

MAGIC

SEEN

Lite

ISSUE 13

MAGIC BY NUMBERS
ANDREW BASSO
2 POKER CHIP TRANSP
SKATING ON THIN ICE
REVIEWS

MICHAEL MURRAY
MENTAL AS ANYTHING

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CONTENTS

Hello everyone, you are very welcome to our latest free taster issue, this edition featuring selected content from the main issue 98 (May 2021). To start our third year of Lite we are pleased to include the full interview with cover star Michael Murray, who is making a big success of marketing his own mental effects. He is joined by Andrew Basso, one of escapology's leading lights in a relatively rare article about an important allied art.

We know most readers enjoy learning a good trick, so we offer you a simple yet extremely effective chip transposition routine from Gregg Webb taken from the Masterclass. Then if you ever worry about making mistakes when you perform, our article Skating On Thin Ice will suggest various ways to avoid them.

Plus...we include Magic By Numbers, a selection of some of the Product reviews and of course a full line up of tempting ads from Magicseen's discerning dealers.

If you like all this and could do with more, then why not jump in and sign up for the full monte by taking a 1 or 2 year download or printed copy sub? Not only do you get everything that the main issues offer every two months, but subscribers get other benefits too, such as free download copies and discounts on book purchases. You can get further details and sign up at www.magicseen.com.

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MICHAEL MURRAY

Mental As Anything

Having seemingly been around for years, and well known for working at Magicbox, Michael Murray has now firmly established himself as a brilliant creator and performer. His reputation around the world has blossomed and his career has never been more high profile than it is now. Graham Hey chats with the outstanding mentalist.

What were you like as a youngster? “I suppose in many respects I was a little bit of a Jekyll and Hyde character at school,” says Michael. “On one side, I was a shy and introverted child with a very small circle of friends. I was often labelled as the teacher’s pet as my homework was always promptly handed in on time and I did reasonably well academically. However, there was another more mischievous side to me that loved playing jokes on other unsuspecting members of the school.

“I vividly recall my physics teacher waking a friend up who had fallen asleep during the lesson. The teacher demanded that he answer the question that was asked moments earlier. In an effort to ‘help’ him out I gently whispered the number 32 to him. My friend immediately proclaimed aloud that the answer was 32 which to his surprise only succeeded in angering the teacher further. What my friend didn’t know was that the actual question asked was ‘What is the closest planet to the sun!’ Note: This was perhaps my first successful attempt at influencing anyone ha ha - but

sadly it had a downside as I also managed to wind up on detention due to my uncontrollable laughter.”

Michael says he witnessed his first magic show at the age of seven in Salou Spain, and an interest in both puzzles and magic was born. “Understandably, whilst my parents supported my interests, they couldn’t see any future in these ‘hobbies’ from a career standpoint - even I did not have a clue what direction I would take at that point in time,” continues Michael, “and as such, they pushed me to pursue various business-related qualifications to ensure that I had something to fall back on if my dreams did not pan out the way that I hoped.

“Work-wise my career path is relatively short. Whilst studying for my qualifications in business studies I became a youth trainee at the Northern Rock (now owned by Virgin). After gaining my qualifications I was offered a full time position at the Northern Rock which I was just about to take when I was offered a

position at Magicbox which is based in my home town of Newcastle.

“When presented with the choice of working in an office behind a computer or making money demonstrating magic and having access to all of the latest books and effects there was no hesitation in my mind and so I emptied my draw and began what would ultimately become a huge chapter in my life.”

I ask Michael, as a performer and creator now, what were the benefits of having a magic shop? “Working at a magic shop was of huge benefit to me from both a creating and performing stand point. Firstly, I was privy to all of the latest books, videos and gimmicks so that I could make very informed choices on those products that I wished to purchase for myself rather than only having the ad copy to work from. The only downside to that was that I very rarely walked home at the end of each week with any money. Instead I would work to pay off the endless list of magic products that had taken my fancy!

A man with short brown hair, a goatee, and black-rimmed glasses is sitting and reading a large, thick book. He is wearing a dark, patterned shirt. The background is a warm, textured brick wall. A speech bubble in the upper right corner contains text. The book he is reading has the title 'THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES' visible on the cover.

...there was another more mischievous side to me that loved playing jokes on other unsuspecting members of the school.



Without a shadow of a doubt, the biggest hurdle I have ever had to overcome is confidence.

“The other benefit was having the opportunity to demonstrate these products and effects for a constant, but ever changing, stream of customers. This knowledge helped to sharpen my mind on which effects would be most fooling and which would not.

“From a creative standpoint these very same benefits applied. I would quite often tinker with the handlings of many of the effects that we sold and perform them my own way. Many times, customers would return and ask me to walk them through the handlings that I had created, and this led me to believe that my ideas may have further potential. As a creative exercise I would often take a look at the video demonstrations that were presented to the dealers and in my mind, I would consider all of the ways that I could achieve the end goal. In many respects it turned into a little game that I could play in my mind and when the actual products arrived, I could see how close I had come to the actual methods used.”

During his time at Magicbox, Michael also created several commercial effects and once again had a constant platform of fresh faces willing to see a demonstration of his latest ideas and these people helped him to refine the products into future commercial releases. His very first commercial release was Beyond ESP (a marked set of ESP cards). To date, Magicbox have sold over 20,000 copies which is incredible. The only downside is that he sold the rights to the effect for mere £300!

What has been the biggest hurdle you have had to overcome as a performer? Without having to think, Michael replies, “Without a shadow of a doubt, the biggest hurdle I have ever had to overcome is confidence. Right through my childhood years and even into my mid to late teens, I was very lacking in confidence and social skills. Both magic (and subsequently mentalism) forced me to interact more and in many respects my love for the art became a greater force in my life than my shyness. It forced me to interact with strangers and the reactions to the effects I was performing only succeeded in drawing bigger crowds.

“As I performed more and more, I started getting requests to perform at weddings, birthdays, office parties, restaurants and hotels and whilst I often felt nerves before any performance began, these would quickly subside after my opening effect.”



Michael tells me that there have been a couple of times when he has seriously considered throwing in the towel and packing it in altogether. He says, “Perhaps the most poignant was in my latter years at Magicbox. Having constant access to videos and DVDs of such talented and charismatic performers as say Shoot Ogawa and David Williamson I realised that despite being involved in magic for many years I was nowhere near as technically proficient as Shoot, or nowhere near as confident a performer as Williamson. As such I thought to myself ‘What is the point?’

“Thankfully, in a somewhat unrelated event, my aunt had told me that everybody is good at something, you just have to find what that something is. After a few years of contemplation, I realised that whilst my earlier thoughts were indeed correct, my actual strength was in creating material and as such I began

to focus on my strengths rather than my weaknesses..."

So where did MindFX come in? And what were the goals you wanted to achieve?

"Whilst I enjoyed many years working at Magicbox I grew older, got married and then along came my two beautiful children. Sadly, the peak times of the business conflicted with those times when my children wanted to spend time with me most (Christmas, Halloween, Guy Fawkes, etc).

"Also, due to balancing my family life with the general running of the business, I rarely had the free time to advance with all of the ideas that I had in my mind. In light of this I decided to work on my first book and reasoned that if there was enough interest in my material then I would make the leap to form my own company which would become a creative outlet for my ideas.

"Working late into the twilight hours armed with a glass of my favourite single malt, I embarked on a mission to collate many of my thoughts and ideas pertaining specifically to mentalism (which had now become my sole interest). With the book complete, I released it to the community and held my breath. Thankfully, interest in the book was far greater than I had ever anticipated and after selling thousands of copies of the book, I decided that it was a case of now or never and thus MindFX was born!"

Michael explains that his decision to leave Magicbox was a bitter-sweet choice to make. He says that on the one hand he was leaving a company that he had worked with for so long and formed countless close friendship and had so many treasured memories, but on the other hand, if he has stayed, he would have missed out on all of the school plays, sports days and other events that he simply could not have recaptured. "We only have one life to live and I did not want to regret missing out on a beautiful opportunity that was within my grasp."

Do you see yourself as more of a creator than a performer? "Despite considering myself as more of a creator than a performer, I also feel that in many respects I do actually perform far more than people may realise. Whilst these performances may not take place in the conventional sense, I am now a very sociable person and I grab every opportunity I can to test and perform my latest routines.

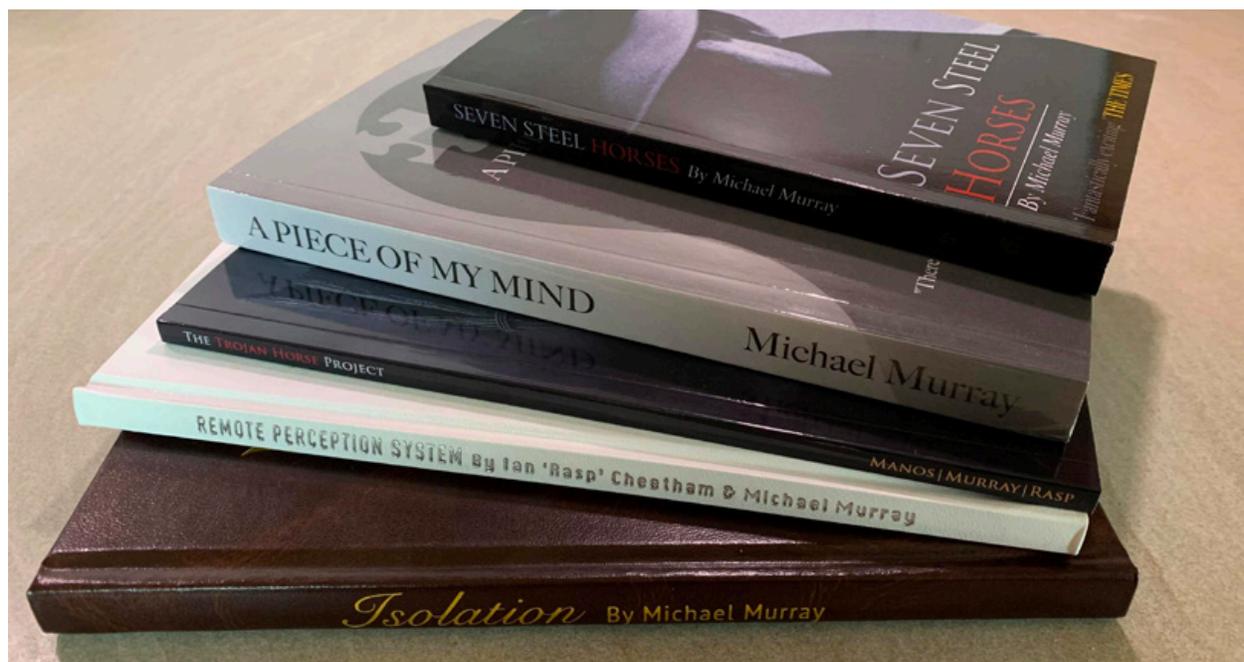
"Almost all of these performances take place unpaid, at social events, giving me the opportunity to fail countless times over until I have polished my ideas into workable commercial releases. Since my participants aren't bound by social graces, they will be quick to highlight any flaws in my work or thinking and this is precisely why I enjoy the route I have taken."

