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TopHat

April 2005 - Edition 37

Each month, there are several contributors who, without fail send me an article by (or shortly after in some cases after grovelling for an extension) the deadline. I consider these writers to be the cornerstones of the ezine whose work props up the ezine. I honestly don't know what the ezine would do without at least four substantial articles each month. Then there are a good number of contributors who've submitted to the ezine maybe once or twice whose work I'm amazed by. For example, this month we have Gary Scott's 'Outs' article, a thoughtfully presented and well-rounded piece that we can *all* use. And that's no small feat. Notable articles of this calibre from the recent past include BrucUK's diary-like account of his magic-life so far and Jason Waskett's comprehensive guide to card splitting. Of course, here I'm talking about all of the articles that have ever been submitted by members of MagicBunny. Truth is, I have never turned down an article that someone has taken the time to write. That's not to say we'll accept any old piece. The fact being that every article submitted to TopHat has been worthy of inclusion. Whether you're a seasoned pro like some of our columnists or a newcomer to magic, your thoughts are more than welcome here. Articles printed in TopHat are rarely edited, aside from the odd typo. What you read is what the author writes.

And now to my point: if you read one of these articles today and something you like is said, email the author to express your thanks (Note: to email an author, click on their icon next to their article e.g. Nigel's Bunny). If you disagree or want to discuss more about a certain point or topic, post a thread on the forums. The author will want to hear about it. Don't let their work go unnoticed: if you've read this, let it be known. And maybe, someday, you'll feel like contributing to the ezine and have your thoughts read by others. Hopefully at that time, you'll get some emails of thanks directed your way too.

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 would like to submit a piece, please email TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk

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The Latest From MagicBunny

Website News

American Bunny in Norfolk *Part II*

By Nigel Shelton

[Continued from Edition 36 (March 2005)]



Mike had informed me the previous evening that he was a very regular sleeper and would have no difficulties awaking the following morning at his usual time of 7.30am. We had spent six hours talking non-stop and performing short routines for each other the previous evening, until 2.00am that morning and it was not until 2.30am that we both finally settled to our separate rooms to sleep. I thought, at the time, that we could both guarantee a long lay in later that morning. I recall waking at about 7.00am and then spending the next half hour falling in and out of a very light sleep when, true to form, I heard Mike's footsteps outside, heading to the bathroom, at exactly 7.30am. It seems that Mike is, indeed a creature of habit! I quickly arose and make myself ready so that I could prepare breakfast for the both of us.

In the ezine of last month, I mentioned that I wanted to allow Mike to sample as many typical local foods as possible and so, that morning, I had prepared a full English breakfast consisting of local produce. Normally I never go to the lengths of an English breakfast and tend to make do with a breakfast cereal and a cup of tea but today I had prepared local butcher's sausages, slices of smoked bacon, eggs, fried tomatoes, local mushrooms and baked beans and soon both Mike and myself settled down to our first meal of the day.

After this, we drove back for a very brief stop at my parents so that I could pick up their dog; a one-year old King Charles spaniel called "Lucy" and then we continued onto the cliff tops at Gorleston for a walk along the beach. You may remember the bitterly cold conditions of the period that Mike came to the UK – most of the country was experiencing snow falls combined with a vicious icy wind that was blowing in from the east. Here on the east coast, we escaped the snowfalls and only experienced a brief dusting later during that week but, being on the east coast, we were first in line to experience the spiteful winds that came in from the sea. That morning started fairly mildly, Mike, Lucy and myself had a very pleasant stroll along the bottom of the cliff face, walking along a deserted stretch of golden yellow sands and single heading south along the coastline. Indeed, the incline of the cliffs helped to break the impact of the easterly winds and it was certainly a most agreeable walk, despite being chilly, with Mike and myself chatting incessantly about all manner of things relating to magic. At the same time, Lucy was darting around our feet, chasing stones and hurling herself into the dunes of sand. Although Mike lives in an inland city, he explained that the environment was very similar to that of his own, the only difference being that I lived by the sea while he recounted stories of his own walks along the shores of an enormous lake. I hope that he may have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a very simple activity but one that was central to my recreation. Perhaps these few minutes would convey to Mike how I like to relax, after a week of work at school, when I take my parents dog each weekend and simply just spend hours walking her around the long sandy beaches that dominate this part of the east coast.

After an hour or so, we returned Lucy to my parents and then headed inland a few miles to a large estuary called Breydon Water. I wanted to indulge Mike with a taste of our local history and to visit a small village called Burgh Castle; falsely named due to the location of a well-preserved Saxon Shore Roman Fort. Despite being a fort, the romantic ruins are called Burgh Castle, and we headed across a short unmade country lane and open grass meadows to get our first glimpse of the impressive flint and brick walls of the fort. I am aware that much of the history of the USA dates back to the 1700's and I wanted to accompany Mike to a location that, I hoped, would be novel and interesting for him. I have mentioned before in this recount how the weather was very cold over the entire fortnight of Mike's stay in the UK and today was no exception. The wind blew in from the east and we stayed long enough to take a few photographs and marvel in the outstanding views from the heights of the Roman fort, across the Breydon estuary overlooking over miles of open marshland lined with bronzed reed beds. It was during our walk back to the car that the weather took an unexpected turn. What was just a chilly wind turned, without warning, into a furious, piercing icy blizzard,

The Latest From MagicBunny (cont.)

complete with stinging, freezing rains that hailed down on our faces almost horizontally. The five-minute walk to the car was an ordeal and we were both relieved to make it to the shelter of the car and experience its warmth as the engine began to engage and heat the interior.

