



THE BUZZ

AMSTERDAM MAGIC SOCIETY



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ISSUE 11

PENN & TELLER

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Summer may look like a quiet time for magic... but nothing could be further from the truth!

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EVAN KASTOR

In September, members of the Amsterdam Magic Society went to the UK and saw Penn & Teller's 50th Anniversary tour. What an accomplishment for them! Actually, several remarkable ones. Fifty years in any career is a success, let alone professional performing.



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Derren Brown – Only Human and Still Master of Our Art (or why you should never miss the opportunity to observe a master at work).



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UNITED BY MAGIC

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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

As I write this, I'm in Oradea, Romania, where my friends Eduard and Bianca are hosting the very first [Transylvania Magic Fest](#). It's an exciting time to be here — magicians from all over are gathering to share ideas, laughter, and of course, magic.

This issue focuses on two remarkable shows: Derren Brown and Penn & Teller. I was thrilled to finally see Derren Brown perform live — it happened to be the final show of his Only Human tour. Edgar captures the essence of the performance beautifully without giving anything away. During our trip, we couldn't stop discussing the show — its layers, the way Derren guided participants, and the precision of the staging. If you ever get the chance, don't miss it. Only Human returns from February through July 2026.

The Penn & Teller show offered a completely different experience, yet it was equally captivating. I especially appreciated that they didn't resort to exposing any secrets. Penn

occasionally slipped into his familiar “magic code,” as fans of Fool Us will recognize, but it never detracted from the flow of the performance. I was also impressed by how Penn remembered each participant's name throughout the evening — a small but telling detail. Evan, a longtime fan, shares his thoughts in his own review, and I encourage you to explore the hyperlinks for additional content.

Elsewhere in this issue, Marvin reports on the Dutch national convention, offering his impressions and highlights from the event. And finally, you're invited to attend the Houdini Séance — but what exactly is that? You'll find out at our next meeting and in the upcoming issue of The Buzz.

ENJOY READING

Fritz with a Z

PENN & TELLER



50 YEARS OF MAGIC
1975-2025

LONDON PALLADIUM SEPT 13-24

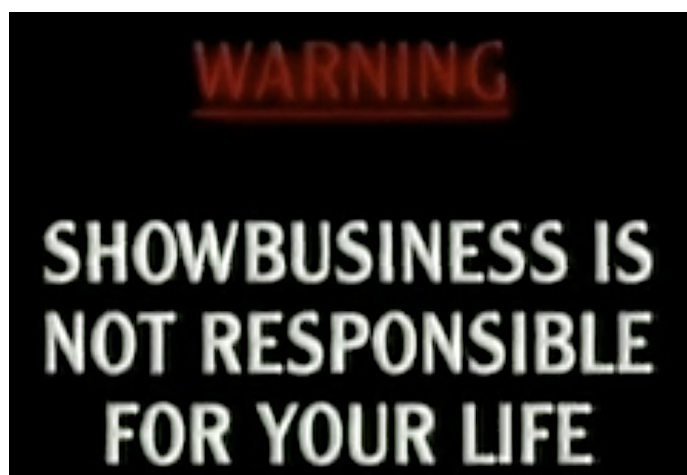
PENN 50 & TELLER

50 YEARS OF MAGIC

**Still going after half a century -
but what has changed?**

Frank Kastor

Penn & Teller's British television special 'Phobophilia' opens with this warning:



For most of us, however, this was less of a warning and more of a challenge. In September, members of the Amsterdam Magic Society went to the UK and saw Penn & Teller's 50th Anniversary tour. What an accomplishment for them! Actually, several remarkable ones. Fifty years in any career is a success, let alone professional performing.

Keeping a relationship, especially one as trying as a duo act, going for half a century is not for the meek, and - no doubt - has had its ups and downs. They have managed all this, a long-running Vegas show & their television show 'Fool Us', which is now on its second country and eleventh season.

Throughout it all, they have seemingly changed relatively little. Penn's personality may have tamed slightly over the years, but he is still loud and prickly. Teller is still the expert at mime while making most of the necessary magic happen.

Their long-standing promise of kindly greeting every audience member who wants to share a post-show moment lives on. They graciously met all of us, along with many other fans, signed anything we wanted and made as many photos as it took to see us all happily on our way. You can see the proof on one of the following pages.

