Children and teenagers who are ridiculed for their weight end up gaining more weight in the long run.

Georgian dancers entertain visitors with modernised folkloric themed dances at Summer Entertainment City.

Community

This American Life star Ira Glass on favourite podcasts and ‘the power of narrative’. P2-3

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People spend more time on mobile devices than TV, says research. Page 15
Glass is full

Ira Glass’s signature storytelling approach – candid, narrative, sometimes startlingly intimate – inspired a generation of podcasters working across genres and styles, writes Hannah Sayle

I think a lot of people who aren’t into podcasts have a technological aversion to it. They don’t realise there’s an app and you just click a button and it pulls up 10 podcasts

— Ira Glass

“Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other.”
— Abraham Lincoln

Quote Unquote
Ira Glass, host of the hit public radio show This American Life, is a founding father of the modern podcast movement. His signature storytelling approach — candid, narrative, sometimes startlingly intimate — inspired a generation of podcasters working across genres and styles.

Since launching This American Life in 1995, Glass, 60, also took to hosting events outside the studio, putting a face to voice and building on the programme’s cult following. His 7 Things I’ve Learned solo show is currently on tour, featuring what Glass called “a bunch of stories I tell for people’s amusement.”

We caught up with the public radio star to ask what podcasts he’s listening to and where the medium’s future lies. The conversation has been lightly edited for length.

Whenever something gets big quickly, people start using the word “bubble.” Do you believe there’s a podcast bubble about to burst?

It depends on what you mean by “bubble.” I think there are two things: the business side and in people’s hearts. And on the business side, do I think people will get to a saturation point and feel sick of it? Yes, I do. I think that’s very possible. As happens with everything. There’s, what, 600,000–700,000 podcasts on iTunes right now?

Still, I don’t think it’s a thing where in a year or two the bubble will burst. Partly because not enough people have even heard a podcast.

What do you say to those people who aren’t listening to podcasts?

If you aren’t listening to podcasts, you shouldn’t feel unculted; you are the solid majority. But I’m not finding people who are like, “I hate stories!” I think a lot of people who aren’t into podcasts have a technological aversion to it. They don’t realise this is just storytelling and you just click a button and it pulls up 10 podcasts.

Do you see that changing?

I do think that’s changing. The majority of the This American Life audience is listening via podcast. We crossed over two years ago and now we have 3 million people listening to each episode as podcast, and 2.2 million listening as radio. The radio has stayed steady, but the podcast audience, which started off as nothing, sort of overtook it.

What makes a good podcast? Can any story be moulded into quality radio or podcast material?

Oh, no, of course not. My workweek is a testament to the fact that most things aren’t interesting enough to be on the radio. We’re constantly running up things and killing them. I do think everyone has a story to tell but everyone does not have a story to tell on the radio. You need forward motion of a plot and someone who you want to hear what happens to them.

Do you have an example?

One of my favourites is a Valentine’s Day episode from This American Life about this couple. They’d been together since the first week of college. It’s 10 or 11 or 12 years in, and they still weren’t married and they start talking about it. She reveals to him that “Oh, I just kind of thought before we’d get married I would sleep with more people.” And he’s like, “Me too!” And so they decide to just sleep with as many people as they can for a month — and one month turns into two months. It doesn’t go well for their relationship, as you would expect.

But what makes this story so interesting as a radio piece is the guy is very frank and vulnerable in explaining what an idiot he was when they started sleeping with other people. She did the more traditional guy’s thing where she’d, like, find some German tourist and take him to bed. He was just falling in love left and right and breaking people’s hearts and he didn’t know how to handle himself.

There’s something in his telling that’s very sweet. In the hands of a different interviewee, we might hate them both and have to kill it. If he had the wrong attitude about it and was kind of a jerk, you wouldn’t want to hear it anyway. If he didn’t have the kind of grace about telling the story and wisdom about who he was when he was younger, it wouldn’t work as a radio story.

What podcasts do you listen to?

Lately, The Daily, the New York Times podcast which is an experiment of doing daily news as narrative. I think it’s spectacularly great. I also listen to Revisionist History by Malcolm Gladwell’s incredible strength as a performer. It’s been interesting to see him become a master broadcaster in two years. — Star Tribune (Minneapolis)/TNS
Fat-shaming linked to long-term risk of obesity

By Rita Giordano

Children and teenagers who are ridiculed about their weight end up gaining more weight in the long run than youngsters who aren't teased, according to a new study from the National Institutes of Health.

The study was conducted by researchers with the Uniform Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda, Md., the NIH's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. It was published recently in the journal Pediatric Obesity.

The Context
Childhood and youth overweight and obesity are at epidemic proportions in the United States and are associated with numerous health problems, including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, sleep apnea and orthopedic complications. In addition, weight-based teasing is one of the most common reasons for bullying cited among youngsters in the U.S. According to previous research, 90% of high school students have witnessed their peers made fun of for their weight, and 60% of overweight youngsters have reported being teased about their weight by peers and family members. Teachers, coaches and healthcare providers have also been found to engage in fat shaming, as well. However, few longitudinal studies have assessed the impact of weight stigma on weight gain and body composition, and those that did tended to focus on adults. But, the researchers noted, children who are overweight or obese are at risk of becoming adults with excess weight.

The Data
The study involved 110 youths who were an average age of 11.8 years when they were enrolled. The participants were either overweight, with a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile, or were considered at risk for excess weight because they had two parents who were overweight or obese. When they joined the study, they completed a six-item questionnaire about whether they had been teased about their weight. They were invited to participate in annual follow-up visits for the next 15 years.

Of these youngsters, 55% were girls. Of the 110 participants, 53% were overweight and 47% were considered at risk. Altogether, 43% of all the participants reported at least one incident of weight-based teasing.

