



## **Anthony Darkstone Brook In Conversation With Jay Scott Berry**

I met Jay several years ago in Europe at a Convention. I had heard of him and his FISM ranking but had never seen him perform. I stood at the back of a large crowd that was gathered at his Dealer's table and watched intently. He intrigued me so much that I decided not to go to a lecture I had planned on attending but stayed there for another 50 minutes to watch him perform what I thought was the closest thing to real Magic I had ever seen. I later found out that Mark Wilson had actually said those words in public about Jay.

Incidentally, back in 2000 in Dallas, Texas, I was having lunch with Scott Wells, Simon Lovell, Mark Wilson and Nani Darnell, and we got to discussing those who exhibited great skill. Guess whose name cropped up as the one Magician whose consummate skill was consistently flawless?

Later that night at The Convention, where I had first met Jay, I watched in total amazement his flawless performance on stage. I became a huge fan and in my review I wrote, "A true visionary. A man who has gone beyond the boundaries. There are only a handful of magicians who are masters of the Art. This man is one of them. Do whatever you have to do to get to one of his lectures or one of his shows."

"Phipps" AKA Heinz Philipp, long time friend and Mentor to Siegfried & Roy shared a similar opinion. He said, "Over the past 70 years, I have seen almost every great magician in the world. I would have to rank Jay as one of the top 3."

How do you top that? Well, Jay did! Because the great Channing Pollock summed him up in just four words, "Impeccable magic, absolutely wondrous!"

Jay and I have been good friends ever since our first meeting all those years ago and I'm delighted to have shared a Stage with him on a few occasions. His travels as a Performer & Lecturer take him, quite literally, all over the world but we manage to keep in touch. I caught up with him recently.

<http://www.jayscottberry.com/>

**ADB:** Hello Jay, it is good to catch up with you and converse a while. I know you got started as an Entertainer at the tender age of 3 and we shall get to that in a while; but for now, I would like to jump start our conversation by talking about FISM 1982. You represented The Magic Castle at FISM. Share with us some of that time and your feelings....

**JSB:** Tony, it's great to catch up with you as well. OK, let's set the way back machine for 30 years ago. After High School, I moved straight to Hollywood to pursue a career in the performing Arts. Within a year, I auditioned for the Junior group at the Magic Castle, and, at 19, was the youngest magician ever to perform evening shows there. Over the next few years, I would present over 500 shows in the Palace of Mystery.

In 1980, the Board of Directors asked me to represent the Magic Castle at the 1982 FISM World Congress in Lausanne, Switzerland. The whole process was amazing, like preparing for the Olympics. I developed many new gimmicks, including the world's first hand held dry ice machine

and numerous pyrotechnic effects. I created the Fog-to-Dove, the Gloves-to-Fog effect, the Flash from Hand (which was the original Light in a Thumb tip effect) and many others as part of a futuristic act, called "A Space in Time". Peter Pit, who spearheaded the drive to get me to FISM was very supportive, as were many other Castle magicians.

The event itself was fantastic. I met many people who would become lifelong friends and colleagues. This was, of course, the year that Lance Burton took the top prize. This decision was somewhat controversial among many of the FISM attendees. In fact, Christian Fechner caught me after the medal ceremony and stated very emphatically that he and many others considered me the Grand Prix winner. Not that there was any rivalry between Lance and I, mind you. We had met a few years earlier and had become friends. However, as it turned out, it was upon this very controversy that I was able to build a successful career in Europe and then throughout the world.

**ADB:** Well, as you know, I often visit Vegas. You and I have a lot of mutual friends there and, yes, over the years many of them have always said that you are a Grand Prix Champion. I guess that is because we admire your talent not only as an Entertainer but also as a skilled Technician and highly Creative Thinker. Your Technical skill requires great practice and rehearsal and many of your moves are uniquely yours. How do you develop these?

