Deep

**DIRECTION:** Julio Soto Gurpide  
**WRITTEN BY:** Stephen, Julio Soto Gurpide  
**CAST:** Phil Lamarr, Jess Harnell, Jeff Bennett  
**SYNOPSIS:** In 2100, when humanity has abandoned the earth, a colony of extravagant creatures still thrives in the deepest abyss of the ocean. Deep, an adventurous ‘dumbo’ octopus and the last one of his kind lives there with his two unconditional friends: Evo, a nerdy and clumsy angler fish, and Alice, a neurotic deep-sea shrimp. When an accident destroys their home, the guardian of the abyss, The Kraken, will send Deep and his friends on a perilous journey to find a new home. In their mission, they will be joined by Maura – a voracious moray eel – and together they will travel to amazing places like the submerged city of New York, the Titanic or the Arctic, facing formidable enemies and hilarious situations. Will they be able to bring the oceans back to their former glory?

**THEATRES:** Landmark, The Mall, Royal Plaza

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**The Boss Baby**  
**DIRECTION:** Tom McGrath  
**WRITTEN BY:** Simon Burke, Alan Judd  
**CAST:** Alec Baldwin, Steve Buscemi, Jimmy Kimmel  
**SYNOPSIS:** A suit-wearing briefcase-carrying baby pairs up with his seven-year old brother to stop the dastardly plot of the CEO of Puppy Co.

**THEATRES:** Royal Plaza, The Mall, Landmark

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**The Mall Cinema (1):**  
**The Mall Cinema (2):**  
**The Mall Cinema (3):**  
**Landmark Cinema Cinema (1):**  
**Landmark Cinema Cinema (2):**  
**Landmark Cinema Cinema (3):**  
**Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (1):**  
**Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (2):**  
**Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (3):**  
**Asian Town Cinema:**

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**Quote Unquote**

Happiness never lays its finger on its pulse.

-Adam Smith

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**Community Editor**  
Kamran Rehmat  
**e-mail:** community@gulf-times.com  
**Telephone:** 44466405  
**Fax:** 44350474
EVENTS

4th annual Mathaf Student Art Exhibition
WHERE: Arab Museum of Modern Art
WHEN: June 8
The annual Mathaf Student Art Competition and Exhibition (SAC&E) is returning for the fifth time this year. The exhibition will showcase the works of students who won the countrywide art competition, this time following the theme “what is your imagined future city?” The competition is an original Mathaf educational programme that supports QM’s commitment for art education and creativity. SAC&E celebrates the creative minds of students aged between 6-18 and encourages students, teachers and parents to explore modern and contemporary art by experiencing Mathaf’s permanent collection.

Garangao Celebration
WHERE: Doha Festival City
WHEN: June 9
Doha Festival City is honouring the biggest traditional celebration for children this Ramadan with a fun-packed Garangao event. First, kids will be given their own mall maps that will give them clues to find and collect candy and nuts hidden all over Doha Festival City. Get the map and find them quick! They can then also take part in the Drum Making Workshop – where everyone will have the chance to design and build their own drum, made out of recycled tin containers.

Meerat Ramadan
WHERE: Katara
WHEN: Until end of Ramadan
TIME: 5pm-9pm
The Ramadan Market is open to the public, and scheduled to run until the end of Ramadan. According to the Katara website, the current hours (until June 17) are 5pm until 9pm, although we recommend that you check it is open before making a special journey as timings may change during Ramadan. There will be kids area with bouncy castle, and it is expected that the Ramadan market will be popular with families as they enjoy their Ramadan evenings at Katara.

Ramadan Nights at Aqua Park Qatar
WHERE: Entire Ramadan
WHERE: Aqua Park
TIME: 8pm-2am
Have fun with your family and friends in style! World class attractions and a thrilling water park experience! From the coolest rides to the extreme ones, Aqua Park has it all at 50% discount this Ramadan! Don’t miss out!

Henna Painting
WHERE: Doha Festival City
WHEN: June 22-23
TIME: 9pm
For the last five days of Ramadan, and in celebration of Eid al-Fitr, there will be professional henna artists designing beautiful henna art on guests. Children will also have the opportunity to handcraft their own henna designs on printed paper. Being the national bird and symbol of culture in the Middle East, guests will also have the chance to have their photo taken with a falcon at Doha Festival City.

Karting at Losail Circuit Sports Club
WHERE: Until June 16
Losail International Circuit, Doha
TIME: 5pm onwards
The Karting track at Losail International Circuit is open for public. Also it can be opened for private companies (upon request and availability). The registrations will be done directly at the venue, at the VIP Car Park of the Losail International Circuit. The minimum age is 15 years old and any participant under the age of 18 needs permission signed by a legal guardian for the karting activity.

Beauty of Islamic Calligraphy
WHERE: QM Gallery Al Riwaq
WHEN: Until June 17
A new exhibition – Contemporary Calligraphy – Mehmet Cebi Collection will open at the QM Gallery Al Riwaq, and will bring together a notable selection of intricate and beautiful calligraphic artworks dating from the 1960s to the present day.

Summer Camp Wakra
WHERE: Music Lounge, Al Wakra
WHEN: July 2-31
This is a month packaged summer camp programme that brings great fun with learning, creating and exploring. The camp is designed to bring out a 360 degree development in the talents and skill level of the students. The camp includes training in keyboard, guitar, drums, art, craft, communication skills, zumba, hip hop, fun with games, movies, competitions, cultural tour, fun day activities, art exhibition and fashion show. The camp is for ages 5-15. Transportation is available from Doha, Al Wakra and Mesaieed.

#1 Am Evo Summer Camp
WHERE: Al Waab and Doha College West Bay
WHEN: July 2 onwards
TIME: 8am to 1pm
The #1AmEvo Camps are designed to challenge young athletes to progressively develop their skills, performance and confidence. The courses are structured to meet the needs of all young players, to have fun, learn new skills and meet new friends in a safe and friendly environment. Students have a choice of venue, with camps held at Doha College Al Waab and Doha College West Bay. The camps are open to boys and girls aged 4-16 years and run from 8am to 1pm daily at each site. Registration Now Open.

Summer Camp Wakra
WHERE: Music Lounge, Al Wakra
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Train like a superhero
WHERE: Aspire Zone
WHEN: Ongoing
Train like a superhero at CrossFit Doha! CrossFit holds a variety of disciplines from weightlifting to calisthenics to gymnastics. This will help your kids excel in sports and retain the healthy and fit lifestyle! Support your kids’ natural urge for physical activities and train like a superhero, at CrossFit Doha’s in demand Kids Classes today! CrossFit Doha is located at Aspire Zone Sports City. For more information, call 44158484.

