

The price of censorship



I doubt anyone reading this blog (Hi Mom!) is unaware of what's been going on with Hank Lee's Magic Factory:

Harry P. Levy, the owner of Hank Lee's Magic Factory, admitted he made 134 false transactions between 2009 to 2011 on a customer's American Express card totaling \$561,927, according to a stipulation of facts signed by Levy and prosecutors. The document was filed in Federal Court in Boston Friday.

Certainly the obligatory pundits on the Café and Genii have beat this to death. Just reading through the threads shows a lot about this hobby. I would assume that there has been plenty of "editing" and deletions on the Café. Kaufman, to his credit, is much slower with the delete key and he certainly has as high a percentage of maroons and ass holes as Brooks.

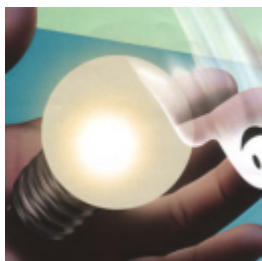
The business practices of Hank Lee's Magic Factory have been sketchy for a number of years. Many years, in fact, before George F. Bush's recession and the Internet decimated the local magic shops. Thread after thread has been deleted by the folks running the Café – supposedly for legal reasons. I wonder if there was money lost by people that might not have been if they had been warned. We'll never know.

I have a credit voucher somewhere that I FINALLY received after failing to get "in stock" merchandise I ordered. Not an unusual story. I generally feel sorry when a small business closes, but not this time. I'm sure there are employees that are being unjustly punished, but also those that knew customers were being gored. To those with clean hands, I hope you recover quickly.



PS Feel free to make your own **con**clave jokes. That fruit hangs a little low for i/m!

To light or not to light



After all of these years in magic I bought my first Tenyo magic trick, Scotty York's Lamp Trick or, as Tenyo calls it, Ghost Lamp.

I had the version originally put out by Ken Brooke many years ago and also the "improved" version marketed by Paul Stone. Both of these were breakable and rather fragile, but the trick was worth the necessary care.

The current Tenyo version is, of course, plastic, but it looks much more substantial and is realistic enough to use, I believe. I just keep wondering whether it screams "electronics" to a modern audience. Those that are familiar with the trick realize that it has nothing to do with electronics, but it would be a convenient explanation used to dismiss the trick. I have scrupulously avoided things like magic apps, which have no mystery at all and are only useful as curiosities.

Another concern is whether any trick using an incandescent type of bulb is not dated. I guess the only thing to do is just start working with it and see how a modern audience reacts. I think it's a cool trick, but that means absolutely nothing to the audience. I'll report back later.

Lecturers I have known



As I mentioned in the prior post, Ye Olde Magick Blogge is doing "favourites" during the month of February. In some respects I hate to play off Andrew's hard work, but I just can't figure out how to comment on his blog. I have tried requesting a name and password, but never seem to get a response. Actually, I probably wouldn't want me commenting on a blog anyway. He has touched on a number of subjects, which I find fascinating and feel somewhat compelled to make comments. One of his recent subjects was best lecturer. Given the substantial difference in ages, it's not surprising that our perspectives are different. I will say that his choice, Chris Capehart, was one lecturer that I missed when he was in Chicago and everyone said he was just terrific. Hopefully, I won't miss seeing the next time he comes through. Just a quick brain dump on some lecturers that I have seen over the past 35 years or so:

Geoffrey Buckingham – this was a lecture I enjoyed tremendously, even though stage manipulation of the nature he practiced was of little interest. Probably the most fascinating part of the lecture was watching him get ready to do his show. He showed us all the loads that he placed on his body in preparation for his award winning act. A true English gentleman in every sense. He added a lot to the convention.

Paul Harris – I had the opportunity to see all when he was at the height of his creativity. You couldn't help but be struck by how shy he actually was. I had the opportunity to attend an extra cost session with him and he couldn't have been more accommodating. The lecture itself, was good but not great. It just wasn't his venue.

A stage illusionist whose name I have forgotten – I've always thought of a stage illusionist as someone who dances around and acts gay while the boxes do the trick. After watching this demonstration, I now define stage illusionist as the guy who dances around and acts gay while the boxes **and** hard-working assistants do the tricks. Some of the machinations that the girls went through in those boxes

astounded me.

Lectures that keep the good stuff – one real gripe I have with DVDs and lecturers are *performance only* pieces. In several cases, I have sat through mundane lectures only to be excited towards the end of the lecture by a quality piece of magic and then being told that it was *performance only*. Certainly no lecturer is required to show anything, but keep your performance only pieces for performances. They are not for lectures!

Paul Green – this is a lecture I thoroughly enjoyed. Paul's magic is doable and well structured. It's too bad his reputation was somewhat sullied over that silly Card Warp controversy. If you can't see Paul, I highly recommend his DVD. There are a bunch of lecturers, many of them big names, such as Darwin Ortiz and David Roth whose lectures have grown into nothing more than a sales pitch with a little bit of entertainment.. Personally, I resist buying anything when I attend one of these lectures. Having said all of this, one lecturer stands out from the crowd to me –

David Williamson! Dave has chops, creativity and insights to offer any audience. He can be absolutely hilarious, but hopefully he will not be in one of those moods where gets just plain goofy. Just hearing him tell the story of his command performance before Siegfried and Roy is worth a long trip. Dave is also one of those guys that puts his whole heart and energy into making sure any convention that has booked him is a success. I understand he is giving more lectures these days as this crappy economy is seriously reducing the number of corporate gigs available. See him if you have the chance. (Now that I think of it, I don't recall Dave having anything to sell in any of the lectures that I have attended.) i/m

i/m

Addendum: Some of the better lectures I have seen over the past couple of years have been presented by local *no names*. Some of these guys really, really work hard to present good magic and good explanations. Maybe it's just a sign of the times.

And Falanga will give you a neck rub while you watch

You think this economy (or is it Georgeconomy) isn't bad! Check out this special from L&L:

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Just look at that boy cipher

Brooks sent out a PM today, 12/5/09, hawking some of *His Holiness'* stuff. In part:

from now until December 24th, 2009....blah, blah

*Don't THOSE crease your Card Case?!? But there's only about 10 days left.....blah
blah*

Not only can he turn a clever phrase, but he ciphers like Jethro Bodine.

Dumb ass!

The upcoming John Bannon videos

Some outfit, that I've never hear of, Big Blind Media, will be releasing Bannon's new set of videos called *Bullets After Dark*. I know nothing about them, but I do know about John Bannon!

There's something special when very intelligent people put pen to paper or are involved with an instructional DVD - witness Bannon, Steinmeyer, Close etc. I'll admit John's performance persona is not dynamic, but it is pleasant and doesn't get in the way of the magic. Explanations have been superb on prior releases. My only concern is that the trailer uses the same overhyped, loud crap that everyone etc is using. I hope that is not indicative of the DVD.

Just a side note - What's he doing in this promo photo:



Take care.....

