



Alvin Lui entertained at Winemaker's Pour House.



A Magical Evening Guided by 'Misdirection'

By Carol Graham

It was, by all accounts, a magical evening.

Tiny white lights crisscrossed the outdoor patio. Thick ivy climbed up century-old brick walls. A dancing fire reflected in goblets of amber wine.

"Do you want to see some magic?" asked Alvin Lui, an illusionist new to the Tri-Valley who was performing at the Winemaker's Pour House in Livermore on Friday, August 9th.

Everybody did.

With his engaging personality and eyes that light up in delight at the astonishment of his audience, Lui made his way from table to table, treating couples and groups to illusions that made people gasp and laugh out loud.

"Magic is showing somebody something that they didn't think was possible," said Lui. "I hope that when people see what I do, they walk away going, 'Wow, I'll remember that.' They'll tell people about it the next day because they actually felt it

and experienced it."

Lui performs in a variety of venues - from restaurants and clubs to private parties, weddings and corporate events. Recent performances include a 250-person party at Barone's restaurant in Pleasanton, a corporate event at the Blackhawk Auto Museum, and at nightclub Pure Lounge in Sunnyvale. Twice monthly he appears at the California Magic Dinner Theatre in Martinez.

"My first love is definitely up-close magic because I get to interact with people," said the 39 year old. "When I'm performing, I have as much fun or maybe more fun than they do."

Each performance is a highly interactive experience combining sleight of hand, audience participation, storytelling, humor and psychology.

"Magic lies in two areas," he said. "Number one, with sleight of hand. Number two, more importantly, within the spectators' minds. It's commonly

called misdirection, but most people don't know what misdirection entails. They think I'm saying, 'Oh, there's a big cat over there,' while I'm doing something else over here. They think I'm misdirecting their eyes, but I'm not; I'm misdirecting their minds.

"Here's an example: take two fingers and hold them in front of you shoulder width apart, looking back and forth between them. If I've shown you a black pen in the middle you will see it as you look back and forth, but if I do something to that pen like swap colors, in your mind you won't see that till you stop looking back and forth. You are actually blind in the middle; your mind fills it in. Everyone has blind spots, we all do. As magicians, we try to live in that spot in your mind that's blind."

Lui began studying magic at 14 when his father brought home a VHS tape of a David Copperfield show. "I remember that day, even where I was

lying on the floor. I totally fell in love with the art of magic within ten or 15 minutes," he said.

From there, Lui began reading everything he could on magic. He wasn't aware there were magic kits, stores or clubs, instead he worked ceaselessly to learn and perfect his illusions.

"When we first started dating three years ago I told him I wanted see how he practiced a new trick," said Lui's fiancée Joanne Kerr. "I said I thought it would be super interesting, like watching an artist do his craft. He proceeded to use me as his test dummy for an hour and a half, doing the same thing over and over. An hour and a half! I said, 'Yeah, that's all the learning I want to experience.'"

Does it worry her that her husband-to-be knows so much about directing the human psyche? "For the most part, he's pretty good about not trying to trick me," said Joanne, who admits she's content not to know the secrets

behind Lui's magic. "At home, he's just him at home. He has an on and off switch. He doesn't go around trying to fool everybody in his life, contrary to what people think."

"You would go crazy if you were always thinking like that," added Lui, laughing. "You would be a psychopath. You couldn't develop relationships, you couldn't have trust or honesty. It would be very tiring - unless you were a psychopath."

While performing, whether at intimate or large scale venues, Lui wears dog tags around his neck that read: This will not end well.

"It has nothing to do with magic," said Lui. "On about Joanne's and my fourth date, we were driving and I looked at her said, 'This will not end well.' We were joking around about our relationship, but what I meant was that I thought this was really going to go somewhere."

Later, at a penny arcade

in San Francisco, the couple had the saying etched onto his-and-hers dog tags. "I wear mine almost every day, but I wear it every time I perform for sure," he added. "It keeps her close to me even though she's not there."

To see when and where Lui will be appearing, or to engage him to perform, visit luientertainment.com.

"When people have me perform at a function, my primary goal is to make them look good," Lui said. "When guests leave, it's wonderful if they say, 'I remember Alvin, I remember his magic,' but I want them to primarily say, 'That restaurant is awesome!' That's really the value I bring to an event - whatever good feeling I give people, they actually transfer that to the host."

Looking around the Winemaker's Pour House, there's no doubt the smiling guests will leave with good memories of the venue, the fun, and the night that was touched by a little magic.