

PAUL

FROM NEW YORK TO NEW APPROACH!

RICHARDS

IF YOU'VE EVER BEEN TO A MAGIC CONVENTION AND SEEN A BIG CROWD OF PEOPLE SURROUNDING A MAGIC DEALER – THE CHANCES ARE THAT THEY ARE WATCHING THE BRILLIANT PAUL RICHARDS! AT MAGICSEEN WE HAVE LONG BEEN FANS OF THIS FRIENDLY FELLOW WHO WAS RAISED WITH FIVE SIBLINGS JUST OUTSIDE BUFFALO, NEW YORK. BUT WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW ABOUT HIM? NOT MUCH, APART FROM HE CREATES BRILLIANT, ORIGINAL MAGIC AND HE ALWAYS FINDS TIME FOR A LITTLE CHAT WITH US AT CONVENTIONS! GRAHAM HEY ASKS THE QUESTIONS...

I begin by asking Paul about his upbringing. "I'm one of six children – and there were four boys in one bedroom and two girls in another – so I guess you could safely say we were on the lower end of middle class!" Paul's dad and brothers were all in serious trades - construction, electrical, iron work, etc... with Paul admitting he was definitely the odd ball of the family. "I spent most of my free time reading books and watching old movies. I've always done magic for a living with the exception of one very short lived post at a market research firm. I took that position when I thought it was time to try my hand at a real job. I quit in two weeks!"

It was Paul's love of old movies that sent him in the direction of the magic

profession. "I was always a fan of old movies and my first real memory of a magician was of Tony Curtis in the 1953 movie, "Houdini". That led me to books about Houdini – and then on to magic in general. I'd spend hours in the library learning about magic and magicians. Not having a lot of funds really forced me to build and tinker to develop my own material. Once, after reading about a magician visiting a magic shop, it occurred to me that such a place might exist near me. So I opened a phone book and found a place called Howard's House of Hocus Pocus! My mom would occasionally take me there and I would hang out looking around, paging through books, and soaking it all in. I couldn't buy much – but I loved spending time there. Believe it or not my first real job WAS pitching magic. I was about 13

years old and I met a man who ran a magic stall at an indoor flea market. Later he opened a proper shop and I worked there for many years. I also did a spot working for Paul Osborne as a magician (and a puppeteer) at an amusement park!"

Most magicians will be aware that Paul was the face of Elmwood Magic, a magic company responsible for some of the best magic releases in the last 20 years. I ask him about how it all began? "Well, I started Elmwood in May of 1993 with the help of magician and long time friend Rob Allen. I was only 22 years old but I was committed to creating something more modern in the world of magic. We were clean, organised, well stocked, with new arrivals almost daily– all of which was pretty uncommon for a shop 24 years ago.

"I mailed out a 12 page newsletter every month for the first ten years of the business. A real newsletter – not just ads – and it was a big part of our growth. During that same time I started to develop and sell our own items – later approaching other creators like Peter Duffie, Jay Sankey, Joshua Jay, Cameron Francis, Mark Elsdon, and others to join our line. In 2003, I decided to double down on our web and mail order business and invested heavily into that end of the company. Around 2006, I made the decision to close our walk-in shop and put all my energy into our mail order and manufacturing. At the time each of those decisions meant taking a huge risk but ultimately it paid off – and we grew into one of the leading online dealers and producers in magic."

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In late 2012, I began to take on a larger role in caring for my elderly parents. As those responsibilities increased I decided it was time to make some serious changes in how my time was being spent. So late in 2013, I made the difficult decision to sell Elmwood Magic - and in 2014 I finalised the sale of the business to Penguin Magic..."

These days Paul concentrates on creating and selling his effects solely at magic conventions, not online. I ask him to elaborate. "It's primarily about time and lifestyle. I still wanted to sell and create magic but after having run a large mail order company for so long I wanted to have more control over my time. I also really like the idea of having something special when I arrive at a live event. I remember as a kid going into that shop and seeing things I had never seen anywhere else. Experiencing magic up close and in three dimensions - that's something that only the live experience can deliver. I don't know that I can do it forever - but it's my plan for the foreseeable future!"

What gives you the most pleasure about being a magic dealer - apart

from the financial aspect? "Right now, it's getting back to my roots!" he exclaims. "I'm really enjoying the old school approach of loading up the wagon and taking the magic to the people. It's fun to work out the material on the road and see an idea blossom. I've never been great at capturing what I do in video demos, so I get the most satisfaction out of being in the trenches and working live!"

