



MagicBunny.co.uk

TOP HAT

September 2003 - Edition 18

Welcome to another TOP HAT e-zine packed full of news and articles from the world of magic. This month, Admin kicks us off, as usual, with the latest happenings at MagicBunny.co.uk. Hear about new projects and goings-on right here and see <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/> for more details.

Next, Michael Saint Louis presents his monthly column from Mid-West America. Continuing on with his much-acclaimed "Let's Build Magic" series, this month Michael explains step-by-step how to make a very handy "Pocket Pegboard" in which to organize your pockets with your magic kit. I'm sure many people will be able to make use of this innovative idea.

Nigel Shelton gives us another of his routines which combines magic with origami. "The Peace Crane" is a beautiful piece of magic which, along with the imaginative but very touching presentation, will surely impress audiences. What's more, the model can be given away to the spectator - a sure reminder of the magic you performed.

The first article of Michael Jay's "Confessions of a Pyro" series compelled me. Now, he'd back to take it one step further, giving tips and techniques on how to actually breathe fire. It may seem crazy, but it's a good read even if you don't want to risk setting fire to your skull.

Finally, Peter Marucci explains another of the effects in his repertoire - "The Miser's Giveaway." This is another effect which gives away a souvenir of the magic you've entertained the audience with. Peter gives a great description of the workings and of course the tips he's picked up over the years.

So until next month, all the best,

~Jon Snoops~
Editor of MagicBunny.co.uk's TOP HAT Monthly E-zine
jonsnoops@magicbunny.co.uk

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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

Normally each month, I take great pride in giving news of the latest plans or projects that are progressing on Magic Bunny but this month there are so many areas to comment upon that it is hard to know just where to start. Many of the different areas of Magic Bunny are growing at such a rate that it is becoming more and more difficult for any one person to even monitor all of these projects. I take great pride in seeing the activity on the boards, seeing the arrival of so many new members, reading the posts relating to "Special Guest" speakers, viewing many of the excellent discussions on the boards, watching the videos that have been submitted in the "File Sharing" forum, seeing the progress of the "Library" and so on.

Rather than pick on any one project this month, I thought that I would like to thank you, our member, for your support and contribution to the forums. You may like to know that the daily activity has risen recently from roughly one hundred posts a day to nearly two hundred. It is a pleasure to log in each evening to see that the forums are a mass of orange posts, indicating the vast amount of activity that has taken place during the day. I no longer have the time to read every contribution, on top of the administration chores, that seem to be never ending, but those that I do view consist of well thought out posts that are compelling to read and contain a wealth of experience and knowledge.

Thank you for allowing all of this to take place. I do value the contributions that are made and I know that the Magic Bunny boards have rightfully earned a place amongst the major discussion boards of the globe.

I am also very pleased to announce that Scott Drebus has accepted an invitation to become a moderator and to join the "Governing" body of these boards.

Scott has made a remarkable input since his arrival and has contacted several moderators privately regarding new initiatives on these boards. You may not know that some of the forums that you now view are the brainchild of this remarkable member. In addition, some of the inclusions to the way these boards function have been built on proposals that Scott has forwarded.

I am very pleased to acknowledge Scott as a new member of the team and I am sure that he will continue to have a positive impact on the way that these boards are run.

Thank you.

Nigel.

Thoughts From Mid-West America

Let's Build Magic

The Pocket Pegboard

By Michael Saint-Louis

It's a holiday here in the States, at least when I am writing this it is. It's Labor Day weekend. I think that this holiday was invented to appease the trade unions a few decades ago, but I am not sure. It doesn't have the clear purpose of an Independence Day or President's Day. But in the end it means a welcome three day weekend (which I supplemented with a vacation day) and a good excuse to throw the two year old and the eight and a half month pregnant wife on the train for a final visit as a trio with my mother-in-law.

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

Although I understand it has cooled off quite a bit at home, too, the main beauty of this cross state journey was leaving behind the high 90's for rainy 70 degree days. That's all in Fahrenheit, of course; by my calculations that's 22 and -6 respectively in Celsius. Luckily I had the foresight to check the forecast before leaving and brought along a nice hooded sweatshirt.

I am not sure what they give Nobel Prizes out for exactly; I thought I had it figured out until they started handing'em out for peace in the Middle East. But if they have any sense they'll be giving the cat who threw a hood and a giant pocket on the sweatshirt one any day now. Surely this can be counted among the greatest of clothing ideas, right up there with blue jeans, black leather motorcycle jackets and push-up bras. Okay, push-up bras are in a league of their own, but hooded sweatshirts are at least at the top of guy's fashion!

