



MagicBunny.co.uk

TOPHAT

November 2002 - Edition 8

MagicBunny.co.uk wishes you a warm welcome to the 8th edition of TOPHAT.

The TOPHAT ezine has flourished over the past few months, and gained a very good reputation. Once more, users have submitted some great articles for us to share with you.

The MagicBunny.co.uk forums are also blossoming beautifully. We have reached the 400 user margin and have a total of over 22 thousand posts. This is excellent news for MagicBunny members as it means we can expand. One benefit is the discount store which you can purchase magic supplies cheaply and with **free** postage. Head over to MagicBunny.co.uk for more details.

In this issue, we had some great articles submitted. Top MB interviewer Huw Collingbourne interviews mentalist Ian Rowland, whilst Michael Jay has submitted his third part of his much-acclaimed series "The Thumb Tip and You" on top of many other magic articles.

So, until next time,

Best Wishes,

~Jon Snoops~

Compiler of MagicBunny.co.uk's TOP HAT Monthly e-zine

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Contents

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.

Message From Admin

Welcome to the November edition of the Magic Bunny ezine, Top Hat.

As usual, the site has been a hive of activity and we have achieved several new records.

We have now amassed over 400 members and accumulated a total of over 22 thousand posts. This is quite some achievement for an independent website and one that we can all be proud of.

In order to maintain an effective and organised database, I have emailed all those who have registered with the site but have failed to post and enquired whether they wish to remain on the MB database. If not, I shall maximise the database in several weeks time, after every inactive member has time to respond. Some of these initial emails have already bounced and so, if you do wish to remain on the MB database, please confirm your wish to remain by activating your account via posting on the forums.

The discount shop has continued to expand, with the addition of many new items. This has proved to be a popular move and already many members have benefited from taking advantage of these offers. Don't forget, not only does Magic Bunny offer magic items at "near wholesale" prices, but there is no charge for postage and packaging. You may also like to know that an affiliate link has been established with www.alakazam.co.uk and every purchase that is made through this link will earn Magic Bunny 5% in commission. This will help support the work of the forums and finance the award of prizes and other miscellaneous expenses. In the past, I have regularly purchased items from this Internet site and I can personally vouch for the range of the items that they have in store. I would like to thank you in advance if you decide to support these forums by taking advantage of this new service.

November also saw the arrival of Tom Cutts, our special guest for the month. The Tom Cutts forum was a particular favourite of mine during the week that he was present. The questions were interesting and searching and Tom's replies were brilliant and well thought out. I have learnt so much from reading these threads and I know that many of our members have commented on how much they had enjoyed these too.

Thank you for your support over the past month, in supporting the forums, welcoming new members, using the shop, using the Alakazam or Amazon links and so on. I hope that December may exceed our expectations and many new records may be set.

Best wishes with your interest in magic.

Admin.

The Thumb Tip and You Part 3

In this, the third and final article on thumb tipping, we will take a look at some final techniques and tips, go over some thumb tip like devices, give credits and finish with my personal handling of a torn and restored, signed sugar packet.

Additional Thumb Tipping Techniques

If you've followed this article since the beginning, you have learned how to use a thumb tip without ever showing it, you've learned how to openly show the thumb tip without it being seen and you've come to appreciate the depth of what a thumb tip can do for your magic. Now it is time to consider some other handling techniques to draw you to the next level of thumb tipping.

Kick Steal: In this technique, your thumb never enters the fist holding the thumb tip and the load. When you are finished with pushing your load into the tip to prepare for the steal, on your second to last push with the index finger into the thumb tip, you push your finger off to the side of the tip (rather than into it), which will push the tip through the back of your hand holding the tip, the fingers in particular, and the tip will now be kicked out of your fingers. Once again, this is difficult to explain without pictures, so picture this in your mind: the tip is in your left fist, the back of your fist facing the audience which means that your closed fingers face your chest. If you take and push your right index finger into that fist, but to the front of the tip rather than inside of it, your right index finger will push the tip out of the left fist, through the fingers in such a way that if anyone could see the back of your hand, where the fingers face the chest, they'd see the tip sticking out. Now, upon pushing your finger into

The Thumb Tip and You Part 3 (cont.)

the fist one last time, you can steal the tip away with the thumb from the back of the fist. In this way, the thumb never enters the fist to initiate the steal of the thumb tip.

Pinch Steal: When using an oversized thumb tip, this steal is essential. At times, you will need a bigger thumb tip than you'd normally use, to fit a bigger load, for example. Starting with the thumb tip, once again in the fist, as you push the last of your load into the tip in preparation for the steal, you push with both finger and thumb simultaneously. This will allow you to pinch the edge of the tip between the index finger and thumb and extract the tip by gripping it in this pinch position. Keep in mind that the fingers, which are facing your chest, have the ability to loosen their grip to allow for this kind of removal of the tip without the audience seeing this action. When using this steal, the tip will extend past the finger tips, so use misdirection, or immediately open the now empty fist to draw off attention from the dirty hand, which can then move the tip into a finger palm position.

