



# Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community  
February 2006

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## January Meeting

January's meeting started with a performance from member-in-waiting Steve Wallace. Steve had the four aces lost in the deck yet magically returned them to the top. Two other cards were selected and Steve was able to not only find one of them, but also changed it into the other one! A nice version of Professor's Nightmare followed (using a neat story about Pythagorus and an equilateral triangle) and he closed with finding a selected card reversed in the deck. It was an impressive show – congratulations to Steve on being our newest club member!

The theme for the January meeting was "rope magic". And our own cowboy prez Steve Seguin pulled out a lasso and showed us how it's done! A teach-in of Professor's Nightmare followed, where Steve showed us the basics and everyone contributed their own moves, ideas and tips. Ropes were available to everyone and we all learned a thing or two about a genuine classic of magic.

Mark Hogan performed Tom Craven's Ultimate Rope Penetration, where a rope is wrapped and tied around his body but could be pulled through it. Ron Keller placed two rings onto a rope and a split second later, both rings were inside knots

on the rope! Dennis Weir taught us a great cut and restored rope (and he brought ropes he made up so we could practice!)

Richard Keller showed us "Imsonnia" – a Professor's Nightmare variation – and also tied ropes without letting go of the ends. Ron then was back with his own cut and restored effect, and Peter Mennie ended the night showing us his rope routine as well as knots jumping off the ropes.

- Mark Hogan

Next Meeting:  
Wed. Feb. 8, 7:00 pm  
Beal Secondary School,  
Room 225  
525 Dundas St., London  
Topic: Penetration

## London Magicians Guild at the Sports Celebrity Dinner & Auction

Mike Fisher took the initiative this year to find a way to promote our club within the community. Mike suggested our services to the Thames Valley Children's Centre for their annual Sports Celebrity Dinner and Auction. Eight magicians (Mike, Don Lackey, Lorne Overholt, Ricardo Leon, Steve Wallace, Mark Hogan, Peter Mennie and Dennis Weir)

joined dozens of volunteers from other local organizations to entertain hundreds of disabled children during the morning of the event at the London Convention Centre.

It was truly a joy to perform for so many children who loved and appreciated the magic they witnessed. (Lorne's dove and Don's rabbit were a big hit, too!). The organizers were thrilled with the response from the kids – all comments to the performers were very positive.

Many thanks to Mike for organizing a wonderful event for our club!

- Mark Hogan

## February's Meeting

Wed. February 8, 2005

The theme for February's meeting is "The Magic of Penetration". Any trick involving one object passing through another is fair game. Start practicing your silk through rope, zig zag, coin through glass, crazy man's handcuffs and bean dip surprise. Once again, everyone is encouraged to show us a trick or two (and teach us how to do them, if you are so inclined).

We'll be starting off the evening with a teach-in of the linkng rings. The teach-in's are intended to be an informal, hands-on teaching session where everyone is encouraged to share tips and moves. If you have a set of rings (or two), bring them in. Hope to see you there!



## Word from the Secretary

Many of you have known me for years as the guy at the club meetings who carries the briefcase, or harasses you for dues or guest fees. So for those who haven't seen the briefcase or I have yet to harass ... here's a little bit about me.

My name is Mark Hogan and I've been a member of the club since the early 90's. I got my first taste of magic as a 7 year old watching a traveling magic show at the local high school. I remember the magician firing a cannon containing a woman and she appeared inside a drum hanging from the ceiling. Now that was cool! Got a magic kit a few weeks later, learned every trick in it, ... and then stopped. Never was interested in anything for very long back then.

One day I read of a PUC course being offered by our own Peter Mennie. Peter did a great job with the course, and on the last night, we attended a meeting of ... you guessed it ... the London Magicians Guild. I attended a meeting or two and laid low ... until Al Munro took me into the hallway of the Howard Johnson hotel and tried to teach me how to shoot rubber bands across the floor and make them come back. Never could pull it off. But I was hooked.

My main goal in magic is a simple one: to get a sleight named after me! For example, the recent Hogan no-handed in-the-mouth card restoration move was introduced to

the world stage at our very own dinner/show. But the cheques haven't exactly started pouring in yet. Guess I've got more work to do.

When I first started, I concentrated on mentalism. I think that was mainly due to watching Kreskin on his weekly television show. (There's my age showing!).

But over the past few years I've added cards, ropes, cups & balls, ... I'll give anything a try nowadays - even transforming into the crazy, egotistic "Marcus Pocus" a couple meetings ago.

