

A Word From ...

... The Editor *Darrel Miles*



Last night the result was:

England 1 France 1

Today has been the time for the response: “not bad, some mistakes, a solid performance.” There were also comments about the short amount of time the manager has been in place and the lack of games played under him.

I had to feel that Top Hat is also at the same stage. We are also looking to the long term, starting to get people into place who will contribute over a period of time. We must not forget those who come in for specific articles from time to time, helping to get the balance right when we need it.

While some may not want to have their prize routines published, there are still reviews, advice, thoughts about magic or magicians that have been seen or met. Why are magic clubs so good, or so bad? In fact, there are a range of subjects that anybody could write about that would help Top Hat go from “not bad” to “pretty damn good!”

One final thought:

Top Hat reached 53 issues. As a quarterly production, we have just over 12 years before we overtake that number!

- Darrel -



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A Picture Is Worth ...

... A Thousand Words

Essay

Gary Scott



A picture is worth a thousand words....

Or so they say ... (Who are they?). ..

As the late Bob Read studied pictographs and paintings for the purposes of his Cups and Ball vocation, we as magicians can study the greats of the last 100 years, not just through film, but through pictures too. Some of the past masters have been caught on film, but too little has been available from the beginning of the 20th century. This was when magicians were masters of the stage and it's not hard to understand why. So here's a picture for you to look at. What do you see?



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This is Dai Vernon, performing Cards to Pocket at The Kit Kat club, New York City, April, 1936. But there is more... a hell of a lot more.

Let's just take a little closer look at what this picture has to offer us, as magicians, for the purposes of magical study.

The first thing that caught my eye (apart from the card being extracted from the pocket, which I'll get to later) was the ease and gracefulness of the routine.

Check out the following points;

Stance

The feet are approximately the width of the hips apart. This commands a natural, authoritative position on stage without looking too overbearing. The weight is on the right foot, ready to make a pivot at any point. The left foot is slightly raised at the toe; with its weight on the heel. The body is able to turn on this pivot point, to face either side of the audience with minimal movement, for maximum impact. The transfer of weight from heel to toe, changes in ratio to the direction turned. Cards to Pocket, (especially trouser pocket), requires a minimalistic movement to convey the impossibility of what is happening.

Naturalness

Let's now look at the handling of this routine. First notice the right hand producing the card from the pocket. The extraction is done at the tips of the index finger and thumb. To reach into a pocket and grab the card with all finger tips would look cumbersome at best and have the potential to cover the face or partial face of the card. The left arm is extended with a slight, natural bend, with the cards held at the fingertips to show as much face as possible. There is openness between the cards in the left hand being displayed and the cards being extracted, with the right hand, from the trouser pocket. A very open gesture that is perfectly exaggerated for a stage performance.

Dress

Although the dress is typical of a nightclub circa 1936, we can see that Dai Vernon, in his prime, was a well presented gentleman. The embodiment of today's magician seems to be jeans, t-shirt and sneakers/trainers. Even by today's fashion conscious youth, the performer on stage must go well beyond the layman's expectations. You are a magician. Why would you dress anything less than?

So take a look at how well the trousers are pressed and fit. In regards to fit, the jacket is the perfect cut as well as the shirt, the proper cuff length. Not only looking smart but serves the double duty of not floating over the magicians wrists to hamper any handling of props/sleight of hand. Dare I say proper polished footwear and a distinctive tie to complete the ensemble?

Gaze/Mis-direction

Although I have covered different topics above, before this segment, the first thing noticed was the card being produced from the trouser pocket. Why? Because you looked where the magician wanted you to look. Dai Vernon is glancing very definitely at the extracted card and so your eyes naturally follow. This is natural mis-direction. If you take an invisible line down the centre of Vernon's body, the left side is almost invisible due to the magicians gaze. Any feat, that requires a minimal amount of movement from the left side, will now be totally transparent. This technique is not totally dependent on gaze. The body must be turned at the slight angle to help narrow the point of vision. Even with Vernon's gaze, a dead on, square view, nothing can be concealed. This is how stance and naturalness combine with gaze form the mis-direction found in this very picture. Even when not performing a secret task, it is possibly best to practise this kind of mis-direction (much better to say direction of attention as pointed out by the late, great Tommy Wonder) whenever you can.

Demeanour

You can see from Dai Vernon's expression to his performance that he is living the dream. With a combination of skill, good dress sense, charm, Vernon projects dignity to the magical arts.

Although many a magician have tried to play down their natural excitement for what they are about to do, it is best to embrace it and project it to your audience.

Other Stuff

Check out Vernon's very tidy haircut, moustache and clean shave. It adds to a more pleasant experience for your audience if you are well groomed. Now check out everything going on around Vernon.

The band. They are preparing the music for their next cue. How many of you can say that you are capable of working with a live orchestra or band? These days it's all about plugging an mp3 player into a sound system and off you go. The band may have just played an intro for Vernon until he hit his mark. After the act they will have played an exit montage. Depending on the act, you can be sure that the band would have to play whatever is required for Vernon's routines. The act of relying on a band to play precisely as needed is a lot different to a simple cue for a sound guy to press play. Just as you would have to be as skilful in your timing in regards to your routines, working with a live band means that you now have to marry the trust of the band and it's conductor to whatever act you are showing.

