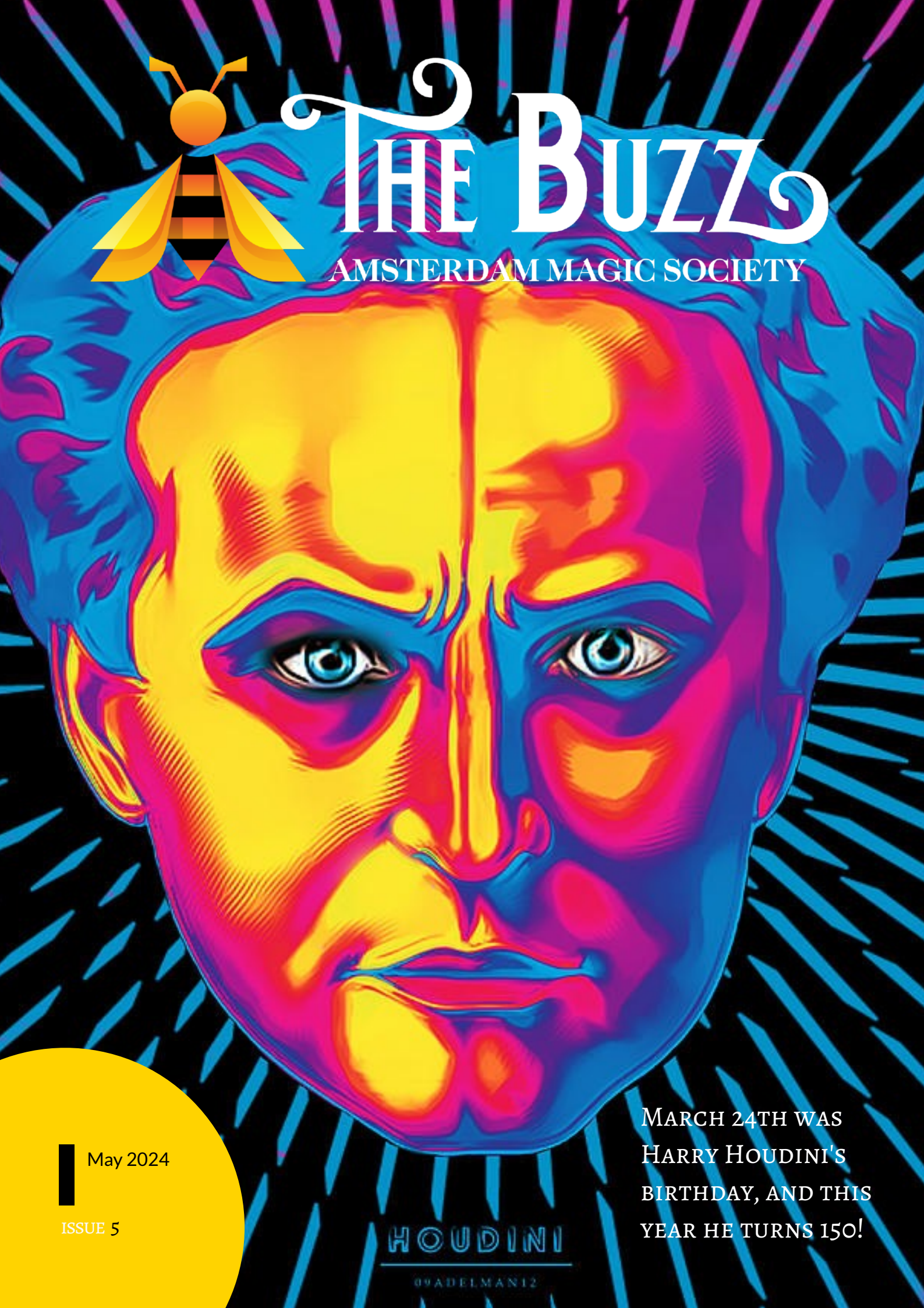




THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



MARCH 24TH WAS
HARRY HOUDINI'S
BIRTHDAY, AND THIS
YEAR HE TURNS 150!

