

# Magic Bunny presents Top Hat



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Letter from...

...The Editor

*Michael Jay*

Nearly a year has passed since issue #6 was released and we've adopted a new way of deciding when to produce our future publications: When a member asks about the next issue. That may sound like a joke (and really it rather is), but it just seems to me that the best way to ensure that we have the support and interest, waiting until someone brings up the subject is the preferable way to go. At least that's the way that we did it this time around and the result was fantastic.

We have a corker of an issue for you. In this issue you will find a couple of stories, a couple of tricks, and some very useful instruction should you decide to try your hand at producing a magic DVD. Guest contributor Ian Adair shares a trick aimed squarely at kids. On the outside chance that you don't know who Ian Adair is, he has graciously contributed a short biography, too. Denis Shields, a Scottish magician specialising in kids shows, shares some thoughts in his freshman offering to Top Hat. Gary Scott writes about his experience on an airplane and Mark Williams tells of his trial and tribulations dealing with magicians from out of town. Steven Goodwin explains technical details of creating magic DVDs, an informative article to be sure. Joel Dickinson offers an excellent close up trick that will make you wonder why you spent so much money on all those different ring flights. Finally, Dan Cunningham gives us a fascinating look at the psychology of performing for strangers in a pub. (There is one other article, but I'll leave that for you, the reader, to find.)

Please feel free to e-mail me at [tophatv2@gmail.com](mailto:tophatv2@gmail.com) should you have any questions, comments, or criticisms in regard to this issue of Top Hat.

Enjoy!

Michael Jay

## Applause at 35,000 Feet...

...(or Thereabouts)

*Gary Scott*

For this edition of Top Hat I had two requests for two very different topics, but the mood for something a little different has taken me. So let me tell you a small tale of, quite literally, high adventure. A personal story that only a few people know about and to which only a few strangers were witness. What they observed, to them, was pure miracle. That may sound a bit presumptuous...but trust me...the best is yet to come.

It begins with my vacation to the USA in September of 2014. The trip consisted of myself and my partner (now wife) and Michael Jay, travelling to Las Vegas to meet Magic Bunny's own Mark Williams. During that time I also spent a week visiting with Michael Jay and his parents in their home. Now there's a big jump going from Las Vegas to Toledo, Ohio. About 3000 miles I do believe. That means only one thing. Getting between Las Vegas and Toledo would mean more time spent on planes. That's always good with me. Always liked planes. Always like flying. The plan was to leave Las Vegas for a week and return after a week of visiting in Toledo. It was standard fare for the outbound flight, with myself and Michael Jay sharing our very first plane flight together. The return to Las Vegas was a completely different experience...

A flight to Las Vegas, east to west coast, is approximately three and a half hours. These internal flights have only pay-per-view entertainment and luckily for me, this was one of those times I could sit back, relax, and enjoy the practise of magic. It's a good time to practise table work on a decent close-up mat. I purchased the smaller Trevor Duffy mat for precisely this kind of travel. So about an hour into the journey, after the first drink had been served, I got out a deck of cards and close-up mat, folded the tray-table down and off I went into my own little magic world. When I practise on these kind of trips, I usually do random stuff. A transposition here, a colour-change there. Riffle shuffles, card controls and even full routines get some work. And don't forget the good ol' ambitious card. After a good twenty minutes or so, I needed to sit back. I was hunched over the table with the tip of my forehead resting on the seat in front of me. Then something strange happened...

A round of applause filled the cabin. I looked around to see if any kind of celebrity had suddenly stood up and made their way to the rear of the plane to get to a restroom. I was wrong. Did somebody win the lottery? Did a doctor save somebody? Neither of those. The applause was for me and me alone. I was fortunate enough to be sitting in an aisle seat and approximately six rows of people had been getting a good vantage point for what I was doing. The guy sitting in

the opposite aisle seat blurted out, "You got to see this guy, he's amazing!" This was followed by numerous questions including the popular "How did you do that?" and "Are you a magician?" Then the two people in my row wanted to start an in-depth conversation. It was an interesting reaction to say the least. Here I am doing some real underwhelming stuff. No flourishes. No Hot Shot cuts. Just strong magic with clean technique.

For the first time in a very long time, I felt proud of the years of work I had put into my card skill set.

I felt proud to be a magician. So am I telling you this story for gloating purposes? Nope. I just wanted to let you know that magic is good anywhere, anytime as long as it's not intrusive or offensive (and to let my buddy Morgan Silver know that if he sat next to me on a plane, I *would* be shuffling cards).

Applause at 35,000 feet... Not bad eh?

Best wishes and I'll siya on the boards!

### **Did You Know?**

In his memoirs, Robert-Houdin credited vagabond magician Edmond De Grisy as his inspiration when Houdin was just a young boy. De Grisy, it is said, was jailed after a bullet catch went terribly wrong and his son died as a result. Upon being released from jail, De Grisy took his wife's maiden name as his performing name 'Torrini' and he traveled as the conjurer with a wagon caravan. Of worthy note is that modern historians can find no corroborating evidence that this man ever existed. He was a phantom of Robert-Houdin's own imagination; created just for his memoirs.

## The Gary Scott/Michael Jay Las Vegas Experience... ...How I Survived

*Mark Williams*

Anticipation isn't quite the right word I'm looking for...Exhilaration does not seem to be it, either. Perhaps trepidation is the closest I can come to describing the impending visit of two members from Magic Bunny. Gary Scott and Michael Jay embarked upon a journey to visit me, here in Las Vegas, in mid-September of 2014. I'm sure each of these gentlemen had valid reasons to make the trek. Yet, the fear inside of me welled up more than you can imagine. The question, "Why?" kept reoccurring in my mind, over and over again.

I want you to understand that when planning the specifics of this trip, I offered to host both Gary and Mike around the Vegas area and that's the sole reason this nagging question of "Why?" was prevalent in my mind. I was trying to figure out where to take them and which tourist destinations to visit. Since I was the one doing all of the driving, I also needed to plot out the logistics of getting from my house, to their hotel, and then making it there in time.

I certainly know my way around town and thought it would be an easy thing to do. But, oh no, Mr. Scott decided he would also like to plan his very own wedding while he was in Vegas. This was something I was not expecting. So, plans needed to be readjusted and I somehow became Gary's wedding coordinator. One day, we took a trip downtown to acquire the marriage license...Then a few days later the ceremony took place. Michael Jay was the Best Man and my wife and I were joyful witnesses.



Ah, but the story does not stop there. I somehow managed to take in a show at the Excalibur Hotel with Gary and his beautiful bride-to-be. Michael and Gary visited with me at my house and we later traversed into a remote part of the desert to Kabuki dance.



Next, was an adventure at Shark Reef inside Mandalay Bay, followed by a night out at Boomers to meet the venerable Gary Darwin. We took a mystical journey over to Jeff McBride's Wonderground. Then, of course, there was the wedding and multiple dining establishments that we plundered together. All of these activities took place within the span of just a few days and, believe me, I was tired.



