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TopHat

December 2005...

...45th edition

By Jon Snoops



Welcome to December's TopHat ezine for MagicBunny members. This month's edition features plenty of articles and effects from members of the forums. It seems that the impending end to the ezine has spurred several new writers to send in their work - don't stop now! All articles and original effects are welcome... contact me by email (jonsnoops@magicbunny.co.uk) to discuss possible contributions. Onto the ezine, but first a couple of admin-related bits...

There's been quite some confusion over when the monthly TopHat will come to an end. So I'll try to clear it up here. We'll be going up to issue 50 (May 2006) with the current monthly format. After that, we're still deciding which direction to take but we'll be sure to let you know.

Over on the forums, the Christmas decorations are now adorning every post. Not so long to go now! Speaking of the forums, we're now averaging well over 2000 posts a week. MagicBunny is coming on in leaps and bounds... it's hard to believe that it's around four years since we began.

Speaking of Christmas celebrations, a group of Bunnies are meeting (as usual) in London on the 30th December - anyone is welcome to come along for some magic. There's a preliminary plan for the day up now but this may change. If money's a little tight for the show you can always meet before and after... basically come along and have some fun. It's a great way to meet other magicians if you're not a member of an official club or otherwise. See [this thread](#) for details.

Also, I'm pleased to report that the badge project has now been finalised with generous purchases from many members meaning that we could order a large quantity for conventions, Bunny meetings and other informal get-togethers. This is now in the hands of the badge company but we hope to have samples by the end of the year and the full run shortly, in the New Year. My express thanks to all who have ordered badges and to those who haven't - you still can - check the thread in General for details.

I think that's all the news to report for this year. It's been a busy one... almost forgot! With the continuing expansion of the site, we've managed to successfully rope in Wayne Clancy to deal with the rising amount of technical issues presented. Those who know Wayne personally know that he's an honest and dedicated guy. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Wayne to the moderating team. I'm certain that he'll be a valuable addition.

And on that note, that's all I have to say, so here're December's offerings for you to peruse and enjoy. On behalf of the entire moderating team, I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and, of course, a Happy New Year.

All the best,
Jon

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ESP Brainwave

ESP Brainwave...

...simple mentalism

By Johnny Anonymous

EFFECT:

You show five ESP cards. After explaining how ESP cards are used in a variety of psychic tests, you turn around and remove one of the five cards. You ask the spectator which shade they choose. They reveal their choice of shape, and you reveal that the card you removed matches their prediction. You then turn the card over to reveal it has a different back colour, in true Brainwave fashion.

YOU NEED:

5 ESP Cards of one back colour, and 5 ESP Cards of a different back colour. If you do not have ESP cards with different back colours, you can mark one set of cards with a large "X" on the backs.

SET-UP:

Stack one packet of ESP cards in the following order, from the face of the packet: Circle, Cross, Wavy Lines, Square, Star. I use this order as it is easy to remember - a circle is made of one line, the cross is made of two lines, there are three wavy lines, the square is made of four lines, and the star is (almost) made of five lines. If you would like to use a different order, please do.

Have the duplicate cards (with opposing back colour) hidden in different pockets, or compartments of gimmicked wallets. Just remember which card is where.

METHOD:

"ESP Cards such as these, are used to test psychic connections between two people. There are five shapes. A circle, a cross, wavy lines, a square, and a star."

As you say this, with the packet face up, count each card from one hand to the other, reversing their order. The circle should now be on top of the packet, and the star at the face.

ESP Brainwave (cont.)

"In tests, one person will choose one of the five shapes, and the other person attempts to divine which shape was chosen. I will now turn around and remove a card. When I face you again, I would like you to try to tell me which card I removed. You could try to predict which card I will remove, by thinking of a card now. You could pick a card at random, and hope it is correct. You could even try to work out the probability of me choosing one particular shape over another. However you decide to think of a card, I don't mind - it is a completely free choice."

Turn your back, and PRETEND to remove a card. However, do not make it obvious where you hide the 'removed' card. Turn around, and begin casually thumbing cards one at a time from the top of the face down packet, to the bottom - almost as if you are nonchalantly shuffling the cards. It is essential you remember the order they are in at any particular time during this cycling of the cards. Ask the spectator which card they chose. When their chosen shape is revealed, you should cut that card to the top of the packet. The casual counting action covers the need to cut the packet.

"Very interesting! You're good at this, you're exactly right."

You can then display the five cards as only four, by holding the top two cards as a double, thus exposing the face of only one card. When you show the 'four' cards, be sure to show them both front and back, to enable the spectator to absorb the colour of the backs of the cards. Do not make an issue of the back of the cards just yet. Square the packet of cards, and remove the duplicate of the spectator's card from wherever you placed it prior to performance.

