## 3D Crossword November 2019 Newsletter 11

This edition covers the following items:

1. Review of the October 3D Crossword
2. The Future of 3D Crosswords \& 2020 Calendar Sales
3. 2019 World Championship Challenge
4. Special RPM Award for Long Term Grid Design for 3D Crosswords
5. RPM Trophy Grid Design Competition 2019

## 1. Review of the October 3D Crossword

The October crossword was designed by Bozzy and clued by Enigmatist. The winner was Jos Tait from Australia. Congratulations Jos.

The rubric read; Noting the anniversary of a disaster turned to relative triumph in the 1960s. Solve 40 clues to partially fill the grid, and complete it by deduction (Day 13). Conduct a word search in order to also find the creator (11) of the original noted creation (21), and two further unclued works: (19) plus an anagram of red cells; and (6) plus an anagram yellow cells. Brackets show total letter counts.

Very intriguing, with lots to be done once the puzzle is largely completed. Coupled with Enigmatist as setter this will be a real test. Started steadily enough and noticed a good few music related answers emerging; possibly, and within a few more clues, probably a theme indicator. 1aw, 14ac CIRCUMSTANCES was a helpful early breakthrough with 'top' show a nice definition for Circus. From the letters that I had AMAZING looked obvious for 24ba but I couldn't fully parse it until I looked at Eric's Hints and Tips later and realised Carmen were of course the AA. The picture clue was more straightforward than normal and existed without an absolutely corresponding word clue. As always with Enigmatist some tough clues but lots of reward in solving them. My favourite was Day 12, clue for 28a (7) DISHELM with an amusing definition 'discover identity of knight' together with brilliant concise and theme consistent wordplay 'director is Henry Wood'.

And so to the end game. The yellow squares give VARIATIONS and the red squares MARCHES. The word search, as far as I am aware a new 3D innovation from Bozzy, leads to POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE, ENIGMA, CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR, DREAM OF GERONTIUS and EDWARD ELGAR. A bit of internet research soon reveals that the first performance of Elgar's piano concerto in e minor was widely regarded as a disaster and that in the 1960's Jaqueline du Pré's recording transformed it into a triumph.

## Solution to October 3D Crossword



Wordsearch and deduction from checking letters:
Edward Elgar
Cello Concerto in E Minor
Pomp and Circumstance (Marches)
Enigma (Variations)
Dream of Gerontius
Further references:
Adagio
Requiem
The puzzle notes the 100th anniversary of the disastrous first performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto in E Minor.

CONCERTO:
a ONCER ( $£ 1$ note) within a broken (hence anagrammed) COT.


## Clues and Explanations for the October 3D Crossword

| Day | SOLUTION | Direction Clue Letter Count | Explanation | Notes |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 1 | ADAGE | 15d Saw a blast from the past from the pit? (5) | A/DAGE rev Egad (=blast from the past) |  |
| 2 | ADAGIO | 21aw Notice exchange of brass piece for strings (6) | AD/AGIO |  |
| 3 | AMAZING | 24ba Spectacular master opens Carmen with spirit (7) | $M$ in AA/ZING |  |
| 4 | ANIMISM | 26to The imparting of soul: Ms Franklin's ultimate aim, I fancy (7) | ANIMISM anag MS N AIM I; ref Aretha F |  |
| 5 | ATOMISTS | 18up,4aw We think there's basic reason shifting intros to Steven Isserlis at most shows (8) | ATOMISTS anag S IAT MOST; shows = vb, Isserlist a cellist | Believers <br> in atomism <br> - supplies <br> 'O' of 'concerto' |
| 6 | BALLADS | 27ba Songs, the sort that plug formal events with music? (7) | BALL ADS |  |
| 7 | BEDWARD | 27to Heading for retirement, poet has broken Lloyd Webber's heart (7) | B[EDW]ARD <br> i.e.anag lloyDWEbber in BARD, ref Julian LW, a cellist | Edward to be found in the wordsearch |
| 8 | CELLO | 16d Room overlooking old bower (5) | CELL/O, which can be the player as well as the instrument |  |
| 9 | CIRCUMSTA NCES | 1aw, 14ac Men uncomfortable with acts in 'top' show situation (13) | CIRCU[MSTAN <br> CE]S anag in CIRCUS ref 'Big top' |  |
|  | (CONCERTO) | (1ac, 4aw-2 suggest no clue) (8) Word-search |  |  |
| 10 | COPED | 1d Managed a couple of conductors Du Pré occasionally slated (5) | C,O/PED first 2 letters + anag (Jacqueline) $D(u) P(r) E$, a cellist |  |

