

## **Transcript of interview with JC Sum and Ning**

**J C Sum:** So.. Tell me first, what is the goal of Red Dot Magic?

*Feel the irony here.. Haha.. We were supposed interview him but the first question was asked by him..*

**Thor:** Haha.. The main goal of RDM is to promote local magicians. Its really fun to go around and sourcing for all these top-notch Singapore magicians like how we went to interview \*\*\*\*\* and catching up on what is he is up to.

*It would be revealed soon on RDM. Be sure to stay tuned to check it out.*

**J C Sum:** Ooo, he is making a new dvd?

**Thor:** \*\*\*\*\*

**Vogue:** Because we think that the magic scene in Singapore is still very under-publicised.

**J C Sum:** It's not what we called mainstream yet, the thing is what Ning and I have done in recent times is to bring it to mainstream. There are pros but most pros do kids magic and family magic and stuff like that, so we are the only group that does mainstream high profile projects within the last 2 years, with Ultimate Magic being one of them. So I think what this has done is that it is an effect you see. When we are just doing card tricks or flourishes, it is a very underground and niche kind of thing as a hobby and there is little commercial value in that.

**J C Sum:** I mean how do you create the value? Same thing with magic, when I first started out, everyone was telling me it has to be done kids shows only. If you want to do magic full time, it has to be kids shows only. I didn't believe that, i believed that the level of magic then is not sophisticated enough to command a particular commercial value. So right now with our projects people are investing. We just did the Impossible Journey? Did you guys catch it?

**Thor:** We.. were busy with something yea..

*Nono we aren't going to expose our lifestyle thereby exposing our identities!*

**J C Sum:** Ok, so it was five thousand people down, STB (Singapore Tourism Board) endorsed it, Central paid for it, everyone was happy, what this has proven was that magic can be a mainstream product. People are investing one hundred thousand in this magic project and it is a good thing. Never has that been done before. So i think what Ning and I have done is from the mainstream level is that we bring interest from the mainstream level, people see that local magic is of this kind of calibre and level and people will start saying that "Maybe we can start hiring our local guys." so we definitely changed that, with the impalement cage, with the Teleportation act and The Impossible Journey and Ultimate Magic we definitely changed that.

**Vogue:** So how did you come up with the concept of working with Ning?

**J C Sum:** I knew she was around since 2004. She was doing her own thing I was doing my own thing and then only at 2006 we actually met when we were doing a filming on street magic thing for Mediacorp. A mutual magician friend asked her would you like to come and check it out. So she came down.

**Ning:** You know Kovan Heartland mall? They used to have this magic shop, so I competed in this competition organized by them...

**J C Sum:** Magic Unlimited.

**Ning:** Yea, that is the one where I came 2nd runner's up and then he heard about it and so that same night it was the Singapore Association of Magicians had an event, that annual thing at Raffles Hotel..

**J C Sum:** That is right.

**Ning:** So he was there and I met him. Then we started talking for the first time la. He invited me down to the concept magic studio and the rest was HISTORY! haha..

**J C Sum:** Of course she started out with us doing close-up and working on her character.. it was a progressive thing not just overnight. She had to work her way up.

**Ning:** I worked hard okay!! I lost toe nails ok!

**Vogue:** I mean how did you decide on the illusions you would want to do for Ultimate Magic? Given the fact that you have an arsenal of illusions to choose from.

**J C Sum:** We had an arsenal like you said, but for Ultimate Magic we created a few more just for the show. One that went on the show full-time was Revo-illusion, Extreme burn, Spiker and the Cross-country Teleportation all created for The Arena.. and Multiplying Bottles!

**Ning:** Yea.. I don't think there was ever like 2 people doing it at once. (*it refers to multiplying bottles*)

**Vogue:** I didn't quite expect the Torn and Restored Rope and the Fork Bending. I've read reviews about what is coming up and that came as a fresh surprise!

**J C Sum:** In August we starting doing sneak previews, as you know we can design something on our head but when we actually tested it on real audience different people had different feedback. So we fine-tuned the show. I definitely wanted a UV segment inside because it just changes things you know, even for 2-3 minutes the whole paradigm shift and your eyes have to adjust.. It just looks beautiful and that is part of the one girl show actually. We included in that fork bending is something we have been doing but we added in the show.

