



### **Steve Dacri - R.I.P – Aloha good friend.**

This article appeared a while back on the Magic Web Channel. I spent many great times with Steve in Vegas. Many of the articles in this section appeared in Vegas Inside Tips. Sadly, Steve has passed. He was a Merlin Award recipient.

*-Many years ago, in a piece I wrote for M-U-M, I described my good friend Tony Brook who is also our Director of International Operations as "magic's hidden treasure". My description was very apt. Since then, he has supplied us at MWC with many interesting articles. His latest is a conversation with...me!-* **Steve Dacri, Editor VegasInsideTips.com  
CEO & President Magic Web Channel**

**A Sit-Down with Steve  
By Anthony Darkstone Brook  
SAM International Deputy  
Director of International Operations – Magic Web Channel**

It has been a while since Steve Dacri, our Esteemed CEO, and I sat down for a good long chinwag. We grab a few conversations with each other via SKYPE but our schedules are such that we have not had time for a good exchange of what has been happening. Recently, we did actually chew the fat and as always, Steve's fast paced adventures and happenings continue to amaze and delight. Those who have been following his weekly ( ahem! I mean when he has a moment ) columns will know that he has been flying across the country entertaining various folk but recently, his travels were linked to happenings with immediate family. He was recently in Florida at Brent's wedding. With his usual style and flair he did the Emceeing and DJing ....and , oh yes ! some Magic as well. He is after all the fastest hands in Magic !!!!

I have never met Brent but heard a lot about him from his lovely Mom, Jan who unless you have been living on The Red Planet you all will know is Steve's fabulous wife. Stayed tuned, as we have been promised full highlights and photos of that event.

Steve, especially those who know him, is a Super guy! Well, a close cousin of Clark Kent. Why? Cause he is everywhere and doing so many things all at once ...or at least it seems that way. I am convinced he has his own telephone booth !!! He packs it flat and plays it big!!!!

Seriously, he is just a dynamo. He runs and prepares The Magic Web Channel, Vegas Inside Tips, performs, rehearses, involves himself in good causes, mixes Martinis and a ton of other stuff that he manages to get into a 24-hour day.

We got chatting the other day and I suggested to him that he and I sit down and take 5 to chat and share some of his more interesting recent experiences.



**ADB:** Wow! This is amazing we actually managed to sit down to chat for a while. June has been a extra busy month for you with family happenings and the event at Treasure Island. Loved your line about geckos in Florida trying to sell you car insurance!!!! Fill us in on all the recent Florida happenings and especially your Emceeing and DJing.

**SD:** Brent getting married, hard to believe it actually happened, but it must have because he and new wife Liz are now in San Francisco on the first leg of their honeymoon. I was in San Francisco with Brent about 23 years ago, he was about 4 and I was teaching him to flip the bird and say "don't f@xx with me" to people, and now he's with his new wife in the same town, still flipping people the bird, I'm sure. When he and Liz were planning the wedding weekend, they called me on Skype and asked if I would emcee the reception and be the DJ. Oh, and could you perform a small show at the rehearsal dinner? I couldn't say no, and was more than happy to do it.

The rehearsal dinner was for about 65 people, in a restaurant that closed for them, and the sight lines were really great, making it an easy task of doing a few stand-up pieces and get a few laughs. I chose six card repeat, taught to me by the creator, Tommy Tucker when I was 16 or 17 years old, as it is such a stunner, full of laughs and always grabs a strong applause and sets the tone for whatever else I am doing. I use it to open my Vegas show and it always does the trick, no pun intended.

Then it was the first trick I ever showed to Brent when he was a little tike, a cut and restored rope. As Jan said later, "they acted like they were seeing a real miracle." We magicians tend to forget the solid impact of the Classics, and where many of my fellow magi would never consider the C&R rope a strong piece, they are missing out on one of the most powerful visual bits of magic, and with the laughs I get from it, it leaves a lasting impact.

