



MagicBunny.co.uk

## TOP HAT

### May 2003 - Edition 14

Welcome to the May edition of TOP HAT. Once again, this issue contains articles from many contributors from around the World

First off is the latest news from Admin, and then we get straight in with thoughts from our very own American columnist, Michael St. Louis. Tony Spallino presents his presentation of the Four Kingdoms card effect—we hope to see more from this user in following issues.

Another new contributor, Timothy Arends, submitted an article entitled “Magic on a Budget” which is a very interesting read. And finally, Richard Penna concludes his tutorial on making a magic website.

So, that’s all for this month, we hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to June’s edition.

~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](mailto:TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk)

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### Message From Admin

*This month has seen the arrival of our newest project; a new category specifically to meet the growing needs of our loyal members. We are pleased to announce the arrival of a new **hidden** category called "Regional Magic Clubs" at the bottom of the main index screen. Despite being presently invisible to all members at the moment, you may rest assured that this category is present. Allow me to explain:*

The moderators and myself constantly strive to make these forums the very best on the Internet to be a site that is able to adapt to cater for the needs of our expanding membership.

We know that many regional magic clubs have associated Internet sites too but few have discussion boards attached to these sites. Members of these regional sites do not have the ability to participate in specific discussion boards unique to their locality and this is an issue that the governing body of Magic Bunny would like to address by offering this new project.

The new category called "Regional Magic Clubs" has been constructed to offer any group of magicians the space to privately discuss matters that are unique to their locality. It is in this category that an unlimited number of hidden forums are planned for the additional use of the members of this board. If any of you are members of the same club and, if you wish to carry out private discussions regarding the activities of this club, you are free to do so in a forum of your own. It is hoped that these forums may provide our loyal members with space to discuss local issues, discuss items of your own agenda and attend to miscellaneous issues such as the arrangement of transport to a club meeting, absences or anything else that is peculiar to your own unique needs.

It is in this new hidden forum where these kinds of discussions can occur and it will be up to the members of that forum to appoint the moderators of that forum and ensure that these hidden areas are maintained to the same high standards that are ensured on the other boards of Magic Bunny.

Any active member is free to approach me at [admin@magicbunny.co.uk](mailto:admin@magicbunny.co.uk) (with the support of two other members) to request this feature and, if this person is responsible and maintains high standards of posting, they will be granted the moderator rights of their own forum for the purpose of discussions relating to items of a regional nature. This forum will be hidden so that other members are not distracted by a large number of additional forums. This member will be given the right of moderator for this forum only and the ability to control the addition of new members in the form of a specific usergroup. It is hoped that, after this forum has been set up, this member may want to advertise this feature at their local magic club and encourage new members to join these boards. They can then add these members to this "regional" usergroup so that the Administrator and Moderator personal of this board can be by-passed.

Although these additional forums will be hidden from all except those who have access, all members are reminded that the same high standards that are expected on the boards will be expected in these forums too. If these standards are not adhered to, the forum facilities will be terminated after due warnings to the members of this usergroup. This extra feature is not intended to be anything other than an additional facility for our loyal members and these shall be governed by the same rules that apply to the other boards of these forums. Members are reminded that, although they are responsible for the upkeep of these new hidden forums, members of the governing body have access to all hidden forums and may supervise any inappropriate postings by the normal discipline procedure.

The governing body hope that this new feature will enhance the facilities that these boards have to offer our existing membership and that, after some time, it may encourage other magicians from existing regional clubs to register and so therefore increase the very high professional input that is currently being offered.

*This is an experimental feature and I personally would dearly love to see this succeed. I appreciate that there will be an additional workload of some thirty minutes per application in order to assess that the moderator is suitable and to set up the software - I do not wish to see this causing an unnecessary burden on my existing workload. Therefore, I ask that zero-posters or non-active members do not apply for this feature – it is meant to be an enhancement for those members who have loyally supported the boards over the past few months. May I respectfully ask that, if you wish to become involved with this feature, that you discuss this with other members of your magic club to encourage them to register with these boards and then email me one combined email with*

### Message From Admin (cont.)

the following information:

*Name of Magic Club (to become the name of the hidden forum)*

*Name of proposed moderator and the number of their posts*

*Names of at least two other members of this magic club who support this application (their posting numbers are not required)*

*This will then be assessed and, if all is suitable, the hidden forum will be up and running within seven days.*

I hope that this new feature may prove to be a useful additional feature for our existing members and that it may enhance the discussion opportunities by drawing in new members from existing magic clubs.

I am aware that there may be some issues that I have not covered. Please post any questions to me via replies to the thread on the main boards so that others may benefit from these too.