Their team has also changed fairly little. Penn mentions during the show that the newest member of their team has been with them for eighteen years. This is a wonderful testament to the environment they create, which must be caring and professional to maintain working relationships as long as this.

I saw my first Penn & Teller live show long before this one, in the mid-nineties in Virginia Beach. In fact, they came through a few times during my middle and high school years, along with David Copperfield and Jeff McBride. Their big trick at the time was **the dual bullet catch**. Other bits they routinely performed on tour were Mofo the Psychic Gorilla and the Magic of Polyester.



PALLADIUM

PENN & TELLER
50 YEARS OF MAGIC
STALLS PLEASE HAVE YOUR BAGS READY FOR SECURITY CHECKS ROYAL CIRC

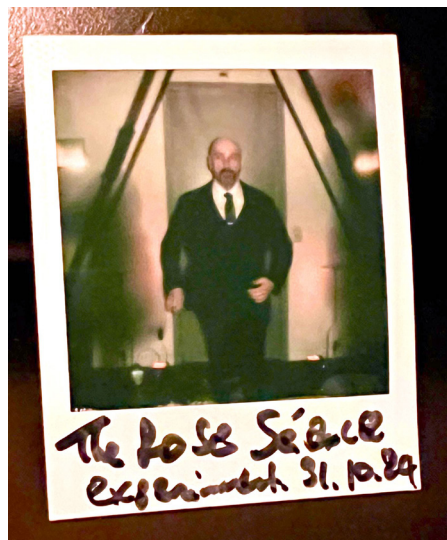
PENN & TELLER
50 YEARS OF MAGIC



One illusion I vividly remember from previous tours was their once pre-intermission effect: [a version of Houdini's water tank](#). Teller, meant to escape during the effect, dies in the tank and then is made to linger for a good five minutes of the intermission on stage still submerged & staring at the audience from his vertical coffin.

The bullet catch and water tank might be regulated to history, but the Magic of Polyester has stood the test of time - it was the first bit they performed for us. Mofo the Psychic Gorilla has also joined this tour, though he has a more family-friendly name these days.

A good amount of the ideas they put into their three early magic books are still funny and work today. I had them all as they came out growing up, and got them all for my personal library again in Amsterdam. The spirit photography we use in 'The Rose Seance' is from 'How to Play in Traffic,' and one of the ideas from 'Cruel Tricks for Dear Friends' inspires a new act Fritz & I are creating.



These guys didn't just influence my interest in magic, but also in society and social issues. I remember convincing my mother to get us a subscription to 'Showtime' so I could watch their show 'Bullshit'.



This show covered a vast number of topics for muggles they thought contained some amount of BS - generally involving people who were taking advantage of the general public. Topics ranged from bottled water to yoga. Later in college, Penn's [Sunday School](#) podcast kept me company on many New York City subway rides.

As I've grown, it is clear that the real world doesn't necessarily reflect Penn's opinions on those old Bullshit and Sunday School episodes, but they definitely expanded my mind in ways it wouldn't have been otherwise.

Apart from books, stage, and television, they have explored software—they made a video game called '[Desert Bus](#)' in which you drive across a barren desert. Nothing really happens, except the bus pulls to the left, so if you don't hold the joystick slightly, it crashes. Fantastic.



In this show, they have seemingly explored computers again. The video projected backdrops appeared to have been created with an image generator.

I have also explored generated material; the [promotional artwork](#) for 'The Rose Seance' was all pretty much created by AI. So, while I don't have any inherent issues with this, it is a little disappointing that a tour of this scale took this route. They could have hired an artist to create 16 images, but instead hired someone to use AI. However, this was the only minor issue I had with the show.

They had three acts I had seen before, but the remaining acts were all new to me, with solid, Penn & Teller plots, methods and effects. Compared to the last tour which we saw in 2023, this was wildly spectacular.

Most acts were created for the last couple of seasons on Fool Us or other recent television appearances. I could find all but one of them. If you'd like to experience what we did, look at [this playlist](#). The password is 1234. Our secret, yeah?

Although you can see it online, there is nothing like seeing it in person. We also got lots of souvenirs. They had many options available, including marked playing cards, posters, t-shirts, a hoodie, mugs, keychains, and a giant program that goes over their fifty years together.

So what *has* changed? Penn & Teller have long been known as 'The Bad Boys of Magic' - and especially during the eighties and nineties, when the secrets of magic were much harder to get to, they made quite the reputation for exposing both **classic** & **made-up** methods during their shows & television specials.

