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TopHat

November 2005...

...44th edition

By Jon Snoops



This month I'd like to take a moment to fill you in on the latest progress of the [MB Badge](#) project. It's been going a little slow lately, mostly due to other commitments on my part (such as what you're reading now) but I'd really like to now get this project moving swiftly. With your help, the project can be finished by the end of this year and all badges sent out. That's the target, so how will we get there?

So far, we have a good number of orders. And I'd like to thank every member who's supported this project by ordering one or more of the designs. But the main problem: we do need more. To attain a sufficient quantity of these (thus gaining the very best price) we need to make sure that we have enough support to cover the order. In order to give you something of an idea of the numbers that we're dealing with, we're currently at 2/3 of our target. That's to say that we're 2/3 of the way towards the required figure which was calculated before we began. This figure is based on the quote given by the manufacturing company and the price has been based on this.

So this is a plea; if you've yet to order one or more of the badges: please, please do so now. You can pay by cheque or PayPal from anywhere in the World. And they're cheap! We really need your order to keep this project moving. A lot of work has gone into it and a lot of people have already shown their support. Also, if you've already ordered one of the designs, here's your opportunity to add more to your order at no extra postage cost. Just let me know and I'll merge your orders together.

Without these extra orders, we simply cannot continue with this project. So thank you for your anticipated support.

I'd also like to make a quick note about the [positivity thread](#) currently running in General. I think this is a great idea and some of the posts in there are really heartfelt. So come on and share your nice thoughts... chabang even hinted at a prize. With all the intense debates surrounding the forums at the moment, it's nice to spread some love with the other members (with Christmas approaching and all).

And I will say that the thoughts reflected in the above mentioned thread should be reflected in each and every other thread that you post in. If you're gonna be nice in one thread, then why not be nice in them all? You don't always have to agree with everyone of course, but please make an effort to *be nice*.

So without further ado, here are November's offerings. There's not so long to go now, this being the 44th edition and us being in our last year of publication. Thanks to all of those who offered their suggestions for the future and who showed their appreciation for the four great years we've had.

All the best,
Jon

Contents

NOVEMBER 2005

Please click on an article below to skip to it or scroll down to begin reading. You can also use the Bookmarks panel (left) to navigate.

MAGIC INTERVIEW: *"Interview With Simon Drake"* By A J

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Comedy in Magic"* By Peter Marucci

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"The 20 Minute Magician"* By Gary Scott

MAGIC COLUMN: *"Thoughts From Mid-West America: Look at Yourself"* By Michael L.

MAGIC EFFECT: *"Ultimate Ace Transposition"* By Aommaster

MAGIC EFFECT: *"Can It Be Possible?"* By Matthew Smith aka wiffyboy

Interview With Simon Drake

Interview...

...with Simon Drake

By A J



1. To start things off, I wonder how you would describe yourself as a performer: a magician, a conjurer? Or something else?

An Illusionist but I don't really mind how I am described.

2. What do you feel is your biggest magical achievement?

I have been in this business for about 25 years so it's hard to say but I suppose I have had most satisfaction building my own venue devoted to my kind of magic, The House of Magic.

3. Do you still have any magical ambitions, or have you got to the point now where you have done everything you want to do magic wise?

Yes I still have ambitions but they are more realistic than when I was younger and I am much more aware of how the business works and my own limitations

4. Everybody has a particular favourite effect that you perform, for me your guillotine effect is absolutely superb. How long did it take you to master that?

Well we rehearsed it over about 3 weeks and because the drop was so fast I cracked two ribs in the process, which made the whole thing much harder to rehearse with full energy. The piece was more a short visual story/vignette than just an illusion. A style of working that I am seeing more and more now with the younger lot out there.

5. What do you feel was your big break into the magic world?

Kate Bush's tour in 1979 was my first break really and that led to numerous TVs and other stuff. In Kate's tour I played 7 really contrasting characters all doing magic of a sort and also wrote the visuals with Kate and her brothers over the preceding year. Most of the press thought I was 7 different performers.

6. What has been, out of all the big illusions you have performed, your favourite to present?

Not sure I have favourites but amongst them I would say 'The Impaler' that I made for 'Raising Hell' with Iron Maiden and the 'Head Off' that we perform at The House of Magic

Interview With Simon Drake (cont.)

7. With the advance of the Internet and with programs such as Secrets of magic revealed, how do you feel about magic exposure shows and sites? And how do you feel the magic fraternity, as a whole should deal with it?

