

THE MAGIC MAGAZINE FOR MAGICIANS & MENTALISTS

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MAGICSEEN MAGAZINE

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Taster Issue

No.8

**JOHN
BANNON**

HITTING THE TARGET

READERS' LETTERS

If you have anything you would like to tell us, whether it's about the magazine or anything magic related, please email: grahamhey@magicseen.co.uk

Yann Frisch

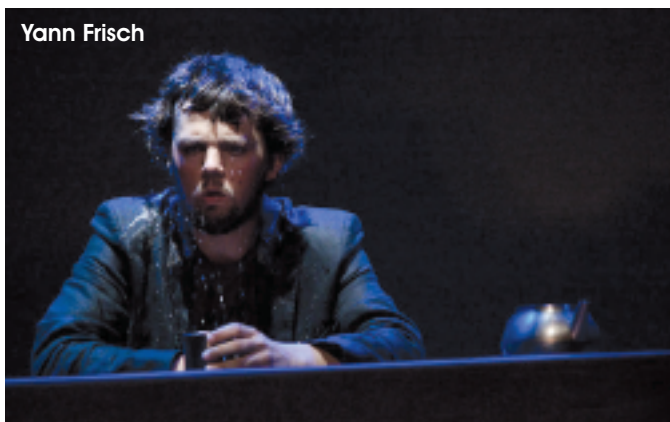


Photo: Luke Burreage

YANN REALLY IS THE MAN!

Anyone who went to the Blackpool convention and saw the competition must have been impressed with the French fellow Yann Frisch, who won with his brilliant up-dated 'cups-and-balls' routine with a jug and cup. It was all done in mime, and was just fantastic! I saw it on Youtube, but it has since been removed.

Brian Robinson, Cheshire.

Yes Brian, Yann's routine was the talk of the convention, and he really did deserve to win. The good news is that we have interviewed Yann and you can read it in our next issue.

MORE PENN & TELLER?

I've heard that Penn & Teller have been given a series on ITV – can you give me more details?

N Holland via email



Penn & Teller

That is correct. Penn & Teller will be in the UK in May, to sort it all out. We have spoken to a few of the magicians who have been asked to take part, but due to contracts we cannot divulge any details. However, we CAN say that there are some UNMISSABLE performers due to have a go at fooling Penn & Teller!

HOW TO START?

Up to now, I've practised magic, but would like to move into mentalism. Anything you could suggest to get me started? Nothing too difficult, mind!

Simon Dennison, Lincoln

There's lots to go at Simon, but off the top of someone's head, why not try: Richard Osterlind's Easy to Master Mental Miracles series?



I MET DAVID!

I was in Las Vegas recently, and while waiting in the foyer of my hotel met David Copperfield!! A dream come true, I thought –

and he certainly lived up to expectations. Even though I'm sure he was pretty busy, he took the time to sign autographs and have a chat for a couple of minutes. All I can say is, it was a real pleasure that me and my family will never forget.

Henry & Julia Ferris, (and two children), Chelsea.

MAGIC BABE IN UNARMED COMBAT

I was assisting in teaching an unarmed combat seminar in beautiful Singapore recently. Imagine my surprise when I learned from Avi Nardia, the head combat instructor, that amongst the group of ladies coming to take the course was none other than Magic Babe Ning! Ning had enrolled on our courses run by

David Copperfield



the Kapap Organisation to learn self-defence skills, and she proved to be a more than willing participant. In fact, at one point I had to make a simulated attack on her and before I knew it she had thrown me over onto my back and given me a stinging strike to the face to boot! It's great to see that even a Magicseen cover star can protect herself so effectively!

Charley Bourgheya, Bangkok



ALI COOK ON THE COVER!

Great to see Ali Cook on your last cover – his performance on the Penn & Teller TV show was great. I've seen him at Edinbro' a couple of times, and thoroughly enjoyed his shows. From the article, it is evident that he is diversifying, and it won't be long before he is no longer performing magic, as – let's face it – it's hard to make a decent living from it. Andy Nyman's doing more and more acting, Cook's moving into that area, too. And the even younger ones will be tempted into presenting children's television, no doubt. Where's the future? (Sounds like a line from a Sex Pistols song!)

Neil Wilson, Southampton

Where's the future? See Yann Frisch for full details!



Above: Richard, doing his famous 'Tom Cruise' impression

Magic Frankenstein!

We asked Richard Sanders to piece together his very own 'monster' using the best bits of magicians... this is what he came up with...

- 1. Best hands:** David Williamson and Bill Malone.
- 2. Best Hair-do:** Jimmy Grippo. Technically I don't think it was his hair but kudos to him for being able to wear that thing.
- 3. Best Dressed:** Derren Brown and worst dressed, Chung Ling Soo.
- 4. Best Brain:** Tommy Wonder for creativity, Eugene Burger and Derren Brown for presentation, David Williamson and Bill Malone for comedic brilliance.
- 5. Best Style:** The Naturals: Matt Schulien, Eddie Fechter, Bill Malone, David Williamson and Tommy Wonder.



2. Jimmy Grippo

4. Tommy Wonder

3. Derren Brown

1. Bill Malone

5. David Williamson

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IN THE NEWS

HOUDINI EXHIBIT ADDS SOME EXTRAS FOR LA STAY

Insidemagic.com reports, and we quote: The must-read website Wild About Harry reports that next stop on the Houdini: Art and Magic tour is Los Angeles, California.

Even 85 years after his passing, the showman still packs 'em in. The show was highly successful at The Jewish Museum in New York and organisers appear to be doubling down on the presentation by adding a retrospective of Jewish Magicians entitled, Masters of Illusions: Jewish Magicians of the Golden Age.

The exhibition's home in Los Angeles will be at the Skirball

Cultural Center. The doors will spring open on April 28, 2011. The exhibition will also feature the inclusion of John Gaughan's authentic working replica of Houdini's Water Torture Cell. The Gaughan replica will ONLY be displayed in L.A. Look for lectures featuring Joshua Jay, Mike Caveney, Max Maven, and Marvyn ("Mr. Electric") Roy.

Houdini: Art and Magic will travel to the Contemporary Jewish Museum, San Francisco, CA (September 30, 2011–January 16, 2012) and the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI (February 11–May 13, 2012).

LANCE BURTON VIP AT OSCAR PARTY

Top Vegas showbiz reporter, Mr Leach reports on the Las Vegas version of the Hollywood Oscar Show. 127 Hours star Rebecca C. Olson served as the female equivalent of a Master of Ceremonies. Her date for the evening was Lance Burton, Master Magician.

Lance Burton was more than serving as eye candy for a Hollywood Starlet. He announced his move from the theatre to the silver screen.

"Lance told me that his entertainment partner, juggler Michael Goudeau, and he are now one-third of the way through shooting their indie magic film. 'We have a 100-page script, and



we've completed about 30 pages so far,' Lance said. 'We're really pleased with the way it's coming along, and I'm having great fun taking on an acting role.'"



MAGIC IN THE NETHERLANDS

Fritz Alkemade takes us on a magical tour...

The Netherlands! Famous for its cheese, tulips, and windmills! A country of 16 million people on 42 square kilometres, with the world famous and beautiful city of Amsterdam as its capital.

The Dutch are down to earth, intelligent, and open-minded. And, for a small country, we're doing quite well in sports (swimming, ice skating and football) as well as academically! But did you know the Netherlands has great magicians as well?

The Dutch magic scene has produced some excellent magicians over the years, and, although magic is not seen regularly on TV any more, it is still very popular, with many performers choosing to concentrate on either manipulation or mentalism.

The country's leading magic organisation is the Dutch Magical Union (Nederlands Magische Unie). Its role is to maintain contact between magicians and to improve the quality of magic. The N.M.U. has over 20



magic clubs, which constitutes about 550 members and seven of these clubs have their own youth magic clubs. The Dutch magic forum (www.goochelaars.com) has over 1300 members and the N.M.U. publishes a bi-monthly magazine called the "Informagie".

