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New in Mechanical Puzzles

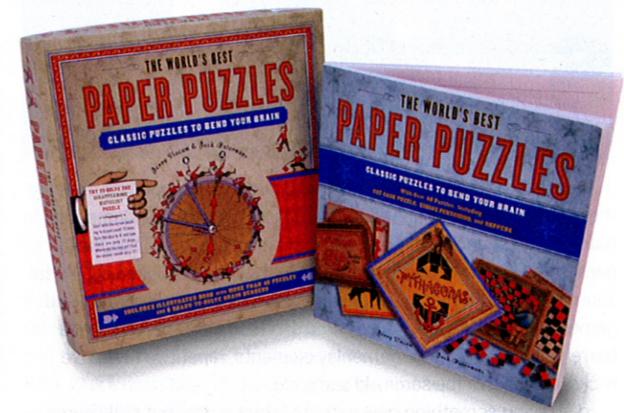
By Tom Cutrofello

THE WORLD'S BEST PAPER PUZZLE: CLASSIC PUZZLES TO BEND YOUR BRAIN

This box of intriguing puzzle artifacts comes from the prolific Jerry Slocum and Jack Botermans. Inside is a 64-page book describing a variety of classic puzzles: tangrams, entanglements, checkerboard dissections, and peg solitaire puzzles. In addition, Slocum identifies modern classics from Japanese puzzlers Edi Nagata and Iwahiro.

The box also contains eight ready-to-solve classic puzzles including The Witch Hazel's Cats Puzzle and a modern classic by Finnish designer Vesa Timonen, Lox in Box II. The pièce de résistance is found on the cover of the box. The Disappearing Bicyclist by Sam Loyd shows 13 boys. Rotate the disc and voilà: Only 12 remain.

Jerry Slocum is a lifelong puzzle author and scholar. He has written numerous books including *Puzzles Old and New*, *The Cube*, and *The 15 Puzzle*. (In the interest of full disclosure, this Mechanical Puzzle Correspondent has known Jerry for many years via the International Puzzle Party. In 2000 I visited his home and his 40,000 puzzles. Those puzzles are currently being transferred to the Lily Library Collections at Indiana University.)



INSTANT INSANITY II

Frank Armbruster created the original Instant Insanity in 1965. The object is to line up the four cubes so that each row has four different colors. Parker Brothers sold 12 million copies in 1966-67, outselling Monopoly. According to Winning Moves (www.winning-moves.com), the current owner, total sales exceed 20 million to date.

Some 42 years later, we now have the sequel...imaginatively named Instant Insanity II. The puzzle has two objectives. First, slide the panels along the cylinder and twist each ring so that each row has four different colors. Second, and more difficult: Match up the small circles at the top and bottom of each panel while maintaining the first objective.

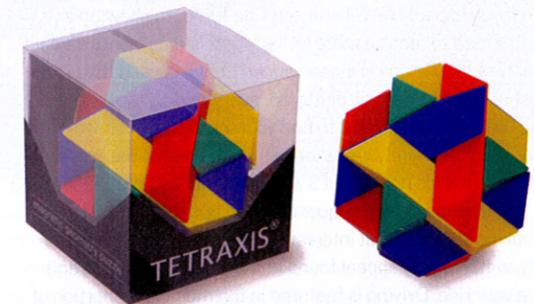
Puzzle collectors may find Instant Insanity II more akin to Missing Link. The Missing Link puzzle had a cubic core, and the object was to restore it to its original state, with each side's chain a single color.



TETRAXIS

Tetraxis consists of 12 identical magnetic sticks. Assemble them to create a lovely geometric creation. The magnetic pieces snap together and the end result is that each stick is parallel to two others, creating four sets of three parallel sticks. Tetraxis is not difficult, however, and everybody in our office has solved it multiple times. This will be the premier puzzle at the Museum of Math when it opens in 2012.

An amusing video can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyEgOo2in1A. Other Tetraxis links: www.kosticks.com and www.tetraxis.com/index/Home.html.



DOUBLE DISK

Double Disk comes from Hogwildtoys.com. Four disks rotate independently. Scramble the colors, then restore. The blue tiles can migrate to the red or green layers, but never to the yellow layer. The other colors have the same properties: They cannot migrate to their opposite side. This makes solving the puzzle not as difficult. Double Disk resembles an old puzzle from the Rubik's empire: Rubik's Shells. Both have two intersecting disks at right angles to one another. Like Double Disk, Rubik's shells also had four colors and each disk moved independently. However, each axis had a button that could only be pressed once, which permanently made both layers spin together and increased the difficulty. Double Disk was invented by Sergej Abramenkov. 

