



MagicBunny.co.uk

August Edition 17

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In this month's TOP HAT, you will see even more changes that have been made to the ezine in order to make it better for you. The tables in which all of the articles are presented in have been updated and the font schemes modified. It's not all eye candy, however as you'll also find the interactivity has been improved. The linking system applied to this and last month's editions means you'll find it a lot easier to get around the ezine and also to web pages mentioned here. Getting to a specific article has never been easier - simply open the Bookmarks tab on the left by clicking on it and select the place you want to get to. You can also navigate with the Contents menu. Photos were another thing requested in a recent discussion, so Admin; Nigel Shelton, has submitted an article which uses photos to illustrate the method. Hopefully this will be the first of many illustrated articles which make text easier to understand and better presented.

Admin keeps us up to speed on the latest news events from the site first of all and this is followed by an effect by Peter Marucci. Michael Jay then spills the beans on his experiences with fire in the first of his new series. Dan Turcotte, webmaster of www.youdomagic.com gives us some of his knowledge on the Push Press Control. Next, Alex Kocan presents a short article about the charity work of Mandy Muden and Michael Saint Louis continues his series on building magic. Finally, Nigel Shelton gives us his ideas on incorporating origami into magic with an illustrated effect using a borrowed bank note.

That's all from this edition, please email any articles for next month's edition to TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk as soon as possible.

~Jon Snoops~
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Every issue of the TOP HAT contains 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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The Latest From MagicBunny

The Latest From MagicBunny

Website News

By Admin

Since the upgrade to a new server and a premier host account, activity has soared on the boards. Postings have doubled from roughly a hundred posts a day to over two hundred and many new and exciting projects have begun on the boards.

Recently we have just seen the visit of Peter Marucci and Doc Eason, as special guests, and the feedback from these two visitors has been excellent. If ever you have an opportunity to read through the "Special Guest" forum, there is a wealth of knowledge that covers a mammoth range of insight. The "Special Guest" project is developing into a treasure trove of wisdom that is unsurpassed across the Internet. Taking into consideration the recent growth of knowledge in the "Library" forum, you will understand that these boards have developed from a vehicle for discussion into a goldmine of information relating to the art of magic.

One particular project that is creating a great deal of interest at the moment is the "File Sharing" forum and, more recently, The Bunny Academy. Day-by-day, members are being set a series of challenges to complete and then these people are asked to upload their responses to these challenges as videos in the "File Sharing" forum. This has resulted in a great deal of activity and I have been particularly impressed by the sheer amount and range of talent to be found on these boards. If you want to enjoy the opportunity of watching other magicians perform or if you want to seek inspiration for your own routines, why not take a peep at some of the more recent submissions for yourself. I am convinced that you too will be impressed by the contributions that you will see.

Please do continue to enjoy yourself on the forums. By all means, you are going to pick up knowledge and skills or impart these to others during your visits but, above all, enjoy your time on the boards and I will rest assured that this site is meeting a primary need for other magicians.

:)

By Admin

Quicker Than the Eye

Quicker Than the Eye

A Magic Effect

By Peter Marucci

EFFECT:

A basic, two-in-the-hand, one-in-the-pocket routine, full of awful gags and puns, and finishing with a double-laugh climax.

PREPARATION:

You'll need four little plastic feet and a little plastic hand. These can be found in the doll-making section of almost every craft shop. As well, you'll need a fake eyeball from your local gag and joke shop. The hand and eye are in your right jacket pocket, three of the feet are on the table, and the fourth foot is concealed in your right hand.

Quicker Than the Eye (cont.)

PRESENTATION:

Extend your left hand, palm up, and point to it with your right forefinger: "You'll notice that my hand is eight inches long. If it were four inches longer it would be a foot." (First hilarious gag.)

Point to the three feet on the table: "But it wouldn't be like these feet, because they are magical. Let me show you what I mean."

With the right hand, pick up one foot and toss it into the left hand. Count: "one." Pick up the second foot and toss it into the left hand, adding the concealed foot from the right hand. Count: "two." Pick up the third foot and put it in your right pocket, palming it out again. "And the third foot goes in the pocket."

Open the left hand, showing that the three feet have magically joined together again.

Repeat the sequence but this time, instead of palming the third foot, drop it into the pocket and palm out the hand.

Show the three feet have again magically come together. Casually pick up one foot with the right hand and pretend to toss it into the left, actually switching it for the palmed hand (Bobo switch). Pick up the other two feet with the right hand and drop all three into the right pocket, palming out the eyeball.

