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WHERE MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY MEET



CHRISTIAN BISCHOF
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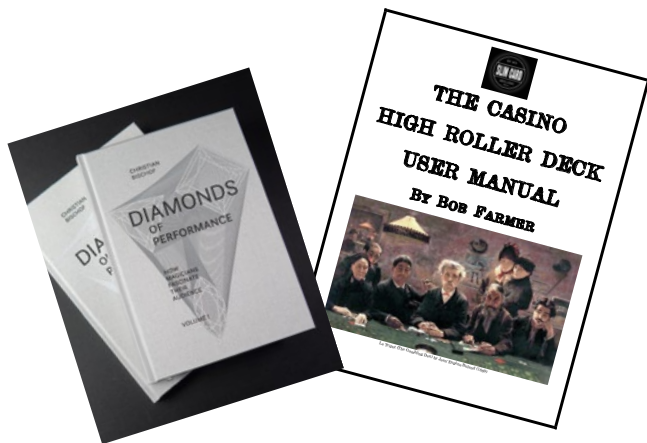
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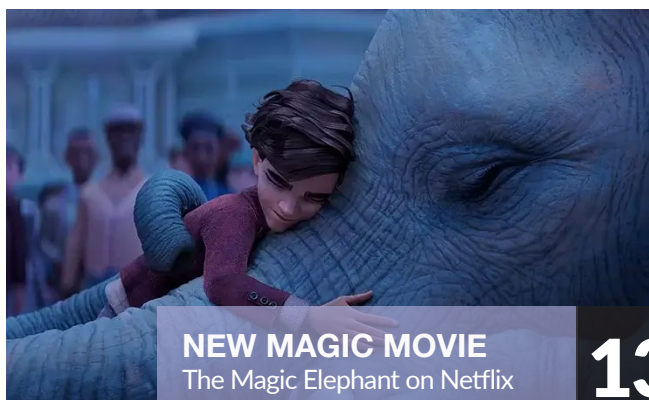
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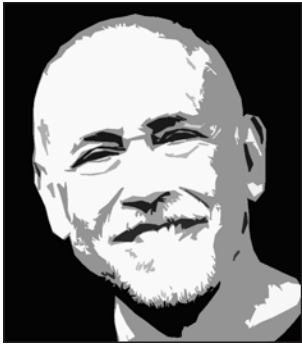
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MAGIC CONVENTIONS WORLDWIDE

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- [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](#)



UP, UP, AND AWAY

You might not recognize the fellow on the cover this month who looks like he's about to take flight. That's Christian Bischof, a Swiss corporate entertainer who has recently released a truly excellent, two-volume set of books titled *Diamonds of Performance: How Magicians Fascinate Their Audience*. Christian, who has a doctorate in economics from the University of Bern, adapted economist Michael Porter's Diamond Theory of National

Advantage, which describes the factors of a nation's competitive advantage in the international market as the four points of a diamond. Christian has expanded this to three diamonds, representing the Trick, the Performer, and the Situation (dealing with the venue and the audience). The first volume of *Diamonds of Performance* discusses all aspects of these three diamonds, including how the diamonds interact with each other. In volume two, Christian explains how he utilized the diamond information in five routines from his performing repertoire.

You'll find a full review of *Diamonds of Performance* on [page 6](#). I also took the opportunity to talk with Christian about his book and his magic career; you can find that interview on [page 10](#). It was an enlightening conversation.

This month I also review a new offering from the prolific Bob Farmer – The Casino High Roller Deck. You receive a high-quality, special deck of cards and a downloadable 173-page PDF manuscript that explains the myriad possibilities with the deck. I think this will be a popular item among those who enjoy performing gambling-themed routines, especially because Bob has built an almost sleight-free four-trick act into the deck. Read more on [page 8](#).

Also this month, Michael Breggar tips one of his favorite mental routines, Dough Man. This is one of those “packs small, plays big” routines that can easily be adapted to fit your performance style. Mick Ayres' routine, Unum Ex Novem, reminds me of a streamlined version of Dai Vernon's classic effect, Out of Sight, Out of Mind. You'll find it in his “The Art and Craft of Conjuring” column.

Be sure to check out the fascinating science article on whether robots could be better teachers than human beings. Lisa put a fun Easter egg on that page, so read carefully.

I've been gratified by the response to my new ebook, *Mastering False Shuffles and Cuts*. I'd love to get feedback from those of you who have had the chance to dig into it. Feel free to leave a review on the MichaelClose.com website. If you have any questions on anything in the ebook, drop me an email at mail@michaelclose.com.

Currently, I'm deep in the pre-production process of analyzing and assessing videos for season ten of *Fool Us*; I watched some fun new things from performers who are new to me. Here are the submission guidelines from the *Fool Us* producers:

Please submit a recording of your routine as you would perform it on our show. Unlisted links to Vimeo or YouTube are preferred. Download links do not get our first attention.



We don't require a live audience or a stage, but record the video as if you are performing in front of Penn & Teller or via remote broadcast to our studio.

Professional video is not necessary. Cell phone video is fine as long as the audio is intelligible.

We love original magical acts with novel and clever methods and tricks we may know but with a new presentation and a twist.

Routines should be three to five minutes in length.

Videos should be unedited.

Please make sure we can see your face in the video, even for close-up routines.

For close-up card tricks, be sure the camera is close enough to read the cards.

The deadline for this coming season is TBD.

Fool Us season ten will most likely be recorded in August.

Auditions are still open; send your video link to fooluscasting@gmail.com. One of the fun things about my job is discovering something new as I work to refine the handling of someone's routine. I did that recently, and I'm really happy with the trick I created. I hope to share it with all of you sometime down the road.

