



MagicBunny.co.uk

## TopHat

### *May 2005 - Edition 38*

A very warm welcome to this month's TopHat ezine. If you're new to Magicbunny, the TopHat ezine is an exclusive online publication for members of the forum. Many members contribute from all over the world and from all magical backgrounds. Our regular columnists are also on hand and you can view their previous articles in the archives on site.

The most recent project on MagicBunny.co.uk has been the Moderator Question and Answer session. This has been a great success as it seems that many members wish to get to know the moderators a little better. The reason for this session was the milestone of 1000 introductions posted by you. This is a great number and we encourage all new members to post their introduction so we can get to know a little about them before they post. If you are a new member and haven't yet posted an introduction, we'd love to hear a little about yourself in the Introductions forum. You're almost guaranteed to get a warm welcome after this.

Being a moderator, I'm somewhat ashamed by how much I've learnt from the other moderator's introductions. I've met five of them but was surprised by the facts and stories told by all of the other guys. So if there was a question you were itching to ask any of the moderators, here's your chance. The forum will remain open for a few more days to allow you to get your questions in.

Finally, I hope you enjoy this month's edition of the ezine on behalf of all the contributors.

All the best,  
~Jon Snoops~  
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Every issue of the TopHat contains original effects and articles written by readers and members of MagicBunny.co.uk. If you would like to submit a piece, please email [TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk](mailto:TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk)

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Admin Article

## Admin Article

A contribution by Nigel Shelton

By Nigel Shelton



*Some of you may know that, as well as managing the MB site; I'm always on the lookout for an interesting story to add an interesting patter line to some of the effects that I like to perform. Certainly, a bizarre effect can be enhanced by some accompanying sinister story and I am always keen to pick up anecdotes of local interest, in order to add interest to some of the effects that I perform.*

It was with this in mind, I decided to raise this topic when I visited a small village pub, The Kings Arms, situated opposite a cluster of houses on the edge of the hamlet of Burgh Castle. I hadn't visited this pub for some time and as I approached the bar, I was casually asked whether I was a holidaymaker from one of the surrounding campsites.

"No," I replied, "I live just a few miles away but I have made a detour here, looking for any unexplained events so that I could add these to my repertoire of mysterious tales."

The landlady beckoned with her finger towards the far corner of the pub, to where an elderly gentleman was sitting alone. She explained that, being one of the oldest regulars to the pub, he was full of stories from his past and she was sure that he could pass on a word or two. I took my drink and made my way to corner to introduce myself, quickly finding myself at ease with the gentleman. He was very keen to talk about the period from his early life, when times were so different from those of today and soon the banter of his words filled the air around the table.

After about a half an hour, I ordered another two drinks, one for myself and one for the gentleman, as we continued talking about times past. I became so engrossed in the conversation I hardly noticed when a second elderly gentleman approached the table and sat opposite his old friend – the two old men were obviously drinking partners and knew each other well.

I'm not sure whether it was the effect of the relaxed atmosphere of the pub, the support of a second friendly face, growing trust in my presence or simply the effect of the alcohol slowly taking hold but the atmosphere suddenly became more sombre and the elderly gentleman lowered his voice to confide a story which he "had never recounted before in all his passing years."

He went on to explain that, as a young man, he had come to this village from the outskirts of Norwich, the nearby city, in his search for work on the land. His wish was to find suitable employment and a place in which to start a home. It was a cold autumn evening when he had arrived in the village, having heard that there was work to be had in the processing of local reed for the thatching of roofs for local cottages. He spotted a whisk of smoke carving its way through sombre hues of the late dusk sky and, as he approached the public house, he recalled seeing a large black cat sitting on its haunches by the closed door of the building. He rapped firmly on the entrance and then bent down to stroke the cat as he waited for a reply. As he stroked the cat it weaved in and out between his legs, pressing its body against firmly but affectionately against the side of his limbs. As he bent down to repeat the coax the door swung open to reveal the outline of a sturdily built woman, dressed in an apron with specks of flour dusting her hands and face. He told her that he was looking for a room for the night and, as she beckoned him to step inside the hallway, the cat followed him towards the first room off the lobby. The woman gestured to a firmly built wooden chair standing alone by a hearth, in which a roaring fire was glowing away dissipating a veil of warmth into the far shadows of the room.

He sat down and the cat leapt onto his lap, snuggling into a compact ball and purring affectionately as it did so. The elderly man continued his story to me by explaining that he repeated his request for a room for that night and after a while he and the landlady had agreed the terms of his stay. By then, the evening was drawing on and an autumnal gale had begun to form in the darkness outside. The wind howled around the chimneystack and echoed into the room as nearby trees rattled their distorted claws against the outside of

Admin Article (cont.)

the windows.

The elderly man went on to explain to me how grateful he had felt then to be able to secure a room before nightfall. Next, he pushed the cat aside and stood up in order to make his way out off the room, following the landlady who led the way with a the faint glow of a small candle. The flickering flame threw an array of dancing shadows onto the ways of the hallway as they made their way towards the guest quarters at the far end of the corridor. Unbeknown to them at the time the cat followed in their wake, stealthy creeping in their footsteps along the wooden floorboards of the hall.

