

THE MAGIC MAGAZINE FOR MAGICIANS & MENTALISTS

MSM

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FUNOVITS**

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ANGELA FUNOVITS

THE SURREALIST!

Launched into the international spotlight by her starring role on NBC's primetime series Phenomenon as well as TV specials in France, Germany, and Japan, the amazing Angela Funovits has wowed audiences with astonishing demonstrations of mind reading and unique illusions. Criss Angel's a big fan, and Uri Geller predicted on national television that she would be "the first female mystifier to conquer the world." She's already had top billing in Las Vegas, is a successful business woman, and is also studying medicine...

Realising that his own career is a bit rubbish in comparison... Graham Hey asks the questions...

Tell us about NBC's 'Phenomenon' - your role and how you got it!

It was very serendipitous. I had just finalised a leave of absence from medical school to do a six-month run of shows in Las Vegas, and I was at home in Ohio rehearsing my act when the Phenomenon casting producers contacted me. They said that they were casting in Vegas the prior week and a lot of entertainers were suggesting that they get in touch with me. I was interviewed very thoroughly over the phone, and within several



Having fun with friends in my 'Magic of Medicine' club at medical school

days had been sent a plane ticket to Hollywood for the final auditions.

Being in Hollywood was a whirlwind. For the first round of auditions, I was asked to perform for the show's producers. They then narrowed their selection down to 20 candidates, and we were individually given the opportunity to

perform for NBC's head executives. I remember Banachek being in the room during both auditions. When one of the producers asked how I got into mentalism, I blushed and told them how surreal that moment was – because I was sitting in front of the man that had inspired me to become a mentalist. I just couldn't believe it was all happening.

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Top picture:
Angela with Juliana Chen.

Banachek was my primary inspiration for taking up mentalism, but throughout the years I've drawn inspiration from entities outside of the magic and mentalism arena.

Tell us about your background and upbringing...

I grew up as a shy girl, in a small and beautiful suburb on Lake Erie. I had a soft voice and a deep love for anything art-related, and I always worked very hard in school. My parents raised me to value honesty, compassion, and integrity. And they always encouraged me to follow my passion.

By the fifth grade I had decided that I would become both a doctor and a magician. I remember thinking, though, that I would have to do something drastic to overcome my shyness if I wanted to make it as any kind of performer. So in addition to magic, I began to work at modeling, pageants, and public speaking—anything that would force me to stand up in front of others and maintain composure. I gave my first keynote presentation to a group of business professionals when I was 14. It was nerve-racking! But I continued to grow and find my voice, and I began to believe in myself and love the things that made me unique. It was then that I really began to blossom and feel comfortable as a performer.

You are a 'supernatural' entertainer - what do you mean by that?

I create mystery through seemingly paranormal means. I use a combination of disciplines to create depth in my show, from vintage mentalism and illusion to hypnosis and genuine reading of body language. The methodology is often at times complex, but this helps to rule out logical explanations for what happens onstage.

You perform mentalism, magic - and we've seen you doing card manipulations - how did you get into 'magic'? Have you taken the traditional route?

I first got into magic at 10 years of age when I watched the Masked Magician revealing secrets on television. I learned largely through

independent study at first, dissecting every detail in the magic books I accumulated. Eventually I did join the International Brotherhood of Magicians, and the men that I met there were incredibly encouraging and supportive.

There are not many women who have made it in magic/ mentalism - why is this?

The reasons are endless. As a young girl it's almost automatic to accept that if you want to do magic, you should find a male magician and be his assistant. There are so few females in magic's spotlight to emulate. I was fortunate to have recordings of Galena, Juliana Chen, and Melinda to learn from as I was developing, but inspiration like this seems to be far outweighed by singers and socialites in the media today.

Who are your major influences?

Banachek was my primary inspiration for taking up mentalism, but throughout the years I've drawn inspiration from entities outside of the magic and mentalism arena. In junior high school my friends and I would watch Charmed every week — a show about three beautiful girls with magic powers — and I found myself analysing what I could learn as a performer from their acting on the show. Things like this helped me to introspect and learn what the theoretical purpose was behind my performances.

As a mentalist, what do you think of Derren Brown?

Derren humbles and motivates me; he has done an amazing job of showing the public mentalism at its best. He is devious on television, and onstage his charisma is infectious. And I love his paintings!

In the UK, mentalism has really taken off - is this the same in the US?

Shows like Phenomenon and The Mentalist have made people more aware of mentalism,

but it hasn't yet taken off the way that it could. The stage is set for someone to make this happen in the coming years.

Do you perform a full mentalism show? What type of venues do you perform in?

Yes, my show is an hour of mentalism, and for live shows I generally perform in theatres and banquet halls. In addition to working on Phenomenon in the US, I have also spent much of my time doing television specials throughout the world, in Germany, Japan, France, and Canada.

What are your favourite mentalism effects?

It varies! I love things that are visual, but most of the time I just want to do simple, clean, direct mindreading.

How much attention do you give to your image and marketing?

I definitely try to give them the attention they deserve; image and marketing are very important to any individual who takes the business of performing seriously. As an entertainer, you are marketing yourself and are essentially your own brand. As such, it's worthwhile to establish what is unique about you – what qualities you will use to serve others – and communicate this in your marketing.

You've done quite a bit of TV - what qualities do you need to succeed on TV?

You have to think big. There has to be incredible impact in your performance – whether it's drawn from tension, emotion, or sheer impossibility. Think about the spectacles of color and light and drama that are on other channels during your time slot, and then decide how you are going to be more engaging. Anything can happen during a performance, so in addition to strong preparation and rehearsal you must be adaptive, think on your feet, and stay cool under pressure.

How much control do you have over which effects you perform on TV?