We also have two large magic shops (Dynamite Magic and Jan Monnikedam) and a few smaller ones, both on and offline.

Besides various magic days, a national convention is organised every year in a different city by a different magic club. At this convention "The Golden Pin" (De Gouden Speld) is awarded to a magician who has greatly contributed to the art of magic or because of a special achievement, such as winning a prize at F.I.S.M.

There is also a yearly event where the young generation (under 18's) compete against each other. The competition is fierce, and many Dutch magicians have gone on to win at F.I.S.M. Our last winner, Dion, recently won in Blackpool with his amazing act, combining dance and manipulation.

Let's Go Dutch: A Brief History of Magic in The Netherlands

One of the earliest books on magic in Dutch is Simon Witgeest's *Het natuurlyk toverboeck* (1684) which loosely translates as "The Natural Book of Magic". This was a very influential publication, and another big influence on Dutch magic were the Bamberg family. For six consecutive generations (1760-1974) they were a family that performed magic. The first of this magical



dynasty was Eliaser Bamberg who was a professional magician in the town of Leyden. His father Jasper, although not a magician, was an alchemist and a necromancer utilising magical methods. Eliaser lost his leg during the French Revolution in 1793 and used his hollowed-wooden leg to make various objects disappear! Eliaser's son, David, assisted him when he was 9 years old - eventually becoming the court magician of King William II of Holland. He passed this tradition on to his son Tobias and his grandson David Tobias (also known as Papa Bamberg). Papa Bamberg's son, Theo Bamberg, also performed for the Royal Dutch family. He eventually changed his name into Okito (an anagram of Tokio) due to his oriental act. Okito created several magic effects (e.g. bowl of water production) and props, most notably the Okito Coin Box. David Bamberg, Okito's son, also took an oriental stage-name, calling himself Fu Manchu. He too performed in oriental costume and invented various effects. Fu Manchu toured with his father throughout the U.S.A. When Fu Manchu passed away, it was the end of an amazing magic dynasty.

Another figure who made an impact on Dutch magic was Jewish magician Larette. Originally from Vienna, he settled in Amsterdam in the 1920s. There, he had his own studio where he was a magic coach and sold magic props. Rotterdam's Henk Vermeyden assisted him and he became Larette's apprentice. After the death of Larette, Vermeyden coached Fred Kaps, Richard Ross, Marconik, and Peter Pit. All of



Fred Kaps

What made Fred Kaps stand out from his peers was that he was outstanding at both close up and on stage. He could perform amazing manipulations with coins and balls, but also dazzle audiences with his close-up card magic.

them went on to win at F.I.S.M. After the Second World War, Henk Vermeyden would play a big part in conceiving F.I.S.M. and the N.M.U. Vermeyden was awarded the "Award of Merit" in 1974 and a year later the "Special Fellowship" award by the "Academy of Magical Arts" in Hollywood.



The Netherlands and F.I.S.M.

Besides organising the world championships of magic five times (three times in Amsterdam and twice in The Hague), Dutch magicians have a reputation for performing well at the very highest level.

It all started when Niberco won F.I.S.M. for the first time in Paris in 1947 in the

manipulation category. He created fluid transitions from one manipulation to another which had never been done before. One of the most famous Dutch F.I.S.M. winners is Fred Kaps – who went on to win on three different occasions: 1950 (Barcelona), 1955 (Amsterdam), and 1961 (Liège). This record still stands today. Fred Kaps started his career as Valdini and eventually changed his name to Mystica. Besides winning F.I.S.M., in 1950 he also became Dutch national champion, and this was the start of a glorious career which took him all over the world.

What made Fred Kaps stand out from his peers was that he was outstanding at both close up and on stage. He could perform amazing manipulations with coins and balls, but also dazzle audiences with his close-up card magic. He was a very polite magician with a memorable smile who reacted as though the magic just seemed to happen to



...Richard Ross was the founder of the Magic Art Centre in Bennebroek. The purpose of this centre is to coach magicians of all ages and thus improve the quality of magic.

him, and his style has influenced many other magicians who have followed him. His never-ending salt-pour is legendary, not to mention his outstanding card manipulations. Because of his contribution to magic, Fred Kaps was awarded the "Masters Fellowship Award" in 1979.

Another F.I.S.M. winner was Richard Ross who won twice: in 1970 in Amsterdam and three years later in Paris. His claim to fame was his approach to the Linking Rings, and a 'Performing Fellowship Award' was given to him in 2000 and he also received 'The Golden Pin'. Ross wasn't just a performer - he coached many magicians, including Hans Klok and Ger Copper. Furthermore, Richard Ross was the founder of the Magic Art Centre in Bennebroek. The purpose of this centre is to coach magicians of all ages and thus improve the quality of magic. The Magic Art Centre is now run by his widow Veronique, and coaching seminars and lectures are still held there.

In 1979 Ger Copper won F.I.S.M. in Brussels with his amazing 'candle' act. He too received the prestigious 'Golden Pin'. Mr. Copper considers himself as a jack-of-all-trades (he's performed most types of magic) and these days focuses on creating acts with black art. Currently he runs the Dutch School of Magic in Assendelft where he has coached many award-winning magicians.

But there are more magicians from The Netherlands who have made a big impact...



Tommy Wonder

With his legacy: *The Books of Wonder* (1996), Tommy Wonder left us many theories and philosophies to think about. At ten years old, magic sparked his interest and he entered several national and international competitions. The work of Fred Kaps inspired Tommy in how to approach and give meaning to magic. Wonder was awarded the 'Performing Fellowship' (1996) and his two cups and balls routine is a classic.

Peter Eggink

A creative mind that has also won prizes at national competitions. Known amongst his peers for releasing effects such as "3 Fry", "Exit" and "A.E."

as well as various DVD's. Peter is currently busy doing lectures for magicians and releasing new material.



Flip Hallema

If you do the 'Flipstick' move, you're doing a sleight created by Mr. Hallema! He created a whole act around this sleight, called "Duplo-Magic" which he has performed around the world. Flip has also won the "Performer Fellowship Award" and he is currently the president of the NMU.



Hans Kazàn

His real name is Hans Mulders and he got the magic bug at the age of 9. Hans had his own weekly magic show on national TV, which inspired many young magicians to do close-up magic. Kazàn's two sons, Oscar and Renzo, also successfully pursued a career in magic. Together with his daughter-in-law Mara, they travel the world as Magic Unlimited.



Hans Klok

Got involved in magic when he was ten and became Dutch and European champion when he was just 14! An illusionist who brings sexiness into magic and who also won a prize at F.I.S.M. with his assistant Sittah, before both went their own way. In 2007 Mr. Klok had a show on the Las Vegas strip for several months called "The Beauty of Magic" and former Baywatch-star and sex symbol Pamela Anderson was Hans' assistant. Lucky old Hans! Nowadays, he dazzles audiences across Europe with his brilliant illusion show. Also, Hans was awarded 'The Golden Pin' by the N.M.U. and is the highest profile Dutch magician.



Christian Farla

Another illusionist, but with a different style! Farla and his wife have performed in Las Vegas. There, Christian became friends with

David Copperfield and has been heavily influenced by the world's most famous magician. Christian received several awards, most notably the Merlin Award for Magician of the Year, 2006. This award earns him the title 'Master Magician'. Farla now tours with his illusion show.

And let's not forget Grand Prix Winners Scott & Muriel, Dick Koornwinder, George Parker, and Sittah! The Netherlands has dozens more professional magicians who are known internationally, while others are only famous in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, with a legacy of amazing magicians and a rich history, Dutch magic is in safe hands! Who would've thought that such a small country had made such a big contribution to magic?

About Fritz!

