



# THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



BRENDON WARE IN  
THE AMSTERDAM  
MAGIC SHOW!



OLIVIER HENNING WON ON THE IBM-CONVENTION IN PITTSBURGH (USA), HELD FROM JULY 12 - 15, THREE PRIZES: THE FANTASMA AWARD, PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD & STAGE - YOUTH CATEGORY 1ST PLACE AWARD. HE WILL APPEAR IN THE AMSTERDAM MAGIC SHOW ON AUGUST 3 IN BOOM CHICAGO !

August  
2023  
ISSUE 6

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The summer is magic, is magic, oh oh oh." It is a great song by Playahitty from the 90s and puts me right in the summer mood.

3 p.



6 p.

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A few years ago, in 2014, I received The Merlin Award for "Best Cabaret Act of the Decade". I got the award against my will.

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RICO WEELAND

When I started with magic I was running into a distinct problem, a problem of authenticity.

12 p.



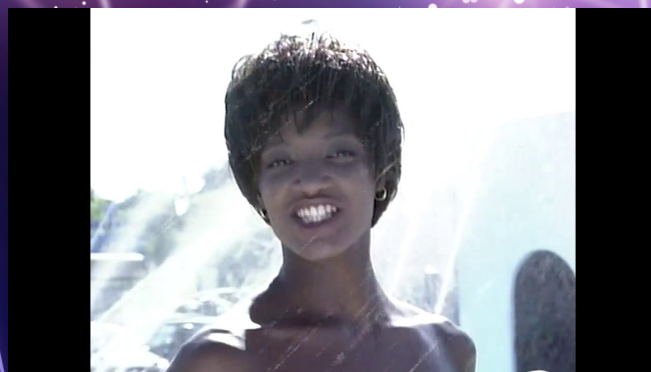
16 p.

# 4/ AMSTERDAM MAGIC SHOW ANNIVERSARY EDITION

This show at Betty Asphalt was a great success, celebrating 7 years of AMS. After the show there was also a successful cosy afterparty.

This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: [amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com](mailto:amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com)

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## DEAR READER

"The summer is magic, is magic, oh oh oh." It is a great song by Playahitty from the 90s and puts me right in the summer mood. What is your favorite summer song?

While most magic clubs have the summer holidays, we plan to keep it going. We had our July meeting which was attended by many of the members. We had talks from Edgar Brumaire about the magic of Disney and Bart Uriot about magic for television. Also busy was the anniversary show of the Amsterdam Magic Show at Betty Asfalt. An amazing line-up with an even more amazing audience. At the end of the month, the Society plans to go to the Boulevard of Magic in IJmuiden. The national championships of street magic will be held at the same time.

In August, instead of our meeting on the usual second Monday, we'll organize a barbecue in Amsterdam. If you can join us, let us know by filling out [this form](#).

From September onward, we have a lot of exciting things ahead. The Apprentices will do their exam in the form of a show for a combined audience of magicians and lay people. That is still two months away, so let's first enjoy the summer holidays.

For those planning going on holiday: take that magic book on your shelf and read it. Or take that magic trick from your drawer and rehearse it. Maybe listen to magic podcasts? Catch up on episodes of Fool Us? Whatever you will do, I'm sure your summer is magic!

"FRITZ"



# Olivier Henning

Olivier is 12 years old when he stands with his nose on top of a magic trick for the 1st time. That was in 2021 at school when a classmate showed him a card magic trick. That made Olivier curious. When he got home, he scoured the internet to learn a magic trick. The next day he showed a card trick. From that moment on, Olivier is infected with the virus called magic. After seeing a circus performance by Hans Klok in August 2021, he knew his destination. He wanted this too! Shortly afterward, in September 2021, he got the chance to meet Hans Klok backstage after a performance and talk about what Olivier had taught himself so far. This meeting only further fueled his interest and ambition in magic. From that moment on, Olivier spent every free minute doing magic tricks. At the end of 2021, he plans to participate in the Dutch Championships in stage magic if the opportunity arises. 2022 A dream year for Olivier. (continue reading below the photo) Not only does he go home as Grand Prix winner with the title Champion of Flanders in the competition of Flanders, but he also becomes Dutch Junior Internship Champion. He is surprised by the Magic Lodge with a certificate for Young & Upcoming Talent, he is invited to perform at the BMF gala show, and he was allowed to perform six times as a guest artist in the summer shows in the open-air theatre Valkenburg by Nigel Otermans, and then close the year with a spot in the line-up of Dave's Wintervariété in Rotterdam. Companies and individuals also show interest and book Olivier to

