

Grease Paint

March 2019



Back Stage Magic

My online business will open soon. Initial target gate was 1 March. With schedule, lecture and the WCA convention that day has been pushed back to April 1st. It takes time to research all the required and operational policies such as: privacy, shipping, returns, etc. But the finished product is close to being open and ready for customers.

I have a lot of other sources beyond those in my catalogue. I promote my site as “Owned and operated by a magician, clown entertainer”. I am trying to put myself in a type of consultant posture. If you want suggestions or need help with something I hope you will reach out to me.

I mostly stock merchandise that supports my lectures. However, my sources ship as I order. If you have a priority I can have my source drop ship to you. But you need to contact me when you submit that priority order.

I will insert periodic advertisements of materials clowns may be interested in. However, Grease Paint shall remain a publication of the Quad City Clown Troupe. I may have a page or article that is Back Stage Magic related. But the bulk of the newsletter will focus on the Quad City Clown Troupe and clowning.

I will also sell some of my personal materials through my store. I invite you to email me with any questions you may have or products you might be interested in. I will do my best to answer your questions and provide a demonstration if available. Email: bsmagic2018@gmail.com

Perfecting Your Makeup:

Focus on makeup and how to use it.

Trick Sold/Secret Told: Buyer beware. Many stores will not offer refunds. Do your homework before you make that purchase.

Stump your Partner—Not: Ad-lib problems and responsibilities.

Contract Agreement: Communications between yourself and those who hire you.

Competition: Challenge yourself. Learn from other clowns opinions.

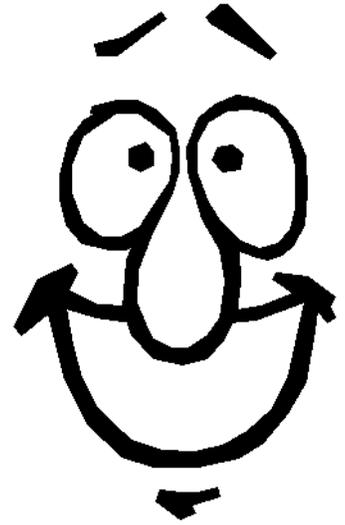
What's on the Paper: 2 Clown mind reading skit. Done on walk-around or on stage.

Famous Failures: Don't let anyone demotivate you. These people were also labeled as failures.

Perfecting your Makeup

When we first get started, we follow the basics. White around the eyes, black on brows, red around the mouth, etc. That is fantastic as the hardest part of clowning is initially getting started. Many never get beyond the mirror and out to the public .

Over time, we tend to make changes to our makeup. The best approach to perfect your makeup does not begin with makeup at all. It begins with a mirror and something you can mark your face with.



Sit down, relax and take a deep breath. Now look in the mirror. This is how you look with no facial expression. Time to go to work. Frown, smile, laugh and act excited. As you make these faces mark the areas of your face that move. Do your brows raise? How about the sides of your mouth. Do your cheeks move? Mark your face. You will be working with those areas that move.

The focus and purpose of a clown's makeup is to accent the facial movement. A clown's makeup should enhance his/her facial expressions. A makeup design that brings attention to the facial expression is the goal. Now is it makeup and mirror time.

Do not just smear grease paint on. Look at your face and try to visualize your makeup design. As you apply remember to apply from the top down and use those colors to highlight the parts of your face that move.

Do not just make one change and call it finished. Use your camera, take a picture and then try other touches. Talk with anyone who has been clowning for a long time and they will tell you they went through some changes and development with their makeup to get it where they are now.

Don't just make a change and go clown on Saturday afternoon and decide that evening you are not happy with it. Wear that change a couple times. I use the rule of 5. With my magic, balloons, clowning, makeup etc. I test the change in front of 5 audiences before I decide to keep the change or let it go.

The only exception is if my change is so horrible that I would not want to share it with the public. I am one that cannot visualize the final product from an imaginary image. Often I need to make the change and look in the mirror to determine if it is public worthy or not.