**Vogue:** I read online that world renowned magicians such as Tim Ellis have commented on their working experience in different countries and lamented on the dead cold response of the Singapore audiences. How do you guys deal with that?

**J C Sum:** First of all Ultimate Magic, the weekend shows tend to be catered more for the tourist and local expats and all. But generally the show is generally catered 90% for tourist. The business model is catered for the tourists market. We are doing the show everyday, 2 shows a day, it is not catered for local crowd but yes Saturday and all tend to be more tourist expats. But like you saw a whole row of I guess living in Singapore foreigners expats. So yeah but Singaporean audiences tend to be more reserved.

**Ning :** I think its our culture. (*Together with JC – Some obvious chemistry there*) it's like you are in school where you just sit down and shut up.

**Vogue:** But I thought that tonight's performance was funny especially when the audiences seem to be reserved in responding. The sarcasm included was totally humorous!

*Vogue was reminiscing the miser's dream routine*

**J C Sum:** Its not sarcasm! (HAHA) we are having fun we are kind of like educating the audience as well "thank for you for the burst of silence" and everybody laughs. Its sarcasm but it's also how you deliver it. So I think as long as it's more for the fun its fine. We understand that the Singapore audiences are unique just like any other countries. For example the Iranians, they don't clap until the end of the act. You know magic has many multiple phases within the act there may be many magic effects. At a magic convention you can expect the technically magic audiences to clap at every effect. They don't clap because they think its interrupting your performance. They will wait till the end of your performance. It's just recognizing your audience. Singapore audiences are the same in fact I think the fact they come to pay for the tickets says a lot already. So I think it's just a different audience altogether.

**Vogue:** So do you guys have any upcoming project?

**J C Sum:** Well we just finished **The Impossible Journey** and that is a big project so we don't intend to do any mega big illusions this year. But we are going up to the UK where Ning will be the first Singaporean to ever headline an overseas magic convention she'll be the star performer of the gala show in the UK. This will be 31<sup>st</sup> of January. So we'll be taking a break for the moment. Ning will be the guest performer while Ill be the lecturer. (South England magic convention)

**Ning:** You know magic magazine "magicseen" ? So basically I have two articles in their magazine so the organizers of the event thought it will be interesting if they sign me up, so during Chinese New Year period next year, JC and I will be there for one week that will be the first convention in the UK before Blackpool convention.

**Thor:** So was it like how did this thing with arena tie up? Did you all approach them or did they approach you?

**J C Sum:** No, they approached us. They wanted to do something magic-centric and they wanted to have a permanent show to have permanent show to basically...on top of that they are still a regular club. But u see a club is not utilized at the earlier part of the day because people start coming at 10 so they decided to have some activity. So they decided on a magic show so they look for ...in their words they look for the best.

**Ning:** Based on our track records, they called us celebrity magicians because no other magicians had the kind of media coverage that we had.

**J C Sum:** One thing was media coverage another thing was the ability to produce such a show as well as of this scale. But the same time economical on a point of view, you saw how we are packed in so the show has to be modular and they did look for other magicians as well both foreign and local but they chose in their opinion they the best la.

**Thor:** So is there a business side to magic that we never know?

**J C Sum and Ning:** Oh definitely!

**Ning:** *Show business...*

**Thor:** What do you do to get such a business?

**J C Sum:** That's another trick you got to know, one of the harder part of the trick you got to learn in the commercial aspect which I think it is something we have done quite well. I mean firstly you need good product you need good magic so I think Ultimate Magic is a good showcase it is a good show given the context of the space we had and the place we are in and how big the space is so don't compare it to a national stadium show. So we are what we are a medium sized show. Pit by Las Vegas standard I think we got a world class show based on that. So the magic is good and there's a good range of pure entertainment, illusions, sleight of hand and I think everyone's happy. They can see the skill and they can see the technique. People who like the big stuff can see the Revolution big and impressive so we have got a good mix and how you come up with it with a show like this? It takes experience as well. I mean coming with a one hour show it's not easy and to hold the audiences it's not easy as well. Not only that, they are paying audiences, so they got to feel it was worth it. So I think its many things all together so not just anyone who can just put together a show.

*After which we continued the interview in a more personal tone as we got more insights to the performances and trick which unfortunately shall remain with us due to protection of intellectual property and respect for the performers JC Sum and Ning.*