



# magicseen



...the  
magazine  
magicians and  
mentalist read,  
in between  
signing on.

## DON'T GET IN A FLAP...

we're featuring DOVE magic!

## COMEDY...

it's no laughing matter!

## THE MAGIC CIRCLE LIBRARY



# RAFAEL

BELGIUM'S  
KING OF COOL

**FREE TASTER PDF #4**



# THE MAGIC CIRCLE

## BROUGHT TO BOOK!

**Terry Wright gives us a guided tour of  
the amazing Magic Circle library...**

Many of you will have heard of The Magic Circle, the world-famous meeting place for magicians. Several of you will have been lucky enough to attend one of the evening events entitled "Meet The Magic Circle" or "The Magic Circle Christmas Show". Some will have attended the lunchtime event called "The History of Mystery". These events allow access to The Magic Circle's five-storey building at 12 Stephenson Way near Euston Station in London. Here you will have seen on the walls framed originals of very colourful old advertising posters or painted murals up the main helical staircase depicting famous magicians and magic, and also cabinets in the museum or the Devant room containing the equipment of those famous magicians of the past. You will also have been entertained!

Very few of you, however, will have visited The Magic Circle library; only members and genuine researchers are allowed into the library in the presence of a librarian. This is the home for over 10,000 books and magazines, and over 1,200 DVDs and video-tapes all on the one topic, The Magical and Related Arts, largely represented by just one number (793.8) in the Dewey Decimal Classification system, which is used to catalogue books in most public libraries. We in the library are delighted that members and other famous people who know of our archive continue to donate or bequeath their books, photographs, DVDs, audio-tapes and video-tapes to help us to build a world-class working and historical collection; we thank these donators very much.

By now those of you less familiar with magic might be wondering how there can be so many books on this subject; those of you well versed in the subject will know. There are probably about 7,000 unique books in our reference library (and we have far from a complete collection of published books and magazines). About 3,000 duplicates of some of these

books are in the lending section of the library, available for members only to borrow for up to three weeks. But since the first book in English which explained the methods of magic was published in 1584, you should not be surprised that 425 years have generated a lot of history, magical ideas, performance techniques, newly invented equipment, stories to tell, and of course instructions, all of which were written down and recorded for future generations of magicians, those who wish to practice the Art of Magic.

The library contents (all of the books, magazines, DVDs and tapes) are owned by The Magic Circle and form a unique collection in the world. We know of no other magic library stored in a dedicated building and available for a large number of users. There are of course private collections around the world, but none of this size is generally available to a society of magicians. From the creation of The Magic Circle in 1905 members have met in leased or borrowed premises in London, and yet this library has accumulated. We were very lucky that, when we did not have a stable home, as well as keeping our books securely boxed in a commercial store, members were willing to store pieces of the collection in their homes. But over the last 12 years we have owned our permanent home at 12 Stephenson Way as the result of the hard work and financial generosity of our members from around the world, and also with a grant from the Lottery Fund. This has allowed all of those boxes of books stored around the country to be consolidated. Two of our current librarians had the mammoth task of designing the library, sorting the books, getting them onto the shelves, and entering all of them into a database. They did a splendid job.

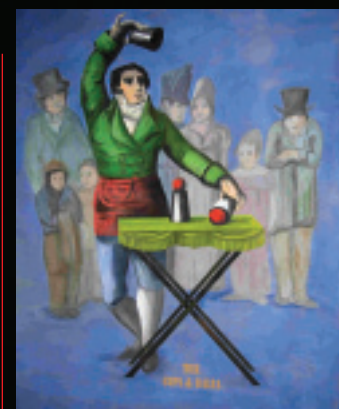
It continues to be quite a task to keep the whole operation in order, whilst also running the lending



**Helical staircase at The Magic Circle.**

library, especially as new books and DVDs are being published ever more frequently. On behalf of The Magic Circle Council, the library is staffed by five regular volunteers (an executive librarian, his deputy and three other librarians) and is generally open only on a Monday afternoon and evening, but also occasionally during the week by special arrangement. All of the volunteers are retirees from various walks of life (law, business, property, education) who share a common enthusiasm for magic and for maintaining a resource and record of magic for the future. We are always, of course, looking for more regular help.

Our database is available for library-registered members to use in the library. We have also recently placed the lending library content onto the password-controlled part of The Magic Circle website. However, we require members to pick up and return their borrowed books in person; it is too easy for books to be damaged or lost in transit, and some books are not replaceable. Needless to say, as in all lending libraries, the late return of a book incurs a fine! And DVDs and videos can only be viewed in the library, again to avoid damage to a scarce resource. It is interesting to note that most current members who visit the library prefer



**One of the murals on the staircase wall.**

to use books rather than recordings to learn and improve their art.

With most of the books using only one number in the traditionally used library sorting system, how do we catalogue our books? We have created our own system which recognises the different types of magic and the related skills that are required to be a really efficient magician. Illusion, close-up, and playing cards are just three instructional examples of those sections; we have a large history section covering the rich heritage of magic; and there are complementary subjects such as performance, presentation and patter. But even this system of types of magic does not answer all of our magicians' needs. Often a member will come to the desk to ask if we can find the instructions for a particular trick. A gentleman



**A corner of the Library.**

by the name of Jack Potter created an index of as many tricks as he could find that had been published in English up to his retirement in 1964. Jack's was an enormous task. He scoured all available books and magazines, and made alphabetical lists which are held in a number of ring binders. Jack typed all of these lists himself; a real labour of love. Unfortunately since 1964 no-one has continued his task, but with modern technology a web-based database known as "Ask Alexander" has recently become available for an annual subscription. This is a database of scanned and searchable pages, largely of magazines at this time, but with the potential to go far.

So a request such as "where can I find the instructions for the find the lady trick?" is often dealt with directly by the librarians based on their personal knowledge of the content of the books, or the knowledge of others who happen to be in the library at the time. Although a library is meant to be a quiet place, and if there are serious researchers reading the books we do maintain a modicum of quiet, it is also really instructive and enjoyable to watch a small group of magicians enthusiastically poring over pages in a book or magazine, quietly talking about a sleight, and then putting what they have read into practice. This practice is most common with playing cards or

coins which can easily be used on the library tables or on the magicians' laps.

To further enthuse our magicians we run an occasional event in the library entitled "My Favourite Books". This is a 30-minute talk given by a magician (performer, historian, or designer) that everyone respects. A former president of The Magic Circle reviewed his 10 favourite books and how these had helped to develop his career in magic; a TV producer explained what he gained from reading his favourite books; a magician used just three books to demonstrate how he uses the content to teach magic; an illusionist, well known as a designer of the magical content of current stage shows around the world, showed how he used books to create ideas for his customers.

