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## TELEVISION

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### Saxe conjures up a magic special

By Jefferson Graham  
USA TODAY

Melinda Saxe left Las Vegas two years ago, hoping to spread her magical wings in other venues.

The illusionist started touring heavily. A talent scout from Disney saw Saxe perform and helped negotiate a TV special for her.

*Disney's Melinda: The First Lady of Magic* airs Friday at 8 p.m. ET/PT on CBS. There has been a slew of magic specials this season, but this is the first to spotlight a woman.

"There are not a lot of women in magic," Saxe says. "That's why I started calling myself 'The First Lady of Mag-

ic.' I thought it would stand out in people's minds that there are few females in this field."

Saxe, the daughter of a showgirl and show conductor, began as a dancer with the Siegfried & Roy show. A magician most of her life, she got a chance at her own show in 1986 at the Bourbon Street Casino in Las Vegas, moving to several other Vegas venues before deciding to leave her hometown.

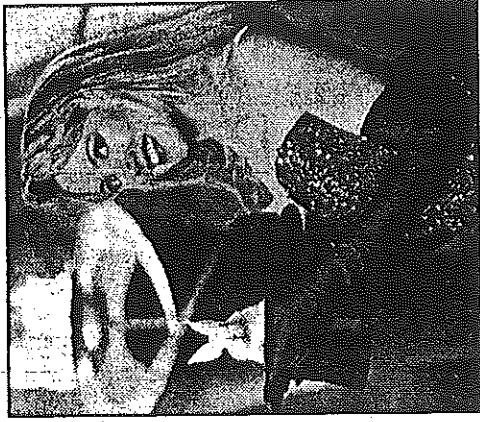
"I had done 10 years of shows in Las Vegas, six nights a week, two shows a night. I needed to try something different," she says. "Leaving Las Vegas was the greatest thing that ever happened."

Shelley Long and Kelsey Mulrooney (*The Christmas Box*) guest star in the

special, which sets illusions to a story about a little girl's bedtime fable. Tricks include making a Lamborghini disappear and a double levitation of Saxe and Mulrooney. As for the Disney connection, Saxe makes a Learjet carrying Roger Rabbit appear out of thin air.

Saxe tied the knot with fellow magician Lance Burton several years ago in a highly publicized Vegas wedding. The union, however, lasted only six months. "It was all an illusion," she quips.

Saxe, who plans to tour this summer, now lives in Florida with her boyfriend and manager Steve Zadrick, sharing their home with six horses, a Siberian tiger, a leopard, three cougars, five dogs and five cats.



By Ray Sey, CBS  
"First Lady of Magic": Illusionist Melinda Saxe appears in her first special Friday.