

# FANTASIO:

# MAGICIAN OF THE MONTH



## Magician with Style by David Ginn

FOLLOWING THE CONTESTS at the 1968 IBM Convention in Chattanooga, I left the auditorium and made my way backstage. I was having a problem with my dove act, and I had spotted a fellow in the contest who might have an answer for me. He called himself Fantasio.

I had seen Fantasio perform with doves on the "Ed Sullivan Show," although he did not use doves in the contest that day. Instead, he did amazing things with a cane that changed colors and lighted candles that vanished instantly.

Backstage I found Fantasio packing up his act. He greeted me cordially, and after hearing my problem and questions, he offered suggestions freely that solved the problem. That was my first impression of a man I now call friend: *he was friendly and willing to share his knowledge with another magician.*

At that same convention, I purchased and performed Fantasio's color changing cane on one of the stage shows. I did it poorly, but he still refers to David Ginn as being the "second" one ever to perform it. The first time he said that I was stumped for a moment. "Who was the first?" I asked him. He smiled and pointed a thumb at his chest: "Me!" he said with a laugh. Since then I have learned to perform the canes and candles with much more polish.

Fantasio was not always *Fantasio*. Born Ricardo Roucau in Argentina, he first became interested in magic as a teenager and practiced it as a hobby. By college age he planned to study for a banking career with a chemistry minor at the University

of Buenos Aires, but a five month banking strike throughout Argentina thwarted his plans. In need of work, young Ricardo adopted the stage name of "Larry" and, armed with some pictures of the name "Larry" on a theatre marque, he traveled to Montevideo, Uruguay. There he convinced a night club owner that



Fantasio with Carlos H. Colombi, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1959. (above.)

This first photo was taken of Fantasio performing, Argentina, December, 1955. (right.)

he was a famous magician named "Larry." With his fresh approach to magic, Larry became popular with the public and his career as a professional magician began.

While working in Montevideo, Ricardo met a young lady named Monica. They were married in 1959, and Monica joined the act, which became known as "Larry and Daisy." Few magicians' wives make good assistants, but Monica's stage background made her an exception, so much so that Jay Marshall once remarked, "Monica is the best magi-

cian's assistant I have ever seen perform."

Gaining in popularity with their audiences, Ricardo and Monica began to travel, working night clubs, hotels and casinos throughout South and Central America. While supervising a casino in Curacao, John Scarne saw their act. He liked their



refreshing act, but told them that the name "Larry and Daisy" was no good for working the United States, even though it was catchy for South Americans. So Scarne suggested that they change their names.

During some intensive soul searching and career reviewing one word seemed to be repeated in every single review of their performances throughout Latin America: "Fantastico," which means *fantastic* in English. Thus Ricardo, "Larry," became Fantasio, and the act was billed either as Fantasio alone or Fantasio



Fantasio, Monica, Jackie and Co. Acapulco, Mexico, 1976.



Fantasio at the Radio City Music Hall, New York, 1969.

and Monica.

Reflecting on the solo or double billing business, I remember one of the early things Fantasio gave me as advice. "Even if you use an assistant," he said, "*always* be able to perform the act by yourself in case the assistant gets sick." His entire night club act bore out his advice: though Monica definitely added a great deal to his performance, Fantasio still could present the whole act as a solo artist.

At the 1964 Combined IBM-SAM Convention in New York, Fantasio won the top award for Originality. That same year Fantasio and Monica received what they consider an even greater award: Their daughter Jackie was born.

During the 1960's openings for magicians in the top shows were

few and far between, yet Fantasio continued to work steadily. Fantasio and Monica had long run engagements at the famous Latin Quarter and Radio City Music Hall in New York. There was a six month tour with the Leberace show, then an 18-month spot in the first "Hello, America!" show at the Desert Inn Hotel in Las Vegas.

Sample reviews during this period read like this—**HOLLYWOOD REPORTER**: "Fantasio is one of the most accomplished magicians ever to appear in Las Vegas;" **VARIETY**: "Fantasio is an uncanny performer who has a terrific impact on the audience;" **FABULOUS LAS VEGAS**: "Fantasio, and his name is appropriate, does unbelievable feats of magic;" and **CUE MAGAZINE** called him a "show stopper. . . who enchants and mystifies with smooth manipulations."