Always working in 3's, my third and final piece was what Dai Vernon used to say to me, "your excellent display of how to combine solid sleight of hand with an impossible premise and get big laughs all at the same time." He loved my signed card to pants routine, but warned me against ever doing it at the Magic Castle ever again (I took that advice, it may be a great piece, but obviously a bit low brow and borderline tasteless. Probably why I love it and why audiences howl, and I do mean howl.

I've had many friends witness this trick over and over again, and they still remark, "we never see you put the card into your pants after all these years." It's remarkable when you think about it.

Good magic, a funny premise, impossible to detect sleight of hand, how can you go wrong? If I think there might be someone (like small children) in the crowd, then I pull the card from my mouth, which is just as strong, some might say ever stronger, as the load is done right in front of their faces and the card is folded as it comes out. Anyway, back to the rehearsal dinner show, it ran 10 minutes, filled with laughs and wonder, ending with a standing ovation, and isn't that what its all about?

**ADB.** Just wonderful. And incidentally, I am delighted that you shared your recollections with Mr. Vernon. Sadly, nowadays there are not too many magicians , and I use the term loosely, who would never take time to understand and learn the art of "the impossible premise" as so aptly put by Mr. Vernon. I can personally vouch for and loudly applaud your flawless execution of that excellent magical ingredient. I bet the folks at Brent's wedding were totally amazed. Well Steve, prior to that, a major highlight was your gig at The Magic Castle. I have seen you, watched with awe each night as you played a drum solo, and then proceeded to blow us away with a kind of card sword routine but you were so original and used a drum stick instead of a sword! Blew us away totally! That was some truly Extreme Close-Up Magic. Man, I have told that story a few times and got a nice round of free drinks each time ...Thanks to you!!! Now, I hear tell you started playing the uke and doing a card effect in a grass skirt? Nah! Now's there's an image to conjure with!!!! Seriously, share with us your time recently at the Castle and how the uke featured in your performance.

**SD:** Yeah the drum bit is always a strong finish, and I came up with it selfishly due to my desire to play the drums and be forced to practice. People don't know I am a real accomplished drummer, been playing since I was 12, just 4 years less than my magic. So when I sit down and start playing, they are thrown off the path, and suddenly when I finish and stab the 2 cards that sly from the drums, it's a total surprise.

I did the same thing with the ukulele trick. I never played the uke, or any string instrument before, but always wanted to. It reminds us of Hawaii, and it's the only instrument on the planet that, when you bring it out, the audience smiles. So I devised a trick with the uke, basically a reworked card effect. I had small plastic tiles made, with the names of songs on them, 12 songs. I dump them onto the table from a wine glass, my assistant at the table examines them and drops them back into the glass. I shake the glass a bit and offer someone in the front row to remove one, hold it in their hand without looking at it. I bring out the uke (cue audience smiles) and state that I will try and get the vibrations from the tile in their hand, and play their selected song. With that I begin a song, and when I finish, the audience has identified the song. The spectator opens her hand and it's the song I just played. Very cool.

As soon as I was booked for the Magic Castle, I went out a bought a genuine uke from a native of Hawaii who now lives here in Vegas, took one lesson and then set out on my own learning to play. I naturally will force a song title, and I had 3 possible songs that I could have selected, in case there were repeaters during the week, and there were many. So I just rotated the forced song. That meant I had a 4 month window to learn to play the uke. I discovered I enjoyed the process, the challenge of learning a new skill. After a month, I was not pleased with my progress, fully expecting to be able to play well already. I stepped up my practice to twice a day sessions, each no longer than 15 minutes, as the fingers begin to hurt after a while.

Exactly one month before the Castle gig, I was ready. That was my goal. I then focused each practice session on the 3 songs I needed to know, and by the time the engagement rolled around, I was sounding like a pro, even if I could only play 3 songs. I also wrote the words to a song I had been playing, so after the first song is played and discovered as correct, I played this second song, which goes like this (to the tune of "Love Me Tender")

*I entertain you with card tricks,  
and I even sing.  
I work with dice coins and sponge balls,  
And a borrowed ring.  
My job is to fool you,  
Make you very ill.  
Your job is to catch me at it,  
But you never will.*

This really went down well, and now I'm at work on the rest of the songs on the tiles. Once I know them all, I won't have to force the song, I'll just have to devise a way of knowing which one is chosen.