And our Young Magician's Club occasionally are able to use the library during one of their Saturday sessions. These are aspiring magicians between the ages of 12 and 18 who are able to learn from experts. Some want to spend some time finding their way amongst the magical literature and perhaps taking away a photocopy of a critical page to help them with the development of their performance.

We are often asked which books are the most popular. This is an almost impossible question to

answer; popularity changes with time. But it is noticeable that some of the older books continue to be consulted regularly. Many magicians buy their own books to study at their leisure which means that the books commonly available through book-shops and through the internet are not as frequently consulted in the library. An exception currently is a history book which has recently gained a lot of attention not only because of its content but also because of its large size. "Magic 1400s – 1950s" was published a few months ago by Taschen; magicians look at our copy of the book first before deciding to buy it for themselves. Do not expect to fit this book into a normal bag or briefcase!

It is the subject of close-up magic which probably receives the most attention. As many of you know after reading this magazine, amazing things can be done with playing cards, coins, a piece of rope, or a handkerchief, right under the noses of observers. Mental magic often using only pen and paper is also popular. The advantage of performing these types of magic is that the magician can just pull something out of a pocket at the opportune moment and entertain. This can be even easier for "bar tricks" when items found at the bar or in other people's pockets can be used. But it is not only the "learning the mechanisms of magic" books that are read. That is just the beginning: learning how to perform is even more important. Simple magic in the hands of a great performer is so much better than impressive magic in the hands of a poor performer. Magicians need to develop their own styles and personalities, so authors have written about how to use eyes, voice, hands, feet and body in a performance, what to wear, and how to develop the words which go with the magic.

To list just a few authors and magicians in terms of popularity: Dai Vernon books, especially the

books written by Lewis Ganson about Dai Vernon's magic, continue to be used. Juan Tamariz books on style are consulted. Derren Brown's books are often on the table, especially used by the younger generation. Jim Steinmeyer's books are consulted for illusion ideas. Why are books and magazines still popular when there is so much on DVD and on internet sites to watch and to copy? As already indicated, a good magician will develop his or her own style and personality, which will be unique and not just a copy. It is much easier to use a book to develop a personal style than to watch a DVD. A DVD is great for ideas and learning mechanisms, but the performer demonstrating on the DVD has a personal style (which fits his or her personality). A learning magician with a different personality needs to develop a different presentation. The Magic Circle library is ideally positioned to facilitate the development of the individual.

This has necessarily been a very short and individual view of the library at The Magic Circle. We want this library to be used: we do not wish to be viewed as the librarian in the well known science-fiction book "A Canticle for Leibowitz", where it is said "To Brother Librarian, whose task in life was the preservation of books, the principal reason for the existence of books was that they might be preserved perpetually. Usage was secondary and to be avoided if it threatened longevity". If you want to have access to this library and the whole building at 12 Stephenson Way then you need to become a member. You will be fascinated by the subject and we will be very pleased to see you. How do you become a member? Well you will need to demonstrate your abilities and interest in magic. Examination nights are frequent, and once you pass the exam, you're in! **ms**

**For more information go to [www.themagiccircle.co.uk](http://www.themagiccircle.co.uk)**

# IN THE NEWS...



## GUNNERSON GETS INJURED!

Things did not go as planned for extreme escape artiste Dean Gunnarson in his planned escape from the tracks of a speeding roller-coaster in Beijing recently.

Gunnarson said he believed hot and humid conditions, with a temperature of 36 C, contributed to him losing the extra split second he needed to completely avoid the bullet roller-coaster car.

The 46-year-old US resident – who has performed death-defying escapes around the world since he was in his teens – said this escape was a little too close for comfort.

“I have always said I don’t do card tricks or pull bunnies out of a hat,” Gunnarson said in his news release. “I push the envelope in an extreme way that tries to do the impossible with every great escape I have ever attempted. I like to keep things close but this was beyond close. It was near death.”

The escape was part of Gunnarson’s Bound for Danger world tour and was being shot for inclusion in a magic special on Chinese television.

This autumn, Gunnarson is planning an escape in which he will be locked inside a steel coffin and buried six feet underground for 48 hours. Be careful Dean!



## PETE’S ON THE ROAD!

Big-haired magician Pete Firman is off on tour again with his Jokes & Tricks Autumn Tour. Starting off on September 19th at Salford Lowry, and then visiting all areas of the country. **Check out [www.petefirman.co.uk](http://www.petefirman.co.uk) for details of where and when.**

## PAUL PACKS ‘EM IN!

If you are “into” card magic, then we suggest you “look into” the card magic of Paul Gordon. His card magic is mostly impromptu; anytime-anywhere stuff! It’s also powerful, magical and entertaining. In the last 30 years or so, Paul has written over twenty best-selling books and produced numerous DVD’s; the latest being his blockbuster 3-disc set Card Startlers (containing 47 of his best tricks) and its follow-up, Card Rarities. You can see trailers (free trick/routine video clips) on his website. It’s good material. See [www.PaulGordon.net](http://www.PaulGordon.net). Paul has also published some



fantastic marketed packet tricks; notably, The Corner of Piccadilly (a three-four card monte effect with a massive kicker ending), Triple Kick Monte and Oil & Water Rainbow.

Paul also lectures and hosts a full day of card magic tuition & lecturing (and much fun) called Card Capers. It is a fun day, and in 2011 it’ll be touring; Worthing, Manchester &

Glasgow. See Paul’s website for full details.

In 2011, Paul Gordon will be releasing a “very best of” book. It’s gonna’ be jam-packed full of goodies; Paul’s best ever card magic including many unpublished gems. It’s going to be a good-looking stitched-pages hardback.

**To be kept in the loop, email Paul at [pgmagic@btinternet.com](mailto:pgmagic@btinternet.com).**

## NAREN SARAPHAIWANICH DIES AGED 66

Veteran magician Naren Saraphaiwanich died of liver cancer on August 4th. The former chairman of the Magic Society of Thailand was also suffering from intestinal cancer and chronic heart disease. He is survived by wife Ratre, a third wife, and five young children. He was divorced from a second wife, with whom he had daughter Panjanuch, after his first wife died many years ago. Panjanuch later dismissed news reports that she had conflict with Ratre over where to hold Naren’s

funeral, saying it was easier for people to attend at the Bangkok-based temple, than at his home province of Nakhon Nayok. Ratre had said earlier that Naren told her to hold his funeral at Wat Phrom Mana Chula Manee Phomma Rangsee, whose abbot Phra Palad Worruwuth also confirmed Ratre’s claim. Naren was known for years for his performances, but his immediate family was facing financial problems when he became ill and began to receive hospital treatment three years ago.

## MANDRAKE RETURNS!

The 1939 classic Mandrake, the Magician may be about to be re-made. Hayden Christensen says that, contrary to industry rumours, he isn’t going to play Mandrake. Mimi Leder, the director, hopes, however, to announce the actor who will play the title role shortly. The film will be based on the Mandrake newspaper comic strip about a superhero magician which was created by the late Lee Falk.



