

The Chainletter

An e-newsletter by and for the escape community

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**A real shocker
from Chris Campbell!**

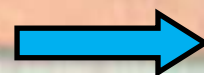
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Fundrai\$ing \$hows

There are both positive and negatives to performing fundraising shows for non profit groups. One of the biggest downside is that they often do not have large budgets to spend money on entertainment. Although, they are often willing to work on a consignment basis. That is I have had many schools balk at the thought of paying me a fee to perform, but they are more than willing to have me work for them on a percentage basis. They tend to see this as a can't lose situation. If the auditorium or theater is a small one, there will be fewer people, and therefore less money to be made, but it can still work. This does not mean I will automatically go for a show like this. There are questions to be asked first. Truth is I feel I have been burned exactly once this way, and there was still money to be made. What needs to be verified and discussed? A few things.

1. Always have a go to person who will be in charge of running the show. Make sure they have decision making authority. If the Principal says they will do this job,



Respectfully ask for someone else. A school principal is far too busy and never knows when a situation may come up that requires their full and immediate attention. You will want someone else.

2. Make sure they have a publicity plan. If they don't, feel free to give them yours, but make sure it will happen. Daily P.A. announcements are a good start. DO they have a phone system set up to autodial parents? Flyers in local shops are even better. I am not above trading advertising space in the program for an advertisement in the store window. Make sure to do a press release to the local newspapers. They love advertising fundraisers to help out kids and schools. Is the PTA or some other group willing to donate a door prize? In my area we have a magic dinner theater show that makes a great door prize to raffle off. We just need someone to pay for it. This is usually not too hard to find if the person in charge is willing to work for it and make a few phone calls.

3.If the publicity flops, what do you get for all your time and energy.? Once you have sold the venue on the show, bringing up a small deposit in a tactful way is wise. Make sure that the people in charge are already seeing the path to success for the event., that way they are less likely to balk at a deposit. Make it reasonable.

You have no intention to need it, it is just insurance.

4. So far this has all be on paper, not comes the hard part. The logistics of the show. Get into he room as early in this process as you can; the same day as you meet to discuss this is best. Look at the room. Sit in different seats, tuck down like you are a kid on the shorter side. See the angles. Bring a music CD, an MP3 or any other device you can and see if you can play with their system. Ask to see the lighting. If the room is really small you can suggest two shows rather than one. Ask now for anything you think you might need that is not obviously in the room. Maybe they can get it for you. Are the chairs fixed or the folding type? If they are folding, have them set up in a way that works for you.

5. Be sure to get permission for "back of the room" sales . No one has ever said no to me on this, and it can generate lots of income. I once made more money from BOR than I did from my fee.

6. Invite the press if you can. Large newspapers may not be interested, but smaller ones might. College newspapers can generate lots of positive publicity.

7. Put on a good show and make sure they all have fun!



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



Wolflock: Escape Lecture!

Hi All

I wanted to give a bit of feedback on a Lecture which I did on 22 Feb 2020.

Just before a fellow colleague and friend's show, the ex-president of the Johannesburg magic circle and I were chatting when he told me about a group that they had started which was called AIM (Apprentices in Magic). The group had been started about a year ago and was open for any and all who were interested in learning more about magic and entertainment from those professionals who were willing to come and share their ideas and experiences.

A great tribute site to the amazing
David De-Val



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

The Magic Nook
www.magicnook.com

"Do-It-Yourself" Magic for
"Built-It-Myself" Magicians



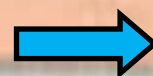
Ages range from around 8 years up to adults. There are not many but they are hungry to learn as much



as they can. Any entertainer knows what it is like to be starting out and wanting to gain the "world history of entertainment's knowledge in as little time as you can" feeling. While telling me more about the meet up, the ex-president asked if I would be willing to come and do a talk on Escapes as they have never had anything like that. I was quite happy to do that and asked if it would be possible to film it all with my camcorder for some footage for my Upcoming Escape Teaching video called BET (Basic Escape Techniques), which will teach those who are starting out, the most basic escapes using only your body to be able to escape from almost any binding without picking of locks, etc. He agreed and said it would be perfect and that he would call me when they are ready.

Expecting the call but not counting on it is how I spent the next week or 2. As they say, hope for the best, expect the worst. I then received a call asking if I would come do the talk on the 22nd

of February. I said that that was perfect for my schedule and thus went into planning, writing and preparing everything for the talk.



