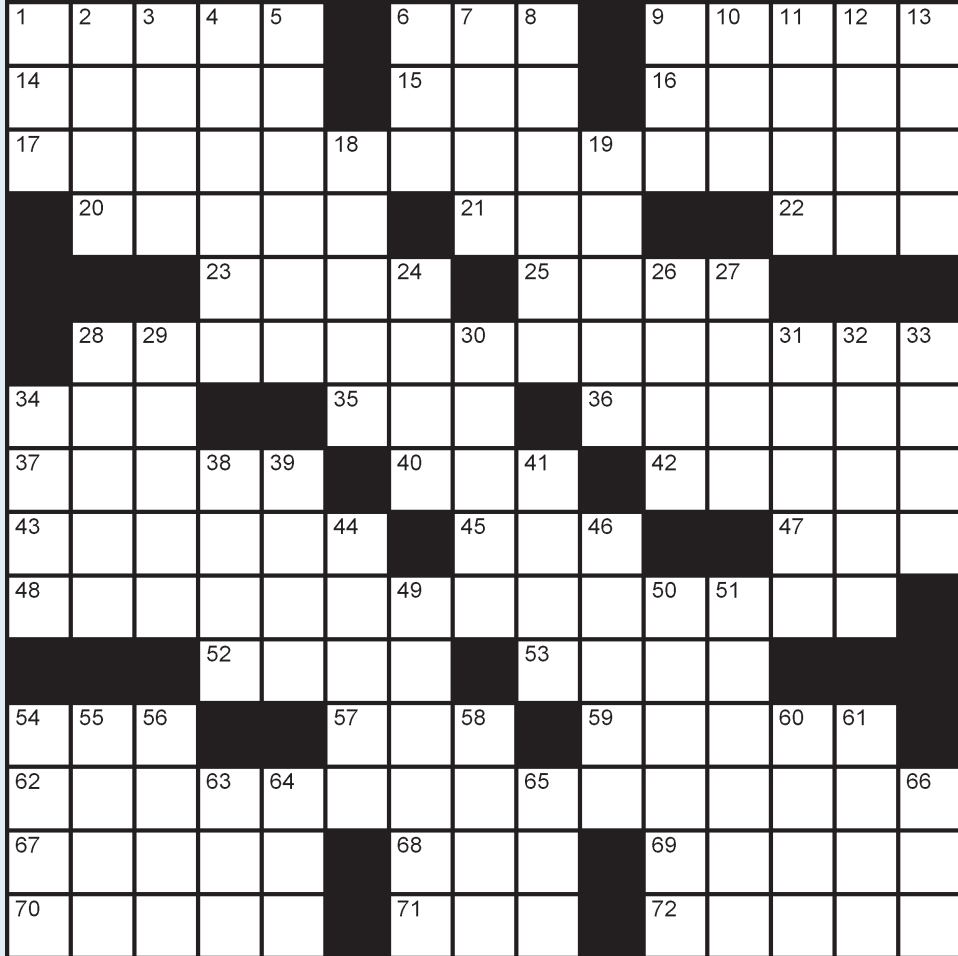


Theater of the Absurd by Bill Conner

Universal Crossword edited by David Steinberg



- ACROSS**
- 1 Pink cocktail, for short
 - 6 "Deck the Halls" contraction
 - 9 Cognizant
 - 14 Far from flushed
 - 15 Eon's subdivision
 - 16 Like a jet's boom
 - 17 Stage presentation about a manicurist?
 - 20 In check
 - 21 Drain, as of energy
 - 22 Crowded convention center, say
 - 23 "Hanna" star Creed-Miles
 - 25 Flat-topped landform
 - 28 Stage presentation with a trio of takeaways?
 - 34 Pronoun for Batwoman
 - 35 Bronze component
 - 36 Bygone Chrysler division named for an explorer
 - 37 Stop
 - 40 ___-Magnon
 - 42 Roadside stopover
 - 43 "Finally!"
 - 45 Clean air org.
 - 47 Uncle, in Uruguay
 - 48 Stage presentation about a religious service?
 - 52 Shears sound
 - 53 Idolize, informally
 - 54 F1 neighbor
 - 57 Canada's smallest prov.
 - 59 Ocean predators
 - 62 Stage presentation about mountain climbing?
 - 67 Art class fixture
 - 68 Lang. with no widely accepted writing system
 - 69 ___ Martin (007's car)
 - 70 Poem of lament
 - 71 Grass grown on a farm
 - 72 IOUs
- DOWN**
- 1 "Indoor" or "outdoor" pet
 - 2 Org. that monitors
 - 3 Close tightly
 - 4 The U.S., e.g., to the U.N.
 - 5 Safe, at the ballpark
 - 6 Earl Grey, for one
 - 7 Apt name for a florist or optometrist
 - 8 Italian sub meat
 - 9 Inquire
 - 10 Anguish
 - 11 Dreamworks' first film (1998)
 - 12 Puerto ___
 - 13 Agree with, as sentiments
 - 18 Citi Field ballplayer, briefly
 - 19 Buy stuff
 - 24 Really outstanding
 - 26 Cherry leftover
 - 27 Lhasa ___
 - 28 It's between eta and iota
 - 29 Gets better
 - 30 When some right turns are permitted
 - 31 State-run game
 - 32 Opted for home cooking
 - 33 Textspeak for
 - 34 "Account temporarily suspended" email, usually
 - 38 Typical teen's talk
 - 39 "NFL Live" channel
 - 41 Composer's numbered work
 - 44 Baloney, or a meat dish
 - 46 Oscar hopeful
 - 49 "Aida" and "Carmen"
 - 50 Airport takeoff area
 - 51 One way to pay
 - 54 Fencing sword
 - 55 Close very tightly
 - 56 Genitive, for one
 - 58 "Assuming I'm right ..."
 - 60 Prefix for "toxin"
 - 61 Edinburgh native
 - 63 Barrel with a tap
 - 64 Practice, as a trade
 - 65 ___ English Sheepdog
 - 66 Half of the word "inning"

HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 Impulsive Lunar Aspects