This probably varies by the production, but I have always been fortunate enough to have a very high degree of creative control. The producers and consultants who help your act



come together know how good television is made, and from this standpoint they can help guide your efforts in the right direction.

Best piece of advice you've been given?

After Phenomenon had concluded, Uri Geller advised me to finish medical school and find the time to perform shows throughout. Now that I am in my second year, I am incredibly grateful that I have chosen this path. I know that as a doctor, I will have the opportunity to help, counsel, and heal patients, yet I can still enjoy life as a performer.

Do you have a career plan?

I have plans, but I've also learned that you can only plan for so much. Just five years ago I couldn't have guessed that my life would have turned out this way. I know that over the next two years I will choose a specialty of medicine and will continue to make time for entertaining. I think it's important to chase goals, but it's also vital to enjoy the present, live with joy, and allow the future to unfold as it will.

What has been the major hurdle you have had to overcome in your career so far?

The major hurdle for me was learning to believe in myself. Once I began to believe, I made the transition from approaching performances with fear to instilling them with my own excitement and love for what I was doing. I found myself intensely mindful of each moment on stage. That was when doors really seemed to open.

What's lined up for 2011?

I will be doing a series of theatre shows after I take the USMLE Step 1 (US Medical Licensure Exam) in the summer. Until then, I am on a strict study schedule and am only performing during weekends and over spring break. Once my summer shows are finished, I will begin hospital rotations for my third year of medical school.

What annoys you most about being a performer?

Not much annoys me, but I do think it's unfortunate that some people do not perceive magic as the great art that it can be. To counteract this, I think it's our responsibility to hold ourselves to high standards when we



perform. What we do when the audience is watching is how they will remember our art.

You perform for corporate audiences - how is this different to performing for people who already like magic/mentalism?

Magic and mentalism enthusiasts tend to be very analytical when watching a performance, but corporate audiences are wonderful because they don't know what to expect. As the entertainment, you provide them with the surprise of something completely different, as well as an avenue to let loose and really enjoy the evening. It's an amazing feeling!

Tell us three things about yourself that no-one will know!

1. I do a lot of card manipulation, but for the longest time I have wanted to do a bird act. I've just never been in the right position to own or care for birds. My college dorm in undergrad wouldn't have

allowed it, and today my schedule and my Chihuahua would definitely not approve!

2. One of my favourite ways to relax is by creating new fragrances. I began perfuming years ago and loved the creative outlet. By mixing a combination of notes in the right proportions, you can project such a wide variety of emotions. The first fragrance I released was called "Decadence". It's a very sexy combination of chocolate notes that evolves throughout the day.
3. I love hard work outs with a passion. No matter how busy I am, I give myself at least an hour each day for exercise. I run, kickbox, lift weights, or do pushups, pull-ups, and plyometrics. Afterwards, I sit back down to study and my mind works like crazy. It's one of my favorite feelings.

Ever been to England?

Not yet!



Favourite holiday destination?

Hawaii! I haven't been there in 10 years, but it was the best family vacation that I've ever been on. We snorkeled, danced at luaus, watched fireworks every night, and strangely enough there was even an unexpected Britney Spears concert on the section of Waikiki Beach right in front of our hotel room.

Your dream line-up for a show: who would be on the bill?

It's hard to pick just a few performers. I would love to do more shows with Aaron Crow, who I met while working on a TV special in Germany. He has one of the most amazing and unique blindfold acts you could imagine. I would also have to include Mr. Maric, who kindly invited me to share the stage with him in Tokyo. His magic is simple, elegant, and powerful, just like his presence. Doing an extended run of shows with these incredibly talented performers really would be a dream.

Sexiest magician in the world is?

Zatanna!

How would you describe your personality?

Extremely disciplined and hardworking, warmhearted and optimistic, intense when I need to be... and always looking to know what you're thinking.

Your best ever show was?

It's hard to single one out; they've all been amazing experiences. One that comes to mind is a performance that I did last year in the Grand Theatre at the Grand Sierra Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada. It was the biggest live show that I have done to date, and was set on the world's largest indoor stage. The crowd was spectacular! I flew home after the show, studying school notes every second of the way, and got high marks on the three medical exams scheduled during the following days. I have never been so exhausted in my life.

The last great effect you saw was?

Over the holidays my friend Rick Smith Jr. showed me a video of Michael Vincent performing his routine "Rhapsodies in Silver". It was absolutely beautiful!

www.AngelaFunovits.com



EX-WORLD CHAMPION BOXER CHRIS EUBANK TALKS TO MAGICSEEN!

MS: I reckon John Archer could 'take' you!

CE: Oh really? Bring him on!

MS: You're a magic fan?

CE: Yes, I always think that being a magician has parallels with the art of boxing. There's huge amounts of psychology in both, and one is forever saying one thing, but actually doing another. Ultimately though, it's about entertainment.

**Thanks to N.O.W Entertainment*



MAGIC FRANKENSTEIN

We asked a top magician to select the best bits of others to make a sort-of magical monster...

Which magician has the best brain? Hands? Legs? Hair? Dress sense?

The answer to all your questions.
Is it me? **Wayne Dobson**



IN THE NEWS



RIP TERRY!

Terry Seabrooke, who died on January 11 aged 78, was one of Britain's best-known magicians, noted for the trick he called "The Burnt Banknote".

Preferring the role of the "comedy magician", Seabrooke relished audience participation during his act. He would summon a member of the audience on stage, take a

bank note from him and ask him to sign it. He would then place the money in a baking tin and incinerate it; later he would restore the money intact.

His other favourite trick was apparently to pass a lighted cigarette through a person's jacket and, after an appropriate dose of hocus-pocus, demonstrate that the jacket was undamaged. Seabrooke performed on three occasions at parties given by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. He toured extensively throughout Britain, including appearances at the London Palladium, and supported stars such as Harry Secombe, Norman Wisdom and Bruce Forsyth. He made more than 145 tours in the United States, where he was a member of The Magic Castle, the Academy of Magical Arts, in Hollywood.

