

Every little thing he does is magic

Aggie magician showcases talent with performances at Bryan-College Station locations

BY ERIC AIKIN

The Battalion

Alex Hinojosa, a junior manufacturing engineering technology major, dims the lights in his room at the University Towers. In his left hand, he produces a small, glowing, red light bulb. Suddenly, the bulb disappears, only to reappear in his right hand. Hinojosa pushes the bulb into his right ear and pulls it from his left. The glowing light disappears into a nostril and comes out of an eye socket. A second later, the bulb is gone again.

This sleight of hand illusion is one of more than 50 tricks Hinojosa, an amateur magician, knows.

"But in my repertoire, I probably only put in 12, because it's better to do a few tricks and do them good than do a lot of tricks and do them bad," he said.

Hinojosa has been performing magic tricks since he was about 5 years old. An older friend showed him a couple of tricks, which got him interested.

"I wanted to be like him," he said. "I wanted to pursue that because I thought it was cool how you can do a little trick and get a good reaction from someone."

The first trick Hinojosa learned was a simple one, he said.

In the trick, called a lefty, the magician shows two empty hands, then closes his left hand and pulls a scarf from it. The magician pushes the scarf back into his hand, only to make it seem to disappear.

Hinojosa said he most enjoys doing sleight of hand tricks and working close to his audience.

"I'm more into what's called close-up magic, which is magic right up front, right in your face," he said. "(Magic) is more believable when you're one or two feet away from the magician, and he does something incredible. You're like, 'Wow, how did he do that?'"

Hinojosa said one of his biggest influences has been David Copperfield.

"He started out small, with just a few tricks, but he's worked his way up. Now everybody knows him," Hinojosa said, pointing to an autographed picture of Copperfield.

Hinojosa started performing in his hometown of McAllen, Texas, where he entertained patrons at the local Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar.

"I would go table-hopping for tips," he said.

He also did several shows for children in

McAllen, including one he remembers as a not-so-great performance.

"I had this cane that was wrapped in silk," he said. "It was supposed to disappear, but when I went to make it disappear, it didn't go. (The kids) just started laughing. I tried to play it off and tapped the cane on the ground a couple of times. That was all it needed. Then they were like, 'Wow!'"

Since coming to Texas A&M, Hinojosa has performed mostly for small groups of friends, although he did make his public debut at a talent show last year.

"There's a talent show we do here at University Towers, and if you win, you win \$100," he said. "I got first place for doing my magic act."

Hinojosa's act has caught the attention of College Station-area merchants.

"Last semester we were at Dillard's. There was a girl at the counter where [Hinojosa] was buying some boots," said Max Campbell, a junior computer science major. "He started showing her stuff, and then a few other people came and started watching. We were going to be there five minutes, and we ended up being there for an hour and a half. All he had were cards and some coins. And he kept people there for an hour and a half."

John Owens, a freshman biology major, said he was similarly awed.

"The first time I saw him, it was totally unexpected. I had no idea he was a magician, and I was like, 'Dang!' He was awesome." Owens saw Hinojosa make an encore performance at Dillard's. "He was buying a card table and started talking to the clerk, then ended up showing him a bunch of card tricks," he said.

Campbell remembers when he first met Hinojosa at a cafeteria in College Station. "He was just working the room, doing tricks," he said. "Mostly for the girls, though."

Hinojosa said magic can be a way to catch someone's eye.

"When I first started community college back home, I took a speech communications class. The first day, they tell you to go up and say something about yourself. I went up there and said, 'My name is Alex and I do magic,'" he said. "The teacher said, 'Oh you have to do a show for us sometime. You have to bring your stuff and one class period will just be us watching you.' So that kind of got me a lot of girls and friends and whatnot."

"I think when I do magic or tell people I'm a magician, they find it interesting because it's unique. It's like nothing else because it's hard for someone to do magic."



PHOTOS BY ANDY HANCOCK/THE BATTALION
Alex Hinojosa, a junior manufacturing engineering technology major, demonstrates the flaming wallet (above) and card tricks (left).

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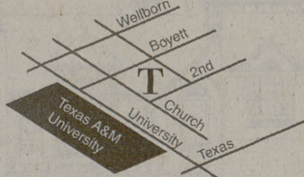


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