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[www.OaklandMagicCircle.com](http://www.OaklandMagicCircle.com)

OMC Discussion Area:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/thevirtualomc>

May 2008

## **President's Message**

May is Movie Night at the Oakland Magic Circle. Come for a night of fun and a blast to the past and see the Mysteries of Al Flosso, Roy Benson, John Scarne, Harry Blackstone Sr. and others. The club will provide the popcorn. After the hour and then some program, be prepared to present your favorite Parlor Trick.

The OMC Auction and Flea market was a fun time for all. There were some real cool collectables put up for auction by Phil Temple. We had about 15 people come in and set up tables to sell. There were lots of unique finds to be had by all.

It is said you will never know what it would be like unless you walk in somebody else's shoes. I think David Sament got one of the best deals of the evening, the black and white patent leather shoes of Timothy James!!! David has been seen wearing those shoes everywhere.

Also in attendance was Loren Lind representing the Society of Young Magicians. He had his special magic grab bags where you "pays your money and takes your chances." I got a chance to see one of the bags purchased by our own Dagmar Theison. She got more than her money's worth with some great pocket tricks and stand up effects. I cannot wait to see her perform one or two tricks for the group. Tom Cutts was there with a table of DVDs. Tom is a Past President of the OMC and is very active on The Magic Café web site. We also had many other members and non members with tables set up around the room with various props, books and gimmicks.

I want to give special thanks to Bill Austin for providing us with the auction time clock, Charles Elliott and David Fry for their getting all the right auction purchases into the right bags. Ken Taylor for the new numbered

paddles; Mark Tarses for being our time keeper; Fred Casto, Steve Davis, and David Sament for once again heading up the buyers table; and a HUGEMUNGOS thank you to Manya Casto for making sure all the sellers were properly documented as they auctioned off their goods.

In addition, I would like to thank Dale Chung and Michael Stroud for staying after the event and helping to put away the tables.

I know there are many other people who should be included in the list of thank yous but I cannot remember them all. But I do want to say that this is YOUR CLUB so, thank you to all our members who made this a fun evening.

Your board of directors wants to serve the membership better, so we have made an online survey and would really like to have your input to determine the rest of the year's activities. Please go to <http://tinyurl.com/4enveg> and complete the survey. Please try to do this as soon as possible so we can get more things that the club wants.

We will see you at our movie night, May 6. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Business meeting at 7:00, show time at 7:30!

**Be sure to visit Byron Walker on line at [www.byronwalkermagicbooks.com](http://www.byronwalkermagicbooks.com)  
Please visit [www.eastbaymagic.com](http://www.eastbaymagic.com)  
Support your local brick and mortar magic shop.  
Misdirections Magic Shop  
[www.misdirections.com](http://www.misdirections.com)  
California Magic and Novelty  
[www.calmagic.com](http://www.calmagic.com)  
Be sure to tell them that the OMC sent you!**

**And, now some news from our roving reporter, Gary Meyer.**

May is Magic Movie Month at the OMC. So it is perfect timing that two significant DVD box sets have just been released that should be "must owns" for all true loves and magic and the movies.

GEORGE MELIES: FIRST WIZARD OF CINEMA (Flicker Alley, \$89.95) is a blockbuster collection of almost all known surviving films of the great magician and early cinematic genius George Melies. 5 discs bring 783 minutes of wonder as we experience his magic performance films (some with trick photography and others not) plus many fantasy and special effects films. There are recreations of historic events and his erotic films (mild by today's standards but very charming). Of special interest and rarely heard are English renditions of Melies' original narrations which he often did as his movies screened. These films were made to be part of a variety program so avoid watching too much in a single sitting. Spread the enjoyment over many viewings. There are 172 films (out of more than 570 he made!) in the collection, arranged in chronological order from his first, CARD PARTY (1896) to his last THE VOYAGE OF THE BOURIRCHON FAMILY (1923) A terrific 1953 documentary about Melies by famous French director George Franju is a touching tribute. An excellent booklet is included.



