



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
February 2014

Volume 9, Issue 6

January's meeting

It was the tail end of the worst deep freeze anyone can remember, but we still had a good crowd for "New Routine Workshop Night". Members brought effects and ideas they've been working on and the rest of us discussed ideas to help make them even better.

Mike Fisher – complete with his *Amazing Corbin* outfit, started by showing a selected card appearing on his fogged-up spectacles!

Peter Mennie had a spectator select a card and Peter displayed his guess at the selection – only to be wrong (gasp!) – but then the chosen card was written on the back of Peter's guess! Peter also presented a card trick using no cards – where a group of spectators select, keep and discard cards until one is selected which ends up being the only one inside an envelope!

Jon Akrey had a card selected and displayed a man drawn on a piece of paper. He lit the paper and as it burned, it floated all the way to the ceiling and back into his hands, where the burned-up man whispered to Jon the selected card! (Very cool!). He also showed us a very nice Osaka bill production (also very cool!).

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, February 12

Time: 7:30 PM

Topic: **FAMILY & FRIENDS NIGHT!**

Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
T-253

Mark Hogan performed **Paul Gertner's** "Firecracker" where a firecracker blows up an imaginary deck of cards, only to have one card survive the flames –

the same card as in the card box on the table all along! And one of our guests for the night – **Liam Buckley** – gave a gift to a spectator and had them sign a coin, which Liam vanished. The gift was opened to find a matchbox which contained the signed coin!

And the **Amazing Corbin** ended the night by showing us a routine to music he has been working on. The theme was "*Alice in Wonderland*", as he made handkerchiefs disappear into a glass mirror, then rabbits coming out of the mirror, watch productions, a tea party production, and the Queen (of Hearts) at the end shouting "Off with their heads!". It's a really inventive routine that invoked a lot of interest and discussion. Way to go, Mike!

There were lots of routines, lots of discussion, and lots of fun – and we can't ask for more than that!

Mark Hogan

February's Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, February 12

TIME: 7:30 PM

**PLACE: Beal Secondary School
T-253**

TOPIC: FAMILY & FRIENDS NIGHT!

Now for something very different – let's invite our friends and family to a meeting!

That's right – bring a friend (or two or three), or maybe some members of your family, and we'll put on a show just for them! Time to show off in front of those we know – and let them see what you do on the second Wednesday of every month!

Be sure to bring some effects to perform – and let's impress our family and friends and have a few laughs together!

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!

Please send any original reviews, magic tricks or routines to:

magic_london@yahoo.ca

News Of Interest

David Copperfield engaged

(CBS8.com)

Magician **David Copperfield** is engaged to **Chloe Gosselin**, the mother of his 3-year-old daughter, *Hello!* magazine reports.

"I'm engaged and in a committed relationship with Chloe in my mind and my heart," Copperfield, who previously dated **Claudia Schiffer**, tells *Hello!*.

Copperfield, 57, and Gosselin, 28, have been dating for six years and live in Copperfield Bay in the Caribbean. Their daughter **Sky** was born in 2010.

It is not the first time his Wargrave home has been hit. It was swamped in 2000 when a wader-clad Daniels pulled Debbie to dry land in a rowing boat, and the Thames marooned them in November 2012.



How Dynamo became Britain's brightest sleight-of-hand star

(express.co.uk)

WHEN **Steven Frayne** performs his day job, the usual reaction he gets is one of disbelief.

Or shock. Or awe. Some people scream out loud. "How can he do that?" yells one woman on the street.

"That's scary. Can I touch you?" says another.

"Oh my God," exclaims yet another.

Frayne is better known as the British magician **Dynamo**, a slightly built, unassuming 30-year-old who appears to stun everyone he performs for, whether passers-by on the street or such celebrities as footballer **Rio**

Ferdinand, movie star **Will Smith** or **Prince Charles**.

You may have seen photos of the Bradford-born illusionist in the paper this week. He was promoting his skills ahead of the third series of his show, *Magician Impossible*, by casually levitating by the side of a London bus. He didn't advertise the stunt in advance and onlookers were left open-mouthed as he seemed to hover in mid-air, level with the double-decker's roof.

It was, of course, a trick but Dynamo doesn't give away his secrets and you would be hardpressed to see any wires.

Despite his TV show going out on the non-Freeview satellite channel *Watch* – as opposed to a terrestrial channel – he is already becoming an international star with the likes of Coldplay frontman **Chris Martin** and rapper Tinie Tempah labelling him the best magician in the world today. Move over **David Blaine** and **Copperfield**.

As for the style of his tricks, they often have an urban "street" flavour but he mixes close-up card tricks with big-style wow stunts, such as walking on water over the River Thames, something he did for his first series – until he was picked up by a police boat.

So far he's turned lottery tickets into £20 notes, has seemingly walked through glass, pulled necklaces through his own throat and has made cardboard butterflies come alive. He's completed a newspaper crossword in under three seconds, has made mobile phones suddenly appear inside beer bottles – the same bottles onlookers were happily swigging from minutes before – and has physically moved the tan line on a woman who was sunbathing on Miami Beach. And there's a lot more where that came from.

Just last week he was making a horrified Prince of Wales wince by appearing to break his own fingers and then restoring them again at a Prince's Trust charity event.

If you've missed the first two series of his show, a quick glance on YouTube allows you to see most of his feats, as well as the stunned and startled reactions they induce, for while many people are often skeptical of magicians, the response to Dynamo's magic probably speaks louder than any review.

The illusionist was introduced to magic by the man he calls "my grandpa" who was actually his great-grandfather, **Ken**, a Second World War veteran who learned his tricks in the navy.

