



## LOCAL YOKEL :: CHRISTOPHER CARTER

By Catherine Wargo

Christopher Carter read my mind over the phone. During our conversation, he was able to tell me the position of objects on my desk by reading subtleties in my voice. He freaked the hell out of me — and I liked it. Carter is considered one of the world's most skilled thought-readers, and he performs across the country at colleges, corporations, and other venues. His mind-reading abilities have more to do with a mixture of psychology and mystery than with 'magic' — and he will be the first to tell you that. "It is my job as a mentalist to use applied psychology to mold and bend a person's understanding of reality, and to that end, in a major part of my show I use a range of non-verbal techniques and hypnotic-like suggestions with audience participants in order to mess with their minds," he says.

**UR Chicago: How did you get started?**

**Christopher Carter:** When I was a little kid, my parents bought me a kiddie magic kit with a top hat and a rabbit and all that. They realized they might have created a monster when I was obsessively doing tricks — they thought that developing new interests might be good for me. I had this Uncle Bud, who was a retired army colonel, so they wanted me to spend some time with him, doing guy stuff — fishing, all that. On Wednesday nights Uncle Bud would have a poker game, and I was the errand boy — I would watch him lose his shirt on a regular basis. I picked up on the fact that whenever Bud had a decent hand, he would twirl his wedding band. I told my mom, who's a psychologist, and she got me a book on body language. I worked out a skill guessing what playing card someone is thinking about. It's impossible to control your body language. After that I just started searching for ways to amaze people with the way that their brains work.

**Whose mind would you most want to read?** Any major politician — you could pretty much take your pick. Because I think it would be cool to find out where their honesty and dishonesty lies — I'm good at doing that. Bush would be a major gas, Bill Clinton would have been too. Maybe Michael Jackson — he just seems not quite human.

**Do you use your powers for good or evil?** Kind of depends on the mood I am in.

**What am I thinking right now?** You're probably thinking, "Gee, is there any way he can really tell what I am thinking?" Am I right?

**Yes. What's brown and sticky?** I just took my dog for a walk...

**Wrong. A stick. What's the biggest drawback? The greatest advantage?** People get really scared when they see what I can do on stage — then they're like "Oh, I don't want to be near you, you'll read my mind." The biggest advantage is that I'm a great negotiator. Also, being able to amaze people in such a personal way is very rewarding.

**If you could have one other super power (other than the one you already have) what would it be?** Definitely the ability to predict winning lottery numbers. I can't predict any random events — human behavior is key, and lottery balls don't have behavior or minds to read.

**Who is your idol?** Obscure entertainers from the 1800s and 1900s — people who did this sort of thing in the "olden days." Washington Irving Bishop was one of the first people to truly "read minds" — using people's unconscious motor reactions to guess what they are thinking. I like people who really value mystery, and he is one of those people.

**How is the field of psychology related to what you do?** It provides me with a set of techniques or skills to predict the way people are going to behave and influence the way people are going to behave. Lots of things that involve reading people are not verbal communication — it's understanding likely behavior but reading what they are doing. It's making them think what you want them to think, then telling them what that is.

**Do you think I could become a mind reader?** Absolutely — anything I do, I think anyone could do — but it does take seven years of solitary meditation. Just kidding.

"Christopher Carter Messes With Your Mind" runs at the Theatre Building (1225 W. Belmont) from June 5-August 3, Thursdays-Saturdays at 8 p.m. Tickets \$25-\$28, call 773/327-5252