I ask Michael if he looks to the long term, and does he have a plan for the future?

"If I am honest I am deeply grateful and humbled to be in the position that I am in right now. This is entirely down to the support that I have had within the community as a whole and in many respects, I have all that I could ask for in life and more. Working for myself and having the freedom to play and express my thoughts and ideas through my releases is literally a dream come true. Perhaps my only long term plan is to get better at playing the guitar!" he laughs.

So, which person or performer has been most influential and inspirational in your professional life? And how has it impacted on you? "Although this may sound like a very cliché answer, Derren Brown was, and still is, the most inspirational performer I know. To be honest, I never had any interest in mentalism until I witnessed his first TV special - and I don't mind admitting that I was among the first in the queue to grab some books on NLP and body language reading after watching that series!

"Derren's presentations were both believable and thought provoking and it was very easy to understand the wider appeal that they had for any given audience. Whilst a magician's skillset has limited scope for application in the real world (save perhaps for the gaming table), the skills that Derren was portraying had everyone's mind spinning at the opportunities that they would present. "It came as no surprise to me that there





I want my participants to walk away with a greater appreciation of who 'they' are and what 'they' are capable of.

was a surge of interest in mentalism after he had hit the scene. Having said all of this, Derren still continues to inspire me in other ways. His art is phenomenal and as a person he is so humble and kind and caring. I have been fortunate enough to meet him on a small number of occasions and despite his success, he has never let any of it go to his head and he has no shred of ego at all.

“As a side note, I actually spent some time in Derren’s company long before he had his first TV Special and he was just as kind and generous with his time as he is today. So many others who have started climbing the ladders of fame in this industry could learn a lot from Derren’s approach to life.”

What are the main criteria you look for when creating an effect? “When I create effects I often look to deliver a message within them. I want my participants to walk away with a greater appreciation of who ‘they’ are and what ‘they’ are capable of. This is why I favour the ‘spectator as mindreader’ effects (effects where the participants are the star of the show or are seen to do something special). Rather than hogging the spotlight myself, I want my participants taking something personal away from the experience.

“Before creating an effect, I always consider why my participants should

care about what it is that they are seeing. I decide in my mind what I want the participant to take away from the experience and what benefit this could bring to them personally. Whilst I still see the appeal of magic as entertainment, I just find that most effects lack any depth to them. If I don’t care about my participants, why should they care about what it is that I am showing them?”

As a performer, what would you say your strengths and weaknesses are? “One of my biggest strengths is my willingness to accept criticism and openly encourage feedback at every opportunity. Even if our point of views differ, there is always something that can be learned from looking at things from another angle. Performers have blind spots in the exact same way that drivers do. I am also not afraid to fail since each failure brings us one step closer to success!

“This may come as a surprise to some, but I suppose my biggest weakness is a lack of confidence in myself. Despite all of the success that I have enjoyed within this industry I do not take praise well and always feel undeserving of the position that I am in. In many respects, I overthink things and my mind obsesses over the small details, ultimately hindering my progress. I also find myself very easily distracted too, since my mind continually occupies itself with new thoughts and new ideas - I rarely find the time to complete one project before another is started.”

Michael tells me that the most difficult aspect of performing for him is actually finding the right situations to perform the material that he loves most. He much prefers to perform in actual situations which aren’t governed by time constraints and to do this rules out table hopping and restaurant work. He says, “I am not one for creating a set list that I will perform each time but instead carefully choose the effects that I perform to suit the specific individuals that I am performing for. Sure, this means that I don’t often get paid for the material that I perform, however I am performing for the love of performing rather than the money that I make from it.

So, what’s the best advice you can give someone starting out? “I would recommend reading as much as you can, watching as much as you can and learning as much as you can about everything.



...after selling thousands of copies of the book, I decided that it was a case of now or never and thus MindFX was born

Find your own niche within magic or mentalism, the thing that brings you most enjoyment and run with it. You may be good at performing, you may be good at creating, you may be good at scripting, package designing, filming, app designing, whatever it is and no matter how it relates to the art, take it and run with it. You only have one life so don't let anything hold you back, life is too short to regret the choices that you didn't take. Give things a go while you can, but most of all make sure that you enjoy what you are doing!"

How have you spent the last twelve months or so? "The last twelve months have been filled with a delicate balance of highs and lows. The month before Covid struck the UK, I invested in a new filming studio for MindFX. Whilst I had hoped to film several projects there along with a few intimate shows for the public, Covid prevented me from doing this. Unable to get anyone to do the renovation work on

the premises, I had to do a large amount of DIY work myself and what would have taken the correct tradespeople days to complete, took me months.

"Other than working on the studio, I embarked on learning the guitar. Having bought a guitar for my 18th birthday I had never actually sat down and learned how to play. In many respects, this has now become my full time hobby and has very much kept me sane throughout this crazy period.

"As restrictions begin to lift, the studio work has been brought closer to completion. As soon as the work is complete, I will be opening the doors and filming several projects that have been sitting waiting for that day to arrive. I will also be examining the possibility of hosting lectures (both live and streamed from the premises) and have invested in some new cameras, lighting and sound equipment for this purpose."

Michael tells me that he's also been collating a list of old projects that have sat on the back burner for far too long and he hopes to get these released before the close of the year. Once these projects are complete he plans to finally finish writing the second volume of 'A Piece of My Mind' which is going to be released under the title 'The Missing Piece'. We can't wait! "Oh and I also hope to get some live guitar lessons too which will please my wife no end ha ha!"

QUICKIES

How happy are you with how your career has panned out so far?

I am extremely happy with my career so far and feel both privileged and grateful to be where I am. My only wish is that there were more hours in each day so that I could progress myself further on a personal level. There is so much that I want to do but just never any time to do it (and believe me when I say that I burn the candle at both ends).

Best live performance you've seen in the last few years?

One of the best live performances that I have seen over the past few years was by the Evasons. Their act is as real as it gets. No fancy props or backdrops, but instead two people performing a highly polished routine that appears so unfathomable to even those who 'should' be in the know. Best of all, they are two beautiful people too. Just like Derren, they are so down to earth and always take the time to listen and engage with those that they speak with.

How do you feel one minute before you go on stage?

I always suffer badly from nerves, right up until the first line of my script has been said. Thankfully, from that point forward they quickly fade away and with each performance, the nerves affect me less and less. Although I don't perform on stage too much, this is something that I would like to expand upon in the future (time permitting).

Favourite TV series?

My favourite TV series ever has to be 'Only Fools and Horses'. No matter how many times I watch each episode I never fail to laugh out loud. Even when you know what to expect, you still enjoy watching the same moments and hearing the same lines over and over again. Much like the classics of magic and mentalism, this is a classic for a reason.



MAGIC BY NUMB3RS

Compiled by Mark Leveridge

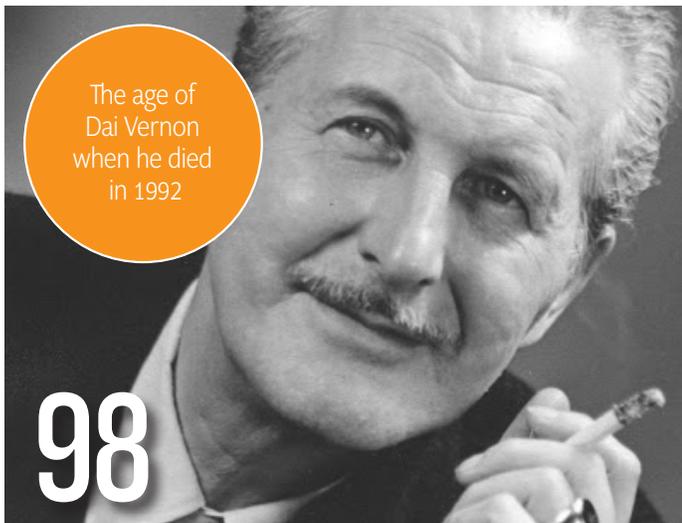


0 The number of live shows most magicians have performed in the last year



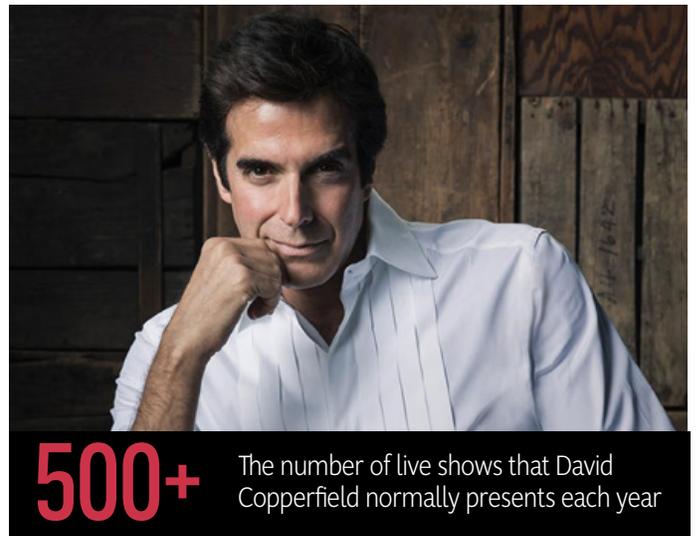
121

The number of episodes of the main Paul Daniels Magic Show that ran on the BBC between June 1979 and April 1994

