

The Artist Who Interviews (May-June, 2010)



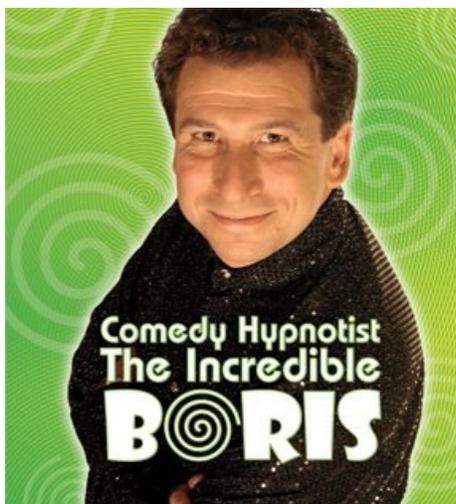
Your work is an amazing combination of skills. How are you able to combine comedy and hypnosis? How would you define a "Comedian Hypnotist?"

I am a comedian first and hypnotist second. I combine theatrics and story telling in a presentation that involves taking an audience on a journey that at the same time delivers a strong message and impact.

I improvise to make a moment funny on stage, while people believe momentarily that the situations I create in their minds are real.

Numerous TV appearances: Montel, Maury, Howie Mandel, Much Music, even Kenny vs. Spenny; how did your career, as a comic hypnotist, begin?

I have always been an avid reader. My first real introduction to hypnosis was when I picked up a random book at the library - "The Search For Bridey Murphy" by Morey Bernstein. It is a layman's overview of a hypnotist dabbling in reincarnation. I was a skeptic and needed to know more. Having read thousands of books on the subject, I am still fascinated how the mind works. I never stop learning, as it also guides me through my life and my own thought process.





Guaranteed that being a hypnotist must require considerable training, how does a person train for this? Even more difficult, how do you train to be able to do this on stage?

I am a certified hypnotist, have a background in hypnosis, psychology, theatre, magic, music and computer programming. I intertwine all those disciplines to present a theatrical presentation that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats.

All these disciplines seemingly do not relate to each other, however - hypnosis is just a science - we all experience trance daily. If you think about it, our mind works like a computer, taking directions from external stimuli and society conditioning. I am a wordsmith that uses those stimuli to achieve a specific effect on stage, resulting in uncontrollable laughter. I always take great precautions of keeping the participants in a positive light, never trying to take advantage of their trust.

I simply figured out a way to take an audience on a mental journey that is exciting, inspirational and unforgettable.



Did you ever imagine that you would be entertaining celebrities, even royalty with the Duchess of York, back when you started out?

I not only imagined it, I made it my goal.

Since I was a little kid, I was able to control a room of people in a positive manner, be the life of the party. At family gatherings, I was always the master of ceremonies.

As a kid in Russia, I actually memorized routines by celebrity comics and retold them in front of family and friends along with impressions.

One day, while participating in a school assembly where I was scheduled to play a musical instrument, I had to fill time on stage between acts - I was thrown on stage and told to stall, which I did by doing comedy bits and impressions. That day I caught the show business bug, discovered the joy of making people laugh and a star was born. It all came together in my teenage years, when I

found a way to blend comedy with hypnosis.

Do you have any favorite, or notable experiences to mention from your TV appearances?

Johnny Carson used to give an ok sign to the comedians that did well. This often signified a start to a wonderful career.

I appeared on the Howie Mandel Show, which was filmed at the old Johnny Carson Tonight Show Studio. Before the show started taping, I asked Howie to let me know if I was doing ok by giving me the ok sign. Many years before that, Howie got that ok sign from Johnny on the set of the Tonight Show, so he understood. My routines went on for several segments. After the first commercial break, I saw the smiling Howie showing me the ok sign. It meant a lot to me, and resounds vividly in my memory to this day.



Your stage appearances must take considerable energy, how do you prepare for these? How do you unwind from them?

The appearances are the most fun I have in my life. From the moment I step on stage, I am driven by intense desire to make this the most memorable experience ever. It has become a switch that from the moment I hear my name being announced, I use the nervous energy and transform it into confidence and take command of the stage and the auditorium.

The adrenalin once it hits my body, makes me excited, creative and turns a normal person into a captivating presence of a performer. It is rather tough to come down from a high that intense. After an evening performance, it is a rather difficult task to go straight to bed, there is no winding down... the high may last for days.

