

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

Never before, has an Australian magician dedicated so much time, effort, heart and soul to the Australian magic community in the entire history of Australian magic like Tim Ellis. He hesitated to be featured, but it's *my* section and I insisted! When you read his story, it's incredible to note how many projects he simultaneously managed and maintained at any one time. It is a remarkable feat, accomplished only by the most organised, proactive, high achievers in the country. A very rare occurrence in any field... and the only one to happen in Australian magic... which probably explains the overdue accolade.

Tim Ellis was born in 1963 and began his career in magic at age 10, after receiving his first magic kit from his Grandpa. Tim played with it now and again, until a grade 5 classroom activity made him realise the power of misdirection. His 5 minute magic show turned into a daylong marathon... normal schoolwork, to Tim's relief, fell by the wayside as he kept inventing trick after trick to his classmate's amazement and teacher's delight.

He was 13 years old when he began performing magic shows at schools, fetes and children's parties. At 14, he was the youngest magician ever, to join the **Magic Circle of Victoria**. He performed in the evening sessions called "Harmony" but, he didn't want to perform just *any* magic you could buy from a magic shop... he invented his *own* material so he could stand out and be original.

There was a certain resistance to young people in the club so, Lyndsay Rietschel (a caring, insightful, albeit strict mentor and tutor) formed **'The Young Magicians'** on Saturday afternoons in a scout hall where they could learn magic.

At 15, he began competing on **'Young Talent Time'** and at 16, made appearances on **'The Earlybird Show'**.

No-one was learning anything of value at magic clubs... and the standard was poor which, in Tim's view, was why he ended up winning 4 out of 5 trophies from the club at 17 years of age, although he was declared **'Teenage Champion Magician'** at the 17th Australian International Convention of Magicians 1980.

He won a talent contest (in a field comprised almost entirely of singers) at the Knox Club, winning a trip to the Gold Coast (which he gave away to his Mum and Dad) as well as an appearance on **'Radio Auditions'**- a very popular *radio* talent show hosted by John McMahon. (Do you think they might have expected a singer to win?)

That same year, he formed his own company **'Magic Unlimited'** (in business now for 20 years) with Terry McSweeney and Duck Cameron who, after a few years, started their own companies.

Tim left **Ivanhoe Grammar School** in 1980, after being editor of the school newspaper and winner of the Drama Prize and Public Speaking Award.

In 1981, Tim was accepted into **Swinburne Film and Television School** to study producing and directing at age 18 moving out of home and supporting himself solely on the earnings from his magic shows. Alongside David Jones, Doug Tremlett, Ian Baxter and Barry Govan, he became a resident close-up magician at **'Babushka: House of Magic'** (later known as **'Merlin's'**) until 1986.

At 19, Tim devised, produced and starred in **'The Magic Club - a Musical Magical'** (1982-1984), with his peers, after Lyndsay Reitschel encouraged the older magicians to spread their wings and leave the safety of 'The Young Magicians' nest.

Tim began performing school shows in 1984, aged 21, with Terry Dansic touring the north of Australia (WA, NT & QLD) in **'Star Magic'**. At 22, he created and toured his own (solo) school show, **'Magic Unlimited'** (with his characters Professor Googalfitz, Bon, The Spy, Spaceman, Mitch and Kev the Cleaner).

By 1986, aged 23, Tim made the first of 10 guest appearances on **'Young Talent Time'** as Professor Googalfitz, Spellbinder and Kev the Cleaner.

This was the year he started to become a regular fixture on Australian TV, putting Tim well and truly in the public eye. He also lectured on Psychic Fraud to the National Skeptics Convention and was awarded **'Best Close-Up Magician in Australia'** and **'Best Trick'** at the **20th Australian International Convention of Magicians** 1986.

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

That same year, Tim devised and produced **'The Festival of Magic'** which expanded to the 10 day national festival **'Magic Week'**.

Magic Week ran for 9 years. The reason for magic week was to promote public awareness of magic, showcasing all talent throughout Australia who were interested in performing. It clearly demonstrated to the public that magic wasn't just children's entertainment, therefore creating a new market for magicians in the corporate arena. The first week featured 10 major activities (including **'The Halloween Hop'** Magic Convention and **'The Ultimate Magic Show'**) plus numerous smaller events. In subsequent years, to kick off Magic Week, Tim would perform one of his "Cunning Stunts" to grab media attention. Tim managed to get 'Magic Week' publicised through the newspaper, radio and television... all solely developed, produced and implemented by Tim... providing financial backing from his *own* income.

