

Genii Speaks

Richard Kaufman

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I FLEW TO LONDON at the beginning of May to attend Bob Read's memorial service. Emerging from the Covent Garden underground station an hour early, I heard a voice at my elbow asking, "I thought you might like to continue the interview now." It was David Berglas. I responded that only moments earlier I seriously considered taking the underground one more stop to

Leicester Square to go to a book shop first, then asked him what he would have done in that case. "Run very quickly," he replied. And we had a good laugh. I've interviewed David several times since January for an upcoming article in *Genii* and he is delightful company. After a quick bite at a French café, we walked over to St. Paul's Church to attend the memorial, deftly organized by Bob's widow Pauline. It was a perfect hour of loving and well-deserved tributes, followed by a well-catered reception. Most of the magical luminaries in London attended, as well as Gordon Bruce, Andy Galloway, and Peter Lamont from Scotland. Jamy Swiss and I came from the U.S., and Bob's close friend Volker Huber and his wife Christine came from Germany. Following the reception I accompanied David Berglas to the Magic Circle for their usual Monday night activities. David did a remarkable job of helming the Circle into its new headquarters while its president and he was warmly greeted by many of the members. I spent the next day with David at his home, during which he not only managed to get a thought-of card under my derriere, but he also did "it" again.

Yes, "it" ... the impossible. As we were in the foyer of his home, about to leave for dinner, David said, "Think of any card." "Seven of Diamonds," I said. "Think of any number," he said. "Twelve," I replied. Berglas, whose expression never changed (though there was no mistaking the twinkle in his eyes), said, "Do you see that Buddha by the door?"—he gestured toward a statue on a bureau directly beside the front door. "He's holding something in his hand—a deck of cards." And I really had to focus my middle-aged eyes to see the black leather cardcase in the Buddha's hand down the hall. "Remove it from the Buddha's hand and open it." I walked over and did that. "Place the deck face up on the table." Done. "Was the number you chose 12?" "Oh yes," I replied. "Count down to that number one card at a time." I did ... and my thought-of Seven of Diamonds was exactly twelfth from the face. I immediately opened the drawers in the bureau on which the Buddha sat and was pleased to find only bric-a-brac—no other decks. It's so delightful to be fooled ... and fooled again. Here was something that I had heard and read about for years, "The Berglas Effect." It couldn't have been more perfect, and David's attitude after trouncing me for a second time

was one of quiet triumph. No raised eyebrow, no swaggering—what does he have left to prove at age 79? Nothing, but he can still work miracles.

This month we "cover" Irishman Keith Barry, whose CBS special *Keith Barry: Extraordinary* aired in the middle of May. Keith performs in a low-key style that pleased CBS—he was hired because he seems like an average guy. • The premiere of season two of Criss Angel's *Mindfreak* on May 31 was a huge success. Apart from the NBA playoff game on ESPN, from 10:00 to 10:30, *Mindfreak* was the No.1 one show on all of cable in the 25 to 54 age group and No.2 in the 18 to 49 age group. Even better, from 10:30 to 11:00, *Mindfreak* was the No.1 show on cable in both the 25 to 54 and 18 to 49 age groups, with over two million viewers, doubling the ratings of its lead-in show and doubling the ratings for last year's premiere. • For many years, Fabrice Delaure has been building electronic devices to help our brethren apparently read people's minds. That's not all he does, and Jean-Jacques Sanvert traveled to Delaure's factory for an exclusive behind-the-scenes interview. It appears on p.46. • *Ex-Seinfeld* co-star Jason Alexander, who's been interested in magic for many years, performed an act in the Parlour at The Magic Castle recently—David Regal gives us a brief rundown on p.42. Alexander brought never-before-seen crowds to The Magic Castle that resulted in waits of several hours for shows and many people being turned away. • The College of Magic in South Africa was the subject of an excellent article in the *New York Times* a few months ago, and by special permission of the *Times* we're pleased to bring it you on p.40. • Our popular columnists Al Cohen, Jim Steinmeyer, and Roberto Giobbi all return this month, and David Acer provides us with another "Magicana" full of excellent tricks. (In our May issue, Bob Farmer promised to describe another trick with a marked deck this month. He fibbed, but sent something equally terrific, "Bummer." Perhaps I'll be able to wriggle that marked deck trick out of him for another issue.)