The day arrived and I was quite tired from not getting much sleep due to hearing that my granddaughter had been born and



getting an unexpected message from my son who I have not had contact with for many years. I just knew that this was going to be a perfect day. I pitched up at the even which is held in a small room at a kindergarten which is run by the ex-president of the Johannesburg magic circle. He came out to greet my wife and I, telling us that there are definitely 2 people coming that he knows of. My heart sank a bit as I was hoping for more but was ready to continue anyway. In the next half hour, roughly 20 + people arrived (which is normally a good turn out for these meetings). My handcuff collection on display with lock pick sets and other set out for them to look at, they had fun



seeing this kind of equipment up close. I explained that the equipment was for them to look at and handle as I would not be dealing with picking of locks today.



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.



If you are interested in occult escapology, you want S. Rob!
<https://www.srob.co.uk/>

"Without a key"
For all your lockpicking needs
www.withoutakey.co.uk



The meeting started with a great introduction for me and I was on my way.

I began with everything you need to know before starting in escapes.

Safety, Equipment and care of them, what to take and what not to, Music in shows and the psychology behind it, Clothing What to wear and what not to, etc. Everyone sat listening to each word and asked questions. I then went on to phase 2: Explaining how to use each part of the body in turn to make an escape easier for yourself. How to breath, how to bulk, how to use your body to get them to bind you how YOU want them to bind you, while at the same time, making them think that they chose to put you in that position, how to use chosen clothing to help you, etc. Phase 3: I then demonstrated using rope chain and Zip ties on each part of the body using my techniques and did a little escape from them to show how easy it was. Wrists, fingers, ankles, upper body, lower body, etc. were all done in turn with volunteers binding each in turn how they wanted and at some points doing more than one area of the body, so as to show that everything can be don't together using the techniques. More questions were answered and demonstrated to show that the techniques did not have to be in the positions you wanted, but can be don't in other areas,

For example, wrists behind the back instead of in front. During this set, I had volunteers come up and with a little

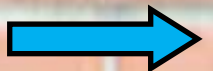


bit of coaching, got them to try what I had taught them and had them do the escapes. One young lady was worried as I bound her wrists, but, after using the techniques escaped successfully and exclaimed, "That was easier than I thought it would be!"

Another volunteer was a young boy of around 8 years who was dying to try. With the



permission of his mother. I bound him too. With coaching, he was out quickly. The gleam in his eye and the smile on his face once he was out



**Have the lads at
Guinness turned down
your world record?
Online World Records
can help...
Contact Fenyx Fyre
info@fenyxfyre.ca**



was all that was needed to boost him on, He was hooked. I foresee a possible future escape artist, right there. The youngster volunteered for a few more escapes including Zip Ties and successfully escaped each in turn. At the end, I received a great round of applause and was told that it was one of the best lectures they had received in the year that this had been going. The audience was also asked if they would be interested in me coming in the future to do a second lecture on something else (such as lock picking or other). Everyone wanted me back for a second time. So, there will possibly be another article in the future on how that one went. Everyone thanked me and gave such a positive feedback.

All in All, I was please to do this lecture and teach the future entertainment world about an art which some believe to be dying. It would be great for future generations to enjoy the art that we love so much if even 1 of those that were there, becomes a future escape artist. The video was a bit dark with a few parts being

Long live the world of Escapes.



Michael Griffin! America's Escape Hero



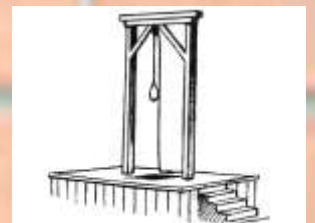
According to most magic historians and Houdini purists, unaffiliated or prejudiced toward the contemporary escapology performer, there is never been set forth anything new

or substantive that Houdini would be unwilling to perform, yet we have never had a reference of the master swinging from a hangman's noose. One of the most fantastic escapes ever performed was done in 1984 by Michael Griffin when he escaped from a thirteen-knot hangman's noose in 52 seconds, receiving national coverage for his exploit. In the escape, Michael's hands were tied behind his back while he sat high in the saddle. A noose was placed around his neck and tightened.

Just like in an old western, the horse was shooed away, and, in the words of Griffin, "the pain was terrible. I thought 'my god, I broke off my rear teeth,' as the 13-knot hangman's noose closed shut on my neck, tightened by my swinging weight." (globe, 31 Jan. '84).

Michael Griffin became the first person to ever survive a public hanging. What made this particular escape stunt so dynamic was not Griffin's fortitude

in performing such a daring feat, nor that he was successful in accomplishing this surely life challenging task,



but that albeit the fact the danger was real, there was a pure and unadulterated simplicity in the concept that was a compulsive variant on a theme. It is a theme that has been brought forth in many movies and throughout the folklore of the settlement of the American West.



