



PHOTOGRAPHY REPORT
By MELISSA NAZARETH
melissa@gdnmedia.bh

BAHRAIN-BASED shutterbug George Raphael has unveiled his first 3D photography exhibition, featuring 20 stunning pieces that pay homage to the kingdom.

The showcase – *Anaglyph Photography Exhibition: A Stereoscopic Journey into Bahrain's Soul* – is currently open for viewing and is a tribute to what the 44-year-old has called home for the last 16 years.

“Through this exhibition I am trying to translate my feelings for this country,” the professional photographer told *Gulf Weekly*.

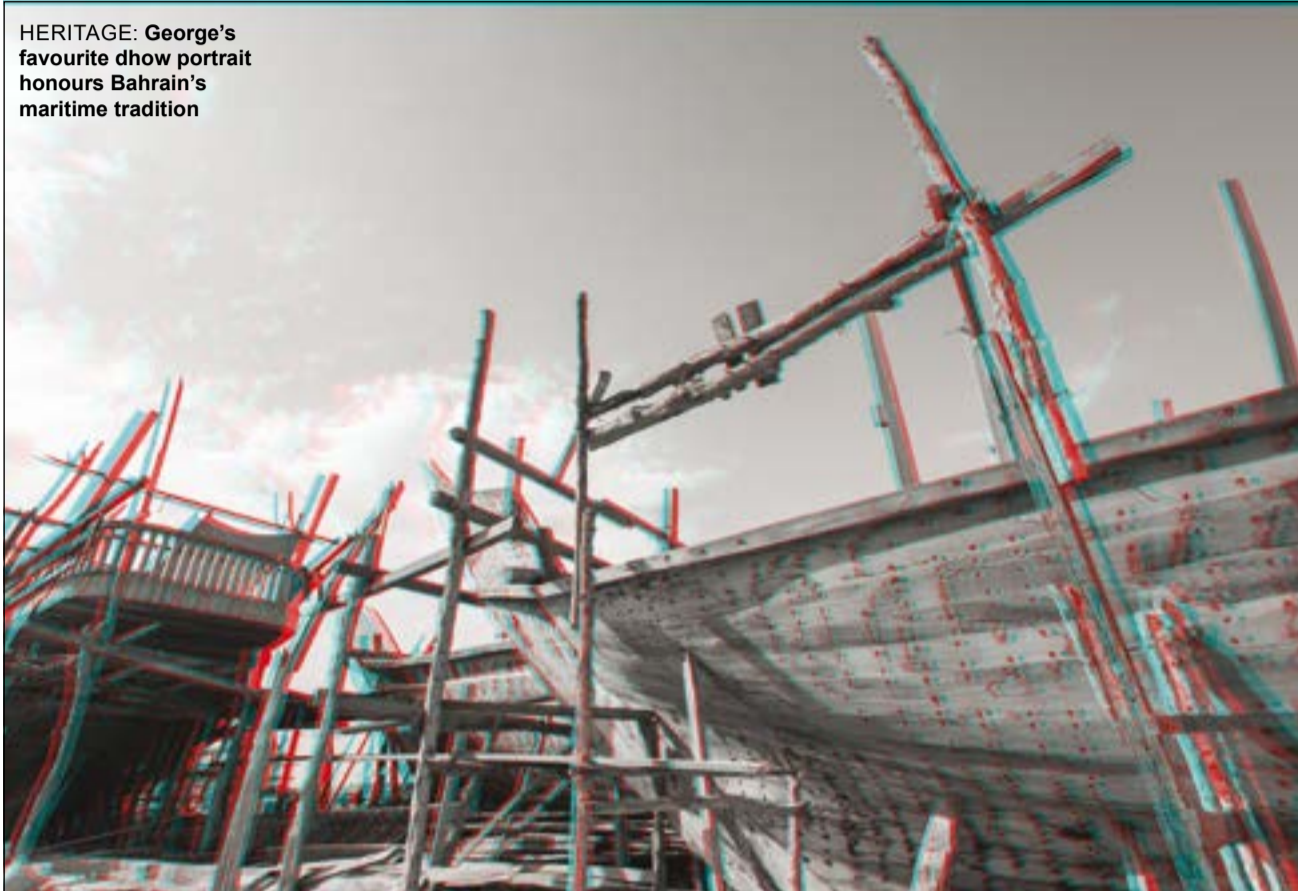
“This is my first 3D exhibition, and I believe it is the first time anyone has captured Bahrain in 3D. These images were taken between 2023 and 2025,” he added.

“Anaglyph is a stereoscopic technique that involves capturing two photographs using a specialised camera rig and then digitally superimposing them to create the final image. To view this image, special 3D glasses are required.”

Some of the iconic monuments and heritage brought alive in the exhibition include the Bahrain Fort, the Khamis Mosque and the kingdom's maritime tradition.

“The black-and-white image of a dhow is my favourite, as it may evoke memories of my hometown in Kochi, Kerala, where there is also a boatyard near my house,” said the Juffair resident, who lives with his wife Hima Joy, Brainobrain Bahrain director, and daughter Olive, a grade six student of Bahrain Indian School.

