



MagicBunny.co.uk

TOP HAT

March 2003 - Edition 12

This month we've had many submissions to the ezine from numerous different writers.

Among these submissions are an interview with magician, David Acer, the third part of Michael Jay's series on Misdirection, the third part on Craig Browning's (Darmoe) "Being a Neophyte..." series and another article from our American columnist, Michael St. Louis. Together with some novel ideas for handing out business cards and other articles, this month's ezine is another bumper issue.

Special thanks go out to all contributors,

Best Wishes,

~Jon Snoops~

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Contents

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

MAGIC NEWS: *"Message From Admin"* by Admin

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"The Tarot Magician"* by Huw Collingbourne

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"An Interview With David Acer"* by Lady Laura

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"We the Rejected and Ridiculed"* by P. Craig Browning/Darmoe

MAGIC EFFECT: *"A Mixed Bag"* by Peter Marucci

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"The Art and Science of Misdirection Part 3"* by Michael Jay

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Being a Neophyte..."* by Craig Browning

MAGIC EFFECT: *"Business Card Business"* by Peter Marucci

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Variety is the Spice of Life"* by Marc Cottingham

MAGIC ARTICLE: *"Thoughts From Mid-West America"* by Michael St. Louis

Message From Admin

We have just passed a major landmark in our history and it has been somewhat an eventful month. On the 28th February Magic Bunny celebrated its first full year of online magical support and during this past month many new private board records were set; the forums grew at a rate of nearly 1200 posts a week and the membership expanded at a rate of 30 plus new members a week. As the forums become more and more active, these records will continue to be surpassed each month and looking back, these private records will pale into insignificance when compared with projected future statistics.

The forums have continued to develop to meet the needs of our membership and you may have noticed the departure of one particularly inactive forum over the last few days. The "Loans" forum was one of the very few forums that was present right from the early days of Magic Bunny. At first, when most members knew each other, the forum was used but, as the membership has grown, members have become more reluctant to participate in such a scheme with so many other strangers. This could be a reason why this forum has decreased in activity or perhaps there may be other influences that have not been anticipated. Even still, the activity of this particular forum was insufficient to warrant the attention that was required to maintain such a service. This is why you will have noted the demise of this particular project.

It is ambitious to expand and develop new projects, in order to continue to provide the very best magic Internet site on the globe. At the same time, it is only right to continue to monitor and evaluate existing projects to ensure that they continue to meet our existing members' needs. To be the very best requires adaptation to suit the requirements of the members and we shall endeavour to monitor and elevate existing projects as well as research and develop future plans.

If you have any feedback regarding the existing projects that you may find on the forums or if you have any ideas regarding your own private visions for the boards, please do not hesitate to contact one of the moderator team. The next exciting development could very well be your acorn.

By Admin

The Tarot Magician

Huw Collingbourne takes a glimpse into the magical life of the Mediaeval world.

Recently I've become increasingly interested in that wicked pack of cards known as the Tarot. While there is no hard evidence to suggest that the Tarot was originally used for anything more mystical than card games, it has, in modern times, become inextricably associated with mysticism and fortune telling. Whether or not you believe in such things, there is no denying the fact that the symbolism of the cards is rich and fascinating. From the inverted Hanged Man to the cruel Wheel of Fortune, many of the cards seem to tell stories from an ancient and unfamiliar world.

Even if you aren't interested in the Tarot itself, there is one card that has a special importance for anyone involved in the arts of magic. It is Card Number One: **The Magician**. In this article, I shall be looking at that card and trying to find out who that magician really is. In modern decks, he is often portrayed more as a wizard than a prestidigitator. But that's not how he began life. To understand the Magician of the Tarot, we have to look at some of the very earliest decks of the Italian Renaissance.

THE JUGGLER

We first see the magician of the Tarot in so-called Visconti-Sforza deck (named after the families for which it was designed). Created some time after 1450, this is probably the earliest Tarot deck which has survived in a reasonably complete form. The Visconti-Sforza cards are immensely beautiful. They are decorated with wonderfully detailed paintings on an elaborate gold background. An excellent modern recreation of the pack which attempts to restore the glory of the originals, has been designed by the Bulgarian



The 20th Century Rider-Waite magician is no longer a sleight of hand artist. He seems to be commanding elemental forces. His hat has been replaced by an 'infinity halo'.

The Tarot Magician (cont.)

artist, Alexander Atanassov, and is published by Lo Scarabeo. In this deck, the Magician is depicted as a rather morose-looking bearded man sitting at a table covered with various objects including a knife and possibly a cup and some coins. He wears a long red robe and a hat with a huge floppy brim.

The cards of the Visconti-Sforza deck are untitled. However, later Italian decks call this card *Il Bagatto* or *Il Bagatello*, while many French decks call it *Le Bateleur*. This can be translated as either 'juggler' or 'buffoon'. This name is not as inappropriate as it sounds, however. Even in English, the word 'juggler' was formerly applied to conjurers. Indeed, the first English language work on conjuring, published in 1612, was called 'The Art Of Juggling'. In Reginald Scot's 'Discovery of Witchcraft' (1584), the section on performance magic including sleight of hand with cards, coins and cup and balls is called 'The Art of Juggling Discovered'.

THAT OLD BLACK MAGIC

Before the 18th Century, a 'conjurer' was most likely to be someone who conjured (that is, summoned to appear) devils and spirits, while a juggler was someone who did sleight-of-hand tricks. In Shakespeare's 'The Comedy of Errors, for example, a character called Pinch, having been introduced as 'a conjurer', proceeds to attempt an exorcism. He says:

"I charge thee, Satan, hous'd within this man,
To yield possession to my holy prayers,
And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight:
I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven."

However, the subject of this attempted exorcism is unimpressed. He considers that Pinch to be a mere juggler (what we would call a conjurer) pretending to be a conjurer (what we would call an exorcist) :

"They brought one Pinch; a hungry, lean-faced villain,
A mere anatomy, a mountebank.
A thread-bare juggler, and a fortune-teller;
A needy, hollow-ey'd, sharp-looking wretch;
A living dead-man, this pernicious slave,
Forsooth took on him as a conjurer."
(*Comedy of Errors*, V,i,238)

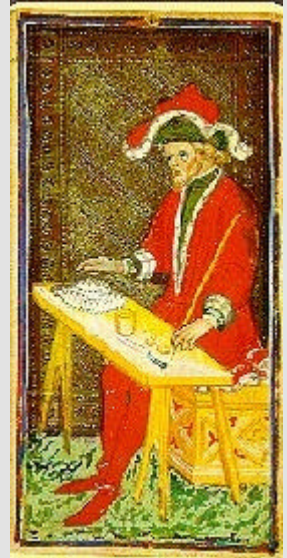
But even as far back as Chaucer, writing in the 14th century, the distinction between magicians who commanded supernatural powers and magicians who did sleight of hand seems to be blurred. In his poem, The House of Fame, Chaucer writes:

"There saugh I pleyen jogelours,
Magiciens and tregetours."

This might be translated as follows: "There I saw jugglers, magicians and tricksters perform." The word 'tregetour' is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as "One who works magic or plays tricks by sleight of hand."

Chaucer goes on:

"Ther saugh I Colle tregetour
Upon a table of sicamour
Pleye an uncouth thing to telle;



This is the Magician from the 15th century Visconti-Sforza Tarot. He seems to be doing tricks of some sort, but the expression on his face suggests he isn't enjoying himself!

The Tarot Magician (cont.)

I saw him carien a wind-melle
Under a walsh-note shale.”

What he is describing here is the old pea and shell game, the smaller cousin of the cup and balls. He has seen a sleight-of-hand artist do a very curious ('uncouthe') act by taking a windmill from under a walnut shell. Yes, well, very curious indeed. Whether Chaucer was being deliberately fanciful in this description or whether the Paul Daniels of his day used a toy windmill as the 'final load', we will never know.

