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A Word From The Editor

David Fung

Ten years after the release of the first edition of Top Hat, on behalf of Darrel and the new team, I'm pleased to present to you Issue 3 of Volume 2. Darrel has very kindly allowed me to write a guest editorial for this issue, which features the usual blend of articles and effects from our members around the world.

Top Hat, like the forums, started with humble beginnings. In last month's issue Founder Nigel Shelton gave us the full history of the Magic

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Bunny site up until now. I'll attempt to fill the gaps in the evolution of the Top Hat e-zine here. I started the e-zine ten years ago in April 2002 with the support of the then-moderator team - quite a different team to the current one though still with one or two familiar faces!

The layout was basic at that time and the contents at times thin. But nonetheless, month after month, issue after issue was produced. It's interesting to flick through the issues from the first few years to see the evolution of the layout which started as pure text and progressed month by month. I'm also pleased that the new team's designers have managed to add a new feel to Volume 2, differentiating it from the older ones.

I edited the e-zine for just over four years. As I've mentioned sometimes the contents were thin - one or two issues with only three features in - but overall the archives represent an amazing wealth of material. The hardest thing for me as editor was gathering enough diverse material to include. I mention this as a call to members to think about what you may be able to contribute. Whether it's a great new card plot you've come up with or some lessons you've learnt in your first year of performing, I'm certain that the Top Hat team will be happy to receive it and that the Top Hat readers will be happy to read it. Perhaps you'd even consider writing a regular column with articles on a theme such as those we've had in the past.

The columns written by Michael Jay, Michael Lauck, Peter Marucci, Craig Browning, Nigel Shelton and at times one or two others really held the e-zine together. In fact, it's all of the writers who really make each issue what it is so I'd like to thank again every contributor who helped to a make success of Top Hat. Their time and writing has been given freely to create the excellent resource we have now.

Another huge achievement is the Top Hat Index produced by Bruce Graham. Bruce, rather painstakingly I imagine, went through the entire archive and indexed every issue, every feature including series links, article descriptions and subject headings. If you're looking for something in particular or simply browsing for articles of interest, the index at http://magicbunny.co.uk/tophat/indices.htm is the first place you should look. What this really needs is a database system to search on and browse so if there are any

willing web development/database wizards in the membership who wouldn't mind spending some time writing a simple system, do get in touch!

A major milestone for me was finding the Top Hat e-zines bundled into a zip file on file sharing and torrent sites via Google. Whilst known for piracy, these file sharing sites sometimes do good. Top Hat is a free e-zine and is meant to be shared. It brings more people's attention to Magic Bunny and also spreads decent quality magic material which is not pirated. Provided the e-zine is not edited or articles copied out, you can send it to whoever you like (magicians!) so if you know someone who might enjoy reading it, feel free to share.

Chatter on Patter was a supplement to Top Hat produced by Will Wood which eventually was attached to eight issues. It's a nicely laid out supplement with an emphasis on transforming effects into full presentations. It's definitely worth a look and is something I'd be very interested to see the return of at some point. You can find them all on the archive page http://magicbunny.co.uk/tophat.php attached to issues from Issue 40.

The end of Volume 1 came at last and I decided that 52 issues would be a nice number to end on, leaving a 'full deck' of issues for the archives. Issues 50, 51 and 52 represent a bumper edition to end the series and are a great place to start if you've yet to delve into Volume 1. The producing of Volume 1 was four years of hard work but well worth it for the resource that was created.

In Edition 43, October 2005, I announced the final year of Top Hat in its current form. However, I hinted that it may return in a quarterly or biannual form at some point. Last year I was extremely pleased to hear that Darrel had decided to restart the e-zine in this format and the fact that you're reading now shows that he's been successful in bringing the project back to life.

So enough of me and onto Volume 2 Issue 3...

Bang! You're Dead ... Essay ... The Tells Got You Joshua Westmeier-Shuh

July 10th, 2001 - 06:30

(Take a deep breath. Slowly exhale half your air, stop. Hold it. Line your sights. Squeeze the trigger.)

The time of day didn't matter. It was San Antonio, Texas in July. Sweat stung my eyes and made the gun hard to grip.

(Take a deep breath. Slowly exhale half your air, stop. Hold it. Line your sights. Squeeze the trigger.)

You would think there would be more to it, but military instructors always gear their lessons towards the lowest common denominator (aka "The dumb kids"). To my surprise, I was a natural. I hit the target effortlessly at 50 yards.

(Take a deep breath. Slowly exhale half your air, stop. Hold it. Line your sights. Squeeze the trigger.)

Although I'd never shot a gun before, it felt easy. Besides, it sure as hell beat scrubbing toilets or night watch duty. For the first time in all of basic training, I was having fun. It wouldn't last.

"Hold your fire and line up, nuts!"

For six weeks I hadn't been called anything other than nut, dummy, or moron. This only became confusing when in close proximity to other nuts, dummies, and morons.

"There are only two things you need to know. One - the gun is an extension of yourself. You will sleep with it. You will eat with it. If I find that gun anywhere but in your hands or on your back, you are dead!"

(Got it. Always hold the gun, don't put it down. Sleep with it like it's your girlfriend. Weird.)

"Next - the basics will save your life. You will learn to tear apart that weapon and put it back together at a moment's notice. You will load and unload your magazines every day. You will take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and when half your air is gone you will stop. Hold it, line your sights, and squeeze the trigger. One day you might actually have to do this when it counts. Now, get back to shooting."

Most military instructors have a commanding presence and this man was no exception. His short, but loud speech made me pause. It wasn't what he said, but the way he said it. He spoke from experience. What did he mean by, "Do it when it counts?"

(..... Oh.)
I could feel my heart beat.
(Damn it, I pulled the trigger.)
Miss.
(My eyes are burning.)
Miss again.
(My hands are too slippery.)

Suddenly, I wasn't such a natural. Every other shot whizzed past the target as the gravity of the situation became fully apparent. I was being taught to fire a rifle in the unfortunate event that I'd have to use one. By the end of the day, I was just barely qualifying on the range.

When emotions get involved during an exercise that requires precision, the likelihood of failure in that exercise is dramatically increased. The reason for this is two-fold.

First, we are not multitaskers. Studies in neurology have consistently shown that our ability to truly multitask is next to zero (www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95256794). Not coincidentally, these studies are the underlying backbone of most texting while driving laws. In other words, you cannot focus on your emotion and your precision at the same time.

