



Practice Magazine

• September Edition

Dear reader, welcome back to this month's issue of the Ipractice magazine.

In this wonderful edition we have Alvaro talking about the soul of the deck; its about the crazy nightmares he has about the deck and is this guy actually going insane? Or is he making an insanely good point?

From the insane we move on to something that might make some of us insane, brutal honesty. Chris Wood talks about discovering our personality and the importance of it in magic, how to analyze ourselves in such a way that our magic can become more memorable, marketable and honest.

Talking about marketable, we have Biz talking about the creative process, do we need to be inspired to create great magical ideas, or is it something else?

I hope that all of you enjoy this months edition of the magazine, we put a lot of love into the project each month and so we hope to inspire and entertain you.

Now with no further ado lets move to our wonderful and though provoking writers!

-Rico



Introduction





The Soul of the Deck

—Al Berbel

Sometimes I have nightmares. While I sleep, my mind travels fifteen years ago to the magic circle of Seville. I am young, and I have a recently opened deck in my hands; it still smells like freshly cut cardboard and industrial ink. With emotion, I draw my deck like a cowboy and make a fan, spread it between my hands, make multiple cuts. I let the cards dance between my fingers and I cut myself a little with the edge of the deck for not being filed.

Suddenly my surroundings darken and I feel the ceiling under which I am rumbling. He has arrived, he is there. He is heading straight for me and intends to flaunt his verbal incontinence and recklessness. Then he snatches the deck from me, my deck. My new deck. He looks at me and tells me that he is going to show me a *new trick* with my deck. When he returns it to me, it is as if the deck were an expired yogurt. It is no longer the same, it is broken. It has lost its soul.

How many times has something similar happened to you? In my case, sometimes for

politeness and other times for youth, I have had no choice but to give up the deck; however, when someone wants to get the most out of their work material and progress, they must oppose such practices. Why? Because not lending the deck is the best way to keep the soul of the deck alive. It is for this reason that I always bring two decks to magician meetings: one for me, and one for when they ask me to borrow the deck.

The question is, *what is the soul of the deck?*

When we open a deck, the element lacks personality, no one has impregnated its tension or moisture from the hands, the deck lacks curvatures that make it concave or convex. It is simply an inert element. On the contrary, when we make contact with the cards we mold them. Little by little, we impregnate the deck with manipulative personality, which makes it possible to distinguish the decks from the magicians that we have around us.

Normally, magicians of refined technique tend to have them impeccable; those who usually

do magic with mnemonic and mathematical principles, usually have it in good condition, but they do not mind that they warp due to humidity, and they usually have some cards with curvatures that are impossible to correct; there is also the rough fan, who usually has the old, unpresentable deck...

And, ultimately, the type of magic you do will require you to keep the state of the deck in a certain condition. For this reason, the type of deck that is chosen to perform magic must adapt to your hands and the way you move the cards. In my case, I have not found a better deck for my way of doing magic than *Tally-Ho*. It is the deck that I use in my shows, in conferences, and in my day to day.

Having chosen a deck and having focused my efforts on maintaining the same brand for all areas (rehearsal, acting, chilling) makes my relationship with the element closer and I know well the virtues and limitations of the cards. I remember that in a conference I gave in Madrid, they told me that

it was impossible for me to carry out a type of handling because the deck did not stand such pressure, however, I did a demonstration before those present and spoke about the importance of impregnating soul to the deck.

It is for this reason that whenever I perform I use new decks, because my relationship with the Tally-Ho deck is so close, that I know it is a safe deck for me.

I invite you, dear reader, to try different brands and types of decks, until you find one with which you are comfortable and can develop your magical activity by printing your personality to the deck, giving it the life that they lack when they are still new in the box.



Putting your Facets on Display

Chris Wood

Putting your Facets on Display (from my Lecture Notes Vol. 3)

For years Alan Alan had been quoting to me some advice from Cy Enfield which was essentially all about honestly knowing yourself and cold bloodedly putting the most appealing facets of your personality on display. To that end tricks are merely a vehicle to help people get to know you. Some personalities are of course, an acquired taste. Alan always encouraged me to go for universal appeal and that has stood me well in that my routines and style translate easily to most audiences, whether family or adult, at an informal or

formal event. However, knowing yourself as others see you is incredibly hard. It simply isn't straightforward to decide which of your facets are the most appealing and highlight them. Often you need help, and perceptive, warts and all feedback. For example I never would have suggested that I possessed charm. It was my good friend Ari Phillips who came up with my tagline "magic with charm" and I never would have thought of it in a million years. I was genuinely surprised when he proposed it but it has been endorsed by clients many times now so I've become confident about using it. Unfortunately magicians

claim all sorts of personality traits in their marketing. Rarely are they accurate. Get a friend to go incognito and ask your audiences what they really thought of your character after a show, use that as the basis of your marketing and the experience will ring true.