Camera Kids: Make Your Own Short Film
WHERE: Aug 6-24
A well-rounded introduction to the different elements of photography, film and filmmaking helps young people make their first one-minute short films. Applicants must be between 13 and 17 years old.

Salsa Beginners Dance Class
WHERE: Every Friday
WHERE: B Attitude Spa, West Bay
TIME: 8pm-9pm
Salsa n Calebda offers variety of dance classes for adults at Beverly Hills Tower such as Salsa every Friday and other Latin dance during other days of the week.

Festive time
WHERE: Ongoing
WHERE: Doha Festival City
The entertainment offering has been designed to ensure there are numerous opportunities for physical activities, from the running track which features exercise stations, the bike trail, through to our ‘first-of-its-kind’ in Qatar, Snow Dunes theme park. DFC is excited to welcome first visitors in April and to celebrate the best leisure facilities, retail mix and dining options, all with exceptional service.

Summer Workshop 2017 for kids
WHERE: IAI
WHEN: July-Aug
Summer break is a long-awaited respite for your kids after months of hitting the books. This is an opportunity for them to hone their current skills, pick up a new hobby, or simply stay active, whether their interest lies in dance, music or arts. This summer, get your kids up and going by enrolling them at IAI! Starting three years and above, we have courses to offer this summer such as Ballet Kids, Strum-A-Long, Holly Thumka, Music Fun, ARTmazing & more.

Imperial Threads: Motifs and Artisans
WHERE: Al Wakra
WHEN: Until November 4
This exhibition focuses on the exchange of artistic and material cultures between the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Empires. Highlighting MIA’s masterpiece carpets, among other artworks, from Turkey, Iran and India, these objects will be contextualised within the historical circumstances of politics and artistic production of their time, primarily from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

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Suicide on tape

Educators speak to Amy Kaufman on the pitfalls, and even some positives, coming out of the Netflix show 13 Reasons Why that has taken America by storm

Teenagers have tweeted more about the Netflix show 13 Reasons Why — the television series about a 17-year-old girl who commits suicide and leaves behind 13 audio tapes explaining what, and who, led her to do it — than any other programme this year. For educators, though, social media sharing has only intensified concerns.

Since 13 Reasons Why debuted March 31, school districts across the United States have sent letters home advising parents that their kids may be watching a show that some mental health experts argue glamourises suicide.

Because of graphic depictions of suicide, rape, bullying, slut shaming and drunk driving, the National Association of School Psychologists has recommended “that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation,” not view the series. Some teenagers and parents affected by mental illness have even petitioned Netflix to remove the series from the site.

Netflix responded by adding a new graphic-content warning before the series’ first episode. And its creator, Brian Yorkey, tread lightly when asked about the controversy: “I have tremendous respect for everyone’s point of view,” he told The Times. “I always believe talking about things is better than silence.”

We reached out to educators to find out how the show was being discussed in real life — in the classrooms and hallways of schools across America. Some feared that the show might inspire copycat suicides; others feel the show is just the latest YA work to incite unnecessary concern, as did The Perks of Being a Wallflower, The Fault in Our Stars and even Harry Potter.

Ruby Alvarado Hernandez
Guidance counselor at a K-12 charter school in Phoenix

A graduate of the school where Hernandez works started a Change.org petition urging Netflix to remove 13 Reasons Why, noting that it’s an “intense” series that explores suicide, depression, bullying, drug/alcohol use and rape.

“I didn’t paint 13 Reasons Why in a good or bad light. I’ve had kids say they watched it with their parents, and that led to some good discussions about how to help people. I can see it being a lesson, if parents know the content and talk openly with their kids.

“At the middle-school level, we see kids who are exhibiting depression or suicidal tendencies, I’m old-school, I wasn’t exposed to the same things that kids have access to with their phones. Most of the bullying or depression, in my day, came from kids saying things. Now it’s all through a text message with no feeling.

“I don’t want to be the principal that says, ‘Oh, they’re just trying to get attention,’ and they go home and do something. That’s why I sent that email out — to inform parents. … I can sleep better at night.”

Erick Baer
Principal at Highland Middle School in Highland, Illinois

Baer sent a letter to the parents of his school’s 670 students about 13 Reasons Why, noting that it’s an “intense” series that explores suicide, depression, bullying, drug/alcohol use and rape.

“Now kids are joking about being in the office before, ‘Miss, wait until you get my tape.’ Of course, we take that seriously. They’ll say, ‘I’d never do that. I’m just kidding around.’ But they have to recognise that there are kids who are in the middle of dealing with depression, and they have to be conscious with their words.”

Robert M. Avossa
Superintendent of Palm Beach County Schools in Palm Beach, Florida

Before overseeing the 200,000 kids in Palm Beach County’s 187 schools, Avossa was a superintendent in affluent Fulton County, Georgia, where he witnessed a concentrated level of suicides. He consulted with Madeline Levine, author of Price of Privilege, which explores psychological issues among teens from wealthy families.

“We’ve had a tightly clustered group of issues where (at least a dozen) students reported self-mutilation, self-cutting and suicidal ideations. Counselors asked those students, ‘Where did you get this idea? What happened? We haven’t seen you in the office before.’ The thing the students had in common was they had been watching 13 Reasons Why.

“My experience in Georgia taught me that I was obligated to tell the parents. These kids are way too young to be watching this series — and binge-watching it, which is even worse. A 13-, 14-year-old kid just can’t process that. It’s rated MA, and we have young kids watching this — that’s really the concern here.

“The part that scared me was the whole revenge thing — ‘I’m gonna show you,’ and sort of glamourising this idea that there’s revenge that takes place by giving these tapes out and making others feel bad about your demise.”
“I have tremendous respect for everyone’s point of view. (But) I always believe talking about things is better than silence.”

— Brian Yorkey, Creator of 13 Reasons Why

Jack VanNoord
Seventh-grade literature and language arts teacher at Lake Zurich Middle School South in Lake Zurich, Illinois

VanNoord was flipping through Netflix when he found 13 Reasons Why. He started watching at 7pm and finished the series at 5:30am. He found the show compelling but problematic and wrote an op-ed about the show.

“There are positive messages out of the show: Don’t be a bully, reach out to those you feel are hurting. But there’s also an unintended message: the potential positive outcomes of your suicide. You can make people who hurt you hurt you. You can take the responsibility for your death and lay it at the feet of others. Your voice can be heard in death when it’s not heard in life. I wanted to write about whether or not those positives inadvertently overshadow the negatives.

“A colleague heard some students talking about my column. I could tell she was being coy, so I said, ‘They didn’t have super-favoured things to say about it?’ She said, ‘No, they kind of disagree with you.’