perform. In the Netherlands, he is accompanied by Edwin Borsora, who, as a former teacher of Hans Klok, has quite a few achievements to his name, and Frans Reijnier, who assists him backstage, among other things. He meets many nationally and internationally acclaimed professionals from the magical world. He is grateful that people such as Hans Kazan, Hans Klok, Flip Hallema, Niels Duinker, and Tycho Boeker have made time for him. His encounters with international magicians such as Jeff Mc Bride, David Copperfield, Mat Franco, Laurent Piron, Dirk Losander, and Mac King also impress him. Meanwhile, interest in Olivier increases. Bookings for performances in gala shows, variety shows, private meetings, and TV programs follow each other rapidly. His magic is to the great pleasure of Olivier because one thing is sure: magic is his passion, and this is his future!



With Lance Burton in Pittsburg (USA)

Olivier is also a (youth) member of the Amsterdam Magic Society. When he is 18, he wants to be a full member. He hopes to compete in October in the Figi Theatre in Zeist at the Dutch NMU Championship 2023.

# 10 QUESTIONS TO OLIVIER HENNING

1) Most memorable show you performed at?

That is a difficult question! I'm in doubt between winning the GRANDPRIX during my 1st competition ever last year during championship of Flanders and my performance at the gala show of Golden Cat Magic Gathering in Bulgaria. That venue was huge, if I'm not mistaken 2,000 spectators, but the atmosphere was fantastic. Sharing the stage with names such as Shawn Fraquhar and Dani DaOrtiz.... AWESOME

2) What is one of your hobbies?

Since I'm immersed in magic, there is not much room for other things besides school, but I love playing the piano!

3) Favorite city?

Las Vegas..... No seriously... depends on the reason for visiting the city. I've always been a big fan of London.

4) We can wake you up in the middle of the night for...

A meeting with the GREAT ones, whom I'll never meet because they have already left the earthly. Of course, our national heroes; Fred Kaps, Ger Copper and Richard Ross. But what if I could share my ideas with Richard Pitchford (Cardini), Houdini or Shimada... that would be magical.... And okay, sushi as well.

5) Who inspires you as a magician?

I get my inspiration from several magicians, but on top of my list is Young-Min Kim. I was thrilled to meet him last May in Turin.

6) One magic item you cannot live without?

A bit dull..... being a manipulator, I would say.... Playing cards.

7) What trick or routine are you working at the moment?

I am renewing my manipulation act with which I have been performing since September 2022 and developing two new manipulation acts. One with cards and one with balls.

8) Lance Burton or Yu Ho Jin?

Both are incredible on stage, so that's a hard pick. I've met Yu Ho Jin twice, (Blackpool and Turin) and besides being a great performer, he is also a very kind person and easy talk to. Not saying Lance Burton isn't, I've just not met him yet and didn't see him perform live. I'm going to meet him in July '23. Perhaps I can answer this question afterwards 🤔

9) What country would you like to visit?

I would love to go to South-Korea, for obvious reasons.....

10) One piece of advice you give to somebody who wants to start with manipulation.

I'm convinced that if you keep trying, anything is possible.. so my advice would be; "don't give up!"

FRITZ WITH A Z





# The Merlin Award scam (Part One)

A few years ago, in 2014, I received The Merlin Award for “Best Cabaret Act of the Decade”. I got the award against my will. Originally, I had no intention of ever talking about it, but recently I discovered that Tony Hassini, the originator of the fake award, had posted a photo of the incident on his website, so in pure self-defense I now feel compelled to say something about it.

## **Magic Awards**

But let’s start with magic awards in general. The authentic awards. Usually they are awarded in connection with magic competitions. The main purpose of magic competitions has never really been about the actual competitions, but more about encouraging artistic development. Magic is a fairly narrow field of entertainment and the general public is generally not very well informed about what modern conjuring consists of. So you could easily build an entire career on performing traditional Public Domain material – without anyone ever noticing. To be crass, you can make a good living as a conjurer without adding a single artistic thought of your own.

So to battle stagnation, “competition magic” has been created – the only forum that exists for a magician where innovation and originality are



rewarded and encouraged. These competitions take place at different levels. The club championships are usually small, playful and without much prestige, while other competitions can be more strict in their form.