Fritz Alkemade is 26 years old and lives in Amsterdam. His interest in magic was sparked by learning a card trick at the age of 9. As a professional magician Fritz has travelled around the world performing for both laypeople and magicians. Hi specialty in close-up magic.

DID YOU KNOW?

That many Dutch magicians like to use stage names? Fred Kaps' real name is Abraham Bonger and Tommy Wonder's is - Jacobus Bemelman. Not easy to pronounce in English!



That in 20 out of the 24 F.I.S.M. conventions organised (from 1948-2009) at least one Dutchman has brought home a prize each time!

Amsterdam has a magical boat called 'Tricky Theatre'. Owner Woody Woet performs while guests enjoy dinner, and 'open mic' nights and magic lectures are often held there.



JOHN BANNON

HITTING THE TARGET

If you have ever spent any time with John Bannon, there are two things which spring to mind. Firstly, he's pretty quietly spoken, and secondly, he's the sort of person who fully considers things before he speaks – you could imagine him putting out 'a hit' on you if he happened to be a mafia boss! I suppose it's quite fitting that I interview the magician who has produced a massive amount of killer magic over the past twenty five years, and who's latest DVD releases have been *Bullet Party* and *Bullets After Dark!!* So, I am wearing a complete set of body armour as I chat to one of the greatest creators of magic on the planet...

Graham Hey asks the questions.

We're in a cafe in Blackpool. Not the most glamorous starts, I know, but what can I do? I decide to start at the beginning, and ask John to tell me about his family and upbringing? "I was born in 1957 and I grew up in a military family. My father was a submariner in the U.S. Navy and we moved around a lot, but we always lived on one coast or the other. I became interested in magic in high school in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

"I.B.M. Ring 103 met at a store on Granby Street in downtown Norfolk called 'The Magic Shop.' The Magic Shop was and wasn't what it sounded like. It was primarily a 'head shop,' selling drug paraphernalia and other counter-culture merchandise. A head shop was not surprising in the early 1970s, but it was a stark contrast to the stately, dignified proprietor, Mr. Earl Edwards. But in the back there was a small room with a platform stage. It was the epicentre of magic at that time in the Tidewater area. I have very fond memories of that time and place."

John stops briefly to take a sip of mediocre coffee. "In Virginia, I attended lectures by such luminaries as Vernon and Goshman. It was there I was exposed to the late Woody Landers, among others. Woody was talented and enthusiastic and knew every card and coin trick — or at least seemed to. Woody was an early influence on me. He was very generous with his knowledge and liked to share. He would fool you and then

The Magic Shop was and wasn't what it sounded like. It was primarily a 'head shop,' selling drug paraphernalia and other counter-culture merchandise.

show you how the trick worked. He also made his extensive library available. Back then, where there were not many books and most information was unavailable to neophyte like me, or un-affordable (I was a high school student, remember.) Much of my early knowledge was obtained by and through Woody.

"In the eighties, I was in the Air Force, and was stationed in Washington D.C. The vibrant D.C. magic community included Larry West, Howie Schwartzman, Harvey Rosenthal, Scotty York, Bob Kohler, Bob Sheets, David Williamson, Tim Conover, Darwin Ortiz, Al Cohen, and many others. Also in the eighties, I began to attend magic conventions, such as the exclusive Fechter's Finger Flicking Frolic, and my sphere of magic friends and influences continued to expand.



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"I moved to Chicago in 1988 to go to law school. I met Simon Aronson and Dave Solomon who, luckily for me, allowed me to participate in what is now known as the "Chicago Session." For the past twenty years I have routinely met with Dave and Simon, my close friends and magical confidants.

In real life, I am a lawyer. I deal mainly with business and intellectual property litigation. After hours, I do card tricks."

I am already enlightened! I wonder why so many top magicians seems to work in the legal profession? It must be the way their minds work – how they constantly look at things from different angles. Or maybe not.

John's first published magic was back in 1986 - so 25 years as a published author/creator .. how do you feel about that, I ask?

"Old," he laughs. "How about older and wiser? Actually, looking back I am surprised to see how well the early tricks have held up — both in construction and in theory. Some better than others, of course. So far, the half-life of my published work appears to be quite long. Even after all these years, I am happy to see that much of the work is as current and relevant today as it was back then."

Twenty five years is not long in some respects. How has your view of magic changed or developed over the years? "My view has not really changed," he says, "but it has developed and evolved. When I go back and look at what I said about the tricks in *Impossibilia* or *Smoke & Mirrors*, I see real

consistency in approach with the way I think about things now. I am still endorsing the same theories, but hopefully a little more articulately.

"Over the years, my critical faculties have developed. I think it's important to know not only what you like about a particular trick, but why you like it — how does it fit into your own magical world view? The flip side almost matters more: What is it about the trick that bugs me? I want to identify it and understand it. Being critical is almost as important as being knowledgeable. Nowadays, I see too much emphasis on 'originality' as in 'different.' Usually resulting in a bad script with too much whimsy or wonder or over-elaboration. I think presentations should be reflective of a specific individual persona. There is not enough emphasis on developing a unified approach that considers the technique, method, persona and audience.

"Personally, I believe most performers talk too much, that is, with an elaborate 'original' presentation, and that most, if not all, card tricks generally should not be presented as 'magical,' or if 'magical' then firmly tongue-

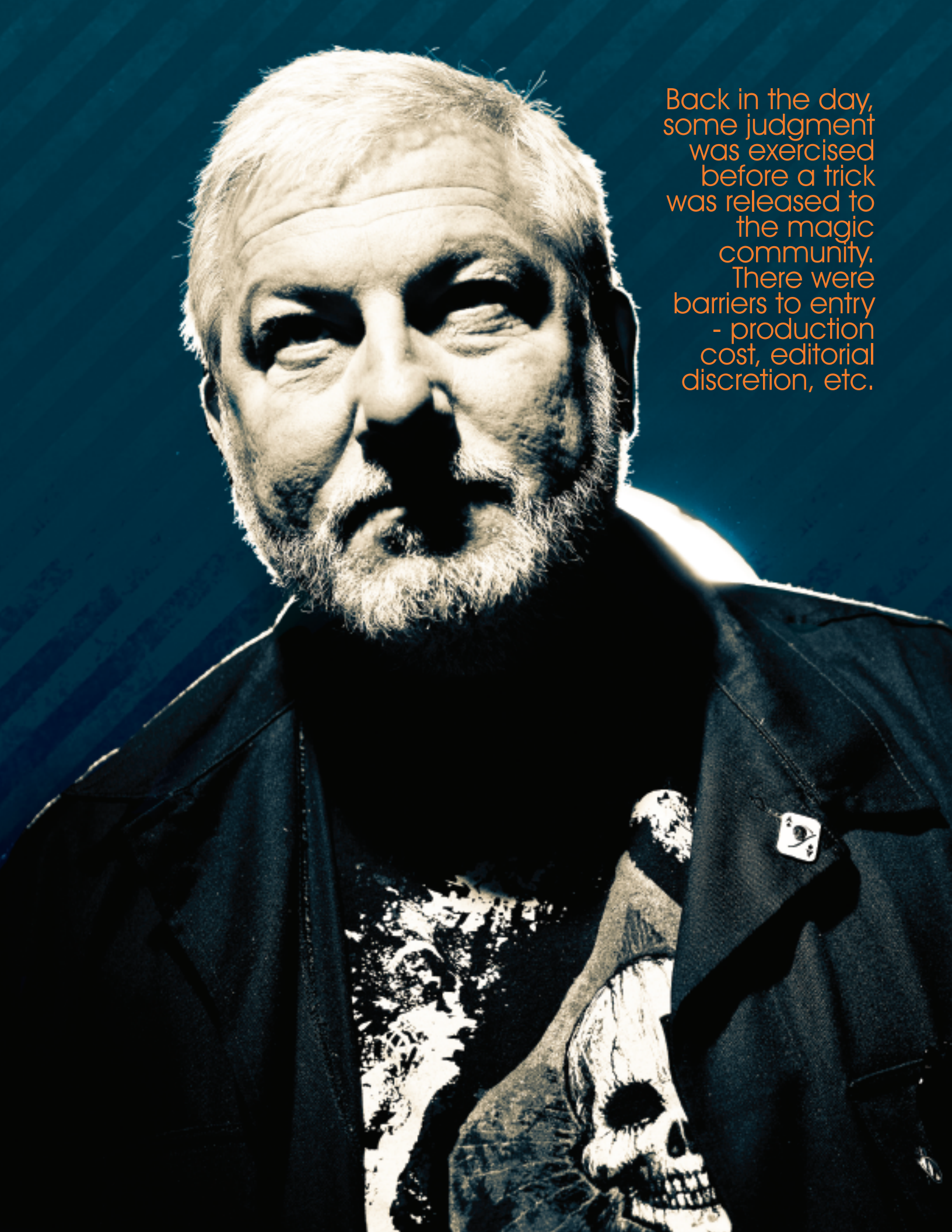
in-cheek. But that's just me . . . Reasonable persons may disagree."