FROM MAGICIAN TO MAGE

In the 19th and 20th century, the conjuring magician of the Tarot gradually mutated into a full-blown mage. The Rider-Waite deck shows a young man called The Magician holding a wand raised vertically to the sky in one hand while the index finger of the other hand points to the earth. The impression is almost of a human lightning rod channelling the powers of Heaven. Instead of conjuring paraphernalia on his table, he has the symbols of the four suits – a sword, a cup, a wand and a pentacle (Waite's preferred alternative to the more traditional Coin suit). This person has little in common with the table-top trickster of the early decks. In Waite's words, he is now “a youthful figure in the robe of a magician, having the countenance of divine Apollo, with smile of confidence and shining eyes.” (*The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, 1910).

Aleister Crowley's Thoth deck goes even further in its insistence on the supernatural qualities of the magician. The card portrays a naked smiling man called The Magus, who seemingly floats at the centre of a dazzling pattern of coloured lights. A Magus was originally a Persian Zoroastrian priest. In modern times, the word is used to describe somebody who is supposed to have the ability to command supernatural forces. Crowley imbues the card with huge symbolic significance – magical, sexual and religious, The Magus is Mercury, messenger of the gods, he is the law of reason, the unconscious Will and the word of God.

How then does Crowley account for the fact that most older decks show him as a mere conjurer? Crowley has an answer for that too. “In the traditional card,” Crowley says, his “*disguise* is that of a Juggler”. He further comments that “This representation of the Juggler is one of the crudest and least satisfactory in the medieval pack”.

INFINITY AND BEYOND

The symbolism of the cards of the Tarot is endlessly fascinating, whether or not you believe it has any esoteric significance. This is particularly true of the 22 trump cards or 'Major Arcana'. The Magician is the first card of the trumps (unless you count The Fool which has the number Zero) and is, I think, one of the most intriguing cards.

Of all the card's symbolic possibilities, it is the Magician's hat which has been most actively debated over the years. In many of the old Tarot decks the Magician wears a broad-brimmed, floppy hat. With a bit of artistic licence, you could imagine that the folds of the brim look like a figure eight on its side or the Infinity symbol. Aleister Crowley describes the magician thus: “He is usually represented with a headdress shaped like the sign of infinity in mathematics.” The Waite deck of 1910 removes any ambiguity. It shows a hatless Magician with an infinity symbol like a halo floating over his head.

In fact, the idea that the traditional magician's hat represents infinity is debatable, bordering on the fanciful. A floppy hatted magician is shown on several 15th and 16th century decks. Yet the Infinity symbol itself was only invented in 1656 by the mathematician, John Wallis. By the mid 17th Century, the brims of the hats of several court and trump cards looked, more or less, like a figure 8 on its side. In the Marseille decks of the 18th Century, it is true that the brim does look a little more infinity-like than in earlier designs. Personally, though, I am inclined to believe that the artist might have chosen this design merely as a convenient way of painting (or woodcutting) a floppy brimmed hat rather than as a means of conveying arcane wisdom.

In her book, 'The Tarot – History, Mystery and Lore', Cynthia Giles comments, “The shape of the



This is the typical Magician as he appears in Marseille decks of the 18th century and later. Some people argue that the brim of his hat represents the Infinity symbol.

The Tarot Magician (cont.)

Magician's hat was no doubt originally dictated by French fashion." In fact, the resemblance to an Infinity symbol is often pretty poor. Nevertheless, the idea that this is what the hat is meant to represent may be just as seductive to mathematicians as to occultists. In his book, 'Infinity and the Mind', the science-fiction-writing Professor of Mathematics, Rudy Rucker, states categorically: "This symbol was first used in a seventeenth century treatise on conic sections. It caught on quickly and was soon used to symbolise infinity or eternity in a variety of contexts. For instance, in the 1700s the infinity symbol began appearing on the Tarot card known as the Juggler or the Magus." Well, I'm still not convinced. But heck, it's not worth losing sleep over.

Your view of the significance of the Magician card probably depends on whether you consider the Tarot to be just a deck of playing cards or a repository of esoteric knowledge. Either way, the card gives us a beguiling glimpse into the mysterious world of one of our distant predecessors.

REFERENCES

While a great many books, articles and web sites have contributed to the research of this article, the following texts have been of particular assistance:

The Pictorial Key to the Tarot by A. E. Waite
(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/Tarot/index.htm>)
The book of Thoth by Aleister Crowley
(<http://www.angelfire.com/celeb/Crowley>)
The Discovery of Witchcraft by Reginald Scot
The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare
Chaucer Complete Works (edited by Walter W. Skeat)
The Tarot – History, Mystery and Lore by Cynthia Giles
The Minchiate Tarot by Brian Williams
The Illustrated History of Magic by Milbourne Christopher
Infinity and The Mind by Rudy Rucker
The Encyclopedia of Tarot (vols 1 and 2) by Stuart R Kaplan

By Huw Collingbourne

An Interview With David Acer

Name: David Acer

Age: 33

Nationality: Canadian

Marital Status: Not married but in a relationship (which depressed me!!)

Type of Magic: Specialises in Close-up magic with a large helping of comedy

Blackpool Conventions: 2

When I arrived at the Blackpool Convention 2003, I had no idea I was going to have such a fun time, I haven't laughed so hard for ages. The guy who really made it for me was David Acer, and I had the good fortune to interview him for 'Top Hat'.

David Acer is a very funny, very friendly and very approachable man. When he performs his act, he comes across as very skilled, very funny, and very, very manic! Acer had the audience in hysterics even before he had been introduced to start the lecture.

I approached Acer on the last day of the convention asking if he would mind being interviewed for 'Top Hat'. I was expecting a flat refusal; the last day was a very busy one for the close-up lecturers! So you can imagine my surprise, when, with no hesitation he agreed and actually seemed quite pleased by it!

An Interview With David Acer (cont.)

We arranged to meet a couple of hours after that so I went and sat in a pub, nervously chewing my nails, preparing for an interview with someone who, it's no secret, I have an itsy bitsy crush on!!! (It's the hair that really does it for me!!!)

For those of you who have not had the pleasure of seeing Acer do his stuff, I shall attempt to describe it and him for you. Acer is a very skilled close-up magician, which he performs with his own unique style of humour. He is a tall man, who, apart from his hair (loose hanging curls, think Alan Davies as Jonathan Creek type hair) he does not appear to have any remarkable features, until he starts performing that is! Acer has the most wonderfully expressive face; with one well-timed look he can bring forth a gale of laughter from his audience.

When the time came, I went to meet Acer. I told him a little bit about us at Magic Bunny and gave him one of our lovely bunny badges, which he pinned on his jumper immediately!

As I was chatting with Acer, he comes over as a warm, funny guy with a great sense of calm surrounding him. When people approached him for his autograph he jumped into the manic character he uses when he performs his act.

LL: Have you any effects that you have developed that you would not teach to other magicians?

DA: No. Any of the effects I perform has so much of my personality in it, that if another magician performed the same effect, it would be totally different anyway!

LL: What is the most difficult slight you have found to master?

DA: Mouth Coils!!

LL: When, why and how did you get into magic?

DA: I started to perform magic when I was 9 years old, 1979. That Christmas I had a magic trick in my stocking. I was a very shy kid and my mother saw how fascinated I was by it from across the other side of the room! The next week she said she was going to take me out to a special place, and we went to a magic shop in the city. It kinda' started from there really.

LL: What is the best advice you have received from another magician?

DA: I haven't really received any advice from other magicians, but this is the best bit of advice I have ever got. 'Listen to everything anybody has to say, but never assume they know more about it than you'.

LL: Who told you that?

DA: [*with a sheepish grin*] Umm, nobody, I just made it up!!