Putting yourself into the trick: For a long time I struggled with just how I was going to apply Alan's advice in practical terms. It was at a convention that I got some great help from chatting to Andrew Goldenhersh. He said that like stand-up comedians you should always try to put something of yourself into your performance. So for

example if you like motorbikes, at some point you should mention that and refer to it. That doesn't necessarily mean that you should make up a trick all about motorbikes, that could well be too contrived, but you get the idea. Having tried it and seen the difference it makes, I now have a simple rule based on his advice which is: "*What does the audience know about you by the end of the trick, that they didn't know about you at the start?*" This has served me well, forcing me not only to develop more interesting patter than merely describing my actions, but also helping me to focus on sharing different aspects

of my character, for different tricks in my set, so that the audience gradually get to know more and more about me and my rapport and relationship with them develops accordingly.

Nowhere to hide: It's very easy for us not to realise how we are coming across to the audience and what facets of ourselves we are revealing, because it's normally unintentional. I'm a great believer in that your personality cannot be hidden when performing, especially when you're on stage where everything is larger than life. You have to be an incredible actor to disguise it or to eliminate it. Invariably your true personality is detected by

the audience, whether it is via your mannerisms, in *what* you say or *how* you say it. Alan told me that you can either accept your personality flaws and exploit them, (e.g. Simon Cowell exaggerating his arrogance, or Bob Hope with his cowardliness) or you can deliberately put the more pleasing aspects on display.

Audience response is not the only measure: The normal defence for a performer is that their audiences applaud or gasp. Indeed there are a plethora of magicians on YouTube celebrating their magic based on capturing a good audience response as if that somehow is the valid-



ation of their performance. The truth is we all love applause and adulation and performing a surprising trick is a quick way to get it. Posting it on YouTube is a way of reliving that feeling and having people like and comment on it is again all about stroking our ego. The problem is (as Richard McDougall has pointed out in his lectures) that magic has a built in applause cue. Focusing on this is ultimately shallow and it's one of the reasons magic is regarded so low in the performing arts world. Very few magicians are actually artistic in their performance of magic, especially in close-up. I'm not talking about obscure, artsy approaches; think of any magician you would consider classy and you'll see finesse and attention to detail, an approach of striving for perfectionism. Whether it is comedy or drama it's there. Maybe by the nature of the beast artistry is rare. Certainly most magicians feel that as long as the audience scream in surprise they are happy and they feel reassured they must be as good as they think they are. They made them scream after all! The truth is that a friend in the pub who makes everyone laugh with a well told joke is probably displaying more skill in performance terms than the magician who buys a trick and enjoys everyone expressing

surprise at how it works. So, yes, although ultimately an audience remains the acid test, they won't tell you if you aren't standing straight, your hair was distracting or you had a tell on one of your moves. Mind you, if you believe that those things don't really matter as long as they applaud, you probably wouldn't have bought these notes or have read this far!

Stripped down magic:

One recent style is to deliberately try to put nothing of your personality at all on display, making the trick all about the effect and not about the performer. Although this can be effective in regards to

the effect registering strongly, in truth, it's a bit of a cop out. I was taught that what you should really be after is for yourself to register strongly, more so than the trick. With a lot of marketing and image promotion you may achieve success in spite of a lack of charisma, but too often in these days of shallow celebrities you can see performers who are a triumph of style and image over talent. Image certainly IS very important if you want success, but you also need to live up to the hype otherwise it's just a case of "the emperor's new clothes".

You are the magic: This is a common saying that

needs a little unpicking to appreciate. There is a tendency to think that if the trick is incredibly strong, that the impressiveness of that will translate into an audience being impressed with you, rather than just with the effect. I feel that this approach is ultimately unsatisfying for you as a performer. What David Blaine did successfully was to offer a reprieve from the pretentiousness and chintz that often surrounded average magic performers who were trying to emulate glitzy stage acts. Instead, through television, Spike Lee's students cleverly

highlighted "the effect of the effect" on the audience. People love to watch other people and the programme was a huge success and influence on the magic world. However, as mentioned above, this has led to many jobbing magicians focusing purely on the effect in a minimalistic style, overlooking the fact that the power of such presentation is about *highlighting* audience response afterwards. In live performances, without a camera, you might consider framing great responses during an effect for others to see, but often awareness of doing this is absent, the



magician is just gratifying themselves by watching the response. Also absent is awareness of any impact they make as a personality. In this style, you are in danger of becoming a complete non entity, interchangeable with any other jobbing magician who invariably does the same standard tricks. (i.e. the ones that are get the biggest response and are the most easy to do). Here Dynamo scores as he makes the most of his back story and you get a sense of who he is in-between the effects via a documentary style fill in.

