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Review by David Britland

PSYCRECY 1. Edited by Steve Drury

Steve Drury is a founding member of the British Society of Mystery Entertainers. *PSYCRECY 1* is a volume collecting together material from many of its members, some published in their society digest and others contributed especially for this book. Contributors include a number of famous names from the world of mentalism and bizarre magick, including Barrie Richardson, Christian Chelman, Marc Salem, Banachek, Dee Christopher, Jim Magus, Roni Shachnaey, Lior Manor, Peter Turner, Luca Volpe, and others; 38 tricks, ideas and routines in all.

I have a fondness for bizarre magick that goes back to my teenage years when I was reading the books of Tony Shiels. I'm never sure if this genre is a fantasy that we never quite grow out of but I was pleased to see some magickal effects in the pages of *PSYCRECY 1*. Christian Chelman offers "Jinx," a transposition routine with a gold and silver medallion performed to a story about a curse and a wish. The story is lengthy and the effect is short so you'd have to be a very charismatic performer to hold your audience spellbound. In a similar vein Todd Landman offers a "Gift of Life." The performer reveals which of five puppets has been chosen after receiving whispered advice from another toy, this time the now vintage Hugo: Man of a Thousand Faces. "The Ritual of Edgar Allan Poe" is Murray the Magician's routine for Torn and Restored Thread. The restoration is an unexpected moment in a routine involving six playing cards and a story about Poe enacting a magical ritual that will save his life. Those in need of guidance to good storytelling will find some basic pointers in Prof BC's article on "Performance Storytelling." The Prof advises that if your audience is not convinced by your character as a "bizarre magician," it leaves you as "just a common magician with a ghoulish overlay." Bizarre magick is a difficult genre to master.

More conventional mentalism occupies a greater portion of the collection. Barrie Richardson's "Human Scale Routine" enables the performer to divine the identity of a playing card that has been moved from one pile to another. The method is simple but could be a fooler even for magicians if caught unaware.

"Creative Psychometry" by Vito Gattullo reminds me of a similar routine that Max Maven has featured for many years. Sheila Lyon suggests readings for walkaround work based on the chocolate guests select from a box. Dee Christopher resurrects an age old card marking system in "Outlander." There were several items in the book that I felt were essentially reworkings of items that the more well-read will be familiar with. But I still found items to enjoy. Included among these is Roni Shachnaey's "The Spirit Talks." A message appears on a signed business card. The method is simple, practical and devious. Atlas Brookings' "The Subtle Hustle" shows how to never lose at Rock, Paper, Scissors. Mauricio Jaramillo's "Mesmeric Attraction" is an interesting idea. You predict where a spectator will place a button on a map of the world. If you can get it to work, I'd imagine it would be very baffling and easily adapted to other presentations.

One unusual item is Daniele Nigris's essay "Divinus." If you like your magic with a veneer of academia, then you might enjoy Daniele's explanation of the different types of fortune-tellers and readers. It goes beyond the categories of shuteye and hustler. Another item that will get mentalists talking is Peter Turner's "The Frame." Peter describes his method for divining someone's astrological sign. Peter says, "This one is about as real as it gets and is genuinely using real techniques." The process uses a series of

“psychological” strategies designed to lead the performer to the correct answer. I have no idea whether this really works but would love to see it in action.

The effects in *PSYCRECY 1* are a mixture of old and new. Most of the techniques will be familiar. Popular themes are used. Every now and then an item will surprise and start you thinking. It covers a wide range of mentalism from billet reading and references to figures like George B. Anderson to electronic mechanisms and Derren Brown. Whether you are a traditional mentalist or nouveau psychological entertainer, you have a good chance of finding something you can use. However, the asking price of £100 seems steep for a print-on-demand book ordered via the Lulu.com website. If the price is designed to keep it out of the hands of lesser mortals, it might well succeed.

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