



COMMUNITY REPORT

By MELISSA NAZARETH
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SINGERS from all over the region will be arriving in Bahrain for the first-ever choir festival to be held in the kingdom on March 1.

Manama Singers, arguably the oldest multicultural community choir in the kingdom, is organising Choir Fest Bahrain, which will showcase a variety of musical styles, languages, cultures and traditions ... a fitting tribute to the GCC's cosmopolitan nature. The event will be held at the Cultural Hall.

"The choirs are from a variety of backgrounds and cultures, sharing and singing a variety of music. We have choirs from schools, churches and the community, and all ranging from 15 to 70 singers," Manama Singers musical director Jo Diciolla told *GulfWeekly*. "We are excited to have invited choirs from the region too, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Dubai. The festival will showcase a celebration of our own styles of performance, intertwined with different languages, cultures and traditions."

"In December 2022, some of our singers went to watch the YMCA (Bahrain) choir, comprising more than 50 singers from several Indian church congregations here, put on their Christmas carol service event," the 33-year-old Saar resident added. "I had not seen or even heard of any other large choirs since I arrived here in Bahrain seven years ago, so, I was surprised and had such a wonderful evening singing along and enjoying the music."

"This made me realise that maybe there are more choirs on the island, and how wonderful it would be

MELODY: Manama Singers putting up a Christmas showcase in 2022 at The Dilmun Club



A festival of choirs

if we could get together, share our music, and create something magical.

"I took the idea to our choir committee and there was eagerness to pursue it further. We did some research and before long we had a long list of choirs to contact. We began the journey last summer, and here we are, with more than 10 choirs attending, from Bahrain and beyond, with a festival that is actually going to happen."

Among the choirs that will participate in the event during



Adnan



Shajimon

the F1 weekend is the YMCA Bahrain.

"This is a great opportunity to share our music with one another," YMCA Bahrain choir conductor Shajimon Christudas said. An electrical engineer by profession, Shajimon is a fan of music especially Carnatic, a traditional style

from South India. "We will build good harmony, not only in music but also in our new relationships and friendships," he added.

Driving down from neighbouring Saudi Arabia, the Najd Choir from Riyadh will also perform at the musical showcase.

"This festival will encourage people from the GCC to get involved with music and join a choir," Lebanese expatriate Adnan Rachid, who formed the Najd Choir in 2019 said. "I hope it will get the attention of ministries and those in government, and those unfamiliar with choirs will come to discover the many talents in the region. More importantly, I hope the festival will spread joy, love and happiness to those involved and those listening," the professional musician and choral director who has been singing and leading choirs, including the UNESCO amateur choir, since the age of 15, added.

Bahrain-based Welsh expatriate Tom Matthias, a music teacher and choir leader at Nadeen School, is all

set to present the talent that he's been nurturing.

"The Nadeen School Choir has performed in numerous live events this year, but never alongside another choir. The festival will be an exciting experience for the students, and myself, to take part in," the Manama Singer pianist said.

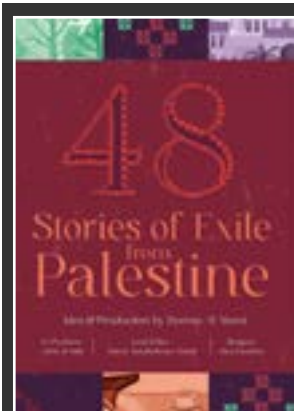
In the past, Tom has been on the judging panel of Harmony Music Centre's Gulf Musician Idol competition and this year, will put on the production of *Matilda*, among other projects.

Manama Singers will also be one of the performing choirs at the festival. They currently comprise about 40 singers across a wide range of nationalities, including English, Welsh, Scottish, Irish, French, Italian, German, Swiss, Swedish, American, Indian, Pakistani, Malaysian, Kiwi (New Zealand), Jordanian, Lebanese and Zambian. Manama Singers celebrated their golden jubilee in 2022.

"Our vision for the festival is to share a love and appreciation for choral singing in present and future generations in Bahrain, by connecting musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds and traditions from within the Kingdom and beyond," Jo explained.

Tickets for Choir Fest Bahrain go on sale early February and will be available on Platinumlist.

For details, follow @manamasingers on Instagram.



PALESTINIAN PLIGHT
Telling their tales
SEE PAGE 2



STREET MAGIC
Elevating the experience
SEE PAGE 3



BOLD BLENDS
The pursuit of passion
SEE PAGES 4-5



PULSE OF POP
Buffy's back (Maybe)
SEE PAGE 6



ONE DIRECTION: Jo Diciolla leading Manama Singers in a past performance



Tom

Changing the narrative



Deema

BOOK REPORT
By MELISSA NAZARETH
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BAHRAINI writer, editor, artist and educator Fatima Al Saad has collaborated with well-known Dubai-based creative Deema Al Alami to compile a collection of poignant anthologies that brings the Palestinian narrative to light.

