

international magic magazine

VANISH

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

The inside story
on Franz Harary's
House of Magic

THE WORLD'S
MOST EXCITING

VENUE

FOR MAGICIANS

FEATURING

OVER 100
PHOTOS



VIDEO LINKS

of illusions &
interviews

GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

BRUCE GOLD
MICHAEL MODE
JOAQUIN AYALA

SPECIAL EDITION
The Franz Harary Story

A \$40 MILLION DOLLAR SHOW
featuring MEGA illusions and more

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH FRANZ HARARY

FRANZ HARARY
LIVE in China
THE REALITY OF ILLUSION

FRANZ HARARY
THE EXPERIMENT

THE WORLD'S FIRST BEHIND THE SCENES COMMENTARY RECORDED LIVE ON STAGE BY THE PERFORMER DURING THE SHOW!

Join Franz as he gives you a live unscripted play by play commentary of his record breaking illusion spectacle, Mega Magic. Shot with home-movie style intimacy, this behind the scenes glimpse into Franz's unique world reveals what it's like to create and star in your own illusion show.

2 DVD SET FILMED IN HIGH DEFINITION

For the very first time, this remarkably candid documentary takes you backstage and behind the "real work" of being a mega-illusionist. Join Franz and his Mega-Magic team as they overcome the "real work" of triumph over impossible obstacles that threaten to shut down the show over again. If you've ever dreamed of standing center stage as the star of your own multi-million dollar illusion show, you owe it to yourself to join Franz on his journey and share in the lessons learned.

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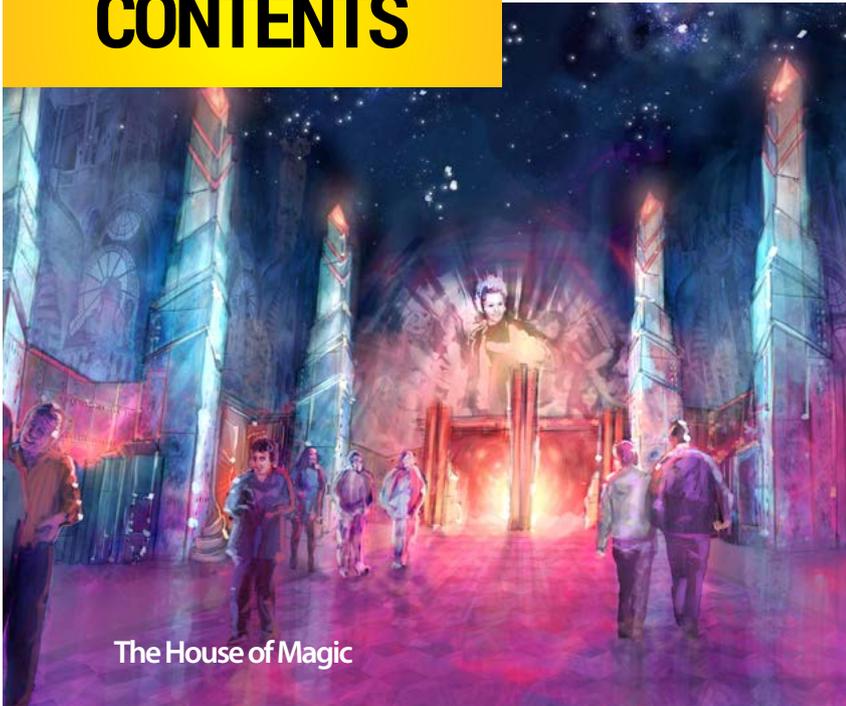
We bring top magicians and creators from all over the world to talk magic, teach and entertain you including Peter Turner, Titanas, Eric Leclerc, Spidey and many more!

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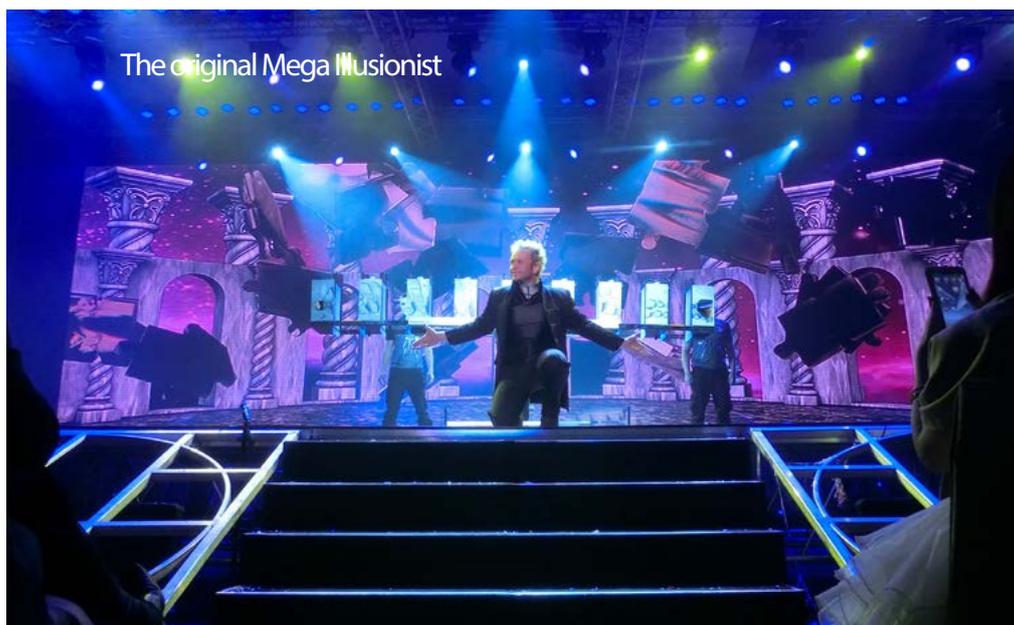
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EDITORIAL

Dreams and Hard-work Equals SUCCESS.

Welcome to this SPECIAL EDITION of VANISH. The interview and story you are about to read is so big, both in length and in news, that I felt it deserved something extremely special. This could very well be considered one of the most important events in the history of magic.

Recently, Franz Harary announced his largest undertaking which will see a theatre and a show that costs over \$40 million dollars. It will be the home for magicians from all around the world. It will open in September 2015 in Macau and is called *The Franz Harary House of Magic*.

What you have now is the culmination of many hours of conversation with Franz Harary.

He gave me personal access to his photos and video library, and allowed me to interview him whenever I had a question. To have this access to somebody as busy and as successful as Franz has proven to be a personal highlight of my life.

For a person who has superstar status throughout Asia and attracts audiences of over 40,000 people, I found him to be incredibly down to earth, very giving of his time and knowledge, and his passion for magic shines through in everything he does.

While his focus has been on creating the largest illusions and productions in the world, I found his energy and drive to be very infectious, and I know readers will be able to relate to what he says, no

matter what type of magic you perform.

The one thing Franz sincerely believes in is that we can all achieve our dreams. He's a living example of a person who never stopped believing in himself and followed through with his vision, and has many stories to tell.

I would also like to thank Bruce Gold, Michael Mode and Joaquin Ayala for taking the time to contribute and give us even more insight in to the life of one of the greatest magicians of our time.

I look forward to writing another story in a years time on the success of *The House of Magic* and how it will change the way the world views magic.

It's now time to digest this incredible story and follow your own dreams.

Paul Romhany
Editor & Writer



FRANZ HARARY'S HOUSE OF MAGIC

An In-depth Interview with Franz Harary about one of the World's largest magic venues in the history of Magic.

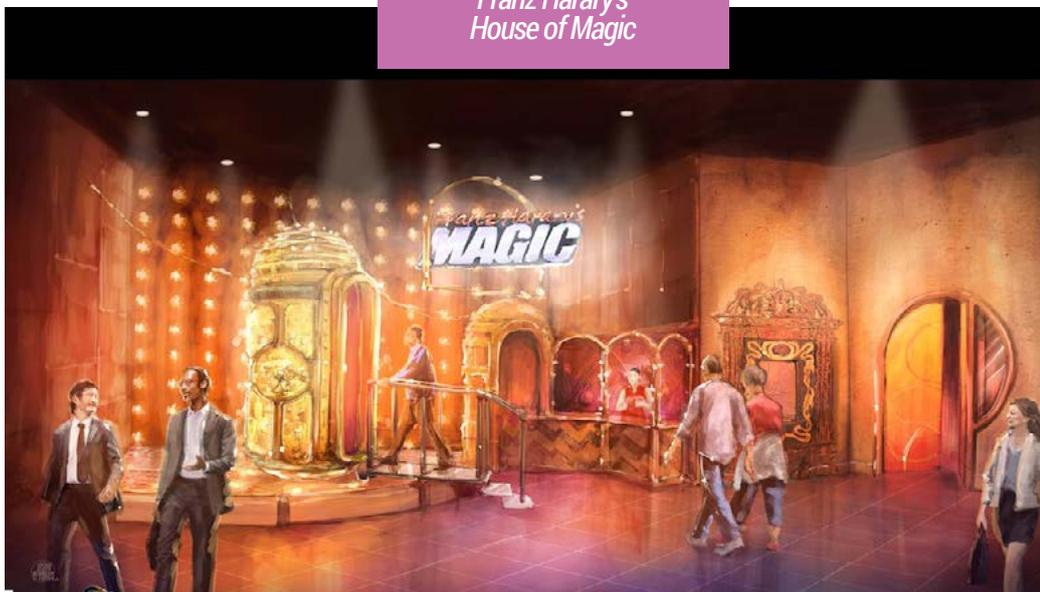




Franz Harary's "House of Magic,"
World's Spectacular Magic Attraction,
Casino & Resort,
Opening —New Studio City Macau,
September, 2015

Imagine that almost every one of us at times have closed our eyes and thought what our ultimate show in the ultimate venue would be. I wonder how many of us have followed through with this dream and turned it in to a reality. It takes decades of hard work, dedication, passion and belief in yourself to take a dream and see it through until the end. One of the few people I know who dreams big and follows through is Franz Harary. He has made a career of taking grand magic illusions and turning them in to MEGA magic illusions and playing to sell out audiences in arenas of over fifty-thousand all around the world. When Franz dreams he does it on a scale like no other person I know. Who else could turn a card trick in to a three million dollar production or take on the world's largest magic project with a show and venue that will cost over \$40 million dollars and create the world's most impressive venue for magicians?

Franz Harary's
House of Magic





At age 20 Franz Harary was discovered by Michael Jackson when he sent a VHS tape to the pop star showing what he could offer the world famous singer. 30 years later Harary is one of the most famous, successful, and internationally acclaimed illusionists working. Today, virtually every illusion show in Las Vegas features some element of Harary's magic design; he has established himself as the leading designer of illusions. In addition to his work as a designer, he also continues to star in his live show, "Mega Magic."

As an on-screen TV personality, Harary's credits are equally massive, both in the U.S. and overseas. His TV series, Magic Planet runs in syndication globally, while his earlier series, Masters of Illusion, along with many of his 42 other television specials, remain alive on TV screens around the world.

As a magic designer and producer, Harary's work in his chosen field is without precedent – his innovations in the field of live, on-stage magical illusions remain unmatched. His client base has included a "Who's Who" of celebrities, including Michael Jackson & Janet Jackson, David Copperfield, Cher, Madonna, Usher, and

Missy Elliott, and such major brands as Honda, Nissan, AT&T, GM, Pepsi, Sony and Toyota. In addition, his illusions have been featured within dozens of live, televised, world-class events, including the Grammy Awards, the Academy Awards, and the Super Bowl.

Currently, Harary is preparing for his most ambitious project yet – the September 2015 grand opening of Franz Harary's House of Magic. This \$40-million attraction will be permanently housed within the new Studio City Macau, a \$3.2 billion hotel and casino resort complex located on the Cotai Strip in Macau, China ("Asia's Las Vegas").

Franz Harary's House of Magic, featuring his award-winning Mega Magic show, represents the world's most sophisticated, state-of-the-art magic productions in history. This unprecedented venue, comprised of four live performance theatres, will enthrall millions of people. Upon its opening, the audience will witness an array of mind-bending, never-before-seen magic experiences; illusions that Harary has prepared exclusively for this site. The venue will also become home to other ma-



Photos: Top - Franz levitate Michael Jackson, Usher with Franz and a sketch from The Majestic theatre in House of Magic.



HALL CONCEPT SKETCH



gicians from around the world as they perform in the four different theatres. The concept is for The House of Magic at Studio City to become the global performance destination for magicians and is the dream Franz has been preparing for most of his life.

ABOUT FRANZ HARARY'S HOUSE OF MAGIC

Described as "an intimate, two-hour, live experiential presentation," Franz Harary's House of Magic has been conceived as an immersive experience "designed by a magician, for magicians." Visitors to the \$40million venue will be treated to brand new, large-scale magical illusions, including: shrinking motorcycles; cars appearing from nowhere, and members of the audience being levitated and teleported to distant locations. "Our show is being designed to transport the adult audience back to their days as children, recapturing that sense of wonder and awe we all had when we were very young," Harary says.

