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TopHat

## February 2006...

...47<sup>th</sup> edition

By Jon Snoops



Welcome to February's ezine. We're getting closer and closer to our final edition yet the standard is still holding up. It's really nice to see new and different contributors now that we've established a finishing-line for the publication. So thank you to all contributors this month and I hope to see more new contributors in the remainder of the ezines.

We have some very good news this month... the badge project is officially complete and ready! The order from the company has been received, all pre-orders sent and everything wrapped up ready to go. I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who pre-ordered because without this startup capital we wouldn't have been able to finance the order. Your support is greatly appreciated.

If you haven't ordered yet, there're still plenty of both designs of badges left on offer. The price is £1.50 per badge plus 50p P&P per order (Int: £1.50). All you have to do is send your details (or PayPal payment, remembering to include which designs you'd like) to me at [badges@magicbunny.co.uk](mailto:badges@magicbunny.co.uk) and it'll be in the post as soon as it's received. For full details (including alternative payment methods) see the thread on the forums.

[Order now to get yours in time for Blackpool!](#)

Speaking of Blackpool, this year will be my first convention and I'm sure I won't be alone. It's kind of overwhelming with everything going on... planes, hotels, gold tickets, this, that and the other. I'm lucky to have someone else who knows what they're doing arranging most of it. I really hope to meet lots of new faces who I've spoken to online from MagicBunny as I'm sure a lot of you are. I'll be looking out for those MB badges wherever I am.

Now, onto the ezine which is still bettering each previous month as we go along. This one's 20 pages of good free magic articles, effects and chat. With material from contributors all over the world and from all areas in terms of performance level and experience this is a great resource for all magicians. Remember that you're free to send this along to any magicians you know provided that its sent unedited in its entirety.

If you like what you see here, your contributions to the ezine in the future would be very welcome. You can send all correspondence to [tophat@magicbunny.co.uk](mailto:tophat@magicbunny.co.uk) - we'd really love to see what you have to offer.

All the best,  
Jon



*The two designs next to a GB penny - each is 19mm across.*

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## KM Aces

### *KM Aces...*

...a card effect for table workers

**By Gary Scott**



#### **EFFECT**

The magician asks four spectators to point to four different cards in the deck. The cards are pulled from the deck individually and revealed to be the four aces (or any four of a kind that you wish). I personally then go into Dr. Daley's or Twisting the Aces.

#### **REQUIREMENTS**

- A deck of cards with the following stack. From the top of the deck: Ace of Hearts, Ace of Clubs, Ace of Diamonds, 7 of Spades, 2 indifferent cards, 4 Queens (or any other four of a kind), Ace of Spades then the rest of the deck
- Ability to perform the *out-jog* break
- Ability to perform a double lift
- Ability to perform the K.M. move
- Ability to 'read' the table you're working at
- A sharpie (alternate handling)

#### **METHOD & PSYCHOLOGY**

Well... lots to discuss. It may seem like a simple trick, but the emotional and interactive elements of this 'effect' are all tied up in the presentation. So let's start at the beginning.

Most of the functions that I work at are of the corporate/high society type and tables are usually circular in nature. This limits the amount of 'table space' for mats, putting things down, certain card routines, etc. Sometimes there is no space at all. For the purposes of this explanation, let's imagine that I am at a circular table of 12 seated guests. Firstly, read that table and look out for the guy/girl who does not want the magician there. You will notice this person as he or she who is purposely distracted by other things going on around the room and not giving you any attention at all.

### KM Aces (cont.)

I open with coins across and in that routine I get to go around the table, learn everybody's names and do something nice that everybody can see. I wanted to do something similar with cards, getting the *distractee* involved whilst not losing the attention of the other side of the table. This is what I came up with.

**Note:** The revelation of the 2nd and 3rd Ace is exactly the same as the 1st, so I will describe the 1st and 4th revelations only.

Take out your deck of cards and give them a false shuffle, retaining the top stock.

Go to any girl at the table and spread the cards in your hands asking her to point to any card. Whichever card she points to, out-jog that card and close up the deck. As you close up the deck get a pinky break underneath the top card. Rotate the out-jogged card from the front of the deck, keeping it face down and place it on top of the deck so that you now have a break under the top two cards. Okay... what is the motivation for me taking the card out of the deck only to place it on the top? I need somewhere to place the card whilst I ask her to hold out her hand and I gesture with my free hand so she knows exactly what to do.

I then perform the double lift to reveal her selection as the Ace of Hearts. Girls are particular emotionally attached to the symbols of the Heart and the Diamond, so this makes logical sense to open with. A gag with a romantic notion would not go a miss here.

I now perform the K.M. move to 'clean up' my double card and then place the Ace of hearts in her hand. So here I am in a situation with a girl holding an Ace of Hearts. Now if this was regular card trick, I would be standing in the same position at the table, but I am now going to move around the table to the person that is two seats away from spectator No. 1.

Whilst moving around the table, I perform a double undercut to remove the now indifferent card that is on top of the deck. I then perform the same revelations to spectators No. 2 and 3. This gives me a situation of three people now holding three different Aces and the people that are not 'helping me' are sitting next to somebody on their left and right who is holding a card.

They can follow along quite happily and not feel excluded.

Okay, now onto my favourite revelation. Spectator No. 4. Quite cheekily, I like the way it ends with me suckering in the *distractee*. Remember them?

When I offer them the choice of pointing to a card in the spread, they will do one of two things. He/she will either go with the flow, or point to the top card of the deck. If they go with the flow, perform the same out-jog revelation for the 7 of Spades, which is now the card on top of the deck. This of course is an *indicator* card and the Ace of Spades is seven cards down.

When performing the K.M. move you now add an extra card to your top stock so count down 7 cards and turn over the *next* card to reveal the Ace of Spades.

Of course, I try and feed the spectator the top card by being psychologically sneaky. I place my thumb as much over the top stock as I can when spreading the cards for them to point to any card. 90% of the time, you will find they will think you are covering something up. They will point directly to the top card and you can cleanly count down to the 7th card which is the Ace of Spades. In both cases, count down the cards in the spectators hand.

I really like the way this routine ends with 'getting one up' on the *distractee*. It also makes for a very different (for the routine) final revelation and all the magic happens in the hands. The magic also builds from a randomly selected card to a four of a kind sensation.

#### SHARPIE?

Well for some, getting four different people to go with the flow of just pointing to a card (without them actually taking it out) can be quite daunting. In this case, use a sharpie. Ask your spectators to use the pen to point to a card in the deck. With or without the sharpie, always use the line, "please point to a card in the deck". Emphasise the word *in*. It will psychologically attract your spectator to point somewhere in the middle. You can even use the sharpie as the main feature of your presentation. You could actually play a little game and get the spectators to pass the pen around to who they feel has the greatest intuition. Who ever they choose, you let them do the 'pointing.'

### KM Aces (cont.)

#### ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

When moving around the table, move around anti-clockwise where possible. You will be moving left to right which is more natural way for the spectators to absorb information. It is how we read and our brains relay information much easier this way. Try not to jog back and forth between directions like a badly edited movie or MTV video. You will lose the spectators' focus.