48 Stories of Exile from Palestine, an English language book that aims to connect the English-speaking and Palestinian communities, is set to hit the shelves in March.

It highlights the personal accounts of victims from the 1948 Al Nakba (meaning 'the catastrophe') and the 1967 Al Naksa (setback), which witnessed the displacement of thousands of Palestinians. The stories shed light on their enduring hardships.

Among the many people involved in bringing the Palestinian plight to light through this 112-page book were 48 authors, 13 illustrators, five editors and 20 volunteer readers belonging to diverse ethnic backgrounds, including Bahraini, Kuwaiti, American,



VISUAL APPEAL: An illustration from the book depicting Yafah city by Dina Fawakhiri

British, Indian, Irish, Russian and Swedish.

An excerpt from one of the stories reads: "By the next day, as Jiddo Assaad rightly predicted, the settlers returned, shooting and murdering him in his own home. His widow and sons never returned to Palestine. They had to grieve their painful loss away from home, in Jordan, where they would eventually become citizens. Jiddo Assaad's story of ensuring his family's safety and staying to protect his home, is one that will never leave us, his proud descendants."

"Palestinians, even in their displacement, have empowered themselves with education, knowledge, skill, patriotism, and more."

"When the violence (ongoing war in Gaza) escalated early October, I was affected much like everyone else," 40-year-old Fatima, one of the editors on this project, told *GulfWeekly*. "I wanted to do something with my voice as a poet but I had this odd paralysis, like my throat was locked, and I was feeling lost and ineffective as a human. When I heard about this book, I knew instinctively that this was the opportunity where I could support the cause and speak up for Palestine."

Deema, the publisher and initiator of this project, is

partly Palestinian and has a personal connection with the stories.

"My paternal grandparents were forced into exile from their home in Jerusalem and carried the weight of displacement and longing for their homeland," the popular children's author revealed, adding that her father was born in exile.

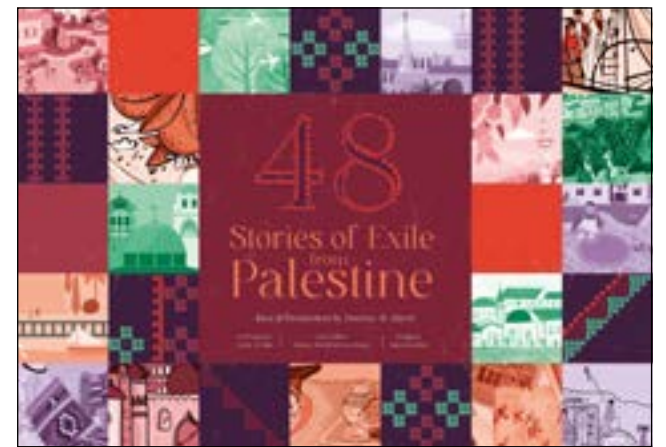
"Growing up, I visited them in Amman (Jordan) every week. Those memories laced with the aroma of Palestinian cuisine and the melody of our traditional music, as well as their accent and use of Arabic metaphors, all keep Palestine alive in my heart."

Though Fatima has closely followed Palestinian history over the years, she found working on this project an educational experience.

"I had to research to get context and details to some parts of the narratives I was editing, which taught me about specific events and massacres that affected the movement of the people in their own land," the Amwaj resident, who is set to participate in a Palestine-themed art exhibition soon, added.

Art for Palestine will showcase her installation that's been inspired by some of the stories she has edited for this book.

"As I read the stories and spoke to the descendants of Al Nakba, I learned about Palestine in its former glory, as a beautiful, peaceful and progressive land. Before this, the image I had was the



STRONG STORIES: The book cover designed by award-winning Jordanian creative Dina Fawakhiri.



Fatima

supporting Palestinians in their pursuit of education, a common theme that threads through the stories.

"I am grateful to everyone who played a role in getting this book published, contributing their time and expertise pro bono," Deema added. "This collective effort not only highlights the power of storytelling but also reaffirms the shared humanity in relation to any group of oppressed people, and especially Palestinians. The book stands not just as a collection of narratives but as a testament to the resilience and unity of people from diverse backgrounds in supporting the Palestinian cause."

48 Stories of Exile from Palestine can be pre-ordered by emailing 48storiesofexile@gmail.com or messaging @deema_al_almi on Instagram.

For details, follow @fatimasque on Instagram.

sieged and war-torn land we see today.

"Palestinians, even in their displacement, have empowered themselves with education, knowledge, skill, patriotism, and more."

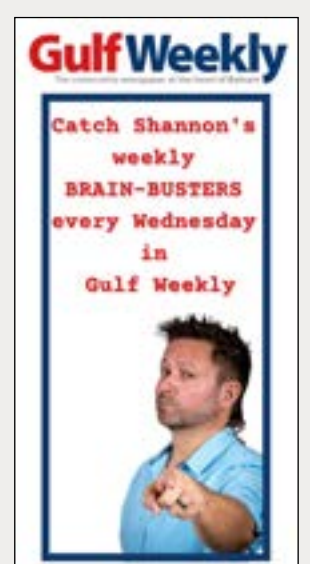
"I hope to visit the country some day and pray at Masjid Al Aqsa in Al Quds. I want to pick oranges from the trees, and taste the figs and watermelons..." the self-trained energy healer added.