I've wanted to do this article for a while. I discovered this image in the Vernon Touch (pge. 138 if you have it) and it is with kind permission from the American Museum of Magic that I have been able to reproduce it for Top Hat.

I'm sure that many of you, after reading my study, will now see this picture in a different light. It is my favourite picture of Vernon performing as it totally encapsulates what a magician should look like on stage.

I hope you may have taken away something useful from this study of a picture. Take a look at your favourite magicians from the past. Especially if you're lucky enough to discover images like I have. So... What do you see?

See you on Magic Bunny



A Cheeky Little Stunt

Effect

Dan Cunningham



Effect: The performer seems to be able to count, at what only could be considered super human speed, the number of cards in a packet cut by a spectator. This feat is repeated under increasingly difficult circumstances from a thoroughly shuffled deck.

In Juan Tamariz's superb book 'Mnemonic' there is a chapter dedicated to using a half stack. A half stack, as the name implies, consists of only half of the cards being in an arranged, memorised order. This affords many of the benefits of using a memorised deck along with the luxury of a relaxed handling, as only half of the cards have to be maintained.

One of Tamariz's favourite routines, by his own admission, is the classic 'Weighing the Cards Routine', where the magician is able to tell how many cards are in a packet cut by a spectator by weighing them in his hands. In fact he is simply using the stack values to gain that information. Included in the notes for this effect are the various themes Tamariz likes to use and one of those imaginary skills is the ability to rapidly count the cards as they are riffled past his eyes.

I noticed when I was performing this cute little trick that it was quite possible to perform the entire routine without showing any of the faces. With this in mind I considered the possibility of this routine working without a memorised deck. In fact, any arrangement that is designed to disguise order (like Si Stebbins or Eight kings) can be discarded too, as the disguise is only necessary if the faces of the cards are seen.

So, operating within these parameters, I asked myself what would be the simplest half stack to use? The answer will qualify the use of the word 'cheeky' in this trick's title. The simplest possible stack to use in this trick is one that we are all familiar with: New Deck Order.

Working:

Open a brand new USPCC deck, remove the jokers deck and overhand shuffle the cards maintaining a top stock of twenty six cards. Alternate this shuffling sequence with some false cuts. The end product should be the first thirteen cards being the hearts in new deck order, the second thirteen being the clubs in new deck order and the remaining twenty six being the spades and diamonds in a randomised sequence.

Phase One: - Small Packet

Cut the deck deeper than halfway at put the top packet to the right hand side. From the remaining cards deal off ten cards onto the table. Using this ten card packet as a gauge, ask the spectator to try and cut off what they assume to be ten cards from the right hand packet and put them in your hand. Take the face down packet and put your middle finger on the top right of the cards, your thumb on the bottom left and your index finger on the back. Add a little pressure with your thumb causing the cards to bow, revealing the card's bottom left index. This is all the information you need to know how many cards are in the packet. Unless your spectator is utterly incompetent you will see a heart, as even with an error margin of three cards either way they will cut to a card in that suit. If the card is a six of hearts you have six cards,

if it is a jack then you have eleven and so on. If you do see a club add that value to thirteen, so if it is a two of clubs the number of cards will be fifteen.

Spring the cards from one hand to another whilst pretending to carefully observe the cards as they move and then immediately name the amount. Spread the cards face down to show that you were correct.

Phase Two: - Half the Deck

Gather the cards and replace them on the right hand side pile (this rebuilds your twenty six card stack) and put the ten cards used as a 'gauge' on top of them and then finally add those cards to the left packet (the original bottom packet).

Now the deck is in this arrangement: sixteen non stacked cards, the twenty six card stack and the remaining ten non stacked cards. Give the deck a false cut and ask the spectator to, this time, cut to about half and put them in your hand. Once again hold them in from the corners and apply pressure revealing the face card's index. Add ten to the stack value to get the number of cards in the packet and this time spring them not into your other hand, but rather a satisfyingly messy heap onto the table. Instantly name the amount of cards and spread them to reveal that once again you are right.

Phase Three: - Any Amount

Gather the cards and replace them to the bottom packet. Whilst telling the spectator that you are now going to rapidly count any desired amount of cards cut, idly spread the cards and get a break under ten of them. Double undercut those cards to the bottom and execute an in-faro. These actions will result in the stacked cards being every second card, from two to fifty two.

Ask the spectator to cut any amount they chose, preferably deep into the deck. Take the amount cut into your hands and observe the bottom card via a turn around glimpse.

If the card is a heart, multiply the value by two. So if it is a queen you will have twenty four cards in the packet.

If the card is a club add thirteen to the stack value and then double it. So if it is a seven of clubs you will have forty cards in the packet.

If the card isn't in the stack (ie. one of the spades or diamonds) carefully (and secretly) push back the bottom card to reveal the card beneath. Take that value and if it is a heart double it and add one, if it is a club, add thirteen to the value, double it and add one. In reading, this may seem like a tricky piece of arithmetic to be used under performance conditions, but in practise you will discover it to be very easy. Once the amount of cards has been ascertained, spring them onto the table and engage in the charade of rapidly counting them. This time instead of spreading them, you can count them to the table as there is no longer any need to maintain the stack.

