

october
2025
002



inside this issue

David Alnwick shares his thoughts about commercial magic with his essay "Commercial Sorcery." He also very kindly offered his amazing star sign divination "Compatible Signs."

David Peace has contributed a very cool tarot effect from his Tarot Reader project "*The Witch of 1665*".

James Williams gives us an amazing card effect "Fish Finger Sandwich", a great and practical sandwich routine and a kicker 4-of-a-kind finale. In my article about my progress on the stage show, we talk about a good chat I had, and I think I've stumbled across an emergency and cheap solution to a silly box problem.

We've also got another article from **Michael Samuel**, this time about comedy and horror in magic (*can you see us leaning into the Halloween spirit?*)

The Daily Magician joins us again with another article about XXXXXX, and a gem from the public domain.

Not only that, but we have our usual **PUZZLE PAGE!**

A CHARACTER AND A 30 MINUTE SHOW

andy jay

DING DONG.

Here we go again, and boy has a lot happened. My local magic club had a lecture from the amazing Rory Adams. If you don't know Rory, he is a consultant for some of the biggest names in television, and the author of the magic book Only Ideas. He also runs the amazing One Ahead Newsletter, linked at the end of this article.

The second part of Rory's lecture was a Q&A (no, not like that), but he offered to do a quick consultancy for ideas in the room. I, of course, jumped at the chance to have Rory give me a quick insight into the new show idea.

Now I won't tip exactly what Rory offered, but here's the stream of consciousness that followed:

I want to do a Q&A Act. I want to make it mean something to the audience. I do not want to act like an "oracle", or even to the point of acting like I am worthy of offering up my advice to their questions and problems. I'm not, and I want to make that clear, whilst also scratching the itch I have for the Q&A. So what are our options?

ACT.

And I don't mean bad acting. Take some classes. Learn how to act. Put on a show. It's not Andy anymore, it's.... Bob. Bob can answer your questions, because Bob IS worthy. Bob is always worthy. All hail Bob. Maybe Bob is an extension of me? Maybe I can tell the story I want to tell, be vulnerable like I can't be as myself, by acting as Bob.

I like the idea. It allows me to embellish the story, grow and expand on ideas, totally and completely free from the embarrassment that I may be talking about myself. Bob can go through the wringer and come out the other side more insightful. It also allows for physical comedy, something I think is WILDLY underused in mentalism.

I like acting. But is it **too** hard? What about the other choice?

DEMONSTRATE.

Derren popularised the idea of being able to break your own rules, by just showing how somebody else would do something. Right in the open.

"I, of course, cannot do this incredible thing I am describing. But these people would claim they can. And using modern techniques I have been able to replicate the act, and this is what it would've looked like..." blah blah blah blah blah

NOTHING AGAINST IT. Perfectly reasonable explanation and justification to break something that might not fit within your character, and something I'd consider, but only as a last resort.

VULNERABLE.

Why can't I just be me? Bare all on stage. Tell my story. Own it. Try to connect on an actual level with the audience. Why not?

Well Andy, I'll tell you why. Because that's absolutely terrifying.

Yep. But it's easiest. It writes itself. No fancy choreography or crazy methods. Just me, and them, and some time together.

so what will it be?

I think vulnerable. We have a quick turnaround, I want to be doing previews in early 2026. It's easy for me to tell real stories and be vulnerable, so I won't bother with overly scripting or having to take acting lessons.

I think another thing I need to think about it how I structure the Q&A. Up until this point, as far as my research stretches, I have only ever seen a Q&A done with one slip of paper. One... "thing". Write an interesting fact, write a bucket list item, write a dream, write a question you have. Any one of those, and more. But I've never seen a Q&A done with multiple slips.

Imagine this...

2 bowls. One with blue slips and one with red slips. On the blue, people write questions they want answered. On the red, a piece of advice they would give somebody else. Then, instead of doing a standard Q&A style act, you can do "audience reading", with members of the audience answering the questions with their advice. Like a matching of souls in that one evening.

Maybe even more bowls. 4? Green, blue, red, and yellow. Questions, advice, fears, and bucket list item. Multiple readings, matching up, audience reading, traditional Q&A patter. That could work... right?

So let's explore some more ideas. I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to perform at the Green Party Annual Gala last weekend. For those outside of the UK, the Green Party are a political party known for their eco-friendly policies. I had 30 minutes to fill, and a lot of ideas.

I'm a lazy performer. I want my set to be run-and-gun. I have no interest in lugging tons of props with tons of set up. I want to get in, perform, and get out. So my set has to be portable, cheap, and easy to use. So I started thinking of what to perform. I love an effect that is recurring through an act. Starts the act, keep coming back to it, and finish it off as part of the finale. My mind instantly went to Derren's usual 50/50 or "recurring" effects. Initially, the word DISassociation that starts and runs through the first act, came to mind. That's fun, easy to do with a billet box, gets the audience involved through the start of the evening. Very little effort on performers side. Bingo.

For anyone that owns People Power by Andi Gladwin from VanishingInc, you will know that Andi talks about a sneak thief routine with name tags. I can't remember it directly, but marking some name tags is nice and easy, and it gets multiple people up on stage. Bingo.

My closer is an effect I cannot speak too much about. It's from somebody who contributed last month, and is a very very cool stage prediction effect. That's about all I can see, unfortunately, but I promise you I will cover it GREATLY when it comes out soon. It is my favourite piece to perform, easy as pie, and kills every time. It's become my safety net. Bingo.

So that's it. Word game to start with the first favourite thing, into sneak thief, back to word game to reveal second favourite thing, into this secret effect, finale is dictionary reveal of the third favourite thing. Bingo.

I'll justify my thinking behind all of this, and my general disagreement with a huge proportion of the magic community in December's issue.

Now I needed props. Some A1 foamboard from my local craft store, I'll grab 8 of those and it set me back £24. A big marker (I had one already but they're available for around £4. I recommend POSCA 8K paint marker). A dictionary, easily available. I use Webster's New World Dictionary: Fourth Edition (it's pocket sized and easy to carry in pocket). Billets and pens (stationery store 6x4 blank billets and a pack of pens for under £10). A billet box.... huh... a billet box. I don't have one of those.

Let me tell you a story.

My first ever show, I did a Q&A. First. Ever. Show. I used the AmazeBox Kraft. For anyone looking for a long lasting billet box, this is it. I had people pop questions in, before the interval I had a spectator come and empty slips into a bowl, took the box backstage, and spend the whole interval trying to rote memorise as many slips as possible. It sucked, but it was cool. First night went off without a hitch. I arrive for the second night, one hour before doors, and they tell me they threw away the cardboard box in the staff room (it was a cafe). Ummmm... sorry? You destroyed my £80 box reliable for the entire second half of my show?

So I improvised. I used Jonathan Levits The Stranger to reveal a bank note serial, Hook by Eric Ross, and a pseudo-hypnosis piece from Timon Krause's Penguin Live Lecture. Fine.

Then, during a walk through IKEA I came across a £1 box. I immediately had a flash idea. I know exactly how to swap in 100+ folded billets using this £1 box. Bingo.

I'm putting together a project for this billet box, as a way to hopefully open the door to billet switching for hobbyists that don't want to drop £80 on a billet box. With this one, if it gets thrown out, you can make another one in 10 minutes. I'm excited to share it with you! Subscribers to the Mag will get a copy of the project entirely for free. I'll also be giving out discounts for single issue buyers too.

So that's it! I got the box, they filled in the slips, and the 30 minutes ruled.

Hopefully that puts a little bit of structure in for those of you who may be wanting to just put something small on for friends and family, or get used to the stage. This is an easy set, with hard hitting effects, and definitely worth the price of supporting the creators. I promise you that.

Next month, I'll be sharing more information about the billet box project, but for those of you still reading, if you have an understanding on the history of billet box methods, can you reach out at themagicmag.zine@gmail.com and let me know?

I'd like to make sure the method is original, but my research has only taken me so far.

THE DAILY MAGICIAN

GEM FROM THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Every month, The Daily Magician gives us a Gem from the Public Domain. We pop our own presentation on it, so it's ready to perform straight off these pages. This is just to demonstrate the principle taught within the public domain project.

EFFECT

A deck of cards is shuffled and cut.

A spectator selects one card at random, memorises it, replaces it, and shuffles the deck thoroughly. There are more cuts, more shuffles, and not a single clue left to trace.

And yet, when the performer takes back the deck, something remarkable happens. They turn the cards over one by one, studying each as if listening for a sound too faint for anyone else to hear. After a quiet pause, they slide one card from the spread and set it face down on the table.

"Every deck," they say softly, "has a pulse. And every now and then, it skips a beat."

The spectator names their card. The chosen card is turned over. It matches.

