

Light from the Lamp

Reviews



Tricks

REVIEWED BY DAVID REGAL

HIGH TECH

teleFoto

Greg Rostami

\$29.99

OF THE OODLES of smart phone effects that have been designed, many are amusing and some are amazing. Very few allow an effect to occur when using the spectator's own phone. In the case of "teleFoto," not only is the spectator's own phone used, the effect is strong and the method is excellent. In short, the spectator uses his phone to go to a web site that features a bunch of photographs—he does this while you cannot see the screen (your back can be turned, if desired). The spectator scrolls through the photos and stops on one he likes, concentrating on it. You proceed to tell him the image he is looking at. It's that direct. What Mr. Rostami has done here, essentially, is turn a spectator's smart phone into the type of mentalism device that normally sells for hundreds of dollars. This is fully customizable—they can be pics of your family, or, if you want to start doing this trick immediately, you can use the images of ESP symbols or Vegas that are supplied and ready to go.



I do not like all tricks that utilize smart phones, as in normal use they employ technology to amazing effect, but "teleFoto" is a subtle bit of business.

Considerations: You need to own an Android device or an iPhone to perform this trick.

"teleFoto" • \$29.99 • Greg Rostami • Google Play or iTunes

Electric Touch +

Yigal Mesika

\$199.95

I NEVER OWNED THE ORIGINAL "Electric Touch," but the concept is simple—it's a device easily worn on one's person that allows one to give a spectator an electric shock (without first rubbing one's feet on the carpet).

It needs to be said that the fact this James Bond-esque device exists at all is pretty amazing, and it is beautifully packaged. Improvements have been made to the original release to give the product the potential to create a greater potential shock and for added durability. The real question is: Do you want to give a spectator a shock? That, of course, it up to you. In some hands it might inspire awe, but in the wrong hands the performer could wear out his welcome ("Okay, this time I won't shock you ... ZAP"), so

it should certainly be used sparingly. The accompanying DVD describes a few approaches related to displays of mind reading, animating metal, etc., as well as some intriguing alternative effects such as affecting the flow of a stream of water, and "charging" bits of confetti. There are two set-ups described. One is temporary, and easy to do on the fly, the more permanent "pro" approach involves having your shoe repair guy do a little somethin'-somethin' for you. In neither version do you have wires running up your body. This surprised me. I only tried the "temporary" set-up, and I was impressed with the simplicity of it all.

Considerations: An incredible little device that delivers the promised shock—the framing of the effect is up to you. "Electric Touch +" • \$199.95 • Yigal Mesika • Your favorite dealer • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc. (916) 853-9292 • www.murphymagic.com



LOW TECH

Gerti

Romanos

\$20

I LIKE THIS, as it is a never-fail, down-to-earth method for the which-hand-contains-the-object plot. In this case, the objects are coins. You display two quarters and ask the spectator to initial one. With your head turned, he places one in your hand and retains the other. You turn back, and, by ostensibly evaluating the spectator's "tells," you correctly announce who has which coin. Some three-coin effects are also described, which require great audience management but allow you to, say, use three quarters with different dates—one is placed in your left hand, one in your right, and the spectator retains a coin. You announce which coin is where, and this is corroborated by squinting hesitant spectators. I prefer the first effect as it is simple, and the method is all one might wish. It's only \$20 and you get a gimmick—that's as close to free as magic gets.



Considerations: This can be purchased with a US gimmick, as well as a UK and Euro version.

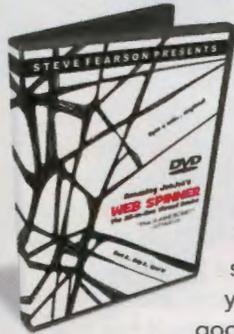
"Gerti" • \$20 • Romanos • Magic Tao • Your favorite dealer • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.

Please send books, tricks, and videotapes for review to: Genii, 4200 Wisconsin Ave., NW, Suite 106-384, Washington, DC 20016. Include a prepaid padded envelope or shipping carton if you want the item to be returned.

**Web Spinner
Web Spinner DVD**
Amazing Joe Joe

**\$25 (prop) \$30 (DVD;
also available as download)**

I WORK WITH INVISIBLE THREAD and have explored many systems designed to safely store it, dispense it, and put it to good use. I have no trouble telling you that this approach, a low-tech system designed by The Amazing Joe Joe in the late 90s, is excellent. Do not buy just the \$25 piece of apparatus, also get the DVD, another low-tech affair in which The Amazing Joe Joe, in his jeans, sunglasses, and typical beach bum attire, teaches the uses of his Web Spinner and lays out a way to float a bill



that proves he intimately knows this territory. He also has some nice touches when it comes to the "Helicopter Card" plot. The gimmick comes complete with thread (two types), wax, and an extra set-up. I think the floating bill is one of the best effects in magic, and The Amazing Joe Joe's touches are splendid. To think that for about \$50 you can perform magic that's about as good as it gets... well, damn.

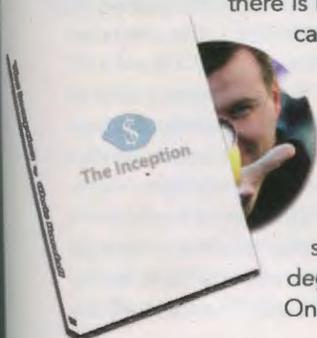
Considerations: This is one of those things that might look like little at first glance, but it represents a true solution.

"Web Spinner" • \$25 • "Web Spinner DVD" • \$30 • Amazing Joe Joe • Steve Fearson Presents • www.emagicsupply.com • Selected Dealers • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.

