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# STARS AND STRIPES®

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## Navy's plan to buy fewer ships draws frustration from lawmakers

BY MATTHEW ADAMS  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — A Navy plan to retire ships, buy fewer new ones and delay some shipbuilding drew sharp words from House lawmakers during a hearing Wednesday to examine the service's budget proposal for 2025.

"China remains... the pacing threat. In a China scenario, the Navy remains our cornerstone of our military's ability to project power," said Rep. Ken Calvert, R-Calif., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee's defense subpanel. "I am concerned the Navy is falling behind."

The Navy and Marines budget for fiscal 2025 unveiled last month totals \$257.6 billion. Though a slight increase from the previous year, the proposal includes fewer purchases of Virginia-class attack submarines and F-35 Lightning II fighter jets. It also plans for long-term projects such as a second Columbia-class, ballistic-missile submarine and two more Ford-class aircraft carriers.

Yet the Navy also seeks to get rid of 19 ships, including 10 before reaching their expected service life, a move Congress has been reluctant to support in recent years.

"The Navy continues to retire ships faster than it builds them.

SEE SHIPS ON PAGE 8



U.S. Navy

The Navy plans to buy fewer Virginia-class submarines, like the USS Vermont.



ALUN THOMAS/U.S. Army

Capt. Daniel Geu administers the oath of enlistment to future soldier Ernest Iglesias in Phoenix on March 20. Army Secretary Christine Wormuth said this week that her service is feeling a lot better about recruiting this year after having missed its goals the last two years.

## Army recruitment looking up

Service 'feeling a lot better' after missing goal for two consecutive years

BY COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

Army Secretary Christine Wormuth told House lawmakers on Wednesday that her service is "feeling a lot better" about recruiting this year after missing its goal for new soldiers for two consecutive years.

"I don't want to be overconfident," the Army's top civilian told members of the House's defense appropriations subpanel while testifying alongside Gen. Randy George, the Army's chief of staff. "But I think we both feel that we have a good shot at making that goal this year, which I think would be very, very important."

That goal, she added, is to ship 55,000 new recruits to Army basic training by Sept. 30, the end of fiscal 2024, and fill its delayed-entry coffers with another 5,000 recruits who would

**"I don't want to be overconfident, but I think we ... have a good shot at making that goal this year."**

Christine Wormuth  
secretary of the Army

move to initial entrance training later. Meeting that basic recruiting goal would match the Army's enlistment efforts from fiscal 2023, when it sent about 55,000 recruits to initial

military training, falling about 10,000 short of its goal of 65,000. But that was an improvement from fiscal 2022, when the Army shipped fewer than 45,000 new recruits to basic training, falling 15,000 short of its goal.

Pentagon officials have noted in recent years that the military recruiting environment is among the worst in U.S. history. Only about 23% of Americans between the ages of 17 to 24 qualify for military service, fewer than previous generations, according to Defense Department data. Among them, only about 9% has shown interest in the military, the data shows.

To counter the problem, the Army has launched myriad of new recruiting programs aimed at beefing up and professionalizing its

SEE RECRUITMENT ON PAGE 8

# BUSINESS/WEATHER

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	..	..	\$4.744	..
Germany	\$4.000	\$4.533	\$4.894	\$4.470	Change in price	..	..	+9.2 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.961	\$5.230	\$5.165	Turkey	..	..	\$4.560	\$4.755*
U.K.	..	\$4.533	\$4.894	\$4.470	Change in price	..	..	+9.2 cents	No change

Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective April 12. The change in price is from April 5.

## PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$3.669	..	\$4.569	\$4.139
Japan	..	\$4.539	..	\$4.109	Change in price	+7.0 cents	..	+9.0 cents	+6.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.639	..	..	\$4.109	Guam	\$3.699**	\$4.239	\$4.599	..
Change in price	+7.0 cents	..	..	+6.0 cents	Change in price	+7.0 cents	+9.0 cents	+9.0 cents	..

