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TOP HAT

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Although this issue is quite short compared to some of the others, I'm sure you'll agree that the material still holds up to its usual gleaming standard.

Nigel Shelton speaks on the successes of the forums, including the recent and upcoming guest speakers you will find if you visit the site. Next, Michael Jay continues his "introduction to fire" with Confessions of a Pyro Part 3.

We are then treated to a similar version of one of Peter Marucci's marketed effects. Clueless is an effect in which you apparently use your skills of judgment and detection to name the weapon on the spectator's card.

Those of you who have missed Darmoe's monthly "Neophyte" preachings will be pleased to see his return. Unfortunately due to ill health, Craig has had to rethink his career. He has kindly given us the lowdown on his situation and we look forward to seeing more of Craig again on the forums and in this ezine.

So, all the best, until next time,

~Jon Snoops~
Editor of MagicBunny.co.uk's TOP HAT Monthly E-zine
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Contents

Every issue of the TOP HAT contains original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you have a submission, please email TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk

MAGIC NEWS: *"The Latest From MagicBunny"* by Admin

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Confessions of a Pyro Part 3"* by Michael Jay

MAGIC EFFECT: *"Clueless"* by Peter Marucci

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Challenge of the Magi"* by P. Craig Browning

The Latest From MagicBunny

The Latest From MagicBunny

Website News

By Admin

The last few weeks have really seen a flurry of activity on the boards and I have been particularly excited to see the input of so many well-known magicians. We have been immensely privileged to have five special guests in just two months, covering a huge span of different areas of magic.

Just a month ago, we were very lucky to have the presence of Doc Eason and we were able to benefit from his input and advice. Just two weeks after this, Peter McCahon created a massive response with his visit and he received a great deal of interest, especially from our UK members who have been following his latest television series. Mid October has seen the visit of Duncan Trillo, the power behind the Internet site "MagicWeek" and two weeks after this one of the most influential names in British magic, Alan Shaxon, is due for a visit as "Special Guest" Finally, just two weeks after these visitors, award winning magician, Julie Eng, will provide input to Magic Bunny, offering her own unique perspective on the art of magic.

We are very honoured and privileged that so many world famous names have offered to visit our site in the role of "Special Guest" - it is a remarkable testimony to these professionals that they are willing to support our forums and provide their own views and input on our members' threads. The advice that these people offer is gold dust and so much can be learnt from standing on the shoulders of these giants.

We are truly grateful to these visitors and the input that they are able to offer. We hope that you may take advantage of their wisdom and insight and that it may inspire you too to develop and fulfil your goal too.

Nigel Shelton.

Confessions of a Pyro Part 3

Confessions of a Pyro Part 3

An Introduction to Fire

By Michael Jay

It was in my early teens that my brother told me about a party that he had attended a short while back. Bill (my brother), explained that some guy who he'd never met jumped up on the back of a pickup truck and yelled, "I'm the devil!" The devil then proceeded to take a big drink of lighter fluid, immediately held a lit lighter in front of his mouth and blew a huge fire ball.

A little light went on inside of my head. So that's how they do the fire ball, or flame tongue. Now I knew. Of course, I couldn't wait to test this theory. I believe that I've already pointed out that a kid will never be accused of being smart.

Alright, here I must state, once again, the most important theme that is running through this fire eating trilogy: Magic Bunny and Top Hat are not responsible for your health and well being. If you decide to put any of this article to use, you accept full responsibility for your own health and welfare. Further, the author of this article is publishing it for educational purposes only. Should you decide to put any of this article into practice and get hurt, you have no one to blame but yourself. All responsibility for your health and well being falls squarely on your own shoulders and no liability for any ills that befall you as a result of reading

Confessions of a Pyro Part 3 (cont.)

this article are accepted or placed on Magic Bunny, Top Hat, it's owner or publisher or anyone else. If you are not 18 years of age or older, you have no business reading this article for any other purpose than to educate yourself on the dangers of using open flame in any act, for any reason.

Which brings us to the topic of fuels. Presently, you should be using lamp oil, because of its low burning temperature. You should be familiar with putting the flame in your mouth at this point and rubbing it on your tongue for effect. You are ready to move up to a hotter fuel source and lighter fluid will fit the bill.

Lighter fluid burns hot so you'll not be keeping this flame in your mouth for extended periods of time. However, the flame goes higher and is brighter, so you appear to be doing something more dangerous with that kind of flame. Don't fool yourself, even though the flame is hotter, larger and brighter the risks are just the same. Breathing in kills you, when fire is present in your mouth. Lighter fluid is a reasonable choice of fuels to use, but there is a better fuel source.