The Grim Reaper continued his path through our field with the recent deaths of George Sands and Del Cartier. Not many of you know Del's name, but for those of us who grew up in New York, he was one of the folks who supported our youthful efforts in magic; Jamy Ian Swiss remembers him on p.84. • In contrast, George Sands—who died on May 16 at age 86—is a name we all know from his routines "RopeSational" and "Sandsational Ropes." I first met George when I was about 7 while on a family vacation in the Catskills—he was the entertainment director at the hotel (it could have been The Pines, or The Granite—all now gone). Upon discovering my interest in magic, he spent many hours regaling me with tricks and stories. He was an interesting and lovely man. In addition to



George Sands



Taking a well-deserved break while performing in Tampa in April, David Copperfield made a mulberry leaf disappear the easy way—by feeding it to a giraffe at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay. David, an avid theme-park fan, enjoyed a safari truck tour of the 65-acre Serengeti Plain where a herd of reticulated giraffes, zebras, and antelope make the habitat their home.

creating the most popular rope routine in the 20th century, George was also responsible for starting the age of the modern packet trick with the publication of his routine "Super Optical Illusion" in *Hugard's Magic Monthly* in June, 1946. This remarkable packet trick is the direct inspiration for any modern packet trick where faces and backs change numerous times. An e-mail sent out upon his death tells more: "George began practicing magic at the age of 17 and was an active member of New York City's fraternity before he entered World War II. Most noted for developing the classics 'SandSational Ropes' and 'RopeSational.' These signature routines have been performed by thousands of magicians including David Copperfield and Dick Cavett, who performed it on the *Johnny Carson Show*. ... He was a prolific writer of 17 booklets explaining his amazing collection of original effects and George was the first person to publish a book on balloon sculpture that was more than an 8-page pamphlet, *The Encyclopedic Balloon Modeling Courses*, Volumes 1 and 2 (in 1972 and '73)." An interesting side-note. When I was about 16 and working behind the counter at Tannen's, Dick Cavett came in and bought *Sandsational Ropes* from me. I remember seeing him do it on TV not too long after that. • While promised for this month, we're working on a long-ish tribute to Billy McComb that will run in a future issue.



Edward Norton in *The Illusionist*

Magic is Hot in Hollywood: Neil Burger's *The Illusionist* starring Edward Norton, Paul Giamatti, and Jessica Biel, takes

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Now Performing

THE MAGIC CASTLE

JUNE 26 TO JULY 2

Close-Up Gallery

Early: 7:00, 7:45, 8:30, 9:15

Jerry Andrus

Late: 10, 10:45, 11:30, 12:00

Damian Nieman

The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: 7:30, 8:45, 9:30

Arthur Benjamin

Late: 9:45, 11:15, 12

Andrew Goldenhersh

Palace Of Mystery

8:30, 10, 11:15

Chuck Jones & Co

JULY 3 TO 9

Close-Up Gallery

Early: James Warren

Late: Bob Bolivar

The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: David Goldrake

Late: Danny Sylvester

Palace Of Mystery

Rich Bloch

Dale Salwak

Amos Levkovitch

WCF Bar

Chef Anton - Pool Demo

JULY 10 TO 16

Close-Up Gallery

Early: Gregory Wilson

Late: Jack Stellar

The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Tom Ogden

Late: Brandon Scott

Palace Of Mystery

Tyler Linkin

Richard Forget

Jim Bentley

JULY 17 TO 23

Close-Up Gallery

Early: Jonathan Pendragon

Late: David Yee

The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Marc Oberon

Late: Allan Hayden

Palace Of Mystery

John Carney

Raymond Crowe

Tina Lenert

JULY 24 TO 30

Close-Up Gallery

Early: Jesse Dee

Late: Al Lampkin

The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Fukai

Late: Timothy James

Palace Of Mystery

Kerry Pollock

Denny Haney

Puck

WCF Bar

Dave Cox

Magic Castle Information

Those with guest cards, and those who belong to the IBM or SAM, are admitted to The Magic Castle with dinner reservations. Please call 323-851-3313 for more information. Updates to the performing schedule can be found at www.MagicCastle.com.

LAS VEGAS

Compiled by David Neubauer
(www.dnmagic.com)

Amazing Johnathan

10 pm, (Dark Thurs.), Sahara

Jason Bird

The Shops in Desert Passage—Aladdin. Main stage, near the "V" Theater, Thurs.-Mon. Various times from 1:15 pm to 8:15, Free

Bite (Vampire Strip Revue)

Antonio Restivo
(magic and fire manipulation)
10:30 pm (dark Thurs.)
Stratosphere

Buck Wild

Nathan Burton (as a redneck magician), 7 pm covered shows Mon.-Wed. & Sat. 9 pm topless shows (Over 18), Sahara (Dark Fri.)

