

Fred Zombie



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Photography by Al Schneider

Cover by Al Schneider

Custom typesetting software by Al Schneider

HTML to PDF by HTMLDOC: Easy Software Products

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# Introduction

All this started when I was roaming on the internet and found a performance of Walking Fred Zombie by Steve Axtell of Axtell Expressions, Inc. I posted a comment about non-spherical objects and the performance of zombie. We won't go into the details of that but I offered to put together a little routine to express my ideas. I was going to use my zombie but eventually got a Fred to experiment with. This led to a full blown routine.

## Chapter 1

# The Props

The package comes with this stuff. (Fig. 1)



I re-bent the wire to fit into my style of performance. The basic routine is from my book, Al Schneider on Zombie. Some of the bits are also found with the instructions that come with Fred. I won't detail all the philosophy from my book but I will give you enough detail so you can see what is going on. I plan on including this routine in my book eventually. Mr. Axtell approves of this.

We need to talk about the basic structure of the puppet. There is a hole in the back of the head. To form the puppet, place the cloth over one hand. The first finger under the cloth is inserted into this hole. The arms are tubes. One is stuck on the thumb over the cloth and I stick the other on my third finger. Steve sticks it on his little finger.

He includes a plastic chain with the set he uses in his presentation. I don't use it.

The wire gimmick has a magnet on one end that sticks to another magnet inside the zombie's head. It is quite effective. The other end of the wire is coiled to hold two fingers instead of one. This seems to be effective. I shortened the wire for my handling by bending the wire near the coil to make an extra coil in the finger area. The ideal length of the wire is to put the head half way on top of the cloth when it is held in an upright position.

The wire was very bouncy because the support points allowed the coils to twist about. I wrapped string around the two coils nearest the head to prevent the coils from bouncing about. It worked fairly well. I also wrapped the end of the wire to make it more comfortable. During performance it was really digging into my finger. All in all, using a two finger coil is much more comfortable than a coil for a single finger.

The weight of the head, magnets, and cloth is much more than a standard zombie. While handling the unit I found the head drooping lower than normal. One must compensate for this extra weight to keep the head in a right position. Also the face is not smooth like a ball. That must be taken into consideration. A few of these critical issues will be handled in the following description.

If you really get into this routine, you will be spending time getting the wire bent right for your style of handling. Time here will be well spent. And, by the by, this routine is not for those that want to open the box and go. However, the few times I have tried this routine proved such effort is well worth it. I think this routine is fit for a closer for any show. It will kill.

I am skipping a lot of detail as most of this will be clear if you purchase the unit.



## Chapter 2

# Setup

Other than the wire, nothing else in the package has been altered. I put the head into the basket face down and covered it with the cloth. I poked some cloth into the head. Then, during performance, I can poke my finger into the hole to get the puppet set up quickly. The two arms are nearby under the cloth and the wire is positioned where it will be ready to go into action. (Fig. 2)



## Chapter 3

# Performance

When the time comes, fetch the basket from its resting place. The trick is performed while standing behind a table. Stand behind the table and announce that you have an actual zombie in the basket you would like to share with the audience. (Fig. 3)



Then ask the audience if you are in Macomb County. Pick some strange name for a county. Then the audience will tell you that you are not in that county. Then you say that is good for Macomb County will not allow dangerous creatures on the stage. (This is a bit from Sid Lorraine's patter books.) Repeat that you are going to show them a real live zombie.

The goal is to put some fear into the audience for what follows. The logic is that if the creature is dangerous, you

can take time with your hands in the basket to assemble the puppet. Then, you act as if attempting to catch it. Of course, they won't buy that but think you are just doing theater. Then they do all that suspend belief stuff and you can take your time putting the puppet together.

Anyway, we now get into the serious introduction of the zombie. Place the basket on the table. The left hand lifts the lid just enough to slip your right hand into the basket. (Fig. 4)



The audience should believe you are reaching into the basket to get something. Then, pull your hand out of the

basket as if something bit you and yell loudly as you can.  
(Fig. 5)



(I got this bit from Karrell Fox of Detroit, MI)

Now, hold your hand with the first finger bent back as if part of the finger were missing. (Fig. 6)



You can say the zombie bit off your finger. Blow on the hand, (Fig. 7)



and straighten the finger. (Fig. 8)



Then say that it is a good thing you are a magician.

