



Andrew Melia

Dutch Master!

After moving to Holland, Andrew Melia's career has building nicely, culminating with his success last year on a Dutch talent show. *magicseen* chats with Holland's new household name!

You won The New Uri Geller Show 2010, in Holland, tell us what that entailed...

As early as October 2009, I went for a screening to be in The New Uri Geller Show. They were impressed by my audition and accepted me into the show. They also gave me a second identity, that of 'The Joker', based on the Batman movies- my job was to read minds and scare people... so I did. I performed 2 televised performances as myself, and was then omitted from the show...the jury said I was too much a magician rather than a mentalist. My alter ego, The Joker; (my identity kept secret until the end of the series); avenged their decision, competing against many top mentalists and causing chaos and mayhem with anyone who got in his way. The knock-out weekly competition lasted through 'til May 2010, and was watched by millions... in the final I revealed my true identity, and thankfully received the most amount of votes from the viewers... crowning me the successor to Uri Geller.

How has the experience helped you? And has it increased demand?

Apart from the mass exposure, I gained a lot of TV experience which was scarce on my CV before. Working on TV was a unique experience... You have about 30 people backstage, who are there to help you. The key is to be friendly



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with all the staff, so that they want to help you, and similarly arrive at the studio well prepared. Since winning the show, the demand has been very high, and I am enjoying being a 'new found celebrity'. Particularly, if I am performing close-up magic, everyone is a lot quieter and more attentive now.

I don't have to fight for their recognition and approval.

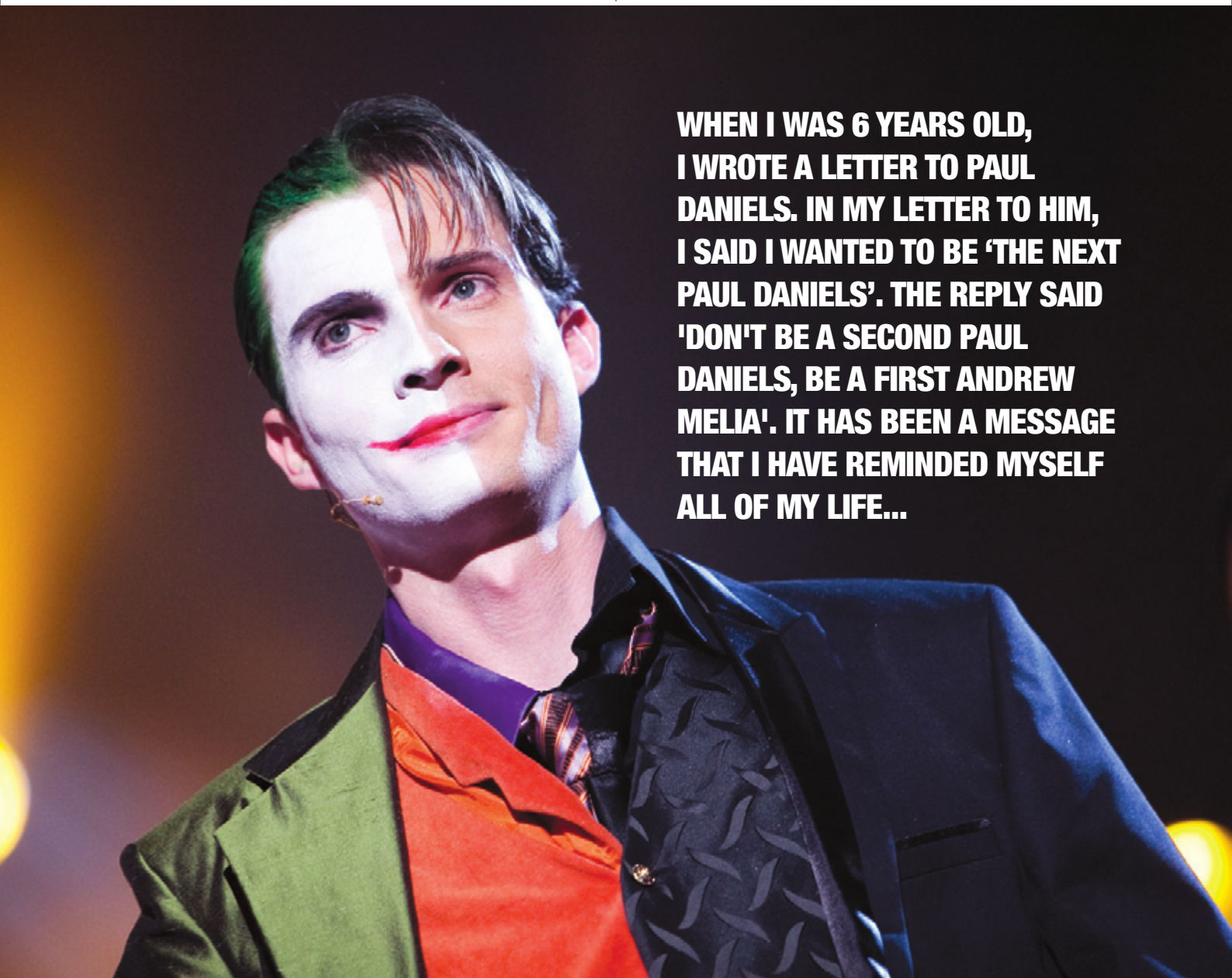
You are now based in Holland - How did that happen?

