



COMMUNITY REPORT

By CAROL SPENCER

BAHRAINI storyteller Noor Hameed is reviving traditional folklore, putting a new spin on old stories, which she brings alive as Mama Amnah.

The beloved character, inspired by her grandmother, is a kindly old woman that delights children with tales from a past long forgotten.

The artist from Manama narrates in standard Arabic mixed with the Bahraini dialect, donning traditional clothing, offering listeners a complete local experience.

She has performed at many cultural events in the kingdom, including the recently held Hawa Al Manama at the Manama Suq.

Currently, the 32-year-old is attending Sharjah Heritage Days Festival in the UAE, representing the kingdom alongside raconteurs from around the world.

"The response at the Sharjah festival has been truly wonderful," the creative talent told *Gulf Weekly*.

"The children are deeply engaged and the adults are equally enthusiastic. They have loved the character from the very first day," she added.

"Mama Amnah is inspired by my grandmother, Amnah, who used to tell me stories. I love her deeply and was close to her. She taught me the art of storytelling – sharing tales that carry meaningful lessons, told with warmth and humour."

In honour of her grandmother's literary legacy, Noor decided to take her love for stories to the next level and has been lighting up stages with her act for the last five years.

Noor channelises the 'captivating feeling' she experienced while listening to her grandmother's stories through the personality.

While Noor is popular among children, she is a hit with older audiences as well, entertaining people of all ages with stories that she pens down. They are inspired by well-known Bahraini myths, and set in historic locations including Muharraq, Adhari, Manama; even ancient Dilmun.

While the artist most enjoys connecting with her listeners, she is also grateful for the



STORYTELLER: Noor with children at the ongoing Sharjah Heritage Days Festival

TALES FROM THE PAST

opportunity to showcase Bahraini culture and heritage in such an accessible way.

"People are learning about Bahrain, sometimes for the first time, and I get to

introduce them to our small island filled with diverse cultures, dialects, art, and beauty," she said.

Complementing her knack to weave a story is Noor's

love for theatre, which began as a child. She participated in school plays and then went on to train under local and international theatre coaches, eventually staging her work in 2022.

The following year, she directed the play *Asfoori*, written by renowned Bahraini playwright Jamal Al Saqer, highlighting the loss of childhood and the Palestinian cause.

"What I enjoy most about theatre is the freedom to present my ideas and passions, and the issues that affect me personally and humanly through artistic expression. I am deeply passionate about movement, lighting, stage colours, and the beautiful madness of theatre. I love expressive movement and performance,"

"Mama Amnah is inspired by my grandmother, Amnah, who used to tell me stories. She taught me the art of storytelling – sharing tales that carry meaningful lessons, told with warmth and humour."



ACT: Noor in her element with a happy child during a performance



RAMADAN RECIPES
New book release
SEE PAGE 2



SOUND OF MUSIC
Bahraini artist
SEE PAGE 3



LEISURE SCENE
Foodie feasts
SEE PAGES 4-5



PULSE OF POP
Music, books & more
SEE PAGE 6

she noted.

Speaking of goals for the year, Noor said that she wants to continue telling stories and keeping her grandmother's memory alive. She revealed that she has many shows coming up during Ramadan this month especially around gergaoun.

"We inherit these tales from our ancestors, which we pass on to our children so that they continue to live forever," she remarked.

For more information, follow @mama.amnah on Instagram.



BOOK REPORT

By MELISSA NAZARETH
melissa@gdnmedia.bh

BAHRAIN-BASED, award-winning food enthusiast Farah Abu Maizar has launched the latest edition of her digital cookbook, ahead of Ramadan this month, with proceeds from sales set to be donated to charity.

Every Little Crumb's Ramadan 2026 – Farah's fifth cookbook – features more than 100 new recipes and some popular favourites from last year across categories like soups, salads, starters and sides, main dishes, desserts and drinks. An exclusive selection of Suhoor recipes is also included.

Spurred on by the overwhelming response to the past editions, this year, the Palestinian-Jordanian from Riffa plans to have a print edition as well.

"I am excited and cannot wait for you all to see my new recipes," the 38-year-old told *GulfWeekly*.

"This project is really close to my heart. Although it entails a lot of work, from filming and writing to developing and tasting the recipes, it is worth it," she added, highlighting that 25 per cent of the proceeds from the book sales will be donated to charity.

In the past, Farah has raised funds with her book for war-torn Gaza, honouring her Palestinian roots.

The new e-book hit the shelves following Farah's milestone moment in November last year, when her 2025 edition won the popular international Gourmand Awards for the best charity cookbook, among hundreds of nominees. Being the only one from Bahrain at the ceremony in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, was a proud moment for the home cook and mother-of-three.

Established in 1995, the Gourmand Awards brings together talents from more than 200 countries across around 60 categories.

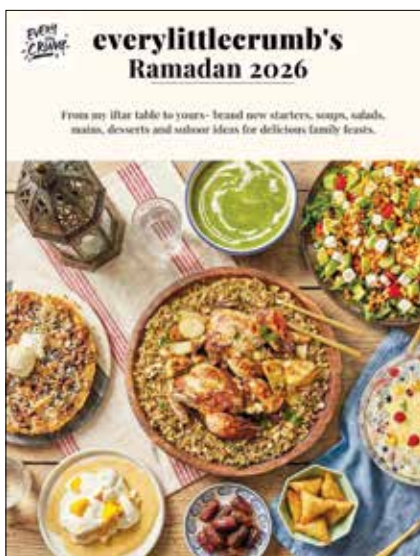
"I got to meet some amazing cookbook authors and people from all over the world, which was a wonderful experience. For some of them, it was their first time visiting the Middle East and they were truly impressed by our hospitality and food.

