

MOFO GOES HOME

"Ignorance of your culture
is not considered cool."
—The Residents

MOFO
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NEW YORK, NY 10185-0010
CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUESTED



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MOFO KNOWS

ISSUE # 9

FALL '91

First things first: Teller & Penn are still at the John Houseman Theater, on New York's fabled 42nd Street, appearing in *Penn & Teller Rot In Hell*. But that's not all! They're also touring colleges on the Eastern Seaboard during their days off. Regular dynamoes, eh?

Does Room 101 mean anything to you? Well, for those of you who missed it, the boys did "Rathead" on Letterman in August. Quite the spectacle. Penn dumped a slew of sewer rats on Teller's head. I was there and, for me, the best part was when Penn ran into the audience with the bucketful of rodents! I loved watching those people scream and squirm.

New on the literary front: T&P are making noises about a new book—and why not? The last one was so successful, it went into numerous printings. When a Mofo Knows correspondent asked for more details, the only hint they were willing to give was that the recipe for Bleeding Jello will be in it. Family reunions will never be the same.

Thanks for all the responses to the new Mofo Knows. I knew there was a reason we did this. . . . If you're interested in Mofo's Nose (issues 1 through 7 of the T&P newsletter), send us a large envelope with \$2.90 in postage stamps *already affixed* and we will send one

each of whatever issues are left—no charge (Honest!). Supplies are limited.

PLUS: Don't forget, kiddies. Your friend and mine, The Amazing Randi, is being sued by Uri Geller for speaking his mind. Do truth or justice mean anything to you? Of course! But if you don't speak up *now*, Randi may lose *even if he wins!* Regardless of the final outcome of the case, Randi may be silenced by nothing more than running out of presidents. That would be a blow against science and a victory for "psychics" of all shapes and sizes—a victory that we may never be able to undo. So while you're doing all that speaking up, put your money where your mouth is and make a difference. Send your contributions to The Amazing Randi Legal Defense Fund, c/o Bob Steiner, PO Box 659, El Cerrito, CA 94530.

For contributions of \$25 or more, you'll get a free Penn & Teller "Rot in Hell" t-shirt—available for sale elsewhere in this issue. Just write "MOFO KNOWS" on the memo line of your check or money order and we'll send you the shirt. As if standing up for a cause you believe in ISN'T ENOUGH, Teller & Penn are gonna give you the proverbial shirt off their collective backs! What guys! —Sealboy



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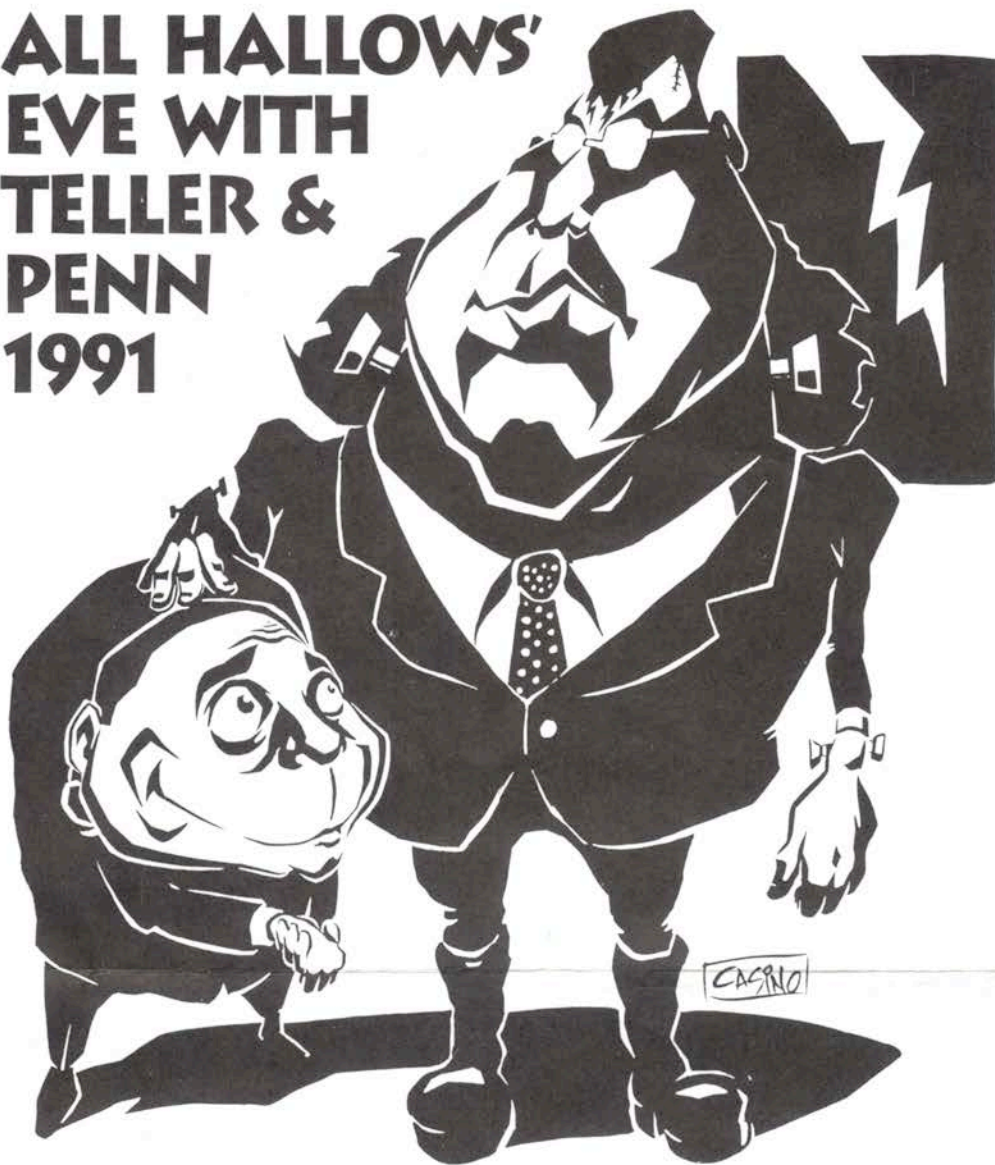


