



Shell Game

A Monthly Newsletter for the London Magic Community
November 2005

Volume 1, Issue 3

October Meeting

October's meeting was a special one indeed. Our special guest lecturer for the evening was **David Ginn**, all the way from Atlanta, Georgia. David is one of the world's foremost experts on kid's magic, performing upwards of 300 shows per year, and author of some 70 books and videos on the subject. His reputation preceded him, as we had more than a dozen guests - one coming from as far as Thunder Bay!

His lecture was his "**Crash Course On Kidshows**", where he focused on the elements he uses to structure a show for children, and a variety of effects that fit each element. For example, his warm-ups always involve comedy (surprises, groaners and exaggeration), and he showed us comedy routines like "**Middle Diddle Silk**" (where a coloured silk goes from one hole to another); a deck of cards "freezing" together like Niagara Falls in winter; and "**Future Fungus**" where coloured feathers on a pole switch places.

All of his effects touch upon key points he highlighted in his lecture. For example: repetition ("**Flower Wallet**"); running gags (**Fantasio appearing cane**); objects taking over (**rising wand**); Involvement (**necklace**)

prediction). He also performed effects to music, tricks with animals, and story telling. David even had one of our young guests (**Ganzalo Arboleda**) help pull a rabbit out of a hat - even though the rabbit was on his head the entire time!

There isn't enough room to cover all the elements David touched upon, and all the effects he demonstrated. His energy was contagious and he truly both entertained and enlightened us. His dealer table was very busy afterwards, and he left everyone smiling.

Many thanks to David for a marvelous evening.

- Mark Hogan

Next Meeting:
Wed. Nov. 9, 7:00 pm
Beal Secondary School,
Room 225
525 Dundas St., London
Topic: Money Magic



Word from the President

How many of you make balloon animals?

I am continually amazed at how many children's magicians do not do balloon animals. I get a sense that magicians feel that balloon animals are either beneath them or somehow detract from their magic. In the grand hierarchy of variety entertainment – a complex class-based, status system which places mimes at the bottom and rodeo clowns at the top, with magicians, jugglers and ventriloquists somewhere in between – sculpting balloon animals is seen as more of a “clown” thing than a “magic” thing.

I've been making balloon animals since I started to perform professionally – not because I was interested in them, but because I saw it as a necessity. There are far too many opportunities to up-sell a show by charging an extra \$75 to stick around for a half hour and make balloon animals. From my limited experience in restaurant magic, balloons are essential – they are a great opener, kids love them, and they endear you to the parents. Balloons can also be great emergency filler in a show.

Years ago, I was in a street performers' competition. Due to poor event planning, there were only a handful of people around as my timeslot for judging approached. Rather than perform for this meager group, I started doing balloon animals. As anyone who has done balloon animals can tell you, balloons have the magical power to

produce children. When it came time to do my show, I had an audience of 60.

Did I win the competition? No, the rodeo clown won - I mean, who can compete with that? But I did take home second place and a very lucrative cash prize.

- Steve Seguin

Web Site Purge

As you know, the club's web site has a page for members to advertise their services as professional performers. This is a great service, especially since the club's web site consistently ranks high on most search engines.

Over the next few weeks, we will be deleting any non-members from this list. If you still haven't paid, we will be collecting the **\$30 membership fee** at the next meeting.

November's Meeting

Wed. November 9, 2005

The theme for November's meeting is “**Money Magic**”. Once again, everyone is encouraged to show us a trick or two (and teach us how to do them, if you are so inclined). Any trick involving coins, bills or money in general are all fair game. Hope to see you there!

Motor City Close-Up Convention, Detroit

November 11-13, 2005

Visit

<http://www.hometown.aol.com/johnlukamagic/convention.html> for

details. Lectures, workshops and close-up shows featuring Gazzo, Paul Green, Nathan Kranzo and more!



News Of Interest

Browser's Den 30th Anniversary

Sunday, November 6th, 'BROWSER'S DEN' celebrates its 30th year in business!! Join Jeff and his staff at everybody's favourite magic shop for a day filled with fun activities. Here are some of the scheduled highlights:

10:00 am until 12:00: Mini-Magic Auction
12:00 until 4:00 pm: Snacks and 10%-25% off discounts
2:00 pm until 5:00 pm: Free caricature sketches
4:00 pm: **Len Cooper Memorial Award** ceremony

David Copperfield to 'Magic' Girl Pregnant?

David Copperfield says he plans to impregnate a girl on stage - without even touching her.



Speaking to German magazine **Galore**, the illusionist rejected the theory that there were only seven different kinds of magic tricks.

He said: "Bull s**t! There is a great deal of new territory to conquer. In my next show I'm going to make a girl pregnant on stage."

