

Anthony Darkstone Brook In Conversation With George Saterial

Many magicians including Jay Marshall, Gary Hughes, Lance Burton and Channing Pollock have praised George's act very highly. George Saterial is an American Magician who has the unique distinction of being magic's only winner of a double gold in 1999. He is magic's only Two-Time Gold Medal winner. This is the first time in the history of magic that this has happened. He won the gold medal and the People's Choice Award at the 1999 SAM convention. He also won the gold medal and First Place Stage contest Award at the IBM convention in 1999. At FISM 2000 in Lisbon, he won joint third place for General Magic. He has had many articles written about him and he has appeared on the cover of many leading magic magazines.

Articles about him have appeared in many papers and in Genii, Magic, M-U-M, The Society of American Magicians monthly magazine and The Linking Ring, The International Brotherhood of Magicians monthly magazine. He has had a lot of Press coverage in the USA and other countries and has appeared on Television several times. George's act is very very highly praised by many of the leading names in Magic. Hardly surprising, because George's act flows smoothly and is highly original. He presents it superbly and confidently.

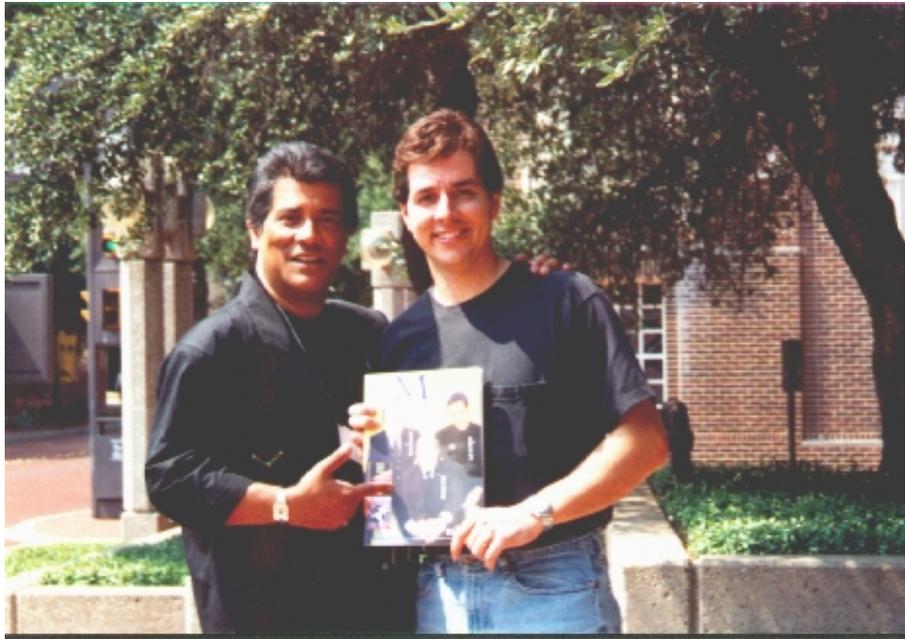
In other words, what Eugene Burger describes as "creating special experiences". George's act is all that and more. Richard Kaufman, the Editor of Genii, wrote an extensive article about George in which he described him as 'a grand artist, someone who makes you sit up in your chair and causes your eyes to widen'. John Moehring of 'Magic' also wrote a major article on George in the September 1999 issue. Lionel Ritchie, Robert Duval, Tony Randall and a whole host of top Hollywood and musical stars have praised George's magic.

George is an experienced performer and has been involved in magic for almost 30 years. He got interested in magic when he was 7 years old and at 12 years old he did a birthday party for a neighbor and got paid the princely sum of \$5 Dollars. Today, some 25 years later, his fees are a little higher. George has done and still does all kinds of magic, close-up, illusions, cabaret etc. A full time professional since 1986 he has performed at The Magic Castle, on cruise ships, Television and at some of the most prestigious venues of the world. I heard about George from many Magician friends in the USA. They referred to him as a magic sensation and described him as "the Guy with the Grandfather Clock" a description that George quite enjoys.

I had the pleasure of first meeting George on Monday morning at FISM 2000 where I was part of the competition backstage team. Later that morning we went for a cup of coffee and chatted like old friends. We chatted on and off during FISM and on the 7th July, (which happened to be my 53rd birthday) George and his wife Holly, with Torkova, Charles Brook, Dan & Carol Garrett, Angelo Carbone and Dave & Jann Goodsell joined me for my birthday lunch. We had a wonderful afternoon. George and I became friends and he invited me to visit him and Holly in Boston where they live. I was especially pleased to see George up on stage to collect a FISM award.

Apart from being a fine magician, George is a very down-to-earth person without any false airs and graces. Unlike many superstars he is very humble and possesses a very genuine

charm. He is soft spoken and courteous man and although he confesses to be a shy person he is very open in conversation and is always willing to share his experiences and vast knowledge of magic. Even though it is a year later he still is quite amazed at being magic's only Two-Time Gold Medal winner. Since FISM we have kept in touch and before he flew to Japan to appear at The SAM Convention there in August 2000, I spoke to him about his life and his thoughts on magic. ...



ADB: Basically, you are a self-confessed shy person. So how do you make the transformation to the character on stage?

GS: The transformation starts while I set up the act. There are so many little details (filing the doves claws, making the match pulls, etc.) to concentrate on, I become very focused on what I'm doing. The "outside world" starts to fade. You get tunnel vision. I guess it's like a basketball player making a free throw. He just focuses on the basket and not the crowd.

Visualization is also very important. Prior to the show, I would find a quiet place, put on a pair of head-phones, listen to my music, and mentally "perform" the act. This technique is also very relaxing. Once my mind is warmed up, I have to warm up physically. Usually by performing some stretching exercises and jumping jacks.