# COMEDY

## It's no laughing matter!

It may seem like a good idea to introduce some comedy in to your act, but it's really not that easy. Yeah, if you want to use some old gags and a couple of one-liners you've nicked from a comedian you saw on the telly, it seems like no big deal. However, comedy is a really serious business, and to get it right, you need to put a lot of time and effort into something which looks like a spur-of-the-moment remark.

**magicseen** deputy editor Graham Hey has performed in hundreds of comedy clubs, and he takes you on a crash course in how to make people laugh... and he's not wearing a seatbelt!



I remember being offered work in Spain as a comedy magician, and I suddenly realised that I needed much more material than I had. So what did I do? Well, as an inexperienced performer, I went to a few magic shops and bought a load of stuff which was just not me, or appropriate to the type of audiences I was going to perform to. The arm chopper, the vanishing bandana - staple effects which are really neither one thing nor the other. And not really that funny either. It was like buying an act from someone who was out of date, and whose act didn't flow. I guess many performers will have fallen in to the same trap as me – it's almost a rites-of-passage thing – a bit like buying a carrier bag full of effects from Blackpool which you'll never use.

I soon realised that with a bit of imagination, I could invent something funny for myself, and usually it was something that didn't cost me any money. Even better!

A recent article in the Daily Mail was all about the plight of the performer who writes his own material. It said that within 24 hours of a performance, material has been recorded, stuck on youtube, stolen by other performers and the originator is long since forgotten – so why bother writing original stuff at all? I remember earlier this year performing at a comedy club in Hull, and the opening act used two of the gags I had written, which meant that when I performed later on, I actually had to drop two of my own gags, because the audience would have thought that I had stolen them from the opening act! It's a complicated business, this comedy lark. Back to the question – why bother writing original material at all? Well, as a performer, there's a great deal more satisfaction to be had when you hear the audience laugh if you can claim to have written it as well as performed it. In fact there's no greater feeling. The worst thing you could possibly hear about your act is: "I've heard quite a few of those before!"

If you have any ambition at all, you will not get very far using second-hand material. To be respected, you have to perform material that is yours – or more specifically, something that you have changed, so that it becomes your own. If you are not performing original material on the comedy club circuit, you will soon get found out – and you'll see the amount of bookings dwindle.

One of the comedy websites reviewed a couple of magicians last year – and it slagged-

off magic, because within the space of a few days, the reviewer had seen two magic acts performing the same routines almost word for word – just like the script provided with the routine. So, the same applies to magic as it does to comedy one-liners – if you can't come up with something original (and it's not easy, I know), then the best thing you can do is to take something that already exists and develop it into a routine that is yours.

Top US comedy writer Gene Perret recalls the time he was writing with two others for Bob Hope. They sat down, had a session to come up with material, and the senior writer of the three kept finishing off set-up lines. The gags were typed and handed to Bob. A few minutes later, they asked him what he thought. He said: "They have the faint aroma of nostalgia!" You would be surprised how many people cannot remember a joke to tell you, but their memory comes back razor sharp if they've heard it

“ You would be surprised how many people cannot remember a joke to tell you, but their memory comes back razor sharp if they've heard it before. ”

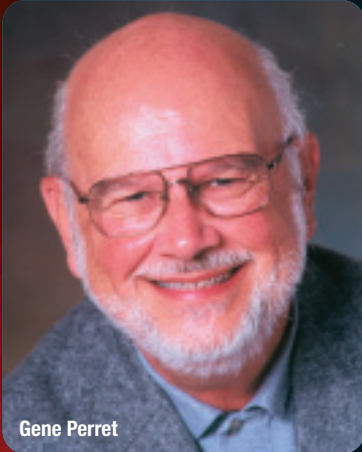
before.

Perret says that he warns writers that if they produce five pages of great, original material, and they have one tainted gag in there, then people are suspicious of ALL the material! That's not to say that sometimes people don't genuinely come up with jokes which are very similar – this happens quite often, especially if there is a big story in the news. Most comedians like to be reasonably topical, so if there is a big event, then there will be hundreds of performers around the country trying to write something funny about a specific event.

I remember writing a gag about national bullying week. I wore a wristband and said to the audience: "Do you like my wristband? It's to commemorate Anti-Bullying week. I didn't buy it – I nicked it off a specky kid outside!" Two days later I went to see Noel Britten at a comedy club, and one of the guys on the same bill (Gary Delaney) came out with a near identical gag – except he had replaced the 'specky kid' with a 'ginger kid'. Gary Delaney is a great writer, and I know he hadn't nicked my line, as I'd never performed it at that time. So these things do happen. And it's really annoying when they do.

In reality, everyone borrows the odd gag every now and again, and there's nothing really wrong with that, as long as you put effort into doing it in your own way. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but time and time again you will hear performers say: "Just be yourself!" And sadly it's true. I've tried to be something I'm not, and it doesn't work, because I'm just not comfortable with it. There's no way on earth I could do a serious act – at one time I had some 'magic' coaching by the brilliant Colin Rose, and he told me that I had a comedy voice! I instantly pictured myself as a comedy-club version of Joe Pasquale. But Colin was right. Sometimes, you don't realise what you are like yourself. Gene Perret says you have to see your act from the point of view of the audience – and you'll probably see something totally different to the image you have of yourself in your mind. And if you video yourself, it will usually be worse than you think!

Comedy is really about having the material that will make people laugh – punchlines that have impact, and the timing to deliver them. You can't really over-rehearse comedy lines, because you have to consider 'laughing time' which you can only control live. It's about keeping the funny lines flowing, forming a



Gene Perret

“ You MUST be heard, and heard clearly. If you mumble or fumble, your credibility is immediately suspect. They lose confidence in you and your performance will suffer! ”

cumulative effect of laughs, so the whole audience can latch on and be influenced by the growing laughter in the room. But, above all, I think comedy is about being different – so that you stand out and are remembered. If you are lucky enough to have a natural style and demeanour that people like, then you are well on your way to becoming very successful.

A question which always pops up is: “How can I open my act?” After all, everyone has probably been told how important the first 30 seconds are. I personally start off with a fake announcement, as it gets people’s attention, and then when the punchline arrives, it takes them by surprise and hopefully they see that you are one-step ahead of them.

Mitch Murray was a writer for Bob Monkhouse (yes, even though he wrote comedy himself, he also used other writers) and he says that he hates analysing comedy. “It’s a bit like love. If you have to define it, you don’t deserve it!” But getting off to a good start is vital, says Mitch, “And think very carefully before messing about with one-liners. You have to be aware that certain words, which may appear innocuous or superfluous, could be part of the magic which makes us laugh. Removing these words may be fatal to the line.”

