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Published by MSUK Publications



It's a pleasure to welcome you to the pages of our latest free taster issue of Magicseen, the contents for which have been selected from issue 95 (Nov 2020) of the full Magicseen Magazine.

Our main feature article highlights the Belgian maestro Rafael, who updates us on how he has been using the extra time afforded by the pandemic to work on his unique new show. We also hear from award winning magician Oliver Tabor who takes us behind the scenes of his ambitious Zoom magic show - and it certainly took more than a laptop and a webcam!

Do you fidget or sway when you're performing at a table side? Are you guilty of too much backward and forward movement when entertaining from a cabaret floor or stage? These are the topics we highlight in our advice article entitled The Two Movements Of Magic.

Every now and again we like to feature an article on one of our dealer advertisers, and in this issue we find out more about new-kid-on-the-block dealership Neo Magic and their creator Vinny Sagoo. We also offer you a neat coin routine from Gregg Webb extracted from the Masterclass section, and round everything off with a selection of the latest product reviews from our trusted team of experts.

If you enjoy this edition of Lite, just think how much pleasure the full edition would afford you every two months! We offer subscriptions of 6 months, 1 year and 2 years in both printed and digital formats, so why not treat yourself to the real thing or add a sub to your Xmas list!

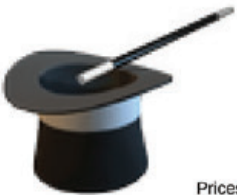
Mark Leveridge

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RAFAEL'S ROOM OF WONDERS



At Magicseen, we always get very excited when Rafael is mentioned - for several reasons. Firstly, the Belgian performer is, in our humble opinion, one of the genuine magic greats - creating truly world class effects and shows which never fail to leave a lasting and magical impression. His work is totally original, exciting and mystifying - which is why he's worked with some of the all-time magic greats as an advisor and creator.

But Rafael is also such a genuinely, lovely guy that we'd love to adopt him and make him live with us! This is the man who brought his mum and brother to meet us at the last Blackpool convention. OK, it's time to see what the genius Rafael has been up to since we last met. And we just can't wait!

Graham Hey asks the questions.

Hey! Rafael, What have you been doing during Covid19? 'Hi Magicseen! I started with finishing the things that were on my 'to do' list for way too long - like making an inventory of all my magic tricks and books and re-arranging my collection and library.

'This turned out to be very practical because I discovered how many duplicate books I unintentionally own and books I thought I had which I don't have and vice versa! I've been reading, studying and learning a lot. On top of that, I've been working on the Ali Bongo book, a book about his life and his magic... And most importantly, I've been trying to stay positive and creative!'



**"...MOST IMPORTANTLY, I'VE BEEN TRYING TO
STAY POSITIVE AND CREATIVE!"**



"A SHOW NEVER STOPS EVOLVING AS THERE IS ALWAYS A WAY TO DO THINGS BETTER WHICH MAKES IT FRUSTRATING BUT ALSO EXCITING!"

So what do you do to stay creative? 'Well, now that all my friends have more time too, I enjoy talking to them more often!

'One of the best things that has come out of this pandemic are my weekly zoom sessions with Kevin James, Gaetan Bloom and Adrian Soler and every week I'm amazed how inspirational these brainstorm sessions are and how many ideas come from it as we keep each other's creative juices flowing!

'Another thing that keeps me creative is looking at my old notebooks which are full of ideas which inspire me to refresh these ideas and to write a new show!'

Yes, we heard from our top-secret contacts that you were working on a new show. How exciting!!!! Tell us all about it!!

Says Rafael enthusiastically, 'First I made a list of parameters I wanted my show to be like:

- A One Man Show with a theme and a storyline.
- Everything original or a novel twist on classics.
- No props that can be bought off the shelf
- Design, write, direct and create everything myself
- Corona proof – no interaction with any spectators onstage
- Everything has to fit in my van!! (Very important!)

OK, so you had strict parameters, so what did you come up with? Tell us!!! The show is called "Room of Wonders". As the curator of a cabinet of curiosities, I invite the audience into my magical world which balances on the edge of fantasy and reality. Every piece in this room has its own unique story and nothing in the room is what it seems - not even the room itself.'

It sounds fantastic, so how long have you been working on it? 'I started in April and to give myself a deadline I started looking for a venue and I found a lovely theatre near to my home town so I'm returning back to my roots as my

"I LOVE BRAINSTORMING WITH FELLOW ARTISTS AND TO EXPAND THE PERFORMERS STRENGTHS AND TAKE THEIR MAGIC TO THE NEXT LEVEL."

first public show was in my home town, this month exactly 35 years ago!

Rafael's plan was to give one performance on the 7th of October but that sold out within 10 minutes of the tickets going on sale! So the manager of the theatre suggested to do a second show and a day later a third show was added. Always modest, Rafael says, 'Sold out is of course not really special these days as the theatre capacity is seriously reduced but still I am very grateful that people want to come to the theatre in these crazy times.'

I ask Rafael how his show evolved from his original idea - or did it work out exactly how he wanted it to? And what were the major hurdles he had to overcome? 'A show never stops evolving as there is always a way to do things better which makes it frustrating but also exciting!' says the master illusionist. 'And while things might look great on paper or in your mind, the real judge is your audience - that's why it is important to listen to them.'

'I expected hurdles but beforehand you never know what they are going to be. This time I didn't expect a prop that should have arrived in 3-5 days would take 5-6 weeks. I also didn't expect that suppliers were raising their prices because they have little or no work which I find a strange way of thinking!

'I learned from the past that it's important to have good communications with your prop builders and regularly follow up - especially when they know what they are doing as they might add their own interpretation. That's great if discussed beforehand - so you can choose to go with it or you can explain why it's not going to work for your unique purpose!'

Have you had other magicians and consultants working on your show, or has this been a completely solo project? 'My intention was to do as much on my own as possible, but I feel it is important to involve people you trust and respect and to ask them for their opinion especially when you have 2 versions of a certain effect because then it's difficult to decide for yourself which is your favourite child!

'Experience has taught me that it is good to do your research and involve people who are experts in certain fields. For example: a friend spent a lot of time working on



the sand-pour so he offered me suggestions such as what is the best gimmick for this effect and which is the best type of sand to use. His knowledge has saved me a lot of time and money!

Rafael's plans for performing his new show include a theatre tour (Covid-permitting, of course), and he's designed it in such a way that it is suitable as a special event for magic festivals and conventions.

Still based in Belgium, "In the land famous for its waffles, fries and chocolate!" I ask him if he's been doing any consulting recently? 'Apart from the weekly creative sessions with Kevin, Gaetan and Adrian I have been consulting with performers like David Goldrake for his virtual shows and I had a very rewarding video call with one of our magic legends where we collaborated on one of his new ideas.

'I love brainstorming with fellow artists and to expand the performer's strengths and take their magic to the next level. I feel that my job as a magic consultant is to make them shine and to bring their vision alive in the best possible way.

'I'm fascinated that so many magicians struggle with who they are and have so much difficulty in finding their own path. I always have the Mona Lisa in the back of my mind as a metaphor...'

Mona Lisa? Please explain! 'Well', replies Rafael, 'The Mona Lisa painting already exists so why would you want to paint exactly the same - as people will always compare it and it will never be as unique as the original! You can, however, be inspired and give it your own interpretation, like the artist who put a smiley face over Mona's face - simple, funny and original.'



'The same applies to our art.'

That's a great way of looking at things I agree. But how do you suggest performers be different? Can you give us an example?

'OK, try to change 3 things and your trick will already look a lot different... Some examples of things you can change are:

Size, shape, order, colour, design, rhythm, method and try different styles of presentation or combine your magic with your other passion(s)... And look around you for inspiration, especially outside the magic scene.'