The sudden atrocious weather conditions gave us an excuse to take a break from this excursion to return to my local pub for some refreshments and we waited for the weather to turn again for the better. We then made a short journey to a second diminutive pub, The Fritton Decoy, for a typical pub lunch. Then we walked off the excesses of our meal by taking a short amble through the village of Fritton and into the surrounding countryside. From here, it was a short journey back home, making a detour to visit a local priory, St Olaves, and to take in the delights of a typical village church at Lound. The church at Lound is unique, however, in one feature: it was one of the very few churches across England to escape the ravages of the Reformation and retain its medieval rood screen. It was a pleasant setting in which to continue our non-stop banter, as we viewed some of the fine architecture of the old building.

Soon we had returned home and Mike was packing his case in preparation for his return to London. The following drive into Norwich seemed to pass in an instant although I know that we were in constant conversation throughout the entire journey.

I hope that Mike had enjoyed his opportunity to visit my part of the globe and I trust that these brief two days had allowed him to steal a look into the porthole of my world on the east coast of Britain. It was my intention to make this visit as low key and relaxing as possible and I do hope that Mike was able to take stock over these two days from his chaotic visit to these shores. I had enjoyed the opportunity to meet someone which whom I had corresponded a great deal over the past few years but most of all, it was simply a delight to be able to talk with someone on a subject that touched both of our hearts; magic. Although this report (and the one from last month) has dwelt on some of the activities we have shared and some of the places that we have visited, the one thing that shall remain with me from this visit will be the non-stop conversation that we both enjoyed. It seems on reflection that we simply talked without interruption for the full two days, just in a variety of different environments and I suspect that there was a great deal of truth in this. It was a pleasure in meeting Mike and sharing with him the joys of magic and its related arts and I hope that he felt the same too.

By Nigel Shelton

From the Desk of Michael Jay

From the Desk of Michael Jay An American Magician in London Pt. 2

By Michael Jay



In the book "Professional Magic for Amateurs" (Walter B. Gibson, 1947), Gibson wrote, "So much time was spent in learning intricate sleights and complex routines that a great many students of the art never got around to the fundamental business of doing magic, let alone presenting their wares in entertaining style." This quote can be found in the second paragraph of the preface to the book.

We have, as magicians, seen this topic debated profusely in the last few years. What is more important - learning sleights or entertaining the spectators? We puff out our chests and debate this topic as if we were the first generation to come upon this conundrum. But, it was put forward almost six decades ago and probably was in question years before Gibson decided to put it in with his text.

You may be asking yourself what my point is. Well, I'm going to tell you. The point, specifically, is that you should be seeking out these old books. There is a gold mine of information that can be found, for a fraction

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

of the money you pay for new books and, truth be told, most of the new books are nothing more than a regurgitation of the old books.

Please understand, I'm not renouncing these new books published by the masters of today. Certainly there is a great deal of wisdom to be found in the newer tomes. Books like "Prism" (Max Maven, 2005) are valuable sources of information. But, where did Maven learn the material that he uses in that book? Do you feel that he simply came up with the wisdom of the sages by sitting down and meditating? No. Maven is a well read individual and the book "Prism" is the culmination of his experience, coupled with the wisdom that can be found by anyone who cares to look to the writers of yore.

For the record, there were no winners of the competition. In fact, there were no entrants.

LONDON DAY

During my stay in England, there were several days posted in the "Off Topic" forums for anyone to join in with us - to come along and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow magicians. One day that stands out was "London Day." Those in attendance were Doc, Jon Snoops, Bruce (BrucUK), Gary Scott and, of course, yours truly. This particular day, which was several days into my arriving in England, was mainly for "touristy" things and Doc was the guide. But, I need to tell you about a specific thing that happened several days earlier, on my very first day in England, which is important to note.

My first day (possibly second - because of the pubs) in England, I met Doc. Gary and I joined up with Doc at a Mexican restaurant. Now, this particular "Mexican" restaurant doesn't have tacos. A Mexican restaurant that doesn't have tacos is like a dog with no legs - there's no sense in giving him a name, he won't come when you call him anyway. So, the restaurant shall remain nameless. Later in this day, we were crossing a street, against the light, and I shot across as did Gary. Doc, on the other hand, was apprehensive to cross, but decided to bolt at the last second. I looked at Doc and said, "Indecision kills, Doc." It was a rather comical moment that becomes important later on (please note the foreshadowing).

Important sidebar: the places that we visited during "London Day" are not in chronological order (blame it on that pub thing)

Back to London Day. Doc was our tour guide, since Doc lives right in the heart of London. He took us on an excellent tour which included the London Museum. Impressive in its magnitude, I was particularly affected by the number of exhibits that you can actually touch. Ancient artifacts on display with no rope to stop the spectator from feeling the coolness of the stone or the grain of the wood. Absolutely amazing.

