

MOFO GOES HOME

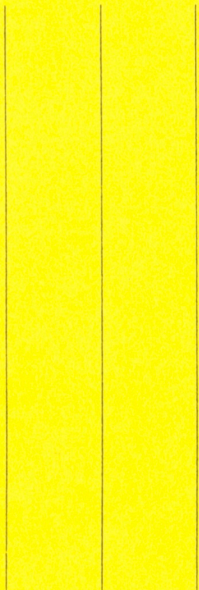
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Issue #1 GRAPHIC ARTIST: AARON TARDOS
May 1989 WRITER: SPENCER CHANDLER TELLER & PENN NEWS LETTER



SPENCE SPEAKS

Welcome, friends, to the first and far from last issue of the Teller & Penn newsletter! Yes, that's right, Teller & Penn. You see, it is the commonfolk that do call these gentlemen (?) Penn & Teller. However, it is the elite and privileged who call them Teller & Penn. You being an official fan are amongst those who can call them Teller & Penn. So go ahead! Call them T&P; your friends will think you to be strange, but you're not -- you're cool.

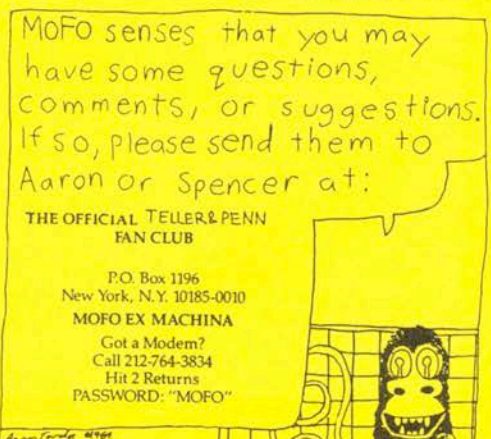
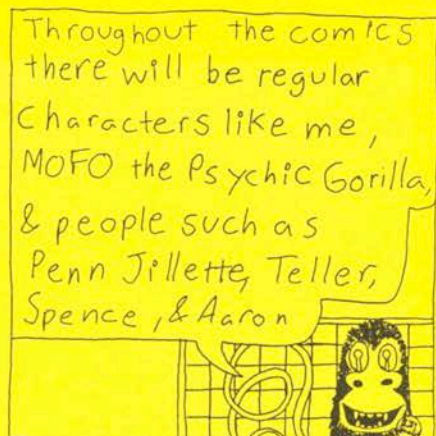
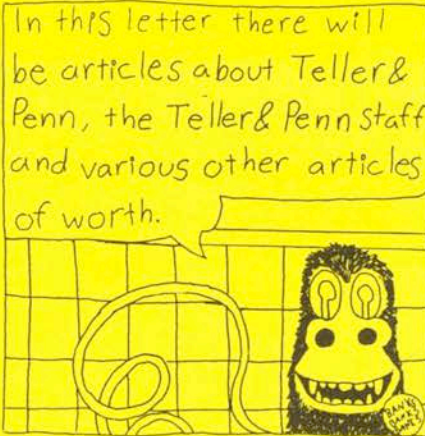
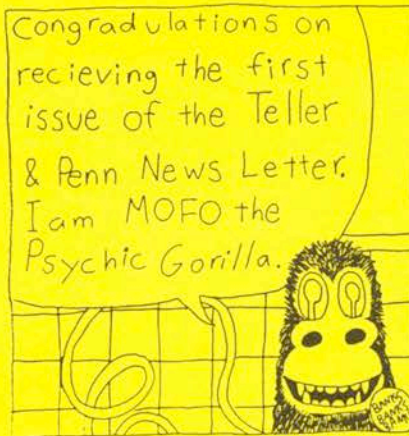
Now in this letter you'll find many things: comics, interviews, behind the scenes articles, and pictures galore. You'll be getting what the average and unofficial fan does not: the inside information. These are stories and articles that the New York Times doesn't dare to print. But we do. We dare to tell you what we really think of the schmucks who mouth off. We dare to print drawings which humiliate and embarrass those who deserve it. Myself and my partner, Aaron, work here in San Francisco, home to T&P's most recently finished engagement. He draws and I write. What a team, eh? Actually, in case you didn't know (which you probably didn't), he and I are also best friends. That's us in the picture, see? I'm the good looking one on the left (just kidding, Aaron). Ow! Aaron just gave me a whack on the head. He can be touchy sometimes, but then again, so can I. Oh well.

