

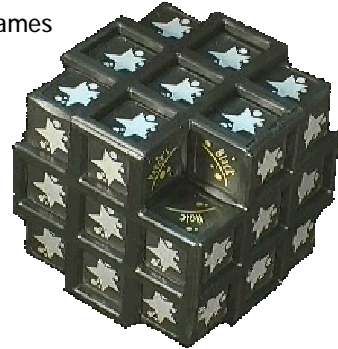
# The History of Sliding Block puzzles before Peter's Black Hole

By Ad van der Schagt

## General

Information about the history of the sliding block puzzle is provided by James Dalgety. He is an English puzzle collector and owns probably the largest puzzle collection of the world. He inherited part of the enormous collection (more than 35.000 pieces) of the late Edward Hordern. During his life Edward collected all kinds of puzzles (brainteasers). He had the largest and most expensive private collection.

This report also contains information from Jerry Slocum and Marcel Gillen. Jerry owns a very large private collection (more than 30.000 pieces) and lives in Los Angeles (USA). Marcel has about 15.000 pieces in his private collection. Nearly all his puzzles are situated in Belvaux, Luxembourg. Part of his collection is displayed in the Toy Museum at Mechelen (Belgium).



## Information by James Dalgety

I have a lot of similar puzzles.

They fall into 2 types: the closed box and open cage.

I have **RTL Magic** and **Magic Jack**.

I got my **Magic Jack** in 1996 from **Edward Hordern**

I am not certain where he got it but its price label says "FR 29.90".

In the late 1970s the Hungarians produced 2 x 2 x 2 and 3 x 3 x 3 versions within transparent cubes. **Naef** produced a beautiful 2 x 2 x 2.

There was the **Vadasz Cube** which used an open framework produces 2 x 2 x 2 , 3 x 3 x 3 , and 4 x 4 x 4.

In all these puzzles the objective was to exchange external and internal cubies.

**Magic Jack** was the most difficult because of the maze pattern.

There is also the Canadian **HI-Q8** , 3 x 3 x 3 in open cage with 4 different challenges of which: #3 is to display 9 different colours on each face, and #4 is to disassemble all the parts including the cubies and make your own unique puzzle!

**Edward** did not catalogue his puzzles. Maybe **Jerry Slocum** could give you exact dates of some of these puzzles?

In 1981 I sold in Harrods London for £2.99 "Puzzle Box" open cage 3 x 3 x 3, made in Korea. Coloured cubes and letters various problems making patterns and/or words.

**End of information by James Dalgety**

I followed his advice. Next the history information from Jerry Slocum.

## Information by Jerry Slocum

The 3D sliding block puzzle, **Peter's Black Hole**, has a long history of more than 100 years.

**P.G. Tait** first mentioned it as a possible puzzle in 1880 .

It was also mentioned by **Rouse Ball** in *Mathematical Recreations and Essays* in 1889 (page 228 in the 7<sup>th</sup> edition)

**C.I. Rice** (US#416,344) patented a 2x2x2 version in 1889.

As far as I know the first one sold commercially (2x2x2) was designed by **Piet Hein**, and named **Bloxx**. **Martin Gardner** in *Scientific American* described it in Feb, 1973 (page 109).

The puzzle was made and sold in Japan under the name **Crazy Qube** by **Kawada** in ©1981. I obtained one in 1982 and purchased one with Piet Hein's Autograph on the side in January 1984.

Another version that I purchased in 1981 was made and sold in Japan by **Maruhaya** (2x2x2) in 1981.

I have many 2x2x2 and 3x3x3 examples in my collection including:

- **Puzzle Box** (3x3x3) with 3 colours and letters to spell words, British, purchased in 1982.
  - **Inversion Puzzle** (3x3x3) ©1982, purchased in 1982.
  - **Varikon Box'S** (2x2x2) ©1982, purchased in 1982.
  - **Varikon Box'L** (3x3x3) ©1982, purchased in 1982.
  - **Caged In** (3x3x3), British, purchased in 1983.
  - **Hi-QB** (3x3x3) Canada, purchased in 1984.
  - **Cube 9** (3x3x3) Made by Tomy with card suites, purchased in 1988.
- etc, etc.

**End of information by Jerry Slocum**

In the puzzleworld there is another great puzzle collector from Luxembourg, **Marcel Gillen**.

