



Hold your horses



Hashim

DREAMS: Qassim holding on to his horse



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FILM REPORT

By MELISSA NAZARETH
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MORE than 50 talented Bahrainis have joined hands to work on a film which showcases dreams, resistance, and the futility of it all, and is set for release next month.

The Arabic movie *Oudur Ajmal min Thanb*, which translates to *A Beautiful Excuse, for a Deadly Sin*, revolves around Qassim, a young man who wants to take his horse up a narrow flight of stairs to live with him in his apartment.

He is met with judgement and resistance from his neighbours, particularly 60-year-old Abu Ghayeb, played by leading Bahraini actor Mubarak Khamis, who blocks the way.

What ensues is a series of actions to resist the other's attempts, and utter chaos. Does Qassim achieve his goal or is he defeated by society?

Director and writer Hashim Sharaf, one of the winners of the Isa Cultural Centre short film grant, penned the story inspired by his personal experience but believes the film will resonate with a wider audience because 'we all have dreams' and, at some point, 'have had to overcome

hurdles to make them a reality'.

"One day I got a call from my mother asking me to urgently run to my grandfather's place, as one of the neighbours was trying to get a horse up to their apartment," the award-winning filmmaker, with a Bachelor's degree in filmmaking and cinema studies from RMIT University in Australia, told *GulfWeekly*.

"My partner and I faced societal pressure when we decided to get married as we belong to different castes, and this experience helped me resonate with the young man's story.

"The horse, to me, symbolises the dream; the stairwell, the passage of time and the older neighbour, the generational gap. It struck a chord with many others who then volunteered to be a part of this film. We all shared a mutual belief that telling the

story was a shout for help to let us pursue our dreams."

Filmed over two days, the 16-minute live-action, dark comedy addresses the challenges one faces while making unconventional life choices.

Qassim, played by rising Bahraini star Omar Al Saeedi, faces opposition from his neighbours. Even his mother puts society before his dreams.

The film has many messages, including society's indifference – everyone is more focused on their own goals, like passing through the stairs, for instance, instead of what Qassim was trying to achieve.

"We don't pay attention to other people's problems as long as they don't affect us, but one day, they might catch up to us, so, let's come together to support others," Hashim explained, highlighting that caring for



ARTISTIC: The film's poster

others benefits the entire community.

The film's title, *A Beautiful Excuse, for a Deadly Sin*, is inspired by a famous Arabic proverb that translates to 'an excuse is worse than a sin'.

The idea of living with a horse is illogical, a 'sin', however, if we understand the sentiment and purpose behind it, it would trump what we, as a society, consider a sin, Hashim said.

He also touches upon how our actions can inspire others to find the courage to pursue their own goals – the Butterfly Effect. Qassim's determination rubs off on a child who lives in the building.

"The film ends with a child emerging from the staircase railing, symbolising the Butterfly Effect – how one small action (by Qassim)

might have left a larger influence on the child's mind. I won't say more and invite you to watch the film to find out how," he added.

There were deliberate choices made for the project, like choosing a narrow building to film in and bringing a horse on set. But Hashim and the dynamic crew overcame the hurdles despite a limited budget.

"We identified a suitable building in Manama but to fit a large crew in such a tight space during summer, that too with a horse, for more than 16 hours over two days was not easy," he said.

"Furthermore, the lighting of the building was difficult to control, but we overcame it thanks to the support of the public service authorities. We even worked closely with a horse trainer so the animal was well taken care of at all times. Our art department did a great job with quick, temporary fixes to the stairs to accommodate the horse."

Hashim hopes authorities in Bahrain will make more investments and efforts to promote cinema and support local filmmakers.

Oudur Ajmal min Thanb will be released in Saudi Arabia next month and in Bahrain this year.

For more details, follow @hashimsharaf on Instagram.



VETERAN: Actor Mubarak shares the screen with rising star Omar

Paws and play!

SUPPORTERS of one of Bahrain's most loved animal charities are rallying around to raise funds for its shelter and programme, during a special Quiz Night being hosted next week.

The fundraiser for Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BSPCA) will be hosted next Tuesday, April 23, at 7pm, by *Radio Bahrain's* Shannon Crockett, who also runs the Brain Busters trivia in *GulfWeekly*.

"We have more than 70 dogs and 40 cats at the shelter, plus all the birds, chickens, ducks and terrapins, and this fundraiser, along with our garden parties, afternoon teas, black tie dinners and sponsored walks will help us take care of them," BSPCA fundraiser Rachel Gibson told *GulfWeekly*.

"Proceeds from this event are expected to go towards operating our free catch-neuter-return initiative for cats and dogs."



COMMUNITY REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
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The event will take place at the Candles hall within the Dilmun Club and feature a slew of prizes and fun activities, in addition to the trivia contest.