The two above steals will offer you a bit more ammunition in your war chest of thumb tipping. These are very important things to know in your overall use of the thumb tip and I strongly suggest that you learn them to make your magic with the thumb tip even stronger. However, the question always arises, "How do I get the thumb tip into my hands to begin with?" This is a matter of creativity and necessity.

Let's assume that you will be doing a silk vanish. Well, when you get the silk to make it vanish, the tip should be accessible directly next to the silk, wherever you have the silk. If the silk is in your pocket, then the tip must be positioned next to it. If the silk rests on your table, then it is easy enough to conceal just below the silk as long as the silk is not lying flat. Keep in mind that the tip does not need to be placed on the thumb immediately. If you've been doing the exercises suggested earlier in these columns, then you are capable of moving the tip from finger palm, to on the thumb and back quickly and naturally. Never discount the power of being able to move the tip to different positions in the hand.

Assuming that you are going to do a cigarette vanish, you can retrieve the tip if you keep it directly next to the cigarette pack. Maybe you don't smoke. That certainly does not preclude carrying a lighter to light someone else's cigarette. Keep the tip next to the lighter in your pocket. Or, if you want to, use a pen much as you would a wand and keep the tip next to your pen for retrieval when you access your pen.

Another method, if you wear a jacket, is to take a safety pin and attach a paper clip to the safety pin. You can now put the pin on the inside lining of your jacket, near the bottom and clip the tip to the paper clip. Make sure that the tip doesn't hang down below the bottom of the jacket, but not too high up, either. You can now steal the tip easily from underneath the jacket using misdirection, or turning slightly to the side of your audience hiding the fact that the hand is grabbing something from underneath the jacket. This clip also works for coins and other small items. Once again, creativity and necessity. Use your imagination.

Some methods for subtly showing the tip but keeping it invisible at the same time is how you hold your hands. Believe it or not, there is a proper way to hold your hands, whether hiding something or not. The tip of the middle finger should rest on the tip of the thumb. This is considered to be the proper way to hold that hand to suggest grace on stage. That may sound funny, but it is true. This also works for us as magicians when hiding the thumb tip. When the tip is positioned on the thumb, if you rest the tip of the tip (not to be redundant) against your middle finger, and keep the other hand in the same position, no one will be any the wiser that the tip is present. Keep in mind that the human psyche follows action, and when the hands are to the side of your body in this position, there is no action and therefore goes unnoticed by the spectators.

Yet another way of doing this is if you wear glasses. As a magician, you should take anything that you have and use it to your advantage, and glasses are just one example of this. By keeping the hand positioned as above (tip of thumb lightly pressed to tip of middle finger), you can push your glasses up at the bridge of your nose with your index finger, which is a natural thing to do, and subtly show your dirty hand empty. This will only draw light attention as it is a very natural maneuver, but the spectators will take note of the fact that your hand is empty, even though it is not. This can also be done with the finger palm as was discussed in a previous installation of this article. By holding the tip in finger palm, as the hand is raised to the glasses, you slowly turn the hand, at the wrist, until the back of the hand is facing the audience then push the glasses up on the bridge of the nose. By doing this, you will show the open palm empty then slowly turn the hand to stop observation into the palm. Do this

The Thumb Tip and You Part 3 (cont.)

in reverse as you take the hand away from the face and you have told your entire audience that you have nothing to hide in that hand - they will ignore it because they know that it is empty.

You can also readjust or remove your glasses at the frame and once again transmit subtly to your audience that the dirty hand is empty and to be ignored. You reach up with the hand with the tip on, and grasp your glasses right at the hinge of the arm, between thumb and index finger and take the glasses off in a slow and cool manner, making sure that the other fingers are relaxed in front of the palm, but separated. This move gives a natural reason for "hiding" the thumb behind the fingers. It's probably best to use a soft tip, as you will be able to grip the glasses better. Just think of the glasses doing the same job as a wand in cups and balls, and you get the idea. In the summer, the street magician, could get away with murder wearing their sun shades! Creativity and necessity.

Thumb Tip-like Devices

The Die Tube - Many magicians don't realize that when they are using a die tube, they are using a different kind of thumb tip. The die tube is a two chambered device that is used, among other things, to do a color change for silks. It is a tube with an opening at both ends. One silk is already loaded into it and is finger palmed. A different colored silk is then pushed into the closed fist and loaded into the top chamber, while pulling out the other colored silk from the bottom chamber - the bottom of the closed fist. When finished, you steal the tube away, just as you would with a thumb tip, and you can now show the hand empty with the opposing colored silk in place of the original silk. The tube is then finger palmed and the silk displayed, which also acts as cover for the die tube.

Finger Tips - The same as a thumb tip, only slender, to be used on the finger instead of the thumb. As discussed earlier, the finger tip can be used by magicians with small thumbs just as if it were a thumb tip. Don't discount this very good use for a finger tip if you simply cannot get a thumb tip that fits properly. This device can also be purchased "pinky" sized, for use on the little finger. These, in particular, are very tiny.

