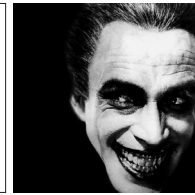


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Is the Small Fry a Big Fish?

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Note: This article was originally published on the BadPsychics website, under the name "Anne O. Nymous". It was an introduction to a full transcript of the seance in question. The transcript is available at Double Exposure.

It's hard to be objective when you like somebody, and I must confess I like Colin Fry. Being used to psychics looking like thugs, Fry is a fresh addition to the Swedish paranormal scene. And judging by his upcoming tour schedule and the new website, <http://www.colinscollege.com>, it is apparent that Fry is in the process of increasing his share of the Swedish market of fantasy-prones. Although you might not consider it a loss in the UK, it is definitely a gain here in Sweden. Take my word for it, should you meet one of our domestic psychics, including Terry Evans, late one night, you would, without a doubt, choose to walk on the other side of the street.

Colin Fry is charming, eloquent, probably intelligent and very entertaining. He also dresses sharply, although his accentuation of some of his preferences may be disturbing to the older segments of the Swedish woo-woo audience. Personally, I think it adds a bit of glamour to a community that tends to be a bit too grey and too dull on the client side and a veritable bad-taste party on the supply side – Fry's approach is a breath of fresh air in comparison. In fact, I could easily imagine him working in mid-level management or at some sales and marketing division in one of our global corporations. And although his preferences are not to my taste, meeting him late at night would include drinks and laughter instead of running for my life, as would be the case with the rest of the psychic lot in Sweden.

But Fry does not have a corporate career, he claims that he talks to dead people and makes the most out of it; it is evident that Fry is in it for the money and that he knows how to turn his claims into good business – the new <http://www.colinscollege.com> website has a distinctly commercial touch and features online course bookings and payment via PayPal. The "school" that has formed around another

British psychic in Sweden, Mrs. Iris Hall, will have to face cut-throat competition from this hard-core spiritualist operating from the spiritual "college" of Ramsbergsgarden. He's charming, professional, and has a background that can be checked and verified – qualities Swedish psychics would kill for. And a union with the Hall school, formal or informal, is very unlikely – I very much doubt that Fry would mingle with the Hall school riff-raff.

As for the core of Fry's business, I would like to start with a bit of sincere advice to Fry – in case he reads this – before I commence with the experience of a live Fry séance.

Mr. Fry, if you are going to hold a séance, or any form of public demonstration, in Sweden, it is a must to have an interpreter who is able to put forward what you say to the audience. Thus, an interpreter should have a solid understanding of, and respect for, your language, English, and a solid knowledge of, and respect for, the language of your audience, in this case Swedish. It is especially important for a man like yourself, who, I imagine, takes great pride in being able to communicate with people of all types and of all ages. Unfortunately, Ms. or Mrs. Jane Lyzell's interpretation of you is degrading your efforts and is an insult to the audience. I don't care how valuable she is to your organization – on stage, she is a disaster. And I do not wish to be rude, I just want to state a fact.

Lyzell made so many errors, minor and major, during 90 minutes, that if the fact that the audience on several occasions had to correct her doesn't tell you something, her distortion of your words should. She made "arms crossed" come out as "arms crushed", "gold bars" come out as "gold logs", "pencil" come out as "paintbrush", etc., etc. She converted an aunt to a sister – I have kept this passage in the transcript. She also has the bad habit of trying to explain what you are saying, and in doing so, distorts the meaning of your words. That is not interpreting, that is to mess things up. If you want people to pay for your words, at least let them have your words. You started off the séance by telling me, and the rest of the audience: "For God's sake, smile!" I don't think you

requested a spiteful smile, so my answer is: For God's sake, give her the boot!

Now, for those of you who are accustomed to the Sixth Sense series, a live séance with Colin Fry might be a bit disappointing. There are no amazing revelations, no on-the-spot messages or any statements indicating that Fry actually communicates with dead people. It's just the old standard cold reading techniques and perhaps even some hot reading, but above all, a hit and miss ratio that is far from what is being broadcast in the UK. If Fry is to get some credit, it is for his creativity in stock spiel and the confidence with which he handles the audience. And one must remember that *Sixth Sense* is a carefully orchestrated show with an audience that must book tickets, with names, and – according to some sources – also give an account of why they want to be on the *Sixth Sense* show. What is finally broadcast is, of course, edited in order to secure a "Wow!" reaction from the viewers. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can be said about Fry's "psychic powers" based on the TV show.

