

Something for every magician that uses a computer

✖ I'm slow to pay for software. Before I buy anything I check freeware and Open Source availability and generally find something as good, if not better, than the commercial offerings.

Really - REALLY, this is not a function of being cheap. I have issues with many software developers after years of taking it where software was never meant to go.

Anyway, one piece of software that I did buy was FeedDemon - the best, in my opinion, RSS reader in existence. FeedDemon was written by Nick Bradbury, the author of the cartoon Dexter, as well as some other neat software such as Homesite.

I would hope that anyone reading blogs and other feeds has some sort of reader / aggregator. I found FeedDemon the most practical and reasonably intuitive.

Yesterday, the owner of FeedDemon, Newsgator announced FeedDemon is now free. Along with the announcement, they released an improved version that looks very nice. There's also a Beta version that integrates with Outlook. I've been playing with it today and really like it.

I've purloined, from Nick's blog some reasons to use FeedDemon:

1. Most web-based readers (NewsGator's being an exception) can't subscribe to secure feeds. I don't know about you, but that's a show-stopper for me - I have a number of password-protected feeds that I absolutely have to keep track of.
2. Web-based readers can't access "behind-the-firewall" feeds. For example, we have an internal server which runs [FogBugz](#), and I'm subscribed to several FogBugz feeds which alert me to problem reports and inquiries regarding my software. I can't add these critically important feeds to a web-based reader.
3. Most web-based readers offer no offline support, and even when they do,

offline reading is still far better in FeedDemon ([this screencast](#) shows why). FeedDemon doesn't just download your articles so you can read them offline - it can also prefetch the images they contain and the pages they link to, enabling you to browse the web without an Internet connection. Your web-based reader can't do that. This is one of those features that you don't think you'll need - until you do.

4. Many desktop readers are full-fledged web browsers, complete with access to your favorites, tabbed browsing, etc. In fact, FeedDemon **is** my web browser - I rarely use an external browser anymore. If you haven't used a browser that's also a powerful RSS reader, you're missing out.
5. If you live in Microsoft Outlook, you can use an RSS reader like [NewsGator Inbox](#) which integrates with Outlook, complete with flagging, indexing, filtering, archiving, and all the other features Outlook power-users rely on.
6. Desktop readers have access to local resources, enabling a slew of features that aren't available in web-based readers. For example, desktop readers can integrate with your favorite blogging client, or [download podcasts and copy them to your iPod](#) or WMP device. [NetNewsWire](#) even integrates with iPhoto, Twitterrific, Mail, and iCal.
7. Desktop readers give you a choice about which feeds to keep completely private. Want your reading habits regarding a subset of your FeedDemon subscriptions kept completely on your local computer? Just put them in a folder that's not synchronized.
8. And of course, speed is often another benefit. Web app performance has become a **lot** better over the past few years, but we're not at the point where JavaScript in the browser can compete with native performance ☐

I believe you'll find the small time you must invest to adopt FeedDemon worth the effort.

Take care.....



Henry Ford had it wrong

Henry Ford had it wrong:

01/11/2008

I read this quote today from Henry Ford:

You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.

Obviously, Hank never made it to the Magic Cafe!



Steve Martin / Earl Scruggs video

I just picked up Steve Martin's autobiography. What a funny, inventive guy.

As I've told people for so long, he was doing this schtick for 14 years before Saturday Night Live "discovered" him.

Anyway, it has nothing to do with magic, but I just posted the You Tube video of Ear Scruggs, Steve Martin and a lot of greats doing *Foggy Mountain Breakdown*.

Magic in its own way.

Take care.....



The new Paul Wilson Videos

The new Paul Wilson Videos:

I'm actually kind of anxious to see these. Paul's a nice guy and an accomplished magician.

I just hope there is really 4 DVDs worth of material – we'll see.

Magic Intelligence

When I travel, I take books and DVDs that have a lot of useful material in/on them. This means I find myself taking John Bannon's stuff quite frequently. We are very fortunate that magic seems to attract a lot of brilliant thinkers – e.g. Jim Steinmeyer, Simon Aronson, Mike Close, Robert Harbin, Alex Elmsley, Stewart James, David Williamson, Darwin Ortiz etc. It seems so many of the magic savants get the press and we tend to forget those of great intelligence and insight.

I spent a great deal of time rereading *Smoke and Mirrors* on my last trip. **What a good book.** Some of Bannon's wisdom needs to be pointed out so we don't forget.