The moon, Venus and Uranus do little for impulse control. When it seems that short-sightedness and self-centeredness are ever-present, consider what it means to be noble-minded. Solitude and contemplation make space for quality thoughts, the sort that expand to include a higher good, a great number of people and a long span of time.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Having been lost at different points in your life, you consider it a blessing to know your purpose and fulfill it. Daily structures provide health-inspiring rhythms, even if the actions themselves aren't astoundingly healthful.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Needs are not weakness, and limits are not always negotiable. Pay attention to what your body is telling you. Sometimes, the tougher move is to take care of yourself instead of muscling through.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). In all matters of construction, including relationships, companies and physical structures, stability is the first tenant of the build. Do not lay a foundation on anything but the most solid ground.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The only makeover worth taking on is your own, as you'll get to steer the process, learn the lessons and enjoy the results. As for the others, inspiring them will be much more effective than trying to change them.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). It's a time to stop comparing yourself and focus on what you have at hand. In addition to a unique collection of talents and resources, you are truly gifted with a sharp mind and the ability to quickly learn what you need to do to succeed.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). The rules will go out the window, and everyone will act according to their understanding and feelings in the moment, allowing a prime opportunity for you to cleverly arrange things to benefit you and yours.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). When a baby cries in public, it activates all mothers within earshot to care. This is how you respond to the cry of a soul. Your heart reaches out to all cries within your radius of feeling.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Energy flows through everything. Though perhaps there is not "good" and "bad" energy, there is certainly energy more or less conducive to your thriving. Invite that kind, and make an unobstructed path for it to enter your world.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Activities are only as productive as they are healthy because the cost of anything that wears away at your health outweighs the benefits. What gets done is far less important than the spirit in which it is done.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You want to be the reason someone smiles today. It's easy for you because you've gotten in the habit of watching what people enjoy and looking for the opportunities to put it in their path.