So you might be wondering how I survived. Before I get to that, I almost forgot to mention that I injured my toe severely, limiting me just a bit. I must say that I have an instinctual need within myself to deliver upon every promise I make. I promised that I would take care of Gary and Mike while visiting. I did that. I also promised myself that no ill-will would befall either gentleman. I accomplished that. I promised to be a courteous host. I believe I made a valiant effort to do that. Lastly, I promised to make their stay in Vegas a memorable one. I suppose you would have to ask Mr. Scott or Mr. Jay for confirmation about that promise.

Friendship is how I survived, a simple little thing which means a great deal to me. Both, Gary Scott and Michael Jay are my friends. The trust I have in each of these fellows goes beyond the boundaries of our message board. There is a far greater respect between the three of us which is second to none. Oh, and if you really want to survive these two guys...It's beer for Michael Jay and food for Gary Scott.

### **Did You Know?**

Novelist Charles Dickens was considered a terrific magician by friends and family alike. He often performed at the request of fellow guests during the many private parties and functions that he attended. Dickens took the stage name Rhia Rhama Rhoos and it's believed that this choice was influenced by a performing magician of the day, Khia Khan Khruse. Nobody knows for sure why Dickens abruptly quit conjuring after 1849, but he still maintained a fascination for the art his entire life. Magic historian Ian Keable published a book on Charles Dickens' in 2014 and if you're interested in learning more about this fascinating history, you can purchase the book at [www.iankeable.co.uk](http://www.iankeable.co.uk)

## Sixty Years On...

## ...And Still Dealing With Kids Magic *Ian Adair*



Having retired from performing kids shows after sixty long years, I guess I have seen many changes over those years; changes in the children themselves – changes in magic dealing and changes in how we treat and deal with the young ones. Saying that, I haven't changed a bit. I am still devoted to the promotion and creative side of publishing and marketing brand new effects which are specifically designed for children's entertainment.

My first kids show took place in my home town in Kilmarnock, Scotland when I was a mere lad of ten years of age – not the best age to be presiding over children I think!

Back then, none of the magic dealers specialised in originating and marketing props for this branch of magic. I bought the odd effect from dealers such as Harry Stanley (Unique Magic Studio), Jack Hughes and Max Andrews (Vampire Magic.) It was only when I left my home town to join Edwin Hooper at his newly formed Supreme Magic Company in Bideford Devon that I became aware of an abundance of "Kids Magic" effects.

Edwin borrowed a couple of hundred pounds from his father which allowed him to launch the business. Over four decades the firm grew to a gigantic proportion, consisting of several huge buildings, over 80 employees, and some ten thousand products. Although magicians used to say that Supreme specialised in kids magic material, the firm produced hundreds of effects which covered every branch of magic under the sun. As a professional children's entertainer, Edwin Hooper knew what kids show performers wanted and went out of his way to please them. I was thrilled to be his right-hand-man and, over my 36 years with the firm, originated many kids effects and even demonstrated them at major conventions.

Although I have over one thousand marketed effects credited to me, these being manufactured and sold by various dealers worldwide, the one effect which became the best seller of all time was 'Dressing Doll'. This item was launched in 1962 and numerous batches were made over the years, with some 5,000 units being sold.

Fifty years on and I am still creating kids magic material, and my very latest effect, being manufactured by Practical Magic is, in my mind, even better. Jeremy LePoidevin of Practical



Magic says that this will be one of his 'best sellers' and if it doesn't sell, he's a Dutchman! (Perhaps his next email to me will be written in Dutch – who knows?)

So, please look out for it. It will be launched at the famous Blackpool convention (2015). I am keeping it 'hush' at this moment – but please don't miss it.

Over the last three years my thoughts have been directed towards writing, illustrating and producing some 13 books (out of 318 of mine which have been published over the years) which deal specifically with kids magic. There are thousands of new and novel kids effects described throughout the series and for those interested, please take time to view my website:

[www.ianadairsbooksonmagic.com](http://www.ianadairsbooksonmagic.com)

I have had the great pleasure of lecturing on kids magic at several major events, including Kidology and Trix in the Stix, and even presented a two hour lecture on the subject at the 2012 Fellow of Christian Magicians convention.

I have often been asked, "Where do the ideas come from and what methods do you use to concoct new, original effects?" Always difficult to answer on the spur of the moment, I made a point of writing a complete book which dealt with my methods of originating magic, kids magic included. It's titled "Thinking Tricks" and it has recently been published.

So, it is super contributing to this important magazine (I have a regular column in Kidabra Magazine) and if any readers fancy contacting me, my email address is:

[magicianadair@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:magicianadair@hotmail.co.uk)

I make a point of keeping in touch with as many children's entertainers as possible, including David Ginn (U.S.A.), Terry Herbert, and my old mate (who used to work at Supreme) John Kimmons.

In the next article you'll find an effect which I would like to pass onto all readers. I hope that you will not only like it, but will use it in your shows.



# Traffic Lights Paper Tear

*Ian Adair*

This is a colourful paper tear using a road safety theme.

**Effect:** Four pieces of coloured tissue paper are displayed. There's one long black piece and three smaller pieces; red, orange and green.

The performer talks about road safety and the traffic lights in particular. He holds up the first piece (red), asking the children what this stands for. He, of course, can state what it means himself, or can misname it. "*Red stands for GO!*" In fact, he can do this with all three coloured pieces.

The three coloured pieces are shown back and front, as too is the lengthier black piece. All are placed on top of each other and the performer tears these into smaller pieces. Screwing them into a ball, a magic wand is waved over this.

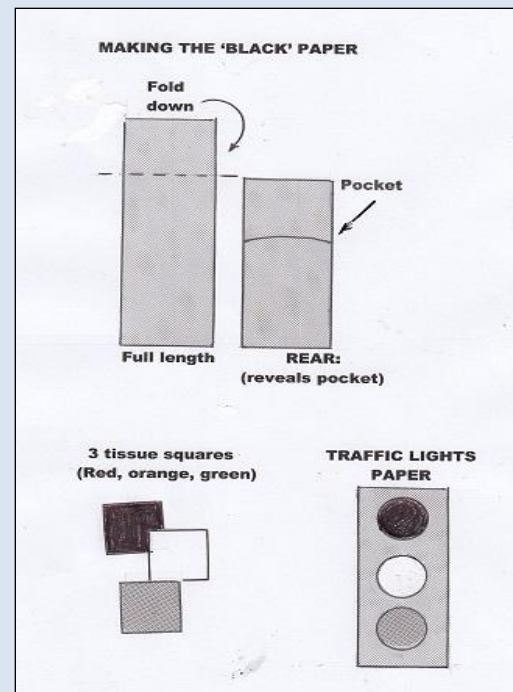
When opened, the pieces have magically restored themselves, a perfect facsimile of the traffic lights. The lengthier black piece becomes the shape of the traffic lights unit and the three coloured ones, now SPOTS...red, orange and green, run down the strip in correct order.

