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WHERE MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY MEET



NEW BOOK

**MY APPROACH TO
TEACHING SLEIGHT
OF HAND**

by Michael Close

PAGE 6

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SCOTT AND PUCK

Instant download for fundraiser for Scott Alexander's family.

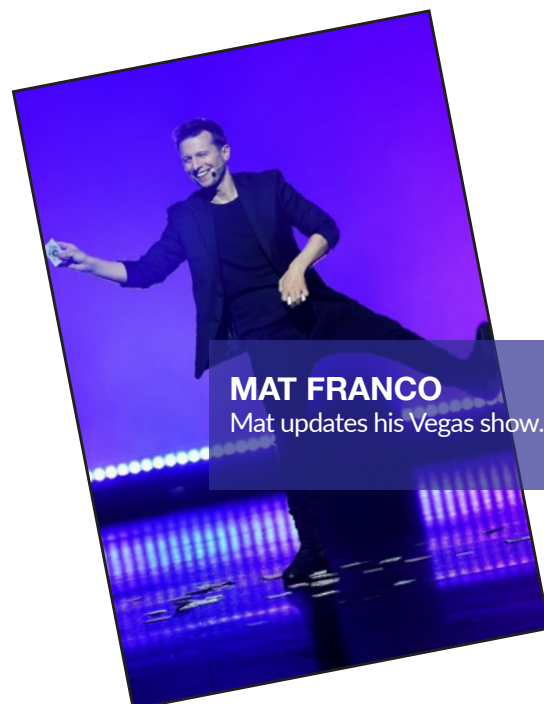
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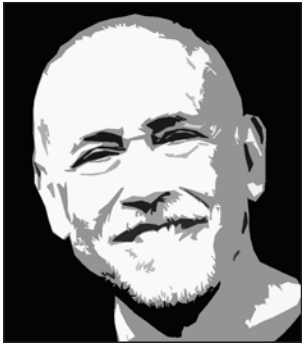


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- [NEMCON - March](#)
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- [52 Friends, Hamburg, Germany, Apr 21-23](#)
- [AbraCORNdabra, Des Moines, IA, May 19-21](#)
- [IBM Convention, Pittsburgh, PA, July 11-15](#)
- [SAM Convention, New Orleans, LA, July 23-25](#)
- [MAGIC Live - Las Vegas, August 6-9](#)
- [Kid-Abra Conference, Chatanooga, TN, Aug 16-18](#)
- [World Magic Convention, London, UK, Sept 23](#)
- [Daytona Magic Convention - Nov 3-5](#)
- [London Magic Convention, London, UK, Nov 5](#)



IT'S HERE!

Lisa and I are delighted to announce our new ebook, *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*, is now available. This publication is the culmination of more than three years of research, experimentation, and online-teaching experience. The goal was to provide magicians of all skill levels a structured method for learning, mastering, and utilizing practical methods for in-the-hands and tabled false shuffles and cuts. My success in teaching these

concepts to my private students convinced me that this information will be valuable to magicians everywhere.

You can read more about how I developed this system in my article, “My Approach to Teaching Sleight of Hand,” on page 6. The ebook contains seven effective tricks using the techniques explained. I’ve included another trick that benefits from convincing false shuffles, The Invisible Card Revisited; you will find it on page 8.

Right now, we have a special deal available; purchase *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts* and get fifty-percent off any Michael Close product (some exceptions apply). You can find a link on page 7.

I’m also happy to announce that casting for season ten of *Penn & Teller: Fool Us* has started. Send your videos to fooluscasting@gmail.com. Please keep in mind these requirements: no stooges, no preshow work, and routines should be five minutes or less in length. Good luck; I’m looking forward to working with another great group of performers.

This month marks the final column of Michael Perovich’s “Ellipsis” series. I hope you’ve taken the time to read and study them; they contain information you won’t find anywhere else. My thanks to Michael for allowing us to share these columns with the readers of the newsletter.

In addition to “Ellipsis,” you’ll find articles by our regular contributors: Bruce Kalver, Mick Ayres, and Michael Breggar. Be sure to check out the video clips on page 14, featuring Harry Riser and Slydini.

We lost some wonderful people during the thirty days from the end of January to now, including magic dealer Joe Stevens, SAM Past President Maria Ibanez, cardman Bob King, Veronique Ross, and legendary comedy writer Bob Orben (you can find an obituary for Orben here: <https://tinyurl.com/5dh75aft>).

I attended many of Joe Stevens’ conventions, going back to the late ‘70s, when they were held in Wichita. Joe brought in great talent from around the world; he energized magicians with his top-dollar magic contests. I enjoyed the time I spent with Joe; he gave me a master class in what it takes to pitch magic tricks at a convention.

In addition to those mentioned above, we also lost Scott Alexander in February. Scott died of complications from a stroke while working on a cruise ship. Scott was one of magic’s few general practitioners – equally adept at close-up, parlor, and stage magic. He recently wrote two important



books: *Denny Haney – Collected Wisdom* and *52*, which is a collection of Scott's original creations.

Several campaigns have been set up to help Scott's wife Jenny and their three children. You can help through GoFundMe (<https://tinyurl.com/vbcb8krb>) or by purchasing *Scott Alexander and Puck Live at the Magic Castle* through Penguin Magic (<https://tinyurl.com/4khsfv8f>).

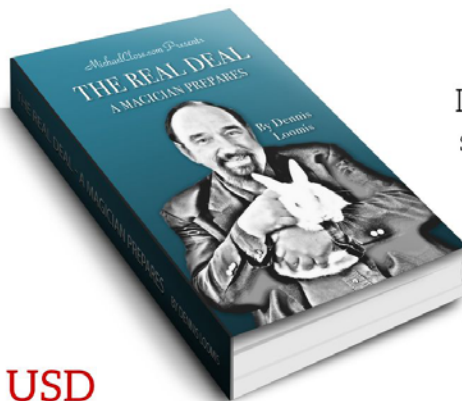
Another of our magic friends could also use your help. New York magician Bobby Torkova was recently incapacitated by spinal stenosis, which is a narrowing of the amount of space within the spine. This puts pressure on the spinal cord and the nerves that travel through the spine. The condition has made it impossible for him to work. A GoFundMe campaign has been set up (<https://tinyurl.com/4hwcahc7>). Any help will be greatly appreciated.

That's it for February. See you next month. ♦

THE REAL DEAL – A MAGICIAN PREPARES

By Dennis Loomis

Foreword by Gene Anderson



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In *The Real Deal – A Magician Prepares* you'll find sage advice, handy tips, timesaving suggestions, full-blown routines for stage and stand-up, routines for children (for both school assembly and party venues), memorized deck information, and great stories and reminiscences. The final chapter includes several of Dennis's articles about his long-time friend Doug Henning. In it, Dennis explains the evolution of one of the iconic illusions of the twentieth century – an illusion he helped popularize.

