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JUNE 2020  
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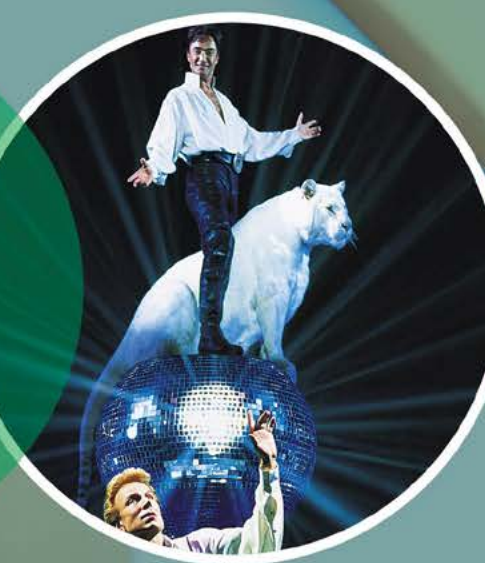


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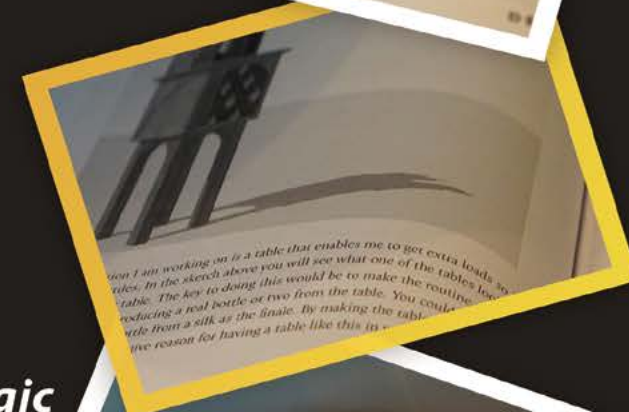


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## GOODBYE ROY HORN

Another terrible loss in the world of magic as we say farewell to Roy Horn. There is no doubt that Siegfried and Roy changed the course of entertainment in Las Vegas, helping to turn it into the huge empire it is today. Their show was unlike any other, the one everybody had to see when they visited Las Vegas. They were, and will forever be Vegas entertainment royalty. My sincere thanks to Diana Zimmerman for her wonderful tribute and photos. Diana's book, Siegfried and Roy: Unique In All the World should be on every magician's bookshelf as it is a real insight into these amazing legends.

With the advent of social media magic, interactive magic shows and on-line appearances due to Covid-19, I thought it was a good time to feature Murray on the cover. Murray has achieved amazing results with his on-line presence. A thank you to Martin Stein who did a wonderful job capturing the story behind Murray's social media success. Murray continues to get press exposure even during lock down and he is about to announce a project related to The Tiger King. Keep your eyes open for this one.

There have been many opinions about live on-line performances, and as I said last month, I am not here to try and convince anyone that this is what they should be doing. There are those performers I know personally who have successfully managed to continue their livelihood with virtual shows, some are busier now than before. And there are secrets to presenting a solid on-line show ranging from; how to make the venue look good, how to reduce on-line latency, how to use OBS, the best format to use, etc. It has been a huge learning curve for many, however, magicians have always seemed to embrace technology and run with it. Look at Georges Méliès and his early pioneering work with film and the integration of magic techniques. I would image he would love this new medium or live performances and the ability for people to talk back to a screen. It's a very exciting time for magic. While in-person entertainment will come back, and in New Zealand HAS come back, the on-line world is here to stay.

I would also like to thank all our advertisers, because without them your FREE copy of VANISH would not be possible. Even during these difficult times they all wanted to continue their support. This allows me to spend time producing the magazine and pays for the costs of having it on-line ... available to you. Please show support to these advertisers by dropping them a note when you purchase a trick and just say, "thank you and that your saw their ad in VANISH".

I am proud to announce that I have completed YEAR TWO and YEAR THREE of the VANISH HARD COVER books. Each volume contains at least 30 effects and 30 essays, hand picked by yours truly highlighting the amazing magic that VANISH has produced over the past eight years. These books are collectors items as only 500 of each will ever be produced. They are available from your favorite magic dealer and contain enough magic to keep you going through several lock downs!

The world has certainly changed in the past three months, and I sincerely wish you all the very best for whatever lies ahead. Stay safe and most of all, please continue to be nice to one another.

Until next time

Paul Romhany







## SHARKS V2

A vivid and evocative casino-style deck, SHARKS V2 is the latest creative collaboration between British magician DMC and magic designer Phill Smith. As the creative alliance behind the now world-famous and award-winning ELITES playing cards, this latest unmarked creation harks back to the first ever deck created by the pair, the SHARKS V1. Originally produced as an on-screen character deck for DMC's first National Geographic television special, CARDSHARK (2012), the first edition of SHARKS has since become incredibly sought after by card collectors worldwide.

As the two continue today to produce many tens of thousands of decks that are used by some of the most influential names in magic, the SHARKS V1 was the project that started it all - with an initial print run of just 500 units. SHARKS V2 have been designed for the more discerning card worker looking for a timelessly elegant design for their performances, produced by USPCC on their finest stock and with special embossing and silver foiling details on the tuck case.

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**JURRAY**



# SOCIAL MEDIA

BY MARTIN STEIN

## The Power of Social Media

Jackpot, Nevada, is just about anything but. The town rests near the Idaho state line and consists of fewer than 1,200 souls, a school, a post office and a public library. And because it's technically in Nevada, it has casinos. Five of them, to be exact. Cactus Pete's is one of the oldest, with the opening of its doors considered to be the town's founding, and by all accounts it's a decent enough resort, with a swimming pool, a steak restaurant for those whose luck is hot and a buffet for those whose it isn't. And it has the Gala Showroom, which has in the past seen the likes of ZZ Top and Willie Nelson grace its stage but today more often sees all-female Led Zeppelin tribute bands.

And, that's where Murray SawChuck found himself on a cold October night in 2015.

Formerly a magician with a show on the Strip, Murray now found himself as far away from Las Vegas as you can get while still staying in Nevada. Literally. His contract at Planet Hollywood hadn't been renewed, his wife of three years had left him, and his father -- to whom he was



He threw himself back in to his work...



especially close -- had passed away, all within the same year.

"It was a lower point in my personal life," Murray reflected honestly. In order to take his mind off his troubles, he did what he had always done: threw himself into this work, accepting any gig that came his way. He also looked back to advice he had gotten years earlier from his mentor, the famous Mr. Electric, Marvyn Roy: to look for what people are into and use it to your advantage.

Mr. Electric, together with his wife, was a famous magic act from the 1950s all the way through to even the '90s. His gimmick was light bulbs, pulling lit strands from his mouth or magically filling a giant bulb with milk. Around the time that Murray began to perform professionally, the music industry was making the massive transition from cassette tapes and vinyl albums to compact discs so it felt like a natural move to design his act around CDs the same way Mr. Electric used light bulbs.

He made them appear from scarves, multiply in his hands, change color and size, breaking and restoring





them, and even passing himself through the middle of one. As he performed and polished the act in Canada, Europe and Asia, he began to amass dozens of awards. That pedigree, in turn, helped him to make his way onto the Las Vegas stage. The strategy Mr. Electric had taught him could just be the jolt of energy his career -- and his personal life -- needed.

In 2015, the one thing everyone was consumed with was social media. Facebook was still growing by bytes and bounds. It had been followed in fast succession by Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat. Even MySpace had been re-launched just a couple of years earlier.

Murray was no stranger to social media, and had a personal page on the original MySpace in the early 2000s, around the same time he had arrived in Las Vegas to hold down the afternoon slot at the New Frontier Hotel and Casino on the Strip. Back then, he was splitting his time between Vegas and Los Angeles, where he performed at comedy club open-mic nights and took acting lessons.

"I really wanted to get on TV," Murray said, "and at the time, there were two people going on in pop culture that really caught my attention: William Hung and Dane Cook. Hung was this guy who tried out for 'American Idol.' He was a horrible singer but he put so much energy into his performance that everyone just fell in love with him. He was all over TV. Meanwhile, I had a ton of magician awards but no one knew my name.

"The other guy was Dane Cook," Murray continued. "He was this massively successful comedian, selling out arenas -- even Madison Square Garden! And the thing I noticed about him was that he had really gotten his start on MySpace, using it to promote himself. So, I decided to try and copy both: auditioning for reality TV like Hung and using MySpace to promote my act like Cook."

While Murray took his magic act from the Frontier to other properties, including the MGM Grand, he kept auditioning for TV, finally landing a gig on the celebrity episode of "Blind Date," a reality show. That led to appearances on "Reno 911," "Celebracadabra" and others.

Along the way, he expanded his social media presence, with accounts on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. But, none had ever done much for his career. His YouTube channel, where he posted videos of past performances overseas and on cruise ships, had fewer than 20,000 subscribers -- and who knows how many of those were actually watching his videos, much less buying tickets. However, while his career on the Strip and TV was booming there was little need to worry about "likes."

He made appearances on "Last Comic Standing," a reality show for stand-up comedians; the national sensation, "America's Got Talent," where he famously made a full-scale steam train engine vanish from the stage in front of celebrity judges Sharon Osborne, Howie Mandel and Piers Morgan; and as a recurring expert on magic artifacts and history on the long-running hit, "Pawn Stars."

On Sin City's Strip, he was the resident magician at the Tropicana Las Vegas, arguably THE most famous casino in a city full of famous casinos, performing in a venue operated by the Laugh Factory Comedy Club (also famous), one of the very same Los Angeles clubs he used to compete at to get onstage for open-mic nights. And, he had married his on-stage assistant.

If he wasn't on top of the world, he was pretty darn close. But, life is nothing but change, and it can be nearly impossible to stay at that peak for any length of time. Incredibly, Murray did for three years. Then, just like a magic trick, it all seemed to vanish in a puff of smoke. His job: gone, after the Tropicana rented out a showroom to another magician who insisted no other magic acts be allowed on the property. His wife: gone, when after learning some of the magic trade from Murray she decided to strike out on her own. But, the one trait that has always kept Murray going, no matter how bad things might have seemed at the time, was his work ethic. And that's what brought him to Jackpot, and to Cactus Pete's.

"Then, one night while I was up in my room, I was reading through some comments on my Instagram page and I saw one from someone claiming that he could make my videos go viral," Murray



Top Left - Ryans' World YouTube star - at 8 years old Ryan earns \$28 Million a year.  
Top Right - YouTube star Fusetube.  
Middle Photo: Dani and Murray perform during the lockdown outside.



PHOTOS: Left photo - Murray celebrates One Million YouTube hits with co-producer Seth Leach.  
Bottom Left - at home Murray performs during the lock-down for his Social Media channels.  
Bottom Right - Working on a project with The Property Brothers.







remembers. "I thought this might be exactly what I was looking for. It's like I felt Mr. Electric giving me a nudge. So, I sent him a private message asking what he had in mind."

The person on the other end of the PM was a young man named Seth Leach, and he also was looking for a rebirth of sorts. Coming at the end of what might be called the Jackass Era, Leach invented himself as the sort of homegrown stuntman Johnny Knoxville would be proud of. He and his buddy, Horne, would record themselves jumping off roofs, surfing on cars and lighting themselves on fire, and then sell the videos to online outlets for anywhere from \$600 to \$1,000.

When the stunts got too dangerous (one of them landed Leach in an ICU ward) and in an eerie prognostication of outrage culture, Leach got a new partner and started producing what were called "morality viral" videos, in which hidden cameras record people not living up to what we'd consider society's highest ideals -- often because the situation was a hoax.

In both cases, Leach's videos racked up millions upon millions of views. And, in both cases, Leach's videos earned him a reputation for being opportunistic at best and mercenary at worst.

"I love the excitement of producing engaging content that you just know is going to go viral," said Leach. "But, I didn't want to keep getting misunderstood for what I was trying to do. When I saw Murray's videos online and all of that unrealized potential, it just fell into place."

Leach didn't just stumble upon Murray's videos by accident. He was already a fan.

"I had caught his act at the Tropicana when I was in Las Vegas with my girlfriend a couple of years before," Leach said. "I was actually one of those volunteers Murray pulls from the audience, and he used my shoe to do one of his tricks. I love it! The whole show! Afterwards, we got our picture taken with him and I bought a bunch of his merchandise. That's why I was sort of upset when I saw his videos and the low -- to me -- viewer counts."

After some back and forth, Murray agreed to produce four videos with Leach to see what would happen.

"That was on a Saturday night," said Murray. "I sent him part of the money on PayPal and told him I'd be back in Vegas on Monday. He says, 'Great! Meet me outside Main Street Casino downtown on Tuesday!' Tuesday? This coming Tuesday? I couldn't believe it! I had done enough TV by that point in my career that I knew how much things generally cost, and what Seth was promising to do, and for what I thought was a low amount, well, talk about magic! I figured that I'm either being conned big time or this could be exactly what my career needed, and if I was being conned, at least I'd have a good story at the end of it."

They met that Tuesday, and Murray felt an immediate kinship with Leach. As a self-described Type A personality, Murray told himself to put a damper on it and trust the younger man.

"I met and became friends with this young violinist named Linsdey Stirling when we were both on 'America's Got Talent,'" Murray said. "I helped her out with some publicity, offered to let her guest star in my show, and so on. A couple of years passed and suddenly she was blowing up YouTube and on 'Dancing with the Stars!' She was getting millions and millions of views per video! I started to research her and realized that she had dated a guy who goes by the name Devin Supertramp. He was one of the first viral YouTubers -- and still is. I thought maybe Seth could be MY Devin."



One of the first videos Leach shot was of Murray doing what's often called the Vanishing Champagne Bottle, in which a bottle is put into a paper bag, the bag is crushed and rolled into a ball with the bottle appearing to have vanished, and then smoothed out again to make the bottle reappear. A standard trick, and one that Murray excels at in his act. But, what Leach added was a guerilla prankish element by staging the trick in an alley where Murray is caught drinking by a security guard intent on arresting him.

"I already had videos online and they had a few hundred views. I wanted Seth to really prove he could come through on his promise so I set the bar at 100,000 views. I simply couldn't imagine more traffic than that. Go look at it today and, I swear to God, that video has got over 20 million views! Twenty million! And, if you add in all the other sites the video is on, the total is more like 110 million!"

Today, Murray and Seth are 50-50 partners in the videos, of which there are now multiple playlists. And, it's not unusual to see viewer tallies of 1 million, 3 million or 6 million or more.

From a social media perspective, Murray is the world's first influencer to have a residency on the Las Vegas Strip. His YouTube channel boasts over 1.65 million subscribers -- more than the entire city of Philadelphia -- and they have racked up more than 1 billion views.

And, his presence on other social media platforms is nothing to shrug at, either. His Facebook page, MagicWithMurray, has well over a half-million followers and an engagement that Coca Cola would kill for. Twitter sees him with a healthy 21,000-plus number of followers, just eclipsed by his Instagram account and its nearly 24,000 followers. Through them, fans can get a real view into his life, with posts about his girlfriend, Dani Elizabeth, an honest-to-goodness Las Vegas showgirl who performed in the classic show Jubilee, and is now dancing and the host in the famous Crazy Girls, and others about his mother, his famous showbiz friends, and of course, his rescued long-haired chihuahuas.



And, as mentioned, he's back on the Strip and back at the Tropicana, regularly selling out his shows. Even with the stop-over in Jackpot, Murray has achieved the rare feat of being a regular presence on what is probably the most fought-over piece of pavement in the world of magic, Las Vegas Boulevard, for getting close to 20 years. And, when he's not performing at the Tropicana's

Laugh Factory Showroom, he's on the road, doing his act in major cities around the country, volunteering to entertain troops at military bases, and spending time working with various charities, such as the USO, Wounded Warriors, humane societies, food banks and others. Part of the secret to THAT trick of popularity and longevity is thanks to his embrace of social media, and especially YouTube and Seth Leach. "There is no question that all of my viral videos have introduced me

to a wider audience and to new generations," Murray said. "I do meet-and-greets after every show, signing autographs for fans, and I'll ask them how they first heard of me. It's almost always YouTube. I'd say it's 80 to 90 percent of my audience. Social media is everything today. You can see it in entertainment -- even in politics. If it's good enough for the people in Washington, D.C., it's probably good enough for me."



But, using social media to pull audiences into theaters where and showrooms where they sit close to each other may be a thing of the past. While this story was being prepared for publication, the novel coronavirus swept over the globe and introduced everyone to terms like "PPE" and "social distancing." The days of crowded spectators and audience participation are over, at least for now. But, just as he has rolled with the hits and jabs in his career to this point, Murray has again adapted, and has used social media to do it.

"If anything, our production pace has tripled," said Murray. "I'm stuck at home with no job to go to, just like millions of other Americans, so I had to do something constructive with all my new spare time!"

Instead of stages, he took the streets and his own home, creating videos (often with Dani and friend and stage partner Douglas "Lefty" Leferovich) and airing them on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and even the challenging Tik Tok platform, where videos run from 6 to 15 seconds.

"I've got a new Travel Channel show that just came out, 'Magic Caught on Camera,' which is going to be a showcase for some of my most viral videos," he said. "Also, the seventh season of 'Masters of Illusion on the CW has a month early on May 15 and is running for 18 episodes -- five more than originally planned. We have new 'Pawn Stars' episodes we filmed this winter, and I've been a part of over three different national telethon streams, online and on television, to support pandemic victims and frontline workers."

"If there's any silver lining, it's that my viewership has skyrocketed with more and more people at home and thirsty for entertainment," Murray said. Now that you're all stuck at home, I've got the one thing every performer dreams of: a captive audience!"



# MURRAY





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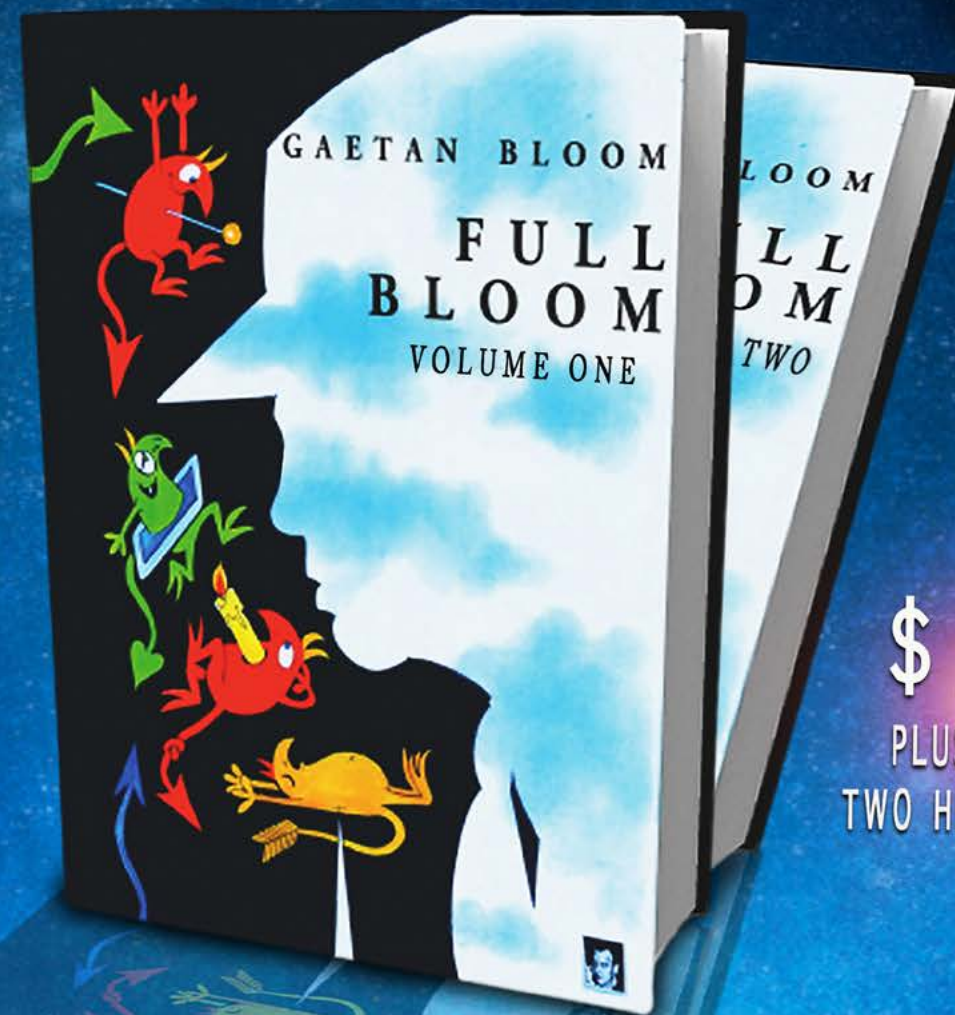


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# ROY HORN

“Without Roy, there would be no Siegfried.” These humble, yet powerful words were reiterated many times by Siegfried during my interviews for their Collectors’ book, *Siegfried & Roy: Unique In All The World*.

