

HYPNOSIS MASTERS



SERIES

*The Secrets To Putting Cash In Your
Pocket Running A Superb Stage
Hypnosis Show Anytime, Anywhere
With Any Audience*



Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

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Welcome

Welcome To the Hypnosis Masters Series

In this series you will be getting interviews and special seminars from some of the worlds best Masters of Hypnosis. Each Master Hypnotist is a specialist in one particular field and will be revealing his or her hypnosis secrets for you.

Meet This Month's Master: Don Spencer



Don Spencer first induced hypnosis at the age of 12. His young "girlfriend" at the time was being hypnotized by her father who was in the military. She taught the young Spencer the art of stilling the mind. He would sit quietly with her head on his lap. Rubbing her temples and having her count backwards she quickly entered a deep somnambulistic state! The astonished Spencer gave her directions. The teenage boy likened the experience to an exaggerated Simon says.

Spencer never forgot that experience and over the year's, was drawn to books, classes, movies and people that hovered on the edge of the mysterious. His curiosity led him to formal educational studies in philosophy, psychology, physiology, abnormal behavior and comparative religion. Alternative studies that captivated his attention and lifestyle were shamanism, metaphysics, hypnotism, NLP, kinesiology, and theater.

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Introduction

Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. My name is Igor Ledochowski and what you're about to hear is a very special interview with Master Hypnotist Don Spencer, which was recorded for us at a Private Hypnosis Club as part of our interviews with the Hypnosis Masters Series.

As you will hear, Don is not just a Master Hypnotist he's also a Master Innovator in this field. Don's interview and seminar will take us on a fascinating tour through advanced hypnotic principles, the secrets behind advanced covert hypnotic language patterns, as well as other hypnotic innovations and special insights that can turn almost anyone into a genuine master of hypnosis.

Listen on at the end of the interview to discover how to get your hands on over five hours of seminars and interviews revealing his fascinating insights.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Interview – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. I'm here with Master Hypnotist Don Spencer, billed as the fastest hypnotist in the world from SleepNow.com. Don is probably one of the, shall we say, leading authorities in stage hypnosis, and if you ever get a chance to see his show, it is stunning. It is a real piece of art.

First of all, Don, welcome aboard and thanks for coming to talk to us today.

Don: Thank you. It's great to be here.

Igor: I spent a long time, believe it or not, sort of searching out for stage hypnotists that have something a little different. There are a lot of very good hypnotists out there and some very good stage shows, but there's something that's a little bit different about your show. It's much more sort of ... it's thought out.

It departs a little bit from the mainstream by going much more into sort of a performance character with the whole lights and show and all that sort of stuff, so it's a really big spectacle.

Tell me, how did you come up with the idea that you don't want to be like a normal stage hypnotist that just does the same routines and does the same kind of show. Why did you decide to do your show differently?

Don: I think for me it began by when I first started off in the profession I studied hypnosis and I went to stage hypnosis, a couple trainings, one with Ormond McGill and then I went to every stage hypnosis show in town that came through town or that was close by, and I watched them.

It was at that time that I thought you know, I'm going to craft a show that's unlike anything that's ever been seen before, and so I had to look back into my experience on what got me excited about going to some kind of an event. I drew my show and crafted it after a rock and roll concert.

Igor: Rock and roll definitely defines the whole spirit and ambience of what your stage hypnosis show is. It's fast-paced. It's furious– didn't Ormond McGill even come to see your show one day calling you the fastest hypnotist in the world, at that point?

Don: Yes, that was pretty good.

I was in Salt Lake City at the time and I had been working a lot of nightclubs for a few years, fine-tuning my show before I went to the theater. But, the opening night when I began to do my shows that the Avalon theatre, Ormond happened to be in town that weekend for a training for another group of hypnotists and came by with a group of people to the show.

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I have known Ormond for years, he came to the show and afterwards he said Spencer, he goes that's the fastest hypnosis I've ever seen. I said can I quote you on that and he goes you sure can. That's where that name came from.

Igor: For those people who are not familiar with it, Ormond McGill is known as the Dean of American Hypnotists. He was one of the premiere stage hypnotists in the US and possibly in the world. Very old school, very elegant show he had, and was famous for being basically the person everyone looked up to, right?

Don: He was. Ormond was the Dean of American Stage Hypnotists and of Hypnotists, actually. What few people realize is that Ormond actually started off as a magician, branched off into stage hypnosis and he was just fantastic. He was a very gentle soul and a pleasant man to be around, so he will be missed.

Igor: You started to open up a couple of topics here which I think it would be important for us to explore later on; for example, the idea that everyone has their own flavor at the show.

Ormond McGill, I think was unique again because his magical background made his shows a little bit more magical and other worldly, and of course, yours is the rock and roll version of stage hypnosis.

Before we go into the middle of this whole stuff here, really the place to start, as usual, is right at the beginning, and most people will be interested in how you actually got involved.

➤ How did you get started in hypnosis in the first place?

We know where the show came from, but before that there must have been a passion and an interest as well.

a. How did that all start?

Don: Actually, my interest in hypnosis goes way back to when I was 12 years old. In fact, I was dating a girl back then, if you date at 12 years old, but I had a girlfriend back when I was 12 and her father, he was in the Navy. She would be hypnotized by her father and so she taught me this simple technique that her father would do with her.

I would sit back on the ground, fold my legs, she would put her head on my lap, I would rub her temples and I would count backwards from 100 down, which is how she instructed me at the time which is what her father did with her, and after we got to about 90 she just quit talking.

She instructed me what to do beforehand when she got to that point where she couldn't talk, that I could just ask her to do anything that I wanted to and she would do it.

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Lo and behold that's what I did at 12 years old. She got to that place and I had her stand up, sit down, jump up, laugh and scream, whatever I wanted to. For me at 12 I had no idea what hypnosis was so it was kind of like an exaggerated Simon says.

Igor: Right.

Don: But, it locked into my mind that there was something very mystical, something very powerful and something very out of the ordinary going on and that experience, it never left me. That was my first introduction to hypnosis.

Over the years I studied metaphysics and the mind sciences, psychology, philosophy and as we move up into the future from that point I was studying psychology down in San Diego. I was in my second year and I read an article in the paper that said learn hypnosis as a career – free demonstration.

It piqued my interest and it reminded me of these experiences that I had years ago, and in psychology. For those out there who study psychology, you may read one or two paragraphs about hypnosis in the books, and I'm sure you've probably had that experience too.

I went to this lecture done by a gentleman named Al Krasner, I watched him talk about hypnosis, he did a demonstration with a woman in the room, and there were maybe a couple hundred people there.

I was absolutely fascinated with this lecture and with the demonstration. It was then and there after this lecture that I signed up immediately for one of his trainings, and that's how I got into hypnosis.

Igor: Actually, that demonstrates also the power of giving lecture demos. This is why stage hypnotists know one thing, which is that it's great PR.

At the end of the show I know most stage hypnotists spend a couple extra days because they will fill their therapy room or whatever other things they're doing just because people's imaginations captured the whole show. It's one basically one to two hour long pitch for the power of hypnosis, right.

Don: That's exactly right, and that's the same thing that I do. For a lot of people it's their first exposure to hypnosis is going to a stage hypnosis show. So it is, it's fascinating and when it's presented correctly, for example, my show I talk to people about the mind and how powerful it is.

I simply lead them to the end of the show which at that point it's like look, ladies and gentleman, if these people are up here exhibiting this kind of behavior in hypnosis, what's going on in your life that could possibly be transformed given the opportunity?

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At that point, you have the back room sales and you can do some great business and help a lot of people to achieve their goals and their dreams in life. It's really ... it's a lot of fun.

Igor: There's something which is tagged onto that, which is – I'd very much like your opinion – a lot of hypnotherapists dislike the idea of stage hypnotists. They think you should be banned it brings the profession down and so on.

Clearly, you have mastered both sides of the fence. I've worked with you and we've had a great time. When we worked together with clients your skill set is right up there with the best of them, and when you do a stage show, of course, you're a consummate performer as well.

➤ **How do you marry those two together?**

- a. Do you think there's a conflict or do you think they actually enhance other?

Don: At the risk of stepping on people's toes, I think the people who think that they don't go together or who are offended by individuals who do stage hypnosis—the traditional hypnotherapists— I think they need therapy. I think they need to loosen up, let that little inner child out maybe, maybe they were repressed, I don't know.

Igor: Right.

Don: On the lighter side, but I think that they really go together very, very well and you're right. After I took a class Al Krasner I took another class, because I realized after a weekend you cannot be a hypnotherapist in one weekend, which is what the class was he offered at the time back in 1986.

So, I took another class in San Diego with a gentleman named Jim Russell. I studied with him for a year and a half in the Hypnotism Training Institute in San Diego and that was a fascinating class. I went three or four nights a week, I'm trying to remember, it's been a while, and on weekends.

I took my classes simultaneously. I took a hypnotism, Master Hypnotist, Advanced Hypnotherapy class and self-hypnosis classes on the weekend, which included also stage hypnosis, fire walking and metaphysics. We studied Freudian psychology. We studied all the basic psychologies and the general psychologies of the day.

It was a very intensive course and I've never run into another school that has ever approached the teaching of hypnotherapy that he did at that time.

Igor: Just to emphasize the point which is you really took the time out to learn your craft properly and this was before the days where you even thought about doing stage hypnosis. You were going to become a hypnotherapist, and you

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really decided to go for the top quality course you could find and invest your time and effort in it.

This is something, this is a theme I've seen a lot of times, almost everyone I've interviewed so far who has really mastered their craft basically, at some point, decided I'm going to find the best person I can find and learn everything they've got to teach because that's the fastest way to accelerate.

I know people have taught themselves stuff as well, but the standard path to becoming a great hypnotist has been finding good quality hypnosis, not just cheap hypnosis or an okay hypnotist, but a really good one. There's something that happens there where those skills sort of get transferred to you, isn't there?

Don: It really is and I think it's really important for people to know, and it was important for me, is when I began in my career I studied with everybody who was anybody at the time, whether they were good or not.

I took a class with Charles Tebbetts. Back in the day, he was one of the premiere instructors. Ormond McGill. I took classes with Gil Boyne; he had a reputation at the time. I went to all the ACHE conventions and the NGH conventions.

I studied with various shamans also outside of the scope of hypnotherapy but trying to understand what shamanism could teach me as a hypnotherapist. So I sought out everybody that I could possibly study with because I thought how important it is to have a powerful mentor who has been there, done that.

Igor: That's really important because sometimes it's just getting a little nudge at the right time that can make the world of difference versus having spent year's later undoing an error that's like been ingrained over many years of work, right.

Don: Exactly.

I was just reminiscing, it was kind of funny, I remember I took a group of my students who had been through my first 50 hours of training. Back then I eventually went on and started the Hypnotism Training Institute of Idaho and Hypnotism International in Utah. My classes were at that time 300 hour, which was larger then any other certification body at the time.

After my first 50 hours I took a group to one of the conventions and what amazed me is that my students came away from there telling me that they knew more about hypnosis and hypnotherapy then many people who had been practicing for 10 or 20 years.

Igor: Right.

Don: I'm not trying to toot my whistle, but it goes back to when you learn something and you study with the best of the best this all becomes a part of who you are that you can give to others and I can't overemphasize that.

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When you're in a mentoring position you have that unique rapport with one other human being that can really share all their life experiences with you at one time. It's awesome.

Igor: Definitely. It's definitely showing in your skill set because you've absorbed I think the best of a lot of different worlds.

You manage to straddle both the direct and indirect world and combine them in a unique model the way that you work. That's pretty rare actually, because a lot of people either, go down one side or the other side of the fence. Very few people are willing to take both and have something that comes out of their personality then which is neither, but it's not limited by either, either.

Don: Part of my training too in the early days, I was also taking classes at San Diego State University with people like Michael Yapko, who was an early Ericksonian hypnotist who studied with Milton Erickson, so I had the good fortune of studying with these individuals at the University, and the reason I was in there was because I was studying psychology.

These were classes that unless you were a psychology or medical student you were not able to take. I was fortunate to also have that aspect of training with me at the time.

I was going to tell you that when we got together I was totally impressed with your skillset too. I really enjoyed watching you work. It was a treat.

Igor: I was going to say it was always a lot of fun. Just for everyone listening there, when Don and I first sort of met up, one of the things that sometimes happen, people will check each other out just to see whether their skillset is.

We ended up working with a bunch of clients and invariably we end up leading in some indirect version of an indirect double induction and you just see these ... I wouldn't say poor people, but really they've had big life issues settled in a matter of an hour or two and they had no idea what hit them.

We had one lady who came I, if you recall, who had ... I think we dealt with the equivalent of four, five, six sessions worth of work in one slightly extended session and she walked out of there and she was literally wobbling. She had no idea what happened but a big smile on her face. It was a lot of fun.

Don: A zombie.

Igor: Yes.

Don: What was fun for me was working with somebody who had a fantastic skill level and how we could work off of each other without stepping on each other's toes.

Igor: That's such an important thing that you can blend the skills and you know where someone else is going. This goes back to I think your wide range of experience because you've mentioned some very different characters; Ormond

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McGill and Gil Boyne are a very different root to say Michael Yapko and even Charles Tebbetts, to certain extents.

When you have that range, you can kind of predict where someone is going with it and you go oh, I know where he's heading with this; then you can pick up the thread at someplace or just add a little bit of support on the other place, and it creates a much richer experience, but if we used the hypnotherapists and for the client as well, right.

Don: Exactly. Then when you get to work and study with shamans then you get to bring the coyote into your practice also.

Igor: Right.

Don: The trickster; so it kind of all works and blends together. It's great fun.

Igor: You've obviously had a lot of very good clinical experience and I can vouch for that seeing you in action. What prompted the transition for me to go from clinical hypnotherapy sort of work into stage hypnosis work, which I think you spent many years just focusing on virtually exclusively.

Don: I think there are two aspects of that. I started off clinically and at the time I had three children. I was a single parent. I had three kids that I was raising with the help of my parents, thank goodness at the time, so that really helped me out.

I really wanted to be there, so I ran my clinic and at the same time I was running my clinic, I was also teaching at college for four years. I was teaching at college four nights a week teaching hypnosis and self-hypnosis, meditation, and all these other aspects of hypnotism and healing.

I was really heavy into the therapy. I got into some heavy stuff which I don't think a lot of therapists really deal with. A lot of people that came to me were referred to me from the local doctors and psychiatrists and psychologists because they didn't have a clue on what to do, and I don't know if I had a clue what to do, but whenever was happening it seemed to work out all right.

I think there was a point where I started needing to have a little bit more fun in life and I started to look more towards the entertainment aspect because there was always a part of me that likes to entertain, so I began to watch these stage hypnotists.

One day I got a call from I think it was a police association who wanted me to do a hypnosis show and asked me if I could do it. I said, of course, I can!

Igor: It's true. There's nothing quite like having enough experience in hypnosis to go, even though I've never done something like this before I understand the principles enough that I can create something out of nothing relatively straightforwardly.

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Don: I have to add, though, I had been teaching at the college for four years and the classes that I taught, I had rather large classes. I had 50 or 60 students a night and so I had a lot of demonstrational hypnosis in my background.

I had never produced a full-blown show but I had demonstrated enough with individuals and groups that I felt like ... I'd watched other hypnotists do it, and I thought you know what, if they can do it like that, I think I can do that. That doesn't look like its too difficult so I went out there and just jumped into it.

Then after that I got excited and I actually rented a club called the Turf Club for two nights and advertise it, sold it out for two nights and man, it was in my blood like fire. It was so hot I couldn't turn back and that was it.

Eventually I think I did the shows and doing the therapy for about a year, maybe two years, and I was in Salt Lake City and I told the gal in my practice named Diane Bradshaw, I told her that I didn't want to do therapy anymore, that she could do it. She could have the business. I just wanted to go do stage work. That was it; I never turned back.

Igor: Wow.

Now, this is like at the moment we've got an idea of you doing the early days of staged hypnosis where you're doing it part-time and so on. There are a lot of staged hypnotists out there who work and do work quite successfully part-time and the rest of the time they either just chill out or do some other work.

At some point, that's switched and you end up having what I believe is the longest running stage hypnosis show ever in recorded history.

Don: It did. I was working in nightclubs there in Salt Lake for a number of years and I was approached to do a show at a theater. When they initially approached me I turned it down, because I was used to working in close quarters, nightclubs, more of a festive party type atmosphere.

The theater was more for a general audience where I had to be more concerned about what I would say or what would happen in the show. It went from more of an R rated show to a PG-17 type of presentation. They were after me for a few months.

Finally, I thought, you know what I'll take the challenge because I need to stretch. I need to get out of this mindset that I can't do it and so I went back to the theater and said when do you want me to start?

He said tonight; so I said okay and I stayed there for 320 weeks and it turned out to be the longest running comedy hypnosis show ever.

Igor: That is a long time. That's a lot of experience under your belt as well. Again, just to point out, many stage hypnotists do the tours, they go to county fairs,

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they do other police shows or balls and stuff like that and that's a tremendous amount of work.

It's a great deal of work and it's good fun and so on, but to actually have that kind of consistent venue with a consistent show so you can tinker with it and tweak it and build it up and there's a audience that comes back every single time, first of all to keep it fresh, to keep it dynamic in that long a period of time, that's just tremendous.

Don: I have to tell you, it was one of the greatest times in my life. I thoroughly loved it each and every week. Every Saturday night I was live on stage and it was a blast.

Now, in between, when I wasn't working there on Saturday night I did a lot of corporate gigs in between. I was really busy, and in Salt Lake, I look back at it and there on the Wasatch Front I believe I hypnotized over 100,000 people during my shows, during that time period.

Igor: That on its own is such a tremendous amount of experience. You must have drawn a lot of interesting shall we say insights into hypnosis and if nothing else just come across some pretty crazy situations just by doing that, because the sheer volume dictates that something mind-blowing unusual is going to happen at some point, right.

Don: Yes, you get a lot of crazy things that happen.

I think one of the big things that a lot of people don't realize is that when you do a performance on that level every week for such a long period of time, everywhere you go, everybody knows you because everybody has heard about your show because you're right there on State Street, the main street where 70,000 cars go by a day seeing your sign. You hypnotize all the high schools, the colleges, half the corporate people in the state. It gets wild.

Igor: You become a rock star. You become the celebrity of town.

Don: You really are.

Igor: At the same time, of course, you still have the freedom that you can move to another town of somewhere else where you don't get so shall we say bogged down by it. You have the best of both worlds.

You can have a celebrity status in your local city district, but then you can go away on holiday and you won't be mobbed in the supermarket because let's face it; we don't want that to happen to us all the time, right.

Don: No, we don't. It gets obnoxious, but it's fun to happen. It's fun to be able to travel and get away from it where you're completely unknown, nobody knows you, and nobody cares. It helps to keep you on a level playing field with your own self too.

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Igor: Whilst you were like this local celebrity, for what must have been like six or maybe seven years I guess.

- **Did you also get to enjoy all the perks of celebrity, like going into restaurants without any cover charges or getting into nightclubs and bars without having to queue up and all that sort of stuff?**

I presume that's all part and parcel of what it meant to be a celebrity in a city like Salt Lake.

Don: Yes, in a city like Salt Lake that's exactly what it was like and it's kind of funny because Salt Lake, this year they just passed a new law where you no longer have to have a membership to go a nightclub, but before that you had to buy a membership to go into any nightclub to drink.

One of the perks was I could go into any nightclub and I would be comped in; free food, free drinks, whatever I wanted. They took pretty good care of you. They were glad to have you around.

Igor: That sounds like a pretty sweet deal for standing up on the stage one day a week and having fun basically with a couple of hundred people, right?

Don: Yes. It wasn't too bad. There's another side to it also. You get other hypnotists, and I had that experience while I was there that there were other hypnotists who wanted to take my place and so there's always the challenge of competition out there.

Igor: That's actually quite a good thing though because it keeps you on your toes and makes sure that your shoe stays fresh from being complacent and sort of tripping out and becoming boring.

Don: It does. It keeps you from being too cocky. I have to say, I think there were four other shows that came into town that tried to do shows the same time I did and I'm fortunate that my show carried on.

There was another man though, that he did a show down the street – and this is kind of interesting – he was actually at the theater that I was at before I went there. His name is Ben Vandermyde. He's an excellent guy. He's an old Vaudeville type performer but the guy was great.

I loved him; even he didn't like me because we were in competition. He moved to the theater down the street that was larger and so we had this dual of the hypnotists and between the two of us we'd bring in around 1,500 people every week to our shows.

Igor: That's a pretty significant number.

Don: Yes. His show, after I started my show up, his show lasted for a couple of years and then the pace couldn't keep up so he folded and I continued on until the day that I decided that I had had enough.

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One of the reasons was that I didn't want to do a show every Saturday night anymore. I was tired of doing that. It became like a job. I began getting a lot of out of state corporate gigs. I also began to get a lot of shows out of the country, and started getting some good national exposure through places like MTV and Playboy. I got to go around the world a few times. The benefits were awesome.

Igor: For sure. You didn't just take advantage of the benefits because you actually did a lot of good for your local community as well, in particular, local hypnotherapists thrived as a result of your shows without having to ever, without you ever getting a penny out of that side of things.

➤ **Can you tell us a little bit more about that and why you made a point out of basically helping other hypnotherapists fill their practices without asking for anything in return?**

Don: That's one of the ... yes, that's a good point because I was not interested in doing private hypnotherapy at the time, but I encouraged people to visit their local hypnotherapists.

So, a lot of the local hypnotherapists did get a lot of business just because of exposure that I gave to hypnotism in the community. I was very grateful that they were there in order to help those individuals who wanted to come to them.

Igor: The reason I mentioned this; I think it was very important is as you know, I've traveled a lot, especially in shall we say non-first world countries; Asia and South America in particular, and what really struck me is there is a direct relationship between those countries that have a lot of stage hypnotists.

For example, the UK and the USA have a lot of stage hypnosis, and the amount of people that make a good living or a decent living out of hypnotherapy, and those countries that have few or no stage hypnosis, and those countries that have no stage hypnosis at all or maybe one or something like that again, there is no hypnotherapy.

It just does not exist. It's virtually unheard of, and people still have attitudes about hypnosis that are literally in the stone about it being some magical power or some mystical thing.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: Those countries where there are stage hypnotists, they thrive, and people may still have some misconceptions about power and control and that sort of that stuff, but they are nothing, not even a glimmer compared to the misconceptions people have where stage hypnosis isn't in your face, people don't see it as a reality and don't even think of it as a possibility for helping themselves.

It's really a powerful force of good as far as I'm concerned. It's the PR tool of our field. I laugh when people try to trash it and say oh, it's no good, because

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they have no clue that they're feeding themselves off the back of these throws existing.

Don: Right. I think that some of the misconceptions actually do come from ... there are some stage hypnotists out there, and I'm not trying to say that what they're doing is wrong. I don't care – they are just trying to make a living and that's fine.

For example, when I first started off in Salt Lake there was another guy there, and I can't think of his name right now and I wouldn't mention it if I did, but he was doing hypnosis shows but he had a very dirty show where he would do a lot of very lewd things in the show, which I think I'm a pretty liberal guy but I was kind of offended by a lot of the stuff that he was doing.

Those kinds of antics can give hypnosis a bad name. They can really cloud a person's judgment if that's their only experience with hypnosis is watching that type of a performance. If all they see is that aspect and they don't see it as a force for good, it's just the idea of somebody taking advantage of somebody and doing some pretty bizarre things with them.

I think that can be detrimental if that's their first experience and so when you have people like myself, you and others know who really have a liking for humanity and want to use hypnosis as you say as a force for good and do the right things and we all live in a better world because of it.

Igor: I agree with that. In particular I think you put the finger on the button. People are making a classic logical mistake when they say look, this stage hypnotist is performing unsafely or with, shall we say, very low standards; therefore stage hypnosis should be banned, whereas the opposite is the case.

Most stage hypnotists are actually very ethical performers and if we encourage ethical performances, for example like you did, this other person probably died pretty soon after you show came up. Why? Because everyone would come to yours. They have a choice now.

It's not a question of just see the hypnotist that is actually good and inspiring and makes me feel good when I leave and I feel like I've really learned something and improved my life in some way just from having witnessed his show, versus the one that when I leave I feel a little dirty and a little bit like something happened and I'm not sure it was necessarily a good thing.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: So by giving more choice and more ethical choice, it just polishes up the whole field in general, right?

Don: Right. It's kind of funny; I had a student a while back who was honing his show down in Las Vegas. He hired me to come down to Vegas and work with him for a while. He asked me about what he could do to have this good show. He was

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trying to pattern his show off of, there again, I'm not going to use any names, but off of somebody whose show was pretty dirty.

I said to him, listen, if you want to be big in Vegas you don't have ... just because it's Sin City doesn't mean that you have to do a show that goes down deep into the dirt. I said the most ... Mr. Las Vegas, Danny Gans at the time, and Lance Burton, the magician, did clean shows anybody could go to.

They were inspired by it, as well as Siegfried and Roy. They were inspired by it, by their message, and they got a good performance of magic. A hypnosis show can be the same thing. You can get a good, decent uplifting show. It can be edgy, it can be racy, but keep it at a level that is still inspiring to people.

Not only do you feel better as a human, but you lift up other people at the same time and I think that's really a sign of a good performance is to lift up other human beings.

Igor: I know we'll be focusing on the whole performance aspect more for the other later today or in the more seminar portion in particular, but a single good point that comes to my mind when you say this is, a lot of people shall we say, do a dirtier show or a more extreme show than needs be, purely because they need that shock value because they're making up for a lack of performance character.

If they don't have a performance that's well thought out and well constructed, then they need something to make up for that, and they think it's basically by doing stunts that are basically, something out of Jackass from the MTV show rather than saying hang on a second, I can have a very simple routine, something as simple as people watching TV, but I can build up the atmosphere.

I can build up the whole thing around it in such a way that it's the most people have ever seen and that's the big difference, isn't it?