ABOUT STUDIO CITY (MACAU)

When it opens during September 2015, "Studio City Macau" will establish Macau, China, as an unprecedented entertainment destination. The new hotel/resort/casino complex will offer a "next generation" of outstanding entertainment-driven leisure experiences. Studio City Macau represents the world's newest international tourism center.

See: <http://www.studiocity-macau.com/>



The sketches above are from the entrance to Mega Magic and below France in the workshop checking out a new Mega Illusion he created.



FRANZ HARARY MEGA ILLUSIONIST

For the first time Franz Harary sits down and answers questions about his upcoming House of Magic and shares his incredible journey from his early days working with Superstar Michael Jackson to creating the world's largest magic venue.



“Approximately 65 semi trucks worth of magic is headed to my place in Macau.”

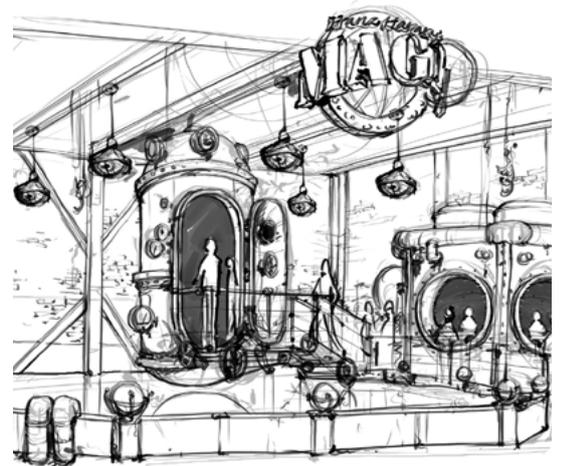
Paul Romhany — Let’s first all of all talk about this incredible project that is the culmination of many years of perseverance, dedication and belief.

ue that would allow audiences to see my most spectacular high-end illusions right up close and under their noses. This has never been done before.

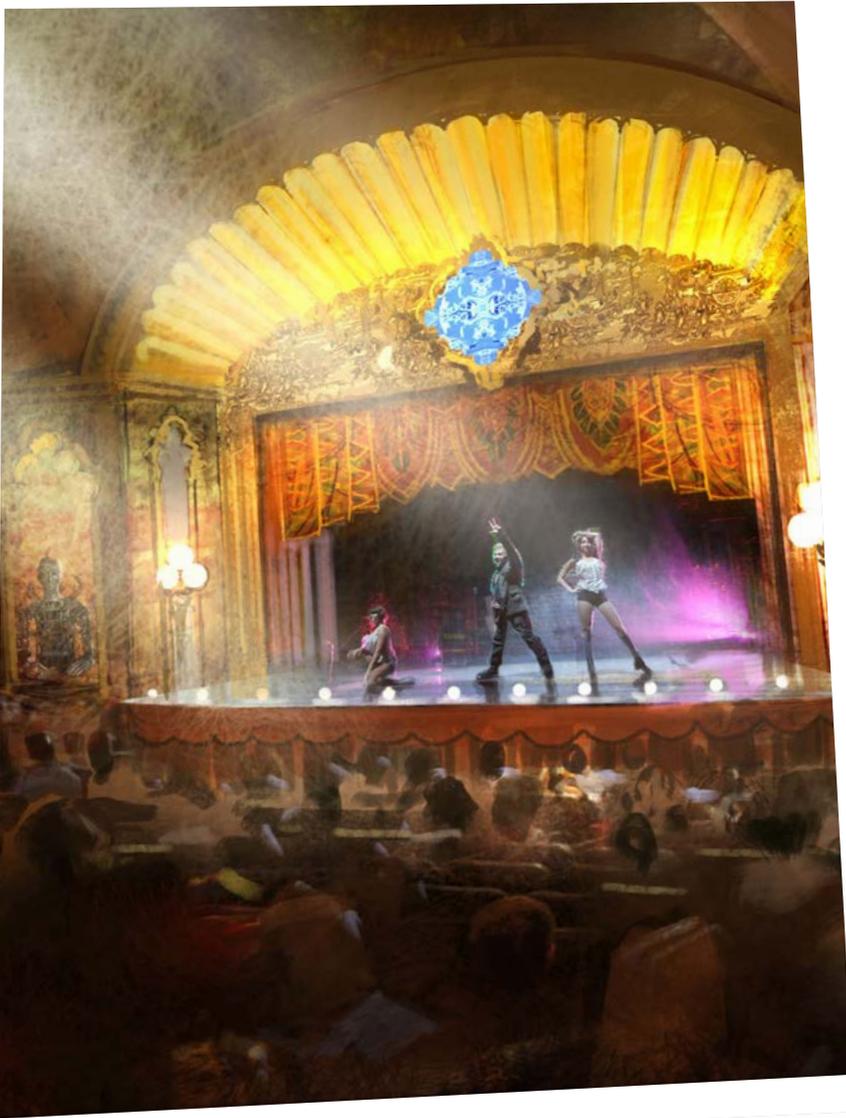
Franz Harary — The House of Magic allows me a unique opportunity, one that has never been possible until today. From my work as a touring illusionist, I have developed formulas that allow me to create very large-scale illusions for stadium crowds. Despite their size, I discovered these massive magical effects are even more powerful up close and personal. In designing the House of Magic, I specifically set out to create a ven-

Paul Romhany — I’ve seen some of the sketches of the venue and it all looks amazing.

Franz Harary — The goal was to design a theatre specifically to allow high-tech large scale effects to operate and yet create the illusion of intimacy. This required an incredible amount of research and design. We actually mocked up all of the effects in my workshop in Los Angeles and tested them to



Photos: Top left - Franz and the giant Orb under construction. Top R - a brand new Harary Illusion design for Macau. Middle - 65 semi trucks worth of magic en route to Macau. Bottom - A sketch showing the Portal which will be a feature in Macau.



ensure that they would work as planned (with magic, no matter how much time and money you spend on computer aided design, until it is physically built and you're actually looking at it, you can never be certain how it's going to work).

Paul Romhany — That would surprise most.

Franz Harary — The result is the Mega Magic Theatre, in which I was able to create the perfect environment for me to perform my own style of magic. It is a future tech (or Star Trek) inspired, state-of-the-art environment for me to create illusions on a scale until now I could only imagine. In this theatre, I will be featuring Mega Magic, an all-new version of my touring illusion show. You will see illusions that have never before been produced, simply because the technology and opportunity were not there. These effects include getting burned alive, teleported, and levitated. Most importantly, the entire show is designed with a single philosophy, the magic happens to and by the audience. Audience members themselves will levitate and float in space, disappear, reappear, you name it. But I will tell you that what you will see in my House of Magic has never been tried anywhere in the world. Alongside this showroom I have created three more theaters for other illusionists to join me. Each one of these theaters is also designed for a specific kind of magic.

Paul Romhany – What a great opportunity for other magicians to perform in this amazing venue as well.

Franz Harary - The Majestic is our salute to the beautiful cabaret houses of Paris. In this venue, we will host some of the world's very best stage magicians. Headliners who are stars not only in the world of magic, but in their own parts of the planet. Luis Dematos is arguably one of Europe's most prolific magicians. Along with many others, he will be showcasing his new magic at the Majestic. Another theatre has been designed specifically for a kind of magic called "power imagine" (think the Hobbit, Merlin, Harry Potter...magicians whose magic is real). To showcase this form of mystical illusion, I created The Lair.

This theater looks as though it is nothing more than the ruins of what once was a theatrical amphitheatre. Now taken over by nature and covered with greenery, it has been reoccupied and once again acts as a theatrical forum as it was intended. Guests sit on benches inside this mystical forest. This is never been done before, and I'm quite proud to be able to feature this style of magic in an environment that you would expect to see it in.

The Illusion Laboratory is just that. It is a fantastic magical futuristic workshop occupied by an illusionere. As guests step inside, they find themselves surrounded by wonderful mechanical toys, optical illusions, visual puzzles and a myriad of magic devices that are seemingly still under construction or just in the design phase. Imagine walking into Willy Wonka's workshop and discovering his creations under construction. It is in this environment that you will see some of the world's very best sleight-of-hand magicians. Beginning with Travis Winkler, a headline





magician from the US, these magicians will walk around doing one-on-one magic for guests as they take in the magical atmosphere around them. Aside from the House of Magic theatres, there is also our magic restaurant named Nua (after the goddess of magic), and of course a magic shop where you will have the opportunity to learn a little bit of magic of your own (just what you want during your visit to Macau). What I'm most proud of is the fact that, despite all of the technology and effort spent, all of these elements have been created for one simple reason...so that my audience can for at least one brief moment recapture that sense of childlike wonder we all had when we were kids. 90% of my magic happens in your mind. It is your imagination that is the real illusionist, and my House of Magic was designed as a catalyst to individual imagination.

Paul Romhany – I heard rumors a few years back something big was happening in Macau and it was very hard to find out what it was all about. I am guessing this has been a long time coming?

Franz Harary - House of Magic took more than quarter of my life to create. I've been

working on this for decades. In development, House of Magic took many shapes and went through many transformations. At one point, it was a theme park ... then a dinner theater ... then an interactive virtual reality experience. In the end, all of this found equilibrium in a form that I believe will change the game. What we are creating is nothing like you've seen before. The entire attraction is, in a sense, a piece of magic. The design process was similar to what I developed working with rock stars. When working with any number of stars – including Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, Madonna, Usher, and Justin Timberlake – the process always began with the question, "If you woke up in the morning and discovered that you have real magic, what would you do? How would you use it? What would you show your audience?" Based on their answers, I produce illusions for their concerts.

Paul Romhany – Your involvement with the music industry is so intriguing and perhaps something others aren't fully aware of. We'll talk more about that later but I'm assuming Macau is allowing you to be the "artist" and create your dream illusions?

Franz Harary – Yes, in this case, the "artist" was me, so I had to close my eyes and ask myself "Okay Franz, if you could for the first time do anything you wanted, create any illusion without concern for money or resources, what would you do?" The House of Magic is that dream. It's my ultimate fantasy. Once I locked in what the place should be, we began the same series of mechanical processes I do for my other productions – from computer aided design, to building full-size mock ups to testing, testing, and more testing.

It took us about three years to make certain that what we wanted to do was even possible. Once we resolved that, I had to come to terms with the fact that my dream would cost approximately \$40 million US dollars. That's no illusion. Luckily, with the incredible support of Laurence Ho and Melco Crown, we were able to put together a plan that would allow us to realize this dream.

Paul Romhany – Are you able to give out any financial figures on a cost of any of the illusions?

Franz Harary – There is an attraction that features one illusion that by itself will cost over \$4 million to build. Standing four stories tall, when completed it will hold the world record for the largest magical effect ever built. Nothing else even comes close. It is going to redefine what magic can be in the century to come. Macau is one of the most incredible places on the planet. China invented theatrical magic about 5000 years ago. This art eventually made its way to Europe and then to the United States. To this day, if you walk into a magic shop in Las Vegas or New York or Paris, you will see magic equipment covered with Chinese icons. As an illusion designer, there was a great deal of pressure on me knowing that I was bringing magic back to the part of the planet where it all began. For the last couple of years I brought my touring show to Macau, the City of Dreams. That was a lot of fun. What I learned there is that Macanese audiences are actually a combination of cultures. You have Chinese, Portuguese and pretty much every part of the planet all coming together into one place.

P— Sounds amazing!

F - On top of which, these audiences are intelligent, but also challenging. There is more technology, more state-of-the-art toys and amazing things to see and experience in Macau than anywhere else on the globe. I knew that I would be competing with this. The audiences here have seen everything. It's extremely difficult to impress them today. And while the pressure is on, I can say I really enjoyed not only producing but also performing for the people in Macau. And I look forward to doing it for a long, long time to come!