"As I said earlier, ESP cards are used to test mindreading capabilities between two subjects. They are not however used to predict the future. Before the performance I had a feeling you would choose this card, which I why I took this card from a different deck."

Turn over the selected card, to reveal it is from a different deck.

By Johnny Anonymous

Tag Team Magic

Tag Team Magic...

...otherwise known as the Double Act

By Gary Scott



In writing this month's magic article, I would like to focus on the important aspects of working in a double act. I am currently one half of a double act with Rory Martin, who you all know as Rammeh on Magic Bunny. What I am about to get into, is the general ideas of what makes a double act work. Some of you will have read my initial thoughts on this in a post that I wrote on the forums, but now I'm going break everything down, into what I understand makes me and Rammeh work. I believe that these same principles have been the anchor for success of all double acts, across all entertainment genres.

I will begin by telling you that I will repeat what I wrote on Magic Bunny. I will intersperse what I originally wrote with added writings.

Creating a double act is not merely a case of putting two magicians together. The most important factor is that you both must 'gel'. Be a unit. Not just in your 'work' but in real life too. The great comic and singing double acts of our time have this in common. Think of Morecambe and Wise, Martin and Lewis, David Walliams and Matt Lucas. Even the great magic double acts. Siegfried and Roy and The Pendragons. These luminaries have the connection with each other to be a unit. Whether it be off or on stage. So many of us take double acts for granted. It is not easy finding another person who you can trust to do the right thing by you. Finding that person who fits your performing criteria on and off stage may take time, but when you do,

Tag Team Magic (cont.)

it will be an instant rapport. I have tried working with others in the past, but because of personal and professional differences, it just doesn't work.

Me and Rammeh work so well, because our goals in magic are the same. Our approach or styles may be different, but its *who we are* that counts. We complement each other. I am the serious prestidigitator, whilst his performance style is what could best be called 'Tomfoolery'... But it is not over performed in anyway. It is just enough of each to blend into an 'entertaining' act. I like to refer to the performance of the character types as a drop of dye in an ocean of serious magic. You can still see that its the ocean, but when the light hits it, the surface shimmers with a rainbow of colour.

With the help and input of people such as Mike Jay, Tony Spallino, Lee Alex, Jon Snoops, Magicwill...we are moving ever forward with our 'duo' work... and it is a lot more fun sharing the magical experience with someone too. Two minds are better than one and nothing is more true than when it comes to working on material. Even though you learn your material as an individual, putting these together as one can be very rewarding. You watch the routines grow together. You are able to solve problems... together. This is the most positive aspect of a double act. The combination of two individuals ideals and methods for making the 'unit' of the double act work.

The feeling that you are sharing with someone. You are both sharing the accolades for the work. You are both working together to make what you are doing a success and this is what I like most about a double act. One of the main problems with being a magician, is that it can be a very isolating way to spend a good part of your life. A good double act will give you the opportunity to spend time with a colleague, who shares your passion for magic and wants to take it in the same direction as yourself.

There are many people who just want to do stuff for the sake of doing it. If I did not 'gel ' or have some kind of connection with Rammeh, there would be no chance of us succeeding in what we are trying to accomplish. There are some general *do nots* that may make you think about whether you wish to pursue a double act of some kind.

Do Not:

- Think that a double act is an excuse to make your magic lazy or become complacent in what you do. You must work doubly so on every aspect of your work. This shows respect to your act and your partner.
- Take on board the 'idea' of a double act if you have selfish ambitions. You are a team. If you want all the 'glory', it may be best to stick as a solo act. This is the main problem that I have come across in the past.
- Rely on your partner to carry the work load. Whether it be in rehearsals, prop managements or performance. You are a team and need to share the workload as evenly as possible.
- Create problems in the act by not listening to each other. You are there to work with one another. The ability to listen and communicate must be a fundamental key in making it all work.
- Think that a double act is based on two individual *magicians*. It is a combination of two individual *people* who can work together at all times. If the former were the case, then everybody would be working on a double act. Remember....its all about *who you are* and not about two magicians doing tricks.

To conclude what I have been trying to express, I will finish by quoting myself on Magic Bunny.

I'm sure with the right presentation, a duo would do well... but that's a world away from a double act.

Siya all on Magic Bunny

Best wishes,
Gary Scott

Signed Card to Ice Cube

Signed Card to Ice Cube...

