THE UN-HOLY TRINITY
The credited founding-fathers of Bizarre Magick
From left to right; Brother Shadow (Carl Herron);
Charles Cameron & Tony Andrucci
What is Bizarre Magick?

It would be easier to first explain what Bizarre Magick is not; it is not the act of smearing a bit of blood on the aces in your deck and still presenting some version of the McDonald Ace routine, even with a spooky tale attached, such things still fall short when your actual mind-set centers on doing a neat trick vs. the creation of something spine-chilling and enchanting.

Bizarre Magick does not mean that you dress strangely complete with Raven Black Hair and eye-liner, possibly even the black finger-nails and odd piercing here and there – no the Hot Topics idea of “Goth” or emulation of certain TV personalities does not translate into your being a true Bizarrist, just a clone trying to replicate an idea. Like the Goth (now SteamPunk) scene however, Bizarre is a mind-set and way of being; you literally must be it as a matter of your nature in order to be successful in its presentation. Some would argue that this is an elitist attitude but as the implication goes, not everyone is cut out for this type of presentation even though there are multiple facets to it and the chances are strong that you may fit one or the other niche.

The big thing that Bizarre Magick is however is THEATER! This is that side of the legerdemain in which we really are actors playing a part; oratory skills and the ability to create mental, even emotional connection to what you do, is the essence of this peculiar art form. When one can create Magick through the gift of effective storytelling, prop/effect free, then you are becoming a true bizarrist. Unfortunately, the journey of reaching that particular summit is frequently painful for one’s audiences, the oratory growing too lengthy and exaggerated and thus, just as the Mind Readers of old came to know a reputation of long-windedness and being “boring” so is the fate of many as they first step into this particular pair of shoes.

All going to plan this little treatise will familiarize you with the world of Bizarre Magic – also referred to as “Haunted” or “Macabre” Magick; an off-shoot from Traditional Magic that many seem to sneer at and look down upon, because it is dark and frequently morose. As the “ruling parties” of certain magic institutions have said, “It is rude and tasteless and does not represent magic in a positive, moral light.” The irony being that this bastard child has far more to do with magic history and how magic has been viewed by society than the gentlemanly image that came about in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Yet, this “elitist” idea does hold an important degree of merit, after all how can anyone take on this powerful mantel when he/she is yet a true “Magician”?
Think carefully on what I’m outlining here when it comes to what the “Magician” represents be it through the auspices of the Tarot, a matter of legend or, as I’ve already touched upon, that well-groomed and learned gentleman (and a few proper ladies) who enchanted patrons simply by way of courteousness, etiquette and knowledge – having a command of language as well as a penchant for trivia. One might even flirt with the notion that these were the essence of a certain Transylvanian count, whose story is more akin to a romance adventure than the darker pale we’ve assigned it; Dracula being a master of seduction but likewise a man of eloquence, charm, and genuine command.

One becomes “Magickle” in this way simply by being a “Wise-ard” – which is actually what the word Wizard implies; a man (typically) that was educated and virtually a full-time student of “the mysteries” – and not all of these mysteries were arcane. Many of the better educated occultists of old were the forerunners of today’s Science, Language Arts, Mathematics, Chemistry and even psychological fields, something the naysayers of our time tend to ignore or attempt to down-play, after all we are talking about *kooks* that conjured demons and conversed with angels, right?

Perhaps . . . just maybe if fans and practitioners of the Bizarre brought reprise of such things within their social personage as well as their actual work, fewer would look down their noses when it comes to what it is we do and how we deliberately invoke the imagination of our audiences in much the same manner as our Mentalist cousins would – daring our patrons to believe, if for but a moment, that magick could be real. . . even when our doings are done with tongue firmly planted in cheek.

Not all Bizarre Magick is offered in a heavy esoteric manner, much of it is filled with levity so as to help our patrons to learn how to laugh at death, the sinister, potential evil and more; an extension of long forgotten rituals that allowed our primitive ancestors to stand tall in the face of adversity and death itself. The Bizarre path likewise allows us to remember history – the fallen as well as the triumphant, those that conquered fate or beat the devil at his own game.

If however, we look at the Wizards of lore – Merlin, Gandalf, or even the likes of Solomon and Abramelin -- we do not find so much wand waving as we find demonstration of pragmatic result; the Wizard understanding how to exploit nature and natural law in order to create solutions to particular problems or desired goals. In other words their Magick came as a result of knowledge more than favors from the Gods or a coalition of Imps and Golems¹. While there are those bits of literary license found here and there, in which this or that author threw in enchantments and incantations, the essence of magick happening by natural means seems to remain a constant, which is how all magick works, even within the auspices of Witchcraft and Ritualism. Understanding this is where the Wise-ard found his/her power and confidence in that they saw a world filled with magick – possibilities.

An important aspect of this truth however, was being able to keep the general public ignorant and so we find the inception of things like Clergy and Rites of Initiation – the sharing of such knowledge based on one’s proven propensities and “worthiness”; what was shared with the public was obfuscated with abstract ideas, many of which weren’t realized until the mid-20th century; *Eye of Newt* having nothing to do with poor little amphibians but rather herbs. By having layer upon layer of meaning assigned to images, words, and symbols the Wizards and Orators of old could give to those initiated in the mysteries, a very different collection of details than what the non-initiate would understand, which is what is known as “Exoteric” perspective vs. the “Esoteric” points of view (language) known to the

¹ *Golems* – akin to Mr. Frankenstein’s monster the Golem is a made-made human life-form spoken of in the Old Testament (Psalms 139:15-16). While little else is said in the bible Jewish Mysticism hosts a range of lore including the famed Golem of Prague created Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the MaHaRIL/Chief Rabbi of the city
students and patrons of the mystery teachings. It's something very much akin to how Mentalists exploit physical and verbal code techniques from time to time in their programs.

*It is something to ponder, is it not?*

**FIRST, A WEE BIT OF HISTORY...**

According to the great Tony Andruzzi² what is presently referred to as “Bizarre Magick” was given birth by Scottish magician Charles Cameron (see: April & August 1984 issues of the *New Invocation*) based primarily on his *Cauldron Magazine* (circa 1964). However, the truth behind it all being what it is, Bizarre Magick is actually that odd skeleton the mid and late 20th century “stars” of television chose to lock into a typically ignored closet down the hall and to the left, in some mysterious old mansion sitting on a hillside; it was what magic was and what Reginald Scott *discovered* long ago (and *exposed*... even without the aid of YouTube)

Take a look at the posters and press art used by those *Golden Age* masters like Kellar, Blackstone and that one time seminary student Howard Thurston; how many li’il devils, fairies and spirits can you find?

*They are everywhere after all and so they were within the shows as well.*

Even into those first couple of decades of the 20th century our evil foreparents leaned upon the idea of things paranormal, even when it came to claims made in routine presentations within their shows. Albeit, these insinuations had seen a great deal of tidal rise and fall, especially when it came to times of literal persecution (imprisonment as well as death) at the hands of churchmen (and the politicians they controlled) over the centuries; even after the Renaissance ages literal suggestion that what one did on stage came about by way of demons or some ancient rite could cost one dearly, even in so-called “Free” nations. However, the public has always had a fascination with such things and a “need” for magic to be real and for miracles to be the sort of thing that still happened – that was still accessible to them, and no longer reserved by those fortunate few found in the biblical texts and associated tall tales in which Kings and missionaries slew actual dragons, snakes and of course a multitude of demons and imps.

*But why?*

*Why do we human critters “need” to believe in such things?*

*Why does it seem a matter of our nature to want to flirt with the esoteric or pagan ideologies – the taboo & forbidden?*

It is a syndrome of sorts frequently referred to as the Forbidden Fruit Condition, something every parent is all too familiar with in that the quickest way to get a child to do something “wrong” is to tell them “NO” or set-up boundaries. Even the so-called matured adult past and present, mocks such boundaries by claiming that “It’s

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² Tony Andruzzi a.k.a. Tom Palmer/Masklyn ye Mage
only against the law if I get caught” or some similar statement of arrogance. But we find this same condition within the minds of those paranoid sorts that invent or invest themselves into the myriad of Conspiracy Theories found in today’s world – be it the Illuminati, Free Masons or the idea that ET has taken control of the world’s governments. In this example however, it is the need to have a tangible nasty – a very real and sinister “Monster” and exaggerate one’s status to the role of warrior or savior because you are of the few that can see such truths.

Again, a psychosomatic conditions that stems from our need to step beyond common boundaries; our need to know what’s what; our need to “belong” and sustained by knowing what others cannot know.

It sounds quite silly when you step back from it and look at the psychology associated with the condition, sillier yet when you see how it has affected all of society and how. You see the whole ritual side of things also ties in with this syndrome by way of how our personal sensitivity to such things is triggered. A look at Murry Hope’s treatise “The Psychology of Ritual” is quite eye-opening when it comes to this side of our issue and for those inclined to study what Ms. Hope shares, you will find a significant formula by which to build your theatrical encounters.

Understanding the psychological elements such as the why and how of humankind’s lusts when it comes to the forbidden knowledge or acts in which we flirt with the Taboo as well as chasing death itself. . . this equates to power on the part of the narrator – YOU! An understanding as to how & why you stage your presentations in a certain manner; everything from ambience & personal appearance, to how you speak and what you say; though our fellows in the more traditional root of Magic require bits of the same theirs is not nearly the level of venture we choose to take on. They are not attempting to create “the real” nor deliver an actual experience such as we do; while we both entertain and bemuse, audiences subjected to our peculiarities will walk away uncertain, even in the hope that what they have endured wasn’t “real” and yet, a residual aftertaste forces them to doubt their very sanity.

