

In the immortal words of Frank A. Clark, "Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man's growth without destroying his roots." This goes doubly for magicians, so our July meeting theme was Critique Night, when Ring members can bring whatever they're working on and gets some constructive feedback to improve their performances. Ably hosted by Zach Mandel, who led the night by explaining that criticism should be honest, positive, and effective, and that everything we were to see was a work in progress, the meeting was very productive and gave birth to great ideas and even some debate. There were five performers in all, which is a small numbers for our typical meetings, but the discussion after each effect and routine more than made up for it.

First on the bill was Dan Miller, who performed a card effect in which one of 4 normal, face-down Jokers turned face up and into an Ace, after which the cards were all revealed to have writing on them and the Ace was seen to have a different colored back. All in all, it was an interesting effect, and it sparked a discussion on the clarity of an effect and identifying the magical moment for a spectator.

Second to perform was Don Engstrand, who performed the Meir Yedid effect Fade Out, in which a chosen card becomes the only one present in a completely blank deck. Don did a great job with the performance of the trick, and was given some great tips on the handling to make it easier to shift the parts of the deck without it being visible.

Next was Bob Lusthaus, who performed an effect he created by combining 2 magic principles. He called up a married couple to determine if they were compatible with each other. He had the husband name a number and count to the card at that number. He then had the wife spell any one of the 52 cards to arrive at another card. When the husband and wife turned over their chosen cards, they discovered that they had located mates (i.e. the 4 of Hearts and the 4 of Diamonds). Everyone appreciated the idea of "mating" ideas from different effects together, which was the topic of the next lively discussion.

Second to last on the bill was Vinnie Moccia, who took two great effects, producing sponge balls from a bagless purse frame and Don Alan's Spongeball & Bowl routine, and meshed them into a really solid 6 minutes of magic. We were all really impressed with his false display of the empty frame in the beginning of the routine, as well as his technique with the balls and bowl, and Vinnie still walked away with some great tips. More importantly, the Ring had a great discussion on how many balls produced was "too many", and how the routine could be best ended.

Finally, Wayne Haarhaus closed the show with an effect in which he telepathically transferred a two digit number from the mind of one spectator into the mind of another. Though Wayne hit the numbers spot on, he explained he wasn't sure if he should have them reversed or not to throw off the audience line of thinking in terms of the method, which begged the question "To be exact, or not to be exact", and led to a discussion about the "Too Perfect" theory of magic and what an audience member's expectation would be from the effect.

This was an interesting night and theme that we will definitely do again in the future, as everyone went home with something, be it a new idea or new ways of thinking. Next month: the challenge to see who is Ring 244's TOP MAGICIAN!