METHOD

This piece, known as *An Instinct for Cards*, relies not on sleight of hand but on subtle design and the psychology of pattern.

Before the performance begins, thirteen cards of a single suit, such as diamonds, are arranged in order near the top of the deck. Through a light overhand shuffle, taking the bottom third of the deck and shuffling onto the top, that order remains intact but moves naturally toward the middle of the pack.

When a spectator is asked to cut "near the middle," they will almost always land on one of those diamonds. They remove and look at the card, return it anywhere in the deck, and riffle shuffle as much as they like.

To everyone watching, the choice seems completely lost.

In truth, the diamond sequence survives the chaos. It remains in order except for the chosen card, which is now sitting out of place. When the performer spreads through the deck, that single disruption is enough to reveal the selection.

The rest is presentation. Let's dive in.



"Gems From the Public Domain"
showcases just one of the literal thousands
of original and powerful effects
waiting in classic public domain books.

Catch it here, every month.

ROUTINE

Setup & Justification

Bring out the deck. Give it a light overhand shuffle (shuffling the bottom third to the top, centralising the diamond stack). You might say:

"I'll give these a quick mix so you don't think there's any setup or pattern. We'll use chance for this."

This feels open and fair but keeps your stack safe.

Spectator Chooses a Card

"Cut anywhere near the middle. Wherever you cut, that's your card."

"Don't show me, just remember it."

The "middle" phrasing steers them naturally toward the diamond block.

Replacing & Shuffling

They replace the card anywhere, then shuffle the deck. You can encourage this:

"Give it a proper mix. A riffle shuffle if you can. Let's make sure nobody could possibly track it, least of all me."

They cut and riffle shuffle multiple times. Everything looks fair.

The Build-Up

Take the deck, hold it close as if "listening."

"If I focus, I can feel when a card's energy doesn't match its surroundings. Every suit has a tempo: hearts beat slow, clubs are erratic, spades cut sharp. Diamonds though... diamonds have rhythm."

Slowly spread through the cards, scanning carefully, as though reading vibrations from each card. You pause now and then, glance at them, mutter to yourself like you're "hearing" the cards.

The Reveal

You stop on one diamond, the one out of sequence, and slide it forward slightly.

"This one... this feels wrong. Like the rhythm skipped here."

Place it face down on the table, build suspense, and ask:

"For the first time, what was your card?"

They say it, and you slowly turn over the correct diamond.

"Every deck has a pulse. You just have to listen closely enough."

REMEMBER

Let's say you have your diamond stack in the middle of the deck, the spectator cuts and removes a card, returns it wherever they like and they cuts and riffle shuffle twice. You take back the deck and you spread through... this is the order of diamonds you see.

Which one is their card?

4-5-6-K-7-8-9-10-J-Q-A-2-3

Spoiler alert, it's the 4th one in from the left! This is because the sequence runs normal until then, cyclically.

4, 5, 6, (K), 7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, (missing K), A, 2, then 3.

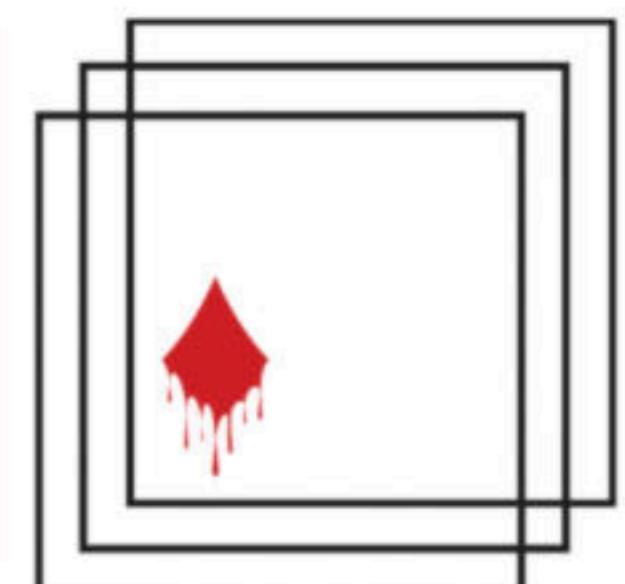
These will be spread out throughout the deck, with indifferent cards separating them. If the spectator shuffles too many times with the riffle, the beginning and end of the sequence may start to overlap.

You'll notice that although intertwined, the numbers still run in order. The King, in our example, would still be the one drastically different. When this happens, you would need to ignore every other card for the length of the crossover in order to see the cards in sequence.

This is a really strong routine, with a method so devious I have personally fooled magicians with it many many times. Culling the values of a suit can be quick if done on a slight offbeat or during conversation. This means the effect can play as impromptu.

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THE DAILY MAGICIAN

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Deep Dive

3 ORANGE JUICES AND OLLIE MEALING



Last month we headed down to a tiny village in the middle of England to meet with one of our biggest magic heroes, **Ollie Mealing**.

(If you've never heard of Ollie, he's probably one of the greatest creative minds in the UK.)

When we got there, it was late at night and we did what all brits do when they meet for the first time - [head to the pub](#).

We don't drink and for whatever reason, we were all craving orange juice, so in a very non-British fashion, we ordered three of those instead of beer and for the rest of the night did nothing but talk.

During that time we probably spoke about magic for at least [3 hours](#).

Here are just a few of the lessons we learned from Ollie...

IN THE CAVE YOU MOST FEAR - YOU'LL FIND THE TREASURE YOU MOST DESIRE.

This sounds like a line out of the book, but genuinely this is verbatim what Ollie said to us as if it were the most natural expression in the world.

In the context of magic - he was explaining how when we tackle the methods and magic that we can often be most afraid of, we can often arrive at the outcomes we most desire.

Or, when we are able to push through our greatest fears - fears of performing, fears of putting on show, etc. - the reward is all the more [sweet](#).

**OUR CODES
MAY CHANGE
EVERY MONTH.
THIS ONE WON'T.**

THE POWER OF DETACHMENT.

For a while Ollie has made an explicit point of not following the magic trends. He finds it far easier to create in a vacuum, not influenced by whatever is popular on any given day.

Musicians or writers will very often do the same - it's quite difficult to write a new murder mystery at the same time as reading one. Or come up with an original tune when you're blasting the Beatles all day.

HOW TO CREATE ALMOST INFINITE MAGIC.

One creative process we all agreed on was this:

Imagine an effect as if the method already existed and then work backwards from there.

Do not limit yourself to the resources in front of you. Instead imagine incredible, powerful effects as if they already existed and work backwards from there.

THE MASTER NOTE.

This was pretty cool - Ollie just had the most insane, huge note on his phone of every single magic idea he's ever had.

He took inspiration from everything from mini projectors, to twine, to the acronym for a James Bond movie.

This note was a safe place, where every and any idea would be saved for later inspiration.

These are just a few of things we discussed with Ollie and the next day, we had the pleasure of performing a few effects for him based on his own work.

If they fooled him, they might fool you too.



You can watch the full performances here:

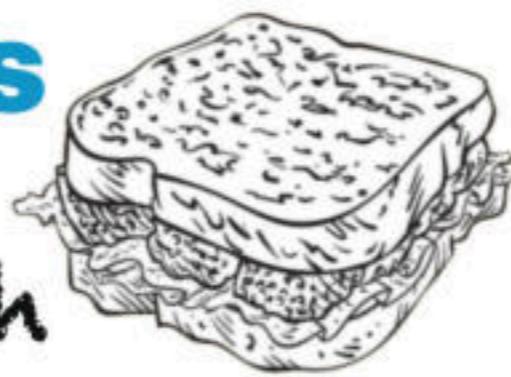
<https://thedailymagician.com/3-magician-foolers>

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james williams

Fish finger Sandwich



This is a really versatile sandwich routine that includes little sleight of hand and has multiple phases. I'll teach a few variations as we go.

EFFECT

A card is selected and lost in the deck. Two Jokers are thrown onto the table, and a face down card appears between them. It is the selection. The trick is repeated, but this time the Jokers are lost in the deck. The single selection is thrown onto the table and suddenly, is surrounded by 2 face down cards. They are turned and shown to be the Jokers. For the third phase, the spectator loses the Jokers into the deck, and again the single card is thrown to the table. This time, 3 face down cards appear around them, which complete the four of a kind of the spectators choice.

METHOD

PHASE ONE

Start with a four of a kind on top of the deck, and the two Jokers removed. Set this up beforehand, do casually between effects, or for a more advanced version you can cull your four of a kind to the back whilst going through the deck to take out the Jokers. Doing it this way makes the effect fully impromptu, although setting up openly is perfectly doable and takes less than 30 seconds.

