

The Society of American Magicians Competition Rules and Procedures

As the new Contest Chairman for the S.A.M., I am taking this opportunity to revise and clarify the rules and procedures for the Competitions. I have taken the precepts established by both Father Cyprian and Paul Critelli and tried to combine them with current FISM procedures. In this way, all competitors will become more accustomed to and conversant with FISM rules, should they wish to move on from National to International Competition.

Let me begin by saying that this is a competition only in that you are competing against yourself and a point score. You are not competing against other magicians. The judges are to establish a fair point valuation in specific categories of the performance that they will themselves adhere to when judging all competitors. Although some prizes are given to the act judged best in its division, certain other prizes are given only when specific point scores are obtained.

Judging is based on a point system, with 100 points being the maximum awarded to a competitor by each judge. The score sheets of each judge are totaled and divided by the number of judges.

Here is a listing of possible awards to be given...

- 1) Father Cyprian Murray Stage Contest awards
 - a. High Score - \$1,000 cash prize
 - b. Second Highest Score - \$500 cash prize
- 2) Dr. Paul Critelli Close-Up Contest Awards
 - a. High Score - \$1,000 cash award
 - b. Second Highest Score - \$500 cash award
- 3) S.A.M. Award of Honor – Gold Medal plus \$1,000. This can be awarded for both Stage and Close-Up. This is awarded to the highest point score over 90 points.

S.A.M. Award of Merit – Silver Medal plus \$500. This can be awarded for both Stage and Close-Up. It can be awarded either for the second highest score over 90 points or the highest score over 80 points, but less than 90 points.

In the event there is a tie score, the judges will reach a final decision as to placement through discussion and giving weight to, in order of importance, 1) Presentation and 2) Originality.

- 4) The Bradley Jacobs People's Choice Award:
 - a) Close-Up - \$500 cash prize
 - b) Stage \$1,000 cash prize.
- 5) William Andrews/Mystic Craig Award for Professional Promise - \$300 cash award. This award can be given in both stage and close-up divisions at the discretion of the judges.
- 6) Awards for Originality and Comedy are given at the discretion of the judges.

The Rules

All Competitors must be a current member of either the S.A.M. or S.A.M.Y. with dues paid for that year. You will be required to provide your membership number on the application form.

All Competitors must be above the age of 14 years old on the day the convention begins.

All Competitors must be registered for the convention. Anyone participating in the act must also be registered for the convention.

The application must be submitted fully completed. This includes submission of your video for consideration and your Act Sheet.

You must have the full application in my hands prior to the deadline date. No exceptions will be made. I will send you a verification of receipt of your application package within 48 hours of receipt. If you do not get a reply from me, e-mail me to ask if I received it. My e-mail is fkaps@aol.com.

Your video submission must be a link to a private vimeo, YouTube or WeTransfer video. No other means of video submittal will be permitted. The video must substantially represent the act as you will present it at the convention. A screening

committee will view these videos and make recommendations as to the act's inclusion in the Competition.

Any performer who has been booked for the Convention may not compete.

I will send you an e-mail informing you of whether you have been accepted for the competition or not. You will get that e-mail no later than 30 days prior to the convention. You will also receive the information concerning the technical specifications that will be provided for all competitors at the convention, aka lights, music, curtains, etc. There will be several different "looks" for the lighting that can be used. Do not expect customization of the lighting plans. Although there will be a tech run-through, do not expect anything extensive. Be prepared to perform your act under adverse conditions. Be prepared with everything you need for your act, including extra supplies. Do not expect to be able to borrow anything.

No, and I mean no, pyrotechnics. That means flash pots, flash paper, smoke/fog generating devices, anything that causes sparks or sparkle, explosions, bang devices and any open flame. That includes matches, torches and candles.

An act is more than a single trick. The act should be a minimum of five minutes and a maximum of ten minutes. Shoot for a nine minute maximum to allow time for audience reaction and things that can go wrong.