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PENN & CAROL BY AARON TARDOS



ALL HALLOWS' EVE WITH TELLER & PENN 1991



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Be the first kid on your block to sport one of these nifty new Teller & Penn t-shirts. Straight from their *hot* show, *Penn & Teller Rot In Hell*, this one-sided, 3-color design is available on white or black shirts and cost a paltry \$15.00 a piece—including postage and handling! Wotta deal!

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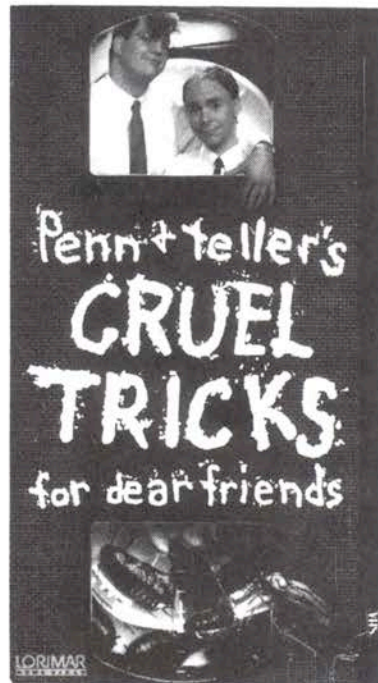
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MEDIA QUOTE UPDATE: In their interview in the August Issue of REFLEX magazine, Penn & Teller said some things about the Magic Castle that didn't go over well out in Hollywood. As a result, the Magic Castle's lawyer sent a letter to the above mentioned publication, making it plain they were none too happy. In the upcoming issue of REFLEX (Issue 21—available on newsstands December 1) our dynamic duo set the record straight in a guest editorial—exercising their common sense by apologizing for stepping on a few toes, and exercising their freedom of speech by explaining the origin of some of their controversial comments. As the editorial states, "We got a little carried away. . . . Trashing the Establishment in magic is part of our job. . . . an insult from Penn & Teller is a testimonial to the fact that [members of the Establishment] are cultural icons."



LORIMAR

A ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

Once in a lifetime experience. That's literally true. When you consider cloud cover and the closeness of the moon... this was the eclipse. We heard it rained in Hawaii and it was perfect here, cloudless. I want to try to get down what I saw, while it's still fresh. What I felt was awe. It's like a shuttle launch in that way but this is nature, the universe and that makes it different. There's nothing to worry about, and that's different and it's scary which the shuttle launch isn't.

I started the day getting gas with Tim, Skell and Brad. The roads were to close during the eclipse and we wanted a full tank in case we wanted to drive somewhere. We ended up staying at the hotel. Being around people is a good idea for this. It's very primitive and with all the cameras and telescopes, you want to be with a tribe of people. We got back to the hotel and had breakfast. I was a little worried about damage to my eyes and I was joking a lot about going blind.