The Results
Youngsters who reported high levels of weight-based teasing experienced a 33% greater gain in BMI per year compared to youth who did not experience weight-based teasing. That amounted to an average weight gain of 44 pounds per year for the youths who experienced a high level of teasing compared to those who did not. Those who experienced high levels of teasing also experienced a 91% greater gain in body fat per year than the youth who didn’t get teased about their weight.

Weight-based teasing appeared to worsen the risk for excess weight, instead of motivating a young person to attempt to control their weight. The researchers theorized, based on past studies, that ridicule about excess weight made youths more likely to engage in unhealthy coping behaviours like binge eating and avoiding exercise. Another possible explanation for the study outcomes was the stress of being teased could have sparked the release of the hormone cortisol, which can stimulate appetite and lead to weight gain.

The Caveats
The study's limitations include the relatively small study sample size, and the participants were all non-Hispanic black and white youngsters.

Next Steps
The authors said more research is needed to explore these findings, including the unique effects of different kinds of weight stigmatizing, such as cyberbullying and social exclusion. In addition, the researchers said, continued efforts should be made to educate people about the potentially harmful impacts of weight-based teasing.

Even 25 cups of coffee a day not bad for heart

There is good news for those who like their cup of coffee every morning. Drinking coffee, even up to 25 cups a day, is not as bad for arteries and heart as previously thought, says a study.

The researchers found that drinking coffee was not associated with stiffer arteries as previously thought. Arteries carry blood containing oxygen and nutrients from heart to rest of the body. If they become stiff, it increases heart’s workload and raises the chance of heart attack or stroke.

“Despite the popularity of coffee worldwide, different reports could put people off from enjoying it. While we can’t prove a causal link in this study, our research indicates coffee isn’t as bad for arteries as previous studies would suggest,” said Kenneth Fung, who led the data analysis for the research at the Queen Mary University of London.

For the study, involving 8,000 people in Britain, coffee consumption was categorised into three groups. Those who drink less than one cup a day, those who drink between one and three cups and those who drink more than three.

No increased stiffening of arteries was associated with those who drank up to this high limit when compared with those who drank less than one cup a day, said the researchers.

“Although the study included individuals who drink up to 25 cups a day, the average intake among the highest coffee consumption group was five cups a day. We would like to study these people more closely in our future work to help advise safe limits,” Fung said.

“This research will hopefully put some of the media reports in perspective, as it rules out one of the potential detrimental effects of coffee on our arteries,” said Metin Avkiran from British Heart Foundation.

The study was presented at the British Cardiovascular Society (BCS) conference in the UK. – IANS
Anti-depressants raise hip fracture risk in elderly

Elderly people who take anti-depressants or opioids are more than twice as likely to suffer a fractured hip after a fall, a new study has found.

The study, published in Australian Prescriber Journal, revealed that the risk of fracturing a hip was significantly higher among those who were taking multiple psychotropic medicines – mood and consciousness-altering medications that are used to treat conditions ranging from depression to dementia.

“Anti-depressants, opioids, anti-epileptic medicines, benzodiazepines (which are used to treat anxiety) and antipsychotics (which are used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder) all increase the risk of hip fractures,” lead author Libby Roughhead from the University of South Australia (UniSA) said.

“Combining them increases the risk even further, up to five times in the case of anti-depressants and anxiety medicines together.”

This equates to one extra hip fracture for every 17 patients aged 80 years and older who are treated for a year.

This risk of falling can be lowered by reducing medicine use, exercising more and using other interventions such as occupational therapy and podiatry, the researchers said.

Australians are among the highest users of anti-depressants in the world, with approximately 10 percent of the adult population taking them each day. – IANS

Hepatitis A on the rise

Drug use and homelessness are cited as two main reasons why hepatitis A infections have increased nearly 300% in the US since 2015, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “Hepatitis A is a viral hepatitis that can infect humans, it infects through the oral-fecal route,” says Dr Stacey Rizza, an infectious diseases specialist at Mayo Clinic.

The CDC says two other groups associated with the increase include men who have sex with men and those who ate contaminated food.

“Hepatitis A is highly contagious and affects the liver,” says Dr Rizza. “It’s a self-limited infection in contrast to some other viral hepatitis. This means you get very sick but eventually clear the infection without treatment because, unfortunately, there is no treatment for hepatitis A.”

Hepatitis A can be prevented by a vaccine. “The vaccine is being universally given to kids throughout the US now,” says Dr Rizza. The vaccine first became widely available in 1995.

Improving hygiene opportunities in homeless camps may help stop the spread of infection in addition to vaccinations. “In some of these situations, they’ve put in temporary showers and temporary bathing units where people can clean up, and laundry facilities so they can wash their clothes, particularly if they have been soiled or are dirty.”

Symptoms of hepatitis A may include, fatigue, sudden nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain or discomfort, clay-coloured bowel movements, loss of appetite, low-grade fever, dark urine, joint pain and jaundice.

“In very rare cases, hepatitis A can kill you. You can actually go into fulminant liver failure, and if you don’t recover from the liver failure, you could die. That is a minority of the cases. Usually, people become very sick, can be very symptomatic, but eventually clear the infection themselves,” says Dr Rizza.

The CDC suggests vaccination of people in high risk groups may help reduce or halt the spread of infections and help prevent future outbreaks. – Mayo Clinic News Network/TNS

This smartphone app helps reduce migraine

Researchers have developed a smartphone-based relaxation technique which reduces headache in people who are suffering from migraine.

The RELAXaHEAD app guides patients through progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) – a type of behavioural therapy in which patients alternately relax and tense different muscle groups to reduce stress.

The study, published in the journal Nature Digital Medicine, evaluated the clinical effectiveness of an app for treating migraine and adding an app to standard therapies such as oral medications under the supervision of a doctor.

“Our study offers evidence that patients may pursue behavioural therapy if it is easily accessible, they can do it on their own time and it is affordable,” said Mia Minen, Assistant Professor at the New York University.