“It didn’t really generate a lot of discussion in the class. It kind of reminds me of the sex-ed talk. ‘OK, gee, Dad! Eye roll. ‘I’m not gonna go out and get pregnant because I saw a movie!’

Elizabeth Deicher
Freshman/senior English teacher at Anahy High School in Sebastopol

‘Because the book talks about bullying and trying to fit in, it felt like a very freshman book to me. Before we started reading it in class, I sent a letter to parents saying, ‘I’m going to be teaching this book which deals with teen suicide, bullying and dating rape if you have any concerns.’ Only one parent responded.

“So when the show came out, all the students wanted to watch it. I watched it too, but after the first episode, I couldn’t get through the rest of the series. They had altered characters so much that it didn’t feel like the same themes were being presented.

“We ended up watching the first episode in class, and a lot of my students who had read the book didn’t care for it. They said (protagonist) Hannah seemed meaner, like she blamed everyone else. Most of it was shot in our main building, so the kids were very excited.

“There have been some conversations with people in my department wondering if showing someone actually commit suicide will be a catalyst for this kind of thing happening among the students. As an English teacher, I have kids do creative writing every week, and after the show came out I had kids who created a few darker pieces. They’d say, ‘I just want you to know, I watched the show.’

“And I had to give those to a counselor. If the student has any sort of words that make it seem like there’s something better in death — like being at peace, or ‘I’ll be traveling beyond,’ then I know I have to give it to someone. It’s really difficult, but it’s my obligation.”

Mary Czajkowski
Superintendent of Lexington Public Schools in Lexington, Massachusetts

“There have been two student suicides in the last year in Czajkowski’s school district. So when parents voiced concern about 13 Reasons Why, she talked with mental health experts and wrote to parents ‘strongly advising’ them not to let their children watch the show.

“It was disturbing that there wasn’t a whole lot of support or resources surrounding the series. I think about the student who might be watching that up in their room on their iPad and having no-one to speak with about it. So I wanted to open a dialogue.

“I think it was important for me to take a position. Other superintendents were doing the same. I’ve received positive feedback from parents thanking me for making them aware of the show.

“There have been mixed reactions from students. I think they try to avoid the topic with me, although I have had some say to me, ‘It’s not a big deal. It’s really kind of stupid. It’s been mixed, but in this day and age, we have to be proactive.’

Chase Mielke
English and psychology teacher at Plainwell High School in Plainwell, Michigan

Over spring break, Mielke and his wife watched 13 Reasons Why and finished the series feeling unsettled. So he wrote a blog post on WeAreTeachers, an online community for educators, encouraging fellow teachers to discuss the show with their students.

“A lot of kids who had seen it were really focusing on the positive message — ‘I realise that even the little things I do can affect people, and I think I’m more conscious of my behaviour now’. But when I would follow up, asking them what they could do as a positive action, a lot of them said they weren’t sure. So we decided to host an event that any kid at the school could attend.

“The thing, I think, that concerned us most from the series was that most kids are already relatively reluctant to share anything with adults. And the series made adults look oblivious, or antagonistic.

“So we shared as much information as we could, and said, ‘You don’t have to talk to a teacher. You can contact a peer. And these are the signs when immediate attention is needed and you should call the police.’

“The event was not that well-attended. It coincided with testing season. I polled my classes, and about 90 out of 120 students had seen the show.

“That’s the double-edged sword — people are talking about it, so there’s curiosity. A lot of them have said to me, ‘I don’t know if I should watch it,’ and if I’m aware of their challenges or depression, I’ll say, ‘It’s definitely not worth it. You shouldn’t subject yourself to this.’”

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Dr Denise Herrmann
Principal at Henry M. Gunn High School in Palo Alto

Over the last seven years, there have been 10 teen suicides in Palo Alto — a rate four to five times higher than the national average. In 2015 alone, four students at Gunn took their lives — so when 13 Reasons Why was released, Herrmann was prepared.

“I knew many students were going to binge-watch it — and that it would be quite the hot topic. In general, our students really do not roll their eyes and say, ‘It’s just a TV show’ when talking about mental health issues because we’re a school that has experienced suicide. We don’t take it lightly.

“It is a television drama, so there are parts that were inaccurate in terms of legally and socially how a school should respond — but there’s no judgment there, because every school is different in terms of how you respond to a tragedy.

“Yes, we have had experience with this, but we weren’t reliving it. I would never endorse banning students from watching the show.

“We have been working very hard on trying to reduce the stigma of any kind of adolescent mental health issues. If we in any way say that the show is not OK to talk about, that might inadvertently be sending a message that it’s not OK to talk about feeling sad or suicide.

“The timing of the release is very interesting. It came out right before students were receiving their college acceptance letters and doing AP testing, so there’s in general a heightened sense of anxiety on high school campuses across the nation. It’s not surprising that students might be finding comfort, almost, in it.”

Los Angeles Times/TPS
WCM-Q chooses winners for prestigious scholarships to New York laboratories

Four Qatari high school students with a passion for science have been chosen as the winners of the annual Healing Hands Essay Competition run by Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q).

The four winners are Alia Salman Ashkanani and Ghalia Salman Ashkanani, both of Michael E. DeBakey High School; Khalifa Ahmed Elmagarmid from Qatar Academy; and Mashael Salem al-Naemi of American School of Doha. They will each now receive a two-week, fully-funded scholarship; the first week will be spent at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York where they will work in Weill Cornell Medicine’s world-class biomedical research laboratories, attend lectures with faculty, visit New York-Presbyterian Hospital and learn what life is like for a medical student at the college. The second week will be spent at Cornell University in Ithaca where they will learn about reading scientific articles and writing and recording research results. WCM-Q funds the trip for each of the winners along with a chaperone to accompany them.

Noha Saleh, director of student recruitment and outreach at WCM-Q, said the trip was an opportunity of a lifetime. Saleh said: “As we know from previous winners of the competition – of whom many have gone on to study at Weill Cornell here in Qatar – the prize is truly inspiring. These high school students will be exposed to cutting-edge research and scientists who are at the forefront of knowledge creation and whose work is cited in top academic journals. These scholarships will really open their eyes and show them the opportunities that are available for those with dedication, passion, intelligence and perseverance.”

The topic for this year’s Healing Hands essays was ‘overcoming health-related stigma.’ Mashael al-Naemi wrote her essay on the subject of Down’s syndrome. She said a family friend had a daughter with the condition, and so Mashael had spoken to the girl about her experiences.

Mashael said: “I talked to the girl and what she told me was my inspiration for my whole essay. I also contacted the various schools in Qatar for children with Down’s and I looked at the charity work that’s done here. “I feel that people with Down’s should be more visible in Qatar, for example they should be on television; children at home with Down’s should be able to look at the TV and see role models.”