\(\left.$$
\begin{array}{|l|l|l|l|l}\hline 11 & \text { DEIFIED } & \begin{array}{l}\text { 25ac Put on a pedestal Yo-yo failed } \\
\text { to change (7) }\end{array} & \begin{array}{l}\text { DEIFIED } \\
\text { palindromic; ref } \\
\text { Yo-yo Ma, a } \\
\text { cellist }\end{array}
$$ \& <br>
\hline 12 \& DISHELM \& \begin{array}{l}28ac Discover identity of knight <br>

director is Henry Wood (7)\end{array} \& D IS H ELM\end{array}\right]\)| 13 |
| :--- |


| 22 | INARM | 8d Embrace Marin when performing (5) | INARM ref M Alsop |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| 23 | MAD AT | 30up Losing it with Juillard School graduate numbers? Not quite $(3,2)$ | (Yo-yo) MA/ DAT(a), Yo-yo Ma a cellist | Oxford Longman |
| 24 | MISSUIT | 30aw Ahead of set, one introducing Mørk is not fit (7) | M/IS/SUIT, Truls Mørk a cellist |  |
| 25 | MOANS | 9d Tips from Antonio Meneses, annoyed about National criticism? (5) | MOA[N]S N in A-O M-S anag, AM a cellist |  |
| 26 | NUMBS | 2d Musical pieces cutting Queen makes no sense (5) | NUMB(er)S |  |
| 27 | OLIVE | 12d Touch of Offenbach, as it happens the Bringer of Peace? (5) | O/LIVE, <br> Offenbach a cellist |  |
| 28 | ORC | 12aw Fantastic character from the heart of Worcestershire (3) | (w)ORC(s), <br> Elgar's county clue a definition of Elgar? |  |
| 29 | ORIBI | 11d Ruminating S African writer soaring ego (5) | ORIB/I rev |  |
| 30 | PAGODAS | 19aw Where some praise Mars, perhaps, during part of ballet (7) | P[A GOD]AS |  |
| 31 | PANDA | 20ac,22d-2 Characters creating overture for Paddington Bear (5) | P AND <br> A(ddington) |  |
| 32 | POM | 19ac First snatches of postoperative melody, "Rule, Britannia!" uplifting for me? (3) | P,O,M - the melody for Cello Concerto came to Elgar after tonsil op |  |
| 33 | QUI-HI | 7d Ravel's the person that's greeting rich colonial... (3-2) | QUI/HI; Ravel French |  |
| 34 | QUOTA | 7aw ...for Poulenc, the person that bit is missing share (5) | QU(i),(i)OTA, 'is' plural of ' $I$ ', <br> Poulenc French |  |
| 35 | RAGA | 6d-3,23to-2 The music made by Jelly Roll? (4) | RAGA rev | AR in ELGAR |


| 36 | REQUIEM | 6ac Music for the rest still timeless, <br> band covering it (7) | RE[QUIE(t)]M <br> e.g. Requiem <br> Aeternam - <br> Nimrod with <br> lyrics |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| 37 | SADHU | 13d Innocent, this holy man, <br> rendering "Chanson de Nuit" (5) | SADHU comp <br> anag; ref Elgar <br> piece |
| 38 | TUBAS | 37up It nevertheless recycles some <br> brass (5) | TUB/AS all rev |
| 39 | UNDAM | 10d Perhaps release the Severn <br> Suite, and add later improvements? <br> Only second ones (5) | U,N,D,A,M <br> second letters, <br> ref the Severn <br> Suite, Elgar |
| 30 | UREDIUM | 33 ba Clobber that is initially used <br> with drum reproduction unit - some <br> hi-fi reportedly(7) | UREDIUM anag <br> IE U DRUM <br> A mass of |
| 4yphae and |  |  |  |

