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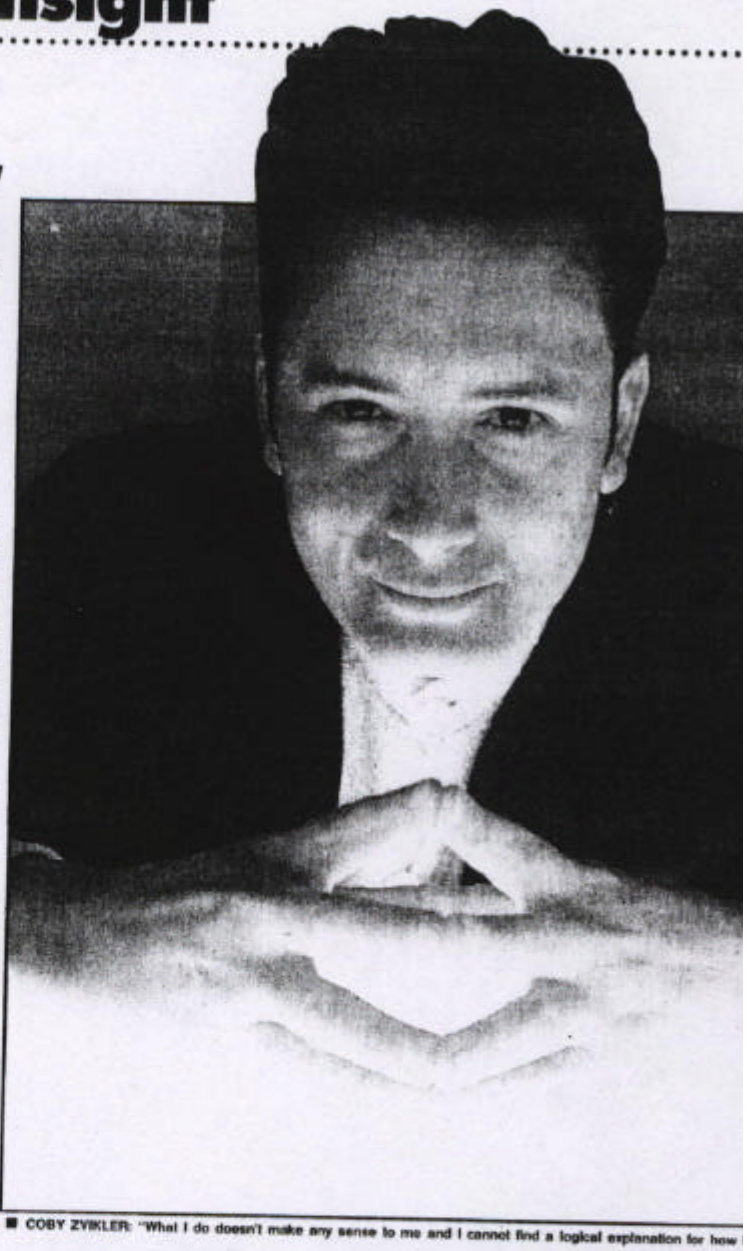

■ COBY ZVIKLER: "What I do doesn't make any sense to me and I cannot find a logical explanation for how

Man with the power?

BY KEITH WARD

It is difficult to make up your mind about Coby Zvikler. For one thing you can't be sure that he is not making it up for you. That's because he appears to have strange and unusual powers, although people have been sceptical about them all his life. Now aged 33, he first noticed them, he says, when he was a boy, recently arrived with his family in Manchester from his native land of Israel. And people didn't believe him then.

"I could always see things. Like colours around people, (lots of kids see that, say psychologists) which I was told by my parents to ignore because it was my imagination. They hoped I would grow out of it. I couldn't ignore it. I had a sort of party trick. I would get somebody to sit down, close their eyes and put their hands on their lap. They had to know something was going to happen, but they didn't know what. I would put my hand above one of theirs. I could feel the heat of their hand from eight or nine inches away. I would start to concentrate. Eventually I could get that hand to lift up. Later I could lift hands, arms, bodies in different positions. It might take me literally hours and hours to do it. I couldn't understand what it was."