This demonstration of skill, admittedly isn't going to make the earth move. But I make an effort when thinking about the economy of an effect that gives the impression of skill, to work out a rough ratio of the illusion of skill displayed to the actual skill required. I can tell you from experience that, if you are the type prone to demonstrating remarkable skills that simply you don't have, then the ratio of implied skill/ actual skill for this cheeky little stunt is, in my nearly humble opinion, a good one.






60 Second Interview Joshua Jay

Interview

Alex Radway

 **Hi Josh, thanks for taking the time to speak to me today, 20 questions. Start.....now!**

What was last trick you saw that completely fooled you?

I watched the Dani DaOrtiz DVDs and was fooled several times..

When someone says "You're a magician? Show me a trick!" what do you show them?

It depends on the situation, and I think that's important. Magicians shouldn't think in terms of one particular go-to trick all the time. Are we standing? Are we sitting? Are the people old or young or a mix? Are they men or women? All these factors weigh my decision of whether to perform, and what to perform.

As a performer, writer, columnist, consultant, lecturer and dealer, you have experience in pretty much every area of the magic industry. Which is your favourite?

I like all aspects of magic—I just get sick of each one if I do it too much! I got very burned out on lecturing and had no real desire to ever do it again. So I focused on performing in NYC for a while. And you know what? I started to miss the lecturing! So, my batteries are recharged and I'm at it again.

When performing, what are your favourite openers and closers?

Again, it depends on the audience. But generally I like to close with something they can talk about: a signed card appearing in a wooden box, or a card fusing together. These are discussion pieces that get more impossible the more you think about them.

Which effect out there do you wish you were the one who invented it?

Anything by Angelo Carbone. He's so clever!

What is the decision process for deciding if you will sell an effect on Vanishing Inc.?

It has to be good, we must agree that it would sell well, and we have to believe it's something we would use.

Have there been any Talk About Tricks submissions for MAGIC Magazine that you've wanted to not publish and keep for yourself?

Not really. I don't have the mentality of holding things back for myself or only certain magicians. I'm proud of the output of that column, and anytime I get a really great trick for it, I think of all the good it will do my readers.

Is there much difference in writing magic books for magicians and magic books for the general public?

Yes. For the public it's a much bigger, more detail-oriented enterprise, and I don't have the final say!

As we all know, being a good magician does not automatically make you a good teacher of magic. What would you say are the most important tips for teaching magic?

Well, to be a good lecturer you must make the explanations as entertaining as the tricks. And that's something that very few magicians understand. To be a good teacher, like anything else, I think you need experience. You must be able to intuit what questions or troubles people will have, and deal with those.

As we all have one, what is your most memorable mess up of a trick/routine?

The most recent one, which was a technical failure of something mechanical in my show. I still shudder when I think of it.

What is the best piece of magic related advice you've been given?

That you must LOVE what you do, and the rest will follow.

OK thanks Josh, now for some random non-magic questions:

When you're not thinking about magic, what's on your mind?

My girlfriend, or movies.

What is the most treasured possession in your house?

Good question! I have three. I collect antique magic, and my favourite pieces are a first-edition Discoverie of Witchcraft, a Houdini King of Cards poster, and an Erdnase First Edition that was owned by Dai Vernon.

How would your best friend describe you in 3 words?

I'm between friends right now. I'll get back to you! I would hope ambitious, hardworking, and honest.

What was the last movie you saw? Any good?

21 Jumpstreet, midnight showing, last night. It was hilarious.

If you weren't in the magic industry, what would you be doing for a living?

Probably running my own business.

What's your favourite ice cream flavour?

Something with peanut butter.

What is your guilty pleasure in life?

Movies. I watch tons of movies.

A movie buff eh? Do you have a top three?

Sure do: Catch Me if You Can, A River Runs Through It, and The Departed

If you were president of the world for a day, what would be the first thing you would change?

The quality of magic on television.

And that's 20, thanks again Josh!

Joshua is an award winning performer, lecturer, and bestselling author of magic. He authors the Talk About Tricks section of MAGIC Magazine, as well as being co-founder of Vanishing Inc. Magic.




Magic ...

... The Musical

Essay

Daniel Rose

 During one of my regular binges on eBay (other online auction sites are available), looking to fulfil my magic fix, I came across Daryl's Ambitious Card Magic DVD. Having had my first and only attempt at an ACR come crashing down in flames (Five seconds in and my layman test subject casually points and remarks "You've picked up two cards." Remember kids, practice practice practice!), I took a second look at the write up. My curiosity was piqued when I got to the following line: "Freestyle routing makes this effect a little like playing jazz."

That was it. If there was anything I was worse at than the ACR, it was music. I'm not being modest, I have my fair share of talents, but I'm more than lacking when it comes to all things of a musical nature. At school I managed to learn the basics of drumming, and I can play two songs on the bass. That's after years of lessons. I still have the bass in my room, where although I keep promising myself I'll pick it up again and have a play, it just sits looking at me accusingly. But I digress. Beyond causing me to relive my failures, the comment got me thinking about the link between music and magic. I'm not talking about the use of music during a routine, but rather the similarities between the two. Can performing a card trick be like a jazz solo? If so, does that make sawing a woman in half the equivalent of the London Philharmonic Orchestra?

