

A Word From ...

... The Editor *Darrel Miles*



This issue of Top Hat 2 marks the Tenth Birthday of Magic Bunny. Nigel Shelton tells the history and gives his thoughts on Magic Bunny over this time. Joshua Westmeyer-Shuh gives another thought provoking essay, while Alex Radway continues his regular series of interviews, this time with Marvin Berglas. There is a card effect by Michael Jay, an article from Mark Williams on pacing your act, part two of Aommaster's "A Few Words on Hypnosis" plus Michael Lauck gives us a one minute biography.

One advantage of working on Top Hat 2 is that I get to read the articles before anybody else. It is with this insight that I can say there is something for everyone in this issue.

My thanks once again go to all those who have sent contributions or worked on producing Top Hat 2.

As always, we are asking for feedback on this issue. Please let us know if there are ways in which we can improve Top Hat 2.

The deadline to send articles for Issue 3 is the 14th of March.

- Darrel -



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The History Of ...

... Magic Bunny

Essay

Nigel Shelton



Quite rightly, if you had asked me early in 2002 about my goals and ambitions for Magic Bunny, I would never have expected or visualised the extraordinary rate of growth nor would I have ever imagined how this site would become one of the Internet's leading magic discussion boards. In fact, Magic Bunny began quite modestly in the form of a free magic discussion board called "Magic City" as an alternative site for a small group of young magicians who were culled from a larger and highly successful magic site at that time.

Early in 2002, Magic City was set up using free software and hosting but, as its activity mushroomed, it became clear that it would soon outstrip the practicalities of its original free hosting. At that time, users

were subjected to a single pop-up advert that was imposed by the free software as a way of financing the site but, as the activity soared, these pop-ups became more and more frequent and consequently more and more irritating. During February 2002 the decision was made to move to a registered domain and the practicalities of this venture were discussed and hammered through in a small group (during periods of private social time) at the 2002 Blackpool Magicians' Convention.

On Thursday 28th February 2002 the name Magic Bunny was legally registered and, within two days, the bare bones were built using the phpBB software by one existing Magic City member, Jon Snoops. Then, that following weekend, Jon Snoops and myself spent the two days transferring and acknowledging the huge mass of accumulated material from Magic City to its new home of Magic Bunny. Finally, on Monday morning, Magic Bunny opened its doors to the influx of members and a new chapter in its history had begun.

The membership continued to increase and we managed to maintain a fairly dignified growth week on week until the entry of one distinguished member, Michael Jay, changed all that. After some two or three months of moderate growth, Michael found this site and, when he joined, he brought with him an incredible passion and flair for the subject of magic. What he gave to an expanding and successful site was a huge influx of fresh enthusiasm and vigour -so that the success of Magic Bunny was guaranteed and it soon became a leading voice in the world of online magic discussion boards.

I recall nominating private time every Sunday morning to record and evaluate the progress of the site, using the statistics software provided by phpBB. Sunday mornings were the quietest and the lack of activity at this weekly slot meant that I was able to benchmark the statistics and ponder over them in detail without interruption. Each week the number of registrations and postings would increase and, each week, the rate at which these statistics would increase grew too. At that time I became quite obsessive at noting the rise of these statistics and I would post these each week privately in the Administration forum and discuss them with the group of moderators. At this time one of the moderators, Sean McQuade, discovered that Magic Bunny had started to rank in the online statistics of another analysis site, one which listed the top one million Internet sites around the globe, and so I became to follow these figures too. It certainly gave me a great sense of pride to see Magic Bunny's activity increase week on week (using our own statistics) and to see the ranking of the site rise step-by-step higher into the global top one million sites. If you had asked me to gauge our success at that time, I would have replied in percentage points and rankings figures - however all that was to change very soon.

About five or six years into our story our remarkable success and activity became the cause of many of our more pressing challenges. Our increased membership brought with it a feeling of alienation and isolation to many existing members - the site began to lose the intimate and cosy feel of close friendship and mutual respect that it once had. Occasionally, private online disagreements between vocal members would spill onto the boards and create a negative ethos that drove some established members away and deterred some new members from staying for long. At the same time, the workload of the moderators grew disproportionately as the membership and activity increased and this forced an increase in the governing body - this meant that decisions became harder to implement and that there became a danger that the original ethos and character of the boards could be masked by the influx of the new blood to the moderator team. (Thankfully, due to the professionalism and determination of those who joined the team, this was one worry that soon ceased to be a concern.)