LL: Fair enough! With the advance of the Internet, magic has become a lot more accessible and the secrets are easily obtainable. Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

DA: [*With a resigned sigh as if he has had to answer this question thousands of times before*] Magicians' opinions on this are irrelevant. That's the way it is and we, as magicians, have to accept it and be more flexible.

LL: Which magician do you most admire?

DA: I can't really say that I admire any magicians, I respect them and what they do, but I don't really admire them. In the entertainment business I admire Steve Martin, he has a lot of irons in the fire with acting, writing and doing bits of magic, so yeah, that's who I admire.

An Interview With David Acer (cont.)

LL: Which magicians have had an effect on your act?

DA: Jay Sankey, Richard Saunders and Rick Bronson. They are all guys who will tell me if my act is good and I can believe them, and they will also tell me when there is something wrong with act. That hurts, but I guess it needs to be done, so they have had an effect on my act.

LL: Does being funny come naturally to you, or do you have to work at it?

DA: I think you can have a natural instinct for some things, like being funny, but it takes research and development to be able to be good at it. The best way to learn how to be funny is to perform, when you are doing three or four shows a week it's amazing how quickly you get better!

LL: Before becoming a magician, did you have any previous jobs?

DA: Nope, I got a degree in philosophy and then went to work in a magic shop, which I guess is a job in retail, but it was still with magic. I worked there for six or seven years and then moved on to be a magician.

LL: If you weren't a magician, what job do you think you would like to do?

DA: I would like to go into advertising, that way I would still be doing something creative.

LL: What would you say has been your greatest magical achievement?

DA: Longevity [*I complained I couldn't spell that so he changed his answer*] Okay. Being in magic for 18 years. [*And then added*] Without killing anyone!

LL: And finally, what is your biggest magical ambition?

DA: I have just finished writing a new book called 'Random Acts of Magic' which will be out in October. I'm very proud of it and I think it is my best book, so yeah, I'm just looking forward to that really.

Hmmm, David Acer, his website says it all really. 'Comedian, Magician and all round cuddly guy'.

If you want to find out more about David Acer go and visit his website. <http://www.DavidAcer.com>

By Lady Laura

We the Rejected and Ridiculed...

We *T*he *R*ejected & *R*idiculed..

By P. Craig Browning/Darmoe

*T*he world of magic, that mundane realm where we of the art tend to dwell and mingle so as to learn about new methods and ideas via which to amaze and mesmerize our fellow being, is a diverse and sometimes contradictory place in which to exist. At times it seems overtly plagued by ignorance along side unconscionable arrogance as the supposedly "learned" amongst us reach out with their piety and near atheist-like pronouncements that slander, thwart and even defeat anyone and all things concerning faith or the surreal. These braggarts of the legerdemain never realizing the harm they do, not just to society but our craft as a whole, when they paint these accusatory portraits of con-artists, charlatans, and money grabbers. More so, they seem amiss when it comes to applying similar "standards of scrutiny" not only to other elements within our world but to their own meanderings in and out of life's various institutions.

*F*or years there has existed a rarely spoken of division within the ranks of the magician's fellowships in which

We the Rejected and Ridiculed... (cont.)

those in study and practice of prestidigitation and boxed contraptions intentionally drove a wedge with those associated with storytelling and the powers of the mind. Granted, either side would "borrow" from the other here and there for this or that reason. Some even took a so-called middle route in which they executed both, lending neither optimum demonstration (with an occasional exception in one or two elements of circumstance.) Nonetheless, this division exists. The Mentalists and their adopted cousins, the Bizarrests embracing paths of practice that not only mimic the ways of lore and the mystique of the true Wizards of old, but oft time kindle fascinations allied with the esoteric or, as some have called it "The Real". The magi of the mind typically seeking a mode of performance that reveals no clue of dexterity or circumstance of question. Theirs is a magic that goes beyond the lesser, more base levels of conjuring that appeal to the eye; it is a science more than an art -- a craft that is so sinuous, that it seems to select, of its own accord, those who will perform it. So much so that the other kindred of the magic world have themselves, placed upon this realm the mantel of the masters. Legend inferring that the art of Mentalism was in deed the pentacle to a master magician's career and thus, a fitting compliment to his... or her, life.

These related aspects of the craft are not one in the same or *married* as some have suggested in recent decades. Cousins, yes! But that is about the limit to their connection. The conjurers of the stage, those that would willingly masturbate publicly, so as to reveal their skill and dexterity along side ego, have seemingly turned their back on those more subtle secrets of technique embraced by the *realist* of mental *magicianhood* who see fit to disguise their skills and conclude their works via the greatest mode of stealth available to them. In their mind, they do not see themselves as jugglers or trained animals doing tricks, but as the masters of genuine magick. Their presentations transcend the auspices of puzzle-making and *riotness* so as to create the ultimate illusion around themselves -- that of the modern-day Merlin.

Like any great adventure in which the Grail is sought, the journey of the neophyte within this labyrinth of the mage is no easy task. Not because of the skills we must develop, or the sciences we must absorb but rather, due to the abuse and degradation placed upon us by our fellows who have created this separation within our society. Those elitist that have intentionally perpetuated a false element of superiority so as to justify their acts of tyranny and betrayal of our ways, our secrets and our methodologies. Individuals who would gladly crucify anyone that would reveal their secrets and truths, yet find it "right" for the sake of "Consumer Protection" to slice their fellows to the quick via a hidden double-edged sword.

Compounding this sad truth are those practices associated with the world of the Mentalist, that our contemporaries would willingly take from us; the art of being a Reader; the skills taken for acts of divination and prophetic forecasts; the titles used in self-promotion along with our claims -- those carefully phrased and properly worded bits of copy that allow us to tread in ever so careful balance, between the world of the believer and the way of the deceiver -- those confidence artists and crooked clerics that would prey upon the hopeless and fear ridden; who extort the ignorant and superstitious.

Does it not make of higher logic, for those that would be better equipped to investigate and "curb" such corruptions, to be seen and accepted into said auspices of culture?

Is it not less antagonistic and more honorable to quietly manipulate circumstance that reveals and expulses such degenerates vs. acts that turn the populace against you, your message, and your claims?

The "Magician" it would seem, has taken it upon himself to assume it their obligation to "warn" the masses of such things. Never admitting to himself or his fellows that the real purpose of this exploitation is merely selfish, individualized promotion. They tend to be blinded to the trauma and psychological angst their actions of harassment create in the community. In their mind it would seem they have no tolerance for any mode of faith -- seemingly soulless beings who've not only denied God but humanity on the whole. Their duplicity lending support to other "covert" antics that would remove from society, its testimony of things wondrous and divine as well as essence of all things spiritual and of good portence.

No man or woman has the right to trespass and impose their will into the life or destiny of another! The freedom of will is one of the greatest of treasured truths known to any being that hosts a soul and genuine connection with that omnipotence most refer to as being God. I for one cannot define such things I can only testify that it is. My Agnostic ways being demanding of proofs; preventing me the luxury of living a course in which blind faith is in order. For in my reality ignorance is far from being bliss and the hosting of knowledge and

We the Rejected and Ridiculed... (cont.)

perspective, the greatest of curses. Yet, it is the way for we that would be called Wizard.

Is there magick in our world?

It is my contention that magick is real and very much encompassing of all we know. I also sustain the fact that magick exists in many forms and is known in many ways by each individual. What one person may see as "Magick" or a "Miracle" another may know to be "Science" or, as the case may be, a matter of logic.

Does the one perspective negate the value of perception testified by the other?

No!

It is only out of ego and the false need within the individual to have his or her way in a debate that makes it so.