I don't approve of exposures especially of generic methods as they remain in the collective consciousness and make it easier to for the general public to suss illusions. I hated The Masked idiot and his feeble justification for doing what he did. Something about forcing magicians to develop new methods and raising the standard. He did absolutely nothing positive. A lot of the magic was made up for that show and it stunk. I think we all know that Valentino was very much an 'off-the Strip' mediocre Vegas performer and needed the exposure and the money. I was all for pooling together hundreds of thousands from other pros and enthusiasts and fighting Murdoch's Fox network in the American courts. At least we may have got an injunction on it. Believe me, if the programmes had been about how a lawyer does his magic or how TV producers exploit artistes then it wouldn't have been aired, no way. Exposures are nothing new, as you all know. The great David Devant was chucked out of the circle twice for newspaper exposures only to be asked back as president later on.

8. Is there any effect that you have not been able to master?

Yes I have not been able to master 80% of magic out there because so much of it is cheesy, spangly nonsense that seems stuck in the fifties or just plain rubbish.

9. What support did you receive from your family in the very earliest days of your magic ventures? Did your family stand by you and offer to support you from the very outset or were there persuasions to find a real job? Did you take the time and effort to persuade your family that this was the career path you were determined to follow?

My family are in medicine on both sides going back generations. My father died when I was 12 and would most definitely NOT have approved of my then hobby becoming a profession. However my mother was encouraging in whatever I or my siblings wanted to do.

10. If you had to be remembered for one effect in your lifetime - which effect would it be and why?

The Silhouette Routine from Secret Cabaret, Series two. It threw the rule book away in terms of originality and included a new principle that impressed many learned magic folk at the time. Check it out; it's at the very end. Also possibly The Impaler or my floating cane, sorry but that's a hard one.

11. Usually those who make it to the top, such as yourself, have some strong roots in their presentation from those who influenced their career. This influence could be a teacher or present and past performers who the person in question looked up to as their skills and abilities grew and took shape. Who do you consider to be your biggest influences in your magic, both past and present? Who are among your favourite magicians, both past and present?

Past: De Kolta, Devant and Jarrett. Channing Pollock for presentation

Present: The Amazing Johnathan. He must be the funniest man alive and the new parts of his show are so funny although not ice-breaking in a magical sense. Teller is also really inventive and a nice chap. Steve Fearson must be the most underrated and un-praised inventor of our generation. The work that Paul Kieve put into The Theatre of Blood as advisor at the National Theatre is also really wonderful and so well done.

12. Do you have any advice for all the hobbyists out there trying to make it to the pros?

Don't get trapped into doing 'magic for magicians' you run the risk of seldom working for the public and becoming a 'professional amateur'. Do your best to find an original twist to your work. Don't listen to 'advice' but rather listen to your gut feeling and most of all practice hard, long after 'normal' people would have given up and got bored with it.

13. Do you like to scare your audiences?

Sometimes yes but I would rather think of it as peddling adrenaline and endorphins to an expectant crowd. So it's not just being scary but rather a whole gammit from fear to laughter to enchantment and awe.

14 What's the strangest or funniest reaction you've ever had from an audience?

A drunk middle aged woman once laid down on the front of the stage and implored in a loud voice that I immediately make love to her, although she didn't quite use that expression. I kept trying to signal to

Interview With Simon Drake (cont.)

security but they said afterwards that they thought it was part of the act. It wasn't. We had quite a few people faint and throw up whilst on tour as well. All good for the box office but messy for the cleaner.

15. I have recently started getting the convention bug and attended my first Blackpool convention earlier in the year. The Blackpool convention attracts a lot of big names in magic, both as a convention lecturer and as attendees. Have you ever been as either, and if so, did you enjoy it?

I have been to only about 4 conventions in my life. I found it a little tedious hearing "When's the next Secret Cabaret?" a thousand times in a weekend.

16. What was it like to appear on the royal variety show?

Ghastly showbiz meat market - never again!

17. You taught Oliver Reed slight of hand for the film "Castaway" was he a good pupil?

He was a marvellous man. Much kinder than one would have expected. Nic Roeg (the director) and I had two, four hour meetings and the script went from having 5 magic effects in it to about 20. Suffice to say that Ollie wasn't a good pupil and there are only about 6 or 7 short and hammily done tricks in the final film! He was more interested in making white wine disappear at the time and engaging me in stunt-fighting. Plenty of bark but he didn't bite. There isn't room to go into it here but there are dozens of hysterically funny stories about my involvement with coaching Oliver. I miss him hugely.

More recently I have done more "magic advising" and right now I am working very hard on a west end show which is a pastiche of the big Las Vegas magic shows. The story is about a pair of illusionists have lost their wild animal license and are only allowed one duck. There are about 18 illusions in the show and quiet a few of them are original. I have had about 9 prop builders and effects folk working on it, most of the bigger magic effects have been built by Paul Cooke, who has done a good job and is a lot of fun to work with. The show is being directed by Kenneth Branagh and called, "Ducktastic" and opens at the Albery Theatre in London's west end in October 2005. It's very, very funny although been frustrating as actors don't seem to want to rehearse the magic as painstakingly as magicians know they have to but we are getting there.