However, one problem that plagued our “middle” years was the disproportionate size of our database. I recall one morning logging on to find that the site had been closed and an uncomfortable email laid waiting in my inbox. The email was from our Internet Service Provider and went on to explain that the site was closed hence with, due to the disproportionate demands that the incredible size of the database had placed on the servers. Sadly, with the closure of the site, this was one problem that I was not able to discuss with the other members of the team - the email made it clear that there were two alternatives; either the site would remain closed or I had to take the unpleasant task of deleting at least half of the database, in order to reduce it to a more manageable size. I tackled the task with great regret and choose to cull many of the posts in the “Off Topic” forums and many of my own private ramblings so that I could allow the more valuable magic discussions to remain in the domain of our members. In the end, I was able to cull some two thirds of our database (to give us a future breathing space) and the site was soon reinstated on the Internet. However, unpleasant this task was, it gave me a valuable opportunity to review the site and re-evaluate my personal goals for its future and (more importantly) the criteria by which it would be judged in future. I was no longer tied to quoting percentage points, membership rankings and post counts as the main criteria for the success of the site but I was able to delve much deeper than that. Now, if you were to ask me, “How successful is Magic Bunny?” I am able to provide you with a more rounded and a more complete picture of how the site has faired. My answer would be ...

Has Magic Bunny touched the lives of those who passed by? Most definitely yes! There are hundreds of testimonials and quotations on the forums by people who have confessed the impact that the site has made on their own personal journeys. The sheer wealth and volume of information and shared experiences is incredible and it has, without a doubt, played a huge part in the private journeys of so many members who access the site, read its contents and take the information on board. I no longer rely on quoting the percentage increase in membership registrations or the proportional increase in threads and posts in any particular forum to gauge its success - there are simply a huge number of people who have passed by this site and grown as a result. For that, we can all share in the pride, knowing that Magic Bunny has definitely grown to be one of the most important global resources for budding magicians the world over. Thank you to the moderator team and the membership base for allowing this to happen. We can all take a sense of pride of playing our parts in that!



Deception

Essay

Joshua Westmeier-Shuh



In a recent conversation with a close personal friend I found myself discussing the intricacies of the Vernon-Finley double turnover used in conjunction with Rafael Benatar's slippery double concept (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igE1i0OS8zA>).

First, I explained the mechanics (the feeling of lightness, the physics of friction and so forth). Then, after he understood the technical points, I began to elaborate on the subtext I use during performance. My goal, I said, is to always make the whole process look like an accident. I don't want the card to slide, I want it to fall.

I proceeded to tell him that every time I present the move this way it flies by completely unnoticed. It was at this point that I was reminded of a very valuable lesson.

“Dude?”

“Yeah?”

“It’s weird to think about how much work magicians put into tricking other people. It’s one of the reasons I never wanted to learn it.”

This is why I love my non-magic friends. They generally have the best insights on all things magical. Besides, shouldn’t they be our first source of feedback? Anyway, he went on with his line of thought, “It’s cool though dude, you never make feel stupid.”

That comment intrigued me because of what it implied. Has a magician, at some point in his life, made him feel stupid? So I asked, “What do you mean by that?”

He replied, “I dunno, dude. Most magicians are kind of a-holes. And after hearing that explanation I guess I understand.”

Now I was really intrigued.

Are we actually a group of a-holes? Am I an a-hole? I hope not, but let’s be honest - there is a certain arrogance about the way magic is often presented.

“I have three balls and I put one in my pocket. Now, watch my hand. Watch. WATCH..... I HAVE THREE BALLS AGAIN!”

Spectator says, “Do it again!”

Magician answers, “I’m sorry, but it’s a cardinal rule of magic never to perform a trick twice.”

Wait a second. You present a puzzle and refuse to tell me how it works. Then you won’t even give me another shot at trying to figure it out on my own?

I’ll let you, the reader, decide. Is that an a-hole move?

Some magicians, having realized this inherent conundrum within the field, have taken to “explaining” their tricks to the spectators. You know what I’m talking about. It’s the part in the performance where the magician pretends to let you in on something so you don’t feel stupid. The smarter people in the group will instantly realize this is just another form of trickery. It’s a trap that’s even worse than the guy with the three balls (my maturity refuses to allow me to pass up a ball joke).

