George Packer chronicles Richard Holbrooke’s brilliance, ambition and arrogance. P2-3

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Brilliant work but misplaced

By the time of Richard Holbrooke’s death in 2010, our friendship had been real for decades, having endured years when one of us or the other had a big job — or no job, writes Norman Pearlstine.

George Packer conducted more than 200 interviews and had exclusive access to Holbrooke’s diaries and private papers. The result is a chronicle of the diplomat’s brilliance, ambition, arrogance and duplicity.

— Norman Pearlstine, Executive Editor, *LA Times*
The first six times I met Richard Holbrooke, I needed to introduce myself. The seventh time we met was in 1983, shortly after I had been named the Wall Street Journal’s managing editor. He not only knew who I was but he recalled all our prior meetings. After a mutual friend assured me it wasn’t personal — that Holbrooke was known for always looking over the shoulder of whomever he was speaking to — I decided to ignore the rights and see what happened.

The result was as rewarding as it was improbable. By the time of his death in 2010, our friendship had been real for decades, having endured years when one of us or the other had a big job — or no job. We met frequently in Washington, Connecticut, where we both had weekend homes, and in Washington, D.C. We shared a love of news, diplomacy and international relations. While at the Wall Street Journal, I laughed at his clumsy attempts at becoming an investment banker. He laughed harder when, after years of covering business and finance, I proved myself incapable of running a business of my own. He wrote frequently for Time when I was Time Inc.’s editor in chief. Every assignment was a negotiation. If we agreed to his writing an 800-word, one-page essay, we both knew he would turn in 1,200 words, hoping we would force us to reduce the column, perhaps including his photo, over two pages.

Because I read Our Man: Richard Holbrooke and the End of the American Century, George Packer’s riveting biography of the diplomat, this memory and others came roaring back to life.

Between 1999 and 2001, when Holbrooke served as America’s ambassador to the United Nations, he made himself and the job seem far more relevant and important than was the case. No matter that it was a consolation prize, bestowed by President Bill Clinton, after he denied Holbrooke’s bid to be named secretary of state. The array of guests and the conversation at dinners hosted by Holbrooke and his wife, Kati Marton, made attendees feel that the embassy’s Waldorf-Astoria residence was a true centre of power, and in some respects it was.

Holbrooke also persuaded me to become president of the American Academy in Berlin, the centre devoted to academia and policy that he had established and chaired after serving as America’s ambassador to Germany. I accepted the job after consulting Henry Kissinger, who wisely said, “Whenever Richard asks you to do something, it is less painful to say ‘yes’ than to say ‘no.’” I stayed in the job for two years following his death because every time I sought to quit, I heard his voice, arguing against my doing so.

Packer opens the book with a similar experience: “Holbrooke,” Packer writes, “yes, I knew him. I can’t get his voice out of my head … calm, nasal, a trace of older New York, a singong cadence when he was being playful, but always doing something to you.”

In Our Man, Packer, who recently joined the Atlantic after years writing for the New Yorker, conducted more than 200 interviews and had exclusive access to Holbrooke’s diaries and private papers. The result is a chronicle of the diplomat’s brilliance, ambition, arrogance and duplicity. Through his reporting, writing and brilliant personal digressions, Packer delivers a pitch-perfect portrait of Holbrooke the diplomat — from his early years in Vietnam, through his stint as a midlevel State Department official, to his work for President Clinton bringing peace to Bosnia as a special envoy, and his final years trying and failing to gain Barack Obama’s support as a special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. So too Packer captures Holbrooke’s personal failings as a husband and in his treatment of friends and rivals.

Packer’s insights about Holbrooke’s brilliance are overwhelmed by the lengthy descriptions of the flaws and weaknesses that defined his professional and personal lives. Packer accurately describes, for example, some of the more painful toasts delivered at a dinner at New York’s 21 Club to mark Holbrooke’s 50th birthday. He omits, however, that the evening ended with Holbrooke’s brilliant and extended reply, done from memory and without notes, in which he responded to each toast with humour and grace.

But by the end of the book and of Holbrooke’s life, the reader almost understands why, despite his obvious shortcomings, thousands of mourners, including Presidents Obama and Clinton, and scores of ambassadors and CEOs felt compelled to attend memorial services in Washington or New York for a diplomat who never attained a Cabinet position.

What is harder to accept are the assumptions implied in the book’s title, Our Man, and its assertion that Holbrooke’s life and death symbolise “the end of the American Century.”

Packer’s prologue asserts that as a nation, “Our confidence and energy, our reach and grasp, our excess and blindness, they were not so different from Holbrooke’s.” Yet everything about the book makes clear that Holbrooke, unlike most of us, was so much larger than life that his brilliance, his ambition and his blind spots were singular in nature.

The title Our Man would have been apt were he describing Holbrooke’s relationship with those of us in the press who wrote about and covered him. Packer begins a chapter about Holbrooke and the Obama White House by referring to a profile in the New Yorker that he says made the mark because it “was too close to Holbrooke’s view of himself.” You have to go to the footnotes to learn that Packer was the author of that New Yorker piece. Holbrooke, who edited Foreign Policy magazine for several years in the 1970s, was that rare diplomat who understood journalists and what drives us. The symbiotic relationship also reflected that many editors thought he was often right on the big issues affecting geopolitics and policy. And he could be great fun, even when he was lobbying for himself. That combination of humour and high purpose also helps explain why so many people who worked for him remained so loyal.