The Inception
Chris Randall

\$59.95

IT'S HYSTERICAL TO ME that plots such as bill-to-lemon and card-to-orange are such established classics in the world of magic that we don't think twice about saying those words, but what oddball plots they are! Pick a card. It's gone. Where is it? Well, see that piece of fruit over there ... ? It just seems so arbitrary. Nevertheless, there is reality, and the reality is both plots can be showstoppers—people love them. "Inception" is Chris Randall's exceptionally well thought-out routine for signed bill-to-lemon. An outgrowth of routines by Steve Spill and Scott Alexander, this is a method that is easy, surefire, and practical to the nth degree—you can do it surrounded. On top of that, you require no fancy



gimmicks. You probably already have what you need, and if you don't it will cost you all of a few dollars to get it. As Mr. Randall explains, the \$60 cost may seem high for a DVD, but what you are buying is the output of years of trial and error—a routine that has been tested, ironed out, and works. If you want to add bill-to-lemon to your repertoire, and you seek a no-fuss method, put your dollars here.

Considerations: Mr. Randall uses a Crown Royal bag in the routine. You can beg a bartender for a Crown Royal bag or buy one from Mr. Randall for five bucks. Better yet, buy some Crown Royal and make a party out of it.

"The Inception" • \$59.95 • Chris Randall • www.thelasvegaskid.com • Your favorite dealer • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.

Micro Card Rise	\$29.95
Bitten	\$19.95
Pirate's Booty	\$14.95
The Evolution Deck	\$24.95
Bob Solari	

BOB SOLARI IS WORKING IT OLD SCHOOL. He produces his own magic effects in small quantities in New Jersey. He then takes them new school by selling them worldwide through his website. These four items are card offerings.

Micro Card Rise

I know the value of a novel card revelation, and this one, designed for intimate close-up performances, will absolutely produce a great reaction. A card is "freely selected," say it's the Four of Clubs. The magician proudly shows his prediction, a King of Hearts. After being told he is incorrect, he elaborates "No ... the prediction is in the King's pocket." A magic wave, and the Four of Clubs starts to slowly rise up out of the Kings shirt pocket. This is a very funny image, and about as winning a revelation as you could hope for. In addition, the gimmicked card is very well made.



Bitten

This is a packet trick put together with some novel vampire-themed playing cards. The plot is multi-phase: Cards are displayed as blank, and one is placed between a spectator's palms. A picture of a bat appears on each blank card. The bat changes to images of Dracula, then the cards become blank once again. Finally the card in the spectator's hands is shown to have two bloody holes, a la the bite of a vampire. As a whimsical climax, when the spectator looks up at the magician, he is now sporting novelty "vampire fangs" of the sort seen at Halloween. It's all

goofy lunacy. The methods taught in the printed directions are very easy, and a card worker might want to substitute his own moves/changes. What you are buying here are some nice looking horror-themed cards (and plastic fangs).

Pirate's Booty

Here again you are paying for unique cards, as this is essentially a version of Nick Trost's "Eight Card Brainwave" (in this case six cards are used). Versions of this trick abound,

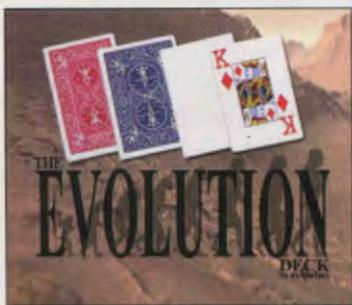
but this one has the benefit of a theme that can relate to qualities possessed by the spectator. The cards, with attractive pirate-themed backs, are laid in a row on the table

and a spectator places a "gold" coin on the back of any one in a hunt for treasure. The remaining cards are turned over, and one of two outcomes is possible: Either every card shows a colorful treasure chest except the card chosen, which displays a skull; or every card shows a skull with exception of the selected card, which shows a treasure chest. This is one of those cases where the nature of the props actually changes the plot of the effect. I can see using this trick with a couple who are dating in order to test a man's potential for good fortune, and getting a lot of mileage out of the outcome.



The Evolution Deck

This is a gimmicked deck that stretches the number of changes normally associated with the long/short principle. The magician removes a deck from a blue card box (not included), but the deck has a red back. On top of that, all the faces are blank. A magic pass, and the cards print ... but the backs remain red. To correct the situation, the magician makes another pass and the deck turns blue-backed.



The technique involved is a bit different from a Svengali Deck, but as with a deck of this type the cards are mainly displayed via riffling them from hand to hand (I prefer cutting sequences). This is the kind of thing one might do prior to launching into a card set as opposed to being a full routine in and of itself, and of course the gimmicked deck will need to be switched out for a normal one as this is one of those things that simply does what it does.

Considerations: These tricks can only be purchased directly from Mr. Solari.

"Micro Card Rise" • \$29.95 • "Bitten" • \$19.95 • "Pirate's Booty" • \$14.95 • "The Evolution Deck" • \$24.95 • Bob Solari • www.bobsolarimagic.com

WINNERS OF PINNER'S

Floating Ring & Ring Flash

Richard Pinner

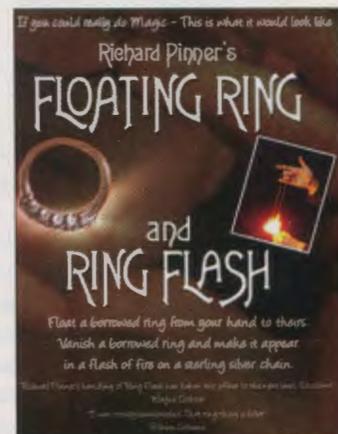
\$44.99

RICHARD PINNER ALWAYS seems to have some good ideas, and this release, a two-for-one package, contains exceptionally strong magic involving a borrowed ring. I love magic with rings, as the prop is unique to the individual, beautiful to look at, and personal. Pinner's very strong floating ring sequence was created in 1991, shortly after the release of the invisible thread reel, and you will need one to perform this effect—it is not included. If you don't have one, though, you should! This is a short routine. The borrowed ring balances on the performer's fingers, floats, then glides down to a spectator's open hand (or, if you're brave, her finger). The benefit here is the fact that the invisible thread disengages at the effect's end, so the spectator can immediately handle the ring. As with all floating effects, practice is required to create the illusion of floating as opposed to dangling.

