



MagicBunny.co.uk

TOP HAT

January 2003 - Edition 10

I'd first like to wish everyone at MagicBunny a Happy New Year. Support has been immense during the months that MagicBunny has been active and you've helped amass a total of almost 30 000 posts.

This month's TOP HAT is jam-packed full of articles from many different contributors. Peter Marucci has added a great little paddle effect and Michael Wilde has sent in an excellent in depth article on a psychological trick that is guaranteed to please.

Michael Jay's new series on misdirection has come off to a brilliant start just as Nigel Shelton's "So - You want to be a Star, do you?" series comes to an end. Together with Craig Browning's (Darmoe) first part of "Being a Neophyte..." and many more superb articles, this ezine is a great addition to your library.

Until next time,

~Jon Snoops~
Compiler of MagicBunny.co.uk's TOP HAT Monthly e-zine
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Every issue of the TOP HAT will contain original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you have a submission, please email TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk

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Message From Admin

May I wish you all a belated happy New Year for 2003. I do pray that this year has started successfully for you and that you may achieve the ambitions that you set for your families and for yourself.

Running a website involves setting new ambitions and targets too and I hope that you may see some of these come to fruition over the forthcoming weeks and months. The rate of growth of the forums has been phenomenal over the first few weeks of 2003. We have achieved some 30 new members and 1200 new posts a week since 2003. This is an incredible achievement for such a young bulletin board.

Thank you to all of you, moderators and members, who have helped achieved these figures.

All this activity has meant that these forums are being cluttered with so much activity across all the boards. Michael Jay has forwarded an exciting new development for these forums, which will involve the opening of a new forum for those members who have access to the secret areas. I shall not steal too much of Mike's thunder (I hope that he may be able to provide some input for his own personal vision) but suffice to say, this will help to boost these forums to provide an even more professional treasure trove of knowledge to all magicians and be a welcome addition to the valued facilities that there are on offer.

There are other projects in the pipeline too, some for the near future and others for far ahead. I hope to bring you more news of these as the weeks and months progress.

Thank you for your support over the past year and I know, with your continued assistance, 2003 will exceed our wildest visions for these boards.

Admin.

In Your Ear!

It may be frustrating for a lot of magicians but, sometimes, the simplest things have the strongest impact on a lay audience.

You can work for six months on a second deal, and the audience goes away thinking, "Hmm, he did something with the cards and then found mine."

Yawn.

On the other hand, you can blow the audience away with the French Drop, that was probably the first sleight you ever learned -- and hardly ever use anymore.

Surprise.

The following is a simple quickie that I use mostly for children who are with adults. After doing my stuff for the grown-ups, I do something for the younger set, leaving them with a souvenir.

And, believe me, the adults as well as the kids will remember this long after they've forgotten anything else you might have done.

IN YOUR EAR!

By Peter Marucci

Effect: The magician shows both sides of a little wooden paddle, waves it behind a youngster's ear and bring the paddle back with a penny sitting on it. The magician then dumps the penny in his hand, does some magic business and, when he open his hand, the penny has changed to a nickel, which he gives to the youngster.

Preparation: A wooden paddle (naturally), a penny, glued to the paddle, a nickel, and the ability to do a paddle move.

In Your Ear! (cont.)

The best thing I found for making the paddle is one of those stir sticks you can get at paint stores. The paddle should be about six inches long, half of that the broad end and the other half the handle. With a coping saw, make the handle as wide as it is thick (about a quarter of an inch). Sand it down but keep the edges of the handle sharp, for ease in doing the paddle move. What you end up with should look exactly like a small boat paddle. (Hence the name, I betcha. <G>)

The paddle move is a basic sleight found in almost every magic book but, in brief: Hold the paddle by the handle, between the thumb and forefinger, showing one blank side of the broad end. The paddle should be parallel to the floor.

As you (apparently) show the other side, turn your wrist 180 degrees toward yourself and, at the same time, roll the paddle 180 degrees between your thumb and forefinger. The paddle is now pointing toward you, showing the (apparently) other blank side. What you have done, in fact, is show the same side twice. But, done smoothly, to the audience it looks as if they have seen both sides.

Glue the penny to the paddle, slightly off-centre to make it look more natural. Conceal the nickel in your left hand; just hold it there and don't be obvious about it. You're ready to begin.

Presentation: Turning your attention to a youngster in the group, take out the paddle and refer to it as your "magic paddle" or some such. Show both sides (paddle move) in a casual manner, gesturing with the paddle as you talk. DO NOT make a big deal of this, saying something like, "Nothing on this side -- and nothing on that side." (Or, if you insist on doing something like that, I don't want to hear about it!)

Reach behind the youngster's head and lightly tap his ear with the paddle, turning it over before you bring it back in view. Look amazed as you say, "Gee, I found a penny in your ear." Let the audience have a clear view of the penny sitting on the paddle. (Handle the paddle gingerly; remember, the penny is supposed to be sitting on it, not glued to it.)

Turn the paddle over your left hand as if you are dumping the penny into that hand. Casually gesturing with the paddle to (apparently) show both sides blank again, say, "Even though I found the penny, it did come out of your ear, so I suppose you should be the one who gets to keep it."

Put the paddle away and continue: "But a penny isn't very much money, so let's work a little magic." Wave your right hand over the left fist (hence the justification for putting the paddle away), mutter your favorite magic words (currently kids get a big kick out of "Hocus Pocahontas") and open your hand to show the nickel. "Hey," you say, "the magic worked again." And give the nickel to the child.

Second Thoughts: If you are a real purist, you can have a duplicate, blank paddle in your pocket should anyone ask about it -- although I have never had anyone do so.

If you prefer, you can have the penny change into a giant penny. Good visual stuff. But then point out that it is still a penny, put it in your pocket, and give the youngster a nickel or -- better still, in that case -- a quarter (since you, not the magic is deciding the value).

I also do this with adults, where the penny changes into a wooden nickel with my name and phone number on the back. These are just wooden discs about an inch and a half across and I rubber stamp my personal info on the back and "5 cents" on the front. I comment about not taking any wooden nickels "but this one's okay because it's magic."