"They were curious about



FOODIE: Farah with the winning 2025 edition at the awards

Flavours of home



DELICIOUS: The 2026 book cover

Bahrain and having lived here for over 20 years, it felt good to be able to share 'a piece of home' with them. They were interested in the flavours and spices and had so many questions," she revealed.

Farah printed a copy of her book, which was showcased at the event alongside the works of other international authors and food connoisseurs.

"Knowing that I had a footprint outside Bahrain

was nice," she remarked.

The certified dietician from American University of Beirut started her culinary journey seven years ago with her website, where she shares recipes that dip into her cultural kitchen and family favourites.

The book is an extension of her journey and, overtime, has become popular with food lovers and home cooks in Bahrain and beyond.

Growing up in the US, Farah was exposed to diverse communities and is committed to celebrating her Middle Eastern heritage and American upbringing through her food.

Talking about one such beloved dish, Farah reminisced how when her mum visited her from Amman, Jordan, they embarked on a project together to document the recipe for mansaf – a Jordanian-Palestinian dish with fermented yoghurt and poached lamb.

"It is a very traditional creation and developing the recipe for it was quite a challenge as my mother, like most mothers and

grandmothers, does not measure the ingredients. We had to take photos at every step and go back and forth but, in the end, we successfully wrote the recipe for the book (last year)," she explained.

Describing her creative process for the literary project, she said: "I try to walk the line between old favourites and traditional, comforting flavours and dishes, while still introducing something new. I develop brand new recipes, inspired by some old popular ones or new flavours that I have tried."

The passionate cook, who is known for her healthy and tasty recipes, hopes to release a book every year. Talking about goals for 2026, she noted that she will continue pursuing her passion for food and experimenting in the kitchen.

"I fell in love with food and cooking as a child and it has inspired me all my life," she added.

To buy the book, visit everylittlecrumb.com or follow @everylittlecrumb on Instagram.

Pineapple Trifle

INGREDIENTS

- 1 vanilla pound cake (300g), cubed
- 6 Digestive biscuits, broken
- 1 can pineapple (500g) plus juice
- 1 can Nestlé cream (160g)
- 6 Kiri squares (100g), softened
- Scant ¼ cup (70g) condensed milk
- 1 Dream Whip sachet
- 1 crème caramel powder sachet
- 2 tbsp milk
- 4 tbsp pineapple juice, divided

TOPPING

- ½ cup (120 ml) cold whipping cream
- ½ tbsp icing sugar
- Splash of vanilla

METHOD

- Layer cake cubes and biscuits in a glass dish. • Drizzle with ~3 tbsp pineapple juice.
- Beat Nestlé cream, Kiri,



condensed milk, Dream Whip, caramel powder, milk, and 1 tbsp pineapple juice until thick.

- Spread cream over base. Add half of the pineapple.
- Whip cream for topping with icing sugar and vanilla to soft peaks.
- Spread on top. Finish with remaining pineapple. Chill 4-6 hours (or overnight) before serving.

Tortilla Turkish Borek

INGREDIENTS

- 6 tortillas (medium to large)
- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1 cup (100g) shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup (80g) feta cheese cubes, or crumbled
- 1 handful parsley, chopped (about 1/2 bunch)
- Big pinch each: salt, black pepper, red chili flakes, plus an optional smaller pinch of ground nutmeg

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat the oven to 180°C. Fold each tortilla into little accordions and then place all six tortillas, folded sides up, into a square baking dish (about 9x9 inches).
- Whisk together the eggs, milk, mozzarella cheese, feta cubes, parsley, and all the spices and seasoning, mixing until eggs are well beaten and everything is combined.
- Pour this all over the tortillas in the pan.
- Bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden brown and bubbling, then slice into squares and enjoy.



* Above recipes are featured in the new book



EMOTIONAL: A screen grab from the video featuring the artist

Sweet and bitter notes

MUSIC REPORT
By CAROL SPENCER

BAHRAINI musician Najma Bu'Allai is finding solace in her tunes as she pensively reflects on her journey through motherhood with the re-release of her song *Hard Enough*.

The latest production uses the original audio with a vibrant and punchy new music video, shot in front of colourful murals and on sunny walkways in the kingdom.

The artist and mother-of-one first wrote and released the track four years ago when her daughter was born. She resorted to music and content creation as a creative outlet during a difficult patch in her life.

"At the time, I was going through postpartum depression, having a hard time in my marriage and facing money troubles," the 43-year-old told *GulfWeekly*.

The thespian, who was an active member of theatre groups before motherhood, found that she was having a tough time channelling her artistic expressions in this new phase of her life and decided to write a song. Her lyrics were a reflection of her state of mind then, addressing the words to her



DARLING DUO: Najma with Sara

now ex-husband and assuring him that they can get through this phase together. Najma, now a single mother

of five-year-old Sara, decided to re-release *Hard Enough* last month, to look back at how far she has come on her

artistic and personal journey.

