

INFORMED OPINION

LATEST PRODUCT REVIEWS

Compiled and Edited by W. S. Duncan

I'd like to depart a bit from our normal review process this month and talk about a couple of items that were not submitted for review, one of which isn't even for sale. The first is Joshua Jay's new effect, Phantom Deck. The trick is an alternate, and much improved, take on the overused OmniDeck meme.

In case you've never seen it, the OmniDeck is a block of plastic shaped like a deck of cards. If you put a card on top of it, most people will take it for a deck of cards. The meme concludes with you "vanishing" the deck, except for a selected card. This always gets a surprised (read: good) reaction, but to my mind it's not a magical event. A deck of cards is transformed into a lump of plastic...hardly high art. But Josh has managed to finesse the idea just enough to turn it into something that makes even a curmudgeon like me smile: instead of a block of plastic, the deck of cards transforms into a collection of transparent cards. This ups the effect considerably, and instead of a lump you have a spreadable pack of "invisible." It seems harder (though it hardly is) and the pack looks wonderful when you spread it between your hands and there is a single card in the middle of the pack. If you use the

OmniDeck, you owe it to yourself to upgrade. If you don't use the OmniDeck, you should at least watch the video on Josh's website for Vanishing Inc. and see how good this looks. I recommend it, and I'm a cranky old man.

The second item isn't a recommendation, it's a requirement. Put down this magazine, log on to the interwebs, and visit Josh at www.VanishingIncMagic.com where he has a free ebook for you to download. The book is called *Magic in Mind*; it's a collection of essays by some of the best thinkers in magic. There are over thirty articles, written by folks like Darwin Ortiz, John Carney, Tommy Wonder, David Regal, and our own editor, Michael Close. If there's a name you think of when people talk about guys who think well and long about our art, that name is probably represented here. Josh spent three years getting permission, collecting, and editing this volume. It's one of the best books on "magic theory" that you'll find, because it represents so many diverse viewpoints. And it won't cost you anything but your email address and your time, which come to think of it makes it the most expensive book you'll get this year. Spend the time. You won't regret it.

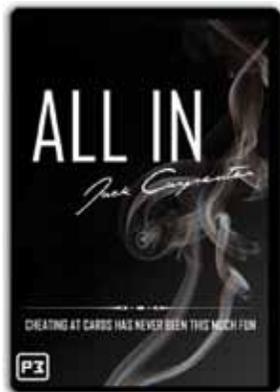
ALL IN TWO-DVD SET

By JACK CARPENTER

Available from: www.penguinmagic.com

Price \$50.00

REVIEW BY ANTONIO M. CABRAL



Jack Carpenter is one of my big heroes in card magic. He was the first card magic idol of mine I got to meet and befriend. His creative output over the last few years has been so astounding that, with the release of his latest DVD set *All In*, Jack Carpenter is starting to honk me off.

I've had the pleasure of seeing much of the material on *All In* previously, because Jack has shared it with friends and colleagues via his YouTube channel. It's become a bit of a running inside joke as to how incessantly often Jack posts a new idea or routine. The astounding part is that there's never a stinker in the bunch. Jack has an uncanny knack for sharp, astonishing, and entertaining card magic, whether it's a quick trick or a longer routine, or whether it requires advanced shuffle-and-deal work or a double lift and a subtlety. *All In* is two discs' worth of such material, and there's something for everyone here.

As I observed in my review of his *Seattle Sessions* DVDs, Jack works very well in a casual atmosphere. Here, the crew at Paper Crane sat him down at a poker table with cigarettes and whiskey and let him go to town on some very talented young cardmen. On the *Seattle Sessions* he was among old friends; here, he's among

new friends, very much in the seat of the old master. His companions – Ben Train, Chris Mayhew, Zach Lambert, and Tyler Wilson – provide an audience, ask questions, and clarify instructions, but mostly they just sit back in awe. To be frank, there's very little Jack could demonstrate that wouldn't take most card workers by surprise.

The discs are a mix of material, with most of the gambling material featured on the first disc and most of the magic material on the second. The moves and techniques are spread throughout the set. Some of my favorite items are: Running the Aces/Table Bluff Shift, an Ace production and control; Touch My Heart, which is a diabolically simple, clear, and direct approach to a two-card transposition; 451 Stack, a comedy gambling demo inspired by the late Earnest Earick; and Jack's revised method for his Ultimate False Deal demonstration. Center deal demos are almost a dime a dozen – Jack ups the ante by placing four Tens on top of the deck, four Queens on the bottom, and four Aces in the middle and then somehow deals all the Tens to one player, all the Queens to another, and the Aces to himself. The astonishing part is that it's easier than it sounds. Another standout is Hustler's Rip, a great take on the Three Card Monte that allows you to visibly tear a corner off the money card only to have the tear and the corner magically jump to another card. A routine that I hadn't seen before is Imagine, a very good way to find two selected cards, one physically chosen and one purely thought of. It also happens to be one of the easier items on the discs. Jack's not afraid to work if he has to, but he never works hard for its own sake. If he can get strong results with minimal effort, he will. Either way, though, his work is never dumbed down.

The moves include some terrific multiple card controls, a number of card switches, and a bottom palm that will have you shaking your head (but will definitely improve your approach to the move). For my money, the tips on second and bottom dealing

are worth the price of the discs alone. Any time Jack talks about false dealing, I listen. And the over-the-shoulder point of view on his hands as he demonstrates the moves drives the point home.

