

Summary

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1. March Competition

The March competition with a Car-Men themed puzzle by Sirius was won by Mark Nichols of Rugby. Tough puzzle. Excellent solving!

Feedback included:

I loved this puzzle ... RE

... The grid, thematic concept, and clues generally are very good Eric, and very much in keeping with your established excellent style. A lot of head-scratching fun to solve .. BL

A wonderful plethora of thematic material. I'd forgotten Surtee's promotion of safety. AJH

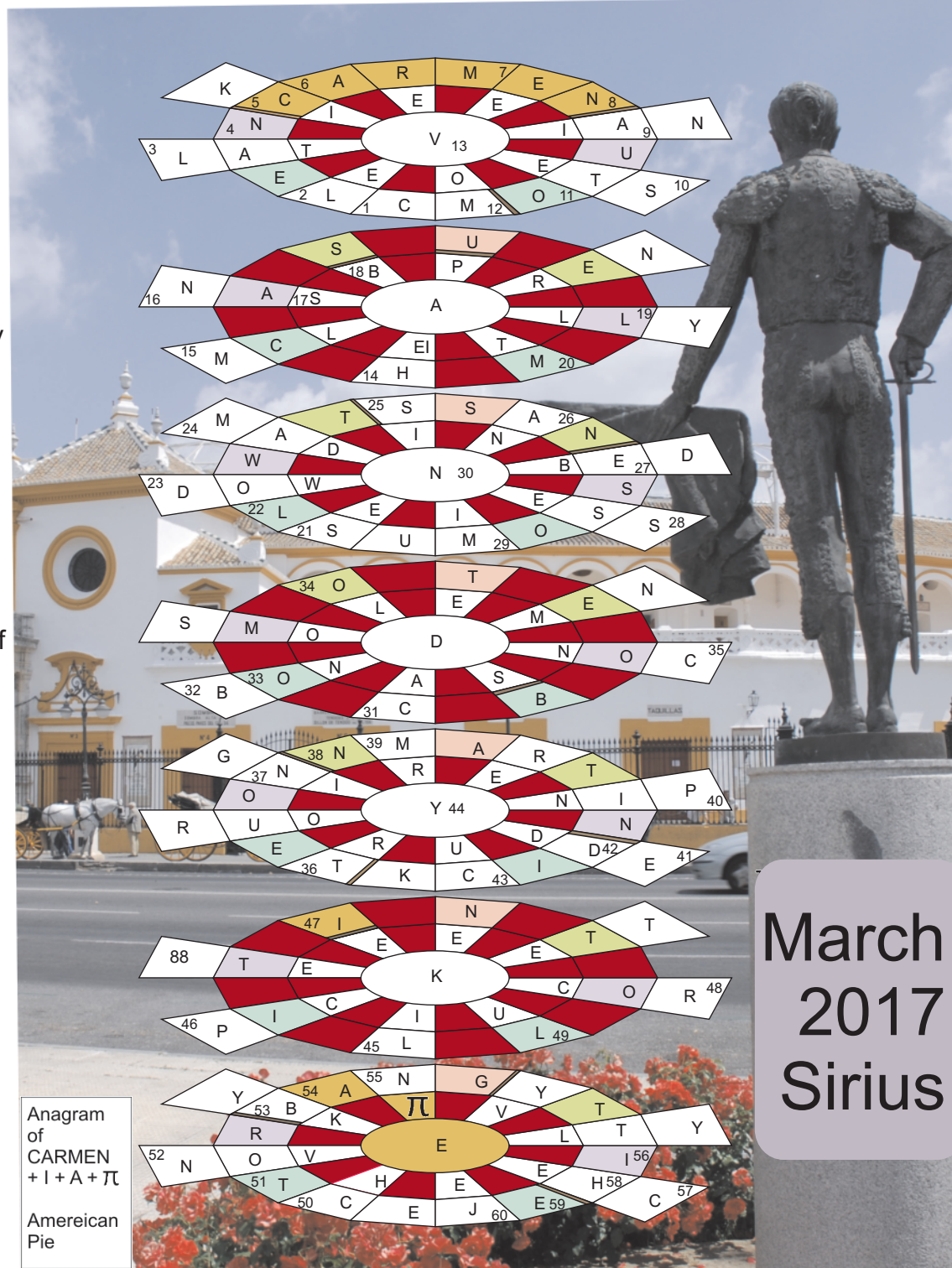
Just finished! This must be the toughest of your puzzles ever - an amazing collection of really difficult clues with head-spinning twists and turns. It must have taken you ages to put the puzzle together and I for one am grateful to have had the chance of having a go at solving it. Many thanks, JM

March entry attached. Another tour de force from you - definitely deserves a grand prize! Don't know how you manage it - I struggle to cope with one theme when compiling. Hope I've got it all right. JP

This one was a bit of a humdinger, especially to someone whose only interest in cars to date has been whether or not her own car would start in the morning! I didn't think I would manage it, but I kept coming back to it and completed a few more clues each time, but you certainly made me work hard for the answers! Even so, I am not confident they are all correct.