BY DIANA S. ZIMMERMAN

I am both humbled and honored to be referred by Nick Lewin and asked by Paul Romhany, two remarkable men and journalists, to write this tribute to Roy Horn—an individual whose equal is difficult to find, in or out of the magic community.

Simply stated, Roy was a multi-

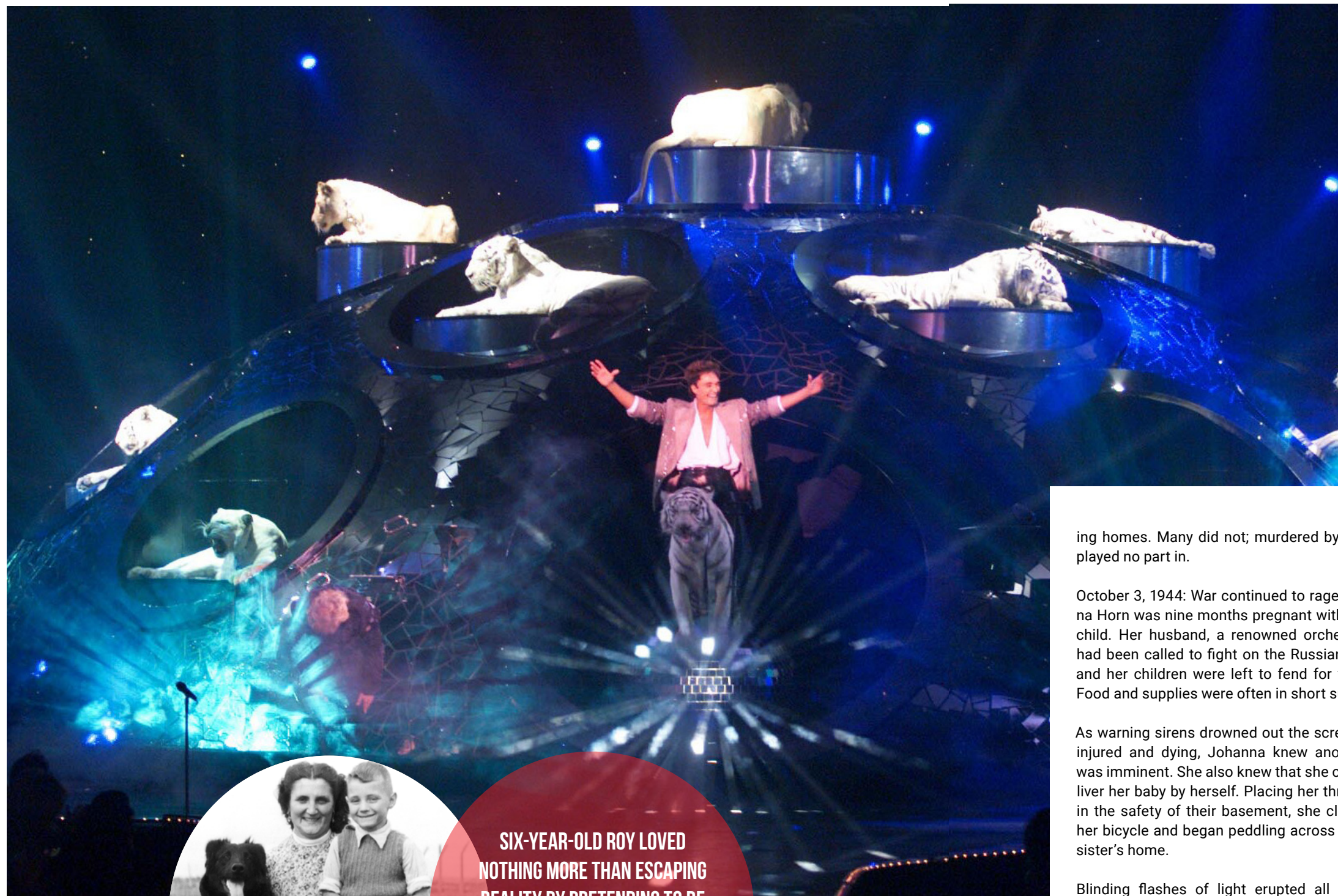
faceted genius: creative, visionary, entrepreneur, and a consummate storyteller with a masterful flair for evoking both whimsy and the dramatic. It’s only fitting that this tribute be the same, using stories from my recordings of him. They were made during the many hours we shared while working on the S&R book. Roy focused on the

“why” not the “what.” So does this tribute.

It’s a story that begins during WWII. Screams of terror ripped through the town of Bremerhaven, a strategic German defense port. Allied bombs dropping at random. Women and children desperately trying to escape their burn-

PHOTO SUPPLIED BY DIANA S. ZIMMERMAN





SIX-YEAR-OLD ROY LOVED NOTHING MORE THAN ESCAPING REALITY BY PRETENDING TO BE A GALLANT PRINCE. HEXE WAS HIS UNICORN.

PHOTO: JOHANNA & ROY HORN WITH HEXE

**"Is it any wonder that he and Siegfried changed our world? Not just for magic. Not just for Roy's beloved cats or the thousands of other animals he saved."**

ing homes. Many did not; murdered by a war they played no part in.

October 3, 1944: War continued to rage and Johanna Horn was nine months pregnant with her fourth child. Her husband, a renowned orchestra leader, had been called to fight on the Russian front. She and her children were left to fend for themselves. Food and supplies were often in short supply.

As warning sirens drowned out the screams of the injured and dying, Johanna knew another attack was imminent. She also knew that she could not deliver her baby by herself. Placing her three children in the safety of their basement, she climbed onto her bicycle and began peddling across town to her sister's home.

Blinding flashes of light erupted all around her. Bombs exploded nearby. But Johanna, like her soon-to-be-born son, focused only on her destination. Fifteen minutes after arriving at her sister's house, a baby boy was born. Roy Uwe Ludwig Horn came into this world as he lived, determined to beat all odds.

Is it any wonder that he and Siegfried changed our world? Not just for magic. Not just for Roy's beloved cats or the thousands of other animals he saved. But for virtually every aspect of live show business, both in Las Vegas and around the globe. Their list of firsts would fill several more pages. Even as kids.

Roy's father came back from the war a broken man. This once gentle musician turned to alcohol to relieve his pain. Sadly, he began taking his anger out on Johanna and the children. During this time, Roy saved the life of a wolf-dog name Hexe, who would also save Roy's life—both from his father's attacks and from drowning in a pool of quicksand.

Six-year-old Roy loved nothing more than escaping reality by pretending to be a gallant prince. Hexe was his unicorn. They played for hours in a nearby field. Fascinated by the curious behavior of a raven, the young adventurer accidentally stumbled into a pool of deadly quicksand. Sinking deeper and deeper, he had no hope of getting out. Hexe ran off, leaving Roy alone. Or so Roy thought. She went searching for help, eventually finding two farmers. Her barking convinced them to follow her back to her beloved friend, and they pulled him free.

It was during these early years that Roy learned he had a special connection with animals. They could sense his feelings and he could sense theirs. With postwar food shortages and an abusive father, he also learned that survival meant self-reliance. It meant working long hours after school to help feed his family, and that life is ultimately what we make of it. Succeeding would be up to him, no one else.

At thirteen, he took a job as a steward on a passenger ship. It was there that destiny played its hand. A handsome young magician named Siegfried Fischbacher





asked Roy to assist him in his act. He agreed, for a small fee. This led to a long dissertation by Roy regarding what Siegfried could do to improve his performance. And so began one of the most successful and innovative partnerships in show business history.

There are so many incredible stories: How Roy smuggled a cheetah, rescued from a tiny cage in the Bremen Zoo, onboard the ship

in a laundry cart, and so their act with big cats was born. How, together, S&R developed a performance style that was greater than either one could have ever achieved alone. How, in 1981 at the New Frontier Casino in Las Vegas, they broke the color barrier. Beyond Belief became the first revue show to allow African American dancers to perform in the front dance lines. How they defied all of Las Vegas by insisting that their early show on Fridays not

be topless so kids could attend. Together, they kicked open the door for family-friendly revue shows such as Cirque du Soleil.

How Roy saved the white tigers and lions from extinction. And how his remarkable connection with animals created much-needed new methods for training, caring, and the treatment of big cats. Or how, when he saw two horses left without shade in the sizzling Las Vegas heat, and their owner wouldn't sell them, Roy bought the land they were living on—along with the horses.

Every night after their late show at 2:00 am, he planted trees on that sunbaked desert acreage, ultimately creating what he so fondly called "Little Bavaria." It became a forested retreat with peacocks, llamas, and an ever-expanding assortment of other rescued animals. He and Siegfried have lived there for the past seventeen years. Jungle Palace, their iconic first home, became their business office.

Or how, in 1990, Roy's genius for story and Siegfried's genius for illusions created a global phenomenon at the newly opened Mirage Ca-





My beliefs have fashioned my life.  
My animals have enriched my soul.  
My destiny has shown me truth.  
And nature has spoken to me,  
in a voice beyond words.

These are my treasures. . .  
. . . and I share them with you.

Roy



sino. For thirteen years, Siegfried & Roy: Masters of the Impossible broke virtually every attendance record, creating an unforgettable live experience that is often copied, but may never be equaled in Las Vegas or anywhere.

I truly love this quote from Lynette Chapell, the spectacular Evil Queen in the show, and the brilliant woman I call the "&" in Siegfried & Roy, because she contributed so much to their success: "Roy saw beyond the tricks. He created real magic."

On October 3, 2003, Roy's birthday, irony would also play its hand. He was seriously injured in an onstage accident with Montecore, a white tiger he had rescued. Roy defied every medical expert's assessment. They told him he would



never walk or speak again—a part of his brain had been removed to save his life. Roy refused to accept their "expert" diagnoses. He did both.

Paul Stone's phenomenal tribute to S&R at the London Palladium in 2008 is yet another testament to Roy's unwavering determination. He would not allow himself to be revealed standing center stage. As difficult as it would be, Roy insisted that he walk out, across that massive stage, on his own. He knew that his resolve inspired others. Roy's philanthropic endeavors to help anyone who needed him, humans or animals, was relentless and continued throughout his life.

Robert Gould, my amazing design partner for the Siegfried & Roy collectors' book, sums up Roy's life and his partnership with Siegfried, beautifully: "Roy didn't care about individual achievements



for their own sake. He cared about inspiring connection and community, about the relationship of humans to animals, humans to each other, and to the world. He held a mirror up to Siegfried and showed him his future self. Roy's resolve, his genius, his unconditional belief that all things are possible are why Siegfried became the image in the mirror."

To this I would add: Roy holds a mirror up to all of us. His life, his genius, his unconditional belief that we are all capable of becoming extraordinary go beyond mere inspiration. He knew that if he could beat the odds, so can anyone. That is the real magic.

Run free, Roy Horn—our gallant prince. Romp across the grassy fields you so loved as a child, frolicking with Hexe, Montecore, and all the other precious animals you've saved. Stroll through the desert land you transformed into a lush Bavarian forest. Walk freely across the many stages in Europe, Asia, New York, London, and Las Vegas that you commanded like no other.

We are all better for having you in our lives. Thank you.

**Footnote:** In honor of Roy, the governor of Nevada, Steve Sisolak ordered all flags to fly at half mast on Monday, May 18, from sunrise to sunset.

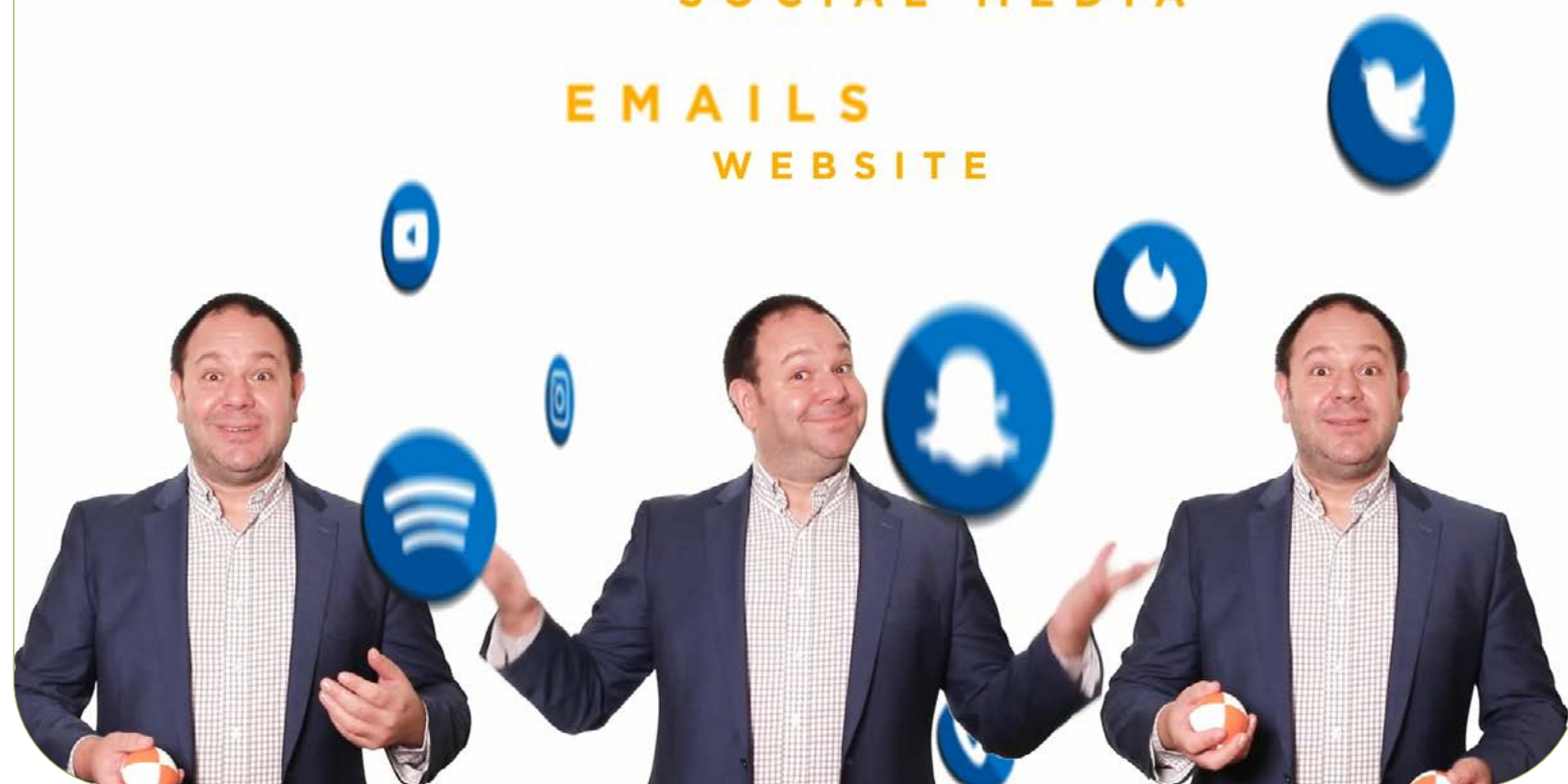
Roy



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# THE TRANSITION TO ONLINE SHOWS

## PAUL ROMHANY

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This month we've seen some truly forward thinking performers tackle the on-line and virtual worlds of magic achieving amazing results. Like it or not - the virtual world is here to stay and will shape how people view and watch not just magic, but television as well. What we have seen is people are finding how powerful it is to be able to take part in a show where they can interact and talk directly to the performer. This is a whole new concept for both performers and the viewers, and something the studios are taking note of. It is fair to say that the idea of interactive television is not far away from production, and it will open up a new concept of how we watch and interact with on screen shows.

Audiences have already seen this with the many interactive shows offered by performers of every kind and magic can be the perfect vehicle for this type of show.

Obviously there is no replacement for experiencing any kind of live entertainment but the online variety now offers a much wider audience with interactions that are different than you get in a show in a theatre. The pio-

neers in this field are going through learning curves every time they do an online show.

Ben Seidman, Robert Strong, Michael Harrison and Tim Ellis are four different styled performers, Michael is a ventriloquist, yet all shared similar views when it comes to the transition from what they were doing in their shows to what they are now doing in their virtual live entertainment. There are constants in what everybody told me, including clients wanting to continue the virtual performances long after quarantine is over.

Agents and clients are talking about having an entertainer be an ice-breaker in virtual meetings with people around the world. As people and performers get more comfortable with this medium it will become part of our culture and part of our everyday lives. Live shows will come back, but those who have invested in adapting to this new and exciting medium will be the ones who will continue to work and move forward in this ever changing world.

### BEN SEIDMAN

Ben Seidman guest stars on the Netflix Original *Brainchild* produced by Pharrell. He appeared on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us* on the CW network and starred in two specials on Travel Channel. He was the highest rated performer for Princess Cruises and won the title Entertainer of the Year.



Ben feels that while we will eventually get back to performing for people it will be different than what we have been used to. Ben invested time and money into writing a new show for the virtual performance. Because his live show requires a lot of audience participation he realized that the majority of his material would not work in the virtual world. The question Ben asked himself when writing this show was ... what would HE want to see in this new environment ... and then back engineer what the piece might be. He wanted to create something truly unique and so has stayed away from any of the marketed effects being sold. In live and virtual shows, the people and agents who hire Ben do so because they know they won't get something they can get anywhere else and Ben's fee's reflect this.

Ben believes that magic is an experience designed to be witnessed in person, so getting that connection between himself and the online viewer can be challenging. The only thing that comes close to the feeling of connection is putting the focus on the viewers and relating to everybody in that moment with strong material. One point Ben mentioned when it comes to putting a show together is "not to merely do a series of tricks". This type of thing might be fine for viewers who are magic enthusiasts but generally having a specific product to sell allows people to buy it. If people realize they are buying 'a show' rather than a series of magic tricks then this is something that they can sink their teeth in to.

The biggest learning curve for Ben was the technical side integrating software and buying new hardware so he could stream his shows effortlessly.

### ROBERT STRONG

Robert Strong, the San Francisco Magician, has twice been voted San Francisco's 'Best Comedian' and three times voted San Francisco's 'Best Magician'. He has performed in over 40 countries, in all 50 states, on every major TV network, and twice at the White House. With over 30 years experience Robert knows how to adapt to any type of show.



For the past 13 years Robert has focused on corporate and trade-show work. Like everyone else, his performances stopped during the lockdown. Currently the trade-show business has an unknown future. Darwins thinking, "adapt or die," Robert quickly set about putting what he knows in to action and was able to continue working. He took his business to a different level with targeted video marketing using all of his skills producing professional quality videos for his clients so they can still get their messages across.

When choosing material for the virtual shows Robert sees the 'square' on the screen as his stage and chooses effects that works on that stage. He referred to Henning Nelms "Ham Sandwich concept" from his book *Magic and Showmanship*. This is where you add meaning to your magic, and it relates perfectly to zoom performances. This theory states that if I reach into the air and produce a Ham Sandwich, you won't care. But if you said to me, "Robert, I'm hungry," and then he plucked one from thin air, I would be amazed. The magic fulfilled my desire. It had relevance. Making it relevant, focusing on the viewers needs is important and part of Robert's success with his online work.





He tries to lock on to what everybody is feeling and thinking, then he can make it comedic and more magical. If, for example, Robert were to call me to do a show he would find out my location, if there was family at home, if I have a headset on, etc. and how I am consuming the product, then creating and customizing this show for me, referencing and letting the viewer know he is aware of their reality.

He, like all the others I spoke to, said the larger than life character you use on stage to project to your entire audience needs to be toned down for virtual performances. There needs to be a 'real' connection and toning down is an important part of a show.

Robert is currently booking corporate on-line shows during business hours, and the one thing he has noticed is that as soon as they start, all these kids pop up in the screen. He is booked to do an adult show, but of course all the adults are sheltered in their homes with their kids, who are saying "if you are good today, I'll let you get on the Zoom business call and you can see the magician," therefore he has completely shifted his expectations.

Robert offers a 20 minute show with 10 minutes showing them a very basic magic trick with the challenge to connect that effect to their next zoom meeting. By using magic and story telling it helps the client add something extra to their own zoom meeting.

### MIICHAEL HARRISON

Michael turns ventriloquism upside-down with his original puppets and creative routines; vaudeville ventriloquism for a new generation. he channels the talents of his legendary great grandfather (a vaudeville ventriloquist) into a one-man, laugh out loud romp into the past with his new up to date twist on this long lost art form. Michael is a talented ventriloquist, puppeteer and comedian with a lifetime of experience in this unique field of entertainment.

Michael is a ventriloquist based on Vancouver Island who has spent a large amount of his career working on cruise ships. As a comedian/ventriloquist Michael went through all the material he did on stage, line for line, and had to edit out everything he knew wouldn't translate through a camera or zoom call.

You certainly lose moments of the live show doing a virtual performance, for instance at one point in his stage show he does a drawing pad routine with the drawing coming to life, at the end he tears off the paper and hands it out, which really sells the routine. This moment is now gone and Michael said there is a definite disconnect with the online show as opposed to the live performance.