This effect plays to the whole table. When all 4 cards are in play you will be in this situation. Taking my example of a 12 seated table, you will have every spectator able to see a card. Making sure that everybody gets involved and enjoys what is happening is the most important part of table work.

Don't feel superior to the *distractee*. Handle the last revelation like all the others. You will find that the other spectators will enjoy the last revelation as much as the *distractee*.

Use people's names at all times (you should have learnt them in your opener), especially with the spectators that are 'helping' you.

You are only limited by your own imagination. Devise your own presentation as this routine can be played on many levels. I personally do this quite quickly as an exposition. I just really work on the last revelation. Remember, the 1st chosen card is nothing magical at all. The 2nd is a coincidence. The 3rd is amazing and the 4th is a miracle.

I like the use of the sharpie. No unruly spectators can *grab* the card out of the deck.

When doing the count down cards in the spectator's hands, you are reversing the order of the cards. Replacing the countdown cards on top of the deck automatically places your secondary four of a kind on top of the deck. You are now ready to perform a different four of a kind revelation, here or at another table.

#### THE MOVES

##### The *Out-jog Break*

(A move I've come up with independently, after reading a subtlety, briefly described in Shaun Robinson's *EZ Waltzer*)

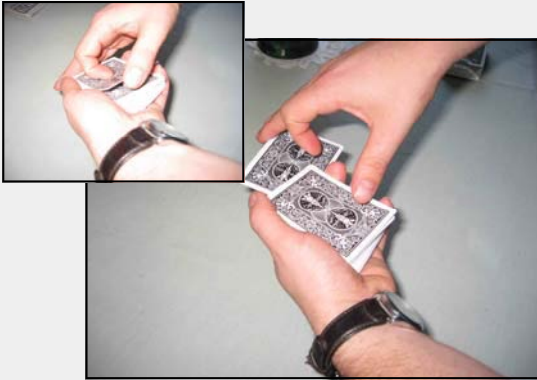


1. Spread the cards and out jog a card from the middle of the deck.

2. Close the deck and leave the card out-jogged. As the deck is closed, rest your middle, ring and pinky fingers on the out-jogged card. Also have your index finger curled on top of the deck.

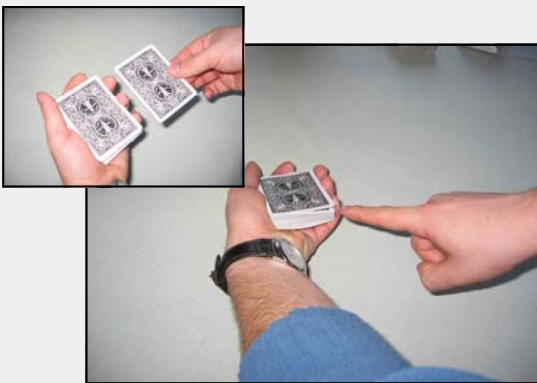


*KM Aces (cont.)*



3. Catch a break underneath the top card of the deck with your thumb, as your middle finger is placed on the left hand side (top left corner) of the out-jogged card. It begins to rotate the card out of the deck. Break and rotation should be one smooth flowing action.

4. Break shown without right hand covering deck.



5. Rotate the indifferent card completely out of the deck and place on top.

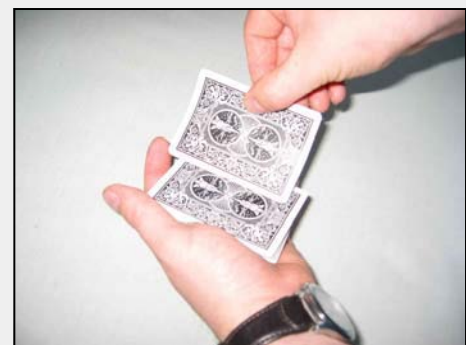
You should now have a break underneath 2 cards.

**The Double Lift**



1. Insert thumb, index and middle finger into the 2 card break.

2. Begin to turn the two cards over to reveal an Ace. As you turn over the cards, slide the left edge of the double against the deck, to help alignment of the two cards.



*KM Aces (cont.)*



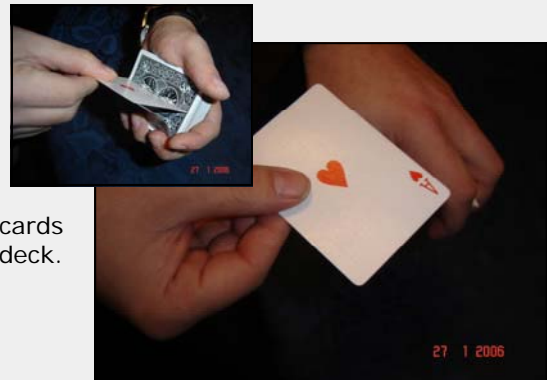
On the completion of the turn, out-jog the two cards. This way you can press down on the double card with your left index finger as it also squares the double back onto the deck. The pressing action will allow you to catch a break underneath the double as it is squared.

**The K.M. Move**



1. Go to turn the double card face down. As the double reaches the edge of the right side of the deck, press down on the uppermost of the two cards with the middle, ring and pinky fingers of your left hand.

2. Take the bottom card (Ace) and slide this away from the uppermost card (2a). Turn the card face up whilst turning your wrist downwards (2b). This will cause the two cards to split and the indifferent card will be placed on top of the deck.



3. Strike the card with your left index finger to enforce the idea of singularity. Turning of the wrist and striking of the card should be almost in unison. The larger movement of the wrist turn helps cover the replacement of the indifferent card to the top of the deck.

**A HANDLING VARIATION**

With practise, it is possible to do the K.M. move without the 'wrist kill.' You are able to stroke the double card against the top of the deck and release the top card in the 'wiping' action. Stroke the double card back and forth against the top of the deck and release the top card on the first wipe.

### *KM Aces (cont.)*

**TIP:** Keep the cards in contact with the top of the deck at all times.

Well... that's my first published trick. I hope it finds a way into some of your table hopping repertoires. I enjoy performing this as much as Ambitious Card. It is one of the few tricks with cards that get so many involved and helps develop a rapport with my spectators.

Siya all on Magic Bunny

Best wishes  
Gary Scott

### *Developing a Cabaret Act Part II*

## ***Developing a Cabaret Act...***

...Part II: Rehearsing the Routine

**By Tam McLaughlin**



Welcome to the second part of my series where I'm going to detail on what it took to put together my first cabaret show. Last month we looked at selecting effects and putting them into a routine. This month we'll look at the rehearsal process and some of the other factors that you need to take into consideration when planning a show.

#### **THE TRICKS**

My approach was to learn the techniques and methods involved in the individual tricks first so that when it came to putting it all together I could concentrate more on the presentation with confidence that mechanics of the tricks would take care of themselves.

I also used the opportunity during my lunchtimes or quiet moments at work, to write out the patter I would use. I am not good at thinking on my feet or ad-libbing so I need time to work out what I am going to say and a few rewrites before I am happy.