So the first step in perfecting your makeup is to evaluate what moves as you make those facial expressions. Step two is experimenting with your colors to see what makes the movement stand out the best.

Trick Sold / Secret Told

Another name for this article would be “Buyer beware”. Magic sources, both online and those brick and mortar stores often stand on this concept. The nature of magic is such that when a trick is purchased the instructions, secret and gimmicks are revealed. For this reason most do not offer any returns or exchanges. The only exception is defective merchandise.

As a consumer it is your responsibility to learn as much about the trick as you can BEFORE you make a purchase decision. Take the time to search for demo clips on the Internet. Many tricks have been done on YouTube for viewers to see. Some have instructions available on the Internet as well. Ask any questions you may have. A seller who believes in customer service and builds his business gathering satisfied customers will provide those answers.

Some dealers are willing to demonstrate them at their vendor table. In those situations you should be able to get your hands on the items and experiment with them. If you have friends who are magicians you can ask them for opinions as well. The local magic club would be a good source to get some answers too.

Do not hesitate in asking the dealer for a few referrals. Many will not share their customer base. But if they have endorsements or other comments they have received they should share them with you. The dealer might have won an award in the industry for customer service or other achievements. If they have, I’m sure they will be willing to share them with you.

Just because one dealer goes the extra distance to answer your questions, you are not contracted to buy from him. I encourage everyone to purchase magic in two stages. First, do the research to determine it is something you want to own. Second, shop around. As long as you know what you are buying, take some time and find the best price.

Dealers who do not provide pre-sale information, respond to your questions or brush you off with a “buy it or not” attitude need to be avoided. Those dealers will take your money and push the “you bought it, now it is yours” attitude down your throat. As you run into those dealers, be sure to let your alley members know. We all need to take the steps to help keep others from those bad purchase experiences.

Stump Your Partner—Not



As we perform the skits seem to get easier. We tend to relax and often stray away from the script a little. There is nothing wrong with ad-lib. In fact, that is the way a lot of clowns put their own character into the performance. I will also add that we often stumble onto more laughing moments that were not there before.

But there is a major problem one needs to be aware of. You have to know the potentials of the individuals you are working with. Some clowns are more relaxed and can work “off the top of their head” without any problems. Others may not be that comfortable. They like to stay close to the script. If one gets too far away from it, they tend to get scared, confused and lost in the presentation.

Here are the golden rules on ad-lib that everyone must follow:

1. Feel free to ad-lib if it adds value to the skit. Just do not hog the spotlight. Allow others to participate too.
2. Stay alert on the content and reaction of your partner. If the partner begins to play along that is fantastic. But if your partner shows signs of confusion or begins to freeze up you need to take action.
3. The one who took the skit so far off script that the partner is lost or confused is responsible. In line with that responsibility is the requirement of bringing the skit back on track.

In the most simple terms: if you confuse or cause your partner to get lost, you have to bring them back. You may need to go back near the beginning and follow the script. You might need to offer suggestions. You have to do whatever is needed to link the partnership up again in the skit.

Once you get the skit back on track you also need to remember to hold to the script. Do not put your partner in that position again. Just follow the script through to the end. If you want to, you can set a time with the partner to practice later. Just remember:

Skits are a “team” performance. One should not take the skit so far off script that the partner is lost or confused. When that happens the individual that took it there is responsible to bring it back.

Contract Agreement

The term “contract” is often received as a structured harsh document. In most cases it is. We use contracts for everything from buying vehicles, to magazine subscriptions. The dictionary defines a contract as a written agreement, especially one concerning employment, sales, tenancy or a commitment that is intended to be enforceable by law.

In the simplest terms a contract is a written document that lists what each party will do. Some people try to soften the impact by referring to the document as an agreement. But the binding consent of both parties is the same. If one party falls short, or does not complete the prior agreed terms then some kind of repercussive actions are expected to take place.

Contracts, or agreements need to be part of our clowning. The document does not have to be formal. Before the event some communication has to be written down and communicated between the clowns, troupe and hiring individual. The wording may be as simple as the clowns will provide walk-around entertainment to include balloon sculptures, and pocket magic. The document should also include the date, time and charges agreed to.

