

# *Collecting Anverdi Magic*



CHUCK CAPUTO

I HAVE BEEN COLLECTING AND REGULARLY USING ANVERDI EFFECTS since 1989. My interest in “electronic magic” and automata was triggered when I had the wonderful opportunity of performing on the same bill with the great Del Ray here in Pittsburgh in 1987. At the time I worked with Del Ray I was a professional magician who performed full-time throughout the Pittsburgh and surrounding areas, I relied heavily on complex sleight of hand for both close-up and stage venues. That night when witnessing Del’s genius I was literally blown away, Del sparked an interest in a totally different aspect of magic, namely electronic magic. Shortly my magic acts incorporated some very unique and original effects in conjunction with standard routines. I was always looking for something out of the ordinary when it came to performing magic. Del and I kept in touch throughout the years mainly by telephone; he was a true professional in our art.

In the early part of 1989 the name “Anverdi” was brought to my attention, I honestly do not remember the source as it has been so many years ago. I began doing some research on this unique name; *you* have to remember that the Internet did not exist at this time so I made many calls to dealers, collectors, etc. I learned basically that Anverdi lived in Holland and was one of the very first pioneers in the magic field to elaborate on using a modern “invisible thread” so to speak, radio control.

Anverdi, not as well known by his real name Anthony DeVries, was a very creative magician who performed a clown act. What many people probably do not know is that he was really a baker in the Netherlands and he applied his wonderful magic inventions to his own act. Today, Anverdi magic is very collectible and can command fairly high prices among collectors and magic enthusiasts. Anverdi also wrote two books: *Miracles with Liquids* in 1965 and *Anverdi—50 Years of Magic Creation* in 1992. I enjoy sitting back on a rainy day and skimming through his books and reading his ideas, almost getting into his head, so to speak.

I purchased my first Anverdi effect, the miniature talking skull, which I still use today, shortly after hearing about him. Of course the skull does not really talk; his jaw actuates opening and closing via the remote. I was amazed at how beautifully this effect was made; it looked too cool sitting on its black Plexiglas base and it worked like a charm. The only thing I added to this in later years was a toe-switch for the remote which allows me to have “hands free” operation. More inquiries throughout the next few years brought me other neat Anverdi effects such as the Rising Cards (both jumbo and bridge size), Barking Dog, Voice Box and others.

Anverdi’s Mental Die is a true piece of electronic genius. A beautiful 2½ inch by 2½ inch black Plexiglas die with white spots



*Anverdi items from left to right. Back row: Bolt of Lightning; Mental Die; Bionic Bunny. Front row: Talking Skull; Dial-A-Mental; Barking Dog.*

is freely placed in its box by a spectator. You can immediately discern what value of the die is uppermost in the box while your back is turned; there is no suspicious touching of anything! This is accomplished through a complicated five or six channel (depending on which model you have) receiver that illuminates corresponding LEDs (light emitting diodes).

The Pad of Miracles is absolutely amazing but one of his more obscure effects! This is a very well made close up case that opens up; *you* can actually store your items in it. A card is selected and replaced in the pack and shuffled. You now extract three cards that *you* feel “strongly” about and place them face down on the green felt covered case which lay open. On your command the card *visibly* flips over! You really cannot get much better than this! I have actually had spectators run out of the room on this one!! The internal coil hidden in the case proper is huge; it is about ten inches in diameter and weighs about four pounds. In my estimation the capacitor that kicks out the stored energy to accomplish the above effect can do some serious damage if touched when removing the batteries.

