

# Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community  
January 2025

Volume 18, Issue 5

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## December's meeting

The December meeting could not be held at our regular spot, as it was not available. But being the holiday season, what better way to celebrate than to simply enjoy some good food and drink at Crabby Joe's Restaurant.

We were able to get the back room at Crabby Joe's all by ourselves, and there was quite a good turnout. And fortunately there was lots of magic to share as well.

As the main attraction, we had **Edwin Mendonca** performing in order to join the club. He performed some nice rope manipulation, including a great rope & *Ring and Rope* routine. He then showed a bottle and a glass, and in a split second made them change places! Not only that, but with a rub of hanky the bottle changed colour! He made a finger ring disappear and reappear on a magic wand held by a spectator! And his *piece de resistance*: A custom-made effect, where a selected playing card, lost on the deck, was found in-between two panes of glass!

Edwin gave us an amazing performance! *Welcome, Edwin, to our club!*

**Peter Mennie** showed us his own variation of a Jon Allen *sandwich* routine (allowing the trick to be repeated), as well as a very novel and clever *Monte* effect using *jumbo Uno cards!*

**Mark Hogan** tried (and failed) at a **Dani DaOrtiz** effect – and thought he'd try again when **Al Coombs** arrived. But the guys got to Al first, and

### Next Meeting:

**Date: Wednesday, JANUARY 8**

**Time: 7:00 PM**

**Topic: BIDDLE, PADDLE OR DOUBLE!**

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

conspired to make the trick fail the same way! (Mark: "OK - You got me!"). But later he eventually did nail his variation on Dani's *Very Lucky*, where a selection lost in a shuffled, dealt and reassembled deck is in the location on a prediction on the table the whole time!

It was a great night and a terrific way to get into the holiday spirit. Hope to see everyone in the new year!

Mark Hogan

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### *January's meeting*

**DATE: Wednesday, January 8**

**TIME: 7:00 PM**

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

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### **TOPIC: *BIDDLE, PADDLE, OR DOUBLE!***

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What do these words all have in common? Well, yes – they are two syllables and end in "LE". But they are also very common terms in magic, of course. We all know tricks involving double lifts, double backers, Biddle grips, Biddle moves, paddle moves – the list is seemingly endless.

For this month, come up with your favourite effects using either a Biddle, Double or Paddle "something" in the routine. Or perhaps show some different sleights or gimmicks that utilize a Biddle, Paddle or Double. There's no shortage to choose from.

Hope to see you in January!

**We Want Your Reviews and Tricks!**

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

[magic\\_london@yahoo.ca](mailto:magic_london@yahoo.ca)

## News Of Interest



### Champions of Magic at Canada Life Place - March 26, 2025

Following a decade touring the world as one of the most successful magic shows in history, the *Champions Of Magic* team are back with an *explosive ALL NEW show* featuring thrilling and mind-bending illusions.

Fusing their skills in grand scale magic, a flair for spectacle and undeniable showmanship, this interactive, high-energy show is sure to entertain the entire family. Combining their signature humor with groundbreaking magic, the world's only team of illusionists present a brand-new production unlike anything that has come before.

"Dazzles audiences with a show like no other." – Broadway World

For tickets, visit: [Champions of Magic | Canada Life Place](#)



### The Session 2025 will be live streamed

(Vanishing Inc.)

**DATE:           JANUARY 10-12, 2025**  
**COST:           \$75 U.S.**

Ever wished you could go to *The Session*, London UK's premier magic convention, but haven't been able to for some reason or another? Well, now you can...without leaving home!

*The Session* turns 20 this year and we wanted to celebrate with some epic surprises. The *Flicking Fingers gala show*, **Luke Jermay's** formal close-up show, and now a huge first for the convention...

**We'll be live streaming The Session 2025.**

For the first time ever, you can watch *The Session* from anywhere in the world. Even if you're not in the UK!

After years of requests from magicians to do this, we felt there was no better year to start than our *20th anniversary*.

This can't-miss live event will make it feel like you're right there in person. Tickets are available for purchase right now!