You will learn more about how movies are made and the basis for today's special effects by viewing these short films than reading a dozen books.

For more information visit Flicker Alley's website where you will also find other fascinating collections of rare and restored shorts of interest to magicians. Ordering directly from them supports future efforts and you won't find it discounted on Amazon. They include shipping and no tax.  
<http://www.flickeralley.com>

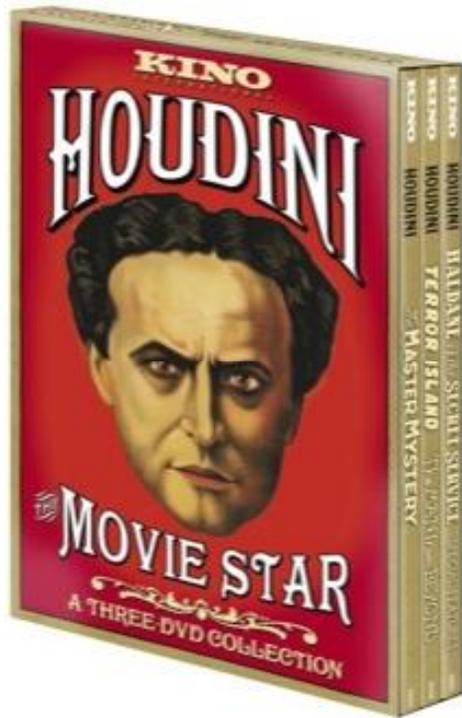
Read Dave Kehr's excellent New York Times review:  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/movies/homevideo/18dvds.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/18/movies/homevideo/18dvds.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

Watch MELIES' THE CONJURER (1989) and a few others at  
<http://tinyurl.com/468a3h>

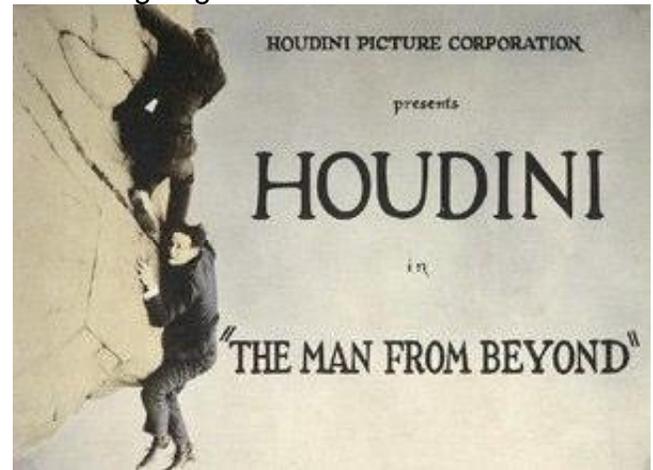
To supplement this box set I urge you to read Brian Selznick's recent children's book, "The Invention of Hugo Cabret," largely a graphic novel loosely based on the last years of Melies when, by 1925, the forgotten filmmaker and his wife sold trinkets from a stand on the streets of Paris.

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"After all you have escaped from, I wonder if anything can ever hold you."  
- Eva Brent (Marguerite Marsh) in The Master Mystery

HOUDINI: THE MOVIE STAR (Kino, \$40) collects virtually every surviving motion picture record of Houdini's adventures as a movie star. The three-disc set includes a fast paced, 15 chapter serial, THE MASTER MYSTERY (1919) with Houdini as a government agent investigating a crooked patents company pitting him against a wild range of enemies and difficult situations including an early cinematic robot. Of course the serial format allows Harry to escape from all manner of torture devices and restraints. Some long lost footage is covered by explanatory title cards. As serials were not intended to be watched in a single sitting, I suggest you break this 4 hours into several sessions.



The Houdini Picture Corp. released its first film in 1922. His fascination with reincarnation is featured in *THE MAN FROM BEYOND* where he is frozen in a block of ice for 100 years and when he is revived, nobody tells him it is no longer 1820. A woman he meets looks just like his fiancé from a century before. His attempt to stop her marriage gets him committed to an insane asylum but even their straightjackets and bars can't hold him, resulting in a "human fly" sequence as he climbs the sides of buildings. The famous footage of Houdini swimming just before the Niagara Falls is part of this movie. The DVD reveals how he avoided going over the falls.