#### **Splash Bottle**

It did not take long to learn the mechanics of this effect which meant I could spend more time working on the presentation. I picked the music Champagne Supernova by Oasis and selected the 30 second snippet of music I wanted to use. All I had to do was edit the audio file. I have 2 PCs at home (lucky me! - actually Clare keeps reminding me that one of them is supposed to be for her) one of which runs the Linux operating system. With Linux I was able to rip the required track from the CD and use a free audio application called Audacity to edit the 30 second clip that I wanted with fade in/out and then convert to an mp3 file.

I rehearsed to my audio track until I was comfortable with the timing while making assumptions about how long it would take to walk to centre stage. I even tried different balloons until I found the one that looked good and I could blow up within 3 puffs. Yep, good old Qualatex was the balloon of choice.

I decided to video myself to see how good this effect looked and got a bit of a surprise at how awful it looked. The production was great but I was screwing my face up and moving my head back in anticipation of bursting the balloon. Not a pleasant site for an audience.

I realised that this was just a natural reaction when you burst a balloon. A reaction that I couldn't show so had to practice again while putting a fake smile without giving anything away to the audience.

During another rehearsal, I could not find my knife. I was sure it was in my inside jacket pocket. Eventually I realised that as the knife was new and hence so sharp, it slit through the stitching in the pocket lining, ending up inside my jacket.

### Developing a Cabaret Act Part II (cont.)

I had to sew up my jacket pocket and also sew some extra material to make the pockets stronger as the knife would be getting used in 3 routines and going into both inside pockets.

#### Appearing Straw

This is not so easy to practice when the straw is bigger than your floor to ceiling height. The straw was to be produced from a McDonald's bag, so I had to visit McDonalds for lunch and get a few extra bags. I had to use some sellotape to keep the bag closed over but had to remove some of the stickiness so that I could easily remove the tape.

I decided that I should have a small table out front so that I could place the McDonalds bag on to produce the straw. This would look more professional than placing the McDonalds bag on the floor.

I had an old table from a nest of tables that I was about to throw out so salvaged this and painted it black.

So, a self working trick that took me 2 minutes to learn, had taken me over 3 hours to prepare for within a proper routine.

#### Grave Mistake

This was not too difficult to prepare. I spend some time working on the presentation with a few mother-in-law jokes to get a laugh.

I had considered leaving this effect until the end of the night when I was doing my "Thank You" speech. However, my lovely wife Clare suggested that it would be better to keep all the magic together and let the "thank you" speech be exactly what it is supposed to be as everyone would be winding down at the end of the night; I could then have a few beers without worrying about another routine. I really should listen to Clare more often.

#### Bill in Kiwi

My plan was to get two male volunteers from the audience, do a bill switch, load the kiwi and move onto the Knife Through Jacket routine.

As much as I liked Carl Cloutier's bill in kiwi, there was some aspects of the routine that I couldn't do using his method. However I thought that as I have been doing magic for several years I should be able to use my knowledge and experience to devise my own method, especially as those Magic Bunny folk keep going on and on about using your brain to come up with your own ideas. I tried it and it worked.

My presentation was not exactly original but would go like this: borrow a signed banknote; indicate that it is forged; do standard bill switch with TT and produce a fake note to prove that it is forged; ditch TT, fake and load kiwi with banknote.

But I still couldn't load the note into the kiwi in my pocket fast enough without looking suspicious so I spend a few days thinking about how to get around this.

As it happens, the next routine was perfect cover for loading the banknote into the kiwi. The next routine involved an apple and some music. All I had to do was finger palm the banknote while introducing the next effect and say "we need a prop which is in my pocket – and some music", and load the kiwi while taking the apple out. The music should provide the misdirection to allow me to load the kiwi and take out the apple.

#### Knife Through Jacket

I had decided to base this effect around Wayne Dobson's excellent routine as his was direct and humorous. If you don't know this routine, then you borrow a spectator's jacket which is held at the shoulders by two spectators on either side of you. You hold a paper target on the other side of the jacket and then proceed to stab a knife through the jacket to reach a paper target on the other side. It appears that the knife has torn through the jacket and target and you then magically heal the tear in the jacket.

There are a few methods of achieving this effect which include the use of a gimmicked knife but I felt more comfortable using a normal knife, which meant that I could also use the same knife for splash bottle and to cut the kiwi to produce the signed note.



### Developing a Cabaret Act Part II (cont.)

I spent some time trying to bring something different to this effect and finally came up with the following idea:

I ask the volunteers if they will help me recreate a famous historical event. The first few bars of the trumpet fanfare in the William Tell overture plays as I bring out an apple. I ask the volunteer to place the apple on his head and point to the top of the function hall saying "There is a man with a bow and arrow aiming at the apple. Unfortunately we couldn't get William Tell. He's dead, and so will you be if this goes wrong". I then say how the proprietor will not allow us to use a real bow and arrow for health and safety reasons so we must use plan B. I then introduce a sheet of paper with a picture of an apple and take out the knife saying that the object is to aim the knife at the apple and stab its centre. However at this distance it is relatively easy, so we need to make things a little harder. This is when I use the spectator's jacket. As my idea is similar to Wayne Dobson's I have since contacted Wayne, emailing him a copy of my routine and he is happy with my routine and has given me permission to use a few of his gags.

I rehearsed the mechanics of this using my own jacket and a chair before asking my wife and my sister-in-law to stand in as the volunteers. To my surprise, the girls did not hold the jacket the way I expected or wanted them to. After a bit of coaching my wife Clare reminded me that she was not a mind reader – that was my job J

This was an important lesson. I realised that I had to subtly direct the volunteers how to hold the jacket the way I wanted. If the volunteer is nervous they may stiffen up and it is almost impossible to move their arm into the correct position. Once I was able to direct the girls I went through the effect which went down very well. My misdirection worked very well. It's a great feeling when you finally understand how to use misdirection properly and it works. I tried this routine over the next few weeks with the girls and unfortunately they worked out how I was doing the effect. I expected they would but I had to have someone to rehearse with and I knew they would keep my secret quiet.

If you try this at home, it is important to use a knife sharp enough to cleanly tear the paper but not so sharp that you cut your own finger. I am telling you this from personal experience. It's better to draw blood while rehearsing at home rather than on stage unless of course you are doing this routine at a Halloween gig J

Once I was comfortable with the effect, I discussed with Clare about using a few ideas from the Bob Reid manuscript but Clare did not seem to like those ideas. However, one night I decided to try one of the ideas where I made it look like some of the black lining material from jacket had been ripped and was being pulled through the rip in the jacket. Clare and her sister were in stitches as they never expected it. I decided to keep this in. Maybe Clare should listen to me more often?

#### **Knickerbocker**

What made this routine difficult was the fact that I would be using four female volunteers and I had to consider best how to handle the volunteers.

I knew that I had to fill the dead time while the volunteers walked to the stage area and I had to ensure that I directed the ladies to the appropriate part of the stage. Also the published routine did not describe how I was to actually peek at the last card. I asked for advice on MB (see here) and fortunately, DMC and Tobias were able to help with this aspect and Dale Shrimpton and Peter Marucci amongst others offered advice on working with volunteers on stage which you can see here.

I worked through this routine with Clare and her sister Jane thinking of what to expect from volunteers. I was pretty sure I had everything covered... keep reading and you will find out if I had indeed covered everything.

