



magicseen

KENNEDY

Blond Ambition

EDINBURGH
ROUND UP

What was HOT, What was ROT

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DEFINITELY DYNAMITE!

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KENNEDY

Northern Soul

At only 26 years old, mindreader Kennedy has already established himself as one of the UK's leading mentalists, with many top corporate credits to his name both in the UK and overseas. *magicseen*'s Graham Hey discovers that there's an ultra sharp-mind sitting right underneath this ultra-sharp hair-do!



Although born, bred and based in Newcastle, his accent takes me by surprise – there's hardly a trace of the North East there at all! Why is this? "Probably because I did a degree in drama at Newcastle University – and they beat it out of you," he laughs.

His first ever gigs were fake seances in University dorms – using tarot cards and weegie boards. "I read Ormond McGill's Encyclopedia of Hypnosis and someone bought me a plinth with a gargoyle on it, and it could open up, so I used it to contain a message from the spirits. People seemed to like what I did, and I'd get people asking me to put on another one of my 'spooky nights'. Then, some of my friends said they were going to form a small theatre company, and had a meeting - this was basically a p*ss up in a pub! There was a guy there – I think he was an estate agent – and he asked me to do an event he had planned..."

Even though you may think he's been around for quite a while, Kennedy has only been performing

as a mindreader since 2004, after a friend gave him a copy of a Robert Nelson book which included a complete mentalism act. "I'm under no illusions about how much I have to learn – I've got sh*t loads!

"But now, the magic profession has changed. Back in the 80's, the trick could be king – just look at Copperfield. Back then, it was all big visual dramas, where everyone was impressed with the effect for what it was. Look at him now, and you'll see that he has introduced a lot more of his personality as well. I think magic stagnated, and even now some people seem happy to nick material. If you did that in the comedy world – you'd be shot down and killed!" Kennedy stresses how important it is to be original. "Not everyone can create new effects, but they can put their own slant on classics. My act has my own imprint on it. There are some great guys out there: John Archer, Graham Jolley, Mel Mellers, all doing great routines in their own individual ways. It's so easy to just go out, buy the props, buy the routines...but it's just not me.



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“You HAVE to put your own spin on things, ‘cos most things have been done before. If you want to see it done brilliantly - see Pete Firman for full details! What I’m saying is: Don’t just watch a Richard Osterlind DVD and do it like he does...I mean, who would want that?”

Doing a drama degree must have covered performing – so was it any help with his chosen career? “Only to a point,” says the spiky-haired man of mystery, “I actually specialised in voice and vocal technique – and I don’t mean singing! I suppose it helped me understand what ‘character’ is.”

At only 26, and even he confesses he looks younger than his age, it could

be argued that his age could count against him because a young man can’t have the same credibility and maturity as ‘older’ mind readers.

“I know that there are gigs that I won’t get because I’m young,” he says, “but there are gigs which I probably do get because I’m young! If a client wants a no-risk, very professional, classy mindreader, then get Marc Paul. But if they want a more ‘risque’, at-the-edge type of performer with some northern humour – then they should

book me! I believe that there’s a marketplace

for everything. The problem is we have to make sure that what we’ve been dealt matches what we’re chasing. Some friends have said to me that I should have a dark, mysterious edge to me, dress in all black, and all that kind of stuff, but it’s just not me. What I’m selling seems to work.”

In these times of recession (I seem to have been saying that for years!), I ask the good-humoured Kennedy what the biggest hurdle is as a mentalist. His smart reply is: “That no-one knows they want one!” He tells me that people want business/motivational speakers, singers, comedians etc, but don’t realise the impact a ‘mindreader’ can have. “They know Derren Brown because he’s been on the telly so much. But this has created another problem: I’ve had to think of something Derren hasn’t done! I used to do a newspaper prediction, but Derren’s effort was so amazing that I could never match the sheer impact. The major hurdle is that he’s still breathing! I’m joking of course, but what he HAS done, is that people now know what one is, there’s a frame of reference for people.”

Kennedy is a stand-up performer, but I ask him if he ever does any close-up mentalism gigs? “No,” he says, emphatically, “I once did a three-week stint performing close-up in a hotel, and quite frankly, I wanted to die!” He seems to know what he wants, and has a clear idea of his whole performing identity. I ask him about his striking image. “None of it is by accident,” he says. “The whole brand has been worked on. I thought: ‘What is my real job?’ For the client it may be to sell more beer,

more tickets, and ultimately to get people to tell the client what a great event it was, and how he made the right decision with the entertainment! If people ask ‘Who did you have last year?’ - then I want to make it easy to answer, by my image. I always wear pointy shoes, have spiky hair...”

So, we’ve figured out that Kennedy is a one-off, who plans everything he does, but who are the people who inspire him to do what he does in the first place? “Well, for presentation, and for just being great, I’d say John Archer, without a doubt. The most inspiring act, and for creativity, then I go for Barry & Stuart! For pure fearlessness, I say Ian Rowland. People love him or hate him – I love him... he’s a brilliant, brilliant man! AND, for creativity for effects then it’s David Berglas.”

As a busy performer, Kennedy can look back and track his own development – and it can be a painful experience! “I have a DVD of myself from two or three years ago and it’s horrendous,” he says, wincing at the thought of it. “The best advice to improve is to hang around with great peers, because they make you raise your game. They make you question yourself: Was is a good act? Was it a good product? The last twelve months have seen the biggest development in my career so far, because I’ve now got the confidence to be funny. My closing line is: ‘Please stop booing!’” he jokes. “But I now have more confidence to just walk on stage and talk to people, just to be friendly – and if the comedy’s not rolling, then they’ve got some great mentalism to experience!”

So, does Kennedy analyse his performances? “I always have a dictaphone in my breast pocket and listen to it afterwards. Sometimes I forget to switch it off – and it can be gratifying if it picks up a company director saying how great the show was!” **MS**



“I ONCE DID A THREE-WEEK STINT PERFORMING CLOSE-UP IN A HOTEL, AND QUITE FRANKLY, I WANTED TO DIE!”



QUICKIES

Fav night in:

Some sort of a curry, with all eight seasons boxed set of TV series '24'



Big night out:

Theatre of some sort, or definitely something 'live'. A comedy club maybe – I just love to see talent on stage

Magic effect you wish you'd created:

'Sneak Thief' – but if I'd created it, I wouldn't have told anybody about it!

Music currently listening to:

Musicals – especially the soundtrack to 'Les Mis'.
Other stuff – Paulo Nutini, some hard rock, dance...



3 things we didn't know about you:

1. I once had a picture of a banana on my blog
2. I HATE cheese. I even have pizzas WITHOUT cheese!
3. I take 3 sugars in my tea

Best bits of 2010:

Performing at the Mensa annual gathering, and also performing at Alan Shearer's house for his 40th birthday party



Career high:

I was asked to perform as the headline act at a venue in London for the Yahoo re-branding launch. That was amazing.

JON ALLEN

Around the corner, around the world!

After winning the World IBM close-up magic competition in 1995, a whole world opened up for Jon Allen, and he's been travelling it ever since! Renowned for his outstanding close-up and stand-up performances, sharp sense of humour and for creating innovative magic effects, he is at the very top of his profession. Graham Hey asks the questions.

Jon's first job performing magic was in 1988 at a restaurant in Mill Hill, North London, and after meeting someone who was into magic – Marvin Berglas - he was offered a job working in Hamleys and Harrods as a demonstrator. During this time he was still working restaurants, moving on to Old Orleans and TGI Fridays in Covent Garden, which he worked for approximately eight years.

