



MagicBunny.co.uk

TopHat

March 2006...

...48th edition

By Jon Snoops



Here it is, the 48th edition of MagicBunny.co.uk's exclusive ezine for magicians, TopHat. We're just off the back of Blackpool... but maybe I'd best not go into that as I'm sure you're sick of hearing about it! So what's in this month's edition then?

We start off with another of Peter Marucci's twists, on a packet trick. Of course, it contains all the terrible puns we come to expect! It's just a quickie but I can tell that it's one of those that will be well received in performance.

The second article this month is another from Steven Goodwin (MB member: Steev) who talks within his field on ways in which we could incorporate our PC's into our magic. Obviously well-versed in technology, Steve goes into detail on methods of input, output and performance. Not to mention that next month he'll be supplying us with a practical application of the ideas presented in this month's edition so look out for that.

Bruce Graham takes a leap across the void into the realm of card magic and presents us with a great self working version of the lie detector card effect. This would fit very well into a psychology-themed act.

Michael L's series on PA systems also continues, this month looking at purchasing the kit you'll need for your sound. He goes into what you need, what you don't and where to get it. Michael also supplies us with a mini (though still rather extensive) glossary of terms that you should be familiar with if considering buying a PA system for magic use.

Tam's series continues on his first cabaret act experience. He gives us many of the notes with which he planned and organized what needed to be done on the day and before to make the show a success. If you haven't yet read his previous parts to this series, now is a good time since his experiences will prove extremely helpful and interesting.

Coming to the end of the ezine, Gary Scott talks about one particular aspect of Blackpool and of becoming a great magician: dedication to the art. His words are spot-on and, although they may seem a little harsh, are intended to give a light kick up the ass to those who may have slipped into a rut in their magic. Gentle encouragement as it were.

And finally, to round it all off, we have a sample chapter from a new novel written by Daniel Wade Mathis. This is a little light reading, to wind down the ezine this month with a magic spin on it. It's very weird... but I *know* that there are some reader who will get a kick out of it.

So all that's left to say, is enjoy...

All the best,
Jon

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Serial Killer

Serial Killer...

...a packet trick interlude

By Peter Marucci



EFFECT

Six cards are shown and the spectator selects one. When they are all turned face up, the five unselected cards are the same and only the spectator's card is different.

WORKING AND PRESENTATION

You'll need six blank-faced cards. On each of three, glue a picture of a gangster. On each of the other three, glue a bowl of cereal.

Spread the six cards out, face down, and have a spectator point to just one card (free choice).

Slide the selected card, still face down, out of the spread.

If it comes from the left side of the spread, put the three at right UNDER the two at left; if it comes from the right side of the spread, put the three at left UNDER the two at right.

Square the packet and turn it face up.

Show five cards to be the same, using the Hamman count. They can be all gangsters, in which case the spectator's card will be a bowl of cereal; or they can be all cereal bowls, in which case the spectator's chosen card will be a gangster.

In either case, the story line and punch line will be similar:

The spectator is playing the part of a detective, on the trail of a killer. Out of six suspects, she chooses one as the guilty party. Five – not chosen – are the same and, that is to say, innocent. The sixth one is different and is the guilty party.

Serial Killer (cont.)

Turn over the last – sixth – card and it will show a bowl of cereal (if the other five are gangsters) or a gangster (if the other five are bowls of cereal).

"And so, you have caught the criminal – a notorious 'cereal killer'."

Run for the door!

SECOND THOUGHTS

Before you dismiss this too quickly, try it with an audience.

It may read a bit "flat" and obvious but – I can state from experience – it plays very well for a lay audience.

By Peter Marucci

Computers as Assistants

Computers as Assistants...

...technological magic

By Steven Goodwin



It is possible, with very simple software, to teach a computer how to "perform" some of the prediction tricks us magicians and mentalists take for granted. If it were possible to communicate peaked information or reading clues we as humans pick up, and transfer them to the computer, it would be possible for *it* to do the show for us! Computers are so common place, that an impromptu performance using a standard laptop can provide an interesting new twist on old ideas. This article demonstrates the feasibility of use a specially programmed computer, and the pitfalls involved.

FAKING THE INPUT

There are two basic input mechanisms for general-purpose computer-oriented magic: the keyboard and the mouse. Let's begin by examining the keyboard, as it has the greater scope for subtle input - most obviously - there are a lot of keys. And a simple application of the "Press Any Key" idea allows most cards to be mapped onto specific keys very easily. For example, if the first key press is on the left hand side it's a low card (using the row as an indication of the suit), whereas the right indicates a high card. We could also use Enter and Space to indicate court cards (of either the red or black persuasion.) The second key press then narrows these five cards down; again based on area. By using clumps of keys you eliminate the need to hit any specific letter, thereby making the "any" key principle appear more natural.

Naturally, by using such a large number of potential keys might suggest to your audience the general method of your sleight of, er, keyboard, although not the specifics. This is where the mouse scores highly. By using a simple interface with nothing more than a single "Next >>>" button on each screen would appear to eliminate all trickery in this area. This is not so. There are three basic methods I shall mention here that allow you to subtly pass information to the computer. However, they all require a specific program to be written, but any local computer geek should be able to implement such simple ideas very quickly, and are usually happy to be paid in pizza and cola!