Khalifa Elmagarmid said in his essay that there were huge stigmas associated with a number of diseases and that this can lead to exclusion from society. Khalifa argued that greater openness would mean people would access treatment quicker.

In total, 28 essays were submitted for the competition and each entrant was presented with a certificate of participation, 12 out of whom received the judging committee’s honourable mentions. At the awards ceremony they heard from WCM-Q Med 2 student Fahad al-Marri, himself a former winner of the Healing Hands Essay Competition.

Explaining the importance of perseverance, Fahad told the audience how, on his first attempt, he had failed to win the competition, but had tried again the following year and being named one of the winners. Of the scholarship to WCM in New York he said: “It was a wonderful experience and opened my eyes.”

The prizes were presented by Dr Marco Ameduri, WCM-Q’s associate professor of physics and associate dean for pre-medical education.

Dr. Ameduri said: “The standard of essays proved to be particularly high this year and it was refreshing to read so many original, thought-provoking and well-articulated essays. “I sincerely hope that those who were not successful this time try again next year, and that everyone follows their passion for science and medicine. The Healing Hands scholarship programme has proven to be a real inspiration for Qatari students, encouraging them to study medicine and help fulfil the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

Malarvadi Children Organisation Qatar Chapter holds an Iftar party

Malarvadi Children Organisation Qatar Chapter conducted an Iftar party in connection with its 7th Holy Qur’an contest. About 250 people, including the contest’s participants and their parents, attended.
Stenden University Qatar’s Class of 2017 graduates

Stenden University Qatar celebrated the graduation of its Class of 2017 in a colourful ceremony that took place at the Rotana City Centre Hotel in Doha. The ceremony was held under the patronage of HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani, and was attended by many special guests, ambassadors, and heads of different organisations.

“Today you gain the fruit of the efforts you have exerted for several years, and you offer your parents the fruits of their care and upbringing. Stenden University is honoured to present you as soldiers for society, armed with knowledge and virtue as a fruit of your teachers’ efforts and the university staff’s efforts,” said HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani while addressing the audience. He congratulated the families of the graduates and added: “I am honoured, in the name of Stenden University, to thank your parents and to congratulate you, wishing you a bright future. I would like to also thank the university’s management for what it does to develop the university and its curricula.”

Leendert Klaassen, President of the Executive Board of Stenden University, said in his speech to the graduates: “Every year thousands of young people, people like you, start their studies at different locations of Stenden worldwide. Wondering what the world out there holds for them, with dreams set out for themselves. All with the ambitions of building a brighter future for themselves, and maybe for others. Our responsibility is to help you, and all our other students, building that future, reaching those dreams and ambitions. This is very important to us, realising your future is fundamental to the communities here in Qatar.”

Dr Ivan Ninov, Executive Dean of Stenden University Qatar, addressed the graduates by saying: “This is a very special day in your life and you have reached a very important milestone in your personal and professional development. We are confident that we have been able to provide you with the tools for a successful life and career. Stenden has influenced you and you have influenced Stenden, and you will always remain an important part of the Stenden family.”

The two top performing graduating students, Farukh Azad and Jethro Delgado, delivered inspiring speeches and shared their personal experiences at Stenden University Qatar. Farukh Azad was also awarded with the prize for “Best Dissertation”.

Stenden University Qatar was established in 2000 under the chairmanship of HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani. Stenden University Qatar delivers internationally accredited four-year Bachelor of Business Administration degrees in International Business and Management Studies, International Hospitality Management and Tourism Management. All programmes are recognised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Qatar. Stenden’s main campus is located in the Netherlands. Stenden’s international branch campuses are located in Qatar, in Bali, in South Africa, and in Thailand.

Sohni Dharti organises Qur’an, Na’at recitation competitions

Members of the Pakistani expatriate community gathered to witness a Ramadan show organised by Sohni Dharti at Al Khor Hall recently. The theme of the event was “Marhaba Ya Ramadan” and it featured Qur’an and Na’at recitation competitions.

A total of 39 children competed in the Qur’an recitation competition, while 9 children competed in the Na’at competition. Na’ats are poems written in the praise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). More than 400 people attended the event. Sohni Dharti chairman Rana Anwar Ali said in his speech, “Ramadan is a guest with us and we have to take care of this guest very well, taking advantage of this holy month we should practice to make our life according to the Qur’an and Sunnah.”

In the Qur’an recitation competition, Muhammad bin Atif was declared first, Abu Bakar Abd second, and Mussaddiq Atif third.

In the Na’at competition, Antal Anwar was placed first, Kowall Ali second and Reza Ahmad third.

The show also featured some eye-catching performances by children that were specially prepared for the programme around the theme of Ramadan. About 150 children participated in six performances that were showcased in the show. The event concluded with a prayer and an Iftar dinner. Sohni Dharti is a forum of Pakistani expats living in Al Khor, and comprises people working in Qatargas and RasGas. Sohni Dharti has been active in organising multiple events for Pakistani community in Qatar.
Mahabharata producer reveals vision for the magnum opus

In the first interaction with international media held recently, producer Dr B R Shetty, billionaire businessman and philanthropist, and director V A Shrikumar Menon shared their vision and plans to build the US$150 million Mahabharata into a billion dollar franchise. The announcement of the magnum opus had earlier created waves in the international entertainment media.

Dr Shetty said, “I have always been proud of our rich heritage and culture and have promoted Indian culture for over four decades. Like millions of Indians, I have been immersed in the teachings of the Mahabharata ever since I was a child. I remember reading the epic in its simpler form as a boy and being fascinated by the way the battle between good and bad was depicted. Growing up, I continued to find inspiration in its pages whenever I faced a challenge, and the epic never failed in showing me the right direction. It has always been my vision to take this grand epic to the people of the world and this project gives me the opportunity to honour my commitment to the epic.”

Elaborating further on his vision, Dr Shetty continued, “The movie will be produced to the best global standards and drawn upon the finest creative and technical talent to ensure a magnum opus of epic proportions that will capture the imagination of a global audience.”

The film will be a coming together of the crème de la crème of the global cinema in terms of its cast and crew. The technical crew would include some of the great names in world cinema including Academy Award winners. The cast will have the best of talents from Indian cinema as well as some big names from Hollywood. A global team led by an Internationally renowned casting director will handpick the cast. The director, V A Shrikumar Menon said that discussions in this regard had already begun with various parties.