...one simple method

By Ashley Williams



This idea was sent by Ashley Williams who many of you may know from the forums as Pale. Although it's another card to x, Ashley's method is very good as it twists the effect into something more of a transposition. This goes a little way into giving the effect some kind of rationalisation. Rather than the card vanishing and appearing in a block of ice half way across the room, you apparently (visually) snap the card above your drink and it's transported inside. I'll describe it almost exactly as Ashley sent it with some inevitable added thoughts throughout.

Setup: Ashley uses a duplicate that you've signed across the face. He recommends a court card since this signature will later be mistaken for that of the spectators. The court card's design helps to mask the fact that it isn't. This card is folded **face-out** roughly into quarters (Ashley says to use the Mercury Card fold to get it looking rough but this isn't really necessary – just fold it up) and the card is frozen in an ice cube tray, submerged in water. When the card is frozen inside the frosted ice cube, the mock signature is actually quite convincing. Get this prepared ice cube onto your drink hidden amongst other pieces of ice. If you have trouble doing this, Ashley tells us that any waitress will help for a 5 spot.

The last part of the setup is to arrange the top of the deck in this order: duplicate force card, indifferent card, indifferent card with double stick tape on its back (from top of the deck face down). The first indifferent card (second from top) will be the card you visually switch their signed card for so I like to use something like a joker or ace that will contrast well with the court card. The other card with tape on allows for a clean display at the end to show that their card is gone. I prefer to use a blob of wax which when stuck onto a card's back and removed leaves enough residue to stick to the card above. It's also easier to peel apart than double stick tape and more invisible. Ashley also suggests using roughing fluid.

To begin, force the top card in any way, retaining the rest of the setup on top. Ashley recommends the riffle force but any good force will do. Place the selected card face up onto the deck and have it signed across the face. I always do it this way. Your rationalisation for putting the card onto the deck face up is to give them a surface on which to write. This is so much better than the spectator giving you back the signed card, you squaring it on the pack (in order to steal the next card underneath) then removing it again. So under cover of blowing the ink dry, thumb count off the two top cards, peeling off the adhesive from underneath. Pick up this double from the bottom edge in a 'biddle' grip where you're holding it along the short end instead of the long end. "This is the great part" Ashley tells me – and I agree – it's very visual. You tap the double against your glass three times and snap change, instantly transforming the signed card into the joker.

After a **short** pause (beat) to let this sink in, drop the double onto the deck and square, adhering the signed card to the one below it. Flip the top card face down onto the table without letting go then lever it face up again and drop it there. Now flip the next four or five cards face up from the top of the deck to show all are different. The second card will be the double but it will remain together, hiding the signed card. Flip the remainder of the deck face up and ribbon spread it on top of the cards already on the table to show the selection has really gone. Don't wait for long after this quick display to show the card in the ice cube in your glass.

A slightly easier method suggested is to use a double lift instead of the snap change but it takes away the visual element from the effect. Just double turnover the selected (read: forced) card which must be second from the top, have it signed and turned face down. Tap it on the glass and it changes.

I like it. It's pretty simple and obviously effective. If your kind of performance setting is bars/clubs then doing it with the spectator's drink is **the** way to go. Don't overlook this strong piece of magic.

By Ashley Williams aka Pale

Flash Production

Flash Production...

...A visual production

By Bennie Wardi



This is little production that you have might have read on MB but I thought that it would also be good here. I came up with this effect when I was sleeping. I had read the concealing method in some book and then when I was just thinking of effects and that move I came up with this.

In my humble opinion, this is a very clean production!

EFFECT:

Magician rolls up his sleeves and shows a lighter and a little piece of paper.

Then he lights the paper to fire and gets a big flash. When the flash is over there is a deck of cards from nowhere held in his hands!

REQUIREMENTS:

A deck of cards (in card box!), flash paper and a lighter. Also you need to be wearing a pretty loose shirt.

METHOD:

Put the pack of cards in your **armpit** so that nobody can see it (and it is there comfortably and stays well) but you can move your hands naturally. You can roll up your sleeves pretty easily and naturally with just a little practice.

Take a piece of flash paper and a lighter and you can show your hands empty: that you don't have anything else other than a lighter and a piece of paper. You don't even have to show the flash paper, you can conceal it behind the lighter or between your fingers, etc... use your imagination!

Keep the lighter in the same hand as where the deck is eg. If the deck is in right armpit, keep the lighter in the right hand and the flash paper in your left hand.

Light the flash paper and at the same time you drop it and when the flash is ending (or still burning, try and work on your timing) drop also the deck from your armpit. Catch the deck with same hand that was keeping the flash paper, and you have a very clean production from nowhere!

ODDS AND ENDS:

Try to catch the deck pretty much in the middle of your body, or bring it to the middle behind the flash. You can hide this if you jump back when the flash is on, like: "What was that!?"