By way of example, please watch this performance by Jason Randal on The Late Show:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nm9Liwnzas

This video is followed by a slew of comments denouncing Letterman:

“Letterman is an idiot....” - pedroogando

“DAVID SUCKS! HE IS THE TYPE OF SPECTATOR THAT SCREWS UP THING. WOW 2.0 IS SOO POWERFULL THAT NOT EVEN THAT WORKED FOR HIM!” [sic] - SalsaShoeProductions

"Why would Dave be such a (expletive removed) douche?? Isn't the point of bringing magicians to your show to let them work their magic and impress the crowd? Dave did everything he could to take control of the trick, make Jason look like an amateur, and ruin the trick for everyone. He's so (expletive removed) rude." [sic] -Alendell

"I perform this illusion myself and to be honest, David really screwed it up for him. What an idiot!!" -sideshow6360

To a small extent I agree with these people. Dave does seem to be particularly rough on magicians. His attitude conveys that he probably finds magic to be silly (stupid?). On the other hand, I noticed something else.

When Letterman calls out Randal at 1:56 for "explaining" (or as he puts it, "cross manipulating") the trick the audience applauds. How could this be? Why would they applaud? I'll tell you why. People don't like to be treated like they are idiots. Go figure.

Unfortunately, the nature of magic stipulates that tricks must puzzle their audience. However, presenting magic solely as a puzzle is a moronic game. If they don't figure it out, you've made them feel stupid. If they do figure it out, you feel stupid. Either way, no one wins. So the solution is obvious - don't present magic only as a puzzle. Still though, that's not enough. We must ask ourselves how to completely remove the deceptive sting of a magic trick.

If you've read my essay on "Magic as an Art," you will realize that by emotionally connecting with your audience you're already halfway there. Remember my mantra? The magic trick should be secondary to the idea you wish to convey. Yeah, yeah, but how do we do this? Well, first we must realize that magic is only an instrument to put the performer on display. The question then becomes, "Would you rather display yourself or a character that you create?" If you said the latter then you're right. Think about it. If you create a character you are only limited by your imagination. If you stay as yourself you become limited by who you are and your own life experience. I don't know about you, but I never want to be limited in performance.

So what is the solution?

To completely remove the deceptive sting of a magic trick we must have the audience focus on the character rather than trick. This is not only good for us, but also for our audience. It is the ultimate method of deception because it allows our audience to trick itself. It is precisely why I cheered (literally out loud) when Yoda fought Count Dooku in the fifth (second?) "Star Wars" film. I'm not focused on the fact that Yoda is a figment of George Lucas's imagination brought to life by computers. What I really want to know is, is Yoda the absolute pinnacle of Jedi awesomeness? Isn't it crazy that I feel like I have a vested interest in a green, midget alien with magic powers and bad grammar?

By now I hope you're on board. I hope you are just itching to create a new magic character. And I bet by now you're just dying to ask me how. Go ahead, ask. I'm waiting.

Alright, I'll tell you.

There are a myriad of books out there on the topic of character development. Even so, there has to be a quick and dirty method, right? You bet. The easiest way to create a character is to ask questions about someone who seems normal and come up with ridiculous answers. Here, let me show you.

Character 1: A man who lives in his mom's basement. He's 45.

The knee jerk reaction is that the guy is a loser. Remember, that will be the audiences reaction as well. So let's instead get the audience on our side.

First question: Why does he live in his mom's basement at 45?

Answer: He lives in his mom's basement because a year ago his wife was murdered and he didn't want to be by himself.

Now the audience is on our side. Anyone want to call a guy out on a magic trick whose wife has just died?

Second question: What happened to his wife?

Answer: She was shot in their apartment in the morning. There were traces of cocaine found in her system as well as methamphetamine.

The plot thickens!

Third question: Do the police or you (the character) have any sort of reason why anyone would want to harm her?

Answer: She was known to be a compulsive gambler. Rumor has it she began gambling at illegal houses on the lower east side. She might have gotten in with the wrong people.

Now we're onto something. We know the character evokes sympathy. We know that the character is depressed. We know the character doesn't want to be alone. Let's take a twist.

Fourth Question: Why doesn't the character want to be alone?

Answer: He's afraid for his life. He saw the man that killed his wife, found him and killed him and seven of his friends.