That is why I consider myself a magician first, an entertainer second. This is why I do not believe a magician is an actor playing the part of a magician.. Magic should be entertaining and should contain elements of theater, spectacle and/or humor. But I think if magic has anything it can call its own, it is its appeal to the bundle of human reactions I call surprise. By choosing magic as the medium, by being a magician rather than a comedian, actor or storyteller, my aim is to provide that otherworldly sense of surprise.

Thank you, John! *The entertainment at all costs* mantra has gone further to destroy magic than anything I can think of.

The old saw that there are no bad tricks, just bad magicians, is nonsense. Of

course there are bad tricks. Lots of them.

At this stage of the game, I'm surprised this even needs to be said, but I heard it again the other night. Not only are there bad tricks, there are real stinkers – just awful. I give you *Electric Touch* etc.

I believe that once a prediction is introduced, the audience presumes that it will be correct; that is, that the trick will succeed. From that moment on, the audience necessarily concentrates on the conditions of the subsequent selection.

Boy, is he on the right track here. It seems like half of the tricks at any magic club start with *I have a prediction.....*

I guess my point of this article is to encourage you to take books and DVDs, written by the great modern magic thinkers, and look deeper. There's a gold mine in the Worker's series, just as there is in the writings of all of those I mentioned above. We're living on a golden age of magic thinking – don't let it get away.

Take care.....



My 1st Broken Resolution of 2008



Here's the marketing poop:

*A tic tac box is shown empty all the way around. You take the coin and slam it on the tic tac box. You can see and hear the coin melting through the plastic and end up inside the container. Your hands are **clean** after the coin penetrates the box. **Immediately** give away the box with the coin inside to your spectator. There's **nothing** to find out. Your spectators **can keep** the tic tac with the coin trapped inside. Forget everything you have seen.*

This is: Pure. Visual. Magic.

- *Easy to do*
- *100% examinable*
- *No holes in the box*
- *Can be performed surrounded*
- *You end up clean*
- *Give away the tic tac with the coin!*

The effect is simple and very effective. Anyone can perform this truly amazing miracle.

*The DVD features UK's successful performer Jonathan Egginton teaching the most **VISUAL** coin through tic tac box **EVER. Period.***

I had honestly resolved to concentrate on the few good products that are available and try to let the rancid crap that is so pervasive alone. As you can see - I couldn't resist. Some things are so, so bad that ignoring them does everyone a disservice.

To complete the marketing, here's the video:

Tac Tics

To those that surf the Cafe, I know we hear *caveat emptor* and all kinds of excuses for the plethora of crap be sold as miracles. We're told that we should understand that puffery is a part of the marketing etc.etc. I have this argument with family and friends all the time. Isn't it time we start calling a lie a lie and expect advertisements to deliver what they promise!?!?!

Let's look at the ad point by point.

1. **Easy to do** – yeah I guess so, if you want to do it.
2. **100% examinable** – boy they push the truth here. There is an implication that the coin is borrowed or can be examined. This is absolutely false. The only examination occurs after the trick is done and then I suspicion the modus operandi is fairly obvious – at least on the appearing part.
3. **No holes in the box** – OK. So what!
4. **Can be performed surrounded** – again misleading. Certainly not just wearing a shirt as shown in the video. A coat / vest is most certainly required.
5. **You end up clean** – You're NOT clean. There's nothing extra in your hands, but the work is still in the box and the other coin is "around".

Just because I have years of training in keeping secrets, I'm not exposing this piece of crap, but just imagine the lamest method possible and you'll be close. Remember, you don't borrow a coin – they can't examine the coin – it's not marked in any way. Basically you show a coin – vanish it and make a different coin appear in the box. Whoopee do!! You too can do miracles for only \$25.

This is not a \$25 trick. Actually, it's not even a 25 cent trick – even if they threw in the 5 cent gimmick. It is an idea you might use as filler in a \$5 set of lecture notes. There is nothing original, clever or even magical here, so to the producers and author we award the ***i/m Steel Balls*** award for their unmitigated disregard of the buying public and willingness to sell this garbage for an exorbitant price – or any price at all, actually.



Take care.....



Further thoughts [1/4/08] - This DVD is short - damn short - and a great deal of it is taken up flashing the FBI Warning regarding copying. They shouldn't worry. I can't imagine anyone, anywhere would want to waste a 35¢ DVD to make a copy of this thing.