

Ring #170 “The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring” SAM #99

January 27, 2022 | Archived Famulus



We have live meetings again. Be kind and courteous. Masks are suggested. but not required.

President Michael Matson opened the January meeting and reviewed the places in Orlando where you can regularly see magic plus the upcoming touring stage shows in the area. We had 26 members present.

This meeting was a treat with two special presentations. The first was Phil Schwartz with a Power Point titled, “For my final illusion, Death by Magic”. It was a collection of true stories on how magicians were killed doing escapes, being buried alive and burning to death as well as being accidentally shot. It was sad, but mostly intended as a warning for safety and planning with a bit of instructional “schadenfreude”, as a motivation to not take chances with your life.

Dr. Ken Schreibman, MD, then gave what could be called a graduate level course on the history of and types of Linking Rings and classic routines with them. He even treated us to an example of how he used the linking rings in a lecture when he was a professor in radiology at medical school. In addition to an excellent and well researched Power Point, with video clips, he brought a large peg board and examples of the over a dozen sets of rings in all sizes. You can see the information here: <https://www.schreibman.info/presentations>

Showtime followed and Mark Fitzgerald did an excellent version of the Linking Rings to poetic verse. Dennis Phillips showed a side table that he built using PVC pipe and stage painted to look like bamboo. He also showed a “Luigi”, the talking Pizza that he made.

Finally, Christian Bryan has a volunteer select a card and it appears in his wallet and then another card appeared in his shoe.

Dennis Phillips



Dennis Deliberations ...

Ring # 170, Assembly #99 “The Bev and Alouise Bergeron Ring”

"Magicians have done controlled testing in human perception for thousands of years." – Teller

I share this sad news from Jerry Darkey “It with much sorrow to announce the passing of Don Arthur. Magic mentor, clown college instructor and most important my friend” Don was 91.



He helped Bev Bergeron write the “Tony Marks” book and Don made some of Tony’s props.

Don also wrote “Illusions in the Round” , an excellent reference guide for practical big illusions in the circus center ring and anywhere you need a big illusion to work surrounded by the audience. I counted Don as my friend.

Israeli 'psychic' Uri Geller still baffling fans at 75 - BBC News

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-59609232>

Israeli 'psychic' Uri Geller still baffling fans at 75

By Yolande Knell
BBC News, Jaffa

🕒 21 hours ago



An interesting idea. Not too different from the “Rings” Illusions (trapping a woman in rings on a pole and then her walking free under cover) You need two assistants to do this, and the police uniforms are a nice touch.

I was in a bookstore, and what I saw sent me into despair. If only I could have found this magic set when I was starting out! It says it has “Everything you need to be a Master

[illegible]

Eric Olsen, locally the creator of Wizardz at the Seralago, on the Kissimmee highway, does an excellent 30 minutes of magic on this video.

Hopefully, he will have an active performance venue here in Orlando again. We all miss Wizardz.

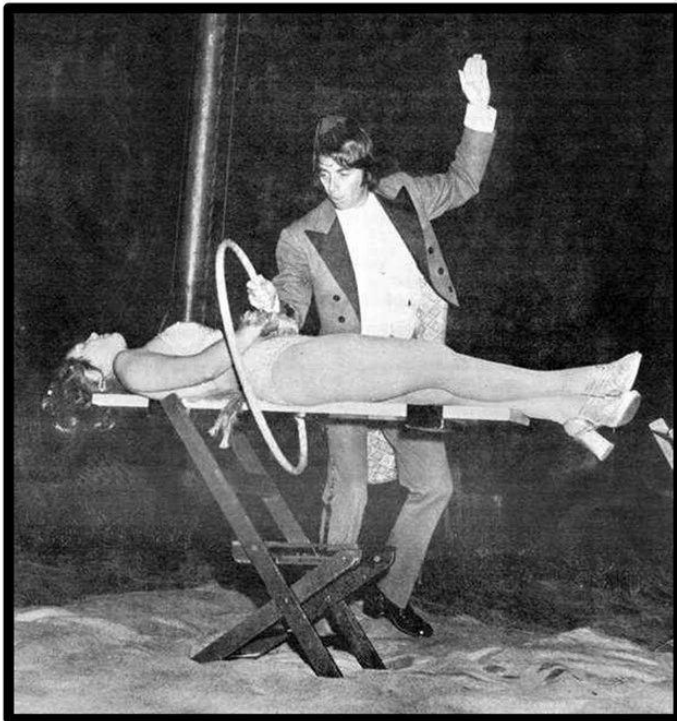
It was a small venue that seated about 30 people And Eric brought in some top national acts.

He also periodically had magic flea markets and lectures.

Hopefully when the pandemic finally eases, he can get back to opening this fine venue.

Ultra-Modern Chair Suspension

A board is placed on top of two wooden folding chairs. The magician's assistant is introduced, and she reclines on the board. After some magic passes, one of the chairs is completely removed, leaving the woman suspended in mid-air on the board. A hoop can be passed completely over, under and around the assistant. At the conclusion of the performance, the assistant gets up, makes her exit, and the prop is immediately disassembled in full view of the audience. This illusion can be performed surrounded, and a spectator can be used because there is no special harness to be worn.



Phil Chandler (Barr) and Cathy on the Hoxie Circus center ring, doing the standard Abbott's Chair suspension.



Here are Penn and Teller performing the Harbin all metal version on the Wendy Williams TV show.