A live séance is a horse of a different colour. Well, you were recommended to book tickets in advance but I did as always, I just showed up. No problem, since it's about money and they want to fill up the hall. At first, I was happy to note that Colin Fry didn't mingle around in the ante-room before the show. But moments later, I noticed a chap sitting on a chair in a corner, alone, without outdoor clothes (everybody else brought theirs into the auditorium), watching everybody and typing stuff on his cell phone. He didn't speak to anybody, he was obviously not part of the coffee stand crew and he was a bit too interested in the people in the room to be typing at the same time. But, as I saw no signs of hot reading later during the show – except when he asked a lady if she had fallen on her right hip (the guy in the ante-room could easily have spotted a limp or her cane), I have decided to give Mr. Fry the benefit of the doubt on this one. If you're thinking of attending a live Fry séance, I suggest you keep your eyes open for this chap, just in case...

Once in my seat, I notice that one of Sweden's most renowned mediums, Mr. Jorgen "Cry Baby" Gustafsson, is in the audience, just a couple of rows in front of me. Since Gustafsson is a disciple of Mrs. Hall, I suppose that she decided to send one of her henchmen to check out the competition. The woman next to him will play a part in the séance later, but for now, the couple sitting in front of her and Gustafsson is more interesting, because before the show, Fry himself suddenly appears and advances to their seats in the middle of the hall. Apparently, they are good friends and I note that their conversation is carefree and hearty. Will Fry be cheeky enough to make use of his friends during the séance?

After the obligatory introduction, Fry starts off by telling the audience to smile, not to keep their arms crossed and to think of somebody else, thus eliminating selfishness which has a negative effect on "the energies" or something like it. Then he asks us to make sure that our cell phones are switched off, so he doesn't get interfering messages from babysitters. Fry's execution of this warm-up is excellent and it immediately sets the audience in a comfortable mood. Did I forget something? Oh, remember the checklist I have in my mind when I attend mediumistic demonstrations? It goes like this:

1. The medium gives accurate, detailed and personal information, pertaining only to the addressed individual.
2. The medium gives information that he or she couldn't have known beforehand by any means.
3. The medium does not engage in stock spiels, i.e. general

statements that will apply to almost everyone, or any other cold reading technique as described by sceptics.

4. The medium does not seek the participation of the audience in order to convey any messages.

I have based these criteria on the assurances always supplied by "believers" when discussing personal experiences of psychic mediums. These are the points always put forward to let me know how to recognize a "genuine psychic". And what I forgot to mention about Fry is that in the end of his requirement list, he added:

"Now, it's very, very important, that when we do make a connection, you must talk to me. I always say that as a medium I'm like a telephone switchboard for the spirit world. I ring out for them. And if nobody responds or replies, they disconnect or they're disconnected. Okay?"

So, I guess that takes care of number four. Fry explicitly asks the audience for their participation in order to be able to convey messages. Whatever Fry says, he needs the audience to tell him whether it has any significance or not. It also means that Fry is able to adapt to whatever the audience tells him. This is essential in cold reading and it does not match what the "believers" claim is the sign of a genuine psychic.

Fry's first contact is with a woman that never lived in Sweden, something he finds "very strange". Now, since the 60s, Sweden has been flooded by immigrants from different parts of the world, seeking work or refuge. My grandfather or my grandmother never lived in Sweden, nor did my husband's – we are both regarded as second generation immigrants. In an audience of 120–130 people, it would be very strange if Fry didn't find at least ten or more people who would "recognize" such a woman. So his bewilderment with this is obviously an act. His additional aspects of this woman – he sees "bright colours", doesn't narrow the selection much but he is observant enough to note that a woman in a purple scarf is whispering to her companion. But Fry's statement is far from enough for the woman, and she needs more information. Fry tries to deliver:

"What I'm going to ask you to do is, it's very important, that you don't tell me anymore than I need to know. Let me tell you what it is that, you know, that I'm feeling, alright? I get the feeling from this lady that in, uh... her life, that she had either damaged her hands in some way or that, uh... later in life her hands were very deformed. Does this make sense to you?"