Of course, no tour would be complete without visiting Buckingham Palace. Just as a warning to other Americans who may visit England - all those stories about the stoic guards are not quite true. They will not stand and let you make fool of them. The lesson to learn here is: Do not molest the English guards. Most interesting was the horsemen. Guards on horseback stationed right on the street, sitting motionless. What beautiful animals (the horses, not the guards).

We also passed "The London Eye." The easiest way to describe The London Eye is that it is a huge Ferris wheel. Everyone wanted to get me on that monstrous device. Fortunately, it was an overcast day (the usual weather in England) and my compadres felt that it was a waste of money, since visibility was low. Of worthy note is that the entire city of London can be seen from the apex of The London Eye. Those of you who are not afflicted with acute acrophobia (as I am) should make a point of riding this contraption if you visit London.

Near the base of The London Eye were human statues. I couldn't resist but have a picture taken next to one of these fellows, who looked much like a renaissance guardsman, etched in stone. The effect is spectacular - when viewing the picture [later, back in the states], my mother thought that I was joking with her when I explained that the statue next to me was, in fact, a real person. These human statues are just fraction of an entourage of street performers that you can see in London, depending on what part of the city that you are in.

And, what tour of London would be complete without passing Big Ben? Bruce expounded that if we waited

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

until the clock struck noon that a cuckoo would come out and he managed to keep a straight face, all the while. I was torn between laughing this off and actually waiting until that damn cuckoo showed his beak...

During the in-between times we visited various pubs. Two things of worthy note here. First, we had to keep a low profile, since Jon is only 16 and technically not allowed to be in these places. Second, Gary visited more pubs in one day with me in tow than he had ever visited in his entire 30+ years of being a Brit. It was in these pub visits that the real magic happened.

The five of us sat down and shared various routines and stories. No matter how much audience time you wrack up, you still need to share your thoughts and ideas with other magicians. It is in this sharing that we gain important insight into our work and see our work from fresh points of view. There are many magicians who feel that performing to other magicians is a bad thing to do. Well, in fact, it can be a bad thing to do, if you are performing to other magicians who don't give a damn, or who have high ego problems, or those who are always looking to steal your material. But, if you are performing to a group of close friends whose only vested interest in your work is to see you get better or ensure that you are the best you that you can be, then this exercise is invaluable.

Videos, books, the latest devices, real audience time and performing to other magicians are all tools - nothing more, nothing less. You can get away from using any one of these given tools, but to willingly deprive yourself of any one of these tools is to lessen your skill as a magician. Much like the tools for maintaining your car, you can do the job without an oil filter wrench. But, changing your oil filter goes much smoother if you have that wrench. So it is with learning and performing magic - don't deprive yourself of any valuable tool.

While we were seeing the sights and going from pub to pub, there was one situation that cropped up - something that is burned into my memory. While getting onto one train in particular, Doc, Gary and Jon had boarded while Bruce and I were unsure whether we could make it in time, before the doors closed. Bruce made the jump, but I was apprehensive as to my ability to dodge the closing doors. Doc put his hands in front of the doors, to prevent their closing, and everyone was entreating me to jump. Finally, I made the decision and went for it. The doors closed on my body, like the jaws of some steel monster trying to chew me up for ease of digestion. Fighting through these hungrily gnawing jaws, I finally got fully onto the train, with plenty of passengers gawking.

Doc looked at me with a gleam in his eyes and an ever so slight smile on his lips and said, "Indecision kills, Mike."

Until next time, thank you for reading and take care.

By Michael Jay

Anytime Card to Wallet

Anytime Card to Wallet

Business Card Blues

By Peter Marucci



The following is my Anytime Card in Wallet, that first appeared in a One-Man Parade I did for the Linking Ring magazine in February of 1985.

It was originally done to get around the angle problems of palming a card for a standard card in wallet. As it turned out, I liked this so much, it is the only method I now use.

EFFECT:

A card, selected and signed by the spectator, is found in a business-card folder that has been lying in full view since before the card was chosen.

Anytime Card to Wallet (cont.)

This can be particularly effective for table workers since it gets your name in front of the audience and keeps it there through your act. This, in turn, provides a logical reason for the cardholder being on the table in the first place.

PREPARATION:

A deck of cards, a matching double-back card, a pen which will write on playing cards, business cards, and a business card case - the envelope-type with a clear, plastic front. The double back is in the case at the back and a number of your business cards are in the case in front if it and visible to the audience when the case is laid on the table.

PRESENTATION:

As the beginning of your routine, say: "Good evening. With business being what it is, I hope you won't mind my doing a little free advertising as I work." Place the case with the business cards in full view on the table and a fair distance from where you will be working.

Continue with the rest of your routine and, as a closer, have a card selected, signed, returned to the deck, and controlled to the top.

"My business cards have been lying on the table all this time while I've been showing you're the power of magic. Now I'd like to show you a little of the power of advertising."