Packer is right in saying that the American Century began with the Second World War, as did Holbrooke’s life. But it is problematic to suggest that the American Century ended with Holbrooke’s death. It is also, at best, an overstatement to assert that anything Holbrooke did — or didn’t do — had that much impact on the decades in which he lived. The “American Century” has been as much about the assertion of democratic principles and the rule of law as about the American exceptionalism that Packer suggests Holbrooke represents.

The importance of an Atlantic community has diminished as a Pacific community has risen, but America, despite the best efforts of its most recent two presidents, remains at the centre of the world. Should that change in coming decades, it will be more because of the growth of Asia than the demise of the United States. — Los Angeles Times/TNS
Disrupted sleep patterns can lead to ‘deviant behaviour’

By Sian Cain

Finally, workers have a new excuse for stealing pens from the office or using someone else’s milk: early risers and night owls are more likely to display ‘unethical and deviant’ behaviour if forced to work outside their natural rhythms, and should be able to set their own hours accordingly.

Speaking at the Hay festival about light and circadian rhythms, science journalist and author Linda Geddes called for more workplaces to introduce ‘flexi-working’ to accommodate different chronotypes, which are most often split into two groups: larks, who peak in energy and mood in the mornings, and owls, who perform best later in the day.

Studies have found that logical reasoning peaks mid-morning, problem-solving improves in the early afternoon and all of us experience a post-lunch dip in alertness in the afternoon, she said.

However, these peaks and drops were on average, with larks experiencing them earlier and owls seeing them later.

“That’s kind of a problem because research suggests if your manager is a lark and you’re a night owl, they’re going to judge your performance more poorly,” Geddes said. “Lark managers tend to perceive more owlish workers who start later or just don’t get going until 10am, they judge them as less competent. And if you’re an owl forced to start work early, you’re going to curb your sleep.”

Citing a study published in Psychological Science, Geddes continued, “And if you don’t get enough sleep, research suggests you are more likely to engage in unethical and deviant behaviour, such as being mean, bullying your fellow employees or falsifying receipts. But it’s not just owls: the larks tend to behave more unethically in the evening, and owls in the morning. So ideally, you want to introduce flexible working.”

A different study also found that workers who got less than six hours’ sleep per night were also more likely to engage in similar behaviours, with researchers identifying a link between sleep deprivation and glucose levels in the cerebral cortex, the brain region responsible for self-control.

In her book Chasing the Sun, Geddes proposes that flexi-working would “help to level the playing field, it could boost workplace productivity and employees’ health and happiness … such an approach could create a more harmonious and morally sound workplace”.

Describing the British relationship with light as ‘perverte’, she said that Brits were likely to be deprived of light during the day, spending 90% of their average day inside, while also exposing themselves to too much light at night-time through artificial light sources.

Geddes suggested using gentle light sources like candles and specially designed lightbulbs would “help the body detect natural sleep signals like melatonin and listen to sleep cues”.

“We should be getting more exposure to bright light, ideally by getting outdoors, but if we can’t do that, using artificial lights. And, in the evening, we need to dim the lights,” she said.

In an experiment on their workforce cited by Geddes, the General Services Administration in the US found that employees who were exposed to more daylight, particularly in the morning, took less time to fall asleep, slept longer, and reported better moods. Workers who saw more light between 8am and 12pm slept 20 minutes longer and took just 18 minutes on average to fall asleep – compared to their colleagues’ 45 minutes. – The Guardian

Air pollution can lead to birth defects

Exposure to severe air pollution can cause birth defects and even fatalities during pregnancy, new research has found.

According to the World Health Organization, nine out of 10 people worldwide breathe air containing a high level of pollutants, and one of every 9 global deaths can be attributed to exposure to air pollution, totalling over 7 million premature deaths a year.

The research, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, showed definitive proof of decreased fetal survival rates, and also shortened gestation rates that can result in smaller body weight, in addition to damage to brains, hearts and other organs in the adult rat models.

The research team used female rats and examined the adverse health effects of exposure to fine particulate matter consisting of ammonium sulfate commonly found in many locations around the world.

During winter months in India and China, where severe haze occurs frequently, fine particulate matter levels were especially high at several hundred micrograms per cubic meter, said the researchers.

“People typically believe that ammonium sulfate may not be terribly toxic, but our results show large impacts on female pregnant rats,” said Renyi Zhang, Professor at Texas A&M University in the US.

“It is unclear yet what is causing these profound effects, but we speculate that the size of nanoparticles or even the acidity may be the culprit,” Zhang said.

Sulfate is mainly produced from coal burning, which is a major energy source for much of the world in both developed and developing countries. Ammonium is derived from ammonia, which is produced from agricultural, automobile and animal emissions.

“So this certainly represents a major problem worldwide,” Zhang added. – IANS

RESEARCH: The research, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, showed definitive proof of decreased fetal survival rates, and also shortened gestation rates that can result in smaller body weight, in addition to damage to brains, hearts and other organs.
Less than 7 hours of sleep bad for heart

People who sleep less than seven hours each night are at higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease (CVD) and coronary heart disease, warn researchers.

The findings, published in the journal Experimental Physiology, show that people who sleep fewer than seven hours per night have lower blood levels of three physiological regulators, or microRNAs, which influence gene expression and play a key role in maintaining vascular health.