It is reported that 80% of silent films made have disappeared. Every year a few "lost" films are discovered. Only five minutes exist from Houdini's next film, *THE GRIM GAME* (1919). The spectacular footage has him attempting to transfer from one airplane to another at 4,400 feet in the air when the planes accidentally crash and go spiraling towards earth. Will the pilots gain control? Did Houdini ever admit that a stunt man actually was doing this?

Only a few escapes can be seen in his last movie, *HALDANE OF THE SECRET SERVICE* (1923). Houdini wanted to move on but the film's box office failure made it clear what his audiences wanted to see.

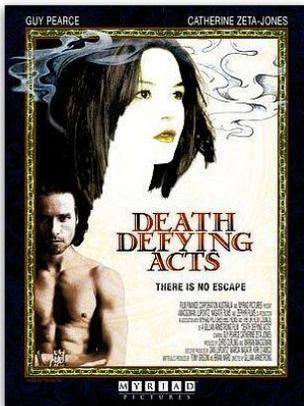
In *TERROR ISLAND* (1920) our hero is a high-tech inventor seeking lost jewels in a sunken ship. The attempts require escapes in some fascinating underwater situations. Sadly, missing footage probably means some missing escapes.

The bonuses are a generous collection. In addition to excellent production notes throughout covering Houdini's cinematic career, there are lots of photos, posters and glass slides from each film; a fascinating featurette about censored scenes with many of them included; all known newsreel footage of 11 escapes between 1907 and 1923; a performance of his celebrated *Metamorphosis* by his brother Hardeen; a French short comedy and finally the audio of a 1914 wax cylinder of him introducing one of his tricks. Picture quality varies but is taken from the best (and often only) surviving materials. Overall this looks better than the average "lost" silent film footage.



The films have a range of musical accompaniments of varying interest with Jon C. Mirsalis' score for THE MAN FROM BEYOND especially good. If you don't like the music with any of the films, just put on your own favorite recording and it can often be surprising fun.

A new dramatic feature about Houdini is not yet scheduled for U.S. release by the Weinstein Company but the Australian production directed by Gillian Armstrong. DEATH DEFYING ACTS has played most of the world. Starring Catherine Zeta-Jones, Guy Pearce, Timothy Sal and Saoirse Ronan (ATONEMENT), the reviews have been mixed but we'll be on the lookout.



Sample review: <http://tinyurl.com/5qft23>

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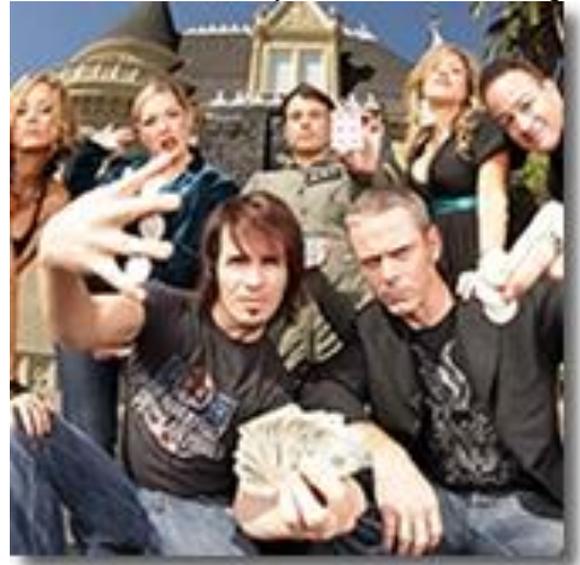
**NEW MAGIC REALITY SERIES**

VH1 To Premier "Celebracadabra!"  
 Celebrity/Reality Show Airs on Sunday, April 27 at 9PM ET/PT

According to a recent release, VH1's Celebrealty concept will undergo a magical treatment with the upcoming "Celebracadabra!," a new reality competition series.