## October 3D Crossword Comments from Solver's

Love the concerto and loved the crossword. Tricky though. DH
Well that was fun. Thank you for a clever and entertaining grid. Btw: Most months I find the Hints \& Tips an additional luxury but when Enigmatist sets the clues they become an absolute necessity! Fingers crossed, I hope I have nailed him this time. GS

Well done to you - a very well put together challenge! Lots of good clues, some of which I struggled to parse. Favourite definitely 25ac - misdirection to Yo-Yo Ma puzzled me for ages! JP

I enjoyed searching for the "hidden" marches and variations and of course Elgar himself, which took a lot of finding after the relatively obvious (B)EDWARD! A worthy tribute to our great english composer. SB

A work of art, as usual AH
I needed lots of help to make the 100th anniversary link but still enjoyed saving this one JA
Look no hints needed MM
What a coincidence as we saw Sheku playing Elgar at B'ham Symphony Hall on Saturday. RE

Well we have to thank Bozzy for giving us a theme that was familiar territory and some impressive (even obsessive) thematic cluing by Enigmatist. It was tough though - under the circumstances its amazing we solved our quota of enigmas and only by working ion concert! J\&JH

We found this quite taxing and are still uncertain about a couple of solutions. DE
An impressive amount of thematic material, both in the grid and the clues! Some rather obscure terms in the latter part of the month, but nothing a combination of Chambers Word Wizard, Wikipedia and very careful reading of the clue couldn't resolve. Crafty indeed JT

Not too tricky but a word or two I hadn't met before. Finding the extra's took most time MJ
Clues led to DREAM OF GERONTIUS quite early with EDWARD in 7 and ELGAR in 32up. Had to look up the CELLO CONCERTO problem though no problems with the anagrams for MARCHES and VARIATIONS. Quite a few new words but clues fitted neatly to allow for simple confirmations DM

How do you go about including so many themed entries - Dream of Gerontius, Pomp and Circumstance marches, Enigma Variations, Edward Elgar - as well as associated clues - Chanson de nuit, Rule Britannia ??? Thanks for a wonderful site. ST

Not too difficult to discover the theme, though I hadn't known that the premiere of the concerto had gone so badly till I looked it up. Frank Paul's drawing didn't help, as it was only afterwards that I realised it was of a ONCER in a (slightly distorted) COT. don't get the 'pit' part of the clue to ADAGE on the 1st, and I guess there's something in the Merriam-Webster definition of UREDIUM that accounts for the reference to 'hi-fi' in the 40th clue, as that in Chambers doesn't seem to do so. PM

Not being a musical person this took me longer than it might have PD
What a treat. This topic really suited Enigmatist and the many surfaces underlining the theme were a delight (who knew about Felix Salmond). We greatly enjoyed this N\&SI

## 2. The Future of 3D Crosswords

As most of you will know the 2020 3D Calendar is now on sale. The flyer for the new calendar is below. Please buy one.
As I wrote in the October newsletter Jos, Nora and I will be continuing in our roles through 2020 to ensure a seamless continuation of the current service to 3D crossword solvers. There were no volunteers to fill either the Short Term Newsletter Editor role nor the Hints and Tips Contributor role. In the circumstances there will be only a very limited edition of the newsletter for February, March and April and no hints and tips going forward. In case there is new interest out there I have advertised both roles again:

1. Short Term Newsletter Editor - I am in Australia for January, February, March and April 2020 and need a volunteer to take on the newsletter editorial role for just 3 months. I can produce the January newsletter before I leave and the May newsletter on my return. I can provide full
advice and guidance before I leave and will be available by email during most parts of my absence. Is there anyone in the 3D solving community who would be willing to take on this quite straightforward role for just 3 months? We need you.
2. Hints and Tips Contributor - Does anyone fancy the opportunity of filling this role. Pick out six to eight clues and provide a hint/tip for solving each of them.
Please email me on alangoddard100@gmail.com if you can help with either of these two tasks. Alternatively please telephone me on 07764895657.

## 2020 3D CROSSWORD CALENDAR



It's here! The brand new 2020 3D Orossword Calendar is now available to order through the website: http://www.calendarpuzzes.co.uk/calendar-puzze/

As usual, there are 12 beautifully presented 3D Orossword puzzles by some of your favourite crossword compilers with another selection of interesting and devilish themes.

This year, both a printed version ( $£ 13.50+\mathrm{P} \mathrm{\& P}$ ) as well as a virtual downloadable version ( $£ 12.00$ ) are available.

They make great Ohristmas presents apparently (!)
All profits from the sale of the calendar will be split between PNIB and BBCChildren in Need.

The 3D Orossword Calendar team thank you very much in advance for your support.

## 3. Notice of the 2019 3D Crossword World Championship

The 2019 World Championship is a clue writing competition which will be judged by Sirius himself. This enables all those that dislike creating grids to have a crack at being World champion in what is potentially our final year. Anyone who has solved twelve 3D crosswords in the year is eligible to compete. We need a clue for:

## SWEET FANNY ADAMS $(5,5,5)$

Sirius will be looking for original entries in the best possible taste. He will apply the following criteria:

- Your clue should be solvable and fair showing precision, concision and wit.
- Compose your clue as if destined for a 3D Crossword where the extra cross-overs allow a little more licence.
- Please provide a full explanation of how your clue leads to the correct solution

The deadline for entries is midnight January 15th 2020.
At the end of the November, Nora will message those of you who have solved a qualifying number of entries (or are almost there) to remind you of your eligibility for the World Championships competition.

## 4. Special RPM Award for Long Term Grid Design for 3D Crosswords

Eric has sent me the following contribution for inclusion in this months newsletter. It is entitled: RPM Trophy Award 2013-2019 "Sock Drawers"

Alison Ramage and Andre Sonnet (Aramis) have designed fascinating and innovative 3D crossword grids since the early years of our slightly bonkers BBC CiNA/RNIB project, including two world championships (note background). You may recall the beautiful star diagram involving signs of the zodiac. It was a logistical triumph to include them all, and an aesthetic delight to do so in such a beautiful way. And above all to have the heart and the determination to see the design through and make a terrific contribution to our fun in solving 3D crosswords and help youngsters in need. Star grid designers. Star setter. Star puzzle. They have also responded to appeals for more grids. Indeed, we have a treat in store in December with a most unusual

3D/2D grid. It's 2D but it's 3D!!! Stunning design. Stunning setter. Brilliant puzzle.

Ray Parry-Morris and I (Eric in his Sirius guise) often referred to a particular period of time in grid construction when there was a lot of fiddling and jiggling of words, hunting and shunting around, until everything fitted in nicely. That
 period can last just hours, or days, weeks. Sometimes a refreshing break is needed. Something to wipe clear the brain. We found tidying the sock drawers an ideal therapy!

Alison Ramage and Andre Sonnet (Aramis)

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Hi Eric,
Andre and I were very pleased and honoured to receive our lovely sock
drawer safely in the post! It is such a super souvenir to have, and
completely in keeping with the crazy wonderfulness that surrounds the 3D
crossword world you have drawn us into.
Thanks so much for thinking of us!
Alison and Andre
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RPM 2013-2019
Aramis
BBC CiNA 3DC

## 5. Notice of the RPM 2019 Grid Design Competition

The 2019 RPM Trophy Task is to design a 3D grid suitable for a puzzle in 2021 of roughly Saturday Guardian level and to write a clue for one of the solutions. Anyone may enter the 2019 RPM Trophy competition

The deadline for entries is midnight January 15th 2020.