The Sixth Finger - This is an actual finger that is hollow. By placing it between the middle and ring finger, with a bit of misdirection, it can go completely unnoticed by the spectators. Honestly, it is amazing what people simply don't notice and the sixth finger is an excellent example of people's lack of observation. The benefit of the sixth finger is that you can store a huge load inside of it. The handling of this device is a bit different from the thumb tip, but not much. With a bit of imagination, you could probably come up with many uses for this oversized load device.

The Stealth Gimmick and The Cloaking Device - The stealth gimmick is advertised as a pocket for the hand. In many ways, that is exactly what this device is. I am not at liberty to discuss what, specifically, this device is but suffice it to say that it is much like a thumb tip, only for a different area of the hand. It has the ability to allow you to show the hand empty while hiding small items. The cloaking device is a gimmick much the same as the stealth gimmick, but with an extra pocket, making it even more useful than the stealth gimmick.

Credits

Thumb tip acquitment - Much the same as the Change Over Pass in "Modern Coin Magic," by J.B. Bobo.

Dropping the arm to the side, naturally - Mike Close

Showing the hand empty while finger palming - Ramsay Subtlety

Kick Steal - Dai Vernon

Pinch Steal - Lance Burton

Open hand vanish of lit cigarette - Michael Skinner

Invisible Ashtray - Michael Knight

The Thumb Tip and You Part 3 (cont.)

Subtleties with glasses - Dale Shrimpton

The Cloaking Device - Jay Scott Berry

And, lastly, I wish to credit the web site, "The Thumb Tip and You," found here: <http://members.cox.net/bevbooth/thumbtip/> After reviewing this site, which was sent to me by a reader of the column, I found my first column in this series to be dangerously close to what is suggested and talked about on this web site. I had no foreknowledge of this web site, although I may have perused it during a drunken moment but I have no lucid memory of the site and this article was never intended to be a rip-off of the site. I was taught the idea of coloring the thumb tip when I was in grade school by a local magician and shop owner named Milo, along with ideas and techniques on how to use the gizmo. Please forgive any likenesses to the site and I highly recommend the site. All apologies.

If I have left anything out, please feel free to e-mail me at michaeljay@about.com and I will give proper credit in future articles. Also, if I've credited wrong, let me know and it will appear in subsequent articles. Thank you for reading these articles and hopefully I've helped you in, at least, some small way. Also, thank you to all of the people who've written with very kind words about this set of thumb tipping articles. Take care and enjoy this last effect, which I give to you all, which is my personal handling of the Torn and Restored, Signed Sugar Packet.

The Torn and Restored, Signed Sugar Packet

Effect: The magician has a sugar packet signed (or monogrammed), which he then rips open, pours into his fist, then balls up the paper of the left over sugar packet, which he also puts in his fist with the poured out sugar. Upon opening his fist, the sugar packet is restored, with the signature (or monogram) still on it.

Method: Take a bunch of sugar packets and spread them out, just like you would to allow someone to take a card. Use 8 to 10 packets to allow the spectator to choose one. After they have chosen a sugar packet, close the spread and place them on the table, but hold one back in finger palm. This is easy enough to do as you close the spread by thumbing one off into a finger palm. Reach into your pocket to obtain a pen with the dirty hand and bring out the thumb tip with the pen, the thumb tip should be over the sugar packet in finger palm position, the pen held at the finger tips. Holding the pen by the cap with the dirty hand, remove the pen from the cap and hand it to the spectator to sign the sugar pack. Put the cap down. You should use a Sharpie to have the sugar pack signed, which will give you a reason to blow on the sugar pack - to dry the ink. Once the spectator has signed the sugar pack, place it over the thumb tip in your hand and begin to blow on it. Slightly open your fingers, which will allow the sugar pack in finger palm position to be seen. However, the spectator will be viewing the extra sugar pack, which hides the thumb tip and the sugar pack that they signed behind it. You don't want to open your fingers too much, you just want to convey the illusion that you are holding their sugar packet in your hand and blowing on it. Now, once you've done this, maybe 2 seconds later, pull out the extra sugar pack, the one not signed, from your hand and simultaneously close your fingers to hide what is on the other side of that packet - the thumb tip and the signed packet, in that order. The illusion will be that you put their packet in your hand, blew on it to dry the ink, then pulled it back out. Now, rip the packet in your hand open, they will think that you are ripping the pack that they just signed open, as you've given them no reason to believe otherwise and pour the contents into the closed fist of the dirty hand. Don't rip the entire top off, just about four fifths of the way, to allow the sugar to pour out and pour it into the thumb tip. Now, take the ripped open packet, ball it up, and push it in with the rest of sugar that you've poured in. As you push this balled up packet into your fist, do a pinch steal in one smooth motion. Now, open your hand up with the signed sugar packet and, while they stare in amazement at the fact that they just saw you rip open their signed packet and there it is fully restored, you can ditch the tip with the sugar and packet into your pocket. The misdirection here is extreme and you should be able to get away with openly ditching the tip and not being caught.

