# HE BUZZO MISTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY

1.50

July 2024

ISSUE 7

Maurice Grange is the new European Champion!

## FRITZ WITH A Z

Abra-abracadabra (And for my last trick) I'm 'bout to reach in my bag, bruh Abraabracadabra (And for my last trick, poof) Just like that and I'm back, bruh





# EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP

### Gandalf & Marvin

Some 900 European magic enthusiasts (including a large contingent of nonpaying volunteers) decided to attend the ECM FISM 2024 in St. Vincent Italy.

### 10 Questions to Maurice Grange

Fritz with a Z





#### Persi Diaconis' Next Magic Trick

#### ERICA KLARREICH

Persi Diaconis shuffled and cut the deck of cards I'd brought for him, while I promised not to reveal his secrets. "I'm not going to give you the chance," he retorted.

This magazine is a production of the Amsterdam Magic Society. If you like to contribute, send this to our editor & designer, Frans de Groot: <a href="mailto:amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com">amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com</a>

Copyright © 2023 by the Amsterdam Magic society. All rights reserved. No part of this publication be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the Editor of The Amsterdam Magic Society. Views expressed in this magazine are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Amsterdam Magic Society unless specifically stated.



#### Dear Reader

Abra-abracadabra (And for my last trick) I'm 'bout to reach in my bag, bruh Abraabracadabra (And for my last trick, poof) Just like that and I'm back, bruh



As I write this, I'm listening to Eminem's new song "Houdini". It's incredible how Houdini

remains a household name. A few issues ago, I wrote about Dua Lipa's song when Houdin was on the cover.

Recently, members of the Amsterdam Magic Show took over The Magic Bar Live. Later this month, we'll be taking over the House of Mysteries in Ghent. Next month, I will be part of the takeover of theater De Cameleon as the Amsterdam Magic Show celebrates 8 years of magic in the Dutch capital.

This anniversary show is always special, and this year's show will feature David Globe, Rob Mollien, Alex Conradi, and Mr. A and Miss Direction.

On the cover of this issue of The Buzz is Maurice Grange, the new European champion in manipulation. I asked him 10 questions, and you can read his answers inside. Maurice will also appear in the gala show at the NMU National Convention on Sunday, October 6th, alongside Dani Daortiz and many others. Additionally, this issue includes numerous reviews.

**Enjoy reading!** 

Fritz with a Z



#### Some personal impressions of the FISM-ECM 2024 by Gandalf

Some 900 European magic enthusiasts (including a large contingent of non-paying volunteers) decided to attend the ECM FISM 2024, which was below the budgeted number of 1200. Thus, the event will result in a loss as the organiser (Walter Rolfo) decided not to cut corners on lecturers and artists. Thus the four days of magic were literally packed with several gala shows (opening, stage and close-up), lectures, workshops, TED talks on magic and – last but not least – the Stage and Close-Up competitions.

I understood from Italian friends-in-magic that the overall costs to attend (admission, hotel and travel expenses) were rather steep, for some therefore almost prohibitive. St. Vincent is well known within the community of magic as Walter Rolfo, founder of the Masters of Magic brand and dito organisation, has already for several years used this venue for the yearly Masters of Magic event.

The ECM FISM can be characterised as an event with many "highs" but also with several "lows". Among the low points were the poor acts that participated in the category Comedy Magic. Putting on funny clothes, jumping and shouting, or adopting a funny voice is not enough to build an act in Comedy Magic that will harvest frequent bursts of laughter. The Spanish first prize winner (Manolo Costa and Mindanguillo) was thus a rare exception, but what fun!

Also, I do not understand that FISM allowed an 11-year-old youngster to enter into the competition. Not only does an act "season"

need time, but this also goes for the performer in question.



From The Netherlands, "our" Olivier Henning participated in the category Manipulation and his performance went very well. Unfortunately, the field in manipulation was very strong and he did not manage to win an award.



Nigel Otermans participated in the category Stage Illusion and also Nigel did a good job. His act lacked, however, originality and in this



category, Alberto Giorgi from Italy was the only award winner with a third prize and an award for Invention. Truly baffling illusion!

The fact that not all prizes in all categories were awarded is indicative of the overall average low level of the competing acts. I will not dwell too long on describing the individual acts as a lot of reports have already appeared on social media.