Our Swedish championships have previously varied a lot in quality and level from year to year, depending on the organizer. Some years it has been world class and other years it has been like a bad joke. For a long time, the outcome of the competitions was equally unpredictable, since the competence of the jury could vary enormously from year to year. Sometimes people who just happened to be standing nearby were recruited as judges, minutes before the start of the competition. It has become much better and smoother since it was decided that the competitions would follow FISM rules and since Gay Ljungberg began arranging courses and training for judges. Today, it is usually a genuine merit to win a Swedish Championship.

On the international level, it is all about FISM. The acronym FISM stands for “Fédération Internationale des Sociétés Magiques” and is an international umbrella organization for all major magic societies around the world. They consist of 111 member associations from a total of 50 different countries, and represent approx. 90,000 magicians and amateur magicians. Every three years they organize the World Magic Championships. A FISM award is the biggest a magician can win. There is nothing else that even comes close. To be completely honest, I have never been particularly interested in awards and honors. The work is its own reward.

While I'm a big proponent of competitive magic and its benefits, it's always been more about the actual work – the process of coming up with creative solutions with a strict deadline, rather than being judged and given points and prizes. I've competed a bit myself through the years, but even though there are some trophies gathering dust on my bookshelf, I don't remember where, when or why I got them. The work I did was important, the trophies less so. That said, no matter how much or how little prestige one considers there to be in winning a magic award, there has always been a serious and honest intent behind it. It is not possible to buy an award. It is not possible to get an award through fraudulent means, the motivations for the awards are always transparent, documented and can withstand scrutiny... with one distinct exception. So, just for fun, let's examine the background to the so-called Merlin Award. Let's start with its originator.

### **Tony Hassini**

It's not easy to find info on Hassini, as he goes by several different names: Tony Hassini, Hassan Emin, Anthony Hassini, Hassim Emin, Anthony H Emin, Emin Hassini... so this review will contain some gaps – but apparently Hassini was born in Cyprus in 1941.

As a 16-year-old he moved to London where he took all kinds of small jobs; dishwasher etc. At one point he became completely sold on magic after seeing a magic demonstration at Hamley's toy store on Regent Street. It was Tony Corinda who had the commission there – in the late 50's and early 60's Corinda employed around 40 people, spread over a number of shops in London (ref.).

Around 1960, the now 19-year-old Hassini sought out Tony Corinda, and managed to get hired for four years to assemble the various magic and prank items sold in Corinda's stores. In contemporary interviews, Hassini claims that he also had a longer engagement at the London Palladium at this time, but there is no evidence that this is accurate.

Around 1964, Hassini moved to New York, where he found the magic dealer Louis Tannen,

and within soon he began making props for Tannen's.

### **Music Producer**

Around the same time, he was joined by his 17-year-old brother Marc Emin, who in 1965 moved from Cyprus to New York to study. The brother was interested in music, so Hassini got the idea that he should try out a career as a music producer. In 1971 he rented a music studio and some skilled studio musicians (including bassist Jim Pons who would later play with Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention) and recorded a LP-record with his brother, who now went by the stage name Marc Mundy. The record was pressed in 500 copies. Someone recently uploaded the record to YouTube if you want to listen: The site The Worlds Worst Records comments: "The playing on the record is mediocre at best, so I'd guess that the boys – clearly seasoned musicians – had very little rehearsal time."



After hearing the results, Hassini gave up his ambition to become a music producer, and a few years later his brother moved back to Cyprus and pursued a career as a mathematics teacher.

### **Magic props with an artistic touch**

Between 1971 and 1980, you could regularly see the name Hassini in Tannen's advertisements in the trade journals. Something that is puzzling about the props that were advertised is that they are artistic aesthetics

involved, especially in the sculpted details. For example, the false hand in Hassini's version of Daylight Seance was quite realistic. In *Genii* May, 1973, Ed Mishell writes in the product reviews that Hassini's rubber doves are so realistic they look alive.

The reason why I find it puzzling is simple – if you've ever seen Tony Hassini's videos, photoshopped images or websites, it is evident that he himself has no aesthetic sense at all for image and form. So it's a good guess to assume that he hired an artist for the sculpted details... or perhaps even more likely, to save money; an art student?

On his information page for the Merlin Award, Tony Hassini writes that the prize was designed in 1968 by a young art student named Carol Michaud. How likely is it that Hassini collaborated with two different artists during the same time period? Maybe it's the same person who designed both the Merlin figurine and Hassini's other props; fake hands, rubber doves, et cetera?