He had to edit out references, lines, physical movements and he found himself editing on the fly even during the show. The hardest part for Michael is not hearing feedback from his audience. In a live show he relied 100% on what he hears from the audiences. Online it becomes difficult if you unmute everybody because there are feedback issues, people talking over each other, screens popping up and background noise making it very hard to perform which throws off the timing. He recommends keeping everybody muted, unless you are spotlighting a volunteer.

In the on-line performance you have to make those comedic pauses in your head and have to assume they have stopped laughing so you can move on to your next line, however, you don't know for sure. To help overcome this he uses a large flat screen TV so he can at least see everybody reacting even though he is unable to hear them. One thing he asks viewers to do is the American sign language waving hands sign instead of clapping. This way he at least can get a clear visual of people reacting.



### TIM ELLIS

Melbourne magician Tim Ellis has spent his entire life mastering the art of illusion. In fact he even holds a 'Master of Magic' degree from the FFFF, New York and is President of The Australian Institute of Magic. No wonder he is a magician Melbourne is proud to call it's own. He is also the Artistic Director and founder of The Melbourne Magic Festival and owner of The Laneway Theatre.

Tim is one of the performers who has really taken to the virtual show world and been able to keep a steady income flowing by performing theatre shows online even charging patrons for 'seats.' When he started Tim wanted to do an online artistic theatrical styled show, but he gave that idea up rather quickly because generally his audiences are families who want to get together. In the end he went for a show where the audience gets to choose what they want to see. The idea is that the audience will come back for another show because they want to continue the magical experience and realize Tim has more to offer. He uses a menu style system which works perfectly.

One of the most important aspects he employs is having an operator who runs the show and lets people in to the 'zoom' room 15 minutes prior to showtime. Having somebody else control and moderate the show allows Tim to concentrate on his performance and is similar to having a stage manager in a regular venue. The operator has become the audience wrangler and host. It's also a little like having a side-kick that you see on talk shows. One of the jobs of the operator is to check people's sound, those who have crisp sound with no background noise he leaves unmuted so he can get the audience reaction. However, the operator may also quickly mute noise so it doesn't interrupt the flow of the show.

Tim frequently uses spotlighting when interacting with spectators which also creates some very magical moments. The audience has complete ownership of the show and the live feeling of not knowing what is going to happen next helps keep them engaged. Tim treats the online show as an interactive concert where the audience all get front row seats.

The key for Tim is to be authentic. With Zoom you have to be yourself. The camera amplifies the performance so he brings it down to an acceptable level. Another online avenue Tim has been presenting are school shows where he teaches a trick to the kids. He has them go and practice, then come back and perform.

Tim wouldn't be surprised if this type of online performance continues once we get back to 'normal,' whatever that may be, because it is a step above television. Online shows are live and interactive and he, like me sees the future of television is about to change, maybe to the point of television fading away.





# TOP 6 INTERACTIVE TRICKS FOR THE VIRTUAL MAGICIAN

Here are the top SIX effects I this month for online performers. I have found these are all perfect to perform close-up to the screen. Some have audience interaction and some are just very visual and play well on Zoom and other platforms. Some of these are similar such as solid through solid so pick and choose ... hopefully this will get you started if you are looking for magic that plays well in this medium.

## FALL

BY PHILIP RYAN & VORTEX MAGIC

This is a wonderful piece and you can get everybody in your virtual world to participate. You take your Sharpie and place it on top of a glass and have every single person concentrate on the pen - under your control it will drop off. It's perfect for the virtual world.



## CALENDAR PRESAGE

PAUL ROMHANY

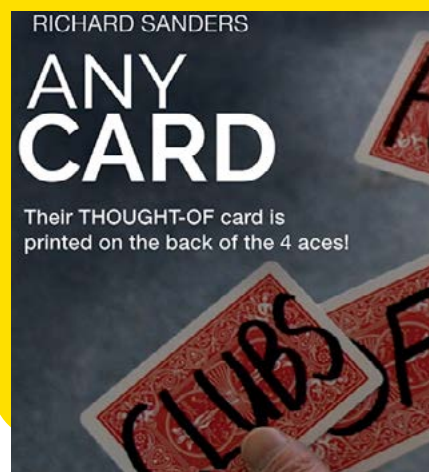
This has been a regular in my walk-about and I discovered it is perfect for online performances. You show an envelope in full view and several spectators call out a date - you show the calendar/diary to them and the card on their chosen date matches the card in full view. It's perfect to connect with your audience online.



## ANY CARD

RICHARD SANDERS

Another perfect routine that involves your online audience. ANY card is named and it is written on the back of the four up aces. What is great about this is that it can be ANY card named - so you can have people call out a color, suit, low or high, etc. A great piece to involve several people.



## GYPSY THREAD

NICK LEWIN

Nick Lewin has one of the best Gypsy thread routines on the market. No matter which version you choose to do you will find that this is a great routine to perform. It can be done close enough to the camera and you end and start clean. It has been my go to routine for television close-up and on-line performances.



## Alchemist: Blossom

WILL TSAI

I have found visual bends look amazing because you can hold the fork or spoon very close to the camera and if you have all the spectator's picturing it bending it happens right in front of their eyes. The nice thing about this is how clean it is, and you can easily have this preset at home.



## FLIGHT

VORTEX MAGIC

Being a staple in my closed-up set this was an easy transition for on-line performances. It's a great way to open a show because it's visual, can be done very close to the screen and instantly sets you up with a quick coin routine that really works well in both live and the on-line show format. I start my show with this! Michael Afshin has produced the perfect coin routine complete with gimmick coins.



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ERIC ESWIN  
WITTUS WITT

# THE ART OF MAGIC AND COVID-19



Eric Eswin and Wittus Witt share their views on the state of magic and ideas moving forward to magic conventions and large gatherings.

**Eric Eswin/Wittus Witt:** The novel Coronavirus (CV) has caused a pandemic. Little is known about the way the virus operates and develops. But the time is at hand to decide how we can or should continue. Simply continuing to wait and repeat platitudes such as: "This is a serious problem" does not help anyone. Above all, we should only focus on the facts. We are supposed to make 100% correct decisions based on 40% knowledge.

Everybody has been affected by the novel Coronavirus. We know that it will take at least another 18 months before a vaccine has been successfully tested to protect against Covid-19.

Until then we must continue to practice "social distancing," avoid forming groups of more than 3 people, and avoid unnecessary travel.

The greatest risk for spreading the virus currently is mass events. But even after the danger of this pandemic has abated, life will not be the same as before Covid-19 if we want to avoid another pandemic which is sure to come.

How do we magicians deal with this situation? We need an audience for our art like all actors in the performing arts. We are no exception.



© Photo: Zakary BELAMY  
*Eric Eswin* - Honorary President of the FISM

## SOME OPTIONS

### Performances without a (live) audience

There have already been several attempts by colleagues to broadcast live performances on the Internet, for example, digitally on YouTube. Jan Logemann and Gaston are two examples. But the difficulty can be found in the quality of such a broadcast. We are now accustomed to professional pictures, lights, dramaturgy and directing through television and cinema, which is why an amateur broadcast – to be very polite – is exhausting to watch.

In general the potential is good, but it also calls for a more professional approach to technology. Anyone who has ever appeared on television or watched magic shows on television knows how difficult it is to convey across a screen the special, magical atmosphere that arises in a theatre.

Workshops and lectures are certainly "easier" to execute. These can be digitally transmitted using more modest means. You could experience this in the online "convention", which Vanishing Inc Magic (Joshua Jay and Andi Gladwin) broadcast on April 5th. The performances suffered from the points mentioned above, but the lectures worked well more or less.

The question remains for the professional: How can you monetize this?

Jan Logemann solved this in his first broadcast with a special link to the YouTube channel that could be purchased. The interest in the first broadcast was still quite high (around 600 viewers), the number of the following "broadcasts" unfortunately flat-tended signifi-

cantly. The same applies here: less (performances) is more. You don't have to be on TV every week.

### Appearances with an audience

If live performances are allowed as early as 2020, they will be completely different. It is almost certain that the seating will be arranged with significant space between the seats. This is not exactly ideal for creating a good mood, but it will be inevitable.

Furthermore, you will have to eliminate effects requiring on stage interactions with spectators – or work with face masks ...?

Close-up performances will very likely be eliminated. It is tough, but it will also be inevitable. Since the situation in restaurants will also change (fewer tables, more distance), performances will also be significantly reduced here. It becomes even more difficult for street performers. They can probably perform, but not in every possible place, because on the street you also have to maintain your distance. So our fellow magicians will have to choose places where there is plenty of space to still be able to reach many people. And collecting the audience donations will be more challenging.

**Question:** What can the professional (and of course also the amateur) do to continue to exist?

### Possible answers

"Digital" appearances with professional production values, both technical and dramaturgical. Live performances with a different program (less or no interaction with the audience).



## Events By Magicians for Magicians

This point is one of the most important for most magicians. On one hand, the art of magic thrives on appearances in front of a "normal" audience, but on the other hand also through conventions and competitions.

Under the aforementioned coronavirus re-strictions, both (conventions and competitions) will no longer exist. The exchange among magicians can perhaps continue to take place in small groups, ensuring that the distance is maintained. Although it will be difficult and not without risk to take the necessary measures. And here too, digital communication will increase. This can be quite successful, in particular because in-ternational contacts can be established more closely than before. We will have to rely on it!

Waiting for the past to return is not the right attitude.

We must try to look to the future. A future with lasting measures to limit and if possible prevent the emergence of deadly viruses. [Please take note: In this respect, look what is going on with the Olympic Games 2020, planned to be held in Tokyo, Japan. Recently the games were postponed till summer 2021. Right now that date is already challenged and Japanese organizers are very pessimistic about its feasibility... unless the games will be held in a different way... Learning from Japan, we can skip the postpone-option and be clear about a cancellation from the start.]

Alternatively we can think of an online FISM World Championship. Just like the Eurovision Song contest. This will take time and money to organize, but it doesn't have to be in July 2021 and it shouldn't be for free. A registration fee should also be requested for an online WCM. Generally speaking the financing of an online WCM will be different from the financing of a live championship. With advantages and disadvantages, but certainly not impossible. It requires a different way of thinking. Again with pros and cons. In line with this the continental championships can also be held online. As these are to be considered qualification competitions, they have to precede the WCM. A possible time line can be: online continental championships in 2021/early 2022 and the WCM in 2022.

Tim Ellis has announced a digital magic convention in his country, Australia. Performances are to be seen on video, which will be judged by a qualified jury. The first prize is

worth \$2000. But then again, as we already said above: the image, light and sound quality must be excellent.

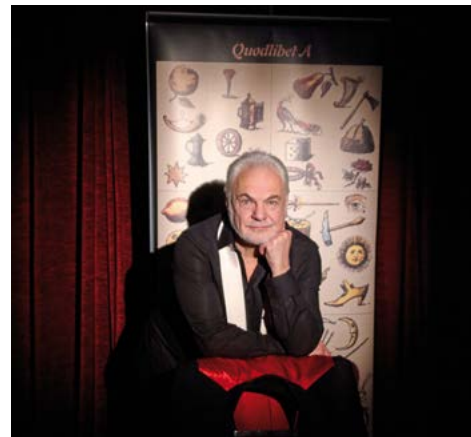
## IN CONCLUSION

- Cancel all magic conventions at least until 2022, including FISM World and Continental Championships
- Create new ways for performances and keep to the new rules in your social life.
- Be aware of a new look of your audience, it will sit in the theatre wearing a face mask. (How will that look!?!?)
- Make digital appearances as professional as possible.
- Magic clubs should set up video portals for their members.
- Give the internet a very special and more professional meaning.
- Keep magic alive, like it is already done on YouTube by some great performers but try to be more professional and above all with a well thought concept.

**Eric Eswin** is a psychologist and a retired Major-General of the Dutch army. From 1984-1989 he was chairman of the NMU, the Dutch Magic Society. He has been involved in FISM policies since 1970. Elected Deputy Secretary General in 1997. 3 Years later, after Marcel Laureau, Henk Vermeyden and Maurice Pierre, he became FISM's fourth Secretary General (title changed to International President in 2006). He is considered a creative innovator and has made many changes to the organization and the Statutes of the FISM. He is the creator of the 6 continental divisions. On leaving his post in 2012 he was awarded the title of Honorary President of the FISM.

**Wittus Witt** is a full-time magician and former FISM award winner (comedy). He presented his own television program for 4 years and published several magic books for the public. He has curated over 40 exhibitions on the

history of magic in international museums. His theatrical program has appeared in many theaters where magicians have never appeared before. Wittus Witt has been organizing magic theater festivals in Germany for the past 14 years.



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## NEIL FOSTER'S BLOW BALLOON

The Blow Balloon is a great comedy piece to complete any performance, be it silent or talking. Magicians, and Emcee's alike, if it's laughs you want? Look no further. One of the greatest Sleight-of-Hand Magicians of the 20th Century, and instructor of the Chavez College of Magic, Neil Foster used the Blow Balloon as part of his "Concert of Magic", the effect received laughs time after time. Easy to use, the performer can easily conceal the Blow Balloon in either hand while giving the effect of a 4ft long balloon inflating all by itself. Comes complete with a supply of unique Rocket balloons and instruction, including an original performance by Neil Foster. \$195.00 plus S&H

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# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MASTER OF ILLUSION

BY NICK LEWIN



If you are going to call a story “a day in the life,” it is probably a good idea to be exact about exactly what day it is! The date was January the 17th 2020 and I had flown into Los Angeles to film some segments for the seventh season of the CW Network’s internationally successful magic show Masters of Illusion. I had appeared in an earlier incarnation of the show almost 20 years before, and it was great to be booked to appear again. I thought it would be fun to share with our readers how the day went down.

Throughout December I worked with various executives at Associated Television International to arrange which five routines I would tape for Masters. With about 45 different magicians filming multiple segments everything needs to be very carefully planned. Eventually my airfare was booked and on January 16th I traveled from my hometown of Austin, Texas and checked into the Courtyard by Marriott next to Burbank airport. I traveled with just a hanging bag with my wardrobe and a computer case filled with props. I travel light.

Checking into the hotel it was apparent that it was filled with magicians and there was a serious magic vibe reminiscent of the opening night at a mini Magic Live convention. I enjoyed a pizza and beer at the bar with my old friend Louie Foxx before retiring for an early night. Any full day shooting a TV show you can pretty

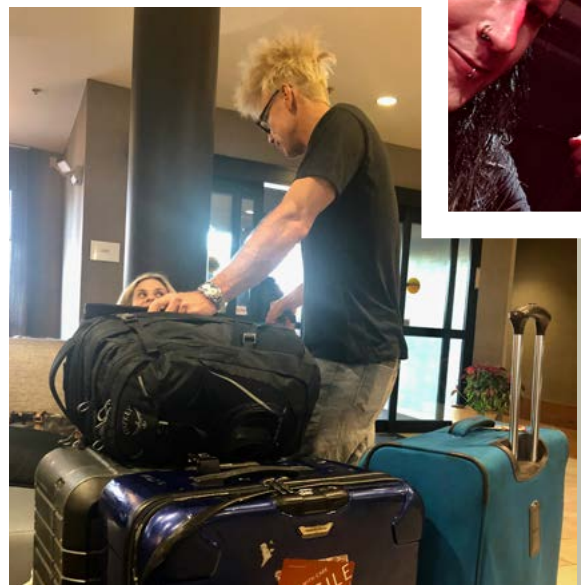
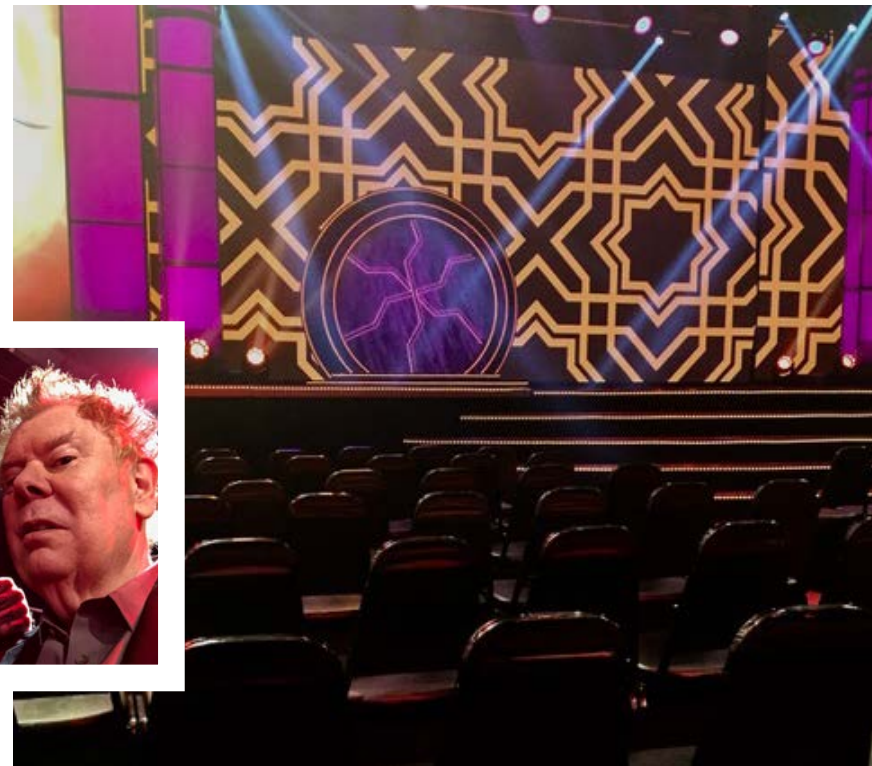


much guarantee it will include a very early start. As I went up to my room I noticed there was a Harry Potter poster in the lobby, it seemed like a good omen so I took a selfie with it.

The next morning at 7:00AM the magicians who were shooting that day met in the lobby and grabbed the first of the many cups of coffee required to wake us up. I had a latte with two extra shots of espresso; I needed those extra shots as I was still on Texas time. A large pile of anvil cases, prop boxes, and suitcases gathered in the hotel lobby, and soon both luggage and a motley crew of magic folk (mostly dressed in black) were transported to the studio in the nearby town of Sylmar. You could easily spot the magicians by their excessive hair products—it goes with the turf. My locks were firmly sculpted and sprayed into their normal Gordon Ramsey state of confusion.

Arriving at the studio, it was immediately evident what a well-oiled machine the Masters





**PHOTOS BY NICK LEWIN & MASTERS OF ILLUSION**

Top Left: Back stage food. Above - the set.  
Left: Murray heading to the show from the hotel.

production has become over the years. We were escorted to our dressing rooms, and shown where we could find more coffee and a stash of tasty doughnuts. Doughnuts are an integral part of any television production regime. I had two jelly filled; I had made sure my new black suit fitted comfortably the night before and knew I could handle that second doughnut.

The performer's first important duty was attending a table meeting with the show's producers, director, and stage manager. We all spent a few minutes chatting about what we needed, and how the production team could help us get our job done smoothly and efficiently. I was delighted to meet up with my old friend Gay Blackstone at this meeting. Gay is one of the producers of the show and knows more about magic than almost anyone I know. She is a rock at the center of this show.

On route back from the production meeting I bumped into David Martin who is also a producer of the show. David is another smooth and skilled cog in the Masters of Illusion team. He is a fellow Brit and when we met he silently handed me a teabag of very

fine English Breakfast Tea. This was a good thing because if I had drunk any more coffee I would have needed scraping from the ceiling of the soundstage. I drank my tea, and had another doughnut while waiting to be called for make-up. By 9:00AM every performer was dressed in their performing wardrobe and wearing full make-up. We then started to do the thing that takes up most of the day on a TV set—waiting around. This was a perfect time to catch up with old friends like Murray Sawchuck, Ed Alonzo, and Dan Sperry, and to take a few backstage selfies.

The Masters of Illusion physical set is a very impressive one with many brightly lit moving parts. The production team had put together a schedule that allowed a maximum of filming to take place in a minimum of time. The larger illusion effects were shot on the stage, close-up performers were filmed at tables amongst the audience, and some non-prop comedy guys like me were filmed in the aisles. It was like a Rubik's cube of performers. It was impressive how expert the production team was at staging and shooting these various segments. They made it look casual but it wasn't; I have appeared on many TV shows

over the years and these guys really know how to film magic.

At about 12:30 PM I was wired up with a microphone by the sound department. They were a fun team, one of whom remembered me from my previous Masters appearance. I then filmed three of my short segments back to back without a single retake. Each of my segments was as short and sharp as I could make it, focusing on "set-up," and "reveal." Masters of Illusion plays around the globe and is seen in many non-English speaking countries so the international success of the show has a lot to do with the carefully streamlined "cut to the chase" magic that it features.