A total of over 40 dealers were present and it appears to me that business went well. Personal highlights for me were a lecture by Bernardo Sedlacek, originally from Brazil, a young guy that really put a lot of thought and analysis into his approach to magic, a "thinker."

Also, Miguel Angel Gea gave a great lecture and was almost unstoppable because of his clear love and passion for magic.



Dani DaOrtiz gave not only a lecture but was the star of the Close-Up Gala where he received a standing ovation. Other participants in this Gala were famous names and great icons of magic such as David Stone (MC), Luke Jermay (with great card magic), Armando Lucero, Jeki Yoo and Christopher Castellini.

The organisation had introduced an experiment whereby the audience could digitally vote for the acts, understandably only after the jury had handed in their scores. This did not work too well in practice and was not without controversy. Later on during the competitions, this "public scoring" was therefore stopped.

My estimate is that there were some 20+ Dutchmen attending the EC FISM 2024, of which the largest contingent originated from Rotterdam.

The competitions started all punctually on time; however, because of the extra time the public voting took in the intervals (changements) they ended way beyond the scheduled midnight hour deadline.

Thereafter there were several after-parties: spaghetti nights and such. For personal reasons, I skipped those because the next day(s) the convention would start again at 9:00 hrs. with a lot to offer, something for everybody's taste.

Finally, Armando Lucero gave over 30 "private shows" for small audiences only because he wanted people to be able to watch his magic not only live but also closeup. An approach that I highly appreciated and subscribe to. A magic marathon!

## In short:

A highly varied event in magic, in different meanings, but all-in-all a lot of value for money and generating inspiration for many months to come.



#### Some personal impressions of the FISM-ECM 2024 by Marvin

It was my first time visiting a four-day international magic convention and witness thirty-five hours of stage and close-up competition. The categories included manipulation, stage illusions, card, micro, parlour, comedy, mental and general magic. In addition to the championship there were also gala shows, one man shows, street magic, lectures, dealer rooms, workshops and (spaghetti) parties.

The acts that I saw during the competition were often very inspiring, impressive and original with great entertainment value, magical moments and stagecraft.

The acts from Robin Deville (card magic), Rune Carlsen (micro magic), Martin Hansson (parlour magic), David Shmagic (parlour magic), Maurice Grange (manipulation) and Alberto Giorgi (stage illusion) stayed with me the most. Also, the acts of the Dutch magicians, Nigel (stage illusions) and Olivier Henning (manipulation) made a very good impression. Female magician Magic Luna (parlour) made a memorable impression with her clock / magic time act as well.

Apart from the main program, the convention was also an opportunity to be with like-minded people and to meet world famous magicians in person. Magicians like Dani DaOrtiz, David Stone, Topas, Paul Wilson and Tom Stone were present and easily approachable to meet informally.

Some of them offered three-hour hands-on workshops to learn from them directly.

Tom Stone said during one of the gala shows that he always advises magicians to start competing, if one wants to evolve in one 's magic.

And Paul Wilson stated that the magic community should embrace and accept the fact that there are so many secrets revealed online nowadays. He even emphasized that this is actually essential for the magic community to evolve. During one of the gala shows there was also one minute of silence scheduled for the remembrance of Max Maven.



My whole experience at the convention goes beyond words. To be among like-minded people and to share our common passion for the magical art is already an experience in itself.

My personal highlight was to participate as a volunteer on stage during four of the competition acts and to thus experience the competition and performers backstage. Next year, the FISM world championship is in Torino.



## A Review/Vlog of the FISM-ECM 2024 by David Penn



## AMSTERDAM MAGIC SH☆W

ANNIVERSARY EDITION ON JULY 4 IN THEATER DE CAMELEON



# **10 QUESTIONS** Maurice Grange

At 19 years old, Maurice Grange won FISM Europe in the category of manipulation. Based in Stuttgart, I sat down with him on Google Meet and asked him 10 questions.

#### How was Italy?

Saint Vincent was beautiful; I like the mountains. It was great to see my friends again from different countries. Also, I like the way the competitors were showcased; it is all about the competition.

## Is manipulation your specialty, or do you also perform close-up?

I do manipulation with talking. I'm not comfortable doing manipulation to music because I like the rhythm of speaking more than the rhythm of music. And I perform magic for children.

#### Who are your inspirations?

Derek DelGaudio. And Yu Ho Jin. When he's on stage, I feel that he is telling a story to me. Also, Topas has been very helpful with my act.

