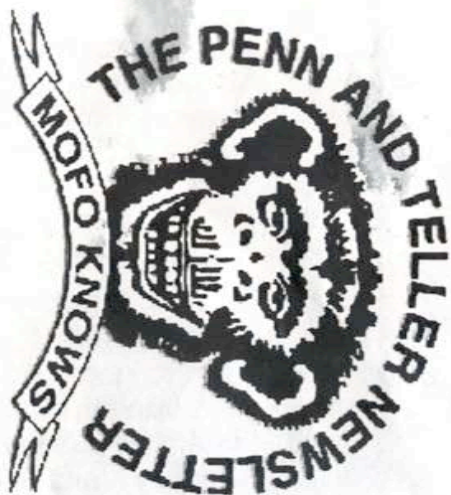


MOFO GOES HOME



"Billy, how much would you want to be paid, year in and year out, to live your life under a microscope?"

—Prince Charles, according to Billy McComb.

Change of Address Requested

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there's more p & t @ www.sincity.com

MOFO KNOWS

Issue 17 April / May / June 1996



We were up at 5:30 in the morning to do *The Big Breakfast*. This is a daffy show with lots of fast-talking Brits romping manically in a house whose rooms are painted with frantic neon colors and filled with cartoon furniture. There's a short, gabby, pink-cheeked guy, several slim women, and a Liverpoolian drag queen in a white wig and thigh-high vinyl boots. "It just seems amazing," Penn said, as we drove through the pre-dawn fog, "that there's a drag-queen that gets up this early."

Watching the show, I was worried that nothing we could do or say would stand out against the show's texture of giddy triviality. They placed us at a Lewis Carroll tea-table on the green lawn under the cold gray sky. The drag queen was shivering. I poured some tea from the pot shaped like a small automobile. The spot began, and suddenly the DQ's tone changed from the giddy blathering she had done the rest of the time to one of unmistakable respect. She raved us, asked the

standard questions, then she and Penn wittily bitched about doing morning television on a cold wet lawn. Penn grabbed fruit and juggled and ate it; I did the Cards-from-Mouth; Penn fired an apple at a cameraman's face with deadly accuracy—luckily the camera was tethered. They called us across the lawn to their vegetable garden. I ripped up sod then sneaked up behind the host and jabbed him in the ass with a handy pitchfork. He was too busy chattering to notice. Commercial.

As we waited for our next spot, I said to the press agent, "These people seem surprisingly respectful towards us." "I think the press holds you," he said, "in a kind of awe. There's nothing like you over here. It just couldn't happen. Only in America. I've turned down two or three times the number of TV and press spots you were able to do."

I tried to understand what he meant about a team like us being impossible in Britain. All I can guess is this: it seems that amusement in Britain is, by and large, deliberately and determinedly lightweight. It is as if it would just not occur to a Brit comedian (and even less to a magician) to do something with teeth or content. Prancing, yes. Giddiness, yes. Transvestism, oh, yes, certainly. But it seems like those who entertain are expected to be buffoons and not a thing more. As Americans we take ourselves more seriously. We think showbiz matters. — Teller.



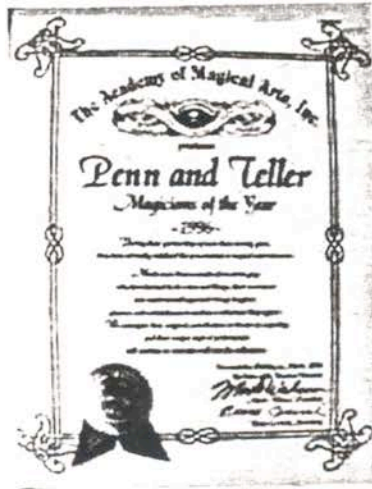
MAGICIANS OF THE YEAR

O k a y ,
we're "Magicians of the Year." We went to the banquet and everything.

I put on a suit and my date got all dressed up and we headed over. We were told to go there for dinner and when we got there I said my name and they looked at me blankly and said, "Do you have reservations." Now, my date thought that was really weird because our picture, as Magicians of the Year, was right behind me. They said, "Are you one of the important people?" I didn't know what to say.

It was great to see Phil Proctor, Carl Ballantine, Stan Freeberg, and Chuck Jones. I liked sitting with Jamy and I liked hearing Billy McComb say, while some hippy was prattling on about the "spiritual side of the art," "I've eaten everything I could throw." Some xtian thanked god (he thinks there's a supreme, omniscient being who gives a *goddamn* about this guy's magic lecture), and really pissed me off. There were a few P&T jokes and the crowd seemed mixed.

So, we were at the end of the show. At the time we hit the stage an evening that had started at 7:30 had gone past midnight and we weren't sure how to do the acceptance, but I think we did it right. We took such a high road that I'm surprised we didn't get nose bleeds. We did Looks Simple and



Teller gave a perfect speech. Just perfect. He said really important things and heart-felt things and said them so funny and so clearly. I was so proud of him. It's so great that our silent guy can kick the ass of any public speaker. It was perfect.

