

LUCA VOLPE

ITALY'S GOLDEN BOY

When he isn't performing on the best cruise ships, entertaining the world's top bluechip companies, you'll find the charismatic Italian Luca Volpe busy creating some of the hottest effects around. magicseen managed to grab a few minutes with one of Europe's hottest mentalists.

Born in Naples, Italy, Luca lived in Pozzuoli, a little fishing town, throughout his childhood. "It is probably because of this town that I became close to the mystery art," says Luca, "because Pozzuoli is close to a lake called Lago D'Averno where there is a famous cave called "the Sybil grotto" (www.naplesnapoliguide.com/grotto-della-sibilla-or-the-entrance-to-hades/). The legend goes that people were visiting this lady (a type of psychic) and asking her questions about their future by writing their questions on a leaf. The 'sibilla' then collected the leaf and answered their questions... well, when I was 7 years old I visited this grotto and I remember that night and from then onwards, I had strange dreams and visions of my life, and most of these visions have become real...kind of deja vu...which is why I now do what I do! BTW I don't use any leaf!"

Luca's father Michele owned a delicatessen shop, "good stuff!" for many years and his mum Lina still does. An only child, Luca's mum says that "another one like me would have been too much!" Luca has a great sense of humour, and is very animated as he chats enthusiastically.

While magic and mentalism is what we know him for, Luca first studied music and gained a hi-level degree in composition from the



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Conservatory of Music San Pietro a Majella in Naples (one of the oldest conservatories of music in Italy). Says Luca, "I never performed as a musician but I have written many songs for well known Italian singers and I also write the music for my shows, so it still comes in handy."

He first started in magic when he was 7 years old (after his experience in the Sybil grotto!), and his first paid show was at the age of 12. "I've now been performing professionally for 27 years," continues Luca, who certainly looks younger than he is. I put this down to a mediterranean lifestyle!

"Mentalism has always been my real passion and I have been studying it from when I was young, everything from Jinx to Corinda, Bascom Jones and anything I could get my hands on. I would save money to buy all the books that were available about mentalism." A few years ago, Luca met Titanas (Titanas Magic Productions) and they immediately became very good friends. "He believed in my ideas and from that day he became my 'magic producer'. It is thanks to him that I have been able to share my ideas with the mentalism/magic community. He is also co-author of some of my routines in my show." His influences are many, and he tells me that



he's always been fascinated by Annemann and the devious thinking of Dunninger in particular. "Obviously I am inspired by the contribution to our art from Cassidy, Banachek, Osterlind, Maven etc. I like to study and analyse various ways of thinking, sometimes you can find invaluable ideas in very old books or clever ideas from very young performers. The beauty of mentalism is exactly this, we never stop studying and developing new ideas."

Mentalism in Italy has perhaps become more popular in recent years due to magic films and the TV show "The Mentalist", but Luca says that in Italy there is not a big culture regarding magic/mentalism performances. "It's very disheartening as the public always

connect the word 'magician' with 'kids parties.'"

Luca often performs a mindreading double with his wife Rebecca. "She's is very good at reading minds, this is why I have to be careful!" he laughs. "We met on a cruise ship, she was a dancer and then when I saw her... the magic began! She is a wonderful woman and is incredibly supportive of me..." I ask Luca about his experience of doing a lecture tour in the UK. "It was wonderful!" he says enthusiastically. "We had (I say 'we' because Rebecca organised it and came with me to help out) a really great time!

"I did lectures all around the UK and I have to say that I received a great welcome from every club. I was a bit shocked to hear the great feedback from my lecture, it's a great thing as it means that years of work and studying have been worth it! I was very pleased to be able to give back and pass on to the community, it's very encouraging when I hear fellow mentalists wanting to try my effects.

"We finished the Lecture tour at The Magic Circle and I found it very emotional to perform there, the theatre was full and I received a great review, it was very satisfying!"

He may be experienced now, but I ask him how he has developed as a performer over the past ten years. "We never stop developing, learning from our mistakes! If I look back, I can see how I have changed my

way of thinking and creating, but this is normal, I am sure I will think the same in 10 years time. I feel a growing "maturity" and I think this shows in the scripting which is more elaborate now. Also the researching of effects/routines has become more 'exclusive' now, as everything I am doing for the show is created from scratch." What would you say is the one thing that you've learned from all your experience? "That the audience want to be "entertained", it's the magic word!" says Luca. "Often as mentalists and magicians, we look for something that fools other magicians, in part this is true, but we mustn't forget that we work for lay people and they don't care about fancy props on stage, they only want to be entertained. So the best lesson is 'always listen to the audience' - this is the best way to grow in our work."