Needless to say, we’re talking about the more extreme face of Bizarre Magick; those little jabs given by the performer even when much of his/her offering tend to be more humor-based; a lesson in how to laugh at death and ultimately embrace our mortality along with all things that go bump in the dark.

Rather than dwelling on these things, let’s move on with this journey. . .

Other Key Players to Remember:

- Tony Raven
- Borodin
- Jim Magus Saltarella
- Doc Shiels
- Docc Hilford
- Joe Givan
- Caite Sidhe
- Eugene Burger
- T. A. Waters
- Stephan Minch
- T. Everett Bookings III
- Rudy Colby
- Pascal de Clermont
- Simon Drake
- David Zver
- Mary Tomich
- Ed Solomon
- Gene Poinc
- Bruce Barnett
- Keith Blackheart
- Roni Shachnaey
- Larry Baukin
- Jeff McBride
- Max Maven
- Leo Kostka
- Bascom Jones
- Karl Bartoni
- Harry Meier
- Joe Lantieri
- Jack Camp
- Harrison Smith
- Erksine
- Simon Drake
- Larry Kuehn
- Robin DeWitt (Kardor)
- William Wizard
- Bro. Shadow (Carl Herron)
First and foremost a Bizarre Performer is a storyteller and next to this he/she is a consummate actor, which is to say that they are deeply vested into theater and understand the essence of that world and what is involved with that aspect of art; you understand that the “tricks” you employ may not always be a thing of novelty or marvel but rather, the mannerisms and trappings sewn in and around one’s character, storyline, and setting.

For the bizarrist the chief goal, even when playing the buffoon, is to deliver a memory of amazement. That is to say that we, unlike our magician cousins, create reality out of the surreal; we lead our guests into the more forbidden realms of study as well as the many avenues of the macabre. If they seek horror then we bring to them horror, tangible and true. If however they seek a chat with a particular ghost that would certainly be within our prowess as well. We are not limited by pasteboards or little bouncy balls let alone coinage and dice; our “pretty things” that come forth from silken cloth often have eight legs, beady little eyes and perhaps a tail. On the other hand, some such things have been known to flutter and squawk, crows being the noisiest of such phenomena.

To be a true bizarrist means that you are naturally inclined towards perfection and willing to be willing enough to do whatever it takes when it comes to meeting your vision and making this yet conceived personage of mind, a reality. But do understand, we are speaking of things that oft time require years if not decade to create; it is note a thing such as visiting a magic dealer or asking a craftsman to make this or fabricate that. No, the bizarre entertainer is ever inquisitive and challenging of his/her own mind when it comes to possessing the “perfect” things that fit a particular story or tale that has struck their fancy. Even at this they are rarely content with the first draft of such finds and insist to find alternative accountings of the happenstance as well as theories and whatever other manner of detail that can be had; we are on a quest towards credibility around the issue/viability around the claim. For we are more than aware of the fact that sustaining the lore is what allows our enchantment to exacerbate; to become more within the psyche of the witness and as such, compel them to tell their tale – our tale – establishing for us and around us, an aura of intrigue and the desire of other curious souls to join us when
next we hold a circle of muse, so they too might come to know such manifestations.

Does this Answer the Question? Perhaps you require greater specifics when it comes to this calling?

Very well then, let me put it this way for you, becoming an entertainer of any sort is difficult; becoming one enshrouded by mystery, one that flirts with and even mocks death or tampers with the forbidden. Well my friends, this is more difficult still, for you will be required to invest a tremendous amount of your self into said venture. You will have to study and learn your way around many, many things so that you are not seen as a fool in the eyes of your patrons but as one who genuinely knows his/her stuff. Let me explain . . .

The Bizarrist depends upon the believability of what they deliver, when we cannot deliver those expected details inquired of by our patrons, we loose credibility. Therefore, those electing to claim of being scholars – experts in the occult, had best know what is appropriate to the present era as well as its contrasts to past and/or recent studies. You cannot survive this ordeal by reading cleft notes and I can assure you that there is nothing in the bizarre theater world that grants you instant validation; it really is a never ending quest. The first step being to see where to start;

- I Have This Effect I Really Like
- I Am Drawn Towards Routines That Involve Death
- I Want to Do Magic That Feels Real, like Real Voodoo
- I Want to Do Ghost Hunts & Séances

All of these are classic to the aspiring Bizarrist and each of these points give us option when it comes to where to move, how and why. There are after all, macabre ways to present a Sponge Ball routine which can fit the looser idea of what Bizarre Magick is (what some call the “safe” form of Bizarre) but then there are those bits that simply work in far superior ways for the bizarre entertainer than they will your traditional magician be it a street performer or Vegas headliner.

Think on it this way; you have the following chief categories when it comes to Bizarre Magick;

- **Gross Magick**
  - Bits with oozing blood, body part mutilation
  - Items being removed from the Eye/skin, etc.
  - Production of living things from sores, orifices, etc.

- **Macabre Magick**
  - Routines that Involve the Morbid
  - Horrific Crimes
  - Disasters & Tragedies
  - Acts of Atrocity/Inhumanity

- **Side-Show Freak & Geek Magick**
  - Anything Common to the Side Show/Circus Markets
  - Human Endurance Challenges
  - Fakir Styled Demonstrations
- **Pseudo-Science Magick**
  - Explanation of Bizarre Phenomena
  - Explanation of Occult Phenomena

- **The Ritualists/Occult Magick**
  - Voodoo Demonstrations
  - Spell Casting
  - Demonology & Invocations

- **Monster/Creature Magick**
  - Vampires & Vampire Tales
  - Zombie Related Materials
  - Tales of other “Gypsy” & Folk Lore.

- **Paranormal/Spiritualistic Magick**
  - Ghost or Monster Sighting Investigations
  - Spirit Tours of Death or Haunt sites
  - Séance/Spirit Communication
  - Exorcism/Casting Out the Unclean
  - Resurrection & Reincarnation Themes

We could probably refine this list even further and I’m certain there are similar lists that use slightly different terminology with the inference being more or less the same, so don’t let semantics mess you up too much, just keep your mind focused on the gist of things as it will help you a great deal as you move down the paths required for cultivating a Bizarre character. Understand however, even with this list, there are a few other factions or themes that must be considered and I’m compelled to start with the most common such element, something I refer to as the B.B.S.

**THE B.B.S. – A.K.A. THE BUFFOONS OF BEELZEBUB SOCIETY**

I always hesitate when it comes to this aspect of Bizarre Magick even though there is a rather extensive number of Bizarrists that cater to the hook of dark comedy; in fact a number of the better known legends of our world had acts that were very much *tongue-n-cheek*; Charles Cameron, Tony Andruzzi, Gen Poinc, Larry White and more notably Docc Hilford and Eugene Burger host just such leanings (proof, that we should never take things too seriously). My introduction to this mode of bizarre work came in the form of magician Barry Hobart of Dayton, Ohio. Seems no one in the area (at least in my age group) would miss his Saturday afternoon shows. You could say that he was a male version of Elvira “Mistress of the Dark” (just not as “sexy”.)

Elvira is however, an excellent example when it comes to how one can be a Bizarre Entertainer without using a single magical effect. Granted Elvira has some personal assets most of us don’t (unless you know a really good plastic surgeon or make-up artist that specializes in Drag), nonetheless she is the epitome of things when it comes to the art of
double-speak, entandra, and how to deliver corny one-liners such as the majority of BBS performers will typically lean upon.

There is absolutely nothing in the book that says we can only study the antics of other magicians, most of my own image and manner of approach came through a combination of notables such as Vincent Price and Peter Laurie but likewise program characters akin to Professor Marvel of Wizard of Oz fame, the antics of the late Carl Ballantine (especially when he played Lester Gruber in the hit show McHale’s Navy) and then of course we have the great Pat Buttram in the role of Mr. Haney in the series Green Acres. While there are several whimsical fast-talkers one can model a character from there is still the need to make said hustler a hint sinister or other-worldly in much the way we find with a certain Mr. Black in the story Something Wicked This Way Comes or Tony Randal’s character in the cult-classic The 7 Faces of Dr. Lao.

As we will soon be discussing, the hustler style of persona lends itself well to the performer taking on the role of collector and even mad-scientist; the type of people that would naturally be surrounded by a myriad of oddities be it a collection of Pickle Punks or a display of various research devices, artifacts and so forth.
When it comes to the world of Bizarre Magick it takes more than a neat wardrobe and make-up to sell your claim; Canadian bizarrist Scott McClellan allows his entire show to echo the Who & What of his claim, taking audiences back in time to a 19th Century Spiritualists Revival where they encounter the sort of mayhem that was typical to the times – all of it presented as the “real deal!”

http://www.theparanormalshow.net/home.html
MULTIPLE PERSONALITIES

This is one big truth when it comes to the various character types found in Bizarre/Mystery Theater. No one type of entity is right or wrong though some fit the situation better than others. If you are a magician that believes the old Needle thru Arm is all you need to be Bizarre, maybe a card trick with bloody pips for good measure, well, YOUR WRONG! You’re just a magician having a really bad dream. A bizarre character is carefully thought out; believe it or not, not everything we do involves blood, gore or even some kind of paranormal happenstance, we may just be telling a tall tale, punctuating it with a special effect or two so as to make it a tad bit more interesting and of course, to excite the imagination of those observing such meanderings.