HERITAGE: George's favourite dhow portrait honours Bahrain's maritime tradition



Bahrain in a new dimension

George fell in love with photography during his high school years. He decided to pursue a degree in the field, which catapulted his career.

“I pursued a degree in photography at Shari Academy in Mumbai. Following my graduation in 2005, I joined one of the leading publications in Dubai.

“In 2009, I was transferred to Bahrain, where I established my media production company in

2014. Our company specialises in commercial and corporate photography and videography services,” he added.

Not one to rest on his laurels, George is currently engaged in the development of another series and aspires to exhibit it by the end of this year.

The showcase runs at Downtown Rotana in Manama until August-end. Entry is free and visitors will be provided 3D glasses at the venue.



ARTIST:
George



RAPT: Visitors sporting 3D glasses engrossed in a photograph



ICONIC: Bahrain Fort in all its glory showcased at the exhibition



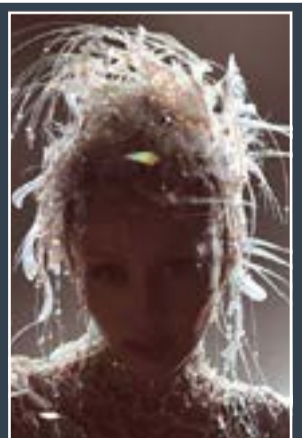
GET INFLUENCED
New award ceremony
SEE PAGE 2



FLAVOUR ON THE ROOF
El Chapo review
SEE PAGE 3



LA LA LEISURE
Eat, fun, repeat
SEE PAGES 4-5



PULSE OF POP
Music, books & more
SEE PAGE 6



TINSEL TOWN: Priyanka, left, with Indian TV superstar Vivian Dsena, fourth from left, and TIAH students during a past event staged by the institute

Making an impact

BAHRAIN is set to stage the first edition of the International Influencers Awards tonight, May 29, where digital innovators and content creators from across the Gulf will be honoured in a dazzling ceremony, writes Melissa Nazareth.

The gala event is being presented by TIAH, a globally recognised soft-skills training institute in Seef District, and will witness 28 finalists across 14 categories compete for titles spanning beauty, wellness, education, comedy, arts and more.

Two nominees have been shortlisted for each of the segments in the awards, which are audited by an independent audit firm. The evening will also feature other entertainment, food, and drink, offering guests a lovely time.

In addition to recognising influencers and the work they do, the awards also seek to promote Bahrain as a major destination for tourism and business.

"We're thrilled to be staging an event of this type and scale for the first time in Bahrain and absolutely see this becoming an annual event," TIAH founder Priyanka Jassal told *GulfWeekly*.

"We want to showcase Bahrain's ongoing efforts in digital transformation and our commitment to

aligning with the national development goals.

"This year, we're also placing a special focus on humanitarian impact. As part of the evening, we will be honouring Bahraini digital voices who are making a real difference in society and using their platforms to inspire positive change.

"We've really focused on being inclusive – our finalists, shortlisted from more than 200 applications, feature creative talents from 15 different nationalities, including Bahraini, Egyptian, Argentine, Italian, Swedish, Kazakhstani, Pakistani, Indian, American, German, and more," the 37-year-old added.

The Indian expatriate has extensive hospitality experience specialising in the airline industry. After moving to Bahrain with her husband six years ago, she was keen to pursue her passion, which led her to open her own institute.

"I started my career as a cabin crew and since then have nurtured the dream of establishing my own training institute in hospitality. TIAH was born of this passion," the award-winning entrepreneur, who has travelled to more than 60 countries, noted.

According to Priyanka, the global exposure she received deeply influenced her perspective and inspired



GO GETTER: Priyanka

her to help others grow personally and professionally.

"I realised that personality development isn't just about image—it's about self-awareness, empathy, and the ability to connect with others meaningfully," added the recipient of Asia's Top 100 Influential Women Awards' Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2021.

Priyanka hopes to continue engaging with inspiring people in Bahrain and beyond. She also has plans to help individuals from underprivileged groups develop their confidence, and expand TIAH's existing programmes to include skills like emotional intelligence and digital communication.

The International Influencers Awards will be hosted at the Ramee Grand Hotel in Seef. Doors open at 7pm and tickets are available on Platinumlist.



SCREENS HAVE DULLED OUR ABILITY TO TRULY FEEL AND CONNECT, WRITES GULFWEEKLY'S COLUMNIST PREETY PRAVEEN AS SHE EXPLORES THIS MONTH'S SPEAK YOUR MIND TOPIC 'HOW OVEREXPOSURE TO GADGETS, ESPECIALLY SOCIAL MEDIA, AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH'.



Stepping into the real world

THERE was a time when real friendships, quality time with family, and taking breaks from work were considered the most valuable aspects of life. Today, these meaningful moments are often overshadowed by phones, laptops and other gadgets.

Charging a phone seems more urgent than talking to the person next to us.

We are more concerned with checking the online status of someone we barely know than asking a loved one how they're doing.

