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SLEIGHTS OF MIND

George Johnson in the *New York Times*:

It was Sunday night on the Las Vegas Strip, where earlier this summer the Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness was holding its annual meeting at the Imperial Palace Hotel. The organization's last gathering had been in the staid environs of Oxford, but Las Vegas — the city of illusions, where the Statue of Liberty stares past Camelot at the Sphinx — turned out to be the perfect locale. After two days of presentations by scientists and philosophers speculating on how the mind construes, and misconstrues, reality, we were hearing from the pros: James (The Amazing) Randi, Johnny Thompson (The Great Tomsoni), Mac King and Teller — magicians who had intuitively mastered some of the lessons being learned in the laboratory about the limits of cognition and attention.



“This wasn’t just a group of world-class performers,” said Susana Martinez-Conde, a scientist at the Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix who studies optical illusions and what they say about the brain. “They were hand-picked because of their specific interest in the cognitive principles underlying the magic.”

She and Stephen Macknik, another Barrow researcher, organized the symposium, appropriately called the Magic of Consciousness.

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Posted by Abbas Raza at 01:36 PM | [Permalink](#)

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