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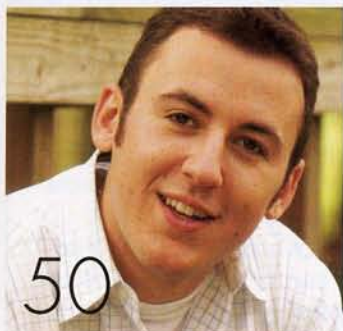
THE MAGAZINE FOR MAGICIANS



Kostya Kimlat

MAGIC contents

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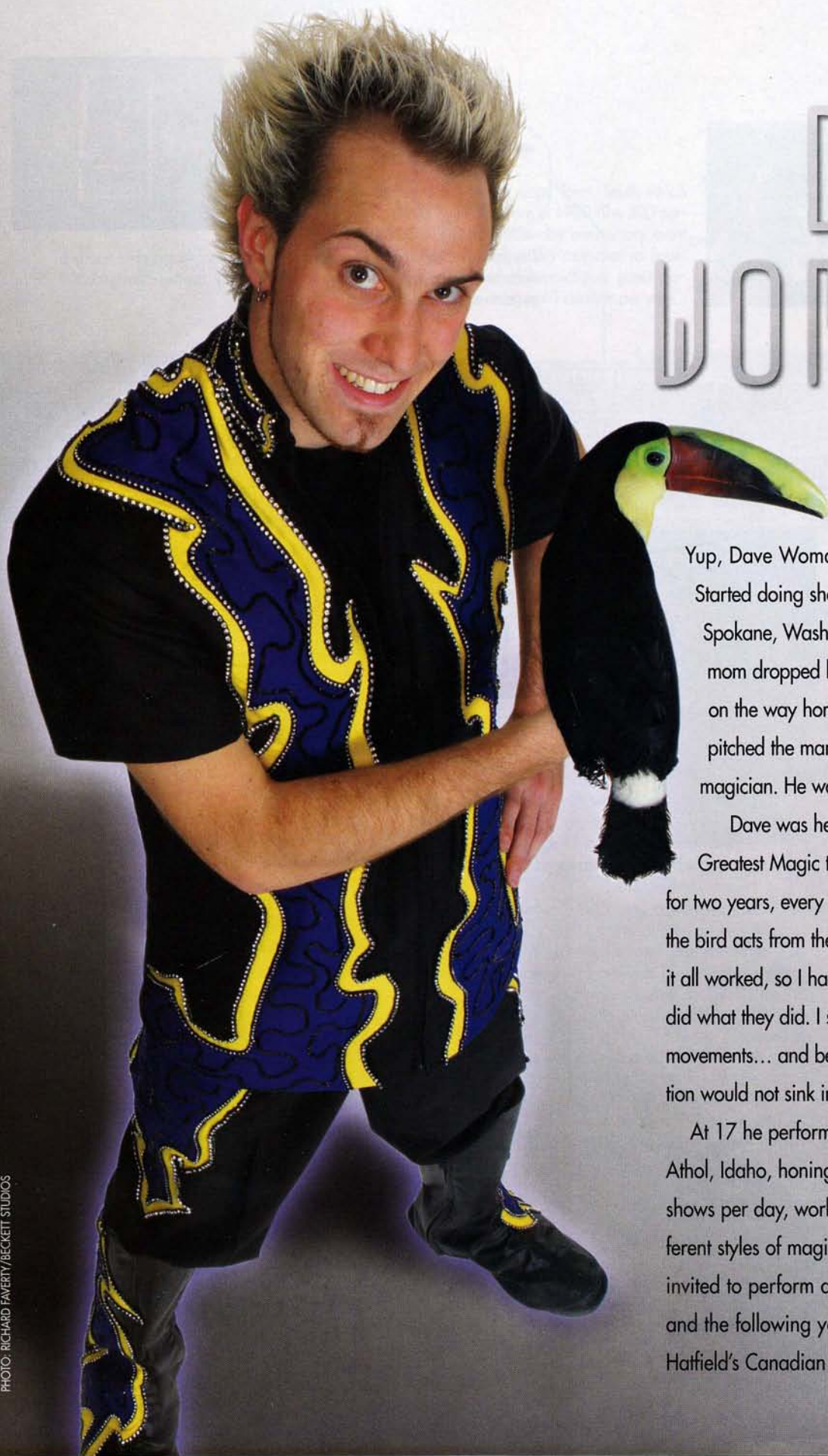
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DAVE WOMACH

By Rory Johnston



Yup, Dave Womach got a magic kit as a kid. Started doing shows at 13 in his hometown of Spokane, Washington. When he was 15, his mom dropped him off at a Red Robin restaurant on the way home from a performance and he pitched the management on the idea of a house magician. He was there for two-and-a-half years.

Dave was heavily influenced by *The World's Greatest Magic* television shows as a young teen; for two years, every day before school, he watched the bird acts from the shows twice. "I didn't know how it all worked, so I had to figure out how and why they did what they did. I studied their choreography, their movements... and became a clone." But that realization would not sink in for a few more years.