And that wraps things up for our very late March issue. Stay safe and well. ♦

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BY MICHAEL CLOSE

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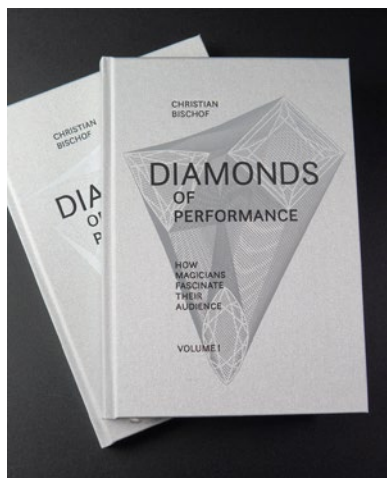
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- Some suggestions on how to use it in your performances. (Pencil or dowel not included.)

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PRODUCT REVIEWS



Diamonds of Performance Volumes 1 and 2 by Christian Bischof

Available from: <https://christianbischof.ch/shop/>

Price: 97 Euros

Review by Michael Close

Those of us who champion the benefits of applying the principles of magic theory to the effects we perform face the same challenge as evangelists: How do we find fresh, interesting, relatable ways to present information that has been discussed by so many authors in the past? One way to approach this problem is for the writer to adapt and apply strategies from disciplines outside of the world of conjuring.

If you are familiar with the works of Juan Tamariz, Eugene Burger, Robert Neale, Tommy Wonder, Darwin Ortiz, John Carney, and me, you realize we all try to put an individual spin on these familiar concepts. The most recent author to join this group is Swiss corporate magician Christian Bischof, whose two-volume set *Diamonds of Performance: How Magicians Fascinate their Audience* provides an interesting and useful way to categorize theoretical principles while also providing practical examples of how to apply that information.

Christian Bischof comes to magic from the world of academia; he received a Ph.D. in business administration and taught strategic management classes at the University of Bern. During this time he was also deeply interesting in magic; his performances won many awards, including the third prize in Mental Magic at the 2012 FISM convention.

When he completed his doctoral studies, Christian faced a choice: enter the business world, or pursue a full-time career in magic. He chose magic, but his business studies influenced his approach to theory and performance. He explains it this way: “This academic education has shaped the way I think. When it comes to magic I like to combine my theoretical knowledge with practical experience, ponder these things and structure them appropriately. In my opinion, you become successful in magic when you can find a good balance between theory and practice. Therefore, this book presents a clear theoretical approach illustrated by numerous practical examples.”

Christian patterned his titular “diamonds of performance” on Michael Porter’s Diamond Theory of National Advantage, which describes a nation’s competitive advantage in the international market. In this model, four attributes are taken into consideration: factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supported industries, and firm strategy, structure, and rivalry. According to Porter, “These determinants create the national environment in which companies are born and learn to compete.”

Christian has expanded Porter’s single, four-cornered diamond into a trio of diamonds, representing the Trick, the Performer, and the Situation. The aspects of magic theory/performance associated with each corner of the three diamonds interact internally, but the three diamonds also interact with each other. This may initially sound confusing, but it isn’t, as you’ll see in moment when I break down the contents of volume one.

Christian sums up his purpose for writing these books this way: “My stated goal here is to devise a practical model to better understand magic, to refine my taste, and to improve my own shows as much as possible. I welcome you as my reader to ponder these issues along with me. To put it simply: if you see a bad magic act, you will know why it’s bad. If you see a great magic act, you will know what exactly you can learn from it. And if you see a recording of your own magic act...you will quickly know if you are good or bad. From either position, you can always improve.”

The “trick” diamond has four corners, relating to Impossibility, Relevance, Esthetics, and Dramaturgy. Impossibility asks the question, “Is it incredible?” Are we providing the mind (intellect) the opportunity to experience wonder? Relevance asks, “Is it meaningful?” Are we touching the hearts of the spectators emotionally? Are we giving them a memorable experience? Esthetics asks, “Is it beautiful?” This is for the enjoyment of the senses. Finally, dramaturgy asks, “Is it suspenseful or surprising?” Are you able to tell a well-crafted story, with a beginning, a middle, and a satisfying conclusion?

Each of these aspects of the trick diamond is examined in great detail. For example, Impossibility is broken down into Construction (the various elements that comprise the method) and Performance Techniques (Physical, Psychological, and Material). This in-depth analysis is continued with the other Trick topics; Christian provides information on a wide range of strategies and accompanies these with easy-to-understand examples.

The Performer diamond has two main topics: Person (the magician) and Stagecraft. Person includes aspects such as respect for the audience, authenticity, style, and effort put into preparation. Stagecraft includes Physical Techniques (movement, gaze, voice, preparation) and Psychological Techniques (genuine acting, spontaneity, and feeling at ease). The Situation diamond covers three topics: Mood (the purpose of the event, what comes before and after your performance, and expectation), Venue (room atmosphere and stage infrastructure), and Sociodemographics (homogeneity, theatrical experience, language, and age). This is as thorough a discussion of this topic as I have ever read. Since where you perform and the conditions you perform under have a huge impact on the success of your show, I was delighted to read Christian’s analysis.

Having discussed each diamond individually, at the end of volume one, Christian explains how the three diamonds interact with each other. He writes, “Not only should you look at the key success factors of each individual diamond, but also at the interactions between the diamonds... The trick needs to suit the performer and both of them in turn have to fit the situation. You will only create a coherent whole if the three diamonds work together. Then you have a magic performance that is deeply satisfying for the audience. Everything fits – trick, performer, and situation.”