If you are the sort that has difficulty in using his/her voice in an eloquent fashion Bizarre may not prove practical to you, for the voice and command thereof, is our most important of weapons. However, those so plagued that would insist on this route of venture may very much find it best to be part of that previously noted fraternity, the B.S.S. there is no shame in it and it allows your recovering magician shadow to enjoy a tryst with the sublime while keeping itself safely in tuned with traditional magic-lore and social element.

Those willing to master their tongue and the art of language however, for you there are decisions to be made and directions to be considered, it’s not just a matter of category as we’ve thus far alluded, but rather our refinement of a main theme in conjunction to the others. Are you for an example, a fraught-filled Vampire that has collected artifacts of his people in order to better understand his course; a gracious blood-sucking host with the desire to share his tale with others over a night’s meal? Or, are you more bent towards being part of the Van Helsing lineage, seeking to wipe-out such scourge from the world, ignoring what good they may do here and there for the sake of human salvation?

Are you one that’s but dabbled in the occult or stumbled upon something surreal; a victim of your own curiosity whose mission is to bring warning to others? Or are you the puritan that seeks to expose and exorcise evil wherever it might dwell?

The single most popular form of these things is the Magpie – the collector of artifacts. Some of us collect actual articles tied to a given situation while other of us collect items that are said to be enchanted or else used for the sake of hunting down the disembodied. You will even find those of us who emulate a certain Professor Caractacus Potts\(^3\) and the menageries of his invention, some so grand as to boggle the mind.

The thing is, you must choose. Are you one vested with natural other-worldly abilities or were you a student of Crowley or worse, the father of Satanism himself, Anton LeVey? Do you consider yourself an actual Witch, a Shaman, or for that matter a Medium or Psychic?

WHAT ARE YOU?

This is the biggest of all questions you need to ask right now. But there are a few ways of learning about who you are and what you would be best at when it comes to your actual persona and performance. I will warn you however; these particular steps won’t prove to be overly easy and may even seem to be a load of trouble given what you WANT to do vs. what will best lend itself to you. . . there’s a very big difference and my only goal is to help you not go through the chaos others have endured over the years, figuring it all out.

\(^3\) Mr. Caractacus Potts is the name of the character played by Dick Van Dyke in the motion picture “Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang"
Let me start by pointing out that during all those years I was pushing around big, overly expensive boxes I had people like Max Maven, Peter Pit and my own Mentor telling me that I’d probably do better commercially if I gave up all that stuff and became a Mentalist.

Guess what, after close to 20 years of beating myself into the ground, I finally shifted to Mentalism and Bizarre Magick. It is a shift that has increased my standing professionally on a number of levels including general name recognition. The moral of the story being that when you are young you really need to LISTEN to your elders and at minimum, look into what they are saying and if or not their words have a logic to them that actually does sit with you.

**What is Your Background?**

I’m not talking about your resume or bio; I’m talking about you as a person, the whole...

- Where Are You From?
- What’s Your Genealogical Past?
- What Are Your Accomplishments?
- What Are Your Hobbies/Interests?

These are the things that will help you learn to better and more accurately define the who & what of your character. So start with the two easiest categories; family history & the history of the community you live in.

- Your Genealogy defines you in a 1001 different ways and it’s always a good thing to look back on and dig deeper into as you age. Start by looking at you and your various personality traits, even health issues or psychological perspectives – how you look at the world, your fears, phobias, etc.

  Now look at both of your parents and learn as much as you can about them and record your own list of quirks, habits, etc. they may have but likewise, look at the traits found in them that are also in you. Learn to see how much you are like the two of them so you can better understand where your own personality type came from.

  Once you know this move back a generation and do the same type of exercise with your grandparents on either side of the family. In this case you may start seeing a set of patterns such...
as how your mother shows traits found in her mother & father and how those things have melded together so as to make her who she is today; same goes with your father.

This might seem a royal, unrelated pain in the butt but it’s actually a common thing found in many acting schools in that connection with these things from our immediate past, allow us to more readily identify with concepts, attitudes, and so forth. Professional writers, especially novelists must go through similar exercises in order to create the abundance of characters we find in their works. So this step is quite important and you will find some curious odds & ends as you move back generation after generation. For an example, I found that my mother’s estranged father as well as his father were both deeply vested in the occult even corresponding with the legendary Aleister Crowley. This is something found just two generations deep in my personal studies and there were many more facets towards the surreal to be found, such as a distant cousin named Tod Browning who gave life to a certain famed monster on the silver screen alongside a popular blood sucker and a ban of carnival “Freaks”.

The family tree studies belonged mainly to my father who’d made the research a serious hobby for a number of years, taking the Browning side of the lineage back some 5 generations as well as my mother’s (Farley) legacy and I believe his mother’s (Blankenship) line as well. We even found that we were more closely related to Edgar Allen Poe than we were the famed Browning poets. But then, being tied to a couple of snobbish society serving love-birds isn’t quite as cool in my case, as having Edgar as a cousin, don’t you agree?

But there is a very important reason I’ve shared this personal bullet-points of my life and that’s my belief that every single person out there has similar skeletons hiding in their own family closets be it a scandalous love affair with a Native American or Black Slave who is rumored to have Voodoo ties (she may have lived in the Créole country after all).

- **Where You Live** is the next research arena and just like your family legacy, you will find all sorts of interesting odds & ends about your local history that few know of. This is important for several reasons the chief two being that you will end up with an array of tall tales that can be used in your local shows that host strong validity; in other words, they can be researched and realized by your patrons which in the long run, gives you some significant kudos for being an “expert” – understand now, this can be a huge boon further down the road, delivering public speaking and even teaching gigs.

The other reason you want to know your area lore is because your environment as a whole, affects you directly. The more you know about the region; it’s plus & minus factors as well as any
esoteric connections (including Freemasonry by the way, which I can’t think of a U.S. or Canadian city that’s not full of Freeman architecture and government influences). But you may even find one or two spookier tid bits; Urban Legends has an interesting way of being found in each community area, as in the same exact tales such as the famed Lady in White (or Blue), Haunted or Cry Baby Bridge and so forth. Don’t mock them, use them to your favor whether it be as part of a ghost tour, exorcism program, séance. . . have fun with it! More importantly, dig as deep as you have to in order to document it and in the case of Urban Lore, you only need something that makes it plausible not so much hard fact UNLESS IT ACTUALLY CAN BE FOUND. Never stop looking and never feel bad about researching and having to say you were wrong previously. Discovering the older and more valid records means you can book another gig at the location and pitch a booklet about your research and why you support the new findings over the previous.

My home town of Springfield, Ohio is loaded with hundreds of haunted tales and boasts hosting one of the most haunted residential properties in the state, a house I actually lived in for a bit more than three years. I can assure you, strange things took place on said land but then it once had a cemetery to the north of the house (moved so the highway could go in), there were many deaths on the site, especially children due to the fact that it was a clinic during the great cholera epidemic as well as a safe-house tied to the Underground Rail Road and the scene of a related lynching. Springfield itself hosts many other tales of this sort given the region’s role during the Revolutionary War, the War 1812 and then the Civil War. Before all of this there is the rumor of “Witches” – a conglomeration of several early settler families who are said to have created a coven and cast many a spell over the land and more than a hex or two towards those they saw as being a danger to the citizen. The irony is, there are those living today that claim lineage from those very family groups who have only recently sold the property upon which legend places their “sacred grove”.

Just as my example with my lineage so we see in this case a few things that one can find when researching their own stomping grounds; I should add that such research is proper with every you move to for any period of time, should you wish to maintain the status of “expert” and lend to your new audience similar treats. This was the secret of the ancient storyteller; those orators and bards that traveled from one village to the next, adapting the tales of heroics and gods to fit with local culture.

• A Second Look At You is what follows, in this case we are looking more at your general interests in life; your hobbies, the kind of books you read or games you play, things you’ve written about, had published as well as the sort of work you’ve been involved with over the course of your life.

I was quite shocked when I took this step; I was 28is years old when I looked back and found hundreds to stories and articles as well as lectures I’d given to Pagan & New Age type groups; I was a living-breathing Metaphysician who’d undergone initiation in several different paths over a relatively short period of time. My knowledge and perspectives lead to my being awarded a Life Achievement Doctorates Degree and ministry ordination.

Trust me, that’s a lot to take in when you feel that you’ve done little other than waste away much of your life on a dream. But taking time to look back on things, while there are many
An Introduction To BIZARRE MAGICK

question-marks on my part due to this and that medical issue\(^4\) I have discovered the value of looking at my personal past good & bad, is one of the best ways of claiming my character while learning about myself. I know many would rather jam a sharp stick in their eye than do this, but it is one of the more important steps when it comes to this general process.

To give you an example, my character at this time Phineas VanBirch, Esquire, he’s a world traveler in the Jules Verne classic *Around the World in 80-Days* sort of way – very Steampunk, as some might say, in that he is a collector of gadgets and professor of the strange and surreal. As I mentioned earlier, he is part pitchman ala Barnum a hint of Vincent Price and Robert Ripley with just enough of *Cousin Edgar* thrown in to insure the occasional chill up and down a patron’s spine. It is however, this pack-rat nature that allows Phineas to be flexible in the things he offers while still holding to character. This is in fact why most Bizarrists do adopt the Magpie attitude with things.