**Requirements:** Although the final traffic light paper can be used several times, the others (coloured tissue squares) have to be replaced for each show.

As illustrated, the set consists of a black strip which is longer than the others and has a secret pocket within it, such as used in 'Papers to Hat' type sets. Inside this pocket will be the final paper with spots attached. The final paper measures the same as the original black piece and three large spots (red, orange and green) are pasted on to its surface, running down the strip in correct order.

The remaining three pieces are square in shape (red, orange and green).

Have the black strip at the rear, with the three squares



on top, then fold in half. When making up sets, each can be banded using a strip of newspaper. This keeps each set complete, ready for removal from the case. Simply tear open the band and the set is ready to use.

**Working and Presentation:** The working is similar to that in many of the other 'tissues to' effects.

First talk about road safety and the traffic lights.

The tissue papers are displayed; first the black, which is casually shown on both sides. Now the three squares of different colours are shown.

Square up the smaller pieces and place these on top of the black one. Now tear in downward strokes until all the papers are torn. During this, the black pocket is torn open which allows the hidden traffic lights paper to come away. As you screw all the papers into a ball, do likewise with the traffic lights paper and keep this separate.

In going to a nearby container or hat, which holds the magic wand, ditch the torn pieces and keep the final balled-up tissue wad on display. Pick up the wand and wave it over the supposed torn pieces.

Open out to display the finished traffic lights.

### **Did You Know?**

Henry Hay, most famous for his book, "The Amateur Magician's Handbook," was born Barrows Mussey in 1912. He began his professional magic career at the age of 13 and in adulthood performed a costume act as 'Hadji Baba'. While he penned three other books under his assumed name of Hay, he also was a ghost writer and translator for other magic books. In 1952 he moved to Germany where he worked as a newspaper correspondent and remained until his death in 1985.

## Dealing... ...With Toddlers

*Denis Shields*

I wanted to talk about toddlers and how you can use them to enhance your show as opposed to interfering with it.

I have had a lot of positive comments from parents about how I manage them and from what they say it appears that some performers don't know how to deal with a wandering inquisitive toddler. I have heard of performers stopping the show until the kid is under control and even shouting at the kid or parent.

My aim is to remain calm under pressure (and you can be put under pressure with a persistent toddler) and to be as professional as possible at all times.

So how do I deal with them? Easy: I make them part of the show. If you do this and get it right you will be amazed at how many business cards you will get asked for after the show.

If a toddler wanders up while I am halfway through a routine, I just stop and stare at it (the child), this gets a laugh; sometimes I will say "What's that!" (another laugh); if it wanders back to the crowd I just carry on as though nothing happened. This can happen two or three times and I just repeat the stopping and staring. Other lines I will use are "That looks real" or "What is that? It's moving" or "Can someone take the batteries out of that" or "What are you looking for? A job?"

Sometimes it will just wander up and stop in front of you. Here you can do the winding up gag and if it toddles off after being wound up it will bring the house down. (Don't be afraid to give them a wee push in the right direction.)

If it tries to go behind my table I make sure I get there first and there is a piece of rope in there for this situation. I reach in for the rope and hand it to the kid and say "Here, give that to your mum and ask her to tie you to a chair" I then look up at the parent and say "Just for half an hour missus".

If the toddler does not go behind the table but the mum comes up to get it I will say "Is that yours, missus? Here's a rope. Tie it to a chair just for half an hour". It is amazing how many will actually reach out to take the rope which gets a laugh.

If it persists in going behind my table and I have to get on with the show I will locate the parent and say "Can you please try to keep 'it' out of there... Just in case he touches my knife or needles thanks" (this usually gets the parent up fast).

Another line I will use if I see a parent coming to collect it, is "Oh you're in trouble now, here's your granny coming".

If it has been coming up a few times and I feel I can get away with it I will bend down and say "Hoy, buzz off" or "You were funny at first but you're starting to annoy me now... buzz off" (in a fun manner of course).

When the parent comes up they usually pick it up and I will say "Oh look it can fly".

What I am trying to get across here is, make the wandering toddler part of your show and pretend you like it. This is their pride and joy and they all love it, pretend you do too and it will really pay off as I get asked for more cards any time this situation arises.

Oh and I always call the child "It" which seems to be humorous.

### **Toddler Assistant**

This is only for the very brave, but the rewards are tremendous: Asking a 2 year old to help with a trick. This can have a significant impact in your show and creates its very own dynamic which can be felt throughout the venue because no one knows how the child will react or what you are going to do. I do not involve them in anything complicated; I just have them hold a wand for a change bag routine or something similar.

If they have a wand and you open a change bag in front of them it is amazing how many times they will just drop the wand in the bag from which you can get a lot of humour as well. Look in the bag, look at the audience, take the wand out of bag and give to child. Chances are they will do it again.

This is just my way of dealing with toddlers and it works for me. I know others like to put up barriers or try to eliminate the threat in some other way and that is fine it if works for them.

Just don't end up being called the 'Stroppy Magician'.

## Snip-A-Sweet

*Denis Shields*

This was an idea that I read some time ago in an old "Club 71" magazine. Ian Adair credited Cedric Richardson for the original idea. It was a really nice bit of business with the 'Cut No Cut' scissors using a strip of Dulciora sweets.

I put it straight into my act and used it at every other. It seemed to play very well as it had a lot of built in comedy.

Unfortunately it became harder to get a hold of the sweets and I had to get them from Spain, but they became harder to get from there too. Also, they had gone up in price as well as being hard to find.

I now use this routine, which is the same basic routine I have used for years, but I no longer need the sweets. I have substituted them for a printed strip of sweets that can be printed off when required and I have added a clear view drawer box which makes the routine magical.

I sent my routine to Ian Adair and he liked it and kindly gave me permission to use it in my notes and here in Top Hat.

### Requirements

Sweet tab, strip of printed sweets, 'Cut No Cut' scissors (I use Bazar de Magia scissors which are great but won't cut paper), scissors (that do cut) and a clear drawer box (full of sweets). An idea is to change the sweets to suit the different festive times (for example at Christmas I use chocolate coins).

### Routine

"Who would like the chance to win some sweets? Excellent! Up you come. Here I have a box full of sweets and you get the chance to win some...But not yet." (Here you show the box full of sweets. Open to helper and then pull it away again. You then close it and put it on your table.)

"I have a big strip of sweets here and you get to cut them. Wherever you cut them that is how many sweets you get. Who thinks he will cut them here?" (Point scissors to bottom sweet.)

"Here?" (Move up to next sweet and continue to top when the audience will shout out 'YES!')