“Why seven or eight hours seems to be the magic number is unclear. However, it is plausible that people need at least seven hours of sleep per night to maintain levels of important physiological regulators, such as microRNAs,” DeSouza added.

The research team measured the expression of nine microRNAs previously associated with inflammation, immune function or vascular health.

They found that people with insufficient sleep had 40 to 60 percent lower circulating levels of miR-125A, miR-126, and miR-146a than those who slept enough.

“Excessive amounts of some herbal products can have harmful side effects,” said Jean-Pierre Falet from McGill University in Canada.

And products containing licorice root extract can raise blood pressure leading to headache and chest pain.

“Products containing licorice root extract can raise blood pressure, cause water retention and decrease potassium levels if consumed in excess,” Falet said.

The high blood pressure in the 84-year-old resident of Canada was found to be induced by homemade tea made from licorice root, according to the researchers.

His blood pressure was severely elevated, and he was suffering from a headache, light sensitivity, chest pain, fatigue and fluid retention in the calves, said the study.

After admission to hospital and treatment, the patient, who had a history of high blood pressure, told physicians he had been daily drinking 1-2 glasses of homemade licorice root extract called “erk sous” for the past two weeks.

Licorice tea is popular in the Middle East and parts of Europe, and erk sous is especially popular in Egypt during Ramadan.

The findings suggest that physicians should consider screening for licorice root intake in patients with difficult-to-control hypertension.

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Hot, spicy Nihari, an undoubted delicacy

Nihari involves slow cooking of meat within its stock, in large vessels. The meat is cooked overnight over slow fire, and special vessels are made for overnight cooking. Making nihari is a technique and it may involve using around 50 different spices including but not limiting to garam masala, cumin, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, bay leaves and some exotic rare spices. Nihari can be made with mutton but tastes best with beef shanks. The simmering of the bone marrow and bones makes it different from other stews. Chicken nihari is not that feasible as the cooking process involves cooking it over slow flame for 6-8 hours and chicken would just melt away in such a long duration of cooking. Chicken nihari is not that feasible for the whole day after consuming it early morning. The secret of cooking a delicious one is the proportion of meat and spices. Cooking nihari is like an art and the cook gets better by making it several times. Some famous restaurants only have this recipe transferred to their next generations and thus maintain the secrecy of the recipe. After the India-Pakistan partition, a large population of immigrants from northern India, particularly from Delhi settled in Karachi. Many of these immigrants were already involved in the food industry back then and again re-established restaurants in Karachi. When traditionally prepared, nihari takes approximately 6-8 hours just to stew, but with the help of modern technology and newer cooking utensils it is much easier to achieve the same result in lesser time.

A portion of nihari is so heavy and full that you can easily fast for the whole day after consuming it early morning. The secret of cooking a delicious one is the proportion of meat and spices. Cooking nihari is like an art and the cook gets better by making it several times. Some famous restaurants only have this recipe transferred to their next generations and thus maintain the secrecy of the recipe. After the India-Pakistan partition, a large population of immigrants from northern India, particularly from Delhi settled in Karachi. Many of these immigrants were already involved in the food industry back then and again re-established restaurants in Karachi. When traditionally prepared, nihari takes approximately 6-8 hours just to stew, but with the help of modern technology and newer cooking utensils it is much easier to achieve the same result in lesser time. Although this dish was traditionally served in morning breakfast, now a days, this can be consumed any time of the day.

One interesting practice followed in some restaurants in Old Delhi is to add few kilos from each day’s simmering pot. This re used portion of nihari is called ‘Taar’ and is known to add a unique and rich spicy flavour to the freshly cooked nihari. There are some nihari outlets in Old Delhi which boost of an unbroken ‘Taar’ from several years in serving nihari. Another interesting fact about nihari is that it was a home remedy for common cold and fever noted by the hakims [doctors] of the walled city. Mughals and their contribution to the Indian cuisine make one of the biggest milestones in Indian culinary history. Mughal capitals – Awadh and Delhi – especially witnessed some of the greatest culinary gems under their rule. A perfect example of this influence is the popularity of nihari. Nihari is particularly more popular in Pakistan where almost every restaurant has its own signature recipe and serves this stew with pride.

Chef’s Special

**Mutton Nalli Nihari**
(Mutton Shank Nihari)

**Ingredients**

- For the Garam Masala
  - Mutton shanks 4 no.
  - Cayenne pepper 1 tsp
  - Garlic paste 3-4 cloves
  - Ginger paste 1tbsp
  - Ginger julienne 2" cube
  - Flour 1/2 cup
  - Ghee 2 tbsp
  - Salt to taste

- For the Nihari stew
  - Cooking oil 1/2 cup
  - Yellow onion sliced 1 medium
  - Cinnamon stick 1 no.
  - Star anise 1 no.
  - Cardamom pods 3-4 pods
  - Cloves 5-6 cloves
  - Nutmeg 1/4 tsp
  - Poppy seeds 1 tbsp
  - Cardamom pods 3-4 pods
  - Star anise 1 no.
  - Cinnamon stick 1 no.

- Mutton Shank 4 no.
- Yellow onion sliced 1 medium
- Fresh tomatoes 3
- Fresh ginger paste 1 tbsp
- Fresh garlic paste 1 tbsp
- Fresh cumin seeds powder
- Fresh poppy seeds powder
- Salt to taste
- Ghee 2 tbsp

**Method:**

To make the garam masala puree poppy seeds and some water to add to the pan with the stock.