"Don't you think something that magical deserves a hand?" you ask, as you open the left hand and drop the little plastic hand onto the table (Yet another hilarious gag.)

Pick up the plastic hand with your right, show it around, then pretend to toss it into the left, actually switching it for the eyeball. As you do, say, "Now there are some people who believe that the hand is quicker than the eye - but I'll let you be the judge of that."

Open the left hand and show that the hand has turned into the eyeball. (Final hilarious gag.)

SECOND THOUGHTS:

Of course, you don't have to use the feet: Anything you used in a two-in-the-hand routine will do, finishing with: "Don't you think something that magical deserves a hand?" and continuing with the eyeball gag.

This plays better than you may think, even though it sounds corny. Just don't analyze it too much. As one wag once put it, "Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog: Nobody much cares - and the frog dies."

Peter Marucci
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Confessions of a Pyro Part 1

Confessions of a Pyro, Part 1

An Introduction to Fire

By Michael Jay

I have always been enamored with fire. Fire is a fascination with me, something that I've never been able to get past. It started at a very early age and has followed me into adulthood. There is something about the deep and base fear of fire that attracts me to it and it has been the source of enjoyment and also pain over the years.

Somewhere around the age of 10, already having experimented with fire for several years, a friend of my brother's was at my house. He took a small amount of lighter fluid, poured it on the tip of his finger, and lit it. He showed his flaming finger for a second or two, then smothered the flame out with his other hand (it should be noted here that this trick was done by a young man of 18 or 20 years of age). I was thoroughly impressed. So impressed, in fact, that the next day I wanted to show my friends. I did exactly what I saw and didn't think it was all that great so I decided to make it even more impressive by dumping a huge amount of lighter fluid on my entire hand and igniting it. My hand got warm, then hot, so I shook my hand hard to put out the fire.

Confessions of a Pyro Part 1 (cont.)

In my father's words, "No one will ever accuse a kid of being smart."

As I shook my hand, engulfed in flame, to extinguish the fire, the sudden flow of air only served to feed the flames. My hand was burning and it was burning hot. I put my now charring hand into my stomach and hit the ground, which took the air away and extinguished the fire. I still carry the scars of that day on the knuckles of my left hand, forever burned into my flesh and memory. That was the exact second that I learned respect for fire.

Later, I saw fire eaters on television. I really didn't figure that such a thing could be all that hard. I was around 12 or 13 years old at that point. I was using flash paper and flash powder and was fairly comfortable with fire. My respect of the flames was still strong. However, it seemed to me that putting flame in the mouth couldn't be all that hard, as long as I didn't go overboard and I fully understood that I needed to be watchful of when warm turned to hot. Also, I had heard that the mouth was better able to withstand heat than other parts of the body (which was driven home with my hand igniting incident).

I made a torch from household items that I could easily lay my hands on and the fuel that I used was, of course, lighter fluid (always on hand in my house). I began eating fire with no instruction and learned more than one lesson the first time I tried. I decided to put fire eating straight into my act without any practice before hand (I just woke up the day of the show and thought, "I'm going to eat fire in my act, today...").

No one will ever accuse a kid of being smart.

In the middle of my stand-up act, I picked up my torch, fueled up my torch then lit my torch in front of 20 or so 8 year olds, who I was doing a magic show for right there in their school. I put the flaming torch into my mouth and gained wisdom on the spot.

First, there is a reason why fire eaters throw their heads back before they put flame into their mouth. Simply, fire burns upward (duh!). In front of those children I burned off my eye lashes, eyebrows and bangs. I did get a really good "Oooh" out of the class, though.

Second, no matter what happens, you must continue the show and you must think on your feet when things go wrong. I looked at the class and said, "That's why fire eater always throw their heads back."

Third, never, ever do anything in front of an audience that you've not practiced over and over and over.

I did put the lit torch in my mouth several more times, but I did so with my head thrown back. Over two decades later, I'd really like to talk to the teacher who was present at the show and get her thoughts on what she'd seen that day. I must have been a sight, up in front of her class, burning off large amounts of hair and acting as if that was my plan right from the start. What went through that woman's head?

So, you're reading this article and thinking, "Man, I really want to stick open flames in my mouth. That would just be the living end." Well, you'd better think carefully about that for just a moment, because putting open flame into your mouth could literally be the living end. Here are some thoughts to ponder...