Don: It really is, yes. You hit it right on the head. It's a performance, so it's how you present it that's going to create the total ambience and the environment for the audience and for your subjects and for yourself.

Igor: Now, before we get into the sort of meat and potatoes of what stage hypnosis is and your insights there, there's something very important which I like to ask people at this stage, and I'd like to ask you as well just to give people some perspective.

If anyone has seen your show or anyone goes to your show – by the way, if you ever see Don Spencer performing, The World's Fastest Hypnotist he'll be billed as, go watch the show. It is spectacular. It is so much fun, it's fast paced, and you will learn a ton of things just by seeing him in action.

However, there's a danger with that which is people see a very polished performance, a very good performance and think hang on a second, he's

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perfect, he's always going to do this, he's always getting the show perfectly; I'm nowhere near the same league yet, so I can't do what he does.

What they don't realize is that you, even now after all those years of experience, will still make mistakes and you've made some pretty big mistakes along the road, which is one of the reasons why you're this good.

It's not whether or not you make mistakes its how you recover from them that that matters and what you learn from them, right?

Don: Yes, that's right. Are we talking about a mistake that I had recently?

Igor: Well, you can if you want to.

Don: Yes. I think that's great. As I'm listening to you I'm sitting here going he's leading me right into this, isn't he?

Igor: Well, you know...

Don: It's great. You can have a polished show and I make it look easy because I've been doing it so it's second nature to me. People watching think I can do that, but there's a lot of work that goes into it. You can make mistakes.

At a recent show, yours truly was there alongside me and there was a gentleman on the floor, I went down there to pick him up and I reached down there and grabbed his hand, and his hand slipped out of my hand and I fell backwards right on my butt.

I just turned around, looked at the audience, looked at the subject and made it part of my act and then just got up and just carried on as if nothing really had happened.

Igor: That is the sign of a consummate performer. It's not that things don't go wrong, because a lot of things went wrong.

If I recall I had a pretty interesting experience on the same show with you with people trying to climb up on a piano, because they took their suggestion very literally and I just did not think of the consequence with that. You have to keep your eyes out sharp for anything like that.

Whether you're slipping and just make it part of your show or whether your subjects misinterpret or interpret your suggestions more widely then would normally be the case.

You have to keep your eyes out for that, your wits about you, and the second something happens that's even a little bit unsafe, put a stop to it right there and that's another side of the stage show which is important.

Don: The safety.

Igor: Exactly, the safety aspect.

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So, mistakes can happen in two forms, as the kind of egg on your face mistake which actually, if nothing else, just to emphasize this in terms of the audience which reaction happen there, they just laughed like they thought it was literally just a gag that you were doing on the show just to show that I'm not just a big hypnotist and a friendly guy as well.

They took it as a sign of friendliness and approachability rather than of weakness and unprofessionalism, and actually it endeared them to you more, because you were willing to make a mistake and you have a big smile on your face and just carried on with the show.

By the end of it they were just so blown away by the rest of the show I doubt anyone even remembered that it happened. All they had was that good feeling, the afterglow from the whole show.

Don: Exactly. I'll never forget the gal up on the piano, though that was classy.

Igor: That was spectacular.

Don: That was good. That was part of it. We weren't really paying attention. We were just kind of doing this thing together and to watch that gal up on the piano, actually it was great, it worked out good, and it didn't harm anything. It became part of the show.

You're right, at the end of the show people left there feeling good. They didn't even notice any of that, and that's part of being a professional is just going with the flow and integrating everything that happens into the show as it is.

I had a guy once who thought he was Superman. He flew off the stage. He actually jumped off the stage, jumping up into the air like he was Superman flying. All's we could hear– the audience is gasping– was this big thud on the ground.

Igor: Oh man!

Don: I walk over to the side of the stage, look down, looked at the guy, and I go you all right? He goes yeah... I was kind of nervous but he got back up on the stage and he was fine. He went down there, he hit the cement, but he broke his fall.

I think I'm fortunate in that way that I've never had anybody have any serious accidents on my stage, ever. I've never had anybody get hurt except once, me, early in my career when I was.

Actually, it was at one of the first shows I did, I mentioned earlier at the Turf Club, I did this show and I think it was a second night. I gave a suggestion that I'm trying to remember what it was, but it was something that when I said this trigger word, like maybe the Turf Club, this person who I sent back out of the audience with a post-hypnotic suggestion, whenever I said the words Turf Club,

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you didn't like it you didn't like it at all; you just were going to pick a fight with me.

I didn't think about my safety at the time and so I had my back turned to the audience and this gentleman is out there hypnotized, I'm talking to the subjects and I'm saying I'm glad you're all here in Twin Falls. I heard the audience screaming, I turned around and this guy is rushing me like a roaring raging bull.

As I turn around this guy lunges at me and as soon as he grabs me we both go over the chairs and I say SLEEP – the guy falls down and sleeps, and I get up, brush myself off and the audience gasps and starts laughing. I said wow I didn't see that one coming. I just made it part of the show.

Igor: Again, it's an extreme example of where you really need to keep your wits about you. In other words, always watch what the subjects are doing, especially the ones that are acting out the suggestions, and even the ones that aren't because sometimes they will act out a suggestion as well because you never quite know how they'll react and you always have that magic out.

It happened with us with the girl trying to climb up on the piano. It happened with this guy trying to hit you and so on, which is the minute something starts going wrong what's the default? You put them to sleep and you just reset the whole show or the whole scene or you change scenes to something else.

If nothing else, it just proves the power of hypnosis to the audience at that point because they go wow this stuff's really potent. This is unexpected. We didn't know this was going to happen right.

Don: Exactly. One of the things that I got from that early experience is that in all my shows I worked to kind of make myself the fall guy oftentimes because I'm the hypnotist up there messing with people, so I always set a scenario up at some point in the show where somebody's giving me a hard time, which is fine because it gives the audience something to laugh at.

It shows them that he can mess with people. But, look at him he's a good guy, he can take it and he can let people mess with him too.

Igor: That kind of balances things out and takes away from the I'm lording it over you but it's a more kind of a respectful fun rather than putting someone else down which I think is a very important thing to keep in the back of your mind, that respect for the audience, that respect for the volunteers on stage as well, right?

Don: Right. I agree totally.

Interview – Part 2

Igor: Now, let's move on a little bit into kind of the mystery of the stage hypnosis show or uncovering the mystery because even to this day, I notice that a lot of experienced hypnotherapists will see a stage show and they themselves will just shake their head and go, how the hell does he do it? What the hell is happening there? Why are these people doing what they're doing?

There are all kinds of theories of social compliance yada- yada and whatnot. Let me ask you directly.

➤ **Is it really exactly what you see?**

- a. When people are on the stage doing these things, responding within literally minutes of standing on the stage, is that exactly what's going on or is there some kind of other background reality that people aren't aware of?

Don: No. What you see is what you get. When you give a person a suggestion and they're in a deep hypnotic state, people will literally do just about anything. I say just about anything, but they'll do just about anything that you ask them to do, within their normal boundaries of morality.

For me, one of the fun things is not so much if I give a person a suggestion, what will they do? But it's more of what won't they do given the opportunity?

Igor: Right. So it's a question of creating the right context.

Don: It is.

Igor: That's part of the skill. You're creating the context that people will want to volunteer. Once you've got a volunteer, you're maybe 89% of the way set.

Don: Right. There again, even during the show there's no guarantees. You may have 10 or 20 people up on stage. You may be going through a number of routines and having a great show. Then all of the sudden, you give a suggestion and maybe one or two people decide, no, I'm done with this. I'm out of here. They just walk off the stage.

Igor: Right. Now, this is important to realize because it is still a live environment. It's not like you suddenly have everyone totally under your control and whatnot.

It is literally that the show – part of the skillset is you're searching for a bias for those people who...

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1. One, go into trance most quickly and most easily, with as little effort from you as possible because you don't have the time to commit to actually creating the right conditions for every individual.
2. Two, won't just be there having a great time inside their head and are actually willing to behaviorally act it out so that other people can appreciate the demonstration.

Because, there are some great deep trance subjects and all they do is sit rigidly in their chair and have a great time inside their head doing everything you want them to do inside their mind, but no one ever gets to see it.

Don: Exactly. The whole hypnotic experience, I liken it basically as a moth drawn to a flame. Most of the people for the most part that come up on stage are pretty good subjects, they're somnambulists, so they're fairly easy to work with.

There again, in my shows, I always create the ambience to begin with and make sure that the people that come up on stage are already good subjects before I even get them on stage, because I don't waste a lot of time really working to get people hypnotized. I want people up on my stage and I want the show to begin immediately, so my show begins out there.

Once I get people up there, of course, I'm always watching everybody very, very carefully because everybody is so different. They all come from a different background and if I give the suggestion say you're all six years old, for example. I'm going to be careful because when I do a regression like that, I never know if one person might have an abreaction to a six-year old experience that could be negative.

So, I've got to keep an eye on each and every individual monitoring their behavior at all times so that I don't distress anybody, I want everybody to have a good, pleasant time.

Now within that, I'm always aware, too, that that's cool, so you're having a bad experience. That gives me the opportunity to show off my skills as a hypnotherapist, because if somebody has an abreaction, I'm not going to just brush it off.

I'm just going to say, excuse me for a minute, ladies and gentlemen. Let me just take care of this real quick. Then I'll just do a quick mini hypnotherapy session that might last about 30 seconds and fix this person in a specific way very quickly. Then I turn it around, the show goes back on and everybody appreciates it. So you have to keep your eyes open, and your ears.

Igor: I know we've talked about this before and I was very impressed by this point, which is – I'm not sure if you've actually ever had to do this—you said if that if that quick one or two-minute intervention on stage happens and it doesn't do the job.

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Then, you are perfectly willing to stop the show there and then, send everyone else off and do some important private work with that person there, because your number one concern is the safety and the well being of the people on stage.

Don: Always.

Igor: The people who have volunteered for this. So, if that means cancelling the show and taking even a financial hit out of that, so be it.

Don: Yes, I have no problems with that. However, that said 99.9% of the time, I will have somebody with me who's trained and if something like that happens, I can just send them off to the side of the stage so the show goes on. Then somebody who's with me, who's perfectly capable of handling the situation, can work with this individual for me.

Igor: Right. That's actually an important thing.

Now, coming back on the topic here we talked a moment ago about how the things that happen on stage are totally real but, of course, the background to this is a self-selecting audience that, as you say the somnambulist moth drawn to a flame.

But even then, you want to be able to look out for the ones that will really shine, rather than the ones that will just do okay or are just there because they think it might be interesting but their hearts aren't in the right place.

➤ **How do you really know who is going to be a great subject?**

a. What's the secret to that?

Don: The way that I set it up, I'll do some sort of suggestibility test with the entire audience. Then, the individuals who are the most responsive to that I'll invite up to the stage. Once they get up to the stage, I'll set them down in their chairs. Then I'll do one or two more suggestibility tests with them to make sure that they've got what it takes at that moment. If they pass the test, I will keep them and the show begins.

That's how I know. I've honed it to that level where I can ascertain that very quickly. I see hypnotists do balloons, raising arms, lowering arms, things like that and you can do whatever you want, but I have developed something that's a little bit quicker for me.

I also look for signs as I'm working with them. Maybe their eyes will close down, maybe their head will fall down on their chest or their shoulder, maybe they'll just flop over in their chair, on the laps or the person's lap next to them, which will tell you that you've got a good subject.

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Even if all those things seem to work, it's still not going to tell you that you have a great subject for the show. You may get a person up there who's just a flopper. They're going to lie down, go to sleep and they're not going to move at all during the entire show. You don't want them up there, so you want to get them off also.

Igor: So, it's partly a question of experience and if you make a bad call, then you just move on to the next person and no one will ever know because you just moved along smoothly, right?

Don: That's right and there again, as I've said before, what happens on the stage, I just make it part of the show. Instead of being anxious about something that somebody with less experience might think something here is going wrong. What do I do? I just make it part of the show and move on.

Igor: What would you say to someone who when they hear you say this, they think but if I do that then people might think that hypnosis is fake because I obviously skipped by a person that it "wasn't working on" and then I haven't done my job as a hypnotist to prove to them how well hypnosis works.

➤ **What would you say to someone who has that kind of thinking going on?**

Don: What I would say is that you probably need to get some good instruction, because if you have that kind of thinking, then you don't have the background, the experience, the training or the mindset to be up on stage, so you better get yourself a good mentor that can help straighten out that faulty thinking.

Igor: So in a nutshell...

➤ **What would be the mindset of a stage hypnotist?**

Don: Well, the mindset of the stage hypnotist, from the get go you're in control. When you set your stage you are in control from the very moment a poster goes up and the promotion goes in. It's all about you, the hypnotist, making people do whatever you want.

So, when people come into my show, I present myself as the authority figure, and people are going to do what I tell them to do no matter what. I'm kind of like the President of the United States.

Igor: The United States of that individual.

Don: So hopefully, people like me. But it's like that, as a performer, listen, you've got a couple of audiences. You've got the audience out there that are coming to watch the show. Then you've got the people up on stage, the subjects so you're doing two shows.

You're doing a show for the audience and one for the subjects and you have got to be in control the entire time. You've got to be like the alpha dog. If

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anybody senses a weakness in that then you're going to lose your show, you're going to lose the audience and you're going to lose your subjects. I've seen it happen over and over again.

Igor: So it comes back down to your performance character.

How can you create a performance character that is first of all, congruent with your personality?

So it's just an aspect of your personality that you, shall we say, enhance for the purpose of the show. And, you're just being comfortable on the stage and that you know this is my environment, you're coming into my world here, rather than me trying to convince you that this is real, please believe me, or all the rest of it.

You can make up your mind as you wish to. It's just that whilst you're here, it's my world, my rules, and we're going to have a great time.

Don: I think that's an important part of it, but I think that there's another part of that also. Oftentimes, people will watch a stage hypnotist and they're going to go oh, I want to be like Spencer, I want to be like Joe Blow or whoever the hypnotist is and that's faulty thinking.

When I work with people, my emphasis is on, okay, who are you? How can we make your personality a part of the show, because I don't want you to be me, but how can this become uniquely you?

Because, if you're comfortable in your own skin, then we make the show revolve around you and your personality. As you project that, then you're going to own the show, you're going to own the audience and you're going to own the subjects.

I think that's one of the things, when I talk to comedians and other performers, one of the things that we sense is that if you're doing a show – for a lot of us it's kind of like going fishing. You throw your line out there. You put a worm on there and you're trying to catch something, right.

You want to catch a good show, you want to catch a good subject, and you want to catch the audience applause. You want them to eat out of your hand, to laugh and to have a great time. So, you throw your line out there, you reel it in and you want to make sure that you're snagging as many people as you possibly can. That's what you want.

If you sense something, the line dragging away, somebody catches it and they start to take it out the door then you've got to reel the audience back in. If you're losing them, you've got to bring them back to you. If that means you've got to stop in the middle of your show and change the way you're talking, change the way you're thinking or even change the direction of your show, then you better do it.

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Igor: That's a very important point because really this is about entertaining people. If you're not doing that then you're not really doing your job.

Don: You're not doing your job, because you're going to have different audiences.

For example, if I'm working at a bar, my nightclub approach is going to be far different than if I'm working in a country fair, state fair, or especially if I'm doing a show for a corporate audience who are a little bit more stuffy, for lack of a better word, because they have a few more inhibitions. It's not a negative thing, it's just you have to work with the audience differently.

So you work with different venues. You're going to have something different, a different approach. You can still do your show exactly the same way, but it's maybe just how you approach the audience that needs to shift. That's part of being a performer and being aware of what's happening.

Igor: So, it seems the themes that are coming out here are that the most important element of a stage hypnosis show, aside from the stage craft, like safety and things like that are things that very few people talk about, which are:

1. Your performance character and how you create that so that actually is something that's in tune with you as a person rather than something you see out there and say I want to do that. You actually find it inside yourself, rather than outside yourself, although of course, the outside can become a spur or inspiration for what you have inside.
2. On the other side is actually being able to understand the psychology of the audience that you're in front of and understanding that different types of audiences will have different needs and different inhibitions that you need to take care of.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: That's one of the reasons we'll be exploring those particular aspects in more depth during the seminar portion, because that's such an important part of the craft, so that you know that I'm walking into a nightclub, I'm going to have this kind of audience, I need to work with in this way and then walking into a corporate show, so this is the kind of things I can expect.

These are the kind of things I have to take care of. I'm at a country fair or I'm with high school graduates. Each group thinks differently, needs different things and needs a different kind of show. You can run the same routines, it's just they'll be presented differently. The energy, the vibe of the interaction will be a little different.

That's something that actually makes you into a great stage hypnotist, rather than the person that has basically the same show, not just the content but presentation and everything else, no matter what the audience is. Sometimes it

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hits great and sometimes it misses, purely because he's not adjusting it to fit the audience.

Don: Right. I videotape all of my shows so that I can always go back and watch myself if I think I'm having an off night to see what went off.

It's interesting, you think about people like Jay Leno, who's a comedian – everybody knows who Jay Leno is– people like him, Jerry Seinfeld and all the big stars, they still – even though they've got great routines and they may have this thing on TV that they do, they still will go off into the smaller nightclubs and work on material before they present it to a larger audience, just to work it out. Work the bugs out, so to speak.

I do the same thing. Sometimes, I'll come up with some new ideas that I want to do, but I don't want to do them on a national stage yet. I want to go work the bugs out and see how it comes across on a smaller audience, so I'll go work it out for a while.

Then I'll go okay, I like it, it feels good. I know what I want to do. Then, I'll adjust it for the bigger stage. So instead of doing a show for maybe 100 or 200 people, now I'm ready to do a presentation for 2,000 or 3,000 people.

Igor: Right.

Now, you have a lot of tips, tricks and secrets in terms of your grab bag because you have a ton of experience.

➤ **Could you share with us what you think at the moment are some of the biggest mistakes you've seen other stage hypnotists do?**

Don't actually talk about the actual specific people. Just the kind of the mistakes people fall into, shall we say, routinely.

So, if someone's listening here and is aspiring for stage hypnosis or is even a stage hypnotist who wants to improve his show, then he can go oh yeah, I'm going to avoid these mistakes or yeah, I've done this, now I'm going to start changing this because I realize now that that's not going to give me the kind of success I'm looking for.

Don: Yes, and I'm going to be real brutal here, too. I think the biggest mistake that I've seen people make is...

1. Number one biggest mistake of stage hypnotists is, being brutal, they shouldn't be doing it to begin with.

They have no business being on stage. They have no presence, no charisma and no style. It's not a negative it's just that we all have different gifts and different abilities. I'm not saying don't try it if you love it. Sure, do it. But not everybody ought to do it.

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2. The second mistake, putting that aside, is somebody who tries to be somebody that they are not.

They want to be the other stage hypnotist. They've seen another stage hypnotist, and they want to do all the routines. They want to try to move like them, act like them, and sound like them. That's the next mistake that people make.

You've got to find your own soul in this. It's just like music. You've got to find something that moves you that you can feel, because if you can't feel it, you're not going to project it. So those are the two big mistakes that I see go on.

3. Then, of course, there are mistakes that may go on with just the way that a person dresses and their mannerisms with the audience.

This all comes through performance, being able to perform. If you never spoke in front of an audience before, man, go to the Toastmasters. If you're female, go to Toastmistress. Hone your speaking skills so that you don't have those problems of talking to an audience. Learn your craft well.

4. Another thing that I've seen is people who have absolutely no experience with hypnosis.

They want to get up there and be a stage hypnotist. I'm not saying that they can't. However, I've seen so many mistakes where they go up there – for example, I saw a guy once.

He was doing a hypnosis show and he decided that he wanted to do the bridge, where you stand on top of somebody. You put them between two supports and you stand on top of him.

This guy took this woman, he put her head on a chair, and he put her feet on another chair. I'm watching him and I'm going, you're going to have a problem. I didn't say anything. I was just sitting there going oh, my God this woman's in trouble. She's going to get hurt.

This guy had never done this before – the human bridge, and he went to stand on top of her and she collapsed, right there on the stage and it hurt her back. It could have broken her neck, the way that he approached it.

5. That's another drawback that I see, is the individuals who do not take the time to study this craft properly.

I can't emphasize that enough. If you want to be good, find yourself somebody who's been there and done that. Whatever it takes to get that person to help you, do it. I just can't emphasize that enough, so those are the drawbacks that I see.

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Igor: That makes a lot of sense. It comes back to basically, there seems to be a couple of big things you're pulling out here. One is this idea of your character and your stage presence, so you can work on those separately. Your character comes from the inside, just the idea of going first.

Your stage presence is the ability to speak in front of a group and the ability to protract. There's a lot of training that can help you with those things: acting, training, drama, Toastmasters you mentioned and stuff like that. Those are the performance elements.

On the other side is the idea of experience. I can't agree with you more than to say, you need a lot of experience and more importantly, just so you know you have your head screwed on tight. You know you're not going to do a risky routine, like the bridge, just because you've seen someone else do it, without understanding the ins and outs.

Just take a step back and think; could this be dangerous? If it could, then put it to one side and think about it when you're not on stage, because the last point in time when you have time to think things through clearly is in the middle of a performance. If you're in doubt don't do it or find somebody who can do it and figure out how they're doing it.

Don: It's like even doing a rapid induction. I've seen people trying to do a rapid induction and they've never done it before. They say sleep and the person looks at them and goes what, what do you mean?

And, because they don't have the experience they're just standing there twiddling their thumbs. I guess the other part, you know, there is another part to it too. It's just the business savvy. A lot of people, they just don't have the business acumen in order to go in there and make this profitable, because it is a business.

The word show business – business is the most important aspect of it because it is a business. It's not just about going up there and saying hey, I'm the star of the show. I'm a hypnotist. Everybody look at me. It's a business, you've got to cross all the (t's) and dot all the (i's).

You've got to do all the setup beforehand, make sure you have the contacts, the networking, the promotions and the press releases, everything you need to do to make yourself good. Then, everything that goes on after it is building a clientele base through the shows so that you can keep going back over and over again to the same location.

Igor: Those are basically the three or four core things to being a great stage hypnotist, aren't they? The idea of your character, the charm, the presence that you project, your experience and your ability to tell what's good and what's not good and what an audience needs.

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Finally, the thing that few people talk about but is oh, so important, are the business elements. Otherwise, you could be a great stage hypnotist with no one to actually watch your show. That doesn't help you very much either, does it?

Don: Right.

Igor: So, if someone just picks up a book and tries to teach themselves, which is fine in many respects, if they make sure they keep within the safety parameters. The one thing that can dash a lot of people's dreams early on is when they've met with failure and they don't know what to do with it.

They either don't know to expect it and to still keep going, where to adjust something and keep going or where there's just no point in pushing on that thing and maybe switch your show to a different type, which would be more successful in your environment and so on.

That's all to do with business acumen that tells you okay, in my environment, I can't do a corporate show because there are no corporates here or the corporations that are here really don't like it. But, there are tons of colleges, so I might as well switch my whole business model into doing colleges because they love these kinds of shows.

Don: Exactly.

Here's a good example. Just the other day, I had a gal give me a call. She's not a student of mine now, but I think that she wishes that she would have been to begin with. She was doing this show, and actually, she bought some of my time just to talk to me.

She called me and was asking me some questions about the stage hypnosis, her show and getting some feedback so I gave it to her. Then, she had another upcoming show at a military base. She called me afterwards and she goes, I failed miserably. I said oh, what happened? She goes well, I hypnotized – it seemed to work– everybody seemed to be hypnotized, but nobody would do what I said. Nobody would respond.

She goes, what happened? I told her what the problem was and she goes oh, I wish I would have known that before.

Igor: Right, which goes right back to the idea of experience and understanding the mindset of each audience? When you know where the problem spots lie with each different audience, you can just inoculate them so that no one ever sees it. It doesn't even arise because you've set things up so that the situation can never occur.

Don: Exactly. Because of that, she will probably not be invited back to the military base. She had the potential of getting a lot of business that she probably won't get because of the failure of her experience.

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Igor: It doesn't mean that can't succeed in time. It's just she should get down and really study her craft properly so that opportunities like that, when they arise again in the future, she can take advantage of them, rather than missing out on them.

Don: Yes, and once I explained to her what the problem was she goes oh, you're right I didn't even think about that. That's exactly what happened. I go, that's what I thought. So yeah, she'll do better next time, if she gets an opportunity to go back there.

Igor: Good.

If there's a newbie out there listening who wants to become a stage hypnotist or is just starting as a stage hypnotist.

- **What would be your advice to make it in this field – to really have a good living, do good shows and do something that they can be proud of?**

Don: Practice and persistence.

One of the big things is practice. You have to practice your craft. You have to study. Study hypnosis. Understand hypnosis inside and out. Understand everything from stress management to smoking, to weight, to abreactions, to fears and phobias. Understand the psychology of the human mind. Know hypnosis. Practice- practice- practice makes perfect; I can't overemphasize that aspect of it.

The other thing for the newbie would be persistence. You're going to have to get out there and knock on doors if you want it to work. You're going to have to go out there, knock on doors, and talk to people. You have to be prepared for rejection because that goes along with the business also. For every one door that may open for you, you may have 50 or 60 doors that won't open for you. It can be frustrating.

Igor: Right. It's important that people know to expect it so that if it happens, they don't go I guess it's just me it wasn't meant to be. They just need to realize that this is part of the process, and as they get used to the process, then it gets easier with time. It just becomes more automatic to how they do things.

Don: Exactly. That goes back to the business aspect of it also, I suppose. You have to some sort of presence when you approach businesses. Everybody wants a promo kit. They want to know who you are, where you've been and what you've done. If you have absolutely no experience, what are you going to tell somebody?

One of the things that I create with individuals is how can we create the illusion of your being a great stage hypnotist with no experience, which is something that I teach people how to do in my training.