I built my own chair suspension illusion in Charlotte, North Carolina in the early 1970s. I was working for WBTV, a local TV station as a producer-director and as on-air talent and had my own children's TV show. It was Halloween and I wanted an effect that would send a chill down the spines of the audience for my local shows.

The true story behind getting the chairs gave me all the storyline that I needed. I did not want metal folding chairs, but the old wooden style chairs and I knew that Abbotts made their own chairs. I thought that if I could find the old wooden auditorium chairs that I recalled as a child, they would be sturdy and adaptable.

Someone at the station suggested that I find a long-established funeral home because they may have some old wooden chairs, they would sell to me. I called several and there was a funeral home in west Charlotte that mostly catered to Black families. It was a part of a regional chain called, Hairston Funeral Homes.

I called and the old mortician told me to come by and he might have some old chairs. I arrived and he recognized me from being on television and was friendly and helpful. He took me to a dilapidated shed in the back of the lot and past an old hearse, with flat tires, that looked like the one they used in "The Godfather". Inside the shed, he moved the cobwebs and other items and there was a half a dozen old chairs in a variety of condition, but they were exactly what I needed.

I picked the two best ones and carried them to the front, and he refused to take any money for them. He said that he was happy to get rid of them. As I loaded them into my station wagon, he said in a somber voice, "Mister, those chairs have seen a lot of grief. You be careful with them!"

I thanked him and took them home and cleaned off the dust and a couple of mud dabber nests and put them in my shed and told my wife where they were and what they were for. I prepared to make a cardboard templet to have the gimmick welded.

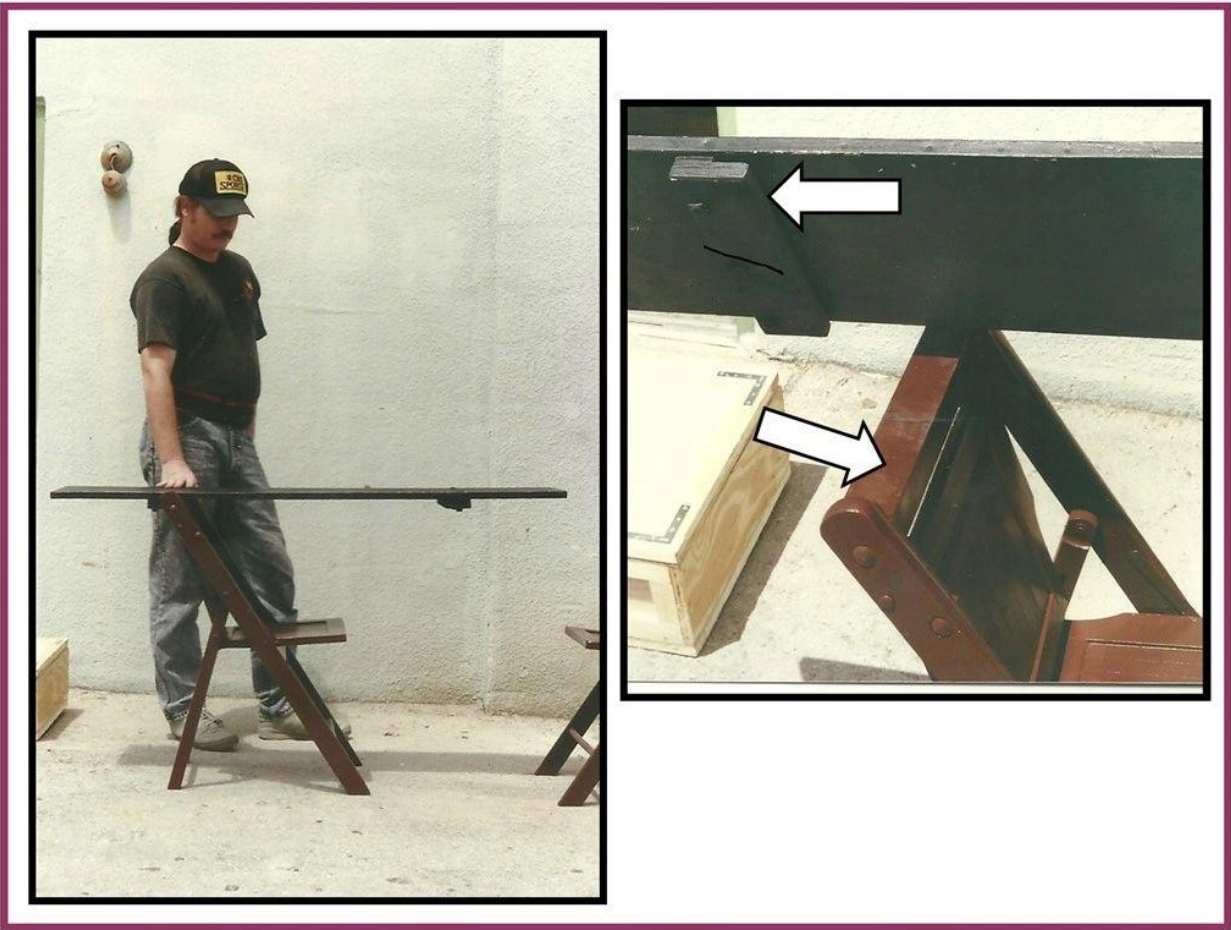
A day or so later my wife asked me why I did not lean the chairs up against the shed wall. I told her that I did lean them against the wall, and she said that when she went to put away the leaf rake, both chairs were laying across the power mower. I did not tell her what the mortician told me about the chairs seeing a lot of grief! I thought that the best way to make the chairs happy was to just tell the truth about the story and that became my presentation.