"Ring Flash" is a lovely handling of a Wayne Dobson effect, which itself is a version of a vanishing and reappearing ring effect that has been around a long time—when I was a kid I bought a version at a magic shop. I like this effect even more than the floating ring as it has a climax that is both astonishing and immensely satisfying. A ring is cleanly vanished via a Pat Page stratagem, then a neck chain is introduced, and a spectator ties a bit of black (flash) string to it. It's dipped into a flame and BA-WOOSH ... the borrowed ring now hangs from the chain. This really is a terrific trick.

Considerations: You are supplied with some flash string, but you will eventually need to purchase some more.

"Floating Ring & Ring Flash" • \$44.99 • Richard Pinner • www.littleshopofmagic.co.uk • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.



Pet

Richard Pinner

\$39.95

"PET" STANDS FOR PLASTIC ENVELOPE THING. This is a clever and pretty card-to-impossible location type prop. After a signed card and/or bill is vanished, the magician reaches into his pocket and withdraws a stiff 3¼ x 4 1/2" plastic envelope that is clearly snapped shut at the top (and cleverly gaffed). Upon opening the envelope, a smaller bright red paper envelope—complete with Chinese characters—is removed. This sealed envelope is torn open and inside is found the signed card. The card will be



transported to its destination via the classic method, so consider this an alternative to a LePaul wallet. The combination of props is elegant and unique at the same time, plus you are supplied with two plastic outer envelopes, clear frosted and black, so you can choose the one that best goes with your blouse. Video instructions are provided online.

Considerations: You are supplied with 20 red envelopes. Additional envelopes can be purchased online at www.littleshopofmagic.co.uk.

"Pet" • \$39.95 • Richard Pinner • www.littleshopofmagic.co.uk
 • Penguin Magic • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.

OF THINGS TORN...

RE

Chris Webb

\$30

THIS TRICK, a DVD and gimmick, is described as a "self-working" version of the one-piece-at-a-time torn and restored card plot. When Guy Hollingworth released "The

Reformation" the magic world stopped in its tracks and took notice. In his hands it is something beautiful.

It was all so clean. A card was openly ripped into four pieces, then the pieces seemed to melt together. When the restored card was immediately handed to a spectator, the feeling of pure magic was tremendous. The method was explained in his book *Drawing Room Deceptions*,

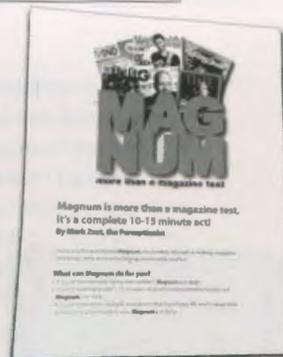
then on video, and since that time a great many alternative versions have appeared on the market. None improved the effect. Some offered methods that were easier. Of these, a few were pretty good. The



rest, including this release, just miss the point. Rather, points. Here's the thing: If the handling seems cozy, it's bad. If the pieces don't seem to magically join, it's bad. And, most important, if you can't simply hand the restored card to a spectator without rushing over to the deck to effect a switch, it's bad.

Considerations: Yes, it's harder to do Guy Hollingworth's version.

"RE" • \$30 • Chris Webb • Junior Films • Your favorite dealer • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.



Magnum

Mark Zust

\$34.95

BOOK TESTS ABOUND, and the methods generally remain the same. In this case, several popular methods have been gathered together on a specially printed two-sided magazine page. You are supplied with three duplicate gaffed pages which have been designed to look like a generic page that would not appear out of place in a variety of magazines. So, you could load the gaffed page into three truly different magazines, give a spectator a choice of which magazine to use, then offer a "free choice" of which page to rip out and use in a test of mind reading. Of course, once your method involves forcing a magazine page, as it does here, you don't need a gaffed page—you could simply memorize relevant information from the page that is to be forced and perform your display of mind reading. When it comes to magazine tests I prefer Al Baker's "Saturday Evening Post Feat" as the procedure appears very free, and the spectators are not limited to a single page.

Considerations: You will need to recover the torn-out pages used in this magazine test, or purchase refills.

"Magnum" • \$34.95 • Mark Zust • Your favorite dealer • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.



Videos

REVIEWED BY JOE M. TURNER

Annemann's Practical Mental Effects, Volumes 4-6

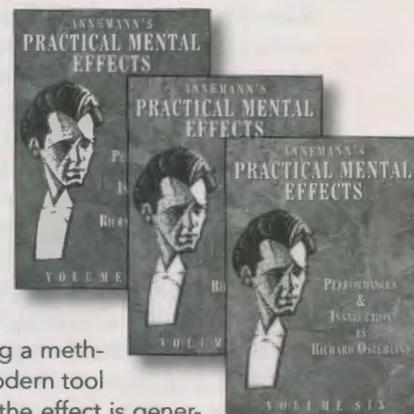
Richard Osterlind \$30 each

RICHARD OSTERLIND has released the remaining three discs in his video treatment of Ted Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*. The collection of highlights from the classic text doesn't completely disappoint, but there are some elements that may cause a few purists to cringe.

As with the first three discs, these DVDs don't attempt to present a comprehensive depiction of every effect in the book; rather, they are presented as a companion piece to Annemann's work, allowing those studying or interested in that book to see some of the routines put on their feet.

What makes these last three discs a bit different, though, is that in many cases Mr. Osterlind has reworked the routing or even the method itself, repurposing the original concept into a noticeably different piece of theater. He may do this by eliminating a phase, changing a method, or introducing a more modern tool into the routine. As a result, the effect is generally faithful to the original idea but the workings may be changed significantly from Annemann's concept.