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Igor: That's very important because otherwise you're stuck in a catch-22. You can't get any experience unless you have experience enough to get a show and you can't get a show unless you have enough experience. That makes sense. This is something which I believe you do in your stage hypnosis mentoring. You do one-to-one mentoring with people.

You craft a whole, shall we say, training regime around the individual, helping them with all the things we've talked about from developing the character to developing the mechanics of a stage show. Understanding hypnosis, all the levels of hypnosis they'll need for the show and the mechanics of how to apply it, all those things.

Also, the background things and the things that normally you don't see, but are just as important— the lighting, the music, the mood, the marketing and the safety procedures all these things that the audience will never actually appreciate are happening but are the reason why the show can be such a great success.

So, there's a whole bunch of things that all come into the same field to be able to be a successful, competent and decent stage hypnotist.

Don: Exactly. One of the things that I really emphasize is to know – there will be a time when you can be able to walk into a large theater, and they have all the lighting, effects, and everything that you may need. But, if you as an individual don't understand stage background, how to make the lights work, how to make effects work for you then you're going to have a problem.

What I like to do is walk a person through the whole stage production. How do we set the stage so that it makes you, as an individual, shine and your performance awesome? So that people walk in there and go oh, my God and when they leave they go, that was fantastic.

Igor: Right.

Don: That's a very important part.

Igor: In your mentoring program, of course, you have this one-to-one relationship with people so you can actually do it based on that person's personality. You can watch them do their little skits or watch them do a little bit of a presentation, or sometimes you even come watch them do a show and you can give them feedback afterwards.

Like, you're going down this direction and you'll probably find these things can help you. You can tweak these things or I'd drop these things here because they really aren't you. That way it helps accelerate them to the point where they can actually be competent performers and run on their two feet without any real interference from the world.

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Don: Right. That's one of the things that I really enjoy doing. When I mentor somebody, my goal is to go to where they live. I'm not interested in them coming to me, that's not what it's about, I want to help them develop their craft, go to where they are, and develop a show. I do not leave until they're on stage.

Igor: That's actually a really important thing. A lot of people would just sell you a DVD set or a book, and that has value I'm going to knock it because there's a lot of value from being able to see different shows and other people's opinions of the anatomy of show, and so on.

But, the fact that you'll stick with them through the whole build-up process literally to the day that they're on stage doing their thing that's actually a really big deal and that can be a great comfort for people who've never been on stage before to have that kind of expert guidance along the way.

Don: It really is. It's a lot of fun. It's kind of funny. Oftentimes, I'll get there and we're backstage in the green room, and the audience has come in there. We've got the music playing, and every once in a while, I'll get one of my students who will go Spencer, I can't do it. You've got to go out there for me. I just can't do it.

I go I'm not going out there. You're going to go out there. This is what you paid me for. This is your show, man. I go, you can do it. I said I've been here with you for a few days now, I've watched you and we've studied this. This is your defining moment. This is where you get to shine. I'm going to count to three get your butt up and go.

Igor: Then, at that point, you're basically adding that little bit of extra pressure they need to actually go through with it. Sometimes, as I've said before, it's the nudge in the right direction at the right time that can save years of undoing beliefs and going down the wrong road.

That's one of the real values of one-to-one or a small group situation where you can really work with people according to what their needs are.

Don: Yes. One-on-one is great. If you approach working with a group in a mentoring situation, that can be absolutely fantastic as well, but you have to make it tight.

Igor: Before we finish up today, I just wanted to sort of let people know that you have very kindly agreed that in the seminar portion of these interviews, you're going to basically try and give us as much of a crash course on your whole system method as possible, which means everything we've talked about.

On the one side, the pure mechanics of a stage show, something which is very important.

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- How to start the show.
- How to run it.
- How to make it successful.
- How you make it fun and interesting and so on.

Also, some of the elements we've talked about today, which sets the masters apart, which are the character, the way they can come across charmingly. The experience they'll need to understand, different audiences and what the needs are of different audiences like corporate or military, what their fears are and how to handle them, so the problems that can arise for others, never arise for you.

Also, some of the business elements so that you've basically got a whole package. It's not all, of course, going to be the same as a full mentoring program. How can it be? But it gives you a crash course on the whole thing so people can really understand this is what it looks like, these are the things I need to address, and these are the things I need to know about.

Believe me, there's a lot of things that a stage hypnotist or a newbie should know that they didn't even realize they should know about because they're not immediately apparent. I think you'll be sharing most of those ideas with us in the next seminar. That will make the key difference between success and abject failure.

Don: It really will. It's going to be a big help, and I look forward to it.

Igor: Well, I'm looking forward to it. It's always a pleasure to chat with you Spence. Of course, we'll be talking about lots of examples of how this stuff works in action because you do have a wealth of experience. You have a way of bringing the material to life by demonstrating.

You do this induction, but by actually saying, here's some ways I've done it before. Just rounding off the experience with actual real life experiences, which I think is so important so I, for one, am really looking forward to it. I will be picking your brain ruthlessly.

Don: Ruthlessly.

Igor: Ruthlessly, without any Ruth. I look forward to hearing you in the next session.

Don: Well, we'll speak again soon at the next session and hopefully, we'll cross paths next week too.

Igor: Fantastic.

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Seminar 1 – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. My name is Igor Ledochowski and I'm here with master hypnotist Don Spencer, billed as the fastest hypnotist in the world, welcome back Don.

Don: Thank you for having me back it's good to talk to you again.

Igor: I'm excited to have you here. This is, of course, the first seminar in the two seminar interviews about stage hypnosis and the insider secrets for becoming a great stage hypnotist, not just an average common or garden variety.

With your permission we would like to dive straight into the nitty-gritty. You did a great job in the other interview talking about the kinds of ideas and concepts people need to think about to become a great hypnotist.

So, what I thought we'd do today is look at the actual nuts and bolts of a stage show so that anyone contemplating doing a stage show can look at that and say yes that's something I can really do, that's something I can actually see myself getting up and running through.

Whilst there's a lot of skill involved, would it be fair to say that it's actually something that once you get your head around the different elements, as a procedural matter, that it's actually relatively straightforward and easy to do a stage show. And, of course, all the "difficulty" comes in creating a great stage show versus just a good one.

Don: I think that would probably be correct, yes.

Igor: Looking at the anatomy of a stage show in terms of beginning to end, how does a show begin?

➤ **What makes a good start to a stage hypnosis show?**

Don: I think a good start to the stage hypnosis show begins, first of all, in the mind of the performer. What I do and encourage others to do is, as soon as you have an idea - let's say for example, I wanted to develop a show three months down the road so I pick a location and then I make the contacts, get a room and then I go into promotion.

It begins with promotion. You've got to have your press releases and you've got to have your posters up because the show begins with the mental expectancy of the people that you're working to attract to come to the show, which all begins with your advertisement.

It all goes back to the rules of the mind what is expected tends to be realized. Once you have your show location, the venue you're going to do, you need to go into overdrive and begin doing your promotions right away.

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I like to do my shows about three months out because that gives the public enough time to see your advertising over and over again and to get excited about it. It will create an excitement in their mind, they can go visit the website, see the various videos that I've done, and it creates this mental expectancy.

They're already hypnotized before they come to the show thinking about; what is he going to do to me? It's a lot of fun.

Igor: That's the magic key phrase you want to be thinking about putting in someone's mind, which is this positive curiosity of what's he going to make me do. What's he going to make someone else do?

That gets the excitement going and a little bit of being unsure of what's going to happen is good, because that takes the conscious mind offline and when people are so much thinking I don't know what's going to happen but it's exciting and all these different things, it takes them into a mindset that almost builds the trance ahead of time.

It's like Christmas. The closer you get to it the more excited you get and the less you're thinking straight, logically and analytically, which is where you want people to be because it's not an exercise in analytical, it's an exercise in the imaginative side of people, the other side of people.

Don: Exactly, and that's the subconscious. You're right; I am Spencer Claus instead of Santa Claus.

Igor: I bring gifts of the mind; I like that.

Don: I'm bringing gifts of the mind. It's really true because whenever you engage somebody's imagination you've opened a doorway right into the unconscious mind.

You've already accessed their belief systems, you're setting up a mindset and creating a framework for your show. And, to have a really good dynamics show, because people are already there with you. You've begun the hypnosis months ahead of time before the show even begins, before the door even opens.

Igor: Of course, it's very important that your advertising sets the tone or theme that's going to match the character you'll end up performing. For example, I came across in the UK a very interesting guy who basically has a hypnotic dog.

He basically hypnotizes people with his dog and that's the whole gag of his show, he has a very well trained dog he brings on stage and he says I don't do any hypnosis, my dog does, and he'll basically sit there and say what does he say Rover? Rover says do this.

It's just a gag but it's actually kind of funny and it fits him because he's got a wild, wacky and eccentric character. His advertising is wild, it is wacky, and it is

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kind of out there as opposed to yours which would be more of a rock star, you'd have the whole rock star look and flashing lights and maybe some fog machine going on.

Another person might be more magical, transformational, so it would be more like a magician might do his posters or his advertising. You've got to make sure the advertising fits the character you're going to be portraying on stage.

Don: Exactly. I take my model of course - we spoke of this before - from rock and roll shows because I'm a big rock and roll fan, at least I used to be, maybe not as much today, but that's what I modeled my shows after.

When you look at bands, like the Rolling Stones, the Beatles or Bob Dylan, they all have fantastic music but their presentation is completely different. I've been to hundreds of rock concerts and it's all in the presentation.

Not every band is going to attract every person and it's just the same thing with a hypnosis show. You may go to five different comedy hypnosis shows and you may find one individual that you really like their style but you can't stand the other people.

They may be good performers to others but they just don't do it for you. It's the same thing take nothing personally.

Igor: Exactly. That's an important point I think we'll come back to in the next session where we talk more about the behinds the scenes stuff like marketing and so on, it's the idea that you don't want to be pleasing everybody, you want everyone that will be pleased to come to your show to be pleased, not for everybody to come to your show.

That's a really key distinction, especially for the newbie going out there to do his thing, right.

Don: That's so true. I remember years ago when I started work at The Avalon, the owner at the time was always telling me Spencer, you've got to do this, this way, you've got to please everybody. Everybody has to be happy.

I would say no, not everybody has to be happy and they're not all going to be happy. This is my show, I'm going to do it my way and people will come because they dig what I'm doing if for no other reason. I can't please everybody it doesn't work that way.

Igor: To use the rock and pop analogy, it's the difference between a pop star and a rock star.

A pop star is almost a manufactured thing that some media company has created, they'll sing great songs and things like that, but it's not until they make that transition to finding their own personality, putting their own personality into

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the songs and the show that they'll cross over into being a genuine rock star that has much more character and will also polarize people more.

Some people just won't like them; won't like the star anymore, won't like their flavor, but on the flip side which is the one we're looking for, you'll have other people who will love them and be really excited by it.

That's what you really want when people come to your stage show, which is people who say I love this, I want more of this versus people who say yes, I can take this, it's kind of interesting.

Don: You hit it on the head, I would agree with that.

Igor: Let's assume you've done everything you need to do for publicity stunts, you've got your posters up, maybe you do some funky publicity stunts like the good old days where they'd hypnotize someone and stick them in a chair in a window for 24 hours before the show and all kinds of stuff like that, all that crazy stuff.

Let's say the day of the show arrives and you're coming to the venue.

➤ **What's the first thing you would do when you come to the venue to let the show begin, basically?**

Don: The first thing that I do when I get to the venue, I normally arrive a couple of hours early and I just do a quick sound check and make sure that everything inside the venue is working.

I want to make sure that my mics are working, that the sound comes through the speakers appropriately and the monitor up on stage is working correctly, in a perfect world.

At that point when I'm satisfied I'll go back into the green room and I'll chill for awhile. When the doors are ready to open, and we normally open the doors about 30 minutes ahead of time, I'll have my sound tech playing music that sets the ambience for the entire evening.

We'll have 30 minutes of whatever it is I determine I want to be playing to start bending minds towards the way I want them to respond during the show. I'll play different types of music that is out of the ordinary, probably something they normally are not aware of.

Because, of course you know, when you introduce strange and exotic types of ambiances to people it takes them out of their comfort zone, they begin to search for meaning and you begin to develop a trance right away.

Igor: You're already using unusual music patterns to shift people out of their normal reality, kind of like I recognize this, hang on a second, where is this going? Now, already they have that slight sense of unreality beginning, which is almost like a trance induction happening there without you having to say a word.

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Don: Exactly. I also have some scores I have embedded in there with my voice where I begin to talk to the audience. I use it oftentimes as a pre-talk, and I'll embed my pre-talk in that.

Maybe five minutes before the show begins, as everybody is all ready and they're seated, then I'll have already on my musical score a message that I begin to deliver to the audience which is again something that I've developed and really tweaked and fine tuned on my computer to make it sound other worldly, to get people to say oh man, what is he saying? What's he going to do?

Igor: It's kind of like all those funky hypno-sounds like, you see with the echo effect, maybe the voice going lower or being more spacey. You're going to create that kind of atmosphere to fit whatever music has come before it.

Don: I dig it. I sit here and spend hours on my computer just being creative and looking for new ways to create something new and unusual, not just for myself but before every performance I do. I'm always thinking; how can I make this better and different for this group of people?

Igor: This is an interesting attitude that you have because this is something that I think is relatively rare amongst stage hypnotists. I know a lot of stage hypnotists who like to do their staple thing.

They've worked out their show, they like it, and they pretty much run the same show. You've got this whole creativity angle where you're going to play with it, you're going to tweak this a little bit, you're going to change the ambience here, something maybe happens randomly on one night and you like it so you figure out how to do more of that feel or vibe.

There's a constant creative involved thinking process, which is I guess one of the reasons why you became so good so quickly, because you are engaged in the process of your show, you're not just delivering it night after night after night, it's a living breathing thing that grows with you as your hypnosis grows and as your character develops.

Don: Exactly. Sometimes it gets hard to separate you from the show and I've been accused of that, it's like; who are you? I'm just me. You're a hypnotist - I say yes, but I'm me, but it's like it's who I am.

As a stage hypnotist, as opposed to going to another job and sitting in an office for eight hours or something and working for somebody, you're the product. You are the product.

You have to think of yourself that way and what can you do to make yourself a better product. You're marketing yourself, you're not marketing really stage hypnosis per se, and you're marketing yourself as a performer that's the business aspect of it.

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Igor: Also, this reminds me of a principle I talk to a lot of my students about which is the idea that hypnosis is not something you do to people, it might be something you do with people, but really to get to the big stages of mastery and get to some interesting places you have to get to the point where hypnosis is something you become.

All the other hypnotic stuff that surrounds you is just a byproduct of how you naturally communicate. That's the key thing. It's not a technique that you pull out of a grab bag and say let's try this one or that. It's just the way you track with people, that's just part of your character now and it sounds like the stage show definitely helps you in that process, because it forces you into that character more and more over time.

Then, eventually, the two blend so that it affects who you are as a human being as much as who you are as a human being affects your show. It's kind of a symbiosis that develops there.

Don: Yes. You become the show you are the show. It's good when you do a long run to get away from it so you can reconnect with yourself, go to an island for a month.

Igor: For sure, just to chill out and figure out what the next steps for you as a person are, right.

Don: Yes, of course.

Igor: Coming back to the idea of the stage show, we've got this idea. Of course you like to do your intro talk, your pre-talk, embedded in the pre-show music, but other people will do it actually just live on stage.

➤ **What are the important elements of a pre-talk, whether you put it into your pre-show now or you get up on stage, start with a pre-show and make it part of your act?**

a. What are some of the important things that people need to think about when doing a pre-show?

Don: I think it's different for different people. For myself, so much of my pre-talk is embedded before the show even begins and I think the importance of the pre-talk is for those individuals who have never been to a hypnosis show.

It helps to explain to them what the show is about, what hypnosis is about, what they can expect, what they cannot expect, and it creates that - going back to the rules of the mind - what is expected tends to be realized.

It creates that mental expectancy so that people can begin to have a general idea of what is going to occur during the evening. You're this grand master up on stage you're the conductor of this orchestra.

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You've got to play the audience. You've got to play the subjects. Whether you stand up in front of the audience and talk to them for five or 10 minutes and talk to them about hypnosis and how the mind works and how we are all subjected to hypnosis every day, whether it's highway hypnosis or whether it's watching a movie or driving your car reading a book, and how we go into trances spontaneously every day, many times throughout the day.

We're setting the stage for the people in the audience to come up and get hypnotized. Part of it is creating rapport to create the sense that this guy knows what he's talking about.

I understand it. I feel safe. I guess I'm just going to let my mind go to him tonight. Let's see what happens.

Igor: You just mentioned a couple of very important points, I hope you don't mind if we just go back and pick up on them.

On the one side you're talking about the idea of mental expectation and of course it's important to introduce the idea of hypnosis so that you can counter things like for example; I heard every word he said, I can't be hypnotized.

Let's face it; some subjects on the stage will have complete amnesia, some subjects on the stage will actually even zone out between suggestions until you call them back to do something else, but for the most part subjects will be there.

They'll be hearing you, there will be a level of consciousness there, paying attention to what's going on, it's just that recedes to the back of their mind and it's less important. They're more willing to let themselves go into their imagination and it's important for them to understand that this is going to happen and that it's a natural thing to happen, so when it does happen...

- a. It's no surprise, and
- b. They don't think something different should be happening than what actually is happening.

Don: Another aspect that I don't always do because I'm not concerned about it is that one of the other reasons for a pre-talk is to dispel myths about hypnosis.

There again, that's how you present your show. I don't go into that because I'm not really interested in explaining to them about the myths of hypnosis like; can I control you? Will you get stuck in trance? From my perspective, I want them to think it's going to happen. I want to scare the hell out of people.

Igor: In doing so and being more uncertain of course it brings their regular analytical thinking more offline which makes it even easier for the show to bite if you like.

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If I understand you correctly, and I think you probably agree with this, the key thing is not whether you say to people look; hypnosis is safe, you'll be fine, I can't control you, I can't make you do things you don't want to do, I won't make you tell things that will embarrass you.

These are basically attempts that hypnotists make at making the audience feel safe being on stage. I think that's the key thing you're saying; make the people feel safe. If you can do that with your attitude alone, there's no need to say anything else, right?

They can be uncertain, but know that nothing bad is going to happen and that comes primarily from your attitude or your aura of authority. I've done this a million times and I'm going to assume that nothing bad is going to happen because it just doesn't.

And, that confidence kind of flows into the audience and so you have to do less explaining why it's safe because that's already built into the whole expectation, ambience, and personality you're projecting.

Don: Exactly. It also doesn't hurt to have a good resume too.

For example, on my website when people - as far as my promotions on all my posters of course I have my website in there and so people have an opportunity for two or three months, however long, to go visit my website.

They can read all about hypnosis, they can read about me, they can read about my stage shows and my clinical work and they can determine at that time if I'm a lunatic or if I have some sense of rationality about me also.

Most people have already made up their minds anyway.

Igor: This goes back to what we said before; the show begins with your advertising and this is why— and we'll come onto this when we get into the behind the scenes stuff in the next session— but why things like your website can be so important because it's part of your pre-show.

It's part of you as a hypnotist, how you'll get perceived by the people coming to the show, what their expectations will be and it goes right back to what you said about mental expectancy; what people expect to happen will tend to happen.

You want to make sure they expect the things you need them to expect, like hypnosis is going to be fun, it's going to be safe, that it's going to be a wild trip, they're going to do things they won't believe they would do but they're going to enjoy it anyway, and so on.

With these ideas inside their mind they're primed and ready to go to be doing unusual things, to be behaving differently, and enjoy it. To basically be released from the tyranny of having to be the way that people expect them to be and to

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express some parts of themselves that are normally not allowed to come out and play.

So, we've got the idea now of the whole buildup. You come in, you've prepared the environment, curtains are closed, your lights get dimmed, the pre-show music starts thrumming up to fill the room with a sudden ambience, and now you start letting people trickle in, they'll start coming towards their chairs and sitting down finding their places.

Meanwhile, the music is going on, depending on your performance character or the kind of show that you'll have it might be eerie, it might be inspiring and it might be funny.

I've seen some hypnotists with their pre-show stuff put on funny quotes and things like that or run little funny movie clips and so on. Basically, you're setting the emotional mood for the whole night.

If you have the technical capacity for this and it's the venue and so on, you may want to embed a pre-talk towards the end of that pre-show thing, like a five to ten minute thing saying here's what hypnosis is, here's what to expect and so on, but in a way again that fits the mood of the thing.

It could be like a deeply mysterious voice saying and now...remember the times you've had...

Don: I think you should do one I like it.

Igor: The other side, if you're going to be a more comic show it would be like hey, it's going to be crazy fun and just remember all the things that are going to happen tonight.

You're moving with the mood of the piece and that's going to basically feed into how you present your pre-talk and the key things you're looking for is expectancy, a sense of safety, and a curiosity to find out.

➤ What's it going to be like?

If I understand you correctly those are the three key things, right?

Don: Going back to the pre-talk, it all depends on the venue that I'm playing. If I'm doing it for a theater it's my show, I can hallucinate and create this entire show exactly how I want it. It's going to be much different than if I have to do a show for a corporate audience where they just want me to come in and do a down and dirty 60-minute show.

It's very organized and orchestrated, they have somebody talking before me, and I have to get up there and do my thing and get off the stage, that's going to be a far different type of presentation.

Igor: For sure. Let's move from the pre-talk now into the actual show.

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Let's assume that you've either, come on and you've done a little pre-talk or that you've embedded a pre-talk in your show music and now the big moment of revelation comes.

You have a DJ or maybe you just record a piece that gets put onto a tape that gets played before you come on stage, which hypes the audience up and says ladies and gentlemen please welcome the fastest hypnotist, the funniest hypnotist, the craziest hypnotist, the shortest hypnotist, the tallest hypnotist or the most hypnotic hypnotist - whatever your image requires, right.

You come bouncing on stage, you slowly smoothly walk on stage, or you roll on stage in a wheelchair, whatever again fits your performance character.

What happens now, because as far as I'm concerned we're now into the middle of show time, right? You've done pretty much all the warm ups in terms of preparing people and getting them to the place, now it's time to let the entertainment really begin and the interaction.

➤ **How do you start that?**

- a. What is the first thing you like to do when you bounce on stage?
- b. In fact, how do you like to come on stage and why?
- c. How do you transform that into actually that moment of moving from pre-show now into the actual show?

Don: For me I can talk specifically about what I do.

As soon as I get introduced onto the stage, the pre-talk and everything has already been done, so as soon as I go onto the stage its like, ladies and gentlemen please put your hands together for the world's fastest hypnotist give him a warm round of applause for Don Spencer.

Lights come on me. I bounce out there onto the stage, the audience applauds, I get out there, do a quick take and look at everybody out there then go right into the show. I just tell everybody sit back, put your hands above your head and I do a suggestibility test right away and get everybody involved from the get go. And so the show begins.

Igor: Let me just pause you to point a couple of things out there to everyone which I think is very important. If you've seen a stage show before of course you'll realize that most people don't work at that pace, most people will come on, their standard routine is to come on stage, present a pre-talk, give reasons why it's all going to be good fun, warn people you need them to volunteer and so on.

A good five sometimes even ten minutes can be spent just on that portion alone. What you're doing - and this really fits the theme of your show, you've got a rock and roll show, you're the rock star, and how do most rock stars or

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rock and roll shows begin? With a blitz and a bang and a heavy drum beat and people just go into the set, bang you're in the middle of the show and that's it.

That's what you do. You come on stage, you'll say thank you very much, everyone go ahead and put your hands above your head and you're already making them do stuff without any explanations, without any please, possibly, maybe do this that or the other - it's just straight in- bam- done.

They don't have any time to think, which is a great thing as far as hypnosis is concerned. You're going straight for active compliance, even if they don't come up on stage they're already putting their hands up in the air which means they're building a hypnotic rapport with you, and it's a fast and furious pace.

You've set the pace right from the very second you hit the stage and I suspect it doesn't really - it'll shift in tempo but that urgency will still be underlying everything that you do and that's the whole part we were talking about in terms of the show, the feel, the character of a show. You have to live it the minute you come out, right?

Don: Right.

As soon as I'm out there the lights are on me, whether I have fog in the background and special ambient lights that are blaring around me like a rock and roll show. I'm out there and I've got the audience totally involved in everything I'm doing and I let them know that I'm in control, this is my show, and they're going to do what I say.

I set the tone right away that I am in charge of the evening. This is my evening and you will do as I say.

I do it in a way that makes it fun and not too overbearing so I go out there and have fun, recognizing too that in every show you have to watch the audience. Even in that moment somebody may make a remark or something out in the audience and I might have a little chuckle about it, but I come right back into controlling the audience to make sure they are compliance with how I want this show to go.

Igor: Just to compare that to a different performance style, just so people get a sense that they don't have to come out and try to be Spencer the world's fastest hypnotist they can be themselves, let's say someone wants to have more of a stand up comedy kind of show rather than a rock and roll feel to it.

➤ **How might someone like that come on stage and do the opening sequence a little bit differently?**

Don: That's easy enough, I do that every once in a while. You can simply, when you're introduced I go out there on the stage or they can go out there on the stage and the audience applauds and it's simply - how are you doing folks it's good to have you here.

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I would toss out two or three one-liners. Something for comedic value, get the audience to laugh, and then I would do a little talk about hypnosis and just make it a general conversation to the people, straight from my heart, to set them at ease.

It's a different way to present it but it's the same thing a comedian does. You go out there, you hit them with a few one-liners, create some rapport, and then you just invite people up to the stage to be hypnotized if they would like to have an experiment in hypnosis for the evening.

Igor: It's important that - it reminds me of another show I saw in Vegas which again has a different feel, it's a more edgy show, more of a Vegas - it's in a dark club, I think it maybe seats 120 people tops, it's a very small venue, very intimate.

As soon as the hypnotist comes out in that one it's great; he has the more I don't give a hang for anything, I'm going to turn up half drunk - he always plays this thing that he's got a big bottle of Vodka next to him and he's drinking it through the show.