Once you have the four of a kind on top (we will use the Queens in this explanation, so feel free to follow along), you need to force the top card without disturbing the rest of the top stock. I cut the deck and classic force (you have a 4 card window to hit, and then cut the stock to the top). You can also riffle force, or slip force, or anything. There are plenty of forcing types out there that work here. Now the card has been chosen, it needs controlling to the top. There are a few options here, ranging in difficulty.

EASY:

Have the card returned to the top of the deck. Cut half the deck with your right hand, like you're about to slip the top card into the middle of the deck. Instead, allow your right hand's fingers to come into contact with the face of the bottom card (of the top packet in your right hand). Lightly touch your left thumb on the top of the right packet. This is to act like a normal slip. As per a normal slip, separate your hands, allowing your left hand's fingers to drag the bottom card of the packet off and onto the top of the left hand packet. The top half can now be replaced, as it looks like you just slipped the top card into the middle of the pack.

INTERMEDIATE:

(editor note) A great single card control is the Hover Control by Chris Severson. I cannot teach this here, but it is invaluable. I cannot recommend it highly enough

ADVANCED:

If you are able to, a clean way to do this is to bottom deal an indifferent card to the table, then insert it fairly into the spread and actually square up.

Get a pinky break underneath the top Queen. Take a Joker and put it on top of the deck (face up, on top of the card above your break). Pick up the second Joker and slide it into the break. Pick all 3 cards up as 2 (FIG 1), separating them from the deck, in your right hand.

I personally put the deck down and regrip the 3 cards using both hands. I take the double in my left, with my left fingers curled underneath. The single Joker is held in my right hand (but the 3 cards are kept together as a group.) (FIG 2)

Now, as you drop the Jokers to the table, extend your left fingers outward sharply, this will cause the cards to split and land on the table revealing the sandwich. Here, you can openly show the selected card between the Jokers.

FIG 1

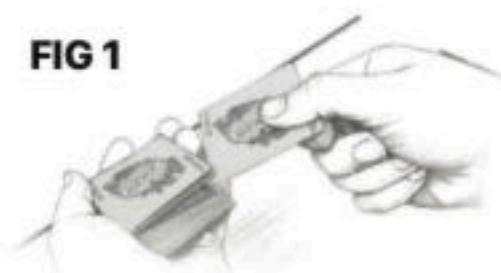


FIG 2

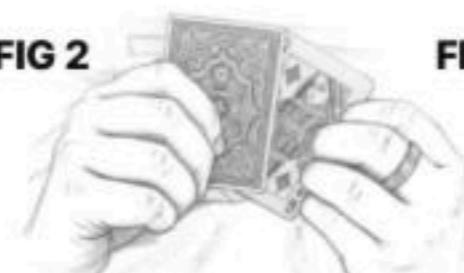


FIG 3



PHASE TWO

Pick up the Jokers to lose them in the deck, but control them back to the top again without disturbing your top stock. The same things apply here if you need them to. Do 2 false slips, the Hover Control works fine with 2 cards and a bit of tweaking, and the bottom deal is also a fantastic method here.

As you falsely square the "Jokers" into the deck, palm off the top card. (editors note: I square, then break, then come back to palm)

The situation is as follows:

A Joker is palmed, a joker is on top of the deck, with 3 Queens underneath. The spectators card, a Queen, is on the table.

You have two options here, scoop or claw.

SCOOP:

Push off the top card slightly, and slide it under the selection to scoop it up. Get a break underneath these two cards. You may need to use the dirty hand a little, but this is done in conversation so no heat should be on your dirty hand.

CLAW:

Use your dirty hand BOLDLY to pick up the selection from the table. As you're doing this (FIG 3), with the left hand, get a break under a card, and then place the selection onto the deck.

Either way, at the end of the pick up, you have a Joker palmed, then the Queen face up on top of a face down Joker, then your break, then the other 3 Queens.

This is the most difficult part of the routine:

Pick up everything above your break with the dirty hand. This will be the Queen and face down Joker acting as one card: The Queen. Place the rest of the deck down. From here, you can hold the double in the same way as Phase 1, with the left hand fingers curled underneath. At the same time you drop, you can also let the palmed card fall free, so that when the selection hits the table, 2 face down cards have now appeared sandwiching it (FIG 5). These will be the Jokers.

PHASE THREE

The final phase turns this effect from a sandwich trick to a 4 of a kind appearance. Here, we can genuinely lose the Jokers into the deck. I allow the spectators to do this, spread the cards on the table and allowing the spectators to insert the Jokers themselves, squaring them in.

Upon taking back the deck, palm the top card again (an indifferent Queen). Either scoop or claw yet again, but this time get a break under 2 face down cards. This means when the selection is on top of the deck, you have the selection plus 2 face down cards above your pinky break, with a Queen palmed in the right hand.

The same kind of reveal with this last phase, where you can pick up everything above your break as one card, ditch the deck, then drop everything to the table. This time, the selection will be surrounded by 3 other face down cards. The spectator will be expecting Jokers, and will be shocked when the 4 of a kind is revealed.

You can also do this in stages:

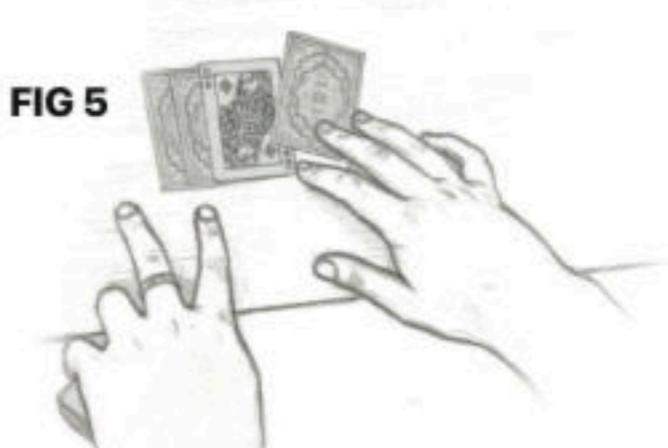
When you have lifted everything off your beak (holding 3 Queens in left hand and 1 palmed in right), you can drop the palmed card and just push off the single Queen, keeping the two face down Queens as one card. This shows the same sandwich image they have seen before. Then, when dropping to the table, allow your left hand to drag and separate the two Queens as they fall, meaning it has gone from a single card selection, to a traditional sandwich they have just seen, to an extra card appearing.

The reveal? Let them turn over the 4 of a kind and receive your applause.

FIG 4



FIG 5



invisible dictionary

andy jay

I wanted a mentalism effect that didn't require any gimmicks, nor apps, and was "improptu" (whatever that means nowadays). I studied propless mentalism for a while and came across a guy called Ross Tayler. If that name is new to you, then go and look him up, and prepare to have your mind blown.

Ross has a great project with Fraser Parker called "Rapture", and on that project is an effect named "Any Word". I took the handling of that effect and turned it into a one-on-one self contained effect.

Now, this is not revolutionary. There is nothing new here, but I love how I have built the routine and where most magicians say "this is my go-to effect" and don't mean it.... I do. It requires a pen and a stack of business cards. This fit the bill for me for being "impromptu". I'm a chronic note-taker and I always have business cards on me. Bingo.

So here is the effect, in a nutshell, as they will see it:

You write a word down and have them sign the back of it for safe keeping. That card goes in your pocket, and the trick starts. After some presentation-only questions, they name a word. You got it wrong. Everybody is sad. Maybe some people laugh at you. You explain yourself, explaining how hard mind-reading is. You demonstrate by having them try to guess a colour you're thinking of. You write a colour down and place it in their hand. They name a colour and they're wrong, proving it's impossible to guess, even if just a colour... if you had written down their word at the beginning... that would be amazing. You take the card out of your pocket, signed by them, and have them turn it over. Their word is there.

So this is how it plays every single time. And they can name any word, because we're just using a simple one-ahead method. But don't be disappointed. I think the strength of this effect is your acting, and also... I have a few different handling ideas (not totally fully formed, so you can help grow it further!) that remove the pocket from being needed, leaving the signed card out in the open the whole time.

So grab some business cards (or billets of any kind) and a pen, and let's get learning.

THE METHOD SUMMARISED

Write a colour and then second deal a blank card placing face down and having them sign the back. Fake put into your pocket, palming out and replacing on top of stack, hiding the written colour. Have them name a word. Feign getting it wrong, build up getting it wrong, demonstrate with a colour. Write their word on your face card (with signed back), then second deal the colour card, placing it face down. Have them name a colour, turn over the colour card. Palm off the signed card and remove from pocket.

See? Simple. But let's break it down **further**.

This does work with as little as 3 cards, but ideally you want a nice sized stack. I usually grab 15 or so everytime I leave the house, plus some that live in my car. Hold them blank side up in your hand and start the routine. This is how I perform it:

Me: I'm going to ask you a question you've probably never been asked before in your life... Are you ready?... Do you have a favourite letter of the alphabet?