You may be reassured that I shall remind you again by posting on the main boards as, because these new forums will be hidden, it may be easy for members to forget their presence.

I hope that you and your colleagues may be able to benefit from this additional feature - one that is (I believe) unique to Magic Bunny.

Admin.

### Thoughts From Mid-West America

#### **WHY MAGIC AIN'T ART**

*Or how to be very, very unpopular in the magic world*

Art is an overused term. Everything is an art it seems. We hear the word all together too often! Is something a bit difficult? "There's an art to it." That cake your mom baked for your last birthday? "A work of art!" Need a bit of help with work? Read *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life* by Benjamin and Rosamund Stone Zander. And of course we all know that da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is great art. Let's not forget martial arts, culinary arts, clip art, arts and crafts.... Yeah, art is an overused term.

I can hear you now: *Dammit Saint Louis, this is supposed to be about magic, not a forum for you to play Heinrich Wolfflin!* True, but I have a point. Your magic is not Art. Wait, hear me out first and then feel free to argue with me. You should all know the e-mail address by now (michaelsaintlouis@hotmail.com).

The more astute of you will have noticed that I used an 'A' in my statement. Because art has become such a mis-used term, I will differentiate the fine arts with the term Art. And what is Art? You wouldn't believe how often this is discussed. One of the cruelest acts the cosmos has inflicted on me was making me sit through countless numbers of lectures and classes on that very subject before the university I was attending canceled its art program (leaving me without a degree)... I could have been drawing naked women all that time, but no, another argument on the validity of comic books as Art. We don't have time for three semesters of theory, so let's just hit the highlights.

Helen Gardner in her pinnacle work *Art Through the Ages (Fifth Edition)* writes: The fact is that a work of art, visible and tangible as it is, is a kind of *persisting event*. Obviously, that kind of knocks out your really great coins across routine. Visible and tangible, yes but persisting? That's the problem. Admittedly, Gardner is writing on art history from the position that Art is comprised of three fields: painting and drawing, sculpture and architecture. You'll note that many things that we commonly think of as Art are excluded. Pottery, jewelry, furniture and costume are all commonly displayed as Art yet they are not on the list. That is because these

Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

types of items (the so-called decorative arts) are examples not of our lofty Art but artisanship. An artisan is one who creates crafts and their rank includes carpenters and masons. Although their work may be decorated or even purely decorative, it does not find itself alongside Art.

You have probably noticed that Gardner's statement discounts other disciplines routinely accepted as Art such as dance, literature and music because they, too, are not persisting (music isn't even tangible!). Gardner's statement is flawed and antiquated, yes, but provides a good starting point because it allows us to see where the modern definition of Art started. So how should Art be defined so that accepted fields such as literature, dance, music, acting, sculpture, architecture and painting/drawing are all included? I submit to you that **a piece of Art is a work that consistently produces an emotional connection (or reaction) with its audience purely on the merits of the work itself.**

So what the hell does that mean? It means that pottery, furniture, costume and jewelry are not Art because there is not that emotional connection. True, they may be very attractive items, but they are simply attractive items. What about that 200 year old piece of brocade from your great-grandfather's jacket? It is beautiful, true, and it creates an emotional reaction in you but not on its own merits. The emotional reaction is due to its link to your own history. Jewelry is discounted because the emotional reactions invoked there have more to do with the inherent value of the piece than the artistic merit of the piece!

Our definition also means that many things are not Art even though they are closely related to pieces that are. For example, the illustrations I have done for magic directions are not Art. Sure, they use the same skills and tools as pieces that are considered Art but there is no emotional content; they are purely instructional. And that commercial jingle that you can't get out of your head uses the same notes that Wagner had at his disposal, but *Flight of the Valkeries* manages a much deeper emotional connection with most of its audience than mere annoyance! And many pieces we may think of as Art are cast aside (and I believe cast aside rightly) by our definition. Most portraits are relegated to lower-case 'a' status as are all those priceless examples of centuries old pottery. Age does not make art, nor does technical skill or difficulty. Emotion makes art. That is what separates great ballet (Art) from truly talented dancers working in music videos or stage shows. Emotion keeps the comic books (and I have boxes of 'em), the pin-up paintings (and I have boxes of 'em) and advertising photographs from being Art. Emotion, emotion, emotion.

Just because there is a lack of emotional connection does not mean a piece or discipline is unsuccessful or a failure. A lot of 'artwork' is sold just to decorate walls. A lot of music is sold merely because it entertains. A lot of paintings are done solely as a visual record of a place or person. Artisanship or crafts can be very pleasant and highly sought after, but their success will not elevate them to Art.