After we had finished filming my first three segments the entire production halted for a well-earned lunch break. A delicious catered meal had arrived from a local Buca Di Beppo restaurant and was laid out on long tables backstage. For the next hour the entire cast and crew devoted themselves to enjoying various Italian delicacies with the same dedication they had shown for the morning's taping. This was the time when we magicians

managed to really catch up, and discuss how things were progressing.

After lunch I quickly nailed shooting my last two segments. As soon as my set was filmed I was relieved of my microphone, and I realized that my work was done. While the camera is rolling the entire studio and every technician is focused solely on you. The moment taping is complete the attention refocuses on the next performer. It is like being a small (but vital) cog in a well-oiled machine. Within 45 minutes of removing that microphone I had received my check, and was sitting in a van on route back to my hotel. I walked through the doors of the Marriott at 3:00 PM and Harry Potter smiled down from the wall to greet me, and I flashed him back a grin.

There is always a little psychological let down when you have finished shooting a TV set, and I wondered what the best way to relax was. As I so often do, I asked myself, "What would James Bond do under these circumstances?" I was pretty sure he would have gone to the hotel bar and ordered a double vodka on the rocks, so that is exactly what I did. Sitting at the bar I ran the previous 24 hours through my mind and decided, not for the first time, that my very favorite part of shooting a TV gig is

when it is successfully concluded.

The events I have described are now squarely in my rear view mirror, and I am home in Austin where last Friday I watched the premiere episode of Masters of Illusion, Season Seven. However, I decided it would be fun to give our readers a taste of what it is like participating in a magic series. It is a weird combination of fun, potential panic, and intense concentration. Like everyone else, I am now looking forward to watching the next season of Masters unfold on my screen on a weekly basis, but it was unquestionably a great pleasure to have been a part of this finely calibrated production.

*MASTERS OF ILLUSION* can be seen on The CW Network. Each week there will be two 30-minute episodes airing back-to-back, from 8:00pm-8:30pm, the then 8:30pm - 9:00pm.





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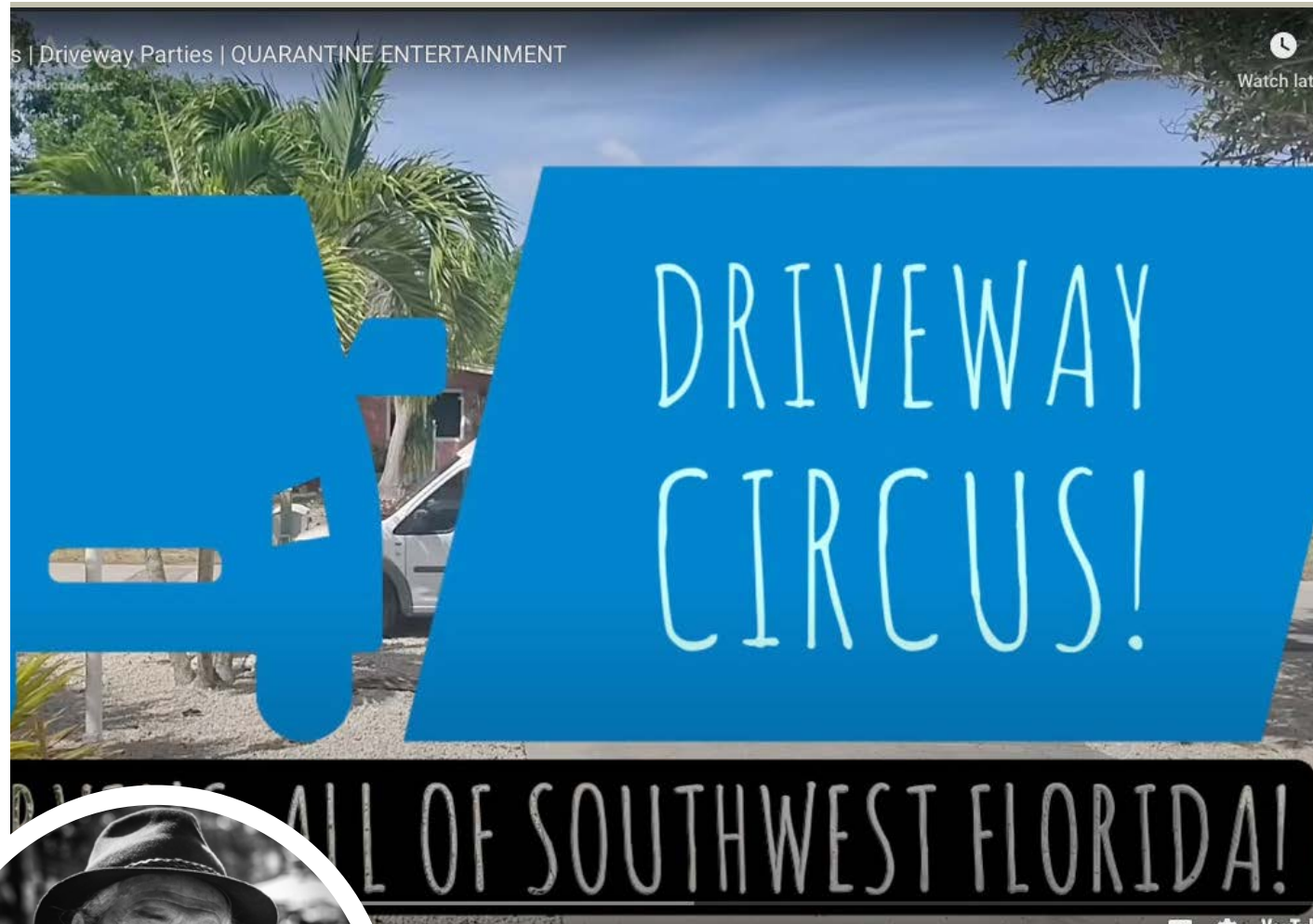
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# WORD ON THE STREET

BY ERIC EVANS

ERIC EVANS is a professional street entertainer and in his series has been sharing his experiences on performing street magic. With people staying indoors and venues closed he looks at how you can take your show to the people.

It's time to start planning.

To paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, even a bad plan is better than no plan and using this unexpected time effectively will ensure that our future is a lot brighter. By preparing ourselves now we'll be able to adapt more quickly to the changes heading our way. Not taking this time to plan will increase the likelihood that we'll be caught unprepared for

what is right around the corner. Even having a bad plan in place can put us in a much better position to ultimately succeed. Any effort that we make now will be rewarded because there are few things in life more enjoyable than seeing smiles on people's joyful faces—the world needs them now more than ever.

With that in mind I offer a few ideas here which may stimulate

your imagination and help provide a productive way forward:

The first idea is to create a trickle show, like now.

A trickle show is a series of visual tricks done with or without patter, and doesn't require audience participation. Such a "show" benefits by automatically resetting itself so that it can be repeated ad infinitum without hesitation. There's no real beginning, middle or end. The "show" can be repeated over and over again, taking breaks when there's a lull in foot traffic.

Such a show doesn't need a fixed audience, they can watch for a few minutes and then continue on their way. There's also no need to spend time building an audience. The audience members decide what distance from the performer as well as each other is



[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/DQ47YKD6LVC](https://youtu.be/DQ47YKD6LVC)



comfortable for themselves and need only get closer to visit the tip bucket.

Trickle shows are certainly an option if handled right, but if you're a more proactive performer another idea came to mind.

In many cities in Europe it is popular to perform what is called "terrace shows". A performer, usually a musician, will set up near an outdoor restaurant, bar or coffee shop terrace and perform. Beyond the ever-present musicians I've seen many different types of performers do terrace shows: magicians, jugglers, acrobats, mimes, walk-behind acts, and clowns. Customers can tip as they come and go or I've even seen some performers approach a terrace to accept and solicit tips.

Taking that same idea and applying it on the same scale here in America would be difficult as we don't have near the density of foot traffic or the number of terraces. Nevertheless, opportunities do exist if you keep your chin up and look for them.

Birdie McClaine "The World's Greatist", is a man of many talents and abilities. He's taken a cargo truck and altered it by building a stage in the back. Driving to large home improvement stores, he sets his show up in the parking lot. Surprisingly (and illustrative of what unique times these are), store managers actually enjoy seeing Birdie there because customers love hearing his music and his dog Ruby melts their hearts. And all Birdie does is play his accordion while Ruby sits, looking pretty, and the people drive up to gladly drop tips into his bucket.

Another idea, more unconventional still and taking that related idea to another level (I'm not sure which direction), I know at least one street magician who works busy traffic light intersections. He does very well for himself performing short, visually impactful tricks, trickle show style.

My friend George Gilbert pioneered a novel venue, one he calls "Drive-way Shows". The shows are booked online and George and his partner Brittany Sparkles arrive at the appointed time and place to perform a Circus and Magic themed show. Typically it takes place at the end of a driveway or open lot, while the audience either sits on their porch or in their cars respectively. George and Brittany have been very successful booking shows in southwest Florida and have generously offered a tutorial for fellow performers to



George Gilbert and Brittany Sparkles

learn their methods on this Facebook group [here](#). They also have a Vlog where you can keep up with their progress [here](#).

And finally the last idea addresses the fact that these days people are carrying less and less cash with them. My friend Warpo, the street Wizard of New Orleans, has stressed to anyone who will listen how it has paid him in spades to use apps such as Venmo, Cashapp and others. At the end of his show he reveals a sign that he's had printed and laminated with all of the links to his accounts. Audience members can then scan the sign with the app they prefer, or follow a link and pay him online without having to deal with cash. In these days of social distancing, making it as easy and appealing as possible to get paid for our efforts is a must.

I want to thank my friend Chris Randall, who along with Vanish Magazine's publisher, Paul Romhany, provided me the opportunity to write this infrequent column. I hope everyone has enjoyed my few contributions to date and I look forward to our undefined future as we help each other through this life changing time.

An expanded version of this article can be found on my Patreon page.

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# LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

COLIN UNDERWOOD

## PERFORMING IN HOSPITALS



Hospital entertainment are special type of performance with specific hygiene protocols in place.

The hygiene protocols and some of the restrictions of hospital performances are very similar to future live shows. Normal shows will not be the same for a very long time so a cautious approach to performing must be adopted. These existing hospital protocols can be adapted to future live shows. I believe that promoting safety and a knowledge of hospital practice will help the marketing of your show in the future.

Hospital performers are used to this type of performance already. I was personally involved both as a performer and training facilitator for a South African organization, Reach for a Dream that provided performers within hospital environments. I was flown around South Africa on a regular basis to train and perform. There were sometimes charity fund raising events that I was involved with as well. The huge community spirit and support from corporate companies, sportsman and celebrities was always heartfelt and most cases over whelming.

Hygiene

Strict hygiene practice is necessary for you as a visiting performer and the immune compromised children. A lot of the performances were given to HIV, Cancer and other life threatening disease infected children. Sometimes children were in quarantine and you had to communicate through the window of the private room.

Strict hand sanitizing is required when entering and exiting the ward. All props that are handled by you and the children must be sanitized regularly during the performance. My suggestion is to omit any spectator holding of props. Sponge ball routines have to be changed or omitted especially sponge balls in the mouth.

### Magic routines

Because the environment is a ward full of beds you can't engage as normal. The procedure being to either move from bed to bed or to perform in the middle of the ward in a stand up type performance. There are no set pieces and everything is worked from a small little trolley or from the pockets.

Visual magic is better suited and long complicated plots to be omitted. Keep it simple. Most times the children are on medication and not feeling well enough to concentrate for very long. But there are the Pediatric wards which have children with broken bones and are able to be more active compared to Oncology wards. Children who have just had chemotherapy are certainly in no mood to engage.

### Magic routines

Cut n Restored rope (Do not leave any loose pieces on the floor)

Professors Nightmare

Ring and rope

Sponge ball routines for nurses or parents.

Card tricks are possible for older children.

Dyed silk tricks are great.

Vanish and production of a silk in a Thumb tip is really useful.

The squeaker is a hidden gem for entertainment and as a distraction tool when a child has to have an injection and knows what is coming.





### Juggling

A short visual juggling routine performed in the middle of the ward or in Outpatient waiting rooms is a great feature. The routines should be short and at best to start with ball juggling routines using bean bags or stress balls so they don't bounce around and cause a problem to nursing staff.

### Puppets

These are really useful for younger children as they engage. The puppet can be incorporated into a routine of simply an add on. The more character you imbue in the puppet the better the reactions. The naughty puppet is very appealing to the young children. You must watch out to approach very young children very slowly as a bright hairy puppet being forced in their face does not go over very well. Any Axtell puppet or a Rocky Raccoon are ideal. (Some hospitals will not allow fur fabric in the quarantined areas. For Covid shows these puppet routines can be an ideal replacement for the assisting child.

### Balloon modelling

Balloon modelling in hospitals is ideal and receives a great reaction. However, some hospitals and the Covid era will make balloon giveaways a less appealing item. But if there is doubt I always recommend a discussion with the parent or hospital staff. Choking hazards are the normal worries for very young children. It might be possible to spray a balloon with sanitizer but I stand to be corrected. The most important aspect is to keep the balloons in safe environment and to use a balloon pump.

Games are popular for some age groups as well as dance competitions. I once took a camera with me and photographed all the children who stayed in a home run by a church. The same children were there the following week so I had the photographs printed and we did a craft workshop ending with a large collage of all the children. Huge reactions. A small music system can be taken to the wards and an impromptu dance competition can be arranged. But you have to normally do this in a common or recreation room. Music of a vibey nature can uplift the children, parents and nurses. Sometimes 4 or 5 nurses would break into a known dance. Great moments shared.

The Corona virus is extremely infectious so the future shows will have social distancing, hand hygiene and masks. I certainly would not want to perform in hospitals any time soon. But once the virus subsides to a relatively safer time in the future, I would do it again at the drop of a hat. I have added on line shows to my list of options and try incorporate a message of hope and a slight educational slant about hygiene. The experience is heartfelt and worthwhile but long term it can drain you. I certainly have huge respect for the nursing staff who are there every day. I dedicate this article to the current nursing and medical staff in the care facilities around the world.

*Colin Underwood has performed for 8 years in hospitals and care homes for children with life threatening diseases around South Africa. He has also conducted training programs for hospital performances covering the training of skills such as magic, juggling, mime and clowning as well as hygiene and basic hospital information. He currently lives in Johannesburg South Africa.*



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# THE CAPTAIN'S NIGHTMARE

JUDGE GARY R. BROWN



The advent of social distancing has put greater emphasis on virtual magic, which requires simple, visual effects easily kept in the frame. One such effect, "The Captain's Nightmare," is presented here for the readers of Vanish.

**VIDEO LINK:**  
<https://youtu.be/z7QA2okxffA>



"The Captain's Nightmare" derives from a concept that emerged in 1945, when Val Evans released "Optogramma" involving lines etched into a die. Within a year, Abbott's produced "Dizzy Wizzy Lines," a small tile with inscribed lines that exploited the same principle. Over the past 75 years, the trick has appeared in countless magic books and kits and been produced in wood, metal, cardboard, Plexiglas, and soda crackers. Often called "The Chinese Compass," it usually consists of a cardstock octagon with an arrow on both sides. Those arrows (or lines, fish, clown faces, etc.) flip about and change directions in mind-bending ways.

Why have these confounding symbols met with such unparalleled success? As one early exponent noted in 1950, "the more you play with it, the more baffling it becomes." Jim Steinmeyer dubbed it "one of those nearly perfect tricks: great, simple effect, versatile presentation, great, simple method." And it's great for virtual performances, as it can be demonstrated in a vertical plane, eliminating angle problems, and plays well across a video link. And you can make one right now, using your computer printer.

The only difficulty with this astonishing principle is the absence of an engaging presentation. As one performer noted, "unless one had a good story to go with the trick, there seemed to be very little one could do with it." This redesign provides a thematic solution.

## THE DESIGN

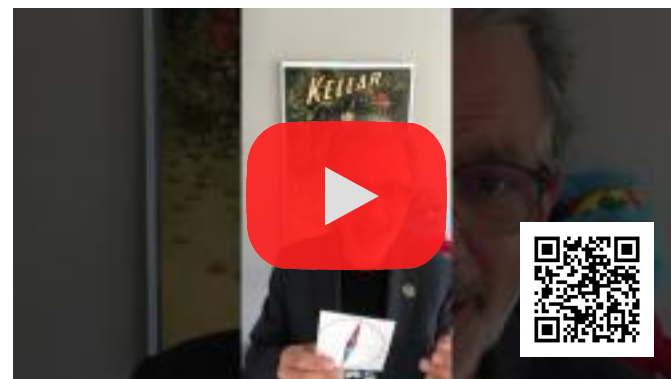
Rather than a generic arrow, this piece depicts an actual compass, but the symbols for North and South – "N" and "S" – are placed on the

needle itself. While slightly illogical, the illusion depends upon this placement: if directional marks appear on the compass dial, the marks "move" with the arrow, destroying the illusion. Furthermore, the fact that the letters N and S are ambigrammatic assists the visual deception.

"The Captain's Nightmare" replaces the regular octagon with a simple square design, allowing for two things. First, because the presentation is limited to the four cardinal directions (North, South, East, and West), a four-sided, square prop simplifies the handling and strengthens the illusion. Second, the prop is constructed of a 7.5" by 7.5" square (easily printed and cut from an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet), folded twice, yielding a 4" x 4" compass surface. This construction conceals two other images: opening the first fold reveals a rectangular, "landscape" picture while opening the second allows the performer to display the image printed on the reverse – a large 7.5" by 7.5" "finale."

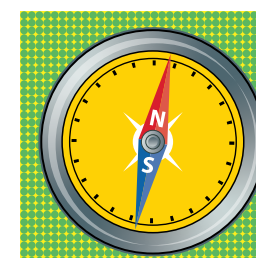
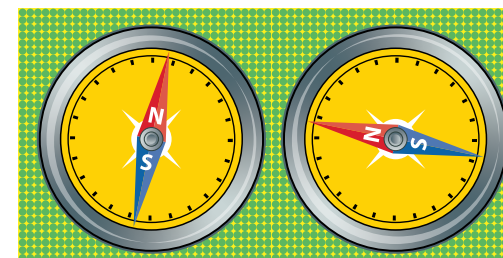
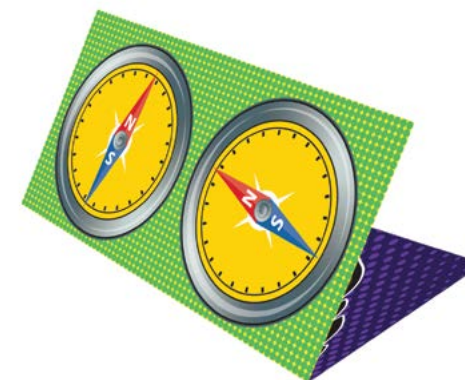
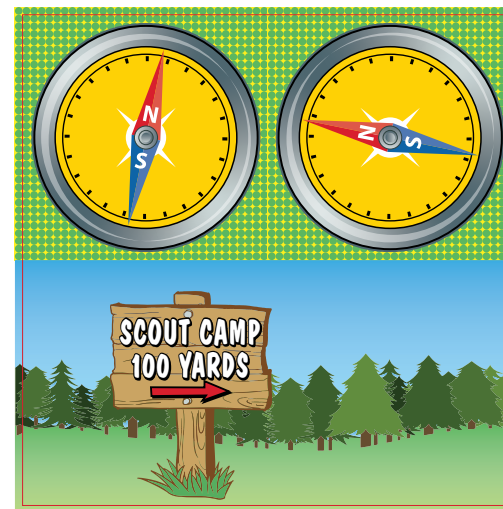
## LEARNING THE METHOD

**VIDEO LINK:**  
<https://youtu.be/Ed-l4qJhyMQ>



The working is simple. [Download](#) and print out the PDF template, double-sided, on a single sheet of paper, and cut to size. Fold the sheet in half, horizontally across the Bermuda Triangle "finale" image. Then, fold it in half a second time, vertically across the vortex landscape image. When complete, the two compass images should be facing outward on opposite sides of the piece.

Once folded, the two compass needles are perpendicular to each other. However, by holding the prop by the corners and flipping it along one diagonal (you'll need to find and mark the correct starting diagonal), it will appear that both needles are pointed the same way – in this case, towards "North." Repeating this several times will establish the reliability of this fact. Next, when you flip the prop by holding the opposite corners, the needle will seem to move 180° with each turn, jumping from "North" to "South" and back in a surprising fashion. Flipping the compass from the center of any of the four edges of the square will



make the needle jump 90°, for an even more visually stunning change. Following the routine, production of the "landscape" and "finale" images by opening the folds – while not strictly magical – substantially aid in the storytelling.

Rehearse in front of a mirror or video screen until familiar with the prop, as casual handling helps sell the illusion. When flipping the compass, you must keep the prop "square," meaning the edges should remain parallel to the edges of the video frame. Switching your grip to the opposing corners is the most challenging moment of this effect. Cover the move with a large motion like moving the compass to a different part of the video screen or with a bit of time misdirection while regripping. You can use the plotline of "correcting your course" to help cover additional switches. Moving from the corners to the center of the edges for additional flips should not be overdone, as it risks exposing the method.