I also added a black wilting feather flower as a novelty gag. Here was the presentation:

My wife would explain to the volunteer, backstage, as she was putting the black shawl on the assistant to pull the ring, so the flower would wilt when I passed the hoop over the assistant! Volunteers understand and play along with the visual gag. It gets a gasp and a laugh.

Typically, I do not use the Abbotts board. I use my own double board but without a cloth cover. I let the black shawl do the hiding or if I use it in a non-Halloween show performance, I have the girl wear a full dress and tack on a matching cloth to the bottom of the support board.

Here is the original Abbotts type mechanism. The support board has a slot which locks into the quarter inch angle iron at the top of the support chair. It just slides in and out.



My innovation was to add a body shaped insert to a hollow removable board. The shawl or baggy costume would hide the support eliminating a need to wrap the assistant. Matching cloth from the costume could be added to the bottom of the insert.



Here are the two support boards meshed from a top and bottom side view and the clips can be seen



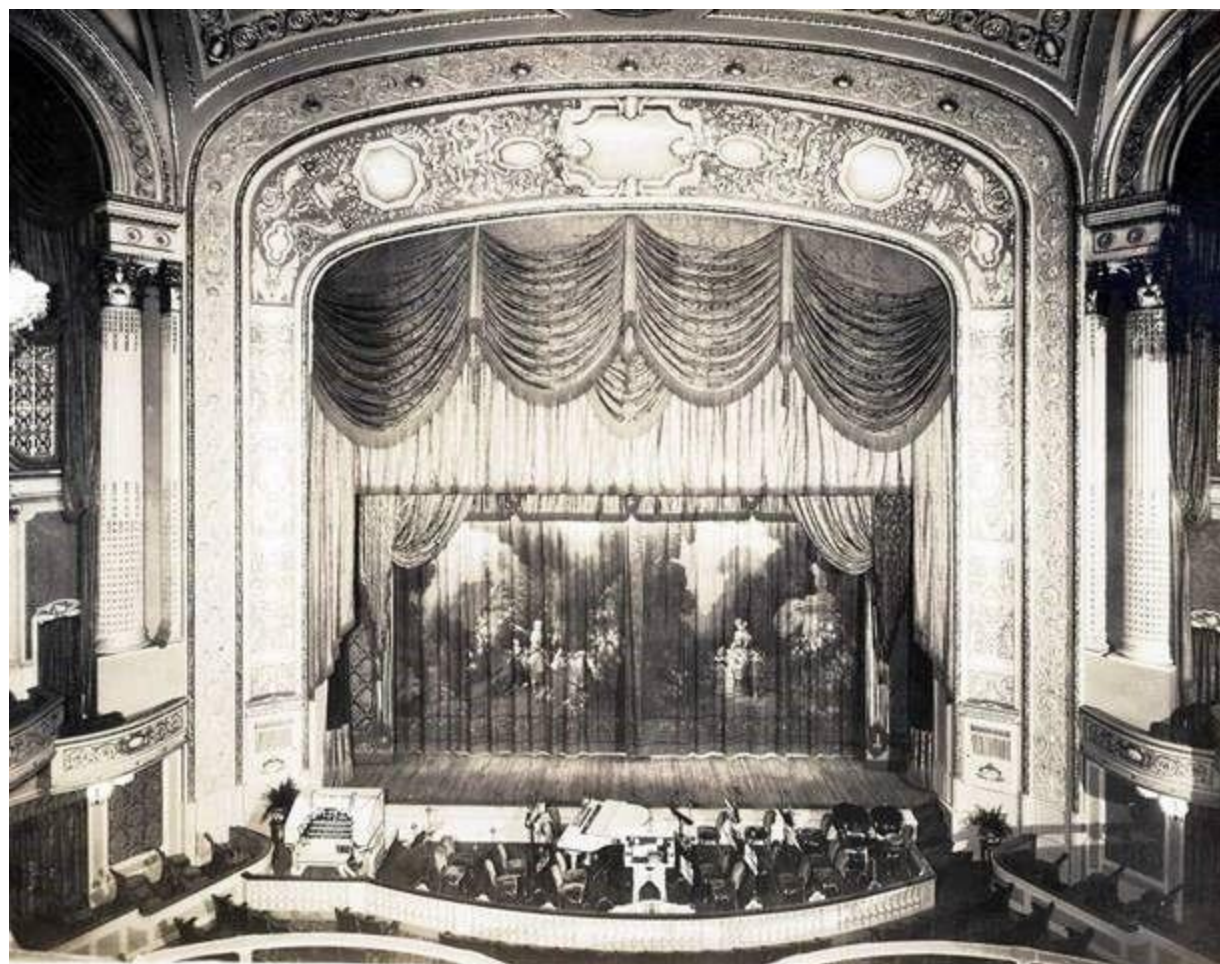
These two photos show the welding details for the iron bracing on the plywood support piece and the way the metal was welded in layers to form the support slot to slip over the angle iron on the end of the support chair.



I wrote this story for my Ring 170 Deliberation column in November 2018, well before the COVID Pandemic!

Look it up in the Ring archives! If I was Uri Geller or a self-proclaimed psychic , I could get some publicity from this. I had no idea, at the time, how prescient it would be. It even frightens me that I had a “hunch”. I am reprinting it again.