With the deck in your left hand, pick up the card case with the right hand and slide the double-backer out about half an inch with the right thumb. Recap what has happened, stressing that the case has been in full view since you started your act. Finally, bring the case to the deck and draw the double-backer out with the left thumb, squaring it on top of the deck.

(If you push the top card slightly off the deck as you reach for the double-backer, it will be easy to get a break under the top two cards and make your double lift easy, certain, and relaxed.)

Double lift the double-backer and the signed card, turning them over on the deck, revealing the signed card. Thumb it off onto the table; the other side of the double-backer will leave the deck looking undisturbed. Leave the signed card with the spectator as a souvenir AND give him one of your cards from your card case.

A couple of things worth noting here: The use of the business-card case gets your name in front of the audience throughout your whole act. The effect gives you a reason for handing out your card, since it has been part of the routine. Finally this can be powerful stuff for trade show workers if the client's business card is used - it will be a card that is remembered, if only for how the spectator got it.

The advantage of this routine is that it can be done at anytime and no gimmicked wallet is needed. Since the card takes up virtually no space, it should appeal to the magus who likes to work "out of his pockets". And, again, it gets your name in front of the audience.

By Peter Marucci

No Way 'Outs'... Revisited

No way 'Outs'... Revisited

Out Applications

By Gary Scott



In issue 32 of Top hat, I wrote an article on outs and how they are an awesome weapon in anybody's arsenal. I tried to convey a way of creating outs for all. I would like to step back in time to address particular instances in my magic life and provide some examples of outs.

Outs are a very important aspect of magic. Some outs are designed into an effect to prohibit failure of a magical experience and create a flawless performance. Some outs are more impromptu, with the out being a way of covering a technical or

No Way 'Outs'... Revisited (cont.)

presentational fault.

My magical profession is close-up. It is with some of my performing repertoire that I would like to give examples of outs that I use in cases of presentation or technical failures.

Please refer to my sponge ball routine, discussed in issue 32 and in the Library, in which I have designed an out that prohibits failure. Please remember that these are my own *personal* outs and they may NOT work for you. I do hope that these will inspire your thinking and help you design your own outs for your routines.

RAINBOW CASCADE

This is a packet trick that is sold exclusively at Davenport's. It is a very powerful effect and can reset in seconds. A 4 of a Kind is shown and with magical gesture they all turn face down. Another magical gesture and they all turn face up. The grand finale and all cards have multi-coloured fronts and backs. For this particular effect, a good Elmsley count is required.

The main flaw in this effect is that the cards have prismatic stickers on the reverse side of 4 of the 5 cards. This makes doing an Elmsley count quite difficult at first and you have to break the cards in. Here are some of the problems I have encountered and the outs I have developed.

Possible Main Flaws :

Cards stick together and ruin your Elmsley count.

Spectator reaches for your cards in your hand and ruin the climax (yes I had them snatched from my hands)

Outs :

The cards often stick together during the first phase of an Elmsley count due to humid conditions or if the cards are not broken in.

With the cards sticking together during an Elmsley count, you will flash either a face up or face down card when you require to show all cards face up or face down. Merely take this in your stride and say to the spectators " This is because I have not used the milkshake shuffle"...and shake the cards in a funny way as if that turns the cards either face up or face down. Repeat the Elmsley count to show that everything is as it should be.

A spectator reaching or snatching for your cards is usually due to their Earth shattering amazement at what has just happened. This has not yet happened for me in the negative.

This is a difficult area to discuss. You must be on top of your game because this is an out that has to be addressed on the spur of the moment. No technical out for this, just a gag and a bit of psychological play. If the cards are snatched, retort by saying "...and I wish to show you that all cards are now under your power and have changed because you have touched them.".. I have used this only once and the timing has to be just right. Timing will come through experience.

BILL IN LEMON

(Cabaret performance)

One of the strongest and most memorable tricks I do is Bill in Lemon. This is part of my cabaret act and my closer.

Possible Main Flaws :

Switching the Bill.

Getting the Bill inside the Lemon.

Outs :

Switching Bills is solely dependent on method. I discovered that I was never felt comfortable at doing an in hands switch without a Thumb Tip. The Thumb Tip method is what I prefer but it also provides possible extra technical problems as we are now introducing utility devices into the routines. I have never dropped the Thumb Tip, but I have had awkward moments where the bill that I require to switch in, has got stuck inside the Thumb Tip.

I have played this as an aggressive comedy moment. I act like I am fighting with the Bill because it is *resisting the magic*. This light hearted moment creates an off beat, which serves my purpose of getting the bill out of the Thumb Tip.

My main problem has always been giving the bill that last fold to insert it into the lemon. I have my lemon in

No Way 'Outs'... Revisited (cont.)

my right pocket and extract the switched bill from the Thumb tip and do the 'dirty deed' whilst chatting to the spectators, who are totally enamoured with their 'magically changed' bill. On numerous occasions, I have had trouble getting the bill inside the lemon. Whether it be, hole is not big enough or having trouble giving the bill an extra fold to ease it inside. My solution is simple and I get an extra effect out of it. After the bill switch, I go into an invisible deck routine, which is very laid back and allows me to keep my hands in my pockets. This gives me ample opportunity to make sure I get that bill in that lemon. It also gives a great pause between cause and effect. It reduces spectators getting one ahead of you and is more surprising when their signed bill appears in the lemon. Here I have used a presentational effect to cover my technical requirements.

