



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
February 2020

Volume 15, Issue 6

January's meeting

January's meeting started off with two (that's right ... two!) performances to join the club!

First up was **Wesley Steele** who removed the pip on the Ace of Hearts as a sponge! He then changed the sponge into a coin – and then bent the coin in his hands! He also sus a card with a large hole in the middle and then peeked off the hole! Amazing!!

Also performing was **Clint Barkhouse**, who performed his comedy *Egg Bag* routine where the egg disappeared from the bag and reappeared inside it; he changed a Chickets pack of gum into a pack of Winter Fresh gum; and finished with his version of *Hippity Hop Rabbit*. He also did his take on Chinese sticks and pom-poms – plus a nice version of "Cavorting Coins" where a stack of 4 quarters jumps between 2 brass shells and finally disappears!

Both performances were awesome! *Welcome to the club, Clint and Wesley!*

Next Meeting:

Date: Wednesday, FEBRUARY 12

Time: 7:30 PM

Topic: LECTURE BY DENNIS WEIR – MR. MAGIC!

**Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
Room 253**

Mark Hogan showed us his newest purchase – the **French Twins** "Error 404" where four pieces of a playing card turn into another card simply by dropping the pieces! He also had a spectator decide what a newspaper article would say – and showed a newspaper image on the spectator's phone that contained all the spectator's choices!

Jim Atkinson did an excellent comedy presentation of a *Monte* routine using 3 Tim Horton cups (one containing water), and while the spectator started winning, he lost it all in the end!

Malachi Davey showed us his take on an effect using *WikiTest*, where he not only revealed a word searched in Wikipedia by a spectator on their phone, but also had a word thought of by the spectator inside a balloon!

The pirate was back! **Mike Fisher** donned his *Captain Corbin* persona and did a terrific Treasure Island book test, where not only did Corbin predict the word in the book thought of by the spectator, but that page in the book disappeared and was found in a locked treasure chest! He also predicted a spectator's selections from a number of coins, keys and even diamonds!

And **Peter Mennie** closed the night with his first performance of a **David Regal** routine where two randomly selected cards by two different spectators change places in two different decks!

Thanks to everyone tonight who brought and showed some of their stuff!

Mark Hogan

February's Meeting

I

DATE: Wednesday, FEBRUARY 12

TIME: 7:30 PM

**PLACE: Beal Secondary School
525 Dundas Street, London
Room 253**

TOPIC: LECTURE BY DENNIS WEIR – MR. MAGIC!

Our own *Mr Magic*, **Dennis Weir** who is a retired science teacher of 30 years who started all his classes with a magic trick.

He will entertain us with his own brand of Magic and with a few of his own illusions that he has created. Bring some cash as you may want to purchase some of his illusions.

So come out in February and learn from *Mr. Magic!*

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!

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

magic_london@yahoo.ca

News Of Interest

“Magic at the Marienbad” - February 14 show

(Mike Fisher)

This month's *Magic at the Marienbad* show is on **Friday, February 14**. Doors open at 6:30pm – show is at 7:00pm.

What better way to treat your significant other on *Valentine's Day* than a night of magic!

Our line up is incredible. Returning due to popular demand and opening the Valentine's show is **Graemazing Reed**. And Headlining the night is the incredible mysterious mentalist **Ryan Edwards!!!**

Ryan Edwards has consulted and/or performed on *America's Got Talent*, *Penn & Teller's Fool Us*, *Wizard Wars*, and many other TV shows, as well as networks like *Space TV*, *Syfy*, *CHCH* and *Yes TV*.

This is going to be a very memorable and magical night. Tickets on sale now!

For more info and to order tickets, visit:
<https://www.facebook.com/MagicMarienbad/>.



Simon Aronson - It's The Thought That Counts

(Jack Shalom)

He was one of the most brilliant and clever creator of card magic effects of the past 50 years. His methods were... shall we say?...*memorable*. The house of magic is large, as **Eugene Burger** was fond of saying, and Simon's creations fit a particular room.

His magic was brainy, intellectual, and absolutely fooling. There are magicians who are great at fooling laypeople; there are magicians who are devious enough to fool other magicians; but the amazing thing about Simon's card magic is that if you were doing it, it would fool even yourself.

To this day, there are probably legions of magicians who perform his "*Shuffle-Bored*" or "*Prior Commitment*" who still have absolutely no idea *why* they work. What they know is that they *do* work, and they blow the minds of people who see them. If the performers themselves can't figure them out, you can imagine, then, that the spectators have got zero chance.

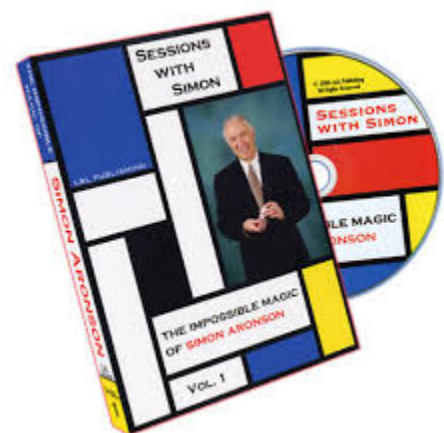
But make no mistake, Simon's tricks impressed non-magicians as well. There's a funny story that magician **John Bannon** tells in his introduction to one of Aronson's books. He shows the secretary of Simon's law firm a card trick, hoping to impress her, and she only smiles pleasantly. Then she says with wide open eyes, "But have you seen *Simon's* card magic?"

Speaking of Aronson's books, I doubt there has ever been a more meticulous, detailed magic writer than he was. His books—*Bound To Please*, *The Aronson Approach*, *Simply Simon*, *Try The Impossible*, and *Art Decko*—are masterpieces of explanation of intricate methods.