Finding no answers online, I wrote Hassini an email saying I was researching rubber doves and asked who had designed the mold for his model. He replied that, yes, it was the same art student who made both the doves and the Merlin figurine!

To be honest, I believe that the Merlin Award originally was a failed magic product. That it probably was meant to be cast in latex, just like the rubber pigeons and other props that he made during that time period. That it probably was intended to be produced as a sight gag every time the audience applauded, a bit like when Johnny Lonn showed off his hidden medal whenever he had made something extra clever. I just discovered something interesting. Since this art student, Miss Michaud, was doing some pretty cool stuff back in the 60's and 70's, I thought it might be fun to see her later work, see how she developed artistically over the years... but my searches led me unexpectedly to The NYC Marriage Index. There I found that a Carole Michaud married a Hassan Emin (a.k.a. Tony Hassini) in Manhattan 1965! The sculptor was his wife!

That hundreds of art students had to compete for the task of designing the award can probably be considered utter fiction. Why else would Hassini pretend that his own wife was an unknown person?

In fact, there are oddities abounds everywhere in Hassini's proximity. For example, in the American trade journal M-U-M from February 1978 you can find the claim that Hassini with his wife Carole, together with a crew of 9 people, did a big European tour with an illusion show in 1967. But in European sources there is no indication that any of that ever happened. In the same article, it is also claimed that Hassini ran one of America's leading prop factories, which is also an exaggeration. Hassini may be well versed in both Greek and English, but it is clear that his real mother tongue is Hyperbole..

### **Marvelous Magical Burger King**

In 1976, the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson took over the marketing for the fast food chain Burger King, and quickly introduced a new mascot to directly compete with McDonald's mascot Ronald McDonald.

The newcomer went by the name "Marvelous Magical Burger King" and was a figure dressed as a king from 16th century England who performed magic tricks together with various bizarre sidekicks – "Sir Shake-a-Lot", "Burger Thing", "The Duke of Doubt", "Wizard of Fries", etc.

Somehow, Hassini got the job as the magic consultant, which involved contributing conjuring tricks to the commercials, as well as being a "body double" for the king when sleight-of-hand tricks were to be performed. As an additional gimmick, about 20 actors were hired to travel around doing parking lot shows as magic performing kings outside Burger King restaurants, so Hassini along with Mark Wilson were tasked with teaching and training these actors in how to do a simple magic show.

Of course, today Hassini claim that he himself was the sole creator of both the concept and the character, and that it was he himself who pitched everything to board of Burger King. That is obviously not true, but what is true is



that the consulting gig was a huge career step for him.

Over the next six years, Hassini contributed magic effects to around a hundred commercials. A golden gig that lasted until 1988 when the rug was pulled from under his feet, when Burger King without warning discontinued the whole concept of the magical king.

### **Distron Video Corporation**

While working on Burger King's commercials, Hassini became interested in filmmaking. It can't be said that he had any inherent talent for the field, but he had willpower and enthusiasm – so when the magic consulting job disappeared, he quickly acquired a video camera, and between 1988 and 1994 he produced around thirty instructional videos under the title Distron Video Corporation. The

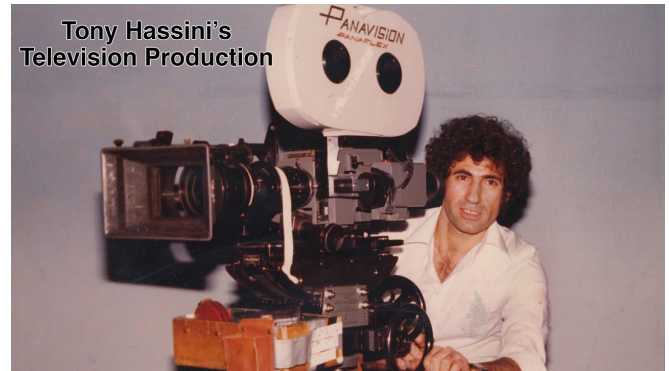


titles were a strange mix. He made instructional videos about dog training, health food, first aid, various health diets and vitamins, allergies, and magic tricks. Let's look at an example of Hassini's video production. As you notice, he is very fond of zooming and to film with a camera crane.

Note the slogan that ends the film above. "Recognized worldwide as innovators on the leading edge of excellence in video productions". Almost every word in that sentence can be questioned. Let's see more of this "leading edge" stuff! If you skip to 1:13 in the following video, you can clearly see Hassini's innovations in the useage of Greenscreen, provided we count "terrible" as an innovation. I mean, what is the purpose? All

these fake microphones from the BBC, CNN, MTV...?

