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ESCAPE COMMUNITY



Christopher Campbell



A New Shrew's Fiddle Escape

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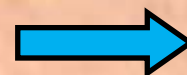


A Guillotine Escape For You From Mark Tripp

What is the best thing about doing the guillotine escape onstage? Probably that gasps and shock from the audience when the blade comes down and you got free and pulled you head out just in time.

What is the worst thing about performing a guillotine escape? It has to be the fact that the escapologist cannot make eye contact with anyone in the audience until after the key moment has passed. Oh, the applause will be there, but think of all the missed opportunities as the audience cannot read the

concern or any other emotion on the performers face. But, what if you could? What if you could do an exciting and suspenseful guillotine escape in full view and see your audience at the same time. Mark Tripp has the answer, and he is more than willing to share.





This started out when Mark was a barker working for the great Don Viano. Don was of the mind that if he was nervous about the escape, if he knew there

was a chance of death, the audience would read that in him and be scared as well. Viano made that work for him using a completely non gimmicked guillotine. Non gimmicked? He was really putting his life on the line and banking on his successful escape each show. Illusion designer and builder Paul Osborne said it blew him away, and Norman Bigelow declared it the "scariest thing he'd ever seen in escape work." Each show a fire would be set to burn through the rope and bring the real guillotine blade down either into an empty stock, or onto Viano's neck.

When Mark came aboard, he insisted that there be a safety factor, because accidents can and do happen. Mark added a safety, but not a gimmick. The guillotine was still examinable by anyone, either before or after the escape. No one would find anything that could show the guillotine wasn't real, because it was real. Don's point was, "Don't tell people I am not risking my life!"



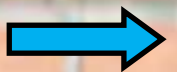
In the usual form of the guillotine escape, the magician is locked in the stocks by both



neck and hands. A cloth is applied to cover the "dirty work." This guarantees that no eye contact will be made, and no emotion will be read. Now the guillotine is still a very scary stunt to perform, both for the performer and the audience, but something is clearly missing. It will be so much scarier to the audience if they see fear and terror on the performer's face.

This was exemplified one day while doing a mall show. Don Viano was doing a water torture cell escape. The cell was covered while he worked to free himself and avoid drowning. People felt cheated as they could not see what he was doing. Anything could be going on behind that curtain. People want to see what happens, or at least "Believe" they can see what happens. This is the psychology that Mark is about to play on, and it will work very well.

First you need a guillotine; a real one. It can be stage size, it can be easily broken down for transport, but it must be a real guillotine with a real blade. It will have runners to keep the blade from flying forward or back and out of control.



"Wild about Harry"
John Cox' Houdini web site
www.wildabouthoudini.com



Instead, it will remain on track and move only up and down. This guillotine has one modification that sets it apart from others, it has no hole in the stocks for your head. Just two holes for your hands, cut in a solid wood block. Now, although the magician is not risking life per se, the loss of hands is a real risk and a career ender. Better still, the performer can look at the audience the whole time. Even if the lights are too bright for the magician to see the audience, they can still see him and that will make all the difference in the world.

The assistant raises the blade by pulling it up to the top of the guillotine. The rope is wrapped around a cleat or a Y-bolt on the side of the guillotine. The performer places both hands through the holes and they are locked together in handcuffs. Now the hands cannot be pulled out of the stocks.



At a key moment a half moon shaped curtain can be attached to cover the stock and magician's hands. Eye contact is still possible. The audience is told, "Please excuse my covering my hands, but if there is an accident, and accidents do happen, it will spare you a horrific sight!"

Just before beginning, the assistant hands the magician a ridiculously large (and useless) hair pin of some type.

Lighter fluid is squirted on the rope up near the blade, and a candle on a pole is used to light the fire at the top. Now the magician must fight for his hands.



