

Blog briefs



Thereâ€™s some pretty good stuff going on in blogland these days. For any of us writing blogs, itâ€™s an ego thing. Whether weâ€™re trying to be entertaining, controversial, instructive or just screwing around, weâ€™re making the large assumption that we have something worth reading â€” at least by some people.

Writing a blog takes time and thought. If youâ€™re reading one regularly and like what you see â€” leave a comment. I can assure you that it is appreciated. If the blog sucks, then move on. It will wither and die if enough people feel that way.

Anyway, hereâ€™s a brief look at some of the blogs I read and whatâ€™s going on:

Unexpected Wonders â€” Jim Coles writes the most thoughtful posts about magic of anyone currently available. As I write this, heâ€™s complaining about being 44. Hell! Iâ€™ve got socks older than that!

Reverie â€” Tom Frankâ€™s very personal magic blog. I could never be comfortable exposing myself the way Tom does, but heâ€™s been a regular poster for a long time and those of us that follow his blog really feel like we know him.

An interesting man. His description is very telling â€” *Just celebrated the 21st anniversary of my 21st birthday. Crazy about a girl named Polly. Love to Swing Dance. Trick Deck Pitchman. I have 4 kids who won't speak to me.* See what I mean.

Be sure to catch some of his videos he makes available. The one on the linking rings is superb.

The Wizard's Ball â€” Mike only posts sporadically. I wish we saw more of him. His recent post is about the disappearing Cafe topics which we continue to endure. He comes to a conclusion that I disagree with strongly:

Instead of crapping themselves every time a naysayer comes along perhaps the Cafe could learn something and perchance improve by allowing a bit of healthy debate.

Go on Steve you know you want to.

The last thing that group wants is open discussion.

The Phantom Notebooks â€” Heâ€™s just begun a review of the Rob Stiff / MagicMakers production of Wesley James 7 DVD set *The Man Who Knows Erdnase*. Actually itâ€™s more like a public execution. e.g. his conclusion on DVD #1: *A completely pointless and useless DVD.... and yet still the best of this 7 disc set*. Iâ€™m not a good one to comment hereâ€™ as Iâ€™m no fan of Wesley James either. Donâ€™t miss the series if you are into cards, at all.

Magicforge Blog Tracker â€” Although the MagicForge blog has been dormant since February, the blog tracker continues to perform a valuable service. Do yourself a favor and subscribe to the RSS feed. It makes it very easy to keep up with the status and postings of all the major magic blogs.

Take care.....



A person who trusts no one can't be trusted.

Theory11.com - 1st Impressions

Remember I'm an old guy and I can only review from that perspective. I could throw a bunch of "dudes" in here and try to sound like one of the street guys, but it would be transparent. (Is "dudes" still even viable? I'm so out of it!)

The Theory 11 site itself is OK. It has the obligatory black/illusionists type theme and has enough noise to give it a little bit of a Web 2.0 feel. Personally, I find it too busy, but I've seen worse.

The videos of the tricks they are selling are like everyone else's videos - bad music - too loud - filled with street bums and space queens acting like the L&L crowd on steroids and giving no idea of what the trick actually looks like. Structured to sell the experience, not the effect. I doubt any of these tricks will actually get you laid, but that's the implication. Again nothing new or unusual here.

I ordered *Digital Dissolve* to test out the process and the item itself. I must say the ordering process was painless and professional. The order was acknowledged promptly and sent the next day. I should get it this week. There's been a LOT of discussion of whether this is merely a repackaging and routining of Steve Dusheck's classic Copper/Silver. If it is, I think they made a serious mistake in using this as one of their lead products. Some of the excuses and rationales I have seen from the producers are robustly L-A-M-E. We'll see!

I'm a big fan of Aaron Fisher and wanted to try his trick, but frankly it didn't even look good in the video and it smells of angles **big time**. I could easily be wrong, but if I am, the video should be re-shot.

They do show that a number of the tricks aren't available yet right on the description. Something that is SORELY lacking on many of the big sites that pretend they have everything in stock.

The forums are nice and seem to have a little momentum. I hope it continues. Unfortunately, most tend to die and only Brooks goes on. Something I'll never understand.

Not a bad start. I doubt it will spawn a new worldwide religion that one would have expected after reading the pre-release hoopla. At this point it is just the web version of *Brainstorm in the Bahamas* and other think-tank commercializations - nothing new. No one else has ever fulfilled the promise. I wish these guys the best.

Gentlemen - keep it real and you have a chance.

Take care.....



“Time” Is On Our Side - Ernie Haase

Drivel & Drool

I Found This Compelling

“Time” Is On Our Side - Ernie Haase

When your soul is hungry you never know what fresh and soul honoring blessing or lesson is waiting for you right around the proverbial corner; and sometimes it's from the most unlikely places!

