

RDM : What have you been up to recently?

Nique: Recently I've just have been the same...working, performing...so at least that keeps me busy! Magic keeps me busy, even on my off days I'm doing magic.

RDM: What is the niche area that you have established yourself as a magician?

Nique: When I started performing professionally I told myself I will only do close-up. Then, because of the scale...I mean, there are a lot of players in the market and different players have different sizes. Based on the size I was operating in, it was necessary to do other kinds of shows besides close-up magic. So that's where I started branching out to stage performances and I'm doing a bit of mentalism now which usually only plays at bigger corporate events.

RDM: What is your identity when you perform?

Nique: I position myself as an entertainer. One of my strong points as an entertainer is my flexibility because, while I can be the serious person performing close-up magic or stage magic or whatever, I do a lot of children parties. Every weekend I am doing birthday parties as well. The kids' shows market was something that took me quite some time to pick up because it's a whole new ball game altogether. There are different skills that are involved. Many people see kids' magicians as the not so magician kind of magician but there's a science to kids magic and I'm quite proud of my kids' shows.

RDM: Do you have anyone who inspires you in your magic career?

Nique: Along the way there were many, many people. Err...my thoughts on magic were influenced a lot by people like Gary Kurtz...

Nique: I was also looking at people like Larry Jennings, John Bannon, David Williamson... In the recent times, not the oldies kinda of category, would be people like Greg Wilson, Guy Hollingworth, Derren Brown definitely. Max Maven, Tommy Wonder and many many people! They've all inspired me in one way or another, either their thoughts or their methods.

RDM: How did you get to chat up with Gary Kurtz?

Nique: It was through emails. I spoke to him via emails at one point of time, a couple years back. I remember it was during the SARS period because in Canada there was the SARS thing as well. That gave me a rough timeline as to when I was speaking to him. At that point of time he was doing mentalism but I don't think he had his stage show up yet. But now, it's quite hard to contact him.

RDM: Long regarded as one of the leading sleight of hand experts in Singapore, do you feel there's a particular sleight of hand that is underrated by the magic community?

Nique: Yeah. In card magic, the Erdnase change is what I feel many people don't do as much because it's extremely practical as a colour change. There are many other fancy colour changes out there but the Erdnase change when done well will look really good. Also because of the different finesses and the small bits of technique that make it different. That's how you can make it look a lot better because many people do it as how I was described during the session (Interview was done after Nique Tan's lecture at Magic Circle) A combination of a lot things can make the trick look better.

RDM: Some people learn it from the DVD, some from videos or even books. How do you work on the Erdnase colour change this way? Did you have any guidance?

Nique: I didn't have any guidance for this move. Many magicians have told me that the way I do this move looks different from others. Up till now I don't know why and how it became like that but I learnt this move from the book "Expert at the card table". Then I started working on the move and it became like that. I do think its part of the process that I take when I approach magic. When I practice, I think a lot. I think about "Okay...this doesn't look good. How can I improve it? My hands are not as big as that guy's, so how can I change it?" So I think a lot about making little little changes be it in stage magic or close up magic. The changes I make are very very small. I'm a better performer than creator and my inputs to magic are very minor but what I choose to do I try to do it well.

RDM: I remember you said you had your first gig at some pub. How was it like getting your first paying gig? How did you convince yourself that you're worth that certain value?

Nique: Mm okay. I was paid very little. It was like a token sum. But as a young kid, if you were to get money doing tricks, at that point of time it felt good! I was telling myself that this could work out but well, I obviously have to charge a lot higher. Haha! It felt good, basically, and that feeling just kept me going.

RDM: There's a difference between audiences who pay to watch you perform and those whom you are engaged to entertain. How do you handle hecklers and difficult situations?

Nique: This is a common question as this is very real. We do magic and everybody tries to screw you up. It's always a certain kind of person, doesn't matter where or how it happens, they can all be categorized into one particular kind. I don't know when situations like these will arise, so I just do what I need to do and if I encounter certain characters.. In the past, I had no say as the audience were made up of people older than I was and as a young man I had no authority or control over the group. But as when you get older, you'll try to fight back rebelliously by throwing more tricks at them, thinking that 'Okay, you know how this is done? Let me show you this, *lagi best*'. That was another phase.

Now, I just don't bother, if the guy is heckling me all the time, I just finish the trick as fast as I can, to give it a logical ending, take my leave and move on to the next group as he doesn't deserve to see more. I really enjoy performing magic to groups of people who really enjoy themselves and we all have a good time. Life is short; I don't want to waste my time fighting with people who don't appreciate magic. So that's the progression to how I handle it these days.

RDM: You mentioned in your book that now you start by first introducing yourself, asking how the evening is going. So is that amount time included in the time you give yourself to spend with that group?