From the first hint of coolness in the air until the oppressive midwest sun finally returns, you'll find me in a hooded sweatshirt. If it is a little warmer, maybe I'll go with the zip-up model; a little cooler? Well, I have a lined sweatshirt for that. And when it gets even colder then the sweatshirt fits right into my old cop jacket or my black leather. The really great thing is that I have a place to keep all my pocket magic with the convenience of a 'fanny pack' without any of the shame I would feel from wearing a 'fanny pack.' Seriously, if you are wearing one of those things it might be time to sit down and really re-examine your look!

The problem, of course, is that everything in that pocket just kind of jumbles together. So when I started seeing these pocket indexes or organizers or whatever they call'em in the magic catalogs I happily sent off \$20 that I could have used on hockey tickets and waited for my salvation to come in the mail. I so should have bought hockey tickets. I could have seen a couple of good fights or something. Instead, I got a another piece of junk to spend eternity in my junk drawer. It was just a thick piece of fabric folded over a time or two and sewn in several sections for pockets. There were pockets as wide as cards, but they could only fit a couple of cards in them because they, like all the other pockets, were sewn flat. It was a good idea but poorly executed.

I had originally considered sewing some elastic strips inside my pocket. I had done this to the inside sleeves of several of my martial arts jackets to hold knives and such, but I threw that idea out because I would have to remove the pocket, make the modifications and then replace the pocket. Although I am fairly handy with a needle and thread (a skill I suggest most magicians and all bachelors look into acquiring), I didn't have a sewing machine at that time. Besides, if I was going to do all that work I might as well just start making my own hooded sweatshirts from scratch! Also, I wanted something that I could easily transfer with all the props still in it. After being mad at the index I bought for a few days I finally got bored enough in my Differential Equations class to design something better. You would be shocked at how much magic I designed or routined out in Diff-Eq. That might have been the most boring class I have ever taken in my life... it was worse than the class I took to get my insurance license! Don't worry, though: my insurance license and my need to do complex calculus based problem solving both expired years ago!

Although several folks have told me to market this, I figured that it would blow the whole beauty of it. What I like about this organizer, which I call the Pocket Pegboard, is that when you make your own you make it suit your needs. Since I don't do card tricks I don't need card pockets and can use the space to hold something that I do want. It's beautiful! And you can make it to fit any pocket. What's with the name? Pegboard is this awesome pseudo-wood panel you can get to line your workshop walls. It has holes in it spaced an inch apart. You can get about 1000 different hangers, boxes, shelves and such to hook into pegboard and hold everything from screwdrivers to screws to chainsaws. When I was a kid I remember spending time with my Grampa King (well, step-gran.... forget it! It would take more than this issue of Top Hat to explain my family tree!) in his workshop. The back wall was entirely pegboard and had hundreds of tools on it, each in its own custom holder and each outlined on the pegboard like a murder victim. If someone borrowed a tool then a slip of paper with their name on it went into the empty silhouette. You never had to wonder where anything was or where it belonged! It was a great workshop and the inspiration behind this organizer since the whole point is knowing where everything is.

To start you'll need a stapler, some posterboard or other light cardboard, a pencil, elastic strips (1/4 inch works well), some spare fabric and something sharp. It is also wise to have everything you want to store at hand so you can size everything properly.

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

Step one is to cut the cardboard down into a shape (rectangle is the best beginning shape) and size that will fit into your pocket. Since we are all different shapes and sizes and wearing different brands, there really isn't a set of standard measurements I can throw out. Keep in mind that you'll have to get this in to the pocket, so pay attention to the size of the pocket's mouth. My cop jacket, for example, has big 10" by 10" pockets, but the mouth of the pocket is only 5". You may, in a case like this, make two thinner organizers for one pocket.

Once you have cut out your cardboard base, play it on the table and lay the items you want to carry on it. Arrange them so they all fit. Don't worry too much about final placement yet, this cardboard job is kind of a working model that will help you figure out how things should be arranged on the final. Once you have everything placed, trace around each prop with the pencil so you don't get screwed up as we put this thing together!

In the end you'll have two basic holders: elastic strips and pockets. If you can arrange all the things that are held in place by elastic strips in a row then you can use one long piece to form all the loops; this saves some time but I don't necessarily think it is that important. It will be important to remember that everything will have to slide out from the elastic loops, though, and placing everything held in this matter together at the top or bottom edge of the base does make a little sense!