Says Jon, "During that time I joined The Magic Circle where I met people who were able to introduce me to a whole new avenue of work. It was also great to spend time with some of the true greats of British and world magic like David Berglas, Ali Bongo and Pat Page."

In 1994 Jon went to his first American convention and the following year won the World IBM close-up competition becoming only the second non-American to do so. This led to a lecture tour of the USA and Canada the following year. In 1998 he won the British IBM close-up competition and three years later won The Magic Circle close-up competition. Beginning as a close-up worker, he



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has now developed into a stylish stand-up performer, and I ask if he has a preference? "They both give me satisfaction for different reasons," he explains. "Close-up magic still gets a raw deal from the general public, and I think this is due to the amount of bad magic and bad magicians that are out there. It is very satisfying to perform a close-up set and see people genuinely enjoying the whole experience and feel true astonishment. I would like to think that when someone talks about

'The last magician I saw...' it will be a positive end of the sentence!"

So what about stand-up? "Well, I'm enjoying cabaret (or at least stand up) magic more and more. The satisfaction comes from creating an act that is not just a series of tricks but has a definite theme. I'm never satisfied because once I am, it means I won't work as hard on it. I always try to find ways to improve even the little things. I must admit, it is a great feeling to have a room full of people enjoying themselves

as a result of the act.

"Why do people want to do stand up? I'm sure a number do it for self-indulgent egotism. They learned the tricks so they're going to do them. No regard for the audience or magic. They want to get up in front of people and show off. However, there are those who genuinely want to entertain, enthral and thrill their audiences. The magic is not done for its own sake but as a vehicle for the performer to say something. This is what great





“TOO MANY MAGICIANS ARE IMMERSSED IN THE METHODS OR THE EFFECTS BUT MISS THE POINT OF MAKING THE AUDIENCE CARE.”

magic, close-up or stand up, is all about. It might be, 'I'm here to give you a great time' or it could be 'think about the world around you.'”

At **magicseen**, we've seen hundreds and hundreds of magicians performing at all levels, from world champions to hobbyists. I ask Jon if there's any common point which magicians tend to overlook? “The point is what is missed! So much magic can be summed up by 'SYPI' which stands for 'So Your Point Is?' People don't care about things like cards finding other cards or half dollars changing to English coins then Chinese Coins. They may prove to be an interesting puzzle for a short time but long term, it means nothing.

“Too many magicians are immersed in the methods or the effects but miss the point of making the audience care. Too many tricks are simply solutions to problems that didn't need solving. The routine, and usually the presentation, simply becomes a process to fulfill the magician's desire to achieve a pointless effect.

“One of the worst sayings in magic is, 'The effect is everything'. It isn't. The experience the audience gets from the magic they see is everything. If you do what you feel is the greatest effect in the world and the audience doesn't care about it, they win... every time.”

Jon has performed at hundreds of corporate events, and I ask him what clients expect from a magician? “Most clients probably expect very little from the magician. I think the majority just want someone to go round doing tricks for people. They think 'magic' would be a fun thing to have without realising that booking 'magic' is like booking a piano; how good it is depends on who the performer is.

“What (I like to think) I give them is more than just a trick machine but someone with a genuine interest in their event and the experience of thousands of similar ones. I very rarely talk about the tricks but about what I do for an event (not 'at') and how I can have a positive impact on their event. Above all, I try and give them the sense that they have absolutely got the right person to be at their event.”





QUICKIES

For breakfast I had.... Lunch.

Last movie I saw was: The last good film was the remarkably brilliant Inception.

First crush was: Laura Bernard

My biggest mistake was: Not having a work visa in the USA.

I'm lucky because: I now have a work visa for the USA.

Dream gig line-up:

A close-up gig with Chad Long, David Williamson, Rick Merrill, Gregory Wilson, Richard Sanders & Garrett

Thomas. They'd probably try to beat us down on price for a group booking.

David Copperfield in a fight with Ian

Keable: Who would win? Keable to win in the live show; Copperfield in the 'edited for TV version'.



Fav country performed in?

A small group of islands in the South Pacific called Vanuatu. Paradise copied it.

Worst habit around the house:

Allowing my magic stuff to somehow seep out of the agreed confines of my office.

The moment you realised you were

good was: Seeing a magician in the restaurant I was at on my last day as a student and I thought, "I'm better than that. I could earn money from magic?!"

Pet peeves in magic?:

Use of the word 'Ultimate' to describe a trick. It's nonsensical and egotistical. Also, use of the word 'spectator' when referring to people and especially those who take part in routines.

Fav quote: If I can offer two: "I've learned that people will forget what you said; people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." and "If it ain't broke, break it."



“I REMEMBER SOMEONE HAD A BUNCH OF CARD FEKES AND I WONDERED WHAT I COULD DO WITH THEM. THE DECK I CAME UP WITH HAD LIMITED SALES BUT I HAD GOT THE MANUFACTURING BUG. I ALSO REALISED IT WAS ALSO A NICE WAY TO BRING IN MORE MONEY!”



Away from performing, Jon also releases original effects. He originally began putting out magic because he felt it was an extension to creating his own routines and presentations. “I remember someone had a bunch of card fekes and I wondered what I could do with them. The deck I came up with had limited sales but I had got the manufacturing bug. I also realised it was also a nice way to bring in more money!

“The first effect I ever put out was called Phobia. While it was still in development, I called my friend Danny Archer and told him only a little bit about the effect. He asked me to explain my whole idea and he was stunned. Less than one hour earlier, another friend of his, a teacher in middle America I had never heard of or met, had phoned him with virtually the identical routine and had given it the same name! I rushed to get mine on the market and both his and mine were released at the same time.”

Jon tells me that he’s had some “not-so-special releases”, but now feels like he’s hit his stride. “I am pleased with all of my releases, but three are special. Double Back is quick and simple yet very powerful;

The Destination Box frames virtually every close-up set I perform and for me ticks more boxes (no pun intended) than any other card to box. The Silent Treatment is the effect of which I am most proud. It has been performed by the likes of Jason Alexander and Mac King and I have seen several variations on the Internet.

“The reason it is special to me is because, as far as I am aware, the routine is unique. Magic is very linear. You start the routine, something happens and there’s a surprise at the end. However, the ending has nothing to do with why you did the routine. When a note is in a lemon, that is not why you put it in an envelope and burnt it; when the card ends up in the box, that’s not why it kept coming to the top of the deck. However, in The Silent Treatment, the finale explains why you have been performing the trick in the manner that you have. In other words, the finale provides the rationale for doing the routine in the first place. I have asked many knowledgeable magicians if there is another routine like it and none have been able to come up with one. Maybe that’s something for your readers to find!”

Jon is currently working on several different things, one of which is a new Key-bending effect called Flexion, which he hopes to have released any time now. “I will also be re-releasing Double Back and I am still working on a stage version of the Silent Treatment. I have some other effects in my head but those are for further down the line...” He also reveals that he’s working on a stage act based on people’s perceptions of magicians. “It’s a lot of fun and I think it opens up a lot of presentational possibilities.”

Having worked with many of the world’s top magicians, I ask if any of them have left him in awe? “Awe is a powerful word!” he says, contemplating his choices. “David Williamson is a genius who has influenced me more than anyone;

Garrett Thomas performs what looks as close to real magic as I have seen; John Archer is one of the cleverest and absolute funniest magicians I have the privilege of calling a friend (which he'll deny of course!). His attention to detail is amazing."