Until next time, happy thumb tipping!

Mike.

Letter From Walter Zaney Blaney

MESSAGE TO THE MAGIC COMMUNITY IN THE USA FROM WALTER ZANEY BLANEY, PRESIDENT EMERITUS WORLD ALLIANCE OF MAGICIANS (WAM)

I want to discuss the growing problem of a few unethical magic builders overseas who are building cheap rip-off versions of many of the proprietary illusions invented by USA magicians. They are marketing them both overseas and in the USA. I will name names, and I will suggest what can be done. But first let me explain.

I will begin by quoting the pertinent passages from the IBM and SAM joint "Universal Code of Ethics". Indeed most magic organizations, including the Academy of Magical Arts (Magic Castle) and the English Magic Circle, also subscribe to these stated ethics.

1. "We shall exhibit moral and ethical behavior....in our general conduct as magicians, including not interfering with or jeopardizing the performance of another magician, either through personal intervention, or by THE UNAUTHORIZED USE OF ANOTHER'S CREATION (my emphasis)."
2. "We must recognize and respect the rights of the creators, authors, inventors and owners of magic concepts, presentations, effects, literature and recorded materials, and their rights to have exclusive use of, or grant permission for the use by others of such creations."
3. "The organizations discourage advertising in magic publications for any magical apparatus, effect, literature or other materials for which the advertiser does not have commercial or distribution rights."

With that said, as the first president of the World Alliance of Magicians (WAM), after our attempts to thwart the Masked Magician TV exposure shows on Fox-TV, I helped shift WAM's focus onto this "other half" of our Code of Ethics.

It began when a magic builder in Belgium named ROCA started building a cheap rip-off of my Zaney Blaney Ladder Levitation in 1992. He sold them through several European magic dealers, primarily Select Magic in Belgium. At first they even advertised it as the "Zaney Blaney Ladder Levitation as seen on David Copperfield's TV Special". When I protested, they simply removed my name from their ads.

The owner of SELECT MAGIC, JEAN GARMINJ, then asked me to send the blueprint plans of my illusion, and if what they were selling was EXACTLY like my invention, they would stop. I suppose GARMINJ and ROCA figured I was just a dumb Texan, but I certainly didn't fall for that stupid ploy. ROCA had figured out less than half my secret, and he wanted it all. Their prop did not work properly and they were getting many complaints from their customers who wanted their money returned.

The several European magicians who had bought my legitimate illusion from me were understandably upset to see my levitation advertised at less than half the price they had paid. And the rip-off was advertised as "greatly improved". I suppose if someone is going to steal, they would have no qualms about lying as well. When later my customers saw the rip-off copy they told me, "No problem, it doesn't work, it's a piece of junk."

More recently, a company in England, Illusions Plus, was selling still another rip-off of my illusion. When I protested to the owner, JAMES ANTONY, he told me there was no court in the world which could stop him from what he was doing. I explained I had no intention of going to court. I instead simply told my many friends in the Magic Circle about it, as I am a proud MIMC member. They checked on ILLUSIONS PLUS and found there were many customers who had never received the props they had ordered and paid for.

When the word spread, soon MR. ANTONY "had a problem". As things turned out, there was indeed a court which promptly put him out of business...the bankruptcy court.

Now today in the USA there is a magic dealer named WOLFGANG WOLLET, with his company in Henderson, Nevada, "ILLUSIONS & MORE, INC". He is advertising at least a dozen rip-off illusions, including my Ladder Levitation, Jim Steinmeyer's Origami and Interlude, Jim Steinmeyer's Windshear (built and marketed by Bill Smith's Magic Ventures), Mark Wilson's Train Sawing, Andre Kole's Pole Levitation, Dan Summer's Compressed,

Letter From Walter Zaney Blaney (cont.)

and a host of other proprietary illusions.

In fact he actually uses Dan Summer's illusion by name, "Compressed", and also the photo that appeared in Dan's first ad in Magic Magazine. He cleverly pasted another lady's face over the face of Dan's assistant. Maybe not so clever, as Dan now plans to sue WOLLET.

In October of 2000, two years ago, WOLLET called me on the phone and asked the price of my Ladder Levitation. When I told him, he said he could get one from a builder in Palermo, Italy for less than half my price. It took me a year to learn that WOLLET was the dealer in the USA selling the rip-off from Italy.

The rip-off builder is named FRANCESCO MARTORANA of MAGIC STUDIO DOMINIK. He is building everyone's proprietary illusions without anyone's permission.

I have written WOLLET twice in recent weeks asking him to remove my illusion from his catalog along with all the other rip-offs. He has not answered either letter, even after I told him I would write this letter to the magic world if he refused. So he was fairly forewarned.