All proceeds from the sale of the book will go toward

BRAIN-BUSTERS

Quizmaster and *Radio Bahrain* host Shannon Crockett, who has been entertaining people across the island with his brain-teasing quiz night sessions, has offered to put *GulfWeekly* readers' general knowledge to the test. Join in the fun every Wednesday with Shannon's seven brain-busters.

1. The orange is a hybrid between the mandarin and which other citrus fruit?
2. Which European City are the Spanish Steps located?
3. Pineal, Thyroid and Prostate are all types of what?
4. Which US comedian wrote and directed *Get Out*, *Nope* and *Us*?
5. Which country has the coldest capital city in the world?
6. The age of a lion can



be determined by its what?
7. Triton is the largest moon of what planet?

1. Pomelo
2. Rome, Italy
3. Glands
4. Jordan Peele
5. Mongolia
6. Nose
7. Neptune

ANSWERS



ARTISTIC: An illustration of the historical city of Al Lydd from the book designed by Gida Homad

An aromatic Asian adventure



GOURMET REPORT
By MELISSA NAZARETH
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THE Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay knows how to elevate humble street food staples and serve them in a fine dining restaurant. That's what my companions and I discovered during the Four Hands Dinners, which have made a comeback this year after a successful last season.

American Bar and Grille at Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa executive chef Aram Mardigian joined hands with Four Seasons Bahrain's executive chef Brian Becher to serve up a special dining experience at re/Asian that featured creative interpretations of fun Southeast Asian street food, and the day before at CUT by Wolfgang Puck.

"One of our main motivating factors behind events like this is offering our guests something different," Chef Brian told *GulfWeekly*, adding that it's just as exciting for the staff who get to learn and do something new.

The Four Hands Dinners with Chef Aram marks the start of a series for this year.

"I was excited right off the bat," the culinary creative based in New Jersey revealed. "It's any chef's dream to travel around the world and understand different cultures. I enjoyed exploring the local fare such as the traditional Bahraini breakfast. I also visited the local fish market, which was a great experience."

Chef Aram's cooking is largely influenced by his

FLAVOURFUL: Colourful creations at re/Asian



VIBES: DJ Katrin spinning the decks



partly Italian roots that originate in Calabria. And, Calabrian sausages were one of the highlights of the Four Hands Dinners hosted at CUT, which also featured other crowd-pleasers such as Wagyu Beef on Weck, a New York-style roast beef sandwich originating in Buffalo, and Argentinian Choripan, a traditional grilled chorizo sandwich.

My foodie friends and I enjoyed re/Asian's dim-lit

ambience, which instantly put us at ease. I could hear chatter spaced with laughter throughout the fully-booked restaurant. We sat at a table close to the window, with sweeping views of Bahrain from the 50th floor.

As we were warming up with peppy numbers by the DJ, we were served a flavourful concoction infused with Japanese tea, which got our motors running, gearing us up for the feast ahead.

We had to try out some appetisers on the menu, specially crafted for this event by Chefs Brian and Aram. We selected the Prime Beef Kimbap, a parcel of refreshing, colourful pickled vegetables and silken tofu. We also ate the Crispy Lamb Belly, tender meat coated in a sticky and slightly sweet five-



DELICIOUS: Grilled King Prawns ready to be devoured.



ALL SMILES: Chef Aram, left, and Chef Brian, right share a candid moment.



Scan the QR code to watch the chefs' interviews

spice glaze, which complemented the protein.

Chef Brian stopped by our table for a friendly chat, revealing his long-time friendship with Chef Aram since 2007 and

calling him the 'undisputed king of sandwiches and sausages'. We concurred on the first bite of the Grilled Chicken Kimchi Sausage recommended by him. Springy and encased in a crispy skin, they were a burst of herby goodness, further elevated by the 'awesome' sauce on the side. While we enjoyed eating them with sticky rice, they were a delight all on their own too.

The Whole Roasted Sea Bream, one of our mains, was a unanimous hit at the table. Chefs Brian and Aram did a fantastic job of infusing this characteristically clean tasting protein with potent flavours, which didn't overpower. The subtly sweet and sticky Hunan sauce clung to the fish,

cooked to perfection and melted in our mouths. The umami flavour complemented the bloody juices and the side of rustic sweet potatoes.

Our meal was paired with premium red grape, which we continued to sip on as we waited for dessert, a selection of the Coconut Sticky Rice with fresh mango and a quenelle of Fresno chilli ice cream. Reminiscent of the streets of Southeast Asia, this dish was equal parts decadent and divine. The Vietnamese Banana Cake garnished with a nutty sesame tuile and piped whipped white chocolate was art on a plate.