Seeing these routines in a professionally produced setting is a real treat. The routines I mentioned are personal favorites; I can recommend every item on these discs, however. (Okay, here's another recommendation: Poor Uncle Joe, a five-card poker hand repeat routine.) The only complaint I have is the title: *All In*. I know there's more material where this came from, and as I said there's not a stinker in the bunch. It's just not fair. Highly (and grumpily) recommended.

FAT BROTHERS 2: THE MAGIC CONTINUES DVD
BY DANI DAORTIZ, CHRISTIAN ENGBLOM,
AND MIGUEL GEA

Available from: www.Kaps-Store.com

Price \$60.00

REVIEW BY CURTIS KAM



If you enjoyed *Fat Brothers 1*, you'll want the next volume in the series. If you've missed the whole Fat Brothers thing so far, but you enjoy powerful, deceptive, clever close-up with cards, mainly, but also with bills, thread, a coin or two, or more, you'll want this, too. I mean, it stars Dani DaOrtiz, Christian Engblom, and Miguel Gea, and features Juan Tamariz, Michael Weber,

Javier Benitez, Howard Hamburg, R. Paul Wilson, Pit Hartling, and David Williamson. If you recognize these performers – and you should – and you'd enjoy seeing them doing and discussing some excellent magic in a fun, casual way, you should buy this.

If mere names don't convince you, perhaps this will: included is the explanation for the trick Dani DaOrtiz has been rocking all over the world – Dani's famous Open Triumph. This is Dani's solution to the following card problem. Find a way to do Triumph, Vernon's self-righting deck effect, with one important condition: the deck is shown mixed face up and face down one moment, and then all facing the same way the next – no cutting, no mixing, and no pause in between. Dani's solution to this problem not only creates that illusion perfectly, but does it almost without sleights. Sure, you need to do an almost-faro, and a decent thumb-drag fan, but that's just about it. Oh, and you need to lie and smile at the same time, that's important.

Dani's Open Triumph is one good reason to own these discs, but it's hardly the only one. Some magicians will have another Triumph in mind, the one that Dani performed, but did not explain, on *Fat Brothers 1*. The explanation for Quick Triumph is here, too, and it's sneaky. As always, Dani relies less on difficult sleights and more on subtlety, with a healthy dose of perceptual deception mixed in.

As for the other Brothers, Miguel Angel Gea contributes coin, card, and coin-and-card magic, sampled from his excellent *Essence* set, which I had the pleasure of reviewing last month. Included is a coins from purse routine in which you never touch the coins, a Collectors featuring two startling vanishes of out-jogged cards right from the top of the deck, and a handling of David Roth's Wild Coin in which the first half dollar becomes

copper, the next shrinks, and the last becomes a half coin – fun, different, practical, and mystifying. What more could a coin man ask for?

Christian Engblom presents some very useful and commercial material for workers, including an excellent double Haunted Pack that ends with the cards cutting themselves in the spectator's hands, leaving the deck clean. Workers will also be fooled and intrigued by Christian's Bill Change, which starts and ends with the hands completely empty. Sleeves are not involved, you never dip into your pockets, and the audience never looks away. The technique has many other applications, and will be a revelation to you, unless you're familiar with some of Jay Scott Berry's early stage work.

Mr. Engblom also presents a multi-phase cards-through-table routine that is surprising and entertaining in its own right, and also sets you up for a near-perfect handling of Vernon's Triumph. In fact, the most difficult thing about this set may be choosing from the Triumph versions presented. Along the way, several "Fat" techniques are described here, involving hiding objects within the performer's "body crevices" (to use Christian's phrase). Chicago magicians will recognize the basic idea as Matt's Hideaway from *The Magic of Matt Schulien*, (Willmarth, 1959) and many of you will find the technique, well, unsettling.

There's more from each of the Brothers, but I have to mention some of the unique contributions of the guests. Card experts will want to hear what Michael Weber has to say about the mystical anti-faro, because he has studied it in super slow motion, and can explain how it works. Paul Wilson tips a beautiful instant production of the Aces on the top of the deck. All you do is to wave your empty hands over the face-down deck; they simply appear face up on top. You'd swear it was Marlo's Rise, Rise, Rise technique, but his hands are empty right after the Aces appear. There's nothing to ditch. The only thing prettier than this is the application he tips, and that's all I'm going to say about that.

Magic Castle star Howard Hamburg is here with something that will finally make you rethink the ending to your Ambitious Card routine, because his sequence with a paper-clipped card is likely better than anything you're doing. Speaking of enhanced classics, Javier Benitez will fool most of you with his über-clean handling of the Gypsy Thread. This is performance only, as it should be.

Other excellent mysteries and goofy bits by the Brothers abound. The "Three Kings of Magic" are introduced by Juan Tamariz, who does some magic himself. There's magic in the sauna, at El Escorial, in the Magic Castle, and in Las Vegas. You'll see Michael Weber pull a table full of decks and cigarette packets from two jeans pockets, and other inexplicable things. But just a warning – many of these involve extreme close ups of nearly naked fat guys. Not for the faint-hearted, but great fun for all.

