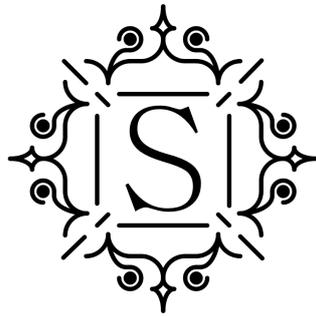




VIPSTUDY CREATIVITY



CREATIVITY - DAY ONE

In this lesson, we discuss what is meant by creativity. The dictionary defines creativity as, "*the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness*".

Over the past goodness knows how many years, many magicians have approached me telling me they do not consider themselves creative. They often ask how someone creates magic and invents original ideas.

If we look back at the definition of creativity, the key word in that definition in my eyes is, '*something*'.

There is no simple, definitive example of what creativity is. Creativity is many things to many people. For example, a waiter may not be considered creative but when something goes wrong in the kitchen, the customers never know. Because the waiter has to think creatively and find

a way around the issue that benefits everyone. It doesn't telegraph to the customer that there was ever an issue.

Now I realise, you may not consider that being creative but it fits the definition perfectly. The waiter used his *imagination to create something*. In this situation, that something was a solution to a problem.

If you were to think about your job or your life, I bet there are countless times in a day that you have to use your imagination to create something. Perhaps if you are a parent, it might be turning a spoon of baby food into an aeroplane which helps your upset baby to eat their dinner.

Or, perhaps you have a job away from magic in which you have to use your imagination to problem solve during tense moments. The point I am trying to make is, if you feel like you are not a

creative person, the chances are, you are creative every day of your life. You just need to realise what being creative is.

But how do we 'make' creativeness happen? Well, this is different to each individual and for each case.

It may be out of frustration, necessity, love, anger, boredom, stress or any number of other reasons.

When I was 16, I created my first magic trick. The reason being, I was on holiday and at the time was obsessed with the '*Haunted Deck*' plot. I had learned a brilliant effect called '*Jumping Jack Flash*' but it required a special card to achieve the effect. I of course, being on holiday, did not have it. Out of pure frustration, I sat on the beach and stared at the deck thinking about the methodology of Jumping Jack Flash to see if there was a way I could achieve it without the use of that special card. Surprisingly, I managed to do it. I discovered a way to produce the exact same effect but using a normal, un-gimmicked deck of cards.

So, you see, in this instance, there were several factors involved. Firstly, my love of the plot and how much I wanted to perform it. Secondly, my frustration at not having the gimmick needed. Thirdly, was my knowledge of previous methods. All of these things contributed to my effect 'Scared' being created.

14 years on and I have created countless magic effects, performances and lots of other things and each time it's because of different reasons. I have learnt over the years, how I think and how I create. I have my own thought processes and methodologies to help me create.

With you, it will be entirely different but hopefully, through this mini course, you can start to question what motivates you and what you can do to harness your creative side.

Please use these notes as reference throughout the course and use the available forums as I will be posting in there as the week goes on. Also, do not forget, there will be a live stream on the final Sunday of this week in which you can ask direct questions with me and we can discuss further any queries, ideas or input you may have!

For now, I need you to do something for day 2. I have created a virtual escape room for you. The details of what to do can be found on the next page. Please be aware, it is designed for computers as opposed to phones or tablets (although it will work on them also, just not as well)

I look forward to day two and for now, enjoy The Create Escape....

YOU MUST HELP!

On Friday 23rd August 1998, Sir David Forsight was murdered at his home.

The police upon inspection discovered, whilst nothing had been tampered with, the doors and windows were locked from the inside and there were no obvious ways in or out of the room. Even so, someone managed to kill him from inside.

This morning you received an email. A hacker has infected your computer and has given you 10 minutes to help him find what it was Sir David was hiding in that room. He has given you a photo of Sir Davids room on the day of his death. If you can crack the code in 10 minutes, he will spare you, if not, who knows what might happen...

Please set a timer for 10 minutes. If you go over, keep going until you crack the code. You are looking for a password. This password is an English word and links all of the clues of the room. It may tell you the name of the criminal, or perhaps the murder weapon, or indeed what he was hiding. Note, you may also need a pen and paper to complete your task.

When you think you know the word, type it in at the bottom of the screen and click submit. Click on things in the room and you might find something interesting!