“Clinicians need to rethink their treatment approach to migraine because many of the accepted therapies, although proven to be the current, best course of treatment, aren’t working for all patients,” Minen said.

To see if an app might increase compliance, the research team analysed app use by 51 migraine patients, all of whom owned smartphones.

For the study, participants were asked to use the app for 90 days and to keep a daily record of the frequency and severity of their headaches, while the app kept track of how long and often patients used PMR.

During the research, on average, participants had 13 headache days per month. Thirty-nine percent of the patients also reported having anxiety and 30 percent had depression.

PMR therapy utilising the RELAXaHEAD app dropped to 51 percent after six weeks, and to 29 percent after three months, said the researchers.

“The study results suggest that accessible smartphone technologies can effectively teach patients lifelong skills needed to manage their migraines,” Minen said. – IANS
Enjoy Eid with tender, juicy Sikandari raan

Eid al-Fitr is the “festival of breaking the fast” and is a religious day celebrated by the Muslims all over the world that marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. This celebration calls for food and festivities spreading over three days. What can be a better way to celebrate Eid with friends and family over tandoor roasted leg of baby lamb? It is a must try dish for all the meat lovers and a great finger licking experience since the Mughal era.

The origin of this dish goes back to the nomadic roots, developing in campfires and military kitchens in central Asia as the food for tribesmen and warriors. The lamb dish is cooked with the toughest cut of lamb – the hind leg, which is usually used for ground meat.

Enjoy Eid with tender, juicy Sikandari raan

The secret to cooking raan lies in taking the toughest meat of the lamb and making it so tender and juicy that you can eat it with a spoon. The secret method to tenderise the meat is to slow cook it with buttermilk or stock, but many chefs have their own way to tenderise the meat. The slow cooking in buttermilk breaks down the tough membranes and softens the meat. I prefer to marinate the meat for over 24 hours and then cook it over slow fire to tenderise the meat.

Sikandari raan as a dish was first known to have been served for Alexander of Macedon’s wedding feast when he married Roxanne, daughter of a King of the Hindu Kush region, which Alexander (Or Sikander) had just conquered. The leg of lamb preparation was also eaten at the battlefield to celebrate the now legendary friendship of the great conqueror with king Porus of Takshilila. Ever since eating the Sikandari raan has become a symbol of friendship and binding ties.

Bukhara, a world-renowned restaurant known for its traditional and authentic recipe, has been serving it from decades and people still enjoy this and similar recipes. To make the raan each leg of lamb should not weigh more than 1.2 – 1.5 kilograms to maintain the portion size and to ensure the meat is tender enough for cooking.

Sikandari raan

Serves 4
Ingredients
For seasoning
Lamb leg (1.2- 1.5kg each) 2 legs
Salt 1 tsp
Kashmiri chilli powder 1 tsp
Ginger-garlic paste 2 tbsp
Malt vinegar 50 ml
Black Cumin ½ tsp
For cooking
Brown onion paste ½ cup
Garlic paste 2 tsp
Cinnamon 1" stick
Cardamom 3-4 pods
Clove 3-4 nos.
Bay leaf 2-3 leaves

Method:

Clean the leg of lamb for extra fat or silver skin and prick the meat with fork or tip of the knife.
Season the leg of lamb with salt, Kashmiri chilli powder, ginger garlic paste, malt vinegar and black cumin seeds.
Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 24 hours or at least for 6-8 hours.
Align the marinated lamb in a deep baking dish or baking tray.
Add water and rub brown onion paste, garlic paste, cinnamon stick, green cardamom, clove, bay leaf, Kashmiri chilli powder and salt to the lamb leg.
Ensure the lamb leg is immersed in water and cook it in preheated oven at 180 degree Celsius for approx. 2-2.5 hours, cover the baking tray with aluminium foil.
Once the lamb is cooked transfer the lamb in a tray and allow it to cool, strain the lamb jus through a fine mesh.
In the meantime, prepare a yoghurt marination with Kashmiri chilli powder, garam masala powder, ginger garlic paste, salt, Kasoori methi and mustard oil.
Once the lamb has cooled down to room temperature, apply the prepared yoghurt marination to it.
Bake the marinated lamb in a preheated oven at 225- 250 degree Celsius for 10-15 minutes, or skewer the lamb leg and finish it in tandoor.
Keep basting with clarified butter to keep it moist and soft.
Preheat the lamb jus and adjust the seasoning with salt and add lemon juice if required.
Once the lamb is roasted transfer it in a serving dish and drizzle some lemon juice and fresh coriander leaves.
Serve the lamb jus accompanied with Sikandari raan, naan and steamed basmati rice.

Note: Check by pulling the meat of the bone of the lamb leg, it should come off easily after cooking it in oven or tandoor, if it is still not tender, give it some more cooking time till it is tender.
You can even cook the lamb leg in the stock and keep it refrigerated till you need to serve it. You can finish it in oven before serving.

Chef’s Special

Tarun Kapoor

Salt to taste
Kashmiri chilli powder ¼ tsp

Method:

Clean the leg of lamb for extra fat or silver skin and prick the meat with fork or tip of the knife.
Season the leg of lamb with salt, Kashmiri chilli powder, ginger garlic paste, malt vinegar and black cumin seeds.
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Culinary Mastermind, USA,
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Lobster fishing on Magdalen Islands

For two months every year, Canada's Magdalen Islands are transformed into a hive of activity as lobster fishers set out with their boats for the summer season. The work is hard and sleep is scarce, but the rewards are high, writes Verena Wolff.

Rush hour comes at 3am on Grande Entree Island. In early summer, the sun is already starting to rise and trucks line the port. Men walk energetically towards fishing boats and shovel ice onto the fish in boxes on board. It's cold – it gets frosty at night, even in summer, in eastern Canada. The men don't mind. They are about to travel a half hour or more out of the port, the biggest in the Magdalen Islands archipelago, though they won't reveal exactly where.