Solvers enjoy themed puzzles and anniversaries might be useful. There is no requirement however to to link a theme with an anniversary. The judges will consider the question, 'Does this grid have the potential to make a good/great puzzle?'

## Judging

Initial judging will be by Bozzy (Nora) who will select the top three entries. Curmudgeon (Shirley Curran) and her husband Charles will then select select the winner and runner up.

## Criteria for Judging

How does one judge such a challenging task fairly? Is it done purely by outcome or should weight be given to the skill with which the developing grid has been manipulated? If the last is conceded, how can the judge see all that should be taken into account?

The grids will be marked by the following criteria:

1. The grid must 'work' eg clue directions, real words
2. Fit the brief eg year 2020 and appropriate to Saturday Guardian level
3. Show clarity of presentation eg anniversary/theme clearly stated, themed words are clearly identified (highlighted or asterisked), sources of non-Chambers words given.

4 Size of grid. Larger ones are more difficult but can provide better thematic opportunities
5. Choice of grid appropriate given the possible themed words.
6. Variety of word length reducing five letter fatigue and a phrase or two is welcome.
7. Ratio of the more commonplace to obscure words
8. Number of 'accommodations' eg bars, extra black cells, symmetry loss -.. yet acknowledging the skill with which these have been employed Note: bars in large grids are not a problem if the 'bits' are locked in three dimensions eg the 4:3 barred arrangement in a Seven Dials grid.
9. Percentage of grid given to themed words (given that we haven't demanded a theme this is less of a requirement than in previous years)
10. Overall impression. 'Will this grid make for a good/great puzzle?'

Credit will be given for other noteworthy aspects eg new designs, new ideas and the unexpected, and wit/humour eg RPM's 007 where we allowed 2 letters from OOGONIA or Mang's double 'U's.

Ways in which the grid itself fits the theme. Eg Pickles in June 2018 Space Invaders, 45 in December 2017, Jack Nichols Bazalgette sewerage system

Ways in which the planning of the grid and solutions lead to planned manipulations eg ABC Murders where 45 gave a word list of clue solutions and then another list for grid entries after decapitation.
'Wholeness' or completing the set, can be very attractive eg Logogriph and Austen together with use of intervening layers, Aramis' Star of David Hexagram (named by Agd), all twelve signs of the Zodiac, as well as innovative design.

Bear in mind that we ask setters to take on a word set which they have not chosen themselves. Some words just lend themselves to a witty clue. Others make the heart sink. Of course nothing defeats our intrepid team!

## Presentation

Clarity is important. These are the requirements for presentation:

1. Grid with quite large clear letters and numbers (if possible) in black ink/biro/felt tip
2. The theme or anniversary with a date
3. A word list of the solutions and their directions eg 1ac and letter counts (see Word table below)
4. An indication of which words are theme words or phrases (asterisks preferred)
5. An indication of non-Chambers words other than Proper nouns and a reference source.
6. Number of cells used by letters from themed words
7. Total number of cells in the grid

6 and 7 used to calculate percentage of thematic cells in the grid.
8. Number of words you judge to be obscure
9. Number of bars (remember to include those in the vertical direction)
10. Use of the same conventions ( $\mathrm{ac} / \mathrm{ba}, \mathrm{aw} / \mathrm{to}, \mathrm{d} / \mathrm{up}$ ) as those developed in the calendar series.

If you follow the above points, your entry will be judged as having clear presentation.
There is an exemplar at the end of the Newsletter. To reduce the burden on the judges we shall be fairly strict on presentation.