While all escape artists disavow the very idea of escaping from the hangman's noose, calling it "ridiculous" and "stupid", Griffin, the only escapist known to perform this spectacle, believes it to be one of the most brilliant concepts he has ever had. His reason for performing the escape was the pure horror of the nightmarish vision, laden with the grotesque obduration of an innocent-looking man swinging from the gallows.

At the age of 18, five years before the hanging, Griffin embarked on discovering the solution to one of the greatest puzzles ever to transfix the mind of any serious post-Houdini escapologist. In 1938, a straitjacket designed by the J.T. Posey company was guaranteed escape-proof when correctly applied to its would-be victim. Nearly forty years later, Michael, the son of distinguished psychiatrist doctor Richard G. Griffin, became the first person to successfully master the secrets of the posey jacket, after he'd been restrained in the regulation manner, as prescribed by the Posey company. In the years since Griffin remains the only known person to have successfully made his escape from the Posey jacket when applied correctly.

According to Rudy Steffish, author of the book *Conversations with Harry: A Study of Contemporary Escape Artists*, Griffin is hard to categorize. "Most escape artists fall into one of two groups. They are illusionists using the appearance of danger to recreate Houdini, or they are legitimate in that they will not use trick handcuffs and such to perform an escape; however, Griffin doesn't really fit into either clique. Whereas he uses the second group's methods for many escapes, he isn't some locksmith on stage picking open cuffs, nor is he some magician who has added an illusion of danger to bolster his

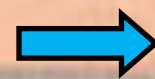


manhood I think Griffin fits into his own category...maybe something defined as an 'escape performer'. Yet, that isn't quite fair, because not only does Griffin want to get out of the restraints, he wants you to get into the restraints with him in your own mind so you can feel the struggle. The being placed into the restraints for Griffin seems like it's more of what he is about, with the escape being an afterthought."



Griffin maintains a strong belief in what he calls "the phantasm of believability", that is

the concept that everything an escape artist does must be done so in a non-spurious and logical manner, but must also maintain an appearance that the performer on stage is creating



a situation that only he can release himself. He told the Los Angeles Times in 1991, "its primary reality. I know that when I come back from a tour, I've got cuts and bruises all over me. every single night I don't know what's going to happen to me."

Griffin is at the top of the near-extinct breed of contemporary escapists who not only master the technical know-



how to become an escape artist, but also the skills of showmanship to become a true escape performer. Michaels escapes have logical reasoning and he is not just another man on stage getting out of a straitjacket. He feels it is up to him to educate the audience



about the straitjacket, such as its uses, how its made and why someone would feel a need to get

on stage and escape from the jacket. It appears after a Griffin lecture on the subject, the straitjacket escape actually becomes the learning tool and there is meaning to the jacket escape.

Another facet of the Griffin show that makes it oddly interesting, is his method of restraint. Unlike anyone else,

Griffin revels in allowing the audience to watch in the trussing up process. In fact, Griffin makes the restraining time of the show just as important as the actual escape. For this reason, he tends to



perform more technical escapes that take less time to bind him, because, according to him, "if it takes a long, unfocused time for a performer to be restrained, the audience will get lost in boredom during the process. that audience will then still be trying to find its way back from the boredom during the performance of the escape."

One of Griffin's main focuses in the field of escape has become the "Challenge Escape". one of the first types of challenges Michael embarked upon was the challenge handcuff release. He felt a need to add something different to the basic escape, and instead of looking at the hokiness of the full view handcuff release, or the very lacking of entertainment value of climbing behind the curtain, Michael came up with the idea of having the cuffs placed on him and then climbing inside of a large, airtight bag, which is then closed. Griffin must make his escape before he falls victim to suffocation. Griffin challenges actual highly-trained police officers to restrain and immobilize him, as opposed to using them only as window dressing to "examine the cuffs". This makes the



production real, and hence, he has created "Primary Reality".



While the idea of doing a handcuff escape from inside of a bag is not new, Griffin added originality to the stunt, by first using challenge restraints, and not his own, and secondly by being honest in the escape, and not referring to the large bag as a "Mailbag". Michael has escaped from U.S. Postal regulation mailbags, but the bag used in the challenge cuff act is a large sack. by presenting the challenge in full view, but while maintaining the hidden aspect of the cuff release, Michael has been able to redefine the challenge handcuff act.