He entertained British troops in the Falklands after the conclusion of the conflict in 1982. Seabrooke enjoyed appearing in front of the troops, also taking his act to Northern Ireland and Belize. Other working trips took him around Europe, Africa, the Far East, Australia and New Zealand.

On television, Seabrooke appeared in two series of For My Next Trick on the BBC, and had guest spots on The Ken Dodd Show, The Good Old Days, This Is Your Life, Comedy Magic Strip and Grumbleweeds among many other shows.

Terence Kenneth Seabrooke was born in Watford on Boxing Day 1932. His interest in magic was kindled when, at the age of 10 or 11, he was given a box of tricks for Christmas. At Watford Grammar School for Boys he proved a fine athlete, captaining the Watford Harriers, and becoming county champion in the quarter- and half-mile events.

His first job was as a bank clerk in Paddington, and he then did two years' National Service with the RAF before becoming a fire inspector for an insurance company. While carrying out one inspection he found the claimant to be the famous

magician Billy McComb, who became Terry's mentor.

Seabrooke honed his skills as a magician at events around Watford, and in the mid-1970s decided to turn professional. "There was more satisfaction performing on the nightclub and cabaret circuit," he said later.

In 2009 the Magic Circle presented him with the Maskelyne Award (named after the 19th-century magician and inventor John Nevil Maskelyne) for his services to British magic. The American Academy of Magical Arts awarded him its highest honour, the Masters Fellowship, in 2004.

Seabrooke once said: "Magic has been very kind to me and has given me a great life. I have travelled the world and met some wonderful people along the way. When I started all those years ago I never thought I would go this far. It was really just a hobby that took off. I realised I was quite good at what I was doing and had the ability to make people laugh." He continued to perform until 2010.

Terry Seabrooke married, in 1961, Hilda Atkins, who survives him with their son and daughter.



HAIR TODAY, GONE...OH, YOU KNOW THE REST!

Paul Daniels has sold his toupee on Ebay, and it went for £1100.

Funny, because we'd been combing the Internet for ages...

WORLDS GREATEST MAGIC DOWNLOADS

Worldsgreatestmagic.com will be devoted to purely digital downloads of the greatest classics of close up magic of all time.

For over 15 years Michael Ammar worked together with Louis Falanga at L&L Publishing to create a dream list of the most powerful, practical magic in modern times, and we then sought permission from every



living creator to teach those effects using every multimedia technique available to enhance the learning.

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ALL COOK

READY STEADY COOK!

We recently saw Ali Cook on the ITV Penn & Teller Show, where Penn said his performance was 'amazing'. Teller didn't say anything.

In the six years since he graced the cover of Magicseen's very first issue, Ali's career has taken a few twists and turns – and it seems all of them have been in the right direction.

Magicseen's Graham Hey catches up with the brilliant Ali Cook...



Photo: Steve Ullathorne

You were the very first Magicseen cover star six years ago - what have you been doing since then?

Well it has been a busy old time for me. Obviously I made Dirty Tricks for Channel 4 but I've also been working on projects outside of magic. I wrote, produced and starred in my own short film - The Enchanter: The Crime Fighting Magician and also had acting roles in seven short film dramas. Aside from writing and performing two one-hour Edinburgh shows in 2008 and 2010 I also exec produced The Halle Berry film Dark Tide and I'm now

working on a new film with Bob Hoskins called Weighed in: The Story of the Mumper, due for release later this year. I'm somehow managing to balance the magic with the acting and producing- so far so good anyway.

Your show was the best reviewed magic show of the fringe and within the top 2% best reviewed shows of the whole fringe - tell us about how you approached it, and how you actually get to put on a show there?

Edinburgh is hard! Very very hard. Twenty six one-hour shows within a month as well as guest slots during the day. The approach is simple: try out as much material as you can, do as many gigs as you can and continually hone your act.

How to put on a show in Edinburgh is an article in itself but basically you hire a room, get some posters and leaflets and then do anything to get people to buy a ticket (Sex is effective!).



Photo: Ray Burmiston

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I think the best route is not to rush. Work on the show, then invite some Edinburgh promoters down to watch you. They have a good idea as to what will work up there and if you impress them they'll take you up and help out with promo etc. However, even with a big promoter behind you be prepared to kiss goodbye to £18,000. And be ready to hear some of the harshest critics in show business telling you the truth about your act.

How long before the event was staged did you get to work on your show?

You try to use every spare minute you can. Last year I started in January and had the show ready by April but I was still tweaking it considerably during the first week of the run in Edinburgh.

How did you go about writing it? And was it a totally new show?

In terms of writing, there is no answer, other than to keep going and going and to realise you'll only ever use a tenth of your ideas in the final show. This used to get me down but the one in ten rule is something you have to remember if you write.

Also, I do set myself some rules. I think every performer has to set themselves rules. They often just don't consciously realise what they are. Magicians tend to be very critical of each other and often when they critique others, the things they don't like are things that violate their own set of rules. What's great about doing a one man show, you become aware of your own rules.

For example, many magicians are taught never put down an audience member or directly challenge them. Whereas Slydini's whole act was based around challenge. Equally, Penn And Teller hate mind readers who claim to be using psychology / NLP to explain how they 'know' what you're thinking, whereas that's Derren's whole schtick.

For me, one of my rules is that I'm not sure I believe in overall themes in shows. Unless they naturally evolve from doing the material over and over I think they feel contrived, slow the pace of a show and often get in the way of the magic.

