

2010

The 'Best puzzle finds of the year' Party



Puzzle choices

Nick Baxter (USA)

Tangler designed by Tom Jolly and crafted in lacewood by Eric Fuller. Two strangely shaped pieces are intertwined to form a cubic shape. But no amount of twisting and turning seems to get them apart.

Fleming's box by Shiro Tajima; purchased at IPP30. Two outer shells form a cube, and can slide independently in any direction to reveal the inner core that controls their movement. Somehow you must release or open this mysterious core—but how?

Gear Cube designed by Oskar van Deventer; available at Mefferts.com. Cube slices are engaged so that a middle slice is forced to move at 1/2 speed when a face is turned, and edge pieces rotate 5/6 as they move from edge to edge. Don't let first-impressions hold you back—this intimidating design is actually easier to solve than the original Rubik's Cube!



Simon Bexfield (UK)

Rubik's Touchcube by Technosource. Beautifully made touch-sensitive electronic cube, liked for its colour and attention to detail in the design.

Pitcairn Island Puzzle Box. An unusual find. A note inside reads "Made from Miro wood taken from Henderson Island and purchased on board R.M.S. Ruahine lying off Pitcairn on Friday 31st January 1947. At that date the population was 121".



Christopher Lohe (Germany)

Helicopter Cube by Adam Cowan, sold by Mefferts. A twisty puzzle with slices allowing all 12 edges to rotate. A special move is possible after a partial rotation, allowing the puzzle to "jumble". I think it is the first mass produced twisty puzzle with "jumbling".

Gear Cube by Oskar van Deventer, sold by Mefferts. A new concept in twisty puzzle design. The gear mechanism requires twelve 90° turns to complete one rotation. The gears are placed externally, so that their orientation can be seen. It creates a new and unexpected solving experience.

Rex Cube by Andrew Cormier, sold by Mefferts. A new mechanics. Each corner can be twisted by 120° including the center pieces of each face. It is a sheer beauty, and despite its easy appearance, it is all but trivial to solve.



George Miller (USA):

Gear Cube Extreme by Oscar van Deventer, sold on Mefferts.com. This comes on the heels of the Gear Cube which has gears on all of the edges but suffers from a rather easy solution methodology. The Extreme Gear Cube looks similar but has FEWER gears. This leads, interestingly, to a much more difficult puzzle. The puzzle itself is fascinating to play with: watching the gears turn over as you twist the puzzle. The movement is silky smooth and the plastic is a delight to the eyes. This puzzle reaches new heights in creativity and manufacturing.



Steve Nichols (UK):

Gordian Knot Puzzlebox (Stickman #22) by Robert Yarger. A great puzzle box. It takes 36 moves to open the single hidden compartment of the puzzle. The moves are well hidden amongst the random latticework of pieces and there are a couple of nice tricks to discover along the way.

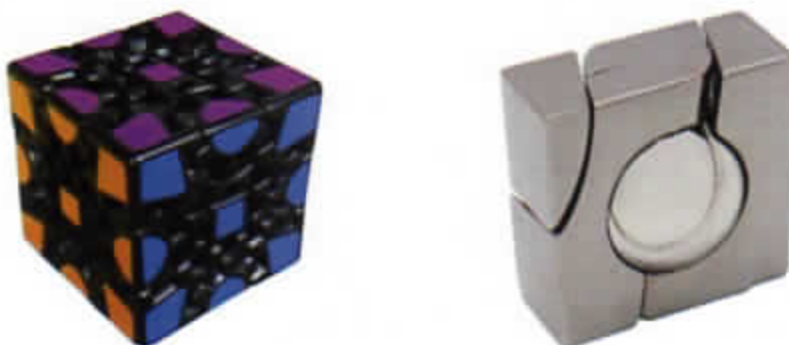
Six Key Lock. This is a six key variant of the classic puzzle lock design that I imported from India about half way through the year. I was particularly pleased to acquire this particular lock as I now have examples of this type of lock for two through to six keys inclusive.

