

MOFO GOES HOME



"I don't much relish riding in limousines, but for Penn & Teller to pull up to a sub shop in the middle of the night in a limo seems somehow just perfectly right." — Penn

MOFO KNOWS
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 CHANGE OF ADDRESS REQUESTED



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MOFO KNOWS

April 30, 1993

Issue 11

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH YOUR TELEVISION

In March of this year, Turner Network Television sent twenty-three videos to Penn & Teller. All the boys had to do was watch the films, make notes on what they saw, turn these notes into wraparounds to introduce the flicks and their commercials, and garner the stamina to host TNT's "Monster Marathon" during the four Saturdays of June.

Penn insists, "I watched all the videos! All the way through! Nearly twenty-eight hours worth! NO fast forward! NO talking on the phone! If the phone rang, I paused. I sat with the massive TNT notebook of research on my lap and read it all. I invited friends to come over and watch with me. A few showed up once. NO ONE showed up twice. One friend said, 'Why don't you just tell people that *Queen of Outer Space* sucks, and be done with it?' 'The Outer Limits' were wonderful to watch. *Them* and *The Thing* (is there a pattern there?) were great. *Night of the Lepus* was surprisingly good. But if you can watch *It: Terror from Beyond Space*, and TNT's *Frankenstein* back-to-back in one night, you can do anything. I can do anything."

Teller offers some viewing tips: "In *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, be sure and notice the boots Sinbad swims ashore in. If you get hungry on 'Outer Limits' night, the time to pick up the pizza is during 'Cold Hands, Warm Heart' (it stars William Shatner). To sound like a pretentious film aficionado during *Them*, point out how much the helicopters and the people wearing gas masks look like the very creatures they are fighting. *Billy the Kid vs. Dracula* contains my nominee for the dumbest line of all the movies: 'Don't be givin' any more carcasses away, 'less

you check with me. I'm runnin' this ranch.' Ted Turner let us take a part-time job to make staying up to host this show pay decent wages. So we'll be on all-night security guard duty at a Manhattan municipal building, watching the Monster Marathon on our security monitor and doing rounds during commercials. Times are tough."

See for yourself during TNT's "Monster Marathon," June 5, 12, 19, and 26.

P&T SHOW THEIR WARES



Penn & Teller will be back at Bally's Las Vegas Casino Sept. 30-Oct. 6

SUPERMEN

Penn & Teller were asked by DC Comics for comments on the death of Superman last November. . .

PENN: "He'll have to die in more media before we're impressed. Penn & Teller have died in feature films, on 'Miami Vice', on t.v. specials, and on stage (in more ways than one)."

TELLER: "I always enjoy it when the hero dies, especially after a big build-up, like in *West Side Story* or the New Testament."

A SLIP OF THE AUTHOR?

In Charles A. Goodrum's 1992 mystery novel, *A Slip of the Tongue*, his sleuths pursue a lead to the Houdini Collection at the Library of Congress. In a chapter headed "Thursday morning, 10:00," they're told about "Pepper's Ghost," a trick most of you have seen in Disney's Haunted Mansions: a brightly lit mannequin is reflected onto a piece of glass, on the other side of which is a prop, such as a chair, and thus the "ghost" appears to be seated on the chair. Mr. Goodrum, however, seems to think "Pepper's Ghost" is an effect done with angled mirrors, and his fictional expert says:

Penn and Teller started their shows one season with a version of this trick. They suspended what seemed to be an empty box in midair over the center of the stage. A kid comes on, throws a baseball through the box, deliberately breaking the reflecting glass, and there are Penn and Teller lying on their sides waving at the audience.

Is Mr. Goodrum giving full rein to his dramatic license, or is his memory playing tricks on him? As Penn & Teller fans know, the boys have never opened a season of shows with Pepper's Ghost, and began their 1990 NBC television special from behind a huge mirror that appeared to be a transparent sheet of glass until it was shattered and the boys materialized on stage behind the cascading shards.