We got down to the beach. Just in front of a resort hotel in Mexico. There were a couple dozen telescopes and people clustered around each one. People were similar with different levels of obsession. While the telescopes were being set up, I sat on a swing with a college girl from Arizona. She was down here to party. I told her we'd been down here for a year and a half getting set up. I also told her that because of bureaucracy the eclipse had been pushed back a couple of hours. Nick, the Movie-Night Kid, was there and we were just kidding around.

Skell had his telescope set to project the sun onto a white card. He had a sheet on the ground to look for shadow bands. Tim had his telescope set to look right at the sun, he also had a filter. You would look into the eyepiece and you

That's not true, it was round because the Sun is round, but not during an eclipse. The shadows on the ground got really distinct and focused.

As it got closer everyone was up and running around trying to see everything. The horizon started to turn an orange/pink, like sunset all around. It was now pretty dark. It was easy to see the shadow bands making patterns on the sheet and even on the ground. Everyone was really excited. The air was cool and it was getting a lot darker. It was very ominous and seriously scary. The maids came out in their matching uniforms on to the balconies of rooms to see the eclipse. We were all very excited and very scared. I didn't want to talk to anyone. Paul had two camcorders running, one on each eye and I didn't want to have to react for him, I just wanted to feel it.

We hit totality and it was okay to look up. I looked up and saw Baily's Beads, just spots, pearls of brilliant light all around one side of the Moon and just a dark disk in front of the Sun. I didn't see Baily's Beads really long enough to register because right away it turned into the Diamond Ring. Wow, a band of brilliant light around the Sun and one brilliant diamond-like bright spot, brilliant, glowing like the sun from one tiny point. That didn't last long, you could watch it go away and then real totality. I was just chanting under my breath "wow" and "jesus christ", Tim was doing the same. Everyone was doing the same. Tim kept giving me binoculars, big ones, and people were lined up for the telescope. This was the classic eclipse with the dark center circle and the brilliant light shooting out around it. The Prominences, this incredible force of the Sun peaking around the Moon. There were three bright purple flares on the side. These purple

Dear Mr. Penn and Mr. Teller,

Having seen your show last week I thank-you for a wonderfully entertaining evening. I write you, however, in regard to the piece involving the live duck.

I am deeply concerned that the use of live animals in the realm of entertainment sends a very wrong message to most people: that it is not only acceptable to use non-human animals for our own purposes, but that it is also funny. It is not funny.

Animals exist for their own reasons. They have their own needs, families, and feelings. To force them to be used for purposes other than their own is an exploitative situation much like slavery. It is not appropriate to place an unwilling victim in a bag for the sake of money. Research reports that animals in such conditions suffer tremendous confusion, anxiety and loneliness. Some "Show Animals" have even died from self-mutilation upon being separated from their family—this is not entertaining.

Please understand the importance of eliminating the duck act. Your failure to understand this would force me, my family, and my friends to boycott what would otherwise be a great show.

Marci S. Steinberg
New York, New York

Dear Marci,

Thanks for your note on the participation of the duck.

We have no immediate plans to discontinue doing the trick, but there are a few things you might want to remember when thoughts of its job trouble you: That duck was destined for table use. It was living in a tiny cage in a poultry market in Tarrytown. The next person who bought it would have had it slaughtered.

We, on the other hand, brought it to our theatre where it has a decent living space, including a small swimming pool. It is well fed and has companionship of the opposite sex.

Then, after it does its job on stage for two or three months, we will retire it to a Westchester dentist's rustic estate, where it will join the flock that lives there.

It will live the rest of its life as Nature intended, struggling for survival in the heartless wild, exposed to its biological enemies, competing against its fellows for scant resources.

And you will be glad.

I do not expect to change your moral/aesthetic position; I only want you to realize that this animal is well cared for, and is eminently better off than ducks who have never worked with Penn & Teller.

—Teller

DEAR TELLER

WHAT TO TELL YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT PEEWEE HERMAN

If your child asks you about PeeWee's Big Adventure in Florida you have two choices about what to tell him.

If you are good American, tell your child that Paul Rubens, the actor/writer who performs as PeeWee is a grownup in a free country, and our constitution says that we are allowed to see any kind of movie we like. People who like history can see historical movies. People who like religion can see religious movies. And people who like sex can see sexy movies. There are even theatres especially devoted to sexy movies, so that grown-ups can go and masturbate while watching sexy movies without bothering people who don't want to see or think about sex.