#### Do you have other hobbies?

I like football and support VfB Stuttgart and the German national team. But I also support France because I am half French. Oh, and I do ballet.

## Somebody can wake you up in the middle of the night for...?

My girlfriend for sure can wake me up. Plus a magician with any magic idea. If it is a new solution to solve the Rubik's cube, I will be back asleep again. But if it is a good premise, I will be up and work on it with you.

#### What magic item can you not live without?

Double blank cards, because they are simple. They are everywhere in my house.

#### Are you working on new magic at the moment?

I am still working on my act for FISM next year. I am trying to create a better flying card.

#### Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I want to have a one-man show with the idea of my act integrated into that show. I would like to share more personal stories, like Derek Delgaudio does in his show. And perform at magic festivals.

## You will be in the Netherlands in October for the national convention, are you excited?

I am really looking forward to it. I have been there before, but not for magic. I look forward to the cheese.

## Any advice for magicians that want to do manipulation?

Smile. Find a character you like. Don't try to work on your own. And find as many people as possible to work with you on your magic. I'm Maurice Grange - and I love doing magic. I discovered my passion for it when a friend showed me a simple yet amazing card trick at the age of 13. My ambition was awakened!

Since then, I have been learning new magic tricks and illusions with curiosity and unbridled joy, which I use to wow my audiences. In the beginning, it was mainly friends and my family for whom I was allowed to perform magic; today I perform my shows nationally and internationally in large theatres, at events and company celebrations and, of course, also for private individuals. The feeling of standing on a stage and looking into the beaming eyes of the audience makes me happy. And it is the best motivation for me to keep developing as a magician.

My big thanks on this magical journey go to Eberhard Riese, the President of the Magic Circle of Germany. I got to know him in 2019 when I was a guest at the Magic Circle of Stuttgart. Through him, I learned not to see the magic trick but the art of magic, and how to tell a story, something personal or a premise, so the art of magic helps me to convey this to the audience. Since then we have worked together regularly and he has accompanied me on my journey as a director.

In 2022, I became the German youth champion in the art of magic in the manipulation category and in 2023, I came second in the French championships in the manipulation category, and now in 2024, I am European Champion.

The question that concerns me the most is, "What is art?" and "How do you make art?!" I don't just want to show you a trick, I want there to be self-expression in my work and for this self-expression to become communication through the audience itself. So now I have a different perspective on my manipulation, I want to get out of this classic image of a manipulator, I want to bring life into the character, I want to tell you a story and I want the viewer to remember their emotion at that moment and not the effect.



# SHOWCASE

## Text: Fritz with a z Photos: Frans de Groot

The Amsterdam Magic Society Showcase was another delightful night on Monday, May 13! With 17 members, 6 Apprentices, and 6 guests at Mascini, it truly was a magical evening.

Hosting the show was a pleasure. Orville kicked things off by demonstrating a trick his uncle had shown him as a child, then made a connection and prediction with three members on stage. Ron followed with a fantastic Sympathetic Cards routine, and Freek performed B'Wave along with an effect from his early card magic days.

Jose presented his Twisting the Voice act and attempted to demonstrate the 3 Card Monte, though the cards weren't cooperating. Danny made cards invisibly jump between guests and linked and unlinked rubber bands right before their eyes. Zippo closed the first half with a shortened version of his Emoji act, perfect for TV.

After the break, Flip conjured macaroons (or "magicaroons"). Evan attempted to let the devil take over a participant, while Stephane helped a guest discover their dream destination. Frans handed out lollipops for the Society's birthday and made a prediction about the final selection.

Peter closed the show by transforming a styrofoam cup into a stream of paper, revealing a Parisian destination with a magic mug, and making a wedding ring appear in his shoelaces. He also performed the classic bowls and balls trick, followed by a ballsover-the-head routine, and finished with an Uber Eats dinner revelation!

As usual, we stayed at Mascini until closing time, continuing to amaze the guests.





## For Persi Diaconis' Next Magic Trick ...

A mathematician who has analysed card shuffling for decades is tackling one final nemesis: "smooshing"

ersi Diaconis shuffled and cut the deck of cards I'd brought for him, while I promised not to reveal his secrets. "I'm not going to give you the chance," he retorted. In an empty conference room at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Antonio, Texas, this January, he casually tossed the cards into four piles in a seemingly random motion - yet when he checked, each pile magically had an ace on top. "Of course, it's easy to get confused when there are a lot of cards, so let me just take four," he said, scooping up the aces. He swivelled the four-card pile in his hands - always keeping it in the same flat plane - and sometimes the aces were face-up, sometimes facedown, even though they couldn't possibly have flipped over.