The World War One Flu Epidemic and the Decline of Vaudeville



★



Typically, magicians and illusionists blame the decline of Vaudeville on the rise of radio and talking motion pictures. I believe that this is only part of the story and possibly not the death-knell of vaudeville. The Flu Pandemic was a factor.

The continuation of the vaudeville era after the devastating and socially destabilizing years of World War One was problematic and greatly affected by the massive 1918 influenza outbreak, that killed millions worldwide.

The forced closing of places of public gatherings and its effects on live theatre are all documented. Vaudeville never recovered the six-month shock because the revenue stream was too marginal to maintain nationwide chains, with touring acts, in both the rural and urban areas. Urban theaters began to become ethnic, as newly arrived small town and rural World War One factory workers formed urban isolated communities.

This was all a result of the industrial buildup of World War One. The Harlem Revival ("Cotton Club") and Jazz and Swing resulted. The country began to lose mass culture. Motion pictures were cheaper to show and by 1920 free radio and phonograph records were beginning to occupy the public's time as a cheap alternative.

And then talking movies finished off the last of the Vaudeville circuits as the owners converted the theaters to movie houses. Vaudeville spanned fifty years of American history and yet few dealt a blow like the effects of the Great War and Influenza. The most popular form of entertainment got battered by the encroachment of technology in the form of movies, radio and ultimately television and until medical science began to understand and be able to treat epidemics, there was much fear in public gatherings, especially during the winter Flu season, which was when the shows operated in the days before air-conditioning. In the 1920s , America began the slow shift to an economic and culturally polarized nation.

I noticed a marked decline in my costume rental business beginning in the mid-to-late 1980s with the rise of the HIV epidemic.

Many people were fearful of trying on and wearing used costumes even though they were all cleaned and sanitized. The shift in the costume business was to premade and packaged sale costumes (made offshore) . This fear , combined with the economic decline of Middle-class incomes and political polarization led to a less happy cultural climate.

The party atmosphere , that we know as the 70s Disco Era, was ushered in by the end of the Viet Nam War and mature Baby-Boomers and the monetary bubbles created by easy credit and optimism.

That faded in the mid to late -80s as a series of periodic credit collapses (S&L late 80s, Dot Com 1990 and the 2008 Financial Great Recession)

Coupled with this is the revival of Tribalism, Nativist Exclusion, and the death of Mass Culture into fragmentation. Show Business does not work well without Mass Culture consumption.

The Music Business relied of the mass culture of AM Top 40 radio and Broadcast TV on a limited number of channels in the pre-cable world. Technology replaced all those and today we have only Niche markets, few of which generate enough impact to have a Mass Culture.

David Copperfield was the last of the Mass Culture Magicians. He rode in on the late Disco exhilaration and in contrast to the datedness of Doug Henning's look and style with an 80s subdued sophistication. Rainbows and brightly colored props gave way to the black paint and chrome of the David Mendoza, Bill Smith , Willie Kennedy Industrial look for Copperfield.

David used the final days of the dominance of network television and yearly specials of vanishing, manipulating, and exploding cultural landmarks to develop a mass following

that he used to sell tickets to his touring show. His era collapsed in the mid-1990s with the rise of the Internet, many TV channels and cultural cynicism and anger.

He was replaced by grunge magic and a more intimate close -up magic.

Vaudeville in a limited form only survives in some places in Europe and destination resorts, like Las Vegas and cruise ships.

We have recently had AIDS, SARS, MERS, Marburg, Zika and Ebola. With air travel, diseases can spread fast. It has been 100 years since the Great Flu Pandemic. Will something like that happen again?

The Wonder Mouse Pitch

The late Stan Kramien said in a lecture and his writings that he used to work the streets with the moving Wonder Mouse. Stan said that whenever some magician accused him of “slumming” or whatever, he just told them, “Take a look at the little ornament on the hood of my car.” — It was a metal reproduction of the mouse. “That little mouse,” he said with a grin, “bought that car!”

The astute showman knows that if you have a crowd, you can sell them products and many shows, especially traveling shows, made extra profits from concessions. It was said that a Circus rolled on popcorn and “floss and flookum” (cotton candy and snow cones). “Herkimer” was the name I used for my Wonder Mouse. I used to get them for \$15 a gross (from D. Robbins NYC) and sell them for a between \$1 to \$3 each.

I pitched them in my stage show and had an assistant working them in the lobby during intermission after I did a stage pitch (that included coloring books, balloons, plush, popcorn, T-Shirts, etc.) I made more money on concessions than for the show performance! Around 1990, the process and availability of the mice was a problem, and the price went up, so I recalled to old carney way of making them! I made a couple dozen silicone molds (using GE window sealer!) spread over Vaseline coated mice. The Vaseline is called in mold making, a releasing agent.

I cast the mice, from the plastic ones that I had, using Durham’s Rock-Hard wood putty filler. It is a yellow powder that I tinted gray, after mixing with water, with a can of black liquid tint from the paint store. I could make them for far less than I could buy them. All it took was time. I added the cards with the thread and hot melted on a 3-inch tail using thin black crochet thread. It was very easy and quick to make a lot of them in mass. I may have made enough profit over the years to have bought a car.



Here's the mouse pitch the way that I've done it for over 45 years. Words in < > are the actions that you'll be making but not actually saying. Make all actions correspond with your patter, of course. The instructions in the package will show you how to do most everything. Of course, the wire is attached to the wax (which is blackened with soot or a burned match, and, stuck to the mouse) on one end, and, about six inches away, to your

lowest shirt button or (as I do) taped to a safety pin hidden under your belt. Tuck the mice into the top of your pants or wear a vest.

