

CARD STARTLERS 3-DVD SET by PAUL GORDON

Review from <http://www.bicycle-cards.co.uk/>

I have been sitting on a review copy of this 3-DVD set for some time now and have been looking forward to watching and sharing my thoughts on it. So if you are trying to get ideas for Christmas presents, read on!

It isn't possible to review in detail the whole DVD set since it contains 47 tricks (covered in almost 5 hours), but I will start with a few general observations. Some of the live performance segments will be familiar to you if you have seen Paul's earlier set 'Live in Action' but it is great to see how a lay audience reacts to Paul's magic. The explanations, however, have been newly recorded.

Without doubt, a large part of the magic of Paul Gordon is Paul Gordon. So there is real value in watching him in action before real people. **His personality and rapport with the audience is excellent**, and even without the explanations of the tricks, most of us could learn about making card magic entertaining from watching him. (I am not, obviously, saying we should all copy his lines and mannerisms – we need to work within our own personalities and characters – but there are principles here we can learn from.)

Secondly, **Paul's explanations are very clear**. They have been filmed in a nice uncluttered set with little to distract. Occasionally the camera work doesn't quite keep up with Paul's explanation – so sometimes we hear him explaining a different view he is giving us before we actually see it. But this is a minor niggle and doesn't get in the way of the explanation. It goes without saying that **Paul is an extremely accomplished card-man, so he makes all the moves seem very easy**. He does repeat moves multiple times to facilitate learning, but if you are a beginner you may still need to watch segments more than once. But that is the beauty of DVD.

A word on style. Although I am quite a fan of the 'high concept' DVDs being put out by people like BigBlindMedia, there is something pleasing about the simplicity of the production on this set. **There is no unnecessary filling or fancy editing** – after a brief introduction it is straight into the magic. And there really is a lot of it! The title menu is presented on the face of a blank deck of cards held over a card-table, and contains the inevitable plug for the website.

What about the tricks? If you're familiar with Paul's books then there will be plenty of material you've seen before – but as much as I love books, there are times when seeing a move and an effect is a distinct advantage. Old favourites like Diminishing? Not Likely! (I do like this one) and Easy Ace Estimation re-appear, but there is plenty of newer material too.

The 'difficulty' of the material ranges from the virtually self-working (like the Bannon-esque Carbon Footprints) to material which requires a reasonable familiarity with standard card moves. Almost without exception Paul performs with an regular (borrowed) deck – and so there are a few more technical demands than with some other creators.

A few highlights: I particularly liked Totally Baffling Card Control, which though apparently an old trick was new to me. (I think it is in Protean Card Magic – which I do own – a reminder how easy it is to miss 'goodies' in a book – see comments below!)

Emulsion Cards is a really nice oil and water routine. For a similar effect with a kicker ending see Fry Them with Oil and Water. Powerhouse is a really clever card revelation – it has two good twists, can be performed with a borrowed and shuffled deck, and is technically very straightforward. Shocked Aces is a largely self-working but entertaining little routine involving the location of the 4 aces and two spectators' chosen cards.

There are also some handy sleights and moves. The Four-Way False Cut and Control is particularly useful (and straightforward) – which does what it says on the tin - a four-way cut which maintains deck order and can also be used to control a chosen card to the top of the deck.

There are also a few performance only effects, most of which are marketed separately – Corner Of Picadilly, The Gordon Diary Trick, Laymen Assembly, Dazzler. Some of these are live performances where the quality of the filming is less good – but then you’re seeing a real performance – you can’t have everything!

One of the interesting things for me, was to see how Paul takes a method and plays with it and creates a family of effects from the same starting point. As you watch more of Paul’s work (and there is plenty here!) you will see something of this ‘evolution’ in play.

The final disc ends with an interesting interview slot. It includes a bit of Paul’s personal history including some of the performers who have inspired him. He also talks briefly about how he goes about creating an effect. There is a defence of mathematical tricks – with Paul’s motto that it’s the performance that matters. Non-mathematical tricks can be dull when performed badly and vice-versa.

As a fellow magic book collector and enthusiast I enjoyed his comments on buying and reading magic books. However, his insistence that you should make time to read and try everything in every book (easily done in a couple of hours a day for a week he says!) is a luxury the amateur may not have.

That being said, we often have a bit more time at home at Christmas, so I think this 3-disc set would be an ideal way to while away that post-Christmas lull! Buy it for anyone who enjoys good quality card magic.

You can buy the set directly from Paul and he has [some special offers](#) on the set too. The base price is only £38 which on a £/trick basis is a bargain! See <http://www.paulgordon.net/shop.html>