"He wouldn't call himself a magician," Dynamo has explained, "but he used to do crazy stunts at the pub – anything for a free drink."

When he showed Dynamo his first trick, making a pack of green matches and a pack of red matches seemingly switch boxes, Dynamo was stunned.

"The feeling I got witnessing that is the reason I carry on doing magic to this day," he says.

The reason he actually started performing magic, however, was for rather more practical reasons – to combat bullies.

Dynamo was brought up around some of Bradford's most deprived housing estates by a young mother and a largely absentee father who was in and out of prison. The smallest kid in school, partly because he suffers from the debilitating digestive condition Crohn's disease, Dynamo was an easy target for bullies. Two boys in particular would pick him up, dump him in a dustbin and then throw him down a hill every day after school while a crowd gathered to watch.

After witnessing the 10-year-old Dynamo come home covered in cuts and bruises, his grandpa showed him a technique which, he says, was "aimed at taking away the bullies' strength so that they couldn't pick me up any more."

It is a trick he has since used in his magic shows and even worked on boxer **David Haye**. Footage shows the former heavyweight champion of the world firstly lifting Dynamo's slight frame with ease but then the magician fixes him with a stare and Haye is absolutely powerless to pick him up, try as he might.

The technique worked on the bullies "but," Dynamo has explained, "they also didn't want to be seen to be scared of such a little guy so they created a myth that I had superhuman powers."

Critique of Criss Angel's "Raise the Dead"

(Richard Kaufman)

According to the *Las Vegas Sun*, where he is regularly treated as the superstar he believes himself to be by the unctuous **Robin Leach**, **Criss Angel** has torn three something-or-others in his shoulder and will have to shut down his live show *Believe* for three months while he recuperates. I, on the other hand, will never recuperate from his morbid and idiotic attempt to ostensibly resuscitate a corpse on the November 26 episode of his current series, *Believe*, in an episode titled "*Raise the Dead*." He should've titled it "*Raise the Ratings*," though I doubt it helped much. I've seen a lot of stupid magic in my life, but "utterly tasteless" is a phrase that I've had rare occasion to use.



Early in the show he says, "this is about respecting the dead." You don't respect the dead by making them part of a bad magic trick on television. The essential nature of his performance on TV has not changed since season 2 of *Mindfreak* when credibility took a long hike. In the "Dead" episode of *Believe*, Angel performed **Ken Whitaker's** "Impaled" on an obvious stooge in a junkyard. Since we all know how "Impaled" works, we also know it's not possible to do it without an assistant wearing a gimmick. So, nothing has changed- everyone you see on your screen might be a volunteer who has signed a simple NDA (non-disclosure agreement) in exchange for the opportunity to be seen on TV. Put your hands on the sides of your face, form your mouth and eyes into big open circles, and exclaim profanities and you, too, can be on Believe.

For "*Raise the Dead*", Angel gathered a group of people, perhaps some actors, perhaps some real volunteers, in a funeral mortuary and pretended to revive a dead man. Aside from the autopsy stitches on the chest and a bit of makeup, he was pretty healthy looking for a corpse. That is, assuming he was actually a human, and not an expensive recreation made via a life cast who simply had an inflatable air bladder in the chest cavity and another in the wrist to simulate a pulse. After what seemed like an interminable amount of buildup over the course of much of the hour, he picked a volunteer from the audience and placed her on a gurney near the "dead guy." Angel stood between the volunteer and the dead guy and pretended to be taking her "life source" and tossing a little toward Mr. Corpse. What happened? The volunteer's pulse stopped and the "corpse" started to breathe and ostensibly had a pulse in his neck, a bit of liquid dribbled out of the corner of his mouth ... and some fake electric Aizmos borrowed from "paranormal investigators" blinked. An entire hour of television was built around a pathetic non-event.

Rather than asking "what was fake?," the easier question to ask is "what was real?". Certainly not the "corpse". Not the "volunteer" whose pulse stopped. Not the claim that the "corpse" had shown signs of life. A comment posted on the *Las Vegas Sun* website by "ocalahere4" reinforces what most educated folks (except those being filmed for a Criss Angel TV show who really want to be seen on television) are already aware of: " If one knows anything about an autopsy then one would know that the heart and lungs are cut up and weighed and no longer intact in the body. So tell me how the body not only breathe without lungs but was also able to hold a pulse with no heart?"

So what was real here? Money. Criss Angel got paid lots of money by Spike TV to make the television series *Believe*. On the Genii Forum, **Jon Racherbaumer** quipped: "I asked a commonsensical friend of mine who doesn't know anything about Mr. Angel about this supposed feat. I also filled him in on Angel! forthcoming hiatus from the Vegas show. My friend dead-panned: 'Why the hell doesn't he heal his torn shoulder? That would be child's play next to raising or reviving the dead. That might take only a few seconds.'"

For many years now, we've all been pretending that Criss Angel is a magician, because he came up through the ranks of magicians, he used to do magic and illusions, he sells magic tricks, and his television shows promote the idea of magic on television. So, when people talk to us about watching his unbelievable tricks on television, it's easiest to nod our heads and say, "Yes, Criss is quite a magician." But with his fantastic corpse trick, all of that can now officially stop. "No, he's not a magician. What you're watching in his shows has nothing to do with the very old, very respected tradition of conjuring. What you're watching is a disservice to centuries of great magicians and, to be honest with you, it's not part of our world."

(Editor's note: So tell us how you really feel, Richard!)

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

Opinions expressed do not reflect the views of the London Magicians Guild.

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