I was listening to an oldies station on the radio and a song came on by the Rolling Stones that said “Time Is On My Side.” I sang along, I knew the words! Oh no, I guess my fundamental upbringing could not monitor me all the time. I must have listened to some “worldly music” at some point to retain these words, but it did get me to thinking about “time.”

We've all heard the saying, “the good things in life take “time,” and it's true. There's no other way around it, it takes “time” to build or create anything of quality and value. It takes time to create a painting, a song, a garden. It takes time to build character, trust, a relationship. These things don't happen overnight, and would we really appreciate it if they did? In this busy world of ours we have so little “time,” but “time” can really be on our side. We need to take some “time” to let our hungry souls be fed and not be filled up with so much stuff between the “Sabbaths” in our lives.

The other day I read about a man who went to stay at a weekend retreat where only monks lived. They showed the man to his room and before leaving him to experience the solitude they said, “Please contact us if you need anything and we will be happy to show you how to live without it!”

The things that matter most in our lives take “time” to nourish. We need to learn

how to say “no” and not feel guilty about it. We need to take “time” out for ourselves, our family, our friends, and above all our Heavenly Father. We need to realize that the demands and expectations put on us by other people are not our problem, we need “time” and if they cannot understand our position, just smile and move on!

I was talking with a friend the other day who had a great business deal to present me, and it was indeed enticing. A couple of years ago I would have jumped right in with both feet and called my family to tell them about the good news of how God just blessed me. (Isn't it funny how much credit God gets for the good and the bad!) It's been a hard lesson for me to learn, but I am learning to wait before I jump. After talking a bit and hearing my friend out I had to say “no.” Although he accepted my answer, I could tell he was a little surprised by it. Fortunately he felt close enough to ask me the reason for my answer. I told him that it had nothing to do with him, the proposal, or money, it had to do with “time.” I told him if he could buy me another day on the calendar I would consider it, but at this “time” in my life I have to say “no.”

We need to learn how to say “no” and not let others make us feel guilty about it. The things that matter most in our lives take “time” to nourish. We need to take “time” out for ourselves, our family, our friends, and above all our Heavenly Father. We need to realize that the demands and expectations put on us by other people are not our problem, we need “time” and if they cannot understand our position, just smile and move on! I think at times we're even scared to say “no” but sometimes we just have to!

My friend graciously understood and we have talked since then and I'm glad about that. That's the measure of a true friendship. I think we've all had the experience of feeling a little used by someone; someone you think is your friend, but eventually find out they were your friend only because of what they thought you could do for them. That's probably why we may sometimes be afraid to say “no.” Finding out they're not truly your friend is a bitter pill to swallow, but a necessary one, for when you find out who your real friends are they become even more of a blessing.

But when I think about these friends who are not really our friends, I have to ask myself, haven't we all been guilty of this at one time or another? We call on our Heavenly Father when the going gets tough, but when things are back on track

we don't call anymore, that is, until things get rough again. Don't you think that God must feel a little like we feel when we've been used by someone? It really has made me more aware of the need to take the "time" to call on my Heavenly Father just to talk, even when I don't need anything! Of course He wants us to make our requests known, but how it must please Him to hear the voice of His children just "checking in" during the normal activities of the day to say hello, thank you, how do you feel about this, and most of all, I love you! I know how good it makes me feel when someone does this for me, and who deserves it more than our Heavenly Father.

We all need to take the "time" to be good stewards of the talents and gifts the good Lord has given each one of us; and we need to take the "time" to use them for His glory to the best of our ability. Our Heavenly Father did not call us to live our lives by the expectations of others nor in bondage to the demands of "time."

Remember, you can't go back again, so roll down the window as you ride down the road of life and breathe in these chances to love and live life wide open!

You will find that "time" truly is on your side, exactly the way God intended it to be!

Fool Me Once



A year or two ago, I bought Silver Shifter – Steve Brooks' \$50 rubber coin. I swear that's what it is. It also came with some silver colored powder and a Q-Tip, I think.

If I rubbed the silver powder on the coin and I stood at one goal line of a football field and you stood at the other goal line it looks a little like a half dollar. Now I can perform miracles as long as you don't move any closer.

I bought this well before I understood Steve Brooks. Those of us that have bought

magic over the years have opened many packages and felt seriously screwed, but NOTHING ever compared to opening the Silver Shifter package and realizing you had just paid 50 bucks for a fucking rubber coin. FIFTY BUCKS! Supposedly, they had high manufacturing costs.

Brooks promised aftermarket books and even a special section on the Cafe for purchasers. I understand it will now be a section of Cogitations II. If the man had an ounce of compassion he would have, at least, included a bottle of Vaseline with every purchase. I'm still sore.

The next release from the fertile mind that is Steve Brooks was something called Free Fall. Someone gave me this over a year ago and I never bothered to break the seal. After all the initial hoopla and congratulatory posts you would think we could see it on every street corner. Hell, I thought they may even make a TV series from it. To date, I've never seen anyone do it or mention it.