Be ready to go when you are "on deck," meaning ten minutes prior to your scheduled time of performance. You will have a maximum of five minutes to set your props and five minutes to strike your props. This strike time includes any required clean up. If you are doing an act where there is any residue left on the stage such as a snowstorm, cards, etc., you are required to clean it up. You are required to provide your own drop cloth to aid in this.

Generally, your act begins when your music starts or you begin speaking. If you attempt to engage the audience in any way prior to this, your act will be considered to have begun.

Music – For legal reasons, if you use music in your act, you need to own the rights to use it. This is a FISM rule and we have adopted it as well. This can be commercial music that you have paid the rights for, royalty free music, or custom scored music. You will be required to send us any music you will use 30 days in advance of the convention.

Video – Unless otherwise notified or requested in advance, there is to be no video taping of the competition. If you wish to personally have your act videoed, that must be arranged through the Contest Chairman prior to the convention. One person will be permitted to video your act only and they must have written permission from the Contest Chairman to do so. Anyone seen shooting video of any act without written permission will have their camera/phone confiscated.

If you require volunteers from the audience for your act, they should be pre-selected before the Competition begins.

A Competitor may complete in both Stage and Close-Up categories at the same convention, however they must be different acts.

Potential awards for the competition will be announced prior to the competition. They may vary from year to year, depending on the organization of the convention.

An act should be your own work and not contain blatant copies of the work of others. One should strive for originality as best they can, but great performances of classic material is often well received. If an act is determined by the judges to be a copy of another's act, it may be disqualified.

There will be a Competitor Briefing meeting prior to the competition. At that meeting the order of appearance will be given as well as review of the rules and scoring system. Other important facts may be discussed including tech aspects and tech run-through times. It is required that you attend. If you do not attend, you will not be permitted to compete. This meeting will likely be the night before the “official” start of the convention, so plan accordingly.

Many of the judging procedures from FISM have been adopted for the S.A.M. Competition. I suggest you go to the FISM NA website and read the Contest Rules and Procedures for the North American Championship of Magic.

There may be time allotted for a feedback session. This is optional for all contestants to attend, but it is one of the greatest benefits of entering the S.A.M. Competition. If possible, the judges will meet with the competitors individually for five to seven minutes and give the Competitor an overview of their impressions of the act with, possibly, some details as well. You will be allowed some questions as well, keeping in mind the time limitation. There will be no discussion of how you placed in the Competition in the feedback session. It is also not appropriate to

converse at length about the judges' comments or argue with them. Many of these judges will speak frankly about positives and negatives they saw in your act. This is not a session designed to tell you how good you were. If you are only looking for gushing and praise, this may not be something you wish to attend. By the same token, these are not designed to be a slam session where you will be berated for even stepping out in front of an audience. It is a safe place for constructive criticism and is designed to help you improve your performance.

Should a feedback session not be feasible, a competitor may request their total score sheet after the Awards Ceremony. There will be no listing of individual judges' scores, only the aggregate.

The decision of the judges is final.

Categories – At most S.A.M. Conventions there will be separate competitions for Stage and Close-Up Magic. Parlor Magic is not a separate category for the S.A.M. and is grouped under Close-Up. This category is slightly subjective. In general, if it feels like Close-Up or Parlor, that is how it will be categorized. If you progress to FISM Competition, there are additional categories, but not at S.A.M.

Under FISM rules the judging sheets cover the following six aspects of the performance. The weighting of those aspects differ from category to category. SAM judges are asked to consider that weighting as well:

Technical Skill/Handling

Showmanship/Presentation

Entertainment Value

Artistic Impression/Routining

Originality

Magic Atmosphere

The final category is a very interesting one. Essentially it asks if the act feels magical, as opposed to merely a display of skill.

Obviously, judging any Competition of an artistic endeavor is extremely subjective. Anyone who is a judge brings their own preferences to the table. We ask the judges to establish a baseline against which all are judged uniformly. It

must be a reasonable baseline though, as there are specific point totals that are required to attain levels of accomplishment and certain prizes/awards.

Marc DeSouza

The Society of American Magicians

Contest Chairman