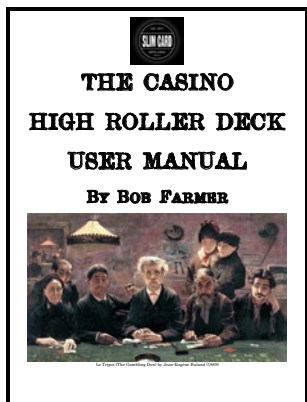
It would be easy to be overwhelmed by the amount of material presented in volume one’s 232 pages. It is one thing to read about all these sound theoretical principles, but it is quite another thing to figure out how to apply them. The easiest way to learn this is to see how others have incorporated these techniques. This is exactly what Christian does in volume two. Using the Trick diamond, Christian examines the routines of three of magic’s premier performers (David Copperfield, Tom Mullica, and Derren Brown) and explains five stand-up routines from his professional repertoire (including his opener and closer). Not many pros would give away major hunks of their acts.

product reviews cont'd

Reading how Christian has utilized the Trick diamond in the construction of his routines is an effective way to begin to internalize those concepts. Also helpful is a checklist (provided at the beginning of this volume) that allows you to easily make note of the techniques you are applying.

In the final two chapters, Christian uses the Performer diamond to analyze himself as a performer. Using the Situation diamond, he explains how he handles the various venue challenges he has encountered. This is great information.

Here's the bottom line: With *Diamonds of Performance*, Christian Bischof has established himself as a strong, clear voice in the world of magic theory. He has organized the material in a way that will be accessible to a wide audience. (That said, be aware that these are dense books, packed with information. I would suggest keeping a small pad of Post-it Notes next to you as read, so you can mark important passages to return to later.) It will take time and effort to implement these techniques, but the results will transform your magic, regardless of your current skill or experience level. Highly recommended.



The Casino High Roller Deck

By Bob Farmer

Available from: www.slimcardco.com

Price: \$55.00 (USD)

Review by Michael Close

Bob Farmer is on fire these days, producing interesting, clever, real-world material with remarkable frequency. Bob's latest offering is the Casino High Roller Deck, produced in collaboration with Slimcardco, a Canadian card-manufacturing company based in Quebec. The easiest way for you to understand what you're getting with the Casino High Roller Deck is to simply quote Bob from the Introduction to the instruction manual:

"I met the guys at Slimcardco at the 2022 FISM in Quebec City, Canada. We exchanged some correspondence later in the summer and then they sent me a box of the best gaffed decks I have ever seen...In the box was one deck that stood out [a Rainbow casino deck]...I was familiar with Rainbow decks, but I had never seen one with casino cards. I did a little research and found a couple of Rainbow deck tricks but they were, to be frank, lame, very lame.

"This started me thinking about some effects that would be enhanced with casino cards, specifically, a deck of rainbow casino cards. However, the usual rainbow deck was fifty-two cards with fifty-two different backs. That arrangement put too many restrictions on the kind of tricks I was thinking of pursuing. I thought a deck that looked rainbow but that had built-in groups of cards that could be used for specific effects would yield better results. As well, there were other effects that could be done that did not rely on those groups.

"The Casino High Roller Deck was the result."

For your fifty-five dollars, you receive a deck of cards and a downloadable, 173-page PDF that explains the myriad possibilities with the deck. The deck is of high quality, with fifty-two cards plus

two Jokers and a blank-faced card. I was able to do a bottom-to-top faro shuffle right out of the box; it took only a short time to get the deck comfortably broken in.

When you receive your Casino High Roller Deck, your first instinct is going to be to play around with it – shuffling it, etc. Don't do this. The deck arrives in a specific order; you need to understand how the deck is arranged, and, in particular, you need to understand the logic behind the arrangement and how that arrangement relates to the specific cards in your particular deck.

Let me clarify this. First of all, this is not a rainbow deck in which every card has a different back design. Bob has designed four built-in routines that can be performed sequentially, and that utilize all fifty-two cards plus a Joker. However, in order to provide these decks at a reasonable cost, they were assembled from card backs already in the Slimcardco inventory. What this means is the card backs you receive may or may not be exactly the back designs Bob mentions in his write-up of the routines. You want to make note of the exact cards in your deck and how those cards relate to the routines.

Here's what I did. On pages 3-5 of the PDF, Bob explains how the deck is stacked to perform the four built-in routines (The Casino Prediction, Blackjack OOTW, Red Card Brainwave, and Three Card Monte). I made notes about which card backs in my deck corresponded to which effect. (You could do this by printing out pages 3-5 and marking on them, or, as I did, using the editing functions of Adobe Reader to highlight each effect title and add a note of which backs that effect used.) In this way, you'll be able to easily restore the deck to its stacked order. This will be particularly useful if you don't use the deck for a while. Don't forget to do this.

Let's talk about these built-in routines. Each of these effects has a theme: the spectator has powers that, until the performance, he never suspected he had. He is able to read the magician's mind (Casino Prediction), blindly separate the high-value cards from the low-value cards (Blackjack OOTW), and pick the right card even though the odds are 7 to1 against that happening (Red Card Brainwave). As Bob writes, "Gambling demonstrations are much more interesting and intriguing to an audience when the spectator is the star, not the magician."

In The Casino Prediction, the spectator is able to receive a telepathic thought from the magician and correctly guess which casino the magician had predicted. This routine has its roots in the familiar "Fred" deck, with the added bonus that in Bob's routine only one deck is required. There is a two-way out involved; Bob suggests using a Humber wallet or a two-way envelope for this purpose, but if you have a copy of my ebook *The Paradigm Shift Volume 1*, I suggest using Bob's Two-rigami prop, which is a single sheet of paper.

Blackjack OOTW is based on Nick Trost's Ultimate Even Money Improved, an Out of this World handling. In this effect, which is very clever and convincing, the spectator separates the high cards in Blackjack from the low cards without looking at the faces. Although in the instructions, Bob discusses "ten-value" cards, the Ace (which has a value of one or eleven) is considered a high card. I mention this because your deck may have an Ace as one of the high cards (mine did); this should be mentioned to the spectators when you perform this.

