

JIM SISTI



Fantasio: Magic's Renaissance Man

There's a story, more than likely apocryphal, told about the great sculptor, Michelangelo. He was showing someone around his studio and pointed toward a towering, nineteen-foot block of marble. "What do you see there?" the great sculptor inquired. "I see a block of stone," the guest replied. The sculptor looked at his friend, again at the marble, and simply said, "I see David."

It may be this ability to look at commonplace objects and envision unique creations that separates visionaries from the rest of us. Certainly, anyone who can look at a piece of plastic that was used to hold six packs of soda pop in place in a grocery store and imagine any kind of use for it, let alone anything useful in a magician's act, deserves the title of "visionary."

However, that's precisely what Fantasio saw in his mind's eye when he turned that piece of plastic around in his hand on that fateful day in 1966 in a New York City grocery store. He didn't see a hunk of plastic; he saw a candle that would be there one moment and vanish in the twinkle of an eye. He saw walking sticks that would appear from nowhere, change colors and then disappear again without a trace. He saw something everyone else had apparently missed, and changed the face of manipulative magic forever.

The man who would be Fantasio was born Ricardo Roucau in 1936 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Like many others, young Ricardo learned his first magic from a child's set at the age of eight but quickly progressed and at the tender age of 22, became a full-time professional magician. Due to the unfortunate placement of a marquee in an early promotional photograph, his first professional name was the forgettable "Larry the Magician." Soon afterward, while touring in Uruguay, he met the woman who would ultimately be his life's companion. A dancer, her professional name was Monica but her given name was Margarita, which means "daisy" in English. They fell in love and decided to form a magical partnership. Thus, a new magic duo, "Larry and Daisy," came into being.

It was the legendary card expert John

Scarne, after seeing their marvelous act, who first extended an invitation to this young couple to perform in America. He also offered a piece of profes-

sional advice, telling them that the name "Larry and Daisy" would never work in America; it was just too common. The budding performer subsequently adopted the name of a popular brand of South American playing cards—"Fantasio"—and his career began to skyrocket.

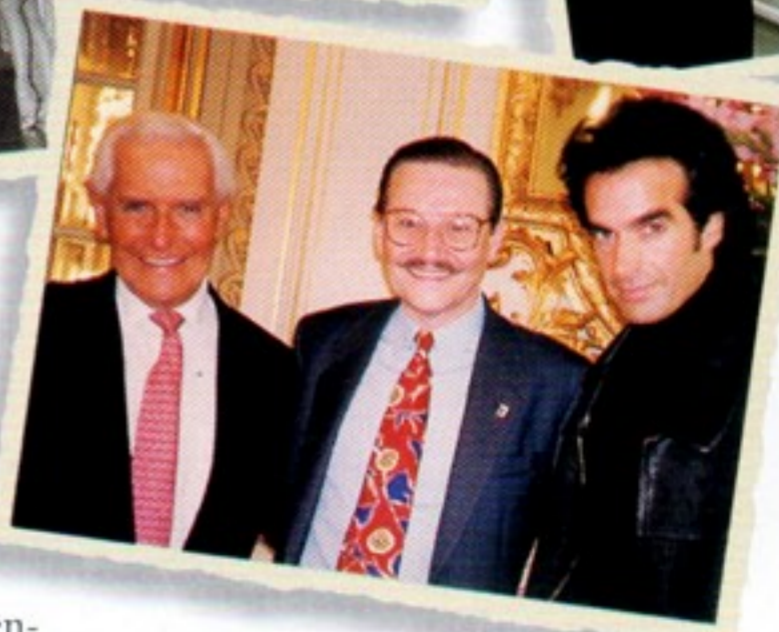
Fantasio performed professionally for almost 20 years, playing almost every major city and venue in the world. His performing resume even includes several appearances on the prestigious Ed Sullivan TV variety show. In fact, Fantasio and Monica had the distinction of appearing on the very first color telecast of the Sullivan program. The legendary performers that Fantasio has shared the stage with reads like a Who's Who of show business and include Bob Hope, The Beatles, Xavier Cugat, Nancy

"Triple Color Changing Cane" effect. This process became tedious and Fantasio abandoned the trick in 1964 but never forgot the idea.

When he found that springy plastic in 1966, a moment he still describes as his "greatest magical moment," he once again pursued his ideas for the ultimate appearing and vanishing canes and candles. Once Fantasio returned to his apartment and cut the plastic to fashion his first vanishing candle, his quest to find more of the material began. What followed proves the definition of genius attributed to Edison - that it's 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. He began a tireless search through all of New York's plastic suppliers and finally tracked down the source. The supplier was reluctant at first, but Fantasio's persistence paid off and finally, he obtained enough of the material to begin production of the first Fantasio Vanishing Canes.

The initial advertisement appeared for the new product in the September 1967 issue of *The Linking Ring* and success was almost immediate. In fact, because their New York

City apartment was not suited to become a production facility almost overnight, the couple moved to Florida in late 1967, buying a house with an extra room that could be used to manufacture the new product. Other products fol-



Clockwise from top: Fantasio and Ed Sullivan, 1965; Fantasio, wife Monica, Ed Sullivan, 1969; Fantasio with David Copperfield and Copperfield's father, Hy Kotkin in Paris, 1995; Fantasio's *Fantastique Show Review*, Acapulco, 1976.

Sinatra, Liberace, Louis Armstrong, Tony Bennett and many others.