Our busy boy, at age 24, created and performed the role 'Head Chief Rabbit' in **'The Wind and the Willows'**, an annual holiday attraction in Melbourne's Botanical Gardens which is still running, featuring Tim's invented character. His **'Living Mannequin'** and **'Robot'** characters were also born thanks to Myer's Electro Expo and Just Jeans desire to increase the traffic in their city store.

Tim's 'Cunning Stunt', driving a \$100,000 Mercedes Benz while blindfolded, promoted **'Magic Week 87'**. He also brought the incredible Tom Ogden out from the US and devised a magic competition which saw the successful competitor (Ricky Ozimo) win a week's engagement at **Hollywood's Magic Castle**, performing alongside Tim and Tom Ogden.

At 25 years old when he was named one of the 'Faces of 88' in **Harper's Bazaar** magazine.

He returned to **Hollywood's Magic Castle** for another week, and performed at 'Expo 88' in Brisbane. Tim was 'Buried Alive' on national television to promote another run of **'Magic Week'** and began the first of ten guest appearances on **The Midday Show**.

26 years old, 1989 and Tim created **'The Magic School'** and, with his mentor Lyndsay Reitschel, taught magic to dozens of students including Enzo Ficco, Warren Jackman, Cath Jamison and Michael Boyd.

He toured Victorian schools with Wendy Richards in his **'Spellbinder'** show. It is true when Tim mentions that kids are the best audience... they're an excellent measure as to how good your show is. School shows are a great way to practise small pieces for **FISM** in front of a hypercritical audience. Tim performed a 4 month season at the **'Comedy Cafe'**, returned to the **Magic Castle** for a two-week engagement in Hollywood and performed another 'Cunning Stunt' to kick start **'Magic Week'**... his infamous **Yarra River Trunk Escape**, where he was chained and locked inside a wooden trunk and lowered by crane into the murky depths of the Yarra River, Melbourne. The fact that there was zero visibility in the water hadn't occurred to Tim in training. A shiver of panic shot through his body when the muddy waters rose around him but, in seconds, he focussed on the job at hand and thankfully escaped unharmed.

Tim published the first of 101 issues of the original AMM (**Australian Magic Monthly**) which lasted over 9 years.

27 years of age, Tim took out the **'Best Stage Magician in Australia'** award at the 22nd National Convention of Magicians 1990. He performed his close-up show 'Pure Magic' at the Victorian Arts Centre and toured the **Northern Territory** with Christof! and Peter Gray in a show for adults called **'Every Trick in the Book'**. When they performed this show in 'Magic Week', Peter Reveen exclaimed *"Producers must be knocking down your door for that show."* and said they should take the show to Las Vegas. Then, off to **Fiji** with Andrew Gill for the city's main event of the year, the Sigatoka Festival, where the city strung a banner across the street reading *'Sigatoka Welcomes Tim Ellis'*.

When Tim was 28, 1991, he toured his new school show **'Dreamweaver'** throughout Victorian schools. He invented **MagicSports** (which is now played in Belgium and Germany and may be played in the USA in 2001) and became a regular columnist for **Genii Magazine**. With 'Dateline Downunder' Tim had the opportunity to write about himself but, again, chose to give other Aussie magicians an opportunity to be noticed.

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

FISM - the World Championship of Magic - in Lausanne, Switzerland, was only two weeks away, Tim had entered his interactive television act in the close up section, along with a coin act he felt was technically challenging enough for FISM (Lyndsay thought the coins were uninteresting and let down the act, he was right!). Tim had always wanted to do a trick in the style of a rap and, in a flow of inspiration he settled on 'The Six Card Repeat' and wrote the lyrics in a restaurant while waiting for Andrew Gill. The next night was **'Showcase Sunday'** at Witches in Britches' (a monthly show Tim created for magicians to try out new material) Peter Reveen saw Tim debut his '6 Card Rap' and insisted that Tim enter it in the competition at FISM. Tim hadn't really prepared and it was off the cuff, but he gave it a shot. The audience went wild! However, no Australian clubs had a copy of the FISM rules which state that a competitor needs to perform more than one trick, and the act needed to be a lot more than 3 minutes long. Tim's act was one trick of less than 3 minutes... however, the judges were so impressed that they insisted on giving him a prize despite the competition rules. Tim was awarded **'Special Prize of the Jury'**. During Tim's performance, Peter Reveen saw how impressed **David Copperfield** was with Tim's act. Peter took Tim over to meet David who said, *"Man, you really rocked the house!"*

