

VANISH MAGIC MAGAZINE

MAX MAVEN
1950 - 2022

Paul Romberg

VANISH MAGAZINE

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SPECIAL TRIBUTE

The response to the December issue of VANISH saw the largest number of downloads since Vanish started in 2011. This shows the love and respect Max Maven had on the world of magic and mentalism, and I have never seen such an outpouring of love on social media than I have for Max after his passing.

We decided this was such an important tribute, with over 50 contributors, that we wanted to share just the tribute part with everybody and offer it as a gift so those who don't subscribe can read it.

We added in a few additional links such as Nick Lewin's television interview with Max and a few extra photos that were sent in.

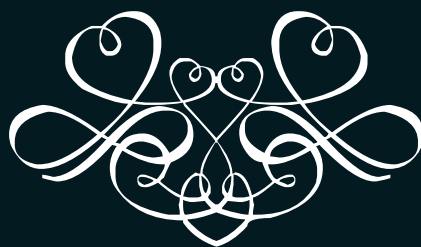
Many long days and nights went in to producing this and I would like to thank Nick and Susan Lewin for all the work they did on working closely with me on producing this. They did all the leg work contacting people and editing the contributions. It was a team effort.

I spent at least 40 hours creating the cover. I am very proud of it because I combined Max's words with his image. There is no photo in the cover, but I used shading and texture, so his image appears on it. His words resonated deeply with me and in particular, "I learned we should all be kind to one another," something that we should all strive for not only in magic but in our daily lives.

Share this with all those you know, and all let's his last words he wrote be heard around the world.

Paul Romhany





MAX MAVEN

21 DECEMBER 1950- 1 NOVEMBER 2022

"Teller and I first saw Max in the 70s, at some magic convention or something. Maybe NYC, maybe Philly. I don't remember. I don't remember the tricks he did. But I remember the feeling. Teller and I had seen Springsteen a few times before and I remember feeling, "I have seen the future of magic and its name used to be Phil Goldstein." He was amazing. I had never seen tricks like that, totally fooled on every single one, and a stage style that killed me dead. He wasn't playing the bland nice guy that everyone else was doing then. He was something else. Something wonderful. Wow.

And after that he just got smarter and better. When there were magical problems that we couldn't figure out, we called Max, and he had a solution for us.

Max will be missed. Magic in general, and Penn & Teller specifically, will be a little less good."

Penn Jillette





PHOTO BY ARTO AIRAKSINEN

MAX MAVEN. A MAGICIAN WHO CONTAINED MULTITUDES.

BY NICK LEWIN

This title is a reference to Walt Whitman's poem *Song of Myself*. The actual quote is "*Do I contradict myself?*"

Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" This seems like a fine start to any tribute about Max Maven. The outpouring of grief over the passing of Max has resulted in an enormous, I might say unprecedented, number of heartfelt stories and reminisces about this extraordinary member of the magic community. If Max could be described as a multitude, then it is equally correct to say he was appreciated and loved by multitudes.

Max Maven was born Philip Goldstein on December 21st, 1950, in Ithaca, New York. He passed on November 1st, 2022, in Hollywood, California after a two-year battle with glioblastoma. In those 71 years, he established himself as one of magic's finest performers, thinkers, writers, and historians. He also created an indelible persona named Max Maven who worked side by side with Phil Goldstein to touch on, and improve on, every

aspect of magic they explored. Few, if any, members of the magic community have left more creative fingerprints on their art form than Max.

Max has been showered with every kind of award that magic can bestow, he has been seen in live and televised performances around the world, all the while creating routines that will be performed by magicians forever. However, as we are learning more and more from the testimony of magicians worldwide, it was the man behind the persona that frequently touched and moved his contemporaries. Max was a very kind and generous soul partially concealed behind the somewhat sinister widow's peak and black clothing that made him so recognizable.

Maven was never a person to suffer fools gladly, but equally, he never stinted in helping a fellow magician improve their understanding and grasp of magic. Max was never one to desire or seek recognition for his generosity or kindness, so it is profound how many such stories about him have flowed out

in the aftermath of his passing. I am just going to relate one small story that affected me on a very personal level.

Back in the '70s Susan and I threw a party in our home in Sherman Oaks. Staying with us at the time were my parents from England. My father was an old-school British gentleman, a chartered accountant who had a deep-rooted love of all things mathematical. At one point I





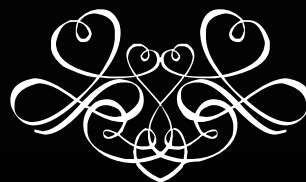
"What an amazing friend Max was to me; a true friend. When others tried to harm me Max defended me and he did it without reservation or reward. 50 years of unconditional love. Bless you Max we shall meet soon again." - Uri Geller

noticed my dad and Max hidden in the corner of my office with notepads of paper. My father had a look of pure joy on his face as Max showed him the intricacies of Magic Squares. They looked such an incongruent pair, but for about an hour and a half, Max took the time to teach my dad everything he knew about the curious art and science of the Magic Square. Why? Because my father had a real desire to learn and understand. My dad never forgot this simple act of kindness and neither did I. It is just a tiny example of Max being Max.

I want to keep my segment of this tribute short, simple, and not cluttered with too much detail. I decided it would be a nice idea to explore various facets of Max's "multitudes" from several angles. A 40 shades of Max. I felt this gives a better appreciation of Max than just my words, therefore I reached out to various other people to add their thoughts. This was not a thorough or exhaustive outreach and I apologize to all those who would like to have added something but didn't have a chance to contribute here. Stories and insights about Max will be shared

for years by magicians who were lucky enough to know him.

Amongst the many attributes, Max brought to the magic table was a fast and razor-sharp sense of humor. In almost any situation it was fair to assume Max would have the last words—and they would be good ones. Max's linguistic skills were second to none and his words were magnificently amplified by his deep and beautifully modulated voice. I suppose it shouldn't have been of no surprise to anyone when Max had the definitive last words on his planetary trip. However, it was! A few days after his passing the following tweet appeared on social media, and I can't think of better or wiser words to conclude my part of this tribute.



Max Maven@RealMaxMaven:

I made my life about words, reading them and writing them. I wish I had a more elegant way of telling you all that I love you.

I had a good run, made wonderful friends, shared many laughs, and I learned a great many things.

I learned that magic allows us to be so much bigger than we are. I learned we should be kind to one another and forgive people for being flawed and prideful.

The one thing I know is that we can all do better, and I think we will.

VIDEO CLIP SUPPLIED BY NICK LEWIN

Back in about 1997 I was producing and hosting a television interview show on the CW Network in Las Vegas called *"The Entertainment Files."* I was delighted that Max took the time to drop by when he was in town headlining at Caesars Magic Empire. My show tended to view the entertainment world through the prism of movies, Max was a charming guest discussing Magic, mentalism, and movies as only he could. He even performed a little magic in the studio. I wanted to share this rarely seen little clip, as it is a very nice one and it has aged rather well.





Photo by Najee Williams of Hocus Pocus Focus

Hocus Pocus Focus
PHOTOGRAPHY

FRIENDS pay tribute

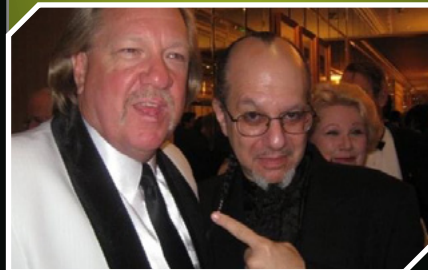
DAVID REGAL

I will forever appreciate something Max said to me. When I moved to California with my wife and kids things were chaotic and I continually worried that I'd made a mistake. I looked up Max not because I knew him particularly well, but because he was one of the few on the West Coast I knew at all. As I opened up to him he could tell I felt untethered and a bit lost. He said: "Well, you have friends out here. Like me."



MICHAEL FINNEY

What a treat it was having a friend like Max Maven. He was so worldly. When I say friend, he was a road friend. I'd never been to his house, and he'd never been to mine. He was somebody I grew to know on the road. We were booked together a lot in the 80s, magic conventions and clubs a few tv shows. As our friendship grew so did my admiration. I was getting to work with a real master of his craft. It was his presence while in character that grabbed me. The dedication to the performance and the amazing feats of Astonishment. "Boo" has to tell you what a great sense of humor he had about himself. I think that's why we got along. I made him laugh. If you were in Missouri at David Sandy's event you got to see my favorite memory with Max. But I will always remember how he made me feel. It was a magical friendship.



GARY PLANTS

Max, at first glance, could be very intimidating. When I first read The Jinx magazine, I was always intrigued with the genius of Ted Anneman. Max was my Ted Anneman.



“

A true **legend** in magic. Gone but **never forgotten.**” - Jeff Hobson

JOE & MARK STEVENS

Max Maven dedicated his life to magic! His purpose in magic was to be a conduit for all magicians and was always pleased to give us advice on oh so many projects that we have been involved with in magic world for almost 50 years! I will miss his NO nonsense valuable advice! We miss you Max! Thanks for being such a valued friend!



MAGIC CHRISTIAN

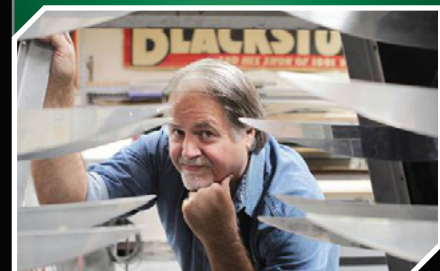
The words seem to escape my computer only slowly. They seem to mourn the same as the writer of these lines. A good friend is gone who started estimated over the time the importance of magic history more and more as the wonderful world of deception. He tried to learn from the old masters from the East and West and started to learn even Japanese to get closer to their philosophy of life.

We started to become friends over magical effects meeting at conventions and specially at the Magic Castle but became closer being historical addicted persons exchanging ideas on historical fact and magic heroes. And Max inspired probably several young magicians to go back to the roots and learn their lessons from the old masters too. R.I.P my friend.



BILL SMITH

I first met Max at the Magic Castle while performing there in 1975. Max was also a good friend of Harry Blackstone Jr (who I toured with for 10 years between 1977 and 1987), and Max met with us on the road quite often. My favorite memory was when we were in Cleveland in 1980 at the Palace Theater. The Palace was connected to the State Theater which was under restoration and was rumored to be haunted. As a publicity stunt to promote the Blackstone Show, Max performed a Seance with several local TV reporters. I snuck into the back of the very dark theater and watched Max at work, center stage with only the traditional "ghost light" on stage for illumination and he scared the hell out of those reporters. It was a great lesson in showmanship for me! Thanks, Max for 47 years of friendship!





ENCOURAGING



My Pal Max Maven by Mac King

I first met Max Maven when I was teenager, at an Abbott's Get Together in 1978. I was sitting with Lance Burton in the bleachers in the un-air-conditioned sweltering Colon High School Gymnasium. Max was introduced and us two Kentucky hillbillies had never seen anything like that. The first thing we noticed—obviously—was his trademark widow's-peak. Then that orotund Max Maven voice. And then his ensemble. Black. Obviously. But not just black. And not the black puffy pants and knee length blouses he favored in his latter years. No. A solid black beautifully fitting three piece suit. But without a shirt—chest hair proudly billowing from his vest. And then Lance and I were like, "Wait. He's not wearing a shirt and yet there are white shirt sleeves visible at the end of his rolled up jacket sleeves." We thought that was so cool. Already a mystery and he hadn't even done

a trick. And then he did a trick. Lance and I were 18 years old at the time, and as often happens with 18 year old magicians, we thought we were hot shit. So Max did his first trick. I looked at Lance, Lance looked at me. We each shrugged our shoulders helplessly. Neither of us had a clue. Second trick. Fooled us just as bad. Third trick. No idea. Every-single-trick simply pulverized us. Easily the most I've ever been fooled by one person at one sitting—before or since.

Max has probably had more influence on me and my show than any other person. He watches with a genius eye and can come up with just the right turn of phrase or little moment to enhance a performance. His ability to suggest

trick plots that fit me perfectly was impeccable. His knowledge of methods was massive. He was encouraging and smart. In addition to my show, Max influenced my everyday life. Book recommendations. Movies. Jokes. Food. Music.