## THE PRESENTATION

The video demonstrations that accompany this article illustrate the patter and handling for "The Captain's Nightmare." We've provided an alternative presentation with a second PDF template, the "Scout's Nightmare." Performed in a scout hat and wearing a neckerchief, affords lots of comedic possibilities.

Finally, while perfect for virtual performances, this effect has other applications. As discussed in connection with "MyPhone, the Paper Smartphone Trick," (see Vanish, April 2019), paper magic tricks have many uses, including volunteer work in hospitals (where cross-contamination issues are paramount), teaching young magicians and gift magic. Personalized with contact information and adorned a QR code, the templates also make great promotional items.

May this magic compass will guide you all to safe, calm waters.

Special thanks to my friend Joe Silke, who designed the fantastic artwork.

*Judge Gary R. Brown is a magician, historian, writer and inventor. His most recent major project, a book on making and using magic wands, is expected to be released this fall by Theory and Art of Magic Press.*

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# GREGORY WILSON



## MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

### EFFECT

With no drink in hand you look at a spectator's drink and announce: "It's now time to do the 'Disappearing Drink' trick." She eyes you suspiciously and puts her hand protectively over her glass. You decide to make-do with just an ice cube. To vanish the cube, you hold it in your tightly-dosed fist. Everyone quickly becomes aware that the "slowly vanishing" cube is simply melting and dripping all over the floor. Once the humor of the situation peaks, you say you'll speed up the process with the application of a little more heat. You wave a lighter under the dripping hand and in a spectacular burst of flame, the cube is gone. And for a hot frozen moment all thoughts untangle leaving your audience staring into infinite space. You joke your way into the next effect because you can't take the silence.

### PREPARATION

All you need for this is a small ball of flash paper and a lighter. The wadded-up paper and the lighter go into your right pants or Jacket pocket.

### STEP ONE

Announce that it's time for the 'Disappearing Drink' trick. Since no one will volunteer their drink for you to vanish, offer to do it a little bit at a time. "Let's start with just an ice cube." Have someone get an ice cube out of their drink and lay it on your left palm.

### STEP TWO

Pull up your sleeve and let everyone have a good close look at the cube on your palm. Build it up as if this were going to be truly amazing.

### STEP THREE

With your arm extended, close you hand tightly over the cube so it begins to melt while saying: "Notice that nothing goes up or down my sleeve, and there are no false moves whatsoever." When the melting ice begins dripping on the floor it will become obvious that the whole thing is just a joke. Squeeze full fun value from the situation. "This will completely vanish, you won't see a thing. Don't take your eyes off my hands! This is the most amazing thing you'll ever see. In fact, this is so intense my hand is perspiring."

### STEP FOUR

Your attention goes to your right pocket as you reach in and say, "Let's speed up the process a little." Two things now happen at once. Your right hand goes into your pocket and gets the wad of paper sort of finger-palmed with your pinkie and grabs the lighter in normal lighting position as in Fig. 1. Now, as this is brought out (and all your attention is focused on your right hand and the lighter), your left hand drops down below your waist and lets the ice cube fall secretly behind you. You might even pitch it behind you depending on where you arc and what's in back of you in the line of fire. Or, sometimes Greg prefers to toss the cube before he gets the lighter during the peak point of audience laughter.

1



2



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# RUBICON 2.0

GREGORY WILSON

## RUBICON 2.0

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With a hot new price and several sizzling new routines, RUBICON 2.0 is now available at only \$200 (discounted from the original \$350 price) and includes killer new material from the professional repertoires of Gregory Wilson, Ryan Oakes and Adrian Lacroix.

While several new cube effects have hit the market since RUBICON, top performers continue to praise RUBICON for its easy handling and surefire method. Instead of multiple panels, complex handling or cumbersome setups, with RUBICON, the dirty work is done with one move in under one second!

The new bonus routines are already included with the on-line instructions, arming you with exciting new ways to perform this close-up, stand-up or in your living room for family and friends. And perhaps best of all, there's no cube solving necessary! (Greg still can't solve one.)

RUBICON 2.0 is a streamlined version of the original, and this is your last chance to get this reputation maker before they are gone for good.

MY THOUGHTS:  
I've always enjoyed Rubik Cube routines,



but often be afraid of them because I can't solve a cube. What Gregory offers here is a full 3-phase routine that allows you to do some pretty amazing magic with the cube, and at the same time give the appearance you are an expert at solving it.

What starts off as a very slow solve with two hands quickly leads in to an impossible solve where the spectator mixes their cube and you are able to match it, with the cube behind your back, so it is exactly like theirs. This really is an impossible part of the routine that is extremely clever and very easy to do. You could possibly just do this if you wanted and finish there, but I think the full routine really makes sense and is very easy to learn. The final part of the routine is taking the cube and solving in front of the audience with one hand. This is what really makes you look like an expert.

Coming from somebody who is a real KLUTZ with a Rubik's cube I can tell you I thoroughly enjoyed learning this routine. If a cube makes you nervous if you 'stuff' part of the routine up during practice, don't fret. Gregory offers an incredible solution



**"The routine is not only fantastic but the gimmick is the highest quality I have seen."**  
- Paul Romhany

that will very quickly get your cube back to the solved position so you can start again. I have to be honest, I found this the most helpful part of the tutorial! I actually went through all my cubes I have collected over the years and was able to solve them all, without actually knowing how to do it.

Once you master the basic concept of the routine then it will become second nature and you can then start to work on presentation. Gregory offers his FULL presentation, and you need to pay attention because this has been honed after thousands of performances around the world,

and so he has carefully thought about every word in the routine.

The download tutorial is broken down in to sections which makes learning this easy. Spend time watching and practicing this routine and you'll have something your audiences will remember, and you'll be proud to perform..

A lot of thought has gone in to creating the best product possible, and it shows by the quality of each cube, the quality and in-depth tutorial and the extras you are given. If you are looking for a great routine to add your stand-up show then you can't go past this. Never be afraid not to solve a Rubik's cube again. Everything about this from concept to completion has been totally custom designed.





# CHOP CUP MUG

George Schindler likes to perform magic with "Everyday Objects" (Good name for a book.) What looks more natural and unprepared than a coffee mug? If you have ever watched George at a trade show you would have put away your metal cup and switched to this one. You can do all the standard chop cup moves and routines with this thermal mug. The diameter of the mouth is 3 inches for large load. The Show-Biz Chop Cup Mug is supplied with George Schindler's complete routine on a DVD. A limited number have been made up and are sold at \$ 39.95 each.



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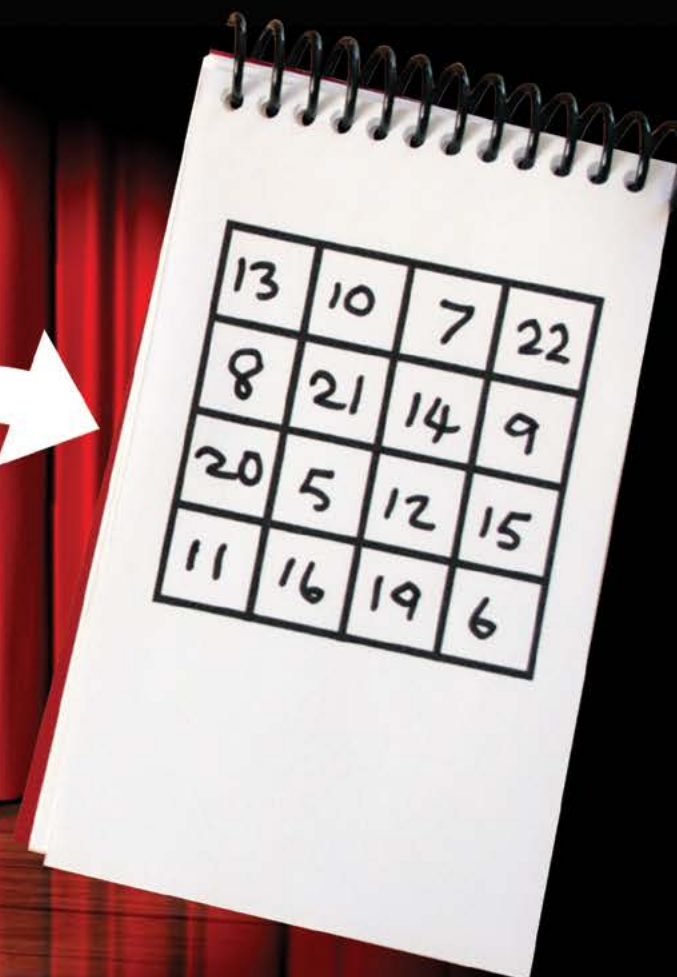


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## INSTASQUARE The Magic Magic Square

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APPEAR  
VISIBLY



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Rudy Koby

"It's the most brilliant Magic Square I've ever seen."  
Eric Buss

"That was the cleanest, most entertaining, Magic Square ever."  
Bruce Kalver



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# LOUIE FOXX

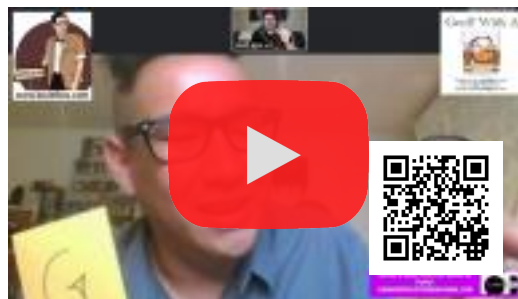
## PROGRESSIVE COINS

### A VIRTUAL TRICK



#### EFFECT:

You show a small coin envelope and can have it marked. You then have someone think of a coin and that coin is inside the envelope. You can watch a demo of the trick here: <https://youtu.be/KeXFwpmDxAk>



**NOTE:** This trick was designed for a "Zoom Show", and it will be described in that context. You can alter it slightly and do it in an in-person show.

**NEEDED:** You will need a small coin envelope with a slit cut in it. The slit will need to be large enough to fit a silver dollar through. You will also need a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, fifty cent piece and silver dollar. Finally, you will need a progressive anagram flow chart.

A progressive anagram is simply a sequence of asking letters and based on if that letter is in the name of the coin, you can figure out what the coin is. The "yes" or "no" answer tells you the next letter to ask. The maximum number of "no" answers you can get with the provided flow chart is two.

Look at the flow chart, you start at the upper left with the letter E. If the person answers "yes" you take the arrow down. If they answer "no" you move to the right. When you get to a space with the name of a coin, that's the coin they are thinking of.

You only move down and to the right, never up or to the left.

#### SET UP:

Lay the coins out in front of you on the edge of the table that your computer is on. Have your webcam angled so that the coins aren't in frame.

Print out the flowchart and place it somewhere behind your webcam where you can read it. Make sure you print it large enough so that it can easily be read. I simply tape it to the wall behind my laptop.

#### WORKING:

You put display a coin envelope in your left hand and hold your empty right hand palm up.

"Imagine I have some coins here...nothing crazy, just a penny, nickel, dime, quarter, half dollar and a silver dollar. I want you to look at the coins and since you can't actually grab one through the screen, pretend to take one."

You can now lower your right hand.

"Look at it, on the back you'll notice I wrote the name of the coin on the back. If it's a quarter, I wrote quarter. On the half dollar I wrote half dollar. Look at the word I wrote, visualize it in your head"

Now we're going to get into the progressive anagram. Remember if you say a letter and they say YES, you move down to the next letter. If they say NO, you move to the right. If

you get all "yes" answers you end up on the fifty cent piece.

You'll notice in the script I didn't give fifty cent piece as an option but it's in the progressive anagram. I'm trying to foresee someone not listening to me and it's there as a backup in case they think fifty cent piece instead of half dollar.

Once you know the coin they are thinking of, secretly pick it up off the table and slip it into the envelope through the slit. In this example we'll pretend they are thinking of the nickel.

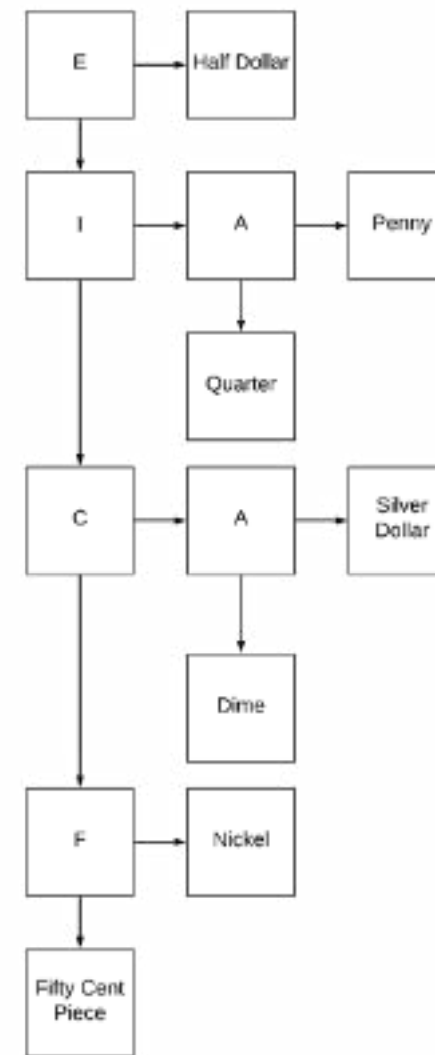
"I've got a coin in this envelope"  
Rip the top off the envelope and dump the coin onto your other palm.  
"You're thinking of the nickel!"

You can now rip up the envelope to show if empty if you want.

**NOTES:** Progressive anagrams have been used in magic and mentalism for a long time. My first introduction to them was in Phil Goldstein's book *Thabbatical*. I always had trouble reliably memorizing them. With the current boom in streaming magic shows, printing them out and putting them out of the camera's field of vision takes memorization out of using them.

This could easily be customized to a company's products by using slips of paper with the predictions in place of the coins and creating an anagram based on the names of the products.

You can download the flowchart used in the trick at [www.magicshow.tips/vanish](http://www.magicshow.tips/vanish) and the password is: vanmag



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- 5 Is physically smaller than a milk pitcher, but equally as visual!



# Polaroid Card

## DAVID J. ATTWOOD



A lot of strolling magicians working the pubs and restaurants need to be very concerned about their pocket real estate and the ability to reset on the fly as they make their way over to the next table to perform. For me terms like “instant reset” always rubbed me the wrong way. I see too many effects that are being sold out there that sacrifice the magic of the effect for the convenience of instant reset. My philosophy is that the power of the magic should never be forsaken for convenience. Magic is not easy, that is why it is magic! The magician needs to create the situation for his act. Being a magician means you have to have absolute control over their environment. Having said that, I have designed this routine to have an automatic re-set. The handling will reset the cards to their ready position in your pocket through the act of displaying the cards and finally proving that cards are all back to their original state.

This routine was something that I developed in the nineties when I saw a local professional performing X-Ray Card by Ton Onosaka. This was the perfect card effect because it was done with cards but it was a purely magical routine. Something appeared right before the spectator's eyes. I loved the effect but the cost of this routine, at the time, was more than I could afford. Necessity being the mother of invention, I went about to try and create a routine that had the same magic of something appearing right before my spectator's eyes and I wanted to make it my own, so I grabbed some blank cards and started working to put together a routine.

The power of this routine is the cleanliness of the demonstration prior to the revelation and the clean up that shows that the entire effect took place only in the spectator's mind and leaving the performer automatically reset for the next table.

**EFFECT:** Spectator is thinking of a card and it slowly appears as if developing like a polaroid photograph, onto a blank playing card. Requirements: Three red back, blank face (BF) cards and one blank back (BB) card. I have found that to get the maximum effect you would want to use a smaller value card. The ultimate card to use for this effect is the four of diamonds or hearts.

The sleights required to have mastered for this

effect are the rifle force, the Elmsley count and the small packet double lift.

**SET UP:** In your right outside jacket pocket, the four card packet needs to be set up in this order, from top to bottom while holding them in your hand: BF, BF, BB4D, BF, all with the blank faces up (pic14). When you load this packet in your pocket, the blank faces will be facing inward towards your body.

I would strongly recommend that you be wearing a sports jacket or a suit in order for the cards to not be bent or disfigured at all. Crisp cards make for better sleights in this routine. If you're putting the cards in your pants pocket, do what you can to not molest the cards too much and it will still work. Routine: Begin the routine by riffle forcing the four of diamonds and asking the spectator to not look at the card yet and to ensure that he hasn't shown it to anyone else at the table. Has anyone here been to Cincinnati, Ohio? Well, I have been there a few times because that is where they make Bicycle playing cards and I love these cards. Last time I was there I was able to scoop some cards off of the factory floor before they went to get printed and I have them here tonight."

Pull out the cards and show them face up in your left hand.

Reach over with your right hand, thumb to the back of the packet and fingers on the blank faces and pick them up so that the blank faces are towards the audience. Gently spread the cards by extending the fingers and pulling back with the right thumb. This makes a nice little fan of the packet.

With your left hand reach up and grab the two cards to the left and retain two cards in the right. With your thumbs on the back cards of the two pairs, rub them in circles in a casual way to show that the cards are just light simple and single cards in your hands.

The position should be in your left hand you have a BF card and the BB5H and in your right hand you have 2 BF cards.

Bring the packet back together to ensure that the order is back to BF-BB5H-BF-BF. "Now they haven't printed anything on the face of the cards yet because they have to ensure a perfect product. The first thing that

they do is make sure that their logo on every single card is perfect and identical."

Execute the Elmsley count to show all of the backs are the same. As you come to the last card, which is a BF. Hold it lightly in your fingers to show a casual nature about it, as if you could drop it and it would not matter because there is nothing special about this card.

"They even go so far to ensure that the thickness or the gauge of the card is the same as every single card they produce. "Now the way that they print the card is not with a stamp or a press."

Casually drop the card that was in your right hand onto the top of the packet in your left hand. Now the order should be BB5H-BF-BF-BF.

Pick the packet up with your right hand in end grip and hold your hand up at about shoulder height and have the blank side of the packet now facing the audience (pic13).

"No! They have someone, simply look at the card and, using only the power of their mind, burn the image on the card. Now, please look at the card that you chose and with the power of your mind, burn that image right across this blank card."

Now, here is where I get to have a bit of fun with my audience and depending on your style, you can really add some comedy in here. I wait a second and then I look back at the packet to see that nothing has taken place. I then add, with a slightly more theatrical flair, "The power of your mind," as if they hadn't heard me clearly the next time. If you are going the comedy route, do not over do it.

Nine out of ten times, I have my assistant say, "It's there," and point at the still blank card. Drop the packet of cards back into the left hand, blank side up and thumb the top blank card, which is the BB5H, to the right about an inch of the packet.

Reach over with the right hand and pick up the card ever so delicately with the thumb on the face and the middle finger on the back at the extreme top corner of the card. The card is being held perpendicular to the floor with the tiniest amount of flesh on the card. "Well, maybe it's like those old Polaroids and we have to let the air get to it a bit." Now start shaking it, like people used to do with Polaroid pictures while they were developing.

"...let the chemical reaction of oxidization take place."

As you are shaking the card, with increasing aggression, slowly turn your wrist in towards your body.

When practicing this in a mirror you can see just how powerful this looks. The red spots are slowly more and more exposed through the shaking. As you slowly turn your wrist in, it appears as though there is actually something developing.

Now this is where I would end the effect when I started. It had all the elements that I was looking for in a close up, packet routine so I was satisfied. Then a fellow magician actually challenged me to make it re-set. So I ended up adding one more phase to the routine to really give it a great and even more magical impact. I show that card to the audience and exclaim, as if I am just as amazed at the magic that has just taken place.

Now you are going to have to perform a small packet double lift.

If you are adept at performing a standard double lift, the actions are similar but there are some slight differences. Performing the Polaroid Card routine is a great safe place to practice the move. The white borders of the Bicycle 808's camouflage the double imperceptibly.

You will need to perform the 'get-ready' while you are displaying the Polaroid Card "developing".

Take the packet of three cards into the left hand dealer's grip.

Put your thumb in the top left hand corner of the packet, apply a slight pressure. Then you are going to run your thumb the length of your left index finger applying a smooth even pressure as you do. This will allow the top card to slide about a hand an inch to the right. With a little practice, you will be able to perform this action without looking and do it completely by feel.

Make contact with the face of the top card with the tip of your left pinky finger and then curl the fingers back up to obtain your pinky

break under the top card.

This move is microscopic and takes a little less than one second to execute. Furthermore, this is all done while your hand is shaking the polaroid card so the misdirection here is one hundred percent concrete. No one is watching the left hand at this point.

"Wow there it is."

I needed to have a reason to bring the BB5H back to the packet of BF cards. I did this with a point. So here, drop the card back onto the face up packet in the left hand and point to the card that was originally forced that, if they were following your directions, will be face down on the table or in their hands.

"What was the card you originally chose?" When they turn over the card there will be applause. Hold your positioning and wait for your applause to recede slightly before adding.