Being a performer, however, is one thing but how does one make the jump to becoming one of magic's most innovative and prolific inventors? As in most cases, necessity is the mother of invention. Back in 1960, Fantasio had a German-made Vanishing Cane break in half. Not wanting to completely discard it, he made a Vanishing Candle from the pieces of the cane to replace the waxed paper-style "Atomic Candle" he had been using. Though it required an extensive paint job to make the shards of metal into an acceptable candle, this formed the idea of painting the existing Vanishing Canes different colors to create a

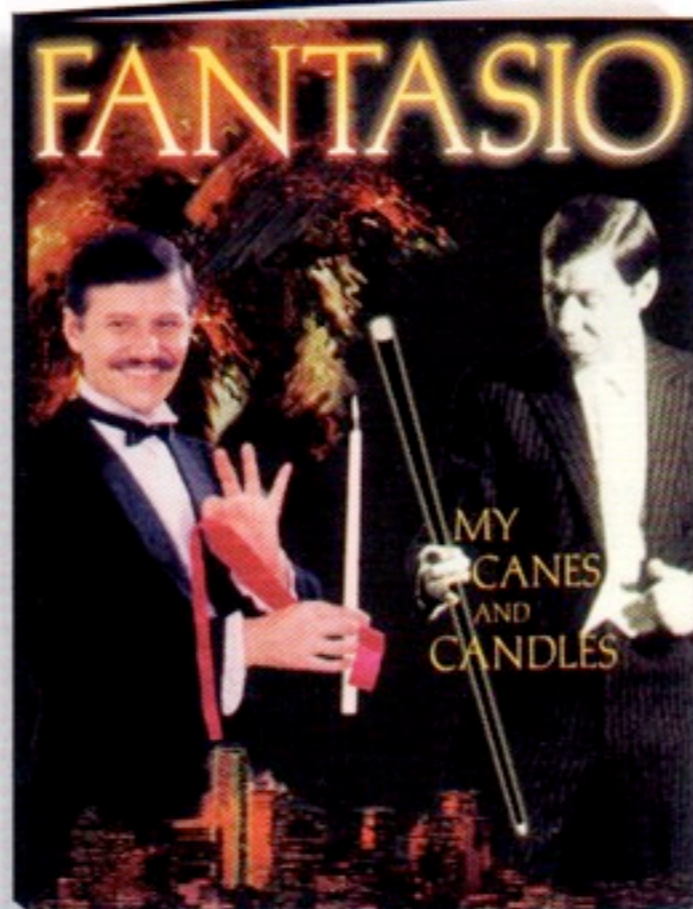
lowed the "Vanishing Cane" shortly afterward, including the "Color Changing Cane" and "Vanishing Candle." Fantasio products began to show up in the acts of the world's leading magicians and they still continue to do so.

Fantasio's new book from L & L Publishing, *My Canes and Candles*, is not only a comprehensive, exhaustive reference work on his inventions, but also serves as a monu-

ment to the substantial mark his creations have made in contemporary magic. Consider this a huge instruction manual that no user of these extremely clever devices should be without. Very seldom does one get personal instruction on the use of anything from the original creator so this book is a rare commodity, indeed.

Those who don't do manipulative magic should also be aware that there are a lot of things in this book for them, even if they don't plan on ever doing any kind of manip act. For example, did you know that you can use a Fantasio cane as a highly effective card sword? What's more, it supplies a kicker ending that cannot be accomplished with the traditional, more expensive prop! Magicians who work for children will also be impressed with the use of a Fantasio cane for the classic 20th Century Silks effect. And, there's a lot more where those ideas from.

What we are witnesses to here is the birth of a classic, a book that future generations of magicians will consider the definitive work on its subject matter. And, it will, no doubt, take its place next to *Expert Card Technique*, *Rice's Encyclopedia of Silk Magic*, *Modern Coin Magic* and the like. Fantasio's *My Canes and Candles* really is a fitting testimonial to a man who, just like Michelangelo seeing a biblical king in a block of stone, saw a world of magic in a lump of plastic and decided to share it with the rest of us. *



A LIFETIME OF MAGICAL INNOVATION BETWEEN TWO COVERS...

Fantasio - My Canes and Candles

Fantasio's innovative magical inventions have been used for decades now by many of the world's most famous magicians. Now, for the first time, the genius behind the magic explains everything about his brilliant creations in *My Canes and Candles*.

In this beautiful, fully-illustrated volume, you'll learn everything you ever needed to know about Fantasio's appearing and vanishing canes, candles and wands: their care and maintenance, complete effects and routines, and innovative ideas that could only have been thought of by their inventor.

Contents include — The Fantasio Canes and Candles • The Appearing Cane • Tricks with the Appearing Cane • The Vanishing Cane • Tricks with the Vanishing Cane • The Vanishing Wand • Tricks with the Vanishing Wand • The Vanishing Candle • Tricks with the Vanishing Candle • The Appearing Candle • Tricks with the Appearing Candle • Cane and Candle Combinations • More With Canes • More With Candles • Canes and Candles Encore • Canes and Candles to Bouquets • Tricks with Feather Bouquets • and more!

There are ideas here for all magicians, even for those who don't perform manipulative magic. What's more, this is the very first time that all of this information has been collected in one volume, making it an instant classic and a must-have for every magician's library.

"Fantasio, you are one of my true 'inspirators.'"
— David Copperfield

"Fantasio, thank you for what you have done for magic."
— Lance Burton

"Fantasio, you levitated the stature of magic to an elegant art form."
— Siegfried and Roy

"Fantasio, you are a very talented magician. My sincere thanks for your many fine contributions to our art of magic."
— Mark Wilson

"Fantastic is the word for Fantasio."
— Walt Disney

Hardcover, 8.5 x 11, 136 pages, illustrated, dozens of photographs and full-color dust jacket.

\$39.95



Upper left: Fantasio with Monica, Brazil, 1972; Roy, Fantasio, Monica, Siegfried and Lance Burton, Las Vegas, 1996; Fantasio, London, 1991; Fantasio's Magic Room and office in Coral Gables, Florida (and what you see here is just a corner of it!!)