You are credited for coining the term, "Google Me," how did this come about?

I was an early adopter of the internet and had a web site and a laptop to answer emails back when they were bulky, expensive and required a phone cord. I did a lot of interviews in my travels (performing 200-300 shows a year or more) - from radio, to print and television. It was hip to



have a web site, but not everyone would remember the name, announced quickly in an interview. Plus the words World Wide Web and dot com were still rather foreign and exotic.

Early on, I noticed that it was easier to search for a web site on the internet using a search engine, especially if you didn't remember the name or the site address. I gave people more options to be able to find me, whether that may be for bookings, get in touch or simply find out more about me before coming to see the show live. Many search engines came around, however Google offered suggestions if you typed something wrong. So after announcing my web site, I would normally add that they can also "Google me". I still do it.

Pretend a person knew very little about hypnosis, describe what it can do for them.

One of the toughest things I ever had to do is to describe what daddy does to my children. Hypnosis is a way to get people to control the environment around them using words, imagery and external stimuli. It is a way to control your body simply by thinking, and a way to control others to be on your side and believing that the thoughts they came up with happened on their own.

We are constantly bombarded by messages. Hypnosis is a way to make those messages positive and meaningful.



At this point, what would be a truly great accomplishment in your career?

I would really like to get my craft to be enjoyed by more people. I am regularly pitching ideas for television shows and strive to perform in larger venues. I would love to travel to more parts of the world that I have not yet been to and revisit the ones where people know of what I do. My greatest accomplishment is the fact that I created a business out of word of mouth. I never set out to become a star or to get famous. I love what I do and simply want to make a difference in people's lives. I entertain and leave a lasting impression, while sprinkling positive suggestions along the way.

What is true success?

Success is doing what you love the most, a career that you don't mind going to work for, even if it is a continent away. Success is having family that is supportive, having friends that make you feel good simply by being there and your presence achieves the same effect. Success is having children to pass along your love and wisdom to. Success is helping someone find their way, when they come to a fork in the road.



You have also been described as a mentalist, what would you describe as the difference between a mentalist and a hypnotist?

A mentalist is a mind magician. I have entertained with mental effects in the past, when I did not have enough material to present on stage to fill a full show. These days I have stepped away from mental magic as there is never enough time on any stage to present everything that I would like. As they say - always leave the audience wanting more. I write new routines regularly and change the shows to keep them fresh and exciting for me and the people who return to see what I will come up with next.

That said, the mental discipline is a way to read or absorb the thoughts of others to achieve a specific effect or get in depth insight. It has even been thought at one point as psychic. I have learnt to achieve the same results by reading body language, read into the meaning of words and external stimuli. And to go even further - we are all interconnected. Thought process is energy that is not just limited to our bodies. Energy travels, and some people are more in tune with it than others. This is why sometimes we call someone only to hear the words - I was just thinking about you.



If you could meet anyone out of all of history, who would it be and what would you ask?

Being a performer, I found that everyone strives to leave their mark on the world. The people that we want to meet are the ones that make an impression on ours. I have had the chance to meet an amazing person that touched my life with music that I listened to on many long trips.

I had the pleasure of meeting Sir Elton John and I asked him the ultimate question - the stardom, the climb to succeed - was it all worth it? To which he gave me an elaborate answer that it was.

If given the chance, what would you change about the world/society to make it a better place?

I have always strived to make a positive difference in people's lives - for a moment or a lifetime. I would like to remove everything negative from our lives.

Genie and a bottle, three wishes, what would they be?

I would like time, health, and happiness to share with family and friends.



Describe a time when you overcame insurmountable odds.

It's hard to pinpoint one. In a showbusiness career there are many hurdles. You have to develop a thick skin, because there are so many stumbling blocks. You have to believe in yourself so that others will believe in you.

When I started out, I did not make a living, far from it. There were many times when I chose to pay for gas in order to get to my next show instead of having a meal, and hoped they would feed me when I got there. I always said that my show is worth a million bucks, but I am willing to work for less.

Do you have a most embarrassing moment that you wish to share?

There are many embarrassing moments in a performer's career. I once appeared on a live TV show for almost an hour, only to realize during one of the commercial breaks that my fly was down. Thankfully I was standing, so nobody noticed.

What advice would you give to a hypnotist and/or a comedian starting out?

Videotape your shows, watch, edit your words and actions and improve. See the show as your audience would. Use language to create a vivid picture that will excite the audience's imagination.