Of course, Rafael, it's almost Halloween and you're famous for your Vampire act – is this act still in demand? We saw it at Blackpool many years ago and still talk about it now... for all the right reasons! In fact, I recall you coming to the Magicseen stand at Blackpool and I didn't recognise you as in your act you had all your vampire make-up on. We had witnessed your act the night before – where you got the usual (!) standing ovation, but you're so modest you never even mentioned anything about yourself or your act. We thought that was sheer class! And we've been your biggest fans ever since. See, you can tell how excited we are!!! We need to calm down.

'I created this act 25 years ago and it evolved throughout the years and I'm happy to say it is still in demand - but then again vampires are timeless :-)' he says.

How do you plan out your shows from scratch? I seem to recall you showing me photos of post-it notes on your fridge at home – and it looked like how detectives tackle a crime-scene! 'When deciding on a show order I write all the individual pieces on post-it notes and try to visualise the different possibilities (taking pictures along the way) and since it is on a place I visit every day I get to think about it at different times throughout the day... I create a show like a theatre play or movie is made - with my own storyboard.

'First I select the theme and the effects I want to perform, then I write the script and decide on the order. Next I design the props and have them built, then I select the music and the outfit, then I start practising and rehearsing my show and then it's showtime and I act everything out in front of an audience...

QUICKIES

Favourite TV series: I enjoy watching crime series, especially the Swedish ones like 'The Bridge.'

Last book you read: 'How to survive COVID-19 for Dummies'

Favourite meal: waffles, fries and chocolate lol. Actually, it's sushi!

Best magic you ever saw live? L'Oratorio d'Aurélia which isn't a standard magic show, but it's filled with surrealistic magical moments.

I also remember the time(s) when I saw Copperfield perform the Death Saw and Flying live.

And seeing, up close, Kevin James performing the floating rose or Lance Burton pulling 6 girls out of a suitcase on the tiny stage at the Hacienda hotel or seeing Siegfried & Roy change Lynette Chappell into a white tiger right in front of me was very impressive.

What I also will remember forever is the tap-dancing cow on 'Tea for two' in the Le Grand David show!!

What are your plans for the next twelve months? Staying healthy, prepare myself for when the world returns to normal and I try to re-invent myself

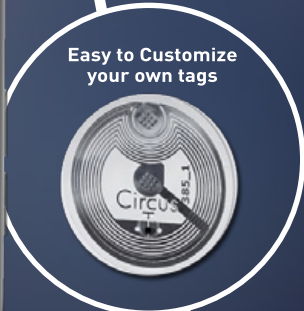
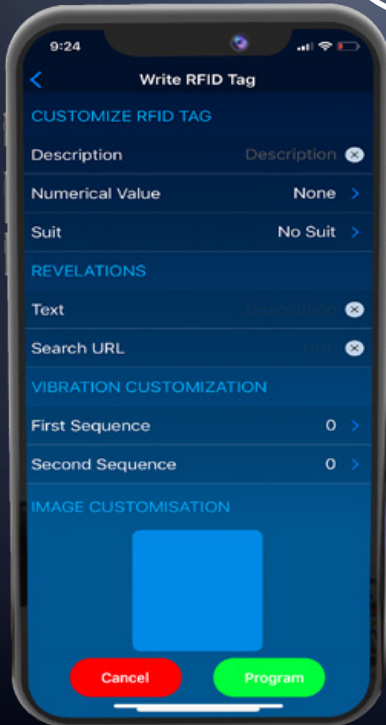
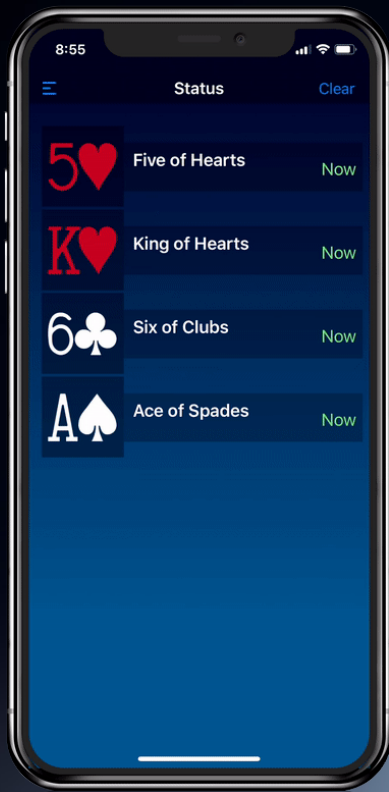
Are you happy with how your career has worked out so far? What have been the highlights for you? Apart from this interview ;-) I think the highlights have been touring the world doing the things I love to do and becoming close friends with some of my childhood heroes.

Also seeing others perform something I suggested or invented makes me happy... except when it's used without permission of course.

Do you have more ambitions? My ultimate ambition is to be a theatrical clown like Avner the Eccentric and tour the world with a visual show that packs small and plays big!

'And then the verdict comes, and you will know if your months of hard work have given birth to a blockbuster or to a fiasco!'

So Rafael, it's been great catching up with you, but quickly tell us about any passions away from magic... what inspires you? How do you spend your free time? What about your love life?? 'So many questions!! I like reading, photography, walking, discovering interesting places and going to the theatre, movies and museums. OK, now my love life! A relationship recently ended and I'm wondering why there is no dating app for magicians – I would call it matchic! On a more serious note I am an eternal romantic who doesn't rest till he finds the One!'



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THE DEALER'S BOOTH

NEO MAGIC

40-50 years ago, if you were to walk around the dealers hall at a magic convention, many of the magic businesses you came across would either be selling predominantly the ideas of the business owner, or would have as their key figure a well known and respected performer on the stand demming. Think of Edwin Hooper, Ken Brooke, Patrick Page, Stephen Tucker, Roy Roth et al.

This meant that when you did business with a magic dealer it felt personal and often you would be tapping into the creativity of a specific individual. As a result, if you liked his way of thinking, you would usually like his products.

Today it is very different in that the vast majority of magic suppliers are effectively clearing houses for the ideas from multiple creators. Often the dealers are totally web based and sometimes it's hard to know exactly who you are dealing with.

So, with all this in mind, it is very pleasant to be able to bring you background information about a new(ish) dealer who in some ways represents a throw back to the 'old days'. Neo Magic is the business that magic creator Vinny Sagoo has formed as a vehicle for his own ideas. After 10 years working as a Civil and Commercial Law Solicitor, a serious car accident lead him to re-evaluate his life and focused his attention back to being a magician and inventor, an aim that he had had since childhood.

Neo Magic (Neo means 'new', so seemed a good choice of business name) saw the light of day in 2018, and he spent the first year brainstorming ideas. The results were published in booklets and he also marketed about a dozen products, which included a highly rated book test, plus card and mental effects.

In the cluttered world of magic selling in 2020 it can be hard to be seen and heard, and so creating a noticeable brand and business attitude can be very important. I asked Vinny what his USP (unique selling point) was...

"At present I only create and sell my own effects, which allows me to manage the process right from the beginning to the end consumer. It also ensures that I take full responsibility for anything that goes wrong, together with making sure that my customer service is outstanding.

This freedom also allows me to reinvest into the business and offer things like free shipping worldwide, no matter what you order.

In the magic business, it is essential that you know yourself and what you are really good at. My forte is smart effects that have little or no sleight of hand. This allows me to focus on the presentation, which in my view is the real secret to great magic."

Vinny likes to create magic that is easy, simple and powerful. He manufactures props from long lasting materials and provides full colour photo illustrated written instructions alongside the inevitable online video explanation. He feels that having tangible instructions to file away helps to reassure purchasers that even if the online video link no longer works at some point in the future, there will still be the physical directions to refer to.

Apart from the fact that the range of magic sold by Neo Magic all comes from Vinny's own head, the personal touch is also continued by the blogs that he writes. What started out as a whole series of short articles written about easy to digest topics, has gradually turned into much longer and more detailed essays.