The magician can be seen to struggle, maybe even sweat a bit. The audience may hear "lock picking" type noises. Then catastrophe strikes. The magician drops the lockpick. The audience can clearly see it hit the stage. The magician stares at it for the briefest of seconds with a mask of sheer terror on his face. Maybe he kicks off a shoe to reach for it with his foot? Suddenly the rope parts and the blade falls. The magician drops the real cuffs on the floor, which will make the audience think his hands went with them. The he steps back in triumph holding up his intact hands for all to see, bowing to thunderous applause. These applauses are practically guaranteed as a tension breaker if nothing else. Anyone and everyone are



welcomed to examine the guillotine and the handcuffs if they so choose.



The Magic Nook
www.magicnook.com

"Do-It-Yourself" Magic for
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A great tribute site to the amazing
David De-Val



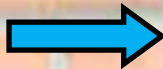
<http://www.davidde-val.com/>

So, what really happened?

First, as the assistant is drawing the blade up the guillotine and tying it off, a safety was employed. A thick and strong carriage bolt is slid through a hole in the side of the cleat, frame and runner. If the blade falls with that in place, there may be some damage to the guillotine, but the magician will live to perform another day with both hands intact.

Second, the handcuff are ADA's or bridge jumpers. You must go to great care to get a set that will neither jam nor look too suspicious. They should look and sound like real handcuffs. If you have or can find a pair of Ian McColl's ADA handcuffs, those will work very well.

When the hands are covered and the rope is set on fire, the fun begins. The magician can drag the time out as chosen as the breaking of the rope is under his control, or that of an assistant. First the magician removes the false cuffs and puts them in his pocket, pulling out instead a pair of real handcuffs. These could be tried on if a spectator wanted to. Next the carriage bolt is removed and pocketed by the magician. Now the blade can fall, but the magician's hands are no longer in the danger zone.



This site is well worth the time to study if you want to learn about lock picking
www.lockpickguide.com

Begging Box!

Your input
is our output!

This is the part of The Chainletter where the editor begs for you to give him some material to publish. No idea what to write?



Well, How about...

- ◆ Your first escape.
- ◆ How did you learn to escape?
- ◆ Your creative process.
- ◆ Your last escape.
- ◆ Who is your hero? Why?
- ◆ What makes a good escape.
- ◆ Your escape bio.
- ◆ An escape you saw on TV.
- ◆ An escape you saw live.
- ◆ Anything escape related.



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This whole time the magician is acting. Looking as though he is focusing on the work at hand. Then the lockpick is dropped. If the magician looks at it, so will the audience. Before anyone can run up to grab it and give it back, the blade drops. The audience will be shocked to say the least, but the magician is fine and ready for the all-important bow and applause.



Mark has made this information available to you for free.

He asks only one thing in return. If you build one of these for your use in your show, enjoy it and make your reputation and the money that comes with it. If you choose to build these to market them for sale, Mark asks only that you give him one. You don't even need to credit him with the idea, just give him one of the one's you make for free.



Your editor thanks Mark for his generosity and does believe there may be a market out there for this product if anyone has the skill and wherewithal to make it happen.



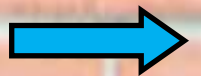
Geo Launch Party is a Huge Success!

On May 15th, The Global Escapology Organisation held its "launch party." Due to the quarantine everything is being done online using Zoom. This turned out in our favor as escapologists from several different countries were represented. 30 members joined on Zoom to watch the presentations done by and for the escapology community that we are.



Allan Taylor was the emcee for the event. We opened with the three founders of the event giving a short presentation about where we want the GEO to go and be

able to do. Discussions of increased membership, safety and conventions were the topics at hand. The founders were very pleased to have met their initial goal of 50 members by May, and the group has no surpassed that number and well on its way to the next goal.



**Have the lads at
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can help...
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info@fenyxfyre.ca**

The first speaker was Chris Gower. Chris addressed the question of how Arthur Coghlan escaped from a barrel that was locked shut by a pole running through the lid and the base. The pole was padlocked outside the barrel on each side.