The next rule is I don't care whether I like the trick or not or whether it fools me or not. Personally I hate the Sands of India. It makes my skin crawl in its pointlessness. However, my tour manager really convinced me to do it - and the audience reaction couldn't be denied. People loved it. So I found a way to do it where I could bear performing it.

Another rule about my show is that I treat it like a DJ set and the tricks I do are like the records I play. It sounds a bit mental but first I have to discover which tracks the crowds like and why. Second I need to know how each of the tracks makes the crowd feel which then allows me to play them in a set to build the show to a climax. I'm also aware that every show is unique so I'll often do routines in a different order depending on the immediate feedback in the moment.

It was a totally new show although when I got to Edinburgh I dropped a few items and brought back one old routine as some of the stand up that worked well on the circuit just wasn't working in Edinburgh.

How would you describe the show you put on, and how was/is it different to what you've done before?

I'd describe the show I did as the best effects I could come up with, done in the funniest way I could think of, in the time I had available. Not glitzy but that's the truth. The big difference to my first show is probably my stage presence. I've worked hard on that. Bill Cosby said doing a one man show is like taking the audience on an aeroplane ride and they've got to know that you are the pilot. I was very pleased with my act on Penn and Teller: Fool Us because there is a very strong character coming over and I don't even utter a word.

Tell us about the comedy element - how did you begin to write it, what sort of comedy suits you best, and is this an area that you'd like to develop more in the future?

Writing stand up is hard, very hard. Again the simple answer is write something that you think is funny. Try it out on an audience. Tape it.



Photo: Ray Burmiston

Listen to it back. Repeat it a few hundred times and then gradually hone it. I think the big mistake here is to edit too quickly. I think a fault with magicians is that we want perfection too quickly. Unfortunately if you are going to invent jokes and tricks you are going to fail and you need to be happy with that in front of an audience. People will think you are bad but you just have to plough through and remember that all your great bits also used to be your not so great bits or the only bits you had!

In terms of comedy my original persona was that of the nice guy who's a bit mental. This allowed me to justify routines like the heads off doves, eating razor blades etc. It also justified very shocking humour and allowed me to deal in extremes. I found that this works very well for younger crowds like students etc.

However, up in Edinburgh I found this was a bit too abrasive and over time I became more like my off-stage self. I did a gig with Frank Skinner last year and we were chatting in the wings, he then went out on stage to 1200 people and just carried on chatting in exactly the same way.

In terms of comedy writing I'd say that I've now mastered the gag. I can write good original set-up/punch tag material but I'm not as experienced a story-teller yet, I find that hard. I like well crafted jokes. However, the truth is, I'm probably better at premise driven comedy, acting-out observations more than anything else. I just haven't admitted that to myself yet! The other thing that I seem to be able to pull-off is tricks that I do silently like the Chicken and Duck or the razor blades. I think what I've brought to these classic effects is a simple narrative.



Photo: Steve Ullathorne

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Did you test out the comedy and routines beforehand? If so, how did it go, and what changes did you make?

Yes relentlessly. One good example would be my book test effect using a 'how to stop smoking' book. I based it on when I gave up smoking. The first thing I did was watch Bill Hicks's famous smoking routine then ignored every single joke premise that he had.

Then I just tried to think of as many joke premises about the topic as possible. I started with real life - putting on weight after giving up, smokers breath etc. However these are quite often hack areas and have been done before. So then I just got creative, read and read about smoking until I came up with ten minutes of smoking jokes.

I did them all for a month night after night then whittled them down to the best three minutes. When I got to Edinburgh I swapped some of the harsher jokes for the gentler lines to suit different crowds on different nights.

Were you inspired by anyone in particular in the comedy world?

My biggest inspiration has always been Steve Martin. I love his stand up. The fact that he started out working in a magic shop and became a movie star gives us all hope.

What was the percentage of 'magic' or 'mentalism' in your show?

70 percent magic 30 percent mentalism.

Did you work on your show with anyone else?

The prop builders John Gaughan, Bill Smith and Scott Penrose. Also my tour manager and I would chat about the show all the time in the car on the way to the gig and that's really where it evolved. As he's not a magician it really helped. For example he said the Sands of India was great!

There was quite a lot of magic at Edinburgh in 2010 - did you see any of the other shows?

I actually didn't. I really try to avoid seeing other magic shows so that they don't unconsciously influence me. I really hope

people will enjoy my show then see some of the other guys and appreciate them doing their thing.

What was the major thing you learned from your last Edinburgh show?

The main thing I'm still trying to learn is to enjoy it more! We had 10 standing ovations in that Edinburgh run but I'd still walk off stage and worry about the three jokes that didn't play that night. It's this weird paradox, you have to analyse yourself, but you also have to be able to give yourself a pat on the back - I still can't do it.

Do you think Edinburgh audiences are different to audiences around the country?

Yes they really are. It's a very strange mixture of the comedy and theatre elite who are highly critical, mixed with totally random tourists from around the world!!!! Not easy. I find comedy clubs easier than Edinburgh for various reasons but basically clubs employ a compere to warm up the crowd and get them to respond as a unit, whereas in Edinburgh you go on cold and you really have to work hard to get the crowd on-side.

Have you been performing in Comedy Clubs?

Yes relentlessly. At least four a week and literally no social life!

What are your thoughts about your future career path? Any particular aims or plans?

I'm also acting, writing and producing films which is also very exciting although magic will always be my first love.

What are your thoughts on 'magic' and its popularity at the moment?

People enjoy anything done well.

Tell us what's ahead for you in 2011?

I'm currently playing a feature role in the Bob Hoskins film 'Weighed in'. This is my first major film role and I've really enjoyed the



Poster: Andy Robinson

process and would like to do more screen acting. It really fits into my thoughts on performing magic. I'm also script editing and producing and starring in a new romantic comedy which is still in development at the moment.

Any TV stuff? And are your DJ-ing days over?

