



JAY FORTUNE

Magical Artist



After two decades as a successful pro comedy magician, we caught up with friend of Magicseen Jay Fortune (simply because he is someone we can rely on for 'filler' at the last moment when a quality feature doesn't make the deadline), to find out how his new career is going since jumping from the stage to the studio as a full-time artist. Graham Hey asks the questions (although not in person, but via Skype, as, in his own words, he simply 'couldn't be a**ed' when he found it who it was he was going to be traveling 80 miles to chat with)...

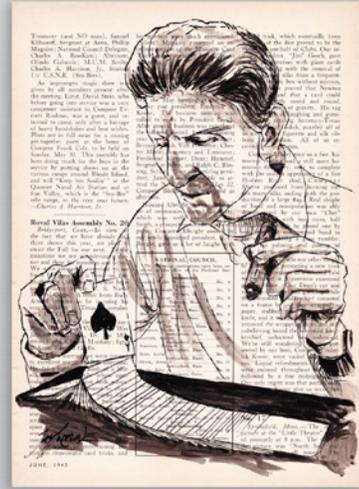
MS: What made you change from performing to painting?

Jay: I did.

MS: Join us next time for more fascinating chat... (laughs) Seriously though...

Jay: Well, I've always loved starting new projects and working with creative people. I've got a long bucket list and have ticked off all I ever wanted to do as a performer. I also think it's important to feel like you love what you're doing. You can't fake that. And our audiences

can sense it. At one of my last gigs I was booked to do 45 minutes stand-up and I looked at my watch about 20 minutes in and said to the audience, 'blimey, I've got 25 minutes left yet and if you lot don't improve then we can knock it on the head now if you like?' I should point out I was a comedy performer and had a kind of 'couldn't care less' personality on stage. But I actually meant it! So, I think when you start looking at the clock, and you're doing less than an hour's work, it's time to take stock and question your motivations for why you're still going through the same motions.



Paintings (L to R):

1. Haunted Deck (Reference photograph courtesy of Michael Caplan.)
2. Houdini Unmasked.
3. Vernon The Professor
4. Marlo Genii Portrait

MS: So, why art?

Jay: I've been drawing all my life, even when I was a busy pro. In the last few years I've felt like I wanted to stay at home more as I was always on the road. My partner Jen is a full-time artist and I wanted to have a studio at home too, so I could paint now and again. However, once I started, it kind of took the stopper out of the bottle, and pictures were pouring out of me! Seems I had a lot of pent-up creative frustration that needed to come out onto the canvas.

MS: Eugh... And you're painting magicians now?

Jay: I made the decision to be a pro artist in January this year. I had begun developing a regular routine during 2018 with my art, setting up a studio and began with pencil portraits, then moved onto charcoal and now onto paint. It's kind of like magic progression; we often start with children's parties, move into close-up and then onto stage. Not that pencil or kids shows are easier! Far from it. I put a few of my early magician portraits up online and folk asked if they were for sale. So, I began selling them.

MS: Yeah, we've got one of your originals. (A Eugene Burger portrait.) Will it be worth something one day?

Jay: (Laughs) Well, fingers crossed eh?! Right now, I've just had my first gallery take my work...

MS: Of magicians?

Jay: No, this is film icons. I'm approaching my art career the same I did with my magic. By that, I mean that I always wanted to have an agent sell my show, so I could focus on the product itself and constantly improve that, as opposed to spending all my time selling a product show by show. So, with my art, I'm now speaking to galleries and publishers who have shown an interest. That way, I can continue to develop the actual art and they can do what they do best and sell it. So, yeah, over time, if things continue going well, the work will increase quite a lot. Why, are you thinking of selling it? (Laughs)

MS: If it is worth it yeah! (Laughs) Who are you currently working on and where do you sell your work, just to the UK or...?

Jay: I'm currently moving into commercial portraits in my developed style outside of the magician market. Not to say I'm not painting magicians anymore, only I've got to expand my portfolio for investors and art collectors. I've painted Vernon many times, and have also painted portraits of Houdini, Ricky Jay, Tamariz, Lance Burton and charcoal portraits of Eugene, Jeff McBride, Max Maven, Penn & Teller, Johnny Thompson, Richard Turner... yeah, loads. They've been purchased by magicians all over the world, which is really encouraging. I must be doing something right!

MS: You were doing something with magazines weren't you?

Jay: Yeah, I was reading an old Genii, from 1943. As I did a page fell out! I looked at it, stroked it - which all sounds rather '50 Shades' - but as an artist you look at the world slightly differently, and thought, 'hmm... that might make an interesting canvas.' A bit of experimentation and ripping a few more pages out, led to ink portraits on old Genii magazine paper. I did Chung Ling Soo, Vernon and Ed Marlo. Yeah, they came out pretty cool I think. (Goes and gets one and shows it to Graham.)

MS: (Shrugs shoulders) It's okay I guess (both laugh). And what was this top secret project you mentioned?

Jay: Oh yeah! Well, that's no longer top secret. So, I'm in the middle of illustrating two major new books for magicians; Eugene Burger: From Beyond and Eugene Burger: Final Secrets. The first volume comes out November 10th. We're working on the second volume now, for release in 2021. Larry Hass has been undertaking this massive and important project which was planned with Eugene. The books were only to come out after Eugene had died. If readers want to know more, check out Theory and Art of Magic online.

What's also cool is that Larry commissioned me to create an original Eugene portrait, so I chose Eugene doing the Haunted Deck based on a photo by Michael Caplan, and it will be released as a limited edition print run of 195 at Magic Live in Vegas for those who buy the book. Pretty humbled by that.

MS: All joking aside, that's really cool and you've definitely got a lot of artistic talent. Do you think you'll go back to performing one day?

Jay: Thanks man. Well, never say never. But for now, I'm excited about having a new ladder to climb. I love magic, and funnily enough, since turning down gigs, I'm playing with magic and reading the history of it more than ever before. Without the constraints of an effect having to be practical for my performing personality or venue, I'm just working on routines for the sheer love of magic. Enjoying every minute.

For more of Jay's art, visit www.jayfortune.co.uk



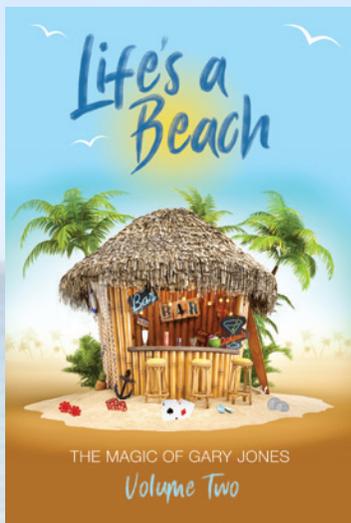
WIN A LIMITED EDITION PRINT!

Jay is gifting one lucky reader the last remaining Tommy Cooper Limited Edition Print.

To win, simply tell us the book Houdini is holding in Jay's portrait.

Email your answer to grahamhey@magicseen.co.uk.

T&Cs: Open to UK entrants only. Unframed. With Certificate of Authenticity.



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