Somehow, knowing a celebrity's daily schedule feels more satisfying than planning our own goals or spending time with those who truly matter.

How did this virtual world take over our reality? Or are we the ones who gave it permission to invade our lives? What should matter more, chasing 'likes' on social media or sharing a hot cup of coffee with someone who genuinely cares about us?

The truth is, this digital shift hasn't just changed our routines, it has reshaped our emotions.

The depth in our bonds, the grief of losing a friend, the sorrow of a breakup, or the pain of parting with a loved one has lost its emotional impact. Screens have dulled our ability to truly feel and connect.

Those late-night heart-

to-heart conversations have now been replaced by scrolling through reels or gaming on our phones. Our excessive workloads have chained us to laptops, denying us moments of physical warmth and connection.

And yet, without guilt or awareness, we've comfortably adapted to this digital lifestyle — we even seem happy about it.

But we must pause and reflect: our real world should be built around real people and relationships. In moments of crisis, it's our loved ones who will stand beside us, not our phones or social media apps. A warm hug, a reassuring touch, a caring glance, or a few kind words will always offer more support than any screen ever could.

We must remember gadgets and apps were created to serve us, not the other way around. Let's ensure they remain tools we control, not forces that control us.

Make time not just for yourself, but for your family and friends too. Be present in the real world. Cherish the laughter, warmth and comfort that come from genuine human connection.

After all, we are human and with that comes a social responsibility to care for each other with compassion, attention and love.

(Preety is a psychologist and author.)

CLASSY: Tropical-inspired minimalist interiors



MAIN: The Peri-Peri chicken was a stand-out at the brunch



SPREAD: A selection of starters served up by a staff member



It's Sinaloa season!

GOURMET REPORT
By NAMAN ARORA
naman@gdnmedia.bh

THERE'S something about a themed brunch that lures you in — the promise of curated menus, good company, and maybe a cheeky excuse to dress up a little.

So when we were invited to El Chapo Lounge and Restaurant's kick-off of its brunch season with an 'All White' rooftop affair in the heart of Adliya's Block 338, I was intrigued.

But what I didn't anticipate was how this brunch would leave such a lasting taste, despite the sweltering 2pm Bahraini sun.

As we stepped out of the elevator onto the rooftop, Che Ballenger and Baba Sounds' electronic beats greeted us, setting the tone for the afternoon.

Our table was right in the middle of the action, and the fantastic staff of El Chapo appeared, almost out of thin air, to get our drink orders.

And just a short while later, the food, which frankly was the star of the afternoon, started flowing out.

El Chapo's Sinaloa brunch menu is structured but generous, offering a range of starters, appetisers, mains, and dessert.

Nachos and dip, a fantastic Sinaloa salad, maple sriracha shrimp, lemon pepper wings, sliders and chicken tenders started off our feast, followed by mains of Peri Peri chicken



PLAYFUL TOUCHES: To add to the nostalgic feel, the organisers, Dallah Promotions, paid attention to little details, like a cotton candy machine



VIBES: A live electric violinist added accents to the music and got people dancing

and beef, as well as a humble bun toast caramel for dessert.

Among the spread, three items stood head and shoulders above the rest for me.

The Peri Peri chicken, served as a main, was smoky, tender, and just spicy enough to wake up your palate without overwhelming it — a true standout.

The lemon pepper wings hit that perfect balance of zesty and crisp — tangy, finger-licking bites that vanished from our table

almost as fast as they arrived.

And then there was the Sinaloa salad, a refreshing plate of greens, shrimp, and citrusy dressing that somehow managed to feel both indulgent and clean at once, cutting through the richness of the heavier dishes perfectly.

It was clear El Chapo's kitchen knows how to cater to a crowd, offering textures and flavours that kept things interesting across courses.

Even the dessert, a

STARTERS: The Sinaloa salad



comforting bun toast caramel, gave the meal a sweet, slightly nostalgic ending.

As for the setting, the rooftop location is certainly a vibe — you get views, sunshine, and a sense of elevation, both literal and social.

The interiors, once you step inside, are tasteful — minimal yet polished, with tropical accents that tie in with the Sinaloa theme.

However at 2pm in late May, it sometimes felt like

we were brunching inside a preheated oven, but El Chapo's customer service once again sparkled, as the team improvised with cute hand fans, while they kicked the air conditioning and the music into top gear.

As the sun went down, and the temperatures dropped, the party really kicked off with Che and Baba keeping the energy flowing throughout the afternoon.

All in all, El Chapo's brunch is off to a flavourful start this season.

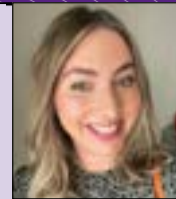
If you're chasing bold bites and a lively afternoon out with friends, it's worth checking out. Make sure you don't miss the Peri-Peri chicken or those wings, paired with a chilled selected beverage of your choice.

The package with soft drinks is priced at BD25net, and there are two selected beverage packages, priced at BD30net and BD35net. The brunch runs from 1pm to 5pm.

For reservations, contact 37738838.

