



MAGICURRENTS

SAN DIEGO RING 76

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Tuesday, February 8
Ring 76 Meeting and

**Close-Up
Competition**

7:00 p.m. Jack's Magic Place

January meeting highlights



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January Meeting Highlights



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January Meeting (continued)



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January Meeting (continued)



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January Meeting (continued)





Review by Joel A. Moskowitz, M.D.

The First Psychedelic Magician: "Spellbound" The Wonder-Filled Life of Doug Henning by John Harrison

The world can thank Canada for the major developments in the Art of Prestidigitation in the past century. Two sons of Canada transfused magic with their innovative performances: For close-up we must applaud Dai Vernon and for stage, none else than Douglas James Henning. Appreciation must be expressed to John Harrison, a senior attorney in a large international law firm, who researched and reported in "Spellbound - The Wonder-Filled Life of Doug Henning" the amazing career of a boy whose motto was "Magician, Have Rabbit. Will Travel" who is credited with reviving magic as a form of mass entertainment.

In 424 pages of tightly written, carefully researched and documented exposition, published by BoxOffice Books, New York (2009), author Harrison tells the story of the birth of new magic. Spellbound was unusual: a rock musical with magic. No monocled Cardini in tuxedo, Henning was a pixyish youngster with bushy hair, moustache and some would say garish clothes. The audience liked him. Inspired by seeing the stage show 'Hair' Doug was determined to bring magic to the stage with music.

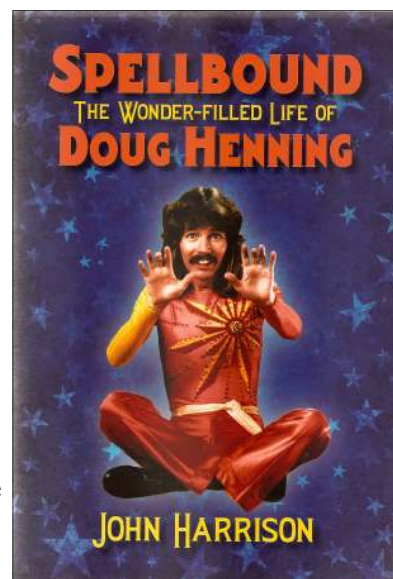
Many magicians, regrettably, fail to understand that the affection from the audience is a key ingredient to achieve rapport where magic entertains. A student of psychology and perception, Doug Henning knew that. At McMaster University, with the intention of becoming a physician, he met a friend and future collaborator, Ivan Reitman (later to be the director of Ghostbusters). He interrupted his studies to "do magic". A loss for medicine but a boon to magic.

Subsequent to college, he was awarded a Canada Council for the Arts grant enabling him to study magic with the masters: Slydini and Dai Vernon. The grant reflects the wisdom of Canada's educators. Author Harrison's lucid description of the evolution of an idea from page to stage provides the reader with 'you are there' virtual experience of the creation of "Spellbound".

It was his performance before the Inuits (Eskimos) of Alert in the Canadian Arctic that Doug learned why magic is necessary. He was dismayed that the audience seemed unimpressed by his wizardry. Afterwards, Doug questioned the Inuit leader asking why his people didn't react to such wonders as producing birds from nowhere. The leader responded that annually the walrus appears from 'nowhere', the floating silver ball cannot compete with the ball of fire which floats through the air and gives warmth and light. Profoundly, the leader, explained, "Now we know why you are doing (magic). It is because your people have forgotten magic."

Most magic enthusiasts will know the rocket path to fame that Doug Henning enjoyed, his various television productions, Broadway shows, nightclub acts. John Harrison details the steps, positive, and the mishaps which follows on the conjurers craft. What led this master magician who was awed when as a youth he viewed a levitation of a female

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Magic News Briefs

Magic-Con will bring some of the world's top magicians to San Diego from March 19-21, 2010, at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront. This is being organized by Syd Segal, a long-time Ring 76 member. For info, talk to Syd at a meeting, or visit the website at www.magic-con.org.

The 53rd edition of "It's Magic" sponsored by Milt Larsen and Terry Hill comes to San Diego County on Saturday, Feb. 20, at 7:00 p.m. at the California Center for the Arts Escondido, 340 N. Escondido Blvd. in Escondido. Tickets range from \$35 for the best seats to \$22.50 for the balcony. The performers are Joel Ward (formerly from Cardiff-by-the-Sea), Mark Kalin & Jinger, Chris Hart, Jeff Hobson, Steve Trash & Co. and Mat Plendl. For info call 800-988-4253 or visit www.artcenter.org.

Ring 76 Calendar

Mar. 8* Favorite Trick Night
Apr. 12 Swap Meet
May 10* Stage Competition
June 14 Lecture, Election & Dues
July 6-10 San Diego Convention
July 11 Awards Banquet &
Installation of Officers

* chance for members to perform

Moskowitz Review (continued)

assistant on the Ed Sullivan show to abandon performing magic and turn to a belief in levitation as a spiritual phenomena is not truly known. Perhaps the difficulties he encountered with his last and least successful extravaganza, Merlin, had something to do with it. Key members of his staff drifted away. At the same time, he was immersing himself in meditation, TM, in the hopes that it would give him the strength, mental, physical and creative to accomplish bringing this magical musical to fruition.

The two passions: magic and TM battled for importance in Doug's psyche. The writings of S. H. Sharpe were congruent with Doug's beliefs i.e. that magic was not only an art form but a spiritual experience.

By August 1987, the secret was out: Doug Henning was calling it quits! His effects were sold to David Copperfield, Siegfried and Roy, Ed Alonzo, and Franz Harary who had first choice. He identified with John Booth, also a graduate of McMaster University who also left magic at the height of his career to become a Unitarian Minister. Doug was not alone in becoming a disciple of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Other celebrities: Mia Farrow, The Beatles, and the Beach Boy became acolytes. The acceptance that one could actually levitate from sitting on a cushion, cross-legged seems unbelievable. Especially for one who "knows" how such things are done. Yet Doug, a cerebral individual, seems to have believed - in the values of TM at least.

Sadly Doug's penultimate return to performing was to raise money for the TM attraction to be built in Niagara Falls. Veda Land fell through. The world soon lost Doug as well. He died from liver cancer in February 2000, age 52. The story of Doug Henning, so well told by John Harrison, is a study of this innovative magician's turbulent path to fame and accomplishment. It is recommended reading for any who would pursue wizardry. It is most highly recommended,
Rx Rx Rx Rx Rx (5 out of 5 Rx).