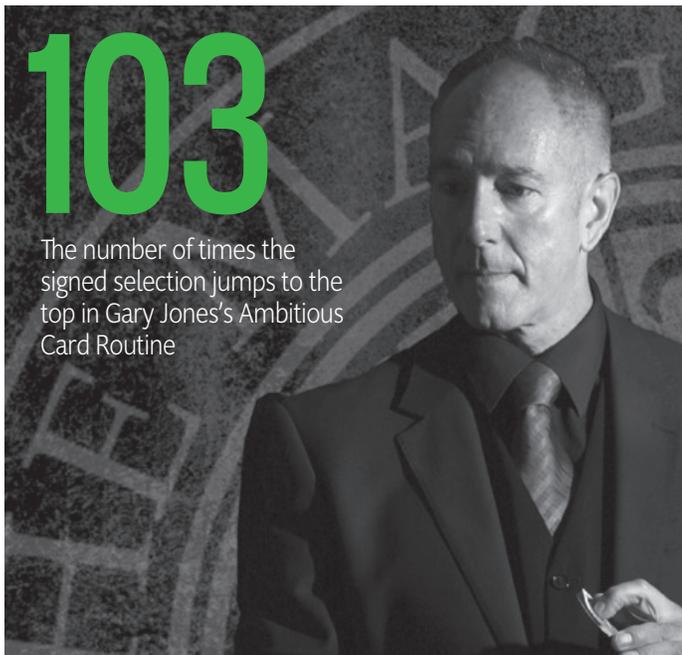


The age of Dai Vernon when he died in 1992

98

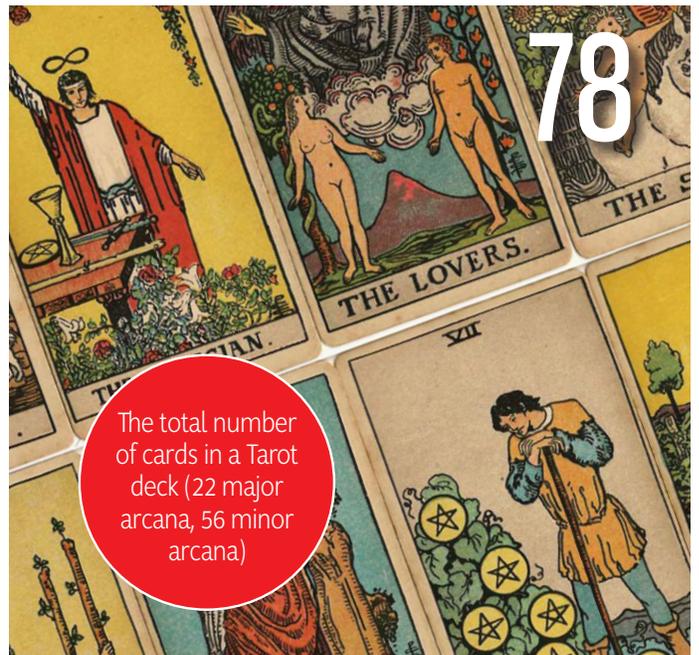


500+ The number of live shows that David Copperfield normally presents each year



103

The number of times the signed selection jumps to the top in Gary Jones's Ambitious Card Routine

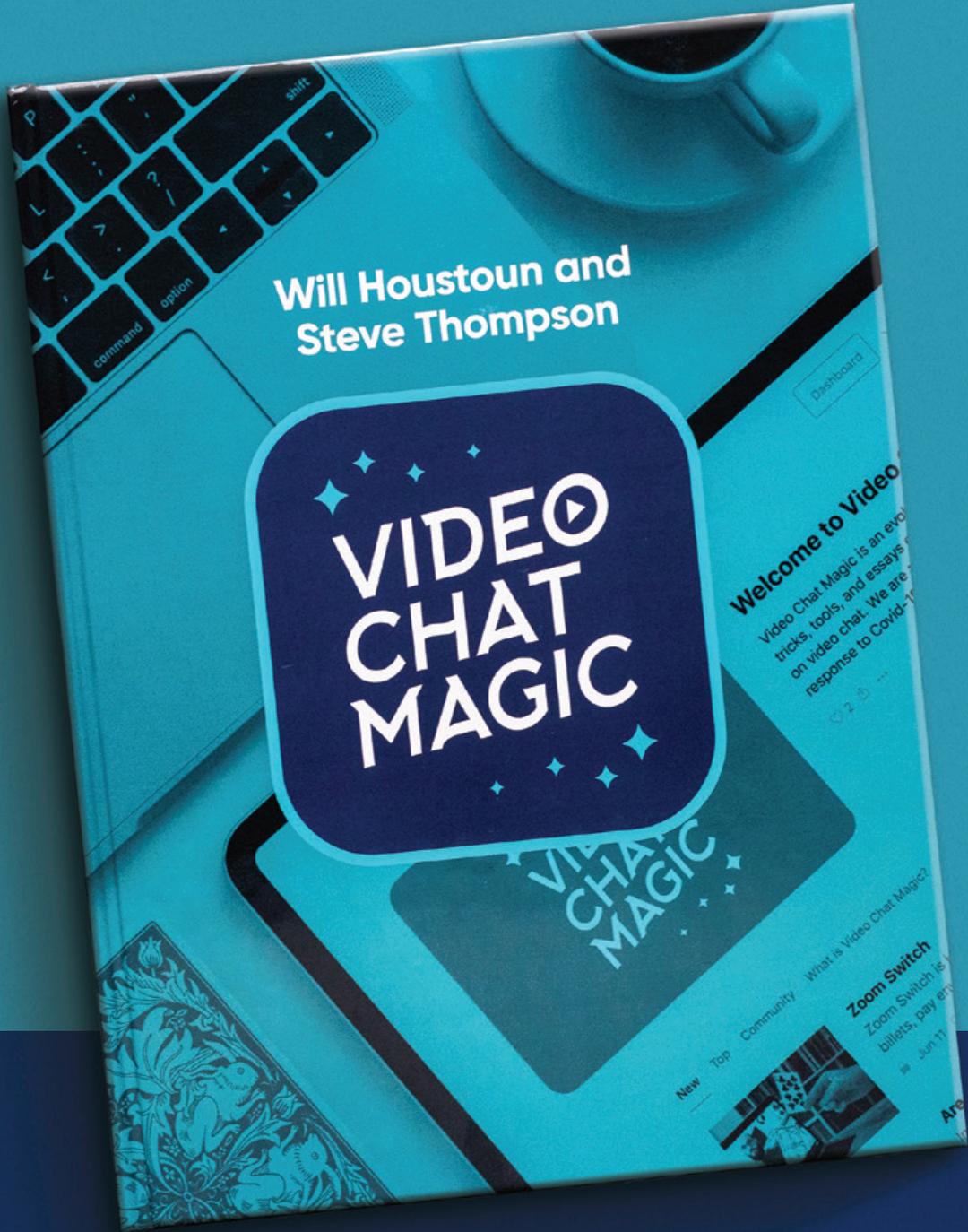


78

The total number of cards in a Tarot deck (22 major arcana, 56 minor arcana)

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2 Poker Chip Transpo

by Gregg Webb A quick and simple transpo of two poker chips.

Comments:

This is based on a coin effect shared by Sol Stone with Gregg Webb. The original method required a third coin, and Gregg eliminated the extra coin and changed the props to more visible poker chips.

Requirements:

Two poker chips, one of a dark colour, say red, and another lighter colour, for example yellow.

Working:

Bring the two chips out and hold them spread at the tips of the left first finger and thumb. The red chip is to the right of the yellow one when viewed from your side. Fig.1.

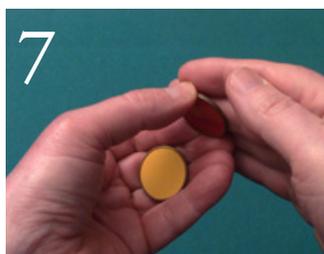
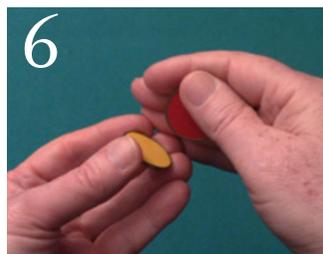
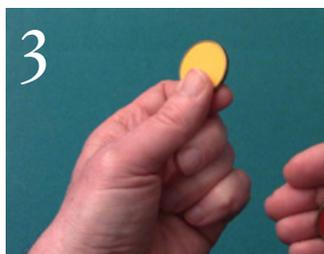
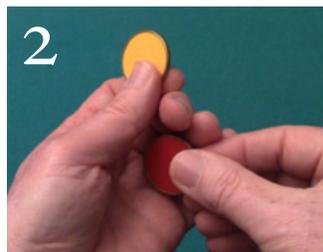
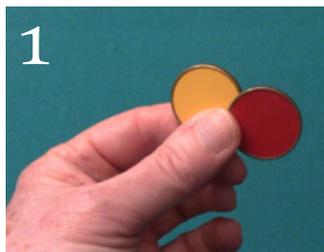
Bring your right hand up and take the red chip, pretending to place it into the left fingers which close around it, but in reality stealing the chip away in the right finger palm. Figs.2 and 3.

Now use the right fingers and thumb to take the yellow chip out of the left hand leaving it displayed. Fig.4.

The left hand, still apparently closed around the red chip, goes to the left jacket (or trouser) pocket and 'leaves' the chip there, the empty left hand coming back out of the pocket and being openly displayed.

The right hand now places the yellow chip into the left fingers in Spellbound position. Fig.5.

Having paused to display the chip there, the right hand comes across in front of the left hand with the fingers held out straight and the red chip held by the thumb behind them. Fig.6.



In classic Spellbound fashion, the moment that the yellow chip is obscured from view by the right fingers, the yellow chip is released by the left fingers so that it falls into the curled left finger palm and immediately the left fingers and thumb grip the red chip instead. Fig.7.

Without a pause, the right hand moves away to reveal that the

yellow chip has changed to the red one. The empty right hand lifts the visible poker chip away to display it back and front.

As it does so, the left hand, with the yellow chip finger palmed, goes to the left pocket and apparently removes the yellow chip from there, thus proving that the two chips have instantly transposed.



EITHER.....OR?

We are all faced with choices in magic, so we asked one or two well known magicians to select between two magical options and explain their decision! This time we put Sean Carpenter on the spot...

1. Coin magic....card magic?

Definitely card magic: if I dropped coin magic, I would lose 3 tricks that I only perform in close-up, whereas losing card magic would cost me over half my close-up repertoire plus about 30 minutes of stand up material.

2. Live shows....Zoom shows?

I have never performed over Zoom, so this is not a tricky decision – live shows. Has anyone said Zoom? This strikes me as like asking someone who is currently in prison which they would choose when it's all over: being released ... or staying in their current cell with Big Vern.

3. David Copperfield....David Blaine?

Copperfield I think. I'd prefer the public to think of a magician as being a performer on a stage, rather than as someone who hangs around approaching strangers on street corners.

4. Blackpool Magic Convention....FISM?

Like many magicians in the Covid era, I haven't done a gig since March, so I'll stick with Blackpool because it's cheaper.

