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TopHat

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Whatever type of magic you usually perform, you'll find Craig Browning's bizarre series invaluable to learn from. Whether you want to incorporate some bizarre presentations into your own routines or simply use some of his ideas to enhance your own area of magic you'll find something of benefit. This month, he looks at how doves can be used in with bizarre presentations involving knives and balls of fire...

Before this, Nigel keeps us updated with news of the latest competition. Congratulations to Craig Leonard for his efforts in this one. Next, Peter Marucci brings us another one of his fantastic presentations of magic effects. This month, Peter presents a card effect using a jumbo card along with plenty of opportunities for comedy.

Another article we can *all* benefit from is the final part of Michael Jay's series on routining your magic. This month's contribution is a complete look at the your whole routine from beginning to end as well as everything in the middle. Brilliant stuff, as always from Mike.

To finish off this month, we have Michael Saint-Louis always-insightful Thoughts From Mid-West America. Continuing on from last month, Michael looks at the next section of Mark Wilson's course. Michael's style of writing always makes me chuckle so I'm sure you'll enjoy reading this as I did, as well as picking up some new ideas you may have missed the first time around from this text.

That's all for this month, guys; please remember to send articles for next month's edition.

All the best,

~Jon Snoops~

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Every issue of the TopHat 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

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The Latest From MagicBunny

Website News

By Nigel Shelton



Thank you to those of you who showed interest in the summer competition, either by submitting an entry or by emailing me privately about this. The task was a very difficult one; to plan a seemingly random underground map layout that could produce the following effect:

The Effect

*The magician pulls a seemingly un gimmicked metro map of some major European city from a wallet. He/She explains that he has recently returned from a business/holiday trip to that particular destination and invites a member of the audience to participate in an imaginary journey, using the map as a reference. The spectator selects **any** station as a starting point and then follows a series of vague, open-ended instructions regarding their imaginary journey through this city. They are then asked to state the name of the station that they find themselves at. Remarkably, after this declaration has been made, the magician withdraws an entrance ticket from his/her wallet to some major tourist destination. The ticket clearly states the same station as proof of match of location.*

This competition was made all the more special by a considerate and kindly £30 donation by James Green of www.wandmagic.co.uk As

well as this, WandMagic

offered the first twenty-five entries a free gift, regardless or not of whether they won the competition. Wand Magic has been trading for about a year now and has gained a reputation for being one of the most economical UK retail outlets on the Internet for magic books, DVDs and accessories. They have also gained a name for an excellent level of customer service and also a high level of consumer goodwill. I was very pleased to receive this support from James and I would like to thank him for the backing that he has provided for Magic Bunny.

Altogether there were three entries to this competition, each so very different in the way that the objective was met:

- *The first was based on the principle of following vague instructions but the layout was designed so that these translated to specific routes on the map. The spectator finally was led to one of two stations, on two separate lines, which both lay adjacent to the required tourist destination.*
- *The second entry was based on the spectator following instructions based on the number of letters in the station's name. These resulted in the spectator following one of two routes into the central complex, both of which led to a single station.*
- *The third entry was based on a regular array of stations, some underground and some over ground. By following a series of vague instructions regarding moving between these, the spectator would finish at one specified location.*

All three were so very different in the way that they created the same effect. I hope that these entries may have generated ideas for you too. With a combination of these so very different three methods, a very complex and convincing layout could result.

In the end, there was no need for a vote to decide the winner. The first two entries were submitted solely for fun, in the spirit of brainstorming ideas and so the third entry, that of Craig Leonard, was declared the winner.

I have been in contact with Craig regarding his choice of prize and he has explained that he opted for a DVD

The Latest From MagicBunny (cont.)

on muscle reading as well as several packs of Bikes. His choice of DVD seems a particularly interesting one; Volume 3 of Banachek's "Psi Series" DVDs. It claims, using the power of your mind and a little help from your volunteer, to be able to find anything through a heightened sense of touch. I would most certainly be very interested to read feedback from Craig, after he has had an opportunity to study this and practise this secret on some willing volunteers. That would make a most satisfying finish to this summer competition.

I was also particularly impressed to learn that, as well as offering the £30 prize for this competition, WandMagic also added their typical gesture of a free gift in the package as well – this was a very noble and thoughtful gesture. I thank James Green from www.wandmagic.co.uk for his selflessness and consideration in providing this very kind-hearted gesture as well as the £30 prize fund. I hope that you may be able to thank him by looking around his site and supporting him with your custom.

By Nigel Shelton

Now That's Gross - Part II

Now That's Gross – Part II

Going Beyond Bizarre...

By P. Craig Browning

So there you are doing a stage act... a traditional Dove manipulation routine with a Goth feel. You even do some dagger manipulation, but what about bringing the two together?

I'll never forget the first time I saw footage of Mark Kaylan performing the Impalment. I loved it! But I wasn't in the position to do it just yet... I was in the position to create a smaller, more shocking version however and that's what we're going to talk about right now.

A pretty little bird is laid on its back then balanced on the tip of a dagger... the magician flinches his hand just slightly and the lifeless fowl drops down the elongated shaft, the tip of which passes cleanly through the birds limp torso.

Sound cool?

