



"Sure, I'll have dinner with anybody, it's easier than teaching magic (considering, I don't know magic)." —PENN

**MOFO KNOWS**  
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 CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUESTED



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# MOFO KNOWS

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## A REALLY BIG TRICK

As you know, David Letterman moved into his new digs this past summer, and you also know which trickster team was invited to help break the place in. Penn and Teller were willing, able, and ready with a carefully chosen bit. All was calm, until Late Show producer, Robert Morton ("Morty") called and told the guys that he wanted a really big trick for the "really big show." The boys came up with "the world's heaviest card trick," designed to reflect the magnitude of David Letterman's new playroom, The Ed Sullivan Theater. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the bit, Teller describes it as simply, "a 1,404 lb. pack of cards handled by two ten-ton fork-lifts."



A ton of fun: Penn, Teller and THE DECK.

That is precisely where the simplicity ends. *Mofos Knows* prides itself on a penchant for digging deep in order to get the facts, so we spoke to the men, behind the men behind the machines (the fork-lift connection) to get the behind-the-scenes scoop. Richard Baker, Manager of Advertising and Sales Promotion at Hyster (the lift truck manufacturer) was the initial linchpin where fork-lifts were concerned. He was sitting in his office

in Danville, Illinois when a note came down the line that Penn and Teller had called. "Gimme that!" he said. Being that the boys are "the tricksters of choice" in the best fork-lift circles, they were immediately referred to a Hyster dealership in New Jersey. A couple of J30XL2 lift trucks happened to be immediately available due to another customer's reneged purchase. Shortly after the Letterman show aired, that same customer miraculously regained his interest and purchased the trucks.

Joe Frassa, Branch Manager of Modern Handling and Equipment (the dealership) gave the guys their vehicles and driving lessons. "We were all very impressed," said Frassa, "in 2 or 3 hours they had mastered those trucks." But after this initial lesson, there would only be 3 short weeks in which the trick had to be perfected.

"It was really neat to watch the trick evolve," recalled Frassa, "each time they changed something, it got more elaborate and spectacular."

There were no accidents, not even a bruise. They did run into a few problems, however. For instance, the length and width of the blades or forks had to be modified so the "cards" could be cut and shuffled. The guys thought Mr. Frassa was just kidding when he told them they needed P&T forks. Then they were presented with those beautiful "Polished and Tapered" forks and they knew Frassa had meant business. Another adjustment was made to keep the deck from falling between the blades. Not only did our cracked team master basic driving functions, they had to figure out and acquaint themselves with the unusual maneuvers that the

(continued on next page)

## "NASTY THINGS HAPPEN..."

by Martin James

Update: Penn and Teller have hit prime (meridian) time television in England? It's true. The six part series, "The Unpleasant World of Penn and Teller" [see *Mofo Knows* #12] aired this past January. Brits got a solid dose of American counter-culture from exposure to new bits like Chipper Shredder [see *Mofo Knows* #13], deemed "unspeakable" by one critic. Her Majesty's vassals were subjected to old Letterman classics such as sawing Teller in half and the upside down bit from SNL and "Get Killed" fame [see *Mofo Knows* #3]. Simon Hoggart of *The Observer* found Teller's disembowelment to be "carried off with a real flair and pizzazz."

Of course, it isn't a party until the guests arrive, and as Penn told Nancy Banks-Smith from *The Guardian*, "We are virtually unknown in your fine country. There's an upside to that. We can get really good guest stars," (see *Mofo Knows* #12) "for a while." In the six week stint the guys are visited by John Cleese and Christopher Reeves, as well as popular British comedians Dawn French and Stephen Fry.