Volume Four opens with a dictionary test that will remind you that sometimes a low-tech solution can be extremely effective. "40,000 Words" amazes with props you can buy for a few dollars at any Wal-Mart. "Number Thot" is an



unusual number divination that has been routinized to start small and finish big. "Pseudo Psychometry" is the standard identification of borrowed personal objects, but Mr. Osterlind's presentation emphasizes personality reading over the matching of owner to object. "Mind or Muscle" and "A Card to Be Thought About" are mentalism-flavored card locations and divinations that are probably the least compelling routines on the disc, though Mr. Osterlind's changes do strengthen the originals. The disc closes with "A Torn Letter," a spirit-writing effect combined with a torn and restored paper.

On Volume Five I found the first routine to be the strongest. "Bert Reese Secrets (for groups)" is the big brother of the routine I found to be a highlight on the first set of discs. This handling is minimally different from the version taught previously, but the question-and-answer routine remains a killer mentalism experience. It seems odd that both versions of this routine would be included in the collection, though. Another highlight was "Who Killed Mr. X?"—a murder-mystery in miniature, in which the performer divines the identity of a "murderer" in the audience as accused by another audience member. At the same time, a drawing of the victim is somehow transformed into a mutilated version of that drawing. The first effect is easily sold as mindreading, but the transformed drawing may be too close to traditional magic for some mentalists to swallow. "Cherchez La Lady" is a three-card routine in which the performer can tell which card is the Queen in a variety of conditions; multiple methods help to cancel and conceal what is really happening. "Between the Lines" is a book test that is unfortunately dependent on a pack of cards (and, as presented here, an additional marketed prop) to make the method work. "Horrors" is the divination of a mentally selected word from a collection of related words printed on index cards. Unfortunately the video explanation is insufficient to actually perform the routine, so if you buy this disc you'll have to make sure you already have a copy of the book (or Volume Six, which includes a digital edition) in order to perform it. The final routine, "Ultra Slate Message," is another spirit-writing performance using slates, this time much smaller and easier to handle.

Volume Six opens with "Tervil," an amazing technique that can be used to predict anything. You write down a prediction, the spectator writes down answers to your questions, and you allow another spectator to confirm that your prediction says the same thing. You'll have to be as bold as a moon-landing headline in order to make this method work, but if you can do it, you'll have an unforgettable impact on your audience. The other standout routine for me was "Whim of Tituba," in which a freely selected magazine page magically transposes with a signed piece of paper that has been folded and sealed in multiple envelopes by a spectator. The effect is less mental in flavor than many mentalists would like, but it is an extremely strong magical effect. If you choose to use the page selection

technique described here, I suggest you practice it so that your performance goes more smoothly than in this demonstration. While disc six contains other material, the real value-added here is a digital version of Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects* itself, which you can read on your computer or other device.

The production is identical to the first outing. Performances have audiences of college students, explanations have Jim Sisti as the clarifying, color-commentating co-host. Audio is fine, but on my copies the video occasionally dropped out, replaced with error screens while the audio continued. This looks to be some kind of video compilation error, but it only showed up twice and may have been corrected in subsequent duplications.

There is little room to criticize the content itself. Annemann was a prolific creator and publisher who generated mountains of strong material. Mr. Osterlind is an experienced performer and even when a few of the performances seem a little bumpy, the end result is strong and a worthwhile representation of the effects. His experience has led him to make a number of changes to the original content, some of which are not clearly or fully explained, and that is going to leave some viewers wondering why they bought the disc if they couldn't learn the routine from the product they purchased.

Mentalists who prefer to stay away from effects that even remotely smack of "magic" will probably want to avoid these discs. Magicians in search of mental magic ideas will find them interesting, provided that the routines they are drawn to are explained in detail. If not, be prepared to do some additional digging to get the rest of the story. I learned a lot watching these discs and enjoyed the journey, but a couple of dropped balls here and there left me thinking that the set as a whole, though a valuable contribution, didn't quite live up to its potential.

Annemann's Practical Mental Effects, Volumes 4-6 • Richard Osterlind • Osterlind Mysteries • www.osterlindmysteries.com • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc. (916) 853-9292 • www.murphysmagic.com • \$30 each

Mentalities (2-disc set)

Stefan Olschewski

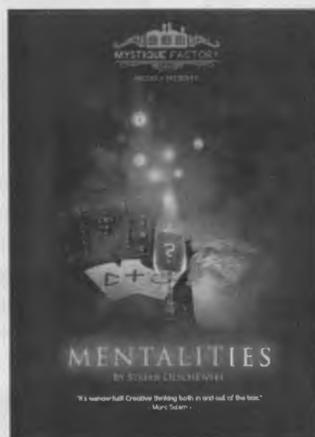
\$50

I CONFESS I WASN'T FAMILIAR with Stefan Olschewski's name other than having seen a listing in a catalog ad or two. He's a top mentalist in Germany according to the ad copy, but somehow he had not really popped up on my radar.

You can consider that situation now thoroughly remedied.

These two discs—unfortunately region-specific to Europe and therefore playable only on my computer—introduced me to a thoughtful, funny, clever performer with a fun, occasionally comical and always-entertaining approach to the performance of mentalism.

Don't get me wrong. Over the years I've developed a taste for strong mental effects and appreciate the impact that



those extra-sensory experiences can have on audiences. At the same time, we've all witnessed mentalism presentations so ponderously sluggish that they could drag down a herd of charging rhinos. It takes a strong performer to keep up the tempo, energy, and audience attention through a long presentation that may not have the visual flash of more traditional magic. Mr. Olschewski achieves that repeatedly in his hour-long performance that has texture, visual variety, a spectrum of effects, and engaging, personality-driven interaction with his audience.

