



MagicBunny.co.uk

TopHat

April 2006...

...49th edition

By Jon Snoops



Welcome to the penultimate edition of TopHat. This month we have another great ezine starting off with more from Tam McLaughlin. His cabaret series continues as he looks at scripting the entire act. Then onto the first of four effects in this issue as Daniel de Urquiza returns with more magic from Argentina.

Tim Arends of Indiana brings us some great tips for anyone interested in kids' party magic. Steven Goodwin continues from last month where he talked about using computers in magic effects. This month he supplies us with a (usable!) effect using cards and a computer that's very easy to do. Shaun Sims also presents an easy to do routine with a simple and direct plot. Peter Marucci's offering this month is not exactly a description of an effect but several fantastic presentations of one: the old 'Spirit Feather.'

We also have a review of Fred Kaps' Fire Wallet which serves as a model review for any that follow. I think Jason Waskett covers everything he needs to in this excellent piece. Finally, we have a short notice about a new production in the capital which I'm sure will interest a few readers.

Next month's issue, the last monthly TopHat ezine will continue as each of the previous forty-nine have, with articles and effects from various members from around the world. This was my preference as opposed to suggestions such as a "Best of TopHat..." (Why...? All of the back issues can be found at <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/tophat/>) or other similar ideas. I'd really appreciate it, however, if every member would consider writing up a piece for the last edition. We can at least make it a bumper edition to show the success of the publication during the last four-and-a-bit years.



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

Also, I'd just like to remind you that we still have MagicBunny badges available. Full details are available here: <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=25688>. They are GBP£1.50 each plus 50p P&P per order (£1.50 International). You can pay by PayPal to badges@magicbunny.co.uk and you'll receive them within 3-4 days.

Thanks for reading, enjoy the ezine and we hope you'll join us next time.

All the best,
Jon

Contents

APRIL 2006

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

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Developing a Cabaret Act Part IV: The Script"* By Tam McLaughlin

MAGIC EFFECT: *"Special Attraction"* By Daniel de Urquiza

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"The Birthday Party Magician"* By Tim Arends

MAGIC EFFECT: *"CompuMental"* By Steven Goodwin

MAGIC EFFECT: *"My Lucky Card"* By Shaun Sims

MAGIC EFFECT: *"The Spirit Feather"* By Peter Marucci

MAGIC REVIEW: *"Fire Wallet by Fred Kaps"* By Jason Waskett

MAGIC NEWS: *"The Original Chinese Conjurer"* By Lee Warren

Developing a Cabaret Act Part IV

Developing a Cabaret Act...

...Part IV: The Script

By Tam McLaughlin



Editor's Note: This is a multi-part essay written by Tam which traces the development and performance of his first cabaret show. It's an excellent account useful for anyone interested in the experience. This month's offering gives you Tam's entire script plan and you can find the preceding parts in the previous editions of TopHat.

Key: red = the effect, blue = directions, black = patter

Splash Bottle

[Intro music: take out balloon, blow up in 3 puffs – throw up to catch – get knife – burst balloon, Say with a confusing look and tone] "I thought it was BYOB?"

Intro

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls [while looking at the kids]

Are you all enjoying yourselves? Great.

I see there's a queue for the bar – better make that a double round [whoever is at bar], I'm going to be up here for a long time.

I see that a lot of my friends and colleagues from the IT industry here tonight.

I was going to make a few jokes about XML, recursive algorithms and default routes but I realised the rest of you wouldn't get them. So, I thought about just sticking to a few jokes about sex and having a life but realised that the IT folk wouldn't get them.

Have you all had something to eat from the buffet?

Unfortunately I didn't get the chance as I was getting ready in my dressing room – well the gents. But I did order in a McDonalds. [look in bag]

Developing a Cabaret Act Part IV (cont.)

Straw Production

Typical. They forgot my drink - but I see they've super-sized my order. you can tell by the size of the straw. Look!

[straw production]

[pause]

Most of you will know that I have been interested in magic for several years but not many of you will know that I'm not the first famous magician in the family. Ok, we'll settle for magician.

My great uncle Patrick was an illusionist.

His biggest show was for the inmates of Barlinnie Prison. He asked for a volunteer for the vanishing cabinet – and got killed in the stampede.

Intro to Grave Mistake

Ten years.

Who would have thought?

Who would have thought Clare would have put up with me for that long?

We've had some wonderful years together - well ok, some wonderful weeks.

Married life started out great... and then we invited the mother-in-law up for dinner [lower hand as if going downhill].

I remember I didn't speak to my mother-in-law for nearly 2 years. Don't get me wrong. It wasn't because I didn't like her; I just thought it was rude to interrupt.

I asked "If you hate me that much, why have you got my picture on the mantelpiece? She said "It's to keep the kids away from the fire."

Grave Mistake

Clare said to me a few weeks ago that she thought it was time we started planning for the future. So I sent away for one of those "Plan your own funeral" packs. That's not quite what she had in mind. So we looked through the brochure and I came across this fancy looking coffin. I said "Clare look at this coffin, it has an amazing Greek carved canopy, French flowing velvet drapes and a German embossed casket for only £10,000".

She said "There's no way we're spending that kind of money on a coffin for you!" I said "Ok, but I don't need to take the carved canopy. I can keep the velvet drapes and the German embossed casket for only £7000." [fold to hide canopy]. Clare said "I told you, were not spending that kind of money on a coffin." I said "Well how about I drop the French velvet drapes and just have the German embossed casket?" [fold to hide drapes] Clare said "No!" and grabbed the brochure and said "Tam, I've found the perfect coffin for you" [last fold to reveal dustbin]

Intro to KTJ

Now, I would like to invite two of guys to come up and join me.