Don't overlook the impact of this just because it's simple and brief; the Gettysburg Address was simple and brief, too.

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So - You want to be a Star, do you? Part 8

This is the final part in the "So - You want to be a star, do you?" series. Written by Nigel Shelton, this gives great advice about how you can jump the gap from being a hobbyist to a professional in magic. This month's section advises you on taking a professional photo shot to accompany your portfolio. If you've missed any previous parts, look in the e-zine archive accessible from the MagicBunny.co.uk site.

Have you ever considered a professional photo shot?

I had undertaken two photo sessions during the past three years and I shall prepare for my third over the first few months of 2002. A photo shot can be a most enjoyable experience and can also provide you with a top-quality photograph that you may be able to use on posters or other advertising material.

Many high street photographers do provide this service so don't think that their sole purpose is to undertake weddings and the like of this. They are able to offer high quality photographic services of this nature too.

A typical photo shot costs in the region of £40 or so. For this you have a fifteen-minute session and then are invited back to view the photographs. The price usually includes a choice of one suitable picture but, if you wish to purchase more, there will be additional charges.

If you want to create a professional image and obtain the services of a high street photographer, visit their store the next time you're in town. Don't expect to walk straight into a photo shot - an appointment must be made. This is usually some two weeks or so in the future after the first approach. This is dependent on the time of year. Weddings are more popular at certain times and you will have to fit around the dates that have already been taken. Make a suitable appointment and return on that date.

During the preceding week, arrange for a haircut so that you will be as smart as possible. Leave your best clothes for the day in question and, when you leave to go to the photo shot, take a number of magical props as well as a comb.

When you arrive for the shot, the payment is usually made just before or after this session. Arrive a few minutes early so that you will not be flustered and then spend this extra time to unwind and relax. Ask if you can, adjust your attire and quickly spend a few minutes combing your hair and tidying your clothes.

You will normally be taken into a studio upstairs or next-door. If you are a minor, allow a parent or trusted adult to accompany you. It will help both you and the photographer be at ease. In fact, many photographers will not accept a booking if you are under 18 unless a parent is present too. This is a sensible precaution for both of you.

Savour the next few moments. The photographer will usually be very skilled in making you feel at ease. The next few minutes should be a very pleasant experience indeed. You will be asked to sit or stand in various poses and the photographer will tell you exactly how to position your hands and head. Do exactly as you are told even though it may seem foolish to you if you are told to adopt a given pose. A clenched fist under the chin may sound forced and unnatural but the end product is slick and professional. Ask if you may include the props of your choice in the photograph. You may wish to fan a pack of playing cards, spring a pack of cards into the air or hold a series of sponge balls between your fingers. Ask if you can do what ever is appropriate to your genre of magic.

Remember that, even though the photographer knows what will provide the best end product, ask if you have any preferences too. A favourite shot of mine shows me looking sullen yet thoughtful, I had to request this though - the photographer wanted a series of smiling, cheerful pictures!

After the photo session has finished you will be offered an appointment roughly two weeks in the future to view the work. When you return at this date, you will be shown a selection of photographs or a slide show presentation of the photo shot. You will be asked to select the photograph that you require. For an additional charge, you may want to make other selections too. After this, you will be invited back after a week to collect the work.

Therefore, from start to finish, the process may take a month. Therefore, if you are thinking of a professional

So - You want to be a Star, do you? Part 8 (cont.)

photograph to accompany your work, you will have to plan in advance.

One final word of caution, if you are an adolescent, your facial features will change rapidly during puberty. Any advertising material or publicity material should be up-to-date. Remember this is you really are seriously planning to produce some advertising materials. It would not be fair to advertise yourself as a young adolescent of say 15 when really you have changed to the more mature features of a young man of say 17. The audience will want to see what they get. It would be equivalent to buying a box of Cox's Orange and opening them to find Golden Delicious. Try and keep your publicity material as up-to-date as possible.

By Nigel Shelton

Subliminal Messages

This effect requires the performer to be able to hypnotise a volunteer. This hypnotised volunteer is sat on the table.

Effect

A volunteer is called upon from the audience to join the one already entranced on the stage. The volunteer is seated on the left side of the stage and the entranced subject is already seated in the centre of the stage. A verbal suggestion is directed towards the entranced volunteer; she is told to try and resist the subliminal suggestion but cannot. She is then shown a written suggestion and is told to resist this suggestion, but she cannot. This is an improvement on Basil Horwitz 'Hot Chair'.

Required

Stack of gimmicked business cards provided. These are easy to construct and are an impromptu looking substitute for and out-to-lunch switch pad.

Construction

Get several cards and place them together (business cards for close-up, postcard size cards for stage). Prepare the top card by writing on its bottom half, 'When I call your name you must raise your arm!'

Across its upper half write NAME followed by a space for the volunteer's name to be written. See fig 2.

You also need a half card. On this you write; 'When I say your name do not raise your arm!' See fig 3.

This half-card is placed on top of the bottom half of the whole card and is secured by an elastic band. See fig 4.

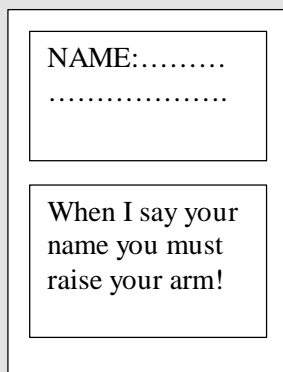


Fig 2
Gimmick

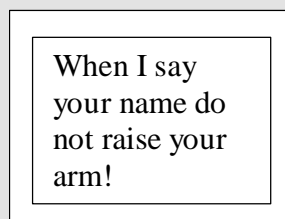


Fig 3: Half card

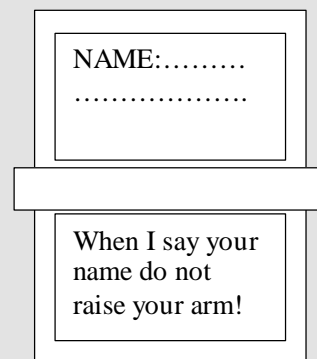


Fig 4: Complete

Subliminal Messages (cont.)