The first disc begins with the full show performed for a live audience. The performance opens with "Technicolor ESP," a streamlined version of Martin Lewis's popular "Technicolor Prediction." While Mr. Lewis has his own "envelopes only" approach to the plot, Mr. Olschewski has taken a truly minimalist approach and combined it with several puns to make the "influencing of the spectators" into several minutes of amusing banter. "Hangman" is a mindreading experiment involving four spectators and the premise that Mr. Olschewski must read their minds before completing the hangman drawing. This routine is also used to set up a strong callback to close the show. "The Key to Your Card" is a stage-suitable method for the Berglas any-card-at-any-number effect that comes across as exceptionally clean.

"JACR," or "Just Another Chair Routine," gives a bit of vibrant color and an easy-to-follow "musical chairs" framework to the four-chair routine. These routines often require attaching items to backs or bottoms of chairs; this easy approach is self-contained with hats, envelopes, and a special wallet that you'll have to order separately (or replace with a different method). The most common weakness of chair routines is that the effect is complex; this staging makes it as clear and clean as you could hope for.

The final routine of the show is "Mes(s)merize," the divination of a spectator's thought. This prediction effect uses an old card-magic principle but dresses it in an interactive routine that involves the whole audience.

The explanations follow, split onto the remainder of disc one and the bulk of disc two. Mr. Olschewski is joined by Martin Adams and Andrew Csimaz for detailed discussions of the inspiration, preparation, performance, and psychology of each of the routines in the show. After the explanations, the two co-hosts conduct an interview with Mr. Olschewski in which he answers some of the traditional questions ("How did you get started in magic?") but delves into his approach for making mentalism into a more visual and more entertaining experience for his audiences.

If you have even a minor interest in mentalism or how to create more personal, engaging presentations for your own routines, this is worth a look.

Mentalities (2-disc set) • Stefan Olschewski • Mystique Factory • www.mystiquefactory.com • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc. • \$50

The Monk's Way

Steve Reynolds

\$37

STEVE REYNOLDS, lately of New Orleans, is an introspective, patient cardman whose methods are centered around

the audience's experience. Heavily influenced by Ed Marlo and Jon Racherbaumer, Mr. Reynolds has taken to heart the idea that the method affects the effect, and this two and a half hour disc is the result of some of his work in putting that concept into action in his own performance.

"Flash Changed" is a flourish change of four cards into four different cards. The method is simple, familiar, and marked less by innovative moves than by handling finesse. "Fireback Aces" is an Ace Assembly that starts with a magical Ace distribution. "Monkey In the Box" is a two-card location using the card box and a simple but psychologically concealed load. "U-Turn" is a version of Larry Jennings' "Pineapple Surprise," or an Ace-twisting plot with a royal flush kicker. "Finally Final Aces" is a technically easy Ace assembly with a particularly bold second phase. "Mr. Fogg Tracked Down" is part prediction, part "Travelers," and possibly my favorite routine on the disc. "Shadow Zone Assembly" is another assembly, this one in the slow-motion vein. "Magician vs. Leprechaun" is an on-the-spot retitling of another "Travelers" routine much like the previous "Mr. Fogg Tracked Down." The disc also contains a "Toolkit" describing some of the moves and techniques needed for the various routines.

The disc's production is low key and easy to watch. The scenes alternate between live performance, in-studio explanations (sometimes with Mark Aspiazu accompanying), and afterthoughts. Crediting is as thorough as you would expect. It is thorough and respectful, illuminating relationships between previous ideas and the current work.

The underlying idea of the "Monk's Way" is to conscientiously incorporate the audience's perceptions into the choice of method and the construction of the routine. If you're looking for new moves and flashy presentations, this isn't the disc for you. But there are cardmen among us who love to delve into the details. How many times should we display this Ace? Which of these similar Add-On techniques is ideal for this moment? If you ask yourself these kinds of questions, you will enjoy learning to analyze your card magic in the Monk's Way.

The Monk's Way • Steve Reynolds • Steve Reynolds Magic • www.stevereynoldsmagic.com • \$35 + \$2 domestic, \$5 overseas • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.



CORNER SHORTS

Modern Intricacies—Yoann Paris

THIS DISC FROM FRENCH CARD WORKER Yoann Paris is a collection of tricks and moves that will challenge even the most dedicated card magicians. Mr. Paris has an overtly skillful style of performance, with flips, flashes, and lots of moves adding an almost balletic feel to the experience. Among the 14 tricks is a flash sandwich, "SanFan," in which a selection visibly appears between two face-up cards in a fan. This is a strong, effective moment. On the other

hand, "Dr. Daley One Second" turns a powerful audience interaction trick into a magical show-off sequence, great for videos and fun to watch, but is it as powerful as the original to a spectator? You'll have to decide what your character requires. The disc's technical production is high-end and uses visual explanations rather than verbal commentary; plentiful onscreen graphics and captions make it easy to focus on the required actions. (One production downside is that you have to navigate to every item independently and cannot watch the whole disc.) The term "eye candy" was designed for this kind of card performance. It's magical and impressive, but with significantly more handling of the cards and the deck

than most card routines. You'll have to put in some work to do this material.

\$30 • Yoann Paris • www.magicalsleight.com • Dealers purchase from Murphy's Magic Supplies, Inc.

6 by Six—Michael "Six" Muldoon

MICHAEL "SIX" MULDOON'S collection of a half-dozen card routines has something for performers of nearly all

skill levels, plus a few interesting bonuses. The routines include familiar plots such as a sandwich, an in-the-hands "Triumph," a stop trick, an "Invisible Palm Aces" routine, and more. Given the standard nature of most of the plots, you may already have preferred handlings of these routines; if so, I doubt any of these routines would motivate you to change from a longtime favorite. That said, there are some excellent moments in these handlings that are certainly worth a look. My favorite of the items is Mr. Muldoon's approach to a Benjamin Earl plot. "Fool Me Once" is a straightforward divination of a spectator's selection. It feels completely hands-off and doesn't require a memorized deck, and it will fool laypeople and magicians alike. The technical production here is simple but adequate, and the menu system allows access to the material with minimal clicks and screens. If you're of intermediate skill and are exploring variations of classic card magic plots, you won't be disappointed.