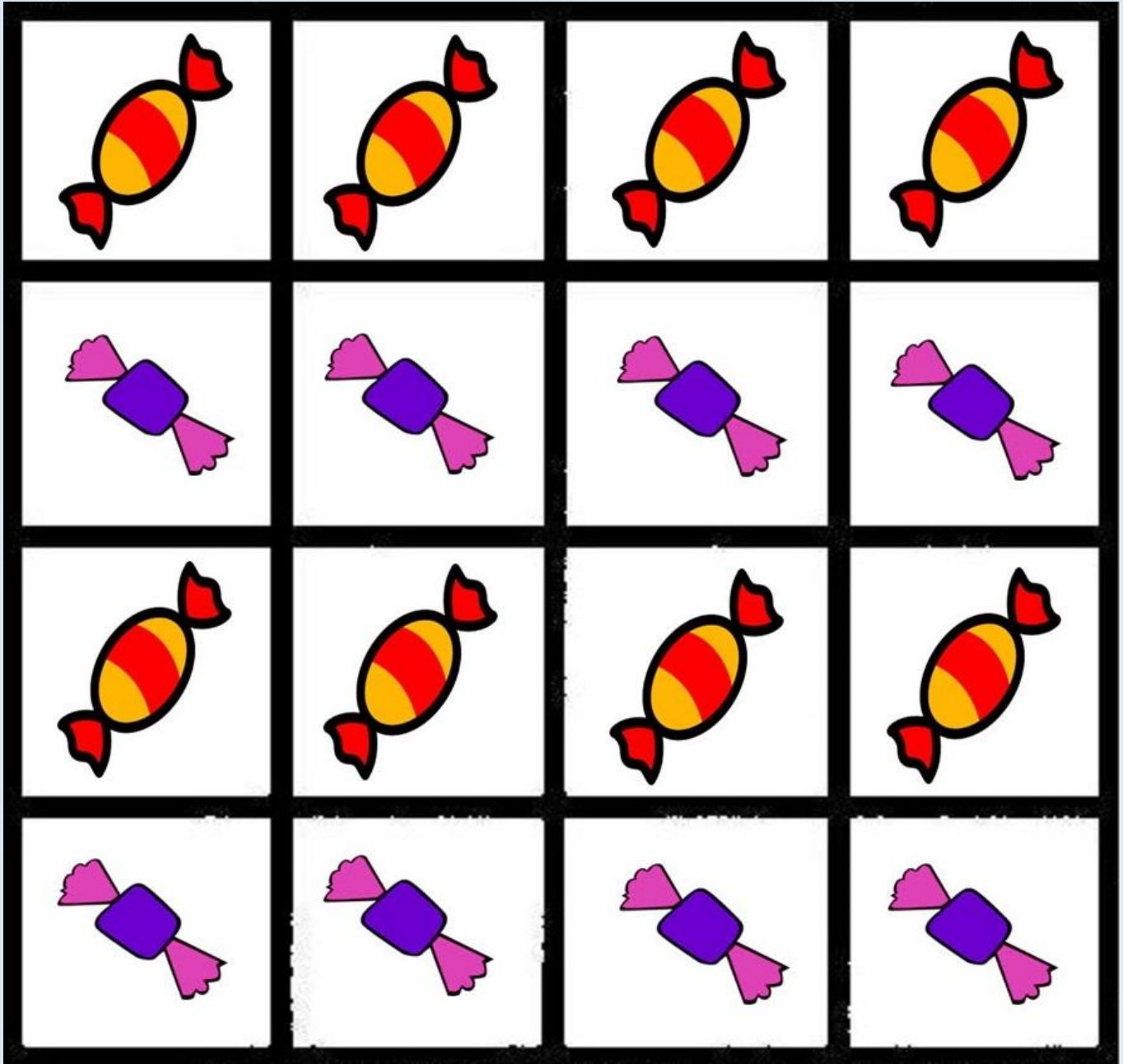
"Oh they think you're greedy! I am sure you won't be, so take the scissors and cut wherever you want."

I now give the helper the closed 'Cut No Cut' scissors and say, "You cut them wherever you want," and then hold the strip as high as I can. When the audience protest, which they will, I say "It's not my fault he's that size."

I now bring my arm down and let him try to cut the sweets, but he can't open the scissors. I take the scissors off of him and ask "Do you not like sweets?" He will say he does and I repeat this a few times, and then say "I will tell you what...I will open the scissors for you - that should make it easy." I hand him the scissors back in the locked open position and repeat above which should get laughs. I then say "Give me the scissors. Oh no you've broke them!" Try to close them and fail and then say, "Don't worry I have a spare pair of scissors over here." (Ditch the fake scissors and bring out the ones that cut.) "I will tell you what...I will cut them for you. Would you like me to cut them here?" (Point to bottom sweet.) "Here?" (Again work your way up strip until you get to the top sweet.) Say in a loud voice, "HERE?" Everyone should shout out yes and the helper certainly will. When he does, you look at audience and say "He is greedy."

I now cut off the top sweet and hand the single sweet to the helper and say "There you go. Oh, you wanted these ones? Well that is greedy. Do you know what greedy kids get? NOTHING."

At the same time I say the 'nothing', I open the drawer box to show it empty, close it and tell the helper to sit down. As they walk away I shout them back and tell them to say "Abracadabra I like sweets!" I then open the box showing it full again and allow him to have some.



**CUT OUT THESE STRIPS AND TAPE THEM TOGETHER TO MAKE ONE LONG STRIP. I ALSO LAMINATE THEM.**



# **SWEET MAGIC**



Print this off and stick it to a piece of foam board the same shape and then tape a bulldog clip to the back of the foam board, this will allow you to attach the sweet strip (and the great thing is as you are always cutting off the top sweet you will only have to attach a new strip after every four or five shows).

## Filming Magic... ...For DVDs

*Steven Goodwin*

I was recently asked to produce an instructional DVD for my friend and mentor, George Kovari. It was to include performance and explanation sections for his "Three Shell Game – Revisited." Since this is not something that most of us do, there wasn't a standard resource available, and I was learning 'on the job'. This article covers the lessons learned, as discussed from the point of you as the videographer and director.

### Plan a Schedule

Normally I would insert a cliché about planning to fail and failing to plan. But I won't! Instead, I'll merely tell to you do some planning, with my recommendation for a filming schedule being:

1. Set-up the area in which you'll work before the magi arrives, so you can work out your camera positions in peace. I used some curtains for a backdrop, three-point lighting with 5000K lights, and a covered table.

2. Ask the magi to perform the whole thing, without breaks or explanations. Film this performance. This gives you (as the director) a chance to make notes on how to break the filming into sections, whether parts of it need to be filmed from difficult angles, and think of what questions the audience would ask. The film also serves as a 'guide', so if any recordings get lost/deleted/misnamed you can re-watch the guide to work out where each part went.

3. Record an introduction. This should be a simple piece to camera, telling who the magician is, the how and why he created this effect, and what you're expected to bring to the table in the form of skills and practise. If we're honest about it, this piece is ego-centric fluff... but it gets the magician used to the artificial environment in which they are now placed.

4. If this is to accompany a gaff, gimmick, or prop, record a separate clip of the magi explaining it. How to make it if necessary, what variations (e.g. cheaper) are available and how long it might take to build it.