#### **MICROPHONE**

I had tried rehearsing with a microphone on a stand but found this difficult, especially as I did not have access to an amplifier to test how well the microphone would pick up my voice while performing. I took some advice from MB about microphones (see here) and decided to purchase a radio lapel microphone. This microphone did not seem to work properly despite my friend Brian testing with his mixing desk and PA

### Developing a Cabaret Act Part II (cont.)

system. While out with some friends one night I was talking about my microphone problems when Gary was surprised that the microphone did not work until Brian decided to tell one of his stories. Brian, who is a guitar player in a band, explained that he had recently purchased a radio pick up for his guitar at a cost of over £300 and that the singer had purchased a cheap radio microphone at £150. Brian then made me tell everyone how much I had spent on my lapel microphone. With my head held in shame and much to everyone's amusement, I said "£15 from EBay" to which Brian replied "Now do you understand why it doesn't work?" Point taken.

Luckily, I did manager to get hold of a top of the range Shure wireless lapel microphone with receiver unit worth £800. I hired it from an audio supplier for the weekend of the party for about £20. When I went to pick it up, I was quite surprised as I was expecting a small case for a tiny microphone but was handed a large 3 foot case which felt like it was full of bricks. It was the receiver unit that came with the microphone that took up all the room and weight.

#### SCRIPT

As I am not quick witted, or a good at improvisation my preference is to script everything I am going to say and rewrite this until I am happy with it. I then rehearse my script out loud which allows me to rework what I have written as the written word does not always sound they way you expect it. I also find that with enough rehearsal, I start to become totally familiar with the words and ideas I am trying to convey in the routine and can then move away from the script if needed without getting lost. I would not suggest trying to memorize a script because it may come across as if you are merely repeating word for word and if you get lost, you may not find your place again. Once I am familiar with the script, I then rehearse my routine with full presentation (the script) to get the correct timing and pick up on any changes that are needed.

I was lucky that the office I was working in had recently been vacated of 150 employees and I was on my own looking after the IT systems for the remaining 15 employees relocated to another floor. This give me space and time to rehearse out loud with no-one listening. Well that is not quite true; I failed to spot the electrician from property services checking on some cabling. Luckily, he thought I was on a phone call using a Bluetooth headset.

I'll go into more detail on the script in next month's instalment. We'll also look at the rest of the planning that had to be done such as timing, props required at each stage and tasks required on the day.

Until next time,  
Tam

### Thoughts From Mid-West America

#### *Thoughts From Mid-West America...*

...Being Heard Part II

**By Michael L.**



If memory serves, last time I left y'all knee deep in box mixers and speaker stands. I could take a second and recap last month's article, but that ain't going to happen. It's all there, go back and reread it yourself! Seriously, if you don't remember where we were then go back and refresh your memory.

And that leaves us needing a plan. A sound plan. In reality, the sound plan is part of your script and if you have a well organized script you may not need to do much work. What we need is to analyze exactly what your sound requirements are so that you can purchase the system that best fits your needs. And before we can analyze we need a detailed account of what sound you need when and from where.

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

Although your sound plan could be built into your overall script, it probably isn't. Grab a pen and a sheet of paper and go through your show (or potential show) and start writing out a list of sounds, something like this:

- Opening Theme (fades out)
- Me, doing Trick 1 through 5
- Me and two volunteers on Trick 6
- "Dance Dance Magic Show Happy Fun Song" during silent act (Trick 7-9)
- Me on Trick 10
- Closing Theme

Now that is a decent start. It explains what sounds will be going on and when, but it doesn't really tell us every thing we need. Let's think about that act again, this time noting *WHAT* provides each sound. And we'll get something like this:

- Opening Theme, fades out: "Magician with Intro" from MP3 player
- Tricks 1-5: me alone on wireless lapel mike
- Trick 6: me on wireless and two volunteers on mike in stand
- Tricks 7-9: "Dance Dance Magic Show Happy Fun Song" from MP3 player
- Trick 10: me alone on wireless lapel mike
- Closing Theme: "Magician Reprisal" from MP3 player

Much better now. We can start adding up what we need. Looks like we are adding an MP3 player with three tracks, a wireless lapel microphone and an additional microphone with stand to the system. That means two channels and an auxiliary in (or three channels). Simple enough, eh? Sure it is, but of course, we are just getting started now, aren't we? Now let's organize things by opening, tricks and close taking note of what is on and off. It'll probably start to look like a chart at this point, but that's what we need!

Segment	Wireless	Stand	MP3 Player
Open	off	off	Magician with Intro (fade)
1	on	off	off
2	on	off	off
3	on	off	off
4	on	off	off
5	on	off	off
6	on	on	off
7	off	off	Dance Dance Magic Show...
8	off	off	DDMSHFS Cont'd
9	off	off	DDMSHFS Cont'd
10	on	off	off
Close	off	off	Magician Reprise

If you have a formal script for your show, you can probably dispense with this by simply noting *WIRELESS ON* or *MP3: DANCE DANCE MAGIC SHOW HAPPY FUN SONG* at the appropriate points in the script. The main thing is knowing what needs to be on and off and when so we can determine how these items need to be controlled. If you already have certain items for your sound system, like a CD player or amplifier, you will have to plan your system control around the existing options (for example, you are going to have to stand

### Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

next to your CD player every time it is turned on or off if you don't have a remote for it) but if you haven't purchased anything yet you can plan where you need to be as items are turned on and off and then buy elements that will allow for this. Before we go on, I should probably mention that hard wired and wireless mikes of any decent quality should have an on/off switch on them that will allow you to control them. If you need to turn a mike on (or off) from a distance then, no, wait... we'll cover that later!

If you must physically control elements of your sound system then you must place them on the stage in an area where you can operate them without disrupting your show. A magic table could easily hide a CD player or something of that nature if needed. If it is the only item you need to manually control then don't worry about cramming your whole mixer in your table; keep it off stage and run a wire to the table and CD player.

If you have the luxury of purchasing after you determine your sound plan then now is the time to go through that chart again and note where you will be on stage at every sound change. Obviously, you will be able to manually operate your own microphone throughout the show as long as you have at least one free hand. Handheld mikes, wired and wireless, will have a switch on the body of the microphone and it is almost always a sliding switch. Wireless hands free mikes (like lapel mikes or head sets, for those of you craving that Garth Brooks feel) usually have their controls located on the power/sending unit which tends to be a belt pack although they sometimes have a switch on the thin wire running between the mike and the belt pack. Some wireless units have a gain control (that's a dial to determine how much signal the unit is putting out... for your purposes consider it a volume knob) built into them and others don't. I suggest getting a wireless system that has not only an on/off switch (and I mean a small sliding switch or a button because it is very hard to accidentally throw these while the dials, which often control gain as well, are easily jostled while moving) but a mute button. Leave the unit on for your entire show and then engage or disengage the mute as needed. If you try to silence a wireless unit by turning it on and off as you perform you may encounter a lag time as the unit powers up or down and this leads to unwanted noise (this is pretty much a non-issue in wired mikes as they are a great deal less complicated electronically). Besides, usually mute controls come in the form of a button which is easier to smoothly operate as you perform.