If you find the idea of poisoning yourself is revolting, this hobby is not for you. When putting a torch in your mouth, you are poisoning yourself. The fluid that you will be using is poison and it is getting into your system through the tongue and cheeks of your mouth. You aren't drinking it, but it is getting into your system none the less. It will affect your internal organs and there is no way around this. Your liver, lungs and heart are hit the hardest, most often. Some other considerations are that this can and will cause blood poisoning, kidney failure, respiratory problems and is known to cause cancer. Give that strong consideration before you continue in this article.

Burns are the most terrible of maladies that can befall the human body. Take a tour of your local hospital and you'll normally find one floor of the building that has bars on the windows. This is the burn unit area of the hospital. The bars are set to stop the patients from jumping out the windows to get away from the pain that they are in - better to die than live with the pain of a large, severe burn.

Confessions of a Pyro Part 1 (cont.)

Burns can cause life long scarring. Fire is unforgiving, especially when it is breathed in directly. To breath in while you have open flame in your mouth kills you. Read that again. If you breath in with open flame in your mouth, you die. The larynx is burned closed, you cannot get air, you die. In an act of God you may live, but you will have destroyed you vocal cords - you may never be able to talk again and if you can, you will always sound terrible. Not the best of things for a magician who needs to talk to his audience.

While there are other considerations of dangers inherent with this truly stupid act, the last that I will point out is damage to the teeth. When teeth are heated, they expand. When they cool, they contract. Over a period of time, they become brittle and break. If you eat fire over an extended period of time, be prepared to make friends with a dentist, as dental work is very expensive.

Still with me? If so, then one last thing before we get started. Magic Bunny and Top Hat are not responsible for your health and well being. If you decide to put any of this article to use, you accept full responsibility for your own health and welfare. Further, the author of this article is publishing it for educational purposes only. Should you decide to put any of this article into practice and get hurt, you have no one to blame but yourself. All responsibility for your health and well being falls squarely on your own shoulders and no liability for any ills that befall you as a result of reading this article are accepted or placed on Magic Bunny, Top Hat, it's owner or publisher or anyone else. If you are not 18 years of age or older, you have no business reading this article for any other purpose than to educate yourself on the dangers of using open flame in any act, for any reason.

THE RULES OF FIRE EATING

- 1) When flame is in your mouth, under no circumstance should you breath in.
- 2) At no time, in practice or in front of an audience, should you do this alone. Always have a friend there, with a fire extinguisher (and knowledge of how to use it), prepared to take the proper steps should you light yourself on fire.
- 3) Always be aware of your surroundings, the flammable objects that are part of the environment that you are performing or practicing, as well as the flammables that you have on hand to do your act. Do not forget that your clothes are flammable.
- 4) Never take you eyes off of any open flame with very few exceptions.
- 5) Be aware of wind conditions and never eat fire if enough wind is present to extinguish a candle (which means DO NOT eat fire in your house, this is an outdoor activity).
- 6) Always have a damp towel ready, on your table, easily grabbed by yourself. Use it frequently to wipe your mouth and chin area. Over the course of fire eating, you will get fluid on your lips and chin, the towel ensures that you keep this delicate area free from residue that could ignite.
- 7) Under no circumstances should you put open flame in your mouth if you've been drinking alcohol (or using any other mind altering drug).
- 8) Of the different flammables that can be used in fire eating, never use alcohol. Alcohol numbs the lips and the mouth, increasing the chance of burning yourself or lighting yourself on fire in the face area. Alcohol is for drinking and not for fire eating (refer to rule #7 above).
- 9) You are never 100% in control of fire. Fire has a life of its own and when you no longer respect that fact, you get burned or worse.
- 10) If you decide to eat fire, you should be tutored by a knowledgeable professional that does this presently, not picking it up from tips in an article such as this.
- 11) Know your limitations.

Now, here is an experiment for you. Turn the heat up in your house to 98 degrees Fahrenheit (37 degrees Celsius, roughly) and exist in that environment for 1 hour. It's really uncomfortable, right? Now, consider, that's the temperature of your body (yes, your internal temperature is very hot and uncomfortable). Understand that for fire to burn any given thing (skin, in this instance), it must heat that item up to the temperature of burning (different objects have different temperature requirements to begin burning, some high, some low and skin is low). What this means is that the skin is already hot and will burn much more easily than if it were, say, at a temperature of 40 degrees Fahrenheit (or 4 degrees Celsius, roughly).