And on Thanksgiving Day at my house he always expertly carved the turkey.

Every day since his death I think of things I want to talk to him about. I miss him so. I sure do love Max Maven.



Max carving the turkey.

DETERMINED



DIANA S. ZIMMERMAN

I first met Max Maven in the 1970s when he arrived at the Magic Castle sporting an exaggerated widow's peak haircut and all-black clothing. His extreme look, unusual talent, and approachable arrogance immediately captured the imagination of Castle audiences, as well as a clever young artists' manager named David Belenzon—who was also Harry Blackstone Jr.'s manager.

With the emergence of Doug Henning in the early seventies, magic's popularity was sky-high. David immediately saw the potential in Max's unique look, style, and mentalist talents, whose intelligent and skillful approach to performing created a curious juxtaposition to his almost cartoon-like look—all of which set him apart from the other mentalists of his day. Unlike Uri Geller or Kreskin—two superstar performers during those years—Max's style embraced an intriguing sense of irony.

Together, he and David Belenzon crafted a dynamic thirty-plus-year career during which Max toured the world, was a featured performer on the college circuit, and at comedy clubs. He also guest-starred on dozens of television shows, both as a mentalist and in acting roles, often playing a parody of his own

persona. Max's popularity continued to soar when he traveled to Japan, differentiating himself from other American magicians with his ability to speak Japanese, as well as his magical skills.

Talented, creative, and determined, to say Max was an enigma is an understatement. He could be arrogant, demanding, and even condescending. But he was also a highly respected consultant and beloved mentor who gave unselfishly of his time. I was fortunate to know all sides of Max Maven, personal and professional, for more than four decades. As with so many of magic's greats, his legacy will live on—and so it should. He was a uniquely talented master of his craft, who, in the end, became the legend in magic he always wanted to be.





Photo © H. Rick Bamman

POLY MATH

JON RACHERBAUMER

In our shared world of magic Max was a person, a presence, and a phenomenon for at least half a century. He was also a polymath who generously shared what he knew in print and in person, doing it with style and (to use a word he liked to use) *panache*. My collegial bond with Max was primarily based on words. Both of us were driven to memorialize tricks, theories, ideas, and anything else related to magic. But Max was more prolific than I. In this regard he reminded me of Walt Whitman, the poet who wrote in his "Song of Myself" — "I am large. I contain multitudes!"

I loved the fact that he wore two masks to express what he wanted to convey: He could be Phil Goldstein or Max Maven; and whenever I read his words I *heard* his oracular voice. Other times what I heard was affectionately chummy. In person he inevitably charmed me, even when he scolded and criticized (often with irony and humor.) But in the long run his words were what mattered. They are his soulful proxy and legacy.

Therefore, when he departed the Here and Now, I sought words to describe how I felt about this discombobulating loss. Max would have known. He was masterful at finding the right words and how to provide explanations that illuminated and consoled.

I'm now remembering a quote by American playwright, Thornton Wilder that Max thought was apropos when dealing with the loss of a loved one.

"All that we can know about those we have loved and lost is that they would wish us to remember them with a more intensified realization of their

reality. This essentially does not die but clarifies.

The highest tribute to the dead is not grief but gratitude."

Ironically Max's last message to us on social media expressed the same gratitude and love, using the right words at the right time.

I will miss his presence while being simultaneously grateful for the legacy he left to me and the rest of the magic world.

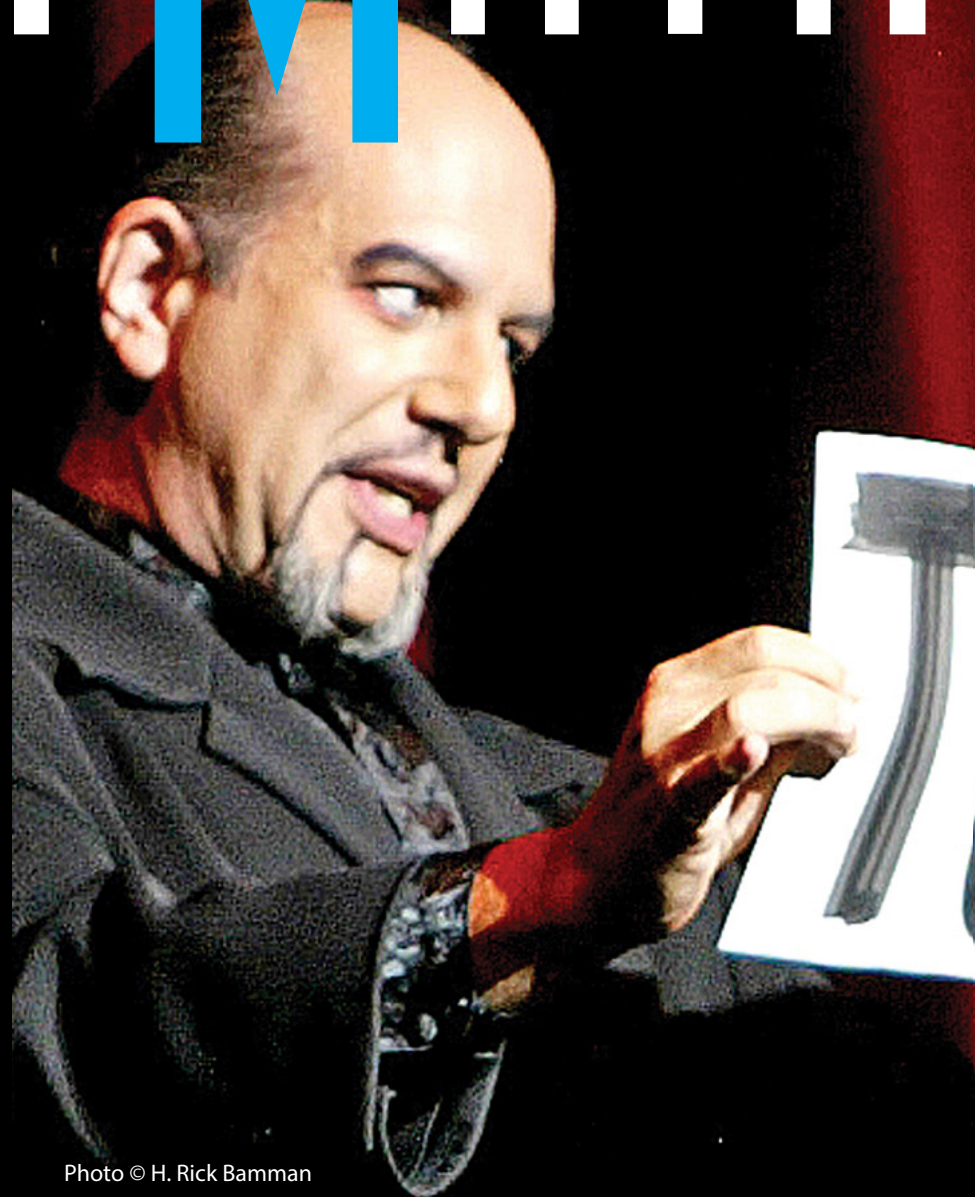


Photo © H. Rick Bamman



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Photo © FISM 2022 - Richard Kaufman with Max Maven



Photo © H. Rick Bamman



LIBERTY LARSEN



As we all know, Max was so many things, it would be impossible for any one person to know or even see all the facets to him. A brilliant diamond mind that impacted the art and our community like no other. Of all those many layers, I'm so grateful that I got to know best the gigantic heart and the big softie beneath the sharply crafted persona that was and is Max Maven. I got to be his kid, from the age of eight years old, onward to the last sweet and tender moments of life.

Max, these are just a few of the "thank yous" I hold in my heart forever.

Thank you for carrying my little pink backpack over one

shoulder down Franklin Avenue at 7:30 AM. every day (those of you who really knew Max and his blackout curtains don't-call-before-noon lifestyle know how huge that is — that's love!)

Thank you for answering all of my endless little kid questions, for always treating me like an equal, making me feel smart and sharpening my intellect.

Thank you for getting me hooked on Ethel Merman and educating me in musical and Broadway history for years and years to come.

Thank you for nurturing my talents, sparking my interests, and helping me create my very first magic act.

Thank you for making little fairy wings out of cardboard, big polka dots, and pink sparkle paper right in your apartment office on Halloween.

Thank you for scaring my friends and being there for my family, as part of our family, beyond anything I can ever truly express.

We miss you more every day, and I will wish, as we all will, that I could call you to talk about magic, theater, and life — for the rest of my life. Nothing can take the place of that, and nothing can take away everything you gave, to all of us. I love you so much.

RICHARD WEBSTER

Way back in 1976, I bought two booklets that changed my life: "The Horoscope Party" by Robert Nelson and "The Blue Book of Mentalism" by Phil Goldstein. From memory, they cost four dollars each, and within weeks of buying them I was able to make a fulltime living as a psychic entertainer.

Bascom Jones, publisher of *Magick*, gave me Phil's address, and I sent him a letter thanking him for his help in kick-starting my career. I received a charming reply, and we began exchanging occasional letters. I finally met him ten years later when he was guest of honor at Tony Andruzzi's *Invocational* in Chicago in 1986. I thought he'd be too busy to spend time with an unknown mentalist from New Zealand, but he was extremely gracious and kind,

and we were able to spend quite a bit of time together. The following year, again at the *Invocational*, I was fortunate enough to perform in a strange magic ritual with Max. That's a treasured memory.

Perhaps my most memorable time with Max was at the Magic Castle when he introduced me to T. A. Waters, and we spent an hour or two in the library there, followed by a visit to the séance room. A year or two earlier, I had attended a séance Max gave and was extremely impressed with what he could do with virtually no props. He showed me some of the gimmicks in the séance room, but said he'd never used them. He didn't need to.

Over the years, he answered numerous questions from me on a variety of subjects,

including mentalism, mnemonics, Jewish lore, and even tips on learning a foreign language. On one occasion I told him how I thought he'd performed an effect I'd seen on a video. His reply was one sentence long, telling me that he hadn't used that method. I thought I'd offended him but received another letter from him a day or two later telling me that he'd seen Kreskin performing an effect of mine on TV.

In June 2012, when I was in New York with my wife and my daughter, Charlotte, I took them to see Max performing his *Thinking in Person* show at the Abingdon Theatre. We loved the show and were able to spend time with Max afterwards. Margaret and Charlotte had heard a great deal about him over the years and were thrilled to meet him. That was the last time I saw Max in person.

I'll miss Max greatly. He was always friendly, kind, generous, and sharing. Although he's no longer with us, he left a huge legacy of books, articles, lecture notes, effects, and DVDs that will help performers for generations to come.

A year or two ago, someone asked me who were the greatest mentalists in the world. He didn't ask me to list them in order, but if he had, Max Maven would be top of my list.



To the magic community Max Maven was an icon, a god, but to me he was simply my friend, my Uncle Max. He always made me laugh, made me think, he was supportive and nonjudgmental. And every year he carved the turkey at our house for Thanksgiving."

- Jennifer Sils King



ALLEN ZINGG

I was a contemporary of Max. I knew him first as Phil Goldstein when he created what seemed to be an infinite number of packet tricks through Hank Lee in Boston. Between *Emerson and West*, Phil seemed to put out a new creation once every week or two. I think the first I bought was *Tiny Water* a four-card version of *Oil and Water*. I met Phil at a Tannen's Jubilee late at night when he joined us and another couple. He demoed *Symbol Simon* a great and organic prediction effect and *Five Card Polka*, a very funny an amazing packet effect. Later I purchased a magazine telepathy routine he marketed through Jeff Busby, *Parasight*. Another amazing routine. He had not yet identified as Max Maven, but his creativity was evident even then.

Over the years I was amazed at his creative output. I loved his droll sense of humor as when I saw him on *Merv Griffen Show* and he was introduced as one of the guests and there was a line of previous guests, perhaps Zaza Gabor, Phylis Diller, and Rip Taylor. He looked down the line and said, "Usually I'm the odd one." How priceless.

What I was struck by over the years is how he embraced and loved both magic and mentalism and his originality in both. By the way, somewhere I have a *New Tops magazine* with a contribution from him titled. *A Comedy Vent Routine* by Phil Goldstein. I always wanted to confront/blackmail him with this after he became Max Maven. LOL.



