



MagicBunny.co.uk

TopHat

January 2005 - Edition 34

Welcome to a New Year and a new edition of TopHat. Due to the emergency upgrade that had to take place over Christmas, this January edition has come out late but hopefully February will be back to the '1st of the month' release date.

Before we begin, I'd like to send you a plea and that's to seriously think about contributing something to this ezine sometime this year. In addition to the columnists who work very hard to meet every month's deadline, we really like to include articles and effects produced by members such as yourselves for variety, enjoyment and information. And we'd really like it if you sent something to us that we could use, perhaps once this year or even more. The ezine relies on contributions from our members and it's all about sharing ideas with other members of MagicBunny.

The ezine has come so far during the near-three years it's now been running. We have had a lot of contributions from different people and we have now established some regular columnists who, just like yourselves, visit the MagicBunny forums, to regularly post and chat. I strongly urge you, if you've not done so already, to visit <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/tophat/> which not only gives information on how to contribute but also provides links to all back issues since number one. Take this chance to explore the extensive range of information in these pages, that has been produced over the past thirty-four months.

This hasn't been my usual introduction, talking about what we have to offer to you this month, but let's now get on with the show. We hope you enjoy reading this and please, please reflect on what I've said here; we'd really like to see what you have to offer.

All the best,
~Jon Snoops~
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Every issue of the TopHat contains original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you would like to submit a piece, please email TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk

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By Nigel Shelton



During mid-December it became apparent that many Internet forums were becoming prone to miscellaneous attacks, resulting in their closure. As a result of this, I was approached by Jon Snoops regarding the temporary closure of the boards some time over the Christmas holidays in order to upgrade the php software. It was during this time of dialogue that I accessed the boards late on Christmas Eve to discover that we were a few days too late and that Magic Bunny was the latest in a number of discussion boards to be "hacked" and rendered unusable. In fact it was our ISP that detected the abnormal Internet activity and suspended the Magic Bunny account in order to maintain the integrity of their servers. This will explain why, from late Christmas Eve, you will have seen an "Account Suspended" notice whilst trying to access the boards.

Sadly, much of my Christmas Eve and Christmas morning was spent trying to correspond with the ISP staff regarding this problem and relaying this information onto the Governing Body of the boards, as well as passing correspondence back to Jon Snoops for his attention the next time he should access the Internet. As you may guess, the Christmas period was the worst possible time for such action, the ISP had only a skeleton staff and many of the moderators and Magic Bunny team were simply away from their computers. This problem was compounded by my habit of using <name>@magicbunny.co.uk email addresses for many of the moderating team. Therefore, it was very hard to correspond with many moderators and inform them of our problems due to the fact that all Magic Bunny activities (including our email accounts) had been suspended.

I was aware of a "conspiracy" theory at that time – that someone of malicious intent was deliberately hacking many magic sites and targeting their actions to a restricted number of specific locations. I would consider this as incorrect. The integrity of Magic Bunny was undermined by nothing less than a worm that, I now believe, selects its targets by various Internet search engines such as Google. Although it was very irritating to have my personal Christmas period disrupted by such a considerable inconvenience and anxiety, I should consider it reassuring to know that there was no directed malicious intent from anyone towards Magic Bunny but it was simply the consequence of our use of one version of the php software.

I was very pleased to discover that our servers were so prompt in suspending our account. I am sure that this action assisted in the control of any potential damage that could be caused. I was also very pleased indeed to discover that Jon Snoops was able to update the software on the afternoon of Boxing Day with the latest version of the php software and had therefore re-opened the site for regular use. It became apparent too that there was no damage to our database what so ever and that there was no need to employ the use of backups.

I would like to offer my personal vote of thanks to the ISP staff and Jon Snoops for attending to the above problem with such professionalism, at a time when I am sure they would have preferred to be in the company of their families during the Christmas festivities. This was no "five-minute" chore for Jon Snoops but it required a considerable length of time, over the course of several hours, updating the boards and implementing the additional modifications that were employed as a result of many of our projects and facilities. I am sure that many Magic Bunny members share my thanks in the fact that they can now also participate again in the facilities of this site.

Here's wishing you all a Very Happy New Year and I hope that you may appreciate a fraction of the work that goes on behind the scenes in order to maintain the operation of Europe's premier Magic discussion boards.

By Nigel Shelton

Great Minds Think Alike

Great Minds Think Alike

Reflections

By P. Craig Browning



There's no doubt about it, the magic world is filled with some creative individuals. A casual look around the on-line forums reveals a cornucopia of "new" ideas someone is peddling. Each month bringing to the fore, something else that someone has come up with, or someone with an idea seeking a means by which to get it on the market.