Which brings us to the next experiment. Fill a glass with ice, then pour in water to about half full. Give the ice a moment or two to chill the water completely, as close to freezing as it can be without actually being there. Near the bottom of the glass it will be very cold. Grip the glass near the bottom and push your first

Confessions of a Pyro Part 1 (cont.)

finger into the glass, very hard, in a good, cold spot. Let your finger chill for a while (at least one minute), until it is chilled through and through, right to the bone. Now take a lit cigarette and hold the hot coal of that lit cigarette against your freshly chilled finger (don't smash the coal hard against your finger, just hold it lightly against the skin). It is amazing how long you can do this before you start to get a warming sensation. You should be able to do this for 8 to 10 seconds before it gets warm. Take the hot coal away when you feel the warming and examine your skin - you'll find neither a burn nor even so much as a mark (excepting the cigarette ashes themselves, which brush right off). This is physics in action.

You now have the tools that you need to prove that you are impervious to fire in an impromptu situation. If you have a soft drink or beer that is cold, you can sit and chill your finger without looking like your doing anything wrong. Follow the directions above and chill your finger through and through. A quick wipe against your shirt or pants will get the water (the condensation from the bottle or glass) from off your fingertip, grab someone's lit cigarette and hold it end for end with your finger and thumb, the filter against the thumb and the hot tip resting against the cooled area of your finger. As the seconds go by, your friends will become increasingly uncomfortable to watch you holding that cigarette in a way that would burn the heck out of anyone else. It is simple, it is physics in action and it is impressive for such a minor and simple act. Remember, as soon as you feel your finger getting warm from the hot coal of the cigarette, quit the demonstration by leisurely taking the cigarette away with the other hand.

I've discussed doing this with others on the forums and they were apprehensive to try this. If trying this makes you uncomfortable, quit reading this article now because you will never put flame into your mouth. What I've just explained works. I've done it hundreds of times and you can ask anyone knowledgeable on fire as to whether the physics lesson I've just given you is true or not. It works. If you cannot trust me on this, then you cannot trust anything else that I have to tell you. Give up on this article now.

You are gaining a close understanding of fire at this point. If you're brave, I have a few more things to share with you, before I call this quits and wait until next month to continue working with you on fire eating. What I'm about to share is simple physics, once again. It is the components that make up fire. Elementary for most, but something that needs to be discussed, none the less.

There are three components to flame. The first is fuel. Without something to eat, fire simply cannot exist. The next is heat. Before fire can consume it's fuel, the fuel must be heated up to the point of combustion (just as with the hot cigarette coal on the chilled fingertip). This can be done with another flame using another fuel source or it can be done when room temperature (or the temperature immediately surrounding the fuel) increases to the "flash point" of the fuel (the flash point is when the environment directly surrounding the fuel becomes hot enough to cause combustion). The last is oxygen. Just like you and me, fire needs to breath to live. Nature hates a vacuum and fire requires air - it cannot exist without it. Remove any of these three components and fire cannot exist.

A flame is comparable to a hollow cone, for our purposes. You have a layer of hot gas, which is the flame itself, with an internal area of cooler, unburned gas (in the shape of an inverted cone - the apex being the top). It's coolest point is right at the point of ignition, or the very bottom of the flame. It's hottest point is the dead center, apex of the cone. However, a sudden interruption of the center of the cone (below the apex but above the point of ignition) will cause the flame to extinguish. This is where the heated, unburned gas (the fuel) makes its way to the exterior of the flame, to begin burning and become the flame itself. If you are unfamiliar with anything above, I implore you to study the physics of fire. What I've pointed out is just the basics of fire. To explore fire specifically would require an article in and of itself.

So, I shall leave you with two effects to whet your appetite for consuming flame. The first is easy and there is no pain associated with it, if done properly. The second requires a tolerance for pain, but is more impressive than the first.

EXTINGUISHING A LIT MATCH ON THE TONGUE #1

Start by lighting the match, which should be obvious. Hold the match on an angle, upside down (upside down to increase the size of the flame, but on an angle to avoid burning your finger - understand?). Once you have an impressive little flame going, stick out your tongue in a flat manner. I say flat manner because you are going to stick your tongue out like you would for the doctor when you say, "Ah," and not like you

Confessions of a Pyro Part 1 (cont.)

would to say, "Nah, nah, nuh-nyah nah."