Now, this is beginning to be more specific information and he also manages to put forward the standard phrase used by all mediums; they ask you to not tell them more than they need to know. Think about that for a moment. Why does Fry or any medium need to know anything to convey messages from alleged spirits? Would they need to know anything if they really were actually communicating with dead people?

Okay, back to the séance. Fry is beginning to close in on the purple scarf woman – does the spirit having deformed hands make sense to her? Nope. So he tries a variation; does the purple scarf woman know of arthritis? Yes, she has it herself. Now remember that Fry just asked if she knows of the condition arthritis – it is the purple scarf woman that gives personal meaning to his general question. Fry adapts to it and says the spirit is empathising with her because the spirit had bad arthritis in her hands towards the end of her earthly life. Cunningly executed cold reading.

Moving on, Fry makes a thing of the spirit constantly struggling for money during her life. This, of course, applies to a vast majority of most people today and more so in previous generations. Thus a general statement that applies to

almost everyone. It's also called stock spiel.

He gets no feedback when trying to put forth an alleged love for pineapple so he tries another path by asking why Brazil is important – something he immediately expands to the whole of South America when the purple scarf woman fails to react upon it. After some confusion when Fry thinks this is pertaining to some other people, the woman tells us that it is she who has been planning to go to Argentina. Remember that the woman told us that, Fry asked about Brazil and when that didn't work he tried South America. Standard cold reading technique.

When the woman asks Fry if the spirit thinks that she should stay home, since according to Fry it appears to be concerned about her going, he evades it with a general phrase about free will and then quickly jumps to a completely different subject; does the purple scarf woman understand about the spirit wanting her to be cautious about a matter concerning 48,000 Swedish kroner? The woman doesn't answer; she obviously doesn't know what he is talking about.

So he quickly jumps to the next subject; would she be able to understand that the gentleman who the spirit is trying to "enable" had bowel cancer? Nope, it doesn't ring any bells. And Fry decides to let go of this "sitter".

The next is a bit tricky. Fry crosses the stage and zooms in on two men on the far left. He is still on about bowel cancer and he now comes up with the name "Erik". Now, the couple that are personal friends of his are sitting very close to these gentlemen and this makes me wonder if the two men are just a diversion. Because it doesn't take long before Fry's personal friend declares that he recognizes bowel cancer and Erik. Would Fry be so blunt that he would use his friends to brush up the terrible hit ratio he got with the purple scarf woman? He does admit that it's a pain to get messages for people he knows. Nevertheless, he continues and what do you think happens?

First, he scores with some stock spiel about his friend doing things that the dead man did not have the courage to do. Then he scores with the man having played guitar and recently picked it up again - which isn't that odd behaviour for anyone who has played some sort of instrument, but still. Then he scores regarding a cheque or a bank slip, half-scores about the man being afraid that he's turning deaf and finally scores about a sign being showed to the couple on their boating holiday.

All scores – amazing! These people are Fry's personal friends and he now seems to have regained what he accomplishes on *Sixth Sense*. Let's continue to see if he keeps it up.

Don't mess with a missionary man. Well, Fry ignores Lennox and comes up with something that has never happened to him before and which he claims is very strange; he asks the 120–130 people in the audience if anyone would understand if they had a grandfather who did missionary work. If not, he would easily have converted this to a grandfather that did some charitable work of any kind, but Lonely man actually had a grandfather who was a missionary. Remember: Fry asked, Lonely man told him.

Then Fry checks if Lonely man has any living memory of his grandfather, which Lonely man says he doesn't. I don't know if Fry gets bolder because of this, but Fry now asks if his grandfather ever had any dealings with people who worked with leprosy or a leper colony. Lonely man says no and Fry is again able to execute a standard cold reading technique; he tells Lonely man to check with his family. This is actually very neatly done. He first makes sure that Lonely man has no living memory of his grandfather and then he can play around quite freely with the grandfather's activities. The grandson won't know anyway. And most

people in the audience will be convinced that Fry is right and this will of course be verified by the grandson's later enquiries. But since this information is not recognizable by Lonely man – and all believers state that it should be, I'm counting this as a miss.

Fry also lets the grandfather convey some standard phrase about him not being overly concerned about money – as a missionary he would be more concerned with teaching Christian values and Western ways. Then he continues with a financial matter that has played on Lonely man's mind since June 2004, and Fry actually gets a hit with this one although we are not informed further in this matter. He ends this passage with the stock spiel that Lonely man will ruin the quality of his life by worrying about money. All relative terms that anyone can fit into his or her own line of thinking. Stock spiel.

