



**DASHUHUA.** Performers at Great Wall Iron Sparks hit molten iron tossed by their fellow performers to create sparks in Yanqing county on the outskirts of Beijing, China. The ancient craft can be traced back several hundred years and is a vestige of northeast China’s steel-producing regions and a source of pride for generations of miners and their families. (AP Photo/Ng Han Guan)

# Molten iron creates bursts of light at Chinese New Year show

By Helene Franchineau  
The Associated Press

BEIJING — Inside a dark amphitheater near China’s Great Wall, four performers carry long, wooden spoons filled with molten iron. Each performer throws the iron against a giant wall. The iron lights up the night in an array of orange showers and sparkles.

As the rolling booms of fireworks and firecrackers echoed across much of China for the Lunar New Year, the group of performers staged a celebration with the centuries-old custom of *dashuhua*, or molten iron fireworks.

The tradition is a vestige of northeast China’s steel-producing regions and a source of pride for generations of miners and their families.

Several groups in Beijing’s countryside offer multiple performances each week, and the shows get even more popular around China’s Lunar New Year holiday.

More than 50 spectators attended the Lunar New Year show on a very cold January night.

As the audience started to arrive, 56-year-old Li Qingfa put on a cow-skin helmet, cow-skin shoes, and a sleeveless goat-skin jacket over thick cotton clothes. He and the other performers covered every part of their bodies.

“The performers may easily get hurt or scalded,” Li said. “So good protection is a must.”

The group practices and cleans the machinery required to produce the molten fireworks every day. Half an hour before, they turned on a large forge and placed several pieces of scrap iron inside. Molten iron began to slowly drip out.

Their show had five parts, interspersed with songs and dances. One part featured molten iron falling from the branches of a tree. The finale featured the four performers lighting up a wall.

“I have fallen in love with it,” Li said.

# Japanese arcade pioneer and “Father of Pac-Man” has died

By Yuri Kageyama  
AP Business Writer

TOKYO — Masaya Nakamura, the “Father of Pac-Man” who founded the Japanese video-game company behind the hit creature-gobbling game, has died. He was 91 years old.

Nakamura, who died on January 22, founded Namco, part of Bandai Namco, in 1955. It started out as just two mechanical horse rides on a department store rooftop but went on to pioneer game arcades and amusement parks.

Bandai Namco, formed in 2005 from a merger of two game companies, confirmed Nakamura had died.

Pac-Man, designed by Namco engineer and video-game maker Toru Iwatani, went on sale in 1980, at a time when there were few rival games, such as Space Invaders. The plucky yellow circle with the huge mouth was a big hit.

It’s estimated to have been played more than 10 billion times: Guinness World Record named it the world’s most successful coin-operated arcade game.

The game was non-violent but just challenging enough to hook players into steering the Pac-Man for hours through its mazes on the hunt for ghostly tidbits.



**FATHER OF PAC-MAN.** A woman walks past a nine-foot-tall Pac-Man made of LEGO bricks in Tokyo’s Shinjuku area, in this file photo. Masaya Nakamura, the “Father of Pac-Man” who founded the Japanese video game company behind the hit creature-gobbling game, died on January 22, 2017, at age 91, the company, Bandai Namco, said. (AP Photo/Ken Aragaki, File)

The iconic Pac-Man adorns t-shirts and other merchandise and inspired animation shows, a breakfast cereal, and even the nickname for Filipino boxer Manny Pacquiao.

The idea for Pac-Man’s design came from the image of a pizza with a slice carved out. Nakamura reportedly chose the word “Pac,” or *pakku* in Japanese, to represent the sound of the Pac-Man munching its prey.

“Pac-Man is a gamer-friendly game with tons of cute characters and that’s why it was loved for such a long time,” Iwatani said in 2015 at a New York red-carpet premiere of *Pixels*, which included Pac-Man creatures and featured him in a cameo role.

The game started out as an arcade item and then was at first played on the Nintendo Family Computer home console. It since has been adapted for cellphones, PlayStation, and Xbox formats.

Other hits from Namco include driving simulation games such as “Ridge Racer” and a drumming game.

Nakamura was a key player in Bandai Namco’s global growth. His pet saying was that his company delivered varied and total entertainment. He took pride in having fun and games for his job.

The company reported Nakamura’s death but would not comment on the cause or other personal details, citing his family’s wishes.

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

Difficulty level: Hard

#15246

**Instructions:** Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue’s puzzle

Puzzle #37811 (Medium)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

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

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