I have discussed the outs in usage for a deck of playing cards in issue 32.

We are lucky to be in a position, where if we are playing our role of the magician properly, we will have the audience on our side and any 'fumbles' will be overlooked.

This, of course, is the only out that really counts. Who you are and how the audience perceives you. If you come across as a smart alec, crass or over bearing, the audience will ultimately be on the negative side of the fence. Every move, word and gesture will be judged and constantly burned. One foul move, word or slip-up and they have you where they want you. Guess what?...You can't blame them. This is ultimately your undoing. You put them there!

Here are a few guidelines in how to present yourself as a close-up magician to spectators.

- Be forward, but not over-bearing.
- Be funny, not crude.
- Be magical, not deceitful.
- Be there for them, not think of them as there for you.
- Be kind and thankful for their attention.

With these few guidelines, and some which you will discover on your own, you stand a much better chance of getting the audience on your side. Make them feel part of your magic and the 'correct' attention, that you desire, will be the reward you receive.

I would like to say thank you for reading my articles on outs and their creations. I do hope this has made you think about your own routines and what can be done to hone your own routines and perhaps give some of you better confidence in your performances.. Developing outs is a good start...

Best wishes
Gary Scott

Thoughts From Mid-West America

Mark Wilson's Complete Course in Magic

Coin Sleights

By Michael Saint-Louis



Ahhh... spring is in the air! In my neck of the woods that means that instead of barely peaking above freezing every day we are now barely hitting freezing at night, warming up 10 or 12 degrees during the day but the wind and drizzle pretty much cancel that out! Oh well. It'll be 100 degrees here soon enough so I kind of like the rain. Besides, gray days are great days for reading and practicing magic and in *The Complete Course* we have some meaty stuff to practice.

We are, for those of you without bookmarks, ready to begin the coin sleights. Nothing too fancy or crazy here. No knuckle-busting ballet of coin and flesh, no cunning subterfuges that leave even our brethren magi

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

scratching their heads in disbelief. Just the basics, the foundations if you will. And like any foundation they are easy to overlook. I know you know them... The French Drop (my personal favorite vanish of coin and ball), The Finger Palm, The Pinch Vanish and The Classic Palm. Child's play, right? Let's get on to the gimmicked hankies and tricks, then....

Wait just a minute! You didn't think that I would gloss over these, did you? If so you obviously haven't been paying attention! As I said before, these moves are the cornerstones or foundations of coin magic. We can't get sloppy with them because too much depends on them. This is a perfect opportunity to evaluate your coin sleights.

Like Wilson, we'll start with The French Drop. Like I already confessed, this is probably my favorite sleight. It's so utilitarian and, if done correctly, can be very convincing. Because the thumb of the 'grabbing' hand actually moves under the coin (and I think *CC's* directions show this pretty clearly, by the way) it really suggests that the coin has been encircled and grasped. I have noticed that many magicians sloppily perform this move by approaching the coin from the top, more like The Pinch Vanish and this really destroys some of the illusion. I like to perform The French Drop squarely in front of my chest instead of off to the side of my body because that way the grasping hand can move from my chest towards the audience and I feel that this motion is the final straw to make the illusion of transfer complete.

Next up is The Finger Palm. I honestly don't have much to say about this sleight that isn't already printed in *The CC*. This is a wonderfully simple and straightforward move. I have found that this is a great sleight for small children who are just starting to learn magic.

The Pinch Vanish has always seemed to me to be The French Drop's poor cousin. It isn't as pretty or convincing as its continental cousin but that doesn't mean it is without value. After all, you simply cannot repeat any sleight too often without someone catching on and The Pinch Vanish is a workable replacement for The French Drop when you need one. Because it is not as complete an illusion as The French, it should probably be practiced more. I know I have spent long hours trying to limit all movement to the slightest of thumb motions to allow the drop. I am certainly open to any tweaks you have discovered to make The Pinch appear as genuine as possible.

Finally comes The Classic Palm. And an admission: I cannot perform The Classic Palm. Before the torrent of encouragement comes in, let me get a few things out in the open. First, I am fine with my inability to perform the Granddaddy of All Sleights. I am pretty sure that Michael Ammar admits to this horrible disfunction as well... so I could be in alot worse company! Second, I don't need more practice. I have practiced the sleight for 25+ years, longer than a whole bunch of y'all have been alive! Besides I used to be able to do it. When I was younger I could perform a passable Classic Palm with my left hand (these were the days when the US quarter was the right sized coin for me) but my right (dominant) hand couldn't pull it off. After breaking bones in my hands so many times (something over forty incidents over the years because of martial arts) I just plain can't do it. Oh well; no sense drinking from a dry creek so I don't even bother. But this doesn't mean you shouldn't try. I am pretty sure that I learned from *The CC* when I was a kid, so you are in good hands. And don't worry if it doesn't click... I give you permission to quit trying after you have 25 years in!