May 2024

ISSUE 5

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Tell me all the ways you need me
I'm not here for long
Catch me or I go Houdini"

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GOLDEN CAT CONVENTION

KILLIAN DUNCAN JEFFREY PETRICK

What makes a convention like the Golden Cat such a typical AMShow tradition? Is it the type of people who attend? (And no, I don't necessarily mean the magicians).



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

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DEAR READER

"I come and I go
Tell me all the ways you need me
I'm not here for long
Catch me or I go Houdini"



Even Dua Lipa sings about Ehrich Weiss, AKA Houdini. His 150th birthday was on Monday, March 24. I wonder if Houdini would have a TikTok account dedicated to magic if he were still alive today...

As I write this, I'm wrapping up the March Magic Madness with the Amsterdam Magic Show. We did a different show every week in March, with the Amsterdam Magic Show in Sofia as a highlight. This was after the Golden Cat convention, and you will read a review

about that in this issue. Last week, I was able to meet up with my good friend, John Guastafarro. John is a very creative performer who has a knack for making small improvements that result in a big impact. So it was nice to sit down for a session, share card tricks, and discuss magic. For me, sessioning is crucial to getting creative and solving problems you cannot do on your own.

So when sessioning with other magicians, it's good to have a few tricks that you consider finished, a couple that are works in progress, and a handful of ideas. Remember that sessioning is a two-way street.

One suggestion that John made when showing him an Ace production between two Jokers (a combo of Marlo and John G.) is to have the participant name the Ace that should be produced. We played with it, but we did not come up with a satisfying solution. I kept playing with the idea, and a few days later, I came up with a solution and a prelude, so that all the Aces can be produced. To me, this new trick is the result of a successful magic session. In this issue, you will read part four of Joshua Jay's essay, Rico's column, a review of the Golden Cat Convention 2024, and more.

Enjoy reading!

Fritz with a Z



More than a year ago, Fritz and I started a new adventure. We establish the Amsterdam Magic Society. We found a suitable location, created our magazine and got to work energetically.

That boosted our aspirations to sell magic to a large audience. Fritz was, of course, been busy with the Amsterdam Magic Show for a long time, but Fritz wanted more. Now there is an Amsterdam Magic Close-Up Show in the Butcher, an Amsterdam Bar Magic Show in the De Buurvrouw, an Amsterdam Magic Dinner show in Batavia, a Rose Seance in Boom Chicago, an Amsterdam Magic Spectacular in the Amsterdam Theaterhuis (a project with the Society). It sometimes made me dizzy, but with Fritz's energy, he always managed to attract a sizeable lay audience to the big and small theatres.

A requested performance for a magic event in Llandudno in Wales gave rise to the idea of a show with his friend Rico Weeland, a duo act. That was a success there, and this was further developed. Our Mascini clubhouse owners were enthusiastic about including this show in their regular programming. The first "Double the Magic" sold out immediately. So, thought Fritz, we continue! But Rico had other obligations for the second show. No problem. Fritz asked two Swedish magic friends, Leif Olberius and Martin Hansson. The gentlemen were happy to do it, and it suddenly became a trio. Leif and Martin confided to me that this location was exceptional, and if they could rent such a theatre in Stockholm, they would immediately do the same.

On Wednesday, March 20, a small theatre filled with laypeople, could enjoy three top magicians. In the bar, our own Soumyabrata

(Magician Soum) performed close-up magic before and after the performance with great success!

In contrast to Fritz and Rico, who, in addition to their own performance, also do a duo act, Now there were three separate performances by three completely different artists. Leif is the most theatrical of the three. For some reason, Leif also likes taking old magic tricks, even the old needles from the mouth and balls in a safety net, finding new ways of putting them together and using them as pieces in his show.

Martin Hansson has been a professional magician for almost 30 years and has performed in nearly every possible venue, ranging from the Magic Castle to a Finnish sauna. Later, he decided to create a competition act, and his Sad Clown act was born. He won several first prizes, including fourth place at the FISM World Magic Championships. He is a funny guy who plays with his audience. I was happy to see his cups & balls, and card tricks.