Judging from the reviews, the bad boys were well received. "They bring a punky sensibility to a showbiz strand that has always been sequins and satin," said an article by Alkarim Jivani in *Time Out* magazine. Rose Rouse from *Box Office* magazine reported that "Stars and punters have been queuing up to watch the pair reveling in gruesome stunts" and, on the whole, found that "their tricks tend to be violent and unwholesome, but you can't help liking them." Although it would be difficult to say that the overall criticism was one of praise, [see *Daily Mirror* and *The Sun* articles elsewhere in this issue] the response was definitely appropriate and flattering by our standards. "Penn and Teller have a strong sense of humour and an unpredictable streak—and how. But they are neither kind nor gentle and they don't believe in magic. They are magicians."

It sounds as though our trick and treatsters got to Great Britain none too soon. The British have their own version of David Copperfield, a quintessential common magician by the name of Paul Daniels. Some people are born targets. Simon Hoggart refers to him as "the Wretched Daniels" in his review, and adds "I suspect many people find [Daniels] soothing precisely because his tricks are so dated and predictable."

## DANIELS BLASTS RIVALS

THE SUN, 19th January

Paul Daniels has branded his American rivals Penn and Teller "pathetic and boring."

Mr. Daniels, who is of course not pathetic and boring, claims his wife Debbie McGee fell asleep while watching the zany duo's new Channel 4 show.

And he gives them just two years before they, to quote a well known magical phrase, disappear.

Paul, who has been the subject of much ridicule by the U.S. duo, says, "I think their show is pathetic and childish. It was a bit boring. I was very disappointed."

"Debbie fell asleep watching them."

He added: "I give them two years, same as America. They came and went in two years there."

"There are much better, much funnier guys than them here. I

think it's a shame they had to go to America to bring them in."

A source close to Penn and Teller said, "Being slagged off by Paul Daniels will cause them considerable merriment."

### AND TELLER ADDS:

A Brit press agent suggested that if we do a West End run (for which we have now had two offers), we should at the very least do an undersling on our marquee quoting Daniels. He is exceedingly well-known, having had a BBC series for the last ten or twelve years, and EVERYBODY knows he stands for stodgy, avuncular entertainment. I imagine that...

"Pathetic And Boring"

— Paul Daniels

...could be a whole ad campaign.

### MEDIA CLIP Sunday Express, 9th January by David Thomas

"Finally, a quick mention for *The Unpleasant World of Penn and Teller*.

"They're two American magicians who are to Paul Daniels what the Sex Pistols were to Max Bygraves—louder, nastier and a lot more exciting. They're not exactly likeable, but their show is just...magic."

(Max Bygraves is a comedian/actor/singer known for his 'singalong' type of songs.)

### BENDY DOLL JIBE UPSETS STAR PAUL

Daily Mirror  
by Tony Purnell

T Magic star Paul Daniels has been mocked for using his pretty wife as a "bendy doll".

Rival jokers Penn and Teller reckon Paul's usual routine is no way to treat a 1990s lady.

The American duo take the mickey in their new Channel 4 series *The Unpleasant World of Penn and Teller* by introducing a doll called Debbie McGee.

Naughty

And Paul, who always introduces his missus as "the lovely Miss Debbie McGee" on his shows, liked their antics not one little bit yesterday. He said the bachelor Yanks were "like naughty boys telling tales out of school."

He added: "The truth is they are not very good at magic so they try to make a mockery of it."

Emmy award winners Penn & Teller upset Paul by making him the butt of their outrageous six-part series which starts in the New Year.

Big, pony-tailed Penn, 38, said: "It's so outdated to push female assistants into cabinets and saw them up and stuff like that."

"We call them box jumpers in the States".

Little Teller, who stays silent most of the time during their double act, said "The women are just decorative props."

The duo's own brand of magic relies on shock tactics and lots of blood.

Viewers will see them nailing a bystander into a box and dumping it ablaze into the Thames.

"That is not entertaining, that is sick", said millionaire Paul, 55.

"They should do a vanishing trick themselves. The reason they put me down is because they know I'm No. 1 and want to jump on the band wagon."

"Most of what they do is plain boring. Debbie fell asleep watching a tape of one of their shows."