MagicChris, took his lips off Brooks' ass long enough to pen this:

That's right! Anyone that uses Free Fall or Silver Shifter knows how his creative mind works!

Yes, Chris, I believe we do!

Having conquered the creative end of magic, Mein Brooks turns his considerable self to the craft of DVD production. He's a talented S.O.B. His latest effort is *The Rat Pack by Curtis Kam*. Peter Studebaker reviewed it in the September *Magic*. I won't fully recount the article. The final paragraph is sufficient:

If you build a better card trick the world will beat a path to your door. This ain't it.

Maybe, just maybe, I've figured out the problem. Peter's review says the performance was shot in a *pool hall/restaurant*. Talk about the fox in the hen house. How was Mein Brooks supposed to concentrate when he was working surrounded by french fries and hamburgers? The DVD never had a prayer. Never!

I'm told Curtis is a nice guy and a good performer. Too bad he teamed with this clown for a very visible project. I doubt the Cafe publicity offset the harm from the amateur production.

Houdini Convention Review

Well, as I mentioned in a prior post, I attended the Houdini Club of Wisconsin annual convention over the Labor Day weekend. This gathering has been held for over 60 years and rotates throughout the state, I understand. Next years convention will be in Osh Kosh.

This years convention was held at the Madisonville Marriott. I really can't imagine a better spot for a small convention. The hotel was joined to the convention center where the events were held. Registration was \$119 and the room rate was \$99. I don't see how anyone felt screwed. It was a good deal.

Please don't take anything I'm about to say as a criticism of the club or the organizers. It's not. It is, however, an indictment on old farts like me that have allowed magic to morph into a hobby that is no longer attractive to young people. Just look around any of the local clubs and in most cases, anyone under 60 is in the junior section. I'll leave it to smarter people than me to determine why this has happened. I certainly don't have the answers.

Let's start with the contests. They had Close-Up, Stage and Escapes. I'm assuming the escape category is because we were in Houdiniland. If I recall correctly, there were 8 close-up contestants, 4 in the escape category and 3 vied for the stage title. Actually, there were only 2 for stage and they convinced one of the locals to appear at the last minute.

I have no intention to embarrass anyone here, so I'm going to make my comments generic and not even mention the category. A couple of the acts were so bad, that we couldn't tell if they were being played for laughs or not. We tried to be a good audience, but if you laugh and it was straight that would be the worst of all responses. Presentation and framing were in very short supply. I'm not a believer in the *presentation above all* school. I will always maintain that first and foremost the magic must be good - there must be a surprise or mystery element - if you want to be a magician and not a prop comic.

Having said that, you still must present the routine to your audience so that they

understand the effect and the setup. This was frequently missing. I'm sure we've all seen a card trick end with – *and now the deck is blue* and we never realized it was red! I chose that since no one did a color changing deck routine at the convention.

Close-Up is very difficult at a small convention. With flat seating and the table at ground level, table work is just about impossible. I think clubs would be better off with a parlor category if better close-up conditions aren't available.

The convention center had a nice stage for the two public shows. Again, the seats were on flat ground, but the stage was high enough to mitigate some of the problems. The show on the first night suffered from a missing act. Oscar Munoz, the undeniable star of the convention, was delayed by the airline and then they lost his luggage – I hate flying. The young man that served as MC and performer did an admirable job in holding it together.

Oscar was there for the second night and things ran smoother as they always do. This was an excellent magic show by any measure. Duplication was at a minimum, the MC was professional and very funny and Oscar certainly lived up to his billing and reputation. I was glad I came.

The close-up show was somewhat of a disappointment. The venue didn't help. We were divided into 4 groups and the performers rotated. Again, we were on a flat surface and some of the performers worked way too much to the front row and on the table. Just like the close-up contest, the performers need to think of this as a parlor atmosphere. They're pros and should be prepared for this situation. The effects that I could see, were actually pretty good.

The lectures, were OK. I did enjoy Bob Coleman's Balloon lecture and Oscar gave quite a nice performance. To me, only these were memorable, but other attendees may well have found the other lectures more useful than I did. No real bow wows here from my perspective.

Oh, the dealers – what a moribund place that was. I think the Internet has totally sucked the life out of them. It's a shame, but it's the world we live in. This used to be the center of a good convention – not anymore.

One other thing I noticed – I believe I only saw ONE impromptu trick performed by an attendee. If there were any "sessions" going on they were in a private room.

I really miss that.

I had a good time, but where are the young people? Please come back!