Zvikler, who lives in Whitefield, can even now be disarmingly frank about his own supposed gift: "I am a very scientific person, right? What I actually do doesn't make any sense to me and I cannot find a logical explanation about how I produce it."

But after years of party tricks and ever-more-serious experimentation in his spare time, he recently took the decision to leave his comfortable role in the family handbag manufacturing business in Manchester to become a full-time "healer" (not a faith healer he insists), employing what he calls his "power healing system", and to write a book about it.

These days he finds his effect on some people can be pretty rapid. There is something of a biblical wonder in the eyes and voices of the people who have experienced and witnessed his successes. But, as he freely admits and we found out, it doesn't work with everybody.

We set up a test for him with two employees of the *Manchester Evening News* who were suffering minor ailments. It is carried out at our offices, unfamiliar territory to him. Suzanne, from the photographic department, is complaining of a pain in the middle of her shoulders, which had persisted for four days. Eric, a security officer, has pains in his neck, the aftermath of a virus attack a month previously.

Zvikler is not told what their ailments are. He treats them together, in my presence, first of all giving each of them a plastic card to wear, about the size of a credit card. It has a magnetic strip programmed, he says, with a signal which he has put there by concentrating on it.

"The card is like the access key to get into your own body computer," he had told me earlier. "I suppose it's a little bit of me. It allows you to tell that computer what you want it to do to correct your problems."

SUZANNE and Eric are asked to stand in front of him to be treated. Zvikler is chatty, pleasant, wont to break into a chuckle and denies using any form of hypnotism. But he looks at them carefully for some moments in silence.

"What I am trying to do is give them my energy. It's difficult to describe. It's like, how do you describe green without having the colour green to show somebody? It's almost like a wall of thicker air in front of me which I am pushing towards people.

"Nobody is in any sort of trance. People are not there to be laughed at. But there's some sort of force that can influence a person."

He then starts asking them to repeat a succession of commands, directed at their respective "internal body computers."

"Increase my energy levels to absolute maximum . . . now. Receive this signal at its highest level . . . now. Lift up my right arm to shoulder level . . . now."

Eric shows little reaction, apart from appearing to stand straighter. But Suzanne's right arm starts slowly to rise and ends up high in the air.

This is weird. She looks a little surprised. She says later: "It was odd. I wasn't in any way helping him. I had felt quite sceptical. I could just feel my arm going up. It was really strange. I was able to lower it, but it started to go up again, until he told me to command it to stay down."

What's more, the pain had gone, she said, and she was still free of it next day.

On Eric, Zvikler tries his scanning technique, passing his hand back and forth some inches away from the pain area, looking for "bumps" of resistance, trying to pinpoint the pain and smooth it away, then resting his hand on it and asking Eric to flex his neck.

Eric says next day: "I would say I felt nothing. The manipulation gave me a little bit of relief, which is something I've found by doing it myself. But last night the pain was back."

We sent a photographer to one of Zvikler's regular demonstrations to small groups, mostly of women, around Greater Manchester.

Most responsive "patient" at that session was Mrs Janet Smith, a 41-year-old clerical officer from Baguley. She told me afterwards: "I went along because I was curious really. I have had a prolapsed disc for about three years. I have been off work for up to 14 weeks at a time since it flared up.

"Since last May I have had a bad limp. Just by looking at me he said I had a lower back problem and started telling me to say things after him, to build up my energy.

"I was standing in front of him. He came over and rested his hands on my hips, for about a couple of minutes, I suppose. My right leg, the bad one, it just started to shake.

"I was not frightened or worried. After about 15 minutes I went for a walk down the corridor. I felt fine. I could not believe I could walk without the limp. I felt as though I had straightened up."

Said an onlooker at the session: "Everybody was aghast, because she walked out of the room without any limp and actually looking taller."

And the failures?

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men. People without tha
energy, who are perhaps
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give some of my energy to

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Then they try acupunctu
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When he was a teenager
was fascinated by Uri Gelle
famously bent spoons by
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● For details and venues of
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