

Ex Libris by **Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.**

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for February 2018! This month I will be in Chicago quite a bit as I work on getting a publisher for a book that I am currently working on. While there I will once again have the opportunity to session with a group of magicians including **Simon Aronson**, **John Bannon** and **David Solomon**. One of the many things that they all stress in their own work is having a good foundation on which to build your magical knowledge, and that leads me to what I want to focus on this month. First, I want to preface that with the fact that both Simon Aronson and David Solomon were students of the late **Ed Marlo** for *over 15 years*, as was **Jon Racherbaumer**, the author of the book we will be discussing this month.

The book is called ***Counthesaurus - An Abecedarian Handbook of False Counts and Displays*** (Counthesaurus is an amalgam of the words *count* and *thesaurus*). This is a 209-page soft cover, spiral bound book published in 2004. The title says it all – this is a book that focuses solely on false counts and false displays with cards. Most of them are related to packet effects, but others also apply to chunks of cards all the way up to a full deck.

One of the greatest tools that a magician can possess is an arsenal of ways to display cards, whether it is displaying four cards while hiding a fifth among them (as in the *Ascanio Spread*) or counting four cards as four and hiding the third card from the top (as with the ***Ghost Count***, *a.k.a. the Elmsley Count*). Jon Racherbaumer is not only a long-time student of Marlo, he is also a prolific author of many, many books related to card magic, all based on his own work and that of Marlo. He is a scholarly magician with quite the encyclopedic knowledge of all branches of magic, but especially the pasteboards.

In this book he offers all the basic counts you may already be familiar with, such as the aforementioned *Ascanio Spread* and the *Elmsley Count*, and among those the counts like the ***Flushtration Count***, ***The D'Amico Spread***, ***The Buckle Count***, ***The Jordan Count***, ***The Hamman Count***, ***The Olram Subtlety*** and ***the Veesser Concept***. Even more than that, there are many different variations on each item, as well as versions that are a blend of one or more technique, all of them offering a way to falsely count or display the cards in view. These are all basic building blocks that can (and *should*) be used as the foundation of your magic routines; indeed, many of them are considered *standard* moves, for example, the *Elmsley Count*, *the Buckle Count*, *the Ascanio Spread* and *the Hamman Count* are all things that you see in a lot of descriptions related to card effects.

One thing that a tome like this allows for is to find alternatives to standard moves, but also, it serves as a reference for when you come across a count or display that you are unfamiliar with. This may not have every single one in existence within its pages, but it is pretty close to containing all the ones that you are likely to ever need and perhaps, even more than you will ever use. There are 78 counts and displays given in this book! What is more, although this book focuses on these counts and displays for use with playing cards, many of them can easily be adapted to groups or packs of card-like objects if it suits your need, things like a packet of small papers, ESP cards, bank notes, business cards, etc.

One of the neatest little ideas I have ever seen in a magic book of any sort is in this book and that is a ***Count Drill*** detailed at the end of this book. What that is specifically is a drill – it is a systematic way of practicing, to learn and gain proficiency with, the various items in the book. I can even be used for other similar moves from *other sources*. It has all been laid out in an easy to follow format and will certainly give you a nice workout.

So, there we have it – an excellent book that is very useful for developing a strong foundation upon which you can build your card magic skills. This book is for all skill levels as everyone from beginners to advance cardicians will find this reference book a very valuable resource. That is all for this month folks – get out there and share the magic and remember: Comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable! – **J.M.A.**