Drivel & Drool

I see the blogmaster at MagiCentric is unhappy that Stephen F. Youell chose to make all of the content from the ill fated Cogitations available on the Internet for a month are so. I can't understand that. Just a few days ago he was telling us that those complaining were nonpaying "bastards", I believe he called us, and that 99.9% of the subscribers were happy, happy, happy. Look at all the things you have to be happy for Mr Blogman:

- You got everything you wanted and expected
- It's better to have tried and failed than never to have tried
- *Real life happens*
- You got your moneysworth MANY times over - and you got it earlier than the rest of the world
- There are still a few critics, but those people aren't worth considering because they weren't members.(Gee, I wonder who said that?!)
- You got tons of email from Mr. Youell, apprising you of the status of Cogitations each step of the way

...and there are more. Just too many blessings to count.

Hopefully, this is my last post on this mess, but I can't promise. I read on Genii, this morning, that he should apologize. No shit! This has been my point from the very beginning. It appears he is totally incapable of taking ANY responsibility for the troubles of this venture. Unfortunately, the sycophants that get their kicks from smelling the jocks of name and semi-name magicians do a disservice to everyone with their irrational defenses.

The Most Important Thing In Magic

I must have seen over 200 magic DVDs. I have a couple of dozen. Certainly, 3 of the last ones I would get rid of would be David Williamsons' series:

- Sleight of Dave
- Dave 2
- Magic Farm

I don't know who the best close-up / parlor magician in the world is, but Dave has to be in the team picture. He probably does more world class routines than any magician I've ever seen. His cups and balls routine, using 2 cups like Tommy Wonder, is my favorite and, interestingly, doable by most reasonably coordinated mortals. It's hard to believe that a simple interlude of the pencil through quarter could be so magical. The clever routing of the thumbtip and salt is sheer genius. I would guess that Dave's goofball persona may hide his brilliance from many magicians. That's too bad. Unfortunately, he's probably best known for the striking vanish, which frequently looks like what is – throwing an object from one hand to the other. If you do the move, grab Magic Farm and follow his advice there. He's backed away from many uses, himself. To the point, at last. I guess the most frequent word I heard him say was *motivation*. At no point in any of his great routines are there any overt moves which are logically unnecessary. For instance, when doing the cups and balls, no matter how good your pass, if there is no reason for moving the ball from one hand to the other, then something is lost. It may be on a subliminal level, but the spectator instinctively feels an incongruity that shouldn't be there. Dave uses the classic wand for motivation some of the time. He has to transfer the ball to grab the wand. Simple and effective. If you haven't seen Dave's routine – do so as soon as possible. If you have the DVD – watch it again. Listen to his advice on timing – talking about the offbeat or *on a laugh*. He really tips it all. Learn from it.

Drivel & Drool

[This section is intensely personal and contains things of interest to me. There is no theme or agenda. There will be times I talk about the Cafe. I may give a computer tip. I

may virtually visit other blogs. Please be warned that this area may be a little coarse and the blogs we visit, less than elegant.]

I know talking about politics is dangerous – damn dangerous, but I'm so frustrated with those goofballs running the White House I could scream. I'm a lifelong Republican and even voted for him and, frankly, I doubt John Kerry would be much better. What a choice we had in 2004! I resent the constant barrage of crapola that by disagreeing with **The War President** we are not supporting our troops. To those of us that lived through the Vietnam War this is right out of the playbook of Lyndon Baines Johnson – **My Country Right or Wrong** or my favorite – **America! Love It Or Leave It**. Get this you dumb ass – the war in Iraq was a bad idea on 9/12 and it's still a bad idea. You are bankrupting the country so you can play *mine is bigger than yours* with your lying old man. There were many of us that questioned a lack of exit strategy, the validity of the immediate threat from Saddam Hussein or the *fight them over there so we don't have to fight them here* rhetoric. This is not hindsight. This has been brought to mind recently by our inability to respond to numerous crises because our resources, our energy and our administration is consumed by Iraq. Everything is met something like this: Problem: All of our jobs are being shipped overseas. Answer: The White House runs out some dufus telling us it's good for the economy. George says: *How about that war. Support our troops*. Problem: Gas is \$3.00 a gallon and is climbing. Answer: The White House runs out some dufus telling us nothing we can do – you're screwed. Just market forces. George says: *How about that war. Support our troops*. Problem: Most of us won't be able to heat our homes this winter. Answer: The White House runs out some dufus telling us nothing we can do – you're screwed. Just market forces. George says: *How about that war. Support our troops*. You get the idea. Don't for one minute think that a real President would be powerless. He speaks, or more correctly could speak, from a powerful pulpit. Right now we have shameful profiteering taking advantage of our *pro-business* administration. At some point this has come to mean *big business*. If you are in any industry affected by an agency like the FTC, FCC or it's apparent they are owned by the corporate interests. Between big corporate interests and trillion dollar hedge funds we are being sold into oblivion.

Meanwhile GII fiddles away. I worry for my kids.



Hey Rummy, I found the WMDs!