Teller points out that Mr. Goodrum's trick, in addition to being Mirror Masking and not Pepper's Ghost, is likely to work only if "we found a superkid with an arm like a mortar who could smash heavy, tempered glass with a mere baseball." And even then, Penn & Teller would be unveiled lying on a bed of broken, ungimmicked glass. Yikes!

"If Goodrum likes that idea, we'll be happy to let him do the test run," says Teller. "I'm very flattered that he included us in his book, but next time he should talk to us first, so he can describe a trick that would work."

Mr. Goodrum will be invited to respond.

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ENCOUNTERING BARBARA BUSH

by Penn

I had a blast covering last August's Republican convention for Comedy Central. I got Barbara Bush to tell me a knock-knock joke, and it was considered an amazing coup.

She was coming out of a broadcast of "The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour." I said, "I'm Penn Jillette."

"Who?"

"That doesn't matter. Tell me a joke."

"You're crazy."

"I know that. Tell me a joke."

"You, you're the joke."

"Anything. A knock-knock joke."

Anything. You say Knock-knock and I'll say Who's there? It'll be great."

"Knock-knock."

"Who's there?"

"Barbara Bush."

"Barbara Bush who?"

"Barbara Bush me."

The Secret Service hustled her away.

She was so hip, I didn't even get it. A totally minimalist, post-modern, deconstructed knock-knock joke.

DUOS

Penn & Teller fan Gene Hatcher has his hair cut by a middle-aged New Yorker named Lou. During the course of a conversation, Gene asked Lou if he'd ever heard of Penn & Teller:

"Penn & Teller? Oh, yeah, sure."

"Have you heard about their newest book?"

"Oh, yeah, yeah," said Lou. "Quite a book, I understand."

"It's pretty clever."

"Yeah, I heard about it. About how wild it is.

All about how they came to America and made their dreams come true."

"Came to America?"

"Yeah. And how they had all these secret

DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH

The MAGIC! bulletin board of CompuServe published a request from someone who wanted to hear from anyone who knew how to perform Teller's Shadows bit, in which he slices a rose and its shadow.

Steve Bryant posted a response: "The shadow trick is Teller's invention and the sole property of Penn & Teller. The guardians of ethics on the MAGIC! BBS (Max Maven, T. A. Waters, Pete Biro, and virtually everyone else in magic) would boil you alive for even considering doing it, even in the privacy of your home — not to mention what Penn & Teller would do!"

PENN & TELLER'S CROSS WORDS

The Solution: by James Randi

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by Teller

It happened in October of 1991 at Dominick's, a former restaurant just north of the Beverly Center in Los Angeles.

We set up in a pair of rooms behind the dining area. The rooms looked like a movie set. They were "restored" by the scenic artist who did *Chinatown*, and had yellowish-brown walls with wainscoting and amber sconces. The carpet was mold-green.

The front room was our "theater." We arranged chairs in one corner for the audience and had them face the opposite corner, which was to be our stage. Little spotlights had been set up on collapsible aluminum stands. On one of the walls behind the "stage," a big, square arch was closed off with wine-dark velvet drapes on a wooden rod. This arch led to the "backstage" (i.e., the room with a pool table too massive to move out of the way), where our props were all set out. It was a strange sensation for me to set up things like Needles, after all these years of being pampered by our assistants.

Carol Perkins, our fire eater, acted as wardrobe mistress and hung all the clothes, and laid out our ties and undershirts. Even Penn got into the act—he assembled the Suspension stool, loaded the blood in the Hand Stab, and went through the show bit by bit to make sure the props were all in place.

The party was a standing-room-only affair. The all-male guests included Frank Marshall, Mike Ovitz, Bob Zemeckis, Jeffrey Katzenberg, Body by Jake, and about 15 to 20 others, most of whom I didn't recognize. The bachelor being bashed, Steven Spielberg, was seated to the left of the middle, and was remarkably easy for me to identify. Martin Short was front and center, and led the laughs. George Lucas stood mirthlessly by

MOGUL BACHELOR BASH ENDS IN TRAGEDY!

announced Penn and me, and we jumped out from behind the curtain. We started the show by grossing out the audience with the Bean Trick. Even Robin was speechless when the eye-slime-covered beans dropped onto his hands.