John and Gary – thanks for volunteering. Please bring your jackets and wallets with you. A big round of applause for John and Gary. Got your jackets? There's a taxi is waiting out front.

Guys, have you got your wallets there? Good.

Can I borrow a £100 note from anyone? A £50? Ok, I will settle for a £20.

Surely someone has a £10 note on them. You know it's not a free bar!

Thanks very much.

Can you just sign this please so that there is no doubt we're using your note. Thank you.

You may have seen in the news that there are a lot of forged notes going about.

Well I have devised a method of detecting a forgery. [examine note]

Hmm, it does initially look forged. I'm going to have to confiscate it.

However, as compensation, please accept this Kiwi fruit. Shall we test it just to be sure? You see if we do the old test, then it should show up any flaws in the printing process.

[bill switch]

Yes definitely a forgery. Half naked woman on this side.

You keep the kiwi in your pocket and face the front. The ladies will be impressed.

Developing a Cabaret Act Part IV (cont.)

KTJ

The reason I asked you both up here is to help me recreate a famous historical event. For this we need a prop, which I have in my pocket and some music...

[Brian plays track 2]

[take out apple]

"Tesco's finest. No expense spared. I would like you to hold this apple on your head."

"Now there's a man with a bow and arrow at the back of the hall aiming at the apple". Unfortunately we couldn't get William Tell. He's dead! - and so will you be if this doesn't go to plan".

"You can relax, I'm only kidding. Unfortunately, the proprietor will not allow us to use a real bow and arrow for health and safety reasons so we've had to come up with an alternative plan."

[take apple from volunteer and bring out picture of apple]

We're going to use this picture of an apple and this knife. All we have to do is stab the knife through the centre of the apple.

Now at this distance it will be relatively easy, so to make it harder we need Gary's jacket. If you could hold the jacket at this end and you hold the jacket at this end here. Great.

Now for this recreation we need the knife, an apple and a jacket. [poke finger against jacket as if it is the knife and say, while looking at an appropriate? Girl] Oh – [name of girl] is getting excited.

Now we have the knife, the apple and... [look at owner of jacket] on sale at Primark? If we just push through...

[knife through]

Oops. We missed the centre of the apple. We should have been here. That's torn it.

And we can see that the knife is completely undamaged.

Not so sure about the apple or your jacket. Hmmm.

[pick bits of paper out of hole]

[pull bits of lining from jacket]

Is that sale still on? Bet you're glad you never wore your good jacket?

Don't worry Gary, with a little heat and a little rub, your jacket will be back to the way it was before William Tell got his hands on it.

Thank you.

Gary you can now take your seat. A big round of applause for Gary.

Paper Balls over Head

[If John also tried to take his seat say] Not so fast John. [otherwise]

I don't think it's fair that Gary gets all the fun so we are going to test your observational skills in a little experiment?

Please take a seat. Relax.

We're just having a bit of fun. It's show business – smile.

Now we're going to use an everyday object which I am sure you're familiar with.

Can you put your hands up like this? [reveal toilet roll and put between fingers]

Stop! Can I just make a little adjustment? It has to be right! [turn TR around]

Personal preference.

Ok John, the ball can either be in the right hand, which is this hand, or the left, which is this hand. What hand is the ball in?

Developing a Cabaret Act Part IV (cont.)

Well done... big hand for John.

[or]

Sorry, let's try again.

Now this is just for John, please no-one help John he's a big boy now.

Which hand is the ball in... no you see it's gone.

Ok, which hand...? you see the ball is over here.

[This is difficult to script as it depends on the volunteers response but this is a basic template I used]

Now sometimes this gets in the way and don't let them put you off.

Which hand? No, it's down there.

John, follow my hands... which hand?

Ok, let's make this a little easier [create large paper ball] and it will help the people in the cheap seats to see as well.

Which hand John?

Ok is the ball still there? Would you bet on it? How much? Will your wife allow you?

Let's give a big round of applause for John.

Intro to Knickerbocker

I recently finished reading a book titled "The intricate mind". It discusses the strange and subtle ways our minds work. For example, how many of you have made your journey home, say, from work, only to find that you have no recollection of the journey you just took?

That tends to happen to me on a Friday night but that can be attributed to the copious amounts of alcohol consumed. I can see [someone] agreeing with me there. What? You can't remember any of last week?

Sometimes our minds go into automatic pilot and were not really aware of what were doing. To demonstrate with another example, without checking, how many of you remember the colour of underwear you're wearing? Briefly raise you hands. Excellent. Those of you that didn't raise their hands, I guess you can't remember or your not wearing any tonight. But that's ok – it's fun to go commando once in a while.

Now for those of you that did just raise your hand, can you please raise your hands again. Great, I need to pick four of you to come up and join me in an innocent experiment in purest telepathy. I promise I won't embarrass any of you.

[I have not included the rest of the routine as it is mostly based on the published routine which can be found at www.onlinevisions.com]

Finale with Bill in Kiwi

Thank you very much Thank you. [assuming I get an applause]

Well you have been a great audience and I've certainly had some fun tonight. I would like to thank my guests... the lovely ladies, John and Gary...

Oh Gary, I nearly forgot. Do you still have that kiwi I gave you?

Please can you bring it up for the audience to see?

You have been holding this the whole time.

I'm looking for a knife, anyone from Easterhouse?

Here it is.

[cut kiwi, hold and allow Gary to retrieve note]

Gary, please do the honours.

Does that have your signature on it?

A big round of applause for Gary.

Good night and thank you.

[Brian plays final music track]

See next month's edition for Tam's run-down of the show itself. Don't miss it!