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Select

Members of the MLM online club and information resource, E-Club Pro, have access to video instructions for hundreds of routines and ideas suitable for close up, children's shows, stand up and mentalism.

Now I am pleased to announce that a selection of 10 of these routines have been extracted from E-Club Pro and are being made available individually to non-members for a bargain flat rate of £7.00 each.

Every month two of the products in **E-Club Pro Select** will be removed and replaced with two new ones, so there will always be something new and exciting to consider.

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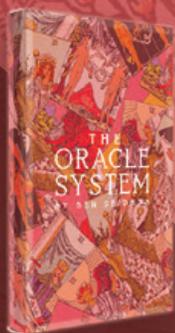
Who would have thought that a
**DIMINUTIVE
RED-HEADED
COMEDY
MAGICIAN**

*would have such a profound
take on doing a legitimately
mysterious and commercial
Tarot reading? Damn him!"*

MAX MAVEN



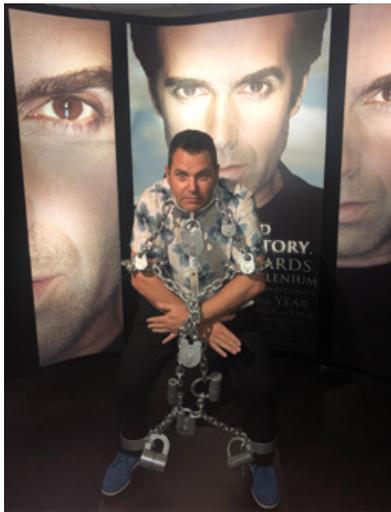
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ANDREW BASSO

“World’s Greatest Escape Artist” - CBS



Performing internationally in over 300 shows per year and reaching more than half a million audience members annually, Andrew Basso is the powerhouse performer behind the success of the enormously popular Broadway smash-hit show, *The Illusionists*. Known as the “World’s Greatest Escape Artist” and the “Rock Star of Magic”, Basso’s performance career has broken box office records and traversed the world’s preeminent stages: Broadway in New York City, Hollywood’s Pantages Theatre, The Kennedy Centre in Washington, D.C., London’s West End, Sydney Opera House, Arena di Verona, Moscow’s Crocus City Hall, and Dubai’s World Trade Centre.

One of the only performers skilled in a variety of genres of magic, Basso

specialises in escapology and death-defying acts, earning him the moniker “The Escapologist”. In 2005, he became the youngest magician in history, and the first Italian, to win the Escape Champion World Title. He also took 1st place in the 2012 Italy “Masters of Magic” championship. Considered by the press as “the natural successor to Harry Houdini”, he is ranked as one of the top magicians of the 21st century.

Allan Taylor – Chairman of the United Kingdom Escape Artists – speaks with Andrew to find out what’s been happening during Lockdown.

Allan: Ciao Andrew, great to speak to you, hope you are doing well and thanks for agreeing to speak to *Magicseen* magazine. Lockdown has been tough for us all, but how have you found it personally? Have you managed to remain focussed and to keep yourself busy?

Andrew: Ciao Allan, great talking to you and it is my pleasure to meet the friends of *Magicseen*! In February 2019 I was in Prague with *The Illusionists* in a sold out week of shows. Then the world changed and lockdown came into our lives. I flew back the US at home with my fiancée Amanda and I experienced for the first time in 9 years of touring what it’s like to be home consecutively for more than a couple of months. The beginning was particularly challenging, going from a rhythm of taking 4 flights every month and performing 10 shows a week to being

home on the couch watching Netflix. It has been quite shocking, but I tried my best to see an opportunity in all of that. The opportunity of having plenty of time to dedicate to personal life, to get in better shape, and to start moving the first creative steps for the projects that were only in my imagination for a long time and which previously I never had the time for. Certainly a highlight of the lockdown for me has been being able to play with all the magic that was forgotten in the basement. So much fun! As a performer I’ve been using social media to stay in touch with my audience and I went Live a bunch of times to have a feeling of “being on stage”, it was quite therapeutic. I created a weekly appointment where I was talking about Houdini with different experts, from historians to collectors, trying to chat about curious facts that we may have never heard of. And during those weeks I realised there was a specific audience for those appointments, definitely an escape community. That led me to thinking about creating something to reunite all the escape artists in a future convention. A thought that 2 other people also had and so a few months later we created the GEO.

Allan: Wow, “The GEO” - that sounds pretty cool, I guess I shouldn’t sound too surprised here, as you know I’m also part of the group – but for the benefit of the readers can you explain more about the group? What is the idea behind it and who were the visionaries and founders behind it?



For sure a highlight of the lockdown for me has been being able to play with all the magic that was forgotten in the basement. So much fun!



Escapology has always been a little niche of magic and I think here there is space to really explore the pure art of escape

Andrew: GEO stands for Global Escapology Organisation and it has been created by joining forces with Allan James Taylor, who is the chairman of the UKEA group (United Kingdom Escape Artists). The UK group is doing a great job for the art form. They have face to face meetings, competitions and awards and lectures from subject matter experts of escapology. We also have Cliff Gerstman from the USA, who's been running a newsletter for escape artists for many years and who also holds a world record for the Fastest Straitjacket Escape in Zero Gravity. We shared a common goal with each other with the aim to create a community for escape artists. This gave birth to the GEO organisation that aims to educate performers to perform safely and to improve and advance the art of escape.

Allan: That's great. So if we have any readers here in the UK who are interested in joining, what is the application process and how do they find out more?

Andrew: It takes only a minute, you just need to fill our online form and agree to our code of ethics. Well, first you need to escape a pair of regulation handcuffs and pick a padlock too. You can find out more info at the-geo.com, but if you have interest in escapology you are welcome to join!

Allan: So what should members expect from The-GEO

Andrew: Being the first and only worldwide escapology group, members should expect to enter a community where you can talk with people who have experience in the art of escape. For now, we are limited to gathering in a private Facebook group and via Zoom meetings, but we aim to have an international convention in the USA and Europe as soon as the world is ready. Escapology has always been a little niche of magic and I think here there is space to really explore the pure art of escape, its techniques and skills, tools and safety procedures, thanks to the expertise of the masters of this discipline. We will have Zoom meetings and lectures with the ultimate goal to have a GEO Escape Artist convention in Europe and the USA.

Allan: I've noticed that recently you have been performing again. Would you like to tell us more about that?

Andrew: I'm so thankful for this! After one year without performing, I received a call from Spain's household magician Jorge Blass for his XI International Magic Festival in a gorgeous venue called Circo Price. Madrid allows 75% capacity in its theatres and so we were able to perform almost like a normal situation. All Covid safety measures were in place and it was amazing being able to walk on stage again. Something I truly wish in a near future for every performer!

Allan: You must be really pleased about that? How did you find getting back on

stage after such a long period off? Do you have any advice for some of our readers who may be feeling a little bit nervous about getting back out there?

Andrew: The opening night was very challenging for me. I was closing the show with an underwater escape act. I need to walk on stage with a controlled heart rate, below 50 beats per minute. I was focused and ready but when the curtains opened, and I saw the audience after so long a time I had to mentally work extremely hard to not let the excitement make my heart race!

I understand performers may be feeling a little nervous about getting back out there – to be honest I was a little nervous too. But then I saw the safety protocols. All artists and crew were tested every week before entering the theatre, masks were required in the backstage and each artist/team was a “bubble” that was not allowed to join another during breaks or meals. The director of the show was ready and flexible to replace an act in case a performer tested positive. Audience temperature was checked and access to their seats was managed. It felt safe and nobody got sick. It is normal to be a bit nervous for the first few days but then it feels normal.

Allan: Some great thoughts there and wonderful advice, thanks for sharing and being honest. So the big question that most people probably want to know is when will we see you performing with the Illusionists again?

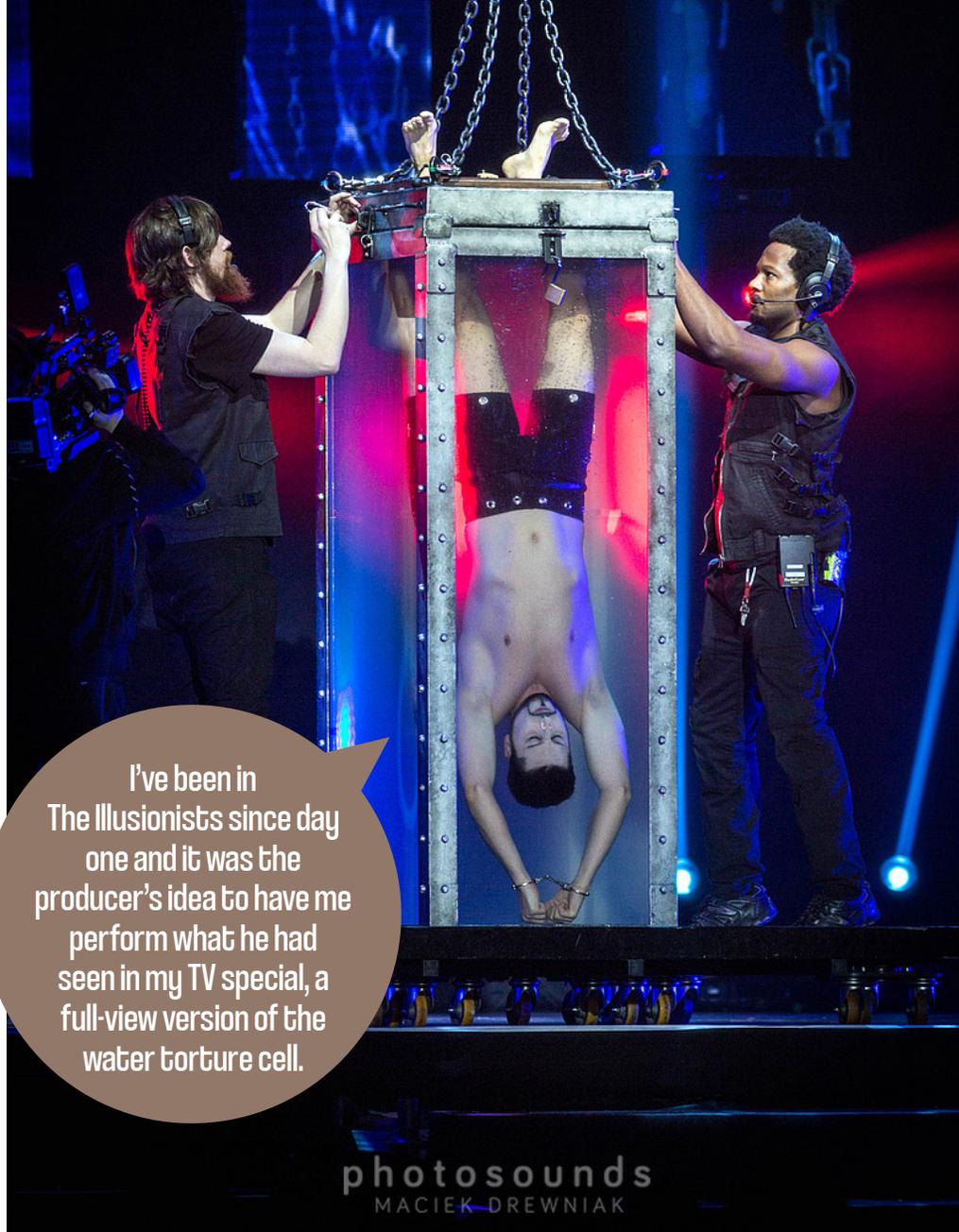
Andrew: The Illusionists is a big company and touring is a complex and an expensive machine that needs organisation that goes from 6 months to 1 years of planning in advance. When the world is ready, The Illusionists will be ready to tour again. The demand for the show is very high worldwide and I'm optimistic for the near future as the vaccine will allow showbusiness to reopen.