LUPE NIELSEN

GOODBYE UNCLE MAX ...

Although I met Max Maven for the first time in the late 1980s, while working at Hank Lee's Magic Factory (Hank always called him "Phil" in those days), I started to know him better at the 1997 Los Angeles Conference on Magic History, when he presented Joseffy's "Balsamo," the talking skull. He was brilliant and remarkable in his presentation of the effect. Throughout the years, Norm and I saw and spent time with Max at various magic conventions, social events and shows. I still remember the time we toured Finland in 2005, it was a treat to hang out with him backstage every day. He even helped us with our luggage during our journeys by train.

Max was a true creative genius, who left his indelible mark in most of the magic literature of the 1970s through the 2010s. He was a genuinely nice person, who really knew how to listen to people. He was also a great trivia wiz, storyteller, and great critic of magic.

My nickname for him was "Uncle Max." The world of magic will never be the same without him. All I can say is that I thank my lucky stars that I met him and that he touched my life. Rest in peace, Max Maven, and may God bless you always.



STEVE SCHLANGER

I've been a magician for a long time, and I've never seen the out pouring of love that I've seen with the news of Max Maven's passing. I don't even think he could've predicted it. A few months ago, I had an opportunity to be with Max and other magicians at a Magic Castle séance. I asked a technical question relating to the *Sphinx magazine* and Max was not only able to recall several articles that were in the *Sphinx*, but what year and who was on the cover on any given month.

Several years ago, I was at the Magic Castle in the Palace of Prestidigitation and Max was performing, and there was a drunken heckler in the audience. I have never seen a performer take care of the situation so directly. Max was a master in anything that he did.

I wish I got the opportunity to know him better; I remember a few years ago Max stated that one of his favorite books was *Harpo Speaks*. This was very big news to me as it is one of my favorite books and I no idea that he liked it. I would've never predicted that we had the love of this book in common.

I believe that Max is visiting Al Baker, Ted Annemann, Eugene Burger, and Joseph Dunninger among others. Aloha Max. We all love you.



MARC DE SOUZA

Obviously, Max's passing doesn't take us by surprise, but it is still devastating. Max was a friend for over 50 years. We met at a convention, probably a Larry Weeks one day affair, and immediately hit it off. He was going by an assumed name at that point ;) We would get together at conventions or on my visits to Boston and spend time together talking and sessioning.

Around 1975, I asked Phil to come down to Philly to do a private lecture, which he did. It was at my then girlfriend's apartment. The lecture was based on material that would eventually become his book *Classic Tacklers*. He came down the night before and I picked him up at the Philly train station. Geoff Strauss, Roy Snyder, my girlfriend and I were going to a party given by some non-magician friends. We invited Phil to come

with us, which he was glad to do. As we were walking out the door, he asked us to call him Max. I thought it was some sort of joke, but he told us that this was his new stage persona and he wanted to "inhabit" the character. And so, as awkward as that was, we all called him Max. At first, he was Max Goniff, the Thief of Thoughts. In Yiddish, that made perfect sense, but he soon realized that Goniff was not a very flattering term and so he changed it to Maven, being a very flattering term. And he was indeed a Maven of the highest order!

I feel fortunate to have shared many sessions and talks with Max over the years. Our last was at FISM in Quebec City. Somehow, I felt that this would be the last time I would see him. We shared some memories and I told him how much I valued his advice, knowledge and friendship over these many years. Sleep well my friend.



Photo by Dale Farris



PHOTOS BY DALE FARRIS



MAX AFTER JUDY CARTER'S SHOW

L-R - ERIKA LARSEN, SARA, JUDY CARTER, MAX

SARA BALLANTINE

I was introduced to Max Maven by my wonderful father, Carl Ballantine. I had seen a lot of magic growing up, but I had never seen anyone quite like Max Maven. He was so striking looking and intimidating (to my younger self) and appeared to truly have psychic powers. We used to pick up Max and go out to dinner after my mom passed, and Max told us how much he liked Ceil. It warmed both of our hearts to hear him speak of her glowingly. I think my mom totally touched his heart too somehow.

On January 9th 2007, Max did a "Castle Perk" down in the Inner Circle where he interviewed my dad. I was lucky to attend that perk, and I saw my dad's mind visibly blown by the questions Max asked him. Talk about delving! My dad had no idea how thoroughly Max had researched his subject. Another huge point for my heart-o-meter.

Cut to years later when Max and I were both elected to serve on the AMA Board of Directors. We found ourselves in lock-step with our opinions and future goals to improve the AMA. A true kinship was formed, and I was grateful for his insight and expertise.

Sadly, he began to get terrible headaches around May of 2021. After his surgery, I became very involved with just visiting and hanging out with him as he pushed on through recovery. I was grateful to be part of a close circle of friends who morphed into a family of love and support for him.

Our time together was special and precious as I became closer to the man separate from his performer persona. Since I am not a magician - only magician adjacent, we had wonderful talks about theatre and music and books and movies we enjoyed. He was tickled to hear my audition stories and was so supportive of my documentary film "TROUPERS." He would have been in the sequel, had we ever gotten around to it. He was just happy when we got together, and without spilling any confidences said beautiful things to me. There was just a lot of love there. And love of good food! His cat however, hated me.

It was an honor to meet his sisters Naomi and Sara. (I couldn't believe he had a sister with the same name and he had never mentioned it!)

To learn more about his childhood and family life was just so special.

I am beyond glad he had the opportunity to know how much he was loved and beloved by so many before he passed, and for him to receive the Masters Fellowship for all his accomplishments and contributions to the world of magic was surely a highlight for him. Just look at all the lives you touched dear Max. You will be missed and remembered forever. I like to think that Phil Goldstein and Meyer Kessler are smoking cigars and talking magic somewhere. I love you.



SARA BALLANTINE



GENEROUS

SANDY MARSHALL - "BROTHER" MAX

I can't remember a time when Max Maven and I weren't friends unless you count the time when Phil Goldstein and I were friends. (Yes, that was his given name at birth). We go back a long way. Max was my brother from another mother, and he always looked at my dad (Jay Marshall) as his number one mentor. When my wife, Susan and I planned a surprise 80th birthday party for Jay in 1999, Max was the first person we called to be on the show. He flew into Chicago and performed a hilarious variation of Lefty with a creepy, skeletal "Righty" routine to the shock (and delight) of a packed crowd.

Others are certain to tell you that Max was

a great writer, master showman, brilliant mentalist and, at the time of his death, one of the most knowledgeable people on the subject of magic in the English-speaking world. He certainly was that, but he was so much more. You should never have been fooled by his highbrow, sagacious demeanor. Max was always generous to a fault, sharing knowledge, magic, obscure facts, and fun on a daily basis to anyone who was interested. Just be sure not to phone him before 3:00 P.M. He didn't like waking up too early.

Max was also something of an actor and in one of his many television appearances, he appeared on "Mork and Mindy" in

1978 as Mork's driving examiner. This was particularly funny to those of us that knew Max never learned to drive.

Years ago, when Max had his heart attack, Aye Jaye and I showed up at the hospital dressed as priests. Max couldn't stop laughing.

Virtually always dressed in black, with black eye make-up and a pronounced widow's peak, that made him look demonic, his opening line upon coming on stage was "BOO" delivered in a contemptuous sort of way. Because of this, many people thought Max was standoffish. Nothing could have been further from the truth. He would



© David Linsell

to lecture and perform at Magic Inc. almost every year. During the pandemic, when Magic Inc. was in serious financial trouble, Max led the charge (with many other great friends) to perform on our very successful telethon.

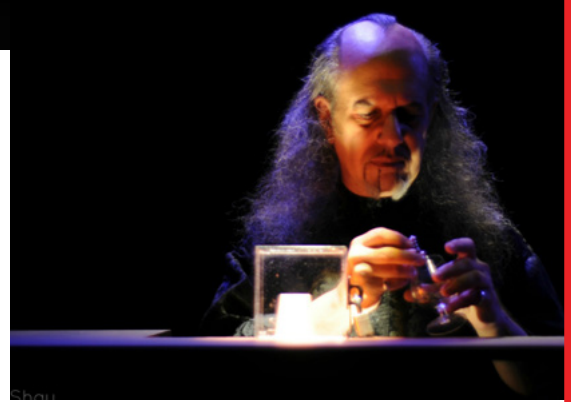
Susan and I saw Max's one-man show in London at the Bridewell Theatre. It was very entertaining, but I thought it should and could be so much more. Happily, Max trusted me to make that happen.

I produced and directed *Max Maven: Thinking in Person* Off-Broadway and brought on board a beautiful, young actress named Melanie Crispin to act as a foil for Max, as well as nine-time Tony Award-winning lighting designer, Jules Fisher, and gifted set designer, Alan Muraoka. Mystic Myron Lowenstein ran the box office. The show received fourteen New York reviews... EVERYONE an absolute RAVE. After each show, Max would meet with the audience out in the lobby as they left the theatre, signing autographs and taking pictures with them. No, he was hardly standoffish. I had black tee-shirts made for the production and on the back the words: "Those people who think they know it all make it very difficult on those of us who do." Yes (if you'll pardon the pun), that was Max to a tee.

What an absolute pleasure it was working with "Brother" Max on this project.

Maybe my favorite Max story is when I sent him an early copy of the biography I wrote about my dad, *Beating a Dead Horse: The Life and Times of Jay Marshall* before it was published. After he read it, he said in his wonderful erudite voice, "Well, you got MOST of it right." I said, "So what did I get wrong? He said, "You say that Jay attained the rank of sergeant in the army. Well, Jay was very vocal about going into the army as a buck private and coming out a buck private." I smiled and said, "While that made a better story, and Jay always loved a better story, it isn't true." Max can't really have his feet held to the fire for this bit of Jay Marshall propaganda because he got it from the horse's mouth, but I told Max, I had a few things that he didn't have. I had my dad's dog tags, his sergeant stripes and his discharge papers from the army, which lists him as sergeant. Max smiled a wry smile, swallowed hard and said, "Well that's just CHEATING, isn't it." Maybe so, but it still makes me laugh. There are not many of us who can say we one-upped Max Maven. Much of the world doesn't know what an inspiration and mentor you were to so many of the greats in our magic and mentalism community. Well, I know.

"Brother" Max, I will miss you, your loving friendship, your wit, your wisdom and our shared laughter, every day for the rest of my life.



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MARK HOLSTEIN

I was aware of Max Maven since my earliest days in magic. His dramatic caricature appeared in issues of *Genii magazine* I devoured every month in the 70s. I studied his books and tricks. I read his articles. I admired his writing and his intellect. He would show up at the early Collectors' Weekends in Chicago. His talks were always a highlight. I stage managed a show he was on, at Abbott's I think. It was early...he still wore a tailored three-piece suit. He opened with his trademark "Boo!" We lit him in appropriately spooky style. But our orbits never really intersected. I don't have a photo of myself with him. He didn't know me.

In late years, Max would participate in the LA History Conferences. His talks were great, and his knowledge and his memory were remarkable. One of my favorite Maven memories occurred at one of the last LA Conferences. Jim and Frankie Steinmeyer graciously invited a group of attendees to their home after the Friday events. It was a wonderful affair with great food, drink, and fellowship. Jim arrived late, squeezing in one more rehearsal after the conclusion of the evening events.

By 2 am, the gathering was winding down, the dishes were washed, and lights were being turned off. Jim and Frankie were due back at the venue in just a few short hours. But Max was holding court in the Steinmeyer living room, showing no sign of slowing down. My wife Sue sprung into action. She grabbed Max's arm. Explaining that the evening was over and the Steinmeyers needed rest; Sue physically dragged Max right out the front door and onto the front walk. Max did not miss a beat. He continued his story, followed right out the front door by his small audience. It's unlikely that he knew he'd been relocated or by whom. The story simply continued a Burbank sidewalk. A completely memorable story for us...undoubtedly a completely forgettable moment for Max.

His shadow is long and dark. His influence undeniable. His presence unforgettable.



PHOTO COURTESY FISM 2022



PHOTO BY ARTO AIRAKSINEN

GRATITUDE



STEVE VALENTINE

Max Maven. It's taken a few weeks to get my thoughts into place on what Max meant to me.