Oh boy, this is getting good. Guy had a drug addicted, compulsive gambler wife, but still loved her. He's a combination of miserable, homicidal maniac and scared. So much conflict! Regardless, we understand why he killed the guy, but what about the other seven? I mean, that's a lot of people.....

I'll save the rest for some other time, but this is the easy "how-to" of character creation. It's a three step method: start with something simple, ask questions and answer ridiculously. By the time you're done, you will have a whole story and a character to go with it. Remember that a character is only who they are because of the history that created them.

Before I leave you let me impart something that my best friend (an English teacher) teaches his students. It's a lesson which he calls "Show, don't tell." Here's what he means:

Telling

Josh is a large man with a beard.

Showing

Josh scratched his beard and rubbed his belly. His frame hid the chair he sat on, making it impossible to see.

Both examples convey the idea that I'm a big bastard. However, the first sentence lacks creativity. It's bland. Without visualization the line doesn't allow an audience to paint a picture in their head. The idea isn't to tell the audience what to think, but allow them to discover the idea for themselves. This is why many of us picture our favorite characters in different ways.

Do you see where I'm going with this? If the character above is the one you wish to create in performance then you cannot say, "Hello, I'm a depressed homicidal maniac. I've killed seven people and live with my mom. My first trick is..." Although the previous line would be hilarious it would be "telling" and not "showing."


To show, you must use your magic. If you're having trouble just go back to the story and my mantra - the magic must be secondary to the idea you wish to convey.

You live with your mom. Do you want to be anywhere but there? I sense illusions coming your way. If you live in her basement and wear PJ's all the time wouldn't you like to dress up every once in a while. Maybe a quick change?

Your wife was a compulsive gambler. Ace assembly anyone? Second dealing demonstration? Why not an ambitious card?

The only thing you want to do is bring her back. Remember the trick where you bring a dead fly back to life? How about sawing someone in half? Would you trade your life for hers? Maybe a metamorphosis.

The sky really is the limit here. Challenge yourself. And one last thing.

Yoda is definitely the pinnacle of Jedi awesomeness. 



60 Second Interview ...

... Marvin Berglas

Interview

Alex Radway



Hi Marvin, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me. Before we start, please state your name, occupation and place of residence.

Marvin Berglas

Creator of Marvins Magic

London

Thanks. OK, 20 questions, starting from...now!

What is your favourite gaffed deck/gimmick to use?

A thumb tip is always useful for creating anytime anywhere miracles.

Which of the Marvin's Magic range (current or previous) are you most proud of?

Our Executive Magic Collection was first of its kind, the Secret Box was always a favourite and my

MindBlowing Magic set with DVD was the best selling in the world when it launched.

What was the last trick you saw which completely fooled you?

I loved Kevin James' Operation...It totally blew me away . We subsequently worked together on the Freaky Body Illusions.

Ever been fooled by a trick using one of your own products?

Floating Match, Energised Coin and Wizard Cards in the right hands are awesome.

What gave you the idea of starting up Marvin's Magic?

I saw a gap in the market while I was demonstrating in Hamleys and it snow balled from then...That was almost 25 years ago.

Which trick/effect do you wish you could have been the one to invent?

The trick of putting more hours in a day.

As we all have one, what is the most memorable time you messed up a trick/routine?

On a live TV chat show when an audience member miscalled their selection probably to test my bottle...With the clock ticking and that cold sweat feeling I had to use all my knowledge and skills to think on my feet and find the new selection magically...Only just in the nick of time.

When performing, what is your favourite opener and closer?

Non specific...It would be to suit the show.

When someone says, "You're a magician. Show me a trick!" what do you show them?

Either any no-prop mind reading trick or my torn corner card routine.

Which magician(s) do you admire the most ...other than your father of course?

I like David Williamson, Jeff Hobson and Mac King.

What is the best piece of magical advice you've ever been given?

Learn a few tricks really well rather than loads badly!

Always good advice! And now for some random non-magic questions:

When you're not thinking about magic, what's on your mind?

Family, Arsenal, Business.

What's the last film you saw? Any good?

My wife and twin boys Matt and Jack.

If you weren't doing magic for a living, what would you be doing?

Three classics. Groundhog Day for the story and detail, American werewolf in London for the drama and effects and Groundhog Day for the story and detail!

If you weren't performing and selling magic for a living, what would you be doing?

Professional soccer player or showbiz management.