5. Repeat the performance, as a whole if possible, or in sections if not. Naturally, filming

in sections reduces the pressure for the magi to get everything right first time.

6. Record the explanations from the same angle as the performance. Even if this appears unnecessary (because you need an exposed view) it provides a timing guide on which to base the exposed view.

7. Record the explanations from an exposed position if necessary. This is done separately, so you can reposition the camera (and lights) once only in a session. These can be overlaid with the guide explanation recorded in #6.

8. Record an epilogue. This lets the magi cover any points they missed and further answer questions that arose from you, as the director. In some cases the exposed view does not show enough, so you can capture a verbal explanation here. (I will always record voice-overs in the same environment as the original recordings because the change in room acoustics alters the voice drastically, making it sound amateurish.)

9. Review the recordings with the magi in a separate room. Here you can jointly decide which takes to use and whether there are any more shots or explanations necessary. Then, send the magi home!

10. Editing is best done alone, without distractions, and especially away from someone that wants to 'just add one more thing'!

Each project is likely to have specific additions, but, generally speaking, try to limit the number of times you move the camera and/or lights, and avoid repeating the same thing too often.

### **TV Overscan**

Two words; one headache. Whenever you use the view finder of your camera you are usually seeing the whole area. When you view the recording on the computer, you are usually seeing the whole area. When you view the DVD on the TV, you're now seeing less. This is due to overscan, which means that the TV doesn't show you the edges of the picture. This is more true on CRTs, for sure, but it's still something you have to consider. It also varies for 4:3 and 16:9 recordings. If your audience is likely to view the recording on a TV, then you must adopt a 'safe area'.

The safe area is the central portion of the screen which is visible on virtually all TV sets and is about 93% of the total width or height of the image. To safely display titles, you should use the

central 80% of the width, and 90% of the height. Professional cameras (i.e. expensive ones) will indicate these regions to you. For the rest of us, mark the lines on your viewfinder. Similarly, professional software will show these marks in the editing package. I'm cheap, with cheap software, so I place a piece of tape on my monitor!

To read more, I suggest starting with the Wiki page.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overscan#Overscan\\_amounts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Overscan#Overscan_amounts)

### **Mark Each Take**

In the film industry, this was traditionally done with a clapper-board. The sound of the wood against wood would be synchronized with the visuals of it closing. Nowadays, electronics have made that unnecessary. But it still provides an essential reference so you know which take was the better one. I mark each take with a playing card! (Hey! I'm a magician, too!) I place a pack to the left of the lens, lift a card up, and show it to the camera, placing it on a discard pile to the right. It is recommended you go in a known sequential order, either AH, 2H, 3H, and so on, or use a stack that you know inside out. I personally use Si Stebbins because the cards alternate red and black, which makes it easier to spot the next take when you skip through large sections of video as you can't accidentally skip past one.



So after holding the card to the lens, say to the magi 'Ready when you are', remove the card from view, and continue with a countdown saying '5, 4, 3...' and stop there. Mark the numbers 2 and 1 by holding up 2 and 1 fingers in one second intervals. Upon zero, point at them, indicating that they should start. This facilitates the 2 second rule. That is, every take should start with 2 seconds of stillness and silence from the performer, and end with another 2 seconds. This is to ensure that any fades, cuts, or other visual effects can be applied over this time and not impinge on the magic.

If the take was a good one (or, at least, not an awful one!) move the card from the discard pile to your pocket. These are the clips to check first. And don't forget mark every take. Even if the magi restarts after just one line of dialogue, you should still add a new mark.

My personal preference is to record each section/move/phase into a single file, leaving the camera running between takes. This is so I don't have a single, 1hr file to work through (which slows my computer down), and similarly, I don't have to work through 50 different files looking for the one that starts with the take labeled 'Jack of clubs'.

### **Prepare Quality Time**

When you might normally film a magic video, such as for the monthly Magic Bunny competition (HINT!), you'll find that a 5 minute performance takes 5 minutes to record. Maybe you'll record two or three 'takes' and choose the best. But ultimately, it's quick. This is part due to the spectators only wanting to do it once, and their reactions being less effective on the second time around. And partly due to your experience in presenting something you've done many times before. The explanations won't have been filmed before, so will be less well-rehearsed, and therefore take longer.

As a guide, the 20 minutes of footage we recorded took 5 ½ hours to record. And it was far from perfect. But it was all the time we could afford to spend. Which brings me to...

### **Film in a Single Session**

Have a good breakfast, lunch, or dinner and then work until it's done. Having water available is good. Stopping for food is not.

From a filming perspective, a single session is important so that there is as little change to the lighting as possible. It might be imperceptible to you, as over the course of the day it happens so slowly, but for the viewer it's very jarring if the resultant video goes from an 9 o'clock take to a 3 o'clock take.

In TV and film there is a specialist crew who are able to make light a scene in exactly the same way, despite of whatever ambient light manages to creep into the scene. When filming outside the TV company will send the footage to a colourist for 'grading' so that a scene shot when sunny matches the continuation shot when it became overcast. As magicians we generally don't have that sort of budget or expertise.

From a performance perspective, the lack of a break makes you more focused, and ensures those 'mental notes to self' don't get lost over lunch. The director should always have a

notepad and pen handy to commit their comments and the magi should be forthcoming with any concerns they have (e.g. 'if there's time, I'd like to show my alternate handling for X', which the director can note).

### **Use a Tripod**

They are so cheap and enhance a production by so much that I cannot see any reason to not use them. Framing a shot is tricky as you have to make sure the camera lens can see everything you need to (e.g. their face, hands, props that move during a performance). Then you have to make sure you can't see anything you don't want to (the dog, your script, an open window). If



you can frame your magi at the start, and just leave the camera running until that block of filming is done, then so much the better. Also, if you need to splice two performances together, there is less of a jump when the cut happens.

Every time you move the camera, mark the position of the tripod on the floor. I used playing cards because they were to hand, but tape is also good.

Also, if your camera supports an external microphone, use it!

### **The Magician is not In Charge (anymore)**

As the director, you are in charge of the shoot and the magi needs to understand this. If you want a re-shoot of a scene, that's your right as you are the only one looking through the camera lens to know what flashed and what didn't (or whether the camera has caught sight of the cat next door, etc.).

In some cases this can seem very unnatural because the usual working relationship has changed significantly. George has 60 extra years of magic experience that I don't have. Despite this, I have to be able to tell him when he's wrong because I know what happened in the lens of the camera. This means your magician must know that they have to listen to you, and you have to be forceful and/or diplomatic enough to tell them when they're wrong, or flashing, and request another take.

### **The Cameraman Is Also a Director, and Directors Should Direct**

The magician is probably not used to performing for a camera, so you need to help out as much

possible. Indicate clearly, ahead of each set-up, what the camera can see. Point out the area with your finger and, if it doesn't impact the performance, put markers just out of shot as a reminder. This is especially useful in close-up shots, such as in the explanation section.