Often, we go through our lives, unaware of the magnitude of affect we have on people we will never meet, our words and actions having ripple effects throughout the lives of others. Today I want to tell you about one life that Max Maven had a profound effect on for over 40 years, mine.

In the late 80's, I was a massive fan of his writings, his column in *Genii*, his packet effects and especially the Color Books of Mentalism, now republished as *PRISM*.

At eighteen years old, somehow, (don't ask me how) I landed kind of a dream job for a teenager, resident entertainer at a nightclub in a hotel in the former Yugoslavia. I was a one-man entertainment team for a company

called Yugotours, who had thought that providing English speaking entertainers to run various nightclubs might be a fun idea. Our job was to run the club, oversee the bar, provide two different 25 minute shows a night PLUS Deejay until 2 in the morning. This would all happen over the course of every two weeks. That's twenty-four different acts! They could be anything, magic, games etc. But I saw this as an opportunity to perform constantly in a place where it didn't matter - too much - if I failed. And I was also able to do as much close-up as my fingers could allow.

I ran the bar, so was drinking a lot for free, I fell in love every two weeks, it was an adventure and coming of age, an experience that one day I'll write about in detail. I was there for two years and would probably still be there if it hadn't been for the coming war. And throughout the



- so secretive that he wanted me to team up with him to sell a TV competition series he'd created but refused to give me all the details... making it impossible to pitch.

We had some wonderful lunches during that time, conversations I'll value forever. A few years ago, I started an online Magic School - MAGICONTHEGO.COM - where I teach magic and history that could get forgotten. It's a growing, visually immersive course now with over 850 videos. When I asked Max if I could teach *Fine Mesh*, *Nucleus*, *Four-Sided Triangle* and others, with all with my notes and variations, he graciously and instantly agreed. I felt I had come full circle.

Working with Max on the award show was surprisingly easy, if he liked an idea he liked it, occasionally a gentle, 'let's not' came my way. His show editing was as efficient as his writing. His goal? To bring the award show in on time - under 2 hours. We did it, and I'd never seen him so happy. I can't tell you what that meant to me. Max even pranked me - live on stage - at the beginning of the show. That was surreal...

So that's it, just one life that Max Maven affected, well actually not just one. British illusionist Jamie Allan was in Toronto not so long ago, to open *ILLUSIONARIUM*. I went to the premiere and discovered that when Jamie was about 8 years old, his parents took him on vacation to Yugoslavia. There, they saw a skinny, geeky teenager do magic shows every night. Somehow, he had pieced together that that teenager was me...

Jamie told me that I was kind (phew) and taught him magic, and it was one of the inspirations for his career of choice (couldn't be prouder). But... as we talked about that time, Jamie started recounting and almost reliving his memories of the magic effects I had performed and that had affected him, and stayed with him, and the one that came straight to mind - *NUCLEUS*...

Thanks Max, for everything. Bow deeply.

entire experience, Max was my companion.

Twenty-four different acts? What would I do? Well, I took a giant trunk of props, and books, including my copies of the *Color Books of Mentalism*. I must have tried everything in them, at least once. I also tried all the Annemann Jinx acts... but that's another movie. I would put an act together in the morning and perform it in the evening.

What I loved about Max's books were the complete descriptions of full-blown presentations. The structure and staging and dramatic power of many of the effects were so well described and seductive I just had to try them.

At times I succeeded spectacularly, often I failed spectacularly, but the material came to my rescue over and over. The memory of me trying to perform *DESIRE* from the *Blue Book*, still brings me anxiety. I had no idea what I was doing, and my eyesight was so bad that I couldn't read the markings, still it's a powerful routine if done well, I didn't do it well...

The *Red Book* gave me some of my most successful performance pieces, starting with *FOUR-SIDED TRIANGLE* - a fabulous presentation for essentially a very simple trick. Strong enough to close the show and always a hit, despite me! I always used *DISPOSABLE COLOR*, and if it worked it was a lovely extra moment. *VISION VERSION*, also a lovely sequence. *SATAN'S NIGHTMARE* was a lot of fun at 3am with a bunch of drunk tourists and locals in the hotel bars, it's dark and weird, and I always, as Max suggests in his description... bowed deeply.

The *Green Book* starts with one of the strongest and simplest card effects of all time, an effect I do to this day if I want to perform a mystical hands-off miracle, it's called *DESTINY*, and truly worth a try. BUT, in the *Green book* is the one stage effect I have performed the most, *NUCLEUS*, Max's version of the magnetized cards with a brilliant presentation that literally makes the audience jump.

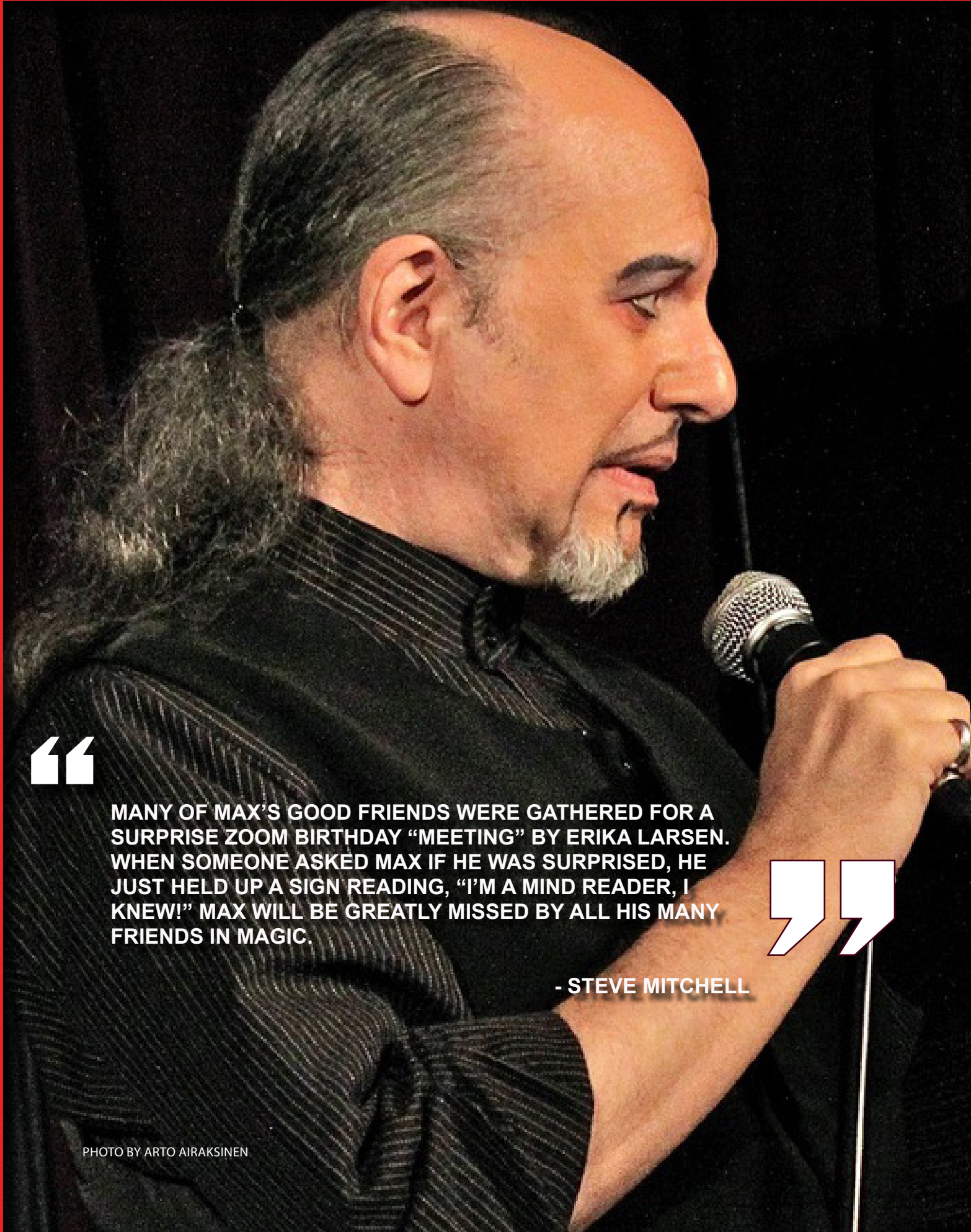
I could go on, but you get the picture, not just stage but his close-up pieces packed my repertoire, *Fine Mesh* - one of the cleanest 2 card vanishes ever - and *Five Card Polka*, a wonderfully visual packet effect, were in my wallet wherever I went. It wasn't just the tricks I learned from, but the theory in his writings that continually taught and challenged me.

To say that his work affected my magical career is an understatement. In my old notebooks his work stands out, including a note, after one good show, where 18-year-old Steve wrote '*Phil Goldstein is a genius!*'. Never did I think we would meet...

A few years later (1990) I found myself at the Magic Castle. There was Max, and in his most intimidating form. Impossible to meet and get to know, but that was ok, your heroes don't have to be your friends.

It took a long time to get to know him, but it wasn't till we worked together on the Magic Castle Awards Show that I was able to tell him what his work meant to me. I got to know the goofy Max, the wry Max, the Max obsessed with wrestling, the secretive Max





“

MANY OF MAX'S GOOD FRIENDS WERE GATHERED FOR A SURPRISE ZOOM BIRTHDAY "MEETING" BY ERIKA LARSEN. WHEN SOMEONE ASKED MAX IF HE WAS SURPRISED, HE JUST HELD UP A SIGN READING, "I'M A MIND READER, I KNEW!" MAX WILL BE GREATLY MISSED BY ALL HIS MANY FRIENDS IN MAGIC.

”

- STEVE MITCHELL

PHOTO BY ARTO AIRAKSINEN



MICHAEL A. PEROVICH

I knew Max Maven since he first appeared at the Magic Castle around the mid 1970s. However, rather than recite personal anecdotes, I'll focus here on two instances where I observed him from afar, in front of an audience, in difficult situations.

The Fifth Conference on Magic History in 1997 included an homage to Joseffy, the eccentric magic inventor. One of his most marvelous inventions was said to be his animated skull – the Skull of Balsamo. This skull was not operated by invisible thread, nor remote controlled motor, nor clever platform. Rather, it was self-contained. Its illusion was dependent on the magician's timing, showmanship and – the mechanism operating exactly as intended.

Max had contributed to many of the previous Conferences, but perhaps this would be his most challenging. Max, and the reconditioned skull with a propensity for mechanical failure, took their places upon the stage. Max asked questions and the skull responded. It responded exactly as if it were a living entity, and had carefully considered the questions posed by Max. It looked about, its teeth clicked, it performed mathematical calculations, it appraised the audience. The illusion was perfect and the warm response from the audience of magic enthusiasts was loud, long, and justified.

Max was drained and, when the performance was complete, he mentioned his flop sweat was real – this was the first time Balsamo had performed to script. Not one of the rehearsals has even come close to being this trouble free. The skull never missed a cue. It had done its part, seemingly coming to life to the amazement of the audience and in tribute to its maker. But without Max's impeccable timing, his authority and stage presence, the skull would have meant nothing. It was a

wonderful treat to see. Joseffy would have been proud.

The second memory I'd like to recount took place in Rimini, Italy in 2015. I love FISM and have attended several. Like all FISM's, this one had its glitches. Actually, it had a great many; a great many more than any of the others I attended. The registration was a nightmare, the assigned seating a disaster, the food unpopular, transportation impossible to find, and the show times anybody's guess.

While the FISM audiences in China were well-behaved, respectful, and impressed by the dignitaries who appeared before them, in Italy things were, well, different. The crowds seemed antagonistic toward the FISM officers, suspicious that film crews were responsible for the incessant delays, and positive that money was flowing to inappropriate pockets. Frustration was high and tempers were flaring, but the ship really hit the sand when the curtain on the jury-rigged stage was unable to fully open, if at all. Acts were forced to perform on a half open stage or delayed beyond their shelf life. I truly thought there was going to be a riot and began to gage which exit I could most quickly make my way to.