The first mouse-oriented method is the simplest – you simply use the right mouse button. Most people *expect* the left button to do something, so when you press "Next" on-screen, they expect you to have legitimately used the left button because the program acted normally. You could alternatively use the middle one.

Secondly, if you make the "Next" button large enough, you can easily distinguish between a click on the left side of the button, and the right side. Or top and bottom. Or even on individual letters of the word inside it. With minimal practise it's possible to divide the button into sixths and hit the appropriate area every time without looking contrived.

Computers as Assistants (cont.)

The third, and final, technique is the most complex but also the most subtle. It is still relatively unknown outside the geek community and is called "mouse gestures." The essence of this idea is that by moving the mouse "left and down" you signal a gesture to the computer. This gesture carries a specific meaning, and is different to if you'd reached the same final position by moving the mouse "down and *then* left." This sequence of movements can be as large or as complex as you like, and can be combined with the left/right button click explained above. The mouse gestures can be monitored as they move towards the "Next" button, or as they cancel the screensaver.

You have a lot of scope to misdirect the input mechanisms because everyone that uses computers knows how frustrating they are. Computers break, slow down and (appear to) do the wrong thing all the time. So an extra wiggle of the mouse just looks like the mouse ball needs a clean. Or by introducing a comment about a stuck key will trigger the thought of "oh yeah, my machine does that, too."

PRODUCING AN OUTPUT

To iterate my favourite magic quote, "if you know 1 production, you know 1 trick. If you 100 productions, you know 100 tricks." There are several ways in which a computer can produce output to reveal a spectators playing card.

The screen is the obvious one. The card can be drawn directly, rendered to the desktop (and hidden by your magic application) or appear as the text on your (cleverly timed) screensaver. If you're working on a stage and can afford (and carry!) several monitors, it is possible to arrange them in either a row or grid formation to produce a much larger display. Or you can use one display for the trick's input data, and another for its output prediction, and make it appear as if they're two machines talking with each other.

With very simple, and cheap, software such as Festival the computer can also use speech output to banter with the magician and reveal the selection. Or, if used as part of a stage show, the computer can use the X10 protocol to control an external light to flash a certain number of times.

PROBLEMS AND PERFORMANCE PATTERNS

As magicians we're often so obsessed with the cleverness of techniques involved, we forget the audience, and what's clever to us is "just another trick" to them. When computers enter the equation a new host of problems appear; that is, because of its complexity, people are more likely to believe it's a trick. How can they not? The smaller the prop, the fewer the "moves", the less chance there is funny business. With a computer processing millions of instructions a second, the opportunity for trickery is increased. Furthermore, with the low cost of wireless networking nowadays, it may be difficult to convince the audience there's no accomplice spying on the chosen card and emailing it to your laptop. It's not enough to hide their selection from the computer, they must hide it from everyone. Anyone that remembers Penn and Tellers "most expensive card trick in the world" can attest to that. But as many know, relying on one person to remember their card can be troublesome.

It is also possible to incorporate software on a web page with either clever HTML or Java programming. Everyone has a favourite web browser, and trusts it implicitly. Therefore you can allay most fears by using a work colleague's machine connected to your web site. You could also use a spectator's laptop. But unless you hang out with a lot of computer geeks, the chance of finding yourself in this situation are very slim. Especially when you need Internet access.

But after all this is said and done, there remains one fundamental problem when using computers as assistants. They're computers. Anyone that suspects you achieve your results through a method, no matter how subtle or elaborate, will believe the computer is following the same method to reach its conclusion. Whatever is on-screen will be assumed as fakery, because most audiences are tech-savvy enough to know about the techniques of Photoshop on circular joke emails. This leads to two schools of thought: either program the computer so that the software-oriented gaff is completely natural and never suspected, or make it magically obvious as to instill the believe (fear?) that the computer really is working a miracle.

It is therefore essential that you obfuscate any methods with patter, or make the technique so complex that only a computer can manage it, but ultimately the user will still be looking for a method. So once again, the secret is in the presentation.

Computers as Assistants (cont.)

But you knew that anyway...

Next month we'll follow up on these ideas with a practical demonstration. I shall be supplying some software and a basic routine that demonstrates the principles behind a simple, but effective, mind reading effect. For magician and computer.

PS. Since writing this article the sharperminds.com website has come to my attention. The fact the site hasn't been updated since 2002, and the software hasn't been ported to other handhelds speaks volumes, I fear!

By Steven Goodwin

Lie Detector

Lie Detector... ...a card trick!?

By Bruce Graham

EFFECT

- After showing all the faces of a pack of cards, you and the spectator each shuffle approximately half a pack of cards, you exchange stacks, and shuffle again.
- They freely select a card from the offered fanned pack, remember it, and freely place back anywhere in the offered fanned pack.
- You get them to answer a question truthfully to gauge what truth "**sounds like**"
- Through a series of 5 or 6 questions / statements, you determine their card by figuring out when they are lying, and when they are telling the truth, leading to a reveal of their freely chosen card.

PRE-REQUISITES

- One pack of cards, any type.
- Small pad and pen/pencil.

RESET

About 30 seconds, out of sight of spectators.

SETUP

- The cards are stacked. I have only ever seen this once before, but it is incredibly simple. The only credits that I can give are T.C. Tahoe, who in turn credits Al Forewood.
- Stack all the 24 "**Round Tops**" (2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, Q) together, and all the 28 "**Flat and Pointy Tops**" (1, 4, 5, 7, J, K, A) together. Place one packet on top of the other. Replace in box.