Mitch Murray’s advice for starting off is simple: “Don’t rush your delivery. If you rush into the next line too early, it’s a sign that you are losing your nerve. You have to control it. As you deliver a line, wait just a little before you deliver the next. Sometimes a gag will produce a delayed reaction and by the time the laughter builds up to it’s peak, you’re half way through the next line if you’re not careful. So let the laughter run its course, and when it’s

beginning to taper off, come in strong with the next gag.” Of course, you have to be sensible about this - don’t stand there in total silence if a gag dies - move swiftly on to the next. By the time you are halfway through your act, you’ll find that you will be conducting the audience, like you would an orchestra. “But don’t feel guilty,” says Mitch, “they LOVE being controlled. In showbusiness, there’s a technical name for people who really know how to manipulate their audiences... STARS!”

Gene Perret says that the audience (who have usually paid to see you), expect you to be the boss. They have given you permission to be in control - but they also expect someone with that kind of power to speak with authority and confidence. “You MUST be heard, and heard clearly. If you mumble or fumble, your credibility is immediately suspect. They lose confidence in you and your performance will suffer!”

As a performer, you can write, edit and polish a dynamic routine. Practise, rehearse, and refine it to flawless perfection. You can develop your timing until it’s impeccable. And still, you can have nights when the jokes just don’t work. Gene recalls a conversation he had with Bob Hope. “I was speaking with Bob about a young comedian who was a potential candidate to guest on one of the Hope TV specials. Hope said, ‘Do you know him?’ I said: ‘Yes, I’ve seen him several times.’ ‘What do you think?’ I said: ‘Well, he has some brilliant material, some great routines. Yet, I’ve seen him some nights when he was just OK.’ Hope was silent for a beat or two on the other end of the telephone, then he said, ‘Gene, that’s all of us.’”

# TOP TIPS

## GENE PERRET

1. Slow Down. “Most of us speak faster than we think we do. The audience are hearing everything for the first time, so give them a chance to take in what you are saying.”
2. A good joke wants to be told. “But it’s easy to fluff it! If you have a killer gag, you want to get it out, hear the audience laugh and applaud. Listen to that hilarity!! Your lips can’t wait to spit out the punchline as fast as possible. I’ve witnessed this phenomenon when playing tennis - my opponent will hit a really weak shot at me, a ball that anyone could put away, but I hit it straight into the net. How could I miss it? The answer is that I rush. I’m so thrilled at seeing an easy set up that I speed up. So slow down, and give the audience a chance to appreciate how good your gag is.”
3. Don’t over-rehearse. “Gags can be so smooth that they are obviously too slick. And when it’s too slick, it’s less effective.”
4. Practise speaking wherever you can. “Most people are not used to public speaking, so it is important to become comfortable with it. Wherever there is an opportunity, volunteer for it.”

## NORBERT FERRE

**The biggest mistake I ever made with comedy was:** In

2007, I worked 7 months in Germany for a cabaret and I did all my show in German. Just after that I had a contract in New York for a Pharmaceutical



Company. During my comedy act (when I spoke) I received no reaction. On stage it was like a shock for me. At the end, I understood when the producer said to me: “Why did you do your act in German and not in English?”

**The best advice I was ever given is:**

Never ask your way to the one who knows it. You will risk not getting lost. Because while getting lost, you find new gags.

**My comedy hero and why?**

Tommy Cooper because he is Tommy Copper!



## NICK EINHORN

### Biggest mistake I ever made with comedy was:

Trying to be someone I wasn't.



**Best advice I was ever given is:** Better to hold your own in a good show than be the best in a bad show.

**My comedy hero is, and why?** Bob Monkhouse. Original, brilliant sense of timing and a true pro.

### Anything else you want to add?

I find that the same joke/comedy moment can have completely different reactions from show to show. As magicians we are lucky. If the comedy element fails then at least we have great magic to compensate. If your magic is not great and your comedy is not good then may I suggest changing jobs!

## WAYNE DOBSON

**Biggest mistake?** Holding back on ad lib ideas, worrying that you might offend somebody, the flow of my timing got very affected.



Freddie Starr told me not to hold back on any ideas, live dangerously, 99 percent of the time it will be ok, worry about the other 1 percent if and when it happens.

**Comedy hero:** Bob monkhouse, his timing was impeccable.

## WOLFGANG RIEBE

This is already funny. A Brit asking a German for comedy tips! That's classic! (Ed: no, I actually sent the email to the wrong person, sorry Wolfgang!)

I have to clarify something here. They say that Germans don't have a sense of humour. Oh yes they do... it's just that it's very precise!

My favourite comedy magician has to be Tommy Cooper - he inspired me to get into comedy magic. I also had the privilege of sharing the bill at the Magic Castle with Tom Ogden. He can take the simplest trick and have the audience rolling in the aisles. If you haven't seen him work, make a point of it.



## Five tips from Wolfgang:

1. You don't have to work 'blue' or below the belt to be funny. British comedy is the king of 'tongue in cheek' humour. If you are going to be naughty, do it cleverly so that the joke can be taken either way. If someone is offended, it is because they thought of the dirty angle. You can cover yourself by saying that you meant it the clean way, and in turn look shocked that someone actually thought differently! Of course if your stage personality is a bit riské, keep the language clean and stay away from 'toilet humour'. I am by no means a prude, but being vulgar limits your market, and will always offend someone. Being 'clever' means you have a wider scope of audience and will work more. An example: if you want to talk about a 'brothel' - that's pretty much straight to the point, and yes, some people get offended. But if you talk about a 'House of Horizontal Refreshment' ... it's funny and everyone knows what you mean, and it's classier. You just have to be a bit creative.
2. Do not steal someone else's jokes! Yes, it's not just magicians who steal each other's routines! Do not be naive and think because someone else got a laugh from a gag, you will get one too. Be true to yourself and know your own personality and limits. Ask your friends, family, spouses to be honest with you. In the beginning I used lots of gags I thought were hysterical. I laughed so loud on stage myself, I didn't even hear that the audience wasn't laughing. It was only until my good friend Martin Breese said to me that I was being stupid, that my eyes opened. You need a true friend who will honestly tell you what works for you. To this day I am still grateful to Martin for being a true friend and showing me the light. Take Jeff Hobson as an example. Why is he so
3. If you are not a joke teller, don't do jokes. Use visual comedy that is naturally built into the trick. Also add dry one liners as a throw in. Jimmy Carr is the master of dry humour for me, plus he is really funny too. Learn from comedians like him. The well planted and timed dry one liners can have an audience in stitches. Also, just like tricks, jokes need to be rehearsed. Timing is what it's all about! Even after 25 years in the business, I still learn something each time I perform. Why do you think the older experienced comedians get guaranteed laughs? It's because they know to the second, where to leave a break/pause, to enhance the joke. It's experience and practice that perfects a joke around your personality.
4. Use lines and jokes that fit with the trick. In other words if you are doing a card trick, use card related gags, and not something that doesn't fit the theme. Unless of course you are Michael Finney who asks the assistant, "Do you like card tricks?" To which they reply, "Yes." And he then says, "Good, because I am going to show you a rope trick!" We use so many 'weird' gadgets and props - the opportunity is so huge to make funny remarks, i.e. calling sponge balls 'underwater erasers'. Again, you just need to use your imagination.
5. NEVER embarrass an audience member or assistant. If you do have to play the fool with them, apologise afterwards and thank them for being a sport. Take the invisible deck routine. You are actually getting lots of laughs on the cost of the assistant. Make sure the audience applauds them for this. If you want to take the mickey out of an assistant, make sure you make a bigger fool of yourself, or best of all just make yourself look stupid. Obviously there are times when audience members invite a nice jab or gag, that's fine, but remain polite and always acknowledge that they were good sports. Not only will the audience respect you more, but the person involved too.