Discussing inspiration, Jon tells me that or a while, he has been more into plots and presentations than effects. "I would much rather spend time working out how to make a simple trick memorable than debating whether a top change is better than a pass. This is born out in my book 'Experience: The Magic of Jon Allen'. So many routines are simple but have a strong presentational hook. I also tell people to simply play. By playing with props, objects, plots, presentations or anything, you will come up with something new and interesting. I keep a notebook and write down my ideas, no matter how stupid or vague.

"I also get inspiration from other entertainment forms. I am a huge fan of stand up comedians Eddie Izzard, Ellen Degeneres and Jerry Seinfeld. Victor Borge was a remarkable musician and comedian. While they may not inspire tricks or methods, I've learnt a great deal from their delivery, routining, and thought processes...

"I get a lot of inspiration from films. So much attention is (usually) given to every aspect of creating a visual spectacle and telling of the story. The Silent Treatment was, in part, inspired by the film 'The Others' which has a memorable moment near the end (I don't want to spoil things for those that haven't seen it). I remember coming out of the cinema thinking, "I'd love to come up with a magic trick like that'. There is a moment that provides a genuine moment of bewilderment that makes the audience consider the film they have just watched. Those who have seen it should see the comparison."



Q&A

Tell us a bit about your lecture tour, where and what will you be doing?

As you read this, I will be in South Africa to help celebrate 30 years of The College of Magic. It does an amazing job and I'm honoured to be invited this year. The following week I'll be in France on a two week lecture tour then straight after that it's a week lecturing and performing in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Next year I'll be over in the USA quite a bit. I'll be at FFFF as well as a few other conventions. I'm also hoping to visit California for the first time in 15 years for some lectures and to catch up with friends.

How do you feel in the build-up to performing cabaret?

I wonder why all my nerve endings are in my bowels. I learnt a big lesson about performing on stage from Jeff McBride that I put into operation every time now. It not only helps to relax me before a show but also means the chances of success are increased.

What annoys you most about performing close-up?

When I have introduced myself to a group of adults and one says, "Oh, let me go and get 'Alice'. I wait and the person

comes back with a small child in tow, who gets put front and centre and the adults all expect it to be played towards the child. It's the instinct that magic is for kids that bothers me. After each trick, there is usually a look to the child with the patronizing, "Ooooh, Alice, how did he do that?" question. She's about 5 years old for goodness sake!

You're going out to do close-up: what do you take with you? (besides an invoice!!)

I take with me more than I need! I said before that I take routines and props with me I may not need but if the circumstances are right, I'm prepared. I always take with me a Silent Treatment because there may be a deaf person there or the music may be way too loud. I take a few 'gag' items but to show I am prepared for things rather than to show them. I will also take some effects that need working on and if I think the time is right, I'll try them out. A tip I learned as well is to take some stand up or parlour items. I've done parties where I was booked for close-up but they wanted a short stand up act at the end to finish off. Some routines can be performed as large close-up or small stand up so, again, it's good to be prepared.

Magicians on Britain's Got Talent! How do you feel about that?

I wish they had somewhere near a fraction of the ability the good magicians have got on America's Got Talent.

Do you find being a magician a lonely existence?

Sometimes at certain magic events I wish it were more lonely! The loneliest times are when an event has been exceptional; people have been raving about me; there have been standing ovations; the booker's face tells me just how much it means to her... then I have a 3 hour drive back home in the pouring rain at 10 o'clock at night.

However, magic has enabled me to not only meet, but become friends with incredible people from around the world. Skype is a wonderful tool! While the saying, "Magic attracts the sociably inept" is true to a certain extent, you will always be able to make friends with others who share your interest... if you so wish.

The greatest live magic performance you've ever seen is?

One performance that sticks out is seeing Rick Merrill at FFFF performing his 'Home School' act. It was extraordinarily magical and very funny. I remember watching and thinking this is what it must be like to be a laymen! That's when you know you are watching something special.

How do you get from being 'just another magician' to become a decent-earner on the corporate scene, and to get those more glamorous gigs?

Can. Worms. OMG! It comes down to what you can offer that sets you apart from being JAM (Hey I like that!) and whether the potential client feels they can work with you. Having a professional looking website helps as a first step. Do you portray a corporate image? People's instincts play a big part so, and it's a cliché, you need to make a good first impression. What is it about you that will make people want to make the booking with you and not another magician? "I'm different" doesn't mean a thing to people.

Same thing goes for when you talk to them on the phone. Can you talk to corporate clients as an equal? Do you seem like the sort of person the company wants mingling amongst their business clients and suppliers? The same goes for the glamorous gigs. Usually, everything is of a very high standard. Having a magician who is out of their depth will reflect badly on the booker. Give them no reason to think you would not fit in. **MS**

KEEPING IN CONTACT



Start-Up Guide To Contact Juggling

By Lawrence Turner

While a few of the basic manipulations involved in contact juggling (generally just body rolls) have been around for a very long time, the art as we know it today was developed by Michael Moschen, who didn't actually call it contact juggling but preferred to describe it as "dynamic manipulation". You will have all seen Michael Moschen's hands as the hands of David Bowie in Labyrinth (perhaps the only use of contact juggling in a mass pop culture media).

Contact juggling is a form of "juggling" where the ball doesn't leave the performer's body (or that's the idea, although there is certainly room for throwing the ball at some points). It is not limited to just using one ball but can use several. It can be broken down into 3 main sections:

Body Rolls: Where the ball is rolled over the hands, from hand to hand, along the arms, over the chest or wherever the performer can manage to roll a ball!

Palm Spins: Mostly used for multi-balling, palm spinning involves holding up to about 4 balls in one hand and spinning them round each other. When combined with some isolation and passing the balls between the hands, this can be one of the most beautiful parts of contact juggling.

Isolations: Rather than rolling the ball around your hands or body, the ball is seen to stay in the same spot in space and the performer's hand and body move around the ball. A perfectly isolated single ball palm spin can be a very beautiful and confusing thing to see - your brain tells you the ball should be moving, but there it stays perfectly stationary. A well maintained and defect-free ball is pretty much essential for effective isolations.

There are of course a few moves that don't strictly fall into any of these categories such as Stalls, where the performer stops a roll at some point and balances the ball on some part of

their body - elbows and heads are a favourite for this; and there are multiball moves that don't quite fit into any of these categories either, but they are the main three and most other moves/manipulations can be made up of a combination of them.

Getting Into Contact Juggling

This can be very cheap to get into, but can get somewhat expensive once you start taking it seriously. All you need to get you going is a stage ball, available from any good juggling shop or website for a few pounds.

I would recommend a 100mm sized ball to begin with, as a lot of the moves are far harder with a smaller ball. Of course, if you have small hands, try a smaller ball, perhaps one measuring 70/75mm.

These balls would mostly be used for single ball tricks. If you want to get into multi-balling, then stage balls aren't sufficient and you'll probably need to buy a handful (I recommend at least 4 to start with) of smaller acrylic balls.

Here the size of the ball becomes a lot more about personal taste. The best way to find out what suits you, would be to visit a juggling shop and ask the assistant. Acrylics, or more specifically clear acrylics, are the kind of ball most associated with contact juggling and are the "crystal" balls you see most (like in Labyrinth). Acrylics can be quite expensive - it's not uncommon to find a 100mm clear acrylic selling at around £50 - and so this is when it starts getting expensive. But of course, the more you spend, the better it's going to look!

