

Top Hat E-Zine presents...



Chatter on Patter

Think before you open your mouth

ISSUE 6: HAUNTED KEY PRESENTATION
BY MICHAEL J. LAUCK III

A Treatise on Presentation from a Practical Point of View

A Supplement Dedicated to the Advancement of Good Presentation

Brought to You By MagicBunny © 2006 All Rights Reserved

Welcome

The year seems to be moving fast, and it seems to be the convention season again already. With Blackpool just gone and South Tyneside just coming up, I'm sure plenty of people have empty pockets but are laden with all sorts of goodies, gadgets and undoubtedly multi-coloured decks of cards to play with. Well put that all aside for a moment because in this issue there lies something very different. It is the only article that has ever been published in CoP that requires you to have a specialist piece of equipment. However, it is more than worth it and you can pick up everything that is necessary from most, if not all magic shops.

This month's contribution comes from Michael J. Lauck III, but you may know him simply as Michael L. around the Magic Bunny forums. Michael has generously provided us with a fresh presentation for a classic piece of magical apparatus; the Haunted Key. This wonderful little device has probably taken a back seat in recent years but that doesn't mean that it does not hold the potential to create powerful magic. Michael will show you how to do that.

Will Wood

Chatter on Patter Editor
chatteronpatter@magicbunny.co.uk
will@directmagic.co.uk

Haunted Key Presentation

By Michael J. Lauck III

I love the little magic. I love magic that can be pulled out of your pocket in the line at the grocery store and performed right there in front of an unsuspecting audience. Plus, I have a busy life so I don't practice much. So I love really easy magic that I can put in my pocket. Frequently, I'm broke, too. I never have any money to be honest, so I like cheap magic too. What's my favourite trick? I don't know for sure, but I know it fits in my pocket, can be done anywhere, didn't cost much and doesn't really need much practice. Wait, it must be the haunted key!

The haunted key? That cheap little piece of junk? Cheap? Check! Little? Check! Piece of junk? NO! It just has to be done right. I've said this so many times that I am afraid that it is going to be carved into by tombstone: It's all in the presentation. What is the secret of magic? What is the key? What makes one magician better than another? Why does this \$500 pocket trick not work for me? Why does that \$5 pocket trick work for him? It's all in the presentation. Seriously, it's all in the presentation.

I've got to figure that everyone and his brother knows the mojo, the secret, the trick, whatever you want to call it of the haunted key. If not then go buy it. It's cheap... I don't know what it goes for in the rest of the world but in the States you can get a large chocolate shake, a decent burger and fries or a haunted key. Get the haunted key; it's better for you!

Now me, I have at least three haunted keys. One is the standard chrome plated model. It's okay but if you look really close you can tell that it has been spot welded together which makes it kind of shady. One of these days I am going to give it a good sanding, paint it with some matt black model paint with a little sand mixed in for texture and then carefully paint some faux rust on it. That'll be a key that commands respect! Look at your haunted key? Does it command respect? How are you going to say its some antique key when it is shinier than a doctor's Harley? Because I am too lazy to paint mine, I have secured other keys. One is an old key doctored to work better as a haunted key (although any old style skeleton key can be used as a haunted key, you just need to practice a little more to get the feel of it). It is brass and a bit rusty and looks genuine, probably because it is

genuine! But it is very small and it doesn't look good in my hands. I don't know where it is, either, and that cuts down on its usefulness to me, too. My third and favourite key is an old skeleton for some handcuffs I got in a lot of magician's equipment from an estate sale that didn't include any handcuffs. Once chromed, it's well past its prime. I don't know if it is just a skeleton key or was altered to work as a haunted key but it works great for me. It's a good size and it looks old. Nice!

I have a key that looks the part, but that is just the tip of the iceberg. The rest lies firmly on the magician. Imagine I am there with you at the hangout of your choice. I take out my weathered old key and place it in my open right hand so that the head hangs off my open palm to my left and the teeth of the key face me. I wave my left hand slowly over it from my chest out towards you two or three times. "Move! Move I say!" I say...and it does! That is magic!