Know what you are projecting: If you are wondering where to start, here is an example of an exer-

cise I use. I am a list person. I like lists. Listing your favourite effects and what they say about you is a sobering exercise. It's not easy to do to yourself and honest feedback from strangers is a valuable thing.

As you list your traits, you begin to see patterns. This helps you understand and define your style. It also highlights the fact you may be coming over as one-dimensional. Knowing what you are aiming to portray of yourself in a routine helps you sell it that much better, and that awareness will certainly affect your script as well as your performance. Alan maintained that essen-

tially, your entertainment skill, whatever it is, (singing, dancing, comedy or magic) is merely the justification for you being in front of an audience. It goes without saying you should be good at it. After that, it's all about you, whether they accept your personality as someone they enjoy spending time with. Call it charisma or likeability, essentially they have to accept you. **YOU.** Your personality is the

foundation on which everything rests. You have to have skill, you have to have good material, but underpinning it all is your personality. Noel Coward's famous line deceptively hides all the hard work required but does get to the heart of the issue. When he was asked how you become a star by an aspiring young actor, he simply replied, "*You shine dear boy, you shine...*"





Create

Biz

You don't have to feel inspired in order to create. You just have to see through it.

Your mind will conspire in order to achieve what it is you want. Set goals that sound impossible and you'll see yourself achieve magical things while trying to conquer them.

Discipline + Play = Good Shit

Collaborating with others when you lack inspiration is like drinking beer when you're thirsty.

Make it a habit to come up with at least 10 stupid dumb idiotic mean silly unfiltered ideas a day.

Any idea is good in the right context or in the right hands.

Make yourself care about what you're doing and let yourself be transported by what you've chosen to devote your energy to.

It is only when we revisit what it is we've learned, revisit what it is we've seen, revisit what it is we've

read that the experience of learning begins.

If you're just starting out you haven't earned the right to be tough on yourself.

If more than half your friends think that what you're doing is crazy, then it means you've started walking down your own path.

*If you're not having fun while
you're performing it's because
everything you do is super safe
and does not challenge you as a
performer or storyteller.*



Bio Chris

Chris is an accomplished full time performer who created and runs the highly successful "Close-Up @ The Magic Circle" show. For the last 7 years he has also produced the show in a variety of theaters, performing every week alongside others with an aim to showcase quality close-up magic. He has been a long term director of the charity "Centre for the Magic Arts" whose aim is to preserve the heritage of The Magic Circle and educate the public about magic as a performing art as well as being a former secretary of the Magic Circle itself.

To find out more about Chris you can

visit his website: <http://>

www.chriswoodmagic.co.uk

Bio Alvaro

Alvaro is the Co-founder of Invisible-Practice, the home of the wonderful magazine you are reading.

He has won multiple national and international prizes such as the: Nordic Countries international award, the Second National Award for Card Magic in Spain and many more. Alvaro is currently spending his time working on his trilogy "The book" this starts with Chelsea that is soon to be released.

Alvaro is a wonderful thinker, creator and philosopher of magic and you can find out more about him right here: [@Alvarobertsel](https://twitter.com/Alvarobertsel)



Biz



Instagram



Find us on Instagram to discover more essays, videos and magic talk!

www.instagram.com/invisible_practice

Mailing List

Subscribe to our mailing list to get notified whenever a new magazine gets released.

[Click here to Subscribe](#)



Thank You To our Patreons:

- *Rehan Kamal*
- *Daniel Tril*
- *Hoig Lim*
- *Mohamed Nayad*
- *Quweyoon*
- *Fritz Alkemade*
- *Jeffery Van Vliet*
- *Radek Pehry*
- *Steve Brownley*
- *Nathan Wilson*
- *Kid Oldman*
-



PATREON

With Invisible Practice we are trying to create a community of dedicated magician who care about magic.

We are about to discover a new way of magic together and at the same time we are discovering what made the old way of magic so good.

Where is magic going? What should magic be? What inspires us to keep going and create amazing magic?

Honestly, we don't know. We only think that we know we

know, but we don't really.

However, this is a goal that we can discover together.

Join the patreon to join our journey to uncover the real secrets of magic.

<http://www.patreon.com/invisiblepractice>