Diaconis' career as a professional magician began more than five decades ago, when he ran away from home at age 14 to go on the road with the sleight-of-hand virtuoso Dai Vernon. But unlike most magicians, Diaconis eventually found his way into academia, lured by an even more powerful siren song: mathematics. At 24, he started taking college classes to try to learn how to calculate the probabilities behind various gambling games. A few years later he was admitted to Harvard University's graduate statistics program on the strength of a recommendation letter from the famed mathematics writer Martin Gardner that said, more or less, "This kid invented two of the best ten card tricks in the last decade, so you should give him a chance."

Now a professor of mathematics and statistics at Stanford University, Diaconis has employed his intuition about cards, which he calls "the poetry of magic," in a wide range of settings. Once, for example, he helped decode messages passed between inmates at a California state prison by using small random "shuffles" to gradually improve a decryption key. He has also analysed Bose-Einstein condensation — in which a collection of ultra-cold atoms coalesces into a single "super-atom" — by envisioning the atoms



as rows of cards moving around. This makes them "friendly," said Diaconis, whose speech still carries the inflections of his native New York City. "We all have our own basic images that we translate things into, and for me cards were where I started."

In 1992, Diaconis famously proved — along with the mathematician Dave Bayer of Columbia University — that it takes about seven ordinary riffle shuffles to randomise a deck. Over the years, Diaconis and his students and colleagues have successfully analysed the effectiveness of almost every type of shuffle people use in ordinary life.

#### All except one: "smooshing."

This toddler-level technique involves spreading the cards out on a table, swishing them around with your hands, and then gathering them up. Smooshing is used in poker tournaments and in baccarat games in Monte Carlo, but no one actually knows how long you need to smoosh a deck to randomise it. "Smooshing is a completely different mechanism from the other shuffles, and my usual techniques don't fit into that," Diaconis said. The problem has tantalised him for decades. Now he is on a quest to solve it. He has carried out preliminary experiments suggesting that one minute of ordinary smooshing may be enough for all practical purposes, and he is now analysing a mathematical model of smooshing in an attempt to prove that assertion.

Diaconis' previous card-shuffling work has helped to shed light on numerical approximation algorithms known as Markov chain Monte Carlo methods, ubiquitous in scientific simulation, which employ processes akin to shuffling to generate random examples of phenomena that are too hard to calculate completely. Diaconis believes that a mathematical analysis of smooshing will likewise have ramifications that go far beyond card shuffling. "Smooshing is close to a whole raft of practical life problems," he said. It has more in common with a swirling fluid than with, say, a riffle shuffle; it's reminiscent, for example, of the mechanics underlying the motion of large garbage patches in the ocean, during which swirling currents stir a large collection of objects.

"The smooshing problem is a way of boiling down the details of mixing to their essence," said Jean-Luc Thiffeault, a professor of applied mathematics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, who studies fluid mixing. Fluid-flow problems are notoriously hard to solve. The most famous such problem, which concerns the Navier-Stokes equations of fluid flow, is so difficult that it has a million-dollar bounty on its head. "The mathematics of any model for spatial mixing is in pretty bad shape," Diaconis said.



Garbage accumulation locations in the North Pacific Ocean.

Diaconis hopes that the union of fluid-flow techniques and card-shuffling math might point a way forward. "My kind of math — combinatorics, probability — is at right angles to the kind of math the Navier-Stokes people do," he said. "If you bring fresh tools in, it might do some good in a bunch of these classical problems."

## **Going Random**

It might seem that no amount of smooshing can be definitively determined to be enough. After all, no matter how long you've smooshed the cards, wouldn't more smooshing be even better? From a practical standpoint, probably not. Diaconis and Thiffeault both suspect that there is a particular moment in smooshing — a "cutoff," as mathematicians call it — at which the deck transitions from highly ordered to highly unpredictable. After this point, more smooshing will confer only inconsequentially tiny increments of additional randomness.