When the magician who specializes in visual illusion mystifies us, we know within ourselves that a greater truth exists and what he/she performs is only an illusion. However, in knowing the mechanics of that trick we have not removed its value as something mesmerizing and enchanting, we are merely empowering ourselves with knowledge, which in turn lends to us added power e.g. understanding. How does this change the testimony of what people see?

Knowledge of how the illusion is presented does prevent us from being misled by one who may misuse such technology but it does not negate the value therein. The individual still perceives the effect as being real and tangible -- it remains a piece of literal Magick and a part of the great Mystery to them. This is why so much of the world outside the auspices of the western/Christianized culture, retains the arts of deception as part and parcel to the priesthood and the way of the shaman. Ironically, the public knows that much of what is revealed by these "Holy" people is trickery, but it is trickery used to invoke another kind of magick -- the Placebo used to incite acts of self-healing and forward motivation within the consciousness of the individual or the masses as a whole.

Students and kindred souls that have embraced this less traversed path of the modern theater learn, albeit slowly at times, this connection we share with the primitive ways when Magic was seen by all as Magick. Even as this sub-cultural evolution unfolds amongst the commercial elements of our fraternities, it has been we, the magicians of the mind and soul, that have been wedged away from our fellows. So much so that the known "Masters" of our craft have cut the umbilical that ties us together, taking their secrets and accomplishments away from the magicians world never to be shared! After all, where little to no respect is given, little to no respect is to be returned. The tricksters and jugglers and dexterity artists who've chosen to ignore or even bury magic's past, have slit their own wrists in this way. The failed amongst them embracing the role of the Skeptic, using it as a platform from which to attack the "easy targets" of the Psychic & Metaphysical realm whilst we, the workers of the field, investigate and more properly remove the greater and more sinister of elements. Frequently in adopted merit of those that never came near said instances.

It is said that *no one wants to hire a fake mind reader...* and yet our contemporaries of the magic world would scream of the injustice and wrong we supposedly do as we cautiously tread the tightrope between their and our realm. It has been pointed out that the majority of those that practice "Mentalism" that come into solid financial success, avoid both the title and the association it hosts with the auspices of stage magic due to the "demeaning" aura it lends to our side of the craft. For we most certainly do not present a "Magic Show" as most would perceive such.

Too, we must set into focus, the plight of the Bizarrest. Like the Mentalist they too are subjected to undue scrutiny and prejudice from within the ranks of the average magic fellows. The irony of it all laying within the truth of such individuals, the greater score of whom actually sustain the issue of the Skeptic whilst allowing their antics as a performer to be enhanced via such associations -- alluded to acts of ritual allied with the so-called "Darkened Arts."

Some might refer to our doings as the Left Handed path in magic. Regardless their dictates of opinion I would suggest that ours is the course that leads more directly back to those roots and seed inklings that are the parent

We the Rejected and Ridiculed... (cont.)

to our craft. In this, even the non-believers of things fantastic, lend significant support and even honor. Far more than can be said of our critics -- those fellows who would damn us though they have yet to fully study, let alone practice the auspices of our art; for that matter, even their own. Such is the way of the half-wit jugglers that strut themselves within society as know-it-alls who, when the illusion is gone, are seen by the masses just as the Emperor was upon the unveiling of his new wardrobe -- a false and shallow shell of a human being filled with contempt for all they deem to be beneath them.

Proudly we confess our plight as the rejected and ridiculed of Magicdom, for we are all too aware than this is a path few will ever tread, let alone know to its fullness. Daily we evoke within ourselves that wise mind of serenity exemplified in the words of St. Francis, begging that Gods themselves (known or yet discovered) will instill within our heart and mind, the acceptance to carry us through, even in those pain filled moments of adversity, brought upon us by those that would brag themselves our "brothers in the craft."

Our angst reaches beyond the thresholds of imagination for we are both, the persecuted as well as the persecutor. We walk a most formidable fence row filled with biers and pitfalls and even moments of indecision and uncertainty. The fickleness of our quandary oft times revealing us as being weak, when in truth we are being empowered -- allowed to see but somehow incapable of clearly communicating the reality revealed and our position therein. The antics of two-bit lawyers knowledgeable in but half the law and thus, half the truth, twisting our words and challenging our experiences in a field where logic and empathy do not coincide and unwillingness from either scope, prevails. Our up-hill ascendancy stifled by pettiness. Yet we know from deep within our own well of souls, that perseverance will bring about fortitude and optimism, the hope that all will soon come together in melding, that all may once again see clearly the understanding of balance and this middle ground upon which we tread.

The validity of things Psychic & Surreal exist only in the experience of the beholder. This is to say that either perspective contains a truth about it and too, neither hosts the right to impose onto the other, an obviously dogmatic course of agenda. For in all truth we are each obliged as both Magicians and Human Beings, to be the "keeper" of our fellow being e.g. to embrace and protect; to learn about the greatness of this world and the Universe via our differences vs. allowing those differences to create bias and rift.

Religion, nor spiritual perspective exist for the sake of division except in those instances in which man intervenes in what the Gods have put forth. As supposedly "learned" men and women trudging the road of wisdom, truth and science it is ours to bring about unification via our magic. Why then must some persist to ridicule and reject others who are of the same path? Why, when we each seem to seek similar things and bring about similar good, are those of the left forced to be segregated from those on the right? I'll not ask why, but I will ask "When"... When will we allow our craft to once again become reunited for the sake of garnering a much greater good?

Yes, I am one who has consciously stepped upon the left handed path. I am not some fool that will blindly accept tall tales, lore or even physical antics suggestive of things miraculous. Yet I am smitten and cast-off by my peers who trod the right handed way. I and my fellows who meander amongst the shades, rejected by those that embrace an alternate course of supposed fantasy. We tremble at times, rescinded through your piety and forced to think lowly of ourselves -- to reconsider the lure of "advantage" that can be known to us when playing by the rules of the status quo. Rule that oft times offend us -- limiting us -- even condemning us to a course of performance that negates once known truths and realities that remain, as a vivid memory to our very souls.

What right do you, our critics, have in damning our side of the craft?

What right have you to expose or reveal or to generate hardship in any way for those of us that take on this course?

None! That is the only answer.

So let me submit before those who have taken it upon themselves to read these words and weigh my thoughts. We are the rejected and ridiculed of the magician's realm. It was they who embraced and sought to adopt our ways, our secrets, and course of practice in a few short generations past, not we that surrendered. It was they, they took it upon themselves to go forth in an abusive manner, lending little to no honor to those they

We the Rejected and Ridiculed... (cont.)

persecute, but worse, robbing our kindred craft of those very same energies via wrote of their course. It has been through their greed and antics of seeming jealousy, that our mentors and great ones ran from the auspices of our fellowships and thus, it has been by their lead that *segregationism* was first imposed.

The invention of a new fellowship has been tried and from its bowels a new breed of elitist was conceived. So let us not make a similar mistake but instead, learn to recognize our fellow be it male or female, and in so doing lend to them a hearty embrace whenever seeing them. Let us create amongst ourselves a pact of unification that goes beyond the airs of things mundane, and lends an agreed upon freedom for all that join this circle; assuring each and everyone his or her freedom of will and of expression, as well as honor (regardless of their difference as it pertains to philosophy).

Ours is a course based on humanity and yes, even the lore of yesteryear fantasy. But we are not the welders of conjecture, nor the judges of things yet explained. Rather, we are the students of life's great mysteries -- the scientists that will find reason behind the miraculous, but host the wisdom that allows for the placebos our society may need. To do otherwise is to detour our personal sense of purpose and the truth behind what it means to be a genuine wizard, regardless of time and era.

Greet our comrades with an opened mind that you may learn and thus, grow.

Embrace the whole of knowledge whether it is of a perspective you can agree with or not. For any knowledge brings with it an idiom of truth and over time, the most subtle of truths evolve into wisdom. The whole of these evolutions translating themselves over time as a wizards greatest power, so fear it not!