Then Fry asks Lonely man if he is annoyed by a crack in a wall or a ceiling of his home. Lonely man confirms that he has a crack in his car windscreen. Could Fry by any means have known this before hand? Yes, by looking out of a window before the séance. All it takes is a glance and to remember a face. Nevertheless, I'm feeling generous so I'll give him half a hit for this one. But one thought always comes to mind when I hear these kinds of "details" that are supposed to verify that it is a loved one's spirit communicating; do all loved one's turn into imbeciles when they die and go to spirit? Aren't there more important issues to convey? Aren't there bigger question marks to straighten out? Apparently not.

He continues with some stock spiel about Lonely man being bothered by small things (don't we all think that about ourselves from time to time?) and goes on by telling Lonely man to repair a relationship between a brother or a son. He then asks Lonely man if he is the one who is doing the pencil sketches. Nope, he isn't, after which Fry converts this into urging Lonely man to show interest in some brother's or son's drawing or sketching of some sort of design with pencil. After that he tells Lonely man he shouldn't worry about the headaches, he doesn't have a brain tumour and he shouldn't be preoccupied with the idea of dying. He ends this "connection" by letting Lonely man know that his grandfather wants him to read a specific passage in the bible, John 6:3. Lonely man is supposed to understand why when he reads it. Of course, no one in the audience has a clue about what this passage is, let alone what it could mean to Lonely man. And when I looked it up, I became very doubtful that Lonely man will ever know why he was asked to read it. Here it is:

"So Jesus went on up the mountainside and sat down there with his disciples."

John 6:3; (New English Translation)

Honestly, that's all. I kid you not. Do you have any hopes for Lonely man understanding this? Do you think that Fry knows what the quotes he tosses around actually say? But doesn't it sound mysterious and important when you say it like Fry does?

Next, Fry's contact is a woman that in character is a sweet lady, kind and gentle but also a sense of sadness. I know, this fits with your, mine and probably most parted grandmothers or mothers. It doesn't mean that our grandmothers and mothers actually were like this in life, but that is how we want to, and do, and should remember them!

This woman's personality changed a great deal towards the end of her life and she felt that she couldn't behave as herself. I know, this fits with your, mine and probably most departed grandmothers or mothers. This is because no one who dies of "natural causes" remains the same. We get old,

we can't move like we used to, our minds are not as alert as they used to be. We, sadly but true, fade away.

Anyway, Fry also senses some names, Elena or Eleanor. It is not stated that those names pertain to this woman but since only one person "can understand this" and not a majority of the audience, I take it that the woman knows of an Elena or Eleanor that has passed. The woman is sitting next to the Swedish psychic Jorgen "Cry Baby" Gustafsson.

Fry begins this session by suggesting that the passed woman had changed a great deal, which caused the people who knew her great pain. He asks the woman next to the psychic if she would understand that the passed woman had to be restrained or stopped from hurting herself. The woman doesn't want to use the word "no" so instead she says that the passed woman was very weak, very old.

Fry doesn't take the hint but goes on about it and suggests the passed woman had a fit of hysterics and that her arms had to be held down to stop hurting herself. The woman next to the psychic still doesn't want to use the word "no" so she states that she thinks it must be another person because the woman she was thinking of didn't have that kind of strength.

It is obvious that Fry is out on a limb so he tries a variation of it by saying it feels as though this would have been through fear in some way but he insists on the restraining part. As this is apparently wrong, the woman next to the psychic says that she is not sure yet but she wants him to continue.

And now Fry changes the subject completely. He's now getting a strong taste of marzipan. And after some thinking, the woman next to the psychic is starting to realize who he is talking to. Uhm, wait a minute. Let's go back to the start of this session. The woman next to the psychic enthusiastically declared "oh, yes" when the names Elena or Eleanor was combined with a sweet, old lady. But this must have been wrong then! And how many deceased ladies does this woman next to the psychic have in stock that was under physical restraint before they died? This is perhaps the best example of cold reading I've ever witnessed, and it's ironic because I think that the woman next to the psychic did not intend to display it for this purpose. She is very clearly demonstrating how she is struggling to make sense of all the nonsense Fry has provided, refusing to say "no" to anything, and in the end when she has fitted all the scraps into her own creative mind and found someone that "it must be" - you cannot doubt a psychic, she has experienced a psychic medium giving "exact and accurate information he couldn't possibly have known beforehand". And that, ladies and gentlemen, is the exposed mind of a "believer".