Allan: Thanks Andrew, we all look forward to seeing the show tour again. As part of the Illusionists, you are famous for performing the water tank escape. How did you learn to hold your breath for so long and what is your personal record?

Andrew: I've been in The Illusionists since day one and it was the producer's idea to have me perform what he had seen in my TV special, a full-view version of the Water Torture Cell. No curtains, no covers. That is my approach to the legendary Houdini's act, to fully and visually engage the audience to understand and appreciate the real skills of an escape artist. They see me picking the handcuffs and the lock as I'm holding my breath for 3 or 4 minutes. To perform the act safely I had to train in static apnea (no movement) up to 7 minutes. My team trained me for the act rather than to attempt a particular record - though one day I would love to train and take on a record attempt. The philosophy for us has always been about the quality of the performance in terms of safety. To cheat death nightly in hundreds of shows a year you need discipline and no compromises on a safety level. Time underwater has value on a spectacular level, but my priority is the quality of the breath holding I perform.

Allan: Thanks for that, I'm sure all our readers are now holding their breath to see if they can manage 7 minutes - I'm guessing most people will gasp out after a minute. So, moving on slightly - how would you describe the current state of escapology? Is it popular?

Andrew: In the past 7 years I've seen escapology getting more popular, especially in the Talent shows. It seems "dangerous acts" are a hot seller in those TV shows and producers ask for more and more danger! Especially when it puts the performer's life at risk!



I've been in The Illusionists since day one and it was the producer's idea to have me perform what he had seen in my TV special, a full-view version of the water torture cell.

Unfortunately, I've seen people really risking their life - not because of the nature of the act itself but for their totally irresponsible approach and lack of preparation of themselves and their team, if they had one. With the GEO we want to create awareness about those risks and we offer free of charge the opportunity to chat with very experienced people. There will be online and live master classes in the near future too. Advice from the experts that can save lives.

Allan: I'm glad you mentioned safety again, that is certainly at the forefront of everything The GEO will try and emphasise to our members. You are also an accomplished magician but when did you start escapology, and do you remember your fist escape and how you felt?

Andrew: I started with magic at 8 years of age, but it was at the age of 14 when I felt the fascination for danger and being prohibited from certain things and the things your mum did not want you to do...and my interest focused on escapology. What an adolescence!

My first escape was at 17. I wanted to recreate the escape I saw in the Tony Curtis movie "Houdini". Chained and locked inside of a box and lowered underwater. I did it in a lake in northern Italy and at night! It was terrifying, but still one of the best memories from the start of my journey. I'll never forget being inside the box and seeing the water rising and consuming all the space inside. I felt like I was in a movie. I loved it!



Allan: Wow – most people at 17 get their thrills from driving their first car – not being lowered into a lake! Are there still times where you feel nervous? Do you ever invent an escape then suddenly think why am I doing this?

Andrew: I try to turn the nervous feelings into focus. Performing many times makes you confident and in escapology, especially when dangerous elements are involved, always keeping the level of attention high is key to a safe performance. I try to turn fear and nervousness into my best companions. In the preparation of a new escape stunt, I'm always very excited. Then the time to actually do it in front of the audience comes and the stress levels suddenly get higher and I often think "I'm so jealous of the magicians out there performing with a deck of cards!"

Allan: What is the big appeal of escapology for you personally?

Andrew: Empathy. There is something unequivocally interesting in seeing someone getting out of a troubled situation. We feel for that person, it becomes a collective experience. When I'm hanging upside down, above the tank, taking deep breaths before getting lowered in...the entire audience become silent. In that moment I feel everyone is hanging upside down with me.

Allan: Over the years which escapologists have been the most inspirational/memorable for you?

Andrew: The first escape I saw on a VHS tape was Canadian escape artist

Dean Gunnarson. It was a video of a Las Vegas show with a variety of excellent performers including my friend Kevin James. Dean was restrained in a straitjacket and then a long chain was tightened around him. I remember, medical gauze was wrapped around to avoid the chain hitting his face during the escape. When I saw that I thought "there is NO WAY he can get out". But with slow paced movements and 2 minutes of struggle he was out. Since that moment I was hooked, and I immediately went searching for a real straitjacket.

Allan: What's the secret to a great escape routine?

Andrew: I wish I knew the secret! If there is a secret then you certainly can't find it in books or videos, it is experience. Only when you're able to perform something in front of an audience many, many times, then you are able to listen to the audience reactions and understand how to create an entertaining escape act, either a funny or a dramatic one. My most successful act comes from the experience of over 100 shows, because that for me is the number that really begins shaping my act. In terms of skills, I think escapology has a lot in common with mentalism - in that credibility is a key role in the performance. You either have it or you need to learn how to create it. Believable stage presence, charisma and speaking skills are for me the tools for a successful escape before any technique.

Allan: You have accomplished many things during your career but is there an escape that you haven't done yet but maybe it's on your bucket list?

Andrew: First I want to escape this lockdown forever! I do like to revisit the legendary acts, those acts that for certain reasons survived through the centuries in the popular imagination. Like the Bullet Catch, the Buried Alive. That's the one! Buried Alive - this is another stunt that captures the imagination of people of every age and generation. I already have the coffin, I just need to see when it will feel right to go six feet under...

Allan: Wow Buried Alive, I guess that is the escape that most people fear and rightly so – over the years we have seen many accidents. So, one last question before I go. You are quite a Houdini collector and I believe you have recently acquired something very special. Can you possibly tell our readers about this special item?

Andrew: Interesting how I'm answering this on Houdini's birthday! Besides having a rare "Harry Handcuff Houdini" signature and a piece of the glass from Houdini's water cell that I have turned into a precious ring, I recently acquired from an auction what is considered the Holy Relic of Houdini's collectibles: the tuxedo shirt collar that Harry used in his last years, probably in his last show too. I was able to locate this incredible piece thanks to my favourite Houdini historian, my friend John Cox. Soon, we are going to have the collar sent to a laboratory. I would love to find out what Houdini's DNA looks like! The response in the Houdini world has been of great support, especially from George Hardeen, Houdini's great nephew, who offered to help in the DNA test and from forensic anthropologist Matteo Borrini, also president of the Liverpool Mahatma Magic Circle, who offered his expertise and passion on this subject to help us. This is going to be a very exciting journey.

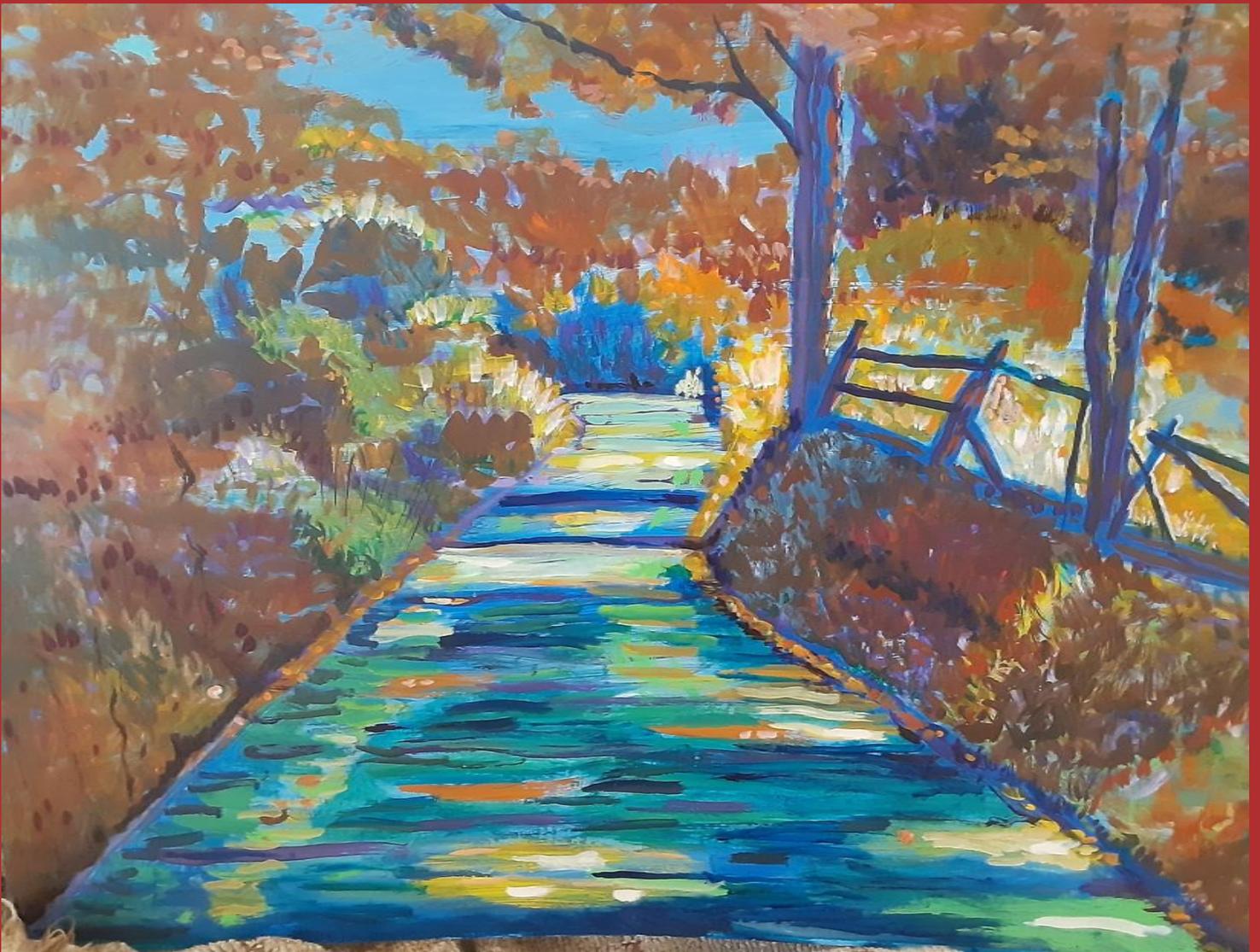
Allan: Ciao Andrew – thanks for taking the time to chat to us and please keep us informed about Houdini's DNA.