Favorite ice cream?

Mint choc chip.

If you could have any genuine magical/supernatural ability, what would it be?

What do you mean, "If?"

Do you have any non-magical hidden talents?

I played 16 seasons for Arsenal ex pro celebrity XI alongside many of my boyhood heroes and once scored 141 in snooker (red, brown, red!) - can speak 6 languages, play 7 instruments and ate for England.

What was the last piece of music that got stuck in your head?

Party Rock Anthem by LMFAO.

Favourite place to go on holiday?

Italy and Santa Barbara, California.

OK that's it. Thanks Marvin, great to speak to you!

Marvin Berglas is the founder of the Marvin's Magic range and is also resident magician for Arsenal FC.



Number Of The Beast

*Effect**Michael Jay*

In last month's issue Freddie Valentine offered a treatise on bizarre magic. That column made me decide to share the following trick with our Top Hat readers. Before I give you this trick I'd like to take a moment to share some thoughts with you.

Rarely do I worry that my work will be copied or stolen by other magicians. My reasoning is simple.

Today's magicians want complex sleights. Most of them erroneously believe that magic is in the sleight of hand and that the more complex and difficult the trick is the better it must be. Because nearly every trick that I perform is based on simplicity very few magicians are willing to give my work a second glance.

My offering in this issue is a card trick that I've named, "Number of The Beast," and it is precisely one of those tricks. It is so very rudimentary that most of the work is done by the spectator and, in hindsight, the spectator will remember that they handled the cards at all times.

The mechanics of this trick are already published and can be found in "The Royal Road to Card Magic" (Hugard and Braue) where it is called, "Poker Player's Picnic," and "The Practical Encyclopedia of Magic" (Einhorn) where it is called, "Spectator Cuts The Aces." If you are familiar with either of these writings then you will already have decided that this trick sucks.

Should you decide to try this trick, though, and you follow my instruction and keep to my script then you will have an extremely powerful effect in your repertoire that can, and will, deeply affect your spectators.

Without further ado, I give you...

Number Of The Beast

The set up for this trick starts with a top stock of four cards as follows (from top, down):

- 6 of Clubs
- 6 of Diamonds
- 6 of Spades
- Joker

Get these four cards on top of the deck in any way that is comfortable for you. I generally have the set up already in place when I pull the deck out of the case. As a side note, the order of the sixes doesn't make any difference but the joker should always be the fourth card down to ensure that you will always know precisely where the joker is without having to think about it.

Please understand that the script that I am about to give you is interactive. You should be prepared to actually discuss what you are talking about with your audience rather than come across as proselytizing to them. That being said, read the following script and commit it to understanding (I say "understanding" because it should not come across as a verbatim script, but rather a discussion that you are having with your spectators).

"Do you believe in numerology? A lot of people who claim not to believe in such things will still have numbers that are important to them. For example, many people will use family members' birthdates

when choosing numbers for the lottery. This isn't surprising because numbers have played an important role in humankind over the centuries.

"In fact, numbers are considered so important that they play a special role in The Bible. The Bible even has a book dedicated to numbers. It's called, 'Numbers.'

"In The Bible we also find that numbers are used in conjunction with important milestones and we find those particular numbers to be a recurring theme. With Noah it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. All too often we read of profits going out into the desert to fast for 40 days and 40 nights. That number, 40, is very important and we are going to use that number because of its significance.

"In numerology, however, it is best to keep the numbers to single digits. So we add the two numbers together, $4 + 0$, and we get the number four. That is the number that we'll use."

While you follow this script and discuss these issues with your audience you should be shuffling and/or cutting the cards. Any series of false shuffles and/or cuts that maintain your top stock will do. This mixing of the cards should be carried out in a lackadaisical fashion while you are talking with your audience. The focus should be on the topic of numerology and its implications rather than on the deck. Nothing fancy is happening here - you are simply talking about these esoteric things and mixing the deck while you do so.

Place the "mixed" deck onto the table. Choose a spectator to help you with this presentation and continue with the script.

"The number is four, so, if you would, please, cut the deck into two roughly equal halves. Good. Now cut each of those two halves into two equal halves so that we have four packets of cards on the table. These four packets represent that important number four."