He's not really drunk but he plays a drunk bad boy hypnotist, it's his performance style. What he does when he comes on stage, he just saunters on like he's been having a cigarette in the back of the bike sheds at school, looks at people with that sort of what am I doing here look.

Then he'll start making a couple of edgy jokes with people in the audience. He teases some of the people, flirts with some of the people, stands in the middle of them and makes fun of a couple of things, but all the time he's doing what you're saying.

He's taking control of the audience. He's making sure they're responsive and then by the time he gets to actually asking for volunteers people already know what they're expecting because there's a sense of - you know the dread people get sometimes when they go on a fairground ride or go to watch a horror film - it's kind of like you want to be shocked a little bit, that's the kind of show he has.

Therefore, by the time they come on stage, they know that it's going to be a racier show. They know that they're going to be doing slightly crazier stuff, but he's set that scene right from the get go with his humor that's very edgy.

It would go down very badly in most venues, it's just again, the way he's advertised it, the venue he's got and the way it's laid out. The only people that come to that want that, and that's important to understand and that's why it's important to have your character ahead of time.

Don: Exactly. When people go to Vegas, they generally assume that whatever performance they're going to, whether it's a hypnotist, magician or whoever, especially comics they know it's going to be a pretty raunchy show and that's what they expect, it's what they're looking for. That's Vegas.

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Igor: It's also the venue it's a nightclub. A nightclub versus a theater, it's a nightclub venue which implies drinking, that whole sexual interplay and all these things have been somehow respected there. If you turn up in a nightclub and all of the sudden you have a squeaky clean show for 12 year olds where you make balloon animals people are going to go; why is this here, it doesn't fit the venue.

Don: Unless you use the balloon animals for part of the show, right.

Igor: Right of course, exactly. Moving on, before we have to discover what those balloon animals might be used for. So, you say you'll bounce on stage, you'll instantly take control of your audience, and you'll get them to go straight into suggestibility tests.

➤ **Is there a particular one you like to do?**

- a. Do you vary them for interest?
- b. How do you like to operate?

Don: When I get out there and talk to the people as soon as I get up on stage I like to do a hand clasp, if that's what you're referring to as far as a suggestibility test, because I want everybody to do the same thing.

My job is to get everybody involved because the more people that get involved; it's just that mass hypnosis thing. If you get one person to do it, two people will do it. If you get two you're going to get five. If you get five you're going to get ten. If you get 10 you get the entire audience.

If you have most of the people in the audience doing the same thing the one, two, three or four people who aren't doing it will begin to do it because they don't want to be left out.

I'll do a hand clasp with the people in the audience as a suggestibility test and those people who are the most highly responsive to that, whose hands are stuck, I invite them up to the stage right away and those are the ones I'm going to work with.

Igor: Before we get onto the idea of what you do with people on stage, let's see what happens.

➤ **What would you do in the following scenario?**

You get up on stage and you say okay everyone, put your hands above your head. People are like; what's going on? Let's say only half of the audience actually puts their hands above their heads and starts doing the test.

- **Would you, at that point, stop and make the others join in as well or would you accept that, run with half the audience doing it and hope you can pull the other half in later on?**

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Don: There again it depends on the evening. I may just go with half the audience or I may just make an offhand remark that makes people laugh and sets them at ease and say something like - hey look around, everyone else has their hands up. If you don't put your hands up they may think you're doing something down below.

You learn to read the audience. You throw out something there that gives people permission to go ahead and put their hands up so people don't think they're fidgeting somewhere else.

Igor: So, you're basically making it less awkward to put their hands up and take part, less embarrassing to do that than something else. I'm not saying you single people out and embarrass them, it's just you're reading the audience and realizing that half of them are kind of lethargic because they don't want to look like idiots doing this.

But, by saying you can either look like an idiot not doing it or you can look like an idiot doing it, and believe me it'll be a lot more fun to look like an idiot doing it but not saying it outright, you're implying it with a bit of humor so the unconscious takes the hint and says we may as well go with the program a bit.

Don: Exactly. It's the same thing you do with conversational hypnosis. You make it acceptable for somebody to do it unconsciously. It's easier to do it than not to do it. They don't really know why, but it seems like something we should be doing.

Igor: Right. I guess over a period of time you'll build up and develop a repertoire of one liners, little jokes or anecdotes that will set the scene so that if something starts going a bit awry, out comes the 20 second anecdote, people get the hint and derail it to a much nicer place rather than the potential problems you might have had otherwise.

Don: Exactly.

You've got to spend your time before you even do a show - study other comics, study other hypnotists, read books on jokes, read books on stories. Learn anecdotes, learn metaphors, so that when you get up on stage you have an idea of how to lead the audience, how to pace the audience, because it's all about pacing and leading.

If you go back to basic NLP type language patterns you've got to go up there, you've got to judge your audience you've got to pace your audience and see what they're doing, you pace that and then you turn that around and begin to lead them to where you want to go.

It's basic trance work. You've got to just watch your audience, you have to know your audience, but in your mind you have to have a background. You need to study beforehand.

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Other hypnotists need to study hypnotists; comedians need to study performance, the performance arts and to learn how to present yourself or your show in a timely manner.

Igor: Let's look at that segment. I know we're spending a lot of time on the opening of the show but I have a sense that if you get the opening of the show right, the rest of the show just rolls beautifully. If you get the opening of a show wrong that's where nightmares can begin, so you're pretty much made or broken in your first 10-15 minutes, right?

Don: You really are, yes. It happens right there.

Igor: That's why if we look at the themes we've been pulling out, and this is something where you can go out into all different walks of life to get inspiration from, we're talking about–

- Number one creating an expectation,
- Number two creating a mood around that expectation,
- Number three refining the expectation to be in line with the actual behavior or experience you're going to expect for people during the show, in other words the pre-talk type stuff, and
- Number four you're hitting the show in the same vibe again but going straight for compliance.

You're getting audience participation which is compliance by everyone, which brings everyone into the same space, the same reality, which is the show reality; rather than having people hang around the back chatting, and a drunk person eyeing the person up in front of them saying I'm not sure about this show, but I'd rather talk to her instead, and risk losing the flow of the show as a result.

So, when people go out and they go to the movie theater, actually a theatrical performance, a musical or another stage hypnotist - magicians are great for this sort of stuff - they can actually watch for those things.

- What are they doing to create the ambience before you walk in, the buzz in the room?
- What are the different kinds of ambiances and buzzes you get in a room?
- Is it in a theater or an opera house versus a grungy garage band?
- How do they set the scene not just when people walk in, how do they build up to the moment where the act is actually going to walk on stage?

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As they build up, that happens along the way.

- Then, when the actual act comes on stage how do they come on stage?
- How do they feed off the energy they've created and begin the actual show?
- What's the first moment of beginning?
- How do they break down the natural audience inhibition to create some kind of audience interaction so that the audience is part of the show rather than being apart from the show and watching it?

These are all the performance characteristics that really design an amazing show or a really poor one if you get them wrong.

- **Have I missed anything or is that a good summary for where we are so far?**

Don: I think you've done a very good job there. I like what I'm hearing.

Igor: Thank you very much.

Don: You're hired.

Igor: I learned from the best.

Don: Another thing I do at the shows too is I have a tri-fold brochure that I put on everybody's seat so that everybody that comes into the show also has an informational brochure about myself so they can sit there as they're waiting for the show and read it.

It's kind of a what is hypnosis, who is Spencer, where does he come from, and all these questions and answers that are going through people's minds. I'm reading their minds and these are things that people will ask themselves so it's all answered. At the same time I don't have to waste my time.

It's another way also to just promote yourself and your show and things that are going on after the show.

Igor: It's another example of an accentuating idea of the pre-talk, with that little informational leaflet, and again just creating that general build up and so on.

If you don't mind, this is something that is first on my mind when I first started coming across stage hypnosis and trying to figure out the ins and outs of it, and I'm sure it'll be on a lot of other peoples' minds too; spending some time trouble shooting some of the things that might go wrong in these early stages.

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For example, are there any tricks that you have - let's take the classic hand clasp suggestibility test that you can do with an entire audience, I know it's a favorite one of yours as well.

- **Are there any things you like to do to make sure it's a little bit more effective?**

I've seen some hand clasp versions which are to be honest with you - it was almost embarrassing to watch the whole routine being run, but then again I've seen some that are ingenious and it's like - how did he do that? How did he get so many people to respond so powerfully?

There clearly are differences in presentation that can make a big difference, right?

Don: There's always a risk of failure in that. One of the things I like to do as I go out there and talk to the people is when I first go out on stage I'll say listen I need a volunteer, I need someone to come up here for just a moment.

The first person that jumps up there to volunteer - listen, it's called the somnambulist. When I call someone to come up and be a volunteer on stage for a moment it's usually a female and she'll come up there on stage. Then I'll say okay everybody in the audience; I want you to watch this person here do everything they do. I take the onus off of me, you're not doing what I say but you're watching this person and doing what they do.

I'll tell the girl put your hands above your head, interlock your fingers, squeeze your hands together, close your eyes, and imagine your hands are locked and glued, they will not come apart no matter how hard you try, they lock tighter and tighter.

I'm watching the audience and saying doing what she does. They'll do the same thing, they're squeezing their hands together, they're watching her and as I say try to pull your hands apart and they're stuck, she can't pull them apart, and that transfers over to the audience.

They're watching her saying oh, my gosh she can't get her hands apart, so they're doing the same thing as they're watching her. Their conscious mind is being suspended, we're going into their unconscious mind which is the yes mind that does whatever it's told and they begin to develop a spontaneous trance at that time.

Igor: Let me just pause you there because I think you just came up with a very ingenious principle and I'd like to point it out to people.

A lot of people listening to this might think wow, this is such a big risk because what if the girl that comes on stage, what if her hands come apart and then I've failed because I've failed publicly and everyone would do what she does, and it's all failed with them as well and I have no volunteers?

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Actually, the bigger risk is actually the reverse; you create a very interesting scenario number one. You've asked for a volunteer– and as you say I like your phrase what did you call it– the call of a somnambulist or something.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: It sounds like one of these Native American - the call of the wild it's calling you.

Don: It is. That's what the hypnosis is like it's like a moth drawn to a flame. Whenever you do a show it's like these people who sleep walk and talk in their sleep, those types of individuals, it's like something in their mind just clicks.

This key turns and something in their mind says I must go to the show. It's like zombies. The stage hypnosis show is actually very easy to do when you understand the nature of the mind and what impels people to come to your show to begin with.

There's a bigger risk in not doing that. I've never had a problem with that, but you have to approach it with great confidence. If you lack confidence on any level of yourself you risk failure. I've seen it happen.

You have to have a tremendous level of confidence in what you're doing. You have to look at the person and you have to tell them your hands are stuck together, they will not come apart. In your tonality and in your confidence and the way you approach it you will get the results you want. It takes great confidence.

Igor: Just to emphasize something you're saying I've actually seen you do this which is great. People will often give up just at the point of success where it's looking a little bit dodgy.

I've actually seen you work with some people for example with a rigid arm, like a stiff arm type thing or iron bar arm or whatever it is, who the first time you do it their arm gets stiff for a while and then it starts bending again. Then you'll just insist and say okay, the arm is straight, you'll straighten the arm again and say stiff and rigid, more then that and just when you're sure it can't bend anymore, try and bend it, and if it starts bending a little bit again you'll do it again.

Literally, I've seen you do this with one guy who was a little bit of a weak responder three, four, five, or six times in a row. On the sixth time it's almost like you could see him surrender to the whole experience and say you know what I'm just going to go with this.

His arm became totally rigid, from that point the whole thing just changed, and we could feel something clicking and shifting. Part of that confidence is the willingness to really go for it and not take no for an answer as far as the hypnotic phenomena is concerned.

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Don: In the aspect in which you're referring to you have to realize too that people sometimes need to be trained. I don't mean to sound like we're a bunch of animals but in a way we are.

Some people are very compliant - I don't even like to use that word, I like to use words like they're more highly responsive - other people just need a little more encouragement.

I can encourage them by going it over and over again. You're exactly right; I will encourage a person to make sure that arm is stiff and rigid as a steel bar, it will not bend, and if they bend then no, listen very carefully - your arm is stiff and rigid. Listen very carefully to what I have to say, make that arm stiff and rigid. Your arm will not bend.

Oftentimes, it comes back for people to their language patterns. There again you're using the law of reverse action where you respond to the strongest part of a suggestion or an idea if the alternative is weaker.

When you say your arm is stiff and rigid, try to bend your arm it will not bend no matter how hard you try to bend it, it locks tighter and tighter. By saying it locks tighter and tighter at the end of it, it negates bend your arm. That's the last suggestion the mind hears.

Igor: You created a mental picture which is very vivid. Lock your arm. It's also a possible double suggestion there.

Are you saying that their arm is now stiff and rigid, or are you saying for them to lock their arm, which can be understood differently?

It can create this sort of blend of consciousness where the conscious mind is confused on whether or not they should be locking it on purpose or whether they should just allow it to happen and in that moment of confusion of course, the magic can start taking place.

Don: Exactly, because when the mind is confused it's looking for meaning, so whatever meaning you put in there, the mind will say okay. It doesn't matter what it is, the mind just says okay, because it's searching for meaning.

Igor: The scenario you've created by inviting a volunteer that you are pretty much guaranteed is going to be a good subject to come on stage in the first place and inviting everyone to look. It looks like a great risk as far as the audience is concerned, like you're really confident because you'll take any old person that volunteers, but really they don't realize the dynamic is that you'll be getting a very good volunteer that way.

The person that comes on stage, they're going to have massive amounts of social pressure to succeed with the hand clasp as well. They suddenly have 100, 200, 500 maybe 1,000 eyes on them and they don't want to fail in front of

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the hypnotist, they don't want to make the hypnotist look bad and ruin the show, so they're going to sit there and pray please let this work.

It's true, right.

Don: Maybe, not always, but I think more than that they don't want to fail.

Igor: If they fail in front of everyone it's their failure and that's a lot of social compliance going on here that they don't want to look like a fool in front for the whole audience.

If they succeed there is already an implication going on that the whole audience will be impressed and clap. If they fail, what the hell is the audience supposed to do? Do they sit there and clap at their failure? Do they get sent off the stage slinking their head in shame?

That's a thought that's going to be somewhere in the back of their mind which is a great motivator for the unconscious mind to say you know what conscious mind? Let me help you out here and we'll make this work. It's actually a nice little extra bit of like racing fuel, to make the suggestions more powerful just by using the context very wisely.

The other thing of course is you have the idea that people are like little dynamos, they pick up on each other's states and experiences, so as soon as you have one person exhibiting deep trance phenomenon, everyone else around them gets infected by the whole attitude and so it starts spreading as a positive vibe through the audience and your show takes off with a flying start.

Don: Exactly. You set the stage when you have one person who does it, and then everybody else just falls in line.

Igor: So far we've gotten to the point where we're literally into the first minute or two of the "show". You come on stage and you've either, asked straight away for a volunteer or you tell everyone hands above your head, interlock fingers, clasp and so on and so forth.

Let's assume you've done a successful initial suggestion test, let's use the hand clasp. Of course, you're going to invite the people that succeeded, everyone who's hands are locked right now, you may want to come up and join me on stage, I'll release you, and you'll be up here with me for the show.

➤ **What do you do if no one comes?**

a. How do you handle that?

Don: What do I do if no one comes on stage?

Igor: Yes. I'm sure it's happened to you once or twice in the past, and there's ways you get around it, right.

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Don: I just say thank you all for coming tonight, I've already been paid, and have a good night. I'm going to go drink.

You can do that, but you know I did have a night like that once. I was doing a show I believe it was for a high school reunion. I got hired to do this high school reunion, it was a 20-30 year reunion and it's been a while back.

I got there and they paid me a lot of money of course to come do the show. I got there and got up there on stage and talked to them for a minute and invited volunteers up there and no one wanted to come up to get hypnotized.

I sat there for a second and thought okay; there are two thoughts in my mind.

- Number one; this isn't good.
- Number two, how do I turn this around?

That for me is a juicy challenge because I really love the challenge of okay, so how do I turn this around? It stretches me as a human being because they've hired me to do something I've got to make it work no matter what.

I simply talked to the audience for a few moments. I say listen, I've already been paid and if you don't mind I'm going to go ahead and talk to you a little bit about hypnosis. I got their agreement and talk to them a little bit about hypnosis.

Then I talk to them about inhibitions and what happens to people as we get older, how we begin to have fears about what we've done in our lives, how we're going to look in front of other people, how we repress our instinctual based nature of having fun and become stooge as we get older.

I talked to them for awhile and as I created that rapport I could see this calm coming over the audience. I said now let's have some fun, who would like to volunteer? I actually got a stage full of people, moved on, and had a good show.

Igor: This is an important principle you bring out here, because as far as everyone is concerned you're just being a good guy and giving them a little bit of a talk about the power of the mind which is kind of what you're an expert in anyway.

Actually what you were doing is you were using all kinds of tricks and principles of covert hypnosis in order to break down their inhibitions. You talk about inhibitions in order to create this calmness in the audience.

You're giving examples of the benefits they'll be receiving and you're constantly checking the audience to feel where the vibe is at until you find it clicking, and you don't ask for volunteers until you find a shift in that vibe developing.

Don: Exactly right. It's like at this point I'm doing a seminar and doing basically a mini hypnotherapy session on people and they don't even know what's hit them.

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Igor: This goes right back to what we talked about in the interview which is to be a consummate performer, a great stage hypnotist, it doesn't require you to just pick up a book and do a couple of things, you can of course learn by trial and error that way too I guess but really you want to be a good hypnotist first and foremost.

You need to understand the mind, you need to understand the idea of therapy, and you need to understand these other techniques that aren't necessarily officially part of the stage show but happen in the background.

In this case it's the idea of covert hypnosis, covert therapy on the audience and the therapy you're doing on them is basically on shyness or embarrassment. If you're doing that and treating the audience as one person that's come in with shyness issues and you're doing the same kind of cover techniques, then you're away.

It just eases enough for something to begin and the trickle effect turns into a landslide and before you know it you'll have a fun show and everyone will be really grateful for having had the experience.

Let's take it to the next step.

We've got a good idea of what we can do if no one comes on stage, it's just being smart as conversational hypnotists and applying our skills under the guise of a simple lecture to basically hypnotize the audience onto stage and volunteering, which I think is a very good thing to do in a stage show anyone, it's all about hypnosis, right?

➤ What if the other thing happens?

- a. What if the wrong kinds of people come on stage?
- b. What are typically the wrong kinds of people that could come on stage?
- c. How do you spot them, and how do you solve that?
- d. How do you make sure the people on stage are the people you want on stage?

Don: I think about the only time you get the wrong kind of people on stage is if you're working in a nightclub and you get some drunks up there.

If you get somebody up there who is obviously inebriated, you simply go over to them or have your assistant go over to them and you just very gently take them by the hand and guide them off the stage and say thank you, but I think you're going to have a better time out in the audience.

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Probably the worst case scenario is that individual. You'll get an occasional person who comes up there, they have no intent on being hypnotized, they just want to come up there and see if you can make them do something.

They'll sit there, they'll go through all the motions and they'll try to fake being hypnotized, but you the very clever, the very sharp, the professional stage hypnotist know that person is not hypnotized because you're watching everybody and you know all about hypnosis and so you just simply go over there, dismiss that individual also.

You're going to get an individual if you're doing an induction or are going about your show and they don't seem to be responding very well, they're just sitting there looking at you, it's very obvious to you that they're not hypnotized and it's obvious to the audience and there again, it's just a matter of fact - I reach over there and grab them by their arm and dismiss them off to the side of the stage and continue with my show and make it part of the show.

Normally, when I dismiss somebody that did not seem to be responding appropriately to make the show the way that I want to, is I'll do it during a routine.

For example, if I'm doing a routine and I have my group up there doing the same thing, as they're acting out and as the audience is up there watching their friends and family and people doing crazy things, then I'll just walk up to a person who is not responding and dismiss them.

It's misdirection. By misdirection they're watching somebody while I do something else and dismiss somebody and nobody thinks twice about it actually.

Igor: So it does two things.

- One the one side it's a very smooth and elegant way to get people off stage without needlessly causing them any type of embarrassment or anything like that.
- Two, it takes any energy away from someone who might be up there for example if there is the odd person who wants to ruin the show, they require attention.

If all the attention is somewhere else they might spend 10 seconds trying to act out and say I was fooled. Then you can smile and say well done now you can rejoin your friends in the audience.

No one can hear them, no one can see them because their attention is somewhere else, and it steals their thunder. They kind of give up and say oh, it wasn't as much fun as I thought it would be, I may as well just slink off and let the show continue.

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Don: Right. There's also another danger there too. If you don't do that you have a person up there who wants to be disruptive and the person sitting on either side of them or someone sitting a few chairs down, they're not zombies they hear what's going on in a different level and that may snap them out of trance.

You may have an entire stage where you had good subjects but because you had one person up there being disruptive it may ruin the entire show. You want to get them off the stage as soon as possible.

Igor: Just to emphasize it again though, having "bad" subjects, people who want to ruin the show or cause problems and so on - that's actually a relatively rare phenomenon unless you're working nightclubs regularly where the main thing you have to contend with are drunks who are either, belligerent and it's going to be pretty obvious to spot.

This other type of person will be pretty much rare, and by the time you run across them you should have enough experience to be able to handle it in stride, especially now that they've heard you give your advice on how to handle that sort of situation.

Don: I'll also set it up too at the beginning of the show. There are three types of people who cannot be hypnotized.

1. Children can't be,
2. Somebody who is drunk or stoned because they already think they're hypnotized, and
3. Idiots

I set it up that way so that people if they're not hypnotized, I'm putting this intentional but fun guilt trip on them. If they have any reservations to begin with maybe they shouldn't be on stage.

Igor: If someone really wants to ruin the show and jump up and say ha-ha I'm not hypnotized you failed, then you say great I failed and you're an idiot, you can leave the stage, and you go on with the show.

Don: I say ladies and gentlemen, here's an example of an idiot. He's not drunk or stoned, but he is an idiot, give him a round of applause.

Igor: Just to emphasize, this would be a last ditch defense if someone is really messing with the show. You wouldn't necessarily do this if some poor little old lady comes up and says I'm sorry dear it didn't quite work out.

You're not going to sit there and rant at her and say you're an idiot, get off my stage you idiot, because that's not really appropriate either.

Don: I wouldn't do that to grandma, no. If it was a little old lady I'd just say you're awful sweet for coming up here, I think you're going to have a lot more fun out

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in the audience. Folks give her a round of applause for coming up and giving it her best shot tonight.

Igor: That's a very polite and very pleasant way of letting people back into the audience.

Don: Yes.

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Seminar 1 – Part 2

Igor: Let's move on to another thing which is something we've touched on both in the interview and a few times today as well, which is the idea of different groups and you need to be able to deal with different groups in different ways.

- Could you run us through maybe the top five groups that a stage hypnotist is likely to come across?
 - And, tell us a little bit about each one's mindset, the kinds of things we should look out for, expect and the kind of special treatment they might need?

Don: You're going to run into different types of groups out there. Probably the main group you're going to run into as a stage hypnotist would be the high school/college type crowd - those people don't really care about what you do, they're just there to have fun. You don't even have to educate them, they just want to party.

They're still in that party mood so let's have fun. I don't want to hear anything else, let's just get to it and have a good time.

You approach them as matter of fact, you have fun, you have a great time and it's the easiest audience you're ever going to work with.

You have for example corporate. Corporate is a different ball of wax. These individuals are usually a bit more reserved, especially in front of their employees or bosses because they're dealing with their image control, they have to work with them, they have to go back to work with them, and they have to keep a certain composure.

A corporate audience, you may approach them much differently, be a little gentler with them, set them at ease and let them know that they won't do anything out of the ordinary that would be held against them, it would be your fault because you are the hypnotist. You approach them differently.

If you're at a county fair theater type of venue, it's different because you have a much larger audience you probably will have anywhere between 1,000 to 5,000-10,000 people out there.

That one you're going to approach differently because the county fair type scenarios, they normally give you 60 minutes, you're on and off stage in 60 minutes because they want to move on to the next act.

You approach that one a little bit differently, you're generally going to get up on stage - there again college, high school type individuals. You'll get a few older individuals, not to worry because the few older people that come up there are usually floppers.

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I approach that oftentimes the same way as I do the college and high school market. Let's just have a lot of fun because face it, you go to a county fair and you're there to have fun, it's a festive atmosphere. It's a generally easy audience to work with.

The toughest audience for people would be working with the military if you can work with the military at all, because they have rules to keep people like me off the bases because we're hypnotists and they have this fear that we're going to get state secrets out of them.

When you're dealing with military you have to deal with the military mindset because first of all I'll use a word, the term brainwashed, because they are. When you go into the military you lose your identity, you're no longer Joe Blow but you're number 00591 Private Egnog or whoever you are.

You are taught compliance and so you have to approach military in that way. If you are working with military you need to put them at ease that no state secrets are going to be revealed and you have to break through a deeper trance that they're in.

They're already in trance so you have to hypnotize them into a deeper trance and while in that deeper trance you have to convince their unconscious mind that they're going to have fun and that this is part of the show you're going to be doing with them, it's completely non-military.

I just simply take one of the individuals who is a good subject and I turn them into the base commander and let them help me be part of the show by giving the orders to the people up on stage and it works just fine.

Igor: I kind of like that because you're not using a pattern that's already ingrained in them, but you're also creating this pseudo reality where everyone knows he's not really the base commander. It's also one of their own who knows the rules and knows how to give the right orders.

Now you'll have your co-hypnotist giving instructions and people in the audience will love it because it's funny that private so and so is now telling a two star general how to behave and at the same time the people up on stage will have this dynamic where they already understand the order compliance dynamic, which you're just feeding into.

