

It's a story. Do you think anyone would have enjoyed the illusion if he would have said...I made this prediction but it's just an illusion, it's not real...so sit back, relax and enjoy. David wanted you to know that "E.T." was a puppet...do you think you would have enjoyed the movie if they would have flashed "E.T." is a puppet every 2 seconds during the movie. I'm not saying that everything David says on stage is made up, because a lot of it's true...but he's a performer and this is illusion.

While this lady's punctuation and spelling leave some confusion about her meaning, there's a big difference between illusion and lies. Watching "E.T.," we were prepared for an illusion before we entered the theater. Entering Copperfield's theater, we're also prepared that way. But this was not a stage-story, nor a script. It was done outside of that special, privileged, atmosphere, and I am absolutely certain that had David told the media that he'd done a super stunt, a trick, there would have been much more respect for him, and none of the deluded innocents accepting that this sort of miracle can be real.

Also, I've received the usual "why-won't-you-reveal-the-trick" complaints. First, telling you how Copperfield did the trick wouldn't help one bit. And, this is a trick that legitimate magicians use, to good effect, in their performances. I'm not about to ruin that aspect for them. As for those who choose to decide that I don't know how it was done, well, that's tough. I don't care a whit what you think, and you're welcome to your delusions. Arguments about, "Uri Geller's a magician, too," don't count, because he insists that he's not a magician, and doesn't even know how to do any tricks. When I tell folks how to bend a spoon or read a message sealed in an envelope, I specify that it's the way I do it, and that Mr. Geller says he does it by divine means.

Bottom line: No, I won't reveal Copperfield's method, though for the magicians out there, I'll comment that had Dr. Jaks not lived, maybe David would have used another method for the trick....

### Bad Astronomy, Great Book

A Book Review: *Bad Astronomy: Misconceptions and Misuses Revealed, from Astrology to the Moon Landing "Hoax"* by Philip Plait. Due out soon.

Astronomer Phil Plait, who is the guiding force behind [www.badastronomy.com](http://www.badastronomy.com), was

enraged, as I was, at the suggestion—promoted by FOX TV in a ludicrous "special"—that possibly the greatest adventure in our history, the Moon landing, was an elaborate, expensive, deliberate hoax perpetrated (for some obscure reason) on the public of the world. But I didn't write a book about it, as Phil did. In fact, in *Bad Astronomy*, this wonderful author has provided us with just about every possible hoax, myth, notion, blunder, and bit of quackery that most of us will ever get to hear about—and he grandly and thoroughly erases every one with broad, long, strokes.

In doing my magic act years ago, I used to get a laugh at the end of one small trick, from the remark, "You see? Educational, as well as entertaining!" Well, Phil has provided the reader with both of those features. He gives us more than enough excellent answers to the usual party-bore's declarations about standing eggs on end at the equinox, the direction water drains north and south of the equator, mirages, the latest UFO "flap," and his/her astrologer's latest success at predicting world-shaking events. We usually don't have effective enough responses to these idiocies, but with Phil's book firmly in hand, we are better armed and ready to let fly with the facts.

It's not enough to express doubt about the claim that a "planetary alignment" won't wipe out life on Earth. You have to have hard data. You can't just say that astrology is bunk. You need hard data. You can scoff at palmistry and phrenology, but you need the figures and facts to fight it. Phil Plait has given us a readable, erudite, informative, useful, and highly entertaining book that contains simple experiments (thought and practical) and super demonstrations to make each of us into Mr. Wizard when the irrational claim shows up. *Bad Astronomy* is Good Science. Very good science.... ▼