"Here's something interesting though." Ensure that their chosen card is face up either in their hand or on the table. "The ink on this card has not had a chance to dry yet."

Now you are going to perform the small packet double lift. Because of the nature of the blank face cards, everything blends smoothly together and hides a lot of sin with a not so perfect execution.

Turn over the top two cards as one. Because the audience was shown that all the cards were actually blank faced cards with the Bicycle logo on the back, when they see the red back design again, you are just reinforcing what they already knew; that the card had the design on the back. The reality of this moment is that you have now switched the second card for the top card.

When you thumb off the card, the BB5H remains on the top of the packet and in your hand now is a BF card.

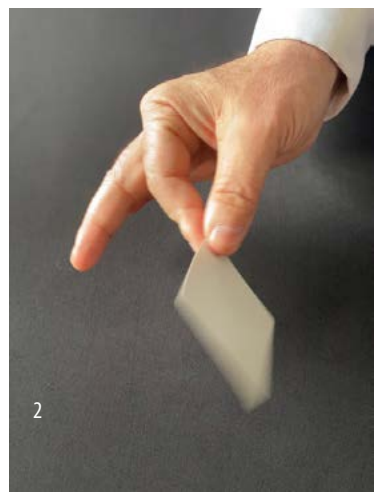
The audience sees exactly what they saw a moment ago, the blank cards. Nothing has changed visually at all.

Take the blank face card that you now have in your hand and drop it onto their chosen card so that they are face to face.

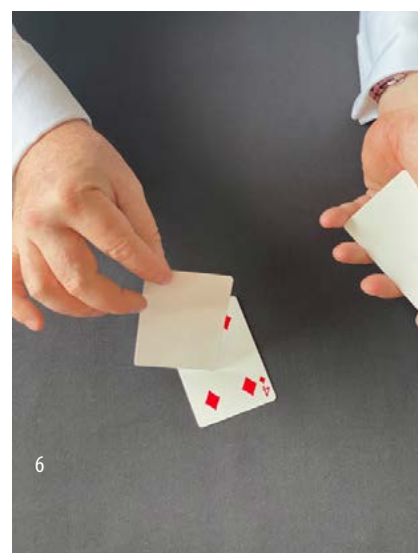
"You see if you rub the two cards together..." Invite the spectator to rub the cards against one another.

"...you see, the ink..." Now turn over the BF card to reveal that the ink has vanished from the card. "...just goes away."

Now to re-set, all you need to do is pick up the BF card and drop it face up onto the rest of the cards in your left hand. Put the cards back into your left outside pocket with the blank side towards your body and you are ready to move on to your next table. Automatically re-set.



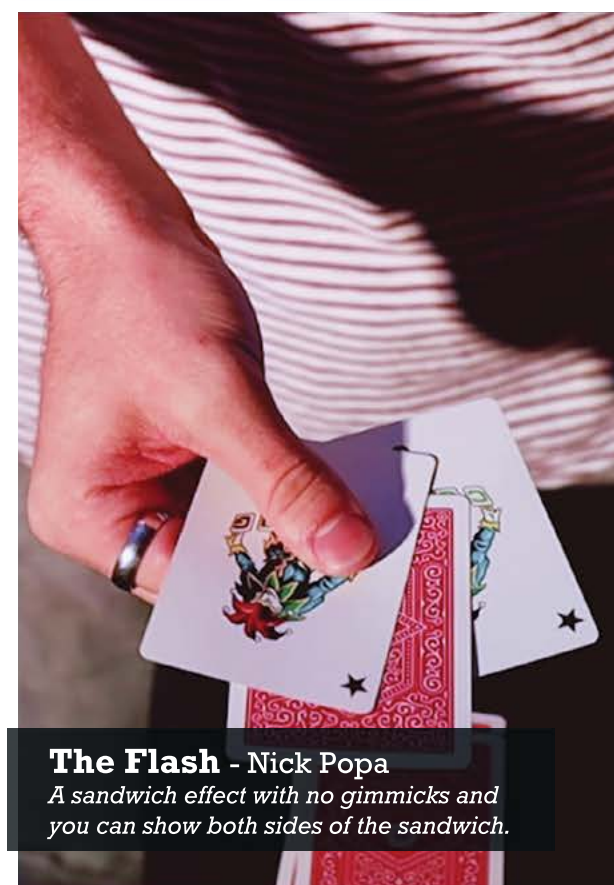




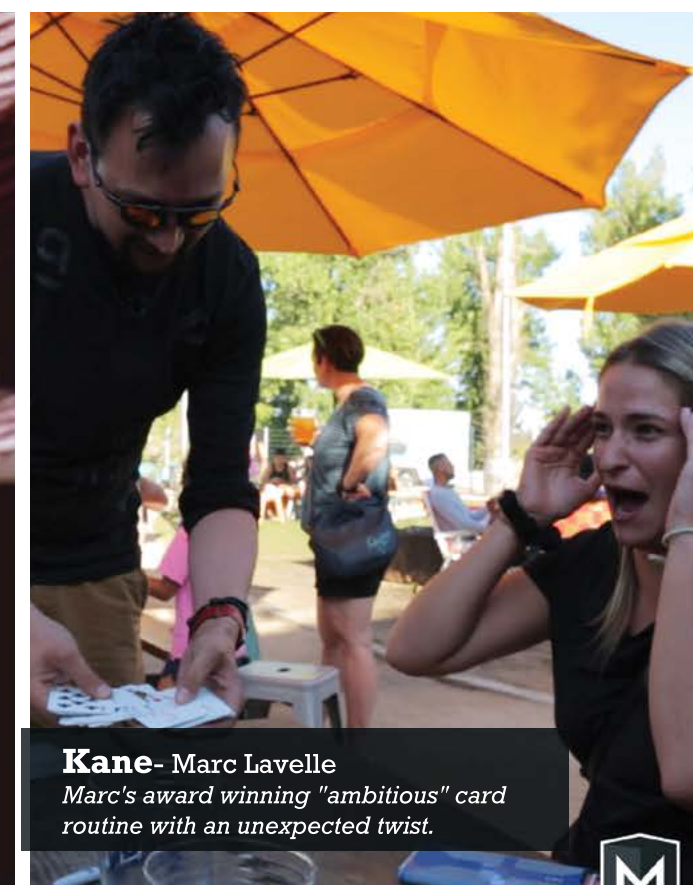
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# A SQUIB IN THE WORLD

FELICITY FIELDS

## AN ENGLISH LESSON FROM A DYSLEXIC



An individual standing on a stage can hold a level of control over their audience. It is escalated if you use the title 'magician,' as the audience is there to see your mystical power which is incomprehensible for muggles. Losing that power and control is the death of a show, and there are many ways for that to happen. I want to discuss what I believe is one of the most unacceptable ways, and that is to verbally stick your foot in your mouth. If the person on stage who is branded as the expert, and supposed to always know what will happen next, becomes flustered by a response from their 'volunteer' they will lose all essence of power, and control. Imagine bringing a volunteer up on stage and being left with the confusion of whether to call them "sir" or "madam." Maybe you make a joke based on an assumption that your volunteer's partner is the woman sitting next to him, only to realize it was the man sitting on the other side. This may be something you've never come across before, but wouldn't you rather avoid these situations, rather than be left standing with your trousers down by your ankles.

Sexuality and gender can be a minefield to navigate even if you have some knowledge of the LGBT+ community. While I know it is a topic of contention for some I am not here to argue or discuss the legitimacy of the LGBT+ community. Today's goal is to explain some basics of sex, gender, and sexualities so you don't stick your foot in your mouth.

There are many identities associated with this community, some of which I do not mention as I just do not have the space to include all of them. If you are a part of this community and wish to share your experiences, please reach out to me and we will find a way to make sure your voice is heard.

### **Pronouns:**

Let's start with language. Typically, at a young age, we are taught that pronouns are he/him/his or she/her/hers. But they/them/theirs is also a pronoun, it is not just used in the plural form for groups but for one single person who does not identify as male or female. It can replace "he or she" in any sentence. For instance, "They picked a card. They put it back

in the deck..." This refers to one person doing the action but does not specify the gender of the person.

Within the LGBT+ community, there are different types of gender. Gender fluid, nonbinary, gender non-conforming, etc. I have found that it is easier to use they/them for everyone unless I am certain of their pronoun preference. This can be tricky to master, by practicing and correcting yourself in everyday life it will become easier. There is a very simple way to find out someone's preferred pronouns. Ask!

### **Asking for preferred pronouns on stage:**

If you are to do this on stage, please do not make a joke and belittle the importance of the question. For some people to be asked this question is a BIG deal. There are times when, especially around strangers, asking about pronouns and gender identity can cause issues that using a gender-neutral term could avoid. I would suggest on stage you do not ask a volunteer their preferred pronouns as it can lead to more "foot in mouth" situations if you slip up. But rather

I recommend sticking to gender-neutral terms like they/them. The volunteer may not be ready to say their preferred pronoun with the company they are with, or to a room full of strangers. But I can assure you that if they are gender non-conforming, they will greatly appreciate not being stereotyped.

### **The difference between sex, gender, and sexuality:**

Sex involves your chromosomes, usually XX or XY, it is in your genes which cannot be changed. Gender is part of identity, it is based on the individual's preference and how they live as their authentic self. Sexuality is who you are sexually attracted to. Gender, sex, and sexuality have no effect on each other.

### **Talking with a friend:**

This column doesn't just deal with being on stage, but also people within this community, our magic family, and friends. To ask someone's preferred pronouns with friends or acquaintances is becoming a common practice. "What are your preferred pronouns?" Just be aware of your surroundings when asking these questions as there are still people out there that are aggressive towards the LGBT+ community. You do not need to speak in hushed tones or be secretive about identity but rather just be aware and safe. Everyone has a right to privacy so they have the right not to tell you, it is their choice when to "come out."

It is June which means even if we are stuck inside it is still Pride Month! This month should be a beautiful representation of love and self-expression that is held across the globe through parades, parties, and decorations. If you do not know someone's gender identity you can use "they" instead of "he or she." If you do not know a volunteer's sexual orientation you do not have to make the comment. Simply let their love be love and carry on with your show!

Until next time...

### **This is additional information:**

If the above is the basics this is the start of intermediate information about LGBT+ community. Some extra knowledge for those who are interested.

Sexuality is a spectrum that includes who you are attracted to and how sexually attracted you are to others. Usually referred to as the Kinsey Scale the two ends of the spectrum are heterosexual and homosexual. Studies suggest that most of the population falls somewhere in between, being some level of bisexual or pansexual, rather than being purely heterosexual or homosexual.

Genetically speaking there are more than two sexes. A person can be intersex, which is part of their genetic code. They can be born with internal and external sexual organs that do not match, or their organs do not match their chromosomes. They can have XX, XY, or XXY chromosomes. There are different types of intersex, and it affects around 0.05% of the population.

Words have prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are letter/s or words added to the beginning of the word that can help shape the meaning. Similarly, suffixes are letter/s or words at the end of the word. So, to understand some of the words in the LGBT+ community you just have to understand some prefix and suffixes. Pansexual is someone who is sexually attracted (-sexual) to all (pan-) genders. Polyamorous would be someone who has many (poly-) feelings (amorous) for others, aka having multiple partners. Asexual is someone without (a-) sexual attraction(-sexual). Etc.





# JEFF CHRISTENSEN

# MAGIC

# IS

# EDUCATION



[https://youtu.be/tQA\\_a\\_kUPtY](https://youtu.be/tQA_a_kUPtY)

I hope that you're all doing as well as can be expected given the current circumstances. My family and I continue to self-isolate and are all working, teaching and studying from home. I feel very blessed to have them close to me during this time. I've continued to try and make good use of this time and have been actively adapting my performances to online as well as doing lots of writing and collaborating. Using Zoom and other software to connect with the great friends around the world has certainly been something that I will continue even after things return to normal. I'd encourage you to do the same...it's amazing! We don't have to wait another year to connect with the friends that we'd usual see only once a year at conventions.

That being said it sure would be nice to see some great friends and great magic in person.

This month I have the distinct pleasure of sharing an interview that I did recently with Andi Gladwin. I've been enjoying the Astonishing Essays series and I found his book "Focusing on Magic" a wonderful read. In the book Andi shares his great love for the art of magic and how approaches and studies magic. Enjoy!

**Jeff: How do you feel magicians can best use this time to improve their magic?**

Andi: If there is one gift that many people have been given from this unusual period, it's the gift of time. More than ever, we can now use our free time to work on magic. I find it especially useful to have a schedule.



PHOTO CREDIT: MATT GILMORE

Perhaps thirty minutes practicing new magic in the morning, an hour of working on existing routines in the afternoon, and some time reading magic books in the evening.

**Jeff: Have you always been a student of magic or is this something of a new experience for you?**

Andi: I have been studying magic since I was eleven years old. I remember being a young kid reading books like the Martin Nash book and continue to study magic at every opportunity I can.

**Jeff: Roberto Giobbi (who you quote) talks about understanding and interpreting a trick better than anyone else. How do you go about understanding and interpreting a trick better than anyone else?**

Andi: That can only come with four things: studying the plot, questioning everything about it, practicing it often, and performing it regularly. And the important thing about this approach is that it's a loop: once you have been performing the effect regularly, you can go back to the start and study the plot again, question everything about it and practice it often. It never ends.

**Jeff: Studying magic in the way that you describe can be challenging for some. Do you have any suggestions or words of encouragement for folks following your book?**

Andi: There are no shortcuts to becoming a great magician and so we must put the work in to achieve the results we want. I read a great quote once: "staircases don't make great climbers, mountains do." The same applies to magic — it's going to be difficult, it's going to take time, but the end result is that we get to share amazing experiences with our audiences. That's the perfect reward for such a big time and energy investment.

**Jeff: Who would you describe as your magical mentors? What qualities do you think makes a good magic mentor?**

Andi: Ultimately, you have to be responsible for your own growth in magic, but I think a good mentor is someone who asks the right questions and helps you find your own answer. And with that in mind, my mentors are my friends. You can always benefit from showing a magician friend a trick and asking them to work on it with you. Are the angles right? Is what I am saying interesting and meaningful? Is there a better way of doing this? The more questions you ask, the better your magic will become.

**Jeff: Can you say more about your thoughts on? "If you don't have a goal then you don't have to accept responsibility for not achieving them."**

Andi: If I didn't keep a to-do list for my work, I wouldn't get nearly as much done. The same applies to magic; nobody is going to tell us what we need to work on, so we need to take charge of our own syllabus. That's why I like to set myself mini goals to work on. For example, perhaps you need to improve your double lift, or perhaps you need a better opener. Give yourself a goal and you know the direction you need to go in. Without goals, I think I would become lost.

**Jeff: I'm familiar with Jeff McBride as I'm one of his private students....what do you think he's really writing in all of those notebooks?**

Andi: Simple solution: ask him! Jeff, like many of the best teachers in magic is always willing to share his systems. Jeff is a conscientious note-taker, but more importantly, he has a system in place to translate, file and review his notes. He's a great example of what it takes to become a lifelong student of magic.

**Jeff: The current situation has devastated the performance industry. What are you doing to in response to "retool" your magic?**

Andi: In the IT world, the most successful companies are "agile" in that they can quickly adapt and change course. The same applies to magicians. I have been impressed with magicians who have adapted to perform online magic shows, give magic lessons, and generally adapt to this change.

We must continue that agility for when we get back to performing. For example, will people still be willing to pick cards? Can close-up magicians stand so close to spectators? So long as we remain agile, we can quickly adapt to the way the world changes.

**Jeff: Love the thought... "just do it, get started and you'll find the answer yourself"...do you feel like many magicians are looking for the next trick, book, video, etc? What are we/they waiting for?**

Andi: The next book you buy isn't going to contain some revolutionary magic technique that will change the world, any more than the current books you own. I find that many magicians dismiss books, DVDs etc. that they already own in the excitement for waiting for the next book to arrive. I'm not against buying new magic (I probably buy more than most!), but I do think that we should give just as much attention to the magic we already own as we do the magic we just bought. Similarly, I rehearse and practice the magic that I already know just as much as I do new magic.

**Jeff: Tell us about your anti-library...**

Andi: In *The Black Swan*, Nassim Nicholas Taleb proposes the idea of an "anti library": a collection of books that the owner hasn't yet read. He writes of Umberto Eco, who would despair at visitors to his



personal library (which contained 30,000 books) who would ask how many of those books he had read. He believed that those visitors were suggesting that owning so many books was to drive his ego and not his education.

I often return from a magic convention with a dozen or so books; more than I'd have time to read in the short term. And while that may seem wasteful, my intentions are also not to build an egotistical display room of magic books, but to build a library that allows me easy access to the information I seek, and just as importantly, as a reminder that there is so much more to learn and that magic is such a wide skill set that I'll never be able to master it all.

**Jeff:** Jeff McBride has lots of books in library...conversely Eugene had but a few...which camp are you in and why?

**Andi:** Eugene read lots of magic, but when he was done, he gave the books away to friends who he felt would benefit from them. Jeff is building a library for himself and his students. In many ways, I think those two goals are remarkably similar and I'd like to think that I connect with that goal too.

**Jeff:** To paraphrase (from you!) "I don't study magic to find better tricks. I study magic to find a better me...which will in turn create a better magician and better experiences for my audiences." How does studying magic help you find a better me? Can you give some details or an example?

**Andi:** I have found that the more I learn about magic, the more I learn about so many other areas in life. There's not one easy example as it's a case of the combined whole being greater than the sum of its parts. By focusing your life on becoming as good as you can be at something, I feel as though you grow in my other unexpected ways. Magic has introduced me to people I never thought I'd get to meet, has taken me to places I never thought I'd go, and has given me opportunities to experience things I'd have never experienced otherwise. And all of that because I decided to devote my time to doing a few card tricks as well as I could do them.

I want to thank Andi Gladwin for taking the time to share his time and talents with me. I simply loved his book Focusing on Magic and I'm sure that you will to. It's chock full of many great insights for any serious student of the art of magic. You can get your own copy of Andi's great book at:

<https://www.vanishingincmagic.com/magic-books/astonishing-essays-andi-gladwin/>

Until next time, remember, Magic is Education.

Jeff Christensen (M. Ed.)  
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Rounding out the surfeit of magic are intros from Todd Karr, Kevin James and Gaetan Bloom; a few essays by Gaetan; chapters on Gaetan's marketed items (the Intercessor, the Escorial Monte, the Escalator); and a two-chapter appreciation of Winston Freer.

MY THOUGHTS:

A double book set that comes in at 8lbs with each book about 400 pages. The quality is first rate and the layout, photographs and drawings really make this something very special you'll refer to time and time again.

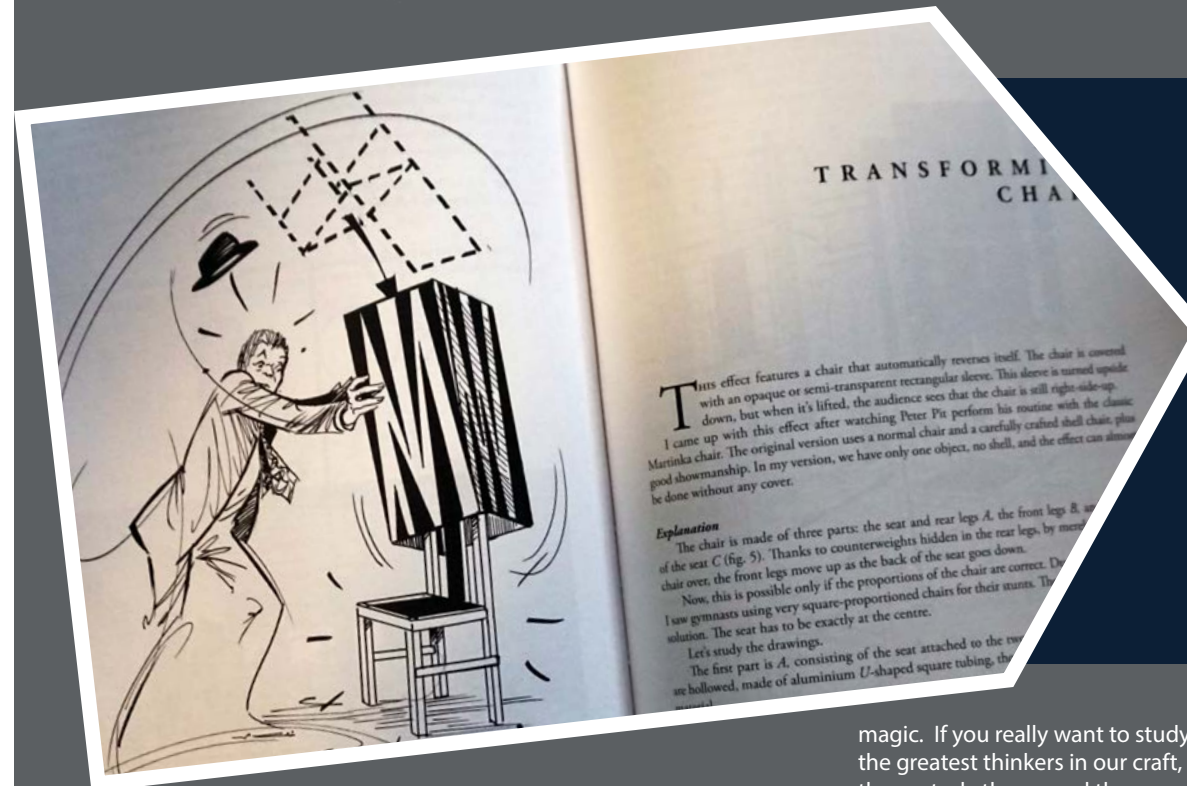
When these arrived I couldn't put them down, and I kept putting bookmarks in where I wanted to work on routines from and add them to my act. By the end I had bookmarked almost every ideal!