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MY APPROACH TO TEACHING SLEIGHT OF HAND

By Michael Close

When I began publishing my routines way back in 1990, I had a few goals I wanted to achieve. Of course, I wanted to offer commercial, practical material that “worked” in real-life performing venues. But I also wanted to go beyond the “cookbook” style of many magic books (do this, then do this, and then do this) by explaining the “why” behind each routine – in other words, analyzing the choices I made in creating the routine. In this way, I hoped to demystify my creative process so other magicians could understand it and utilize it. I wanted to do more than just explain; I wanted to teach.

In the “On Palming” chapter of *Workers 3* (1993), I branched out into a relatively unexplored area: developing a structured, pedagogical approach to learning a sleight. Most magic books may explain *how* to do a sleight; very few explain *how to learn* that sleight. What I attempted in the “On Palming” chapter was to offer preliminary “exercises” that would train the fingers, in the same way musicians learn advanced techniques through the use of etudes. (This chapter was later expanded into the first volume of the three-volume *Palming* series of ebooks, which were released in 2006 and 2007.)

Chronologically, the next sleight I analyzed was the faro shuffle, which I had learned from Harry Lorayne’s *Close-up Card Magic* when I was thirteen. I switched from Lorayne’s “top-down” method to Marlo’s “bottom-up” method, which Harry Riser espoused. There is definitely a “knack” aspect to the faro. Lorayne sums it up this way: “You’ll have to practice it until you’re ready to give up – that’s when you’ll get it.” Unfortunately, while this describes the moment when you finally (probably accidentally) discover the knack, it in no way helps you along the path to discovery.

During my tenure at the Houdini Lounge in the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas, I figured out how to explain this knack, and I taught the shuffle to several people at magic conventions, often using a tandem approach. (I would be the right hand and the other magician would be the left hand). I refined my method of explaining the shuffle, and, in 2001, Lisa and I released our first electronic product, *Michael Close on the Faro Shuffle*, which was released on CD-ROM in 2001; it combined text, photographs, and videos. We were newbies as far as electronic publishing was concerned, and we used a simple menu program to allow navigation through the various videos.

The pandemic quarantine presented a new and interesting set of challenges. Preproduction on *Fool Us* went virtual; I spent hours on Zoom calls working with acts, which forced me to devise ways to impart information without physically being in the same room. I also began working with more private students, many of whom were middle-aged. I mention the age factor because for these students, the responsibilities of work and family affected how much time they had to practice magic. My goal with them was not to teach them every variation of every sleight, but to focus on the most practical and useful moves; I also had to discover ways to teach these moves so the learning curve would be reduced.

This led to two new ebook projects. The first, *Mastering the Double Lift*, was published in 2021. The second, *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*, is available now. Neither ebook is designed to

be encyclopedic in nature. Instead, the goal is offer the techniques that will be of most use to the average magician, and to structure the teaching in such a way that the sleights can be mastered in the shortest amount of time. Three unifying concepts are at the heart of this training: naturalness, uniformity of action, and a casual, relaxed handling.

These ebooks are suitable for all magicians, regardless of skill level. Beginners will find that the structured, logical learning path, if conscientiously followed, will provide rapid progress. Because the hand and finger positions are designed so the false actions faithfully mimic the genuine actions, intermediate and advanced practitioners may have to dislodge some muscle memory before mastering these techniques. Believe me; it's worth the effort to have sleights that are indistinguishable from the real thing.

I'm proud of the double lift ebook, and I'm especially proud of *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*. I believe it raises the bar for teaching through the ebook medium. ♦



NEW!!!

Mastering False Shuffles & Cuts Ebook

Master the art of false shuffles and cuts with this comprehensive ebook from Michael Close! This ebook includes dozens of detailed videos and photos, as well as ten amazing card tricks to amaze with your newfound skills.

Get ready to take your card magic to the next level with False Shuffles and Cuts from MichaelClose.com

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THE INVISIBLE CARD REVISITED

BY MICHAEL CLOSE

In my new ebook, *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*, I include seven effects that demonstrate how tricks can be enhanced by incorporating convincing shuffles and cuts. Here's another example – an effect that is often unfairly categorized as a “beginner” card trick. The chaos provided by the shuffles and cuts, enhanced by a force that appears aboveboard, and combined with sleights that are presentationally motivated create a deep mystery, for both laymen and magicians. I hope you give this a try.

Roberto Giobbi published *The Invisible Card* in *Card College 3*; it is his handling of what is often referred to as “the Biddle trick.” In it, a selected card vanishes from a fan of five cards and appears face up in the center of the deck. (If you have that book, I suggest you read through Giobbi's write-up before you read on.) The selection must be forced; Giobbi uses the riffle force (although he suggests replacing this with the dribble force, which is explained in a later volume). Unfortunately, even though I think the riffle force handling explained in *Card College* is the best way to do that particular move, I prefer not to use either move. For the force, I use a technique from Charlie Miller.

I added a justification for recounting the packet of cards (after the selection has been stolen) and a more visual vanish using the Rub-away move. Most important, I have strengthened the force. For this effect to have maximum impact, the spectator *must be convinced* the selection was a free choice and the magician cannot possibly know what the selected card is.

I also utilize several of the shuffling procedures explained in my new ebook *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*. If you don't have this ebook, you can substitute procedures you have in your toolbox, but the sleights I suggest are completely convincing.

Setup: It is necessary to position a four-of-a-kind before the effect starts; two cards should be at the top of the deck, two cards on the bottom. This can be easily accomplished either before you start or during the lull between effects. Just spread the deck looking for a pair together. Cut them to the face of the deck. Then run through the deck culling the other two cards to the top. Let's assume we have two Nines on top of the deck and two Nines at the bottom.

It is important for the spectator to be convinced the deck is in a random order. I do this using the F.T. Tabled False Cut to set up for a tabled riffle shuffle that maintains the top and bottom stock. I do the shuffle sequence twice as I patter. I then do one more F.T. Tabled False Cut, holding a break between the two halves of the deck with my left thumb tip. As I pick up the deck with my right hand, the left hand pulls the upper half of the deck to left for about a quarter of an inch. The right hand places the deck into dealing position in the left hand. The right thumb pushes down on the in-jogged lower portion and the left little finger gets a break between the halves. This break is between the four Nines.

I now force one of the Nines using Charlie Miller's Spread Force, which was described in Harry Riser's *Secrets of an Escamoteur*. I extolled the benefits of this move in *The Paradigm Shift Volume 1*, but did not explain it. Here's how it works.

