



MagicBunny.co.uk

TOPHAT

September 2002 - Edition 6

Welcome to the latest edition of TOPHAT.

Along with the MagicBunny.co.uk site, this e-zine has had a complete makeover as you can see. Hopefully this new format will make everything neater and bring the e-zine together.

This issue, in my opinion is the best yet. We have four great articles for you to devour, from magicians around the world. Special thanks to Micheal Jay for his amazing second part to "Thumb Tip and You" and of course to all our other contributors.

For more articles like this, visit the forums at <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk>, register and start to post. When you've acquired just 50 posts, you can apply for access to the Secret Areas of MagicBunny.co.uk. See the website for more details.

Best Wishes,

~Jon Snoops~
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HIGHLIGHTS:

Every issue of the TOP HAT will contain original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you have a submission, please email TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk

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Many thanks as always, to all members who submitted articles to this month's edition.

The Magician's Living Room

Many of you may already know about the Magician's Living Room and perhaps several of you may already have registered with these forums and may have contributed to its pages.

You may be interested to know that these boards are currently being revamped to specialise the services that are on offer to its members.

Surfers on the Internet have a huge variety of forums and other sites to select and if a site is unable to offer something that is unique or better than other Internet sites, it will fail to attract the right calibre of members or appropriate standard of postings.

There has recently been an audit of the services at this site and a clear vision has been developed for the Magician's Living Room - one that has not been utilised at any other site. There is a clear ethos and direction for this site, one that will make the Magician's Living Room stand out from other sites on the Internet and provide a service for magicians that will be unique and inspiring.

The Magician's Living Room shall be a method and solution site for magicians of all calibre with an emphasis on competitions and the like.

The next few weeks shall be exciting times for this new development and you are welcome to visit and see what this site has to offer.

Take a look through these forums and see how much this site has developed over the past six months and witness the change that has occurred in the ethos and direction of this facility.

Visit <http://www.themagicianslivingroom.co.uk> and take a look for yourself at how far this new project has moved on.

The Crazy Kube Booklet

I am very pleased and proud to announce that the Crazy Kube booklet is now complete and on the shelves of the Magic Bunny store for the incredible price of just £1.

This booklet was produced following input from Magic Bunny members in response to a competition set within the Competition Forum. The winning entries (and other contributions) may be found in this thirteen-page booklet.

For those of you who are new to magic, you may like to know that all the necessary sleights of hand are explained so that nothing is assumed knowledge. This means that this booklet may be read and the effects performed without needing reference to other books on basic card sleights.

Quote:

Krazy Kube Booklet - £1.00

This digital booklet was compiled following a competition for members at the magic Bunny site. It explains, step-by step, how to build a card cube and then proceeds to outline seven different routines using this prop. The booklet is fully illustrated and contains additional instructions for the various sleights that are mentioned within each effect.

All revenue received from the sale of this booklet will be used to enhance the facilities on offer at this site.

Thank you for your anticipated support.

Admin



News from Admin

First of all, may I welcome those of you who have taken a well-served break back to the normality of life. I trust that you may have had a relaxing and memorial holiday.

August has seen the climax of five different competitions and I am very pleased to announce the following winners:

(1) The Genre Competition

Close-Up Winner – Damien

Mentalism Winner – Huw Collingbourne

Stage Winner – LeeAlex

(2) The Impossible Location Competition

Kev

(3) The Krazy Kube Competition

First Prize - Cagliost

Second Prize - Dan

Third Prize (Joint) - Joe

Third Prize (Joint) – Conjurer

(4) The August Competition

Winner - LeeAlex

(5) The Challenge Link-Up Project

All successful entries will be included within the proposed booklet.

As you can see, August has been a very busy and active month for competitions and there has been a great take-up for these. The important thing to bear in mind is that everyone has been a winner. We have all benefited from reading exciting and original ideas and I know that many members have commented that these have helped to spark of further ideas too.

