



MOFO  
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# Mofo's Nose



Issue # 5 GRAPHIC ARTIST: AARON TARDOS  
June '90 WRITER: SPENCER CHANDLER TELLER & PENN NEWS LETTER



## INTRODUCTION

Alas! We meet again! Or at the very least, my words reach your home. It has been quite a while since the last issue of Mofo's Nose, but don't think nothing has been going on. It's just that we've been quieter about it than usual.

With the beginning of summer vacation knocking obnoxiously on our front doors, many lethargic student will take to the streets, causing undue unpleasantness unmost unof unthe untime. If you are a member of this phylum, I urge you to practice worthwhile and warmth-inspiring activities, such as knitting, cattle-producing, or creative whining in post-Freudian thought. Do not, under any circumstances, hang out on street corners, break bottles and grab yourself in unseemly places unless, as Penn would say, "you want to look cool."

Hey, speaking of cool, I was sitting in Original Joe's restaurant, eating dinner before a show, and eavesdropping on the other patrons. At the booth next to me were two women talking about

shows they had seen in the past year or so. The old lady with blue hair remarked, "They were hoodlums. Just rogues." The other one, slightly younger but with old-lady aspirations, provided an excellent contrapuntal quip. She said, "They were rather brash. I don't know how they can stand themselves." All right. You get no guesses as to who they were referring to.

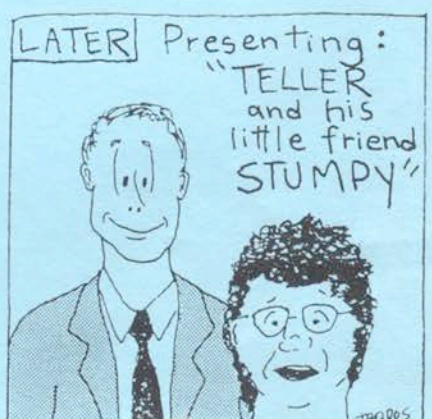
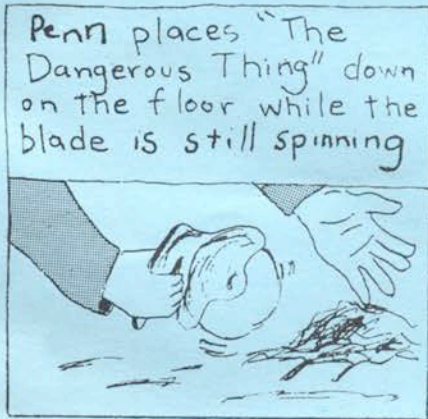
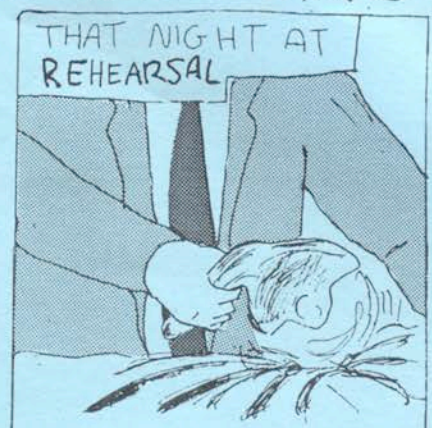
Anyway, here's our latest contest:

On a postcard (nothing fancier, you fool, it's not a love note), write and tell us what you're doing this summer. If it has anything to do with P&T, you might win! Then again, you might not. As always, the contest is casual (tie and slacks preferred). Send all entries addressed to Aaron and Spencer here at Mofo's Nose.

This issue should put you in a frivolous mood, suitable for your summer vacation. In the interest of being polite, we hope you enjoy it. If for some reason you don't, keep it to yourself.

SPENCE

# THE STORY OF PENN AND "THE DANGEROUS THING"



"I don't think any girl should ever go with any performer. You can print that. Stay away! They're scum! Slime!"