Leisure Scene

What's on guide by
Jayne Houghton



PRETTY ON A PLATE:
Coffee and cake



STEAK YOUR CLAIM TO LUXURY AT RITZ

GUESTS can treat themselves to an unforgettable evening with Tomahawk Tuesdays at Plums in The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain.

The restaurant offers a luxurious dining affair that's sure to delight the senses. Enjoy a perfectly grilled Angus tomahawk steak expertly paired with a premium bottle of grape beverage, every Tuesday, from 7pm to 11pm, priced at BD69.

● Cantina Kahlo hosts Saturday Brunch Fiesta, a lively brunch experience bursting with bold Mexican flavours and authentic dishes.

Diners can immerse themselves in the festive atmosphere as an energetic mariachi band provides

the perfect soundtrack to the culinary journey. It's available every Saturday, from 1pm to 4pm and is priced at BD25 with soft beverages and BD35 with selected beverages.

● Meanwhile, Ritz Gourmet Lounge will introduce a curated selection of signature pastries and sweet delicacies in June, designed to awaken the palate in every bite.

● Nirvana presents The Great Indian Thali, offering diners a vibrant Indian dining experience with a traditional thali featuring a variety of dishes crafted to perfection. From aromatic curries and tender tandoori specialties to fragrant rice, each platter presents a feast of colours and flavours. Guests can pair their

meal with a refreshing glass of lassi, a traditional Indian yoghurt-based drink, for the perfect touch. Available Sundays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays from 12pm to 3pm and 7pm to 11pm, the feast is priced at BD24 per person including a lassi.

● The Lobby Lounge offers Sweet Duo Delights, featuring an exclusive Coffee and Cake Combo that provides the perfect blend of warmth and sweetness.

Guests can enjoy select coffees paired with the finest cakes, each crafted to provide a moment of pleasure. Available Sunday to Wednesday from 10am to 4pm at BD9 per combo.

For reservations, call 17586499 or email rc.bahz.restaurant.reservations@ritzcarlton.com.



FOUR Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay presents an exceptional collection of dining experiences designed to celebrate the season's finest flavours until the end of May.

Embrace the sophisticated Italian custom of Aperitivo at Bay View Lounge, available daily from 11am to 11.30pm. This à la carte experience showcases expertly curated sharing boards featuring Italy's premium cheeses and finest cured meats. The selections are thoughtfully paired with refreshing beverages, creating the perfect atmosphere for relaxation within the lounge's refined setting.

● Bay View Lounge transforms the classic afternoon tea into an elevated daily ritual with the Blossom Afternoon Tea Experience, served from 12pm to 9pm. It begins with savoury selections including bresaola accompanied by cream cheese and fig jam, stuffed zucchini flowers filled with salmon and avocado, and delicate lemon saffron prawns enhanced with fresh mint.

The sweet course presents artful creations such as a light Japanese cheesecake topped with kumquat marmalade, an elegant matcha and Madagascar vanilla choux, and a rich Guanaja dark chocolate tart brightened with yuzu.

Freshly baked scones arrive with clotted cream and house-made artisanal jams to complete this refined offering.

Choose from premium Jing tea selections at BD22, or enhance your experience with the Royal Afternoon Tea at BD26, which includes a specially crafted mocktail to complement the delicate flavours.

● Tomorrow, from 1pm to 4pm, Bahrain



COLOURFUL: Latin American Brunch

CELEBRATE THE FINEST FLAVOURS OF THE SEASON

Bay Kitchen will host the Latin American Brunch Celebration. The culinary journey begins with vibrant appetisers including the restaurant's acclaimed Mexican Salad, a colourful three-bean salad dressed in smoky chipotle, and savoury Beef Salpicon.

The interactive live ceviche station features fresh Leche de Tigre and innovative Nikkei-style preparations, while the barbecue station offers sizzling specialties

like Red Snapper Veracruz, Buffalo Chicken Wings, and tender Dry Ancho Chilli Braised Short Ribs.

Traditional favourites include freshly made tacos, empanadas, and enchiladas, all served with authentic accompaniments. The sweet finale features Latin desserts including creamy Flan de Queso, indulgent Tres Leches, and crispy traditional Churros. Live Latin music creates an authentic atmosphere while children enjoy their dedicated buffet, creative face painting, exciting piñata activities, and rotating weekly entertainment featuring treasure hunts and talented balloon artists.

Pricing is set at BD35 including soft beverages or BD48 with the selected beverage package. Children under six years dine complimentary, while those aged six to 12 receive a generous 50 per cent discount.

For reservations and additional information, call 17115500 or 17115044.

INTERCONTINENTAL Bahrain invites guests to experience a curated collection of exceptional dining offerings all month long.

Celebrate Eid Al Adha in style at Selections' special Eid Brunch on June 7. Gather family and friends for a festive culinary affair held at the Regency Tent from 1pm to 4.30pm.

The buffet features an array of flavourful dishes in a cultural setting, enhanced by live Arabic music from Zeina Fares, a fun mascot appearance, and a dedicated Kids' Corner filled with games and activities. Priced at BD20net for adults with soft beverages, BD26 with select beverages, and BD10 for children under 12.