John seems to have embraced the DVD age, working closely with Big Blind Media, which we'll get on to shortly, but how does he see the ever-expanding YouTube generation? "Mostly from the neck down! (I am sure I am not the first one to make that observation.) YouTube is both a blessing and a curse. Information wants to be free and travel as fast as it can. YouTube puts up no roadblocks whatsoever. There are no filters.

"Back in the day, some judgment was exercised before a trick was released to the magic community. There were barriers to entry - production cost, editorial discretion, etc. It was the age of the anthological magic book — Greater Magic and the small booklet of maybe ten tricks, for example.

"Now there are fewer and fewer barriers to entry. You do not have to be literate (as in able to read a book much less write one), video is omnipresent and inexpensive, and it costs nothing to post on YouTube. In the old days, filters meant





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you saw maybe only the top 20% — in which case half was chaff. Now darn near the whole 100% is out there. While it appears that there is an explosion of mediocre magic, nothing's really changed — the filters have been turned down.

“As Eugene Burger is fond of saying, ‘the house of Magic has many rooms.’ I’ll limit my response to the close-up wing, card trick hall, amateur room.” I am an amateur as are most of the magic community. From a performance side, the main result of having mainly amateurs means that there is a lot more not-so-great magic out there, as well as a failure of self-criticism. But there is also a lot more experimentation and attempt, which is a crucible for progress. On the inventing/publishing side, with the internet and the ease of ‘putting stuff out there’ all barriers to entry have been removed and, again due to a lack of criticism and judgment, a lot of not-so-great magic.”

What do you think this information ‘explosion’ means? “Two things: (i) you can’t keep up with it all and (ii) you really wouldn’t want to! On the flip side, more magic means net-net more interesting and good magic and more progress. The best way to have a good idea is to start with lots of ideas.

You just have to (i) be able to tell the difference and (ii) be able to filter the wheat from the chaff.

So much of magic is about judgment. There definitely can be diminishing returns and there are a lot of left turns off the reservation. Didn’t Al Baker say, ‘many good tricks are killed by improvement’? So, the trick is to know when not to stop and know when to stop.



Not just method, but presentation too. Many good tricks are killed by a verbose, naively offensive presentation in the name of ‘whimsy’, ‘wonder’ and/or ‘suspension of disbelief.’

It is an ongoing quest for the ‘wisdom to know the difference.’”

The more sips of coffee I take the less it appeals to me, and in the end I give up. The drink is bland and lacks any type of kick! The opposite of Big Blind Media, the innovative magic company run by the quirky Owen Packard. I ask John what it was like to work with these crazy kids? “I had decided not to do video unless it could be done non-traditionally. Meaning different from the mainstream and different from the just-as-mainstream ‘street nonsense’ style. All while recognising that the important parts are the trick and the explanation — not much you could do about that. It’s not all style, but if I was going to do video, why not with style?”

“The ‘Fractal’ packet tricks (‘Royal Scam,’ ‘Duplicitly,’ and ‘Spin Doctor’) were an initial foray. I specifically asked that the shoot and the editing be done ‘Hollywood,’ not ‘documentary,’ style and I thought they came out great with not much more direction than that. The editing was for the most part, just what I wanted. Movie-like without losing the content.”

John says that after being exposed to Owen’s direction, editing and sheer style, he

Many good tricks are killed by a verbose, naively offensive presentation in the name of ‘whimsy’, ‘wonder’ and/or ‘suspension of disbelief.’

decided that, if he were to do a trick DVD, he would want to do it with with BBM. He adds, “Coincidentally, at that exact moment, there was a figurative knock on my door and Owen contacted me and asked me if I would be interested in doing a DVD with him! It was a real kick to work with Owen and his crew. I could not be happier with the result.

“‘Bullets After Dark’ is tricks and explanations. The explanations are more expansive and detailed in terms of plan and theory than I usually would have done. Then, the explanations are periodically enhanced through short interview clips. Finally, the whole thing is top-notch ‘Hollywood’ simply oozing with style. Thanks to Owen, Bullets After Dark is a fabulous-looking piece of work!”

As I get older my card work gets tempered with much more knowledge, experience and most importantly, judgment.

It seems the top guys have some sort of weird infatuation with firearms - let's not forget Andy Nyman's recent book: Bulletproof! So where did the title, 'Bullets After Dark' come from? "Owen was going for a backlit, shadowy 'noir' look (and achieved it). 'Aces' can be called 'Bullets' in poker parlance. Accordingly, 'Bullets After Dark' is as 'noir' as it gets. (As you can tell, I am not afraid of obscure titles — Dear Mr. Fantasy, anyone?)"

Tell us about your latest project and why you're so excited about it (!)

"'Bullet Party' has a different, but just as stylish, look. Once again, Owen has made me and the tricks look really good. Originally, I had thought about a purely 'fractal' project. Over the last year or so, I had made real progress with 'Bullet Party,' a highly-amplified extension of Elmsley's 'Four Card Trick.' I was excited about the trick; it was commercial, 'fractal' (that is, examinable),

and sophisticated. I thought it would make a good release.

"Then again, last year's 'Mega 'Wave,' another examinable packet trick, had gathered a following, but had not been on video. Further, I had come up with a fairly significant improvement for another fractal packet trick, 'Poker Paradox.' With these three tricks — each of which could have been released on its own — I'd reached critical mass for a new video project. I had no trouble getting Owen's attention.

"By the time it was over, 'Bullet Party' was no longer purely fractal. Nevertheless, all the tricks use regular cards and are virtually all impromptu and most fairly easy to do. Furthermore, each trick has aspects that I feel deserve publishing, aspects that 'move the ball.' 'Bullet Party' is a variety of card magic that I would find very interesting. Hopefully, others will too.

I don't know how Owen did it, but pound for pound, 'Bullet Party' is a fat package. The necessary cards for 'Bullet Party' and 'Mega 'Wave' are included along with twelve expertly-filmed card tricks and explanations. Seems like quite a bargain."

Having watched his latest releases, John seems to be producing some of his best-ever magic, which begs the questions: What do you regard as the most satisfying part of your career? And is there one defining moment where you felt you were at the top of your game? "Right now!" he says, straight away, and I believe him! "Seriously, I enjoy doing what I do and am happy that the magic community finds what I do acceptable. As I get older my card work gets tempered with much more knowledge, experience and most importantly, judgment. So I feel like it's getting better. Maybe I've produced my best trick already — several come to mind — but maybe not. I certainly don't think I've produced my last good trick. Not yet, at least."

And with that, John smiles, and heads off to demonstrate some of his latest effects. And I take off my body armour. That was quite painless really.

