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BY JERI CHADWELL | [jeri@newsreview.com](mailto:jeri@newsreview.com)



Drew Wheeler has been practicing his sleight of hand for 17 years.

PHOTO/JERI CHADWELL

## In the cards

Drew Wheeler

**"I'm extremely proficient with cards,"** said Drew Wheeler.

The 23-year-old Reno native has been obsessed with sleight of hand since seeing his first magic performance as a small child.

"I was 4 years old, and it was Alex Ramon," Wheeler said.

Ramon—whose real name is Alex Gonzalez—is a popular magician these days. He recently appeared on the TV show *Penn & Teller Fool Us* and has performed gigs at Los Angeles' Magic Castle.

"He was a teenager when I was 4," Wheeler said. "My parents used to work for his parents back in the day. Yeah, that was the first time, and I actually got to meet him. He was doing magic tricks, and he showed me some tricks. I was really into it. A couple of years later, I learned my first card trick from my cousin Michael when I was 6."

Wheeler doesn't come from a family of magicians. Cousin Michael wasn't one. He was just the sort who knew a trick or two, like that family member some people have who likes to pull coins from kids' ears or ask people to "think of a number."

"But I was hooked from there," he said. "And I've never stopped learning. I always say I've been doing magic since I was 6. I'm 23, so that's 17 years."

In the early years, it wasn't always easy.

"I was severely bullied in middle school," Wheeler said. "I went to O'Brien up in North Valleys, and it was not super civil. ... People would, like, take [my] deck of cards and throw it, and I'd have to pick them up. So I got to the point where I'd just carry multiple decks, so I could just leave them. I wouldn't even pick them up. I wasn't going to waste my time and give them the satisfaction."

Wheeler was able to put his days of playing 52-card pick up with bullies fully behind him when he moved to Indiana after his freshman year of high school. He lived there for three years before returning to Reno. It was the first place Wheeler felt his magic was appreciated—and the first place he had a paid magic gig.

"That's why I have [magicdrew.com](http://magicdrew.com) as my website. The movie *Magic Mike* had come out, and people would just call me that, joking," he said.

Indiana is also where he began expanding his magic routines to include more props than just cards. But the magician, who said he's never had an interest in working with animals or high tech props, to this day uses a tool kit reminiscent of TV's *MacGyver*.

"I mostly use rubber bands, ink pens—toilet paper," he said. "If you give me a roll of toilet paper and a chair, I can entertain a crowd for five minutes, easy."

But cards are still his favorite.

"I can get very creative with cards," Wheeler said. "There's endless possibilities. It just depends on who's holding the deck, right? Yeah, I vomit up cards. I make cards fly around me."

Perhaps Wheeler's most impressive trick has been figuring out how to make a living as a magician. But he's achieved it by offering performances, private magic lessons, teaching magic at High Desert Montessori and keeping up a regular Saturday night gig at Press Play in midtown. This summer, he hopes to perform at the Old West Theater in Virginia City.

"Magic has really been the cornerstone of my life," Wheeler said. "It gave me self-confidence." □

Drew Wheeler has weekly performances at Press Start, 1413 S. Virginia St., on Saturdays from 8 to 11 p.m.