

# Genii Speaks

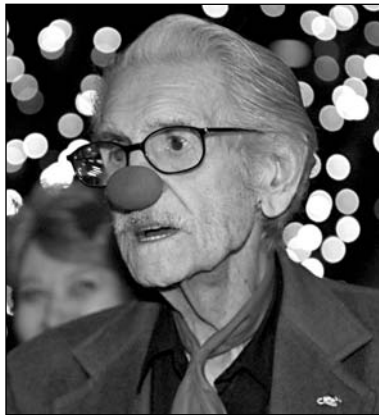
Richard Kaufman

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**JUST AS WE WERE** going to press, the phone call came: yet another magic great has died. One of magic's most beloved magicians, Billy McComb, left us on Sunday April 30. We'll have a tribute to Billy next month. • This month I'm pleased to present another Dai Vernon issue of *Genii* (our first, in December 2001, sold out very quickly). It coincides

with the publication on May 14 of our book *The Vernon Touch*, which is a 608-page collection of all of The Professor's "Vernon Touch" columns which ran here in *Genii* from 1968 until 1990. Every word has been newly typeset and hundreds of never-before published photographs have been added, all beautifully designed by Michael Albright (see ad p.57). In late June you'll also be able to purchase volume one of David Ben's remarkable new book, *Dai Vernon: A Biography*—the first truly comprehensive story of Vernon's life (see ad p.66). We have an excerpt for you beginning on p.52 that will amply demonstrate the depth of author Ben's research as he takes us back to Vernon's escapades in the early 1920s and his meetings with Dad Stevens, the night he famously fooled Houdini, and his courtship of his future wife, Jeanne. • At FISM in Holland several years ago I met Hakan Varol, a marvelous German dealer and craftsman who manufactures a unique line of magic you won't find anywhere else. While he produces many items, the one which caught my eye was a complete Flea Circus in a handmade wooden box whose lid opens up into a stage. The invisible fleas perform remarkable and incomprehensible stunts and tricks—I'll tell you more about it on p.46 (but you can go directly to his website and see it for yourself: [www.hakan-varol.de](http://www.hakan-varol.de)). • Jack Parker is a name rapidly becoming known among lovers of card magic—he's damn clever and I couldn't be more pleased to present a double-sized "Magicana" this month with David Acer describing 10 of Jack's finest creations, complemented by 63 line drawings by magic's finest illustrator, Earle Oakes. Sounds like an e-book you'd pay \$20 or \$30 for ... but it's right here in *Genii* this month—no extra charge. Jack has also posted videos of most of the tricks on his website, [www.jacksdeck.com](http://www.jacksdeck.com), where he also sells booklets. • At the Los Angeles Conference on Magic History last November, Patrick Page spoke about the unique act of British magician Francis Watts in which he performed a lengthy sequence of tricks using objects borrowed from the audience. I'd never heard of Watts before, but Pat's appreciation for what he did intrigued me. Pat agreed to describe the act for *Genii*—you'll find it on p.38. • The 38<sup>th</sup> annual



Billy McComb, 1922-2006

Photo by Damon Webster

award banquet of the Academy of Magical Arts took place in April and Dustin Stinett was there—and he puts you in the audience on p.60. • Waiting for another illusion plan from Paul Osborne? You can all vanish your ducks on p.16. • Max Maven's "Inquisition" is always one of our most eagerly-awaited features—transport yourself back to grade school on p.15. • Finally, Mike Close, David Regal, and Joe M. Turner let you know the best of the latest books, tricks, and videos on the market.

**The Linking Ring**, the magazine of the I.B.M., will see many changes as longtime editor Phil Willmarth steps down at the end of this year. The I.B.M. has set up a committee to conduct a search for candidates for the post of editor. Contact Don Wiberg, the International Secretary, at [ibmsecretary@comcast.net](mailto:ibmsecretary@comcast.net) by July 15<sup>th</sup> if you wish to apply for the position.