The BSPCA was founded in 1979 and is Bahrain's oldest animal rescue centre. Last year, it suffered from a severe lack of donations, and kind-hearted donors have kept it going.

The organisation plans to conduct more events throughout the year to be able to take care of stray or abandoned cats, dogs and other pets across the kingdom.

Shannon is hoping to see at least 10 teams enter the competition, to walk away with top prizes, which include Jazzfest tickets, free meals, and medical therapy vouchers.

"My quiz night topics are very broad but I will always find a way to tap into the



FOR A CAUSE: Shannon conducts one of the previous quiz nights

cause, so expect to get a few questions about our furry friends," Shannon added.

"BSPCA has been running these for years and this will be my fourth time hosting the event, after the last one in June last year.

"We have built a special relationship over the last couple of years. I'll do anything in my power to help the animals in the kingdom.

"I will also have a few side games I like to play to give our guests additional chances to win some fantastic prizes from our generous supporters.

"Prizes this year include tickets to Jazzfest, IV Therapy vouchers from Alkem Health and Wellness as well as breakfast for four and a month's supply of fresh fruit pops from Popina, just to name a few, with more

prizes to be announced soon." To register to participate in the event, there is a BD5 per person charge, with up to six

people allowed per team. To book your spot and get more information, call Rachel at 66608901.

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 Thursday with Shannon's seven brain-busters.

- Starting with the letter 'b' what word is the Persian equivalent of a 'suq' found in Western Asian and North African cities?
- Which company commercially released the world's first compact disc (CD) player in 1982?
- Jenny Curran, Bubba, Lieutenant Dan Taylor – are characters from which film?
- Alpacas are very similar to, and often confused with which animals?
- Who was the first male tennis player to win a Grand Slam tournament with a non-wood racquet?
- The 'Line of Control' refers to the military control between which two countries?
- In physics, what is the plural of quantum?

Gulf Weekly
Catch Shannon's weekly **BRAIN-BUSTERS** every Thursday in Gulf Weekly

ANSWERS

- Bazaar
- Sony
- Forrest Gump
- Llamas
- Jimmy Connors
- India and Pakistan
- Quanta



KITTY: Jenkins, one of the young cats housed within the BSPCA shelter



ELROY: One of the dogs being taken care of by the BSPCA



ART REPORT

By NAMAN ARORA
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ONE of the pioneers of the modern contemporary art movement in Bahrain is showcasing pieces from his six decades-long career in a one-of-its-kind exhibition at the Art Centre, near Bahrain National Museum.

In his exhibition *Sixty Years in the Studio*, Bahraini creative Asghar Ismaeel has displayed 74 paintings and 27 sculptures, each created painstakingly over the course of his career.

“The 60 years of my journey into art started amidst Bahrain’s pristine nature, and I was privileged to spend time with art pioneers who encouraged me to pursue and nurture my hobby,” Asghar told *GulfWeekly*.

“I went to trade school for a short time and also gained many technical skills and then moved into a more creative path. In 1968, I joined the Arts Amateurs Association in Manama where I collaborated on theatre scenography with artists like Eman Assiri, who encouraged me to join the Arts Amateurs Association, alongside Abdulaziz Zubari, Hussain Al Sunni, Abdullatif Mufiz, and other pioneers in Bahrain.

“This exhibition marks a significant point in my life, allowing me to revisit beautiful moments and memories just like a diary. Years ago, I painted my children, and today my grandchildren have become subjects in my paintings, reinforcing their place in my life and heart.

“I wanted to share these moments through a selection of my old and recent artworks, to tell my story over the past 60 years.”

In 1973, Asghar went on to join the Contemporary Arts Association, participating in their first annual exhibition in Bahrain.

Over 60 years, he has exhibited across the Arab world, including in Egypt and the GCC.

While many artists choose to specialise in fine art or take the industry route, Asghar elected to stay at the intersection, and explored his creativity in both.

While he was painting stunning portraits and nature-inspired scenes, he also manufactured Bahrain’s first manual printing press, helping creatives like Nasser Al Yousef, Kamel Barakat, Ebrahim Busaad and Abdulkarim Al Bosta take their craft to the next level.

He also created a specialised cartooning station

Six decades of pioneering art



HERITAGE: **Needle and Thread (Oil on Canvas, 2012)**



POIGNANT: **Meditation Moments (Oil on Canvas, 2003)**



REALISTIC: **Yusuf (Oil on Canvas, 2023)**



LEGACY: **Lady in Red (Oil on Canvas, 2020)**



OPENING: **Asghar, left, with Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities president Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, second from left, and other guests at the inauguration of the exhibition**



TRADITION: **Asghar's Beans Seller marble sculpture**



WALK: **The exhibition offers a journey down the artist's vaunted memory lane**

for Ahmed Ghuloom and would have continued his journey into woodworking and crafting if not for a terrible accident.