Coleman's Camping Fuel is the brand that you'll find most fire eaters choose. Also called, "White Gas," Coleman's gives you the flame that you need and is a better choice than lighter fluid. Also, this white gas is almost tasteless. When you use lamp oil or lighter fluid, you will be burping up fumes for several hours after you have finished with your fire eating act. With Coleman's, there is almost no taste, so this burping effect is not so bad.

There is the chance that you'll not be able to find Coleman's fuel. Coleman's is actually 100% naphtha petroleum distillate. So, if you're unable to locate Coleman's, then the fuel that you are looking for is naphtha petroleum distillate and make sure, when purchasing this fuel, that it is 100% pure. Your choice of either Coleman's or lighter fluid still carries the risks that come with introducing chemicals into your system, though - never forget that.

The last fuel that you can look into is kerosene. I strongly suggest against kerosene, mainly because of its extreme smell. I also don't care for its burn rate. It tastes terrible, both when you use it and when you burp it up later. I only mention it here because it is an acceptable fuel.

Take a glass of water outside. Pull a bit of that water into your mouth then spit it out (that's why you should be outside). When you spit that water out, I want you to make it as misty as you can. In other words, don't spit it out in a stream. Rather, you should purse your lips together and infuse as much air into the mix as you can. When you can blow that water out in a fine mist, as fine a mist as is imaginable, then you are prepared to blow a fire ball. The fire ball is more impressive when plenty of air is mixed in with the fuel. Your face is safer when a good mist is blown. You see, there are two important reasons for blowing a fine mist when doing the fire ball.

Now, before you actually go through with blowing a fire ball, there is one ultimately important thing to remember prior to the attempt. You'll find that, after many years of conditioning, you have the reflexive action of swallowing liquids that you place into your mouth. It is a natural reaction and you've been doing it all your life. You've got to overcome the desire to swallow what you place in your mouth, otherwise you'll simply swallow the fuel, just out of reflex. The act of fire eating already introduces enough chemicals into your system without actually taking a drink of the fuel, so get over the need to swallow.

Ready? Light your torch. Take a sip of the fuel. Bring the lit torch up to a 45 degree angle from mouth and tip your head up 45 degrees so that your mouth is on an even plane with the lit torch. Holding that torch about 6 inches from your face, blow the mist directly into the flame. Your damp cloth, which we've discussed in an earlier article, should be close at hand. Immediately wipe your mouth.

I cannot stress enough that you get this mist down perfectly before you try this stunt. If you have globules of fuel, rather than a fine mist, chances are that some of it will travel from your lips down your chin. In this instance, you can easily ignite your face (something that you are really trying to avoid). Even with the fine mist, some residue may still be present on your face, hence the need to wipe your face clean immediately following the fire ball.

Everything that you've learned this far, from these articles, gives you all the knowledge that you need to

Confessions of a Pyro Part 3 (cont.)

add fire eating to your pyro act. To date, the tools that I've given you are to be used in short time periods, rather than an extended fire eating show. If you are considering the idea of doing a full blown fire show, then you'll need metal torches. The wood ones that you may have made will not last up to extended burning, which is necessary in a pure fire eating act. So, let's look at the creation of a metal torch.

You're going to need a meat skewer. If you've ever had Shish Kebob, then you know exactly what you're looking for - a thin, metal skewer. In a pinch, you can also use a wire coat hanger. I prefer the meat skewer, simply because it is a thicker metal and more controllable when placing in the mouth - it doesn't bend easily, like a coat hanger will. When you find the skewer that you're looking for (about 12 inches long and an eighth of an inch in diameter), purchase several of them. They are relatively inexpensive.

Using a needle nosed pliers, bend about three quarters of an inch of the tip of the skewer over, onto itself. Do this slowly, because the metal will snap if you try to force it quickly. It may just snap anyway, but if you've followed directions, you still have a few more to work with. If the metal gives way, but doesn't fully snap, throw it out, anyway and use a different skewer.

Having done that, you will now have a hole, or an eye much like a huge needle, at the top of the skewer. You'll use this eye to thread your material through in the creation of this torch. Which brings us to the wicking that you'll be using.

Purchase a t-shirt from your local shop. Just as with the cotton for the wooden torches previously described, you'll want the t-shirt to be 100% cotton to avoid the melting of synthetic fibers which will drop little balls of fire into your mouth while putting the lit torch in. Of course, you will want to avoid such a thing.

