

# THE EVAASONS

## MARVELS OF THE MIND

by rory johnston

THE EXOTIC-LOOKING WOMAN STANDS ON THE STAGE, BLIND-FOLDED, WHILE HER FAST-TALKING HUSBAND WITH A WIRELESS MICROPHONE MOVES QUICKLY THROUGH THE AUDIENCE. HE PAUSES IN FRONT OF A MAN AND ASKS HIM TO CONCENTRATE ON THE SERIAL NUMBER OF A BORROWED DOLLAR BILL. THE LADY ON STAGE TELEPATHICALLY DIVINES THE EIGHT-DIGIT NUMBER, ANNOUNCING IT TO THE CROWD. A WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE IS ASKED TO STAND. THE LADY ONSTAGE MENTALLY CONNECTS,



calling out the unidentified volunteer's name. She then asks the woman to think about a photograph in her purse. The sightless performer proceeds to describe the photo and give the name of the person in the picture. As an afterthought, she identifies the *sister* of the person in the photograph.

The gentleman with the mic continues to wander and talk with the audience, borrowing various objects. The blindfolded lady tells the volunteers things about themselves and the items they are holding... information that could only be obtained through extra sensory perception, psychic abilities, or mental telepathy.

Tessa and Jeff Evason are amazing another crowd with their Second Sight act, introduced, quite correctly, as "one of the best acts of its kind in the world." Moreover, they proudly proclaim that it is done without the aid of any electronic gadgetry, relying solely on the power

of the mind. This energetic young couple demonstrate techniques that are as close to real mindreading as one could possibly imagine.

Raised in Cornwall, Ontario in Canada, Jeff saw a magician on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and was bitten by the magic bug at an early age. When he was 14, his grandfather took him on a cruise where he met one of the ship's entertainers, magician Bernard Reid. Mr. Reid took a liking to the young boy who followed him everywhere, and at the end of the voyage, he presented Jeff with a copy of *The Amateur Magician's Handbook*, in which Jeff immediately immersed himself. By the end of the year, Jeff was doing shows, performing for local children's parties. He continued entertaining

through high school, college, and another ten years, working in the field of broadcasting by day and performing magic by night. Finally, realizing where his heart was, he decided to take a chance, quit his radio job, and move to Toronto to perform magic full time.

Two years later, Jeff was invited to perform at a fashion show, where he was teamed up with one of the models as an assistant. Her name was Tessa, and although born in England, she had been raised in St. Lucia, where she grew up watching fire eaters, glass walkers, and magicians. Always fascinated by such performers, she jumped at the chance to work with this handsome young entertainer. Performing a "Zig-Zag" and a "Mutilated

*While on the stage blindfolded, Tessa reveals the contents of a lady's purse.*



PHOTOS: GARY D. HUGHES



Parasol" routine, she showed natural ability, and the two immediately hit it off. In fact, she joined him for a 12-week summer stint, performing resort shows. The act went so well that, in the fall, she took a leave of absence from her job in a law office to join him on a cruise ship, assisting in his illusion show. She never returned to those offices.

Jeff and Tessa developed a full-evening show entitled *Fascination*, which they booked from city to city using promoters and telephone ticket sales. It was during this period, around 1984, that Jeff listened to an audiotape of Liz & Tommy Tucker doing their mental magic act at the Magic Castle. "The audience response so greatly impressed me that I immediately set out to see what Tessa and I could do to develop such a routine. Our first step was to contact the Tuckers and travel to Boston to meet them."

As it turned out, Tommy Tucker was ill and in a wheelchair, as the result of an automobile accident. He and Liz feared that they would be unable to continue performing much longer, and they were looking for someone to pass the act down to. In fact, the Tuckers had advertised in magic magazines that they were selling the act, and although they had received some responses, they hadn't run across a couple that was willing to put in the time, expense, and

tremendous effort it took to master such a complex act.

Jeff and Tessa were very interested in what the Tuckers had to offer. However, Jeff explained, "There was one big question. Because Tessa had always been a 'silent' assistant in the act — someone who had never spoken on stage before — could she handle the 'star' roll?" They decided to give it a try.

Three years and thousands of hours of rehearsal later, The Evasons were working a cruise ship when the cruise director asked them to do an extra, unscheduled late show in one of the lounges. "Why not? We were out in the middle of the ocean. The ship was rocking that night, and we knew the audience would be small." It seemed like the perfect opportunity to try out the mental act they had been working on for so long. The audience loved it and the show became the buzz of the ship. It seemed The Evasons had a hit on their hands. "It wasn't until later," laughed Jeff, "that I learned, as we were being introduced, how Tessa had been backstage getting physically ill. Not from sea sickness, but from the stress of having to speak on stage for the first time!" Tessa did fine and, as anticipated, became the "star" of the show. "In fact," said Jeff, wryly, "people often ask why I'm even there. Why does she need me at all?"