Fry ends this turn with some stock spiel, letting the passed woman thank the woman next to the psychic for not letting anyone say anything bad about her after she had gone. As if it was common practice for family and friends to speak ill of the dead. And after this he lets the woman next to the psychic know that there is nothing wrong with the mirror not hanging straight, it's the wall that needs to be checked. She just okay's Fry through and it's hard to tell whether he's actually telling her stuff she's familiar with or if she just acknowledges his statements. The next connection is with a person feeling a terrible fear of water, a person that must have drowned. Among the 120-130 people in the audience, one man recognizes this and raises his hand. After some successful guessing regarding gender and age, Fry delivers some stock spiel about the spirit feeling embarrassed about being where he shouldn't have been where he was at the time it happened and because he had been told not to go there. Could the opposite be right when you are talking about a drowning accident?

Fry delivers another "detail" about the spirit remembering someone who could impersonate Donald Duck and I actually took an informal poll about this one. It appears that everyone in our family and all of our friends in pre-Cartoon Network generations know of someone who can or could impersonate Donald Duck. I can do it. Can you? Still, it's clever of Fry to think this stock spiel out.

He tries another one, this time a bit more specific and of course he flunks; the man does not understand two boys hanging upside down by their legs. Fry adds the year 1979 to the context and but doesn't manage to get acceptance even when he concludes that it must be the person who drowned who had visited an amusement park in 1979. So Fry returns to guilt feelings regarding the actual drowning, which the man acknowledges.

Then Fry goes for details again. The spirit remembers someone called Peter quite well, allegedly the drowned lad's age. The man has no clue about this. So Fry changes this from believing that it was a message for this Peter, to the drowned lad wanting the man to know that this Peter, whom the man has no knowledge of, also was in spirit. Fry then goes on, saying that this Peter, who the man still has no knowledge of, was killed in a car accident.

Does the man have any interest in snowboarding? Nope. Would he understand about someone going down a slope of snow on a tin tray? Nope. Well, it could indicate, Fry says, that it's another memory from some time ago. Go figure.

So Fry returns and elaborates further on guilt a bit, and ends the session in this safe area. Crossing the stage, he returns to the purple scarf woman; did someone ask her to invest money? Nope. In a business plan? Nope. It's something current... Nope. Did she agree to lend someone money over three or four payments? She doesn't understand. The interpreter explains and the woman finally says "yes, yes", but she wants to know if it could have anything to do with a bank. The interpreter refuses to take it down that lane and insists on keeping it to the general "lend someone money". The purple scarf woman decides that one could say that. How accurate...

Fry finds it best to leave the purple scarf woman for good. The spirit of a cross-dresser now appears. Does anybody recognize this? One woman thinks so, although the man she's thinking of didn't actually wear women's clothes, he just liked pink. Well there was something sad about this man and only five people at the end of his life understood the agony he was going through, Fry adds. The woman concludes that it can't be the man she's thinking of then.

But wouldn't the woman understand that very few people attended his funeral, Fry asks. Yes, she would - she didn't attend herself. Wasn't he involved in some violence a year before he passed? Nope, not that the woman knows of but it could have happened...

Not dejected by this obvious *cul-de-sac*, Fry now tells her that the man wants to thank her for listening when he told her how frightened he was shortly before he passed away. The woman is puzzled. But would she understand that he seemed to be very nervous? He was always kind of nervous, the woman replies. And would she understand that she still has contact with two of his other friends? Not often.

But she knows two other particular friends of his? Knows of them, she replies. But she at least agrees to let them know he says hello. Then Fry changes the subject completely. Is she the one that is very good at arranging flowers? The woman is reluctant to go along with this but she admits that she likes to arrange flowers, but ...

But isn't it something she has been doing quite recently? Not that she knows of, no.

