

How To Create Kids' Magic and Triple Your Income!

By John Breeds

Reviewed by Mark Leveridge

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Approx. 190 8.5" x 10.5" pages, perfect bound with colour printed and laminated soft cover boards. Very nicely laid out and designed with plenty of action black and white photos and entertaining cartoon illustrations.

Many readers will probably be saying, "Who's John Breeds?" John is one of those busy children's entertainers who has quietly been going about his business of entertaining children without the magic world at large having really heard about him.

But I will bet that a very large number of those same people who ask that question will have used an invention of John's in their own acts, because John was the inventor of the Visible Magic Painting. Originally marketed by Repro 71, and subsequently ripped off by a whole host of dealers worldwide, this is just one of many ideas that John is now sharing with us via his excellent new book published by Practical Magic.

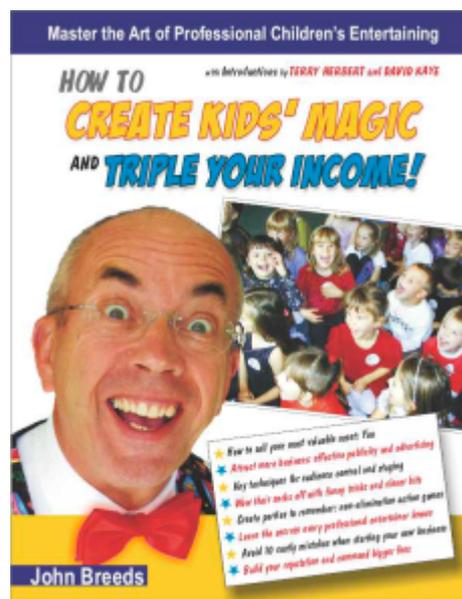
The object of this book is not just to provide new material for working magicians' acts, although it certainly does that admirably well, but it's other main mission is to provide would-be kids' entertainers with the right skills and tools to successfully earn good money doing it!

While most performers spend plenty of time getting together the tricks for their act, they probably spend considerably less time in working out how to effectively promote themselves so that they get the bookings at which to use their act, and yet without that promotion, the best act in the world will wither and die.

So the first three chapters of John's book concentrate on the 'business' aspects of the professional children's entertainer's job.

Chapter 1 goes into great detail about how you can sell yourself. John focuses particularly on telephone technique - what to say to turn the potential booker from a person who just wants a magician, to someone who really needs you.

He gives lists of key words and phrases to use to encourage the enquirer to book and he explains how to



close the deal in the most effective way. I did feel slightly uneasy at times with what I felt was almost pressure selling techniques, and I would hope that readers who follow John's advice will do so sensitively and not use it as a battering ram, as otherwise I suspect it may have the opposite effect and frighten some people away. But the principles are very sound if applied correctly and with common sense. John also gives examples of his confirmation letter, contract and other information sheets, and he even tackles the subject of fees full on.

Chapter 2 deals with publicity and advertising. Publicity is where you either get or actively create news stories in which you and your services can get a mention, while advertising is where you pay for your information to be disseminated via the web, printed publications, radio or TV.

John talks with obvious authority on all the avenues open to you and lays out clearly the pros and cons of it all. He is honest with his advice which all seems to come from his own experience - he's clearly tried most things and knows what works and what is a waste of money and time.

For advertising he explains how to create a good advert for Yellow Pages or newspaper advertising, and shows several examples of good and bad practice in order to push his points home. He also covers the subject of show give-aways and how they can best be used to spread the word for you.

Chapter 3 is called Audience Control and Staging. This is quite a technical chapter as a good deal of it covers PA systems and microphones. As someone who is not very

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technically minded I did get a bit bogged down in all the wealth of detailed information here, but I think if you were looking to set yourself up with a sound system John's information would be worth reading a couple of times if necessary in order to extract the info required.

Away from the technical stuff John also talks about how good routining and judicious use of bits of business help to control the children and he also explains how he uses backdrops and other bits of staging and lighting to create a more theatrical feel for his show.

Funny Bits and Clever Tricks is the subject of Chapter 4 where the reader is treated to a range of magic to suit all ages. There are routines for standard favourites such as the Silver Sceptre, the Torn and Restored Tissue, Equally Unequal Ropes and Ron Gilbert's Magic Marksman, and then there are other ideas which he has adapted, so that we see variations on the Chinese Laundry and George Kovari's Diminishing and Enlarging gloves.

There's a huge section on John's own Visible Magic Painting principle with countless variations, and there are a number of mental effects such as Mental Epic dressed for kids work too. All the routines are good - they are full of fun, well constructed and straightforward to do, and it's clear that John has used them under fire!

The final Chapter, No 5, details a number of non-elimination action games. Classic games such as Musical Statues, Musical Chairs, Corners and Pass the Parcel are all adapted so that they retain all the fun but no children need be eliminated. For anyone who does the full party this chapter will provide some more excellent ideas for the games section of their show.

Having read the book I am slightly puzzled by its title. How To Create Kids' Magic and Triple Your Income sounds like he will be telling you perhaps ways in which you can come up with new ideas for children's shows, which is not the case. Similarly, tripling your income is a bold claim which even if you follow John's advice to the letter in these current money strapped times is perhaps a little optimistic.

But there can be no doubt that this is an extremely thorough book written by someone who clearly loves what he does and who knows how to do it well, and I would not hesitate to recommend it to any aspiring children's worker as one of the books to read on the subject of entertaining children. John has put a massive amount of time, energy and expertise into this project and I suspect that it will justifiably do very well. ML

Star Rating: ★★★★★

Available direct from: www.johnbreeds.com