Getting Info About Contact Juggling

To learn how to contact juggle you could get yourself over to www.contactjuggling.org where you can find plenty of free written tutorials. If you want a book, the standard reading is James Ernest's "Contact Juggling". For DVDs, there are visual versions of James Ernest's book on the previously mentioned website, or there is "The Visual Encyclopedia



of Contact Juggling” by Matt Olsen. So there’s something to suit everyone’s budget! Again, the higher the price the better quality of product and as every magician knows, it’s a lot easier to learn from a video than it is from a book.

Contact Juggling In Magic

The most obvious place for some contact juggling in a magic routine is during a zombie ball effect, or some form of floating ball trick. By finding a ball that is the same size and colour as your gimmick, you could switch between the two to add an extra touch to the routine and this could also add a fair amount of convincing to it.

Using contact juggling as a build up to, or as a conclusion to, a routine like this gives a greater amount of justification for including it, rather than just randomly adding some without really associating it with the magic.

As an idea, you could do your little zombie ball routine then switch out your zombie ball for your contact ball and using a combination of isolations and hand movements, copy the same movements the zombie made. Using isolations in this way can give the impression that the ball is moving of its own free will. Of course, it won’t look like it’s actually floating, but the illusion is as close as it comes without using any gimmicks.

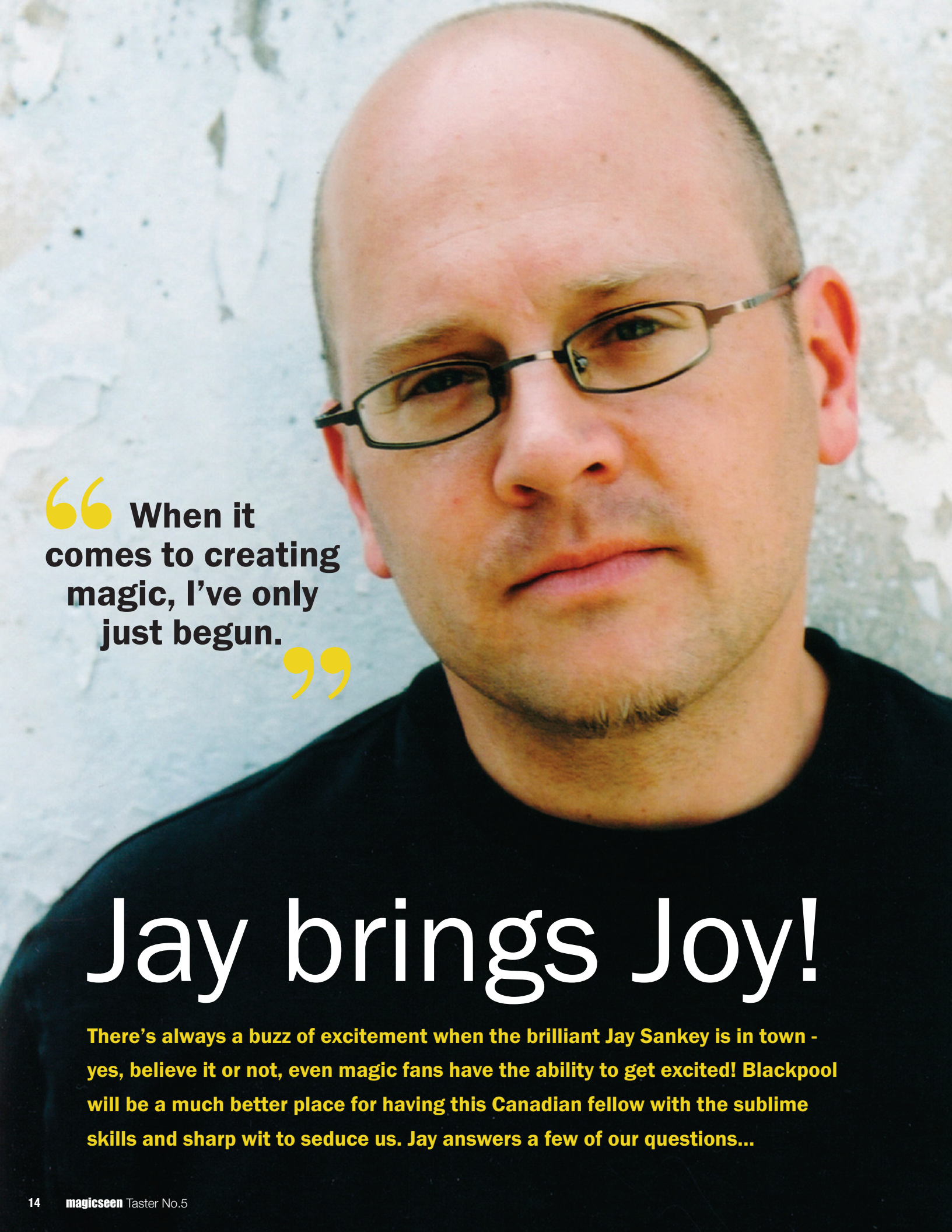
There are several other forms of object manipulation using pretty much anything a performer can get his hands on. Some ring

manipulation has obvious uses in a linking rings routine etc...

Unfortunately, because magic tends to use small size balls (such as in the Cups and Balls, for example) it limits the amount that contact juggling can be interwoven with the magic. But maybe there is room yet for someone to come up with a good combination! **ms**

(Ed Note: Armando Lucero, the top close up performer from the USA, uses contact juggling as part of his close up show. His performance with a single ball is beautiful to watch and proves that it is a great way to captivate the attention of an audience!)





“ When it comes to creating magic, I’ve only just begun. ”

Jay brings Joy!

There’s always a buzz of excitement when the brilliant Jay Sankey is in town - yes, believe it or not, even magic fans have the ability to get excited! Blackpool will be a much better place for having this Canadian fellow with the sublime skills and sharp wit to seduce us. Jay answers a few of our questions...

Are you a fan of conventions & competitions?

Absolutely. I'm a fan of anything that fans the fires of a people's passion for magic. ("Fans!" Get it? Yeah, yeah, they can't all be winners). For many people, conventions and competitions are a great way to focus and fuel their interest in magic. At the same time, I think people should be very careful that they don't become intimidated or overwhelmed by these events and leave feeling deflated rather than excited. Some people who try to absorb too much at a convention or big competition can end up feeling drained or jaded and that's the worst way to nurture your love of magic.

What was the last competition you performed in?

I haven't performed in a magic competition in almost 30 years. The last competition I entered was as a young boy at a "magic camp" organised by Tannen's in the US. If I recall correctly, I did a few original coin tricks including some sort of "coin through jacket lining" effect. All I can remember is some line about "the weave in tweed" and how I was convinced it was a funny line.

What are your previous experiences of Blackpool?

Blackpool is incredible. I always get a huge kick out of being 1 of 5,000 magicians who invade a small British town for a few days. The competitions and performances are amazing, but I also get a charge walking through the streets and spotting some of the biggest names in magic strolling around like "ordinary people." The whole thing has a real "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" vibe for me.

If you were responsible for putting on a show - which handful of magicians would you like to see perform? Close-up or stand-up. And why?