18. Could you tell us a little about 'Simon Drake's House of Magic'?

Yes it's a permanently themed 4000 sq ft Victorian venue totally dedicated to my take on magic and illusion. I built a Haunted Cellar with many optical effects and forgotten illusions as well as a few new ideas. The Whispering Chair which started as a cold reading thing but now utilises a real clairvoyant, where each audience member get their fortunes told in 3 minutes. My show is just under an hour and we specialise in light hearted amputations and decapitations of celebs and senior executives, as well as my floating candle, cane and knife thru arm as well as a lot of other things and original illusions. It's a full evening from 7.00pm to 1.00am with great food and a reasonably priced bar, 3 close-up magicians and dancing.

19. Have you ever injured yourself doing any of your effects

Yes quite a few times in the old days but I am a lot more careful now. I set fire to my right arm in 1985 at the start of an hour show and carried on with no skin on about 3 square inches of my forearm (it hurt more the next day!). I fell thru a hole in the catwalks at Hammersmith Odeon (now the Apollo) opening for Peter Gabriel, with Elton John and Phil Collins as guests in 1980 and landed 8 feet later on a scaffold bar on the base of my spine (again it didn't hurt much till the next day and my badly bruised pelvis took about 6 weeks to get better) I was very lucky as it missed landing on my coxis by about 10mm which would have meant certain paralysis. It happened during a strobe lighting effect and the 3500 audience gave me a standing ovation as I vanished between flashes, so the effect was that I disappeared completely down-stage-centre with no boxes or drapes on that huge stage!

20. And finally are there any plans to resurrect the Secret Cabaret?

No sorry. We did 12 shows and I called a stop to it before the format got flogged to death, although Channel 4 were desperate for more at the time. I felt it was better to go out on a high point. I may do a fresh series of something similar one day but I am busy with other projects at the moment.

That's all for now folks. Thanks for your interest in my work

Simon Drake

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By A J

Comedy in Magic

Comedy in Magic...

...audience conditioning

By Peter Marucci



"That was no lady; that was my wife!"

That was the punchline to a joke. So how come you aren't laughing.

Well, the answer is simple (beside the fact that the joke isn't very good): You weren't set up, or conditioned, to be ready to laugh. The same applies to comedy in magic. You have to condition the audience to be ready for what you are about to do.

There are a couple of things that I do that accomplish this. They are strictly for laughs and have no magic content but they set up the audience for the magic and comedy that I do later in the show. These "bits" work the same purpose that a warm-up comedian works for big-name comics on television: The job of the warm-up comedian, who is never seen on air, is to warm up the studio audience so that they will laugh more readily at the big-name comic's jokes.

(By the way, this applies to just about every show that is done before a live audience - quiz shows, talk shows, situation comedies, variety shows - and not just for stand-up comics.)

The two bits that follow are both done as openers but I would never do them on the same show. That would be a bit of overkill; you want to win the audience over, not beat them into submission!

So let's get on with it!

THE OPENER I:

You walk on stage, smile at the audience, and make eye contact with different part of the house.

Okay, how many don't do that now; or only THINK you do it? And how many performers have you seen who come out and give the impression that they would sooner be anywhere else: They don't smile, and they don't make eye contact with different parts of the house.

But I digress.

As I was saying, you are on stage and you speak to the audience:

"One of the important things about doing a show like this is to have a big opener," you say.

And, with that, you reach into your jacket pocket and pull out a bottle opener about a foot and a half long.

"Fortunately, I brought one with me."

You then put the opener aside and continue with your show.

THE OPENER II:

You walk on stage, smile at the audience, and make eye contact with different part of the house.

(Hey, didn't I just say that? Yes, but it can't be said too often!)

Your table is to your side and you are holding a sheet of newspaper.

(The next bit is optional but it, too, helps warm up the audience.)

"Interesting things in the paper today," you say as you apparently read the page.

"Here's an item about a fatal accident at the tool and die works; it seems a worker was hit with a tool - and died."

"And here's another story about a fatality. Seems there was a freak accident at the circus. A performing

Comedy in Magic (cont.)

elephant was being led through the sideshow when it stepped on a - well, you get the idea."
"The classified pages are full of good stuff. Here's an ad in the Personals column: Sailor with wooden leg wants to meet woman with cedar chest. Object - long-term storage."

