

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

Hello folks and WELCOME BACK to Ex Libris, it has been quite a while – five years and seven months, in fact, but we are BACK!

First, for those unfamiliar, a short update on why the long pause: Back in January 2021, after a whirlwind six years in the AAMC, some of those spent as the Secretary, President and Librarian, my family and I relocated from Wyandotte to northern Michigan for work – specifically the resort town of Charlevoix.

It has been a crazy half of a decade, but earlier this year I was asked to come back to writing this article on a regular basis, and so I shall. If you previously enjoyed my writings, I tip my hat to you, and you may also thank long-time AAMC members **Bob Goodwin** and **Dan Jones** for prompting me to make the comeback! Now, on with the article!

This month, we will be looking at ***The Book of Secrets – Lessons for Progressive Conjuring*** by **John Carney**. We previously focused on the work of John Carney back in the December 2016 article – take a look in the Ex Libris archive on the website for a refresher. This is a 369-page, hardcover book originally published in 2002 by CarneyMagic, and is now out of print. There are rumors of a reprint coming soon, but we shall see...

There is a broad range of material covered in this book, and much of it is based on, or inspired by, magic from the “way-back machine,” which is no surprise because John Carney is a student of magic history, and he was a direct student of some big names in magic like **Dai Vernon**, **Charlie Miller** and **Fawcett Ross**. This book also contains a number of intermittent articles on self-insight, creativity, philosophy (both personal and historic) and more. The purpose of these articles is to get you to think more deeply about the magic you perform, what you wish to get out of it, and how to go about executing those visions and dreams. Some of these thought-provoking articles may even bleed into other areas and interests in your life, and they probably should!

As for the effects within the covers, there is a good bit of card work, but not necessarily as effects. It focuses more on essential techniques for the serious card worker, such as palming and culling, and a few exemplary effects are included

which make use of them. The other content includes coins and magical miscellany, some of which I will highlight now.

On a personal note, one of the genres of magic which I consider the most impossible, the most magical and the most enchanting is that of cigarette and cigar magic. This is especially amplified when dealing with lit cigarettes/cigars which appear out of nowhere, multiply and vanish without a trace. The late, great **Eugene Burger** always lamented that he stopped smoking, if only for the fact that he could no longer produce a *lit cigarette from his long, spindly beard*(!) Imagine that in the minds of your audience! The problem with that genre of magic is that I am not, nor have never been, a smoker. The techniques and effects can absolutely be transferred to similar objects like crayons and golf pencils, but that is a subject for another day. That all being said one of the best cigar routines was created by **Nate Leipzig**. That effect inspired *Just a Cigar*, which appears in this book.

I have long related the where and when of my personal favourite effect in magic, which got me interested in the first place – the Chinese Linking Rings, and in this book are two moves for the rings that come from an unknown origin. They are wonderful to watch, and even more fun to perform!

The coin magic in this book is beautiful, if not straightforward in plot. One of the greatest plots in magic is covered by his *Silver and Glass*, inspired by the work of Dai Vernon and **Edward Victor**. This is a coins-to-glass effect, and John teaches some classic sleights to accomplish the effect therewith. There is a wonderful section regarding the Paul Fox coin pail (and it was Paul Fox who attained fame for the “standard design” of cups used in Cups & Balls).

There is a section on Cups & Balls magic, much of it based on the classic routine devised by Dai Vernon and taught in the classic John Carney style. Lots of variations here, all worth exploring for your two & three-cup versions of this classic magical mainstay. The influence that Vernon and Miller had on Carney is on full display in these parts, including the section where he details the use of grapes. Side note: *PLEASE* treat yourself to the *Caffeinated Cups and Balls* (a mere \$35/USD) on carneymagic.com, if you are at all interested in C&B-related magic.⁴

To round out the miscellany in the book, *Swing Blade* is a Paddle Move effect that is, basically, straight out of the **Edwin Sachs** classic tome, *Sleight of Hand*. Then, there is *Thimble Collection*, which absolutely reminds me of a **John**

Ramsay-style of magic, but is inspired, in this case, by the **Paul Rosini** *Impromptu Thimble Routine*. Thimble magic is another personal favorite – astonishing and silky smooth!

Well, that wraps up the return article for this month. I hope this inspires you to check out this book if you have it or can find/borrow a copy (if you can). There is a LOT of wisdom to be learnt from these pages. Until next month, happy reading, and I hope you enjoyed our renewed journey into yet another magic tome. Keep the magic alive! - J. M. Q.