The Krazy Kard booklet has now been written up, proofread and published. Within the next few days it will be available on sale at the Magic Bunny shop. Hopefully, the Challenge Link-Up Project will result in another exciting read and it will soon become your opportunity to discover what amazing ideas have been put forward for all of the incredible methods that have been submitted

Thank you for your support with these projects and your continued input on the discussion boards. With about 15,000 posts on the boards, we are rapidly becoming the fastest growing magic Internet site on the Web. That's no mean achievement for a site that is only seven months old.

For more information on these events, please see the latest newsletter.

I shall look forward to seeing more top quality activity over the forthcoming month.

All the Best,

Admin

So, You Want to be a Star, do you? Part 5

Make a video

Find a friend who has access to a video recorder and ask for their support in recording a short ten-minute routine. Don't try to be too ambitious with your routine but endeavour to strive for the very highest possible standard of recording. If you want to be seen in the best possible light, it will do your case no good what so ever if the camera shakes or the picture is poorly framed. There are many publications on the production of a professional looking video. Make sure that the video recording person knows exactly of the highest standard that is expected of him/her. Include effects that you are confident with and that may appeal to a wide audience.

Find a suitable venue, one that is quiet yet has a neutral background that will not distract the watcher from your performance. Rehearse your performance and patter thoroughly and do not be afraid to repeat the recording if your performance is not up to scratch. The inclusion of, perhaps, one mistake may prove to the watcher that you can deal with isolated unexpected problems professionally and maturely but if there are too many errors, scrap the performance and start again.

Watch the video with a friend and be critical of your performance. Listen to the patter and watch for the angles of the sleights. If you are unhappy with the routine, repeat it again and again until you feel happy with the outcome.

Copy the final sequence onto two or three blank tapes and label them neatly with your details. Check that they look presentable from the outside of the box. If the video labelled has been reused and has a previous programme crossed out then it will hardly present a professional image for your tape.

A video will be a powerful option to leave at the desk of a busy local newspaper reporter or theatre manager. It will prove to them that you are committed and professional , it will show then that you are serious about developing your role in this area.

By Nigel Shelton

The Thumb Tip and You

In the first article of this series, we've taken a look at how to choose the proper thumb tip for your personal use, proper practice procedures, the basics of thumb tipping and acquitment. Based on some of the feedback that I've received, there are a couple of points that I must go over before we begin with this next installment.

First, the thumb tip should not cover the entire thumb at any given time. The thumb tip should seat on the thumb exactly the same whether the tip is full or empty - there is no difference. The problem that was apparent was my usage of the words "the first knuckle." What this means is that the thumb tip should fit snugly on the first phalanx of the thumb, but not go beyond. When the thumb tip is on the thumb properly, the thumb should retain full, normal movement at all times, whether the tip is loaded or empty.

Next, some people have smaller hands and more slender fingers and thumbs. These folks will have a problem finding a thumb tip that fits properly and is workable. So, I'd like to give you a bit of advice that has worked well for some younger men that I've worked with. You'll find that a finger tip (same as a thumb tip, but made for the finger) can be substituted for the thumb tip, will fit better and can be used reasonably in place of a thumb tip. At first you may discount this idea, please don't. I've experimented with this myself before giving you this advice and I can use a finger tip (in place of the thumb tip) that is even a bit small for me and achieve exactly the same results, including stealth mode, which is discussed below.

That being said, I hope that this has cleared up any problems that you may have had with the first article. Now, let's get into some more points of proper thumb tipping and some advanced handling.

Thumb Tip Stealth Mode

Once you have the proper handling of the thumb tip down, you'll notice that there is really never a reason that the tip should be viewed by the audience. However, there is a special effect that the thumb tip has that allows you to

The Thumb Tip and You Part 2 (cont.)

show the hand with the tip, openly and fairly, and have it still appear that the dirty hand is, in fact, clean or empty. When done properly, the audience will gaze at the tip and never realize that they've seen it, even though they have. I call this the "stealth mode."