\*DieselEFD \*\*Midgrade  
Pacific prices for the week of April 12-18

## EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		Commercial rates	
Euro costs (April 12)	\$1.05	Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3769
British pound (April 12)	\$1.22	Britain (Pound)	1.2548
Japanese yen (April 12)	148.00	Canada (Dollar)	1.3694
South Korean won (April 12)	1329.00	China (Yuan)	7.2369
		Denmark (Krone)	6.9491
		Egypt (Pound)	47.5500
		Euro	0.9318
		Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8355
		Hungary (Forint)	362.91
		Israel (Shekel)	3.7502
		Japan (Yen)	153.15
		Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3077
		Norway (Krone)	10.8256
		Philippines (Peso)	56.44
		Poland (Zloty)	3.97
		Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7510
		Singapore (Dollar)	1.3534
		South Korea (Won)	1368.93

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

## INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	8.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	6.00
Federal funds market rate	5.33
3-month bill	5.39
30-year bond	4.62

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

### FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



### FRIDAY IN EUROPE



### SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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## MILITARY

# Army calls for aviation training 'stand up'

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Army on Wednesday directed all its aviation units to conduct new training to curb a sharp uptick in aircraft crashes in recent months, service officials said.

Maj. Gen. Walter Rugen, the Army's aviation director, dubbed the focused training an aviation "stand up," as opposed to the typical stand down units do after a series of incidents. The idea is to increase awareness among aviation soldiers to some of the issues surrounding the recent crashes without grounding aircraft or pausing flight activity.

"During this stand up, units will do targeted training that we've really been very deliberate about crafting, while continuing to fly missions toward our overarching goal to build enduring [combat] readiness and proficiency in our force," Rugen told reporters

Wednesday just as the order went out to soldiers across the active-duty, National Guard and Reserve forces. "We decided that the recent accident increase would be better mitigated by focusing more on specific training topics to better get at targeted areas that are contributing to many of our safety issues. So, more training is focused training."

The Army has had 12 Class A mishaps — those in which a person is killed or service equipment sustains at least \$2.5 million in damages — in fiscal 2024, which began Oct. 1. It marks a large rise since fiscal 2023, when the service only had nine Class A mishaps for the year. In total, the Army has had about 3.2 Class A mishaps per 100,000 flight hours in fiscal 2024 compared with about 1.1 per 100,000 flight hours in the previous fiscal year, according to service data. Nine U.S. soldiers have

died in those crashes, along with one Border Patrol agent.

Rugen said various issues have contributed to the increased crash rate, but he provided few specifics Wednesday, as the service was still investigating about half of the crashes this year.

The training will last roughly four to six hours for aviation soldiers, including pilots, maintainers and flight crew, he said. It will focus on risk management and mitigation for commanders, power management and spatial disorientation for pilots, and broad maintenance topics for maintainers, Rugen said.

He said issues with spatial disorientation — when a pilot struggles to know where the aircraft is in relation to other objects or its altitude — have been a trend in some of the recent incidents, especially "with respect to the ground."

Much of the training will be new to soldiers, conducted in a classified setting and based on specifics that Army officials have seen in the recent crashes, Rugen said. Other parts of the training will be familiar to soldiers and focus on reinforcing the Army's aviation standards.

"We're leaving no stone unturned," the general said.

Officials from the Army Combat Readiness Center, which is based at Fort Novosel, Ala., and investigates all the service's Class A mishaps, will travel to all the Army's aviation units to help guide the training, said Brig. Gen. Jonathan Byrom, the center's commander.

"We will have our experts working with the very capable trainers at each of these units to have those really graduate [school] level discussions on the mishaps with the focus being to

learn from them, so that we don't repeat any of these problems that we've had in the [recent] past," Byrom said.

The stand up comes just weeks after the National Guard completed an aviation stand down following several crashes involving its helicopters. Rugen said that was part of the reason that the service chose to forgo a traditional stand down for this new approach.

"We want to be empowering to the force," he said. "Commanders have asked for flexibility, and with the National Guard ... just coming out of a stand down, we didn't want to just keep standing down. We wanted to get some action associated with it to reverse this trend."

Active-duty aviation units will have until May 10 to complete the stand up training, Rugen said. National Guard and Reserve units will have 60 days to complete it.

## Marines take aim at Navy on social media over fumbled photo

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

The Marine Corps schooled the Navy over social media Wednesday after the sea service uploaded a photo of an officer firing an improperly configured rifle.

The Navy posted to its official Instagram account a now-deleted photo of Cmdr. Cameron Yaste, skipper of the guided-missile destroyer USS John S. McCain, holding a rifle and looking through a scope that was clearly mounted backward.

The weapon's foregrip was also mounted strangely, positioned closer to the gun's center than its barrel.