They're collecting the traps they use to catch lobster out of the Gulf of St Lawrence. "We're allowed to fish for lobster for 10 weeks," says John Gee, who is setting off with his captain. The season begins in mid-May.

Every night, the fishermen set off into the gulf, which lies between the province of Quebec, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. The gulf is the outlet of the North American Great Lakes. It flows into the Atlantic and the water is as salty as the sea.

This is the third biggest river by discharge in North America. Until it gets to Quebec City, it is a freshwater river, turning brackish at the Ile d'Orleans and then finally becoming salt water.

While the lobster fishers prepare their boats, a larger vessel docks nearby. Its captain has been out catching snow crabs, but isn't particularly happy with his catch.

"Every day is different," says John Clark. He doesn't say much but he's friendly, something that could be said for most Madelinots, as the islanders are known. He doesn't have a lot of time – he's setting off for the lobster traps later.

"The season is exhausting for the fishermen," says Gilles Lapierre, who has lived in the small archipelago since he was a child and can trace his French ancestors back nine generations. "The lobster and crab seasons overlap and some boats fish for both."

Sleep is a fleeting thing during the season. Clark will have a quick lie-down of two hours before setting off again.

Lobsters and crabs are a lucrative source of income, and fishing licences are hard to get. "Mostly they're passed on in families," says Lapierre. "To the son, sometimes to the daughter?" If a permit comes up for sale it can cost up to 500,000 Canadian dollars (370,000 dollars).

There's a huge market for the lobsters within Canada and beyond because the water they come from is cold and clear, and they come in all kinds of sizes.

For a long time, there were no quotas and anyone could fish here however much and whenever they wanted. But eventually the traps started coming up empty because the waters were overfished.

"At the time lobsters weren't even a delicacy," says Lapierre, looking back on his childhood. "It was food for poor people."

Today, lobster, cod and halibut are prized by the islands' restaurants.

There's also a smokehouse, Le Fumoir d'Antan, which prepares herring from the province of New Brunswick, as well as a cheese farm and a brewery, A l' Abri de la Tempte, set up by two women.

Elise Cornellier Bernier and Anne-Marie Lachance wanted to make a beer that didn't just taste like all the other commercial beers. Their light beer is called Cale-Seche, made with sea salt and lemons. They also make various other kinds that might taste foreign to more traditional palates.

Six of the main islands are linked via road, while the seventh, the Ille d'Entree, is reachable only by ferry.

See-kayaking on the gulf is also a popular pastime and there are caves in the sandstone cliffs of the islands in which you can swim, as long as you wear a wetsuit and helmet.

The weather is quite cold even during the summer, and the currents in the caves can be strong.

But if you decide to go for a paddle or lie on the beaches around the gulf, beware of the boats that continually motor past on their way to the lobster traps, only stopping in the early afternoon.

The only quiet day is Sunday and the season ends in July. – DPA
9 WAYS TO AVOID GETTING SICK

1. Get vaccinated
Every year the flu virus mutates and adapts to the previous year’s vaccines. As more and more people get vaccinated, they also help those who can’t (like infants and seniors) from getting sick by granting herd immunity.

2. Rethink that extra drink
Studies have shown that excessive alcohol inhibits the immune system by reducing the ability of white blood cells to effectively kill bacteria. Alcohol also dehydrates and can disrupt your sleep which is also another way to get sick.

3. Avoid sugar
Just like alcohol, sugar also inhibits white blood cells from fighting bacteria and viruses. Women shouldn’t exceed more than 6 teaspoons of sugar, while men shouldn’t exceed 9 teaspoons. A typical can of pop has 10 teaspoons.

4. Wash any item you touch
Washing machines, phones, microwaves, keyboards, doorknobs, light switches, bed rails, remote controls, and children’s toys are all hotbeds for bacteria and germs! So washing all these objects occasionally helps reduce the risk of bacteria and germ build up.

5. Probiotics
Roughly 50% to 70% of your entire immune system is located in your gut. Your gut contains a healthy mix of bacteria which prevent pathogens and infections from being absorbed. So promote healthy bacteria by way of kombucha or kimchi (instead of sugary yogurts).

6. Stop biting your nails
Think about everything you touch in the course of the day. Biting your nails means exposing your mouth, nose and eyes to a variety of bacteria and germs that could be harmful to you. So wash your hands with soap often and avoid the nibbling.

7. Exercise moderately
Moderate exercise, in the long run, strengthens your immune system. However, intense workouts leave your body in a weakened state that also weakens your immune system. After intense workouts, your body is more susceptible to getting sick for a 72-hour window.

8. Hold your breath
Studies show that the droplets from sneezes and coughs carrying germs travel much farther than previously thought. Holding your breath for even 10-15 seconds after a sneeze or cough can reduce your chances of getting sick.

9. Get fresh air
Sometimes, sharing warm air inside an office or home can lead to getting sick. The air that’s circulating in a closed space carries germs and bacteria that can infect you. So take a few minutes occasionally to get some fresh air, when it’s a little chilly outside.
Personal Growth & Development

If you’re not investing in people, you’re not investing in the success of your business.

Your Human Resources
A part of understanding and deploying engagement best practices requires understanding current HR models. However, the key model is and will always be the human resources model. The human resources model treats employees as a finite, exhaustible resource. Therefore, businesses must implement effective strategies to get the most from their employees. They are not expendable or by any means, common.

Subsidize Education
Formal education programs and tools are one of the best ways individuals can develop new skills and knowledge to directly apply to their roles. Therefore, it’s also one of the most worthwhile investments your company can make.

Time for Passion Projects
One way to inspire growth in your employees is to encourage them to work on passion projects – on work time. It can be service or business-related, but the project must be something they are personally invested in. Not only will employees grow from the additional experience, but these projects will benefit your business in surprising ways.