Seven TV and film stars will vie for the title of "Best Celebrity Magician" when they attempt to learn and perform tricks normally done by professionals. From the streets to an elementary school to the legendary Magic Castle in Los Angeles, the celebrities will be

eliminated until only one is left standing.



Hosted by actor and magician Jonathan Levit, the celebrities include: Carrie Wilson, C. Thomas Howell, actress and comedian Lisa Ann Walter, Chris 'Kid' Reid, Hal Sparks, ANT and the Pussycat Doll's Kimberly Wyatt. In each episode, the celebrities are taught a different genre of magic that ranges from sleight-of-hand to comedy magic to large-scale illusions.

The celebrities are paired with magicians that include: Asi Wind, Rocco, Silly Billy, Murray, David Regal, Derek Hughes and Simon Lovell. The panel of judges include: Max Maven, Jeff McBride and Levit who will determine which celebrities advance to the next round and get a shot at facing off in a battle of illusions in Las Vegas for a grand prize of \$100,000.

The series premieres Sunday, April 27 at 9 PM ET/PT. Each episode will be available on [magic.vh1.com](http://magic.vh1.com) every Monday following its Sunday on-air premiere.

*Courtesy of Wayne Kawamoto of About.com: Magic & Illusion*

**From Stan Allen of MAGIC magazine**

Here's the latest, plus a few reminders from previous *MAGIC eUpdates*:

**Oprah!**  
**Wednesday, April 30th, syndicated**  
 David Blaine will be promoting his breath-holding record on *Oprah!*, April 30th. The

show, which airs that same day, is syndicated, so check your local listings for times and channels in your area.

**The Late Show with David Letterman  
Monday-Friday, May 5th-9th, 11:35 p.m.,  
CBS**

It's "Magic Week" on David Letterman's show, May 5th through the 9th. Magicians who are scheduled to perform are:

Lance Burton (Monday, May 5th)

Mac King (Tuesday, May 6th)

Dirk Arthur (Wednesday, May 7th)

Steve Wyrick (Thursday, May 8th)

Penn & Teller (Friday, May 9th)

**And finally, part 2 of the movie review by  
David Sament**

(In the April newsletter, we ran the first half of David's review. Here now is the second half.)

At the March meeting, Gary Meyer very generously donated two movies to the OMC library--The Illusionist and The Prestige. These are both very good magic-themed movies and they came out within months of each other in 2006.

The Prestige takes place in nineteenth century London. It's about two famous and rival stage magicians who are always competing with each other, and sabotaging each other, and the consequences become deadly. The acting is very good, the photography is great and there are a lot of great scenes that show old magic props. Overall this is worth watching, but the movie does have one major flaw in my opinion--it's much too ambitious. There are many inter-related stories and at (at least for me) it was hard to keep track of everything. In this respect The Prestige is the opposite of The Illusionist, which is very tight and focused. But this is still a good movie, and it does have one of the great acting performances I've ever seen, which is David Bowie as Nikola Tesla, the controversial assistant to Thomas Edison who became a recluse and, some say, kind of a "mad scientist".

These movies are both recommended, though one more than the other!

# Our Feature Performer for OMC Movie Night



## **Magic and music**

Magician-crooner **Darren Romeo** is bringing his one-man show — “Darren Romeo, the Voice of Magic” — to the Post Street Theatre for a limited engagement. The six-week run, to be announced today, will begin previews June 3 and open June 10, continuing through July 13.

A protege of **Siegfried & Roy**, Romeo combines classic magic tricks, including the famed Floating Light Bulb, with music, singing his own compositions and songs by **Andrew Lloyd Webber** and **Billy Joel**, among others.

He’s received top honors and awards from the Academy of Magical Arts, International Magicians Society and Society of American Magicians. Tickets (\$35 for previews; \$40 to \$65 for regular performances) go on sale Sunday. Call (415) 771-6900 or go to [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).