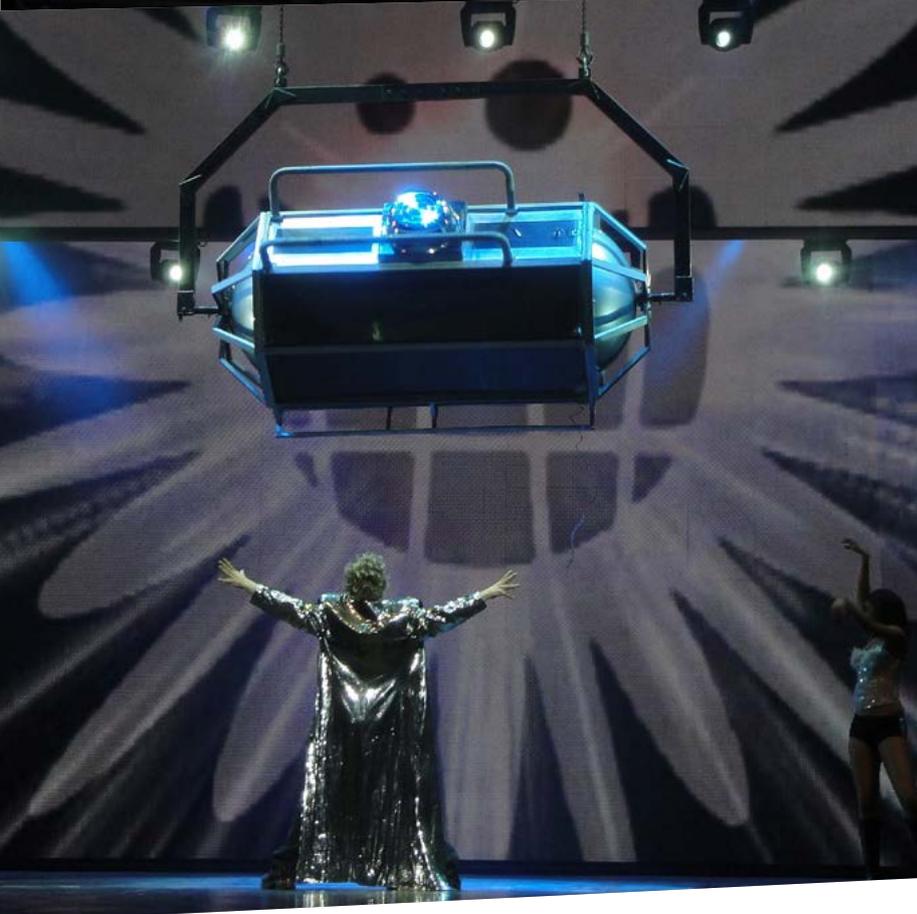
P — Tell me about the audiences in this area and how the show is developed for them.

F — What we are doing in Macau is an hour and a half experience, two hours with the pre-show, it could be expanded in to six hours easily because there is enough material in there. It's going to be a visual overload besides the fact that it's predominately a Chinese audience and they have a very short attention span. You need to keep hitting them with new information constantly because they are so tainted and have seen so much that it is very difficult to own them. The way you do that is just by giving them more production and more visual value than you would in the US or Europe where you can take your time and spread things out a bit more.

Asian audiences are unique to any other in the world. Magic holds a special place in not only China, but also the entire area. It's in their culture. When you add to this the fact that in the past few decades, there has been more technology showcased in this



“You need to keep hitting them with new information constantly



part of the world than anywhere else, it creates a unique dichotomy. Audiences in Asia want to believe in magic. They want to believe that there is something more out there. At the same time, they are being told every day that anything is possible via science and technology. So, in a sense that magic they culturally want to believe in is shot out from under them by the technology. I feel this. I can look into my audience's eyes and see that there is a genuine desire to believe in Real Magic. I never exploit or take advantage of this. I am always very clear with my audiences that what I do is an illusion. I'm not a wizard, but rather, a person who has taught himself to create these wonderful visual puzzles. I invite them to join me in this world, but never for a moment suggest that I am in anyway different or above them. I think that's important. I am less Merlin, and more Ironman.

P – You have created a niche market that I don't believe anybody else in the world is doing and certainly not to the extent you are doing it.

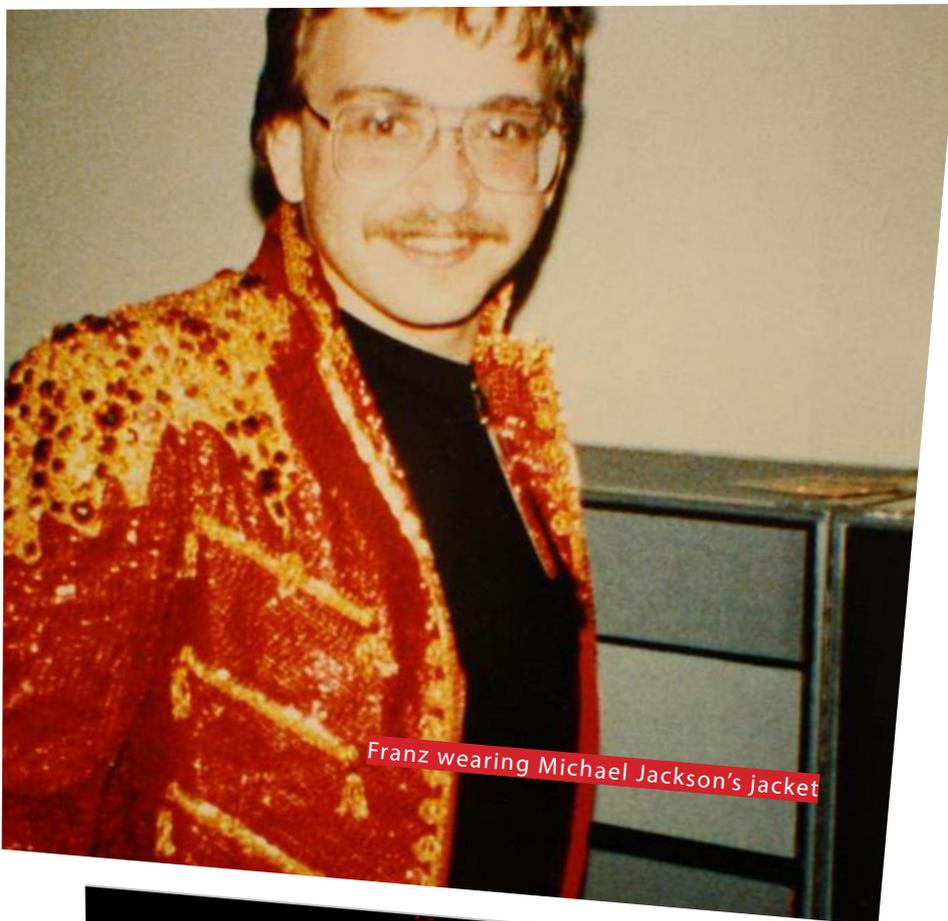
F - More and more, I find myself to be my own toughest competitor and am constantly competing with myself. I've created this super real world. The world that by definition needs to continuously reinvent itself. Luckily, I haven't run out of ideas.

Magic by definition is anything outside of the ability of technology of the day. As technology moves forward, magic must in the sense surf that wave. In turn, magic is the catalyst for creativity. It is through magic that's the scientific community is encouraged to dream and wonder. Through this process, new technology is born. In turn, magic must once again, stay slightly ahead. As such, magic and technology are forever intertwined with each other, in a kind of perpetual dance. Each moving the other forward at the speed of imagination.

P - The terms "immersive" and "interactive" get used a lot, and magic can often be more about watching an expert as s/he performs on the stage. How is your approach here incorporating interactivity?

F - Myself as well as all of the magicians who will be performing at the House of Magic all share a common philosophy as artists: the most powerful magic is that which happens to you and by you. As such, every opportunity will be taken to create magic with the audience and to the audience. It is this interactive experience with real people that will allow every guest to vicariously experience the event. For example, members of the audience will float in air, and will actively become involved in people and objects appearing, vanishing, dis-assembling, etc. You get the idea.

P – You talked earlier about working with a variety of music superstars for concerts. What is the attraction with pop concerts and illusion?



Franz wearing Michael Jackson's jacket

F - The music industry has always traditionally been the vanguard in live entertainment because that is where the money is. If you look way back to Wagnerian Operas that's where the money was in those days. In an Opera you would have flying horses, volcanoes and real magic and sea battles going on in a theatre for audiences. Music has always had the resource to experiment and to do the next thing, and that holds as true today as it ever has.

P - How did you get in to working with these incredible superstars?

F - I got my big break in 1994 when Michael Jackson was really at the peak of his career. He went out on the Victory Tour and I sent him a VHS tape of me making a car appear in a parking lot at my home town of Ann Arbor, Michigan and this was something I had invented when I was just 16. (Since then its been ripped off worldwide which is another subject.) I sent him this video with a note saying "I'm Franz, I'm 20 years old and I can do this for you." The next thing I knew I was on a plane heading out to LA to meet my idol. Michael was one of the first people who actually got it; he understood that technology and the science of the day would only take you so far. If you want to create something visual on a live stage the only way to go beyond the bounds of technology of the day is to use illusion and magic principles. (Beside the fact that he loved magic anyway.)

When we met we were about the same age and became friends, which lasted for 26 years. With his money and with his love for magic the two of us created a lot of new stuff including the fact that I rigged all of (his) Neverland ranch with trap doors, secret passages and we had wire systems and Aga levitations everywhere. What was really cool was the stuff we did was all architectural because if you walked through his house you would never know it was there. I'm not even sure if the person who bought Neverland Ranch knew of all the systems I had put in place.

P - They would be when they fall through a trap door.

F - I remember Oprah Winfrey did an interview with him while sitting on the stage where I put a trap and I was thinking if it was a bad day something could go wrong and she could fall through it.

P - I forgot that there is quite a history of incredible theatre tied in with music performances that dates back centuries.

F - It's going on right now. I'm working currently with a Taiwanese super star Jolin Tsai. She is massive and we are touring all of Asia with an arena tour. Again she is doing all kinds of cool stuff. The type of thing I find



Franz with Paula Abdu

myself doing now is more visual. For example one of the things she is doing is having a head like Medusa and having snakes for hair that will be animated and moving around. The only way to do that again is through illusion principles. Otherwise you've got way too much animatronics attached to your head so there is a lot of stuff going on there. She is also going to do a lot of vanishes and appearances and even though many people in the western world haven't heard of her she is as powerful in Asia as Ariana Grande is. (Again concerts like this is where the money is.)

P— This type of work must really allow you to be incredibly creative.

F — What I do is use the music industry as my playground or sandbox and I get to experiment and play with new technologies and then take that information and apply it to my own show. This is what I'm doing in Macau with the new show. It's a combination of everything I've ever learned in my hundred years of being in magic now, and it's all being slammed in to one venue.

P - There seems to be more respect for magic in Asia than certainly a lot of Western countries such as Canada, USA, New Zealand, and the UK etc.

F – It goes in waves. If you think about what magic was in the mid 90s starting with The World's Greatest Magic. For a while there magic was like comedy clubs was in the 80s. Magic had that wave and paved off with Lance Burton in Vegas then it goes over to Korea and there you start to get this burst of all these different magic clubs all competing with each other, then that fades away then it goes to Japan then eventually over to China. Magic in China peaked a few years ago and it's slowly starting to move down. It was during that peak that I was able to sell my House of Magic. My master strategy is in the next four years as China finds its equilibrium with magic as an art form is to have the House of Magic as that product of this period and it will stay forever.

P – I'm assuming that the show and venue will have a strong Chinese influence?

F - What is cool about what I am doing is that while it will have a strong Chinese influence it will be very universal. It is designed by me and specifically for my friends. You know I bought my house seven minutes from the Magic Castle thinking I would go there all the time. I think in



Music and Illusion in action

Photo above: Franz teaching Justin Bieber an illusion for his concert
Right - DMC with Franz



"I use the music industry as my playground and I get to experiment and play with new technology

the last year I've been there once or twice, but there was a time when the Castle was my life. I learned what it could mean to have a place for magicians and the importance of that. What makes the Castle so great as it was designed over time to become the ideal showplace for magicians.

As you well know Asia right now is booming with technology and the creativity is incredible. So we are able to do so much that you wouldn't have been able to do anywhere else in the world 10 or 15 years ago.

P – Can you share some of the ways you are going to incorporate this technology in to this new venue?

F - The way I'm using this technology is invisibly. What I learned is that science and high tech doesn't fool people anymore. Look at my stuff from the TV show That's Incredible, 28 years ago, it doesn't mean anything today. Back then I was stretching my hand through television screens but none of that applies anymore now that technology has moved to a point where the audience expects this. So when they see anything that looks high tech, or anything that looks as though any kind of science is involved they immediately turn off and credit it to technology. If your cell phone started to float at restaurant most people would say, "Wow, I wonder what kind of chip is in that cellphone?" If that happened 30 or 40 years ago you could have a cult following, you'd be the master of your own domain, but that's not the case anymore.

Now I believe the Japanese have now figured out how to, using lasers, create actual three-dimensional holographic images floating in space. They have the ability to put an image at any spot in space! Imagine ten years from now you are creating video images in space. When all of that happens magic will change and by definition change.

Magic by its very nature inspires creativity. It is that inspiration

that creates new technology. Star Trek invented the teleporter and that is magic. We are now able to teleport sub atomic particles.

Because of this there is that eternal dance between science and magic.

P – If we look back in history science and magic have always been closely connected.

F – Absolutely. If we look at what is happening in China there is so much technology that when Chinese people see something impossible they automatically link it to technology. Where I was going with this is that the Harary House of Magic in Macau does not look high tech. It is retro-tech, almost Jules Vernon. It's Victorian but this fantastical clockwork retro-tech world. I'm not trying to put something out there that seems high tech because if the audience sees something that is (technological) then they will credit everything to technology. I intentionally am trying to keep everything as simple and understandable as possible in this environment. Having said that, I love this design style.

P – I know this has been an ongoing project so where did the first seeds of something so big start?