Reflecting on why she re-released it, she said: "I feel better and more enlightened now. And I feel proud that I actually wrote this song to remind myself of how hard it was back then when I first became a mum and how things actually changed."

"When I wrote it, I thought I would never get out of that phase, that I would stay in that depressive state for a long time. I am stronger and happier now."

"Back then, I just got a sound card, a PC and a mic, wrote the song and recorded it. Very basic mixing and mastering. Looking back, I did a good job."

For the Isa Town resident, content and video creation has been an outlet for over a decade – a journey she kicked into high gear when she started posting on *TikTok* three years ago.

Since then, she has built a loyal following of more than 20,000 fans and even collaborated with local creatives. "I wasted many years not following my passion but now I am not afraid of what people think. I feel fulfilled doing what I want," she remarked, hoping that her content inspires others to unabashedly follow their dreams.

To watch Najma's videos, follow @najmabuallai on *TikTok*.

GET together with your family and friends to enjoy some of the English language films being shown at CINECO Seef this weekend.

WORLDBREAKER (15+)

Five years ago, a tear in the fabric of reality brought creatures to our world from an alternate dimension bent on our destruction. A father hides his daughter on an island to keep her safe, while he prepares her for survival and the battles to come.

Actors: Luke Evans, Milla Jovovich, Billie Boullet

Timings: 11.15am, 3.15pm, 7.15pm, 11.15pm

THE HOUSEMAID (18+)

A struggling young woman is relieved by the chance for a fresh start as a maid for a wealthy couple. Soon, she discovers that the family's secrets are far more dangerous than her own.

Actors: Sydney Sweeney, Amanda Seyfried, Brandon Sklenar

Timings: 12.30pm, 3.15pm, 6pm, 8.45pm, 11.30pm



THE ASTRONAUT (15+)

When an astronaut crash-lands back on Earth, a general places her in quarantine for rehabilitation and testing. As disturbing events unfold, she fears that something extra-terrestrial has followed her home.

Actors: Kate Mara, Laurence Fishburne

Timings: 1.15pm, 5.15pm, 9.15pm

(Check out *GDNOnline's* list of the best movies to watch this weekend on Instagram)

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) In which major city was the first artificial ice rink built?
- 2) The Super Bowl on Sunday was held in the stadium of which NFL team?
- 3) What is the actual name of the nun in *The Conjuring*?
- 4) What national capital was created in 1873 by the merger of three cities straddling the Danube river?
- 5) Which international soccer squad are also known as the 'Black Stars'?
- 6) Bahrain Pavilion won the gold award



for which category at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan?
7) What is the currency of Bosnia and Herzegovina?

1. London
2. San Francisco 49'ers
3. Valak
4. Budapest
5. Ghana
6. Best Architecture and Landscape
7. Convertible Mark (Marka)

ANSWERS

Leisure Scene

What's on guide by
Julia Cassano



CELEBRATE the magic of Ramadan with an extraordinary lineup of unforgettable events at The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain this month.

The hotel proudly presents Layali Al Noor, its newly unveiled grand Ramadan tent, where the kingdom's rich cultural heritage meets contemporary luxury in a breathtaking setting.

Inspired by the island's land, sea and natural beauty, the space features layered greenery, natural textures and intricate architectural details, creating an atmosphere of warmth, serenity and understated elegance.

In partnership with the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait and CrediMax, Layali Al Noor accommodates more than 750 guests across five distinct venues, offering the perfect setting for both intimate family iftars and grand corporate ghabga gatherings.

From the first day of Ramadan, guests can enjoy iftar from sunset until 8pm priced at BD38 per person, followed by ghabga from 9pm to 2am at BD42 per person,

STARLIT DINING AT THE RITZ-CARLTON



GRAND: Layali Al Noor

available Saturday through Wednesday.

On Thursday and Friday, iftar is available from sunset to 8pm at BD42 per person, with ghabga from 9pm to 2am at BD44 per person.

Children aged six to 12 enjoy the event at BD16net, while little ones under six dine for free.

For a unique culinary experience, guests can also enjoy Shan E Iftar, a family-style Indian sharing menu at the elegant Plums restaurant. With its warm

interior and thoughtful details, Plums offers a welcoming space for iftar gatherings.

The menu features slow-cooked specialties, fragrant rice dishes and more, available from Sunday to Friday, sunset to midnight, priced at BD19 per person, including one lassi.

Enhance your Ramadan experience with a staycation at the hotel. Begin the evening with a luxurious room, then gather with family and

friends at Layali Al Noor to enjoy an unforgettable iftar or ghabga. Available from February 21, rates start from BD175net per room, per night, subject to availability at the time of booking.

Guests can also embrace the spirit of the season with the New Year Indulgence restorative spa treatment, designed to promote balance, renewal, and inner calm.

This 75-minute treatment includes a personalised massage, eye contour therapy, spa enhancements, and full access to the spa's premium facilities.

Available until February 28, from 9am to 9pm, the experience is priced at BD85 for 75 minutes from 9am to 9pm.

For more information contact 17586499 or email rc.bahrz.restaurant.reservations@ritzcarlton.com.