There are a great many magicians whose work I admire, but the first names that come to mind are Richard Sanders, Juan Tamariz, Shoot Ogawa, David Acer and Eric Mead. Sanders is just such a stellar combination of funny and really magical. Tamariz is so smart, subtle, warm and present/accessible. Ogawa blows my mind with his heart stopping visuals. Acer is just such a lovely person and always makes me laugh my butt off. And Mead, he's a true student of the art, always learning, always thinking, and it comes out in his work, every gesture, every humble word. (I'd also love to see a close-up show featuring Kuda Bux and Heba Haba Al, but that's only because I groove ghosts and I've gone through periods in my life where I've obsessively said the names of both quite dead magi over and over and over again. Their names are just THAT catchy!)



Has there been one single thing in the past 12 months that has really blown your mind?

My darling daughter Madelaine was born on January 18, 2006, and she's been blowing my mind ever since. (My sweet 3-year old boy Mason has been blowing my mind for years!)

You are a prolific inventor of effects - can you sleep at night!?

Some nights I simply can't. Too many ideas swirling around in my head demanding to be written down and fleshed-out. So I drag my tired bones out of bed, shuffle downstairs, find a notepad and pen and take dictation for an hour or so. I think of myself as a kind of servant with The Ideas as the master. Other nights, as I lie in bed I am able to resist tip-toeing into the "magic mindset," and on those nights, sleep quickly takes me.

What was the last book you read?

"Becoming Attached" by Robert Karen PHD. It's about first relationships and how they shape our capacity to love.

Last movie watched?

I've been on a bit of an Oliver Stone binge recently. My wonderful wife Lisa likes sports movies (with their tense, sweaty palms climaxes) so we watched "Any Given Sunday" a few nights ago and both thoroughly enjoyed it. We rented "World Trade Center" the following night, but it lacks the usual Oliver Stone bells and whistles and we experienced it as slow and surprisingly dull.

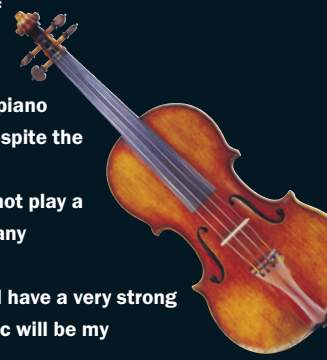
Favourite UK/European magicians?

I am a big Derren Brown fan. Talk about making effects MEANINGFUL and giving them a credible and engaging context. Superb! **MS**

5

THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT JAY!

1. I have written a few screenplays as well as a still-unpublished non-fiction book called "The Connection Instinct" exploring the painful fictions that give rise to our seminal sense of separateness.
2. I have a large scar on the first knuckle of my left index finger from when, as a 9-year old amateur filmmaker, I cut off the head of a tiny plastic toy figure (an African tribesman to be exact) with an X-acto knife in preparation for a post-battle scene...the knife slipped and sliced me to the bone.
3. I've been working on a silent act for 2 years. I sometimes feel that "I've been forever getting by on my wit" and I long to SHUT UP and let the magic do the talking.
4. As a teenager I briefly experimented with a variety of instruments including harp, timpani, violin, piano and clarinet. Despite the fact that at this point I cannot play a single song on any instrument known to man, I have a very strong belief that music will be my "last career."
5. When it comes to creating magic, I've only just begun.



www.sankeymagic.com



HAVE A LOOK AT MY PACKAGE

by Daniel Lander

There exists on YouTube a curious subculture of exhibitionists and narcissists, ready to share with their webcams what is normally a very private and very intimate activity.

These are the “unboxers,” and what they do is take you through the opening of their just-received magic packages and parcels. Fresh from their favourite magic dealers, these boxes, mailing-bags and jiffy packs are excitedly unsealed -

packing-peanuts spewing over bedroom carpets, and magic goodies forming piles of treasured booty. All human life is here: the anticipation; the frustrations; the exhilaration; the disappointments; the countless Ellusionist decks.

YouTube user MrAlexMagic is particularly keen that we should see his magic purchases, even turning his webcam on in the hurried few minutes between the postman

arriving and his leaving for school. In school-uniform and with promises of a second part to the video should his battery run out, he takes us through his decks and pk equipment with a hushed reverence worthy of a religious relic. It is the essence of Christmas Day morning in 133 seconds, and MrAlex is just as delighted with his shipping note as he is with all his actual magic...including his Ellusionist decks.

In fact, the shipping note/receipt often plays a star part in these videos. Just as fascinating as any of the magic products, the stars will fumble and open the A4 sheets, peruse and digest the banal contents of it, and yet still somehow decide this is worthy of our attention and hold it up to the camera for a low-resolution extreme close-up. It can turn into like watching a car-crash in slow motion; you see the unfolding of the sheet of paper, you see the scanning of the text, and you find yourself shouting out, “no, it’s just the shipping note, we don’t need to see it!” But they show it anyway. And their Ellusionist decks.

The preponderance of males in the magic world is, naturally, reflected in this area too. User TheAmazingSavanna competes well with the boys by combining genres to make an “unboxing road-movie,” whilst being the passenger in a moving car. Curiously, this element doesn’t add to the excitement, but Savanna must be congratulated for trying to stretch the boundaries of the art form, whilst simultaneously demonstrating that a \$6 magic colouring book can be just as prized as a handmade O’Connell wallet or Todd Lassen coin gaffs...or a very collectable Ellusionist deck.

Decks of cards do tend to dominate what is pulled out of the parcels and packets, so user sk8terdp is worth sitting down with

the popcorn and watching, for the variety on show. He shares with us his acquisition of a smorgasbord of magic: dancing canes, thread genies, stiff ropes, dimes and pennies...oh, and Ellusionist decks.

Yes, watching these videos it is very easy to be condescending, it is very easy to be cynical. Yet they break down national and cultural differences to reveal the universal of the passion, fever and thrill that magic can provoke in those who love it. They reassure when one reflects on the giddy feelings of receiving one’s own magic deliveries - that you are not the only one. They demonstrate that Americans like to use dirty great lethal-looking knives to open even the most straightforward packet, containing, say, an Ellusionist deck.

Finally, I want to direct you towards one of my favourite videos. YouTube user mistersage1’s five-minute epic “my dudethatscoolmagic package opening.” First of all, he is terribly British and understated, and practically undermines everything I’ve previously written about the excitement. Secondly, he not only reads from, and shows us, his shipping note, he also refers to it as “pretty cool.” Thirdly, he goes one stage further than most and holds up to his camera an individual packing-peanut, referring to it poetically as an “S-shaped thingy.” Bless him, he’s even surprised that the cards he takes out of a red Bicycle case are red-backed cards. So next time you receive some magic in the mail, think how much the world could be served by making it into a public event that millions can be invited to. Even if we don’t see you performing with them, let’s see those tricks and DVDs, books and, oh yes, those Ellusionist decks, make their way up that virtual red carpet and enter your life. It might be the start of making your audience spellbound. Or at least parcel tape-bound. **ms**



SAME TIME, SAME PLACE

Aldo Colombini

This effect is really a fantastic one. It is based on an idea by the late Steve Pressley.

EFFECT:

You apparently know in advance the card that a spectator will select!

PERFORMANCE:

Take back a shuffled deck and say, "Usually magicians are able to find cards because they know in advance which card a spectator will choose." Fan the cards face down and remove one card. Square the other cards face up in the left hand and insert the card, without showing its face, face down in the middle of the face-up deck.

Spread the cards showing the face-down card in the middle. Square the cards and obtain a break below the card that lies directly under the face-down prediction. With a double undercut, bring the two cards to the bottom of the deck (the face-down card is now second from the bottom in the face-up deck).