“In the early 1990s, due to a work-related accident, I lost several fingers on my

left hand, which was the left hand I used for drawing,” he explained.

“This injury heavily impacted my everyday practice, and for several years I lost the drive to create as an artist. Eventually, I

managed to train my right hand to pick up drawing again, taking years until I could produce work at the same level.”

Undeterred, he continued his creative journey, delving even deeper into sculpture,

while still working at a variety of factories across the kingdom.

“I found materials in my environment, gravitating towards wood as a suitable companion, then later discovering firebrick, where I started on developing realistic sculptures,” he added.

“Once again, my path intersected with my childhood friend, the late artist Khalil Al Hashimi, for whom I crafted some sculpting tools. My craftsmanship contributed to exploring and studying various art techniques, eventually leading me to delve deeper into the craft, with the British Council Library serving as a valuable

resource.

“In the early 90s, I began sculpting on pieces of stone and marble acquired from construction sites, as materials were not readily available, and recently I started working with bronze.”

As a self-taught artist, Asghar’s exhibition takes visitors through his graphic printings, sculptures, carvings, portraits, nature paintings and more. His work is also part of the Bahrain National Museum Collection as well as in private collections in Bahrain and internationally.

Within his body of work are frequently repeated elements drawn from Bahraini heritage and glimpses of daily life.

His unique work reflects the lives of everyday people within Bahraini society particularly featuring the female form as a symbol of her important role in society.

Sixty Years in the Studio opened on Monday and continues until April 29.

For details, follow @asghar_ismaeel on Instagram.

Leisure Scene

What's on guide by
Jayne Houghton



GASTRONOMICAL DELIGHTS GALORE AT RITZ-CARLTON

EMBARK on a culinary adventure at The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain's dining destinations.

From the Arabian flavours of La Med's Amber Night to the spirit of Mexico at Cantina Kahlo and the Thai delights of Thai Lounge, prepare to explore a world of gastronomic experiences.

Amber Night beckons guests to indulge in Arabian-inspired delicacies.

Each meticulously crafted dish promises to evoke the vibrant spices and time-honoured traditions of the Arabian Peninsula, offering an unparalleled fusion of flavour and sophistication.

To cater to diverse preferences and desires, La Med presents four distinct packages: The introductory option, priced at BD29, invites guests to savour an array of tantalising dishes paired with traditional tea



VIBE: Thai Lounge

and Arabic coffee.

For those seeking an elevated experience, another option, priced at BD35, offers the same delectable cuisine alongside a selection of soft beverages.

For connoisseurs desiring a touch of luxury, the next option, priced at BD45, encompasses all the offerings of the previous package with the addition of select beverages, ensuring a refined dining experience.

Lastly, for those yearning for exclusivity, the final option, priced at BD55, invites guests to a VIP

dining encounter in a private setting, complete with personalised service and luxury ambience.

On Saturdays from 6pm to 10pm, Cantina Kahlo invites you to embrace the tropical spirit with their specials: Dos Corazones offers an opportunity for you and a companion to enjoy a refreshing beverage or Tres Amigos treats you to enjoy three mouthwatering tacos accompanied by three mocktails in the perfect spot for sundowners; prices start at BD12.

For a taste of Thailand,

Thai Lounge's Bento Box Experience is not to be missed.

Whether you're craving the crispy textures of tempura or the bold flavours of stir-fried delights, their signature Bento Box promises an exquisite fusion of flavours. Priced at BD18, it's available daily from 1pm to 6pm.

For more information or reservations, call 17586401 for La Med and Cantina Kahlo, and 17586499 for Thai Lounge, or email rc.bahrz.restaurant.reservations@ritzcarlton.com



COLOURFUL: Cantina Kahlo

UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE AT HILTON

An impressive line-up of promotional activities are available at Hilton Bahrain this month.

Kickstart the day with a sumptuous Breakfast Buffet at Origin Kitchen and Culture, available daily from 6.30am to 10.30am. Priced at BD13 net per person, guests can indulge in a lavish spread of breakfast favourites amidst the elegant ambience of the sixth floor.

Guests are also invited to transport themselves through time and musical eras with the Blast From The Past Friday Brunch, relishing the nostalgic tunes of the 70s, 80s and 90s.

With an extensive spread of delectable dishes and a never-ending flow of beverages, this brunch promises an unparalleled dining experience. Opt for

unlimited beverages at BD39 net or indulge in soft beverages at BD28 net.

Following brunch, the festivities continue at Cocoluna Lounge.

Every Friday from 5pm to 7pm, guests can partake in the After Brunch Offer, featuring an endless pour of specified premium drink for BD10. With a live DJ setting the mood, patrons can unwind and revel in the lively atmosphere.