These are called Words Of Wisdom (or WOW) and rather than being used as a selling or promotional tool, are intended instead to enrich the knowledge of the reader with the aim of enhancing magic performance.

Vinny has also recently started his own audio podcast. Already a fan of the format, Vinny wanted to take his version a little off the beaten track, as he explains.

"Rather than pester the biggest names in the magic industry for their views, I thought that it would be much better to interview my friends, colleagues and customers on various magic related topics. Neo Magic Podcast is still within an embryonic stage and I try and get something published every two weeks.



I have had some great interviews with magicians about starting a magic business from scratch, how to create effects, how to market magic, how to pitch them to the correct magic company and also a recent one on Bizarre magic, which was fascinating. I have many more lined up, like social media magic, which I am also looking forward to.

The podcast is lighthearted and designed to be informative, so that it can be enjoyed by anyone who has an interest in magic. It is available across all platforms so make sure you search for Neo Magic Podcast and subscribe."

This year has, of course, been a challenging one for such a fledgling business, but Vinny has grasped the opportunity to present successful Zoom lectures and dealer dems in his ongoing quest to be recognised and remembered by the magic fraternity, and also to make up for the lack of opportunities to put himself and his magic in front of potential customers through traditional live events.

It's great to see someone with the enthusiasm and intelligence to develop their own pathway in selling magic, and Neo Magic has made a strong start in what Vinny hopes will be a long and successful venture. We wish him every success.



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Magic champion Oliver Tabor tells us how he hosted his online magic show!

For the last 17 years, a magic show has taken place every summer within a 17th-century barn in Rochford, Essex (many an hour was initially spent thinking up the name for the show) simply called Magic at the Barn. Over the years, the show built up a regular following among families in the local area. Starting off as one show on a sunny evening in July 2003, with the increase in popularity, the shows expanded to include a Sunday matinee, leading to 2 shows on each day, and eventually to an audience of 1,000 on the 10th anniversary of the show in 2013.

THE CHALLENGE

Like many live shows that had steady support with regular attendees each year, the job of organising and producing them was much like making a well-tested homemade pizza recipe, with individual ingredients sprinkled in the perfect quantity on each slice, producing extremely tasty, pleasant mouthfuls. Then suddenly, a rogue ingredient comes along, adding itself without permission to the finely tuned, doughy creation and destroying the years of well-rehearsed hours spent in the Italian kitchen.

The current crisis has pushed all shows to the limit,

MY ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO HAVE TWO CAMERAS: AN IPHONE AND A LAPTOP THAT WE COULD EASILY SWITCH TO DURING THE SHOW... SOUNDS EASY ENOUGH RIGHT?? I'M SOOOOO GLAD I DIDN'T GO DOWN THIS ROUTE!

with many postponements and cancellations across the whole industry. Some have managed to survive and keep their brands running by presenting their shows online, with varied success. Most of these shows have used the now tried-and-tested Zoom-chat model, which can work very well for a close-up or parlour-type show. However, the USP for the Magic at the Barn shows is their unique setting.

THE SETTING

The venue itself is a 17th-century barn theatre, used as a working barn up until the millennium, when farm equipment became too big for the space for it to be used as a farm building. Over the next few years, it was gradually converted into an entertainment venue with a stage, theatre curtains, lighting and PA system, with enough space for up to 120 people seated.

The summer magic shows have always been presented on the barn stage. Therefore, I wanted to keep this aesthetic when presenting it online by creating the feeling of experiencing the show as if seated in the audience.

NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Since lockdown, I've had the luxury of making recordings for various online cabaret and theatre shows as a guest act, presenting my 10-minute act from the barn stage. An added comfort was having the option to re-shoot and edit the recording to obtain the desired result.

A live streamed show would be a completely different matter. My original plan was to have two cameras: an iPhone and a laptop that we could easily switch to during the show... sounds easy enough right?? I'm sooooo glad I didn't go down this route!

To maintain the social distancing between the performers and crew, two performing/filling areas were needed: one camera facing the stage, capturing the stage performances; and the other to the back of the room, for the fill in/introduction segments for the show's host/compere.

GETTING EXPERT HELP

During lockdown, I had been in contact with a man who knew everything there is to know about everything technical, and everything there is to know about online



streaming. In other words, he knew everything! When I first started producing shows, I wanted to do everything myself: flyer design, marketing, performing, hosting, etc. However, unless you'd like to make the contents of your head implode, getting people on your team who have an exceptional knowledge in a particular subject is the best thing you can do. It eases up head-space and vastly improves everything for your product/production.

Matt Grimmett is the man in question. He set up his home hub of machinery in the middle of the venue, consisting of at least two iMac screens with cameras, specialist lighting and monitors for both sound and vision for the performers, together with enough wires and cable to wrap around a large pizza 100 times.

ACCESSING ENOUGH WIFI

The barn had recently been upgraded with the latest Wifi, however the building is located in the middle of the countryside, offering little upload speed. Therefore, we had to split the upload between the 1 meg that the barn could offer and Matt's helpful assistant George's phone, which made it up to 8 meg in total.

SETTING UP THE CAMERAS

The show was streamed live over the internet, with tickets sold to either watch and interact in a Zoom chat room, or to simply watch the live stream through a dedicated YouTube channel. The performers' monitors allowed them to interact with the Zoom participants for assistance with routines and to experience their reactions throughout the show.

The "stage cam", as we called it, captured the entire stage so we could make use of the stage curtains and lights to give it the feel of watching a stage show. Having one



locked-on vantage point also had the advantage that angles presented no problems at all. So a hidden Black Art method utilised in the vanish of a girl in a cloak could be made to look as deceptive as possible, with the whole stage giving more opportunity to improve larger effects, such as a version of the Artist's Dream with mirrors surrounding the back of the stage, also heightening the presentation of the classic Zig Zag girl illusion.

The stage cam could also be utilised for more close-up presentations, allowing acts to perform closer to the camera and to help with chatting to Zoom viewers. The stage also gave juggler Mat Ricardo the chance to really play with the space, rather than being in the small room he had been using during lockdown for his online shows at home. And with the monitor projecting the audience reactions, it gave him the almost real feeling of performing at a real gig.

The other camera, the "barn cam", was for the show's compere Wayne Trice. The image captured him in front of a mini-theatre set-up that we hoped would give an intimate feel, adding some warmth and rapport with the watching audience. Wayne interacted on this camera to help keep that connection going.

THE RUNNING ORDER

The show had two halves of 45 minutes, with a 15 minute interval, to mirror the template of past barn shows. Each half opened and closed with a visual act, set to music, that included an illusion, such as the production of a girl (Vicky Butterfly) and Zig-Zag girl, a dancing hank routine (which opened the second half), the Colour Match routine, Butterfly Snowstorm and the vanish of a girl to close. Wayne presented routines in-between such as Ring On Rope, Torn & Restored Newspaper and Tic Tac Toe. He

kept the flow of the show going, much like a live show, plus introduced the guest acts Mat Ricardo and 2 Minds Combined, who pre-recorded a hand shadows routine. 'Machine mechanic' Matt, together with George, kept the show streaming live on Zoom and YouTube whilst directing cameras, playing videos, positioning lights, grabbing screens from the Zoom chat for all watching to see during the interactive parts of the show, plus altered sound levels and played music cues. You can now understand why he was absolutely pivotal in being there for the successful running of this process!

HOWITWENT

We ran the show twice over the course of the weekend, at 7pm on Saturday and 3pm on Sunday, matching the times for the previous year's shows. We gave ourselves the day before to set up and run the routines through the cameras, watching the capture on Zoom and YouTube to iron out any problems and to witness what worked visually and audibly.