Red Card Brainwave is based on Trost's Eight-card Brainwave. Bob has added a prediction and a handling that does not use the OIram Subtlety. Casino Monte can be used as an encore. During a game of "Find the Ace," three cards go through a variety of transformations. This routine requires a modicum of card handling ability; if you find it's too much for you, the three cards can also be used

product reviews cont'd

for a Color Monte routine.

I'm sure magicians will appreciate having what essentially is a full card-act built into an arrangement of fifty-two cards. Because the deck is novel (with its variety of casino cards), it can be logically introduced even after tricks that use a standard deck.

Had Bob stopped there, you'd probably feel you got value for your money, but in typical Farmer fashion, Bob doesn't stop there. Because this is a full, ungaffed deck, you can use it for other gambling-related tricks. Bob gives you 120 pages of such effects from a variety of creators and they are all worth trying. However, I would be remiss if I didn't point you toward Bob's The Casino Inspector routine. Using just low-level sleight of hand (and a prearranged deck), you produce a demonstration of otherworldly card-handling ability. I have a small amount of work on this routine, which I published in *The Paradigm Shift Volume 1*.

The PDF concludes with valuable information on some useful moves, including false shuffles and false cuts.

As always, Bob Farmer has provided a ton of value for the money. None of the routines in the full-deck-stack act is difficult, but you will have to spend some time familiarizing yourself with the procedures. And the large "Other Routines" section will give you some great effects to add to your repertoire. If you do card magic and enjoy gambling-related tricks, you won't go wrong with The Casino High Roller Deck. I recommend it. ♦

CONVERSATIONS WITH CLOSE



CHRISTIAN BISCHOF

My guest this month on Conversations with Close is someone who may be unfamiliar to you. Christian Bischof is a Swiss corporate entertainer who has recently published an extremely valuable two-volume set of books titled *Diamonds of Performance: How Magicians Fascinate Their Audience*. Christian discusses important theoretical concepts as they apply to three areas of magic performance: the trick, the performer, and the performing situation. He then shows how he utilized these concepts in his own routines. You can find my review on [page 6](#). (Spoiler alert: I thought it was great.)

I spoke to Christian from his home in Switzerland. We discussed his early exposure to magic, his life in academia, how he shifted to full-time performing, and what his goals were when writing his book. I really enjoyed our conversation. You can listen to it [here](#). ♦

DUNDAS DICK'S DESIGN FOR A PACKAGE

by Lee Asher

FROM THE PATENT FILES

In May of 1871, Dundas Dick, a resident of New York, was granted a patent for an innovation in packaging design. Records show he holds several other US patents.

This time, Dick's invention "relates to a new manner of finishing a rectangular package by the mode of securing the wrapper, and consists in the application to the folded wrapper ends of gummed pieces of paper, which give a peculiar appearance."

This patent is even more interesting because the assignor is Marie A. Mauger, Victor Mauger's wife. It seems Dick worked with them on several playing card-related projects, including this one.

If you look closely at the bottom of the patent graphic, we see a Mauger private die tax stamp. ♦



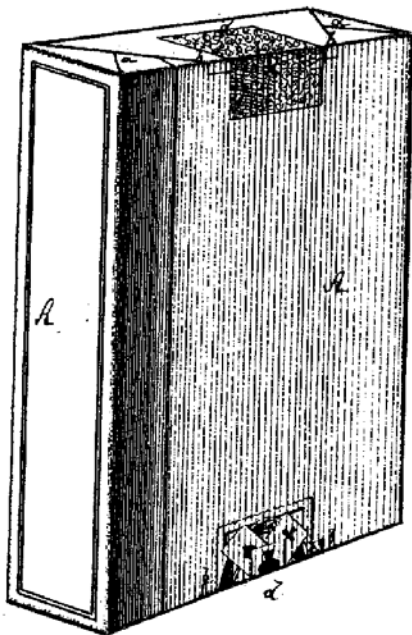
ABOVE: A Victor E. Mauger and Petrie private die tax stamp that seems to appear in the patent drawing below.

United States Patent Office.

DUNDAS DICK, OF NEW YORK, N. Y., ASSIGNOR TO MARIE A. MAUGER OF SAME PLACE.

Design No. 4,875, dated May 9, 1871.

DESIGN FOR A PACKAGE.



APPLICATION PATENTED
ON MAY 9TH, 1871
PATENT NO. USD4875
NEW YORK CITY, NY (USA)

WITNESSES: A. V. BRIESEN
AND T.B. MOSHER

Inventor:

Dundas Dick.

PER

M. M. M. L.
Attorneys.

Witnesses:

Gustave D. D. D.
Wm. H. C. Smith.

MAGIC NEWS

GOING FINE SINCE 1889: THE MAGICAL ARMSTRONGS NEW DOCUMENTARY IN PRODUCTION



Going Fine Since 1889: The Magical Armstrongs is a documentary in preproduction about a family of African American magicians travelling throughout the South in the early 1900's within the confines of the Jim Crow era.

The film explores the life and times of illusionist John Hartford Armstrong, his wife Lillie Belle and daughter Ellen E. Armstrong, who continued the family legacy with a solo magic act. As America came into a modern century, where society and entertainment were changing rapidly, the Armstrong's brought a sophisticated grandeur to the world of magic but are virtually forgotten today.

Producer/Writer/Director, Jennifer Stoy is a former casting director who worked on major film and television projects such as Beverly Hills, 90210, 3rd Rock from the Sun, Adventures of Joe Dirt, and House on Haunted Hill. In the early 2000's she produced two straight-to-DVD releases, Frog-g-g! and Sugar Boxx.

This film is sponsored in part by South Carolina Humanities. To watch the trailer click [here](#).