For any stationary microphones I can't stress enough how much I recommend hard wired mikes. Sturdy, reliable and cheap, the only drawback on a mike that doesn't need to move is that you have to run a wire along the stage. That's what tape is for, buddy! While I am mentioning tape, you can drop a butt-load of cash on gaffer's tape or some other type of stage craft tape made to hold temporarily and then not leave a residue and come in several colors or you can go to the local hardware store and pick up painter's tape (which seems to always be blue) which does the same thing for a lot less. I tape down ALL my video wiring with painter's tape and have never had a problem with it.

If you need an auxiliary sound source like a CD player or MP3 player then you probably want one that will include a remote. With a remote you can skip cramming that CD player under your black art well topped performing table and just tape the remote to the table or slip it in your pocket. It is also preferable to get a machine that has a dedicated line out instead of merely a headphone jack. A line out is actually designed to be fed into a secondary amplification device and should be less apt to create hiss, hum and overdriven distortion (which is caused by putting too loud of a signal into an amplifier). Whether you opt for an MP3 player or the much more economical CD player option, you'll want to create the either a custom playlist or CD for your show. This should contain the music or sounds you will need in the order you will need them. I suggest getting some simple sound edit software (if you have an OSX era Apple machine Garageband will work) that will allow you to fade tracks in or out and create each track so that the music starts immediately and the track ends precisely with the end of the sound. This way the microsecond a track starts you will know whether or not it is the proper track. Further more I suggest placing one 3 second track and two 30 second tracks of silence between any two pieces of sound that will not be played back to back. This will give you a full minute to make sure the device is stopped before the next audible track is played and that should give you ample time to shut the unit off when needed as well as creating a barrier to prevent you from pressing back and replaying the last sound a second time. When you need the next sound you merely press play and skip forward until the sound starts.

Most mixers will not be remote controlled. They are out there, I know... I have seen the ads in the back of the magazines too. I haven't ever run across a remotely operated PA system but they seem awfully pricey to me. Besides, most of the control of a PA system can (and should) be set up in advance. A sound check will allow you to make sure that volume levels are correct (remember, a bit too loud in an empty room is a

### Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

bit too quiet in a full room) and that tone controls are set you make you sound as sexy as possible. All that really leaves is switching between input channels and auxiliary devices. Those auxiliaries should have their own damn remote. So all that really leaves for the PA remote is to turn on and off individual channels. Now, if these channels are all hooked to mikes then go back to that section and mikes and read it over and over until you realize that mikes should have their own controls. If, for some reason, you need to control a mike from a distance, then you may want to look at a mixer that has a muting button on each input channel; it isn't that uncommon.

One more control option is the foot switch (aka the stompbox). Typically, foot switches are boxes with one, two or three buttons that you step on. This allows a certain amount of handsfree control of the unit, which is very important if you are busy cranking out the righteous tunes on your left handed-strung hollowbody and need to go into a heavier gain, crazily overdriven distortion but only on your solos. It isn't like you can turn around and adjust the settings on your amp, right? Instead your guitar amp may have two channels that each are fed by a single input jack (connected to the guitar) that allow you to set up two completely different sounds and then switch back and forth between them by stepping on button one on the foot switch. In a guitar amp you will often find that you can switch between 'clean' and 'overdriven' channels (button one), turn special effects, like echoing, on or off (button two) and such. In certain PA systems you will have a foot switch option and it will probably either completely mute the entire system (allowing for the sound to be turned completely on or off without having to power the system up and down) or turn on special sound effects (like them there echoes and reverbs and such) or both.

Hmmm, that pretty much covers the basic control options and designing your sound plan. I should probably mention that if you are purchasing any remotes you need to test them out with your whole system up and running because some remotes will make weird digital noises that you really don't want to pick up and amplify. Wireless systems are more sensitive to this, as you may imagine. What you may not imagine is that cellular phones will also cause brief digital clicking at random moments in hardwired and wireless setups., so you need to turn that phone off (not just silent) or keep it well away from your PA. In fact, cell phones frequently can cause this digital clicking that nearby amplifier systems will pick up even if they do not have a microphone or any other input attached!

Next time we will get directly into purchasing stuff and go over a few of the juicy extras like line outs, effect loops, digital signal processors, carrying cases and about a million other things. Until then, refine that sound plan and then, if you dare, try to realistically forecast what sound control options future routines may require!

By Michael L.

### Your First Walk Around/Table Hopping Event?

#### ***Your First Walk Around/Table Hopping Event?...***

...some words of advice and tips from someone who has been there

**By Matthew Smith (wiffyboy)**



Before I go any further, I wish you all a prosperous 2006 (I know it's nearly Feb as I'm writing this!)

The aim of this article is not to preach all that I know, simply because I don't know it all! What I want to do is pass on some advice/tips that I have picked up since doing walk around magic. I've only been performing magic for the past two years, and I realise that I am rather "new" compared to many other magicians on this forum, however I still feel that I have some useful advice that's worth sharing.

So with out further ado, here it is.

## Your First Walk Around/Table Hopping Event? (cont.)

### **BE ON TIME**

It may sound simple and obvious, but poor time management can equal no further bookings from that client! You may know every sleight of hand ever invented, but if you can't get to your booking on time, you are going to create a poor image in the mind of the person(s) who booked you. This is likely to lead to bad word of mouth and could potentially stop anyone present from wanting to book you in the future.

My view is to arrive 30mins before you are contracted/asked to start.

I take those 30 mins to workout the layout of the function room and coordinate a plan of how I will ensure I get to every table in the time frame agreed. This leads me onto my second heading, function layout and logistics.

### **FUNCTION LAYOUT AND LOGISTICS**

You need to ensure that you can easily get from table to table. This sounds silly. But remember that once people are sat at tables, it can be very hard to squeeze in-between chairs and walls!

Make sure you know if/when the disco/band is going to commence. There is nothing worse than having to perform magic while "Fat Boy Slim" is blaring out of the speakers! Ensure that your effects/routines can be easily performed with minimal patter in case of loud music being present!

### **GET TO KNOW THE BAR STAFF/WAITERS/HEAD OF SERVICE**

By far, in my opinion, the most important piece of advice I can offer to anyone – and something I did not do at my first booking! Another reason for myself arriving early is to introduce myself to the bar staff and waiters. Why do I do this?

- a) To let them know who I am and what I do.
- b) To get them on my side! There is nothing worse than performing at a table and the waiters come dashing over with food and completely block you out or move you on/interrupt your performance. If they know who you are and what you are doing, there is a better chance that this will be avoided. For example I will explain to the waiters/waitresses that I will be performing at each table for the duration of 8-10 minutes. This way they know that I won't be there for long and secondly, that if they do have to interrupt they are usually a lot more polite – which reflects better on me (the magician).

Another reason for knowing the bar staff is so that I can "store" items behind the bar. I'll usually ask if I can house my drink behind the bar and my travel coat. The last thing you want to be doing, in my opinion, is carrying these items around with you (unless your drink/glass is part of your routine).

As and when I need to get a drink, all I need to do is catch the attention of a member of bar staff who usually know why I am around the bar!

I usually show the bar staff/waiters a small 5-6 minute routine as well, so that they know the type of magic I perform. Again, this helps build a positive rapport with the staff working at the venue.