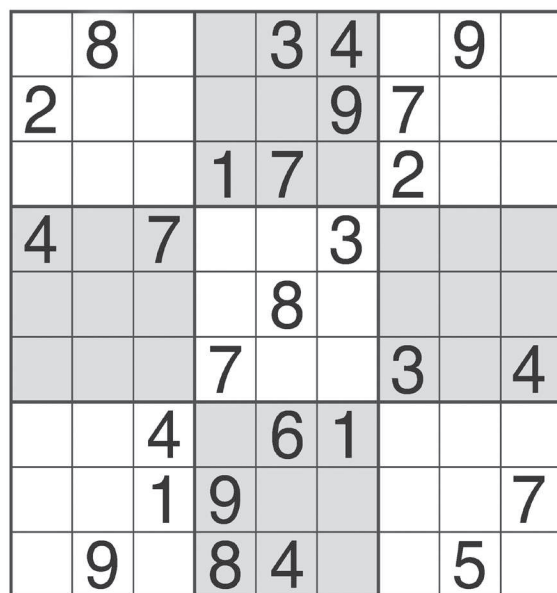
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). If only conflict were like a pest you could trap and carry far away from you and set free in some distant field. Well, maybe it is. Give it time and distance and see what happens.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Faith keeps you going when you lack evidence that your efforts will pay off. But don't rely on faith alone. Keep acquiring more experience until you see tangible results.

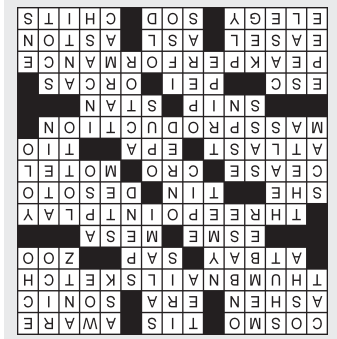
TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 24). You focus on enjoying people, and you dedicate yourself to the causes that improve their lives. It's a social value that keeps your days interesting and filled with love. A private wish will become a public prize. Apply new strategies for work and finance in 2022. There's more than one reason to learn and ride trends. Pisces and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 1, 4, 33, 8 and 19.

Universal SUDOKU

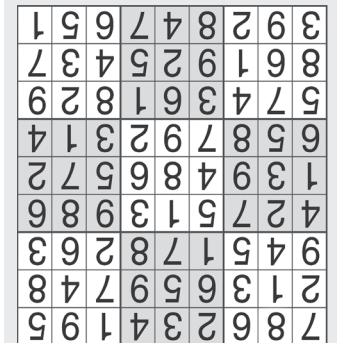
Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