Coin magic a rap duet between Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg? That's when I decided. It was clearly my responsibility to compile the definitive list of Magicians and their respective Musicians. What follows is the result of many minutes meditation on various magical acts and what music would best represent them. If I've left out your favourite magician, put them at the bottom of the list or compared them to Justin Bieber, I urge you to remember: my word is final, full of implications that will resonate throughout the magic world for years to come. Either that or just a tongue-in-cheek list that doesn't actually mean anything. Enjoy.

Banachek

First of all, I have to stress, I hold Banachek in the highest esteem. His Psi Series DVD on muscle reading was the first Mentalism DVD I purchased. The rest of the series, as well as his books on Psychological Subtleties have been, in my opinion, works of art. If you have the opportunity, watch his ESP effect on the PSI Series #1. Go ahead, I'll wait.

Wasn't that good? Those little subtleties transform a puzzle into an impossible miracle. What music thus best represents this mentalist maestro? It had to be an act that could elevate a song by adding those little notes and touches. Initially I was going to choose a jazz musician, but I had second thoughts. Banachek's magic is not so much free form, rather a carefully orchestrated symphony, where each note has it's part, adding together to a show stopping climax. Ladies and gentleman, I present [Tchaikovsky's 1812 overture](#).

Penn and Teller

Arguably one of magic's best known double acts. Thanks to their Saturday night show, 'Fool Us,' they have become a household name in the UK. My father, who knows very little about magic, speaks fondly of them as 'the ones who ran someone over with a truck then showed you how they did it.' Yes Dad, and so much more. However, they haven't been without their share of controversy, mainly over issues regarding exposure. And as the judge said at my hearing, exposure is a bad thing.

Who better to sum up one of today's top magical duos than a top musical duet? How about Sonny and Cher? Frank and Nancy Sinatra? For a moment, I was tempted to go with 'Islands in the Stream,' specifically the version recorded by [Bryn and Nessa](#) from the sitcom 'Gavin and Stacey.' In the end however, I had no choice but to go with the finest duet of all time; [Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock - It Takes Two](#)

Criss Angel

The illusionist who brings mystery to our everyday lives, forcing us to ask ourselves big questions. Questions such as: 'How does a 44 year old get away with dressing like a teenager on national television? Where does he get his make-up? What's on the other channel?' Still, his Mindfreak series was hugely popular, earned him a lot of money and made magic 'cool' for the younger generation. Yes, Criss is how I found out I'm no longer part of the younger generation. To find his musical twin, I set two key criteria: eye-liner, and eye-liner. The song I chose has all that and more, besides being considered 'cool' by today's youth. Well, it was last time I asked, I'm finding it difficult to keep up.

[My Chemical Romance - I'm Not Okay.](#)

Dynamo

Modelling the latest styles from JJB Sports, Dynamo, aka Steven Frayne, has wowed the public and celebrities with his magical might. Certainly one of the first names to crop up among my friends when we discuss current magic, Dynamo has earned the respect and adoration of magicians far and wide... or their bitter jealousy at his success using little more than the Lean and the Hindu shuffle. To team him up with his musical soul mate, one name and one name only sprung to mind, a band that shared both his style and popularity. [N-Dubz - I Need You](#) (Can you believe they have a Greatest Hits album? I don't want to live on this planet any more.).

Piff the Magic Dragon

The first time I saw Piff step on stage, I dreaded what was to come. Is this for real? Within seconds, his dry humour had won me over. For me, the funniest magician around, and one of the most entertaining. Besides that, he's a freaking dragon! How cool is that? Add in his assistant, Mr Piffles, and you have the absolute best magician of all time ever. Therefore, I had to find the greatest song of all time, a song that combined humour, rocking guitars, and a video that had Dave Grohl playing the Devil. With that in mind, there could only be one pick. [Tenacious D -Tribute](#).

While on the subject of Piff and Tribute, we can't continue without a mention of his now infamous copycat. I don't actually want to repeat his name, as I don't believe he deserves any fame for his shameless rip-off. For the young Ukrainian doppelgänger, who performed a mind bogglingly similar routine to Piff on Russian national television, I chose another act that takes perfectly good songs, makes minor changes, and think that's skill. The cast of Glee. Frankly, they deserve each other. I'm not linking to a video here, I refuse to.

David Blaine

Can you believe the first Street Magic special came out in 1997? Blaine has been wildly popular, both among the public and magicians. Then things began to get a little weird, as an unfortunate [Eamonn Holmes](#) found out. The street magic eventually gave way to an increasing number of Houdini-esque stunts, which proved slightly more divisive. Some people began to question whether a bloke sat in a plexiglas case without food for 44 days was actually that entertaining. If David Blaine had been a musical group, he would be one of the most successful of all time, with incredible talent. An 'experimental' attitude (and I'll leave you to work out what that exactly means), however, would leave some listeners like a slightly confused, slightly scared Eamonn Holmes. [The Beatles - I am the Walrus](#)