To build the elastic loops for your props, place the piece on your base. Staple or hold the elastic done on one side and without stretching the elastic, put the strip over the prop and hold it against where you plan to staple on the other side. Hold the elastic as tightly against the prop as you can without stretching it and mark this spot but do not cut it! Now move your prop and grab the cutting tool of your choice (although scissors are the most appropriate) and cut the elastic, not at the place you marked but at about 75 to 80% of the distance between the side you already stapled and the mark you made (the deciding factor here is how stretchy your elastic is... error on the long side because you can trim elastic off). Now secure the other side of the elastic. When you place the prop in the loop now the elastic will have to stretch and that tension will hold the item in place. Of course, you will have to modify this procedure as common sense dictates! Heavy or long items may require two or three strips to secure them and oddly shaped items will have to be adjusted for (don't make a quarter inch wide piece of elastic to hold your Haunted Key! Yeah, the neck fits in that size loop but the ends won't go through!). Some items may require more of an elastic harness than simple loop. Start by making the loop we just talked about and then add a second piece of elastic to form a T. To do this, place the prop in the first loop and staple a piece of elastic at the bottom. Run it over the item, under the loop and then back down to the starting point. Measure and cut it like you did the first loop. You may want to throw a staple or quick stitch or two where the two pieces of elastic cross.

Some items just won't work with the elastic strip loops. Also some of you just won't like the feel of them. That's okay, though, because we can easily make pockets out of scrap fabric. Wait, now, don't go ballistic just because you can't sew a straight line without sewing your thumb to the fabric! For our working model (and for the final if you are that allergic to home economics class) we are going to just use the stapler. You know, staplers are pretty useful things, too. I mean, from the hand stapler to the electric office stapler to the pneumatic industrial stapler, staplers have become a.... well a staple of connecting crap to other crap. Put the stapler-guy on that Nobel Prize list, too!

Again we will put the prop we are working with on our cardboard base. Place a small piece of fabric-- enough to amply cover the prop-- on top. For most things that I make pockets for (like cards, thumb tips and such) I like 1/4 to 1/3 of the object to stick out of the pocket for easy access. Little things like coins are an exception to that, though. They are small enough that something more on the order of 50% should be exposed. It seems natural to place the fabric about 1/4 to 1/3 of the way down the item since this is where we want the pocket to be, but it is better to place the fabric at the top of the object and fold the fabric down into position. Now staple one side to preserve the fold. You'll find that this folded edge will be much easier to use when slipping items in and out of the pocket because a cut edge will snag your prop. Go ahead and throw a staple or two on that side. Wrap the fabric around the prop and staple it on the other side. Don't wrap the prop too tightly! This isn't elastic and it won't give, so make your pocket loose enough to allow the prop to wiggle... remember, when you are using these props you'll be moving them in and out of the Pegboard by feel, so give yourself some slack! After you have stapled both sides, trim the fabric down. The bottom is a bit trickier, but not too bad. Leaving your prop in position, push the loose fabric down in the

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

middle and staple it. Fold each corner in (like you are wrapping a present) and staple them down. You can now trim off the excess fabric. This should be very, but functional!

Between the loops and the pockets you should be able to fit most of your props on the Pegboard. There are a few specialized connections that are easy to do, too. I have used a bit of duct tape to connect bobby pins or paper clips to hold slips of paper before. I have also pushed large headed thumb tacks through the Pegboard (then bending the sharp point down and taping it against the back of the cardboard) to hold magnetic props. Still, I usually find myself going back to the elastic strips and pockets... but you use what works for you. After all, the whole point of this is to come up with the right organizer for your style and routine!

The final step for this month is to start using this thing! You'll never perfect the layout of your Pegboard without using it and figuring out what is working and what isn't. Make two or three draft versions at least before you decide on your final. Even though the drafts are only cardboard and staples, they should hold up for quite a few uses. If they don't, even that tells us something about your needs....

Next time we will put together your permanent Pocket Pegboard. This should give you plenty of time to construct a draft or three and get some time with it and that is a must before going on. Plus, this will give us a reason to start talking about that Advanced DIY Kit I have been threatening to spring on you. Until then, happy finger flinging and, oh yeah, if you still don't see why this is going to be better than your fanny pack please, please, please get some fashion help!

By Michael Saint-Louis

The Peace Crane



DEDICATION:

This routine is dedicated to the memory of Sadako Sasaki, who died from leukaemia on October 25th 1955 at the age of 12.

EFFECT:

An arena of cards is made by ribbon spreading a pack of fifty-two cards in a horseshoe across a surface. The cards are all seen to be composed of different Japanese characters. The central area within the horseshoe is used to build an origami crane, during which time the magician tells of the story of Sadako Sasaki. Three Japanese characters are drawn on the wing of the crane.

The magician tells the spectator that he/she will depart, leaving two special gifts. The paper crane is given to the spectator and a card is selected randomly from the ribbon. The card bears the same characters as those on the crane. The magician shows that the characters spell the word "peace" the second and final gift for the spectator.