By Tam McLaughlin

Special Attraction

Special Attraction...
...mental coincidence?

By Daniel de Urquiza



EFFECT

As the initial opening of a series of mental card magic, the performer asks spectator to select any card of the deck. The selection consists in a very brief stroke with the tip of the index finger on one card of the fanned deck. This card is extracted from the deck very fairly. Any other 3 cards, of different suits and values, are placed besides the selection. All face up. Spectator takes and shuffles the deck, divided in 2 packets. She selects any packet. Shuffles again, if wished. Deals cards face up on the table. If the card dealt is from the same suit as the selection, then the selection moves one place ahead. If it's another suit, the matching card moves one place ahead. All cards are dealt. The selection always reaches first the spectator, because of the eerie attraction existing between the selection and the spectator. This attraction it's what caused spectator to select it, in the first place. Spectator shuffles again the packet, if wished. It happens again. Then the OTHER packet is shuffled by spectator, and the cards are dealt. It happens again.

IDEA OF PRESENTATION

There is a very special relation between human beings and cards. This relation is the foundation of fortunetelling with tarot cards, and this relation can be explored with regular poker cards. Actually, the poker cards are the base of one of the most famous types of tarot card, the French Tarot from Marseille.

Please, let me show you in a very special way the relationship existing between you and cards.

When a person picks a card, it's not at random. Esoteric forces of a very strange kind are there at work, and the selection it's always related to the one who is making the selection.

For instance, "pick a card, any card." Let's place it face up on the table. Ah, the Jack of Spades! Now, to prove the strong relation between you and this card, let's place near to it 3 other different cards. Very different... let's see... okay, Ace of Hearts, Queen of Clubs and... King of Diamonds. Different in value, different in suit. Please, take this half of the deck, and shuffle it. Now take this one, and shuffle it.

Please, point to one half. Ok, take it, and shuffle it one more time. Concentrate on your card. Deal cards face up, slowly, on a pile, on the table. Let's see... a club. Let's move then, towards you, the club card... the Queen of Clubs. (this continues until all cards are dealt)

See!!! The Jack of Spades it's with you, it's the nearest card... it's almost touching your heart.

METHOD

This is a simplification, reorganization, change of presentation and amplification of an aspect, besides of being an exhumation, of an old effect recompiled by Nick Trost at "Gambling tricks with cards." The original routine is from Tony Koininy, and he called it "Derby". The routine by Mr. Trost is called "Horse race."

The original routine involved matches, coins, and a presentation around a horse race. With all due respect, adoration and veneration to Mr. Trost, that was a rather naive presentation, if you now what I mean.

And using matches, coins, etc, while maybe visually appealing and out of the ordinary, it also took some spontaneity away.

Also, my method allows spectator to choose a card, making it a lot more personal and interesting... I think.

This routine is an opener, so you are supposed to have previously arranged the setup.

But the setup is not so complicated, so feel free to try it impromptu. Any decent culler should be able to do it reasonable fast and hidden.

SETUP

Cull the treys to the top.

Cull to the top any 5 spot card of each suit, in any order. The only thing you must be sure of is that you have on top 5 cards of each suit.

You'll have a 20 cards on top, 5 of each suit; the treys, and a bottom section of the deck composed by all court cards and the aces.

PROCEEDINGS

Fan the deck, in the way me and you know so well (we are sooooo clever) that causes the spectator to choose from the lower half of the deck. If you don't know what I'm talking about, then go read Mr. Bobo's

Special Attraction (cont.)

work, or feed your doves, instead of losing your time here.

Spectator will select, forced by your cunning and the eternal laws of logic, either an ace or a court card. Place that one face up, in the middle.

By the way, the ideal audience disposition is as follows: a rectangular table. At one end of it, your spectator. You are seated, next to him, on one of the sides of the table. Rest of audience is around the table, but not behind you.

When you place the card, place it with at the top short end point to spectator, face up, in the middle of the table. You have to calculate approximately 6 cards in distance from the spectator's chest, which should be above the edge of the table.

Kinda silly describing all this, I know, being so simple in actual performance.

All is for the sake of correct understanding, and a certain level of freakiness of me. What can I say, I'm an artist.

So, you place that card face up in there, and look quickly at the faces of the deck, doing this:

- a) Take 3 other cards of different suit and value.
- b) Cut the deck in a way that the 3 that matches the suit of the selection gets added to the top 20 cards. Say, you are looking at the faces of the cards. You see the 3 of club third from the first 3. Think: it's very easy what I want you to do. I want you to add one more card of the suit of selected card. In this way, when placing cards at the table, you'll always have one more card of the suit you want.

The selected card always reaches spectator first than the others.

Soooo... simply slide with your thumb the needed three next to the bottom card of the 20 cards top packets. It's very similar to a cull, only done "in front" instead of "behind the spread". Of course, you don't have to slide anything if the needed 3 is already there.

Now, watch me being a genius: lift all 21 card packet and give it to the spectator who selected the card, asking her to shuffle the cards. Ask her to concentrate on her selection while doing this.

Then give her the lower packet, and ask her again to shuffle. Magician force her the top packet, afterwards.

While you do all that I've told you to do with great faith in me (long to describe in print, very short in actual performance) explain that you are going to show them an eerie attraction between the selection and the selector.

To show that this only happens with the selection, and with no other card, you'll place 3 other cards around next to it. Very different cards, in value and in suit. The spectator is going to deal the cards from her packet face up, in a pile, in the table.

From the packet SHE shuffled, remember.

She deals say, a club. Move forward then the club card on the table, toward spectator. As you may probably guessed by now, the selection always reach first to the spectator.

Coincidence?

