

# FANTASIO: MAGIC'S POLISHED GENTLEMAN

**P**ROBABLY NO ONE in the recent history of stage magic can inspire so many adjectives to describe his performing skills as can this very reserved and oh-so-talented artist whose name instantly invokes the images of disappearing (and appearing) canes and candles.

Deservedly, he has been lauded by many, and has been called:

"One of the most accomplished magicians ever to appear in Las Vegas."

"An uncanny performer who has a terrific impact on the audience."

"He is a show-stopper and pace-changer...a superb, clean working South American Magician who enchants and mystifies with smooth manipulations."

Perhaps the late Walt Disney said it best, when he intoned: "Fantastic is the word for Fantasio."

For Argentine-born Ricardo "Fantasio" Roucau—whose magical talents first surfaced in South America, were nurtured and developed in the United States, and then were displayed the world over—truly deserves his enviable position at the top of this excitingly fabulous, but all-too-frequently fickle profession that lavishly bestows honors with one hand while it breaks performers' hearts with the other.

## ***Polished Gentleman Of The Stage***

It is difficult to watch Fantasio on stage without becoming immersed in his performance and over-

whelmed by his personal magnetism. At a lecture during Tannen's 1989 Jubilee, we sat barely six feet from Fantasio's hands—and although the audience of







amateur and professional magicians were made privy to the inner workings of his illusions, his smoothness and polish made it difficult to acknowledge that we were watching mechanically aided effects in the dexterous hands of a master, and not "real magic."

More than anything else, Fantasio is a master at his demanding art. To watch him work—particularly at close range—is to watch a silken demonstration of artistry, with polish, professionalism, perfection and pride. The man glides through each illusion—even while *explaining* and *demonstrating* it to his audience.

His appearance and attire are a lesson drawn from "Dress For Success," whether he is trodding the stage in an impeccably tailored tuxedo, or surrounded closely by his "peers" at a lecture session in the studied informality appropriate to the occasion.

And everything works! Everything. Every effect. His stage and lecture performances contain no unscheduled "sorrlys." It is the perfection for which Fantasio is justly famous.

The effects he performs work smoothly. Those he offers for sale to the magic fraternity are designed to work, again and again and again, and to do so as flawlessly as if the master himself were handling them.

Perhaps it is this perfection which has made these effects so commercially viable. If a magician purchases one of Fantasio's effects and learns to work with it well, it will work—time and again—and for many years to come.

### **Pace-Setter/History-Maker**

Fantasio was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on October 3, 1936, and his interest in magic began at a tender age with the South American equivalent of a Gilbert Magic Set. The first magician he actually saw perform—Fred Bamberg, "Fu Manchu" spawned in him an eagerness to learn more about the art of magic.

Exposure to Fred Astaire's performance in "Three Little Words"—in which the dancer played a

magician—made young Ricardo determined to be the best in the business, and by age seventeen, he was taking sleight-of-hand lessons and belonged to three magic clubs.

He read every Spanish language text on magic that he could get his hands on, and when the supply of available books ran out, he taught himself to read and write English in order to expand his magical knowledge.

By 1959, Ricardo was a contestant in sleight-of-hand at the Argentine Magic Congress, and went home with first prize for an act featuring billiard ball manipulation. During that same year, he turned pro, making his debut on television in Montevideo, Uruguay.

1959 also was the year in which he convinced a lovely young dancer named Monica to become his bride—and subsequently his performing partner. As a team, they met with almost instant success, appearing all over South America and the Caribbean, playing the huge Hilton Hotel chain.

As the years rolled by, the magic business has been kind to Fantasio—a kindness abetted by his performing ability. His career soared in the United States, and he was booked into such famous establishments as the Latin Quarter and Radio City Music Hall in New York City, and the Desert Inn in Las Vegas.

According to a story which appeared in the June 1966 edition of I.B.M.'s "Linking Ring," after one of

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### **A Tribute To A Friend**

I met Fantasio for the first time in 1971 when, after long years in the USA, he and Monica had returned to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to work for a couple of months. I was 16 and I already had read about him and the Four Prizes he'd won for his Canes & Candles, and I couldn't believe it when I saw in the newspaper that he would go to perform in a Show ten minutes from home!

Of course, I went there. How many times? 50? 200? Who knows! I still can describe his routine today—step by step.

This meeting made such an impression on me that it has stayed with me all my life. Ricardo was and still is one of my role models as a person and as a professional, and I still am proud to be one of his friends, almost twenty years later.

He loves Magic and still today, after all those years, he continues enjoying new tricks and thinking up new ideas for the Magic Fraternity. His unique creative mind always lets him come up with something new to show us.

Thanks to Fantasio & Monica for writing such an important chapter in the History of Magic! —*Marcelo Contento, Boston, MA*



his performances at the Desert Inn, Fantasio was stopped on the way to his dressing room by a spectator who was incensed that Fantasio had not done his dove production that traditionally had ended his act. The man held up his handkerchief and demanded he "make the pigeon appear." The dove still was loaded into Fantasio's coat, and he promptly obliged the demanding spectator! The guy walked away muttering, "I can't believe it. I just can't believe it!"

### **Making Television History**

Then—at just about the same time Ed Sullivan "discovered" the Beatles, he discovered Fantasio, too, and history has it that Fantasio performed on five occasions on what then was undoubtedly America's most famous and popular live television variety show, and was—unquestionably—the most highly paid magician ever to appear before that network extravaganza's demanding audience.

Fantasio also made magic history in 1968, when he won the top four awards at the I.B.M. and SAM conventions of that year. In a competition with a host of other magicians, he won awards for: Most Original Effect; Most Commercial Tricks; Best Stage Effect; Senior Originality Award. This was the first and only time, to date, that a single performer took these

four top awards.

The routine that copped these honors then subsequently became available in magic shops across the nation, and serious magicians were able to purchase the Triple Color-Changing Cane To Double Bouquet Of Flowers and Candelabra.

Fantasio went on to still greater heights in the magic kingdom. In 1973, he and Monica added daughter Jackie to their act, and created a show titled "Fantastique." Admittedly, it was just that. And it went on to play for three years.

Dapper Fantasio played in Tokyo at the Grand Prix of World Magic in 1978—an event which became the biggest production in the history of Japanese magic—perhaps partly because it coincided with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Nippon TV Network.

He also was star of the gala show of the First Mexican Convention in Magic, and played on four occasions to FISM congresses.

Fantasio still travels worldwide, but now makes only select stage appearances and lectures at conventions and other magic gatherings, preferring to reside in Miami and supervise the manufacture of his magic effects (he has created more than one-hundred), and to pass along his knowledge to magicians who aspire to greater achievement.

Ricardo "Fantasio" Roucau has obtained nearly one-hundred magic awards and diplomas. He is an honorary member of dozens of magic societies. He has been featured on eighteen (now nineteen) magazine covers around the world. He also has played on hundreds of television shows.

Fantasio and his lovely wife, Monica, are an inspiration to magicians everywhere, and a credit to the professionalism and creativity of the magic community. Whenever you uncover an opportunity to watch this maestro work, don't pass it by. You are sure to benefit from this most enjoyable experience. There is only one Fantasio. Bravo! □



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