Presentation and Method

'We use suggestions all the time, more than we realise. By suggestions I mean; 'Could you make me a cup of tea' or 'Feed the cat'. However we do not need to tell people to do something for it to be a suggestion. The way we move, our gestures, our postures and our eye movements all suggest things to people. For instance if a person you are talking to has fallen asleep, they have suggested to you that you are boring. My next experiment is based on this fact.'

'Would you mind stepping forward please? Thank-you, you will be our judge.'

The entranced volunteer is still on stage and in a state of hypnosis; the following is directed to her:

'Jane, in a moment I will say a short passage that will make no sense at all. However within the babble is a subliminal suggestion and I will see if you can pick up on it.'

On a whiteboard write, 'Scratch your nose' and show this to the audience but not the volunteers. Recite the following:

'Jane, throughout my experience in thought reading I have stumbled upon many hitches, but who knows, hitches now indicates an intelligent person. I had to start from scratch; you know sitch (this is an English word meaning easy) really.'

There is a nose scratching subliminal message in the text. 'Who knows hitches now' is how the conscious mind receives the passage but the subconscious hears it as 'Who NOSE ITCHES now'. Also there is ' START from SCRATCH, you NOSE ITCH really' so it should leave the subject scratching their nose. To increase your chances of getting a scratch, gain a rapport with them through mirroring their blinks, gestures and movements. Then scratch your own nose and they should mirror your movement. If not it does not matter, say:

'You have successfully resisted a verbally instructed subliminal message. The suggestion I was trying to put across was for you to scratch your nose. When I said things like 'who knows hitches now' and ' start from scratch, you know sitch really', I was hoping for your subconscious to interpret it as 'who nose itches now' and 'start to scratch your nose itch really'. However you resisted it, but let's see if you can resist the written suggestion.'

Introduce the gimmicked card stack.

'On this card I have written a suggestion, your job is to resist the suggestion and you must try hard to do so. Please mark this card with your name.'

Card stack is handed out and the entranced volunteer writes her name on the second card and reads the suggestion on the half-card. She thinks she is writing her name on the top card but she is really authenticating the second card so the judge thinks no switches can take place.

'Now I will give this card to our judge who will write what the suggestion is on this whiteboard, so everyone can see it.'

Take out the whole card with the opposite suggestion to what the volunteer just read and hand it to the judge. He will see her name on the card and will come to the conclusion that no switches have taken place. He writes the suggestion he saw on the board and shows it to the audience.

'Remember when I call your name resist the suggestion. To show the audience you have resisted the suggestion do the opposite, okay? Good.'

'Jane, resist the suggestion now!'

Subliminal Messages (cont.)

She has read the suggestion as 'Don't raise your arm' so she will do the opposite and raise her arm. This matches what is written on the whiteboard. Et voila, the volunteer could not resist the suggestion.

Before the entranced volunteer can complain she is told to go back to sleep and her memory of the events that have just taken place on stage are erased.
The judge is thanked and is told to go back to his seat.

By Michael Wilde (This effect plus a simple method of trance induction and much more are soon to be released in my forthcoming book. For more information please visit <http://genesisbook.20megsfree.com>)

Thoughts From Midwest America

GUNG FU AND GLIDES

We had guests come over for the holidays which had very little effect on me personally but sent my wife into a flurry of cleaning up the night before they arrived. For those of y'all that aren't married, cleaning up is this ritual wives have in which they pick up all of their husbands' belongings and put them *Away*. Like most husbands, I have no idea where *Away* is, but evidently all my really cool stuff goes there. When I bought my 12 inch action pose Ultraman figure I pictured how awesome it would look on a mantle someday. Now that I have the mantle I find out that Ultraman *does not* belong on the mantle but *Away*. In fact, now that I think about it the only items I own that are allowed to be seen, aside from a few cool old books like the first American edition of *Our Magic*, are a couple of my metal cup sets (and I think that they are all allowed out because the room needs silver highlights and filler for the built-in bookshelves, not because they cool magic props). Trust me, *Away* is the real final frontier!

I was sitting on the floor (I had already been vacuumed around) watching cartoons and pondering where all my cool stuff had gone when my wife marched up to me with a plastic grocery bag in her hand and an odd look on her face. "What is this?" she demanded without even waiting for a commercial break or anything. Being a little more concerned with *Mobile Suit Gundam* than cleaning, I muttered it was a grocery bag and scooted over to see around her. "No, what is all of this?" she asked a little louder and moved in front of the TV again. Since it was a commercial this time I looked at the bag. It was full of 3 to 5 inch pieces of nylon clothesline loosely tied into knots. I might not know where my stuff goes when she cleans, but I know enough to know what she will and won't understand so I just smiled at her and said to put it with my magic stuff.

What I knew she wouldn't understand was that the bag was a record of progress. All the knots were from doing *Cut and Restored Rope With Pop-Off Knot*. The bag was about half full; I figure that when I have a paper grocery bag full that I will finally be ready to try it out on real people. I should end up with hundreds of knots; if I really stuff'em in I might even have a thousand or so.

I wonder how many magicians spend that much time on tricks, especially the simple ones. I mean, sure, I'll have the trick pretty much down after a few dozen times; in fact, truth be told I have known the trick since I was in elementary school. But when I do a move or trick I want the physical actions to be instinctual so that I can concentrate on the presentation and audience interaction. I have almost always performed without writing out patter, preferring to have a mental outline of the necessary verbal contribution to the effect and maybe a one-liner or two that have worked before. (I say almost always because I once performed in Mandarin and that was completely scripted, proofread and professor approved!) You never know what will happen when you perform, especially in an intimate setting, and I prefer to be ready to go with the situation instead of being locked into a script.