The Peace Crane (cont.)

PREPARATION:

Take a set of blank faced cards and write a series of different prophecies in Japanese characters, using a permanent marker. One card must be marked with the following characters for peace. Take the "peace" card and place it face downwards, on top of the remainder of the cards.

You will also need a square of paper, for the origami routine.

THE ROUTINE:

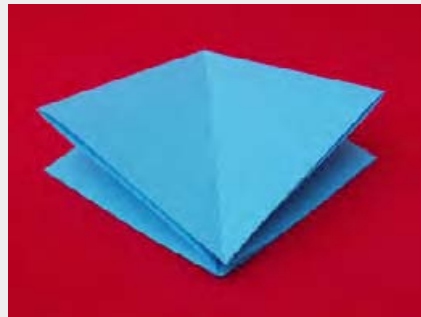


Ribbon spread the pack of cards, face upwards on the surface of a table, to create a horseshoe-shaped arena, in which you may work. The cards will set the theme for the following routine and create a natural area in which to work. As the cards are face upwards, the spectators will see that all the faces are different.

Talk through the story of Sadako Sasaki as you fold the paper into an origami crane. (See the appendix for details notes regarding the background of this story and guides for the accompanying patter.)



(1) Fold the paper into half along all four lines of symmetry, as shown below. (Square paper must be used in this routine.)



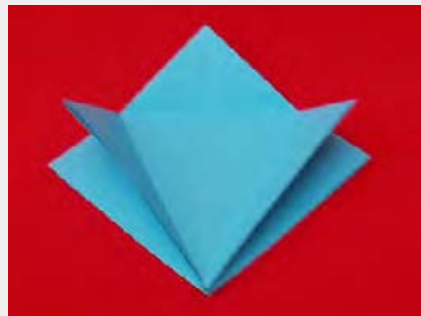
(2) Using the creases made from step one, bring all four corners to meet together and flatten the model.



(3) Fold the lower sloping edges of the upper layer of the paper inwards so that they lie along the vertical centre crease.



(4) Fold the upper corner (the closed point) down over these flaps and make a firm crease.



(5) Unfold the above two steps.



(6) Using these creases, lift the single payer of paper at the lower corner and raise it all the way to the top.

The Peace Crane (cont.)



(7) Squash the model flat and repeat on the reverse side.



(8) Fold the two outer edges inwards to the vertical centre line.



(9) Repeat for the reverse side.



(10) Inside reverse fold both the sharp points upwards. An inverse reverse fold is made by simply folding the paper at the required angle, both forwards and backwards, and then forcing the two sharp points inside out, so that the inside surface of the sharp point is now on the outside.



(11) Reverse fold one tip of these sharp points to form a head.



(12) Take hold of the two wings and pull then apart carefully, allowing the central part of the body to flatten.



(13) Write the Japanese characters for "peace" on one of the wings and give this to the spectator as a gift.

(14) Collect the cards together and hold these face downwards, so that the "peace" card lies on top. Riffle through the cards and ask the spectator to call "stop" at any moment. When this happens, slip-force the top card to the spectator.

(15) Show that the two sets of characters are identical and explain that these form the word "peace", which is your second and final parting gift.

APPENDIX:

The following extract is a true story, one that inspired this effect. It is recommended that this story be recited during the origami exercise above.

The Peace Crane (cont.)

THE SADAKO STORY:

The paper crane has become an international symbol of peace as a result of its connection to the following story of a young Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki.

Sadako was born in 1943 and was two years old when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. As she grew up, Sadako was an athletic girl but in 1955, at age 11 while practicing for an important race, she became dizzy and collapsed. Sadako was diagnosed with Leukaemia, "The Atom Bomb" disease.

Sadako's best friend told her of an old Japanese legend that said that anyone who folds a thousand paper cranes would be granted a wish. Sadako hoped that the gods would grant her a wish to get well so that she could run again. She started to work on building paper cranes and completed over 1000 before she died at the age of twelve on October 25 1955.



Inspired by her courage and strength, Sadako's friends and classmates planned the building of a monument to Sadako and the other children killed by the atom bomb. Young people all over Japan helped collect money for this project.

In 1958, a statue of Sadako holding a golden crane was unveiled in Hiroshima Peace Park. The children also made a wish, which is inscribed at the bottom of the statue and reads:

This is our cry, This is our prayer, Peace in the world.

Today, people all over the world fold paper cranes and send them to Sadako's monument in Hiroshima.