Thankfully, we had no major problems during the show, apart from losing the YouTube stream during Sunday's show - as so many people were watching, the stream couldn't handle the output: not a bad problem in my book. However, we did record the Sunday show and sent out a link after to all that this broken live stream affected.

AUDIENCE NUMBERS

We also offered free tickets to NHS workers throughout the weekend's shows by offering them access to the live stream YouTube link in return for a picture of their pass. This proved very successful and boosted viewing numbers for each show. Each show had roughly 100 people watching, which was the aim: I could have easily increased numbers with advertising, but this was an experiment and we wanted to gain confidence and experience in running this model first and foremost. As tickets were being sold, I didn't want any possible backlash in case of any problems over the course of the trial to keep the Magic at the Barn brand running.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The main aim of this project was to perform an online virtual magic show but with the added elements that a theatre show would have, such as lights, curtains, music tracks and audience interaction, to give the feel of everyone being together in a venue.

It was definitely stressful at times but with lots of lessons learnt. The greatest feeling was to be in the same room as other performers... to share stories, jokes and generally feel the support and shared camaraderie you usually feel when performing shows! As soon as Matt announced the joyous words "And we're clear/That's a wrap", hugs were replaced with euphoric clapping, beer bottles were opened and an order to Domino's was placed!

The usual pizza production recipe had been altered that weekend to accommodate the new rogue ingredient, but the taste of two large post-show Dominos pizzas never changes.

Check out the show: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1rA21QNsNA>

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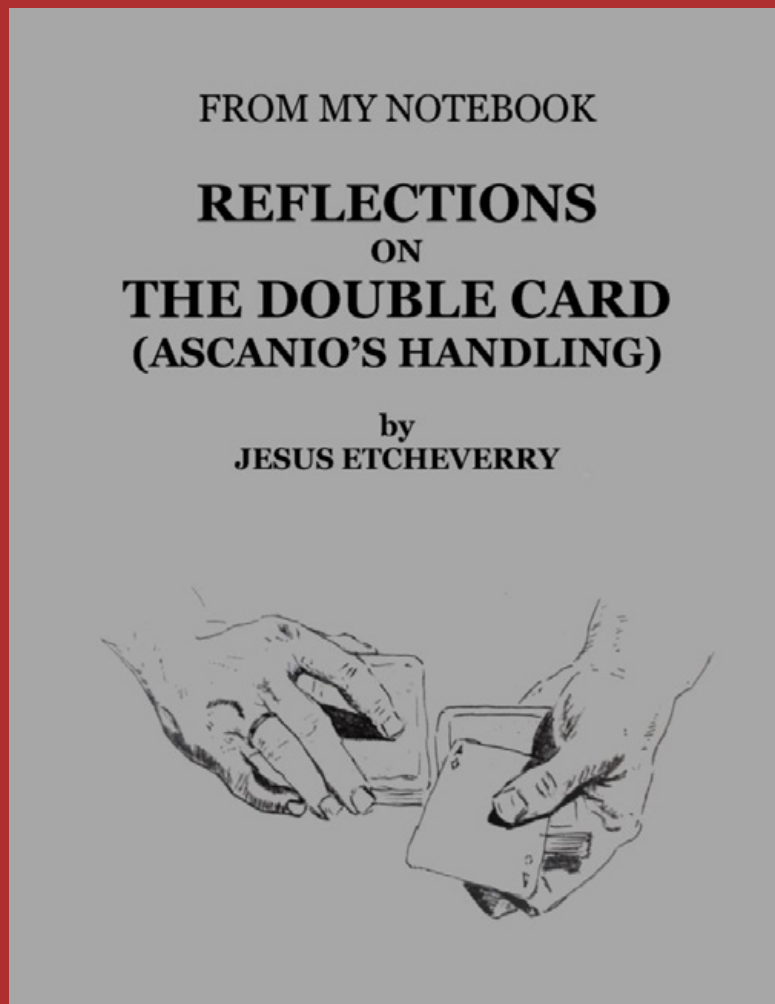
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THE PERFECT PHONE TO IMPOSSIBLE LOCATION

TIM ELLIS

iDrop

TIM HAS TAKEN A CLASSIC PLOT - THE APPARENT DESTRUCTION OF A BORROWED ITEM - AND MADE THE MOMENT OF TRUTH BOTH **HARROWING AND HYSTERICAL**. IT WILL GET ROARS.

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WHEN IT COMES TO **GREAT SITUATIONAL COMEDY MAGIC**, TIM ELLIS'S IDROP IS ABOUT AS SUREFIRE AS IT GETS.

CHARLIE FRYE



CUSTOMER REVIEWS

VANISHINGINC.

THREEWAY SPELLBOUND
-WITH KICKER

GREGG WEBB

A coin held at the fingertips changes in quick succession to two other coins. Then a silver dollar appears out of nowhere as a surprise kicker.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. A copper/silver coin (half dollar one side, old English penny the other).
2. A Chinese coin with a square hole in it.
3. A silver dollar.

SET-UP:

Have the C/S coin and Chinese coin somewhere to hand. Put the silver dollar in the right trouser pocket.

WORKING:

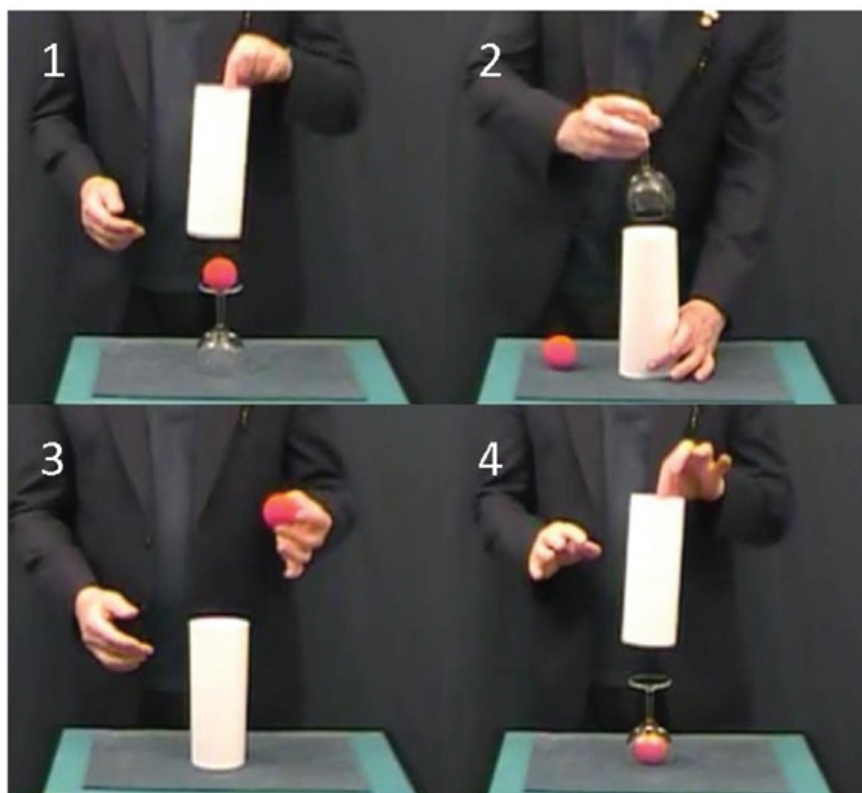
1. Get the Chinese coin into a right classic palm and then place the C/S coin into the left fingers in classic Spellbound position. Fig.1. The silver side should be facing the audience.
2. Bring the right hand, back towards the audience, across so that it covers the coin in the left fingers. Fig.2. Note that the right thumb is kept out of view and the fingers are straight.
3. As the right hand passes over the C/S coin, use the right thumb to hit the side of the gaffed coin so that it is rotated bringing the copper side to the front.
4. Smoothly move the right hand away to reveal that the left hand now apparently holds a copper coin.
5. Repeat the passing of the right hand across the left fingers, but this time let the C/S coin drop into the curled left fingers, Fig.3, and immediately then use those freed digits to grab the Chinese coin from the right palm.
6. When the right hand withdraws the coin appears to have changed into a Chinese coin.
7. You offer to explain the mystery. *"I actually have four coins,"* you say. With the empty right hand take away the Chinese coin and put it away in your back trouser pocket. *"That's one."*
8. You now close your left hand, snap your fingers and open it again to reveal the copper side of the C/S coin. Reach into the left hand and pretend to pick the coin up. In reality you simply flip it over and leave it hidden in the left hand as the right hand withdraws and pretends to take the copper coin to your right trouser pocket. *"That's two,"* you say.
9. While in the pocket the right hand classic palms the silver dollar and comes back out again. Meanwhile the left hand has closed, you snap the fingers and open it to reveal there is now a silver half dollar there.