The cutoff phenomenon, which occurs in a variety of situations in math and physics, owes its discovery to an earlier shuffling analysis by Diaconis and Mehrdad Shahshahani. In 1981 the pair was trying to understand a simple shuffle in which you just swap two randomly chosen cards. If you do many such shuffles, for a long time the deck will be far from random. But after roughly 100 shuffles it will suddenly transition to nearly random.

Since that discovery, the cutoff has been identified in many Markov Chain Monte Carlo algorithms, and recently it has even been discovered in the behaviour of atomic spins in the Ising model, which describes the process by which materials become permanent magnets. "The idea of the cutoff has been very influential," said Yuval Peres, a mathematician at Microsoft Research in Redmond, Wash.

All the card shuffling methods that have been successfully analysed have cutoffs, and Diaconis conjectures that smooshing will too. "I'd bet \$100 to \$1 that smooshing has a cutoff," Diaconis said.

## **10 Smooshing Tests**

Diaconis is drawn to problems he can get his hands on. When he got curious about how shaving the side of a die would affect its odds, he didn't hesitate to toss shaved dice 10,000 times (with help from his students). And when he wondered whether coin tossing is really unbiased, he filmed coin tosses using a special digital camera that could shoot 1,000 frames per second — and discovered, disconcertingly, that coin tosses are slightly biased toward the side of the coin that started out face-up.

So to get a feel for how much smooshing is needed to produce a random deck, Diaconis grabbed a deck and started smooshing. Together with his collaborators, the Stanford biostatistician Marc Coram and Lauren Bandklayder, now a graduate student at Northwestern University, he carried out 100 smooshes each in lengths of 15 seconds, 30 seconds, and one minute.

Next, he had to figure out how random the decks had become. The ideal way to do this would be to check whether each possible deck arrangement appears equally often among the smooshed decks. But this approach is utterly impractical: The number of arrangements of a deck of cards is 52 factorial — the product of the first 52 numbers which approaches the estimated number of atoms in the Milky Way galaxy. "If everyone had been shuffling decks of cards every second since the start of the Earth, you couldn't touch 52 factorial," said Ron Graham, a mathematician at the

University of California, San Diego. In fact, any time you shuffle a deck to the point of randomness, you have probably created an arrangement that has never existed before. Since a direct experimental test of randomness isn't feasible, Diaconis and his collaborators subjected their smooshed decks to a battery of 10 statistical tests designed to detect nonrandomness. One test looked at whether the top card of the deck had moved to every possible position equally often in the 100 smooshed decks. Another looked at how often pairs of adjacent cards — the seven and eight of spades, for example — remained adjacent after the shuffle.

Persi Diaconis demonstrating the card shuffling technique called "smooshing" at the Joint Mathematics Meetings in San Antonio, Texas, in January.

Of the 10 tests, Diaconis suspected that smooshing might have the hardest time passing the adjacent-pairs test, since cards that start out together might get swept along together by the hand motions. And indeed, the 15-second smooshes failed the adjacent-pairs test spectacularly, often having as many as 10 pairs still adjacent after the smoosh — more than enough hidden order for a smart gambler to exploit. "If you know that, say, 10 percent of the cards are still going to be next to the cards they were next to before, that's a tremendous advantage if you're playing blackjack," Graham said.

Diaconis expected the 30-second and oneminute smooshes to fail the adjacent-pairs test too, but to his surprise, they aced all 10 tests. "I thought this was a lousy method of shuffling," he said. "I have new respect for it."

The experiments don't prove that 30 seconds is enough smooshing to randomise a deck. They only establish that 30-second smooshes are not as egregiously nonrandom as 15-second smooshes. With a sample size of only 100 smooshes, "you can only detect very strong departures from randomness," Diaconis said. It seems likely that the cutoff occurs sometime before one minute, since 30-second smooshes already seem to do pretty well. But, he said, "we'd be on more solid ground in discriminating between 30 seconds and one minute if we had 10,000 smooshes." That's far more than his group can carry out, so Diaconis is thinking about organizing a "national smoosh" in highschool or junior-high math classes.

Even more than additional data, however, Diaconis wants a proof. After all, ad hoc statistical tests are never a conclusive way to show that a shuffle is random. "It's perfectly possible that some clever person will say, 'Why didn't you try this test?' and it turns out to all be wrong," he said. "I want to be able to say, 'It doesn't work after a minute and here's why,' or 'It works after a minute and here's a proof.""