Lance Burton, Master Magician

7 pm Tues.-Sat.,
10 pm Tues. & Sat., Monte Carlo

David Copperfield

7:30 & 10 pm, 4:30 Sat.
& some Sun. MGM Grand.
June 1-14, 20-July 5

Tyas Frantz, Chris Karpiak,

Seth Grabel

Beacher's Madhouse 10 pm,
Hard Rock

Haunted Vegas Tour & Show

Robert Allen & Jac Hayden & Zamora, 9 pm tour and show (Dark Wed.-Thurs.), Greek Isle

Illusionary Magic of Rick Thomas

2 & 4 pm, Stardust (Dark Wed.)

La Femme

Stephan Vanel, 8, 10:30 pm
(Dark Tues.), MGM Grand

Mac King Comedy Magic Show

1 & 3 pm, (Dark Sun. & Mon.)
Harrah's Clint Holmes Theater

Nathan Burton Comedy Magic Show

2 pm, (Dark Fri. & Sun.)
V Theater in the Desert Passage,
Aladdin

Penn & Teller

9 pm, (Dark Tues.), Rio

V, The Ultimate Variety Show

Jeff Hobson, Nathan and Sarah,
7 pm and 9 pm, Aladdin

World's Greatest Magic Show

Kevin James, Joseph Gabriel,
The Majestixs, Kozak. Derek
Roberts, Billy Ferguson & Chris
Randall (pre-show). 6 pm Sat.
Thurs., 8:15 Fri., Greek Isle.

Xtreme Magic Starring Dirk Arthur

2 and 4 pm, (Dark Fri.)
Tiffany Theatre, Tropicana

David Copperfield Tour Schedule

June 1-14, June 20-July 5, August
3-9, August 24-Sept. 20, Nov 9-29,
Dec 21-31: Hollywood Theatre,
MGM Grand, Las Vegas, 7:30, 10pm
July 20-23, Ceasars Palace,
Atlantic City

place in Vienna in 1900 with magic consulting by Ricky Jay, Michael Weber, and James Freedman. It's described as "The tale of a poor magician who woos an upper-class woman by weaving some magic" and opens August 18. • Posted by "Quint" on Ain't It Cool News on Friday May 5: "There's this Houdini flick in the works called *Death Defying Acts* with the insanely interesting casting of Guy Pearce as the famous magician. It hit today that Catherine Zeta-Jones is taking a part in the film as well ... playing ... a psychic who has a passionate affair with Houdini. The flick is being helmed by Gillian Armstrong, director of *Oscar And Lucinda* and *Charlotte Gray* from a screenplay by Brian Ward (*Interpreter*) and Tony Grisoni (*Fear & Loathing In Las Vegas*)." • *The Hollywood Reporter* noted on May 24, "John Malkovich has signed on to play the title role in ...*The Great Buck Howard* ... which follows a luckless magician (Malkovich) and his assistant as they struggle

to reinvigorate his career. Colin Hanks already has been cast as the assistant, and Tom Hanks will play the assistant's disapproving father." • And the big one is director Christopher Nolan's (*Memento*, *Batman Begins*) *The Prestige*, starring Christian Bale and Hugh Jackman as "rival magicians in 1878 whose struggle to poach each other's effects leads to murder." Also starring are Michael Caine, Scarlett Johansson, David Bowie, and Ricky Jay.

On the website About.com, Christopher Nolan said, "For me, the main hook is really the extraordinary world of magic at a time when magicians were really the premiere

entertainers. A lot of the things really in a funny sort of way were the precursor to cinema and a lot of the things they were doing are now things that happen in movies from special effects and so forth onward. So we get to create a world in which the narrative plays tricks on the audience just the way the magicians are." Look for a fall or winter release. With four Hollywood films on the way about magic and magicians, if one or two of them succeed at the box office will it be long before someone rewrites the script for *Smoke and Mirrors*, the Robert-Houdin inspired film that was to star Sean Connery, then Michael Douglas, and is now in limbo? • In related news, friend Neil Patrick Harris whom you may know from his past credits as *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, the film *Startroopers*, and the recent NBC series, *How I Met Your Mother*, has received rave reviews for his performance in the Arthur Miller drama *All My Sons* at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles. Neil, who was a Magic Castle Junior, is an avid magic buff who performed wonderfully in Jim Steinmeyer's "Palingenesia" at the Los Angeles Conference on Magic History last November. You'll be reading more about "Palingenesia" and Neil shortly here in the pages of *Genii*.