Turn the deck face down (the reversed card is face

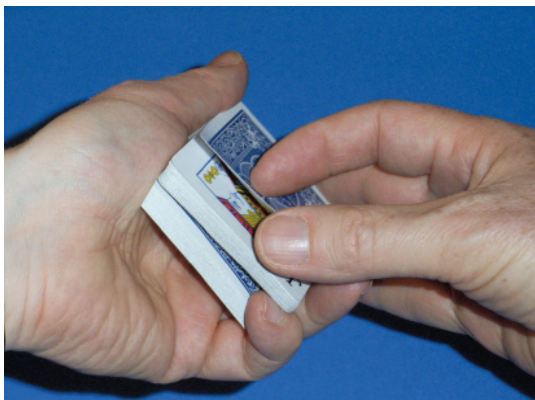


Fig 1

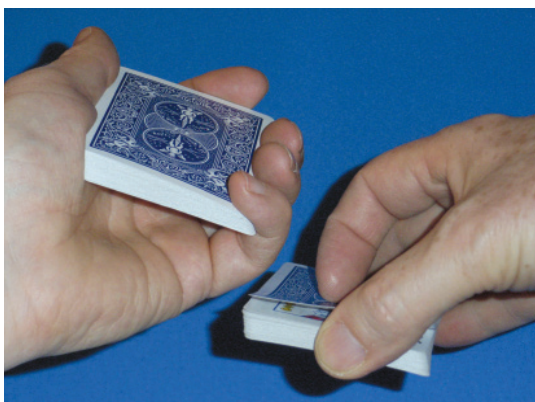


Fig 2



Fig 3

up second from the top) and have a card selected without exposing the reversed card. After the selection is complete, your right hand cuts the top half of the deck and the left-hand lower half is offered to the spectator so that he can place his card on top. Place the right-hand half on

top but keep a break between the two portions.

Execute the Marlo's cover cut, which will bring the selected card on top of the deck, directly onto the face-up card. Briefly: the left little finger has a break over the selected card. The right thumb obtains a break

below the top card of the deck. Fig.1. The right hand cuts the top half of the deck—all the cards above the little finger break—and brings them to the bottom. Fig.2. The right thumb keeps the break in the middle of the deck. The right hand takes all the cards above the break but the left thumb at the same time slides off the top card that falls onto the bottom portion directly over the reversed card. Fig.3 shows an exposed view of this happening. Place the right-hand half to the bottom.

Position check: the selected card is face down on top followed by the face-up card followed by the remainder of the face down deck.

Turn the deck face up and spread some cards showing that the selected card is not near the bottom of the deck. Square and turn the deck over. Lift six or seven cards with the right hand and flip them over onto the remainder of the deck. Spread the face-up cards as far as the first face down card, showing them to be indifferent and flip them face down on top. (With this subtle move you have secretly reversed the selected card face up and turned the other card face down.)

Casually cut the deck to centralize the reversed card. Spread the cards face up showing the face-down card in the middle, saying that your card is still there and has been from the very beginning. Turn it over and show it is the selected card.

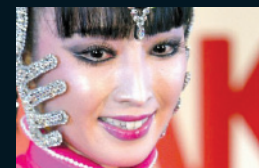
USELESS MAGIC TRIVIA!!

Medieval magicians used to place celery seeds inside of their shoes as they believed that doing this would help them to fly!



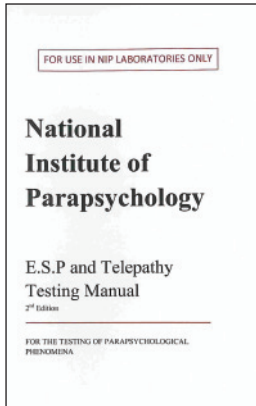
Professor Kathy Sykes, the delightful TV presenter, who used to present Tomorrow's World for the BBC, used to be a magician's assistant in Florence, Italy.

Paul Daniels' real name is: Newton Edward Daniels



Japanese magician Princess Tenko was almost killed in 2007 when a sword trick went wrong. The illusionist was trapped in a box by 10 metal swords during a show in the Japanese city of Sabae, breaking several ribs and her right cheek.

One of the swords "would have been stuck in her right eye if it were one centimetre higher", her manager Noboru Ochiai said at the time. Renowned for her elaborate costumes and doll make-up, the magician was injured performing a trick billed as The Spike Illusion in the Face of Death.



THE TEST BOOK - BOOK TEST

Paul Carnazzo

Available from:
www.merlinswakefield.com
Price: £49.95

Now here's something interesting for anyone who wants to include some pseudo thought transference in their act. Firstly do not be misled by the title - this is NOT a book test in the traditional sense. Instead you are supplied with a wire bound book which purports to contain a number of 'tests' which have been put together by the National Institute of Parapsychology to assess whether the performer and the spectators can link minds and pass information to each other.

Essentially each page of the book contains lists of numbers, or words, or object drawings or symbols, and these are used in various ways by the performer to prove that thought transference is possible. Sometimes the presentational emphasis is that a spectator is receiving a thought, other times that he is sending one. The methods used are

technically straightforward, but often good presentation skills will be required as many of the effects rely on subtle use of equivoque or some form of psychological forcing, and clumsy application of these ruses will ruin the purity of the intended effects. So I would suggest that while those already versed in the work of performers such as Banachek or Bob Cassidy will feel very much at home, as Paul Carnazzo has based some of his ideas on their earlier efforts, newcomers will need to practise well before attempting to pull off some of the more demanding effects.

So what do you get for nearly 50 quid? Well, firstly the nicely produced wire bound A5 size Book Of Tests which is printed on good quality paper with glossy card covers. This book is going to be handled at times by the audience so needs to withstand a fair amount of wear and tear.

Next, you get a set of a dozen pieces of card. These are printed on one side with a suitably obtuse looking symbol, and text that tells you that they have apparently been supplied by the National Institute of Parapsychology. The other side of these cards is blank and at some stage before you can begin to use the cards in any of the tests, you are going to need to draw symbols or write words on the blank sides and then cover them with pieces of supplied transparent self adhesive

film, cutting it neatly to size. This preparation needs to be done carefully but only once. Next you are supplied with a gimmicked Sharpie pen which has been prepared to work as a dry erase marker pen (as opposed to a permanent marker that Sharpies normally come as).

Finally, you receive an A5 size 52 page centre stapled instruction booklet which takes you through all the necessary preparations, handlings and presentations. These instructions are quite detailed and perfectly adequate for getting you up and running with the tests.

If you are considering adding this idea to your act, there are a couple of things for you to consider. Firstly, what type of act do you wish it to be part of? It seems to me that to get the best out of this you would not want to pick just one of the tests and do it in isolation, as the impact would be less than if you do a sequence of them since it builds as it goes. While you wouldn't probably look to do all 10 tests, several would make a good sequence and be logical as it builds the impact as it progresses. You certainly wouldn't want to include this as part of a magic act, since the idea is supposed to be that you are doing genuine parapsychological tests rather than magic tricks, and even as a section of a mentalism act, you would want to make sure the rest of your material fitted in

with this style too.

The other main consideration is where you could do this material. The Test Book is A5 in size and spectators are repeatedly required to look at things in the book.