Once we’ve walked through these three chief circles that envelope our lives we can start refining and defining the who & what we are to become rather than being lead by the nose by way of those nasty magic merchants that show us all the flash just to whet our appetites and all too frequently, make us look like fools. Let’s face it, there really isn’t anything “new” in magic, just another way to do the same old thing e.g. it is up to us to personalize what it is that appeals to us as performer.

**What’s Your Vision?**

I’ll warn you, it’s going to be at least two different things at the moment in that you’ve just read over a ton of stuff that, when worked honestly and properly, will change your present point of view. But let’s look at right now for a moment, ignoring all that’s been said thus far; *What is Your Vision?*

**Why?**

Go ahead, write this down. Get used to investing yourself into things for this is the way of the true Bizarrist/Thespian; we work at it!

Our objectives always circulate around how to deliver the best, most real feeling demonstration we can; how to support the sense of validity we wish each bit as well as ourselves (our character) to have. Even when we are taking on the more satiristic mantel, our agenda still relies on such things because they are still a part of us and must therefore be a part of what we do, what we claim, what we are.

I certainly can’t run out in full Drac and do a show let alone a satire type program. That’s not saying I don’t include a good deal of levity in what I do, only that I’m not the type to run out and do a clown-like Caricature, even though that role is technically, more commercial; it’s simply not natural to me. This is the whole purpose behind these exercises and what I’m asking you right now; *What is Your Vision and Is It a Natural Part of Who You Are in Life?*

I’m betting you’re nowhere close given how I’ve outlined these questions. It’s like a game of *Dungeons & Dragons*, you might have a vision as to what kind of entity you wish to play but it all comes down to the roll of the

\(^4\) Medical Issues – aside from damage by the M.S. the author has endured numerous concussions to the head due to accidents, Martial Arts competitions, etc. as well as related drug use damage during the 70s’. There is likewise a Psychological blockage as the result of childhood trauma – PTSD episodes.
dice. In life as well that crap-shoot can be rather strange and unforgiving, but as they say, we must learn to work with what we have not what we want or want it to be. While we can reach the latter, chances are strong that other dice rolls down the pike will only get us close to the concept but more than likely a few light-years better than our current vision is witnessing. While some may see this as an introduction to a Leap of Faith, I think it’s more of an educated jump.

Blind Faith is what you had when you first opened this booklet, now you have a bit of educated perspective along with a few challenges that are going to shift the proverbial paradigm and put the ball into your corner allowing you to take those assets you’ve found by doing the footwork and actually begin building something that’s viable – REAL. You will be able to move from the wannabe status and into the mode of neophyte; one that is educated and primed in a way so as to move forward, and make your dreams a reality.

**PERSONA...**

This is the next big deal in your journey and it’s not an easy one. While a collection of favored storylines and themes will help, it is a two-way street; your character will help you in making effect selections and the creation of storylines just as certain effects will spark your imagination, perhaps helping you recall an idea you haven’t considered in a long time. So you need to be considerate of such things; aware so that you can evolve your “style”.

**Wow! This Seems Like A Ton Of Bother!** Cries the neophyte

Well, we’re talking about THEATER here, not how to create a magic show.

This is more than all the other stuff, what makes Mystery Entertainment so different from traditional magic; we know we are actors and as such, we strive to do the things real actors do when developing a persona for their next role.

Some years ago when I lived in Los Angeles I was house sitting for a lady friend of mine who just happened to be neighbors to a gent named Christopher Lloyd. Well, the day came that I actually caught a glimpse of old Doc Brown but not in said persona. Rather, he was in full Uncle Fester drag from a day of filming “The Adam’s Family”. The point being, he stayed in character even when he came home from the studio in the evenings; something you’ll find that almost every major star will do be it when working for Hollywood or on Broadway. The interesting point being that we don’t seem to remember the ones who elect to not become so absorbed by a role; interestingly these are likewise the one’s whose careers seem to fade into that elusive abyss of forgotten being.

**“But You Aren’t Going to Find Any Magician Doing That Sort of Thing!”** Claim those armchair experts at the Café.

I’ll lay cash on the table that there are; one of whom I was privileged to watch mutate out of the young close-up card guy of Boston fame into the Mentalism giant most of the world knows him as today; I’m referring to Max Maven or, as some would say, the artist formerly known as Phil Goldstein. But
there are many others, most of whom haven’t the colorful notoriety of Max, but they are still viewed as legendary performers. Entertainers of all types go through transformations as the years catch up with them, even Criss Angel has slowly migrated from his pseudo-goth image of the 90’s to a more tamed down oddity. If we’re to look at history, many of the greats didn’t reach the pinnacle of fame and adoration until their latter years. Dante used to joke about how he no longer needed the make-up to make himself look the elder gent he’d played on stage for so many years.

In the Bizarre world I’ve gone from a Mohawk wearing punk-rocker hustling Hollywood Blvd. to the fat old fart in a wheelchair. . .

. . . ok, that’s my day job. . .

. . . no, I’ve become a whimsical collage of sorts who is part mind-reader, part professors and part charlatan – a Steampunk lunatic that’s learned in many, many varied things.

. . . as you can see, I play myself.

The point is, adaptation, in this instance – working with the cards you’re dealt in life and molding the who & what you are to become around such things.

But Why All of This Trouble?

In Mentalism more than any other arena, we have a plethora of fools presenting effects that do not coincide with the skill they are claiming. For an example the Blindfolded Telepath who is suddenly able to convey the amount of change in a person’s pocket – a Clairvoyant skill, not one attributed the Telepath.

Granted, if this blindfolded swami had a partner that counted the aforementioned change then there is a logical connection he/she sent the details mentally.

This may seem trivial at first glance but when it comes to hosting validity in what we do it is a serious issue and our failure to heed to such things means that large neon signs will be flashing in the mind of the beholder who in turn, will paint you as a fraud.

So What?!

Do you recall that little mention I gave earlier about being a local authority – an expert on regional lore and how this reputation can help pay the rent when the show gigs aren’t flowing?

A large number of Bizarrists have become experts on a wide range of topics with history being at the top and an understanding of actual Occult traditions being the other. But there are those that have learned a great deal about yesteryear medical practices, execution situations as well as gangland activity, even skill set like jewelry and other skilled crafts upon which they are able to give very genuine lectures.

Picking your poison in this case, is far more than how you go about doing magick
STYLES – VARIATIONS & COMBINATIONS

“It is important for the bizarrist to know which area of the spectrum his presentational style falls. Not because either style is preferable, but because it is important to avoid straying from one area of the spectrum to the other during a performance. The performer must realize that crossing the boundaries will change his audience’s perception of the performance. The theatrical bizarrist cannot get away with the types of presentations used by the goetic bizarrist because he is expected to succeed dramatically, while a goetic bizarrist succeeds because his audience is faced with the uncertainty of witnessing a miracle”

Jim Magus

While I’ve touched upon the idea of the Storyteller the need for Levity and the difficulty of maintaining a heavy-dark character I’ve yet to touch on the primary “disciplines” or paths by which the typical Bizarrist creates and presents his/her programs;

- **The Goetic Mode of Performance** brings a very strong element of curiosity in that the performer typically suggests a degree of uncertainty; where he/she is a student of the surreal what they present is akin to being an experiment be it some kind of esoteric ritual, the casting of a spell or trying out a new pseudo-scientific device.
  - **The Bumbler Style** can fit into this niche but not so much if he/she is outwardly a klutz but more in the mode of being a very serious student of the craft who is susceptible or malfunctions & mishap. See the character Neville Longbottom or even Ron Weasley in the *Harry Potter* tales.

- **The Student of the Paranormal/Occult, etc.** is a most excellent place for the neophyte of magic to start their journey (those 14-25 years of age) for what should be obvious reasons; this is a personage that is a natural part of your reality which means it will be far easier for you to mimic or echo when doing the work. While older persons can adopt this façade under the guise of being a latter life curiosity, it is a mode that can carry the novice well into their early 30’s, giving them time to prepare and better mold the adult entity they will become (most logically, the Professor/Lecturer sort)
  - **The Ritualist** is a common mode within the bizarre environs best allied with this niche; involving those that present a varied collection of spell work, hex casting even sacrifice.
    - **Monsters/Vampire** types are most common in this arena though they can prove a stratum to most any other mode described.

- **The Hunter** is the sort that seeks to rid the world of vile things. He may be an actual Exorcist either in the classic Christian Priest mode or that popularized by Zelda Rubenstein in the film *Poltergeist*. On the other than you could be more akin to Van Helsing the famed Vampire Hunter (or *Buffy*, for that matter).

- **The Collector/Inventor** I’ve already touched upon; a sometime “mad man” of sorts whose life is filled with this and that novelty/artifact. By far one of the more versatile & popular modes of persona.
The Hustler/Carney & Side Show theme takes in several characteristics in that you could be a “Freak” or “Special Person” as they now say, but you can likewise come across with the busker & hawker slant, out to run things with a wink & a nod that the game is afoot. Not just a game of chance per sé, but one in which fate is known to offer a darkened hand.