## Theoretical Smooshing

When Diaconis returned to college after a decade as a professional magician, his first three grades in advanced calculus were C, C and D. "I didn't know you were supposed to study," he said. His teacher told him that he should write down the proofs and practice them as if they were French verbs. "I said, 'Oh, you're allowed to do that?'" Diaconis said. "I thought you were just supposed to see it." When it came to smooshing, instead of just trying to "see it," Diaconis devoured the literature on fluid mixing. "When we started talking about the connections between cards and fluid mixing, he read the whole 200 pages of my Ph.D. thesis," said Emmanuelle Gouillart, a researcher who studies glass melting at Saint-Gobain, a glass and construction materials company founded in Paris in 1665. "I was really impressed."

While Diaconis grew more conversant in fluid mechanics, Gouillart benefited from his unique insight into card shuffling. "It turned out that we were studying very similar systems, but with different descriptions and different tools," Gouillart said.

The collaboration led her to develop a better way to measure correlations between neighbouring particles in the fluids she studies. Diaconis, meanwhile, has developed a mathematical model for what he calls "the sound of one hand smooshing." In his model, the cards are represented by points scattered in a square, and the "hand" is a small disk that moves around the square while rotating the points under it by random angles. (It would be easy, Diaconis noted, to extend this to a two-handed smooshing model, simply by adding a second disk.)

Diaconis has been able to show - not just for a 52card deck but for any number of points - that if you run this smooshing model forever, the arrangement of points will eventually become random. This might seem obvious, but some shuffling methods fail to randomise a deck no matter how long you shuffle, and Diaconis worried that smooshing might be one of them. After all, he reasoned, some cards might get stuck at the edges of the table, in much the same way that, when you mix cake batter, a little flour inevitably gets stranded at the edges of the bowl and never mixes in. But by drawing on 50 years of mathematics on the behaviour of random flows, Diaconis proved that if you smoosh long enough, even cards at the edge will get mixed in.

His theoretical result says that the smooshing model will eventually mix the cards, but doesn't say how long it will take. The model does provide a framework for relating the size of the deck to the amount of mixing time needed, but pinning down this relationship precisely requires ideas from a mathematical field still in its infancy, called the quantitative theory of differential equations. "Most studies of differential equations focus on what happens if you run the equation for a long time," Diaconis said. "People are just now starting to study how the equation behaves if you run it for, say, a tenth of a second. So I have some careful work to do."

Diaconis is optimistic that the work will lead him not just to an answer to the smooshing question, but to deeper discoveries. "The other shuffles have led to very rich mathematical consequences, and maybe this one will too," he said.

Diaconis shares his magical secrets with only a select inner circle, but he dreams of laying the secrets of smooshing bare. "Smooshing is something that people use thousands of times a day, and mathematicians should be able to say something about it."

#### ERICA KLARREICH





#### 

## AGENDA

July 4 - <u>Amsterdam Magic Show</u> 8 th Anniversary Edition, Theater De Cameleon Amsterdam

July 8 - <u>Amsterdam Magic Society</u>, Mascini Amsterdam

July 31 - August 3 - <u>Abbott's Get</u> <u>Together</u> in Colon, Michigan USA

August 4-7 - MAGIC Live! in Las Vegas Nevada, USA

August 9 - 10 - <u>MagiCon</u>, Clayton, North Carolina USA

August 12 - <u>Amsterdam Magic Society</u>, Mascini Amsterdam

August 14-17 - <u>KIDabra</u>: The Conference of Kid Show and Family Performers in Chatanooga, Tennessee USA

August 15 - <u>Amsterdam Magic Show</u>, Boom Chicago Amsterdam

August 18 - <u>Boulevard of Magic</u>, Zandhuis in IJmuiden aan Zee

August 23-25 - <u>New England</u> <u>WizardFest</u> at Boxboro Regency Hotel in Boxborough MA

August 30 - September 2- <u>Combined</u> <u>convention</u> - Dallas, Texas

September 5-7 - <u>Magicians' Alliance of</u> <u>Eastern States</u>, Cherry Hills, New Jersey

ATTER MAN

September 5-8 - <u>Fröhlich Magic</u> <u>Convention</u> (National Austrian Convention) Bad Aussee, Salzburg, Austria

September 11 - 15 - <u>Magic All Festival</u> -Spa, Belgium



## Out of sight out of my



## Just sit down and do it.

I was always struggling with this problem of starting with something that I was really excited about. Opposite of some people, I wasn't afraid of failure, I was afraid of success. I'm still quite afraid of success, and because of that, I will come up with a thousand reasons to not do something. Or to trick myself into thinking that I'm doing the thing while I'm actually not doing the thing.