FIRST FEMALE MAGICIAN TO PERFORM IN LAS VEGAS, GLORIA DEA, DIES AT 100 YEARS OLD

LAS VEGAS (KTNV) — The first female magician to perform in Las Vegas, Gloria Dea, passed away,

In addition to magic, she was an actress and dancer who starred as the comic book heroine Pha in Columbia's King of the Kongo in 1952. Her first performance as a magician debuted at the El Rancho Resort in 1941.

She recently was awarded the key to the Las Vegas Strip on her 100th birthday in August 2022.

Dea will be honored at UNLV on Tuesday with an Honorary Fine Arts Degree for her contributions to Las Vegas.

Other iconic Las Vegas magicians, such as David Copperfield and Lance Burton, have been paying their respects on social media and paying tribute to her legacy. KTNV Article can be read [here](#). More information at [Casino.org](#)



Image via Lance Burton Instagram.com

MAGIC CASTLE LOOKS TO ENCOURAGE MORE FEMALE MAGICIANS

BY ARIEL WESLER HOLLYWOOD

Look through the halls of the Magic Castle, and there will be posters of storied magicians. Skyler Jade, 17, hopes to one day join them. She's one of just three female magicians enrolled in the Magic Castle Junior Society.

"My friends and I always joke about looking at it, and then who's going to be the next junior who's in this case," Jade said, looking at photos of Junior Society alumni.

Jade is from Pacific Palisades and said she really got into magic about five years ago. "My grandpa would show me little card tricks that he learned," she said.

In October 2020, at the suggestion of a friend, Jade auditioned for the Magic Castle Junior Society, an exclusive group for young up-and-coming magicians. She remembers the moment she found out she was accepted. "I woke up the next morning to my dad shaking me awake because he saw the email where it just said, 'Congratulations, you got into the program,' and it was such an amazing feeling," Jade said.

Jade performs at restaurants and other private events and said the biggest thrill is watching the reactions from people in disbelief. "I love when magic feels really natural and kind of feels like organic and less set up," she said.

Jade recently performed for Ericka Larsen, a descendant of magic royalty and president of Magic Castle Enterprises. "My grandmother, my grandfather, my uncle and my dad used to tour as the Larsen family of magicians," Larsen said.



Larsen's family founded the Magic Castle 60 years ago, which was her grandfather's vision, but he died before it could become a reality. Watch video and read the article [here](#).

SHOULD YOU WATCH 'THE MAGICIAN'S ELEPHANT' ON NETFLIX?

Review by Andrew Morgan — March 17th, 2023

Set in the fictional small European town of Baltese, where the impossible seemed possible before the Great Foreign War shrouded it in perpetual grayness, the film centers around young orphan boy Peter who lost his mother and sister during that same war period. He is being raised by the aging soldier who saved him many years ago, Vilna, but he has always thought his sister might still be out there despite the insistence of his guardian that they have passed on.

magic news cont'd

One day, on his routine trip to the Market Square, Peter encounters a fortune teller who promises to answer life's most difficult questions for the small price of one coin. Risking the only coin he had that was meant for dinner with Vilna, Peter antes up to ask the question that has plagued him for years: How do I find my sister?



Picture: Netflix

To which the Fortune Teller replied: “Follow The Elephant.”

The film is based on the children's novel of the same name by Newbery Medalist Kate DiCamillo, whose work has been adapted to film several times including her first published novel “Because of Winn-Dixie” that was made into a film back in 2005.

The Magician's Elephant marks the feature film debut for director Wendy Rogers. She was a long-time Visual VFX Supervisor who found a niche in animation, working on such prominent films as Shrek, Flushed Away, & Puss In Boots. Read the review [here](#). ♦



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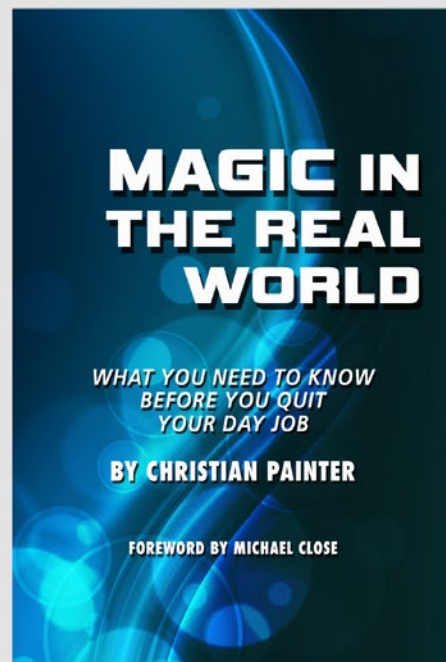
OTHER EBOOKS FROM MICHAELCLOSE.COM:

MAGIC IN THE REAL WORLD EBOOK by Christian Painter

If you're a magic enthusiast, and you'd like to turn your hobby into your job, this new ebook by Christian Painter, should be your next purchase.

This may well be the most practical ebook for the aspiring professional magician ever published. This ebook will save you time and money, and will increase your odds for success.

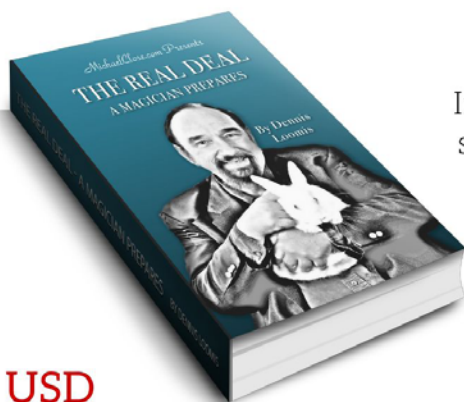
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Where Magic Meets Technology



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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.

COOL CLIPS

FIRST EVER TWIN FOOLERS | PENN & TELLER FOOL US SEASON 9
THE VAN HARGEN TWINS



SLYDINI AND CHER



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.