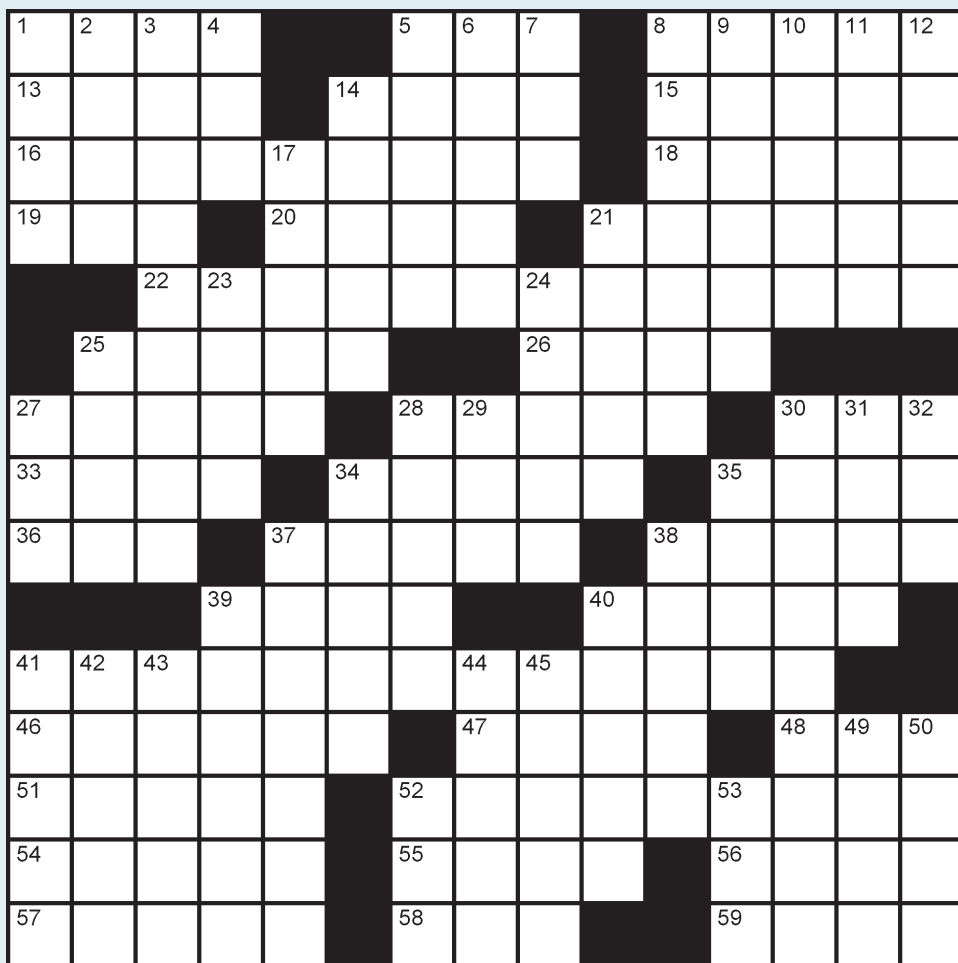


SOLUTIONS



Encircled by Prasanna Keshava

Universal Crossword edited by David Steinberg



- ACROSS**
- 1 ___ ghanoush
 - 5 "Desus & Mero" network, for short
 - 8 Loud kiss
 - 13 Letters in an urgent request
 - 14 PC brand
 - 15 Use for a snooze
 - 16 Chance to accompany a firefighter
 - 18 Between, in Paris
 - 19 Sheep sound
 - 20 Celine whose first and last initials are apt?
 - 21 One absorbs things quickly
 - 22 Path toward redemption
 - 25 Blemish on a shirt
 - 26 Luau garlands
 - 27 Nasal noise
 - 28 Like an even match?
 - 30 Awesome, to the Beatles
 - 33 Broadcasts
 - 34 Captivates
 - 35 The Big Easy, in brief
 - 36 Modern driving aid: Abbr.
 - 37 Laborious undertakings
 - 38 Comes to room temperature, say
 - 39 Ollie's pal in classic comedy
 - 40 Temple honoree
 - 41 Gem from a farm
 - 46 Tie in a low-scoring game
 - 47 Slippery swimmers
 - 48 Praise in verse
 - 51 It can come after "tea" or "table"
 - 52 Up to speed, and like all but four bookending letters of 16-, 22- or 41-Across
 - 54 Trace of color
 - 55 Berry whose name is 75% vowels
 - 56 The Irish Sea's ___ of Man
 - 57 Sinister smile
 - 58 Org. for Penguins and Sharks
 - 59 Brazilian soccer great
- DOWN**
- 1 Wire fence feature
 - 2 Bengaluru's continent
 - 3 Trouble-makers
 - 4 King Kong, for one
 - 5 2020 movie about a cartoon canine
 - 6 Dye used for a bridal tattoo
 - 7 URL ending for a nonprofit
 - 8 Ignored the alarm
 - 9 People who are under 18
 - 10 Health insurance giant
 - 11 Welsh ___ (dog breed)
 - 12 Prepare to pray, perhaps
 - 14 Extraterrestrial
 - 17 Let in, or let on
 - 21 Biases
 - 23 Rowboat propellers
 - 24 Is polite after a boring play
 - 25 Sound heard at a salon
 - 27 Droop
 - 28 High-tech
 - 29 Fix, as a gambling game
 - 30 1984 movie set in a town with a ban on dancing
 - 31 Friend in battle
 - 32 Common undergrad degrees
 - 34 Night driving hazard
 - 35 Pinot ___
 - 37 Something shocking
 - 38 Discontinue
 - 39 Fall guy
 - 40 New ___, India
 - 41 Expenses
 - 42 Detach, like a corsage
 - 43 Sierra ___ (African country)
 - 44 "As Time Goes By" actress Judi "She loves me not" flower part
 - 49 Tiny house resident?
 - 50 Sporting sword
 - 52 Fleming who created James Bond
 - 53 Sass