Truth is the majority of these little "inventions" are little more than someone's variation on someone else's variation to an effect that dates back at least two or three generations.

Little twists that "improve" upon the handling or presentation of a former idea or effect theme. At a guesstimate, I'd have to say less than 3% of the materials we get introduced to each year, honestly bear the title of being "original" when it comes to thought or impetus... and that's being generous.

There is likewise that other problem, when two individuals come up with a similar idea but develop said concept separately, totally independent of the other. A great example of this is the "Ultra" system released by Ken Whitaker's Creative Illusions several years ago; a simple table design which permitted the purchaser a plethora of "add-on" effects. It was one of the more successful introductions of an actual multi-purpose utility base ever placed on the market. But, the truth of the matter is, Franz Harary had come up with a similar table design several years previous that was never marketed. Either designer coming up with the concept independently as the result of their personal genius. Ken, in this instance, had never seen Franz's version of the table or even heard about it. Nor had any member of the Creative Illusions team e.g. his creation was not a "rip off" from someone else's thinking, it was merely demonstration that great minds do at times, think alike.

Such issues of circumstance cultivate within the creative mind, a sense of "need" for getting their ideas "out there" and on the market or somehow documented before anyone else. Even this doesn't insure us of accurate recognition when the fat lady sings. Take a look at the popular Spectator Sawing in Half, done with a small cross-cut bow saw. It is typically known the world over as the "Harbin Spectator Sawing" when in truth, Mr. Harbin had purchased the second of two units made by Percy Abbott some years previous (Kirk Kirkham owning the original). Granted, Mr. Harbin made some amazing improvements to this classic not found in the original. In more recent years Jim Stinemeyer has added his two-cents to the scenario, delivering yet another version that's even more clean and impossible. This demonstration however, reveals how effects evolve when like-minded individuals "play with them" – massaging them around a bit until they can find the ways to make them better! Had this habit of course not been acceptable, we never would have seen innovations like the Thin Model Sawing or the more streamlined versions of the Disembodied Princess.

Several years ago I'd come up with a comical routine for illusionist Steve Wyrick involving a duck, a cannon and a deck of playing cards. Though Steven loved the gag he passed on it for the time, shifting his direction toward bigger, more dynamic bits. Now several people knew about my effect in that I had pitched it to numerous acts over the years, including the late Harry Blackstone, Jr. However, another good friend of mine, (Doug Malloy -- possibly one of the most honest guys in the building business), came up with the same exact idea employing an entirely different principle. Now Doug Malloy would never knowingly take someone's idea and run with it. He came up with his version of my original routine, entirely on his own. Quite frankly, in discussing the bit with him recently, I think his version has some advantages mine don't. Either way, it's a very funny bit of business for those seeking to get a bit fowl when doing a card location. (Sorry about that, I just couldn't pass up the line...)

On the up-side, Doug is seriously considering another of my effects as a 2005 release that's based on the classic "Where Do the Ducks Go?" I can assure you, this is quite probably one of the funniest variants you're likely to encounter anywhere, and it's worth the few extra bits of set-up involved when you consider the entertainment value behind it. I've used this routine on and off since the late 1980s when I first came up with it and it's never failed to bring the house down. So keep your eyes peeled and save your penny's, it's going to be "one of those things" people will want for their stage act. [End commercial plug]

A few issues back I extended to the readers of TopHat a glimpse into some of my "gross" creations. Ideas

Great Minds Think Alike (cont.)

that I'd originally planned to market but hadn't. After nearly two-decades of sitting on them I thought it was time to share them. Partly, so they would be "protected" when it comes to historic mention as to who came up with what. Partly due to my experience with Mr. Malloy and the realization that a "good idea" can be usurped, not in a manner that's intentionally cruel or ill-meaning, but simply as the end result to the fact that great minds really do think alike. We can "see" things in a way that allows the "obvious" to surface. After all, Graham Bell's name is only associated with the Telephone as a matter of circumstance; his patent application came through ahead of others offering a very similar idea. We can see this same course of "coincidence" in many other areas of technological development. It's just a matter of life and how things that need to come into the world of humankind, will – one way or another! Some may see this as kismet or synchronicity, or even world karma. Regardless, it is something that seems to happen and it really is an amazing thing.