The proactive and friendly service added three stars, or should I say seven, to a fascinating culinary journey. I look forward to returning for the next Four Hands Dinners and can't wait to find out what's in store.

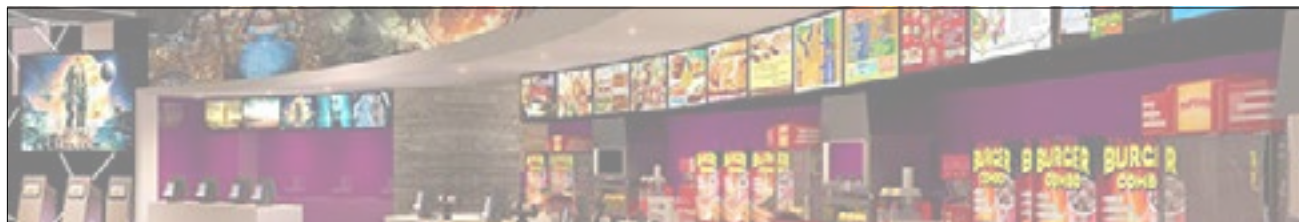
For reservations, call 17115044 for CUT and 17115046 for re/Asian.



ON A ROLL: Kimbap action at re/Asian's sushi counter.



MEATY: Crispy Lamb Belly coated in a five-spice glaze



ART REPORT

By MELISSA NAZARETH
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BAHRAINI artist Feryal Ishaq Bastaki is excited to co-host her first art exhibition for this year from February 3 to 5.

Ten young artists will showcase their works to the local art community at the event where Feryal's vibrant creations will also be on display.

"I have a series of exhibitions lined up this year, the first of which will be for young artists and university students at a media centre in Janabiya. I'm organising this showcase with my partner Bader Al Aali, who, like me is an experienced artist, and will participate too," the Saar resident told *GulfWeekly*.

The local talent practices numerous artistic styles, including Khayyami, a form of Persian art. A popular theme in this art form is 'lovers amid nature', which Feryal feels might be 'too bold' for some and hence she decided to blend this style with traditional Bahraini art, a widely accepted style in the Arabian Gulf.

"While Khayyami represents the romantic side of me, pop art represents my tough side," Feryal revealed, adding that she uses bright colours with clear strokes for the latter, a testament to her personality, which is 'a mix of cat and lion'.

She also practices digital art and uses acrylic paint for her physical paintings.

Feryal's artistic process involves sketching on photoshop and shifting to canvas after assessing the final result.

Two of her favourite creations are *Pearl Merchant's Daughter* and *Bahraini Woman*.

"The latter portrays the traditional Bahraini woman with mashmoom (a local plant variety with multiple uses including medicine and accessorising) in her hair," she said. The subject

ARTISTIC: *Pearl Merchant's Daughter* depicting the treasures of the sea adorning her long hair



Captivating color traditional theme



Feryal

in the stunning art work has an eyebrow missing and when asked about its symbolism, Feryal explained that there's none.

"The reason is her eyebrow is sharp and big, which puts the total focus on the eye, and her forehead is narrow. To balance the aesthetic, one eyebrow was enough. Viewers don't even notice it, unless I draw their attention to it," she added.

"I'm fascinated with portraits and my main focus is Bahraini culture," added the Omar Khayyam fan, who is inspired by the artists in his poetry and continues to refer

to their art especially when she paints a face.

Omar Khayyam was a popular Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet.

Last year, Feryal fulfilled one of her goals of permanently exhibiting her works at malls and hotels.

"I had mentioned Naseef restaurant during a television interview, and the owner, Ameena Naseef, kindly invited me to display my creations at Seef Mall in Seef District during Ramadan.

It's now showcased there permanently. I would also like to express my appreciation to The Art Hotel and Resort general manager Ramez Nemeh for displaying my art on a TV screen in the hotel's lobby," she added.

Feryal, who began doodling at the age of 12, owes her artistic achievements to her



SHOWCASE: An artwork permanently displayed at Seef Mall

high school art teacher who noticed that her drawings and paintings were better than most other students her age.

However, she believes her career in this field took off at university when she enrolled for an art course as an optional subject. It was there that she honed her skills, especially sketching.

However, life had other plans for the creative who went on to become an English language teacher after graduating in English literature with a minor in French from the University of Bahrain.

"I worked at several government schools and teaching took all of my

time and energy," Feryal explained. "Eventually, I landed a job at the Ministry of Education where I was promoted to join their Educational Supervision Directorate and worked there for many years.

"Art seemed to fade, until I decided to retire and pursue painting full-time. Persian art has always been my inspiration, those beautiful faces with sleepy eyes... I don't have a formal degree in art but I learned through persistent observation until I mastered the techniques.