Have the spectator that you've chosen cut the deck in half and then cut each of those two packets in half again. Have the spectator simply place each cut packet next to the other(s) as they continue their cuts so that you have a row of four packets of cards sitting on the table. Keep a close eye on where your top stock ends up. Out of the four packets of cards your top stock will end up either all the way to the left or all the way to the right. This being completed, continue with the script.

"Another important number is the number seven. In Genesis the 7th day is the day of rest. There are 7 deadly sins, 7 virtues and 7 days in the week. Seven is a recurring number and, therefore, important to us. In fact, if we subtract the four packets from the number seven we arrive at God's perfect number - the number three.

"That number, the number three, is the ultimate number. That is the 'Godhead' - The Trinity. He was put to death and arose on the third day. Three."

Look at the spectator who is helping you and continue as follows:

"Using that number, the number three, pick up a packet and put the top three cards onto the bottom of that packet. Then place a single card onto each of the three packets sitting on the table. Three on the bottom and then three on the table. Three.

"Here, let me demonstrate so that you can fully understand..."

Pick up the packet at the opposite end from the packet that has your top stock and put the top three cards of that packet onto the bottom of that packet and then place a single card from the top of that same packet onto the top of each of the packets sitting on the table. You do this as a demonstration for

your spectator to show him precisely what you expect him to do with the remaining three packets on the table.

Put your packet back down on the table (back to its original position), point to the packet to its immediate right (or left - depending on which side you started) and have the spectator finish out doing this for each of the three remaining packets in the order from where they sit on the table (your top stock packet should be the last packet handled by the spectator and, as with the three packets before it, three cards go to the bottom and then one card onto each of the packets on the table).

I realize that this seems convoluted when reading the instruction. If you have either of the books mentioned at the beginning of this article that explain this trick (and you probably do), then you can refer to them in order to understand it better. If you don't have either of those books then I recommend that you follow the instruction above with a deck of cards. If you follow exactly how it is being explained with an actual deck, and in real time, it will be much clearer.

Once the mechanics of placing the three cards on the bottom of each, individual, packet and further placing one card from the top of that packet onto each of the tabled packets is finished (for all four packets), continue on with the script.

"But there is another number, a terrible number, an evil number. It, too, is a three digit number and it is the number of The Beast. Do you know that number?"

Almost every spectator will know this number. It is 666 and if they can't come up with it on their own then tell them. Once you've told them (assuming that you need to tell them) they will immediately recognize the significance of 666. Continue on with the script.

"Yes, that's right, 666. The number of The Beast.

"Six.

"Six.

"Six."

As you say each "six" in this part of the script, flip a six over on one of the tabled packets. (There will be a six on each of the three packets that did not originally have the top stock. It is the joker that is on top of the packet that originally had the top stock.) Allow that to sink in. Your spectators will be looking at three sixes and the fourth packet remains undisturbed.

Do not be in a hurry at this point. Look at their faces and thoroughly enjoy what you see. When you flip those sixes your spectators will have a look of shock, horror and complete disbelief. Relish this reaction because it is one time in your life that you will get such deep discomfort from your spectators that words on this page will never be able to describe.

To conclude, use the following script.

"Please, don't go home tonight and lose sleep thinking that you've seen the devil incarnate presented in this silly trick. Never forget, this is just a card trick and nothing more. Yes, this is just a card trick and, well, I'm just joking..."

As you say, "just joking," turn over the joker.

In conclusion, I could tell you many stories of how deeply affected my own spectators are when I present this trick. I could further explain why using a joker at the end of this lets your spectators off the hook and brings them back to reality. I won't. I'll let you take this bizarre piece of magic and find out for yourselves.

Then again, it's so simple that it probably just sucks, anyway. Best to give it a pass.

Take care and thank you for reading.



Mark's Remarks

Essay

Mark Williams



There are moments in Magic that makes us all stop and take notice. A vanish, an appearance or even a transposition. The awe and wonder swells inside of us ... to this very day. Yet, how do we apply what we see, to what we perform. Simply put, I think the key is to let the magic sink in. Do not rush the moment. Spotlight it and showcase the very moment of the magic and bring the wonderment to life.

Pacing your effects is the most important factor. Whether you use music in your act or the spoken word (patter)...set your pacing and timing so that when the magic happens, it does not get lost. I have witnessed first-hand many performers rushing through their effects, only to disappoint and confuse their audiences. A slower paced effect, heightened by natural tension would serve well to improve one's performance.