Paul Daniels

My first memory of magic was seeing Paul Daniels performing on Saturday night television, along with the lovely Debbie McGee. My first magic set was a Paul Daniels set. As I got into magic, hundreds of other magicians grabbed my attention, but Mr Daniels was never forgotten. Like that first album that you never would admit to owning, or that cheesy single that you secretly know all the words to, so Paul Daniels tricks marked itself indelibly on the brain. Much like the track I selected: [Village People - YMCA](#)

Max Maven

I firmly believe Max Maven could stand up on a stage, not perform a single effect, just talk, and he would have the audience in rapt silence. It would be easy to say he just has unique voice, but it's more than that. The man has a real presence to him, an air that makes you sit up and take notice. I feel more intelligent just listening to him. A true credit to the field of mentalism. Plus he appeared in Fresh Prince of Bel Air, so he is clearly legendary. The artist I chose to represent Mr Maven is one that I actually hated as a child. My Dad played his music constantly, and I couldn't stand the country style. I still dislike country music, but somehow, some time after I left home and was able to appreciate the singer on his own merits, I came to actually really enjoy his music. I still haven't told my Dad. For a voice that is reminiscent of Max Maven's presence, I chose [Johnny Cash - Hurt](#). (Yes, I know it's a cover, and I know I just laid into the Glee cast for their covers, but this is different. Because I say so. Send your complaints to the usual address).

Well, that about sums it up for my magic and music insights, I hope I've given you something deep and meaningful to think about. Until next time, may all your magic be rock worthy.



Axtell Drawing Board

Review

Darrel Mileson



When you pay £99.99 for what is essentially a white board with some squares drawn on, some may question whether anybody can be that gullible. Yet that is what helps to make this look so magical in the first place. As far as the audience is concerned, a whiteboard is exactly what it is. I can only admire the brilliance of somebody coming up with a prop that actually LOOKS like something people would use.

Nothing odd is to be seen* yet with the board and a pen you can do magic which is as real and memorable to an audience of children as any illusion.

The idea is simple. You draw a picture which comes to life. You have the perfect opening for adding the “look don’t see” part if you wish. The eyes you have just drawn on move side to side and they know it is the picture talking as they see the mouth move.

Apart from the board I received a cd with a routine which also included the just the part the picture says. The instructions were clear and included plenty of examples of different drawings that would work. These are enough to give people ideas to make up their own routines. Whether you are a vent or have to record the speech I can see no reason why you couldn’t have routines ready for Halloween, Christmas or maybe one for Birthdays. Once the routine time is down to perfection, how hard can it be to change the name , or leave a gap, in “Happy Birthday”? A personal touch which will make this even more memorable.

I mentioned timing and this is what you need to practise to get this perfect. This is so easy to use that it may still seem overpriced. This couldn’t be further from the truth. It is a well made prop which will last and last and one which is a pleasure to perform and watch performed.

*I had noticed that holding it up with light directly behind may show the workings. I used Velcro on the top of the board and a cloth I use to wipe the board. This hangs down behind, is easy to get to when you need it and therefore doesn’t look odd.

This is certainly one of those props which is enjoyable to use, think up ideas for, practise with and leaves the audience with a feeling they have just seen something magical. As there was a problem I had to overcome with by using the cloth, this will get a **9/10** from me.



Axtell Pizza To Go

Review

Darrel Mileson



For £74.99 you get a gimmicked pizza box, a wooden spoon, a chef’s hat, a mixing bag and the gimmicked pizza. It would seem as if you have, excuse the pun, all the ingredients for a magical routine.

The basic routine is that you didn’t have time to eat before the show so you bought a pizza to eat. You open the box and there is nothing inside. A volunteer helps mix one up for you which then appears from the box. The kicker is that it is larger than the box.

There are good things about this routine. First, while this may sound a bit like a Dove Pan routine, a pizza box is recognised as a pizza box. No odd looking props in sight. While it is just a cardboard box which will damage over time, there are two plus points. Firstly, it would be easy to gimmick a box from any well

known brand of pizza delivery companies. Secondly, this isn't a prop you are likely to use enough to make the box start to look tatty anyway.

The other good part is that the spoon that is used to stir the mix can be turned into a wand. Simple idea and adds another piece of magic to the routine.

I am sorry to say that the negative points far outweigh any good parts of this routine.

£74.99 for what you get, really? I can see nothing in the props or the secret that would justify this price tag. The pizza looks what it actually is, rather than anything like a realistic pizza. Many children would have played inside things made in the same way as the pizza, only on a much larger scale. This makes the big finish turn into a big letdown. I feel it ends as a joke rather than as magic. £75 for a joke is way too much. I tried different ways to make the pizza seem more real. However much I tried, I just couldn't make this convincing, let alone magical.

When it comes to giving this a score I have to take several things into account. I do like the way that the props, apart from the pizza, are recognisable as something from everyday life rather than magic props. I also have to accept that it may just be that Pizza To Go just doesn't suit my style. To be fair I have added a couple of points on to reflect this. If this cost £25 I would maybe have added another point. After all it would seem a reasonable price for what you get. Instead, at £75 I have to deduct a point for what I see as a hugely overpriced set of props. Taking everything into account though, I have to give it a score of just 3/10.



Magic ...

... In Sin City

Essay

Mark Williams



So is there magic to be found...in Las Vegas, Nevada outside the glitz and glimmer of the casinos?