(Research source: <http://www.sadako.org>)

Confessions of a Pyro Part 2

Confessions of a Pyro, Part 1

An Introduction to Fire Eating

By Michael Jay

When I was growing up, air conditioning was nonexistent. That's not to say that it did not exist, but in my house, it may as well have not existed. I did, however, have a big, steel box fan. It featured three settings, low, medium and high. Of course, that fan had a prominent place in my window and blew directly on me at night. Still, its use to keep me cool was only its secondary task. Its ultimate purpose was to hold my small fires, which I would light on its steel frame. I was around age 10 when doing these things.

I would build a log cabin style house of matches or tooth picks then burn it down. The steel frame of the fan didn't burn, of course. The switch which chose the speed of the fan itself was plastic, however, and it did melt. Still, I was able to avoid melting the switch completely into uselessness. The paint in my small burning area melted off, too, leaving the scars of the flames on the metal below and at the edges.

I also burned candles on that fan. The wax would melt and spill down the side at times, marring the protective slats that kept your fingers away from the steel fan blades. With different colored candles, it actually made for a pretty, if sloppy, display down the side of that fan. I was told once that it was possible to lift the flame off of a candle and keep it lit between your fingers. I tried for years before I finally realized that, under the circumstances, that was an impossible task. My brain finally stopped what my burned

Confessions of a Pyro Part 2 (cont.)

fingertips could not.

As has already been noted, nobody will ever accuse a kid of being smart.

It was under these conditions that I learned a little trick, which is of no big consequence, but is fairly cool to do and is not widely known. So, here is an experiment that I give you that will raise eyebrows and is nothing more than an exercise in basic physics.

Light a candle. Let it burn for a few moments, so that it is good, hot and no longer flickering. Take a lighter and light it, or light a match from the candle's flame. Hold the flame of the lighter or match away from the candle and gently blow out the candle. Now, with the lit flame, hold it over the candle, directly in the line of smoke that is coming off the candle's wick. You will see the flame physically travel along the smoke and relight the candle. If there is a goodly amount of smoke coming off the wick, you'll be surprised just how high up you can hold the flame and still have it travel down the smoke and back to the wick, relighting the candle. Keep in mind, the flame that you are holding must come in direct contact with the smoke coming off the wick.

Again, this isn't a big deal, but people do get a kick out of it when they first see it. After you've done it a few times, show it to someone and see how they react. You'll find that they are usually quite impressed by this little display. However, you should take note of what this experiment illustrates and how it relates to you, as a fire eater.

Flame can, and will, travel along fumes to ignite a fuel source. Never forget the lesson of that candle. If you are doing your act with fire, in an area that is not well ventilated, you may inadvertently ignite your fuel supply without being anywhere near it. That apparently inconsequential experiment is a big lesson in the physics of fire.

It is here that I shall repeat a few lines of my last article for you, please pay very, very close attention to this: 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.

Presently, let's learn to breath. Yes, we all do it, every day, but few people ever learn how to really breath. Close your mouth and breath through your nose. Next, open your mouth but continue to breath through your nose. You do this by sealing off the back of your palette with the back of your tongue. Work on that, get it down and be able to breath through your nose, and your nose alone, while your mouth is open. When eating fire, you should never be able to breath in through your mouth. Become intimately familiar with breathing through your nose while your mouth is open. Understand, while fire is in your mouth, you'll not be breathing through your nose, either. Actually, you'll be breathing out, gently, to surround the flame in your mouth with a cushion of air going out. This will allow you to keep the flame in your mouth just a bit longer.

Now, breath out through your mouth, but keep your nose plugged off, so that air only comes out via the mouth. This is accomplished in much the same manner as closing off the mouth to only breath through the nose, however, you will be closing off the nose farther back in the throat. This is hard to explain, or even demonstrate, but you need to learn it.

Close your mouth. Now, breath in through your nose, slowly, for a count of 10. Fill your lungs completely. Open your mouth and breath out, slowly, for a count of 20. You will, prior to placing fire in your mouth, breath in through your nose. When the flame is in your mouth, you will slowly, ever so slowly, breath out through the mouth. As noted above, this action, the action of breathing out, will surround the flame with a cushion of air which will help to keep the mouth cool while the flame is inside the mouth's cavity.

Confessions of a Pyro Part 2 (cont.)

To the subject of fuel, you'll find many different fuels on the market that can be used in fire eating. Some fuels burn hotter than others. I've heard people talk of "cold fire" before. Now, listen carefully here, there is no such thing as cold fire. Fire is hot. Period. However, when getting started, I suggest that you begin with a fuel source that does not burn as brightly, or as hot, as the fuels you will use once you are comfortable with working with fire.

