



While Anderson was working for Mark Wilson Productions in the 1970s, he had the opportunity to teach magic and illusions to numerous television stars, such as John Denver [above] and Dick Van Dyke [below].



The four volumes of *Larry Anderson's JawDroppers* collection are titled: "Out of Thin Air," "Ready, Set, Go," "Well Worth It," and "Cards, Cards, Cards." [For contents listing see "Lots o' Stuff."] Seasoned magicians will be familiar with just about every trick per-

formed on the tapes, and often Larry's explanations will seem rambling and excruciatingly detailed. However, for those magi who buy the tapes and watch the performances, they'll be pleasantly reminded of how effective some of these oldies can be — the simple stuff that was

simply forgotten. Some magicians will perhaps be surprised to see a few effects included that are perhaps "too good" for the common herd. For examples: Peter Pit's "Inflation," a cut-and-restored feat with two one-dollar bills; Bill Simon's classic "Business Card Prophecy"; "The Haunted Bill," which appeared in *MAGIC* recently ["Inside Out," March 2000] as Stefan Schutzer's "Daphne Dollar"; and "The Solid Ghost," disguised on the second volume as "Ghost Trap."

All the material that went into the tapes, according to Anderson, was carefully selected then scripted. "Six of the eight months of the project were spent researching tricks that I felt could be accomplished, learned, and performed easily enough by the novice." During the Christmas and New Year's holidays last year, Larry actually shot all of the routines — which he calls "the presentations" — on High-8 video in his home and office. Then, starting in late-January, these presentations were duplicated on two studio sets with small casts of "audience extras." The 80-plus presentations were shot back-to-back in two days. Larry returned to shoot the explanations in two more days, for a total taping schedule of four days. "It was not the ideal way to do it, but from a cost standpoint it was the best. We lumped into two days all the shots with the extras, who were not needed for the explanations." He admits there were some tricky moments reconstructing particular nuances of the live presentations when it came time to shoot explanations. "Sometimes I'd say 'When Diane took the Four of Spades...' when it was actually a guy named Joe who took the Two of Clubs."

After the four tapes of tricks with explanations were in the can, Anderson set out to produce the 30-minute infomercial designed to take *JawDroppers* to market. "This took three full days to shoot because we had a number of locations with lots of crew moves. There was a sports bar in Marina Del Rey, a couple of upscale restaurants there, and the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, where we did all the street scenes."

In the process, some of those studio presentations were changed quite a bit when they were performed on location. The "Ashes on the Arm," done as a card revelation in the studio, appears on the infomercial as an eerie discovery of a name merely thought of by a lady. The tricks are called "in-your-face magic" by Nancy Sullivan, the infomercial's attractive spokesperson and co-host, who accompanies Larry when he moves his stuff to the streets then into people-filled bars and restaurants. And just as on *David Blaine: Street Magic*, where cameramen

focused on people's reactions to David's magic, Larry manages to fill lots of frames of his infomercial with astonished and amazed reactions of his on-the-scene audiences. "That was pure coincidence," Larry says. "None of us involved in the project had seen any of the



In addition to appearing on 60 half-hour episodes of a 1980s revival of the long-running game show, *Truth or Consequences*, and *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, Larry showed up to teach Lucille Ball how to do magic for a 1986 ABC special.

Blaine shows... not until after all the product videos were shot." Anderson maintains that only recently did he watch the re-runs of the Blaine specials. "I was inspired. He was brilliant to show everybody's reaction. I took as much of that premise as I could in the infomercial."

Testimonials seem to be an essential part of any infomercial. A sales rep confesses how easy it is to learn tricks from the tapes. A school teacher uses Larry's magic in the classroom to help break the ice with new students. An author can't believe that her shy 14-year-old son amazes all at church and scouts with the magic he's learned from the tapes. Another sales rep calls on a client and shows them a trick to cinch the account. A musical composer/arranger tries to describe the "rush you get" from performing magic. A cook, an accountant, and even a surfer join in to extoll the merits of *JawDroppers*.