After the interval, Fritz gave us a one-man show. With his sleight of hand and surefire comedy, he will make your jaws drop, and your smile muscles test. Of course, he did well, doing tricks I see before, but the audience was impressed when he finished with his rope routine to Einaudi's music.

The audience was happy to see the show, and in the bar, they stayed as long as they could to see Soum do his sponge balls, ambitious card routine, and a lot more magic and talking about the show they just have seen.

The following "Double the Magic" show is Wednesday, June 20, with Michal Skubida & Fritz with a Z.

TEXT AND PHOTO'S FRANS DE GROOT





Out of sight out of my **mind**

A lesson about study from **Ascanio**



The Magic of Ascanio Volume One might be a book that by now I've read about five times. It's also the only magic book, other than LePaul, that I keep coming back to and I keep rereading with such intensity. The book holds a certain depth to it that is different from other books.

Each time I read the book, I gain a deeper understanding of magic, concepts, and the flow of routines, allowing me to grasp everything more profoundly. Perceiving a magic book of this scope also means that there were things I didn't grasp on my first read-through, and there are things I won't fully comprehend until I revisit the book in five years. However, it shows that I'm evolving as a person.

One lesson I couldn't appreciate until recently is Ascanio's system for studying. He has a whole process for studying an effect from the moment you read it on the page until you've truly mastered it. This is interesting; his approach goes beyond what we usually perceive. Typically, when we talk about studying, it involves reading the trick from the pages of a book and then learning how to perform it.

But Ascanio's method encompasses the entire evolutionary process of understanding the

trick until it's fully mastered. I recommend everyone to explore this studying process in the Ascanio books. It might be something I'll discuss more later, but for now, I want to focus on a few steps of Ascanio's process that compel us to engage deeply with the book. The main idea is to reread the trick after you've already learned it.

This is something I still need to do more myself, but whenever I do, I see a significant benefit. When I decide to learn a trick, I understand where all the techniques go, how to apply them, and in which order. Then, instead of moving on to the next trick or crafting a presentation, it's better to go back and reread the entire trick.

Rereading it brings forward details that weren't clear before, such as finger positions, small touches, or even a way of handling a card that I skipped over initially.

The fact remains that you could read enough information to grasp the routine, but never enough to fully internalize what is written on the page. In order to do that, you have to reread the trick.

Magic is built on small details; those details can be the difference between day and night.

This extends to where to hold a card during a reveal or taking a step back right before a reveal.

These subtle touches can transform a strong effect into a miracle.

However, those are also the exact touches lost when only reading a trick once. We can't see those touches yet when reading the trick just once because we don't know what we're looking for yet.

Reading a trick only once might result from different things; one might be dopamine, but the other might be impatience. In my case, I'm a bit impatient.

I love magic, but I also want to move on to the next thing. I want to know and learn as much as possible; however, sometimes, especially now, that impatience is detrimental.

Any time I'm in a jam session, I note that it's better to truly know one trick well than to know ten tricks half-heartedly. The latter may still be interesting, but only in the sense that it can be shared.

Someone might be working on a certain idea, and you see how the trick that you can do half-heartedly can be applied to enhance their idea. In this case, we're sharing, which makes it a perfect excuse to engage.

But having been in enough sessions and deeply examining my own work, I'm happiest when I can present interesting touches to a routine or perform a certain routine well. To reach this point requires a deep understanding of the routine and where I'm going with it.

When I understand these things, I can truly put my own touch on it and know it will be amazing. Otherwise, I might spend multiple years searching for a touch that was in the book all along.

RICO WEELAND



Happy Birthday Harry

March 24th was Harry Houdini's birthday, and this year he turns 150!

Strangely, although he was born on March 24, 1874, Houdini always celebrated and said that his birthday was on April 6th.

It was no mistake, for Houdini knew his actual birthday.

An engraved pocket watch given to him by his wife, Bess Houdini, in 1910 bears his real birthday, March 24, with the first letter of each word in the engraving spelling out his given name "EHRICH".



An evening with Radek Hoffman

Radek Hoffman is a mentalist from Poland and a member of the Magic Circle. A Man of mystery, an Illusionist, a Mentalist: whichever way you look at it, these words leave you wanting to know more.