F – In 2007 I was doing my show in Atlantic City at The Tropicana. I looked around and realized that if you are more than forty years old there is nothing to do after midnight there, so I thought I want to start a hip magic destination. That got me together with a bunch of my Disney friends and others in the industry such as optical guys, animatronic guys and I said if we could build the coolest magic based attraction what would it be. I put together a package and started shopping it all around the world. We ended up selling it to Dubai. It was actually sold as a theme park and slightly smaller than Disneyland. Then the





company we were dealing with collapsed and that created a big giant legal mess.

From there we had offers in Hong Kong and then eventually Macau. So the word was out that I had this large attraction. From 2008-2010 it had taken on many different forms from a theme park to a floating hotel and at one point it was going to be on a ship floating above a body of water. Finally we got a bite from Macau and they said they were building a 2.3 billion dollar entertainment themed casino and by this time all the formulas had come together and I was able to take all the information from Korea, Hong Kong, Malaysia, etc. and formulate quite quickly a package format that would fit in to a casino.

P – Were there many limitations once it started moving forward from your original concept?

F – In this case you are limited by the technology and the space. What I learned when you are dealing with a casino environment space is the most valuable thing. I can say it is more interesting back stage that it is on stage. Back stage is the same size as on stage but we have enough equipment to fill the stage six times. Everything back stage gets hung up in the air like a puzzle piece. If you've ever looked at 3D Chess then that is what it looks like. It's all being built right now and that is the only way we can get six times the amount of equipment in to a place that is designed to only hold one set that amount. There's been an incredible forethought and advance design and engineering in my own touring shows and built it up little by little but with this everything had to be designed and pre-calculated beforehand. I can tell you that the magic is the least of my problems because I can design illusions in my sleep but it's everything else like power, electronics, water, life safety and emergency systems. There are so many systems that

need to be integrated and every one of these systems has an army of guys and all these people need to come together.

I learnt an interesting phrase called "As Built Drawing." I've done a lot of drawings in my life but what I've learned when you are building something like this that is so big you have your engineering drawings, then you have the "As Built Drawings." These are what were actually built as opposed to what we planned on making. I thought how was that possible. (How can you spend two million dollars and not know exactly what you are making?)

With so many people working on the project, "stuff" happens. That happened to us, we had a fly system and at one point I have these six spheres that come down and hover and levitate. On the video image we have another couple of hundred spheres. To make six balls float you'd think it was just guys backstage with string but it's not. Everything is automated and you have these safety systems to make sure the balls don't fall, etc. Two days ago I discovered the space for this basically elaborate marionette system has an air-conditioning duct going through the same space. It's like, wait a second "How did that happen?"

So it's now my magic department fighting with air conditioning and life systems. 90% of my work is dealing with the infrastructure even more so than the show.

P – Do cultural and language barriers affect your work?

F – I was one of the first guys in to China in 1991. It was like the Wild West. As you know, more than most, it can be extremely difficult not just because of the language barrier but also the cultural barrier and the way of doing business. Macau is not China. It is Macau, although there is a lot of China in Macau. The place I'm



Photos: Top - The show in India and below getting mobbed in the streets

working in is basically Vegas. I'm working with as many Americans, New Zealanders and Brits as I am Chinese, maybe more. The whole thing is extremely corporate. As an artist I'm changing all the time and here when I want to make a change there are sixteen people I need to get approval from.

P – Have there been any moments in your career that have influenced the way you put together the show for The House Of Magic?

F – In 2011 I produced the most technically advanced show ever at a place called Kingdom of Dreams in New Delhi. This was well in to over 30 million dollars of technology. It was basically a theatre where everything was completely automated. I went nuts and basically took my touring show and planted it in this place for four months. I created a show that was incredibly technical and was really proud of it. About two or three weeks in to it I realized I had made this grave mistake because by having so many integrated technologies and you know that as a performer, what we do relies on doing things on the fly. When something great happens you run with it and you embrace it, but when you've

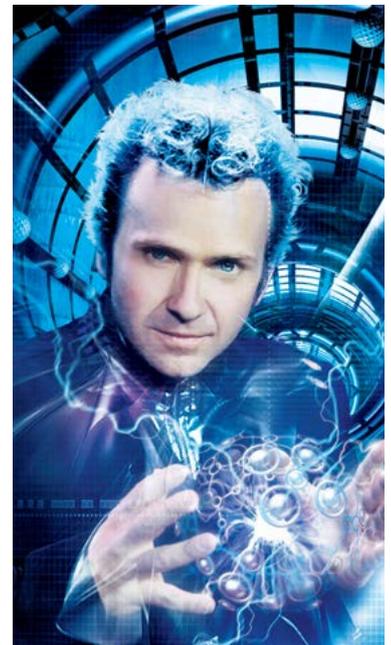
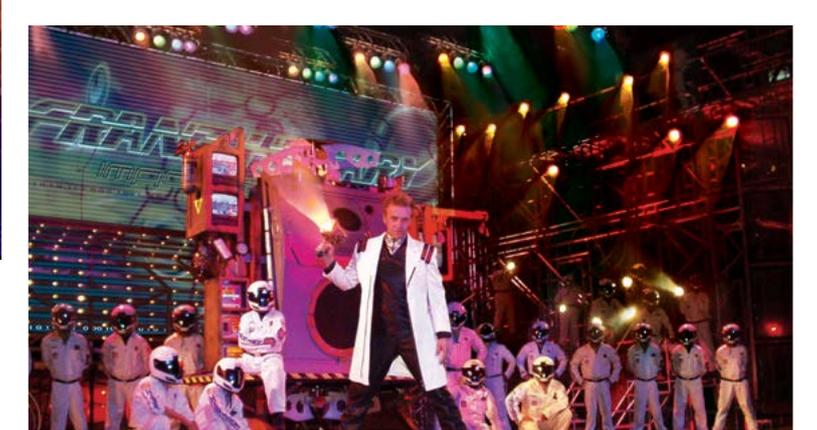
"I realized I had created this giant robot and I was just one cog or gear and it wasn't fun."

got this giant machine humming around you, you don't have time or the freedom to stop and riff with somebody from the audience because it throws everything out of sync with the machine and it crashes.

I realized I had created this giant robot and I was just one cog or one gear and it wasn't fun. By the end of week four I felt like I was going to make donuts every morning, the same donuts morning after morning.

P – Then it becomes a job.

F – I learned that having an audience say you're great isn't enough. The love of strangers, as least for me is not what I'm in it for. What I need, and it's like oxygen is to be able to create something new. To create something, make it and put it out there and say this is what is in my mind today. I learned that's what it's about for me, making something cool and putting it out there. This show in Macau, even though there is more technology than in Delhi, I was very careful that there was a certain amount of fluidity to it. For example in Delhi everything was on a single track. You'd hit GO on the computer and it just goes. Macau there are breaks, every time something good happens I can break and riff and then go on.



“My ego was taking a hit. The only person who knew was Bruce Gold who is arguably my best friend.”

P – So you’re in total control of the performance?

F – Total control. The performer, myself, is the production manager because I’m actually calling the show.

P – Will you take breaks from the show?

F – I have what I call some “Mini-Me’s” who will take over when I need to take time off.

P – You are creating what must be the largest undertaking of

any magic venture in history. How hard has it been to keep it under wraps for so long.

F – We got the first bite in 2010 and the legal on this was huge so I couldn’t tell anybody until now. I would go to a magic convention and people would ask what I was up to but I couldn’t tell them. My ego was taking a hit. The only person who knew was my good friend Bruce Gold. He has been along with me the entire road and the only person I could confide in with this project. He has been my go to guy and

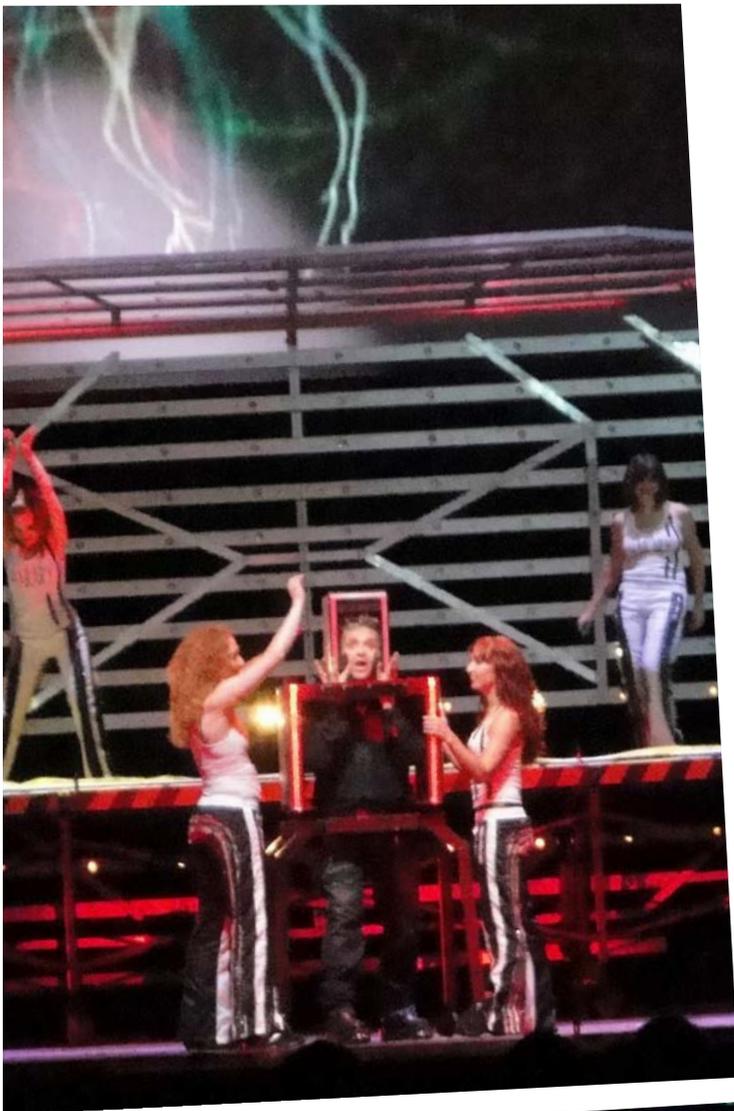
my therapist. Finally now we can both talk about the project. Bruce is the talent booker on this project. He is being stormed by magicians’ worldwide.

P – With so many different facets to your work how would you describe to somebody what it is that you do?

F - That answer depends on who I am talking to. I never tell them I’m a magician or illusionist because if they don’t know me the next question is a request. They

High Tech Illusions

Photos: from various live shots from shows around the world.



Photos: Top - Franz performs his current Twister
Bottom Photo: 2D

want me to show them something. If somebody is a doctor you don't say, "hey look at my skin rash" when you meet them. As magicians we get asked to do a trick. Generally I tell them I'm a producer who does mostly live television shows and they go, "oh, he's just a producer." Or if I really don't want to deal with it I tell them I design live special effects. The answer depends on who I'm talking to. The most honest answer is I'm an illusion producer and performer, probably in that order but what does that mean. What do you say?

P – It depends, if I'm going through US customs I tell them I'm a bricklayer.

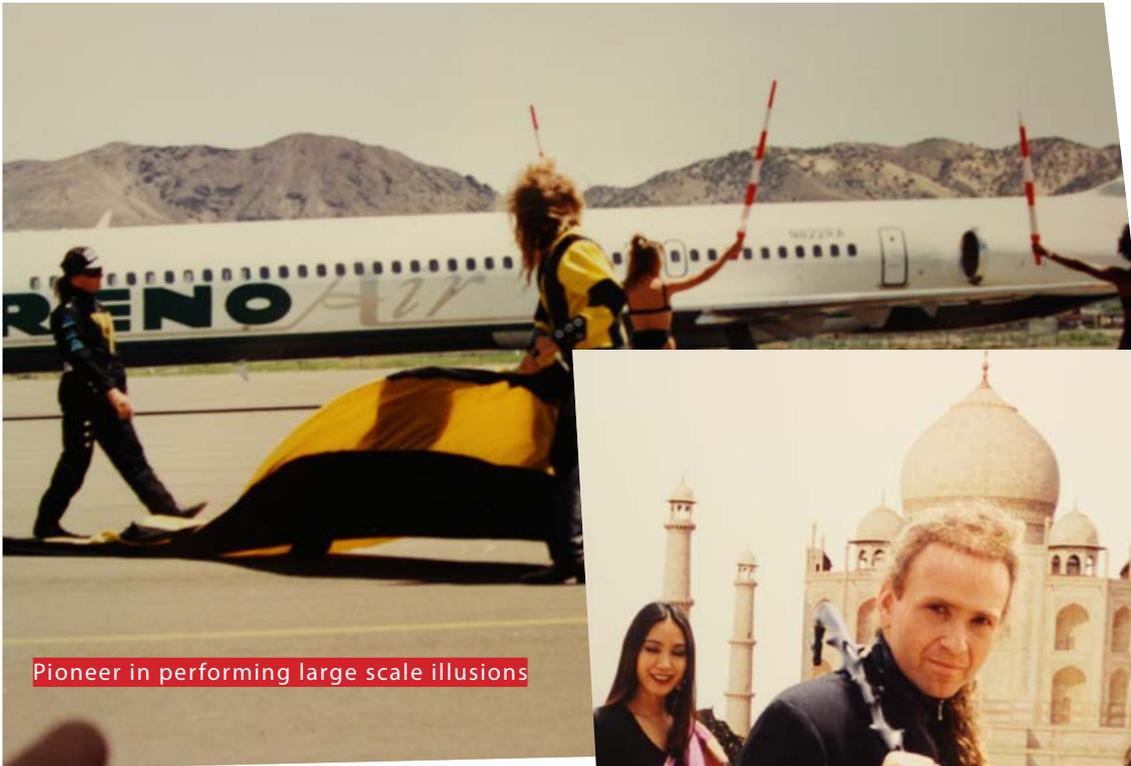
F- You learn never to put magic or illusion on any of your cases.

