

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

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for June 2018! June...wow! How are we six months into the year and almost to summer already?! I was recently going through my archives as I thought about which books to cover and I realized that to date, I have written thirty-eight(!) articles about magic books! The subject matter has been rather broad, but I was really having a hard time deciding what to write about, which then became my big hint...

This month we are going to talk about a book which is not necessarily a book of effects, though it does contain a few. What it is, is a book on utility devices for magicians that falls squarely into the DIY category. *Prestige Pen Projects* by **Shawn Evans** is a book that is all about gimmicked pens and markers for various uses. It is a little unusual in that it was published in both PDF form *and* in paperback. The paperback edition was very limited and was released in 2012, containing 155 pages of content.

This book contains twenty (20) chapters which detail the construction of various gimmicked pens and some follow with effects that they can be used for, though the uses for each are rather obvious in their construction. What may surprise you is that even though some of these pens are electronic in nature, none of them are going to require days of construction and a degree in electrical engineering to complete. Most of them use household items and tools found in most tool boxes. They will also not break the bank. Most of them take about a half hour to make and cost not much more than \$15-\$20/USD for all the necessary implements. The pens in this category are what you would call *flash pens*, which can be used to discreetly ignite flash paper, flash cotton or any number of flash products.

There is a nifty multi-use pen which can be used to secretly add slush or snow powder to a liquid, liquids for Water to Wine effects, PK effects and a few others. Oh, and it writes like a normal pen! There are pens that write in colors other than the ones indicated by the caps/ink sticks, ideas for the FriXion pens, self-moving pens and even a pen for doing the *Ashes on the Arm*. If you have ever wanted a pen that produces a puff of smoke from your mouth, this book shows you how to make one and for much less than the marketed versions.

As mentioned before, there are some effects given for some of the items too, like the *Relightable Matches*, the various FriXion pen effects, one of which is a very clever use with the **Paul Harris** *Twilight Angels* effect. At the end of the book you will find some fun and interesting pen facts and trivia, some of which can be used in your scripting!

The book is illustrated thoroughly with color photos as well as illustrations. The photos are not all professional quality, but they are very clear and do the job they are meant to do very well. The instructions in this book are also very clear and everything is explained in a clear, easy to understand and easy to follow manner. Even the most non-crafty person will be able to follow this book. What is more, if you have the PDF version, there are links to videos that show how the pens are used and even videos of how to make/construct some of them – this really goes above and beyond what most magic books give you as far as depth of instruction.

All in all, this book has some very clever devices in it and all of them are practical, easy on the wallet and not horribly time-consuming to build. Furthermore, once you make them they are very easy to repair or replace, should that ever be required. There is one small caveat with this book, however, and it is this: The paperback was limited for whatever reason, and it is safe to assume that it was most certainly *not* to create scarcity and drive up the price as both the PDF and the physical book were both the same price – more on that in a moment. You might still find some dealers out there with physical copies left, but if this really interests you, it can be purchased from [www.lybrary.com](http://www.lybrary.com) as a PDF. The cost is \$42.92/USD, which is a little steep for a PDF but the information it contains, and the depth of the instructions make it more than worth it, in my humble opinion. Or is that, o-pen-ion? Sorry...I will let myself out.

That is all for this month folks – enjoy the summer weather as it comes along (sorry to our readers in the southern hemisphere – winter is upon you)! Join me again next month as we delve into another great magic tome!  
– **J.M.A.**