At 17 he performed at Silverwood Theme Park in Athol, Idaho, honing his craft with three 30-minute shows per day, working a variety of stages with different styles of magic. In 2001, at age 18, Dave was invited to perform at the Shanghai Magic Festival, and the following year he was booked on Murray Hatfield's Canadian tour.



“That was the best experience ever,” he said. “I loved living on the bus and doing three shows a day, just my 12-minute dove act.”

As a result of being inspired by the dove work of Greg Frewin and Jason Byrne, Dave had copied their styles and looks. “I started out in a black tux, but after seeing Jason I recreated his costume, but in yellow. To me, that was *original*, because it was a different color. I did the same thing with someone’s vanishing candle routine; by changing them from white to red, I thought it was original. As a kid it didn’t sink in that just changing a color didn’t make it mine.”

On the six-week Canadian tour, Dave was able to discover who *he* was as a magician. “I had 75 shows to tweak my act. I tried to make changes every day and got a lot of feedback from Murray, Ardan James, and Ed Alonzo, who were on the tour with me.” It was during that time that Dave created his unique look and costume, because finally the truth hit him. Literally.

“Ed Alonzo slapped me in the face and said, ‘Quit it, and do something else!’ We sat down and looked at photos I had of my other shows. Ed saw one in which I was wearing a bowling shirt, and he asked, ‘Why aren’t doing your dove act in that?’ I said, ‘Because it’s buttoned up and it has short sleeves!’ He said, ‘I know. Why aren’t you doing your dove act in that?’ I thought about it and a few days later came up with an idea. We took a break at Christmas, so I went home and had the costume made. I brought it back and showed Ed. His response was, ‘I expect to see that in the show today.’ By the third performance it was.”

There were problems to work out, but Dave realized it was important to stop copying others and establish his own identity. Eventually, he took the concept to costume-

designer Betty Reilly [see “Looking Good” *MAGIC*, September 2005], whose expertise in magicians’ needs took the design to the next level, giving it a more formal, Vegas look.

“It’s so important to find your own look. To do this, it’s advantageous to get outside help. I think as kids — and, at 22, I still classify myself as one — we need to realize we can’t do everything ourselves. Costumes, accounting, graphic design, prop building, video editing... there’s a limit to what we can do well. It’s imperative to hire people who are experts. Betty is expensive, but looking back on what she did for me, I’d almost pay twice as much. I can’t put a dollar amount on the value of that expertise. The more money I spend on outside consultants, the better my show is getting.”

Costuming is just one of the aspects of his show Dave altered to fit his own persona. Illusion designs were changed or created to fit his character and concept, with plenty of ideas being inspired by photos cut from mainstream magazine articles and passed along to a design consultant for adaptation to Dave’s act.

Dave’s goal was to work cruise ships. His dream came true two years ago when he joined Princess Cruises in Hawaii. His success on that ship opened up a number of opportunities with other lines, and today he is working regularly at sea. Dave and his wife Jamie travel with eight doves, three parakeets, and a toucan. Their show consists of a bird act; a number of illusions, including a Modern Art, a Plexiglas Sub Trunk, a Shadow Illusion; and several talk pieces, such as an Orange/Lemon/Egg/Parakeet routine and a variation on Chattering Teeth featuring the toucan — a total of over 75 minutes of material.

Starting in June, Dave and Jamie will take their performing skills to a new venue. They

will star in their own show at the SandCastle Dinner Theater in Saipan, a resort destination near Guam that caters to Japanese, Chinese, and Korean tourists. Following in the footsteps of Rick Thomas, Mark Kalin, and the current performer, Anthony Reed, Dave will be the youngest magician ever to work the venue. He and Jamie will be performing 12 to 15 large-scale illusions, which will be interspersed with dance numbers and one variety artist. With a background in bird training, his plans are to feature nearly 150 birds, including six large macaws, 15 doves, one cockatoo, two toucans, and “a whole bunch of parakeets,” plus two tigers and six showgirls. Dave has teamed up with Cirque du Soleil dance coach Chris Childers to develop visual and original magic concepts. Dave says of Chris, “He’s an amazing person to work with, with an unlimited amount of creativity. His experience with Cirque du Soleil left him with the concept that nothing is impossible.” The show will be performed twice a day, six days a week, for two to four years.

Due to outbreaks of “bird flu” and the West Nile virus, there have been concerns about taking his birds to Asia, or if he would even be allowed to do so. It is in Dave’s favor that Saipan is a US territory, and his contact at the resort pulled some political strings. Dave’s birds have consistently had a clean bill of health, backed up by 13 years of paperwork to prove it. Presently, it has taken more than two months of worry, paperwork, and negotiation, but Dave now feels “95% sure” that all will go well for him and his feathered friends.

Dave is excited about the shows — yet another dream come true. Don’t pinch him, he might wake up... but a good slap in the face never hurt. ♦