Second, it's your physiology. The release of catecholamines (Epinephrine and Norepinephrine) is a biological defense mechanism used by the brain that allows us to adapt to an unwanted, possibly hostile, change in our environment. By increasing your heart rate, constricting vessels to raise blood pressure, and dilating the pupils, the catecholamines provide humans with a heightened perception of their surroundings.

While the previous bodily changes are superb in allowing us to either evade or fight a Saber-toothed Tiger (I recommend evading), they also have adverse effects as well. Do your hands shake before a performance? Do you feel butterflies before you take the stage? Well, just thank Norepinephrine. In other words, in a situation that requires a precise maneuver to be executed under duress, your body will

provide you with chemicals that have the exact opposite physiologic effect of what you would like. Isn't nature wonderful?

Public speaking, sleight of hand and the blocking of presentations are the basis of magic. In other words, magical entertainment is a precision exercise. Let's face it though, after the first two minutes of performance most of us are not emotional anyway.

Still, magic is a lie and lies make us nervous. Anxiety provoking situations affect our biology in predictable ways. This is the basis of machines that detect physiologic changes (heart rate, respiration and perspiration) and then make inferences about those changes on whether or not we are lying.

What should we do as magicians to cope with this? Practice, of course. Even so, all the practice in the world cannot allow us to overcome our fears of being caught. It's natural to have anxiety when hiding something. This fear, however, must be dealt with because this fear is the origin of the tell.

What is a "tell" you ask? A tell is when you giveaway to the audience that you're doing something mischievous. It destroys the illusion that you can do magic. A tell is the most important thing you need to learn to hide.

You might be thinking to yourself right now: what is this guy babbling about? Everyone knows magic isn't real! Well, that's true. Remember though, as a magician, you enter into a pact with your audience. The agreement is that you pretend to possess magical abilities and they pretend to believe you. Should a maneuver in your show be suspect, you have broken your part of the contract. In doing so, the audience's willing suspension of disbelief is gone. And then, you're just a guy (or girl) doing tricks.

To put it another way, we all know Middle Earth isn't real. There's no Ring of Power, no mountain, no tiny dudes with hairy feet. However, if one of the Ents suddenly gained the ability to fly during their fight with Saruman, we would be reminded of this fact. Why? Because Ents can't fly! Sure, they're talking trees, that's normal. They can walk too, also normal. Flight though? No. No way. Ents have boundaries within their universe. Crossing said boundaries is a tell. Should they do so, our suspension of disbelief would be lost.

Allow me to tell you the first boundary of your universe. No person who could really perform magic would ever consider using sleight of hand. That means that even though sleight of hand is always suspected, it should never be spotted. Remember, if you could do magic, you wouldn't need to touch any of your props.

Allow me to tell you the second boundary of your universe. No person who could really perform magic would ever be nervous because there is nothing to be nervous about. It's not a trick - it's all real.

In closeup magic, there are three kinds of tells. I'll explain each one in turn.

The Structural Tell

Structural tells are a problem in technique. Most of them involve a lack of understanding of economy. Before I explain the rule of economy, I must show you what it means to break it. Cue this video of Paul Gertner to 2:10 and watch until 2:30 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_0cGxqYZp6M

Did you catch the structural tell? If I wanted to pick a ball up and put it in my pocket that's what I'd do. I wouldn't pick a ball up; put it in my other hand, then transfer back to the original hand I picked it up with

Bang! You're Dead The Tells Got You

only then to put it in my pocket. (Of course, Mr. Gertner tells them later that he didn't really put them in his pocket so it's okay, right?). The movements lack economy. They don't represent what a reasonable person would do when presented with the same situation. Now, I know the argument to that is, "We're magicians, we're not supposed to do things normally!" And to that I say - you're a magician; you're supposed to be a normal person with extraordinary abilities.

Anyway, Gertner isn't alone. Here, enjoy these structural tells:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2TLPBwuHtTY Dai Vernon at 1:56 (Why put the ball in your left hand only to put it in your right only to put it back in your left? Is that what a reasonable person would do or does he need to cover sneaking a ball underneath the cup?)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ck9LFEfZRGI Alex Elmsley (Exaggerated movements when turning over the cards.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=issapXgmT-Y Joshua Westmeier-Shuh at 2:07 (no one would pick a mint up off the table like that.)

Remember, structural tells always lack economy. The rule of economy is what YOU would do if you were honestly doing what you said (if you want to know what a double should look like, turn over one card without thinking about it). Try your best to mirror honesty and then say goodbye to your structural tells.

The Speed Tell

Speed tells are much more directly related to anxiety than structural tells. In this tell, the magician picks up speed for no apparent reason. Most performers do this subconsciously as a way of getting through something that is unpleasant (something sneaky). Here, cue this video to 3:50 to watch world champion magician Johnny Palmer on David Letterman perform the cups and balls: http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=soqKkxZvDyA.

Did you notice that toward the end of the trick he begins to pick up speed for no apparent reason? That's the speed tell. He has to get those baby chicks underneath those cups and he's willing to sacrifice anything to do it!

The Skill Tell

Ah yes, the skill tell. This is my favorite. The skill tell involves demonstrating to the audience, generally at the beginning of a performance, that you are incapable of performing magic. In other words, the magician tells the audience, "I'M USING SLEIGHT OF HAND."

It's not their fault. They can't contain themselves. Must...have something...to show...for countless hours...of practice...

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=soqKkxZvDyA Johnny Palmer at 1:09

www.dananddave.com Everything these guys have ever done

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQxrWJ-6Tcg Jamy Ian Swiss at 1:17

www.theory11.com Everything these guys have ever done

I could fill pages upon pages upon pages with magicians who find it absolutely necessary to display their skill. Magic isn't about displaying your skill, it's about hiding it. Let me say that again. Magic isn't about displaying your skill, it's about hiding it.

Those are the three major tells to watch out for, but honestly, so what? Teaching you to spot tells is not my goal. I want you to eliminate them. Yeah, but how? My drill sergeant has already given you the answer.....

Drill Sergeant Dictum #1 - "Your props are an extension of yourself."