"I started participating in art exhibitions in 2012. So far, I have showcased my work in Bahrain and Tunisia and I've also displayed at online exhibitions in Egypt and Italy."

Joining the social media wave, the creative started uploading her art on

Weekly



ARAB: **Golden Eyed**, a pop art piece



POP: **Vivid colours** in a pop art piece



VIBRANT: **Feryal's** collection of artistic bookmarks displays her signature blend of Persian and Bahraini influences

urs, es

Instagram in 2020.

"There weren't many exhibitions happening in Bahrain due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but posting on Instagram made me feel like my art was being seen. I decided that I would share something every day.

"I'm grateful to my social media followers who have offered immense encouragement over the years."

Around the same time, she also started printing her artwork on merchandise such as bags, rugs and magnets, which gained popularity among her patrons.



CRAFT: **Feryal's** art printed on a decorative plate

Feryal's vibrant bookmarks have a completely different fan base altogether.

The former educator has big plans for 2024 and among the events in the pipeline are *I'm a Woman*

exhibition in March, an international cultural exhibition in April and a children's exhibition in November.

For details, follow @feryalishshaq on Instagram.



ACTION: **The Black Blues Brothers** at Edinburgh

ENTERTAINMENT UNLIMITED

THE Spring of Culture festival continues in full swing as residents on the island lineup for exciting events ... from art displays to acrobatic performances and cultural popups. *GulfWeekly* is highlighting its favourites, set to happen in the coming days. Take your pick, from cultural walks to performing arts and more.

● 50th Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition

The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities will celebrate the golden jubilee of the island's bijou art event. Now in its 50th edition, the Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition will be available for viewing from tomorrow, 8am to 8pm, at the Bahrain National Museum, and also features workshops, lectures and more until the end of April.

● The Black Blues Brothers

Conceived by Cirque du Soleil's Alexander Sunny, this international sensation blends contemporary circus and musical comedy.

Witness an acrobatic celebration featuring jumps, somersaults, limbo-dancing with fire, human pyramids, and more. The performance happens at The Cultural Hall on February 2 and 4 at 7pm and February 3 at 5pm. Tickets are available on Platinumlist.

● Black, White, Green, Red

The watermelon remains and, since the attack on Gaza last October, has gained mainstream recognition as a symbol of solidarity with the Palestinian people. In this exhibition, organised in



FLASHBACK: Art display from a previous edition of the Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition.

collaboration with Bahrain Gallery, artists aim to blend creative expression with the aspiration for a liberated Palestine. Runs from February 6 to 22 at Albareh

Art Gallery, Saturday to Thursday from 9am to 1.30pm and 4pm to 8pm.

For details, follow @culturebah on Instagram or visit springofculture.org.



DRAMA: **Sinister** characters come to life on screen

MYSTERIES ABOUND

BAHRAIN CINEMA CLUB – Wednesday, 7pm, Juffair

Film: *Burning*

Director: Lee Chang-dong

Duration: Two hours and 28 minutes

Cast: Yoo Ah-in, Steven Yeun, Jeon Jong-seo

Plot: Jongsu, a frustrated introvert, has his life complicated by the appearance of two people: Haemi, a spirited woman who offers romantic

possibility, and Ben, a wealthy young man she befriends. When Jongsu learns of Ben's mysterious hobby and Haemi disappears, his obsessions begin to mount. At the 2018 Cannes Film Festival, the film was nominated for the Golden Palm Award and won the FIPRESCI (Fédération Internationale de la Presse Cinématographique) Prize. For details, call Huda Tabbara on 39682323.

Pulse of Pop

AROUND THE WORLD IN MUSIC, TV, BOOKS AND MORE - BY NAMAN ARORA

A REBOOT of the popular TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is in the works, according to country music legend and uncredited producer for the original show Dolly Parton.

Dolly's production company, Sandollar Productions, which the singer co-founded with her former manager, Sandy Gallin, had co-produced all seven seasons of the show, as well as the spinoff show *Angel*.

"They're still working on that," Dolly told reporters, without specifying who is involved in the project.

"They're thinking about bringing it back and revamping it."

Buffy the Vampire Slayer was created by writer and director Joss Whedon, and centred around the eponymous character, the latest in a succession of young women chosen by fate to battle against vampires, demons and other forces of darkness.

The series received critical and popular acclaim, and is often counted among the greatest television series of all time.

American film director and producer Fran Rubel Kuzui had attempted to reboot *Buffy* with a new movie in 2009.

However, fans of the show, and some of its cast members, had criticised the project for not involving Joss.

In 2018, Joss and producer and



REBOOT:
The cast of
*Buffy the
Vampire
Slayer*

THE BIG MOMENTS ARE GOING TO COME!



Dolly

screenwriter Monica Owusu-Breen collaborated on a proposed reboot with a Black actor playing one of the leads, but it received backlash from fans who assumed a Black actor would play Buffy.

On X, formerly known as Twitter, Monica suggested the reboot would introduce new characters, but "There

is only one Buffy," she wrote.