### **POCKET MANAGEMENT**

This is what I took with me when going to my first performance:

1 deck of red bikes, 1 svengali deck, 1 invisible deck, colour monte, mike skinnners ultimate three card monte, the bip book, sponge rabbits, free will, wallet (equipped to perform a card to wallet routine), insurance policy routine and a tt/silk.

I struggled to locate each item as and when required. I did not know what pocket any of my items/effects were in. This can only have looked bad once I had approached a table and got into my routine.

So, pocket management is essential. It is something I now build into the practicing of any new effect that I potentially want to include in my close up routine.

I try to construct my pocket management in a way that as I put one effect away, the pocket it goes into contains the next effect I require.

For example, I usually approach as table, introduce myself (more on this later) and go into a sponge rabbit routine. Once all 7 bunnies have been revealed they are gathered up and placed into my left jacket pocket. Out of the same packet comes a pack of cards, from which I perform a couple of card tricks. When these tricks are over, the cards go back into the left hand pocket and at the same time I'm going to my right hand

### Your First Walk Around/Table Hopping Event? (cont.)

pocket with my right hand to get the next effect ready. It might sound simple, but look at it the other way. You finish your sponge routine, and dump the sponge somewhere. You are now checking your trouser pockets, inside jacket pockets etc to locate that next effect. You are taking up valuable time and its doing nothing for your nerves!

Also, don't take more than you need. As many of you many be thinking, I took too much to my first event. I knew by the end of the evening that I had "over-packed" due to half of the props never being touched. The weight of items that I was carrying around was also causing problems and making my suit look heavy/clumpy!

I now only take a packet of cards, sponge bunnies, wallet, a packet trick and invisible deck. If I want to change my routine half way through the evening I will have these items in the jacket that was left behind reception. This gives me a good excuse to get a drink, collect more business cards and change effects if necessary.

#### **INTRODUCING YOURSELF**

This one aspect of close up magic has caused much debate and discussion. There are many different ways to approach a table. Some people approach a table and burst into an effect, other talk for a while and others do something to catch someone's attention from a distance (i.e. a fancy shuffle) and therefore generating an "invite" to that persons table.

I simply approach a table and welcome them to the "evening". At this point I could be a waiter for all they know! I continue to comment on the location/function (always positive) and then explain that I am the "entertainment" for the evening. This is said in a some what tongue and cheek manor. I will then always ask if they would like to see a trick. 99/100 they say yes. In this case I go straight into my sponge routine (the bunnies being palmed throughout the introduction). If they say no, I don't make a big deal of this. I thank them for their time, wish them a good evening and say that if they change their mind, they are welcome to call me over later.

I do it this way as I find that wasting time showing them a few effects and then realising they are not interested is time misspent – I might as well be entertaining people who actually want to see it. Other people may disagree with this, but this is what works for me. For example, Jay Sankey is noted for saying that lay people are unqualified to answer the question "Would you like to see a trick"!

#### **IN WHAT ORDER TO DO THE TABLES?**

I go along with the advice Bill Malone dispenses on his On the Loose DVD's. I like to do one table at one end of the room, get good reactions (clapping/cheering), and then go to the other end of the room. Why, well because it adds the illusion of you being everywhere. Your client will be able to see/ hear that you are doing a good job and covering a lot of ground at the same time! I don't like going from one table to the table opposite (next to). This is because usually people on the 2<sup>nd</sup> table have been listening/looking. If you give it 20-30mins they are likely to have forgotten what they saw and also hopefully be dieing to see what you showed the other table – adding to the atmosphere/expectation and hopefully the applause.

#### **CLEAN PROPS**

Make sure the props/equipment you are using are clean. For example make sure your cards looks clean, that the card box isn't tatty and that the sponge balls don't look dirty etc. I wouldn't want my meal served on a dirty plate and wouldn't expect a magician performing at my table to use dirty/tatty equipment.

#### **DRESS**

This is another area of magic that creates a lot of discussion. My thinking on the subject is to wear:

- a) What you feel comfortable in
- b) What the client would like to see you in
- c) Something that is practical for the time of year. I've been in many situations where I have worn too much and the heat has nearly knocked me out!

I usually wear a suit and white shirt, tie and sometimes a waistcoat. However this is my own preference, and may not suit other people.

### Your First Walk Around/Table Hopping Event? (cont.)

#### CHOOSE YOUR MOMENTS

Something I read many years ago, that is still as relevant today. Don't show magic to a table that have just started eating. From reading other people's experiences, the last thing people want to see is a magic effect, when their food is getting cold! I try to time it so that I entertain each table in-between courses. This is easier than it sounds. You will see (and may even be told) how the waiters/waitresses serve the function room. They can't do the whole function in one go, so instead they do it in "waves". Therefore as section of the room finish their main course, another section many only just be starting, making it easier to work out where to go.

#### THE MAGIC

Finally, make sure that the magic you perform to other people is well practiced. I never carry any effect that I am not confident with. Obviously mistakes will happen regardless of the amount of practice, but make sure that the mistakes don't occur from under rehearsed effects.

Bare in mind your table/storage space requirements. Many effects usually require items to be stored/put aside. Make sure you aware of how you will be entertaining (i.e. walking around during a champagne reception or during a meal/seated at a table). Most of my effects can be done "in the hands"; however having a table is always an added bonus J

I also like to carry around an "adaptable" effect. In my case its usually colour monte. The £14 card is usually substituted for another card (happy birthday etc) and the patter modified. This shows to your client and their guests that you can adapt to many different situations/events. To be able to adapt the effect colour monte all you require is a permanent marker pen, a blank faced playing card (with matching back) and suitable substitute patter.

So there you have it, some tips and advice that I wanted to share with you all. I would like to state once more that I don't claim to know it all but do hope that this article has been of some help to people.

Until next time, and I hope to see some of you at Blackpool,  
*Wiffyboy*

### Chimps, Ahoy!

#### *Chimps, Ahoy!...*

...thumb tip magic

By Peter Marucci



#### **EFFECT & PRESENTATION:**

"Genetic scientists have discovered that chimpanzees - and possibly other higher primates - have almost identical genes to those of humans; there is only about a 5 per cent difference.

But thank heavens for that 5 per cent! Otherwise, we'd all be going to work covered in fur and eating bananas! However, if the 5 per cent difference can be positively identified, it might be possible - by genetic engineering - to turn chimps into sort of furry people.

It would take an enormous amount of effort - with no guarantee of a payoff - to do such a thing. And there's only one person who might be able to do it."

"Let me explain."

*(The magus takes out a silk handkerchief with a picture of a chimp on it.)*

"If we take a chimpanzee like this one and attempt to improve it genetically *(as the magus says this, he*



### Chimps, Ahoy! (cont.)

*stuffs the silk into his left hand*), we will need a person who is an expert in genes to solve the basic problem.

And so, we would have to call on that well-known expert in jeans (*as the magus says this, he opens his left hand; the chimp-silk has vanished and in its place is a disc with an enlargement of a button on it - and the button bears a name:*) Levi Strauss!"

#### **WORKING:**

You're probably way ahead of me on this already.