Those who hire you may ask you to do a short mini-show. The show may not have been included in the contract/agreement. There is no problem. If the clowns are able to they can. But if the clowns cannot then that is not grounds for the hiring individual to reduce the payment due. Another situation may be the hours. The hiring individual may ask you to stay an extra hour. Again, if the clown is able to and willing there is no problem. But if not, then that is not grounds to reduce the amount of the compensation.

Even the clown troupe documents each event. We communicate what the activities will be and the anticipated donation that will be received. We also use that same document to list the clowns that plan to attend. The terms contract/agreement may sound extremely formal for clowning. However, at this time they are the only communications where each party signs off/agrees on what takes place, when and the amount of the donation.

Some agreements are extremely informal. I have booked events through email. I receive a request for a quote and reply. They agree and I follow that up with an email summarizing our communications. I ask them to acknowledge by reply email. That has served me well in the past. The activities, date and times are shared as well as the compensation. To date this email type of agreement has worked fine for me.

Do not let the title of the document scare you. Take the time to write down what you agree to do and what you expect to receive in return. Then get the hiring individual to acknowledge. This will prevent a lot of problems later.

Competition

Clown conventions often include competitions. The WCA convention this March will include balloon sculpture, makeup, face painting, group skits, single skits and paradability. Each competition has its own rules. Those rules specify the time involved, in many cases the materials used and any limitations that may apply.

A panel of judges will score each competitor. Their scores will be combined for a grand total and that total compared with others to determine first, second and third. Winners are usually announced at the banquet and that is also when they receive their copy of the judges score sheets.

Competitions can be very good, average, or poor. The first thing you have to realize is that each judge has his/her own opinion. They do not confer with each other before they mark your score. It is common to get a mix of good and bad comments/scores. I will use myself as an example.

I plan to compete in single skits. I will do my egg tray routine. If you are not familiar it involves an egg tray with a cup on it. I cover the tray and on the other side of the stage make an egg vanish. I indicate it traveled to the cup. First time it fails, so I try it once more. The second time it fails also. I pull the cup off the tray and the tray falls apart. I end up holding the bottom of the tray that displays two fried eggs.

It is nice routine. But a judge may view it as a magic trick and mark me down for it. That judge may feel it was not a skit, but a magic routine. If that is the opinion I will not get very high marks. And, the feedback will be negative. However, the next judge may enjoy it and score me very high. It is the individual judge's opinion.

Competition serves two purposes for clowns. The serious clowns compete for points. When a clown receives a certain level of points he/she qualifies for the "Clown Hall of Fame". There are many clowns that compete just for the points. Other clowns compete for the fun and feedback.

That feedback can include anything. Many have picked up makeup tips, costume accessory ideas and other appearance comments. Some clowns get feedback that relates to the performance. Notes involving blocking, projection, timing and other gestures help us improve our routines.

Still others get good feedback, but compared to the others in the competition, they just didn't score high enough to place in the top three. I have picked up some good ideas just by sitting in the audience and watching a competition.

Competitions are a great way to get some “quality clown evaluations”. As we perform, just about everyone in the audience claps and cheers. But to score well when judged by your fellow clowns is really an accomplishment.

If you are thinking about competing there are a few things you need to do to prepare. First, you need to get a copy of the rules. They will tell you how you will be scored, and list any limitations that apply. In terms of scoring the rules will also identify any penalty. One that usually is set in place is score deductions for going over the time limit.



Armed with the rules you need to take a hard look at your clown character. Makeup competition can be brutal. You stand on a stage and strike a pose. You hold that pose as the judges take a hard look at application, features and highlights. Balloon competition is not makeup or costume intensive. But you can bet that the balloon creations will be some of the best you have seen.

Your next quest is to determine the area you wish to compete. From there you need to rehearse until you are able to perform it in the allotted time frame. The next step is to use your phone or a camcorder and record it. Video recording shows everything. That casual twist that you do not think about will be obvious on the playback. Make notes of things you need to change and then rehearse it again.