The woman reached the far end of the corridor, turned a key in the lock of the door and pushed the door aside to reveal a small cramped room, furnished with a single readymade bed, a solitary cupboard and an enamel jug of water in a similarly fashioned white enamel bowl resting on a sideboard at the back of the room.

The elderly man continued to explain to me that he stepped inside the room and flung his kit bag onto the counterpane of the bed. The landlady swung the door shut from outside the room but he became aware of the presence of another creature. It was then that he realised that the cat had followed the two of them down the corridor and, past the landlady, into the room. The man was young and alone and grateful for the security that the cat's presence gave him and so he lifted it up onto the bed as he made himself ready to retire to sleep for the night. The gale continued to blow outside the window and he could hear the clatter of a glass bottle rolling along the ground outside the pub. As he finally stepped into bed, the cat snuggled up close to him and burrowed its way into the recess of his right arm. The man lay upon his back listening to the sounds of the gale outside and the cat, nestling itself into the hollow formed between the man's right arm and body, lay its head upon the shoulder of the man and began to purr contentedly as the man very quickly fell asleep.

The elderly man then paused in the recount of his story and a glimmer of fear crept into the corners of his eyes. "Have you ever dreamt of dying?" he enquired of me, "Have you ever awoken with a fear so profound that pools of sweat cause the very nightclothes you wear to fasten upon your skin with a revolting, chilling clamminess?"

The elderly man explained that he had awoken with a start from a deep nightmare to find himself lying on his back in exactly the same position that he had fallen asleep earlier that night. The room still lay shrouded in darkness and, although the storm had passed, he became aware of a tingling prickly sensation in his right arm. Assuming that he had trapped a nerve in his arm, he reached across his body with his left hand to pull the right arm free when he felt that the pools of sweat were not what he thought they were. The still of the night air was broken by a scream as he pulled his left hand back and saw trickles of fresh blood running from the tips of his fingers. With all his strength he leapt to his feet and shouted for help but, as he did this, he remembered the cat and felt a deadweight hanging from his neck, as if attached to his body like a leech to a host. He recalled feeling faint and nauseous, falling to the floor but from this moment on was unable to recount any more of the happenings of that night.

The old man paused in the description of his story. The only detail he could recall after this was awaking in a clean sterile bed with the smell of disinfectant filling the air. The room was filled with a distant fragrance of flowers and towering above him was the fresh and starched figure of a nurse at work.

"Sleep now and build your strength," she whispered to her patient, "you've had a nasty fall and I guess that's why you've lost a lot of blood. It's lucky that the landlady of The King's Arms heard your call and found you otherwise we may have lost you completely."

The elderly man looked at me with a perplexed, confused glare and explained that he felt a strong obligation to return to the pub as soon as he was able and to confide with the landlady that she was wrong regarding the nature of his blackout; somehow the cat was entangled with this ghastly episode and he had to warn her before this adversity could repeat itself with another visitor. The very first thing he did, upon leaving the cottage hospital, was to return to The Kings Arms and confide with the landlady.

"I must speak with you urgently about your cat ... " he began.

**Admin Article (cont.)**

"... my cat? she interrupted, "But I thought it was yours – it followed you in as you came!

The old man stopped in the recollection of his story, hinting at what was to follow. My eyes were glued upon his face and I detected a sense of fear; an ancient fear that had been harbouring in the creases of his face for the past fifty years or so. He pulled a gnarled old finger to his neck and hooked it into the collar of his shirt. As he pulled slightly, I spied the scar of two small white dots lying side-by-side along the bulges of one vein that ran the length of his neck. The hairs on the back of my neck began to erect and bristle with fear as I realised the enormity of what had happened that eventful night, all those years ago. I turned my face away to view the expression of his elderly friend, sitting opposite him on the other side of the table. He, too, seemed to be as shocked as I felt. The second old man very slowly crooked his head to his left hand side, pulling it away from the folds of his coat. The contours of his face seemed to echo the fear that I witnessed upon that of the storyteller and it was then that I noticed a second pair of scars on his neck too. Indeed it seemed that these two old friends had more in common than I first thought – for the first time, it was evident that they shared a grisly dreadful secret from their separate pasts.

I was unable to wait for any longer to escape from the relative safety of the warmth of that pub but I knew that I had achieved what it was that I had been searching for – I had got my ghastly story. I stepped outside into the colds of a dark autumnal evening ... straight into the path of the sinister glaring eyes of an obese black cat sitting on its haunches on the doorstep of the house opposite.

*By Nigel Shelton*

**From the Desk of Michael Jay**

***From the Desk of Michael Jay***  
An American Magician in London Part III

**By Michael Jay**



After getting off work last night, I stopped by Sean and Autumn's place (two dear friends of mine) for a hand or two of Euchre. They were having a bit of a party, nothing major, but there were a couple of people there whom I'd never met before. Whenever this happens, Autumn always begs me to show some magic because she thoroughly enjoys being able to tell folks about her "magician friend." So, I did a very simple trick, one that I call "The Phantom Limb," which borders on a bizarre presentation. At the end of this article, I'll tip that trick to my readers. The really good thing about this trick is that it works wonderfully well with a sponge ball routine, but is also a fantastic stand alone piece that is nothing but impromptu.