I learned this approach not from performing but from fighting. I have been involved in one form of martial art or another since I was a freshman in high school and have practiced Wu Hei Long Chinese boxing for 13 or 14 years now. My instructor, a crazy ex-professional fighter and Cherokee biker named Bear Shifu, drilled into us

Thoughts From Midwest America (cont.)

the importance of the fundamentals so that we may concern ourselves with the ever-changing situation instead of the mechanics of each punch, kick and lock we performed. I thought I grasped the concept (I mean it seems simple enough, right? keep up with the basics) until I started teaching our school's children's classes. In addition to my own advanced training I found myself doing the most basic stances, blocks, punches and kicks for two or three hours a day. Within just a few weeks I found myself still able to use the advanced techniques of our style when I needed to but really relying on a core set of just a few beginner level techniques. By reverting to these simple moves that I was practicing thousands of times a week my mind was free to concentrate on the many variables encountered during each fight; my body was almost on automatic pilot. It really increased my fighting skill immeasurably.

About the same time I was doing a lot of card sleights. I needed a way to keep my oft-broken fingers limber and cards are much cheaper and more portable than physical therapists! It was bothering me a great deal that no matter what sleights I tried I never looked quite as smooth as the first good magician I ever saw in person, one of my grandfathers. Although just an amateur and not even that devoted to being a magician as much as being the king of bar bets and jokes, he had the best card handling that I had ever seen (which still holds true today and even applies to about every magician I have seen on TV, too, except for Ricky Jay [of course]). Then, one day while doing glide after glide it hit me. My grandfather had spent a few years after the service in Vegas as a blackjack dealer. He claimed to have often worked 16 hour days during Vegas' golden era before giving it up to spend another couple of years professionally gambling (and probably cheating). Under the watchful eye of a pitboss he probably wasn't doing double-lifts or false shuffles but in those old days of one or two deck hand dealt games he probably shuffled hundreds of thousands of times and dealt millions of cards! He was so smooth because the cards in her hands were as natural to him as walking!

And think about walking for a second. Most of us can walk, talk and use our hands all at the same time without difficulty. We think it comes naturally, but it doesn't. I have an 18-month old toddling around my house. It has taken every day since she was born to acquire the strength, agility and sensory perception necessary to get to where she is today: she can walk but can't run well or handle stairs, she can talk but still hasn't put together a real sentence. It will be another three or four years before she is really easily communicating her thoughts and feelings or can run without doing spontaneous face-plants!

I don't know about you, but I consider walking a hell of a lot easier than doing a good Chinese sticks or cup and ball routine. But in retrospect I reckon I spent several years really learning to walk and still practice it every single day! I know I can't say that about my cup and ball routine...can you? So if you find yourself in my martial arts school expect to throw sidekicks over and over every class even after years of study and if you are in my house and find a paper grocery sack full of knots, expect to see *Cut and Restored Rope With Pop-Off Knot*. Just don't expect to see my Ultraman figure on the mantle!

By Michael St. Louis

From the Desk of Michael Jay

As is my habit, I always start with notes on my past articles, giving credit where I had missed it to begin with. If you read my last article, you will recall that I gave you the details of a signed torn and restored sugar packet. The handling was mine that I personally came up with. However, as is the usual facts, when you think that you've made up something new, it turns out that it has already been done. So it was with my handling of the signed torn and restored sugar packet, which was astutely pointed out to me by Dale Shrimpton. The original handling of this trick was already figured out by Richard Osterlind in a column titled "Richard Osterlind's Challenge Magic."

ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW FORUM

Several weeks back, a project was suggested for all members by Lady Laura. Her idea was to begin collecting

From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)

biographies, written by different members, on magicians past and present. At the time of this writing there are two posted. One is of Houdini and the other of Dai Vernon.

Various members have suggested that we open a specific forum for these biographies. The problem was that a forum for just these biographies was too much space for too few biographies. Well, I thought about this idea and one thought led to another, then another and I came upon a full scale use for such a forum. In fact, this is something that has the chance to blossom into a very useful tool for all magicians, over a course of time.

"And what may this be?" you may be asking yourself. Well, I'm going to tell you. What we are proposing is a full scale library. This new forum, which will be called, "The Library" will be for the posting of original magic effects that hit the market, the biographies and the indexing of existing tricks, along with their histories. As these items are posted, I will be indexing them internally. What this means is, for example, someone may post a biography of Alex Elmsley. Another member may get around to posting the explanation of the Elmsley count. These two posts, in conjunction with any other posts that have anything to do with Elmsley, or even mention Elmsley, will be internally linked. So, anyone doing research will have to look no further than the index because everything that they read will contain the proper links to further information contained on the Magic Bunny site, as well as off site information that can be found.

This particular forum will become part of the restricted forums on the Magic Bunny site. In this way, we can openly index magic tricks without fear of exposure to the casual browser. No information that is presently copywrited or owned as intellectual property will be posted. However, this will allow for an unedited library, at the disposal of every member who has access, which is most any member that sticks around the site long enough. Over a period of years, this library will become a valuable and intricate tool, the likes that, to my knowledge, no other site on the internet will offer. I hope that this news is as exciting to you as it is to me.

See you all 'round the boards and take care of yourselves.

Mike.

Practice

Written by Nigel Shelton, Darren, John A. Mahood and Tony Spallino

Practicing is one of the very important parts of being a magician. There are many points of view when it comes to practicing and how to practice. In the following paragraphs the student of magic will find what can be classed as the most valuable points of this part of magic.

An important note is that you should not simply practice, you should practice correctly. By practicing the proper techniques, you'll not need to come back later and try to fix a bad habit. Half the battle is ensuring that you are practicing proper techniques and handling skills. Should you practice improper techniques, this will cause you to become discontent, since you will be caught doing your secret maneuvers. This is no fun for the magician and it can have a very bad effect on the beginner since it is demoralizing. So, while reading these very important points on practice, always keep in mind to practice proper techniques or, really, all this practice is useless.

Practice comes in several forms. The aspiring magician must practice the sleight of hand that is predominant in magic. He/she must also practice the techniques that are involved with the handling of any magic effect. Also, the patter, or story line, in conjunction with the logical progression of the effect must be practiced. Finally, the overall handling of the effect and the subtleties must be practiced. Ultimately, all of these parts must be put together and the effect practiced from beginning to end.