On Thursday, April 4th, he showcased his act at the Amsterdam Magic Show, captivating the audience with his performance.

A few days later, on Monday, April 8th, Radek conducted a lecture for the Society. During this lecture, he shared with us four effects: drawing duplication, card calling with a kicker, a murder mystery, and another drawing duplication. The first drawing duplication was cool. Utilizing a svenpad to get a picture in the participant's mind but with layers of deception to make it hard for the audience to backtrack. The routine concluded with a kicker—a pivotal moment, according to Radek, that makes the performance memorable and fosters audience discussion.



He emphasized the importance of incorporating such moments to enhance the visual appeal of mentalism "This is the only card trick I do on stage", tells Radek. It's a very impressive card calling routine using poker as a theme with lots of touches throughout the routine. And as with the previous routine, there is a kicker. Radek also discussed his work on the Si Stebbins and how to use the information to your advantage.



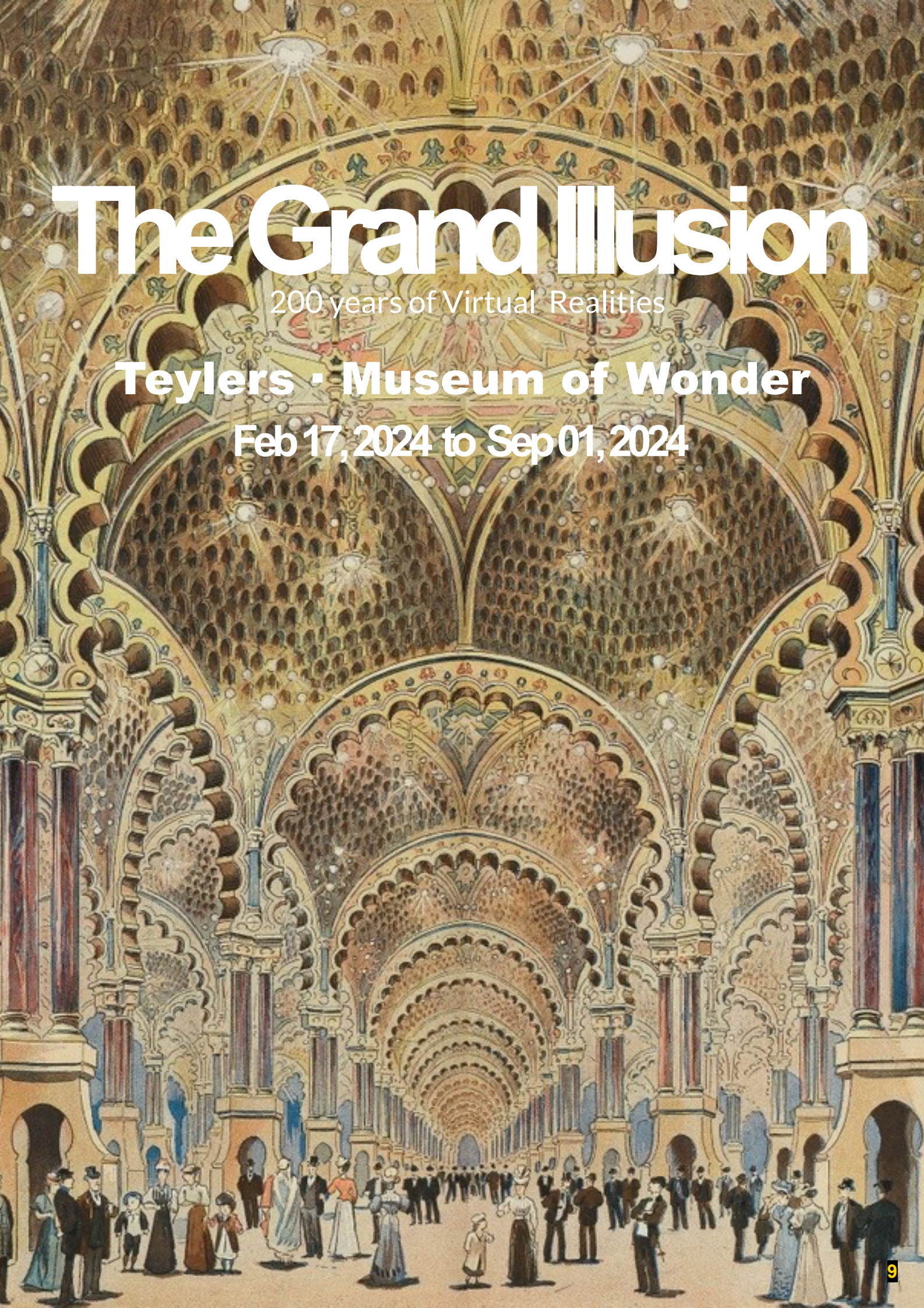
Before the intermission, Mr. Hoffman played a murder mystery where three participants had to play roles of the murder, the witness, and the victim. Radek reveals who is whom. And as a kicker (you see a pattern?), he was able to predict the murder weapon that the participant was thinking of. He shared how to mark items and how you could use it for other routines.