Wednesdays, from 7pm to 12am, mark Ladies Night, offering three complimentary selected beverages for female guests. For bookings and more information on Origin and Cocoluna, call 33692013.

Elevate evenings to new heights at Block 44 on the 44th floor, where Hilton Bahrain presents the Afro Series, a celebration of Afro beats and rhythms every Wednesday and Thursday from 9pm to 2am.

Thursday nights also feature Happy Hour from 9pm to 11pm, offering 50 per cent off on selected beverages. Ladies can enjoy two complimentary beverages during Salsa Nights every Friday from 9pm to 2am.

For more information or reservations, call Block 44 at 33690081.



FLAVOURS: Hilton Bahrain

STEAK FIESTA



ROYAL Golf Club Bahrain invites guests to indulge in two delightful dining experiences.

Explore the ultimate steak sensation at the Steak Fiesta, every Wednesday starting at 6pm. Delight in premium-quality steaks expertly crafted by their talented chefs for a culinary extravaganza that will leave your taste buds ecstatic. Live music and a charming atmosphere complete the evening.

Immerse yourself in the regal ambience of the Royal Tea at Links, where delightful treats and savoury temptations await amidst panoramic views of the greens. Available daily from 11.30am to 7pm. Choose from two packages: BD13 net for two guests inclusive of tea and coffee, or BD17 net for two guests inclusive of tea, coffee and two glasses of premium bubbles.

For more information or reservations, call 39007546.

RELAX AND STYLE AT FO

An impressive world of luxury and indulgence is on offer at Four Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay this month.

Guests can kickstart their weekends with the Lazy Breakfast at Bahrain Bay Kitchen, a laid-back affair featuring an extensive spread of breakfast favourites, specialty egg dishes, Arabic mezze, and more. Held every Saturday from April 13, the breakfast feast runs from 11.30am to 3pm, offering guests the chance to savour a diverse array of flavours. With a price of BD20 per person, children aged six to 12 enjoy 50 per cent savings whilst children under six dine free, it's an opportunity not to be missed.

For those seeking an elegant afternoon indulgence, the Bay View Lounge beckons with its Traditional Afternoon Tea.

Guests can enjoy meticulously prepared sandwiches, scones, and artisanal pastries, accompanied by a selection of exquisite teas or coffee. Priced at BD16.5 net per person, it's a chance to relax and unwind in style.

On Fridays, guests can brunch like royalty at CUT by Wolfgang Puck. Executive chef Brian Becher presents a selection of Wolfgang Puck's favourite dishes, served between 12.30pm to 3.30pm.

With the option to enhance the experience with an extended beverage package, priced a la carte, it's the perfect way to kick off the weekend.



TASTY treats



UNWIND IN YOUR SEASONS



Breakfast

For those with a taste for Asian cuisine, re/Asian Cuisine by Wolfgang Puck offers a contemporary twist on traditional favourites. Located on the 50th floor, guests can indulge in signature dishes such as Szechuan Lamb Dumplings and Whole Steamed Sea Bream, amidst stunning interiors.

And for those in need of pampering, The Spa offers the ultimate relaxation experience with its Signature Hammam followed by the Sensory Journey Candle Massage. Available daily from 10am to 10pm, guests can treat themselves to a rejuvenating escape from the everyday.

Prices for the Hammam experience are BD135 on weekdays and BD140 on weekends.

For more information or reservations, call 17115500 or 17115070.



SUSHI: Asian delights

Capturing moments

A former Bahrain resident returned to the kingdom this week to showcase some of her stunning photographs in a one-day photographic exhibition, writes Naman Arora.

Bahrain-loving 13-year-old Soniya Deshpande displayed 150 of her best photographs in her solo exhibition titled *Drawing with Light: A Lens Chronicle*, which took place last Sunday, April 14, at the Bahrain Conference Centre in Diplomatic Area.

"I grew up in Bahrain, and spent almost my entire childhood here before returning to Pune, India, so I thought this would be a good opportunity to reconnect with my friends and family here and showcase some of the photographs I have been taking," she told *GulfWeekly*.

The exhibition was divided into six sections. The 'Qalbi Bahrain' (Arabic for 'My Heart Bahrain') section showcased the photos of the kingdom she had taken during her stay on the island spanning almost a decade.

Meanwhile, 'Diversity in Life' focused on the different people she has met in life so far, ranging from Bahraini potters to Indian fruit-sellers, and more.

In 'Nature's Creation', Soniya captures the beauty of flowers and plants found in her backyard as well as during her travels.

'Shufti Glimpses of Gujarat and Rajasthan' dives deeper into her journeys through the two Indian states with her mother Suvarna and father Sameer.

'Wildlife Whispers' documents the birds, bugs and animals she encountered, some within her own backyard, and some further away, like the Bengal tiger she managed to get a shot of, at the end of a safari tour in Gujarat.