We've been doing this joke [claiming magicians at the Magic Castle hate Penn and Teller] for 15 years and Teller went out and explained it to the people who didn't get it. He talked about how wonderful show-biz was and I stood there and realized how hard it is to just stand on stage when you have nothing to say. Man, Teller was good. He just killed. It was the only time in the evening that someone had the full attention of the audience.

I think we did everything right. They were ready for us to do any snotty, mean thing we could think of and we didn't even think of them—we just did the right thing. Most of them still won't get it, but that doesn't matter—we feel great about it. And, Jamy seemed very happy and that, when all is said and done, seemed to be the whole reason for this—Jamy, Randi, Johnny, and Billy. It was a good thing. —Penn.



The Academy of
Magical Arts, Inc.

proclaims

Penn and
Teller

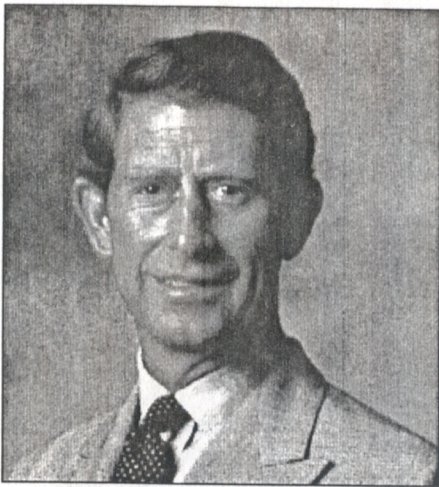
Magicians of the Year
-1996-

During their partnership of more than twenty years, they have virtually redefined the presentation of magical entertainment.

Much more than a couple of eccentric guys who have learned to do a few cool things, their irreverent and controversial approach brings laughter, pleasure and astonishment to audiences wherever they appear.

We anticipate their original contributions to the art of conjuring and their unique style of performance will continue to entertain well into the millennium. Presented this 23rd day of March, 1996

By Order of the Board of
Directors
Mark Wilson, President
Bruce Cervon, Secretary



THE PRINCE'S TRUST

the way from America to do that." —*Teller.*

At the end of the show, we had to file out and Sir David Frost led us in bowing and then he yelled, "Three cheers for the Prince of Wales—Hip, hip...." And we all yelled "Hurrah...." And he did it twice more and so did we. It was so stupid. Steven Fry was next to me on stage and he said, "Try to pretend it's Uncle Sam up there and he's got the beard and the suit and he's a real guy." —*Penn.*

Then we all lined up backstage. HRH was to come back and and thank the performers. We considered possible greetings: "Hey, Chuck, how's the missus?" "How's about putting in a good word at Scotland Yard so we can get gun permits for the Bullet Catch?" Cannon and Ball warned us, "Just hope that he shakes your hand and moves on. If he gets talking, you can't shut him up."

Now he came into view, a middle-aged rich kid with good posture and a diplomatic smile, measuredly familiar and complimentary, cued by the thickheaded David Frost. It was easy to imagine the Prince's tutor teaching him to greet performers: "Now, Chaz, if you have nothing

do that?" I started my usual, "With a good deal of discomfort," answer and Penn chimed in with, "He'll tell you. He has to. It's protocol." I said, "Or else..." and drew my fingers across my throat. "You have the gift of gab," he said to Penn, "if I might say so. That's the whole secret, isn't it?..." —*Teller.*

I met a prince and my dad was thrilled. What more do I want? —*Penn.*

What an odd man, an unstuck-in-time job. Pure figurehead. Son of the richest woman in the world, trained to play polo and chat diplomatically, eerily robotic, principle heir to the throne in an era in which thrones are just expensive old furniture. I wonder—could he write a macro or fry an egg?

As an American, the whole HRH thing seemed peculiar and rather sickly, but as a magician, I'm pleased that our little company just joined the ranks of magic legends like Herrmann, Maskelyne, Houdini, Malini, Devant, Charles Bertram, and Karl Germain who all performed before royalty. Strange to be in a place so old, so locked to its history, so gray, so alcoholic. Stranger still that it looks like we may shortly be bigger stars there



The Fox network announced Wednesday [March 22, 1996] 33 prospective series in development for the 1996-97 season. Among them, comedies starring Pauly Shore, Julia Sweeney and Gail O'Grady, and dramas with Eric Roberts and Daniel Baldwin. Also included are three reality series, including one called *Penn & Teller's Impractical Jokes*. —*Los Angeles Times.*



MOFO SEES

April 23 — May 4
Sadler's Wells Theatre
London, England

May 9 — May 21
Bally's Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

May 27 — June 5

When the band played, "God Save the Queen," Wiley and I sang, "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Yeah, sweet land of liberty. —*Penn.*

Our spot was about half an hour into the first act. We were

Our spot was about half an hour into the first act. We were doing the Water Tank with a famous old Brit comedian named Richard Wilson. Our crew, the best in the theatre, had arranged to have a booth built for the Water Tank, nicely placed to allow it to make its usual entrance. It went off without a hitch. As I was wheeled off, dead and drowned, Frost remarked, "Imagine. That fellow came all

"Now, Chaz, if you have nothing else to say to them, ask them whether they are on tour."