"I'm going to show you folks my favorite magic trick, but I'm going to do this a little differently. First, I'm going to show you the trick and then I'm going to show you how it works! The trick is done with a little mouse, but it's not a real mouse, it's a magic mouse! "If you put him on your hand, you can make him, go forward <have him run from hand to hand>, back up <hold hand at an angle and move back and forth>, turn right, and turn left. Would you like to see him roll over? Well, just watch and I'll have him roll over, run across one hand, and jump into the other!"

"Now, I'm sure that you're wondering how I made the little mouse do all of that, so, I'll show you. If you look under the chin of the mouse, you'll see a little black dot. That's the magician's secret gimmick. It's normally light tan in color so that you can hide it in the palm of your hand, but I dyed this one black so that you all could see it a little better. I'll take it off and let you see how it works without the mouse. He's not going to go anywhere without it anyway!" <let them see the wax "move" across your hand> "I did this a little while ago and a young lady said 'I know what that is! My dog has them!'

No, it's not alive, and it's not a magnet, and it's not some kind of a motor. Believe it or not, the little gimmick is made from wax and wire. "There are lots of other tricks that you can do with the gimmick besides just the mouse. For example, put it on a coin and use that as part of your tip when you go out to eat. Ask the waitress to pick up the coin <quarter> before you leave, and, when she goes to reach for it, the money runs back to you! And the waitress will usually run the other way! Don't tell her that I told you to do it! "Or, put the coin into a glass <use a small juice glass> and the coin will come right out of the glass into your hand! But please don't put the coin with the gimmick on it into a soda machine or a pay phone...you could get into a lot of trouble! In fact, you could go to jail! I've never been to jail myself.....and I don't want to go back!

The last trick that I'm going to show you is with box of crayons instead. Put the gimmick on the bottom of the crayon and put it back into the pack and let the crayon just rise out of the pack! "Now if you like the mouse and the other tricks that I did with the magician's gimmick <make the mouse "run" across your hand one last time before putting it away>, I do have some available. Well, heck, that's why I showed it to you! Each package comes with the mouse, the gimmick, and instructions for all the tricks that I just showed you.

Now, I don't charge five or ten dollars for them like you might pay in a magic shop. No, I charge \$39.95! I'm just kidding! Today, they're just \$3.00 each (depending on the demographics of the crowd it could be from \$1 to \$3) and everything you need is in each

package. Or, if you need more than one, I do have a special. You can get three for \$7.00. That's like getting one of them for less than half price!

And, if you get three of them, I'll give you a male and two females so that you can raise your own! So, if you want one, or three, or more, just let me know and I'll be happy to wait on you! They all come with The Good Mousekeeping seal of approval--whatever that is--and it's so nice to have a mouse around the house!" Obviously, you either move your hand or your belly or both to make the mouse, the coin, and the crayon "move".

The instructions tell your customers to use a thread from a lady's stocking after they learn to work the mouse with the wire. You should, too. Also, you should hold your hands higher than where the thread is attached to you to make it virtually impossible to be seen. Use thread from a good quality black Danskin stocking. The ones from cheap panty hose break too easily.

You could also use "Wooley nylon" thread in spools from a fabric store.

I always have two mice hooked up and if I do happen to break the thread, then, I can always put it back, out of sight, next to the other mouse, and, after talking for a few seconds, pull out the mouse that still has the thread attached and continue just like nothing happened.

Of course, if you break the thread on the second one, just go into the close.

Watch and have fun!

Some interesting illusions and presentations that I have not seen before.

<https://www.arielandrochelle.com/index.html>

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Ariel and Rochelle's award winning act has been performing around the globe on luxury cruises, at international resorts, fairs, festivals, and theatres, for seventeen years. Their lively personalities, sparkling chemistry and playful sense of humour, shine in shows that are unsurpassed, with lightning fast "quick change", comedy and breathtaking illusions that thrill audiences of all ages.

Shows can be done in English, Spanish or Portuguese.





This is Paul Romhany's (Confabulation method) "Dream Prediction" with the large envelope.

This guy's version is a different patter from Paul's (seen on Paul's site down below) I made one up...I have been playing with it... No assistant needed. Packs flat, not gimmicky, plays big.

http

<https://paulromhanymagic.myshopify.com/products/dream-prediction-lite>



Years ago, I made a prop Blunderbuss (pilgrim shotgun). It was flat and made out of plywood and stage painted. I had an air cartridge connected to a funnel with cornstarch on the back side.

The comedy duck was attached in a sling ,on an overhead batten connected to an off-stage cord release cord. I had a volunteer on stage doing a type of Jumbo Sidekick, where you try to reveal a choose card and flowers fly out of the vase and table drapes fall, all by missed shots with a pistol.

Finally, the blunderbuss is brought out and in the volunteer's hands it goes off and out of the ceiling falls the duck!

My sad sack comedy assistant comes out, looks at

the dead duck on the floor with a sad dejected look and takes off his hat and holds it over his heart ,with reverence to the dead, and slowly drags the dead duck off stage by the neck, shaking his head in sorrow.

The bit would bring down the house with at least 2 minutes of laughter. It was one of the strongest entertainments bits on my full evening show. This is a great prop! Here is David Ginn holding the classic **Abbotts Giant 6 ft. Comedy Duck.**

I am crushed! My favorite magic store just raised all their prices 25%.

