

WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

Pop superstar George Michael dies of heart failure at 53

LONDON — George Michael's moment of liberation followed what seemed at first to be a time of deep humiliation. He was blessed with sensual good looks and an exquisite voice, attributes he used to become first a teenybopper heartthrob and then a mature solo artist with videos that played up his considerable appeal. He kept his own sexual orientation private, until he was arrested in 1998 for lewd conduct in a public toilet in Los Angeles after being spotted by a male undercover police officer. In an earlier era, that might have doomed his career. Instead of retreating, however, he made a single and video — "Outside" — that ridiculed the charges against him and mocked the Los Angeles police officers who busted him. The memorable image of the two uniformed policemen kissing in the video — both funny and outrageous at the time — helped Michael come out as a proud gay man. He was unashamed, unapologetic and ready to poke fun at himself even as he produced a steady stream of hits. But Michael, whose death from heart failure at 53 was announced Sunday, struggled in his later years, fighting health issues and substance abuse problems. His voice remained golden — at times it seemed there was almost no limit to his range — but his behavior in public became ever more erratic.



AP Photo/Tim Ireland

Tributes are left on the gate outside the home of British musician George Michael in London on Monday. Michael, who rocketed to stardom with WHAM! and went on to enjoy a long and celebrated solo career lined with controversies, has died, his publicist said Sunday. He was 53.

Russia: Focus is on faults, not terror, in plane crash probe

SOCHI, Russia — A pilot error or a technical fault — not terrorism — is likely to be the cause of the plane crash into the Black Sea, Russia's transport minister said Monday as the nation held a day of mourning for the victims.

All 84 passengers and eight crew members on the Russian military's Tu-154 plane are believed to have died Sunday morning when it crashed two minutes after taking off from the southern city of Sochi. The passengers included dozens of singers in Russia's world-famous military choir, nine Russian journalists and a Russian doctor known for her charity work in war zones.

On Monday, the search operation involved more than 3,500 people on 45 ships — including 135 divers flown in from across Russia — sweeping a vast crash site at sea and along the shore, according to the Defense Ministry.

Five helicopters and drones were being used to help spot bodies and debris. Two deep-water submersibles arrived Monday in Sochi to aid the operation, which went on all through the night thanks to powerful searchlights.

The Black Sea search area — which covers over 10 square kilometers (about 4 square miles) — is plagued by underwater currents that can carry debris and body fragments into the open sea.

Recounts or no, US elections are still vulnerable to hacking

ALLENTOWN, Pa. — Jill Stein's bid to recount votes in Pennsylvania was in trouble even before a federal judge shot it down Dec. 12. That's because the Green Party candidate's effort stood almost no chance of detecting potential fraud or error in the vote — there was basically nothing to recount.

Pennsylvania is one of 11 states where the majority of voters use antiquated machines that store votes electronically, without printed ballots or other paper-based backups that could be used to double-check the balloting. There's almost no way to know if they've accurately recorded individual votes — or if anyone tampered with the count.

More than 80 percent of Pennsylvanians who voted Nov. 8 cast their ballots on such machines, according to VotePA, a non-profit seeking their replacement. A recount would, in the words of VotePA's Marybeth Kuznik, a veteran election judge, essentially amount to this: "You go to the computer and you say, 'OK, computer, you counted this a week-and-a-half ago. Were you right the first time?'"

These paperless digital voting machines, used by roughly 1 in 5 U.S. voters last month, present one of the most glaring dangers to the security of the rickety, underfunded U.S. election system. Like many electronic voting machines, they are vulnerable to hacking. But other machines typically leave a paper trail that could be manually checked. The paperless digital machines open the door to potential election rigging that might not ever be detected.

What's more, their prevalence magnifies other risks in the election system, such as the possibility that hackers might compromise the computers that tally votes, by making failures or attacks harder to catch. And like other voting machines adopted since the 2000 election, the paperless systems are nearing the end of their useful life — yet there is no comprehensive plan to replace them.

Trump's pick for ambassador to Israel has all sides on edge

NEW YORK — If President-elect Donald Trump wanted to show he planned to obliterate President Barack Obama's approach to Israel, he may have found his man to deliver that message in David Friedman, his pick for U.S. ambassador.

The bankruptcy lawyer and son of an Orthodox rabbi is everything Obama is not: a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements, opponent of Palestinian statehood and unrelenting defender of Israel's government. So far to the right is Friedman that even many Israel supporters worry he could push Israel's hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be more extreme, scuttling prospects for peace with Palestinians in the process.

