

Review of Roberto Giobbi's *Unexpected Agenda*, by Reviewer EndersGame

I just got mine in the mail recently, and am very impressed. It is beautifully presented in a stunning large hardcover finished with foil on the cover and a ribbon bookmark inside. And the quality of the content matches the quality of the production. It contains 365 articles, one for each day of the year, with tricks and secrets and ideas that will stretch your thinking and ability in all aspects of magic. The graphic design and formatting is appealing, and clear black and white photos accompany the text throughout.

It's not the first book of this kind, and can be considered as the sequel to two similar volumes that have appeared previously, *Secret Agenda* (2010) and *Hidden Agenda* (2016). But you need not own any of those previous titles to enjoy this one, because *Unexpected Agenda* is a completely independent work, and each page offers a fresh magical insight that stands alone.

I've been a fan of Roberto Giobbi ever since I came across his outstanding Card College series, and realized that this was the gold standard benchmark for learning card magic. His written work continues to impress me, and demonstrates a lot of fine thinking about magic. He is well grounded in history and tradition, and respectful to those on whose shoulders we stand, while building on their work with insightful and creative contributions of his own. He is a true scholar who honours magic as an art, and encourages us to have a thoughtful and contemplative approach to our performing, both mechanically and presentationally. His writing strikes the perfect balance between being comprehensive and clear. This fine volume is another fine contribution to his written works, and will be appreciated by any magician who is serious about his craft.

I'm a real enthusiast and collector of playing cards, so I was especially pleased to see several articles in the book about playing card curiosities such as the history and significance of the Ace of Spades (Oct 1), and interesting and unusual facts about playing cards (Oct 2-3), including common nicknames for specific cards (Oct 4). Such curiosities can provide useful material for patter or for introducing a card trick. I also appreciated the 12 point checklist for card quality control (Apr 10) and the 10 step kata to help break in a new deck of cards (Apr 11). And the suggestion about using cards from different custom decks (Mar 5) has real potential, Lennard Green's "Stolen Cards" being a fine example of this.

But there's a whole lot more, including details about tricks and routines, tips for sleights, strategies for performance and presentation, strategies for navigating the business side of magic, anecdotes and stories from Roberto's personal experiences, and theory about the principles of magic. While card magic is the focus, there's also much that has application more broadly to close-up or stage magic. This is very much a book where you can learn firsthand from an expert about all aspects of magic.

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