Spec: I don't think so?

Me: Okay well, some people say the first letter of their name, or their spouses name, or dogs name. Maybe don't go for those now I've said them but if you had to name one letter what would you say?

Spec: Hmm... M?

Me: M? Okay, wow, nobody chooses M. Okay...

Here, I write down the colour YELLOW on my top card, and I second deal it onto their palm up hand or the table (*Fig 1*). You don't need to do a fancy second deal here, and you want to keep the stack wrist killed towards you, so nobody can see what you're writing. I catch a pinky break under the top two blank cards, and when I have written YELLOW I simply reach into my break and take the second card out. I break here, and shake the card like a polaroid (not too hard otherwise the blank face will flash) and give it a blow as if the ink needs to dry. It's a little convincer, but also not important if you want to do this somewhat surrounded.

They now have a blank business card face down in their hand, you have a stack of business cards with a colour written on the face (keep that wrist killed!) Hand them the pen and have them sign the back of the card. Emphasise:

Me: Sign the back of this for me, just so you know I can't switch it out. Don't look at what I've written yet, we'll get to that later.

The spectator signs the card, and as they are recapping the pen, place it in your back pocket. Keep the signed side towards them as to not flash the blank face, and if you're surrounded, you can almost hold it in a loose palm position as it goes into the pocket to hide the blank face from people behind you.

Once your hand is in your pocket, slide the card up into palm and bring the hand back out, placing the card immediately ontop of your stack in hand (*Fig 2*). Because you've kept the signed side towards your audience, this means when in palm the signed side will be outward, with the blank face against your palm. When you place the card onto the stack, it covers the colour card with a seemingly blank card, meaning you can now relax if you show the face of the stack as it will seem like it should.

Now we start the selection process. This doesn't really matter as they really can name any word, so it's presentational only. Here is what I do:

Me: Can you pick up the invisible dictionary for me? It's just there, in front of you. Pick it up for me.

Spec: Actually pick it up?

Me: Yeah! It's right there.

(This is where I am palming the card out of my pocket and replacing it onto the stack)

Me: Great. If you flick through the pages, you'll see the letters pass... A.... B... C... Just stop wherever you like. You CAN stop on M, but that might be too obvious. It's totally up to you.

Spec: Okay I've stopped.

Me: Awesome. What letter did you stop on?

Spec: G

Me: Oh no. Okay, I might still be able to make this work. Okay, so if you look at the pages can you see all the "G" words?

Spec: I can...

Me: Do a couple jump out at you? Maybe one in particular?

Spec: Goose.

Me: Goose? Like the bird?

Spec: Yeah.

Here, I put on my best Oscar worthy performance and genuinely try to convince them I have it wrong. I convince myself I have it wrong. I stutter, I act disappointed. I play off how they react, and immediately try to justify why I got it wrong.

I know how this looks. I'm telling you that you need to get it WRONG? That isn't good, you'll look like an idiot, you won't look super smart and maybe look like you shouldn't have been hired for the gig in the first place...

YEP.

Play it, and play it well. It will make the kicker so much sweeter if you do. I know it's an ego hit, and I understand that some people won't want to introduce it into their character and that's fine. I am willing to take a hit if it means I get a bigger hit down the line (but this is part of a bigger conversation.)

So let's check in:

As far as they are concerned, you have written a word down, they've signed the back, and that is in your pocket. They've then chosen a word and Mr Magic Man here has gotten it wrong and is now all embarrassed.

What's actually happened:

You have a blank card on top with their signature on the back. And then you have a colour written without a signature on the back. Then the rest of the stack. Nothing is in your pocket.

Once I've milked getting it wrong and somebody has made a "awhh, it's okay we love you anyway" quote, I go into gentle-defence mode.

Me: Well, there are so many words in the English language, right?
We've only just met. If I had written down "Goose" that would be... impossible. Even with a restricted amount of words, like... I don't know... colours, it's so hard. If I were to choose a colour right now, do you think you could guess it? Considering there are only 10-15 colours that people would name.

Spec: I think I could!

Me: Alright, well I'll commit, and you can guess.

Write "Goose" on the top card. This puts "Goose" on their signed card. Once written, second deal again, placing the colour card face down on their hand or table (Fig 3).

Me: Okay, I've committed, what colour do you think I've gone for?

Spec: Green.

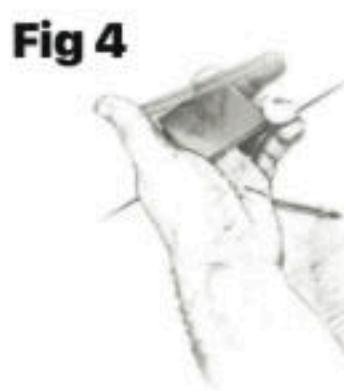
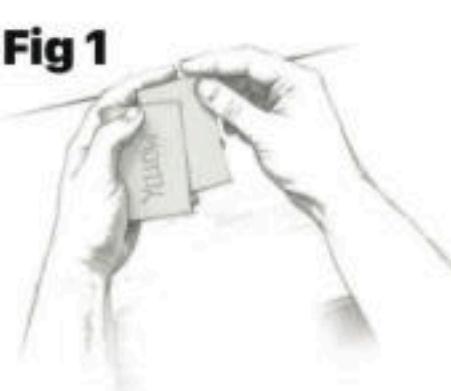
Me: Have a look! So close, but see how hard it is? It's impressive just with a colour. If I had written "Goose" at the beginning... and then had you sign that card and put it in my pocket... that would be... impossible, right?

At this point whilst I'm delivering that above line, I palm off the top "Goose" card, and move almost immediately to my pocket. I aim to pull it out of the pocket when I say "and put it in my pocket... that would be... impossible, right?" By the end of the line, I'm holding their signed card at my fingertips, handing it to them to turn over.

What I love about this effect is that it forces people to drop their guard. They see a professional fail at their craft. For the most part, at least whenever I have performed this, which I have done hundreds of times, you are met with empathy. This allows you to easily win them over. On top of that, the second you reach into your pocket to pull out the signed card, they react. Laymen can connect the dots, and they know what's coming. You get reactions from this point right up until they turn the card over. The build up and release peaks and valleys in this effect make it very enjoyable to perform and I really amp up the peaks and push down the valleys.

The key thing I would keep in mind when practicing and performing is the angle of your wrist. There are some moments you are dirty on the top of your card stack, make sure you choreograph to hide these, done with a simple wrist kill. See the images below.

So now you know the basics of the effect, let's talk about variations.



Although I generally have no issue with going to the pocket. The way the routine plays means there is very little heat on that get-ready moment, and is built with the "pick up the invisible dictionary" line to distract from the placement back onto the stack. But I would love a version that keeps the signed card on the table. Here are some rough solutions that you can take and build on. Thanks to Adam Dadswell for helping with handlings across the board and watching my stream of consciousness videos I send about this.

Okay so here are 2 solutions (for whatever they're worth):

1 Pre-fold a card and sign one half of the back. Keep this card palmed in your left hand with your signature facing inward, and then place the blank stack on top (Fig 4). Once you've second dealt the blank card (after writing the colour), fold it in half. They sign one side of the back and you place the folded card onto the stack for you to sign. Once you have signed, I pretend to take the folded billet off with my right hand, when in fact I slide the bottom pre-folded card out (your signature will be showing) as my left hand moves to grab a drink to place the card under. (Fig 5)

You should now have your pre-folded billet in your right hand, with your signature showing. In your left hand is the stack, with the real signed folded card on top, wrist killed as you pick up a glass and place the pre-folded billet underneath. This is really strong, as the billet is out, but YOUR signature is on top. It's enough of a convincer, as they don't know what is coming, and the effect hasn't really started yet.

Whilst they're acting going through the dictionary, this gives you plenty of time to unfold the billet on top of the stack, ready for the word to be written. Now you can write their word, second deal the colour (unfolded) card out and place face down. Whilst they're naming a colour and turning it over, you can refold the billet.

When you're ready. Take the folded billet out from under the glass, showing that you signed it. I personally enjoy just placing this at the BACK of the card stack as you tilt your wrist down to show the face of your stack. It doesn't make sense but try it out, it's disarmingly deceptive, especially when done on an off beat.

Doing this means the pre-folded billet sits behind the stack, showing the real folded card laying on top of the stack. They are able to take that folded card and open it for the reveal.

2 You can also use a pseudo-signature method. I use pseudo-signatures a lot in my professional shows, and I will explain my thoughts and touches on it in a future edition. But ultimately, depending on the country you are in, there are "stereotypical" shapes of signatures. Sounds silly, but if you do a tight and scribbly gibberish signature, and you do a curvy air-y gibberish signature then you can be covered for a lot of scenarios.