Good luck!

<https://www.vipstudy.co.uk/createescape127364517263>



CREATIVITY - DAY TWO

In this lesson, we think about why we create and the different ways we can be creative. I asked a few friends in magic to provide some insight into what they consider it is to be creative. How they are creative in their everyday lives and any advice they may have.

You can see the huge array of different answers and philosophies which shows, there really is no correct answer nor can we really say what is and what isn't being creative.

Yesterday, I asked you to play a game. The escape room was an interesting exercise to show that, although everyone had the same set of clues and although everyone had the same set of tools at their disposal, each of us took a different pathway and came to a completely different answer.

So how does this help us be creative in terms of magic? Well, like a few of the

creators said in the video, there are different ways they consider themselves creative. Some create new plots in magic whilst others can take a look at something already existing and improve or adapt it to their needs.

This little escape room exercise was to show you that you can be creative and come to your own conclusions when faced with an already existing set of clues.

There is no reason now that you could not take an already existing magic effect, move or idea and see it differently. Adapting or changing it for the better and turning it into something brand new.

When I was drama school, I distinctly remember a 'creation game' we played. The teacher would take a random object, for example, a black plastic filing tray. (but anything may be used) She would make us...

sit in a circle around the object. Now, we were asked to each take the object one at a time and use it in a way it was not intended for. For example, one classmate sat in the tray and pretended it was a sled. Another placed it over the head of another classmate, got a cup of water and poured it over the top, using the tray as an umbrella.

This is something that has stuck with me throughout my magic career and I often go back to. A simple way to start thinking creatively is to use an already existing idea (an effect) but changing one aspect of it.

A few examples of existing effects... Matthew Johnson has a fantastically cheesy effect called 'Black Is'. Essentially it is a sponge ball routine but using little sponge letter Is that are black. He has added some quirky little lines in there which make the whole routine super commercial, funny and feels like a totally different effect.

The changes are incredibly subtle but change the feeling of the whole routine. An example of my own I have recently worked on, I love the 'PK Touch' plot and use it heavily in my working set. There is a fantastic version called 'D'Angelos Touch' in which you stand behind the spectator, mime touching them and they raise their hand in the air to indicate a tap.

Before, I was doing it somewhat silently until I took a step back and realised it looked as though I was

controlling their actions. Much like a puppet master pulling at the strings of a puppet. So, I have now placed in a quirky piece of script which makes it seem as though I am turning them into 'my puppet'.

When they have their eyes closed, I say, "Do you know the story of Pinocchio? Pinocchio believes he is a real boy when in actuality, he has invisible strings holding him up. Please, as you raise your hands, keep this story in your mind"

The audience at large correlates Pinocchio as being the spectator. It then seems as though I am controlling him like a puppet. Much like Pinocchio himself. Once again, this is a tiny, subtle change but gives a totally different feel to the effect.

So, a simple way that you can begin to think creatively is to take a routine you already do and change one aspect of it. If it is a coin trick, see if you can use a different object and see how that makes the routine feel. Or perhaps there is an effect about a guy called Sam who happens to be a Bellhop and instead of using playing cards, perhaps use photos.

The change doesn't have to be substantial, it just needs to change the narrative or the feel of the effect. Head to the forums and let people know what effect you used and what you have changed out. See what others did also!

"WHEN YOU CAN DO A COMMON
THING IN AN UNCOMMON WAY; YOU
WILL COMMAND THE ATTENTION OF
THE WORLD"

- GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER



CREATIVITY - DAY THREE

In this lesson, we discuss forced creativity. When I say forced creativity, I don't mean that we are forcing ourselves to be creative but rather, circumstances arise that mean we *have* to be creative.

One of the best ways to find your creative side is to gig. When you have a regular gig or residency, there are a huge number of factors that will require you to discover your creative side.

For example, hecklers. Hecklers force us to become creative and find ways to get around their annoyances to save the moment. It is only through gigging that I can now be 95% confident that anything thrown my way, I can get out of. Of course, we are always learning and always coming across new situations so it will never be 100%.

Another interesting thing is, the routines you perform, you become

more creative with. For example, I have been thinking of designing a dual reality booktest for many years. This came about from my continued performance of 'The Mother of all Booktest'. In the book, a few of the force words can actually be used to give a seemingly different and more personal revelation.