When you feel your skit is “performance/competition” ready then it is time to bring in some friends. Perform for them and pay attention to their reaction. Timing is best learned by video and the audience reaction. Remember they need time to hear, and follow along with your action.

Finally the day of the competition, be sure to attend the meeting. They will have a competition meeting that is a requirement. There they go over all the details again. If you miss the meeting, you will not be allowed to compete. Get a good night’s rest and show up at the designated time. Remain calm in the waiting area. When it is time, step out and perform.

Do not expect answers/feedback that day. Judges need to watch all the competitors. Awards and results are usually available during the banquet. You are usually given a copy of the judges score sheets. Those are the documents you get your feedback from.

We have Quad City Clown Troupe members who have been in competition. We also have members who are certified as competition judges. If you have questions, bring them up during a meeting and we will get them answered for you.

What's on the Paper

A 2 clown skit that can be done on stage or as a walk-around. One clown needs a piece of paper and pencil/pen. This is a mind reading approach. However, care needs to be taken to point to something that will be written on the paper, rather than reading a clown's mind.

1st Clown: If on stage walks out and begins talking with the audience. If a walk-around just mingles until the 2nd clown interrupts.

2nd Clown: I can tell what is on your mind. I can tell even before you speak it.

1st Clown: I don't think so.

2nd Clown: Yes I can and I will prove it. (Hands the 1st clown a piece of paper and pencil.) You write down whatever you want on this piece of paper and I will tell you what it is.

1st Clown: Does not believe him, but writes something on the paper. When he is finished, he asked the 2nd clown: "now tell me what's on the paper".

2nd Clown: Says it is not very clear. Maybe if you hold it above your head. (1st Clown does that.) No, no it is getting darker, but I still need it more in focus. Perhaps if you put the paper on the ground and stood on it. (1st Clown puts paper on the ground and stands on it.)

1st Clown: Ok now tell me what's on the paper.

2nd Clown: What's on the paper? Just a silly clown. (2nd Clown then runs off.)

First clown looks confused, shrugs his shoulders and walks off, or continues with the walk-around.

That is the straight through version. If the audience is interested I have been known to have the 1st clown refold the paper. When that didn't work I have had him hold it over his head and twirl it as he hopped on one foot. You can come up with various things for the 1st clown to do. When it is time for the ending that is when you have him set it on the ground and stand on it.

This is an older classic that many clowns have stopped performing. Very easy to do and flexible in that you can do it as a stage skit, or interrupt a clown during a walk-around. Regardless the setting the audience will enjoy it.

Famous Failures

The next time someone tells you that you are not a real clown remember these people. I think you might have heard of them before. They were told they were failures. But the end results were completely different.

After being cut from his high school basketball team he went home, locked himself in his room and cried. (Michael Jordan)

He wasn't able to speak until he was almost four years old. His teachers said he would never amount to much. (Albert Einstein)

She was demoted from her job as news anchor because they felt she was not fit for television. (Oprah Winfrey)

He was fired from a newspaper for lacking imagination and having no original ideas. (Walt Disney)

They were rejected by Decca Recording Studios. The studio executives didn't like their sound. They said they have no future in show business. (The Beatles)

His first book was rejected by 27 different publishers. (Dr. Seuss)

Do not ever let anyone depress you with their narrow and incorrect opinion. The true measure of a clown is the entertainment of his/her audience. If they enjoy and appreciate you then the individual's opinion that is talking down to you has no merit.

We all shine in our respective areas. Brian performs at nursing and senior housing facilities. His audience enjoys his performance. But they are not entertained as well as some of our other troupe members who work specifically in that environment.

One is not measured by the face painting, balloon animals, pocket magic or any other craft. Our audience measures us by how well they are entertained. And, when they are entertained, they do not criticize the clown for the make or costume. They are too busy enjoying the fun and laughter of the moments.

SOURCE: Internet search. One can find a few more if they wanted to search further. I only used there because they were highly recognized individuals that overcame all those negative actions, comments and opinions.



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Send articles and the release acknowledgement documents as a PDF files to:

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