Explaining further, he said, “My vision for this magnum opus is to be a rendition of the one of the world’s greatest epics that will take the audience’s breath away. Internationally renowned Malayalam superstar Mohanlal will be essaying the role of Bhima and has set aside two years for this project. This dedication and investment of time will be required from every actor. We will have the best of global and Indian talent associated with the film. We are paying special attention to the VFX and over 50% of the production budget has been reserved for it to ensure that no corners are cut in delivering a dazzling visual experience.”

Mahabharata is to be made with master versions in three languages, i.e. Malayalam, English and Hindi. It will be dubbed and sub-titled in all Indian languages as well as major foreign languages.

Elaborating on the plans for distribution of the film, Menon said, “We will soon be announcing specific additions to the team in the areas of marketing and distribution to build global alliances to ensure Mahabharata reaches audiences worldwide. We aim to have a large global release worthy of the film, targeting multi-country and multi-platform releases as also international franchises across 85 lifetime. We will begin showcasing the project at major film markets across the world soon.”

Marsa Malaz Kempinski brings ‘Ramadan’s Smile’ to orphans

Marsa Malaz Kempinski, The Pearl-Doha recently partnered with the Eid Charity Foundation and AlWehda Medical Group to bring ‘Ramadan’s Smile’ to orphans within Qatar. Breaking their fast together, a sense of celebration and sharing could be felt throughout the hall.

The Iftar took place at the Eid Charity Head Quarters, where Marsa Malaz Kempinski provided a flavoursome selection of dishes with an array of cuisines to suit the multi-cultural guests. More than 20 members of the Marsa Malaz Kempinski team volunteered to take part by means of interacting with the children and serving the invited guests. The gathering strengthened the bonds between the invited orphans and audience through educational and interactive activities which were executed by the volunteers in a friendly atmosphere.

The idea behind ‘Ramadan’s Smile’ was not only to bring together this incredible group of people, but to also educate them about the importance of healthy eating and living especially during Ramadan.

Wissam Suleiman, Cluster General Manager said: “Being a family man myself, I know the importance of gathering with loved ones. It was an honour to be able to be part of such an incredible event especially during this holy month, where the importance of celebration, togetherness and sharing is emphasised.”
BMW M8 promises to be the icing on the cake

Alongside the ongoing development of the standard 8 Series, the engineers at BMW M are also working flat out on the M model. A fully camouflaged, early prototype of the future BMW M8 will be unveiled in a driving presentation as part of the support programme for the Nürburgring 24-hour race.

Classical M features like larger air intakes, modified brakes and a sports exhaust with four tailpipes hint at the significantly boosted power and dynamic potential of the car and whet the appetite for a driving experience of intense emotional richness.

“The conception and development of the standard BMW 8 Series and the M model run in parallel,” explains Frank van Meel, President BMW M Division. “The future BMW M8 will build on the genes of the 8 Series and augment its DNA with added track ability and generous extra portions of dynamic sharpness, precision and agility. It all flows into a driving experience that bears the familiar BMW M hallmarks and satisfies our customers’ most exacting requirements.”

Development is also underway of a race-specific car – the BMW M8 GTE – to spearhead the return of BMW Motorsport to Le Mans: “The BMW M8 GTE development programme for our Le Mans comeback is in full swing,” says BMW Motorsport Director Jens Marquardt.

“Developing a new racing car is always exciting, and in the case of the BMW M8 GTE the anticipation is that much greater still. We can’t reveal any pictures yet, but I can promise you that the BMW M8 GTE will look spectacular. We are planning an initial roll-out for the first half of this year and are looking at giving the car its race debut in the Daytona 24 Hours in late January 2018.”

The 2017 Ford Escape - technologically advanced and refined

The new 2017 Ford Escape delivers an even more technologically advanced, refined and affordable sports utility vehicle (SUV), making driving simpler, safer and more enjoyable.

It offers Ford's sophisticated SYNC 3 communications and entertainment system, innovative driver assistance technologies, an ergonomic and comfortable interior, and powerful and efficient engines including Ford's twin-scroll turbocharged, direct-injected 2.0-litre four cylinder EcoBoost engine, which produces 242 PS and 368 Nm of torque. A 2.5-litre iVCT Duratec automatic petrol engine with 171 PS and 230 Nm of torque is also available, with each engine variant mated to a six-speed SelectShift automatic transmission with paddle shifters.

The new Escape also features Ford's Perpendicular Parking technology that helps drivers park hands free in spaces alongside other cars; an enhanced version of the Active City Stop collision avoidance system; and Ford's Adaptive Front Lighting System for optimised visibility in low light. Further advanced technologies include Hands-Free Liftgate and Ford Intelligent All Wheel Drive (AWD).

Seamlessly connected with SYNC 3

For the third-generation system, Ford has drawn on more than 22,000 comments and insights gained from research clinics and surveys to ensure the new version is the most customer-centric designed system. Simplifying the user experience by putting the audio and phone options customers use most at their fingertips, SYNC 3 has been further improved through increased processing power and a reduction in the number of steps required for a command.

Ford’s SYNC3 offers, for the first time, Arabic language capability – both text and voice activation – enabling simpler control for drivers. With pinch-to-zoom and swipe gestures, SYNC3 provides customers with a high definition experience of the eight-inch touch screen that is similar to smartphone screens, thus making it easier and more intuitive to use.

Navigation also sees a greatly-improved system with SYNC3, including 3D support with landmarks, a Mecca compass, and enhanced junction view providing detailed lane visuals and guidance.

Smartphone integration has been stepped up with several fantastic new features, including Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Sophisticated technology

New Escape offers an enhanced version of Ford's Active City Stop collision avoidance system, which now operates at speeds of up to 50km/h, increased from 30km/h. Active City Stop uses sensors at the front of the vehicle to look for stationary objects in the road ahead and pre-charges the brakes if the vehicle is approaching an object too quickly. If the driver still does not respond the system reduces engine torque and automatically applies the brakes to reduce the impact of collisions, or avoid them altogether.

The latest generation Ford MyKey technology allows new Escape owners to programme a key for younger drivers that can inhibit incoming phone calls; restrict top speed; prevent deactivation of driver assistance and safety features; reduce audio system maximum volume; and disable the audio system altogether if occupants are not using safety belts.

Stylish Escape

The new Escape features Ford's latest design language for a bold and sporty look that is shared with the EcoSport compact SUV and new Edge mid-size. A large upper trapezoidal grille and a smaller lower grille are flanked by sleek new headlamps incorporating LED daytime running lights and complemented by stylish fog lamps. Restyled taillights complete the sporty look, while a new range of 17- to 19-inch alloy wheel designs are available in variety of finishes including Luster Nickel. A power-operated retractable tow bar automatically stores itself out of sight below the rear bumper when not in use, to retain the new Escape's sporty looks. The steering wheel and air-conditioning controls are even more intuitive, and feature fewer and more easily distinguishable buttons and switches, making the controls easier to recognise and navigate.