"From engaging in practice gun shoots, conducting maintenance, testing fuel purity and participating in sea and anchor details, the #USNavy is always ready to serve and protect," the post said.

Social media users quickly jumped at the chance to poke fun at the error.

"Dear U.S. Navy. The scope is on backwards," wrote X user @travisakers. "This is why we have Marines on ships."

The Marine Corps appeared to take its own dig at the Navy, sharing a photo on its social media accounts of a Marine firing a weapon aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer. The caption read: "Clear Sight Picture."

On his official X account, Rep. Mike Collins, R-Ga., posted a picture of a pistol with its barrel and grip on backward. The caption read: "Navy's newly issued sidearm."

Others noted that even action movies rarely make such errors.

"Even Hollywood gets this right," wrote X user @matthewdmarsden. "We are doomed."

Though the Navy ultimately deleted the post, X users continue to share screenshots.

"Thank you for pointing out our rifle scope error in the previous post," the Navy later wrote on vari-



U.S. Navy

**The Navy removed a post on its official Instagram account Wednesday showing a warship commander firing a rifle with a backward scope.**

ous social media accounts. "Picture has been removed until EMI [extra military instruction] is completed."

The Navy defines EMI as "instruction in a phase of military duty

in which an individual is deficient, and is intended for and directed towards the correction of that deficiency."

The John S. McCain was operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet's operations

area when the photo was taken. The command referred questions to the Navy's Chief Information Officer, who did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment early Thursday.

## Medical squadron commander is fired at Air Force base in Wyoming

By ROSE L. THAYER  
*Stars and Stripes*

A physician assistant in command at F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming was fired after less than three months on the job without a detailed explanation offered by the service.

Air Force Lt. Col. Jimmy Stanley was relieved last Friday as the

commander of the 90th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron by Col. Johnny Galbert, commander of the 90th Missile Wing, according to the base.

The base cited a "loss of confidence" in Stanley's ability to lead the squadron — a phrase common among the military services when a commander is fired.

Stanley, who works in aerospace medicine, graduated from the Interservice Physician Assistant Program in 2007, according to the Federation of State Medical Boards. He has treated patients in Georgia, Florida and North Carolina, in addition to Cheyenne, Wyo., where Warren Air Force Base is located.

He entered active-duty service in September 2007 through a direct appointment and has received the Air Medal and Bronze Star, among other awards and decorations, according to his service record.

Lt. Col. Tanya Berg has assumed command of the medical squadron, which provides an array of health services, including dental, family

practice, flight medicine and immunizations for the base.

Warren Air Force Base hosts roughly 3,360 service members and 964 civilian employees, according to the base. Its largest unit, the 90th Missile Wing, operates, maintains and secures 150 Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

## MILITARY

# Court-martial begins in espionage case

## Sailor assigned to Yokosuka-based destroyer accused of sharing missile system information

By ALEX WILSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — A court-martial for a chief petty officer accused of espionage began this week at Naval Station San Diego, a Navy spokesman said.

Chief Petty Officer Bryce Steven Pedicini is standing trial on charges he passed classified information to an unidentified foreign government.

The fire controlman was assigned to the Yokosuka-based guided-missile destroyer USS Higgins at the time of the alleged espionage.

Prosecutor Leah O'Brien in court said Pedicini was motivated by financial gain to sell military secrets over the internet to a stranger, and

his financial challenges made him a "perfect target," according to a KGTV Channel 10 News report Thursday.

The case began when a woman posing as a Japanese researcher contacted Pedicini on Facebook, inviting him to write research papers, O'Brien said, according to KGTV.

The woman eventually convinced Pedicini to send classified information on a ballistic missile system and documents that outlined Chinese and Russian threats, O'Brien said. Pedicini first received \$50 for filling out a survey and \$1,000 for the initial documents, the prosecutor said, according to KGTV.

The court-martial began Tues-

day and is scheduled to run through April 19, Naval Surface Forces Pacific spokesman Cmdr. Arlo Abrahamson said by email Wednesday morning.

Pedicini opted for a trial with a judge without a jury, Abrahamson said. He declined further comment.

Pedicini is accused of handing off at least seven pieces of national defense information to an unidentified foreign national between November 2022 and February 2023 near Hampton Roads, Va., according to his charge sheet.