I have been told that MARTORANA has been quoted as saying, "I am a magic builder. I will build anyone's illusion for anyone who wants to buy one. If they wish to pay extra money to the inventors, that is their business, don't bother me with it." Okay, so much for the ethics of FRANCESCO MARTORANA and his STUDIO MAGIC DOMINIK, and the ethics of WOLFGANG WOLLET and his ILLUSIONS & MORE INC.

Now, what do we do? Back in July, 2000, WAM arranged for a dozen top magician lawyers to meet together in Cincinnati, along with the international presidents of IBM and SAM. We had an excellent discussion on the subject of rip-offs and secrets exposure for over three hours. Subsequently WAM arranged for many hours of legal research to see how magicians could be protected by patents, copyrights, trade secrets laws and such, and we published a book titled "PROTECTING MAGICIAN'S SECRETS". (If interested, see our information on how to purchase a copy on our WAM website: www.MAGICIANSALLIANCE.COM)

The bottom line is, it is difficult and expensive to try to legally protect our secrets and our intellectual property. However WAM has written proposed legislation that we want to take to the U.S. Congress, which if passed, could materially help magicians in this respect. We hope one day to get enough contributions to move forward on this plan.

Meanwhile, Plan B is to do something that I have found works: TELL THE WORLDWIDE MAGIC COMMUNITY WHO THE "BAD GUYS" ARE, NAME THE NAMES.

There will always be a MARTORANA or a WOLLET around to take and take and never give, to break our Code of Ethics, to show no respect to those who create our new magic. But I have faith that the honest magicians of the world will choose NOT to trade with the "bad guys" when they learn who they are. All we have to do is TELL THE TRUTH, expose them just as they have stolen from us and exposed our secrets.

There will also always be those magicians who freely choose to deal with these "bad guys". To save a few bucks they show no respect for our magic inventors. They help take away the incentive of those who create, and thus they harm the future of the art of magic.

No one but those relatively few who have created a new illusion or trick can fully comprehend the amount of time, hard work, inspiration, money invested and passion it takes to perfect and market a successful new magical creation. My bet is that the vast majority of magicians WILL have the proper respect for our art and our inventors. And for those who don't, they take a real risk on an inferior product, one that may not even work (or actually be dangerous in its construction), and one that may not even be delivered. While trying to get their money refunded, they join a long line of other losers. They end up getting ripped off themselves, which they justly deserve.

I know immediate past international president of SAM, Warren Kaps, formed a Blue Ribbon Committee to work

Letter From Walter Zaney Blaney (cont.)

on this very problem, and I'm sure IBM also is considering something similar. I know the editors of MUM and The Linking Ring are working hard to carefully weed out advertising from the "bad guys".

I hope this letter is printed in as many magic magazines as possible, and will be put on the internet to the various magic group websites, and will be forwarded to your many magic friends around the world.

I recall one very good magic magazine editor who recently said , "With the internet, there is no place left to hide." It's time we take a strong stand now. I hope this letter will be just the beginning.

Walter Zaney Blaney President Emeritus World Alliance of Magicians (WAM)

The 3 M's of Magic

When you perform there are three things that you must understand.

(1) Misdirection

This is possibly the most important skill you can utilise with magic. This is the ability of making the audience look where you want them to look and sense what you want them to sense. Do not look at where the action is occurring, only where the action is supposed to be taking place. For example, if you want the audience to think that you are holding a sponge ball in your left hand, you must look at your hand and act as if there really was a sponge ball there. If you act as though you believe, your audience are more likely to believe in what you are doing too. You can also use misdirection to draw attention away from an area. Look at where the magic is supposed to be happening and the audience will look there too.

Keep your actions as normal and as unaffected as possible. To be convincing you must act as if what you are doing is completely normal. Study how your hands move when you transfer a coin from hand to hand and then repeat the same moves precisely as you perform the appropriate sleight.

Patter (the words that you use) not only interest and relax an audience, they can also be used to make the audience take more attention of you and less of your hands. Identify the times in your act that you are more prone to unwanted attention and use misdirection to diminish the risks.

(2) Motivation

This is the skill in deceiving your audience to believe that you are not doing anything suspicious at the very time that you really are. If you put your hand in your pocket to ditch a coin, the suspicions of the audience will be enhanced - but if you put your hand in your pocket to remove a wand then there will be a logical reason for your actions and so you can use this action to ditch a coin without arousing additional suspicion. When there is a need to perform a suspicious move, find an excuse for performing that very manoeuvre using your normal body actions.

(3) Moment

During any routine there are two important moments; the instant that the magic seems to have taken place and the instant that the magic actually did take place. Your objective is to increase the period between these two times so that potential suspicions can be allayed and that the magic can have a greater impact. You can convince the audience that the magic has taken place at any particular moment by clicking your fingers, waving a wand or chanting an appropriate phrase. Choose your time to do this carefully so that you can draw their attention away from the instant that you actually secretly did the trick some time before.

