

### the medic

Sussex-based writer and broadcaster Dr David Delvin answers your questions

**A night on the tiles**  
SOMETHING very odd happened to me over the holidays. I went clubbing with a bunch of mates and I know that up till about 2am I was having a great time. But I can remember absolutely nothing more till I woke up in my own bed at midday. I'd lost my handbag, and there were clear signs I'd had some sort of sex – but not full intercourse. I went to my doctor, who said I was suffering from amnesia. But is she right?

WELL, amnesia isn't a diagnosis – it just means loss of memory. Common causes include head injury, drugs and alcohol. You may never find out exactly what happened that night but in view of the fact there was some sort of sexual activity, I think you should have a check-up at your nearest genito-urinary medicine clinic.

**Yellow peril**  
I HAVE noticed sometimes our gas rings burn with a yellow flame instead of a blue one. I have read somewhere this could be dangerous to health. What do you think, doc?

A YELLOW or orange gas flame strongly suggests there is carbon monoxide in the air. This could kill you. Please open your windows – and ring your gas supplier's emergency line immediately.

**Bottom line**  
UNFORTUNATELY, my partner watches quite a lot of porn films online. He says all the girls in these movies are quite happy to do rectal intercourse – and he wants to know why I definitely am not. What should I tell him?

YOU could tell him to go and take a running jump. The reason the actresses in these movies go in for that particular activity is because they get paid extra money for it. Also, they have had to learn to open up their sphincter muscles – by means of a training programme of gradual widening. This is not particularly good for the female body and is liable to lead to incontinence.

**Period of adjustment**  
MY BOYFRIEND has suddenly announced that just before my period arrives, I develop a "shrill" voice. Is this possible? Is there anything wrong with me? THERE'S nothing wrong with you. Before a period, lots of women develop a voice-pitch a semi-tone, or even a tone, higher. This is just due to the change in hormone levels. Perhaps your bloke has a finely-tuned musical ear?

**The morning after...**  
MY FLATMATE has decided we four girls should lay in a stock of the morning-after pill in our medicine cupboard – just in case of emergencies. Is this a reasonable plan? Or could it do us any harm?

WELL, these days it is a plan some women are adopting. Frankly, the post-coital pill – to give it its correct name – is most unlikely to do any of you any harm. However, as a doctor I do feel it would be more sensible if all of you equipped yourselves with good methods of contraception. For a start, why not buy a box of condoms for your medicine chest?

**Black outlook?**  
I HAVE suddenly noticed I am passing black-coloured mucus each morning. Is that okay?

NO, THIS is usually a sign of bleeding somewhere inside you – for instance, in the stomach. So see your doc this week, please. However, there are two common "innocent" reasons for black, tarry stools. This symptom can be caused by taking iron tablets – and also by drinking red wine.

**No colds guarantee?**  
WOULD taking daily vitamin C guarantee I don't get any colds this year?

I'M AFRAID not. But it won't do you any harm and may possibly give you a little protection against winter bugs.

**Bitter pill?**  
I AM 18, and on the Pill. Could that be the reason why I do not climax?

NO, OCCASIONALLY, the Pill can make a woman less interested in love-making. But it can't affect the process of orgasm. In fact, research shows many British women do not manage to reach a climax till they are 19 or more. So at only 18, you have plenty of time to learn how to do it.

● Write to Dr Delvin with your questions at: The Medic, Argus House, Crowhurst Road, Brighton BN1 3AR or email: features@theargus.co.uk. Dr Delvin regrets he cannot enter into personal correspondence.

# Brighton's first lady of magic

PICTURES BY SIMON DACK

## ROMANY can name the Queen, Johnny Depp, Judi Dench and Jeffrey Archer among her fans – but after performing worldwide for many A-list celebrities, the man this top magician can't wait to meet is... Ken Dodd. RUTH ADDICOTT hears her remarkable success story

AFTER becoming the first woman in history to win Stage Magician of the Year, Brighton illusionist Romany was hailed by judges as the new 'Divina of Magic'. Romany fought off worldwide competition from a string of male magicians at the ceremony in London and is now hoping to trailblaze a new dawn for women in British Magic. Her success will come as no surprise to the legions of celebrity fans who have showered her with compliments over the years. Hollywood heartrob Johnny Depp told her he found her show "very funny", Judi Dench went to the trouble of writing a letter and just before Christmas Romany entertained guests at the Queen's birthday party at The Ritz.

The Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Andrew were in attendance as well as 350 of The Queen's relatives and friends. "I met the Queen for the first time at the party afterwards," says Romany. "She said, 'Hello, are you the conjurer?' I said, 'Yes' and curtsied. She was very sweet. I've got a lot of respect for her. She's 80 for God's sake and still works like crazy." Despite Romany's strutting around in a corset, sequins and feather boa, the Queen didn't bat an eyelid. It was Prince Andrew who gave her a look of bemusement. "He did look at me a bit oddly," Romany recalls.

"I said, 'It's all right Prince Andrew, I'm a magician – not the whore of Babylon!' I did him a card trick and he said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'Pick a card.' I did the trick and he said, 'That's amazing!' I said, 'Come on, Prince Andrew. You must have seen that before.' He said, 'No, I haven't' I said, 'You must get out more.'" She might have had the undivided attention of Prince Andrew for a brief second but it is the vertically challenged King of Magic himself, Paul Daniels, who is her hero. "Paul Daniels is brilliant," she exclaims. "He could run rings around David Blaine any day. I don't like the way David Blaine says he can do it for real. He can't! It's a trick! The whole point of being a magician is you're talking about the nature of illusion. If I could really do magic, I'd be lying on a beach in the Caribbean not running around doing cabaret."