My brother has been living in Amsterdam for 13 years, working independently as a DJ and music producer. He convinced me that it is

a lot easier to be successful in independent career paths in Holland than in other countries; so 8 years ago I moved over there with the intention to be a fully professional magician. It was a huge success, as I found I was more interesting to entertainment agencies in Holland being a foreigner, I was therefore an







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international act. Also, there are less magicians in Amsterdam than in London, for example, so I was being fished from a smaller pond...

If you look back on your career development from say, four or five years ago, how have you improved - and have you any advice on development for young magicians?

Yes, 4 or 5 years ago I was not happy with my status/development as a magician. So, I changed gear, and decide to work towards getting my first award. After a lot of hard work, I entered the IBM British Shield Competition in 2007. I won first place in Manipulation, this was a huge confidence booster, and subsequently made me an award

winning magician. This helped my outlook, and from here I felt that I would not be truly satisfied until I had worked successfully on television. Only recently was this latter part accomplished, so my advice to young magicians is to work hard, seek advice from professionals, and have goals in mind that are realistic. Treat your goals as stepping stones, one step at a time. When I was 6 years old, I wrote a letter to Paul Daniels. In my letter to him, I said I wanted to be 'the next Paul Daniels'. The reply said 'don't be a second Paul Daniels, be a first Andrew Melia'. It has been a message that I have reminded myself of all my life, that it is OK to aspire to be other magicians, but importantly; to stay original and be yourself. Thankfully

tho', later to my surprise; I am now the "next Uri Geller!"

You have been working with Ger Copper - how does this work?

I have been working with Ger Copper (former FISM Grand Prix Winner) for about 4 years now. I met him on a plane home from FISM, Stockholm in 2006, and we got onto the topic of coaching. It was just what I needed, a professional to 'clean' my act. I go round to his studio a few times a week with my act, and he cleans it up in technique and choreography...I found his advice invaluable, and it reminded me of the importance of working in a team... which I had not considered practical before.

You do a variety of different acts - do you have a preference?

I like to be an all rounder in magic. I love performing manipulation, though you can't beat the feeling of a full audience laughing along to your patter... I have worked a lot in comedy clubs, and I found, altho' nerve racking at first, when it is a success, it is a huge confidence booster.

Ever had to 'give up' on an effect because you couldn't master it?

Yes, I practised the muscle palm press with a coin, to make it apparently fall upwards. I found it impossible. I gave up.

What's the BOX OF FEAR all about?

It is a trick based on that of Jim





Pace- The Web. However, with his permission, I have re-invented it making it more realistic, practical, and to induce bigger reactions. I have also improved the handling of the load. The packaging is immaculate, the effect took 3 years to develop. You can visit my website to see a video, or watch it temporarily on YouTube. The 3 phases of the vid' are:

1.Anticipation, 2.Fear, and 3.Fun.

As described by Hank Lee's Magic Factory:- The Box of Fear is a funny and sometimes scary effect that can be done close-up or on stage, and is perfect for street performance! Based on The Web by Jim Pace, you will not find a more exciting ending to a trick than this one!

Approach a spectator with a clear plastic box which is covered with a cloth. Ask the spectator to hold onto the box. As the anticipation builds as to what is inside the box, you remove the cloth. Much to your surprise, the box is empty! There is nothing inside. It must have escaped. It's all fun and games until the spectator turns over her hand and POW! What a finish! Box of Fear comes complete with the fold-up plastic box, instruction manual and all necessary gimmicks. I am pleased that many shops worldwide are now selling the item.

Has your psychology degree helped you in this industry in any way?

Yes, my psychology degree has helped me a little. However, with any psychology theory, there are always social, cultural and individual differences.

Have you any rough career-plan? Any direction you would like it to take?

I am continuing to work on TV, and with my new entertainment agency who find me a lot of Stage work. I am also considering entering FISM 2012, if I can get my act together, so to speak.

Anyone you would really like to work with in the future?

Derren Brown is one of my favourite artistes out there, as is Jeff



McBride, and less popularly Nestor Hato is a great manipulator.

Do you get stressed before a performance? Have you always been good at handling pressure?

The majority of the shows were 'live', so yes, at first I found it very stressful. Then I just reminded myself of all the reasons why I wanted to do it, and that it had been an ambition to perform magic on TV since I was a child. I have put a lot of practice into my technique and patter, as well as stage presence over the last few years, so I felt well prepared. The stress levels I found relative to how much work I had done for the act... as the army quotes with the rule of the 6 Ps...Proper Preparation Prevents Piss Poor Performance.

Do you think there is a difference between the thinking or presentation styles of European magicians as opposed to British performers?

I find that when I go to British magic competitions for example, the acts are very similar... all with a classical music soundtrack, and copied styles. There is certainly more originality in acts overseas in my opinion. Comedy acts vary from country to country also, i.e. I still don't find a lot of Dutch humour funny.

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Best magic purchase of the last year!?

I often get my magic custom built now, although I thought Yigal Mesika's Tarantula was great.

DVD or book that has most influenced you?

Jeff McBride - Art of Card Manipulations, Derren Brown - International Magic Lecture DVD & Theodore Anneman's Practical Mental Magic.

Last book you read?

Magic and Showmanship by Henning Nelms.

Most annoying habit?

Speeding fines and smoking.

Favourite movie?

The Great Buck Howard.

Tell us 3 things about yourself that we don't know...

1. My favourite colour is black.
2. I have an arcade machine in my house.
3. I love snooker.

Most underrated magician in the world is?

I have been working over the last few months with Belgian mentalist Jan Bardi, I found his knowledge outstanding. Also, Keith Bennett is an encyclopedia of knowledge.

Carrot & Walnut cake: Is that single walnut on the top really necessary?

A cake is usually shared, so why just the one walnut? **ms**

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