HOROSCOPES BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021 Countdown to Mercury Retrograde



The intent of words is often in conflict with their literal meaning, which matters a little today and a lot tomorrow. Listening better will be required. Mars and Saturn put a spin on the countdown to Mercury retrograde with intellectual energy triangulated to challenge our notions of intelligence, communication and contextual awareness.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're capable of great self-sacrifice, but why sign up for it unless it's totally necessary to the situation? Take the easy good times when they are handed to you, and live them guilt-free.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You intimately know a game because you've played it. When you celebrate the winner, you know exactly why. There's almost no glory in the trophy because nearly all the glory is in everything that comes before it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Because there's no guarantee that getting there will be any fun, the journey is a test of character. "Happiness is not a station you arrive at but a manner of traveling." -- Margaret Lee Runbeck

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Rushing leads to overindulgence. Moderation is more easily achieved when you actually appreciate the qualities of a thing. Slow down and enjoy.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Once the cards are properly shuffled and dealt, there is nothing anyone can do about which ones end up in hand. The skill is in getting behind anything you're handed and playing it with confidence.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Mark Twain suggested, "In his private heart, no man much respects himself." Give yourself a little more love and credit today. Only the delusional forget to struggle with self-doubt.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Your project is picking up momentum, and there's plenty of "if they could see me now" energy around you. But of course "they" can see you, and they are definitely impressed, though perhaps not showing it yet.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Better to have frequent pops of minor joy than hold out for payoffs in the far-flung future. Big events will be wonderful when they happen, but cultivate pleasantries, too. For the most part, happiness is sustained in small daily rushes.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The experts and gurus may have good information, but the very best teacher by far is your own personal history. Think about what went so right and what actions can be repeated to continue the trend.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Much will be lost due to pride, arrogance and intolerance, but not by you. While it brings you no pleasure to benefit from the failings of others, when justice is served, you would be wise to accept what's rightfully yours.

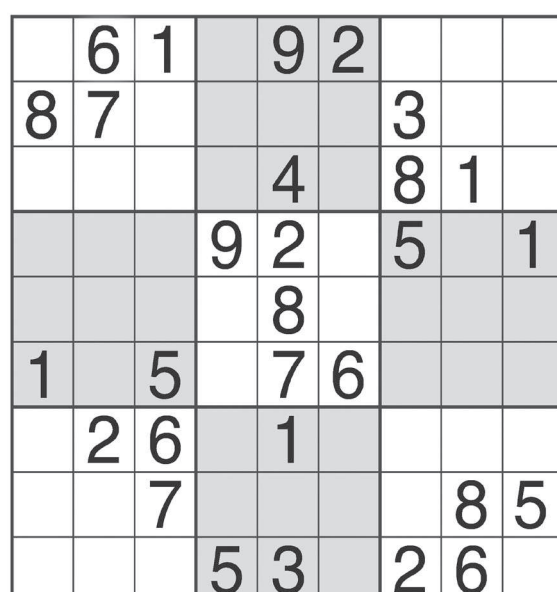
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You believe in luck, flirt with it, cultivate and conjure it. Even so, you know better than to count on it. You will work hard in the knowledge that your sweat will contribute to your good luck when it happens to come around.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Getting lost in series or book is preferable now to real-life drama, which is messy and often comes with unpredictable, uncontrollable and far-reaching effects.

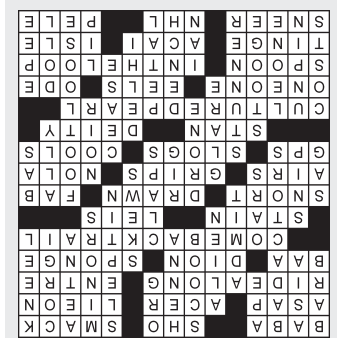
TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 25). As intangible and mysterious as love is, it's hard to love accurately, though easier to love fully. You'll give your all in a variety of relationships and reap benefits friendly and financial, romantic and practical. An unachieved goal from way back will circle around; this year, the timing is much better. Capricorn and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 12, 2, 9, 3 and 13.

Universal SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★★



SOLUTIONS