It's simple! You need but make a small harness for the victim and a dagger with a blade that can be manipulated with a simple slide mechanism on one side of the handle.

The harness is the tricky part and each one must be made to the bird you use. I used white Velcro strapping and covered it with small white feathers that were glued onto it. You can also use a fine mesh that's glued onto the Velcro. By placing this onto your bird a day or two ahead of time it will prune its own feathers through the holes in the mesh and deliver a better camouflage for the gimmick.

The strap in question has a small, thin metal plate glued onto the center section that would be the bird's back/spine. This has a slightly raised "cup" with a recess that allows the blade to fit in securely. Experiment with the dimensions and you'll find the best size that conceals itself from a distance but assures a secure fit when the dagger is inserted. Too, you can place a small magnet in the bottom of the cup so that it adheres to the dagger's tip (which is flattened slightly) for added security.

The dagger tip that appears on the opposite side of the bird's body can be done in one of two ways. The best way comes straight from Ken Whitaker's original Impalment illusion, a small portion of an appearing wand, which you release via a thread pull (pins) when shaking the dagger and causing the drop. The alternate is not as good but is probably easier for most of you to make than the previous method. This involves a mousetrap styled spring system built into the harness. The flat dagger tip is hidden beneath a special slit pocket and springs up when you make your move... again, triggered by a pin and thread release.

In either version, the dagger tip is reset and secured by your own hand, when you pull the lifeless bird off the dagger and bring it back to life. You simply push down on it and using your thumb, secure it with a small Velcro strap.

Now That's Gross - Part II (cont.)

As noted, the Dagger is a very simple gravity styled system in which the blade drops into the handle by about two to three inches (the thickness of your average dove). When you remove the bird from the dagger tip, your left thumb pushes the blade back into position and locks it into place. It's that simple.

Now for the good part... BLOOD!

By using some small pieces of reddish felt and placing white fabric on the opposite side, I was able to offer that small smattering of blood onto the birds lifeless form when the dagger tip shot through the top... this comes into place automatically when you activate the pin and thread release. Simply put, this swatch of cloth Velcro's onto the cup holding the dagger tip and is folded over like a set of flower petals. Your pin for the tether release goes through this collection and locks everything into place. When you reset the blade tip, you simply palm off the swatch or, you could make the swatch in a way that allows you to easily refold it and lock the tip back into its secured position.

When performing this bit I always used this same bird for the Dove to Silk toss... I did this for one very simple reason... there are times the dang fake dagger tip don't reset and thus, it's good form to be prepared and get rid of the evidence e.g. you might want to think that aspect over just a bit if you're planning on using this routine.

I first did the *Dove Dagger* in 1983 (memory serving me correctly). It was never something that proved steady within the act even though it did get some sound audience reaction. I liked it, but at the same time, rarely did much bird work so it became one of those cool things that went to the wayside. I leave it in your capable hands, hoping that someone out there will do it justice and be well served by it (just remember where you got the idea from and include my name in the credits.)

Now if it is cool bird stuff you want, I have one other little ditty on this month's bill. I'll warn you up front that this bit is very dangerous (for the bird) and must be practiced regularly so as to make certain no harm comes to the animal used. More than anything you've done in the past, timing is everything in this bit. I call it "*Flight of the Phoenix*" and as the name implies, it is the spectacular production of a living dove from the midst of a volcanic eruption.

The general idea is that you've been doing some bird productions already as well as *Fickle Fire* type manipulations. As you come to the conclusion of the Fickle Fire routine you bring both hands together and in so doing, a massive eruption of flame shoots up several inches from your hands (about two feet actually) and from this, a flying dove.

Before we get to the pyro let's talk about the bird release. It is little more than an invisible harness, the bird situated centered your costume (I placed it in my vest) in a "slick holder" (this is a slick plastic tube/oval that allows for a very quick release and little friction. I used a flimsy plastic cover from an old very cheap notebook.) The tether must be set in such a way as to fall off the bird as soon as it is produced from the holder. I used a free loop design that went through a loose eyelet on the harness. This can easily slide out of the harness as the bird takes flight.

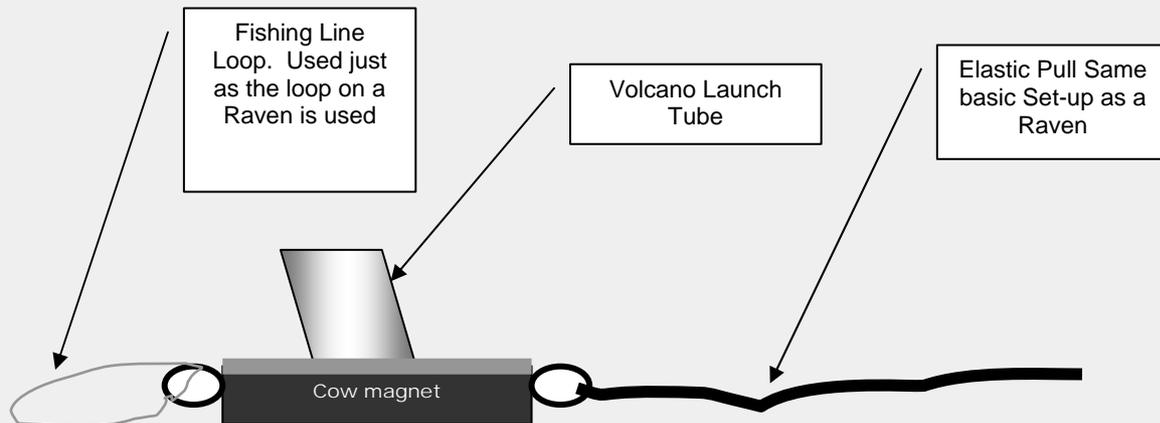
The pyro element is simple but requires some serious thought as well. Firstly, you have two small Fickle Fire units. I used the one's made by Mark Toifol for years because they're so nice and small as well as dependable. I do believe Jay Scott Berry sells an improved version of this particular system, given that Jay used Mark's units for many years, as did Lance Burton.

