

London Mentalism Meeting

7 July 2007

Treadwell's Book Shop

23 Tavistock Street

Introduction

I was pleased with the enthusiastic support for this meeting; a meeting solely dedicated to the art of mentalism. What started out as a kernel of an idea blossomed into a full-blown event with a full house of participants. I was snooping about Treadwell's Bookshop and got talking to Christina, the owner, who as it happens, is also an American and we both went to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. I figured fate was with me and that this venue would be destined for the meeting. A spreadsheet and many PayPal transfers later, we had 30 eager participants trundling into the basement of the shop ready for action.



Todd, Maria, & Andrew

Christina left one of our participants (Pete Antoniou) in charge, which threw most of off in the first instance (myself included). Pete posts by the name Celloboy on the *Mentalist Sanctum*, which dawned on me about 10 minutes into the day. The room was indeed much smaller than imagined, but we managed to get some extra chairs and get down to business.



Jon

My initial plan was to break into small groups (I even prepared numbered billets!) but the layout of the room was not conducive, so I thought a 'brief' round of introductions would break the ice. The introductions were fascinating as we learned we had in our midst stage mentalists, close-up mentalists, inventors, writers, bizarrists, hypnotherapists, beginners, veterans, and TV/Movie people. The general tone was supportive and welcoming as we digressed here and

there and sounded each other out.

Lunch

Lunch arrived around 1 pm, which gave us the opportunity to re-arrange the room and engage in more informal networking. There was a great buzz in the room as people who had met online finally got to put faces to names. Each corner had a gaggle of people involved in intense conversation where no doubt various effects and methods were being discussed.



Bev & Barry

Performances

Séance living and dead test

The post-lunch session started with a wonderful display of close-up spiritualism with a séance demonstration from Roni Shachnaey. He displayed an altar cloth, a pentagram bag, some billets and a candle. Doug Segal, the ever helpful victim, wrote the name of a dead relative or dead friend on one of the billets, which was placed into the bag. He then wrote the names of four living people on the remaining billets, which were also put into the bag and mixed up by Doug. Roni extracted one billet, and Doug read



Roni

out the names of the people on the remaining billets; they were all the live ones! Roni had successfully extracted the billet with the dead person's name on it!. He immediately referred to the person as 'she' and then tore up the billet and placed the shreds in Doug's hand. He named the person as Rita and then asked Doug to write Rita's name on a card that was full of other names. A sheet of paper was laid on top of the card and set alight. Once the flames subsided, the names were gone and Doug read out the remaining text: 'I am here'. The effect was followed by a full discussion of methods, alternatives, and other applications of the materials Roni used. This effect will appear in the *Oracle Magazine* (see below).



Tom & Siobhan

Stepping Stones

Tom Lauten 'stepped' up to the plate with a great new effect that utilises the Uncle Charlie card from the Heirloom collection. He explained that Uncle Charlie used to play a game called 'stepping stones' and proceeded to lay out five cards with different images on them: a box, a circle, a cross, a rising star, and a tsunami (waves). The participant (our own Phill 'Mitox' Smith) was then shown a set of cards with

instructions on them. He chose a card, followed the instructions counting, spelling, and removing cards at random and yet the climax involved a sucker finish and a double kicker with two matching symbols! This will be a big commercial hit and perfect for dinner parties and other occasions for close-up mentalism. The props were suitably aged and the story and cards were fantastically scripted. Discussion ensued about different routining and presentation.

The Director's Cut

Our final effect came from Simon 'Bananafish' Shaw, who presented his 'Director's Cut', which has a collection of cards with movie posters on it across different genres of films. The participant selects one card and imagines the main features of the film (plot, actors, etc). Simon then divines the film that they selected. This effect is super slick and will play well for walk-around and close-up settings. It can be presented as a drawing dupe, a body language effect, and can utilise the participant's imagination, including visualising major scenes, the leading actors, as well as the music. All of us liked the fact that such a small set of props can pack so much presentational potential. I am sure this will be another commercial hit.



Simon, Dale, & Tom

Open Discussion



Matt, Andy, Paul, & Dale

The rest of the afternoon's discussion centred on innovation, improvisation, being yourself, methods and imagination. One of the key themes that emerged through discussion with Andy Nyman was on the fact there is no need to be like someone else. Rather, we all need to develop our

styles and effects. In *Prism*, Max Maven says mentalists effectively demonstrate four

main abilities and use four main methods for producing them (see pages 3-5). Like any great cultural manifestation (playing cards, Tarot, backgammon, chess, etc), mentalism has a finite set of elements and an infinite set of possibilities. The methods have evolved very little over time (with the exception of some new technologies) but the presentation, context, and development of routines and effects represent an endless and fascinating panoply of opportunities.

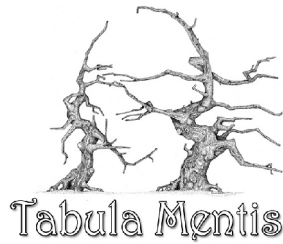
Mentalism Society



We also briefly discussed the need for a mentalist association of some kind. Opinion to date remains mixed on this question. Some see it as a logical step forward for representing our interests, sharing ideas, and establishing a useful network, while others prefer a loose network and informal arrangements. Roni Shachnaey and I are exploring possibilities and thus far have set up a domain name (www.psycrets.org.uk) and are soliciting views on content for the website, as well as clarifying the aims and objectives of the society.



Dominic & Steve



Future Meeting

We all expressed an interest in having another meeting. To that end, Tim Bowden has kindly offered his studio on 7 Mallow Street for the next meeting, which will be held on the 27th of October 2007. Entitled, *Tabula Mentis*, the second meeting offers a large venue, more time, and plenty of room for catering. The day will be more structured with sessions on stage mentalism, close-up mentalism, bizarrism and séance work, and gimmickless mentalism (e.g. naked techniques, readings, and 'invisible' mind reading).

Marketplace

The meeting closed with a frantic marketplace opening up with deals from Simon Lea, Andy Nyman, Julian Moore, Phill Smith, Jon Thompson, and Todd Landman.

Aftermath

Many of us stayed on for the pub afterwards and a small number of us ended up in Soho for dinner. The feedback has been tremendous both in private correspondence and forum chat. I want to thank you all personally for making the day such a great success and wish you all good fortune until the next meeting!

Dr Todd Landman
The Metaphysical Magician



Gallery



James, Paul, & Steve



Doug & Maria



Matt, Bob, & Andrew



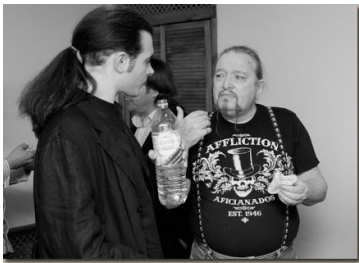
Iain & Steve



Simon



Tom & Todd



Merlin & Roni



Paul, Matt, Andy, Paul, & Dale



Gary & James

Participants

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Resources

The Mentalist Sanctum
www.mentalistsanctum.com

TalkMagic
www.talkmagic.co.uk

The Magic Woods
www.themagicwoods.co.uk

The Mental Image
www.thementalimage.com

Martin Breese International
www.martinbreese.com

Oracle Magic Magazine
www.oraclemagicmagazine.com

Oracle Magic Magazine forum
<http://cybermessageboard.fatcow.com/oraclemagic/index.php>