TRUE MYSTERIES DVD AND BOOK
BY FRASER PARKER AND THE 1914

Distributed by *Murphy's Magic Supplies*

Price \$56.50

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE

The ad copy for Fraser Parker's *True Mysteries* is reminiscent of those wonderful ads we used to read in the backs of comic books, the ones that compelled us to send our money in for X-Ray Specs and Hypno-Disks. We are lured in with suggestions that we will learn the secrets that will give us the appearance of powers to remove a spectator's ability to speak, to cause him to be unable to



let go of an ordinary deck of cards or lift it from a table, or to even change his personal belief in the existence of God. The difference between those ads and *True Mysteries* is that the product

delivers what it promises. The combination of linguistics and psychological twists blend together to create a fine set of subtleties that, when executed, will create the illusion of having spectators behave as if in a hypnotic state without ever having to put them in an actual trance. No long inductions, no increase of risks to your insurance rider, and yet you will appear to have the ability to cloud men's minds (and women's, as well).

This is not a collection of tricks, but a set of principles and subtleties that can be used to enhance your existing repertoire. The work is bold and direct. It is not for the faint of heart. You have to be able to act as if you are a hypnotist, to be comfortable with manifesting moments of subtle confusion, and to embrace the principles involved in creating dual realities. The principles will be as effective on a big stage as they will be in intimate performances.

Pseudo-hypnotic principles have been explored in our art for many years. The subtleties will work if you are confident in your words and persona and are nice to your audience. *True Mysteries* is also a much needed mini course in the often misunderstood and misused principles of dual reality. Most dual reality effects are in fact episodes of instant stooging. That is not the case here. Fraser Parker ensures in his work that both the participant and audience walk away having had a satisfying experience. In addition to the principles and subtleties taught there are also several "bonus effects," including an interesting take on the Berglas Effect. For the record, I do not like it when something is called a bonus effect. If I bought it and it is printed in the book or on the DVD, then it is not a bonus, it is just part of the contents. I really do not care if something was included in the original work or not.

The book itself is well written and edited. It is a short book. There are approximately thirty dense and thoughtful pages bound into a case that also holds the two-hour, region-free DVD that is included as part of the package. The production values are very high. The audio and video are clear and there is no annoying background music. The ebook version of *True Mysteries* has been unavailable for quite a while and the demonstrations and discussion on the DVD are worthy of your time. Parker offers a disclaimer on the packaging and advertisements: "*Disclaimer: With great power comes great responsibility. Performer discretion is imperative when utilizing the principles taught on this disc; some of the effects may cause distress to some audiences.*" Some of the themes will be frightening and offensive to some people. To his credit, we are both warned and offered alternate themes to explore for those who do not wish to play fast and loose with references to the almighty.

Fraser Parker self identifies as a student of Kenton Knepper, so it is no surprise that Kenton has contributed a glowing Foreword. If you are a fan of Kenton Knepper's works, you will already know that you want this work. If you are not yet a fan of Kenton's *Wonder Words* and such, then this work might compel you to give his works a second glance. I will be revisiting this work soon and look forward to more work from Fraser Parker and more fine products from The 1914.

PACKS SMALL PLAYS MASSIVE VOLS. 1 AND 2 DVDS

By JAMIE ALLAN

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Price \$30 each volume

REVIEW BY DAN GARRETT



Jamie Allan is a British magician who has worked theater magic shows and cruise ships for most of his career. He was among those who figured out how to make his close-up magic visible to large audiences, using techniques he discovered on his own. Perhaps he was influenced by watching David Copperfield pioneer these techniques.

Over half of Volume 1 is spent on not one, but two live performances of an Ambitious Card routine followed by a lengthy explanation. The two live routines are not identical, and the explained routine is not the same as the two live performances. The best part of the routine is the finale to the first live performance, which uses a semi-transparent plastic "filter"; this allows the signed card to gradually appear face-up on top of the deck. This is a commercial item, and produces a really wonderful visual effect. Unfortunately, there is no mention of the item or explanation of its use during the teaching phase. I was very disappointed. Mr. Allan also includes his routines with Professor's Nightmare and a "simulated" Any Card at Any Number effect.

To balance the scale, the advice on setting up and making your close-up magic visible to a large audience in a theater is outstanding. Jamie covers cameras, projectors, lighting, and screens to give you a good knowledge of what is important and what equipment is the current state of the art, technically.

Volume 2 begins with two live performances of the Gypsy Thread. Yes, there are again two when only one is needed. Jamie explains his pet routine in full detail, giving every nuance. The routine is quite standard, but with some good touches in the preparation of the thread. The message is more about the type of thread to use (UV thread) and the type of UV lighting to make it visible on stage. The final half-hour of the disc contains two (again?) performances and an explanation of Dan Harlan's Card-Toon, a commercial item.

While this two-DVD set does not contain any bad magic, most of it is fairly standard. One of the best bits of magic is Banded. It is a clever Ambitious Card routine with a deck, a rubber band, and gaffs you can easily make. There is good information regarding the staging of close-up magic for a larger audience, using lighting effects, a high-tech camera setup (on a stand with a custom table attached), and a large screen. There is also great advice, gleaned from a lot of performing experience, on theatricality and stagecraft. The only problem is that the real meat of this project could have been presented on a forty-minute DVD. Why do we need three-plus hours of Jamie Allan?

Thanks to the skills of director Russ Stevens, the production values and editing of the video are good. Most of the explanations appear to have been shot at the Magic Circle in London. The performances in front of live audiences appear to be on a cruise ship theater stage.