FISM will begin in Stockholm at the end of this month and, for the first time since its inception in 1948, there will be an exhibition of photographs of famous magicians. Zakary Belamy, a French photographer who has specialized in magic since 1999, came up with the idea and has been traveling around the world snapping portraits for the past several years. The

concept will eventually culminate in *World Magic Photo Tour 2005-2008*, a book to be published in 2009. The magicians who've cooperated with Zakary provide an encompassing visual record of the artists in our field: Ali Bongo, Alan Shaxon, Alan Alan, Amazing Jonathan, Billy McComb, Boris Wild, David Berglas, David Roth, David Williamson, Flip, Gaetan Bloom, Ger Copper, Gerard Majax, Harry Lorayne, James Hodges, Jason Byrne, John and Pam Thompson, Juliana Chen, Kenji Minemura, Kevin James, Mac King, MagicWave, Max Maven, Michael Ammar, Norbert Ferre, Norm Nielsen, Otto Wessely, Paul Daniels, The Pendragons, Roberto Giobbi, Shimada, Todd Karr, Topas and Roxanne, Vik and Fabrini ... and many more. Zakary's been extremely helpful to me recently, providing some beautiful portraits that you'll see in upcoming issues of *Genii*.

David Avadon writes: I wanted to thank you for asking Pat Page to record his memories of Francis Watts. Like you, I was fascinated with the story of this performer's act as Pat told it at the History Conference and I'm delighted to have a permanent record.

As a young magician, I purchased Grant's "Challenge Magic Act"—I actually worked it up and did it. Suddenly, as Page was describing Watts's act, there it was, an act done entirely with objects borrowed from the audience. It was interesting to me to see how Watts dealt with various items and how he made sure he had a strong effect for a finale. When I was doing the Challenge Act, I eventually came to the conclusion that an audience would rather see three great tricks than three pretty good tricks, even though the pretty good tricks were done with borrowed objects. I thought that the huge amount of preparation and the jazz-like improvisational skills needed to do the act were lost on an audience, or a least didn't outweigh the impression left by a fabulous trick which wasn't performed with a random object.

I wondered, as Pat spoke, if Grant had heard about Watts's act and it became the uncredited source of his manuscript. Joe Berg also recorded a similar idea: The performer would pass a hat through the audience collecting random objects. Tricks were done with the borrowed items—and some special items planted in the hat by the performer. Of course, much later, Kirk Charles wrote about improvised magic. It was also chilling when Pat described Watts using a loop of thread around his neck. Aside from seeing Watts use it to make a shoe move, Pat didn't know what it was for. Well, that's the gimmick for another Grant item: "The Rising, Dancing, Floating Silk." (Another trick I experimented with.) It's easy to see how Watts would use the thread if a pocket handkerchief, scarf, stocking or anything similar were offered. It's also interesting to wonder whether Watts got the idea from Grant or Grant got the idea from Watts or both happened on the idea independently.

After many years, Ron Wilson has retired as Entertainment Director at The Magic Castle. Until a new permanent Entertainment Director is hired, Dale Salwak will be booking the Palace of Mystery and lectures. Todd Karr and John Lovick will book the Close-Up Gallery, Parlour of Prestidigitation, W.C. Fields Bar, and Friday Lunch acts. A



Hugh Jackman in costume for *The Prestige*

party will be held in Ron Wilson's honor to celebrate his long and valued service as Entertainment Director on June 21st starting at 8 p.m. in the Inner Circle. All Castle members are invited. On a more personal note, I had a great time working with Ron on his book, *The Uncanny Scot*, in the mid 1980s—he was a superlative close-up magician who did an almost perfect act.

Finally, upon my return from London, a copy of Andy Galloway's new book *Diverting Coin Magic* was nestled in my mailbox. At 72 pages, hardcover, it's a small gem and well worth your attention, particularly if you're a fan of the style of magic which was embraced by John Ramsay. Mr. Galloway was Ramsay's protégé and it shows in his subtle construction and artful discussion of misdirection. Very fine, and available from International Magic in London. See the ad on our back cover •