I met Milt Kort for the first time when I was 19 years old. Eventually, I began taking him to the magic meeting at Lake Orion, Michigan. I've said it before, but those car rides were a great time for me. Every Monday I got to spend an hour and a half with Kort. He'd ask me what I had been working on and then give me personal lessons on everything from finances to my double lift.

One day, I was explaining to him some of my difficulties with the classic palm. To which he replied, "You have to learn to forget about them."

"Huh?"

He then went on to tell me that he used to keep coins classic palmed in his hand all day long. Eventually, he told me, that he forgot about the coins. In doing so, his hands appeared perfectly normal when palming. He suggested I take the same approach. I won't lie, I found myself questioning Milt's judgment in this matter. Also, sometimes it was hard to know whether or not Kort was trying to pull one over on you. Either way, I figured I'd give it a try. To my astonishment, by day three I'd forgotten that the coins were there. In learning to forget them, the problems I'd encountered previously with the classic palm went away completely. From that day on I no longer thought of him as Kort. He was Zen Master Kort.

I am forever thankful to have known him.

So what are both Kort and my drill sergeant trying to tell you? A person is not generally consciously aware of their foot, hand, or any other body part. And so it must be with your cards, your coins, or any other item you work with. Lose conscious awareness of them and you'll be well on your way to losing your tells. Lose your tells and you'll soon find yourself in the world of Zen Master Kort.

Drill Sergeant Dictum #2 - "The basics will save your life."

Do you remember driver's training school? I do. Weeks went by where I'd find myself getting yelled at for a combination of constantly joking and not keeping my hands at the ten and two positions. Ah, memories. Long story short, the other day I found myself being cut off by a semi-truck on my daily hour plus commute into work (school). Where do you think my hands went? That's right, ten and two. Upon finding myself in a situation where I could possibly get into an accident, I went back to the basics.

Understanding the fundamentals of magic serves to not only to allow the magician to grasp the greater complexities of the craft, but also serve as a safety net when we find ourselves in compromising situations. Really understanding the basics will put you on the road to eliminating your tells (particularly the structural tell). For more on this, I recommend reading the Ron Bauer Private Studies Series and The Royal Road To Card Magic. These books might just save your life.



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... Spelling Stacks

Steven Goodwin

Essaj

Spelling tricks using stacked decks are amongst the first we learn. The ingenuity of a smartly
stacked deck mirrors the fascination many have with the secrets of magic in general. This article
will introduce you a simple approach for stacking such a deck.

I also call these looped stacks. Essentially, a small packet of cards is used and individual cards are dealt from the top to the bottom, with each move counting as one individual letter. Once each letter of a particular word has been spelt the final card is revealed. This is repeated for each word until the pack is exhausted.

Instead of counting letters you can also count words in a sentence, days of the week, or anything else that makes sense to the plot used in your trick.

Creating the Stack

Begin by counting the number of words in the list, and drawing spaces for each word. We shall use the example of spelling the name of each card, ace through ten. Therefore, we begin with 10 spaces,

Starting with the first card (ace) count through each empty space normally, and write an 'A' in the last slot; this will be the card you deal face up.

Then, beginning with the next blank space, begin counting out the letters of the next word. In our case, two. Write in the next number.

(t) (w) (o)

____A_________2______

If you reach the end of the list, return to the beginning in one motion, and always count empty spaces. Since each card is discarded once spelt, the spaces represent each card in the pack. And since each deal reduces the packet size, we only need to count blank spaces.

Continue building this stack as shown, and check your results with those presented at the end.

Because every stack is generated by an algorithm such as this, it is impossible to produce the same result with two different stacks. However, you can vary the result by dealing the next card face up.

Another variety of stack requires the spectator to spell some of the names, but their attempt lands on the wrong card (usually the joker) whereby you replace the card and continue as normal. The method is identical to that above, except you must count empty spaces and the one occupied by the joker.

There is no magical formula, alas, for determining which positions the joker should be in. Instead, you determine on which spelled word you want the first joker to appear, and place it accordingly. Since the position of the joker is now fixed, you work out the rest of the stack to see if it fits your intended presentation.

In order to practise this technique, you can generate a stack that allows you to recite the follow short poem, moving one card from the top to bottom on each word. Each word marked with * indicates the point at which the card turned face up as you say it.

Women*.

They steal your heart*.

Take your diamonds*.

Then they club* you to death,

And bury you with a spade*.

Q♥ A♣ A♠ A♥

You can repeat the practise by including extra dummy cards which are left in your hand at the end of the routine. For a bonus point, build a stack with 6 extra blank cards, each containing the letters spelling out "The End"

Example Stacks

These are simple stacks where by spelling the name of the card, you will automagically arrive at it. In all cases you deal cards from the top of the deck to the bottom, saying each letter. You must then remove the card from the deck once you have finished spelling its name, and continue counting with the next card.

In this first set of stacks, the final card of the word should be upturned to reveal the number. That is, spelling 'A-C-E' involves moving two cards from the top to the bottom, and showing the third.

From A-10: 3 5 1 8 10 2 4 6 7 9 From A-King: Q 4 1 8 K 2 7 5 10 J 3 6 9 From 10-A: 1 8 10 6 3 2 9 4 7 5 From King-A: 1 8 10 K 6 3 2 9 Q 4 7 5 J

This second set works as above, but with the card after the last one being revealed.

From A-10: 4 9 10 1 3 6 8 2 5 7 From A-King: 3 8 7 1 Q 6 4 2 J K 10 9 5 From 10-A: 4 1 7 10 2 8 3 5 9 6 From King-A: 9 6 J 4 K 1 7 10 2 8 Q 3 5

This next list allows you to spell the name of every card in the deck! It's more a proof on concept, since you would need more personality than time to present it effectively. You should spell Ace through King of

spades, followed by the same with the suits hearts, diamonds, and clubs in that order. Include the word "of" each time, and turn over the final card of the word.



Secrets Behind The Magic... ... The Actor's Box Of Tricks

Essay

Allen Tipton

The secrets behind our magic are often complex, but I want to show you some simple ones which, if put into practice, will improve your performances and your status as a magician.

Goodliffe in his Abra. magazine Editorial, as far off as 1954, said, "Magicians do not want to read about how to improve their shows. They only want more card tricks!"

One would hope that attitude has now changed, but it is still not changed by all magicians.

So in these articles I will show you a few of The Important Things.