AN EXQUISITE FEAST

INTERCONTINENTAL Bahrain invites guests to its Regency Tent to immerse themselves in the warmth and joy of Ramadan with a series of specially curated experiences designed to make the holy month truly memorable.

Guests can break their fast with an exquisite culinary journey at the tent's iftar event, enjoying a lavish buffet, live cooking stations, traditional favourites and international selections, all set in an elegant ambience enhanced by the soft melodies of live Arabic strings.

It costs BD28net per guest, with children aged six to 12 receiving a 50 per cent off and those under six dining for free.

For those seeking a relaxed late-night gathering, the hotel offers a rich ghabga buffet, featuring a wide array of traditional and international dishes prepared by expert

chefs to satisfy every taste.

Available from 9.30pm to 1am, this experience costs BD22net per guest, with children aged six to 12 receiving 50pc off. Children under six dine for free.

Guests visiting during the first week of Ramadan can also enjoy a special 50pc early-bird discount on both iftar and ghabga.

The Regency Tent will host an exclusive offer for ladies every Monday, allowing them to enjoy iftar and ghabga at a 50pc discount in a refined and relaxed setting.

Guests can enjoy the cherished Ramadan tradition of gergaoun at the hotel. It will feature a festive buffet, sweets, lively music, and a specially curated children's programme with henna art, a best dressed gergaoun competition, and entertaining characters.

The event will be held on the 15th night of Ramadan, with children aged six to 12 receiving a 50pc discount



GATHERING: Ghabga nights

and those under six dining for free.

Noor Lounge complements these celebrations with a selection of Ramadan

goodies, hampers and cakes, offering a 50pc discount daily from 6pm to 11pm.

For more information and reservations, call 36967701.

SPECIAL PASS AWAITS

THE British Club Bahrain has organised a special Ramadan Pass for residents aged 18 and above, offering access throughout the holy month. Valid from the first day of Ramadan, the pass is for individual use only, as holders are not permitted to sign in guests.

The pass is priced at BD60.

For more information, contact 17728245.



MEMORIES:
Valentine's Day
Brunch

CREATING PRECIOUS MOMENTS

DISCOVER a world of exceptional dining and lively entertainment at Hilton Bahrain, where memorable experiences come together to turn every visit into a moment worth celebrating.

Enjoy a full Southern-American experience packed with great food, games, entertainment and unforgettable moments at CLAW BBQ.

Set against the backdrop of the kingdom's skyline, on the 44th floor, the plush restaurant is open from Sunday to Thursday, 4pm to 3am, and from noon to 3am on Friday and Saturday.

Gather your friends and enjoy happy hour at CLAW BBQ, Sunday to Thursday, from 4pm to 8pm and on Saturdays from noon to 8pm.

Sunday brings two hours of unlimited beverages for BD12.500, available from 4pm to midnight, with the option to extend for an additional two hours at BD10 extra. Guests can also enjoy 20 per cent off the menu all day.

On Mondays, ladies can enjoy four complimentary beverages from 8pm to 11pm, along with a sharing platter for BD15. Plus, ladies receive 30pc off all full priced food and beverages.

Turn midweek into a fiesta with Taco Tuesday, offering unlimited selected beverages and a generous selection of freshly made tacos from 6pm to 1am for BD16.

On Wednesdays, enjoy two hours of unlimited beverages for BD12.500, from 7pm to 9pm.

Meanwhile, Origin Kitchen and Culture has lined up a fabulous Seafood Night on Thursday, where the freshest catch is showcased alongside live cooking stations, from 7pm to 10pm. Prices start from BD30.

Couples are also invited to celebrate romance at Origin Kitchen and Culture's Valentine's Day Brunch tomorrow from 12.30pm to 4pm, with prices starting from BD29.

The celebrations continue at Cocoluna Lounge on February 14 with a three-course dinner and live entertainment, at 7pm. It costs BD45net per couple with unlimited soft beverages and BD55net per couple for unlimited selected beverages.

The restaurant also offers a fabulous breakfast buffet at BD13net per person, Sunday to Friday from 6.30am to 10.30am. Late risers can also enjoy the spread on Saturdays from 6.30am to 11.30am.

For more information, call 33692013.

Leisure Scene

Weekly Entertainment



FOUR Seasons Hotel Bahrain Bay invites guests to indulge in a curated selection of dining and wellness experiences this Valentine's season.

At Bay View Lounge, embark on an elegant French canapé journey beneath graceful olive trees, overlooking the serene sweep of Bahrain Bay.

Classic French flavours are reimagined into delicate, bite-sized creations, from foie gras macarons to caviar-topped scallops, crafted with the finest ingredients for a truly elevated experience.

It is available daily until February 19, from 11am to 11.30pm, at BD12.

For a romantic brunch, Bahrain Bay Kitchen presents a special Month of Love Brunch tomorrow. Guests can savour Oyster Rockefeller, smoked salmon,

lobster thermidor, and vibrant live stations featuring ceviche, barbecue selections, and Asian favourites.

The brunch runs from 1pm to 4pm, priced at BD35 including soft beverages, or BD48 with a selected beverage package.

Couples seeking an intimate dinner can enjoy Byblos, where Lebanese-inspired cuisine meets romance. The evening concludes with artfully crafted desserts infused with floral and berry notes for a memorable finale. The special Valentine's Day dinner starts at 6.30pm, priced at BD120, including soft drinks.