The first, the fuel you should start with, is lamp oil. Lamp oil has a slow burn rate and offers one of the cooler flames that you can get. Still, even using a fuel such as lamp oil, you must never forget that breathing in equals death, when flame is in your mouth. Go to the store, pick up a bottle of lamp oil, and read the cautions on the label. Take a good look at the part, in particular, that states, "Harmful or fatal if swallowed." You shall be putting this stuff, via the torch's head, into your mouth. Whether you like it or not, you'll be ingesting lamp oil. Again, if you don't care for the thought of that, then don't do it. You won't lose anything by never eating fire but you do stand to lose a great deal by actually doing it. The choice is yours.

We will talk about other fuels later in the article. Presently, your main fuel will be lamp oil, until we get farther and want a bigger, brighter flame.

Now, you'll need a torch. These can be purchased professionally, but that is really a waste of money. Also, I prefer to be intimately familiar with my props when I'm taking my own life in my hands, I would think you'd feel the same. I'm going to teach you how to make a simple torch but this particular torch would be considered a bad torch by the professionals. I've used this style for years and it has come in handy, which is why I shall explain this particular method to you.

You'll need a length of wood dowel. It should be roughly the same size around as your little finger. You'll also need cotton and thread. The cotton and thread should both be 100% cotton. You want to avoid any kind of cottons that have synthetic fibers.

Preparing for a show at one time, I needed cotton since I had allowed my supplies to run out. My wife gave me a zip-lock bag of cotton balls, which I figured would do the trick. As it turned out, they were synthetic, but I did not realize that. During the show, the torch head (the cotton ball) was on fire (obviously) and the synthetic fiber melted. I put the flame in my mouth and as I pulled the flame back out, the head of the torch rubbed against the back of my teeth, leaving a synthetic coating on my teeth. It took the better part of the day to clean that off of my teeth. It literally welded right onto my teeth. The moral of the story is to always use 100% cotton and never let anyone get your materials for you.

Cut your wood dowel about 12 inches long. This will be your torch's shaft. Next, take the cotton and rip off a good sized piece. Using the edges of the cotton, fold them back into the center of the piece, so that you develop a cotton ball. This spot where you fold the cotton back into itself will be where you place the wood dowel. Shape the cotton so that all sides are roughly equal. Once you have a good tight roll on the cotton ball push the dowel into that center and shape the cotton ball around the dowel, again, trying to get all sides as equalled out as you can. Hold that in place and take your thread, still on the spool, and begin wrapping the bottom of the cotton ball with the thread (you should be wrapping the thread right over the top of itself, remaining in the same area at the bottom of the cotton ball or torch head). As you wrap with the thread binding the cotton ball to the shaft, pull it tightly (not tight enough to break the thread as you do this, but as tightly as you can). This wrap should allow about 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch of cotton below it, on the shaft of the torch. After you've made about 20 passes, wrapping the thread, pull it tight enough to break the thread. You'll find that by doing this you won't need to tie off the thread, it will stay in place. The shaft of the torch should be roughly at the center of the cotton ball head (or, approximately one inch into the cotton ball itself), to ensure that the cotton ball is tightly bound to the shaft and will not drop off inadvertently. Congratulations, you now have a torch. It should look like one of the drum sticks that the bass drummer of a marching band uses.

Now, before you light that thing, there is one important point that you need to consider. The shaft of the torch is made of wood, which means that it will ultimately burn through. You must always keep an eye on this. You'll find that the bottom of the torch head is where the burn through happens. Inspect this spot after every show or fire eating session. Once the dowel is burned through at 50%, just snap that part off and install a new torch head. You'll be able to keep using the same shaft three or four times, snapping the end piece off each time it has burned through at the 50% mark. What you really want to avoid is the shaft

Confessions of a Pyro Part 2 (cont.)

burning completely through and dropping that torch head into your mouth when it is on fire, which is really not a good thing.

Also, the burn through area of the torch will be charred. This charring can block your view of the real burn through amount, or how much of the wood the flame has actually consumed. Use a dull knife to carefully scrape the charring off of the area. Get down to the un-charred wood so that you know exactly how much of a burn through that you have, in reality.

These torches are designed to add effect to an overall fire show. They are not for extended periods of burning, which will cause the wood to burn completely through. If you are going to be doing an extended show of purely fire eating, then you will want to make a metal shaft torch. We will get into the creation of that kind of torch in the next article. A metal shaft torch requires a bit more preparation and will not use a cotton ball head, so please don't try the above method with a metal shaft.

