

*Eddie Dean, Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit, October 2017*



*Photos by Patricia Klich*

*Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* premiered at the *Circus Factory* in Cork, Ireland as the headlining show for the first Cork Circus Arts Festival, *Pitch'd*. My own performance was preceded by the Irish debut of juggler Asaf Mor's highly physicalised juggling show, *Nine to Five*. Mor's extremely physical and masterfully choreographed juggling show, helped to build audience expectations about the physical and technically demanding nature of my own performance. This is something which I have consciously pursued with my circus approach. *The Tangled World(s) of Quantum Physics*, for instance, depicts me performing a technical five ball juggling sequence in an effort to establish my credibility as a circus artist.

In this original one-man show, I publicly performed solo for the first time since *Mental Wi-Fi*. This was an important progression for me, as throughout my duo work of the previous years, I had acted primarily as presenter and "sender" and had, thus, not fully experienced "being psychic" onstage. The show was well attended, well received, and positively reviewed by Lauren Mulvhill in *Motley* magazine – UCC's official monthly magazine – in which I was described as 'rebellious' and a 'natural showman.'<sup>1</sup> According to Mulvhill: 'Dean's rebellious, 1950s-style look worked incredibly well with this particular set, and the entire show was thoroughly aesthetically pleasing.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mulvhill, Lauren. 'Smells Like Dean Spirit.' *Motley*. Oct 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Mulvhill, Lauren. 'Smells Like Dean Spirit.' *Motley*. Oct 2017.

In some regards, *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* was an adaption of *Unfathomable*, in which I replaced Maggie as “receiver” and the audience replaced me as “sender.” In this capacity, not only would I be the “receiver”, but I would also be able to experience the objectification which results from being stripped, blindfolded, and even subjected to apparent danger in these performances. This in turn would enable me to explore the role of the objectified “psychic” onstage, rather than subjecting my partners to this objectification. In doing this, I could even go *farther*, engaging in activities (such as stripping), which I would not have expected of my partners.

I removed the five-act structure of *Unfathomable* and condensed the lecture portion of the show into a single segment, as I had originally performed it in *Mental Wi-Fi*. I also incorporated additional elements including a strip search sequence, a “celebrity story,” and several new and original demonstrations in which audience members apparently employed their own apparent telepathic abilities.\* In contrast to the chess board flooring and many lighting and sound cues in *Unfathomable*, this one-man show took place in a warehouse, and experimented with the stripped-down aesthetic of contemporary circus.\*

This performance was also an extension of my dark TED Talk approach, through which I attempted to encode my performances with ambiguity in an attempt to situate my audiences in a liminal space. This liminality was clearly noted by Lauren Mulvhill in *Motley*:

It should also be noted that Eddie Dean, as a researcher and lecturer, is not attempting to present his work as a type of magic, but as a form of science; this meant that a lot of facts and figures were used throughout the show to back up his claims. While I didn’t have any means of fact-checking these claims at the time... it certainly sounded convincing, and was never dry in its presentation. Saying that, though, while Dean’s apparent mind-reading abilities are enthralling, I’m a skeptic at heart, and that’s something I had to repress slightly in order to fully enjoy the show. I say ‘slightly’ because even for me, some of that stuff was mind-boggling.<sup>3</sup>

The liminal location of the warehouse on the outskirts of the city in an industrial estate further assisted in framing the performance and foregrounding the liminality of the experience. In the

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\* ‘*Motley* Magazine Review of...’ See appendices: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

\* Contemporary circus is an approach to circus characterized by a bare and stripped-down aesthetic, as well as for multi-disciplinary and ensemble-based approaches, often incorporating the use of text. Contemporary circus is exemplified in the work of the Montreal-based *Les 7 Doigts de la main*.