By Nigel Shelton

An Interview With Ian Rowland

IAN ROWLAND THE MINDREADER WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD

Huw Collingbourne interviews this influential and controversial British mentalist exclusively for Top Hat.

One of Britain's top mentalists, Ian Rowland is admired by many top performers and reviled by others. On the one hand, he has written what many people regard to be the definitive book on the art of 'cold reading'. On the other hand, he has explained some of the principles of the art on American television. This has led some mentalists to accuse Ian of exposure.

We decided that it was time that Ian had the chance to give his own side of the story. In this interview, Ian tells us all about his views on exposure and gives us the low-down on that now famous (or notorious, depending on your point of view) TV show. But first wanted to know a bit more about Ian's own approach to performing...

Huw: To start things off, I wonder how you would describe yourself as a performer: a magician, a mentalist, a psychic entertainer? Or something else?

Ian: Mindreader. Sometimes, if the context warrants it, I add mind-motivator.

Huw: You seem unimpressed by John Edward (according to an article on your web site). Can you explain why, if Edward has so many 'misses', so many millions of viewers believe he's the real thing?

Ian: I don't presume to know what millions of people think or why. Ask them. My two cents guess would be they believe because they want to. Psychic powers are as real as you want them to be.

Huw: Do you think there is at least the possibility that 'psychic's such as Edward or Sylvia Browne might, in fact, be genuine?

Ian: Of course. 'Possible' isn't the issue.

Huw: In the past, it seems there was a clear distinction between 'mental magicians' and 'psychics'. These days the boundaries seem a bit blurred. Many people who claim to be psychics in public acknowledge themselves to be mentalists among fellow performers. How do you feel about that?

Ian: Fine. Taking the "I'm for real" route can lead to problems, such as rather emotionally needy people latching on to you as a sort of all-knowing messiah. I prefer to follow the example of Mark Twain. He said "I always tell the truth. That way, I never have to remember anything". Works for me.

Huw: I know you are very interested in language as a tool of performance and persuasion. What, would you say, are the most important linguistic techniques that a magician or mentalist can employ to enhance their performance?

Ian: Am I? I'm not aware that I've any special interest in language as you suggest. Kenton Knepper seems to be the expert in that area.

Huw: Which book, or other resources, would you recommend to those performers who might want to learn how to make language work to their advantage?

Ian: No idea.

Huw: *No idea?* Hang on a minute! You've talked about this subject on previous occasions. On one magic discussion group, for example, you specifically recommended the following books, all of which deal with the use of language:

Vance Packard, 'The Hidden Persuaders'; David Ogilvy, 'Ogilvy on Advertising'; Michael Wheeler, 'Lies,

An Interview With Ian Rowland (cont.)

Damned Lies And Statistics'; A J Ayer, 'Language, Truth And Logic'; Stephan Schiffman, 'Cold Calling Techniques'; Stephen Pinker, 'The Language Instinct' and S Morris Engel, 'Fallacies And Pitfalls Of Language'.

In fact, you specifically recommended the Engel book as *"a masterpiece of analysis and enjoyable writing which goes light years beyond Kenton Knepper's 'Wonder Words'"*. I'd say that suggests to me that you might have slightly more of an informed interest in linguistic techniques than you would have us believe!

Ian: Well, it's perfectly possible I've got my own wires crossed and that I've contradicted myself. Could happen. However, I guess there's a distinction to be made. I took your question to refer to ways in which one can apply language deceptively in live performance (the kind of thing which Kenton Knepper writes about). If I recall correctly, the books I listed have very little to do with this. They have more to do with things like persuasion (in different media, and in different contexts, not necessarily anything to do with spoken words during a performance) and the way one can subvert the reasoning process by which people reach conclusions. This DOES interest me a great deal.

Huw: Most of the time you seem to take quite a subtle approach to the nuances of performance. But, at the other extreme, you also do 'sensational' routines such as 'psychic surgery'. What's the attraction of blood and guts?

Ian: I'm not attracted to blood and guts. Now and again certain kinds of sceptical audiences like to see the psychic surgery routine, so if it's appropriate then I'll include it. I'm not sure it serves any great purpose, but it is fairly dramatic and it can be fun.

Huw: On your site, you also say that you often get requests to hammer nails into your head. I haven't seen you do that (I'm glad to say!). It sounds incredibly dangerous. Is it? If not, how can I learn to do it....?"

Ian: It can be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing. It's the kind of thing that you have to be shown how to do by someone who already knows the fine details. I was shown by a friend in Italy.

Huw: As you know, many mentalists have attacked you for exposing secrets. recently, for instance, you did an exposure of cold reading in America on ABC's 'Primetime' show. How do you justify what you did?

Ian: Sorry, but I can't agree with the premises in your question.

...*"Many mentalists"*?

I'm not sure about this. I know there are some people who belong to a certain prominent organisation and who have written angry comments. I respect the organisation they belong to, but I'm not sure they are very good representatives of it. There may be others critics too, outside that particular organisation. However, these people do not necessarily constitute a well-informed majority. I've had lots and lots of emails from mentalists congratulating me on my work, encouraging me, supporting me. This includes some people in that same prominent organisation. So you can slice and dice the evidence either way. And in any event, whatever opinions may be flying around, I don't accept that I'm guilty of exposure and I don't think the facts support that allegation.