Magic is a performance. Like so many other performance disciplines it is a multi-layered product. Take a motion picture as an example: it has been written, probably made (or directed) by someone else, depending on actors to be believable in their roles, scored by someone else who relied on several more people to perform the music and so forth. A magic performance may include music and costumes, props, routines and techniques devised by various people and all brought together by a magician. That motion picture may help us pleurably pass ninety minutes (okay, two hours with previews and commercials) but fail to qualify as Art. Take two very violent films. *Blade* is a great movie. It's a super violent vampire smashing blast fest, but you leave with not much more than a rush. Did you learn anything about yourself or the human condition? Will the lessons of *Blade* guide you as a person? I doubt it. Akira Kurosawa's version of *King Lear* is a film called *Ran*. Its battle scenes make Wesley Snipe's fight scenes look wan and weak but after sitting through the Japanese film the audience leaves with more than excitement. Mortality, familial relations and honor are all addressed and to be pondered. *Ran* is Art, *Blade* is a movie. *Blade* probably made more money than any ten Kurosawa films and has probably been seen by more of today's film-going public. It is successful, it is entertaining but it is still not Art.

How does magic stack up? Does it entertain? Of course, if done well (sometimes even when not done particularly well). Magic can make money and magic can make stars but how often does it make true emotional connections? Sure, there are the fleeting moments here and there when we allow ourselves to be briefly drawn into a character; we do genuinely like performers like Lance Burton and Mac King even though we have never met them, we may even buy into Copperfield uniting an estranged father and son for a fleeting moment. But it ain't Art.

Can magic be Art? No, I really don't think it can. I think that a performance that includes magic could become Art and I most definitely believe that more performers should aspire to produce Art. When such a performance occurs the magic will be just a tool. When such a performance occurs the skills that produce the

### Thoughts From Mid-West America (cont.)

Art will not be the technical moves of magic or its effects but the same skills that go into producing any other theater that is Art: writing as Art and acting as Art. If we want to elevate magic performance into the realm of Theater (that is theater as Art), then we must remember that magic is theater and we must be actors. I think somebody once said something about great magicians being actors or some such. You probably heard it.

Does magic have to be Art? No. Hell no. Most of us just want to entertain. There is no shame in that. In fact, there is great value in that desire. People want to be entertained, they want to be able to cast aside their troubles and sit in wonder. But remember that if your goal is entertainment than you are an entertainer. No more rants about how magic is like painting or why isn't magic as respected as ballet when we spend just as much time perfecting our art... they are perfecting their Art and, even after a lifetime a study they may never achieve that capital A.

*By Michael St Louis*

### Lord of the Rings Version of the Four Kingdoms

Sometimes an effect can be updated based on current trends or fads that are happening in the world. This gives a magician different options in using effects, especially if the magician is putting a routine together. Effects that may not usually go together could find a new home as part of a routine based on something current, such as Harry Potter.

While practicing this effect, I realized that it could be combined with a story associated with Lord of the Rings. Since the movies are very popular, and the books are considered classics in fantasy literature, here's a chance for a magician to take advantage of that popularity. Since you're telling a story based on Lord of the Rings, there's no copyright issue to worry about.

Summary: While telling a story from Middle Earth, the magician causes the cards to help act out the story. Based on a routine from Card Trick Central (<http://web.superb.net/cardtric/>), with original patter.

Props needed: A deck of cards

*Introduce the effect by talking about the land of Middle Earth, and how its history has been filled with tales of heroes and great evil that plagued the land.*

*Seperate the cards into Aces, Kings, Queens, and Jacks, removing them from the deck. Set aside the rest of the deck.*

There are lots of different lands in Middle Earth. Names such as Rohan, Rivendell, Lothlorien, and the Shire.

Set out the Aces in a row. Continue to place the Kings on top of each Ace, matching each suit. (placing a King of Hearts on an Ace of Hearts)

These lands were filled with many wondrous beings. Men from a variety of lands, Dwarves who could work stone into amazing things, Elves who were the oldest beings and concerned themselves with the lands, and finally the Hobbits, creatures of ease and comfort.

Start laying out the Queens on their respective suits on top of the Kings.

The mysterious Elves were the first beings in Middle Earth, fair of body and strong of mind. Immortal, yet aware of the passage of time.

### Lord of the Rings Version of the Four Kingdoms (cont.)

Place the Jacks on top of the Queens.

Of special note in the history of Middle Earth were the Hobbits. Frodo, Samwise, Merry, and Pippin. Four hobbits who were charged with the task of getting the Ring of Power to Mordor in order to destroy it.

Pick up each stack of cards and place each one on top of the other.