The time draws near...Dip the torch head in the lamp oil, fully soaking it and, after doing that, in a downward arc, use centrifugal force to throw off excess oil. I will assume that you are smart enough to realize you are doing this outside, and not indoors. The area you should use to shake off the excess oil is a dirt area of ground, a grassy area if you don't have a purely dirt spot or, if all else fails, then right on the cement floor of the garage. This should be done no less than 8 feet from your fuel source (the spot you keep the open fuel for dipping your torch in). What you are trying to avoid here is having so much fuel on your torch that it will drip off into your mouth or run down the torch to your hand while the torch is on fire. Obviously, this is a situation to avoid. If you don't realize that without me telling you, then it is time to stop reading and forget about this entire thing.

Here I would like to just make sure that you understand you must have someone else present while you do this. Never, under any circumstances, should you be eating fire alone. Your friend or helper should be armed with a fire extinguisher and know how to use it. You should have easy access to a damp towel. Any time that you put open flame into your mouth, make a habit of wiping your lips and chin with your damp towel, to get rid of any residue of fuel that may be present in these areas.

Light the torch. With the torch lit, before you go any farther, use the flame coming off the torch to look at the wind conditions. If there is enough wind to put out a candle, then do not go any farther. Put the torch out and wait until later when there is little to no wind. Wind is your enemy. Never forget that. To save you from testing this yourself, I'll explain. A sudden gust of wind will cause the flame to lick over in the direction that the wind blows, causing burns to the cheeks, chin or worse - the eyes. At all times, be aware of the wind conditions.

Taking the lit torch, throw your head back, so that your nose points straight towards the sky. Open the mouth in a large "O" shape. Bring the torch up, above the point of the mouth and take your large breath. Bring the torch down, straight down, and, without touching any areas around your mouth (specifically, your lips) begin exhaling slowly as you put the flame into the center of your mouth. Your nose should be plugged, as explained above in the breathing exercises, and the exhale should begin when the flame of the torch is 3 to 4 inches from your mouth. While the flame is in your mouth, you should continue to exhale, slowly, which, as explained, will give you a cushion of air around the flame allowing you to sustain it for a bit longer in the mouth.

Now, here is the trick. When the flame is in your mouth, you must distinguish cool, from warm, from hot. If you pull out the flame as soon as you feel your mouth getting warm, you will not burn yourself. If, however, you wait until you feel your mouth getting hot, you will get burned. Even if you only wait until the heat is something you can deal with, it will be too late. You will get burned. Remember the experiment with holding the hot coal of a cigarette against your skin? I explained that you should take the cigarette away once you feel warmth. The same holds true here. As long as you pull the flame out of your mouth before your mouth feels hot, you won't get burned.

To put the torch out with the mouth, simply close the lips around the shaft of the torch. The lack of oxygen will extinguish the flame. Using a metal shafted torch will cause a burn with this method. We shall go over a different way to extinguish the flame with a metal shafted torch. For now, though, use the method above. Simply deprive the flame of oxygen and it will go out.

Here's one last thing you can do before I put an end to this article. Remember how we pulled the match

Confessions of a Pyro Part 2 (cont.)

across our tongues? You can do the same with your torch. Again, throwing the head back, extend your tongue out of your mouth, just as you had for the match. You can rub the torch over your tongue, back and forth, for several seconds without burning yourself. Again, once your tongue feels warm, you stop. This is guaranteed to get you a strong reaction from your audience. Seeing you rub the flame over your tongue effects them very deeply. Never forget that the fear of fire goes very deep into people's psyche.

In the final article, next month, we shall look at the creation of professional, metal torches, other fuels to use and some tricks that you can do with torches and fire eating. We shall also get into the big one - blowing the tongue of flame (that huge fireball that you see the pros doing). Always remember, don't breath in when flame is in your mouth - your life depends on it. Take care and stay safe.

By Michael Jay

The Miser's Giveaway

The Miser's Giveaway

A Magic Effect

By Peter Marucci

One of the truly great routines in magic is the Miser's Dream. Some magicians of the past made their reputations on this one trick alone, yet it is seldom seen today among high-profile performers.

Dai Vernon described it as the greatest trick in magic -- after all, what member of your audience wouldn't want to be able to pull money out of the air?

And there are literally dozens of versions, from the Visible Miser's Dream (using a gimmicked glass to catch the coins), to ones using simple coin droppers, all the way up to astronomically expensive coin ladders.

The Miser's Dream lends itself to almost every approach -- from a serious silent act to comedy -- and the possibilities for subtleties are as varied as the number of performers who do it.

There is one small bit that I have been using for many, many years and it never fails to get a gasp from the audience -- especially, for some reasons, adults at children's shows.

EFFECT

The magician pulls a number of coins out of the air and tosses them into a bucket. At the end, he shows the coins to be real and gives one to a member of the audience.