PRESCHOOLERS PREFER TO LEARN FROM A COMPETENT ROBOT THAN AN INCOMPETENT HUMAN

Researchers at the Cognition and Language Development Lab tested three- and five-year-olds to see whether robots could be better teachers than people

According to a new paper by Concordia researchers published in the Journal of Cognition and Development, the answer largely depends on age.

The study compared two groups of preschoolers: one of three-year-olds, the other of five-year-olds. The children participated in Zoom meetings featuring a video of a young woman and a small robot with humanoid characteristics (head, face, torso, arms and legs) called Nao sitting side by side. Between them were familiar objects that the robot would label correctly while the human would label them incorrectly, e.g., referring to a car as a book, a ball as a shoe and a cup as a dog.

Next, the two groups of children were presented with unfamiliar items: the top of a turkey baster, a roll of twine and a silicone muffin container. Both the robot and the human used different nonsense terms like "mido," "toma," "fep" and "dax" to label the objects. The children were then asked what the object was called, endorsing either the label offered by the robot or by the human.



Child learning from competent robot. Photo courtesy of a competent robot

While the three-year-olds showed no preference for one word over another, the five-year-olds were much more likely to state the term provided by the robot than the human.

"We can see that by age five, children are choosing to learn from a competent teacher over someone who is more familiar to them -- even if the competent teacher is a robot," says the paper's lead author, PhD candidate Anna-Elisabeth Baumann. Horizon Postdoctoral Fellow Elizabeth Goldman and undergraduate research assistant Alexandra Meltzer also contributed to the study. Professor and Concordia University Chair of Developmental Cybernetics Diane Poulin-Dubois in the Department of Psychology supervised the study.

The researchers repeated the experiments with new groups of three- and five-year-olds, replacing the humanoid Nao with a small truck-shaped robot called Cozmo. The results resembled those observed with the human-like robot, suggesting that the robot's morphology does not affect the children's selective trust strategies. Read the full article [here](#). ♦

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



DOUGH MAN

For the longest time, I performed mentalism in a more serious manner. My performance style then switched over to more comedy-related magic and mentalism, so effects such as the one I'm about to teach you were put into the "magic box," hermetically sealed, and stored for later usage.

Dough Man is one powerhouse of a mental effect. It is a two-punch routine performed with paper money and provides plenty of opportunity for you to add whatever flavors you wish to the soup. By the way, I never liked the title. I was pressed into giving it one when rushed to write the set list for a performance. Before that, it was always the Money Mind-Reading Trick in my mind. I really never gave the title a second thought. Since that time, I have never really given thought to change the name. So, long live the Dough Man!

It is always good to have several mentalism effects in your portfolio that can be utilized with any size audience or venue and flexible enough to be placed anywhere in the program. I typically used this piece as an opener or my penultimate effect. I'm not implying you cannot use it as a closer; it is very strong. I just have not done so.

About twenty bank notes are borrowed from audience members. While your designated assistant gathers the bills in a small basket (and writes down who lent what!), you fetch a box of letter-sized security envelopes and toss about half the box contents to your table. Once your assistant joins you up front, you both stuff the bills one at a time into the envelopes. The envelope flaps have a spot of repositionable glue and are easily sealed (and reopened later). Once all the banknotes have been sealed in the opaque security envelopes, they are mixed and handed over to your helper. From the stack, she "deals" a row of three envelopes on the table. You instruct her to deal another row of three on top of those on the table, but she can deal them in any order (left to right, right to left, middle first). Now ask her to mix the envelopes again and deal out three more and another three. Mix again and deal. She needn't deal out all of the envelopes in the stack and she may shuffle, or stop at any time. The only requirement is that each pile has an equal number of envelopes which, you state, *"improves the statistical randomness of the process."*

While Marilyn has been dropping the bucks, you turn away from her. (In my "serious days," I also put on a blindfold. If I were to do that now, I would put my glasses back on my head after the blindfold was positioned. Yeah, I'm not so serious now!) I instruct my helper to pick up either the left-most or right-most pile of envelopes, give them a little mix and remove three envelopes from that pile and place them on top of the tabled middle pile. She then places the remainder in the "collection basket" along with the other unused envelopes. She is to do the same with the stack on the other side of the tabled middle pile. Before she tosses the remaining envelopes in the basket, she is to count how many remain. Whatever the number, she now takes off an equal amount of envelopes from the middle stack and tosses them into the basket as well. You comment, *"Since I have no idea how many envelopes you dealt to the table to start with, I have no idea how many remain. This is an example of maintaining the integrity of the randomness."* (Sez you.)

“Pick up that pile of envelopes and count them one at a time to the table. Do it quietly though. And do it at a slow pace so the audience members can count with you. Remember, everyone, do not count out loud!” Marilyn counts nine envelopes onto the table and lets you know she has finished. *“Marilyn, please open the top envelope and remove the bill. Show it around to others in the audience. And concentrate on its value.”* You do your mind-reading conniptions and then suddenly blurt out, *“Okay...I’m getting something...I’m seeing various numbers and a few letters. (long pause) Ah! There were exactly nine envelopes left on the table! And the one you selected was holding a one-dollar bill!”*

There will certainly be applause at this point; you’ve connected with a left and a right hook! But now it is time for the knock-out.

“Marilyn, take a look at the serial number. Look at the last five characters or so. There should be four numbers and one letter, right?” Of course, you are right. The last five characters are always four digits and a letter! *“Now, concentrates on those characters. Try to silently transmit them to me. I am getting a 1 and an 8, a 2, a...no, it the 8 and then the 1, then 2 and...4...ending with the letter D. Is that correct: 8124 D?”*

Knock-out!