While the Fellowship was traveling all around Middle Earth, the evil Sauron was attempting to find the Ring and wrest control of it from our Hobbit, Frodo.

Start redealing the cards from the top of the pack. (The cards should start being dealt into piles of Aces together, Kings together, Queens together, and finally Jacks together.)

As Sauron attempted to find the Ring of Power, the various lands (Aces) were left almost empty as the Free People attempted to fight him off. The men of Middle Earth (Kings) were gathered together to continue the fight against the Evil One. The Elves (Queens) stood together and advised the Fellowship of what they needed to do to accomplish the task of destroying the Ring. This task fell to the Hobbits (Jacks).

Gather up the cards, each group one by one. After each stack is together redeal them into the same arrangement as before.

But for the side of good, there stood the wizard Gandalf who guided each group in the quest and helped each land to get themselves back on the path of goodness.

Cards end up the same as they started.

*By Tony Spallino*

### Magic on a Budget

After seeing the prices of magic apparatus in catalogs or on the websites of magic dealers, many aspiring magicians may be, well, scared off from taking up magic as a hobby. A poster on the Magic Bunny forums wrote: "Magic is big business and for the average man in the street it's ridiculous the prices of some of the magic stuff, e.g. videos... Magic is just a big money game." True, magic CAN be very expensive; It is not unusual for an amateur to spend thousands of dollars a year on the hobby.

There is nothing wrong with buying magic, mind you. Many magicians love browsing through catalogs, sending off their orders, and opening the packages when they arrive, like Christmas all over again. Getting new stuff is part of the fun of being a magician. But the nice thing about magic is that it accommodates a wide range of preferences. If you want to become an excellent magician while spending as little as possible doing so, this need not be a problem. Many magicians achieve just as much acclaim with a hank of rope or a deck of playing cards as others do with thousands of dollars of apparatus.

The goal of any amateur should be to be considered a "real magician." By REAL magician, I mean someone who can do magic anytime and anywhere, someone who has a wide variety of tricks to call upon at any moment, and someone who can do magic on a stage, platform or close up. This is the type of person whom the average

### Magic on a Budget (cont.)

layman and the fellow magician alike, after watching perform, considers to be a "real" magician, not just "a guy (or gal) who can do a few tricks."

The first step to being a magician on a budget is to take a trip to your local library. After a few hours, you'll have a book list of personal favorites. Personally, I prefer owning my magic books. Having a book on one's shelf makes referring back to a particular trick much easier. But the library is a good way to get a feel for what is out there.

If I were to suggest a single book to the aspiring magician it would be the Mark Wilson Course in Magic. This book packs more information into a single volume than any other book in recent memory. The book is also as easy to follow as can be: each trick is broken down into step-by-step instructions and every step is illustrated. You could become a "real magician" from this book alone. The book is in many public libraries.

The next step is the Tarbell Course in Magic. This is a seven-volume set (or eight, if you count the most recently published volume, which has its own separate index) and it must be considered the cornerstone of any magician's library. Each volume contains about a hundred tricks for the price of a single piece of store-bought apparatus. The entire course has enough material to keep you occupied for your entire lifetime! The course has everything: close-up, sleight of hand, card magic, platform effects, even stage illusions. Although it's fun to buy other books and many of them contain much valuable material, a lot of what they contain is simply a rewriting of the classic effects already found in Tarbell. So by buying the Tarbell Course first, you can save yourself much unnecessary duplication of material. The Tarbell Course is in very few public libraries.

Another key to saving money on magic is to put your routines together first, then visit the magic shop. If you go to the magic shop first, you may be dazzled by the magic shown there and buy a lot of stuff you don't really need, or that you later discover you already have the instructions to in a book. If you put your routine together first, based on your books, you know exactly what props you need to complete your act.

But what about stage magic? Yes stage magic often uses a lot of expensive apparatus. But most amateur magicians will never have the need to put together a full stage act. It is best to start out with close-up, party and platform magic to build experience. If you find that you have sufficient opportunities to perform on the stage, then you can consider investing in the equipment. Even then, you can start off with inexpensive magic, because most amateur magicians who are called on to perform on the stage need only to do a few effects, not put on a full evening show.

Some magicians have built reputations with stage routines using nothing but rope. Mentalism and audience participation routines play big on the stage but use little in the way of apparatus. Many flashy stage effects can be built inexpensively at home.

The offshoot of all this is that you can become an excellent magician inexpensively. You can spend as much or as little on magic as you wish. In the world of magic, how much time you spend practicing and learning the craft is more important than how much money you spend on apparatus.