...*"attacked you for exposing secrets"*?

This may be true of some of the people concerned. But it would be a mistake to credit all of them with a logical, cause-and-effect basis for their anger. Some of them were attacking me long before the Primetime piece was even a twinkle in a producer's eye. One of them hates me simply because a long time ago he asked for a free review copy of my cold reading book and I refused to give him one, on the basis that I'd never be allowed to see whatever review he wrote. He's disliked me ever since. And he's entitled to. Why should I imagine everyone's going to like me? I'd prefer it if he and I were friends, because I'm a friends sort of person. But he doesn't want that, and it's his loss. Talk to people in this art who've made friends with me. Ask them if I'm a good friend to have.

...*"You did an exposure on Primetime"*?

I disagree. Look, before I get into this, let me say that if people just want to get angry and throw a few insults my way, well, that's their choice. Be my guest. I have a lot of friends in this art, and they find a lot more in me than just

An Interview With Ian Rowland (cont.)

a target for ill-founded abuse. Criticism is fine, but it's only worth anything - and worth paying attention to - if it's informed and constructive.

So, for anyone who actually wants the facts, let me offer a few.

I've been passionately interested in cold reading for a long time. I'm interested in what it can do, how and why it works and what it tells us about human nature. I've heard a lot of nonsense spoken about what CR can and can't achieve, both from sceptics and their opponents, but the only way to know is to try it. Prior to 'Primetime', I'd never had the chance to try CR in the style of a spirit medium doing the 'hotline to heaven' schtick. ABC television offered me this one-off golden opportunity to try cold reading in this style, and they were willing to take the experiment seriously, and to deal with all the moral, legal and tact issues involved. So I took it.

And that's why I did it. To explore what impressions this style of cold reading can give to the performer (in this case myself) and the audience, and to deepen my own knowledge and experience in this field.

Did I do it for money? No. I'm not saying if I got paid, or if I did how much, because nobody needs to know. Let me just point out that this piece was produced by ABC News division, not the Entertainment division. Anyone who wants to know can call ABC News and ask what their official policy is on paying contributors.

Did I do it for the attention, or to build my career? No. I don't need the attention. And in any case you can't build a career giving this kind of demonstration.

Did I do it to sell more books? No.

Did I do it because I'm on a crusade to protect or educate the public? No. The public aren't asking me to educate or protect them, and even if they were, who's to say I'm a fit teacher? I haven't seen the piece yet, but apparently the way ABC editorialised it, they gave the impression that I'm on some sort of mission. Well, they skewed it that way, not me. That's not what it was about as far as I'm concerned.

Did I do it to hit out at prominent psychics or to strike a blow for sceptics? No. I did it for the reason stated. End of story. If sceptics want to make capital out of it, that's their business, not mine.

So, that's my reason. But I wouldn't have done it at all if I felt it constituted exposure. I have never, and will never, expose any secret or methodology which will harm contemporary entertainers (be they magicians or mentalists). I'm okay with giving a lecture or going on TV and explaining psychic surgery, because no-one uses it for entertainment. Even then, I won't show the thumb-tip method because I think this is crossing the line. So I use a cruder, less sophisticated method which is good enough to get the basic point across about con artists, but not going to damage the interests of entertainers.

I'm pretty widely read in mentalism, but I've yet to see a mentalism trick or routine for which the 'method' in the instructions says 'use cold reading'. Now, it's true that some mentalists use CR to embellish a trick or dress up a routine. But some of them also use dry ice or candles or spooky music or black clothing. That doesn't make dry ice or candles etc. a magic secret. If I go round telling people how to get frozen CO₂ and let it melt in water, is this a magic secret? Of course not, even though some magi may apply it to a pet mentalism effect. Ditto with CR. It's not a magic secret. If I thought it was, I would treat it as such.

Other people are, of course, entitled to a different opinion. And I'm entitled to mine, based on the 36 years I've been entertaining people with magic and mentalism. That's the way it looks to me.

Huw: Derren Brown often explains many of his routines by reference to psychology. Frankly, it seems to me that claiming a special psychological acuity is no more satisfactory an explanation of some of Derren's 'miracles' than claiming a psychic ability. Wouldn't it be reasonable, therefore, to make a case for exposing some of Derren Brown's claims as 'fraudulent'?

Ian: Not in my book because I'm not into exposure. See above. As for Derren, he's entertaining people and doing a superb job of it. He and his team who put together the 'Mind Control' shows are deserving of the highest praise and admiration.

An Interview With Ian Rowland (cont.)

Huw: Finally, what advice would you give to someone who wants to learn the ropes of mentalism or 'psychic entertainment'? Where should they start and what should they aim for?