P – You've had a huge influence on magic on television. What is your take on the current state of magic we see on television using TV editing and the trends of today.

F – I'm proud that I am a pioneer in it as I've been doing it for a very long time. My personal value or ethical standard and position will always remain that I will never use digital technology to do something that I could not produce live. There have been a hand full of times where I have faked it, however, it has always been to save money but not to create something impossible. There have been times when I have been called upon by a production somewhere to create live something that I created on camera. I did a thing for the launch of the Transformers movie in Tokyo where we had to transform a building in to a robot, and that was only possible because I vanished the Luxor in Vegas for television. That was digital but Tokyo was live so anytime I fake something I engineer it in my mind and go to the producer and say we can do this for real for about 1 to 1.5 million dollars or we can fake it for fifty thousand dollars, either way I'm okay. Usually they will go for the fake but if I ever get busted on it I always have a very detailed and creditable explanation of how it's done, even to the point of engineering drawings on it. Other than that, I have really stopped using digital technology about a decade and a half ago because it doesn't mean anything anymore.

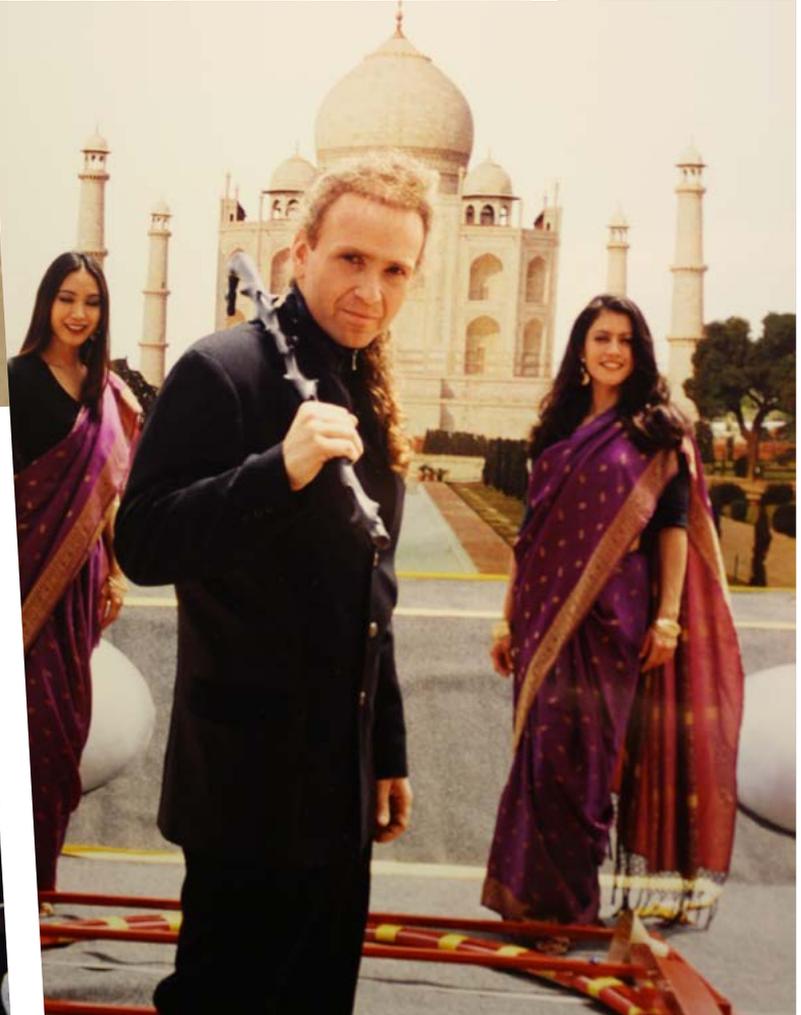
Today any thirteen-year-old with a Mac and software can do any digital trick. There's some incredible stuff on YouTube now with shadows etc. It doesn't mean anything anymore and fake it for the camera doesn't get you anything. I literally stopped doing it because I don't need to. The other thing is people watching it don't care anymore. Years ago I was making buildings vanish from The Empire State to the Taj Mahal but nobody cares today because you can do it yourself in a couple of minutes using your Mac.

P – The times dictate the change although some people never move on.



Photos: Making a plane appear, vanishing a building in Tokyo and making the Taj Mahal vanish

Pioneer in performing large scale illusions



F – The problem is that there are some people who have found themselves in the position of having a television series where they opened up that Pandora’s Box and started going digital. Two things occurred, one of them is that they ran out of things to do. They became more and more digital and even worse they start looking at other magicians and start ripping off their live effects. What’s happened is because of this need with television being so hungry for material magicians have found themselves screwed by their own design because they went

to this land where there is no return. The final product is that of these magicians ripping off everybody else, and certainly myself included. I’ve had so much of my stuff, not only live but digital ripped off and put on television by a handful of guys. That’s the other reason I’ve really pushed away from it.

If somebody came to me tomorrow and asked me to make the moon disappear I’d be happy to erase it in Photoshop but nobody wants it. That time in magic is gone and we are now on to something new.

P – We talked earlier about

magic going in waves. What is the next big thing for magic?

F - I wish I knew what the next big thing will be. I believe it will incredibly virile and it’s not going to be visual. I think it’s going to be something you feel. My friend Morgan Strebler, who I tell him all the time is an idiot savant, has come up with stuff that makes me think “you son-of-a-bitch I would never have thought of that, where he touches people and affects their sense of feeling. I think that is where it is going where it will be more of a sensory experience rather than a visual. Unfortunately that’s

not me, I design visual puzzles. I don’t think I will ever be that artist although I am looking forward to where it goes and applying a little bit of that to my way of thinking with visual optical illusions.

P – In the theatres in Macau you are creating something that is more than visual right?

F – Yes that is exactly what I’m doing. I built a world, which is a magical experience. In a regular show you sit in a chair and a series of events pass by you, in Macau it is treated as though a particle physicist or a cosmologist would treat the concept

of time. All time is, and all experiences are and the audience passes through this linear experience of space-time. It is a 'thing' that exists or a magical entity that exists and the audience passes through that magical entity experiencing it in a linear time flow of their own design.

P – I do believe you are creating something that is new in many ways and where theatre shows are heading. Do you think this type of show will ever get to the USA?

F – I think eventually it will although the leading guys right now are all out of Asia such as Lu Chen. I have so many magic friends in Korea that make me feel like a boob. I see them perform and I just turn my brain off and watch it like normal people watch magic.

P – Do you know what you'll be doing when you take time off?

F – Probably touring but I barely know what I'm doing two months ahead.

P – I think most of us are like that if we were honest.

F – There were times when I looked at my friends and I'd say I will never work for the rest of my life because I have nothing booked. You learn over time that feeling passes.

P – Is everything on plan to have the show open by September?

F – We will be ready – the building should be ready so it's all go. A few weeks ago the country of China said that Macau now needs to spend more focus on entertainment and less focus on gambling. When that happened it was a great day for Franz because the focus has moved on to entertainment.

P – I've also heard they are building a 30 Kilometer bridge from Hong Kong to Macau. This will really make it an entertainment destination.

F – The arrival building will be part of our building so the first thing people see when they enter will be The House of Magic.

P – Do you find you get credit for your creations?

F – Some of it I am and some of it I'm not. The real kick in the nuts was The Twister. I invented that in 1986 and it has been ripped off by so many people to the point others have published it as theirs. The idea for that came when I was working with Alice Cooper. He wanted to take a baby's head and spin it 360 degrees. I



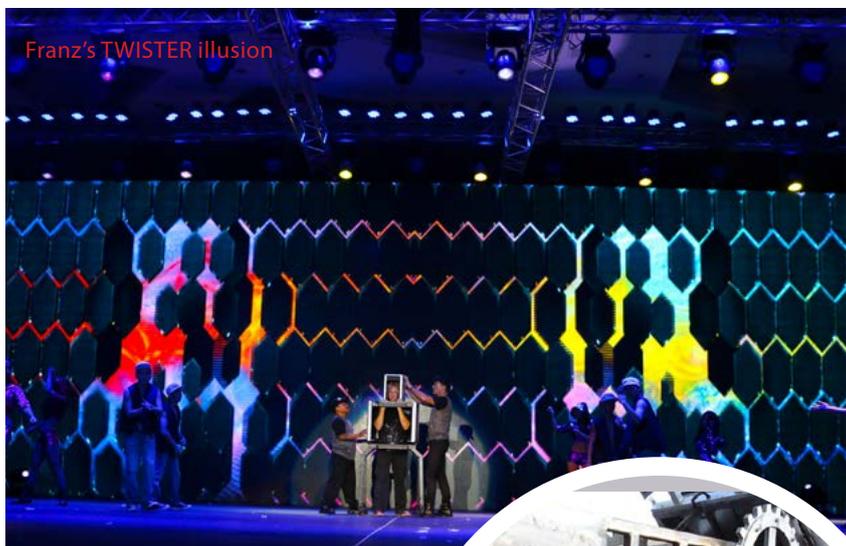
Lu Chen and Franz in Taiwan

came up with the vice idea and from that got the wig idea. At the time I was poor and living in Hollywood. In the back yard there were some 2x4s and a handsaw. So with those 2x4s, the saw and some duct tape I built the first Twister. Because they were 2x4s everything was too big and it went too high. I lent it to Ed Alonzo who cloned it and that version was then cloned, complete with the building flaw of the 2x4 and cloned hundreds of times after that. Today you will see Twisters where the head is much higher than it should be for visual reasons and only because I had 2x4s and a hand saw when I built the first one. There was some guy in a magic magazine where he claimed to be an illusion designer and shows blueprints of the Twister including the original design flaw. It's very difficult to watch that because so many people have taken credit for it. To date

the only person who can truly verify this is my friend Ed Alonzo because he had the first one.

P – I love the photo of you and the chicken. Let's chat about the Zig-Zag Chicken?

F – This was the first act I ever put together. When I was young I remember my principle goal was to win the junior champion at Junior Magic Day so the way I was going to do that was to create an act that has never been seen before. I looked at dove acts and thought to myself I can do this with rubber chickens so I put together a dove act with rubber chickens with feathers flying all over the place. I ended up winning the contest and thought this will be me. After about a year of doing this and when I eventually got into illusions I was still doing the silly chicken thing, I thought well I need to make a transition here



so I built myself a little Zig-Zag for a chicken. Eventually I'd like to think I matured beyond my chicken phase.

P – What's the story behind the monster floating truck?

F – More and more I'm getting calls to do entertaining facets far from magic. Obviously it started with concerts but it's gone in to everything else from ballets to laser shows and all kinds of stuff. I got a call to design a bunch of magic for a monster truck show tour. I got really good at understanding the monster truck industry and they are really a great bunch of guys. So much of what I do is mechanical and backward engineering so there are a lot of parallels between that and the motorsport industry. There is a really strong connection there. I brought Bruce Gold in as my writer and we created a bunch of magic



using monster trucks.