Take the burning match and, starting toward the rear of your tongue, in one smooth motion put the match on your tongue and drag it across your tongue, forward. Do not mash the match onto your tongue, just set it on with light pressure and begin pulling it forward, keeping that bit of light pressure downward to hold it on the tongue. You will hear the hiss of the match as it extinguishes, and so will your audience (assuming you are doing this in an intimate surrounding where this quiet hissing can be heard). If you've built the flame up high enough prior to doing this, you can actually run the match across your tongue and pull it off your tongue, out of your mouth, still lit. If you achieve that effect, then finish off with the next effect that I shall give you.

When doing this effect, you'll feel the warmth of the flame and the hot head of the match. However, if you do it exactly as I've explained, setting the lit match on the tongue and immediately begin pulling it forward, you will have no burn and you will feel no pain. This is the non-painful way of achieving this effect. If, however, you have a high tolerance to pain and are brave, the next effect is for you.

EXTINGUISHING A LIT MATCH ON THE TONGUE #2

Do as you did above when lighting the match (hold the match upside down to increase the size of the flame, but on an angle to avoid burning your finger). Now, again stick out your tongue in a flat manner and place the lit match at about the center of your tongue. Let it sit there for about a second (yes, this burns) then pull your tongue slowly into your mouth (a little faster when going past the lips) and close your mouth, sealing your lips. The match will remain lit in your closed mouth for another second, but, whatever you do, do NOT crush it out against the top of your mouth.

This will leave a small "pin-hole" burn on your tongue and it is uncomfortable, but it is not a bad burn. Also, if the match burns for too long, simply part your lips just slightly and gently blow outward - that will immediately extinguish the match and send a puff of smoke out of your mouth. Alternately, you will have the chance to clip the back of the match in your teeth as you pull the match into your mouth. This will allow you to get the hot head of the match off of your tongue, which is actually what is burning your tongue.

Understand, you cannot get away from burning your tongue when you do this. I do it, though, and the bit of pain associated with this method is acceptable (in my book). One last point - do NOT do this twice in a row. Allow a couple of days for the small burn on your tongue to heal before attempting this again. The burn that you will have is uncomfortable, but not bad and the pain subsides in only an hour or two (sometimes sooner). Doing this before the proper healing of the burn will insure that you give yourself a bad burn on your tongue, which should be avoided. And, never forget, you are burning your taste buds - if not given the chance to heal, they may be destroyed forever in that area.

Again, when doing either of these two extinguishing effects, do not breath in. If you do the second effect, make sure that you've blown the smoke out of your mouth prior to breathing in. When eating fire of any kind (a small match or a big torch) never breath in - breathing in kills (say that over and over and over again...Breathing in kills).

In the next article we shall take a look at fuels, which to use, which to avoid and why. We shall also look at how to make a simple but effective torch and how to handle a lit torch. We shall also go over how to extinguish that torch, using your mouth. And, we shall continue to go over the idea that you should never, never breath in when flame is present in you mouth.

By Michael Jay

Push Press Control

Push Press Control

A Magic Technique

By Dan Turcotte

I am not sure where how I came up with this method. I think it just came up while practicing and I made a mistake. It really looks fair and takes a lot less practice than the pass.

HERE IS WHAT APPEARS TO HAPPEN:

You hold the deck in the mechanics grip and hold the chosen card in your right hand, ready to slide it into the middle of the pack (your right fingers hold the card by the top, with your right thumb and index finger). Your right thumb is on top of the selected card. All you do is put the card into the middle of the pack and slide it in until you have 3/4 of an inch left. You now press your thumb on the top card and squeeze the pack a little bit and slide the card in flush.

THIS IS WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS:

The chosen card goes in and pushes a single card above it out just a bit. You are left with a squared front of the pack, with a little bit of a card sticking out of the middle at the bottom. The chosen card is now second from the break card. You can switch hands with the deck and not lose the break as long as you keep the out-jogged card hidden. You can also tap the sides of the card on the table.

To take over control at the break, just pretend like you are squaring the deck. Here is the fine point which makes this method dependable if you can get the feel for it. When you go to get control of the break, push down and twist your thumb towards your body and the fleshy part of your thumb will open the break and it looks natural. This is good anytime you hold a tiny break and need to get it back. You can pass the card to the top or control it with cuts to get the card to the second to the top. This is a very good situation to be in. You can now take the top card and say, "Your card is not on top (put the card in the middle) and it's not the bottom card either (put the card in the middle.)"