If you want to port your close-up magic to the stage, these

DVDs will provide some good advice. But due to the length (too long) and price (too high for the value of the information), as well as the repetitive nature of the video, I have to give *Packs Small, Plays Massive* a grade of C.

THE DANCE: THE TUMBLING MUSCLE CLICK PASS DVD BY BRIAN PLATT

Available from: www.Plattmagic.com

Price \$24.95

REVIEW BY CURTIS KAM



The Dance focuses on a coin move by Brian Platt, a talented guy who seems to be determined to explore advanced coin work all on his own, which is a fine enough thing. But one runs the risk of reinventing the wheel from time to time. The move itself is a handling variation of a click pass from Japan's Akira Fujii, first published in the U.S. in *Genii* magazine in October

of 2001. What Brian has done is add a nice retention of vision aspect to Fujii's move, and that change adds significantly to the illusion. He has also (I'm sure) independently rediscovered work first done by another talented coin magician from Japan, Hidekazu Kimoto. Hidekazu is not well known in the U.S., despite his being a frequent attendee and performer at the Midwest Jubilee and Obie O'Brien's F.F.F.F. I had recalled that Hide first showed his move to me in the late 1990s – early 2000s, and he just happened to be visiting Hawaii when I received this disc for review. So he was able to confirm my recollection, and the fact that he had not, to his knowledge, ever shown this move to Mr. Platt.

None of this changes the fact that this click pass is a valuable technique, and the teaching on this disc is good. Like many retention sleights, the move looks best when viewed head on, but only viewing from the extreme sides or behind will actually expose anything. Even from sub-optimal angles, the sound element makes this pretty convincing.

But I'm getting ahead of myself; here's what the move does. In the course of performing a Coins Across routine, or, hopefully, something actually entertaining, the performer shows one coin sitting on his right palm. He displays a second coin at or on the fingertips of his left hand (two different positions are discussed). He drops or tosses that coin to join the first, and the audience sees that coin fall. They hear it hit the other coin, and they see a coin in the right hand as it closes. Despite all that, both coins are now hiding in the left hand. This puts the performer two steps ahead of the audience, a strong position to be in. Anyone familiar with Akira's original Jet Coins routine understands how useful this is in a standard Coins Across effect.

Mr. Platt calls this a Tumbling Muscle Click Pass, and on this DVD he will teach you, in a friendly, informal, conversational way, the TMCP, a variation, and a solid three-phase routine that uses it. Since the TMCP relies on the muscle pass, Mr. Platt starts by explaining that move, and he has a couple of ways to describe it that I've never heard before. If you've tried to learn the muscle pass, but just couldn't get it, you might want to listen to Mr. Platt. His "Fonzie Thumb" teaching technique might clear things up for you. The production values are not dazzling. This is a single-camera production, but it's thoughtfully shot and edited.

Having explained the muscle pass, Mr. Platt then teaches the retention pass half of the move, and then puts it all together into the TMCP. He does not credit the retention pass that he uses here, but I believe it's something we owe to Ishida Tenkai. He also teaches a variation of the click pass using a grip and retention mechanics closer to the sort that David Roth teaches. He teaches clearly and smoothly, without the ums, okays, or uhs that plague the unscripted explanations of others.

The whole click pass is then assembled, and Mr. Platt teaches three variations. One uses a more conventional grip and retention pass, one is a steal rather than a click pass, and the last is a closely-related variation of the Sylvester Pitch.

Since the first part of Mr. Platt's routine is the classic Tenkai Pennies (done here with larger coins), he goes on to explain that trick, adding details not evident in the description in *Bobo's Modern Coin Magic*. He does blur the distinction between the original Tenkai move and the Sankey/Sanders Pointing Transfer, but that distinction eludes me, as well. He also teaches a little touch on that transfer move (which was a favorite of Roger Klause), published in *Kabbala* circa 1971.

Finally, Mr. Platt teaches a three-phase two-coin routine that he calls The Dance. In the first phase, a coin is in each hand, and they gather into the same hand. This is repeated, but with a different method. Finally, both coins are placed in the left hand, and both coins travel to the right. No presentation is offered for these events, as that doesn't seem to be the point of this DVD. The main idea is to teach the move and show it in action, which Mr. Platt does pretty well. If you have any interest at all in the muscle pass or in advanced work with coins, this DVD is worthy of your attention.

COMBUSTION DVD AND PROPS BY ARRON JONES

Distributed by *Murphy's Magic Supplies*

Price \$31.50

REVIEW BY JAMIE SALINAS



Who doesn't like to play with fire? This DVD is only for performers who are eighteen years of age or older. There is a disclaimer at the beginning of the video. A magic effect with fire and a disclaimer at the beginning of the video definitely has my attention.

The effect is very simple. A match is lit, blown out, and handed to a spectator. After a few moments of discussion of

the emotion of anger, the match re-ignites in the spectator's hands. Does it really look like the description? Yes, it does! Does it play well? Yes, it does. This is a very good effect for mentalist and magician alike. But please read on.

The DVD is well produced, but does not include any of the supplies you will need to perform this effect. You are provided with the necessary information regarding what you will need, how to prepare your gimmicks, and suggestions for performance. Combustion uses chemicals and fire, so you must use every safety precaution when making and performing this effect. The supplies that you need are easily obtained and the instructions are easy to follow. You will need to purchase additional items to prepare for

this effect.