Nique: Hmm, I don't categorise it as such but I do know that for each group I normally do about 3 effects. Because of the way I structure the routines, they are modular and it means that I can stop at any time and it will still make sense. At events, it's good to have routines like that because when you're performing and somebody comes in to serve drinks, the effect stops halfway and it's hard to

pick up again. Or if you're halfway through and someone comes behind you and goes, "Hey! Long time no see!"

With modular routines, you can stop at any time and it'll help with handling these situations as you can stop, take your leave and go. As long as I get through 3 effects, I am more or less covered with that group. It varies from group to group, for some groups I may rush through it due to time constraints or the nature of the group, where it is awkward and no matter what you do they are just going to be uninterested. If I parted the Red Sea, they would just be like, "Okay lor."

On the other hand, if there are people who really enjoy themselves, I would spend more time with them. It benefits everybody. I spend more time with them, they laugh and clap more, I feel happier as a performer, my client feels happy, and everybody feels happy.

RDM: You say that you have 2 sets of routines of 3 effects and you perform them interchangeably. So what happens if now, I have 2 sets of routines and after every 2 sets, I'll have to go somewhere to reset my tricks because I can't do it in front of them. I find that stops the tempo so how do you cope with that?

Nique: Tempo as you mentioned is very important. Starting your performance at the event, the tempo is hard to build; the first group is always difficult. Even today, I still find it hard. There are some days I just don't feel like it, you know? You're tired after 3 or 4 kid shows and in the evening you have to do close-up, it needs determination. That is why you should not spend too much time on the 'bad' group because it kills your motivation and disrupts your momentum. Once you have a good group, keep them. It's a strange thing but your good groups will keep coming.

Okay, back to the question. I work the reset into the trick itself, so at the end of the sequence I know that certain things will always be in certain places. Let's say for extreme burn, my extreme burn is kept inside my jacket's pocket. So what happens is, after the effect happens I'll keep the money. I do do do do do, and I'll know everything will reset itself because of the design. All I have to do to reset is put my hand inside to reset it, it's just the matter of knowing which flap to push. You just got to know the orientation you put it in. All these come with practice! To actually do it and know that if I orientate the fold this way, then later my hand goes in and I'll have to do that, flip it over and it's reset. So it's a matter of structuring things. But extreme burn is something that I would reset while going to the next group.

RDM: How about resetting your decks?

Nique: Sometimes, as a professional performer, it's worth it to change the effect or the method slightly just so that the effect resets itself. For the Red-Blue double-backers, they're always here to have them out is just a matter of taking them out and putting them into the deck, it's quite easily accomplished in between effects.

You don't have to be instantly ready-to-go the moment you're finished with a group...while introducing yourself, your hands can be doing this *fumbles around*. Nowadays, I just tell them I'm the magician and I'm not shy about it. Just be proud that you're the magician, because it may sound tacky saying "Hi, I'm the magician and I'm going to show you some tricks." But if you act confident about it then a certain 'air' will be projected..this 'air' of Good Stuff and people will reciprocate with

“Okay, let’s watch!” instead of being shy. Now that you mention it, I do reset some things in front of the audience, making all sorts of funny actions which may not be the best but it works for me. Haha.

RDM: So sorry to take up so much of your time!

Nique: No, it’s fine!

RDM: LAST QUESTION ☺ Tell us something that no one knows about you. Maybe something that not even your wife knows...

Nique: MY WIFE?! Hahaha! Hmm let me think...

RDM: Or share with us about a funny incident or most interesting incident while performing?

Nique: Most interesting incident while performing? Nothing very interesting, just a lot of funny or weird stuff. Okay, I used to have this guy... Oh but this is not magic-related, it’s music as I was doing music quite a bit at one time. There was this old man who would come and support me and my band mates. He would come up to us and would take individual photos of us... every week, whenever we were performing. And the next week, he would come up to you personally and give you a developed copy of the previous week’s photo. He would get you to sign it and you would think that you would give it to him, right? But no, he gives it to you! I found that guy very very cute. Ah, there has to be something more interesting la! Man... I can’t think of anything that might be news-worthy or shocking. Oh, character-wise, I need to do something over and over again, I am the kind that would lock the door 10 times just to make sure it’s closed.

RDM: That’s like OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)!!

Nique: Yeah yeah yeah!! A little bit! I’m a little bit like that. I’m extremely obsessive. Once I do something, I need to learn everything about it but once I learn everything about it, I will stop and look for something else to do. I’m very into handicraft and at one time I was very into making wallets. So I learnt how to sew and in the process learnt how to make gas wallets and stuff. I had a wallet which worked as a fire wallet, a peek wallet and a card wallet. It was a strange strange looking design...

Nique: But once I learnt how to make it, I stopped. Then I looked for something else to do. I’m thinking about learning how to make sushi next! Outside of magic, I try to learn a lot of other things and I’m very obsessive. Once I want to learn something, I would spend hours and hours and a lot of money just to buy raw materials just to make something and after I made it and know how it’s done, I throw it away and then I look for something else. That’s how I spend my time.

RDM: Thank you very much!

Nique: Thank you thank you!