WORKING

- Get the cards out of the box, and fan or spread the deck, showing they are mixed, which they are,in a manner of speaking ; -)
- Split at the point where the change happens, and give them one or other to mix. You do the same and then swap and repeat. Place the two mixed packets together. You have mixed them, but not changed the stack.
- Fan the cards face down in front of the spectator, but only fan the "top" 20 or so. Get them to pick "any" card, remember it. Collect the pack together while they are doing this, and then get them to replace the card into the pack, (fanned again), but only fan the lower 20 or so cards.
- Collect the cards up, and spread the pack, face-up, on the table.

Lie Detector (cont.)

- **Their chosen card will be obvious. As you had the card returned to the bottom, it will be near the top when the deck is spread, and easily spotted.**
- **From here on, it is all presentation.....**
- Walk away, and ask them, "**Can you see your card in the pack in front of you**". They will answer "Yes", which is truthful. You "mentally record" the sound of their voice on your pad.
- Now take the cards, shuffle, get them to shuffle, or whatever. Ask questions which are unrelated, related, bizarre, about cards, about colour, get them to show you cards, whatever fits into your routine.

EXAMPLE ROUTINE

Imagine the card is the (flat-top) 5S which you have spotted amongst the round-tops

- 1) "**This is the only time that you need to be truthful. Can you see your card in front of you?**" - YES, (scribble something in your pad)
- 2) Walk back to them, gather the cards, get them to shuffle, then select a card. Show it, and ask "**Is your card this colour?**" - whatever they answer ask "**So is your card lower than 6?**"
- 3) "**Remember - I can lie as well as you, is your card the 8H?**" - after they answer, scribble something down.
- 4) "**So, your card is definitely between 4 and 7**", (I lay money that they will say "No" at this point - but it doesn't matter anyway)
- 5) "**Your card IS black though, isn't it?**"
- 6) "**Would I be close if I said that it was the 5 ofHearts?**"

Then reveal, on the pad or a drawing.

THOUGHTS AND RAMBLINGS:

- After the "Truth Assessment", do it blindfolded with a routine about "poker face" etc.
- T.C. Tahoe suggests that this could be done using a pendulum reading.
- Performer explains that salesmen go out to with clients a lot to get to know them, as it helps in the later stages of negotiation as you have a good idea whether they are telling you the truth or not.

By Bruce Graham

Being Heard Part III

Thoughts From Mid-West America... ...Being Heard Part III

By Michael L.



Alright! Let's grab a fist full of cash and buy some PA equipment! If you haven't read the last couple of articles then you are way behind. You had better go read them now. I can't really do a summary because, after all, it took a couple of articles to explain it the first time! Now is everyone with me? Let's grab a hand full of cash and go buy some PA equipment!

If you haven't asked your loser musician friends for advice on a good musical equipment store yet, this is the time to do it. I know that there are some real deals out there on the Internet, but there are some real rip-offs too. You need some place trustworthy and knowledgeable to help you get the right equipment. Plus, a good music store will hook you up with setup information and make

Being Heard Part III (cont.)

sure you have all the little stuff you might forget. As an example, I recently bought a mandolin from what is probably the world's biggest music equipment web site. It was so cheap I couldn't pass it up even though I wasn't even looking for a mandolin! Along with the mando I picked up their beginning mandolin package, billed as everything I would need to start playing mandolin. I got the mandolin and it was a steal. The set included a strap (necessary to hold that stupid little thing up), a crappy electronic pitch generator, extra strings, a book and even a DVD on playing the mandolin. Everything I needed to get started... except a freaking pick! (For y'all high brow Europeans, 'pick' is a hillbilly term for the plectrum.) Even though I don't play guitar and had never played the mandolin before, I had dozens of picks laying around (occupational hazard) but it still kind of annoyed me. I didn't get *everything* I needed after all!

Before you go shopping take a minute to review your needs. How much of an audience and how much space do you need to cover? Do you need a stand alone, portable unit? How much equipment do you have space and strength to deal with? Get as firm as an idea in your head as you can before you step out of the door. Don't forget to gather a list of additional equipment you may need... microphones, cables, adapters to run your MP3 or CD player into the equipment and whatever else you think you need. Now you are almost ready.

I'll end this article with a kind of mini-glossary of terms and equipment names divided into three categories: general stuff, things you might need and things you don't need. Before that, though, let me just run quickly over microphones. Remember: unless you are a mime, you need at least one microphone!