Andrew: Ciao Allan, see you soon at the upcoming GEO meeting!

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DEALER SHOUTOUTS

PROP DOG

One staff member at PropDog has posters of David Regal on his walls, so it comes as no surprise they have teamed up with David to bring his Colour Changing Knives to the UK. The routine doesn't differ wildly from the traditional but David Regal has added a light-hearted premise which justifies why you are carrying a knife and also the colour changes. However the really big difference is the knives themselves. These aren't modified off-the-shelf knives but purposely designed props for this effect. The look and weight is just perfect. This effect has been popular for generations, performed by the greats such as Ascanio, now it has been given the Regal touch. The first sets sold out immediately, but a handful of the latest delivery are still available. The PropDog doors are open once again, should you want to see the quality in person. www.propdog.co.uk.

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In 2018 Looch released what is now considered to be a game changer in the world of mentalism. His Blink peek case had been described as one of the very best peek cases in the world by renowned mentalism reviewer Jheff over at his Marketplace of the Mind. Looch has just released his follow up: Blink 2 which has changed the game again. Beautifully hand made in premium brown leather this modern minimalist business card case is the finest you will find anywhere on the market. Designed to excel at just one thing... peeking, Blink 2 will be one of your best investments in your peek portfolio. Limited to 300. www.readmymind.co.uk

MISSION MAGIC

Congratulations to Jamie Doyle who has become President of the Fellowship of Christian Magicians, taking up the reins from Duane Laflin. Readers of Magicseen will recognise Jamie from his '57 Cents And Little Hattie May Wiatt' coin routine in the March 2021 issue. Jamie is a children's pastor and a prolific creator of original gospel magic. He has just published the fifth eBook in his 'Tricky Message for Kids' series. 'These are real resources from a real children's minister who has worked in real churches with real kids... really!' Jamie says. All five eBooks are available for instant download from www.jamiedoylemagic.com and www.missionmagic.co.uk As well as carrying Jamie's latest eBook, Mission Magic is giving away Steve Harnery's new eBook 'Illusions That Reach Kids' as a FREE download. Steve's 28 gospel magic lessons are the perfect introduction for any Christian performer wanting to sprinkle a little magic onto their next message. Discover Mission Magic's library of free gospel magic eBooks and videos at www.missionmagic.co.uk/free-gospel-magic.

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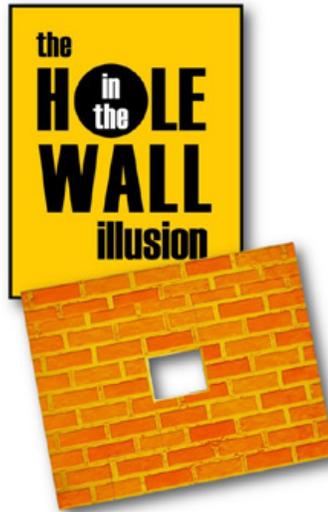
ILLUMINATI MAGIC RELEASE PENSENSE LITE. The team at Illuminati Magic has launched a brand new Color Match System. If you are not familiar with Color Matching Routines, this couldn't be simpler. Imagine this – the magician hands a prediction to an audience member and then asks the audience member to blindfold them. After the magician is blindfolded, a second spectator takes a pen and begins to colour in a black and white cartoon, selecting the pens at random. After the spectator has coloured in all five regions, the magician removes his blindfold and asks the audience member to open his prediction -- and low and behold the prediction 100% matches the spectator's colouring in! No switches, no stooges. PenSense is the ultimate Color Matching System, notifying you via your wireless earpiece, Thumper or Notifier once the spectator has selected a pen. The system even works with your iPhone or Apple Watch! The entire platform utilises high tech electronics and uses UNGAFFED Sharpies. PenSense Lite is USB chargeable and provides up to 40 hours of performance time. Check out PenSense Lite on www.illuminati-magic.com/products/pensense



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SKATING ON THIN ICE

HOW TO AVOID PERFORMANCE MISHAPS

Mark Leveridge

Being a secretive art, the performance of magic brings with it an extra layer of potential worry and pressure. The magician is expected to create a presentation that is both interesting and entertaining for the audience while at the same time executing any number of additional covert manipulations that are essential to the successful outcome of the magic and yet which must remain invisible to the audience. So, no pressure there then!

The fact is, all conjurors are regularly just one slip away from disaster, whether that be dropping the stacked deck all over the floor, or being the victim of a malfunctioning prop. Quite frankly it's a wonder that any of us ever summon up the nerve to try to get away with it! But try we do, again and again, because when it works (which hopefully is most of the time), the rewards in terms of audience reaction and self satisfaction make it all worthwhile.

Working on the, not unreasonable, assumption that no performer is perfect and that mishaps can happen at any

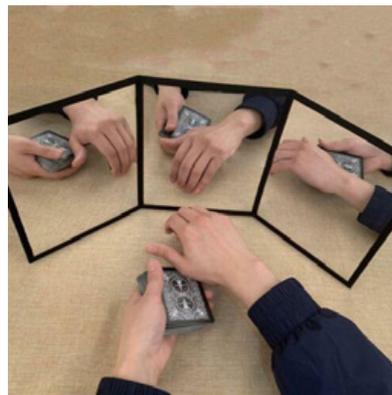
time to any of us, we thought it might be helpful to take a look at a number of steps which we can take in order to preempt disaster, because many of the accidents that befall us are avoidable if precautions are taken in advance.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

I would suggest that there are two main categories where failure can arise. The first is with an error performing a move or in trying to execute some sleight of hand, and the other is where a prop fails to work as it should. So let's start by looking at both these aspects and discussing how we can reduce the risks associated with them.

SLEIGHTLY OFF

The term 'sleight of hand' covers a wide range of technical manoeuvres ranging from a simple French Drop coin vanish through to complex sequences of manual dexterity. Every performer has a different threshold for where they move from being well within their capabilities to areas where they are technically more challenged. Only you can judge where your particular line is drawn, and indeed



...you can successfully achieve in the calm atmosphere of a practice session in front of a mirror...

that tipping point may move depending on performing circumstance or how you are personally feeling on any given night. In other words, what you can achieve on one occasion may be more than what turns out to be possible on another.

Clearly, the more practised you are with your sleight of hand moves and the more comfortable you feel when executing them, the less likely you are to make a mess of it. But the trick here is to understand that what you can successfully achieve in the calm atmosphere of a practice session in front of a mirror, may well be reduced in the pressure of a live performance.

So one way to help reduce the potential for error is to ensure that the technical aspects of the magic you want to perform is well within your levels of ability, not at the extreme edges of it. Successfully



...some pieces of apparatus are by the nature of their construction robust and fairly failsafe, others can be far more delicate and therefore prone to failure.

practising a difficult move time and again in isolation is not the same as having to hit it first time at a key moment in a live performance, and so practising at random moments to create that one-off pressure, can help you to assess what you are genuinely capable of in a show.

Of course, some moves are not terminal if you happen to mess them up a little. A flash of a palmed coin or a marginally fluffed card move, may well not even be noticed by most of the audience in the flow of a presentation, so the key here is not to react yourself to any slight mishap. If you don't comment on it or pause your presentation, even what seems to you to be a quite glaring error will often go unnoticed by spectators who aren't really tuned in to what they are seeing in any case.

But there are some sleights which are central to the moment of magic. The pass of a hand over a tabled card which causes the card face to change, for instance, is a high pressure moment where you have invited direct spectator scrutiny of exactly where the sleight of hand needs to be executed. It's not a move that is done on the off-beat, it's one where the audience has to watch carefully in order to witness the magic.

Because you know this is an important moment, the nerve levels may increase and the chances of a mistake due to the extra pressure may also go up, and so you need to decide whether this move is sufficiently within your skill level or not. If no amount of practice can make you feel comfortable enough about the move, it might be worth considering a different method or even a completely different trick, rather than expose yourself so fully to potential error.

MALA-PROP-ISM

If your sleight of hand seems pretty much within your personal control, the same cannot always be said about your props. While some pieces of apparatus are by the nature of their construction robust and fairly failsafe, others can be far more delicate and therefore prone to failure.

Experienced performers will attest to the fact that if a prop has the potential to go wrong, then over the course of many performances the likelihood is that it probably will!

In my view the best way to try to minimise the potential for error is to do a sort of magic risk assessment on any prop which could possibly fail. Look critically at the way the apparatus works and imagine a worse case scenario. For instance, if you are using an electronic clipboard which is designed to secretly send information about anything written on paper attached to it, imagine that it fails to provide the info and ask yourself, "what am I going to do?"

You may decide that it would be possible to amend the presentation of the effect on the spur of the moment so that the information from the board is no longer central to the routine. Or you might decide that the info is so vital to the trick that it would be better to use an alternative low tech method instead in order to remove the risk entirely. Whatever the final decision, the key is to have thought about it in advance so that if the worst happens, you will have already considered what you will do and will hopefully therefore be able to seamlessly continue.

Being mentally prepared for potential disaster may seem on one level to be unnecessarily pessimistic, but if you have a contingency plan for most of the possible prop failures, it does provide you with a sense of reassurance rather than being caught totally unaware mid performance.

Analysing the weaknesses of your props should also alert you to aspects of your apparatus which may need occasional repair or renewal. For instance, the bands in a folding coin gradually degrade with time and may snap in performance. If you have thought about this in advance, you can check them from time to time so

see whether they are still fit for purpose, and indeed put on new bands if necessary before the old ones break. It's all too easy to never critically look at props we use a lot, but if there are inbuilt weaknesses you can avert failure by being aware of them.



A NERVOUS DISPOSITION

Some performance errors are not caused specifically by an inadequacy in sleight of hand or because a prop fails to work, but because the performer himself is simply really nervous. Tension can make us do, or not do, things which normally would not be an issue. Errors in presentation or patter even can be brought about by not being able to think straight when standing in front of an audience.