For example, I've had as a goal to play and develop my first one-man show called "Curating Mysteries". But rather than writing that show and finding a venue to perform it, I came up with a thousand things to not actually work on the show. The script wasn't good enough, a certain piece wasn't right, or I had a different solution in mind for a trick.

I had so many ways to trick myself into thinking that I was working on the show. I thought I was working on the show because the structure of the show was actually changing, but every change that I made and every idea that I implemented got me further away from actually performing the show.

I either didn't have the method or the material to execute the new ideas.

But after having some very honest conversations with close friends and after accidentally finding one very specific segment on Masterclass, all of this changed. Let's start with the conversations with some friends of mine.

After talking to a friend about the show it got clear that the ideas for the show were becoming crazier, in a good way. Very beautiful ideas of changes, levitations, and just very strong visual images. But the problem with all of that was that I was finishing about one idea per three months. Moreover, all those ideas were visual transitions rather than actual tricks. They would be a specific way to end the cups and balls or to go from a coin routine into the next routine. The visuals and the images were astounding and highly motivating to me at the time. But the problem was that they were not helping me with the goal of "Playing and developing the show".

"Playing the show" is a big key factor here. All those ideas were getting me more and more into the developing phase, and less and less into the playing phase. Luckily a lot of this changed when a friend told me "Whatever you're going to do, your first show is likely going to suck. Just do the show and remove everything that you don't like". That was a great piece of advice! It doesn't mean that I won't keep working on those ideas until they're fully developed and performance-ready. But it does mean that for now, they are on the back burner. At least, until I have played the show multiple times. The problem with the ideas just being in my head is that they're all theoretical. I have no idea if they would actually work in the context of the show and if they would feel right, and what a shame it would be to work on a piece for multiple months only to find out that it doesn't work for the audience or in the context of the routine.

This of course is still a possibility, but at least by taking that transition out and just doing the barebones version of the routine I can do the full goal which is to play and develop a one-man show.

So, then I had the realization that I actually just had to start playing the show and I realized that over the years I've accumulated enough pieces for a parlor setting to actually start doing it. So I started to compile a show from those pieces. But yet, I still wasn't really moving forward. I wasn't moving forward and I started to think that maybe I didn't have the motivation to actually play or develop the show. But all of this changed after I started talking with a friend of mine from Portugal about different forms of creation and motivation.

Different people create differently, and even though I'd say I don't always create in the same way. One way of creating has been coming back pretty consistently, which is creating under pressure. Kind of like creating with a deadline.

So in the case of the show, I started to go against my nature and I immediately booked a venue. From my nature, I'm a person who wants to have everything ready and know every escape plan. For a show this would mean I'd like to have the show, the script, the website for the ticket sales, the marketing channels, and all the other things that come looking around the corner while organizing a show. Doing this the other way around, first booking the venue, scares the living shit out of me. But the good thing is that it adds pressure. It adds the pressure of wanting to actually deliver and giving people something that is worth their money as well as not wanting to embarrass myself in front of a huge audience (if there is even an audience at all).

Creating in this way helped me a lot to let go of the unimportant details. The details are nice fantasies but they are holding me back from actually doing the thing. And that is where we get to the second thing that has helped me.

Recently I bought a Masterclass subscription together with some friends. No, this is not the Vanishing Inc. Masterclass, but the website called "Masterclass". If you don't know about the website, I highly recommend you check it out. It has many great sources for learning how to write, act, sing, cook, and much more.

All in all, very useful skills for magicians. Understanding more about other arts while learning from the best will also give you new venues of appreciation for your own art. At least for me, it did. But I'm digressing.

During the Masterclass of Michael Lewis, a bestselling author whose books have been turned into movies, he talks about the best advice that he could ever give to any writer. In our case, I want you to substitute the word writer for the word magician.

"The best advice I can give to any writer is to just sit down on your chair and write."

## **RICO WEELAND**



Amsterdam Magic Society Zeedijk 24 1012 AZ Amsterdam

www.amsterdammagicsociety.com

amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