Make her shuffle again her packet.

Repeat.

It happens again.

Wow.

Take the packet from her, place it on top of the other packet, while performing a pass, keeping the break. Do this in a sort of "packet switch alla Marlo" fashion (indeed it's a packet switch. Use any other you know). Meaning: take the packet from spectator as if the trick is over. Place it for a moment in top of the other packet, which you've absently picked from the table. Perform the pass, and separate the packets, as if they have never been in contact one with the other. The rhythm it's quite similar of that of the top change. You can think of the switch as a top change of packets.

Offer her to shuffle again the "bottom" packet, and to do it one more time!

By Daniel de Urquiza

The Birthday Party Magician

The Birthday Party Magician...

...top tips for the kids magician

By Tim Arends

Birthday parties offer an excellent opportunity for the magician who would like to earn a bit of extra money from performing. There are a lot of children, and each of has a birthday every year. There are also a lot of parents who want to turn their child's birthday into a memorable experience. There is a definite demand for this type of performing.

Birthday parties are usually held on the weekends (regardless of which day the child's birthday actually falls) so you could not make a full-time living from them alone, but they can be an excellent source of extra income without jeopardizing the safety of your regular job. There are, however, a few pitfalls to this type of performing. Here are a few tips to avoid them, and to come off looking like a pro from the very beginning.

1. Make sure you are ready to start performing for pay.

Don't be in such a hurry to start making money from magic that you don't give yourself enough time to perfect your act. If your audience is paying good money to see your show, they deserve the very best act that you can give. Besides, you will be more confident and suffer from less stage fright if you know deep down that you have mastered what you are doing.

Practice your show exactly as you would perform it in front of the audience, imagining that the spectators are in their seats in front of you. Then perform the show for family and friends. It is also a good idea to do the show free a few times for charitable organizations (just make sure you are offering the show to groups that otherwise could not afford to pay for entertainment). Remember that children are your most appreciative audience if you're good, but unforgiving if you "goof up."

2. Limit your show length to a half-hour.

Ever notice that this is the length of all children's television programs? There is a good reason for this. Children have a limited attention span. Remember the old show-biz adage "Always leave them wanting more".

3. Work up a show that is easy to carry and quick to set up.

You probably won't be collecting premium prices from birthday party shows so keep your setup time to a minimum. Besides, the kids will be eager to see your show when you arrive, and eager to get on with the cake and ice cream when you are finished. If you can limit the show to two suitcases, or one suitcase and your roll-on table, you'll only need to make one trip from the car to the house and back again.

4. Involve the kids in the show as much as possible.

Kids love to be a part of the show, and this is one advantage the live entertainer has over video. Emphasize giveaways in the show such as newspaper trees, balloon animals, and cards with your name and phone number on one side and an optical illusion on the other (also a good form of advertising). Try to use as many audience volunteers as possible. You can get the kids to participate, even those who don't get a chance to come up, by having them shout "Abracadabra".

5. Try a variety of ways to advertise your show.

Some people advise leaving your cards on bulletin boards, on top of candy machines, in laundromats, etc., but these are often removed by management as quickly as they are put up. Still, it doesn't hurt to try. Birthday party websites are a possible way to get quick business, but sign up with only one at a time so that you can evaluate whether they are working for you (some parents won't remember from which website they got your phone number). Eventually, you might consider an ad in the yellow pages.

6. When a potential client calls, know what to say.

Here's where you have to really "sell" a show. Think up your "sales pitch" in advance, and be enthusiastic when you describe your act. Have a date book to jot down each show you book, so you don't accidentally schedule two shows for the same time. Have a note pad printed up with places for essential information such as: date of show, time of show, full address, phone number of caller, name of caller, name and age of birthday child, how the caller found out about you, etc. Make two copies of this and put one in your magic

The Birthday Party Magician (cont.)

suitcase so you'll be sure to have it with you when you go to the show.

7. Don't overcharge.

I think it is better to charge a bit modestly at first than to price yourself out of the market and become discouraged at an early date. Don't sell yourself short, but remember that for your first shows you will be gaining experience, which is worth no small amount in itself. You might want to base your fee according to how far you must drive to get to the show.

8. Give yourself plenty of time to get to the show.

If you want to build a good reputation, never arrive late for a show. This may mean giving yourself twice as much time as you think you will need to find the home where you will be performing. Also important is not to schedule two shows too close in time to each other. Figure out your route in advance, but remember that maps (even online maps) can contain errors, streets can be unmarked, traffic can be heavy and roads can be closed, so give yourself plenty of time to get to the showplace. Also always carry the phone number of your client in case you get lost, and hope that you never have to use it!

9. When the show is over, leave.

The host will sometimes invite you to join in the cake and ice cream, but my advice is to politely decline. You want to create the impression of being a busy professional, and besides, there's no point in overstaying your welcome!

Birthday party performing can be very rewarding. All that remains now is to put together an act and get some experience! Good luck!

By Tim Arends

Tim Arends lives in Indiana and posts to Magic Bunny as "Cybernettr" (a nonsense word he made up). He can be reached at cybernettr@aol.com or timarends@aol.com.

CompuMental

CompuMental...

...more technological magic

By Steven Goodwin

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Neither MagicBunny nor the TopHat ezine takes any responsibility for files downloaded from other sites. Although every effort has been made to ensure that content linked to is safe, you should always take extra caution when downloading files from the Internet*



Following on from my previous Top Hat article, "Computers as Assistants," this piece covers a practical demonstration for some of the ideas discussed within it. It is a simple effect that requires a deck of playing cards... and a computer running the free software from <http://www.bluedust.com/compuMental>.