Quick-ish Q&A

Is there any area or aspect of magic which you have never got to grips with? An area where you have struggled?

Most of them. Seriously. When I was younger I wanted to do it all — cards, coins, balls, ropes, rings — you name it. Even mentalism. The realities of life convinced me otherwise. So I decided to focus on card tricks and have lived happily ever after. (I have to take some of that back—I never wanted to do tricks with straws, sugar packets, chewing gum, or silly putty.)

What was the last great performance by a magician you saw live?

At the last MAGIC Live convention, I saw Tim Conover's mentalist show which was fabulous, and Guy Hollingworth's Erdnase show. Both, tough acts to beat.

Who are your own magic heroes – and have you ever met them? (if so, how was it?)

I have had many magic influences and, thankfully, I have been able to meet almost all of them—if only just an introduction. Vernon, Marlo, Ascanio, Frank Garcia, Mike Skinner, Larry Jennings, Jack Birnman, Larry West. I've never really had a mentor, which is sad really. I was happy to meet Don Alan (a long time ago) because I think he had a huge under-recognised impact on the modern close-up performer persona. I was really glad to finally meet Martin Nash—a great creator and performer of card magic, and another under-recognised huge influence on the modern close-up persona. I have yet to meet Roy Walton—perhaps a pilgrimage is in order...

You were at Blackpool – have you got over the culture shock? How was it for you?

Blackpool is an experience, isn't it. This was actually my second year in a row. Last year,

I worked the convention—lecture and the dreaded "horseshoe." That was a culture shock. I hear they've stopped doing the "horseshoe," what a shame. I've worked in that situation twice. The first time, Juan Tamariz was behind me. The second, last year, David Williamson was to my right. Just lucky, I guess.

This year was a lot different. I came over to help Owen out with the "Bullet Party" launch. Much less stressful. The dealers' room is really amazing—it's like a trade show accompanied by the occasional lecture. Nothing like it in the world. I'd love to come back.

The Magicseen front cover – you've really made it now, eh? More seriously, what's your big message – the magic topic that seems most important/relevant at the moment?

I am honestly quite pleased and flattered to be on the cover of Magicseen. First time for



me. It's the curse of the amateur. Being primarily a developer or a tinkerer, and not a professional performer, I am not generally considered on the "front line" of magic today, and certainly not part of its "face." Frankly, I rather prefer not to be a professional magician—it seems like a hard way to make a living. There often appears to be a bias against amateurs and a sense that only professionals are qualified to opine. You know, the attitude that if you haven't performed a trick a thousand times, you are not entitled to speak about it. I think that's nonsense. The dumbest form of this bias has got to be: "We (magicians collectively) don't need new tricks, we need to practice the ones we already know." I have nothing against practise, but I believe in innovation and progress. Of course we need new tricks.

Who's the most underrated magician around today?

Paradoxically, among magicians it's probably David Blaine. David Blaine's deliberate "anti-

presentation" presentations are roundly criticised by many magicians, but he clearly knows what he is doing and has resonated with many performers. Directly with the younger "street magic" crowd, and indirectly with magicians like me. Blaine has made me think about, understand, and appreciate the idea of "persona-based, adventures of the props" presentations. Sometimes the best presentation is no presentation. Blaine is changing the persona of the close-up magician—which is a good thing.

Give us three words which you think sums you up the best. (This is not for a job interview on magicseen!)

There are lots of words I think should not be used in reference to oneself. Can I get away with: Calm. Discriminating. Always thinking.

Favourite movie?

The usual suspects (not, "The Usual Suspects").

Favourite breakfast?

Full English without the baked beans.

Last book read?

The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo

Secret hobby?

It wouldn't be "secret" then, would it? Actually, if you took each letter in this interview that falls on a prime number (including spaces) and unscrambled them...

Competition

To win a copy of *Bullet Party* and *Bullets After Dark* DVDs from Big Blind Media, simply answer this question: Name **ONE** magician whose quote is promoting John Bannon's latest release on



Bigblindmedia.com Send your answer to: grahamhey@magicseen.co.uk by midnight, May 30th. Winner notified by email.

WE WANT YOUR BEST IDEA!

The Masterclass Award for 2011, which consists of a cash prize of £250 plus a special certificate, will be presented to the person who contributes the best trick published in the Masterclass section of Magicseen during Volume 7. Marc Spelmann, John Bannon and Mark Townsend are the next to contribute - so what can you offer to wow our readers even more to put you in the running? Please send your contribution to the Editor at markleveridge@magicseen.co.uk as soon as you can. Two issues of Volume 7 are already gone, so you have just 4 issues left to stake your claim to the cash! So don't delay, show how creative you are and let us tell the world for you.

TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

Marc Spelmann

EFFECT: The performer discusses an unusual skill he has acquired, whereby he can wake himself up without an alarm. He can also predict time and is able to divine times that are thought of within a minute or two of the targeted time. To show how difficult this is, the entertainer offers to give a spectator a chance to try it for themselves.

The performer writes a time on a piece of card which is placed writing side down on the table. A lady spectator is invited to announce a time that she feels he might have written on the card. Let's say she selects 3.45. Smiling, the performer says "Let's be honest, the chances of you getting it correct are pretty slim but that is the point, this is not easy. Nonetheless, if you are within thirty minutes we'll class that as a hit."

Now a second spectator is invited up and is asked to bring with him a watch borrowed from a further audience member. The performer says to the assisting spectator: "In a moment I am going to have you spin the hands of this watch. You can spin backwards or forwards it really doesn't matter, what does matter is that the time you set is not known to you or anyone else, this will be totally random."

The mentalist demonstrates with the borrowed watch, showing

the spectator how the hands spin round. Turning away, the performer instructs the spectator to spin the hands of the watch sight unseen, and once completed to push the stem in. The spectator is then asked to take a peek at the random time. Picking up another business card, the mentalist begins to jot down a time but seems to struggle as he says: "I told you, this isn't easy." Crossing out his first attempt, the performer asks the spectator to visualise the time as numerals, as the hands of the clock are hard to distinguish between. Writing a second time, the magician mentions he feels it is quite close.

Retrieving the first card from the table, the performer asks the lady spectator for her time again. She replies "3.45." He asks whether if she got within thirty minutes would she be impressed with her efforts, to which she replies "Yes.". The entertainer turns the card over and says "So one minute out would really impress you then?" showing that the time he thought of was 3.44. He then turns to the second spectator and asks him to reveal for the first time his randomly selected time. "7.53.". The mentalist turns the card around and replies "I was off the first time round but luckily I changed my mind and even I'm impressed with 7.53."

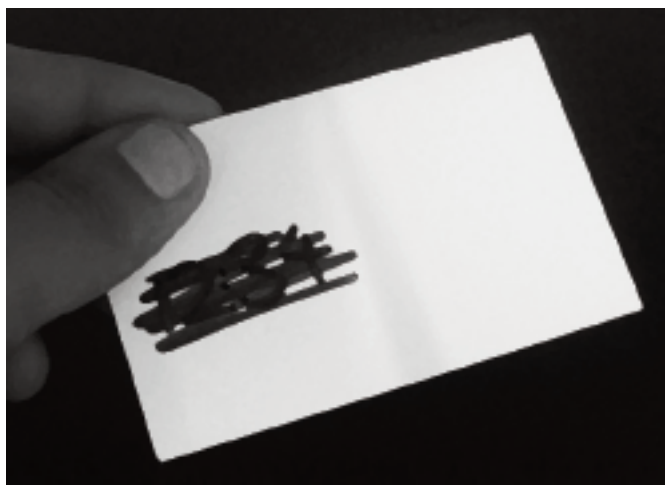


Fig 1



Fig 2

WORKING: This effect is very strong, but it does require a decent presentation, along with a few subtleties along the way. First of all I have to give huge credit to Bev Bergeron, who as far as my research goes invented the watch force which was published in his excellent manuscript 'Predicting Time'. The force has been popularised over the past decade by my two friends and peers Banachek & Richard Osterlind. Guy Bavli, another very creative chap, also has a handling on his DVDs published by L&L.