**Our major feature** next month will be an exclusive on Keith Barry, whose one-hour special on CBS, *Keith Barry: Extraordinary*, aired on May 12 (shortly after this issue went to press). After meeting Keith in London at the International Magic Convention last November, then interviewing him for three hours last week, I was looking forward to seeing a preview of the show and was not disappointed. He's an interesting and talented mentalist/magician. The TV special focuses on Keith performing mentalism for celebrities and climaxes with a public hanging—it was suspenseful, enjoyable, and well done. And it was nice to see someone on American TV who's not copying David Blaine or Criss Angel. Brad Henderson, who knows a lot more about mentalism than I do, will be turning the interview into our July cover story. • On May 8, just days before the Keith Barry special airs on CBS, *David Blaine: Drowned Alive*, will air on ABC. The two-hour special will climax when David, who will enter a water-filled glass sphere on May 1, will attempt to break the world record for holding his breath underwater after spending most of the preceding week in the sphere. Word is that there will also be some great magic in the show—Paul Harris has spent many months in New York with Blaine in preparation. • I just returned from Las Vegas for a quick trip to the set of the second series of Criss Angel's *Mindfreak*, which begins airing weekly May 31<sup>st</sup> on A&E. As in season one, I might pop up as one of the talking heads between effects. They were about halfway through filming the 21 episodes by the end of April and I



Keith Barry

think you can look forward to seeing more magic performed on each episode compared to the first season. One of the big stunts you'll see is Criss put into a strait jacket and tossed out of a plane. He'll have 20 seconds to escape in order to pull the ripcord on his parachute in time. Later this year, after the entire series has aired (so we can discuss things without ruining any surprises), we'll have a full report on all the stunts and effects and a nice surprise for *Genii* readers.

Every time I've seen Shimada perform I'm reminded of what a truly wonderful magician he is. On p.71 of this issue you'll see an advertisement that offers the chance of a lifetime: five days of personal instruction with the master in the art of producing doves and fanning cards. It's not cheap, but it's hard to imagine that if you're truly serious about learning the art of dove magic you wouldn't find it to be well worth the price.

On Sunday April 23, as David Copperfield left the Kravis Center in Palm Beach, Florida, at 11:15 p.m. after performing several shows, he and two women who are in the crew were robbed at gunpoint by four youths. After the two women were relieved of their valuables, the robbers demanded David turn over his goodies as well. He did something that turned out to be clever—he pulled out his pockets and showed they were empty. I'm assuming he did the old Pocket Dodge. This enabled him to keep his cellphone and, as soon as the robbers got back into their car, they called the cops and reported the license plate number. The criminals were captured 10 minutes later. While David's ruse had a positive outcome, it could just as likely have had a negative one—if the robbers thought he was being cute, and they searched his pockets and found he was hiding stuff, he could easily have been shot. So I wouldn't suggest emulating his actions, though I have to say it's pretty cool that David used a magical technique to avoid being robbed.

An enormous pile of excellent DVDs washed over my desk in the past month. Murphy's Magic quietly put out a boxed set of nine DVDs containing over 17 hours of material this past January—the original Tannen's *Stars of Magic* videos from the 1980s. While not new, the staggering amount of material they contain is well worth the \$150 asking price. Most of the DVDs contains several tapes combined—the two DVDs devoted to Paul Harris contain all five original tapes, the Frank Garcia DVD contains two tapes (and where else can you see Frank's work?), the two David Roth DVDs contain four tapes, and there's more from Bernard Bilis and Eric DeCamps, as well as an All-Star DVD. The quality of the material is superb. • R.

Paul Wilson on *The Royal Road to Card Magic* is a mammoth set of five DVDs in a nice digi-pack foldout, with Paul leading the viewer on a comprehensive basic course in card magic. Edited and marketed by L&L, it's a superb set—highly recommended for all those who love cardmagic. • At a convention in Las Vegas awhile back I saw Asi Wind per-

GENII SPEAKS, continued on page 13



## THE MAGIC CASTLE

MAY 29 TO JUNE 4

### Close-Up Gallery

Early: 7:00, 7:45, 8:30, 9:15  
Mike Barger  
Late: 10, 10:45, 11:30, 12:00  
Joycee Beck

### The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: 7:30, 8:45, 9:30  
Mark Haslam  
Late: 9:45, 11:15, 12  
Shawn McMaster