First we watched a video of the escape being hosted on TV by Don Lane. The escape was amazing and left many people scratching their heads, especially when Arthur offered \$10,000 to anyone who could prove the any part of the barrel wasn't what it appeared to be.

With that in mind, Chris built a brilliant cardboard mock-up of Arthur's barrel and proceeded to demonstrate three different ways that the escape might have been done. This lecture alone would have been worth the price of admission at a convention. Chris is a very clever thinker and highly creative on top of that.

Mark Lyons came to the camera next and gave a talk on some historical and expensive



collectable handcuffs, and how to tell if the provenance is real. Many unscrupulous dealers will pass off copies, fakes, or lower quality cuffs for ones that they are not. Mark has an amazing collection

and everyone enjoyed the lecture. Kudos to Boobzilla for coaching Mark though some technical difficulties. Mark ended by giving us a short tour of some of his collection.

Tim Houlton came to show us his British Transport escape. Since everyone knows the

story of Houdini and the Russian Transport escape, Tim decided to do a modern take on the escape and get himself a modern day British prison van. The video we watched showed an incredible amount of effort put into restraining Tim inside the cell of the van. Although there was no stopwatch visible, Tim soon emerged from the roof of the van holding a container of milk and much more fully dressed in a tribute to David DeVal.



Tim did not reveal all, but he did go over a few key points in how he made the escape.

Brilliant job mate.

Joaquin Kotkin showed off some handcuffs including some clever gimmicked cuffs as well. He also has a pair of bat-cuffs likely made by Ian McColl.

This led to a general session of people showing off their own cuffs such as they could.

Wolflock showed us a set of South African Police cuffs

Chris had a pair of Charlie Gateau cuffs.

The goal for this gathering was not to go on in a marathon, but rather to run for two hours as a fine prelude to a real convention. The room was kept open for general comradery for another hour until the host ended it.



I think everyone enjoyed the launch party.



Christopher Campbell

Using His Head!

From the incredible and devious mind of Christopher Campbell, check out his latest escape device! He calls it "Using your Head or you will be dead!"



It is a pure keep your wits about you prop based on the "Shrews Fiddle," a punishment device from Germany and Austria originally used in the medieval era. The basic idea is that my head and hands are locked in a shrew's fiddle

device, but with spring traps that are ready to hit my wrists and head with spikes like a bear trap if I move around too much. Being blindfolded will make it that much harder.

Sometimes our brains see something and you just have to go with it. That was the case when I started this build. I had envisioned in my head what I wanted but that was about to change several times as this build progressed.

Originally, the fiddle was to have one trap and a simple chin trigger.

Knowing I needed a larger size printer than what I had I enlisted my friend Joey Davidson, who has a bigger 3d printer than I do. to help get the size I needed with his large bed 3D printer. Discussion after discussion occurred on how we could make the trigger work but came to a standstill. Not giving up on the idea I once again put myself in the eyes of the audience and what would excite them.



Joey and I had further discussion and we made the basic parts needed for the build along with two sizes of traps. Actuated by sensitivity if the wearer does not do a smooth lock pick and removal. Each piece is a custom built and putting it all together was no easy task. Hours and hours of sanding, dremelling and just simply making each piece fit into each other was a labor of love. This project was a test of persistence and creative abilities and am so happy how it turned out. Now, to share it with an audience!



So I got the idea thinking about my drum escape and the traps I am using for it and another large escape. I wanted an escape that focuses on smoothness and finesse. I wanted to



do a blind escape with consequences. This binds my head and hands which both have a trap ready to spring.

The triggers are set by a series of connected locks and a set of thumb cuffs. If the locks or restraints are moved too much. Well off goes the traps. It is a mixture of challenge, finesse and skill! With a visual the viewer will know is a signature "StrangeOrDanger" set

It also can be used in a moving stunt and the pressure that instills but not moving the body much



Here are the thumb cuffs that I scaled down in size to make it even tougher. The bolts hold wire that are connected to the triggers.



[More Photos!](#)