I've started attending some conventions in the past few years and it's been a blast! I've attended all the CAM conventions, and attended my first IBM convention in Cleveland. For those of you who never have attended one, I strongly recommend it. Most fun you'll ever have with your clothes on.\*

That's all there is about me. See you at the club. Hopefully I won't have to harass you any time soon (or I might send Marcus after you!)

- Mark Hogan



\* Please note: Mark's opinion of how much fun you can have with your clothes on do not reflect the opinions of the editorial staff or this publication.

## News Of Interest

### Mindfreak Renewed

Criss Angel's successful Mindfreak series which aired last year on A&E has been renewed for 21 more episodes, starting again this June. This year's creative team will include: Banachek, Mark Cannon, Dexter, Luke Jermay, Todd Robbins, Jim Steinmeyer, and Johnny Thompson.

### Derren Brown's Heist Causes Stir

Derren Brown's latest UK Tv show "Heist" featured his ability to influence his subjects completely. He persuaded four managers unwittingly to carry out an armed robbery.



### The Great Alex Elmsley Passes

Alex Elmsley suffered a heart attack on Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup> in London, England. Elmsley was one of the greats of magic and his name is rightly associated with so many effects and moves magicians consider essential to performing.



Elmsley was born on March 2, 1929.

### More Friday Night Magic

In the last issue of Shell Game, I mentioned Friday Night Magic that is currently running in Toronto at the Revival Theatre. (Details at [www.magical.com](http://www.magical.com))

Our good friends at Browser's Den have arranged a special treat for everyone. For the

month of February you can get two FREE PASSES to the show. That's a value of \$40.00. Contact the Browser's Den for more details. And since you're phoning them, why not order that little something you've been thinking about...

#### Calendar

February 6 Western Jugglers' Club 7:00-9:00, UCC

February 8 London Magician's Guild meeting

February 12 Western Jugglers' Club 7:00-9:00, Alumni Hall

March 11-12 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Waterloo Juggling Festival, Waterloo, Ontario

## Magic Reviews



### Absolute Magic by Derren Brown

How do you create a performance in which the audience accepts that what they are seeing is real magic and not a series of explainable tricks?

This is essentially the question I was asked recently. The person asking went on to describe an idea for a magic show that was remarkable both for its simplicity and for the fact that I had never seen or heard of anything like it before. But, everything hinged on finding the answer to that core question.

At the time I didn't have an answer. But the question nagged at me so I re-read Derren Brown's *Absolute Magic* looking for some concrete advice I could give.

Brown's aim in *Absolute Magic* is to set out a model for performing magic in such a way that it feels real to the spectator (even though he or she may intellectualize it later). It is a book about performance, drama, and theatre. It is not a book about showmanship. This immediately sets it apart from all of the performance theory books on the magic market today.

Showmanship is about applause cues and the like. If you want to increase the applause your magic receives (and applause, obviously, is a good thing), you are better off reading Darwin Ortiz's *Strong Magic*. For Brown, it is the moment before the applause that is important.

It is in this moment that Brown wants the person watching to utterly believe in magic.

Let's be clear on this, because most discussions of magic and theatre talk about creating a "suspension of belief" amongst an audience. This suspension of belief allows an audience to accept that the solid steel rings really linked, that the tiger really vanished, and that Peter Pan can really fly. This isn't what Brown wants. He wants the audience to believe – to absolutely believe – if only for a moment that magic is real.

So how do you do that?

According to Brown, the most natural way is to utterly believe in the magic yourself as you perform it.

For any effect, you must explain to yourself how the magic works. For example, if you are vanishing a silk in your closed fist, maybe the magic heats up the molecules in the silk causing them to move faster and faster until they escape the attraction that binds them and, one by one, flow unseen out of your hand. In this case, the heat and molecular action would likely be uncomfortable for the magician, and his expression and demeanor should reflect this. The exact explanation is arbitrary. The important thing is that an explanation exists and that you believe it to be true. And remember, the magic is the cause of the effect. The effect is just the part that we see.

This concept of believing in the magic yourself usually gets labeled the "silent script" in other books, but, like the idea of "suspension of belief", I find the term trivializes the concept. We're dealing in conviction here. The notion of a script implies you're faking it.

Once you have conviction, you need to choose your effects and create your routines with a sense of dramatic sensibility in a way that fuses character, performance, and magic effect together. An interesting side effect of creating a magical explanation for every effect is that you start to look at your material differently. For example, if you believe that when you do "Oil and Water", the cards stay in the same position but the ink on the cards rearrange so that all the black ones are together and all the red ones are together, you start to wonder if it would be worth the magical effort in the first place. In other words, does

the effect make the cause worthwhile?