Parallel to the production of strange diet and dog videos, Hassini tried to start up something called "Video Teaching Easy Method Library" – a simpler predecessor to the International Magicians Society (IMS), but aimed at the general public.



In 1990 he made the first video "Beginner's Magic". The adjacent image is one of his advertisements for the public – published on May 31, 1992, in "The News Journal" of Wilmington, Delaware. It is not possible to find much more information about "Video Teaching Easy Method Library", so we can guess that it probably wasn't a great success. Anyway, it seems that in 1994, Hassini got tired of making odd instructional videos, and instead turned the page to the next chapter of his life. IMS – International Magicians Society



In June 1994, the following page ad appeared in the trade journal Genii. In 1990 he made the first video "Beginner's Magic". The adjacent image is one of his advertisements for the public – published on May 31, 1992, in "The

**Fast... Easy... Fantastic!**  
**BE A MAGICIAN!**  
 Now on VIDEO... Dozens of Sensational Tricks

**Watch and Learn... With Master Magician Tony Hassini**

**AMAZE YOUR FRIENDS... AMAZE YOURSELF!**  
 Imagine yourself with 100% success... amazing your guests... producing a big crowd...  
 ...and then, after the show, your friends and family are still talking about you. All this...  
 ...and more... all in one package... all in one video... all in one price... all in one place...  
 ...and more... all in one package... all in one video... all in one price... all in one place...  
 ...and more... all in one package... all in one video... all in one price... all in one place...

**ONLY \$19.99 EACH SET OF 3 - ONLY \$49.99 SAVE \$39.99**

**PERFORM LIKE A PRO... YOUR CHOICE OF FIVE WATCH-AND-LEARN VIDEOS**  
 ...and more... all in one package... all in one video... all in one price... all in one place...  
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**IMS - International Magicians Society**

In June 1994, the following page ad appeared in the trade journal Genii. (See next column) In other words; a video club. Adjusted for inflation; for the handy initial sum of \$50, you was granted the privilege of buying additional videos for \$20 each. In the beginning, Hassini sent out a welcome package with a membership card, membership pin, diploma and a folder for extra member mailings... but that package quickly got thinner and thinner. Hassini often and happily backdates the start

of the video club to 1968. No idea why, because there is no sign that IMS existed before May 27, 1994 - which is when Anthony Emin (Tony Hassini) registered the company "International Magicians Society Inc" in Nassau county, New York. He didn't even register the trademark until March 1996. Why 1968? The sculpture he used as a logo for the business had been gathering dust for 26 years, so maybe he says 1968 because that's when his then-wife created it?

**The International Magicians Society**  
 Invites you to become  
**A LIFETIME MEMBER**  
 A Limited Time Offer!

When you join I.M.S. you will receive a FREE membership kit consisting of all the items on this page. For only \$25.00 you can become a Lifetime member of I.M.S. and enjoy all of its many benefits.

- Personalized Lifetime Member Certificate
- Official I.M.S. Legal Pin
- Laminated Membership Card
- Mental Magic Video by Tony Hassini
- International Magicians Society Sorcerer's Note Book

As an I.M.S. member, you will receive our Official Newsletter that will keep you up-to-date on current events and the latest additions to the I.M.S. MAGIC Library.

Here are some of the famous magicians who share their secret tips and don't on these I.M.S. Magic videos:

- Simon Jan • Derek Single • Patrick Page • Tom Miller • Bobby • Sally • Lee Lancaster • Tony Clark • Harry Lorayne • Professor Bobby Baker • Billy McClain • Dean Dix • The Great Samson and more than space aliens.
- For information and membership application, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: International Magicians Society, 581 Ellison Ave., Westbury, NY 11590.

**The I.M.S. MAGIC HALL OF FAME VIDEO!**  
 A Tribute to the Great Masters of Magic.

This video is FREE to all International Magicians Society members.

Now, you can see rare film footage of the Great Masters of Magic you have read about. You will see them walking, talking, acting and doing what they do best - MAGIC!

Almost three decades ago when we founded I.M.S., we made a promise to preserve and promote the art of magic. This video is one way of fulfilling our promise. By preserving the rare footage of the Great Masters on video, and providing each of our members with a free copy, the Great Masters of Magic will live forever.

Dear I.M.S. member: If you have not received your free copy of the "I.M.S. Magic Hall of Fame" video, please call the I.M.S. office and give us your membership number and we will mail out your copy.