'Ye Hai Mumbai' explores her time in the South Indian city, where she was able to capture both famous



INAUGURATION: Soniya, second from left, with her mother Suvarna, left, Indian Ambassador Vinod K Jacob, second from right, and American Mission Hospital general practitioner Dr Babu Ramachandran, right



TOWERING: One of Soniya's shots of the Lal Mahal in Rajasthan, India

monuments and lesser known neighbourhoods.

And finally, the section titled 'Uranophilia' is dedicated to her love of taking shots of skies at different times and from different angles.

"All these images were taken using my Samsung M21 to help me further hone the craft, but I would love to upgrade my equipment at some point, although using a professional DSLR would sacrifice the mobility and quick access that using my phone has given me," she added.

"Some of these pictures were actually taken while I was being driven somewhere, so having a light camera device came in quite handy!"

The former student of New Millennium School, currently studying in Grade 8 at Pune's DriveChange Learning and Resource Centre, captured all the photos within the last

three to four years.

In 2022, she published her first book, a pictorial journey titled *My First Bus Trip* based on her childhood experiences. The book was launched in the kingdom by then-Indian Ambassador Piyush Srivastava in December 2022.

Soniya plans to continue pursuing photography as a passion, though she is clear she doesn't want to make it a profession because 'that might take the fun out of it!'



MOULD: A shot of a Bahraini potter at work

CELEBRATING ARAB CINEMA

A ROADSHOW presenting five Arab short films is set to be staged in Bahrain.

Founded and managed by Emirati actor and director Nawaf Al Janahi, Black Box Cinema is focused on presenting Arab short films, spreading film culture to new circles, and giving different audiences the chance to come closer to Arab cinema.

Its past editions have showcased 106 short films to more than 11,500 viewers, making it one of the most attended film showcases in the UAE.

The seventh edition will go to different cities in the UAE and abroad including Bahrain to present five Arab short films that were previously screened. The films are subtitled in English, and admission is free to the public.

The showcase will be held at Bahrain Cinema Club in Juffair on Wednesday, April 24, where the films will be screened one after the other from 7pm.

The films include: *Big Day* (Egypt, 2022) directed by Ahmed Samir, which runs for 15 minutes and revolves around a wedding that is turned upside down after rumours spread that the groom is

planning to run away; *Litre of Gas* (Egypt, 2022) directed by Ibrahim Rami, which runs for 17 minutes and focuses on an unemployed man who goes on a journey searching for gasoline for his car amidst a nation-wide rise in oil prices. He ends up finding himself instead, exploring the socioeconomic injustices that put him in this situation in the first place.

Long Trip (Iraq, Belgium, 2021) directed by Ali Kadhum runs for 13 minutes and tells the tale of Dries, who after his father's death, must make a fundamental decision to either cremate the body or return it to be buried in his birth country as tradition subscribes.

This World Is Wonderful (Kuwait, 2021) directed by Hmoud Faris, which runs for 13 minutes, shows a world where there is motherhood, childhood, a knife, and a key; and *Unveiling Selma* (UAE, 2022) directed by Mariam Al Serkal and Maaria Sayed, which runs for 15 minutes, follows the life of 35-year-old Selma who, between house chores, a neglectful husband, and an innocent daughter, decides to free herself and rediscover her womanhood.

For more details, call 17725959.

Pulse of Pop

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

A 'SWIFT' RETURN TO THE STUDIO!

JUST six months after the release of her critically acclaimed 10th album *Midnights*, Taylor Swift is poised to drop her 11th studio album, *The Tortured Poets Department* tomorrow (April 19).

Announced as a surprise during her acceptance speech for Best Pop Vocal Album at the 2024 Grammy Awards, the record marks a swift return for the prolific singer-songwriter and promises a new chapter in her ever-evolving sound.

Taylor conceived the album shortly after finishing work on *Midnights* and continued developing the former during her ongoing Eras Tour.

With a concept fashioned after the five stages of grief, *The Tortured Poets Department* is her self-proclaimed 'lifeline' album — a product of imperative songwriting.

It consists of 16 songs, featuring collaborations with the American rapper Post Malone and the English indie rock band Florence and the Machine.

The physical editions of the album will include bonus tracks.

The title hints at a thematic exploration of vulnerability and artistic expression, potentially drawing inspiration from literary figures known for their passionate and often melancholic works.

"I've been working on *Tortured Poets* since right after I turned in *Midnights*," Taylor revealed during a concert stop in Tokyo.

"It's a very personal album, and I poured a lot of my heart and soul into it."

This introspective nature aligns with the subtle clues Taylor has scattered online.

Her social media bio currently reads, 'All's fair in love and poetry', further fuelling speculation of a thematically cohesive project.