Good luck! And remember to have fun doing it! A list of your words in electronic form is most helpful. The Word table headings below are what we send to setters with your list of words filled in, seen in the 'Clues \& Explanations' section in the Newsletters.

| Day | SOLUTION | Direction Clue Letter <br> Count | Explanation | Notes |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
|  |  |  |  |  |

It would be great to leave two spaces between the directions for your word and the letter count.

## Notes on Grid Design and an Exemplar

These are much as they have been but there are a couple of adjustments in the light of experience and feedback.

- Bars: In a small grid eg $5 \times 5 \times 5$, bars affect the 3 D quality by reducing the number of checks on solutions. Such grids can usually be completed without bars with thought. However, in larger grids eg $7 \times 5 \times 5$ and the Seven Dials cylindrical grids, bars have less effect and even none at all. If a line of seven is split 4:3 and the splits have two checking letters, that seems to be fine with me and should not incur penalties. In these grids, particularly Seven Dials, bars give rise to more variety in word and phrase lengths and
that's good. We have not shown bars in the down direction up till now, but they are still there! We are experimenting with ways of showing such bars. It is worth bearing in mind that setters generally are not fond of too many short words to clue.
- Chambers Word Wizard, CWW, is generally great for entering partial words to find words in Chambers that fit spaces in a grid. I wrongly assumed that a word in CWW would be in Chambers print. Not so all the time. Do check.
- The Tie-break grid designs form a pool from which to select for the next calendar series, but this is not a criterion in the judging. Feel free to be innovative and show off your designing skills. However, if you would like your grid to appear and be clued by a top setter, bear in mind that our print format accommodates up to 42 words for clueing. Having said that, Oberto came up with a brilliant idea in the 'Carry On' puzzle where a number of themed solutions were not clued at all. This added interest. Grid designers are honoured by having the designer's name by the grid and underneath the setter's name in the title.
- Snakes are solutions that go round corners. In the early days we saw them as a device to get round a problem of completing a grid. Now we are more used to them, a snake might be deliberately chosen at the beginning to accommodate words of lengths beyond the dimensions of the grid. They can be a way of making better use of the space in a 3D grid. Bozzy, in her Arizona snakes grid a few years back made excellent use of .. well, snakes! Logogriph managed to fit what seemed the entire cast of The Magnificent Seven. Fantastic! Feel free to use them up to a point. . Likewise reversals.
- Directions for snakes become clunky when there is more than one turn. But if the cells involved can be highlighted in the grid, they are very easy to follow and fill in. Too many highlights and the diagram become confusing. There is a balance to be struck between getting another thematic word into the grid, and the cost incurred in use of an obscure word elsewhere or too many snakes perhaps. Some solvers love them and some do not care for them at all.
- 3D grids offer certain advantages to solver and clue writer. The solver has more crossovers. One solution helps to solve more of the remaining clues than in a 2D grid. There is less chance of being stuck in a corner. For the same reason the clue writer can afford to be more imaginative on occasions, as Araucaria observes in the Foreword for our website. However, the setter has first to construct a word grid in 3D. One day there will be generally applicable computer programs to assist this task. But for now it is a matter of listing words you would like to employ, choosing likely grid sizes and styles, making broad plans and then using trial and error, hacking away through dictionaries to find unlikely words that fit. One can get lucky quickly. I remember Curmudgeon's excited email on her Rubber Soul Beatles grid. Amazing! Or one can invest huge amounts of time only to be thwarted in the last word to complete an otherwise excellent grid. You can reduce the element of luck.
- Analysis of crossword grids shows that when crossword solutions cross over each other (checking letters) there are particular sets of letters that occur more often than others. ETAOIN SHRDLU occur regularly. If you play Scrabble you will know the high scoring letters eg $Z, X$ are best avoided as checking letters. If you put inflexible combinations in at the start you often have to stick with them throughout. You will be keen to include themed words and they might contain awkward letters. This can lead to more and more clunky grids with large numbers of bars which reduce the 3D quality to somewhere between 2 and 3 . It is sometimes better to sacrifice a themed solution to help complete the grid at the end without recourse to obscure words. It's a question of balance. Think
carefully about the kind of grid that will best suit the words you would like to use. If you can't persuade them to stay in the grid, perhaps the setter can use them in the clues? An intended anagram of a theme word would exemplify this and is just as good as the themed word itself. Your choice of theme has a great bearing on flexibility in construction.
- Consider RPM's brilliant grid in 2014. In choosing Flemming and Bond, there is a wealth of literature and films to provide a very large list of possible words. RPM then used Moneypenny to shoot off on another front of currencies and coins. This adds interest, giving the solver more to ponder and solutions less predictable and more pennydropping. It is worth giving theme choice a good long think. It will reduce the length of the marathon. To a sprint perhaps!
- There are decisions to be made, balances to be struck. There are 'accommodations' to be found or rather 'more creative ways of distributing letters to form words in odd shapes'! After all what is so special about linearity in a solution? Why shouldn't it bend round a corner? Algebraic functions do this all the time. Some will suddenly break off and then continue elsewhere with no apparent link. That reminds me of Gin's Orwell/Huxley puzzle with the wonderful invention of the mezzanine floor. Should Cluedo have a monopoly on secret passages. It's time a Sirius puzzle had a worm hole or two.
- Symmetry pleases the eye but would a blind solver see it as necessary? Ximones did not bind himself to such rules although we often bind ourselves to Ximones. Many finalists in previous years will have agonised for hours, days and weeks re-arranging the sock drawer in between-times, to produce better and better grids. They will have balanced the number of themed words they can fit in, with the number of obscure words they are forced to employ in order to complete the grid. Names of girls and boys are seized with gratitude. The Bible and old maps of The British Isles come up trumps perhaps.
- Words take an interesting course. They join together or split into two. They might change direction and go the wrong way! They might form a multi-strand alpha helix!! They might do something we haven't thought of before but would be great fun to try. These 3D puzzles are serious fun and no longer a novelty, but there are always experimental areas to explore. We have only scratched the surface. The occasional obscure word is not such a problem in 3D because it is very likely that all the checked letters are known. So beware obscure words that cross? What is important to know is that the word can be found. Our first source of reference is Chambers Standard Reference Dictionary. Solvers might access the printed form or use Chambers Word Wizard :