Grind the remaining spices in a blender into a powder and add the poppy seeds paste to it and keep aside.

To make the nihari, heat oil in a heavy bottom stock pot and add sliced onions.

Cook until onion is caramelised and transfer the onions to a separate bowl.

Cook and simmer the stock until it is thickened for about 15 minutes.

Grind the remaining spices in a blender into a powder and add the poppy seeds paste, salt and cook for 2-3 minutes.

Remove the shanks and keep aside.

Sift flour, ghee and 1/2 cup water in a bowl to make a paste and add this to the pan with the stock.

Cook and simmer the stock until just thickened for about 15 minutes.

Return the lamb to the stock pot and add chopped cilantro and serve hot with lemon wedge and naan bread.

Chef Tarun Kapoor, Culinary Mastermind, USA. He may be contacted at tarunkapoors@gmail.com
Embassy of America hosts Kimono-fest

Haruhi Otsuka, wife of Seiichi Otsuka, Ambassador of Japan, and Mary Knight, wife of William Grant, Chief of Mission for the Embassy of America, recently hosted Kimono-fest at the residence of American ambassador. Seventeen members of Kimono Club Doha also attended the festival. Kimono Club Doha is an active and popular culture organisation in Qatar and was established in 2013. Chiho and her club members have showcased many colourful programmes, tailored to a wide variety of audiences, both young and old. The club also performed at the DECC, during the 11th Haya Fashion Exhibition. The members have also showcased fine handwork of woven silk garments, and explained the traditions behind them at Qatar University and several other schools in Doha. The Kimono-fest featured a programme choreographed by Chiho Funeno, one of the founding members of Kimono Club Doha. The event also featured several styles of formal kimonos, an obi-tying ritual and a mini-catwalk of models carrying the flags of Japan, Qatar and America.

Nepali organisations host Iftar get-together

Shyanja Welfare Community (SWC) Qatar recently organised an Iftar get-together at Gulf Garden restaurant. The get-together was attended by representatives from various non-resident Nepali organisations, journalists and entrepreneurs among others. Ajmat Ali, President of SWC, chaired the programme. Guru Narayan Rana Bhatt, Adviser to SWC, was chief guest at the event. The guest of honours at the event, included Badri Prasad Bhandari, Maya KC, Prem Nepali, Prem Raj Rijal, Bharat Roka and Mohammed Aziz Ali.

The event kicked off with the recitation of the Holy Qur’an by Mufti Nabi Box and Hassan Ali Atari, which was followed by a message on the importance of Ramadan. Speaking on the occasion, Guru Narayan Rana Bhatt, said that the purpose of the event was to promote social harmony among people of different religions. Ajmat Ali thanked the community members for their support. Maya KC, Aziz Ali and Bharat Roka also spoke on the occasion.

OIS organises Qur’an Recitation Competition

Olive International School (OIS) recently organised Qur’an Recitation Competition. The judges of the competition, included Shabana Taha and Abdul Gider, Atif Kallal, Abdul Gafoor, Karishma Inamdar and Nikhat Mateen were in-charge of the event. Indrani Dutta, Co-ordinator at OIS, encouraged the students to deliver their best keeping the excellence in mind. She insisted on saying that a learner’s aesthetic development, character building, spiritual growth, moral values and creativity are supported to a great extent by these types of co-curricular activities. She felicitated the winners with certificates to motivate them for future participation.
PROTECTING OUR PLANET

BIKE MORE
DRIVE LESS

reduce
REUSE
recycle

Cut down on what you throw away. Follow the three “R’s” to conserve natural resources and landfill space.

EDUCATE

When you further your own education, you can help others understand the importance and value of our natural resources.

Volunteer!

Volunteer for cleanups in your community. You can get involved in protecting your watershed too!

CONSERVE WATER

The less water you use, the less runoff and wastewater that eventually end up in the ocean.
IT STARTS WITH YOU

choose sustainable

Trees provide food and oxygen. They help save energy, clean the air, and help combat climate change.

- seafood

Learn how to make smart seafood choices at www.FishWatch.gov.

PLANT A TREE

Don’t send chemicals into our waterways.
Choose nontoxic chemicals in the home and office.

SHOP WISELY

Buy less plastic and bring a reusable shopping bag.

Long-lasting light bulbs - ARE A BRIGHT IDEA

Energy efficient light bulbs reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also flip the light switch off when you leave the room!

oceanservice.noaa.gov
It has been eight years since I have been living in Qatar and till now I have admired the beauty of this country—it is one of its kind. Every time you step out of your house, I can assure you that you will find something amazing to capture and preserve that moment in your camera.

The steeped-in-tradition Qatar has many stories to tell, you can learn about the ancient pursuit of falconry, watch camels race across the desert and admire traditional dhows (wooden cargo boats) bobbing on the water. But the country is developing rapidly, with the capital Doha a world-class city in the making, thanks to its spectacular modern skyline, peerless Museum of Islamic Art, a fine and expansive traditional souq, and burgeoning arts and culinary scenes.

On any given day you could sample a portfolio of sophisticated restaurants and then watch the sunset over sand dunes that seem to spring from a fairy tale.