Experience The Hook seafood night at the Regency Tent, from 6.30pm to 10.30pm. Guests can indulge in fresh ocean fare with interactive live stations, signature dishes and refreshing drinks. Priced at BD24net for soft beverages and BD32net with bottomless selected drinks.

A refined Friday brunch at Legendz SteakHouse offers buffet stations, à la carte mains, and live entertainment for a relaxed yet upscale dining experience. Live vocals by Alona and DJ sets complete the ambience. Available every Friday from 12pm to 4pm. Priced at BD28net with soft beverages or BD38net with unlimited selected beverages.

Children under six dine free; ages six to 12 enjoy 50 per cent off.

Float into your morning at Elements with Your Floating Happiness, a picturesque breakfast for two served poolside in the heart of Manama.

Perfect for a serene escape or special celebration, this luxurious start to the day is available daily from 9am to 12pm. Priced at BD19net for two guests.

For more information, contact 36967701.

Leisure Scene

Weekly Entertainment



SHOWSTOPPER:
Grilled Angus tomahawk
steak at Plums

CELEBRATE Eid Al Adha with a special Eid ghhozi offering at Sheraton Bahrain Hotel.

Perfect for gatherings of 10 to 15 people, the Ghhozi Family Feast includes a selection of delicious cold and hot mezze, a whole lamb ghhozi, fragrant rice, and delightful desserts.

Available for the three days of Eid, it is priced BD286net for the whole feast and BD196net for just the ghhozi – takeaway orders only. Bookings must be made at least one day in advance. Place your order today by calling 17533533 or WhatsApp 38885431, or email Dining.bahsi@sheraton.com.

● The newly opened Braserio Atlántico invites you to indulge in a unique blend of Argentine culinary roots. Authentic dishes cooked using traditional wood fire techniques await. Savour the curated beverage menu, brought alive with native grapes and exclusive producers from Argentina and beyond, daily at the rooftop venue; the lounge is open from 4pm to 2am and the restaurant from 7pm to 11pm. For bookings, call 17517715 or Whatsapp 38885482 or email reservations.brasero@sheraton.com.

EXTRAVAGANT:
Ghozi Family
Feast



AN EXQUISITE EID FEAST

● Make your events special with delicious Sheraton cakes. Starting next month, indulge in 12 varieties of scrumptious artisan creations.

● Get ready for a flavour-packed adventure at The Wild Brunch every Friday, from 12.30pm to 5pm.

Indulge in premium shareable cuisine and sip on punchy handcrafted beverages while live entertainment electrifies the atmosphere. The offer is priced BD36net and BD46net for the selected beverage

package. Ladies enjoy a special rate of BD23. A free-flow premium bubbly package costs BD186net per person.

● Wild also serves a daily three-course special meal, with a changing menu featuring flavours from around the globe, including Spanish, Asian, British, Italian, Peruvian, and more. The offer runs Sunday to Thursday, from 12pm to 3pm

and is priced at BD10.5net including homemade iced tea.

● Experience the vibrant flavours of Persia at Golestan Persian Grill. Tuck into authentic dishes, from fragrant kebabs to house specialties. The restaurant is open daily from 12pm to 3pm and 7pm to 11pm; and on weekends from 12pm to 4pm and 7pm to 11pm.

For bookings, call 17533533 or WhatsApp 38885409.

FESTIVE DELIGHTS



LET'S ROLL:
Sushi to savour



PICTURE PERFECT:
Floating breakfast by the
poolside

ODD COUPLE ON STAGE

GET ready for a night of laughter as the Manama Theatre Club brings Neil Simon's classic comedy *The Odd Couple*, to the stage at the British Club in Um Al Hassam tomorrow, May 30, and Saturday, May 31.

The play surrounds the hilarious and calamitous cohabitation of two polar-opposite personalities: the slovenly, easygoing sportswriter Oscar Madison and the obsessively neat,

neurotic news-writer Felix Ungar. The result is a side-splitting exploration of friendship, frustration, and the everyday absurdities of human relationships.

Tickets for this must-see production are priced at BD8.500 for Brit Club members and BD10 for general admission. They are available for purchase on Platinumlist.

For more information, call 17728245

FOOD AND FUN AT DILMUN

THE Dilmun Club in Saar has a calendar packed full of activities to suit all tastes. From themed dining nights to live music and sporting action, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Tonight, May 29, the club will host a special Lobster Night. Bookings are essential and can be made by calling 17690926.

Saturday offers a traditional

Saturday Roast, with a full carvery buffet available for BD5.500.

The renowned Manama Singers will be performing on Tuesday, June 3. The evening will also feature live music and karaoke, complemented by a happy hour that will run until midnight.

For more information, call 17690926.

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.

- 1) Black lead is a common name for which substance?
- 2) What is the official name of the clock tower commonly referred to as Big Ben?
- 3) Which country does the cloth denim, used in jeans, originally come from?
- 4) Which Arabic name translates into English as 'Servant of God'?
- 5) What is the name of Dua Lipa's 2020 album?
- 6) What country was the last to introduce



the Euro?
7) What does a circle with a cross through it mean on a clothing label?