Here are some of the Great Masters you will meet on this video:

- Ollie
- David Devant
- The Great Nicola
- Dams
- Rosini
- Kellar
- Thurston
- Kaiding
- Blackstone Sr.
- Horace Goldin
- Milbourne
- Christopher
- Cardini
- Russell Swan
- Kuda, Box
- Levens
- Robert Harbin
- Sator
- Fred Coss
- Richard

It is difficult to say anything concrete about anything at all from this point, because here Hassini lets go of the ambition to stay near reality. In 1998 he makes a website for the business with the domain name "Learnmagic.com", and in 2001 he moves over to the domain name "magicims.com".



The Magic Academy is the crown jewel of the International Magicians Society. This is where magicians study and get their Doctor of Magic Degree.

(To be continued)



# AGENDA

## AUGUSTUS 2023

July 23 - August 5 - Vrije Vogelfestival with Woedy Woet Website: <https://www.vrijevogelfestival.nl/>

July 28 - August 6 - Hans Klok & Friends - Java eiland Amsterdam. Tickets: <https://www.eventim.nl/artist/hans-klok/>

July 30  
BOULEVARD OF MAGIC - IJmuiden

July 30 - Magic Circle's 2nd Annual Convention, London. Website: <https://themagiccircle.co.uk/convention/>

August 2-5 - Abbott's Get Together in Colon, Michigan. Website: <https://www.magicgettogether.com/>

August 3 - Amsterdam Magic Show, Boom Chicago. Website: <https://www.amsterdam-magic.com/>

August 6-9 - MAGIC Live! in Las Vegas Nevada. Website: <https://www.magicconvention.com/>

August 9 - Fröhlich Zauberfestival Magic Day in Bad Ausee, Austria. Website: <https://zauberfestival.life/frohlich-zauberfestival-2023/>

August 14 - Amsterdam Magic Society BBQ

August 19-21 - MagiCon, a LIVE Festival in Clayton, North Carolina (just outside of Raleigh) - Website: <https://themystictower.com/magicon>

August 16-18 - KIDabra: The Conference of Klhow and Family Performers in Chatanooga, Tennessee - Website: <https://www.kidabra.org/>





# Out of sight out of my mind

## Finding yourself



When I started with magic I was running into a distinct problem, a problem of authenticity. Online I saw all this great magic around me and all of these great performers, but none of them performed like me, or rather, I couldn't see myself in any of them.



When I saw David Williamson perform, I loved that goofy character and even better his magic, however, I'm not as hyperactive or funny or crazy as he is and then looking at the other polar opposite, David Blaine, I love to still talk about concepts with a certain kind of romanticism so just shutting up and being very mysterious also wasn't the vibe I was going for.

For a long time, I couldn't find any examples of magic that felt like me. Performers that would inspire me to copy them and base my character on them. Now that might be a weird thing to say, to copy someone while I'm talking about a quest for authenticity. However, copying someone to master something is very important. As soon as you combine that with



honesty, you're well on your way to being authentic.

I couldn't find anyone for a while, until one day. One day I found Michael Vincent's Fool Us performance and all the doors went wide open for me! For the first time in my life, I knew that I wanted to perform magic like that with that type of style. An elegant composed type of style that is respectful towards the audience and towards the magic. But most



important of all, don't throw away the magic to get an extra laugh.

Knowing that this was the style that I wanted to perform had to do with two things. One of intuition, I just knew and felt and I wanted to perform magic like this. But the other was honesty. I could be honest enough to myself to see that I was not like David Williamson and even though I love watching Dave perform and I love the magic that he does, I'm just not a performer like Dave, that style isn't Rico. As soon as I started to apply that honesty a lot of things started to click. Because all of a sudden, I started to develop a feeling of the things that worked for me and that didn't work for me. That's where the authenticity kicks in.