First from "The Actor's Box Of Tricks", then routining the trick, the act, handling volunteers, etc. And please remember- everything I write has come from sheer experience in both magic and theatre.

I want your watchwords to be: Showmanship, Presentation and adapted Theatre Techniques—the keystones which are vital to effective performances (aspects which are so important whether you are working in theatre, cabaret, stand up, close up, street magic, corporate, trade shows or children's magic).

We need to have magic with impact, wonder, mystery, surprise, laughter and, above all, magic with entertainment (be it serious or comic).

The first Secret may make you smile, smirk or simply say, "That is not for me." Wrong. It is the simplest technique I teach and is the BASIS of CONTROL over an audience—an audience of any size. Master it (it's quite easy) and your control will improve.

Secret No. 1: The Stance

The idea for this came to me many years ago watching lay people being interviewed on TV. They seemed to be standing on a moving ship—swaying from side to side! This movement was exaggerated because they were being watched on a small screen and some swayed so much they partly disappeared from view. It was a sign of uneasiness. They were not balanced correctly or relaxed on their two feet.

To correct this you must stand with a gap between your feet; a gap the length of one of your feet. If you are very tall or very broad then the gap may even be 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of one of your feet.

Rise up on the balls of your feet. You will feel the muscles behind your knees tighten. Retain this tightness and come down back onto your feet. Relax this tightness slightly. Now lift up the middle of your body—the diaphragm area—slightly! Hold this, but NOT rigidly.

You should now be balanced evenly on both feet. You can turn side to side, covering your entire audience. Confident control begins with being relaxed on well balanced feet.

Secret No. 2: Your Audience Your aims are:

1. THEIR ATTENTION: You must hold their attention throughout.

2. THEIR REACTIONS: Reaction is achieved by interesting, mysterious, surprising, entertaining and thoroughly worked out, well rehearsed routines plus well rehearsed timing

3. THEIR INTEREST: Strong magic, Strong Presentation.

4. LIKEABILTY: The audience must LIKE you. Smile. Practice your smile. Look in the mirror. Ask yourself: Is it a friendly smile. Too wide? Not wide enough? Showing too many teeth? Not enough teeth. Is this a person I would like? Work on it.

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: If the audience feels part of your magic then you've won. Try to find a way of incorporating participation somewhere in the act. What about being different and incorporating participation into a silent act or a manipulation act?

6. THEIR LAUGHTER & AMAZEMENT: Combine all the above and you are well on the way to being a successful magical entertainer.

7. EMOTION: Asking a question can get an emotional response. Bringing audience nostalgia (e.g. Copperfield's Grandpa's Aces; The Boy Who Had Never Seen Snow) will evoke emotion.

Your warmth and your approach to people is vital to success.

If they like you then they will like your magic. But they must like YOU first.

Read Fitzkee's "Showmanship For Magicians". It is a good read with sound advice. The Check Charts in the final chapter will give you food for thought and practical ideas.

Then ask yourself, "What is Magic?"

The answer? It is the Experience of Wonder; Mystery with Entertainment: Entertainment with Mystery

And as a performance art you will need some of the Actor's Box of Tricks, because your tricks are just a hook upon which to hang the entertainment.

Change Bag ...

... Routine

Effect

Peter Mileson

The change bag has been around for a while; however it is thought to be, and even disliked because it is, an obvious prop. I created this routine to make the Change Bag the main focus of the routine, rather than a prop brought on just to change or vanish something.

To start with it was a normal clatter box routine, you get 3 silks put them in the change bag and make them reappear in the clatter box.

I do children's magic and find a bit of comedy always helps in my routines. So instead of just vanishing the silks, the magician and volunteers have a bit of trouble with the silks reappearing. Next I realised that, among other reasons, the clatter box took away from the trick so, instead, I used the chick pan.

So now I have gone on about how the trick has evolved I should probably tell you what it is.

Props:

- Zippered Change bag
- Chick pan (Or any other small production device)
- 3 silks (I use red white and blue, but they can be any colour you want)
- A flag (any large silk will do, just make sure it is bigger than the silks and has the same colours)
- Silly wand (not vital but a wand of sorts adds an extra comedy moment)

The Effect:

First let me explain the routine: you are going to make 3 silks disappear and reappear in the chick pan. It's as simple as that (not original in concept but how you get there is a bit different).

Now you need 3 volunteers. You stand them at a good distance from one another.

The first is on the far left. The second you stand on the far right. And finally the third is in the middle where you should end up as you go with them to the positions.

All my props are off to the far left of the stage.

Next pick up the silks one at a time and give them to the volunteers every time you pick one up (i.e. you pick up silk 1 and give it to volunteer 1 [far right] then you pick up silk 2 and give to volunteer 2 [far left] finally get silk 3 and give to volunteer 3 [centre]). Have them examine the silks.

Whilst the silks are being examined by the volunteers, get the change bag and collect them, one at a time, in the order stated above i.e. right, left, middle.

Once you have collected the silks, get them to say the magic words (in my case, "Miles More Magic"). You then ask the volunteers to check that the silks have vanished. Right says, "Yes;" left says, "Yes;" middle says, "No."

Ask them to pull the silks out the prove that they are there. You do this a total of 3 times in the order from the start - right, left, middle:

Yes, yes, no

Yes, yes, no

No, no, yes

You get them to call out each time, but really get them going for the fourth and final time.

On the fourth run you go to each one as before (you should be centre stage) and push your arm through the bag to prove to everyone that they are gone.

(The idea of going from one to the other like this came from David Ginn's 'ABC Puzzle' found in "Live Kidbiz 2.")

Finally bring the attention to the chick pan on the table that has been there the entire time and explain that the silks are in there even though it had appeared empty. Hold it up to the audience and they will see that it is empty. Act surprised that the silks are not in there.

Now get the silly wand and give it the middle volunteer hold the chick pan for them get them to call out the magic words one last time and open it as they finish and pull out the flag or large silk.

Another thing that I have wanted to do with this routine, but due to a lack of practice time and time in general, with my exams to revise for, have not been able to add is the magic waistcoat. This is why a flag is preferable.

My idea was when handing out the silks you state that it is easy to remember what colour you have, because it matches the waistcoat. You do this each time. The nice thing with this is people who aren't

Change Bag Routine

very confident with the waist coat are fine with this bit because you can do it off stage when getting the silk (hence part of the reason I do it one at a time and it is also adds a bit of comedy.)