When it comes to performing your routines, Brown stresses the need to properly set the scene. He suggests you have to reverse the dynamic of approaching a group and make the space yours. You have to make them adapt to you. You should gain the rapport of the group, provoke their curiosity, and pull them into a more controlled, magical space – and out of their comfort zone. By setting the scene properly, you also create a sense that what they are about to see is important.

Another key for Brown is the idea of "withholding". If you truly believe in the underlying magical explanation you have created for an effect, this understanding will naturally leak through to your performance. The more you communicate this fictitious explanation without appearing to do so purposefully, the more believable it will be, for the audience will feel that they picked up on it themselves.

That is important.

The audience must feel that they sensed the magic for themselves rather than having had it thrust upon them. To do this, the performance has to be withheld in such a way that it is felt rather than seen. By doing so, you will involve the emotions of your audience at a greater level – and emotional responses are always greater than intellectual responses – and provide them with an experience that feels real.

Well, that's a taste of what's in this great book. Throughout *Absolute Magic* Brown expands on these ideas and gives more. He

starts with the presumption that performing magic should be the most enjoyable and beautiful thing imaginable and then takes you on a journey of discovery and imagination. If you want to know more, pick up a copy.

- Steve Seguin

We Want Your Reviews! Please send any reviews of magic tricks, books and videos to:  
[Steve\\_Sequin@hotmail.com](mailto:Steve_Sequin@hotmail.com)



## Tricks

John the Revelator, by Steve Seguin

This is a piece of close up mentalism that draws on Derren Brown, Richard Osterlind and Banachek. This is something to perform for a woman or a married couple. Here's the script:

"Do you remember the exact time you were married? Not just when the ceremony started, but the exact point in time when you exchanged vows. Write down that time for me. Just turn it over when you're done so I can't see it.

"Take a look at this watch. I want you to imagine that as I turn the hands on the watch backwards that we're going backwards in time. See? Right now it's five o'clock, now it's four o'clock, now it's two forty five.

"Here, hold the watch like this and keep turning the hands backwards as you imagine yourself going backwards in time. Going back

through all the years you've been married. Going back to your wedding day. Keep turning. I want you to see yourself at the church. You're waiting to go down the aisle. Remember how nervous and excited you were.

"I want you to see your bride's maids there. Your father. Hear the music playing as the doors open and you walk down the aisle. See all your friends and family turn their heads to watch you as you walk in your beautiful white dress.

"Remember how your father gave you that last kiss before you joined your soon to be husband on the altar. Feel yourself back in that moment of time.

"Look at your husband now just as you looked at him then – full of love and promise. There's nothing more important than this one moment in time when you both said 'I do.'

"What time was it when you exchanged your vows?"

Without another word, you take the watch from her hand, turn it over, and lay it on the table so everyone can see that it is set to that exact time.

Method: The routine boils down to two essential parts – learning the time the person is thinking of, and setting that time on the watch.

Purists will want to pick up a copy of Richard Busch's Peek Performances to find a gimmick-free method for glimpsing the time after it is written down. I simply use Mark Strivings' Sight Unseen Case. The important point is that you know

what the time is before you take out the watch.

I used to add some patter lines to justify why the participant had to write down the time in the first place. Now I don't bother. I just simply ignore the card with the writing on it completely. The weight of rest of the routine takes the focus off the card.

The watch must be analog rather than digital. In performance, pull the stem out so that you can turn the hands backwards. Freely show the face of the watch to the people watching as you call out times – 5:00, 4:15, 2:45. Show each time to a different person.

On the last one, actually set the watch to a minute or two before the time that was written down. Move your thumb over the face as you show it to someone and miscall it. Look them in the eyes as you do it (hey, since you're lying to them it's the least you could do). Because you're repeating yourself, because it's starting to get boring, and because the spectator doesn't have a lot to care about at this point, this miscall will go unnoticed.

At this point, you need to secretly push the stem of the watch back in. I do this under cover of the larger motion of swinging your hand holding the watch back towards the person thinking of the time. In the same motion, I turn the watch face down.

Once the stem has been pushed in, the person can turn it as much as they want without moving the hands. The participant won't notice that the stem has been pushed in for several reasons:

- It's a man's watch and slightly unfamiliar
- It's face down which changes the feel of things slightly
- You've got her focused on the details of her wedding day

The trick is basically done. When you take the watch from them, pretend to push the stem in, and lay it on the table. At that point, don't say another word until someone at the table does.

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Steve Seguin, Editor

The Shell Game is a free newsletter sent to members of the London Magicians Guild and other people in the community interested in magic.

Content and opinions expressed do not reflect the views of the London Magic Guild.

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