I believe I’ve touched upon the primary persona themes that have proved the more popular both, commercially as well as in preference by working artists. As I’ve encouraged up to this point, you need to look at what you discover about your self and your existing assets that best support one of these niche areas in order to find your personal best fit; the style of Bizarrist you’ll most likely find comfortable with and able to “sell” and make most convincing. Needless to say, you will impose upon this template many of the ideas you’ve already projected in your mind when it comes to shifting into Bizarre Magick, but now you have a way of creating a more sound and structured foundation to said dream.

**VALIDATION**

Bizarre Magick evolved in part from the spiritualistic side of Mentalism; the material that involved Hauntings, Séance and other such surreal themes. As such a huge degree of the psychology tied to Bizarre Magick is how “real” we can make the experience for the observer. This is why I’ve invested so much space giving you a series of “challenges” that will help you acquire said validation, establishing your characters & storylines in a way that is at least loosely based on fact; facts that can be discovered by anyone either by way of deliberate research or mere happenstance.

The old time Mentalists had a standard that seems forgotten now days, the gist of it being *that we do not admit nor deny having some kind of grand power or ability, we simply allow people to believe as they choose based on their own experience and consternations.* To a degree we do this with Bizarre Magick even though it is far more obvious to most, that it is little more than fun – a *Halloween Horror Attraction* for the more matured audience, if you would. But then again, humanity has always loved its oddities and freakish things nearly as much as it has loved to toy with things dangerous and taboo. This therefore is our role in life’s tasks; to give folks that taste of the gorish and encounters with death from whence it seems any sense of return is not possible. . . at least not leaving us as we were beforehand.
No doubt few of those under 50 years in age have a clue as to who Roy Houston was, and to put it kindly, he was the guy that toured throughout the Midwestern U.S. and much of eastern Canada with an illusion show that was typically presented under canvas or as part of an exposition. My personal encounter with him was while working on the “WONDERCADE” show for Ward Hall & Co. While reworking an old Abbott made Cannon Illusion Roy pointed out the quote you’ll find to the left; a statement that I’ve found to be far too true over the years, and a sentiment echoed many years later in a tribute lecture given by Eugene Burger at the popular Darwin’s Group in Las Vegas in which he gave the late Barclay Shaw significant kudos for being able to take any stock prop off the Magic Shop shelf and transform it into something miraculous and exclusive – the kind of thing that magicians would rave about but prove too lazy to try to do on their own. If you find what I say to be cynical, watch at how magicians react at the next lecture you go to in which creativity and showmanship are the focus and not one card trick is taught.

Over the 35ish years I’ve been involved with the vocation of magic I’ve seen far too many excellent talks on creativity and showmanship get booed and even avoided. Yet, the very people that whine about not getting work and wondering why they are looked down on by others, haven’t woken-up to the fact that they (we) need such insights and more importantly, we need to get off our ever widening hind-side and make the magic we do “OURS”. Something that is especially important to the Bizarrist and just to help this sink in a bit deeper; just as shopping at Hot Topics won’t make you “Goth” neither will buying everything from OUTLAW or any number of popular merchants of bizarre effects make you a true Bizarrist. You will certainly end up with a nice collection of neat gadgets but there’s a problem; the 14 year old spoiled brat down the street got that same $500.00 contraption and is showing it off to all he knows including his YouTube viewers.

Ok, this isn’t the literal reality but it is a form thereof; more in today’s market than ever before we are faced with a saturation issue when it comes to magic that’s available to nearly anyone with a credit/debit card or PayPal account. Because of this the seriously minded Bizarrist needs to get a bit creative when it comes to tailoring their props in appearance, improved deception elements, etc.

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5 WONDERCADE was a circus styled “under the big top” traveling Illusion & Review show starring Roy Houston produced by Ward Hall & C.M. Christ World Attractions I was the lead male assistant and prop tech to the show.
I recently purchased (and I must emphasize up front, that I still like this prop and the concept though the things I’m about to say may seem “harsh”) known as *Death Toll*. Fact is, I have always wanted a Spirit Bell of this design and the fact that the plunger could be seen to drop as the bell rang was a huge selling-point for me. But then comes what some might call “buyer’s remorse” as the parcel landed on my door-step;

- Horrid Packaging (as in “non-existent”)
- No Physical Instructions – just a DVD... that didn’t work properly
- A Gross Lack of Deceptivity

As I picked the bell up I also found my chin dropping to the floor as I noticed a one-inch hunk of brown plastic mounted to the base of the bell; something that is hidden in the ad-based video that was almost all shot at an over-head (down angle) perspective so as to disguise the extreme thickness of this section. The still photography for the ad being set on a highly reflective surface so again, the eye would be deceived when it comes to the obviously extreme thickness of this piece. I can’t say any of this was deliberate, but then there is that old saying about things that look, sound and walk like a duck...

**Magic Conceptualism is Not For “Artists”**

Artists are concerned primarily with aesthetics, not deception. Then we have the other side of the issue, that of the *Gadget Junkie* who comes up with a somewhat clever concept who again, gives little consideration when it comes to the deception behind the prop associated with said effect.

These are the two issues we’ve seen in magic over the past 15-20 years that is costing it... costing us as well as our audiences... in that the “pride” of the true magic-artisan of old, has been set to the side, apparently.

If you have a bell, in this example that is “enchanted” in some way it should look as normal as possible and absolutely nothing of question should exist around it. For the Bizarre & Psychic Entertainer this is paramount, far more than it would be for the traditional magician that panders to an audience that’s accepting of trickery and would-be deception. For us however, the goal is to create an experience that looks, feels and even smells “real” This is the psychological nuance that segregates these two aspects of the magical arts, form the traditional auspices of the legerdemain.

Even when we look at large scaled Illusions, deception is paramount. Let’s face it, if the base to a Thin Model Sawing cabinet looked four or five inches deep (which is closer to actual depth) it would not be nearly as impressive as those that seem to be two inches or less in thickness, be it with or without a beveled base design. Just take a look at the Abbott *Cutting in 6 Illusion* side-by-side a Chuck Jones’ *Mismade Lady*... which is more impossible to the eye, just based on how it looks...

...especially considering that they both work in the same exact manner.
As to Death Toll the photo to the right reveals what I did to help cover-up the problem at hand, what a bit of an artists’ touch and some planning can do. In this instance, an apparently solid marble base, but to “sell” that fact, I’ve added a special bottom plate which not only rids me of the flimsy plastic cover that was originally included, but lends to the prop both, weight and cold – think about that, why would such things be important?

Because the first rule of magic is “deception”; deception that manipulates as many of the senses as possible; by disguising the plastic base as marble and giving the unit weight I’ve given it a sense of authenticity but, by making it cold to the touch, just as real marble would be, I’ve delivered a psychological convincer, should anyone touch or hold the device. Then again, the thud it tends to make on a table top accentuates the idea of the thing being heavy which, in my case, fits the storyline.

Certain of the references I’ll list in the back of this treatment will give you loads of insight when it comes to how to age paper, wood, metal and the such. You will also find a wealth of knowledge at the DragonSkull web-site (http://www.dragonskull.co.uk/main_map.htm) which is the “Learned Pig” of Bizarre Magick.

Bizarrists, as I mentioned earlier, become skilled in a lot of supported arts & skill groups such as leather crafting, wood carving & in-lay techniques, metal work & jewelry making simply because such things are needed in our craft. You’ll even find certain of us offering a very limited number of a specific item (13 tends to be the most popular of such limited releases) the reason being quite simple; the time & materials involved with construction – the time cuts into the working performer’s schedule while materials may not always be readily available (which is one reason each unit will appear different from the others) or, in the case of special metals like gold & silver, or gem stones for that matter, price could be an issue and the maker is waiting for prices to drop in order to save you, the buyer, some cash. But the other big reason for limited distribution of such items is to keep them rare and not have scenarios such as I hinted at previously; finding your exact same piece in a show hosted by a local white faced clown that knows nothing of Bizarre Magick but needed a nifty piece for Halloween.

Developing these alternative skills can allow your interest in the Bizarre take you down many paths of opportunity, just look at the wonders created by England’s Dan Baines as well as the legendary Doug Higley and Christian Chelman. My personal explorations have drawn the “artist” out in me to some extent, because of the...
needs I have in creating a Steampunk themed wheelchair and having to build the thing myself, from the ground up (well, using an older chair as the foundation, I’m not crazy enough to go from pure “scratch” with things).

**Storylines. . .**

When it comes to the tall tales we tell our audience there are but a few wordsmiths that come to my mind for Bizarre Magick application; Larry Baukin and Ed Solomon certainly top the list in my book but there are many others to be contemplated; Tony Raven, Docc Hilford, Jim Magus, Leslie Melville and Christian Chelman just to name a few. Admittedly, I’ve used much of the material this collection of individuals have penned in an “as is” mode, maybe modifying the actual effect a tad or even going with a different prop altogether while employing the gist of their stories lines, but the heart of their thinking still remains and serves as the engine driving the fantasy.

By working from a storyline-anchor you can create complete acts that hold to very specific themes. For an example, my Séance material features several different story themes; “Bell, Book & Candle” is the latest, actually the reason why I purchased the DEATH TOLL effect; the tale told is a semi-true love story involving Steven & Charmaine Dey who actually owned an Occult bookstore in Las Vegas named Bell, Book & Candle. Then I have two special programs that focus on the spirit of children; little Miss Emily and a wayward school boy named Shorn Clark, the latter of whom is likewise modeled from a real world scenario, an instance involving a former residence of mine in the Springfield, Ohio area, a home listed as one of the most haunted private residences in the state. Needless to say, I have created storylines around the history and local lore pertaining to this place where I and my adopted family lived for a bit over three year.