You have to work on your timing but with pretty short time practising you can do it!

One of you suggested (Gareth Witty) that you could do this in reverse too, using a pull. Actually you don't need a pull. Just throw it into your armpit and with a bit of practise you'll get it down nicely!

You should practise this technique like like any other eg. Classic Palm. Keep the deck in your armpit while you do other things, and pretty fast you will learn to keep your hands totally normally with the deck hidden in your armpit.

Also one idea came to my mind while I was practising this. The deck is still warm if you keep it for long enough in your armpit. Then you have great line: "Look you can even feel the warm still in this deck!"

Thanks, Bennie Wardi

Real Mentalism Part I

Real Mentalism...

...Part I

By P. Craig Browning



There has been much debate, especially in recent time, about the *issue* of Mentalism and what defines it. Truth is we have several schools of thought...

- **The Trendies** – these are the wannabes inspired by the current flow of poorly scripted and directed televised specials in which a hint of mentalism/mental magic has been blended in with stage illusion, bizarre styled effects and of course a rock-n-roll “Goth” element for the most part. The secondary influence stemming from actual mentalists like Derren Brown and Gerry McCambridge who seem to have taken an MTV approach to some of what they offer at the public level.
- **Mental Magicians** – as the name implies these are stage and/or close-up magicians who toss a bit of mental magic type material into their shows. Though we’ve seen an increase of this type of performer and we’ve seen this type cross over the proverbial line in the sand, reaching into the deeper auspices of “true” mentalism for materials that really don’t belong in a “magic show” (if one wishes to gain the best possible impact with them). Granted, this is a huge can of worms many would love to debate, but I think you’ll understand my definition and reasons for it, as we move through this series.
 - **The Bizarrist** – though Bizarre Magick envelopes a much broader scope than what we see in its mentalism connection, when done properly it incorporates many of the psychological tools allied with Mentalism. Namely, the investment of belief or “suspension of disbelief” that’s intentionally exploited by the Psychic Entertainer. Too, we must remember that one side of Bizarre Magick is in fact “Haunted” or “Spiritualistic” theater i.e. Séance, Ghost Stories, House Haunting, etc. And of course, this field has come to include elements allied with the Carnival Side Show world as well, but Bizarre work on the whole, is a massive category worthy of separate study.
- **The Analytical Mentalist** – are those performers that sustain their demonstrations via a pseudo-scientific theme such as an ability to read body language, NLP, or even psychological implications and related controls. Members of this category tend to envelope the greater whole of today’s Mentalism movement and too, they tend to be individuals that host a skeptic/cynic’s point of view around the psychic issue.
- **The Traditionalist** – if you’ve ever watched Larry Becker, Falkenstein & Willard or even Kreskin you are witnessing what I call the “traditionalist”... even Max Maven fits into this niche in that we are talking about high energy ENTERTAINERS. They aren’t afraid to toss in a good dose of corn, bad jokes, and the classic used car salesman’s charisma. Such performers are generally popular with the industrial/trade show as well as cabaret markets and include most of your Hypnotist and Mega Memory type performers.
- **The Truest** – is the peculiar category that individuals like Richard Webster, Ron Martin, and I happen to fit into. We tend to straddle the fence when it comes to the kind of venues we work in and the role we play; frequently working as a legit Reader/counselor as well as the showman all in the same day. Most of us in this category have a limited sense of belief and exceptional understanding when it comes to things metaphysical, magickle, esoteric and of the occult. We see ourselves as “honest” paranormalists and “psychic” investigators (not the same thing as being a skeptic, though many of us actually assume said title.)

As to which of these categories is “genuine” mentalism would only be a matter of perspective, in that each hosts its application. If antiquity were to serve as the rule however, it would be of the latter categories that

Real Mentalism Part I (cont.)

we'd find the greater sense of substance. The Analytical styled performer evolving out of the early days of skeptical inquiry and the famed demonstrations of Kellar, Dunninger and of course Houdini. Similarly, this style of presentation has come from the charlatans themselves, many of whom took on the persona of being a learned expert or researcher involved in this or that branch of "scientific" exploration.

The Traditionalist seems to have surfaced as a kind of spin-off to the above. On one level, we could call what these performers did "Mental Magic" in that their demonstrations frequently took on the feel and approach of a magic show vs. actual mentalism. The primary difference with this type of practitioner however, is their sense of showmanship and addressing their role as a Mind Reader or whathaveyou. It would seem that this style of performer approached what he/she did as being pure show business, and in many instances, retaining their affiliation with the magic fraternity.