The heated debate over Friedman's selection is playing out just as fresh tensions erupt between the U.S. and Israel, punctuated last Friday by the Obama administration's stunning move to allow a U.N. Security Council resolution to pass condemning Israeli settlements as illegal. The move to abstain, rather than veto, defied years of U.S. tradition of shielding Israel from such resolutions, and elicited angry condemnation from Israel, lawmakers of both parties, and especially Trump.

"Things will be different after Jan. 20th," when he's sworn in, Trump vowed on Twitter. Friedman, certainly, is different.

Cuban President Raul Castro faces deep problems in 2017

HAVANA — Alex Romero was delighted when President Barack Obama came to Havana in March bearing the promise of a bright new future.

Like so many other Cubans, the 42-year-old state photography shop employee thrilled at the president's vision of restored ties between the U.S. and Cuba. Families would reunite. A flood of American business would lift the stagnant centrally planned economy, fueling its slow path toward reform. Even as Obama spoke, an 80 percent surge in U.S. visitors was drenching state-run and private businesses with hundreds of millions of desperately needed dollars.

Nine months later, the world seen from Havana looks very different.

President Raul Castro faces what could be his toughest year since he took power in 2006. 2017 brings a possible economic recession and a U.S. president-elect who has promised to undo Obama's normalization unless the Cuban government makes new concessions on civil rights. Resistance to pressure from Washington is a founding principle for the Cuban communist system, making domestic concessions in exchange for continued detente a virtual impossibility.

"People expected that after Obama came there would be changes in the relationship between the U.S. and Cuba but that we could keep the best of what we have, the benefits for the people," Romero said. "Trump's not going to be able to get what he wants, another type of Cuba. If the world's number one power takes us on, 2017 is going to be really bad for us."

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Fleeing war, South Sudanese create booming camps in Uganda

BIDI BIDI CAMP, Uganda — "I don't want to go back," James Issac declared, just minutes after becoming a refugee. "I don't want to die."

For two days, the slender 30-year-old from South Sudan's Equatoria region navigated his way out of civil war, riding a motorcycle along dirt roads and avoiding government soldiers who, according to accounts by refugees to The Associated Press, have taken aim at civilians.

In his last steps on South Sudanese soil, Issac passed a group of rag-tag rebel soldiers and crossed a rickety bridge into Uganda, and safety.

"I am happy," he said, as Ugandan soldiers searched his belongings for contraband. "There (are) no problems here."

He is one of 440,000 refugees who have fled South Sudan's spiraling conflict into Uganda this year alone, creating some of the world's largest refugee camps in just six months' time.

Once a killer, now a CEO: Ex-con works to turn youths around

SOMERVILLE, Mass. — John Valverde isn't your typical CEO. He spent 16 years in prison for killing a man accused of raping his girlfriend.

While in prison, Valverde did his best to redeem himself, earning two college degrees, teaching fellow inmates how to read and write, and working as an HIV/AIDS counselor.

Next week, he'll take over as chief executive officer of YouthBuild USA Inc., an organization with a global network of programs aimed at helping young, low-income dropouts reclaim their lives and get skills to land jobs and become community leaders.

Valverde said he thinks it is important for him to be honest about his past with the young people he's trying to help. One in three has a criminal record.

"They are just like me, and therefore their path could be like mine, and therefore they could achieve things that they never imagined," Valverde said in a recent interview at YouthBuild's Somerville, headquarters.

Ski industry skews big, so smaller resorts tout authenticity

DENVER — A budget ski resort in western Colorado came up with an eye-popping offer — a \$700 lift ticket, the most expensive in the nation. Only this lift ticket comes with a sweet bonus: a pair of handcrafted skis made from Colorado wood.

Gimmicky? Sure. But Sunlight Mountain Resort says that in an era of increasing ski-industry consolidation, where a handful of companies control more and more winter sport terrain, scrappy independent resorts need all the help they can get to compete with amenity-laden megaresorts.

From baking fresh doughnuts for skiers to displaying local art to play up a sense of community, smaller, independent resorts say they have to rely on personality.

"It's the difference between Budweiser or a craft brew," said Troy Hawks, Sunlight's head of marketing and sales.

The ski industry used to be dominated by independent resorts, where downhill and cross-country skiers would drive to a local mountain, maybe get a fireside cup of hot chocolate in a lodge, then drive home. A ski area with an on-mountain hotel was a rarity, one with nighttime entertainment and white-tablecloth dining would be a true destination.