Let's look at the watch force first. Most wrist watches of any value are analogue. In other words, they have a stem which changes the time by pulling it out. On most but not all watches the stem pulls out to two separate points, one changing the date, the other changing the time. We are going to use this to our advantage. As you explain what the second spectator is to do, you simply twist the stem, changing the time to your desired time, and then discretely push the stem in one click. This will mean that when the spectator spins the stem he will not be changing the time but instead the date, which in most cases is very small and won't be noticed. The nice thing is that when the spectator spins the hands of the watch and stops, you then ask him to push the stem in. This psychologically suggests that he was indeed moving the hands.

Now let's get on to the one tiny bit of preparation which is the business cards. One is left blank whereas the other is slightly modified. All you do is write a time and then scribble it out so that it can't be read. Fig.1. That's it.



Fig 3

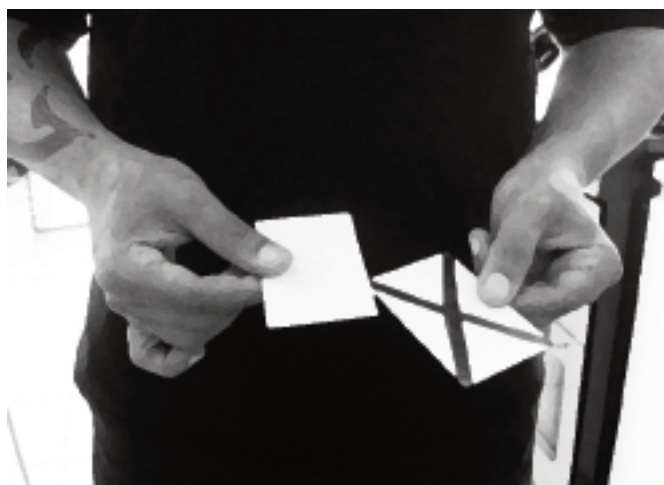


Fig 4

So, let's take it from the top. You pick up the card with the scribbling on it and write 7.53, this card being placed on the table as you ask the lady the time she thinks you have in mind. She replies 3.45, and you say your lines as in the effect description above. You then invite the second spectator up and borrow a watch from a third person. The reason for this is because you don't want the assisting spectator to be familiar with the watch as he may notice that the stem is not pulled all the way out, which is more likely if you are using his own watch.

The spectator apparently spins the hands and he pushes the stem in. He looks at the time, which you have forced. You then pick up a blank business card and pretend to write a time down, make a mistake and then scribble it out by simply rubbing your index finger nail against the card. You then write the lady's named time, minus a minute, on this otherwise clean card. What you have done is psychologically created two distinctly different cards so that when they are later shown, the audience will place them in the correct time and space, which camouflages the one ahead.

All that is required now is to show both cards. You can, if you so wish, just grab both cards and confuse the real positions of each one thus the audience cannot keep track of which card was which. I prefer to switch them openly using a very bold top change action but only using the two cards. The handling is shown in Figs. 2, 3 and 4. Some pointers to doing this are:

- 1) The X on the card is shown purely for illustrative purposes only. The grip is quite loose, the kind of grip used for a top change or the Elmsley Count.
- 2) The hands meet only for a fraction of a second, and at that moment the cards are smoothly switched one for the other. The misdirection is a gesture as you recap.
- 3) The move is more deceptive if it is performed on a horizontal plane so that the cards are edge on to the audience although it can work face on.

So, there it is a simple yet very effective routine. One last tip is that the time you force with the watch should be an hour or two either before or after your actual performance as this means it won't take you long to adjust the hands to the desired time. An hour either way can be easily reached with minimal handling.

This effect was inspired by a version of a card effect I do which in turn was based on a T.A. Waters effect from his book Mind, Myth & Magick. I simply changed the use of cards to that of a watch and time.



THE ESSENTIAL MAGIC CONFERENCE DVD COLLECTION

Luis de Matos

Available from: Your favourite dealer

Price: \$150/€120 (approx. £95)

In issue 34 (Sept. 10) we published a report on the inaugural Essential Magic Conference, which was the first major magic event to be held entirely online. Over a three day period, sessions of magic discussion, performance and lecture were streamed to over a 1000 registrants around the world, and despite a few minor glitches, it was undoubtedly a triumph for organisers Luis de Matos, David Britland and Marco Tempest. Part of the registration deal was that 'conventioners' would receive a set of DVDs containing all the presentations, the Q&A sessions and lectures at the EMC, and these have just recently arrived. The good news is that those who did not sign up for the original event can now purchase these DVDs as a stand alone product.

The set comprises of 8 DVDs, each one covering a session. Each session contains three categories of material - Talks, Performances and Passion For Magic. In total there are 88 different events on the DVDs, all of varying lengths, something which is a definite plus as it provides a lot of variety and keeps the audience interested.

Let's look at the three categories offered on each DVD.

The Talks cover quite a range of events. You have standard lectures in which the artiste performs and explains some magic. There are discussions with a panel of experts such as the History Panel, the TV Panel and the FISM Panel. And you have talks that are literally that, a talk, in which the presenter discusses with the viewer a particular magic related topic. There is huge variety on offer and it is especially fascinating to hear the views of world experts on matters to which normally a traditional convention cannot afford to allot time in the schedule.

The Performances are, as the title suggests, demonstrations of magic with no explanations. Effectively these are the Gala Show or Close Up Show equivalents from a regular convention. The difference is that the setting for these performances is not at all theatrical. There is no special staging as everything takes place on a TV studio set, and I got the impression that this, combined with the fact that the 'audience' comprised only of the other members of the 33 experts assembled and therefore there was little or no audience reaction or atmosphere, caused some of the performers to feel a bit uncomfortable and sometimes rush what they were doing. However, there are some top people such as Guy Hollingworth, Gaetan Bloom, Lennart Green and Finn Jon amongst others who are all featured and their material is, of course, excellent.

The Passion For Magic section of the DVDs features footage shot

separately from the actual live event and which consists of monologues or interviews with top names such as Lance Burton, Mac King, JC Sum and Magic Babe Ning, Cyril Takayama, Marco Tempest, Jeff McBride and more. Most if not all of these were also available to registrants to watch on the EMC website. These are very interesting as they again cover a wide range of topics and it's great to get the candid views of such well known people in magic.

The quality of the DVD production is first class. The 33 assembled magical luminaries who take part are undoubtedly all experts in their fields and it's amazing that so many of them were persuaded to get together for 3 days in Portugal in order to make this event happen. As I said in my original review of the event itself, the EMC is not in my opinion for the casually interested but is more for the thinking magician or someone who is truly interested in learning technique from the best and who wishes to explore magic far more deeply than is normally possible. These DVDs capture the first EMC event really well and are a treasure trove of excellent magic, advice and opinion, and if you consider yourself to be one of the magician types that I described above, you shouldn't let the relatively high price of this DVD set put you off buying them. **ML**

WHAT'S HOT: awesome line up of genuine world talent

WHAT'S NOT: definitely not for the casually interested magician

★★★★★



INSTANT RE-SET WALLET!

Harry Robson

Available from www.harryrobsonmagic.co.uk

Price: £40 approx.

Well, the first thing to note about this wallet is that it's a reasonable size. I've seen wallets before that were so big you need planning permission to get them in your jacket! It's a terrific card-to-envelope-inside-a-compartment wallet, which re-sets very easily (between tables!). You can re-set it 12 times before needing to re-fill with envelopes, which are Dave Bonsall 'Delux' envelopes. The wallet is top quality, and the best part is that you don't even need to take the wallet out of your pocket to re-set it!! The price is about half of what you would expect to pay for a quality product like this, and magicians are already saying that this is the one they use! The wallet comes with a DVD with routines/ideas. Recommended. **GH**

WHAT'S HOT: A clever device for repeating miracles!