(Sounds pretty flat, doesn't it? Yet I have used this to open my children's and seniors' shows for years and it has never failed to grab the audience right from the start. It can keep screaming kids quiet and get staid adults to sit up and take notice. And there are NO gimmicks!)

METHOD AND PRESENTATION

You'll need six or seven coins (in Canada, I use one-dollar coins; in the U.S., half-dollars would be the right size.) And you'll need a container -- I use a tin can, about four inches in diameter and seven inches high. (It's a standard size coffee can and it must be metal, to create the sound.) You can buy fancy and gimmicked champagne buckets from dealers, but why bother? The idea is that you are pulling coins out of the air with your bare hands, so the receptacle should be as commonplace as possible.

The coins are ribbon-spread in the left hand, which also holds the can. This is a standard method, explained

The Miser's Giveaway (cont.)

in Bobo's Modern Coin Magic and many other basic magic books. (Or, get someone at your Ring to show you how to do it -- that's what the I.B.M. is all about!)

Holding the coins and the can in the left hand, you walk out to your audience: "Hi there, did you know there's magic in the air today? And there's something else in the air, too -- money!"

Look around in the air as if you are watching a fly -- or a flying coin -- then reach out with your right hand and grab the imaginary coin and, in one continuing motion, drop the coin (?) into the can in your left hand, releasing one of the coins your left is holding at the same time. Shake the can, look into it, and take out the coin.

"Money," you say, as you pretend to drop the coin back in the can. Actually you thumb palm it in the right hand and release another coin with the left; the illusion is perfect -- it looks and sounds as if you dropped the coin from your right hand into the can.

Look around at the audience and say something like, "And there's more money here," as you take a coin from behind the ear of an audience member. (Don't leave this bit out; kids -- and adults -- expect you to pull a coin out of somebody's ear and they LOVE it!

(For years I pulled a coin OUT OF someone's ear, until a fellow magician mentioned that he always pulled the coin from BEHIND the child's ear, because he didn't want them trying this at home and injuring themselves by jamming a coin in their ear.

(A word of warning to the wise!)

Pretend to drop the coin in the can, palming it in the right as the left actually drops a coin. Continue working the audience, pulling coins from here and there (do your own routine here -- everyone has a different style for this) until your stash of coins is exhausted. You now have one coin still thumb-palmed. Produce it (from wherever) and toss it in the can. The left hand then turns the can upside down and pours all the coins into the right hand; the right hand then pours ALL BUT ONE of the coins back into the can.

NOTE: This is what this whole routine is about:

Examine the coin you are left holding and then hand it to someone in the front row (preferably the birthday child or some special person).

"Is that a real (loonie, half-dollar, whatever)?" you ask.

When they say "yes" -- and it may take a little prompting to get them to say anything -- you turn and walk away from them, leaving them with the coin. Then, as an afterthought, you turn back to them and say: "You can keep that one -- I can make lots more."

Put the can away and continue with the rest of your show.

SECOND THOUGHTS

Sure, it's going to cost you a buck (or a half a buck) every time you do this -- but, believe me, you'll reap hundreds of dollars in publicity. Adults and kids alike are impressed with the fact that you gave away the coin; it's that sort of thing that plants the tiny seed of doubt in their minds: "Gee, what if it wasn't a trick, after all. What if he really could"

And if you don't think there are top-flight magicians out there who would kill to get that kind of reaction from their audience, then you are definitely in the wrong business.

Once again, the KISS principle is at work (Keep It Simple, Stupid): No fancy palming coins, no chrome champagne buckets, no suspicious gimmicks -- just a plain, ordinary, unadorned tin can, a bunch of legitimate coins -- and a hint of real magic at work.

This is as close to the real thing as you will probably ever get -- and your audiences will love you for it.

This is a strong piece and I only use it as an opening trick; it's fast, flashy and magical and gets the audience's attention right from the start. Put simply, you have shown them right off the bat that you are magical. Using this routine elsewhere in the show probably wouldn't garner the same response.

If you do this, first of all, PLEASE rehearse it carefully -- and it don't mean practice palming the coin; I mean REHEARSE the whole routine until it becomes second nature. After all, you are supposed to be a magician and you should be able to pull money out of the air without even thinking about it.

Secondly, never, ever pass over the bit where you pull a coin out of a child's ear; you will have an adoring fan for life!

And, finally, don't worry about the trick costing you a buck or a half-dollar; if it bothers you, don't give the coin away. But, again PLEASE, if you do give the coin to an audience member DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES take it back. That would be cheap, chintzy, and most definitely un-magical.

And that's certainly NOT what it's all about!

By Peter Marucci