Many thanks for several happy solving hours (and some very frustrating ones) on this puzzle. CF

Bullring in Seville immortalised by Bizet's Carmen
Photography - Sirius



V. v. clever and v.v. difficult! JBu

Another tour de force from you - definitely deserves a grand prize!
Don't know how you manage it - I struggle to cope with one theme when compiling.
Hope I've got it all right. JP

What a great puzzle, Eric. I never thought I'd get near to finishing it but just day 24 to go. Some clues took ages for the pin to drop and I laughed out loud when I got the very naughty-in-so-many-ways clue for day 12. As for day 41, it is a classic case of not seeing what is in front of one's eyes, eg 88 .

I can't see that cell no 47 is clued anywhere so assume it is your way of ensuring that AMERICAN PIE has been worked out. A tour de force indeed. NB

I found this 3D by Sirius to be very challenging and was on the point of giving up several times. 'Don't dig that kinda music chum' and my Nissan going the wrong way which was Madness! Having solved all the elements except the significance of the seven pairs, still some head scratching there. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the twists and turns and without the Internet was not going to be easy as (American) Pie!

Many thanks. PC

Thanks for this fascinating puzzle and apologies for my late entry.
CH

Every month I think I won't be able to crack it and March was no exception! Those asterisked clues nearly drove me mad but after Mrs Sirius's comment that she found them "such fun", I attacked them again with renewed impetus and worked out why the word I thought must go in the gap was in fact the answer!

On now to the March extra.....and, even if I work out what the answer is, will I know where to put it! With very best wishes. JBr

I loved your puzzle, which took me a bit longer than usual but I really enjoyed it.

A few blasts from the past; " the Esso sign means happy motoring, call at the Esso sign"

"Bye Bye Miss American Pie, took my chevy etc"

My father used to give me a shilling on Sunday to buy a Beano and I used to spend the change on grapes. Little Plum your redskin chum is probably not PC these days.

Wacky races - I have a friend called Penelope whose email address is Pitstop!

Lots to enjoy here. 27C had me singing the jingle all day. 14di I loved my redskin clue in The Beano. Wacky races too. Had most trouble with 45di. Bye, byePD

The Beano of course set its own standard for political correctness, hard-hitting journalistic integrity, and thorough grass-roots research to present the language of native Americans with an uncanny authenticity by for example using the simple device of substituting the word 'HEAP' for the word 'very.

Eg

Big Chief: What Little Plum think Big Chief new squaw?"

Little Plum: "Heap good."

Big Chief: What Little Plum think Big Chief new car?

Little Plum: "Heap good."

Big Chief looks contentedly smug. Little Plum smirking behind straight face.

Tricky one this month, not my subject at all (apart from the Wacky Races characters). Never heard of Paddy Hopkirk (Marty Hopkirk of course, but Paddy?), never heard of Jackie Brenston, never heard of Earl Stevick...I'd forgotten about the "small family car" adverts for Durex back in the 70s too, so it took me a while to understand 12. Shame about Chuck Berry - are you psychic or was it one of those unfortunate coincidences which prevent The Times from using living people as clue answers? AW

I actually had a very enjoyable time catching up with Tim and working on the answers in a cafe in Chester (Lodge Cafe, Grosvenor park, worth visiting) when his wife abandoned us to go shopping!

I did not really understand the CHEEK BY answer – Tessa who?

I am at a disadvantage with pop music since I went deaf in 1956 but Tim was able to fill me in on these connections!

Enjoyed it all very much.NC

Huge apologies to Norah for overlooking what should have been obvious to me. Originally 'CHEEK BY' was in the grid as a 'filler' between themed entries. I had in mind the well-known 'Cheek by Cheek' Except I discovered weeks later and near the deadline that Fred Astaire was dancing 'Cheek to Cheek' and the nearest Chambers came was 'Cheek by Jowl'.

The lesson for me is to check all grid entries by dictionary before things get out of hand. But by the time of discovery, the practical solution was to find a patch rather than a complete re-design. The clue refers cryptically to 'Cheek by Jowl' with only the 'Cheek by' part being entered. JOWL is signified by a homophone and reference to Tessa Jowell, former minister under Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and a shadow minister too. Perhaps the baroness is passé.

I have now been able to solve enough of the puzzle to complete the entry, although I don't get all the references to 'car men', nor the links with "American Pie". In particular, I don't know Tessa at clue 8 or little Plum at 18, while I've not sorted the anagram at 41 - presumably a driver of a Rocket 88, a car new to me.

I must congratulate you on packing in such a lot of thematic material, even though the opera didn't get much of a look in, apart from the picture of the bull ring. PM

This was a heroic effort despite the large number of alien sub-cultural references.

This one was one of the toughest I remember completing, partly 'cos of the many snakes and "split answers", and partly 'cos the themes were alien to me.

And I'm afraid the execution wasn't quite up to your normal high standard, leaving me questioning several of the clues/answers. I am being especially pedantic, mind, and I'm an ardent Ximenean !

Here are some instances (assuming that I have them all correct !):

49 36di - Chambers gives TRYER in that spelling as "someone who is assiduous in trying to win", and I didn't see that definition in the clue - seemed like the clue had two cryptic indicators and no definition.

You are right of course. The clue was also deliberately double cryptic. I would argue (for a short while) that a 3D puzzle offers some license with all the extra checking. A Seven Dials grid even more so. For me, there are two crucial tests. One – is the clue solvable beyond a reasonable doubt in the context of the puzzle. This clue is eminently solvable.

But second test – does it meet with approval by solvers. And there you have me Sir!

31 7d - I didn't like "hoarse sound" => MUSTANG. In a clue you can give a word and then the answer is a homonym of that word but to give a homonym in the clue of a definition feels wrong.

I follow what you say and it certainly feels different. It is no argument to point to the delightful surface image of parent and baby coping with emissions. But I do think some extra 3D license can be allowed. There might be some tweaking to render the clue more acceptable but I haven't got there yet.

43 21di - I don't think "with MCLAREN" is clear enough to define SENNA - even given that CAR is the major theme

This is quite deliberate and helps establish the pairing theme of car with driver/singer. The clue's wordplay is clear and easy – Anne's back And even I had heard of SENNA.

1 6d - "lousy" doesn't mean NIT, it means NITTY

Quite right! But 'lousy' also means there is at least one nit involved? Wouldn't it be a surprise if a lousy sheep did not have a single nit?

30 39di - the only spelling I could find was MR YUK, not MR YUCK

There is a sorry tale to tell here. The only spelling is MR YUK except an incorrect spelling in one dictionary. One Look dictionary, unlike Chambers which never makes a mistake (?!!) has Mr Yuk incorrectly as MR YUCK. I should have checked other sources at the early stage of grid design. But at the time it was an absolute godsend and solved a meshing problem between themed entries. By the time that I discovered the error, we were very close to printing deadlin4es and re-designing the grid was not a proposition. It needed a patch. It could have been blanked but I liked the Trump reference.

The Hollies sang Doris Troy's 'Just One Look'. It's a pop song. The puzzle has several song references. Only One Look Dictionary has Mr Yuck leads to 'Just One Look ...' indicating the incorrect MR YUCK.

Is Mr YUCK a correct entry? I would argue that it is correctly reporting the incorrect entry in One Look Dictionary.

20 3di - I don't think "bird" means AVIAN. AVIAN means bird-like or of birds

Yes, according to Chambers, leading from Aves, Avian is only an adjective. But Oxford dictionaries and others also give 'avian' as a noun:

??????? This time of year is ideal for spotting certain boreal or arctic avians in the Northeast United States, thanks to the combination of low temperatures and fallen leaves.'

That raises an issue! When a solution is not in Chambers but is in another dictionary, we tag the clue and give the reference. So what should we do when a word in a clue is not in Chambers in the sense it is used in the clue? And yet it is known generally in that sense?

9 50di - a bit like 43 21di, I don't think "MCLEAN's" is enough to define CHEVY - even given that CAR is the major theme

Again, I hear what you say but Don McLean and Chevy are inextricably linked for eternity by the song 'American Pie'. The clue uses the puzzle's pairing of cars and men. If it were a question on 'Pointless' – what cars did these people drive? Don McLean and Chevy would score in the 80s I guess. Jackie Brenston and Rocket 88 might be a pointless answer.

8 57di - I didn't understand the cryptic bits of this one. And somehow "suggestion of some intimacy" doesn't feel correct to define CHEEK BY. (I'm assuming you meant "cheek by is a suggestion of cheek by cheek" or summat like that.)

This is another tale of woe. I put CHEEK BY in the grid intending to use 'Cheek by Cheek' as a solution to be clued. It helped mesh thematic entries in an early stage of grid construction. I might have been thinking of Fred Astaire. At a much later stage of checking, I realized that Fred was 'Cheek to Cheek' in his dance. Then came the awful discovery that 'Cheek by Cheek' was not in the dictionaries. Too late for major changes, it needed a patch. 'Cheek by Jowl' was in all the dictionaries so I clued it requiring only the 'Cheek by' part to be entered in the grid.

40 10di - (the one that gave me so much angst) - I don't think STEVICK is well-known enough to be clued by "Earl" solely. Maybe "Earl the teacher" or "Earl in languages" ... ? And also, the product that might get up your nose is made by VICKS, not VICK.

I agree STEVICK is obscure. As an educationalist, it sounded familiar. I should have checked it out. VICK/VICKS I did check out. The stand-by jar of Vick does indeed say 'Vicks' but they are obviously wrong. (!). Everybody I know calls it 'Vick'. You are right of course.

Having said all that, it was still very enjoyable

- I loved the initial theme (Carmen the Opera in 1875) being interpreted as "Men who drive Cars".

- I liked the use of the Greek PI at the bottom

- I chuckled (and am still smiling) at the definition for CONDOMS

A Ximonean might question the superfluity of 'grand prix'.

(PS Having been with 3D Puzzles for many years now, I think my personal criterion for judging a good grid construction is : when I look at the completed grid weeks afterwards, I can easily see what the answers are without referring back to the clues.)

I hear what you say and such grids are much easier to construct. There is another view that the grid is a vehicle for the puzzle. Does it add to the solver's enjoyment?

Some solvers love the twists and turns of all the snakes, arches, blends, reversals and see a lot more in a grid than straight unbroken lines. These grids have properties of word searches as well. Other solvers do not like that sort of thing at all.

We are most fortunate in having a large number of solvers prepared to give feedback on the puzzles which is absolutely invaluable.

This was one of the most challenging puzzles in the series for some time. I think I am beginning to get your measure, Eric, so there were several guffaws of hilarity and a few raised eyebrows along the way, as we have come to expect, but I suspect that, had the clues not been presented in alphabetical order of their answers, I would have struggled to complete the grid. En passant, however, although I have read your rationale, you will never persuade me that S. MOSS should come before SENNA alphabetically.

What an elaborate and interesting idea, with (at least) three interconnected themes taking us from Bizet through Carmen (nice photo of Seville) and Mercedes via Wacky Races to Don McLean – classic Sirius and, in my experience, the first ever appearance in a crossword of Luke and the Arkansas Chuggabug. The mind of a setter is indeed a byzantine and devious thing.

As with the Tower Bridge puzzle last year, I am amazed at how much thematic material you have managed to cram into the grid. The inevitable consequences of such richness of content are, of course, the incidence of very short words and the tortuous entry method, exacerbated by the circular format, which is already a significant conceptual minefield for solvers, or at least this one, both horizontally and vertically.

Some of Sirius' clueing would undoubtedly have strict devotees of the Ximenean school spluttering in indignation, but variety is the spice of life and I particularly enjoyed the clues for CHEEK, CHUCKLE, CONDOMS, HEAP, MUSTANG SALLY, PICKETT. Too few gripes to mention but the colon in the clue at 30 did hold me up, since, as per the blurb later in the calendar, it had me thinking we were looking for two unconnected short words.

Altogether great fun, then – let us never forget that is the raison d'être of crosswords and God forbid we should ever take ourselves too seriously.

All best regards KM

Had American Pie early on but linked to the film and did not see answer sheet confirming 8,3! McLean's Chevey and Levee. Kept thinking there should be something with the 4 strange plus multiply defined clues. If so, missed it. I liked the way there were many possible themes running through the crossword. Assume it is DOWN BED. If so then not a favourite. If not that explains something. Assume 47 needs the I. DM

Please find appended my effort at solving this fiendishly-complicated puzzle. It has so many intertwined themes that I became completely befuddled at times, and I marvel at the devious brain that can produce such an intricate challenge!
I do hope that April's offering will give my head a rest!
With best wishes and many thanks for the entertainment, SF

Hi Sirius, Thanks for a stumer of a puzzle! EL

March solution attached. This took me a marathon effort, but it was worth it!

This was much harder than the previous two puzzles, especially with its "complementary" clues. I'm not a fan of motor sport (apart from watching Wacky Races as a child), so Google and Wikipedia got a good workout. It was a fun challenge though. I especially liked the use of π and 88 in the grid. JT

Excellent varied selection of car men. We were very amused by 12. Great fun! N&SI

The hardest part was working out where to put the answers. HB

What a lot going on in this! S&CC

I fear this puzzle will receive rather fewer entries than usual, but hopefully it doesn't put solvers off heading into the next 9 months, as they won't get much harder than this.

One query – I couldn't find any entry that covered square 47, which needs to be 'I' to complete the AMERICAN PIE endgame – was this deliberate, or have I just missed something? KW

Just squeezed in under the deadline date... Very enjoyable and very clever clues. Kit has now been introduced to Wacky Races!
Robert just wondered if it was a bit tough for anyone new to the 3D puzzles. At one point I think he wondered if he would even finish it. RE&KB

Kit is an absolute terror with the bookies.

For me this is an age appropriate puzzle. Very enjoyable though the grid filling makes me cross-eyed! Thank you! BB

Last day again - and it's a Friday.
So mad panic here especially after being called out at 05:30 a.m. to deal with system failures at work <sigh>

For a month that has whizzed by it seems ages ago I did this puzzle.
I know it took me a few sessions and had great fun matching the 7 pairs and the 6 "complementary" answers but I found finishing it very fiddly - there was always another loose end that needed checking, and I'm not sure I have everything understood - there must've been a reason why I didn't send it earlier.

I liked the use of 88 and the Pi symbol (March suitable for that as it includes Pi-day March 14 ... 3.14 - geddit, watch out for Tau-day on June 28)
They helped rather than hindered

From my terrible scribble

PAIRS

Aston Martin Bondmen

Automobile Chuck [Berry - as in "Driving along in my ...]

Batman Batmobile

Chevy McLean [presume a ref to Ameerican Pie - "drove my Chevy to the levy"]

Chitty^2 Bang^2 Van Dyke [Dick of that ilk]

McLaren Senna

Mustang Sally Pickett [Wilson P]

Asterisked

13 DICK [Dastardly] The Mean Machine [Wacky Races]

25 MADNESS Driving in my car

25 LUKE Arkansas Chuggabug [Wacky Races]

28 MINIS Paddy Hopkirk

41 ROCKET 88 Jackie Brenston (not a song I knew at all)

42 S MOSS Mercedes-Benz [Stirling Moss]

I thought all 6 Asterisked were going to be Wacky Races people after getting Dick Dastardly.

These *'d clues were certainly the hardest and couldn't be completed without recourse to google in some cases.

E.g. I had never heard of Paddy Hopkirk, so when I deduced him from the wordplay it took a look up to understand how he relates to Minis

I still have one poorly or mis-understood clue:

12 (35Di) CONDOMS - I haven't understood how they related to Grand Prix Surtees cars

Stay well. AJR

Surtees cars advertised a London Rubber Company product. In its Grand Prix coverage, the BBC blacked out images of the car. After (/during) the Aids epidemic, public and BBC attitudes are very different.

A considerable challenge to someone not particularly familiar with the themes. At least one guess probably wrong! JS

Herewith my March solution. When I looked at this in mid month I thought that I'd better get straight on with it. Just as well and even then I needed some help from the Hints and Tips to complete it. This was as difficult a 3D puzzle as any I've tackled. What did the '88' signify, why was the pi sign in there why was there no obvious way of filling square 47. Plus two layers over and above the basic theme. CARMEN came relatively early as did most of the orange squares. I hazarded that the anagram might be PAN AMERICAN and it was much later that AMERICAN PIE emerged as the right solution. I presume that the 3 links were McClean, Chevy and Moss? The asterisked clues all had to be cold solved which proved a real test although S MOSS emerged of its own accord. ROCKET 88 proved the crux of the puzzle for me. I'd never heard of Jackie Brenston nor Rocket 88. With a timely intervention from the HINTS & TIPS I got this and then was spurred on to finish. A real tester; maybe more appropriate to November or December.

Thank you Eric for a really good work-out AG

Jackie Brenston's gramophone record 'Rocket 88' (an Oldsmobile) has been put forward by some as the first Rock'n'Roll record.

The calendar puzzle was amazing: how on earth did you manage to fit so many references and links into one puzzle? The jigsaw puzzle was fun too.AR

Attached is my attempt at March's crossword. It's definitely the biggest most hideously complicated crossword I've ever got anywhere near completing (since when did March have 45 days?) but got there in the end.

Actually to be fair it was joint effort between me and last month's winner. My mum had a few holes in her knowledge that I was able to help plug, specifically the music of Don McClean (which she didn't know due to her being deaf) and cars competing in the Wacky Races (due to her not watching a lot of children's tv in the 1970's – definitely a strong area for me).

Thanks very much for another great crossword. TC

It seems, in the field of astronomy, that your star is not one star but two, imaginatively labelled Sirius A and Sirius B. Regarding our much loved 3D crosswords and from what I know of your work in recent years this information fits neatly into a simple formula I have devised. When you are in collaboration with another contributor, either as Sirius A (grid design) and Setter or Grid designer and Sirius B (setter), then we can all look forward to a world we are relatively familiar with. But if, on occasions, such as this month, March 2017, you are responsible for both parts, that is to say , all of the puzzle, then boy oh boy , hold on to your hats.!Because, Sirius A plus Sirius B means doubly serious! What a tour de force this month's puzzle was! What a maze of ideas and associations! Thank you so much. However, it is with no small relief that, as far as I can see, these two stars do not appear in conjunction again this year. Phew! GS

Well, Sirius, you are certainly to be congratulated on producing the most amazing crossword! Apart from the originality of the grid, it must go into the record books as having the most convoluted themes.