Vacations and Sabbaticals
Encourage your employees to travel, take time off, collect themselves and enjoy their free time. Also, sabbaticals may seem costly but that level of freedom can be nourishing and insightful – the returns of which come back to your business.
Captain Comics: The many mutations of Swamp Thing

By Andrew A Smith

The new Swamp Thing TV show isn’t your daddy’s swamp monster. It isn’t even Alan Moore’s.

Moore is the English writer famous for From Hell, League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, V for Vendetta, Watchmen and a slew of famous stories on major DC Comics characters like Green Lantern (Mogo Doesn’t Socialize) and Superman (For the Man Who Has Everything). One of his most beloved efforts was his run on “Swamp Thing,” which re-imagined and revitalised the character.

Moore began his run on the second Swamp Thing title in 1984. Prior to that the muck-encrusted mockery of a man had been an accidental headline.

“We really didn’t think we were going to create a legend,” says Len Wein, who co-created the character, along with artist Bernie Wrightson.

(Shamed to note that both Wein and Wrightson are no longer with us. The astounding thing is that both were born in the same year, 1948, and both died in the same year, 2017. Something cosmic going on there.)

Wein went on to recount an anecdote about the 1970 creation of an 8-page story that became Swamp Thing. He and Wrightson were at a holiday party at the house of DC writer Marc Wolkman, where Wrightson “suitably depressed” after breaking up with his girlfriend. Wein had already dreamt up a story that mixed romance, horror and wistful sadness, which had been accepted by his editor. He pitched the story to Wrightson, who agreed to draw it. Swamp Thing eventually appeared in the DC Comics mystery anthology House of Secrets in 1971.

Swamp Thing was told from the point of view of Alex Olsen, a young scientist murdered by his scheming partner, who londered for Olsen’s wife. Buried in the swamp, badly injured but not dead, the scientist morphed into a creature recognisable as today’s Swamp Thing. As the story began, he lurked in the swamp, watching the house where his partner lived, having married Olsen’s widow. The usual grisly revenge ensued, but it was the wife’s horror at Swamp Thing’s appearance that lent the story its weight, as well as Swampy’s tragic acceptance of his new existence.

According to Wein, that issue of “House of Secrets” was the best-selling DC book of the month it appeared, and he and Wrightson were begged to continue the character in an ongoing series. Eventually they both accepted, but unwilling to dilute the power of their 8-page gem, created a new Swamp Thing origin. Swamp Thing #1 appeared in 1972 to suitable fanfare.

The new version of Swamp starred Alec Holland and his wife Linda, who were working on a “bio-restorative formula” in a swamp when foreign agents bombing their lab. Linda was shot and killed, but the explosion, formula and swamp combined to revive Alec as a living plant—a swamp thing. What ensued was Alec’s quest for a cure to his condition, while battling monsters as a monster.

The title had its ups and downs, even being canceled at one point. But then came Alan Moore. Moore arrived with issue #20 of the second Swamp Thing series, and did something amazing. Many creators will re-invent an existing character that isn’t selling well. But Moore re-invented Swamp Thing and turned the strip completely upside down ... without changing a single word that previous writers had established. That’s pretty hard to do!

So: Spoilers ahead for a 1984 story. If you don’t want to know what Moore did, don’t read any further.

Still with me? OK. Moore asked the musical question, “What if Swamp Thing isn’t a man who thinks he’s a plant, but a plant who thinks he’s a man?”

In other words, Alec Holland was dead, and had been since Swamp Thing #1. The character named Swamp Thing was truly a plant, one who had simply operated under the delusion that he was Alec Holland after absorbing Holland’s memories via planarian worms. (Feel free to Google.)

Which meant that there was no “cure” to be had.

Which meant that Swamp Thing had no future to work for, and his past efforts had been a waste of time.

Which meant he was really, really angry. Moore went on to establish a new purpose for Swampy, one that was amazingly grandiose. Swamp Thing, it turned out, was the “avatar of the Green,” or plant life. Counsellled by the Parliament of Trees—previous avatars who had existed before him—Swamp Thing was to protect plant life from its worst threat: Man.

One interesting aspect of this was the implication that all of literature’s swamp creatures—Marvel’s Man-Thing, Hillman’s The Heap, Theodore Sturgeon’s It, etc.—could be connected to this grand cycle of avatars. DC couldn’t say so — copyright laws, you know — but the reader was free to make the connection.

This new status opened Swamp Thing to powers he didn’t know existed. According to Moore, Swamp Thing could project his consciousness anywhere. As it turned out, he could even connect with plant life on other planets, and with some effort, project his consciousness there.

Moore told some suitably outlandish stories about Swamp Thing in space, but mainly he told horror stories about traditional monsters — monsters that he inverted in much the same manner as he had Swamp Thing. What if, for example, the monthly cycle of werewolves was connected to the monthly cycle of menstruation? What if the swamp was, simply lived underwater?

Moore — abetted by the super-creepy art of Stephen Bissette and John Totleben — breathed new, terrifying life into old legends, and catapulted Swamp Thing into the stratosphere.

Which, strangely, doesn’t seem to be connected to Swamp Thing’s most famous iteration, the Alan Moore series. In the first episode of the new “Swamp Thing,” we see all the characters we associate with the comic book series, only in slightly altered ways:

The new series is set in Marais, Louisiana, instead of Houma, Louisiana. But it looks just the same.

—We meet Avery Sunderland (Will Patton), a local boy done good, instead of evil Green. Sunderland of the globe-straddling Sunderland Corporation. Avery’s wife Maria (Virginia Madsen) appears to be a bigger player.

—The show’s protagonist is Alec Holland (Andy Bean), but he is a disgraced biologist who used to work for the Sunderland Corporation instead of a scientist working for the government. And he is single. (Sorry, Linda.