There is an old well-used phrase, "Practice makes perfect." This would better read, "Practice makes permanent!"

Practice (cont.)

Many beginners ask, "How long do I have to practice for?" A good answer might be, "Practice until you can do the trick well and then practice until it's perfect. When you've got the trick performed perfectly, practice some more – practice, practice, practice." Obviously, the more that you practice a trick the better will be your performance. You can never underestimate the power of practice. The art of magic is not how you do the trick, but the effect that you create in the spectators' minds – for this you need to practice.

No practice needed? Some tricks that you may see for sale are labeled, "No practice needed." Don't believe it! Any trick, no matter how simple, needs practice before performing. Every trick needs you to perform some kind of action in order for the trick to operate – no trick is completely self-working. Some routines require the use of a gimmick. These, too, need practice. You may have to hold the gimmick using a certain grasp or you may have to ditch the gimmick after the trick is performed – these all require practice. Some routines require special clothing or a very simple prop. Everything that the trick requires must be included in the practice. Don't think to yourself, "I haven't got a pen for this coin trick – I'll practice with a pencil now and use a pen when a spectator offers one during the performance." No matter how small a role a prop plays you must wait to rehearse until you find it. Some minor issue may occur during your practice session – something you never expected! It is better that it occurs in private rather than during a performance.

Practice just one trick at a time. Don't try to focus on too many tricks at the same time. It is better to perform one trick well than to perform one hundred tricks badly. Focus on one trick and master all the ins and outs of that trick before you move onto others. The more that you focus on one trick - the more efficient you will be in mastering that trick. Learn how to do the trick thoroughly so that you are absolutely confident how to present it. Then is the time to move onto others.

Try to imagine what the trick will look like from the audience's point of view. How interesting will they find it? See if there are any angles from which the secret may be revealed. If there are, work out strategies to avoid giving the secret away. How can you distract the audience so that they won't spot a load or sleight of hand? How can you finish the trick in a really dramatic way? If you practice in front of a mirror or with a video camera, you can answer these questions for yourself. It also encourages you to look away from your hands and towards the audience. Next, practice with another magician or a trusted friend to give you some constructive feedback. If you practice with a friend, you aren't looking to share the secret; it's just that you want some feedback regarding your performance. Listen to their comments and modify your routine accordingly.

Keep persevering with a trick. Make adjustments until you are happy with the way that the trick runs. Change your finger positions if you find a move awkward or difficult. Alter the patter to suit your own personal style. Do not be afraid to modify a trick to suit your own personnel requirements. We are all different and what suits one magician may not suit you.

Run through your routines and identify weak points in the performance. Work out the stages of the performance when you are most vulnerable to exposure. Are there times when a flash might reveal a gimmick? Are there points when you have to load the equipment? Work out ways to get around these difficulties, using misdirection if necessary. You may want to also include the rehearsal of a suitable "out" for use if the trick misfires or you make an accidental mistake. This should enable you to change the end effect should something go wrong during your performance. Plan for the unexpected as well as the expected.

Practice your patter as you practice the effect. You may find it helps to record a script of the performance. You could do this on a tape or in writing. Have you rehearsed a suitable and convincing misdirection to minimize the risk of exposure?

Practice frequently but in small doses. A twice-daily five-minute session is far better than seventy minutes once a week. You are more likely to overcome a problem if you come to it afresh and it is easier to maintain a high level of concentration for a short period. You may even find it helps to perform a mundane task, such as watching television, as you practice a repetitive maneuver. This means you can spend a prolonged period working on a minor point and get the handling off to the best of your ability. A lengthy bus or train journey might just be the ideal opportunity to practice a simple sleight. Work within your own constraints to find the time and circumstances that suit you best.

Don't be tempted to show a trick before you have time to practice it thoroughly. If you are not confident

Practice (cont.)

with a trick then don't perform it. If you show a shoddy effect it will undermine your abilities as a magician and will remove the sense of wonder and astonishment that the audience should feel for you.

Practice when you are in a good mood. By practicing when you are happy, you will train your mind and emotions that doing magic makes you happy. This effect will come through whenever you show a trick to an audience. You will get a good feeling while doing magic and this will also help you to overcome stage fright. Much like a Pavlov dog, doing magic will make you happy and you, in turn, will naturally make your audience feel good about watching you perform.

Practice, for some, is a slightly ugly word. It usually brings the feeling of long boredom and terrible repetition upon us. You should, however, thoroughly enjoy practicing. Your perception of it should be, "I am learning more about something and getting better at the same time."

If you are practicing an ambitious card routine for example, you could just go over the moves again and again, but surely this will mean when it comes to performing it, the trick will reflect a slightly dull feeling, as you will have done it a million times before.

However, what you should do is to go through the routine a few times until you can do the trick without reading instructions or anything like that, then imagine it from your audience's perspective. Go through what patter may sound entertaining and appropriate, then imagine yourself in Caesars Palace maybe, performing this on stage in front of millions; then imagine performing it in the street for a crowd; then maybe in a magic competition and so on. This will make it more fun for you.

As noted earlier, you can practice while you watch television. If it is a repetitive motion, like learning to properly overhand shuffle, you can sit and watch the television while you practice this. Also, you shouldn't have to watch your hands while you are doing an effect. This will allow you to do what you need to do, like an overhand shuffle, without the need to watch your hands to ensure that you are doing it properly - you will be doing it properly and you will have the confidence that you are. Practice builds confidence in yourself and your skills, an important part of being able to do magic and do it right.

Sometimes you should simply skip practicing. You'll learn that you may go several days or even a week without wanting to practice. Don't fight it, that's okay. Sometimes your mind needs a "mental vacation" from it all. You'll find that if you force yourself to practice, you'll get frustrated but if you let it go for a few days when this happens, then you can come back with a fresh perspective and some things you had trouble with you can do better than ever.