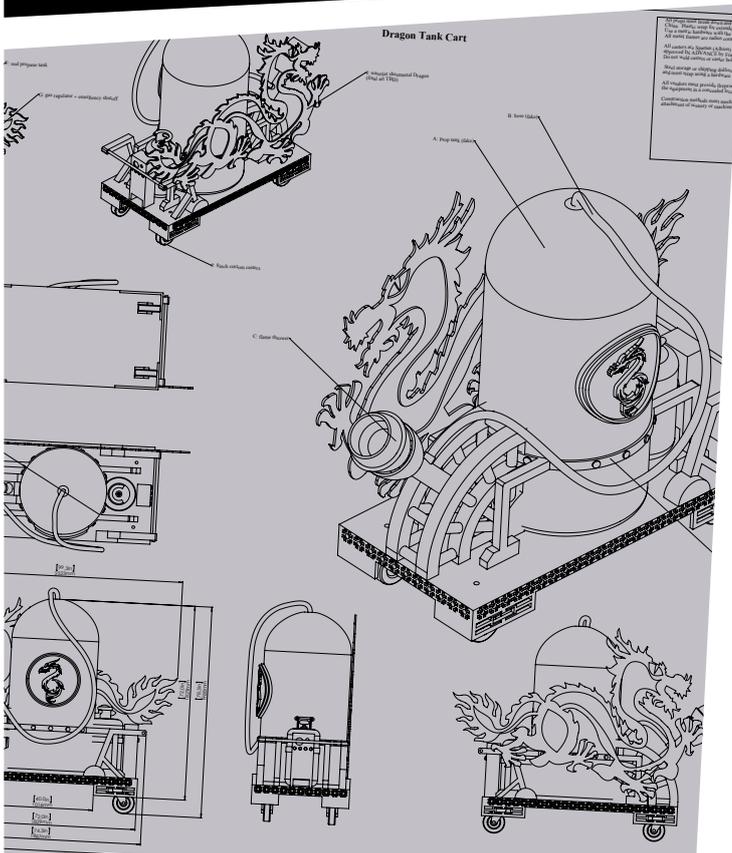
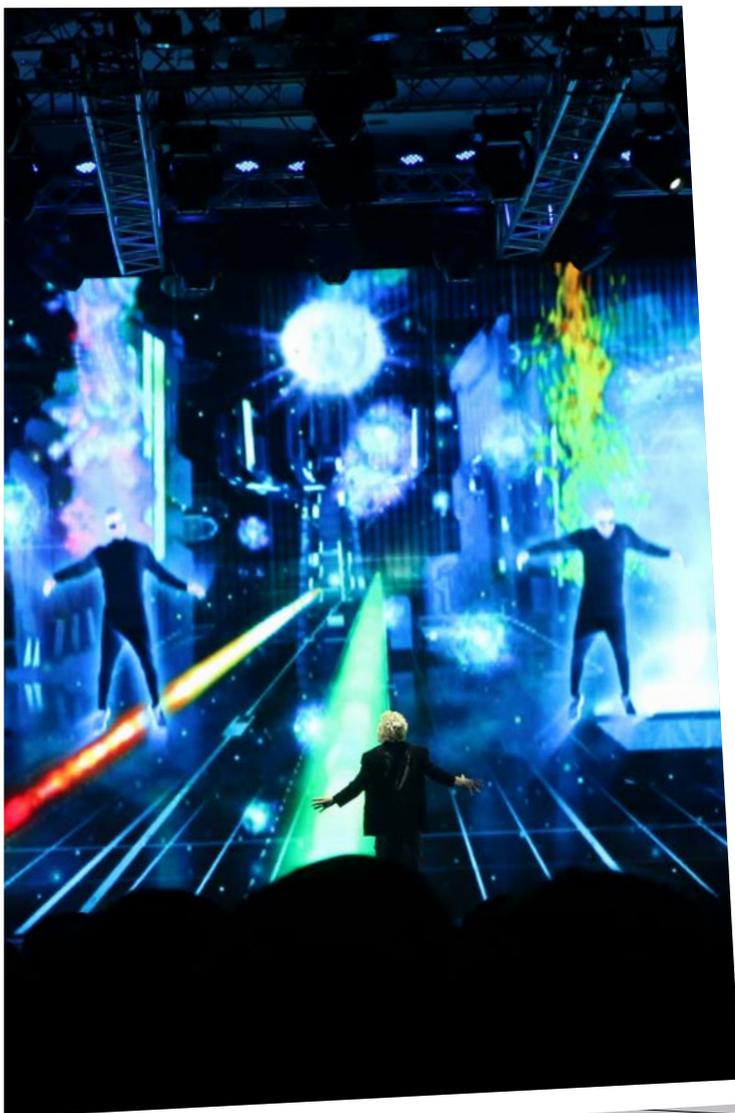
P – I know you perform in arenas with thirty to forty-thousand plus people. How do you tackle a show like that?

F – I've done more of these than I can remember. Anything after 40,000 the experience changes and the audience is predominantly watching the screen so you need to treat your production as a television production as it is a live production. After that it really does become a video product.

P – Something that has always fascinated me is people give illusions a name such as The Origami Box, The Zig Zag etc. Do you name your illusions?

F – I don't give anything a name because I think it diminishes the impact. When people start naming illusions the messages changes. It takes it away from the magician who has the ability





Photos: Top - Zomboy
Below - sketches of an illusion

to "I'm performing this thing that I have purchased" and it sends the wrong message. Naming tricks I think is silly. We have names of illusions for the stage crew but that's only with in the organization so people know what we are doing. Take Zomboy for example – it means nothing other than it helps the crew know what to set up.

P – What is Zomboy?

F - I'm always asked: "Why don't you do a card trick?"

So after twenty years of this I set out to produce the most elaborate visual card trick I could think of. What happens is a woman picks a card and a whole sequence happens on the screen for the LED show. I make people come from the screen and I basically control the LED element and finally the cards appear on the video, which I pluck, from the wall. It is basically pick a card find a card but to get there I spent three million dollars on LED video. Obviously I didn't spend that amount of money on a card trick but I was able to tap in to that kind of resource using LED screens. I decided if I'm going to do it I'm going to do it different and remain true to my brand.

P –Who does the sketches for the illusions?

F – I do most of the rough sketches and will sit there with my graphics designer Glen Grillo, and without exaggeration almost hundreds or a thousand hours figuring all this out in a two-dimensional world. In the end there is probably 20% of screwing around and largely what we do is psychological and no computer program in the world could truly represent what happens in the left and right side of the brain. The process is mostly me doing those silly little sketches, often on a napkin, and cleaning those up with my technical designer.
<http://www.arcanerealities.com>

P – What do you do to spark creativity?

F – I very rarely sit down and say, "OK I need to create something." It's just part of living and breathing. It's an ongoing thing, its impossible, this is not a good thing, for me to look at something and see it as a potential design research or potential inspiration for something. It's just how I'm wired. Everything I see I look at with that skew. It's part of being alive I guess. Every once in a while I need to create something for a client and it's a specific thing. In that case it's formula and reverse engineering. I would look at something and say here is the client, here is the image and here's the performance situation, the budget etc. and take all of those elements and it's a series of deductions. That's not the fun process.

The one thing I am meticulously careful not to look at other magicians or magic products for inspiration. I don't go to a lot of magic conventions simply because my career doesn't allow me to. I don't spend much time in the magic community because it just hasn't worked out that way and has allowed me a distance to create automatically.

P – I'm thinking the same could be said for somebody who is in to close-up magic or other types of



Michael Jackson's SPIKER illusion

"So here I am inside the load chamber with my hand still hanging out with a 3/4" spike going through the palm."

performers.

F – Right – I always believe that no matter what world you are in you need to be different from that. When I'm in the music industry I'm the magic guy. When I'm in the magic industry I'm music guy. I try very hard not to fall in to the groove along with everybody else.

P – I saw a CNN piece on you performing in India when you got Delhi Belly and got sick but you still had to do the TV show. I'm sure you have many stories like this?

F – The universe smiled and made me a celebrity in India and that's great. My stomach hasn't accepted that yet and I have to be careful. We were in the middle of a TV show and by nature I'm a one-man producer, director, creator and I surround myself with good people and try to get the best team around me but in the end it's really me running the show. In the middle of everything I got Delhi Belly and I remember I would have to line up the shot and go to the bathroom then do this over

the course of the day.

There have been a lot of other situations but — knock on wood — I've never missed a show. I remember in India I had a kidney stone and after the show rushed to hospital then back on stage the next day.

In Abu Dhabi I was performing Michael Jackson's Spiker. He had many safety points in it to make sure he could never get hurt. When the show was done he gave me the illusion as a gift. I put it in my show for many years but being cocky I thought I didn't need all the safety in it. One day in Abu Dhabi I get into it but don't slide all the way in to the trap to get in the load chamber so my hand is still in the active zone. This guy takes all these spikes and they jam it in the illusion and through my hand. It wouldn't go all the way because of my hand so they pulled it out to get another running start and jammed it through my hand again. So



here I am inside the load chamber with my hand still hanging out with 3/4" inch spike going through the palm. There was blood running everywhere and now I'm sitting in 1/8" of blood in the chamber and I'm screaming the entire time but they thought I was just adding a little bit of drama. Finally they pull it back out and I realise I'm going to have to finish the thing to get out. Unfortunately, because my hand wasn't available I wasn't able to close the fire shield, which protects me from the flames. I had no choice but to commit and hit the activation button and remember looking up and seeing this big burst of fireball. When it was all done I ended up crawling out of that thing covered in ash and with no eyebrows and blood everywhere.



I believe today, more than ever you can't just present an illusion show because you are competing with Cirque and all of Las Vegas. The production value is so high you can't close your eyes to this. For the past twenty-one years I've started using video for everything. For the last eight years I've been doing a very heavy LED element in my show. Right now I probably spend 30% of my design time in doing the video component of my live show as much as I do everything else. It's so important and encompassing. Right now I'm in Maui, my graphic designer and I spend about fourteen hours watching computer screens everyday. That along with sound design and lighting design is as much of what I do as an illusion-

ist as designing illusions. In order for an illusion to be powerful you need to create an entire world for your audience. I don't believe you can just roll out a Cube-Zag and that will cut it anymore. I'm sure in ten years it will be much less work as technology improves but what I'm doing now is so cutting edge and time consuming.

P – I know you are well known for all of the Mega-Illusions but I've also seen you perform some incredible magic with just fabric and a person. It reminds me of what Chaplin once said in order to make a movie he just needs a pretty girl, a park bench and a policeman.

F – I get a lot of crap for being dependent on my equipment,

“PIRACY IS MOST OFTEN NOT BORN OF EVIL BUT FROM STUPIDITY”

Photos: Workshop in India - spot the copy of a well known illusion that Franz had to have thrown out.

P – There is a photo of a warehouse in India filled with illusions. What is story behind that?

F – It was a job I was hired for in India. When I turned up they had copied all these illusions. It was pretty horrible. I went there and took the gig but under the condition they stopped ripping off all my friends. That meant two things. The first was I ended up designing over two hundred illusions in the course of three months, which I didn't think was possible to do. Also when I got there I saw all these props half built amongst the rubble. In many cases the props were not functional props. They didn't have gaffs or load chambers and looked just how they looked on YouTube. They built the illusions without any of the methodology and couldn't get the stuff to work. It was quite bad. What I really stand for is anti-piracy in magic. I have been ripped off so many times in magic. By the time I saw this in India I thought I need to change this here. I got on my soapbox and that was my mantra. I know it still goes on and you do what you can.

Piracy is most often not born of evil but from stupidity. They don't understand when they rip off an illusion they are not ripping off the wood and aluminum but stealing years and years of work and time of another individual.

I have this thing where I don't ever want to do anybody else's effects. I feel if I do that I'm just a Karaoke singer.





Being mobbed in India and performing a floating bill.



probably more than most. I think it's because my toys are so large that my peers like to give me garbage for that. It's really important though for me to NOT be dependent on it otherwise it's almost as though anybody could do it. It does take a fair amount of dedication and understanding of the art.

P – Finally, with the Internet has becoming such a part of everyday life how has magic changed and what lessons have you learned a long this incredible journey?

F – Where to start? In show business the most important word is business and more and

more product is meaning less. There are still pockets in the world where you will find excellence but more often than not it's driven by money. Today anyone can be a Vegas headliner if they rent a theatre. That's all it takes it just takes money. Anybody can be a magician if they buy themselves a website and a couple of props. We live and work in this very weird industry that doesn't require talent to be successful. It is difficult to compete in that environment and what I find myself doing more than ever is proving that I actually have the product. There are so many guys out there who are lying but have great promo

but have never done a show in their life. 90% of my work is sustaining a professional credibility. That has been difficult to deal with because you and I have spent our lives thinking that we create excellence and we do the very best we can and we make this cool thing and they will come. As you and I hit our middle age, suddenly the playing field has changed and anybody can look as good as we do if they've got the money from mom and dad to buy an Origami, a Zig-Zag,

Pole Levitation and maybe a bowling ball trick and end with a snowstorm and you're done. The game has changed and it has become a credibility game more than anything and that is something I didn't see coming.

P— I agree.

F - That was hard to learn and grab on to that. I've learned also that fame is an illusion. I thought all my life I wanted to be famous. I've



"I've learned also that fame is an illusion. I thought all my life I wanted to be famous ..."

had that and know what it's like and you discover that's not enough. In India I had some horrible experiences such as having my entire show held up for ransom. I was held hostage and remember a couple of times sitting in my hotel thinking, "OK, I've got my entire show being held hostage and I'm stuck in this country and I can't get my thirty staff out, as we were all trapped because their air tickets were held by this crooked promoter." I was feeling terribly sorry for myself so I thought by going to go to a shopping mall and having strangers tell me I'm great would help. I was just going to walk around and be mobbed and feel great about myself. I went to a mall and had all that autograph storm and in the middle of all that realized that this isn't it. It wasn't fulfilling, and that combined with the show where I felt like a robot, I had to really start looking around and try to analyze why I was in it. I thought it was for fame but that comes and goes. It made me realize that for me it is to create new things to help move the art form forward and to affect and better as many people as I can.