<sup>3</sup> Mulvhill, Lauren. ‘Smells Like Dean Spirit.’ *Motley*. Oct 2017.

review in *Motley* – for instance – Mulvhill writes: ‘I’ll try almost anything once, which is how I ended up in a dark warehouse down an even darker road in the middle of Cork City one Sunday night. A red glow crept out of the doorway and onto the ground outside as I approached the building and was directed in. I had reached the Circus Factory.’<sup>4</sup> *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* opened with the screening of *The Tangled World(s) of Quantum Physics*. After an opening story/joke and an opening demonstration, I allowed myself to be “strip searched.”

### The Bodily Strip Search



*Photo by Patricia Klich*

My experience with stripping and semi-nude performance during *Project Viola Ten* had led me to the decision to include a “strip search” (down to my trunks) in *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit*. Incidentally, it was my own idea to be “stripped” and “searched” during *Project Viola Ten*. While not *strictly* necessary, the stripping process did serve a practical purpose. In the review in *Motley*, Mulvhill notes the following: ‘We had the privilege of hearing the first five minutes of his lecture on the topic, after which he promptly stripped down to his underwear to prove that he wasn’t wearing any sort of wire.’<sup>5</sup> Mulvhill reacts, ‘I wasn’t sure if that was part

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<sup>4</sup> Mulvhill, Lauren. ‘Smells Like Dean Spirit.’ *Motley*. Oct 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Mulvhill, Lauren. ‘Smells Like Dean Spirit.’ *Motley*. Oct 2017.

of the lecture or not because needless to say it's something I've yet happen to see in Boole 1.'<sup>6</sup> \* She also included the following parenthetical exchange: ("It's like you're avoiding looking at him," my companion said to me. I responded, "I'm just giving him a bit of privacy.")'<sup>7</sup>

The justification for stripping down was inspired by the turn of the century conjurer, escape artist – and by some lines of thought, the first modern mentalist – Harry Houdini.\* Houdini regularly appeared semi-nude in performance – on stage, in police stations, in publicity photos – displaying his 'leonine physique'<sup>8</sup> and using semi-nude 'beefcake publicity photos'<sup>9</sup> at a time when it was considered quite titillating, or even shocking, to do so. As I see it, part of Houdini's genius was in creating a completely non-sexual context for this "beefcake" show, by ostensibly stripping in order to "prove" that he did not have keys or lock picks concealed on his body. Circus, as well, has long employed similar – ostensibly non-sexual – displays of skin, physique, and discreet eroticism.

The strip search portion of my performance not only offered a degree of "proof" that I was not 'wearing a wire'<sup>10</sup> (as Mulvihill nicely phrases it), or otherwise accomplishing my demonstrations through the use of concealed electronics, but also allowed me to play with the tension between objectification and narcissism. To adapt these ideas into my one-man show, I purchased the exact style of white *Calvin Klein* trunks worn by Justin Bieber in his notorious advertisements for that brand. These commercials – while famous in their own right – are perhaps most infamous for being parodied by Kate McKinnon on *Saturday Night Live*.<sup>11</sup> In selecting these trunks as the undergarment to be eventually exposed, I was exploring my superstar approach, tapping into pop-cultural, consumerist, hyper-sexual iconography, in an appropriately self-referential or tongue-in-cheek manner. By putting my physique on display I intended to differentiate myself from the vast majority of mentalists and conjurers. My exploration of the circus approach allowed me to literally

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<sup>6</sup> Mulvihill, Lauren. 'Smells Like Dean Spirit.' *Motley*. Oct 2017.

\* 'Motley Magazine review of...' See appendices: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

<sup>7</sup> Mulvihill, Lauren. 'Smells Like Dean Spirit.' *Motley*. Oct 2017.

\* Houdini appropriated spirit-ties (escapes) and covert information gathering techniques from spiritualists and clairvoyants, and presented these feats in a context in which they were divorced from their spiritualist and clairvoyant roots. He was among the first – and certainly the most visible – practitioner to do so. In many ways, Houdini paved the way for his young friend, Joseph Dunninger who, following Houdini's death at 52 years old, went on to become the world's first 'master mentalist.'