You'll need a nine-inch silk, on which you have sketched a picture of a chimpanzee (see Second Thoughts), a disc with a picture of a Levi Strauss button (see also Second Thoughts) and our old friend, the thumb tip.

The disc and tip are concealed in the left hand as the silk is held at the left-hand fingertips and displayed. It is then tucked into the tip and stolen away.

The left hand is opened, at the appropriate moment, and the Levi Strauss (jeans expert) button is displayed.

#### **SECOND THOUGHTS:**

To make the chimp silk, I got a picture of a chimpanzee (just a little smaller than a nine-inch silk) from my clip art on my computer and taped a white silk over the picture. With a brown Sharpie marker, and using light, brush-like strokes to keep the ink from 'bleeding', I traced the picture of the chimp.

Let it dry for about 24 hours to let the ink ;set.'

For the "button", I used a wooden disc and copied a jeans button off the Strauss web page. I then sized them to just a little smaller than the disc and printed two of them. I cut them out circularly and pasted one on each side of the wooden disc.

And there you pretty well have it.

Simple, yet effective, handling, allowing you to put your full concentration on the story. But I don't have to tell you that; you do that already. Right?

Peter Marucci  
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### Real Mentalism Part III

## ***Real Mentalism...***

...Part III

**By P. Craig Browning**



What is "Mentalism"?

Is it simply an act of replicating things we hear of or have seen Psychics do, or is it our attempt to deliver to our public a safe, sane, and fun Psychic-styled experience? Is it 'magic' or is it something a bit more involved and personable?

Truth of the matter is Mentalism is all of these things and just a bit more. Though related to the magician's art, Mentalism brings with it a unique sense of obligation the mere trickster will never know or have to be concerned with.

*"How?" you ask "It's just tricks!"*

### Real Mentalism Part III (cont.)

Perhaps, but unlike traditional magic Mentalism has the auspicious position of being seen as "real" in the mind of most public audiences; a little fact that many a magic buff new to this field, simply don't wish to accept or more importantly, embrace.

As I pointed out last month, when Mentalism is done properly it will be seen as real and this reaction by the laity tends to frighten and haunt the typical magic performer; it's an aspect of what Stephan Minch refers to as *Magician's Guilt*, a very real syndrome that is suffered by the typical performer that's out there simply seeking to do tricks for the sake of personal amusement or to serve as an ice-breaker in social settings.

In his book on Home Psychic Parties Richard Webster points out a very legitimate fact; *the public is going to see you and call you a Psychic*, there's no getting around it. So why are you fighting it?

Bob Cassidy points out in several of his tomes that the most successful "Mentalists" in history were never known for their ties to magic, nor were they ever known as "Mentalists" – they bore the title Telepathist, Intuitionist, Clairvoyant, etc. Thus, in just three of the industry's major writers we find the same theme repeated time and again, there must be a reason; after all, these guys have been doing this stuff longer than most of us have been alive, let alone studying magic or mentalism.

Fact is, we can go into the annals of magic and find example after example of such inference and for some "unspoken" reason, it is ignored – replaced by a new philosophy designed to seemingly level the playing field between magician and psychic entertainer – the idea of *"it's only a magic show with a psychic or paranormal theme"* or else a demonstration in human behavioral study.

*How does this level the playing field? You ask*

It criminalized, so to speak, the tools and resources that have been a part of the Mentalist's vocation & art for generations; most specifically the art of being an effective Reader. When you consider the fact that William Larsen, Sr. who was a lawyer, exploited such things, and the fact that Robert Nelson, one of Mentalism's most prolific writers shared these concepts and modes of business operation it should dawn upon us that something is amiss – that someone or some group has an alternate agenda up its sleeves.

Conspiracy?

Perhaps, but I'm not that paranoid; at least not in the sense of embracing the idea that a selfish, corrupted faction within magic has some kind of cruel agenda it's trying to establish as the new "norm" to the craft. Yet, it is somewhat difficult at times not to think such things given the plethora of misinformation (and incomplete perspective) being heralded and promoted from within the magician's camp. Ideas and philosophies that have likewise been woven into mainstream society that simply negates the fantastic; robbing human kind of what really is "Magic".

I've recently been re-reading Kenton Knepper's awesome manuscript ENCHANTED EVENING. Many individuals loathe this treatise but they are the one's that simply want to learn how to do another trick at the mechanical level rather than learning how to create magick; over half this tome forces the reader to look at his/her self, their life and ask where the "enchantment" is? It reveals to us how to recapture this spell of the mind and in so doing, how to present it to those we encounter; not just as performers but as human beings that embrace and live an enchanted life.

*How can looking at our own life improve our magic? You ask.*

Ask Stainslavski or any actor trained in that method. We're talking Acting 101 here folks. If all we are as performing magicians *mere actors playing a part*, then this is something you shouldn't only know, but embrace.

Of course such thinking is right up there with a belief in Unicorns, Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny in that one in maybe every 500 enthusiasts involved in magic will take the time to even consider learning a thing

### Real Mentalism Part III (cont.)

about legit theater, let alone acting. It's far more important to know Joe Shmoe's variation to someone else's idea on the Pass than it is to know how to actually present an effect in a way that allows our patrons to escape the mundane. To hell with learning how to perform, we just want to do tricks! Isn't this the mantra of the magic buff?

Perhaps not consciously, but in our actions it is what we do far more than we pay attention to the little details. But this is precisely what separates the Mentalist from the Magician – those little details. We embrace a mode of thinking and action that incorporates every possible nuance we can find, that makes our "magic" more magickle, more real, and far more experiential in the mind of the laity. I'm not saying that magicians per se, don't look at ways of improving their technique, far from it. Only that the nuances and psychology used in Mentalism are far more reaching and "deep" than you will find in the presentation of traditional magic.

The greatest weapon we, as performing Mentalists have to our advantage, is the public's perception. In that a greater majority of people in our world believe in something supernal, half our battle is won from the moment we begin our demonstrations. That is, if we aren't playing them as fools and presenting an obvious card trick and trying to pass it off as being something "Psychic"... that simply is NOT Mentalism.

This "new" movement within magic wants to negate this advantage and remove from us those assumptions and conclusions known of and exploited by our predecessors. Their contention being that *Dunninger didn't do it and he did card tricks...*

Fine, but that was a different time and the public still viewed magic with a degree of intrigue that was supportive to the idea that it was more than mere tricks. Even the magic community exploited the myth of Houdini being able to dematerialize; that his true secrets along side those of Thurston, Kellar and the other grand masters of the Golden Era were lost and remain unknown; In other words, our own kind used the public's gullibility and desire to believe so as to retain the essence of "enchantment" in what they presented. It really wasn't until the late 1960s that a serious commercial movement began to transmute this sense of perspective; the entire Henning craze of stating he was an Illusionist and everything he did was a trick, being but a commercial tag line that appealed to the consumer at a new level. But Doug still exploited the fantasy of magic and used it creatively in the hope of inspiring others to believe in the unbelievable and find within themselves, the magic of spirit and the joy that is life. A dreamy-eyed concept that was quickly squashed by the establishment and the commercial on-set of certain new comer talents the public was discovering like those two German guys with all the big cats in Vegas and that Jewish kid from New Jersey doing little vignettes as his mode of presenting big illusions.

