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### The Penis Monologues: LIVE Makes Its Atlanta Premier

By [Kevin McNeir](#) | Published 08/23/2009 | [Theatre](#) | Unrated

*Intimate Secrets of Men Explored in a "Real Talk" Atmosphere*

By Sr. Correspondent, D. Kevin McNeir  
Photos courtesy of Audphotogirl and JL King

#### KEVIN MCNEIR



Award-winning journalist with over 12 years in the business as a news, features and editorial writer. Degrees from U of Michigan, Emory and Princeton with two first place awards for feature writing by Chicago Association of Black Journalist. Writing is my passion. Newest projects include J'Adore Magazine and National Black MBA Magazine.

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One of the most powerful things about live theater is its ability to both inspire and educate. And in the case of the Atlanta world premier of The Penis Monologues: LIVE, which recently opened at **Danneman's Coffee House** in the city's historic Fourth Ward, the buzz has already begun about this unique production that not only chronicles the secrets about men's relationship with their penises but attempts to empower women so that they can understand the male psyche and make more sound decisions about their relationships.



JL King, executive producer/screen writer and party host, Dr. Richard Goodjoin and actor Jason Steed pause during a pre-play reception for Steed.

And what better way to open conversation then through the "mouths" of characters like Good, Big, D\*\*\*, Alternative, Envy and Wh\*\*\* -

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D\*\*\*? Co-written by JL King and Christopher Beckwith and produced by LFTM Productions, the play opens with a feisty, sensual woman (Vicky James) who is frustrated by her inability to find a man that can be honest about his needs and desires. After sharing some of her more recent disappointments and the anger that seeks to consume her, she turns to six men for advice. Through their lively, hilarious and sometimes earth-shattering revelations, they give her and the listening audience a real education on how men think not with one but with "two heads."

"I have always wanted to work on a piece like this because first of all I am a father and have a daughter who lives in a world where relationships are highly valued, particularly among women," King said. "But at the same time I am well-aware that Black women are facing HIV infection rates that continue to climb more than any other group in America. In addition, these same women lament that they are often forced to settle for a man that is far below their desires. I am known for dealing with controversial subjects [King is the New York Times best-selling author whose On the Down Low and his appearance on The Oprah Winfrey Show moved conversations about black males, homosexuality and the down low lifestyle out of the closet] and just believed that a play like The Penis Monologues was the perfect way to help women examine their own behavior and to leave the show better prepared to deal with men. Sure we want men to come to the play and listen and participate in the dialogue that follows as well - but it's first about empowering women."



IronE Stapleton illustrates why he's the most sought after brother in the bunch.

Some may draw immediate connections between this Monologue and the episodic play written by Eve Ensler, which originated at the off-Broadway Westside Theatre in 1996. However, while Ensler chose to



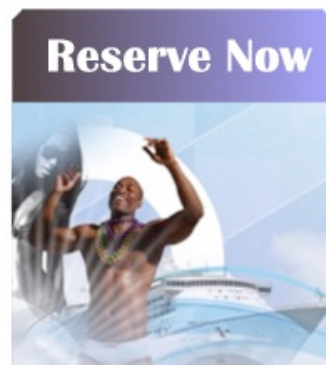
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I know he is gay,  
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but that doesn't change  
my love for him



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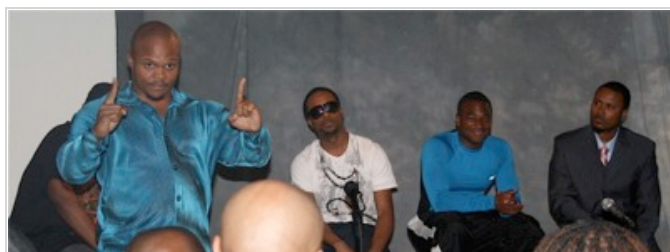




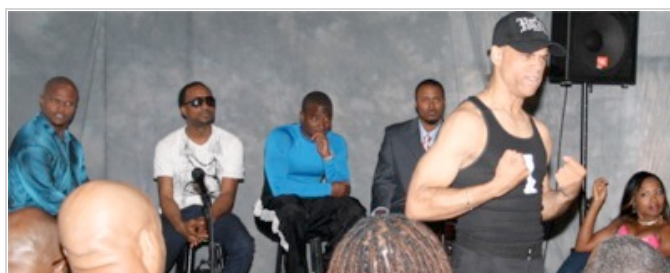
first star in her production [The Vagina Monologues] before recasting it with celebrity monologists, this production uses six monologists, mostly local actors who deliver their messages with the typical Black male bravado and swagger that we see in the "hood" and on America's street corners every day.

Still, there are several aspects of this play that make it a refreshing and provocative look at how men think more often with the "wrong head" and use it to their advantage in their relationships, whether with other women or in some cases with men.