You now go silent, hold up the paper, and tear it into two pieces. Discard one piece.
Tear the piece you are holding into two pieces and discard one piece.
Appear to be very deliberate and careful about what you are doing.
Continue this until you have a piece about six inches square. Fold it in half, then fold it in half again.
Now go over to your table (or use the microphone stand) and slide the folded paper under one leg, as if levelling the table.
"There, that's better. It was starting to bug me," you say, and then go into your first routine.

Sure, that's an old gag, used by burlesque comics and circus clowns and it's been around for years.

But did you ever think WHY it's been around so long? If it weren't good, it wouldn't last!

SECOND THOUGHTS:

The whole object of the comedy opener is to put the audience at ease; to get them to relax, to focus their attention on you.

Most successful stage plays open to one person on stage or a vacant stage and one person enters. The audience is not slammed right into the plot of the play; they are given a brief period to adjust to the events. So be it with your show!

Peter Marucci

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The 20 Minute Magician

The 20 Minute Magician...

...a guide on how not to become one

By Gary Scott



You know... a lot of things have opened my eyes about magic recently. The ease at which information has become so readily available is astounding. The internet is spawning a whole generation of 'magicians', eager to show their friends their latest version of the Sybil cut... and my personal favourite... the 20 minute magician, who buys the latest fad, craze or self-working miracle and goes out that night of receiving said 'miracles', to perform to his friends. So... in this very issue, I will try and attempt to put together a small guide on how to avoid becoming a '20 Minute Magician'... and this list is by no means exhaustible, but it is a good start.

Lets start at the beginning.

KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

...and why you are getting into magic. Sure, it's an exciting thing for an eager newbie to buy that bitten coin and thumb tip, but make sure you know what you are doing.

Most go out and perform straight away and expose everything, due to no practise. They have no idea what magic is supposed to look like. They bought the 'secret' and that is enough for these guys. Ask yourself... why am I doing this? What attracts me to magic?

Why do I want to make magic a part of me?

If your only purpose to do 'magic' is to be superior over your fellow human beings, you have no right in performing magic for anybody.

The 20 Minute Magician (cont.)

BUY QUALITY MAGIC!

The first thing *not* to do is get too excited by all that's available. Most magic on the market is an absolute waste of money. Make your spending choices carefully. Read reviews about the product(s) that you are interested in. Read what other magicians say about it. Listen to the voices of reason, those being magicians and sales staff that are known for their reputation of good advice. You will find that, although magic stores stock a majority of items, if they are of good service, then they will advise you on what good products are and what are bad.

BUY BOOKS!

...and this is where the 20 minute magician falls miserably.

Personally, I have floored so many magicians with magic learnt from a book; it astounds me when the 20-minuter says... "Is it available on a DVD?" It annoys me and satisfies me at the same time. I know that they want every single piece of magic in the universe to be available to them instantaneously and for the all important 'secret', but then again, I know my magic is in safe hands because 99% of them will not be arsed to look at a book. I have to admit, in the beginning, I was drawn into the video medium, but the amount of knowledge that I have learnt from the prefaces, introductions and essays on theory, presentation, misdirection, business and so forth, in magic books, have well surpassed any DVD content.

DVD'S DON'T HURT!

...Yes... they don't hurt, but if you abuse them, they will make you a clone of the performer. The best thing to begin with, is a video of a well known performer and write notations of why it is 'working' for him. Look at how he portrays himself as a magician to the world. Now write down how you want to be seen performing magic.

What are your natural character traits and how can you enhance them in a magic performance? Look at the video medium, to study how to behave in front of an audience. Learn as much 'magic' material as you can from a book. Combine these 2 methods and you are halfway out of the 20 minute magic box.

YOU MUST PRACTICE!

....and this is the other almighty fail point for the 20 minute magi.

Practise makes perfect? Nope... *Perfect* practise makes perfect.

A wise man once said, "An amateur practises until he gets it right, a professional practises until he doesn't get it wrong!" If only *every* magi would take note of this...

Practise must be structured. Don't practise in front of anyone. Especially new sleight-of-hand. You must know the technique. Technique is not just the sleight-of-hand or correct handling of props. Technique also involves body language, audience management, patter, gesturing and so much more...

TUTOR?

....yes, someone who you know, that actually knows how to perform magic, can actually help you step out of the 20 minute box. Be prepared for a grilling, if they offer you their personal advice. 3 things to remember when you approach someone about tutoring . Listen... listen and listen some more. Remember... it's YOU that went to them, not the other way around. Don't try and be a smart arse and contradict what they are saying. Show them ultimate respect by listening and 'showing' them that you have listened by applying the work that they have set out for you. Don't hide it and try to be clever when performing to your tutor. SHOW THEM what you have learned. They tell you stuff so you don't f*** about. Most tutors have years of experience, and not just in magic either. A good magic tutor has years of experience in a theatrical art of some kind and has been a regular worker for a few years. Check that you know *who* you are getting into and not just into a 16 year old who does a few flips with a deck of cards.