In this second handling idea, have your pseudo signature card on the bottom of your stack, face up (pseudo-signature outward). You can have them sign the card as usual, but when they are doing so, turn the stack over against your body. Beware of card placement here, you can flash on both sides of your stack, so make sure your grip is solid and you're keeping it secret. When you take the card back, immediately place it face down on top of the pseudo-sig card. Then blow on the signature, and second deal the pseudo out, placing it under a glass. Place it on your side of the glass, so the refraction from the glass (and liquid inside) will shield the detail of the signature.

Their attention will immediately be moved back to the invisible dictionary they need to pick up, so don't think too much about it.

All you need to do is pass that top card (with the real signature) to the face, and you're covered to place the stack down and relax whilst they name their word and you pretend to get it wrong. When you demonstrate the colour phase and second deal your colour card down after writing their word down on the signed card, you can either leave the card on the face ready to switch in, or pass it to the back ready to switch.

When you're ready to switch it back in, just take the card quickly from under the glass and do a top change. Depending on if you're doing it face up or face down will be dependant on your choreography here. You're essentially placing the pseudo card onto the stack and second dealing or top changing for the real prediction.

I hope you have fun with this effect! If you see me at The Session or Blackpool in 2026, I can perform this for you and run you through the handling in person!

If you're interested in seeing the routine play and explained in video, you can join Adam Dadswells Patreon where I shared the base routine and some further ideas on video.

COMMERCIAL SORCERY

DAVID ALNWICK

CASTING SPELLS

I'm a full-time professional magician. The majority of my work is spent performing at the Edinburgh Fringe festival or within theatres throughout the UK. I recently started to perform close-up again and am paid well to do so (rates are available on my website). I have strong reviews, and have cultivated a reasonable fan base throughout the last decade.

I don't mean to boast (although I am bloody proud and grateful of my career), I say this as justification for the ideas I'm about to present. While the following

"There is some confusion as to what magic actually is. I think this can be cleared up if you just look at the very earliest descriptions of magic. Magic in its earliest form is often referred to as "the art." I believe this is completely literal. I believe that magic is art and that art, whether it be writing, music, sculpture, or any other form is literally magic. Art is, like magic, the science of manipulating symbols, words, or images, to achieve changes in consciousness. The very language about magic seems to be talking as much about writing or art as it is about supernatural events. A grimoire for example, the book of spells is simply a fancy way of saying grammar. Indeed, to cast a spell, is simply to spell, to manipulate words, to change people's consciousness. And I believe that this is why an artist or writer is the closest thing in the contemporary world that you are likely to see to a Shaman."

Alan Moore is a writer who changed the medium of comic books with his iconic take on 'Marvel Man,' and then again with 'Watchmen.' Moore is regarded as one of the greatest living writers of fiction. Moore is also, by his own admission, a magician. Moore does not practice sleight of hand. Indeed, his methods are more closely associated with propless mentalism. Pete Turner is probably a fan. Moore isn't as wealthy as David Copperfield, but I'm confident Moore's cultural impact dwarfs the entire of magic's contribution to the zeitgeist over the last five decades.

ABSTRACT MAGIC

I mean, c'mon, we all love magic. I REALLY love magic. At this point, magic is my religion. But magic (in the way we do it) has a low cultural impact relative to other arts. That's not inherently a bad thing, but it's definitely not a good thing. And yet, magic as an idea, as an abstract, beats everything.

I've read a lot of books on varying artistic practice, filmmaking, writing, all kinds of performance art, you name it, and almost every one of those authors, at some point, says their practice is 'like a magic trick.'

The informal definition of magician is 'a person exceptionally skilled in something.' Often, any high-level craftsman or artist is referred to as a 'magician.' Our art is the universal idea of mastery.

When portrayed positively in fiction, we either have actual supernatural powers or camera tricks are employed to demonstrate powers (in films like 'The Prestige' or 'The Illusionist') beyond what stage magicians can actually achieve. Mostly though, fictional portrayals of magicians (as I discuss in my TEDx Talk 'Why Magic Should Frighten You, little plug there) are jokes. The literal fool. Where's the disconnect? How is the modern magician so comically removed from even the informal definition of itself?

I believe the answer was best spoken by one of my heroes within the art.

Take it away, Max.

"Most magicians are afraid of magic."

Max Maven

MAGIC BAD

It's a terrible cliché for magicians to trash-talk, mock, and deride other magicians. Max did it, a lot (and I love Max). I couldn't get through Ortiz's 'Strong Magic' because every other page savaged 'most magicians' (seriously, try to read it, or read Jamy Ian Swiss' 1994 review of it).

I get why. I can't imagine it's a problem exclusive to the performance art of magic, although I imagine the fact magic isn't generally respected as an art form by the general public exacerbates it. When you're trying to create great magic in the hope people will appreciate it as they might a good book or film, and you see a working magician perform store-bought tricks, word for word, badly, knowing most audiences have never experienced live magic before and this is likely their first and forever impression. A banana, instead of a bandanna.

Even so, it isn't cool to belittle other magicians, it does more to highlight the personal insecurities of the writer, and we're all pretty insecure.

Instead, I'll say this. Growing up, I was led to believe there was such a thing as 'commercial magic.' This was the stuff you did to make money and get gigs. I was also led to believe the highest bracket of opportunity available to the magician was a 'Got Talent' show.

From where I now stand, I feel professionally and artistically confident enough to say this is bullshit nonsense.

THERE IS ONE GOD.

"Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art."

Andy Warhol

There was a time where I might have thought the above quote is in violation of Maven's statement, but the opposite is true. There's countless works on the topic of 'Is Magic Art,' and the only reason this could possibly be in question is if magicians are not being artists. Would Warhol, Bowie, Moore, Penn & Teller, or Derren have achieved their cultural impact standing in front of a panel of 'judges,' none of whom possess a goddamn soul, to be publicly appraised? There is only one God who gets to weigh my heart against the feather. My audience.

I draw two circles, and in one I write what I'd love to see. In the other, I write what I believe my audience might want to see, and I perform that which overlaps. Sometimes, I take risks. I perform only what I want, and hope they want it to. They can be feral when I'm wrong about that, and I try not to take it too personally, but on occasion, we agree, and when it happens it's the closest one can get to the divine. Long story short, I don't think Simon Cowell is good for business. It's good for the individual, in the short term, sometimes, but overall, I don't think those platforms are a net positive.

What we think of as 'Commercial magic,' has immense value, for sure, but it risks becoming a copy of a copy of a copy. False art imitates art, normal art is old art treated in a new way, true art is entirely original. Aiming for true art isn't practical. Dedicate your life to normal art and you might happen upon true art. I didn't come up with this, it's the central thesis of 'Our Magic' written by Devant and Maskelyne well over a hundred years ago.

What I have found to be commercial art or 'good business' is to embrace the kind of magic Maven believed magicians feared. The kind of magic Moore talks about. The ancient idea of magic echoed in the modern abstract of 'magician.' It's about understanding the connection between what we might think of as the fantasy idea of magic, the 'supernatural,' and artistic craft. We all know the C. Clarke quote about advanced technology being indistinguishable from magic, but this idea can be extended. Most people don't understand most things, as such everything can feel a little bit magic. When a painter creates a perfect depiction of a landscape from a blank canvas, watching it come to life feels like magic without the need for supernatural belief.

This thesis is extremely broad, and my life is dedication to exploring its implications, but I want to end with something you can action on. Look up Strange Bird Immersive's blog, 'Immersology.' They create the best escape rooms in the world due to their fascinating work on the nature of immersive storytelling. It's one of the best resources for understanding magic, and how the average person interacts with it. Their writing significantly impacted my own work.

I'll leave you with the immortal words of the greatest magician to ever live.



"I can escape anything lol"

Harry 'big dick' Houdini

The Witch Of 1665

Effect:

A deck of tarot cards is introduced. The performer invites a participant to cut the deck and marks the cut.

An image is shown of a woman named Judith Witchell, a victim of a witch trial. The performer explains that she was condemned as a witch for using tarot cards. Stories like hers inspired the performer to explore the tarot and its symbolism.

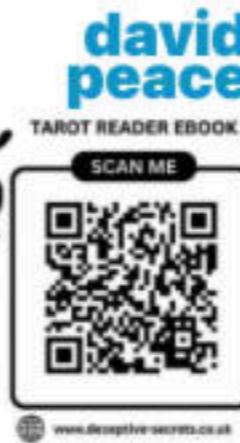
The performer offers to give three participants a reading. Each person is given three tarot cards and asked to mix them face down so the order is unknown. The performer begins with the past, asks each participant to select one of their cards to represent it and gives them a reading. The process continues for the present and future, with each participant choosing from their remaining cards.

As the readings end, the performer points out that if the participants had chosen different cards, their readings would have been completely different. The performer then draws attention to the numbers on the cards and notes that each row forms a three-digit number. When these three numbers are added together, the total is 1665. Finally, the performer brings the focus back to Judith Witchell. The image is turned over or revealed to show that she was hung as a witch in the year 1665.

Method:

This is the classic 1665 force, re-imagined using tarot cards. It has always been a favorite of mine, and one day, while looking at the numbers on the tarot cards, it all came together. The method is simple, elegant, and completely self-working as long as the setup is followed.

Each group of three cards adds up to 15. When you assign a group to each participant and line up their selections correctly, the final total reveals itself as 1665. The force works through columns, and here is the exact breakdown:



Three sets of cards:

861	Strength (8), The Lovers (6), The Magician (1)
942	The Hermit (9), The Emperor (4), The High Priestess (2)
375	The Empress (3), The Chariot (7), The Hierophant (5)

Note that in some tarot decks, Strength and Justice are swapped between numbers 8 and 11. If your deck places Justice at 8, make sure to adjust accordingly so the math still works.

To begin, stack these nine cards on top of the deck. The order within each set of three does not matter, and the order of the groups also does not matter. What matters is that all nine are on top. At this point you can perform a false shuffle or false cut, as long as the top nine cards remain in place. When the performance begins, hand the deck to a participant and ask them to cut it. Use the criss cross force by placing the remainder of the deck across the cut portion at an angle. This creates the illusion of a free choice. Now you shift focus.

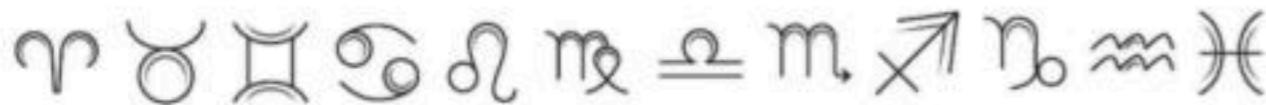
Introduce the image of Judith Witchell and share her story. This part of the routine is not just emotional context, it also serves as time misdirection to cover the discrepancy caused by the criss cross force. Let the moment breathe and draw the audience into the atmosphere. After the story, return to the cards. Remove the angled packet and deal the top nine cards into three groups of three. Each participant receives one group. At this point the method is essentially complete.

Ask each participant to select one of their cards to represent their past. Then repeat this for the present and the future. It is important that the participants place their cards in a vertical line so each person has their own column. The cards must not be mixed between participants. Once the readings are finished, draw attention to the numbers on the cards. Add up each column. Each will total 15. From there:

Rightmost column: 3 plus 7 plus 5 equals 15. Carry the 1.
Middle column: 9 plus 4 plus 2 equals 15 plus 1 equals 16. Carry the 1.
Leftmost column: 8 plus 6 plus 1 equals 15 plus 1 equals 16.
The final total is 1665.

Now return to the story. Bring the attention back to Judith Witchell. Ask the audience to look again at her image. Turn it over and reveal what has been there the entire time. She was hanged as a witch in 1665. The same number they unknowingly created through the cards.

david alnwick COMPATIBLE SIGNS



Here's a simple effect to know a participant's star-sign. It's a method I first discovered through Steve Young's brilliant effect 'Visionary.' I adapted it for star-signs.

Cut out the 'Compatible Signs' article and keep it (there are more copies on the cover sheet on this newspaper.) Have a participant look over the article and explain it shows which star-signs are most compatible to your own. Have them silently find their star-sign in bold and look at the three compatible signs beneath it.

Have the spectator read aloud their sign and its corresponding compatible signs in any order they wish, and you will try to guess which of the named signs is theirs.

Here's how you know.

The signs are secretly split into two groups. Signs beginning with either S, A, or C, and signs that are not. The mnemonic is SAC (or CAS, if you prefer).

In every case, the bold signs and corresponding compatible signs belong to different groups. You must listen for the odd one out.

E.g. You hear them say Aries, Scorpio, Leo, & Cancer.

Aries, Scorpio, and Cancer begin with either a S, A, or C, so the odd one out (therefore their sign) is Leo.

If they name Gemini, Taurus, Pisces, & Cancer, the odd one out is Cancer as it's the only one that begins with SAC. Easy.

If you like this, sign up to my mailing list here: www.davidalnwick.com/palmreader to receive a free birthday revelation method and hear about upcoming effects.

Your Compatible Signs

Davina Cook Lifestyle Editor

Find your sign in **bold** to see the most compatible signs with yours. Your lucky number this week is 1089 and your card is the ten of hearts.

Taurus
Capricorn - Scorpio - Cancer

Capricorn
Virgo - Leo - Pisces

Cancer
Gemini - Taurus - Pisces

Leo
Aries - Scorpio - Cancer

Libra
Capricorn - Aries - Sagittarius

Aries
Taurus - Gemini - Virgo

Aquarius
Leo - Virgo - Libra

Gemini
Aries - Cancer - Sagittarius

Virgo
Aquarius - Sagittarius - Aries

Scorpio
Taurus - Libra - Pisces

Sagittarius
Taurus - Virgo - Leo

Pisces
Scorpio - Capricorn - Aries

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Leo
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Libra
Capricorn - Aries - Sagittarius

Aries
Taurus - Gemini - Virgo

Aquarius
Leo - Virgo - Libra

Gemini
Aries - Cancer - Sagittarius

Virgo
Aquarius - Sagittarius - Aries

Scorpio
Taurus - Libra - Pisces

Sagittarius
Taurus - Virgo - Leo

Pisces
Scorpio - Capricorn - Aries

projects you need to see.

harry baker

If you love good writing, take tips from Harry Baker. The Grandslam Poet has gained worldwide recognition from his incredibly heartfelt, funny, and clever wordplay. Anything from a spoon used to eat Falafel with during his time in Germany, through to a poem to be read at his funeral, Harry draws the line between comedy and emotion perfectly.

In fact, his poems are so good, they would make a great addition to a show... hmm.

His TikTok is blowing up if you are on that, but he also has great clips on YouTube. In the nature of the newspaper, I must commend his physical works, with his book "Wonderful" being one of my favourites, and "Unashamed" following closely. He is also an absolute joy to watch on stage, a true masterclass in filling a stage and capturing a theatre audience with nothing but his notebook and a microphone stand and one that can absolutely add to how we speak to our audiences.

He's currently touring around the UK, if you get a chance to see him please do. You might even see me there.

A little quote from his poem "Sunflowers: Instructions Upon my Death":

*I don't need a fancy pot to keep my ashes,
Just find a decent spot where there's a breeze.
So the next time someone gasps at all the wonder in the world,
A part of them is breathing in a part of me.*

SAM christian grace

If you don't know Christian, then you are missing out on some of the most incredible thinking when it comes to card magic and mentalism that there is in the world right now.

I am good friends with Christian, and have worked closely with him throughout the development of ENIGMA and SAM especially. If you don't know what SAM is, then here is quick low down:

SAM - YOU think of a word, and with no questions at all the spectator guesses your thought. They are not spot on, but they are contextually very close.

SAM tackles the issue of the too-perfect theory... perfectly. Let's take the assumption that as mind-readers, we are claiming that we can do it for real. We can read people, and read minds. If that were true, we may get it right a lot of the time but there will be natural mistakes, and times where we get close, but not perfect. This just adds to the realism of what we are claiming. Now imagine giving that to a spectator.

If they actually tried to read your mind, this is what it would look like. It's real. It's convincing. It's fantastic.

It's an iOS only app, that uses Apples Dictation services for voice input. This of course comes with the knowledge of appropriate places that are ideal for voice recognition performances.

I've personally used this for a long time, and it's the perfect addition to ENIGMA, or any mind reading routine.

SAM can be found at
enigmaofthemind.com

Questions:
support@enigmaofthemind.com

parade

I live in Bournemouth, for those of you that don't know. And as an Arts Town, with an Arts University, we aren't that "arty". So I decided to visit the annual "Arts by the Sea" festival, boasting independent artists coming to perform for free over a weekend. I wasn't expecting much, but I was specifically blown away by one performance, and it opened my eyes to how I could implement it into expanding my magic.

I was walking through the town centre, on my way to the festival, but what caught my eye was a GIANT wooden wheel, being rolled by a handful of performers. Every now and again, one of them would scale the outside of the wheel as it was rolling, cheering to the crowd once they reached the top. Music was blaring, and they had gained a crowd of 100 or so people as they pushed the wheel through the town.