Don: If you can get a two star general up on stage, I don't think so.

Igor: I was just using it as a dramatic example. Please don't kill me over this one.

Don: I understand. When you work on the military base chances are you're going to get...

Igor: You're going to get the cook. Look at me I'm the cook and I can do more than cook.

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Don: You get a lot of privates and first officers and things like that, yes. You know, the military bases I've worked on, I tell you I've had a blast. I really enjoy working with the military and I've always had a great time with the men and women in uniform, they're a fun group.

They've got a tough job and it's fun to work with them.

Igor: The last group I'd appreciate your insight on is nightclubs. We've talked about nightclubs before about being a certain kind of venue...

- **Can you just give us a quick thumbnail sketch of what kinds of things to think about when you're thinking about doing a show in a nightclub as opposed to say a theater or county fair, just so we have a nice rounded picture of the venues?**

Don: First of all, I'll say this, the shows that I do, most of my routines I can do the same routine for every kind of venue, it's just that the approach is different.

In a nightclub I approach it as a party. When I go into a nightclub and do a show, the people there - people go there to party, they go there to drink and have a good time. Of course they have interactions with other people and so I simply approach it that way.

When I do the nightclubs it's a party. I'm very festive and nine times out of 10 I'll have a drink in my hand because I want to be one of them and let them know that I'm one of them. Whether it's a real drink or a fake drink is not the point, it's how they perceive me to be to them.

I go in there to be one of them. I'll go up there and in my pre-talk if I do a pre-talk I'll talk to them a little bit and shoot the bull and do some interactions with the audience. I'll say some jokes, pick on a few people in the audience, and let it fly from there.

It's a festive atmosphere it's a party.

Igor: Great. I really appreciate you taking the time to actually work through these different scenarios because all too often people think.

- **What is a stage show?**

They never think about where is a stage show going to be held and realizing that they tweak - they can have the same routines, but they still tweak the presentation style to fit the audience and the venue.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: Now, I think we've got a pretty good handle on what we're dealing with here. We've got the setup, we've got the pre-show buildup, we've got the first couple of minutes on stage, start taking control of the audience, getting some compliance, getting some suggestibility tests, getting your volunteers on stage -

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we know how to get volunteers on stage if for whatever reason it's a lackluster audience.

We also know how to deal with different types of audiences so we can anticipate certain things happening.

For example, if I go into a military base to do a show I'm not going to go straight into doing my routines with them because I know I've got extra work, a little more conversational hypnosis stuff to do ahead of time to make sure that I can get them to the point where they're willing to do a show with me.

➤ **Now, you have them on stage, you've picked the right kind of audience, you've picked the right kind of show for the right kind of audience what do you do with them?**

a. Now that you've got everyone on stage, what happens next?

Don: That's really simple. Once I have everybody on stage then I take control of the stage. People will come up there - let's say I have 15 chairs up on the stage for example, and people will have a tendency if they have friends they'll want to sit down next to their friends or their spouses or whatever, and I begin separating everybody.

I don't want the person sitting next to another person who knows them so I go in there and I pick people up, I'll sit them man woman, man woman, and make sure they don't know each other. I might even move them around two or three times.

One of the reasons I do that, besides I don't want them to know somebody because they'll be too chatty, is because I want to show them that I'm in control of the stage. They're going to sit where I tell them. They're going to do what I tell them to do. It's all about controlling the stage.

At that point when I get people where I want them I'll have them sit back in their chairs and I'll do a couple more suggestibility tests with them because I want to make sure that they're the people that I want.

Even though they come up there it doesn't mean they're going to be a good subject, but I'll go through a couple more suggestibility tests and if they pass the test, they stay. If they don't pass the test I just dump them off the stage and move on.

Igor: Excellent. Let's say they come up, you do a couple of suggestibility tests and you've maybe gotten rid of one or two extra people, so you've gone from say 20 people on the stage down to 15, the chairs are filled, and you're ready to proceed.

➤ **What happens now?**

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Don: I go straight into the show. I'll either do one of two things, and there again it's judging the audience. I may do an induction, some kind of progressive relaxation which I invite the entire audience to do, this simply helps me to deepen the trance.

Once they're up there and they've passed the suggestibility test, as far as I'm concerned these guys are already hypnotized, I can control it however I want to.

There is a danger in that however for a newbie who does not have that kind of experience because they may not have the confidence to know how to proceed to control that.

In that case you may want to go on and do a progressive relaxation which simply deepens the hypnotic state. I'll invite the audience to do that at the same time.

The reason I invite the audience is because there may be one or two people out there who were thinking about coming up, didn't do it, but once I do the relaxation that way they may go into trance and they may be a very good subject, and I'll go out into the audience and bring them up on stage.

Also by doing a relaxation technique like that it's a whole different level of composure and ambience in the room. I'm now telling everyone in the audience sit back in your chairs, put your feet flat on the floor, close your eyes all the way and take a deep breath in. Breathe in and breathe out, listen very carefully to what I have to say and I'm talking to the subjects at the same time.

Now I'm doing mass hypnosis not just with the subjects but also with everybody in the audience. It helps to move them into having more fun with the show and into following along and doing exactly what I say at the same time. Does that make sense?

Igor: Absolutely, and it's kind of part of what people expect. They come to see a hypnotist you've got to give them the swinging watch. They've got to see someone being hypnotized.

You and I both know that by the time they're up there and they've passed a couple of suggestibility tests they're pretty much gone but the audience doesn't necessarily know that, they just think some weird power has happened and they're still waiting to see the "hypnosis".

Now, you do just a two or three minute quick induction and they'll say wow, look; how does he do that? I mean I hear the words but I didn't expect all these different things to happen as a result.

Don: They're watching their friends getting hypnotized. They're saying look at them they're falling over, they're laughing and they're having a great time with it.

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The induction part is not necessary but people like to see it, so that's just part of you as a performer, and it's how you make that work, how you approach the induction.

When I do an induction like that I have a certain ambience that I create to make it more - not fun, but it's like mysterious and dramatic. I create this whole new scene like breathe in and breathe out. In just a moment I will begin to relax you step by step.

I change my tonality, my talk slows down, and as I'm going through this the people on stage their eyes are closed and the people in the audience, they're looking at me and I'm looking at them and I'm saying relax this part of your body.

I might say your stomach muscles relax and I'll take and spread my hands over my stomach, maybe look at one or two of the gals out there and they're going oh, yes.

You can feed off the energy of the audience and play with them. Relax your face and your arms - you'll see guys and gals out there wriggling their hands, they're just shaking everything down.

You're reading your audience and you're playing with them at the same time, you're giving them something also.

Igor: Right. It also puts them in a more receptive state so the audience is more engaged in the show so they're going to have more fun because they're more a part of the show rather than like we said before, being apart from it.

Don: It is an audience participation show.

Igor: Sure it is. We're now through the induction sequence, I'm guessing we're into minute five or ten, something like that, depending on how much you do up front.

➤ What happens next?

You've had your mysterious music, you've done a two or three minute relaxation induction, everyone is just flopping or drooling on a chair and you've had a couple of people melt into puddles in the audience as well.

➤ **Do you leave them there or do you bring them back out of trance, what do you do?**

- a. Do you switch the tempo of the music?
- b. How do you handle it once they're down there?
- c. What do you do?
- d. What do you say?

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Don: Once I get people where I want them I'm ready to rock and roll. I go right into my first routine. I'll say I'm going to count to three and at three sit up in your chairs and I go into my first routine. I just watch how people respond up on stage.

That's how I do it. I just transition right into my first routine. I do two or three routines and I do them really fast, I do them really furious, I do it with everybody because I want to see who is the very best subject that I'm going to keep because I may weed some people out.

If I don't have to weed anybody out that's just a bonus for me. I do the first few routines very fast, everybody is involved, and then when I'm done with that I might move into doing some individual routines with people.

The show begins at that point with me.

Igor: If I understand you correctly you want to deepen trance and now you're basically saying to the audience, okay, you can make some noise again if you want. I've seen a couple of charming things where hypnotists once the people on stage are deep in trance, they'll turn to the audience and say okay, now I'd like to give them a massive round of applause, so they can anticipate the kind of reaction they'll be getting from you throughout the rest of the show.

That's kind of a nice little touch because it basically says to the guys on stage the more you act out today, the more love you'll be getting from the audience, and here's a taste of what it's like. I think that's a nice little thing going there as well.

Don: That's what I do.

Igor: I've seen you do it and it's a nice little touch. When you come onto the important element, which is the warm-up routines, the two or three as you said group routines, the keys are they're group routines and if I understand you correctly they're simple routines.

Some simple activity they can engage in that involves everyone so you have an opportunity to watch them and figure out who is the most engaged, who is the most animated, who is going to be the star of the show and who do I need to put in the sidelines so it doesn't really disturb anyone else.

Don: That's exactly why I do those first routines, so I can determine who I'm going to use to be the star of the show.

Igor: Let me ask you this...

➤ **How do you choose a warm up routine?**

a. How do you know what makes for a good warm up routine?

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- b. Can you give me an example of the things you might do or that you've seen other people do?

Don: Listen, here's what I tell people. A good warm up routine, whether it's a warm up routine or whether it's any routine that you do, number one it's got to make sense to you.

As a performer, don't pick something just because you've seen somebody else do it. Maybe you see somebody riding in cars or riding some horses or whatever they do as a group together, maybe they're going on a journey to the beach or flying in an airplane together, but do something that makes sense to you.

You've got to feel it inside of yourself. If you can feel it inside of yourself, the routine that you're doing, then you can convey that to the subjects. If you're just doing lip service chances are they're not going to get it. They may get it, but your odds are going to be increased significantly if you approach your show from a sense of - the show has got to be your soul, you've got to feel it.

If I'm for example doing a routine where everyone is sitting in a car, it's only because I get it. I put myself in the car; I'm in the car with these people. The music comes from a part of my life that makes a lot of sense that I can relate to.

If I can relate to it and really get into it, I can convey this and it's going to be a much better presentation for my subjects and for the audience as well.

Igor: This goes back to the fundamental principle for us as hypnotists, which is going first. You've got to be able to go first. You've got to be able to appreciate whatever scenario or scene you're creating for your volunteers so you can bring it to life properly for them and for the audience because that's part of the show.

Although the audience doesn't realize it, they've got to be able to feel the same thing. Whether they're driving a car or whether they're riding a bike or something like that, they've got to be able to feel it and you're the one that's going to create that experience for them, right?

Don: Exactly. You are the director, the conductor of the entire performance.

Igor: Let's assume you've got this. You've got this idea of a filter for you to test things against. These are a dozen different ideas I have for a warm up, which one do I really get? I really get these three or four.

- **What other qualities are you looking for in a warm up routine besides the going first element that will make for ideal warm up routines, so you can really get the job done that you need to do?**

Don: With whatever elements I have I want to engage all the senses. I want people to hear it, to see it, to feel it, to taste it, to touch it as much as I can so I want to

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produce a hallucination through all this sensory apparatus that an individual has.

If I say you're in a car I want them to put on some seat belts, I want them to put their foot on the gas pedal, and I want to see them strapping on that seat belt, I want to see that foot moving, I want to see their hand up on the steering wheel, I want to see their hand on the shifter.

I want to make sure that these guys are extremely engaged in what I'm doing. If I'm saying it's hot I want to see sweat beads on their head or at least see them fan themselves off.

If I say you're getting cold I want to see these people shivering. I want them fully engaged. When they're in that state you're going to have a dynamic show, you've got great subjects.

Igor: Just to point out again something you did there, especially with the car routine; there's a big difference in you're in a car, drive your car, okay the car is driving, it's great and you're having a great time, which is really a bland way of creating it.

You've actually created a lot of experiential reference points for them. For example it's a beautiful summer's day, you're sitting in your car - strap your seatbelt on. That's already a little bit of compliance but it also makes it more real because that's what real people do in real cars.

Put the music on, turn it up loud - and you might even have your DJ turn the music up louder while you're doing it. Put your hands on the steering wheel - you're actually telling them a lot of the behaviors to engage in initially so that by the time you release their imagination they can actually run with more creative behaviors and they've got more of a sense of what you expect from them.

Are there any other things? We've got the idea that you need all the senses engaged; you've got the idea of going first which is very important. You also mentioned something in the beginning about you wanting the whole group to be involved.

➤ **Can you tell me a little more about why that is or how you might use that group dynamic to assist the launch into the actual show?**

Don: The reason I use a group dynamic is because there again it goes back to the mass hypnosis thing. When one person does it then everybody follows along and nobody wants to be left sitting there by themselves not following along.

What happens is let's say you have 15 people up on stage, 10 people are really good subjects and five are kind of not as good as they could be. Once they watch other people doing this - and they're lightly hypnotized - as they begin to get into it, it just deepens the trance.

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That's the whole purpose is that whenever you give a person a suggestion and they participate in it, it deepens the hypnotic state, that's the bottom line.

Igor: It just reminds me of something else that some other hypnotists do which is a lovely little touch. You'll get somebody to do something.

For example, everybody is playing in an orchestra, drums or something like that so the whole group is doing this and from time to time he'll get someone, especially if he's sitting next to a really strong responder, he'll tap them on the shoulder and wake them up.

Everyone else is still carrying on of course - and he'll put to the person on his left and say look at this guy, look what he's doing, isn't that crazy? What do you think of that?

You can really see this guy, sitting in the middle of all these lunatics banging drums that aren't there, looking at them like they're crazy, and then he says sleep and he goes back into the drumming thing.

Now every single time he does that the person who just opened their eyes and looked at the rest of the group and all their crazy antics, his antics double or triple in magnitude because he's now seen everyone else and says wow, these guys are really going for it, I need to step up the pace a little bit here.

Don: Exactly, yes. There again those individuals are very good subjects and you can take a good subject at any routine and you can break them from that routine and talk to them about what's going on and they'll just jump right back into it at a faster and more furious pace.

Igor: That's part of the stage craft, which I think we'll come onto in a second now. I think we've got a good handle now on how to do the whole initial setup.

We've gone through the show build up, we've done the introduction to yourself, we've done the getting people involved, getting volunteers, hypnotizing them, and even the warm up routines.

You're running right in the middle of the show now, you're doing the stuff people think they've come here for, which is all the little skits and so on, and you're doing this as a group right now.

➤ **What kinds of things do you have in your mind when you want to transition from the warm up section to your main routine, the sort of meat and potatoes of your show?**

Don: What goes through my mind? I don't know that anything really goes through my mind its all part of the show. I don't know if I can really differentiate between that because to me it's all part of the show.

I just go from one routine to another routine to the next routine. After I do my first few routines then I stop the show for a second and I have music playing in

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the background and I go up and meet each individual and ask them what their name is and I'll usually shake their hand and do a quick rapid induction with them and throw them over the person next to them because the audience likes to see that, it's a lot of fun.

After I do that I'll turn to the audience and say listen; these are the people I'm going to work with, do me a favor and give them a tremendous amount of applause because from this point forward the more applause you give them the more they're going to give to you, the more they act out, the more applause you need to make.

I'll interact that way and the people on stage are listening to this and they know that from now on man, the show is all about them, and they've really got to give it 110% because the more they give out the more the audience is going to feed on them.

Igor: That's a very nice feedback loop you create there, which is the more wild the audience gets with their approval the more wild the people volunteering do crazy stunts, the more the people in the audience will love it and the energy feeds on itself.

The people on the stage feed off the vibe that the audience gives them, the audience, of course, feeds off the crazy antics and the vibe of the people on stage and it's a nice self reinforcing circle.

Don: It's a reinforcing circle, it's a direct suggestion, everybody follows through and from that point the show just gets crazy. Whatever routines I choose at that point it just gets insane.

I'm no longer trying to figure out if I've got good subjects or bad ones, the people I have there now they're the ones I'm going to work with, we're going to have a good time, the show goes on for the next 30 minutes or however long I have left and it's just one fast paced routine after another until the finale.

Igor: Let me ask you this, it's something again that you mentioned and I want to spend a little more time on this if I may, which is you talk about once you go from the warm up which is a more general group activity, then the flow changes to meeting individuals and talking to them, getting a little about them, their names and so on, and you also mentioned in the middle of routines you like to break in and stop people and talk to them.

➤ **Can you tell me a little bit about what it is you're trying to achieve when you talk to them directly in comments out of trance, how that affects the show and how you handle that whole interplay?**

You're not just putting people into different situations is it? There's something else that happens as well.

Don: I'm sorry; when I ask them to do what?

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Igor: When for example you introduce yourself, you introduce each individual person volunteering, ask them their name and talk to them a little bit, but then during the main show as well they might be doing a skit, for example, maybe an alien is talking to a priest or I don't know what, you'll interrupt them and you'll suddenly ask them out of trance.

- a. What's going on here?
- b. What are you doing here?

You're basically interviewing the volunteers while they're still on stage so the audience can hear them. What's that interview about? That seems to be a really important performance element of a stage show.

Don: Part of it for me is when I ask them who they are and what they're about, it gives me a little information about them, because it might be something I can use on a specific routine that I can utilize that individual for which I think they're going to be really good in this routine.

It helps me to know who they are as an individual does that make sense?

Igor: Exactly. That's the initial introduction, then later on in the show, and I've seen a lot of hypnotists do this and you like to do this a lot as well, there's a lot of interaction with the subjects.

You don't just say okay here's the scene, you're such and such person and you're such and such person - go for it; you'll start the scene off but in the middle of the scene you'll interfere.

You'll either, pause proceeding and ask them; what are you guys doing? You'll go in and you'll keep people in character but you'll still ask them what's going on and have them explain some kind of conflict they're having - how do you handle those conversations?

It seems to me that a lot of the show's value comes from you becoming the audience's mouthpiece and interacting with the people on stage.

Don: The reason I do that is there again, it's just for show value. Let's say for example maybe I have two guys up there dancing together for example, depending on the venue - it doesn't matter but for most places its fun to watch two guys dance together.

They're up there dancing together, and I may stop and say hey - wide awake - what are you guys doing? What are you thinking? They'll look at each other and say oh my God, I can't believe I'm dancing with this guy I don't do this kind of stuff.

It gives me some fodder for throwing in - for interjecting what the audience might be thinking. I can use it for comedic value and so much of the show is improvisation.

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You as a performer, you never know what's going to happen so you've got to be quick on your toes, quick on your wit, and determine what you're going to say.

It's like; what are you guys doing? Would you do that normally? No. How about you? Of course I wouldn't. Listen you guys; it's really my fault, I'm the hypnotist, I hypnotized you guys, they look at me and they're like what a creep.

I know you guys would never really do this if you weren't hypnotized, right? They say yes, of course I would not. I say okay cool. I tell you what; we're just doing a show, we're having a good time, shake hands, make up and we'll go on.

They'll go shake hands and I'll just say something like don't you really want to dance again? They'll get in there and start dancing, hugging, and stuff, and it just adds to the comedic value of the show that shows you that my God, there's something going on with these guys.

I thought maybe they weren't hypnotized, but look at them this is crazy.

Igor: This is something important that you're bringing out here. You're creating frames. Go back to the idea of conversational hypnosis; you've created interesting frameworks that contrast.

On the one side they're giving a social statement saying I wouldn't dance with a guy, I don't know where that came from and it's not going to happen again. As soon as they made the social contract - it's not going to happen again - you turn around and make them do it again.

That creates that same dynamic of like wow; something really must be going on because people don't normally say I'm not going to do this anymore. Then literally, the second they've said that turn around and do exactly what they said they wouldn't do.

Don: That's right.

Igor: It seems to me you've talked about the idea of improvisation and this, I guess, is why you talk about going out there and studying other hypnotists. It's not just their routines that they have it's the labels, how they handle the routines that's the important thing, the little interjections, the little jokes and those setups.

You just gave a good example of a setup.

What are you guys doing?

Why are you doing this?

Would you normally do this? There are all these denials.

Would you do this again? No, and then, of course, they do it again.

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After all these classic denials they go off and do it anyway again. That's kind of a little bit of a handling, how to present the routine, and each hypnotist will have their own way of doing it.

The more you see people do this the more you'll get a flavor of how you'd like to do it as well, right?

Don: Exactly. That's what's so important about studying theater, studying other performers and really honing your style down to who you are as an individual.

Igor: Next question.

- **What's like the litmus test, the acid test, for whether this routine is good for you as a performer versus if some other hypnotist can pull it off well and it's interesting for that audience?**

Don: The litmus test for me is just; does it make me laugh? I like to laugh and have a good time. It's got to make perfect sense to me. All those elements are there for me.

The biggest element - can I feel it - do I just crack up at this? If I can't laugh at something I'm doing myself then I'll find something else I can do. It might be different for somebody else but for me does it make sense?

Igor: Right, so again it's the idea of can you get your own mind into it, can you go first with the routine itself. Does it entertain you? Then you can pull it off and understand it and your instinct will be more attuned to how to present that particular routine, right?

Don: I work on presenting scenarios and routines that people see in real life but maybe they just don't talk about it. If I can produce an effect on stage that people see in real life but they maybe don't talk about but they're kind of curious about it then it becomes a broad general interest type of routine that everyone can learn from so it becomes interesting in that respect also.

Igor: Right, so you take little slices of your normal life and suddenly you get inspiration everywhere. You could be standing in a supermarket queue, the person in front of you is a little smelly and you can start wondering hey, how could I use this in the show?

I'm sitting here and I'm feeling a little bit awkward, but you're trying not to show that the other person is a little but unhygienic, but in a stage show of course you can really bring the dilemma out.

This person really stinks but you can't show it, but they really stink. The less you try to show it the more powerful they stink. There's this inner battle that you can then very dramatically exploit and show to people and they'll recognize it because everyone has been through that situation.

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Whether it's in a supermarket queue or on a bus or if it's at a party or whatever it is, that's why it's more entertaining to them because it's sort of their life that's being presented as a caricature while at the same time demonstrating the power of hypnosis.

Don: Well put.

Igor: Let's move the pace a little bit if we may because we keep coming back to this idea of your character, your performance character, what's your performance going to be like and everyone should have their own performance character rather than mimicking other people and so on.

➤ **Could you spend a little time talking to us about what you mean by character?**

- a. Can you give us some examples of different characters?
- b. What is a "bad" or a "good" character?
- c. How do you tell the difference?

Don: I don't know that there's a good or a bad character, a character is something you utilize. You use your character. For example I had a person that he looked like a rat. His show wasn't very good so it didn't work because he looked like a rat.

We had to take those character flaws that this individual had and turn them around to make it positive. One of the things I noticed he would do in his show was he would want to shake hands with a lady and give them an orgasm.

It made the women uncomfortable, it made the men uncomfortable, and of course because he looked like a rat it made everybody uncomfortable. You have to turn these things around and maybe use a third party to do some of these things instead of you doing it yourself as a performer, so it becomes more palatable to the subjects and the audience, if that makes sense to you.

Igor: Sure. So, rather than him being a slimy person that's saying look at the creepy powers I have, it becomes more like hey, I'm going to turn this shy guy here in the corner into a stud and, of course, everyone starts rooting for the shy guy, so he gets people on his side rather than his original angle, which clashed with his character rather than accentuating it, right?

Don: Right. A routine like that all it does is make him look like an even worse person than he probably is. Maybe he is that way internally.

Igor: It's the perception of it, right. If you're going to be perceived as a slimy character, that would be a very interesting performance character, but then you've got to be able to play that role without abusing that role.

➤ **What do people want?**

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If there's a slimy character they want to be able to hate him, they want him to fail. You could be the slimy hypnotist for whom everything goes wrong. Of course, the audience will love you for allowing them to have their fantasy fulfilled of having a slimy hypnotist being punished by life, but then he still has all these strange powers, but they end up backfiring anyway.

Don: Oftentimes, I look at myself. If you look at Hollywood, in a Hollywood movie if you've ever done a Hollywood movie and I've had the opportunity to do movies in the past, before you do a movie you have to go in front of a casting director which casts you.

They look at you and they kind of get an eye for well, what kind of character can we put you in? They kind of get a feel for you and then you develop the character in their script around you and your personality.

It's the same thing when I'm working with individuals. I look at a person and I have to make a judgment like okay, so you look like a rat, how can we make this work for you in this role as a stage hypnotist?

I had another guy in Oregon, for example, very nice guy, very demure and his thing was he wanted to be a lot like this controlling demanding kind of hypnotist. But, you know what; he just didn't have that kind of personality. He didn't even look that way he looked kind of like a goofy guy.

I encouraged him to go for the goofy hypnotist approach which worked very well for him, where the other thing failed for him. There again we have to cast ourselves the way - we have to sometimes step aside from the way we want ourselves to be and look at ourselves for the way that we are.

Maybe we need to ask some people we know, people like friends or family. When you look at me, what do you think of? Be prepared for the answer.

Igor: So, an important principle in terms of developing your character appears to be - performance character shall we say - is to look at what is natural to you, your natural everyday character anyway, and you pick out like a caricature of that character and with that caricature you make more of it for the show, and it just becomes a more extreme version of it.

A shy guy might be an ultra shy hypnotist, which can have a great keynote comedic value. As a result they're basically, just accentuating something that's already there, emphasizing something that's already there, rather than trying to mimic something they don't have yet and as a result are incongruent in presenting.

Don: Exactly. Be congruent with who you are.

Igor: Is that the only way you can do this or is there something you can do - I mean, it strikes me that there might be a possibility to do the opposite also, which is to

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have something that is so contrasting with your character that itself can be dramatic if done the right way.

➤ Is that something you've done with people as well?

Don: Of course, you can definitely do that. You can completely contrast your character and it goes into you have to study you have to work at it. Being a contrarian can certainly work to your advantage.

I had a guy, he was up in Canada, he wanted the show to be funny - a really nice guy, but he was afraid to be funny because he was in his home town. He grew up and people looked at him in one way, like he was this tough guy.

He used to get in a lot of fights in his family, and he was just the town ruffian. In order to bypass that aspect we developed a friendly personality so we could reverse the context so he became the punching bag in the show instead of being a punching bag to the community.