While working Las Vegas in 1965, Fantasio was spotted for the "Ed Sullivan Show" for the first five appearances over the next four years. The late Ed Sullivan was reported to have said that Fantasio was the first magician he had ever seen perform in short sleeves. Also, agent Mark Leddy (booker for the Sullivan Show) said that Fantasio was the highest paid magician ever to appear on Sullivan's show.

One of the highlights of Fantasio's career occurred in 1968 at the IBM and SAM Conventions. In contest competition Fantasio won four awards for his cane and candle magic: (1) Most Original Effect, (2) Most Commercial Tricks, (3) Best Stage Effect, and (4) Senior Originality Award. This was the first and only time in magic history

to date that these four top awards have been earned by the same performer.

Over the years Fantasio has won ten first place awards, has been made an honorary member of more than a dozen magic societies, and has worked on the same program with such notables as Bob Hope, the Beatles, Tom Jones, Louis Armstrong, Tony Bennett, Liberace, Flip Wilson, Phillis Diller and many others.

Since 1968 Fantasio has concentrated most of his non-performing time on the manufacture and production of his vanishing canes and candles, plus related products for other magicians. By 1973 Fantasio had decided to give up the performing side of magic and devote his full time to manufacturing candles and canes. However, an offer to form his own Magic Review for El Casino in Freeport, Grand Bahamas, changed his mind. There he became involved with a beautiful show filled with magic, dancing, singing and beautiful settings, all worked around Fantasio's performance of magic, assisted by Monica and nine-year-old daughter Jackie. This show played Freeport for 14 months, then moved to the Carillon Hotel in Miami Beach for six months, and finally toured South America and Mexico.

In April 1974 Lynne and I were fortunate enough to visit the Grand Bahamas and see Fantasio and family at work. His spot in the show featuring canes, candles, card fans and doves was absolutely smooth and polished. Later in the show he surprised us with his version of the Zig Zag Illusion followed by Monica in the Hindoo Basket, using the production of daughter Jackie from the basket as the kicker. It was quite a show!

During the last several years, Fantasio has made his headquarters the Miami/Coral Gables area of Florida, and there he has concentrated his efforts on creating new magic effects and producing cane and candle products. In the fall of 1979 he produced an all-star magic show in Buenos Aires featuring international acts such as Dick and Diana Zimmerman, Richard Ross, Ali Bongo and De Yip Loo. In 1980 Fantasio lectured and appeared at a number of conventions, including the SAM in Pasadena; Abbott's; the IBM in Brighton, England; and Tannen's

Jubilee.

Of his cane and candle lecture at Brighton, Stan Morgan reported in *The Budget* (English IBM publication): "All I will say is that his (Fantasio's) products should set the standard for all dealers products." Another reviewer talked of the act at Brighton: "Fantasio and Monica had their own field of skill which owes its success not to the past, but to the future. He is, of course, the candle king, but he does much more than produce and vanish candles, working manipulative wonders too with cards. He had something you can't buy. **STYLE.**"

Fantasio's performance of magic and his production of fine magic props are both wrapped up in a man who strives for perfection. The canes and candles which he manufactures are made from a laminated plastic material which was also used to protect the feet of the Eagle spacecraft when it landed on the moon in 1969. The fact that it will not rust, needs no oil, won't cut your hands like its metal competitor and is available in colors all combine to make Fantasio's cane and candle products among the most popular magical effects in the world. I sincerely doubt that there is a magic shop in the world that hasn't carried the Fantasio props. Due to the flexibility of the props he makes, each magician is free to adapt them and use them in a wide variety of routines, many of which Fantasio and I have published in the three *Fantasio Cane*



Fantasio with David Bamberg (Fu Manchu) and Piuman, Argentina, 1970.

*and Candle Books.* We are now working on a fourth volume for summer 1981 publication, featuring some of Fantasio's newer products—the Color Changing Lighter, the Vanishing Wand, Wand to Bouquet, and the Appearing Candle.

If you perform magic on stage, you have probably already used the Fantasio products; if not, you probably will one of these days. They pack small, play big, and are so adaptable.

Having learned this much about a fine performer in our magic fraternity, perhaps you'd like to see him work. You'll have your chance this summer, for Fantasio has already been engaged to perform at the Pittsburgh IBM Convention July



Fantasio with Jerry Lewis, Las Vegas, 1964.

15-18 at the Pittsburgh Hilton. If you want to see a beautiful act, smooth and enchanting, don't miss Fantasio. He will make you believe in real magic!