In the middle of nowhere, sand stretches ahead of you for miles before this ferocious fortress comes into sight. The fortress’ beauty lies in its lonesomeness, and you can approach it on a camel-back at a leisurely pace. As you stand beneath this fortress, you will feel a sense of being connected to an exciting and influential history.

To help you understand the history of the fortress better, Al-Zubarah often holds exhibitions on the site. This fortress will have you feeling humbled; you will feel that there is something wonderful about realising your own insignificance.

— *Text and photos by Joel John Mathew*
Coming-of-age comedy disappoints at box office

By Ryan Faughnder

Like a straight-A student on the eve of graduation, Annapurna Pictures’ R-rated teen coming-of-age comedy Booksmart had a lot going for it. The movie earned stellar reviews, scored an enthusiastic reception at the South by Southwest Film Festival and even drew favourable comparisons to the hit 2007 film Superbad. The studio was confident enough to give Booksmart a complete summer release from a pair of studious high school girls who try to cram four years’ worth of misbehaviour into one wild night – a wide release at the beginning of summer.

And yet the film drew a modest audience in its opening weekend, grossing $8.60 million in its first four days of release. While that was close to what analysts were expecting, it was nonetheless a disappointing result for a movie that played in 2,500 theatres in North America over Memorial Day weekend. Audiences instead flocked to Walt Disney Co’s Aladdin, which grossed $112.7 million Friday through Monday.

Apparently reacting to the low early results, Booksmart director Olivia Wilde on Saturday called on her 1.6 million Twitter followers to get more people to their local multiplex as soon as possible. In the wake of the lacklustre box office opening, some on social media accused Annapurna Pictures, the company launched by Megan Ellison, of botching the debut. The West Hollywood company, known for movies including Vice, Detroit and If Beale Street Could Talk, has struggled to create commercial hits despite a reputation for making high-quality pictures. The movie was distributed theatrically by United Artists Releasing, a joint venture formed by Annapurna and MGM.

Some blasted the company’s decision to embark on a wide release on a busy holiday weekend rather than try to build word-of-mouth through a limited initial unveiling during a less competitive time of year, such as August or in the fall.

Others criticised the company’s marketing campaign, though filmmakers including writer-director Nija Mu’min, who made the 2018 coming-of-age tale Jinn, countered that the studio’s push for Booksmart was robust. Still others said lofty audience hopes that the movie, which lacks major stars, would become the female box office equivalent of Superbad were unrealistic.

Superbad, written by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, had a clear built-in audience because of its connection with Judd Apatow’s brand of comedy after the success of The 40-Year-Old Virgin and Knocked Up.

To some observers, Booksmart is simply the latest example of a midlevel movie to fall victim to today’s franchise-driven box office market. Smaller movies, including STX’s UglyDolls and Lionsgate’s rom-com Long Shot, struggled badly this month in the wake of Marvel Studios’ Avengers: Endgame. This weekend alone, cinemas will be flooded with highly anticipated new releases, including Warner Bros. and Legendary Pictures’ Godzilla: King of the Monsters, Paramount Pictures’ Elton John biopic Rocketman and Blumhouse Productions’ Octavia Spencer horror offering Ma. “Summer’s a very tough marketplace,” said Jeff Bock, a box office analyst with Exhibitor Relations. “You’re stuck between all these mega blockbusters that everyone wants to see. Talk to any indie distributor.”

Ellison was not immediately available for comment. But United Artists Releasing President of Distribution Erik Lomis defended the company’s strategy, saying it’s about more than just opening weekend.

“We have always believed, and actually proven, that we have a movie that audiences love, and we are expecting the film to play well into the summer,” Lomis said Tuesday. “We are not quitting on this great film. We’re confident that it’s going to leg out.”

But why risk a broad summer release? Executives were looking for a way to connect with Booksmart’s target audience of women ages 17 to 34, and movies that start with limited releases tend to draw older crowds. A somewhat comparable film from last year, A24’s Eighth Grade, had a so-called platform release, starting with four theatres and gradually building up to more than 1,000. Yet it ended its run with a mere $13.5 million in box office receipts.

As for the idea of opening later in the year, STX’s critically acclaimed The Edge of Seventeen opened in November 2016 but took in only $14.4 million. Unlike an indie film like Booksmart, which opened after the release of its predecessor, Hollywood blockbusters are strategically placed to connect with summer vacation.

Also, Annapurna and United Artists thought they had a chance for a summer breakout hit after getting rave reviews from Booksmart’s March debut at South by Southwest in Austin, Texas, a festival that helped propel the success of R-rated comedies Blockers and Trainwreck.

The gamble may not have paid off right away. But Annapurna and United Artists still have hope for Booksmart, which opened more or less in line with their expectations, boasts a 97% fresh Rotten Tomatoes score and won the endorsement of celebrities such as Ellen DeGeneres. The marketing push relied largely on a digital promotional campaign to target young women on social media.

But it still faces a steep challenge amid competition from studio giants – literally. Godzilla: King of the Monsters is expected to top the charts this weekend with at least $50 million from the US and Canada alone. – Los Angeles Times/TNS

SLOW OPENING: Beanie Feldstein and Kaitlyn Dever in Booksmart.

Ankit Narang to play college student in web series

Actor Ankit Narang of Pavitra Rishta fame is going to play a much younger character – a college student – in an upcoming web series.