Ian: I wouldn't give advice, because I'm not in any position to. I suppose if pushed I'd say don't go round asking for advice! Just do it. Perform. Learn by experience. It's the only teacher that matters.

For more information on Ian Rowland, or to order the latest (3rd) edition of his book, 'Full Facts Of Cold Reading', visit his web site:

<http://www.ian-rowland.com/>

Ian tells us that his book has been revised and reset throughout. There are about 15,000 more words than in the 2nd edition, including a completely new section about the potential application of cold reading techniques in non-psychic contexts. It is only available from Ian's web site.

A 'primer' on Cold Reading

Cold reading is a method of secretly pumping one or more people for information in such a way that it appears that the 'psychic' or mentalist has actually obtained the information by mindreading or (more commonly) from the spirits of the dead. Some people, such as James Randi, believe that many top American psychics including John Edward use 'cold reading'. You can find a brief discussion of cold reading on Randi's site: <http://www.randi.org/library/coldreading/index.html>

By Huw Collingbourne & Ian Rowland

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Elastic Band Magic

When someone pulls a pack of playing cards from their pocket and starts a number of elaborate flourishes, you soon begin to realise that this person is an accomplished magician and you expect to see some magical tricks to follow. Your anticipation of a magical finale slightly diminishes the impact that such a finale may produce. For example, when you see a lady climb into a box and the magician draws out a saw, you expect that he is going to cut her into half. The trick is entertaining but the surprise is diminished by the expectation that something magical is about to happen.

However, if you saw a performer walk into the spotlight and then pick that light off the stage, hold in his hands and release the image of a flying bird made from glowing lights you may well be entranced with the beauty and imagery of this effect because you were caught up, unaware by the fact that something magical was about to take place. This is the power that elastic bands have. They are so common and inexpensive that they are something that we all take for granted.

If someone picks up two elastic bands, we don't really expect anything magical to occur afterwards and so, when it does, we find ourselves spell-bound by the effect. Elastic bands are objects that we all have handled so many times in the past that we take their properties for granted. We know that they are continuous bands of rubber and that they cannot link together. We know that, once broken into two, they cannot be made whole again. We know that rubber can't pass through other solid objects, such as other rubber bands. We know all this and more. The properties of rubber are so simple that we do not feel the need to question these ourselves.

Therefore, when these magical effects do actually happen we are taken totally by surprise - because the simplest rules that govern our world seem to be shattered and desecrated. This is strong magic at it's strongest!

If a spectator feels confident with the properties of the material that is being handled, if a spectator has knowledge and understanding of the object itself, if the spectator is not expecting an effect to take place; then what is produced is a very powerful form of magic indeed. This is the power of elastic band magic.

Elastic bands also have the advantage of being found in a wide variety of known environments. They are readily available in the classroom, the workplace or the home. Therefore, when they are utilised in an impromptu routine,

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Elastic Band Magic (cont.)

they can be taken from the local environment itself. When the props are taken from the spectator, or the immediate environment of the spectator, there exists a naive form of trust that absolutely nothing "fixed" can happen. There is the belief that the props are free from tampering and completely trustworthy. This too, produces a very strong overall effect.

One final advantage of elastics is that they are small and easily transported. There does not exist the need to carry boxes or crates of gimmicks and tricks. You could very easily carry a bunch of elastic bands in a trouser pocket with you for weeks at a time and then perform an impromptu routine at the drop of a hat.

By Nigel Shelton

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

This is the sixth part in the "So - You want to be a star, do you?" series. Written by Nigel Shelton, this gives great advice about how you can jump the gap from being a hobbyist to a professional in magic. This section reveals the secrets of getting publicity by asking a newspaper to print a piece about you. If you've missed any previous parts, look in the e-zine archive accessible from the MagicBunny.co.uk site.

A particularly powerful way of gaining local recognition is through the use of a regional newspaper. Most towns and cities in Great Britain print a weekly or daily paper that contains just articles of a local nature. You need only flick through these pages, however, to gain an understanding of how difficult it can sometimes be to fill these pages. During my time as a freelance reporter, I repeatedly struggled to find articles of a noteworthy calibre. Week by week the main front page heading would be something of the form of...

Local Market Gardener Grows Straight Cucumber

Yes, believe me, the local press really do struggle to find sufficient high calibre material to fill their pages. This is why, not only can they prove to be a powerful ally, but you can also exert a slight degree of editorial voice when you submit any appropriate material. Let me explain....

Some local papers produce forms for outside bodies to complete when submitting information. These forms usually consist of a first section with important information such as your name, telephone number, the date and so on. After this there may be an extended space to write the necessary information. If your paper does not produce forms such as these, then you should use wide ruled lined paper and take care that you start by including any appropriate information before writing your article. This should include; your name, your age (if you are a minor), your address, your telephone number (daytime and evening), your email address, contact information, the date of submission, a brief description of the nature of the report and notes on whether the report contains additional material such as photographs. This should all be laid out clearly before the main article is written.

By Nigel Shelton

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