Paul added: Debbie is more than just a box jumper. She has a university degree, was trained by the Royal Ballet and is a performer in her own right."

A REALLY BIG... (from front page)



Penn with a really BIG queen of hearts.

bit required. What's more, they had limited practice space and limited time. "They had to do the trick in under seven minutes," recalled Frassa. "A couple of times they made it in under six minutes and we were all amazed!"

What about the element of danger? According to Mr. Baker, "You're always worried that something could go wrong, but when [our vehicles] are used properly, they are incredibly safe."

Joe Frassa shared this view, but added, "We didn't know that Teller was going to hang upside down. The guys brought in their own rig to hang Teller from and we all cringed a little bit, but did what we could to make it safe." A metal securing pin was added to the rig to insure stability. Still, Mr. Baker did not recommend trying this trick at home.

Penn and Teller have a slightly different take on the situation. "We did it on Letterman and did it on Fox New Year's Eve. Huge hit. And we know it will be a killer in the new live show we're getting ready for, our 20th Anniversary Tour." And will the fact that almost no standard stage will hold a ten-thousand pound fork-lift stand in their way? Fortunately, Joel Fischman, the head of entertainment at Bally's, who produced the New Year's show in Vegas, relayed this little known fact before the guys learned by experience. "Boys," he said, "if you drive one of those mothers over our stage, it'll go straight through, just like the one did at Treasure Island the other day."

Success prevailed. "Fortunately," said Teller, "we have a god as a producer [Fischman], who built a new stage surface of 3/4-inch plywood topped by 1/4-inch STEEL PLATING WELDED TOGETHER. Now we can do our little trick. Here."

Some guys have all the fun.



Teller is off to the Letterman set.

## THERE'S ONE THING WE JUST WON'T STAND FOR

by Teller

Recently the Philadelphia (Teller's home town) City Paper ran an article by one A.D. Amorosi, in which the writer pleads his case that people should not boycott Woody Allen's latest film just because they may be miffed about his love life habits. The author writes, "There is no end to the personal crimes of those artistic types we love almost unconditionally." There follows a dirty laundry list which includes the alleged moral transgressions of the likes of Bing Crosby, Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Red Skelton, and so on. In the midst of this shocking array of celebrity no-no's, we suddenly discovered the following outrage:

"Penn and Teller were once mimes."

Imagine our dismay. Mr. Amorosi doesn't have to imagine it—Teller explained it to him as follows:

4 September 1993

Bruce Schimmel  
City Paper  
Chancellor Building Mezzanine  
206 South 13th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Mr. Schimmel

A.D. Amorosi lists my partner and me among those entertainers whom the public forgives for sins of the past. Fair enough. We have sinned. But instead of citing one of our real transgressions — for example, on New Year's Eve in 1991, we told millions of television viewers that midnight has arrived, when in fact it was only 11:59 — Amorosi claims, "Penn and Teller were once mimes."

This is a stinking lie. Mimes, for Amorosi's information, are cake-faced pansies who prance coyly through pathetic propless plots to the disgusting acclaim of the French. We are responsible for many low shenanigans (such as releasing 3800 horseflies in David Letterman's old studio), but we have never, never been trapped in an invisible shrinking box or acted out the plight of marionettes.

Perhaps the writer is confused by the fact that a few pasty-mugged baboons once minced their way over the same Newmarket sidewalks where in the 1970s, Big Al the Spoon Man, Penn, and I used to entertain and intimidate money out of wandering couples plump with South Street dinners.

Or perhaps someone should take a closer look at A.D.

Amorosi. In my opinion, only a diseased mind could conceive the notion that evils like drug addiction and wife-beating are comparable to the sin of mime.



