

June 2016 Meeting “Magicpalooza 2016 Wrap-up”

Posted on [June 28, 2016](#) by [Dennis Phillips](#)

President Craig Schwarz brought the meeting to order. Dan Stapleton reviewed the recent Memorial Day Weekend Magicpalooza Convention of the Florida Magicians Association. He announced that next year the Association will have a Close-Up Convention in Orlando in May of 2017 with big money prizes.

Craig did a recap of all the magicians appearing and the magic themed attractions around the Orlando area. He also announced said that he is revising the look of our Internet web page www.ring170.com

Phil Schwartz presented another great episode, #77, in his series of Magic History Moments. This edition was on magic catalogs and, sometimes, their misleading descriptions.. Most older magicians grew up spending hours browsing through dealer catalogs and reading every word and dreaming of owning and performing the advertised products. The first catalog was Henry Novra from his Magical Repository in London and published in 1858. Floyd Thayer’s first catalog appeared in 1907. Phil showed examples of historic catalogs such as Thayer and Owen as well as Felsman, Berg, Ireland, Sherms. Bland, Conradi-Horster, P&L, Martinka and Hornmann He also showed a mystery thought reader from Johnson Smith and Company and demonstrated Mystic Smoke from the fingertips.

Dan Stapleton presented an effect from Stan Lobernstern with a hotel room key where the number printed on the tag was anything that his three volunteers called out. Dan added his own touch to the classic method and made it an up-to-date entertaining effect.

Roger Reed , as the hilarious Stroky the Clown, used a balloon to do imitations and tricks. James Bailey the 3rd showed how to swallow a long balloon. Greg Solomon told the story of Tates Compass and spun a plastic rod and it reversed directions to prove that “He who has a Tates is Lost” . Dennis Phillips had a live dove and has raised doves for almost 50 years. He explained their behavior and gave advice on working with them. The agile Mark Fitzgerald did a mini Linking Ring routine and made a stack of coins go through the table.

Dennis Phillips

Dennis Deliberations ... Ring # 170

“The Bev Bergeron Ring”

July 2016

“It’s a dog-eat-dog world and I am wearing Milk Bone underwear”

-said to me by a booking agent in the late 1980s-

First of all, a couple of magical standouts for magic, theater and performing art at last month’s Magicpalooza 2016: Dan Stapleton with his Butterfly Routine and Birth of a Pearl and ,his risky but effective, “52 Audience members as a card deck” . Dan took the

staple “Blammo Box” illusion and made it a whole enchanting artistic routine. His Birth of a Pearl reframed the Classic Zombie into a signature piece of art.

Next was John Tudor: His singing version of the “5 Card Repeat” as well as his Sword Basket and Broom Suspension were great. I mention the names of these illusions and magicians wrinkle their nose, but John added his own touch with wardrobe and made them art pieces and very entertaining.

Of course, Shimada and the entire bill of performers at Magicpalooza gave shows that were a credit to the magical arts. If you missed Magicpalooza, you missed a lot of great magic!

The new movie “Now You See Me 2” got a paltry 34% Rotten Tomatoes rating. Yet — many magicians and magic hobbyists will flock to it just to see if there’s any of “our” actual magic in it, as opposed to just the usual camera stunts and disingenuous editing. Don’t get your hopes up too high for great magic. Movie studios are trying to make money.

Now you see Me2 is the follow-up to Louis Letterier’s surprisingly successful caper about vigilante magicians evading law enforcement and their vengeful benefactor. In Chu’s sequel, the Four Horsemen — Jesse Eisenberg, Woody Harrelson, Dave Franco, and newcomer Lizzy Caplan (subbing in for Isla Fisher) — find themselves caught in the center of a dangerous magic trick. And this time, someone else is pulling the strings. Like the first episode of the series, you will find things to enjoy. The June issue of Magic Magazine has a (neutral-to-glowing) article on it, and as you know, the magic world always goes gaga over any movie that gives magic even the slightest bit of attention. They point out with glee how some of the film’s principal actors managed to learn some rudimentary sleight of hand [“So-and-so can now do a Color Change! O-O-O-H!!”), and how Woody Harrelson went on some talk show and blew everyone away with his newly mastered Book Test, and that his awesome performance of it can now found on YouTube.

One of the things that tick-off magicians: How nearly everything they do can be taught to actors who, if they weren’t the midst of making a movie with “conjuring” in it (and most of it is CGI at that), the actors otherwise would not give a flip about “our” magic.

Another point of contention: Daniel Radcliffe and the other stars from *Now You See Me 2* get on the talk shows, and totally blow an opportunity to promote their movie in a very clever and unique way, by doing some actual magic!

If the movie promoters had two brain cells firing, they would have gone to the (two) pro magicians said to be technical advisers for the film, and say to them, “Hey guys, since we’re going to be making the rounds promoting this film (Jimmy Kimmel, Jimmy Falon, etc) teach us a trick or two that will blow everyone away!!” ...But with the possible exception of that that one Book Test by Harrelson, none of the other actors bothered to

take advantage of the opportunity. They just sat a there and dispensed the usual small talk.

It is amazing how time and perspective can change our attitudes. When Burt Wonderstone was first released, I thought that it was a train wreck of a movie. But now a few years later, it is fun to watch, both as an absurdist comedy but also as a film filled with a lot of inside jokes about the Las Vegas Magic business.

In the 1980s most magicians panned everything that David Copperfield did in his TV specials. Of course then they went out and bought things that were released like Timothy Wenk's "Misled", Don Wayne's "Floating Ball" and "Pranky Hank" along with Sid Lorraine/Dan Harlan's Chinese Handcuffs. The deep pocketed magicians bad-mouthed Copperfield's Illusions but bought Origami Boxes and Zaney Blaney Ladder Levitations by the dozens when they saw them.

In the 1990s, the World's Greatest Magic series from Gary Ouellette was the magician's whipping boy. Yes, everything on it was copied by magicians who claimed to be disgusted by it. Today, it is looked back on with nostalgia as those yearly Thanksgiving Eve's high points for magic.

Perhaps deep inside the psyche of every magician is a thread of competitiveness. They hate to be "topped"...

"And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Exodus 7:10-12 (KJV)

Pharaoh's Magicians apparently did Fantasio's vanishing cane. Then Aaron had the latest model (from a quality supplier!) that had the new and improved snake-eating gimmick. Blew them away and won FISM 1225 BCE!

Yep. It's a dog-eat-dog or is that: cane-eats-snake world?

I am on the phone with Fantasio now...giving him my credit card! I have to have one of those snake eating canes.

So what will happen to Jolly Old England now that they voted to cut ties with the rest of Europe? The UK always retained the Pound as their base currency but most places also accepted Euros. I suppose one stark contrast is that if you have book some shows in both

the UK and the Continent, you will be required to go through customs again. The way it was, once you were in the UK, you could easily travel to the rest of the Common Market.

Herd mentality, or mob mentality, describes how people are influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviors. Examples of the herd mentality include elections, stock market trends, and various superstitions as well as fads and becoming fans of performers and products. Social psychologists study related topics under the headings of group intelligence, crowd wisdom, and decentralized decision making. Those who see humans only as isolated individuals, each making sovereign choices as “unmoved movers”, cannot grasp the social dimension of humans.

Herd mentality and herd behavior have been prevalent descriptors for human behavior since people began to form tribes, migrate in groups, and perform cooperative marketing and agricultural functions. The idea of a “group mind” or “mob behavior” was first put forward by 19th-century French social psychologists Gabriel Tarde and Gustave Le Bon. Herd behavior in human societies has also been studied by Sigmund Freud and Wilfred Trotter, whose book *Instincts in the Herd in Peace and War* is a classic in the field of social psychology.

Sociologist and Economist Thorstein Veblen’s *The Theory of the Leisure Class* illustrates how individuals imitate other group members of higher social status in their consumer behavior. Our own Phil Schwartz, an advertising and marketing master, can provide details on that. More recently, Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point*, examines how cultural, social, and economic factors converge to create trends in consumer behavior. (Think! Why do people buy tickets to see magic shows? Answer than and you will work forever!)

21st-century academic fields such as marketing and behavioral finance attempt to identify and predict the rational and irrational behavior of investors. (See the work of Daniel Kahneman, Robert Shiller, Vernon L. Smith, and Amos Tversky. and George Soros) George Soros, love him or hate him, made a fortune by using his psychological analysis in the commodities market to bet against the British Pound some years ago. Then he repeated his method against the Thai Bhat. I suspect that Soros has again just made a fortune off of the Brexit vote. Soros is driven by an investment philosophy built upon the scientific method and combined with a focus on societal change. His reputation sends shivers of fear through the central banks with weakened currencies and disagreeable governmental policies. Soros’ strategy is based on philosopher Karl Popper’s “The Open Society and its Enemies” which is a critique of totalitarian societies and an examination of the scientific method. His investing algorithm is similar to the mathematical method of John Nash’s, “game theory”. In contrast, Warren Buffet is a value and dividends investor with a long term approach. He says that he “buys profitable businesses with a long term future” and never gambles.

Driven by emotional reactions such as greed and fear, investors can be seen to join in frantic purchasing and sales of stocks, creating bubbles and crashes. As a result, herd behavior is closely studied by behavioral finance experts in order to help predict future economic crises.

When you refine your business model ,for marketing your magic and entertainment services, consider more than just the superficial. Think your way through your choices and decisions.

Finally, I hear magician/illusionists tell me all the time..."I need my own theater, my own dinner show!" Many sink a ton of money into it. The vast majority lose it all. Some never recover from the psychological blow.

Here is an excellent video by Justin Flom where he honestly explains why he failed with his own theater in Branson ,Missouri. He also tells what he learned and how it made him a better person.

It goes back to keeping focused on "the main thing". Flom didn't.

When I was in pilot training, Col. Hill, my USAF instructor pilot explained setting priorities in the cockpit: Keep up awareness of your airspeed, altitude, terrain and other aircraft-in-your-area, fuel management, weather and communications status. Never over-estimate you or your aircraft's abilities and maintenance needs and never catch that dreaded disease that kills many pilots, "Get Home-itis." Always have a back-up plan. He had a couple of Air Force slogans that stuck with me: "Never swat at flies when alligators are biting your ass!" and "There are stupid pilots and there are old pilots but there are no old and stupid pilots. I have been flying for 46 years, I am going on to age 68. I am still here!

Justin Flom , in his video, said the same thing that I just did but in show business terms.

Stay Alive...Stay fighting (both in magic and in the air) !

Dennis Phillips

One of the great privileges of working the Dinner Show at Magicpalooza 2016 was sharing the bill with the talented Jackie Manna, Ventriloquist, from our Ring. Mark and Greg also did a great job. (Photos courtesy of Craig Fennessy)



Here I am producing a Dove after doing the Ribbon Cutting.

Below is my rabbit appearing and my Plate Spinning Finale.



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