It was “The Dollar Store”. Well, no more.

I know those of you who like to make magic props are equally disappointed.



Has Jay Sankey pretty much lost touch with reality? I am not referring to his magic but his marketing and hype. I have been on his e-mail list and at least twice a week I get

notification of a new or recycled effect. Each one is “a reputation maker” and the greatest invention since sliced bread and you cannot live without.

I saw Sankey lecture at my convention here in Orlando way back when and he was very good, with practical real-world stuff that fooled. I wasn't in love with his quite antagonistic comedy-club persona, but whatever. I use some of his creations, but I think that perhaps he has become less of a performer and capitalized more on his early reputation as a creator of magic.

I think it's a case of chasing the marketing. What it takes to sell an effect to an audience and what it takes to sell a DVD to a magician don't always line up with each other. A lot of the effect creators seem more interested in selling the sizzle not the steak, if you catch my drift. Over the years his DVD and products went from being creative and actually workable to being complete piles of nonsense.

I remember him having things like Airtight, Paper Clipped and possibly maybe a few more early pretty stuff. You were paying more for the DVD with tips. You rarely saw him put performing in the real world. These DVDs looked like they were done in his basement with him alone. And now he pretty much lost his mind and all credibility by coming out with Bending The Real.

There was an "effect" in that book/video where he says you walk into a room and throw a dust cloud in the air, and you've just "Bended their minds", when you really just looked like an idiot.

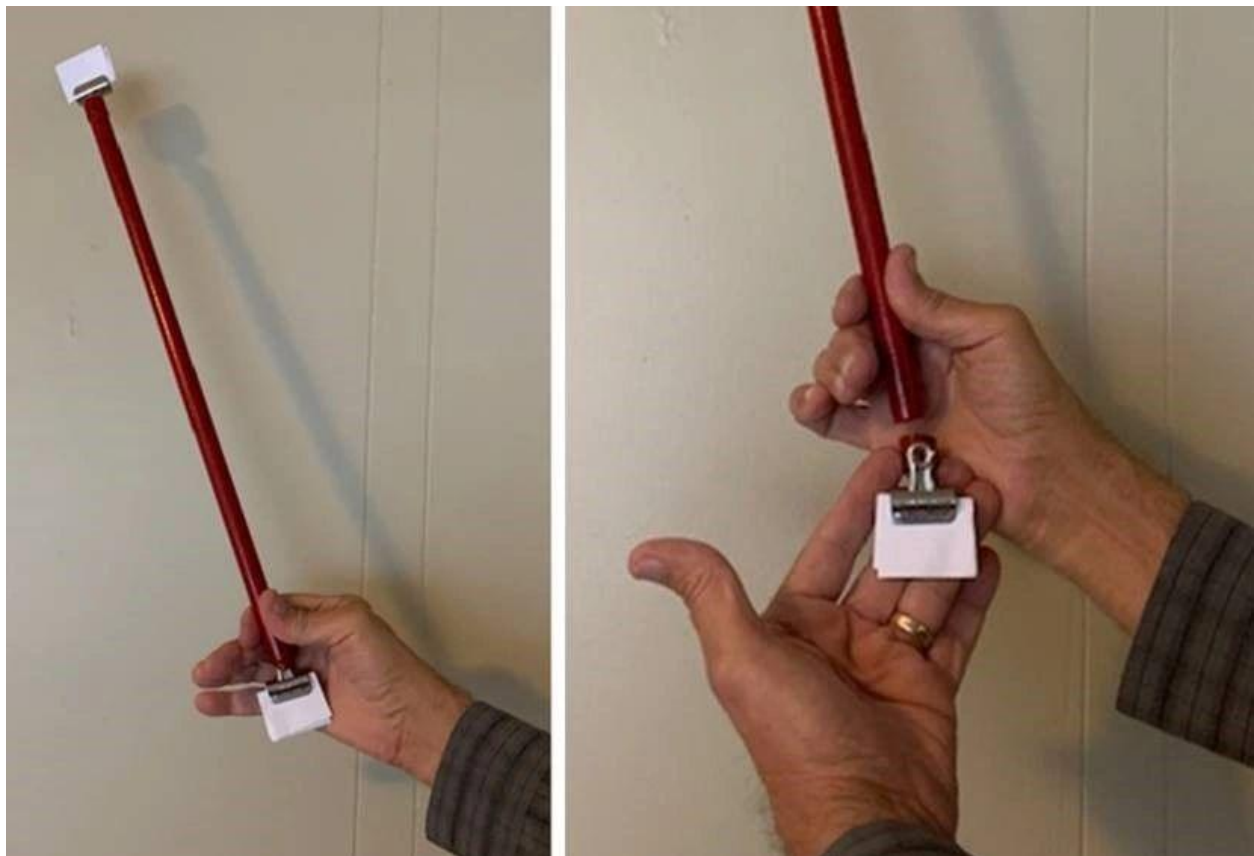
But check this out... After looking at this new Sankey effect, “Switch Clip”, the clip, you should be able to make one, using my method, to try out. Watching the video, none of the “switches” actually happen the way they are shown.

So, you are not seeing the actual switch. Nothing is switched on the video! Not knowing what Sankey is really doing in a real performance (because he never shows it!) , I reverse engineered a method where you can switch the items , using a paper clip, with a little hand cover and hand to hand exchange. My method is based on the old “double ended holder”. This has also been done with clothes pins.