During the preliminary actions of the force, the left little finger will maintain its break between the

halves; this is accomplished by exerting pressure with the left thumb. The left hand moves to the far right of my performing surface; I begin to spread off cards with my left thumb. The spread cards are allowed to slide to the table top. I continue to push off cards as my hand moves to the left. After I have spread off eight cards or so, I look up and ask the spectator to say stop. I continue to spread as I say this.

As I spread, I watch the spectator's lips. To say the word "stop," the lips form the "s" shape before any air is expelled. When I see the spectator form the "s," I slightly speed up the movement of my left hand; I release all the cards above the break as the spectator says stop. The left thumb moves to the left (leaving a gap), and then spreads off the remainder of the cards.

Much like the dribble force, Miller Spread Force relies on timing. Unlike the dribble force, the unloading of any extra cards (between the formation of the "s" and the word "stop") is better concealed. In the dribble force, the extra cards fall in a noticeable clump; in the Miller force, the cards become part of the spread. The only knack to acquire is the ability to spread off cards without the break becoming obvious at the front side of the deck. The key is to spread while still exerting downward pressure.

I now apparently give the spectator a wide degree of freedom. *"I tried to stop exactly when you indicated, but there might have been a lag there. This is the card you stopped me on (indicating the top card of the left spread), but would you rather have the card before it (indicating the bottom card of the right spread), or the card before that one (indicating the card second from the bottom of the right spread), or maybe this one (indicating the card second from the top of the left spread)? It's your call."*

Although this seems to be scrupulously fair, whichever card the spectator chooses is going to be a Nine. The spectator makes his choice. I push that card toward him and I push the right-side spread to the right, away from the central performing area, roughly squaring it. I pick up the left-side spread, placing it in dealing position in my left hand and I turn my head away as the spectator looks at the card.

While the spectator looks at the card, and with my head still turned, I overhand shuffle the cards in my left hand. Depending on which card the spectator took, there will be one or two Nines on top of these cards. I perform a lift shuffle, keeping the Nine(s) on top. After the spectator looks at his selection, he places it face down on the table and I turn back to face him.

"We also need four more cards, so just say stop. And again. And again. And once more." I spread through the cards I hold; the spectator stops me at four random locations and I toss each card onto the selection, making a pile of five cards. I have no idea what the exact identities of these five cards are. However, I know for a fact there is only one Nine, and that Nine is the spectator's selection.

"Right now, you have five cards in front of you; you selected all of them. Mix up the cards. I won't look." I turn my head as the spectator shuffles the five cards. When he has finished, I turn back and take the five cards from him, turning the faces toward me as I receive them. *"Only one of these cards is significant to you; I'm going to try to figure out which one that is by listening for what is called a 'vocal tell.' Here's how it works."*

When I turn the faces of the five cards toward me, I immediately spot where the Nine is. I need it

the invisible card revisited cont'd

to be center card of the five (that is, third from the face). If it isn't there, I split the fan between my hands in a gesture ("*Only one of these cards is significant to you...*") so when I bring the cards back together I have shifted the Nine to the central position. Once the cards have been shifted, I square them (face up) on top of the left-hand cards.

"I'm going to ask you some questions. The correct answer to these questions is, 'No.' Do you understand?" Quite often, the spectator will say, "Yes," which will get a laugh. If the spectator says, "No," I say, "*Great, you get the idea. Here we go.*" [Note: This patter approach comes from the *Card College* routine.]

I will now show all five cards to the spectator, one at a time, and in the process I will steal the selected card. This is accomplished via the "Biddle move." The right hand holds the deck in overhand grip between the thumb and middle finger at the right-hand side. The left thumb pulls off the top card and moves forward, displaying the card to spectator. I ask, "*Is this your card?*" The spectator replies, "No."

The left hand returns to the right hand to draw off the second card. The first card goes completely under the right-hand pile; the left edge of the right-hand pile is pressed against the heel side of the left hand. The left thumb draws off the second card; it lands on top of the first card. The left hand moves forward, displaying this card to the spectator. My question is repeated; the spectator says, "No."

This display is repeated for the third card (the selection), but with a small difference. When the card is pulled into the left hand, the left little finger gets a break under it. I take this opportunity to memorize the suit of this Nine. I ask the question and the spectator replies, "No."

The left hand returns to pull off the fourth card. In this action, the left-hand cards go directly under the right-hand cards (just as they have the previous times). The right hand grips the Nine, retaining it under the right-hand pile as the left thumb pulls off the fourth card and moves forward. The question and answer are repeated.

The steal of the Nine is the key move in the routine. To be deceptive, there must be *no change* in the rhythm of the two hands. The left thumb must pull the fourth card to the left *before* the left hand moves forward; otherwise, the spectator will see the Nine disappear. Third, the Nine must be flush with the right-hand cards. If it pokes out to the left, the spectator will see it. None of this is difficult; it simply requires some practice (a metronome will help).

The left hand returns to the right hand. The fifth card is drawn off and the question and the answer are repeated. I nod my head as if I have discerned important information from these questions. As I do this, I casually place the right-hand cards onto the tabled pile, which is off to my right.

"You did a very good job, so you no longer have to answer my questions with 'No.' In fact, from now on I want you to tell the truth. Here's what I learned: With the first two cards, your responses sounded identical. On the third card, however, I sensed a slight hesitation. The fourth and fifth cards sounded like the first two. I think the third card is yours, and I'm so sure of it I'm going to do this."

The left-hand cards are flipped face down. I'm going to count the four cards as five using the

the invisible card revisited cont'd

Biddle move, and I'm going to provide justification for counting them by using the above patter. The right hand takes the four cards in overhand grip; the actions follow the words. *"With the first two cards, your responses sounded identical."* I pull off the first and second cards, one at a time, with my left thumb, moving my left hand forward with each pull. I catch a little finger break under the second card. *"On the third card, however, I sensed a slight hesitation."* As I pull off the third card, I steal back the second card under the right-hand cards. The left thumb angles this card forward and to the left. The left fingers straighten the card so it is out-jogged as the left hand returns to drag off the next card from the right hand. The final card is similarly dragged off (*"The fourth and fifth cards sounded like the first two"*).

I remove the out-jogged card and place it into position for the Rub-away Vanish as I say, *"I'm going to do this."* I perform the vanish, lifting my right hand to show the card is gone. *"I didn't make the card disappear; it's here, but it's invisible. Let me turn it face up. Yep, I'm sure this is your card; you took the Nine of Spades, didn't you?"*

Because the selection process was so fair, the revelation of the card's name comes as a big surprise (especially if you do this trick with a borrowed deck). *"I'm going to take your Nine of Spades and toss it over here."* I mime picking up the invisible card with my right hand. I toss the card toward the pile of cards to my right.