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Books

REVIEWED BY WILL HOUSTON

Too Hot for the Devil

Tom Gagnon and Matthew Field \$60

IF YOU READ Gagnon's last book, *Avant Cards*, then you will have some idea of the style of *Too Hot for the Devil*. The book primarily contains card material although there is also a decent sized section on coin work as well as a few other items.

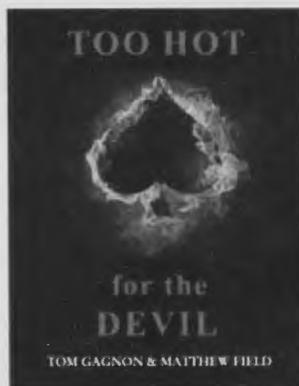
Within the world of card magic the ribbon spread is an action that seems under utilized, especially when you compare it to other basic actions such as the in-the-hands spread. Gagnon is steadily working to rectify this imbalance, using *Too Hot for the Devil* to build on the spread based work he published in *Avant Cards*. The book includes some 34 interesting spread based moves and effects.

Items that particularly caught my eye include: Invisible Fingertip Switch, a move that allows for the switch of one sandwiched card for another under cover of closing a ribbon spread; and a series of moves based on Gagnon's Pluck Revelation, intriguing productions of a selection from a spread. One of the things that is so appealing about these techniques, and spread based work in general, is that they feel somewhat open and hands off. Unfortunately some of the

other spread items, the One Card Ribbon Spread Pass, for example, require both hands to cover the spread in a rather cozy manner. This seems to take away from the openness found in some of the other techniques and, while the technical constructions of the moves are interesting, it means they don't stand out in quite the same way as the less closed sleights. To see what some of the moves look like visit Gagnon's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/TomGagnon1116

Aside from ribbon spread techniques, other card concepts that caught my eye included: "Open Predicament," a very smooth solution for the open predication; and Z-Box, an intriguingly gaffed card box that will, in combination with neat handling, effectively switch cards or other similar objects very smoothly. The wonderfully named Slug-O-Matic Deck is also a clever idea that will allow you to control a slug of cards, even during a spectator's shuffle, although you will need card cutting apparatus to make one.

If you do not like card magic then *Too Hot for the Devil* is almost certainly not for you. If, however, you are a card magician who happens to also like magic using other objects then the section on coin magic, concentrating on Coin Assembly type sequences along with some technical moves, will be a welcome bonus. In addition there is also a rubber band item in which a band jumps from your hand to a spectator's wrist, and a display to use at the beginning of the cups and balls based on the structure of a Monte throw! I remember seeing the rubber band effect making its way



round FFFF earlier this year where it was quite a hit!

You might expect a book that is co-authored by one of magic's finest illustrators and one of magic's best editors to be well written and presented. *Too Hot for the Devil* does not disappoint, although the niggles of finding illustrations over the page from the point they are referenced in the text does irritate slightly. If you are looking for new performance pieces then it is worth bearing in mind that much of the material in *Too Hot for the Devil* requires a good surface to work on but, if you are really after a collection of interesting technical magic then it is a book that is well worth considering.

Too Hot for the Devil • Tom Gagnon and Matthew Field • 8.5" X 11" hardbound with dustcover; 215 pages; b&w illustrations; www.tomgagnonmagic.com; \$60 (+p&h)

Ein Spiel Karten

R.P.

\$29.99

THE CONJURING ARTS RESEARCH CENTER is, quite rightly, renowned throughout the magic world for the incredible Ask Alexander database—a fully searchable collection of over two million pages of magic books and magazines—as well as *Gibecière*, the remarkable biannual journal dedicated to the history of conjuring. Now, however, they have expanded their output to include high quality pdf downloads of material such as full files of magazines and even, in cases where they have been able to make arrangements with the publishers, contemporary books like Harry Lorayne's *Classic Collection*. The subject of this review is, perhaps, even more interesting than a convenient, portable pdf of a much loved book—it is a convenient, portable pdf of a previously unavailable book, a translation of *Ein Spiel Karten* published in Prague in 1853.

The Conjuring Arts Center suggests that this is the first book, in any language, to describe advanced card magic and also, intriguingly, comment that it is likely to have been written by one of J.N. Hofzinger's students. The material described is, indeed, notably advanced and the book is written in a charming style that Lori Pieper seems to have admirably maintained in her translation into English. (I only say "seems" as I am unable to read the German and make a true comparison.)

Ein Spiel Karten opens with an introduction in which the author laments the poor quality of existing instructional material and explains how he plans to avoid the same pitfalls in his own work. He then goes on to explain a selection of core sleights that he will refer back to through the rest of the book. These include Passes, False Shuffles, the Force, stacked decks, and specially prepared cards.

The main body of the book is split into four sections covering tricks that require preparation, tricks that can be preformed using sleight of hand and a normal deck, self-working tricks, and tricks using a stacked deck. The first three of these sections are charmingly introduced with the setting of a scene at a social event in which a magician might be asked to perform. The author then goes on to describe the feats that the hypothetical conjurer might demonstrate and also to explain the effects following each description from the audience's point of view. Within this

structure the author describes over 80 effects, as well as numerous hints and tips on their performance that are neatly integrated into the descriptive sections of the book.

It would certainly be possible to list a selection of routines that it is surprising to see described at the time, and even some that one would be pleased to see in a current book on magic, but to do so might lead the reader of this review to miss some of the charm and excitement to be found in reading the book and making those discoveries for themselves. Instead I will simply end by saying that anyone with an interest in card magic, or the magic of the 19th century, will not want to wait long before visiting The Conjuring Arts Research Center's website, downloading their own copy of *Ein Spiel Karten*, and discovering some of its secrets for themselves.