WHAT'S NOT: Nothing really!

★★★★★



SKIP SWITCH PROJECT DVD

Ollie Mealing

www.bigblindmedia.com

Price: £16

This is one of the latest releases from Big Blind Media and, as a result of this, one thing that is already evident is that the production quality, as ever, is exceptional. So first off, well done to the producing genius that is Owen Packard.

Now, on to the Skip Switch, the move around which the aptly named project is based.

Ollie is one of those young, rising bright lights in the card magic

world and is full of creative ideas and this release is no exception.

In effect, the sleight taught is a utility move which allows you to switch a sandwiched card in a very justified and undetectable manner. Very few moves which are comparable to this exist so this is a welcome addition. As you can imagine, a move of this sort has countless uses and can be placed into any sandwich routine and indeed a variety of other routines.

The switch, although not easy, is well within the reach of any intermediate card man and the detailed teaching certainly aids this process. This learning is complemented by the BBM signature of having another magician sit in on the explanations to help keep them on track and in this case, James Went does an excellent job.

Finally, although there are 11 effects taught which use the

switch, none of them jumped out at me. They are worthy effects but I feel that you will get better mileage out of the move if you apply your own ideas. However, do not get me wrong, you will enjoy watching through the routines and they certainly demonstrate what potential the move has. As well as this, the explanations are very thorough and enjoyable to watch.

Overall I would say that the DVD is worth purchasing as you will undoubtedly find use for the move and you will have a pleasurable experience learning it.

WHAT'S HOT: Nice utility move with many applications.

WHAT'S NOT: The effects taught could have been stronger.

★★★★



STAND AND DELIVER

2 DVD set by Shaun McCree

Available from

www.rsvpmagic.com

Price: £24.99

Shaun's last DVD Mix and Mingle was a superb set which made me rethink my style of magic.

His new handlings on old effects never cease to amaze, and so his new DVD was no disappointment.

One of the effects is a switch of a pile of pieces of coloured paper to a wad of bills, which could be very visual, but his handling, in my opinion, makes it an even stronger effect.

He also features a colour changing deck with a twist, in which the card changes to whatever colour the spectator names. Not just red or blue - but any colour at all.

To be honest, this set is probably not as good as his last, but if you

already own it, this new set is full of all new material, that has clearly been tried and used in the real world for many years, and I cannot recommend it enough.

If you don't own his first set, buy that one first, love it, and then buy this one. **TC**

WHAT'S HOT: A dozen or so killer routines that you will want to use

WHAT'S NOT: This DVD features one or two filler tricks, as opposed to Shaun's purely original first set.

★★★★

AT A GLANCE



SIGNED UP

Trevor Duffy

Available from

www.cards4magic.co.uk

Price: £15.00

A decent packet trick where only one card in the deck has your signature – but it then transfers on to a chosen card. The effect is good, and Trevor is a dab hand at coming up with appealing ideas. There's no sleight of hand involved, so no need to panic – there are no moves which are likely to dislocate your shoulders. It's clever and effective.

WHAT'S HOT: Good twist at the end

WHAT'S NOT: Another full packet trick to carry around with you!

★★★

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.



Card magic is one of the most popular areas of our art and there are many thousands of card tricks in existence. Magicians spend countless hours practising card sleights and moves and even more time coming up with umpteen variations on card effects that have come before. So you would think that given the huge volume of material out there it would be nigh on impossible for any one plot to have significantly more importance than any other. But I would suggest that there is one plot which for many years has been like a Holy Grail for serious card magicians the world over, and that is the Any Card At Any Number (ACAAN) plot.



IN SEARCH OF THE

HOLY GRAIL

By Mark Leveridge

For the uninitiated let's first briefly explain what the fuss is all about. The plot of ACAAN is, in its purest form, very direct and mindblowingly unfathomable. A spectator is invited to name any card. Let's say they choose the 4C. A second spectator is requested to name aloud any number from 1 - 52. Let's imagine 37 is chosen. A deck of cards is handed to a third spectator who is invited to count down in that pack to the 37th card. When he turns over the card at that position, it is the freely named 4C.

The reason this plot has taxed the ingenuity of cardicians for so long is because it is capable of many variations both in terms of the actual plot itself, and also in terms of the methodology. But the real driving force behind its popularity is, I would suggest, that performers are always looking for the perfect solution to the pure effect. And it is this Holy Grail type of search that has for many years maintained an impetus to the trick and given it an almost cult like status amongst card magicians the world over.

As with any trick, devising a method opens up a huge number of choices. With

ACAAN though, the idea is to get as near to the perfect effect as possible. So what are the pre-defined set of conditions that problem solvers are trying to reach? There are basically four.

- 1.** The deck must be in view from the outset.
- 2.** The choice of card must be totally free.
- 3.** The choice of number must be also be completely random.
- 4.** A spectator must be able to count down in the deck to the chosen number.

There are a few other riders too such as no stooges must be used and ideally, once the card and number are revealed, the performer should not have to tamper with the deck before the counting commences. If you think about these basic conditions, you can see that it is quite a challenge to meet most, never mind all, of them, but that is what has exercised the minds of inventors as they seek to come up with the ultimate method.

If you go onto the websites of most major dealers and search on ACAAN you will no doubt unearth several marketed versions purporting to be the 'ultimate' solution to this conundrum. And if you read the advertising blurb that accompanies these versions, most will tell you that this is the easiest/purest/most direct one available. But the truth is, few truly do reach anywhere near the pure concept of the plot as the compromises they make in order to achieve the effect move them varying distances away from the Holy Grail, some to the point where the original is hardly recognisable at all!

These compromises may often be totally acceptable in terms of creating a trick that works and works well. Special or stacked decks, card sleights, clever forces of either the card or the number (or even both!), all these deviations from the pure effect have been used to create workable magic, but for the true Holy Grail seeker, they don't really cut the mustard because they move too far away from the essence of the perfect plot.

To try and get a view on ACAAN, we approached three well known performers and asked them to give us the benefit of their opinion on this card classic.



MARC PAUL

I have always loved the plot of Any Card at Any Number ever since I first saw David Berglas perform his version when I was still a teenager. He blew me away. I was stunned and had no idea. The effect got under my skin and I have probably spent more time thinking and experimenting with this one effect than any other. The plot is beautifully elegant and simple to understand. It is for this reason that the effect creates the impact that it does for magicians and the general public alike. Audiences instinctively appreciate just how impossible it really is.

Currently I have over 20 ways of achieving the effect and that dear reader is the key. I have versions that I can do with a borrowed shuffled pack, I have other versions where I use my own pack that is gaffed to the hilt. I have other versions where the pack is normal and can be given away but only after the effect has been performed. I have versions that can only be performed in certain venues. All have compromises, all have advantages. My skill as a performer is to choose the best method for the situation I am in and then to skilfully hide any compromises and build up the advantages.

Over the last few years I have seen a lot of tricks come onto the market using the ACAAN

plot as a selling point. The very harsh truth is that many of them are NOT ACAAN. In many of them the compromises are too great, the card is physically chosen, the choice of number is restricted etc. The clean, clear plot gets bent out of shape to accommodate the method. Many of these tricks are very, very clever, BUT they are not ACAAN. And absolutely none of them are what has become known as "The Berglas Effect"

"The Berglas Effect" is the purest version of ACAAN. David Berglas is a master of it and has been performing it for over 50 years. It is unique in its approach; it is super clean and will probably never be surpassed from a method point of view. It has been discussed by top card men from all around the world and has created a whole load of controversy. So let me clear up one important point that has led to some of that controversy, it does NOT use stooges. The very best effects in magic appear to be utterly inexplicable, that's one of the reasons they ARE good effects. If you want to see what "The Berglas Effect" looks like then visit my website at www.marcpaul.com on the video page is a clip of me performing on Parkinson.