Can't even remember the last time I scratched on the decks! After Penn And Teller the offers have been incredible for TV series. So I'm in various development meetings but can't say too much about them at the moment.

Do you think any differently than you did five years ago? And have you changed?

Yes I'm just more and more confident on stage and that's from doing the comedy circuit solidly for the last five years. You can't fake stage comfort. You've either got it or you haven't and you only get it from being out night after night - without any props.

Are you surprised magicseen is still going?

It's the best magic magazine out there! So I'm told.

www.alicook.com



TURNING THE TABLES

How to succeed with magic in a restaurant **PART 1**

Mark Leveridge

Forty years ago the concept of having a magician arrive at your table to entertain you was relatively unheard of, especially in the UK. But gradually this situation has changed as more and more good quality performers have been out there plying their trade and elevating the entertainment format from a low paid sideshow to a well remunerated and respected way of working. Close up magic is hugely versatile, requiring as it does no special staging, lighting or sound system, and so the number of opportunities for using it commercially have increased as bookers come to appreciate its value.

One avenue that opened fairly early on for commercial close up was that of performing at tables in restaurants. Many performers have managed to secure very long residencies in pubs, hotels or restaurants performing to people who have come in to eat, and so it can be a source not only of regular income but consistent work too. While many entertainers are used

to performing close up at set piece dinner functions, the rules of engagement are very different when trying to succeed at magic in a restaurant, and so we thought it would be a good idea to approach a number of successful and experienced close uppers to get their advice about how to make a success of restaurant table magic. Our thanks therefore go out to David Willmott, Iain Moran, Shaun McCree, Jayne Corrigan, Harry Robson and Matthew Dowden, all of whom have provided much of the information that forms the essence of this feature article. In this first part we will be looking at a number of important issues that face you if you want to work in the restaurant setting.

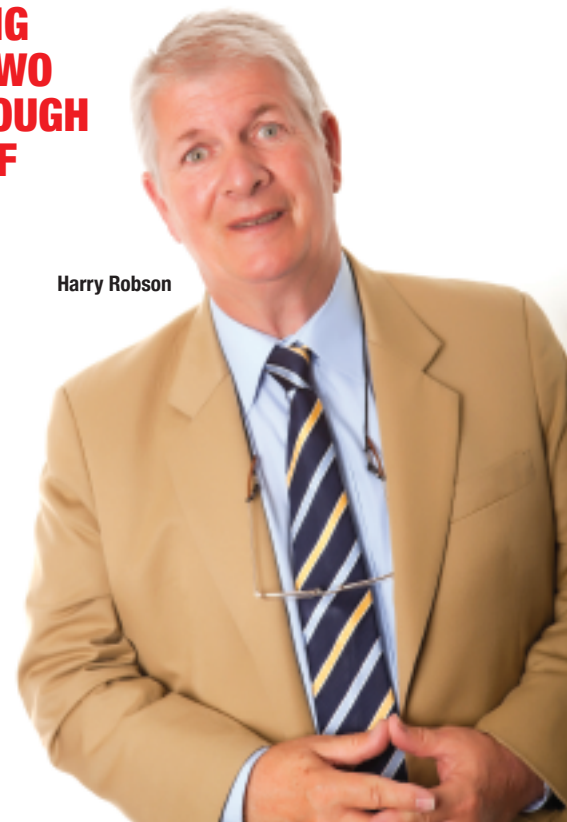
VIVE LA DIFFERENCE

At first glance you might think that doing close up at a dinner function and performing in a restaurant are pretty much the same. After all, both basically consist of groups of

“IN A RESTAURANT, PEOPLE STAY FOR VARYING AMOUNTS OF TIME AND THERE MIGHT BE CHILDREN WHO YOU NEED TO CATER FOR, PLUS YOU COULD BE ENTERTAINING TABLES OF TWO PEOPLE THROUGH TO TABLES OF TWENTY.”

HARRY ROBSON

Harry Robson



“IF THERE IS A PROBLEM IN THE KITCHEN OR IF SOMEONE HAS BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH SOMETHING, THE MAGIC GOES A LONG WAY TO APPEASE THOSE SITUATIONS.”

MATTHEW J. DOWDEN

people sitting down to eat a meal who you have to entertain at their table. But actually, the two formats are in many ways like chalk and cheese. Harry Robson sums up succinctly the main differences: “At a corporate function, the evening is split into two - the pre dinner drinks and then the meal. There is a predetermined number of tables, so you know how long to spend at each one. In a restaurant, people stay for varying amounts of time and there might be children who you need to cater for, plus you could be entertaining tables of two people through to tables of twenty.”

This shows you one of the major differences - with a dinner function everyone arrives basically at the same time and each table will be served the meal at the identical stage of the evening. Everything is done to a set timetable and for the performer this makes it easier to structure when to approach the tables and how long will be available to entertain each group. Restaurant clientele is made up of a whole range of disparate groups of people who will arrive at all different points during the evening, who will stay for varying lengths of time (some people simply have a main course and then leave, others may go for a 3 or 4 course option and effectively be there for hours!), and who normally would not be in any way connected to any of the other diners.

So, the timings of how and when you work in a restaurant are very different and the performer has to cope with this. Most entertainers would expect to perform for between 2 and 4 hours in any one

session, and during that period there may be very busy times, when there are several tables waiting to see some magic, and other times when the magician could be left standing around waiting for another table to be ready for him.

But it's not just the timings which are affected, there is an impact on the amount and type of material you need to carry with you too. As Shaun McCree explains: “Many times at a dinner function I may only perform about three effects, repeated over and over. I'm far more likely to vary the effects in a restaurant because I will select the ones I think are appropriate for the table concerned - I'd probably perform different material for a birthday party at a table of ten than I would perform for a young couple out on a date, for example.”