Ein Spiel Karten • R.P. • Instantly downloadable PDF; 76 pages; black and white illustrations; www.shop.conjuringarts.org; \$29.99

Reading Writing

A Complete Course On Handwriting Analysis And Readings, Plus Applications In Mentalism And Close-Up Magic

Ariel Frailich

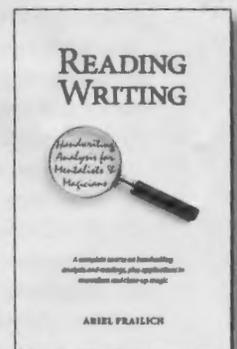
\$55

ARIEL FRAILICH'S *Reading Writing* is, as the title suggests, all about reading writing. It is not the kind of text you will find in this magazine—by getting this far you have already proven your ability to read that—but rather the kind of graphological reading that allows you to make judgments about somebody's personality based on a sample of their handwriting.

The rationale behind graphology is that a person's physical movements can tell you a lot about them and, as handwriting is a manifestation of physical movement, the way in which someone writes can also tell you something about their personality. This idea has led to two main applications: "scientific" graphology, and graphology as entertainment. "Scientific" graphology is an area of some controversy. As recently as last April the BBC published an article examining French companies' extensive use of graphology as a recruitment tool while also noting that some psychologists consider that graphology has no scientific value. Instead of getting bogged down in the "science," Frailich sticks to describing the use of graphology for entertainment purposes but it is worth bearing in mind the "scientific" basis on which the practice is founded—while it is considerably less shaky, in the supposed psychic reading, for example, care must be taken not to overstate what can be achieved.

Be that as it may, Frailich's introduction to the book gives a powerful demonstration of graphology's potential with a clever stunt in which you, the book's reader, correctly identify the author of a particular piece of text. It may not be empirical proof that the concept is sound, but it is an interesting experience.

Reading Writing is split into three main sections. The first presents a simple, easy to learn, system that can be used to give an entertaining graphological reading. The second contains basic information on the way in which a reading



can be given as well as different markets into which the service could be sold. Finally, a selection of mentalism and close-up effects that offer the potential for the inclusion of a graphological element are described.

Frailich's system for handwriting analysis is based on learning 12 variants that you can spot in someone's handwriting, as well as the character traits that they indicate. Each trait is clearly explained and straight forward to learn. With the help of a few exercises that are included in the book, the basic system should be simple to memorize in a week with a little work each day. Frailich then goes on to give more detail on each of the traits and also gives examples of which are most telling in a given situation as well as suitable lines that could be used to describe them. This is a very clearly explained system that efficiently gives you everything you need to start giving readings quickly.

Once the system has been learned and understood, Frailich explains how readings can be given in a variety of settings from graphology parties to stage shows and even by mail. He also gives a timely reminder of a variety of "professional considerations" for a performer who is using graphology for entertainment, particularly with regard to the occasional client who will ask for information of a more serious nature than it is prudent to give.

The section of the book that places graphology within the context of effects includes a dozen mentalism pieces and six magic tricks. The mentalism explained includes several variations on the Living or Dead Test, a book test, a murder mystery themed around the board game Clue, and a couple of psychometry style pieces. Mentalism probably lends itself to being combined with graphology more easily than magic and each of the examples given demonstrate how the two areas can merge. It is particularly intriguing to note that the effects that are suggested include both those that use magic techniques to enhance the graphology element and one in which the graphological reading is actually a secret part of the technique by which the effect is achieved. Frailich is also careful in constructing the routines so as not to claim that graphology can achieve too much—avoiding the common pitfall of the mentalist claiming that an extraordinary knowledge of body language allowed them to work out someone's grandmother's maiden name based on the way they blinked.

Before describing the six magic tricks, Frailich comments "Graphology isn't easily introduced into a magic performance" and it is certainly true that it sometimes feels a little more forced into the magic routines that it does with the mentalism pieces. If you are determined to combine traditional magic with graphology, however, the tricks will give you a good starting point.

Reading Writing is a nicely produced book that features clear instruction and a well thought-out teaching process including examples of different types of handwriting and exercises with which to practice. An experienced mentalist or magician might, as Frailich himself points out, find the complete and detailed explanations of basic mentalism/magical ideas a little grating but it hardly seems reasonable to criticize a writer for making their work as clear and accessible as possible.

No less than Lee Earle has commented that graphology "will be the hot premise for a lot of future mentalism because it bridges the gap between the believable and the impossible." If you agree with that idea then Frailich's *Reading Writing* will provide a thorough introduction to the area as well as number of ideas on how to incorporate it into your existing work.

Reading Writing • Ariel Frailich • 6" x 9" casebound; 192 pages; b&w illustrations; www.isawthat.com; \$55 (+p&h)

Metamagic: An Introduction—A Guide to Using Magic as a Medium for Discourse

Shawn DeSouza-Coelho

\$14

MY FRIEND, DAVID FUNG, recently gave a lecture at The Magic Circle in which he very neatly surmised the two main groups of people interested in magic: those whose interest focuses on clever methods and techniques, and those who view the technique as secondary to the performance. "For one group," he commented, "method is a means to an end, for the other, the means is the end." If you fall into the latter category then *Metamagic* is almost certainly not the book for you and you may as well turn the page. If you fall into the former group, however, read on ...

The blurb on the back of *Metamagic* states "The art of magic has reached a crisis point" and later concludes that "... the fundamental structure through which the art of magic operates is the direct cause of the art form's degradation [...] if magic is to return to its former glory, then its magicians must radically shift the paradigms that continue their practice." As this may suggest, *Metamagic* is a book based on magic's lack of status as an art (despite the number of magicians who insist on talking about "The Art Form") that attempts to explain the reasons for its current status and also to suggest a method by which it might be improved.