We would like to once again wish you a warm welcome to this exclusive fan club. By the way, if you happen to have any comments, questions, or ideas, don't hesitate to send them to either my or Aaron's attention at the fan club address. So start reading, have fun, and be cool. You're a Teller & Penn fan.

Spencer Chandler



Photo: Daniel Hollander



TELLER & PENN GET KICKED OUT

The Magic Castle is a drinking club. Don't let anyone kid you or tell you otherwise. For those of you who have been living in caves and/or New Jersey, the Magic Castle is comprised of little old men that scurry up and down the corridors, dropping coins and decks of cards from their arthritic hands, and feebly attempting to impress their cronies. In my opinion, the reason why the Magic Castle is so popular is not because of it's grace and elegance and charm; it has none of these elements. The reason is, quite simply, that the club will accept anyone that will pay the ridiculously overpriced fee of \$800 down and \$250 per year.

Anyhow, if you are lucky (?) enough to perform there, they reduce your lifetime membership to \$50. Almost all magicians that are offered this reduced rate take advantage of it, but not our two carbon-based life forms that we (the elite) call "Teller & Penn". They performed at the Castle, smelled the breath of "a hundred old drunkards", and left with a hasty "good riddance". Needless to say, they did not go back. What interest would two men that don't drink have in a club for boozers? (JUST SO YOU KNOW, there are only two things that'll get Penn into a bar: topless dancers & good rock 'n roll. The Magic Castle offers neither.)

Three years later, after plenty of whining on the part of the magic community because of T&P's alleged expositions of magic, the Magic Castle membership decided that they would do something about these two whippersnappers who threatened to expose their precious and unique (ha!) acts. However, they thought past their capacity and suffered for it.

The decision finally reached was that T&P must be kicked out of the Magic Castle. The members threw up their hands and rejoiced, while T&P clasped their stomachs in raucous laughter. They weren't even members to begin with!

To quote Penn Jillette, "If you're going to throw us out of a club, make sure we're members first."

TELLER & PENN ACCUSED OF BLASPHEMY

It was a cool and crisp Wednesday night that I was fortunate enough to see Teller & Penn perform at the Curran Theater here in San Francisco. Just before showtime, my family and I enjoyed a delightful dinner at a nearby restaurant, the result being that my pocket became filled with chalky mints that burst into powder sometime during the first act. Despite this minor explosion, I enjoyed the first act immensely. One particularly cool thing that Teller & Penn did was a prediction trick involving the Old and New Testaments. It was a fabulous routine, one which was greatly heightened by T&P's comic abuse of the Bible. Tears of laughter streamed down the faces of many a gleeful spectator as the first act ended and people exited into the lobby. (For those of you who have never seen a live show of T&P, Penn goes out onto the street during intermission to wax eloquent with the audience members.)

On this evening, however, there was an extremely irate woman with a look on her face that seemed to cry out for a dosage of Pepto-bismol (I should know, myself being a frequent user of the aforementioned medicine). But enough about my gastrointestinal problems, and onto the real matter at hand: this eccentric Christian woman who decided to cause trouble for our friends Teller & Penn.

Her face was quite unsavory, and I was forced to turn my head away and merely listen to this reptile woman who began to unleash a torrent of rage and hostility on Penn. Her tongue hung out of her mouth as she hollered that the prediction trick was blasphemous and that Teller & Penn were mocking her God. Penn, our hero, calmly tried to explain the idea of freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and how the two mix, yet the woman would not listen to reason. She continued on, her voice getting more and more shrill by the second. The woman left in such a fit that it looked to me as if she needed to be tranquilized and locked up in a padded cell. The group of people who had gathered around to listen to this Bohemian rattle on were now smiling in great approval of her frustration.

"My wife, the redhead, did explain the displeasure of the godless act. The act really took away any joy that we could receive from your show. Please consider other Christians and Jews who may be greatly offended by this act.

"(My wife)... and I will pray that God will reveal His true love towards you. Please read Ezekiel 3:19."

Feh! What a silly little letter do we have here! Let's take a look at Ezekiel 3:19, shall we?