New convenience features make Escape even more user-friendly; an electronic parking brake is effortless to operate and frees room for improved storage in a centre console that now also features a storage area capable of accommodating a variety of bottles and cups, and a new USB connection point for integrating and charging mobile devices. A door lock indicator now tells drivers at a glance whether the doors are locked. The Escape also offers Hands-Free Liftgate that can be opened or closed using a kicking motion beneath the rear bumper.

The new Escape's sculpted bonnet features a wider, uninterrupted central dome that not only serves to complement Escape's sporty new looks, but also incorporates a structural design that more closely controls deformability and flexibility of the bonnet, improving pedestrian protection in an accident. The bonnet and rear liftgate also have been re-engineered to help mitigate damage to more expensive-to-replace components following a collision.
2016 | Alzheimer’s Disease
Facts and Figures

Alzheimer’s Disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United States

More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s

1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer’s or another dementia

In 2015, more than 15 million caregivers provided an estimated 18.1 billion hours of unpaid care

Alzheimer’s costs caregivers more than their time

Family caregivers spend more than $5,000 a year caring for someone with Alzheimer’s

For some families this means missing a vacation

But for others, it may mean going hungry

Every 66 seconds, someone in the United States develops the disease

In 2016, Alzheimer’s and other dementias will cost the nation $236 billion

It kills more than breast and prostate cancer combined
Little upgrades that can mean a lot to homebuyers

Anyone who's ever bought or sold a home knows how even tiny little touches can sway a buyer to feel a particular house is "just right." While major changes such as good location, a big kitchen, and a certain number of bedrooms and bathrooms all drive a home's price and how attractive it is to buyers, small details like fresh paint and new faucets can also help clinch a sale.

When you're trying to sell your home, you should be willing to spend some money on repairs and improvements to help boost the sale price. The good news is that you don't have to spend a lot to make a big impact if you invest in key quality details. Here are seven "little things" you can do to help make your home more appealing to buyers, and possibly get a better price – and you can accomplish them in just a weekend:

Upgrade your kitchen faucet and sink

The kitchen faucet and sink aren't just practical tools every kitchen needs – they can also be essential elements of a room's overall design and appeal. Replacing a dated kitchen faucet is a minor change that can mean a lot to homebuyers. In addition to modern styling, you'll get four spray functions and a convenient pause feature, the ability to set a preferred water temperature without re-adjusting the handle, and a water-conserving maximum flow rate of just 1.5 gallons per minute. Pair it with an Edgewater double bowl stainless steel kitchen sink, and you have a programmable thermostat helps your home look more modern, and possibly get a better price – and you can accomplish them in just a weekend:

Install a programmable thermostat

If your home's thermostat predates Facebook, it's probably time to ditch the dial and install a touchpad programmable thermostat. Not only would a new thermostat help your home look more modern, a programmable thermostat helps with energy efficiency – something that's very important to today's homebuyers.

Replace incandescent light bulbs

If your home still has traditional lightbulbs, replacing them with energy-saving LEDs or CFLs is an easy way to improve your home's overall energy efficiency. These bulbs use 25–80 percent less energy than conventional bulbs and last three to five times longer, according to the Department of Energy. Imagine the potential buyers into your humble abode. Replacing an old, weathered front door with a new one creates a positive first impression. What's more, installing a steel entry door returns 90 percent of its value at the time of resale.

Put a water-efficient faucet in the bathroom

A great deal of water can be wasted in the bathroom, and the faucet can be one of the biggest culprits. Replacing an older bathroom faucet with a modern water-conserving option like one from the Townsend bathroom sink faucet collection is not only visually appealing for buyers, it also speaks to their sense of environmental responsibility. What's more, upgrading to a faucet with handles, instead of a knob-style operation, allows for easier functionality for people with varying degrees of dexterity, from small children to senior citizens.

AQUARIUS
March 21 – April 19

Today you may feel especially passionate, Aries. You might even have a party scheduled. Don't be surprised if it has to be postponed for reasons beyond anyone's control. You might try to sublimate those feelings through creative activities. Novels and movies could also prove good outlets, though never as good as the real thing!

CANCER
June 21 – July 22

Money matters might be weighing on the mind of a close friend or lover, Cancer, and he or she might seek your advice. A creative project may require a larger expenditure of money, time, or other resources than you originally thought. This could make you wonder if you will be able to continue with it. It might take some tweaking on your part, but you should be willing to complete it as planned.

LIGBA
September 23 – October 22

Some good but surprising news could come your way today, Libra. Perhaps a family member or friend will call or drop by with a surprising development that directly affects you. In the evening, go out together and celebrate. Don't forget to include your special someone in your celebration plans.

SCORPIO
October 23 – November 21

Today may start out frustrating, Scorpio. Be prepared! Some equipment might go on the blink and it could take a while to get it fixed. A temporary separation from your partner could also be disappointing. You may have a lot of physical energy for which you have little immediate outlet. Take a long walk. This would not only provide an energy outlet but also clear your head.

SAGITTARIUS
November 22 – December 21

Your level of artistic inspiration is high today, Sagittarius. Dreams or meditation may bring up some spiritual insights and revelations, and you may promptly forget them upon coming out of your dream or meditative state. This could prove frustrating! Try writing them down even if you only remember snatches. This can help bring them to the surface again. You will want a record of them anyway.

SAGITTARIUS
November 22 – December 21

Tasks of any kind are likely to seem the labours of Hercules today, Gemini. Overwork and strain could have you feeling a little under the weather. It might be a good idea to take some time alone to rest. If you can't, at least try to take things easy. Also, some unexpected changes in your community might have tongues wagging. Be sure to check out the facts before jumping to conclusions.

PISCES
February 19 – March 20

A delivery that you were expecting from far away might be delayed, Pisces. You might have visitors, Leo, or even a party scheduled for tonight. By midafternoon you might feel too tired to go out and wonder if you should cancel. It's best to keep your activities low-key. Have to cancel plans. Hang in there!

COMMUNITY/LIFESTYLE/HOROSCOPE
**Wordsearch**


**Less**

AGELESS  EYELESS  JOYLESS
AIMLESS  FACELESS  LEGLESS
AIRLESS  FEARLESS  PEERLESS
ARTLESS  FLAWLESS  RIMLESS
BONELESS  HAPLESS  SINFUL
CARELESS  HATLESS  TOPLESS
ENDLESS  HEEDLESS  USELESS

**Codeword**

Every letter of the alphabet is used at least once. Squares with the same number in have the same letter in. Work out which number represents which letter.

