

MAGIC ON TELEVISION

by Mark Wilson



When the first *Magic Land of Allakazam* went on the air from CBS in Hollywood some 50 years ago, we knew that its most essential requirement was to entertain the people at home. This meant that they must believe that the magic they were seeing was not done with any kind of “trick photography.” In other words, the magic must come from the magician, not the television camera. I was not too worried, because that is exactly what we achieved with our local shows back in Texas.

When our first local series, *Time for Magic*, went on the air, we had created three new rules for presenting magic on television.

1. Never cut away during a trick.
2. Always have a live studio audience.
3. Always make a statement, “no camera or television trickery is ever used on this show.”

We hoped to convince the home-viewers that WE were performing the magic, NOT their TV set. And by George, it worked!

The point I want to make is, if home viewers believe the magic they see on television is done with camera tricks, or by incorporating those undetectable “digital special effects”, and not by the magician, then we have a major problem. And that’s beginning to happen more and more often.

On the other hand, properly presented, the art of magic has proven over hundreds of years its tremendous potential for entertainment for millions of people through television and on the Internet. But that will only continue to happen if we maintain the trust of the viewers. Those watching must believe what they are seeing is real, not a cleverly edited video, and that the magic is being performed by the magician.



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