The Volcano unit is little more than a 1 ½-2" piece of copper pipe ½" dia. With an electronic heating coil and small power source. In my day I used a simple AA battery but I'm willing to bet you could probably exploit some of today's technology and go with a smaller Watch or Hearing Aid battery now. If you are familiar with the finger flame launchers, this unit is essentially the same thing but designed to be held in the palm of the hand. You load it with a combination of flash paper that's been stuffed with flash cotton (so as to get a better fireball). You can likewise add small amounts of flint flakes or other chemicals so as to get sparks and colored crackles if desired, but do some solid chemistry research first!

The bottom of this unit has a "Cow Magnet" attached to it. This is a small flat rectangular magnet roughly 1 ½" x 2 ½" and about ½" thick used by Veterinarians on cows (I'll not go into detail...it's gross!) You'll also want to have an eyelet on either end of this unit onto which you will be placing a loop of fishing line on one end and an elastic on the other (think *Raven* and you'll understand.)

Now That's Gross - Part II (cont.)

The purpose of the magnet is very simple... it steals your fickle fire units and allows your hands to be free once the Volcano has been activated. This is a utility I added to the device vs. using a Topit to ditch everything. The pull was simply a better way to go.



In performance you will use the actions of your Fickle Fire routine to set up the bird launch. The pull is pre-set in your right coat sleeve or if you prefer, to cut back into the coat. The left hand gains the tether attached to the bird and loops this over the right wrist. Your left thumb will snag the loop attached to the Volcano unit as this is done, the action is hidden via your choreography with the fire in your hands – a rolling action, hand over hand, kind of like doing the gestures to the song *Kumbya*. The end result is that you have the Volcano unit in your right palm and the bird tether looping across the extended elastic band and your right wrist.

You'll have to experiment with this so that the magnet does not catch the right hand fire gimmick too soon.

In this "Ready" position you bring your hands back together in a cupped position, joining the flames in either hand. Everything is close to your body at this point. The right hand activates the trigger to the Volcano. At this point several things happen in nearly the same instant.

- a) The fireball will ignite and start out the tube, moving up and away from you.
- b) You must extinguish both fickle fire units and allow them to attach to the magnet
- c) Your left hand (still holding to the bird tether via a finger or two) drops down, pulling the bird out of its hiding place and catapulting it upward... but...the right hand also controls this launch, gauging the speed of the fireball and keeping the bird back, away from the flame.
- d) As the right hand extends, the pull is actuated and moves all the apparatus into the right hand sleeve or allows everything to move into the coat (depending on which method you're most comfortable with.)
- e) Bird tether is pulled through by left hand and allowed to fall down and free as bird moves up and away from the flame (which should be nearly extinguished within a brief instant).

Needless to say this is a beautiful and unexpected bird production. It does require some practice as well as caution. You must be very aware of everything so as to insure the animal's safety as well as your own.

These are two of my "pet" bird bits that I've not shared the workings on with more than a few select friends. If you have a creative mind and are willing to experiment a bit, I know you can make either of these effects a key part of your own dove and fire manipulation routines. I encourage you however, to experiment and adjust each routine so as to fit your natural mode of action. There's always room for simplification and improvement and in that Dove work is not my forte' I'm positive there are a few of you out there that can add some positive insights to what's been shared, that will transform these simple effects into awesome miracles.

Catch you next issue...

By P. Craig Browning

Pick a Card, Any Card

Pick a Card, Any Card

Jumbo Comedy

By Peter Marucci

EFFECT:

The magician whips out his ever-present deck of cards and asks a spectator to "pick a card, any card." However, she has little choice because there is one jumbo card in the regular-sized deck, that the magician keeps pushing in front of her.

Finally the spectator takes the jumbo card, looks at it and returns it to the deck -- anywhere she wishes. The magi says he'll cut the deck to her card -- and does so, to no one's surprise. However, he then points out that the card next to the jumbo is a match -- even though the spectator put the jumbo back in the deck at a place of her choosing.

WORKING AND PRESENTATION:

You'll need a regular deck of cards and a jumbo with a matching back. I use a face card for easier identification -- in the case the Jack of Clubs. Put the jumbo about the middle of the deck and the matching Jack of Clubs on the bottom.

Fan the deck face down and ask your victim to "pick a card, any card," while you are shoving the jumbo into her hand every time she reaches for the deck. Eventually, if this is done in good humor, she will take the jumbo. (If she absolutely refuses, please don't make a big deal out of it; let her take any card and go on with another trick, then return with the jumbo to a more co-operative spectator.)