Without disclosing much about the show or his role, the 26-year-old said: “It’s a romantic character of a college-going boy. I will start going for its shooting by the beginning of August, till then I will get in good shape.”

For the Dosti Drishii actor, transformation is a must “if you are passionate about your work”.

“It’s a difficult process to gain and lose weight. You have to work really hard. As of now, I have to look super fit for the series. I am doing everything required to stay fit. I am eating and sleeping on time and most importantly, working out,” he said.

NEW PROJECT: Ankit Narang says he will start going for the shooting of the series by the beginning of August.

Tanuja undergoes surgery, to be in hospital for a week

Veteran Bollywood actress Tanuja, who was diagnosed with diverticulitis, has undergone surgery.

An official at the Lilavati Hospital said that Tanuja was doing fine post-surgery. The official added that the actress was expected to be in hospital for a week.

Diverticulitis is inflammation or infection of small pouches called diverticula that develop along the walls of the intestines.

The 75-year-old actress was admitted in Lilavati Hospital on Tuesday “with some pain in abdomen”.

Tanuja’s daughter and actress Kajol, whose father-in-law and action director Veeru Devgan died two days ago, was photographed while visiting her mother.

Tanuja’s recent prominent appearances have been in projects like Pitruroon, A Death in the Gunj, Do Chor.

An official at the Lilavati Hospital said that Tanuja was doing fine post-surgery.

UNWELL: Tanuja, right, with her daughter Kajol.

Aarambh and Sonar Pahar. She is known for films like Memdhi, Chand Aur Sarai, Baharen Phir Bhi Aayegi, Jival Trif, Nai Roshni, Jeeve Ki Raah, Hoathi Mere Saathi, Anubhav, Mere Jeevan Saathi and Do Chor. – IANS

Friday, May 31, 2019

GULF TIMES | 11

SHOWBIZ

COMMUNITY
Pooh Cafe

And legend has it that some brave wolves made friends with humans.

They would stay with them near their fires.

And eventually they moved with them into their big forts.

I wonder what ever happened to them?

Let's go to the edge of the human world and see.

Let us never speak of this legend again.

Let's face it, we're no longer man's best friend.
Yesterday's Solution

The Mall Cinema (1): Devi 2 (Tamil) 2:30pm; Ngk (Tamil) 8:30pm; Devi 2 (Tamil) 11:15pm.
The Mall Cinema (2): Aladdin (2D) 2:30pm; Aladdin (2D) 8:30pm; Ngk (Tamil) 11pm.
The Mall Cinema (3): Ngk (Tamil) 2:30pm; Ma (2D) 9pm; Avengers: Endgame (2D) 11pm.
Landmark Cinema (1): Devi 2 (Tamil) 2:30pm; Devi 2 (Tamil) 9pm; Ma (2D) 11:15pm.
Landmark Cinema (2): Ngk (Tamil) 2:30pm; Ngk (Tamil) 8:30pm; Ngk (Tamil) 11:15pm.
Landmark Cinema (3): Aladdin (2D) 2:30pm; Aladdin (2D) 8:30pm; Avengers: Endgame (2D) 11pm.

Sudoku

Sudokures 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 to 9 and none is repeated.

Solution

Across
1 Notice speech showing reverence (9)
8 Italian family held back by Thai family (5)
9 It’s many years since pine’s family (5)
10 Very small can with yellow label (4)
11 Time runs out—it’s the end of the line (4)
13 Mollusc providing world of opportunities (8)
20 Top expert receives millions (9)
21 Company beginning to suffer— that causes great opportunities? (6)
22 Company blocking sudden suffering? That causes great opportunities? (6)

Down
2 Guards fed up with tips (7)
3 Harvest in Yorkshire, apparently (4)
4 Rang the bell as instructed, apparently (4)
5 Chaps covered with slippery tar on deck (8)
6 Suffering with father at home (8)
7 Police wrong to stop little girl (4)
8 Italian family held back by reverence (9)
9 It’s many years since pine’s family (5)
10 Very small can with yellow label (4)

The popular story of disgruntled workers throwing their sabots into the machinery to jam it is not supported by evidence. Rather, it’s that the workers typically wore sabots.

Gainpain (GAYN-payn)
MEANING:
noun: An instance of such subversion.
verb tr.: To disrupt, damage, or destroy, especially in an underhanded manner.

Sabotage (SAB-uh-tazh)
ETYMOLOGY:
noun: An instance of such subversion.
verb tr.: To disrupt, damage, or destroy, especially in an underhanded manner.

Usage:
since coming to power in 2010, the government of Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orban, has consistently used computer?"

Roughshod (RUF-shod)
MEANING:
adjective: 1. Domineering, bullying, brutal.
2. Having horseshoes with projecting nails or calks to prevent slipping.
3. A short, introductory musical passage, usually improvised, repeated several times.

Usage:
“Could MazeHunter be used by US companies to sabotage the attacker’s computer?”

Vamp (vamp)
MEANING:
noun: 1. The front upper part of a shoe.
2. Something patched up or improvised.
3. A short, introductory musical passage, usually improvised, repeated several times.

Usage:
“Slip on stilettos with flattering wraparounds and pointed vamps redefine the workday pump.” — wordsmith.org
Body shaming can lead to more weight gain in kids

Teasing and bullying overweight children could act as a catalyst in further increasing their weight by 33 per cent, compared to obese kids who do not suffer body shaming, a study suggests.