As in any book about mastery, the first phase is always to copy the master. So that's what I started to do. I started to read the same books as Mike was reading and I started to learn similar types of magic. I wanted to learn all of these things so that I could adapt to the same style of magic, a style that I felt comfortable with. As soon as I became adapted, I started to apply honesty and I could see things that Mike was doing that didn't feel like me. Or even certain opinions that he had that I didn't share. That is an important phase in the process of

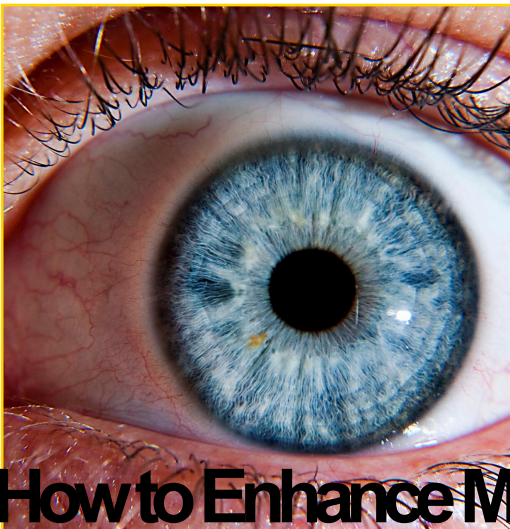
mastery because the student starts to become an individual that has their own opinions.

Through all of that, I started to develop my own style that would fit within the same type of magic that Mike is doing, but it's not the magic anymore that he does. It is the magic that I do with my personal flair to it. I love this because it makes me much more fulfilled. But even better, there is only one person in the world that is best at being me, and that's me. Any other person imitating me or wanting to be like me might be good, might even be fantastic, but they will never be as good as me. Simply because they aren't me.

I want to encourage all of you to start to look at your magic with a level of honesty that is genuinely interested in whether or not the things that you're doing fit you. If they do great! If they don't, great! What would you change to make it more like you, what would you change to like it more yourself?

I hope that those two simple questions will give you as much joy and fun as they have given me.

**RICO WEELAND**



## How to Enhance Magic Tricks with Your Eyes

GAIA SHARES SOME VALUABLE PSYCHOLOGY INSIGHTS AND AN EASY WAY TO MAKE YOUR MAGIC BETTER.

Sometimes, you perform an incredible magic trick, and the reaction from the spectators isn't as big as you hoped. You might perform the same trick as another magician and believe you're performing it exactly the same way, but it elicits totally different levels of reactions. The point is, sometimes, the trick alone isn't enough. You may need an atmosphere that enhances the magic effect and fosters a strong connection with your spectators. The more connected your audience feels to you, the more they remember the experience and remember it fondly. And one element that can be beneficial in achieving this is the psychology of eye contact.

Why eye contact? Eye contact has a profound impact on human emotions. It triggers a release of oxytocin, the bonding hormone, and fosters a sense of connection and empathy. By engaging spectators on an emotional level, magicians can intensify the impact of their illusions, leaving a lasting impression and a sense of shared experience.

So why not take a moment to set aside the deck of cards and learn a new way to enhance your magic, transforming your tricks into miracles?

### Six curiosities on eye contact from psychology

- The best form of eye contact is not continuous but somewhat intermittent: moments of eye contact should alternate

with moments of looking away. The average preferred duration of eye contact is three seconds (and no more than nine seconds).

- We get an idea about their personality based on how much people meet our eyes or look away when we talk to them. Indeed, studies demonstrate how, in job interviews, the way the interviewer's eyes meet those of the applicant ascribes a specific character to the latter and, therefore, can determine hiring or rejection.
- Eye contact catches and holds our attention, making us less aware of what is happening around us. You've undoubtedly had the experience of connecting through a gaze with someone across a noisy room: the world fades away, and you share a momentary connection.
- Locking eyes with someone triggers a cascade of brain activities, signalling that we are engaging with another person actively looking at us. This realization heightens our awareness that the other person possesses thoughts, intentions, and a unique perspective. When someone looks directly at us, it interrupts our ability to remember and use information, imagine things, and control our thoughts by filtering out irrelevant details. You might have personally experienced these effects when you looked away from someone to concentrate better on your thoughts or words, even if you weren't consciously aware of it.
- In Western cultures, people who make effective eye contact are perceived by us as more intelligent, conscientious and sincere, and we are more likely to believe what they say.

How to use eye contact to enhance your magic  
How can we use all these elements to improve our magic performances? Here are two toolkits from psychology that can help you make the most of eye contact in magic.

#### 1: A toolkit for close-up magic

In these situations, where you interact with individuals one to one, some precautions need to be taken.

Avoid fixating directly on the eyes. When interacting with a person, there's an unconscious tendency to shift your gaze from

one eye to the other, which the listener interprets as the speaker's insecurity. A piece of advice is to look right between the person's eyes. People perceive that you look into their eyes confidently, and they feel more engaged. The gaze should not be fixed but in motion. Try looking between the spectator's eyes for four seconds, then shift your eyes to an object or another person, and finally return to the initial position. This prevents the gaze from becoming intrusive to the spectator while remaining engaging.

