



Magic: 1400s–1950s

Noel Daniel (Editor) , Mike Caveney , Ricky Jay , Jim Steinmeyer

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Magic has enchanted humankind for millennia, evoking terror, laughter, shock, and amazement. Once persecuted as heretics and sorcerers, **magicians have always been conduits to a parallel universe of limitless possibility** – whether invoking spirits, reading minds, or inverting the laws of nature by sleight of hand. Long before science fiction, virtual realities, video games and the internet, the craft of magic was **the most powerful fantasy world man had ever known**. As **the pioneers of special effects** throughout history, magicians have never ceased to mystify us by making the impossible possible.

This book celebrates **more than 500 years of the dazzling visual culture of the world's greatest magicians**. Featuring over **1,000 rarely seen vintage posters, photographs, handbills, and engravings** in one 650-page volume, it traces **the history of magic as a performing art** from the 1400s to the 1950s. Combining sensational images with lucid and incisive text, *Magic* explores the evolution of the magician's craft, from medieval street performers to the brilliant stage magicians who gave rise to cinematic special effects; from the 19th century's *Golden Age of Magic* to groundbreaking daredevils like Houdini and the early 20th century's vaudevillians.

Magic: 1400s–1950s Details

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From Reader Review Magic: 1400s–1950s for online ebook

Nostalgia Reader says

3 stars for the essays, 4.5 stars for the presentation of the posters and photographs.

Rebecca says

I requested this book from OSU because it seemed like a great Taschen book I hadn't seen. Little did I realize that it's more coffee table than coffee table book. It's huge!! Its size almost impedes its use, but that really highlights the best part: the vintage posters and playbills and their wonderful visual storytelling.

JBP says

If I could give this book ten stars I would, so wonderful this collection of magic related material is. This isn't a small book, it's one of the over sized Taschen books and when I say over sized, I'm not kidding around--it's massive! Which only adds to the books appeal, as the full-color lithographs collected in this are mind-blowing and gorgeous as the complete history of magic is given loving treatment. The posters and photographs are the stars of *Magic: 1400s-1950s*, with short histories on different eras of magic. Virtually every magician who ever made a name for themselves is in this book. This is a jaw-dropper.

Julian Walker says

This is a wonderful history of magic and illusion through the centuries. A gloriously illustrated and beautifully written coffee table book – this is no light reading but its stature is matched by its engagement – I defy anyone with an interest in entertainment not to enjoy it.

From some of the most famous characters in the illusion business, to many of the more obscure performers, this book has the lot and is an absolute encyclopaedia of information – although written in an engaging and interesting style missing from many such works.

Immerse yourself in this and revel in the sheer inventiveness of creativity.

Absolutely delicious reading.

Fraser Sherman says

A great history of the stage magician's craft, covering the major names (with particular focus on the golden age of the early 20th century — Houdini gets his own chapter), the famous tricks (sawing a lady in half, mind-reading, levitation and the once definitive "cup and balls" stunt) and the changes in magic as they adapt

to new venues such as music halls, vaudeville, movies and TV. Beautifully illustrated with photos and posters.

P.S. Winn says

A look into the different aspects of magic. This is an intriguing journey into magic and all it entails, a few of those ideas may surprise readers.

Michael Kelly says

A glorious, huge, hefty, large format volume detailing the history of stage magic and its performers from the 1400s to the 1950s.

It has some great essays in there, but the real meat and value of this enormous book is the sheer quantity of fantastic illustrations. These range from photographs of magicians at work to the glorious, gorgeous posters they had produced to advertise their performances.

A colourful, inspiring and fascinating volume.

Ryan Jones says

great read and awesome book.

jesse says

I'm a visual creature by nature which isn't something particularly singular I admit. Were I to rate the book solely for it's ability to make me eyegasm at every page it would get plenty of awards, but geez did it make me angry, frustrated and delighted at turns the further I skimmed.

Let's take those chapter pages for example: the book designer did an incredible job choosing beautiful vintage patterns and design elements for those.

The images in this book depict adverts and illustrations from the world of magic from various artists (1400-1950s), but keep in mind that it's basically a hefty and fucking huge doorstopper of a book weighing several kgs and depicting 99.9% white dudes, so not a lot of research was put into including non-white/caucasian countries. And that brings me to the crux of the review: lack of diversity from the publisher.

Kind of a missed opportunity right there and a smidge irritating, but I should not have been surprised that it's missing. Okay, I lie. Not a smidge.

It's not like "Taschen" is an exception as a publisher and I am sure they weren't even aware of excluding non-white cultures (which kind of makes this worse, actually), but sometimes ignorance is not enough of an

excuse. So, no: Fuck this! I know my voice will probaby not make any ripples, but now my thoughts are out there and I won't give you 5 stars, though I'd really like to.

Furthermore, you'll see plenty of images with white dudes wearing "yellowface" and it fucking rips your heart out because Westerners had never stepped onto 'faraway' lands and these performances were supposed to give them a taste of that complete with colourful oriental rugs, embroidered robes, scented candles and whatnot. But again, other cultures are not to be found inside those same pages, including China.

For all my raging complaints, it is what it is and taking it at face value it's eyegasm for any reader giving them a thrilling snapshot in time.

David L. says

A fascinating history of magic in the theater augmented by illustrations and photographs. The book itself looks like a magic book. Definitely recommend!

Jonathan says

Not a book to read in bed: you won't be able to hold it up long enough. Beautiful to look at and well worth the money.
