



Inside Ed's Head

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Don't Do as I Did (See Darwin Ortiz At the Card Table NOW!)

Have you ever wanted to kick yourself? I did, about six weeks ago. I was reading Simon Aronson's Try the Impossible, and he referred to a trick from the book Darwin Ortiz at the Card Table. I knew I had that book, so I opened up my Magic Database™ to see what notes I had taken.

There were none! I had thirty-one entries from Darwin's other book, Cardshark, but nothing at all from At the Card Table. For whatever reason, I bought the book, shelved it, and then forgot about it. This turns out to be very unfortunate, as it contains two fundamental items that I wish I had learned. The Pinky Count is a move that **EVERY** card man should attempt to master. For those who've not heard of it, it is a way of getting a break by using the pinky of your left hand to count off a specific number of cards. This is by far the best way of getting a break under more than one or two cards. Unfortunately, as Mr. Ortiz states clearly, this is not a move you'll be able to do a day or two after reading about it. It will take some dedicated practice. I've been working on it a few minutes a day, at least five days a week. I see that I'm making progress and I expect to get it eventually.

. The second is a surprisingly easy technique that allows you to take a new deck out of the box, and shuffle into the Si Stebbins order with a few simple overhand shuffles, and two faros. (See: "The Si Stebbins Secret," p. 137.) I tried this myself and found it shockingly easy to do. An extra-nice feature of this procedure is that you know which cards you have to cut at to do your faro shuffles. (OK, it you can't do faros, this is not shockingly easy, but perhaps it might inspire you to **learn** faros.)

I'm really upset that I missed these items twenty years ago. I would have been a better magician had I learned just these two techniques from the book.

Please note: just because I'm only discussing two of the tricks in this book, don't assume that's all that interested me. I will fool the hell out of people with his "Mindbender" (P. 151). It's a sleightless "impossible revelation" of two selections that will absolutely blow you away. After I read it in the book, I watched the DVD, and it still fooled me!

"Modern Jazz Aces" is in here also (p. 117.) I had learned it from his lecture notes in the late '70s. I fooled the guys at Brad Burt's magic store in San Diego very badly. For a few years after, I was "Mr. Jazz Aces" every time I returned to the area.

There's a bunch more. I'm sure everyone will find his favorites. I know that the book is out of print, but the DVDs consist of three of a ten disk set available from L&L Publishing. Considering the low price of \$99, you'd be wise to consider them.

When you think “Darwin Ortiz,” your first thought will probably be of a man with extreme slight-of-hand chops, a man who has more talent in his right pinky than the rest of us have in all ten of our digits. This is true.

Then you might recall his book Strong Magic, and realize that Darwin doesn’t rely on manual dexterity alone to create his effects; he analyzes the effect he wants, and looks to the method that will produce the strongest reaction. If he believes a gaff or a subtlety will give him the effect he wants, he’ll use it. (On the DVD, he voices the desire to start and end clean.)

With this in mind, I’ll be giving you two tricks this month. The first is Darwin’s “Do as I Did,” used with his permission. The second is a discussion of another of his effects, “Dream Card,” which I believe is very powerful. For reasons that I’ll discuss, I won’t be using Darwin’s method, but next month we’ll talk about a method that I will be attempting in the near future.

I could go on, but my typewriter ribbon is running low on ink, so I had better get to the good stuff.

Do as I Did

You’ll need two decks for this one, the first is a stacked deck that allows you look at a card and know the value of the next card in the stack. This could be a simple mathematical stack like the Si Stebbins stack, or a memorized deck *.

In addition to the stacked deck, you’ll need an Ultra-Mental deck. (Invisible Deck.)

Effect: You ask the spectator to take the face-up deck under the table, cut the cards a few times, reverse the top or bottom card, and insert it face-down into the deck. You take the deck back, leaving it on the table. You now remove a second deck, and explain that you did the exact same procedure earlier that day, and still don’t know the card you reversed. You now remove your face-down card from your deck, and table it. The spectator now removes the face-down card from her deck, and tables it also. She turns both over; they match.

Method: You’re probably ahead of me at this point, but you should read on to see how Darwin suggests you handle the spectator.

When producing stacked deck Darwin gives it several false shuffles. (If he’s just set up the deck using “The Stebbins Secret,” this is unnecessary.) He then starts cutting the deck face up in his own hands to demonstrate how the face card changes each time the deck is cut. He then gives the spectator the deck and asks her to cut the deck in her hands a few times. This gets her used to the proper procedure for cutting the cards.