Yet, how do we go about learning to pace effects and time the appropriate wonderment? Well, the book *Designing Miracles* by Darwin Ortiz is a great place to start. Ortiz breaks it down into basically four steps: method, effect, performance and design. Another great book is *Approaching Magic* by David Regal. In David's book you will learn how to invent, construct and perform your magic effects. Both books are invaluable resources to help you improve as a magician. Watching other magicians perform is another great way to learn. You get to see first-hand what to do and sometimes what not to do. Study the classic acts, like Fred Kaps, Richard Ross or even Shimada (just to name a few). By absorbing everything you see and read; you will be well on your way to being a better magician.

Taking drama or acting classes can also help you learn proper timing and staging. Delivering your lines in a play is much like framing your performances for an audience. A well paced act will capture the wonderment and serve it up onto a platter for all to enjoy. Take your time, slow down and let the magic sink in. It really is the only way to making your magic more meaningful.



A Few Words On Hypnosis

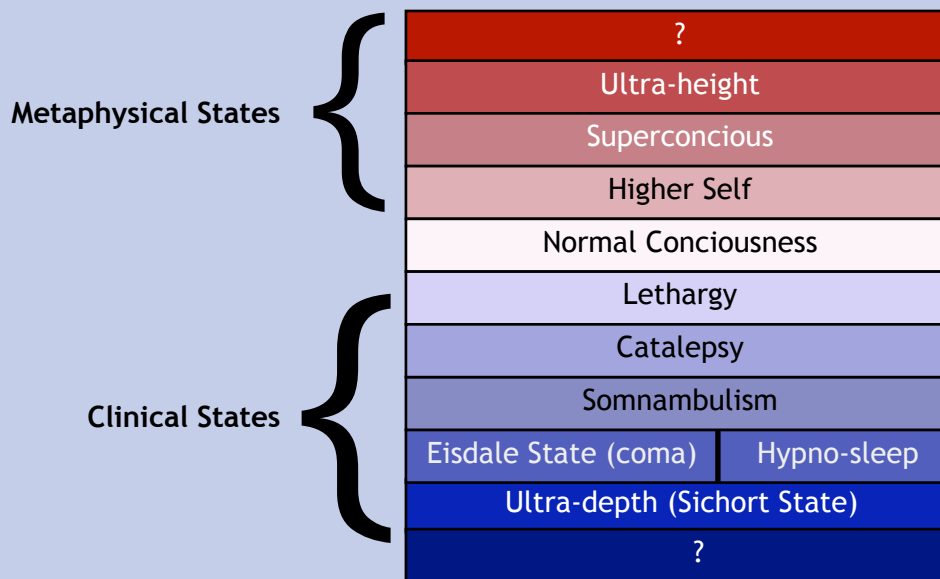
Essay

Aommaster



The trance state achieved by a hypnotic induction can vary from person to person (which gives rise to the rumour that some people are non-hypnotizable, but more on that later). There are a number of trance states (these are briefly explained below). Please bear in mind that my training comes from a hypnotherapeutic background and not from a performer's background. Please note that, depending on your

training, this list may vary slightly (with some people even questioning the existence of individual, compartmentalized states), but, in general, this is what we have:



When we think of hypnosis, we normally associate it with the mind being relaxed. When the mind is in this state it is in one of the clinical states of trance (which will be explained later). However, a hypnotist can cause the mind to be more aware and this leads to the metaphysical states. It is claimed that in a metaphysical state of trance (specifically, Ultra-height), the client is able to find solutions to their own subconscious problems and even able to treat certain illnesses such as cancer. While I personally do not believe it, nor do I endorse the use of hypnosis as a form of cancer treatment, one cannot help but ask if such a thing is really possible. This is subject to debate, which I will not do here.

Now, we move to the clinical states. The first two states, Lethargy and Catalepsy, will rarely be seen by a hypnotist since most modern inductions will drop the person directly into the somnambulistic state. But, in brief, a lethargic state is one of deep relaxation and a cataleptic state is one where certain muscles can be rendered unmovable by a hypnotist's suggestions (e.g. eyelids).

The somnambulistic state is sometimes called the "working level of trance." It is the state where suggestions can be accepted by the subconscious and where a hypnotist (be it clinical or performance) will be able to do his work. We will discuss more of this later.