Ask her to remember her card and show it to the rest of the audience -- but be very careful not to let you see it. This is all done with an absolutely straight face, as if the card were completely normal.

Ask the spectator to replace the card anywhere in the deck -- and be sure that she understands she can put it anywhere she wants; this is critical!

Hold the deck in a right-hand Biddle grip and take small packets off the top with the left, as in the Hindu shuffle. Tell her to say "stop" when she wants to replace the card. When she puts it on the left-hand stack, drop the cards in the right hand on top; this puts the regular Jack on top of the jumbo.

Square the deck and put it on the table face up. Do not try to shuffle the deck -- the spectator must not think you did anything to the cards after she replaced the jumbo.

"Your card is now hopelessly lost in the deck," you tell her, "and yet, with my mystical powers, I am able to cut the deck exactly at your card."

Remove the cards above the jumbo, to no reaction whatsoever from the audience.

"I sense that you are not impressed with this feat of magical prowess.

But remember, you chose a card and replaced it in the deck at a spot of your choosing -- I repeat: you, and you alone, decided where the card would be returned to in the deck. So, would you please pick up the big card (for the first time, you suggest that something might be different about the chosen card)."

As she does so, you continue: "And you will notice that, by some miracle, even though you had a free choice, you put your big card right next to the matching, normal-sized card."

Take your bow and go into some other card miracles or, if you're smart, leave.

SECOND THOUGHTS:

This is not meant to be an improvement on Petrick's original handling, simply something that works better for me under the conditions I am faced with.

Pick a Card, Any Card (cont.)

Petrick's concept, or course, is loaded with opportunities for comedy and humor -- but, please: at your expense, not at the expense of the volunteer. Remember, people who volunteer to help you in your act are doing you a favor, not vice versa; so treat them as you would a guest in your home.

This works better as an opener than on its own or a closer, because you should then continue on with some "real" magic that will knock their little socks off. However, you can be almost certain that, if they only remember one thing from your close-up act, it will be the nonsense with the jumbo card.

That's just the way it goes.

Peter Marucci
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From the Desk of Michael Jay

Your Routine

A Final Look

By Michael Jay

This article is an extension of my two previous writings, in Top Hat issues 27 and 28. If you are serious about making routines, then I suggest you go back and have a look at those issues of Top Hat before you proceed. In those articles you'll find the ground work which brings us, logically, to this article. The preceding works have looked at actually routining a routine, but this article will be specifically about how to build a routine. You may consider this to be out of order, but I don't think so, personally.

What is a routine? Well, simply put, it is a series of tricks or effects that logically fit together and are performed one after the other without stopping until the end, or finale, is reached. However, that is a rather simplistic definition. The fact of the matter is, a single trick can be a full routine if bits of business and other entertaining factors are added into it. As an example of a single trick being a full routine, we can use the Invisible Deck for our purposes here.

With the classic presentation of the Invisible Deck, a spectator is asked onto stage and handed a non-existent deck. The spectator is asked to shuffle the deck, take out a card, remember the card then replace it in the deck upside down. Another deck is produced and the one card that the spectator chose is shown to be the only upside down card in the deck. When done with the classic presentation, this routine can last as long as 8 minutes. So, how does this single trick class itself as a routine?

Let's take a look. A routine has an opening, a middle and an ending. With the Invisible Deck, the beginning (or opening) is when a non-existent deck of cards is produced by the magician. This definitely gains the interest of the audience, simply because of the pantomime that is expected of the magician to prove that the invisible deck exists. If it is handled well and the magician honestly appears to be working with a deck of cards, the spectators will pay attention. This is the opening, which builds interest. The rule of thumb is that the opening of any routine should be flashy and build immediate interest - it is in the idea that a non-existent deck actually exists that interest is built. You've introduced an idea that in and of itself is "flashy" - the existence of something that doesn't exist.

Next is the middle. The middle is in the fact that you call someone from the audience, then give them the cards to handle on their own. This can be highly entertaining for your audience, especially if you've done your job and picked a good assistant. A good assistant will not only entertain the audience, but they will entertain themselves and you to boot! The proper technique for picking the assistant is a subject all to itself and we will not deal with that here, at this time, so let's assume that you have a good assistant. The amount of built in business for this part of the trick, the middle part, is almost infinite. Dropping an invisible card, forgetting to tell the spectator to put it back in the deck upside down (and thereby having to go

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

through the deck again, find their card and put it back upside down), showing the audience to ensure that they don't try to trick you and so much more material that it just boggles the mind as to how much time you can kill during this part of the trick. This is the middle, which will lead us up to the finale or ending of the routine.

The finale is when a real deck of cards is produced and the spectator's chosen card is the only face down card in the deck. Presented properly, this is an effect that will leave the audience talking for months, even years later. This is what you want from your finale. However, this is an example of a single trick being a full routine and, for the most part, such examples are few and far between.

To fully study a routine and routining, there are two specific examples that stand out. First is the "Ambitious Card." Next is the "Cups and Balls." Let's have a quick look at both, shall we?