"Look, here are one, two, three, four cards. There's no Nine here." I meticulously take each card from my left hand, rubbing each on the table with my right hand, and turning each face up to show the Nine of Spades isn't there. Then, I spread the pile of cards on the right, revealing the Nine of Spades face up in the middle of the spread. This concludes the effect. You can watch a video of this trick [here](#). ♦

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MAGIC NEWS

THE REAL MAGIC ROADSHOW IS FINALLY COMING BACK!

For the last two years we all went through a tough time of lockdowns, cancelled events and uncertainties. We've been missing our friends in the United States and seeing them again in the autumn last year was a real joy for us. That's why we're excited to announce that we've selected six amazing U.S. cities to bring you the best dealer room of the world to you!

Once again, you'll get to connect with some of the best creators and producers in the business, including - Mark Mason, Paul Richards, Dirk Losander, and Christian Schenk - along with special guests along the way. We've kept the cost insanely low and now you get even more bang for your buck! Seriously, you won't believe how much you get for less than the price of a movie ticket! However – due to the low cost and limited space, there will be no door tickets available for these events. You must register in advance! Click here to see if they are coming to your city: <https://www.realmagicroadshow.com/>



PODCAST: MAGIC, HUMOR, & HONESTY WITH LEGENDARY MAGICIAN PENN JILLETTE

SAN DIEGO (KGTV) — Legendary magician Penn Jillette, the talking half of Penn & Teller, joins ABC 10News reporter Jeff Lasky for a wide-ranging conversation discussing his 40+ year career on stage, how they developed their famous sense of irreverent humor, and why he says fellow superstar David Blaine's style of magic is ridiculous.

Penn & Teller are stars of the longest-running residency show in Las Vegas History, have sold out numerous runs on Broadway, and taken their act around the world. Along the way, they've made hundreds of late-night talk show appearances, been guest stars on popular television shows, and produced acclaimed documentaries. Click the image below to listen to the Penn's interview with Jeff Lasky.



SCOTT ALEXANDER & PUCK LIVE AT THE MAGIC CASTLE (INSTANT DOWNLOAD)

With Scott's unexpected passing Penguin Magic is releasing this rarely seen footage with all proceeds going directly to Scott's family. **Here's your chance to see their original and hilarious show as well as raise money for great cause.**

(Instant Download) Scott Alexander & Puck Live from the World - Famous Magic Castle in Hollywood. This is their full performance shot at the Palace of Mystery in 2001.

Featured signature routines include: Slashed, Race Card Rabbit, Cane Up Nose, Dancing Hank, Weed, Grab n Stab, The Needles, Wishes, The Giant Bush

Purchase your intant download [here](#).



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MAGICIAN MAT FRANCO UPDATES HIS SUCCESSFUL LAS VEGAS SHOW

BY MATT KELEMEN - FEBRUARY 17, 2023



Mat Franco—Magic Reinvented Nightly, the hit headlining Strip residency that is heading toward its eighth anniversary this summer, has been reinvented. Franco, 34, took some time off as he and his wife welcomed a baby into their family last month, but he returned to Mat Franco Theater this month with new illusions, technological advancements and stagecraft seasoned by more than seven years of performing in a room of his own.

“Excitement” is his response when asked for one word that comes to mind when he thinks about the new show. “I am literally so excited,” he says. Franco spent most of his time with his family leading up to his first curtain call of the year, but managed to pull himself away to check on how things were progressing with his creative team at the theater. “It’s exciting to see things happening and things in motion, and celebrating the small wins of each step of the process.”

Franco’s creative team worked around the clock during the baby break to get everything for the new production in place. “Based on the long-running success of the show, we made huge investments into the theater and the show itself,” he says. Read more [here](#).

COOL CLIPS

HARRY RISER TALKS ABOUT SLYDINI'S TIME IN INDIANAPOLIS



SLYDINI - THE HELICOPTER CARD



THE MAGIC OF SCIENCE

Why do we include science articles in our magic newsletter? Because we believe that learning about the latest scientific discoveries can be a great source of inspiration for your magic performances. By exploring topics like perception, psychology, and physics, you might just come up with your next mind-blowing trick.

CUSTOM, 3D-PRINTED HEART REPLICAS LOOK AND PUMP JUST LIKE THE REAL THING

No two hearts beat alike. The size and shape of the the heart can vary from one person to the next. These differences can be particularly pronounced for people living with heart disease, as their hearts and major vessels work harder to overcome any compromised function.

MIT engineers are hoping to help doctors tailor treatments to patients' specific heart form and function, with a custom robotic heart. The team has developed a procedure to 3D print a soft and flexible replica of a patient's heart. They can then control the replica's action to mimic that patient's blood-pumping ability.

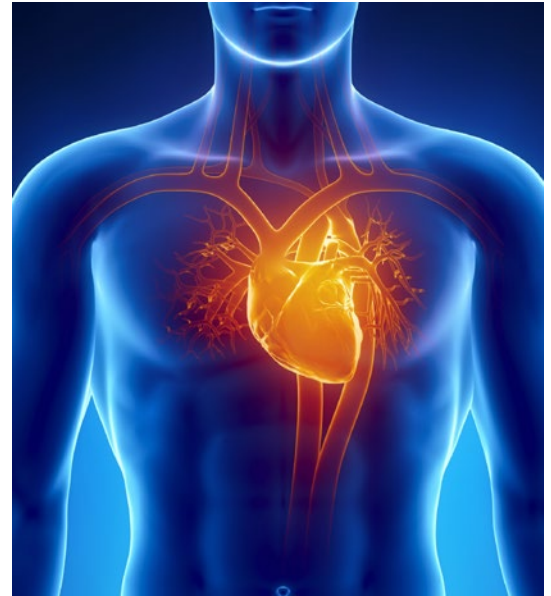
The procedure involves first converting medical images of a patient's heart into a three-dimensional computer model, which the researchers can then 3D print using a polymer-based ink. The result is a soft, flexible shell in the exact shape of the patient's own heart. The team can also use this approach to print a patient's aorta -- the major artery that carries blood out of the heart to the rest of the body.

To mimic the heart's pumping action, the team has fabricated sleeves similar to blood pressure cuffs that wrap around a printed heart and aorta. The underside of each sleeve resembles precisely patterned bubble wrap. When the sleeve is connected to a pneumatic system, researchers can tune the outflowing air to rhythmically inflate the sleeve's bubbles and contract the heart, mimicking its pumping action.

The researchers can also inflate a separate sleeve surrounding a printed aorta to constrict the vessel. This constriction, they say, can be tuned to mimic aortic stenosis -- a condition in which the aortic valve narrows, causing the heart to work harder to force blood through the body.

