

## ***Ex Libris*** by Joaquin M. Ayala, Ph.D.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for May of 2018 and the final installment of the Chicago series! I hope everyone has been enjoying the warmer weather when it has been here – all these ups and downs are getting ridiculous! Well if you have not read any of the Chicago series articles yet, go back two months (time travel, if you must, but be sure not to let your ‘other self’ see you) and start there, and curl up with one of the great books and a cup of hot iced tea...

This month we are going to take a look at a third member of the Chicago Sessions group, **John Bannon**. John has been a rather prolific author and creator of many effects and he is widely known for many different products, many of them being close to self-working effects while retaining their strong punch. As of this writing John Bannon is a practicing lawyer (specializing in business litigation) in the Chicago area and still finds time to create, travel and lecture for various clubs and conventions all over the world.

Back in 1986 he published his first book *Mirage* and since then he has authored 15 other books. I will concentrate on my top two picks, the first of which is ***Impossibilia***, a 142-pages hardcover book published in 1990 by L&L Publishing. The book is split into four sections: EZFX, Side FX, Special FX and the Bonus Section called ‘Real Men Don’t Carry Coin Purses’.

In the first section you will find his now-rather-famous handling of Triumph called *Play It Straight*, a version in which the spectator can shuffle the cards, face up into face down and the deck rights itself except the all thirteen cards matching the suit of the missing selection. *Tourist Class Travelers* is a clean, direct Cards to Pocket. *Creased Lighting* is his version of the *Mercury Card Fold* which folds the card into eighths as opposed to quarters.

In the second section you will find some very commercial coin work including a couple handlings for Matrix, a Chinese Coin penetration off a shoelace (followed by a Ring Off String effect), a Coins to Glass and a very nice 3-coin Coins Across which he calls Triple Threat. In Special FX there are just four effects: A playing card revelation, an Ace Cutting demonstration, three marked coins vanish and reappear in an envelope and a burnt, Torn & Restored cigarette paper. Each of these methods are easy but are not quite like you might expect!

The bonus section is a great read for anyone but especially for coin workers that use traditional style coin purses. It details various moves and sleights that can be utilized with a coin purse as well as some excellent coin effects using those moves and sleights. The final effect is a revelation for card work where a brass disk is shown to have the image of a previously selected card on it.

The second book that I want to bring to your attention is ***Destination Zero***, a 209-page hardcover book published by Squash Publishing in 2015. The first printing of this book sold out worldwide in less than 6 months! As of this writing, a limited second printing is currently available. If you happen to miss out on the second run, while the first edition will not cost you a lot of money to obtain, they can be hard to find. This is a nod to the fact that people really love the material and are hanging on to the books.

Some of the standout effects in here include *Petal to the Metal* in which an audience member themselves divine the identity of a predicted card, *Perennial*, which is a Diary effect without the diary but there is a little bit of a Stranger Card ploy at work here, but this is a very effective version of the Birthday Card plot, a favorite of Simon Aronson, and this can be carried in your wallet. *Four-Sided Gemini* is a rather new (well, new in 2015!) variation on the Gemini Twins which is based on the *Four-Sided Triangle* by **Max Maven** from his 1977 ***Red Book of Mentalism*** (later as part of the ***PRISM*** book published in 2005 by Hermetic Press).

*Perfect* will allow you to predict a card after a spectator freely cuts, deals and stops at a particular card. *AK-47* is a great little gem where any card in the deck is merely thought of by the spectator, then the performer commits to one card and removes it from the deck, later showing that the card they removed exactly matches the thought-of card...Every. Single. *Time! Box of Doom* is one of my absolute favorite effects in this book and maybe, just maybe, even of all time! It is a very strong update of *The Trick that Fooled Einstein*, remixing some elements from his earlier version called *The Einstein Overkill* from two of his earlier works, ***Six. Impossible. Things.*** (2009) and ***High Caliber*** (2013). Closing out the book is *Banco*, a great little bonus effect which is a high-stakes handling of the classic *Bank Night* effect.

If these effects all sound like hard-hitting, commercial pieces of magic to you, your thinking is correct. If you were to guess that there are some knuckle-busting effects in this book, you would be wrong! In fact, the title of the book itself hints to something that every effect in the book has in common: they are *all self-working!* Seriously! Furthermore, all of them are easy to do, but John Bannon goes far beyond the methodology of each effect and breaks down the effects to their bare bones, then teaches you how to dress each one up to become a self-working effect that does not appear to be self-working. He also covers why certain things should be done and others should not.

Two other honorable mention books by John Bannon are ***Dear Mr. Fantasy***, a 197-page hardcover published in 2004 by John Bannon, and his 2013 compilation work called ***High Caliber***, 305-page hardcover published in 2013 by Squash Publishing.

Be sure to check out the works by all three of the Chicago Session guys from this series: **Simon Aronson**, **Dave Solomon** and **John Bannon**.

Further, explore their works that I was not able to cover in the articles – there are some truly hidden gems from among the three of them!

That wraps up the Chicago Series as well as the article for this month – be sure to join me again next month as we take another journey into the magic books of yore to dig for hidden magical treasures! – **J.M.A.**