## ANOTHER GOOD THING ABOUT BEING A "SUBSTAR" THAT I NEVER EVEN THOUGHT OF

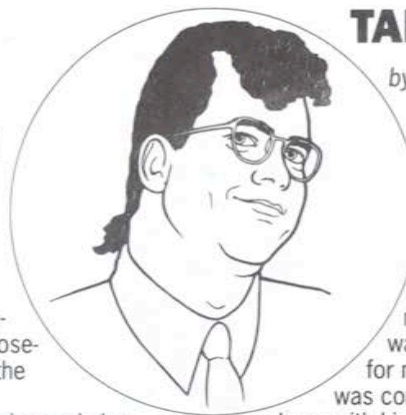
by Penn

We were on TV in Vancouver and I mentioned that when I travel I often get nose-bleeds (which is true). I believe it's from the change in weather.

But Trish Linke was watching and listening and she was afraid that I might have Hereditary Hemorrhagic Telangiectasia (Osler-Weber-Rendu syndrome). She sent us a FAX with a full page-and-a-half of other symptoms I should look out for.

From now on when I do these local TV spots I'll try to work in health problems I might be a little worried about. "Hi, I'm Penn Jillette and this is my partner, Teller. We're Penn & Teller, we're playing Friday at the Palace Theater downtown, and I've had a painless bruise of my left ankle for a few months now...."

Oh, if you care, I don't seem to have any of the other symptoms so I'm not worried, but it was nice of Ms. Linke to be concerned.



## TAKE IT, LOU

by Penn

Those of you that know me should have some idea what it means to me that last night (August 28, 1993) I played bass and Lou Reed played guitar while he taught me the song that he wrote for me, "Tattoo of Blood." He played guitar and I played bass. He sang it, and then we tried many keys until he found that one he thought was best for me. He worked on a bass line for me and then we jammed on it. My mouth was completely dry and I was shaking. Sure, I've

hung with him a lot but this was actually playing music.

He said I was a better bass player than he expected and I have less problem with pitch than Kramer says I do.

He said the hardest part of singing this song was not singing the word "blood" like Dylan.

I'm working on that.

He said, "This is why rock and roll will never die - "Goddamns"\* sitting around doing this for hours."

When he did a guitar solo and then "nodded" me in, I thought I was going to faint.

He said, "I guess this is kind of a thrill for you, huh?" It was quite a thrill.

\* so as not to offend we replace all obscenity with profanity.

### P&T FAN AND FRIEND CHIP DENMAN REPORTS:

"Just got the upgrade to (graphics software program) Corel Draw, and, hey, my friends are clip art! There on CD, there's a file called penn\_tell.cdr (with your old haircuts). There's also a copefi.cdr, but no siegfried, roy, or henning."

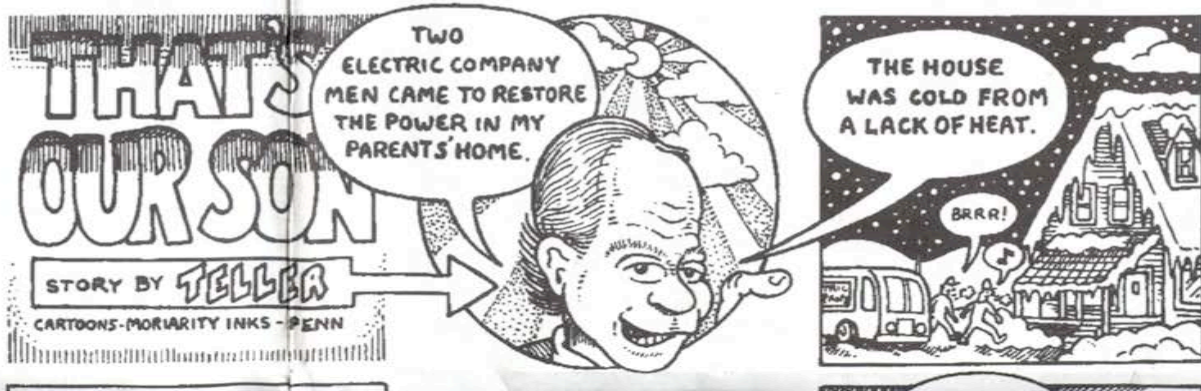
The pics appear with the stories Penn and Teller wrote.