Here is my attempt at a solution – prithee look kindly on it. MC

This was really fabulous Eric, so much fun, such clever clueing, I loved it! Thank you. And of course I knew what the mysterious 88 would mean Based on a recent puzzle of yours Radium! Only it didn't. I bet I'm not the only solver who made this early assumption. JR

I like the Seven Dials and associated grids because they accommodate more easily longer phrases and words giving a wider range of word lengths. However, it is not unusual two thirds the way through solving the puzzle to find solutions of unsolved clues materialising in the grid. This spoils satisfaction and wastes what might be super clues. In addition there is a larger number of solutions. This was the subject of much discussion with Puck and resulted in the Christmas Cracker clues in December. On completing this March grid I thought the puzzle would be too easy so I introduced some more levels and stages. It seemed a good idea at the time! It certainly produced a much harder puzzle than intended. Thank you all those solvers who put in a supreme effort to complete it. I take off my hat. Sirius.

Illustration of Bizet's opera Carmen, published in Journal Amusant, 1875. The image was used as a background image behind the clues.



2. Puzzle Notes and Clue Explanations

Carmen: Bizet's opera was first performed at the Opera Comique in Paris on 3 March 1875. This 132nd anniversary was the stimulus for a grid starting with Carmen and going on to Car-men, cars and their 'men' - being drivers or musicians. The intention was to view 'men as human generally but Penelope Pitstop just refused to stay in the grid and most drivers/musicians in the puzzle are male. Bizet's wife's name was Genevieve. Carmen's confidante was Mercedes. This encouraged the direction the puzzle took. Grand Prix, songs, films, cartoons, abound with cars and drivers/singers producing a rich pool to choose from in the grid construction.

The number of pairings was sufficient to demonstrate the theme by highlighting clues which could be paired off. Given the theme, this allowed cross-referencing and using the theme to provide definitions.

A further step was to clue one of a pair but require grid entry of the partner. The second was in alphabetical order but not the first. That was hard.

Finally, having attempted earlier to design an American Pie grid but failing, but noting CARMEN's letters were all in the Don McLean song, the idea for an anagram helped by the symbol for pi, wrapped up the puzzle and took account of cell 47. MCLEAN, CHEVY, LEVEE.

SOLUTION		Direction Clue Enumeration	Explanation
ASTON MARTIN	1	6d-5,38C Since a hundred lousy sheep turned back driven by 5 (5,6)	AS + TON + (NIT on RAM)<
AUTOMOBILE	2	9C,11d Vehide with no particular place to go according to 1d-5 (10)	Cryptic def lyric from Chuck (Berry) 'No particular place to go'
BATMAN	3	18di,26C-2 Bruce in tights providing personal service to British officer (6)	Reference to Bruce Wayne Batman's alter ego
BATMOBILE	4	18di,20d 3's ride beat limbo dancing (9)	(BEAT LIMBO)*
BONDMEN	5	32di Slaves who stick together with Pierce, Sean and Roger?	Pierce Brosman, Sean Connery and Roger Moore
CADET	6	31di Trainee officer takes part in replica detox drill (5)	hidden
CARMEN	7	5C What Genevieve's chap composed to Prosper (6)	Carmen originally a story by Prosper Merimee. Genevieve – Bizet's wife
CHEEK BY	8	57di This insolence from Tessa we hear, making suggestion of some intimacy (5,2)	CHEEK BY (Jowl) (Tessa Jowell)
CHEVY	9	50di 27's revolutionary five? Yes! (5)	CHE + V + Y Don McLean
CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG	10	57,58antiC,57,58antiC,53C,53C Show 32di-4 creator's notes to big noises often misreported by naughty boys (6,6,4,4)	Ian Fleming wrote CCBB
CHUCKLE	11	1d Berry will reportedly go down with a laugh (7)	Chuck Berry 'chuck'll'
CONDOMS	12	35di Undercarriage protection on Grand Prix Surtees cars (7)	Reference to John Surtees cars in Grand Prix races endorsing London Rubber Company products. (TV black out)
DICK (THE MEAN MACHINE)	13	42C*(4) One is driven animatedly mad - <i>Mince á</i> <i>Menthe. Ah!</i> (3,4,7)	(MINCE A MENTHE AH)* to 'Mean Machine' and Dick Dastardly in Wacky Races
DOWN-BED	14	23di Retire having last word to premier	Bed-down to down-bed
EDDYING	15	41di Duane spilling gin, swirling in liquid motion (7)	Duane EDDY + (GIN)*
EJECTOR	16	59C Accessory in some Seats eg one in 32di-4's 1, assisting passenger exit (7)	Ejector seat in Bond's Aston Martin
ESSO	17	27C-4 So, going back a bit, that's the sign of happy motoring (4)	ESS + O and old TV ad for Esso
HEAP	18	Little Plum's very old car (4)	Native American Beano character used expressions like 'heap good' meaning very good.