Mental practice helps build physical practice. Sometimes, you will simply not be able to practice as you'd like to. The materials that you need are not at hand, or you are in a situation where there are other people around (never practice when you have an audience, they should not be privy to your practice sessions, which are a private thing). You can actually use your imagination to practice under these conditions. Picture yourself, in your head, doing the trick to an audience. See yourself doing the maneuvers that must be done and practice the patter in your mind while you do this. You'll find that when you practice for real, these images will help you overcome problems that you've been experiencing and will give you some extra material to work with. The mind is a powerful problem solving tool, and when used in this way, will help you to overcome problems that you've been facing in your technique and sleight of hand maneuvers. The name for this technique is "Creative Visualizations" and you should use it when you've hit an impasse in your practicing. You'll be amazed at what this kind of practice can add to your real time practice and how many problems you can overcome by doing this.

A PRACTICE TEMPLATE

THE SEVERAL DIFFERENT STAGES OF A PRACTICE SESSION

Stage one: Select the effect and evaluate it (angle problems and staging requirements - for example you may need a jacket, table etc.). If the effect fits your requirements and performance limitations then move one to the next stage.

Stage two: Learn the moves parrot fashion. Don't worry about patter or presentation at this point, you simply

Practice (cont.)

want to be able to do the moves that are required. Learn each individual move needed, from the beginning, then prepare to do these moves, one after the other (parrot fashion) in stage three.

Stage three: Perform those moves in front of a mirror and reevaluate the effect as in stage one. If, at this point, the effect passes the first level of evaluation you can now spend the time making the effect yours and ironing out any issues the effect may have.

Stage four: Think about the patter. Many performers suggest that you script the patter and write it down. This is not a method that everyone will use, but if you have problems with patter you may try this method out and see if it works for you.

Stage five: Dry run with patter and moves in front of a mirror. At this stage a full dress rehearsal is recommended. Wear your suit and tie or whatever clothes you'd normally wear when performing to an audience. During this stage work out which pocket the effect will come out of and where the effect will be placed when you are through (this is a little point many forget, yet pocket management is very important if you are going to work professionally), or have it on your table exactly where it would be sitting if you were doing a full show with a table.

Stage six: The performance test. Do the trick as you normally with a "safe" group. This can be a part of a brain storm session on patter ideas/presentations improvements etc. with other magicians, or you can simply show the effect to your family or close friends. At this stage all advice is of value, even from someone who is not a magician. Ask them questions like, "What bits worked well and what did you like the most?," or "What was strong, what was weak and did you see anything that I did that gave the trick away and, if so, what?" You'll find that different things of importance can be gleaned from magicians and from laymen.

Stage five and six should be repeated several times. During these times, you should be taking mental note of where you've went wrong and what you've done right. A powerful tool here is to actually write your thoughts and insights gleaned from these critiques down on paper and go over these notes extensively. Polish down the parts that aren't good (possibly get rid of them altogether) and keep the parts that your audience's liked. You may need to remove whole parts and go a different route in the presentation, don't worry if you have to do that, you'll just be doing what all of the best magicians do.

Stage Seven: Your first "non-safe" audience performance. In this performance you'll be showing your magic to an audience that is not close to you, quite possibly strangers. If you've followed all of the previous steps, you'll have the confidence to show your magic to this "non-safe" audience, knowing full well that you have a killer magic effect and that they will be entertained and enjoy your performance.

Now the big secret: The practice cycle should never be broken. You will sometimes go back to stage three and ditch the effect. You will find that many of your effects will be ditched as late as stage seven. Stage five and six must be repeated many times, so no effect is ever finished and you'll always be working on improvements, refinements and presentation.

Whoever said that doing magic, and doing magic well, was easy?

Edited by Michael Jay
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Being a Neophyte... Part 1

Being a Neophyte...

...The Days of Innocent Discovery In The Art of Mentalism!

P. Craig Browning (*Darmoe*)

{Part I}

Mentalism -- The complex art of Reading people's thoughts and selling them steak, while at the same time understanding that the people, their thoughts and the steak don't actually exist, except in your head.

-- Robert Cassidy* *Theories & Methods for the Practical Psychic*

The recent antics of so-called "Street Magicians" like David Blaine & Criss Angel here in the U.S. as well as the success of those shows featuring the likes of Darren Brown in the UK or the controversial John Edward here on our side of the pond, the whole has brought both, performer and public interest in things psychic, surreal and bizarre back into vogue. So much so that we find 12 year olds that have learned five or six bits of *Mental Magic* and never even heard of Tony Corrinda, let alone such masters of the craft as Kuddah Bux or Robert Nelson, calling themselves a "Mentalist" or, as the case more frequently denotes, screaming over the fact that they just can't make this stuff work.

Well, this column and all that I address in sequence of the next few months is for you -- the novices of mentalism and bizarre magick. Shared perspective from someone that works almost 100% of the time in this field at some level. Unfortunately I can't say this is my fulltime field of focus. I do write on other subjects for other publications; I do lectures that address a small plethora of issues; and I am called in from time to time as an effects designer and routine consultant on other shows. In other words, I still have to do "magic" and play with those big expensive boxes and explain to some of those big shots how things are "supposed to be done" vs. "how they want to do it..." (and all this time you thought I was just picking on you guys... like Max Maven, people pay me to be "opinionated" and make them better than they normally are. Which brings us back to the issue at hand... guiding you into the world of dreams...)

For a rather extended period of time a myth existed in the auspices of stage magic that essentially supported the idea that "Mentalism was the ultimate level of accomplishment for the seasoned performer of the legerdemain." In other words, you had to be an old fart with gray in the temples and a crick in your back to do mentalism...

NOT!

Though there is plenty of gray in my hair and my back is shot, that is not why I do this stuff. I started experimenting with it over 25 years ago, did my first full evening show as a mentalism at the age of 22 and got the ever liven crap scared out of me.

People believe this stuff is real!

This is why maturity -- life experience -- is so important to the psychic entertainer and Macabrest... it's also where the foundations to the aforementioned myth stems. It is not a carved in stone reality if you use circumstance to your over all advantage. But, let's back up even further than this and look at the bare bone basics of what is and is not mentalism, bizarre magick, and mental magic.