After purchasing the necessary equipment and supplies to make your gimmicks, the effect is relatively easy to perform. The reactions you will get are great, and I love the fact that this uses a common object (a wooden match and a matchbox), with a very easy to follow routine. If you have any concerns about working with chemicals, storing chemicals, preparing the gimmicks, working with fire, or you are under the age of eighteen, then this is not for you. If you are willing to invest in the time and money (\$15+ depending on the amount of chemical you purchase), collect the supplies, and take the necessary precautions when working with chemicals and fire, then you will want to purchase this DVD.

THE GRID DVD AND CARDS By RICHARD WISEMAN

Available from: www.essentialmagiccollection.com
Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies
Price \$35.00

REVIEW BY DANNY ARCHER



The Grid is a version of the classic Magic Square using specially printed cards. From a deck of cards with numbers on the front, a spectator selects a card. The magician deals out four hands of four cards and asks the spectator to guess which hand's total equals his chosen card. The chosen hand adds up to his selected number. Each of the other three hands also reveals the chosen number. The four hands are quickly arranged into a 4 x 4 grid to form a Magic Square. Each column, diagonal, row, corner, etc.

adds up to the chosen number. Finally, the cards are turned over to reveal a message written on the backs of the cards that predicts the chosen number.

In addition to the DVD, well produced and filmed by Luis Matos (and with guest spectator Dani DaOrtiz), you receive a specially printed deck of Mandolin cards. The deck will only be used for this effect. The cards are well made, but you will have to do a one-time preparation of writing the prediction on the backs of the cards. Richard explains everything carefully and clearly; once the deck is set up the effect is self-working. The spectator has a totally free choice of cards from a small group and can change his mind if desired. Once learned, the handling is very easy, so attention can be paid to the presentation.

So who is The Grid for? The first thing that leaps to mind are the many people who want to perform a Magic Square but have not taken the steps needed to learn one. This is a square that anyone can do. Usually a Magic Square is performed in a stand-up or stage environment, but there are many close-up versions scattered throughout the literature. (The strolling version I do was learned from the Stockholder effect sold by Gregory Wilson). In my opinion, The Grid is not a true Magic Square. To me, a true Magic Square has a random number generated by the audience and then the performer fills in the grid, displaying a form of mathematical ability. Because of the cards used, that mathematical prowess is missing from this version.

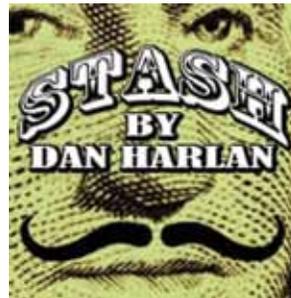
That said, using this version opens up other presentational possibilities. What if after they selected their card they told you their number? Then the performer shuffles and cuts the deck and

then forms the grid, as a demonstration of his ability to control the cards and create the final outcome. I think The Grid, given the right presentation, could be a very powerful effect. I am not always a fan of single-trick decks, but The Grid is an exception to that rule because the effect is very strong. I think it might be best for you to watch the demo; if you like the effect, you will not be disappointed with the props or method.

STASH TRICK By DAN HARLAN

Available from: www.DanHarlanMagic.com
Price \$19.95

REVIEW BY PAYNE



I'm a sucker for "borrowed object to impossible location" effects. I possess many more sets of Nest of Boxes than a rational man should. I have also been known to stuff bills, cards, and all manner of ephemera into multiple varieties of fruit. So I was thrilled when I came across Stash, Dan Harlan's latest entry into the wonderful world of "bill magically transported to a

highly improbable object" tricks.

The effect is simple and direct. A bill is borrowed from a spectator and marked by the magician. In the scenario that comes from Mr. Harlan this marking is in the form of drawing a mustache on Ol' George with a Sharpie. The Sharpie is handed to the spectator, leaving the magician's hands free to slowly fold up the bill. As the bill is being folded the spectator is told not to take his eyes off it, even for a moment. This ruse allows you ample opportunities for bits of business as you try to get the spectator to take his eyes off the bill. It doesn't matter if he takes his eyes off the bill or not, however, because the magician causes it to transform into an orange piece of paper right before his eyes. The magician unfolds the note to reveal that it contains the message "uncap the pen." The spectator removes the cap of the pen he has been holding the entire time, only to find the previously mustache-marked bill rolled up inside it.

I really like this effect because there is no fuss, no muss, no loading of bills into sticky fruit, or having to carry around hollowed out lemons in a special holder in your jacket. This makes Stash a fun little trick for walk-around and impromptu situations because it's easy to carry around with you. It's ready to go and resets in less than a minute.

Yes, it really *isn't* the spectator's bill that ends up in the pen. So a switch needs to be done to ring in the pre-marked bill from the beginning of the effect. But this is done on the offbeat, long before anyone knows what's going on. So there is zero heat on the move.

This means that the marking made on the bill must be done by the magician's hand and be of his own choosing. You can't have the spectator write on the bill. Some will think that this weakens the overall effect. But once again Mr. Harlan's handling helps to overcome this weakness by making the drawing of the mustache an exhibition of skill rather than an intentional marking of the bill.