Using the bottom of the t-shirt, cut about an inch and half of material from it. This will give you a circular piece of material, which you should cut on the seam, giving you a long piece of cloth, an inch and a half in width. Feed an inch through the eye of your torch shaft. Hold that bit down on the torch shaft with your thumb and with your other hand begin wrapping the cloth around the torch. Wrap it tight and make sure that you cover the entire eye, so that no metal shows through the top. You may have to do this a few times before you get the hang of it, but, as long as you don't tie it off, you only need to unwrap it and do it again.

Once you have the torch head fully wrapped, tie it off to the piece that you initially held down with your thumb. You now have a functional torch. Once you have the hang of doing this, you can make a torch in minutes. Also, this torch should last you through dozens of performances without the need to wrap a new torch head on it. You can also ensure that the torch will last longer by wrapping thread around the bottom, just as we had done with the cotton and wood torch. I've found this extra to be unnecessary, but a good thing to do just as a safety precaution (if the knot burns through, then the torch will unwind during your act, possibly while it's in your mouth).

Keep in mind that when using this metal torch, the cloth wick will not burn much if you keep it well fueled. It is when the fuel on the torch head starts running low that the cloth wick starts to really burn up. To insure that your torch's head lasts longer, always make sure that your torch is well fueled when doing your act.

Next, you need to be aware that the metal shaft gets hot, unlike the wood torch. Using the wood torch, you can allow the shaft to touch your lips. This is not so with the metal torch, as the heat will travel down the shaft. When putting this torch in your mouth, you'll want to guide it in using your tongue. With your head thrown back, you can stick out your tongue (flat, remember?) like you are trying to touch your chin with it. As you put the fire into your mouth, let the burning head travel down your tongue into your mouth, which will help you to ascertain where the metal shaft is at all times.

For putting out the torch, you'll not want to close your lips, like you did with the wood torch. If you close your lips, you've guaranteed that you are going to get burned from the searing metal. Rather, bring your lips almost together, then let out a quick puff of air. The quick puff of air will extinguish the flame.

I've now given you all the tools that you need to put on a fairly good fire eating show. For further study and

Confessions of a Pyro Part 3 (cont.)

a great many tricks you can do, I suggest that you purchase "The Professional's Guide to Fire Eating," by Brian Brushwood. That is the most comprehensive guide to fire eating that you'll find on the market today and Brian has included many, many pictures to help you along with very stupid stunt. Also, you'll find several different ways of making torches, comprehensive guides to the fuels that you can use and a plethora of tricks that you can pull off to fill time, rather than just putting the fire into your mouth and blowing fire balls! You'll also get some very important insights into this, well, shall I call it, art?

Until next time, stay safe and have fun!

By Michael Jay

Clueless

Clueless

A Magic Effect

By Peter Marucci

EFFECT:

You show nine cards that, you say, are based on the board game Clue. Each of the nine cards has the name of a weapon printed on one side. A spectator cuts the pile of cards a couple of times, then cuts them again and selects the next card. It is a totally free choice.

Playing the part of the detective, you than "grill" the suspect, finally coming up with the correct name of the weapon and - supposedly - solving the case.

WORKING:

Obviously, you'll need nine cards. I use business cards, which can be printed out on my computer with the names of the weapons. But you can use blank-faced cards and hand-letter the names.

The nine weapons, in this order from the top in a face-down stack are: Gun, Overdose, Noose, Ether, Bomb, Axe, Club, Knife, Sword.

Notice that the first letter of each item goes together to form the word 'gonebacks'. The word means nothing but this is your memory device for remembering the order of the cards. (Look on this as a mini-version of a set-up deck.)

The cards can be given as many single cuts as you want and it won't change the cyclical order of the weapons.

So, when the spectator finally cuts the cards and chooses one, you take the cards back and casually look at the bottom card of the top half of the stack - the card immediately before the chosen one. Say, for example, that card is the Axe. Then, using the 'gonebacks' memory aid, you know the next letter is C - for Club.

You now know which is the chosen card - that's 10 per cent of the routine. The other 90 per cent is in the presentation - and that's the hard part!

SECOND THOUGHTS:

As well as weapons, this can be done with just about anything: Animals, drinks, flowers (the 'scent' supposedly tells you what the chosen card is), etc.