Finally, at the end when holding up the flag, drop it to reveal the final change bringing your arms up in to the perfect applause pose.



Essay

Aommaster

There are numerous rumours that have built up over time (thanks to Hollywood, TV shows and general ignorance) and it is important that your spectator/client is aware of these before proceeding with an induction. Hypnosis can be severely hindered if the person is not willing to be hypnotized, which is usually a result of one of these rumours. Without further ado:

Rumours surrounding hypnosis

A Few Words On ...

Rumour: "Hypnosis is an unnatural, weakened and vulnerable state of the mind."

... Hypnosis

Verdict: False! Hypnosis is a very natural state of the mind. We enter and leave a hypnotic trance state at least twice a day, before we enter deep sleep, and after we wake up from sleep. The mind is not weakened, nor vulnerable. In fact, you have a heightened sense of awareness. Your senses are stronger. You can hear and see things more clearly in a trance state than without.

Rumour: "You cannot lie when you are in a hypnotic state. Everything you say is the truth."

Verdict: False! Fact of the matter is: you lie better in a hypnotic state than in a normal state!

Rumour: "You are under the hypnotist's complete control when you are in a trance state."

Verdict: False! Notice the second part of the definition of hypnosis "... combined with the establishment of selective thinking". A person in a hypnotic trance has selective thinking. They are in complete control of which suggestions they want to accept and which they don't. A hypnotist cannot make a person go against their will or morals. The person needs to be willing to accept the suggestions before they can have any effect.

Rumour: "Hypnosis really works"

Verdict: True and False! Hypnosis will only work when you want it to. If you are not willing to accept the suggestions a hypnotist gives you, they will have no effect.

Rumour: "Not everyone can be hypnotized"

Verdict: False! Everyone can achieve a deep state of hypnosis. How deep of a trance they enter will vary from person to person, but everyone can achieve a working level of trance. The only thing that can keep a person from entering a hypnotic state is fear. If a person has a fear of hypnosis (for whatever reason), then they will not enter a deep a level of trance.

A Few Words On Hypnosis

Rumour: "Hypnosis is dangerous"

Verdict: False! Hypnosis is perfectly safe because the person in the trance state is in complete control the whole duration of the trance. There have been no reported cases of anyone being injured through hypnosis. But always remember: as a hypnotist, it is your responsibility to take care of the person in the trance state. Hypnosis does not give them super-human strength, i.e. anything they could not do in a state without a trance cannot be done in a state with the trance.

Rumour: "A person can get 'stuck' in hypnosis and never be able to emerge themselves"

Verdict: False! Since the person in the trance state is in control, they can emerge whenever they want. There is a difference between not being able to emerge and not wanting to emerge. A hypnotic state can sometimes be so stress-relieving that a person may n o t w a n t t o emerge. In this case, it is up to the hypnotist to provide the motivation for the person in the trance.

Rumour: "A person needs to be completely relaxed before they can enter a trance state"

Verdict: True and False! This comes down to the induction technique. A person can be in a state of hypnosis while standing up too! An induction is just a set of steps a hypnotist goes through to get the person into a trance state. There are three types of inductions:

Progressive relaxation

These inductions are the "classic" hypnotic inductions. The ones that you see on TV, in movies, etc. They bypass the critical factor through pure boredom. These inductions are the ones that require a person to be relaxed in a comfortable position, taking deep breaths, imagining a beach, etc.

Rapid

These inductions take anywhere from 2-10 minutes to carry out. They do not require relaxation, but due to their fairly long duration, relaxation on the client's behalf is recommended.

Instant

As their name suggests. These inductions are instant. As fast as a snap of the fingers. These inductions should be no longer than 5 seconds.

Some final words

My hypnosis training comes from a hypnotherapy standpoint, which differs from stage and entertainment hypnosis. However, certain rules must be followed, regardless of hypnosis usage:

- 1. Never attempt to hypnotize a person against their will. It will either not work or they will enter a trance state very briefly before emerging themselves very angry with you.
- 2. If a person is willing to be hypnotized, make sure that they are ready by asking them "Are you ready to be hypnotized?" Make sure that the area around them is safe and you are ready to support their body weight when they fall to the ground (unless you have supplied them with the pre-hypnotic suggestions that say otherwise).

A Few Words On Hypnosis

- 3. Be careful what you read! Many products advertise themselves as the "fastest induction in the world" or "the most powerful induction in the world". You know better!
- 4. Choose your induction carefully. I am personally not a fan of the handshake-pull induction. From the videos I have seen online it looks like a spectator could be injured if you are not aware of any health conditions they might have. I prefer to play is safe by either using an arm-drop induction or an instant induction (e.g. finger snap).

I hope this article provided you with some insight (whether you are a performer, or a to-be spectator or client) into what hypnosis is and what it isn't. Hypnosis can be a lot of fun (past life regression, future life progression, seeing auras, spirit guides, etc.) but can also be used for therapeutic purposes (painless child birth, phobia/fear treatment, etc.).

If you are interested in learning hypnosis, there are many resources which you can learn from. Two of the best ones I have seen are:

http://www.omnihypnosis.com/

This is the official Omni Hypnosis Training Centre website. The hypnosis taught here is for people interested in pursuing a career in hypnotherapy. The beginner - advanced training is extremely pricey (about \$650) but will cover every aspect of hypnotherapy. It contains over 30 hours of training on how to start a hypnotherapy practice, inductions, deepening techniques, and therapeutic techniques such as regression, chair therapy, death-bed therapy, etc.

The Manchurian Approach DVDs

These DVDs are aimed at people who intend on using hypnosis for entertainment purposes (either walkaround or stage). It also teaches inductions, deepening techniques, but instead of therapeutic techniques, it teaches forces, peeks, etc. It costs about \$80, contains more than 4 hours of teaching. With this DVD, you can combine magic, mentalism and hypnosis together to achieve astonishing results. It is one of the best DVDs I've seen on the market so far.

Interview

Alex Radway



Hi Paul, thank you so much for taking the time to speak to me today, Before we start, please state your name, location and occupation.

Paul Wilson, currently at home in Scotland and I'm a writer, producer, director, actor and presenter. I also perform the occasional show...

... R. Paul Wilson

Thanks, ok, 20 questions, starting....now!

Was it daunting having to teach a resource as well known as RRTCM on video/DVD?