Microphones may or may not require power. If they do require power it may come from internal batteries or it may be supply from the amplifier. This is called phantom power and applies only to wired microphones. Microphones can be worn or held by hand and either style may be wireless. Hand held wireless mikes are often normal handheld mikes with a transmitter plugged into the bottom where the wire would normally attach. These are the only truly wireless mikes out there! Most wearable mikes, be they lapel mounted (aka lavalier) or earphone based have a wire that runs to a belt pack with holds the batteries and the transmitter. These wires are typically run under clothes to the belt pack, which is almost always in the small of the back. As a magician you must determine if this is going to cause you trouble! I'd hate to have that last dove production shoot your headset off your head, but it could happen. There are several different ways microphones actually collect sound. It isn't worth it to learn about them because vocal tone is not nearly as important to a speaker (meaning a talking person, not a cabinet pumping out wicked bass) as it is to a singer. There are several different patterns of mike sensitivity, though, and that gets important. These patterns describe the area around the microphone that it effectively picks up sound, although the distance will vary with each microphone. Cardioid patterns are shaped like Valentine's Day hearts with the mike in the butt-shaped part at the top and are extremely common in vocal mikes and will be your first choice in a wearable mike. Omnidirectional mikes grab in a large circle and are not the best suited for a performer's mike but may work for a mike to be shared by a small group, like your volunteers. Figure eight, or bidirectional, are not to be considered. Uni-directional or 'gun' mikes collect sound from a thin wedge extending from the end of the mike like a flashlight beam. This is a great pattern for magicians using handheld mikes. Shotgun mikes, however, tend to describe microphones with a larger pick up area and are better suited from trying to capture the referees on a football field than your magic act. Telescopic mikes are specialty microphones, as are proximity mikes, and just plain will not work for you!

Now I am going to dive into the list of terms. If you have any questions feel free to PM me through Magic Bunny or e-mail me at brownbagmagic@swbell.net

GENERAL TERMS

- Watts: literally, a measurement of work done that is expressed in... no matter; most units will measure their output power in Watts which is not technically a measure of sound, so Brand X's 50 Watt amp may not be as loud as Brand Y's 50 Watt model.
- Impedance: this is how much something loads down an electronic system; speakers all have impedance ratings that must match an amplifier's impedance load and multiple speakers can raise or lower the total impedance depending on how they are wired together! This is where that trusted music shop advice comes in!
- Ohms: often symbolized with an upside horseshoe, this is the unit of measure for impedance.
- Channels: a channel is an input path in an amplifier.
- Equalization (EQ): these are tone controls and may take the form of knobs, sliders (graphic EQs) or even

Being Heard Part III (cont.)

	computerized controls.
RMS:	a method for determining power output... not really important.
Peak:	when used with Watts this denotes the absolute limit of output.
Stereo:	sound on two sides.
Mono:	sound on one side.
XLR:	a three pronged connector that is used for most microphones.
1/4 inch:	the diameter of a common 'bayonet' style connector in music.
Speak-on:	a four wired connector used with speakers; these can be wired many ways and your connectors must be wired correctly for your amp and speakers!

Things You Might Need

Phantom:	or phantom power is electricity running through an amplifier's mike connections to power microphones; make sure that you amp supplies the correct voltage if you use phantom power!
Bass:	tone control adjusting lower frequency response.
Mid-range:	or simply mid, controls the middle frequencies.
Treble:	controls higher-end frequencies
Aux In:	a place to put sound in an amp that skips most pre-amp controls; this may be where your CD player is plugged in.
Insert:	basically like Aux In.
Footswitch:	a control that allows channel switching and other simple functions to be operated via buttons the performer steps on.
Ext Speaker:	a connection for an additional speaker in a combo unit .
Mute:	silences the entire amplifier with a single button .
Line Out:	allows an external system (like a house PA) to use the signal from your unit and allows you to still make adjustments with your pre amp controls.

Things You DON'T Need

Reverb:	the first in a long list of sound effects that you don't need; may include spring, digital, electronic and so on.
Chorus:	another sound effect you don't need to pay for; also octaver, wah, flange, doubler, echo, tremolo and anything listed with these words!
Tuner In:	an insert for instrument tuning equipment.
Effects Loop:	a set of jacks that allow external sound processors to be added.
Effects:	aka digital effects aka onboard effects, etc. a blanket name for reverb, chorus and the like..
Tubes:	tubes are great; I am paying my mortgage because of tube amplifiers but they are 100% unnecessary for a magician's show! No tubes in anything, ever period!

By Michael L.

Developing a Cabaret Act Part III

Developing a Cabaret Act...

...Part III: Planning & Preparation

By Tam McLaughlin



PLAN

As it was proving difficult trying to keep track of everything I had to do for the show, I prepared a plan that included the details of each routine and preparations for the show such as where each prop should be placed: what should go into each pocket and duration of each effect.

Developing a Cabaret Act Part III

The plans were as follows:

DETAILS OF EFFECTS

Splash Bottle	
Plot	Enter stage right to music: Oasis - Champagne Supernova, face front, blow up balloon (3 puffs), take out knife, burst balloon, bottle of champagne appears.
Required:	gimmick, bubbly, knife, 2 balloons. Music queued
Duration:	1.5m

Appearing Straw	
Plot	Talk about getting a McDonald's and straw too big
Required:	McDonald's food bag with straw inside
Duration:	2m
Notes:	Consider applause card after effect: 30s

Bill in Kiwi	
Plot	Get 2 volunteers. Ask for £100, then £50 settle for £10. Exchange for kiwi. Money forged, bill switch
Required:	TT, kiwi *2 (spare), dummy bank note
Duration:	3 minutes
Notes:	Do I ask for volunteers to help recreate specific moment in history now or after effect?

Knife Thru Jacket	
Plot	Recreate William Tell arrow through apple: KTJ
Required:	paper picture of apple, knife, apple, 2 volunteers
Duration:	5 minutes
Notes:	extra bits of lining

Balls over Head	
Plot	paper ball disappears when volunteer tries to guess which hand
Required:	toilet roll: good make :)
Duration:	5m
Notes:	mouth coil if spec spots ball

Developing a Cabaret Act Part III (cont.)