For example, 'Jackhammer, Mountainside, Receptionist and Loudspeaker' are just four of the force words that can be used to create a far more sensational revelation.

Let me explain further. When I know the spectator is thinking of the word 'Jackhammer', I give my attention to a different spectator and try to divine their word instead. However, half way through, I will look back at the spectator thinking of 'Jackhammer' and say something along the lines of, "Who is he?" They will look confused. "I don't know who Jack is, but please

get him out of your mind”

They will instantly react absolutely stunned. But to the rest of the spectators, it now seems as though you have revealed something far more personal than a word from a book. Then, when it comes to the revelation of the word, “With you i’m getting someone holding a tool of some kind. Is this like a large hammer or something?”

They of course react and confirm you are correct. 8 times out of 10, they will never actually say what the word is because the confirmation of the word by the spectator is all everyone needs.

Suddenly, you have not just revealed the word in the book but also revealed they are thinking of Jack, whoever that may be!

Again, with receptionist, I would look back and say something like, “Who is she? I don’t know who she is, this woman at the front door but please get her out of your mind”. Now most people associate a receptionist as a female. Equally, they would be found at the front of a building. However, the wording implies a front door of the persons house. They will react positively because you are getting their thoughts, albeit not exactly, it is still close enough that they know what you mean.

Now, at the beginning of this course, you were asked about being creative. I

would say, whilst I haven’t just created a new method, I have been incredibly creative with how I reveal the information and how I can manipulate the existing effect to get even more impact from it.

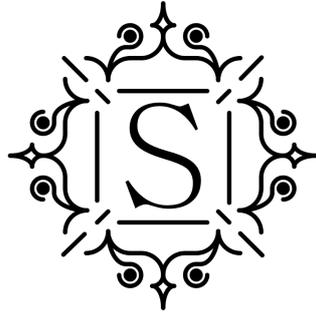
Equally, I work a few different residencies in pubs and restaurants. A lot of the groups are the same every week. Now instead of learning brand new material every week, I take effects I already do to them and change one aspect of them so they feel like a totally different effect. You have to remember that the general public don’t remember cards tricks the way we do. Chances are, they find it hard to remember exactly what happens in a certain trick. They don’t associate a card coming to the top of the deck as an ‘ambitious card’. So, when some of those groups ask me for new tricks, I often show them an effect I have already shown them but changed slightly. They have no idea and they react as if they have never seen it before.

So my advice here is put yourself in a tricky situation. Step out of your comfort zone and let those circumstances force upon you creativity.

Don’t forget, there will be a course dedicated to residencies and getting them. They are the perfect place to help grow your creative process. So stay tuned!

"THE IMPORTANT THING FOR YOU IS
TO BE ALERT, TO QUESTION, TO
FIND OUT, SO THAT YOUR OWN
INITIATIVE MAY BE AWAKENED"

- BRUCE LEE



CREATIVITY – DAY FOUR

In this lesson, we talk about producing your effect. So let's presume, you have come up with an incredible effect and you want to share it with the magic community, what do you do next?

First thing is to make sure the effect works and works well. Perform it as much as you can and make sure it is as awesome in performance as it is amongst your friends and family. Make sure it is marketable and different from what exists.

If it is based on a previous product, find out as much history as you can on the effect because it is very, very easy to re-invent what already exists! It happens to everyone and isn't a bad thing but it can cause many issues to you if you bring it to market and it has already been released.

Send it to a few close magician friends and get their feedback on it. See if they think it is worthy of a release and if

they are working magicians, get them to road test it. If past this point you still feel as though you would like to release, you can start moving forward.

If it is something that uses another method or idea from another magician, reach out and let them know you are thinking of releasing it. Most creators are pretty nice and want to further the art, many will give you permission. If not, ask what you can do to get their permission. Most creators will usually give some input into your effect also. This makes it more marketable. Come up with as many variations as you can because that means more for your money when it comes to those purchasing the effect.

Now you need to decide how you are going to bring the effect to market. There are a few variables and each one has a few more variables but thanks to modern times, we have a ton of ways to market effects. Which is both good

and bad. It means as lot of magic is released everyday which shortens the lifespan of an effect and saturates the market.