MISS JULIE BROWN

**CAESARS TAHOE**  
**ARTIST ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT**

AGREEMENT dated September 7, 1989, between Desert Palace, Inc. dba Caesars Tahoe ("HOTEL") and BUGGS & RUBY DISCOUNT CORPORATION ("PRODUCER") furnishing the services of PENN & TELLER ("ARTISTS"). The parties agree as follows:

1. ENGAGEMENT: HOTEL hereby engages PRODUCER, and PRODUCER hereby accepts such engagement, to present an act by ARTIST consisting of TWO (2) persons to perform, at the Cascade Showroom located on the premises of Caesars Tahoe as a starring attraction for the engagements described below.

2. FUNDAMENTAL PROVISIONS:

A. ENGAGEMENT(S): March 9-10, 1990. Three (3) shows in two (2) days. One show Friday at 10:00pm, two shows Saturday at 8:00 and 11:30pm.

B. COMPENSATION: \$10,000.00

C. ACCOMMODATIONS: ARTISTS each to receive one 1-bedroom suite plus \$150 per day food and beverage at HOTEL, non-cumulative. ARTIST's road manager to receive 1 king room plus two buffet tickets per day at HOTEL, non-cumulative.

D. BILLING: 100% star headline.

E. MUSICIANS/REHEARSAL: Not applicable.

F. PRODUCER/ARTIST ADDRESS: Penn & Teller  
c/o Steve Levine  
ICM  
8899 Beverly Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

ARTIST services are exclusive to HOTEL as set forth in Paragraph 20 and at no time while on the premises can the ARTIST perform a magic trick or illusion which involves the use of COCKROACHES.

3. ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULING: If Paragraph 24, provides that the parties are to agree on scheduling for an engagement or if HOTEL elects to reschedule a missed show under Paragraph 24, HOTEL and PRODUCER agree to negotiate in good faith to (a) schedule the engagement within any period set forth in Paragraph 24, or (b) reschedule the missed show within a six-month period measured from the later of (i) the first missed show, (ii) the final date of engagement stated in Paragraph 24, or (iii) the last possible engagement date stated in Paragraph 24, if all engagements are not scheduled by the date the last show is missed.



During a recent engagement at Caesar's Palace in Lake Tahoe, Penn & Teller had a very special clause in their contract.

**BY BUDDHA, THIS DUCK IS IMMORTAL!** by Penn

We're back to work and we're writing machines. We've been writing like crazy and that's why you haven't seen us much. All we've really done in public is a weekend in Tahoe - yes, we're in showbiz. During that gig I had a phoney heart attack (it was just a high fever from the flu but the paramedics got all freaked-out and I got to pull a "the-show-must-go-on-thang and do the show with EKG pads on me - way cool) but it wasn't a heart attack and I'm fine.

The only other appearance was the sawing on Letterman. It was a lot of work and a real test of Robbie, our new prop guy. You may have seen the bit. The bit was me sawing the place in a box where Teller is hidden for the bogus sawing and kill him (standard plot). I had to use a circular saw. One rehearsal day, on the train out to the shop, Robbie says to me something like this, "I'm going to tell you this over and over again. It's a 'loaded gun speech'. I have created a very dangerous thing. It's a circular saw with all the safety features taken off. It has no blade guard. It has no guide. It's just a powerful whirling sharp blade on a handle. When you've finished 'cutting through' Teller, let go of the trigger, wait until the sound stops, look at he blade and make sure it's stopped turning and place it down carefully. If the blade is still turning at all when you put it down, it will take off across the floor, across your foot and up your leg cutting deeply everything in it's path." We got into the shop and he repeated the speech for Teller. The first time we used the "dangerous thing" he gave

the speech again, it mustn't be put down with the blade turning the slightest bit. It's a "dangerous thing". We used it carefully and kept it unplugged when we weren't actually rehearsing. We video taped the rehearsals so this is all on video. Every run thought I would say, "I'm plugging in the 'dangerous thing' now", to remind me of the danger. We did several run throughs. We were having a lot of fun and went to dinner. When we got back we discussed the problems with the bit. One of the problems was that the guts weren't flying around enough. They just plopped and sat. I had a solution. I looked Robbie and Teller in the eyes and said, "This time, after I cut through, I'll act like I'm a little crazy and I'll go at the floor. I'll take the saw and start cutting the guts on the floor. They'll fly around and maybe it'll look good". Robbie said, "Okay". Teller thought it was a good idea. I plugged in the 'dangerous thing'. I did the bit up until the end. I hit the guts on the floor. The 'dangerous thing' toughed the floor and took off like a killer wheel from hell. It sliced off a quarter inch of the thick rubber soul of