You've released many effects over the years, which ones stick in your memory most as ones you really love? "That's a tough one!" laughs Paul, "I've never put out something I didn't love - but the reasons are often so wildly different. White Bikes was one of my first hits, so it always has a special place in my heart. NFW was a monster success and I loved watching the incredible reactions when I first started performing it. I always loved Sticky Situation and It's A Match for their cleverness of method. Certainly, Free Will would be in there too for - purely for the devious nature of the prediction. I could say something similar about every trick I ever produced. I wouldn't have put them out if I didn't see something special in each of them.

"But I can honestly say that I'm most interested in the items I've developed over the last few years. I was more than a little apprehensive about how my new material would be received after stepping away from Elmwood Magic. But it has been an amazing journey. The first three effects I released under the Paul Richards Magic line – 3Cast, HueGo, and Moniker – were all hits out of the gate. More recently my Snare, Imagine, and Shanghai Coins have been selling faster than I can produce them. Since I'm only selling at live events, I realise those will be unknown to most of your readers but if our paths cross - ask to see them and I know you'll be walking away with a bag of goodies!"

Paul tells me that his all-time best seller has been NFW and it continues to be wildly popular to this day. "I think it struck a chord with magicians because they convinced themselves that they couldn't be fooled by such a common premise. It's safe to say that when any magician starts doing a "twisting effect" - it's easy to zone out. But that surprise ending always packed a powerful punch! Sadly, many of the modern handlings of NFW seem to eliminate the twisting aspect of the routine. I've always thought that was a mistake. It's those phases that make the ending so strong!"

"While everyone knows about NFW, I would add that several of the effects I produced sold in the tens of thousands. White Bikes, Double Take, Sorted Affair, Free Will, Vanished & Gone, It's a Match, iBalance, Sticky Situation, What's Mine is Mine, and more – all sold in those numbers. Many of them never generated the buzz that NFW did but shops kept stocking them month after month and year after year. Even now, when I am only selling direct at live events, my products continue to sell extremely well without all the buzz. I always jokingly say I am the most successful magic creator no one has ever heard of!"

Paul's own list of creators he respects and admires tends to include creators who produce work that is radically different from his own. "People like Jerry Andrus, Lubor Fiedler, and Winston Freer come to mind," he says, concentrating, "or Jim Steinmeyer if you're looking for someone a bit more contemporary."

This year Paul will be at about two dozen live events but presently only does a handful of conventions, mostly the larger events or ones that are in locations that interest him.

"At the opening of 2013 I started a series of events called The Real

Magic Roadshow. I assembled a team of creators which included myself, Mark Mason, Dirk Losander, and Chris Smith, along with a number of special guests - and we travelled to several cities across the United States to share what we do best, live and up close. My plan was to continue with that after I sold Elmwood but I was pleased when Penguin showed an interest in pursuing the concept with me. They rebranded the events as The Live Magic Expo and I've been pretty busy with those over the last few years."

When not engrossed in creating new magic, Paul loves to cook and travel – and he's also a fan of music and film. Says Paul, "I'm also an avid reader of science, philosophy, and art. If I'm not doing magic - then you'll probably find me immersed in one of those things!"

I ask what is taking up all his time at the moment? "I'm locking down my new releases for the coming year and getting some of them into production. Over the years, I've had a lot of requests for lecture tours abroad and I've decided that 2018 will be the year to start to tackle those!"



QUICKIE SECTION!

HOW OFTEN DO YOU PERFORM THESE DAYS?

I certainly did a lot more in the past - but I still do a few dozen shows a year. I've been on the road a lot with magic events the last two years but I'm looking to put a bit more focus on returning to "real people" in the coming year.

LAST GREAT MAGIC PERFORMANCE YOU SAW LIVE?

Another tough one. I'm fortunate in that I see a lot of really good magic – but real greatness is a bit of a will-o'-the-wisp. If I had to choose a complete show – I'd say Guy Hollingworth's "The Expert at the Card Table". If it had to be a stand-alone act, I would lean towards Yann Frisch.

THERE'S A NUCLEAR WAR AND YOU HAVE TIME TO GRAB 7 ITEMS BEFORE YOU DASH INTO YOUR NUCLEAR BUNKER – WHAT DO YOU TAKE?

I'm not really a "stuff" guy. I'd just grab my wife and daughter – they can choose the other five things.

TELL US THREE THINGS ABOUT YOURSELF THAT PEOPLE WON'T KNOW...

1. I played ice hockey for nearly a dozen years.
2. I'm a pretty serious cyclist.
3. If I had the nerve, I'd probably be a farmer.