If you can perform The Classic you are in luck. There are literally millions of tricks awaiting you. If you can't, there are still millions of tricks awaiting you, you'll just have to adapt the handling to use your favorite Classic substitute. I personally find that 85% of the time, that Finger Palm we just covered works fine!

We only covered four and a half pages this month, but these four and a half pages are more important than the rest of the Money Magic chapter in its entirety. Next month we'll have gimmicks to play with (maybe even make) but this month don't shortchange yourself: Hit the foundations!

By Michael Saint-Louis

What Does It All Mean?

What Does It All Mean?

“A Magician?!”

By P. Craig Browning



What does it mean to be a “Magician” or “Mentalist” or “Bizarrist”?

Seems there are a plethora of explanations and very, very few solid definitions. However, there is a common sense of consensus amongst those involved in this craft. Individuals most of us have heard of and even patronized over the years, who are in fact the living, breathing definition of such things.

The earliest, most accepted definition as to what it is to be a “**Magician**” states that “***We are but actors playing the part of a magical entity.***” Ironically, few of us are really “actors” and even fewer of us project anything that comes close to being a “Magical Entity.” The greater majority of us are little more than person’s possessed with a curious mind along with the ego-based desire to do something others can’t. Clinically speaking, most that become involved with magic and its related arts are individuals hosting a strong sense of personal insecurity. Many of our more accomplished performers being serious introverts; magic and the performance thereof, serving as their elixir – the medication, if you would, that helps them to overcome personal limitations within social environs.

Wow! Those are some tough words... why would I say such a thing? You ask.

Because it’s time for us ALL to come out of the proverbial closet and get honest with ourselves and recognize that our own vulnerability is our strength. Like the thespians we supposedly are, we must learn to pull from our own lives, our own personal philosophy about life and living, in order to find that key that will unlock our creativity. In short, our personal ability to be brutally honest with ourselves about our strengths and deficits will deliver to us the passion each and every artist evolves from.

With the advent of the 21st century the world of professional magic has come to know a unique transmutation. Granted, what we are seeing stems from “Cyclic Law” (see HERMETIC LAW for better understanding of this i.e. The Kabalion) e.g. history repeating itself. Looking back a century ago we can easily see how the public’s interest in the surreal was exploited by the grand masters of the day. Many of whom intentionally exploited known superstition and ideas allied with the esoteric within their advertising and marketing material, not to mention the fact that such things were manipulated (with tongue firmly planted in cheek) as a mode of presentation. Since the early and mid 1980s this same theme has slowly unfolded, manifesting itself today via our own enthusiasm to learn and study the darker modes of performance – Mentalism and “Bizarre” magick.

As a “Magician” one of the greatest miracles we can present is magic that takes place in the spectator’s hand. As a **Mentalist** however, our *slight-of-hand* is exchanged for *slight-of-mind* and the greatest apex of our craft is delivering the kind of intimacy and rapport that allows our feats to unfold within the participant’s mind. Some believing that the role of the Mentalist is akin to that of the magician e.g. *An Actor portraying someone that’s psychic.* In truth, it’s so much more!

Though Mentalism is an art form related to magic, it is not a part of magic!

The world of magic hosts many related arts that include all forms of puppetry, juggling, mime, and mimicry. Each and every one of these separate art forms employs the art of deception as well as skill. In recent times the art of the sideshow performer has come into the throws of this vast family of kindred arts, primarily for the sake of art-form preservation. Unlike any of these other *allied arts* however, Mentalism employs a great deal of slight-of-hand and, in some instances, devices that are gimmicked. Because of this, many who are enthusiast of magic see a direct correspondence between the two and thus, embrace those similarities, proclaiming them as “proof” to their “right” to present mentalism styled material within the auspices of a magic show. Their lack of discipline and inability to respect differences of either form independently, robbing them of the over all advantage they’d otherwise know, if and when practicing each in an appropriately framed manner.

We’ve all heard the explanations... “***Magic requires the suspension of belief, while Mentalism requires an investment of belief.***” Long story short, the psychology between the two is in complete and total opposition. The majority of us knowing the words, but fail to adhere to them. Our enthusiasm, along side our lack of respect for Mentalism as an exclusive art form separate from stage magic, blinding us. Thus, we

What Does It All Mean? (cont.)

give ourselves *permission* to short change the potential we'd otherwise come to know when presenting *true* mentalism or magic for that matter, on its own merits.

For many a generation there existed a myth when it came to the practice of "Mentalism"; that it could only be effectively presented by one that's lived a full life e.g. the older, more seasoned performer. The explanation behind this claim centering on public perception – someone with some graying hair and a few wrinkles here and there has more life experience and thus, hosts the logical position of knowing more and being more. But even in those yesteryear times when this was a given, there existed many a young person making some very interesting (headline grabbing) demonstrations. The older, out of date perceptions about Mentalism, suggesting that those venturing into this realm do so because it is the icing on the cake – the pentacle to their long careers. In many cases, there is a truth to this. One must be a very natural and accomplished showman that can think of his/her feet, in order to effectively control the audience or routine participants that assist you on stage. Fortunately there are outlets for earning that level of skill in today's world. Thus, the adage no longer applies... at least, not to the level it did a century ago.