<sup>8</sup> Kalush, William and Larry Sloman. *The Secret Life of Houdini*. 2006. p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> Kalush, William and Larry Sloman. *The Secret Life of Houdini*. 2006. p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> Mulvihill, Lauren. 'Smells Like Dean Spirit.' *Motley*. Oct 2017.

<sup>11</sup> 'Calvin Klein Ad – SNL.' *Saturday Night Live*. YouTube. 18 Jan 2015.

put my physical abilities on display in order to imply the physically demanding nature of my demonstrations.

I have previously written about the undressing of the male body in conjunction with the revelation of tattoos.\* At this point, I would like to consider the theoretical implications of striptease, more generally, in performance. Admittedly, my strip search was not a strip tease *per se*, in the sense that it was (at least ostensibly) not erotically motivated. In reality, however, my experimentation along these lines were driven by a desire to explore issues of objectification and narcissism on stage. While I was not seeking eroticism *per se*, I was definitely intending to foreground the physicality of my so-called “demonstrations” while putting my body on display as a ‘leonine’<sup>12</sup> specimen and sexualized object.

The disproving of electronic methodology was also an important consideration, and I do believe that stripping went some way toward accomplishing this. However, just as Houdini’s loinclothed photos do not prove that a key – which is a very small object after all – was not concealed in his mouth, loincloth, hair, or even anus (as was sometimes the case);<sup>13</sup> neither did my strip search absolutely disprove the concealment of electronics. Indeed, most spectators are not at all familiar with the types of devices which my stripping did and did not disprove.

Philosopher Roland Barthes, in an essay on the Parisian (female) striptease, has called attention to the conventions of the form which, Barthes argues, serve to mask and conceal the objectified body, even as it is revealed. According to Barthes, the ‘ritual gestures which have been seen a thousand times’ in fact, ‘hides nudity, and smothers the spectacle under a glaze of superfluous yet essential gestures.’<sup>14</sup> Yet, nudity is not the object of strip tease and Barthes calls attention to the ‘G-String covered with diamonds or sequins which is the very end of striptease,’ writing that ‘this ultimate triangle, by its pure and geometrical shape, by its hard and shiny material, bars the way to the sexual parts like a sword of purity...’<sup>15</sup>

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\* See: ‘Visions and Revisions.’

<sup>12</sup> Kalush, William and Larry Sloman. *The Secret Life of Houdini*. 2006. p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> Kalush, William and Larry Sloman. *The Secret Life of Houdini*. 2006. p. 121.

<sup>14</sup> Barthes, Roland. ‘Striptease.’ *Mythologies*. 1957. Trans. Annette Lavers. 1972. pp. 84-86.

<sup>15</sup> Barthes, Roland. ‘Striptease.’ *Mythologies*. 1957. Trans. Annette Lavers. 1972. pp. 84-86.

In *The Actor in Costume*, Aoife Monks has written at length about the relationship between striptease and costuming. According to Monks, striptease may be described as ‘a form generally performed without speech’ based on an ‘opposition between the objectified (passive) female body displayed for voyeuristic (male) pleasure.’<sup>16</sup> According to Monks, striptease is ‘a codified gesture of eroticism, rather than actually *being* erotic, just as the strippers’ undressing body promises nudity, but is never quite naked.’<sup>17</sup> Even so, Monks also reminds us that ‘nudity in the end is not the shedding of costume, but another manifestation of costume onstage, another version of the actor’s body at the theatre.’<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Monks argues, that ‘taking off or putting on clothes...crosses the boundary of [the] normal body.’ Accordingly, she argues that ‘it is less the loss of clothing that matters, as much as the shift in the boundaries of the body that makes the striptease erotic.’<sup>19</sup> According to Monks, the naked body ‘has a much less powerfully erotic effect than one that interacts with dress, space and objects.’<sup>20</sup> Monks also explores the different, but no less complex dynamic which can be observed in – and the notable lack of – male stripping on the stage. Monks writes:

The fact that undressing is a way for performers to lose their status, may explain why the male body is often presented in an already-undressed state onstage in performance art. For a performance artist to appear onstage naked, male and not be funny seems to require that nudity be established from the get-go, rather than emerging from the act of undressing. Naked male bodies are a commonplace of body and performance art; forms that emerged from the visual art and avant-garde practices of the early twentieth century. In order to ensure that the realness and presence of the male body is paramount, without comic effect, these performances have developed theatrical strategies of ritual and containment that are structurally similar to those of striptease.<sup>21</sup>

The strip search segment of *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* was performed silently to music (Elvis Presley, *My Baby Left Me*, 1974). I did not strip entirely nude, but remained in my white *Calvin Klein* trunks. As Monks has indicated, the process of removing

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<sup>16</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 105.

<sup>17</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 118.

<sup>19</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> Monks, Aoife. *The Actor in Costume*. 2009. p. 109.

my clothing – as a male – resulted in laughter and general merriment and perhaps an awkward tension. This reaction is observed, for example, in Mulvihill’s review in *Motley* magazine.

On my subsequent televised appearance on *Ireland’s Got Talent*, my stripping was even subjected to ridicule. Jason Byrne, for instance, made references to the “antenna” concealed in my trunks, while Michelle Visage criticized my choice of the colour white, which – she explained – left nothing to the imagination. She claimed to be unable to look away and, thus, found it very distracting. I, on the other hand, found the running jokes from the judges (excluding Louis Walsh) for much of my performance and throughout the post-performance discussion, to be quite grating and reflective of the loss of status which Monks has described in detail.

In *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit*, I attempted to circumvent such an outcome. Before beginning to undress, for instance, I cautioned the audience: ‘please keep your cat calls, and your hooting, and your hollering to a minimum, because I’d still like to crawl out of here tonight with a little bit of dignity.’ At this point, I signalled for the music: ‘Hit it.’ I do not consider the strip search concept to be a failure. Indeed, inspired by Houdini, I *desired* to render myself objectified. However – much as Houdini had previously done – I went to some lengths in order to justify and disguise my striptease as a necessary part of my performance; an example of the thoroughness of my “scientific approach.” This approach allowed me to offer myself for objectification, while at the same time calling attention to the role of the audience in striptease; essentially saying to the audience with a wink: *shame on you for objectifying me*.

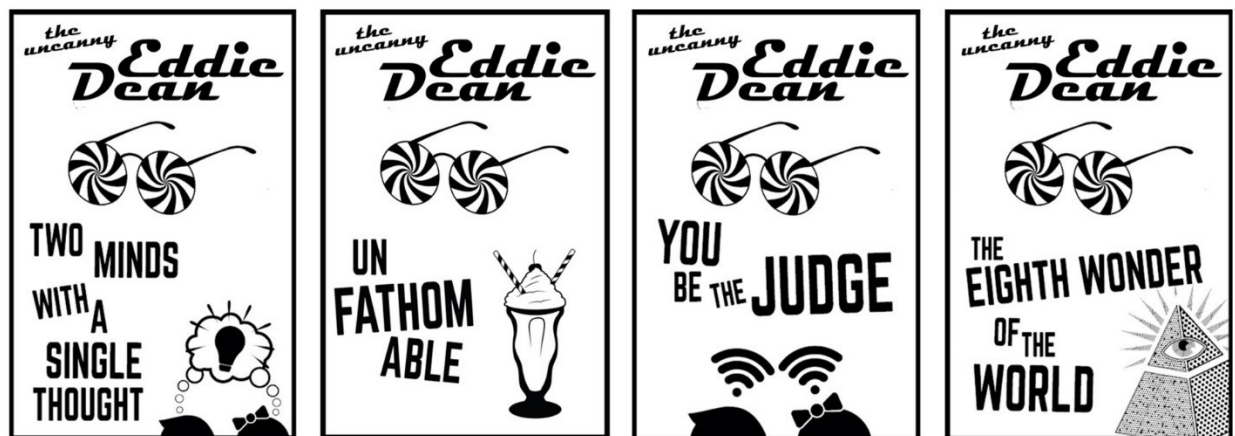
I fuelled these flames to some degree, by subtly incorporating ambiguous innuendo into my script. For example, after I had stripped down to my trunks, I turned 360 degrees and, indicating my trunks, said: ‘I got these in the *Justin Bieber: I’m a Belieber* catalogue... well... I don’t just read it for the articles.’ At which point, I winked at the audience. In point of fact, I was not even naked beneath my trunks. I was wearing a nude coloured dance belt constructed of a thick fabric designed to compress, conceal, arrange, and *contain* my real nude body. But informing the audience of this fact might have spoiled some of the fun.