Doctors commonly treat aortic stenosis by surgically implanting a synthetic valve designed to widen the aorta's natural valve. In the future, the team says that doctors could potentially use their new procedure to first print a patient's heart and aorta, then implant a variety of valves into the printed model to see which design results in the best function and fit for that particular patient. The heart replicas could also be used by research labs and the medical device industry as realistic platforms for testing therapies for various types of heart disease.

Read the full article [here](#).



ELLIPSIS BY MICHAEL A. PEROVICH

Michael Perovich is a retired civil engineer and a highly accomplished amateur magician. He was a columnist for M-U-M and has contributed routines to Genii, Talisman, and The Ganson Book. He is the author of the excellent memoir, *The Vernon Companion*. He is an active member of SoCal Sodality and the Academy of Magical Arts.

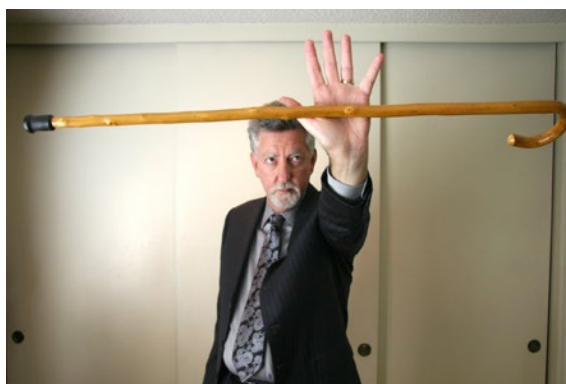


A FEW GRIPS WITH A CANE PLUS ONE

We'll conclude this series of columns where we began: with some observations on one of Mr. Leipzig's effects. I've long been tantalized by Nate Leipzig's routine, *A Few Grips with a Cane*, as described in *Dai Vernon's Tribute to Nate Leipzig* by Lewis Ganson. I've been able to piece together a number of grips from this source, from photos of Leipzig, from a short film clip I once saw of him performing part of his cane routine, and from one or two methods I've devised on my own. I'll also note that the February 1997 issue of *M-U-M* describes the basic effect taken from the Ganson book description.

Leipzig apparently began his club work with this effect, in which a walking cane mysteriously adheres to his hand under a series of seemingly impossible circumstances.

Mr. Ganson's book gives a number of hints about the routine but focuses primarily on two grips. The first is performed with the horizontal cane seemingly adhering to the vertically held hand when it is placed at the cane's balance point near the base of the thumb (Photo 1). This method is well described in the book (and the aforementioned article in *M-U-M*) and is the centerpiece of the routine. Once this description is concluded, however, another method is entered into that has always puzzled me. It seems to rely on pressure points being simultaneously applied at the base of the fingers and the thumbs, and "then curling the little fingers in very slightly." The illustration that accompanies this portion of the text shows the little fingers virtually curled around the cane in a manner that would draw heat from most any audience.



The descriptions of the moves following the base-of-the-thumb method seem confusing to me, or, at the very least, subject to a wide range of interpretations. The only person I've ever seen perform a cane routine was the late David Avadon. As I recall, his presentation relied on the basic move and didn't make use of the second method in the book. So, I've never seen anyone attempt this second method. David did comment to me, however, that he used the first method so much he was comfortable performing it with a tire iron. Pretty impressive, I must say.

Using my interpretation of the second method, the cane can be securely held with its length parallel to the floor and the hands directly above the cane. The fingers are all perfectly straight and there is no curling of the little fingers. I have no idea if this is the method used by Nate Leipzig, but it may very well be because he appears to use a variation of this grip in the film clip I've seen.

These cane grips are all based on physics and typically involve the curved handle of the cane wanting to rotate and being resisted by a combination of pressure points on the hand and fingers. This is also the case here. I think this grip can be best understood by beginning with the cane

supported as shown in Photo 2. Here the cane appears to be sitting on the thumbs, which in fact it is. Note that Photo 3 shows the position of the cane handle as well. The handle is extending up above the horizontally held cane. The cane is pressed against the flesh of the finger joints, although this will also work with the cane pressed against the fleshy part of the hand just below the base of the fingers.



Now move your hands down by rotating the hands and forearms from the elbows. This will cause the handle of the cane to attempt to revolve and will embed the cane in the flesh of the fingers while the thumbs hold the entire affair in place (Photo 4).



I was quite startled when I first tried this, as I wasn't quite sure why it worked. I was amazed at how securely the cane was held in place. The other grips I use, including the basic move of Photo 1, are all somewhat tenuous and care must be taken to see that cane isn't inadvertently dropped. This grip, on the contrary, is quite firm and the cane can be freely moved into a variety of positions while held this way. I sometimes pretend to be trying to push the cane down only to have it rise up, seemingly of its own accord.

Give this a try. You might even fool yourself.

[Editor's Note: For more information about the Magnetized Cane effect, check out Steve Cohen's excellent book *Max Malini – King of Magicians, Magician of Kings*, page 202.] ♦

MIND OVER MATTERS BY MICHAEL BREGGAR

Michael Breggar has authored five books (focusing on card magic and mentalism) and is a columnist for The Linking Ring ("Auto-Magic"). You can find his books at www.mjmmagic.com



THE NON-INEVITABILITY POSTULATE

This month, we will explore a mentalism-performance concept I believe is as important as any I've mentioned in the two years of this column. It has to do with the central premise of mentalism: the mentalist *will* read the subject's mind or predict a future event or make something move without physical contact. Within the construct of a mentalism routine, the denouement is inevitable, right? That's why I emphasized the word "will." Think about this, though. If the effect's conclusion is expected and inevitable, can the effect possibly be *entertaining*?

Some mentalists may argue the last remark. They may say, "I want to be amazing," "unbelievable," or even, "not of this earth!" Being "entertaining" is not on their agenda. A binary perspective comes to mind: you are either a performer or you claim these mysterious powers are, in a way, legit. The presentation of mentalism is performance art. And performance art that is status quo – and without texture or surprise – is boring.

So, as you develop your mentalism effects, routines, and performance sets, think in terms of the variance of texture. Make each routine different in scope, manner, and approach. How are audience members utilized and managed from effect to effect? Are there emotional or comedic "hooks" to keep them engaged as you proceed through your program? Above all, put on your audience's shoes and ask how easy it will be for them to differentiate one effect from another *one week after the performance*.

There is a long and glorious (?) history of mentalism methods and techniques that revolve around the same four premises: telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis (thus quoth the Maven, Max, in his early masterwork *The Blue Book of Mentalism* (1976)). To further complicate things, many successful mentalists further restrict the potential portfolio of effects by suggesting mentalists "specialize" in one area or the next; the performer should only have a single superpower to demonstrate. This is like telling a magician they can only be a card magician and must only perform red/black separation effects!