When the magi performs to a human they look them in the eye. When the magi performs to a camera they look in the eye... of the nearest human. The director. This is a difficult habit to break, so you may have to position yourself by the camera lens, so that if they do look at you, it will appear as if they are actually looking at the lens and therefore the viewer. If they continue to look away, stop the recording, explain again, and restart the take. After a couple of retakes they will either get the message and look to the camera, or hate you and look at the camera because they don't want to make eye contact anymore!

In some cases, film the end of the routine first so the magi has some practise looking into the lens then return to film the start once the magi is more practised at performing to the camera. In this way the viewer isn't put off by the recording from the first scene.

### **Film the Explanation Twice**

The first explanation should be recorded so it can be included as a silent film. This allows both of you to talk, saying things like 'move your left hand closer', 'pause there slightly', and 'not too far forward'. This ensures the exposed view is truly exposed.

Then, the second recording will be more natural and can include commentary from the magi. Think of the first as a live rehearsal. After all, for the magician, recording an explanation is something they might only do a couple of times, so have less practise. Giving them a live practise, with full direction, is a major benefit and they only need to use short term memory for a few minutes.

Whether the final product includes one, or both, of these explanation recordings is up to you. I like to use both, but keep the first silent. Some DVDs overlay music on this, in an attempt to demonstrate their higher production values or to avoid dead air. Personally, I find the music to be both tacky and a distraction.

### **The Credit's in the Post**

By this I mean that you can always add subtitles, or overlays, in post-production to indicate the originator of a particular move or to enhance the verbal description. You can also use this to correct any names or oversights. This can help save a lot of time by not requiring a re-shoot.



The same is true for other mistakes, or minor misdemeanours, that you didn't spot until a review of the final product. This is not a Hollywood blockbuster and, for the most part, you can get away with a lot of minor issues – dropping a prop, fluffing a line, bumping the camera – that you would not in any other filming project, depending on how much time you have and how much it bothers you.

Personally, I will shoot the sections as often to get a good performance of it, so as to get a set of usable film clips as early in the day as possible. This lets everyone relax a little. Then, once I have the complete trick, I will return and re-shoot sections until we've run out of time. The first and last takes are usually the best, so if there's no improvement on the third, I'll usually accept the first, unless there was blatant flashing. After all, the viewer can fast forward 3 minutes to learn the secret, so it's not as fatal to flash as it would be in a promo video.

### **My Own Epilogue**

Some of the thoughts and realisations happened because of problems that arose during the recordings that George and I made. Some didn't exist because, in planning, I anticipated them and knew a way of avoiding them. And some are purely theoretical which I considered after the event, but never came up.

If you have any questions, do ask on the forum.

I suppose I should comment on the hardware/software I use, and how to edit a promo video from the footage. But perhaps I should save that for another time!



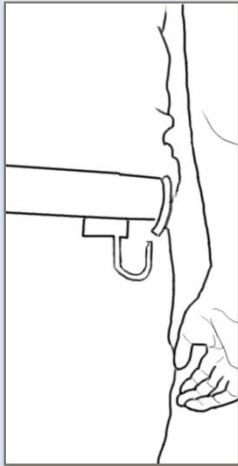
# Locked

*Joel Dickinson*

I first published 'Locked' in 2013 in "What the Eye Can't See" and this is an upgraded version. It always gets great reactions, you don't need a gimmick and it connects with the audience (and has a really good kick).

## Method and Set Up

You will need a padlock and a key. I personally use a large padlock but you are more than welcome to experiment and use the lock size that works best for you.



You need to place the key from the padlock in your left trouser pocket. The padlock will be wedged under your belt just above your back right pocket. The shackle of the padlock will be open and pointing away (as in the figure to the left). You also need a pen in your back, right trouser pocket.

Ask to borrow a finger ring. You can now perform your favourite ring routine or just proceed with Locked. I personally perform 'Divorced' by Justin Miller (it's a routine which has been very well thought out and gets great reactions - I recommend checking it out along with his other material at [justinmillermagic.com](http://justinmillermagic.com)). Once the routine is over and everybody is amazed, discreetly obtain the key from your pocket in a left

hand finger palm.

Fake transfer the ring from your right hand to your left hand which contains the key. Close your left hand over the key and the audience will believe you are holding the ring.

Casually drop your right hand to the padlock and place the ring on the shank. Turn the shank 180 degrees so it's ready to place into the hole. Your motivation for this is removing the pen from your back pocket and it should be done in a swift motion.

Bring the pen forwards and use it as a magic wand by waving it over the key. Place it in your breast pocket.

Slowly open your left hand to show the ring has transformed in to a key.

Now comes the amazing revelation of the borrowed ring. Remove the padlock from under your belt and simultaneously push the shank into the hole to close the lock. Bring it forward to show it has travelled to the closed lock.

Whilst you remove the padlock remember to say something like, "Inside my back pocket is a padlock." People will believe the lock was in your back pocket (after all, it wouldn't be tucked under your belt).

At this point you are free to hand the lock and key to the spectator, so they can open the lock and remove the ring and you are finished.

### **Alternative Endings 1 & 2**

**1)** Instead of revealing the key before removing the padlock, bring the padlock forwards with your right hand closed covering the ring on the lock. Blow the closed left hand and slowly open it to show the transformation. Now open your right hand to reveal the padlock is locked with the spectator's ring attached on the shank.

**2)** Instead of the first key, have a second key in your left pocket which doesn't fit the lock and then when you hand it to your volunteer to unlock, it doesn't fit. Act like you have packed the wrong key and give them the padlock, and for fun put it on your participants finger and tell them it looks just as nice as the ring and the padlock compliments the diamonds. Then, when you're ready, switch the key and unlock the shank.

**NOTE:** This effect gets excellent reactions. It's also a quick to reset. Just pop the key in your pocket and fit the padlock in your belt under the guise of your jacket. Leather belts offer more grip for the lock rather than cotton based belts.

### **Additional Thoughts from Phil Shaw**

Phil had a great idea. Instead of reproducing the ring on a key padlock you could produce the ring on a gimmicked combination padlock such as the 'Dreamlock' or 'Patlock'. When you bring out the special padlock hold it so you cannot see the combination. Hand the key and the padlock to a spectator to unlock. You'll get a laugh as the key obviously won't work. Then ask the spectator for the year they were born (1973 or whatever it is). Bingo it opens the lock.

## Mining...

## ...For Gold

*Michael Jay*

When I was growing up and learning magic, back in the early 1970s, I didn't have anyone to teach me anything where magic was concerned. The only resources available to me at the time were books that I found in my school library and the public library. One name that I found over and over associated with magic books was Bill Severn. Few people today know of Bill Severn's contribution to magic.