To be honest, I would like there to be a bit more. You can make money performing magic in some of the usual ways. Here are some examples: Birthday Parties, Corporate Events, Trade Shows, Hospitality Suites and even some Restaurants. However, the competition is fierce and steep. After all, Las Vegas is known as The magic capital of the World. As such, thousands of people move to Las Vegas, Nevada every month. Plus, there are well over one million people living in the Vegas Valley. It is sometimes necessary to be fully employed in another field of work, having magic as your back-up income.

Making it to the big time, performing magic in Las Vegas, is a very elusive pursuit. Many of the top performers like Lance Burton, Mac King or even Criss Angel have signed multi-million dollar contracts for a determined number of years. Recently, Jeff McBride finally earned his own stage at the Palace Station Casino. This comes as quite a shock since Jeff has been considered a premier entertainer over the past several years. It almost begs the question, "Why not sooner?" It is just difficult to make that major breakthrough. Casino owners already know what works. A unique and different act, like Mc Bride's, can land a performer inside a Vegas spotlight.

Often times, there is a lot of work involved pursuing your career in magic. Rejections are part of our world. We as magicians must optimize our time promoting our acts and honing our skills. Here in Vegas, you will need something special to go the distance. But, there are rays of hope.

Gary Darwin, a magician who has authored many books, hosts a gathering of magicians every Wednesday night here in Las Vegas. The meetings are held inside a local bar and are very informal, all are welcome to attend. You'll find performers of all different levels from novice to professional. Many will start up "jam

sessions” and there is always a lot to be learned. Some of the attendees will even set up a make shift swap meet, where you can purchase either new or used magic items. Darwin is also a Collector and maintains a Magic Museum and Library at his own residence. Gary always puts out an open invitation to anyone wanting to see his Collection or peruse his Library.

Luckily, there are brick and mortar shops in Las Vegas. Denny & Lee’s Magic Studio is the most popular amongst Magicians living in the Valley. Houdini’s Magic Shops are plentiful, inside quite a few casinos. Pricing is everything though and Denny & Lee’s beats out Houdini’s by a mile. The shops will special order items for you, if they do not stock the product you seek. There are also gambling supply stores here in Vegas. Many magicians frequent these shops for decks of cards and casino chips to use in their close-up acts. So, there are plenty of resources available to the local magicians.

So, is there magic to be found in Sin City? The answer is...Yes, but it can be a struggle. The best advice I can give is to always remember the three “P’s”: Practice, Practice and more Practice. Be the best magician you can and continue to study all aspects of our entertainment art. I am currently working as a mailman here in Las Vegas. So, I use magic as my back-up income. I spend most of my time juggling my work schedule, my family life, my magic and my free time. The neon lights of the Vegas Strip are all quite alluring. The twinkle in my eyes, keeps my dreams alive. I live and breathe magic, as I have done for the past 36 years. magic is something more to me...it is an inspiration, which I want to keep forever.


Best Magical Regards



Defining ...
... Reality

Essay

Mathew Parrott

 I’m sure to most of you this sounds incredibly philosophical and boring. I’m not giving you tips on how to palm a tea cup or how to build a Top-It big enough for six platypodes. But I hope that in some small way it will help you with your magic when I move towards the applications in your légerdemain.

Last week I got into a debate with my girlfriend over the definition of reality, with my girlfriend saying that in some people’s reality ghosts exist. This was my point, in their reality, not in reality. These two are different, and importantly so. The OED defines “reality” as:

reality, n. 1. Real existence; what is real rather than imagined or desired; the aggregate of real things or existences; that which underlies and is the truth of appearances or phenomena.

Reality is therefore not we perceive, but what is real, and using once again the OED:

real, adj.2, n.2, and adv. 1. Having an objective existence; actually existing physically as a thing, substantial; not imaginary.

Therefore what is testable and can be demonstrated to exist through science is reality, and not ghosts, mediums, psychics and such. For example, when I French drop a coin into my left hand but take my right hand as if I have it, what is reality? Is the coin in my right hand? In the audience’s reality it is, but in reality it’s still in my left hand. Magic is making these two different; making reality and perceived reality contest by various methods. The more these two realities contest the more effective the magic. For example, an effect that is guaranteed to get you remembered is the Omni deck. This effect is much more powerful than a colour changing deck routine, even if performed the exact same, even though real magic would essentially have to work in the same. Why? Because the two realities are further apart in an Omni

deck. In their reality there is a deck of cards in their hands, and then their reality is demonstrated to be wrong by showing the deck is really a plastic block. It'd be an even more impressive piece of magic if they opened their hands and there was a unicorn inside because that questions their reality too. So surely we should try to make our magic question the fundamental principles of reality.