We then performed the Hand Stab lightly and fast, and, next, we did the Cups and Balls, playing the music on a boom-box. Penn introduced the bit as "A trick we haven't done for years, but we haven't done this sort of twelve-year-old-birthday-party stuff in quite a while." The audience was amused, but when we repeated the trick a mile-a-minute with the clear plastic cups, the crowd was zapped.

We followed this with the Suspension. Penn started to select Jake, the Hollywood fitness trainer, then checked with me to see if the chairs would hold up. I shrugged. Penn decided that to be safe ("MOGUL BACHELOR BASH ENDS IN TRAGEDY! BODYBUILDER PARALYZED FROM BULL NECK TO BASKETBALL CALVES!!") he'd pick a waitress instead. She floated, and Jeffrey Katzenberg kept exclaiming, "That's impossible!"

Next we brought out Mendelssohn the ball python and showed he was real. Penn asked, "Anybody here afraid of snakes?", and told Harrison Ford: "I'll keep him away from you."

Penn and I snipped the snake in half and heaved the pieces into the audience, splattering thousand-dollar silk shirts with stage blood. The splatterees loved it.

I then did the Needles. Spielberg was my volunteer, and I have never had a better one. He was smug while testing the point of the needles, and while I took out the first thirty or so, he played condescending and bored. Then, when I put them between my lips, he suddenly changed his expression and said, "Oh, Jesus!" He got visibly more and more alarmed as I ate more needles, and then, when I handed him the instruments to examine my mouth, he looked REALLY hard, prying into every cranny of my mouth. "Nothing," he pronounced. "It's empty!" He sat down.

I swallowed the thread, and when I pulled out the needles threaded, everybody went nuts, except George Lucas, who sat stoned-faced throughout. I have a feeling he doesn't like magic—industrial or otherwise—that he can't figure out.

I then sat at the piano, the lights dimmed, and I started to play Gary Stockdale's music for Burnin' Love. A light came up on the entrance, and Carol whipped back half the velvet curtain. "Yes!" the audience exclaimed. She slinked in,

able to hear any mistakes above the laughter. Fortunately, I was able to play note-perfect anyway, pumping the volume to be heard. During the last lyrical moment of the bit, the audience quieted, and then exploded with pleasure and approval. We took a bow, and then Penn told them to change their mood so we could come back in a few minutes with something really creepy.

Ten minutes later the revelers were sitting quietly in a room now lit only by candles. We handed out lurid color photos of erotic escapades. The men were instructed to pick the photo they thought would best typify Steven's impending marriage to Kate Capshaw. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Spielberg select the very picture Penn and I had planned to force on him later to make the trick work. My jaw almost dropped. He was unknowingly making this too easy for us. We then collected the selected pictures and had Steven choose one of them at random with his eyes closed.

We took out a blank slate. We cleaned one side and wrote Steven's initials and the date in a lower corner. We turned the slate over. On that side was the famous self-caricature of Alfred Hitchcock, and the initials AJH 10-30-26. "It's been a long time since we did one of these bachelor parties," Penn remarked. (Houdini fans shouldn't be misled by Hitch's initials.) We handed Steven the slate with the side with his initials on it face down, then gave him a piece of chalk and told him to close his eyes and hold his hand underneath the slate.

Now, for the first time, we revealed the picture Steven had isolated from the selected photos. It depicted a kneeling bare-breasted woman in chains with her head shaved and her nails cut short. Everybody concentrated on the picture, and Steven made no indication that this was the picture he'd now chosen twice, the second time without looking.

With his eyes still closed, Steven began to mark the slate from beneath. I gave him vague directions: "Two straight lines. Now two quick curves. Now move your hand to another part of the slate," and so forth.