After the intermission, he shared a nice drawing duplication. It was inspired by a Bob Cassidy idea. It was thoughtfully constructed and it was almost the perfect way to execute a drawing duplication.

Close to the end of the evening, Radek also touched on the art of revealing. Sure, you can get information any way you want (peek, center tear, etc.), but how do you reveal it? How to do it in such a way that is memorable instead of writing the word down on a pad and turning it over the audience? Overall, the evening proved inspirational, sparking extensive brainstorming and idea-sharing among attendees after the lecture.

Text: Fritz with a Z.
Photos: Frans de Groot



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At the workshop of Martin & Leif

My experience of the workshop with Leif and Martin was very educational. Leif and Martin are two very nice guys from whom I learned a lot. They also said that you should take everything as feedback and not criticism, which I thought was very good advice. I found out that they can also give good tips on different types of magic. I did close-up magic, but Zippo did manipulation. Still, they can dive very deeply into the details that I would never notice myself. All in all, they were very instructive, and I would love to work with them on my act again.

Freek Bonnema





What do Audience's really think?

(Part four)

How Do They Really Feel?

We already explored people's existing feelings about magic, then took a brief detour into what cards and colors and symbols people are most likely to think of. So far, our study has been concerned with preconceived notions of magic. Now we dive into what aspects of magic people enjoy most after they see it. What do they remember most? What do they forget? Are they as fooled as we think they are?

The first experiment we did concerned the framing of magic performances. It was another A/B test; we divided the population into two testing groups. Both groups were shown the same video: Shawn Farquhar's FISM-winning routine, "Shape of My Heart."

The first group was simply asked to watch the video. They weren't told anything specific about

Shawn or his effect. The second group was told that they were about to watch the World Champion in Sleight-of-Hand Magic perform the routine that helped him win magic's highest honor. Everyone from each group was then asked to rate their enjoyment of the clip, and to talk about their experiences.

Were people more amazed when they thought the magician was a world champion? Do accolades matter? Yes and no. Shockingly, there was very little difference in how much people enjoyed Shawn's magic. Those who knew his background enjoyed it about the same as those who didn't. But that's not the full story. Those who knew his accolades attributed him more credit and skill than those who didn't. People were nearly four times more likely to click to see more magic from Shawn if they were presented with his credentials.

The accolades led to a deeper appreciation. We did a similar A/B experiment with Benjamin Earl's fantastic Fool Us video. In the video, he locates four Aces from a shuffled deck, each in an increasingly impossible way. Group A was shown the video without any introduction. Group B read this before watching: "The following magic trick is performed by magician Ben Earl, one of the finest sleight-of-hand artists in the world. He is one of only four magicians with the skill required to perform this effect perfectly."

With Shawn Farquhar's video, we were testing whether peer selection affected people's enjoyment. In other words, if other people think this guy is good, he must be good.

With Ben Earl's video, we tested for skill. If people perceive someone as having

virtuosic skill, would they appreciate and enjoy the show more?

In the case of Ben Earl's video, participants did enjoy the clip more if they were told in advance that what he was doing was extremely difficult.