# “CAN YOU MAKE A PIGEON APPEAR?”

## A LOOK AT THE NOBLE ART OF DOVE MAGIC

Mark Leveridge



The origins of who actually first thought of producing a dove are pretty much lost in the mists of time with some people claiming that there are records of magicians using birds as far back as 3000BC, but in modern times (i.e. the last 100 years), there can be little doubt that the popularity amongst contemporary magicians for dove magic was fuelled by the outstanding performances of Channing Pollock. Although the surge in popularity for this style of magic was highly noticeable, with no magic convention competition or gala show even to this day apparently being complete without such an act, commercial opportunities for dove acts have dwindled. Despite this fact, there are still those who are interested in adding such a signature style of magic to their repertoire, and so we thought it would be fun and useful to find out a bit more about what it takes to 'make a pigeon appear'.

To help us with the necessary information, we approached four experts in the field. From the United States we contacted two of the best known dove workers in the world, Lance Burton and Tony Clark, and then to balance the viewpoints of our American friends, we got in touch with two of the UK's finest, Scott Penrose and Brian Sefton. All four illustrious dove workers kindly provided much opinion and information which we are pleased to pass on to you now.

### PIGEON FANCIERS

The pigeon and the dove are related birds, hence the confusion amongst lay people as to exactly which bird a magician may well attempt to drag from a silk scarf, but normally magicians like to work with white 'Java' or 'Diamond' doves. Tony Clark also mentions a

browner dove called a Morning Dove and Brian Sefton says he has occasionally seen a Barbary Dove used, this being a pale brown dove with a darker collar. But most common is, of course, the white Java dove. So assuming this is the one to use, is it better to have the male or the female?



## IF YOU HAVE TOO MANY MALES IN THE AVIARY THEY TEND TO FIGHT - A BIT LIKE MAGICIANS IN A MAGIC CLUB, REALLY! SO, IT LOOKS LIKE THE FEMALE DOVE IS THE WAY TO GO ON BALANCE IF YOU WANT A QUIET LIFE.

"The gender comes into play depending on what you want the dove to do," says Lance Burton. "The females are smaller and less territorial while the males are better fliers."

Scott Penrose says that he finds the male birds calmer and easier to train, but the disadvantage of them is that they are much noisier and tend to 'coo' non stop! Also, if you have too many males in the aviary they tend to fight - a bit like magicians in a magic club, really! So, it looks like the female dove is the way to go on balance if you want a quiet life.

### HEAVY BREEDING

Right, so you know what dove you want but where are you going to get it? There are a number of potential outlets such as bird farms, animal sanctuaries, pet stores and specialist bird breeders. Brian gives some interesting advice on this:

"Obtaining doves can be tricky. Most authorities do not recommend buying from a pet shop as you never know what you are getting. It is preferable to find a local breeder so that you know the history of the bird. Look at the bird's feet. A pale pink foot means it is a young bird. The feet darken over time, so an elderly dove will have almost purple feet."

Tony says that you could approach a company that releases doves for weddings and special occasions as they may be able to sell you a suitable bird, or if not, point you in

the right direction. Scott suggests putting an advert on some specialist bird websites if you are having difficulty, or even try getting a bird from another magician which may be surplus to his requirements, although Scott does add the caveat that going down this route you may end up with a barmy bird that the other guy couldn't train!

### TRAIN SPOTTING

Before a dove can be used in a magic act it has to be trained. After all, magicians may know that doves come out silk hankies, but for the doves themselves this is not their natural way of behaving. So, I wondered whether there was a particularly suitable age of bird that was best for training. As you would perhaps expect, young doves are usually the preferred choice, as Tony explains.

"I think as soon as they are able to eat on their own, you should start working with them. For very young birds, I would simply pick them up each day so that we get to know each other. This will get the dove used to movements and noises so they will be easier to train. I would say when the doves are at least two months old, then you can start working with them."

Lance agrees that you should start training as soon as possible, although both Scott and Brian say that older doves can also be used to great effect. Quite a bit depends on the individual dove - some you may start to train from very young and yet they never really 'make it', while an

older dove can be brought in and due to its character need hardly any work at all to get it up to speed for use in the act. It's hard to spot which dove might be best for training in advance, you just have to get on with it and see how it turns out.

### ALL WORK AND NO PLAY

Getting a dove to work as part of your act is part taming and part training. The first job you need to do is to get the animal used to being handled by you. Gently moving the bird from hand to hand, feeding them by hand, this all familiarises the dove with you. Scott reckons that 90% of the job is getting this taming done, and only 10% is preparing the bird for being part of the tricks. Doves are generally docile and, as Brian puts it, they "would rather perch than fly", so all your early efforts should be aimed at simply gaining the confidence of the bird so that it knows that it will not be harmed.

Once that has been achieved, the next stage of the training will depend on what you expect the bird to do. If the idea is simply to produce the dove and then put it into a cage, then some birds may well allow you to do that with no further work on your part. But if you want the dove to fly away and then come back to you again, for instance, that's when the problems start. Tony explains the fundamentals of his approach to this difficult training process.

"In my videos and book I teach my "return flight" programme. This programme works with repetition and not starvation. My method involves a room made out of black cloth with a work light in the corner to act as a spotlight. It is a gradual process that takes about six weeks. Like people or magicians, some learn faster than others."

With something like the fly back you probably need to decide whether it is worth the effort. Scott says that he could never get it



## TOP 10 TIPS FOR DOVE WORKERS

Our four experts kindly offered up the following advice in a nutshell for all you budding dove workers out there.