Knickerbocker	
Plot	Divine colour of knickers worn by spectators
Required:	5 permanent markers, 5 sheets cardboard, assistant to collect pens.
Duration:	6m
Notes:	Important to handle volunteers correctly

Bill in Kiwi	
Plot	Suddenly remember about spectator who lost his £10, now holding kiwi to come on stage
Required:	spec kiwi, my kiwi and knife
Duration:	2m

PREPARATIONS FOR THE SHOW

Tasks to be done in the morning of show
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare straw
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy fresh apples and kiwi
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure CD player and mp3 player have fresh batteries

Tasks to be done at hall in afternoon of show
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put up table and cover table with black cloth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave bubbly in props case
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setup microphone system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with Brian, music to be played during show

Tasks to be done just before the show	
Item (loads)	Jacket
Marker	TL outside pocked
Apple	RH Outside pocket at the back of the pocket
KIWI	RH outside pocket at the front of the pocket
Knife	LH inside pocket: handle up: transfer to RH inside pocket after production
Bottle	loaded on LHS of body
Balloon	in right hand

Developing a Cabaret Act Part III (cont.)

Item	Trousers
TT (loaded with fake note)	RH trouser pocket
Mouth coil	RH trouser pocket
Items on Main Table	
5 sheets cardboard, my sheet off to side	
spare balloon, spare marker	
Box with loo roll	
Target with picture of apple	
McDonalds bag with straw, loosely taped shut	
Small table out front	
Other	
Small table out front	
Good luck kiss from Clare	

Well, sorry that this month's installment may seem like a bit of a jumble. But it's these planning stages that make sure things run smoothly on the day. Hopefully this may give you some idea of what's involved. Next month I promise that we'll look at scripts of the different effects, and finally in the last issue, onto the show itself.

By Tam McLaughlin

Dedication, Desire... and a Will to Win!

Dedication, Desire...
...and a Will to Win!

By Gary Scott



This may not be the longest article ever written in a Top Hat as I am writing under difficult circumstances which I will explain at the end, but I thought I would share my thoughts on my personal highlight of the Blackpool convention 2006... and it all happened on the Friday night...

Will Houstoun wins the British Magical Close-up Championship.

Now this is total inspiration on many levels:

- Will is a good friend of mine and we share the magic.
- I witnessed the dawn of that act in its infancy, watching it grow and become championship calibre material.
- Inspires me to get my sleight of hand to an unprecedented level at which its never been.

I first met Will Houstoun over a year ago, just before Blackpool 2005 if I recall correctly, at a London-based magic meet. I was impressed as hell with his Cannibal Kings routine, deck-vanish and superb table passes and flourishes. We met again at Blackpool 2005 and hit it off pretty well... over the past year we have met several times when we could, with Will even watching and ripping apart my Fakini routine for 8 hours

Dedication, Desire... and a Will to Win! (cont.)

straight. I also performed with Will on several shows that I've put on myself.

With a magic friend like Will, it was only fair that I support him in his quest to become British Close-up Magic Champion... and so I took that fateful plane ride to Blackpool to support my friend and share the desire.

The act was a complete triumph. Solid, hard-hitting, visual magic from the very beginning. But what did it take to get it there?

Will is the most singular dedicated magician I have ever come across. I know that he spends some 20 hours straight on a single move or routine... and that is what it takes: dedication. It's something very few magicians have and are very complacent in what they do. If we are to look at ourselves objectively, are we approaching our magic with the same desire and dedication as Will?

I have needed to meet a magician like Will for a very long time. To feed me a new desire in sleight of hand. To give my magic new purpose. That new purpose is to make my magic as hard-hitting as possible. A complete visual rush. This is the reason I got into magic. To be as good as I could be and I don't think I've been doing all I can to take those next steps. I need to sit down, open those books and become a magic student again and I'm really looking forward to it.

Over the past 3 years, I've become complacent and fallen into the 'trap' of real world work. I may be able to hold a crowd at a table or perform to them in a theatre setting, but my magic is not as it could be and it makes me feel like I'm cheating my audience and not giving them what I could. Yes, we can all do spongeball routines. Yes we can all do a card force. Yes we all know how the invisible deck works. But what would happen if, by a mere gesture, we could change 3 silver dollars into 3 Chinese coins. Cleanly and convincingly. No extraneous motions... just a wave of the fingers. No basic sleights, mastering some real-hardcore knuckle busting stuff... with everything looking like 'real' magic. Can any of you reading this actually claim to be able to do this?

According to the File Sharing forum on Magic Bunny it is few and far between.

And this may be a wake-up call you all need... just like myself.

Somewhere along the way, I forgot why I got into magic... and that very simple reason is to perform the impossible. Once you have been in the presence of a true master of sleight of hand, you realise that your so-called *dedication* is not all it is. I am currently typing this... and it's taken longer than expected because of some very difficult conditions... I'm classic palming 2 coins in each hand as I do.

Thank you Will, for changing my outlook on magic forever...

Congratulations on your win. It was well-earned!

Siya all on Magic Bunny.

Best wishes,

Gary Scott

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on...

...an excerpt from an unpublished novel

By Daniel Wade Mathis

Ruth saw the sign first.