IAN ROWLAND

ACAAN is a great plot, but only if the presentation (and method) is straightforward so that the lay audience (the people who matter) can readily appreciate and understand it. Alas, some of the many methods to be found in print are so convoluted as to be purely of academic interest to magicians, and have little or nothing to do with entertaining real people.

I included an ACAAN routine in my 'Blackpool Lecture Notes' and I happen to think it's very good, but then again I would, wouldn't I? Obviously, we are all biased in favour of our own creations. My version uses just one regular deck, no stack. It's what Marc Paul calls a triple A trick (any time, any place, anywhere). Free choice of any 'target' card (genuine free choice, from a FACE UP shuffled deck). Free choice of number or position in the deck. It relies on precisely one, simple move (the Backward Prophecy move) which is covered by perfect misdirection within the shape and structure of the routine.

I am happy to say that I have had the one and only David Berglas perform his ACAAN effect for me. I am happy to confirm that it is as brilliant, direct and magical as the legends report. He placed the cased deck on the table and never touched it again. He invited me to name any card. I said nine of diamonds. He invited me to name any number from 1-52. I said 17. He asked me if I wanted to count from the top or the bottom. To be awkward, I said from the bottom. He invited me to pick up the deck and do the counting for myself. I did. My card was at the 17th position from the bottom. I add my vote to the many who suggest that no-one can perform this effect better than David Berglas.

You will notice that one name has come up in each of the performers' comments, and that is David Berglas. David is someone who has become synonymous with ACAAN because he is purported to have devised the ultimate pure method, a method which is not available for sale and in fact which has been revealed to few. How much is 'legend' and how much is truth is, of course, hard to assess, but if you watch the clip of Marc Paul on Parkinson (as suggested above) you will see Marc present what looks like the ultimate clean version of the routine. There seems no possible explanation for what he presents, other than the use of celebrity stooges - he wouldn't, would he? Well, he says he doesn't, and I for one, believe him! But however the effect was achieved, you can see that in its purest form, the effect when presented correctly is totally staggering.



PAUL GORDON

When one thinks of ACAAN one thinks of David Berglas. But, do we really know his secret? Methinks, not! Over the years, I've published a few "solutions" but the very best ideas (and most direct) usually involve set-up/memorised decks and stooges. (Or, as I did to Roger Crosthwaite once, use a one-way force deck. Bingo!)

I once read a magician saying that he uses a known-order deck and then second deals to position. Yeah, right! Sure he does. My best effort (which doesn't quite comply to the rules of ACAAN) is "Twin Peeks" which was once marketed by Aldo Colombini (after he watched it/me fry the in-crowd at Tannen's, New York in 1997) which is also in my 2001 book, Professional Card Magic Miracles. It's a two deck effect, but can be cunningly geared to the ACAAN principle. What's more, it looks really impressive (so I'm told), but is actually very - very - easy.

However, I honestly think that the effect - on laymen - is not very strong and/or entertaining. Magicians are naturally impressed because of the method. There are a myriad of methods in print; they range from simplistic & sneaky (one-way decks and my afore-mentioned trick) to complex and often impractical. After all, do you really want to do 45 invisible (??) second deals to get to the 46th card? No. I thought not!



So, how and when did ACAAN actually start? We asked magicseen friend Max Maven to give us a little background....

YES ACAAN

MAX MAVEN

Photo: Zakary Belamy



Here in Hollywood, in the film and television industry, there is a slang term that became popular in the 1980s: High Concept.

The meaning is easy to explain. A TV or movie production is High Concept when the premise can be expressed in a single sentence. There are those who believe that this quality is essential to the creation of box office hits. Clearly, that's not entirely so, because there are plenty of counter examples. Nevertheless, it is true that a significant percentage of hits are indeed High Concept projects.

In magic, many of the plots that have achieved "classic" status can also be viewed as High Concept. In fact, for some of the most popular ones, the entire scenario can be expressed in the basic title of the trick. For instance, The Linking Rings, or the Cut-and-Restored Rope.

The plot we shall discuss here also has a High Concept title: Any Card at Any Number. A compelling plot, it's not surprising to learn that its roots go far back into the history of magic with playing cards.

The earliest known versions employ a somewhat less daunting challenge: Card at Any Number is, quite obviously, an easier problem to solve, because the card may be physically selected at the outset, thence controlled to a named position by any number of means. This shows up at least as far back as 1785, when a method appeared in *Le Testament de Jérôme Sharp* by Henri Decremps.

In the 1800s, the trick was in the repertoire of such as Robert-Houdin, and taught in books in French, German, English and undoubtedly other languages as well. By the end of that century, the plot was well established. The *Potter Index*, which goes only up to 1964 and is hardly a complete reference, lists over two hundred versions, of which more than fifty predate 1920. The idea is explored in many of the foundational texts of twentieth-century conjuring, stemming from such authors as Cremer, Stanyon, Sachs, Roterberg, Hugard and Hilliard. Camille Gaultier's classic *La Prestidigitation sans appareils*, published in 1914 (although the English-language

version didn't appear until 1945), contains no less than eleven methods.

In looking through the *Potter* citations, one finds some versions that tackle the more stringent rules wherein the card is not physically selected, but rather thought of and named aloud. Not all of these are quite as direct as their descriptions suggest, but such is the impression made upon the audiences.

In Professor Hoffmann's *Card Tricks Without Apparatus*, which appeared between hard covers in 1892, we find a trick with a nineteenth-century High Concept title: "To Place a Card Thought of by one Person at such Position in the Pack as another Person shall mentally Select." Similarly named effects crop up in several books over the next couple of decades, such as Charles Carter's *Magic and Magicians* in 1903, and J. K. Benson's *The Book of Indoor Games* in 1904.

Despite its plentiful explorations in print, the modern obsession with the plot can be credited to one man, and in fact largely to one specific performance. In the summer of 1976, the International Brotherhood of Magicians held its annual convention in Evansville, Indiana. That event included a substantial group of British performers, several of them featured on the gala show that took place on Thursday evening, June 24. Among these was David Berglas, whose name and reputation were known to the American magicians, but whom few had seen perform in person. His extensive set included several routines for which he is justly famous, but, having been in the audience that night I can attest, the one that caused ceaseless discussion during the days and months that followed was David's presentation of Any Card at Any Number.

Later that year, Martin Breese released an audiotaped interview with David Berglas as part of his *Magicassette* series. On this, David repeated the performance, under completely fair conditions that were verified by Martin's genuinely voiced astonishment.

From that point on, the plot became enduringly attached to the Berglas name. Over the years, as he has continued to

perform the effect in various circumstances, it has achieved legendary status. In 2002, the publication of the colossal tome *The Mind & Magic* of David Berglas, written by David Britland, revived a passionate fascination for the plot with a new generation of cardmen and mentalists. Many were disappointed when they read the final trick section of the book, chapter sixty, devoted to "The Berglas Effect," as it did not provide a straightforward template of the method. Those who actually studied those fifteen pages would discover that, in fact, the "real work" is contained therein. But, it cannot be extracted without effort—which is surely what this version deserves.

In the past five or six years, the plot, now frequently referred to by the acronym ACAAN (because it requires less typing for Internet posts) has generated a host of new approaches, several of which have been marketed, and at least one taking up an entire hardcover book! Some of these solutions are dreadful, others are ingenious. I have encountered methods using sleight of hand, gimmicked cards, multiple decks with accompanying deck switches, and a host of other means. The paradox is that so much complexity can be found in the exploration of a plot that is based on the simplest of High Concept ideas. But, within such paradoxical intersections is where magic is found.