I go into greater detail on these stories in the FREE booklet on Séance work, for now I’ll simply make note that these programs involve items, actual personal possessions as well as police reports, obituaries, etc. tied to the kids or events in question.

Like most bizarrists I have other niche routines that wonder off on other themes, everything from NAZI rituals and artifact tales to material tied to the odds & ends I’ve collected over the years. I have a horrid menagerie of haunted toys, carnival oddities and items tied to macabre events like the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre and San Francisco earthquake of 1906. So as you can see, a good deal of variety exists, so long as you can support a key storyline and not just one particular story to which you’ve attached a particular effect.

Storylines, at least initially, need to support the claim made by your character, the Who & What he/she is. The reason you want to do this is to build a regional reputation. I talk about this in the MENTALISM introduction book and more in my Psychic Technologies material, but having an image your patrons can identify with is what will allow you to stand out and be seen as something more unique than the typical guy/gal that tinkers around with magic. I’ll assume, just because you’re reading a book about Bizarre Magick, that this is already your goal.

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6 Ms. Emily – not to be confused with Mark Piazza’s Emily séance, or my own “Ms Emily Q&A System”.

7 Shorn Clark – is the name found in an 1850’s McGuffey Reader I picked-up on eBay a few years ago that I know use in a routine that was inspired by T.A. Water’s “The Psychic Coercion of the Interrupted Schoolboy”, a spirit slate routine that’s now become a solid 15-20 minute feature in one of my Séance shows. The McGuffey Reader being a key feature in the act, used for a series of Book Test styled demonstrations and a bit more.

8 Haunted Home -- http://www.guardiantales.freewebspace.com/F4-OhioTale.html
CLOTHES ARE PROPS TOO... 

Few of us think about our costuming in this manner, but what we wear and how we wear it is literally a “Prop” and just like all our other props, we need to sport details that not just make the outfit our own, but likewise convey a bit of a story – a sense of description – that focuses on our character and his/her claims to fame. Let’s face it, an Archeologist of the 1920’s probably looks more like Indiana Jones vs. the Professor/Lecturer sort who would most likely be dressed in the generic mode of “dress cloths” typical to the decade in question. When it comes to the hustler and B.S. artists flash and savvy tends to be the key and even here there are variables in that those who targeted the big money winners & political favorites about town had to dress in a manner that made him/her “welcomed” without many questions; it’s a manner of speaking properly, mannerisms, education expressions as well as clothing, courtesy, etiquette, etc. On the other hand those that hustle the lower income and superstitious are more prone to take on the classic gypsy persona, even today. This is a group I absolutely loathe in real life in that I’ve watched them cruelly manipulate the “ignorant” hard-working souls of the world. I’m proud of the fact that I’ve helped authorities in investigations and exposure of this type of individual and will do so any time I’ve asked to do so.

Getting Back to the Actual Issue Here, how you dress and “act” is going to take you further than you might think. The “trick” however, is to keep things subtle, at least that would be the case for those not striving for the more gothic or clown image in which things get a touch “Hollywood”. Even here you need to work towards authentic outfits; considering again the era from which your character comes from, a 17th century Vampire or Necromancer isn’t going to take on the present day Pretty-Boy or Lost Boys type Vampire/Mage look, so think it through.

We must likewise consider the utilitarian application such costumery lends; do we require special alterations for a Hold-Out of some kind? Looser sleeves perhaps, for a mechanical contraption devices or slight-of-hand techniques such as sleeving? Or maybe a build-in for some special pull or reel? The list can be a bit endless it would seem, each of us adjusting each part of our wardrobe to fit this and that need.

Years ago Peter Pit taught me a very interesting bit of performer’s psychology; you put your performance clothes in a different closet when possible, using that closet and room as your personal green room, the place that helps you get into character. Over the years I’ve expanded on that formula by designating specific outfits for specific routines, same applies to the box/containers that carry the props for that particular program, everything is designed to help me become that side of my main persona; it becomes a mnemonic of sorts, which aids me in recalling the script, routine sequences and technical nuances such as when/where and how to set NLP anchors or triggers as a possible side-effect⁹ bit.

Another aspect of this action, at least for those that have the budget to do so, is to have duplicate versions of a prop when you decide to feature it in more than one routine. For an example, if you are doing a Spirit Bell routine, use a different style of bell in each act; If I’m ghost hunting I will frequently use the recently rediscovered Suspended Wine-Glass type bell that “tings” when you come into a part of the room that has a spirit presence. Ed Fowler (Carlyle) used to offer this idea on his web site but in the past ten years or so, it has seen a

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⁹ Side-Effects – refers to subtle effects used primarily in Séance programs. The concept is purely psychological in that things happen during the performance that take place outside the performance area. For an example, a candle moving across a table top or levitating up from its holder, slowly turning and setting itself back into the holder. There are many Side-Effects which one can use that aid you in creating an “Experience” for guests rather than the more traditional “show”
series course of evolution that’s done away with the original pencil and rung in a rather special stick (my personal version actually has away by which to “pluck” the string and thus, cause the glass to ring)

Even in how you go about using such a device should vary. Eugene Burger points out how, on the psychological level, a bell ringing just once can have a greater impact on guests than acts in which one performs a Q&A session, interacting through the bell with the spirit visitor. Even here, you need to consider just how to exploit that single chime. In the Bell, Book & Candle séance, I have a second bell that rests off to the side strictly as an exhibit piece, this $5.00 wonder makes one hell of a loud clang, so when I have the group lulled into a relaxed and quiet state, I deliberately ring the thing to shatter their nerves. It’s a bit of a comedy relief gag I’ve inserted into the act that helps lighten the atmosphere and helps guests to relax and not stress over the proceedings; one big instant of noise followed by squeals and shrieks in the room followed by laughter, can take a genuinely spooky styled program a long, long way toward success.

While creating “bundles” of the sort we’re discussing here, we do need to be on guard when it comes to the magpie habits we magic lovers can fall into. While I think it wise to have (as per this example) one bell for one program and a completely different kind of bell another, I believe we can easily enter a dangerous Pack-Rat niche that is justified under the banner of “this one is for that story and that one is for this story and the one over there goes with the new piece I’m putting together and so on. . .”

Going with the example of the Bells, I’ve chosen the Wine Glass Detector as a focus point used in my Ghost Hunting programs. The show theme and how I use the “bell” is in such strong contrast to how I work with Death Toll or my 10Spirit Bottles; all three come off as being something totally different. They exist however, for two reasons;

- I created a particular routine one season and needed an “up-sell” for the following season that I could pitch and deliver to the same group the following year e.g. I created a second show that used a totally different sort of Spirit Bell as well as Bell related interaction.

- I then created a 3rd act using a completely different theme and variation of the bell that would be used in a more generic manner – more a part of a Bizarre Ritual than Séance

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10 Spirit Bottles – is based on the old Multiple Pendulum effect (see Bill Cushman’s “Trybill”). My routine taking on a very strong Caribbean/New Orleans “Voodoo” theme, in which the bottles contain the soul of various Zombie-fide victims.
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You can do this with most any effect that captures your attention, it just requires a bit of footwork and in some instances, a bit of personal creativity – having to experiment and come up with your own variations in handling a given concept.

Batteries Not Included . . .

The mage of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century is quite tempted to succumb to the ways of technology and for a plethora of reasons I can fully support but likewise, warn you against. Too much dependence on electronics and computer based devices, cell phones, apps, etc. can actually hurt more than help; I’m even aware of those acts that cannot work a show when the power goes out in the building or they forget to change batteries on their systems, etc. and the sin of all sins, they aren’t proficient enough in basic skills and storytelling to pull off a show anyway.

I strongly encourage you to resist temptation when it comes to the use of technology, and when you do decide to employ it, have an alternative method (or two) available – a contingency plan for when Mr. Murphy comes to visit . . . and he will!

The other thing to consider, especially when it comes to Bizarre styled performance, is that the older methods of doing things can work to your advantage. For an example, let’s say you want to do a Talking Vase or some such routine; using the old induction coil method would be superior in today’s world simply because folks are so savvy when it comes to micro-electronics and mini-speakers. If you have a prop that talks and yet there is absolutely nothing to be found in its general design, you have an actual miracle. If you can add to the effect by way of a combination of methods you have the sort of miraculous encounter that will have folks dumbfounded for decades to come (who say’s you can’t use a bit of ventriloquism with your talking device?)

