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myself. So I stopped doing the magic shows. I figured, if I wasn't very good, then why do it? I decided to concentrate on acting full time.

"Now that I've come back to magic, I definitely feel that my training and experience has been a big plus. A lot of people think that when you act, you are just pretending to be someone else. In a way you are, but what you start to realise as you grow as an actor is that in order to be good, you really have to bring more of yourself into your roles. It makes what you do far more interesting and more truthful. Now that I'm a little older and a little more confident in my abilities, I don't have as much trouble being myself in front of an audience. It's still hard sometimes, not having a fictional character to hide behind. And I suppose I could create some sort of magician character. But I honestly feel that performing as a slightly exaggerated version of myself is far

more interesting than any character I could create. Especially doing close up magic which is such an intimate experience. If I were doing a stage show, it might be a bit different. In fact, I'm actually working on developing a one man show in which I play different characters and perform magic. But it's not a magic show, per say. More of a play with magic in it."

Lots of actors seem to have a love of Magic (Ricky Jay, Leonardo DiCaprio, Orson Welles, Woody Allen etc etc) – any idea why?

"Not really, other than a lot artistic people usually have interests in more than one art. Although, let's face it, theatre and film are all about illusion. If you think about it, movies and plays are just really elaborate magic shows. So it doesn't surprise me that there are many actors and directors who are fascinated by magic."

How did your interest in magic start?

"I honestly can't remember but I do have memories of seeing Doug Henning and Harry Blackstone, Jr. on TV when I was a kid and just loving them. Then David Copperfield came along and I was blown away. I had never seen a magician like him before. People take him and his style for granted now, but David Copperfield was pretty new and different at the time.

"So after seeing these guys, I wanted to be a stage magician. Not having the money to buy large stage illusions, I used to create a lot of my own props out of cardboard boxes and toilet paper tubes. I would also use all of my allowance money to buy tricks like the Acrobatic Silks, Strat-O-Sphere, the Die Box, Hippy Hop Rabbits, all the classics of parlour magic. I still have all of those props. At the time, I had absolutely no interest in close up. In fact, for years, the only card tricks I did were the Invisible Deck and a couple of things with a Svengali deck. It wasn't until I was in my mid twenties that I acquired a copy of "The Royal Road To Card Magic". That's when I started dabbling in card magic. And even then it took a long time for me to work up the courage to perform close up magic for people."

So in all your time in magic, what would you say was the GREATEST trick you have ever seen?

"David Blaine making magic seem cool." Cameron laughs. "Seriously. Before Blaine, magic was thought of as really geeky. Now, magicians are dressing like rock stars and magic itself has a much cooler vibe. And even the magicians who aren't dressing like rock stars are certainly giving off a more Hollywood attitude. Look at Joshua Jay. He dresses well and is totally buff! The magicians I remember seeing as a kid wore ruffed shirts and none of them looked like they hit the gym on a regular basis. The days of loud vests and spinning bow ties are definitely coming to an end. Not such a bad thing, in my opinion. Like any art, magic should change with the times."

And with performers like Cameron Francis at the helm, the art form is certainly destined for change. And for the better! Before we sign off, Cameron has one last tale to regale us with.

"When I was a kid, about eight or nine, my mom asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. 'I want to be an actor,' I said. To which she replied, 'Well, what if you can't make a living as an actor?' I thought about it for a moment and then came back with, 'Then I'll just be a magician.'" She must have been worrying ever since! **MS**