He became an object of ridicule in a fun way that allowed him to be a performer and it came off very well for him.

Igor: Again, this is an important principle you bring out. We're going with a character that's already there. He is perceived as being a ruffian, a fighter, and this time rather than caricaturing and emphasizing that character, you're actually still honoring it and you're still using that as your lynchpin.

But, you're actually reversing it and saying hey how about instead of being the ruffian, the rest of the town becomes the ruffians and he gets to be the one that gets constantly at the effect of it.

Again, it still takes the same thing that's already there, the same dynamic that everyone knows and can instantly or intuitively recognize, and it plays off that although this time it's playing off it in a contrasted way rather than in an enhancing sort of way.

Don: Right, that's exactly what you can do. So much of it is just for me - I have the years of experience of working with myself and working with other people, and also part of my background is theater.

I've had the opportunity to work on developing different characters with myself, in my early days of studying drama and doing a few movies you'll never see on TV, my life took a change as I was going into that profession which is okay and I'm happy with what I've done, but I have that wonderful background in stage production and character development and reading scripts and drama, it's a lot of fun.

I encourage people, go to your local community college, take some classes in drama, and learn character development. It'll do nothing but enhance your life and your showmanship.

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Igor: That's actually an important thing because it goes right back to what we talked about in the interview which is that it is an art of showmanship. You go to Toastmaster to learn the basics of standing in front of crowds or you go to a drama workshop to understand the basics of character, theater, contrast and stuff like that.

The point is you're going out there and you're educating yourself in the different ways that you can influence an audience to have a good time, not just to have a good time but to have a good time that actually speaks to them rather than something they'll remember 50 years from now rather than something they'll forget within 50 minutes of leaving.

Don: It's the same way a person would come take one of your workshops in the near future because they will learn things from you specifically that they're not going to get in any other way because you're not only teaching them the principles of covert hypnosis, but you're doing it in a mentoring fashion that they're not going to be able to get just by reading a book.

They need that hands-on in order to be able to put that into their psyche.

Igor: I've got to tell you I agree. I view any seminar, any training in fact, I think schools should take a hint from a lot of the performance arts and say this is not just education this is edutainment.

You have to work with the whole personality, which means you've got to make it a delight for them as well as informing them so that the whole aspect of their personality can be part of it. That's an important thing as well.

Stage hypnosis can then end up having interesting after effects in the rest of your life. You become more charismatic in your day to day life just because you've had to learn to be that way on stage. It can't help but enhance the whole of your life, right?

Don: Exactly.

For example, I have a son in Montessori. In Montessori, their approach is working with the creativity of the individual as opposed to a public school where you're going and everybody is learning a group thing and it's very rigid.

The Montessori aspect, I see how my son is getting creative and they're working to bring out all these good points with him and to work with his character development in ways he can't get in public school.

It's the same way in the creative arts schools, junior high, high school or younger and you take these classes and whether you go to New York or L.A. and enroll in one of these schools that work with you on developing your music ability, your acting ability, your speaking ability; your entire character which is very positive.

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In the same way in mentoring, whether it's in my program or yours, we do the same thing with individuals. We work on highlighting these aspects of a person.

Igor: Absolutely. Beyond just highlighting an individual's character and using that as the pillar on which the whole show is built around, what kind of things should people pay attention to in order to let the show itself have a character, to build the drama or the flow or the humor of a show as it progresses from start to finish?

- **What kind of ideas and thoughts should people have to allow their show to really evolve naturally and be a powerful entertaining show?**

Don: Part of that is just music. Music sets the tone for everything that you do in your show. For example I always have music playing in the background to fill in the gaps.

There's nothing worse to me than going to a performance with a stage hypnotist and they do a routine and then all of the sudden it goes blank while he's scrambling to think of what to do next, or she, and there's kind of a dead silence in the background.

I like to have music in the background that creates this nice segue that will go from one routine to the next routine so there's always something flowing in the back of the mind.

It keeps the tempo, it keeps the audience engaged, it keeps the subjects engaged, and that helps to either build it up dramatically or humor, depending on which music you choose to use.

It's the same thing with your routines. If you have a certain music or tempo playing in between routines then on your next set you do you simply use a different musical score in the background to set the pace for the routine that you're doing.

You have to do that because that creates the mood.

Igor: Music is a very important part of the show, not just for the actual routines to pull people more into the routine, but also to fill the gaps in between and to set the scene for something to happen or that's going to happen in a moment's time, right?

Don: Exactly. Always be prepared. I may go into a venue with my show down, I'll have maybe 20-30 routines that I'll do, but I'm always ready to shift it if what I'm doing or the audience is different, I may have to switch my routines on a moment's notice.

Igor: Right. We'll be talking more in the next session when we talk about the background behind the scenes sort of stuff how you set things up with the DJ or

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whoever is running your sound, or if you run your own color how to do that so you can switch your music to follow the routine at a moment's notice and so on.

Coming back to the idea of the importance of music; are you suggesting then that as a rule people should have some kind of theme music that they play between most of the skits and then that theme music gives way to the next skit music and the skit actually unfolds around that.

Then, when the skit comes to the end again the theme music comes back as a general sit down and go into trance music.

That creates a sort of anchor as well for everyone, not just the people on the stage being told oh, here's my trance music again, best go back in trance - but the audience also recognizes oh, he's doing some weird magic juju stuff again.

They get to be experiencing a little bit of that as well. It wouldn't be unusual for an audience to develop increasing trancelike phenomenon as the show continues because they're being entranced just by watching people do this stuff.

Don: I do have the same thing that goes on between each routine.

Igor: Right, and at that point you just take a leaf out of a skit or short I saw on TV where the stage hypnotist puts the entire audience in trance, then sits down and reads a book for an hour, at the end of which he stands up and says you've all had a great time, it's the most amazing show you've ever seen, you'll tell all your friends how amazing it was and you'll be back next week for the next show.

Thank you very much and goodnight.

Don: You could do that too. You could put everybody in hypnosis, put some music on in the background, go into the green room, have a couple cocktails, have some shrimp and salad, come back, and say thank you.

Igor: Everyone has had a great time and you will remember this as the best show you've ever seen but next week when you come back again with all your friends you'll realize you'll have an even better time. Until next week - I'll see you then.

Don: I'm going to have to do that one night that sounds like fun.

Igor: That will be fun. We're coming to the end of this interview and there's no more appropriate way of ending this interview or this seminar portion than with the big question which is...

➤ **How do you end a show with a big bang rather than with a whimper?**

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Don: It's like when you start your show you want to start it with a big bang and when you're done you want to end it just as spectacularly. When I do my shows I like to do the human bridge. It's something I've done for 20 years or so.

There again you have to make it dramatic. You can't just say I'm going to stand on this person, watch this everybody this is going to be great. I make it very dramatic. I make it very intense. I put on music that's so loud that it just blows everybody's eardrums out. I turn down the lights.

I create an ambience and then when I'm done - I'll create these dramatic passes over a person and make it look like something mystical and magical and then I'll stand on the person and the lights come up and everybody claps and they're going oh my God, how did he do that, it looked so awesome.

At that point, I'll say a few words to the audience and end it on that note, on something that makes them say wow.

Igor: It sounds like you're taking the idea - the image that comes to my mind is watching a magician who is levitating a woman who makes big hoo-ha about putting her in some kind of a trance.

Then she lies on the table, he waves some more magic passes and she starts lifting a little bit - it's a real drama that's built up around it rather than just saying get on the table love, oh look she's up in the air, isn't that cool? Now get back down and we'll finish the show.

Don: It's all about showmanship. It's not what you do it's how you do it.

Igor: Another point we need to address, I know you like to do the bridge, but also the human bridge is a - shall we say - very risqué act to do purely because of the biomechanics involved.

➤ **Can you tell us a little bit about the safety elements?**

a. How do you make sure you take care of people?

And also, of course, emphasizing everyone who is listening to this, if you're starting a show, do not start with a human bridge.

You're going to need to go find someone who can do it well so you can put all the safety tips into the right place at the right time so you don't end up hurting people.

Much as you mentioned in the interview section there are people out there who see it, misunderstand it, do it wrong, and as a result can end up doing a lot of damage to people. This is a very dangerous thing to do unless you understand how to do it safely, right?

Don: Exactly. The way that I approach it of course is that during the course of the evening I'm watching each and every one of my subjects, determining who I am

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going to pick out for the finale, and I always go for the smallest female that I possibly can unless there's no females and then I'll use a guy.

I always try to pick the smallest female and as I get ready to move into the human bridge there again I'll turn out the lights and turn on some fog and turn the music up really loud and turn off my microphone and then I'll simply talk to somebody and I'll ask them first off if they've ever had a neck or back problem.

If the answer is yes, I will pass on them. If they say no and I say is it okay if I stand on you and they say yes, that's the person I'm going to work with. My microphone goes back on, I'll grab their hand, I'll bring them in front of the stage and then the drama begins.

That's how I create my safety for myself. There again, it's how I position them before I stand on them. I think I spoke earlier where I watched a person put their head and their feet on a chair and then of course they collapsed.

There's a proper way to do the human bridge and if you do it incorrectly you can hurt a person, so it's very important to know how to position a person exactly over two supports so that they don't have any injuries and so they don't collapse, and so you have a wonderful spectacular finale that everybody is just in awe of.

Igor: Just to emphasize the point here, if anyone is thinking of going out and doing something like this avoid the human bridge. There's a lot of other fun stuff.

There's a lot of scope in stage hypnosis that you can do and if you absolutely want to do something dramatic like something physical like the human bridge and then make sure you find someone like Don Spencer here who really knows how to do it.

Understand all the safety angles, knows all the things that could go wrong, and knows how to make sure that doesn't happen, and learn those things thoroughly. We're in the business here of charming people, not ruining their lives.

Don: Right. Just because you can do it doesn't mean you ought to do it. You don't want to be a 250 pound guy standing on a 110 pound woman, no matter how good of a hypnotist you may be, you're going to break somebody's back.

Igor: Just to point out Don, you're a relatively small built person which means you don't have the weight of the Governor of California, Arnold-sized person, which would be a much bigger endeavor to put through anybody's body, let alone a small woman's body.

Don: Exactly, and if I was I'd pick a bigger woman, or just pick a guy who is well built, who can take it.

Igor: Exactly. We've got this big dramatic finish.

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➤ How do you then end the show?

The lights come on, you're standing there, you say a few words to the audience, you bring the person who is now stuck between two chairs back to standing.

What's a nice way to finish a show, to have people walking out buzzing and talking about you, so that you're guaranteed they'll be talking about you to their friends for years to come?

Don: One of the things I like to do after I do that finale is I'll have the person sit back in their chairs and I'll do one more powerful induction with everybody on the stage.

What I do is when I invite people to the stage to begin with I tell everybody that comes up that before they leave they're going to get suggestions of their very own.

When I'm done standing on the person and I have everyone sit back in their chairs I have them close their eyes, I give them all a suggestion of their very own, a very quick one or two-minute hypnotherapy session that's empowering for them.

Then, of course, I'll give them each separate suggestions that when they go back into the audience they are going to respond to maybe somebody that they're with in a crazy way, they're going to hug them, kiss them or maybe they're all going to walk out there and start shaking everybody's hands or doing something that's just a little bit odd.

When I'm done with the show I dismiss them and they go back into the audience and the audience is waiting for them to come out there to see what they're going to do.

Are they going to do it? Are they going to kiss me? Are they going to sit on my lap? Are they going to say something to me? What's going to happen?

I end it that way and people are out there in the audience, the hypnotized people are going back out there and the audience is watching them, these people are obviously still hypnotized because they're doing something crazy.

What I like to do is I like to go out into the audience and wake each one of these people up individually. Here's the reason why I do it - people want to be close to you the performer, and they want to see the person next to them being woken up really close so it's a twofold purpose.

Igor: It really brings the whole show into the audience, makes them able to feel and touch it so they'll know wow, it's happened right next to me and it's someone I know. This is crazy there can't be any tricks here because I was sitting right next to him when it happened.

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You've gone into the audience now, you've cleared them all up, you come back on stage, you say your final farewell, the finale music comes up, everyone gives a wild crazy foot stomping round of applause, a standing ovation, and they file out and that's the end of the show, right?

Don: They file out and then at the very end then my DJ, my sound tech, will say ladies and gentlemen thank you for coming out to the show, please do me a favor and give Spencer another powerful round of applause.

You get that last applause, you bow, and then you bow out of the theater.

Igor: Depending on what kind of venue you have, sometimes you'll also go and mingle with the crowd afterwards. You can't do that in a theater, you're less likely to mingle, but you might shake their hands at the end of the performance as they're walking out.

In a nightclub you can join them, have a drink, let people come up to you at the bar and talk to you n private. I think that's a nice elegant touch at the end of a show to be approachable.

As you say they like to be part of the performer, to be able to touch them and see them close up. It's a chance for them to connect with you on that level which I think is always a very charming thing. I know you do this and it makes for that nice rounded feel good ending.

Don: Yes. Just because the show is over doesn't mean it's over. I like to go out there and mingle with people. If it's in a theater I'll go stand by the door and shake people's hands on the way out.

If it's in a nightclub I'll go around and mingle. People will be sitting around in little groups, especially those who were hypnotized are just chatting about it like - what happened?

I'll go talk with them and thank them. One of the fun things that happens quite often too is you're going out there and the people who were hypnotized are out there with their friends and they're going man; I can't remember anything, I don't know what I did.

I'll take it upon myself I'll say you don't remember anything? Watch this. The people are watching me and it's like; what's he going to do? I'll do this quick trance induction on the person and say listen; when I tap your head or tap your hand or something, you're going to remember everything that you've done, have a great time remembering everything right now.

They'll open their eyes and say oh man - you can see their face turns red and they just start going oh, I can't believe it. It just makes for a good after show effect.

Igor: The show continues long after the show is over.

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Don: The show continues. You have the opportunity, maybe people will have questions for you or they want to get a hold of you, they want a business card, they want a private consultation so yes, it continues.

Igor: That's a great place to mention that this seminar is going to continue in the next session where we'll be talking about all the behind the scenes work that is actually really important to make a show work.

I think we've done a very good job and I want to thank you for this Don. You've really dissected a stage hypnosis show and looked at all the pieces, how they work, as well as how to really make them work.

In the next session we're going to look at the background, the technical requirements. How do you actually get yourself on the stage in the first place, safety requirements, all these different things that the audience never really sees and they should never really see because to the extent they don't see it you've done your job right.

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Seminar 2 – Part 1

Igor: Welcome to StreetHypnosis.com. My name is Igor Ledochowski and I'm here with master hypnotist Don Spencer. Welcome back Don.

Don: Thank you Igor, it's good to be back.

Igor: Don is the world's fastest hypnotist. He is one of the most consummate stage hypnosis performers as well as actually having immense skills in hypnotherapy and other things as well.

In the last session Don you gave us the insights as to how to structure, run and have a basically compelling powerful stage hypnosis show. We went through everything from how the anatomy of it runs, what you do, when you do it and how you do it.

The ideas you have to have in the back of your head in order to do a good job with it, there's something else that makes a great stage hypnotist, isn't there? There's all the stuff that people don't see, the kind of behind the scene sort of stuff.

- **Can you tell us a little about why the, behind the scenes stuff is as important as all the stuff we talked about in the last session and all you do on stage?**

Don: As important or even more important. Some of the things you do need to have behind you which is very important is your equipment. Your equipment consists of a sound system which has speakers, a mixer, an amp, microphones and special effects, all these things that make you shine on stage.

One thing you don't want to do is go to a venue and rely on their sound system, because if you do you might as well just cut your throat and walk out the door because chances are you're going to have a very bad show unless in you're in a giant theater that has a \$500,000 overhead lighting system, projectors and everything else.

Igor: So, it's really important that people understand the ambience created, the sound sphere if you like, is as important as the visual demonstration stuff that's going on, and that's why having a good sound system helps.

You mentioned a whole bunch of different things there.

- Could you give us an idea of how much the different bits - the speakers, the mixers and all these things - might cost someone, just so they can get a sense of what range or price range they should be budgeting for and paying in?

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Otherwise, they'll end up getting cheap equipment that will break or won't do the job they want.

Don: Let's start at the top.

1. To start you're going to need some good speakers.

For a good speaker system you're going to need at least two - depending on the size of the room - 15-17 inch speakers that go out to the audience and you're going to spend around \$2,500 for those, maybe \$3,000 because you're going to include a couple of speakers that come back as monitors on the stage so subjects have a clear sound so they can understand what you're saying.

2. You're going to need a mixer.

A mixer is a board where you input all of your microphone and whether you're using a laptop, a CD player, or a minidisk player, so you need a mixer to mix your sound. There again you're going to spend anywhere between \$300 and \$500, depending on how big your show is and how many inputs you need.

3. An amplifier to run the mixer and the speakers.

You'll spend roughly \$400 on a good amp. In an amplifier you're going to need at least 900 watts to run the mixer and the speakers.

4. Then, of course, you need mics.

A good mic is going to cost you around \$700 and you can of course get lesser mics at like Radio Shack if you're in a jam financially, but if you want a good headset microphone or handheld you're going to spend upwards of \$700 for a good microphone.

5. Along with that you're going to want to have a hardwire mic, which is simply a microphone that is attached to a wire that goes into the mixer itself.

You'll want that in case you run into a situation where your wireless signals are being interfered with by anything on the outside like police sirens or something that might happen, so you need a good hardwire microphone also.

Igor: That's quite a technical list. If someone is very serious about creating a great show and touring with it and so on I'm sure it's worth the investment. If someone is just starting off and hasn't got the cash - because that's like almost \$5,000 just in equipment alone...

- **What can someone do if they just want to start and dip their toes in the waters of stage hypnosis who don't have that kind of budget to work with yet?**

Don: Get a boom box. No, I'm just kidding on that one.

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Here's something that's really inexpensive and it's effective if you don't have the budget to lay down \$10,000 on a sound system.

6. Hire a good DJ.

They'll come in and they'll work for you for a show, and you can get a good DJ that will charge you anywhere from \$100-\$300 to come in and do a show and they'll bring in all the equipment you need. You can even teach them how to run the show in about 30 minutes. A good DJ is worth their money because they can follow all your leads and you can pace them throughout the entire event.

That's a good way to start also.

Igor: If you do want to go down the DJ route...

➤ **How can you recognize what's a good DJ versus a bad DJ?**

Don: It's going to be different for everybody. My first question when I talk to a DJ, first I look at their website, I make sure they have some good credentials, then I call them and I talk to them.

My first question is, are you familiar with Macs or an iPod? I'm a Mac guy. Being a Mac guy, I run everything off my computer which is a Mac and if they're going to be running the show they're going to be running it off my computer, so I want to make sure they're familiar with that because I don't have the time to teach somebody how to do that even though it's not that difficult.

A good DJ will have a laptop computer, whether it's a Mac or a PC. That's important to me. That's the first question. If they have that and they've been doing this for five or ten years, then I feel comfortable with them.

Igor: So, it's really this.

- Number one, can they handle the technology you're bringing which in this case is a Mac laptop?
- Number two, time served in the industry, if they've been around for a few years and they're making a decent living you figure they know what they're doing.

Don: Yes, and of course I ask them what equipment they have. They have to have the right equipment. They've got to have the speakers, mixers and amps. I ask them all those important questions and of course they're going to come set up the sound and they're going to break it down. That's one thing you don't have to do which makes it really nice.

At some point as a person gets further into this career they'll have their own sound equipment, they'll have their own DJ that works with them that can travel with them.

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Igor: This suggests that even if you're not going to be able to afford the \$4,000 or \$5,000 to buy a decent sound set right away you still want to do your research and find out what different speakers are, what the qualities are, how they work and so on, purely so that when you actually work with a DJ you can quiz them, find out what equipment they have, and if they know how to use it.

Don: One of the things you don't want - a lot of DJs work with powered speakers. Personally I don't like using powered speakers, those are the kind that don't have amps, they're pre-amped so they have an amp inside of them, which sometimes causes distortion in sound.

- **What's really important when doing a show is that your voice is very crisp and very clear and you're going to have different channels?**

Usually when you have powered speakers everything comes out the same channel and it becomes distorted. You want to make sure you have one channel for your voice, one channel for your computer, one channel for your speakers and one channel for the sub woofers, whatever you're using.

Igor: It sounds like the whole sound department is a very important thing for people to pay attention to. We've got a nice list of the equipment they need and the things they need to pay attention to, beyond that it might even be worthwhile someone doing a basic sound course somewhere to get them used to it or if they've got a friend who is a DJ to learn the ropes.

The more you understand about the sound, how it's created, what's good and what's bad the more you'll be able to judge what equipment you buy yourself and how to use it, or if you want to hire someone in how good they are and how good their equipment is.

Don: Exactly.

Igor: I have a few more DJ questions.

- **In terms of training the DJ, how do you do that?**
 - a. Do you just run him through the show and act out little bits and pieces so he roughly knows when skits come?
 - b. Do you have a list for him saying what music in what order?
 - c. How do you deal with that side of things?

Don: What I'll do is I'll meet the DJ if I hire a DJ and meet them at the venue a couple hours ahead of time. We'll get set up, I'll just open up my computer and everything is listed on there.

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I'll run through the entire show in about 15-20 minutes, so he's familiar with the various tunes that I use in the background, the musical scores, and so he has a sense of how I operate so we can go back and forth.

A good DJ, really in 20-30 minutes they will get it really quick and you'll have a flawless show.

Igor: We've got the whole idea of developing the sound under our belts now; what if someone wants to go for a more spectacular show, like I know you have the rock and roll theme. That's the one that comes strongly in your show.

➤ **What would someone do if they wanted to create special effects and those sorts of things?**

Don: When you get into special effects you're talking about maybe strobe lights, smoke and mirrors, different types of lighting that you can put on the sides or behind and above you. There's many different ways you can go with lighting.

There again, if you have absolutely no experience with lighting find somebody to help you with that because you can ruin a complete show having your lights set up improperly, especially if you're using strobe lights.

You want to be careful using strobe lights because if you have people up on stage or in the audience and you have strobe lights; a person can have an epileptic seizure. You have to be very careful when you're using lighting of any kind.

If you're going to be using strobe lights I always have a little sign outside the door saying strobe lights in use, if you are epileptic you may want to just close your eyes or wait 20 minutes before you come into the showroom.

American DJ, they're a company on the Internet that you can go and look at the various lights that they have online and get an idea of what makes sense to you because everybody would be different on what attracts you.

There again it goes back to when you do a show, what floats your boat? If you can afford it maybe you want to talk to somebody in stage production and get some feedback from them, go over a complete show and get some creative input from somebody who is a real professional in the business.

Not specifically do they have to be a stage hypnotist, but just somebody who is experienced in stage production.

Igor: That makes a lot of sense because you're now basically getting all of the expertise on a stage production rather than their expertise on stage hypnosis. They're making the atmosphere not necessarily the show.

Don: Exactly right.

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Igor: If you're going to buy your own special effects equipment, just give people a ballpark figure.

- **What kind of ballpark would they be in, in terms of how much money they'd have to budget for?**

Don: I would probably budget, for all of the equipment including the sound system, maybe \$20,000-\$30,000. The lights are going to cost you anywhere from \$500-\$1,000 a piece so depending on how many lights you want.

If you get into a good venue they're going to have a lot of the lights for you, but leave nothing to chance because you'll be doing a lot of corporate gigs, more than likely you'll go out, rent a ballroom or something and you want the ambience to be correct so you want to set it up so the show looks the way you want.

That's who you are. You are the product, you are the show, and you don't want to do a half assed show, but you want to do a show that really is going to define who you are and what your show is about, that's what people are going to come back to and what they're going to buy. It's worth the money.

Igor: Again, if someone is starting off they're not going to be able to afford the \$30,000 for the special effects plus the \$5,000 for the audio equipment and the rest of it.

- **Is there a shoestring version that you would recommend people start out with?**

Don: Back to the DJ, a good DJ will have a whole garage full of lighting, light trees, special effect lighting, gels and everything you need. A good DJ will have everything you need and they may charge you a little bit more for it or they may not.

If you're in a venue and you think you're going to be there awhile a lot of DJs will jump at the opportunity to work with you more than once and give you a good price if you're going to use them again.

Once again, a DJ is a good way to go. Some venues as I said earlier have some lights but I wouldn't count on it.

Igor: So, it's always worth investigating the venue out first and doing your groundwork properly, and if you're going to be in a place several times build a relationship because it sounds like that's really where you make your life easier.

Have a good relationship with the DJ and you'll get a better price, you'll get a better show because he knows your show, and at that point everything just rolls more smoothly, right?

Don, tell us, we've got the equipment set up, we know how to create the atmosphere now, if we're going for a bigger type show we may even have hired

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a show producer to either impart their wisdom to us or to even stage manage the whole event for us, depending on what size show we're going for at this point.

We still haven't dealt with something very important which is, although we know how to do a show and all the things we have to look at, how to develop a character and all these things for it which are all important.

I'm just thinking about the novice, the person who has never been on stage before, never done a stage hypnosis show, hasn't even done a training or maybe a little training, who wants to go out there and become a stage hypnotist but hasn't got the experience.

It's a catch 22 isn't it? It's difficult to sell yourself to a venue without the experience and it's difficult to get the experience without getting a venue to do in.

➤ How can you break that catch 22 situation?

Don: Final Cut Pro. Of course, I'm joking there but you can do anything with a good software editing system. The reality is if you don't have the experience you fake it until you make it. You just have to get out there and present yourself as if you've done shows.

You can also just go around to every club or community hall and offer to do a lecture demonstration, don't take any money. You're going to have to get some exposure somewhere you're going to have to get a promo tape at some time in order to get into the big leagues, to get the big money.

You're not going to go into any comedy club or large theater. They're not going to take the risk on you if you don't have some sort of background, so you have to develop that.

Even if you have to go to a club for example and learn how to speak through Toastmasters or any of the other organizational clubs, film everything you do. Take a camera and film it.