Tim turned 29, 1992, and took on the role of Vice-President of the **23rd Australian Convention of Magicians**. Tim's ideas and organisational skills helped turn this event into the biggest magic convention ever held in the Southern Hemisphere, with a record breaking attendance. Tim even used his own money to bring out a third guest artist, Max Maven, to join Alan Shaxon and Mac King. Tim was asked to appear as the special guest at the **International Brotherhood of Magicians National Convention** in Salt Lake City to perform his '6 Card Rap' and again, performed for a week at **Hollywood's Magic Castle**.

1992 was also the year that Tim bought **Bernard's Magic Shop**, an Australian icon, which he owned until 1997.

Bernard's Magic Shop was a regular haunt for many magicians, including Tim in earlier years. It is a childhood dream of many young magicians to be surrounded by so much magic... so when Gerald Taylor, previous owner of Bernard's, offered Tim the opportunity to purchase the shop, he jumped at the chance. Tim had a plan... to increase the \$240,000 annual turnover to nearly half a million in under 5 years, even to the detriment of his own magic career. Tim, as you may have guessed, is extremely goal oriented and thrives on achievement... so, with Tim's promotional wizardry and insight, along with Bryan Wood's incredible marketing skills, talent and extraordinary mind, they did just that. Tim instigated Bernard's Magic Shop Catalogues, Videologues, The Junior Magician's Magic Club, Trade Nights, Roadshows, and produced **18 Bryan Wood Teaching Tapes** along with many other marketing tricks of the trade. **Bernard's Junior Magic Club** was formed... yet another school of magic. Instigated by Tim Ellis and run by Bryan Wood for 5 years, this magic club was the hub of young magic activity between 1993 and 1998. (Later, Tim and Bryan also co-ordinated classes for adults at the **Praharan College of TAFE** and **Melbourne High School**.) Bryan is a master of sleight of hand and the art of entertainment so, with his teaching background, successfully helped to shape some fine aspiring young magicians.

Bernard's became a hive of activity while Tim owned the shop, acting as a centre of magic where magicians would converge to discuss the magical arts, play with new ideas and tricks, encourage each other and swap business ideas. (International guests became so familiar with Tim's niche that even today, they come to Melbourne, first stop Bernard's, in search of the magical genius of Aus.) Then, both Tim and Bryan decided it was time to pursue greater dreams.

FISM was in Yokohama, Japan in 1994, and at 31 years old, Tim performed his fabulous 1950's style cups and balls routine that appropriately ended in a liquid (milkshake) load. It was a total surprise for the judges and won him the **Silver Medal for 'Close-Up Magic'**... only one point short of qualifying for the Grand Prix award.

Tim also performed another "Cunning Stunt", escaping from a **straitjacket** dangling from a crane, in Alice Springs. He toured schools with Michael Boyd in **'Pure Magic'**, and produced his own teaching videotape **'Cunning Stunts'**.

At 32, 1995, Tim produced and performed with a host of other magicians in the late night close-up shows at **Mietta's**, Melbourne. It was another incarnation of the old Sunday Showcase where magicians could be seen by the paying public and try out new effects. He also starred in the **'International Stars of Magic'** with Jeff Hobson, Jade and The Wilsons at **Burswood Casino**, Perth, WA.

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

Tim, 33, performed a season in **Singapore** where the organising committee plastered a 24' high poster of Tim's face on the side of a building... scaring the bejeebers out of him! He became the President by popular vote of the **25th Australian Convention of Magicians** 1996, the most successful convention ever held in Australia breaking the attendance records set in 1992 (not yet superseded) featuring a load of activities and a fabulous array of international guests including Tommy Wonder, Tom Ogden, Ali Bongo and Bob Sheets. In the same year, Tim co-produced a two show special, '**Magical Mystery Tour in Australia**' for **Japanese NHK TV**.

In 1997, 34, Tim became the first Australian ever to perform as a guest at **FISM** in the 'Close-Up Gala Show' in Dresden, Germany, on a line up included David Williamson, Paul Gertner, Pit Hartling, Eugene Burger and hosted by Ali Bongo!

At 35, 1998, Tim performed '**Dreams and Illusions**' at **Caper's Dinner Theatre**, released '**The Wizards of Aus**' also produced the *very revealing* 'Closing Show' and late night events at the **26th Australian Convention of Magicians**.