**WHISKEY DAY**

I'm a Jack Daniels man, myself. Infrequently I like to have a shot of Jack with a beer. Sometimes, though, I like to pour it on ice and sip on it over the course of an hour or so. When Jonathan (Tobias) invited me to have a shot or two in his private whiskey club, I couldn't resist. The date was set and I marked it on the itinerary as "Whiskey Day." In attendance that day was Jonathan (of course), David (Davidbod), Gary Scott and myself.

The club itself was up a flight of stairs. Jonathan warned that we needed to keep quiet in the club. Those who know me realize that I'm not what you'd call a quiet individual, but I gave my solemn promise (and what's more, I kept it).

We sat down at a table, much like a coffee table here in the states, and Jonathan got us each a glass of Irish

*From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)*

whiskey to start off. Gary, of course, being a teetotaler (even though he doesn't drink tea, either) sipped on a glass of water while the rest of us lusher got down to serious whiskey tasting. Both Jonathan and David needed to sip from their water-back, something that I consider sacrilege when drinking a fine whiskey. Funny, Jonathan said the same thing about my desire to put that very same whiskey on ice.

Please keep in mind, I drink and I drink a lot. So, the events that took place in that whiskey club may not be chronologically correct. Regardless, I managed to keep my very loud voice quiet and THAT I remember.

David taught us a dice game, which we played while we sipped and chatted, called "Perudo." It was an enjoyable and relaxing game. I'm still trying to find it here in the states, as some of the rules escape me at this point. As it turns out, David collects dice and he had a bag of around a thousand of them that he'd bought in a shop earlier in the day. It's the good thing that he had those dice, since nobody else was carrying any and we couldn't have played this nifty, little game otherwise. You would think that Gary would have had the advantage, playing against guys who were downing whiskey, but the fact of the matter is Gary kept losing to our alcohol induced skills.

Before too long, we were doing what magicians do - showing tricks and talking shop. I can't begin to remember everything that was done during that time, but I do know that the brotherhood is alive and well. Of the four of us, Jonathan was the mentalist. I can't speak for Gary, who was sober, but I do know that David and I were blown away by Jonathan's work, even in our slightly altered state. Gary is an excellent sleight of hand guy and David has the most engaging personality. David's demeanor is tranquil and mesmerizing - he is a natural magician. To tell the truth, I simply enjoy watching good magic and these three gentlemen thoroughly entertained me during that time. I, of course, gave my simple offerings, being the lazy magician of the four of us.

After a terrific time, we retired to a local pub, where we not only had dinner, but we were met there by Carsten (AKA Calixa, AKA Magixx). Carsten hails from Germany and, when he talks there is no doubt about his nationality - he has a guttural German accent. Our day was just getting better and better. Our group of four was now five and the party was just beginning. We continued talking magic, showing tricks to each other and, now, we had a whole pub worth of audience members. I was knocking back the Guinness quick and hard. Gary tried to slow me down, but had no luck with that. After several hours, it was time for Jonathan, David and Carsten to get back to real life and Gary and I still had to make the journey home (I was lucky that I could walk at that point).

All I can do is offer my sincerest apologies to Gary, who had to deal with me the entire way home that evening.

### **THE IN-BETWEEN TIMES**

During my stay in England, there were several days which were specifically scheduled and the itinerary was posted for anyone who was in the area and wanted to join in. Still, there were some days that Gary and I simply lounged around. Of course, anyone who wanted to join in was invited, but these days were not "official" days. Out of the many folks that I got to meet, two guys were the most prolific - Jon Snoops and Doc.

One particular day Gary and I were in London and we were joined by Jon. We normally met at a McDonalds that was close to a coffee shop. Generally, my breakfast was a Guinness or two, so I was always on the look out for pubs, breakfast being the most important meal of the day.

Now, Jon is one of those guys who likes to work hard to get his routines down, but he doesn't show it to anyone after he's mastered it. Part of this is that he's worried about being caught out, which is a common thread amongst magicians. Sometimes, even though we have a routine down 100%, we still know the sleights that we are using and somehow feel that the spectator is going to see everything that we know is going on behind the scenes. This can be a daunting and unsettling feeling.

It was a particular pleasure, then, that Jon decided to show Gary and I his 3 shell routine. And, I'm glad that he did. Jon completely blew Gary and me out of the water with this routine. I had never seen a 3 shell routine prior to that day. I've done a three card monte as long as I can remember, but Jon's presentation

*From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)*

was smooth and absolutely fabulous. Hey, I've been around and I know how the 3 shell game works, or, at least, I thought that I did. Jon proved to me on that day that I didn't know squat!

In my opinion, the funniest thing about it all was that Jon was just as impressed with the fact that he blew Gary and me away as we were impressed by his smooth and deceptive handling. And, I believe, this ushered in a whole new era for Jon. You see, I'm a simple guy and I do simple magic. My greatest desire in my career is to see other magicians succeed and, to that end, I try to help where and when I can. I feel that both Gary and I helped Jon to realize that he is an excellent magician and that he's very good at what he does. Keep up the good work, Jon.