The findings, published in the journal Pediatric Obesity, appear to contradict the belief that such teasing might motivate youth to change their behaviour and attempt to lose weight.

The study involved over 100 youths who were an average of 11.8 years of age when they enrolled, according to Natasha A Schvey, Assistant Professor at the Uniformed Services University in the US.

The participants were either overweight (defined as a body mass index above the 85th percentile) when they began the study or had two parents who were overweight or obese.

For the study, they completed a six-item questionnaire on whether they had been teased about their weight. They then participated in annual follow-up visits for the next 15 years.

The researchers found that youth experiencing high levels of teasing gained an average of .20 kg per year more than those who did not.

The research team theorises that weight-associated stigma may have made youths more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours, such as binge eating and avoiding exercise.

Another possible explanation is that the stress of being teased could stimulate the release of the hormone cortisol, which may lead to weight gain, said the researchers. – IANS

ARIES
March 21 – April 19

You could receive some sort of windfall today, Aries. Use it wisely. Consider buying some time to figure out what you want to do with your life. It’s likely that your career isn’t exactly ringing your bells these days. You’re ready for new challenges and opportunities.

Meditate on what would make you happy and then take a systematic approach to achieving it.

TAURUS
April 20 – May 20

It’s likely that you will succeed at whatever you set out to accomplish today, Taurus. If you’ve been held back by worries over the integrity of a relationship or the long-term prospects of a partnership, you can dispel concerns by confronting the person directly. You may find he or she has the same feelings about you! Honesty is important today.

GEMINI
May 21 – June 20

Your energy may flag a bit today, Gemini. There’s nothing to worry about, though you could take better care of your health. What happened to that exercise regimen you vowed to start? It’s never too late to improve your eating habits and begin working out. Even if you only walk three times a week, you will notice a dramatic difference in your appearance and outlook.

CANCER
June 21 – July 22

Today is meant for socialising and connecting, Cancer. Your creativity is at an all-time high, so also try to work in some quiet time where you can do some writing or painting. If friends invite you out in the evening, by all means, take them up on the offer. You may meet someone who could be pivotal to your career.

LIBRA
September 23 – October 22

You’re ready for a career change, Libra, or at least a change of venue. Have you considered telecommuting one day per week? That might give you the variety you seek without needing to find a new job. You may meet someone today or in the near future who will have a dramatic influence on your career decisions.

SCORPIO
October 23 – November 21

What is your dream, Scorpio? Answer that question as specifically as possible today, then set about attaining that goal. All signs indicate that whatever you begin today will pay off big time. Even though you may feel that your dreams are too ambitious, there’s no need to feel overwhelmed. Vow to take things one step at a time. Keep in mind the old adage, “Once begun is half done.”

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LEO
July 23 – August 22

You can’t help but notice that your home looks a bit drab, Leo. Today you could plan to do something about it. It won’t take much money, just time and a little creativity. Paint some samples on the walls. Your spirits will improve. You can make big changes to the mood of the place simply by introducing more colour.

Aquarius
January 20 – February 19

You’re unstoppable today, Aquarius. It seems you can do anything. Your confidence and energy are high. There’s no question that you’re ready to take the world by storm. Is the world ready for you? Think carefully as you formulate plans for your new project. Whatever you do will succeed, but be sure you’re doing what you really want to do rather than what others expect of you.

SAGITTARIUS
November 22 – December 21

This may seem odd, Sagittarius, but you may not be the person you think you are. There are indications that you have hidden talents. If they come out today, no one will be more shocked than you! This could take your career in an entirely new direction. Strategise ways to incorporate this talent into your career. Your work will take on a new dynamic, and you will take a major leap forward.

CAPRICORN
December 22 – January 19

You’re about to experience a major change in your life’s direction, Capricorn, and it may occur today. Keep your mind open to all sorts of possibilities. You’re likely to receive some important information. Of course, you may not realise its importance right away. It’s only with the passage of time that you will look back on this event as pivotal. Make sure you don’t miss it.
Once upon a time” tales and folksy games from the pre-television days are making a comeback in Iraq during the long nights of Ramadan. Traditional storyteller Abdel Wahed Ismail, a red fez atop his head, yellow scarf draped over his shoulders, in a black gallabia gown, captivates audiences in the northern metropolis of Mosul. As in other Muslim countries, the annual month of dawn-to-dusk fasting is a time for evening gatherings in restaurants, coffee shops or homes of family and friends across Iraq. While many spend the night in prayer at mosques between an evening feast and pre-dawn snacks, others take part in games that in Iraq are reserved for Ramadan-time. Up until one or two generations ago, Ramadan nights were the preserve of the hakawati, or Arab storytellers, regaling audiences with fables as well as local news and historical stories. Mosul, now a city of almost two million people, has for centuries been a commercial and intellectual hub of the Middle East. With the arrival of television and radio in the 1960s, the hakawati vanished from the coffee shops and restaurants where families and friends gathered. Two years after Mosul — a city gripped by violence following the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein — was freed from the stranglehold of the Islamic State jihadist group, Ismail has been leading a revival. The 70-year-old actor and local celebrity takes his seat each night on a white wooden bench on a platform to tell tales in the unmistakable Moslawi dialect. “I’ve lived through so many different times, so I try to pass on stories of good things to young people,” said Ismail, who witnessed the bloody overthrow of Iraq’s monarchy as well as a succession of coups and wars. While tales such as the chivalrous epic “Antar and Abla” put smiles on the faces of older members of the audience as they reminisce, Ismail slips in references to hip online games such as PUBG for the younger ones. A die is hidden under one of the cups and the players have to work out which one. Another competition in which players must find a hidden object — “mheibess” (rings) — is extremely popular in Baghdad. A player discreetly slips a ring to a member of his team, and their adversaries have to figure out who, reading their body language and facial expressions. Such games form part of a wider social phenomenon as Ramadan nights turn once again, often for the first time since the 2013 invasion, into social events rather than a time to be hunkered down at home. They also serve to show that “technological progress has not got the better of the good things of the past”, said Iraqi sociologist Saad Ahmed. — AFP
Greek life coach eulogises spiritual cleansing in Ramadan