**ADB:** I can't wait to see that. This is exactly what I define as Entertaining Magic! An effect that is not only highly original but also one which involves the entire audience. As always, your capacity for creativity is just amazing. Personally, I wanna see a show where you do both the "card-stab" with a drum stick followed by the uke and a finish with 40,000 bunnies He! He!. Today is June 28 and last night you were performing at Treasure Island in aid of The Lupus Foundation. For those of us who don't know the full details of this please share with us all the happenings of last night and indeed how it all came about and your personal involvement.

**SD:** The show was one of those eleemosynary events we all love and hate. I get asked to do a lot of benefits and get involved in causes and organizations all the time, as many entertainers do. I evaluate each one based on the merits of the organization and the nature of their mission statements. Not interested in big bloated charities that spend almost all of their contributions on office expenses and executive salaries.

When the founder of Colors of Lupus attended one of my shows at the Four Seasons last month, she asked me if I would be interested in working on their first annual fund raising event. I checked the organization out and felt that their passion and devotion to raising awareness for the disease and finding a cure through focused research, I signed on. My friend Grant Griffin was the producer, and he called upon some of his pals to join in; I was the emcee. In a show like this, with a silent auction prior and a wonderful dinner and awards ceremony preceding the show, there is a lot that can go wrong, and the show must be fast paced and solid in every way. Then, if the rest of the night is a disaster, the crowd forgets all about it by the time the show ends, and the night is remembered as a success.

Just before getting there, the Producer called and said the closing act, a contortionist, had hurt his back and might not be able to perform. I thought it was a bad joke, but it was true, and he asked if I could do another 10 minutes. No problem. I grabbed some extra props and threw them into the prop trunk. When I got there, 3 hours before showtime, pandemonium reigned, which usually happens when nobody seems to be in charge. As I dutifully tried to ignore it all, I quietly staked out my corner of the backstage and set up my props, went through the line-up of the show with the band, sound checked my microphone and moved into my dressing room.

When the producer showed up less than 2 hours before showtime, he brought the news that 2 other acts were not showing up, or they might be showing up, he just wasn't sure, they hadn't called him in days. He went looking for the bar and the remaining 2 acts and myself were standing in front of the stage with the band looking on, completely clueless as all of the show blocking, lighting and rehearsal time had been spent on a multi-act variety show. Now half of those acts were missing, and I made the split second decision to take control of this train wreck in progress.

Initially, the show was a mix of magic and comedy and music, with some wonderful variety acts sprinkled amongst the singers. With all of the variety acts gone, all that remained were 3 singers, with competing egos, and me. I worked it so I was the variety break between these singers, doing a spot at the top of the show and in between each act, so it wouldn't seem like an episode of American Idol. It worked, and the band was happy with the flow, and they got to play for a while as the folks ate their dinner, then take a break during the terminally long awards portion, and then take the stage fresh and eager for a shortened version of the show we had originally expected.

Actually, if all the acts had shown up, as I had feared, the night would still be going on now. I expressed my concerns at a production meeting prior, saying we had way too much show here, especially since the awards and speeches part usually have a history of running long. As it turned out, over an hour long.

The show, set to begin at 7 pm, kicked off a little before 9. I could see the crowd was anxious, and my first opening slot was painful at first, as there was so much noise in the room and they

had just sat through a boring parade of speeches and awards. It was like having the worlds worst opening act. I had to pull them all back into the "show mode". My opening monologue drew a sprinkle of laughs (and this was the A-material) so I went right into my briefcase and pulled out the bowling ball, and dropped it onto the stage floor. The loud thud had the desired effect. Silence. Then stunned applause. I repeated it. More applause and you could hear a pin drop. Houston we have lift-off.

When I told my story while performing six card repeat, they laughed at every beat. When it was over, they were ready to nominate me for president. I coasted through a salt vanish and long pour and a few jokes that hit the bulls-eye. I brought out the first singer, and walked off feeling really fine. But not for long. The band played the opening bit, and the Mexican Folk Dance Troupe didn't appear. They had to stop and start two more times before the colorful dancers appeared, performing in front of the stage on the dance floor area, which was great if the audience could've seen them. They never showed up for a rehearsal, which meant the lighting crew had no idea there would be action anywhere other than on the stage, so the dancers did their thing in the dark.