—TV’s Abby Arcane (Crystal Reed) is an American doctor with the CDC, instead of being the European daughter of Swamp Thing’s greatest enemy, the scientist turned sorcerer Anton Arcane.

—Matt Cable (Henderson Wade) is the local sheriff, instead of being the government agent assigned to protect Alec and Linda Holland.

—Tom Tripple (Matt Biedel) is a reporter on the local weekly paper, instead of the hostess of a tabloid-style TV show.

Of course, all of this could be misdirection, and all the characters will shed their skin to reveal that Moore’s plots are the underlying reality. That could happen.

Or it could be its own animal. If so, it can join the previous Swamp Thing adaptations, which include a TV show on TNT, two movies and a cartoon. Not to mention the hundreds of comic books.

“All in all, not a bad record,” Wein said, “for a character who began life as an 8-page mystery anthology story.” — TNS
Yesterday’s Solution

Super Cryptic Clues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Across</th>
<th>Down</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Be in a hurry to use a punctuation mark</td>
<td>1 Extent to which tides can flow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 What Beethoven did, being calm</td>
<td>2 Humiliate phoney English leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 How old is bird in Dorset</td>
<td>3 Outside gym for all to follow</td>
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<td>4 Just outside gym for all to follow</td>
<td>4 Rip off coat</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Part of the qualifying match</td>
<td>5 Trumpet blown</td>
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<td>6 They use rum and sleep</td>
<td>6 Rip off coat</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Donald’s first drink in the enclosure</td>
<td>7. A drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Opportunity to split</td>
<td>8. A birthmark or scar</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 How old is bird in Dorset</td>
<td>9. A mark burned into the skin of a person</td>
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<td>10 An identifying mark of a disease</td>
<td>10. A mark burned into the skin of a person</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Leader of Cub Scouts from Lakeland</td>
<td>11. A mark burned into the skin of a person</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Stay in hostel in Germany</td>
<td>12. A mark burned into the skin of a person</td>
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<td>13 Star sea-altered claim again</td>
<td>13. Star sea-altered claim again</td>
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<td>14 Charles and Edward briefly</td>
<td>14. Charles and Edward briefly</td>
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<td>15 State song about most of valley</td>
<td>15. State song about most of valley</td>
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<td>16 Rip off coat</td>
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<td>17 Brilliance in Ulster assembly region</td>
<td>17. Brilliance in Ulster assembly region</td>
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<td>18 Metal-worker with tree</td>
<td>18. Metal-worker with tree</td>
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<td>19 Agile male beginning to follow</td>
<td>19. Agile male beginning to follow</td>
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<td>20 Opportunity to split</td>
<td>20. Opportunity to split</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 Hard blows? They usually come in pairs</td>
<td>21. Hard blows? They usually come in pairs</td>
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<td>22 Country not welcoming sound</td>
<td>22. Country not welcoming sound</td>
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<td>23 Allied countries stop short</td>
<td>23. Allied countries stop short</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 Not bound to be promising</td>
<td>24. Not bound to be promising</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Rodents shared bedroom and freezer</td>
<td>25. Rodents shared bedroom and freezer</td>
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<td>26 Nutty biscuits</td>
<td>26. Nutty biscuits</td>
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<td>27 Depression in olden times</td>
<td>27. Depression in olden times</td>
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Solution

Sudoku

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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The Mall Cinema (1): Kolaigaran (Tamil) 1:30pm; The Secret Life of Pets 2 (2D) 3:30pm; The Secret Life of Pets 2 (2D) 5:15pm; Aladdin (2D) 7pm; Godzilla II: King of the Monsters (2D) 9:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 11:30pm. The Mall Cinema (2): Virus (Malayalam) 1:15pm; Aladdin (2D) 4pm; X-Men: Dark Phoenix (2D) 6:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 8:15pm, Bharat (Hindi) 11:15pm. The Mall Cinema (3): Bharat (Hindi) 2pm; Aladdin (2D) 5:15pm; John Wick 3: Parabellum (2D) 7:30pm; Casablanca (Arabic) 8:45pm; Virus (Malayalam) 11:30pm. Landmark Cinema (1): Kolaigaran (Tamil) 1:30pm; The Secret Life of Pets 2 (2D) 3:30pm; The Secret Life of Pets 2 (2D) 5:15pm; Godzilla II: King of the Monsters (2D) 7pm; Godzilla II: King of the Monsters (2D) 9:15pm; Wrong No. 2 (Urdu) 11:30pm. Landmark Cinema (2): Bharat (Hindi) 1:15pm; X-Men: Dark Phoenix (2D) 4:15pm; X-Men: Dark Phoenix (2D) 6:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 8:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 11:15pm. Landmark Cinema (3): Aladdin (2D) 1:30pm; Bharat (Hindi) 4pm; Casablanca (Arabic) 7pm; John Wick 3: Parabellum (2D) 9pm; Virus (Malayalam) 11:15pm. Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (1): X-Men: Dark Phoenix (2D) 2pm; The Secret Life of Pets 2 (2D) 4pm; Godzilla II: King of the Monsters (2D) 5:45pm; Bharat (Hindi) 8:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 11:15pm. Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (2): Virus (Malayalam) 1:15pm; Bharat (Hindi) 4pm; X-Men: Dark Phoenix (2D) 7pm; Godzilla II: King of the Monsters (2D) 9pm; Kolaigaran (Tamil) 11:30pm. Royal Plaza Cinema Palace (3): Bharat (Hindi) 1:30pm; Aladdin (2D) 4:30pm; Casablanca (Arabic) 7pm; John Wick 3: Parabellum (2D) 9pm; Virus (Malayalam) 11:15pm.
Parents, please take note. Kids who engage in organised physical activity at a young age are less likely to have emotional difficulties later in life, says a study.

Besides keeping children from being sedentary, physical activities such as structured sports have the potential to be enriching, both physically and mentally, said the study, published in the journal Pediat . P .