As an actor I could go out and take on the role of being James Randi and making life a living hell for anyone that believes in the paranormal or that may think themselves "Psychic". I could do a fair job at it, but it wouldn't be a convincing job.

Why?

Because it's not who I am!

In order to be an effective performer, regardless of what area of study you happen to be working in, you MUST pull from your own inner-self; your life's experiences, your understanding, your personal empathy and philosophies, etc. As has been said in the past, YOU MUST DO THE STUFF THAT'S YOU!

How many of you are trying to be some kind of dark, mysterious Goth-like entity and yet, it is proving to be a pain in the hind side to do so?

Heavy characters are very, very difficult to pull off. Look at the classic monsters (actors) of yesteryear and how they sustained their macabre image; Vincent Price, Boris Karloff, Orson Wells... all of them sewed a strong sense of humor into their persona. Even Max Maven combines his eccentric looks and mannerisms with tongue firmly planted in cheek because he knows he simply cannot pull off the kind of sinister "heavy" people see him as being. T.A. Waters did the same thing; he sold mystery and intrigue but in reality, it was the opposite of who and what he really was.

Based on what I know about certain "stars of magic" I'm rather confident that we aren't going to find too many mercenaries or axe murderers living out that image on stage... but that's another story altogether...

As a Mentalist we, more than any other area of magic, must define the kind of personality and performer we are. In short, we must discover which "niche" we best fit in or which category we want to mold ourselves into. In so doing, we need to look logically at...

- a. Our ability to pull off that kind of character; and
- b. The viability of such a character – is it commercial – something people will pay to experience?

Sadly, some of our own ideas (most of them) won't lend themselves well to that second area of issue. Fortunately, a bit of study and self-discipline can help us evolve into the kind of character that's best suited to our natural state e.g. the first side of things t'aint so difficult... that is, of course, provided you are honest with yourself in looking at which category you are best suited to. Bearing in mind too, that your own energy will shift; what you choose and do right now will not be the same thing you present in seven to nine years. That's just plain physics! We all change and become someone completely different than we were, on a seven to nine year cycle; this is a physical, emotional, chemical and psychological fact of life. Understanding this helps us better understand how to apply ourselves in our efforts in cultivating an on-going sense of character, reputation and general image as both, performer and human being.

I know I've jumped about here, but I think most of you are intelligent enough to see some morsels worth chewing on and considering; especially those of you "new" to mentalism (magic in general) and striving to define yourself and your identity.

Catch you next issue!

By P. Craig Browning

Topsy-Turvy Bottles

Topsy-Turvy Bottles... ...thoughts on routines

By Peter Marucci



The trouble with a lot of magic is that, when the routine is over, there seems to be no clear-cut ending. One example is the linking rings. After you have linked the second and third ring, the audience is already ahead of you - they know the rest are going to be linked. And what happens when you finish? Nothing, usually. How many times have you seen a magician standing there with outstretched arms, holding a chain of rings, and grinning vacuously as he waits for the applause that comes more out of sympathy than appreciation?

There are a number of tricks like that in magic: Good, solid tricks that only need a little showmanship at the finish to turn them into something - well, magical. One such effect is the Topsy-Turvy Bottles, recently released as Confusing Crayons. If you're not familiar with it, here is the routine in brief. The outfit (for Topsy-Turvy Bottles) consists of two bottles and two metal tubes. And something else - but it's a dealer item, so I'm not going into that here. The magician holds one tube on his hand over a bottle and the volunteer (who should know better) does the same. Then they go into a do-as-I-do routine, where the magician's bottle is always as it should be but the spectator's bottle is upside down or, at least, pointing in a different direction from the magician's.

In the right hands, this can be mildly amusing. In the wrong hands, it can be pure torture for the audience. First, it invariably goes on far too long. And, second, there is no logical ending; nowhere to stop it; nothing different ever happens.

That is about to change:

PREPARATION:

Obviously, you'll need a set of the bottles (or crayons). Take one of the bottles (the one you will be using) to your local glass and mirror shop where, for a few bucks, they will grind the bottom off the bottle and smooth the edges. You are left with a bottomless bottle that looks like a regular bottle.

Then stop off at your favorite magic shop and buy a bunch of spring flowers (the ones you have are getting a little ratty-looking, anyhow). Attach a small key ring to the strings of the flowers and slide them up into the bottomless bottle until the ring is all but out of sight.

PRESENTATION:

Having lured an unsuspecting volunteer on stage, show him the ungimmicked bottle and tube. Have him hold his bottle in his left hand, by the base, and slide the tube over the top with his right hand. You do the same with the gimmicked bottle.

