

# The Chainletter

An e-newsletter by and for the escape community

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Issue 115



## Li Lau on BGT



## Escape Artist vs. Rubik's Cube

### This month's Chains...

Li Lau on Brittan's Got Talent	1
Moving Forward	1
Mental Escapade	3
World Records	5
Escaping the Virus	8

## Moving Forward

by Stuart Burrell

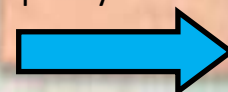


It seems so very long ago, yet as I type this it is less than two months. This was back when it was not uncommon to stand shoulder to shoulder with someone or sit in close, almost too close, proximity with one another at a public gathering.

I was watching a lecture on escapology at the Blackpool Magic Convention and I had the pleasure of being called to the stage to take part in a challenge. I was joined by my fellow UKEA member Robin Fox and I will admit a slight degree of narcissistic pleasure as we were both recognised and name checked by the magician friendly audience. That pleasure quickly evaporated as Robin proceeded to wipe the floor with me in the challenge itself, however, notwithstanding that, the lecture was insightful.



It highlighted that we, as an art form, risk being drawn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.





The lecture was presented by 'Lord' Christian of Norway, famous for his work on various European 'Got Talent' shows and his extensive output on You



Tube, and part of his act is based on an almost obscene breath holding escape that sees him submerged for over five minutes. I will not go into the set up here as it is not mine to share, but during his act he did reference that the look he was going for was inspired by the Saw movies.

This is a slight issue as those movies used props supplied to them by Richard Sherry, who for those new to the art, is one of the finest Escapology effect manufacturers in the world today and, I believe, deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Collins and McColl.

The Saw movies are iconic, they are an easy touchstone for people to use to describe what they would like to see, and, they are frightening to watch. All of which are key components to a viable act in the modern world, especially when we are approached by television producers.



The problem is not that we are being asked to perform 'Death Defying' escapes for these shows but that what we do risks resembling the work of everyone else. We risk becoming cookie cutter copies of one another. All dressed in black, looking scary, frightening the audience to death.



Going forward, the escape artist that creates the kind of tonal shift that Doug Henning did in the 1970's, keeping the tricks but changing the colour pallet, will be the one that is most memorable.



Then again, what do I know, I am the 'Non Death Defying' Escapologist.

Keep safe, stay well



"Wild about Harry"  
John Cox' Houdini web site  
[www.wildabouthoudini.com](http://www.wildabouthoudini.com)





# Mental Escapade

## From the Magic Nook!

### Mental Escapade

*Is it a Mentalist's Dream or an Escape Artist's Revenge?*

*A person from the audience is chained up with a combination lock chosen at random by another member of the audience from a selection of four or more locks. Then she is freed when random numbers are chosen by other members of the audience to add up and the total is called out for yet another audience member to try on the combination lock. Surprise! It opens! The escape artist, who is taking a break and turned mentalist, has nothing to do but organize everything and let the audience participate in letting an innocent "victim" escape. The e-Book of instructions by Professor Spellbinder is available on The Magic Nook in The Wizards' Journal #42-05.*

Mental Escapade has everything an escape artist, or a magician for that matter might want.. This effect could be done by a mentalist wanting to dabble with locks and chains, it could be done as a general magic effect by a magician, or in our

Case, an escape artist taking a rest from the physical rigors of escape, and letting the audience do the heavy work for a change.

For this effect you will need some combination locks, some cards, and a length of chain. Really quite inexpensive to prepare when you think about how long the effect will take and how it will read from the audience. This is not a surprise as Jim and the Professor have a long standing reputation for creating quality magic using simple materials that are easily acquired on a budget.

Mental Escapade also has the advantage of calling for multiple audience volunteers and participation. That always makes an audience feel good, even for an individual is not one who came on stage.

Basically it looks like this... A volunteer comes on stage and is chained up. A combination lock, that has been chosen at random is used to lock the chains. A bit of by play and what we hope is the right combination is also chosen at random. If the random combination works, the volunteer is released and you get the applause.

The potential for entertainment runs high in this effect. First, there are the standard lines many of us use when showing off rope or chain to a volunteer. These are classic and standard. If they don't get a laugh, at least they



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get a smile.