There is a real art, then, in how modern mentalists bring old, established methods to modern sensibilities and deploy them in an *entertaining* manner. I frequently revisit *The Jinx*, for example, and marvel over the cleverness of the many Want Ad Tests. How do you replicate this today? Those newspapers that are still alive carry few (if any) want ads. You needn't go too far back in history to find pages of these things in the past. But those types of newspaper sections (let alone *newspapers*) have sadly become anachronisms. The good news is that every week you can enter your local supermarket store and right by the main entrance is a rack with the current week's sales circular. This brightly colored, multi-paged, tabloid-sized publication is perfect for replacing the newspaper. And it can equally be sliced and diced so a single torn-out piece becomes the focus of a telepathy or precognition routine. (Even better news if you are a magician...these circulars are great replacements if you want to revive your Torn-and-Restored Newspaper routine). Or don't tear up the circular and use it *in toto* for a book test. Similarly, those mammoth, extra-long, pharmacy-chain cash register receipts are perfect for mental work, like variations of Al Spackman's great Clip

Line. (I explored several different ways to utilize these things in a series of articles in *The Linking Ring* several years ago).

Updating the props and modernizing the presentations allow us to continue to use, and sometimes revitalize, classic mental methods. Still, there is one very challenging element that must be considered when you are developing a mental routine for today's audiences:

They are way ahead of you.

They know where you are going before you get there. If a spectator is asked to draw a picture on a tablet, the audience knows the mentalist will divine the drawing and duplicate it. If several spectators write four-digit numbers on a pad and a sealed envelope is somewhere nearby, everyone just knows the total of these random numbers has been predicted and is resting in said envelope. How does the mentalist, therefore, make a routine interesting and entertaining from start to finish if the ending is inevitable? The audience may never figure out how you received the information, but if they know you will somehow receive it (actual psychic abilities aside)...well, there goes any element of surprise as well as any element of entertainment value.

How, then, does one structure a mentalism routine that maintains the surprise throughout? I call it the "Non-Inevitability Postulate"(with apologies to the writers of *The Big Bang Theory*). Try this. Take your best (or most favorite) mentalism routine. Now picture yourself performing it to a small group. At the end of the effect, you receive polite applause and overhear two people speaking. One says, "I don't know how he did it, but he got that information somehow." The other person nods and says, "Yeah. Besides, *who cares?*"

That last comment should be devastating. They are not saying you are not special, but they are saying you are not *entertaining*. There's that word again! You may have amazed 'em, but you have not surprised or entertained them. How do you make them care?

I have found the deployment of emotional hooks works exceptionally well, but must be carefully modulated. Know when enough is enough and it is time to end the repetitiveness of the routine (as in a Q&A routine where your responses will vary, but the activity can get boring if overused). Figure out ways to end repetitive routines. (Again, think of the Q&A effect; does one just stop and move on to the next routine, or is there a surprising or entertaining reason one must stop?)

My favorite example of leveraging the Non-Inevitability Postulate centers around the prevalent Triple Prediction Plot, whether the flavor used is a Mental Epic approach or another. In this case, one of the three things predicted is kind of underwhelming ("*Please think of any city in the world. Now please think of a number between 1 and 1,000,000. And, oh yeah, take a card.*") While this may be necessary because something needs to be forced, how can you interject some surprise into the proceedings? And how do you get around that measly force? The approach I took with the Triple Prediction plot is, in a way, a non-sequitur style approach. Since, during the reveals, the audience thinks you got the first two correctly predicted, of course, you will get the third prediction correct, ho-hum. So I threw them a *Twilight Zone*-style twist. Not only was the third prediction incorrect, but it wasn't even of the correct type. In my effect Three Numbers and a Lady, three numbers are named. The first two predictions are spot-on, but the third, instead of naming another number, predicts a playing card. All seems very wrong. But enter Rod Serling and the famous four-note guitar riff. Something occurs to the mentalist who then asks the subject who thought of that last number to deal down to that number in a nearby deck of cards. The predicted

mind over matters cont'd

card is found at that number. It is surreal and unexpected. But more than that, it is surprising and entertaining. No longer is the ending so inevitable! (By the way, readers of this newsletter can find Three Numbers and a Lady in the August 2021 issue).

One final thought. "Mystery Performers" who wish audiences to believe they have a smattering of psychic DNA may wish to consider "the strategic miss." That is, occasionally missing on a mind-reading effort. Adherents will claim only magicians and "fakers" are one-hundred percent correct. I guess you could consider this a type of non-inevitability. But I reserve my postulate for the way to construct enjoyable, entertaining, surprising, non-boring, and of-this-earth mentalism! ♦

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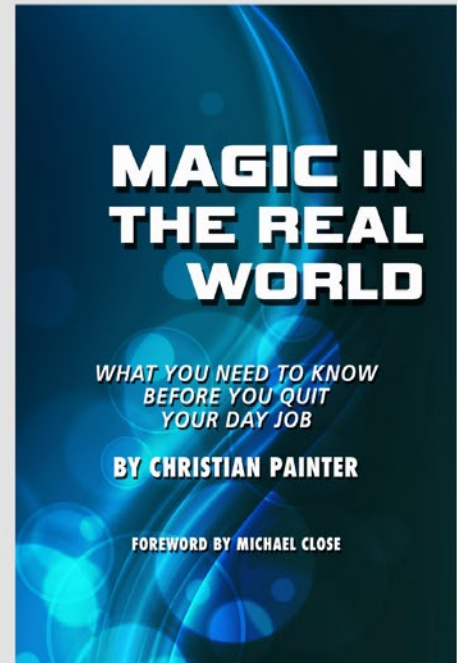
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THE ART AND CRAFT OF CONJURING BY MICK AYRES

Mick is a trickster, tunesmith, and tale-swapper for the Walt Disney Company. Feel free to reach him at mick@mickayreswares.com or via Facebook.



“A true Artist makes the people in the audience feel less alone.” – Thomas Baxter, magician, paraphrasing Viola Davis, actress

Any magician wishing to improve his or her presentation by noticeable measure begins by writing a meaningful script. However, the most relevant script is nothing more than words on a page if the conjurer cannot draw the audience into the world in which he or she abides. In other words, a theater experience should not just be about the performer and audience looking at each other, but rather looking together in the same direction. In a word: Relationship.

So, how does a conjurer get an audience to care about the performance? The good news is your audience took the first step toward a relationship just by showing up. They trust the performer will not waste their time. The magician, in turn, must care about his audience on a meaningful level. I’m not talking about a “thanks-for-buying-a-ticket-now-watch-the-show” level of relationship. Fish worth catching are not in shallow water.