The Second Sight routine became a regular segment in The Evasons' show, sandwiched between the magic, some fire eating, and a few larger illusions. The audience response, however, called for more changes and, five years later, the emphasis of the act had shifted completely. The illusions were phased out and by the time Jeff and Tessa were married in 1991, the entire act revolved around mentalism.

Jeff and Tessa never call themselves psychics, nor do they ask anybody to believe in the supernatural or the paranormal. On the other hand, they don't deny the existence of ESP either. "Hey, it is impossible to show that ESP does not exist," Jeff says with a smile, "You can show 100 cases of fraud but you can never write it off." The Evasons wisely let the audience decide for themselves.

"The power of suggestion and illusion are very closely assimilated to each other. We suggest things will happen to the audience and they see things that aren't really what their senses tell them they are seeing. We're not doing the same kind of tricks that magicians do. And I say that because I'm differentiating between a trick and a psychological illusion. However, when it comes time for Tessa to say the names of people in photographs, that is no longer an illusion. Everything that you see is the result of



*Before mentalism, Jeff and Tessa worked ships, performing an act with doves, stage magic, and fire eating.*

years and years of study and communication between two people on a completely different level.”

According to The Evasons promo material “They have no secret assistants and do not use any concealed electronic communication devices. They offer \$25,000 to anyone who can prove otherwise.”

In addition, this \$25,000 challenge is offered despite the fact that many magicians in the business are aware that Liz & Tommy Tucker, who the Evasons credit with teaching them, were known for their electronic devices. Tommy Tucker claims to have marketed “the first solid state devices to aid mentalists and magicians in 1957.” In the late ’70s and into the ’80s, Tucker’s ESP Inc. advertised his “Magitronix” systems — “solid state beacons which send electronic impulses or light up tiny LED receivers” — in major magic magazines. The methods were extolled as being “The Easy Way to Learn Contact Mind Reading.”

When Jeff was asked about these “easy way” systems, he explained that The Tuckers actually had *three* acts for sale. There was “Magitronix” and “The Miracle Mind Act,” both of which relied heavily on electronics, and there was “The Miracle Mind 2000,” a



so-called *act* that was supposedly a more complex system. “The first two were developed to provide a mechanical method for achieving apparent telepathy results,” Jeff says. “Short-cuts, so to speak, for those who couldn’t or didn’t want to take on the intense training the third method took.”

Tommy Tucker’s “Miracle Mind 2000,” according to Jeff, used no electronics and featured another *modus operandi* altogether. “These are the lessons we learned. We then took that system, combined it with several others, made our own improvements, and developed the technique we use today.”

In concluding these explanations, Jeff had an interesting comment about Liz & Tommy Tucker’s Second Sight act. “Liz *did* use an ear-piece in her later years, but not as a secret communication device.” It seems that she wore it simply because she was getting hard of hearing and couldn’t make out Tommy’s words clearly enough. “It was, quite simply, a hearing aid.”

Once The Evasons had focused their energy on the psychic aspect of entertaining, their career took off. Television producer Gary Ouellet, also Canadian, enjoyed their performance at a small magic convention, Magi Montréal, and expressed interest in using them on NBC’s popular special, *The World’s Greatest Magic*. A few years later, while appearing at a Psychic Entertainers convention, they received the call from Gary to fly to Las Vegas for a taping. Their appearance on *World’s Greatest Magic V* led to the Discovery Channel’s *Grand Illusions*, which triggered interest from Fox’s *Powers of the Paranormal* show, then PAX’s *Masters of Illusion*. Singapore’s TSC produced a documentary about the couple entitled *The Fourth Dimension*. Concentrating mostly on college campus and corporate shows, The Evasons still manage to squeeze in six to eight weeks on cruise ships each year. Their 60- to 70-minute show, which has taken them to 28 countries, consists of headline predictions, a table levitation, a rarely seen light-and-heavy/Georgia Magnet demonstration, the levitation of an audience volunteer, a number of traditional mental effects and, of course, their remarkable Second Sight sequence.

In 1997 the Psychic Entertainers Association voted them top performers of the year, presenting the organization’s highest honor, *The Dunninger Memorial Award for Distinguished Professionalism in the Performance of Mentalism*. At the 1999 World Magic Seminar in Las Vegas, Jeff and Tessa won the *SARMOTI Award* in the World Challenge Stage Competition. They are the first mentalists to receive this honor, presented as Siegfried & Roy’s favorite act of the Seminar.

Recently, after a three-year effort, Jeff and Tessa have received their green cards, and are moving to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. The location was chosen not primarily for the proximity of cruise ships, but for the convenience to Inamorata, their 38-foot sailboat. Passionate about sailing, the couple plans to spend as much time as possible on the water — riding their current wave of good fortune. If there is a prediction for the future of The Evasons, it looks like a smooth sailing act all the way. ♦