They attributed to Ben more skill, surprise, complexity, and enjoyment when they perceived his talent to be world class. Eighty-five percent of those who thought what they were seeing was difficult wanted to see Ben perform more material. Only 33 percent of those who were told nothing about Ben's skill wanted to see more material.

Certain accolades matter more than others, it turns out. What is more impressive to an audience: great skill, performing on television, winning awards, performing for celebrities, or being expensive?

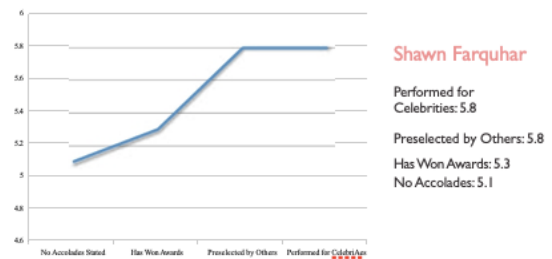
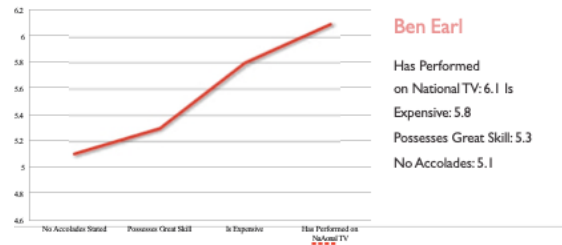
We tested for different accolades in each clip. Audiences are most impressed by television performances. The other accolades are appreciated about the same. However, magicians introduced with some kind of accolade (anything at all impressive) were more deeply appreciated.

The takeaway here is that introductions matter. As a convention organizer, I've introduced many magicians. When I ask how they would like to be introduced, the majority of performers say things like, "Whatever you want," or "Just keep it short," or "It doesn't matter." If you care about how deeply your audience appreciates you, it does matter.

Quick caveat: This isn't a license to invent credits, just encouragement to use the ones you've already earned. Sure, you were in the audience for a taping of The Tonight Show. That doesn't mean you were on The Tonight Show.

Money Magic

The way magicians and tricks are framed matters, as we have just explored with accolades and introductions. Next, we wanted to explore the



perceived "value" of a magical experience. To test this, we divided our participants into four groups. The first group was told to imagine that they encountered a magician on a boardwalk, who performed a trick (which was then shown via video). The other three groups were told the same thing, but they were asked to imagine that they paid to watch the magician. Some were told to imagine the fee was five dollars, others twenty dollars, and others fifty dollars. How did "paying" to watch magic affect the enjoyment?

There are two notable results here. The overarching conclusion is that people most enjoyed the magic when it was free. No shock there. They were most impressed, attributed the greatest complexity, and were most surprised by the (same) trick when they didn't have to pay for it.

But it's also worth noting that of those who "paid" to watch magic, paying more means enjoying more. Those who paid twenty or fifty dollars enjoyed the same trick more than those who paid only five dollars. The perception of value is a powerful illusion.

Forgettable Card Tricks

Card tricks are my life. I make my living with card tricks. And when I'm not performing

card tricks, there is nothing I would rather be doing than working on a new one. Imagine my disappointment, then, when our study showed that card tricks are the least memorable genre of magic across all ages and nationalities. It boils down to this heartbreaker of a statement: If you want your audience to forget the specifics of what you do in your show, you should do card tricks. But the news isn't all bad. People often liked the card magic they saw. They simply couldn't describe it in any detail. More on this in a minute. To test an audience's recall on magic, we asked people to describe magic effects they have seen and, separately, their favorite magic trick. This data is useful because it allows us to discern the tricks that stay with people, even years after they have seen them. We can see the qualities of tricks that are remembered best, and whether we can learn anything about how to make our own magic more memorable. And, if people haven't seen much magic before, we can see how they remember tricks we showed them earlier in the survey. A person's memory of a performance is, arguably, more important than their feelings during a magic show. Magic shows last an hour. Memories are forever. People universally remember effects that are easy to describe and understand. "He made a girl float." "He told me the day I was born." "He made a tiger appear from a box."