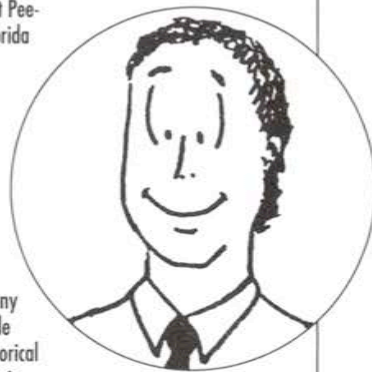
Tell your child that freedom to choose how we make ourselves happy without hurting other people is a lot of what the Declaration of Independence and Constitution are about. But in some places selfish pigs pushed their way into government and managed to slip by laws that try to prevent people from just having fun.

This is how Paul got in trouble. He went into a movie theatre where you are supposed to watch sexy movies and masturbate. But in that community there was an old law that said that it was okay to have theatres to show sexy movies and get people excited, but *not* okay for them to masturbate. Pretty silly law, right? You would not expect the police to spend much of their time hiding in a theatre to catch people breaking an anti-fun law, when they could be out catching murderers, right? Wrong.

No one even proved Paul guilty, but all of a sudden everybody got very excited, because Paul was famous. It's the same sort of thing that happens when a movie star has marriage problems. Nosey people with boring lives like to make a big stink when famous people have trouble. Paul's bosses at his television show got all scared that if they stood behind their employee who was accused of violating an anti-fun law, the nosy people with boring lives would say stinky things about *them*. They took away "PeeWee's Playhouse", even though it is a good television show that lots of people like. It's too bad they were not a little braver or more loyal.

Tell your child that it is important that he or she do his part to fix this situation, by telling our lawmakers and our television broadcasters that we think the whole thing is unfair to Paul and the fans of his show. We should all help to get rid of anti-fun laws, and we should make fun of people who are cowards in the face of stinky talk by nosy people with boring lives.

If, however, you are a nosy person with a boring life, tell your child that PeeWee led a secret life as a wicked man who put on a false beard and wig and (might have) tried to undermine our society by playing with himself. Tell your child never ever to enjoy a work of



sun, he also had a filter. You would look into the eyepiece and you would see a big circle, our sun, and sunspots and everything. It looked like a dirty lens but the same spots were on Skell's projection. Skell had brought number 12 welding glass and Nick had goggles of 15. You're supposed to have 14. I was taking pictures of the people and loading my camera. Someone yelled "first contact." I put on the goggles and laid on the ground, there was a little bite taken out of the top right of the sun. It moved so slowly. I guess it was about an hour or 40 minutes or something that it took the moon to move across the sun. It was slow enough that you couldn't see it move but you could tell it was moving. I just lay there on the ground watching the sun get eaten away, feeling the incredible heat on my face and inside the goggles. It was very relaxing and it was very powerful.

After about half an hour, I took off my sunglasses. The day was darker. It's hard to notice because you're eyes adjust but it was getting darker. And colder, my sunburn didn't hurt anymore and there were cool breezes. I stopped looking through the goggles and went to the projection on Skell's telescope. I sat with Charles. He kept adjusting for the rotation of the Earth. The Sun kept getting smaller. When you looked at light falling through the spaces between leaves, you saw little eclipses. When you made a space with your finger and thumb, you saw little eclipses. I had always thought when sun light went through a pinhole it was round because

of the pinhole.



—Penn

Moon. There were three bright purple flares on the side. These purple fires looked like an effect. It looked like the color must have been treated but it was the real deal, it was visible with the naked eye, red/purple fires on the side of this pitch black disk in the air. And light, fire, spilling out on all sides, in a couple places, twice as far out as the width of the Sun. It was amazing, really beautiful.

The six minutes flew by, there was a panic to see everything. I wanted to look around and see "darkness at the break of noon," I wanted to think about feeling the cold breeze. It didn't get too dark, but pretty dark for noon. The Sun's power, so great—too great to be hidden completely by the Moon, was fighting and spilling around the sides. I laid on my back, on the sheet with the binoculars, watching the purple hydrogen fires blaze and move. I guess I should point out that I was crying and everyone was just moaning, "wow", "jesus christ" and Tim was saying over and over, "No one knew it would be this good."

I wanted to see the Diamond Ring through the binoculars and it came quick and as I watched it, it happened very fast and got bright. People were yelling "stop looking!" and I reluctantly tore my eyes away to save them from white light/white heat. It started getting light, we wanted to stop it, we wanted the Sun to do it again but no go. The partial stages coming out just pissed us off. We talked about what we had seen, agreed there wouldn't be another like this even close in our lifetimes and started packing up.

It was awe. Pure awe. What power. The telescopes and high tech equipment just heightened the primal feelings. In the middle of the day, the Sun went away.

We said our goodbyes, I took a shower, I'm writing this and we get on a plane and fly home. I'll stay in Topeka tonight and do a voice-over for the nude dancing thing. Boy, do I owe thanks to Tim. Wow.