Unfortunately there are several areas in which DeSouza-Coelho makes questionable statements, from a magical point of view, and these weaken the interesting ideas that he discusses. By way of example, a lengthy four pages is spent lamenting the fact that art funding organizations, and specifically the Canada Council for the Arts, refuse to invest in magic's development. While investment is not a widespread phenomenon, I believe that no less than Doug Henning received funding from the CCA and, as a magician in London, I am very aware of the support that two arts organizations gave to The Magic Circle after being convinced that magic is an art, when they contributed over a million dollars toward the creation of The Centre for The Magic Arts.

Another example of a seeming lack of magical knowledge, which actually manifests itself at both ends of a spectrum, is when DeSouza-Coelho talks about FISM. On the one hand he uses Shawn Farquar's FISM win, at the second most recent FISM convention, as evidence he is "the former best magician in the entire world." I am not disagreeing that Farquar is a good magician, but to use any competition result as proof that any performer is the best in the world seems acceptable in marketing hyperbole but not elsewhere. In direct contrast, when

discussing Soma's win of an equivalent standard award at the same FISM convention, DeSouza-Coelho uses his cell phone act as an example of magic encouraging the wrong type of creativity commenting that it "is actually just a variation on an Effect [...] The Multiplying Sponge Balls [...] produced by Magic By Gosh." This seems flawed on at least two levels.

There are other examples of similar slips throughout the book but I want to mention one more. When discussing magic on television DeSouza-Coelho comments that "Every instance of magic within this medium [...] proffers a version of the art form that bears more resemblance to fast food advertisements that it does to actual art." Expanding upon this statement DeSouza-Coelho says that all magic on television "[...] is designed for immediate and repeated consumption in spite of any actual worthwhile content." Now it is certainly true that television magic contains more than its fair share of eye-candy for the MTV generation but there are also shows like the French *Le Plus Grand Cabaret Du Monde*, that has showcased some of the most artistic magic that currently exists, and Derren Brown's programs which have often been insightful, thought provoking and, dare I suggest it, perhaps artistic.

At this juncture you might be wondering whether, as a reviewer, I am simply enjoying spotting deficiencies in *Metamagic* and gleefully pointing them out to you. I am not so mean spirited and, fortunately, DeSouza-Coelho gives me the opportunity to prove it because, while his magical background seems a little sparse, he does offer some interesting ideas from the philosophical and theoretical world regarding art, both in general and more specifically in its relationship with magic.

One of the first ideas that particularly struck me appears as DeSouza-Coelho explains why people like magic. Michale Hauge, in a book about writing screenplays, advises that for a successful protagonist two desirable attributes are power and skill. DeSouza-Coelho points out that the performing magician neatly combines these characteristics as the effects they create are of extraordinary power while the audience simultaneously credits the performer with exceptional skill in creating the effects.

Another concept is that any piece of art comprises three elements: technique, signifier, and signified. In the case of a painting or a sculpture the technique is the ability to create the object, the signifier is the physical completed object, and the signified is the viewer's subjective experience of the object. DeSouza-Coelho also observes that most art proceeds linearly along this line of technique, signifier and signified, but that in magic, because an effect is based on comparison between the actions that the audience know happened and the outcome that they know those actions would not allow, gets caught in an endless cycle between technique and signifier.

Perhaps the best known historical work on Magic as an Art is Maskelyne and Devant's 1911 publication *Our Magic*. This suggests the positioning of conjuring effects in short dramatic form and is a work that was then taken up and expanded upon by S.H. Sharpe in his books. None of these magicians are mentioned in *Metamagic*

but DeSouza-Coelho does offer some views on "magic as metaphor," perhaps the current outgrowth of their work. The suggestion is that "magic as metaphor" fails at an artistic level because it leaves no room for interpretation and therefore no room for transcendence. If you tell your audience what your magical effect represents then it is analogous to an actor standing on stage explaining the purpose of his narrative rather than simply acting his part and letting his audience interpret it as they see fit. Even a piece of magic that might be considered artistic, Eugene Burger's "Cosmic Thread" for example, is not, DeSouza-Coelho says, because the audience interprets the patter about Hindu mythology rather than the effect itself and the art is therefore in the story and not in the magic.

Does DeSouza-Coelho offer a solution that allows magic to be performed artistically? Sort of. He does offer a revision of the conventional magic trick structure, along with examples of how it can be applied, that he suggests allows the performances to become artistic. Unfortunately I could not fully understand the significance of the idea which seems like a version of "magic as metaphor." Some of the examples of the structure in use, such as a routine in which a piece of paper is suspended from the fingertips, confuse things even further as the magical effect itself begins to be compromised. In arguing for the success of this routine DeSouza-Coelho says that after finishing his show with the paper trick he is most commonly asked "What happened to the paper?" This certainly could demonstrate the routine's power but perhaps there is another interpretation, rather like the dubious compliment "I have never seen you better" or the damning praise of "Marvelous isn't the word."

Metamagic is a basically produced print-on-demand book. The writing is clear and mostly succeeds in explaining complex theoretical ideas although at times it becomes a little ponderous, perhaps because DeSouza-Coelho is writing for both a magical and non-magical audience.

I suspect that most people who read *Metamagic* will discover new ideas. I would also imagine that most people will find themselves agreeing with some parts while disagreeing with others. Perhaps, however, there is more value in a book that makes you consider your own views on a subject, whether you agree with the author or not, rather than one that you simply nod along to. I know that I enjoyed learning about new ideas and deciding where I stand in relation to them, perhaps if you like thinking about magic you will, too.

Metamagic • Shawn DeSouza-Coelho • 6" x 9" Softbound; 165 pages; Available on lulu.com—search for "Metamagic"; \$14 (+p&h)

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