JEEPING	19	60di,55C-2 Driving off road to wow American with less smelly game of table tennis (7)	Wikipedia JEE! + PING (pong)
LATVIAN	20	3di About time! Large bird found in the Baltics (7)	L + A(T)VIAN
LEVEE	21	2di One might hold back a flood of conscripted soldiers we hear (5)	'Levy'
LIKEN	22	45di Compare setter after fifty with Barbie's boyfriend (5)	L + I KEN
LSO:ION	23	19d-3:56up-3 Players following score - half-Nelson: Sirius up for it – a little bit charged (3:3)	(ne)LSO(n) I + ON
LUKE (via ARKANSAS CHUGGABUG)	24	49di* (4) Solution needed after old boat engine sounds like before – half senile insect (8,9) Wacky UK Gran – such a gasbag – an Engine of State? (8,9)	ARK + ANS (AS) + CHUG + GA(GA) + BUG Wacky Races
Updated with definition		Wacky UK Gran – such a gasbag – an Engine of State? (8,9)	(UK GRAN SUCH A GASBAG)to Arkansas Chuggabug in 'Wacky Races' cartoon. Driven by LUKE
MADNESS* (DRIVING IN MY CAR)	25	24di*(7)Executing tee shot Mary (in C) bursts into song (7,2,2,3)	DRIVING +(MARY IN C)* To 'Driving in my Car' Song by MADNESS
MCLAREN	26	15di With re-training Merl can be representing 43's team (7)	(MERL CAN)* Senna drove for McLaren
MCLEAN..	27	12C Donald in short is a Scot generally fit and healthy (6)	Don MCLEAN MC + LEAN
MINIS* (PADDY HOPKIRK)	28	29di*(5)Irishman's American dance at Scottish church (5,7)	Rally driver PADDY + HOP + KIRK drove MINIS
MOVER	29	12di Rover heading off following motorway. Not a shaker (5)	M + OVER
MR YUCK Wikipedia Mr YUK	30	Trump? Just One Look shows this US hazard warning: year caught up in filth (2,4)	M(YR<)UCK MR YUCK is an incorrect spelling in One Look Dictionary
MUSTANG SALLY	31	7d,17di Wilson's baby making hoarse sound before sudden emission (7,5)	Wilson Pickett MUSTANG + SALLY
NASALLY	32	16di Old Teachers recognised friend through the nose (7)	NAS + ALLY NAS formed NAS/UWT with UWT
NAW:MOTO	33	4d "No!" Hamish might say turning pale: love Tom's new mobile (3:4)	WAN<

NE:NET:TT	34	8d Newcastle - symbol of light?: catch practice in cricket: races to heart of letter (2:3:2)	Post code and neon light: 2 defs: le(TT)er
NISSAN	35	30di,25C Japanese make Granny-Tours round ship with number one accommodation (6)	N(I)(SS)AN
NOUET	36	37antiC Tune played about love and French bag with herbs (5)	(TUNE)* around O
NOVELTY	37	52di 'Vet Only' convertible would be a new thing (7)	(VET ONLY)*
OLDSMOBILE	38	34di,20d Eg 40's former familiar aged phone (10)	Old + Old = OLDS + MOBILE
PICKETT	39	46di "Don't _____!" said by many a parent. Na, na na, na na" he refrained' (7)	Line from Wilson PICJETT's 'Land of a TRhousand Dances'
PINY New solution	40	40di-4 Button-hole with hint of Yak provides such coniferous scent (4)	PIN + Y
ROCKET 88* (Jackie BRENSTON)	41	48di*(6,88)Onassis guns to a hundred (6,8)	JACKIE + BRENS + TON to Kackie Brenston' record entitled 'ROCKET 88' possibly first Rock'n'Roll record. The 88 is in the grid./
S.MOSS *(MERCEDES BENZ)	42	28,29antiC-4*(1,4)7's companion whose potty mate is Bill we hear? (8,4)	Carmen's confidante – Mercedes Q Whose potty mate is Bill? A Ben's = 'BENZ'
SENNA	43	21di Anne's back with 26 (5)	ANNE'S< (drove McLaren)
SLOW AT	44	21C Unfortunately Lot was finding it difficult to pick up (4,2)	(LOT WAS)*
SLOW YOUR MUSTANG DOWN	45	21C-4,44di left,7d,23di-4 39's calming advice to 31(4,4,7,4)	Song lyrics
STEVICK	46	10di Earl with odd settee that might get up your nose (7)	SeTtEe + VICK Earl Stevick
SUMO	47	21antiC-4 Wrestling with awkward mouse when bottom parted (4)	(MOUS)*e
TIE ON:LCE	48	51up-4,33di-2:22up Attach formal wear: Sweet Italian dropping party for low carbon economy (3,2:3)	2 meqnings: (do)LCE
TRYER	49	36di Burst front right tyre if I'm a judge (5)	(R + TYRE)*
VAN DYKE	50	13d 10's driver picking up Flemish artist (3,4)	'Van Dyck'

3. March Extra

There is a terrific March Extra by Puck available for download from the website (posted 16th March). We aim to provide an Extra each quarter during the year. Deadline midnight 15th April.