THE ULTIMATE ANSWER?

....for how to get out of the 20 minute magician box resides in YOU!

Stop performing half-arsed tricks and unrehearsed routines. Stop expecting the secret of all magic, to fall in your lap. DO SOME RESEARCH....as in don't expect everybody to give you hand outs. This is the main flaw that I absolutely detest. That 'pro' magicians have spent years researching their stuff and the 20 minute clan want us to give it all out at a drop of a hat. It's not going to happen. Don't expect instant results. Good magic takes time. Don't learn the secret of a trick , practise it once and show your girlfriend/family...

The 20 Minute Magician (cont.)

because, no matter how bad it is, they will think the sun shines out of your arse, giving you a false sense of security and in the real world, you will fall flat on your arse. Doing your own research, shows that you ultimately are interested in magic and will go a much longer way in showing respect to the art that us 'real world workers'... work so hard at. Don't think the secret of magic is the 'secrets'. It is so much more. If you don't want to look past the 'secrets in magic', or do the research... get out! Magic is not for you!

Well, I do hope this 'tiny' guide has opened a few eyes in the eager newbie department.

Especially the younger guys, who in this day and age, expect instant information access. This of course means to them... instant success.

Fortunately, for us working professionals, the formula for learning magic can never change. We will always be striving to perfect our magic. Researching our material, practising, and being consumed by the passion of the art.

I hope you have a better insight into what it takes to perform magic.

This little guide will NOT make you a magician, but it is a good start and hopefully, those that are stuck in the realms of the '20 minute magician', will take note of what has been said and will realise that magic is an art that needs respect. No matter if it's the largest stage illusion or the smallest thumb tip.

Siya all on Magic Bunny

Best wishes
Gary Scott

Thoughts From Mid-West America

Thoughts From Mid-West America...

...reflections

By Michael L.



When I left the stage, all the kids were screaming for more magic. Judging by the old vaudeville adage "Always leave them wanting more," I was gold. I managed to materialize and then float (Zombie style) a skull at a church function without anyone complaining, so that's good I guess. I gave out souvenirs. Most of all I managed to keep the kids quiet and contained for 20 minutes after eating at the Halloween Party/pot luck dinner and since that was my job I guess it was a success. But I'm not happy.

For a church event, it really was the gig from Hell. It had been mentioned but was never confirmed until the evening of the 20th. There was talk of a stage show and there was talk of close up, so I was not sure what I was doing until they called. The show was on the 30th. Not exactly ideal, but I had kind of expected it.

And then there was my house. The first weekend in October we started a bathroom rehab. It needed to be done, I'll grant you that. My house is about 100 years old and the bathroom floor, which was a wooden box filled with about 6 inches of concrete that the tiles were set directly in, was collapsing. The problem was the approach... my approach was to borrow or make a home owner's insurance claim for about \$10,000 and hire a reputable company to send a crew of semi-reputable illegal aliens to completely rebuild the room while my wife's was to recruit various family members to help and do it ourselves. Of course, by ourselves she meant that she would go to visit her mother on the other side of the state while I stayed home to work. By Monday the toilet and bathtub were to be connected and by the end of the week the entire project would be done. For the record, it is the second week of November and the bathroom still isn't done. Anyway, the long and short of that was I had a torn up bathroom, basement and hallway and house that was taking up all of my spare time. Returning the bathtub to a usable state was trumping rehearsing for a free gig at church. I wasn't feeling as ready as I should have by any stretch of the imagination and seriously considered backing

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

out but couldn't do it. My church is small, broke and the kids loved the show at the church picnic last year. Besides, back in my regular performing days I had done more than one last minute booking.

It was a simple enough show. It was light on talking (half the church couldn't hear me if I had a vintage tube mic and a 5000 watt power amp sitting on stage, so why bother?) and based around the old TV monster movie hosts. The lesson, and I believe in lessons when performing for children, was that under all the scary make-up and costumes that the kids would see on Halloween were just regular people. I would start in my jeans and a black shirt and as I talked about the old monster movie television hosts I would roll up my sleeves and unbutton the shirt to reveal a long sleeved skeleton print shirt underneath. Add some burnt cork to darken the eyes and hollow out the cheeks and all I would need is a cape. I'd clean the excess burnt cork up with a napkin which I could tear up and restore with a skull print appearing on it, From there, my pet spider Stinky and I would produce some cobwebs to decorate the stage, then make Stinky disappear. Then a version of the Miser's Dream using some flat erasers that looked like bloodshot eyeballs. The Phantom Tubes would produce Yorick, my skull, which I would then float with my homemade Zombie apparatus. I have several of these gimmicks but none of them were heavy duty enough to float Yorick, even though he was only styrofoam and hollowed out. After Yorick floated a bit, I'd toss him to the kids and take a bow. Nice and simple, right?