1. Do not be mean to the birds. Remember they are living creatures.
2. A good tip for building cages is to make the floor area the same size as a double page of your local free paper with a mesh floor to stop the birds walking in their droppings
3. Practise, Practise, Practise!
4. Try to come up with some original effects with the doves. If you can't, be sure to do the standard effects perfectly
5. Learn as much about the subject as you can
6. Watch the videos of Channing Pollock
7. Read more than just magic books. Read about the care of livestock
8. Start with two doves and work your way up slowly
9. If you are squeamish about bird droppings, dove magic is not for you!
10. Audience perception about how you are handling the birds is very important - they have to believe you are treating them kindly.



**“YOU SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT THESE BIRDS ARE LIVING THINGS AND NOT JUST PROPS FOR YOUR ACT, AND SO THEY NEED LOOKING AFTER AND SHOULD RECEIVE DUE CARE AND ATTENTION AT ALL TIMES SO THAT THEY REMAIN HEALTHY.”**

**WANT TO KNOW MORE? HERE ARE SOME SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING, WATCHING AND INFORMATION:**

**‘The Encyclopaedia Of Dove Magic’ - Ian Adair**

**Watch any DVDs featuring Greg Frewin, Tony Clark and Shimada**

**‘How To Make A Living By Stealing - Doves Of Course’ - General Grant**

**If you go to Tony Clark’s website ([www.tonyclarkmagic.com](http://www.tonyclarkmagic.com)) and use the coupon code thanks20 you will get 20% off when making an online order.**

**Doves 101 DVD - Andy Amyx**

100%. “When it worked it looked good but when it did not work and the bird flew in another direction it damaged the continuity of the act. In the end I decided it was not worth the risk.”

One thing that Brian is very adamant about is that you should never clip a dove’s wings to prevent it flying. If it flies, he says you shouldn’t grab for it, but just let it settle somewhere and then go and get it. You should always remember that these birds are living things and not just props for your act, and so they need looking after and should receive due care and attention at all times so that they remain healthy.

**PRODUCTION NUMBER**

The most popular trick to perform with a dove is the dove production.

There are two main ways you can go with this. You can either use a prop (such as a production box or a dove pan), or you can go for a production via a body load. The first option is the easiest - buy the prop, read the instructions, rehearse and then go out and do it - while the second option takes a lot more work.

To produce a dove from under a silk or scarf, for instance, you are going to need a dove holder. There are many different designs available, but essentially they consist of a bag which the bird sits in and which is secured by velcro, or press studs or a zip arrangement and which is then loaded into your clothing. Some require both your hands to release the bird, others can be done single handed.

If you want to do a bare hand bird production you will need an invisible

dove harness. Scott explains how this is used.

“It is a harness in the true sense and is a white cord, ribbon or elastic affair that the dove wears and has a nylon loop attached to it. This enables the magician to produce the dove bare handed without any silks to cover the load. The dove wears the harness under its feathers. The dove needs to be produced at speed as there is no cover.”

Scott is actually not a fan of this type of harness as he feels that the birds often do not appear to like the sudden way that this needs to be used, and Brian has similar reservations. He says that the “invisible harness can be dangerous for the dove if used carelessly and are not recommended for the beginner”. Tony, on the other hand, has

## **“IN THE PAST IT WAS MUCH EASIER TO TRAVEL WITH LIVESTOCK, BUT THESE DAYS THERE ARE MUCH TIGHTER RULES AND THE COSTS HAVE GONE THROUGH THE ROOF.”**

designed (and indeed sells) his own invisible harness and naturally he is keen on it.

“As far as an invisible harness goes, I do push my design as it is the safest one out there and comes with a line that can be removed from the dove. I’ve had my invisible harnesses on the doves for months at a time with no problem at all. I designed these almost 20 years ago and they are one of my biggest sellers. So to me that says it all. Again, I only push it for the sake of the dove. I call it the “love your dove harness”.

### **THE BIG COVER UP**

If you intend to do body productions of doves you will need to fit the holders and/or harnesses into your performance clothing. You need to cover up the fact that you may have a number of doves sitting around your person, so your clothing must be loose enough to prevent any bulges from showing, but not so loose that after the doves have made their appearance the clothing looks far too big for you.

Depending on what you already wear, you may be able to get your existing suit altered to accommodate the holders (Brian advises you to use a theatrical tailor for this as they are more likely to understand what is required), or you can get something made bespoke. But don’t forget, you don’t HAVE to use body loads if you want to use doves. Some of the best dove acts are very restrained in the number of body steals that they use, as Scott points out:

“Brian Miller only used a couple of body steals and mostly used non-body load techniques and it was still a great act in its day. He and

his wife Audrey won the British Ring Shield with the act years ago.”

### **TRAVEL SICKNESS**

Working on the assumption that you have got the doves into your act, what about transporting them from venue to venue? As soon as you bring live animals into the reckoning it can produce problems, especially if you need to take them abroad. As Lance says, transporting doves both domestically and internationally is always “exciting”! In the past it was much easier to travel with livestock, but these days there are much tighter rules and the costs have gone through the roof.

Tony suggests that if you need to travel overseas with your doves, it is best if you contact the department of agriculture in your destination country in order to find out what papers may be needed and what additional costs may be incurred. Scott says that the cost of doing it all often amounts to more than the price of his own seat on the plane!

To get round this problem, many dove acts now leave their birds at home and try to borrow suitable birds from magicians in their destination country. It’s just about the only practical way to get round the difficulties, although naturally enough the fact that the doves are not your own and are therefore not used to you personally, may cause a few problems during your act. However, at least it means you can still perform mainly as you would at home.

In the UK, venues who book acts with livestock are bound by the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Also, there is the 1925 Performing

Animals Act which requires trainers and exhibitors of animals to be registered with the local authority. Under this Act, the police and officers of local authorities, who may include a vet, have the power to enter premises where animals are being trained and exhibited, and if cruelty and neglect is detected, magistrates’ courts can prohibit or restrict the training or exhibition of the animals and suspend or cancel the registration granted under the Act. Scott takes up the story:

“Many magicians tend to not be licensed and are ignorant of this legislation. I have held a licence for years but rarely get asked to produce it. However, if you work in London theatres they are very insistent on the documentation being produced. At the London Palladium the theatre declared to the London Veterinary Inspector that I was performing with doves and he dropped in to make a spot check on their welfare. The inspector has the right to examine the birds and all the props you work with.”

### **AM I BOVERED?**

With the difficulty of actually getting hold of suitable birds, the expense and awkwardness of trying to travel with them, the commitment to training and the long term need to look after them properly (doves can live 20 to 25 years!), it’s a wonder than anyone bothers to include them in their act. And yet they do.

So just what is the attraction? Our experts all know why THEY do it!

“The reaction is unmatched. When a live dove appears the reaction is spontaneous for the performer. I used to do doves when I was a young boy for birthday parties and the kids would just go nuts. That’s how I got hooked.” says Tony

Lance simply knows that “People love animals!”

