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Genii

THE CONJURORS' MAGAZINE

CELEBRATING **30** YEARS OF
LE DOUBLE FOND

Genii

THE CONJURORS' MAGAZINE

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30 YEARS OF LE DOUB

Boris Wild Interviews Alexandra and Do



BLE FOND

Dominique Duvivier English Translation by David Jones

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**Le Double Fond
is celebrating 30 years
of providing magic
to lay audiences
in an elegant
and unique setting
in the heart of Paris.**

**It is a magic theater,
café, bar, and serves light
food and snacks.**

**At the heart of the
business is Dominique
Duvivier and his daughter
Alexandra, who own and
run Le Double Fond as
well as perform regularly.**

PHOTO BY ANDREW LYNDON/KEGGS

BORIS WILD: How was this crazy idea to create a theater-café for magic in Paris at the end of the 1980s born? Was it easy to find a place that matched what you had in mind?

DOMINIQUE DUVIVIER: In fact, it wasn't too difficult to find. I put my friends on the case: about 10 people began looking with me to find a place in Paris that could fulfill all the functions that I was dreaming about.

BORIS: Did you have specific requirements in mind, or did you just look for a place that felt right? Because, well, there's a certain atmosphere here and you get the feeling that it wouldn't have worked anywhere else, although it's hard to say exactly why.

DOMINIQUE: Yes, that's true ... we had to visit three or four cellars like this before finding this particular one.

BORIS: So you already had the idea of a cellar in mind?

DOMINIQUE: Yes, well, let's say a theater. That was the priority. Honestly, I wasn't necessarily thinking about either a bar or a restaurant, which is what we finally ended up with. I wanted a place 100 percent dedicated to magic and that didn't exist anywhere in Europe at the time, as you know. One of my friends said to me: "I just saw something on the Place du Marché Sainte-Catherine, not very far away." So I popped over there the same day and there it was: love at first sight. It was exactly what we



needed. At that time it was a Caribbean nightclub whose owner, who was very nice, was in rather a hurry to sell because his business wasn't going well. He sold the commercial license and the premises for the current equivalent of 200-300,000 euros. It was a godsend! It was just a matter of finding the money.

BORIS: There is that, obviously.

DOMINIQUE: Yes, and it wasn't just a small detail as I didn't have any money at all. So I went to see my personal banker and told him about my project.

BORIS: How did he react?

DOMINIQUE: Well, I'll make it simple: I made an appoint-

ment to ask for a loan. He welcomed me quite warmly:

"So, you have a project, tell me about it!"

"I'd like to open a place dedicated to magic and I saw a location that I like very much."

The guy immediately seemed less enthusiastic. He typed "magic" into his computer (which was quite rudimentary at the time) and, while showing me his screen, he said:

"Look, there's nothing coming up! If you had said 'deli,' then there's a lot of stuff, but there's nothing under 'magic,' I'm afraid I can't do anything for you."

So there it was, in five minutes my hopes had been dashed. But, as I had nothing to lose and I was a bit annoyed, I said, "Can I show you a trick anyway?"

Banker: "Oh, okay, if you must ... whatever you like."

So I did a trick for him that lasted 40 seconds and then the guy exclaimed:

"But that's great! Could you explain your project to me again?"

"I'd like to create a place dedicated to magic, people would come and see some magic while having a drink, and then they would go downstairs to watch a show."

"You said 'have a drink?' So you want to open a bar? Well that's certainly possible."

And, believe it or not, he lent me the money, all because the word "bar" came up in his computer. So, obviously, it was necessary to mortgage my house and we lived quite frugally for several years to be able to repay the debt. But today Le Double Fond is worth almost 10 times its purchase price. That's crazy.

In fact, I think that the moment I saw the guy was going to reject my credit application I was no longer just "someone seeking a loan," but became a magician with a wacky project who hadn't been taken seriously. At that moment I didn't even want to give him my sales pitch. I just wanted to "sell the magic." To show him that magic is serious and, as a result, he took me seriously and we did business.

BORIS: And so what was this trick that took 40 seconds?