I got everything set up during the service and was calming down. Then it started to get ugly. There was candy at every table (of course) and the children were on it before lunch could get started. As parents and grandparents ate the children literally ran wild. I spent my forty-five minutes leading up to show time keeping children from running around the stage and poking through my props. By the time we started the show I was about as close to throttling a few of these kids as I have ever been, but a deep breath and happy place and everything would be okay, right?

Last year at the church picnic I had my portable backdrop that allowed me to set up in privacy. When I came out after my introduction I was shocked to find that the children were encouraged to sit on the edge of the stage! Aiya zaogaole! So this year I INSISTED (using the creepiness of the show as an excuse) that children sit with their parents. But they had a new surprise this year... my introduction came from my four year old! Sings A Song is her "Indian name," but she is a blonde haired, blue-eyed angel with a broad, dimpled smile. In short, she is "Never follow a child act" personified! Worse yet, her surprise introduction was to take the mic and announce ringmaster style "LAAAADIES AND GENTLEMEN!" take a bow and march back to her mother. Of course, she *killed*.

My misfortune started early. Although I have used burnt cork many, many times I got cork in my eye for the first time. And not just a little, either, but a chunk about the size of a small ball bearing broke off and flipped right into my eye. I saw it fly right in. It hurt and made my eye water and kept me from seeing out of it. As you can imagine, it was annoying me the entire show. But the torn and restored napkin went alright and Stinky was a big hit. During Stinky I stepped too close to one table and my cape draped over my Phantom Tubes (which were sitting behind the table) and knocked them over. Nothing was revealed but I hate any mistakes. I can't remember ever knocking over a prop before and it still makes me so angry with myself! The Miser's Dream went reasonably well. I took an empty hat, produced and 'dumped' several erasers into the hat and then turned it over to reveal dozens of eyeballs. The magic went well, but upon dumping the eyeballs the children were unleashed! I tried throwing some erasers out into the tables, but they rushed me for pencil erasers. Big kids got handfuls while little kids got none. I made an executive decision to interrupt the show to retrieve a bag of extra erasers from under the table to hand out. It destroyed the flow of the show but no one cried! After that I produced Yorick and that went very well.

I am actually proud of that production because I think I have invented a novel way of ditching the load bag. Yorick rested in the Tubes in a black velvet bag with his face staring up towards the mouth of the bag. When I removed him from the Tubes I keep him in the bag, pulling it back from his face as I reveal him. It gives him a hooded Grim Reaper look. It also allows me to hide the hook behind the bag and ditch it when I visibly remove Yorick from his hood and leave it on the table! Yorick appeared, played well and got a laugh when introduced as my ex-partner. We had grown apart... almost become strangers and Yorick was on hard times. I stared into his eyes and, you guessed it, "Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him well!" I slipped off my cape for Yorick's big number and, when slipping the gimmick on my thumb, managed to rip open a cut I acquired

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

the evening before in the bathroom. Fumbling to find a spot where the gimmick could sit without driving into the open wound kept me from smoothly loading Yorick onto the gimmick. I covered this by pretending to 'float' Yorick by balancing him on my bended knee and then the crook of my arm. A few jokes about him being a ham and that's why the act broke up helped cover and I thanked the good Lord that I had included that silly "Alas poor Yorick" bit! Finally I got him mounted, floated him for a few seconds before flicking him off the gimmick, catching him with my left hand as I deftly swung the cape back, with my thumb firmly stuck in the Zombie gimmick, with my right. I threw Yorick to the kids, turned to fold my cape carefully (really removing my thumb forcibly from the gimmick) and place it on my table before coming off stage to high five the little ones. Left handed high fives, though, as my right thumb bled and my right eye poured tears....

After I had made it to the john to wash my face and hands I talked to the kids and a few parents and grandparents as I packed up my stuff. Luckily, the cake walk was starting and it drew the kids away. The Laughing Girl, my two year old, won a plate of Halloween cookies and I managed to get everything out to the van. It was the worst show I have ever, ever done.

I could pat myself on the back and congratulate myself for entertaining the children even though everything was going wrong around me. I could brag about my quick and glib saves or even my decision to stop the show to make sure everyone got an eyeball eraser. Instead I have spent every day since the show picking it apart and kicking myself for screwing up as badly as I did. If it had been a paid gig I would not have accepted the check. I could start measuring out my table placement exactly so I will know where all props are even if half blind. I now know that liquid skin style bandages are not hardy enough to fight off the bite of my copper and brass Zombie gimmick.