Second Interview ...

Actually, yes. Very. It was part of my attempt to teach myself the ins and outs of production (Hit The Road was the other video I made around the same time). RRTCM was ready made to create a video course but I was determined to encourage viewers to use the book in conjunction with the videos. Learning to read magic books is as important as learning sleight of hand, in my opinion. Another problem was having to perform so many card tricks in the time we had available to a small group of people. From the start, I insisted on NOT pushing for reactions or trying to blow these people away. They had to watch me do card tricks (plus reshoots) for over twelve hours in ONE day. Keeping them awake under those lights was our priority. They had to be participants for the sake of illustration of performance - NOT a studio audience. I'm very grateful to all of them for their help. Which effect do you wish you could have been the one to invent?

The card in the hat. I still use it. I fool anyone not familiar with it.

What was the last trick you saw which completely fooled you?

Dean Dill fools me every time I visit him in LA but I think the last one that actually troubled me the most was a version of "ring off string" that Dean did a couple of years ago. It fooled me badly. I thought about it for a while and returned to the shop to find him performing for someone else. My theory was right and Dean could see I had nailed it. It's a cat and mouse game. I once stacked twenty decks of cards in his shop (over several days) just to fool him with one trick. Tamariz fools me every time I see him too. Recently I spent a week with him in Spain and he totally destroyed me with a seemingly simple effect. The explanation was wonderful. It's my favorite feeling and I pursue it every day.

When someone says "you're a magician? Show me a trick!" what do you show them?

The thumb gag. If they REALLY want to see something, I make any coin they ask for appear from nowhere, then vanish it up their sleeve. It reappears from their OTHER sleeve. I save the cards until they are genuinely asking for a proper routine.

When performing, what is your favourite opener and closer?

I have used my version of 3 FLY since the early nineties. It's simple, magical and allows me to look the audience in the eye. I always close with The Predator as an encore, of sorts.

What is the best piece of magical advice you've ever been given?

I'll give you three:

Confusion is not magic. The simplest method is the best, but not necessarily the easiest. Want wonder.

Which magician(s) do you admire the most?

Juan Tamariz. If I could make a list I would include too many names but Eric Meade, Michael Weber, Bebel, Roy Walton, Chuck Smith would be the first names I'd think of. If I could include magicians of the past I'd need several pieces of paper. I have learned a great deal by studying great magicians and trying to find my own path.

As we all have one, what is the most memorable time you messed up a trick/routine?

So many stories. I once did a set in the W.C. Fields bar at the Magic Castle. Bob Sheets was watching as I seemed to mess up every single trick, including a two deck, stacked miracle that literally went nowhere. I remember the audience loving every minute. I made it fun, which was exactly what Sheets had been trying to teach me that weekend. After the two-deck nightmare, everyone was exhausted from laughing as I removed my trusty chop cup. I said "I hope this damned thing works." and they all laughed again. I did too. When they calmed down I remember the line exactly - "I can't believe I'm the only one not drinking!" It was a riot. When the lemons appeared the crowd went wild. It's one of my favorite shows of all time and proved it's you the audience must love, not the tricks.

What is your favourite gaffed deck/gimmick to use?

I never use them. Ever. Honest. Really!

Thanks, and now some random non-magic questions:

When you're not thinking about magic, what's on your mind?

Film, filmmaking, writing. TV production. I read a great deal on many subjects - anything that interests me.

What's the most treasured item in your house?

My family.

What's the last film you saw? Any good?

I saw Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy. I absolutely loved it.

If you weren't performing magic for a living, what would you be doing?

I work in film and TV for a living. You know, I admire professional performers but I feel lucky that

60 Second Interview - R. Paul Wilson



Erm ... no.

Magic As Art

Essay Michael Jav

As magicians we enjoy arguing whether or not magic is art. Regardless of how we look at it, we like to tell ourselves in our own self important way that our opinion is the only one that matters. Whether or not we view magic in and of itself as art, I believe that we can all agree on the fact that magic is a performance art.

For me it is a matter of looking at our tools and what we do with them. I don't believe that magic is an art, but I do believe that we can artistically weave our performance in such a way that it becomes an art. As an example, a painter's tools are not his art - they are what he uses to express his art. He has different brushes that allow him to contour in different effects that become part of the overall picture that he paints. In those contours we find art.

In this column, I will look at our tools and how we can contour our performance via the use of those tools. All too often, we consider only one or two tools in our performance and this narrow view doesn't allow us to paint a truly contoured picture. In our example, we will use the following tools:

Magic As Art

- A deck of cards
- A thumb tip
- A "Sharpie Through Anything"
- A double backed card
- Various sleights

Generally speaking, we like our ambitious card routine to be composed of a deck of cards and our various sleights and nothing more. This, however, holds us back because we are choosing to ignore the extra tools that the painter would not snub when painting his picture. We miss out on the contours that the true artist would never turn his back on.

The deck starts in its case in the same pocket as the thumb tip. The Sharpie is kept in a different pocket and will be used to ditch the thumb tip when we go to grab it. The double backer is, of course, already in the deck of cards and our sleights are ready to go at any time.

The deck set up is a queen of diamonds on the top with the double backer immediately underneath. The queen of hearts should be located in the deck, near the middle. Other than this, I will not be going into great detail in the handling of this trick because you should be able to work it through on your own (and this will allow for your own creative way of presenting this trick).

Without further ado, I give you:

The Close Up Stage Trick

"Stage magicians really have it hard. They have all the equipment to lug around, they have sound equipment to deal with, the lights and, most importantly, they need an assistant. Rather than have all that stuff, I'm going to present my stage act to you, right here, at your table."

Pull out the deck of cards with the thumb tip in finger palm, underneath the cased deck. Open the case, pull out the cards and put the case on the table. As you bring your dirty hand back up, put the deck back into that hand, which will continue to provide cover for the thumb tip. Timed properly, it is a very simple matter to bring the deck back to the dirty hand as you turn the hand to receive the cards without the tip ever flashing.

"First, I'll need an assistant. So, for my lovely assistant I'll use the queen of hearts."

Flip the deck over so that the faces are up and begin thumbing through the deck for all to see. Careful handling will allow you to flip the deck and maintain cover for the thumb tip. As you spread the face up deck, it continues to hide the thumb tip. Don't spread all the way to the top or you'll show the double backed card. The queen of hearts is near the center and that's all the farther that you need to spread the deck. Have a spectator take the queen out of the deck and square the deck back up.