1999, 36, Tim toured Victorian and Tasmanian schools, with '**Magic Unlimited's Best Show Ever**'. He performed at Homebush Bay Stadium in '**Magic Mania**', levitated a car in Perth and both provided magic and pyrotechnic guidance on the set of **Blue Heelers**, Channel 7.

2000, the new millennium, was heralded in by a massive three hour show on New Year's Eve and the return, for one year only, of the **Australian Magic Monthly** magazine as '**AMM2000**'. Also returning was another season of '**Magic Unlimited's Best Show Ever**' through schools. Tim's new show '**Cunning Stunts**' premiered for **The Melbourne International Comedy Festival** and newspapers were reluctant to run the advertising for the show for fear they might make a very nasty accidental typo! Tim also took off for America and Europe which saw him performing as guest headliner at the **Society of American Magicians** annual convention and being pelted with fruit!

38 years old in 2001 Tim returned to the USA to headline Hank Lee's famous **Cape Cod Conclave, The Battle of the Magicians** (Ohio), and the invitation only **Fechter's Finger Flicking Frolic** in New York. 200 of the world's best close up magicians are personally invited to this event every year and this year Tim was not only asked to give the opening lecture, but he was voted the '*Most Valuable Participant*' by his fellow magicians.

2002 began with a massive three month world lecture tour starting in New Orleans, travelling all throughout the USA including the **World Magic Seminar** in Las Vegas, through Paris with a lecture at **La Double Fond**, all through Europe and culminating with the **South African Magic Championships** where Tim voted newcomer Lee Eun-Gyeol the champion magician. A highlight of this adventure was going on safari through Zimbabwe with legendary magician Tommy Wonder.

40 years old in 2003 and, while most men his age are having a mid life crisis, Tim took on more work than ever before. Kicking off with another lecture tour which saw him driving in a circle around virtually the entire United States, he then brought the German magic team '**The Flicking Fingers**' to Australia for two magic conferences in Melbourne and Sydney. Then it was off to the **FISM World Championships of Magic** in Den Haag where he not only sat on the Jury, performed in the gala Stage Show, but he also organised and performed in a nightly **MagicSports** tournament that was the talk of FISM! He finished off the year by heading to Korea and appearing as guest artist in **Lee Eun Gyeol's Magic Concert**.

In 2004 Tim heard a rumour that there was not going to be an Australian national magic convention. This would mean, for the first time since 1952 the tradition would be broken. So he decided to produce the event by himself using his own money. He invited Lee Eun Gyeol, Aldo Colombini, Henry Evans, and Norbert Ferre as special guests and the event was a huge success. Part of the success was due to the publicity generated due to an audacious stunt. Tim gathered a team of magicians and together broke the **Guinness World Record** for the longest non-stop magic show in history. Previously it stood at an impressive 24 hours. Tim and his team performed non-stop at Melbourne's Luna Park for 75 hours.

Meanwhile, Tim spent three months and \$10,000 working with Ben Whimpey of Orsino Media to create three top selling magic teaching DVDs: '*Ellis in Wonderland*', '*24 Years of Living Next Door to Ellis*', and '*Runaround Sue*'. Finally, it was off to New Zealand for a holiday... well, sort of.. he was special guest performer and lecturer at the **New Zealand Convention of Magicians**.

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

2005 was a year dominated by close up magic. Tim appeared at the first (and only) **Merlin's Invitational Close Up Convention**, performed a week in the Close Up Gallery at **Hollywood's Magic Castle**, and returned to lecture again at Fechter's Finger Flicking Frolic in New York. He also returned to **Hank Lee's** and **The Battle of the Magicians** and, for the first time ever, went to the legendary **Tannen's Magic Shop** in New York where he presented his lecture.

Back home in Melbourne he presented the '*Halloween Spooktacular*', a show that included a walk through horror scarefest hosted by Mat 'Igor' Unwin, he appeared in the short film '*Speed Dating 101*' which was shot at his home, and his house was even featured on TV in '**Location Location: Amazing Homes**'. He also created the interactive, multimedia corporate entertainment called '**Hollywood: Live!**' with Ben Whimpey, which saw guests filmed in the foyer against a green screen then appearing as the stars of a movie after dinner!