To my mind the mark of a professional is not the ability to cover a disaster but to prevent any disaster from happening. By this standard I failed miserably and I have been kicking myself ever since. Please, please learn from my mistakes. REHEARSE! Rehearse until you are perfect and rehearse in your venue. If this is not possible, create your show's set in a way that you can set up exactly on stage. Measure distances and keep true to them. Rehearse until you can move comfortable in your set with your eyes closed ESTABLISH RULES FOR YOUR VENUE! It shouldn't have been my job to keep all the little carpet rats away from my props but it fell to me because I hadn't set up any other arrangements and I robbed myself of valuable personal prep time. Nor should it have been acceptable for the children to rush the stage after my Miser's Dream. And finally, the old saying holds true, NEVER FOLLOW A CHILD ACT!

By Michael L.

Ultimate Ace Transposition

Ultimate Ace Transposition...

...simple (effective) card magic

By Aommaster



Before making any quick judgements of this trick, please try it. When I was first taught this trick, I thought "Everyone will see how it is done", but when I performed this, it never failed to stun. My favourite aspect of this trick is that it is completely impromptu, uses no real sleight of hand (although they can be used, they are not required, and may just be unnecessary), as well as the fact that the deck can be borrowed. The deck may not even be a complete deck, as long as the aces are there, or any four of a kind for that matter.

Pull out four aces from a pack of cards (they don't need to be aces, they can be four-of-a-kind, but aces seem to have the highest impact) and place them in a row in front of you, facedown. On top of each of the aces, deal three cards facedown. It doesn't matter what the cards are. Set the rest of the deck aside. Place the piles, one on top of the other, forming one pile.

"Now" you patter, "you should all agree to me that every fourth card in the pile is an ace". Show that this is

Ultimate Ace Transposition (cont.)

true. You can either fan the cards, or show them one-by-one, counting, 1-2-3-ace. I tend to use this method, as it makes the spectator think that something strange is going to happen while I do it.

Now, turn the pile over so that it is, again, face down. Deal 4 cards facedown, saying "1-2-3-ace". Casually, take the top card of the pile, still facedown, pointing at the last card that you have dealt, asking the spectator "What card have I just dealt over?". The spectator is very likely to say that it is an ace. when he does so, tell him "Please turn that card over." When he turns it over, he sees that it is the ace.

Now this is where the only move in the trick comes into play. While he is turning the card over, the card that you picked up to point at the last card you dealt is placed AT THE BOTTOM of the pile. So basically, one card from the top of the pile is placed at the bottom after the fourth card is dealt. Here, you can use a pass, to bring it to the bottom, but, it is not necessary because the misdirection is extremely great. Everyone in the audience, I guarantee, will be looking at that card, expecting something great to happen, and that is when you would execute this move.

Now, ask the spectator to turn the ace over. Start dealing, again, one card at a time from the top of your pile, counting out loud "1-2-3-ace", although what you are really dealing is "2-3-ace-1". Deal the rest of the pile in the same way without stopping.

What you now have is four piles. The first two piles contain indifferent cards. The third pile contains an indifferent card at the bottom of the pile. The remaining cards are all aces. The fourth pile has an ace at the bottom, followed by all indifferent cards.

You are now set to perform the rest of the transposition. Turn the first two piles face up. These contain indifferent cards, as the spectators expect. Take the bottom card of pile #3. This is an indifferent card. While doing this, tell the spectators "the third pile contains indifferent cards". Take the bottom card of pile #4. While doing this, tell the spectators "the fourth pile is the ace pile".

Wave your hands over the two piles and say "Watch how I will make the two piles transpose", and snap your fingers. Turn over both piles together. The cards, have indeed, transposed!

By Aommaster

Can It Be Possible...?

Can it be possible...?

...more simple (*effective*) card magic

By Matthew Smith



This is an impromptu card trick that I devised one evening when performing to friends.

EFFECT:

A spectator chooses any card from a shuffle deck (can be borrowed). The card is returned to the deck

IMPORTANT: *The magician does not see the card. The deck is cut several times to thoroughly mix the cards.*

The magician, against all odds attempts to find the spectators cards. One by one the cards are dealt face up onto a table. However, upon dealing the cards into a face up pile, three cards are moved to one side and kept **FACE DOWN**. Neither the spectators nor the performer know what cards these are. The 49 cards remaining have now all been dealt face up onto the table. Gasps from the audience, their selected card has not been seen. Can it be possible that their card is one of those three cards set aside?

By finger print recognition and heat perception analysis, two of the three cards are discarded. The one remaining card ends up being the spectator's card! How can this be possible???!?!!

Can It Be Possible...? (cont.)

REQUIREMENTS:

One deck of cards and a captive audience!