The Ambitious Card starts with the choosing of a card, by whatever design the magician wishes to use. Normally it is a forced card, but can easily be a free choice. The card is oftentimes signed, placed in the middle, then instantly it is back on top. This is a quick opening and gains immediate interest.

The middle is when that card, under increasingly more difficult conditions, continues to jump to the top of the deck. Bits of business and patter add to the tension that is created when such an impossibility continues to occur. Twice, thrice and sometimes four or five times, that card continues to be put in the middle and still comes right back up to the top. This ultimately leads to the finale, which has to be something more than just the card jumping to the top. If you end here, with the card at the top of the deck, then you have an anticlimax, which is to be avoided.

The finale is when the card is found in the magician's wallet, in somebody's shoe or under someone's glass (or salt shaker, or plate, or whatever is there to sneak the card under). This is the logical culmination of a trick where the card simply does not wish to be held down to the physical fact that when it is placed in the deck, it must remain in the position where it was placed. It is truly an ambitious card!

Now, the fact of the matter is that you are doing several different tricks. The first time it jumps to the top is possibly a tilt. One trick. The next time it is a double lift. One trick. The next time, it is a side steal. One trick. The last time it is a palm off to wallet or shoe. One trick. However, your spectators don't know that each different technique is one trick, to them it is a series of magical happenings that all become one trick - a routine.

A completely different effect is the "Cups and Balls." In this effect, three cups (classically) and three balls defy all forces of physics. This effect goes way, way back. In fact, Houdini himself said, "I call no man a magician until he has mastered the cups and balls," which is funny because Houdini is not considered a very good magician by many in our community. Never the less, if you want to study the proper way to routine your magic, then cups and balls is priceless.

The opening occurs when you present the cups to your audience. In this, there are several ways of dealing with it. You can show the cups to physically pass through one another or show that they have trap doors in the bottom. Regardless of how you open, you are giving the spectators something compelling to look at and possibly a history on the cups, which is normal for most magicians. You build an interest, which is what the opening of a routine aims to do. You also bring three balls into the mix and usually a wand. A wand, in and of itself, is an interesting item to any given audience. The wand stands for power and is oft associated with a magician. Basically, the interest is built in the opening by introducing visually compelling items.

Next, you come to the middle of your routine, which is making the balls do what is physically impossible. The different combinations here are almost limitless. The balls go through the bottoms of the cups, jump from cup to cup, gather inside of one cup or a plethora of other effects which can be achieved by the creative magician. Just as with the ambitious card, if the magic stops at this point you have an anticlimax. Certainly, there must be something more.

So, to the finale, the balls all disappear and in their place are fruits or other large "final loads." The impact on the spectators, when they've finally decided that they cannot hope to keep up with the sleights that are presented (and, don't fool yourself, the spectators know that you are using sleight of hand) and simply give up on the fact that they can catch you, when they see a complete turn around and something too large to fit

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

in the cups is discovered, the finale is the strongest that any given magician could every hope to achieve. Complete impossibility, surprise and delight is the ending. A true finale and the most excellent of examples of a routine.

Study the examples above. The fact of the matter is that we learn better from examples than we do from just reading words that don't point to examples. With that in mind, we shall take a look at the components of the routine using the examples to help us with the specifics.

THE OPENING:

It is agreed by most professionals that the opening must grab the attention of the spectators. Further, it should be flashy and immediately start with some kind of magic that is both visual and compelling. The Invisible Deck routine would seem to go against that basic advice. However, it really does follow the advice, only on a different level. The idea of having an invisible deck is a compelling thought. Treating the non-existent deck as if it were real seems to say that there really is a deck in the hands of the magician, so it suggests that a magical deck really does exist. With the Ambitious Card, the magic starts almost immediately and stimulates the spectator's curiosity to see what happens next.

We can use both of those examples to set up our opening. You don't need to have an immediate flash of magic happen. However, if you go that route, you are going to have to come up with something compelling to gain the interest of your audience. Either you start with an amusing tale or present an idea that is compelling to your audience to garner their attention, or you must use something visually compelling to get their attention. It may seem odd, but the Invisible Deck is visually compelling in that it doesn't exist. If you really want your opening to lead into an excellent routine, then you have to give this very important part of your routine a great deal of thought. Without building the immediate interest of the audience, you are going to lose 25% to 75% of them right from the start. This is to be avoided.

Let's say that you are building a coin routine and you want a good opening. Michael Ammar came up with an excellent opening for a four coin routine by producing all four coins from the flame of a candle. He further used flash paper so that each coin would appear out of that flash, one at a time. The flash of the paper and appearance of the coin cannot be ignored by the spectators, it is immediately magical and visually compelling. Of course, you'd better have an excellent routine to follow such an opening and the finale had better be completely awesome, or you'll have an anti-climax.

You don't need such an extreme opening. You can equally open your routine by doing an open handed appearance of the coins or, even easier, you can introduce old coins that are visually compelling (or both!). Old coins are compelling because young folks are interested in them and the older folks become reminiscent and emotionally involved as a result. You can also choose to use foreign coins, which can be equally as compelling as old coins. Regardless of the coins that you choose, you should have a strong story line to go with them. Those old coins can be the ones that they put on your great grandfather's eyes all those years ago as he rested in his coffin (for the bizzarists). Any story about the coins that would lend to the fact that they are more than just simple coins will do, as long as the story is interesting. That is the most important part, the story **MUST** be interesting.

