

PAUL SHOOT TO THRILL!

Around the same time as this very issue is published, independent film maker and magician Paul Squires releases his latest project: 'Ever So Sleightly' – a look at the current magic scene in the UK. We spoke to Paul about his latest production...

What inspired you to make a magic documentary?

I've always loved magic, when I was a kid I remember I'd put on magic shows for my parents in their front room. That was a long time ago now....but anyway, a couple of years ago I met a guy called Tony Peach, a really accomplished magician at a function. He was working the tables, and we got talking in the bar after he'd finished working. He told me about the local magic society and he invited me along to see what it was all about. I went along and my interest in magic was re-ignited. It was brilliant. Shortly after I decided to make a documentary about magic. Originally I thought I'd concentrate on local magic societies, but changed the angle and decided to film a 'snapshot' of the UK magic scene and along the way provide some cool tricks and advice to magicians.

Who is featured on the documentary?

There's a loads of well known faces there - I wanted to include the performers who I felt really were the cream of the crop. I think I've done that. There's Paul Zenon, Wayne Dobson, Joe Pasquale, Simon Lovell, Stephen Tucker, Mark Leveridge, Paul Gordon, Marc Paul, Jay Scott Berry, Mike Danata, Mark Mason... and more. I also wanted to feature fresh new talent, so there's clips of performers like Matthew Stirling and Ben

Williams. I also use some very neat footage of the 'Men In Coats' who I loved at the Blackpool show. I even made sure I included my pal Tony, who after all was the guy that introduced me back to magic.

Are there any extras on the DVD?

Yes there are. I hate it when you buy a DVD and there's only the film on it, or some dodgy trailers. There's the main feature, some 'bonus clips' that never made it to the finished film but I still really like, a feature called 'Who is Paul Squires?', which is self explanatory really, and best of all there's a really amusing commentary.

Why is it amusing?

I think it's a first as I decided to have two laymen giving their opinions on the film and magic in general! I got my brother Laurence and friend Andy to join me (with several bottles of beer and wine) and we just did it. I had no idea Andy hated card tricks, so it is all pretty amusing. I didn't want them to have seen the film beforehand, so the comments from them were really fresh. .

Where will the DVD be available from?

You'll be able to get the DVD at all good magic dealers, via the web, my website and maybe some high street stores also.

Who is it aimed at?

I always like to make the sort of films that I would like to see, so I guess it's aimed at someone who is interested in magic, and wants some great tips to help them perform. A bit like me! But I didn't want to restrict it to magicians only. There's no exposure at all, so it's still entertaining for folks that have no interest in performing magic.

What was the most difficult aspect of doing this documentary?

Apart from the sheer amount of work to produce a film like this, one of the problems is that the camera is very unforgiving. When you are performing to people, you use misdirection through movement, talking to them...but I found when viewing some of these performances the magic didn't work. A TV viewer isn't as easily influenced by misdirection as the audience that are seeing the trick up close. Therefore on some occasions the magic didn't work I realised that some tricks look great in a pub, but it doesn't always translate as well on the screen..I didn't use any camera tricks, and I'm really happy with the magic in the finished film.

Who long did the documentary take to produce?

It took over 12 months to shoot and edit - It took over 50 hours of studio time to finish it, and a long time to mix the music too! I was very fortunate to have a really great animator called Trevor White who did the cartoons for me, and two electro acts helped me with some music too which I think makes the film.

Are you a performer yourself?

Yes - I joined the Surrey Society of Magicians and have about half-a-dozen tricks that I regularly carry, I have a couple of favourite card tricks, some silk vanish stuff...simple stuff you can carry in your pocket. I love learning new tricks, and even collect magic books as well. I think anyone can do magic in front of their friends in the pub. But it's a totally different situation to perform in a restaurant, for example. As part of my research for the film I tried both table hopping and entered a stage competition. As a relative newbie it was daunting, but I had to try it so I could ask the right questions from many of the acts in my film.

Which performers do you admire?

There are lots of guys - Tommy Cooper is a favourite, but I also enjoy watching Richard Osterlind, Penn & Teller, Wayne Dobson, Tomas Medina - who did 'Geek Magic', he's very funny...I really admire anyone who is fresh and entertaining with their magic. In fact anyone that has the guts to get up on stage and give it a go deserves real respect. Particularly when they are brilliant!

What's your next project?

I love comedy, but magic is still a passion. I have a magic related DVD idea but I'm saying no more at this stage...

This is your second feature production, Paul - tell us a bit about your first...

My first documentary feature was called Butte Bound, which traced my encounter with legendary daredevil Evel Knievel in his home town. The movie received impressive reviews, and because it was pretty wacky and original. It became a cult hit with motorcycle fans here in and in the States. It was a bit different to this film, but it was the one that got me started making documentaries.

COMPETITION

magicseen has two copies of 'Ever So Sleightly' for the first two people who answer this question correctly:



What was Paul Squires' first documentary called?

Please email your answers to: grahamhey@magicseen.co.uk

Photography: Venture Woking