First, let's get the description out of the way. Consider the use of a sock puppet - you know, placing a sock over the hand and using it to talk by moving the thumb up and down inside of the sock, giving the sock the appearance of having a head and a mouth. The fingers would be on top, mitten like, and the thumb directly below. This is how the hand will be held for display of the thumb tip without giving away the fact that the thumb tip is on your thumb. Hold your hand in sock puppet position, thumb tip on the thumb and point your fingers straight at your eyes (as if looking into the mouth of the sock puppet). You will be looking at your finger tips and thumb tip and you will notice that the tip is almost invisible from this perspective. So it is with your audience.

With the thumb tip in the left fist, stand before a mirror. Take your silk, or streamer, and push it into the thumb tip as described in the first article, as if you are pushing the silk into the left fist. Now, make the steal of the thumb tip with your right thumb and take your right hand, wearing the tip, and point it toward the mirror using the sock puppet position. You are now showing an empty right hand to your mirror. At this point you may drop your right hand to your side, back of the hand toward the mirror (audience) and slowly crush the silk in the left hand into nothingness. Use the acquitment from the first article to once again show both hands empty and you can now retrieve the silk from the left hand.

Important Tips and Subtleties with Stealth Mode

You are now privy to the real secrets of the thumb tip. Not only is it a handy little item for making things disappear, but it also can be used to completely convince an audience of both hands being empty with the stealth mode. There are still some thoughts to consider, though.

First, the example above using the sock puppet idea needs a bit more explanation. If you fall into the habit of keeping the hand in this uncomfortable looking position, you'll draw attention to it. I only used that description to fully explain how stealth mode works. In fact, the fingers should be a bit spread and relaxed. What is important is that the thumb points directly at the audience's eyes.

Next, never use this method to point out that the dirty hand is empty. You want to use the stealth mode as a hand gesture, while talking. You are subtly showing the hand empty and not calling attention to it. Keep in mind, when you openly show the hand empty in passing, which is what you want to do, you are confirming in the spectator's mind that you have an empty hand without drawing attention to this fact. This will do more to convince the spectator that the dirty hand is empty than if you actually point it out - this is psychology in conjunction with misdirection. Never say, "You see, this hand is empty," show it but don't point it out (very important).

Another thing to consider is that the hands, unless in a specific position, naturally tend to stay in motion. When gesturing in stealth mode, to show the hand empty, keep it moving. This is just a short hand gesture on your way to the relaxed "hand to side" position. You'll also note that the hand with the tip on should remain with it's back to the audience, to cloak the thumb tip. When you apparently have something in the fist of the left hand, it is natural to turn the body so the right shoulder faces the audience, holding the left fist a bit out, away from the body. This naturally allows you to hold the right hand, the dirty hand, with the back toward the audience and appear as if everything is on the up and up - once again, the psychology of this position naturally draws attention to the left hand and away from the right.

One last thing before we get into an advanced magical effect using the thumb tip, remember that when dropping a hand to your side, it naturally swings a bit. If you drop your dirty hand to your side and come to an immediate stop, you'll draw attention to it. So, let the hand drop and swing a bit. This will pull off the heat from the dirty hand because it is a natural movement. Again, psychology. This is another reason for the thumb tip to fit properly, since this allows you to treat the dirty hand completely naturally and normally.

At this point we will look at two effects that can be pulled off using the thumb tip. These are a bit more advanced than the simple vanish of a silk, or production of the same.

The Thumb Tip and You Part 2 (cont.)

Vanishing a Lit Cigarette

Effect: The performer pulls out a silk from his pocket and places it over his fist. He then pokes a hole (or pocket) into the silk - into his fist - and takes a lit cigarette and drops it into the silk. After crushing the cigarette into the silk with his fingers, he pulls the silk open and the lit cigarette is gone, the silk being unaffected by the lit cigarette.