You can take these examples and you can splice them together on a good software editing program and build a demo tape that you can give to a venue that will open the door for you.

Oftentimes too, it's not what you know it's who you know. I think that's very important. It's not always what you know, it's sometimes who you know to get in the door, but you've got to be persistent and keep knocking on the doors.

Igor: Just to put a little structure on what you've been suggesting, I think some very good ideas have come out there.

1. One, if you haven't got any experience on a stage or speaking like that, just get some experience.

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It doesn't even have to be stage hypnosis experience. In other words, things like Toastmasters which are just about public speaking is enough to get you out in front of people and getting used to people looking at you and understanding that whole dynamic.

That's a good starting point for someone with no experience at all to get used to the pressure of what it feels like to be on stage.

2. The next step you're suggesting is that now that you're comfortable in front of people, be comfortable doing hypnosis in front of people.

Getting a couple of simple hypnotic phenomenon like you go to some kind of a lecture demo, you go to a Rotary Club, an Eagles or Lions Club or something like that and offer a free lecture of some sort.

3. Then, during the lecture you hypnotize the audience, you pick the best volunteers and you do a couple of phenomenon.

It's good for you because you'll get your confidence up. It's good for you because you'll get exposure because everyone will say wow, look at the hypnotist who can do this.

Now people are talking about you, and it's also good for you because if you videotape those lectures you can pull out the bits where you're doing some crazy hypnotic phenomena, put them together into a video package and use that as your initial promo until you have a proper show you can record.

You can show people look; I've done all these things, so I can do this. Again it allows you to really pull yourself up by your bootstraps, right.

Don: Right, that's exactly the way to approach it.

Igor: That leaves one big question open.

➤ **How do you do a lecture demo?**

- a. What would you recommend people start with?

If I was, for example, to go to a Rotary Club and say hey, I'm going to do a free lecture demo for you on hypnosis.

➤ **What do I offer them?**

➤ **How do I approach them, so that I can actually get in there and actually get that experience?**

- b. In fact, what do I do once I get there?

Don: That's the easy part because most organizations are always looking for somebody to come in and be a guest speaker. They don't really care who you are, so that's the easy thing.

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As a hypnotist what you have to offer is to give a lecture on the mind and how the mind works, along with stress management and then as you're doing this simple demonstration which is maybe 10-20 minutes or whatever they allow, you can do a group demonstration, do a basic induction, do some group suggestibility tests.

From there you get the best subjects to do some individual demonstrations, do this one-on-one stuff and you know what, you're going to have an amazing feedback from the people in the audience.

They're going to watch you and they're going to say how did he do this? You might even wonder how you did this but the dynamic in that type of lecture is really not much different then doing a stage show.

So, you have an entire group, you do a basic induction maybe with everybody, do some group suggestibility tests, you get the best subjects out of there, you bring them up on stage and you do a show.

Igor: You basically do everything we talked about in the last seminar we just had, but you cut it down to fit. If you've got 20 minutes you make it fit 20 minutes. If you've got half an hour you make it fit half an hour. If you've got a whole hour you may as well do the whole show and make sure you tweak it every now and again so you talk a little bit about how the mind helps people in different ways.

It wouldn't be surprising by the way if people would end up picking up a hell of a lot of business just if they have a therapy practice as well, it's a great way to fill your practice even if you never want to do stage hypnosis, right?

Don: It is a great way to pick up a hypnotherapy practice because the people will be so amazed at what you've done that they will definitely want a business card from you to call you later.

Igor: So, a tip from the top is when you go to do one of these lecture demos bring stacks of business cards. Better still, bring your appointment book and get them to actually write their names in the appointments right away. Better still get them to pay for it straight away because then you know they're definitely coming.

Don: That's right. I'm so busy that I don't know - if you want to make an appointment I'm sure you'll enjoy going ahead and signing up here right now and I do accept deposits right now to ensure your space.

Igor: It's part of salesmanship and we'll be coming onto the idea of salesmanship in terms of selling your show a little bit more later on as well.

Before we do that we've got a good idea, in terms of, here's the equipment you need and where you can get a cheap shoestring budget version of it. We've even got an idea of how to start getting exposure, how to start getting experience, so the young novice stage hypnotist can cut his teeth and get some

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very important experiences without the pressure of having to perform on a full live show or without getting stuck in the catch 22 loop.

The next question I have now as we're getting in towards the show itself, we've got all of our equipment set up, we've got some experience and stuff as well, and we kept talking about this point of how important show music is.

➤ **Can you tell us a little bit about the technical aspects of show music in terms of how you deliver it?**

a. Also, how do you choose the music that you want?

Don: Well, that's interesting. Here's what I used to do and I don't do so much of it now because we have the internet, but I used to go - I'm a music guy. I love music. So, whenever I listen to music, whether it's to the radio or watching something on TV, as I began to develop my stage show I would always ask myself.

How can I make that music work in a routine?

How can I turn that into a routine?

I've got a feeling and if it's something that moves me its like, how can I use that? I really love this song, how can I make that work in a routine? That's how I went about creating my hypnosis show, by listening to music.

Igor: You'd start off with hearing a song, you really like the feel of it, the sound of it, the rhythm, something somehow moves you and gives you an experience, and you start thinking to yourself.

➤ **How could this be used in a show?**

a. How could I use this music to build some kind of a scene around it, so when the audience sees it they feel and see the whole experience rising up in front of them?

b. Is that right?

Don: That's a very good mind model, yes. I like that. That's exactly what I do. Also I do the same thing by watching TV. If I watch TV and I see a TV show or if I go to the movies and I watch a movie and there's something on there that strikes me as this is kind of cool, how can I use that in my show?

I can also work on a musical score to fit that also.

Igor: You're basically looking outside anywhere in life where you have experiences to get inspiration. We've talked already at length in the other interviews about going to other stage hypnosis shows will give you some rough ideas of where to start and just give you the experience of seeing other people performing, but

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then you go beyond that into watching comedians, watching TV, watching people in everyday life.

If something catches you as an interesting situation you do the reverse. You start with a situation and ask.

- **How can I put this situation on stage and what music would fit the situation to create the right kind of atmosphere?**

Don: Right. I get inspired from my son. I have a six-year old son, Dakota, and I watch him a lot. I'll see things that he does and say now I can use that in a show. I can regress everybody and they're going to be five or six years old and I'll set up some scenarios that remind me of things my son does because it just cracks me up. I can utilize that.

Igor: You mentioned something really important which is the idea of regression in a show. A lot of people just to warn people in terms of using this, regression is an important thing to do right or handle well in a show because it has got the risk of abreaction.

I know that when you do regressions you do it in a specific way to basically cut out the possibility or at least limit the possibility of someone abreacting.

- **Can you tell us a little bit about that so people understand that you're doing this again, within a safety parameter, you're not just randomly regressing people and if they happen to have trauma in the past, that's their problem?**

Don: The way that I'll frame it is I'll say in a moment I'm going to count to three, for example, and we're going to go back in time. We're going to go back to a time when you were just five or six years old, a happy time and a place where you feel comfortable. That's how I approach it.

I just frame it to let them know that we're going to go back to a time when you were five or six, a happy time only, where you're safe and comfortable. We're going to have fun with that.

That suggestion will help to put their minds at ease when you're doing a regression. Can someone have an abreaction? Of course, they can, no matter what I say or do it can certainly happen; it has happened.

Being a trained hypnotherapist for many years those are simple things to overcome in a matter of seconds if you happen to see somebody having a problem.

For example you may be working with a group of adults, they're six years old, and you may notice that there's somebody sitting over there and they're crying. If you don't know what to think about that in your mind you may think oh, my God they're crying what have I done? I don't know what to do.

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I just go over to them and I'll ask them what's the matter? What's wrong little boy or little girl? They'll tell me, then I'll say okay, maybe they have to go to the bathroom and they're afraid to ask. I'll say here; just touch my finger, you don't have to go anymore.

I'll use it as part of the show in what you would say is a covert type of way to bypass a potentially bad situation.

Igor: It requires that you again keep a hawk like eye on your subjects that if there's any sign that things might start going wrong, even on the way towards a regression, you can step straight in there and start detouring it before it goes into any really nasty territory, right.

Don: Exactly. You must watch your subjects at all time.

Igor: Which once again goes back to the idea that first and foremost you really need to understand hypnosis and then you become a stage hypnotist on top of that so that if things do occur, you know how to deal with them, right?

Don: Right.

Igor: We've got the idea of developing routines. We can either, start with the music and build a scene around it or we can start with an event and develop a music that fits it.

We talked a lot about the anatomy of a stage show, especially in the last show where we start with the intro, the test, the induction, the warm ups and the main routines and the big climax.

➤ **What I'm wondering now is how many routines or skits should someone aim to have or develop for a show, for one night of shows?**

Don: I think that for most people they're going to run into between 15-20 different routines they're going to do in one night, and that includes any type of warm up routines they do.

In my shows, I have a set of about 75 different routines that I can break into because even though I have a very strict set of routines that I want to do, you may have a different kind of an audience where what you thought you were going to do may not be what you can do.

I always have a large repertoire of other routines I can break into at any given time. You want to go there figuring you're going to do 15-20 routines, but be ready with at least 50.

Igor: Especially for a new hypnotist it's useful for them to have their 20 or so routines and have maybe another 10 back-up ones that they can run into and as time goes by you rotate them so that your repertoire grows naturally.

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There's no good having a routine as a backup that you've never done, right?

Don: Exactly. You want to play with all of them so you can see what works and what doesn't.

Igor: Right, you need to know exactly how to run it otherwise okay my favorite routine, the one I know how to work really well isn't working today, I know what I'll do, I'll start a routine that I've never done in my life before but don't really know how it works, I don't even know if I can pull it off. That'll work in this situation.

Don: Let's see if we can get people jumping on pianos, right. That's the thing to do.

Igor: For everyone who is wondering about the piano reference let me just enlighten you a little bit. The last time Don and I were together we ended up doing a stage hypnosis show together for a set of high school graduates it was a fantastic and fun evening.

During one of my sections of the show we were doing a slightly scary thing with like a puppet that came to life and of course what we failed to realize is that in doing the whole setup, which was just an eerie sort of setup, I had accidentally regressed them - which of course we figured within about two minutes - because the following thing happened.

The doll starts animating, and everyone runs offstage. I thought, man I forgot the first rule of stage hypnosis. We stopped them all, it's all over now, come back on stage, and then of course we restart the whole scene again and meanwhile the audience is laughing hysterically.

We make the conditions you'll be staying on the stage at all times, making sure you're well clear of the borders and the edges and so on. They can hide behind chairs and the natural obstacles in the room and so on.

The next thing I know, the doll starts coming back to life again, they're all rushing to the corner, one girl is actually climbing the piano that's been stored in the corner and there are these sounds of disjointed keys going bing-bang-bong. At which point, I look at Don and say okay, I think this is probably where we have to cap this one.

The audience, of course, is laughing hysterically. We're laughing hysterically, and there's a beautiful moment where the girl that's actually racing up the piano - we just put everyone to sleep straight away, and she just sort of drapes over the piano like a lounge picture that hangs in the corner of a bar somewhere. That's pretty much the climax of that particular scene.

It was totally unplanned. The reaction was a lot more vigorous than I had imagined it would be but it was a lot of fun.

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Don: I think I have that somewhere on video and if I can find that maybe I'll put that on You Tube.

Igor: That would be really funny. Pianos aside now, we've got the idea of the skits and the importance of actually having tested your skits, for example, that was a new skit that I made up that day, so now we have a much better understanding of how to run something like that, the potential consequences.

It's important that you do that with all your skits, that you rotate them through, so you're familiar with every single one of your routines, what it does, how it works, and what the potential misunderstandings within it can be so you can clean it up.

In time you'll build your way up to 50 routines, 60 routines, 70-75, so you'll always have backups you can go to if a particular thing doesn't quite work the way you want it to, doesn't have the impact you want it to or just runs flat and you need to move on to something else.

Let's move onto the next sequence. We've got the behind the scenes stuff of the show nicely laid out. We know where to get the equipment, how to work the equipment and we know how to prepare some of the performance elements of the show.

- **Looking now, at how to get the work in the first place, what's the most important thing?**
 - a. You mentioned promotional material; what kinds of things are included in promotional material?
 - b. What can people expect and how might someone go about preparing something like that?

Don: Nowadays your promotional material consists of your website and a DVD. A DVD is something that's a 15-30 minute bit of your show. Promotional agents, they want to see what you're doing.

For example on my website I have tons of different video clips and I have complete hypnosis shows available on my website also for promotional individuals to go and watch so I don't have to send anything to them, but you do need a website, you do need a DVD to promote yourself.

If you're doing a show yourself you want to send out press releases to TV, radio, newspapers, that's part of the press kit. You need a headshot of yourself or a body shot of yourself in some kind of hypnotic pose, however you're trying to fashion your specific look.

If you want to put your hands in front of you or behind your back, if you want to smile or look kind of goofy or dramatic; however you want to look that's part of you, you need that picture.

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We go back to what we talked about earlier. Do a few shows, tape it, and then you can make your demo out of that and just show it to people. Go around to the venues and knock on the door.

What I do - I don't really need to do this anymore but I used to go around with my iPod or with my computer and I had my show on there. I could walk into a venue, open up my computer and say look; here's my show.

This is what I can do for you, this is how we can promote it, and this is how much money you can make. When do we start?

Igor: Let me just break into what you just said there, I think it's a really fascinating thing. You've got the idea of the promo video; we know some tricks around how to create a promo video if you haven't got the experience yet for the free lecture demo and so on.

I like the idea of you showing them the stuff so they can actually see you doing it. One of the things you mentioned there is here's the earning potential this kind of show has.

- **Could you tell us a little bit about the numbers that different kinds of venues, in terms of cash, can generate for different people so people know what to say?**

If you go to a nightclub you can make them one particular offer, if you go to a theater it'll be a different kind of offer in terms of what their upside is.

- **Can you give us a rough idea of the financials behind a show like that?**

Don: Yes. It's going to be different from town to town, city to city, state to state and country to country. Roughly if you go into a nightclub, night clubbers aren't big spenders.

If you're new at this, if they offer you \$300-\$500 you'll do well. Take that now as you're building experience, you need it so wherever you can get the work do it, \$300 is better than nothing but \$500 is better still.

If you go to a theater chances are they're not going to hire you if you're new. In a larger theater you're going to have to firewall that which means you pay for the theater, you pay for the space, you pay for all the advertising and you do all the promotions yourself. The greater the risk the greater the reward. It's that simple.

In a nightclub you can also approach them if they just want to pay you a small amount you can also approach them with a door split. Say listen let's sell the tickets for \$10 each.

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We'll get 200 people in there, that's \$2,000. Split the door with me, I'll keep \$1,000, you keep \$1,000 and you keep all the bar money I don't want anything. If you have \$200 people in there they're going to average maybe \$20 apiece so that's another \$4,000 at the bar for the bar, so they're happy with that, making an extra \$5,000.

Igor: Juts to repeat this, this is something that someone trying to sell a stage show, especially in a nightclub scene, really needs to understand. First of all the nightclub needs to know what's their upside?

Their upside is they'll sell more drinks they'll have 200 people in the room which probably will stay on for partying afterwards anyway. They'll be doing the pre-show and after show, they'll be spending at least \$20 a head so that's about \$4,000 for a small intimate venue of like 200 people.

There are 200 people and an extra \$4,000 plus the door money if you're doing a split like the one we suggested there, that's a grand to the venue so they've made \$5,000 for your night; you've made \$1,000 for your night maybe, plus another \$100-\$200 as a basic thing they've given you.

That way everyone knows exactly what the upside is, everyone knows what they stand to gain which makes a much more persuasive sell than just saying hey, let's just have some fun and entertain people and it'll be good.

It is a business and you have to show them the business bottom line as part of your pitch.

Don: That's all they care about. They just want to know what's in it for them. They don't care who you are, they just want to know what's in it for them. It doesn't matter if you're a brand new hypnotist or if you're somebody who has been around for years, or if you're somebody famous or infamous - they just want to know am I going to make money on this deal?

They don't mind spending money on promotions and stuff if they think they're going to make money on it, but it's going to be up to you to persuade them that you're worth the risk, even when there's no risk and you're doing a door split.

It's really no risk to them, especially if they don't spend any money, because usually in a bar they'll put up posters all over, maybe do a mailing to their email list if they have one and they'll promote it for a month or two. The people that come to the show are going to be their regulars over a two month period, the regulars will go out, tell other people and bring other people to the venue.

When you approach them you want a couple month leeway to do your show, you're not going to walk into a club and say I want to do a show next week, it just isn't realistic.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

They're not going to have time to promote it, you're not going to have enough people, nobody is going to be happy, and you won't be going back to that place ever again.

Igor: The thing to bear in mind is, if you're doing a show and you manage to relatively pack the house, because it's been promoted properly, even an average stage hypnosis show for most parts of the country and most parts of the world really, it's such a new and different thing that what might seem like an average show to you, like an okay show to you, maybe even a slightly poor show to you will still be a highlight for a lot of people's entertainment experience.

Don: Exactly, and that's a very important point you make. I can walk into a venue, I can look around, and a guy that used to work with me, Dave, would walk into the venue and I'd look at him and say okay - we used to have this scale from one to 10 and I'd say this is going to be a 10 or it's going to be a 15.

Sometimes I'd say this is going to be a two. The interesting thing is that even if it turned out to be a two, and that's for me as far as how I feel doing a show because if I leave a show and say man that was a 10 or a 15 I feel good, but the audience may not have the same feeling that I do only because I'm a really fussy picky perfectionist when I do my shows.

You're right; if it's a two the audience has never seen it and even though you may not feel like it was your best show to them it was fantastic. You'll be surprised that the remarks you get from these people coming up to you and saying that was awesome, you were so much fun I dig it. Come back again soon.

Igor: This is again part of the standards. We've spent a lot of time talking about how to have this amazing stage show and really be a cut above the rest and that's really important, but it's also important to realize that when you're first starting your shows do not have to be great.

They can be totally mundane and average and whilst you're building the experience you'll still be providing real value, real entertainment to people so it's okay to start at the bottom and work your way up.

It's good to have the ambition to get to the top but don't kill yourself along the way because you're not "good enough". That will come with experience, practice, and thinking about these things we've been talking about.

Don: Exactly right. It's interesting; along with the people who are newbie's at this, that will be their experience, and I mean I've had the fortune of training people who just happen to have a lot of money, they happen to own a comedy club or they own a bar and so they take my training and they just go back to their own venue and do their own thing. That's not going to be for everybody though.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Igor: I'm going to start a comedy club just so I can do my own show. That's kind of how you started though, isn't it? You basically went to nightclubs, you hired the venue to do your own thing - so as you called it you fore walled it - and you took all the risk, you paid for the space, but you end up making much more on the other side.

Even in a small venue, \$10 per person with 20 people in the venue, that's \$2,000 paid for an evening and a couple hours of work. It can have its upside. If you're now talking about a theater with like 1,000 seats in, in a theater you can probably put the price up so the money potential starts escalating.

Don: You can but you have to consider though also, even on the smaller venue, if I fore wall something like that and you get 200 people and say you charge them \$10 and get them \$2,000, it may cost me \$1,000 to promote it.

Igor: Right, which is why you would rather start off by doing a door split with an existing venue, because it's a lot easier to kind of get to the grips with the whole marketing and understanding how it all works type thing.

Don: There's nothing worse than fore walling a place just to feed your own ego. You hire a room and pay all the expenses, it costs you \$2,000, you get 200 people in there, they pay the overhead and you make nothing. That's always an unpleasant experience also.

Igor: That's a fancy show, not very good as a business model.

Don: No, it's not.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Seminar 2 – Part 2

Igor: Looking at some other ways to pick up work then; we talked about going into venues and making a pitch, saying look this is what you stand to gain, this is what I can offer you.

We've talked a little bit about the risks and the potential rewards of basically hiring a venue for yourself and taking all the risk but then all the money on the backside as well.

➤ **What other ways are there for people to actually pick up work if they don't want to take those kinds of risks?**

Don: They can go around to their community and talk to business to business networking groups that would potentially hire you, and then when you get a little bit more experience you can work on getting onto the fair circuit and getting onto the college circuit, getting onto the high school circuit.

There again they have associations that you can go to once a year where you're actually hired to work these circuits. That's another way to approach the market.

When you get into that level where you're working with an international association of fairs or a national organization for colleges you better have a promo ready. If you don't have a promo ready you don't have a chance in hell of getting in the door because they want to see what you've got.

You're not going to be the only hypnotist there trying to sell yourself.

Igor: Looking at these trade fairs again, just to repeat the names so people can make a note of them - for the fair circuits in the US, it's called the International Association of Fairs is that correct?

Don: It's the International Association of Fairs and Expos. They hire the talent for the counties and the state fairs, and then they have regional ones as well. There again, no promo package don't even go.

Igor: In terms of college and high school kinds of areas that's the National Association of Colleges, NACA or something.

Is that correct?

Don: NACA is the abbreviation for that yes. You can Google that and get more information on that for sure.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Igor: If I was to go to one of these fairs, I've got my promo tape ready in my hand maybe I even have my laptop in my pocket.

➤ **How do these things work?**

- a. Do I just wander around and do something or is there like an appointment system?
- b. How does it work that you can actually get your information out there?

Don: For example, if you do the fair circuit, they have a thing down in Las Vegas every November. You go down there and you sit for three days, you have a little booth and you drink a lot because the booze is free.

I tell you, there's a lot of people running around or crawling around during those three days. You rent your little booth and you set it up.

For example, when I go there I just put a big monitor up there and have my show going in a continuous spin for three days so people can watch the promo and then I'm available to talk to people.

All these buyers, they walk by your booth and if they're interested they stop, they talk to you. If they like what you do they hire you on the spot. The other thing I do is I'll have somebody there and I'll walk around to all the booths and I'll meet everyone in the tradeshow. It's a lot of work.

Igor: You still have to hustle, it's just the benefit is all the work is contained in one space and a short period of time, but you still have to do the legwork, you still walk around, you still have to shake hands, smile, talk, meet people and tell them about what you do and so on.

Your interpersonal skills are pretty important at this point, right?

Don: Yes, they are important. You have to be prepared to spend a lot of money. When you're on that level you're going to have to pay to rent a booth, you're going to have to pay to stay in Vegas, wherever the venue is.

You have food, lodging and everything on top of that, so you can easily spend \$5,000 on a tradeshow just to promote yourself in the hopes that you're going to be bought.

The competition there is very fierce and there are people there, new hypnotists that come in there all the time that will undercut you, and they will work for almost nothing just to get their feet in the door.

Igor: That's something to be aware of. The upside, of course, is you could almost fill a year of your diary if you find the right people and the right sponsors and whatever for that investment.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Again it's a different kind of risk that you take. It has a lot of potential but of course there's a different risk you take in terms of just hiring the booth and all the expenses you mentioned already.

Don: Exactly. Along with that there's tradeshows for like the cruise lines and the airlines and hotels, there's so many different avenues. It's all about networking. YOU have to get out there and knock on doors and let your fingers do the searching and get out there and network.

It's not what you know it's who you know. If you get out there and build rapport with individuals and you're a nice person and you're not really pushy you can open some doors and get some really good business. You can make a lot of money in this business by being a nice person, getting out there, and meeting people.

Igor: That's kind of a theme that's coming up over and over again. Go out there, meet people, show them what you do, go out there meet people, show them what you do. Don't take rejection personally, go out there, meet people, and show them what you do.

Keep going and eventually it's just like the law of numbers will work in your favor, especially if you are personable enough and think about how you approach people, so you change your approach to make it more seductive as you go along.

Don: Some people choose to go out there and hire an agent to do the work for them. Not a lot of hypnotists use agents but if you get a good agent a good agent will charge you anywhere from 20% or probably closer to 30% for your show, but if they charge you 30% to get you a show that's 70% you didn't have to begin with. It's not a bad deal.

When I first started I had three different agents that worked for me and they got me a lot of business.

Igor: Have a couple questions.

➤ **How do you get in with an agent?**

- a. How do you get them to accept you so you can sit back and let their work roll in as far as hopefully you're concerned?

Don: You've got to be a pest. It's like anything. They're dodgy people. Honest to God man, they get stacks of promotional material from people every day. Everybody wants to be represented.

You go to an agency office and you look at their desk and they'll have 20, 30, 40 or 50 stacks of promotional DVDs, not just from hypnotists but magicians, bands, impressionists, clowns - whatever.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

That doesn't even include all the email they get from people trying to get work from them. It goes back to have a good personality, take the time, go meet these people in person, be personable, and find out a little bit about the person.

Take them a gift, make them feel special, wine and dine them.

Igor: It goes back to classic salesmanship. Learn some sales strategies. If you haven't got that type of personality what can you do? There are sales trainings of course which will help you you've got to sell yourself at that point, so you need to understand the whole sales process to some degree anyway.

➤ **What else can people do to develop the right kind of personality for the business side of this?**

Don: For the business side? There are a lot of courses you can take. They can certainly take any number of courses that you offer or that I offer as far as developing business acumen for this profession but it's a show business and the biggest part of this is the business. The show is not the big part it's the business.

Even the show is a business that you have to put together. You getting up there and doing the show is very miniscule compared to the business aspect of it. I would say if you need help go find a therapist.

Igor: That's more for the people side of things. If you don't like people and you can't speak to them or you're too shy, well we're hypnosis folks, this is what we do. If you can't do it yourself, which is fine it happens, then find someone who is competent to help you with that side of things.

I think the key thing here is to say there are a lot of resources out there that will help you in the next steps, whether it's to learn how to run a business, how to market a business, how to sell yourself and sell your services or if it's a question of working your personality.

So, you can go out there and take rejection, so you can go out there and present yourself well, so you can go out there and be a people person and just have the energy to keep knocking on those doors until enough start opening that you can actually make a living from it.