Although you could present this as part of a stage spot, the size of the book suggests to me that a close up show where the audience is smaller and far nearer would be better. In fact, I think this would work very well at a private party where everyone is relaxed, knows each other, and where there is plenty of time and the minimum of distraction.

Much of the work here relies on subtle intonation and clever use of words and speech, and this is not possible in the hurly burly of a dinner function or most commercial close up situations, whereas an attentive audience in someone's house, for example, would allow the performer to develop an atmosphere to make the most of the tests. **ML**

WHAT'S HOT: some nice ideas needing good presentation skills to pull them off well

WHAT'S NOT: perhaps a bit expensive
★★★★★

AT A GLANCE...



IMAGINE

by G and SM Productions
Available from your local magic dealer
Price: £19.00 (approx)

Imagine being able to turn a signed double blank card into a thought of playing card. Front and back, with the spectator's signature on the face of the card! Well now you can with Imagine with only minimal sleight of hand required! This effect is also an excellent use for all of those old cards you've got stuffed in a drawer. Great effect.

★★★★★



TWISTED BLIZZARD

J Aaron Delong
Available www.jbtv.co.uk
Price: £17.50

One of the hits of Blackpool 2010. You ask a spectator to simply name any card in the deck. Then spreading the deck, there is only one card in the entire deck, the named card. Every other card is BLANK. This is an alternative handling of the original Dean Dill effect but with no sleight of hand.

★★★★★



TUNNEL VISION

by Dave Forest

Available from:
www.full52.com

Price: £9.99 (Instant download)

Tunnel Vision is Dave Forest's clever solution to the idea of pushing a playing card endwise through the long side of a deck of cards and having it visually transpose face up into a previously signed card as it passes through the pack, or as a way of transforming a card into an Ace, for example. Visual changes like this make for eye-popping magic and once it has happened the card is examinable.

For the small price, you are taught how to make the two necessary gimmicks, which are very easy and simple to make and take just minutes to do. Neither requires any obscure materials or skills beyond

cutting and sticking. You are then shown and taught three routines,

Tunnel Transpo is a straightforward routine where a signed chosen card is placed under the spectator's hand on the table. Another random card is then pushed through the pack transforming into the signed chosen card, whilst the card under the spectator's hand becomes the card pushed through the deck!

Vision Corrector starts off with a red backed prediction card shown. Another card from a blue deck is then freely selected but doesn't match the red backed prediction. The red card is then signed on the back and pushed through the deck where it visually changes to match the chosen blue backed card still with the signature on the back.

Finally Tunnel Vision, is the professional feature length

routine where four jokers, one at a time, are pushed through the deck and transform into four Aces. The first three transformations utilise existing but well choreographed card moves to achieve three face down changes whilst the last joker uses the Tunnel Vision gimmicks to show the change visually face up as a finale. A nice story line makes the repetition make sense and the well paced sequence makes for a strong professional set piece of card magic.

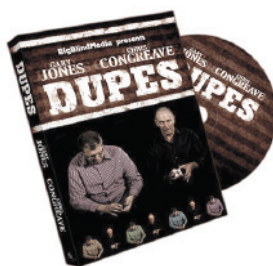
The well explained routines require intermediate card handling and any specific moves required are explained. The sequence of moves is important so each routine will need some handling practice so that it appears natural to avoid having to reposition the deck to correct handling errors. So far it's all very good. Easily made gimmicks with a relatively

straightforward handling, produce some eye-popping magic! What's the down side? Well, each routine has a specific set-up so they can only be done once without having to reset. That of course means the routines require a deck to themselves so won't be too practical to repeat at a standard dinner type function.

That doesn't take anything away from the very practical but simple design of the gimmick(s) and well structured feature routine of the four Jokers to Aces. It's still a worthwhile purchase, especially if you can use it in 'one off' performances as part of a set act. **PP**

WHAT'S HOT: Great visual magic and easily made gimmick!

WHAT'S NOT: Reset prevents repeating
★★★★★



DUPES

Gary Jones & Chris Congreave

Available from
www.bigblindmedia.com or
your favourite dealer.

Price: £19.99

Grab one deck and a few extra duplicate cards and

you have a veritable arsenal of magic at your fingertips. No more pockets bulging with decks only capable of unleashing ONE trick. That's what it says in the advertising blurb anyway.

You do need a bit more that just a few extra cards for some of the effects on the DVD but it is certainly worth it!

Gary and Chris take you step by step through 12 effects (14 if you include the other two handlings of

Pocket Interchange) and it is clear to see that they have worked together and been friends for many years by their onscreen rapport. It is very entertaining to watch.

All the effects taught are well within the reach of the average card worker with little or no sleights required.

There's everything from 'Card at Any Number' to 'Card in Pocket' effects and I'm sure there will be something on here for everyone interested in cards.

As you would expect from Big Blind Media the DVD production is excellent, and again, some will like the format, some won't.

If you have 20 quid burning a hole in your pocket you could do a lot worse than spend it on this DVD. Highly recommended. **PS**

WHAT'S HOT: 14 excellent card effects taught in an entertaining fashion.

WHAT'S NOT: A bit more than just a few extra cards needed.
★★★★★

AT A GLANCE...



FOURSEEN

Wayne Dobson

Available from your local magic dealer

Price: £15.00 (approx)

Taken from his recent 3 DVD set and produced as a stand alone item, Fourseen is one of Wayne Dobson's most popular routines from his TV and live performances. Great revelation of four cards with a really strong ending! Ideal for close-up or stage.

★★★★★



FLIGHTCASE

Peter Eggink

Available from your local magic dealer

Price: £17.50

Any card is selected and signed by the spectator. Next, you show the card case to be completely empty (it really is empty) and it is placed in between the hands of the spectator. Suddenly the signed card visually disappears, only to be found inside the card case that was shown empty just seconds ago. Easy to do method for one of card magic's most popular plots.

★★★★★

Edinburgh Festival Round-Up 2010!

It comes around every year, almost like an annual event! (Yes, I meant to say that!). And every year, more and more magicians seem to be making their way north to the Scottish capital. We've dug out a few reviews of performers so you can see for yourselves what the press said. Just remember that these reviews are generally written by non-magicians. OK, here we go then....

PIFF THE MAGIC DRAGON

Every Edinburgh act is looking for some way to stand out from the crowd, and Piff the Magic Dragon has definitely achieved it. Rather than just your average comedy magic show, this young man does his dressed as a dragon. A very cute one too! If humans could be friends with dragons, I'd definitely want to be friends with Piff.

The cuteness factor is further increased in Piff's new show, where his co-star is Mr Pickles, the levitating chihuahua. The dog was clearly suffering from stage fright and appeared quite bewildered by the whole situation, so hopefully he got some nice doggy treats after the show.

I was a little disappointed to see some of the same jokes being re-used from Piff's 2009 show, and I have to say the novelty of a man doing magic tricks while dressed as a dragon (however cute) had worn off somewhat. There was also one sketch section which even Piff himself recognised was ill-advised. However, the tricks he did were still impressive, and I would definitely

recommend the show to those who have not seen Piff before. At £6 a ticket, it's one of the best value shows on the Fringe.

Review by Jessica Pinkett



PAUL ZENON, LOUNGE WIZARD

Although he is also appearing nightly throughout the Fringe co-hosting The Late Late Show with Mikelangelo, Paul Zenon is also demonstrating his close-up magic in the basement of Le Monde in

this intimate 45 minute show.

As quick with his comedy as he is with his sleight-of-hand, Paul speeds



through this impressive show, giving the audience a great opportunity to witness his magic up close and personal.