Although plans for an on-screen reboot have yet to come to fruition, the world of the show has extended to other mediums.

Several 'Buffy' cast members reunited last year for an Audible series set after the events of the show, which concluded in 2003.

Slayers: A Buffyverse Story picks up 10 years after the 'Buffy' series finale and focuses on a new slayer, Indira (voiced by Laya DeLeon Hayes), and Buffy's former vampire lover, Spike (voiced by James Marsters).

Anthony Head, Charisma

Carpenter, Juliet Landau, Emma Caulfield, Amber Benson, James Charles Leary, and Danny Strong also reprised their roles from the TV series.

Speaking of the original series, Dolly added that while she was 'very involved,' the credit for the show's success is down to the people who worked on it every day.

"A lot of my work was done just conversing back and forth with the business people there," the singer added.

"I have to give more people more credit on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* than me. That little show did great."



FACING FEARS

AN animated fantasy adventure comedy in which a young boy faces his fear of the night is set to hit Netflix this weekend.

To be released digitally on February 2, *Orion and the Dark*, produced by DreamWorks, has been directed by Sean Charmatz and written by Charlie Kaufman.

The official synopsis for the movie, based on a children's book of the same name by Emma Yarlett, reads: "Orion seems a lot like your average elementary school kid – shy, unassuming, harbouring a secret crush."

"But underneath his seemingly normal exterior, Orion is a ball of adolescent anxiety, completely consumed by irrational fears of bees, dogs, the ocean, cell phone waves, murderous gutter clowns, and even falling off of a cliff."

"But of all his fears, the



thing he's the most afraid of is what he confronts on a nightly basis: the Dark.

"So when the literal embodiment of his worst fear pays a visit, the Dark whisks Orion away on a roller coaster ride around the world to prove there is nothing to be afraid of in the night."

Orion is voiced by Jacob Tremblay, with Colin Hanks as the adult version of the character, while Paul Walter Hauser voices Dark.

"WRITE" COMMUNITY

A UNIQUE collaborative novel featuring some of the leading literary voices of today is set to be released next Tuesday.

Fourteen Days, edited by Margaret Atwood, centres around the Covid-19 pandemic. When the pandemic shuts down Manhattan, USA the residents of a Lower East Side apartment building begin gathering together on their rooftop.

Slowly, the residents become actual neighbours, establishing a sense of community through shared stories. Each character is narrated by a different literary voice. Margaret, Celeste Ng, John Grisham, Dave Eggers, Tommy Orange, Louise

Erdrich, and Neil Gaiman are just a few of the major authors contributing to this work.

THE SMILE CREEPS BACK

RADIOHEAD members Thom Yorke, Jonny Greenwood and Tom Skinner are back with a new album, this time under their relatively young band *The Smile*.

Wall of Eyes is *The Smile*'s second album, after the band made its surprise debut in a performance streamed by Glastonbury Festival in May 2021 and released their first album, *A Light for Attracting Attention*, to acclaim in 2022.

The songs for the eight-track *Wall of Eyes* were developed while on tour for the first



Tom,
Jonny and
Thom

album. After releasing the single *Bending Hectic* in June last year, *The Smile* announced the new album with the single *Wall of Eyes* in November, followed by *Friend of a Friend* in January.

The album also features the songs *Teleharmonic*, *Read the Room*, *Under our Pillows*, *You Know Me!* and *I Quit*.

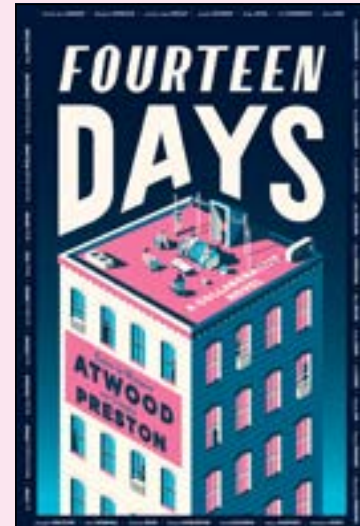
A version of *Teleharmonic* was featured in a 2022 episode of the television



drama *Peaky Blinders*.

Thom does the vocals on the album, while joining Jonny on guitar, bass and keys, as Tom mans the drums for the critically acclaimed work.

The album has been recorded in Oxford and at the famous Abbey Road Studios in London, UK with strings performed by the London Contemporary Orchestra.



MotoringWeekly

The top motoring and motorsport news



Racing action at the BIC

BIC SET FOR EPIC BATTLES

THE 2023-24 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship (BDRC) reaches its midway point in this season's third round, taking place this week at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir.

The fight for victories, podiums and all-important points is set to intensify as the region's premier drag racing series hits the quarter-mile strip at "The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East".

In the two previous meetings, around 250 competitors from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Canada, and US took part.

This week's programme kicked off last night and continues today with back-to-back nights of Test

and Tune, from 6pm to midnight.