1. Graphite
2. Elizabeth Tower
3. France
4. Abdullah/Abdallah
5. Future Nostalgia
6. Croatia
7. Do not dry clean

ANSWERS

Pulse of Pop

AROUND THE WORLD IN MUSIC, TV, BOOKS AND MORE - BY RIMA ALHADDAD

GLAMOROUS: Miley donning the archival 1997 design featured on the album cover



FACES OF BEAUTY

GRAMMY-WINNING pop singer Miley Cyrus's ninth studio album *Something Beautiful* drops tomorrow.

In its 13 tracks, the visual album – which will have an accompanying film releasing in theatres internationally on June 27 – tackles existential themes, centring on healing from trauma and finding beauty in the darkest moments of life.

In an interview, Miley described the body of work as ‘hypnotising and glamorous’, and credited British rock band Pink Floyd’s album and accompanying horror-surrealist film *The Wall* as inspiration.

“My idea was making *The Wall*, but with a better wardrobe and more glamorous and filled with pop culture,” she said, adding that on the fashion side, the late designer Thierry Mugler’s 1995

couture show shaped the record’s mood board and aesthetic. She is seen wearing an archival 1997 piece by him on the album cover.

The pop sensation also revealed that the film is her way of presenting something to the fans that is an alternative to embarking on a tour. She added that it is difficult to do as she suffers from Reinke’s edema, a rare condition of swollen vocal cords which she underwent surgery for in 2019.

She described the condition as a part of her unique anatomy, explaining that she would rather try preserving her singing voice – which is distinguishable for its deepness and raspy sound – than to risk waking up from undergoing another operation sounding different.

“The chance of waking up from a surgery and not sounding like myself is a probability,” Miley said.

“I have this very large polyp on my vocal cord, which is giving me a lot of the tone and the texture that has made me who I am, but it’s extremely difficult to perform with because it’s like running a marathon with ankle weights on,” she added.

The 32-year-old superstar emerged as a teen idol by playing the lead role in the *Disney Channel* musical series *Hannah Montana* (2006 to 2011), which kick-started her singing career and paved the way for her to grow into a successful artist as an adult.

She won her first two Grammy awards last year for the hit song *Flowers* in the Record Of The Year and Best Pop Solo Performance categories, and bagged her third earlier this year for her feature on the Beyoncé song *II Most Wanted* in the Best Country Duo/Group Performance segment.

THRILLER television series *The Better Sister* is out now on Prime Video.

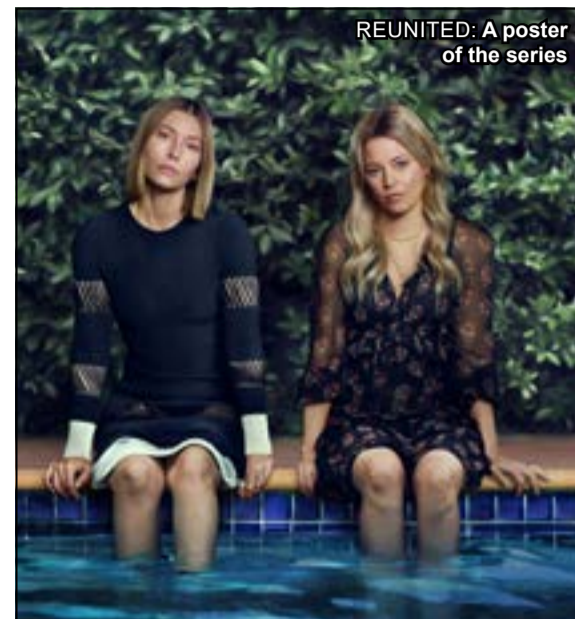
Starring Jessica Biel and Elizabeth Banks, the series tells the story of two estranged sisters, Chloe (Jessica), a high profile media executive with a handsome lawyer husband and teenage son, and Nicky (Elizabeth), who is struggling to make ends meet.

When Chloe’s husband is suddenly brutally murdered, the two sisters find themselves reunited, and together they try to untangle a complicated family history to discover the truth behind his death.

In an interview, Jessica explained how despite the two characters being siblings, their different childhood experiences resulted in their opposing personalities.

“It’s such an integral part of these performances that these two sisters grew up in very different households. They grew up being told mistruths that have really sent them down two different paths in their lives, paths they regret,” she said.

Created by Olivia Milch and Regina Corrado, the eight episode-



REUNITED: A poster of the series

SISTER ACT

series is an adaptation of the namesake 2019 novel by author Alafair Burke, who acts as a consultant on the show.

“One of the themes we were exploring was the deep and profound effect the past has on all of us,” Elizabeth noted, adding that her portrayed character’s upbringing resonated with her on a personal level.

“I have three siblings, and I’m 11 years older than my brother, so we had two very different parents. We had two entirely different scenarios, knowing that your parents grow and change.”