Put the proper amount of time into deciding on your opening. It is at this point where you either gain your audience's attention or lose it. Just as with first impressions, the opening is what will set the tone of the routine to come. If you lose them at this point, you'll have little chance of gaining them back later. The opening is arguably the most important part of the overall routine.

THE MIDDLE:

It is here that the bulk of your magic will happen. Whatever tools you've decided on for a routine, be it a card routine, a coin routine or anything else, there must be a logical progression as the middle of the routine unfolds. As an example, you don't want to open with something similar to the Ammar example above using coins, then pull out a pack of cards. That is not logical (which is not to say that properly routined it couldn't be logical, only that such a thing would be highly irregular). So, if you open with coins, then stick with coins. Once you've mastered the art of routining, then maybe you can experiment with adding different tools into the routine, but first, get used to building strong routines with one form or another and don't mix and match at this time.

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

The middle of the routine can be broken down into phases. Using the Ambitious Card example, phase 1 would be The Tilt, used to bring the card back to the top by way of a Double Lift. Allow time for that to sink into the spectator's heads. You see, magic shouldn't be fast, it should be slow and obvious. When you try to move fast, it is because you are doubtful of the sleight or your skills, which makes you nervous. Conversely, if you are sure of yourself and well practiced, you can take your time and allow the impact of what you've just done sink into your spectator's minds. In this "sinking in" process, your magic becomes powerful, so don't move too quickly. Consider that the spectators, in general, believe that the hand is quicker than the eye. Under that assumption, it is easy to see that if the spectator cannot follow your quick hand movement, they will automatically assume that you've done something tricky and the magic is gone as a result. Remember, perceptions are realities. On the other hand, if you move slowly and fluidly, the audience will feel that you've done nothing tricky, so the only answer is magic has occurred. At that point, they are going to start to try to figure out what you could have done and therein is the power of the routine, because once you've allowed enough time for the fact that a card placed squarely in the middle has risen to the top you won't give them time to question your moves, you'll go straight into phase 2.

Phase 2 is the double lift, in which the magician slowly and obviously places that card into the center. Immediately, with no special moves, it is back on top. You have now presented the spectator with a second display of magic, done by using a different technique. That is extremely important to understand; it is in the use of a completely different technique that throws the spectator off of the beaten path and makes it almost completely impossible for them to go back and figure out how this works. Using that example, remember that when you are putting your routine together, if you are going to shadow one effect, you must use a change of technique. So, in building your routine, make sure that each phase that appears to be the same as the previous phase, you use a change of technique to make the magic happen. However, keep in mind that your routine does not have to be built on the same effect happening over and over, as with the ambitious card.

Using the cups and balls as an example, you'll see that different effects can be achieved but it is still one routine. For the middle of a cup and ball routine, phase 1 could be the penetration of the ball through the cup's solid top (in cups and balls, the bottom of the cup is the top and vice versa).

Phase 2 follows on the heels of phase 1, which could possibly be having the ball jump invisibly from one cup to the next. Phase 3 could be the ball vanishing from the hand, only to wind up under a previously empty cup. Each phase presents a different effect, but they are linked together in the fact that everything is happening with the cups and balls.

Continuing on with the coin example for routining, you now need to set up a phase by phase presentation. Your first step was the opening and I gave the Ammar example only to explain the opening and nothing more. So, let's say that you start with a single, old coin and have woven an interesting story around it. You have your spectator's attention and they are interested. You move into phase 1.

Phase 1: Using a trick out of Bobo's book, you make the coin penetrate from the back of your hand to the palm. Allow that to sink in and follow with phase 2.

Phase 2: The coin penetrates from the palm to the back of the hand. The first phase uses one technique, which is a two beat maneuver. The second phase uses an entirely different technique, which is a one beat maneuver.

You are now at liberty to finish with your finale, or add in another phase or two (or even three and four more phases, if you are good enough to continue to hold the audience's interest through a huge amount of phases). Let's consider a possible third phase...

Phase 3: You make the coin penetrate through a solid table top. There are many, many techniques for making such a thing happen. Consider this, though. You are now on your third phase and all of the phases are linked by not only the coin, but by the penetrations that the coin has been accomplishing. You may now like to take a look at your opening and change your patter a bit to allow for some foreshadowing in the patter line. The coin cannot be held to the physical world and tends to go right through solids. You might need to carry that coin in a special box (think "Boston Box" or something similar). So, you could reasonably move into a different tangent using the Boston Box for a finale or for routining your routine even farther. You have given a logical reason to carry the coin in an odd box (it cannot penetrate brass) and you've

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

logically introduced a Boston Box. Be creative. Also, understand that I don't introduce these thoughts saying that this is what you should be doing, I'm only giving examples to help you along the way, so please don't write to me telling me why the Boston Box would be a stupid idea at this point in any given routine.