Tell him you are about to give him his first lesson in magic (and ain't THAT the truth!) and all he has to do is follow your moves carefully.

Lift your tube to show the bottle in an upright position and have him do the same. You both lower your tubes and put your right hands on the top (left hand already on the bottom of the tube).

Turn the bottle and tube upside down, then upright, then upside down again. The spectator does each move as you do, so make the turns slowly.

Lift your tube and show the bottle upright. When he does the same, of course, his bottle will be upside down. Look somewhat disappointed in him and offer to show him again. At this point, ask him to turn his bottle upright so you can both start the same.

Again, turn the bottle and tube an odd number of times and again remove your tube, showing the bottle

Topsy-Turvy Bottles (cont.)

upright. When he does the same, of course, his bottle will be upside down.

STOP RIGHT HERE.

To repeat this would be pointless for you, the magician, and painful for the spectator and the audience.

Shake your head sadly and express mock disappointment in your assistant. Then offer to make it as simple as possible for him. With both bottles again upright, cover the tubes with your hands and turn them upside down one and then back again. Tell him that both bottles should be right side up and ask if he can tell if his is that was. He will answer "yes." (If he answers "no," you've probably got another magician on stage with you.)

Tell him to remove his tube, showing the bottle upright. As he does this, stick your index finger in the neck of the bottle and pull it and the tube up together, while holding onto the ring attached to the spring flowers with your left ring finger.

This should be timed so that, just as his tube clears his bottle, your tube should reveal the bouquet of lowers in your left hand.

Feigns surprise and astonishment at this turn of events and suggest to the spectator and the audience that both of you need more rehearsal for this trick.

As for a round of applause for your assistant and send him back to his seat.

NOTE: The last bit - turning the surprise on yourself and not the assistant - gets him off the hook and doesn't leave him looking the fool. This keeps him and the audience on your side - and they'll go away remembering having seen a magician and not some smart-ass.

That's called entertainment - and that's what magic is supposed to be all about.

Peter Marucci
email: showtimecol@aol.com

How to Entertain With a Deck of Cards

How to Entertain...

...with a deck of cards

By Timothy Arends



This is not an article on how to do card tricks. This is an article on something rather more important: how to actually entertain with a deck of cards. As Mark Wilson once wrote, "Magic is not inherently entertaining. Magic that is presented by someone who is not an entertainer becomes a mere puzzle."

If this is true of magic in general, it must be even truer of card magic. Card magicians have a reputation that is not a particularly good one. Perhaps this is attributable to uncle Bob doing those boring count-down card tricks at family gatherings. Perhaps it is due to the card magicians who don't know when to quit, as immortalized by W. Somerset Maugham in his story "Mr. Know All": "He asked me if I wanted to see a card trick. I said no. He did five. "

One problem of card magic is that it requires more concentration on the part of the spectator than other types of magic. For example, if a magician changes a red handkerchief to a blue one, the change is obvious. If a magician changes a four of diamonds to a five of diamonds, the change is much more subtle. Noticing such details requires more concentration on the part of the spectator, and is therefore more tiring.

How to Entertain With a Deck of Cards (cont.)

Another problem is that card magicians tend to perform much too quickly. Famed magic writer Henry Hay, in his book *Learn Magic*, wrote that "Every crowd is as slow as the slowest person in it. Some people are very slow indeed." He cited John Mulholland's rule for showing something, such as a coin or an empty hand: take three times as long as you naturally would. This is so that every spectator - even slow Joe - will see what is going on. Mulholland would say silently to himself, "Nothing in my hand--once. Nothing in my hand--twice. Nothing in my hand--three times, and now maybe slow Joe in the back row knows that my hand is empty."

But what do most amateur card magicians do? They fly through their card tricks, hardly giving the spectator a chance to follow what is going on. Perhaps they figure that if they do their tricks quickly, it will be harder for the spectator to figure them out. Or perhaps they think the spectator will be impressed with their skill. Most likely, they don't give the subject much thought at all. In any event, it will be harder for the spectator to understand what is supposed to be happening in the first place! If this rule of remembering "slow Joe in the back row" is important for General Magic, think of how important it is for the card magician.

In tricks where a spectator selects a card, it never hurts to impress upon him the importance of remembering his selection. If performing for more than one spectator, have him show the card to others at the table.

The question of whether the magician should make a display of his skill, or whether he should, even if he is an expert card handler, handle cards in an ordinary, perhaps even slightly fumbling manner, is a question which has been hotly debated. I take a neutral stance on this issue. I can see both sides of the argument, but a few card flourishes could add interest or intrigue to a performance. This is especially true in cases in which a magician is openly claiming that he has possession of a certain amount of skill, as in gambling demonstrations. However, since most of us, including myself, do not possess expert card handling abilities, this point is moot. Ultimately, it comes down to personal preference. Of course, attempting to do difficult flourishes at which one is not competent, and thereby doing them in a fumbling manner, is worse than doing nothing at all.