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http://chambers.co.uk/puzzles/word-wizard/
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- It can happen that a word pops up on the Wizard but is very difficult to find in the book. This might be due to different editions or to tenses which are not given or maybe just the paranormal again!) Watch out for common endings of words which in themselves are not words.
- A much larger second source is One Look Dictionary which is a collection of a large number of dictionaries: http://www.onelook.com (although not Chambers) One Look has a great deal more proper nouns as well as slang words and expressions. Beware The Urban Dictionary! I would avoid it unless absolutely desperate! Both these internet sources have partial word finds. Scrabble solvers can be useful too. You can use the blank letter tile or both of them in cases where you want two words related by subtraction or addition.
- If a word of your choice is in these dictionaries, then another solver can find them. That is a crucial test on whether you should use that word. Non-Chambers words, other than proper nouns, should be indicated and a source given.
- Another useful engine is Google particularly if you have first and consecutive letters. If your word is not in Chambers, not in One Look, and does not come up in Google .... it may be considered obscure even though it appears in respectable paper source such as Barnaby Budge with two B's. The problem is that even the most erudite solver does not know everything and does not necessarily have a complete crossword library.
- If your word is in The Compact Oxford Dictionary you can be assured that it is not considered obscure. But obscure words are often really interesting! So we should use them shouldn't we? Now and again? If we have to? One maybe two perhaps. Three starts to feel heavy, particularly if they cross in the grid.
- Of course nothing defeats our intrepid team! Sometimes the choice of theme does not lend itself to large numbers of themed words. For example, a composer will have a limited number of well known works and these might have long titles that reduce flexibility. One seems doomed to a low percentage of themed cells in the grid. But let the imagination slide sideways a little. Is there some way of bringing in a wider range of words? Take VERDI for example. Once you slip sideways to GREEN .... the world is your lobster. Or go to DRIVE as an anagram or something else a little bit whacky. You might see your topic as the trunk of a tree with hoped-for branches coming from it. But perhaps there is another trunk for which your chosen theme is just one branch. There are ways to boost themed cell percentages by using words hidden in the grid that might or might not be clued in themselves. I recall Linxit's achievement of ARAUCARIA set out in an intervening layer. Winning grids almost always have a little bit of je ne sais quoi. A tinge of humour perhaps. Take a look at Enigmatist 2014 with grid by 45, a winner in its year. Nora Boswell produced an eye-catching, award-winning 3D grid based on a giant 3D, 3D. Or perhaps that of Toby Le Rone a few years ago which used a giant Toblerone triangular prism.
- But theme percentage is certainly not everything. It does suggest a measure of some of the skills in the design process, but consider Ogre's wonderful penny-dropping grid about extinction. It made a very nice puzzle indeed. With the use of the criteria, the overall judgement is about assessing the designer's skill in providing potential in the grid to produce a satisfying, interesting and enjoyable puzzle.