Of course, if you are working the same restaurant week after week,



Matthew J. Dowden

you come across the problem of having to entertain the 'regulars' who have seen you before. This naturally has an impact on what material you use, because you cannot rely on your front line set of tricks if the audience has already seen them and you therefore need more material to hand. Also, the number of diners sitting round the table can make a difference to what you perform, as Matthew Dowden explains: “In restaurants you are more likely to get tables that are made up of a family of four than

you would at a set dinner function, so your material has to be versatile enough to be able to adapt to each situation.”

Another factor which can influence your choice of material is pointed out by Jayne Corrigan: “In a restaurant setting you are likely to be the only magician, whereas at a set dinner function, there are often several magicians, which makes it necessary to divide the room, ensure your effects don't cross over etc etc.”

“IN A RESTAURANT SETTING YOU ARE LIKELY TO BE THE ONLY MAGICIAN, WHEREAS AT A SET DINNER FUNCTION, THERE ARE OFTEN SEVERAL MAGICIANS, WHICH MAKES IT NECESSARY TO DIVIDE THE ROOM, ENSURE YOUR EFFECTS DON'T CROSS OVER ETC ETC.” JAYNE CORRIGAN



Jayne Corrigan



Iain Moran

IT'S A TEAM GAME

Timings and performance material are affected then, but what other differences can the restaurant magician expect to experience? David Willmott makes an interesting distinction about the role that the magician has in the restaurant when he says that "at a restaurant you are treated more like a member of staff." In fact, it could be said that rather than representing just yourself as a magician, when working a restaurant you become an ambassador for the venue itself, and often the reason you have been booked by the manager is in order to reflect well on his venue so that people will remember and enjoy the complete experience of being there and will therefore hopefully return. As the entertainer, you therefore have an added responsibility to ensure that the 'front of house' runs smoothly. Matthew sums it up nicely: "If there is a problem in the kitchen or if someone has been dissatisfied with something, the magic goes a long way to appease those situations. I have literally had people say that I have turned a bad night into a good night. This is invaluable to a restaurant as those customers would not have come back had it not been for me."

To make yourself important to the restaurant therefore, you need to be a bit more than just the magic man. You need to get on with the waiting staff, to cover for unforeseen delays thus keeping the customers happy, and generally to consider yourself part of the team trying to make a success of the venue's endeavours. This is very different from how it is at a dinner function where you basically just turn up, perform and then go home!

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Let's take a look now at the type and quantity of tricks which are going to be needed to cope in a restaurant. All of our panel agree that ideally tricks should be angle proof, have no re-set, be versatile so that they can play to a small or larger group, fit easily in the pockets, be easy to understand and usually be performed up in the hands to aid visibility. Shaun also includes another important consideration: "My secondary consideration would be that practical restaurant effects can be varied in length - multiphase routines where you can skip to the end are an asset - if the food arrives quicker than you expect

"GENERALLY, THOUGH, I TEND TO USE NO MORE THAN SIX OR SEVEN DIFFERENT TRICKS."

IAIN MORAN

then it's still possible to conclude your set with the table feeling they've seen a full show."

Trying to time the magic to finish before the meal arrives is always a potential problem for restaurant workers. Because every table is on a different time scale, it's much harder to judge when the meal will be served, and so the performer needs to be aware of what is going on around him in order to minimise the number of times that his performance gets interrupted by a waiter or waitress. Longer routines consisting of several separate effects can prove a real boon as you can cut them short if necessary.

Harry analyses his choice of effects even further. He tries to find things which will also be suitable for all ages (useful if there are children present), which ideally can be used to promote himself and the restaurant and best of all, which will leave something that the diners can take away to show their friends. Again, we can see the importance of understanding that the restaurant magician is partly there to promote the eating establishment and so tricks which work towards this end are important to cultivate.

So, assuming you understand the type of tricks required, how many are likely to be needed? "Some tables might only get to see a quick trick as you are always dictated by when their food arrives. However, you need to have a good repertoire as the very nature of restaurant magic means lots of repeat customers," suggests David. Iain Moran adds a couple of other factors to take into consideration: "...how busy the restaurant is, how close the tables are to each other, if there are children in the restaurant, etc. Generally, though, I tend to use no more than six or seven different tricks."

This brings up another interesting point. Restaurants, as a general rule, tend to be quieter venues than those used for big dinner functions. This means that when you are performing, it may well be that what you are saying will be heard right across the room and much of what you do may well also be visible to other tables, especially in smaller venues. Matthew elaborates on what his policy is regarding the amount of material required for a gig: "My policy is that it never hurts to have a large repertoire of effects at any one time. Not only does this keep YOU interested after hours of performing, but it means that if you

"...IT TENDED TO PUSH YOU TO CONSTANTLY WORK ON NEW EFFECTS AND THE FACT THAT YOUR REGULARS ARE A PERFECT AUDIENCE..."

SHAUN MCCREE



Shaun McCree



David Willmott

“YOU NEED TO HAVE A GOOD REPERTOIRE AS THE VERY NATURE OF RESTAURANT MAGIC MEANS LOTS OF REPEAT CUSTOMERS.”

DAVID WILLMOTT

get repeat customers you can show them something new. Also I have never liked the idea of going to a table near or next to a table where you have just been performing and doing the same tricks and jokes. It looks exactly the way it is, that you only have so many tricks. Also if someone has seen you working the room they have already seen your act a few times before you even get to them.”

Variety is therefore important if you don't wish to have a reduced impact because people have already had a 'preview' at other tables of what you can do. One advantage of this is explained by Jayne: “Restaurants are a great way to try out lots of new material and see how they play in the real world.”