10. Reach across with the right hand and as you openly lift away the half dollar, allow the palmed dollar to fall secretly into the left hand. The right hand takes the half dollar to the right trouser pocket as you say, *"That's three."*
11. Finally, close your left hand for the last time, snap the right fingers and open the left fist to reveal the surprise of the silver dollar as you exclaim, *"And that's four!"*

www.markleveridge.co.uk

The Tube Of Wonder!



This is a simple yet baffling effect suitable for a close up or parlour show. A simple cardboard tube is placed on the table and lifted to reveal that inside it is an inverted wine glass with a large red ball on top of it. The tube is freely displayed and can be examined by a spectator. The performer's hands are otherwise empty.

The tube is placed on the table and the inverted wine glass dropped down inside. Finally the ball is dropped into the tube so that it rests again on the base of the glass.

A snap of the fingers and the tube is immediately lifted off again to reveal that the ball is now impossibly trapped UNDER the glass! The tube is genuinely empty and both the performer's hands are still empty.

This quick effect requires no gimmicks and creates an incredibly clean handling. It is supplied as a [TricKlipXtra Video Download](#).

Price: £7.00



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THE REVIEWS

WE TAKE A LOOK AT **WHAT'S HOT** AND **WHAT'S NOT**



EL3DON

Mark Elsdon

Available from Vanishing Inc Magic,
www.vanishingincmagic.com
Price: £19.98

Mark Elsdon, featured on the front cover of Magicseen in January 2020, is known for "...his many commercial releases" and that "he has a way of simplifying routines so that people can instantly connect with them". In conjunction with Vanishing Inc three of his effects have been brought together in one reasonably priced package.

What you get are three postcards, each with a link to video of a live performance, followed by a clear explanation. You also get the two pre-prepared fake cards required for one effect. Ideally all three are designed for small groups in a relaxed and fairly informal setting, though it might be possible to scale up Oblique and Limelight to use with larger groups. Two of the three require a surface.

NSY Open is an open prediction with a kicker. The performer writes a prediction which is shown to the entire group except one. That person chooses a card in a very free manner which proves to be the predicted choice. A second prediction is written and kept secret. With no suspicious moves a spectator deals the deck face up revealing that the chosen card has vanished. As predicted

it is inside the card case and can be removed by the spectator. It is a good effect, not difficult to do but does require some handling practice. A limitation is that the deck has to be pre-set and there is a small clean up required.

Oblique is almost impromptu. A few people are assigned roles as Liars and one as a Truth Teller. The performer, using a series of questions, psychically divines who the Truth Teller is. The method is relatively simple to learn and well disguised by a series of otherwise irrelevant questions. It is these camouflage questions that provide the scope for a lot of fun and the opportunity to tailor your presentation along any lines that suit. With a small group you could perform this almost anywhere at any time. To be effective, presentation is everything and you will need to be proficient to smoothly blend the key questions amongst the others.

The third item is Limelight. This is a five phase find a card routine with a strong difference. At each stage, and with apparently increasing difficulty, the cards are found by a spectator. Throughout it is the spectator who gets all the credit. The reversal of attention, away from the magician, makes the effect. Better still it is not difficult to do.

The methods are straightforward, well within the reach of anyone with basic card skill. Although the spectator is complicit, beyond a few simple pieces of information they really have no better idea of how the effect is being accomplished. You do need space to be able to take the spectator to one side to impart 'secret information'. If you do all five phases the assistant needs to be briefed three times and the whole routine runs for about ten

minutes. If this is too long, it is modular and it is quite possible to use only some stages.

The video instructions are very comprehensive. Amongst other things you get very good advice on selecting a spectator, how to build the rapport necessary to get co-operation and there is a detailed explanation of those small nuanced aspects of presentation that only come from hundreds of repetitions.

If I have a minor gripe it is that the explanation is a bit repetitious and could have done with some

sharper editing. Altogether though, Limelight alone is worth the price of the whole package.

SB

WHAT'S HOT: three good routines. Oblique and Limelight both strong workers which once mastered can be performed with no preparation.

WHAT'S NOT: Elsdon is so keen to pass on the very useful details the explanations are at times a bit repetitious.

RATING: 85%



ALL ALONE

David Regal

Available from www.card-shark.de
Price: Approx £31 (€35)

The Invisible Deck (ID) has been in almost every close-up magician's repertoire since its invention and for good reason. All Alone is David Regal's take on the ID plot.

All Alone delivers everything the original ID does but with an additional kicker ending.

A deck is introduced and any card is named by a spectator. You spread through the deck showing that one card is face up in the face down deck - it's their named card. So far this is the same as the original ID. However, when you

turn the deck over all the other cards are blank. The chosen card is the only card in the deck.

It really is a great concept and an improvement on David's original version of this trick called 'Alone'. With 'Alone' the spectator was limited to the cards they could choose. Now with All Alone any card in the deck can be named.

The method is clever but it does prevent you from removing the named card completely from the deck. Like other similar decks it does use R&S and the backs of the cards (Phoenix design) are marked which eliminates any counting. The cards are well made as you would expect from Card-Shark.

If you like the ID plot then I think you will love All Alone. Highly recommended. **PS**

WHAT'S HOT: Solid alternative to the ever popular Invisible Deck
WHAT'S NOT: The chosen card cannot be fully removed. Deck cannot be examined.

RATING: 85%



HALLPASS

James Anthony and Julio Montoro

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £27.00

Think of this as an innocuous clear plastic passholder hanging around your neck that gives you the same functionality as a David Regal Clarity Box, Jon Allen Paragon or any other of the "clear boxes with a card inside".

A folded card, or prediction can be seen within and in the motion of being removed it can be switched for one palmed. An ID card on a lanyard is a ubiquitous natural object, even if you are the only person wearing it at an event, so it is unlikely to draw much attention. It also takes up no pocket or table space.

You receive an ungimmicked badge holder with lanyard, together with several inserts and bits and pieces to make it "work", such as black art inserts, a half Bicycle card and 3 replicas of folded currency (Dollars, Sterling and Euros). The promotional video is quite clear that this is a utility device for switching and this is reflected in the 45 minute instructions, which focus on the handling of the prop, rather than any fully explained routines. The two most mainstream effects will be a signed object (card or bill) to impossible location, or a prediction (Confabulation or otherwise). Revealing that a folded card that has been in full view is actually the card they just signed is undoubtedly a disorientating and impactful effect though it defies a simple explanation of what the effect actually is (transposition, weird prediction, time running backwards?). In

contrast a prediction is clear and makes perfect sense.

Whatever the reveal, the choreography is the same and surprisingly deceptive. Attention is drawn to the object in the holder. The holder is unclipped and the object apparently slid out. This is a deceptive smooth rhythmical switch, rather than a full optical illusion.

If the black art principle is used the holder can be dumped onto a dark surface (an inactive mobile phone works well), in which case it appears empty. An alternative handling simply uses the badge in the holder to conceal the retained object. This is more convincing than might seem as the focus is on the removed card or prediction rather than the holder.

