

Transcript of the Interview with Brad Manuel

Vogue: Okay Brad! Can you give us a self-introduction, like your age, your full name?

Brad: Okay, Brad Manuel from Australia and yeah... that's it!

Vogue: How old are you? Can I know your age?

Brad: I'm 39.

Vogue: Married with 3 kids?

Brad: Married with 3 kids.

Vogue: How did you end up being a magician?

Brad: Well... I started playing cards and stuff with some friends when I was about 16 years old and was never really into magic or anything like that but I just found that I could cheat with some card tricks. So, my friends and I used to play a lot of cards and we just had a bit of margarita and partying and do a few card tricks for each other and that's sort of it. And I was soon enough doing you know, at parties and people saying "Brad, can you do a few tricks?" and yeah, it sort of evolved from there. I started doing some work for some restaurants, doing a bit of magic and did a lot of comedy club stuff when I was a bit younger.

Vogue: I would describe your style of magic as comedy-based right?

Brad: Yup.

Vogue: How did you decide on the identity of the style of your magic?

Brad: Well, for me it just has to be your personality. So, probably one of the biggest struggles for magicians is the fact to find what your style is, your own style. For me, it was never really an issue because I am not very technically proficient with a lot of stuff and I always like a joke, everything's just fairly well very social for me. And yeah, having a bit of a comedy club background, doing stand-up (comedy), it was probably an easy decision for me because I couldn't stand there and do a serious magician's act because it's just not me. So, I think if you're comfortable with your own personality then you go with what your strengths are, and for me it's definitely not sleight of hand. You know, I couldn't compete with guys who are fantastic with cards, I only knew 3 card tricks! So, you just need to find a strength that works for you and for me, it was just humour!

Vogue: So can I say that your aim of performing magic is to entertain?

Brad: IT IS! And my job is to make people laugh. That's my job.

Vogue: What do you find most enjoyable about this job? Do you even consider this a job?

Brad: Well yeah, it IS a job but the best part is that I get to go to work and make people

laugh. And magic-wise, it's good to be able to amaze people and have some fun with them but the best part is I get to go to work and every time I leave from a show, everyone's happy!

I actually get to make them happy and get paid for it! That sounds corny but that really is it. It is a fun job! And that's the important thing that I think all the magicians need to remember. We should be having fun; it's not just about the magic. It's about your audience and actually giving them the entertainment whether you are amazing them or just making them laugh or doing a combination of the both, to HAVE FUN!

Vogue: You said you started out performing at parties, so how did you decide that it was going to be your full-time job?

Brad: *Chuckles* Well, I was actually working in the transport business, running a depot so I was actually working about 60 hours a week when I decided to go full-time. It wasn't really a decision I made, I was kinda forced into it. I was working 3 nights a week doing magic for a couple of restaurants where I lived and at least 1 night a week at the comedy club. And I was earning more money working 4 nights a week than I was working 60 hours a week and I was getting paid quite well doing the job that I was doing. But there was a change in the company and I was given an ultimatum that I would either move town, relocate and take a different job OR I was going to be out of a job so I didn't want to take the new job so I said "you know, I'm not gonna do that" and said "look, I'm making more money doing this magic and you know, I'll do that!"

Vogue: Were you married at that time?

Brad: I wasn't married at that time, didn't have kids. I was single...or actually I wasn't single, I had a girlfriend which is my wife now. But she was working and I was making good money doing what I was doing.

Vogue: At that time you only had a girlfriend so there wasn't much financial responsibility right?

Brad: No, but I owned a house and was paying off the house so I needed to make sure that I had money to pay for that. But I suppose for me, the big thing was that it was a bit of a change in life. I was given an ultimatum from the company I was working with and I didn't want to take their options so I quit in September and I had Christmas parties (to perform at), I was working 3 nights a week at these restaurants and was doing the comedy club. So I had heaps of income and when it came to January, there were no more Christmas parties and things slowed down in the tourist industry where I was living and I was like oh okay... and by the time February came I didn't have any shows at all. So I had a month basically where I had

no money, no income and I was thinking “what a crap idea this was to become a full-time entertainer!” So I just changed my tactic, I started working more in the comedy stuff, tried to start writing a show which was more suitable for corporate functions like after-dinner functions. And really just WORKED AT IT, you know. I went and did some security work because I needed to earn some more money. Probably about 12 months, I was doing all these, a transition where I was doing a little bit of part-time stuff, before I went back to full-time entertaining.

Vogue: What was your marketing strategy like, with Australia having so many full-time magicians?

Brad: Well no no, not really, I didn't really have a marketing strategy! This probably sounds unusual to most people but my strategy was to get as much work as possible so I had food on the table and I didn't lose my house. So...my marketing at that point in time was that I knew quite a lot of people. I used to play a lot of sports, I used to play football so the people in that community that I was hanging around I suppose. One of them ran a hotel, ran a pub, so I ended up doing some work 2 nights a week for him. And I knew people who were involved in the restaurant industry so I was working for them as well. And then I started concentrating on doing this business. But..what happens if this business doesn't keep going then I've got to look at finding other opportunities, other places where I can perform and get paid for it. And so, comedy clubs are great..not very good money though and so I thought, well there's money in performing at people's functions and so that's what I started doing. I started to find some material that was suitable for business functions and just develop it from there and so, it was more of a necessity. I needed to earn money otherwise I would have been broke, have no money and that wouldn't be good at all. So I needed to find places to work and materials that would work.

Vogue: How did you decide on the materials that you were going to use?