Method: Have a silk, or hank, in your left pocket, the thumb tip in your right pocket. Naturally, you will need a lit cigarette, your own, or one of the spectator's. Reach into both pockets. Seat the thumb tip on your right thumb and bring out the silk from the left pocket. As you begin to display the silk with the left hand, bring out the right hand and grasp the silk, pinched between first finger and thumb of the right hand. The silk will act as natural concealment of the thumb tip, which is on your right thumb. Explain that silk has a special quality that is little known to most people - it can resist extreme heat. Make a fist with the left hand and hold it in such a position that the thumb and first finger are on top (as if you were going to punch someone). Place the silk, fully opened, over the fist and allow all sides to drape down over the fist with the middle of the silk centered over the top of the fist. Using your right thumb, poke the silk down into the fist and leave the thumb tip behind. Take a lit cigarette and drop it down into the thumb tip, which will shield the silk from being burned (be careful to insure that the lit tip of the cigarette does not touch the sides of the silk which are naturally sitting over the fist that don't have the protection of the thumb tip). Also important here - the lit tip of the cigarette should go into the tip first, so that when you crush the cigarette out, your fingers will be pushing against the filter and not the lit tip of the cigarette.

With the first finger of the right hand, poke inside the thumb tip, to begin crushing the lit cigarette out. Pull this finger out quickly and say, "Whoa, that's kind of hot." Use the middle finger and do the same, crushing the cigarette a bit more into the thumb tip, react the same by pulling it out quickly (maybe even shake the hand a bit, like it burned some). Next the ring finger, but be just a bit slower about it, next the thumb and make the steal. Finally, finish it off by putting the first finger into the hole and really squish the hell out of the cigarette that is no longer there (the audience doesn't know the cigarette is gone, so a little acting here goes a long way). Now, use the stealth mode and explain that you hope that this worked, as silk costs quite a lot these days.

With the right hand, pinch one of the corners of the silk and between the first finger and thumb (once again, the silk acts as concealment of the tip) and slowly pull the silk away from the left fist. Snap the silk with a quick motion of the right hand after the silk is completely off the fist (more of a flourish here than anything important) and grasp the other corner of the silk with the left hand. Display the silk between both hands and show both sides of the silk. You can now fold up the silk, taking the thumb tip with it, and replace it in the pocket. Wow - a miracle!

The Invisible Ashtray

Effect: The performer explains that he carries an invisible ashtray with him/her wherever he/she goes. Reaching into the pocket, the performer comes out with a hand full of nothing, displaying it to the spectators and explaining that this is the invisible ashtray. To prove it, the performer takes a lit cigarette and crushes it into the hand holding the ashtray that isn't there. The cigarette vanishes and the performer's hand is unscathed.

Method: Have your thumb tip in your left pocket. Once again, you need a lit cigarette so use your own, or a spectators. This method is close to the above method with some small changes and requires a bit more acting, however it is a bit more visual. Explain about your invisible ashtray and say you will show it to the spectators. Reach into both the right and left pockets and come out with the ashtray in the right hand (of course, there is nothing there, but call attention to it anyway). Come out with the left hand, holding the thumb tip in finger palm position. The open end of the thumb tip should be toward the first finger and thumb. As you explain about the ashtray, pretend to transfer it to the left hand. If you are good with a finger palm, you can actually set the invisible ashtray on your open left hand's palm, in effect showing the left hand completely empty. Otherwise, just grasp the invisible ashtray from the top with the left hand, and go immediately into the closed fist position with the left hand, as explained below.

Now, close the left hand into a loose fist position and flip it over so that the back of the left hand points sky-ward. Take the lit cigarette with the right hand and in one, smooth motion push it into the left fist, allowing the thumb to

The Thumb Tip and You Part 2 (cont.)

follow the cigarette into the fist, into the thumb tip, and crush the cigarette out. Pull out the thumb with thumb tip seated properly on the thumb and immediately push the first finger of the right hand in, to continue crushing out the cigarette that isn't there. Use the stealth mode maneuver while explaining that the cigarette also becomes invisible when crushed into the invisible ashtray, which shows the right hand fairly and openly empty.

Flip your left hand back over and as you open the left hand to show that the cigarette is now invisible also, pull the thumb tip into finger palm position in the right hand (they will be so concentrated on seeing the left hand open that you can easily do this without being seen). Take the invisible ashtray and set it on the right hand's upturned palm, concealing the tip in finger palm as you did above. Just as above, if you cannot pull off the finger palm to show the hand completely empty, then simply grasp the invisible ashtray from above as you had originally done with the left hand. Put the ashtray away and leave the thumb tip behind.