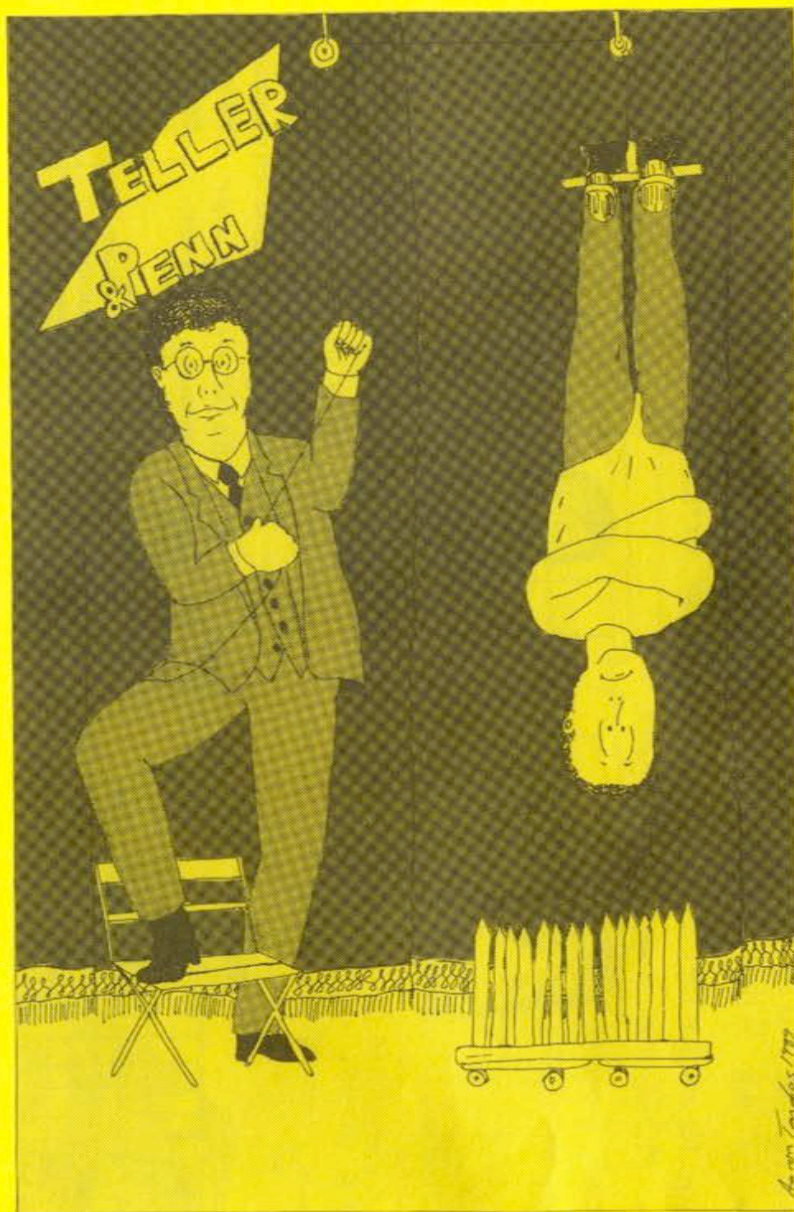
"But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you will have saved your life."

-- Ezekiel 3:19

What is this? This is ridiculous. Since Teller & Penn have no intention of changing their act for a bunch of fanatics like this, does this passage mean that T&P are going to die in the midst of this routine? "But you will have saved your life." Does this mean that just because a family of dunderheads has shaken their fingers at Teller & Penn this family will be saved? Does this mean that I can go up to any apparent wrongdoer and say, "Naughty, naughty! Musn't do such things!" and I will be saved? Nonsense!

And the line, "(My wife) and I will pray that God will reveal his true love towards you." How dare they be so presumptuous

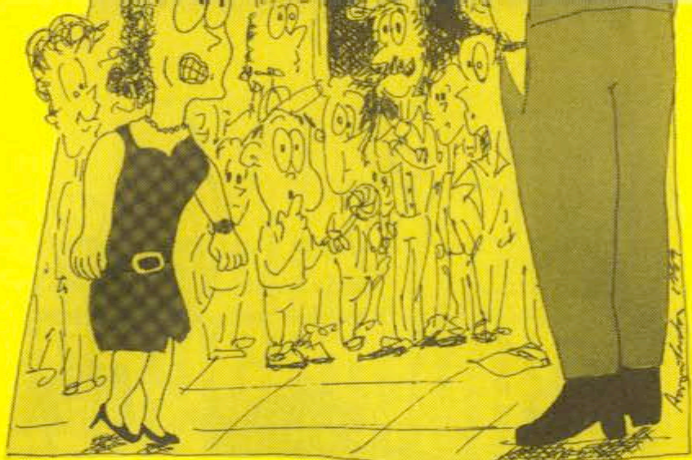
CASEY AT THE BAT



TELLER & PENN FIT TO PRINT

What does it take to rate for the NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE? Just find

ask why Penn's left third finger is painted red. It could get you dead.