It is here that I shall leave my travels in England until my next writing and give you:

**THE PHANTOM LIMB**

**Effect:** In order to prove the theory of "the phantom limb" to the spectator, the magician rips a piece of tissue in half, places one half in his own hand, one half in the spectators hand and instantly the ripped halves join in the spectator's hand.

**Explanation:** Before I start, most magicians will see the effect above and say, "Oh, I know how to do this one," and will immediately quit reading. If you do that, you lose. There is so much more to this than simple sleight of hand, that to overlook what I'm about to tell you is remiss on your part as a magician.

Start by getting two sheets of toilet paper. Tear these two sheets from the roll, but keep the two intact (in other words, the two squares should still be connected, one to the other so that it is a rectangle, and not a square). Place this two piece sheet down in front of you at the table and say, "Have you ever heard of the phantom limb? You know, where someone who has lost an arm or a leg talks about the fact that they can still feel that missing limb, even needing to scratch it sometimes, although it is no longer there?"

Normally, somebody will have heard of this. It is fairly common knowledge. Continue, "Yes, that's right. Even though the arm is missing, that person will still feel its presence. Now, unless you've actually lost an arm or a leg, you don't know if this is true or not. Of course, too many people have claimed to feel this phenomena to think that it isn't true, but still, there is no real proof. Which is why I am going to attempt to prove, right here and now, that this phenomena known as the phantom limb is very real."

Tear the sheet of paper that you have in half, so that you now have two separate squares, and ball them up simultaneously, one in the right hand, one in the left. Because of the size of the squares, they roll into very small balls and since they are tissue, they are very soft - this is important and I'll explain why a bit later on.

Open your left hand, palm up, fingers together and have one of your spectators do the same with either one of their hands. Say, "Please, help me with this. Open your hand like mine. Now, I'm going to place one of these tissue balls into your hand and one into my hand. When I place the one in your hand, I want you to close your hand up into a fist, nice and tight." While you explain how you want them to close their hand up, actually place your right hand's fingers onto their palm, thumb on the bottom of their fingers, and use your thumb to close their fingers up, forming a fist of their hand, while you cradle the back of their hand with your left, free hand. This is an intimate thing to do, but it will serve to ensure that they do, in fact, fist up nice and tight once you've put the ball into their hand.

Also, please note the statement, "Now, I'm going to place one of these tissue balls into your hand and one into my hand." You are actually going to place one into your hand and THEN one into their hand, but by saying it in the reverse, they will forget that you actually put one in your hand first. It sounds strange, but it works. Trust me on that.

Now, pick up the one ball with your right hand and do a simple false transfer (specifically, a "fake put"). Pretend to put the ball into your left hand while retaining it in the right hand and immediately grab the other ball with your right hand, smashing the two balls together, and place this double ball into your assistant's open, waiting hand. Your assistant will immediately close their hand around the balls and you now have nothing in your left hand and both balls in their hand.

*From the Desk of Michael Jay (cont.)*

Maintain the position that you have with your left hand and explain, "Now, both of these two balls came from the same sheet of paper, much like a limb that has been separated from a body. If the phantom limb effect is real, then certainly one ball must be feeling a sympathy for the other ball and should want to get back with its missing part. Here, let's have a look..." Blow into your left, closed fist and slowly open your fingers. The ball is gone.

Say, "Alright, we're halfway there in proving our theory. Now, open your hand and let's take a look." When they open their hand, both balls will be there. Immediately say, "As you can see, it doesn't matter whether the phantom limb came from a person, or from some other object, because everything is relative. We are all part of the same environment and physical laws such as this apply to all things, equally." Let them assimilate that idea and take your bows.

**Final notes:** Since the balls that you are using are small and soft, the spectator will never realize that you've given them two, instead of just one. I've done this effect using barroom napkins, but normally only use half of a napkin for the effect (in essence, one quarter of the napkin for one ball, one quarter for the other). The reason is that barroom napkins are bigger and harder than the toilet tissue squares. I've actually been caught doing this because the spectator could feel the bulk of both balls being put into their hand. Consider that fact and remember: forewarned is forearmed.

Also, you'll find that this trick fits perfectly with a sponge ball presentation. Most every sponge ball worker does the "sawing in half" effect. Using the patter above, this is a natural when you explain, "In the old days, when someone's limb was gangrenous, they would actually saw the limb off using any old, handy saw - something like this..." Doing the sawing in half at this point actually becomes a logical thing to do; it gives a reason for the sawing action on the sponge (something that ordinarily the magician just does with no real reason at all). And, if you're using red sponges, that is much like the blood that would be shed when someone got a limb sawed off. Disturbing, yes, but very to the point and should give the serious bizarrists some food for thought (or, maybe, a leg up).

For the impromptu worker, this is pure gold.

Here I bid you all a "fondue" and promise that I will get to CAM and the Magic Cavern, along with thoughts of Blackpool 2005, in next month's article. Until then, you all take care and thank you for reading.