Brian feels that “Generally, audiences like to see the ‘little birds’ provided that they do not suspect any ill treatment, and a favourable reaction does tend to make all the effort worthwhile.”

For Scott it’s the fact that “if you see a really good dove act then it has the potential to be one of the most magical acts that you will ever see....I continue to keep the birds and maintain the act as I love performing that type of magic and when it does go before the public they seem to enjoy it as they rarely see that kind of thing these days.”

So, there we are Dear Reader, they all think it’s worth the effort, so how about you? Are you going to be the next Channing Pollock? **ms**





# PRINCE ERIC

THE SULTAN OF STYLE!



Without doubt, Rafael is one of the world's top magicians. He's creative, funny, stylish, charismatic, and a thoroughly decent bloke, too! Graham Hey finds out more about this modest Belgian genius...

**Tell us about your upbringing, your family, and what it was like for a young magician in Belgium!**

I had a great childhood with loving parents, a fun brother & great family members who always supported me in my endeavours.

As a child, I was always goofing around and pretending to be various characters by dressing up in different costumes... I gave puppet shows for an audience of other puppets and stuffed animals.

Once I turned my bedroom into a haunted mansion with ghosts floating around & spiders falling from the ceiling, but then I had to ask my mother to go in to turn on the light for me because I was too afraid to enter by myself.

I got interested in clowning and magic at age 6 and my playtime was making up my own props, creating acts and performing them for family members.

At age 10 I joined the local magic club and I started to perform shows. First I did children's birthday parties and in later years I started to perform for adults. Since most people in Belgium have a wrong (negative) image of magicians this turned out to be difficult for me as a youngster to fight against any prejudices that they might have but it was also good schooling for me because even at a young age I realised that I needed to make my magic accessible by making it entertaining and to win over the audience this way.



**At what stage of your career did you realise you had the ability to create original, amazing routines?**

Very early on I did things my own way. As I didn't know that magic shops existed I created my own effects from cardboard boxes and paper tubes.

When I was older I finally got some "real" magic tricks from a magic shop but because I didn't care to read the instructions I made up my own routines and performed some tricks differently instead of the usual way.

It was only when I saw other magicians perform that I noticed that I did things a bit different....

“If you are lesser known you can get away with trial and error, but if you are making a living at performing there is little room for mistakes”.

**Did you always want to be a 'stage' performer?**

Most of all I wanted to entertain people and make them laugh and I still do...

**Who influenced you the most as a young man?**

I loved to watch the Paul Daniels shows on TV (my First English words were 'pick a card, any card') and on his shows I saw great magic presented in a comical fashion and I saw visual clowns like Avner the Eccentric & George Carl - and they influenced my love for visual comedy and magic. In later years I got creative input from friends and colleagues around the world, such as Jeff McBride, Eugene Burger, Gaetan Bloom, Avner the Eccentric, Kevin James and the late Ali Bongo. Another important friend and influence is Matinelli, formerly a magician himself but now the man who builds many of my props.



**Were you fanatical about magic - did it consume your life, or are you the sort of person who can 'switch off' and do things away from magic, too?**

I'm very passionate about magic art!

I used to think, create & perform magic all the time. Now I know that there are other, more important, things in life so I try to use the 'switch off' button more often (which is not always easy).

**Do you feel a lot of pressure to continue making each routine better than the last?**

Yes, people have more expectations so you have to surprise them when performing new routines which is not always easy because my acts such as the Dracula & Dove act took me several years to perfect. If you are lesser known you can get away with trial and error, but if you are making a living at performing there is little room for mistakes. When I have a new act I test-run it at shows where I'm welcome to try out new things in between other acts before showing them at magic conventions! ...And I also put pressure on myself because I am a perfectionist.

**How would you describe your working methods?**

Sometimes I have an act in mind and I start looking for presentation ideas & I try to find the right character for the act - this is how my dove act started. I had a dove act and was looking for a character that could present the act in a goofy way.

Sometimes I have a character in mind and I start looking for things he can do. For example, in my Dracula act I wanted to perform as a vampire and I looked at the movies to see what effects I could recreate on stage.

Sometimes there is a need to create an act, illusion or special effect, like for example the shows I did with the Belgian Music group. They needed magic that fitted their style and music. Another example is working for musicals. They tell me what needs to happen and it is my job, as a magic consultant, to bring the magical effects from the script onto the stage. The same applies to the creation of new illusions.

Sometimes you start with what the effect should look like and later you look for the method(s) - an example of this is my Sawing In Half on the sofa. It took me several years and several sofas to perfect and it uses 6 magic principles in this one prop. Sometimes you come up with an interesting method and you look for different ways that you could use it. Or you take an existing effect and you look for ways to change the look of the props.

...Or you try to use common items instead of magical looking items like Gaetan Bloom's Chinese Sticks done with bicycle pumps or my matrix effect done with the buttons on my jacket instead of coins. A good technique is to force yourself to create (imagine) new effects and you write them down. If



you read them back at a later date you will find things that inspire you and that you can massage into usable effects.

It is important to always keep your eyes open (and a notebook nearby). You never know when and where you will find inspiration (toy shop, supermarket, movie, song on the radio, dream...)

**I saw your incredible Vampire stage-routine at Blackpool - do you still perform this, or have you now introduced something else?**

Yes, I still perform my Vampire act as it is still in popular demand. It took me 7 years to perfect and it is one of my favourite acts to perform - and I probably





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always will as vampires never die ... I still perform my Dove act regularly and I have some new acts, including ‘a nutty professor’ illusion act, a comedy quick-change act, and a stand up comedy magic show amongst others!

**Many magicians have traditionally performed the same act for years - is it still possible to do this today, or must you keep changing?**

Yes, it is still possible on the condition that you have an act that is easy to travel with and that can work in any conditions without any language barriers.

The reason that I like to perform so many different acts is because I like to create and play different characters - but maybe one day I will concentrate on one show and spend the rest of my life perfecting it.

**What is the market for your act? Is the market becoming smaller? And how is magic regarded in Belgium - are there opportunities on TV there?**

I have different act & shows for different markets.

In Belgium I mostly perform my stand up comedy magic show sometimes combined with illusions. We don't have a magic tradition in Belgium so it is difficult to sell yourself as a magician, that's why I always sell myself as Rafael and not as a Magician. There are no TV oportunities, so that's why I've always tried to create my own.

**What is the biggest challenge you have had in the last year?**

Trying to find the right balance between my professional life and my private life.

And I also found out that several people around the world have copied my illusions without my permission so I spend a lot of energy trying to stop them.

What most amazes me is the excuses they use for their theft, like that I should be happy as they only steal from good magicians or that they improved my illusions because they made it bigger (and less deceptive) and changed the colour of the prop so it is different from mine!!!