In the next article we will go over more advance techniques with the thumb tip, look into some thumb tip-like devices and I'll share with you a pet routine of mine, which requires mastery of the thumb tip and a great deal of practice. Until next month, happy thumb tipping!

By Michael Jay

An Interview With Lance Burton

Lance Burton is one of those rare magicians who has mastered every aspect of magical performance from close-up card magic to big stage illusions and death defying stunts. He has recently celebrated his sixth year at the Monte Carlo Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Thanks to the magic of the Internet, **Huw Collingbourne** was able to contact Lance via email and ask him a few questions about everything from learning magic to the perils (or otherwise) of exposure. **Magic Bunny reveals all...**

Huw: Many thanks for taking the time to do this, Lance, and many congratulations on your first six years at the Monte Carlo. Let's hope that in a few years from now we might get the chance to see you here in the UK?

Lance: I have seven more years left on my contract. But, one day, I do plan on taking the show on a tour of the UK!

Huw: Since we are doing this interview over the Internet, maybe I should start by asking how important the Internet is to you? Has it made a big change to your professional or personal life? I gather you take a laptop around with you. Is that mainly for email?

Lance: I have a laptop computer. I mainly use it for writing. I love e-mail. It is a great invention that allows me to communicate with my friends. I am afraid that I am not very savvy when it comes to computers.

Huw: Do you use any design software, say Corel Draw or AutoCad, for creating new tricks and illusions?

Lance: No. When I design a new magic trick, it is usually with pencil and paper.

Huw: What do you enjoy most about the Internet? Which sites do you like to visit?

Lance: I mainly use the Internet to get the news. I like reading newspapers on line. It is more convenient than an actual newspaper.

Huw: You once commented on the first time you encountered an Internet discussion group on magic that there was so much "yelling and screaming" and people "calling each other names" (*Lance obviously wasn't talking about Magic Bunny!*) Do you worry that this will put people off (particularly young people) learning more about magic?

Lance: I guess that could be true. A young person who is interested in magic could visit one of those sites and get

An Interview With Lance Burton (cont.)

turned off to magic. The Internet is just like any other tool, it can be used for good or for evil. It is a double-edged sword, just like any other invention.

Huw: I've seen you occasionally posting to moderated newsgroups as a special guest (e.g. KJMagic, <http://www.kjmagic.com/forum/>). Are there any groups that you post to on a more regular basis?

Lance: My good friend Kevin James asked me to participate in his KJmagic board. That was a very enjoyable experience. Everyone was nice, and we had some interesting discussions. I don't spend a lot of time surfing the web. Just don't have the time. Doing two shows a night and rehearsing and trying to create new magic is a full time job.

Huw: Do you think the next generation of magicians will generally benefit from the Internet? Or is the Internet just a distraction? It sometimes seems to me that all the online magic shops seem to offer instant tricks guaranteed to get you instant fame, as though all it takes is a few gimmicks and a nice web site to become a great magician!

Lance: The Internet is a valuable tool. It's value is all in how you use it. Magic has not really changed. Magic dealers want to sell their wares. They have always promised "instant fame" and all that. Now they just do it electronically.

Huw: Some sites and newsgroups make a habit of exposing magic tricks? Is that a threat to professional magicians? Or is it a challenge?

Lance: Neither. It is not an issue, never has been to the professional.

Huw: It seems odd to me that computer technology seems (as far as I can see!) to play so little part in stage magic. After all, computer graphics have revolutionised special effects in TV and film. But magical technology still seems to be pretty traditional - mirrors, hydraulics and lighting. How come? Is the computer revolution just going to pass magic by?

Lance: Here's the thing; Magic has NEVER been based on technology. We do use optical principles and mechanical principles on occasion. But, magic is based primarily on PSYCHOLOGICAL principles. Magic is created in the spectator's mind. Human beings are essentially the same as they were five thousand years ago. The human mind has not changed. Magic is still built on the same psychological principles that it was five thousand years ago.