EFFECT

A card is chosen or thought of by the spectator (using your favourite selection method). Without anyone apparently knowing it, a computer "thinks" of the same card.

METHOD

The real trick is in software. By clever use of the mouse you can impart the information about the card to the PC that it then displays. First off, have a card selected by your least unfavourite method and held on to by the spectator. The only limitation with the selection method is that you must either peek or force this card. Card stacks work well, too. The card itself is unimportant and can change for every performance, provided

CompuMental (cont.)

you know which it is. Mention, however, that no one else must see the card (especially the computer!), and should be kept close to their person. Then turn to your computer. Switch on the monitor, or open the laptop lid, to reveal the opening "splash" screen. You say, "This is my new assistant. His name is CPU. And I've taught him to read minds. Shall we start the program?", clicking the "next" button before you say "start". This emphasizes that nothing has yet happened in a case of computerised misdirection.

However, the position of this click is vital. The button is divided into six areas in a 3x2 formation. This is easier to visualise than a 4x2. A left mouse button click on the top row maps to cards of numeric value 1, 2 and 3. The bottom row tells the computer the card is 4,5, or 6. Now – if the card is higher than 6 you repeat the above portioning, but clicking with the right mouse button. That is, 7,8 and 9 on the top, with 10, Jack and Queen on the bottom. Kings require a click anywhere. Since all computer users expect the button to work irrespective of position, and you haven't started yet, no one should suspect anything.

Then say, "Right! The computer is ready to read your thoughts." You might like to accidentally (on purpose) knock the mouse at this point, or move it to the text on the screen and gesture an underlining motion under one of the words. This is necessary because you need to click in a specific area of the button again, and moving the mouse explicitly can look odd. Patter for a few moments about the connection between man and machine, and deus ex machina. When you feel the "computer" is ready (it tells you when it is - mentally, of course!), click the mouse in a specific position on the "next" button again, and the computer reveals the card. The position dictates the suit, going clubs, hearts, clubs on the top row, with spades, diamonds, spades on the bottom. A left click on the second button uses the value of the card from the first click, while a right click indicates a king of the appropriate suit.

With all the work done, simply ask the spectator to come up to the computer, pat it, and place her card beside the monitor to reveal that they are identical.

FORCE NOTES

If you force a specific card, then the program can be much simpler than it currently is and need only contain one image! However, some cards naturally fall onto regions where the mouse doesn't need to be moved. They are:

Clubs: 1, 3, 7, 9, King Hearts: 2, 8, King Spades: 4, 6, 10, Queen, King Diamonds: 5, Jack, King

So even without a 16-way force pack, this gives a better than 1 in 4 chance you'll never need to move the mouse and can avoid that part of the process.

GEEK NOTES

By renaming and changing the files in the directory you can use different mouse clicks to achieve similar results, and in non-card environs. A second package on the above website includes a set of files that mimic the Firefox web browser. This provides a familiar interface that attempts to hide the trickery of a custom application.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Having access to a computer is the stumbling block with this effect, as it is slightly larger than all my other props combined! I therefore believe this is of more use as a casual office trick ("Hey – look what I downloaded...") and potential stage routine. However, those performing street magic may be able to walk into an internet café with the software on a USB keychain and run it directly. Remember to gain the users trust first though with another effect, as most people don't like their computer being hijacked.

FOR THE FUTURE

I am working on alternative software that doesn't require a second click. This means the spectator can press the second button, giving the impression that they alone have interacted with the machine. This code is nearly finished!

In the interim, however, the source itself has been released under the GNU GPL, meaning you can make any changes you like without royalties or payments. The only stipulation of the GPL is that if you release your executable code, you must also release its source code. More information on the GPL can be found at <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/gpl.html>

By Steven Goodwin

My Lucky Card

My Lucky Card...

...strong (simple!) card magic

By Shaun Sims aka sinajar

Hi guys, this is my first effect that I have submitted to Top Hat and I hope you like it. It's a great opener in my opinion and gets great reactions for me.

EFFECT

The spectator shuffles a deck of cards and fans through the face to check they are a normal deck. The spectator then cuts the cards in 4 random locations, leaving 4 face down piles. The spectator chooses which pile they want to use and the magician starts dealing the cards until they say stop. The magician then takes the next card and places it aside and says "this is your lucky card".

The magician reaches for his wallet that has been on display the entire time and opens it to show there is a mini card in there, he takes it and places it by the spectators card. He asks the spec which card he wants to turn over first. He then turns one over and then the other, amazingly, they match.

WORKINGS

You will need a wallet, a miniature card and a normal deck. The miniature card is optional, you can just use a duplicate, but make the sure the back colours are different.

The duplicate card can be any card you want. I use 10 of clubs and you need to put this card in your wallet. Have the same card you are using, on the bottom of the deck. Corner crimp this card and then you are ready to go. The crimp allows the spec to shuffle cards, and then after they have shuffled, you just need to cut the crimped card back to the bottom.

Give the cards an over hand shuffle and run the last card so it is left on top of the deck at the end. Then milk the top and bottom cards together, when you start another overhand shuffle. Now there is the 10 of clubs second to bottom and another card on the bottom.

Ask them to pick up the deck and get them cut 4 piles of cards, keep track of which pile has the force card.

We are now going to force the pile with the force card. Get them to push two piles forward. If they push two piles which don't contain the force card, say "ok, we'll get rid of these". If they push 2 piles and one contains the force card, say "ok, these are the ones you have chosen to keep" Which ever scenario happens, act casual and as if that is the only outcome.

Get them to place a pile in your hand, if it is your force pile, say "ok, this is the pile you have chosen to use", if they choose the other pile, say "ok, this is the pile you have chosen to get rid of".