Shaun takes up the theme, “One of the things that I used to find particularly beneficial was that it tended to push you to constantly work on new effects and the fact that your regulars are a perfect audience to test out that material - I used to find that they would enjoy being the first to see new tricks - it kind of made them feel part of an exclusive club whose opinion you clearly trusted, I think.”

BAGS OF ROOM

All of the panel agree that somewhere between 6 and 12 tricks is going to be the average they would have access to, but how do they carry these around? Extra cases, bags? David's approach is consistent with all the others when he says: “Everything is in my pockets. I carry nothing, certainly no close up pad. However, my bag is nearby so I can pull out a new trick for the regulars.” Most of the panel admitted that they do like to have a case or bag with them which they may place behind the bar or somewhere accessible but out of sight in order to have the potential for a change of material or perhaps for a supply of business cards or any other expendables. But all of them believe in carrying what they need on their person, although Jayne also carries with her a top hat! “I carry a top hat as I find it helps to immediately establish the fact that I am the magician, both for the table I am about to perform to, as well as to distant tables. Although I do carry some extra props in my top hat, everything I actually use for my main sets is contained within my pockets.”

Having extra material available in a separate bag is also helpful if you

want to do a one-off special effect for particular guests. It may be that a group of people in the restaurant are celebrating a birthday, and under these circumstances you may wish to perform a routine which no one else will have seen that evening. You can do this without having to sacrifice valuable pocket space for the entire evening by getting the props required from the extra case.

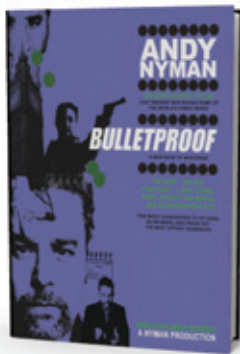
We asked all six of our panelists to say which trick from their repertoire they consider to be 100% perfect for restaurant work. Interestingly, three of them all chose the same trick - the Ambitious Card. Shaun sums up what he feels is so great about this classic effect: “As a plot it's clear in concept, it displays some measure of skill, it can be concluded at any point if necessary, and can easily be understood by both small children and people for whom English is not their first language. As the card is signed, people who don't even know the names of the cards can follow it. It's also capable of infinite variation and multiple possible climaxes which is an asset for repeat viewings.”

Jayne went for the Last Trick Of Dr. Daley because “it's strong, quick

and can be performed in the hands, with a borrowed deck if necessary.” Matthew went for sponge balls as “it's versatile, magical and very entertaining.” Harry couldn't offer just one trick as for him there were three equally strong contenders, those being his own version of the Brainwave Deck, Richard Sanders' Interlaced and the classic Card On Ceiling. The last of these is probably a choice for many other pro performers too, because as Harry says, “when people return to the restaurant with friends, they talk about the trick and can point out their card stuck to the ceiling which is a good conversation point and advertising for yourself.”

AND THERE'S SO MUCH MORE...

So, we've made a good start, but there are many other things to think about. Such as... how to approach the tables, how to get work in a restaurant, dealing with refusals, whether to work for/accept tips, deciding whether to use the table top to work on, plus considering what books/DVDs you should study to really get yourself up to full speed and more....but all this will have to wait until next time when all will be revealed! **ms**



BULLETPROOF: ANDY NYMAN

(A COLLECTION OF HIS MYSTERIES)

288 pages, leatherbound.

Available from

www.miraclefactory.net

Price: \$250

I had my book on order for well over a year, and I was beginning to think it would never see the light, even though I was assured it would. When it finally arrived, I had

almost forgotten all about it – so it was an even better surprise!

This limited edition book (750 worldwide) has been lovingly and stylishly put together by Andy Nyman and editor Todd Karr - and everything about it is pure class. There are knocking-on forty Nyman effects included, and the best bit is that the props are included – placed in special sleeves throughout the book. The props to perform these miracles are great, but I seriously doubt anyone will actually use them. The whole package is so good that no-one will want to keep this product in anything less than perfect condition.

The book is peppered with hundreds of photographs showing Nyman in his natural habitat – in a backroom, acting-the-goat, and

coming up with killer ideas. Not only do we get great effects, Nyman likes to look after us, and he happily provides instructions on how to make the perfect espresso!

This is a brilliant book, and as I write this review, I couldn't tell you if there are any left. If I were you, I would do your very best to get hold of one – even if it means doing a car-boot sale, or renting out the wife! (OK, or husband). Books like this only come along once every blue moon. It's so good that it's going straight back into its protective bubble-wrap. Oh yes. **GH**

WHAT'S HOT: Outstanding effects, brilliantly presented with two bonus DVDs!

WHAT'S NOT: Nothing to declare, sir!
★★★★★



BLOCKBUSTERS WITH CARDS DVD

Paul Gordon

Available from

www.paulgordon.net/shop.html

or Tel: 01903 211785

Price: £30 plus p&p.

Paul Gordon! You've got to hand it to him – he only does card stuff, and he's not going to change now, it's far too late for

that. This double disc set contains over 30 card tricks which have never appeared on film before.

Paul's an expert with cards, and an expert at handling close-up audiences – and you can see this as most of the effects are filmed at a private party. The standard of effects is very high, and you can see that they go down extremely well live. One disconcerting thing about this disc set is that some of the explanations appear before the actual trick – I think they call that the 'one ahead principle!' We'll let him off that, as this is a very good release, and definitely worth the money.

The disc starts off with a couple of poker-related tricks, which I'm not a fan of (poker, that is, not the effects). Head to Head Poker is a brilliant effect where a spectator has free choices of cards pushed

forward (face down) – and even selects the magician's cards, too. The spectator gets an average 'hand' but the magician gets a royal flush. A self working effect which gets a brilliant reaction.

Hellman's Aces is an effective aces/sandwich effect, and Dazzling Flush sees five cards appear between five others.