If you want to see a special filled to the brim with this, check out '**Off The Deep End**.' They show the workings of several stage illusions.

This routine exposure got them kicked out of The Magic Castle in the early 1980s, a badge of honor they brought up every chance they could.

They were also allegedly refused entry into London's Magic Circle. Both groups have strict rules regarding exposure of magical secrets to the public.

Today, however, their once iconic exposure is done only in code on Fool Us, and nowhere to be seen in this show.

Just two days after their West End debut, Marvin Berglas **inducted the duo** into The Magic Circle on the steps of the London Palladium.

Is this due to their shift on exposure? We will likely never find out, and I doubt they would hesitate to start again. Time will tell whether they are finally let back into the Magic Castle. Somehow, I don't think they mind either way.

Frowned upon or not, those peeks behind the curtain at such a young age helped foster my lifelong interest in this wonderful art form. 🐝



You are invited to attend

Final Houdini Seance

8:30 to 9:00 P. M.

October Thirty-first, Nineteen hundred thirty-six
(Hallowe'en)

EDWARD SAINT
DIRECTOR FINAL SEANCE

Harry Hove

Find out what really happened at the
tenth and final Houdini Seance during
the November Society meeting.

A reading of William Larsen's shocking
first hand account will be presented.

Sincerely,

Evan Koster, Edgar Bruinaire & Harjolein Hermans





AGENDA

October 23 [Amsterdam Bar Magic Show](#)
Café de Buurvrouw Amsterdam

November 3 [Jamm - Just another Magic Monday](#) Gorinchem (NL), Theater
Peeriscoop

November 4 [Amsterdam Magic Show](#)
Boom Chicago Amsterdam

November 6 - 8 [TRICS](#) (Carolina Close-
Up Convention) in Charlotte, NC

November 10 [Amsterdam Magic Society Meeting](#), Mascini Amsterdam

November 11 [Banquet Magique](#), Casino
de Chaudfontaine (B)

November 20 [Amsterdam Bar Magic Show](#) Café de Buurvrouw Amsterdam

November 21 - 23, [Masterclass Jeff McBride et Larry Hass](#), Brussels (B)

November 27 [Amsterdam Magic Close Up Show](#) Boom Chicago Amsterdam

December 1 [Jamm - Just another Magic Monday](#) Gorinchem (NL), Theater
Peeriscoop

December 8 [Amsterdam Magic Society Meeting](#), Mascini Amsterdam





DERREN BROWN
ONLY HUMAN

Derren Brown – Only Human and Still Master of Our Art (or why you should never miss the opportunity to observe a master at work).

If you are a magician, mentalist, or mystery performer, then you are forever an apprentice of your art. In any discipline, watching a master at work is essential to learning. That is why an opportunity to attend a Derren Brown show should never be missed.

On Saturday, September 13th, in Manchester at the Lowry Theatre, some members of the Amsterdam Magic Society and I had the privilege of watching Derren Brown deliver the final performance of his show Only Human before taking it on tour.



For almost two hours, we witnessed what can happen when showmanship, hypnosis, and mentalism blend seamlessly and rise to their finest expression. Nothing is left to chance: your experience is designed from the moment you enter the theatre, through the anticipation before the curtain rises, and even in the music chosen for your exit at the end. Yet everything feels spontaneous and authentic, flowing with intensity and layered methods woven in highly elaborate ways. This is what a true mentalism show looks like. And Derren Brown remains one of the ultimate masters of our craft, staying year after year, show after show, at the very top.

Only Human is not a mainstream show. In fact, despite his deserved broad notoriety, none of

Derren Brown's shows could really be described as mainstream. This one is ambitious and at times disturbing—breaking the codes of a “classic” show on many occasions, making you uncomfortable, uncertain, even questioning what is happening. I could describe some of the breathtaking moments of hypnosis and mentalism, but that would spoil what must only be experienced live.



More useful than advising you simply to see the show is sharing how it became a true masterclass for me. I am currently reading Derren Brown's excellent book for performers, *Notes from a Fellow Traveller*, and I'm learning a great deal from his thoughtful and practical words. But mastery is not only taught through words—it is also “caught” by observing a master at work.



Watching Derren perform reveals the subtle, unspoken processes—timing, rhythm, flow—that are crucial to mastery but difficult to articulate without direct observation. If you watch carefully, you will see the small adjustments that make all the difference. Being in the audience of a Derren Brown show offers a direct and personal experience of how all the sub-skills of our craft combine into a fully congruent, immersive whole.