### Palace Of Mystery

8:30, 10, 11:15  
Derek Hughes  
Joel War  
Danny Cole

JUNE 5 TO 11

### Close-Up Gallery

Early: Jon Armstrong  
Late: Ivan Amodei

### The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Chase Curtis  
Late: Alfonso

### Palace Of Mystery

Matt Marcy  
Arthur Trace  
Jason Byrne

JUNE 12 TO 18

### Close-Up Gallery

Early: Nathan Gibson  
Late: Jonathan Levit

### The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Joe M. Turner  
Late: George Tovar

### Palace Of Mystery

David Deeble  
Michael Grasso  
Mystina

JUNE 19 TO 25

### Close-Up Gallery

Early: Jason Tong  
Late: Dan McKinnon

### The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Bob Dorian  
Late: Aldo Colombini

### Palace Of Mystery

Terry Elton  
Kyoko  
Magic Wave

JUNE 26 TO JULY 2

### Close-Up Gallery

Early: Jerry Andrus  
Late: Damian Nieman

### The Parlour of Prestidigitation

Early: Arthur Benjamin  
Late: Andrew Goldenhersh

### Palace Of Mystery

Chuck Jones & Co

### Magic Castle Information

Those with guest cards, and those who belong to the IBM or SAM, are admitted to The Magic Castle with dinner reservations. Please call 323-851-3313 for more information. Updates to the performing schedule can be found at [www.MagicCastle.com](http://www.MagicCastle.com).

## LAS VEGAS

Compiled by David Neubauer  
([www.dnmagic.com](http://www.dnmagic.com))

### Amazing Johnathan

10 pm, (Dark Thurs.), Sahara

### Jason Bird

The Shops in Desert Passage—Aladdin. Main stage, near the "V" Theater, Thurs.-Mon. Various times from 1:15 pm to 8:15, Free

### Buck Wild

Nathan Burton (as a redneck magician), 7 pm covered shows Mon.-Wed. & Sat. 9 pm Topless shows (Over 18), Sahara (Dark Fri.)

### Lance Burton, Master Magician

7 pm Tues.-Sat.,  
10 pm Tues. & Sat., Monte Carlo

### David Copperfield

7:30 & 10 pm, 4:30 Sat. & some Sun. MGM Grand  
June 1-14, 20-30

### Collin Foster—Quicker Than The Eye

4 & 6 p.m. (Dark Mon.)  
Comedy Zone, Plaza

### Tyas Frantz, Chris Karpiak, & Seth Grabel

Beacher's Madhouse 10 pm,  
Hard Rock

### Haunted Vegas Tour & Show

Robert Allen & Jac Hayden & Zamora, 9 pm tour and show (Dark Fri.), Greek Isle

### Illusionary Magic of Rick Thomas

2 & 4 pm, Stardust (Dark Wed.)

### La Femme

Stephan Vanel, 8 & 10:30 pm (Dark Tues.), MGM Grand

### Mac King Comedy Magic Show

1 pm, 3 pm, (Dark Sun. & Mon.)  
Harrah's Clint Holmes Theater

### Penn & Teller

9 pm, (Dark Tues.), Rio

### Bite (Vampire Strip Revue)

Antonio Restivo (magic & fire manipulation) 10:30 pm (dark Thurs.) Stratosphere

### V, The Ultimate Variety Show

Jeff Hobson, Nathan and Sarah, 7 pm and 9 pm, Aladdin

### World's Greatest Magic Show

Kevin James, Joseph Gabriel, The Majestixs, Kozak. Derek Roberts, Billy Fergueson & Chris Randall (pre-show). June Guest Stars: 1-25: Ardan James, 26-30: Shimshe. 6 pm Sat. - Thurs., 8:15 Fri., Greek Isle.

### Xtreme Magic Starring Dirk Arthur

2 and 4 pm, (Dark Fri.)  
Tiffany Theatre, Tropicana

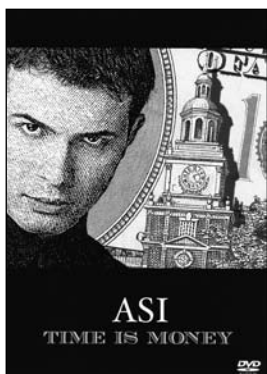
### Restaurants

Eric Allan  
Outback Steakhouse,  
(Green Valley), Fri. & Sat.