Fry now explains that the man just wants to let her know

that he was close to her when she was doing something with flowers or floral effects. Well, she admits to having attended a funeral. Spotting a way out, Fry asks her if she had something to do with the floral effects of a funeral. Nope. The interpreter now tries to tie everything together by stating that she was in an area where there were some floral effects. But Fry decides not to go further and ends it by telling her that the man just wanted to let her know that he was with her on that day. A lot of nothing, it seems.

Next is a woman, supposedly someone's mother, who passed away after contracting pneumonia. An elderly lady catches on to this one and Fry puts the remarkable question to her; was she the one who was concerned about the spirit woman being cold? The elderly woman nods. What a peculiar and uncommon concern for someone with pneumonia...

And, Fry continues, there was this thing about taking extra measures to make sure she wasn't cold. Uhm, right, the common practice is to keep pneumonia patients in freezers.

The spirit then puts the number 87 or 89 in Fry's mind. It is up to the elderly woman to find something in her or her mother's life to fit that number. She acknowledges 89. Nothing more comes out of this. Was it an age, was it her flat or street number?

Fry asks the elderly woman if she will be in a party of six during Christmas. Maybe, she says. What a pity then, Fry declares, that she only have five left of those special glasses, which Fry thinks are either coloured or with a gold rimmed top edge. Now, as I was taking a poll around the family regarding Donald Duck impersonations, I also asked about this one. It turns out that coloured or gold rimmed "fine" glasses are very common, especially among older people. They keep them in display cabinets and only use them on special occasions. And no, unfortunately they don't have the full (12) or half (6) set - one or two are missing or have been broken. Just for fun, check with mum or granny. You'll be surprised.

The elderly woman addressed by Fry also has glasses like this, but due to some confusion it is not clear whether she have five or six of them. Fry implies that a full set has been divided between two but as the elderly woman starts to explain that her sister had them first, she is cut off by Fry who is now more interested if she has recently fallen on her right hip. No, she says. Fry then asks if she still has an elderly aunt in this life. The interpreter asks her in Swedish if she still has a sister in this life. The elderly woman confirms that she still has a sister in this life. Having established that the elderly woman don't see her sister that often, but speaks to her, Fry declares that it is the aunt that has taken a fall and the elderly woman should ask her aunt why she hasn't told her about this, or the fact that her aunt's family is treating her bad.

After this rather serious advice, Fry asks why her mother is telling him to indicate the 14th of March. No, the 18th has some significance to her but not the 14th. Well, her mother is indicating that she must put something in her diary on the 14th, otherwise she will forget. Slick, very slick.

After a pause, Fry asks the elderly woman if her mother liked Charlie Chaplin. The elderly woman confirms this astonishing preference for a woman that probably was young during Chaplin's glory days. Fry continues by stating that her mother in fact thought that the silent movies were better than the modern sound movies. Now, my own preferences are that I still think that Peter Sellers' movies are better than Jim Carrey's, Clint Eastwood's are better than Tom Cruise's. It's a "those were the days" phenomena. Stock spiel.

Fry ends the elderly woman session by saying her mother is thankful for her making sure she was kept warm. All things must come to an end and after having had yet another stock spiel session with Lonely man, Fry ends the séance. I don't stay for the question period after the break - I would probably have been too tempted to ask him about his experience with wind-instruments.

So, in conclusion, did Colin Fry meet the demands imposed by "believers"? Let's see.

1. Did Fry give accurate, detailed and personal information, pertaining only to the addressed individual?

Fact: Apart from his personal friends, he gave no such information.

2. Did Fry give information that he by no means could have known beforehand?

Fact: No, he gave no such information.

3. Did Fry engage in stock spiels, i.e. general statements that will apply to almost everyone, or any other cold reading technique as described by sceptics?

Fact: Yes he did, all the time.

4. Did Fry seek the participation of the audience in order to convey any messages?

Fact: He started by explicitly asking for the cooperation of the audience and he also got it all through the séance.

Although he does it in style and with some creativity, Colin Fry is an obvious cold reader. But I'm fairly certain that most people attending this live séance thought it was an amazing experience. So he gave value for money. Even I think that I got value for my money - my expectations were also met. But does he talk to dead people? No way. If you're thinking of attending a live séance with Fry yourself, look out for the man studying people by the entré. I sure would like to know if it was right to give Fry the benefit of the doubt. And when you watch *Sixth Sense* or re-runs of it, keep in mind how Fry performs when he's not in full control of the conditions.