As mentioned, these bits of business seem as useless byplay, they serve to suggest the creature you are about to

show is dangerous. That sets the stage to enable you to spend time wrestling with the creature enabling you set the puppet up before bringing him into view.

## **Bringing the Zombie Out**

Open the lid all the way. (Fig. 9)



Insert both hands into the basket quickly as if trying to catch something. (Fig. 10)



Once your hands are in the basket, insert the first finger

into the cloth and into the hole in the head. The left hand flips the cloth back and jams the arms on the thumb and third finger. Periodically, move the hands back and forth to create the illusion you are trying to grab some small creature. In the routine that follows, the left arm is pressed onto the thumb so the zombie hand is facing the wrong way.

Bring the creature out for everyone to see. (Fig. 11)



The left hand presses the cloth around the right wrist. Bring him up out of the basket. The left hand pretends to hold the creature back while the creature's arms are reaching for the audience. All the while make growling sounds.

Make an attempt to control the creature. Between growling sounds you can say, "Now behave. You promised you would behave if I let you get out and see some people." Continue some growling and say, "What do you want?" Growl some more and say, "No you can't eat anyone, behave."

At this point you do your best puppet stuff. I am not a puppet guy so I just continue with the following.

While the creature is trying to get at the audience, notice that the arm is on backwards. Then say to the creature, "Hey, your arm is on backwards." You want Fred to look at the backwards arm but he can't because everything is in the way. So, I just tip the head and arm down and up indicating Fred is looking at the arm. (Fig. 12)



Fred looks at me and then at the audience as if he does not know what to do.

Then I say, "I'll fix it for you."

I reach up and rotate the arm so the hand is facing the right way. As you do this, make Fred's head look up and shake



in pain as the arm position is corrected. Accompany this with shrieks of pain as if Fred is screaming. (Fig. 13)



Move your left hand back to the wrist as if holding Fred.

Fred continues the action by beating on your left arm with his right arm. The action depicted in the following two pictures is repeated as Fred hits the arm repeatedly.





I tried to blur this to illustrate action. He is trying to hurt you as you just hurt him. Continue beating on your arm and let the arm fall off into the basket. (Fig. 16)



Fred looks into the basket and then at you. (Fig. 17 & 18)



Then he continues beating you with his left arm. (Fig. 19 & 20 repeated.)



Again, continue this allowing the left arm to fall into the basket. (Fig. 21)



Then, Fred looks into the basket, then at you, and then looks up screaming in pain. (Fig. 22, 23, and 24)





You of course supply the screams. In the above picture,

the head is shaking accompanied with screams. Then, the head falls into the basket. (Fig. 25)



Then the cloth is allowed to slip off your hand and it falls into the basket. (Fig. 26)



You look a little perplexed; shrug your shoulders and say, "Well that is what zombies are about."

## Set Up to Float

Now put both of your hands into the basket as if you are going to straighten things. (Fig. 27)



When your hands go into the basket, the head is placed on the bar in a good position. Then the hands grab the cloth and raise it out of the basket. You are apparently smoothing out the cloth for whatever you are going to do next. During this action, the right hand grasps the cloth



between the first finger and second. The middle two fingers are positioned to slip into the wire coil. (Fig. 28)



Say something about letting him get some rest. Spread the cloth out as if you are going to cover the basket. Move the cloth in front of the basket. (Fig. 29)



Then move the cloth as if covering the basket. As the cloth

is pulled over the basket, the right hand dips down to the coil left sticking out of the basket a bit. (Fig. 30)



the right fingers are slipped into the coils of the wire. In this picture the eyes should be looking at the audience. That would help cover this odd motion. Finally, the cloth apparently covers the basket. Note that the coil is held at the top of the back of the basket, outside the basket. (Fig. 31)



Doing this quickly will look a bit odd. So, move very

slowly as if attempting to be kind to Fred.

## **Fred Comes Alive Again**

After the fingers move into the coils and have secured the wire, be sure you are looking at the audience. Once the fingers secure the wire, cause the head to bob up under the cloth by curling the middle fingers. (Fig. 32)



The audience now knows that the performance is not over. Quickly look down as the form of the head drops. (Fig. 33)



Repeat this. Look at the audience and the head bobs up a bit. Look down and the cloth goes flat.

