

Review *In Order to Amaze*, M.U.M. Magazine, May 2016 (Michael Close)

From 1995 to 2005 I reviewed products for MAGIC magazine. For nine of those ten years I was the sole product reviewer, and I reviewed about 1,500 products. Consequently, when I stepped down from that job, I never wanted to write another product review again. Currently, I'm very happy to turn the reviewing duties over to Bill Duncan and his excellent roster of reviewers, who do a terrific job every month.

However, every now and then, a truly exceptional product is released and, selfishly, I want to be the one to tell you about it. (It's good to be the king editor.) This month I want to tell you about Pit Hartling's new book *In Order to Amaze*. Pit is a German magician who came to the attention of American magicians as part of the Flicking Fingers troupe. Pit's previous book, *Card Fictions*, contained only seven items, but each was a showstopper. In describing *Card Fictions*, Simon Aronson wrote: "...even a quick read was enough to convince card magicians worldwide that this little volume was a *big* contribution to card magic. It introduced incredibly original plots, devious methods, and engaging presentations, all tied together with perceptive theoretical insights into our art.

The tricks in *Card Fictions* were designed to be performed (to use Paul Cummins's useful phrase) from a shuffled deck in use. *In Order to Amaze* offers twenty-one routines that use a memorized deck. If you are an experienced practitioner with the Aronson stack or the Tamariz stack, I will make this a short review: You *need* this book; you'll *love* this book; you'll *learn* from this book; and you'll *add routines* from this book to your repertoire. That's it. Close the magazine, get on the Internet, and buy a copy.

For everybody else (and as to not shirk my reviewing responsibilities), I'll give you a little more information. First, if you don't understand what a memorized deck is and what is required when working with such a deck, go to simonaronson.com and download a PDF file titled *Memories Are Made of This*. It's free, and it will tell you everything you need to know to get started. Under no circumstances should seek out information on the chat rooms, bulletin boards, or forums on the Internet. By the time you sift through the astonishing amount of garbage you'll find there, you'll have lost interest in the subject.

Second, you need to have both intermediate-level fluency with whatever stack you've memorized and intermediate-level card-handling ability. The routines in the book run the gamut from those that require no sleight of hand to those that require advanced techniques (like faro shuffling and second dealing). However, all of them require that you know your stack cold: naming a card immediately calls to mind its stack number, naming a number brings the associated card to mind, and you are secure in your ability to estimate the position of a card and cut it to the top (or near the top).

Concerning which stack you need to know to perform the effects in Pit's book, here's good news: of the twenty-one effects, seventeen are stack independent. This means you can perform them with whatever memorized stack you use. Of the remaining three effects, two specifically rely on the arrangement of cards found in the Tamariz stack, and the third is only Tamariz-specific in the sense that it is easy to get to the necessary arrangement from the Tamariz stack. (I like this third effect, Game of

Chance, very much, and I quickly figured out an easy way to apply what I know about the Aronson stack to that trick.) If you are an Aronson-stack user (as I am), you'll be happy to know that Pit has gone to an extraordinary amount of effort to make it easy for you to add these tricks to your repertoire. If you use a stack other than Tamariz or Aronson, don't despair; Pit explains how to generate the information you need. You'll just have to invest some time.

If (like me) you use a memorized deck in real-world strolling situations, you'll be happy to know that for every routine in the book Pit has devised ways to return the deck to stack order. In some cases no cards are disarranged during the trick, in others only a few cards need to be adjusted. In one remarkable routine, the memdeck is shuffled twice and you restore the order during the course of the trick. This is really great.

Pit is a clever guy; *In Order to Amaze* is chock-full of ingeniously constructed routines. But he is also a performer who knows the value of an evocative and entertaining presentation. Every routine has been fully scripted and showcases Pit's sense of whimsy and playfulness. They may not fit you perfectly, but all the scripts give you a good starting point for your own personalizations.

And it doesn't stop there. In addition to great tricks with great presentations, Pit offers theoretical insights and useful handling tips. The theory is tied into the effect being discussed, which I think is the best way to surreptitiously slide in the really important information. The techniques and handling tips will prove useful in all your card magic, not just memorized deck tricks.

So there you have it. *In Order to Amaze* packs into its 252 pages more useful, thoughtful, ingenious content than a thousand one-trick DVDs. I'm not going to detail any of the effects or tell you what my favorites are. To be honest, I wish I was the only one who had this information. But that wouldn't be fair to Pit, who deserves to be compensated for his creativity and hard work. Like I wrote at the top, if you do memdeck magic, you *must* buy this book. If you don't do memdeck magic, but you'd like to see what world-class professional magic looks like, buy this book. *In Order to Amaze* is extraordinary, and I give it my highest recommendation.

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Michael Close
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