For a sophisticated night out, CUT by Wolfgang Puck offers a lounge experience with live jazz. Guests can enjoy an à la carte menu featuring exceptional dishes on February 14, from 8pm to 11.30pm. Entry to CUT Lounge costs BD20, with a

BD50 minimum spend per person at the restaurant.

Additionally, re/ASIAN CUISINE and Blue Moon Lounge will feature specially curated à la carte menus, complemented by the signature Sweet Heart dessert collection, crafted by Wolfgang Puck's executive pastry chef Pierre Chombon. It is available February 14, from 8pm.

For couples seeking relaxation, Azure Pool offers a 60-minute aromatherapy massage, followed by private access to a poolside cabana. Guests can enjoy a bottle of bubbly alongside chocolates, macarons, and mixed berries. From Sunday to Wednesday, the experience is BD280, and from Thursday to Saturday and on public holidays, BD295. It is available in two sessions: 7pm to 9pm and 9.30pm to 11.30pm.

For more information, call 17115000.

CANDLELIT EVENINGS FOR YOUR VALENTINE



THE Amriya Group, operator of a distinguished portfolio of restaurants, has curated a series of romantic Valentine's Day experiences designed to create truly unforgettable moments.

Across its venues, couples are invited to celebrate love through exceptional cuisine, elegant settings and captivating live entertainment.

At MASSO, guests can enjoy an intimate evening inspired by refined Italian flavours. A specially curated Valentine's menu is complemented by live entertainment, creating a warm and sophisticated atmosphere for the occasion.

The celebration takes place on February 14 from 7pm, with a minimum spend of BD50 per person, inclusive of a complimentary macaron for each guest. Reservations can be made by calling 17721061.

For a seaside celebration, Lyra by the Sea offers a romantic Valentine's experience featuring Greek-Mediterranean cuisine, candlelit tables

and enchanting live entertainment. Couples can dine on February 14 from 7pm, with a set menu priced at BD30 per person.

Lyra was recently named The Best Restaurant in Bahrain 2026, as part of the Middle East and North Africa's 50 Best Restaurants.

For more information or reservations, call 17778822.

Circa sets the stage for a South American-inspired evening filled with fire-kissed flavours and the emotive sounds of live cello. Designed for connection and celebration, this Valentine's experience takes place on February 14 from 7pm and is priced at BD25 per person, inclusive of one selected beverage. Bookings can be made by calling 39927872.

At The Orangery, couples are invited to share an elegant evening for two featuring a curated menu, a floral keepsake and live piano music. The experience is available on February 14 from 7pm for BD23,500 per person. For reservations, call 17369696.

SHERATON'S ROMANTIC CREATIONS

STEP into Sheraton Hotel Bahrain, where a romantic ambience meets chef-crafted favourites and premium dining experiences designed to impress.

For an elevated evening, Brasero Atlántico presents a refined à la carte menu curated exclusively for Valentine's Day. Guests can indulge in romantic creations starting at 8pm, with a minimum spend of BD100 per couple.

Valentine's Day can also be celebrated at Golestan, where an upgraded à la carte menu is paired with live entertainment to create a warm and elegant atmosphere. The experience begins from 8pm on February 14, with a minimum spend of BD25 per person. During the day, love and flavour come together at WILD with a lavish Valentine's Day Brunch.

Featuring premium dishes and fresh seafood, the event promises a festive afternoon worth savouring. It takes place on February 14, from 12.30pm to 5pm, and is priced at BD40 net per person.

For more information, contact 38885408.



HEART: Valentine's dinner at Golestan

GET WHISKED AWAY

SWEEP your partner away to Hawar Resort by Mantis for a romantic escape where every detail is thoughtfully curated to celebrate love.

Whether you choose a room or an overwater villa, the stay is enhanced with elegant romantic decor, a relaxing 60-minute couples' spa treatment, and breakfast at Bahri.

Guests staying in villas can enjoy the added indulgence of in-room breakfast or the resort's signature floating breakfast experience.

To make the occasion even more special, one lucky couple will be surprised with an exquisite Christophi piece, adding a memorable keepsake to the celebration.

Guests can enjoy a special Valentine's Day experience: intimate, overwater dining at C-Salt, where candlelit moments, breathtaking views and a serene atmosphere create the perfect romantic evening.



FLOAT: Overwater stay

It costs BD100 for an overwater pod and BD70 for regular seating at the restaurant. This is available from today to February 14, with slots open from 4pm.

Book your Valentine's stay by calling 32183610 or emailing reservations@hawarresort.com.

JAZZ IT UP WITH DILMUN

DILMUN Club Bahrain is hosting a special Jazz Valentine's Day event tomorrow from 8pm onwards.

The evening features a gourmet menu, including seared scallops, poached asparagus, goat cheese and caramelised onion tart with rocket salad, beef Wellington, teriyaki salmon, and more. Entry is BD20 for members and BD22 for non-members.

For bookings, call 17690926.

Pulse of Pop

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



MUSICAL LOVE LETTER

BRITISH music composer and producer Daniel L Harle is dropping his new album *Cerulean* tomorrow.

Named after a distinct shade of blue, the project is a dreamy experience and love letter to everything he finds beautiful, the creative described. He cited the 1940 Disney animation film *Fantasia* and the Renaissance era as inspirations.