Next is the question of how to chain your volunteer. Personally I like something I saw Kreskin do in the late 1960s. He threaded a chain around the neck and through someone's jacket sleeves. This meant that if the lock stayed put, she was either stuck in the chains, or could be cut out of the jacket. Alternately you can chain wrists to neck which is what The Professor suggests, or, if you have a strong wooden arm chair on stage, simply chain the wrists through the chair.; a good idea as it leaves the neck unrestricted.

Now comes the magic part. You could add in some sleight of hand if you want to and if you can, but it is not necessary; the effect will work just fine without.

Using cards to ferret out the correct combination brings up the tension, and of course the volunteer is released at the end.

I like this effect for several reasons as I have already stated, and I intend to use it. At the budget cost of \$5, you can afford to buy this just to play with, even if you never use it.



I recommend Mental Escapade with two thumbs up!



**This site is well worth the time to study if you want to learn about lock picking**  
[www.lockpickguide.com](http://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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# World Records!

## from Stuart Burrell

From the street performer busking under the railway bridge to the seasoned professional standing on a stage in front of hundreds if not thousands of people there is one thing that resonates with that crowd, one term of reference that is instantly recognised and understood to be the benchmark on which to measure the efforts they are about to witness.

### The World Record

Now, to be clear, the street performer and the stage performer are under no obligation to be



accurate in what they say. They are not fact checked, they are not cross referenced or even under any form of independent observation from a third party, they

are not being filmed or measured in a scientific manner, so there is a degree of cynicism amongst his or her peer group when a performer states that they have set a world record, or the target they need to reach.

For this article, please set aside any cynicism as to the totals or validity of the awards as we explore the World Records that are out there, to be broken. This is not an exhaustive list and this simply covers records relating to escaping.

The list does not include such records as 'swimming in handcuffs' or 'running a marathon in leg irons' as they do not include an escape, nor the record for 'largest padlock' or 'most people handcuffed together'.

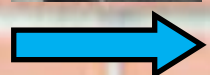
Where two record awarding bodies exist and cover the same record but different results are given, the fastest record from the relevant awarding body has been given.

Let us start with the untouchables, the performers that have set World Records or been recognised by Record Accreditation bodies for work of such grandeur that even if you were to start now, the chances are that you will fall short by the time you retire.

Nick Janson – Guinness World Record Holder for Most Handcuff Escapes (across his whole career, independently verified from authentic handcuffs)



Mario Manzini – Guinness World Champion Escape Artist



**Have the lads at  
Guinness turned down  
your world record?  
Online World Records  
can help...**

**Contact Fenyx Fyre  
info@fenyxfyre.ca**



Now, for a long time, those were the only two records that could be set, however, at the turn of the Century, Guinness began to open up the area of Escapology and other recording bodies came into existence. As such, the following is a brief list of the other records and who currently holds them at the time of writing.

### Guinness

Guinness, Fastest Handcuff Escape Blindfolded, Chad Netherland (USA), 2.42 seconds

Guinness, Most Handcuffs unlocked in one minute, Stuart Burrell (UK), 9

Guinness, Most Handcuff escapes in one hour, Zdenek Bradac (Czech Republic), 627



Guinness, Fastest escape from Handcuffs underwater, Thomas Blacke (USA) 3.425 seconds.

Guinness, Most handcuff escapes in 24 hours, Zdenek Bradac (Czech Republic), 10625

Guinness, Fastest time to escape three handcuffs underwater, Zdenek Bradac (Czech Republic), 38.69seconds

Guinness, Fastest time to escape from a pair of handcuffs (double locked), Danillo Audiello (Italy) 0.91 seconds



Guinness, Fastest Escape from a Straitjacket, Danillo Audiello (Italy), 2.84 seconds

Guinness, Highest suspension straitjacket escape, Scott Hammell (Canada), 2,194.5m (7,200ft)

Guinness, Most Straitjacket Escapes in one hour, Lucas Wilson (Canada), 98

Guinness, Most Straitjacket Escapes in 8 hours, James Peters (UK), 193

Guinness, Fastest Straitjacket Escape Underwater, Lucas Wilson (Canada), 22.86 seconds



Guinness, Fastest escape from Straitjacket in suspension and chains, 10.6 seconds

Guinness, Fastest escape from Straitjacket in suspension (no chains), 8.40 seconds



Guinness, Fastest Escape from Prisoner Transport Irons, Stuart Burrell (UK), 1 minute 3.78 seconds

Guinness, Fastest Escape from a straitjacket whilst sword swallowing, Rachael "Frankie Stiletto" Williams (USA), 47.94 seconds