On *Ireland’s Got Talent*, I was not able to hold control over the judges as I had more or less managed to do with the audience at my one-man show. The judges had microphones and they – not I – were the stars of that show. Under such circumstances, my attempt to coyly “play it both

ways” crumbled, and I felt *truly* objectified and stripped of status and dignity. It is perhaps also worth noting that prior to my stripping, both the judges of *Ireland’s Got Talent* and the hosts of *Ireland’s Got Mór Talent* had complemented, or at least commented, on my suit in some way. A number of these comments were televised, such as Glenda Gilson’s comment that I looked like I was ‘from a gangster movie’ and Denise VanOuten’s opening comment ‘ooh, you look very smart.’

Whereas on *Ireland’s Got Talent*, I was to stay stripped, and perform the entire demonstration while blindfolded and in my trunks, in *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit* – after being stripped and having my clothing searched – I did something which is almost never observed within the conventions of striptease. I got dressed again in full view of the audience. But I did not dress fully. I put on my trousers, socks, shoes, and white tank top. Once again attempting to tap into pop culture and classic Hollywood iconography, this costume choice was inspired by Paul Newman’s pool hustling character, Fast Eddie Felson in Robert Rossen’s 1961 film, *The Hustler*, as well as Marlon Brando’s bestial character, Stanley Kowalski in Elia Kazan’s 1951 screen adaptation of Tennessee Williams’ *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

## Superstar Status



*Eddie Dean cards by Clifton Barnhart*

After performing an abbreviated historical lecture and Zener card test, adapted from *Unfathomable*, I performed the murder game as originally performed in *Two Minds with a Single*



*Thought.* Next, I told a story about an encounter with William Shatner in which I either demonstrated telepathy against all odds; or got exceedingly lucky. In response to that incident, William Shatner allegedly called me a rock star. It was from this story that the title of the show was drawn. That story, and other “non-demonstration” activities, were designed to provide texture and to imply status. To perform *only* demonstrations would run the risk of being – in the words of turn of the century purported telepathist Agnes Zancig – ‘too suggestive of the pet puppy dog who is brought out on certain occasions to perform his parlour tricks before his mistress’s visitors.’<sup>22</sup> As I attempted to distance myself from such a structure, I began to consider the topic of “proof”.

Many stage mentalists with conjuring associations – such as Joseph Dunninger or David Berglas – not only performed consecutive demonstrations, but each demonstration concluded successfully; offering apparent “proof” of their claims in the process. Mentalists with spiritualist or psychic associations, however – such as Anna Eva Fay or Uri Geller – do not always offer apparent proof. In fact, these performers sometimes offer their failures as a form of *anti-proof* in which the lack of proof seemed to prove their legitimacy. It is logical, after all, to conclude that if these performers were using “tricks” then surely, they wouldn’t fail so often or so spectacularly.

With this in mind, I began to consider the possibility of storytelling. I was particularly struck by a psychically themed story related *without proof* by purported telepathist Julius Zancig in his autobiography, *Adventures in Many Lands*. According to Zancig:

At length I set out to reach my hotel, and thought as it was a nice night I would walk. This I did and had almost reached the turning when I felt somebody behind me. I turned quickly, and as I did so two men came towards me in a very threatening attitude... At that moment, I remember, I clearly visualised the scene... I was undecided what to do, but my indecision rapidly evaporated when I saw the flying figure of my wife coming towards me accompanied by a Japanese constable.