MENTAL MAGIC -- entails effects that host a psychic/spiritualistic theme such as the Mental Epic or a Spirit Cabinet but, for all appearances it is still seen by the spectator as being a clever magician's illusion -- a trick!

MENTALISM -- is not part of traditional stage magic but has become an adopted cousin of recent note (circa late 19th century) due to the popularity of programs in the mid to late Victorian era and well into the early 1940s that featured Mediums, Astrologers, Crystal Gazers, Dowsers, etc. Unlike Mental Magic Mentalism takes on the appearance of legitimacy e.g. it looks real!

BIZARRE MAGICK -- though many think it a relatively recent development, has been around since the late

Being a Neophyte... Part 1 (cont.)

1960s and early 1970s. This is a unique form of magic that depends greatly on theatrical presence created by the performer(s) vs. high end effects/technology. Most Bizarre Magick takes on a ritualistic/occult type feel to it as well as association to things psychic, morbid and surreal.

All three of these elements share some key commonalities including the chief sources for initial study and development e.g. Corrinda's 13 Steps to Mentalism; Annemann's Practical Mental Magic; and of more recent note Mind, Myth & Magic by T.A. Waters followed, according to some, by Ted Lesley's PARAMIRACLES. I stress that these are the opinions of some, not my own. Though the latter two tomes are great resources I believe the novice would benefit more by learning more about the basics first. In my book this includes the following...

MUSCLE READING TECHNIQUE -- The original tomes for this area of study include *Hellstromism* by Robert Nelson and *Contact Mindreading* by Schantz, both sold through Hades Publications in Canada. I'll also recommend Steven Shaw's (Banachek) latest release on this topic, which is actually two books in one.

Muscle Reading, in my opinion and experience, is one of the most powerful and practical skills any mentalist can develop. Ironically many tend to avoid it because it is so close to being "real". So much so that scientific research, including that conducted by major skeptics like James Randi, support the technique as being a legitimate form of thought interception a.k.a. Telepathy. Once known, you literally need nothing else. You can easily do a 20-45 minute show with nothing other than this single ability. The PR stunts that you can create using this method are mind blowing and most importantly "Real!" Long story short Muscle Reading is the truest mode of improvisational mentalism you are likely to find.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESENTATION -- Knowing words and how to use words has been a valued skill required by all showman but especially the psychic entertainer. Though I recommend the course for all magicians Kenton Knepper's *WONDER WORDS* is a must for anyone getting into mentalism or bizarre magick. The techniques outlined in this course can be applied to just about all facets of living and vocation. However, there is much more to this area of study in today's world when it comes to effective Psychic styled work. I'm referring to the memorization of material akin to Steven Shaw's (Banachek) *Psychological Subtleties*. As well as remote styled routines such as are featured in Lewis Jones' book "*Person to Person*". This type of magic empowers you at numerous levels but mainly at that goal level we all seek e.g. on the spot performance ability and being able to deliver the impossible, under any set of circumstances when you haven't a single thing on you.

Some time ago I got chewed out by some "Magicians" because I challenged them to do 20-minutes with nothing in their pockets and without stooping to card tricks. They couldn't... I did an hour and 15 using little more than what I've covered thus far and what I will mention next...

BILLET WORK -- the single most powerful routine any mentalist can do is the Q & A (Questions & Answers). If you watch John Edward or any of the big name psychics, that is essentially what they do, most of them don't even fiddle with using papers (a.k.a. Billets). But, as Tony Corrinda points out in his famed tome, one's skill at becoming a proficient Reader is the pentacle of being a mentalist. Unfortunately, you learn to get there by doing it! There are no shortcuts!

Both the Corrinda & Annemann books offers some insights on billets... most of which isn't only out of date, but completely outside the realm of application e.g. magician's conjecture vs. applicable *real life* fact. So start with the following resources

Faster Than A Speeding Billet by Docc Hilford (video)

The Q&A Teach-In by Lee Earle (video)

The Center Tear Teach-In by Lee Earle (video)

Bob Cassidy's Mentalism (CD Rom * a collective)

Peek Performances by Richard Busch (book)

Being a Neophyte... Part 1 (cont.)

This covers only the billet side of the information, not the Reading work.

READING TECHNIQUES -- are priceless! Too, you can tie a Reading type situation to most any kind of circumstance or effect. This, as you will learn, is of special value and lends to you a unique sort of power when it comes to how you entertain folks.

The top priority for anyone studying this next step, of being an effective Reader is to learn at least on standard system straight from the source BEFORE you pick up magic books and magician's habits associated with canned spills and Cold Reading B.S.

Paul Alberstat, Richard Webster and a large number of others individuals whom I have very high regard for, will encourage you to begin with Palm Reading, Tea Leaf Reading, and Asian Face Reading for one simple reason... they're not just classics to the trade but, most everyone you meet has two hands and a face (are you starting to see how, mentalist think and see things different than magicians?) You needn't a deck of cards, a bag of runes or any thing else. Too, the techniques associated with Tea Leaf Reading can be applied to Dream Interpretations, Divining someone's drawings (-see S.A.R. from Kenton Knepper & J. Tank-), etc.

It takes a while to learn any one of these systems but the pay off is well worth it. Besides, cultivating this skill also gives you one of those things the old timers said was a "requirement" of the proficient mentalist -- a mnemonic system/ associative memory.

I recommend you allow yourself time to become as adept as possible in at least one primary system. At the same time, I do support learning some of the general insights associated with the fields of Numerology, Astrology, Tarot, Runes, Ogham, and so forth, simply so you can use the advantages they offer you as a both Reader & Performer and too, so you don't sound like a fool when speaking with members of the "shut-eye" community about things psychic, etc. (believe me, these people do know what they're talking about and will hang you out to dry if they think you're a fake.)