Teach what you can as best you can, knowing that it is through you and those things that compel you as both Artist and Scientist that likewise transform you from the role of being a common mortal who does tricks, to a human being made enchanted. In the act of giving selflessly of yourself, the true miracles become known and that mode of magick that is denied by the self-righteous becomes a part of who and what you are intended to be.

Hold to the truths you know even in the darkest hours of adversity and subjugation. Preserve these things in the annals of you heart and upon the pages of your own chronicles, that others might gain a glimpse of your own greatness.

Excel in life! Live it to the fullest and be a being of truth. Do not allow yourself to be thwarted by the dogmas of man, nor imprisoned by the doubts of your own mind. Know empowerment and know you are of the most excellent fellowship to ever exist. For society has always rejected and persecuted that which challenged its opinion and supposed logics. In that reality we walk with those martyrs and saints who, throughout history, saw beyond the limitations of the mundane.

Rejoice and be filled with joy, for you are not alone. Know that you walk in the fellowship of the spirit that is magick and exist in a plane where all is real and the auspices of science and spirit are once again rejoined.

Blessed Be!

P.S.... Did you catch the subliminal in the last few paragraphs?

Later!

Craig Browning

Surrealist Entertainer

Old Time Mystery Shows

A Mixed Bag

As the old song goes "little things mean a lot."

In fact, some of the little "bits" you use are often remembered long after the trick they go with is forgotten.

So here is a collection of those bits of business that can turn a routine routine into a memorable moment. I have used every one of these with success; however, depending on your performing style, some may or may not work for you.

Feel free to browse and take your pick.

MISER'S DREAM

The Miser's Dream has been called one of the greatest tricks in magic. After all, who wouldn't want to be able to pull money out of the air?

But does your audience really believe you're doing that? The following will at least plant a seed of doubt in their minds.

When you have finished your regular routine, dump the coins out of the container and into your hand. Jingle them, point out that they are real, and let them cascade from your hand back into the container -- all but one.

Show the single coin, comment on the fact that it is real and say to someone in the front row, "Take a look for yourself," and toss the coin to her.

When she goes to give it back to you, say, "No, that's all right. You keep it. I can make lots more." Then move on to your next trick.

Here in Canada, we have one-dollar and two-dollar coins. I use the one-dollar "loonie" (so called for the picture of the loon on the reverse). So it costs me a buck at every show. Small price to pay for the gasps of astonishment you'll hear.

And believe me, they'll remember you; after all, how many people have your spectators met who give away money?

THE LEPRECOIN

If you have to ditch something in your pocket, do you still use the move as an excuse to go to your pocket and pull out some invisible "woofle dust"? (Presumably, it comes from dusty woofles.)

It's a weak move at best because it's not logical and, believe me, your audience knows that even if they're too polite to say anything.

So, hightail it off to your local coin dealer and get an Irish coin; I use a 50-pence piece -- it's about the size of a U.S. half dollar, seven-sided and has a bird on one side and an Irish harp on the other.

Put this in your pocket so, when you have to ditch the whatever, you explain that you need your magic Irish coin to make the magic work. Reach into your pocket, ditch the whatever and bring out the Irish coin, describing it as your "Leprecoin." Use it as a mini wand to make the magic work and leave it on the table for inspection.

It fascinates the audience and, again, ensures that you will be remembered. After all, you aren't like every other magician, going to his pocket for a handful of invisible woofle dust.

A Mixed Bag (cont.)

GAG BAG PLUS

Van Cleve's Gag Bag is a wonderful prop: A bag about nine inches square that changes color every time you turn it inside out, for a total of five changes.

Unfortunately, most routines used with it are nowhere as good as the prop. I hope this one is a little better.

Start with the bag on its last color change and put a modelling balloon in it. Working backwards, turn the bag inside out, each time adding some dog paraphernalia -- a bone, a brush, a chew toy and so on.

To perform, show the bag, offering to magically produce a dog. Turn the bag inside out and discover, not a dog, but a bone. "Well, we know the dog's in the area. Let's start over." As you turn the bag inside out, of course, it's a different color from where you started and you find a chew toy. "Well, we're getting close. Let's start over." And you turn the bag inside out -- to yet another color -- and another piece of dog equipment.

Continue this until you come to the balloon, where you announce that you have found the dog. The audience will point out you haven't, so you blow up the balloon, make a dog and give it to a member of the audience -- whom you then use as a volunteer in your next trick.

WHATIZZIT?

Finally, here's one that I haven't used because I don't know what it could be used for -- although I have no doubt that one or more of you will be able to put this to great use.

Blow up a 260 black balloon fully and tie it off. Take two white cardboard tubes (the cores of toilet paper rolls are ideal) and slip one over each end of the black balloon.

You now have an inflated rubber wand about five feet long.

It looks funny -- but what do you do with it? I'd like to hear from you.

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The Art and Science of Misdirection Part 3

We've taken the time to consider that misdirection is probably a misnomer of what we are actually doing, and that is directing attention and not misdirecting. This is an important consideration in the study of misdirection, which is why I am repeating it here. Never forget, you are not misdirecting attention, you are directing attention to where the magic happens and that is where your own attention belongs. You will not master this technique that is so important in our art until you believe in your own magic. When something disappears, you need to believe it yourself and you need to react to that vanish much the same as your audience. This is a psychological subtlety and one that you are strongly advised to study, learn and use throughout your career as a magician. This really is the difference between strong magic and weak magic.

If you have been following this article since the beginning, you will have noted that we have already discussed 5 important forms of misdirection. Of those 5, entertainment is really the strongest. Honestly, entertainment is the

The Art and Science of Misdirection Part 3 (cont.)

strongest of all the forms of misdirection and we will soon discuss more methods of misdirecting. However, you must stop to consider that entertainment is what paves the road for your audience to follow along with the magic that you are presenting. By entertaining your audience, you are taking them along for the ride. Think about the fact that misdirection happens naturally during entertainment and you don't need anything overt to misdirect with. No, misdirection is a subtle thing and if you don't use this powerful form of mind control subtly, you will never be anything more than a trickster.

This point is driven home in a routine by The Amazing Jonathan. Jonathan holds up a spoon and explains that he will bend it with his mind. He begins to concentrate on the spoon, raising one eyebrow and bulging out one eye. He cocks his head and his mouth becomes taunted, the audience can see, in a humorous fashion, that Jonathan is putting everything he has into making the spoon bend. Suddenly, from off to the side of the stage there is a big explosion with a boom and a flash. This explosion is almost impossible to ignore and the audience immediately turns to look. Jonathan seizes on this chance and openly bends the spoon with his other hand. By the time the audience looks back, the spoon is of course bent, the suggestion being that the spoon was bent with mind power but, unfortunately, the audience missed it. Jonathan explains that it took too much mind power to do and he can't do it again, so they must take his word for the fact that the spoon bent by power of his mind. This is all in good humor, as Jonathan is a comedian first and a magician second. Nobody is fooled by this display, hence the comedy behind it.

However, consider that when you openly misdirect attention, you are using the off stage explosion technique. The audience is misdirected, of course, but they will know that you used overt misdirection to get them to look away and did your dirty work in that instant. Don't fool yourself into believing that just because you can make someone look away that they won't know exactly what you're doing. They will. So, you must entertain, you must lead them along and keep their attention on the entertainment to successfully use misdirection. It is in this that we see misdirection as an art over a science, for the magician must artfully bring about the entertainment that gets the spectators to willingly follow of their own volition. That, dear readers, is the secret, right there, for you to read and use. When the spectators feel that they willingly are looking in the area that you want them to, they will not suspect any misdirection at all. When the spectators are forced to look in a certain spot, they will know what you did to them every time. Please, go back and reread that, it is the most important thing that you can learn from this column.