“The elementary school years are a critical time in child development, and every parent wants to raise a well-adjusted child,” said study lead author Frederic N Briere, Professor at the University of Montreal in Canada. For the study, the researchers took data from a cohort of children born in 1997 or 1998. They examined whether consistent participation in organised sport from ages six to 10 would minimise risks associated with emotional distress, anxiety, shyness, and social withdrawal at age 12.

“The results revealed that children who participated consistently from ages six to 10 showed fewer instances of those factors at age 12 than their counterparts who did not engage in physical activity in a consistent way,” said Briere.

“Getting kids actively involved in organised sport seems to promote global development. This involvement appears to be good on a socio-emotional level and not just because of physical benefits,” he added.

Being less emotionally distressed at the juncture between elementary and high school is a priceless benefit for children as they are about to enter a much larger universe with bigger academic challenges, said the researcher.

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**Aries**

March 21 – April 19

Take extra time to tend to your appearance and show off a bit today, Aries. Keep your shoulders back and head high. Be the proud person you are. You should feel validated. Your job today is to simply uplift people with your presence. This is no sweat for you. Happiness is right up your alley, so have fun.

---

**Taurus**

April 20 – May 20

You may be called upon to host a gathering in your own home. Taurus. At first this could throw you into a panic because you don't think your house is clean enough. Don't worry. It’s probably impeccable. You’re the only one who will notice any dust, so don't sweat it.

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**Gemini**

May 21 – June 20

You feel confident. People can't help but notice as you radiate a loving, peaceful calm. Geminis. Eyes will turn your way, and complete strangers may come up to you and tell you how attractive you are. Be confident yet humble and you will inspire people just by your peaceful, glowing presence. Take advantage of this wonderful day by enjoying yourself for the beautiful person you are.

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**Cancer**

June 21 – July 22

You may be running into obstacles associated with your goals. You may feel you aren't getting the support and co-operation you deserve. Today you may sense that people are emotionally distant, with shallow views on certain issues. People you expected to be on your side may turn against you, making you feel betrayed. Try not to take things personally.

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**Leo**

July 23 – August 22

You may be running into obstacles associated with your goals. You may feel you aren't getting the support and co-operation you deserve. Today you may sense that people are emotionally distant, with shallow views on certain issues. People you expected to be on your side may turn against you, making you feel betrayed. Try not to take things personally.

---

**Scorpio**

October 23 – November 21

Get into the spotlight where you belong instead of letting someone else take credit for something you did, Scorpio. Don’t be shy about strut ting your stuff. You may usually turn away from people who act this way because they seem shallow and self-centred. Realise that you’re more sensitive. Be proud of who you are.

---

**Sagittarius**

November 22 – December 21

Today can be a wonderfully productive day for you, Sagittarius, if you learn how to compromise. If you insist on doing things your way only, you will run into difficult emotional conflicts. Realise that this can easily be avoided by joining hands with your partner and working together toward a common goal. There’s a great deal of energy here, so don’t waste it on something insignificant.

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**Aquarius**

January 20 – February 18

This is a great day to strut your stuff, Aquarius. You’re on top of the world, so enjoy it, your family, and the people around you. You’re at the forefront of the action and you don’t miss a beat, regardless of the conversation buzzing around you. You’re able to whip out facts and dates at the drop of a hat. Don’t let anyone bring you down or talk you out of your good mood.

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**Pisces**

February 19 – March 20

You may feel tense. Pisces, perhaps because someone close to you disregards the way you feel. You feel as if this person is more concerned with his or her own issues and not concerned about you. Meanwhile, your sensitive, caring heart is well aware of everyone else. You support others and are thoughtful. It’s time to rearrange your priorities. First care about yourself, then others.
People spend more time on mobile devices than TV, says research

By Wendy Lee

It’s finally happened: Americans now spend more time on their phones and tablets than they do watching TV.

In the United States, adults will spend an average of three hours and 45 minutes each day on their smartphones, feature phones and tablets this year, eight more minutes than they’ll spend watching TV, according to a forecast released Wednesday by research firm eMarketer.

The change has been years in the making, as smartphones have become more ubiquitous and the ways people use their devices has shifted. Phones now let you do more than steal quick glances at social media, and streaming shows and movies on the smaller, portable screens has become commonplace.

“There is far more content today than there was even a couple of years ago,” said Monica Peart, a senior forecasting director at eMarketer, referring to the growth of streaming platforms like Netflix and Hulu. “All of this is driving the need or desire to be on the smartphone.”

The gap between the amount of time spent on mobile devices and TV has narrowed dramatically over time. Last year, American adults spent nine hours and four minutes more watching TV than looking at their phones and tablets, eMarketer said. But TV watching used to be more dominant – just five years ago, adults spent two hours and four minutes more watching TV than using mobile devices, the firm said.

The forecast follows other reports, including one by Nielsen, that indicate audiences are spending less time with traditional television. In the third quarter of 2018, Nielsen said American adults on average spent four hours and 14 minutes each day on live or time-shifted TV, 11 minutes less than a year earlier. Time spent on apps and the web on smartphones and tablets in the third quarter was three hours and 14 minutes, 17 minutes more than a year earlier, Nielsen said.

The difference in time was even more pronounced for younger Americans, with people 18 to 34 spending one hour and 51 minutes on live and time-shifted TV and three hours and 25 minutes on the web or apps on smartphone and tablets in the third quarter of last year, Nielsen said.

Over time, eMarketer expects the trend to continue. In 2021, eMarketer estimates adults will spend three hours and 54 minutes on their mobile devices, compared to 3 hours and 22 minutes watching TV.

The eMarketer estimates did not factor in voice calls on mobile devices, but did consider most other mobile uses. On smartphones and tablets, adults spend about 30% of their time on audio-related apps that allow them to listen to radio and podcasts, eMarketer said.

Social network apps take up about 24% of user’s mobile time and video apps took up 19% in 2010, the firm said.