Oskar's Matchboxes. At the beginning of the year I was fortunate enough to be able to purchase this finely crafted (in Indonesian Rosewood) version of Oskar's matchboxes. I've always liked this puzzle, not least, because it was one of the few puzzles I actually had the skills to make when I first discovered it in Puzzles Old & New.

Norman Sandfield (US):

Gear Cube: I enjoy the response of friends to this extreme step in design beyond the original Rubik's cube. It is amazing to watch the variations on the way the gears move. Designed by Oskar van Deventer, inspired by a gearing idea by Bram Cohen, it will be Meffert's Puzzle Of the Year for 2010. It requires twelve 90 degree turns to complete one rotation, and is rumored to be slightly easier than the Rubik's cube.

Cast Marble: Another collaborative effort by Oskar van Deventer and Bram Cohen, produced by Hanayama. I find it elegant to view, and very elegant to solve, but not too easy!



Bernhard Schweitzer (Germany)

Ka'apuni (Hawaiian for turns or rotate) by Jos Bergmans: Present the puzzle partially assembled without the loop piece and ask for it to be taken apart. This requires only rectilinear moves. Then add the loop piece and ask for the puzzle to be assembled. This needs only rotations (6 or 7).

United by Jos Bergmans: The solver can figure out that to assemble the puzzle, the two connected pieces have to make a turn, but it is in fact the other pieces that need to be turned.

Colorcube by Mike Toulouzas: This looks like one of Stewart Coffin designs, but it is completely different and fun to open. The woodwork is fantastic, several notches better than Pelikan himself. Available from <http://www.puzzlevision.com/colorcube.html>



David Singmaster (UK)

How round is your circle? by John Bryant and Chris Sangwin. Given out at MathsJam this year. Known since 19th century but I have never seen a set like this. When you put a flat object on these bodies, they keep it level and roll along smoothly.

Peck and Parker Puzzle Card from 1890, New Haven, Connecticut. Acquired recently, an exceptional example of a puzzle card with a spectacular number of things to find, including Blondin, the tight-rope walker, crossing Niagara Falls with his baby.

the Big 4 Set, Uncle Sam Puzzles, which is stamped "E.G. Billings Toy Shop, Providence RI" on the back. I also have two honorable mentions - *The Tangler* by Tom Jolly, made by Eric Fuller from beautiful curly maple. <https://www.cubicdissection.com/html/purchase/discont/tangler2.html> This is a great design and has only two pieces! The second honorable mention is "*The Yankee Puzzle*" patented in 1896 by W. G. Adams. It is nothing more than a rustic square of wood with some brads stuck in and a brass piece that must be navigated via its slots from brad to brad starting at a central inscribed circle outwards, then back again, but I was very happy to find it (on eBay) since reading about it in *Slocum* many years ago.



Naoaki Takashima (Japan)

New Kumiki by Akio Kamei. This was my best puzzle find of the year. The craftsman's name is not indicated anywhere on the puzzle, but I confirmed with Akio Kamei that the puzzle was made by him when he was working for Yamanaka Kumiki Works. It is one of the earliest Kamei puzzles, made in late 1970's.



Michael Tanoff (USA):

The 16-TO-1 PUZZLE. This puzzle from 1896 has been reproduced by both Bits and Pieces and Hanayama ("Laby"). In 1896, silver and gold currency standards (16 ounces of silver per one ounce of gold) were heavily debated in the presidential election (in which William McKinley defeated William Jennings Bryan). A patent for the puzzle was issued on February 8, 1898 (U.S. Patent 598,855 by Clarence W. Carter of Chicago). The puzzle was referenced in the *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 8 No. 4, July 1897, in an article by Ernest H. Lindley (Clark University) titled, "A Study of Puzzles with Special Reference to the Psychology of Mental Adaptation." The article points out that while the solver works on one side of the puzzle, 'opposite side drops from memory, along with the whole plan of this obverse side. The puzzle thus hampers both retrospection and prevision."