"Mommy, Mommy, can we go see the magic show? Please, Please, Please Mommy can we see the magic show?"

Charlene looked at her daughter and smiled.

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on (cont.)

"The sign says there is a fire breathing Dragon on display inside. I don't think we should go in there."

Ruth looked at her with the pleading eyes of a child determined to get her way.

"Mommy, I peeked inside when we were standing near here earlier today. There is NOT a fire breathing Dragon inside. It is a Magic Show. There is a small table covered with a white cloth on the stage. I saw a big, old top hat sitting on the table. I think maybe the Magician will pull a rabbit out of the hat. I've always wanted to see a real magic show Mommy. It's free Mommy."

Ruth had managed to say the magic words.

Charlene and her daughter were now walking briskly back towards one of the smaller tents attached to the most miserable looking creature she had ever laid eyes on. Ruth's mother was already frantically searching for her smokes before they were far enough inside to read the signs. Just as Ruth had promised, there was a sign inside the tent that said:

The Magic Show is Free

There was also another sign that read:

Ice Cream
For the Kids
☺Price Less☺

Charlene immediately shot a glance at Ruth. Ruth smiled back and said "Mommy, it's OK. I'm not hungry. I just want to see the Magic Show."

There were plenty of empty seats even though the tent was rather small. The whole place was about twenty feet in diameter. As in all of the tents Ruth and her mother had been in, this one had a wooden deck circling the interior. This one was so small and narrow that it was useless for providing additional seating. All that was up there were some rather bizarre statues of small monkeys playing flutes. Charlene tried not to look at them too long, for some reason they made her uneasy. What was adorning either side of the stage was truly grotesque; yet, easier to look at than the monkeys. From what Charlene could tell they were supposed to be Pygmies. They looked so real she would almost swear that they were stuffed. Why their hands were missing was something of a mystery, not to mention the crude manner in which their mouths had been sewed shut. Their cheeks were all fat and round like they had just taken an immense breath right before the suture's had sealed their lips forever. Charlene wondered. "What kind of sick bastard would put that in front of a stage for a children's magic show?"

"What the hell" Charlene thought... "It's free and I can smoke in here." Ruth seemed content enough, and that was a good thing. Charlene had already decided that they would go home right after the show was over. This would be as much as she could take for one day.

Little Ruth was being unusually still and quiet. She was intently studying a small piece of old parchment she had picked up on the way inside the tent. Charlene knew it was a bit risky to not examine whatever her daughter was looking at, but she was tired of being eternally vigilant. This place had a way of wearing down a person's defenses after spending a whole day here.

Ruth hadn't written anything on the card yet. She did manage to find a small charred stick on the floor she could use later. The parchment hadn't even been used yet. Ruth was happy to have found a clean scorecard.

She would be very careful to fill it out. just right.

There was already one thing she could mark before the Magic Show even started. There was a circle drawn on top of a cone. Ruth marked a big X through it. She thought once again to herself the magic phrases that got her inside the tent and into a seat. "It's free Mommy." . "It's OK Mommy, I'm not hungry." Ruth's thin, small lips quivered into an almost evil smile.

At last the Magician appeared on the stage. He looked older than Methuselah. Ruth was pretty sure

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on (cont.)

Methuselah was dead, if not this was probably really him. The Magician didn't look weak or frail. He did look old, ancient and weathered just like the mountains nearby.

Charlene was well into her first smoke when she began to ridicule the old magician in her mind. "This guy is boring as hell . no wonder the show is free. Probably just uses it as a scam to sell overpriced ice cream to kids, how typical."

Ruth was watching intently as the Magician waved his wand and tapped the old top hat three times. He said "Typical Temporal Drag on Drag on Drag on" Ruth laughed silently at the simple word play knowing in her heart that it was deadly serious in its intent.

The Magician then began the arduous task of actually pulling the rabbit out of the hat. This particular rabbit was not coming out without a fight.

Charlene felt a small prick on the side of her neck as the first ice shard penetrated her soft flesh and quickly dissolved into her bloodstream. Ruth was very still and barely caught a glimpse of the monkey reaching into a pouch to pull out a shard to insert into its flute. She knew the strange protrusions on the bottom of the pouch were fingers. She just knew it. Ruth had a sense for such things being the good little Witch that she was. Ruth never actually even saw the monkey blow the shard into her mommy's neck but she definitely heard the "pufft" sound as it began its flight. The little trickle of blood slowly working a path down Charlene's fair skin told Ruth everything she needed to know. Ruth reached up and gently kissed her mother's neck as to prevent the new silk blouse she was wearing from becoming stained.

"Thank you Mommy. I love you Mommy."

Ruth felt a little twinge of guilt at the perverse pleasure she received from the salty, metallic mixture of her mother's sweat and blood, coupled with her schoolgirl like infatuation with the Magician. For the most part Ruth was just pleased as pie that she had enough self-discipline to wait until the end of the day to bring her mother here. If Mommy wasn't a little tired and stressed it might not work out the way that she had hoped.

Charlene felt something bite her neck. "Damn mosquito." She didn't have time to swat at it as her daughter was reaching up to give her a very loving kiss, thanking her for be a good mommy and giving in, as usual. She looked at her watch as the Magician began reaching into the old top hat. It was five o'clock sharp. As the old man began the seemingly mundane task of extracting the rabbit Charlene began to feel a little strange. Time was slowing down. She wasn't the least bit groggy. It was quite the opposite. Every second ticked by as if it were a minute. Every minute seemed as if it were an hour. A hour was a little less than an eternity. Charlene's focus was entirely upon the magician and what was transpiring between him, the old hat and the rabbit. She could not look away, except to look at her watch.