By the time I came back, the place was a noisy mess once again. I decided to ignore my planned tricks during this break, and instead intro'd the first singer. The band played him on, and he wasn't there. They looked over to me and whispered "where is he?". I just smiled and began to curse the day I agreed to do this show. Suddenly a figure in the back of the hall burst through the doors and ran to the stage. He announced he was in the rest room, and I thought, "how charming and professional". He did his two songs, then decided he would add a third, even though the band had no clue what he was doing, so they meekly tried to get it together and he went on to sing to his heart's content.

When I came back, it took a monstrous effort to once again get the crowd back. I expertly produced 8 glittery balls to mostly silence and indifference, and I wished I was home in front of the TV. I threw one up in the air and balanced it on my nose, a gag that always gets a huge laugh. Except tonight. With that silence, I decided to cut it short and bring out the next voice. She took the stage and crooned, the crowd enjoyed her last song, but they were still talking and moving around during the first one.

This time when I hit the stage, it was under much better conditions. I figured they were beginning to fall asleep after the big meal. My next bits went over surprisingly well (a card effect, rope effect, Fielding West dove production and a bow.

The next singer attempted to break glasses in the room with his booming baritone and I returned for a card stab (the double) and a farewell joke. Went down well, especially when I said good night.

The after show gathering with the organization and the supporters was extremely positive, lots of congratulatory remarks and as I expected the show saved the night, effectively wiping away the memory of the fiasco that surrounded it. I have already been hired for the next event, and have a meeting next week with another Strip casino executive who said he'd like to see me work for him. And I got paid, not full fee, which is customary for a charity event, but a fair wage for the work involved. I call it aggravation pay.

**ADB:** The merry Life of showbiz. Sooner or later it happens to some of us! Maybe even a few times!!! Yikes!!! Well, that's showbiz. As our dear pal Dan Garret once told me, "That's showbiz. It shouldn't be, but sadly, on occasions, it is! " Somehow we get thrown ( well almost literally ) into a mess that is unprofessional and although we cringe, we step up to the plate and make the save!! Ok that was one baaaaaaad night but those who know you well will not be in the least surprised that you made the save!

Well, Steve to change the topic and I'm sorry to end on a sad note but death like taxes is inevitable . I happen to know that over the years you knew all the showbiz greats from the world of TV, Movies, Music , etc . Like you and I, several thousand, well likely millions, had a huge crush on Farah Fawcett, so sad she had to endure so much prior to her demise. What are your thoughts?

**SD:** She was a brave woman, a remarkable talent and she was loved by so many. It was weird, so many people seemed to depart this earth at the same time. I had just experienced the death of Ed McMahon, whom I had worked with both on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson, and on TV Bloopers & Practical Jokes. And we were both from Massachusetts, we shared a bond in that respect as well. Local newspaper had just called and interviewed me about Ed, and a Boston radio show taped an interview as well. The next day, or was it the same day? Farrah was gone. I met her once, when she was at the height of her fame, the poster had been out, I had one in my office, and we sold them in our magic shop. I was doing a magic school, and we held the lessons in a community meeting room located across from my downtown magic shop in the newly opened shopping mall. I was there early in the day to set the room up, and when I arrived, there were security guards everywhere. I asked what was going on, and they said "Farah is coming here, any minute now."

I think she was there as part of a radio promotion, and the winners were going to meet her in the center of the mall on the stage. They needed to put her someplace away from the stage and the crowds until she was about to be introduced, so they decided they would use the very same community room I was using for the magic lessons that evening. Talk about being in the right place at the right time. Soon, a man walked in with a police officer and looked around. I recognized him, it was Ron Samuels, the manager of Farah. I introduced myself and explained I was setting up for the magic lessons tonight, and he nodded. "Great, can you make me disappear?". (I estimate at least a million people have asked me that same question over the years!)

