

# Step right in



Over the years I've been in magic I've seen a number of great salesman. After all, isn't it magic just one big pitch?

Among the dealers, three stand out for writing incredibly compelling sales copy:

Ken Brooke

Jeff Busby

Bob Kohler

Certainly, my favorite magic dealer was and always will be, Ken Brooke. Ken had an enthusiasm, coupled with stringent moral code which I have never seen equaled, certainly not today. Those who read his sales copy for Fred Kaps Floating Cork, the Nemo Rising cards or the Koornwinder Kar to name a few, know what I'm talking about. You never had to concern yourself about the truthfulness of the descriptions. They were always honest and the effects were genuinely practical and doable. Compare this to the half assed YouTube demonstrations we have today which are generally contrived to deceive the prospective purchaser. Unfortunately, magicians today will never have the thrill of mailing the check to that far distant land called *England* and waiting for what seemed an eternity for the latest miracle from **Ken Brookes' Magic Place**. You knew the wait would be worth it. Today, you can get screwed with the speed of the Internet - no waiting.

We miss you Ken.

The second dealer, capable of incredibly compelling writing was Jeff Busby. It's certainly no secret that Busby was and is a flaming dick. It's very hard to divorce that fact from the quality of his output. *Epoptica*, his periodic sales booklet was an incredible read. It showed the depth of his magic knowledge and understanding of history. There were times that I'm sure is historical perspective was warped due

to his own abiding love for Jeff Busby.

Tricks and manuscripts developed and / or sold by Busby were generally terrific. I still think his work on the Sterling egg bag was one of the best effects ever given to magicians.

Some of his work in Arcane, a periodic magazine for his customers, was just brilliant. I know there are people out there, myself included, that were burnt by Busby and eventually decided he just wasn't worth the trouble. A serious waste of talent.

Among today's merchants nobody and I mean nobody compares to Bob Kohler. I first heard of him when he was advertising the first iteration of the Ultimate 3 Fly\*. Any magician that wouldn't have walked to Las Vegas to get that trick was without feelings. In retrospect, it's kind of funny to recall the laudatory remarks he heaped on Todd Lassen and how he is viewed by him now. I'm a friend of Todd, so my perspective may or may not be fair. Kohler's ability to extract really serious bucks for his material is legendary. Whether it's a \$200 rope trick, a \$400 bill in lemon or a \$2000 cloth goose — but, I guess, that his job. I trust I'm not the only one that wakes up in a cold sweat screaming ***I paid what for that!*** I see he's now hooked up with the Anaconda crowd selling \$100 flourishes. I'm sure he'll be successful.

(\* his nearly mystical hold over magicians is exemplified in the hundreds and hundreds of messages on the Cafe about a *rumored* second generation 3 Fly. Unbelievable!)

These guys relied on their skills as a wordsmith. For the most part, that is unnecessary today. Today's sales people rely on editing, street bums and camera trickery. Their over-hyped crap may, at last, drive us back to classic magic. I sure hope so.

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# No muss, no fuss - just pure magic

iTricks.com just posted information regarding the Japanese entrants at the 2009 FISM.

The video is a delightful young lady performing classic manipulation without any of the transparent cutesy crap we see so often. I love this routine:

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## Polishing A Pig



You would not have to read this blog for long to know that I consider 2 types of people the worst forms of the breed - bullies and hypocrites. Some of my favorite characters from the Cafe are world class in both categories, including the primary subject of this essay. Bullies, in my definition, are those that take advantage of their status or situation to inflict their position on those unable to respond due to their respective stations (e.g. the abusive boss). There is no lower form of life and I know there must be a very hot place in Hell for them - it's going to be a crowded place!

Some years ago, Stephen Youell, his holiness, ran a paid website called Cogitations. There was a lot of discussion whether Youell actually delivered what was promised. From my perspective and that of many others, he didn't. His friends and other enablers persisted in excusing him by claiming they got value for their money. So what! The man had created a contract with his subscribers

saying he would do certain things and he didn't. That's a fact.

I received and retained a number of messages that Youell sent to people that were just unbelievable in their hatefulness and meanness. At the same time the footer on his Café signature cited a Bible verse, hence the moniker *his holiness*. At the end of this particular conflagration Youell did his best *you won't have me to kick around anymore* (Richard Nixon circa 1966) and rode off into the sunset. Apparently, his horse got lost and turned around. He's back. Just like getting shit on your finger - you can't get rid of it.

B. D. Erland wrote, maybe the most intense magic blog I've ever read. I don't know who he is or even if that's his real name, nor does it matter one whit. I do know that he is a young man who cares about his magic and the state of the art. His essays are brilliantly conceived and thoughtfully constructed. Do I agree with everything he says? Absolutely not! He is however someone who is willing to civilly debate any issue. After he closed his blog — come back B.D. — he apparently became embroiled in a verbal altercation with Youell on the Café.

Anyone that has been around the Café for any length of time realizes that trying to argue with one of Brooks insiders is absolutely fruitless. Your posts will be deleted and his buddies' posts will either survive or be the last word. Here's B.D.'s recount all of the altercation:

Ye Olde Magic Blog

(B.D. and others - put Evernote on your computer. When you get a PM or thread on the Cafe that you want to keep - move it to Evernote. Brooks and his henchmen are impotent to alter history then.)

The battle moved to The Weekly Magic Failure. Youell's posts certainly fit the classic definition:



**Polishing A Turd**

The act of trying to make something hopelessly weak and unattractive appear strong and appealing. An impossible process that usually results in a larger, uglier turd.

The whole thing is absurd. Youell long ago lost the right to claim any sort of *heat of the moment* defense. Hiding behind the incredible bulk makes it even less palatable.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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?