Now we come to one of the most important elements of entertaining with cards: a good patter line. This can make almost any trick more entertaining. "But what about David Blaine" some may ask. "He performs with very little, if any, patter". But David Blaine is the exception that proves the rule. His low-key performance style is what made him stand out from other professional magicians - it was his unique "hook". Now that he has claimed this performance style as his own, amateur magicians who attempt to emulate him will be seen as David Blaine wannabes. To attempt to mimic David Blaine's style would be as disastrous for the average magician as trying to emulate Eugene Burger's professorial demeanour - they are two extremes. A happy balance lies somewhere in the middle.

If it is used only with those effects with which it truly fits, story patter can be very entertaining. A good example of this is the effect from *The Magic Book* by Harry Lorraine, "This guy and the drinker". Another good example of good story patter is the old beginner's trick in which the magician tells of burglars (represented by the four Jacks) break into different parts of a department store (the four Jacks are inserted into different parts of the deck). A story, however, should not be shoe horned onto an effect that it does not fit. You should not attempt to make spot cards represent characters in your story, for example. Storytelling is the oldest form of entertainment. It is a way cavemen amuse themselves. And I think the human brain is hard wired to enjoy good stories. Therefore, when a story can be adapted to a trick, it turns something involving mere pieces of paper into a miniature drama. But it does have to be done with discretion.

One good way to learn to be an entertaining card magician is to watch how the top professionals perform - not to steal their ideas or patter, or to mimic their mannerisms, but simply to observe the various nuances of their performance - how they handle spectators, how they routine their effects, how they deliver their patter. I think you'll notice that professionals do not rush their tricks or perform them in a dull, lifeless way.

If you wish to read further on this subject, *Expert Card Technique* by Jean Hugard and Frederick Braue has some good chapters on presentation. The website magicpatter.com is not updated very often, but it does

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have some good patter examples.

But the most important step to becoming a more entertaining card magician is the desire to do so. If you put as much thought and effort into being entertaining as you do in mastering sleights and moves, you will have won half the battle right there.

Tim Arends lives in Indiana and posts on Magic Bunny as "Cybernettr" (a nonsense word he made up).

By Timothy Arends

Future of Magic

Future of Magic...

...a new direction

By Michael L



It's December and it is getting so cold my dogs (especially the puppy) are refusing to go outside. On the flip side my girls wake up every morning and run to the window to check for snow. It's the time of year that I suppose I should be writing about what tricks you want to find in your stocking or review the year in magic. But that isn't going to happen.

Recently I had an opportunity come up that could, if I pursue it, move magic out of my hobby bin and back to my job bin. That's a whole long story I don't really want to get into, but it highlighted something that I have been doing a lot of thinking about lately: what is the future of magic and how can I fit in?

The more pessimistic of you out there will probably ask if magic even has a future. Of course it does. By my reckoning, magic has outlasted gladiatorial games, jousting and New Coke. Magic has adapted and lasted through vaudeville, variety and the birth of the cinema. Sure, it has had ups and downs but magic isn't going anywhere. Magic will adapt and move on and we must find our places in it.

So what is going to be the new trend in magic? It is my firm belief that magic is going to become more personality oriented and less "Vegas." Simply put, magicians are going to become characters again.

Most of my life magic has been Vegas style, big and flashy with leggy assistants and bad sparkly suits... sometimes jumpsuits! There was a time there where I thought magicians had disappeared because everyone was an illusionist. Magic seemed to revolve around boxes, tigers and fire. Sure, there were a few noteworthy exceptions to this who got some air time. Performers like Harry Anderson and Penn and Teller were bucking the trend, but they were cruising through the world of standup comedy more than magic. Magic was big! Magic was shiny! It made shuttles disappear and Delorians appear. Magic had choreography.

Choreography!

It was cool, I guess, but kind of disenfranchising. I knew I didn't want to work with jungle cats or elephants and if I could attract hot leggy dancers I had bigger and better plans than finding an assistant, if you know what I mean and I think you do. So where was someone like me supposed to fit in? It was easy for close up guys, especially ones that did not want to work for children, to feel lost and alone. But the times are changing.