The conjurer’s deeper responsibility is to return the favor by offering a well-constructed act that uses the inherent drama in each presentation to enhance this relationship. The theatrical elements that create drama in a magic performance include humor, mystery, conflict, tension, hope, elation, surprise, and enthusiasm; they all come into play. On some level, one or more of these elements are present in every magic effect or else it wouldn’t exist. In the real world, these are the same elements that make every relationship interesting enough to be worth pursuing. The finest conjurer is one who makes himself as necessary to his audience as they are to him.

The late Tim Conover was a master of this. I only saw Tim perform once, but he connected in a way that will remain unforgettable to me. A Conover performance offered every dramatic element listed above in a seamless way that felt genuine. Tim’s enthusiasm made you root for his every success and laugh at the near misses – even if those near misses were planned. By the time you walked to your car after a Conover performance, you were already missing your new friend.

Isn’t that real magic?

STRING THEORY

A deck of cards is shuffled. Several guests are each given a small packet of cards. They are asked to think of one and then turn their packet face down and mix it. The packets are collected and then mixed even more by the guests. At no time do you see the face of any card, yet you are able to discern each thought-of selection quickly.

These instructions are thoroughly detailed with script and choreography information. However, String Theory moves along well during performance. There is nothing to prepare. You only need a deck of cards and some cooperative friends.

Address the audience and say, *“When you were a child, did you ever attach a string between a*

couple of tin cans and talk through it? It worked, but only if you kept the string tight and nothing touched it. The tiny vibrations on the string were amplified by the can; but to get any sort of message across, the connection had to be strong with no distractions.

"I have a theory that intuition works the same way: like when your spouse figures out what you want and does something about it before you say a word. We call it a hunch or intuition, but what if there some sort of tiny, mental thread connecting us with those we care about? What if we're actually picking up on vibrations from thoughts going back and forth between us? Let us test the theory. Since we're still getting to know each other, we will focus on something familiar. Most of us have a deck of cards somewhere in our home, so this one will do."

Remove the deck from its case and hand it to a guest for shuffling. While this is being done, say, *"For this to be a verifiable experiment, there are a few rules. I will never see the face of any card. You will not remove a card and put it back. You will not speak the name of any card. You will not write it down, either. The only record of any card will be solely within your mind. Now I need four subjects to assist me."*

As you acknowledge the volunteers, privately think of them as numbers one through four, going from left to right. Retrieve the deck and hold it face down.

Spread over four cards into your right hand and give this packet to guest number one on your left. Likewise, give a packet of four cards to guests two, three, and four respectively. Do not call attention to how many cards you have given each guest. Say, *"Each of you can now choose from several cards. Just think of one. Do not point to it or whisper your card to a friend. Do nothing to indicate which card you have chosen. Now hold your packet face down and mix them so even you don't know where your card is."* Put the balance of the deck aside; you won't need it any more.

You will collect the packets in a manner that appears random but that maintains the sequential order. Approach guest two and have him place his packet in your left hand. Now step over to guest four so she can put her packet in your right hand. Guest one puts his packet on top of the cards in your left hand and guest three puts her cards on top of those in your right hand. Step back and, without looking, drop the cards in your left hand on top of those in your right hand. The packets are now assembled in one, two, three, four order from top to bottom.

Hand the cards to another guest who is not one of the four volunteers. Hold out both hands with your palms flat. Say, *"Please deal one card into my right hand and then deal one into my left hand. Now keep going back and forth until you have no more cards. By dealing this way, you are mixing cards from each packet into those from other packets."* Once she has finished, put the cards from your right hand on top of those in your left hand.

Again, hand the assembled cards to yet another guest who is not one of the four volunteers. Hold both hands out flat and say, *"To be thorough, we should do it again."* Make sure the first card is dealt into your right hand. As the guest deals the cards back and forth, say, *"Now there is no doubt everyone's cards are well mixed among the other groups."* As before, put the cards from your right hand on top of those in your left hand. Believe it or not, this process has just stacked the cards in your favor.

the art and craft of conjuring cont'd

Address the four volunteers and ask, *“Is it fair to say that no one can know what cards you are thinking of – and no one can know where your card is in this stack?”* The guests will agree these conditions are true and fair.

Say, *“Past experience has taught me that finding all the cards at once is almost impossible. So we’ll work with small groups just like we started.”* Spread the top four cards into your right hand and hold them up in a fan so the guests can see them. Look away and say, *“Examine these cards. If you see your card, say the word ‘yes.’”* Listen for a response. Often, you will hear the word yes from a guest. Sometimes, no one will respond. However, there are times two guests will confirm their cards have been seen.

Let’s assume guest three has spoken up. Turn towards her with the card fan still held high. You don’t know what her card is but you do know where it is. Since she is the third guest, her card is the third one from the right of the spread. Say, *“Now is the time to imagine a connection threading its way from your mind to my own. The thread is stretched tight between us.”*

Pause for a moment, then say, *“Look into my eyes and not at the cards. I can feel tiny vibrations from your thread; I can feel it even into my fingers. Think only of your card.”* The fan of cards is held at eye-level so, even as she maintains eye-contact, she can still see the cards with her peripheral vision. Now, with as little movement as possible, allow the first, second, and fourth cards to slip one-by-one from your fingers to the floor until only the third card remains. This seems impossible to your guest. Exclaim, *“I’m not controlling this; you are. Please tell me this is the card you had in mind!”* She will confirm it. For the first time, look at her card, name it aloud, and hand it to her as a memento.

Say, *“I’m thrilled it worked, but people still might think it is just chance. Proof is in the repetition, so let’s try for the other cards.”* Leave the dropped cards scattered on the floor. Spread the next four cards from the top of the assembled group into your right hand and hold the spread up so the remaining guests can see them. Repeat everything you just did for any guest who confirms the presence of their chosen card. However, for the sake of instruction, pretend no one responds. In this case, you allow all four cards to drop one-by-one to the floor until your hand is empty.

Spread the next four cards into your right hand and hold them up while you look away. This time, pretend guest one confirms his card is visible. You now know his card is the first one on the far right of the spread. Again, make eye-contact and encourage the guest to imagine the thread between you. Allow the other cards to fall one-by-one to the floor until only the first card remains. Remember to be excited; this card has just validated your “string” theory. Look at the guest’s card, name it aloud, and hand it to him.

Spread the last four cards into your right hand and hold them up for viewing. Since this is the last group, guests two and four will both confirm their cards. You know without looking that their cards are in the second and fourth positions from the right. Even though you are going through the motions, glance back and forth as dramatically as you can from one guest to the other and allow the other cards to drop until only the second and fourth ones remain. The last guests will confirm these cards are the chosen ones. Look at their cards, name them aloud and present them as mementos to their respective owners. Say, *“That’s proof enough for me. I bet an honorary doctorate from Harvard is already in the mail.”*

Don't worry about those fallen cards still scattered all over the floor. That mess is just a Snowstorm in China for mentalists.