They climbed it up a hill, and parked it in an open space on the high street. They strapped wheels to the side of the big wheel and then put the big wheel on its side, and put a wooden top on. It made a stage on wheels. By this point, there was 200 people crowding around. And they danced. They were up on top of the wheel, spinning it, running on it, jumping off it, climbing all over it. It was beautiful, and reminded me of my long gone youth!

Not only as it a beautifully made prop, but the idea of wheeling it through the city to gain an audience and then tipping it to make it a stage is awesome, and one I want to explore for a touring festival mentalism act. Does mentalism work in a "walk-by" festival, like glorified busking? Any mentalism buskers out there, hit me up I want to know more.

If you manage to catch it in your local city in the UK, then go and catch a performance and see how this eye catching stagin could work for your performances. You can catch a visual if you type "**Parade The Giant Wheel**" into YouTube.



reviews.

THREE

adam dadswell & luke closer

THREE by Adam Dadswell and Luke Closer is a thoughtful, well-crafted collection of mentalism for real-world performers. It is simple, smart, and focused entirely on what matters most: strong structure, direct methods, and reactions that feel genuine.

Luke Closer's I CAAN YOU CAAN offers a refreshingly direct take on the Card at Any Number plot. You can use any shuffled deck, and the method feels as fair as it looks. It is straightforward, reliable, and hits hard in performance. His CASH IN HAND builds on the familiar "which hand" idea but adds several unexpected layers, revealing not just where the money is, but also a thought-of time, destination, and playing card. The routine flows naturally and ends with a clever surprise that has been hiding in plain sight. Adam Dadswell's Choice of Three rounds things out with a strong three-envelope routine built around a clever, flexible idea. The choices feel completely open, yet the ending always lands exactly where it should.

What makes THREE stand out is how honest it feels. The methods are easy to follow, but the thinking behind them is smart and deliberate. Every detail has been tested, refined, and stripped back to what really matters in front of an audience. The teaching is clear and practical, with enough insight to help you make the material your own. Each routine feels natural in performance, fits neatly into any working set, and resets quickly so you can move straight into the next piece.

THREE is modern mentalism done properly. It is simple, confident, and powerful in the hands of someone who values clarity over complexity. It proves that great magic does not need to be difficult; it just needs to be well thought through and performed with intent.

Three:
deceptive-secrets.co.uk/store/p/three

Use code "THEMAG" for 20% off THREE!

HORROR, COMEDY AND MAGIC

michael samuel

I've enjoyed writing for a few years now. I always loved any creative writing that we might do in English GCSE and I was really inspired by Stephen King. More specifically, I loved the bizarre, psychological aspect of his storytelling. The way that it allowed (*and to a degree requires*) the reader to make assumptions in their own mind—the way that he might use those expectations against the reader.

This made me want to write my own horror novella. I think it was about a person slowly and painfully turning into a vampire: a bit Jekyll and Hyde-esque! I stopped writing it mainly because the writing process was taking up a lot more time than what my daily life allowed for (*so if you want to steal the idea then feel free!*)

After trying to write horror, I turned to writing comedy sketches. Sketches were a lot less time consuming to write and it was much easier to start and stop writing them. They also brought a bit more joy to life rather than constantly thinking about how I was going to avert the reader from figuring out that Bob was the psychopathic, murderous vampire!

What I realised about horror and comedy was that, whilst each genre is clearly different in entertaining intent, they have the same integral structure—build of tension, climax, release in tension.

How does this relate to magic?

In magic, tension builds, tension climaxes and tension releases in the exact same way! With horror, we expect a threat (*building tension*), the threat reveals itself (*tension climaxes*) and we gasp (*tension releases*). With comedy, expectation is created with the set-up of a joke, the expectation is averted (*reaching the climax*) and we laugh. With magic, the idea of an impossibility is entertained, the impossibility becomes the spectator's reality, and the tension is released with either a gasp or a laugh or both!

This similarity is an important one to articulate because it provides us with a basic structural context: one which we can perform our magic by. We must understand that the context of the magic is what creates the impossibility.

Assume you are performing an ambitious card but, the spectator never saw you put any card into the deck. All they see is you turn the top card over and exclaim "look, the nine of hearts is on top!" Of course they will not be amazed. Therefore, we must ensure that our magic is understood—structurally. The spectator must see the nine of hearts go into the pack first, in order to be amazed when they see it is on top again. If we had a trick that did not structurally make sense—one that did not build tension—it would be like a joke that did not avert expectation. It would be like a joke that read:

"Doctor, Doctor, I feel I have a strawberry on my head," and the doctor replied... "No worries, I'll refer you for a scan and monitor to ensure there is nothing damaged with the tissue?"

That's a terrible joke! That is exactly what everyone expects to hear. Why should anyone laugh at that? That is what makes it so powerful to have multiple endings to a trick. If you are doing an ambitious card routine and for the last three phases the card has appeared on top, the audience expect for the card to appear on top. When it does appear on top they aren't impressed because that's exactly what they anticipate will happen. The first three times it happened, it was unexpected and so, the audience were surprised however, by the third time they are conditioned to believe their card will appear on top. Therefore, avert their expectation by making their card appear folded in a matchbox or in one's pocket or under a glass or behind their ear (only perform the last cliché if it is presentationally necessary!).

Ultimately, predictability is boring. That is why, when writing a song, the first two melodies sung in a chorus are the same and the third line sung is a slight variation of the first melody. A spectator may expect the woman to be sawn in half however, only in a few tricks can you meet the spectator's expectations exactly. In those tricks, you need a really good method!

Some magicians may say "You will think of any card. You will think of any number and the card you think of will be at the number you are thinking of." This is not contradictory to what I am saying. This is building up the expectation. However, it is the step-by-step presentation: "you will now lose your card. You will now shuffle the cards. I will now fan the cards facing me. I will now find your card" that is boring and monotonous. There is no build-up of tension because all the tension is being defused. It does not allow for the spectator to build up enough of a reaction when that moment of tension release comes. They will merely have had their expectation met because you made their expectation so—unlike the horror when you as the reader shouldn't have guessed that Bob was the vampire.

Lastly, what's most important about this build of tension, climax, and release is that the release of tension is a raw, human reaction—a gasp or laugh. It is somewhat difficult to find the sweet spot between how long we should wait while building tension and when we should reach the climax of the trick. If someone is telling a joke and the setup is very long, but the punchline is a childish pun, then the joke is not as funny as if it was retold with a much shorter set up. Depending on how powerful the trick is, determines how long you should spend building expectation. That (I believe) is the problem with magic squares. They are firstly maths, which some people just hate, and they are all in all (to spectators at least) not as impressive as the ring-on-rope trick you just did. However, the effect of the trick can be strengthened if the tension built is quicker than a five-minute mini history of magic squares, which only magicians and mathematicians have heard about.

All in all, you must remember, any magic is built on the suspense of disbelief, the expectation of something impossible becoming a reality. Do not defuse the spectator's expectation by describing what is going to happen as seen by yourself (the magician). Try to feel with the spectator the disbelief that what is happening has just happened, no matter what their brain is telling them. This will allow space for that moment of a release in tension—the human response of joy and wonder to magic.

IS ORIGINALITY NECESSARY?

andy jay

Nothing is original in magic anymore.

That's the saying, right? I was once told by a magician that originality was the most important thing. That is was "wrong" to perform an effect the way it was performed by somebody else. Add your own twist, your own patter, your own handling. Only then, are you a good magician.

I'm here to challenge that concept, with a bit of a stream of consciousness.

By that same magician, I was asked *"Would you be happy being a cover musician? Who never writes or performs original music, but always just recycles somebody else's material?"*. I think it was asked as a "Gotcha" moment, but... yeah? I mean think about it: There are absolutely TONS of cover artists, who make a good living as impressionists, or just tribute acts. I went to see Moulin Rouge on the West End last week. You know... the musical Moulin Rouge? Tony Award Winner for Best Musical, Moulin Rouge? That's a "Jukebox Musical". Its soundtrack is comprised of other peoples music. Katy Perry, Lady Gaga, Elton John, Britney Spears. Even the world famous "original" song from the show *"Come What May"* was originally written for Romeo and Juliet, but used for Rouge, and has done so with worldwide success.

My point is: No, I don't think there is anything wrong in other performing arts industries to copy work. Copy it. Not repurposing, but copying. It is a done thing, and done to huge success. Usually taking smaller pieces from multiple projects and throwing them into an "original" show.

