

Smoke 'em if you got 'em

I consider Jim Coles a friend, even though I never met him in the classic sense. He's a fellow blogger and a good guy. You only need to look at his postings like The Geek Factor to realize Jim really thinks about and cares about magic.

Jim asked me to read and give my honest opinion on his latest manuscript **Under Cover**. *Under Cover* is a 22 page pdf describing one of Jim's pet effects - a spectators initialed quarter appears under the cellophane wrapper of a sealed cigarette pack. As with all good tricks, it can be described in a simple sentence, so it has something going for it.

The pdf is carefully photo-illustrated and Jim precisely describes the performance and preparation. To his credit, he also divulges the weaknesses of the effect:

- 1. It's not done by real magic.*
- 2. You use a pack of cigarettes. This obviously means your a Communist and child molester. (As a former smoker, I resent the fervor of the anti-smoking crowd, which puts this at the top of the criminal heap. Meanwhile, the CEOs and CFOs are robbing us blind and laughing their asses off - but I digress.)*
- 3. No instant reset - this is not an any time any where impromptu trick. It is primarily for formal shows and those occasions where you really need to impress.*
- 4. It's not difficult, but the setup requires some patience and precision.*

Actually, a short list. Everything has been audience tested over the years and I can't imagine anyone having questions after reading the manuscript, but I'm sure Jim will be there to help if you need it.

Why you should by this:

- 1. The effect is off beat and not seen very often.*
- 2. It's easily understood from a spectator's viewpoint. You won't lose their attention and they don't have to remember anything.*

3. *This is a fully honed, professional routine and if it is the kind of trick you do, I can't think of a better alternative.*

4. *It's one of the rarest things in magic - a true **bargain**. It's available at Library.com for \$6.50. The price of a Frappacino and a lot less fattening.*

5. *You end clean. I can't stress the importance here. I've seen the best in the world finish routines dirty and they all look as if someone has them by the kajonies and are about to squeeze. There's too much good magic to perform tricks where there's a stench in the air from finishing dirty.*

6. *You don't have to endure terrible, overbearing music in the ads while miracles are performed for a motley collection of street bums and space queens.*

In summary - I really liked it. It's the kind of magic I like - direct, memorable and unfathomable. It requires enough thought and preparation, that you won't see everyone else doing, but there's nothing beyond the reach of the average magician.

In the right hands, you could make a serious reputation with this. I doubt you'll have women tearing off their clothes, but then again.....

Something Seriously Cool

At my age I seem to suffer from ID (Interest Dysfunction). I seldom see something on the Internet that really makes me *sit up and take notice*. This is especially true for web services. Maybe I've seen so much that I'm very discreet or I just may be too damn old!



Today I ran across a very cool mail site called Wordle. I don't really know what to call it, except **Word Art On Roids**. The picture here is what it arbitrarily built

when I put in the URL of the i/m blog. I'm not sure of the magic application, but I'll bet it can be put to good use. I hope you enjoy it.

Take care.....



PS I forgot to mention that I had trouble using it with Firefox. It worked fine with IE - now there's a switch.

A little faith restored



I don't attend many magic lectures any more. Although I came to the conclusion long ago that most professional magicians are pompous, overbearing and over-rated gas bags, I used to be willing to attend 20 or 30 lectures a year hoping to find a few gems. I had the opportunity to see David Williamson, Paul Harris, David Roth, Michael Ammar, Duke Stern and a few others that made the hunt worthwhile - at least I used to think so. As I've gotten older and gas has gotten more expensive, I'm going to fewer and fewer. You have to open a lot more oysters to find a pearl it seems.

I recently attended John Lovick's lecture and was sorely disappointed, as were many others that I spoke to. Here was a lecture that had been advertised for months and Lovick acted liked he just heard about it that afternoon. It was

disorganized, uninformative and, in general, just not very good. From my perspective, he wasn't very gracious to the attendees either. I will admit that I enjoyed getting a glimpse of his *Handsome Jack* persona, but it certainly wasn't worth the cost or time invested in attending the lecture.

So..... when I was invited to attend a lecture by David Regal, my initial impulse was *no way*, but I remembered how much I had enjoyed his DVDs and he certainly *seemed* like a nice guy and the magic was clever and doable. I decided



to go and boy am I glad I did! Regal *is* a nice guy and his lecture was fun and informative. He was well prepared even though it was the first time he had done this particular lecture.