6. Prevarication - This is a term used by Tom Crone in his manual, "Misdirection for Close-up Magicians." Prevarication is, quite literally, lying, or to deviate from the truth. This can be both a mental and/or physical misdirection that requires subtlety to properly use. In prevarication, we are telling our audience that specific conditions exist when, in fact, they don't. As an example, using prevarication, we wish to point out that we have no more than three coins when we actually have four. Overtly used, the magician would say, "I have three coins." This is very poor. Rather, in the form of explanation, the magician should say, "These three coins were handed down to me by my great grandfather." That is subtle prevarication. You've pointed out that you only have three coins without actually stating that you only have three coins, and either way you go, you are lying.

Prevarication in the above example is a mental misdirection. In misdirection, there are two ways to go - mental and physical. As was mentioned earlier, there is repetition of action as misdirection, which would be a physical example of misdirection. However, prevarication can fall into the form of physical misdirection also and, once again, requires subtlety to use properly.

As an example of using prevarication both physically and mentally, we shall add on to the example above. After using the mental prevarication as in the example, we shall follow it directly with physical prevarication. Ordinarily called a "shuttle pass," after drawing attention mentally to the fact that you have three coins, let's assume that those three coins are sitting on your left hand with one hidden in your right. You show those three coins to the spectators on your left and, while in the middle of saying, "These three coins were handed down to me by my great grandfather," you swap the coins from the left hand to the right, holding one back in your left hand, and display the coins openly on your right hand (which, by holding one back, you now have 3 coins sitting on your right hand). This is a physical prevarication because you have shown exactly three coins but the prevarication is that only three coins exist, which, in fact, there are four. Subtle, but effective.

The Art and Science of Misdirection Part 3 (cont.)

7. Eye Movement - Time and time again, you have probably been told that the audience looks where you look. There is a reason you've heard this so many times - it's true! When you want the audience to look in a certain place, you must also pay attention to that place. This is a terrifically subtle misdirection. This can go back to the ricochet, discussed earlier, in that when you speak to someone, you look at them. Of course, they look back at you and maintain eye contact. This is a natural thing to do. Never forget the power of eye contact with your spectators, but also pay attention to the fact that their attention follows your attention. Where you look, they look. If you follow the hand that is empty, while the other is dirty, then so will your spectators. If you follow the dirty hand trying to get the spectators to follow the area that you are trying to misdirect them to, give it up, they won't.

Once again, we go back to entertainment and the need for your attention to follow, naturally, along with where the spectator's attention must be placed. You can use the "off stage explosion" technique to get their attention away from yours, but you will not be a magician by so doing. No, you must use your attention to follow the area where the spectator's attention belongs. It is in this form of misdirection that we see the extreme importance of practicing our craft. If you cannot palm that item perfectly, without concentrating on it, then this form of misdirection will fall flat. You must concentrate on the area that your spectators are to concentrate, or you will lead them away from where their attention belongs - which is exactly where your attention belongs and not on the palmed object.

8. Hand Movement - The eye follows the movement, or the action. The hands must always have purpose and meaning. Consider coming up to a light at an intersection. The cars that are stationary take up none of your concentration. However, as you prepare to go through that intersection, if a car begins moving to your left or right, it immediately garners your attention, even though it may be in your peripheral vision. The same for the hands when performing magic to the spectators. The hands must always be held in a natural manner, even when palming - *especially* when palming. If you just made a false transfer, the hand that draws the attention is the hand that moves.

There can also be a diffusing of attention. As an example, both hands move simultaneously. The attention can only go to one hand. So, you've made the false transfer and you want to move both hands at the same time, one drops to your side (the dirty hand) and the other is brought to center stage in front of you. First, of course, we must consider eye movement - your attention should be on the hand that you want the spectators to follow (and that ain't the dirty hand!). So, you follow the clean hand. If you've done your false transfer properly, then the audience will give attention to the clean hand automatically. In that, you add your attention which strengthens that misdirectional maneuvering. When the dirty hand hits your side, then you allow it to swing (which actually goes back to repetition of movement because the hand dropped to the side will naturally swing, which is repetition of natural movement). Your attention on the clean hand takes the attention off of the dirty hand, combined with repetition of movement, lightly salted with prevarication added to entertainment and you've got the makings of a miracle when that object disappears. But, keep in mind, if you simply make the object disappear, you will need to draw attention elsewhere, or the audience will immediately begin looking for where that object went to and, of course, the only place that it can lead them is to your other hand.

Whew! That's a lot to think about in just one article, so it is here that I shall end. When I began this series, I really expected it to take up 3 articles at the most. Still, we have only just scratched the surface of misdirection, so you can bet you'll see another on it next month in Top Hat. I hope that this is giving you plenty of thought and consideration. Further, I hope that what we've discussed to date has helped to make your magic stronger. We still have to look at how to build misdirection into our routines right from the beginning, rather than as an afterthought and we have yet to discuss more techniques of misdirection. I can't say how many articles this will run, but if you have specific concerns, please e-mail me and I shall endeavor to put them into my next article, in which we shall go over yet more techniques for misdirecting attention and how to put them together to make good magic excellent magic.

By Michael Jay

Being a Neophyte... Part 3

Being a Neophyte...

...The Days of Innocent Discovery In The Art of Mentalism!

P. Craig Browning (*Darmoe*)

{Part III}

The word "Billet" come from the French "billet-doux," a love letter. (literally, a "sweet little letter.") Mentalists refer to these little pieces of paper as "billets" because that's what they were called in the heyday of fraudulent spiritualism. (Sitters were asked to write "letters" or "billets" to the dearly departed in the hopes they would receive an answer through the medium. This was in the days before e-mail when people actually wrote letters to everyone they knew -- even to dead people if there was no one else around who wanted to read them. Their descendants are known as spammers.)

-- Robert Cassidy* *Theories & Methods for the Practical Psychic*

Now that you know the answer to that age old question "What's a Billet?" Let's take a look at this popular device and the realities around using them in the real world of the Psychic Entertainer & Bizarrest.

Like many of you my initial introduction to the term and idea of a Billet came out of a magic book rather than a book on mentalism. But even at that, the references offered in the two chief bibles of our craft (Corrinda & Annemann) tend to offer a "magician's perspective" on the issue vs. that of the working mentalist/con-artist. A factor that has resulted in a great deal of cleverness and very little in way of applicability e.g. methods based on common coin and card moves that, when looked at from the spectator's perspective, don't seem to be natural and thus, cast suspicion upon the events at hand. Transforming your attempt to divine someone's thoughts from being an experiment in telepathy or whathaveyou, to being little more than a magician's trick.

So *what?* You ask.

Mentalist do no do tricks. We may incorporate trickery so as to bring about a specific end result, but what we present does not, in any way, denote the idea of being a trick or game or puzzle. Knowing how to separate these two lines of thought is the chief stumbling block of most who venture into the darkened alleyways of mentalism. What Stephan Minch refers to as being "Magician's Habit" which, over time, translates into "Magician's Guilt" whilst performing.

The key to effective mentalism, especially when the physical manipulation of items is required, is to keep your body language and all you do very nonchalant. That is to say, you are not showing the billet at your fingertips, waving your hand and causing it to vanish... this is not a demonstration of dexterity and skill. Thus, you must seem a bit "less skills" and even a hint "clumsy" compared to our magician cousins. I don't mean you're a buffoon, but I do mean that you offer a kind of haphazard mode of action and interaction that's frequently described as "nervous".

Watch tapes featuring some of the more successful mentalist of today, especially the guys that seem to have it all together... Kreskin, Cassidy, Becker, they all command the stage and yet, they offer subtle little hints of imperfection that make them believable and acceptable to the audience. In truth, these "mistakes" deliver "anchors" to the mind so as to take away from the idea you are up to no good.