The transformation is completed while I'll apply my stage makeup, and get into costume. It's like putting on a second skin. As the saying goes... "if you dress the part, you become the part."

ADB: I know you are an experienced performer but it has taken you a few years before you developed the 'Guy with the Grandfather Clock' act. Can you share your experiences and frustrations as to how it came about?

GS: When I first starting working with doves, I used the typical bird cage. I never liked it. I always felt that as soon as the curtain opened, the audience knew what I was about to do. So I got rid of the cage and attached a perch to my magic table. Most of the time the doves would stay, but ever now and then, one or two would fly off. Several magicians suggested not to feed the birds and then place seed on their perch so they would stay. I don't "starve" train my doves. I never have. Personally, I don't believe in this training technique. I don't believe it's healthy for the birds. In addition, I never liked the "magicians" table. I wanted something to create a theatrical setting. An atmosphere. Plus, something unique that I could be identified with. As you said, "the guy with the grandfather clock..." I searched around for many months, playing around with a lot of different ideas. Nothing satisfied me. One day I

walked into a furniture store, and saw the grandfather clocks. Something clicked. I just stared at them. I could visualize it on stage.

But a clock is a "living" object. How could it fit in with my act and make sense. I dismissed it as a bad idea. I kept searching. Over the next few months, I couldn't find anything else that influenced me. I kept thinking about the clocks. Finally, I decided to build one out of cardboard to play around with. Once I had something physical, the ideas started to flow. Even after I built my working model, it was still quite awhile before I performed with it. I had many unsolved problems both mechanically and theatrically that I could not answer. I felt it wasn't ready. I kept procrastinating. Finally, I got to a point where I had to just jump in, ready or not. The only way to learn to swim is to get wet.

By performing and getting audience reactions, the act progressed dramatically. It has gone into directions that I never could have imagined by just daydreaming in my workshop. Over the years, I have rebuilt the clock several times over, incorporating new ideas and improvements. The only original parts left are the face frame and base.

ADB: How do you feel about being Magic's only two time Gold Medal winner? 1999 was a great year for you. Tell us a little about how the SAM and IBM Gold Medals came about?

GS: When I think about last summer, it's still very strange and surreal. I'm still not used to all the attention. I feel as though it's all a dream. I decided to enter the contests as an incentive to refine and polish my act. Over the last several years, the act was placed on the back burner, and I was focusing on other projects. I became stagnant. My true passion however was still with my clock act. I had many ideas I wanted to work on, plus I wanted the act to get recognition. . Contests are a great way to give yourself a deadline. All I was really after was to showcase the act, and hopefully place well in the competitions. I never thought that I would actually be honored with one gold medal, let alone two!

ADB:. You've always publicly stated that your wife Holly has been a great supportive influence in your career. Tell me how you met and how Holly got into magic because of you?

GS: I met Holly through my college roommate, Ken. He had an interest in magic and I'd shown him how to do a couple of simple tricks with cards, coins or ropes. He'd practice all week and then show his family when he went home on the weekends. When he came back to school, he'd always complain that his cousin would ruin the trick on him. Turns out his cousin was Holly!

She hated magic! (laugh) . A short time after, I was putting together a new brochure, and I needed a couple of girls for the photos. Ken suggested his "cute" cousin Holly, and she worked out great. Later, I needed an assistant for a variety show Ken and I produced, and once again Holly worked out great. To thank her for her help, I took her out for dinner, and the rest as they say is history.

When I was struggling with the decision of becoming a full-time magician, she was very supportive and believed in me. A lot of women may have said to stop dreaming and get a real job. She backed up my dreams and supported me all the way. 100%.

ADB: You credit many leading magicians as being helpful to you on the road to stardom. You often speak about the Portuguese magician James Rainho , who now lives in the USA, as being an influence. Can you share some of this ?

GS. Jimmy has always been a good friend. He was probably the first professional magician I knew. In addition to performing, Jim created and sold magic effects. Some how, my father heard of him, and we went to his home. The special thing about Jim was that he didn't just sell the tricks. He gave me some pointers, and made sure I knew how to use the prop. If I had some problem, he was always willing to help. It wasn't a formal teacher/student relationship. A few years later, the local IBM ring in Boston sponsored a youth magic contest, which I entered, and won first place. Jimmy was there, and I think it was the first time he saw me perform. He took notes during my act. After the show, he took the

time to sit with me and discuss everything. I never asked him to do it, he just volunteered. He's very generous that way. I feel very fortunate, that many of the local magicians took an interest in me when I was growing up. Maybe they saw something in me, or maybe it was just my enthusiasm. They've been just great.

ADB: . Your most recent major performance was at FISM 2000 in Portugal. Now that it is all over and you walked away with an award, what are your recollections?

GS: . Probably what I'll always remember, and what meant the most to me, was how many people (yourself and Charles included) were rooting for me. It was an honor and privilege to be selected by the Society of American Magicians to represent my country. In the months prior to the competition, I received many well wishes. After I finished my set in the competition, many of the Americans at FISM congratulated me on my performance, and said that they were proud of me. Knowing that all those people cared about me, and appreciated what I did, really made it all worth while. Receiving the actual award was just the icing on the cake. ..

ADB: . You are about to leave on a tour of Japan in August 2000. Before you leave can you offer some suggestions to young magic performers?

GS: Follow your dreams, and they will become reality. Learn all you can about theatre and performance. There's more to magic than just a bunch of tricks. Work hard, and always try your best. And above everything else, stay grounded. To me the sign of a true professional is one who not only knows his craft, but more importantly one who respects others.

NB: *Although this article was written a decade ago , it contains some very useful pointers that have stood the test of time.*

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