

Steve Dacri, a magician who took his close-up show to the stages of Las Vegas, died on February 11, following a battle with colon cancer. He was 54.

Growing up in Worcester, Massachusetts, Steve learned his first tricks from a Mandrake magic set when he was six. He was performing two years later and began a fulltime showbiz career at age thirteen. He moved to Los Angeles in 1977 and became a regular at the Magic Castle, even as he traveled the country to perform public and private gigs. His television appearances ranged from spots on all the major talk shows of the day to acting roles on network drama series, as well as hosting a syndicated variety show, *Magical Mystery Tour*, in 1975. A creator of effects, books, and videos, Dacri was especially known for his handling of the sponge balls, which he referred to as "Martians."

Setting his sights on Vegas, Dacri gave over 3,000 performances over six years at Caesars Magical Empire. After that venue closed, Steve and his wife Jan booked his show into several Las Vegas casinos, including The Orleans, O'Shea's, the Imperial Palace, and the Four Seasons at Mandalay Bay. One year ago, in February 2010, he debuted *Steve Dacri: In Your Face* onstage at the Shimmer Cabaret of the Las Vegas Hilton.



PHOTO: KARI HENDLER



Tim Conover

1959 – 2011

Timothy Gene Conover passed away on February 2, at the age of 51. Starting his career as a close-up tradeshow magician, Tim went on to become recognized as an innovator in the field of mentalism.

Tim's exposure to magic happened at an early age with magic performed by his father and grandfather. In 1975, when Tim was sixteen, the first Doug Henning TV special and a Christmas gift that year of a magic kit began his obsession.

In the early '80s, I began to hear about "Timmy" from Scotty York, who early on recognized the creative thinking and dedication to method that would become a hallmark of Tim's professional career. His ability to not only master but refine advanced routines like the Ramsay Coins & Cylinder, the Memorized Deck, and Goshman's Salt Shakers opened doors and created relationships with leading magicians around the world: Vernon, Slydini, Goshman, Kaps, LePaul — these were the magicians he studied. His favorite magician was Del Ray, whom Tim analyzed extensively to understand the thinking, timing, and presentation that made his performance unique.

After college, Tim took a job in sales with Mitel, a telecommunication firm. While working for Mitel, his boss added performing at tradeshows to his job description and for five years Tim balanced both his sales responsibilities and tradeshow performances. In 1983, at only 24 years old, he finished in sixth place at the Las Vegas Desert Seminar \$10,000 Challenge by turning his close-up pad into a live ferret. In 1987, after five years with Mitel, Tim turned pro with a tradeshow career in full bloom.

Looking for a way to distinguish himself in the marketplace, Tim decided in 1989 that he would concentrate on mentalism. For Tim, that meant reading and studying every book written and every effect he could get his hands on to determine what were the best effects and methods. He had an obsessive approach to working on new material. And once he found a perfect solution, he would rip it apart, fine tuning it again and again. He was also blessed with great hands and a light touch, which was devastating when combined with his ingenious methods and machine-gun presentation.

In 1993, Tim won the first place award at the World Magic Summit in Washington, DC. This shocked the magic world, because Tim was the first mentalist to win in such a high-level competition against the world's leading close-up magicians.

From a method standpoint, Jan Racherbaumer recalls, "His aim was to come up with new effects to dream about, using diabolical and subtle methods extremely difficult to detect, even under repeated viewings." From a presentation standpoint, childhood friend Glenn Farrington observed: "People would laugh during Tim's act because they loved witnessing this intense boyish charm spilling out of a grown man. There's no formula or technique for that. It just is."

Tim was also one of the most generous magicians and friends you could ask for. He helped Mark Phillips get his start in the tradeshow field when, as Mark remembers, "Tim gave me a glowing recommendation to a prospective company while he was working for their competition. It resulted in my working for that prospect at more than 200 tradeshows over the past eighteen years." Upon his death, one of Tim's clients wrote to me to relate a story in which Tim flew into their city to do a special performance in the hospital at the bedside of their son who had been severely injured in an auto accident. When Tim was told the child would probably have memory issues as a result of his injuries, Tim went home and taped the same tricks on video so the child could watch and remember them at a later date as his memory returned. The special gift of the magic show on video arrived the next week, along with a magic book signed by Tim.

In the last few years of his life, Tim struggled with health issues that apparently became overwhelming to him and ultimately led to his tragic death at such a young age. Members of the magic community mourn not only the early loss of such a fine magician and friend, but also the loss of the potential future contributions he would have made to our art. He will be missed and remembered for his energy, thinking, and dedication to the art. Tim was one of the most skilled and creative close-up magicians and mentalists I've had the pleasure to know. Watching him perform made me feel like a kid again.

— Paul Gertner



PHOTOS: DAVID UNSEEL