The first option is self production. It is literally doing it all yourself. Coming up with the name, designing artwork, sourcing materials, making, marketing and selling. It can be a really daunting task to undertake and you need to make sure it is worth your time. If it is going to take you 10 hours to produce 25 of the product and you're selling the product for £14.99 each, that means you're earning £37.50 an hour. (roughly) Then take your costs of production (for example materials) to make the props and the packaging, suddenly you realise you are working for not a lot.

Remember also, magicians will only pay a certain amount for an effect so putting the price up might not be worth your while either. If magicians think it is to expensive for what it is, then you won't sell any.

The upside is, any profit you do make, you keep and you maintain full control over everything that happens. But to make a really quality product, you'll need good printing, nice packaging, good filming equipment etc. It is never ending. You could however outsource things. Get a designer, someone to make the gimmicks etc. This is an effective way of self production, but of course it will cut into your profits. But this is an option well worth your

consideration. Both are viable options of self production!

The next option is one that I recommend more so. Approaching a reputable company to produce an effect with you. I have more experience with this. I have been privileged to work with Alakazam Magic, Penguin Magic, Murphys Magic and Full 52 Productions but have also been approached by several other companies who have asked to purchase the rights to some of my effects.

My first piece of advice is, do your research on the company. You don't want to receive complaint emails because that company isn't replying to their customers. Your name and their name may become synonymous with each other so it is within your interest to make sure they are reputable. Also remember, that company will potentially earn a good amount of money from your product, so if at any point you feel as though they are under appreciating you or your efforts, move on. It is a partnership and you should have mutual respect for one another.

The two main deals that are normally put forward are a 'buy out' or 'royalty'. There are pros and cons to both and different companies offer different variables and percentages.

A 'buy out' is normally a company purchasing the rights to produce the

product. This means they will agree a fee with you, pay you the fee and they will cover the cost of production. This is a good option for several reasons. Firstly, no work for you. They will take the reins and produce everything for you, from the packaging, filming and marketing etc. They may need to you film the instructions or not depending on what you agree. Always check what you are signing as you need to know what you are giving away. A few creators, myself included have been caught out by contracts that have hidden conditions which give the producer more than just the production rights.

With one company, in the early stages of my career, I signed a contract that I thought just gave the company permission to sell a product on their site. In actuality, I signed a terms & conditions agreement which gave the website digital control of that product. Meaning, if they decided to sell the website, my product would go with it. When I asked them to remove it from the site, they refused and asked me to check what I had signed. Under the agreements, they could decide to remove it or not. They chose not to. I didn't work with that company again.

With a buyout, the company will usually also give you a certain amount of units to sell yourself. The profits of these units are entirely for you and not shared with the company. They will also usually let you buy in more stock but for the wholesale cost.

The second option is royalties. In this case, you and the company agree on a split. They pay a percentage to you and keep a percentage for themselves. Normally their percentage is higher in order to recoup costs of production. Again, they will source gimmicks, film, production and marketing.

The pros and cons of each are, lets presume you are brought out but the product does not sell. The loss then is on the part of the company. They may well not recoup the production costs but there is no loss to you. You have the buy out fee and all is good. However, if they end up selling a large number of units, they will of course make a substantial amount more than you.

With royalties, again, if the product sells none, you make nothing. You don't even have a buy out fee. However, if they sell loads, then you will make a good amount of money. It is also an option with a bit more longevity. Because even after that initial run of sales, over the next year or so, units will sell here and there and your royalties will still add up.

Companies also have a large customer base so they can help get your name out there and get you a following amongst the community!

Which ever road you decided to go down, make sure you follow these steps and all will be good!

"CREATIVITY IS CONTAGIOUS,
PASS IT ON!"

- ALBERT EINSTEIN



CREATIVITY - DAY FIVE

Welcome to workshop day! This is where I sit down and take some random things to create magic with.

If you are a fan of creative courses, please check out 'The Creative Collective Course' from Dave Loosley.

This was an exercise we done together at the Alakazam Academy for Dave's course and it was so much fun!

So here is what you are going to do. Give a friend £10 (or however much you want to go for) and ask them to go to the local £1 store. Have them pick up some things that look interesting.

Then, take them home and set a couple of hours aside to create. Sit down with some scissors, tape, glue, paper, pens and whatever else you have laying around, and try to create some effects using the items that have been brought back from the £1 store! This will be a huge creativity exercise and will open

your mind to possibilities you never knew existed!

