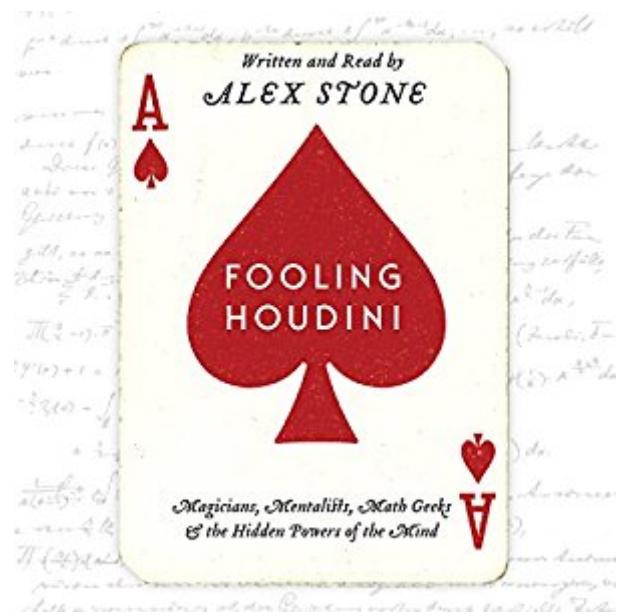


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Fooling Houdini: Magicians, Mentalists, Math Geeks, And The Hidden Powers Of The Mind



Synopsis

When Alex Stone was five years old, his father bought him a magic kit - a gift that would spark a lifelong love. Years later, while living in New York City, he discovered a vibrant underground magic scene exploding with creativity and innovation and populated by a fascinating cast of characters: from his gruff mentor, who holds court in the back of a rundown pizza shop, to one of the world's greatest card cheats, who also happens to be blind. Captivated, he plunged headlong into this mysterious world, eventually competing at the Magic Olympics and training with great magicians around the globe to perfect his craft. From the back rooms of New York City's century-old magic societies to cutting-edge psychology labs; three-card monte on Canal Street to glossy Las Vegas casinos; Fooling Houdini recounts Stone's quest to join the ranks of master magicians. As he navigates this quirky and occasionally hilarious subculture, Stone pulls back the curtain on a community shrouded in secrecy, fueled by obsession and brilliance, and organized around a single overriding need: to prove one's worth by deceiving others. But his journey is more than a tale of tricks, gigs, and geeks. In trying to understand how expert magicians manipulate our minds to create their astonishing illusions, Stone uncovers a wealth of insight into human nature and the nature of perception. Every turn leads to questions about how the mind perceives the world and processes everyday experiences. By investigating some of the lesser-known corners of psychology, neuroscience, physics, history, and even crime, all through the lens of trickery and illusion, Fooling Houdini arrives at a host of startling revelations about how the mind works - and why, sometimes, it doesn't.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like almost everyone, I've always had a somewhat casual admiration for magicians and their ability to make us believe things that we know can't be so--and yet we're seeing them without own eyes (or so we think). I love to see a good trick and I love to be fooled. And I've always believed that most magic tricks work largely because of the good hand skills of the magician and/or a clever amount of misdirection--and both of those are true. Until I read this book, however, I had no idea just how much of the misdirection and trickery was coming from my own mind. Alex Stone has written a fascinating book about just how much of the power of magic--whether it's a close-up coin trick or an ambitious illusion--relies on our own psychological/neurological foibles. We trick ourselves as much or more so than the magician does. Stone starts off the book by telling the tale of his attempt to win honor and glory at the Magic Olympics (the pinnacle of magic competitions) and the various changes in his personal life that, along with a lifelong infatuation with magic (blame his father) eventually led him to all but abandon his "normal" life and pursue a strange and somewhat obsessed journey to the center of the magic mind. Along the way he spends time with some of the great legends of magic (a lot of them regularly hanging out in a pizza joint in NYC on Saturday afternoons), a handful of grifters, three-card monte ne'er-do-wells, a stellar and legally blind card mechanic (Richard Turner--whose abilities are legendary and will absolutely challenge your thoughts about blindness) and psychologists. Each of these characters helps add to his growing understanding of just how much the person being fooled is as much a part of the fooling as the magician.

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