As the spectator removes the queen and you square the deck back up, it is a simple matter to put your thumb underneath and seat the thumb tip on your thumb. Table the deck and take back the queen by putting out your hand with fingers on top (hiding the thumb tipped thumb underneath). Grip the card with fingers on top and thumb underneath the card.

"I'm going to hypnotize my assistant because that's what a stage magician would do."

Showing the queen to your spectators, take her with the other hand keeping the thumb tip behind the card (you simply take the thumb tip off of the thumb holding it pressed to the back of the card). Make a

few passes with your hand (because you are hypnotizing her) and set the card on the back of your hand using the thumb tip to hold the card in an upright stance (rather like the back of an easel). You have now proved that you hypnotized your assistant because there she stands, stiff as a board, on the back of your hand.

"Now that she's under we'll do what a stage magician would do...We stick a sword through her!"

Take the card off of the back of your hand, re-grip the card seating the thumb tip back to where it was originally and hand the card to a spectator (basically, you do the same as above only in reverse in order to hand the card back to the spectator). They will want to have a look at the card, so it's easy enough to simply reach into your pocket and pull out the Sharpie (of course, ditch the tip at that point).

"Since I don't have a sword, this will have to do."

Take the card back and plunge the Sharpie through it. Rip the sharpie out and say:

"There, now she's cut in half - just like a stage magician would do!"

Hand the card back and replace the Sharpie in your pocket. Again, they are going to be terribly intent on seeing that card and you can get away with anything.

"Of course, stage magicians are illusionists. What you've seen is an illusion. I didn't really mutilate my assistant...That would be a ghastly thing to do."

Pick the deck back up.

"Instead of mutilating her, let's put her in a box. We'll use this deck as the stage magician's box and I'll seal her inside."

Do a double lift/tilt get ready while you are talking and use the tilt to appear to put the queen into the middle of the deck. This will leave you with the queen of diamonds on top, followed by the double backer, followed by the queen of hearts.

"Imagine if she could get out without any problem at all..."

Flip the top card, the queen of diamonds. At first your audience will think it's the right card because it's red. It won't take much, though, before they figure out the ruse.

"I could use her twin sister to help me, but that would be cheating."

Put the queen of diamonds into the middle (for real) and do a double turn over.

"But, see, I don't need to cheat - here she is! Still, maybe they're triplets. I'll tell you what, why don't we ensure that there's no way for me to cheat. Please, sign this card across the face."

Thumb off the queen of hearts, reach into your pocket and pull out the real Sharpie. Have the card signed while you do a get ready for a tilt. Again, perform the double turn over and she is back on top. You are now prepared to continue onto another phase or go straight into an impossible location (or even card on forehead if you please).

You can, of course, choose to use a card to wallet which will add even another tool into the contour of this trick, but that choice is purely yours. What I want, more than anything else, is for you to stop and consider all of the tools that you have when building a magic trick to allow you to give it more depth than just doing a standard trick that you've bought from someone.

We have so many tools, like the painter's brushes, that it is a shame to let them go to waste when you can paint such a deep picture rather than the two dimensional trash that we do most of the time. You have the tools, use them. Be creative. Be you - not the guy that you bought some damn trick off of.

Take care and thank you for reading.

... Remarks



Mark's ...

Essay

Mark Williams

There are moments in magic that make us all stop and take notice. A vanish, an appearance or even a transposition. The awe and wonder swells inside of us...To this very day. Yet, how do we apply what we see to what we perform? Simply put, I think the key is to let the magic sink in. Do not rush the moment. Spotlight it and showcase the very moment of the magic and bring the wonderment to life.

Pacing your effects is the most important factor. Whether you use music in your act or the spoken word (patter), set your pacing and timing so that when the magic happens, it does not get lost. I have witnessed first-hand many performers rushing through their effects, only to disappoint and confuse their audiences. A slower paced effect, heightened by natural tension, would serve well to improve one's performance.

Yet, how do we go about learning to pace effects and time the appropriate wonderment? Well, the book Designing Miracles by Darwin Ortiz is a great place to start. Ortiz breaks it down into four steps: method, effect, performance and design. Another great book is Approaching Magic by David Regal. In David's book you will learn how to invent, construct and perform your magic effects. Both books are invaluable resources to help you improve as a magician.

Watching other magicians perform is another great way to learn. You get to see first-hand what to do and sometimes what not to do. Study the classic acts, like Fred Kaps, Richard Ross or even Shimada (to name just a few). By absorbing everything you see and read you will be well on your way to being a better magician.

Taking drama or acting classes can also help you learn proper timing and staging. Delivering your lines in a play is much like framing your performances for an audience. A well paced act will capture the wonderment and serve it up on a platter for all to enjoy.

Take your time, slow down and let the magic sink in. It really is the only way to making your magic more meaningful.

Best Magical Regards!



Breaking The Taboo

Breaking The ...

VOI 2 ISSUE 3 Apr '12

Essay

... Taboo

Dan Cunningham

It is not unusual, within a new product's advertising blurb, for the statement 'Incredibly Commercial' (or words to that effect) to be proudly declared as a positive reason for its purchase. I would like to take a moment or two to examine exactly what that phrase means.

Ask a working professional what they require in a trick that would be suitable for their repertoire and you will find that these are the typical answers:

Instant Reset: This means that, ideally, at the conclusion of the trick it can be performed again for a different audience immediately without any re-arranging of the apparatus involved. There would be nothing less convincing than responding to a request to see a trick again with, "Certainly. I just need to nip to the gents for a minute or two." If 'Instant Reset' isn't available then limited manipulation of the apparatus (casual or idle handling) is the next best alternative.

Angle Free: This means that your trick can be performed surrounded or, at least, nearly surrounded, without any part of the effect's method being revealed. It may be worth noting that those in the vicinity, who are not necessarily your immediate audience, should also be considered.

Simple Plot: If you are working in a venue where there is loud music playing in the background communication can be an issue. Perhaps there are children amongst your spectators who would not appreciate any unnecessary complexity. Also, in a working situation a complex plot could take away from the actual magic itself.