While known for her genre-bending versatility, some reports suggest a return to her signature pop sound with a



PROLIFIC: Taylor announces the new album after receiving the Best Pop Vocal Album award at the Grammys.

touch of lyrical maturity.

Post Malone features on *Fortnight* and the English indie rock band Florence and the Machine appears on the *Florida!!!* track.

Four physical editions of the album, each titled after and containing a different bonus track, namely *The Manuscript*, *The Bolter*, *The Albatross*, and *The Black Dog*, have been made available for purchase.

Apple Music, a major partner in the album's rollout, has teased a 'carefully curated experience', with cryptic

changes appearing in Taylor's playlists leading up to the release.

The arrival of *The Tortured Poets Department* comes at a significant juncture in Taylor's career. Fresh off the success of her re-recorded albums, the project signifies a return to original music, potentially solidifying a new creative direction.

Industry analysts predict the album to be a commercial juggernaut, capitalising on the fervent loyalty of her fanbase, the 'Swifties', who are already dissecting

every social media post and interview for clues.

Pre-orders for the album shattered records, with exclusive merchandise bundles and limited-edition vinyl pressings further fuelling the anticipation.

Like every Taylor Swift album, *The Tortured Poets Department* is more than just that; it's set to be a cultural event.

It promises to be a deeply personal and artistically ambitious project, captivating both longtime fans and those new to her musical prowess.

WEB OF DECEITS

CRITICALLY acclaimed author Clare Mackintosh is set to release *A Game of Lies*, the second installment in her Ffion Morgan series, next Tuesday (April 23).

This highly anticipated novel promises a heart-pounding exploration of deception, murder, and the unsettling underbelly of reality television.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Welsh mountains, *A Game of Lies* follows seven strangers who believe they've signed up for a classic survival competition show.

However, as the cameras begin rolling and the games commence, a chilling truth emerges — this is no ordinary competition. Instead, the contestants are forced to confront their deepest secrets, with potentially devastating consequences.

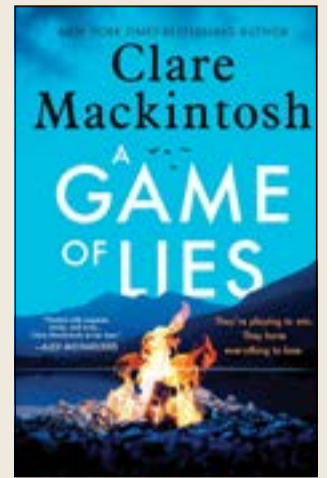
When one contestant mysteriously disappears, suspicion and fear engulf the isolated location, prompting the arrival of Detective Inspector Ffion Morgan.

Established in Clare's successful debut novel, *The Last Party*, Ffion is known for her sharp intellect and unwavering resolve.

"Ffion is a character who continues to evolve with each book," Clare said in a recent interview.

"She's flawed, but she's also incredibly strong and determined. I enjoy putting her through the wringer and seeing how she emerges on the other side."

In this new case, she faces a unique challenge, since the remote setting, fractured relationships among the



remaining contestants, and ever-present cameras create a complex web of alibis and hidden motives.

Each contestant harbours a dark secret, making them both suspects and potential targets.

Beyond the thrilling whodunit aspect, the book delves into the psychological manipulation and voyeuristic tendencies inherent in reality

television. Clare masterfully crafts a narrative where the line between truth and manipulation blurs, leaving readers questioning the very nature of what they see on screen.

Early critical reception for the novel has been overwhelmingly positive.

Reviewers commend her ability to create a cast of compelling characters, each with their own hidden depths. The fast-paced plot keeps readers on the edge of their seats, with shocking twists and turns that will leave them breathless.



Clare

SNYDER IS BACK WITH EPIC SEQUEL

SCIENCE fiction geeks are in for a treat this weekend, as Zack Snyder's highly anticipated *Rebel Moon: Part Two: The Scargiver* is set to hit Netflix tomorrow (April 19).

Following the success of the first part *A Child of Fire*, this second installment promises to raise the stakes as Kora

and her band of warriors face off against the tyrannical forces of the Motherworld.

Picking up where the first film left off, *The Scargiver* finds Kora and the surviving warriors on the moon of Veldt.

This once peaceful village has become their new home, and they must now defend it from the relentless pursuit of the

Motherworld.

The warriors will be forced to confront their pasts and find strength in their newfound unity to stand against the overwhelming force.

The cast boasts a stellar lineup, with Sofia Boutella reprising her role as Kora alongside returning stars like Djimon Hounsou, Ed Skrein, and Michiel Huisman.