I have not provided detailed scripting for the latter revelations because at that point it is better if you resist the urge to talk too much. Instead, give the impression that this process requires your full attention and concentration; any distraction is a cause for failure.

Here's a presentation tip: when you encounter a pile with two or more selections, consider putting the pile down without revealing anything yet. Say, *"That is going to be a bit more of a challenge. I'll get back to that in a moment."* Reveal the other selections and return to the tabled pile last. When you reveal these last two cards, hold one in each hand with your arms spread wide in triumph.

In any case, think about the moment you have created. It is as if you walked into the room and asked them to think of a card and moments later you are holding that card. Visually, the audience sees this moment as good theatre. You have connected mentally with some guests, learned what was needed, and discarded everything else.

In 2006, I published an effect called Know Way! – a mental-magic presentation with a gambling theme that required a table for dealing out several hands of stud poker. The effect had ties that bind to conjurers such as George Schindler, Frank Garcia, Henry Christ, J.B. Bobo, and Ted Annemann, who each had their own way of exploiting the self-working method involved.

String Theory is scripted as pure mentalism and has been streamlined so the presentational pace is quicker on stage. The performer's handling of the cards has been minimized so the table is now optional and the effect can be performed in more intimate venues. The relevant scripting, the careful choreography, and the unusual revelations keep the method well camouflaged.

String Theory copyright 2010 by Mick Ayres. ♦

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TECHNICALLY SPEAKING BY BRUCE KALVER

Bruce Kalver is a professional magician and tech guru. Bruce is a past president of the S.A.M. and a frequent performer at The Magic Castle in Hollywood.



PREDICTION TIME

This is a hard one to describe. It's a prediction effect, one in which the method is so much fun, you have to force yourself not to laugh. **Timed Out** by Mark Kerstein is a real winner.

Essentially, you open a drawing pad app and show choices such as ESP cards, photos of landmarks, a Rock Paper Scissors game, virtually anything.



You then take a blank page on the app and draw a prediction, turning the phone face down on the spectator's hand. You then ask the spectator to name his choice and turn over the phone. The choice is your prediction.

Based on an old Milton Bradley magic toy, Spirit in the Coffin, the technology of the iPhone makes this method a breeze to use. There are multiple settings and options to perform **Timed Out** however you like. I tried it out on my family and giggled to myself how easy this was to perform. Once you make the prediction, you never touch the phone again.

Timed Out is available on the iPhone App Store. The app is free.

A NEW SPIN



My son is a professional drummer. Sometimes when he plays, like all drummers, he spins his sticks in the air. I remember a friend in high school English class who would constantly spin his pen around his fingers because he had a lot of nervous energy. Today he would be using a fidget spinner. A lot of magicians do something similar by spinning their wands, especially during Cups and Balls routines. I have never been able to do a proper spin. No one really showed me how. If you are like me, you will be happy to discover there is something to help you learn proper spinning. Meet the **Outus Spinning Pens**.

These special end-weighted plastic pens look like magic wands. They are black with silver trim and have a balance stripe right in the center. The illustrated instructions teach you forty different spins. They are not real pens, but the caps come off and the tube is hollow; you could put something inside, like a prediction, or salt, or glitter.

A little over eight inches in length, you get two pens per set. Find them on www.amazon.com for \$10 for the pair.

Bruce Bonus: I found a really good tutorial online from magician Oscar Owen in England. Check it out at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCH5nKhVEkQ

STRANGER NO MORE

We have mentioned Jonathan Levit's **The Stranger** a couple of times in this column. I was an early purchaser and loved it immediately. You have the audience create a phone number and you call that number; a perfect stranger names the selected card. When it first came out, it was an easy and fun effect to perform. It always killed at my shows.

Then Jonathan got creative. He added all these extra things to the app and slowly my perception of the app became complicated and confusing. Although the add-ons would enhance the presentation, things like using a spectator's phone to make the call, using other objects, wrong numbers, were just too much to sift through. Recently, while appearing at The Magic Castle, I had a nice conversation with Jonathan. His reply was, "See what I've done to make that easier in a couple of days." He wasn't kidding. He made it easier.

The Stranger now has an update that includes twenty-five three-to-five-minute videos that nicely explain each step of the workings. By the first video, you will be able to perform the effect. The second video makes the presentation better. Each video adds one more layer of possibilities to get you through everything possible. I totally get it now! This should have been there from the beginning. Well done, Jonathan!

Both IOS and Android versions have these videos; when you watch them, you'll feel as if Jonathan is giving you a private master class on how to use this stellar routine. I did the effect a few nights ago at an adult birthday and the routine produced gasps, applause, and a standing ovation.

The Stranger is available on the iPhone App Store and on Google Play for \$149. ♦



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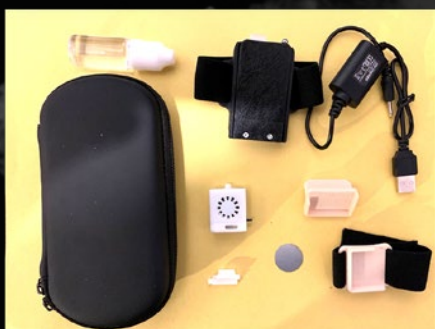
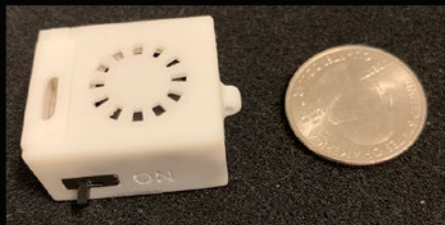
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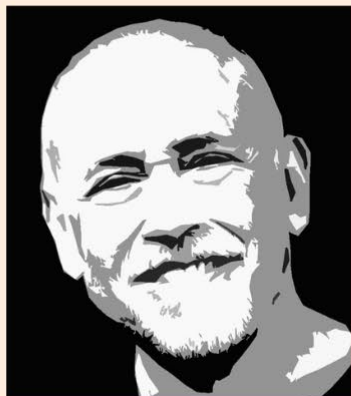
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Affordable, accessible training focused on a single topic and discussed in depth. These are not theoretical discussions; you'll learn tricks and moves and ways to incorporate the information into real-world performances. You can watch these training lessons as many times as you like.

TOPICS:

- DEMYSTIFYING THE MEMORIZED DECK
- MEMDECK THE NEXT STEP
- THE TRUTH ABOUT LYING
- PALMING WITH CONFIDENCE
- HOW TO DESIGN A THREE-TRICK SET

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