I do however have a rule of thumb... of sorts. It's come about as the result of years of practice and self-denial (thank you Albert Goshman for that line...). If we look back at the annals of magic based publications of the past century, we can see how many of the "greats" shared simple and even complex effect or routine concepts in print. There was no expectation of financial gain. The reason being logical, if you think about it: the more your name is seen in print in association with clever thought the greater your level of recognition and support from within the industry itself. In other words, there are times that it's best to share at an open level, your ideas and innovations. In the long run, your openness and willingness to do so will pay off. Not so much in economic gain, but in professional status. I know some of you may not comprehend what that means or why it's so important, but do believe me when I say that such actions will do you more good than trying to make a quick \$40.00 on a second-rate eBook that's been haphazardly compiled.

Some time ago I submitted a concept to Magic Bunny's Challenge known as Ms. Emily. I offered this "advanced" concept freely and (blushing) won the competition. Since that contribution illusion builder Michelangelo (On-Line VISIONS) and I made some remarkable improvements to the original idea, making it far more deceptive as well as practical. Long story short, this single effect has evolved into a complete act that defies common logic when dealing with a Q&A styled presentation. My point being, that it doesn't matter how complex or simple the effect idea may be, it's a good thing to share. On the other hand, when we've come up with a new handling on some yesteryear bit, unless it is absolutely proven to be a mind-bending improvement that's driving our peers crazy, we're fools to attempt a commercial venture with it. More than one up-start has found mud on their face in doing so. One young man in particular, though he's recovered somewhat, allowed his head to swell as the result of those accolades placed upon him by the like of Kenton Knepper, Rex Sykes and myself. He went a bit out of control but has since, come back down to earth. His contributions being worth while and his financial focus, a bit more in line with his level of genuine recognition throughout the industry vs. the big dollar ambitions previously known.

The moral of this story is that "humility" is a good thing. When we can allow ourselves to live humbly, we open the door to host greater rapport with those we work and interact with on a daily basis. To coin an old circus adage, "You're only a star when the spot light is shining on you."

There is absolutely nothing wrong with making a buck or two from your creativity. But take heed to the examples of the past. Hold your secrets close to the breast and use them daily, so that you create intrigue from those surrounding you. When you start having your peers, especially those of note, offering you an exchange for this or that technique, then you know that what you have created hosts value. It is at this point that you can choose to share those insights with a limited few, be it for profit or simply an exchange of information. Then in your waning years, place these closely held techniques within the folds of your biography or, alternately, a book filled with your course of thinking.

One of the key bits my mentor was known for was the nearly forgotten classic known simply as "The Orange Bowls". This routine is pure slight of hand and is more elegant, when properly presented, than just about any other routine in magic, including the Linking Rings and Floating Ball. It was his "dream" trick. One taught him by the legendary Will Rock who'd come to know great fame for his handling of the effect decades previous.

In the course of his life Kirkham shared the finesse and over-all secret to this amazing bit of business, with less than a dozen key people in his life; Bob Brown, Norm Neilson, James Hamilton and myself being amongst those few. This is how the inner-secrets of magic have survived over the centuries. Certain parts of

Great Minds Think Alike (cont.)

the world, such as the Orient, still holding to this act of tradition, the secrets of the master passed on to the student and only the student, never made a part of public publication or knowledge. A tradition that, in many ways, needs to see a bit of a resurgence... at least, in opinion of a growing score of pros now encompassing the world that have become a bit fed-up with the money grabbing antics of the aspirant novice. Bottom line is, magic no longer exists when "the world" holds access to its secrets for a price.

I know that this perspective seems to negate my words of encouragement, to share more openly and freely. But at the same time, it reveals to us another simple fact that can be learned from those yesteryear greats – understanding the value of secrets, what should and should not be openly revealed and why.

In that we live in an era in which the theft of concepts and ideas seems prolific, it is very important to document one's origination of a bit. This can be accomplished in several ways, including the act of sharing the basis to that approach with our fellows. It may be a small handful of individuals that we trust and at the same time, it could be the readership of a noted publication, be it on line or of hard copy.

It's something for us all to digest and contemplate.
Catch you next issue!

By P. Craig Browning

Think of a Card...

Think of a Card...

...Impossible? Probably.

By AVON

The ultimate effect for a magician or mentalist would be to ask the spectator to think of any card and it would be the same as the one you have been holding in full view all the time. There are of course methods for performing similar effects using various techniques, gaffs, stooges, switches, indexes, etc.. However, nothing is as clean as described. Simon Lovell has some interesting ideas in his book "Son of Simon Says", but still nowhere near clean!