Now, look up and then lean forward a bit and look down as if attempting to ascertain what is going on. (Fig. 34)



As you look down the head bobs up and hits you on the chin. (Fig. 35)



Now, we move into the clever gymnastics. Both hands raise the cloth as if raising it to look into the basket. (Fig. 36)



The head is moved up with the cloth but behind the cloth so the audience cannot see it. The upper edge of the cloth is far from the basket. Your head ducks down as if studying what is in the basket.

Fred or Fred's head makes an appearance. While looking into the basket, the right hand rotates a bit bringing the head up onto the edge of the cloth. (Fig. 37)



As you hear the audience respond to this, the head ducks down behind the cloth. (Fig. 38)



Tilt the cloth toward yourself and look over the cloth on the audience side of the cloth. (Fig. 39)



Tilt the cloth toward the audience and look behind the cloth again. (Fig. 40)



Once again, the head pops up on the edge of the cloth.  
(Fig. 41)



The audience should respond. This time shake the head and make a growling sound. Look up at the head as if you are startled. (Fig. 42)





## It Floats

Perform a cover and uncover move.

During this move the goal is to freeze the position of the head in space. The hands then flip the cloth over the head and then uncover it. The hands still have the cloth spread wide as in the previous picture.

Begin this by moving the cloth toward the audience a bit. Also, move the cloth up to cover Fred's face. Then move both hands in an arc around the head quickly. Snap the hands up then toward yourself then down. This causes the cloth to flip over the head. (Fig. 43)



Hiding Fred's head first is not necessary to accomplish the move. However, if you do not cover his face before doing the move, the audience will see his head flip over during the move. This is a problem with a non-spherical floating object. However, if the head is first hidden before the flip, it looks fine.

Note, the hands execute all of this motion moving in circles around the head. This allows the head to remain in one position in space. This sequence should convince the

audience the head is floating. This motion is repeated so the cover and uncover happens twice. The goal is to convince the head is floating. That is, this is where the magic occurs. What follows is eye candy to complete the show. This is the place to put the work in to make it look like magic. This will convince the audience the head is on its own.

Let's continue with the first covering motion. After the first flip, the hands will be between you and the head. Also, the hands should be below the head as in the previous figure.

This position is not held long and the hands reverse to uncover the head. This motion need not be quick as the covering motion. The hands move in an arc over the head. Then the hands can move to either side of the head revealing it. The edge of the cloth slips over the head so the head appears to be resting on the edge of the cloth once again. (Fig. 44)



Again, the irregular shape of the head will reveal that it is rotating. However, during the odd positions of the head, it is covered by cloth so all should go well.

One last word about this: your demeanor should suggest you are trying to understand why Fred's head is floating. You can look at the head with a frown of confusion.

Note the power of this. Everything is moving. You have a frown on your face like you do not know what is going on. Yet, the head is fixed in space. The illusion of floating is very strong.

As mentioned, this sequence is repeated. The reason is this. To accomplish this sequence successfully, the motion must be quick. This quick motion will not give the audience a chance to absorb what is transpiring. Doing it again gives them this chance. One could even do this sequence three times and all would be OK. If you are a fast worker, that may be desirable.

On the last cover and uncover action, look at the audience just before you uncover it. (Fig. 45 and 46)





This creates a strong impression it is really floating and prepares for the fly up. (Fig. 47)



There is one problem here. Sometimes the audience will break out in applause here. You can't stop to accept it. What I do, not that it is the best thing to do, is continue covering and uncovering. As I do this I tip my head as if doing a small bow to accept the applause.

In general, I avoid pauses that might be considered as

applaud queues. I just get on with the action.

## The Fly Up

After you have done the cover and uncover sequence, Fred's head will be sitting on the cloth. Now you switch tactics. You freeze and let Fred move. While holding the cloth rather straight and the hands are not moving, cause the head to move down behind the cloth. (Fig. 48)



Then bring the head up under the cloth. The head should go as high as your head. (Fig. 49)



The hands will move toward each other as the head goes up.

Here, Fred moving and you not moving creates a strong illusion of floating. You are not looking at the action.

One of the goals here is to create a perspective between your body and the upper motion of the ball. So, lean forward a little bit and have the ball move closer to your head.