Internationally, people remembered larger illusions best, which could be attributed to more stage magic trends abroad. US-based participants often referred to effects they had seen on television from David Blaine, America's Got Talent, and Penn & Teller: Fool Us. People also enjoyed tricks with animals. Card tricks were frequently named but almost never described in any detail. This was so alarming to us that we added a question to the experiment, asking participants to specifically describe a card effect they had seen. Even when prompted, only 27 percent of participants could describe any card trick with specificity. The most common response was to simply list "tricks with cards." What does this mean? It means that to most people, card

tricks are, categorically speaking, hard to tell apart. I dislike country music, so when I hear anything with honky-tonk banjo riff regardless of who is singing or tempo or subject the only thing I hear is "country music." For most participants, any trick with a pack of cards is just a card trick. And with a reasonable time lapse, most people will be unable to recall how many cards were picked, how you found the card, whether you separated the cards by color, or whether you dealt yourself four Aces.

There is an exciting exception to this rule. Most people's recall for card tricks improved markedly when another prop or element was involved. People recalled card effects best when there was another prop to anchor the memory: "He threw the cards into the air and one stuck to the ceiling." "A card I picked ended up in my pocket." "He cut open a lemon and took out a playing card." When another element is involved, such as writing on a card and then changing the writing, the recall of the trick's plot improved tremendously. We surmise that when people no longer categorize an effect as a "card trick," they can more easily differentiate it in their minds. Also, plots involving cards and other objects are often easy to describe in one sentence and are often more memorable than card-only effects. There appears to be a weird but important distinction for people between "card tricks" and "tricks with cards."

This conclusion has been extremely hard for me to accept, because of my love for card magic and my dedication to the genre. But facts are facts, and if I'm honest with myself, my own experiences mirror the data we found: people do find the intricate plots of card magic hard to recall, and tricks that use cards and other objects are usually stronger than pure card magic.

But if you love cards as I do, take solace in this important revelation. When asked to name their favorite trick, about twenty percent of people did mention card magic, despite being unable to describe it. Which prompts the unanswerable question, "If they enjoy what you do, does it matter if they remember specifics?" (To be continued)

KILLIAN DUNCAN JEFFREY PETRICK



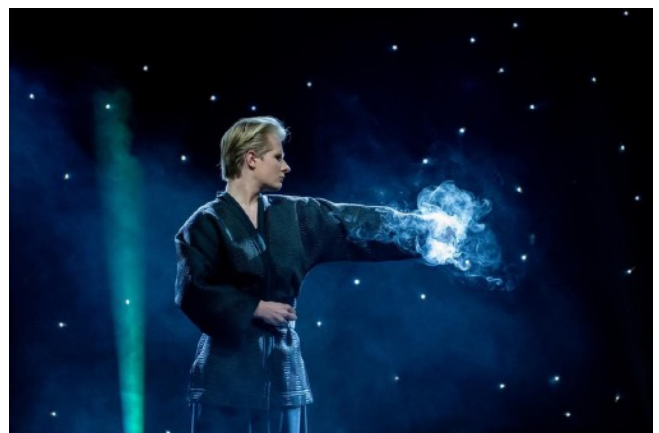
What makes a convention like the Golden Cat such a typical AMShow tradition? Is it the type of people who attend? (And no, I don't necessarily mean the magicians). Each person is friendlier than the next, and somehow the most enjoyable conversations aren't even about your favorite false shuffle or the newest gimmick from Sansminds.

All in all, it was (in my opinion) yet another overly long journey to get there, but we at the AMShow always manage to have way too much fun. In some mysterious way, we always find a way to get a beer somewhere.

Upon arriving at Hotel Mak, also known as 'the warm nest,' we were immediately welcomed with big hugs, lots of noise, and a drink (which also summarizes every evening in Gabrovo, more or less). I almost forgot: we received a bag with items and we had to create an act of three minutes within the hour. There was a cash prize and you guessed it: we won! To quote Lil' Jon: shots, shots, shots. The night was long. My bed was calling me, while the others went on to the piano bar in town.

The lectures this year were by David Stone and Yann Frisch, not in that order, but I intentionally

want to end with Yann for reasons that will be explained later.