Now I know what some of you might be thinking: "*Sounds amazing, but the time zones might make it difficult for me to watch live.*"

Well, lucky for you, we also thought of that. Which is why *you'll also be able to stream the content for seven days after the convention ends!*

We genuinely love *The Session*, and are so excited for you to finally join in on the fun regardless of where you are in the world.

To check out the performers, schedule, lectures and shows, visit: [The Session magic convention London - Vanishing Inc. Magic shop](#)

Click [here](#) to get an e-ticket to these world-class lectures and performances for just **\$75!**



## Magifest convention in Columbus, Ohio

(Vanishing Inc.)

**DATE: JANUARY 23-25, 2025**

**COST: \$350 U.S.**

(Excerpts from an email from late December)

Did you know that industry research shows the best time to book a flight is roughly *26-28 days* ahead of when you plan to fly? This is typically when prices are their best.

Well, conveniently for you, this email is arriving exactly 26 days ahead of *Magifest*. So, if you haven't booked your flight yet, now would be the perfect time.

If you're reading this and haven't bought your Magifest ticket yet, what are you waiting for?

**Justin Willman** is doing his full show, **David Ben** is the *Guest of Honor*, even **Axel Hecklau** & **Javi Benitez** are traveling across the ocean to get in on the fun. Magifest will also feature underground sensations like **Rick Holcombe** and **Giancarlo Scalia**, and will prove why Chicago is rapidly becoming the new

magic capital of America with sensational performances from **Ricardo Rosenkranz** and **Abby Segal**.

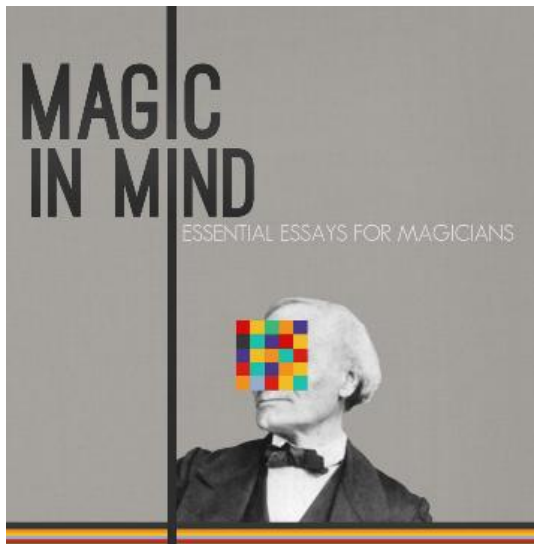
This only scratches the surface of a lineup that was already ridiculously good, and we're adding to that today with **David Parr**:

David will be joining us for a one-of-a-kind show and lecture in which he'll show you the keys to maintaining creative drive and being happy about the magic you perform. Along the way, he'll also perform and teach many of his favorite routines.

Oh, and by the way, we also introduced single day tickets this year. But, there's only a handful left for each day. In fact, the whole convention is nearly sold out.

For more information and to get tickets, visit:

<https://www.vanishinginmagic.com/magic-conventions/magifest>



## An excerpt from *Magic in Mind: The Illusion of Impossibility*

(*Magic in Mind*)

A few years ago, **Joshua Jay** and **Andy Gladwin** from *Vanishing Inc.* released a collection of essays from some of the world's most famous magicians, called "*Magic in Mind: Essential Essays for Magicians*".

Here is an excerpt from one of those essays:

In retrospect, we can look back at the early writings of **Derren Brown** with expectant approval. After all, he is the *UK's most famous and decorated mentalist*, and an undisputed thought leader in our field.