Deeper than this, we now have two possibilities. Depending on what deepening technique is used we can get the client into either the Esdaile State (also known as the "hypnotic coma") or Hypno-sleep. This coma state is very unlike a medical coma state. Rather, it is a state of total euphoria and may even cause your client to be unresponsive to your suggestions because it feels so great. In this hypnotic coma state they have no problems of their own and are in a state of total peace. Hypno-sleep, on the other hand, is very similar to normal sleep with the exception that suggestions from a hypnotist enter the subconscious very strongly.

Deeper than the coma state, people claim that there is one more state of trance called "Ultra-depth." It is claimed that in this state human healing is accelerated by (about) 10-fold, with even the possibility of one

person being able to heal another through physical contact. Again, I am a bit skeptical about this state's existence.

Last but not least, the question marks. We still do not fully understand what happens from a medical standpoint when a person is in a hypnotic state. We do not understand what the human mind is capable of and, as a result, we are not sure if other depths exist.

So now, back to the somnambulistic state. As mentioned earlier this is your working level of trance. Most inductions (especially the rapid and instant inductions) will drop your client into this level of trance without any further deepening required.

It is important to test your client to ensure that you are at that level of trance or you face the risk of your suggestions not being accepted. If you find that you're not at that level of trance then use a deepening technique. You do not need to worry about someone entering the Esdaile state, or any of the other deeper/metaphysical states, because getting someone to that level of trance requires quite a lot of effort.

Hopefully, by now, I've shed a bit more light on what is possible with hypnosis. If you are interested in learning a bit more, a good book I found is called, "The Art of Hypnosis: Mastering Basic Techniques," by C. Roy Hunter. It's fairly old and does not go into a lot of detail on depths (especially metaphysical states), but it does talk about deepening techniques and tests of depth.

Next time: Rumours behind Hypnosis.



One Minute Biography ...

... George Méliès

Biography

Michael Lauck



Although perhaps not the most famous magician of the 20th century, George Méliès may be the most influential. Even though his name is hardly known to the average person his addition of stage magic techniques and innovations to the early film industry shaped the development of the modern motion picture. Thanks to the recent Martin Scorsese release *Hugo*, 100 years after the heyday of George Méliès, he is finally beginning to enjoy widespread name recognition.

Born in 1861 to a fairly wealthy family Méliès was originally interested in becoming a painter (which his father did not condone). Visits to the Egyptian Hall and the Théâtre Robert-Houdin cultivated an interest in magic and illusion. He began lessons and then staged his own performances. After inheriting a share of the family boot factory he sold his share to his brothers and used the proceeds to purchase the Théâtre Robert-Houdin.

After attending a very early motion picture exhibition Méliès grasped the importance of the new medium. He purchased the necessary equipment and built himself a modest film studio. From the late 1890s until the dawn of the First World War Méliès produced over 500 films. His most famous is probably 1902's *A Trip To The Moon*, which features explorers shooting themselves to the moon inside a giant bullet (and hitting the moon in the eye). In addition to early science fiction, Méliès pioneered horror stories, news presentations and comedy. He also made several films that were simply presentations of his stage magic act.

Unfortunately Méliès success was not to last. The industry that he helped to create passed him by leaving him broke and forgotten. He spent his later years living with his granddaughter and selling toys. By the

1930s his work began to be recognized as an integral part of the development of film. He was awarded the Légion d'honneur and, perhaps more importantly, began to consult with and advise the new generation of filmmakers. George Méliès passed away in 1938.

Méliès' Tchin Chao the Chinese Conjuror, an excellent mix of his stage and camera magic sensibilities, can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBj54xzygKk>



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Top Hat - Issue 3 due 1st April 2012

Submit your article or effect to be included in the next issue to:

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Parting Shot



Once you have broken past the beginner period of magic, where you are experimenting with how tricks work and learning the basic technical skills in magic, you will most likely start performing your magic to friends and family.

At this stage you should soon realise that the "real magic" of magic doesn't lay in the trick itself, but rather the way it is performed.

Since there are many ways for any effect to be performed, each of us must present a certain style and for a certain reason...Maybe you try to be funny and make people laugh, maybe you try to be mysterious and make people think, maybe you try to surprise people- we all have different tasks with our magic.

We don't all realise this straight away, but once we are used to performing magic, this is a question we certainly should ask ourselves- what is our individual task in magic?

This may take years to answer, but we should all have some obvious aims for our magic.

What are yours?

- Zoink -



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