There is an option to steal away the retained item leaving the holder clean – though this feels slightly Heath Robinson, involving double sided tape that needs to be regularly renewed.

This is an attractive plot and concept, but don't expect anything earth shattering in terms of method. You need to be prepared to put in some modest practice to make it smooth, and ideally routine your set so you can drop the holder onto a mobile phone or other black surface. Be happy you are buying an idea and handling and you will be well satisfied! **CP**

WHAT'S HOT: natural everyday object. Deceptive simple switch of "in clear view" object. Does not require pocket or table space. Deceptive handling

WHAT'S NOT: not quite the optical deception of a Clarity Box type prop. No fully explained routines

RATING: 60%



THOUGHT OF CARD ACROSS

Morgan and West

Available from www.vanishingincmagic.com and www.card-shark.de

Price: £35.00

Despite what it says on Vanishing Inc's website, this effect is called Thought Of Card Across, and not CARDS, as in Morgan and West's version of the classic routine, it is indeed only a single card that transports itself from one pile of ten cards to the other.

This is the method that the time travelling magicians used every show in their Parlour Tricks act, and indeed it appeared in their book of the same name. The advantage of this particular product is that you are supplied with the two sets of highly gaffed cards that are required, these being manufactured by Card Shark in their Phoenix back design.

The thinking behind the method here is quite brilliant. M&W have developed a handling that is a perfect blend of concepts from other similar effects and as a result, the method contains no palming, no false counts, no sleights and in fact really no moves at all!

Although they are a double act and they perform this routine with one assisting spectator, a sole performer can work it just as well by inviting two spectators up on stage. Ten cards are openly and clearly counted onto the two spectators' hands. One set of cards comprises of all black suit cards, the other red.

The black suit cards are fanned and the spectator remembers any one of them. With no moves

of any sort, the two sets of cards are recounted back onto the spectators' hands, to reveal only nine black cards and eleven now in the red pile. The black cards are fanned and the spectator is asked to confirm that the card he thought of is no longer there. He agrees that it is gone. He names his card and it is found to be the only black suit card in amongst the red pile.

The video instructions are available from Card Shark's website. On gaining access via a password, you are presented with a page featuring eight separate videos. These cover an introduction, M&W's double act performance, a one performer presentation, a video explaining the cards that are supplied, a handling explanation video, one on resetting the trick, and one in which they answer a series of FAQs, all of these featuring M&W themselves. Then in a final bonus video, Christian Schenk of Card Shark runs through his handling that eliminates the need for a reset.

All the videos are excellently shot, and the M&W ones in particular are very entertaining to watch. They also do an excellent job of explaining everything you need to know to perform TOCA. The handling is not difficult but it will take some practice to become totally familiar with the method in order to ensure that you perform it smoothly.

In terms of presentation, this handling creates the most open and clean version of the traditional plot available. Don't imagine that only having one card transpose is in any way inferior to the more normal three, because in my opinion it is in fact just as strong and in many ways much easier for the spectators to appreciate. Presented correctly this is a wonderful routine for parlour or stage work. ML

WHAT'S HOT: a great combination of principles molded into an unbelievably clean handling for the classic effect

WHAT'S NOT: nothing
RATING: 90%



IDROP

Tim Ellis

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £45.00

iDrop is a commercial routine designed for cabaret, platform or stage work in which a spectator's iPhone is apparently damaged, then disappears, before being found restored in an impossible location. The routine has all the hallmarks of classic 'magician-in-trouble' type effects but using an object which is far more valuable than a borrowed bank note!

The centre piece of the routine's methodology is a special bag

(supplied). Constructed from hard wearing materials, this 34cm x 29cm black bag is based on the old Mesh Egg Bag in which the bottom half of one side of the bag is made from a semi-transparent mesh covering which allows anything dropped into the bag to be still seen.

Because of the simple yet effective construction of the bag, anything dropped into the zippered bag top, will be seen to drop down inside and remain visible through the mesh. However, the act of dropping it inside affects a switch so that the item on view through the mesh is not the original borrowed object. The illusion is perfect, the switch therefore totally invisible.

As Tim Ellis explains on the 25 minute video instructions, the principle of the bag can be used in many different ways, and he runs through a selection of ideas including a deck switch and a way to use the bag as a forcing prop. However, the main routine uses a borrowed black iPhone, and in order for you to be able to switch in something that looks the same as the borrowed item, you are

supplied with a special iPhone look-a-like prop. This has been designed to break into two pieces when it hits the floor, and this is used to comedic effect in the routine.

The online video begins with a live performance from Tim at a commercial booking, and this enables you to see and appreciate not only the effectiveness of the routine with lay people, but also see Tim's personal presentation.

An iPhone is borrowed and a spectator drops it into the bag. However, during the subsequent by-play, the phone suddenly drops out of a hole in the bottom of the bag and falls to the floor where it breaks in two. Tim drops the broken pieces into a small box from where it vanishes. A short while later the borrowed phone is discovered inside a nest of boxes.

The box to vanish the iPhone pieces and the nest of three boxes needed to reveal the restored iPhone are not supplied. Tim goes through an explanation for how to make them, and the task is simple enough and is only a one-off necessity. The method

for loading the nest of boxes is clever, easy and practical, and everything about the routine shows that it has been worked successfully in the real world.

If you are a patter cabaret/platform magician looking for an effect that has built in entertainment combined with a highly practical method, and which uses a valuable and readily recognisable borrowed object, then this is ideal. I think at the price asked this is also extremely good value, especially because for your money you will be getting a commercial routine that may well go straight into your act. **ML**

WHAT'S HOT: a practical, commercial and entertaining routine using a valuable borrowed item. Good value with well made props. The bag can be used in a number of different ways

WHAT'S NOT: using a black iPhone in a black bag with a black mesh front does not make for perfect visibility. You will need to make some big extra props to perform Tim's full routine

RATING: 80%



STOLEN DIAMONDS

Magician Zimurk

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £18.00

In effect, the magician shows four blue backed Bicycle cards, each with a single diamond pip on their face (no indices). One by one the pips gather on one card. With thought, some of the cards

could be offered for examination at the end.

This packet trick is quick to reset which would lead me to think it was created for strolling work, but I'd suggest it isn't. You need a table space to put the cards down on to work the trick and also good audience management to stop people picking anything up during the trick itself which could put a serious spanner in the works.

The instructions are by online video with secret password access. You won't hear a voice teaching you the magic, as the video instructions are visual with musical accompaniment. The trick is stated as being suitable for beginners but I would argue this isn't the case. Stolen Diamonds requires some basic card handling and counts. There is rough and smooth used to facilitate the handling at one

point which does make the effect look clean, but on my set the roughing wasn't applied enough to work properly.

Without hearing a proper explanation of how to make the counts deceptive, a beginner could easily get these wrong, ultimately fooling nobody.

Where best to present this? It might be a nice piece of visual magic to use for your online shows and social media videos.

At about £18.00 this might make a nice effect for the hobbyist who wishes to have a new piece of magic to practise and show to friends down the pub (any that are still in business!) but I see little interest to the pro or semi-pro magician.

At the end of the video dem there is a bonus effect called

'Matrix Diamonds' where the pips gather one by one with a different handling, similar to matrix routines. All-in-all, I felt the effect was a little underwhelming and, in places during the routine, observant spectators wouldn't necessarily be fooled by the handling of particular cards. **JF**

WHAT'S HOT: appears clean and might be best for social media.

WHAT'S NOT: a little underwhelming for the price.

RATING: 35%



WALLET

Nicholas Lawrence and Abstract Effects

Available from any Murphy's retailer or dealers contact www.murphysmagic.com

Price: £35.00

A minimalist utility wallet. That was what was discovered within the package which looks like something a sexy novelty condom would be wrapped in (I've heard).