William Irving Severn, born on May 11th, 1914, in Brooklyn, New York, was a journalist by trade. For 15 years of his life he cut his teeth working at various newspapers and radio stations in 22 different cities. From 1930 to 1935 Severn was an editor and columnist for the Farmingdale Post. During those years he began his career as a performing magician in New York, specializing in cigarette and silk magic. He married Sue Schulz in 1936 and co-wrote four books with her after becoming a freelance writer in 1945.

Severn wrote some 50 books under his own name, specializing in non-fiction children's books that covered topics such as biographies; civics; social history; language; and children's pastimes. He further penned over 25 books on magic, most of them aimed at kids. He was a member in good standing of the SAM, IBM, and an Associate of The Magic Circle in London.

As I grew up, Bill Severn helped me become the magician that I am today. Bill died just short of his 78th birthday on May 7th, 1992, and I'm only sorry that I never got the chance to thank him for the help that he gave to a young man with very few choices on his pathway to learning magic.

Bill Severn, through his books, was my very first mentor in magic.

In 2012 I had the pleasure of visiting England for my fourth time. One of the highlights of my time spent during that trip was visiting Magick Enterprises in Sheffield. Unlike many magic shops, Magick Enterprises featured an entire wall dedicated to books; mostly old books - hundreds of them.

Perusing those shelves I was able to pick out a half dozen or so books for purchase. Amongst those fine treasures that would be coming home with me was a book penned by Bill Severn, "Magic From Your Pocket." The interesting thing about this book, in particular, was that it was written for a British audience (e.g. notes are listed in GBP and one effect uses Polos - a kind of

mint that Americans would be altogether unfamiliar with) and published by a British publishing company.

Looking through "Magic From Your Pocket" you'll find 39 tricks covered in 9 chapters. The tenth and final chapter teaches the magician how to rework those tricks using different objects in order to take a single trick and make it a completely different trick in the eyes of the laymen, even though you are actually performing the same trick. This is heavy theory made comprehensible to a younger mind.

While the book has just over 150 pages, it is quickly read by an adult. I spent little more than an hour reading through it, cover to cover, fully understanding the instruction of each and every one of those 39 tricks. Most of the tricks covered were useable for a contemporary audience. Given a small amount of creative effort on the reader's part, those tricks could become powerful feats of magic.

Out of those workable tricks I was able to identify 5 specific tricks that could actually be reworked and sold as instant downloads to the rabid masses of visual learners.

Imagine that: I have found 5 tricks that I could easily charge \$10.00 each on instant download from a book that I paid less than \$10.00 to purchase. I'll leave it up to you to do the maths on that...

Conversely, if you are a reader (and I must assume that you are since you are reading this), allow me to share a nifty, little trick that you can perform anywhere. It will take up some of your pocket space and I wouldn't suggest putting this into your professional repertoire (although I can see where an actual worker might just be able to take this and make it something for a professional walk-around venue), but the amount of pocket space is only at the cost of a small box of matches. Severn gives this trick the name, 'Prize Loser'.

You will need a box of matches, a nail that fits in the box, one wooden match, and a washer that fits into the box. That's it.

Empty the matches from the box and place one match and the nail in the drawer before you close it. Place the washer in between the drawer and the sleeve (directly underneath the drawer, but on top of the sleeve, i.e. sandwiched in between the two). With this set up, you can open the drawer without showing that there is a washer and if you take the drawer out completely, the washer will drop into your hand unseen and can easily be covered by the drawer.

With the box set up in this way, you can carry it in your pocket and it's ready to go anytime that you wish to show this trick.

You explain to your spectators, "I went to a carnival where a fast-talking fellow was offering prizes to everybody who took a chance. He was talking about free refrigerators, TV sets, washers, and trips to the moon. He said I couldn't lose, so I took a chance. But this is what I won."

Take out the match box and drop it on the table with a look of contempt. In doing so, make sure that your hands are shown to be completely empty.

"What is that supposed to be?' I asked the man and he told me to have a look at my prize."

Pick the match box back up and open the drawer, taking off the sleeve completely. This will allow you to retain the washer in your hand while the drawer sits flat on your palm (covering the washer). Drop the sleeve onto the table in a casual manner. The spectators will see the nail and the match sitting inside the drawer.

"He told me that my prize was an all-metal coat hanger and a cigarette lighter. When I complained, he said that if I drove the nail into the wall, I could hang my coat on it. And that the match certainly was a cigarette lighter."

As you are saying the above, pick the nail up to punctuate the line about the coat hanger and, after putting it back, pick up the match to punctuate the line about the cigarette lighter (and also replace it back into the drawer). After you've shown both the nail and the match, pick the sleeve back up from the table and replace it on the drawer, but leave the washer underneath (still sitting on your palm, but under the now sleeved drawer).

"When I told him I expected one of the big prizes, like a refrigerator or a washer, he answered that if I wanted a washer, I could have one."

Pick the box up from your hand, revealing the washer.

"That's exactly what I got...A washer."

The patter that I've given is almost precisely the patter that is supplied by Severn in his book. I have reworked the handling just a bit, but it was for sake of this article and remains nearly the same as the book describes. What impressed me about this trick is that if you simply picked the drawer up to reveal the washer, it mostly gives away the method. But, by replacing the sleeve, the method is subtly hidden in the handling (an almost un-noteworthy point, but given thought, it is a very important part of making this trick magical). And, the icing on the cake is that this trick can be done fully surrounded (a big selling point for tricks when published and released as "NEW!").

I gave this article the title, "Mining For Gold," because that is what I've done here. I've taken an old book, by a mostly unrecognized author, and I have mined some gold from those pages. In fact there is a lot more gold to be mined from just this book alone. At the price of six pounds sterling, I have at least 2 dozen tricks from which I can reasonably create some powerful magic and have at least 5 that are worthy of marketing to the magic community.

This is what you should be doing, mining for gold. Rather than putting the gold into somebody else's pocket, those wonderful professionals who are happy to sell you their remakes of the tricks already on offer to all and sundry, why not look around for old books like "Magic From Your Pocket" authored by guys like Bill Severn? The difference is that authors like Mr. Severn published their books as a labor of love whereas the professionals these days publish their material as a labor of financial and egocentric gain. Guys like Bill Severn deserve to be remembered; most of the contemporary pros do not.

The gold is out there, folks, just waiting for you to find it. Long forgotten and obscure men from the past planted that gold just for you; you owe it to them to ensure that they will always be part of the universal mind that makes up the magicians of the 21st century.

As always, take care and thank you for reading.

### **Did You Know?**

Albert Levinson (1895 - 1976) was a professional magician whose career started in Coney Island. Not long after that he worked the sideshows for various circuses, ultimately graduating to vaudeville, theater and even television. It's said that his 'Egg Bag' and 'Miser's Dream' routines were of legendary proportions, being masterpieces in Albert's hands. He was a close friend of Joseph Dunninger. Although his knowledge of magic and magicians was encyclopedic, he was particularly noted for being patient and kind to the beginners in our ranks. You would probably recognize his stage name:

Al Flosso



## Why I Don't Identify...

### ...As a Magician

*Dan Cunningham*

If I get an afternoon to myself, I usually find a quiet corner of one of my favourite public houses with my card mat, a new deck of Tally-Hos, enough cash for a gallon of local ale, some indescribably poor take-away food, and, eventually, a taxi home.