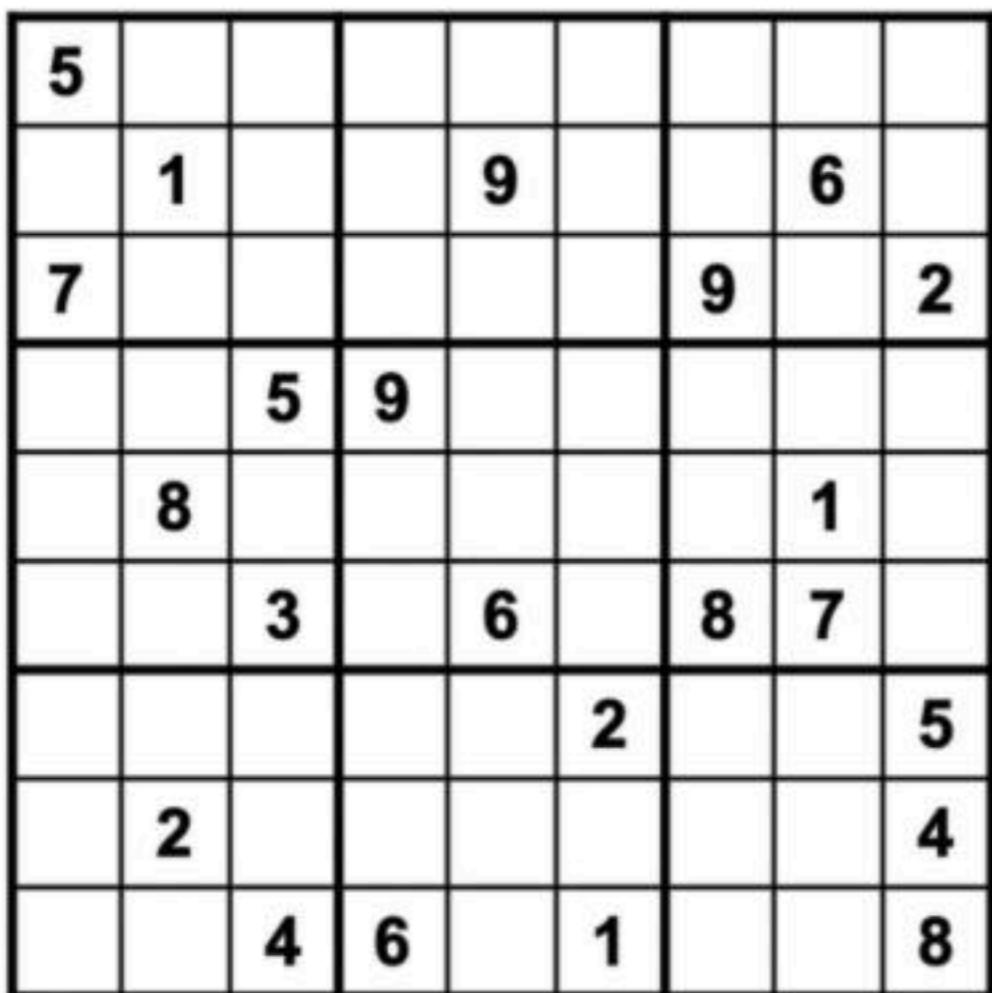
Now am I saying you should go and perform Derren's ENIGMA in its entirety? No, of course not. But trust me, laymen are not going to remember that time Derren did a Which Hand routine on TV or on a Comic Aid show that both aired 20 years ago. They also probably haven't seen another mentalist do it, if they've even met another mentalist at all. So yes, you can absolutely perform a Which Hand routine.

Of course, there are caveats, and this is not a hard and fast opinion, but why do we hold magic performers to a higher standard than other artists hold the art within their industry? I can pay to see the traditional Swan Lake on stage whenever I want, and it's the same every time, no matter which dance company or country you are in.

If you need to put a show together to get yourself off the ground and get confident in performing, do not feel fear about performing acts you know, in the way you know them.



the mag. Puzzle Page



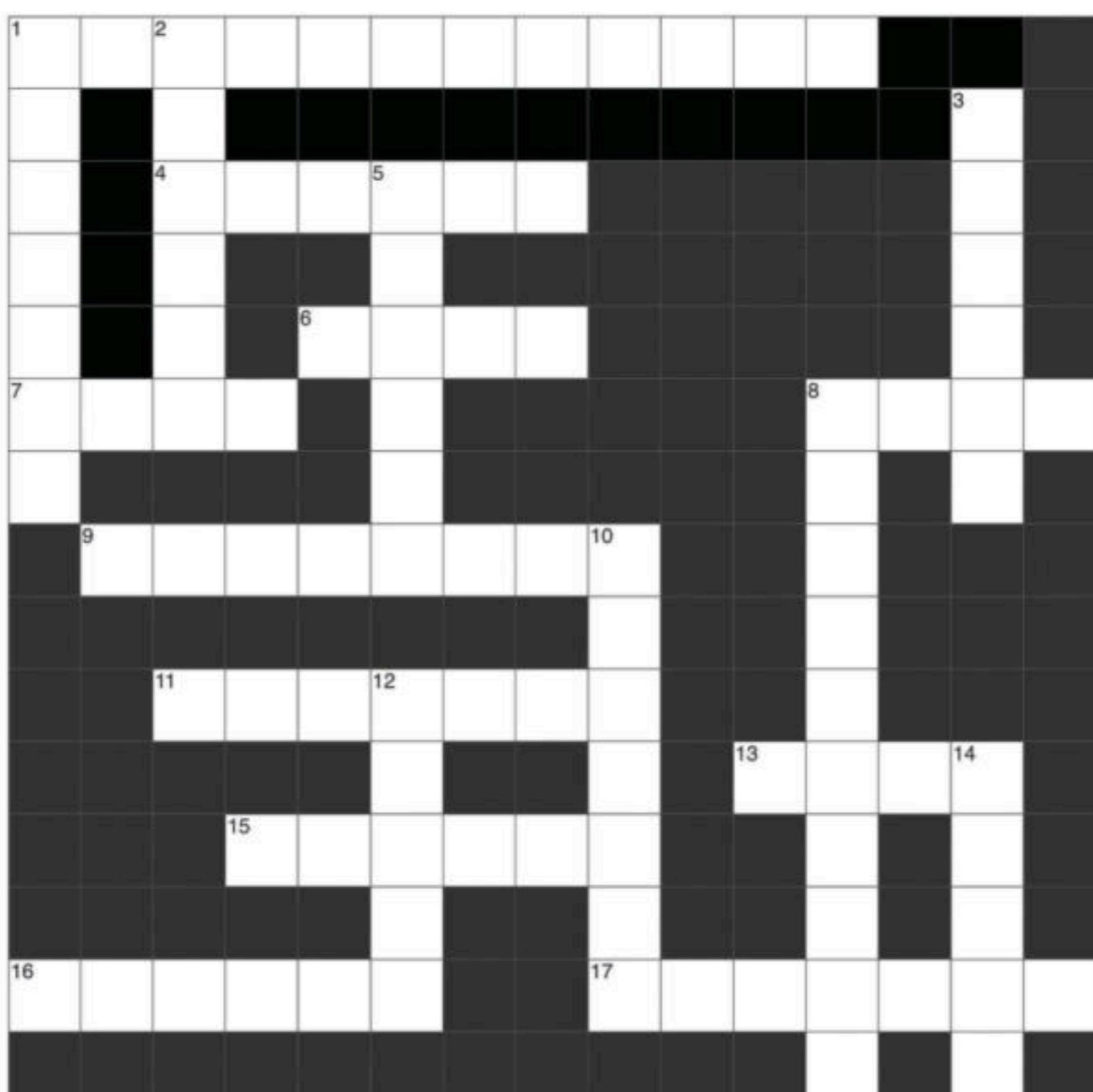
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WORD SEARCH

BICYCLE
BLACKPOOL
DECK
GIMMICK
HALLOWEEN
HORROR
LEVITATE
MENTALISM
MNEMONICA
MYSTERY
PARLOUR
PREDICTION
SESSION
STAGE
SWITCH

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Popular magic forum (3, 5, 4)
- 4 Luke ____ : from THREE
- 6 Card sleight: Double ____ (4)
- 7 The shop I found my £1 billet box solution in (1,1,1,1)
- 8 Coin classic: French ____ (4)
- 9 Online magic newsletter run by Rory Adams (3, 5)
- 11 Magic company named after an animal (7)
- 13 Now you see me, now you ____ (4)
- 15 The juice the Daily Magician drank in their Deep Dive (6)
- 16 Andi Gladwin's routine I mention in the show article: ____ Power (6)

DOWN

- 1 The author of The Magic Way (7)
- 2 Performance finale! (6)
- 3 ____, Comedy and Magic: Michael Samuel's article (6)
- 5 Secret move between hands (6)
- 8 Andy's go-to billet routine: Invisible ____ (10)
- 10 Paul ____: Legendary TV magician (7)
- 12 SWITCHONE magician's surname (5)
- 14 Magician's secret pocket (5)

Got an idea for a puzzle?
email us at themagicmag.zine@gmail.com