*By Timothy Arends*

## A Magic Website Part 2

### PUTTING PHOTOS ON A WEB SITE

A picture is critical if you want to give your site a professional image. It is best to have a photo so that a potential booker can actually see your face and who you are, and obviously you have to look your best in this. There are many ways of taking a photograph from doing it carefully in full dress in the living room, to having it done professionally in a photo shoot (see issue 10 of Top Hat for a superb article on professional photo shoots by Nigel Shelton). Whatever photograph you end up with, it must be appropriate to the overall look of your site. For example, if your site has a dark design and looks very spooky and magical, the photo should have the same properties, and not look out of its element. Take a look at [www.trillusion.co.uk](http://www.trillusion.co.uk) and see how each photo blends in with the black background, but still stands out.

To make your image look presentable, it may need to be edited before ready for publication. This may involve cropping or resizing the photo, and maybe altering the colours if the image is too bright or too dark. This can all be done by a simple image editor such as Paint Shop Pro trials and earlier free versions of which can be obtained from various Internet sites), and the end result should be a photo that shows you in a magical theme, setting an example of what a booker can expect. The photo should also be as 'clean' as possible, with no intruding marks and preferably no signs of compression. A digital camera is therefore a good way of taking pictures of yourself as the image is very high resolution and can be transferred directly to the computer. Once on the page, the photo should look perfectly in place, although a 1 pixel thick black border around the edge can help to give it that professional look.

### MAKING A VIDEO CLIP

This is a completely optional item, but it again adds professionalism to your site, as well as giving visitors something extra to look at. Video clips can be made fairly easily, and can be done with various equipment. If you happen to own a camcorder and a video capture card, you will be able to make very high quality clips with sound, but even a standard web cam will do for a short clip. A short close-up effect or even something standing up, but appropriately lit will be enough. Make sure you wear proper magic dress and look as you would if you were actually performing. If you have a camcorder, you may even want to ask a friend to film you doing an effect to a spectator, and capturing a genuine reaction, which makes it even better. Whatever you do however, make it brief, and video compression is highly recommended. Anything over about 1 MB in size may deter people from downloading the video who are on 28 k/s modems, and other people simply do not have the patience to wait for a large file to download.

A way of overcoming download time problem is to make the video clip 'stream'. This means that a portion will download, and then start playing as more continues to be downloaded. It means there will only be a short delay before playback, and you can get away with some slightly larger files in this way.

But what format should the video be in? There are many, including Windows Media, QuickTime, Real, and several other less-known formats. Any of the above are useable, and most, if not all web cams come with video capture and sometimes video editing software that will capture footage and then edit it and save it to a file (this can be a help as a video may look better if faded in and out or if a title is superimposed onto it). There will usually be a preset format that a program like this will save to, and you will probably have to adhere to that format unless you find a third party application to use. (Microsoft's VidCap32 is an excellent, very simple program that I use, which gives complete freedom with resolution, compression method and so on. It can be obtained free from <http://www.themmm.com/download/shipmm/vidcap32.exe>.) Whichever format you end up with, all that is required is to upload the video to your web space and link to it from an appropriate page on your site. It is also advised to provide a link to a location from which the necessary player can be downloaded, so that visitors without the software can easily watch your videos within a few minutes.

### TITLES

When you have all of your content on a page, you need some sort of title for it. This can be as simple as normal text or you can go slightly more elaborate and design one using a program. Normal text is ok for more standard sites but for more elaborate or themed pages, you may want to create your own. Headings made using Microsoft



### A Magic Website Part 2 (cont.)

Office applications such as PowerPoint sometimes work, but if the text ends up being too fancy or too colourful, it can begin to look cheesy. Animation Shop is a good program that will create very good titles, which can be any font, colour or size, but tend to have a softer and 'neater' look than standard text. It also allows for some animation to be applied to your text. This could be an effect that happens to it for a few seconds, but should not be something that repeats, as this can become annoying and even make a visitor leave.

#### PAST CLIENTS

One more item that should be considered on a web site is the inclusion of a list of past clients or functions at which you have performed. These may not be large functions and may just be a small show, but anything for which you received payment could be listed (and if you are thinking about building the site, the chances are high that you have previously done a paid function of some description). It not only shows the visitor that you have experience at giving performances, but also gives them an idea of what sort of functions you can cater for.

That's it for this slightly shorter offering. Take care, and remember that building a web site really does help you as a magician and a well-designed site will give you the image that you want and hopefully keep visitors returning.

Best Wishes,

Richard Penna.

June's edition will be out, hopefully, at the beginning of next month so please send articles in before this date to [TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk](mailto:TOPHAT@magicbunny.co.uk)

Thanks,

Jon Snoops