This might seem like a lonely activity, but despite the idea propagated by some cynical magicians, the general public love card tricks; almost to the degree where they will breach typical standards of etiquette (including going and sitting next to a total stranger) to see some card magic.

My favourite pubs happen to be next to railway stations, so the type of person who feels compelled to bother me varies wildly - from giggly, teenage girls to dignified World War Two veterans; from the friendly to the confrontational; from the blind drunk to the stone cold sober. Due to the fact that I consider performing to be a skill that needs to be practised like any other, I rarely turn down the opportunity to engage.

You could be forgiven for thinking that this task, given the variety of spectators, would require an enormous skill set, after all you wouldn't use the same material for a battle-bruised football hooligan as you would for a Rolex wearing advertising executive would you? No, you wouldn't. But as someone old enough to know when it is time to stop learning new methods and focus on one, I elect to use the same trick, over and over, only each time I dress it up in new clothes.

The trick is always the same. The spectator either physically selects or thinks of a card and I discover its identity using the mechanisms contained within a memorised deck. This simple effect is dressed up in variety of costumes that are as varied as the type of person I will encounter during these boozy afternoons. Over the course of nearly ten years I have discovered something which, at first, can be quite jarring: members of the public, even the educated, affluent, world-wise members of the public, believe strange things.

You see, when I tell the off duty policeman that I can ascertain his card by the way he is sat in his chair, it is not met with the type of amazed laughter you would expect if a coin vanished from one hand and appeared in another, it is met with a request to tell him how he can use this skill himself in his work environment. When I tell the student that I can memorise a deck of cards in under a second, there is no suspension of disbelief, there is a genuine offer of money

to help her memorise her university text books.

These offers are politely refused and the secret method is maintained (not to mention the even bigger secret that not only am I incapable of performing these feats – nobody is). For the readers of this article on the other hand, I will detail some of the more fanciful claims I make and the actual truth behind them. Before you scoff, how many of you thought these things were possible yourself?

### **Rapid Memorisation**

There exists, largely in fiction, the idea of the photographic or eidetic memory, often attributed to genius IQ or neurological trauma. Those who profess to have this remarkable ability always seem to have two distinct qualities: 1) they claim to be able to memorise enormous amounts of information at a glance with perfect recall and 2) they seem to be immune to any invitations to be tested by anyone prepared to incorporate any standards of scientific rigour.

Solomon Shereshevsky, consistently cited as someone who had a photographic memory, openly admitted to being a mnemonist, or, for the uninitiated, a person who, using a 'normal' memory, builds complex imaginary constructs to house large amounts of information. Yet even after hearing the truth from the proverbial horse's mouth, he still is considered to be someone who owned some sort of supernatural power.

Kim Peek, the inspiration for Raymond Babbitt, the low functioning Autistic character in the film "Rain Man," is held in what could be justifiably called 'folklore' as someone with a perfect memory and, after reading a short list of his abilities, you may agree. Unfortunately the short list would have to be compiled from a list of claims made by his father and a couple of unqualified journalists, as no other data sources exist. The only tests that were performed on Mr. Peek were an IQ test (which yielded a score of 87) and a post mortem examination of his brain which revealed a rare genetic syndrome that accounted for some of his physical deformities.

Finally there is 'The Brainman', Daniel Tammet, who has made a career out of declaring himself to be a savant. Daniel has published numerous books and has travelled the world talking about his perfect memory and how it is assisted by synesthesia (a rare condition where your brain confuses sounds, tastes and colours). I could produce a hundred pages for this magazine discussing Tammet's claims (starting with his earlier career which involved teaching people to be psychic) but a simple Google search would achieve the same. Just consider this: the man with the perfect memory entered two of the World Memory Championships held in London in 1999 and 2000. He came 12th in 1999 and was only bested by three 'ordinary' people in 2000,

earning himself an unspectacular 4th place.

Each time I perform my memory demonstration, in the midst of a demonstration of how I cheat at card games, I memorise the deck with a single glance. The actual record for this feat is 21.19 seconds, held by German mnemonist Simon Reinhard, and there is a \$10,000 prize for anyone who can beat it.

### **The Power of Suggestion**

The vagueness of the subtitle should imply that I have to be careful when discussing this topic since we as a species are prone to being impressed upon, often without our knowledge. But the extent of this phenomenon is greatly exaggerated in the mind of the general public.

There are definitely instances where you can be influenced by surroundings that are the product of design and there are peer review studies to show this. Dr Simon Moore of Cardiff University conducted a (now infamous) study in 2008, proving that a researcher could surreptitiously boost or deflate elements of your character that you would consider foundational, such as patience or tolerance, by managing the temperature of a beverage you were holding. There is a whole industry based on suggestion, with chartered psychologists advising companies on how to make their products more eye-catching, assisting supermarkets to enjoy more 'impulse sales', and, most famously, how to ensure the environment of a casino will maximise its clientele's fondness for risk taking.

The difference between the claims of the peer reviewed scientist and myself lies with specificity. The habit inducing environment of the casino has results that can be measured statistically over a long period of time, whereas my claims are quite specific and immediate. After I have discovered the identity of the spectator's chosen card, I then spin an elaborate yarn about how the environment around them was carefully manipulated to ensure they did so, from the arrangement of the card case and jokers to the number of cigarettes protruding from the carton.

In reality that is as possible as sawing a lady in half or getting someone to rob a security van after hearing a certain piece of music.

### **Telepathy**

I know what you are thinking (see what I did there?)...You are thinking "Why on earth are you dedicating column inches to this telepathy nonsense, particularly after the pseudo-scholarly

approach you've employed so far?" The reason is if there is one ability that I can rely on a spectator believing exists, one way or another, it is telepathy. So, just for completeness, let's briefly discuss why telepathy is not possible.

The mind that is supposed to be read is an emergent product of a brain. There has never been a mind without a brain and, despite some online conversations that lead me to believe the contrary, there has never been a healthy, functioning brain without a mind. Our thoughts are the result of electrical data moving within a physical apparatus (an apparatus to which those thoughts are necessarily confined). Yet all it takes to convince even the most sceptical of observers otherwise are a couple of tall tales about CIA experiments and a pack of playing cards.

Those are three of the most common abilities I profess to have when performing my modest craft in a dark corner of an equally modest public house. I could list many more, ranging from muscle reading to poker tells, from being able to calculate at lightening speeds to being able to tell if you are lying by observing how often you blink, but I have probably tested your tolerance already.

So in conclusion, why do I choose not to identify as a magician? To be a magician you invite a spectator to pretend, for a moment, that they are witnessing something amazing that they know to be impossible. I am far too lazy for that. I choose to invite them to witness something amazing that they don't know to be impossible.

I'd rather they did all the work.

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