4. Hints & Tips

The sometimes vital Hints & Tips series will continue shortly in April with fresh exuberance from A.Saille of Winchester - a solver and setter of considerable experience. I am most grateful to Adam for stepping into the breech and we extend our huge thanks and best wishes to 'Mrs Sirius' for nursing us through some tricky times.

5. Colin Dexter

We were sad to learn of the passing of Colin Dexter. Don Manley was very kind to introduce me to Colin with a view to asking him to write a foreword to our first BBC CiNA/RNIB Puzzle Calendar which he very quickly agreed to do. We were interviewed by Peter White on BBC Radio 4's *In Touch* programme for visually impaired. The context was making crosswords accessible to blind and partially sighted solvers through a computer program developed with Ian Humphreys in Australia.

Colin invited me to his home in Oxford to demonstrate the computer program. His wife Dorothy made the coffee whilst I fumbled around with computer leads, speakers, and other bits and bobs that just wouldn't fit together in a strange environment. Colin was most kind gently suggesting patience and calm saying that it didn't matter how long it took to set up. We talked about eye conditions, how his own sight was deteriorating, how hopefully things would start working soon, and how Hope had been last to escape from Pandora's Box. He did not use computers and was happier to be shown. Colin put me at ease.

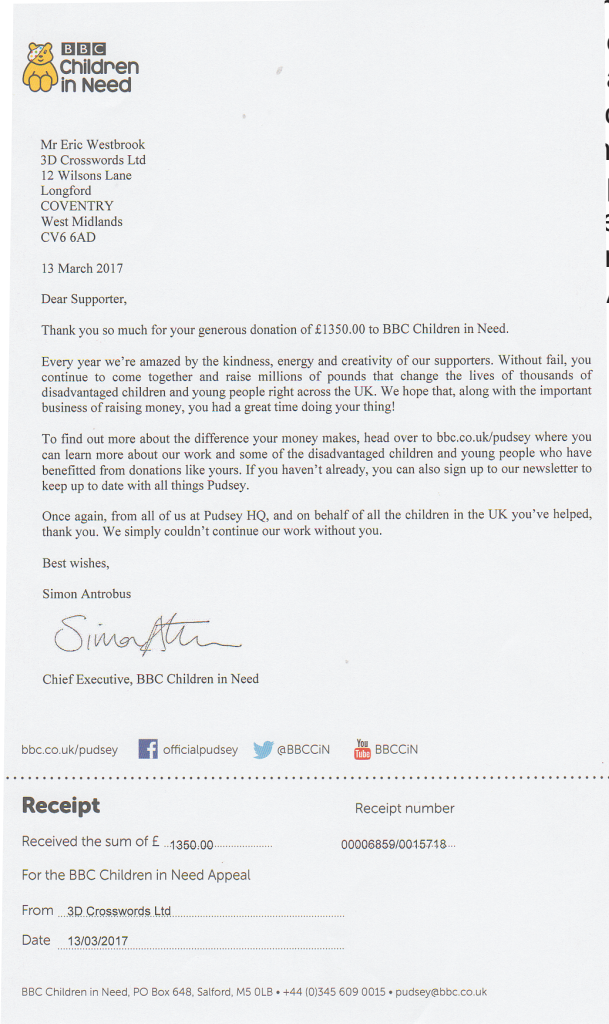
When the blind crossword program started up I became very aware of an extremely bright intelligence flickering and darting around the facilities of the program. Colin was anxious that we get it patented. The program was a winner! I agreed that it was but explained that the whole point was to make it freely available for anyone to use it in any way. That was the only moment of brief incomprehension.

Kindness, schoolmasterly good humour and cheer and a formidable intellect. Sir Jeremy Morse described Colin as "An Absolute Hoot."

Thank you for your help Colin.

6. BBC Children in Need Appeal Acknowledgement

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cific focus of RNIB Pears
itre and then contributing to
pool which supports the very
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ngsters funded by BBC
A.



Well done everyone.

Finally, thank you for supporting our project to help youngsters in need.

Best wishes Eric Westbrook

Registered Blind RNIB Member & Public Speaker
3D Crossword Designer Sirius

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