The two men at once took to their heels and fled, whilst my wife said that she had sensed something wrong all the time, and a moment before she had actually received the impression of the place where the two men were about to attack me, and had fortunately found a police officer just outside the hotel and brought him along with her... Had it not been for the curious intuition of my wife there is no doubt that I should have suffered some sort of assault, probably by means of Ju- Ju-Jitsu...<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Zancig, Julius. *Adventures in Many Lands*. 1924. p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Zancig, Julius. *Adventures in Many Lands*. 1924. p. 24.

Suitably impressed by Zancig's thrilling, proof-less, and incoherent claim (was it telepathy or precognition?) I decided to dedicate a portion of my one-man show to telling stories – seemingly heart-wrenchingly authentic ones – which seemed to describe a number of my own exceptional experiences. In telling these stories, I would make no attempt to offer proof. By offering no proof for my incredible stories, I would imply that I was above needing to “prove” myself.

In this pursuit, I looked to the behaviour of celebrities on chat shows, who often tell amazing, and sometimes difficult to believe stories, but rarely bother trying to prove that their stories are true and don't seem to care whether their “true” stories are believed or not. In reality, these people may, or may not, care. However, in terms of behaviour, they behave “high-status” enough to not *act* like they care. This “high status” (ie., superstar) approach may be contrasted with the “low status” – and potentially desperate-seeming – attempts to prove which may come across as “begging” to be believed. This is a manipulative approach to be sure, particularly as my word as a doctoral researcher is backed with a certain amount of credibility not afforded to most performers of mentalism.

While devising the storytelling portion of my one-man show, I found further inspiration in an article in *The New York Times* that described Derek DelGaudio's one-man show *In and of Itself: Identity is an Illusion*, as having ‘scrambled magic and memoir and revealed something of the psychological forces that might drive a boy into a corner of show business defined by obfuscation and control.’<sup>24</sup> According to DelGaudio: ‘You don't become a magician because [your] grandfather bought [you] a magic kit. It's because your parents fought and told you were worthless. It's because you were in circumstances so bad you needed to escape.’<sup>25</sup> DelGaudio describes his monologue in *In and of Itself: Identity is an Illusion* as the only ‘honest origin story’ in ‘a magic show.’<sup>26</sup>

Of course, we seem to have to take DelGaudio at face value that his “honest” origin story is *actually* honest. Could it be, perhaps, a case of a skilled liar and actor doing what he does? I don't know, but in light of the favourable reviews and press this show has received – much of which has noted the truthfulness of the performance – this performance apparently *feels authentic* to many

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<sup>24</sup> Weiner, Jonah. ‘The Magician Who Wants to Break Magic.’ *The New York Times*. 15 Mar 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Weiner, Jonah. ‘The Magician Who Wants to Break Magic.’ *The New York Times*. 15 Mar 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Weiner, Jonah. ‘The Magician Who Wants to Break Magic.’ *The New York Times*. 15 Mar 2017.

spectators and reviewers. For instance, on *GQ.com*, after journalist Sam Schube notes the irony of using magic as a tool for ‘telling the truth,’ DelGaudio agrees that such an approach is ‘dumb [and] not very wise’ but he also argues that his work ‘happens to live in that space, that paradoxical space of, like, Whoa. That can be both alive and dead. There’s no way a magician can say something meaningful. [Or] honest... But I hope to make it so.’<sup>27</sup>

In August of 2018, I attended one of the final performances of this show at the Daryl Roth Theater in Manhattan. It is among the most powerful theatre experiences I have ever had, and I spoke with DelGaudio following the performance. He insisted, as does Director Frank Oz in an online interview,<sup>28</sup> that everything said in the performance is true. Having seen the show, I find this hard to believe\* – but at the very least – Derek’s position on this is clear, both on and off the stage.