Qualifying will be held on Thursday from 3pm onwards, setting up pairings for eliminations on Friday from 2pm onwards.

Tickets to Test and Tune cost BD2 per person for each night along BIC's Beyon Grandstand. Tickets for Qualifying and Race Day are BD5 apiece for the Start Line Grandstand and BD3 for the Beyon Grandstand.

The BDRC 2023/2024 season features five rounds, with the next one scheduled from February 6 to 9, setting the stage for the championship finale from March 19 to 22.

For more information, visit bahraingp.com or call 17450000.

NEWLY re-signed McLaren driver Lando Norris is confident that the team will be in the mix for race victories in 2024, but is patient for a championship challenge.

Bahrain-owned McLaren turned heads last season by going from struggling for points to regularly fighting for podiums, with highly effective upgrades being implemented following a technical reshuffle.

The newly re-signed Norris came close to scoring McLaren's first Grand Prix win since 2021 on several occasions, taking six P2 finishes, while team mate Oscar Piastri managed to triumph in the Qatar Sprint race.

"It's both the team's goal and also just a personal goal that I've always had," he said of his and McLaren's constructors' and drivers' title ambitions. "Am I convinced I'm capable of doing it? Yes. Am I convinced the team is capable of doing it? Yes."

"I don't think it's just last year and how we turned things around, I don't think that's the only thing I would say that's convinced me. It's just everything that goes on day to day, people that are here, work ethic, mentality, approach to everything."

McLaren last won the constructors' championship in 1998, while Lewis Hamilton in 2008 is their most recent drivers' champion.

Pushed on when he feels McLaren could challenge for titles, Norris called it "a difficult question" to answer, but hopes the team's momentum means it is close.

"There were moments we were close to winning races last year, and a few races we were not miles away from a



Norris

Entering the big league

Red Bull," he added. "We're the closest we've ever been (to winning a race) since I've been here and for many, many years, but fighting for a championship is a bigger step. If you ask me do I think I can

win races this year, I'd be inclined to say yes, but to go straight into winning the championship, I think that's another level.

"(It's a step) both for myself, (as) racing at the very top is not something

I've necessarily done for a while, but also for the whole team. For everyone here at the factory it's a different kind of level and excitement, for mechanics a different level of pressure and excitement."

He continued: "Do I think we're ready to challenge them? Yeah, absolutely. In those situations, and there's opportunities where we've been fighting against Red Bull, Ferrari, Mercedes, going against them head-to-

head in strategy, pit stops, all of those things, and the majority of times we've executed them extremely well.

"When it comes to pressure, I think everyone is in a very good position, but as soon as you mention fighting for a championship, everyone's mentality changes a little bit. But I feel I'm ready to go against Max Verstappen and Lewis and fight against them."

McLaren will hit the track with their new F1 challenger at Silverstone on February 14, having already presented the livery that will adorn Norris and Piastri's MCL38s, and are gearing up for the pre-season testing in Bahrain from February 21 to 23.