*By Michael Jay*

*The Laugh-Meter*

***The Laugh-Meter***

Funny Stuff

**By Peter Marucci**



**EFFECT:**

In the course of his routine, the magician tells a joke (or does a humorous trick) and the audience laughs. The magi immediately whips out a Laugh-Meter from his pocket and bounces a ball in front of it to see how high the ball will bounce and, thus, how funny the joke was.

This is repeated a couple of times during the act. Finally, the magi comes up with a gag that falls flat (on purpose -- we hope) and again whips out the Laugh-Meter.

However, this time when he bounces the ball, the ball simply hits the floor and lies there - - as dead as the joke the magi just told.

### The Laugh-Meter (cont.)

**WORKING AND PRESENTATION:**

You'll need a set of bounce/no-bounce balls, available from most joke shops and magic dealers and who-knows-where-else.

You'll also need a Laugh-Meter. This is just a strip of cardboard about two feet long and four inches wide, hinged in the middle to make two one-foot sections. (This way it folds up and fits in my jacket pocket without being too awkward.)

From top to bottom on one side, I have letters spelling out LAUGH-METER; on the opposite side, there are gradation marks, like a thermometer -- supposedly to indicate the level of humor in the joke.

The Laugh-Meter is in the left jacket pocket, the balls are in the right. (See Second Thoughts below for a different handling.)

Proceed as above and I think you'll be amazed at the audience reaction.

**SECOND THOUGHTS:**

This was originally done as an IQ test, proving that the magician was a genius.

However, I felt more than a little uncomfortable using that approach with a lay audience, particularly one made up of people that I knew nothing about.

At best, you might get hurt feelings; at worst, you might get a broken nose.

And so I came up with the Laugh-Meter; it's always better if the joke is on the magi, rather than the audience, and that's true with every sucker trick -- the Die Box, Stop Lights, you name it.

If you really want to carry this to its illogical extreme, have a BIG Laugh-Meter made up, that stands on stage with you all during the show.

Naturally, for stage work, the little, dark balls won't be very visible. Not to worry! Did you think I'd take you this far, only to abandon you?

Toy shops carry a range of balls, about tennis-ball size, that are very squishy. When you try to bounce them off the floor, they "die" when they hit, and just lie there. These are made up to look like big golf balls, small baseballs, and normal tennis balls, and come in a range of colors -- including a bright yellow that looks just like some tennis balls.

Are you ahead of me yet? Get one of the squishy balls and a matching real (and very bouncy) tennis ball for your stage-sized Laugh-Meter and you've got a sight gag visible from the back of the biggest theatre you'll ever have to play.

Thanks again to Al Finnegan Jr. for being willing to share this with his fellow members.

*By Peter Marucci*



Look at Yourself!

## ***Look at Yourself!***

Part 1 of an undefined number in a series.

By Gary Scott



I'd like to begin this series with a true story. To protect the innocent, people I know will be referred to as 'friend'. The guilty shall be known as 'other act'. A friend of mine was working on a show. He was with another act. He told my friend that he was having trouble getting repeat bookings and asked for some tips. My friend looked at the other act and shrugged his shoulders. " I don't know" ..he replied....

Now this story isn't so amazing if I leave it as is. To elaborate on what *is* so amazing requires for truths to be told about the other act.

Imagine you are about to walk out stage, what are your priorities?...Final prop

managements?...

Script reminding?...Psychological set-up?...Your attire and appearance?...

According to the 'other act'...it is neither or either of the above. According to the 'other act', before you go out on stage, you must eat a chicken tikka sandwich and stink out the dressing room. Getting crumbs everywhere and spilling sauce on your attire. That's right folks, breath management is not in the other acts vocabulary. Then of course you stand up, belly sticking out, clothes the wrong fit!

Of course, the other act has been sitting in the dressing room so long, sweat marks have started to soak through his shirt and his body odor begins to mix with the aroma from the chicken tikka. Are you getting an image of this other act?...My, my...what a surprise!... and I guess we all now know why he has trouble with repeat bookings.

So...what am I writing all this for?.. Well, I would like to address the issues that pro- working magicians call secondary. That invisible list that apparently has nothing to do with magic. Yep this series will not be about sleights, tricks or stories about vacations. This is going to tackle the important issues that we need to discuss about being in front of people and performing. I do not know how long this series will be or what issues will be raised, but I will begin with something that cannot be overlooked. The other act knows nothing about this and it is called a..... **FIRST IMPRESSION!**

The first time you step out on the stage or performing area, people are looking at you!...Not the lights, background or your props. They look at you!...and for any performance , you need to be the focus of attention!

So here are some guidelines on making that first impression successful.

### **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

Yep, it has to be said. Make sure you are freshly bathed or showered and use a good deodorant. Magic is the only performing area I know of, where you can fully interact with your audience, within their personal space. Don't let them hate you for it.

### **BREATH**

Yep, this another area sorely forgotten. Remember to brush your teeth and use chewing gum or mint to prolong your fresh breath, if you have to be at a show well before performance time.

### **HANDS**

Look at your hands. Do you need a manicure? Yes?...don't hesitate! As far as I'm concerned, a magicians hands are his tools and they need to be kept in the best condition to do the best job. Get rid of all that muck under your fingernails too. Cuts, warts, bumps and bruises can be easily covered up by some flesh colored daub from any good pharmacist.