The trick is also designed to be done one on one, or for a small group of people. The supplied bill switch does have some angle issues (as do most bill switches) and there is a little bit of subterfuge involved in uncapping the pen. So don't plan on doing this in

the middle of a throng of observers.

But if you are looking for a great “bill to impossible location” trick that resets quickly, packs small, and plays big, then Stash is well worth a look.

THE GRUMBLE GLIM DVD AND GIMMICKS BY NATHAN KRANZO

Available from: <http://kranzomagic.myshopify.com/>

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Retail Price \$35.00

REVIEW BY JAMIE SALINAS



What the heck is a Grumble Glim? Simply, it is a secret device for finding out the identity of playing cards. Has this been out on the market before? Yes it has, so read on to see what is new and what is not with this item.

Nathan Kranzo has taken an old idea and refined it in a very clever way. The basic principle is the one you may know, but what makes this different is that

Nathan has created a method for getting the gimmick into play and then ditching the gimmick in view of your audience. You will have to get crafty because you will have to assemble your gimmick, but Nathan has included most of the supplies you will need to prepare your glim. You will most likely have the other needed supplies to finish the gimmick, but if not, a quick trip to an office supply store and you will have what you need.

After Nathan covers the assembly of the glim he walks you through various ways to use the gimmick, and the act of ditching it. A few ideas are covered for routines that utilize the gimmick and the information that you secretly obtain. Nathan also includes a few ideas using numbers, words, or simple drawings rather than a deck of cards.

What you will not find here is a high-end produced video; this seems to have been recorded in Nate's kitchen. But the quality is very good and the instructions are easy to follow. Priced at \$35, I would have expected the gimmick to be already made, but it is easily constructed. This is an improvement on an old idea that has been simplified to get the gimmick in and out of play. It is a great utility item for the card worker.

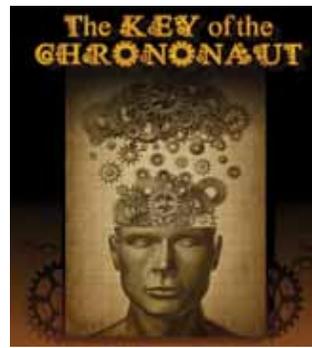
THE KEY OF THE CHRONONAUT TRICK BY BRIAN COOK AND MASTER PAYNE

Available from: www.MagicCrafter.com

Price \$129.95

REVIEW BY JIM KLEEFELD

Since I perform a Steampunk magic show, I was totally intrigued by the new Steampunk close-up effect, The Key of the Chrononaut, routined by Master Payne and crafted by Brian Cook. If you're not sure what “Steampunk” is, keep reading, because you might like this anyway. The Mystery Time Traveler (or magician) shares an envelope with an aged letter inside. Upon opening the letter, a small copper gear falls out, the key to the time machine. Your job is to return it to the past (or future) from whence it has come. You stack two wooden-and-brass gears and a business card over the copper gear; when you lift them, it has vanished. You find



that it has returned back inside the folded letter.

The props and materials are a giveaway to the secret for knowledgeable magicians: a flat object is covered with a ring, a card, and another ring, and then disappears when the top ring and the card are lifted. The small paper letter has been folded into a square, then unfolded. But do not dismiss this as just a simple employment of the Ring Vanish and the Buddha

Papers. The pair of rings is finely laser-etched to resemble gears and inset with fine brass edging and they hold a new secret: they can both be shown, and in fact examined, as simple hollow rings both before and after the effect. No glued felt bottom on either. In fact the brass gear vanishes so completely that everything – business card, two rings, and the envelope in which they were stored can be examined. Payne and Cook have devised a clever and subtle addition (two secret additions, in fact) to make this a magician-fooler as well as a crowd-pleaser for regular audiences.

The wooden rings/gears are about two inches in diameter. The small copper gear that vanishes is about one inch. Everything about this is first-class, from the custom engraved envelope with its authentic antique postage stamp (did it really used to cost three cents to mail an envelope?) to the parchment letter and gear-like clip to hold it folded shut. I was impressed also with Master Payne's ability to have the vanish of a small gear make sense with a Steampunk story. The instructional DVD is quick and simple, but to the point. If you want to tell a futuristic or sci-fi story, or mold this into an antique or “haunted” event, those are distinct possibilities. It is a close-up trick to which you can bring a wonderful level of presentation. If I had any qualms about the product, it would be the price. Not everyone will pay \$130 for a close-up trick with small paper and wooden props with few gimmicks and no moving parts. But this is priced for the discerning, and you get a routine that is clever and which few others will be performing. Although my Steampunk show consists largely of platform magic, I'm definitely bringing this along to my bookings to use as pre-show ice breaker material.

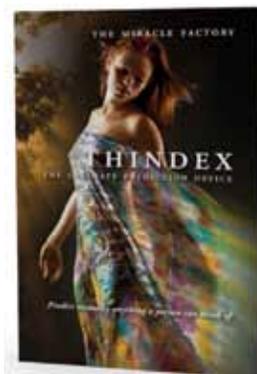
THINDEX - THE ULTIMATE PREDICTION DEVICE FROM THE MIRACLE FACTORY

Available from: www.MiracleFactory.net

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Price \$24.95

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE



An indexing system allows a performer to create multiple-out situations. There are indexing systems such as Harvey Berg's that enable you to pluck a named card instantly out of your pocket. Others hold envelopes or folded slips of paper, often referred to as billets. The best indexes do not require you to look for the desired billet, but by their design permit you to instantly and accurately access the targeted item. Thindex is designed to be kept and

used in your own wallet. The Thindex itself is a common item and has thirteen compartments that can accommodate up to fifty-two outs. To access the billets, you have to take out your wallet and, while presumably looking for something else such as a bill for a wager, either flip through to the pocket you want or riffle down the edge while performing a concealed count.