At first nothing happened. The hand went into the hat and began the telltale motions of searching for something inside. This went on for a minute or two. Charlene watched the process in excruciating detail for what seemed like an hour. At least an hour. More like two hours. Not only was she watching, she was also entrained with the mind of the old man in a way she had never before experienced. She felt exactly like a fish that had swallowed the bait and had absolutely no hope of getting the hook out. It was set that deep. There was nothing left to do except fight the battle to the death. The battle the fish knows it will never win, yet fights with all of its strength out of sheer instinct. If Charlene tried to look away from the stage her head jerked back around violently, as if an invisible hand had grabbed her by the face.

Little Ruth laughed as the Magician's arm was pulled into the hat up to his armpit. He than began the slapstick routine of attempting to extract his arm and whatever it was that he had gotten a hold of inside the dark silk interior. Back and forth the battle raged on. Ruth thought it was quite hilarious. She made a point not to look at her mother. A little more time needed to pass before she would feel confident that it was safe. To much preparation had gone into this for her to mess it all up by risking a little peek. Fifteen minutes was what she had decided upon and she was determined not to violate her own little rule. Finally the Magician put both arms into the hat and pulled with all of his might. Two somewhat mangy looking ears emerged. The Magician spread them apart and said "Can you ear me now?" Ruth's mouth quivered into a smile, knowing that the comment was directed at her mother. This was going to be better than she had ever believed possible.

Upon hearing the words of the old man, Charlene rose from her chair and screamed. "You Son of a" "Pufft, Pufft" two more spots appeared on Charlene's neck and she immediately sank back into her chair.

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on (cont.)

Ruth could hear a faint echo of what her mother was experiencing due to the sweet kiss on her mother's neck as the show was beginning. The voice was extremely faint, yet extraordinarily clear. "The Automated Restraining system has been activated. Please remain seated for the duration of the show. The Rest Training System has been activated. Prepared to be trained for the rest of the show in proper etiquette and manners. This is not a drill. Be glad for that!"

Ruth was taken a bit by surprise; however, she quickly examined her score card.

There was an eye, a megaphone and a big smiley face. She circled the megaphone and drew a bar through it. "No Screaming Allowed, Mommy." The thin lips quivered once more. Ruth glanced up at her mother's eyes. She might have to wait awhile on this one.

The old man looked directly at Charlene as she sank back into her chair. Suddenly her head jerked up violently and she was staring directly at the small table and the old top hat once again. The gruesome sound of bone breaking pierced Charlene's ears. "Can you hear me now?" echoed through her mind. The old man let out a guttural sound as he ripped the rabbit's leg off at the hip. He had to stretch the fluffy skin considerably before the fur began to turn an ugly red and the leg broke loose. He held it so Charlene could see it clearly. He held it there for at least a minute before taking a bite. A bit of raw, bloody muscle tissue was clinging to his chin as he threw the rest over to the side of the stage. An old hound dog hidden in the shadows began to tear into the leg with contentment. Without any conscious thought Charlene reached into her purse and found her smokes. As she took the first puff off of her second cigarette a quiet voice entered her mind chanting. "Puff the magic drags on., puff the magic drags on., puff the magic drags on. " Charlene knew that smoking was making things worse yet the habit was so ingrained in her that the hand crept knowingly to her mouth time and time again. She had about half a pack left. It was going to be a very, very, very, very, very long magic show. A single tear slipped out of the corner of her left eye and began its journey to mingle with the drying trickles of blood on her neck. She was beginning to sweat profusely due to a variety of things. The nicotine entering her system was making the sweating worse and beginning to make her nauseous.

Ruth laughed as the Magician pulled a roasted turkey leg from the old top hat and took a big sloppy bite from it. There was still a piece hanging from his chin as he returned her thin evil smile with a huge grin and a wink from one eye. Ruth hadn't even noticed the old hound but was happy when he got a nice treat. She missed the single tear rolling down her mother's cheek. Ruth was sitting on her mother's right side.

Charlene watched the old man plunge his arm deep into the hat for the second time. Once again a mighty battle ensued. His elbow would emerge from the top of the hat only to be yanked violently back into the deep silk unknown. In and out. In and out. In and out. The old man was deep into Charlene's mind and when he tried to go into that most private part of her psyche she rebelled. Another "Pufft" and she settled right back down. "Just sit back, relax and enjoy the show" softly undulated through her mind. She briefly saw a cowboy hat instead of a top hat on the table. Who knows why.

Charlene looked at her watch. It took a full count of sixty in her mind for one second to tick off. Quickly that invisible hand grabbed her by the face and jerked her head straight ahead to become entrained with the small table, the top hat, the rabbit and the Magician. The see-saw battle was still in full swing. The old man's arm was beginning to look like something had been gnawing on it, the sleeve to the jacket of his formal tuxedo, with long tails, showed red in the places where the rabbits teeth had managed to puncture the fabric. He had a white shirt on underneath the coat, the kind with fancy ruffles running down the front. The ruffles were smeared with blood and entrails.