Former Ring President Art Thomas gave me this about 15 years ago. It is a stick with a small bull clamp on each end. One end is on a removeable cap. The idea is that you (and possibly 2 to 3 other assistants) can go out in the audience and have people fill out personal information on paper billets and on the way back up to the stage, you switch them out for dummy billets that are burned and then you secretly open the real billet and read the contents apparently reading their thoughts.

The billet seems to never leave the site of the audience but in walking back up to the stage, you switch your hand hold, and this switches the real billet for the dummy end billets! You have then the audience member put his billet on the removeable end and hidden in your hand is the dummy bullet and the other end. Once you have done the end-over-end switch, you simply palm off the end with the real billet and drop the clamp behind your table where you can grab the real billet from it and palm it to be opened behind your pad portfolio.

The old double-sided Scotch Tape on the pad gives you an easy way to stick it on the pad and open it with your pen. If you have a couple of assistants, they can grab 3 or 4 billets the same way and do the dirty work and make them available to you from the back of your table.



Two wooden clothes pins can do the same thing. The late Bob Cassidy just did an “in hand” billet switch. It wasn’t even a “move” He covered the action with a white cigarette lighter which he shifted in his hands, and he burned the dummy billet and opened the volunteer’s billet in his pocket.

Here is my approach to doing this with paper clips.




To make: Attach two paper clips end to end with a thin strand of lamp cord wire and then secure them with a little blob of epoxy putty and paint with a flesh tone. My method works fine. Maybe Sankey's is better.

I have no way of knowing because he never showed the actual performance.

If you think his method is different and may be better, send some money to him and get his. If he can actually do what he shows on his video, then it is not my method, and you have a miracle.

I think the origin of this move , at least what I think it is, can be found in Cy Enfield's Card Magic. The Enfield book is from the 1960's (Vol. 3 of de Cova's 'Treasures' DVD. The routine the switch is used in, 'Ordered Surprise', is -as well as being typical de Cova brilliance- just one of his many uses for the switch.) Alexander de Cova's Clothes Pin switch was created in 1983. The handling is identical to that which Sankey published in '100% Sankey', except that Sankey substitutes a paperclip for the clothes peg.