Furthermore, you can add a fourth phase at this point. You could possibly split the coin into two coins and continue on with a two coin routine. Understand, though, that if you do such a thing in the context given above, you are now moving into a second middle part of your routine, or routining your routine as it were. You will now start with a phase 1 all over again, because you've changed the original intent of the routine, which was a one coin routine. Consider the ramifications of that thought - you now have two separate routines acting as one routine (again, routining the routine). This can be a very good thing, since, in some situations such as walk around magic where your time may be cut short and you have to move on, you have the choice of doing your full routined routine, or cutting it in half and doing either the one coin routine or the two coin routine. Such a routined routine can be a useful thing to have, assuming that you are well practiced and polished with both sub-phases of the overall routine.

Or, and this is going to get convoluted, you can use the splitting of the coin into two as a prelude to your finale, which makes the splitting of the coin the final phase of the middle of your routine. A way to go at this point would be to have both coins vanish and the single coin found back in the Boston Box, which you introduced (and should have proved empty after removing the original coin) at the beginning of the routine. A logical ending and not an altogether bad finale.

To sum it up, the middle of your routine should be comprised of phases. You may choose as many phases as you please, but you should not have too few or too many. The middle must be interesting, must be magic and must not bore the spectator. Each phase should build on the last and be a little bit better, or appear more magical and impossible than the previous phase. Further, your middle should build logically up to the finale. This may seem to be a tall order, but it is going to separate the beginners from the professionals. If you want to be professionalistic in your magic presentations, then you **MUST** routine your material. And this brings us to the last part of the routine, the finale.

THE FINALE:

The finale of any routine must be the logical conclusion to all of the previous magic in the routine. Not only that, it must signal the end of the routine in an obvious way and, done properly, is an applause cue. By definition it must be the most amazing part of the entire routine.

Using the Invisible Deck as an example, the "real" deck is introduced and the card chosen by the spectator is the only down-turned card in the deck. Because of the presentation, wherein the spectator has put a card chosen upside down in the deck, this is the logical conclusion. It also logically is the end of the trick and is, by its very nature, an applause cue. Exactly what we look for in the finale of a routine.

Next, the Ambitious Card's finale is when the card turns up in an impossible location. Naturally, you are not going to be able to top this, so it must be the finale, or the conclusion to the trick. This is a very impressive way to finish off your routine and oftentimes the card in question has been signed. The reason for this is that when the card winds up in the magician's wallet (or under somebody's drink), there must be definite proof that a duplicate card was not used. Once that card has gone to an impossible location, the obvious signal that this is the end of the routine is only natural. However, you may wish to hold the card up, along with the wallet if you used one, in what is called an applause position. This lets the spectators know, just in case there is any question, that the end of the trick has arrived. Normally, though, if you've done your job, the audience will know that you've reached the finale.

Finally, with the cups and balls the fruits, or other final loads, signify the end of the trick. What greater finale could be achieved than when the balls that the audience has been trained to find in impossible locations simply don't exist anymore and in their place are items that appear too large to fit under the cups? This whole effect on the viewers is an amazing thing to observe. It comes right out of left field and shocks the spectators in a way that is difficult to put into words. This is one of the ultimate finales in magic. The whole study of cups and balls is a study in routining, misdirection and sleight of hand. No wonder it is considered to be the height of magic proper. Study the cups and balls in conjunction with your own routine work since the example that it sets is the "golden fleece" of our trade.

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

So, where should your finale go? Again, consider that the finale is the logical culmination of the work that you are doing, with whatever the tools you've decided on using to accomplish your magic. Unfortunately, I cannot give you any specific ideas, since this is dependant on exactly what the opening and middle of your routine must decide, which is why I give you so many examples.

One excellent example of a finale for a coin routine is the coin to sugar packet. Not only as the finale to a coin routine, but this can also be used as a finale to an overall act. A coin is borrowed, marked by the spectator (the marking is a requirement to prove that the original coin is the coin that ultimately winds up in the packet of sugar) and a routine with that marked coin is presented for the audience. Ultimately the coin is vanished, not to return. The magician starts a new routine with cards or something else. When the magician is done, as an afterthought he asks to see some of the packets of sugar on the spectator's table. One packet is opened and the contents poured out. The coin is found to be inside, with the sugar. Such a strong ending signifies that the magician is done, simply because he won't be able to top such a strong trick. It amazes and it fries the audience. To attempt to continue at this point would only disappoint the spectators. The perfect finale for not only a coin routine, but an overall presentation. Give these things thoughts when you are putting your own routines together.

The finale of your performance is of penultimate import. While it is, hopefully, what you will be remembered for it is still not the most important part of the routine. Never the less, it is still the ending and extremely important overall.

In conclusion, the opening of your routine is the most important. This is where you garner the attention of your audience and will set the pace for the full routine. If you fail to capture that attention in the beginning, your finale will not gain you a memorable performance and will, quite possibly, make your finale incomprehensible to those who were not paying attention in the performance. Your finale itself is the next most important part of the routine. Again, this is what you'll be remembered for and if it isn't memorable, you will appear to be a mediocre magician, at best. So, choose your finale with the greatest of care and make it the most visual and most impossible part of your routine. The middle is the least important part of your overall routine, which is not to say that it shouldn't be given as much consideration and care as the opening and the finale. This is the part that allows you the most interaction with your audience and gives you great allowance for letting your personality shine through in your work.

