
John Sturk: Great Performers are Born not Made

Contributed by
Thursday, 24 November 2005

John Sturk

It would be safe to say John Sturk performed as well as you would expect from a young man new to magic.

It would be safe, but not true. The truth: Mr. Sturk performed with a sense of professionalism far beyond his tenure in our craft. Actually, we may have seen one of the next big names in magic perform in the Open-Mike session at John Luka's Ninth Annual Motor City Close-Up Convention.

The young man was introduced with a short but impressive resume including a People's Choice Award and First Place in the Close-Up Competition at last summer's Magic Week festivities in Colon, Michigan.

We knew of Mr. Sturk from his seminal work in the formation of Michigan State University's Magic Club. In fact, we've featured stories about Mr. Sturk and the club frequently in the virtual pages of Quinlan's Inside Magic. So, we were pre-disposed to find his act enjoyable. We were ready to excuse his likely nervousness performing for so many hardened and molting professionals.

Sure, it was irritating that he referred to the author of this article as Mr. Quinlan and thus emphasized the obvious differences in age, vitality, hope, dreams, ambitions, debt. One day he too will be as we are now and some young whipper-snapper will refer to him in the same manner and we'll see how he likes being called, "Mr. Quinlan."

So you have the set-up. We're ready to give the youngster a break and write nice things to encourage him.

He did not need our pity or false encouragement. In fact, he was so good we were tempted to trash him, suggest he had stolen the routines of masters, performed with vulgarities that caused Gazzo to leave the room, was badly in need of a shower or at least a good going-over with one of those new disposable personal groomer/delouser's we've put high on our gift list.

Mr. Sturk performed a daring and technically difficult rope routine flawlessly. His moves were great, his patter was smooth and well-rehearsed but not rote. His ability to play to the crowd was the most impressive aspect, however.

Although not evidenced in our own repertoire, we are convinced years of study and practice can give almost anyone the technical skills to perform most sleights. Enough practice in public speaking and mindless repetition of the same routine will make any patter seem smooth and perhaps eloquent.

We believe great performers are born, not made. You can either work a crowd or you can't. No amount of practice or repetition will change a stiff into a truly great performer.

[Actually, we know this truth from our years on the convention and meeting circuits when we presented our lecture and vast collection of tapes, CD-ROMs, GAF Viewmaster Disks, and spiral-bound booklets for Great Magicians are Made, Not Born: Be the Best Performer Alive...

John Sturk

It would be safe to say John Sturk performed as well as you would expect from a young man new to magic.

It would be safe, but not true. The truth: Mr. Sturk performed with a sense of professionalism far beyond his tenure in our craft. Actually, we may have seen one of the next big names in magic perform in the Open-Mike session at John Luka's Ninth Annual Motor City Close-Up Convention.

The young man was introduced with a short but impressive resume including a People's Choice Award and First Place in the Close-Up Competition at last summer's Magic Week festivities in Colon, Michigan.

We knew of Mr. Sturk from his seminal work in the formation of Michigan State University's Magic Club. In fact, we've featured stories about Mr. Sturk and the club frequently in the virtual pages of Quinlan's Inside Magic. So, we were pre-disposed to find his act enjoyable. We were ready to excuse his likely nervousness performing for so many hardened and molting professionals.

Sure, it was irritating that he referred to the author of this article as Mr. Quinlan and thus emphasized the obvious differences in age, vitality, hope, dreams, ambitions, debt. One day he too will be as we are now and some young whipper-snapper will refer to him in the same manner and we'll see how he likes being called, "Mr. Quinlan."

So you have the set-up. We're ready to give the youngster a break and write nice things to encourage him.

He did not need our pity or false encouragement. In fact, he was so good we were tempted to trash him, suggest he had stolen the routines of masters, performed with vulgarities that caused Gazzo to leave the room, was badly in need of a shower or at least a good going-over with one of those new disposable personal groomer/delouser's we've put high on our gift list.

Mr. Sturk performed a daring and technically difficult rope routine flawlessly. His moves were great, his patter was smooth and well-rehearsed but not rote. His ability to play to the crowd was the most impressive aspect, however.

Although not evidenced in our own repertoire, we are convinced years of study and practice can give almost anyone the technical skills to perform most sleights. Enough practice in public speaking and mindless repetition of the same routine will make any patter seem smooth and perhaps eloquent.

We believe great performers are born, not made. You can either work a crowd or you can't. No amount of practice or repetition will change a stiff into a truly great performer.

[Actually, we know this truth from our years on the convention and meeting circuits when we presented our lecture and vast collection of tapes, CD-ROMs, GAF Viewmaster Disks, and spiral-bound booklets for *Great Magicians are Made, Not Born: Be the Best Performer Alive through Practice and Mindless Repetition*. Some would read our two contentions as contradictory or at least inconsistent.

We don't. If we did, we'd have to either give back the money we got from the sales of meaningless materials or re-open this text file to make edits. So, if being consistent means we can't be cheap or lazy, we'll stick with our inconsistent ways].

Mr. Sturk is a born performer.

We thought we'd seen every rope routine. We were wrong. Although some of the moves were familiar, they were performed flawlessly and in a routine that actually made sense.

He did use one of our favorite Whit Haydn lines from his fantastic Mongolian Pop-Knot routine: "Just a piece of rope--like you'd find in any bedroom." But even then, Mr. Sturk has his own presentation that both understood how to deliver this line.

[Check out a neat discussion on the delivery of this line in which Mr. Haydn offers his advice on the best delivery. This link leads to the discussion at [The Magic Cafe](#). We consider Mr. Haydn to be a born performer. Further, you can see Mr. Haydn deliver the line (as well as his entire Mongolian Pop-Knot routine) [here](#)].

This hagiography began as an earnest review of a young man we were already inclined to appreciate. We do not know Mr. Sturk's long-term career plans. Perhaps he will be encouraged by many positive reviews and pursue a career in magic or entertainment generally. While we do not know his plans, we do know talent when we see it.

We hope you have a chance to see Mr. Sturk perform. We are certain you will agree with our evaluation.

You have a chance to check out his work Tuesday nights at the Lansing Texas Steak House from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Follow this link for information about and directions to the restaurant, the link on Mr. Sturk's web site ends in a SQL error. And if you've ever had an SQL error in your end, you know that is something to avoid.

Check out Mr. Sturk's web site here.[magic news](#) [magic](#) [magic review](#)