![Codeword puzzle](image)

**Sudoku**

![Sudoku puzzle](image)

Sudoku is a puzzle based on a 9x9 grid. The grid is also divided into nine (3x3) boxes. You are given a selection of values and to complete the puzzle, you must fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

**Adam**

I KNOW YOU DON'T LIKE STORMS, DAD. I'M NOT PROUD OF IT.

THEY HEVE JUST ALWAYS FREAKED ME OUT, ESPECIALLY THE.

**Pooch Cafe**

I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT GETTING TAIL-ENLARGEMENT SURGERY Didn't give me as much pleasure as I thought.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO GET IT REMOVED?

Yeah, but I just need to use it for ONE MORE THING SO IT WASN'T ALL FOR NOTHING.

OKAY, I'M READY.

**Garfield**

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO TONIGHT, GARFIELD?

EAT GARBAGE, WOUL ON THE FENCE, DOG DO SHOES, TRASH-TALK SOME DOGS, THEN GET CHASED UP A TREE

SO, THE USUAL

IF IT AIN'T BROKE...

**Bound And Gagged**

AFTER THIS SHOW, LET'S GIVE THE DOG HOUSE BACK TO PRINCE.
**Super Cryptic Clues**

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**Across**
1. The rest is translated from English prose (6)
4. Nuts you have at Christmas (8)
10. The dish looked to be pickled (3-4)
11. Find me hiding in mottled tree (7)
12. River Dee overflowing the grass (4)
13. A bid made to run an hour faster (4,6)
16. Force is no longer wrong (6)
17. Led epic voyage with little support (7)
20. Dad’s lying about the fuel (7)
21. Fabulous bird bowled over by clear trumpet (6)
24. Died having swallowed drink when depressed (10)
25. Care about port (4)
27. Goat vet trained to dance (7)
29. Finished a jolly sort of delivery (7)
30. Put down urge to drink (8)
31. Hunter to break up search (6)

**Down**
1. Peg appears under par following the soldier’s remarks (8)
2. Give members an order (7,4)
3. Dead flower (4)
5. Person writing explosive news stories? (8)
6. Rival’s cut-price motto (10)
7. One’s over-age (3)
8. Pool talk (6)
9. Improvised over an unfinished wine commercial (2,3)
14. Top form (6,5)
15. Property owner’s giving support to rioter’s being sorted out (10)
18. People lacking faith in Castro’s following (8)
19. It’s cold right in the middle of a ship (8)
22. Sayings of modern times (6)
23. Second man to swallow the fruit (5)
26. Heal wound of Rachel’s sister (4)
28. Bigwig giving 5 to 1 on ‘Pinhead’ (3)

**Yesterday’s Solutions**

**Across**
1. Catches 5 Screw up 9
10. Airedales 11 Attain 12
14. Overt 15 Looking up 18 Pineapple 20 Femur 22
Canister 24 Primer 26 Pulled out 27 Allay 28 Dissent 29
Amended.

**Down**
1. Cock-a-hoop 2 Theatre 3 Henrietta 4 Stay 5 Strip poker 6 Radio 7 Willing 8 Paste 13
Slipped out 16 Infuriate 17 Portrayed 19 Nonplus 21
Mumbled 22 Coped 23 Suede 25 Etna.

**Wordsearch**

**Codeword**

**Colouring**

**Answers**
French Montana decided to turn his life around when he was shot in the head.

By Geoffrey Rowlands

French Montana was 15 years old when he had to become the family breadwinner. The man born Karim Kharbouch in Rabat, Morocco, was just 13 when his family moved to New York. He arrived speaking only Arabic and French. English was learned on the streets and in high school.

After two years of struggle, his father Abdela gave up on his American dream and decided to move back to Morocco. But Karim’s mother refused to leave. She cited lack of opportunities in their homeland and stayed put in New York. “We were living on welfare,” explained French Montana, now 32. “Despite this, my mother believed in America than if we went back to Morocco. I want people to get to know me. “I was YouTubeing my favourite African artist, Cheb Hasni, when I came across a video of these kids in Uganda dancing barefoot. I felt like I saw me in them because I was doing the same kind of thing when I was their age. “They were happy living in poverty with no TVs and just learning how to dance. They had their own moves and their own swagger. I had to find these kids and put them in my video.

The song video and cover artwork refer back to his African roots. “I was YouTubeing my favourite African artist, Cheb Hasni, when I came across a video of these kids in Uganda dancing barefoot. I felt like I saw me in them because I was doing the same kind of thing when I was their age. “They were happy living in poverty with no TVs and just learning how to dance. They had their own moves and their own swagger. I had to find these kids and put them in my video.

The “cover artwork is a photo of my parents taken at their wedding. It’s my favourite picture. It’s unforgettable for so many reasons since I was born later that year. “I feel it’s time for everyone to know where I came from. Some people think I’m from Mexico or Puerto Rico. I have to tell them I’m from Morocco. I want people to get to know me.”

A further six mixtapes, plus numerous collaborations with other artists, have followed the album. But as French Montana fans may have been beginning to despair of hearing another LP, it seems his sophomore album could be set for release later this year.

Two tracks have been issued. No Pressure, which features Future, and Unforgettable, which boasts Rae Sremmurd’s Swae Lee as the guest artist. The latter has received critical and public acclaim. At 24 and still climbing Billboard’s Hot 100, the song is by far French Montana’s biggest US hit single. It has proved even more popular in the UK where Unforgettable currently holds the number six spot.

The song video and cover artwork refer back to his African roots. “I was YouTubeing my favourite African artist, Cheb Hasni, when I came across a video of these kids in Uganda dancing barefoot. I felt like I saw me in them because I was doing the same kind of thing when I was their age. “They were happy living in poverty with no TVs and just learning how to dance. They had their own moves and their own swagger. I had to find these kids and put them in my video.

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On women, critics and everyone else perplexing Hollywood this summer

By Michael Phillips

Let’s play a little game of YES and NO.

Question: Do women exist?
Answer: YES.

Question: Do they exist on screen in a meaningful way?
Answer: NO. Not often enough. Not yet.

Question: Are women employed behind the camera in a meaningful way?
Answer: YES. Just enough to make it a news story when someone like Patty Jenkins, who had to wait 14 years between big-screen projects, gets the nod to direct Wonder Woman.

Question: Is Wonder Woman arriving just in time to save the summer movie season even before summer, according to the calendar, begins? Answer: YES. Jenkins’ hugely effective direction of Wonder Woman, arriving just in time to save the summer movie season even before summer, according to the calendar, begins.

Question: Do women exist?
Answer: YES.

Question: Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes. Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes. Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes.