This book is far more than tricks that Gaetan has created over his incredible career. By the time you finish reading and devouring every page you will get more of an understanding of his thought process and what goes in to making something different that is very strong magically but also very entertaining. You will also look at things around you in a different light, and get your creative juices flowing.

These books contain various lectures notes, marketed tricks and essays, plus many unpublished ideas including one of his signature pieces that originally was going to be kept out of the book.

There are essays throughout the book including one of my favorites called, 'The Effect and The Plot.' He states "that the effect is what happens during the trick and the plot is the pretext or premise. It's WHY you are doing the trick." The thought process in all the essay chapters really make you stop and think and if you've ever wanted to get creative this



"The best set of books I have read that covers every aspect of magic from close-up, mentalism to illusions." - Paul Romhany

is the book that will help you immensely.

The books are overflowing with such a wide range of material from classic ideas to things only Gaetan would have thought about. No matter what the routine, everything has a twist or novel concept that takes it to another level. One example is the Transformation Chair. A classic made famous by Peter Pitt, but Gaetan's method and effect are so direct and different than I've ever seen. This is a great example of how his mind works. If you love building props you will definitely LOVE this book!! There's enough material in here to keep you busy for a very long time. There is magic with apples, tubes, ropes, cards, bottles that twist in your hand, Sharpies, light bulbs, chairs, costume changes etc. the list just goes on and on. It is filled with comedy routines, mentalism, illusions and stand-up

magic. If you really want to study the work of a true master and one of the greatest thinkers in our craft, then these are the books for you. Buy them, study them, read them over and over, work on the material and make it your own. You will have routines that your audiences would not have seen before, and you'll have a lifetime of ideas and routines to draw from within these books.

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## FOCUS ON DR. LARRY HASS

EDITED BY LYNN MINER

*“The world needs magic. As magicians, we can help heal people and the world through our art.”*



DR. LARRY HASS

The Magic & Mystery School, now beginning its fourth decade, has produced and shared more magical wisdom than sands in the Sahara Desert.

This month introduces a new column series, Magical Wisdom. In today's topsy-turvy world, we need all of the magical wisdom we can get. Specifically, we will be presenting the sage advice and wisdom resident in the 300+ years of cumulative experience from faculty and staff at Jeff McBride's Magic & Mystery School. Each month, Dr. Lynn Miner, a seasoned School aficionado, will bring to VANISH readers insights from the School's core faculty and staff. You'll get to peek under their conceptual lid, see what makes them tick, and learn some of their wisdom gems. In this first column, Miner picks the brain of the Dean of the Magic & Mystery School, Dr. Larry Hass, who contributes this essay.

### IN THE BEGINNING

My very first encounter with the Magic & Mystery School happened back in 1995, when I read an article in one of the magic magazines about something called “Mystery School.” I desperately wanted to go! But I was a young assistant professor of philosophy with tenure to earn—and we had a young son—so it was simply impossible during the 1990s to get away for a week on an experiential retreat. Instead, what I did was bring the “Mystery School” to ME! I launched the Theory and Art of Magic Program at Muhlenberg College in 1999, and brought Eugene (of course) to participate, but also Bob Neale and Jeff & Abigail.

This led to me being one of the Guests of Honor at the very last Mystery School in June 2003 and again at the second Magic and Meaning Conference in 2007. After that, I was asked to serve on the faculty of the School, became the Associate Dean in 2010, and the Dean in 2017, after Eugene's death.

I must say, I am so honored to serve as the Dean of the School. One reason is because I am committed to its mission to advance the art of magic by helping magicians become more knowledgeable and, if it is their calling, to be more excellent performers. The other reason is because serving as Eugene's successor—and carrying on his legacy—is a deep personal pleasure because of our long friendship.

### MY “PERFECT” MAGIC DAY

*“As a performer, I warm up, practice, and rehearse just about every day.”*

Along with my daily work as the Dean of the School and as the Publisher of Theory and Art of Magic Press, I have a highly active performing career—which is why I got into magic in the first place. (For the record, I retired early from college teaching in 2010.) Thus, a “perfect” magic day for me always involves warming up

my body and voice, developing new performing material, and then moving into practice and rehearsal for the next shows that are coming up. (During the pandemic, this means online shows and appearances.) After that, typically after lunch, I work with students, and follow-up on email, phone calls, and business matters. As the day winds down, I study magic—most often through books, but occasionally through video.

### MAGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

*“The fundamental business of every magic show is relationship building.”*

I have been performing magic now for nearly thirty years, and I would say one of my big “level ups” was the realization that it is all about relationship building with my audiences. If they don't like me, respect me as a confident performer, and trust me, then there won't be very much “magic” at the show. For me, this is one of the most fundamental premises in the magic show business.

As an outgrowth of this insight, I have especially learned how to build a full show so it becomes highly interactional. Of course, I do routines the audience watches, often to build their trust that the magic will be strong; however, rather quickly people are joining me on stage to play. And in a number of my pieces the whole audience plays along with me—whether it is a small close-up show or a major theater show. My primary “trick” then, perhaps my best one, is working to magically transform every audience from observers to interactive participants and co-creators. In this respect I need to mention that Jeff McBride is a great master and teacher about audience dynamics. I have learned so much from making shows with him, as have all of our students, because this is a core teaching element in many of our classes.

### MY MAGICAL DREAMS

*“The pandemic has created such disruption, but it is important for us now to create new goals and plans.”*

One of my biggest goals over the past five or six years was to create a full-evening theater show with a strong narrative arc about the essential place of magic in our lives. I am thrilled to say that this show—Magical Life: An Evening with Larry Hass—had “soft openings” in several cities and made its full premiere in 2019 at the Orpheum Theatre complex in Memphis. This was a big dream and, as a full theater show, it required a great deal of labor, collaboration, and production work. While I definitely plan to continue my performing work at corporate events, conferences, and private parties, I am also looking for producers and venues for further runs of Magical Life run. Of course, I know things will change on the other side of the pandemic crisis, but there will always be a hunger for live magic theater. Thus, I am already working on re-configuring the show so it can be performed “no-touch,” then after that “low-touch,” and then someday again “high-touch.”

Another goal the pandemic has actually served was my developing online magic classes, offered by the School, on a number of different topics. At the time of writing, I just completed a six-hour magic course (two hours in three consecutive weeks) titled “The Three Levels of Magic Performance.” Very soon, I will be teaching my second such course, which is devoted to a deep study of Juan Tamariz's three essential books of magic philosophy.

### MY MAGIC REFERENCES

From that and what I mentioned earlier, you can see magic books and study remain keenly important to me. I have a fairly significant library, both for my own learning and also as resources for when I am writing or editing books for my Press. I have a video library, but it is much smaller. I believe magic videos are useful in many respects, but also that exclusively learning magic from videos keeps magicians from growing in several important ways. After all, magic videos represent a very small tip of a vast iceberg that consists of all the magic of every style that has been created and recorded in the literature. As a result, too much video learning with magic keeps one floating along the mere surface of the art.

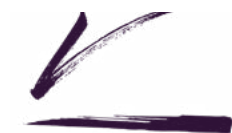
### A LIGHTBULB EXPERIENCE

*Lance's Law: “The best magicians today are the ones who make the most shows.”*

Over time and through experience, I've gained many insights. When I started performing magic at the age of thirty-four, I didn't understand that learning how to perform is something that primarily happens through actually doing it, not by watching videos or even reading books about it. A big moment for me was learning what I call the “Lance's Law” (after Lance Burton).

Here's the story: in 2009, we took one of our Master Classes to see Lance's show—after which Lance graciously welcomed us all to his private reception area for conversation and photos. That night, one of the students asked Lance, “Mr. Burton, setting aside yourself, who are the best magicians today?” Without missing a beat, Lance said, “Oh, that's easy: the best magicians are the ones who make the most shows.” Whoah! This was a big idea, and it struck me deeply. Of course, it was true! Learning how to perform magic isn't something that happens in one's head while reading or watching anything. It happens by performing as many shows as you can and—here is the key part of it—learning from every show. It is not enough to perform to improve. Instead, one must come home from that show and make a list of the things that went well—that's always important! But then we have to honestly assess what didn't go well and figure out how to make sure it never happens again.

This is the only way to grow as a magician: to make as many shows as one can and learn from every single one. This is the “growth mindset” I teach all of my magic students and all our students at the School. But I should also say that the path of growth-oriented performance is not for everyone. Many people simply love reading about magic and learning tricks and studying the history and watching magic shows and hanging out with magicians! Me too! Magic is a great, fun art and hobby, and one thing that makes the magic subculture a special place is the fact that professionals and enthusiasts rub shoulders with regular frequency. This is a profound pleasure to me, and I learn so much from all these encounters—which typically are full of friendship and respect. Another reason I am so honored to be the Dean of the School is because it really is a place for everyone interested in magic to come and learned from each other. This hasn't changed with the onslaught of the pandemic. Quite the opposite: our Mystery School Monday live shows are watched each week by hundreds—even thousands of viewers. And our recent online courses have been enrolling at a very high rate. So, as the Magic & Mystery School heads into its fourth decade of educating magicians in the art and craft, the online classroom technology creates an exciting new opportunity for us to interact with magicians all over the world. Indeed, I expect this next decade to be an era of tremendous growth for online teaching and learning. Nonetheless, at the heart of it all is our team's commitment to in-person learning and performing. Technological delivery systems are helpful, but not optimal. The magic of learning and the experience of magic happens best when people are together, in the same physical spaces, as though gathered around the fire. That is where Mystery School started in 1991 and how it has flourished over its thirty years of working with thousands of magicians from all over the world.





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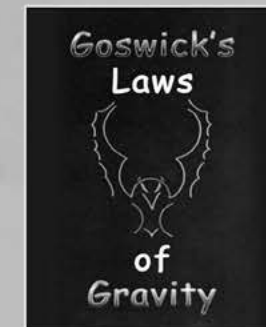
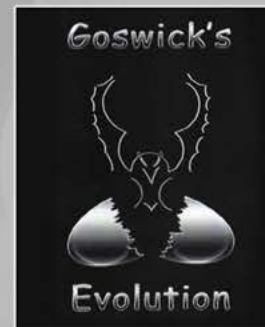
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## THE SHOWMAN Tristan Crist

BY  
Thomas L. Swieciak

## MASTERS OF THE AMERICAN MIDWEST: PART 2 THE CLASSICIST, THE SHOWMAN, AND THE ROCK STAR

Some proposals take a lot of planning.

When Tristan Crist walked into a bank to finally finance the building of his own magic theater, his proposal had been in the works for some time. Ever since establishing the only theatrical grand illusion show in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, Tristan knew he would have to eventually find a larger venue. For years, Crist had been delivering the quality of a Las Vegas illusion show in the confines of a theater not much larger than a coffeehouse. However, once the financing was in place, the proposal was almost complete.

Unable to contain his excitement, Tristan watched as construction workers poured concrete into the foundations of his future performance venue, and kept his Facebook followers apprised of the theater's progress as his proposal came to fruition. Then, piece by piece, the proposal came together. The walls went up, the floors were carpeted, and the stage was put in just the right place. Then, when the lighting was perfect, the grand illusions were all on display, and after an audience had sat enthralled before his incredible performance in Lake Geneva's newest theater, Tristan got down on one knee and asked for the hand of the woman he loved, his assistant Shannon.

Needless to say, she said "yes," and the proposal was a success. It was entirely fitting, as magic has been the center of Tristan's life since the very beginning.

"I remember performing my first paid show for a Girl Scout troop at age 13," Crist said. "My parents had a rule that 50 percent of the money I would make had to go into a savings account for college, and the other 50 percent I could spend. Outside of a few short-term stints flipping burgers at a restaurant and stocking shelves at a grocery store as a teenager, I've never had a 'real' job, and am proud to say every dollar that

has gone into my career and business has come from performing magic," he added.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at a young age Tristan would take a 2 hour city bus ride to the nearest magic shop as often as he could. Theophilus Magic Shop was a small world of enchantment built into the breezeway of a former magician's home. "Fred, the owner, was always patient with me and would let me stare at all the fancy props while I thought about the pros and cons of each piece of apparatus, before counting out my dollars and purchasing everything I could afford each month," Crist said.

Crist literally built his show from the ground up over his lifetime. Some of Tristan's earliest shows were accomplished with background music from a Fisher Price record player. Eventually, Crist worked his way up to a cassette player, and once his shows began to develop, Tristan bought a coveted CD player to provide his performances with musical ambiance.

"Growing up in Milwaukee, the first magician I remember seeing was David Seebach," Crist said. "To be honest, I think David greatly influenced a vast majority of the professional magicians performing in the Wisconsin area today," he added. Witnessing the colorful wonder of Seebach's illusion shows inspired Crist to pursue his dream professionally.



"When I was 18 and just graduated high school, I spent a summer on Washington Island with friends, and put together my first self-produced stage show on a banquet hall stage at a local restaurant," Crist said. "The following summer I borrowed a Ford pickup truck, taught myself how to drive stick shift, and with my girlfriend as an assistant, went on the road to do a self-produced tour of 6 illusion shows in a variety of small theatres that I rented or talked into doing a ticket split with," he added.

Tristan's production began to grow as the years went by, thanks in a large part to the method of investment which his parents had instilled in him. "From there the tour got bigger every year, and throughout college I would spend the summers on the road performing in theatres, at camp grounds, and everything in between," Crist said. "Eventually word of mouth resulted in some corporate bookings, and every year I had more shows and made more money. Making more money meant I spent more too, and soon I bought a Chalet sub trunk, a guillotine, a chair suspension, and I was off and running," he added.

In 2006, after graduating from the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point with a Bachelor's degree in Theater Technology and Design, Tristan was hired as the featured illusionist for the summer season at Baraboo, Wisconsin's Circus World Museum. "I spent the summer of 2006 performing 7 days a week doing a 30-minute show in the circus ring," Crist said. "A three-month contract turned into ten years, and I learned a ton throughout the process about the performance side as well as the business side of running an entertainment attraction," he added.

After a decade with the circus, Tristan knew that he had to continue growing, as he always had throughout his career. "When I moved from Circus World in Baraboo to Lake Geneva in 2015 to open my own theatre, it was certainly a risk that could have turned out differently," Crist said. "Luckily, I had great success which led to building the permanent theatre in Lake Geneva and I hope to remain here for the rest of my career," he added.

However, Tristan's time in Baraboo did not only

offer him a valuable insight into the world of magic – he also met his future fiancé, Shannon. "She was water skiing for the Tommy Bartlett show," Crist said. "I needed an additional assistant for a corporate gig and was able to convince her to give it a try," he added. Shannon would follow Tristan and his longtime assistant, Nancy, to their new performance venue in Lake Geneva.

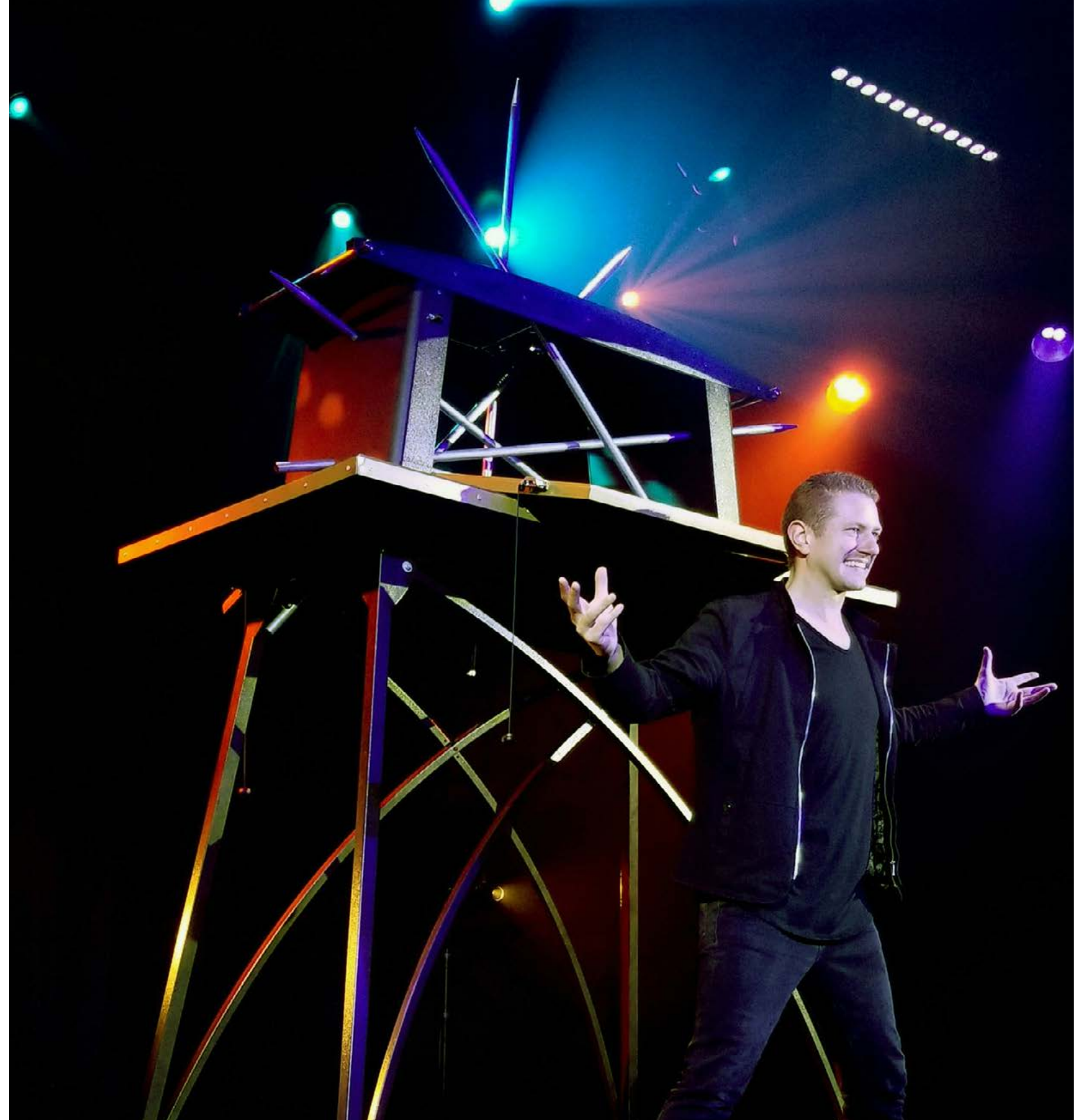
People have repeatedly asked Tristan why he chose Lake Geneva as his base of operations. "People always ask why not Branson or Vegas," Crist said. "The beauty of my location is I'm in a resort town close to Chicago," he added. "Ninety percent of our audiences are tourists from Chicago on a short overnight trip."

As his shows sold out night after night, Tristan realized that there was a strong demand in Lake Geneva for the kind of entertainment he was offering. The next step was a big risk for Crist, but it turned out to be worth it. "Deep down I knew the ultimate dream was to own it all myself," Crist said. "Not just rent the space – I needed to do it my way. Shannon encouraged me to explore building it from the ground up. That was a scary concept since I knew nothing about the construction process," he added.

"Of course," Crist wistfully remarked, "I knew nothing about moving to a town and opening up a small 50 seat venue, and that had worked out great, so why not?"

For years, Crist had been driving past a two-acre, undeveloped piece of land across from the local Walmart. "It looked like prime commercial property, but it had been sitting for years," Crist said. "The problem was the 20 foot hills of topsoil and overgrown weeds and trees that covered the entire two acres. It would cost a ton of money to improve the lot and make it usable to build on," he added. After thinking over the proposal, Tristan finally decided to go for it. "You only live once right?" Crist said.

During the design process, Tristan ensured that the structure he was building would not only serve as an exemplary theater for his audiences, but also as a long term investment for his future, as someday he will have to consider retiring. "The building itself was designed in a way that it could easily be turned into multiple commercial rental units," Crist said. "It would be very hard to sell a traditional the-



PHOTOS OPPOSITE PAGE: Left to Right - Just after purchasing land for the new theatre, theatre frame work going up, construction on outside, finished theatre.





atre someday, but an office and retail commercial building across from Walmart holds a lot of value," he added.