SHATTERING SILENCE

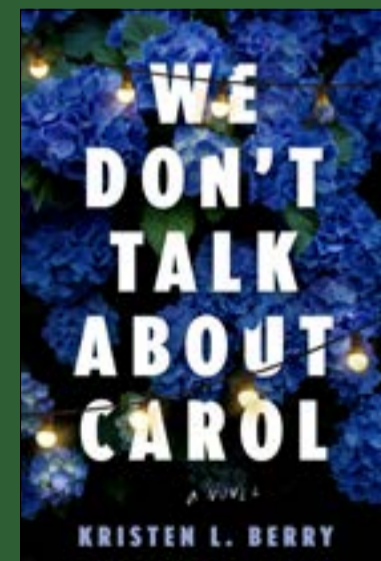
AUTHOR Kristen L Berry’s novel *We Don’t Talk About Carol* hits the shelves on June 3.

The mystery thriller tackles the story of Sydney Singleton, who, upon her grandmother’s passing, finds a hidden photograph of a little girl, who she discovers to be her aunt Carol who went missing in the 1960s.

Nobody has spoken about what really happened to Sydney’s long-lost aunt, but upon discovering the photo, she becomes determined to unravel the truth and break the sinister silence around it.

The writer and communications executive with a bachelor’s degree in English and literature has worked with leading consumer brands for nearly 20 years while writing in her spare time, and is now finally making her debut in the literary world.

“For as long as I can remember, whenever I’ve visited a bookstore or a library, I’ve gone to the fiction shelves to find the place where my future book would live.



It’s so surreal to think that before long, I’ll actually be able to find my novel on that bookshelf,” Kristen said in a social media post.

“I’m so fortunate to have so many friends, loved ones and critique partners who believed in this book and generously contributed their time and energy to help me improve it before the first draft was complete,” she added.

Switch off!

So many of you have come forward and accepted *GulfWeekly's* digital detox challenge. As mental health awareness month comes to an end in May, we are thrilled to share some more experiences of people going offline for 24 hours – no gadgets, no social media – successfully culminating our campaign.



My initial reluctance to sign up to a day without digital was a signal that it was exactly what I needed. At first, I felt uneasy

about not responding to messages or wondering if I was missing something important. Several times during the morning, I turned to my phone, out of

habit, rather than necessity. Having the space, the pause, I noticed a shift away from this automated, mindless, compulsivity. I savoured the small moments, like the taste and smell of my crispy peanut butter breakfast toast, which I ate slowly and mindfully.

Giving myself permission to not be available 24/7 has reminded me that it's OK to give myself space to connect with myself. I've rested, got my stuff done. I've remembered to breathe.

I plan to make this a regular ritual: one full day a month where I unplug and return to myself. And the world can wait.

– **Beth Noble, 52, Psychotherapist**



Beth

At first, I kept checking my pockets for a phone that wasn't there. But the silence grew comforting. I spent the day journaling, playing board games with my family, and finally organising my space — something I had been procrastinating. Without the pressure to check messages or scroll, I noticed I was more patient and relaxed. The detox reminded me that my time is valuable and doesn't always need to be spent online. It was a much-needed reset and I plan to do it more often.

– **Bhavna Malkani, 31, Accountant**



Bhavna



Jeah

Breakfast, the sand, breeze, and coffee that I can drink without rushing – these are some things that went 'online' when I went offline – refraining from social media for a week made me live more!

I had a calling to grow in spirit and could see beyond my daily life.

Everything came alive when I started to bother less about my phone dying.

I was able to find real connections without the Internet and admire real scenes without 'filters'.

It is only when we participate in real life that we will know the true essence of it is beyond our screens.

– **Jeah Valerio, 28, Artist**

Going phone-free for 24 hours was harder than I expected. The FOMO ('fear of missing out') hit me early in the day, but it gradually turned into a sense of peace.

I ended up sketching – a hobby I hadn't touched in years – and even cooked a new recipe from scratch. Without digital noise, my thoughts felt clearer and my anxiety reduced. It also gave me more time to talk with my sibling, which we rarely do. This detox showed me that small breaks from the digital world can have a big impact on mental clarity and connection.

– **Riash, 35, Sales officer**

Spending 24 hours without social media or my phone was eye-opening but also a challenge. I felt more focused during patient consultations and truly listened, without distractions.

The day felt calmer and more present, allowing me to have a face-to-face discussions with my colleagues which otherwise has become very rare. I did sleep better that night.

However, I also felt a bit disconnected from the outside world and curious about updates. Overall, the experience reminded me of the importance of being present and how digital detox can enhance my work and well-being.