### **HAIR**

A proper haircut that makes you look professional and tidy. This means no greasy mop, but a well proportioned and washed hair style. Obviously, this also depends on your character. Some of you may have long hair, but you already know that you have to take care of this. Take a comb or brush with you as part of your kit.

### Look at Yourself! (cont.)

#### ATTIRE

Just sticking on a jacket does NOT make you magician. Each of us have our own character and how we wish to dress. Now some of this will not be applicable to all. There are acts where the characters traits are sometimes projected by what he wears, but I would just like to concentrate on attire for the standard Cabaret/ close-up worker. Personally, I wear a double cuff shirt, with a waistcoat and matching bow tie. Black trousers and black shoes. Make sure that your shirt is freshly pressed, as is your trousers. The Jacket must be dry cleaned regularly, to rid it of the natural odors of time.

Shoes clean, polished. Try not to make a waistcoat and tie be of the ' spangly' kind when doing close up. It is much more appropriate to wear a waistcoat and tie of an evening wear persuasion.

Depending on the weather, I sometimes wear braces and a short-sleeved shirt. I eliminate the waistcoat from the equation but still wear the bow tie.

There are so many ways to dress and for every occasion. In a nutshell, the magician has to convey as someone who is smart, intelligent and pleasing on the eye. A good rule of thumb is to dress like you have somewhere better to go...later!

So now you are presentable to an audience, not only that... a *paying* audience. This is your first impression, so make it a good one.

Well, I hope some of you don't get offended by what should be common sense. If you are offended?...then read it all again, because you may have to *Look at yourself*.

My next task is to tackle the psychological set-up. Those personal preparations to gear you up before you step out on stage or walk up to that table for the first time.

But of course that will be in a future Top Hat..

Siya all on Magic Bunny!

Best wishes  
Gary Scott

### Thoughts From Mid-West America

#### ***Mark Wilson's Complete Course in Magic***

Lapping

**By Michael-Saint Louis**



I'm ashamed to say that this might not quite make it in Top Hat. I've been knee-deep in HTML redoing the web site for my video business and a last wave of spring colds have flooded through the house. Because I refuse to touch any of my snot nosed little disease couriers I, of course, escaped without getting sick but that still left me chief nurse of the house! Still, I hope this sneaks in under the wire because we are coming to two things I have been looking forward to: gimmicked hankies and lapping. The gimmicked hanks are an old lover who I just can't seem to shake, while lapping is a new one that has just caught my eye!

Hankies. Hanks. Silks. Pocket squares. Snotrags. Doesn't matter what you call them, I love them. Back when I ran movie theaters I was forced to wear ties. Often with the ties came jackets. Let me tell you, there is no better fashion statement in a 135 degree projector room than a jacket and tie! Theater owners can be real morons... but I digress. When I wore ties I usually went for the vintage stuff. Yup, to me Fred Mertz is a fashion icon! I really like vintage clothes a lot but I'm a big buy (I wear size 4XL t-shirts now and was actively working out then, so I had a bigger neck and bigger arms and even a bigger chest!) and, as far as I

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

can tell, everyone back in the 40's and 50's was a small medium at best! So that leaves hats and ties. I own five vintage fedoras at the moment and wear them all regularly still. I rarely wear ties anymore, but still have all my favorites. I ask you, what puts the perfect finish on an ensemble featuring a 1928 International Shriners Convention tie (red silk with the scimitar and crescent hand painted on the tie)? A matching red silk artfully arranged in the breast pocket of course! Besides, finally it gave me an excuse to carry a silk. Back then I did alot of magic in the lobby of my little art house and I learned, since at any given time I may be covered in soda syrup, real butter (oh yes, nothing but the finest for MY customers) or projector oil, that therre is nothing wrong with using gimmicks. Turns out that the audience doesn't really give a flying--- er, well... they just don't care if you are fingerclipping and muscle passing or using a secret pocket. They just care that magic happened.

The trick hanks in the ol' Complete Course are a nice little start. If you haven't ever used one try it. Especially if you are doing any kind of silk work! Gimmicked silks make for some nice magic.

And then there is lapping. I always scoffed at lapping; you know, kind of like how you are now. Who sits down to perform anyway? Turns out I do!