He added: "Naturally it will be without sex. Everyone will be happy about it, but I'm not telling you any more."

The magician is currently on tour in Germany with his show, **An Intimate Evening of Grand Illusion**.

Penn & Teller: Off the Deep End

Penn & Teller will go "Off the Deep End" in an NBC special that will air Nov. 13.

The two-hour show will be the first magic special ever performed entirely underwater, the network said Wednesday.

Penn & Teller will make a submarine "disappear," do tricks with sharks and "psychic" dolphins, and perform a new "super illusion" in which they walk on water.

More Mystery Hunters!

The hit children's show "Mystery Hunters", starring David Acer as **Doubting Dave** (a magician/scientist/skeptic), has been renewed for a third and final season.

Acer also got promoted to Executive Story Editor in addition to his contributing writer and star credits. The show



continues to be one of the most popular series on Discovery Kids and YTV in Canada for it's demographic.

Calendar

November 6 **Browser's Den Anniversary**

November 9 **London Magician's Guild** meeting

November 11-13 **Motor City Close-Up Convention**, Detroit

November 13 **Penn & Teller** t.v. special

Magic Reviews



Natural Selections I and II by David Acer

I've seen David Acer lecture twice, seen him perform stand-up comedy live twice, watched **Mystery Hunters** countless times, and hugged him once.

But does he ever call?

Despite his negligence in this one area, Acer is still one of my favorite magical writers. His first two collections of his own material, *Natural Selections I* and *Natural Selections II*, are filled with exceptional material.

What makes them so good?

Three things.

First, the magic. Each book is filled with dozens of unique routines directly from his professional repertoire. The material is fun to learn, entertaining to watch, and extremely practical to perform. It's also a little off-beat and very visual.

A few of my favorites:

- **Time Flies:** After placing a quarter in his pocket, the magician announces he'll make time go backwards. Taking off his watch, he waves it over his empty hand. When he opens his hand, the coin has returned. Even better, the watch has vanished from his other hand and is now back on his wrist.
- **Ghost in Machine:** A card trick using a vending machine. You have to try this!

- **Quartermain:** A stunning coin through deck of cards routine.
- **Rink:** A borrowed ring links with a borrowed pair of glasses.
- **No Holds Barred:** An impromptu moving hole routine with all the impact as *Holey Terror* and *Pothole*.

Interspersed with the routines are essays on working close-up professionally, performance anecdotes, and practical sleights.

The second reason the books are so good is that Acer is a wonderful teacher. His love for magic is well evident. Whenever he describes a trick, he explains each sleight in clear detail. All sleights are indexed separately so they can be easily found later. Any influences on his thinking by other magicians are clearly credited. All of which makes his books fabulous learning resources.

Third, Acer writes goodly – er, Acer goodly writes? Not only does Acer write beautifully, what he writes is fun and entertaining. His humor runs rampant throughout the books. You'll laugh out loud reading these.

- Steve Seguin



Tricks

Strike Vanish Revisited, by Steve Seguin

There's a category of sleights that I describe as "invisible". These are moves where the actual sleight of hand employed is invisible, but the observer is still

left with the impression that “something” has happened.

A classic pass is a common example of this – the move is done so fast that the spectator has no idea that the top half of the deck slid sideways under the covering hand while the bottom half was pushed up to take its place, effectively bringing the selected card to the top of the deck. But, because of the unnatural action, speed, or rhythm of the hands, the spectator knows that the magician just did some secret move.

If a spectator thinks he knows how a trick is done – even if this is just a vague “he did something with the cards, right there” – the magic is gone. To quote sleight of hand expert **Eric Idle**, “A wink is as good as a nod to a blind bat.” (Say no more.)

I include **David Williamson’s Strike Vanish** in the category of invisible sleights. To illustrate, I’ll describe the move as it is usually taught and performed by most magicians.*

The magician holds a coin in the palm of his left hand. The right hand holds a wand. Bending at the elbow in a large up and down motion, the right hand taps the coin with the tip of the wand. Once, twice. On the third tap, the left hand drops downward three inches or so. The coin, through inertia, retains its original position, effectively floating in the air above the left hand for a split second. At this precise moment, the right hand comes down with the

* To be fair, I’ve never seen David Williams on teach the strike vanish, nor have I read a description of the move written by him. I’m going strictly by the way other magicians and magic videos typically teach the move.

wand in order to tap the coin. The right fingers open slightly, allowing the coin to enter the right hand, before the fingers close again. The tip of the wand now taps the empty hand left hand, and the coin has vanished.