TELLER & PENN

A TERRITORIAL DISPUTE

Part two of a two-part story chronicling the battle of Human v. Vermin. Part one appeared last issue, and detailed the numerous but futile efforts of Robbie Libbon, Teller & Penn's Director of Covert Activities, to keep a pesky rat out of his prop room at the Eugene O'Neill Theater. When last we heard, Robbie was preparing for combat. . . .

The rat had no way of knowing that the bread I kept in the [prop] room was used in a bit called "King of Animal Traps." I had a large assortment of leg-hold traps at my disposal. I grabbed a racoon leg-hold trap, set it, and left it in front of the hole the rat had made the night before. There was no need for bait; if the rat wanted to get inside the room, he'd have to run right across the pan of the trap, springing it shut. Since the trap had been built for a racoon, I assumed it would close on the rat's tail instead of his leg. Smiling grimly, I closed the room for the night and headed home.

The next day, I opened the door to the room, turned on the lights, and peeked over to the closet door. The hole was there; so was a little ball of carpet fuzz, but the trap was gone. I was taken aback for a moment. Had the rat seen the trap, summoned help, and carried the trap away to dismantle it? I took my rat stick and pounded on the wall.

"EEEE! EEEE!" I heard, and understood what had happened. I cautiously turned the corner.

The rat had, indeed, run straight into the trap and across the pan. The trap had somehow managed to snap shut on its leg. And the rat had somehow found the strength to drag the trap halfway across the room, where it now lay exhausted. He jumped when I came closer, and began to frantically bite at the metal trap. I shuddered. It is one thing to set a trap, but entirely another to see an animal caught in one, even if it is a rat. Suddenly his beady little rat eyes were filled not with cunning, but with uncomprehending anguish. It looked less like a filthy antagonist than a helpless, disheveled version of Stuart Little.

"EEEE! EEEE!" It said, and renewed its struggle to free itself from my trap.

I was at a loss. On the one hand, I had caught the pest. On the other, it was sitting on the floor not three feet away from me, alive. The only thought in my head was to let it go. I would now gladly cohabit with it, share my room and my bread, talk to it -if only I could let it out of the trap.

I took my rat stick. I needed this tool to depress the spring that held the jaws shut so it could pull itself free—in spite of my newfound affection for the critter, I wasn't about to get within biting range of it. Edging closer, I lowered the stick onto the top of the spring and began to push.

The rat jumped, and began to attack my stick, upsetting the trap. I jumped, and began to sweat.

"Come on, rat, stay still. I'm trying to help!" I yelled, and tried again. But the rat had no reason to trust me now. Again, he screamed, and rolled, and turned the trap over.

"Goddamn you!" I shouted. "Can't you see I'm your only chance?"

"EEEE! EEEE!" it said.

I took the stick, rolled the trap over again, and began to slowly depress the spring. The rat paused for a moment, and looked at the stick. Slowly, the spring was beginning to compress . . .

"EEEE! EEEE!" It screamed again, and hurled itself at the stick, turning over the trap.

I pulled the stick away and looked at the rat as it chewed at the jaw of the trap.

"Listen, you idiot," I said angrily. "For one thing, you came in here and ate all my bread. For another, you made of mess of everything else. Then, when I blocked off the entrance to the room, did you get the message? No, you just had to come back in here. And now, when I want to let you go, you keep messing it up. Now just hold still for one goddamn minute, and I'll let you go."

"EEE! EEEE!" it replied.

"Oh, the hell with it," I said, and hit it over the head with my stick.

It stiffened up within minutes. I took it out of the trap with the stick (now broken in half), rolled it into a little Bloomingdale's shopping bag, took it outside, and tossed it into a garbage can. I threw the trap into the sink, poured a gallon of disinfectant on it, washed it off, and hung it up to dry.

I opened the door the next day confidently, threw on the lights, and stepped briskly inside. My bread was undisturbed. I picked up one half of the broken rat stick, tapped on the walls, and listened. There was no response. I opened the closet door, and peered down the hole in the floor. Nothing.

I walked to the middle of the room and looked around. "Any rats here?" I said quietly.

I was alone.

—Robbie Libbon

false beard and wig and (might have) tried to undermine our society by playing with himself. Tell your child never ever to enjoy a work of art by a person whose lifestyle is different from his own. Inculcate in your child that all laws are just, and that Freedom means the right to do only things that please everybody.

And be sure to teach your child that Thomas Jefferson was a jerk for writing that junk about the right to the pursuit of happiness.

—Teller