**JSB:** Thank you Tony. And thanks also all our mutual friends. I appreciate that. This all began, as you said, at the age of three. I grew up Reno, Nevada in the shadows of the Sierra Mountains amidst the multitude of Casinos there. It started with tap dance and singing at the age of 3. When I was 4, I began performing in school plays and musicals. My interest in magic was sparked when I was 5 years old with a small magic kit. At age 7, I was cast by the local theater group to perform in the stage classic, "The Seven Year Itch".

As far as the "method to my madness" is concerned, well, I've actually fine-tuned that over many years of trial and error as well as simply maturing as a performing Artist. The main method that I use I call "Reverse Illusioneering" To begin, I simply imagine the effect as a perfect illusion; that is, not worrying about method at all. I hold this as the ideal by which I will then create the final effect. Working backwards, I then work out the methods to create that illusion. This may take days or years, but I always continue to measure the end result with the ideal that was set forth from the outset of the process.

**ADB:** Interesting. Magic kit at 5. Ok, let me do the Math. That's 45 years of Magic. You are one of those lucky people who never seem to age. I used to tease a very good friend of ours, the late Pat Page and call him Dorian Grey. He never seemed to grow older. He always looked the same, as did another great friend of ours, the late Ali Bongo. You and I have great stories of the time we shared with them in Scotland, but we shall chat about that later. For now, I'd like to focus on a topic that you and I love to revel in ..and that is Lateral Thinking. As I stated in my introduction you blew me away the first time I saw you. Your capacity for lateral thinking is beyond brilliance. What you have done to the simple thumb-tip and Sanada is Gold Medal thinking. You didn't just transform them, but metamorphized them. Your methodology for getting a ring off a ribbon is beyond superlatives. Don't reveal any secrets here ...save that for your lectures ... but for now please share with us the process behind that kind of thinking.

**JSB:** Yes, I'm just about to turn 50..... . What's interesting is that I don't feel any older in spirit. In fact, I am more at ease with myself and my simple ability to create and perform that ever before. Certainly there is some sense of achievement, but I don't ever rest on past glories. On the contrary, I feel like a seasoned climber who is always looking for another mountain to climb. I look at it this way: One of the greatest things we can experience in life is a true sense of accomplishment. But the thing is, you can't get that unless you get out and accomplish something. It's like the best natural high. Furthermore, the amount of accomplishment that one feels is directly relative to the challenges that you overcome. With that in mind, I set my sights ever higher, always seeking a new plateau.

Yes, dear Pat and Ali, both were great friends and constant inspirations. To address your comments on Lateral Thinking, I think it's actually quite simple. Continuing on from what I was discussing earlier, in order to create the "perfect" illusion, I just create whatever means or tools

necessary. Along the way, if I feel that a gimmick is somehow limiting the process, I simply modify it until it works for me. The same goes with any sleights. The simple truth is that a sleight of hand move must be imperceptible. If it looks like I'm doing something unnatural, the illusion is diminished.

**ADB:** How very true. He! He! I wasn't aging you but in a way your unique style of classic magic with a futuristic flair has become iconic and continues to be in demand, quite literally, world-wide. As you know, earlier this year, I lectured and did a work-shop in Singapore and I can tell you that you have a huge fan base out there in that region of Asia. You will be back there in October. Tell us about some of the places you've been.....

**JSB:** Well Tony, it is always rewarding to have one's hard work appreciated. I have never really stopped to count but I've certainly performed many thousands of shows over the years, from close-up to large illusions.

I've been fortunate to travel the world, many times over, from Las Vegas to Monte Carlo, New York to Paris; from the Grand Ballroom of the Beverly Hilton to the historic Theatre-an-der-Wien in Vienna. I've been featured on dozens of national and international television shows including a recent series of TV specials in Indonesia. I'm told that those TV Specials attracted tens of millions of viewers. Places I've been ...that may take too long to list them all. In general terms, pretty much all the main cities in the US , Canada, Africa, most of Europe, various countries in Asia and of course, Australia. It seems like I'm always on a tour somewhere... or planning one J . I've just literally finished performing music and recording a new album in Branson, Missouri . Next stop is LA, where I'll be presenting my new lecture.