HERE IS ANOTHER GOOD USE FOR THIS CONTROL:

Put the chosen card face up into the middle of the deck. Use the control to get the card to second from the top (face up). You are now going to do a top palm to reveal that card. Hold the pack with one hand ready for a single handed moving top palm. You can say, "All I have to do is swing my hand back and forth and the card comes to the top." Move your hand side to side with a 1 foot arch (two times). During the last swing away from your body top palm the card and it looks like it materializes on top of the deck. You will have to watch the angles a bit. It would be ideal if you have the spectators in front and to the left a little bit if you are right handed.

HERE IS THE FINE POINT THAT MAKES THIS MOVE WORK:

Immediately after the card is revealed on the top of the pack and your hand is away from your body, bring the pack back towards your body and with your left hand take off the new face up chosen card, hold it up and show the audience and at the same time set the pack down on the table. The top palmed indifferent card will settle on top of the pack. This take a little practice but it isn't really noticed if you did it without flashing the top palmed card. You can also spread the cards on the table which will help get rid of the card in your palm.

If anyone has read about this technique before, please tell me and I will credit the person who published it before me in the next Top Hat.

Dan Turcotte
<http://www.YouDoMagic.com>

About Mandy Muden

About Mandy Muden Magic for Charity?

By Alex Kocan

The annual Dreamflight trip for terminally ill children to Florida gets underway in October.

Each year the registered charity makes dreams come true for 200 children. During their holiday they will visit Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom, Universal Studios, MGM studios and of course Sea World.

In order to reach the estimated £400,000 needed to fund the trip Comedienne and magician Mandy Muden, like many volunteers, is raising extra capital. She is organising two magic shows to be held at the Magic Circle on September 6.

An all-star magical line-up will appear at the shows held at 3pm and 8pm. The first is a children's show, the second strictly adults only.

"I have been going on the trips for ten years now", says Mandy.

"Each year we take over a jumbo jet and convert it into a mobile hospital to cater for the children's medical needs.

"Most of the children don't mix with others usually so to be around those in similar situations is very liberating.

"One year a little boy said to me that it was nice to be near people and not feel like an outsider."

"More than anything the trip provides the children with a fantastic memory they will never forget."

For further information about this event please visit the official site at: - [Dreamflight.org](http://www.dreamflight.org)

Tickets for the shows are £12 for adults and £6 for children and can be purchased directly from Mandy at: - Mandy.Muden@virgin.net. Alternatively, you can visit her web site at <http://www.mandymuden.com>.

By Alex Kocan

Thoughts From Mid-West America

Let's Build Magic! Everything Old Is New Again

By Michael Saint Louis

Yeah, I know that last month I said that this month we would cover the advanced DIY magic kit. Blah, blah, blah...here's the deal: I lie a lot, after all, I am a magician. What we are going to do instead is cover a little DIY magic so we can see the beauty of building our own junk and y'all can get a little more of an idea of what you'll be wanting to do ('cause that will have a direct effect on what kind of stuff you'll need for your more advanced kit). So this month, a little found magic and a little homemade magic and next month, more tool talk. Or maybe not; after all, I lie a lot.

Alright, the other day I find myself in need of a pill box. I needed to take a few prescription meds to work so that I wouldn't forget to take them (although the constant burning pain ripping through my abdomen does kind of work like nature's day planner when it comes to remembering to take my pills) but I didn't want to lug my full prescriptions back and forth. So I grabbed my brass Johnson Okito box—I mean, that's what the Okito box started out as, right? I was feeling pretty smart until I opened it up and saw that I

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

have been a little lax with the brass polish lately. Throwing out that idea, I went for my solution to almost every problem: the 35mm film canister. But on my way to grab one I stopped to go through my wife's purse for cash (don't tell her) and found the perfect solution: an Okito box.

It said it was some kind of mints or gum or something. I dumped those back into her purse (don't tell her) and left for the ol' mill with my new treasure. It's an Okito box, pure and simple. Sure, it isn't brass or hand-crafted or specially weighted for easy manipulation but it also cost about a buck and a half (well, it cost Polly about a buck and a half). When was that last time you saw an Okito box in the catalogs that cost less than a bottle of Guinness? Lemme answer that for you: never.