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TV LISTINGS Evening listings MONDAY

MONDAY EVENING												A - Charter Astoria/Seaside		L - Charter Long Beach		DECEMBER 26	
A	L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30				
2	KATU	(2) KATU News at 6		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	Happy New Year, Charlie Brown	Rudolph's Shiny New Year	Baking Show "Chocolate Week"	KATU News at 11	(35) Jimmy Kimmel							
3	KOMO	(4) KOMO 4 News		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	Happy New Year, Charlie Brown	Rudolph's Shiny New Year	Baking Show "Chocolate Week"	KOMO 4 News	(35) Jimmy Kimmel							
4	KING	(5) NBC Nightly News	KING 5 News	KING 5 News	Evening	Hairspray Live A teenage girl wants to appear on a popular show.			KING 5 News	(35) Tonight Show							
5	KOIN	(6) KOIN 6 News at 6	CBS Evening News	Extra	Ent. Tonight	Kevin Can Wait	Man With a Plan	Kevin Can Wait	Man With a Plan	Scorpion "Fish Filet"	KOIN 6 News @ 11	(35) S. Colbert					
6	KIRO	(7) KIRO 7 News	CBS Evening News	The Insider	Ent. Tonight	Kevin Can Wait	Man With a Plan	Kevin Can Wait	Man With a Plan	Scorpion "Fish Filet"	KIRO News	(35) S. Colbert					
7	KGW	(8) KGW News at 6:00 p.m.		Live at Seven	Inside Edition	Hairspray Live A teenage girl wants to appear on a popular show.					KGW News at 11	(35) Tonight Show					
8	KOPB	(9) Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	Jingle Ball The iHeartRadio Jingle Ball in New York City.	Whose Line Is It?	KGW News at 10	Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Met Your Mother						
9	KOPB	(10) This Old House	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour		Antiques Rd. "Birmingham (Hour One)"	Oregon Experience "Rajneeshpuram"	Independent Lens "Meet the Patels" (N)			Film School Shorts						
10	KPTV	(12) 6 O'Clock News		Family Feud	Family Feud	Gotham "Look Into My Eyes"	Lucifer "Lady Parts"	10 O'Clock News			11 O'Clock News	2 Broke Girls					
11	KPDZ	(6) Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's 8 O'Clock News on PDX-TV	FOX 12's 9 O'Clock News on PDX-TV	Family Guy	Family Guy	American Dad	Cleveland Show						
12	KCPQ	(13) Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Gotham "Look Into My Eyes"	Lucifer "Lady Parts"	Q13 News at 10			Q13 News	The Simpsons					
13	KIRO	(20) Wrecked	Wrecked	Wrecked	Wrecked	People of Earth	People of Earth	People of Earth	People of Earth	People of Earth	People of Earth	People of Earth					
14	KZJO	(22) Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9			Friends	Friends					
15	ESPN	(29) (5:15) NFL Football	Detroit Lions at Dallas Cowboys (L)			(20) SportsCenter	The day's news in the world of sports.				SportsCenter						
16	ESPN2	(30) (5:30) SportsC. (N)	SC Top Plays of the Year		E:60 "Stories of the Year"		Outside the Lines	SportsCenter Special "My Wish"			SportsCenter	NCAA Football St. Petersburg Bowl					
17	NICK	(31) Henry Danger	Henry Danger	Henry Danger "The Danger Begins"		Game Shakers	SpongeBob	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends	Friends					
18	DISN	(32) (6:05) Cali Style	K.C. Undercover	To Be Announced		(45) Girl Meets W.	(1:10) K.C. Underc.	(3:35) Bizaardvark	The Lodge	Stuck in Middle	Liv and Maddie	Austin & Ally					
19	FAM	(34) (4:30) Charlie & the Chocolate Factory	**** How to Train Your Dragon (10) Gerard Butler, Jay Baruchel.	**** Shrek Forever After (10, Ani) Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Mike Myers.					Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, Mike Myers.		The 700 Club						
20	FMC	(35) (5:00) The Twilight Saga: Eclipse	(20) ** The Twilight Saga: Eclipse (2010, Drama) Robert Pattinson, Taylor Lautner, Kristen Stewart.	** Twilight (2008, Drama) Robert Pattinson, Billy Burke, Kristen Stewart.					** FXM Presents		Intervention						
21	ROOF	(36) Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention	Intervention					
22	ROOT	(38) Ship Shape TV	Halls of Fame	UFC UFC 175 Site: Mandalay Bay Events Center							UFC "207: Nunes vs. Rousey" (N)	Fight Sports MMA (N)					