This wallet is well made and is designed to carry a credit card, folded paper money and coins. It's like a coin pouch, slim, small and easy to hold in the hand in mechanics grip (the dimensions are not far off a poker sized playing card). It can be used as an everyday minimal wallet and looks less suspect than some of the larger gimmicked wallets on the market. The small size suggests innocence yet this wallet is simply gaffed to do a huge amount of magic.

Online instruction is by the Abstract Effects team who reminded me of two guys just

shooting the breeze while waiting in a coach station! Laid back and friendly, the ideas come and explanations follow; almost a brainstorming session.

Several effects are taught. The first is '3 Dollars' where you remove a dollar coin from the wallet and show. This is then placed back into the wallet and under a participant's hand. The wallet is then tipped out and the dollar has changed to four quarters. These are dropped back in one by one (they can be heard clinking as one is dropped onto the next) and again the wallet is placed under the participant's hand. This time the participant can remove from the wallet a folded paper dollar, the quarters having changed once more.

This is a great effect and a real pleasure to play with and work on. The set-up is well thought out to make the routine flow smoothly and this could be worked in a close-up show. It does require competent handling but nothing beyond the basic skills of the average coin worker.

The next effect is another strong magic routine. 'Card to Cash' is a transposition effect where a folded banknote and a credit card change places visually and instantly. A paper note is taken and placed in your pocket. The credit card remains in the wallet with the upper part of it being on display. A shake of the wallet and it visually changes to the banknote. This can be removed and examined if necessary. Replaced in the wallet, with a portion always on show, it visually changes back into the credit card.

The wallet is gimmicked yet many routines allow the participant to remove an item from it and even if they discovered the gimmick, it would pass by unnoticed as it wouldn't explain any of the magic which had occurred. The gimmick doesn't even look like a gaff and could well be just part of the design of an everyday wallet.

When I began playing with the wallet it was a little stiff, but when worked in, it operates smoothly. The instructional video is 30 minutes long and covers the above effects as well as teaching the Out-To-Lunch principle (the wallet is excellent for this).

The wallet can be used as a peeking and/or switching device with some great additional handlings also being on extra videos which are accessible to purchasers. Folded playing cards and business cards are the perfect size for this. I struggled to slide a poker-size playing card into the wallet, but the team

say that it is the correct size and needs to be worked in as the wallet holds two cards aligned perfectly – great for doubles etc.

A Sharpie from the wallet is also taught and has some nice handlings. This little quickie would work well at the start of a close-up show. The guys also discuss how it can be used to create signed bill/card to impossible location effects.

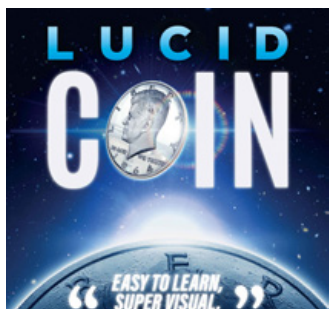
One noticeable omission from the teaching video was that you aren't taught the exact handling to operate the gimmick. This isn't necessarily vital as time spent with the wallet and learning the routines gives the opportunity to work out how you would best handle the wallet direct.

Overall, this is a well-made utility wallet. In the back of my mind I'm not sure if similar gimmicks have been applied in the past to envelope magic, but nevertheless, seeing this made in leather, with care and thought given to the routines, make it a very worthwhile purchase. Those of a creative bent will get tons of fun and use from this. **JF**

WHAT'S HOT: innocent looking device capable of strong magic, well-made and with lots of possibilities

WHAT'S NOT: you're left to devise the best handling to operate the gimmick embodied in the wallet

RATING: 80%



LUCID COIN

Marc Oberon

Available from www.marcoberon.co.uk/the-shop

Price: £34.99

When FSM winner Marc Oberon decides to release an effect into the magic community you expect it to be good and Lucid Coin is no exception.

The Lucid Coin allows you to make a coin appear or disappear instantly. When performed properly it really does look like real magic - especially when you see Marc do it on the trailer.

You are supplied with a 2 inch US coin and a certain other gimmick which does most of the hard work for you.

It is a little knacky at first and angles do need to be considered when performing. The coin supplied is actually quite thin and at first I found that it didn't behave as it should. It took me a while to figure out where to hold the coin for it work properly.

As simple as the props are it's not something you will be doing within 5 minutes of opening the packet. Practice is definitely required to make this look as good as the trailer.

The video instructions only run

to around 12 minutes which is quite short but in that time Marc manages to show you everything needed to know along with a handling of Miser's Dream using the Lucid Coin.

If you like visual coin magic then this is worth checking out. **PS**

WHAT'S HOT: Looks like real magic when performed properly.

WHAT'S NOT: Quite pricey considering what is supplied.

RATING: 80%

GRAHAM HEY



CONFESSIONS
OF AN
**INVISIBLE
MAN**

The brilliant new
Sci-Fi rom-com novel

by Graham Hey

from Chronos Publishing

Cooper McRae is going to be completely invisible for seven days. He plans to woo Lucy Pendleton – the girl at work who acts like he's invisible ALL the time, get himself one million pounds and meet his hero, Elton John. However, things don't go to plan. A drugs cartel, an ex-girlfriend's pregnancy and a neighbour with an unhealthy interest in Lego all conspire to make his week of invisibility more complicated. This is his confession. Will Lucy fall for his charms, or will she see right through him?

OUT NOVEMBER 2020

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ON BOTH HANDS

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Here are some special 'extra' announcements from a few of our regular advertisers



CARD-SHARK...

Well, here we are, please don't shoot the messenger. In the past 10 months the world has totally changed since we first heard the words "Coronavirus". Everything has changed! The way we socialise, the way we eat and drink, shop, watch or participate in sporting events, classes for education, weddings, funerals,

the list goes on. Yes, everything has changed. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be getting better soon. Additional restrictions have been levied in England, France and Germany to name a few.

Subsequently, the field of magic has changed too. The tricks performed a year ago may not be socially acceptable

because of the proximity to the spectators. The basic handling of the props used may have required the performer touching the hands of the spectators. Currently, these are all huge "No No's"!

At Card-Shark, we have gone through our inventory of effects and have created a new category in our online shop: ZOOM FRIENDLY MAGIC

In this category are effects that are CONTACT FREE! These effects are suitable for ZOOM Conferencing and Socially

Distant Settings. Perfect effects for the current state of affairs and for the months to come.

And if you order any item from the ZOOM Category, we will include a high quality N95 face mask.

We hope that you will Stay Safe and Stay Well!

HANDS - FACE - SPACE - MAGIC

www.card-shark.de/ZOOM

BLACKHART

A Twist of Fate – a brand new close-up Bizarre Magic effect from Black Artefacts, and just in time for Halloween!

Based on Twisting the Aces, The Black Hart gives this classic a truly Bizarre Magic presentation that takes it way beyond a card trick. And even better news, with the specially manufactured Tarot cards, there is no sleight of hand required, just follow the handling and the magic happens!

The Rider Waite size Tarot cards are laminated for long life and will easily slip into your pocket or smartphone case ready to perform at any time.

A Twist of Fate is only available from Black Artefacts and can be viewed at – www.blackhart.co.uk/twistoffate.html

NEO MAGIC

If you love listening to Podcasts, please check out the 'Neo Magic Podcast' available on all platforms including Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Pocket Casts. We have

episodes covering everything from Creating Magic to Packet Tricks. Also, on our website (www.neomagic.co.uk), there are a number of really interesting blogs that you can sink your teeth into. Whilst on our site, why not check out the Super Bundle, which is only £49.99 with FREE shipping anywhere in the world, and our Booklet Bundle, which is only £39.99. Sky's The Limit received 85% from Magicseen magazine and both booklets have some incredible magic and mentalism. Finally, if you fancy booking Vinny Sagoo for a FREE online Zoom lecture, please email info@neomagic.co.uk

READMYMIND

Places - An International Miracle Comprising a special set of postcards from various well-known destinations around the world, these postcards introduce a brand new marking system to the community. Designed to be as clear as possible to the performer, they are psychologically invisible to your audience.