Charles shook hands with the tiny Chinese acrobats. "Do you speak much English?" he asked in his bizarre, overbred voice. They didn't. He asked if what they did took lots of practice. "Are you on tour?" he asked their manager.

Then he came to us. He shook my hand, thanked me, and said, "You survived, I see. How do you

may shortly be bigger stars there (after less than three years in their consciousness) than we are here (after twenty). So fifty hours after we arrived in London, we were on a plane home to the land where the world is in color. I was a bit jet lagged and bleary, but as I now reckon it, much happier than a king. —*Teller.*

We met the monarch formally known as Prince. —*Penn.*

May 27 — June 5
Bally's Las Vegas
Las Vegas, NV

June 8
Caesars Tahoe
Lake Tahoe, NV

July 13 — July 14
San Francisco
Symphony Orchestra
Davies Symphony Hall
San Francisco, CA

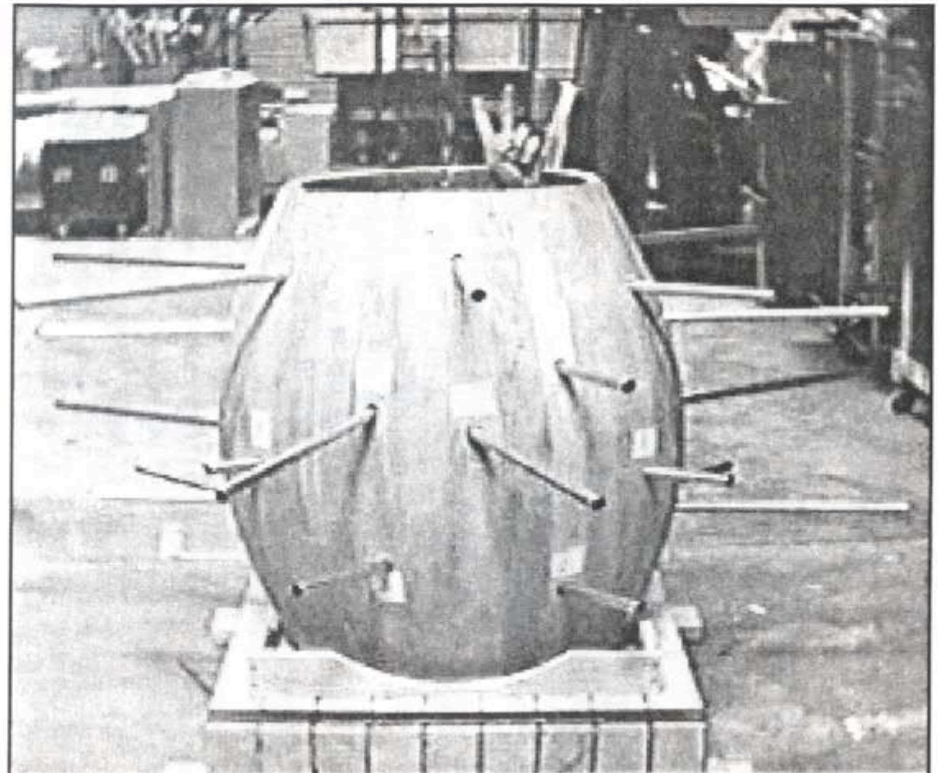
In 1683, Thomas Sadler built a "musick" house beside his medicinal well in northeastern London. In 1931, a modern Sadler's Wells Theatre, with a seating capacity of 1,499 persons, was opened on the site. Sadler's original well can still be seen under a trap door at the back of the stalls in the current theater.

FUNGOIDS

Does anybody out there know the story "Enoch Soames"? It's—I daresay—THE most brilliant of short stories. It's by Max Beerbohm. It's in his collection, *Seven Men*. You may have trouble coming across it at your local bookseller. It's also in an anthology called, to my recollection, *Speak of the Devil*. Yeah, yeah, I know, everybody will want a copy now. To love



this story you have to love the Yellow Book era of turn-of-the-century obscure art poetry. It helps to have a little decadent French leftover from high school. I don't want to tell you too much if you don't know it, but on June 3, 1997, I want to take a field trip to the British Museum, and you are welcome to join me. Do we all need bumper stickers: SOAMES IN '97? Is there a "Max Beerbohm Society" somewhere in Britain? I bet, if there is, they already have plans for the trip. —*Teller.*



Penn and Teller's new Barrel Trick involves a dozen metal rods, a barrel that's only 34" tall, and, of course, someone inside.