I absolutely love gadgets and technology but I’ve come to recognize the value of not relying on it. As the old cliché suggests, \textit{when you remove all other possibilities only one solution can prove true}; if however, we incorporate techniques that cancel out one another, even preventing our need for the electronic cheat, then we end up with the greater sense of accomplishment. I should likewise point out the fact that one could use the technology aspect of an effect ONCE . . . like the Burger idea with the spirit bell’s single chime, if you allow the device to make one last manifestation that’s completely outside the parameters established, you will gain intrigue and invoke uncertainty – plausibility that something “more” is afoot. One of my favorite such gags is a Jim Magus idea of having an elastic band set in a way that makes it “invisible” that you can snag while working the OUIJA and thus, cause the Planchette to fly off the board or maybe even shift back to the word NO, etc.; something that’s totally unexpected and which happens with no hands near the device in question.
SAMHAIN: ALL FOOLS EVE

Samhaine (Sah-When) the celebrated Celtic New Year that has known a plethora of other titles over the ages, the most noted being HALLOWEEN – All Hallows or Beggars’ Night. For the sake of this particular issue though I have found “All Fools Eve” the most appropriate in that every single lover of magic will decide on October 31st that he wants to toss together a Séance or some such, not realizing the amount of work that goes into this sort of production and the fact that it is not a mere conglomeration of nifty tricks. When it comes to the Bizarrist, this is a very special time of year in that it is usually our busiest & most lucrative but too, it is a time of year that we can use our art form as a way to EDUCATE folk about the Days of the Dead that exist worldwide and have been observed by most every known culture since the beginning of known time to present. So much so that even the Church has yet to succeed in destroying it though it has managed to place a stigma around it, which is the main reason “WE” need to pick-up the gauntlet and set things straight; it’s a Celebration of both, the Harvest and the Year Past during which families honored those who had fallen in that past year’s cycle. This is really close to the universal prevue of things, though some cultures celebrate it in different seasons and not so much with the New Year point of focus as found in the Celtic regions of Europe.

Because of the “aura” associated with Bizarre Magick the Halloween season is an excellent time for us to enlighten folks as to its meaning and how it is celebrated around the world. Then again, I’m a big proponent of using Magic (particularly) as an educational vehicle. As Bizarre Entertainers we are able to weave a myriad of things together in ways that allow young minds to better understand everything from myth to wisdom parable. Probably why magic has been so popular with the Sunday School crowd and Elementary School instruction – you just can’t beat a whimsical old wizard, a puppet and magic when it comes to unlocking a child’s mind and desire to learn. Oddly enough, these same ploys work on adults as well because we WANT to reclaim that innocence and belief in the fantasiful in our youth. Too, when we are confronted by someone mature using the same techniques we encountered in our early school years, we willingly pay attention more and absorb what’s being conveyed; especially when some sense of logic gets connected to the spiel.

Obviously this means you will need to learn about these things as well and keeping with the purpose of these booklets, I’ve included a reference list that can help you there, at the back of the book.
Halloween, as I’ve already pointed out, is the season for amateurs as well as the expert. Because this is OUR TIME OF YEAR you must be prudent as to when and how to exploit it when it comes to getting the work, which simply means you are going to start marketing no fewer than six months prior to the holiday in question. When it comes to the Bizarre Entertainment world we have more than Halloween to look at; the Yule Tide season was the original time of year when ghostly tales were told by the fire place, which means you have both, Yule as well as New Year’s Eve to your advantage. There is likewise the time of Mardi Gras and if you are comfortable with such, the annual Gay Pride Celebrations believe it or not . . .

. . . c’mon, we’re talking about fairy tales, are we not?

My point is there’s at least a half-dozen key dates on every calendar that lend themselves well to the Bizarre Entertainer, if this is what you wish to do make a doable plan and work it in a realistic manner. While most of my own work is limited to Psychometry Luncheons and Séance type shows I still have material ready to go for;

- Mother’s Day
- Valentines
- Mardi Gras
- Father’s Day
- May Day (a.k.a. Beltane)
- Halloween
- Yule/Christmas
- New Year’s Eve
- and a growing list of other possibilities

The issue being that you can do this kind of work full-time, if you just put your mind to it and think about what’s available. I’ve done everything from playing Darth Vader doing a lecture on the Force (pure Mentalism show) to Psychic Murder Mystery dinner shows, so think it through. We are not limited to Halloween and the 3-6 week window that surrounds it.

Have you even wondered what the real reason is for going to a Car Race or even the outrageous popularity of Big Time Wrestling?

Human Beings want to see the squish – we want to see the gore . . . the taboo. Just look at how we rubber-neck when passing a car accident on the highway or how we can’t seem to get enough of videos in which some poor fool gets his nuts cracked, a bloodied nose or is barfing all over the place. We’re a sick animal when it comes to this love affair of ours; the sickness stemming from how we deny our enthrallment not the act itself.

It stands to reason that this strange human condition equates to opportunity for those of us that can offer either a comedic or serious look at the grotesque and forbidden. Jim Rose and Scott McClellan are just two examples of businessmen/showmen who’ve accomplished this in such a way that audiences seem willing to pay uncanny sums for the experience. So why can’t you do the same thing, year round? Everyone loves a freak!

**CREATING OPPORTUNITY**

According to Christian Chelman Bizarrist have exceptional opportunity in the corporate world working business meetings and hospitality suites during convention dates. I know I’ve done my fair share of mixers for this and that chamber of commerce let alone companies like Merrill Lynch and certain insurance groups as they wine & dine customers. So yes, there is a big dollar opportunity should you work your way into that environment. Just as you do with traditional magic, you must first gain a local reputation that places you on the fringe without alienating too many “family first” proponents. This might sound an odd point, but even for we weirdoes having a positive rapport with the local bible-thumping brigade is important even though we won’t win over the whole of them; there will still be that fanatical element that will label you as anything other than human. USE IT!
When doing my big macabre show I would deliberately stir the pot in order to gain media attention; going so far as to hire a handful of college students, hand them protest signs with biblical passages about wizards and such. What starts out with five or six sign carrying actors turns into a mob of a few dozen rather quickly; real zealots that are more than willing to condemn something they no nothing about outside of the hearsay I personally started (something I learned from Madonna and Bette Midler; start the rumors yourself).

While this sort of thing can backfire on you when working smaller towns, it’s an excellent tool to consider when visiting larger communities, campuses, and so forth – all is fair in love, war and business it would seem.

**But Why Would I Encourage Such Negative Reactions?**

Because it creates curiosity.

When the film “Last Temptation of Christ” was released the fundamentalist Christian community gave the film an estimated FIVE MILLION DOLLARS in international press as the result of their mass protests and related rhetoric. The result was patronage to the film by millions of people that originally had no desire to see it.

It’s often referred to as “Forbidden Fruit Syndrome” in which human beings will always make an excuse to partake of the things they are told most to stay away from. Just look at how many taboos exist in the majority of the world’s religions (especially the big 3) when it comes to sexual adventures outside of marriage and then ask yourself why prostitution and the sex toy industry are still huge, popular money makers some 5000 years later? Ask why War and acts of coveting what others have (keeping up with the Jones’) is so common/typical even when the prophets warn us against such things?

Fact is, we live in a world of hypocrites, regardless the religious label, simply because it is our nature to be curious and to want to investigate and as I’ve pointed out, flirt with the forbidden.

When it comes to getting work as a bizarrist it is this side of human nature that works to our advantage and the thing we need to learn how to use when it comes to marketing; if we make it too bold and too much a point, we will lose. On the other hand, we cannot use knit gloves and understate what we’re all about. So creating an ALLUSION becomes the key. . . something the music industry has proven for years; just look at how many major bands have passed through an album era tied to the Occult, Death, Anti-Church and then, in their latter years, produce material that state the opposite. Look at how it gave them longevity but likewise, how the rumors, album art, and general controversy allowed them to fill major stadiums with tens of thousands of fans.

This is where the trick lays; alluding to the idea of darkness. Just look at Max Maven’s promotional materials for the 80s and how he exploited an almost Vampiric image. You can see it with T.A. Waters who typically worked very tongue-n-cheek though his image was heavy and dark.

These are things you must weigh as you create your public “commercial” image. You want to guard against over-sell and make certain that your brochures, posters & mailing packages offer a genuine overview of your program. You also need to insure that what you’ve created is commercially sound, which brings us to the next niche area of contemplation – Act Content

We’ve already discussed some of this in previous chapters; how your image & claims will help you create a program that “fits together” in a logical manner. It is however, in knowing what kind of markets one wishes to work, that will help us stack the deck by way of show content. In other words, if we still want to work school shows that cater to the younger teen crowd we must have a strange character that parents & educators feel safe
with as well as a program that TEACHES the students at some level. For instance, if you are a “mad scientist” you may be using the OUTLAW Re-Animator as a way to explain some of Edison & Tesla’s experiments. Needless to say there’s a ton of really cool electrical “experiments” that can be done as both, background trimming as well as participatory routines. Such a nut job would want to look into actual Science Education devices that can be used in such a program, not just magic effect. At the same time, this same character may focus on chemistry or the value of developing the mind by way of memory skill, mathematics, etc.

The moral of the story is; know where you want to go with your show as you begin creating so that the act is tailored to the common venue of interest. Of course, you may likewise create variation to the core act so as to expand upon the key markets that are available to you such as local civic groups, festival work (strolling & stage), and even close-up material that would support your image while proving viable as a service.

REMEMBER, when you create your bits, it is perfect ok to modify the props used in order support your claims, the character and general show theme. Don’t use the same old tricks & gaffs everyone else has; make yourself think and create in order to be novel.

The Must Haves

This is common logic when it comes to business in the 21st century but especially show business. You must have the following ASAP;

- A Web Site
- A Video
- A Press Kit
- A Business Card

These four things must be in place prior to making ANY attempt at going pro or even establishing a part-time side-business. The Web Site must be easy to browse, simple and not overly wordy. It must host as many testimonials as you can get and most importantly, it must offer short video snippets of you working and at least one good 5+ minute sequence from an actual show, preferably staged under the same setting you are focusing on for business such as Jr. High Schools, College, Night Clubs, etc. This has become the #1 Must Have of the industry, so get it done!