If you haven’t played with this move, try it. It’s extremely fun to play with, and there are countless uses for it. If you practice it in front of a mirror, you’ll see that the transfer of the coin to the other hand is completely hidden by the larger motion of the wand. You’ll also notice that the rapid action of the move itself is eye-catching. This eye-catching nature tends to raise suspicion in the mind of the spectator, making it “invisible”.

So how do you take an invisible move and make it invisible?

Two ways: First, make the move a sideways action, and, second, add misdirection.

Instead of the sharp up and down motion of the forearm bending at the elbow used in the traditional strike vanish, use a gentle arc of the upper body rotating at the hips.

Hold a coin in your open left palm slightly beside your body, rather than in front of it.

The way you stand is important. The audience is in front of you. Your feet are facing straight ahead in a 12 o’clock position. Your



left hand, displaying a coin in the open palm, is extended beside your body pointing roughly towards 9 o’clock. This is a very

open and natural position for displaying an object while talking to an audience.

As you speak, pivot your upper body to the right so that it faces 1 o'clock. Don't move your feet or left arm.

However, because of the movement of your



upper body, your left arm will end up pointing towards 10 o'clock.

Immediately pivot your upper body back to the left, sweeping around until you are facing 9 o'clock. Again, neither your feet nor arms should move other than the motion created pivoting your body. Your left arm will end up pointing towards 9 o'clock.

The initial swing to the right followed by the motion back to the left will allow the coin to leave your left palm. There is no throwing motion involved. If you let it, the coin will literally hang motionless in a fixed spot as your hand and arm move.

As your body swings around, your right hand (holding the wand) will pass through the spot where the coin is floating. Open your fingers slightly and let the coin enter the right hand.

There are two things to strive for here. First, make the motion of your body – both the initial motion to the left and the longer motion to the right – be as slow as possible. Second, do not move your right shoulder or elbow joint at all until the right hand has the coin. It should remain straight. It is this economy of motion that differentiates this

method from the traditional strike vanish.

As soon as the right hand has the coin and the left hand is pointing towards 9 o'clock, the right hand will move naturally to allow the tip of the wand to touch the exact spot on the left palm where the coin had been resting a moment ago. Rub



this spot very slightly, pause, then lower the tip of the wand an inch or so to reveal the vanish.

You'll notice that this approach also eliminates the "one, two, three" nature of the traditional strike vanish. The initial two taps are often used to accustom the audience to the up and down motion used in the vanish. Unfortunately it also telegraphs the exact moment that the move is going to take place – people are used to things happening on three and tend to be watching more closely.

To make the move completely invisible, add misdirection. As soon as the upper body hits the 1 o'clock position, look directly into your audience's eyes and talk to them. Hold your eyes fixed on theirs as your body swings back to the left. As soon as the coin is in your right hand, let your eyes and head follow the movement of your body so that your eyes look directly at your left palm at the exact moment the tip of your wand touches it.

The strike vanish in this way becomes a natural gesture of showing the coin fairly to the audience rather than a sharp, striking motion.

Here's a couple applications of the strike vanish that I've used. I've never seen the strike vanish used in these ways before in any of the literature I've read so I'll claim them as original.

Coin in Bottle: The strike vanish is very well suited for a coin in bottle routine. The coin is in your left hand. The folded coin is wedged in the neck of the bottle. The fingers of the right hand hold the bottle by the neck, concealing the folded coin. Do the strike vanish, bringing the base of the bottle around so that it hits the left palm. The bottle needs to hit the palm hard enough to dislodge the folded coin.

The illusion of the coin penetrating the bottle is perfect. You are also in a position to do a surprisingly clean display of the bottle by holding the neck between your thumb and first two fingers while your third and fourth fingers conceal the coin.

Loonie on Fire: I used to do this while building a crowd street performing. It's a fun bit of business and involves fire – which always gets people's attention.

I'd ask one of the older kids watching me set up if they had a loonie. They'd usually get one from a parent. I'd light a fire-eating torch, take the loonie, and do a strike vanish. The flame from the torch would burn for a second or two on my hand before going out. When it does go out, people notice the coin has vanished.

It's very pretty.

At this point I would ask the kid, "Did you like that? Want to see

it again? Ok, go and get another loonie..."

It's a nice laugh, and helps get people used to the idea that they will be paying to watch the show.

Note: I really haven't explained how to transfer fire from a flaming torch to your skin. There's a trick to it, and if you don't know the trick you will get burned. Burned flesh on your palms hurts. It also can lead to infection. I strongly advise that you do not try this trick and am not responsible if anyone does try it and gets hurt.

And I certainly don't want to hear how burning your palms has put a crimp on your "social" life.

We Want Your Reviews and Tricks! Please send any original reviews, magic tricks or routines to: Steve_Seguin@hotmail.com

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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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