**Information by Marcel Gillen**

Find enclosed a few pictures about the same kind of puzzles I already have in my collection.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. <b>Challenge Cube Four,</b>            | 20-04-1993 from Tomy, Japan             |
| 2. <b>Challenge Cube Nine,</b>            | 31-03-1991 from Tomy, Japan             |
| 3. <b>Cube Puzzle 2,</b>                  | 05-10-1997 from ????                    |
| 4. <b>Hi-QB Cube,</b>                     | 12-03-1988 from Hi-QB, Calgary Canada   |
| 5. <b>Inversion,</b>                      | 28-12-1987 Toys & Games, Capitol Height |
| 6. <b>IQube 06, (Lösungen)</b>            | 20-10-1994 from Activa GmbH             |
| 7. <b>IQube 12, (Lösungen)</b>            | 20-10-1994 from Activa GmbH             |
| 8. <b>IQube für Blinde</b>                | 02-04 2000 by ???                       |
| 9. <b>Logikai Jatek 2x2x2</b>             | 15-04-1995 by Ungarn                    |
| 10. <b>Logikai Jatek 3x3x3</b>            | 15-04-1995 by Ungarn                    |
| 11. <b>Mad Marbles</b>                    | 24-06-1988 by Lakeside                  |
| 12. <b>Magic Jack</b>                     | 20-10-1994 FunTech                      |
| 13. <b>Magic RTL</b>                      | 1995 Braintrust GmbH                    |
| 14. <b>Multicolored Rectangle</b>         | 30-06-1996 ???                          |
| 15. <b>Sliding Block Cube</b>             | 15-04-95 by Kitajima Akiyama            |
| 16. <b>Vadsz Kocka 4x4x4</b>              | 04-12-1996 Banhidaplast Ungarn          |
| 17. <b>Varikon Box Maxi</b>               | 10-08-84 by ???                         |
| 18. <b>Varikon Box Mini Red Plastique</b> | 05-04-1992 ???                          |
| 19. <b>Varikon Box Mini Red White</b>     | 05-04-1992 ???                          |
| 20. <b>Varikon Box Mini</b>               | 10-09-1985 ???                          |

Hope this will help you to figure out the first designer of for me the same mechanism of Puzzle.

To find more information ask maybe Jerry or James Dalgety.

Here the gallery of the puzzles in the private collection of Marcel Gillen.



Challenge Cube Four



Challenge Cube nine



Cube puzzle 2



Hi-QB Cube



Inversion



IQube 06



IQube 12



IQube für Blinde



Kerokereroppi 2



Logikai Jatek 2x2x2



Logikai Jatek 3x3x3



Mad Marbles



Magic Jack



Vadsz Kocka 4x4x4



Varikon Box Maxi



Varikon Box Mini Red



Varikon Box Mini Red White

Varikon Box Mini





Magic RTL



Sliding Block Cube

### End of information by Marcel Gillen

#### Conclusion

The basic idea for the sliding block puzzle is very old.

There are a lot of (nice) variations.

All over the world people have tried to produce and sell this puzzle (to become rich?).

The Peter's black hole is the last one till now in this serie.

#### Question

A lot of them are patented. Why so many copies/variations?

#### About the author

I live in the eastern part of the Netherlands and started collecting puzzles in 1990. Now my private collection consists of about 3000 different old and new brainteasers. I intend to go on collecting puzzles and all kind of information about these puzzles.

Thanks to all that have supported me in finding this complete information and thanks to Theo Geerinck for his suggestions.

Ad van der Schagt

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The Netherlands

#### Supplement

From Geert Hellings (a rotation- and slidepuzzle collector from the Netherlands):

The new 'Magic Hole' puzzle is sold in Belgium in toyshops and costs Euro 14.95.

Rather expensive for a puzzle like that, I think.

In the shop I bought the puzzle (Maaseik, the Netherlands) they told me that the inventor of the puzzle has been on Belgium TV.

It is true, the puzzle is not a new invention.

There are several versions with 2 or 3 or even 4 cubes at each side.

David Singmaster writes in his *Cubic Circular no 2* (autumn 1982) about the "Bloxbox" of Piet Hein (7 cubes in a 2x2x2 box) and similar puzzles from Japan en Hongary.

Konsumex from Hongary has sold the 3x3x3 version too, just like K.W. Toys from Korea (so called "Puzzle Box") did.

Looking at the Hungarian version the cubes are situated in a closed, transparant plastic box, and the cubes are connected with axes in such a way that only the cubes located at the outside can move.

Besides there are (at least) the following variations:

- a version with 26 balls (8 red, 9 white en 9 blue) packed in a small box made of transparant plastic.
- de **Magic Jack**, the original version with a silverlooking outface and in red a custom-made version for RTL television.
- the **Inversion**, 19 cubes (partly red and partly blue faces) are hold together by yellow parts (some bigger than the cubes) on the axes.
- the **Challenge Cube 9** from "Tomy": 26 cubes in a transparant box with 6x8 round shaped holes and symbols of card on the cubes.
- the **IQ-cube**, a black plastic box with 6x9 rounded holes and cubes with red and yellow sides.
- the **Caged-in** puzzle, 26 cubes with colored sides (6 colors and black), the goal is to obtain the figuring as the Rubik's Cube
- the **Vadasz Kocka**, 5 variations: one 2x2x2, two 3x3x3 and two 4x4x4 variations with sides of white/gray, red, rose, orange/yellow, green, blue or black colored. (with solid colors and/or more slowly "saturated" colors). The cages are made of black plastic and have (big) quared holes. Besides it is very intersting to know the casing can be disassembled very easy. Peronnally I prefer this variation.

*The Black Hole looks mostly as the Magic Jack because both of the puzzles (just like the inversion with less cubes) are caged with free corners.*

*The Black Hole is a little bit bigger. The division of the colors from the sides and the goal of the puzzle are different, but basically the puzzles are complete identical.*

In my opinion it seems impossible to get the Black Hole patented.

Many regards,  
Geert Hellings

Thanks to Geert.  
Ad