How do we do this? Well it isn't an easy thing to do. Why do you think a mentalism effect where an idea appears to be literally plucked from the brain is so much more effective than one where it has been written down? Because the former is completely impossible in actual reality and their perceived reality. This is how "magician foolers" work too, by using our knowledge to trick us, by questioning our perceived reality. Lewis Le Val has a new DVD and Bluray out at the moment called Paint the Roses Red. On there is an effect where a spectator names a suit, shuffles the deck and then Lewis being given a two second glimpse can name the order of the cards that come up in that suit. Complete defilement of reality on a wonderful scale. I urge you to watch it on the YouTubes and call the man a demon as I did to his face. That's what we should be aiming for in our magic, the moment where we're called demons because we managed to do something beyond capable known reality. That's why magic should always look at weird scientific facts. Such as sodium polyacrylate; a polymer with the same reflective principles as water, therefore when in water it isn't able to be seen, there is so much potential for that and most people don't know about it.

Magic should attempt to push boundaries of knowledge in areas people don't know about, so that we can create magic that seems completely impossible to reality. And in the same breath be unique. If somebody sees two people do the same amazing effect, it obviously isn't beyond reality. We should therefore be aware of actual reality as much as we can, so we can use it to play upon perceived reality.

Understanding reality is incredibly important as magicians, and whilst seeming an unimportant philosophical essay I hope this has somewhat helped your magic and how you view it.



Secrets Behind The Magic ...

Essay

... The Actor's Box Of Tricks - part 2

Allen Tipton



Beside your props. The three most important 'tools' magicians have are: hands, faces and bodies.

All of these must contribute to the performance of magic and aid handling, directing & misdirecting attention

Secret No. 3 YOUR PHYSICAL SELF.

HANDS

Never keep waving your hands around, up and down or all over the place.

First this can distract and/or irritate an audience. Second you draw too much attention to your hands and many times you do not want the audience to scrutinise them too closely. The rule is: Don't semaphore! The right gesture in the right position (in the trick and delivered at the right pace), provides you with the right misdirection.

Try to keep your thumbs close in (but not held rigidly; leave a little gap between the thumb and the side of the first finger). Too many magicians spread their thumbs wide then wonder why the audience is suspicious when they thumb palm!

ALWAYS have a small space/gap between the armpits and your body. Never glue the arms against the sides of the body. This will help to make your performing pose look more relaxed and prevent arms working like windmill sails.

I once, tutoring four movement sessions with Torvill & Dean (just before they had their first big win), spent ages trying to get Chris from working with his thumb stuck out & up in the air. It just, in his case, looked ugly. I never really cured him!

The hands make the main gestures. So when you point something out—if they have not been used like windmill sails beforehand, the audience WILL look wherever and whatever you point at.

With a gimmick, such as the thumb tip, try wearing it all day—until you have forgotten it is there. But not in the toilet!! This will make it more natural as you will so familiar with it you will forget it is there!

For the timid—if someone says—‘Oh you have a plastic thing on your thumb’, tell them it is a shield you keep protecting a cut! I have often, in my early days, wondered whether I could bandage the thumb tip, and then lightly bandage the thumb beneath—might fool some magicians to see you poke a gap in a handkerchief and still come out of the gap with a bandaged thumb!!

When you gesture, keep it smooth, flowing and finish the gesture off—do not gesture and cut the movement off sharply. Try to work, mainly, with the hands just above waist level—opposite the diaphragm.

Occasionally—at shoulder level.

Avoid hands in front of the face unless it is a special gesture you need to use, emphasising your eyes etc. Hands in front of the face or at chest level can obscure the face, especially if you are on a stage or platform and your audience is below you. Johnny Ramsay used to pretend he was encircling a hoop with his arms whenever he stretched them in front of his body.

Above the head is best, but only used for a grand dramatic gesture.

When you are NOT using your hands, try to leave them in repose, relaxed, at the sides of your body. If your performing persona is a casual one, then put your hands, in your trouser pockets or hook the thumbs in there. Above all do not fidget with the hands. Took me ages to stop Marc Oberon doing this, as he was giving away where his hidden load was.

Try the odd gesture with one finger pointing at where or what you want them to look at. One finger gestures can be very dramatic. I will excuse any wag reading this, asking about two fingers!!

EYES

These are SO important in aiding misdirection. Control of where your audience looks is vital to the success of your magic - be it at you, at an object, away from an object or a vital move, eye focus is of paramount importance.

Many a sleight or move has been ‘telegraphed’ because the magician’s eyes look in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The old cliché—the audience looks where you look (and of course where you gesture and look) is your number one rule. This was what Johnny Ramsay taught me first, in the 3 lessons I had from him.

In close up or one to one performance IF you look into the assistant’s eyes he/she will look into yours and then that is when the dirty work is carried out.

Taking the WHOLE audience into your control is quite simple. On a stage/platform; in Cabaret; at a table—you slowly but not very slowly, FAN/SWEEP, eyes & head, across the audiences' faces. Your eyes briefly rest on each face or apparently rest on each face. Obviously you can't pause on every face but you create the illusion of doing so. This used to be called 'the 3 second stare'.

In other words you try to take in everybody—your eyes saying 'look at me'.

BODY

Audience control is helped if you have the correct body position. Magicians in Close Up often lose this control, slightly, when they bend into the audience sitting round a table.

You have 4 positions of the Body: 1. Full front. 2. Sideways (as in profile) 3. Nearly sideways (as three quarters turn away from the audience) 4. With your complete back to the audience.

Your body should be MAINLY in what we call, 'The Open Position'. This means letting the audience see as much of the front of you as possible, either full frontal or three quarters.