Huw: Finally, what tips can you offer to someone (say a certain British journalist by the name of Huw) who's realised, rather late in life, that he's missed his true vocation as a magician? What would you say is the best way to learn magic these days? Books? CDs? Videos? Computers?

Lance: Magic is wonderful profession and a wonderful hobby. All are welcome. You can learn magic from books, videos, DVDs, Computers. A live teacher is a great idea somewhere along the way. I have had some great mentors who taught me things that are not found anywhere else. The main learning tool is experience. After you have learned and practiced for countless hours, go out and perform. Do magic for your friends and for strangers. Do free shows in hospitals and nursing homes. Perform any where you can find an audience. That is the way you learn to be a magician.

Huw: How long do you think it would take for me to progress from a few simple card tricks to, say, vanishing an elephant?

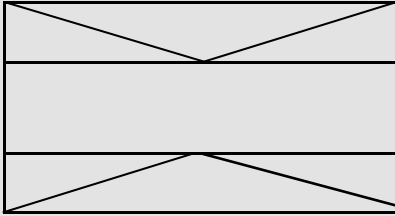
Lance: Vanishing an elephant is no harder than doing card tricks. But the props cost a lot more!

Many thanks to Lance for taking the time to do this interview. If you haven't got the chance to fly across to Las Vegas to see his show (if only!), be sure to visit Lance's web site at: <http://www.lanceburton.com>

By Huw Collingbourne

Ruminations – Creativity in Magic

You may have heard of *déjà vu* (seen before) – when the brain thinks that something has occurred before. The term *jamais vu* (never seen) is applied when the brain has never been presented with a concept before, and these concepts are usually totally beyond comprehension.



The optical illusion shown above seems straightforward enough; two parallel lines appear to curve. But when it is presented to peoples with no prior knowledge of perspective, it does not work. Perspective is a concept they cannot easily grasp.

So how on earth does this relate to magic? We make assumptions about how tricks are done based on the knowledge we already have. New ideas are always based on older ones. The first cars looked like stagecoaches, because no one could comprehend the idea of anything else. So surely all tricks are just reworkings or compilations of older ones? Yet this is clearly not the case. At the MC Dealers day I bought Guy Hollingworth's fantastic book, *Drawing Room Deceptions*. It contains tricks that he invented, and these are stunning examples of creativity. Obviously they use many standard moves and the effects are derived from standard ones, but some of the *concepts* are completely different from anything that seen before.

Andi Gladwin, winner of the World's Fair Award, says that, on the contrary, it is necessary to have a "strong *backbone* of magical knowledge" to create new magic. You should be knowledgeable of magical effects and moves, which you can then apply to your ideas. Studying the effects of others will also help you gain a wider outlook on magic.

On the other hand, in November 2000 Peter Lamont hosted a TV program called "Are You Superhuman?" He performed the Ambitious Card to an audience composed half of the YMC and half laymen, where a spectator's card repeatedly rose to the top. When interviewed, the lay audience correctly guessed that the deck was in fact composed entirely of the same card. The magicians thought that the trick was done using standard moves (double lifts et cetera). So sometimes, *preconceptions* can be as hazardous as none at all.

Do you even need to create new tricks? This is debateable, but without a doubt, the most important thing is that *the style must be your own*. Your own presentation, your own persona. About a year ago, I bought Daryl's Ambitious Card Video. I already performed the Ambitious Card, but for about a week after watching the video, I couldn't stop performing it in Daryl's accent! I took on his persona, and the style was not my own. It didn't work. The Chinese Linking Rings is a classic of magic, performed time and time again the world over. But whenever I see it I like it, because the *style* is different. And that is the crucial thing. Your style is what will shape your act. No one could get away with performing the same tricks as everyone else. Yet we do, because we make them different through our presentation and style. Just a thought.

By Hugo Hadlow

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A big thank you to all contributors of this month's TOPHAT.

I'll see you next month with more top articles and magic effects from members of MagicBunny.co.uk

Yours Magically,

Jon Snoops