Now we are going to force the card through the vulnerable glide. Show the face card and then deal it face down, at the same time say "I'm going to deal the cards face down until you say stop. Actually, I'll deal them face up". Turn the card face up, this is just a little convincer. Perform the glide and start dealing cards until they say stop and then take the next (force card) and put it aside and say this is your lucky card.

Say you always keep a lucky card in my wallet, take it out and build it up and then show thy match. I always give them a choice of whether they want to turn over my card first or theirs.

My presentation is based around the idea of luck. There's loads of possible presentations, but I'll leave that up to you. I hope you try this out, and drop me a PM if you have any other ideas for this or want to let me know what the reactions are like etc.

By Shaun Sims aka sinajar

The Spirit Feather

The Spirit Feather... ...and other things

By Peter Marucci



In a time when most kids are being raised on a diet of CDs, computers, and television – and most performers are kids' magicians (but some won't admit it!) -- it's a bit sad to see these same performers still doing stuff based on nursery rhymes and fairy tales.

Sure these things have a place – if well done – but can't we keep abreast of the times?

Royal Magic has an effect called Sprit Feather, which involves a feather balancing and dancing, on its point, on the back of a playing card.

No magnets, wires, threads, wind, air, or the usual stuff is involved; but, still, it's a pretty ho-hum trick.

Then comes Wild Magic, of San Antonio, Florida – owned and operated by Tom Jones and Rachel Wild – with their routine which is as up-to-date as today's headlines.

Humbly, I offer a couple of other handlings of the method (without exposing it).

EFFECT

A feather (or what you will) dances on the back of a playing card; no wires or magnets are used.

WORKING

Because this is a dealer item, I am not permitted to reveal the working of the trick here.

PRESENTATION

However, not to worry; the presentation is the most important part of any trick (the secret being a very small part) and a couple of presentations are offered here.

First: Wild Magic (with whom I have absolutely NO financial or other interest) offers a handling of the Sprit Feather that can tie in with Harry Potter. There is no copyright infringement, since no images or trademarked items are used in the effect.

You take a playing card off a deck of cards and lay a bright red feather across the card. When you say the "magic floating spell" that you may have learned at Hogwarts -- Wingardium Leviosa" – the feather stands upright on the back of the card, hovers around, dances, and then, finally, flies off the card.

Since the feather is not gimmicked, you can pick up a bag of brightly dyed feathers at any craft shop and give the feather away to one of the youngsters after the routine.

Second: The Quidditch Match.

Quidditch is a mythical game from the Potter books, played by two teams on flying brooms, in pursuit of a winged, golden ball – the Golden Snitch. If you get the gold ball, you automatically win the game.

The best flying broom for the game is the Nimbus 2000.

Go to a hobby shop or craft shop and get a miniature corn broom. These look like "witches' brooms" and are about five inches long. Gimmick it by putting a tube in the brush end and you are set to go.

Lay the broom flat on a playing card and release it. Suddenly it stands upright, swings around, and "dances", before either settling down or jumping off the card (your choice).

Third: Aladdin and his Flying Carpet.

As you relate the story of Aladdin, his wonderful lamp, and his flying carpet, you produce a small carpet (about the size of a playing card – sound familiar?) and a cutout figure of Aladdin. The figure is laid on the

The Spirit Feather (cont.)

carpet and suddenly he arises and balances on the carpet as you swing it wildly about. Finally, you slow it down, Aladdin lies down on the carpet and you remove him.

This is done by simply setting up the cutout of Aladdin with a hollow tube in his base and the carpet is set up like the playing card.

SECOND THOUGHTS

This wonderful effect is limited in its routines only by your own imagination. I have far too many plots to list here; I have given you the best few.

I also have two bizarre ones, involving the resurrection of an Egyptian mummy and the creation of a Golem, a creature made of mud in human form that is part of Yiddish folklore.

This routine is just too good to pass by, especially with the added plots (he said, modestly!).

Enjoy! Your audience certainly will.

Cheers,
Peter Marucci

Fire Wallet by Fred Kaps

Fire Wallet...

...by Fred Kaps

By Jason Waskett



NAME: Fire wallet by Fred Kaps.

AVAILABLE: From Flash-magic, 26 Rue Saint Clade, 91700, Villiers-Sur-Orge, France. Tel/Fax +33.(0).1.60.16.43.62 or E-mail flashmagic@laposte.net website www.flash-magic.net (prices in Euros).

Of note, I found the guy, who I assume runs this, to be very friendly and helpful.

I tried to find a dealer here, or in the USA, but no joy. I am sure that if you phoned up a good magic dealer they'd be able to order one in for you.

PRICE: I purchased mine at Blackpool for £25. You can't beat a good "hands on" look at something.

VALUE FOR MONEY: I'll say 9 out of 10. This is a high quality well made piece. To be honest, it would cost £15 for a wallet anyway, that's a normal one. So to put it in perspective, I'd say yes it's a good deal.

EXAMINABLE: I'd have to say no, but you can have it right in front of them with no worries, and they can take a good look at it. You can't hand it out, but who gives their wallet out anyway?

ANGLES: You can show the wallet quite openly, but they are going to see something from the rear if they are behind when it's on fire. There is a basic sleight involved in order for the card to appear in the wallet, but if you don't know what that is then you're in the wrong forum/need to read a few more books on the subject.

RESET: Now this is going to be dependant on many factors, if it's a hot day it's going to narrow the timing down a little due to evaporation and of course it's also dependant on what fuel you decide to use. But I'd have to say instant, in the flaming wallet aspect, and close to instant in the card to wallet.