He then asks her to duck the cards beneath the table, and proceed as described above. After she’s done, she returns the deck. As it is face up, he knows what card has been inserted face down. He then removes the Ultra-Mental deck from its case, and using its inherent secret, takes out the duplicate of the card the spectator has selected, and places that card face down on the table. He then cases and pockets the deck, putting it out of sight and out of mind of the spectator.

Finally, he asks her to spread her cards, place the one face-down card next to the card on the table, and then turn them both face up. *Mirabile dictu*, the cards match!

I'd like to quote Darwin's final thought. "Unfortunately, the Ultra-Mental Deck has been pitched to laymen so extensively that a magician using any of the standard presentations for it runs a real risk of being nailed by a layman who knows the gaff. However, even the layman who once bought an Ultra-Mental Deck at the drugstore will not recognize it when he sees it in the context of 'Do as I Did'"

I'd like to give you one thought of my own. You've given a spectator a "shuffled" deck of cards, and had her handle it extensively. She **must** believe it's an ordinary shuffled deck. Make use of that.

The Dream Card

This effect is on page 81 of At the Table. It uses sleight-of-hand, as well as a couple of well-known gaffs. The magician removes his wallet from his jacket pocket, and takes a red-backed card from it. He points out that the card has his signature on the back, and will be used later as a prediction. The card is returned to the wallet, which is pocketed. The spectator is now given a very fair choice of a card from a blue-backed deck. The spectator signs the face of this card, and returns it to the deck.

The magician again removes the wallet from his jacket, and the red card is displayed once more. Not only does it match the spectator's card in suit in value, it **IS** the spectator's card, the signature clearly visible on its face.

As Darwin says, this is a staggering effect. I know that for certain, because I've been doing a similar effect for years, Bro. John Hammon's "The Signed Card." (Richard Kaufman, The Secrets of Brother John Hammon, p. 47, 1989.) In this effect, you place a "mystery card" from your deck in front of a spectator, and tell him to keep his finger on it. You then have a card selected, signed, and placed among four kings. The selection vanishes from the kings pile, and the mystery card is turned over, it is the signed selection.

This effect has always been the closer for the "Four-of-a-kind" segment of my close-up routine. It leaves the spectators completely mind boggled; I never felt any need to replace it. However, "Dream Card" has two advantages that might make me reconsider: the "mystery card" is red; the selection is blue. This eliminates any possibility of a switch. If some alert spectator is able to backtrack "The Signed Card," or sees a recording of it, he might be able to figure out how the selection was switched for the mystery card.

"Dream Card" also stands on its own. In Hamman's trick, there is the preparatory phase where the selection must vanish from between the four kings. In the Ortiz version, you can introduce the effect any time you want.

All this notwithstanding, I can't do "The Dream Card" as written. The first and primary reason is that I no longer perform wearing a suit jacket. The last time I was paid to do formal close-up, or wore a jacket in a business environment, was over eighteen years ago. My Mullica and Kaps wallets have been retired for good. (As have I.) Perhaps I could buy a hip pocket wallet and keep it in my right pocket when I want to do the trick. No. I have too many props sitting around my house already, waiting to be used. I'll have to come up with a presentation that eschews a wallet.

There's another reason why I'd be reluctant to do Ortiz's routine as written; it uses a top palm of the top **two** cards. I've been doing card magic for sixty years now, and I've **never** done a trick

that's required a multiple card palm. I'm not averse to learning a new sleight when warranted, but my first reaction is always to see if I can modify a trick's handling to fit my current style and technique. Additionally, Hamman's trick has one advantage over Ortiz's: the "mystery card" is apparently always under the spectator's control. In "Dream Card," the red card is tucked away inside the magician's wallet for most of the trick. I'd like to modify "Dream Card" to fit my requirements, using technique I already have, and, if possible, merge the best aspects of both tricks.

That, my friends, will be addressed in next month's column.

*** Department of Blatant Plugs**

For those who are thinking of learning a memorized deck, I strongly urge you to wait until I publish my **Aladdin** stack. It allows you to give a cased deck to a spectator, have them name a card, remove the deck from the case, and spell to their card. Many people have seen me do this recently, if you haven't, ask me about it. Although I've memorized the stack, which I believe is the best method, there is a non-memorized-deck version of the trick, as well.

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