my work boot. It's climbed up the leather and slit MOST of the way through the boot. I froze. It hurt because it had hit my foot. The leather was clearly cut. There was fake blood all over for the sake of art. I was sure I was cut and in shock. I froze for a long time. Robbie stuck his finger in the cut and said it hadn't cut my skin. I said it had. Robbie sat me down. Mr. Goodtime took the train out of town. I was really shook. If I had been wearing my groovy little surf shoes you'd be calling me "Stumpy". I had to walk around in the rain to calm down. I thought the bit was too dangerous and asked that the guard be put back on. Teller and Robbie said it was okay the way it was. Teller said that the blade guard was "to protect the blade from the world, not to protect the world from the blade". Teller said if we put on a blade with smaller teeth I would have more control. Robbie said there was no guarantee that the blade guard would snap back, it could get stuck. At the time I didn't realize they were lying to me. They won, no safety features were added. On the train back Robbie said to me, "It doesn't matter what level of safety you operate at as

long as it's consistent, so you know what you're dealing with." I think they may be both out of their minds.

"Where are those three new men?"  
"Are you three guys sure you know what you're doing?"

I'm so glad I didn't cut my foot off. It was the first Teller and Penn box trick and on the air everything worked. Right before we went on, the pig blood and guts was starting to overflow and Robbie asked for a straw so he could suck it up. (Robbie's the right man for the job.) The man playing Rob Pike from Bell Labs was Rob Pike from Bell Labs and he did a fine job. Teller's feet were played by a MovieNight kid named Willow. He's a little over 5 feet tall and was standing on his head in foam rubber for the whole bit. He had the hard part. I'm so glad I didn't cut my foot off.

We'll be touring with a lot of new material in the fall and we're doing a prime time special for NBC. Right now it's scheduled for Radio City but it may move to the Apollo (we went to the Apollo, you should have seen us go go go). It'll be aired some Saturday at 10:00 PM near the end of October. We're shooting it the end of August. We're driving an 18 wheel truck over Teller and producing over 100 thousand bees. We did the first bee test and got in a tiny room with the venomous insects flying all over us. Bees really stink. I didn't say "sting". In a confined space they stink! We suffer for our art. It's going to be great.

The catch phrase for another of the new bits is: "By Buddha, this duck is immortal!" In context it's even better.



## THE STORY OF B by Teller

In Irvington, NY near the train station we have a shop. It's just a room, partitioned off from a big warehouse. In this room is a smaller room made of vinyl, plexiglas, and calking. This is the bee-room.

You see, we plan to produce a multitude of honey bees (say 500,000) on the TV special we're doing this fall, and we need a place to experiment, to figure out where to hide the bugs and how to persuade them to make a dramatic entrance. We want the audience to cringe in it's collective seat while we stand there matter-of-factly with the venomous insects all over our faces.

That's the rub, you see. We don't want to wear gloves and beekeeper hat/veil. We want then to crawl on our flesh for your enjoyment. At the same, time of course, we don't want to get ourselves stung to death.

We learned from Houdini. Whenever he wanted to do something life-and-death-deadly-looking, he took great care not to get hurt. This involved a lot of experimentation and preparation. He was not just a nut who had people nail him in coffins and throw them off bridges. He was a nut who came out alive.