Enter Max Maven. Max, above all others, had the angry crowd's respect. Max pulled up a stool, sat down and began to speak. The crowd began to listen. Max calmly acknowledged that there were problems. But he also pointed out how hard it was to put on something of this magnitude, how hard everyone was working to overcome problem areas, how much work was going on behind the scenes and during the night. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, Max won the crowd over. Tension drained from what a moment before had been an angry mob. People responded to Max's logic, demeanor,

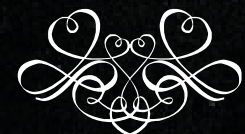
and soothing tones. He soon had them convinced that patience was not only needed; it was, indeed, the proper course of action.

The audience knew of Max Maven's support of, and contributions to, FISM over the years. His reputation was unsullied, his sincerity unquestioned, his motives unimpeachable. Max succeeded where others had failed only moments before. Everyone was lucky he was there because not only did he quell an ugly situation; he made the remainder of the event much more pleasurable for everyone concerned.

I don't believe anyone else could have pulled this off.

I'll conclude with a short personal anecdote. I asked Max to write a segment for my book, *The Vernon Companion*. I told him exactly what I was looking for. He asked me how many words and when I needed it by. He submitted exactly what I wanted, written exactly as I wanted it, and precisely on time. Now, you might think this was a very common occurrence. It wasn't.

Aloha Max, you made quite an impact.





CONNIE BOYD

MAGICAL WOMEN AT FISM WITH MAX

Like many magicians I am struggling with the loss of Max Maven. When I reflect on my career and highlights many times Max was there. We taped the first, "World Magic Awards" together in 1999. We both admired Barclay Shaw. Our paths crossed when we met again in Shanghai at the Magic Festival in 2012 and I will always cherish Max's comments about my performance. As he graciously said, "the enthusiastic reaction of the Chinese audiences proves that Connie Boyd's magic transcends international boundaries".

This year at Max's invitation I presented a lecture as part of his history of magic FISM series entitled, "How Women Influence Magic". I never dreamed of such an honor and to be given a grand stage for my voice to represent many Magical Women. It is one of the greatest honors of my life.

That opportunity was thanks to Max Maven who was always watching and observing and who was always at the heart and the pulse of magic.

I saw the loving care Carisa Hendrix enveloped Max while at FISM and I knew he was in the best hands. I fortunately have a recording of Max's introduction to my lecture, which he attended beginning to end. I have my favourite photo of Max with many of the women who attended the talk. I am so grateful I was given that opportunity and that was thanks to Max Maven.

In September, I received a Special Fellowship from the Academy of Magical Arts and the Magic Castle. The text on my award was written by Max himself. It was presented by my friend and mentor the brilliant Diana Zimmerman. Max was presented with a Master's Fellowship Award and was inducted

into the Magic Hall of Fame and I had the honor of being there to watch him receive those awards and to watch many esteemed colleagues and friends pay tribute to him. I was so pleased to be able to thank him and congratulate him and to hug him a last time. I am grateful to have known him and I am grateful he saw something in me, as he did with many, and that he gave me an opportunity to soar on my new Magical Women path. I am struggling, but I am eternally grateful.





SERGEY MOCHULOSKIY

More or less serious mass magic movement started in Russia at the beginning of the 2000s, at first slowly, and mostly with cards. "Encyclopedia of card sleights"... "Card College"... and then suddenly, like a storm, Mentalism, it was something absolutely new. Came the Giant at whose shoulders the local magicians of this genre are standing today, professionals and amateurs, official and underground. At first, we thought there were two giants, the information was arriving slowly. Then it became clear, Max Maven and Philip Goldstein read minds in the same way because they are the same person. The contribution of this person to the art of illusionism in the world and in our country as well is invaluable.

Thank you Giant! Rest in peace.

BILL MALONE

"He was a true one of a kind. I will miss him forever. I really respected Max as a wonderful person and an incredible creative, talented performer."



RAY ANDERSON

Max was a true legend in the world of magic. Unique. One of a kind in all the world. We won't see the likes of him again. He dedicated his life to the advancement of the art of magic. Although I am sad that he is gone, I am a better person for having known him. Thank you, Max. So many are in your debt.



JAMY IAN SWISS

It seems to me now that Max was always ahead of us.

At a time when magic was seen as old-fashioned and stale, Max created a striking persona that flew in the face of audiences' (and magicians') preconceptions about what magic or mentalism could be.

When mentalism had been dominated by repeated prediction effects, without process or motivation, Max introduced the profoundly modern subtext of influence and psychology. Much later, Derren Brown would expand and exploit this foundation and make it the trademark of his work.

When mentalism had been dominated by billets and impression devices, Max ignored those traditions and moved to psychology as a dominant methodological element. (Throughout his career, Max eschewed the use of billets entirely.) Contemporary mentalism is filled with psychological methods, a fact that is taken for granted. Such was far from always the case.

While purists derided the use of playing cards in mentalism, Max's mentalism with cards was so breathtakingly mystifying that he not only routinely opened his shows with a substantial segment of such work, but also would consistently fool audiences of magicians, who were incapable of duplicating his often risky and psychologically based effects even if they held theories about the methods.

Even when utilizing classic principles—a memorized stack, a pencil-marked index card—Max would demonstrate his mind-reading abilities by describing in impossible detail the mental machinations and purely imagined visual elements of his on-stage audience assistants to a degree that was unprecedented, and regarded by many if not most as unduplicatable.

Partly the reason for these facts of his work was Max's constant embrace of the role of risk in his material and performances. When



I first met John Thompson I was quickly faced with this particular shared facet of our tastes in conjuring, namely the fact that wisely considered risks can sometime produce distinctly stronger effects. In a wonderful online interview of Max with the television writer, producer and comedy historian Mark Evanier¹, Max recounted:

1

<https://youtu.be/pc0VvMQY-DY>

“Every routine in my repertoire can go wrong and has gone wrong. Years ago in the eighties, I actually kind of sat down and ... I looked at my active repertoire, the stuff that I do most often, and I took out everything that didn't have at least some element of risk. Because I said, if there's no risk, there's no fun ... for me! It's sort of the Karl Wallenda School of Entertainment, except that when I fall down, all that gets injured is my pride.”



2022 BY JAMY IAN SWISS

When equivoque was basically known as the Magician's Force and the most widely used published work lay in forcing one of three books for a book test, Max wrote an eight-page essay in 1976 that became nothing less than a foundational work.

From 1976 through 1980, a period when mentalism was just igniting a birth of new publishing and

interest, Max created five unpretentious and inexpensive manuscripts that later became known as the "color series," and that would come to demand astonishing prices in the resale book market. That is, until 25 years later, when the collection would be published as the book, *Prism*, which remains a top selling and invaluable work of practical, commercial, deceptive mentalism to this day.

One remarkable characteristic of all of these historical facts and more is that Max was actually quite circumspect about promoting his innovative contributions. The booklets were invariably minimally produced and similarly priced. A combined search on ConjuringArchive.com on "Max Maven" and "Phil Goldstein" delivers 1,262 entries, representing probably about three-quarters of the

actual number in my estimation. Yet despite his prodigious published output, Max rarely wrote about his most important creations. The strange tragedy is that he wrote so much, but he has not left us with the bulk or best of what he had to offer. He certainly had more in mind, but he was not permitted sufficient time to fulfill his plans.

In 2006, in the "Performance Notes" instructional manual to "The Da Vinci Zone" book test, Max gave us a small taste of his theoretical depth regarding one significant element of his work—long after the fact of Max's innovation and use of these ideas. He wrote:

"Let me take a moment to address what I feel is an essential aspect of effective mentalism the sense of process. Mentalism is basically a demonstration of some sort of paranormal ability which, for the sake of this discussion, we'll say involves the transfer of secret information. ... The audience does not observe the transmission, except in the most external manner.

Rather, there is a starting point (some secret information is established) and an ending point (the information is revealed), and the only reason the audience accepts the claim that some process was involved in linking those two events is that the performer blithely states that it happened.

I have long contended that this is not enough. If the performer does not convey some sort of definition, the audience's experience is shallow. The result may be impressive, but it doesn't go anywhere. No wonder mentalism is frequently condemned as being boring. Without an underlying process, it usually is.

Therefore, I am a firm believer in Process Mentalism: approaching the presentation of such effects with a deliberate subtext that conveys a feeling that something is actually happening in the space between the start and end of a demonstration.

Now, exactly what that something is remains for you to decide. There is no "right" solution, and what works for one performer may not fit another. The process may be explicitly described, or implicitly incorporated into your behavior. What is important is that you know what it is."

I have provided that excerpt in order to enable readers to grasp the full substance of this idea of "Process Mentalism" – a frankly huge idea which Max innovated. The first great mentalist I ever saw perform live and who thrilled and inspired me was Al Koran. He was a superstar in England before immigrating to the United States. And his mentalism act consisted almost entirely of predictions. Consider that fact, and the sea change—that became a tsunami—that Max's "Process Mentalism" brought to the art.

As I mention in a memorial tribute for Genii magazine, Max was well ahead of all of us with observations and insights that many of us now accept and embrace as fundamental to our view of the magical arts of conjuring and mentalism. Consider:

- "Magicians are afraid of magic."
- "The great tragedy of 20th century magic in the larger picture is that magicians have taken an art form that is inherently profound and rendered it trivial."

It would require some time for me to fully grasp the meaning and significance of these statements. But I came to comprehend that they were interrelated, and unarguably true, and as I reached these understandings I could then begin to alter my work and incorporate their wisdom in significant ways. My work grew and matured as a result.

Max did not leave us with enough, but he has left us with a great deal. Including this:

"There are two kinds of mysteries: Those that are meant to be solved. And those that are meant to be savored."

I shall savor the mysteries of my friend Max Maven until the end of my days.



HOWARD HAMBURG

I still remain devastated and continue to have a saddened heart with the passing of Max Maven. Beside me considering Max one of the top three geniuses in magic of all time, more important, Max was one of the kindest individuals in or out of magic I have ever met in my 83 years.

For years I was invited to Tapalpa, Mexico which is a village located in the mountains a two hour drive from Guadalajara, Mexico. It is a special get together comprised of magicians such as Dani DaOrtiz, Asi Wind, Miguel Angel Gea, Paco Rodas, Mahdi Gilbert, Yann Frisch, Armando Lucero and notable others and hosted by Javier Natera who paid for all expenses including air travel, hotel accommodations in Guadalajara and a beautiful hotel in Tapalpa.

Every meal was incredible and served by the hotel staff. All restaurant bills were taken care by Javier. He was the ultimate host.

A few years ago, I asked Javier if he would invite my friends Max Maven and Allan Ackerman and Javier immediately responded, "OF COURSE." I asked Max if he would like to join this unusual get together and he immediately responded "Yes," as was the same response from Allan Ackerman. Max had a wonderful time and those paid attendees from four South American countries were so thrilled to see Max who answered every question they had. Each of us gave lectures and Max's lecture was the favorite of those attending as was the favorite of the rest of us who lectured over the five-day period.



STEVE SPILL

You can spot me in the lower right corner of this 1975 photo taken at the Magic Castle. At the time I didn't know Max particularly well, but did know he was an anagram enthusiast. When he met someone new he'd think of anagrams or, more easily, for any words that can be made out of some, but not all, of the letters in their name. Oddly, using this method, one might get the measure of someone quite well from their name.

How about these anagrams to prove my point?

Madam Curie = Radium came

Alec Guinness = Genuine class
Salman Rushdie = Read, shun Islam

Phil Goldstein used the anagram idea in reverse: He decided what he wanted to be and changed his name to fit. When I try for anagrams for the name Max Maven I get:

Max Maven = Genius
Max Maven = Pioneer
Max Maven = Author
Max Maven = Mind reader

I'm a bad speller. Max was a great man.



PHOTO

DAI VERNON, MAX MAVEN, STEVE SPILL

SHAWN MCMASTER

There will never be another magic mind like Max Maven's. He was simply brilliant. His meticulousness was evident in everything he performed and/or published, and we in the magic community were better off for it. In just reading some of the wording of many of his mentalism effects, you can see how Max sometimes made the effect happen in the spectators' minds without him doing a damned thing other than just speaking words!

On a personal level, he was always a supportive voice about my comedy magic work and publishing ventures. He kindly contributed interviews and essays on more than one occasion for my digital publication The Mandala during the three years it ran, and while I didn't take advantage of it as much as I should have, he also had an encyclopedic knowledge of magic and magicians. Whenever I reached out to Max for an origin of a trick or sleight, he never let me down. In fact, he would quite often give me more useful information on the topic than I had ever hoped for. I will miss Max. We all will miss Max. Magic, as a whole, will definitely miss Max.