Next month I'll expand upon this list and give you some insight about taking those first few steps towards true mentalism. Until that time, *may the farce be with you...*

Craig Browning
Surrealist Entertainer
Old Time Mystery Shows

The Art and Science of Misdirection

Written by Michael Jay

Many debates have started over the question, "Is magic an art or a science?" This single, simple question has evoked heated debate in the many circles of magic, from the hobbyist to the professional. Worked out completely, it can be ascertained that magic is both a science and an art. The science lies in the sleight of hand and technical work that goes into any routine. The art lies in the presentation, the story line and the creative way that any given magician combines several techniques to come upon a logical sequence of events to make magic happen. This sequence, pasted together properly, contains many factors. One factor, whether built in by design or by accident, is misdirection. In the following series of articles, we will be looking at this fascinating tool of our trade, which is a form of mind control, called misdirection.

The Art and Science of Misdirection (cont.)

In "The Books of Wonder," by Tommy Wonder and Stephen Minch, this topic is dealt with immediately at the beginning of Volume 1. So important is this tool to a magician, that Tommy Wonder feels it imperative to begin his 2 volume set with this subject. However, before delving into a serious discussion, Mr. Wonder considers the name, "Misdirection" and whether or not this is a misnomer.

Misdirection is a negative word. Consider that we, as magician, are misdirecting our spectator's attention away from the technical work and directing that attention to where the magic is happening. To fully appreciate the magic as it is happening, the spectator must be unaware of the things that we are hiding. By thinking of our misdirection, we, the magicians, are directing our own thought to the exact spot where we do not want our spectator's attention to be drawn. As a result, we psychologically and inadvertently direct attention to the wrong area. Therefore, when we consider misdirection in all its technical and artistic glory, we should not be calling it misdirection, but rather "Direction." Our own thoughts must be on the direction and not the misdirection, to completely give our magic the power that it can and should have. With full consideration to this fact, this article will deal with misdirection as misdirection, as that is the name that we are comfortable with and to change it at this point could be an easy cause of confusion.

MISDIRECTION IN THEORY

Misdirection is a constant in our lives. Anyone who reads a book while the television is on is dealing with misdirection. Reading while listening to music is also misdirection. Have you ever been reading while your thoughts have gone on to something other than the book? You stop reading, realizing that you have not comprehended anything from the last paragraph or two and now have to go back and reread the whole thing. You have experienced mental misdirection. You are playing a game, such as cricket or baseball, with your friends and two hours goes by like 15 minutes - that would be temporal misdirection. Misdirection comes in many forms that we deal with from day to day, but don't take the time to consider that fact. Walking along, you hear a loud noise and immediately turn to see what it was. This is misdirection, as is when someone calls your name. You hear your name and everyone who hears it who has the same name as you, looks. Misdirection.

There are many more examples of misdirection in our day to day lives. The magician, however, makes a study of this basic principle. To overlook this ultimately important part of our hobby is to overlook a very basic principle of magic. Sleight of hand and gimmicks make magic, misdirection makes magic powerful. Try this experiment: Right now, look at a picture on the wall. Do it, right now. Now you've come back to reading this article. How long did it take you to refocus on this article? How long did it take you to find your place? You'll note that it took a second just to find your place and begin reading again. You were misdirected and now you are back, but for a second in time, you needed to refocus and find your place. You may think that this was no big deal, but if you spend some time considering what just happened, you'll realize that if you are doing a magic effect and you need a second to make a move or maneuver unnoticed, what you have just learned is of extreme importance.

As an example, you are doing some close-up work with a deck of cards and you need to do a pass, which is not fully invisible. If the spectators look at the deck in your hands, they will see you make this maneuver, but it only takes you a second to pull it off. You need some misdirection, and you need it fast. So, what will work in this situation? A quick break in the action while you ask a question or make an observation would work. All you need to do is ask one of the spectators a question, they will reply and for the most part, the other spectators will look at the person replying, or you, while you ask your question. This can even be made stronger, using only the information that is in this article at this point in time. Rather than just ask a question, use the name of the spectator that you'll be asking the question to, "Bill, have you ever seen a card trick like this before?" Using the name immediately draws Bill's attention - you've used his name and by human nature, Bill is instantly drawn to look at you. Also, out of human nature, the other spectators are drawn to look at Bill while he answers this question. The specific name given to this (by Tommy Wonder) is "The Ricochet."

However, misdirection should not be overtly used. Misdirection needs to be subtle. In the example above, you ask Bill a question. That question needs to fit into the natural flow of your routine. The question proposed in that example is a suggestion, but may not be the best way to go about using misdirection, depending on how the magician has built the routine. If the question comes straight out of the blue and there is no reason for it to exist, other than for misdirectional purposes, then the spectators will feel, deep down, what you've done, which was to

The Art and Science of Misdirection (cont.)

misdirect their attention. They may not know what has happened, but they will know in a deep and base way, that you've done something you shouldn't have. Keep this consideration in mind at all times when building a routine and placing misdirection into that routine at key points. The misdirection, or direction of attention, must be logical for it to be effective and undetected by the spectators.

Considering the above, we come to how to build misdirection into a routine. There are two schools of thought on this subject. The first, you can build your routine, identify the weak points, then add your misdirection to cover these spots afterwards. This will work, but it is not the strongest way to go about this. The second, you build in your misdirection as you build the routine. This is the stronger use of misdirection, as it becomes part of the fabric of your routine, rather than a patchwork that you've added as an afterthought. Using the example above, with Bill, you realize that this part of the routine must be covered. Prior to figuring out where your routine is going, or adding in any parts beyond the pass that must be covered, you must think of a reason to stop at this point to inject the comment for misdirection's sake. Should you decide to finish the work-up of your routine, then any comment that you add will be a patchwork, or an afterthought. By deciding to build in the misdirection right at the beginning, this comment will be logical to the effect that you are attempting and may just springboard your thoughts to a logical continuation of the effect based on the misdirectional statement. This will, of course, make for a stronger and more magical routine.

In the next article, we shall dissect misdirection and its many forms. We will take an in depth look at what misdirection is and why it works. Eventually, we will get into how to use misdirection not as a misdirection, but rather as a direction and how to build it into your routines, to make you a better magician and to make your magic as powerful as it can possibly be.

Thanks, as always to all of our contributors. Keep those submissions coming in to TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk

See you next month,

All the Best,

Jon Snoops