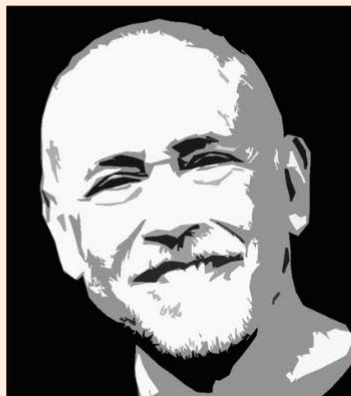
Bills Bury the Dough, Boy.

Hopefully you have been able to infer the potential of an effect like this. There are actually three magical moments of mind reading. The first two fly in fast and furious together and the third is a true smack down! Don’t be in a hurry to get the borrowed money back to the spectators! Soak in the applause first. And if you are wearing a blindfold, remove it single-handedly with a flourish of an outstretched arm. It is a great applause cue!

I was inspired by a trick published in the mentalism publication *Psycho Gizmo*, which was published from the 1950s through early 1960s. It was published by Teral Garrett of Kentucky (re-typeset e-versions are available today at Trickshop.com). G.W. Hunter’s *3 Predictions* (Volume 1, Number 1) is what tickled my fancy. It is a card trick that uses the same mechanics as described above. Hunter did not know the origin of the method and assumed it was ancient.

For our version, you only need a box of security envelopes (standard letter-sized #8, 3.5 by 6.5 inches). I keep them in the box until ready; I then place the box on the working table and withdraw a big handful. The box has the words “Security Envelopes” on its front. So, without saying a word, your audience knows you aren’t messing around! Inside the envelope closest to the front of the box, place a one-dollar bill (or whatever denomination you wish to use). As mentioned earlier, I also have placed a dab of repositionable glue on the flaps to make the opening and closing of the envelopes quick and easy. You need to have memorized the last four digits and letter of the bill’s serial number. That’s an easy task even for the memory-challenged (I’m in that group). Still, if you think you need a nudge, jot it down on the back of the envelope box.

Your spectator-helper gambols through the audience collecting currency. I think it is a good idea to get the first name of the audience members lending the cash so your act doesn’t end with casualties! You’ll need about twenty banknotes to make it look good. Some spectators may wish to contribute several bills to the cause. I always carry twenty notes of different denominations just in case. When your helper joins you up front, let her dump the basket’s contents on the table. As



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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.



There is a black button in my pocket.

When I developed a keen interest in magic as a young boy, my parents had six kids and were raising us on an enlisted man's paycheck. There was no extra money available for my new hobby, but they supported my interest as best they could. My father gave me an old, weathered deck of cards held together with a rubber band and my mother found a few large buttons in her sewing kit. I learned to do coin tricks with those buttons. Together, my parents took me to the library as often as possible. It turns out librarians love children who sit quietly among the stacks. I soaked up every book about magic I could find.

If I wanted a magic trick, I made it using things from the junk drawer in the kitchen. My first paid show happened at the age of thirteen (a birthday performance for a little girl who lived on the next block) and the props were paper clips, rubber bands, toothpicks, and, of course, cards and buttons. I developed a fondness for effects that rely on simple but clever subtlety. To this day, the classic trick Thieves and Sheep remains a consistent favorite. The guests enjoy a nice story and a baffling mystery, as long as you know your right from left. When I need someone to select a specific card I gravitate toward the Cross Cut Force for the same reasons; the subtle cleverness makes it one of the most underrated forces in the conjuring industry.

When looking for ways to improve your act, your character, or your scripts, if you try to make grand, sweeping changes, you will be frustrated quickly. Every professional in the business will tell you that real changes come slowly with a tweak here and or small adjustment there. Big improvements start as subtle things found in the timing, the stance, or simply in the depth of your next breath.

One simple subtlety keeps me focused when on stage. I slip small messages to myself underneath the cellophane wrapper of the card case. At first, the message was nothing more than my set list. Over time, I realized the guests never paid attention to it because, to them, a card box is just a card box. They see them displayed on racks in department stores everywhere. Now these papers have one-word messages of encouragement such as Excellent or Fantastic; or gentle reminders such as Relax, Breathe, or Posture. After the pack is removed, the box is tossed on a table behind me. During the show, I sometimes turn away from the audience briefly as a guest writes something or chooses an object. In those moments, I glance at the private note to myself and grin. For a while (because I am my own best amusement), this Conjuror's Oath was slipped under the wrapper:

*"I pledge allegiance to the cards
In this cased deck of Bicycles –
And to the cleverness of my own hands.
One deck; fifty-two names;
With mysteries and wonders for all."*

That black button I mentioned earlier? It will soon be fifty years old. It is the sole remaining button from my mother's sewing kit. Every morning it goes into my pocket before the wallet and keys. It doesn't mean a thing to anyone but me; but it is a subtle reminder of where this high road started, what has been required to get here, and where the road seems to be going.

UNUM EX NOVEM

A guest shuffles a deck of playing cards and removes nine cards. She thinks of one. The cards are mixed. The conjurer spreads the nine cards face down between his hands. One by one, cards drop from his fingers until only one remains. It is her thought-of selection. There is no sleight of hand; the performer has never seen the face of any card. In the world of think-of-a-card presentations, this one is very clean. Unum Ex Novem is a Latin phrase meaning "one from nine."

More than decade ago, I published *Predict-Abilities* (Book Two in *The Act* series) and explained the details of a show I performed for several years at the Disney resort on Hilton Head Island. The closing effect, *Know Way*, allowed the mentalist to accurately discern several cards silently chosen by guests from a group of twenty-five cards. Later, I changed the script and handling in a way that reduced the cards in play down to a more manageable sixteen. Unum Ex Novem takes it even further in this intimate presentation between the guest and the mentalist. Despite multiple evolutions in handling, the original principle behind the effect has remained intact, but the number of cards involved is now streamlined to a more intimate nine. Of course, during performance the conjurer whittles that number down to, well...one.