The diatribe over Mentalism vs. Mental Magic could fill volumes. It is a debate that will probably continue long after my ashes have been spread over Stonehenge. In my opinion however, Mental Magic is a side of Mentalism that's appropriate for the standard magic show. Nine times out of ten, this mode of performance employs a "prop"... a small chest, slates, or other "obvious" devices. Too, Mental Magic tends to host a strong degree of "corn" – it's very tongue-n-cheek, so to speak.

As a self-proclaimed "truest" I perceive genuine Mentalism to be an art form in which I intentionally trod a very fine line between the realm of entertainer and charlatan. Intentionally, I manipulate my audience so as to be uncertain. I neither admit too, nor deny having some kind of unique Psi ability. I intentionally exploit personal factors surrounding my life and genetics, to elude to the possibility that what I do is "real." At the same time, I offer slight "hints" here and there that are intentionally corny and obviously "arranged" – Mental Magic, if you would, that intentionally plants the seed of thought that I really am a very good fraud – an ENTERTAINER, as some would say.

This is "old school" mentalism. Even those that offer programs dressed in intellectual clothes, such as Banachek or Kreskin, find themselves in this same position. It matters not if you tell people point blank that what you are about to do is nothing but pure trickery and illusion, a great majority witnessing a solid mentalism demonstration will not buy it! That is to say, they will give you credit for being "gifted" (even though you don't admit to such things.) The only difference between this mode of presentation and what I do is packaging. But that brings us back to what I was discussing previously – knowing one's self and pulling from one's own life and life experiences so as to create. We're fools if we don't do such things! This has been the "secret" of every successful "artists" throughout history, whether they were a poet, painter, sculptor or performer.

As an individual deeply allied with the esoteric and things metaphysical, it only made sense that I too place my focus into what has become known as "**Bizarre Magick**." Let's face it, it would be exceptionally stupid for me to not exploit family ties to major occult legends, not to mention my own participation in the New Age movement of the late 20th century. Even before I consciously knew what I was doing, adding a hint of the macabre into my shows was the norm. My personal photos and related reputation always tying me to a Vincent Price styled personae.

Bizarre Magick, like Mentalism, opens a whole new can of worms. The truth be known, genuine Bizarre Magick has nothing to do with horror stories, the esoteric or surreal. It is an attitude and mode of performance – the kind of energy one projects when working.

There are two styles of "Bizarre Magick" – the clown that dresses in a particular mode of drag (or "Drac" is it may be – as in "Dracula") and presents hookey but gruesome material such as we've seen offered by the likes of the late Gene Poinc and of course Eugene Burger. Then you have the guys and gals that present intrigues that affect the mind vs. the eye, what Rick Maue refers to as being "**Cerebral Magick**", the kind of material that "haunts" the subconscious of those participating at an on-going basis. This latter mode of performance requiring the performer to look at each "trick" more as a special effect vs. a key to the show. Like Mentalism this mode of presentation requires a theatrically based investment of belief from those participating. It is intimate in its nature and 110% pure theater. Even if the mage is presenting just a single routine, it is done as an interactive play – an experience vs. a demonstration.

Admittedly I see a thin veil that could lend to us one other side to the whole Bizarre Magick idea, what I refer to as **Macabre Magick**. This would cover material that's more in line with the spilling of blood. Routines associated with Jack the Ripper, Lizzie Borden, etc. fall into this category as would major stage routines

What Does It All Mean? (cont.)

involving visible and bloody vivisection's, emulation's, etc. Ironically, this side of Bizarre Magick tends to overlap with a field many refer to as being **Geek** or "**Sideshow**" **Magic**, the kind of stuff we've seen Todd Robbins do over the years.

Personally I believe that true Bizarre Entertainment is a field in and of its own and the term "Magic" or, if you prefer "Magick" should be removed from the equation, so as to take away the limitations many are subconsciously placing upon themselves when exploring this domain. That however, is another issue entirely. *Do as thou wilt...*

The bottom line is that all of these things are an aspect of theater and as such, we are each obliged to look at ourselves as being thespians first and magical performers second. We owe it to ourselves to gain those foundations known to every actor and showman if we are to perfect our craft. It's an on-going process – the real "trick" as it were, being to learn how to use the tools we've been given.

Tools?

Stop seeing what you do as a "Trick" and start identifying each and every effect as being a tool to your craft. Learn the ins and outs of each and every bit that appeals to you and learn how to refine it and thus, make it your own. Become willing to define yourself and then, stand your ground, allowing what you do to be an expression of who you are. In so doing, you have the chance to become what we each aspire to be, a performance-artists: that guy/gal that is setting the trends vs. following them.

Until next time.

By P. Craig Browning

Ace-High Triumph

Ace-High Triumph

Card Work

By Daniel de Urquiza



Ok, hello to everyone. I've been absent for a time now, yes, I know it. But what do you want; I can't be a genius all the time. I was resting, you see. Today, I want to share with all you gentle readers an ace/triumph routine that I've developed recently, and still I'm working on it.