### MEDIA CLIP

Daily Mirror, 7th January  
by Simon London

"These two cult US comics perform such a dazzling array of stunts and tricks you'll want to keep some of these on tape.

"Loud, brash and very funny these two are definitely not Paul Daniels - which is one excellent reason to tune in."



Sincerely,  
Teller



## A QUICK QUAKE REPORT

by Teller

At around 6 a.m., before the sun came up, somebody decided to shake my hotel bed hard enough to almost throw me out. The bottles in the minibar were rattling so violently against one another they knocked open the front door and leaped out onto the carpet. Then an effete voice, almost drowned out by static, came over the tiny red emergency loudspeaker, "We have just experienced a major earthquake. Please remain calm. Remain in your rooms and do not use the elevator. We have experienced a temporary loss of electrical power."

Being stuck in the Four Seasons Hotel during an earthquake with rich people was like being shipwrecked on Gilligan's Island with nobody but the Howells. When they heard the announcement about the free lunch buffet, they all hurried down the stairs (it's a 14-floor hotel) to stuff as much gratis grub as they could hold.

At the emergency-lunch-buffet at The Four Seasons, an LA producer friend of ours showed up. He lives in Santa Monica and came in just to schmooze with showbiz disaster victims. I remarked on it, and he said, "Well, my wife said, 'Where do you go in an emergency? The Salvation Army?' And I told her, 'No, to the fanciest hotel in town—they'll want to take care of their guests.' Voila, free food, and while I'm at it, why not work the room? You're the first one who busted me on it."

He's a lovable scum.

At two, we knew the electrical power was back on, because the fountains in the garden suddenly started to spurt.

Being in a steel-framed, flexible-foundationed, modern earthquake-resistant building, there in the dark of the night it was like riding Space Mountain. It felt like the end of the world and I loved it.

## MOFO SEES

March 21,22—La Jolla Playhouse, Mandell Weiss Center, CA

April 9—Bally's Grand Hotel & Casino, Atlantic City NJ

April 15,16—Jones Hall, Houston TX

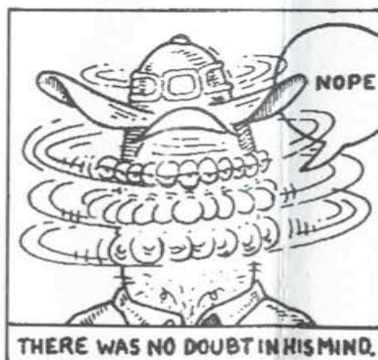
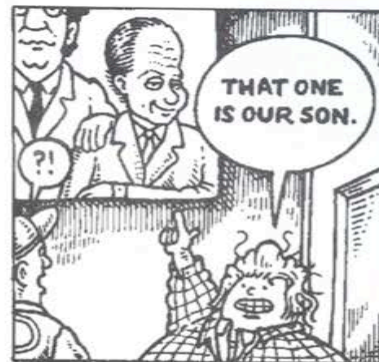
April 21-May 4—Bally's Las Vegas Casino Resort

June 11—McCarter Theatre, Princeton NJ

DOWN THE STAIRS CAME MY MOTHER, BUNDLED UP IN SLACKS AND SEVERAL FLANNEL SHIRTS. SHE LOOKED, AS SHE SAID, LIKE A "RAGPICKER!"



ONE OF THE WORKMEN, THE LESS FRIENDLY AND MORE RESERVED OF THE TWO, WAS STARING AT ALL THE PENN & TELLERANA IN THE LIVING ROOM, THE UNOFFICIAL BUT UNDENIABLE PENN & TELLER ARCHIVES.



TWO OR THREE TIMES BEFORE THE WORKMAN LEFT, MY MOTHER NOTICED HIM LOOKING AT THE PENN & TELLER POSTERS, AND REPEATING TO HIMSELF:

