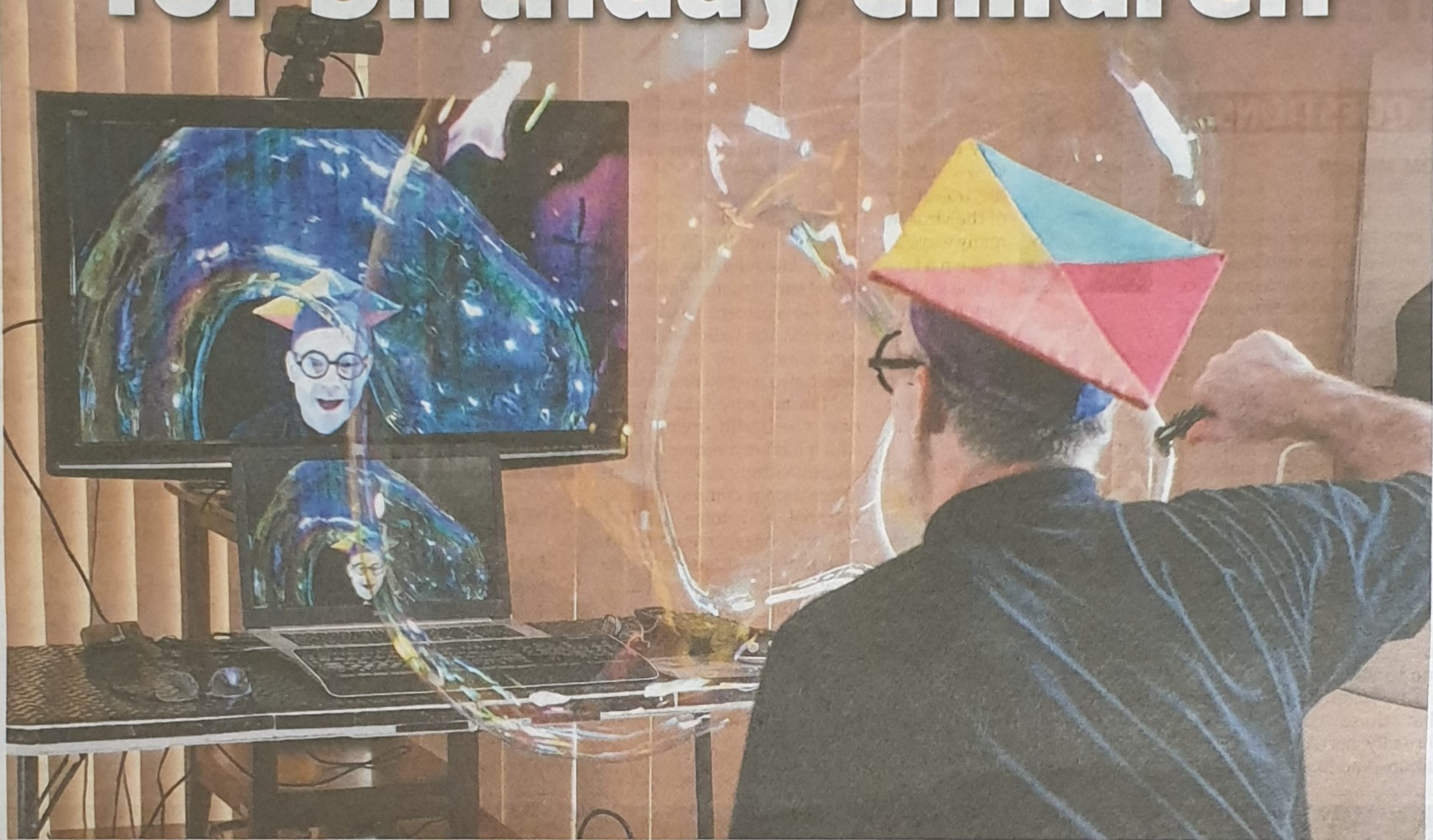


Living in bubble a party for birthday children



PARTY TRICK: Gaeme Denton, as Marty McBubble, performs his Scientific Bubble Show for an online audience.

Picture: BRENTON EDWARDS/AAP

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A BRIGHT idea to bring birthday parties online is giving socially isolated boys and girls a new way to celebrate their special day with friends and family, anywhere in the world.

Children's entertainer Gaeme Denton (aka Marty McBubble) is now offering his Scientific Bubble Show parties online, using Zoom, from his Fulham Gardens home.

His live and interactive performance is relayed from a makeshift studio into the homes of the birthday boy or

girl and their guests. "I do lots of new tricks and the children get to direct the show, choosing which bubble science tricks they most want to see," he said.

"I also host the party from start to finish, first by making sure all guests get connected to Zoom properly, and afterwards I help the parents present the birthday cake and co-ordinate singing of *Happy Birthday*."

Like many entertainers in the live performance industry, Mr Denton lost work through COVID-19 social distancing policies.

"Moving to Zoom online parties gives me an opportunity to maintain at least some income, while also hopefully offering families an enjoyable shared birthday party experience," he said.

"It has also been a great chance to innovate and to learn new skills. And even when I'm able to return to live performances, I will probably continue to offer online performances, particularly to those in remote areas, or those who are unwell and can't get to live events."

The first party took place in the US. The birthday girl's mother, Kaye Hamilton, of Columbus, Ohio, said the children were "able to connect and be together without actually being together".

The experience was one of pure joy for her daughter Lily, 6, who had been struggling with social distancing.

Lily said the show was

"amazing" and Marty McBubble was "silly, fun and nice".

Mr Denton was pleased with the results of his social experiment.

"It was heartwarming for me to see children connecting with each other, in a party atmosphere, when they had not been able to see each other at school or socially for many weeks," he said. "And while performing my show, to see them all on the big screen laughing together was wonderful."

The shows also fit in with the school science curriculum, reopening the potential for school bookings further down the track.

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