Guinness, Fastest escape from cling film (plastic wrap) whilst suspended, Rob Roy Collins (UK), 27 seconds

Guinness, Fastest time to escape from a strait jacket whilst suspended from a hot air balloon, Super Ning (China), 53.70 seconds



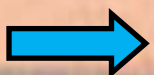
Guinness, Fastest time to escape from chain underwater, Daniel Robinson A.K.A. Weasel Dandaw (UK), 10.76 seconds



### Record Holders Republic

Record Holders Republic, Fastest Escape underwater from Straitjacket and Chains, Daniel Robinson A.K.A. Weasel Dandaw (UK), 34 seconds

Record Holders Republic, Full Body Chain Escape, Thomas Blacke (USA), 6.1 seconds.





Record Holders Republic, Fastest Wrist Strap Escape, Thomas Blacke (USA), 1.47 seconds

Record Holders Republic, Fastest Escape from a straitjacket on Stilts, Cameron Tomele, 25.37 seconds



Record Holders Republic, Handcuffs and 100 feet of chain, Amey Vinay Kumar Sarang, 42 Seconds

Record Holders Republic, Handcuff Picking, Fastest Time to open one Cuff, David Adamovich (The Great Throwdini) (USA), 0.5 seconds



Record Holders Republic, Handcuff Picking, Fastest Time to open one handcuff ten times, David Adamovich (The Great Throwdini) (USA), 21.8 seconds.

### Online World Records

Online World Records, Fastest Escape from a Straitjacket in Zero Gravity, Cliff Gerstman (USA), 40 seconds



Online World Records, Fastest Escape from Handcuffs whilst holding a flaming torch in mouth, Li Lau (South Africa), 28.02 seconds

Online World Records, Fastest Inverted Fire Breath Strait Jacket escape, FenyxFyre (Christopher Campbell) (Canada), 29.28 seconds



### Record Setters



Record Setters, Fastest Straitjacket Escape whilst Hula Hooping, Brad Bryers, 1 Minute 28.20

Whilst every effort has been made to make sure the above list is accurate, please be aware that records are there to be broken and the above times may change.

Equally, not every website has updated its records or is accepting challenges at this time. Therefore it is vital that direct contact is made with the recording body before any attempt is made.

Finally the above list only shows those that currently are the designated 'Record Holder' previous performers may have set the record and may still use the term 'Record Holder'

although 'Record Setter' would be a clearer term to use to prevent confusion. Simply because their name is not listed here does not diminish their accomplishments.





# Escaping the Virus

Well, I don't need to tell you how much the Corona Virus sucks. I don't need to tell you how badly it has affected the world of entertainment. Why don't I need to tell you? Because you already know. Personally I have lost three gigs to the Virus, but then I have a day job and don't perform as much as the full on professional entertainers do. Some of you have lost tens, or maybe even hundreds of jobs to this world wide quarantine.



What to do? ABC has already hosted a few shows in which big name music performers appear on TV singing their songs for free in an effort to raise money for virus research and financial relief.



Several religious groups took to the internet to host the holiday's services last month.

Several magicians have been online doing free shows for no reason other than to entertain people, to keep in practice, and to give themselves something to do.

These are all good things.

So, where are the escape artists? Why are we not online? Using the social media seems the best way to advertise all the online events I spoke of. Why aren't we online?

Hmm, I suppose there are some issues.



1. You usually need an assistant, or volunteer to put restraints on you. If that person is your spouse, or other family member, the process is immediately suspect.



2. Most escapes take up some amount of room. Unless you're doing a simple thumb tie escape, you may not have the space to make the effect work.

3. Most magicians that are putting sets online are using either a cellphone camera or a laptop camera. These are fine for close up magic, or maybe small parlor sized magic,



but without a trained camera crew, it would be difficult, if not impossible to pull off a large escape.

4. How to build tension online? This is hard. Just look at any escape on YouTube.. The escape is large, and usually gives the appearance that the performer's life is on the line. (whether it really is or not) Can you do this in your living room?

5. There is no audience. Recently I have been told I have to teach using zoom. It makes me feel like a disk jockey on the radio. I talk into a microphone, but I don't see or hear my audience. For all I know, the kids are playing video games and not listening at all. Their speakers could be off or even disconnected and I would never know. Performing without an audience is doable, but the energy is very different.



Now... Which one of you exciting and amazing performers will be the first to prove me wrong? Most people don't like to be wrong, but sometimes it feels great! Step right up...