INSPIRATION:

Its no more than a key card location trick, which I will explain in a few moments. But how did I come about performing it? I was in a pub with some mates last night. I was on a roll with a few impromptu card tricks and a couple of poker demonstrations etc. We had done an ACR earlier, and I asked one of my friends to place their card into the deck wherever they wanted. I was going to launch into a key card location trick, however forget their card had been signed – D'oh! With no card control possible as I had put the cards down on the table etc, I had to think on my feet. This is what I came up with.

METHOD:

A card is chosen. Do not have it signed! While the spectator is showing the card to friends, gather up the deck and place into the left hand. Get ready to perform the Hindu shuffle. Please refer to Royal Road to Card Magic or Mark Wilson's Complete Course to Magic if not 100% sure what a Hindu shuffle is.

First glimpse the bottom card. This will be your key card or locator card. Do this subtly. Don't draw attention to what you are doing! After glimpsing the bottom card, you can do a 'belly' shuffle... a Hindu shuffle starting by pulling out the centre block of cards thus retaining the bottom stock. Then, in Hindu Shuffle fashion, start shuffling the cards until the spectator says STOP. At this point offer the left hand packet to the spectator so that they can replace their card.



Left hand packet has the spectators card replaced (X). Right hand shows the previously glimpsed key card.

Once the card has been returned, the remainder of the deck (in the right hand) goes on to of the spectator's card. You know have the following situation. A pile of cards, the spectator's card (X), the key card (Ace of Spades) and the rest of the deck.

Cut the deck twice. As long as you complete the cuts, the key card and spectator's card will keep together, and the two cards should be around the middle. Pick up the deck and replace into the left hand dealing position

You now talk about how impossible it would be to locate their card. Build this up. This trick relies greatly on presentation.

With the deck face down in the left hand, deal cards off the top of the pile, one at a time, and turn them face up onto the table. Repeat this.



From left to right, random cards, the spectators card (X), the key card and the rest of the deck

Whilst doing this all you are doing is looking for the key card. However, don't make this obvious. Talk about chance, probability, looking for finger prints/signs, feeling for heat etc. As soon as the key card is laid down face up (Ace of Spades), the next card will be the spectators chosen card. Before turning the spectators selection over say something like:

"This card feels hot, and there looks to be finger prints all over it"



Dealing cards from the top of the left hand packet, turning them face up as they are dealt onto the table

Can It Be Possible...? (cont.)

Place this card (X) FACE DOWN to one side. This is the spectator's card. However no one knows it's the selection. Return to dealing the cards face up onto the tabled pile of cards. Stop twice more and remove two face-down cards. Place them to the **RIGHT** of the spectator's card.

Continue until the whole deck of cards has been dealt down FACE UP. Remark that you hope they haven't seen their chosen card!!!!!!!

Place the pile of cards to one side, and bring in the three face down cards. All you do know is "big-up" the effect, and get rid of the two cards that you know not to be the spectators card.

Once one face down card is left, turn it over slowly, and like me take your applause!



The key card has just been dealt onto the table; therefore the next card will be the spectators card (X)



The final three cards, from left to right, the selection and two other cards

Why did it work?

As I said earlier, I had to think on my feet. I was making it up as I went along. However, the reaction I got was excellent! It just didn't seem to be a Key Card trick – it was built around a story, and at the same time, the spectators were trying to catch me out by looking at the cards being dealt face up to spot their card.

I tried it on other people that night, on the family at home, and at work this morning. It was well received by all. So I thought I'd share it with you as a small way of saying thank you to everyone who has shared their knowledge and information with me.

What if their card is at the bottom of the pile?

You have a miracle on your hands – the last card from a fairly cut deck ends up being their card – WOW!

What if their card is at the top of the pile and you don't know until you reach the bottom card and realise it to be the key card (I.e. dealt the chosen card face up onto the table first)

This shouldn't happen if you do only a few cuts. You should be able to control it to around the centre of the deck

However, if you do turn over the top card and it is in fact the spectator's card – I'm sure they would gasp and you'd realise!

However a way to combat this would be to ribbon spread the cards all face up before going into the dealing phase. Just glance at the card to the far right of the spread. If it's the key card, gather up the deck and give the deck one more genuine cut

EXTENSIONS

There are many possibilities with this typed of trick! If you were to classic force (or any other natural force) the selection, and then do the routine as stated, you could have a matching prediction in your wallet or a sealed envelope for a bigger finish. People will have forgotten who they selected their card by the time the effect is over. Although using the classic force should not arouse any suspicions in the first place

I'm not consciously aware of ever seeing anyone perform this trick to me or reading about it. The only item of originality I claim to this trick is the way I have structured it. If you break the trick down all you have is a key card trick, the principle of which has been around for many years!

Enjoy it – I look forward to any feedback you may have

Wiffyboy