Michael also has a blanketed challenge escape, offering a large sum of money to the group or individual who

can restrain him in a rational way so that escape would be impossible. Many have stepped forward to accept this challenge, but so far, the money has remained in Griffin's possession. One of the most difficult of the challenges Griffin has faced was the one set forth by the Baldauf lumber company. The box was not built to the specifications set forth in the challenge, and Baldauf lumber had to drill an air hole into the lid of the box after Griffin had already been restrained inside. Michael ended up with a gaping hole in his back, yet performed the escape to his spectacular end. It taught him a valuable lesson in challenge escapes, yet, needless to say, Griffin evaded this situation and Baldauf lumber was unable to collect the bounty.

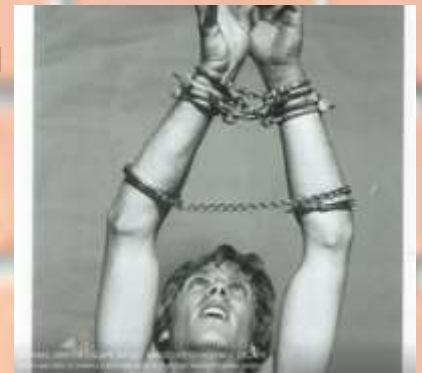
Among the many other escapes, a Griffin experience will involve include the German "Transporkette" chain, (as opposed to the "Siberian" chain available at many magic shops) which is a legitimate restraint actually used in Germany, various rope ties, including an interesting escape from the wheel of a loaded cannon, a U.S. Navy sea bag from days of old, and the unique Maniac Mitts. One element you



won't see as part of Michael's stage show, however, is any escape involving imminent death or doom, as Griffin feels a true entertainer doesn't need to threaten

his audience with that type of cheap, theatrical fear. The factor of not knowing who will be in your audience which may include small children is another reason Griffin won't attempt to "kill" himself on stage.

Griffin has also escaped from numerous local, county, state, and federal prisons, and escaped from under the water of many lakes and rivers, including the mighty Ohio River after it had frozen over and a hole had to be cut through it. In doing underwater publicity escapes, Griffin believes the audience is aware of the



possibility of him drowning, and by viewing it, the audience takes responsibility for whatever may be witnessed.



Michael Griffin is widely regarded as an internationally acknowledged expert in the study of handcuffs, leg irons, and other odd and varied restraining devices. He has one of the largest privately-owned collections of such memorabilia in North America.

Michael has also done non-escapes, that have an element of danger, including his version of Russian Roulette, and the East Indian Needle trick, which he performed on a national cable program, in what was described by one of the hosts as the most amazing variety act the show had ever featured.

Michael has also appeared on other television programs, including a show in which he was restrained by legendary funny man, the late James Coco. It was after another appearance on the national daytime variety style program griffin was nicknamed the "Boss of Bondage" by no less than the "Boss" himself, Mr. Bruce Springsteen.

In 1993, Michael Griffin earned the very prestigious International Magic Awards for the best Escape Artist. He was invited to perform on the awards show, where he accepted a challenge from Orange County, FL. Sheriff's department to be fastened into a pair of handcuffs, a length of chain, a pair of leg irons and a 60 lb. ball attached to his neck and shoulders. He was lowered into the lagoon headfirst hanging by his ankles at Universal Studios in Florida. Griffin was almost done in by this challenge as he was drug across the

Bottom and in the process, kicked up silt, which nearly blinded and disoriented him. Fortunately, he was able to make the escape in 30 seconds and resurface, before the unthinkable happened.

The risk factor is something Michael believes a responsible escape artist will eliminate in a show because an escape artist who gets killed only hurts all escape performers. Griffin, however, has suffered minor injuries that come with the territory of performing with legitimate restraints.

Kay Monroe - Van Meter, a writer from Ohio once cantered, "the mythical animal, the 'Griffin', had the head and wings of an eagle, and the body and legs of a lion. It possessed keen sight, the strength to fly forever and the power and agility to overcome any obstacle. Today we have a human 'Griffin', the escape artist who has developed and is setting a new standard in the scope and challenges of escape artistry and performance. like the legendary beast, Michael Griffin possesses the physical and mental attributes to perform such amazing feats of escape that even the most dubious onlookers have been totally amazed and awed."

One of Griffin's other important attributes is his philosophy and commitment to representing himself as a role-model worthy of the respect and admiration of today's despondent youth. Michael maintains a drug-free and non-alcoholic lifestyle believing in an old-fashioned work ethic and keeps himself attached to a clean life concept. For all of this, Michael Griffin hopes his crowning achievement will be the title "America's Escape Hero".