There have been a few attempts by people to find out what the most popular card people would choose via surveys etc. and I found an interesting article in an old magazine:

"THE MENTAL CHOICE OF A CARD"

Harry Meadows in Magigram Volume 5 No.6 Feb. 1973

"Only recently have I finished research, in which some 7000 people participated into the mental choice of a card.

As our minds follow a definite psychological pattern, the following data can be regarded as quite general.

For instance, in terms of percentage, 70% of people think of a red card, the heart being chosen by 41%.

In respect of those who think of a black card, only 7% choose a club. Nearly 3 out of 5 of the 23% who think of a spade choose the ace.

Almost every other person will think of an ace, yet only slightly over 1% choose the ace of clubs.

Think of a Card... (cont.)

The ace of hearts – selected by 20% of the people involved is the most thought of card, with the ace of spades a very close second.

Other cards often thought of are queen of hearts (1 in 10) , ace of diamonds (1 in 14), Jack of Diamonds (1 in 16).

The best thought of digits are 7 & 3 although 2, 6 & 8 are also very popular.

About 1 in 900 will mention the joker; however the least thought of card is the 9 of clubs.

There appears to be no significant change in the trend of thought in any particular age group – both men and women think more of a red card; and whilst men think more of the ace of hearts, women think more of the ace of spades."

A very interesting article that has prompted me to come up with a mind-blowing new effect.....

Ask a spectator to think of any card, do your best bit of acting then tell them that their card was NOT the nine of clubs !!!

By AVON

2004 & The Complete Course in Magic

Thoughts From Mid-West America

2004 & The Complete Course in Magic

By Michael Saint-Louis



Before we dive into this month's installment of The Complete Course, let me apologize again for last month. I've got a lot going on in my life (like everyone else) and I learned when I was an insurance agent a long time ago to live out of my Day Planner. Now it's a PDA, but I still live out of it. To tell the truth, I am actually writing this article on my PDA right now while I am recovering from some nasal surgery (believe it or not, once I heal not only will I be able to breathe through my nose but I should be even better looking)! Anyway, I wrote down the day Top Hat was supposed to get sent out instead of the day my article was due. I did post the article on the forums (someone moved it to the Library which probably kept some of you from reading it). Once again, I am sorry. Even still, one of the best habits you can get into for school and for your career (magic or otherwise) is to keep an organized schedule!

Now give me just one more minute of rambling. It's Christmas time as I write, which means 2004 is almost in the books. Let's take just a moment to look back at the year in magic. Hmm... well, I have to say personally it was a great year. I added some great books to my collection, returned to the stage (albeit briefly) and hooked with Michael Jay to hit Houdini Days (which was flat out incredible). For the magic world, though, the year kind of sucked. Maybe magic is getting more attention in Europe, but here in the States everything was kind of blah. THEM? Blah. Mondo Magic? Started blah and then disappeared after it finally started to come together. I can't even name a special that I am sure came out in 2004. Did Mind Games? It was blah. Was there a Blaine special? Does anyone care?

Unfortunately the biggest news in magic was the tragedy that befell Siegfried and Roy. Well, maybe things were better in your town. If not then maybe you can make them better in your town next year! In fact, it is

2004 & The Complete Course in Magic (cont.)

our duty to magic, if we really love magic, to do whatever we can to make 2005 a more positive year for magic!

Now that all that is behind us we can finish up cards in the Complete Course. Yup, I said finish. See, I have to be realistic about our studies (I said early on we would skip stuff) and I can't believe that many of you will bother with Jumbo Card or Genie Card material. So next month it's on to money!

Jumbo and Genie Cards aside, there was a pretty good amount of information. We'll close out cards by touching on the double backed, the double faced, the short card and even a few flourishes! Luckily, most of the information was pretty straightforward and easy to apply.

Now I know that some of you have already blown off the gimmicks. Why? Why? WHY? These three little buddies can help you work some great impromptu magic. They can also give you second methods for some of your favorite tricks so you can break magic's second rule! By alternating a peek at a key card and the use of the short card you can present 'pick a cards' until your fingers fall off.

I hope that everyone out there has taken the time to at least secure the three gimmicks. It is kind of a bummer that only the short can really be made at home, but at least the double faced and double backed cards are pretty cheap. I invested \$10 or \$15 a couple of years ago and bought a gimmick deck that included both red and blue backed versions of double backed, split face (two different card values on one card), blanks and double facers. I think there are even a couple red on one side, blue on the other double backs! It's worth the investment to at least try the doubles out. Now we've all read books that suggest you can easily make your own doubles by simply gluing two cards together. They are 100% lying to you. What you make by gluing two cards together is a double thick card, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Being twice as thick as the rest of the cards in the deck gives this gimmick properties that can be applied a lot like the short card. You may want to try them both and figure out which you prefer.