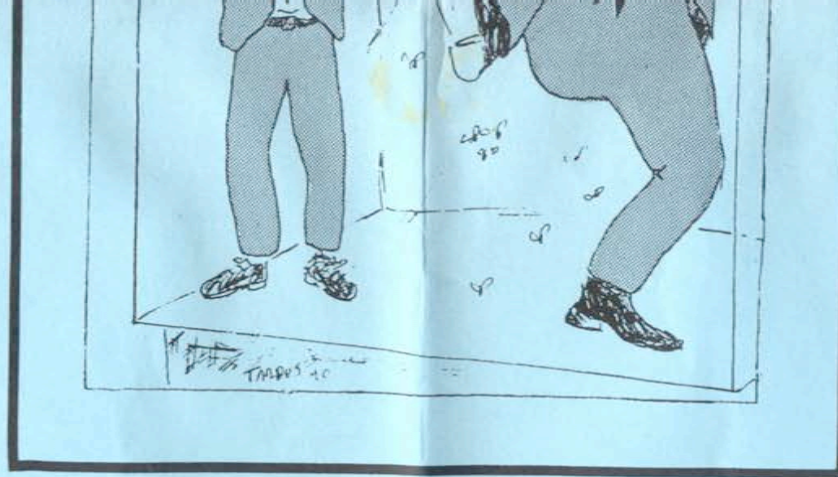
So the first thing Penn, Robbie (our new Research & Development man) and I did was go to a doctor specializing in allergies. He gave us each thirty little shots of the venom of bees, wasp, hornets and yellow jackets in varying strengths. It made six neat lines of five needle-pricks, three on

each forearm. It was important to be sure none of us had an allergic reaction to insect venom. If you're allergic, you can die from a bee sting.

Then we hired a bug-expert, Dave Brody, the same entymologist who taught us how to handle roaches and leaches, and who rented us a snake to cut in half (see book "Cruel Tricks..." p. 130-151) on "Saturday Night Live", and the rats to put over my head on "Comic Relief '89". He ordered 40,000 bees. They came from the apiary in two wooden-and-screened boxes via US mail.

For our first experiments (May 8th) we wore beekeeper uniforms with hat, netting veil, jumpsuit and gloves. We went into the bee-room and closed the door. Dave pried the lid off the box, and the bees flew out and buzzed around the lights (as you have seen moths do). That was a big relief. We were afraid that confined bees would just sit there and the trick would look lame.

Bees stink. When they are confined in their boxes, bee-etiquette does not permit them to defaecate. They have to



wait till they're flying. We let them fly, and we could see honey-colored bee turds (like tiny globs of sweet-smelling snot) all over ourselves, the bee-room and our new HI-8 camera (with which we were recording the proceedings). It was sickening and scary, what with the insects all over our bee-suits and buzzing past our ears and smelling like toilet deodorant.

But we learned something. The bees did not try to sting us unless we accidentally started to squish one. And, not really being in a proper hive, they did not feel attacked and defensive. They were just confused.

Afterwards, we noticed that a lot of them escaped as we went in and out of the bee-room. We were standing outside our shop in bee suits when the owner of the warehouse came by, attracted by the cloud of buzzing bugs at our door.

"Bees?"

"Yes. It's a trick."

"Oh. A trick. I see."

He smiled and nodded understandingly and went away. I think he figured it

had to be some kind of phoney bees. We decided to rehearse next time after business hours.

On May 21st we tried it again. Penn was eager to see what would happen if we just sprayed ourselves with bug-repellent and left off the veil and gloves. We let Dave Brody go in first.

He sprayed stinky "Cutter" repellent on his right hand (he's left-handed) and went in with the hand exposed. Bees would come and sit briefly on his hand, then fly away. No problem. Then we sprayed repellent on our faces and hair. Still no problem.

Now I don't mean we were macho guys who never flinched. Country-Boy Jillette got used to it quickly ("When one lands on your hand and you don't jeck away, it's exhilarating!") but city-slicker Teller kept yelping, "Scared. Scared. That's all. Not stung." The only person who got stung was Dave, the bug-expert. He was trying to see whether he could hold a bee in his hands tightly pressed together and the bee didn't like it and stung him on the palm of his hand.

I caught a bee and put him in a thumb-tip (non-magicians: this is a sort of flesh-colored thimble) and stuck my thumb in, leaving him just enough room to buzz around in there. Then I let him fly out dramatically. Expect to see that on the show.

Afterwards we looked at the videotapes. When I saw the bees sitting in Penn's hair, on his ear-lobe, and on my cheeks and eyebrows, I cringed.

So I think we're on the right track.