SCI-FI: The adventurers of the new series

Motoring Weekly

The top motoring and motorsport news

Shanghai spectacle

THE engines are revving and crowds are roaring as Formula 1 prepares for a much-anticipated return to the Shanghai International Circuit this weekend. It's been a long five years since Lewis Hamilton took the checkered flag in China, and the hiatus has been filled with twists and turns both on and off the track. A number of key F1 stories are taking centre-stage this week in China and here's what you need to know.

HOMETOWN HERO

This race weekend holds particular significance for China's first ever F1 driver, Zhou Guanyu. The wait has finally ended for Zhou, who will get the chance to race in front of a home crowd at a sold-out Shanghai International Circuit. While Zhou debuted in 2022, this will be his first experience racing on home soil, making it a truly special occasion for both the driver and the Chinese fans.

RED BULL VS FERRARI

While Red Bull has dominated recent seasons under the current regulations, the competition is starting to breathe down their necks.

The Japanese Grand Prix showcased this shift, with Ferrari putting on a much stronger showing than in previous races.

The gap between Max Verstappen in pole position and the rest of the field in 2023 was significantly wider than this year, with five different teams – Red Bull, McLaren, Ferrari, Aston Martin, and Mercedes – all represented in the top seven finishers.

This year's race in Suzuka also saw a strategic battle unfold between Ferrari and Red Bull, with Carlos Sainz potentially challenging Sergio Perez for second place if not for strategic decisions by the Scuderia.

The fact that Ferrari

HOME BOY: Zhou set to race in his home circuit for the first time ever



can compete on a track historically favouring Red Bull bodes well for the upcoming races, particularly in Shanghai, which is known to be more front-limited in terms of performance.

While Red Bull will undoubtedly aim to maintain their edge, the tightening competition suggests that fans can expect thrilling battles for victory throughout the season.

STALLING ARROWS

The Japanese Grand Prix weekend was a mixed bag for Mercedes. Lewis Hamilton, in particular, experienced a rollercoaster

of emotions. Early promise on Friday faded in the race, with Hamilton finishing a disappointing ninth due to a combination of damage and strategy calls.

Teammate George Russell wasn't much better, crossing the line in seventh.

Following the race, Toto Wolff acknowledged that Mercedes was in a 'rebuild phase' and struggled to pinpoint why the car wasn't delivering the expected lap time gains.

However, there's a glimmer of hope.

The team has confirmed that the car is generating the targeted downforce levels on



HIATUS: Racing action at the 2019 China Grand Prix

track, but it's not translating into the desired performance.

Wolff remains optimistic, viewing this as a positive step towards unlocking the car's full potential.

Mercedes will be looking to make significant progress based on data analysis back at the factory ahead of the race in Shanghai.



COMMITTED: Alonso set to continue with Aston Martin

ALONSO

One of the biggest stories brewing even before the wheels touched down in Shanghai is Fernando Alonso's commitment to Aston Martin. The Spaniard has signed a lengthy contract,

which he describes as 'the longest I've ever signed in my career', keeping him with the team until at least the end of the 2026 season. This move not only solidifies Alonso's future in the sport but also opens doors for a potential championship run in his twilight years. With Honda joining forces with Aston Martin in 2026, and considering Alonso's current performance, it wouldn't be a surprise to see him challenge for the title and potentially become the second-oldest F1 champion behind the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio.

DRIVER MARKET STILL UP IN THE AIR

With several driver contracts expiring at the end of 2024, the driver market remains a hot topic. Daniel Ricciardo, for example, needs to deliver strong performances to secure his seat for 2025. His future, along with the futures of many other drivers, will likely be decided in the coming weeks and months, adding another layer of intrigue to the upcoming races.

The return to Shanghai promises to be a special event, not just for the fans eager to see their favorite drivers back, but for the entire paddock, who are waiting to see how the teams position themselves for the remainder of the season.

THE 2025 CALENDAR

With just four races completed in the 2024 season, talk of the 2025 calendar might seem premature. However, the schedule was recently confirmed, revealing a significant change to the opening races. To accommodate Ramadan, which falls in March next year, the races in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia will be pushed back to the fourth and fifth rounds, respectively. The Bahrain Grand Prix weekend is set to take place from April 11 to 13, 2025.

This shift hands the coveted season opener slot back to Australia. China will be the second race on the calendar, followed by Japan.