He walked back out and within a few minutes the door swung open and in walked Charlie's Angel herself, looking stunning and obviously shy. I walked over to her and introduced myself, told her I was a huge fan and I probably blabbered a whole lot of nonsense as I stood there staring at her, her hair was outrageous, not all curls as in the posters, but straight, slinky blond, and her face had just the right amount of make-up. Probably one of the most beautiful women I had ever met, even more beautiful than she appeared on television. In person, she was petite, had the perfect body and that smile of hers lit up the entire room. She was friendly, and looking at all the magic props that were scattered about, she was curious about everything. She asked me to show her a magic trick. I couldn't believe it. Here I was sitting in a closed room with Farah sitting next to me, and she laughed and screamed as I performed magic for her, in her hands, and on the table in front of her. This went on for about 20 minutes, then a man came in to announce that it was time for her to go onstage. She thanked me, gave me a hug (I was officially in heaven at that point) and off she went.

I followed her out and watched as the crowd went crazy when she appeared. She took to the stage and smiled, posed for pictures, said a few words and then it was over. Just like that. I never did get to speak to her again, she was mobbed by people and surrounded by police. But I will never forget that special time we shared together in that community room.

**ADB:** Hugged by Farah Fawcett! I am insanely jealous of you, you lucky dog! Too bad she's gone but better that than her suffering. Of course, we also must mention Michael Jackson. Here was someone who took Entertainment to the nth degree. His untimely and tragic passing has affected millions world-wide. Please share your thoughts.

**SD:** No question, another great loss, and a shock, as nobody seemed to know he was in such frail health, much like Elvis was when he also died from an accidental overdose of drugs. I met Michael back in 1979 or 1980, with Doug Henning, at the warehouse of my friend, illusion builder Johnny Gaughan. I was consulting with Johnny on magic illusions for the upcoming tour by the Jacksons, which was Michael and his brothers. He ran in for a measurement on a prop that was being built, so we got the chance to talk to him briefly and I showed him my Martians routine, which he loved. I gave him one of the sponge balls, and I am told he kept it along with his vast collection of magic tricks he had. It is sad to see him go at such a very early age, and at a time when he was planning on a very ambitious tour after so many years away from the stage.

**ADB:** Steve, as always, it has been a blast. However, I cannot finish with out asking you what is in store over the next few months. I know you are working on some "top secret" projects and for contractual reasons cannot say too much but give us a general idea what, if the Gods of Showbusiness will it, we can look forward to in the near future.

**SD:** I am very excited about several projects, and you are right, some of them I cannot talk about yet, but there are some that are very near and dear to my heart that I can discuss somewhat. First, I am planning on bringing my close-up magic show to another casino here in Vegas and also on the road to a number of cities. I am going to combine those stops with a few lectures and workshops for magicians at the same time. I will be appearing at the Florida State Magic Convention, a big regional convention that has been asking me for years to attend, but the dates never seemed to work out. But we finally nailed down the dates (November 2010) and I am very happy to be a part of this convention. As you know, I rarely perform at magic conventions, by design. But that one and one other will happen in 2010, can't say which other one yet, as contracts are not signed yet. You will hear about it in due time, you can be sure. I am also close to locking up a deal for one of my wedding shows to play in Vegas for an extended run. I will perform magic within the show and direct it for the first year, then I will replace myself, assuming the show last that long. I wrote 3 of these interactive comedy shows, and it is thrilling to be finally putting one of them in Vegas. I book them around the country on a limited basis, have been doing that for almost 15 years, but this will be the first time they will be in residence in a city since they originally opened in Boston back in the 90's.

I also have 2 television show projects in discussion right now. I shall be calling on you to show up in Vegas again as a Consultant. One is a reality show, that's really all I can publicly say at this time, and the other is a comedy show that I am planning to film and submit to film festivals before selling it to a distributor for TV and movie exhibition. Many other projects in the works, but lets save the rest for another time. You know you love my Cranberry Martinis!!! Always good to talk with you, Tony. Cheers & Mahalo.

**TB:** Thanks Steve. Aloha. Cue Uke!!! Bring on the Hula girls and break open a few Coconuts!!