The MCL38

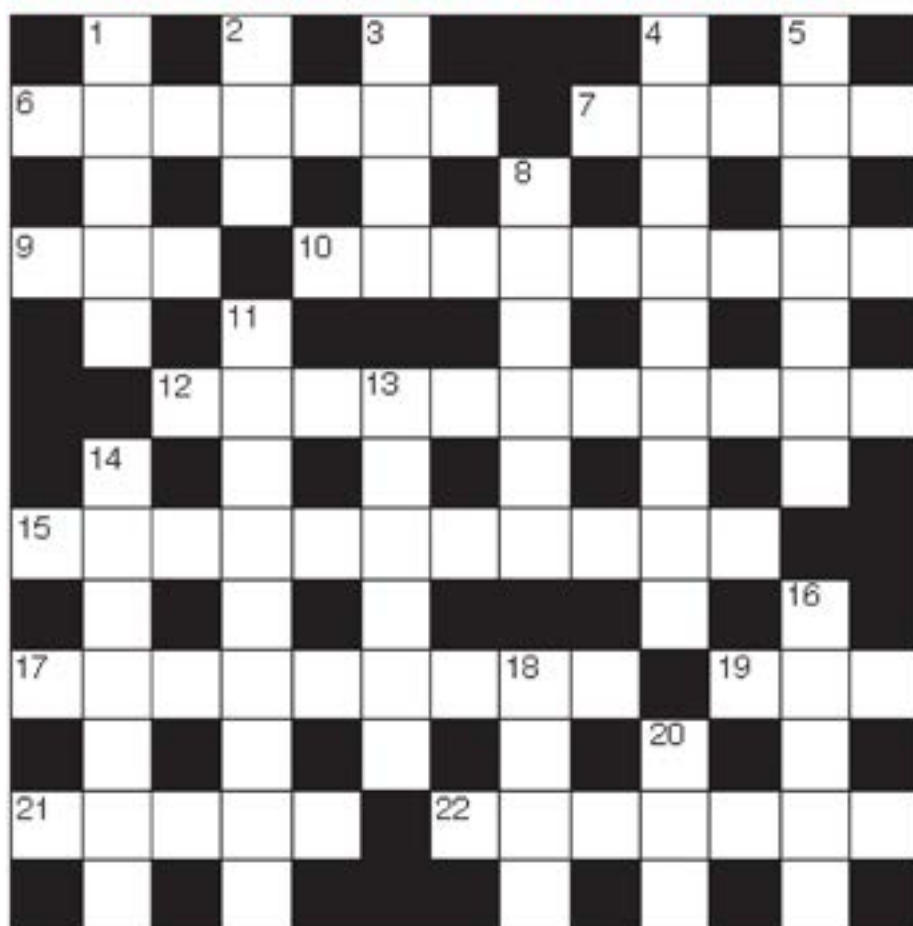
Time Out



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crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

6. Slanting (7)
7. Sweetener (5)
9. Argument (3)
10. Languid (9)
12. Unrestrained (11)
15. Focus (11)
17. Chastise (9)
19. Cunning (3)
21. Spate (5)
22. Greet (7)

DOWN

1. Detest (5)
2. Immerse (3)
3. Rotate (4)
4. Substitute (9)
5. Spectacle (7)
8. Note (6)
11. Carrying out (9)
13. Go back (6)
14. Amiable (7)
16. Cluster (5)
18. Fastened (4)
20. Frozen water (3)

who, what, where, when

WHO ... is the UK Conservative MP for Chingford and Woodford Green?
WHAT ... does a luthier do?
WHERE ... was José Manuel Durão Barroso the Prime Minister from 2002-04?
WHEN ... was the novel *Valley of the Dolls* by Jacqueline Susann first published?
WHO ... wrote the novel *Whistle Down the Wind*?
WHAT ... word in common usage derives from the Hindi word *bangla*?
WHERE ... do Portsmouth FC play their home matches?
WHEN ... did the mutineers of HMS *Bounty* settle on Pitcairn Island?

just so

gone gone gone gone end

sense sense sense sense sense sense

1

HANS CHRISTIAN
ANDERSEN

darn tough sudoku

So you think you're good enough at Sudoku to crack this baby? Remember, we were the first in the Gulf to bring you this bit of Japanese mayhem...so we don't kid around

Last week's sudoku

9	2	5	1	6	4	8	7	3
4	6	8	9	3	7	5	1	2
7	3	1	2	5	8	4	6	9
2	8	4	3	9	1	7	5	6
6	9	7	5	4	2	1	3	8
5	1	3	7	8	6	2	9	4
1	7	6	4	2	9	3	8	5
8	5	2	6	7	3	9	4	1
3	4	9	8	1	5	6	2	7

6	2	7	5	1	4	3	8	9
4	5	1	8	9	3	7	2	6
9	8	3	2	7	6	4	1	5
7	1	6	3	2	9	5	4	8
3	9	2	4	8	5	1	6	7
8	4	5	7	6	1	2	9	3
2	6	8	1	3	7	9	5	4
5	7	9	6	4	2	8	3	1
1	3	4	9	5	8	6	7	2

darn tough sudoku

1	3	5	7	6	2	8	4	9
9	4	8	3	5	1	6	2	7
6	7	2	4	9	8	3	5	1
4	9	3	1	7	5	2	6	8
7	2	6	9	8	3	4	1	5
5	8	1	2	4	6	7	9	3
2	1	9	8	3	4	5	7	6
8	5	4	6	1	7	9	3	2
3	6	7	5	2	9	1	8	4

Sudoku

		2				6	5	
	6			9	2			8
		4	1		5	3		
7			8		3			5
5	2			1			4	3
					4			6
		1	5		7			
4			2	3			8	7
	3	7						

Sudoku

	5		9					6
7		9	1		8	3		5
		6				2		
4				3			1	7
		3				9		
9	1			8				2
		2				5		
6		4	5		7	8		3
	7				4		6	

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 7 Vulnerability;
8 Clemency; 9 Cant; 10
Fillip; 12 Nudist; 14 Ignore;
16 Enfold; 18 Skit; 20
Intimate; 22 Revolutionary.

Down: 1 Building;
2 Animal; 3 Iron; 4
Abeyance; 5 Placid; 6 Stun;
11 Previous; 13 Solitary;
15 Option; 17 Foment; 19
Keep; 21 Toil.

JUST SO: A soldier of for-
tune, Heaven on earth, High
treason, An inside job

WHO, WHAT, WHERE,
WHEN:

Eric Sykes; 1858; India;
January 1977; Anthony
Hopkins; Blonde on
Blonde; Venice; 1871.

Darn Tough Sudoku

		7	2					5
5				7	9		3	
	3						8	
		3						1
		8	9		4	5		
1						2		
		2					5	
	1		6	2				8
4					7	6		