Question: With Jenkins scoring with Wonder Woman, will the critics catch up to her? Yes. Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes.

Question: Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes. Is that why it’s performing under expectations? Yes.

Question: Did Cannes Film Festival jury member Jessica Chastain really need to address the limited representation of women on screen during this year’s festival? Answer: YES. It was even there, but YES.

Question: Look. We all go to a lot of movies, some of us more than others. Through the roles they play, we know what actresses are up against, year in and year out. At the Cannes closing-night jury news conference Sunday, the star of Zero Dark Thirty spoke to the “disturbing” narrowness of the female images she’d seen in the previous 10 days of festival jury duty. Chastain did the math. Hollywood occasionally does and then forgets, near-instantaneously. “If you have more female storytellers, you also have more authentic female characters,” Chastain said, adding: “When we include more female storytellers we will have more of the kinds of women that I recognise in my day-to-day life. Ones that are proactive, have their own agencies, don’t just react to the men around them (and) have their own point of view.”

Question: With Jenkins scoring with Wonder Woman, with Sofia Coppola and Judi Dench’s director Ava DuVernay finishing up work on A Wrinkle in Time for Disney, can we take heart from any progress being made?
Answer: YES. A Wrinkle in Time for Disney, can we take heart from any progress being made?

Question: And yet another title of Imtiaz Ali escapes an accident on the sets of the film when a portion of the ceiling fell off. Apart from the accident this week, the 51-year-old also became a victim of a death hoax when an European news network titled El Pais ran its headline, “When the critics liked Baywatch, did the reviews get some people off the fence and into the theatres? A Quiet Passion, The Lost City of Z, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales led to low scores on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, which, in turn, may have affected the average Fandango-browsing civilian’s ticket-buying choices. Are critics the problem with certain summer movies not performing well?
Answer: NO. I haven’t talked to a single civilian to date who felt warmly toward either Baywatch or Pirates of the Caribbean. Five I’m sure they’re out there, but I haven’t. When the critics liked 21 Jump Street, the reviews get some people off the fence and into the theatres? A Quiet Passion, The Lost City of Z, Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales led to low scores on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, which, in turn, may have affected the average Fandango-browsing civilian’s ticket-buying choices. Are critics the problem with certain summer movies not performing well?

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Question: In general the critics, female and male, like Wonder Woman. If it makes a tremendous amount of money (which it probably won’t: it’s a little too good to be that sort of hit), it’ll be categorised as “critic-proof.” If it performs only pretty well, the critical reception will be used by the studio as an indictment of the limited economic impact of reviews. On the other hand, bad reviews of Baywatch and Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales led to low scores on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, which, in turn, may have affected the average Fandango-browsing civilian’s ticket-buying choices. Are critics the problem with certain summer movies not performing well?
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Question: Why hasn’t Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales managed to catch up with Wonder Woman?
Answer: YES. Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales led to low scores on the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, which, in turn, may have affected the average Fandango-browsing civilian’s ticket-buying choices. Are critics the problem with certain summer movies not performing well?

Question: With Jenkins scoring with Wonder Woman, with Sofia Coppola and Judi Dench’s director Ava DuVernay finishing up work on A Wrinkle in Time for Disney, can we take heart from any progress being made?
Answer: YES. A Wrinkle in Time for Disney, can we take heart from any progress being made?
The competition in Finland is real, but the horses — not so much

The sight of teenage girls prancing around an arena with hobby horses clutched between their legs might be a bit odd — but the looks on their faces will tell you this is no joke. In Finland, hobby-horsing is a sport to be taken very seriously.

By Sigrid Harms

Every seat at the local sports hall in the Finnish city of Vantaa, near Helsinki, is occupied. Nearly 1,000 people fill the stands, their eyes fixed intently on the central arena.

A show-jumping course for horse riders, complete with hurdles, has been erected in the centre. However, there is no neighing or whinnying to be heard. That’s because the horses in this competition are made of wood, cotton and fabric.

Their riders are fighting for the title of Finnish hobby-horsing champion, and it is not something that they are taking lightly. Some 200 participants, with their horses clutched between their legs, will spring over hurdles and elegantly prance across the competition area during the contest.

Hobby-horsing is well on its way to becoming a true sports discipline in Finland. The SKY hobby-horsing association says it has nearly 10,000 active members, most of them girls between the ages of 10 and 18.

“We haven’t been recognised as athletes thus far, but we’re working on becoming more accepted,” says Venla Maria Uutela, president of the association.

Though the hobby horse has been seen as more than just a toy in Finland since the 1980s, this odd sport has only recently begun to garner attention.

“At first, most people made fun of those riding on their sticks,” says Venla Maria, who has written two books about her hobby-horsing. But instead of shying away from public attention, the enthusiasts have openly embraced it. Last year, 200 of them rode in a parade through Helsinki yelling: “Respect the hobby horse.”

“We wanted to be seen and to show that we’re proud of who we are and what we do,” says the 20-year-old.

Ada Filppa, a 16-year-old from the town of Naantali, certainly takes pride in the sport as reigning champion in the dressage category.

Ada trains four to five times a week in various places, including the woods, the street or the garden behind her house, where she’s built her own obstacle course.

“Hobby-horsing, for me, means freedom,” says Ada. “I can do what I want. No one can tell me what to do, there are no rules that I must hold myself to, and I don’t need any equipment.”

It’s also really good fun, she says. “When I’m having a bad day, I simply set out on my hobby horse, and then I’m happy again.”

Ada says it doesn’t bother her when people give her a strange look.

“A lot of my friends also have hobby horses,” she says, and anyone who makes dumb comments probably isn’t her friend anyway.

The teenager also rides real horses – but that’s completely unrelated. “Hobby-horsing means a lot to me,” she says, and anyone who makes dumb comments probably isn’t her friend anyway.

Uutela believes that one reason hobby-horsing has grown in popularity is that anyone with a little imagination can do it.

There are numerous videos on YouTube about how to make a hobby horse, and the components are easy to find: a broomstick, fabric, fur, wool, stuffing and decorations – which are obviously up to each creator.

Ada has seven, several of which she made herself. “I’m not especially proud of those,” she says with a laugh.

Hobby-horsing also has a fan in filmmaker Selma Vilhunen, whose documentary Hobbyhorse Revolution won two awards at a March film festival in the Finnish city of Tampere. The film is scheduled to be shown at festivals in the US and Switzerland later this year.

The documentary follows a group of girls who hobby-horse, while also touching on bigger themes, including friendship and solidarity.

Vilhunen recently told the Finnish radio station YLE that she admires hobby-horsing culture.

“Everyone can be who she is,” says the director. “There’s a lot we can learn from these girls.” -DPA