Friday: the competition. Oh well. I've already said what I think of competitions in our world in a previous edition. I used it last time to simply show what I like. And fortunately, my companion Rico thought the same way. His act, Tibor from Hungary, and Eduard from Romania stood out to me. Eduard was also rightfully deserving (again), although I had some questions about "the story." But nowadays, I have questions about every routine (guys, keep it simple, okay?). In the evening was the dinner and the handing out the prizes. Congrats to our own Olivier Henning, taking home gold! A really





fun afterparty again, ask me for the pictures when you see me.

Yann Frisch, well, where do I begin? I said before the lecture, "It seems really interesting to dissect his FISM act." And it turned out, I hit the jackpot. It was so interesting to see and hear how he uses juggling in his act. I 'almost' never use lapping techniques (wink, wink), but every time (and there were many), it had a reason and was used in a different way.

David Stone is a seasoned performer, and you can tell by his material. From producing bottles (with a remarkably intelligent and 'simple' idea) to gimmick-based tricks that are all usable and not just handy for the 'TikTok generation.'

Then the gala show. I've been to three now, but this was truly the pinnacle of entertainment. The scale alone deserves a big round of applause for the Golden Cat team because this is how you put our world on the map.

With lots of glitter, glamour, too salty/greasy popcorn, and a ton of entertainment. Even the acts without magic had something magical about them, as if I were watching a Cirque du Soleil show. In previous years, I would occasionally check my watch to see if we could leave yet, but every minute captivated me. And as the finale, our magician with balls (you can interpret this in multiple ways, be my guest). Yann Frisch's act brought down the house, and I sat there with a few Bulgarians next to me CRYING, actually CRYING from laughter.

Guys, look up his FISM act if you haven't seen it yet. Top-tier entertainment, and then some.

Sunday was another travel day. After breakfast me, Fritz, and a few others did Zumba with Vassi.

We ended our weekend with the Amsterdam Magic Show at the well-known Sofia Live Club. I, along with a pack of hungry, magical tigers, warmed up the audience beforehand. Then we delivered the show we're known for in Amsterdam, catering to all tastes, lots of humor, but above all, entertainment. These are shows where I don't mind sitting back and learning from the audience's reactions. I learn something new every time, and I want to pass this on to fellow magicians. Put your phone away, keep your umpteenth pack of expensive playing cards in your pocket, and enjoy. It's the best profession there is and also the best thing you can share with an audience. Magic. Just magic.

Finally, a small digital hug to the AMS crew who was with us. Let's just say that I wasn't entirely in my element last year. Because, well, creatives, you know, sometimes you have moments when you're not feeling it (and that's okay, speak up). But each and every one of you are great guys whom I could easily travel with for a month to all the conventions the world has to offer. From the bottom of my heart, thank you guys. I say this not as colleagues but as friends and kindred spirits with a shared desire to entertain the people around us.

I'll set the bottle aside for a while, but if you happen to see me during one of the Society evenings, I'll tell you about the other 80% of our trip (if I can still remember it). "Cheers"





AGENDA

- May 2 - [Amsterdam Magic Show](#), Boom
Chicago Amsterdam
- May 4 - [Tampa Bay Festival of Magic](#) in Tampa,
Florida.
- May 7-9 - [Collector's Expo](#) in Los Angeles,
California
- May 10 -12 - [Magic Festival](#), Czech Republic
- May 12 - [Magic Circle Convention](#), London
- May 13 - [Amsterdam Magic Society](#), Mascini
Amsterdam
- May 17-19 - [AbraCORNdabra](#) in Des Moines,
Iowa - Website: <http://abracorndabra.com/>
- May 23-26 - [FISM / European Championship
of Magic](#) in Saint-Vincent, Italy
- June 3 - [Central Illinois Magic Get-Together](#) in
Springfield, Illinois.
- June 6 - [Amsterdam Magic Show](#), Boom
Chicago Amsterdam
- June 10 - [Amsterdam Magic Society](#), Mascini
Amsterdam
- June 12 - [Double the Magic](#), Mascini
Amsterdam
- June 21-23 - [Magic Rally](#) in Saalbach Austria
- June 22-29 - [Bryn Mawr College Campus](#),
Philadelphia, PA





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