You will need long, thin, and dexterous fingers to negotiate removing a billet smoothly and swiftly when the index is fully loaded. Angles are an issue. There are the equally disagreeable factors of a significant fattening of the wallet and having an important prediction written on a small piece of paper. That said, I am no stranger to Costanzo-wallet syndrome and can see this working well in a bar and other casual situations where the heat on the performer is low. Where the heat is high, I would be loath to use a wallet to index outcomes, as the public is cognizant that wallets by their nature do have multiple pockets. Also, I feel it would strain my audience's credulity in a stage performance situation, to have a prediction in my wallet on an itty bitty piece of paper, rather than in a big envelope on display. Karr does offer approaches that will permit you to slim your wallet while imperceptibly minimizing the range of choices.

We are told the index can also be used without the wallet. This does not alter the previous caveats. Fifteen routines are described in the eighteen pages of accompanying text (I do wish that the text had not been printed white on black, because I find that hard to read). The premises of the routines are contemporary and should play well in a variety of social situations. While there are more subtle and effective indexing systems available, Karr has clearly given a lot of thought to this release and his desire to turn an everyday object into a workable and useful tool. Too often a multiple-out wallet looks nothing like a standard wallet that an average guy would carry. In this case, you actually can use a standard hip wallet.

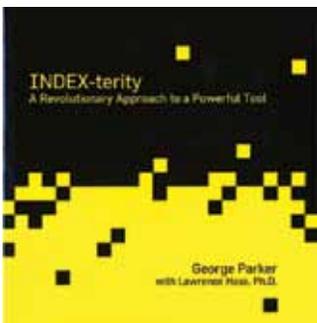
INDEX-TERITY BOOK, VIDEO, AND WORK KIT COMBO BY GEORGE PARKER

Available from: www.TheoryAndArtOfMagic.com

Distributed by *Murphy's Magic Supplies*

Price 39.95

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE



George Parker's Index-terity is everything one would want in an index system. The accompanying book is well written and clearly illustrated by the late, great Earl Oakes. Five strong routines are taught from Parker's repertoire, and I suspect they will be adopted by many who purchase this package. They are all well choreographed with no wasted motions or unnatural or ill-timed

movements to tip the methods used. This is classic billet work: no envelopes are used. The index is not a pocket index; it can be effectively employed without a jacket and can even be used when wearing a t-shirt and shorts. If you have ever manipulated thimbles or billiard balls, then the timing and management of angles to maximize the utility of the device will be readily apparent. This is the index equivalent of an Upside-down Topit. This is not a buy-and-try deal, and I am grateful for that. Dilettantes will admire the technique and not use it; dedicated workers will delight in

the power offered. Instead of upping the price and supplying a ready-made index, we are given a crafts kit with precut pieces and crystal clear instructions on how to assemble three indexes and two cardboard dice that are used for one of the routines. You will need to supply your own scissors, tape, and stapler. Assembly time is less than half an hour; after making several, the prep time will be halved and you will have gained the ability to reconstruct or replace one on the road if your prop bag goes astray.

There are two different indexes, one that holds sixteen outs and a more slender model that holds ten. Folded playing card sized billets are ideal for the routines. In addition to the book, we are provided with a link to nine short instructional videos. You will need a copy of the book to access the hidden page, because the password changes regularly. The videos show with great detail how to build the indexes and also include extra tips on their concealment. Lessons in steals and switches are provided, as are full performances of the routines taught in the book. I would have preferred that instead of an online link to view the videos, we had been given a download option or an actual DVD. The first time I tried to access the page, the website was down due to a server issue. Lawrence Hass, the publisher of the package, assured me that this was a first for his site and indeed this morning all was back to normal. A hard copy of the video would not be dependent upon an Internet connection and would have increased the value considerably without adding a lot to the cost. Refill kits for those who do not want to cut their own card stock to build more indexes are available from Theory and Art of Magic Press for the low price of \$15.

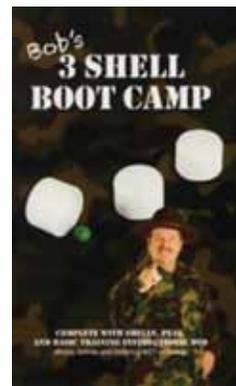
Lawrence Hass has been building a strong reputation as a purveyor of fine products and clearly has no intention of stopping. Index-terity is reasonably priced and provides excellent opportunities and value.

BOB'S 3 SHELL BOOT CAMP DVD BY BOB SHEETS AND GLENN MORPHEW

Available from: www.ChefAnton.com

Price \$50.00

REVIEW BY PAYNE



The Three Shell Game is something I've played around with for years and years. I've purchased books, DVDs, and watched many an online video. But try as I might, I could never come up with a routine or settle on a selection of moves to keep in my arsenal. This was most likely because of the self-inflicted information overload I had subjected myself to.