We get some tales of his formative years hanging out in a Blackpool freakshow; his experiences going through airport security with metallic objects secreted about his person; and a fabulous signature routine featuring a pool triangle and a pint of Newcastle Brown.

Paul's con-artist charm and acerbic sense of humour is enjoyable and his routines are slick and – even 2 feet away in the front row – impossible to fathom.

Review by Keith D

BARRY & STUART: SEANCE

A lot of people seem to be completely taken in by this show. Not, presumably, in believing that these two young Scottish tricksters are genuine necromancers, summoning up evil spirits, but in that they become so thoroughly absorbed by the horror-movie



aesthetics, they experience genuine shock at what occurs.

But, in reality, it amounts to some stage hypnotism, a few mid-range magic tricks and a couple of fantastic ones, but all brilliantly packaged in the dark theatricality of the séance.

Barry and Stuart make it abundantly clear they are sceptics, debunking some of the psychological tricks that convince people they might have witnessed something supernatural, such as voices in radio static. They are affable, sometimes witty, guides through the history of spiritualism and mythical creatures such as the Sandman (which I kept mishearing as 'sound man' which made the whole thing a lot less spooky, even though some of these tecchies can, admittedly, be a bit weird).

This preamble is the equivalent of checking the knots in an escapology stunt, getting the audience to concentrate on exactly what the conjurers want you to concentrate on.

As we delve deeper into the mock séance, volunteers are genuinely discombobulated by what they witness, and as we move towards the finale – the details of which the

audience are all urged not to disclose – the illusions become more impressive and, to some, more believable. There is no denying the wow factor here, as you wonder how they could possibly have done that, but you get the same with fellow Fringe magician Ali Cook but without all the diabolical whistles and bells.

For many, the experience was much deeper than being astonished, and for them this would surely be a five-star show (as some reviewers have already deemed it). For the rest of us, it's simply a bit of gothic fun.

Review by SB

MORGAN AND WEST: TIME TRAVELLING MAGICIANS

Morgan and West: Time Travelling Magicians is a family friendly magic show with tricks both classic, such as the cups and balls, the bullet catch(!) and familiar card tricks, as well as inventive ideas such as the daring balloon escape. It's a slick, fun afternoon adventure in magic.

The show has a nice pace where audience-involved tricks are broken up with small vignettes. In these moments, a time travel manual in voice over is demonstrated metaphorically with sleight of hand and humour. There is a rope trick to show the dangers of a time loop and a very well crafted coin trick that moves back and forward in time.



Morgan and West were immediately likeable and put the (sold out) audience at their ease. I would like to have seen a bit more Victoriana in their language and attitude as the old world turns of phrase they did use were enjoyed thoroughly. During interactions with volunteers there seemed to be little spontaneity or banter outside of the script where there could have been. However, their exchanges with each other were well crafted and elicited a lot of laughter and appreciation.

The lighting and soundtrack punctuated the show well with comedy highlights; changing up the pace to keep everyone interested. The staging was simple as there was a large chest on end in the middle of the stage housing everything our magicians needed. For me, I would like to have felt a little deeper in Victorian company and it would be an easy task to replace modern envelopes, books etc. with something that looked in keeping with the premise; especially in this era where steampunk is a la mode.

Classic tricks were given new life with the framing device of Victorian time travel and new tricks were born. As a magic show, it is accomplished and welcoming, not showoffey at all. Morgan and West have a great chemistry with one another and I am sure that the whole crowd including the children thoroughly enjoyed the show.

I personally really enjoyed these time traveling magicians. I thought the look, feel and comedy of the show were accessible and fun!

Reviewed by Katy Schutte

ALI COOL – PIECES OF STRANGE

The first magic trick that Ali Cook learnt as a child was from a Paul Daniel's set, but he's certainly come a long way since then. His hour-long Edinburgh Fringe show provides an astounding range of magic tricks and demonstrations of jaw-dropping mind-reading.

Ali's comedy patter between the tricks is a little on the cheesy side and was reminiscent of David Brent and Jimmy Carr - but the audience were here to see the magic and not his jokes. His magic performance skills are of great quality and the opening trick as a 'cruise ship' magician make him endearing to the audience.

>>



>> His prediction tricks are nothing short of unfathomable and are the ones we're still talking about a day later. Ali does change the direction of the show a few times, displaying his amazing range of skills, albeit some bizarre ones.

The Houdini-inspired finale is nothing short of mind-blowing and worth the ticket price alone.

This Fringe venue is small allowing you to see the tricks up close, but you may leave suffering from a sore head trying to work out how on earth he does it. Grab a ticket for this intimate setting whilst you can.

Review: Edinbro Spotlight

COLIN MCLEOD, I KNOW

Colin McLeod is a rising star in the mind reading world and he has achieved so much for someone the tender age of 23. Hailed as the new Derren Brown, Colin has travelled the world performing his show, but the Edinburgh International Magic Festival sees him return to Edinburgh, giving people a rare opportunity to experience his skills, live.

My friend and I were intrigued to see Colin in action and were not disappointed as we took our seats at Augustine United Church this evening. A short video of the mystical man welcomed us to his

show and the first 'demonstration' began.

Colin was confident on stage, with genuinely funny gags linking his show together. With a forensic scientist background, his ability to read body language and people's minds was evident from the start. Randomly picking audience members to assist him led to gasps of astonishment as he mystified the audience again and again.

I don't want to give away any 'spoilers' to the show, but I was particularly impressed when he got one audience member to read another's mind and unlock a padlock combination. In fact, I was amazed at every aspect of this show – as were the rest of the audience.

Colin has a clear ability to predict what people will say and do which was demonstrated in front of my own eyes and will have you convinced he can actually see what people are thinking. I just don't know how he does it, but will be pondering his possible methods for a long time to come.

Review: Edinbro Spotlight

THE BOY WITH TAPE ON HIS FACE

I've seen a few standups over the years whose mouths I'd have gladly



sealed up with gaffer tape. But that's no obstacle to Kiwi comic Sam Wills, whose whole act – now making waves throughout the world of comedy – is based on an inability to speak. Think Chaplin, think Marcel Marceau, think those old Edinburgh stalwarts Men in Coats. But Wills ranges beyond classic silent comedy, using every means at his disposal – sound effects, costume, pop music and playful business with the audience – in pursuit of wordless fun.

It's old-school stuff, and those who can't abide mime may still find their teeth going furry at this comedian. It can be a bit cute – and yes,

sometimes you want to scream: "For God's sake, say something!" But more often, it's a pleasure to see great vaudevillian routines reinvented and invested with real personality. The sketches themselves are often familiar: Wills slipping his arm into the sleeve of a dress and embracing himself, or animating Louis Armstrong with a cloth cap and a Tupperware box. But Wills's sticky predicament gives them new life. It's funny to see three audience stooges do the dance moves to Blame It On the Boogie. It's funnier still to see Wills's exasperation at having to teach them with a gaffer-taped mouth.

Audience participation-phobes may stay away, but they'd miss a show that's less about humiliation than celebration. There's one remarkable moment, when Wills and a woman from the crowd sit and make eyes at one another, and a dorky, touching love scene is created from nothing. Elsewhere, the big laughs usually come when his mystifying business with various props finally yields its visual punchline – a Rizla paper spinning like a propeller, say, or a tableau from the film Ghost. For now, Wills is the last word in silent comedy.

Review: BL. The Guardian