– **Dr Syed Raza, 52, Cardiologist**



Dr Syed

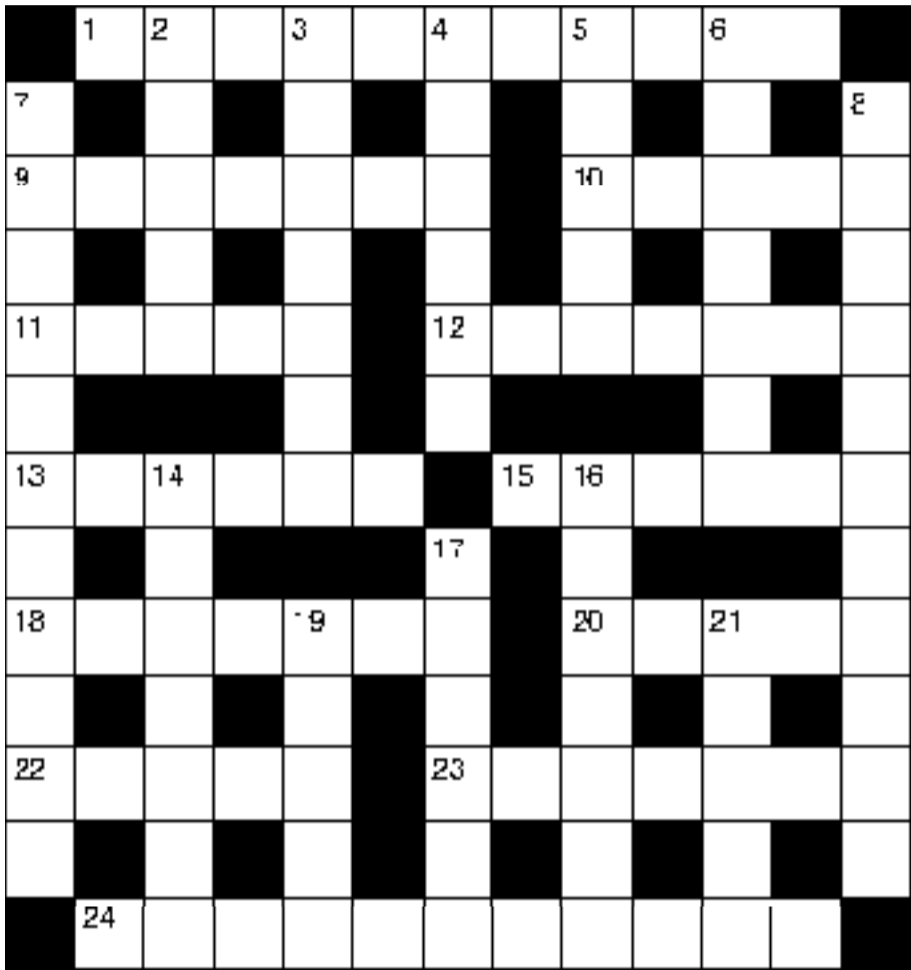
Editor's Note: We have been inundated with entries from you, our lovely readers, and thrilled to have read every single one of them. Disconnecting and living mindfully cannot be a luxury anymore. It must be intentional for our mental health. It's wonderful to learn that many of you intend to make this a regular practice. Sadly, we could only print a few of your responses but will try to publish as many as we can online. Visit gulfweekly.com

Time Out



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crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

1. Dumbfound (11)
9. Prodigal (7)
10. Thick (5)
11. Spiral (5)
12. Diffidence (7)
13. Recourse (6)
15. Disclose (6)
18. Cravat (7)
20. Clear (5)
22. Malice (5)
23. Dexterity (7)
24. Ancestry (11)

DOWN

2. Lariat (5)
3. House-breaker (7)
4. Enrol (6)
5. Pious (5)
6. Genuine (7)
7. Clumsiness (11)
8. Vileness (11)
14. Part (7)
16. Detonate (7)
17. Folk (6)
19. Subject (5)
21. Vigilant (5)

who, what, where, when

WHO...played Norman Bates in the 1998 remake of the film *Psycho*?
WHAT ... tree features on the flag of Belize?
WHERE ... is the mountain of Snaefell?
WHEN ... did British Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone die?
WHO ... won rugby union's Celtic League title in 2006?
WHAT ... heavy rock group recorded the albums *Sabotage* and *Paranoid*?
WHERE ... is Mount Kosciuszko the highest point?
WHEN ... did Colombia gain independence from Spain?

just so

mutt

T♥UGH

CLOTH

wercs

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

7	4	3	2	6	0	1	8	5
5	9	1	4	1	7	2	8	6
8	2	8	5	1	9	3	7	4
1	6	1	3	7	2	5	6	9
9	5	2	8	1	6	3	7	4
3	7	5	8	9	5	1	1	2
6	8	5	7	2	3	9	1	1
2	3	9	1	8	4	7	6	5
4	1	7	9	6	8	2	3	5

darn tough sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 1 Accoutre;
5 Hang; 9 Fuss;
10 Carousal; 11 Diary;
12 Rupture;
13 Independently;
18 Threaten; 19 Gang;
20 Offence; 21 Wager;
22 Till; 23 Standing.

Down: 2 Caution;
3 Observe; 4
Rearrangement; 6 Assault;
7 Gallery; 8 Couple; 13
Introit; 14 Direful; 15
Plains; 16 Niggard; 17
Lantern.

JUST SO: The long and short of it, The red sea, The sound of music, To err is human.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN: Howard Flight; Egyptian pound; Sea of Japan; 1960; Sarah Waters; Electrocutationist; Amsterdam; 1996.

Darn Tough Sudoku

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

Your work pad space ...