Lighter Than A Feather sees a card appear inside a zippo lighter, while Pseudo Smyth's Myth is a cracking self-working effect with one of the best forces I've seen for ages.

There are lots of excellent effects here, including one of Paul's most popular marketed effects: Red Herring. The sleights required for several of the effects here are skated over, but most are not difficult.

AT A GLANCE

INSIGHT

Peter Eggink

Available from your
local dealer

Price: £22.00 (approx)



A signed card visually appears in the centre of two jokers with holes through the middle.

Insight uses a brand new concept and comes complete with DVD, hand built gimmick on Bicycle stock and everything else you'll need to perform this effect. Use your own deck of Bicycle cards.

Poor filming lets this down a little but the effect itself is quite nice.

★★★★★

If you are into cards, then you'll enjoy this offering – and even if you don't, then you'll still find something to spice up your act, or stimulate conversation down the pub. Most of the effects are short, sharp and have good endings. Paul knows his cards. That's entertainment! **GH**

WHAT'S HOT: Lots of quality effects and experience Paul's sharp presentations.

WHAT'S NOT: Effects/explanations not in order. However, Paul tells me this was done on purpose and in some ways it's easier than having to keep switching between menus all the time.

★★★★★



4D SURPRISE

Tenyo

Available from:
www.merlinswakefield.com

Price: £29.95

Part of the World Greatest Magic range this is a fascinating grand illusion done in miniature. Two thin plastic panels are shown and one is slotted at right angles into the other so that it creates a sort of stage with a backdrop. A three sided semi-transparent frame is freely shown and placed in front of the backdrop on the plastic stage.

The audience can see clearly through the transparent frame to the backdrop behind. However, suddenly the frame is lifted away to reveal a sold miniature Statue Of Liberty figurine standing in front of the backdrop. Which begs the question - where on earth did that come from?

This is one of those Tenyo items (and there are many in the range) where you will get as much delight from the method as you will from showing it to someone. I suspect that if you as a magician were shown this you would be completely fooled by it, so lay people stand no chance! The props are really well made, the concept (by no less a genius than Lubor Fiedler) is brilliant, and the handling is straightforward and pretty convincing. There are a couple of little touches in the way the props are made that shows a lot of

thought has been put into this to make it as easy as possible to do.

There are some slight angle issues and your audience does need to be right in front of you - this is certainly an effect that you would not want to show to more than 2 or 3 people at a time. I also wish that the plastic Statue Of Liberty figure could have been made a little bigger (which I think it could have been without changing any of the other dimensions of the props), as the impact of the appearance of the figure is reduced a bit because of its size. However, where it came from will puzzle most if not all who see it. **ML**

WHAT'S HOT: awesome concept

WHAT'S NOT: a larger figure would have been an asset

★★★★

you to watch any of the video chapters quickly and easily on your computer. This is a perfectly satisfactory way to watch the video content and it does mean that the cost of the product is much lower than if you were to buy this as a real DVD.

As well as the card rise itself, which is a complete trick in its own right, Dave also provides you with a nice longer routine called Aces On Air. In this he uses three different classic impromptu methods to make three Aces rise from a shuffled deck, before then placing the deck in the box and performing AIR as the last Ace. Everything is well filmed and clearly explained and with there being no gimmicks and no re-set or get ready required, the whole thing is just about as practical as you could wish for. I think this is a very good idea and at the price is good value for money. **ML**



AIR - ALMOST IMPROMPTU RISER

Dave Forrest

Available from: www.full52.com

Price: £9.99

There are innumerable methods available for achieving the classic card rise effect, and here is yet another devised by the creative Dave Forrest which is based on an idea by Ken Krenzel and Richard Kaufman called On The Up And Up and also with a tip of the hat to the handling of the principle by Richard Sanders on his 3 DVD set The Richard Sanders Show. So you may well ask, what makes Dave Forrest's version worthy of your attention? Well, I'll tell you. Firstly, the deck used is entirely ungimmicked. No fake cards, no extra gizmos, nothing, just a

regular deck. Secondly, the card which rises is genuinely freely chosen and is signed. Thirdly, the card rises right out of the very centre of the deck. Fourthly, the deck is inside the card case when the rise occurs. Lastly, when the card has risen, the entire deck can be lifted out of the box with the card protruding from the pack and could be handed to a spectator who can remove their signed card themselves.

As you can see, it has a lot to recommend it in terms of cleanness of method. But is it difficult to do? No, actually, it's not. Of course, Dave does it very well and makes it look easy, but technically there is nothing that will frighten anyone other than the

card magic beginner. There are some slight angle issues which you will need to be aware of if you tend to work without your audience directly in front of you, but this is simply a matter of being aware of what needs to be covered and making body and hand adjustments to suit. You will also need to do some small one-time preparation to your card case before you can start with this, and I must confess to having a chuckle at Dave's neat way of doing this in order to comply with some sort of health and safety advice - he clearly didn't want to be facing any lawsuits!

The routine comes to you as downloadable video. This in itself is interesting. You effectively end up with a sort of mini website which when you enter it using your regular browser, you are presented with a small screen on a stylised webpage which enables

WHAT'S HOT: no gimmicks, and its a signed card that genuinely comes out of the deck while it's in the box

WHAT'S NOT: slight angle issues and a marginally unnatural way of holding the box during the rise

★★★★★

Got an item for review?

Items for review can be sent to any of the following addresses:

Graham Hey: 6 St Everilda's, Everingham, York YO42 4JE.

Phil Shaw: 23 Stock Close, Norton, Malton YO17 8BE.

Mark Leveridge: 13A Lyndhurst Road, Exeter EX2 4PA.

Please also supply information on price, postage and where your product can be purchased from. If you have a digital image (JPEG, TIFF, PDF) of your item too that would be appreciated, but not essential.



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 “unpacking 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**