PAUL GERTNER

When you walk onstage in a theatrical outfit, heavy eyeliner, a hairstyle dominated by a pronounced widow's peak and your opening line is "BOO!" you better have the chops to back it up. And our friend Max Maven certainly did... with talent left to spare. And as most of us young performers were tepidly stepping before their audience hoping and praying the audience would like us, Max dared his audience not to. With that one-word opening and a self-effacing smile he acknowledged what they were thinking and invited them along for the ride. And then having mentally disarmed them he clobbered them with a devious combination of method, technique and performance that left those of us in the "know" knowing that we had all stopped thinking way too soon.

If anything, Max Maven made bold choices. The character, the look, the voice, and the

precision with which the words were spoken... all of these were choices. As was his most consequential choice to focus on mentalism, decades before it became the latest trend. This interesting choice allowed his alter ego Phil Goldstein to continue to create, invent, write, and play in the world of mystery and magic which caught his childhood attention in the first place. Perhaps for Phil-Max as we sometimes called him in the mid to late 70s the name change was nothing more than a clever branding and marketing decision or perhaps there was just too much going on inside that amazing brain of his to be constrained to a single persona... so why not become two? Makes perfect sense when you think about it.

When we first met in 1975, he was still Phil Goldstein living in the city of Boston

" Many from Siegfried & Roy, David Copperfield and Penn & Teller relied on his experience when adding a new piece to their show."

where I now reside. But for most of his life he was Max Maven, a performer and prolific creator of magic and mentalism who influenced performers worldwide. A teacher, historian and unique one stop resource that in his later years became an icon at the Magic Castle in Hollywood in the same way Dai Vernon, Kuda Bux, Billy McComb and Al Goshman were decades before. Many from Siegfried & Roy, David Copperfield and Penn & Teller relied on his experience when adding a new piece to their show. And Max was happy to give you his opinion, nothing sugarcoated, but an honest one, a well thought out one. And he would usually provide you with an angle to think about that you had simply overlooked.

If we all had real magical powers we would rewrite this ending. For me it would be watching a young magician coming to the Magic Castle for the very first time, and when walking through the door seeing a 90-year-old Max Maven sitting in the chair where Vernon used to sit right outside the close-up room. But while that chair remains empty, don't be fooled by the illusion. I have a feeling Max will be sitting there, and that thought makes me smile on an otherwise very sad day.



NAJEE WILLIAMS

Max Maven saved my marriage (and, perhaps, my life)! More on that later.

I originally met Max back in 1990, when I joined the Magic Castle, but it wasn't until I started working there as the "Official Photographer" that our friendship galvanized. He was a very warm and compassionate man.

Max was, of course, an intellectual. His knowledge of magic was prodigious, but few people knew of his awesome knowledge of music. While working at the Magic Castle, I started a roaming trivia game on music of the 60s and 70s. The game went like this: Someone would name a popular song from the era and the other person had to name the artists/group/band. Oh, the epic battles Max and I would have. Max would see me across the hallway and rush to me. "Najee, I have one for you. Who performed *Grazing in the Grass*?" I would respond, "The instrumental version was by Hugh Masekela, but the vocal version was by The Friends of Distinction." He would light up. I would throw something back like "Who performed *Cissy Strut*?" He would quickly announce, "That's easy. That was The Meters." People around us would be astounded. Others would try to compete with us, but hardly anyone else had the aptitude (Jonathan Neal surprisingly did). Max loved being impressed by my recall of one-hit wonders, and I was equally amazed by his recall. It was a mutual respect of equals, knowing very few could keep up. It brought us both great joy and pride. So much fun.

Now, how did Max save my marriage and life? I had been addicted to cigarettes since I was 12 years old. I tried everything to quit. When my daughter was born in 1978, I tried desper-

ately to quit, not wanting my baby girl smelling tobacco smoke on her Daddy. I failed. When my father died in 1989 from lung cancer, I tried to quit. I failed. When I saw my best friend dead on his deathbed in 2005, I knew I had to quit. I failed. I married my wife in 2009, while hiding the fact that I was a smoker. She HATED cigarette smoke and would not have married me, had she known. She would not have stayed with me had she found out.

One day, in May of 2010, I was walking outside of The Magic Castle and I saw Max puffing on this black stick with a blue light. I asked him what it was and he said "It's an electronic cigarette. It has nicotine, but none of the tar that causes cancer and emphysema. Also, it doesn't have the smell of tobacco." He told me where I could order it online. A few days later, I received my electronic cigarettes. That was May 13, 2010 and I have never had one puff of a regular cigarette since. I used the electronic cigarettes for a couple months, then dropped them, too. I've been free of the addiction for 13 years now, and I owe it all to Max. He saved my marriage and, most likely, my life.



RYAN C. REED

Growing up as a kid I watched Max Maven's work on TV and Video then was able to see Max during "The Magic at The Capital," a local magic convention in Sacramento in the mid 90s.

I remember being quite captivated by Max's eyes, deep commanding voice, deadpan humor and dark persona.

A few years back a friend and I had come to Hollywood, California for filming with James Corden, a quick visit with Johnny Gaughan then dinner and shows at "The Magic Castle".

After an exhausting day but wonderful evening of enchanting food and feats of archimage we found ourselves with the evening winding down and exiting "The Castle". To the right of the exit door is a chair. I look to the right and sitting there was the man himself Max Maven.

Max was sitting there by himself, one leg crossed over the other. Taking in the atmosphere, just hanging out and soaking in the ambiance.

I stopped mid stride speechless not quite sure what to say. I reach out to his foot and grabbed it.

Max: "Well hello there!" I gave Max a quick look of hello and respect.

Without words I let go of his foot and exited the venue. A moment but a moment I'll never forget.

I didn't want to impinge on the man's stillness or moment of introspection.

I will Miss Max.



BEN ROBINSON

I admired him greatly. I met him several times, not much talk between us, except the first time. Max was appearing Halloween weekend at Caroline's Comedy Club in New York City in 1986. I was not far away at another club with a very well publicized bullet-catch indoors, the rifleman firing above the heads of an audience. Somehow we got away with it. Max knew my publisher Ray Goulet since he was a student at Brandeis University. As coincidence would have it, the woman I took to see Max's show at Caroline's had dated him at Brandeis University. I did not know this at the time. She told me the man on stage reading minds was really named something other than his nom de theatre and that she should say hi after the show.

I'd participated in a written test with him during the show, and being fourteen years his junior, yet with the endorsement of Harry Anderson on my book, Max said when meeting me, "So, you bring her from my past, you participate in my show now, and you're appearing soon with a gun?" I smiled that he had the whole picture in an instant. It wasn't competitive ego, it was professional assessment. A silent recognition that the other guy was checking out his show and he knew my date. Somehow that ranked for one second in his universe.

And what a universe it was. The Entertainment Director of the Magic Castle smiled from ear to ear telling me my first week at The Castle received not one complaint. He then told

me, "And when I told Max Maven that, he said he was going to come see you. Like I said, not one complaint."

Amazing? Well, to me it was a high compliment that he'd take the time. I mean, no one ever will again approximate his output. No one will ever know such in depth understanding. And when I was informed of his passing I was in the Museum of Modern Art with the magic historian Richard Hatch who informed me. At the moment we are in a "members only" time slot, hence the place was almost empty. Dick and I were surrounded by Magritte paintings when he told me Max passed. I felt as odd as the paintings on the walls. I had to sit down surrounded by the truly surreal. When I informed a friend of mine who knew Max very well where I was, he remarked, "Max would have loved that. He was a Magritte painting."



CARISA HENDRIX

There is a big Max Maven shaped hole in the world. I feel it every time I have a success, I want to share with him, or need sage advice, or acquire a juicy piece of gossip I know he'd love. Lately, when I think of him, I remember the sassy man who had no patience for my negative self-talk or self-doubt. He saw the best in me and when I was around him, I could see it too. I have come to learn he made a lot of people feel that way.

This loss has wounded us all in way we don't yet know, but I tried to remember that the pain of his passing is just the payment coming due for a thousand joys, and the joys were all worth it





JEFF MCBRIDE



Max Maven - Always One Ahead

The first thing Max ever said to me was "Oh you're JEFF MCBRIDE the guy who thinks mentalism is boring!" I was completely embarrassed, but it was true! Until Max, every Mentalist I saw put me to sleep.

I had recently written a short article for a magic weekly newspaper called *MAGIC WEEK*, a tiny publication from upstate New York. It was then that I knew I was dealing with a very powerful intellect. I said to myself, "This Max Maven guy reads everything!" I was correct! He even reads little newsletters on the other side of the country.

So, the first day I met Max, both of us were waiting at 57th Street and 5th Avenue for the famous street magician Jeff Sheridan to show up and perform at the plaza fountain: one of his regular performance spaces. While we were waiting, Max performed his famous Equivoque coin routine. I was impressed how much entertainment and mystery he got out of a handful of change!

One thing we did have in common was a performing philosophy that "less is more." Jeff Sheridan also described to this performance philosophy...he was a magical minimalist.

Over the years Max and I became very good friends. Max would offer me his insights and critique my shows; his critiques were hard-hitting but most welcome. He did not pull punches; anyone that knew Max Maven knew that he gave it to you straight up! I learned many lessons on how to give and take advice and feedback from Max.

My mentor Eugene Burger was one of Max Maven's best friends. Eugene had his own room here at our mystery school named "The Dean's Room." Every night he would talk on the phone with Max discussing their day and what magic they were working on.

Max was a constant presence in my life for more than 40 years

One of the best times I spent with Max was when he directed my online show *MAGIC QUEST*. Not only did he give me his expert direction, but he also gave me a real benediction that I needed to move forward in this new medium. "It's all about the eyes," he said, "All about the eye-contact. Zoom is the most intimate media ever created. The person who focuses more on the personal connection instead of the technology will win this game."

The last time I saw Max was at FISM. He was in good spirits. We spoke about life, death, Eugene, and what is beyond. Now Max knows what is beyond...he is always one ahead.

STAN ALLEN

SIXTY MONTHS

In the summer of 1991, I was assembling a team of writers to put a voice to a new magazine that would premier that fall. I wanted this upstart periodical to have some teeth to it, to not just be another “everything is beautiful” fluff rag. What was needed was someone to write a “call ‘em as you see ‘em” monthly column. Max Maven gave us that — in spades.

For five years, his *Parallax* column offered a steady flow of commentary on what was going on in the magic community. Often, these were simply short bits — “If magazine editors can afford computers, why can’t they afford spellchecking programs?” Wait, you talking ‘bout me?!

Other times he would write in more detail, as was the case in May of 1992 when he devoted two-thirds of his allotted page to why professionals shouldn’t talk to amateurs. To say that that one caused a bit of a stir would be quite the understatement. The piece generated the most letters to the editor — a record that stood for the entire 25-year run of the magazine.

Max and I regularly disagreed over his use of *big words*. I argued that no one — myself included — would know what those words

meant, unless they read the column with a dictionary close at hand. Max countered that he wasn’t just using big words, he was using the *right words*. Ugh!

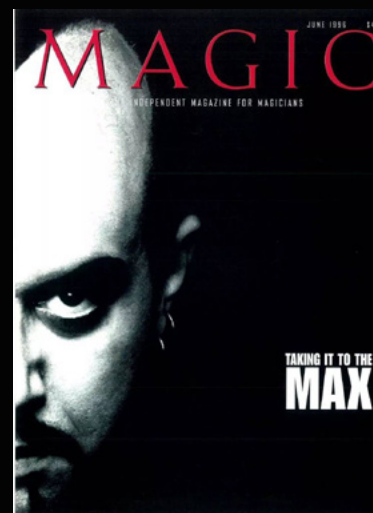
One month, just to appease me or annoy me — hard to say which — Max wrote the entire column under the sub-head of “Brief Case.” In it, he defended the use of big words, but he did it while only using five-letter words or less.

The thing about Max’s tenure in *MAGIC Magazine* is that, whether you *loved* the column or *hated* the column, you read the column. And if we’re honest with ourselves, those columns — like most of what he gave us over his lifetime — made us think.