But I'm pleased to say, I'm now on the road to recovery and will soon be able to count myself among the number of thimble riggers wandering the land. All thanks to Bob Sheets and his *3 Shell Boot Camp* DVD. Mr. Sheets has stripped the Three Shell Game down to its very essence, and has worked only the moves, subterfuges, and patterns one *really* needs into a one-minute workout. You then practice this sequence for fifteen minutes in the morning and fifteen minutes in the evening; within three weeks you will be able to perform the shell game with the best of them. At least that's what Mr. Sheets promises, and after watching this video I have no reason to doubt him. I'm halfway through the program and am already seeing marked improvement in my shell game

skills. In fact, the routine, though thoroughly demonstrated by Mr. Sheets, is actually taught by Glenn Morphew, a student of Mr. Sheets who achieved his mastery of the game by using this boot-camp methodology.

So, if you want to add the shell game to your repertoire, or are just curious about the effect, I cannot recommend *3 Shell Boot Camp* highly enough. You receive the DVD, a supply of School for Scoundrels Perfect Peas, and three plastic bottle caps in lieu of the traditional walnut shells. Not only are bottle caps the preferred cover for the peas these days, but their small size and somewhat more difficult handling makes them the perfect vehicle to learn with. If you master the caps, then moving to the larger, easier to handle shells will be a breeze.

DVS DVD AND GIMMICK
By Criss Angel and Mark Calabrese

Available from: www.funinc.com

Dealers contact Fun Inc.

Price \$25.00

REVIEW BY NORMAN BECK



DVS is a play on the word “devious.” I am very excited to have the privilege of reviewing a magic project by someone as famous as Criss Angel. I would like to mention that this is a very hard product to review. To be honest, I have never talked about anyone as famous as Mr. Angel, so this is a review that has nothing good or bad to say about the product, but rather is a review full of questions.

The first question is, why was DVS released? The first thing I did upon receiving the product was to look at the ad in the February issue of *Genii* magazine. I was so happy to see a quote from a magician whom I know and respect: Bill Malone. The ad quotes Bill as saying “DVS is so good it should be kept a secret.” That quote could be taken one of two ways. I called Bill about this; he had no recollection of ever seeing DVS. I wonder how this is possible.

The second thing I did was to look at a YouTube trailer of one of the effects that is performed on the DVD. The effect is that you locate a freely chosen card from a borrowed, shuffled deck while blindfolded. I am curious how you would have the duct tape to blindfold yourself to do the trick, but not have a deck of cards. The trick in the trailer is not explained on the DVD, but the explanation stresses that you must keep track of the orientation of the deck prior to dealing. If you were to perform it as it is done on the DVD (in which Mr. Angel makes his appearance), you have a chance of failure. I would like to know why this was not taught. The performer is truly blindfolded, and yet is able to find the card. The spectator does not mess him up by turning the deck around, but what if she does?

The actual DVD lists six effects, but they are all the same effect: the spectator selects a card and you find it. The effects vary only in handling. With all six effects the outcome is always that you find the card. I have become more Spartan in my old age; for this trick you have to carry a secret something with you at all times. In one of the effects you simply must control the card to seventh from the top; if you can't do that without help, you are not ready for a product of this type.

Mr. Calabrese tips his hand in the first trick when he tells us the most important thing is that you can do this with a borrowed deck. I know all I need to know. He spends 2:18 teaching me how to shuffle a card to the bottom of the deck and then back to the top, and later on how to use the magician's choice force (total time to learn that 1:35). I can't even say a proper hello in 1:35, much less teach anything.

One of the effects is as follows: The spectator uses his own deck and shuffles it, yet you are able to find the card. The problem is that you must touch the spectator's forehead. I do not feel like I could get away with this. I notice on the DVD that “DVS is a brilliantly simple concept that allows you to perform utterly impossible card magic that transcends sleight of hand.” I need to know what that statement means. They also tell me that I can “cause someone to stop dealing at his card from a borrowed shuffled deck.” What does that mean? I'll tell you what it means. It means that you yell out the word “stop” when he gets to his card.

The feel of the DVD is that Mr. Calabrese found this really cool method, and now needs some tricks to go with it. I like the concept of the product, but I doubt I would ever use it in real life. Much like a baby elephant, this is cute to look at but what am I going to do with it when I get it home?

HEARTZ TRICK
By Dan Garrett

Available from: www.DanGarrettMagic.com

Price \$20.00

REVIEW BY JIM KLEEFELD



Dan Garrett has a knack for producing commercial, workable routines, and his newest offering, *Heartz*, is no exception. You show your hands empty and form the shape of a heart using both hands. Then you separate your hands and instantly produce a bright red heart. You hold a red pen behind the heart to symbolize an arrow going through it, then produce a second heart. You place one heart in a spectator's fist. When she opens her hand, she sees two hearts where there was one. *Heartz* would be great for table-hopping, or anywhere there are couples and a romantic atmosphere.

The props are easy to pocket, but large enough to be seen in low light. You get two soft Goshman sponge hearts, each about two and a half inches across, a fairly well-known gimmick to use for the bare-hand production, and clear simple directions. Although this might sound like the familiar sponge ball trick that everyone uses, the wonderful story line about love and the use of red sponge hearts (specially custom-made for this effect) puts the routine in a higher class. *Heartz* is priced very reasonably, and I see no reason why everyone should not have one to pull out for the right situation. ★

If you wish to have your product reviewed, please send it to:

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