We then asked him to turn over the slate. It was covered with what appeared to be gibberish. A wave of disappointment and embarrassment rolled over the audience. Robin, who had been pleased that we were going over so well, panicked. He sputtered casual but desperate witticisms. Most people paid little attention to him

DEUT, 21, X

"Doot," he read. "Twenty-one. Ten."

"What could that be?" said Penn. "Doot, twenty-one, ten..."

A long pause, then many random guesses. Then, "Deuteronomy." Then more guesses. Penn turned to the person who had said, "Deuteronomy."

"What did you say?"

"Deuteronomy. Chapter 21. Verse 10."

A ripple went through the crowd. Penn asked, "Is there a Bible here?"

I leaped over the couch to the bookshelves behind, fished from the random collection a zippered family Bible, and tossed it to Steven. Penn held a candle as Steven found the suggested passage:

"When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive..."

Steven continued with verses eleven and twelve:

"...and seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldst have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head and pare her nails."

A soft gasp. Robin realized the show had been under control all along. Applause started, but I stopped it.

"Wait! Who selected this picture at the very beginning?"

"I did," admitted Steven. "And then I ended up choosing it again with my eyes closed."

Lots of gasps, and more applause.

"We want you to have this slate and this picture for souvenirs, Steven," I said, handing them to him.

"Yeah," added Penn, "and this page of the Bible." He ripped out the page and handed it over.

"A toast to Steven!" somebody called, and the champagne flowed. Penn and I toasted with Evian.

We gave Steven a Penn & Teller hat. He immediately put it on. "I collect hats, you know. I'll wear this on national television. A woman once gave me a hat, and, without thinking, I wore it the next day on 'Good Morning America.' She started calling me up, thinking that my wearing

the door, with his little black beard immobile. Harrison Ford was in the second row a little to the right of center, looking uncertain and embarrassed. (After the show, I told him I was a fan of his. He replied, "That makes us even.")

Robin Williams, acting for the second time as toastmaster of a Spielberg bachelor party,

the eyes of many males following her with tongues akimbo. On cue, Penn whipped back the other half of the curtain and revealed himself in his smoking jacket. Huge laugh. Every move, every joke, every trick got such big reactions that my nervousness at playing the piano disappeared, although I knew the audience wouldn't have been

ad studied the slate for a minute or two. Steven said, "It looks like 'deal' or *Duel*— that was my first film."

"Wait!" I said. "Penn, put a few candles up on the bar in front of the mirror. And Steven, take what you have drawn over to there."

Steven read what he saw:

her hat on t.v. indicated that I wanted to marry her."

The following Monday, Steven's assistant, Bruce Cohen, called: "An absolute stunning success. Steven had the time of his life. He's so happy and excited. All day long he's been parading his Penn & Teller hat around the world."

Teller pleads guilty to bank robbery charges

By Jonathan Bandler
Staff Writer

White Plains: *Ex-Bank of New York employee could be sentenced to up to 35 years in prison.*

case. Howard Courtney Thom.
pleaded guilty to the crime.

From The Gannett Westchester Daily News

MOGUL BIRTHDAY BASH ENDS IN BEVERLY HILLS!

Imagine you're ten-years-old, and your mother tells you that if you take a nap this afternoon, you can watch Penn & Teller set up their show in your projection room this evening, and then you can stay up late on a school night to watch the performance itself.

Now imagine that your father is Jeffrey Katzenberg, chairman of the Walt Disney studios, he's hosting a fiftieth birthday party for record mogul David Geffen, and the bash is being held in your Beverly Hills mansion on Sunday, February 21, 1993.

Now comes the hard part: setting up. Teller says, "We had to work for four and a half hours to fit our show into a room the size of a Westwood, California disco."