Yes, Max took some shots. But did he really take shots at people, or was he taking shots at what people did? I know, it’s a fine line, but it’s an important one. And again, if we’re honest with ourselves, some of the things we did deserved a few shots.

And by the way, Max didn’t deliver his barbs anonymously or while hiding behind some Internet nickname. Nope, he said what he meant. And he put his name it.

Well done, Max.



▶ PHOTO- MAX ON THE COVER OF *MAGIC MAGAZINE*



Note from editor: The article Stan is referring to that caused such a stir can be found in the May 1992 *Parallax* column in *MAGIC magazine*.

Stan kindly gave permission for readers of *VANISH* to get the PDF from that issue.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read it.



ZABRECKY

AN UNMISTAKABLE MENTOR & FRIEND



Oardinia polaroid cronut irony single-origin coffee viral. La croix echo park fixie pabst, hell of chartreuse cardigan raclette. Irony next level pickled schlitz. Organic knausgaard neutra kitsch butcher slow-carb. Stumptown meditation narwhal edison bulb cray. Asymmetrical typewriter master cleanse, umami skateboard fam gluten-free neutra af. Truffaut cliché chambray organic pop-up williamsburg. Ennui poutine live-edge lyft, keytar pinterest glossier deep v truffaut cronut authentic slow-carb letterpress small batch. Chicharrones polaroid woke pork belly, chambray meggings neutra vaporware hammock lomo iceland listicle unicorn meh. Yr PBR&B gentrify cold-pressed tbh, forage meditation vinyl wolf. Flexitarian post-ironic skateboard snackwave you pr An Unmistakable Mentor & Friend

While transitioning from a career in music to one in magic, I met Max Maven. We met after I'd reached out to him seeking

artistic and technical advice with my latest obsession, mentalism. With the temperament of a medical doctor, Max carefully listened to my dreams and goals. Then, for the better part of that hour, Max talked, and I listened as I scribbled his words into my notebook. That hour felt like five minutes. I spent the next several days transcribing and organizing the pages of notes from our session, hitting the AMA Library to read up on some of the material he'd suggested, make props, and rehearse before we met again that following Friday.

We continued to meet at Cyber Java again, and again, and again, until Max became what I'd consider my unmistakable mentor. Those hour-long sessions gradually lasted longer and longer. During them he, one at a time, helped me achieve my artistic goals. His counsel and suggestions led to ideas that were beyond my wildest dreams.

As our sessions would wind down, we both opened up about who we were offstage, and from that, learned about each other's

He showed me how to look at problems through a deeper lens.

lives outside of magic. I'd learned that he, like me, had a previous life as a musician. While talking about rock and roll, he told me he'd attended Woodstock as a teenager. It was a stretch to believe that this middle-aged man who didn't seem to leave the house without dark make-up and a head-to-toe all black wardrobe walked among — and just might have been — one of those colorful hippies in the summer of 1969. The layers of the person I knew as Max Maven deepened, magic historian, enigmatic mind reader, musician, and former bohemian boy. Max suddenly embodied equal parts bold, cool, and far out. That day he became much more interesting than I'd already known him to be.

One of my dreams during that time was to work in the Parlour of Prestidigitation at the Magic Castle. After receiving my third disheartening rejection letter from the club's talent booker, who informed me, "With all the current death and destruction going on in the world, please keep your macabre magic act away from the Magic Castle." I shared the letter with Max. He found it laughable. "We'll fix that. With all the current death and destruction in the world, magic needs you more than ever" he said. And of course, he did fix it. He sprung the concept of a shift from my current premise — a funeral themed mentalism act — to that of an all-American, boy-next-door premise. That is, if my Norman Bates-esque persona was the boy-next-door. That day he planted an invaluable conceptual seed I've been developing ever since.

Over the next 20 years, the sessions at Cyber Java came to an end, but our friendship blossomed in the best way friendships can. I learned to love and admire him for so many things beyond his place in magic; his endless curiosity and infinite knowledge about nearly everything, and his ability to listen and be a good friend.

Later, I had the good fortune of serving with Max on the Board of Trustees at the Academy

of Magical Arts. As board members, we offered counsel and helped make creative decisions for the member's and guest's experience at the club. During that time, I learned even more from Max. It was in those meetings that I learned Max held a black-belt in reasoning and problem solving. I anticipated each board meeting with Max for selfish reasons — I knew I'd learn something from him. At light speed, he'd define the root of any question or problem and find a reasonable answer quickly and effectively. He taught me how to step back and look at questions from many angles before making a final decision. He showed me how to look at problems through a deeper lens. More effective and less reactive.

For me to call Max a mentor is easy, though words can't truly describe how grateful I am to him for all he taught me. However, beyond all that he taught me, the most beautiful thing about my friendship with him was that we were vocal about how much we meant to other. Max knew how much he taught me, and if too much time went by without me saying so, I'd remind him. He knew how much I cared about him, how much I loved him, and I knew how much he loved me.





PHOTO COURTESY FISM 2022

LUIS DE MATOS

Max Maven was real friend, a true colleague, a profound inspiration to me (and many), a very special human being with whom I felt unparallel complicity and respect.

I strongly believe that he gained his eternity among what he called the dysfunctional magic family. I was lucky enough to feel, over a period of three decades, inside what he liked me to define as "The Great Wall of Max Maven." He is irreplaceable and his knowledge, genius and generosity will always be missed.

KNOWLEDGE

PETER SAMELSON



Peter Samelson
- 1975 Magic Ski Fashion Show - created by Wesley James

Everyone's posting pictures and I have a few tied to specific Max events. First up is me, in tennis togs. This is how I met Max.

created the Friendship Convention in Tokyo (AUG. 8-12, 1990). Without Max I never would have been there. Oh, there are tales to tell but let the photos do the talking for now...

It was a lifetime ago; the year was 1975 and I was in Boston in a Magic Ski-Fashion Show, when Max showed up because, well, because it was a magic show. Afterwards, Max complimented me on my handling of a bare-handed tennis ball vanish and that was the start of a friendship.

Like so many others, I miss Max, but keep him alive with my Mental Images. May his memory be a blessing.

Max skyrocketed and remembered his friends, bringing them with him and bringing them together. It was through Max that many of us connected with magic in Japan and specifically with Ton Onosaka, who



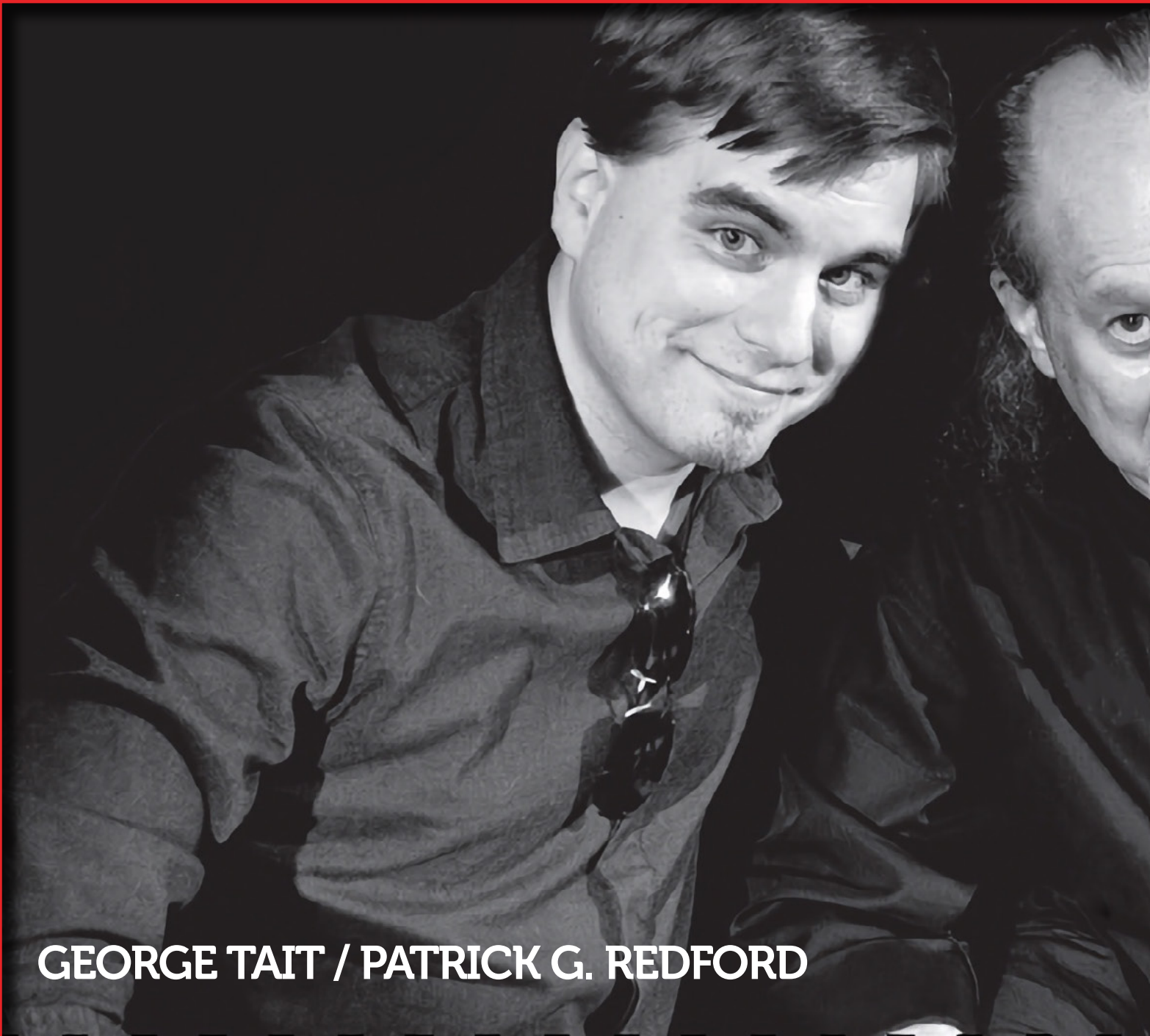
Peter, Hiro Sakai, Mama Onosaka, Ton Onosaka, Bona Ueki (of The Napoleons), Max Maven, Lisa Manna, late Parte Koishi (of The Napoleons), and Yuka Shimoda



FR: Michael Chaut, Charles Reynolds, Patrick Watson, Simon Lovell
BR: Todd Robbins, Peter Samelson, Max Maven, Jamy Ian Swiss



Peter Samelson, Siegfried, Tomo Maeda, Roy, Max Maven



GEORGE TAIT / PATRICK G. REDFORD

MENTOR



In one of the last conversations Max and I had, I had made the comment that one thing that stands out that I've learned from some of my closest mentors and friends in magic that I love so dearly, is that getting old sucks.

Max being the enigmatic polymath that he is, retorted: "...you know what Dai Vernon had to say on the subject, don't you?"

Of course I didn't. I also knew I was about to and I was thrilled.

"Get younger friends," Max finished.

While I realize this was his way of gently preparing for the inevitable future that was before us, it was also a reminder that it's important to surround ourselves with people we choose; as it is often easy for many of us to spiral through the world alone. I couldn't help but respond without thinking, "No offense intended to anyone, but young people can be such idiots."



Time is precious. Time is the most valuable commodity.



"I don't disagree with you." Max said.

Worried that I had come off a bit thoughtless, I expanded further, "For the record...I don't discount myself from that category."

Max, perhaps realizing he may have unintentionally called me an idiot, softened it by adding, "I don't discount myself from that category either."

I've been talking with Max for all but the first eight years of my life. Though I wouldn't have comfortably called him "friend" until I was about twenty-one. This was around the time I stopped being overly intimidated by his company and we began speaking as people who know one another instead of me being the annoying kid that occasionally asked him questions (which he always graciously took the time to answer). He had a huge heart and always took the time to remind me that we're all just people.

There are people in my life that I'm not sure that I'm ever going to get to see in real life ever again. There are people that I'm positive I won't ever see again. Some of those people aren't by choice. Time is precious. Time is the most valuable commodity. I've gotten a lot more picky about how I spend it these days but I'm honored to have spent quite a bit of it with Max.

BRILLIANT

GAETAN BLOOM

I can't believe Max won't be helping me anymore, and whisper me wonder words...