Sometimes, just walking around an interesting shop can trigger so many different ideas! In the UK, Wilkos, Tiger, Rymans, WHSmith and as previously mentioned, the £1 shop are all great places to find some cheap but interesting items. These kinds of shops regularly change their stock, so you'll always find something new and exciting! Quite often it is seasonal, so if you would like to create magic for a public holiday like Easter, Christmas, Halloween or anything else, these kinds of shops will help you to create bespoke magic!

If you can't get to a shop? Look through your drawers! We all have that draw full of random things that we're not even sure what's inside. The first drawer we go to when we need something random. Have a look around and see what you can find!

"START WHERE YOU ARE, USE
WHAT YOU HAVE AND DO WHAT
YOU CAN"

- ARTHUR ASHE



CREATIVITY – DAY SIX

As magicians, we have to be creative in more ways than one. When I think about my week on week rota of creative tasks, I have to:

- Create new effects.
- Adapt effects to changing circumstances.
- Upscale and downscale to different venues.
- Create instagram posts to boost engagement and keep me fresh in the minds of my audience.
- Create artwork for my website.
- Create banners for wedding fairs and lectures.
- Create artwork for marketing tricks.
- Write ad copy for tricks and for my website.

This list goes on and on and is ever changing. But you can see, there is far more to being creative than you might have thought at the beginning of the course. And hopefully, 6 days in, if at the beginning of the course, you

thought you were not very creative, perhaps now you are realising that you are more creative than you gave yourself credit for.

All of these things can be learned just by trying them out. I am not a trained designer in any way and yet, the artwork for my products is largely done by me! Including some of the special gimmicked photos in my effects. My wedding fair stands which I have had many magicians request if I can design for them, all designed by me. My website and now many other websites are all designed by me. It sounds impressive, but the reality is, it was just me sitting down and playing around with different softwares and looking up tutorials to get a basic understanding of things and then practicing until I got the hang of it.

Pick up a couple of design books, typographic books. Look at some

design websites and see what they suggest. Be curious, be bold and realise, there is nothing to lose but everything to gain.

We live in an age where information is literally at the touch of a button. You can learn anything from the experts in their field and very cheaply. So why not do it?

Once again, get feedback from your friends and see what they think. I am lucky that one of my best friends from school is an artist and graphic designer so I get feedback from him on my design work. Eventually, you will get into a routine that works for you. You'll discover what you like and what you don't like and what works best for you. It'll end up being a kind of mental template that you can return back to.

Software is also very cheap. I recommend 'Affinity Photo' and 'Affinity Designer'. Both are very easy to use and yet, do the vast array of what other softwares like 'Photoshop' do. But I promise, they are very easy to use after a short amount of time!

Also, look into professional templates to help you along. 'Envato Market' has a ton of cheap professional templates for pretty much any occasion!

Good free stock photos at 'Pixabay' and look at public domains for stock video!

For camera equipment, most phones shoot in 4K now and video editing software comes standard on most computers. You can purchase gimbals and phone camera lenses fairly inexpensively now a-days which will make your video production look more professional.

Lastly, YouTube is your friend for tutorials in how to use software or equipment!

There are tons of great tutorials which are often updated as the software updates!

Use the skills you already have in whatever job you do or have done to help you. There are always transferable skills, you just need to look for them.

"CREATIVITY IS ALLOWING
YOURSELF TO MAKE MISTAKES. ART
IS KNOWING WHICH ONES TO KEEP!"

- SCOTT ADAMS



CREATIVITY - DAY SEVEN

I sincerely hope that this mini course has shown you how you are already a creative force and how to harbour those traits you already have to inject a creative serge into your magic.

As it is the last day, there will be a live stream in which we can discuss anything else in relation to what has been discussed.

If you have any questions for me or fellow VIP Study Alumni, then now is your chance to ask them and hopefully have your questions answered.

I want to round this course off by saying thank you! I really hope you got something from this course and it has helped you in some way. I truly believe that every person has a creative side but we just need to dig deep and mine those little gems from inside. If you began this week thinking you were not creative, I hope now you realise that you are and perhaps not in the way you originally thought.

I also have to give huge thanks to those who have taken the time to write up about their creative process or to record videos for this course.

Please remember, any questions, ideas, comments or suggestions can be posted in the forums.

Until the next course, happy creating!

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