Keeping calm before a show can help to alleviate errors caused in this way. Being well prepared, arriving in plenty of time for the show start, feeling confident in the material you are intending to use, avoiding last minute changes, all these things and more can help you to avoid unforced errors. Back in issue 60 (Jan 2015) we did a full article on how to successfully combat performance nerves, so you may wish to check this out if this is something that you suffer from.

AVOIDING THE UNAVOIDABLE

Of course, the truth of all of this is that occasionally you will get caught out no matter how thorough you are in trying to avoid mistakes. But I suppose the way to look at it is that we're only talking about entertainment here. If a trick goes wrong or a move is messed up, nobody died, so if possible keep it all in perspective, laugh it off, and move on. And if you put into practice some of the advice given above, hopefully the number of times things do go awry will be few and far between and so the overall impression of you and your act will go untarnished in the minds of your audiences.



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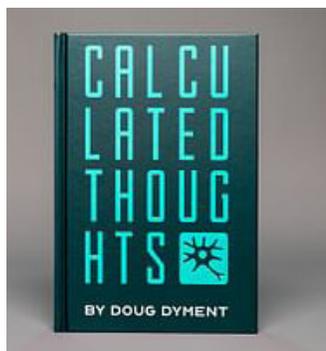


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Doug Dymment is a name I was, until this book, unfamiliar with. A quick bit of research and I discovered the man to be a bit of an underground mentalism legend. This book collects together his output from his 25 plus years as a pro mentalist.

And what a book this is!

I've never been a performer of 'serious' mentalism but enjoy reading the methods, theory and thinking in this branch of magic. Outside of Tenyo, there are few other branches of magic that have such clever thinking, devious methods and psychological subtleties that make you feel all fuzzy in the groin area.

This 400-page hard-back book is packed full of mentalism plots (or 'experiences' as Dymment refers to them) with clear, detailed explanations. The first chapter deals with Magic Squares. For me, this was one of the book's highlights. Dymment offers mathematical solutions

to formulate your own squares and provides different plots to make them unique for the person, or audience, you may be constructing it for. I liked this chapter a lot.

The next section covers full deck stacks. These stacks were easy to understand and remember without too much thinking on the part of the performer. With many different stacks, original to Dymment, each with its USPs, with further explanations of effects possible with them, this segment was another I liked. A lot.

Following this, we are taught effects using the various stack principles including work with Tarot cards.

An entire section is devoted to Dymment's 'Quarto', his latest in a long history of evolving billet-tears. Here we uncover more deep thinking, clever methods and downright deviousness. This chapter was another that I liked. A lot.

A section on how to read and interpret ESP/Zener cards was most informative. This section alone could encourage the savvy reader to consider opening up a new market for personal readings.

Impromptu performance pieces abound, each having (on paper) significant magical impact. The WordPlay chapter has mind-reading effects with no props in sight (plus a psychological word force that got me as I read it; one of those nice occasions when we realise that, despite our own magic knowledge, we are only human and as easily duped as the mere layman). I liked this chapter.

Work on bank-night and other pack-small, play-big routines follows, all with well structured handlings where process is at a minimum, while impact and the fairness of performance is heightened.

With further chapters on subjects such as 'How to construct a forcing matrix', 'marker cribs' and how to create a marked deck system with any standard pack of Bicycles, plus an entire section of Dymment's thoughts on performance and theory, and a closing chapter featuring routines and collaborations from Dymment's circle of mentalist friends, there really is so much packed into this book, space forces me to be succinct.

This really is a good book. The deep thinking Dymment proffers, his excellent use of foot-notes and crediting, the bibliography dotted throughout the work, the depth of explanation (I sometimes did feel things were perhaps a little over explained in some cases) and the way he can make what appears at first to be a difficult process, simple to understand and remember, make this a book worthy of your attention.

This is one of the best books on mentalism I've ever read. Highly recommended. **JF**

What's Hot: detailed explanations with sound theory on a whole host of mentalist plots, routines and tools to achieve apparent miracles. Original systems. Excellent plots.

What's Not: the diagrams and explanations may put some people off on their first flick-through as they appear complex. Their loss!

Rating: 90%



ARCHER'S TIP-OFF!

Comedy mentalist John Archer posts: "Playing with quite a novel travel themed effect by Arnaud van Rietschoten called 'Take Off'. It has a lot of possibilities for mentalists. Not getting paid or even asked to do this but thought I'd give you all a heads up".

SHAWN'S REPORT

Shawn Farquhar posts: "This weekend I did two private Zoom shows and it lifted my spirits some. Lori says I'm a walking ball of gloom lately. I'm not going to allow the stupidity of a few selfish individuals ruin my spirit, I have too many good things in my life. If you're one of those who "knows more than the scientist" folks and you're reading this, please stop following me and go away until you grow up. You're one the biggest parts of the problem... the biggest problem is you can't see it. I'll get off my soapbox now and go do something to distract me... Stay safe, wear a mask, support local arts if we ever return." Listen to Shawn!



CASINO OOTW

Mark Elsdon

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact

www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £20.00

Many magicians have made minor variations to Paul Curry's Out of This World since the trick was first created in 1942. In Mark Elsdon's version he makes two changes to adapt the presentation for his Art

show. The first allows the pack to be shuffled by a spectator and completely reset into blacks and reds in a single cut. The second avoids having to stop half way during the deal to switch which piles are designated red and black.

To facilitate the spectator shuffling you get a pack of specially prepared Bee cards so that however thorough the shuffle the two colours can be stripped out in a single cut. The

move is not difficult, more feel and knack than a complicated sleight.

With a glance at the corners it is easy to tell if the separation is perfect and this is also my reservation. It is quite possible to see that there is a difference between the corners of some cards even while the deck is being shuffled. Whether in a live performance this would fly by I don't know, but I was aware of it.

In Paul Curry's original handling the performer (false) shuffles the deck at the outset and the spectator shuffles at the half way stage. Whether having a spectator make the initial shuffle by adding a gimmicked deck is better is a moot point that I suppose comes down to personal preference.

Mark Elsdon's handling to correct for the discrepancy in the two piles works very well. It gets rid of

the need to switch which piles are used during the deal and loses the correction into a natural step in the final handling. I think it works partly because of his personality and presentational style, and partly because he is in a parlour style presentation, but the basic principle could easily be adapted to other settings.

You get a deck of the specially prepared Bee cards and access to twelve minutes of video explanation filmed in a bar setting to an audience of magicians. **SB**

What's Hot: effective way to deal with the discrepancy between the two piles of cards after they have been dealt.

What's Not: need to trade off the benefit of an initial spectator shuffle against a gimmicked deck.

Rating: 75%



UP

Steve Marchello

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £27.00

Under the pretence of static electricity, a freely chosen card clings to a participant's finger, hovering around 1-2cm above the deck.

As a teenager in the mid-90s, I owned a gimmicked playing card that was almost exactly what you are supplied with here. The only difference is that in this effect the gimmick will break with wear and tear, whereas the original I had was much sturdier and the card floated a tad higher. With the sheer volume of magic that is constantly being created, it's

inevitable that creative thinkers will devise similar effects and gimmicks.

This is a well-made gimmick but fragile. The 20-minute online video teaches the modus operandi but most of the time is spent teaching you how to repair the card when the gimmick breaks. There are no magnets, wires, blah, blah. The floating, signed card is a free choice. Instant re-set.

But here's where the effect falls a bit flat. The card hovers a fraction above the deck. The chosen, signed, hovering card can be given away as a souvenir which leads the audience to question the only other thing in play, namely the deck (which the card hovered very slightly above). Should they ask to examine the deck, good luck with ditching the gimmick!

Another gripe; the trailer is 90 seconds, of which the first 30 depict our creator, Mr. Marchello, standing with his anti-Covid mask on, holding a deck of cards with a sound track that would fit the latest epic

blockbuster action film. All of this intense build up leads to a few other mask wearing spectators, politely reacting to a card which clings to their finger a short distance from the top of the deck. To say the build up isn't justified is an understatement.

Should any spectator, apart from the participant who is involved, take a second to look under the hovering card, the method will be obvious. Whilst this is easy to do, there is a plethora of rising and floating card effects on the market and in books which are far more magical. **JF**

What's Hot: an easy-to-do levitating card effect with a freely chosen, signed card.

What's Not: the height of the levitation is a little underwhelming. The fact that the top card of the deck is 'hot' once the signed card has been given out needs to be considered.

Rating: 35%



V&B SHUFFLE MAT

Vorst & Bosch /Vanishing Inc

Available from www.vanishingincmagic.com

Price: £63.30

Measuring just 10 x 7 inches and brought to you by the team at Vanishing Inc, the V&B Shuffle mat is the perfect accessory for practising your shuffles and cuts, etc. Of course the mat could also be used for any other close-up magic that requires a small footprint.

The mat is expertly made as you would expect from V&B and feels great when shuffling cards on it. There's not really much more to say other than if you are looking for a small shuffle mat then you can't go wrong with this one. Available in several colour options. **PS**

What's Hot: Perfectly sized and very well made. Soft velvety feel.

What's Not: Quite pricey.

Rating: 85%



FORK THROUGH FINGER

Axel Hecklau

Available from
www.axelhecklau-shop.com

Price: £13.00

I often wonder what motivates a magic creator to take an effect which could have been a page or two in a book and instead decides it warrants being released as its own stand alone effect with an accompanying 45-minute video discussion. Well, Fork Through Finger could easily have been the former, but instead appears as the latter.

This horror-stunt is where you take a fork, ask a participant to hold it, prongs uppermost and then it, apparently, penetrates your finger.

Given it had 45 minutes of discussion accompanying the basic effect, let's look deeper. Firstly, the effect is based on Matthew Johnson's Pen Through Finger. I've also seen Mark Setteducati do a similar finger stunt using the basic technique.

In the clear, well presented video, creator Alex Hecklau is joined by Tobias Dostal as they perform and dissect the effect. Hecklau presents the trick on a sword box premise, where his finger represents the girl. A photograph of your finger is then used to cover up part of the finger being used, and this is explained to be the box which covers the girl. Finally, the prongs of the fork are said to be the swords.

Over three stages, your finger is first pricked by the prongs, then a quick stab results in the prongs penetrating your finger and puncturing the photograph. The final penetration has the fork

prongs fully penetrate your finger and the photograph, with the fork being lifted up and out through the photograph at the finish and therefore apparently it has been driven right through your finger.