PITTED: The Silver Arrows need to make significant changes to stay competitive this year



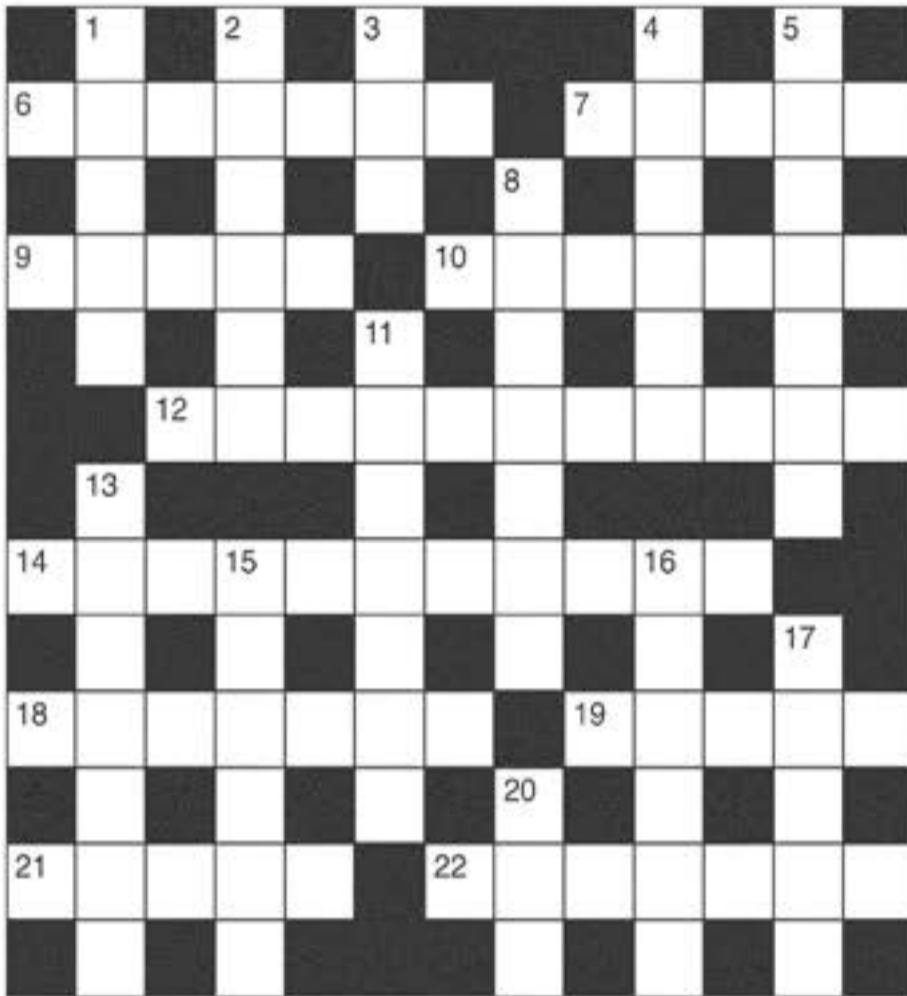
UNCERTAIN: Ricciardo ready to prove he has what it takes to continue racing in F1

Time Out



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crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

- 6. Set free (7)
- 7. Board game (5)
- 9. Lukewarm (5)
- 10. Intricate (7)
- 12. Vengeance (11)
- 14. Result (11)
- 18. Let (7)
- 19. Irritate (5)
- 21. Step (5)
- 22. Opposite (7)

DOWN

- 1. At no time (5)
- 2. Edit (6)
- 3. Employ (3)
- 4. Floor covering (6)
- 5. Sovereign (7)
- 8. Shoe-mender (7)
- 11. Lawn game (7)
- 13. Deserted (7)
- 15. Distinctive phrase (6)
- 16. Annul (6)
- 17. Lift (5)
- 20. Marry (3)

who, what, where, when

WHO ... did Dr John Reid succeed as the UK's Secretary of State for Health in 2003?
WHAT ... US label released *A Christmas Record* in 1981 featuring The Waitresses and Cristina?
WHERE ... in Africa is the Kingdom of Swaziland?
WHEN ... did Cliff Thorburn win the World Snooker Championship?
WHO ... played Flashman in the 1971 television series *Tom Brown's Schooldays*?
WHAT ... rock group released the album *Selling England by the Pound*?
WHERE ... was Leopold Bloom's house in Dublin in James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*?
WHEN ... did Mauritania gain independence from France?

just so

enutrof

fast ward ward ward ward

bb or  bb



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

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

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

darn tough sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 3 Endeavour; 8 Loot; 9 Patronage; 10 Covert; 11 Blood; 14 Divan; 15 Rest; 16 Gross; 18 Team; 20 Twice; 21 Leash; 24 Behind; 25 Ephemeral; 26 Turn; 27 Sterility.

Down: 1 Elucidate; 2 Convivial; 4 Neat; 5 Enrol; 6 Vendor; 7 Urge; 9 Prong; 11 Booth; 12 Delicious; 13 Attendant; 17 Steel; 19 Meteor; 22 Steal; 23 Spot; 24 Bait.

JUST SO: Half a world away, Big Ben, Archbishop, Down to earth.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN:

David Baddiel; Gloria Grahame; Co. Clare; 2005; Lee Marvin; Sessanta; Northamptonshire; 1983.

Darn Tough Sudoku

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