Speaking of short cards, I have found that the small paper cutters being sold for scrapbooks and crafts work great for cutting short cards. The corner rounding is still a bit of an art, but I personally have a great deal of luck with infant finger nail clippers. I have been told that there are special cutters to round the corners of photographs for scrapbooks and such that work great but I personally have not found one with the right angle for cards.

I reckon that pretty much leaves the flourishes, eh? Personally, I have always found the instructions in this section pretty weak. Now write this down because I'll probably never, EVER say this again, but this is a job best suited for a video. Probably something on the order of McBride's Manipulation Without Tears.

Having said this, be cool with the flourishes. I have always thought that flourishes were kind of a temptation for magicians to get lazy. I'm not saying that flourishes are easy or that they don't have their place in performance, it's just that I think some magicians start throwing in more and more flourishes when they start getting bored with their own magic. If that's the case then that time spent learning to triple cut one handed and pressure fan could be better spent polishing the script or learning new material!

The other problem I have with flourishes is that they tend to set a 'look at me, see what I can do' vibe. I think that is a bad mindset for a magician (or really for any performer). Performing for personal attention is, to my way of thinking, pretty shallow because the audience should really be the focus. I hope that you perform because you want to make people happy or educate them or stir their belief in the mystic or some other more noble purpose.... And as long as I am griping let me get this off my chest. I heard a magician say recently on US national TV that magic was like a game and the audience was rooting for him to fool them. He had already bored me and that just ticked me off. Here was a guy who had done absolutely nothing to earn or even ask for my willing suspension of disbelief. He had the gall to assume that, just because the announcer put the word magician in front of his name, I wanted him to fool me. As if he had so much personal charisma I should automatically want to come off second best to him in a contest of wits. I hope none of y'all have this attitude! Needless to say, I wasn't rooting for him!

2004 & The Complete Course in Magic (cont.)

If you have followed along in The Complete Course so far then you have the beginnings of a really solid arsenal of magic at your disposal. Don't slide off course now! Don't forget to develop your act in every way you can, fine tuning the routine and patter until you have something to be proud of instead of just an overblown game of hide and seek!

By Michael Saint-Louis

The Clip Family

The Clip Family

Everyday objects

By Peter Marucci



While prowling a large stationery store a while back, I came across a package of five jumbo paper clips. I had to have them! At the time I had no idea what I would do with them but they were so charismatic a prop that I couldn't resist.

After playing with them on and off for sometime, I finally came up with the following:

THE CLIP FAMILY

EFFECT:

The magus tells the story of two paper clips that met, fell in love, got married, and raised a family. And he magically demonstrates what happened at each step of the way.

WORKING AND PRESENTATION:

You'll need two jumbo paper clips, six small paper clips (I use colored ones - three blue and three pink), and a picture of a church on a strip of paper about a foot long the three inches deep.

This is just the old linking paper clips on a dollar bill routine, dressed up a bit.

Have the six small clips linked together and concealed in your left hand.

Show the picture of the church and the two jumbo clips:

"Once upon a time, there were two paper clips who met and fell in love - I guess it was an office romance. And they decided to get married. So one day they headed off to the church to tie the knot."

Fold the picture of the church in a Z-fold, with the top horizontal of the Z being (a), the diagonal being (b) and the bottom horizontal being (c). Put one paper clip on the picture, over (a) and (b); put the second one on the picture to the right of the first, over (b) and (c). Now, if you pull the end of the picture to flatten it out, the clips will pop off, linked together.

"And when the clips left the church (pull the picture out flat), they were linked in holy matrimony."

Hold the clips in the left hand, one dangling from the other and discard the picture.

"The clips rode off into the sunset to start their new life together and live happily ever after." Take the clips with the right hand, one still dangling from the other.

"But, as time passed, they started to raise a family - three boys and three girls." Open your left hand and let the six regular paper clips fall in a chain from it.

The Clip Family (cont.)

SECOND THOUGHTS:

If you do this, you'll find that the action of linking the two giant clips will tear the paper; I have mine laminated with clear Contac self-adhesive paper. Don't have it professionally laminated; it will be too stiff. Or, if you want to have a bunch printed up, you could destroy one with each performance. Your choice.

Have fun with this.

cheers,

Peter Marucci

showtimecol@aol.com

Thanks to the contributors this month. I hope to see some of *your* articles here in the future.

All the best,
Jon Snoops