Luca works mainly on his own, developing original ideas and routines, but this year he reveals that he will have the honour of having his new show scripted and directed by one of the most creative mentalists today, Luke Jermay.

"I love his writing style and his ideas are brilliant," says Luca enthusiastically, "we are working very hard to create new routines for my new show. It's going to be something that the public has never seen before. The concept behind the show is wonderful but I can't say any more for now!

"I also have my good friend Titanas collaborating with me on the show. Every time we speak we create so many new ideas! I'm also working with Paul McCaig, Mick Hanzlik, Master Miracles in Germany and Hakan Varol."

With a new cruise ship contract about to begin, I ask him about the industry afloat. "Cruise ships are a great place to work. Every night there are 2,000 people from all around the world ready to see the show. You need to sacrifice a little of family life as sometimes we are on board for 8 months, but I am fortunate that I have my wife working with me. I have been working in the cruise industry for 13 years and every season is still very exciting."



community and I look forward to that. As I said before, the main project now is the new mentalism show and I am giving my all to make it the best I can!

My girlfriend comments that you have a lovely complexion and hair – she asks if you are a high-maintenance metro-sexual?

Haha! Yes, I must admit that I do take care of myself (I think every Italian does!) I may have more skin products than my wife but I also put it down to the Italian diet and my good genes. My grandmother is 92 and she looks amazing.

Tell us 3 things about yourself that people do not know...

1. I am the only Italian who is allergic to the combination of pasta and tomato (I can eat pasta and tomato but not together- weird I know!)
2. That one day I would like to own a dog and teach it magic tricks. It might even win BGT.
3. I collect smurf figures. I have hundreds of them including magic smurf, obviously.



Last book you read?

Scryer's Band of Readers. I think this book will make history. For me it is the encyclopedia of reading!



Last movie you watched?

James Bond Skyfall. I enjoyed it but thought it was a little over-hyped.

What did you have for breakfast?

A fresh red orange juice and some cereal while looking out of my balcony at the Island of Capri!

Who would play you in a movie about your life?

Obviously George Clooney...no...just kidding. Maybe Mr Bean!

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QUICKIES:

How do you view the current state of world mentalism?

Very good but also very bad! Very good because we have some really great performers and many of our 'younger generation' are giving great contributions to our art. On the other side, mentalism has now become fashionable due to the Derren Brown effect. This is positive because it is making mentalism popular but it also means that more and more people are trying to copy him and not developing their own individual personality.

Which is your favourite effect (that you've created) and why?

Well, I have a few of them but probably my Ultimate Chair Test Routine Act is the one that has received incredible worldwide feedback. I had people from all around the world sending me emails and videos, it is really great to see the routine performed in different styles!



Another effect which I am really proud of is "The Key Of Fate." This has been the most talked about effect at the lectures. It is a mixture of chair test, seven keys to baldpate, predictions and much more. It's a very fun routine to do and also very flexible. I have included this routine in my latest DVD "IN MY MIND 2".

Another of my favourites is the "Singing Bowl Q&A" Act from my book "Emotional Mentalism." it's something I am really proud

of and is the classic example of a routine that's easy to perform but can be very emotional for the audience.

What are TV opportunities like in Italy?

I had a great period of TV in Italy for several years. I was guest on many national TV shows and I even had my own street magic show on SKY. For 5 years I hosted an afternoon TV show and we did over 600 episodes in 5 years. That was a great experience and I learnt a lot from it. Now, apart from a few things, sadly the opportunities in TV in Italy are slim. Producers are happy to call "stars" from Big Brother and other reality shows rather than give a magician a slot!

You were at Blackpool this year – what are your memories of that?

I meet some nice guys from Magicseen, do you know them? One is called Phil and the other Graham, maybe you've heard of them?

I find Blackpool is not only a great convention but a brilliant social event! It was great to see Titanas, Angelo Carbone, Stefan Olschewski and many other friends. There is nothing better than speaking about magic over an Italian dish! There are some good Italian restaurants in Blackpool, but Bella Italia is not one of them!



Are you happy with your career path so far? What is next for you?

Absolutely, but I have a lot more to do. I have many ideas and projects in my head, waiting to be shared with the magic