I was also inspired by the previously referenced Panti Bliss’ one (wo)man show *High Heels in Low Places*. One segment of that performance which resonated strongly with me was Bliss’ humorous recounting of the time she met the international superstar Madonna. Bliss’ story was not exactly complementary of Madonna – who Bliss described as ‘a cunt’ – but I remember finding the story to be funny, impressive, and credible. The voyeuristic aspects of such stories cannot be ignored. The public seems to crave the “inside scoop” on celebrities. And, as I have argued regarding *The Amazing Kreskin*,\* such stories bolster the credibility of the storyteller, provide social proof, and – by nature of the association with an A-list celebrity – imply a high status by association. My observation about DelGaudio’s origin story can also be said of Bliss’ story about Madonna. As an audience member, I do not know whether Bliss’ story was true. I assume that it was true. But the story would have been no less effective or believable if it was entirely false. In fact, even if the story *was* true, it was inevitably enhanced, exaggerated, or at the very least, specifically constructed in order to achieve maximum impact.

While contemplating storytelling and authenticity, I also came across an article on Amanda Chantel Bacon, a luxury wellness guru selling extravagant supplements – which ‘are not FDA-

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<sup>27</sup> Schube, Sam. ‘Derek DelGaudio’s Genre-Bending Magic Show Will Make You Feel Things.’ *GQ.com*. 16 Jul 2018.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Derek DelGaudio & Frank Oz Discuss “In & of Itself.”’ *BUILDseriesNYC*. *YouTube*. 28 Jun 2017.

\* For instance, one portion of the show purportedly features a recorded phone conversation between DelGaudio and a crooked gambler identified only as “the Wolf.” Yet, it is well-known that Frank Oz himself provided the voice for this “character.”

\* ‘Kreskin: Television Personality.’ See appendices: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

approved, and have not been proven to work’<sup>29</sup> – to a clientele including Gwyneth Paltrow, Jennifer Aniston, and Alicia Keys.<sup>30</sup> According to an article in *The New York Times*, Bacon ‘perfected the celebrity wellness business.’<sup>31</sup> *Vox* claims that Bacon ‘followed the well-worn formula of the wellness guru’ and describes the formula in ‘five easy steps.’<sup>32</sup> These five steps may be roughly summarized as: ‘Have a compelling origin story’ which leads to a ‘eureka moment’ and then use those ‘transformative experiences to sell something’ using ‘anecdotes that back up your work.’<sup>33</sup> The final step is to ‘be gorgeous’ because ‘being the change you promise to deliver is a key part of the formula.’<sup>34</sup> After reading this article I set to work to create an origin story, a eureka moment, and a celebrity story which would support my claims. These stories would serve as subtext for my performances and would be considered for inclusion in my own one-man show.

After constructing these three stories, I selected only my celebrity story for inclusion in my one-man show. I then collaborated with friend and colleague, comedy writer and stunt show performer Matt Baker,\* to maximize the comic potential of the piece. In this story, I describe flying to Kentucky to perform at a private party hosted by actor and television host William Shatner. At that party, I was asked to perform an outrageous test of telepathy in order to settle a very large wager between Shatner and another guest at the party. I managed to pass the test by sheer luck – or was it telepathy?

This story – while being “realistically” self-deprecating – is designed to subtly affirm my status as an international expert on both theoretically real and fraudulent telepathy. The story also seeks to maximize plausibility by adopting a confessional tone in which I admit to doubting my ability to complete the telepathy task I was given. At the conclusion of the story, not only was I able to ambiguously complete the task, but my abilities were hugely appreciated by the great William

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<sup>29</sup> Young, Molly. ‘How Amanda Chantal Bacon Perfected the Celebrity Wellness Business.’ *The New York Times Magazine*. 25 May 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Young, Molly. ‘How Amanda Chantal Bacon Perfected the Celebrity Wellness Business.’ *The New York Times Magazine*. 25 May 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Young, Molly. ‘How Amanda Chantal Bacon Perfected the Celebrity Wellness Business.’ *The New York Times Magazine*. 25 May 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Belluz, Julia. ‘The 5 rules of success for highly effective lifestyle gurus.’ *Vox.com*. 27 May 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Belluz, Julia. ‘The 5 rules of success for highly effective lifestyle gurus.’ *Vox.com*. 27 May 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Belluz, Julia. ‘The 5 rules of success for highly effective lifestyle gurus.’ *Vox.com*. 27 May 2017.