One guy even said not to worry as he introduced his act to the audience by saying that ‘the next illusion that he will perform is from magician Rafael from Belgium!’ What I now try to do is gently educate the less informed or those not burdened by a conscience of

what is right and what is wrong. Always giving the inventors value and their due respect. Sadly enough, some people don't realise that by ripping off somebody else's illusion or act you are not only hurting the creator but mostly yourself, as most people make a fool of themself by pretending to be somebody else and most of the time they also expose the secret of the magic as their homemade props are nowhere near as deceptive as the originals built by a skilled builder.

**What is the best thing about working for other magicians?**

I like the creative pressure since you have to come up with new things and find solutions to problems. Also the work is ‘two way’ as I learn a lot from working with others and I see things through their eyes.

**Do you ever come up with an idea for someone else which you wished you could keep for yourself?**

Yes, the opening of my new theatre show was originally an idea I had for Hans Klok, but, thinking it over I called him the next day asking if he wouldn't mind not adding it to his show so that I could use it in my own show! Luckily for me he didn't mind.

**What are you working on at the moment?**

At the moment I'm working on the new show of Hans Klok called 'Hurricane' which I'm currently writing together with Hans.

I am also directing and creating the magic for this show and I will perform some comedy magic as his special guest star. We will tour for 5 months in Holland & Germany which should be a lot of fun.

I'm also working on a new full evening theatre show with a story line and plenty of 'never seen before' magical effects which should be ready in 2012! And in September of 2010 I celebrate my twenty five years on stage in the same theatre where I did my first big show at the age of ten! It will be a 2 day event with some guest acts & I will perform 10 different acts in this show.

**Film companies have admired your effects and have asked to buy them! Please tell us a bit about this...**

What I want to do with my acts is to have a storyline and do the special effects they do in the movies, but live onstage.

In my Dracula act I rise straight up out of a coffin, as film vampires have done in the past.

Some film companies have called me to rent my illusions because it's cheaper and more effective for them than to do it with computers. That's a big compliment, because it means that it looks good — good enough to be



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in the movies! Of course, I don't rent or sell my creations because I like to keep the magic secret!

**If you were to choose five other acts to perform with on the same night, who would you choose?**

I would choose some of my close friends like Kevin James, Gaetan Bloom, Arturo Brachetti, Hans Klok, Michael Goudeau, Avner the Eccentric (ok, that's six).

**Tell us about your dove act, and how it was developed...**

It was originally a serious act that I created for a theatre show in which I had to perform a magic act, but has since moved far from that path. I couldn't resist adding a gag, then another, and slowly my stage character became goofier. After Jeff McBride suggested that I take a look at what was then a new movie called Austin Powers: International Man of

Mystery, the character inspirations came together and the act as it is today was born. The finale of the act came through an interesting creative process: I wrote down all of the dove finales I knew about, then I looked for something no one had done. This led to the creation of my growing cage effect, in which I place 4 doves in a small cage, which enlarges to become a tall cage with a girl standing inside.



“The Beauty of Magic, gave me the opportunity to design illusions for Hans and his co-star, Pamela Anderson”.

In 2005 he performed in my show and over time our friendship became a close friendship. The Klok show that played in Las Vegas in 2007, The Beauty of Magic, gave me the opportunity to design illusions for Hans and his co-star, Pamela Anderson.

I taught magic to the actors in the show, such as Pamela and the children who played Hans when he was a child in a flashback scene. As the show's Illusion Consultant I came up with touches to speed up the presentations and strengthen the magic and help the lighting designer, choreographer, and director with questions they might have. I also created five new illusions for the production, such as the Eiffel Tower illusion (in which a cast of dancers entered the Tower, then vanished as one character emerged), a Girl From Body (performed without a box), the appearance of a girl on a chair, and a poster of Anderson that became the pin-up girl live and in person. Working with Hans was hard work as we worked 14-16 hours a day - but it was great and together we came up with some great stuff, like our version of the guillotine illusion that cuts Hans visibly into two pieces.

**Tell us several things people will not know about you!**

1. I love art especially René Magritte
2. My favourite food is Sushi and not Belgian fries - but that's a close second ;-)
3. At one point in my life I performed a serious manipulative cowboy act but I only did it once!

4. I created the 'stretchy ear' effect found in Marvin's freaky body illusions magic set (my name is on the DVD credits but it doesn't say what effect is mine).

**What makes you laugh?**

I love to involve my friends in a 'one of a kind' gag and even if I know what's coming, it gives me great pleasure to see how they pull it off.

One example was during the FISM convention in Dresden I gave David Williamson an idea for a gag. What happened was that after David Williamson's close-up show, Copperfield is making his way back to the dealers' room and the hallway is packed with people surrounding him trying to get autographs and pictures, when suddenly a girl is heard screaming: "David!, I can't believe it! It's David!" The crowd goes silent as the hysterical girl makes her way towards David Copperfield, and they part as she gets closer and closer. Copperfield goes to give her a hug when.... She walks right past him... And jumps into David Williamson's arms and gives him a kiss!

**What are some of the highlights in your career:**

Winning the Siegfried & Roy Golden Lion Award in Las Vegas in 2005. Performing the new version couch sawing for the first time at the FISM gala show in Holland which was a risk, performing something new for over 2000 magicians! And performing at the Monte Carlo Magic Stars and at the Blackpool Magic Convention! **ms**

[www.rafael.be](http://www.rafael.be)

**There is a lot of comedy in your performances - and dark humour - is comedy a great love of yours? And have you always been a comedian?**

My first goal in life was to entertain people with comedy. I wanted to become a clown but this was easier said than done!

A chance encounter introduced me to magic. I saw a clown who did magic tricks and that sparked my interest in magic!

I love to combine the two without exposing the magic for cheap laughs but I try to find the balance between strong magic and good comedy.

**Much of your visual humour seems to have been taken from Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin and been given it a bizarre twist - how would you describe your humour style?**

I have a wacky sense of humour ...I love visual comedy and no effort is too much for a gag.

I love to improvise and to come up with one liners but I am terrible at

telling jokes. I can never remember the punch lines. Somehow if I twist things just a little bit in my mind, I can see humour in just about anything.

What I don't like is insulting humour or making jokes at the expense of others, especially volunteers from the audience -which sadly so many magicians do, and it gives us all a bad name.

**Is it true you used to do a spoof act based on Hans Klok – and now you have ended up working for him? How did this come about?**

I had known Hans for many years as a colleague and when I needed to perform a 'serious' illusion act in a summer variety show he helped me with some illusions.

The act ended up looking a bit like a spoof of him including the over the top postures (movements) & wind machines! Later, after he saw my Vampire act in 2003 at the FISM gala in Den Haag, he invited me to perform in his show as his opening act.



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