Thank you in advance for taking on the challenge. And remember to have fun too.

An example of the presentation of a solution is on the next page. For convenience of display it is included as a single sheet. It is better that your solution include the different elements on separate sheets:
B. Sirius Tie-break Entry 2017 for February 2018

MS Word table in separate file. This goes to the setter and appears later.in Newsletters. (note two spaces between direction and letter count)


| SOLUTION |  | Direction, clue, letters | Explanation \& Notes |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| AFTER* | 1 | 17ac Please write your clue here (5) | As in setting one's cap |  |
| ALL OR NOTHING* | 2 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 1aw,10d,21ac-4 } \\ & (3,2,7) \\ & \hline \end{aligned}$ | ref Small Faces song |  |
| ANYTHING* | 3 | 17aw,21ac-4 (8) | ref, 'Oliver' 'I'd Do Anything' |  |
| AORTA | 4 | 1d (5) | Potential connection with heart |  |
| ASSET* | 5 | 1ac (5) | As in attractive quality |  |
| EASEL | 6 | 12aw (5) |  |  |
| IGLOO | 7 | 15ba (5) |  |  |
| LOVE* | 8 | 22 (4) |  |  |
| LUMMY* | 9 | 4d (5) | Lord love me |  |
| LYONS | 10 | 4ac (5) |  |  |
| MISTY* | 11 | 14ac (5) | Johnny Mathis signature song |  |
| NYLON | 12 | 8d (5) |  |  |
| OSSIA | 13 | 5d (5) |  |  |
| REELS | 14 | 11ac (5) | Possible romantic reaction |  |
| RENEE* | 15 | 7ac (5) | Ref: Four Tops: Don't Walk Away Renee |  |
| ROMEO* | 16 | 11aw (5) |  |  |
| RUSH | 17 | 19aw (4) | Possible romantic reaction |  |
| SAYDI* | 18 | 13aw (5) | Obscure: One Look Dictionary Urban |  |
| SIDE | 19 | 16up (4) |  |  |
| STYES | 20 | 6d (5) |  |  |
| SWEET NOTHING* | 21 | $\begin{aligned} & \text { 2d,10d,21ac-4 } \\ & (5,7) \end{aligned}$ | Brenda Lee Sweet Nothings. Noting singular use in the singing on actual recording |  |
| SWOUN* | 22 | 2aw (5) | Old form of 'swoon' - romantic assoc |  |
| TASER | 23 | 3d (5) |  |  |
| TASTE | 24 | 3aw (5) | Potential link to 'Taste of Honey' |  |
| TWAIN | 25 | 18aw (5) | Old form of two could link to couple |  |
| YEATS* | 26 | 20ac (5) | Love poetry |  |