What's all this got to do with Billets? You're wondering.

To do a switch from the information slip to your dummy, you must somehow get item A and B together cleanly and above suspicion. More so, you must learn when and how to do this exchange so as to gain the strongest psychological advantage that's possible.

Bob Cassidy's dissertation on the Simplified Baker Switch in "*Theories & Methods for the Practical Psychic*" lends to you a step by step example of how to accomplish this very thing but, it also reveals how to more effectively apply the ideas shared with us by Steven Shaw (Banachek) in his *Psychological Subtleties* book.

Being a Neophyte... Part 2 (cont.)

As a "Magician" you have undoubtedly taken Steve's material and walked up to folks saying "Pick a number between..." or "Name a Flower..." etc. Though this is a way of using said material, it is about the least effective manner by which to incorporate it, not to mention the fact that you are essentially setting yourself up for failure. I've watched Bob's live performances and studied how he incorporates these psychological elements as clever misdirection not only in his Billet work, but in establishing key factors around the opening of his show. The end result is a very high energy, highly visual, interactive series of events that builds audience interest and general excitement.

Now, if you were to lay a blank billet slip in front of someone and tell them to use this as part of a relaxation exercise, encouraging them to relax and see themselves resting in a flower garden during the early spring... As you direct them to do take in a deep breath through their own nose, you do the same then say, "*smell that sweetness in the air, a blend of unique blossoms giving you that tranquil bouquet that allows you to relax and be at peace.... Think of that aroma _____ and identify the two prominent smells you are getting...*"

She is not to tell you, but after a short pause you smell in another breath and kind of sigh saying "*I'm getting Honeysuckle and (sniff again) I think that's lilacs?*"

Odds are very high (depending on what is typically in bloom in your region this time of year) your client is going to say the same. They will come across with one or the other if not both.

With your hit, you have created an "anchor" in the patron's subconscious that says "This guy is for real" and thus, when it is time to cheat, they'll never suspect it. After all, you just read their mind.

What if you don't hit?

That's o.k., as is explained in the Cassidy manuscript, you didn't say that this is what they were smelling or experiencing, it was what you were smelling. But, you can recover by saying something along the lines of "*But I bet you were thinking of it... I bet one of the smells in the air was very similar to one of those, wasn't it ?*" (kind of nod you head slightly to affirm reply). Nine times out of ten, the subject will agree with you and give you credit for the hit. If they continue to challenge you at this point simply say, *that's o.k. it just reveals how far out of sync our thoughts are...* and move onto something a bit more surefire such as a mathematical force like *Reversal* or *Finding The Impossible Force* {see Richard Busch's "**Number Please?**" for details}

The next step, in the case of how Cassidy handles things, is to use another common element as a passive force. This time, the patron writes that number or word onto the slip, folds the slip and retains it while your back is turned... you proceed but do not reveal, just tease that you might "feel" what was written. This false climax helps build suspense but also builds on the testimony of your participant that you were divining their thoughts without touching the slip.

You tell them now, to open the slip again and print the name of a place they want to go to on their vacation or whatever. This is a genuine unknown but, it can still be cheated.

How?

In the second force, the first thing you have them write down on the slip, you can establish a theme to the Reading while likewise making it seem to be the sitter's idea. In the case of the Cassidy manuscript he encourages the sitter to write a simple four letter word. Nine times out of ten, especially if you are working with a female, that word will be LOVE... the follow-up deals with a place to go with someone special... this can typically be narrowed down to any dozen key vacation spots associated with romance. With but a slight bit of pumping, you can come up with the answer WITHOUT doing the switch. This is however, a bit of "advanced" skill and not something the novice need try until he/she has become proficient in the art of "Reading" people's body language, etc.

In the final phase of these actions the information is gathered (and yes, I'm going to say it and sound like a card

Being a Neophyte... Part 2 (cont.)

guy) via your favorite method.

Why have I left out the method? You're wondering.

Because I want you to study and learn. I've given you a reminder about Mr. Cassidy's manuscript (and highly encourage you to get it.) and I did mention in the first part of this series certain videos and CD resources that will allow you some solid insight around this topic. The whole of which, combined with actual practice, will lend to you the foundation needed for doing billet work that is smooth, non-detectable, non-suspicious and fun!

In closing I'll make mention of a little something concerning Billets and how I've used them over the years.

Long ago when I first started doing Mentalism full time, I was asked to do a midday bit for a group of secretaries and executives over lunch. I hadn't a clue as to what I was going to do until I re-read the Bert Reese routine (go back through those two bibles of mentalism and you'll find it.) The end result was a very funny and fun piece of business that people still ask me to do. The only difference is, I've learned those nuances and subtle touches such as I've outlined here, that make the entire effect around the routine that much better... that much more impossible!

When I first compiled the list of things today's students of mentalism need for generating personal advantage in this field, I broke some of the more traditional rules of the craft and gave you insights on a direction that is more empowering as well as practical. If you can master the art of being a Reader, Muscle Reading and Billet work, you will never have need for another prop or book as long as you live and you will be able to generate an above average income working part time hours for the whole of your days.

Next month, we'll start taking a look at that side of the issue... getting started and building the reputation. Until then, happy hunting!

Craig Browning
Surrealist Entertainer
Old Time Mystery Shows

Business Card Business

Why do you hand out business cards?

No, that's not as silly a question as it seems.

Most of us would say that it's to get our name in front of the public to drum up new business.

But, to do that, the cards have to be effective. Probably 99.9 per cent of all business cards are taken out of politeness and thrown away within a day or two.

To be really effective, the cards should be something that the recipient will want to keep for a reason other than the fact that you gave it to him or her.

Cards with pictures of wands, rabbits, top hats, and an alphabet soup of initials of the various organizations you belong to may stroke your ego -- but they don't do much to catch the prospective client's attention.

So let's look at some cards that the potential customer will keep, even though he or she isn't planning to book a magician in the foreseeable future.

Business Card Business (cont.)

CARDS THAT DO BUSINESS

Some time back, magician Tony Wilson of New Zealand sent me a package of his promotional material, with the kind permission that I could use it as part of a column.

I was so impressed with one item -- a business card -- that I immediately had my printer turn out a couple of hundred for my own use. (And, yes, before you ask: I used my own name and not Tony Wilson's!)

Unlike most cards, it is printed vertically rather than horizontally. At the top, it says: "Push a coin through the hole without tearing, bending, or folding the card." Beneath that is a hole punched through the card about the size of a cigarette. And under that, it says: "If you wish to learn the secret, call:" followed by your name, address, phone number, and whatever other "bumpf" you think is appropriate.

It's an old gag but I was surprised the number of lay people that didn't know it and were truly puzzled.

The secret, of course, is that the coin isn't pushed from one side of the card to the other, through the hole. You run a pencil or straw through the hole and then push a coin that is lying on the table.

Simple? You bet! But believe me, it is truly effective. You know the recipient isn't going to throw this card away until he or she has pulled the gag on dozens of other people -- and probably not even then.

Another handout that Tony came up with, and I like a lot, is a simple plastic letter opener. Tony uses a paddle move to show it blank on both sides, then slides it through his hand, where it is "magically printed" with a caricature of Tony and the words "Open up new magical entertainment with Tony Wilson, magician" followed by his phone number.

Very slick. Very eye-catching. And something that the recipient is not likely to toss out the next day.

Many thanks, Tony.

An oldie but still a goodie -- and one of my personal favorites -- is the Pride and Joy card by Lee Jacobs. I rubber-stamp my name and pertinent information on the back. When I'm looking for a card, or anything else in my wallet, I stop, chuckle a bit, and says: "Did I ever show you a picture of my pride and joy?" Beaming, I hand over the card.

The reaction is always great and 99 times out of 100 they hand the card back. When I tell them they can keep it (pointing out the info on the back), they are always genuinely pleased.