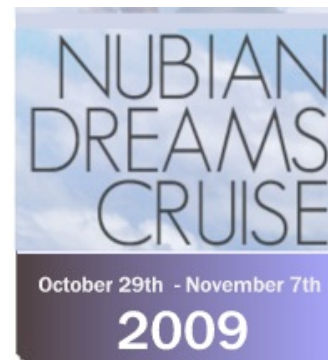
First, in a style most associated with African-American men, the characters talk to one another, "shooting the dozens" while the lead character discusses his life and the choices he has made. The audience is encouraged to "speak" to the characters as well - almost like a Sunday morning call-and-response dialogue with the black preacher.



Naylon Mitchell says he's proud, black and gay!



The sensual and seductive Vicky James asks the brothers "Is there an honest man in the crowd?"



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Moderator Nakia Roberson congratulates the cast following the show's conclusion while the audience prepared for the question and answer period.

In another move that may prove beneficial to the show's success and longevity, King remarked that his plan is to use "celebrity" actors from cities in which they reside when the play begins its anticipated tour across the US and is shown in those actors' respective home towns.

The cast includes New York-born veteran actor and print model Naylor Mitchell who will soon begin filming for a pilot directed by Robert Townsend; Anthony Antoine, an HIV/AIDS activist who uses his music to entertain and educate; actress and model (Vicky) James whose recent pursuits include several other stage plays; popular runway and commercial model Nathaniel Ryan; IronE Singleton who besides acting maintains his own production company; seasoned actor and model LaDarian Raymond, and celebrity actor Jason Steed, best known for his role as Baby Gat in the hit television series Noah's Arc.

Here's what a few members of the cast had to say about the show.

"It's a great role for me because like any acting opportunity it allows me to live a different life - to become someone totally different from who I really am," Ryan said. "JL is talking about taking the show on the road and promoting it in different cities for weekend performances. I think it's certainly good enough to do just that and we have a great chemistry among the cast."

"This show isn't trying to be the same as The Vagina Monologues - actually I believe it is even better," Mitchell said. "I believe as we fine tune the show it will be even more memorable because of the subject matter that is dealt with in the play and because of the variety of men that are portrayed though the six male characters. Each male figure is unique, bringing a strong message to the audience. Regardless of one's gender or sexual orientation I think anyone that sees this show will take something meaningful home with them."

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Nathaniel Ryan, the character with very small genitalia, shares how fearful he was of rejection from his female companion during their first night "together."

"My goal is to become the best actor of my generation and since coming to the United States I have had some tremendous opportunities," Steed said. "In order to be the best at my craft I have to be willing to take chances - to accept roles that are challenging and in The Penis Monologues I have such an opportunity. Plus, it's a whole lot of fun. In some ways, the role I play (Wh\*\*\* D\*\*\*) allows me to say things that I may have thought about but never had the courage to say. That's the beauty of being an actor."

While it was apparent that a few of the actors suffered from the ever-present opening night "butterflies," each held their own. Besides Steed whose comedic performance in this show was brilliant and whose British accent and boyish charm are enough to captivate the common man, Raymond does a phenomenal and convincing job in his role as Good D\*\*\*. In addition, the muscular Singleton is a perfect choice for the role of Big D\*\*\*, capitalizing on facial and other body expressions that leave the audience howling. But some may find that Ryan who plays the role of Envy Dick (a.k.a. "the little d\*\*\*\*") is the best-kept secret of the cast.

Monologues is directed by Patrick Scarborough who is no stranger to the stage, having worked with the likes of Donald Lawrence, Clifton Davis, Gester Harrison, BeBe Winans, Rickey Dillard and Tremaine Hawkins.

"Without Patrick I don't believe any of the actors would have been able to represent this project in such a strong and positive way," Mitchell added. "He really brought the words to life and helped us do some amazing things with our characters - he really is the star of the show."

King agreed with Mitchell in assessing the value of having Scarborough on board as the director of the play.

"He's an experienced, educated actor and director and while he may not be as well-known as some others we could have chosen, he definitely knows his stuff," King said. "I think that one of the reasons that this show is destined to be a hit is because we bring to the public unknown talented people like Patrick."

King noted that while his name may be the one "up in lights," his co-writer Christopher Beckwith [author of the recently published gay love

story What's In It For Me?] deserves an equal amount of credit for his creativity and contribution to the script.

"I need to thank Chris who is my friend, colleague and fellow author because he really stepped up to the plate and delivered three powerful monologues for the play," King said. "Adding his to the three I wrote have collectively made this show a success."

According to King, since the opening, he has been bombarded with e-mails and has seen a host of postings on the more popular Internet sites, including Face book. The show was initially scheduled for a two-day run in Atlanta but it appears that in this case, the "show will go on."

Look for The Penis Monologues: LIVE one day soon in your city.

For more information go to [LFTM](#)

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