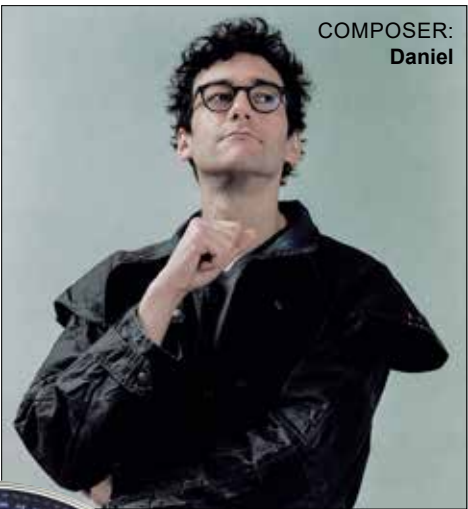
While it follows his 2021 rave culture-inspired project *Harlecore*, Danny considers *Cerulean* to be his debut album. It is the culmination of his evolution as an artist throughout his career, which he embarked on in 2010.

It is set to feature a number of creatives including British artist Pink Pantheress, French musician and rising talent Oklou and American singer-songwriter Clairo.

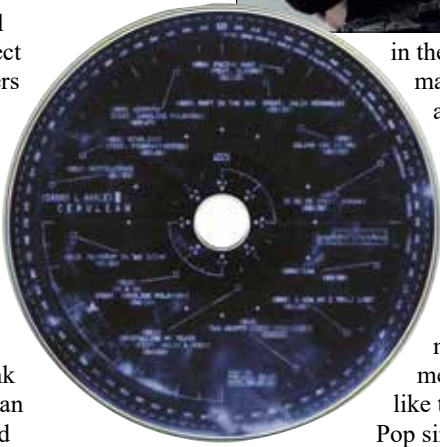
In an interview, Danny reflected on his experience working with the featured artists, and how he chooses who to collaborate with, saying that he is very particular.

"I can only work with people if I have a vision for what they could do," he explained.

"I guess the kind of melodies that I like use the voice as an instrument, and the lyrics as a half-abstract canvas. All these artists do that



COMPOSER: Daniel



ETHEREAL: The detailed CD art including the tracklist

in their own music and are the masters of their craft," he added.

"I honestly can't really believe it, looking at the list of people. These are my favourite artists who aren't jumping on any bandwagons, they're creating source material. It's very meaningful when people like that trust you."

Pop singers Dua Lipa and Caroline Polachek, whom he has worked with before, also make an appearance.

The creative talent executive produced both of Caroline's studio albums: *Pang* (2019) and *Desire, I Want to Turn Into You* (2023), which earned him a Grammy nomination for Best Engineered Album, Non-Classical in 2024.

He also co-produced the song *Houdini* on Dua's third studio album *Radical Optimism* (2024).

THRILLER film *Crime 101* starring Chris Hemsworth is out now in theatres.

Based on a 2020 novella by Don Winslow, it follows jewel thief Mike Davis' (Hemsworth) heists along California's US Route 101, which have left the police baffled.

When he sets his sights on the ultimate score, his plans intersect with those of insurance broker Sharon Colvin (Halle Berry).

Detective Lou Lubesnick (Mark Ruffalo) believes he has cracked Mike's pattern and is determined to bring him down before the next job.

In an interview, director Bart Layton recalled that the idea for the project came to him in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, when he received the novella.

"There was a sort of sun-bleached quality to it, which felt like everything that we didn't have at that moment," he said.

"I remember thinking, 'Wow, this is a really great sort of superstructure for a movie in the vein of

CALIFORNIA HEIST



DRAMA: Mark Ruffalo, left, and Chris Hemsworth in the film

the ones that I certainly remembered best as a teenager, or in the 80s and 90s. Proper, grown-up movies, films that were thoughtful, but they were also great Saturday-night, popcorn movies," he added.

With his idea finally coming to life, the filmmaker believes in his star-studded project and promises theatre goers a good time.

"I think one of the things that maybe will be really most surprising or gratifying

about the film is people seeing how brilliant a performer Chris is," he noted, praising the Australian actor known for playing Thor in the *Marvel Cinematic Universe*.

"We changed the way he holds himself. We changed his hair and eye colour, because he's so extraordinary-looking that the challenge for me was to make sure the character is also quite real and quite grounded," he added.

A HIDDEN WORLD

MAGIC realism novel *The Astral Library* by Kate Quinn is set to hit the shelves on February 17.

It tackles Alexandria 'Alix' Watson, who finds solace in Boston Public Library. Boggled down by the burden of working three dead-end jobs to make ends meet, she escapes into her favourite fantasy novels.

One day she stumbles through a hidden door and meets the Librarian: the ageless, acerbic guardian of a hidden library where the desperate and lost escape to new lives inside their favourite books.