From around 1974 to present, a great wedge was driven into the world of magical entertainment that segregated what we do from the surreal. Though we've known a hay-day that's unsurpassed at the commercial level, we've likewise sold our soul when it comes to the psychology of being a wizard and more importantly, keeping the related arts in rightful modes of separation; allowing those that specialized in this or that field, the highest sense of advantage in what they perform and how it was presented. The whole of which brings us back to those opening few paragraphs in which I was referring to the voices of experience and what magic history – the history of mentalism in particular – has to say when it comes to this now *threatened* side of our craft.

Mentalism has always been about the theater, showmanship, and psychology NOT THE TRICK. It has always been about weaving a viable, believable web or seeming legitimate facts so as to create intrigue, uncertainty, and that required investment of belief, no matter how tentative it may be, so that our magic went beyond the mundane perceptions of being anything akin to parlor magic or a puzzle.

The Mentalists of old were not show offs that had to masturbate publicly by showing off their latest neat acquisition. They were (are) gentle folk that are rather proper in their actions and attitudes, learned in the ways of language and the human animal, as well as intelligent. Without doing a single demonstration of their so-called psychic prowess, you instinctively knew they were unique individuals – something a bit more than a mere trickster or even beyond that, which many would classify as being the typical mortal.

Just as the magician must dedicated his/her self to long days of practice and rehearsal, so too the mentalist

### Real Mentalism Part III (cont.)

invests countless hours of refining their skill and understanding of things both, natural as well as phenomenal. We understand that the "tricks" aren't the secret to our success or our "legend"; it is rather how we can best mesmerize the public and exploit opportunity so as to create an even grander illusion – that of being a genuine enigma or mystic.

The commercialism of today's magic culture, the willingness of the inventive mind to cheaply prostitute his/her ideas for the sake of a buck; the unwillingness of the consumer to actually learn how to be effective in presenting such prizes – all of it is destroying a vital aspect of our craft. This is something we are each just as guilty of being a part of as the next person in that few are setting their foot down and saying "Enough!" Fewer yet, are taking on the responsibility – our obligation – to actually open our eyes and see what's being lost and how we too are guilty of this rape, and saying to ourselves "No more!"

Most all of you are exceptionally aware of my passion when it comes to Magic on the whole, but Mentalism in particular. It is my one true love in life and like any good husband, I loathe seeing my wife molested and abused. Similarly, I detest the antics of the arrogant, who are ardent in their agenda to remove from this side of our craft, those assets and skill building resources that have made more than one psychic entertainer a shining beacon of success and a pillar within their own community – silent heroes few of us will ever read about let alone learn from, simply due to our adoption of a cynic's narrow-minded attitudes and mythic belief that everything is simply black & white... a concept every aware human being knows to be just as delusional as the concepts faith, religion and spirituality have promoted for the past several eons.

Is it so wrong, to have a belief?

The Westernized world is the only aspect of human culture that segregates the magic of theater from the auspices of religion and human development; an action stimulated initially through the auspices of a single cult-based doctrine that has spread its influence about much of the globe, claiming itself as the only source of genuine divinity and related miracles... but then, what religious element don't boast similar claims? Even science, the opium of the atheist and cynical, offers such dire extremes.

The bottom line, and I know I've taken my time in getting there this month, is that we are not too late when it comes to weighing the old ways of Mentalism with today's seeming attempt at robbing society of what little it still has when it comes to knowing "the real" – that magic that goes beyond typical theater and parlor tricks and appeals to one's soul and the inner-receptacles of the mind. It is not a criminal act, nor something immoral – such antics exist only within the character of the individual not the act itself. Just as the NRA claims that guns do not kill people but rather, the idiot holding the gun, so is the truth behind how Mentalism – true Mentalism – is performed and used within the whole of society. After all, guns also help accomplish some great good as does Nuclear energy, so let's not allow selfish perspective negate the opposite side of the coins we toss in life.

By P. Craig Browning

### Magic Shops Are Like Sex Shops?

## ***Magic Shops Are Like...*** ...Sex Shops?

By Steven Goodwin

#### **DISCLAIMER & INTRODUCTION**

This article may be considered offensive to some (or probably most) readers. If you're easily offended then you'd be best to give this witty little interlude a miss. *You've been warned.* Neither the editor nor the author take any responsibility for ill-feeling as a result of reading this article. What's more, despite his apparent knowledge on the subject, Steven Goodwin has assured us that he has so far (apparently) visited only one of the two places outlined. So any misinformed opinions/references are based upon this experience...

**Magic Shops Are Like Sex Shops? (cont.)**

**A SPONGE WHAT?!**

Is it just me, but as a single male, relatively inexperienced in the ways of the world, why do I feel that walking into a magic shop is akin to visiting a sex shop?

It's probably the secretive nature of them both that causes this anxiety. Knowing that all wonders you've never seen will be fully revealed behind the covers of those shiny books. Or perhaps it's because any magazine costing over £3.50 is usually a pretentious art quarterly, or sat on the top shelves in WH Smiths.

Maybe it's not the books. Maybe it's the presentation. Wrapped in clear plastic, with the opening taped up to stop in-shop browsing, and the dog-eared copies of older magic magazines and posters presented above the counter to preserve them for historical reference. Much like looking through the dog-eared copies of Playboy you find hidden under teenage beds.

Apparently.

Personally, I blame the pornographic industry itself for my confusion. Their seeming self-reliance on cheap gags, female objectification and innuendo remind me of the bad stage magicians in the 1970s - the ones I used to know and love, but who haven't grown with the years and are still peddling material Bernard Manning would consider tired. Truly cringe worthy. Alas, titles like "Dick The Magnificent, and his magic wand" just underline this fact. Books such as this are available in either shop.

As are stripper decks.

Although the meaning is slightly different.

Perhaps it's the price of the product. Everything seems to follow the rule that less costs more. Perhaps the thrill of paying twice as much for a thong with half the material is identical to paying £20 for a 5p coin. Both of which get palmed and disappear in the crack. Furthermore, who else would spend so much on a single DVD? HMV: £11.99. Virgin (no pun intended): £12.99. My type of shop: £35. That gets you a sixty minute feature, shot on handheld DigiCams, with a blurb demonstrating the exposure of "The Queen getting a bottom palm" and "The King's Rising." The cost isn't shared around either, since you'll be watching it at home. On your own. With the study door locked. While practising a double toss.

In fact, it's probably the lack of after sales support that connects the two shops. Knowing you won't sell any of your material on, lest someone else know the "sort of thing" you get up to. Only with magic books you generally can't find them discarded along the side of the railway track.

Actually, there are lots of reasons why magic shops are like sex shops. And having just re-read this piece, I realise the similarities are very marked.

So much so, I've already forgotten which were references to the magic shop, and which to the sex shop.

Sorry!

*By Steven Goodwin*

Thanks again to all contributors from this month. I look forward to seeing more material from different contributors next month. The deadline is the 28th Feb for articles. If you're unsure if you want to send something in, get in touch and we'll see what we can do. Remember, we've only got 3 issues left until the end.

Thanks,  
Jon Snoops  
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