Well, the commotion died down and the show resumed its pace, the second act proving to be equally entertaining as the first. The lady, however, knew nothing of the success of the latter half of the show, for she and her pathetic family had left.

A few days later, a letter arrived at the theater, calling the attention of Teller & Penn. The letter reads as follows:

"Recently we read that your act was 'great fun! Family entertainment.' So we took our son to celebrate his birthday.

"Sorry, but we had to walk out after the first act. You had mocked and cursed our God. The God who lives in our hearts and guides our lives. I understand you have been to India and you have seen the darkness these people live without the light of his true God. Yes, I have been to India several times.

as to think that God hasn't already revealed his love towards T&P? How do they know that T&P haven't already made deals and bargains with God concerning vast amounts of real estate and stock in the carpet business? Last I heard, Teller and Penn were on a first name basis with God, Teller having a bit more trouble considering he has no first name. Becoming serious again (but only for a moment or two), this family is full of irrational thinkers and arrogant noses which are stuck in the air at all times. With the sending of this letter, this family thinks they have had the last word. Their smiles are smug and their hearts warm with the feeling that they have done the moral and correct thing. Well, they haven't! They've only made us angry. If the prediction trick upset them as much as it did, I can only imagine how angry they will be when they receive a copy of this fan letter.

CLOSING QUOTES

"In the nineteenth century, people weren't ashamed of being called magicians. Creative people weren't afraid to get involved... Time was when the idea of magic meant you were doing things that caused amazement, and that you were doing things that were genuinely, shockingly innovative. I mean, one of the strangest examples is a French magician who was so important to his country that when they were having trouble keeping the natives under thumb in Algeria, the government sent him down there as an ambassador to blow the local medicine man out of the water with high-tech tricks involving electromagnetism. I mean, I don't think that this was a totally wholesome thing that he did, to assist French imperialism; however he was a very important person in that culture and there was excitement about him," Teller told PENTHOUSE reporter Patrice Balwin in the December 1988 issue.

a couple of "very eccentric guys who do a few cool things," put them on the boardwalk at Atlantic City and let the antics begin. For the December 4th, 1988 NYT MAGAZINE article, Glenn Collins met up with our capricious duo on the set of their first feature film, PENN AND TELLER GET KILLED.

Collins found Penn getting ready for his first "squib," a black powder charge that detonates, simulating the impact of a bullet. While a master of trickery and illusions it was Penn's first time at this stunt and, according to Collins, his "eyes danced like those of a small boy ready to set off a cherry bomb in his Aunt Wilma's garage."

Getting shot is just part of the fun for the neo-phyte "movie stars." Stabbings, pseudo surgery, moped chases, and heavy coin artillery exchanges abound in PENN & TELLER GET KILLED. The heroes were entirely absorbed in "shooting" the movie and the pun is intended. Gunshots are an integral part of the soundtrack and punctuate the action as well as propel the plot of this highly entertaining and macabre story.

With a successful road show, Off Broadway and Broadway acclaim, a home video, a Showtime premiere, an upcoming book and numerous television appearances Penn and Teller are breaking into the feature film forum. Ever the practical jokesters, the movie takes these two to higher heights of trickery and slight-of-hand. And don't

If keeping up with P&T's antics is difficult enough imagine life on the set with Arthur Penn ("Bonnie & Clyde," "Little Big Man," and "The Miracle Worker") directing. Confusion caused by calls for "Penn" became a running joke despite the obvious differences between the 6'6" 34 year old star and the half as tall but twice as old director.

Penn Jillette, 34, the son of a prison guard and a graduate of the Clown College of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus and Teller, 40, a former Latin teacher, and son of commercial artists, met in 1974. Despite their physical, educational, artistic and expressive differences the pair of pranksters have become good friends who share a common background.

According to Arthur Penn, as related to Collins, "Penn and Teller's black wit comes out of 'the experience of the assassination generation. They grew up with the Kennedys, Martin Luther King Jr., John Lennon, the attempt on the Pope's life and on President Reagan's life.' (They) find comedy in the macabre 'to anesthetize themselves,' Arthur Penn says, 'because the psyche can tolerate just so much agony before it converts to agony.'"

Collins' last question "Can success spoil Penn & Teller?" was answered thus: "Everyone becomes a parody of themselves... I just hope we don't lose our goofiness."

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WOW

Ann Tarantasia