



Danie de Jager - Coco the Clown

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It has been our intention to include Danie De Jager on Industry Legends for quite some time now. This passionate man had a colourful and vibrant story to tell. We are sorry that it's at this sad time of saying good-bye that we finally get to share his life story. This write up was taken from the Magic Mania website (magicmania.co.za), and we would like to add it as a tribute to a friend who always gave us at DWR Distribution support, regularly invited us to see shows at Gold Reef City, and most importantly someone who will not be forgotten.

Danie De Jager, the man who sees shows in his mind and is then able to turn them into reality, is no easy target to pin down on paper. Not even a super chameleon would be able to keep up with the pace Danie's always switching jackets between being Entertainment Manager, Producer, Director and Artist.



As the only performing artist of the De Jager family, Danie started living his dream as a lad with a “break-away-magic wand”, with his family falling victim to his tricks and pranks more than once. (Believe it or not ... the very same wand still from part of his shows today) “Magic was always my interest, though I had no support at all to pursue it as a career. I literally had to prove myself over and over.” Danie revealed in a recent interview. (Today he’s the sole owner of one of the largest collections of magic related apparatus in the Southern Hemisphere!)

April 1988 marks the date when Danie’s professional career came into motion with his appointment at Gold Reef City and the birth of the legendary CoCo the clown. “Merlin’s Magical extravaganza” – 1988 (18 top illusions and crew of 32 pax) was his first big solo-production at the Gold Reef City theme park.



In February 1992 Danie was appointed as the Gold Reef City Entertainment Manager and responsible for planning and managing all functions, entertainment, corporate events, holiday programs, family days and day to day planning of the park. (He currently has an entertainment staff of 70 and 20 casual entertainers, these numbers increase over school holidays.)

Both Circus Hippodrome and the annual New Year's Eve parties (events that's put Gold Reef City on the map for local people and tourists since 1993) are very popular events created by this man with vision.

With such a busy schedule at Gold Reef City one would be inclined to think that Danie's 'had it' for one day when he closes the doors to his office which resembles an entertainment paradise with all 'his toys', props and costumes. Fact is that he's most probably on his way to a magic lesson, buying new tricks, one of his own shows or off to fill the role as mc at some function.

Danie could just as easily have followed a career with radio or TV but he likes the thrill of performing for a live audience and absolutely "hates canned voiceovers" on any of his shows. "Although I'm a full time entertainer and manager at Gold Reef City I'm also an artist in my own right and need some space to satisfy my own creativity on the outside and test new ideas for my Gold Reef City projects."



In creating a show Danie has a few golden rules that guarantees “a mind blowing experience” for both audience and artist:

- Never play the same venue with the same show
- Change tricks that bore him (That is very often)
- Keep the show original with lots and lots of showmanship.
- Not talking for hours “Cut to the bottom line and show the magic!”
- People pay to see you, so look your best at all times.
- Entice all of your audience’s senses, (visual amounts up to 50%)
- Music, Music, Music (“people like to hear familiar tunes”)
- Never reveal any of his magic secrets, no matter what or who.
- Learn from other artists.
- Teamwork and a good relationship with your crew.
- Neat costumes, effects and props.

For Danie there is no distinction between an adult and children’s trick. “...it’s just the presentation that differs ... remember that there is a child in all of us”. In his mind there is also no such show as the best one ever, “you are only as good as your last show”. Every town and venue gets the same devotion from Danie and his Magic Mania crew, no matter how big or small. “I always pack one and a half shows when I go out. The reason being that no two audiences is ever the same. You can work out a show on paper and it looks great, but the picture might change when you hit the stage ... that’s the time I rewrite the whole show - with in split seconds on stage. My crew hates these moments.”

Danie tries to wear a new jacket with every trick to add to the theme, energy and flow of the music and colors in his shows." In big shows my wardrobe takes up more space than the illusions together." Danie gets new ideas from every situation and creates his own illusions that he has build for him from scratch. "I also try new tricks on my crew and co-artists, if I can fool a well salted crew member, I know it will be a walkover to fool an innocent audience."

Danie travels abroad at least once a year to watch all kinds of shows (Las Vegas a must) to touch base with the international market. He's worked in countries like Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia ... and yes he has a BIG DREAM but it's his secret for now!