That is magic... bad magic! And don't you dare say that nobody does it like that because almost everyone does it like that! Showing your hands empty and that there are no wires does not make better magic either nor does it count as presentation. It's just baiting the audience, daring them to figure it out. No emotion, no connections, no presentation. A crappy performance like that makes magicians think that haunted keys are only worth the \$5 they paid for it.

Instead, say me and you are at that hangout again with a couple of girls you know. Waiting for an opening, I say something like, "Do you believe in ESP and that kind of stuff? It's kind of freaky, you know? I didn't go to college to learn how to be superstitious, but I had this sike (surely "Psyche"- Ed) professor who used to make us carry an old key around... look, I still have mine! (I pull it out now. The key, I mean, pull the key out now) I got an A in that class! He was kind of nuts, you know, the old crazy hippie type of professor like in the movies. I mean you go in the first day and here's the professor looking like a cross between the doctor in "Back to the Future" and an extra from Woodstock with this box of keys, handing them out. He told us that if you put it in your hand like this (I put the key in my right hand like before, facing you) and when you find someone you can connect with (I twist my body to the right to face one of the girls and then back in the other direction so that when I am facing the girl that I am interested in [don't tell my wife, okay?]) it will tell you (it moves) like that! Isn't that weird? (Now I reset the key in my palm.) It seems like BS (slowly, I pan past you and the other girl and then back to the first where the key again rolls) but it always works the same way!"

Now, that's magic. It isn't great magic, but it's a start and maybe I get that girl's attention. There's a story, there's a bit of audience investment, there's a repeat

of the improbable, yeah, that's magic. But it isn't great magic. Great magic goes like this:

I live in an old house. One of the oldest on my street. When we bought it we had some trouble establishing the age of the house because we couldn't find any city records about it being built and they go back to like the 1820's. I mean, I know my house isn't that old... like 100 years, maybe. I find things in the yard when I dig and stuff about that old, too. I found this key.

Turns out that the reason that they couldn't find my house at first is because when it was built the street had a different name. Up until 1915 it was called American Way. Corny, but true. But in 1915 something terrible happened, something really bad. There was a fire on the block. Only my house and the house next to it survived; the rest of the block was just leveled. It was like 12 or 14 houses and they all burnt to the foundations. It happened on a Sunday morning and that's why the fire got so bad. Everyone on the block was at Mass. Everyone except the Dolan kids. The Dolan kids had skipped Mass and gone home to play. They probably did it all the time because St. James is so close they could get home, play and be back before anyone even realized they were gone. They were six and nine and at that age something like that is a great adventure.

Except this time there was a fire. From the newspaper accounts it seems that their mother realized they were missing about the same time as the congregation was realizing that there was a fire on the block. The smoke had to have spread the half mile or so the fire and the Cathedral by the time Mass was over, even if the wind was blowing the other way. All those houses? That's a lot of smoke. And in all that smoke Mary Dolan realized her boy and girl were missing. It probably only took a moment for her to make the connection and just know-- know like a mother does-- where her children were. And she was gone. Mr. Dolan was something of an invalid it seems. Some kind of mill accident left him unable to walk without a cane. The story I read said he managed to run that day, no cane. Love does that to a person you know. But he couldn't keep up with Mary and she got home first.

Nobody can say what happened for sure, of course. It seems likely that the children were scared and ran upstairs and locked themselves in their parent's bedroom. I guess they thought they would be safe there. They were either under the bed or hiding in the big cedar trunk at the foot of it. They had locked the door.

The newspaper said they found Mary Dolan's remains just outside the bedroom door in the collapsed house. She had gotten the key (I hold up the key and place it in my hand) from where-ever they kept it and it was in the door, but it wasn't

turned. She was nothing but charred bones according to the article, but she was stretched out, reaching out to the door. A roof beam had fallen across her; she was probably paralysed by it, but her hand was still out, almost there, just trying to reach that key again... trying to make it turn (and the key turns). Just reaching until the end...

And that is great magic. That is presentation. That is history and emotion and theatre. It is the same \$5 trick any way you do it, but it is not the same magic. It's all in the presentation.