One drawback to using many of Anverdi pieces is that they go out of tune fairly frequently. You have to remember that he built these items decades before digital encoding existed. Tuning must be accomplished by manually adjusting potentiometers and tuning screws, while it is a time consuming job, it is by no means impossible. Another drawback of using electronic devices in performance



*Poker chip Effect; Anverdi Key Box.*

is we live in an age where our airways are not only polluted with smoke and damaging particulates but by radio frequencies. Just think about it, the airways are congested with transmission waves from fax machines, computers with wireless Internet, car alarms, pace makers, etc. In my twenty plus years of performing I sometimes get placed into hotel banquet halls for various shows and these are by far the worst places to use electronic or radio control equipment. A good idea for items that operate on common radio frequencies (below the Del Ray recommended 800–900 megahertz range) is to simply power them on an instant before using them. I would have to say that Anverdi's Jumbo Rising Cards are by far his most unreliable piece and I would hesitate to seriously use the trick in a performance. Good luck to anyone using older electronic apparatus from any inventor that is less dependable than Anverdi!

As implied by Anverdi's first book, *Miracles with Liquids*, he was just as creative in making magic apparatus for liquid tricks. I am particularly fond of his Wonder Tray, Universal Bottle, Wonder Ring Glass, Wonder Ring and a little known liquid effect called Sigowi. Liquid effects can be messy and audiences realize this and therefore appreciate this aspect and will respond loudly when a magician performs one such effect professionally. Many magicians shy away from liquids and such items, I say go for it!



*Anverdi Hand Box; Various Bottles & Wonder Tray.*

Anverdi's Wonder Tray came in several models but the outcome was always the same. Milk is poured from a pitcher into an empty glass on the tray, the other glass fills up! The unique feature is that the filled glass can be lifted from the tray due to an ingenious gimmick developed by Anverdi. Now the milk in this glass can diminish as the other one fills up, this is all very visual.

Anverdi's Wonder Ring Glass is best described as "spooky"; I have had many a jaw drop on this one. Unfortunately this item is rarely used properly as two chemicals are needed to make a rich colored wine slowly and visibly appear. Most performers take the easy way out and simply hide kool-aid powder in the base of the above. Anyway, you literally build a glass from the bottom upwards by attaching clear rings together. The water (distilled is best for this) is actually contained in the top ring unknown to the audience. When the water is released it trickles down into the base of the glass and mixes with the chemical creating a rich, dark wine to appear from the bottom on up.

I often use Anverdi's Universal Bottle which is the ultimate milk pitcher, again seldom if ever used correctly. In performance the bottle is shown to be filled with wine, this is visibly poured into a paper cone which is ripped up and thrown into the audience! You are clean!!!! This double walled bottle again uses chemicals. A bleaching agent is used to literally turn the wine into water; the water is always in the bottle and *never* leaves but is invisible to the audience. The audience swears it was poured into the cone. I have seen less enthusiastic performers simply use this bottle as a "milk pitcher" and partially pour some wine into a cone, a lot less effective!

Anverdi's Sigowi liquid effect is similar, but still a little different. A green silk is placed in a clear glass, when you cover the silk/glass with a clear tube and lift upwards the silk vanishes and turns into a green colored liquid which can be poured out. I might add there are no "pulls" involved. All of the above effects are clearly detailed in Anverdi's books, check them out!

I regularly use many of Tony Anverdi's props today in all venues of magic. I would have to say the most amazing electronic props I have from him, and the ones that have been very successful for me, are his Talking Skull, Mental Die and Pad of Miracles.

I cannot tell you how many times I have used all of the above at trade shows, hospitality suites, etc. You can view my Anverdi collection in its entirety on my web site. It has been over 14 years since Anverdi has left us but his genius lives on to inspire us all. Because of Anverdi electronic magic has become a leading passion of many, including myself.

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CHUCK CAPUTO is a busy Pittsburgh magician, collector and creator of unique magic tricks manufactured in metal, wood and Plexiglas. Many of the effects Chuck creates integrate the use of electronics as inspired by Del Ray and Tony Anverdi. Chuck is married and a father of two boys, Michael and Nick. You can learn more about Chuck at his web sites: [www.freewebs.com/caputocollection/](http://www.freewebs.com/caputocollection/) or [http://magician\\_chuckcaputo.tripod.com/](http://magician_chuckcaputo.tripod.com/)