The 35-year-old, who trained at the prestigious Mystery School for magicians in Las Vegas and is a member of the Magic Circle, changed her name to Romany by deed poll when she was 21. She refuses to reveal her real name ("I'd rather not go there") and apart from a brief spell when she insisted on being called Minty Tulip, Romany is what she has always been known as.

"It's really stuck," she says. "It's a name linked to travelling and I'm always happiest when I've got a rucksack on my back. It's important to my business and to who I am that people call me Romany." Romany moved to Brighton five years ago. She wanted some fresh air

Brighton cabaret stars Boogaloo Stu, Dolly Rocket and Nicky Mitchell of Kroon Kats among her close friends and the Sequin Starship is a well-known haunt in Brighton for "healthy parties", where guests turn up to be entertained and not smoking or booze allowed.

Prior to Brighton, she travelled Europe, sometimes on stilts, trying to make a living as a street performer. It was while she was in Germany in 1996 that she met a good-looking juggler called Kammann who was to change her life. "We met at a fabulous street festival," she recalls. "I was a magician and he was a juggler and he kept giving me the eye. Then three years later, he proposed up a tree."

Romany remembers the moment well. They had hitched a lift to a party in a fork-lift truck and when they arrived at the venue – a tree – Kammann could contain himself no longer and asked for her hand in marriage. Romany was thrilled and they got married a few months later in the town of Linz. She wore red platform shoes and a big gold wedding dress she had bought in Bournemouth for £3,000. "The local people were so excited a German juggler was marrying an English magician, they gave us a castle to get married in and a champagne reception in the town hall," she says. "There were 300 guests and the whole wedding was televised. It was shown 72 times in one week."

Sadly, the marriage didn't last. Romany by name and Romany by nature, she didn't want to be tied down and they got divorced four years later. "We still work together and are best friends," she says. "Married life just wasn't for me. I'm Romany, I travel."

Since training in Vegas, Romany has toured the world impressing audiences as far afield as Hollywood, Dubai and Glastonbury (where she died a theatrical death as the crowd went into a state of focus.) She has built a slick routine around MC-ing events, still walking, fire juggling and theatrical costumes to full-on magic. As with most circus stunts, there has been the odd hairy moment and Romany has set her hair on fire ten times without even noticing.

The last time it happened I only realised it was on fire when the people in the front row started patting their



Romany in her Brighton home

heads shouting 'Fire! Fire!' They thought it was part of the act," she says, almost too matter-of-factly. "Luckily I've got curly hair so you can't see the difference." Romany can perform in French, Italian and German as well as English and has even made her mark in the dance world for winning the UK Salsa championships three times. Her main routine, however, is a kind of burlesque meets Tommy Cooper with corsets, feathers and diamonds thrown in. She sets herself apart from other burlesque acts on the circuit by adding a twist with her own comedy material and ad libs her way through each act. "He loves magic and kept following me as I was walking around from table to table. I kept saying, 'Jeffrey,

I'm trying to work here' but he was very persistent. He just loves magic." Every job has its downside, however, and when the celebrity dos dry up, Romany can be spotted doing the odd office party to make ends meet. Slightly more raucous than the more genteel royal events, the subject of office parties has been a moot point since one spectacular disaster before Christmas. As is the fashion at office parties, all the male employees were rather worse for wear and Romany lost her rag when they kept interrupting the show. "They didn't get it," she says, crossly. "They thought I was some sort of stripper or something and kept stealing the props. In the end I said, 'I'm not going to play any more' and walked out."

As much as she enjoys baffling celebs with her amazing card tricks, Romany says one of her happiest memories to date was the time she teamed up with a local charity and put on a free show for 1,000 children in a South African township. Romany felt she wanted to give something back. It was a humbling experience and she was proud to be there. Despite the range of gigs, Romany insists the job is not as well paid as you might expect. Although she can pick up as much as £2,000 in one night, as she's self-employed, she doesn't have the comfort of knowing when the next pay cheque is going to come in. "I've got a magic teacher in Vegas so once I've spent the air fare going there and bought all my new costumes, I don't have that much left," she points out. "Sometimes I'll end up spending a couple of thousand just for the

privilege of performing in Hollywood. The amount they pay magicians is peanuts." Romany has ten corsets – and a personal trainer who pummels her into shape twice a week to ensure she fits into them. Her pride and joy is a purple glitter sequin corset which cost £500, but most of them hail from sexy lingerie boutique She Said in Brighton. Fellow cabaret singer Dolly Rocket makes her hats and her sparkly platform shoes come from Hollywood. She also has a special skirt with secret pockets which cost £300. "It's designed so I can do magic. I can't tell you how," she says, teasingly. Her favourite trick is called the Hindu Mystery, in which she burns a long piece of thread into tiny pieces, asks the audience to make a wish and then pulls out what appears to be the same piece of thread perfectly intact. Romany's dedication is inspiring. She says she's spent the past 20 years dreaming and training to get where she is today and as the first woman in history to be named Magician of the Year 2006-8, she is up there with the best in the business. What makes her particularly unique is that she has had to create her entire routine from scratch. "Male magicians have been doing tricks in their jackets,



PICT: TOBY AMMES



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With Paul Daniels and Debbie McGee



Hero, Ken Dodd