The back to the audience is used for some dramatic effect as when the magician is about to vanish the girl in Asrah- it looks far more effective if he has his back towards the audience, gesturing upwards to the covered figure, floating high in mid air.

Get your Eyes, Head & Body working effectively for you and you will be a more relaxed, dynamic performer.

READ


Showmanship & Presentation by Edward Maurice. Published by Goodliffe, later by Supreme. Ignore the Stage Make Up section which is totally out of date but there is much wisdom and common sense in this old book authored by a very polished performer and winner of many magic competitions.



Old Tools

Essay

Michael Jay

 I often talk about the magician's tool box. The fact of the matter is that everything the magician has in order to fool his audience are tools. His voice, his hands, the sleights, the gaffes, the gizmos and the entire environment around him (just to name a few). Given thought, it should be accepted that anything and everything is a tool for the magician to use in his ultimate goal of fooling his audience. Direction/misdirection? A tool. Patter/presentation? A tool. The spectators themselves? Yep, tools!

Everything, all inclusively, is a tool just waiting to be utilized and exploited.

So let's dip into some old tools, tools that are available to nearly any novice magician even at the lowest level of the learning curve. All we need is a deck of cards, a pen or pencil and a slip of paper.

Tool #1: The Peek

Tool #2: The Card Control

Tool #3: The Force

Tool #4: The Equivoque

Hand the deck to any spectator for shuffling. If you're lucky, you'll be able to peek the bottom card without needing to take the deck back. If you've managed to get that peek then just have the spectator place the deck on the table. Write the name of the peeked card on the slip of paper, but don't let anyone see what you've written.

If you don't manage to get that peek, then take back the deck and do an all around square up or get your peek of the bottom card in the way that is most comfortable (and unnoticed by the spectators) for you. With the peek out of the way, table the deck and write your prediction on the slip of paper as above.

Tell the spectators that on the slip of paper is your prediction. Fold it up and place it underneath something on the table (salt cellar, coffee cup, beer can - whatever), but ensure that it can be seen by all at the table. You're not trying to hide it, you are just making sure that it will be left unmolested.

With your prediction out of the way, pick up the deck and shuffle the cards (controlling the peeked card to either keep it in place or put it on top of the deck). Ribbon spread the deck and allow any spectator to choose one from the spread. Have them point to that card and then slide it out of the spread, isolating it from the deck.

Your best bet is to slide that card out yourself. Leave it face down on the table - nobody should know what card is sitting there. Pick the deck up and shuffle some more (controlling the peeked card to either keep it on top of the deck or on the bottom of the deck).

This time have a different spectator choose a card, but force that peeked card on them. If your best method for forcing is to have the card on top of the deck, then that's where you should have controlled it to and it should go without saying that if your best method of forcing a card is to have that card on the bottom then certainly that's where you'll have maintained it with your control.

Again, ensure that the chosen card (the forced card) isn't viewed by any of the spectators and place it next to the first chosen card sitting on the table. Again, take the deck and shuffle it.

Have a third card chosen by a different spectator, but use a completely different method of having the card chosen. That is to say, if your first card was chosen from the ribbon spread and your second card was chosen via a classic force, then riffle down the deck and have the third spectator put his finger in and the card stopped at would be the third card chosen.

Place the third chosen card with the other two on the table, again ensuring that nobody knows the value of that card. You now have three cards sitting on the table, face down, and a slip of paper that's been in view the entire time with your prediction written on it.

Say, *"Three people have chosen three different cards in three different ways. Now we'll choose just one of those cards..."*

Use a fourth (different) spectator and equivoque the peeked card. You now have one, single, card sitting on the table (the peeked card) which, for all intents and purposes, was very fairly chosen - not just by one person, but by four different people.

Have a spectator take the slip of paper that has been sitting on the table all that time and open it up. Have them read what it says to the audience at the table. Slowly turn over the card.

You now have a powerful trick that can drop jaws if you present it properly. I have purposely stayed away from including a script and have not given very much in the way of presentation. What I have given you is the necessary tools for performing a masterful piece of magic theater if you just take the time to make it your own.

I will, however, suggest that after you've made your peek and the deck is tabled, take some time to get away from the freshly tabled deck. If you immediately write your prediction down, then it could be suspect. Don't be in a hurry at this point, but then again you don't want to bore your spectators to tears. It can be a delicate juggling act between engaging conversation and simply getting on with it. As a performer and artist, you need to know when to act, when to react and when to cut to the chase.

This is a good trick with which to learn such things.

I would suggest, also, that you take time to read "The Chatter on Patter" that was included with the original Top Hat (issue #40). It is a detailed treatise on the equivoque and, in my humble estimation, required reading.

As always, take care and thank you for reading.



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Submit your article or effect to be included in the next issue to:

tophatv2@gmail.com

Deadline for submissions is:
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Parting Shot



Perform what you want to do, but limit yourself within a framework (that is to say it might be strange if you are performing a mentalism number and then start producing feather bouquets before you get everyone in the audience to wiggle their fingers in the air to get Freddie's head back).

First get the techniques right, then start over again and work on your presentation. Confidence is the name of the game. Make the people like you and it doesn't matter what you perform.

-Lee Alex-



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