Does this work? You bet! I have had people tell me that they have heard of me solely from one of the cards still kept by someone else. And in one case, it was more than two years later!

For a more magical effect, you could have your cards printed so that about a third at either end is blank. Then set up a stack of them in the Out To Lunch fashion. (Two-thirds of a blank card covering the printing and an elastic band around the pack to hide the cut card.)

Then have someone sign the "blank" card, slide it out of the pack and give it to them face down to hold between their hands "until the magic begins to work." Then have them look at the card. After which, they fall down and worship you.

Well, all right; maybe not that last part.

Last Christmas, I picked up a cheap deck of playing cards with a holly motif on the backs. Again, I rubber-stamped the faces of the cards (the ones with enough blank space) with my name and sundry information. Then I handed them out as "Christmas cards."

Business Card Business (cont.)

Did they work? I have no idea. Probably not, in the short run. But, over the long haul, I have become known for off-beat cards and promo material, so the "Christmas cards" maintained the image, at least.

In the Linking Ring magazine of February, 1996, I wrote a column on the paddle move, where the paddle finds a penny behind a youngster's ear. The penny is then changed into a nickel and given to the young spectator.

I have done this for adults, with the penny (stuck on the paddle) turning into a wooden nickel. The nickels are wooden discs I get at a local craft shop. On one side I have stamped "5 cents" and on the other side -- you've got it! -- that ubiquitous rubber stamp with my name and other info was at work again.

Although I haven't tried this myself, you might consider going to your local printing shop and getting a role of stick-on buttons that say something like "I Helped Magician Peter Marucci." Of course, if your name isn't Peter Marucci, you may want to adapt this. And don't forget your telephone number.

(Since I wrote this piece, quite a while ago, e-mail has become a way of life for many people. So don't forget your e-mail address, either!)

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Variety is the Spice of Life

A SHORT ESSAY BY MARC COTTINGHAM

Magic is the spice of life and variety brings magic alive. It is important to express different art forms, which can be linked to magic. Examples of different art forms may include unicycling, juggling, contact juggling, dance, acting (taking on the role of a character), stand-up comedy and ventriloquism. I believe that if you can link just one other art form to your magic, it opens up a new world, not only for you but also for your audience.

A good example would be Jeff McBride. He has combined mime, martial arts, dance and most importantly magic to produce an excellent act. He has been unique and original showing his individuality. He has been different from the rest of the pack and as a result has been a success. Instead of actually staying in the magic theatre, David Copperfield has actually gone out and performed stunts-illusions around the world. He has used everyday things or pieces of history known to everyone and created miracles out of them. These include the vanishing of the Statue of Liberty, Eiffel tower and walking through the China wall. Also, Houdini and his escapology, and Uri Geller using the force of his mind to bend spoons. All these performers have been great successes because of their ability to be different.

The main focus should be to do with the magic but a little variety provides interest. By varying your act, people's expectations can be broken. When you go to see a magic show you expect just magic, but when something different happens, people will wonder what will come next, and so be more excited and waiting in anticipation. This also creates surprise, which is a successful magical ingredient. In my opinion, combining magic with other forms of entertainment is a way forward, a way for magic to advance. By doing this you will be unique, different and be noticed.

Variety is the Spice of Life (cont.)

We see the linking rings performed by magicians again and again but many presentations are all the same. Some people like to see the same magic all the time but performed very well. Why not make the presentation a little different by adding another art form? For example, one could juggle with the rings or unicycle whilst performing the routine. I emphasize that magic is still the most important part with the main focus, but a little variety may spice up your magic act to a new level.

By Marc Cottingham

Thoughts From Midwest America

Tongues

I would just like to say how stoked I am about the Blues putting Osgood between the pipes at the eleventh hour. I know some folks say he's nothing but he's got a ring and only three other minders in the league can say that! I figure after 35 years Lord Stanley may finally come to town!

I heard that on sports talk radio tonight. I followed it (hey, I could've been saying it!), but do y'all? I understand that hockey isn't real big in the UK (at least I recall something to that effect in an early issue of my primer on British culture *Bizarre Magazine*), but if you are an NHL (National Hockey League) fan you know that the Blues picked up former champion goalie Osgood right before the trade deadline and the caller thinks that they might just win the Stanley Cup for the first time in the team's history. Serious sports fans have their own vocabulary and they are not alone. Face it finger-flingers, every vocation and avocation has its own specialized terminology. Being familiar with the right vocabulary not only helps one understand his field of interest but projects his competence to others.

I mean obviously the radio caller I quote above is pretty into hockey. Maybe he played, maybe he is just a life-long fan but he at least has a serious interest. Consider this: you are idly flipping through the new releases at your favorite magic shop and in strolls a guy you don't recognize. You chat a bit casually and he produces (probably literally) a business card reading: Martin Merlin Street Magician. So you say that's pretty wild, you have personally never had the guts for busking. He gives you a bit of a blank stare. Later, while discussing the finer parts of the three card monte you mention that you prefer a gaffe-free version. Again, he looks at you like a puppy stares into a window fan. And then we know, he can print up all the business cards he wants... he is probably a rank amateur!

We judge people-- and people judge us-- by the vocabulary used. It is a legitimate and useful way to quickly judge people's competence. I can give examples all day long, but I don't think I really need to. Instead, let me drive one point home: PEOPLE JUDGE US THE SAME WAY!

As magicians this is extremely important to remember. We are performers, we portray characters and we have to do so convincingly but unlike actors we do not (at least most of us do not) have the benefit of writers choosing our words and developing our characters. We have a rough job! We are often one man shows out there trying to pull off these characters without the character being the focus. That is, for the audience to buy into our gambling routine they have to first accept us as a gambler. For our bizarre routine to go over we have to be sufficiently spooky ourselves. And here's the kicker: We often have to establish this character almost instantaneously.

And we have a lot of tools at our disposal. Costume, props, acting lessons and so forth all are important, but we ain't covering any of that today. Too often it is the verbiage that is ignored. All the cool props and expensive costumes are not going to get you around the wrong vocabulary!

Thoughts From Midwest America (cont.)

Let's just pretend you are going to present a bizarre act with you a spooky modern day master of the occult. You can't go out and present something you learned in the Book of Evil. The Book of Evil? How lame is that? What's your fall back, The Necronomicon. A lot of folks will buy that but a lot of folks will know that Lovecraft made that up. Why not drop something like the *Malleus Maleficarum* or Lord Scot's *Demonology and Witchcraft* on them? They are real books that are much spookier than anything fictional. Plus, you never know, your bizarre act may even attract people with a real interest in the Occult who will recognize references to Montague Summers.

For your psychic act you had better do a little research! With people on TV everyday talking to your neighbor's dead grandma and radio shows like Coast to Coast AM ruling America's late-night airwaves terms like "Remote Viewing," "Natural Sensitive" and "Channelling" are getting pretty common. You never know when the lady in the front row is into this stuff, but every one she came with will be looking to her for a cue on how to react to you! Here's another case... and another consideration. Some characters are so obscure in real-life that you need to not only adopt a vocabulary but make sure you adopt one that feeds a stereotype. Think about conmen... most folks never come into contact with real hustlers and gamblers. All their ideas about them come from TV and old movies. After all, real conmen kind of depend on blending in, right? But people think that conmen run around dressed like gangsters from a Cagney movie, chain smoking and working \$5 bar bets. Sometimes you just got to go with it!

You have taken the time to learn the moves, find the props and set up a tight routine. Now do yourself a favor and take the time to do the research to sound the part and complete the greatest illusion of all: your character!

By Michael Saint. Louis

The end of another bumper issue of TOP HAT. Many thanks to all contributors who made this month's ezine possible. Please send submissions for April to TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk by the 10th.

All the Best,

Jon Snoops