23	FST	(39) (5:00) UFC UFC 157				Fox Sports Live	TMZ Sports (N)	Speak for Yourself			Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.						
24	SPIKE	(43) Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops	Cops					
25	COM	(44) Futurama	Futurama	Futurama	Futurama	South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park	Just Friends (05, Com) Ryan Reynolds.						
26	HIST	(45) American Pickers "Good and Evil"	American Pickers "Good and Evil"	American Pickers "Tick Tock Pick"	American Pickers "Concrete Jungle"	American Pickers "Concrete Jungle"	American Pickers	American Pickers	Pawn Stars (N)	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars	Pawn Stars					
27	A&E	(46) The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48	The First 48: Revenge Kills	The First 48: Revenge Kills	The First 48: Revenge Kills	(05) Live PD: Rap Sheet							
28	TLC	(47) Extreme Coupon	Extreme Coupon	My 600-lb Life "Angel's Story"	My 600-lb Life "Laura's Story"	My 600-lb Life "Laura's Story"	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.	My 600-lb Life "Lupe's Story" At 600 pounds, Lupe spent the last 10 years in bed.					
29	DISC	(48) Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws: Full Throttle "One" (N)	Street Outlaws (N)	Street Outlaws (N)	Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theater (N)	Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws	Street Outlaws					
30	NGEO	(49) Finding Atlantis	Stonehenge Decoded			Easter Island Underworld	Area 51: The CIA's Secret				StarTalk						
31	TNT	(50) (5:15) *** Pacific Rim (2013, Action) Charlie Hunnam, Rinko Kikuchi, Idris Elba.	*** Man of Steel (2013, Action) Amy Adams, Michael Shannon, Henry Cavill.	(45) *** Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters Logan Lerman.													
32	USA	(51) (25) Breaking Bad "A No-Rough-Stuff Type Deal"	Breaking Bad "Seven Thirty-Seven"	Breaking Bad "Grilled"							(35) Breaking Bad "Bit by a Dead Bee"	(40) Breaking Bad "Down"	(45) Breaking Bad				
33	FOOD	(52) Modern Family	Modern Family	Modern Family	Modern Family	WWE Monday Night Raw					(05) Last Vegas ("13) Robert De Niro.						
34	HGTV	(53) Diners...Dives "Southern Spectacular"	Jonas (P) (N)	Jonas (P) (N)	Jonas (P) (N)	Cake Wars "Powerpuff Girls"	Cake Wars "Rose Bowl" (N)	Chopped "Taco Time!"			Chopped "Betting on the Farm"						
35	FXX	(54) Love It or List It	Love It or List It	Love It or List It	Love It or List It	Love It or List It	Love It or List It	Love It or List It	House Hunters	House Hunters	TinyHouseHunters	TinyHouseHunters	TinyHouseHunters				
36	CNN	(56) (5:30) *** 2 Guns (2013, Action) Mark Wahlberg, Paula Patton, Denzel Washington.	*** Jack Reacher (2012, Action) Rosamund Pike, Richard Jenkins, Tom Cruise.	Anderson Cooper 360	The Legacy of Barack Obama	Fareed Zakaria examines the Obama Presidency.					CNN Newsroom						
37	FNC	(58) The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly	Hannity			The O'Reilly Factor	The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly	Hannity			On the Record						
38	CNBC	(61) Shark Tank	Shark Tank			Greed "Silk Road: Digital Drug Dealers"	American Greed: Scam	American Greed "The Surfer Slayer?"			Paid Program						
39	BRVA	(63) Vanderpump Rules "Cold Feet"	Vanderpump Rules "Pride"			Vanderpump Rules "The Sociopath"	Vanderpump Rules "No Show" (N)	Timber Creek "Resting Chef Face" (N)			WatchWhat		Vanderpump Rules				
40	TCM	(64) (5:00) The Omega Man Charlton Heston.	*** The World, the Flesh, and the Devil (59) Inger Stevens, Harry Belafonte.	**** On the Beach (1959, Drama) Ava Gardner, Anthony Perkins, Gregory Peck.									Five (1951, Drama)				
41	SYFY	(65) (5:00) **** Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (89) Harrison Ford.	*** Insidious (2010, Horror) Rose Byrne, Ty Simpkins, Patrick Wilson.	*** Doom (2005, Sci-Fi) The Rock, Karl Urban.													
42	RFD	(62) American Rancher	Red Steagall	Horse Master	Inside Reining	Craig Cameron	Rural Eve. News	Rural America "Live"			American Rancher	Red Steagall	Product Showcase				