It started with Harry Anderson and Penn and Teller and then Michael Finney and The Amazing Johnathan. Magicians were creeping into the limelight through the stand up comedy circuit. And since places like The

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Improv and The Funny Bone don't exactly smile on the talent rolling in with four cages of albino wildcats, their magic had to be a little less flashy and a little more funny. That leaves comedy magic... and the fine line between comedy magic and prop comedy is personality.

So the groundwork has been laid for a while now, but we were still seeing *World's Greatest Magic* specials feature Melinda and a half dozen dancer laden illusion acts whose names I can't remember. Vegas magic was still going strong and, quite frankly, still is. Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Lake Tahoe, Branson and at least a couple of dozen tiny resort towns still offer up jobs. But we're talking about the future, aren't we?

I think it started like this: "Hey, we need something different." "I've got an idea. Let's do a magic special." "Let's not." "No, this guy is *different*. And chicks dig him." I'm pretty sure that was the way it all went down in the big network offices the day they decided to air the first David Blaine special.

Love him or hate him, you have to admit that Blaine turned magic upside down. The only other magic presence on TV at the time was the whole series of Masked Magician specials. People loved Blaine. They loved his whole weird "Wanna see somethin'?" schtick and his David Carradine in *Kung Fu* presentation. David Blaine instantly became the new Houdini.

Don't sell Blaine short. Not only did he hit TV audiences with a whole new performance style, his special was something new. Since his character and performing style left the showgirls and stages behind, the television guys needed something new. Throwing Blaine out on the street, this magic special felt like reality TV. The producers also made the audience reaction the real focus of the show. The final result was nothing short of groundbreaking and made David Blaine a household name. And Blaine ran with it. If you think back, for a while he was everywhere... hanging with Leonardo DiCaprio, dating super-hot chicks and dropping in on Howard Stern. He became as known, for a time, as much for being David Blaine as he was for his magic. 24/7 he was (is) his character.

Then came the tragedy. And the public freaking *loves* tragedy. We all know what happened to Roy Horn. Forget about animal act safety and appropriateness and all that crap. The media was all over Siegfried and Roy after the attack and suddenly the poster boys of Vegas magic became real, vulnerable people. Next thing you know they are on *Extra*, *Entertainment Tonight* and are all over the tabloids. Every appearance, every step in the recovery is still being covered. The boys recently visited their protégé, Darren Romeo. I know 'cause I saw it on TV. I am 100% sure I would have never seen this on national television before their accident but America has now embraced Siegfried and Roy, not as the Liberaces of magic but as people.

And then entered Criss Angel. Again, you may love him or hate him but you can't deny the impact he is making on magic. I can name at least two other weekly magic shows (*Masters of Illusion* and *Mondo Magic*) from recent years but I don't think either made it a full season. Angel has one on the books and was picked up for a second. His show has stepped far into the reality TV realm with its copious behind the scenes footage and constant interaction with friends and family. Audiences don't just like Criss' magic, they like Criss. Once again the magic has become secondary to the character.

Okay, have I made my point yet? The future of magic is not in spending \$45,000 on stage illusions and short sequined skirts. Vegas magic ain't never going away, mind you (in fact, it'll have a nice niche if variety shows replace reality TV as the networks look for another inexpensively produced format to bulk up their schedules as worldwide audiences lose interest shows like *Who Wants To Marry A Transgender Rockstar?*), but don't expect it to be the yellow brick road it has been in the last couple of decades. The new superstars will have definite distinct personalities instead of definite and distinct gimmicks.

It's probably worth noting something about the majority of this new generation of magicians. They all seem to lean to the bizarre. Blaine and Angel have a distinct implied mysticism to their persona while Anderson, Penn and Teller and AJ all have an old-school spook show gory streak in them. Not saying that you need to go that way, or that all magic will go bizarre... just something to think about.

So where's that leave you? Oh, crap, you didn't expect me to have an answer for you, did you? I haven't ever seen your act and I don't know how much personality you have. But do you have a distinct character?

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You know, something more than "Well, my character is basically a funnier/wackier/spookier/whatever-ier version of me...?" Does your character make sense with the magic you intend to perform and in the genre of work you want? That is to say, are you trying to force a spooky Edwardian warlock into kid show magic or blue material into corporate magic? Is that character entertaining enough to carry someone's interest for 5 or 10 minutes *without* magic? Another way to think about that last one: are you, as a performer and character, worth interviewing on a late night talk show?

Now that is something to think about, huh? I'll leave you with that and I hope you do think about it. But I have my own magical mysteries to mull over and besides, the dogs need to go out and it just started snowing....

By Michael L

The deadline for next month's submissions is the 28th December. If you have an article for us, it'd be very welcome for publication. Send all correspondence to TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

Many thanks to all of this month's contributors.

Jon Snoops
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