\* ‘Biographies of Collaborators.’ See appendices: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

Shatner himself, who bequeathed upon me the title, *rock star*. The final version of my William Shatner celebrity story, and the first drafts of my origin story and *eureka* moment may be read in the appendices of this dissertation.\*

## The Rock Star Aesthetic



*Neon Eddie Dean design by Clifton Barnhart*

In Rogan Taylor's 1985 book, *The Death and Resurrection Show: From Shaman to Superstar*, Taylor draws a connection between shamans and rock stars, demonstrating how rock stars transfix and provide catharsis for the public, who in turn, imbue these entertainers with the mystical powers of the shaman.<sup>35</sup> Throughout the performance, I attempted to explore a “rock star” aesthetic. In addition to displaying a significant amount of skin – much of it tattooed with esoteric symbolism – I also popped pills and drank a blue energy drink without calling attention to the act. I also featured rock music at three different points in the show.

Through my fascination with – and exploration of – the superstar aesthetic, I selected the phrase *Telepathy Superstars* as a catchphrase for the Deans. Our superstar trading cards, for example, listed us as *Telepathy Superstars*; and had it not been for the insistence of our collaborator Martin Hart, I would have chosen the title *The Deans: Telepathy Superstars* for our show, rather than

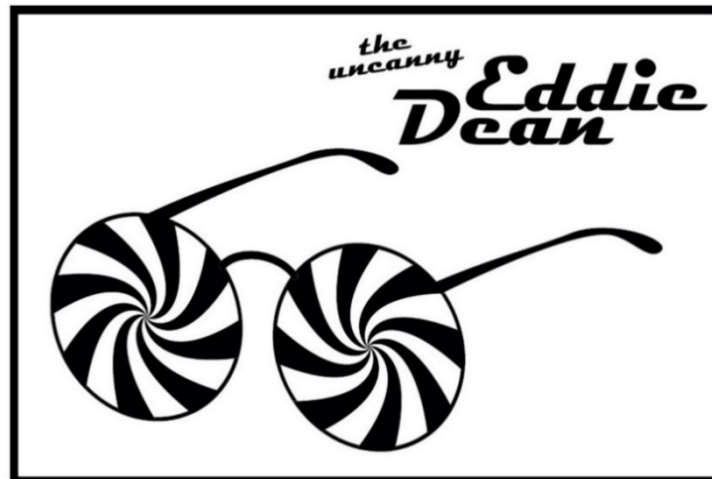
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\* ‘The Guru Studies: Origin Story and Eureka Experience.’ See appendices:  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

<sup>35</sup> Taylor, Rogan. *The Death and Resurrection Show: From Shaman to Superstar*. 1985.

*Unfathomable*. With the dissolution of the Deans, I felt that the rock star aesthetic was better suited to the new “lone wolf” direction of my one-man show.

Consequently, I decided that a progression of rock music, from Elvis Presley to *the Ramones* to *Nirvana* would form the soundtrack for the show. Seeking to emphasize my bad boy status, I attempted to invoke the style, not only of rock stars, but also “method” icons such as *the rebel without a cause* James Dean and *the wild one* Marlon Brando. Both Dean and Brando were known for reckless behaviour offscreen, as well as on, and I attempted to foreground my “reckless” side in *Eddie Dean Telepathy Rock Star: Smells Like Dean Spirit*. For instance, the promotional blurb\* for the show describes an incident in which I apparently ‘destroy[ed] a laboratory’ and this (staged) incident is shown in the trailer for the documentary of *Project Viola Ten*.



*Hypno-glasses design by Clifton Barnhart*

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\* ‘Promotional Blurb, Telepathy Rockstar,’ See appendices:  
<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/676366/676367>

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