Once again the old man plunged both arms into the dark interior of the hat. This time he had the demonic bunny by the throat. Charlene watched in horror as the Magician plucked out an eye with his thumb. The old man's nails were long, thick, and black with dirt. The tissues that normally held the eye firmly in place inside the rabbits head were dangling from the eyeball as the Magician plopped it into his mouth and began to make it peep out from between his teeth and lips with pushes from his tongue.

Charlene had gone into a catatonic stare. Ruth circled the eye on her scorecard and drew an arrow to the megaphone. "Eye Scream." Now she knew what an Eye Scream looked like. Ruth could look at Mommy as much as she wanted to at this point. Mommy was too far gone for anything to disturb her eternal moment of absolute terror.

I Scream for the kids.

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on (cont.)

Eye Scream for the kids.
☺Price Less☺

Ruth hadn't marked the smiley face on her scorecard yet, it would have been a bit premature. She laughed when the Magician plopped a couple of grapes into his mouth as he was battling with the rabbit. He was pushing them in and out of his mouth with his tongue. Ruth thought it was a little gross, but funny nonetheless. The rabbit looked fake, like a child's stuffed toy, the type she might sleep with at night. Both the rabbit and the Magician's shirt were stained, probably from the turkey leg he had pulled out earlier in the show. "Sweet dreams Mommy," Ruth thought silently to herself. "Sweet dreams."

Charlene saw the end of a rope poking out beneath the, not so white, tablecloth. The old man sensed her awareness and reached down for the coil of coarse rope. Tied to the end of the rope was an oversized fish hook. The Magician pulled a big carrot from inside his sleeve and impaled it with the hook so that it completely disguised the sharp barb on the end.

Charlene looked at her watch. She counted to sixty and the second hand finally went, "tick." When the rope began to pull through the old man's hands so quickly as to burn his flesh, Charlene thought she was going to vomit. The smell of burnt rope and skin was quickly replaced by a wet, squishy sound. The rope was wet with the blood of the old man's mangled hands, yet he held on with all of his will and began the slow, painful task of reclaiming the length of rope that had disappeared into the dark silky interior of the old top hat. The old man began making knots in the rope. It wouldn't be as easy to pull through his wet, bloody palms next time. What seemed like hours later, the head of the rabbit finally began to emerge from the top of the hat. The hook had entered through the top of the inside of the rabbit's mouth and had pierced through the top of the skull. The carrot was still covering the hook and gave the dead rabbit the look of a small mutant Unicorn, the bloodied carrot protruding from the forehead in just the right place.

Little Ruth thought it was a perfect Grande Finale, Tying a carrot to the end of a rope and catching the rabbit like a furry crawdad. The back and forth battle never grew monotonous as the Magician threw in enough twists to keep her attention. The red scarves he pulled from his sleeves were slimy and covered with catsup. It was a little gross but extremely funny. The Magician had made quite a mess of both himself and the table by the time the show was complete. Ruth could see that the rabbit had gotten the carrot; however the Magician quickly hid the rabbit from her view and gave a great bow.

The show was over.

Charlene was choking down her last smoke when she heard a quiet voice say "Mommy, we can leave now. The show is over. Mommy, can you hear me?"
Charlene's lungs hurt, her head hurt and she felt like she was going to vomit.
She snapped back at Ruth "Yes, I can hear you. Come on let's go."

As they were exiting the tent they both noticed something they hadn't seen on the way in, a large barrel with a big smiley face was sitting in the center of the exit. Charlene threw the crushed, empty pack she held in her hand into the barrel. The barrel was full of crushed empty packs that once held smokes.
Charlene grabbed Ruth's hand and began walking away from the tent at a somewhat uncomfortable pace.

Ruth thought to herself "I will have to mark the smiley face when I get home."

That evening Charlene went to bed early. Ruth pulled out her scorecard and drew a circle around the two black dots and the open arc beneath it. She then found a piece of scrap paper and made a face large enough to cover the lid of the kitchen trashcan. It was the round kind, with a little peddle at the base. When you pressed the peddle down the lid would flip open.

Charlene did not wake up until almost noon the next day. She rummaged through the fridge searching for something picky little Ruth would eat. All that she could find were some bananas that were beginning to turn black from the cold. Ruth saw the black skin of the bananas and said "I'm not hungry Mommy." Charlene stopped dead in her tracks. She went back to the fridge and opened the freezer and pulled out a carton of ice cream. Charlene placed a bowl in front of Ruth and dipped out two scoops. Ruth looked up at her with an icy stare prompting Charlene to rather forcefully slam another scoop on top of the first two. Ruth thought quietly "That's right Mommy they are the ancient, weathered type." and then began digging a hole in the side of one of the mounds on the bottom.

((Puff)) The Magic Drag on (cont.)

The carton was empty so Charlene walked over to the trashcan. She saw the smiley face on the lid and began to shake.

There was a single tear drop beneath the left eye.
Charlene dropped to her knees and began to cry.

Ruth got up from her chair and walked over her mother.
She gave Charlene a very gentle, loving kiss on the side of her neck.

"Thank you Mommy. I love you Mommy."

By Daniel Wade Mathis

My thanks to all of the contributors *and* readers who continue to make this ezine a pleasure to publish and read. Remember to send your contributions for next month's edition; the email's still TopHat@magicbunny.co.uk

Thanks,
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