The ball is going to go over your head. This will perplex the audience as they will be assuming there are threads on the head that make it float. If the ball goes much higher than your head, that idea is crushed.

The next action is to rotate slightly so the right hand moves away from the audience and the left hand moves between the head and the audience. At the same time, the left hand releases the cloth and the right hand allows the ball to

continue moving upward. Then, your head turns and the eyes focus on the cloth rising. (Fig. 50)



As the head moves up and away, the left hand reaches for the cloth quickly and grabs it. The head continues moving away and the left hand pulls on the cloth so it looks like the head is slipping away under the cloth. (Fig. 51)



Now, both hands move toward you as if pulling the ball down. Look at the audience and raise your left hand a bit

so the cloth forms an arc between the hand and the ball.  
(Fig. 52)



The right hand moves up slowly so the head appears to be floating relative to the left hand.

If you are like me, you will watch this in a mirror a lot to fool yourself.

## **The Fly Around**

The next goal is to have the head fly around your body in a mad dash. First we need to get ready for this. This sequence handles the fact the head is not a sphere.

The head drops straight down. (Fig. 53)





The hands suddenly spread with the right hand going to your far right. Your left hand will be near your right shoulder. The head moves to rest on your arm at the elbow. (Fig. 54)



This motion serves to keep the head facing the audience. Once the head hits the arm, look at it and say something like, "Where are you going?" You can rest here a bit before launching into the fly around.

To do the fly around, rotate your body so your right hand moves to your left. Keep the cloth and head against your arm. This is a bit odd but it keeps the wire hidden and keeps the head facing in a logical direction. Drop your right hand so the audience sees the head kind of from the top or at an angle. (Fig. 55)



When the back of your arm is toward the audience and the wire is hidden, raise the cloth up and away from the head. (Fig. 56) The head is snapped into the cloth. (Fig. 57)



The head moves far to your left. (Fig. 58)



Here is the exciting part. The head zooms around your body but you do very little.

Now move the head upward and in an arc around the two hands. (Fig. 59)



The hands kind of remain in the same location in space at

this point. The head continues on the arc toward the inside of your right elbow. (Fig. 60)



Once the head has made an arc of 18 degrees, both hands move to the right so the head can rest against the side of your body and under your right elbow. (Fig. 61)



Just rotate your body to your right a bit more than 18 degrees. (Fig. 62 and 63)



You want the audience to see the form of the head on their right side of your body which is behind you.

Now, spread your hands and bring them together causing

the head to shoot from behind you to your front side. (Fig. 64)



The body is not rotated. From the audience point of view, the head traveled from your far left to your far right.

Once the head is way in front of you and left side of your body is toward the audience, you do the head smash.

## **Head Smash**

This is considered the highlight of the routine. The head is

hanging in space to your right. Move the head in a straight line to hit you in the chin. (Fig. 65)



This is accomplished by opening and closing your hands. Act as if you got hit and are reeling from the blow. During this the ball hangs lazily in front of your face. (Fig. 66)



## The Mad Grab

After reeling a bit from the chin blow, the hands attempt to grab the head but it drops suddenly. (Fig. 67)



This is accomplished by moving your hands apart as they reach for the spot where the head is suspended. As the hands close on that spot, the head is allowed to move downwards. The hands come together grabbing nothing. Spread the cloth to your right side and move the head to the top of the cloth. (Fig. 68)





Mentally, you are apparently trying to figure out how to catch the head.

### **Another Escape Attempt**

Fred, of course, has a mind of his own and attempts another get away. He again ducks under the cloth. (Fig. 69)



Then he shoots up under the cloth as before. (Fig. 70)

Repeat a bit of the floating business by moving the head up and down with the right hidden hand and allowing the cloth to drape loosely from your right hand. (Fig. 71)



The left hand releases the cloth. (Fig. 72)



The left reaches for the head and grabs the head.

Immediately, the right hand reaches up to grab the head.  
(Fig.73)



The goal is to create the impression that both hands grabbed at the same time.

### **Force the Zombie into the Basket**

Once both hands have grabbed the head they do a mime bit where the illusion is created the object is attempting to float up but the hands are forcing it downward into the basket. (Fig. 74, 75, and 76)





While one hand apparently holds the head in the basket, the other slams the lid on the basket.

## **Finally**

The experience is over and you can take a deserved bow.  
(Fig. 77)