For me my work is predominately in Asia and South East Asia and for many people magic is real. If you've worked Dubai, Abu Dhabi then you know magic for them is real. I had a woman call me up and say, "Please my husband is under a curse from this other woman who has made him fall in love with her. Please remove the curse so that me and my children can have a happy home again." So for them it's real. That made me rethink everything I was doing and what you come to realize is that magic can be used to give people hope. In my own show, my image, or my message has changed. I believe most magicians get in to magic for ego and for everybody to tell us we are great. Then you come to a point where you say this is fun but I now



need to find stability. You need to support yourself and your family. Once you've got that then you ask "why am I really in this?" That's when you truly become an artist. You ask yourself, what affect am I having on people around me with people who are sharing this planet with me.

All of this comes back to when I first put my show together in 1987 and was hanging around with Michael Jackson. I decided I was going to produce a show that looked like a rock concert. I gathered together all my friends from sound, stage and lighting and grew the hair out and moustache and wore this Bon Jovi jacket – I looked like this gay teddy bear – although I was very hip. I looked much like Freddy Mercury. As I matured and my show matured today, when I started to look around at my purpose I realize my message

has become "I'm just like you." I could have done what you do and you could have done what I've done, but simply I chose to spend life creating this 'thing,' but there is nothing I do that is exceptional. In turn, if you look around here are all these wonderful toys I've created, almost like Batman with this wonderful world built from my imagination and I've learned that anything is possible. If I have learned this then you can learn this. In your life, also, anything is possible. It's a very empowering message and happened by accident. I realized that it is so deeply engrained in my product I doing it on a subconscious level.

When I was a kid they had the Apollo program. Neil Armstrong had landed on the moon and the Apollo program was the emblem to my generation who



Franz and his bike in China



said anything is possible. If you truly want to do something you can do it. I'm a total space geek and have done all sorts of things with NASA. In my show I have a pretty heavy NASA space technology influence, and I realized even that throws back to when I was a kid. It all comes back to if you can set your mind to something you can create magic.

P – You are certainly living proof that anything is possible and I want to thank you sharing this inspirational journey with us all. The House Of Magic is going to set a new standard in magic and I can't wait to visit it for myself.

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Photos: Two shots of Franz working magic on television.



Franz and Bruce Gold with a Monster Truck

BRUCE GOLD FRANZ HARARY – GENIUS LOVES COMPANY

Franz Harary has been one of my closest friends for more than 25 years and, knowing my sense of humor as he does, if I describe him as a “genius” I’m sure Franz will expect a punch line to follow, like: “When I say genius I’m referring of course to Franz’s gift for interpretative dance.” Well, I assure you my admiration for Franz is sincere. I’ve long marveled at his creative genius, though I wish he would stop telling the baristas at Starbucks that my name is spelled, “Broose.”

Whitney

I first met Franz when he came to Lake Tahoe to catch a show I was appearing in at Caesar’s called Masters of Magic. Franz’s manager was the show’s co-producer and Franz was there to videotape the performance as a favor to him. That afternoon Franz dropped by the house where the cast was staying. He had a canvas duffle bag with him and inside it was his pet snake, Whitney, an twelve-foot python (which never failed to make the audience gasp when it magically appeared in Franz’s show.) Franz pulled Whitney from the bag and the snake uncoiled itself on the living room rug. Trust me when I tell you no one was at a loss for conversation that day. Franz and I became fast friends and many years later I attended his wedding in Hawaii where Whitney made another surprise appearance of sorts. Judging from the look on the face of his bride to be, Franz had not told her he’d given the baker “special instructions” for the design of their wedding cake. It was white of course (it was a wedding after all) but the shape of the cake was somewhat less traditional. This was a “snake cake,” coiled back and forth enough times to assure every wedding guest got a slice. Happily, his bride went through with the ceremony proving love does indeed conquer all. I’m sure everyone who attended that wedding still remembers that snake cake. (I had a piece of the tail, and yes Franz, it was the only tail I got that evening.) Like Houdini before him, Franz knows how to capture people’s imaginations and make himself unforgettable.

When I moved to Los Angeles after my run in Tahoe, Franz kindly loaned Whitney to me for a promo photo, which was a play on the old “Spring Snake in the Peanut Brittle Can gag.”

Whitney still resides with Franz at his home in LA, but she’s grown too large for the show and is enjoying her retirement as a “home-security snake.”



Franz with Whitney

“The next thing he knew he was shaking hands with Michael Jackson, sealing the deal and his fate as pop music’s “go to guy” for all things magical. “

Pop Goes The Wizard

If you’re only now learning of Franz’s prolific work as an illusion designer I can tell you his credits are lengthy and impressive. Let’s start with three words: “King of Pop.” When Franz was just twenty (and sporting a moustache far beyond his years) he did something audacious. He tracked down the address of the producer of the Jackson’s Victory Tour and submitted a videotape of himself performing at the halftime show for the University of Michigan in which he made a car magically appear in the center of the stadium. Franz reasoned that if he could do illusions like this, surrounded by an audience of thousands, he could design illusions for the Jackson’s Victory Tour. Cut to: Franz, buckled into an airline seat headed to LA. The next thing he knew he was shaking hands with Michael Jackson, sealing the deal and his fate as pop music’s “go to guy” for all things magical. What followed would eclipse Franz’s own imaginings and just four years later, after racking up a client list that read like the Billboard Hot 100, Michael told him, “You should be doing this for yourself.” Franz took that advice to heart and rebooted his career as a performer, putting everything he’d learned (and the bulk of his savings) into his own pop music inspired illusion show.

Cut to: Yoyogi Stadium in Japan 15 years later. I am watching from the sound booth as a tidal wave of applause washes over Franz, standing center stage as the star of his own Mega Magic show. Thousands of fans in the stadium are wearing souvenir necklaces that feature a medallion emblazoned with Franz’s silhouette and the word that became his magical mantra, “Now!” Indeed, it was now Franz’s turn to stand in the spotlight just as Michael Jackson had encouraged him to do. In Japan, Franz delivered stadium-sized astonishment and elevating magic to the level of spectacle. His show featured his original illusions along with the kind of music, lighting and special effects you’d normally only see at pop and rock concerts.

An Audience With Royalty

I once accompanied Franz and his crew to Neverland Valley Ranch to help with a show he was doing for Michael Jackson and his guests. Michael’s theater was as large as those in Hollywood and had it’s own custom concession stand. (I still have the wrapper from a Moon Walker Chocolate Bar.) After the show we all went to the rehearsal studio adjacent to the theater to meet the King of Pop. Michael walked in wearing the black fedora and red shirt that were his trademark look at the time and the crew and I formed a wide semicircle around him as if he were a delicate soap bubble that might pop if we touched him. We each introduced ourselves and shook his hand then stood in silence, all of us starstruck, except for Franz who casually chatted with Michael as if he were a regular person, which of course he was, but his immense fame made that easy to forget.

Franz has worked with the biggest names in the business and he is not starstruck. He knows that when the cameras stop rolling or the show is over most celebrities want to be treated like normal people, free of the glittering bubble of fame. I think Franz’s friendship with Michael taught him a lesson about the price of fame and the isolation that can accompany it. Franz has told me one of the things he enjoys most about performing are the moments after the show, when he gets to sit down with friends to share a meal and some laughs.

(I probably shouldn’t tell you this, but if you’re ever at dinner with Franz don’t be surprised if the waiters gather around you at the end of the meal and start singing, “Happy Birthday,” even though it’s not your birthday. Don’t let on, just blow out the candle on the tiny hot fudge Sunday they’ve placed in front of you and try not to laugh when you look across the table and see Franz snickering delightedly to himself.)





Bruce and Franz

No Gifts Please

The invitation to my 30th birthday included the line, "No gifts please, your presence is the present." Franz took this as an invitation for a practical joke. I'd invited a couple dozen friends to join me and the party was just getting started when one of them handed me a small gift-wrapped box. I protested, reminding them that I had said, "no gifts please." Inside the box was a brass belt buckle that spelled my name in capital letters, "BRUCE." I thanked my friend for the thoughtful gift and quietly wondered what made him think I was the kind of guy who'd wear a belt buckle with his own name on it? A short time later another guest arrived and handed me triangular gift-wrapped box. Guess what was inside. That's right, another brass belt buckle, "BRUCE." I laughed loudly, tried to look equally grateful and actually thought this was all just a hysterical coincidence... until the I unwrapped a third "BRUCE buckle" which was inside the smallest of three nested gift boxes. Now I got the joke, due in no small part to the fact that Franz was now doubled over with laughter. Turns out he'd found the belt buckles a month earlier and had waited for this moment, wrapping each differently and distributing them to my friends in the hopes of keeping the joke going as long as possible. By the time I unwrapped the sixth and final belt buckle I'd already begun plotting my revenge. (And after all this you'd think he'd know my name is not spelled, "Broose.")



TOP PHOTO: Early years with Bruce, Franz and family
Bottom: Bruce and Franz in China

The Creative Process

I've been a writer and creative consultant for Franz Harary Productions on many occasions over the years and if your wondering where Franz's best ideas come from I'll tell you. They come from me. I'm kidding. They come from Franz's inexhaustible curiosity about the world. He's fascinated by science and space exploration, physics and pop culture, and when he's seeking inspiration for an illusion he doesn't look at what other magicians are doing, he looks for what captivates him. He's playing his own game by his own rules and rule number one is originality. Like all great artists, Franz possesses a burning desire to create things new and original, and he never stops seeking an answer to the question, "What's cool?"

Franz likes to bring a folding bike with him on his travels around the world and in his time off he enjoys riding around the city in search of new and interesting things. He also brings a small folding bike for his wife, which he's only too happy to loan me when she's not there. I'm 6'4" tall and each time I go for a ride with him on that small bike he asks me, "Circus in town?"





Bruce and Franz in China

Failing By Succeeding Spectacularly

One of the things I'm most proud of is helping Franz design one of his most startling outdoor illusions... which worked a little too well.

Cut to: A historic mountaintop in China where a multi-million dollar musical production takes place nightly on an outdoor set that was built into the mountainside to resemble an ancient Chinese fishing village. In the story, a woodsman falls in love with an enchanted female fox that's taken human form and their love is put to the ultimate test when they must wait more than a century to be united. It is a moving story that often brings the audience to tears. In the end the mountain itself brings the couple together at last and they live happily ever after. Franz and his team were hired to create new magical effects for this popular show.

Cut to: A bridge high above the fishing village set. It is summer and Franz, Joaquin Ayala and myself are standing on the bridge relearning the meaning of the word "perspiration." After ten minutes are clothes are soaked and so began more than a month of sweating the details. Here's what Franz achieved: At the climax of the musical, just after the couple finally embraces, they stand side by side in the center of the bridge and levitate 30 feet into the air where they remain motionless for a moment before their bodies pulse with light and they vanish instantly into the night sky. It was breathtaking and the audience was awed. Frankly, the producers of the show were doubtful we could pull it off in the first place and we may only have been there because they were humoring certain parties. The illusion of the couple levitating and vanishing into thin air was so powerful it was all the audience talked about – which was horrible because we'd managed to upstage the multi-million dollar musical production with a single magic trick. After that the illusion seemed to mysteriously encounter technical difficulties on a regular basis.

Monsters And Magic

Franz has designed illusions for film, television, concerts, operas,

theme parks, Broadway and even Monster Truck shows. He was contacted by a promoter to help them make their theme, "Monsters and Magic" a sensation. I was hired to write the script for the show (yes even Monster Truck shows have a script) adding preshow activities, introductions and dialog along with bits of comedy and magic for the emcee to do. The halftime extravaganza featured one of Franz's best Illusions, a daring midair escape in the spirit of Houdini. Franz didn't appear in the show, but we were there for rehearsals and the opening day. If you've never had your spine rattled by the roar of a Monster Truck you don't know what you were missing. A few local magicians showed up to catch the show and Franz was approachable as always. There is nothing "Hollywood" about the way he acts and he's just as comfortable in the company of Monster Truck fans as superstars.

Bold Choices

I still recall the day, over two decades ago, when Franz got his first pair custom made eyeglasses with completely square lenses. I took one look at them and said, "You've got to be kidding me." He was not and I was never more wrong. It doesn't sound so remarkable now, but trust me, back then it was totally unique and evocative of his willingness to eschew the accepted style and make bold confident choices. When we wore those eyeglasses he looked like no one else and that was the whole point. His clients loved them and they became the perfect visual metaphor for a man who was way ahead of the curve.

The Method To The Mystery

How did Franz achieve such enviable success? Was he lucky? Did he have a Magic 8-Ball as a kid that told him, "It is decidedly so." No, he made a deal with the Devil. (Okay, it was Max Maven, but it's easy to confuse the two.)

Franz knew what he wanted from a young age and he didn't wait for permission or adopt anyone else's limitations as his own. He had the kind of potent self-belief that comes with youth and he



matched it with talent, persistence and a passion for his craft. Did he encounter setbacks? Yes, but he didn't waste time lamenting over what went wrong. He learned from it and never stopped moving forward. The fact that he's a jovial unpretentious guy helped him immensely, as does his work ethic. He works harder at what he does than you probably imagine, quitting only when the work is done and since he often works with people in multiple time zones simultaneously, there's no telling when his phone will ring.