**ADB:** Australia..... that's where you live. You have invited me to come visit you there in your own Castle of Magic on a 100 acre property. Thank you Jay. It is on my To Do list. We just need to dovetail our schedules and travel. Speaking of Castles and Palaces, we have to reminisce on that incredible weekend of shows that you Produced at Falkland Palace from 2001 through 2007. That was a remarkable event filled with many one-of-a-kind memories as dear Ali Bongo and Pat Page are no longer with us. That was great fun when Ali and I locked Pat in a dungeon cell. We have the photos to prove it and an extensive article was published with that photo in The Magic Circular. Anyone going to <http://www.magicsam.com/> and clicking on Events and then International News will see more great photos of that event. We had some 6000 people at that weekend event. Share some of the background on how you put that together ...

**JSB:** Yes that was fun. Great having you and your son headline there alongside Pavel, from Switzerland, Flip, from Holland, David Goldrake from Luxembourg, Columbine from Australia, Kramus Nexifisus the 2000 year old wizard from Scotland, Helmut & Doris Kautz from Germany along with many others. Of course, as you already mentioned, the two Grand Masters themselves, Pat Page & Ali Bongo, were there every year!

It all came about as a result of my good friend, Mark Fisken, from Edinburgh. He contacted me in April 2001 and invited me to headline the very first "Palace of Magic" Festival, held in and around the historic Falkland Palace. It all sounded very intriguing, and certainly an opportunity not to be missed. When Lisa and I arrived in Falkland, we were utterly entranced by the beauty of this quaint medieval village. It was as if we had stepped back in time. The whole event went off very well and, it just so happened, there was a 250 year old, listed house up for sale, just near the Palace. To make a long story short, a few months later, we owned it. By the next year, Mark and I had teamed up to co-produce the Festival, which quickly became one of the world's largest celebrations of magic and wonder.

**ADB:** This is a testimony to your organization skills as an Event Producer. I hear you may be planning something similar in Australia in the near future and combining it with another great passion of yours – Music. I well remember after the shows in Scotland, sitting in your living room; my son picked up one of your guitars and started playing some chords.....and you, began entertaining us with your singing and guitar playing. Tell us a bit about Jay the Musician.

**JSB:** The event in Australia is in the early planning stages right now. At the moment, however, I am staying very busy performing magic as well as music. This all goes way back. When I was 8, I began playing cello in a string orchestra and at 9 was singing in the Sierra Boys Choir. I got

my first guitar when I was 12 and, at the same time, I was playing drums at school. In fact, when I first moved to Hollywood, I landed a lead role in a musical that was bound for Vegas and Broadway. As destiny would have it, however, the backers pulled out at the last minute, which allowed me to pursue magic instead.

However, music has always remained an integral aspect of my life and career. In 1985, I began composing soundtracks for my stage productions. This led to 3 instrumental albums and a commission to come to Vienna and compose a score for an original ballet in 1995, performing with The Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

During that time, I was actively travelling, all around the world. In 2001, while on tour in Australia, I met Lisa Richards, who is a magician and very talented costume designer. For 5 years, we lived in Falkland, Scotland.

When we were looking to purchase a larger acreage to raise our children on, we searched to world and decided upon a beautiful place just north of Sydney called Wherrol Flat. Once there, I decided to actively create and compose music again. Just a year (and lots of hard work) later, I released a new album which has now been heard on over 800 radio stations around the globe.

**ADB:** Wow! Congratulations. You are a World Class Magician. You sing and compose music . You play the guitar. You are a species of 21st Century Troubadour. As a result of this new CD, you are just as well known in country/folk music circles as you are in Magic. The last time you called me up to chin-wag on the phone you told me about the gig in Branson. Share a bit of that with us.

**JSB:** Well, as I mentioned before, it's about setting ever higher personal goals. However, there's something more: Joseph Campbell coined the phrase, "Follow your bliss". If you find in your heart that which you really desire to do, do it. I don't want to be drawing my last breath, thinking, "I should have", or "if I had only..." Today is the moment, now is our story.