By Mudassir Raja

Ramadan is that time of the year when Muslims change their usual routine for a month. The changes are very significant and visible. People from other countries visiting Qatar during the holy month of Ramadan also observe these changes and react in their own ways.

Evridiki Ilioki is a Greek national, a certified leadership and life coach. She has been living in Doha for four years. Community recently spoke to her about her experience of Ramadan.

Evridiki considers herself blessed to be in Qatar during Ramadan. “I feel blessed to be here, especially during the holy time of Ramadan.”

She had absolutely no experience of Ramadan before she came to Doha; in fact, she was introduced to it for the first time here. “First of all, I was introduced to Ramadan from some dear Qatari lady friends of our community, who made us realise the holiness of the season by their life example. Now, Ramadan for me symbolises mainly: time of life example. Now, Ramadan for the holiness of the season by their dear Qatari lady friends of our community, who introduced to Ramadan from some recent years. She had absolutely no knowledge of Ramadan before she came to Doha; in fact, she was introduced to it for the first time here. “First of all, I was introduced to Ramadan from some dear Qatari lady friends of our community, who made us realise the holiness of the season by their life example. Now, Ramadan for me symbolises mainly: time of life example. Now, Ramadan for the holiness of the season by their dear Qatari lady friends of our community, who introduced to Ramadan from some recent years.

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Evridiki sees lots of benefits of Ramadan. “The benefits as I have learnt from my local female friends are: patience and mercy, which, let’s face it, we all need more of in these harried times. Ramadan is viewed as a holy, blessed month that leaves you with a developed sense of self-control and clear-mind in areas including diet, peace of mind and creating stronger family bonds.”

She now understands that Ramadan is not all about abstaining from food and water. “So, I understood that a very important part of Ramadan is spiritual cleansing. Having a dear friend in mind, I remember how after a day of fasting and praying made her face and skin glow. She looked calmer and happier” — Evridiki Ilioki

As a life coach, Evridiki feels that Ramadan is a good time for people with stress to de-stress themselves by praying more and more to God. “Also, it is a great time for me as a coach, as I can encourage all my clients, but especially the ones with stress and anxiety to pray more and ask God to support them to find peace in their hearts. What a great time to cultivate more peace and light in our hearts.”

Especially in the beginning of Ramadan, I experienced some of the ladies in our community to be a bit nervous and restless, I see as they continue with their fasting regime, they feel better and better every day and then after about two weeks you start seeing the benefits in their physical and mental state. They start becoming more relaxed, peaceful, they smile more. As time is passing by, they are starting to feel happier and preparing for Eid, time to enjoy all the spiritual gifts they received from Ramadan with their loving family.

Evridiki was born in Greece but lived for seven years in the UK. She is a certified leadership coach with an Applied Coaching Psychology background. She has 18 years’ experience in the sector of coaching/mentoring. She is now the head of How Women Work/HWGLOBAL, a division of Elite Consulting LLC.

HWGLOBAL is a reputable women’s organisation that promotes leadership in Qatar through executive/life coaching and educational retreats for the last 10 years.

Memorable acts of self-sacrifice in Islam

History has brightly recorded many examples of Muslims attaining the exalted degree and the paramount quality of self-sacrifice and altruism.

Once, a woman came to the best of creation, the last Prophet and the leader of Messengers, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, and presented a garment to him, saying: “O Messenger of Allah, this is [a gift] for you.”

The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, accepted it and wore it as he was in need of it; then, one of the Companions saw him wearing it, and said to him, “What a beautiful garment! Give it to me!”

The Prophet, sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam, accepted it and wore it as he was in need of it; then, one of the Companions saw him wearing it, and said to him, “What a beautiful garment! Give it to me!”

But, perhaps the exemplars of self-sacrifice among our predecessors, are the three who favoured the other’s lives over their own. Huthayfah Al-‘Adawi, may Allah have mercy upon him, relates, “I went looking for my cousin on the battlefield during the war of Al-Yarmook. I had some water and mentally noted, ‘If he still has any breath, I will give him some water to drink and will wash his face with it.’ I found him and asked, ‘Should I give you water to drink?’ He made an affirmative gesture; but then we heard another man cry out, ‘Ah! Therefore, Hishaam made a sign to me, telling me to go to that man. When I went to him, I found that he already expired. When I returned to Hishaam, I discovered he, too, had passed away; and when I returned to my cousin, I saw that he had died as well, may Allah have mercy on all of them!’” – Islamweb.net