

# Secret mind games

It's time for magic but **Marion Sauvebois** meets a man who swears he really can read minds.

**S**ome children are good at maths, some have a talent for music and others have the knack of instinctively locating objects hidden for them by their friends.

Scottish mentalist Colin McLeod belongs to that last category.

"My friends would just hide something in their house and ask me to find it as a game. I would find it every single time," the 24-year-old explains.

Unlike most magicians, Colin did not grow up attempting to master the usual rabbit-in-the-hat or card tricks.

He became fascinated by Sherlock Holmes when he was six and vowed that he too would be able to deduce everything about a person from his appearance, personality or thoughts.

Building on his already highly developed intuition and aptitude for thought-reading, he studied forensic science at university.

"I specialised in criminal profiling. A lot of what I learned had to do with behavioural patterns.

"The psychology behind this has really helped me to understand people and I use many psychological techniques in my shows.

"You could say that my routines are a mixture of intuition, psychological techniques and total lies," he adds.

It is difficult to know where intuition ends and technique starts. His business card even reads: "Colin McLeod, Mind reader (?)."

He elaborates: "I would just say that I can read people's thoughts. I am the closest thing to a psychic but I am more accurate than one.

"I did a show in Edinburgh with five psychics and I would be able to tell more about the audience's lives than any of them. I could tell people their pin code, phone number or who their first kiss was with.

"At the end, all the psychics wanted to know how I did it."

Colin certainly enjoys a dose of mystery and has not only built his act but his personal life around it.

He says of his fiancée: "She is very supportive

and keeps challenging me to come up with new ideas. Actually she is better at reading me than I am at reading her.

"If I told her about all my techniques, my shows would not look so impressive to her. She would stop being amazed."

Is there absolutely nothing for his audience to take away at the end of a performance?

"I teach the spectators psychological techniques and a little about body language so they can try some tricks on their friends.

"For instance, if you tell someone to hide an object in their hand, they do it behind their back, and when they show you their hands they will look at the hand it's hidden in as if checking that it's there.

"If you ask them to do it again, they will hide the object in the same hand again."

His shows might be magical but their fundamental aim is to make people laugh and enjoy themselves.

"What can be funny is when people clam up or try to catch me out.

If I ask them to think

## Festival highlights

THE eighth South Tyneside International Magic Festival, organised by South Tyneside Council with Martin Duffy and MagicBox, is at The Customs House, South Shields, from March 7-13.

Highlights include:

- Family Magic Extravaganza, March 9, 6.30pm: Leading magicians from Newcastle's Magic Circle with compère Peter Darrant.

- International Gala Show 1, March 11, 8pm: World Champion of Magic Latimer, mind-reader Colin McLeod, comedy magician Jon Stetson and illusionist Andrew Van Buren with compère John Archer.

- International Gala Show 2, March 12, 8pm: Latimer, French entertainer Norbert Ferre, magic author Nick Einhorn, American conjurer Paul Vigil and Amethyst with compère Jon Stetson.

- Magic Convention, March 11-13: A series of masterclasses, lectures and Q&A sessions.

- Festival details:

[www.southtyneside.info/magicfestival](http://www.southtyneside.info/magicfestival).

Tickets: 0191 454 1234.

about something, they will often think of something embarrassing, that I couldn't know.

"When I guess it they are really self-conscious. But it's all in good humour. I don't reveal their secret in a very embarrassing way."

Colin has just come back from Los Angeles. Since he started performing at the age of 16, he has travelled the world and entertained in such legendary venues as Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

He has also lectured to some of the world's most renowned mind readers, sharing his most treasured secrets.

Now he is preparing himself for the South Tyneside International Magic Festival and Convention in South Shields, set to take place from March 11 to 13.

"There will be new elements to my routines for the festival," he promises. "It will be fresh."

A final thought from the master: it seems there is more to this than entertainment.

"My fiancée and I are looking for a house," he says. "Every time we go to a viewing, I make a point of asking the owners why they are moving away and whether their neighbours are friendly.

"I am instantly able to tell when they are lying."

Needless to say, the couple are still looking.