I loaded it up with Iso-Propal Alcohol and lit it every half an hour (maybe more) in a three hour period. I

Fire Wallet by Fred Kaps (cont.)

couldn't get it to light on the three hour mark, even though the pads were still wet. I consider that pretty good. Other fuels are going to evaporate less, or more (see fuels below). It's easy to re-fill, although I don't really think that's quite the right word to use. If you can fill a Zippo, you can fill this.

YOU GET: A dandy wallet and a small bit of paper (badly photocopied in French). When I say dandy, "Dandy" appears to be the make of the wallet (it's embossed on the front) before it was converted into a fire wallet. I'm assuming that "Dandy" is a trade name, perhaps prevalent in the States.

The wallet is 92mm by 120mm by 20mm. It has 5 credit card slots, 3 internal pockets, and 1 bill pocket (which is big enough for British, Euro and American greenback. The length being for the longer US currency. There is also a zippered compartment which the card will appear in.

You can see it here: <http://www.flash-magic.net/frameset.htm> (page 6)

Not a great picture, but you get the idea. I looked at this one and the deluxe model, but much preferred this one, as the deluxe was larger (a three fold wallet), and could be shown more openly.

EFFECT: A spectator freely chooses a card, signs it and then returns it to the deck. The performer shuffles the deck, but the card is found to have disappeared from the pack. The performer reaches round into his back/or jacket pocket to remove his wallet. When the wallet is opened flames appear. the card is then found in the zippered compartment.

DIFFICULTY: Loading, 2 out of 5. A basic sleight is involved (you'll find plenty of them in the Bahamas). Not as easy to load as some wallets, but not a problem.

Firestarting, 2 out of 5. Due to the fact you have to flick the flint. Technique to light? Slide your right thumb in; this gives a little room to flick the flint with your index finger, then open. Flick it when just opening and you'll get both sides aflame.

BUILD QUALITY: Nice quality wallet, good brass flint system which is solidly riveted to aluminium hinged heat shield plate. This plate has been sprayed matt black and has a "well" on one side which helps to snuff out the flames when closed (and perhaps helps to limit evaporation slightly).

The hinge pin does tend to ride up with use, but is easily pushed down. The fuel pads/wicks, are fibreglass and will last donkeys (a subtle colloquialism meaning quite some time, definitely longer than I'd be past caring). I was informed that fibreglass can take 1000 degrees of heat, which is highly unlikely you'll get up to, as you'd end up like an Indiana Jones extra!

RATING: 9 out of 10. 9 - Excellent. You will not be disappointed. It's great. People rate Fred Kaps wallets highly, and not just the salesmen!

WOULD I BUY AGAIN?: Yes, but I don't think I'm going to really need to. I might look at the electronic ignition ones, but this is pretty simplistic in design, and thus pretty reliable. Flick this, spark created, spark hits fuel loaded pad, and you're away.

If you want an electronic one, then this may be worth a look: <http://www.topsecretmagic.co.uk/new.html>

NOTES: Do I really need to say this?! Yeah, I do.

*****IT'S A FIRE PRODUCT, AND THUS IS DANGEROUS*****

I know this may be pretty obvious, but don't overload it so it's dripping everywhere, don't get blasé with it, and be aware of your surroundings.

There I've said it, back to the review. I saw a couple of other fire wallets. One was only £10. It was any old wallet that you could buy in, well your local wallet shop, except that it had cotton wadding just glued to the inside...? Hmm, so I'm going to pour petrol on this, and then set myself on fire. Okay.

Fire Wallet by Fred Kaps (cont.)

An example here:

From Alakazam:

Pro Fire Wallet

The fire wallet is a great prop to use for getting the spectators attention when performing close-up magic.

With this newly designed hip size model you can show the wallet as being normal with credit cards and bank notes inside before suddenly making it burst into flames.

*The ignition can be operated with one finger and the **fire gauze has been sewn not just glued inside** to prevent any fire debris from falling onto the floor.*

Available from the second week in November so pre order now ready for your Christmas shows.

NOTE: This product is intended for professionals to use at their own risk. The manufacturer and resellers assume no liability for hazards inherent in the use of this device.

NOT FOR SALE OR DEMONSTRATION TO UNDER 18's.

Price: £25.00

Sewn in? I'm obviously missing something here. If it's sewn in, then the bit you set fire to is attached directly to the leather. Then that means that there is surely no heat shield? Which is a necessity to protect the wallet from the heat created. I don't personally see that as a good thing, but welcome others opinions. Just to put it into perspective, I'm not slagging off Alakazam, and have not seen this wallet, but I can't see how it can be anywhere near as good.

Don't be fobbed off with some cheap copy. After I knew what I wanted I still had a nose around, and saw the exact same "Dandy" wallet with what looked like half a sandbag stuck in it. It was terrible, just awful.

I've converted mine slightly by slipping a magnet, 13 x 0.75mm circular, either side (in the far bottom right and left corners) as you are looking at the fuel areas. It snaps shut and locks, which I like, as it can really be shown quite openly, but I am wondering how this might affect my bank cash point card...

I also had to figure out the loader. It's a very thin plate of, possibly, sprung steel and has a bend placed in it. I ended up cutting a piece of stitching (where it's stitched across the zip) as I could get to it easier, and gluing it inside to the larger flap in the compartment where the card appears. If I'm wrong I'd love to know, as it doesn't seem to work too badly like that.

100% light up? I'd have to say pretty much.

I think that about covers it, I was informed by someone that Zippo flints, although more expensive are the best ones to use. In the grand scheme of things, we are not talking a lot of extra cash.

I said earlier, don't overload with fuel. I've noticed it doesn't seem to light as easily if it's absolutely sodden. The spiel says...