All day I played with this bad boy (I am on the phone a lot at work so I can fidget with things all day). A little tin about the size of an Eisenhower dollar with a rounded top. The weight is crappy, true, but this little tin brings something back to the Okito box routine that has been missing: familiarity. The problem with my \$35 brass perfectly weighted Okito box and even my dragon embossed \$25 aluminum decently weighted Okito boxes is that no one knows what the hell they are and they all cost more than several bottles of Guinness. I always explained that the dragon topped ones were antique Chinese pill boxes and just hoped that nobody would bother to ask me why I would have antique Chinese pill boxes. Now I let the big VELAMINTS logo speak for itself.

Go to the store and stake out the breath mints. Everything is in a tin of some kind now... square, rectangular, oval, round, hinged, snap on; there's a bunch of options out there. I like the classic round style (I tried an oval but just didn't like it... you might) and a round one with a snap on lid. By classic I mean the lid just pushes on and stays on by virtue of friction and by snap on I mean these lids (that seem to be patented in the States under the name Snap-Itz) that have a button in the middle like the seal button on a jar of baby food and a weird fingered edge. Press the button and the fingers snap out, press the fingers in and they snap onto the container and the button pops out. It looks like it wouldn't work as an Okito box but I like handling it. Either way, look for a tin that isn't any wider at the bottom than at the top (so the lid will fit on either end). The other thing to pay attention to is how tight the lid fits on. If it is so tight that it leaves scrape marks on the container than you can't use it because the scrape marks will give away the action. Unfortunately there isn't a way to tell how tightly the lid fits until you buy the tin and tear the shrink-wrap off. Another advantage of the Snap-Itz style lid is that there is no sliding action and, therefore, no scrape marks.

The action is the same as a regular Okito box but using a candy tin will make a world of difference, trust me. Okito, after all, didn't invent a prop... he made a trick out of an everyday object. This was the essence of his trick and it is why he fooled other magicians. Go back to Okito's original idea and it will make your Okito work magical again. So get to the candy aisle and find yourself a new toy... or just go to your wife's purse and see what you can find. And when she wants to know why the bottom of her purse is full of Altoids just roll your eyes and nod at your two-year old daughter as she plays innocently in the corner. That's what I did... after all, I lie a lot.

Let's switch gears now and build something. We'll stay in the pocket magic genre, though. One of my favorite pocket tricks is the paddle trick done with two short sticks with dots or fake diamonds on'em... it's got about a billion names from Liberace's Piano Keys to Gem Sticks, but I like to call them Spot Sticks. As far as I can figure R. M. Jamison first published a routine of this nature in the September, 1944 Hugar's Magic Monthly as Jamison's Spot Sticks. There isn't any reference to an existing trick and they mention the sticks are easily made, so one assumes they weren't being sold. And it is the easily made part that I like.

Whoa! Wait a minute! Why would I want to make Spot Sticks? They are soooo cheap! Either that's a public outcry or the voices are back. Since the doctors say the voices are gone, I'll assume some of you don't see why we should make something you can pick up for little more than bus fare. There's a bunch of reasons. One, you can never have enough of these things cause they break easily. Two, it's good to craft your own tools; you gain an intimate understanding of them. That's why my ancestors made their own spears and arrows instead of inventing Wal-Mart Three, (possibly the best reason) you can make whatever you want. Jamison's original routine, for example, calls for a red stick and a white stick so you can differentiate between them easily in your patter. You could easily find small stickers to make a set that works in with your own overall act... maybe small bunny or card suit stickers.

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

But for now let's assume you want the original Jamison set. One is white with a single black dot on one side and the other is red with two dots together on one end on one side and one of each end of the reverse side. We'll make all the dots black so we'll need a bit of paint (red, white and black), spray primer, a brush and a Q-tip. We can make the sticks out of wood or plastic whichever you prefer. Wood is probably easier to work with. You'll need each stick to be about three inches long and something close to a quarter inch square at the cross-section. Remember last month when I mentioned that the true value of putting together the DIY kit is trooping around weird stores figuring out where to find stuff? Well, it's time to put that knowledge into use... if you found a good hobby store (or possibly a craft store) then they should carry balsa and/or basswood. One length (they are sold in lengths between one to three feet in a variety of cross-sectional sizes) of something around a quarter inch square should be plenty. Now, the hard-core model airplane and railroad dudes will swear to you that there are vast differences between balsa and bass wood. Yeah, whatever. I got news for everyone: a three inch piece of quarter inch square wood is pretty much just an overgrown toothpick and it really doesn't matter if it is pine, oak or balsa. Buy the straightest, most uniformly colored (unblemished) piece you see. If you want to make a plastic set then head over to the polystyrene display. You'll find the perfect size pieces (for these are the two by fours of the modeling world) in among the miniature I-beams and sheets. You'll probably find hollow and solid pieces available; stick with the solid pieces!