For its TV-watching data, eMarketer’s report focused on time spent on TVs that were not Internet licensed content. Roku and Google Chromecast, were broken out into a separate category in eMarketer’s forecast, representing an average of just 35 minutes of an American adult’s day in 2019. That amount of time is expected to grow to one hour and four minutes a day in 2021, the firm said.

Unlike traditional television, streaming services play into consumers’ desires to pick what they want to watch on their screens from a library at any given time and to download content to view on the go.

Companies including Netflix, Amazon and Apple have invested heavily in adding shows and films for their streaming platforms, causing a boom for industries including animation. Last year, Netflix was expected to spend as much as $13 billion on original or licensed content.

Consumers “are becoming more and more choosy about what they are going to watch at what time,” Peart said. “It’s much more of a case of choosing when and how you would like to view (shows and movies) as opposed to needing to sit there as the programmers have designed it.”

Traditional television networks and studios have launched or are in the process of launching their own streaming services in a bid to capture those consumers. Disney will unveil its streaming service, Disney+, later this year starting at $6.99 a month. – Los Angeles Times/TNS

I miss you: Sanjay on Sunil Dutt’s birth anniversary

Actor Sanjay Dutt posted a heartwarming message for his late father Sunil Dutt on his birth anniversary, saying he misses him every day.

On actor Sunil Dutt’s 90th birth anniversary on Thursday, Sanjay took to Twitter to remember his father. The actor shared a black and white photograph of himself with his father and his sister. He captioned it: “Happy Birthday Dad. I miss you.”

Sunil Dutt was a movie actor, producer, director and politician. He had worked in memorable films such as Sadhna, Ek Phool Char Kaante, Gumraah, Mera Saaya, Mother India and Mumna Bhai M.B.B.S.

In 1968, he was honoured with the Padma Shri by the government. He died of a heart attack on May 25, 2005 at his residence in Mumbai.

Sanjay’s fans got a glimpse of the bond he shared with his father through Rajkumar Hirani’s film Sanju that saw actor Paresh Rawal as Sunil Dutt and Ranbir Kapoor as Sanjay. – IANS

Nothing more fulfilling than being mother: Tulsi Kumar

Singer Tulsi Kumar says there is nothing more fulfilling than being a mother, but it comes with some challenges.

The Tu lung mein dushchi hit-maker became a mother to a boy in December 2017. She understands the struggle of new mothers and losing the post-pregnancy weight. In an industry where looks are generally as important as talent, it was imperative for her to get back in shape.

“There is nothing more fulfilling than being a mother. But it does come with challenges – one of them being the extra weight that one carries well past the baby’s arrival,” Tulsi said in a statement.

“Yes, that has been my struggle too and something that most mothers will relate to. Today, nearly a year and a half later I want to share that I have managed to climb this mountain with some success. My motherhood inspired me to do this. And to all the mothers, you can do this as well,” she added. – IANS
Georgian folk dancers entertain visitors at Summer Entertainment City

By Mudassir Raja

Summer is a time to enjoy indoor activities during the holidays. There are many attractions available in Doha during these summer vacations. One such place is the ongoing Sumer Entertainment City (SEC) at Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC).

On its soft opening day – Tuesday, the entertainment city offered lots of attractions. One such fascinating activity was a cultural dance performance presented by a Georgian dance group in collaboration with the embassy of Georgia in Doha.

The artists of Georgian National Ballet “Sukhishvili” enthralled the audience with their classical and cultural dances during the ongoing events at Sumer Entertainment City at Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

The dance show forms a part of the cultural and daily live performances and roaming shows at the entertainment city. The other embassies that will offer their folk dance performances at the festival include Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and South Africa, among others.

The folkloric themes (choreography, music) filled with classical dance elements performed by a Georgian dance group in collaboration with the embassy of Georgia in Doha.

The company’s representative Khatia further said: “In over 500 tours Georgian National Ballet has numerously toured 5 continents, more than 90 countries, held over 10,000 concerts and over 50 million people have watched its performances. The usual two-hour-long programme of Georgian National Ballet is a story about life, suffering and heroism of the Georgian people. It offers fabulous costumes and gorgeous choreography portraying Georgian soul – men surprise with their temperament and reflect both warlike and noble nature and stunningly beautiful women, floating on the stage, fascinating spectators with their charming dance. The whole programme brings up the history of Georgia to the trial of the audience.”

She added: “Georgian National Ballet has always been innovating, evolving and advancing the Georgian dances. The folkloric themes – choreography and music – are being modernised and filled with classical dance elements. That’s what makes the company so unique, successful and demanding throughout its existence. The Georgian National Ballet has around 150 dancers and its own orchestra.”

Explaining the dance performances carried out at SEC, she said: “‘Lazuri’ – the couple’s movements are more frivolous. This dance is close to the modernistic esthetics.

“‘Samaia’ – This dance brings to life 12th century resuscitated fresco. Based on the portraits of the King Tamar, typical of Georgian monumental medieval art.

“‘Ilouri’ – This piece originally created and performed by founders of Georgian National Ballet based on Lekuri Dance, but modified where ladies are also dressed as men and performing equal steps and moves.

“‘Juta’ is the name of a small village on the border of Georgia, which was a trans-shipment point. In old times, this place was well known for horse thieves. This is a new choreography based on the traditional folk movements.

“Khojia’ is a dance invitation, based on Ossetian melody.”

The company’s representative further said: “We recently performed at Katara during a cultural diversity festival. I think the organisers of the entertainment city saw our performance at Katara and invited us again here in summer. Usually we travel with 45 to 75 persons. For this show, we are only 15 people here. Usually we perform with live orchestra. We have our own band. This time we have to depend on the recorded music.” She added: “I really love visiting different Arab countries. Qatar is an example of success in the modern world. This summer we will also be performing in different European counties. In winter, we will perform in Muscat.”