Hand the deck to a guest for shuffling. As she is mixing the cards, use this time to state your intentions: *"I know we just met, but I'd like to propose to you. You seem a little nervous. No worries – this isn't that sort of proposal. I propose to pull private information out of your mind and reveal it aloud. Oh boy, now you are more nervous than a moment ago. Again, no worries – I never share ages or weights. I only reveal commonplace information that proves the point while avoiding physical harm to me after the show. That's where the playing cards come in."*

Do not take the deck back. Just give your guest these simple instructions: *"Please hold the pack face down and deal three cards into a pile. Now, cut the pack and deal three more cards into another pile. Finally, cut the pack once more and deal another group of three cards next to the others."* The balance of the pack is placed aside.

Say, *"To keep this experiment legitimate, I must never see the face of any card and you must make every choice. You have three groups of cards in front of you. Please choose any group, pick it up, and look at those cards. Please think of any card in front of you and remember it. Now, look me in the eye and mix those three cards."*

When she is finished mixing, say, *"At this point, is it fair to say that even you are not sure exactly where your card is in that group?"* She will agree. Continue by saying, *"Good, please put all the groups on top of one another into one large pile."* These instructions give her the freedom to assemble the pile so her group is on the top, bottom, or in the middle. Pay attention to where her group goes; the top is position one, the middle is position two, and the bottom is position three. Most of the time, her group will be in position two simply because she will drop it on top of a group and then cover it with the other one. For the sake of these instructions, assume her group is in the middle and you are thinking "Two."

the art and craft of conjuring cont'd

Pick up the pile and spread the cards face down between your hands so a little bit of each card is displayed. Say, *“Because we have only nine cards, it is not possible to mix the cards with a traditional poker shuffle. A more basic, almost childish technique will get the job done – a few from here, one from there, a couple here, and so on. And, just to make it official, the cards are given a proper cut.”* Accordingly, your actions will match your words and the cards will get mixed, but with a controlled result. For lack of a better name, I call this faux yet intentional blending of nine cards the Novem Mix.

As you deliver the line above, you will separate the spread and drop cards both in pairs and singly from different places to make a pile of mixed cards on the table, but do so in this manner: Begin by dropping the third and fourth card from the bottom of the packet as a pair onto the table. Next, remove the top card of the packet and drop it onto the tabled pair. Now, you will repeat these actions with one slight change; this time, drop the second and third cards from the bottom of the packet as a pair onto the tabled group. Again, drop the top card on the growing pile. There are three cards left. Drop the remaining three cards together as a group so they land in-jogged on top of the loose pile. With your right fingers, pick up the entire pile by gripping it from the right side. Place the pile in your left hand. As you square up the pile, your right thumb lifts up on the jogged group and cuts these cards to the bottom. You are finished. The pattern is: cards three and four from the bottom; top card; cards two and three from the bottom; top card; last three jogged and cut.

The Novem Mix looks fair, yet it arranges the packet so all the cards from group One are in the first, fourth, and seventh spots; all the cards from group Two are in the second, fifth, and eighth spots; and all the cards from group Three are in the third, sixth, and ninth spots. It is easier to understand if you arrange a nine-card packet face down with three Aces on top, three Deuces in the middle, and three Threes on the bottom. After the Novem Mix the card order is will be Ace, Two, Three, Ace, Two, Three, Ace, Two, Three, from top to bottom.

In other words, during performance, think of the nine cards as three groups of three. The Novem Mix has moved all the original cards from position two so they are now the second card within the top, middle or bottom third of the nine. Likewise, if her group was stacked on top earlier (position One), her card would be the first card in each respective third. If her group was originally on the bottom, then her card would now be the third one in each section. All that remains is to discover which section holds it.

Spread all nine cards face down from hand to hand again and say, *“I have been accused of being a sneaky guy. So, before we go any further, please confirm your card is still here – just say yes as soon as you see it.”* Remove the bottom three cards from the spread. Hold this group fanned toward your guest so only she can see the faces. Pause for a moment and give her a chance to respond. If she does not say anything, replace the packet back on the bottom of the spread and now remove the top three cards as a group and hold them up as well. Again, give her a chance to respond. If she remains silent, replace this group back on top of the packet and hold up the entire spread of nine cards and say, *“Do you see it anywhere in here?”* She will say yes; you now know her card is the second one in the middle third – or dead-center of the nine card packet. Of course, if she sees her card among the bottom three or top three, you know her card is the second one in that respective group the moment you hear her response.

Lower your hands so the spread is again face down. To reveal her thought-of selection, keep

track of her card as you slowly allow all the cards around it to fall to the table one-by-one. As you do so, say, *“You are the only one in this room who could know which card you have in mind. Even if someone peeked at your group of cards when you were deciding, they still wouldn’t have a clue. Perhaps they could make a wild guess and get it right some of the time – but mentalism isn’t about guessing; it is about knowing.”* By this time, you have allowed eight of the cards to slip from your fingers onto the table. Only one card remains in your hands.

Look down at the back of this card and say, *“Hmm...there is only one card left. For the first time, would you tell everybody the card you are thinking about?”* She names her card. Turn the card face up to reveal a perfect match.

More than one guest can play. A performance of Unum Ex Novem for a couple out on a date or celebrating an anniversary will highlight their evening. The Novem Mix is not limited to playing cards. Index cards with drawings or words can be used as well as photographs or postcards.

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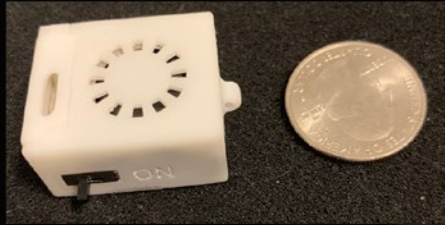
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