I don't even remember when we first met, but for sure when in 1981, I visited USA for the first time. Max was there and acted as a wonderful host for me at the Magic Castle. For instance one day he told me, "Mon cher ami, I have arranged everything for you and tomorrow we will visit Disneyland!"

It was marvelous, Ken Brooke was there too, and we were like children. Imagine your first time in Disneyland. Ken was crying of joy during It's A Small World, Disneyland, and the Magic Castle--two dreams at the same time. And after that, he took me also to Universal, and he knew these places inside out. Incredible Max, utterly brilliant, and knowledgeable Max.

Yes, he took me really under his huge black wings. Thanks to him, I also met Eugene Burger, of course, and later, we did memorable trips to Japan with another Jedi, Ton Onosaka, who had put the trip together—how wonderful.

I remember the day when Ton had organized a very special dinner, a Fugu party! Well, you know how expensive this can be, with special old geishas in a private room to serve the gorgeous, but so dangerous meal. Max was really stoic, Eugene was not as courageous, really, but he was a fantastic mime, pretending to eat the food, but his knowledge of lapping did the rest.



Max, Gaetan and Jeff Mcride

But really, the best part during the trip was to see all these people, Japanese, Europeans, or Americans listening to Max speaking fluent Japanese. This was a wonderful show by itself, and you could tell that Max was so happy to astonish all the people, groups, after groups--so wonderful Max. He was really very fond of Japan and his culture.

Pretty early on I started to call him, privately, "Uncle Max," and every time I had a question, I went to him like consulting an Oracle, and the process was always the same. I asked him my question and Max listened, concentrated and then a

pause, and then, started to look at me a little bit sideways, before talking, and his first words were always, "Well Gaetan," and then he always had the perfect answer, always humorous, and often starting as an analogy with one of his own beautiful stories. These moments were priceless and will always be in my heart, and in my soul. You may think I am bombastic, but NO it's true, one hundred percent!

Also, the first time at the Magic Castle, I did a trick for him with an invisible watch. It was more a joke than a trick, but an interesting plot. Then, he had his mystic gaze, and savoring the words he was going to deliver, he said, "Well Gaetan are you familiar with the name of Winston Freer?" "Who?" "Winston Freer, I will tell you about him, because I feel that you kind of think like him, often and with that, he started to open my mind to this incredible genius, and without that talk, I would quite surely have never met, years after, the absolute expert on the subject, my so dear friend Gene Matsuura. Max had this special knowledge of what was good for you, or not.

Even quite recently, when we knew he was not healthy, he was always helping me with different contacts at the Castle lost because of Covid, and we had planned to meet again at the Castle. It won't be the case, but yes, in one way I am sure he will be there, somewhere, in all the rooms with his enigmatic and charming smile, and later, some other day, he will give me an appointment upstairs, at twelve, in the old library in the corner, writing his column, and Max and Eugene will look at me and Max will say, "Well Gaetan, you are late, we have been waiting. Let's talk about this new book we started some years ago," and believe me, we will write it!!



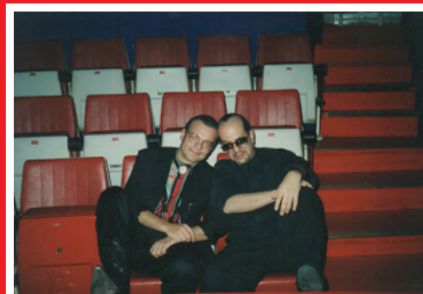
Max, Eugene Burger and Gaetan in Japan



Dai Vernon, Max and Gaetan at The Castle



Max, Gaetan and Eugene Burger



Gaetan and Max



PHOTO: L-R Brian Lewis, Keith Barry, Gerard, Tony's daughters Kate and Lucy, Max and Tony "Doc" Shiels

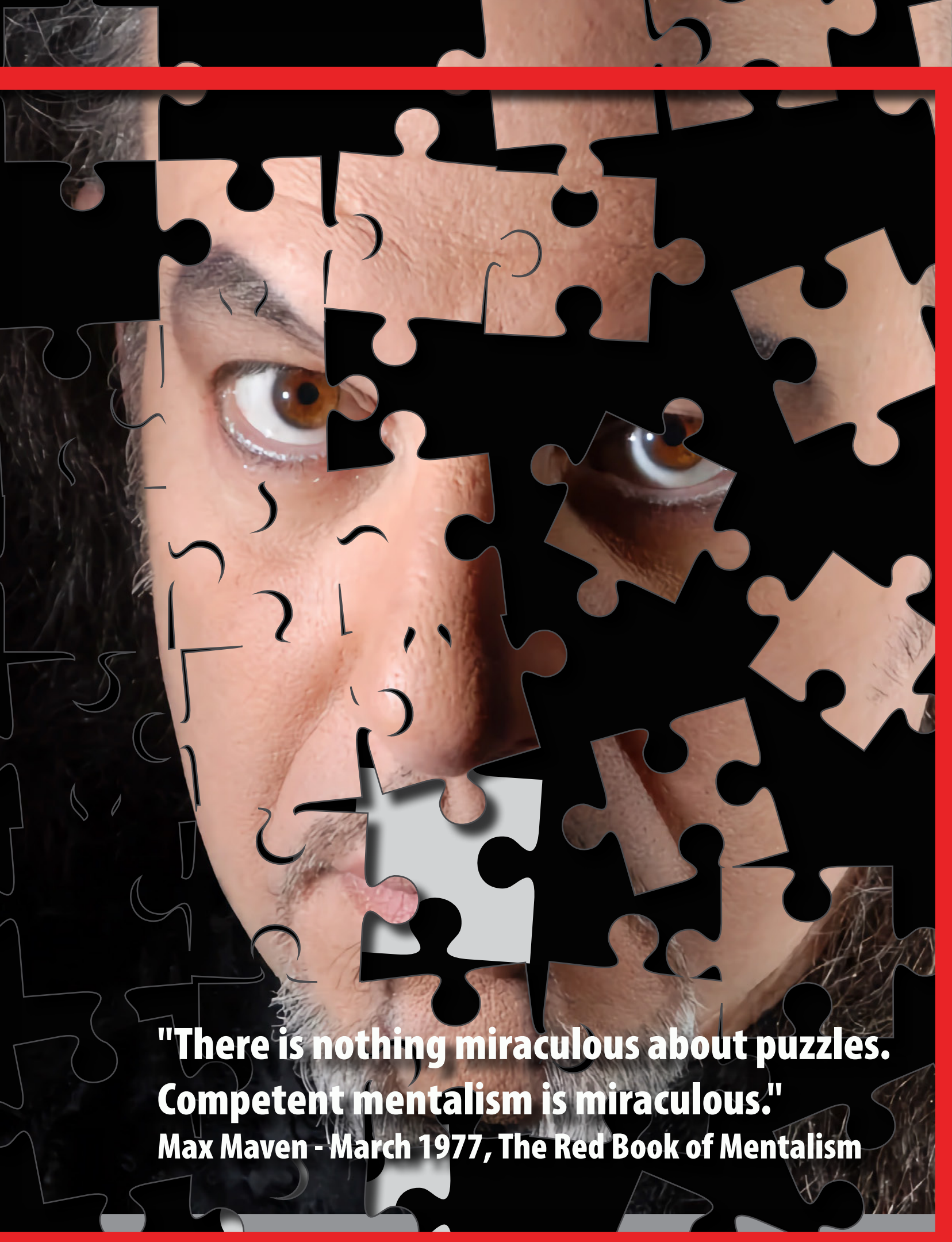
KEITH BARRY

Max appeared on my series Brainhacker and I spent a number of days with him in Ireland which was an amazing experience. It was magical reuniting him and Doc - two absolute LEGENDS and heroes of mine.

My favourite memory was when Doc looked at Max right between the eyes and held out his fingers towards Max's body. After around two minutes of intense staring between them we were all bewildered as to what Doc was doing, Max included. Doc shook his hand and said to Max "You're hurting my knuckles." Max asked simply "How am I hurting your knuckles?" Doc replied, "I've been trying to levitate you and bounce your fucking head off the ceiling for the past two minutes." With that Max smiled, then giggled, and then cracked up laughing. The table erupted in laughter, and we all cracked up for around four minutes in a full-blown laughing fit.

Many people don't realise that not only was Max a scholar and a genius--he also had a great sense of humour, and could not only tell a good joke, but he could also accept a good joke, especially when it was by one of his comrades and colleagues





**"There is nothing miraculous about puzzles.
Competent mentalism is miraculous."
Max Maven - March 1977, The Red Book of Mentalism**

ANDREW GERARD

I remember meeting Max Maven in Oregon somewhere around 2001 when I also got to meet Billy McComb. I'll never forget it. Stephen Minch saw me and wanted to personally introduce me to Max. "Max this is Andrew Gerard from Vancouver, Andrew is one of the underground guys..." Max's reply was, "sounds dirty." We chatted for a couple of minutes surprisingly nothing to do with magic. Then I mentioned to him that I had found several novels that used his naturally occurring book test principle. His eyebrow raised and I smiled because that was the face that I'd come to know through reading his books and studying his work. Over the years we exchanged several emails. In 2007 I started to work in television consulting, producing, writing and being on camera. Fast forward to 2014. I created a TV series in Ireland with my friend Keith Barry called Brainhacker. Keith and I made a list of guests we wanted to have on each episode. The names I wrote down were Max Maven, David Berglas, Doc Sheils and Uri Gellar. Keith had done the same. Same list same names.

When Max arrived, we felt excited, and it was a thrill to produce his segment where he performed his chair test. To be able to watch him in this medium was a masterclass in performance and audience control. In the hallway after filming Max gestured to me and said, "well done, let's take a photo."

I found myself in Hollywood in 2017 working and filming when I received an email from Max saying, "I hear you're in town." Part of me wanted to believe he could just sense it through his mental powers, but I knew

that probably some of the magicians in town had let him know... Still, I never asked because the mystery was greater than the truth. We connected and went for coffee at a little cafe on Hollywood near La Brea. We sat outside on these large picnic tables and got into a very wonderful conversation that I will always cherish. This was casual Max dressed in comfortable clothes, it was nice because at this point I felt like I met Phil Goldstein. He was happy to just be himself. For the first time I felt like we were actual friends. We were talking about creating routines and some abstract ideas regarding a premise I had come up with a piece that I had wanted to offer up to Max as a gift that would be great for a television spot.

Basically, it was a routine where Max would meet at a cafe with a devious person, perhaps a card cheat, or pool hustler. After a brief discussion about human nature and reading people Max would bring out an old penny and a \$100 bill explaining that the man should hide the \$100 bill in one hand and the penny in the other. And if Max couldn't guess correctly the man could keep the hundred, or of course the penny if he so chose.

Round one.

Max would deliberate before revealing where he believes the \$100 bill was while talking about perception, decision making and

Karma. Max would make his decision and the man would be shocked when he opens his hand to reveal that Max was wrong! The man chooses to keep the hundred and Max takes back the penny. Max explains he's quite surprised and the bill for the two coffees arrives. The man says he'll pay for the coffees. Since he won the \$100. Max exits the scene leaving behind a small, folded card. The card is a photo of the penny explaining it is a 1944 Steel Lincoln Cent worth \$1000,000!

As if that sting wasn't enough, the coffee bill shows Max had a cup of Elida Geisha Natural 1029 coffee. That is \$100.00 a cup. The man pauses for a moment and realizes that he didn't lose anything but gained a valuable lesson about perspective human nature and decision making and most of all that Max Maven has very expensive taste. Max smiled ear to ear when I describe the routine to him. Of course, his notes were that it would have to be reworded ... of course. IT IS MAX AFTER ALL!

No words that I or anyone else can write can sum up Max's life passion work for our art. The enormity of Max Maven has not ended as his work branches out into a vast expense. His work has inspired us all greatly and now his life does as well. Thank you Max we will speak your name forever.





Watch the FULL FISM interview with Max Maven & Luis De Matos



The Magic of the Gilbreath Principle – Max Maven





**I learned that magic allows us to be so much bigger than we are.
I learned we should be kind to one another and
forgive people for being flawed and prideful.
The one thing I know is that we can all do better, and I think we will.'**

MAX MAVEN



PHOTO BY ARTO AIRAKSINEN