See, I've got two darling little princesses. Lovely little visions they are; sweet as can be. Big blue eyes and lots of blonde curly hair.... and very quick to point out they are proud Crow Indians! So much for stereotypes, eh? Anyway, they are, by and large, little angels. Until they get hungry. When they get hungry they are teeny-little emotional roller coasters, just like their mother. To make matters worse, the average family-style eatery hasn't really figured out that children don't like to wait for dinner and that children's meals should be served A) at the same time as appetizers and B) not straight out of the oven hot! So as they sit and wait desperately for their chicken fingers or hot dogs they are easily distracted and quick to throw a fit. And I've learned things to entertain them. I can make a rose out of a cocktail napkin (thank you Doc Eason!), a baby wrapped in blankets out of a dinner napkin (thank you Indian crafts) and even a little doll out of a straw wrapper (thank you divine inspiration) and when none of that works anymore, then it is magic time. My older girl loves magic. My younger girl is only 19 months or so and doesn't always get it, but she's starting to understand that things aren't supposed to just disappear and appear. About two weeks ago we were starting to get a little too antsy. The girls decided that they should, to pass the time, eat salt right out of the shaker. Since we had already tested for ghosts with my haunted key, I needed something quick and that salt shaker needed to go! Just the day before I had been breezing through this month's material and it hit me. Needless to say, seconds later the girls were amazed and then confused (it was almost long enough to give the hot dogs and chicken fingers time to arrive) and the salt shaker had firmly made it's presence known as it crashed landed into my, um, well, guys, let's just say use caution when deciding what should and shouldn't disappear by dropping into your groin! But the pain was fleeting and worth it. Since then I have used lapping with them two or three more times, always with good results. In fact, last time i noticed the table across from us watching as well!

Once again, it just goes to show that magic is a very fickle and situational craft. Even the lamest or most basic move has value sometime! And that is why Mark Wilson's Complete Course in Magic is literally worth its weight in gold!

*By Michael Saint-Louis*

## The Silva Universal Coin Dropper

### Coin Dropper

Leonardo Silva

By Jason Waskett



**NAME:** The Silva universal coin dropper by Leonardo Silva.

**AVAILABLE:** <http://www.silvamanipulation.com/drop%20small.htm>

**PRICE**

I purchased mine from Pegani at Blackpool for £15:50, and then went back the next day and bought another. Of the 150 dealers at Blackpool I only saw one selling a coin dropper.

**VALUE FOR MONEY**

I'll say 7 out of 10, it could be cheaper, but then again so could everything. This has been thought out well and I can see it lasting a long time. I think it's a good deal, if of course it's something that you need and will use a lot. I mean just consider that normally with an item that is made for such a select/small market the price is normally very high. Yes it's plastic, but like I said, it's not made for a huge market and being plastic is actually a bonus. (see later)

**EXAMINABLE**

N/A. Worn under your jacket and is dark grey and black so is well hidden from view. It does have a silver effect sticker on the side but this is easily removed.

**ANGLES:** N/A.

**RESET:** It's instant.

**YOU GET:**

A small well printed colour 3 page booklet of instructions, spare elastic bands (two sizes, and good quality as well) shown below on the instructions, sizing foam and felt pad. The dropper is also in there which attaches to your clothing using a safety pin.



**EFFECT:**

Put simply, coins appear from nowhere. The item is designed to drop a stack of coins. Note I said stack, as I don't believe it was designed to drop them individually. (Well for them to be taken individually)

**DIFFICULTY**

1 out of 5. Very simple to use, and didn't take long to get used to at all. That said, if you want to drop individual coins at intervals, without reloading then 3 to 4 out of 5 (see notes).

**BUILD QUALITY**

8 out of 10. Well made, but not unbreakable. Good quality safety pin attached to a standard hard plastic Berghan pinch clip seen here.

The exact name of which escapes me (somebody help me out here). The type that are used extensively in camping gear accessories/belts etc. Quik Klips? Anyway, glued to this (and screwed, due to the design) is a softer moulded plastic. You can see more of the clip here.



### The Silva Universal Coin Dropper (cont.)

We used to call this type "Mickey Mouse" plastic when I was a kid (the sort that you can dig your nail into slightly). Attached to this is a rubber flap, seen here,



which keeps the coins in place due to an elastic band which applies light pressure on the face of the coins. I don't know how long this flap will last, as only time will tell, but I don't perceive a lot of wear on it. On the inside of the flap is red felt and the pen points to the felt pad that is used to size it down for half dollars. The foam is also stuck in to hold the half dollars in place.

#### RATING

8 out of 10. When I first got this I thought "Wow! This is amazing." But with hindsight and playing with it for a period of time, I now think it's pretty damn good. I'm not saying I was taken in by its looks, although I perceive that would be a major selling point, but it was the first dropper that I'd actually got my mitts on and had a play with, and it's always wise to have a look at what else is available.

#### WOULD I BUY IT AGAIN?

Well I did didn't I 😊. But with hindsight, Hmmnnnn I think I would definitely check out something like this also:

<http://www.misdirections.com/accessories.html> (A quarter of the way down the page)

This works on the same principle as the "Murray card dropper" <http://www.magicbunny.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=17707> but only holds 3 coins. It doesn't look as flash (practical is a word that springs to mind) but if 3 dollar coins is all your after, in one hit, then for the price (a bargain) I'd advise you go for it. Check to see if they make one in half dollar size, it wouldn't surprise me.

or:

<http://www.vikingmagic.com/cgi-bin/dc.pl?keywords=coin&html=full&key=610&options=>

Looks like this will take various sized coins, and I'm guessing it dumps in one hit, but I'd check before purchase.

If you want coins individually then check out:

[http://www.vikingmagic.com/cgi-bin/dc.pl?keywords=coin.\\*dropper&html=full&key=167&options=](http://www.vikingmagic.com/cgi-bin/dc.pl?keywords=coin.*dropper&html=full&key=167&options=)

I seem to recall seeing this type of design and the coins flow out, under control, just like turning on a tap.