It is 2020, and Tristan finds himself at the helm of an incredibly inspirational career that started in a small breezeway magic shop with a Fisher Price record player. Over 23 years, he has grown his dream into a multi-million dollar tourist attraction, all because of a passion for performance and a love of magic. "It's amazing that in the last few years what started as a dream to own a magic theatre has turned into an entrepreneur, property owner and future landlord," Crist said. "Like much of my

career, one thing led to another and here we are," he added.

It was that same dream that drove Crist onto one knee in asking for Shannon's hand in marriage, inside the enchanting theater of magic that they had built together. "Shannon poured her blood, sweat, and tears into the project of building the new space, and it felt appropriate to propose to her on the stage that she helped build," Crist said.

A stage, fortunately for Tristan, was perhaps the perfect place to propose to a magician's assistant. After all, in case she was having thoughts

about declining the proposal, Shannon undoubtedly remembered that the sawing in half box behind the curtain was just the right size for her, and soon it would be show time for *The Showman*, Tristan Crist.

The Tristan Crist Theater remained closed during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. On May 13th, 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that a unilateral executive extension of the "Stay-At-Home" order issued by the Wisconsin governor in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was unconstitutional without the support of the Wisconsin State Legislature. Due to a lack of legislative support for extending the



PHOTOS: ABOVE - LOBBY OF TRISTAN CRIST MAGIC THEATRE  
BELOW: THE STAGE IS SET IN THE NEW THEATRE.

governor's order, the statewide "Stay-At-Home" order expired, and residents of Wisconsin were thus beholden to pandemic guidance issued by their local governments. By the following week, the Tristan Crist Theater had begun complying with all necessary social distancing requirements in accordance with a gradual reopening of the city of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Shows began again on May 23rd, 2020. During the statewide closure, Tristan Crist had been ensuring the business remained productive by selling magic kits and theater concessions to drive-up patrons.

*Thomas L. Swieczak is an American lawyer and lifelong magic enthusiast who holds degrees in aviation technology, education, English literature, film, journalism, and law. He resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S.A. with his wife Sheila. He can be contacted at milwaukee.magicworks@gmail.com.*







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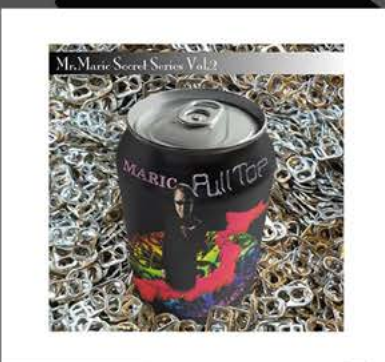
Wonder Sealer



Card Through Meshbag



Maric Cup



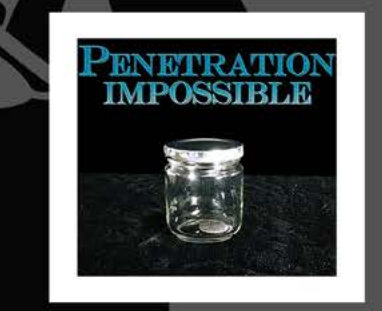
Maric Pulltop



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Hole



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Magician's Buddy



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-MICHAEL NIGHT- MAGICIAN & HYPNOTIST



# REVIEWS

## TRICKS, DOWNLOADS, BOOKS

01



**TIMELESS BY VANISHING INC.**

**Price: \$40**

**Available: All magic dealers**

**WHOLESALE: [Murphismagic.com](http://www.murphismagic.com)**

The performer brings up the topic of implanting ideas in someone's head. To demonstrate, the mentalist removes their watch and has a participant select a time by twisting the knob to move the hands around at random. The chosen time is remembered and the performer's watch is held between the participant's hands. The performer's head is genuinely turned away the entire time. Still, the performer can now discern the chosen time. Here's where it gets crazy: to prove that the time and the watch itself was an implanted idea, the mentalist asks the participant to look at the watch again. There are now **NO HANDS AT ALL ON THE WATCH**. The hands...are just gone.

This is an extremely clever idea and extremely simple in method. Don't let the method take away from the overall effect because often it's the simplest things that are the strongest.

You receive the watch, depending on which one you chose to purchase, and a box as well as the download link. The effect is very straight forward where you can 'show' the hands of the watch as you spin the dial then turn it face down in the person's hand. They turn the dial and look at the time. You instantly tell

them what time they randomly chose and to kick it off the hands on the watch completely vanish.

A nice feature here is that you can hand out the watch and everything can be examined. This was one of the first effects released many years ago by Vanishing Inc. and it's great they brought it back. I love the premise of time and this is a nice addition to any effect using time. The kicker is that the hands vanish. There is **NO** skill in doing this part of the effect and it happens very quickly after they look at the time they set. The method is what I love more than anything. At first you may be surprised **BUT** in performance it flies by your audience. The handling is what helps sell the overall illusion and the tutorial explains everything in detail.

A great routine that happens in the spectator's hands.



02



**CREDITKA By Artifex**

**Price: \$29.95**

**Available: All magic shops**

**WHOLESALE: [www.murphismagic.com](http://www.murphismagic.com)**

With CREDITKA, everything happens in the spectators hands - you start with a devastatingly direct ACAAN effect; after a card is chosen and a random digit from the credit card number is picked the card is located **AT** the chosen number **IN** a shuffled deck.

Then the kicker - An unbelievable transformation that seemingly takes place in-between their hands!

They look back at the credit card but the digits are no longer there... Instead, they see the prediction that's **IMPRINTED** where the numbers were a minute ago.

There have been similar ideas like this on the market over the years that utilize a credit card, but this one looks as close to a real credit card than others I have seen. The idea is the spectator looks at your credit card and it is placed in their hand. A card is chosen and then found in the deck. When they look back at the credit card the card they chose is embossed where the numbers were on the card. The cards you receive are extremely well made and look like a regular credit card.

Like any credit card, if you keep it in your wallet it will scratch, so you might want to keep it separate from others while traveling. In performance you can put it in with your regular cards. The reason I mention this is because you want the cards supplied to look like exactly the same, and if one is scratched it will look odd. You are supplied with a little envelope so perhaps keep them in their while transporting.

The effect itself is very direct. You will need a deck of cards and the handling is taught on the download. Basic card skills are required regarding the handling taught but once you have the cards you will be easily able to adapt to any routine you may already do. The simpler ideas are sometimes the best and while this is simple the impact is very strong. When the person turns over the Visa card they will be blown away that their card is now embossed on the card.

03



**CEE-LO**  
LOUIE'S CUP AND  
DICE ROUTINE

**Louie Foxx's Cee Lo**

**Price \$60**

**Purchase at <http://www.magicshow.tips/cee-lo/>**

**Effect.**

This action packed routine uses three dice and one dice cup. One at a time the dice disappear and reappear under the cup. Then the dice magically jump from your pocket to your hand before

disappearing completely to reappear under the cup. Then for the finale two giant dice reappear under the cup one at a time.

Here's what you get:  
A tutorial DVD  
Gimmicked Dice Cup  
Regular Size Dice (gimmicked and un-gimmicked)  
Jumbo Dice (gimmicked and un-gimmicked)

Nick Lewin review of Cee-Lo.

I have always been a fan of the Chop Cup. I remember Ken Brooke's excitement when he jettisoned his beloved version the Dai Vernon Cups and Balls in favor of the Chop Cup. Why was he so excited? He had the epiphany that the elimination of two cups vastly improved the focal point in the effect without detracting significantly from the final revelations. It certainly does make for a streamlined effect that packs a punch. Louie Foxx's Cee-Lo replaces the cup and ball motif with a much more logical combo of Dice and dice shaker which makes for a nicely organic combo of props. Only magicians seem to think that a cup and a ball make a logical duo! This routine is straightforward, and easy to learn from the excellent DVD that accompanies the props.

I have always enjoyed Louie Foxx's ideas. He is a first rate performer and magical thinker. Louie creates excellent routines that are jam packed with entertainment value, and his Cee-Lo is no exception to this rule. This routine is thoroughly enjoyable throughout the performance time, and there is not the sense of padding that so often occurs in this kind of effect prior to the double load finale. Talking about that finale pay off, the final jumbo dice production is a beauty! It is the kind of smart thinking that will make you feel great every time you perform it. This is a really fine routine with nicely made props; I give it five stars, and I strongly recommend it.

04



**AMAZE WANDS by Danny Orleans**

**Price: \$25.00**

**Available: All magic shops**

**WHOLESALE: [www.murphismagic.com](http://www.murphismagic.com)**

Based on Bev Bergeron's iconic creation of the colorful multiplying wands Danny has produced a deluxe set with the added bonus of producing a break-away wand at the end. These wands are the perfect addition to any kids show performer and there is a reason this is called a classic. The addition of the final wand is a very clever idea and gets that final laugh that this has been looking for.

You get the four nesting wands, made from plastic, and the final black break-away wand.

They are constructed with a vibrant polypropylene hard plastic and scratch-resistant ends so built to last. You will also get access to a download tutorial where you will get 15 minutes of great ideas by Danny. Having seen Danny perform this I can tell you it's a huge hit with the kids. You also get access to an e-book with different ideas.

With Danny's ideas you will learn how to do this all by yourself - without any onstage help, which is great for social distance shows. When we can eventually get kids up to help then you can go back to your regular performances, but up until people are comfortable with this use it as a solo piece and you will still get lots of laughs. There are a lot of great ideas on the tutorial, many I am sure people haven't thought of before.

This is a TOP quality product that every kids show performer will get use from.



05



**The INFORMER** By Lloyd Mobley  
**Price: \$59.50**  
**Available: All magic dealers**  
**WHOLESALE: Murphysmagic.com**

As a fan of the original impression device Lloyd released using a playing card, I was excited to see the pad version. You receive the special impression pad, a gimmick pen, which looks innocent and a special something so you can gimmick any other pen, plus access to a 15 minute tutorial.

As far as impression devices go this one is one of the very best. You can cleanly show the pad and either have them write on the outside on a post-it note, or on a piece of paper on the pad itself. They then take away their paper and you simply place the pad on the table or put it in your pocket and you instantly know what they wrote. The pad itself is designed in such a way that you can show every page, the back and front to look like a regular pad, with nothing to see.

The impression itself is truly what makes this outstanding. It uses technology that is foolproof and very easy to read. There are no electronics that will break down or you need to charge, but rather a very clever pad that has a secret tool hidden inside.

The pad itself is made just for this routine, and you can easily replace the paper with any other note style paper. It is durable and built to last. The technology used for the impression is like no other.

If you are looking at a way to easily get information from a spectator via an impression then this is the best on the market!

06



**THE MANGA BOOK TEST** by Michael O'Brien  
**Price: \$20.00**  
**Available: All magic shops**  
**Wholesale: www.murphysmagic.com**

For \$20 this could be the deal of the century!! I'm a HUGE fan of book tests and this one has to be one of the most unusual and interesting ones I've ever seen.

You receive a booklet of instructions with download links to an hour and a half tutorial PLUS a lot of other bonus tutorials and routines and ideas. At its essence this book test is a multi-phase routine using ordinary Manga comic books. Manga are Japanese style comic books and this is what makes this so novel. You could literally walk in to a book shop and perform this using any of these style comics.

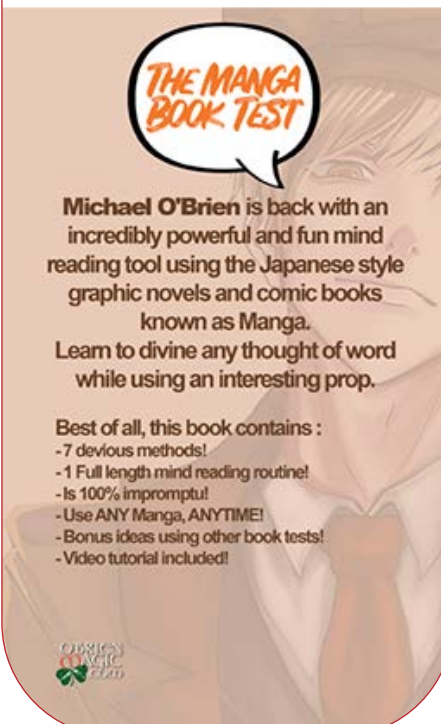
The methods are extremely clever and use principles used before, but with the addition of these comics they become embedded in to the performance so nobody will see or suspect any dirty work. The routine taught builds from one piece to the other and can use up to four spectators on stage. The one thing I love about this book test is that each revelation is very entertaining. This keeps

the pace moving which can be lost in a book test with more than two people helping out. Michael uses a variety of methods in different ways to make the selection process as open and as fair as possible.

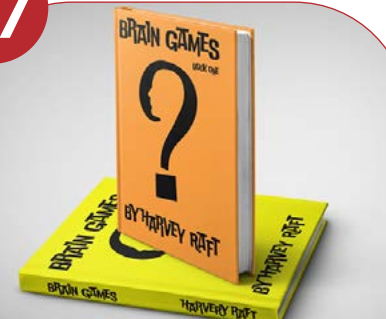
Because of the nature of the comic books it makes sense in Michael's performance because he wants people to think of words that they might not regularly think of. These comic books are perfect for this reason because they are filled with interesting words that also add to the overall fun of the routine. The second phase is where you read two people's minds at the same time. This changes the pace of the book test and helps break up the idea of just reading one thought at a time.

The final phase is a blindfold test with a really nice kicker where you apparently get it wrong by writing down a number, however, the kicker is that the number matches a Pokemon from a catalogue that has been in view the entire time. It's a really strong finish to this very strong and highly entertaining book test.

There are many things to love about this book test and many reasons I highly recommend it if you are looking for something very different. Above all it is fun to perform and a very well crafted and structured performance piece.



07



**BRAIN GAMES** by Harvey Raft  
**Price: \$160.00**  
**Available: All magic dealers**  
**WHOLESALE: Murphysmagic.com**

An incredible variety of magic that will make highlights over 40 years of work by Harvey Raft. These two books are very different in that they also give you access to custom graphics for many of the routines and cards that Harvey has designed over a period of time. For card magicians you will find a huge array of tricks using regular cards as well as gimmick cards, again with access to print the decks yourself. Harvey could have released many of these independently as single tricks, but here you have his life's work in two incredible books.

While most the material is card based he has also included two 'booklet's within the book that were previously published and sold separately. One is on Change Bags and the other is original Magic for Christmas.

There are over 400 pages and enough material to keep you busy for a very long time. I've been a fan of Harvey's work since his release of his commercial routine, "Mental Karaoke." If you are familiar with this wonderful routine then you will have an understanding of Harvey's incredible way of working out different methods and routines that are out of the box. This book contains similar ideas as Mental Karaoke but again, methods will vary. You can easily apply many of his ideas to regular marked cards you may already own.

The content ranges from self-working effects, math-style magic, non-card magic and themed magic using Movie cards, Zenner cards and more.

Definitely a book you can come back to time and time again and find strong and entertaining routines.

08



**UNTRUTH** by Rich Li and Sans Minds  
**Price: \$25.00**  
**Available: All magic shops**  
**Wholesale: www.murphysmagic.com**

This is an extremely visual piece of magic where four Kings instantly change to four eights, and then back again. It's a bit of eye candy for sure and if you are looking for something that would be perfect for your next Tic Toc or Social Media quick trick this would definitely fit the bill.

In a live performance it comes across as CGI, but of course it is done live and will still look as good.

You receive a special gimmick that is all ready to go as soon as you open the packaging, and a DVD with instructions. I think having a download link would have been a good idea as well for those who no longer use DVDs.

The tutorial explains the handling, and it will take a little practice to get this correct and comfortable looking, plus it also explains how to make the gimmick yourself. I imagine this product was originally intended as a DIY project, but thankfully they opted for including it already made.

There really isn't a performance section but rather handling. They do suggest a few ways you could do this, one being as a pseudo hypnosis type routine. I am sure card workers could find a use for this little gimmick and incorporate it in to other routines. Other possibilities might include having four cards chosen and they instantly change or perhaps the Kings change to the chosen cards, etc.

Overall a good little item that doesn't require too much skill and can be done surrounded. One thing to note is that you can't hand out the gimmick card and do need to be careful of any light shining directly down on it.

09

**IT'S A RINGER** By Nick Lewin  
**Price: \$19.95**  
**Available: www.lewinenterprises.com**

This is a mixture of two routines, ring on rope and ring in card box. This is an extremely commercial routine with each phase stronger than the last, and then you hit them with the final phase of the ring vanishing and ending up in the box. This has been Nick's go to close-up routine for a very long time, and it should be yours as well! The rope moves are extremely deceptive and fooled me when I saw it performed. Nick offers some very subtle nuances that make each phase of the borrowed ring coming off the rope look impossible. There are four phases of the borrowed ring off rope, and the final ring in card box is much safer than ring flight but with the same impact. All you need is the card box and the rope inside and you have a solid routine that is ideal for close-up and strolling.

This is a download and Nick explains everything in detail making it fun and easy to learn. Nick teaches all the moves and how to make the gimmick card box. One of the many things I love about this is the structure from the moment the rope comes out of the card box until the vanish and appearance of the ring from the box. It's extremely well structured and thought out routine that you WILL use under all working conditions.





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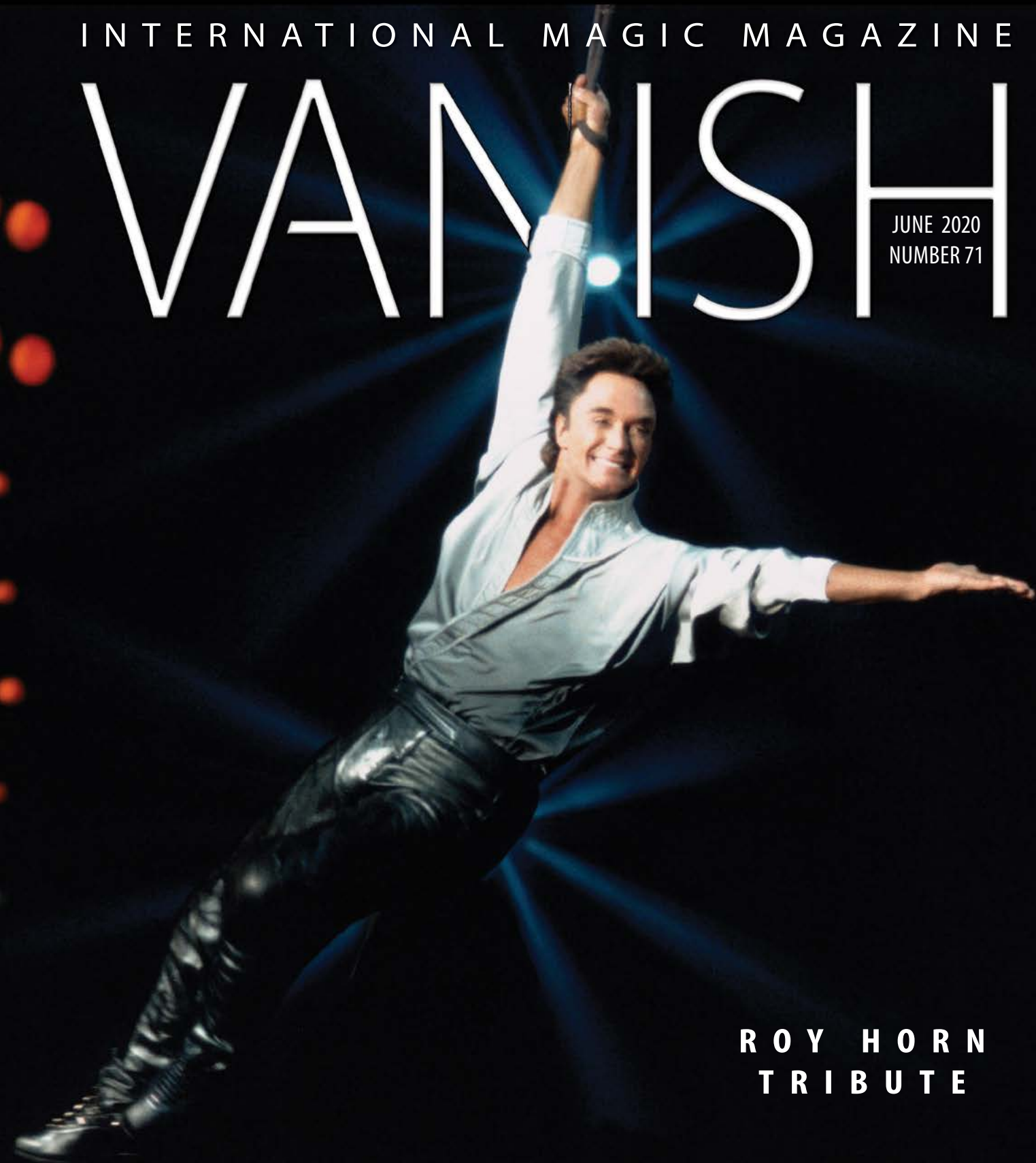
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