Don: Take a class in self hypnosis, see your local hypnotherapist, take a course from Dale Carnegie– *How to Win Friends and Influence People*– take some marketing classes, go to the (SBA) Small Business Association; there are tons of resources out there for people.

Igor: It's important to emphasize this because a lot of people go in with these starry eyed dreams like I'm going to be a stage hypnotist now and they don't realize that just having the skill which is very important, and having good skill will definitely take you to a level that's above a lot of other people - but even then there's a business aspect.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Work won't just come rolling in, you've got to go out and find it. You've got to make it happen.

Don: You have to. It's really interesting when people hire me as a mentor on a one on one basis, they don't know what they're getting themselves into. We cover all of these aspects with a person.

We go from ground zero with most people teaching these concepts in a short period of time, but the people that go through and make it are highly successful, have a lot of fun and are a better person for it. There are no shortcuts in this.

Igor: There are a lot of successful husband and wife teams or friends where basically one person does the work and one person does all the business side of things.

➤ **Do you have any advice or tips on how that can work and how to set that sort of dynamic up?**

Don: Sure. If you're a husband and wife, it can go two ways. For example, I'm not married but let's say I had a wife, she would do the business aspect, she would make all the calls, all the contacts, and I would just tend to doing the show.

That would be my part, I would do the show and she would do all the paperwork, the bookkeeping and everything else so I could just focus on the creative aspect of the performance. That's how I would handle that as a husband and wife.

If she's working with me in the show I would pick up some of the slack on the business part of it and she could be my assistant in the show itself. I've seen a number of hypnotists who do that quite successfully around the country, where you have a husband and wife team who are both out there performing together.

Igor: That's another interesting dynamic or another interesting approach people can take. There's lots of choices people have, lots of different ways of doing it, it really then comes down to figuring out what they want, what niche they want to go to, where their strengths are and what audiences they like.

If you recall we spoke a little bit about the different types of audience the Vegas type, the corporate type, the high schools, the colleges, having regular gigs - all these different places we've already mentioned to a certain extent.

Wherever your main pool is, your main niches are, whatever your personal circumstances are, that starts to define what approach you take to marketing, what approach you take to business structure, what approach you take to how you develop the show and how you present the show.

It all has to happen around you. There's no one template that says do steps one through ten and you'll be a successful stage hypnotist guaranteed, because it doesn't take your whole life into account.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Don: It's called teamwork. If you're working with a partner its teamwork and you do have to find your strengths and weaknesses for each individual on the team.

Igor: Let's leave the idea of the business aspects on the side for a little bit and focus back on the show time behind the scenes sort of stuff. We talked about arriving at the venue a few hours early and setting things up.

- **Can you talk us a little bit more through the actual process that you go through when you actually arrive at the scene?**

Let's say you're going to a high school event or a corporate event. You turn up a couple of hours before the show is supposed to start.

- **What do you do?**
 - a. What have you brought with you?
 - b. How do you arrange it?
 - c. How do you put it together?
 - d. What are the technical bits that you run through?
 - e. Do you have a checklist of things you go through to make sure everything is in place and you don't forget anything?

Don: Yes, you can have a checklist on a sheet of paper as you begin, but to go over that really quickly I'll go a couple hours early or at least at some point when there's nobody there.

I'll set up the speakers, make sure the light works, hook up the computer and hook up the entire sound system, and then I'll do a sound check and make sure the microphone is working. Go into the back of the room; talk into the microphone, say check - check, testing one, two, three...

Make sure you have equal sound coming out of your speakers so you can hear it clearly anywhere in the room. That's what I do. If I'm working with a DJ or even with my sound tech we'll go through the show very quickly and just make sure we're on the same page.

That's it, that's all I do. That's my checklist of everything I do pre-show.

Igor: Let me ask you more questions regarding this subject.

- **What about the chairs for the delegates?**
 - a. Do you wait until before the show starts or bring them up as the volunteers come up?
 - b. Do you have them on the stage already?

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

c. How does that work?

Don: The chairs are already there. I didn't mention that. I make sure the chairs are all set up, anywhere from 10-50 to 20-40 chairs, depending on the venue you're doing. I have all the chairs set up across the stage.

There again it's a preference for hypnotists. I have mine in a straight line. I've seen other guys that put them in a circular fashion or maybe have two or three different rows of chairs it depends on the venue you're in and what you're familiar and comfortable with doing.

There's no real hard rule for how to set up the chairs except have the chairs together and don't have any arms on the chairs.

Igor: That's actually a very important point, the lack of arms, especially because you're going to expect people to move and you don't want to have arms inhibiting them.

It could even be dangerous because if someone tries to get up and gets stuck in the chair, don't even notice it then they can do themselves or someone else harm when the chair picks up with them and they actually go whacking into someone.

➤ **That's actually quite a big point isn't it?**

Don: It is, yes. I don't want arms because the people up on stage, they're going to be leaning across each other all the time. They're going to be flopping back and flopping forth, they're going to be everywhere and I don't want them going over some arm and ripping into their rib cage or something like that. That might cause damage.

Igor: People might think it's good to have the arm rests to prevent people from falling out of their chairs, especially if they're going to be flopping around the place.

➤ **How do you deal with the safety element of people falling out of their chairs during the show?**

Don: There's a couple ways to approach it. One way is that as you begin the show, as people are being hypnotized, you can simply tell them you are stuck to your chair. Your back is stuck to the back or your butt is stuck to the seat of the chair. If you try to get up you'll find you can't get up. If you try hard to get up out of your chair you're stuck and you can't move.

You watch them, they're stuck you're in good shape. You can have them put on an imaginary seat belt. Put this seat belt on right now, this seat belt will keep you safe at all times. At no time will you ever fall out of your chair, because you are strapped safely in your chair for the entire time of the show unless I specify or release you from that chair.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

That's another thing you can possibly do to keep people safe and in their chairs. Even if you do that it's no guarantee that a person isn't going to fall out of their chair if there's a real flopper.

Igor: So there's no excuse for not paying attention to your volunteers.

Don: You've got to pay attention no matter what.

Igor: You've gone through your whole checklist. You've set your sound up, you've gone to the back of the room to hear the bounce of the sound, you've mixed it around a bit; everything is working well. I presume then you just go home and you relax for a big, right?

Don: Depending on how much time I'll either, go home or if time is short and if the venue has a green room I'll go back in the green room and flip on the TV and have a little meal before show time.

Igor: When would you go and typically get the pre-show stuff we talked about in the last session going?

➤ **When would you start that whole thing going?**

Don: That would start when we opened the doors. For example, if the show starts at eight and the doors open at 7:30, I would have the music queued to start at 7:30 when the doors opened. That's how I'd approach that quite simply.

The music begins when the doors open.

Igor: So that when people walk in they're not walking into a quiet empty room, they're walking into a place that's already buzzing, to kind of build on the anticipation that's already there.

Don: I want people to walk into my party. This is my party. This is my thing. We're going to have a good time, so let's get down. I want to create a festive mood or whatever.

The doors open, the music is already playing, and people are be-bopping down the floor to their chairs.

Igor: Let's say we're getting close to show time.

➤ **What kinds of behind the scenes stuff do you have on your mind to make sure the show goes well and the business element is taken care of as well?**

Don: Actually, at that point, I don't have anything going on in my mind. I've already fully prepared because I know that the lights are good, the chairs are set, the sound is good and the music is playing. I've already prepared in the back of the room a table set up where I can sell CDs, DVDs, t-shirts, posters, or whatever. I might bring with me to sell in the back of the room to generate more income.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Everything is already done so that I don't have to think about anything except ladies and gentlemen, please put your hands together for the world's fastest hypnotist - and that's when I go.

Igor: Let's go back... I think you just mentioned a very important point there. Having a table in the back with CDs and DVDs where you can basically make extra cash, even if you're just being paid \$1,000 for a show, you've taken the door money at a nightclub, the same way a nightclub sells their booze and makes their money from that you can also make extra cash on your show by selling products.

Don: Right, you can, and I encourage you to do that. If you don't have something make it. People will buy stop smoking CDs, weight loss CDs, pain control, stress management, insomnia type CDs - these are things that are hot sellers at the hypnosis show.

You have to remember, you have a whole audience of people who are hypnogogic. Just because the people on the stage are the best subjects, everybody who is in that room has been mesmerized.

Whenever you activate the unconscious mind and people begin to fall into your trance by watching the show and laughing and crying or whatever they're doing, they've entered their emotional unconscious mind. That is a trance state.

Throughout the show I always remind people that we do have CD's, DVD's and other material available at the end of the show.

Igor: You'll actually literally mention it mid show, you'll just make a side comment and then carry on with the show and then have another side comment and carry on with the show, just to seed the idea so they can start thinking about it before they leave; otherwise, it might be a bit too last minute and they'll say it's too much to think about now.

It's percolating inside them as they watch your show so that by the time they leave they say you know what? I have a problem with sleeping; I'm getting that insomnia tape so I can sort that out once and for all.

➤ Is that kind of the thing you do?

Don: Exactly. It's not unusual for me to pick up an extra \$200, \$300 or \$400 after I do a show, in a small venue with maybe 200 people.

Igor: Wow, that's not bad going.

Don: No that's not chump change. It's not bad. That will pay for lodging and buy you a good meal.

Igor: Definitely worthwhile.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Don: It's a good selling point also if you're approaching a nightclub because I always tell the nightclubs I say listen; you're going to have a couple hundred people out there hypnotized - do you know how much more booze I can sell?

In fact, let's make some special hypnotic drinks for the evening. I can sell them.

Igor: Special hypno-cocktails.

Don: Yes, special cocktails at a special price. I do that at every bar that I go to, we always have a special hypnotic drink.

Igor: When you drink the hypnotic drink ladies and gentlemen you might find your night becomes twice as much fun, so you can buy your normal drinks or you can go have a special hypno-juice.

Let's move on again. We've got the idea of the show set up in the background. We've even got the idea of preparing the back of the room with some products so we can make a little extra cash.

Now, let's turn to the behind the scenes stuff you might do during the show.

- **What kind of things do we have to keep in our minds during the show that the audience won't necessarily see, and hopefully, will never get to see, especially when it comes to things like safety?**

Don: Some of the things that are going to go on that you need to be aware of besides keeping the subjects safe. When you give a suggestion to the people you want to make sure your voice is very clear.

They need to hear what you say and each individual, for example if you're giving a suggestion to one or two individuals and not everybody, you need to make sure it's just those two individuals who are going to respond and not everybody who is up on stage.

You have to be very clear and very concise with what you're doing when you're giving suggestions because in a hypnotic state everybody will want to respond to the suggestion. You've got to be very clear with that.

Igor: **How might you single an individual out over the others so that person only responds and the other ones stay put?**

Don: Very simply what I do is I just go over and I say the individual I'm now touching, in a moment I'm going to count to three and on the number three your eyes open and this is what you're going to do.

The person I'm touching right now and only the person I'm touching right now will act upon this suggestion on the count of three. That's an example of how I frame that so everybody else knows if they're not being touched - unless of course they're having some sort of kinesthetic hallucination - oh, he's touching me.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Igor: That's possible as well.

Don: It is, I've had it happen quite often and it will happen again in the future.

Igor: Let me ask you about this.

➤ **Is it possible that whilst someone is actually acting out the suggestion you've prepared only for them and you set all that stuff up?**

a. Is it possible that someone in the seated volunteers watching them suddenly gets inspired by something random that no one really knows about why or when to jump up and do their own thing with it?

b. Is that something that happens and how do you take care of it?

Don: Oh yes, I've had that happen a lot. When you're doing a show, all of the sudden you give a suggestion and somebody out there in the audience who has been sitting there for 30-45 minutes all of the sudden they get up and start acting out.

I'm going oh my God, this person is hypnotized and I didn't even know it. It's actually kind of funny the people around them will start busting up. If I don't catch them right away the audience will start screaming hey Spencer over here.

I'll look over there. Normally, if you're on stage you have lights in your eyes and if you have a lot of lights in your eyes you can't see that well out into the audience. In fact, sometimes you play a venue and it's just dark.

That's why oftentimes on a stage I'll wear sunglasses because the lights are so bright and you can't see out there.

I'll go out to the audience and simply grab the person and have them come up on stage really quickly and just make them part of the show or I'll look at them from the stage and say look at me now and do not look away. I am going to count to three and at three your eyes will close, your body will go loose, limp and relaxed, you will fall to the floor gently now - one, two, and three - sleep.

They'll just kind of slowly melt down to the floor and I'll always say if there's somebody next to them, please make sure they go down gently. I'll always have that safety in mind because a person can fall and smack their head.

Igor: I can also see it being very dramatic when somebody in the audience who wasn't even "part of the show", suddenly just is hypnotized and passes out because the hypnotist says sleep right in front of them.

➤ **Can you imagine you're sitting in the chair and the person next to you stands up and you think; this is a bit weird, and the hypnotist says sleep and the person just sort of drools and slowly just collapses over your lap?**

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

I had not seen that one coming at all. That could be a real highlight for someone as well, couldn't it?

Don: It could be. I've had that happen and you make it part of the show. I'll go out into the audience and I'll look at this person and I'll say wow - I don't know what to say, ladies and gentlemen just give me a moment here, let me find out what's going on with this individual.

I'll make it very dramatic. I know they're hypnotized but the people out there might be thinking wow, did someone get hurt? What's happening? I may change the whole tone of the show for a moment, just to bring it down, take everybody down, and then I'll do something crazy and the whole audience will just bust out laughing.

You can tweak peoples' emotions that way also in a show if you have that happen.

Igor: Taking the next step from that though, something that might be of concern to some people, is what if you have a heckler? Especially I can imagine if you're in a nightclub or a bar you might have a couple of people who are really drunk in the back and they start coming up with comments.

➤ **How do you deal with that sort of situation?**

Don: A couple ways to do that. One way is to have a bouncer ahead of time be aware that if anybody gets up and heckles they just go grab them by the scrap of the neck and throw them out.

Another way to approach that is I have a few one liners to toss back at the individual to belittle them and put them in their place that works also. Study some one-liners from comedians or get a book on how to deal with idiots.

Igor: Here's a question.

➤ **Can you give me an example of a situation you've been through, where you had to deal with a heckler; someone that was going to interfere with the show but you dealt with it in one of these different ways?**

Don: To keep it clean, one of the things that I use often is kind of like - you know what? If you're such a great showman, here's the mic, come up here and get it and you can finish the show for me.

Of course, the person is not going to come up there and they're going to feel really bad, they're going to sit down embarrassed and the bouncer is just going to get them out there.

If they're just a drunk people don't want a drunk messing with the show. They are very generous and if a person is drunk and being obnoxious I've seen people grab a drunk and throw him out of the bar.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Igor: Just because he's interfering with their show and they actually like the show. It's important to remember if you have a heckler, if you've done your job right up until this point, the rest of the audience is actually on your side not the heckler's side.

Don: They are on your side.

Igor: That's a lot of power. That gives you a lot of authority to do things which makes your life a lot easier. This also means heckling is a lot less likely to happen as a result unless you specifically only go to venues like bars and nightclubs where alcohol can mix in with that and make that more likely to happen.

Don: In all the years that I've done shows I think I've had - you know I've done a few thousand shows and I can honestly say I've maybe five or six hecklers in all that time.

Igor: That's pretty low odds. That's good to keep that in perspective.

Don: When you go out there, you do your show, one of the things that you need to do is you go out there and you command the stage, you command the audience, and you command the subjects.

If you go out there full of confidence with this charismatic outlook and you have this great command of the stage and the sound and everything nobody is going to mess with you, nobody wants to mess with you.

I always tell people you know what, say it one more time, I have 20 people here hypnotized that will come down there and kick the living crap out of you.

Igor: You're actually turning the whole situation into a joke, taking the thunder or stealing the energy of whatever the heckler is doing, so usually they'll pipe down and sit back down again.

Again just to emphasize having a heckler in your show is a really unlikely thing to happen unless you're doing a really poor job, in other words you're volunteers disrespectfully which I've seen happen a few times or you're treating your audience disrespectfully.

Keep the audience on your side. Treat them like a welcomed guest and hecklers...

a. won't arise, and

b. if they do arise usually the audience will take care of them for you through social pressure and all kinds of other things.

Let's turn our attention in the last few minutes to some other things that I think will be of real importance to people. The one thing we haven't handled yet in terms of the actual show so far is this idea of the microphone itself.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

You've mentioned different kinds of mics, wireless and headsets and mics with cords and so on, but there's actually an artistry to using the microphone as well so it's an invisible part of the show rather than something clunky that keeps getting in the way.

➤ **Can you give us some tips around how to do that?**

Don: Yes. There again microphones become something that is a matter of preference. Some guys like to have a hand held mic, some people like a headset mic, it just depends.

One of the things that I do with the mic, whether it's the headset or a handheld, there are instances where I do need to speak directly to an individual that I don't want the entire audience to hear, so I will just flip the mic off, put it on mute, whether it's on a handheld mic or there's a switch on the pack that's on my back on the transmitter so I can reduce that and talk to somebody outside the ears of the audience or the other subjects.

For example, if somebody needs to be dismissed I can turn down my mic and dismiss them quietly or if I'm getting ready to do a routine and I need to talk to them and frame something or make sure they are going to be appropriate for the routine because it's a very serious one, then I'll turn down the mic and after I get their okay I can turn the mic up and go on with the show.

Igor: Right. For example, something we mentioned in the last interview was the idea of the human bridge. This would be an example where you turn the mic off, check the person thoroughly to make sure they are physically and otherwise capable to do that stunt safely.

You do that all offline, so that when you actually do the demonstration it looks much more serious, much more dramatic to the audience because they are not aware of the setup you created to make sure it's actually very safe.

Don: Right.

Igor: I'm just going to move on from that point towards some of the final things we've alluded to but haven't really looked at in more detail. The idea of how people dress to present themselves, that's something that the character has to do with, but also how do they refine their character?

I can't imagine that a newbie stage hypnotist or even someone who has been up there for a while will instantly know what the character is they want to portray and have it.

It seems to me that it's more of a thing that evolves over time, you grow into it with thought and polish and feedback and experience and so on.

Don: If people had a voice like yours, that's the big part of it right there.

Igor: Why, thank you sir.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Don: If they don't have an Igor voice that just instantly induces trances with people the dress is very important because you want to create a mood and the clothes are the perfect way to do that.

You want to dress better than your audience or you want to dress eclectically. You want to look different. You're not going to go there and dress - for lack of a better term - like the common folks out there, because you're a common guy off stage but you want to be flashy, you want to get up there and give a performance.

There again go to the stage. Look at musicians, look at comics, except some of the red neck comedy guys who go out there with short sleeves on. You don't want to dress like that.

You can, you might be able to get away with that in the Deep South people probably won't take you too seriously. I've seen hypnotists get up there dressed like slobs and their show actually reflects it.

If you get up there and you dress really sharp then that's going to set the mood right off for the audience. They're going to look at you and think this guy is a professional, I mean look at the way he dresses. That is awesome.

That really sets the mood. They think you're a serious person. You can dress to be very serious or you can dress to be comedic, it depends on how you want to pace your show, how you want to frame it.

For example, I'm getting ready to do some shows overseas, I've been putting some thought into this and thinking- am I going to wear my leather pants to this show?

I could, but then again, I think maybe I'm just going to wear shorts and put on a really sharp jacket on top of that and a pair of tennis shoes. I'll dress down in one way, but be eclectic in the way that I dress so it still comes off as very flashy.

Igor: I understand. A place to kind of get some inspiration for that would of course be to watch other performers as you say, comedians and entertainers and people like that, because then you'll get some ideas like oh, that's an interesting combination he's got there, I don't like what he's done there.

You have to think about what makes it interesting and what makes it not work so that you can develop your sense of attire.

Don: If you just watch the comedy channel you'll see the different comedians that get up there and do their presentations. Some of the guys dress really sharp, other guys just dress like the guy next door, and others dress really dumpy.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

It's kind of how you want to project yourself. If your show is going to be very dramatic then you're going to want to look very slick. If it's more of a comedic type of presentation then you can let things fly a little bit easier.

Study other people.

Igor: Here are a couple more questions for you.

➤ **What about the study of character now?**

- a. How do you evolve your character so you really have a compelling character on stage for your whole stage hypnosis show?

Really it comes down to you, doesn't it? It comes down to your character, how you present it, how you frame it, how you speak - the whole shebang is the show really.

Don: I get feedback. I like to have forms out there at the end of the show for people to fill out and part of that is; what did you like about the show? What did you not like?

That probably would be considered a bad thing to ask but I like to know what people are really digging and what it is they didn't like about the show. I get that feedback from a form at the end of the show.

Also, at the end of the show, I'll just go out and begin to mingle with the audience, let them meet me and listen to what they have to say about the show, what they have to say about me.

This is my feedback. This helps me to develop my own character and, of course, I videotape each and every show so that I can go back and watch the way I presented my show. I have done this since day one. I have a whole garage full of thousands of tapes of my shows that I've done.

I started doing this before I even began doing hypnosis shows, just to see the style of presentation that I gave to the audience. If I look at myself on stage and I cringe then I probably can assume that a lot of people in the audience may be cringing also.

If I look at myself and laugh then I'm thinking well, that's not too bad. It gives me the opportunity to also tweak different parts of my presentation style. Maybe I'm talking too quickly, I'm moving too quickly, or I need to do something a little bit differently.

I'll have friends attend the shows or give me feedback. I'm never afraid to get feedback from individuals about how I appear, how I come across on stage. This helps to define and refine that character which is me on stage, which will be you.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

Igor: I can imagine sometimes it'll also help because you might find yourself being surprised by the audience picking up on a particular point of yours that you didn't like particularly or weren't even particularly aware of, but it keeps coming up over and over again.

You think you know what. Since it's coming up again and again I might as well feature it and make it part of the show, make it part of the character, because people are spotting it anyway so obviously, there's something going on there.

Don: Right. You can use it for whatever feedback is worth. It might be something you can accentuate it may be something you want to eliminate. It's all good.

Igor: Of course, when you work with people as a stage hypnosis mentor you're basically going to cover everything we've talked about today, but in very specific detail.

Not necessarily in terms of bringing more categories and more ideas than we've discussed, but more a question of refining those and saying okay for you as an individual, here are some character points you may want to play with. Try these out.

Okay, let's define it this way so you can short circuit that whole process of growth or rather you can accelerate it so you can get to that final point much quicker in terms of their character, their dress, the type of show, you can help them develop routines, you can help them to actually put their routines together and say look, I've done these kinds of routines before.

You may want to try tweaking it this way or that way because what you're doing right now is probably going to lead to these kinds of problems because you've got the experience to do that.

You also help them with the whole business side of things, as well to get a venue to say okay...

➤ **Where are you?**

- a. What's your environment look like?
- b. Do you have nightclubs? Try there.
- c. Do you have lots of colleges? That's a good place to go to as well.

The whole grab bag of stuff we've been talking about over the last few sessions here is something you really focus on in detail with people isn't it.

Don: Yes, we go very deep. I start off with having a person hallucinate where they want to be. Not where they are but where they want to be, and that's the place we work on going to.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

It's just like I take a person who is like a piece of clay and we just begin to mold them, mold their character, mold their show, everything about them just becomes different.

It's a wonderful fantasy and that's what I encourage people to do. Let's fantasize, let's hallucinate. If you could do or be whatever you wanted to be or do, what would it be?

If there were no restrictions at all, what would it be? That's where I'd like to begin. From that point we cover everything we've talked about in these seminars and it becomes very personal, very one on one, and the good thing for individuals I work with is because I've been there, I've done that over the last 20 years, hypnotizing over a million people.

I get excited when I have the opportunity to work with new people. There's nothing for me right now that's better.

Igor: Honestly, I've had a pleasure working with you as well, and it really does make a difference I've got to say having someone there.

On the one side we talked about mixers and sound boards and things like that, but having someone there, even on the technical level alone saying plug this thing in here and slide it up and down and see what happens - slide it up higher, slide it down lower - having that physical experience and someone with experience talking you through it is really valuable.

That's not even touching on all the performance secrets we've talked about or the routines we've created and so on. I, for one, am very excited and very happy that you've taken the time to really lay out all the things that people need to think about if they want to be a great stage hypnotist.

We've got the idea of the business elements, we've got the technical elements, we've got the actual procedure, the process you do for your show and the biggest understanding of all which is that this is not a cookie cutter template, you've got to find it inside you to be a unique person and that's I guess where mentoring really helps.

Don: We've just scratched the tip of the iceberg here. There's so much more but it's been a pleasure being able to talk to you about this and going into the level of discussions that we have on this topic.

Igor: Thank you so much Don for coming and sharing your insights and experiences with us.

Anyone who wants to get a hold of Don go to SleepNow.com, that's his website, you'll find all the details you need about everything about Don on there.

Hypnosis Master – Don Spencer

End of Seminar

On that final note, everyone, as much as I hate to say this, this is the end of this particular session. We will be back again with another master next month.

Until then, I'm Igor Ledochowski with StreetHypnosis.com and I've been talking to the fastest hypnotist in the world, Don Spencer from SleepNow.com.

If you're interested in finding out more about our hypnosis training programs, just go to StreetHypnosis.com. We have over 30 different programs on all aspects of hypnosis and self-hypnosis. If you want to listen to Spencer's seminar, where he gives away his hard-earned and inspiring stage hypnosis insights, then go to StreetHypnosis.com/spence.

Meet Your Host

Each month's Interview with a Master will be hosted by Igor Ledochowski, a master hypnotist of international acclaim. He is regarded as one of the world's foremost experts and trainers in conversational or covert hypnosis.

Igor created the Private Hypnosis Club, the world's first community for master hypnotists.

He was the first ever hypnotist to release a full audio course on Conversational Hypnosis, the latest version of which is 'The Power Of Conversational Hypnosis' and is the No.1 best selling hypnosis course in the world.

Igor is also the creator of over 30 other advanced hypnosis Program. All his programs are available from:

www.StreetHypnosis.com