Katzenberg wanted a show similar to the one he had enjoyed at Steven Spielberg's bachelor bash. He turned over his split-level projection room to Penn & Teller, their two assistants, and Katzenberg's contractor. The ten-year-old Katzenberg twins, David and Laura, got to watch as long as they stayed out of the way. As it turned out, they even came in handy when P & T learned the mini-theater's sound system couldn't handle the cassette tape of the music they used in performing Cups and Balls, and so they needed a boom-box. David provided his. The housekeeper was the only one less than thrilled by the advent of Penn & Teller, as she watched these entertainers from hell dump the glass-topped coffee tables out of the way and into the garden. The smoke detector was wired into the burglar alarm and couldn't be disarmed, so Katzenberg's contractor sealed the detector with plastic wrap so Penn & Teller could eat fire without ruining the expensive

threads and haircuts of twenty partygoers.

The guests included Carrie Fisher, fashion maven Calvin Klein and his wife Kelly, who was Penn & Teller's floating victim for the Suspension, studio executive Barry Diller, who, at the appropriate moment, searched Teller's mouth for embroidery needles, and Bob Daly, the head of Warner Brothers films.

Penn & Teller changed into their suits in the guest house in the Katzenbergs' back yard, and then Jeffrey himself introduced them, bragging that they had had universal success, except with the film they made for Bob Daly and Warner Brothers.

The show then opened with the Bean Trick, and Penn dropped the eye-slime-covered bean onto Daly's palm.

The performance lasted for about half an hour, and included, for the first time in private, Teller performing Shadows, and closed with the 10-in-1 version of Fire-eating.

The boys had begun the show nervously, aware of their guests' clout in show business, and, as always, less than fond of performing for a small group, but they began to suspect the show was going over well when they noticed Katzenberg continually glancing over to enjoy his children's enjoyment of the Bad Boys of Magic.

They had accepted the gig keeping in mind the advice Robin Williams had given them at Spielberg's party: "If you bomb here, you never have to worry about bombing again."

They didn't bomb.

Teller summed up the Geffen birthday party as "A huge hit with Katzenberg's kids, and the adults seemed to like it, too. And, ah, what a relief that is."



HOT AIR

by Penn

Last July I had my first hot air balloon ride. It's the most peaceful, beautiful, amazing thing I've ever done. Carol, Sister, me, the pilot Gary, and his six-year-old son flew together. We were at a balloon festival in Greenfield where people gathered to watch about 10 balloons fly. It costs \$150 a person, but it's worth it.

The best thing is that there's no control, no instruments, no maps, no checklists, no nothing. You fill the balloon up, you take off, you fly for about 45 minutes wherever the wind takes you, and then you look for a place to land that won't crash you into power lines and kill you. (Two or three people die a year).

The only steering you can do is if you go higher you go to the right and lower you go to the left. I can't understand how that works but it seems to. I don't get how the wind can be that way as a rule of thumb.

It was so beautiful to see my hometown just peaceful below. Everyone you fly over waves and says "hi." I really loved it! The sky was clear and the visibility was perfect: mountains and everything.

We "tickled the treetops" and also almost had a "splash and dash" in the Connecticut River. We could have landed at an airport that came under us but we decided to go longer. Then it got iffy, and there really wasn't a place to land. Denny, my nephew, was following in his car and yelling, and even showed up in the woods under us.

I loved it, loved it, loved it.

We tried to land in a field. There were people looking at us, and we threw them a web to see if they could pull us over the field but they couldn't, so we pulled the web up and went on. We came down in a softball field in Miller's Falls. Gary, the pilot, just yelled down to people and made them the ground crew. We touched down really nice.

I think I'm going to try to get a license. In Arizona you can get a license in a couple of weeks if you work your butt off, but around here it takes at least a year for a private license and at least another year for a commercial license. Getting a license is harder here because of the few places you can land.

It's the best sport. You fly by the seat of your pants and there are NO MAPS. You DON'T HAVE TO CARE WHERE YOU ARE! Other people worry about it. It's the way I live my life.

I'll have my license and a balloon within the next couple of years and anybody that isn't a scaredy cat can take a flight with me.

It's SO COOL and mood-alteringly peaceful.