New Challenges And Triumphs

As the star of the largest touring illusion show in the world, Franz performs illusions solely of his own design and he could easily have relied on his time tested material for his next project (his biggest ever) but that wouldn't be at all like him. Franz has designed a totally new edition of the Mega Magic show with never before seen illusions for his new venue in Macau, "Franz Harary's House of Magic." I have seen the rehearsals and I can tell you he has outdone himself again. The illusions are massive and astounding, and once again he is about to elevate magic to the status of "spectacle." If any magician has a right to boast of his accomplishments it's Franz, yet those who know him will tell you he remains remarkably down to earth, still just a guy from Michigan with big dreams who never stops working to make them real.

Full Circle

I asked Franz where he thought he'd be today if he had never sent his demo video to the Jackson's producer. He told me, "I'd probably be living in Michigan doing Auto Shows." I highly doubt it. I know Franz too well and he's just being modest. He would have found remarkable success by another path. He is unstoppable. Did I mention he went to collage on a music scholarship, plays the trumpet and has a rich baritone singing voice that's a cross between Barry White and Josh Groban? That is not a joke.



PHOTOS: Left - Selection of original illusions from various shows



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The Creative Mind & Magic of Franz Harary

PHOTO Above: Bruce Gold, Franz, Michael Mode
Below: Franz and Michael 1988

By Michael Mode

A few years ago, I was playing a mix of Beastie Boys videos on YouTube when the song "Pop Your Balloon" started playing. Although the song had been released over a year earlier, it was my first time hearing it. Just over a minute into the song, I heard the following lyrics coming through my computer speakers...

"Like Franz Harary, I'm a magic man, films in the cam, cat's in the bag, carpet is shag. You can try to take the boast, but you can't take the brag."

I did a double take at my laptop screen. Did the Beastie Boys, the legendary band that I grew up listening to, really just mention one of my best friends in their song? I turned the

volume up and played that part of the song again...

"Like Franz Harary, I'm a magic man..."

I immediately called Franz and asked him if he was aware that his name was used as a lyric in a Beastie Boys song. Franz said he wasn't aware and didn't know how the group had learned of him because he had never worked with them. Then, in his typical laid back fashion, Franz said, "That's pretty cool, thanks for letting me know." Franz then changed the subject, asking me how I was doing and what I was working on that day. I had just told Franz he was mentioned in a song and he didn't really seem to care. But it's not that Franz didn't care or appreciate this type of recognition, it's just that he's humble and



is often uncomfortable when complimented or reminded of his fame. Side note: When putting together this article, I told Franz I was going to mention that the Beastie Boys used his name in a song. Franz's response, "Oh yeah, I forgot about that."

It's well documented that a 20-year-old Franz Harary launched his career when he sent a videotape of original illusions to Michael Jackson. The King of Pop was so impressed that he commissioned Franz to design all of the magic for his Victory Tour. Since then, Franz has created concert illusions for countless music superstars including Madonna, 'NSYNC and Justin Bieber to name a few.

Franz Harary is a celebrity in many parts of the world, setting attendance records with his arena shows and stopping traffic when massive crowds gather to witness his larger than life illusions.

Franz has starred in more than 27 of his own television specials, making things like the NASA Space Shuttle, a 52-story skyscraper in Tokyo and The Taj Mahal in India seemingly disappear.

Franz designs illusions for theme parks and has created a huge catalog of original magic which he performs in his own show, Imagine Nation, which consistently ranks

Photos taken by Franz Harary



as the biggest magic show in the world.

Currently, Franz is putting the finishing touches on his \$40 million attraction, Franz Harary's House of Magic, opening in the fall of 2015 at Studio City Hotel and Casino in China's gambling capitol of Macau. All of these accomplishments make for quite an impressive resume, but it's just one side of the multifaceted Harary.

I first met Franz Harary almost 30 years ago when I was just a kid and new to magic. We were at a magic convention, the Abbott's Magic Get Together, and I mustered up the courage to go over and ask one of my magic idols if he could give me his opinion on a magic routine I was trying to create. Franz not only took several minutes of his time to offer encouragement and thoughtful advice, he made me feel like I was important, as if I was the only person in a crowded room full of magicians eager to get his attention. Since then, I have witnessed Franz give that same attention to many up and coming magicians. Franz remembers the magicians who were kind enough to help him when he was starting out and he goes out of his way to offer the same encouragement and give back to the magic community.



Michael sitting on a dock

“We’ve been in countries where he is a true celebrity and household name, selling out huge arenas and literally getting mobbed by fans ...”



ABOVE: Sold out Arena shows

Remember the famous photograph of Michael Jackson supposedly sleeping in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber? That photo was taken while Jackson was taking a tour of a hospital after he got burned while filming a Pepsi commercial. The image leaked to the press and the pop icon was embarrassed by the photo and worried what people would think. Franz and Michael were friends and this whole photo incident took place during the time when Franz was doing a lot of work for Jackson. It turns out that the reason that now famous rumor went viral is because Franz suggested Michael run with the made up story rather than dismiss it.

Franz flew to several of the hotels that Michael would be staying at on tour and measured the doorways to the suites in order to create a fake hyperbaric chamber that was slightly wider, requiring the hotel room doors to be taken off in order to get it in the suite. By doing so, hotel maintenance would have to get involved and word of the supposed oxygen sleeping chamber would spread to hotel employees and leak to the press. As the old publicity saying goes, “It doesn’t matter what they say, as long as they spell your name right.” Well, the plan worked and Michael’s name was spelled correctly by media outlets around the world.

Oddly, as well as I know Franz, I’ve never heard him tell this story. I only recently learned of it from another person. Franz had signed a secrecy agreement with Jackson but others working on the project hadn’t, and they leaked sketches of the oxygen chamber to be built and other details of the plan.

Franz had created magic for Jackson’s tour, traveled with the star around the world and designed magic elements for Jackson’s theater at Neverland Ranch. After all of the time they spent together, Franz only has one picture with Michael. When I asked Franz why he didn’t take more photos or talk about Michael Jackson more, his answer had nothing to do with the secrecy agreement that he still honors. Franz told me he had seen too many people take advantage of Jackson over the years and felt bad that

Michael lost trust in so many people due to selfish actions for their own gain. Franz considered Michael to be a friend and always treated him as such.

I’ve traveled around the world with Franz several times working on various projects. We’ve been in countries where he is a true celebrity and household name, selling out huge arenas and literally getting mobbed by fans while he attempts to walk through the food court in a shopping mall. It’s a surreal experience seeing your friend getting rushed by fans in one part of the world and then a few hours later we land back in the U.S. and he’s back to just being a regular guy. But Franz is always just a regular down to earth guy, much different than his larger than life onstage persona might lead people to believe.

One of the things that most people don’t know about Franz is that he’s an excellent photographer. Using nothing more than a basic point and shoot camera, Franz captures outstanding images often composed with his unique perspective. It’s this characteristic of always trying to view situations in a different way that carries over into his illusion design. Like most great artists, Franz looks at the same things everybody else does but somehow sees something different. Whenever we brainstorm ideas for a new project, I’m always amazed at how Franz takes the thought process in a entirely different direction from anybody else in the room. Fueled by an insatiable curiosity and a childlike sense of wonder, Franz is quite simply one of the most creative people I’ve ever known.

Franz has a home in the Hollywood Hills and is constantly traveling to top tourist destinations to perform and consult. But if you ask Franz to name his favorite place on the planet, he’ll tell you it’s his lake house in Michigan, just outside of his hometown of Ann Arbor. Franz and his wife, Akiko, escape here whenever their busy schedules allow, hosting small gatherings of family and longtime friends. Akiko, who is an amazing cook, prepares huge spreads of delicious food while Franz reconnects with his Midwest roots and

relives memories of time spent on the water when he was a child. The giant swan paddle boat docked in front of the house is proof that the child in Franz is still very much alive. It's here, at the lake, that Franz stares out at the spectacular sunsets and conjures up new ways to transport his audiences to places of wonder.

They say you shouldn't meet your heroes because you might be disappointed. That advice is probably true in most cases, but it definitely wasn't the case when I met one of mine a few decades ago at a magic convention. Nearly thirty have passed and Franz Harary remains a dear friend and a continued source of inspiration.

Franz is also one hell of a practical joker, often plotting elaborate schemes with hilarious results. Next time you see Franz, ask him about the sushi incident on the Japanese subway. I don't think the locals who witnessed it have ever been the same!



WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT **FRANZ HARARY**

By JoaquinAyala

I've known Franz as a friend, and have admired him as a creator and designer for as long as I can remember. Let me share a few things about him that you may not know.

The first thing many people aren't aware of is that he is a great singer. He was university trained when he was young and deep down I think he always wanted to be an opera singer. Jokingly, I've often told him if the magic doesn't work out he could always turn to a career in singing. Whenever we have the opportunity to visit a restaurant or venue where there is Karaoke he will stand up and enchant the crowd with his powerful voice.

Franz loves to travel and likes to go to the worst places in every country. He wants to go where the poor people are, where the crime is, eat at the street markets, and experience the life of those people. Over the years I've travelled with him to Japan, China, and South America, and I can tell you he is an extremely down to earth guy who would rather eat where the local people eat than dine in a fancy restaurant. These are usually the places tourists stay away from. In Mexico, for example, he made me drive him to a suburb and get something from a street vendor who sold Tacos on the side of the road. He wants to immerse himself in the culture of the places he visits and genuinely loves meeting people in every country he travels to. Something that might surprise many is that before every show he will go out into the arena and talk to people.

He is a fantastic friend and whenever he visits his close friends he brings a gift. For the past ten years, I've been one of his builders, and if he comes to Vegas he never arrives empty handed. He might bring





MICHAEL JACKSONS' SPIKER

Joaquin and Franz with the Spiker Illusion

a little mask from Malaysia or India, or wherever he came from. I once told him he was crazy and didn't need to always bring gifts. His reply was, "Well, this is me . . . it's who I am." He has a heart of gold, and that is rare in this business. One day he arrived with a big box which I thought was an illusion. It turned out to be a helicopter drone he had bought for me in Hong Kong simply because he thought I'd like it. He is always thinking about others and that to me is Franz.

He is also one of the most creative people I know. Every morning he wakes up and thinks, "I need to come up with something in magic that nobody else is doing." He once told me he has an allergy to common illusions such as the Zig-Zag, Origami and Sub Trunk. He wonders why magicians would want to do effects that somebody else is doing. His analogy is that of a singer who only sings cover songs. You are far more likely to be successful if you perform original material and establish yourself as somebody unique. It is this thinking that makes him strive to create such original material and be so successful.

Something Franz and I have talked about is getting old, yet he is still able to re-invent himself. If you watch his performances you'll see that he incorporates the latest technology into his show. Throughout his career, he has kept up with what's going on in other forms of entertainment, especially the music industry. If you look back at his earlier videos, you'll see he's always on the cutting edge of technology. This is part of his secret to longevity in the business.

A day in the life of Franz Harary will start at five o'clock in the morning when he usually goes on the computer to research the latest technology. He then hikes for 45 minutes on the Hollywood Hills for exercise. Sometimes when I go with him, he'll want to talk about anything other than magic but when we get back home it's straight down to business.

He is extremely knowledgeable about the cosmos, the universe and space. It's his hobby, and that's why he's a member of NASA. If Franz hadn't wanted to be an illusionist I think he might have ended up working for the Space program. He loves space and was influenced by the first moon landing as a young boy.

Franz is also a great sketch artist. He does incredible sketches and designs everything by hand. He will sketch on anything he can find, from a paper napkin to a scrap of paper. At one point I'd like to publish a book of his original designs and ideas because they are works of art. From those sketches he'll work with a graphics person, and the end result will be the plans that I use to build his illusions. Franz is incredibly particular. If a base is 1/8"



too thick he will want to have it rebuilt. He wants to be involved in every step of the process. He loves detail and whenever I work with him I know how far I can go before I can get his approval.

As you know, Michael Jackson was a good friend of Franz's. There were times Michael would pick him up and they would go to the movies together or go shopping. Michael loved Franz because of the way he spoke. Franz has a very calming voice and Michael liked that about him. One of the illusions Franz designed for the Victory tour was

the Spiker illusion. When the tour finished Jackson gave it back to him, and Franz now performs it in his show. As a side note I was honored recently when Franz asked me to repair it for him. This illusion has so much meaning to Franz, and I am currently refurbishing it for him.

Franz is a unique person. I think people like him are born about once every hundred years. Those that know him call him a genius and a wonderful friend.



PHOTO: Top - Joaquin in Franz's show
Bottom: Franz levitate Joaquin



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EDITOR
Paul Romhany

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Ben Robinson

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Nick Lewin

PRODUCT REVIEWERS
Paul Romhany & Friends

COVER PHOTO DESIGN BY
Paul Romhany

ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
Paul Romhany/Sydney Anderson

SENIOR MARKETING SPECIALIST
Steve Hovevar

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Paul Romhany

ART DIRECTOR and LAYOUT
Paul Romhany

PROOF READERS
Richard Webster, Mick Peck, Ben Robinson

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editor@vanishmagazine.com



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