Jayden LaCross  
TGI Fridays, Wed. & Sun.

### Las Vegas Magic Organizations

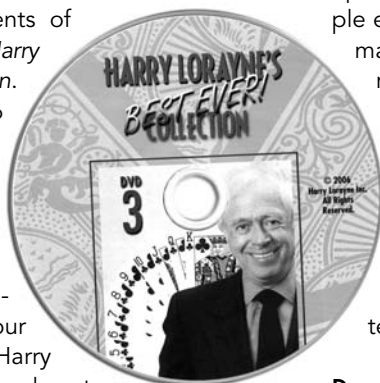
I.B.M. #257: 7 pm 1st Monday of each month at Boomers, 3200 Sirius Ave. [www.ring257.com](http://www.ring257.com)



form a great effect where a bill I signed vanished and reappeared under my wristwatch. Tried to get it for "Magicana," but Asi was intent on putting it out on a DVD: *Time is Money* has just come out and, while the \$35 price tag is steep for a single trick, it's a doozy and could be a real reputation maker. (There are a few bonus items on the DVD based on the Origami dollar bill fold used in the routine.) • I grew up watching Harry Lorayne do card magic in New

York City and he's one of those guys who can make any trick look good—he has a unique manner of performance ("pell-mell" as Jon Racherbaumer has called it) that moves straight ahead like a bullet with mile-a-minute patter. L&L Publishing has re-released the 10-volume videotape set they did of Harry as a set of four DVDs (each of which has the contents of three videotapes on it) called *Harry Lorayne's Best Ever Collection*. All told they contain about 16 hours of material. Aside from the value of the tricks (there's a lot of good stuff that isn't particularly hard to do), there are several lessons to be learned. One is the importance of watching your audience rather than your hands while you're working. Harry knows how to sell a card trick like almost no one else and watching him do these tricks brought back many fond memories. From the 1960s to the early 1980s he was the best-selling author in magic and these DVDs may help viewers remember why.

**Salvano (Tomasz Chelminski, 1929-2006)** died of cancer in April at the age of 76. Rafael Benetar reports: "Salvano was one of the true masters of our art. His extremely polished (as well as Polish) act was wonderfully structured and the exe-



cution was as close to perfect as it gets. I've seen it many times and, aside from the sheer joy of watching it, I am still fooled by his multiple flawless productions of full Martini glasses while wearing a well-fitted Tuxedo. The outlook of his act was very traditional and what many would call old-fashioned. But he stood out in the most legitimate way: on sheer class and quality.

"I had the good fortune of working with him several times, staying in the same hotels, and enjoying his pleasant conversations during meals. He was very opinionated and had very personal views on everything.

"Here is a little story, on a more personal level, to shed some light on his human side and sense of humor. He used to say, Why should people always ask you how you are if they are not prepared to put up with a real answer? Why not just say hello? Some people even say 'How are you?' and walk away. Ever since he made that comment, and realized that I took note, he made me fall into the trap several times. I would meet him a year later and ask, 'How are you?' And he would start: 'Uhhh, my knee is cracking, oh and my stomach, and this headache ...'."

Not only does the Greater Magic Video Library offer two excellent DVDs on Salvano's work, but less well-known is Losander's *A Day with Salvano* (\$35 at [www.losander.com](http://www.losander.com)). Salvano was truly a master of his craft.

**Department of Inevitable Corrections:** Max Maven writes, "In the May issue's 'Magicana' David Acer wrote, 'While there is precedent for converting stage-illusion plots into close-up card tricks, Rob James may be the first to make the leap with the Substitution Trunk.' Not even close. I had just such a plot in *The New Tops* back in 1980, and I was by no means the first to come up with the idea." In fact, many people on the Genii Forum chimed in with numerous versions of card transpositions using "Metamorphosis" as a plot. •



Salvano