43 years old and it was already 2006, so Tim headed to **The Royal Melbourne Show** and presented a series of illusion and escape shows, including hanging upside down and escaping from a straitjacket. He appeared in another short film "*My Life or Something Like it*" and even branched out to performing radio with Darren James and Tony Leonard on **3AW**. Tim flew to Stockholm to again judge the **FISM World Championships of Magic** and also was nominated as 'Lecturer of the Year' by **The Academy of Magic Arts**.

2007 and Tim was recognised in two magic history books: '*Dictionnaire de la Prestidigitation*' (France) where he was listed alongside David Copperfield, Houdini, and Orson Welles, and '*Deceptions Downunder*' (Australia) where historian Brian McCullagh said "*his contributions to magic in Australia cannot be measured.*"

Tim's notable performances included travelling to Hong Kong as guest performer, lecturer and judge at the **Asian Magic Championships**, and the premiere of his new show '*Poker in the Face*' at **The Melbourne International Comedy Festival** where 30 guests gathered around a poker table where Tim regaled them with stories of the adventures of some of the legends of poker history. (And lots of card tricks too, of course!)

Tim turned 45 in 2008, and in addition to performing corporate shows in Bangkok and Hong Kong, he created three new one hour stage shows. '*Something About Needles & Razorblades*' was a live horror show, a parody of the movie SAW, and it was presented for **The Melbourne International Comedy Festival**. Also at the comedy Festival was the family friendly show '*Illusionarium*', sponsored by radio station *LightFM*.

Tim also created and directed **The Melbourne Magic Festival** in 2008, and premiered the family show '*The Wizards of Aus*' as one of the dozens of shows performed by Melbourne magicians over the two weeks of the winter school holidays.

In 2009 **The Melbourne Magic Festival** returned, bigger and better than ever and Tim presented another two brand new shows: '*Ellis in Wonderland*', which told the story of an adult Alice returning to Wonderland to try to restore order and her own lost sense of wonder, and '*Aspycadabra*', an autobiographical show telling about Tim's life since recently being diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome.

Tim recorded a series of short 'Microprograms' for **Channel 31** which were aired between regularly scheduled TV shows. Tim also went to Taiwan early in the year to appear on Lu Chen's TV series '*Magic*', and then to Beijing where he again sat on the jury at the **FISM World Magic Championships**.

2010 and Tim produced a variety series for **Channel 31** based on Nicholas J Johnson's popular live show '*The Catchpenny Club*'. He also co-ordinated the magic and appeared briefly in the Australian feature film '*Matching Jack*' directed by the acclaimed Nadia Tass.

In Australia he made the Melbourne Cup appear for a corporate event, appeared on '*Hey Hey It's Saturday*' with Russell Gilbert, and narrated the short film '*Two Trees*' for **Salvos Studios**. Tim collaborated with the **Swinburne University School of Design** to create the online Asperger's world '*Aspergion*' and he was also featured in the **Society of American Magicians** international magazine 'M-U-M'.

Tim travelled overseas returning to New York for **Fechter's Finger Flicking Frolic** where he paid tribute to the Head Forker Obie O'Brien with a video parody of his life, then it was off to Canada as guest headliner at their annual convention. He premiered his new stage show '*Escape from Reality*' in Hong Kong and later performed it at **The Melbourne Magic Festival**. Also, at the 2010 Festival, he premiered the family show '*Illusionarium 2010*'

Tim Ellis Complete Biography (so far...) – 1963 to 2011

2011 began with Tim as guest artist at the **Geniis Convention** in Sydney, then guest artist at the **International Magic Experience** in Las Vegas where he compered and performed on the Stage and Close Up Gala Shows, lectured, and presented '*Something About Needles & Razorblades*'.

Tim became resident magician on the kids TV show '*Toon Time*', and the '*Today*' show broadcast live from his warehouse home. Tim acted in the short film '*Holy Spirit Please*' for the **Salvo Studios** and comedian Lawrence Leung even based an entire episode of his ABC TV series '*Unbelievable*' on trying to come up with a way to fool his childhood hero, Tim Ellis.

Tim consulted for **The Australian Shakespeare Company** adding magic to their innovative stage production of '*Macbeth*' and presented another brand new family show at **The Melbourne Magic Festival** (now attracting over 10,000 people to the Northcote Town Hall), called '*Once Upon A Time*'. He also flew to Hong Kong as guest performer, lecturer and judge at the FISM Asia Magic Championships where he launched his brand new, 150 page book of magic secrets '*Timeless Magic*'.