#### NOTES

I set it for where my hand hangs naturally down by my side, right at the base of my jacket,

### The Silva Universal Coin Dropper (cont.)



so there's no fumbling at all. Be aware the item will swing slightly, due to how it's attached, but that's no problem. The exposed view is shown here.

The close up mat (used as background here) would actually be where your shirt or waistcoat would be, the base of your finger makes contact with the base of the coins and as your hand pulls away, the coins follow.

As I read somewhere, this looks like something that James Bond would have, or an item pinched off the set of a Batman movie. I can totally agree with this. Over engineered? Welllllll....., I'll use the phrase "well thought out instead." Even the elastic bands and safety pin are black.



I've used the term "Mickey Mouse" plastic earlier which may sound derogatory, but this softer plastic has the advantage that it is more silent, when the coins move across it, than if it had been made out of the same (harder) plastic as the clip.

I bought the item as I was a bit unhappy reaching into my pockets, and I don't mean under misdirection. I, personally, want to be able to make the magic happen. I don't want to be reaching into my pocket to get items, or picking them up from the table. I understand that this is also necessary but wish to limit it. My line was "now if these coins keep appearing, I'm going to be in trouble with the Franklin mint, so I'll make the next one appear the old fashioned way. " Pause, hand openly reaches into pocket (not as weak as it sounds) 😊.

#### ADVANTAGES

1. If you used two, and had them pinned side by side they wouldn't "clank" together due to them being made of plastic. Also, it's noiseless due to this and the felt pad.
2. It's made to take either half dollar or dollar size. This is a major selling point. It only takes a small adjustment and involves sticking the foam and felt pad into the coin recess. Thus limiting the size to take half dollars. You can quite easily change it back again.
3. Quick change. If you've bought two, as I did, instead of faffing about with the afore mentioned bits of foam/felt. You can set each one up and interchange them via the Quik Klip as and when they are needed. basically the coin holding part clips off and can be carried separately. this removes most of the hassle of re-attaching it back. Snap and it's done. That said, I wouldn't leave it attached when you sent it to the dry cleaners.
4. Can be attached to the underside of a table (in advance). They also stock another version specifically for this.
5. Easy to take/drop the whole load.

#### DISADVANTAGES

1. Hard to take individual coins (when attached to clothing). In practise yes, in performance 😞. I don't feel comfortable going to take them singly. Would probably be easier if solidly under a table, but surely there are easier ways of setting up individual coins to be stolen. In fairness though, I don't know if it was originally designed to take coins individually, and there are other droppers (aforementioned) that are also limited in this way.

### The Silva Universal Coin Dropper (cont.)



2. If you are moving around and only have 2 half dollar coins loaded, then you might lose them. I was tempted to convert it slightly to allay this. Which involves cutting down into the groove slightly, where the pen is pointing (so the elastic band is pulled into it) where it meets the flap and also cutting down the sides of the flap itself, so the flap is pulled into the coin recess, a little bit more.

3. Flap is quite thin at the joint, which enables it to, well....., flap, but this shouldn't be a problem in normal usage.

4. Plastic so no extremes of temp. would become brittle at low temperatures. Not really a problem though, unless you were an arctic performer 😊.

The spiel says:

*This is a very versatile prop that will allow you to use 4 silver dollars, 4 to 5 fifty cent pieces, or English pennies with the conversion kit included.*

Yep, totally true. It really is universal. But of note, as with some of the other droppers shown, is that if they are soft coins you may squeeze an extra one in there. I can get 6 Liberty halves in, but would advise 5.

*Light- weight black impact resistant polyurethane, this finish will not peel.*

I'll go with that one.

*It can be attached to your tail coat or jacket to execute smooth & deceptive body steals.*

Oh yes, definitely, they forgot to put the word easy in there as well.

*The pressure used to slide the coins into the hand can be adjusted based on your preference.*



True, you tighten the elastic band up by winding it around the screw (technical stuff 😊). Shown here.

I can imagine somebody down their local club showing this around to a few of the younger guys and everyone saying, "Wow!!! I must go out and get one." Whereas there will be a few of the older guys thinking, "well my ones lasted me twenty years, and still going strong, so I think I'll stick with that."

It does it's job very well, but take a look at what else is available before you make up your mind. It comes down partly to what load space you are looking for, but it definitely has some advantages.

Of note, they also make one for a large 3 inch coin. It looks like it only holds one, but then again how many do you need? I couldn't find a coin dropper on the net that held this size to compare it with. If I used a large coin, I would probably purchase it.

#### OVERALL

Great bit of kit. It performs well. Am happy with my purchase, I have, and will continue to use.

**The Silva Universal Coin Dropper (cont.)**

**WITH THANKS**

Various pictures have been used in this review. These were used with the express permission of Leonardo Silva and I thank him kindly for it. I'd also like to say cheers Jon for your editing.



*By Jason Waskett*

I'd like to thank all contributors this month for yet another fascinating edition of TopHat. We'll see you all next month with more great articles and until then, we hope to see you on the forums.

All the best,  
Jon Snoops  
*MagicBunny.co.uk*