The construction is pretty basic. Measure and cut a couple of three inch sections. This is where that razor saw miter box I mentioned last month comes in handy. If you didn't lay out the cash for that just cut slowly and carefully! I like to hold the sticks together pressing one end down against a table to make sure one isn't too much longer than the other. If one is noticeably longer then file it down. You'll want to lightly sand the sticks, particularly at the cut ends. If you are using plastic you'll need to sand the end with a fine, then very fine and then a very, very fine grade of sandpaper (and probably finish with a plastic polishing or emery cloth) to get that end nice and smooth. Or you can really coat it thickly with paint! Speaking of paint, prime'em and paint'em.

After they are dry, measure one quarter inch from one end of the white stick. Just make a dot in the center with a pencil. On the red stick measure one quarter inch from each end on one side and a quarter inch and a half inch from one end on the other side. These are your marks for adding the black dots. You'll want nice round dots (like on a pair of dice) and it isn't hard to do. Sure, you could slightly indent each dot with a Dremel or a wood punch, but that's for the guys with way too much love for woodworking. Me, I'll grab a Q-tip (preferably the kind with a rolled cardboard body, but the plastic tube style will work, too) and cut one end off. You can also roll up a few inches of newspaper tightly until it's about the thickness of a Q-tip, but I prefer to go for the easiest method! Dip the decapitated Q-tip into the black paint and blot the end on a piece of scrap paper a couple of times. This will knock off the excess paint... as soon as you leave a nice even circle on your scrap paper start putting dots on the sticks. It's just that easy! If you want, after everything dries through a coat or two of clear finish on'em.

There you go. Now you can build your own Spot Sticks for whatever works for you. Bizarrists, dump the spots and paint runes or hieroglyphics on there. Kiddie show guys, go for tiny character stickers or turn those plain old spots into Mickey Mouse heads. Or go ahead and glue on fake rubies and diamonds. Like I said before, the best reason for building your own magic is that you can build exactly what you need!

You may have noticed that I didn't give a routine for either of the props I talked about. Of course, there are dozens (hundreds, probably) of tricks and routines out there for Spot Sticks and Okito boxes. I've blabbed on enough, so why waste the space here? Besides, as long as you have set out and built or found the perfect props for you, why fall back on someone else? You have gotten this far, right? Why not go all the way? Sure, I might lie a lot (after all, I'm a magician) but I am being honest when I say the best patter and routines for you are in you!

By Michael Saint Louis

The Shirt Off My Back

The Shirt Off My Back

A Magic Effect

By Nigel Shelton

This is one vanishing/appearing banknote effect that you can honestly claim to donate the "shirt off your back" if it fails.

PREPARATION:



(1) Take a note, lay it sideways and fold the top and bottom edges towards the middle.



(2) Unfold the paper and turn it upside-down. Fold in about five millimetres from the right.



(3) Turn the paper back and refold along the two long sides as before.



(4) Fold the right-hand side one more time by doubling the end over.



(5) Turn the note over, so that you can work on the other side, and then fold in two triangles to form the collars of the shirt.



(6) Work on the left-hand side by fold a one-millimetre flap upwards, to form the cuffs to the sleeves.



(7) Symmetrically fold the left-hand corners so that they lay above and below the main body of the shirt, as shown below.



(8) Tuck the left-hand side under the collars of the right-hand side to form the shirt.



(9) The finished model.

The Shirt Off My Back (cont.)

AN IDEA FOR A ROUTINE:

This origami item could be used in a short vanishing/production effect.

Ask your spectator for a banknote and take one of the same denomination as your pre-folded shirt banknote. Fold the two edges of the long sides towards the middle and reach into your pocket for a pen.

At the same time, exchange the spectator's note for the pre-folded shirt and remove it from your pocket as shown, hiding the collar in the palm of your hand:



Ask the spectator to sign the end of the banknote and then simply finger the sleeves out and push the body of the shirt under the collar, as you proceed. The note may be vanished and lost. Offer the spectator "the shirt off your back" as a legitimate exchange for their note at the end of the routine.



By Nigel Shelton (2003)

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this month's ezine. The material was excellent and I'm sure you, the readers, enjoyed it.

Next month's edition will be out around the 15th so please email articles to TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk. Thank you.

Jon Snoops