If you don't want to make this up yourself, I market a version, called Cocktails For One, in which the spectator selects one of ten different drinks and you reveal the choice with amusing byplay. It is available

Clueless (cont.)

from me at \$6 (U.S.) postpaid. If you are interested, send a cheque or money order to:

Peter Marucci
270 St. Andrew St. East
Fergus, Ontario, Canada
N1M 1R1

As I said, the story line is the big thing here, and I'm leaving that up to you. So put on your thinking caps, come up with a great story line, and go out and entertain!

Cheers
Peter Marucci

Challenge of the Magi

Challenge of the Magi

By P. Craig Browning

Many have emailed me over the past few months, wondering what's happened and why I've not been around. Well, life got in the way. That's to say, life conditions reached a point that demanded me to stop and take a long hard look at Craig for a change (and start taking care of him.)

Several years ago an incident occurred while I was living in my native Ohio, in which I ruptured several discs in my lower back. (Ironically, I was still recovering from a broken neck at that point in time as well.) Long story short, that injury has transmuted itself (kindof) to a chronic form of degenerative disc disease which is now attacking my spine from the neck down and the bottom up. The situation is compounded by other "things" ranging from a long-term battle with depression to a more recent (and highly inconvenient) diagnosis of agoraphobia; long story short, I've become a prisoner to my own body.

Why such a public confession? You ask.

Because I know I'm not alone. There are other top name performers/personalities as well as those of lesser fame who are all facing various kinds of life challenge concerns and in doing so, trying to cultivate ways by which to a.) Conceal their ails by finding alternative methods, etc.; b.) Work through their limitations however they can; c.) Figure the easiest way to fade from the scene and die quietly, wadding through their own hell.

Truth is there have been and are many individuals who refuse to allow health issue of this kind to get in their way. I know of one former Creative Illusions client that became paralyzed from the waist down who is now traveling with a rather fantastic illusion show... he's even been on television! There are tales of card workers, such as the late Johnny Paul, who did everything single-handed as the result of a stroke. Then too, there seems a plethora of noted performers from all aspects of the entertainment industry, that face daily battles within their minds – depression, anxiety disorders, ADHD, and even Schizophrenia hasn't stopped them. People who keep their condition "quiet" and yet, serve as a powerful inspiration to others via their craft.

When I was told six years ago that I'd be in a wheelchair before I hit my mid-40s I convinced myself that it would be O.K. and I could deal with it. Well, now I'm in the damned thing and I'm not dealing with it as well as originally thought. At the same time this seeming inconvenience has lent to me inspiration – a new way of presenting the kind of magic I do. As my good friends Andy Leviss and Rick Maue pointed out, the idea of a wheelchair bound Psychic has some great promotional advantages. Too, there's that popular myth that the loss of one set of senses of abilities brings about an enhancement to others (and we are using that angle! After all, I can do a blindfold drive at the drop of a hat these days... and have!)

Challenge of the Magi (cont.)

Like anyone I have my good and bad days (chronic pain ain't fun!) I can no longer plan for show dates or push for commercial gigs because of the uncertainty I face each day. I can however learn to see alternatives e.g. how to get my fix as a performer, but in smaller doses. The irony of it is that I'm being taken back to the role of being a Bed & Breakfast performer and part-time card reader. I'm also being faced with the challenge of refining my writing skills so that I can find an alternative mode of generating income as a freelance writer. The point being I'm still willing to be willing to learn and, all going well, grow vs. allowing my conditions to bring me down.

The other reason I've composed this little article is for those of you new to magic or the entertainment industry on the whole. To challenge you to look at your lives, your loves and contemplate how you would overcome such adversity when it presents itself. I can assure you, most of you will come face to face with similar or even more threatening challenges, as you grow older. Age itself wakes many of us up to that fact that we can no longer do the things we used to do (some of us sooner than later.) For me, the arthritis now riddling my hands and joints simply means I must find simpler alternatives to the way I handle billets. At the same time, the increased sense of sensitivity in those old rusting joints has given me a wondrous advantage when it comes to that Muscle Reading thing that I love doing for folks... so there's always a silver-lining to be found IF you choose to look for it.

I know that this article is a bit short. I promise you all that I'll give what I can as I can as time moves on. My hope for now is that I've given you some food for thought that will prepare you for some of those curve balls life tends to dish out from time to time.

I do wish to thank those of you that have been so supportive during the past few months (you know who you are). I'm looking forward to sharing a bit more about doing magic when next we meet!

By P. Craig Browning

If possible, could you please email articles for November by the 10th to get an early start. I have some articles already from you early birds so keep 'em coming in!

Thanks to this month's authors and remember, the address is: TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk

Jon Snoops

