

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for March 2018! In the February 2018 article I mentioned that I would be travelling to Chicago and sessioning with the "Chicago Sessions" group, which was started by **Ed Marlo** back in the 1960s and carried on today by two of his closest students, **Simon Aronson** and **Dave Solomon**. **John Bannon** was not a student of Marlo, but he is an intrinsic part of the core group today, as is University of Chicago Professor of Philosophy, **David Finkelstein**.

I mention this again because I was reminded of all the great material that has really come out of this group, especially Simon, Dave and John. This inspired me to do a series which focuses on books that each of these magicians have written which I will call the *Chicago Series*. This month I will focus on a few of the earlier books written by Simon Aronson. The first is called the ***Bound to Please*** (self-published in 1994), which is a collection of four of his earlier publications, including ***Kabbala – the Simon Aronson Issue (April 1973)***, ***The Card Ides of Simon Aronson (1978)***, ***A Stack to Remember (1979)*** and ***Shuffle-Bored (1980)***. Undoubtedly the most notable part of this collection is *A Stack to Remember*, the one that started it all on the Aronson Stack, the memorized deck stack created by Simon. He discusses the mnemonics and various techniques for memorization, followed by various built-in features of the stack and other ways to use it.

Shuffle-Bored is another thing that Simon became well known for and is a fantastic principle with which you can create some very strong and almost self-working card magic with. For example, *Random Sample Shuffle-Bored* is a predicted Triumph, of sorts, where packets of cards are mixed faceup into face down and you show a little booklet which has "predicted" three different things about the deck in its shuffled condition, leaving room for one statistical error, which also turns out to be true! Also, within this collection are two of his most famous effects which are also marketed separately: *Ad-Jacent*, a two-selection Card Stab effect using an advertisement card, and *Red See Passover*, a Cards Across type of effect using a mentally selected red backed card which vanishes from its packet of 12 cards and appears in a packet of 12 blue backed cards.

The second title I want to talk about is called ***The Aronson Approach*** which was published in 1990 by Savaco Ltd. as a 173-page hardcover book. This is one of his shortest tomes but with no less powerful card magic inside. One of the stand-out items in the book is not so much an effect as it is a move, which Simon calls *Mark-a-Place Mates*. The move is taught here in the context of an effect where a spectator randomly finds pairs of a four-of-a-kind. It was inspired by the **Bill Simon Prophecy Move**. It accomplishes a similar result with a different maneuver. Other standout items include *Active Aces*, a very nice four Ace routine that combines the Stanley Collins Vanish of the four Aces with the Henry Christ Fabulous Ace routine, which sees each Ace reproduced in a different way. *Under Her Spell* is a combination of the vanish of four Queens with some cheeky scripting if you choose to use it, then each queen is found again by spelling their names.

Finally, there is *Simon-Eyes*, a very strong and direct mind-reading effect in which you discern two completely free mental selections, no forcing, no switching, using an ordinary deck with no gaffs and instantly repeatable in any situation with no reliance on a memorized stack at all, although one certainly could use one. It takes a long time to describe the workings, but it is not overly complicated to accomplish the effect. Also included in this book is something that became a standard feature of his books, which is a section dedicated to further work on the memorized stack, some of the ideas Aronson Stack-dependent and other which will work with any stack you want.

The third and final book in this article is called ***Simply Simon***. It was self-published by Simon in 1995 as a 308-page hardcover book. This book covers quite a bit of ground and contains some of the strongest material that he has ever published. *Child's Play* is a pretty much self-working mental game based on work by **Dr. Bob Neale**, revolving around the game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. In short, you always know the outcome of the game without even having to look at anything, and for the final phase, you will predict the outcome! The *Aronson Stripout: Push Through Variation* is one of the best false shuffles you will ever learn but further than that, it is rather easy to do too.

The real stars of this book are *Happy Birthday*, *The Calendar Card* and *Fate*, which all revolve around a spectator selecting a random, unknown playing card which ends up matching a prediction. It is mentioned that the first of the three can be done with any easily calculable stack or memorized order, and the plot was inspired by the **Alex Elmsley** effect called *Fate's Datebook*, which can be found in *The Collected Works of Alex Elmsley, Volume 2* by **Stephen Minch**. In this context it uses a special calendar card which you can make yourself, and the Aronson Stack. Each of them produces the same effect, however, the procedures are all a bit different and some are even cleaner than others, but all very worthy of studying. Simon takes great pride in his work on this plot, and rightly so: there is a version of this effect that can be carried around in your wallet, so you can perform this anywhere on the go! The last section of the book is on his Cross-Index Index. Simon did an insane amount of work on this index which can be used with the Birthday plot, and it allows you to cover every one of 4,392 possible outcomes in a single wallet! Seriously. It takes a while to explain the whole system, but it really is quite simple to understand and use.

Well, that is all for this month folks – join me again next month as we delve into the work of David Solomon. Keep the magic alive! – **J.M.A.**