In addition to this incredible and

original marked set, you will also receive a custom set of forcing postcards that allow you to perform a 3-phase routine that Looch has been using for years to audiences across the UK.

The postcards can be configured in a variety of ways unique to each performer. This is a cutting edge utility tool for the modern working mentalist with no expense spared. You will love them!

Limited to 250 sets, Places consist of: A set of special marked postcards depicting various well

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THE TWO MOVEMENTS OF MAGIC

Mark Leveridge



There's a filming technique that is prevalent in some movies and TV programmes, where a handheld camera is used to shoot the footage, and in order to make the action seem more 'real' and 'raw', the camera is essentially 'waved around'. Normally, cameras are kept still, or if not stationary, they move smoothly on track or wheels in order to create a jolt free experience for the viewer. But it appears that some filmmakers think that if you allow the camera to sway around, it will make everything feel more exciting. Personally, it just makes me feel nauseous and irritable!

Well, the same can be said of watching some performers. I remember going to a Michael McIntyre live show in which his backdrop consisted of vertical stripes. Now, I really like his comedy style, but he does tend to walk up and down repeatedly and often at quite a fast pace. As with all comedians who work big arena type venues, he has a follow camera, the footage of which is transmitted to huge overhead screens.

The result of the stripey background, Michael's pacing, and the need for the camera to chase him from one side of the large stage to the other, created a very uncomfortable watch. In fact, it was visually distracting and prevented you from concentrating fully on his hilarious patter lines, something I am sure he would not be pleased about.

The fact is, whether performers are standing either on a stage in front of a large audience or positioned at the side of a banquet table, how they move their body can either improve or potentially ruin the way the audience enjoys their show. Yet I am sure that not many magicians have spent time analysing their movements during a performance, which is a surprise given how important it might be.

To my way of thinking there are two different aspects of this whole question. The first is understanding when it is acceptable to move and when it would be better to stay still, and the second is to do with when you have to move during a show, how to do so effectively and economically. So let's take a look at both.

STANDING STILL

Have you ever watched a video of yourself taken at a live performance? Did you notice anything about the way you moved about? Here are some things to look for.

Do you pace up and down (like Michael McIntyre), or do you sway slightly from side to side or even keep altering the balance of your body from one foot to the other?

If you're holding a prop, such as a pack of cards, do you fiddle with it as you're talking, distractedly riffling, cutting and springing the cards?

If you're displaying a prop or holding a playing card face towards the audience, do you wave it around a bit or pan it from side to side quickly?

You see, I feel that usually any of the above habits come about because the performer is feeling a bit on edge or nervous, and the anxiety makes him unable to stand or be still. To the watching audience, if they pick up on any of these ways of behaving, they may start to feel a little anxious too because it may look like the performer is not sure of himself and what he's doing. Not a good image to portray.

Training yourself to stand still can affect all of the above errors in one fell swoop. If you are chatting to the audience and you are in a relaxed static pose, they will relax with you and their confidence in you and your abilities will start to increase.

You can be holding a deck of cards in your hand but because you are not unnecessarily fiddling with it, it will remain almost invisible right up to the moment that you start to use it in the trick. As a result, there is nothing to distract the spectators from your patter, something which could be important in certain tricks where the words you use are vital to a successful outcome.

If you hold up a card face at the conclusion of a routine, keeping the hand holding the card completely still and just gently pivoting the wrist to turn the card face first to the

"...WHEN YOU ARE TALKING TO THE AUDIENCE AND THERE IS NOTHING MUCH ELSE HAPPENING, STANDING STILL MAKES YOU MORE RELAXING TO WATCH AND WHAT YOU SAY CLEARER TO UNDERSTAND."

left and then to the right, means everyone gets to see the card clearly, thus increasing the reaction to the trick itself. So much better than waving it around so that no one can catch a proper sight of the card face.

If you can prevent yourself from swaying around, it is easier and more comfortable for the audience to watch and concentrate on you. This is as important when working close up as it is when on a stage or cabaret floor. In fact, in some ways it is even more important, as when you are positioned right next to your audience, every little mannerism and movement is accentuated and noticeable. Just to be clear, I am not suggesting that you should stand rooted to the spot afraid to move a muscle! What I am advocating, is that when you are talking to the audience and there is nothing much else happening, standing still makes you more relaxing to watch and what you say clearer to understand.

POETRY IN MOTION

Naturally enough, there are going to be times, especially with stand up acts, where the performer needs to move. It may be he needs to approach members of the audience, or to fetch/discard props from a box, case or table. In theory it is straightforward - you have to get a prop so you just walk over to where it is kept in order to pick it up. But in doing this simple action you may be guilty of 'portering'. This is a term that I first came across many years ago in an excellent article written by Bob Swadling, which I published first in the British Close Up Magic Symposium - The First Decade book. Here is part of that article to give you the general gist of the point he wanted to make...

"Many years ago, when I was starting out in magic, I visited a professional act doctor. These were people who would look at and give a critical review of your act and help with the production.

After watching my act, his comment to me was, "Why don't you employ a porter?" "What do you mean?" I retorted.

At the time, I was doing a dove act. My stage setting was a dove cage towards the back of the stage, positioned stage left. Centre stage I had a cane to table with a top hat on it, in which to throw cards, during the card manipulation section. Another table was placed forward at stage right.

I would produce a dove - that was "the magic" he explained! I would then walk from centre stage to stage left and place the dove in the cage and then walk back to centre stage. He explained that "the walking backwards and forwards was portering".

On my table stage right I had some rope and scissors to perform cut and restored rope. I would walk from the dove cage across the stage, pick up the rope, walk to centre stage, show rope, walk to the table and pick up the scissors.

I would then walk to centre stage, cut the rope, walk back to the table to place the scissors down and walk back again to the centre stage to show that the rope had restored.

"The magic" he explained was the rope restoring. Everything else I had done was portering and all the portering had to go. How, I asked, could I perform the rope cutting without portering?

He was not a magician, but suggested that I stand centre stage, produce a cane, change the cane to a length of rope. Show the rope and hold both ends in one hand, forming a loop. A pair of scissors would appear in the loop. I would take the scissors and cut through the rope allowing the scissors to be removed. I would then throw the scissors into the air and they would vanish. Then when I looked at the rope again, it would have restored. I could then throw the rope into the air and it would change into a dove. I was beginning to get the idea!"

The point of all this is that it is easy to be guilty of unnecessary walking about the stage. With a bit more thought, at the very least the tables and other props could be repositioned closer to the performer to avoid lengthy walks to fetch props. And then with perhaps better planning and routining, the need to approach the tables could be eliminated altogether, as the example Bob quoted above illustrates.

Economy of movement is evident with most of the world's best stage manipulation acts. They twist and turn perhaps, but essentially they remain centre stage and rarely have to stray outside of that small area. The result of this is that it is easier for the audience to appreciate their magic as they are not distracted by irrelevant movement about the stage.

So, if you are a stand up, cabaret or stage performer, it might be of benefit to take a critical look at your act to see whether you can tighten up on your movement. Are you constantly getting spectators up to help, for instance, and does this cause too many 'dead' spots in your act? Could you use the same onstage helper for two consecutive tricks to reduce the need from two lots of 'up and down', perhaps?

The best way to take a critical look, as I mentioned above, is to watch a video of your show, ideally one that was recorded at a live event. You might be surprised at what you see when you look at it with fresh eyes, and as a result be able to address issues of swaying, fidgeting and portering!



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