Brad: Well, I just used to do stuff that I liked.

Vogue: The magic which you're performing, did you learn it all yourself or did you learn from someone?

Brad: No, no... Actually, I was 19 I went to Bernard's Magic Shop in Melbourne and I bought 2 books and I just read the books.

Vogue: What books are they!

Brad: I honestly can't even remember them! But I think one of them might have been a Tarbell book, you know the Tarbell Course in Magic, and one of them was that book. So I just read the books, what I thought at that time were pretty cool card tricks and looking back they

might be pretty ordinary but you know, I developed a few things that I liked and thought were funny and for the trick-wise, what I would try to do because I never used to see any other magicians, didn't know other magicians, the only time I found out about Bernard's Magic Shop was when I walked past it when I was in Melbourne. So that was the reason why I went in there and bought a couple of books. I just tried to come up with ideas to do stuff that were funny and that I thought were cool things to be able to do. I came up with a way to do a bill switch without even knowing (at that time) what a bill switch was. So anyone who has ever seen my lectures would see that when I do a bill switch it's a totally different form from what they've seen before and the reason is because that's just how I did it when I worked out how to fit a bill into a Thumb Tip and I didn't even realise that there was a trick that was already out to do that. So yeah, sort of getting ideas and stuff that I liked and thought would be good and worked out ways to do them!

Vogue: Have you thought of it, being a magician, that the audience heckles you?

Brad: Yeah, slightly...

Vogue: So what do you do with them?

Brad: Well you try not to have a dead audience. Your job as being an entertainer is actually to engage the audience, to get them involved in your show. This is the difference I have with a lot of magicians, I don't want the audience just watching the show. I want them involved in the show. If they're connected to what I am doing, it's gonna be a better show for them and I'm gonna do a better show because I feel that connection with the audience but they need to be wanting to know what's going to happen next, what I'm going to do next. So you're gotta get them involved. If they're a dead audience, ahh I call them dead fish, well you got to get them back to life. You got to get them hooked and involved in the show and there are couple of ways to do that is that you got to get them within the first couple of minutes realistically. I need them to like me, it's a terrible thing to say, but I actually need them to like me. So, as soon as I come on stage, they realise it's just a bit of fun, harmless and that they're gonna have a good time. That's the most important thing for me. Makes my job for the rest of the show so much easier.

Vogue: So you try to establish a sort of vibe?

Brad: Yeah, you need to have that kind of vibe. If they are a dead audience, it's hard to say you have a dead audience as your job as an entertainer is to make them NOT a dead audience. But if you do sometimes get an audience that's just not with it, you just gotta get 'em. That's it, that's the bottomline, you just HAVE TO get them. If you don't get them then they're gonna walk away and not enjoy it so, you have to have to, THAT'S YOUR JOB! You gotta MAKE them get involved the show, you gotta get them from being a dead audience to be laughing with you or being amazed by what you're doing. And your presentation and your persona is what's gonna do that.

Vogue: What's the toughest part of your job?

Brad: Toughest part...sometimes it's the travel for me. Travelling on my own.

Vogue: Being away from home?

Brad: Yeah...I'm normally only away a couple of days at most for work but this time I'm away for 3 weeks because I've got the tour as well.

Vogue: On your tour will it just be lectures or are there shows as well?

Brad: Yeah shows, I normally don't do too many lectures at all. So on the tour mostly, or actually all of it is shows.

Vogue: When are you going to give a lecture in Singapore? ☺

Brad: Well actually I lectured in Singapore a few years ago! So quite a few years ago yeah. *Laughs* I don't know, I suppose when I get around to organizing it. I talked to Ken about it and a couple of guys have asked me about it because there's always new people coming into magic. I had a different couple of styles of lecture that I do. Actually, I think I've done 2 here. I did my normal funny tricks lecture and a dice-stacking thing for everyone. Yeah, lectures aren't really high on my priority list I suppose...it's the performance that's what keeps me busy so, busy enough anyway.

Vogue: Are your kids getting influenced in any way by you?

Brad: Well, both boys can do some dice-stacking! If they want to do it, great! If not, yeah, it doesn't make any difference to me. My middle child, Travis, he's just a funny kid. So, he's probably..if any of them he's probably the one with a future in entertainment I suppose. SO...if he wants to do it...Blake, my oldest, has helped me with a couple of things over the years in shows so he has got involved. He actually have come in and done some head-juggling, you know, couple of different things for family audiences so yeah you know, really it's fun if you involve kids in what you do. It's great but yeah, if they wanna do it great, if not, whatever they want to do is good as long as it makes me and my wife retire early, they can pay for us and I'll be happy with it! *Laughs*

Vogue: Okay, last question. Tell me something no one knows about you.

Brad: I'll give you a magic related thing. I once managed to stuff up the vanishing bandana? The one you put the banana in the cloth? I managed not to do that, in a show, LIVE. Which I thought was funny!

Brad: It had a little button which was where the hole was, and the button had fallen off so I just didn't perform it and just squashed it up and put it in there and...

Vogue: What happened?

Brad: And then when I opened up the hanky the banana went everywhere in the front row! *Laughs* which is great for me because as a comedian it's just part of the show anyway and I thought it was hilarious! Yeah so that's something that no one would know about me, I stuffed that up. It's almost impossible to be able to stuff that up. BUT I DID. I did it quite well and mine didn't really look bad, it looked it was supposed to happen *laughs*

Vogue: Awesome! Thanks for sharing with us.

Brad: That's it? Cool!