

## **GETTING MENTAL – MENTOC THE MIND FUGGLER GIVES YOU WHAT HE THINKS YOU NEED.**

This year the Lawrence Busker Festival is going mental. There will be acts that mess with your head and what you think is possible. Fire eaters, sword swallows, jugglers, aerialists and incredible acts of dexterity. No better example of this is Mentoc the Mind Fuggler who will read minds, bend metal and make you wonder what is real.

Mentoc is the most recent reincarnation of Michael Morales who has been pursuing the freakish arts of circus and carnival culture since 1982. He started as a juggler appearing at arts festivals in Indiana but soon found that the appeal of the weird and the unusual kept calling him. He wanted to bring the counter culture world of the circus and the carnival into the mainstream. A clash that would surely shock and entertain like never before.

Michael contends that this odd obsession started with the tent revivals he attended with his grandfather in West Virginia while just a youngster. "Seeing those tents in the valleys with the fog surrounding them holds a vivid image for me", Michael recounts, "Each night was filled with snake handlers, poison drinking, music and food". It was in the midst of the religious revivals he found his love for freaks.

Michael became the founder, producer and director of Circus Mondo . It was intended to be an introduction to carnival culture for the mainstream of America. The audience would enter a pre-show area filled with games of chance, circus posters and peanut shells on the floor. They would then be lead into another area where the freaks and geeks would perform their circus arts of contortion, fire eating and unusual abilities. "I would look for the one guy in the audience ready to pass out and work on him" Michael retells, "and when he passed out the show would really begin."

Eventually word got around that Circus Mondo was the real insiders look into the culture of the bizarre. It actually was a well-crafted presentation of the usual tricks and techniques performers had been doing for ages. The artistry existed in the timing and the manipulation of the audience in presenting the tricks. The troupe of geeks and freaks were no more than regular actors that Michael had trained and directed. Staging, setting, timing and improvisation were the real skills presented.

"A craftsman gives you what you want but an artist gives you what he thinks you need", Michael said as he remembered the Circus Mondo phase, "I am not necessarily going after applause but shock and amazement". According to Michael this has usually shown up as anger or applause to the material he presents. "You will react with anger if you are challenged unexpectedly, you may be offended".

The artist in him has pushed his career in many directions. After Circus Mondo, Michael created shows based on fire eating and fire manipulation, a Killer Clown act followed, then Mexican Luchedores and a living history recreation of a travelling 1800's performer. He sought out every venue for his productions. He brought these shows to the street in Canada, New Orleans and Chicago. "Creating for the street involves a lot more improvisation with the reactions of the audience" He tells, "and I am good at that".

His obsession with the carnival and circus culture and his artistic approach continues into Michael's latest creation of Mentoc, a mentalism act inspired from the 1930's. As Mentoc, Michael presents himself as a person who has a particular gift for using powers of the mind. He predicts answers, reads minds and bends metal without any support or props. He often employs audience members to get involved and provide the means to make the impossible real. "My latest routine has a woman slapping me around until I get the numbers that she has secretly written down. Each slap opens up an insight until I have solved the puzzle" He said while trying to explain his latest show. Understandable or not, it is obvious that Michael is willing to go to great lengths to give you a good time.

Michael Morales as Mentoc the Mind Fuggler will make his debut appearance at the Lawrence Busker Festival this August 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> on the stages and street corners of downtown Lawrence. He will be joined by likeminded and equally talented acts on over 5 stages throughout the weekend. You can get more information on times and places at [www.Lawrencebuskerfest.com](http://www.Lawrencebuskerfest.com).