Derren Brown challenges your beliefs about what you thought was possible in a performance. His example as an accomplished performer not only shows you how to do it well, but also proves that such excellence can indeed be achieved. It is a call, if you are willing to answer it, to refine and elevate your own performance.



One concrete lesson I took from observing him was his mastery of managing guest flow during the show—how he invites them to the stage, places them, manages their presence, and transitions seamlessly to the next experience, often using implicit, evocative communication.



That is why I recommend studying Derren Brown not only through his books and interviews but also—whenever possible—through direct observation of his shows. You will learn things that can only be absorbed this way. Only Human is one of those rare opportunities. Catch it if you can.



EDGAR BRUMAIRE



Zeist, September 28, 2025

The Figi Theater in Zeist became the beating heart of Dutch magic as the NMU Convention “United by Magic” brought together magicians, creators, and fans from across Europe for an unforgettable day of inspiration, skill, and spectacle.

Organized by the Nederlandse Magische Unie (NMU), the convention offered a rich and varied program of lectures, workshops, and performances — all centred around the idea of connection through magic.

From the moment the doors opened, the atmosphere buzzed with creativity, curiosity, and camaraderie.

Throughout the day, attendees enjoyed insightful lectures and hands-on workshops, exploring everything from close-up techniques to stage presentation. The theme United by Magic was felt not only in the shared passion for illusion, but in the friendships and collaborations rekindled within the magic community.

The evening culminated in a dazzling Gala Show, hosted by the hilarious and charismatic Jack Tucker, who kept the audience laughing between breathtaking acts. The line-up featured a world-class selection of performers, including:

- David Sousa (Portugal) – master of elegant visual manipulation
- Dion van Rijt (Netherlands) – bringing original and theatrical magic to the stage
- Ellie & Jeki Yoo (South Korea) – combining charm, humor, and astonishing illusions
- Cillian O'Connor (Ireland) – the young sensation who captured hearts worldwide
- Mario Lopez (Spain) – known for his inventive and surreal close-up magic
- Markobi (France) – celebrated for his FISM-winning card magic



The highlight of the Gala Show for me was its incredible variety. From comedy and stage illusions to juggling, parlor magic, and a dazzling quick-change act — there was truly something for everyone.

Earlier in the day, the spotlight was on emerging talent with the Hans Klok Trophy competition — a prestigious contest showcasing the next generation of magicians. My personal Highlight was that I was on stage as a volunteer during Cillian O'Conner's competition act for the Hans Klok Trophy. He came in second with a great mental performance where he knew





the order of a whole deck of playing cards (cut by myself!) and revealed the chosen card on the correct number!

Olivier Henning was awarded the Hans Klok Trophy 2025, earning well-deserved recognition for his creativity and stage presence.

A touching moment came when Rob & Emiel were honored with the Gouden Speld (Golden Pin) by outgoing NMU president René Laurant, acknowledging their outstanding contributions to Dutch magic and their decades of dedication to the art.

As the curtain fell and the applause echoed through the Figi Theater, one thing was certain: the NMU Convention 2025 not only showcased world-class magic but also celebrated the unity, passion, and artistry that continue to make the Dutch magic scene truly special.

I'm truly thankful that I was able to be present at the convention to share magic experiences. Hope to see you next year!

MARVIN BÉRÉÑOS



STUDY WITH MASTERS OF MAGIC IN BELGIUM

LEVEL UP YOUR MAGIC

From Friday Nov 21, 10:00, to Sunday Nov 23, 16:00 (2025) in Bruxelles

**You already know so many tricks!
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“Thank you, Larry, for doing so much to help raise the intellectual level of our beloved Art of Magic!”

*Juan Tamariz
Master Magician, Spain*

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While there are many ways to learn magic — through books and DVDs, in person, or online — nothing substitutes for the real Master Class experience.

In a lecture, a workshop or a so-called masterclass, you are mostly passive receivers from the teacher who just goes through a list of tricks.

An original Master Class revolves around you, your needs, and your goals.

There is no fixed program for a Master Class as this will change based you, the participants.

- Do you want to improve your sleight-of-hand skills?
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Amsterdam Magic Society

Zeedijk 24

1012 AZ Amsterdam

www.amsterdammagicsociety.com

amsterdammagicsociety@gmail.com