The Web-Site and all related press materials you use must all match and hold to a consistent theme and I emphasize on the word CONSISTENT. Establish a look and hold to it for at least 2-5 years. The reason is very simple; people will associate you with the look and when they see similar images, colors, etc. they will recall you. This same mnemonic anchor likewise helps them locate YOU during internet searches or even something as simple as looking through a physical rolodex and finding your card.

There are two types of Press Kits in today’s world; the PDF download and the classic hard-copy. Both have to have at least one 8x10 head shot along with a small gallery of you in and out of character. You will need referral letters, media copy, etc. as you get it. You also need to keep it up-to-date, using the most current 6 or so letters/articles rather than leaning on material from years past (which happens with many of we older dudes).

Study as much as you can about the Magic Industry from the Business point of view. Talk with actual working pros, especially those that have more than 5-years practical experience and who you know for fact, work consistently. I emphasize this because this is an industry filled with liars and braggarts believe it or not. You need to get genuine perspective and not from one single source but many.

THE MARKETS?

I’ve offered one analogy above when it comes to how we strange types can actually fill a niche in the public school network. When you sit down and start contemplating things, I’m certain you’ll begin to see the many
opportunities that actually are out there. But, I am compelled to warn you, especially those under 30, when it comes to selecting your markets/venues – don’t chase “like minded” types.

When it comes to specific markets & venues, they are more or the same as what our fellow mage & mentalist chase after. Our job therefore, is to make ourselves stand-out as being more unique and able to deliver best, the things a client is seeking. The client that wants to play it safe isn’t going to give you a second look unless they have that hint of intrigue but in conversation want to cut things from your act for one reason or the other. You really don’t need that sort of pain in the hinny but you will need to weigh sacrifice over advantage; will the gig that person offers to your advantage when it comes to networking and being able to advance?

Rick Maue told me a story some years ago, about an agent that called him, offering a $1,500.00 gig. Seems this agent was looking for a “Mind Reader” and had heard about Rick. But, he didn’t know Rick, what he offered, etc. he just wanted a trained monkey that could fit a particular niche; had a 16 year old kid spoken up and said he could do Mentalism they guy would have taken him instead, paid him half of what he was offering Rick and all would be happy. This is an ugly reality when it comes to show biz and most especially variety entertainers.

Rick turned down the gig simply because this agent didn’t want Rick, he wanted anyone that could fill the bill – flesh out the package he promised a particular client. For many of you this may sound odd, but as Bizarrists and Mentalists we lose in a very big way when people aren’t hiring us for being us. . . for being what we are that is different. That is the nut that must be cracked if we are to generate the work flow and it is the perpetual challenge sat upon your shoulders in order to maintain our image of novelty.
IN CLOSING

As best I’ve been able I’ve tried to paint a picture or two about Bizarre Magick and working as a Mystery Performer. My views are nowhere near complete though I feel they have given you a reasonable understanding as to what’s involved, what’s required and what the potentials can be. The following pages lending to you a list of resources that will help you move down this path, learning about the *Who’s Who* as well as the *What’s What*. I would encourage you to download my FREE book on Séance work as well, in that it is very much a related side of Bizarre Magick.

Since that day I got to see Richardi perform his Buzz Saw Illusion, blood & guts flying everywhere, I have been enveloped by the desire to make magic experiential and as real as it can be. I was never satisfied with static body parts set into a MisMade Lady or whatever other grand illusion I might be working, they had to move, breathe and be alive. When that poor girl was cremated, the audience had to smell the burning flesh just as they beheld that geezer of blood oozing out of her lifeless body after dropping down the tip of that inverted sword. The majority of my creations in the past 30 years or so almost all tying to the Bizarre and Psychic realms; that side of magic this is most ancient and “forgotten”.

I’m certainly not alone when it comes to the inspiration and direction traveled; Richardi’s American tour in the mid-70’s sparked many a young mind and from our trials and effort, brought forth a new generation of creative youngsters who have the potential of making Bizarre Performance an art form in and of its own. The catch is, we need to stop looking at the tricks long enough to learn the art – to learn about theater, oratory and grace. This is the true core of Bizarre Magick and until you understand it and what it means to be an effective storyteller & actor, you will never really be a genuine Bizarrist. So spend some time with your community theater. If you are young, take classes in speaking and acting, even debate. Expand your sense of being and challenge yourself to become learned and skilled in and around those areas that appeal to you; especially when it comes to the macabre.

For as silly as it can seem Bizarre Magick is a difficult thing to master, but not impossible.

I wish you the best.

Blessed Be!
BOOKS FOR THE BIZARRIST

The first section in this list refer to the best “Primers” for those new to Bizarre Magick and honestly wishing to learn more about the craft, these are akin to Corinda and Annemann in the world of Mentalism or Royal Road to Card Magic for those addicted to the pasteboards – the “Bibles” of the craft.

1. The Arcana of Bizarre Magick by Jim Magus
2. An Introduction to Bizarre Magick by Jack Camp
3. Growing in the Art of Magic by Eugene Burger
4. Magic & Meaning by Eugene Burger
5. Spirit Theater by Eugene Burger, Kauffman & Greenberg
6. Theory & Presentation of Magick by Carl Herron (Bro. Shadow)
7. Bold & Subtle Miracles of Dr. Faust by David Hoy
8. Entertaining with Horror by Jim Magus
9. Grimoire of the Mages by Tony Andruzzi

SÉANCE & GHOST HUNTING
1. The Psychic Mafia by Lamar Keen
2. Daemons, Darkling’s & Doppelgangers – Supreme Magic
3. Encounter with a Ghost by Larry Kuhen
4. Have Séance Will Travel by Carl Herron (Bro. Shadow)
5. The $1,000.00 Séance by Docc Hilford
6. Mephisto’s Journey by Docc Hilford
7. Invisible Stranger by Docc Hilford
8. Band of the Hand by Docc Hilford
9. Manifestations by Lee Earle
10. Séance by Al Mann
11. Séance by Scott Davis
12. Spirits on the Table by Larry Kuhen
13. The Talking Board by Jim Magus
14. The Paranormal Entertainer by Paul “Voudini” Bell

SHINING A LIGHT ON THE HOLIDAYS & SYMBOLS
1. The Wheel of the Year by Pauline Campanelli & Dan Campanelli
2. Encyclopedia of Witchcraft by Ray Buckland
3. Eight Sabots for Witches by Janet & Stewart Farrar
LEARNING COLD READING
The first in the FREE Book series introduces the novice to the world of Cold Reading; not just the theories and concepts that have been so popular with early 21st century writers, but reference to the older forms of responding to questions from the stage as well as the formulas used by the old timers (prior to the mid-1970s), even leaving the student with one favored and proven method that has been used by Mystery Entertainers and real world Psychic professionals for well over 100 years to date; a simple, easy to learn system that will empower you with the ability to deliver relatively accurate character & personality Readings your patrons will remember for years to come.

MENTALISM
Was released in February 2011 as the 2nd of the FREE Book series, delivering a rather unique over-view to the craft that allows the novice to become familiar with the differing schools of thought & practice while likewise explaining the nuance differences between true Mentalism, Mental Magic and just an inkling on what has become Bizarre Magick.

Unlike most composition on this subject I have deliberately shared insights from esoteric literature the shines light on a little spoken of truth; the fact that a huge amount of what one learns and conditions themselves for when becoming a Mentalist mirrors the lessons and disciplines associated with Psychic Development and actual mysticism; no selling of souls or virgin sacrifices, but certainly the scholastic flavor of things.

ABOUT BIZARRE MAGICK
Book III in the FREE Book series released in the fall of 2011 with Introduction to the Art of Séance.

About Bizarre Magick introduces the student to a relatively new face of modern-day magic that came into popularity in the late 1990’s by way of the earl televised special featuring David Blaine and Criss Angel. Truth is however, Bizarre Magick’s roots can be found some 30 years prior to this point in time when the likes of Charles Cameron, Brother Shadow, Tony Andruzzni and Anthony Raven hosted the reprise of magic as it was done in antiquity – a bit gruesome with a hint of the occult and smattering of death here and there.

This book gives you a look at the history as well as the many modes of presentation common to this performance heavy art form.
INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF SÉANCE

I’ve been coupling magic tricks with storytelling for decades but especially so when it comes to creating a genuine sense of haunt; everything from fireside tales of fright to ghost hunts, tours and the various styles of Spirit Communion – the Séance.

Like Bizarre Magick Séance work is very performance heavy and nothing remotely as mundane as many envision. It has evolved far away from the meandering of things presented by magician and pseudo-debunkers forming into a specialty niche all of its own (though closely related to both, Mentalism & Bizarre Magick)

Anyone curious about developing a Séance or Ghost styled program needs to start with this tome before taking another step. It will direct you to positive, well worked material and ward you away from that which has been produced by inexperienced dreamers and plagiarists that are trying to look knowledgeable.

THERE’S MORE TO COME . . .

I’m presently working out book concepts dealing with *Major Illusions* and *Escapology* as part of my 2012 release as well as a handful of text you can buy. . .

. . . *bet you knew that was coming*

Of course I’ve had a long list of retail publications on the market for years, just do a search on my name through Lybrary.com or visit my storefront at Lulu.com. I have listings of material that’s exclusive to certain sites so look around.