In all fairness, this is probably more of a book tour than a lecture. Regal has produced a huge and expensive book called *Approaching Magic*. It is pregnant with every type of material imaginable and it was a real pleasure seeing some of the things performed that I had recently read. As expected, some looked better and a couple actual looked worse than I envisioned. He sold a bunch of books!

Two things struck me as I thought about the lecture. David Regal structures his magic to fool his audience. Even though he does some story stuff, he's a magician and the trick comes first. Thanks for remembering that!

The other thing I've been formulating in my mind all day and I'm still not sure I can state it as succinctly as I would like. Entertaining magicians like Regal don't spend their time talking about entertainment - they truly teach by example. It seems that only the dullards keep beating their audience constantly with the *entertainment stick*.

See him if you get a chance - it's worth the effort I assure you.

Take care.....



Final Drivel - Regal did a lot of stuff with magnets - well hidden stuff. It may be time to drag out the old pendulum principal and combine that with these modern magnets. It could be a powerful combination. I kind of wish I hadn't sold my *Upside Down Topit* books now.

It wasn't always like this....



My friend Scot over at *Scot's Magical Mystery Tour* takes a break to recall Ronald Reagan on the 4th anniversary of his death. I invite you to read it. With optimism such a rare emotion these days, I trust Scot won't mind be posting his quote from President Reagan:

And whatever else history may say about me when I'm gone, I hope it will record that I appealed to your best hopes, not your worst fears, to your confidence rather than your doubts. My dream is that you will travel the road ahead with liberty's lamp guiding your steps and opportunity's arm steadying your way. My fondest hope for each one of you — and especially for young people — is that you will love your country, not for her power or wealth, but for her selflessness and her idealism. May each of you have the heart to conceive, the understanding to direct, and the hand to execute works that will make the world a little better for your having been here. May all of you as Americans never forget your heroic origins, never fail to seek divine guidance, and never

lose your natural, God-given optimism. And finally, my fellow Americans, may every dawn be a great new beginning for America and every evening bring us closer to that shining city upon a hill.” -Ronald Reagan (1992)

Can you imagine these sentiments coming from those maroons running our country now? We are paying an enormous price for politics of fear as they have been practiced for the past seven years. Bush - Cheney - Rove - take your pick. I hope they all rot in Hell. I know that may sound harsh, but the hubris of their malfeasance will be borne by our children for generations.

Tom Frank recently wrote:

.....I've never know it to be such a challenge to get people to lighten up and little and have some fun. They stand there, watch, pay or don't pay, but it's pulling teeth to get a large part of the audience to show even trace amounts of delight.

Actually, I genuinely think things WILL get better. All of us are like the guys with the shovel after a circus parade. There's a serious load of elephant shit to pickup, but eventually we will and the stench of recent years will eventually fade.

Take care.....

i/m

Pure Magical Delight

I've really been enjoying David Regal's new book. With all of the unadulterated crap floating around, it's nice to find a genuine *future classic*.

We're fortunate that we have people like Regal involved with magic. This type of quality and magic thinking is becoming increasingly rare.

I understand he's going on a lecture tour shortly. I hope I can catch him.

Maybe they're right



The ESPN morning radio host is Colin Cowherd. Colin's an opinionated blowhard and Colin Cowherd's biggest fan. He, like Rush Limbaugh, speaks with an infectious energy that's hard to ignore.

Anyway, last week he was talking about attending a social function of some sort and the hosts had hired a magician - dare I say a *profession magician* - to perform. Colin's recollection of the performance was:

Here's a coin.

Now it's gone.

You're a jerk!

It doesn't really matter whether his assessment was correct or not. It appears that we are saddled with a public perception that is damn difficult to remove. The really sad thing is the vast majority of magicians, especially hobbyists and amateurs, are genuinely nice people just trying to have a little fun and spread a little happiness.

There are exceptions.....

A friend of mine recently attended a local magic contest, put on by one of the better clubs. There were 10 participants and, as usual, the club made an effort to have lay-type people there so the contestants could work to non-magicians. So, they had women, children, men etc. in the audience.

One act began with the classic sponge balls from mouth - actually performing the critical pass very well. He then proceeds to end the routine by producing a Goshman Ding Dong from his mouth. Now remember there are small children here - what the Hell was he thinking. Even if he was performing in the Red Wings locker room this would be inappropriate. Who wants to see a routine ending with a soggy sponge Johnson?

To compound the crime he said it was a canon, because the rest of his act was a *big bang* or something lame like that.

Do you think any of those layman recalled the other nine acts?