As part of this pursuit, I lined up a number of national and international music festivals and concerts. The most recent, as I mentioned, were some shows at the Americana Theater in Branson. Talk about a rush! The response was tremendous. We taped the shows, so I'll have that up on Youtube soon. In addition to the live shows, while there, I was very fortunate to team up with the legendary Charlie Chalmers to produce my new album, due out in November 2010. He has worked with a veritable who's who in the music business over the past 50 years and has 7 songs in the Grammy Hall of fame. Please see <http://www.jsbmusic.com/> for more info.

**ADB:** What a wonderful phrase & philosophy... "Today is the moment, now is our story." I could not agree more. Moving away from Music and magic for a brief moment, no conversation between us will be complete without touching on our joint passion for the esoteric. You once told me that it was your Grandfather who was a major influence in your thinking and philosophical views. Is there is a stage in Magic evolution that leads someone to these paths or is it that we are already on the path and our Magic performances are mere manifestations?? ..share some of your thoughts with us.....

**JSB:** Yes Tony, like Channing Pollock and many other magicians before us, we share a love for, shall we say, the deeper magic. It was my Grandfather who set me on the path of a mystic when I was a young child, stating that he didn't want me to "unlearn 50 years of garbage" like he had to. He used to discuss many esoteric subjects, like Edgar Cayce, Rudolf Steiner, Paramahansa Yogananda, The Akashic Records and astral projection, just to name a few. However, I think that the most profound thing he drilled into me was this: "As you go through life, many will tell you that they know the way, but only you know the way".

**ADB:** Yes. I love that saying of his. You mentioned it to me a while back and it impressed me deeply. What's the schedule for the rest of 2010 and for 2011. Is there any space left for Magic Clubs to book you for a lecture in 2011?

**JSB:** Well, as I mentioned, I'm on tour now in the US. From here, I'll head to Mexico City and then on to Malaysia and Indonesia before heading home in early November. I'm booked quite solid in Australia through early March 2011 doing music concerts and festivals, both as

performer and producer. From March through July next year, I'll be touring across Europe, the UK and Ireland, performing magic and music. I'm set as the headline act for 5 or 6 conventions during that time. We are also looking at dates in late February and early March to produce a Magic Festival in Kuala Lumpur and Iran.

As for whether clubs can book me, all I can say is please contact me and I'll do my best to fit you in. I'll be back in the US next September through November, so I'm booking those dates now.

**ADB:** Somewhere out there is a young up & coming Magician reading about you. Your life in showbiz and on lecture tours have taught you many things. Care to say a few words based on your empirical experiences ??????.....

**JSB:** Sure Tony. Empirical, eh? Well, I'm just a student of the school of hard knocks: The University of Adversity. I've been kicked down and pushed around more times that I can count. The secret of my success is just to keep coming back stronger. I'll sum it up like this: We'd all love to be able to predict the future. I've learned that the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself. I think that the secret to success is having the sheer audacity to imagine a goal and the stubborn determination to stick with it, in the face of all obstacles. Don't wait around for someone to discover you. Be bold. Go out, grab the world by the horns and hang on. Have the courage to dream big. There is no such thing as false hope. One of the greatest things you will experience in life is the sense of true accomplishment; but you won't get it unless you actually accomplish something. It won't be easy, nothing worth achieving ever is.

Nobody gets a free ride. With that in mind, let any adversity you face simply fuel your enthusiasm and determination. Don't waste any time viewing others as competitors. You are your only competition. Don't follow anyone. True Art is only achieved through unique individuality. You only fail if you give up so don't.

**ADB:** Yes indeed. Great words. I've quoted your Grandfather's favorite phrase before and I'm sure will do so again several times. He was absolutely right when he taught, "As you go through life, many will tell you that they know the way, but only you know the way". As you and I have said many times, it is the courage to dream big and then getting out there and doing everything to make it happen is the real secret. Thank you Jay. It has, as always, been a delight spending time with you.

**JSB:** Thanks Tony . You are very welcome. Always fun chatting with you.

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