<https://sankey-magic.myshopify.com/products/switch-clip>




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SWITCH CLIP

\$24.95 USD



ADD TO CART

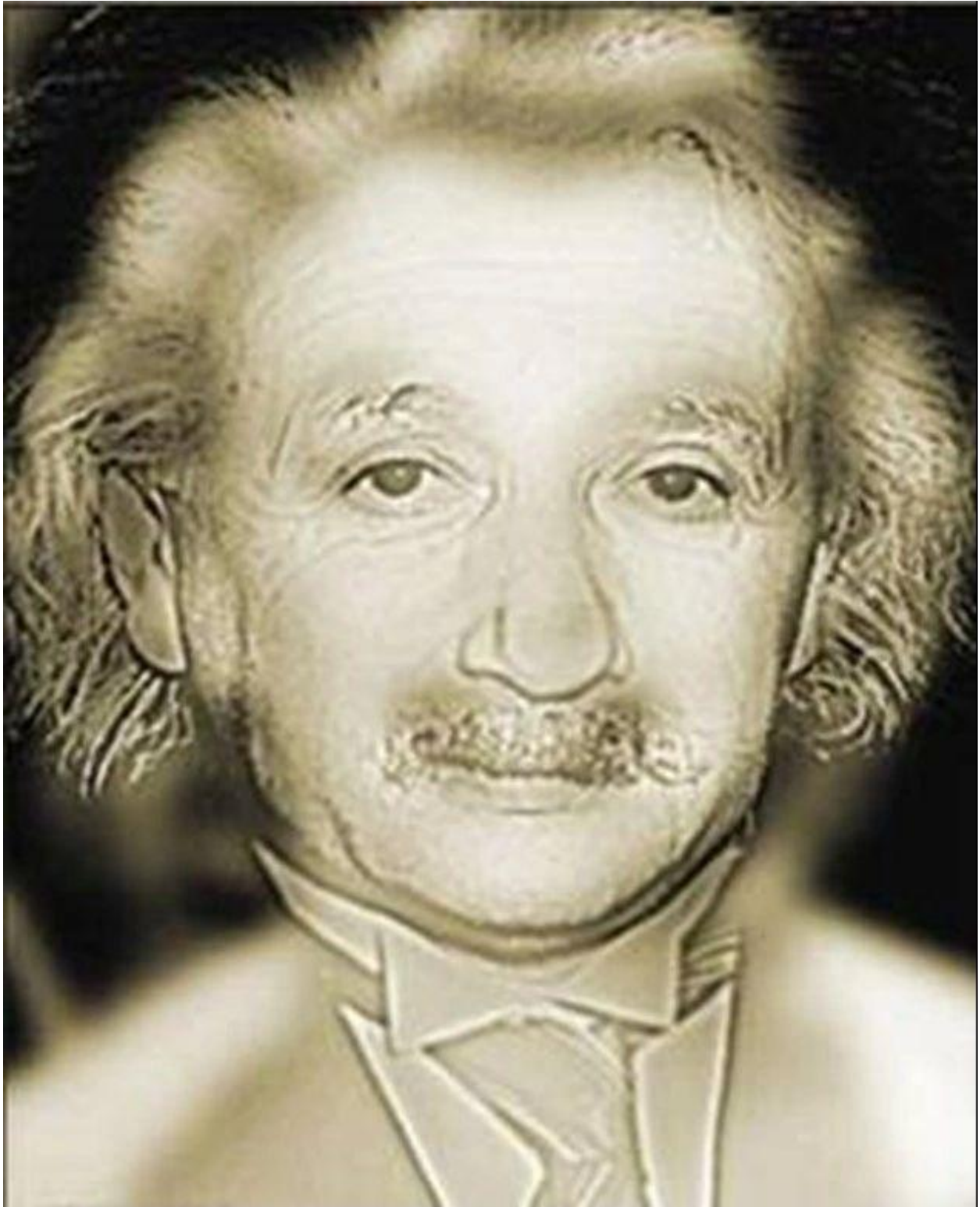


This week only - we're including Jay's acclaimed '22 Blows to the Head' mentalism project as a **tremendous FREE GIFT (\$35 value)** with all orders for 'Switch Clip'!

Magicians have long used optical illusions. Chris Philpot put out a routine called “The Hundredth Monkey” which is a series of pictures that look totally different from close up as opposed to far away.

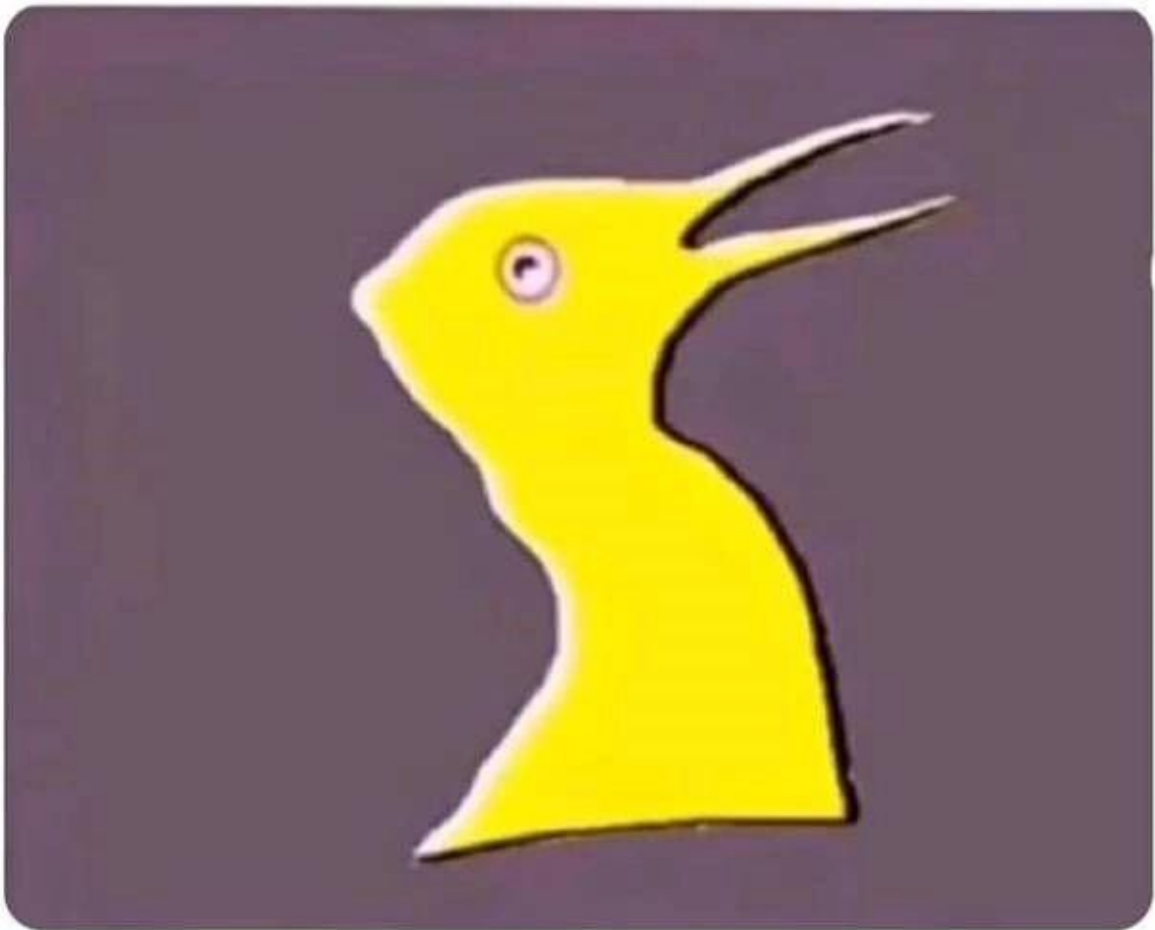
Thus, you can show the same photo to someone close up and turn to someone far away and they see something entirely different.

The person on stage sees something different than the audience. Here is an example: Seen from different distances, this can be either Albert Einstein or Marilyn Monroe!



So, now you can understand the joke below. It is a spoof on the old “Rabbit and Duck” gag. I suppose the punchline is, “If you have no brain, you will see other things”.

If you're right brained, you'll see a dog. If you're left brained, you'll see a giraffe...



I have been using Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA" as the music for my Big Stage Show finale since 1986. I found that in a family touring show that mostly plays rural areas, a Patriotic Finale is the classic way to end the show.



I think you will like his new version of the song!

Until next month,

Dennis, Ring 170/SAM 99 Secretary