Catching Up With...Tony Valenzuela

May 1, 2000 By Kevin O'Leary

Age: 31

Diagnosed: February 1995

The Passions of Tony: His one-man show at West Hollywood's Coast Playhouse casts an ironic eye back at his own earnest journey from sexually naive teen with AIDS paranoia to HIV positive, pro-sex activist celeb. "Act 2 takes me through the speech I gave in 1997"—as the top-billed youth rep at a national gay confab, Valenzuela outraged movement honchos by copping to sex sans condoms, apologies or regrets—"that got me in so much trouble."

Notorious P.I.G.: "In Act 3 I become Hudson O'Hara, 'the infamous advocate of bareback sex.' He's based on the characterizations of me in the media. So, of course, HIV made Hudson rich and famous beyond his wildest dreams."

Front row to Bareback: "Mom was there opening night. I come out to her four times in the play: as gay, as HIV positive, as a porn star and as a call boy. And in my family, I'm the shy one. They're all such hams."

Biggest fan: Kirk, 35. "I met him online in mid-October, and he's proven to be everything his profile said.. Plus, he's right here in LA. My advice to everyone looking for love on the 'Net is to keep it in the same city. It's the cross-country thing that gets weird."

Critical mass: Nonfans tend to focus on the message, not the medium. "Even if I pour out my life story in 75 minutes—with a lot of scenes that are clearly painful to me—some people still want some definitive answer as to the ethics of unprotected sex. But I never give it. The answers I have come to will only work for me."

Long run: In April the play hits the road and may head to his old haunt, San Diego. "I'd like to see how it plays where I was run out of town," he says with a laugh.

(To stay caught up with Valenzuela, e-mail him at *arcadiola@aol.com*)

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