The infomercial premiered nationwide March 24, and almost overnight the orders were streaming in. "We're on Discovery, Lifetime, CNBC, Comedy Central... you name it, we've sampled all national cable and lots and lots of independent stations." Because media time for infomercials is so expensive, Global Response LLC, the producer/distributors of *Larry Anderson's JawDroppers*, know well the importance of identifying the niche market early on. Even though the infomercial is targeted to all ages and cultures, they feel their demographics point to the 20- to 40-year-old male. "It's the average guy who can go to a bar and hand out his business card," says Larry. "And

there's an implication [on the infomercial] that chicks love magic."

Larry wants the people who watch the infomercial to say to themselves, "Hey, I could do that!" That's why Ms. Sullivan paints an average-guy portrait of Mr. Anderson. "I want people to know I'm not a professional magician. I'm an actor. I do game shows. I'm an entrepreneur. I owned a restaurant. I tell them that I now use magic to make an impression. I want them to know that I do magic to have people remember me."

The next marketing phase is getting *JawDroppers* on shelves at retail. "We first had to show the product was successful on the air before the major stores would stock it." On June 20, a two-volume edition of *JawDroppers*, "As Seen on TV," pops into racks in such stores as WalMart, K-Mart, and Target. For \$29.95 you get over 40 tricks taught in three-and-a-half hours. And by the middle of the summer, the tapes go international. They will be marketed via infomercial and television promotions in 14 different countries.

Only a year ago, *JawDroppers* was the mere germ of a money-making idea that sprung up during an infomercial shoot in Southern California. Now it's becoming a worldwide catch phrase for simple-to-do tricks that are guaranteed to work for you or — remember — your money back. While there are no reports of a rash of refunds, Larry does hedge on saying just exactly how financially successful the venture has been for him and his investors. He simply likes to say, "We're happy." ♦

LOTS O' STUFF

Volume 1: Out of Thin Air

Ultimate Utility Move
A Snappy Coin Production
Business Card to Dollar Bill
Crayon Clairvoyance
Electrostatic-Toothpicks
Twice Fooled
Not so Flatware
Shape-Shifting Silver
Touched by an Angel
A Business Sandwich
Anti-gravity Ring
Houdini Hanky
The Flighty Coin
Elimi-notation
Things That Cling
Two-bill Penny Pincher
The Self-propelled Cigarette
A Coin-wrestling Shortcut
Phantom Matches
The Floating Dinner Roll
ATM (Air to Money)
Sweet Money

Volume Two: Ready, Set, Go

Anything Goes
Appealing Wallpaper
Baffling Bucks
Burnt Offerings
A Point Well Taken
Bills From Nowhere
Business Card-Incidence
Busted!
Change Out of a Buck
Ghost Trap
The Handmade While-U-Wait Business Card Printer
Helicopter Bill
The Ash-stounding Penetration
Gimme a Break
Pad Your Budget
Snip-a-Tip
Leave 'em Spell-bound
Never the Twine Shall Meet
Arch Enemy
The Haunted Bill

Volume 3: Well Worth It

Ultimate Utility Move
Business Card Bamboozle
Worth It's Salt
Zombie Spoon
Double Your Dough
Silverware Shuffle
Ring & Coin Join
Loopy Linking Loops
Winged Silver
Continuous Coins
Sprint Grip
Gimme Five Transposition
Rebounding Dinner Roll
Perplexing Penny-tration
"X" Marks the Spot
The Mysterious Black Hole
Through the Table

Volume 4: Cards, Cards, Cards

Do as I Do
I'm Sure You Disagree
Out of my Hands
Quick as Lightning
The Odd Couples
Two on a Match
An Ace-stounding Discovery
The Drunken Shuffle
Touchy Feely Aces
How the Key Card Works
Gotcha!
The Im-pulse-able Discovery
Under the Influence
Picture Perfect Prediction
How the Svengali Deck Works
Somebody Stop Me
A "Bottom Deal"
The Airborne Card
Copy Cat Cards
Elevator Card
Hanky-Panky Card Penetration
Hide 'n Seek and You Shall Find
Take a Stab at It
The OT Switcheroo
Spill Decision