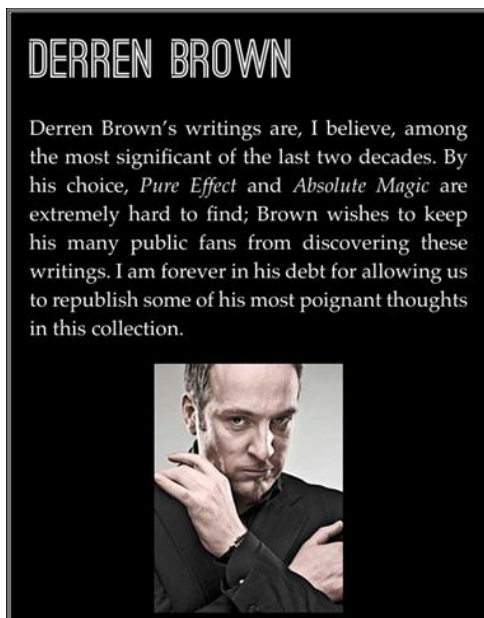
But I'm old enough to remember actual events quite differently. *Pure Effect* came out in 2000, just before his television career catapulted him into the public's eye. The author of *Pure Effect* was a provocative unknown who espoused a decidedly different approach in both style and substance. He was just thirty years old when his writings were published. His career is the rare inversion of the norm: he developed a crystal-clear theory on how he wanted his performances to look, and he achieved his goals through performance.

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## Working with the Spectator in Mind

If we are honest, what is our starting-point for forming an effect? I feel there is a tendency amongst many magicians to start with a new move, some clever sleight - from some point of methodological skill. Then the possibilities of that move are explored, until an effect is formed. Often that effect is marvelous, and one that will fool everyone. But to make it magical, the magician will have to change focus. And there, I feel, lies the rub.

The question for the performer in forming an effect should not be 'What can I do?' or 'How can I use this?' The ultimate questions that will lead to truly magical effects must be spectator-centric. *'What would really freak out a spectator?' 'What would convince them that I possessed this power?' 'What would move them in a particular way?' 'And what would they want to see?'* Only after answering this, I think, one should ask - *'And what then can I provide to take it a step further?'*



It is my opinion that this leads to a more creative process. The performer is placing himself in the position of the spectator. He is subjecting everything that he does or desires as a performer to the consideration of the effect that it would have on a spectator.

This consideration is paramount also in the performance -- not just the effects themselves. I remember recently visiting the restaurant where I regularly perform here in Bristol. I was sat in the spacious, Byzantine lounge area where attractive staff and a belly dancer pampered the guests. This was after maybe ten years of performing, but was the first time I ever got a clear sensation of exactly how I would feel if I were to be

approached by a magician. It occurred to me that in those years of performing, I could never have really considered that. I realised how easily a chirpy, adequate magician would have made me cringe and been utterly out of place. I saw that I wanted to be pampered, not made to feel self-conscious. Had I really been ensuring that my little audiences had actually warmed to me and felt comfortable? I imagined a suave and theatrically-dressed chap coming over and introducing himself with a charming and discreet air - asking if he might join us for a few moments... I saw that it would be exactly right, exciting and elevating. But how easy it would have been to get that wrong!

I realised that through feeling insecure about approaching a table and compensating through brashness, I had probably alienated a lot of people in the past. How easy it is to be an embarrassing imbecile with this work!

### **Setting a Context**

These thoughts led to me restructuring much of my close-up performance. Here I can only speak of how it affected my own style, which is appropriate to the venues where I perform. But I think the questions and considerations - but I make no presumptions about my answers - are worthwhile for anyone to take on board. Those that have will realize how rewarding such a reappraisal is.

The magician's first task is to set a context for his performance. I see the group as a *tabula rasa*. I approach them, I feel, with charm and confidence, and quickly achieve rapport. Yet I also retain an authority that I want them to feel. I want to be seen to be withholding something. I want to hold a promise of something for them. I want to give them time to get ready for the magic. To become curious and attentive. To watch, essentially, on my terms. This is much more enjoyable than launching into a routine immediately. I can learn everyone's name, and make sure that they know mine. I am, after all, coming into their group uninvited. I have a basic responsibility to be at least civil. Again, I remember Eugene Burger at that convention. The magic can start long before you start an effect. I also remember that if I am walking into their space to perform, I am asking them to form judgements about me. Any magician that begins a table-hopping set with the selection of a card or the inspection of an object is deluding himself if he thinks the audiences are interested in the cards or prop for those moments. They are forming their opinions about the performer and assessing how they feel about him. I feel it is much better to realize that and give them a chance to like me and respect me before I start performing my magic for them.