Well, it's in French, so I haven't got a clue!

Downsides?

The flint cuts into your finger a little, repeated use will take the skin off slightly. Oh and you are not going to be able to get it going in high wind, even a breeze is going to waft the fumes away, so you can't light them. Just like a Zippo, eerrrr windproof lighter.

The pin in the hinge slides out. I originally thought, no hardship though, I'll just tap it a little with a hammer and splay it out a bit. This didn't work too well, so in the end I found a longer piece of brazing rod and bent it

Fire Wallet by Fred Kaps (cont.)

over top and bottom to keep it in place. If you lost the original rod it would still be effective though. If you had it in your back pocket, over time, I think the weight of you sitting down would flatten out the thin steel loader. Thus narrowing the space for the card.

Good review on another fire wallet here:

<http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=14232&highlight=fire+wallet>

Useful threads:

<http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=15991&highlight=kaps>

<http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=8729&start=0>

and on fuel:

<http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=20504&highlight=fire+wallet>

I've also more recently seen the Jardonnet wallet. By Stephane Jardonnet. It retailed at £25 and was also a "Dandy" wallet. The loader was a thin sheet of hard plastic and the entry was just a cut in the inside main money pocket. I could have got a straighter cut with a Stanley blade, because that's all it was. Put it this way, the card wouldn't magically appear in the compartment as easily. This did however lock magnetically.

It can be seen here:

<http://www.world-of-magic.co.uk/magic.asp?id=432>

and here:

<http://www.murphymagicsupplies.com/catalog/tricks/html/kapsonfire.html>

It was the same design as the Kaps, the cheaper fuel holder being that hard wearing cotton you get on military style belts. This was riveted straight on to the same type of well as the Kaps, but there was no heat shield. This whole part was glued directly onto the plastic. Well I don't know the ground here, and I don't want someone to sue the pants off me. Hey I've only got one pair. Otherwise known as? Well I get the impression, that if this were a Fred Kaps wallet, it would say FRED KAPS on it.

In my opinion, and that's all it is, as I'm no professional performer, it is a cheaper purchase, and it shows.

OVERALL: The fire wallet by Fred Kaps is hot stuff (sorry, I just had to!). I've said this before about another wallet and I have to say it about this one, it doesn't look like a prop. You can put your cash in it and use it everyday like any other wallet. Controlled flames at your fingertips, and safe if used responsibly. I did have to play around with it a little to get it exactly how I wanted it but I'm very, very happy with it. Top notch.

Right, I'm off for some twisted fire starting...

By Jason Waskett

The Original Chinese Conjuror

The Original Chinese Conjuror

...a musical diversion suggested by the lives of Chung Ling Soo

By Lee Warren

Saturday 1, Sunday 2, Friday 7 July At 9.00pm
Almeida Theatre, London

Music: Raymond Yiu - Text: Lee Warren

Raymond Yiu and Lee Warren's new music theatre work tells the extravagant true story of William Robinson, whose onstage death at the Wood Green Odeon in 1918 brought to an end a brilliant magic career. For years he had conned the British paying public into believing he was a more exotic figure than proved the case.

The Original Chinese Conjuror (cont.)

Young composer Raymond Yiu and his librettist (and magician) Lee Warren, have drawn on vaudeville, magic shows and musical theatre to tell this engaging story.

This production, which receives its world premiere on Southworld Pier as part of this June's Aldeburgh Festival (15, 17, 18 June) before heading to the Almeida, stars counter tenor Andrew Watts and reunites Martin Duncan (the versatile director of Chichester's multi-award winning Frank Loesser musical *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*, *Gondoliers* (ENO forthcoming) and Birtwistle's *The Last Supper* with his National Theatre of Brent collaborator, designer Francis O'Connor.

The Original Chinese Conjuror is produced by Aldeburgh Almeida Opera and commissioned and developed with the support of the Genesis Foundation.

Born in Hong Kong in 1973 and resident in England since 1990, **Raymond Yiu** studied Engineering at Imperial College London and is self-taught as a composer. His music has been performed by Lukas Foss, Andrew Watts, Britten Sinfonia, Lontano, the Rothko String Trio, London Sinfonietta and the BBC Singers. His *Beyond the Glass* for chorus was shortlisted at the second British Composer Awards in 2004 and he received the spnm's George Butterworth Award in 2003. His trio based on Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* was premiered in Italy and his music has also been performed in the United States of America. Ray is currently represented by the bmic's *New Voices* scheme.

Lee Warren has been a professional magician since the age of twelve. He trained as an actor at The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts and as a teacher of Alexander Technique at the Alexander Technique Studio, Wandsworth Common. He has taught at several drama schools and is a resident teacher at The Actors Centre, Covent Garden. The author of several short stories, he is currently writing a play about the Cathars and working with Raymond Yiu on a new opera. *The Original Chinese Conjuror* is his first full-length libretto. He has directed several theatre pieces, including *Milk for Jamie* at the Soho Theatre Studio, and the world premiere of the opera *Gravity and Light* at Oxford Town Hall.

BOOKING/LISTINGS INFORMATION

Almeida Box Office: 020 7359 4404

On-line: www.almeida.co.uk

Almeida Theatre, Almeida Street, Islington, London N1 1TA

For further press information, please contact:

Sophie Cohen

Telephone: 0207 428 3250

Email: sophiecohen@blueyonder.co.uk

By Lee Warren

Many thanks to the eight contributors this month. Please send all correspondence to tophat@magicbunny.co.uk and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. The 50th (final) edition will be released in hopefully less than a month.

Thanks,
Jon Snoops
MagicBunny.co.uk