While Simon was not above using sleights and gaffs in his magic (and he delighted in upsetting fellow magicians' expectations of what his bag of methods might include) his claim to fame really rests on thinking very hard about a few tools which required mostly sleight of mind. As he would say, just as you have to plan things so that your sleight of hand doesn't show, you also have to plan effects so that your sleight of mind doesn't show either.

In Simon's books, he takes you through all his thinking point by point, thoroughly exploring variations and improvements, telling you what versions he threw out as weak or too revealing, giving you his scripting, and moreover, unlocking the reasons why his methods work. Simon's training as a lawyer shows—his books are not just explanations, but thorough briefs with points and subpoints. In magic circles people like to debate, with near religious ferocity, whether it's better to learn magic from books or DVDs. Of course both sides have valid views, but for the book-lovers, their strongest argument is two words: **Simon Aronson**.

No one would call Simon an extraordinary performer, but on occasion he would step away from the card table to do another kind of magic: his mentalism act that he created with his college sweetheart and wife of many years, Ginny. They did a classic two-person mindreading act, and fortunately it was captured on video as an extra on one of his videos. It's something that neither he nor Ginny have ever revealed, and while clearly there must be some code going on, I have resigned myself to the fact that if Simon created it, I'm never going to be able to figure it out. You can see their act for yourself in the "*Sessions with Simon - #1*" DVD.



Simon Aronson was a full-out, full-deck memorable mensch, and I'm sorry to hear about his passing. From the Jack of Spades to the Nine of Diamonds, he will not be forgotten.

Think of a ...

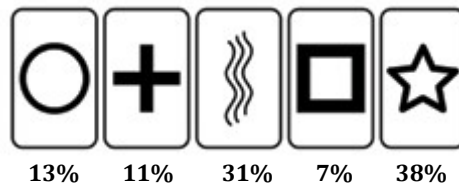
(Joshua Jay)

In September 2016, **Joshua Jay** published an article called "*What Do Audiences Really Think?*". He collaborated with **Dr. Lisa Grimm**, a researcher and professor from *The College of New Jersey*, involving 526 participants from ages 18 through 80.

Clips of Joshua's performances, and well-known clips from other magicians, were shown to the participants and used to gain valuable information about what audiences think of magic, what they love (and hate), how we can more easily get volunteers, etc. The following excerpt is from this study.

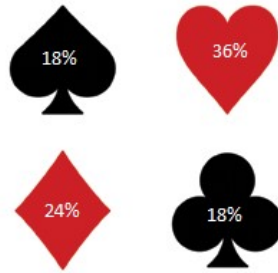
The next section will be of particular interest to mentalists and close-up performers. We asked people to imagine things: favorite food, any number, any symbol, any playing card, any color. The images and choices were randomized to eliminate as much bias as possible, and in many cases participants were invited to write in their answers.

Of the five ESP symbols (*Circle, Plus, Wavy Lines, Square, Star*), **37.6 percent chose the Star, and 31.2 percent chose Wavy Lines**. (Circle was the next most popular, with 12.5 percent, followed by Plus with 10.5 percent, and lastly Square, which was chosen by just 6.5 percent of the people.)



Now to playing cards, which are the results in this section I looked forward to the most. If we can gain some simple insight into which cards most people think of, we can put this secret advantage to use in a number of useful ways.

When asked to think of *any* playing card, these are the results: **Hearts came in first (36 percent)**, followed by **Diamonds (24 percent)**, and **Clubs and Spades (each at 18 percent)**. The most commonly thought-of card was the *Queen of Hearts*, followed by *Ace of Spades*, *Seven of Hearts*, and *Two Hearts*.



But if we change a tiny aspect of how we ask the question, we can drastically affect the results and learn something useful.

We conducted an A/B test in which half the group was asked a control question (*"Please think of any card"*), and the other half was asked the same question in a slightly different way (*"Please think of any card, but not something obvious, like the Ace of Spades or the Queen of Hearts"*). This added element, asking them *not* to think of "something obvious like the Ace or the Queen," made the data much more predictable.

When you add this phrasing, **people thought of a red card nearly seventy percent of the time.** The list of thought-of cards also changed:

- Two of Diamonds
- Three of Diamonds
- Three of Clubs
- Three of Hearts
- Four of Diamonds
- Seven of Diamonds
- Seven of Hearts

This is called *semantic framing*. The concept is that different words give us different perceptions of events. In this case, if you say to a spectator *"Think of any card, but not something obvious like the Ace of Spades or the Queen of Hearts,"* you can follow it up by making several statements with relative confidence: *"You're thinking of a red card. And it's a spot card. A Diamond. The Two of Diamonds."* As before, I don't suggest you rely on these numbers as an effect, but it's valuable to know how most people will think before even *they* know.

Here's another example of semantic framing. When asked to think of any color, it's very hard to discern in advance what people are going to think of. But if you say, *"Think of any color, such as green or yellow,"* one color emerges as a clear favorite. **Blue was chosen 33 percent of the time.** When blue wasn't chosen, **purple and red were the next likely favorites.** By giving the examples of green and yellow, you effectively eliminate those choices, and at the same time cause people to choose a color that contrasts greatly with your examples. Similarly, if you ask someone *not* to think of an obvious card like the Ace of Spades or the Queen of Hearts, note that this phrasing effectively

eliminates *any* Ace or Queen from being chosen, and it pushes people toward selecting a low-value Diamond. People are sensitive to our phrasing; they react to it, and in ways that they might not be aware of or fully understand.

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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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