

Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, PhD.

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for July 2016! I hope everyone is enjoying the insane summer weather – welcome to Michigan! This month instead of going back in time to explore a book, I think we will stay right where we are with a modern tome called **One Degree** by John Guastaferrro. This book is already a modern classic of sorts and it was originally published by Vanishing Inc. as a hardcover book. The book was wildly popular when it first came out and the demand was so high that when the hardcover edition sold out, they reprinted the book in soft cover format for re-release earlier this Spring.

The crux of the book is the essays that are in between the effects. They talk about the philosophy of the author which he calls the ‘One Degree Principle’. To describe what this is: Sometime it is such that you have some great effects in your arsenal, but maybe you are not happy about certain aspects of them. It might be that it is very streamlined as far as method and handling but the result is a lackadaisical response from your audience. Perhaps the reactions you get are very good but there is something in the method that is either difficult to do or that muddies the pathway to the result. The idea behind the One Degree Principle is that the slightest change can make something that is already great, even better - a one degree change. To illustrate this, if you have a pot of water at 211 degrees Fahrenheit, and one degree more will push it to the boiling point.

These little changes might be in the form of something you say in your script, one or two words or maybe an entire sentence. It might be in the form of changing a sleight, adding a move or removing one from the method, it might be adding or changing a prop that is used. In reality, it can be anything. Other essays in the book talk about how to come up with your own ideas, how to create your own brand of magic and your own imaging, creating connections with your audience and more. These are relatively short essays but they will make you think, whether you intend to be a full-time magician or just an amateur who performs for friends or at the club. It is all aimed at making you a stronger performer.

The effects in the book are all things that John has come up with based on old plots in magic, but they all share two things in common: They are all very commercial and they have all been through the “One Degree” change filter. That is, they all started out as something John used in his professional sets and over time, small changes were made to make them better, cleaner, more direct, etc. Two of the best effects in the book are effects that John is very well known for, among others, and they are his *Lost & Found*, which is his travel themed effect where a signed card travels to a luggage take, is removed and reappears back in the luggage tag. The other is his *Vino Aces* which is his version of the classic *MacDonald’s Aces*, and in his version the cards are placed in wine glasses and can play on stage to large crowds as well as smaller parlour settings. This book is very well worth your attention if not for the great effects it contains then for the thought-provoking essays which will surely get your mental wheel turning.

That is all for this month folks –as always, get out there, share some magic and enjoy the summer for soon the school season will be upon us!

-JMA