For me, another result of making these changes was that I started to really and reliably enjoy table-hopping and walkaround magic. This may sound strange, but I trust that all of us that perform regularly will be familiar with the terrible ennui that can set in before approaching the first group of the evening, or starting again after a break. We're not in the mood. I found that by changing the way I interacted with the spectators and slowing down my performance to allow them to feel charmed and respected, I never again felt that grotesque reluctance to perform that comes when one has to force oneself into an 'upbeat' state unwillingly. There was no need to do that. My performance became more honestly me. An exaggerated version of me, certainly, but I no longer had to become something that I wasn't.

The next level where one must be aware of setting a context, I feel, is finding a meaning for the effect itself. Much has been said on this by other authors and I do not have the years behind me nor the standing to speak with the same authority. Similarly I can add nothing very new to the discussion. But

consider this if what you are presenting to the spectators is seen to be a *puzzle* to be solved, then they will be concerned with that task. And as with any puzzle offered, if they cannot arrive at the right answer themselves, then they will feel entitled to be told the solution. If the performer does not offer one, then they are entitled to feel resentful. I think of those ghastly lateral-thinking problems that a particular type of person enjoys offering for solution. Rather than simple murder, one engages in an attempt to find an answer depending on how polite one feels one should be. Imagine if one genuinely tried to work out the problem, until finally giving up, to find that the poser of the problem had no intention of confiding the answer. Heaven forefend that any of us should be such arsars in our performance, but the question of what meaning we are attaching to the effect is vital to performing strong magic that transcends the mundane.

If I may be so bold as to offer an example from my own repertoire, then I would direct the reader to my effect '*Transformation*' towards the end of this book. This is, from a technical point of view, little more than some cards changing on the table, but it will have immense personal resonance for the spectator. Inasmuch as it is important to relate the effect to the life of your spectator for them to find some meaning inherent in it, there is little in the realm of magic and mentalism more relevant to a spectator than a personal reading, which forms the structure of the effect.

### **A TABULA RASA**

I would suggest that the participant with whom you are about to begin your magic presents a clear, open and responsive slate for you to fill with emotional information. Most will have had no experience of live magic before, and even more will have had no previous experience of your magic. The spectator/participant awaits cues from you to know how to behave. Presuming that you have picked your participant with a reasonable degree of wisdom, you can presume that she is eager to be helpful and not appear to be incompetent of performing the tasks at hand. This is why I believe before anything else regarding performing effects, that what you perform should be presented as essentially serious. NOT necessarily solemn, but essentially serious. When I think of an effect in this way, I imagine it to seem to have integrity, relevance, and elegance. Although it may be communicated with humour, it is clear that it is not trivial. The adult spectator realizes that magic is an adult art. Because your participant comes to you eager to learn how she should respond to your performance and instructions, you have the choice of whether she responds to them in a transient, lightly amused way, or whether she takes something rather personal and marvelous away with her.

Behind each effect I perform is the question of whether the presentation and communication of the effect are worthy of it. The effect has potential for unspeakably powerful impact. Where along that line am I performing it? Am I merely trivializing it? If we take, then, as our starting point that our participant is open to suggestion and emotional and psychological direction, we can now consider what emotions and states of mind are useful to elicit, and how to do so.



**Paul Harris** has written marvelously about how magic takes us back to our infantile state of astonishment. That the experience of wonder triggers that early period when nothing made sense and the world was one of unfurling surprise. It seems to me that this would be a marvelous experience for a spectator of my magic to have. When I began to consider this, I saw the importance of eliciting emotions with the magic, to give it a deep resonance and to provide an emotive journey of some sort for my audiences.

May I suggest that your aim as a magician is to create and manipulate wonder and astonishment while avoiding confusion and mere puzzle solving on the part-of the spectator. There is an inherent beauty in possibly all effects, something that can be found and brought out. If the audience find a sense of that beauty, and even artistry, it will be easier for you to help them attach an emotional meaning to the effect.

*Derren Brown*  
*Pure Effect (2000)*

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Vol. 18, Issue 5  
January 2025

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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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