

# 'You are getting very sleepy.' Well, maybe not

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So there I was, smack in the middle of the Union Auditorium stage in front of 150 laughing students and some guy with false teeth, a polyester-blend suit and Grecian formula hair is telling me to "Relax... just relax." Yeah, right.

My father always told me never to volunteer for anything. But, not being one to follow any sensible advice, I joined 11 other volunteers for last Wednesday's hypnotism demonstration in the Union. The Carolina Union Special Projects Committee had invited Jon Lautrec, "Hypnotist Extraordinaire," (who says he's better known as "the world's ugliest hypnotist") to demonstrate his craft and give a seminar on memory tricks for students.

Before he began, Lautrec assured us that he would not intentionally embarrass us — that he was "not here to make idiots out of you. You have faculty to do that." Sure. Tell that to the guy who ended up doing Pee Wee Herman's Big Shoe Dance on stage.

He also told us that unless we were profoundly stupid, under the influence of drugs, or 90 percent brain-damaged, we could be hypnotized, no problem. Like anybody was going to call him on that one.

So anyway, he told us to relax, put our arms down by our sides and our feet flat on the floor about a foot apart. For some reason, this felt more like the beginning of Jane Fonda's Workout than a hypnotism. I expected Lautrec to burst into a round of leg-lifts at any moment.

Instead, he just told us to close

our eyes and listen to his voice: "Relax. You are beginning to sense a heaviness in your limbs. You feel heavy all over. Now your head is heavy and you feel a heavy sleep spread all over you." Sleep? I have enough trouble sleeping in class, much less on a stage in front of 150 of my peers.

Then it all started to be weirdly reminiscent of all the bad movies I've ever seen. You know what I'm talking about — where the evil scientist disguised as a Regular Guy (or maybe a Handsome Stranger) turns a sweet innocent young thing into a blood-thirsty nymphomaniac by twirling some cheesy-looking pendant back and forth in front of her.

But since he promised us that people never do anything while hypnotized that they would not do otherwise, and since the sweet innocent young things seemed to have a lot more fun after their transformations anyway, I decided to go along with it. Still it's hard to trust a guy whose tie is wider than his head.

While this struggle rages inside my head, Lautrec is counting to 10, telling us to feel sleepier at each count. The guy to one side of me is totally slumped over in his chair, the girl on the other side looks really limp too.

So I'm wondering: am I profoundly stupid? brain damaged? drugged? I mean, I feel relaxed, but nowhere near sleep. Maybe I'm not trying hard enough. Maybe I'm trying too hard. Maybe I am stupid.

Realizing how absurd that is, I shut my eyes as tightly as I can and listen to his voice. "Your arm is now light as a feather," he says and he lifts each of our right arms. That's cool, I thought, my arm feels pretty light. So he goes on and on and on about how light our arms are, and then says that they are now limp and heavy. Heavy? No kidding — we've been holding them in the air for 10 minutes.

Then he tells us that we are watching a movie. In light of my earlier cinematic flashback, this isn't too difficult. He says it's a very funny movie. Ditto on that.

Then he says that he will awaken



DTH/David Minton

Jon Lautrec, "Hypnotist Extraordinaire," displays a brave volunteer

us, but we will still be hypnotized. When we do awaken, however, we will smell something bad. "The closer I am to you, the worse it will smell," he said. The audience got a big kick out of that one. Then again, they didn't have to smell him. What do you think a cigar-smoking hypnotist smells like? You got it.

He snaps his fingers and tells us to go back to sleep. "You will have no feeling in your right hand whatsoever," he says. Then he lights a book of matches and holds it under my right hand. It didn't hurt very much, but neither did it when he held it under my left hand.

This, he said, was to demonstrate that painkillers are not really necessary. "Hypnosis can take away the

pain of surgery, even childbirth," Lautrec said. Now only a man would suggest that a woman in labor could go to sleep.

He snaps his fingers again to put us back to sleep. This time I feel noticeably more relaxed. Maybe there's something to this after all. Then again, maybe not...

He tells us that the number five does not exist, never has existed, and that we will not miss it. He tells us to wake up. Count your fingers, he says to the guy beside me. "One, two, three, four, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven," the guy says. "What's two plus three?" Lautrec asks me. Five, I say. He glares at me and says "Well, I guess it didn't take on you," he said.

Give me a break! The dude next to me thinks he has 11 fingers, and he's looking at me like I'm the strange one.

After that, he puts us back to sleep. I really do feel relaxed, almost sleepy this time. But I can hear every word he says: "When I say the words 'drunk,' 'sober,' or 'hangover,' you will feel drunk, sober or hung over." He tells a story about getting drunk and hung over, etc. Everybody laughs and acts happy when he says "drunk." Right. Everyone knows that drunks are always happy.

He then told us that when we awaken, he will appear to be completely nude — "Just a little surprise for you," he said. Little or not, I had no desire to imagine such a thing. Some of the other volunteers were not so lucky. One girl turned nearly purple when Lautrec turned to her and said "My little friend likes you. Look, he's smiling at you."

As a grande finale, Lautrec asked some of the volunteers to "be" their favorite celebrities. Sterling performances were turned in by Pee Wee Herman, Walter Payton, Michael Jordan, Vanna White, Whitney Houston and Frankenstein's monster. Luckily, he didn't ask me to do anything. Perhaps he sensed that I wasn't as far gone as the others.

It was all in good fun, though. Maybe under different circumstances, it might have worked better for me. Someday, maybe, I'll really get hypnotized. Just don't ask me to have a baby like that.

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**Burtman** from page 3  
anyone else," he said. "I do some freelance writing, but right now, I'm too busy with everything else."  
Burtman teaches a course called "How to Write Reviews" at the ArtsCenter in Carrboro. "I've never taught a course before," he said, "but it's a fun way to make a little extra change." He teaches his students not to be like everyone else and to come up with something different that will attract a reader. He says that UNC's journalism school does a good job, but it doesn't encourage good writing.  
Next semester, he will be teaching "Introduction to International Music" at the ArtsCenter. "Music is like any folk culture — it goes from one place to another," he says. "I have some guests who specialize in various national music." He says that this course is for the lazy people who will not search for bizarre music on their own.  
Along with his interest in music, Burtman plays in the band Dog Eat Dog. "We play confrontational music. We've been banned at more places than we've played. We're not mad — we're just accurate."  
Burtman, who holds all kinds of jobs, said, "I'm not cut out for a nine-to-five job. I can't sit in one place for eight hours. I prefer to do as many different things that I enjoy as I can without getting cramped. I kind of do whatever comes along. I might settle into something more consistent down the road, but I can't see myself conforming."  
Burtman does not conform to living in a modern house either. "I live in a little shack in the woods," he said, "and I heat it exclusively with wood. It keeps me in shape." He keeps himself busy "hauling and a'chopping and sawing."  
Until he does choose a full-time job, if that ever happens, Triangle Slim will probably continue his Sunday show along with writing, reviewing, teaching and chopping.