The Librarian takes a dazzled Alix under her wing, but before she can escape into the pages of her new life, a shadowy enemy emerges to

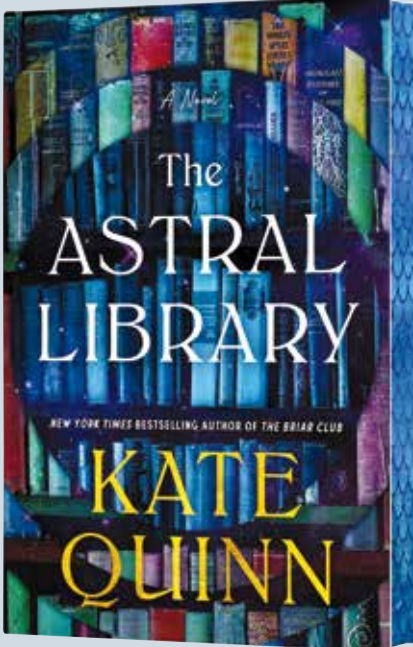
threaten everyone the Astral Library has ever helped protect.

Best known for writing historical fiction, the author cited her mum as the main source of inspiration for her writing career.

"My librarian mother had a degree in ancient and medieval history and told me stories about the past in the same casual way that



AUTHOR: Kate



other kids my age got fairy-tale bedtime stories," she said.

"I was gravitating naturally toward the past as soon as I began writing stories of my own, which was about age seven," she added.

However, when asked about her new release, she described it as slightly different from her previous works, as they usually focused on women's underrepresented roles in history.

"It's a bit of a departure for me, less straight historical fiction and a bit more magic realism. It's my love letter to libraries, librarians, and readers everywhere."

MotoringWeekly

The top motoring and motorsport news



On the road to success!

OSCAR Piastri is on a similar career trajectory to Formula One world champion teammate Lando Norris and should have a shot at the title this season, McLaren boss Zak Brown said ahead of this weekend's preseason testing in Bahrain.

The American told reporters on a video call that his drivers were raring to get going.

"He (Piastri) is now going into his fourth year. Lando has a lot more grands prix than he does so if you look at the development of Lando over that time, Oscar's on a similar trajectory," Brown said.

"So he's in a good place, physically very fit, excited, ready to go."

Piastri, who debuted with McLaren in Bahrain in 2023, can become Australia's first champion since Alan Jones in 1980.

While Piastri took his first win in his second season, Norris had to wait until his sixth. Both won seven times last year.

Brown said he had spoken a lot with the Australian over the European winter break and expected the 24-year-old, championship leader for much of 2025, to pick up where he left off.



FLASHBACK: Norris, left, celebrates with a trophy on the podium after winning the Monaco Grand Prix alongside third placed Piastri, right, and team boss Brown

He said the discussion had been all about creating the best environment for him and what McLaren needed to do to support him.

Brown said Piastri had spent time in the simulator and, in response to a question about lingering sentiment in Australia that McLaren favoured Norris, "he knows he's getting a fair shake at it".

"You win some, you lose some. Things fall your way, things don't fall your way," added the chief executive.

Brown said Norris' confidence level was also very high.

"He's highly motivated and it's our job to give him and

Oscar the equipment again to be able to let them fight it out for the championship," he said.

"If we can do that, I think Oscar and Lando will both be in with a shot."

Norris can become only the second Briton to take back-to-back titles after seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton, who won four titles in a row with Mercedes from 2017 to 2020 as well as two together in 2014 and 2015.

The only other multiple British world champions are Jim Clark (1963, 1965), Graham Hill (1962, 1968) and Jackie Stewart (1969, 1971, 1973).

"I think there are some drivers that say 'I've done it. Now I'm done'," said Brown. "And then you have drivers like Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen and Michael Schumacher who go 'I've done it once, now I want to do it twice and three or four times'."

He reiterated that both remained free to race and said decisions would be taken strategically as and when they arose.

"We feel like we'll be competitive. The top four teams all seem very competitive. Very early days but indications that we will be strong," he added.

Enjoying every second

Two-time world champion Fernando Alonso said this week that he had still not decided whether this year would be his last Formula 1 season but regardless, he planned to enjoy every second of it.

Speaking from Aston Martin's livery launch in Saudi Arabia ahead of testing in Bahrain, the 44-year-old Spaniard, the oldest driver on the F1 grid, said he remained fully motivated after a record 425 starts.

F1 is entering a new engine era this season and Aston Martin, now a works team, are also starting over with Honda replacing Mercedes as their power unit provider.

The season starts in Australia on March 8, after preseason testing in Bahrain this weekend, as well as February 18 to 20.

The AMR26 car is also the first for the Silverstone-based team under the leadership of multi-title-winning design ace Adrian Newey and technical guidance of former Ferrari man Enrico Cardile.

"This first year in this set of regulations will provide a lot of action and a lot of input and feedback from the driver," said Alonso.

"I think it's going to be a very interesting season from a driver point of view.

"I don't know if it's going to be the last (season) but, you know, my plan is to enjoy every second.

"And then if I make one more (season), you know, I will be also happy. So let's see. I will do race by race."

Alonso, who last won a grand prix in 2013 while with Ferrari, took his titles with Renault in 2005 and 2006.

"I feel very motivated. I feel very focused into the new system. But, you know, Formula One is a dynamic sport. It keeps changing every week," he said.

"Let's see these regulations, how they work, how easy or difficult it is to follow cars, how much action we see on track. So, you know, there are things that will play a part also in my decision for 2027."

Aston Martin finished seventh last year and have already started on the back foot, with the new car turning up late at a recent shakedown in Barcelona.