The duration of eye contact is brief but should exceed a threshold below which the connection with the interlocutor is broken. As we mentioned earlier, four seconds is optimal.

If you are performing for two or more spectators, you must allocate the appropriate number of glances to each one to keep them engaged. The following section explains a technique to achieve this.

Finally, when shifting your gaze, do so slowly, without abrupt movements, accompanying your eyes with appropriate gestures that further highlight your words and connection with the spectator.

Although it may sound a bit silly, my advice for practising all of these suggestions is to rehearse them with puppets: by making eye contact with them, you can practice using your gaze as if puppets were your spectators at your close-up venue. Place puppets in front of you and perform a trick you like focusing on implementing just one piece of advice at a time. Once they become automatic, you can rehearse them with friends. Perhaps you can film the performance and review the footage to see if you applied each suggestion, only focusing on the movement of your eyes.

## 2: A toolkit for a broader audience

For an audience where there can't be a personal connection with individual spectators, relying solely on the magician's eyes may not be perceived at a great distance. If you have ever been to a theatre or a concert, you may have noticed that the farther you are seated from the performer, the less visible their eyes or even their face becomes.

Consequently, one suggestion to make eye contact with your audience is that your entire

head and torso should be in motion and face the specific section of the audience you are engaging with. Your eyes wouldn't be enough. A helpful tip would be to film your performance from various angles and depths within the auditorium to assess if you, as a spectator, would feel involved from every spot in the audience.

But how do you address the entire audience without overlooking any section? This is where the Post-it technique (pretty cool name, I know) comes into play. It works this way: you should take six Post-it notes and number them from one to six. Then, affix them to a wall: three above and three below, adequately spaced apart. These represent the six sectors into which you have divided the imaginary audience in front of you. Now, perform a magic trick you are familiar with while looking at the Post-it notes following their numbering. Next, rearrange the order and repeat the trick while focusing on the Post-it notes according to the new total. Gradually increase the number of post-it notes on the wall to create more audience sectors.

Following a numbering system will help you ensure that you do not overlook any section of the audience, and having the post-it notes distributed in random order guarantees that your movements are not linear and boring for the spectators. These two features ensure that everyone feels included in your performance. This technique can be applied to stage, close-up magic, or any other venue. You can envision the Post-it notes representing individual people or sections of an audience.

Feel inspired!

Now it's your turn! You have new tools; strive to internalize them until they become second nature. If you're here, it's because you love magic, and I believe there's nothing more beautiful than performing a magic effect, creating a bridge with the spectator, and sharing a message. To do that, rehearsing is essential. Practice, embrace the journey and let eye contact truly enhance your magic.

GAIA ELISA ROSSI

# AMSTERDAM MAGIC SHOW

ANNIVERSARY EDITION IN THE BETTY ASFALT COMPLEX

On Thursday, July 6th was the jubilee edition of the Amsterdam Magic Show. This show at Betty Asphalt was a great success, celebrating 7 years of AMS. Fritz opened the show with a poster appearance and he did a great job introducing the artists in a hilarious way. There was a great lineup of artists from all over the world: the Netherlands, USA, Wales, and Belgium. After Fritz opened the show, Robert Blake

spectators had made during the break. A special experience you will never forget.



After the break it was time for Chris Williams. A man with a lot of energy, who can do anything. Juggling, making water disappear while dancing, and mind reading. At the end of his act, Chris shows his collection of his favorite socks that he received from his family over the years. He showed eight socks and let a spectator choose one. Believe it or not, he wore that sock all the time. Chris is a must see for everyone.

kicked off with classic magic like a monte routine and the linking rings. It was also very impressive what Robert could do with a rope and a pair of scissors. It was a great experience.

After this it was time for Santiago Michel. A great mentalist from Las Vegas with his own show there. He showed a great map trick of the casinos and used the spectator's poker face to find out which card the spectator was thinking about. Santiago also managed to find out which of the five spectators lied and who spoke the truth. To conclude his act, two spectators had to make a random drawing. He managed to draw exactly what the



The great magician Jo de Rijck closed the show with a hypnotic disc on a drill. With that he hypnotized the entire audience. The big surprise of the evening was the cheerful assistant of Jo: the mind-reading chicken named Curry. Curry manages to guess a country that a spectator wrote down. It was very special to see that with this special chicken everything is possible. After the show, there was informal magic in the foyer. All in all, this jubilee show was a great success.



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