The stages of the effect are well constructed, each building up to the big penetration. This is a convincing illusion. Hecklau has clearly given the structure of the effect a lot of thought and explains his thinking process in the video. He also instructs on where best to present this, how to work with angle issues and how to practise.

But... I can't really see this being much more than a stunt. The age old and well known stunt of removing your finger tip/thumb is one step away from the secret of this effect. I'm not sure how many intelligent adults would be convinced that this is a real mystery.

So where would you use this? The effect might produce hysterical street magic reactions for Instagram and Tik Tok. It might be a nice stunt to do at the dinner table or when having a meal with friends (whenever that particular delight will be allowed again!). I can't see it being a highlight effect of any serious table hopper or close upper due to the sensitivities of guests. Who really wants to see a magician at the table side asking a participant to help plunge a fork through the magician's finger?

Overall, this effect is well structured yet ultimately, Fork Through Finger felt all too much like a juvenile finger stunt and not much like a performance of magic. **JF**

What's Hot: a well structured, almost impromptu, convincing penetration of a fork through your finger.

What's Not: felt all too much like a beginner's finger stunt. Could have been in a book on table/dinner tricks instead of as a release in its own right.

Rating: 30%



ONE QUESTION

Ollie Mealing

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact
www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £21.90

Some tricks I review amaze me more because they are ever released in the first place than the trick itself. This could be another. It's not that it doesn't work or entertain an audience. It's a practical idea, but it's been over-packaged just to reach a suitable price point.

The unnecessary inclusion of normal items like a deck of red Bicycles and a mini 'post it' note pad are there because the simple gimmicked card alone would barely justify half the price. It's a novel routine based on a very simple premise but despite the marketing blurb, is far from original.

It's a mental card revelation presented as a party game like Heads Up or Twenty Questions except in this case you will only ask one question. You start by writing a card on a sticky note and placing it on your spectator's head to prove that it's impossible for them to see what you wrote. They then do the same for you. Without you seeing anything, you are now going to guess the name of the card written on the note stuck to your forehead.

In the party game version, questions are asked to try and deduce whatever is written on the note. In this case you say that you will only ask one question which will give you the clues to the card.

You ask a question completely unrelated to the trick like, "what did you have for breakfast" and comically interpret the answer to get the clues to the card. You pick up the pack and spread through removing one card which when turned over proves to be the correct card.

The routine is all about the presentation as the magic is on the lightweight side. It's a fun piece and the 'daft as you like' question asked to help you guess the card will allow you to entertain with your ridiculous interpretation, thus leaving them with an absurd explanation as to how you were able to deduce the card.

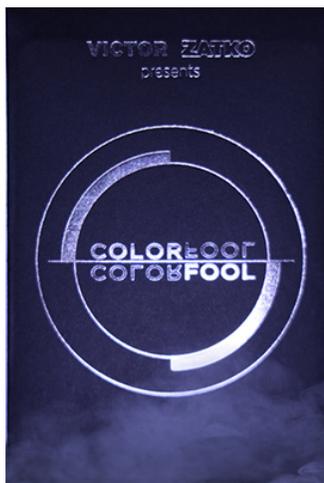
A 30 minute online video helps with all the nuances that make the routine easy to present with a red backed gimmicked card and an extra bit of 'something' so you can gimmick a card from your 'favourite' deck, or just a blue backed card.

You wouldn't want anyone behind you or to the sides in performance which could be problematical as this is mainly suitable for casual performances. The method will be transparent to a magician but will provide a fun piece of card mentalism for lay people. **PP**

What's Hot: has the potential for an entertaining piece of mental card magic. Practical to perform.

What's Not: transparent method to some. An over packaged product to reach a suitable price point. See if you can figure out how to open the box before you want to rip it apart!

Rating: 55%



COLORFOOL

Viktor Zatzko

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact

www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £25.00

A single blue backed card is moved slowly back above a blue deck, and the top card changes to red. The changed card can be examined. This is a very brief moment, brought about by a few highly faked cards which need to be controlled and got into, or kept in, position. The change is quite poor on angles, so is perfect for social media or for showing one or two spectators in

person. The blue back of the card prior to the change does not bear full scrutiny, but that can be easily managed through appropriate "wrist kill" and routining. The transformation itself takes place progressively as the top card is drawn back slowly hovering a centimetre above the changing back.

The accompanying video explains the mechanics of the cards and how to execute the change, with a suggestion for a colour changing deck routine. The mechanics work well enough, small back markings would help ensure that the cards are in the correct orientation prior to

the change.

I am a great fan of the new generation of flap cards (which are cheaper than this setup) and are more practical to introduce, operate and dispose of than this rather unwieldy clump of three cards. **CP**

What's Hot: a nice slow motion visual colour change ending with a card that can be examined.

What's Not: needs a clump of cards to be controlled and kept in the correct orientation. Poor angles. Back prior to change cannot be closely scrutinised. Relatively expensive.

Rating: 40%



THE STING

Scott Paton

Available from www.alakazam.co.uk

Price: £9.99

Scott Paton has devised a cyclical stack that is simple but far from simplistic. A three stage routine takes an apparently mixed deck and moves from a simple revelation of a chosen card, through finding

four of a kind, to a climax revealing the pack in new deck order. The routine could technically be done by a near beginner but needs some mastery of false shuffles and cuts to be fully deceptive. It would perfectly complement a display of Cardistry.

Peter Nardi fronts the instructional video, with occasional comment from Scott Paton. Instructions are extremely clear, even to a beginner,

and there is a helpful section on supporting card techniques, such as false cuts and shuffles.

The stack is simple to set up but does not bear prolonged scrutiny. However reds and blacks do not alternate and adjacent cards have no discernible relationship. There is no memory work and the divination of a removed card is simpler than Si Stebbins.

The principles in the stack can be more subtly deployed than the new deck order finish, which in unskilled hands is probably "too perfect". Peter Nardi gives an example of how scrapping the ending leaves an ideal

set up for Out Of This World. This opens up possibilities for modifying the stack, using the basic cyclical pattern, to simply carry the suits and values needed for a particular effect – for example keeping the suit or colour separation but forfeiting some of the sequence. **CP**

What's Hot: a highly adaptable, strong sequence of self working magic. An excellent introduction to cyclical stacks. No memory work. Clearly explained.

What's Not: unlikely to be convincing in the hands of a beginner.

Rating: 70%



NOTIFIER 2

Illuminati Magic

Available from <https://illuminati-magic.com>

Price: £170

Notifier 2 by Illuminati Magic is an electronic peek device which allows you to receive notifications from multiple electronic magic devices via its tiny display or vibration thumper.

The Notifier 2 device connects and sends information via Illuminati Magic's Unifi iOS app. This app is the central hub for managing and pairing all of your devices. Although the device is small there are quite a few settings which can be tweaked to suit your own requirements (screen brightness, vibration strength, colours, etc). I'm quite tech savvy but it did take me a while to get the hang of the various options available both in the Unifi app and the Notifier unit itself. There are lots of video tutorials to work through on the Illuminati Magic's website.

Once set up you soon realise what a powerful piece of kit the Notifier is.

It's small enough to conceal the unit in your hand or house in a playing card box ready to peek the necessary information when required.

I currently have my Notifier unit connected with Pensense Lite (see review on p48) and it works flawlessly. The notifications are instant and very easy to see.

The unit can receive information from many other electronic devices both from Illuminati Magic and several other electronic device manufacturers (ProMystic, Inject, WikiTest to name a few). Notifier can also receive text messages or vibrations from an off stage assistant

should you require this option. I have not had my unit very long but already in a short time playing with it I can see its huge potential.

If you are an electronic mentalism fan then this would be a great addition to your arsenal. Having such a tiny peek device which can connect to so many different props can only be a good thing. **PS**

What's Hot: Tiny unit with very clear retina display that's easy to see and read. It can connect and receive info from many electronic devices

What's Not: A bit confusing to set up at first. Not cheap.

Rating: 85%

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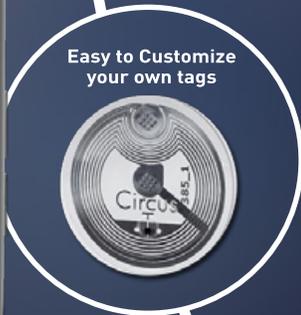
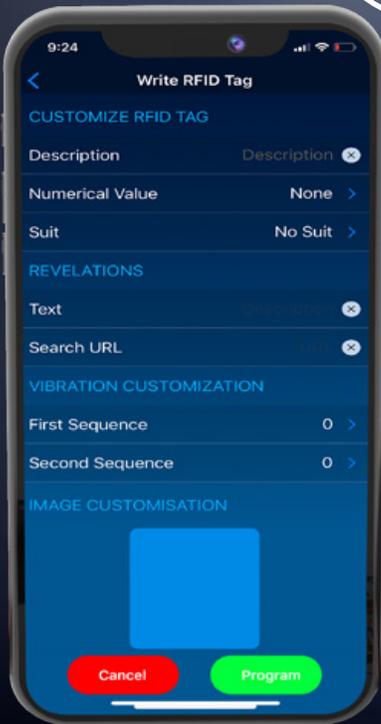
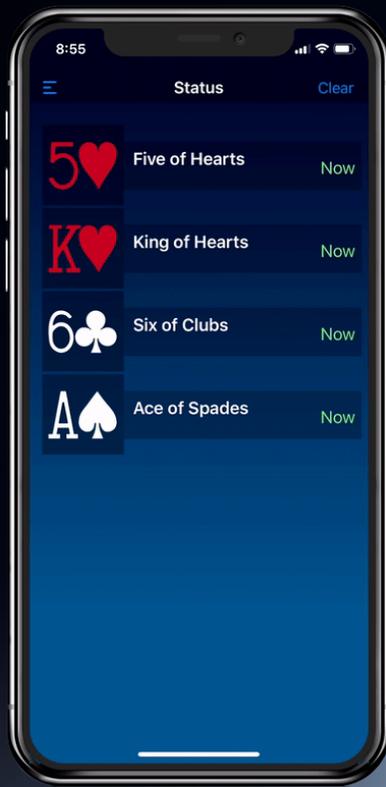


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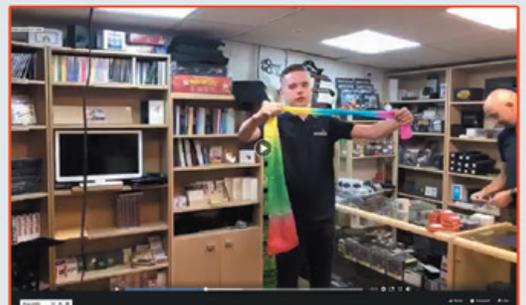
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