Make your routine, study your routine and know it inside and out. As you perform your routine, make note of what works best and what doesn't seem to work at all. Cut out the bad, add bits in and through evolution, you will ultimately have a routine that sets you aside from the other magicians. Our magic is our art. Some artists paint, others write, we, however, fool. It is how we express ourselves and it is our art. Please, treat our art with the reverence it deserves.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't quickly discuss one important tool in the creation of and work on your routines. That is a pen and paper. Keep a notebook of your work. By writing down your thoughts and keeping them in order, you will have a powerful tool in growing as a magician. I cannot stress enough the importance of a simple notebook and pen. You can have one opening with various middles and a couple of finales to mix and match by way of keeping them down on paper. It makes your job simple and ensures that you won't forget some very important ideas that you've had. Notebook and pen - never forget!

Until next time, I hope that this article was worth your time invested to read it. Take care.

By Michael Jay

Thoughts From Mid-West America

Mark Wilson's Complete Course in Magic

The Hindu and Overhand Shuffles

By Michael Saint-Louis

If memory serves me, we left off at the Hindu Shuffle. Since this is all pretty basic stuff (which makes sense since this is still the beginning of a basic book on magic) we'll whip through the Hindu and Overhand stuff and leave card forces until next time. After all, that's a topic that merits some real discussion!

I think that a lot of people kind of overlook the Hindu Shuffle. Maybe it is because it is a shuffle that is associated with a lot of basic magic and that is too bad. It is very easy to lose sight of the audience perspective when you are studying magic. As long as it works, the audience doesn't know if you are doing basic magic or extremely advanced black-belt card control technique (that's kind of the point of magic, right?). The thing is, there is usually a great deal more to go wrong with them there fancy black-belt card control techniques. It's almost a cliché but in magic, as with so many other things, KISS applies. If you don't know the KISS Principle it stands for Keep It Simple, Stupid. If you ever get a job that involves ties and/or cubicles, you'll hear it a lot. And I take back what I said before; it isn't almost a cliché, it *is* a cliché.

The only really weak part of the Hindu Shuffle material that I see is the false cut offered on page 57 aptly titled **A False Cut**. Maybe I am missing something (and if I am, let me know), but this always seemed like a really crappy and obvious move to me. I don't get it and really would like to hear from someone who thinks it is working for them... better yet, I'd like to see a little web cam of that!

On the bright side, there is a nice break from the 'found your card' tricks with the **Hindu Color Change** and **The Color Changing Decks**. If this is your introduction to magic than by now you have a couple of interesting things you can start doing for the friends and family. I have to admit that one of the things I wasn't looking forward to at all when I started this project was the number of times I'd be revealing the spectator's card. I steer away from card magic to begin with, but finding a card to me is just the worst. So imagine my pleasant shock when **Hindu Aces** followed. Maybe card magic isn't so bad after all...!

Before we get into the Overhand Shuffle I should mention that my ribbon spread is improving. When I use a decent deck of cards it's almost not embarrassing! I use a lot of odd and off-brand cards for two reasons. First, I understand that Bikes aren't as easily found across the pond as they are here. I want to work like you guys are. Also, I have a lot of decks from weird card brands because I have been trying to find a brand from my youth. I don't remember what it was called but it used a red devil reclining on a crescent moon as its Joker. Finding a deck that comes with devil cards would be extremely cool and facilitate some Gospel Magic ideas that are bouncing around in my head! The result is that I have decks and decks and cards of varying quality and no devil cards!

An investment I have made since the last installment is a good close-up pad. I got a nice, big red one and I find that it really makes a difference. A nice working surface isn't a necessity but it sure adds more than just good looks to your magic! The cards glide nicely across the surface and it sure as heck makes picking them up a lot easier!

Back to the book, eh? Next up is the Overhand Shuffle. Like the Hindu, this is a good shuffle for anyone who is working without a table. The Overhand, in all fairness, probably looks a lot more natural and innocent than the Hindu and that should be kept in mind when designing routines. The Overhand is also very, very easy which makes it good for magicians who end up performing over a few beers!

The problem with the Overhand Shuffle is that it brings us back to the grind of the found your card tricks. The authors seem to even sense this and try to include something to shake things up a bit with **The Card Through the Handkerchief**. It isn't much of a break, though, as it is just a drawn out FYC trick. Luckily they beat a dead horse by including a second method! And I don't even have the energy to fully dis **The Magnetized Card** the way it deserves to be dissed! The one saving grace to this could have been that it could serve as a really good introduction to the concept of angles and guarding your angles, but instead it is a lame trick with something like three or four slim sentences on angles following it. Tarbell would have put in much more emphasis on this point, even this early in the game. Angling is so important that it has to be learned to be paid attention to very, very early in your magic studies!

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

And at this point I have had enough. Is this your card? Yikes! Enough of that! Next time we'll get into forcing cards and maybe even the double lift and that is where the fun will start. Until then, keeping practicing and send any questions or comments my way!

By Michael Saint-Louis

I hope you've enjoyed reading this edition of the TopHat. Thanks to Nigel, Craig, Peter, Mike and Michael for their time and effort in helping to produce all of this. The deadline for November will be the 20th September so please send articles and effects to TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk

All the best,
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