Modular: If you are using a routine then it would be handy if you were able to tailor its length according to factors in your environment. For example if you are beginning a four phase routine, after being informed that the spectator's meal is soon to arrive, being able to miss out one or more of the middle phases seamlessly would be an advantage.

So, as this seems to be a perfectly serviceable standard for the producers of magical effects to aim for, what is the concern? There appears to be something of a taboo regarding whether or not a product is commercial. For example it would deemed bad for business for the supplier of a product to declare it to be not commercial at all. This is a taboo that I will now enthusiastically break.

First of all I would suggest that I am on sturdy ground statistically when I say that most buyers in this industry are amateurs. It only takes a quick look at the members on the average forum to see this, not to mention those who attend conventions. A look at the inventory of any magic supplier lends heavily to this theory too. If a magic supplier really depended on professional magicians then their inventories would be very different than they are currently. They would have bulk offers on playing cards and the literature would be geared towards the generation of business, rather than the refinement of sleights. But as it stands most online shops have dozens of expensive 'limited edition' decks of cards, the type of cards that a collector would be interested in. The reading material or DVD content, for the large part, is focused on either establishing a broad foundation for the beginner or refining the existing techniques of the enthusiast.

There is the aphorism that a professional magician performs a few tricks for hundreds of people, whereas an amateur performs hundreds of tricks for a few people. Now I don't necessarily agree with this rather simplistic distinction, but let's suppose that it is true. Shouldn't the arsenal of the professional magician constantly be changing? If we operate under the assumption that most money spent at magic shops is done so by the working pro then this would have to be the case. But it isn't.

If the producers of magical effects have failed to make this observation themselves then we all lose out. The amateur finds that, increasingly, the material produced is designed to have the commercial properties listed earlier, properties only relevant to the working professional. Subsequently, creators and suppliers of these magical effects lose out too, as they are only appealing to a tiny minority of those with money to spend. Finally, professional magicians find that in order to add to, or improve, their act they have to wade through mountains of material supposedly designed for their needs when most of it is described as 'commercial' only because it is currently seen to be good business sense to do so.

Maybe it's time to embrace a new genre of magic? Maybe it's time to embrace 'non commercial magic'? I think so, and to illustrate the point I will need to examine the two main arguments against such a proposition:

Argument number one: 'If magic is not commercial then it is usually magic for magicians'

This, much to my constant amusement, is seen as a criticism. Magicians socialise with magicians, often in the form of group meetings either in a local club or a less formal arrangement. Shouldn't magicians be treated to mystifying magic too? Ask yourself the question 'who watches the most magic?' and really think hard about the answer. I haven't seen a professional magician advertised in the north of England in over a decade, so I would doubt that the answer would be 'members of the general public'. The actual answer?

Magicians. Magicians watch the most magic, be it to learn, to help others improve with constructive criticism or, as mentioned earlier, purely for social reasons. So why should 'magic for magicians' be a bad thing?

Simon Aronson is absolutely unapologetic about the fact that some of the content of his books is designed to fool other magicians. Typically one conjures up images of absurdly difficult sleights designed to remove signature movements familiar to magicians, but anyone who is lucky enough to have read Aronson's work will tell you, this is not always the case. The likes of Aronson (and for that matter Scarne) implement clever arrangements and principles to their magic, the result being that the magic occurs with seemingly no manipulations at all. With the ambition of being able to fool the knowledgeable these gentlemen have created effects so clean that they are almost 'magical'. Surely this is something to be desired of all magicians, regardless of whether or not they perform to complete strangers in exchange for money.

Argument number two: 'If material isn't commercial then it is untested'.

There is a rather patronising view of the amateur propagated by some and the usually hackneyed description generally consists of something like this:

'The amateur only performs for his most tolerant of friends and members of his family. As a result they have rarely been criticised and therefore their material is largely untested in "the real world".'

The idea that some have this view will almost certainly be refuted my most reading this article. But ask yourself how often, on a forum for example, will the views of the amateur be met with 'Well how many working gigs have you done then?'

My response would be 'I've done as much table hopping as Lennert Green, and I have performed at as many weddings as Simon Aronson'. The best magical innovators, in my library at least, are not constantly performing day in, day out. Does this mean that their material, which has been usually reserved only for audiences of their choosing, is any less enjoyable than material that has been shown to thousands?

Breaking The Taboo

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The material produced by these two men is decidedly non-commercial. Lennert Green's material breaks practically every rule listed at the beginning of this essay. The lateral palm, which I would suggest is the main device he uses, is very angle dependent. His presentations often have elaborate setups which leaves them not modular at all. Also, the sleights are so difficult that months, if not years, of investment are required to get them working even fifty per cent of the time. Also note that Lennert often mentions his time in magic clubs and in the company of other magicians. They are the critical audience he uses, not the general public.

Aronson's material is often dependent on a very specific environment, usually one where he can communicate easily with many members of the audience. He requires table space and an audience who can listen easily without the inconvenience of interruptions or loud music. His presentations are almost theatrical with a definite beginning, middle and an end. Due to these specific parameters, few people are treated to seeing his wonderful material. Does this mean that it is 'untested'? Does this mean that his performances are any less impressive just because they are so few in number? Is he any less equipped to perform in 'the real world'?

We the amateurs, those who perform magic purely for its own sake, those who provide most of the income for magic shops should be perfectly comfortable asking for more non-commercial magic. We should be delighted to hear that a new effect is not going to be something that is accessible to any audience. We should applaud the producers whose material will take hundreds of hours of practice before it can be performed and we should relish the opportunity to fool even the most experienced magician.

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Top Hat - Issue 4 due 1st July 2012

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Parting Shot

do not think that gimmicks are at all lazy. In fact, I don't like the way that people tell newcomers to steer clear of gimmicks and head for books and DVD's. Since when could you do the coin in bottle without a folding coin?

Using gimmicks also takes away much of the effort needed to do the mechanics of the trick and it lets us concentrate on the presentation. When I did a social event a while back at my school I did NFW, reversing card and svengali deck. People may critisize me for using that (and ok, it wasn't exactly difficult) but some of the reactions were incredible.

What about scotch and soda? Probably the most used coin set, yet it is a gimmick.

I am not saying gimmicks are the greatest, nor that they are terrible, but I don't think there is a single performer anywhere in the world who has not, or does not use some kind of gimmick.

- Richard Penna -

and don't forget to follow us on Twitter! - @MagicBunnyForum