Alonso said the team could have a challenging start to the 24-race season but hoped for a much stronger showing in the second half with some 'special races'.



EXPERIENCE: Alonso ahead of pre-season testing in Bahrain



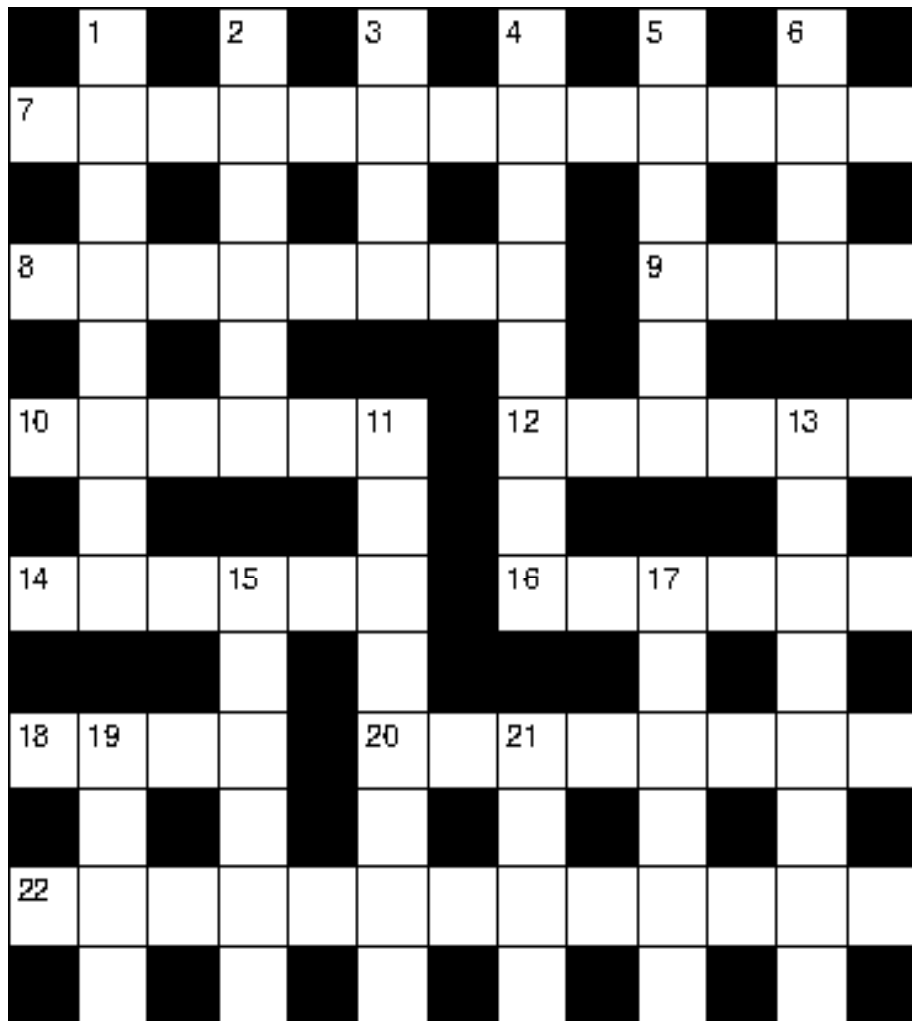
RACING: Alonso takes to the track in the new AMR26

Time Out



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crossword break



Solutions in next week's issue.

ACROSS

- 7. Questioning (13)
- 8. Inspector (8)
- 9. Thought (4)
- 10. Splendid (6)
- 12. Bury (6)
- 14. Alcove (6)
- 16. Property (6)
- 18. Cease (4)
- 20. Wickerwork (8)
- 22. Categorical (13)

DOWN

- 1. Unsafe (8)
- 2. Death (6)
- 3. Forehead (4)
- 4. Wrong (8)
- 5. Severe (6)
- 6. Centre (4)
- 11. Meddler (8)
- 13. Substance (8)
- 15. Use (6)
- 17. Vibration (6)
- 19. Melody (4)
- 21. Location (4)

who, what, where, when

WHO ... wrote *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years*?

WHAT ... elements are present in a cyanide?

WHERE ... would you find the volcano, Hekla?

WHEN ... was the Boston Tea Party?

WHO ... directed the 1997 film *Titanic*?

WHAT ... kind of creature is an ibex?

WHERE ... in Europe did the Black Death of 1348 begin?

WHEN ... was Rudyard Kipling born?

just so

maiden.

DKI

d0ing

Spring

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

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

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

tough sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Sudoku

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

Last Week's Leisure Solutions

CROSSWORD BREAK:

Across: 1 Plot; 8 Reasonable; 9 Displace; 10 Tray; 12 Please; 14 Threat; 15 Stanza; 17 Bandit; 18 Drug; 19 Complain; 21 Restaurant; 22 Else.
Down: 2 Legislator; 3 Trip; 4 Manage; 5 Potent; 6 Cast-iron; 7 Very; 11 Avaricious; 13 Abnegate; 16 Accrue; 17 Bemoan; 18 Darn; 20 Late.

JUST SO:

Barbed wire; Burn the candle at both ends; Eye witness; Long division.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN: Stirling Moss; Silver and gold; Russia; 1987; Tim Burton; Bird; Alaska; 1982.

Tough Sudoku

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