To this day, this would be the effect:

Magician shows and extends in the hands a deck of cards, face down, claiming that she is going to perform a major miracle with it. But, to do so, to be like God in a way, she needs to create... CHAOS. Like the first chaos, the one prior to creation. The one from which God performed the first miracle, the Genesis.

So... she shuffles one half face up, one half face down (Ok, I know it, it's no big deal. So much for the primigenial chaos and stuff). She shows face up cards and face down cards. Then, from this total chaos, she produces an ace (ok, no big deal again. Man, stop criticizing me, I'm doing the best I can, you know). Immediately, she produces another... but so much miracle has lowered the chaos batteries of the deck, so she needs to shuffle AGAIN face up and face down, and even more, to cut (Stop it... I'm warning you nicely only one more time).

Amidst this frightening haphazard of randomness, the magician produces, visually, from the middle of the deck, the third ace.

Here it comes, ANOTHER face up/face down shuffle, so the final ace is the most difficult. But you know it, don't you, smart- ...buttocks? Yes, the final ace is face down in the middle of the totally arranged, in order, pristine and unbelievably-clean-in-every-way deck.

Ace-High Triumph (cont.)

After this effect, you are named the archbishop of the confraternity of the primordial chaos, then you turn out to be the Antichrist, and that the real name of your mother was Rosemary.

METHOD

The secret is so simple... oh so simple. You have the four aces face up on the bottom of the face down deck. Proceed to any kind of shuffle that doesn't reveal this situation to the marks, pigeons or audience. Extend the deck between your hands, showing order and all backs.

Then, while talking about the chaos and stuff, simply lift the top half of the deck, and matching the words of turning this half face up, do so, while at the same time turning the lower half also face up, leaving it in a single movement on the table.

So, it seems that you have only tossed one half face up and one half face down on the table, ready for a table shuffle. Of course, the misdirection is on the face up half, and the act of carelessly (or nonchalantly, I love to use nonchalantly, how many times in your life do you use "nonchalantly"?) tossing both halves on the table goes by them.

Riffle shuffle the cards, except for the 4 aces, which must remain on top of the now-shuffled deck.

First advantage of this method: no stripping, pushing, etc. You really shuffle the deck.

Openly double cut the top card to the bottom, showing thus... yes, face up and face down cards.

Okay-dokey, or Okito Dokito. Situation check: 3 FD aces, FU deck, 1 FD ace.

First revelation:

a) The silly way. My favourite, but I must warn readers that my wife totally killed it. She said I'm stupid, shortly. But again, I like the effect it has on real audiences. It convinces them that I'm stupid.

Rant about your skills, the miracle you are about to perform, etc. Say to onlookers to say stop while you are riffling the corner of the deck... you know the routine. But... use only a very stretched and open index finger to mark the card they say stop, and insert clearly the tip of that finger... amongst the cards. Offer to let slip a few more cards. They say no. Cut right there... and it's not an ace. Your line: "I never said it had to come out on THIS side." So, you turn the lower packet face up, show the ace, and toss it to the table.

b) The hot shot way: ok, you have a face up ace on bottom. You can do gazillion productions, from the hot shot cut to the Pop Up.

Second revelation:

I'm coming from the silly way. So I put together both halves, keeping a big, unnatural, totally uncovered and utterly nasty break. I pass the deck, and use the tip of my thumb above the now-lower packet to push forward an ace. Make it pivot between the index finger of the hand that holds the top packet and the middle finger of the hand that holds the lower packet, and throw it to the table.

Again, is mostly up to you, because you have there the aces to do with them whatever you want.

Second shuffle:

With my production, I end up like this: a face down packet in one hand, a face up packet with the aces on top and another face down packet in the other. So, it seems that both packets are face down.

I turn over the real face down packet, and again I shuffle it leaving the aces on top.

(To recharge the Chaos Batteries).

Also, I perform afterwards a slip cut, thus burying a faced down ace in the face up deck. One face down ace is on top, covering all, like the president covers all for the corruption of his lower protégés.

The Third Revelation:

Cut by the face up ace that's buried. Easy, 'cos it has a natural bridge. You'll have it on the bottom of the top packet. Say that you are going to create a magical field around... here (while pointing to the top card of the lower packet). Now lightly rub both halves, and let the ace appear on the tips of the fingers that hold the lower half in dealing position. Try to achieve a sudden, startling and visual production, coordinating the movements and making the top half seeming to "float" above the lower.

Use the moment of surprise to toss the recently produced ace on the table... and turn over the lower packet, leaving it on the table.

Ace-High Triumph (cont.)

Fourth revelation:

Well, there you are set to the final ace. Simply shuffle face up and face down again, this time burying the top ace, add a real cut for good measure and for centering the ace, dramatically ribbon spread. Climax.

So, here it is. I think it is a nice opening routine; it has several interesting twists, and few at least "not so worn out" ideas.

Hope you enjoy it.

By Daniel de Urquiza

Hopefully you've enjoyed this month's ezine and will consider contributing some of your own work in the future. To the contributors and columnists this month, thank you on behalf of all the readers and we hope to see you back here next month.

All the best,
Jon Snoops
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