Seven pieces of information were identified as documents with titles such as "Article 1112" or "1223 Updates," but they allegedly con-

tained information related to national defense.

Hampton Roads is home to major military installations and commands, including Naval Station Norfolk, Norfolk Naval Shipyard and Langley Air Force Base.

Authorities allege Pedicini also attempted to hand over photographs of a computer screen connected to the Defense Department's network used to transmit classified information.

The Navy says that attempt took place at Yokosuka in May.

Pedicini had reason to believe those documents and pictures "would be used to the injury of the United States and to the advantage of a foreign nation," according to

the charge sheet.

The document refers to the recipient or recipients only as a "citizen and employee of a foreign government."

As a fire controlman, Pedicini would have worked with "everything from radars, fire control systems and computer systems to the Navy's most advanced missile system, Aegis," which is used aboard guided-missile destroyers and cruisers, according to the Navy's description of the job.

Pedicini enlisted in January 2008 and served aboard the guided-missile destroyers USS Curtis Wilbur and USS McFaul, according to a biography provided by Abrahamson.



SEBASTIAN ROMAWAC/U.S. Air Force

A U.S. Air Force F-22A Raptor arrives at Kadena Air Base, Japan, on March 28.

## Raptors arrive on Okinawa as part of rotating fighter presence

By JONATHAN SNYDER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Two F-22 Raptor squadrons have landed on Okinawa as part of an Air Force plan to replace retired F-15 Eagles with frequent rotations of various fighters through the island.

The 199th and 99th Fighter Squadrons arrived at Kadena Air Base on March 28 to join other fourth- and fifth-generation fighters, including F-35A Lightning IIs, already deployed there, the Air Force announced in a press release April 5.

The Defense Department in December 2022 announced a plan to retire or reassign two squadrons of aging F-15C/Ds stationed at Kadena. Until it decides on a permanent replacement, the Air Force said it will rotate fighter squad-

rons through Kadena — what it calls the keystone of the Pacific — situated near Taiwan and the East and South China seas.

Since then, squadrons of Air Force F-16CM Fighting Falcons from Germany, F-35A Lightning IIs from Alaska, F-15Cs from California and Louisiana and F-15E Strike Eagles from North Carolina and Idaho have taken turns on Kadena's flight line. Neither the Air Force nor DOD has announced plans for a new, permanent fighter presence on Okinawa.

"Currently, no decision regarding a permanent deployment of aircraft to Kadena has been made," Staff Sgt. Gary Hilton, spokesman for the 18th Wing, told Stars and Stripes by email Wednesday.

Nikkei Asia reported in Decem-

ber that the service planned a smaller number of advanced F-15EX fighters at Kadena and quoted concerns expressed by the vice chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

"I support a permanent basing of F-15EX aircraft at Kadena but am concerned about the Air Force's initial plan to station only 36 new aircraft, replacing the 48 divested ones," Rep. Rob Wittman, R-Va., told Nikkei for its Dec. 13 report. Wittman said he wants to see an "operational analysis" that supports the decision.

Hilton said the DOD "maintains a steady-state presence at Kadena" by deploying newer and more advanced aircraft to backfill the 48 F-15C/Ds of the 44th and 67th Fighter Squadrons previously stationed there.

## UK, South Korea complete 1st joint patrol to intercept illicit North Korean trade

By DAVID CHOI  
*Stars and Stripes*

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — The United Kingdom and South Korean navies patrolled the seas around the Korean Peninsula this month looking for illegal shipping into and from North Korea.

The first-of-its-kind joint patrol began on an unspecified date in April and concluded Thursday, according to a news release from the Ministry of National Defense. Surface ships from both countries and a South Korean maritime patrol aircraft took part in the mission.

The patrol shows "a firm commitment to strengthening ... the implementation of UN Security Council sanctions resolutions to limit the financing of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear programs," the release said.

The release did not say whether any North Korean ships were interdicted. Neither countries' defense ministries immediately responded to a request for comment by phone Thursday.

The two navies will "continue to strengthen" their efforts in enforcing sanctions against North Korea, the release added.

The patrol comes nearly four months after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met with U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak for a summit at Downing Street.

The leaders signed the Downing Street Accord, which condemned North Korea's "unlawful nuclear and missile development" and said their countries will conduct joint patrols to

uphold Security Council sanctions.

Canada in April 2023 deployed a warship and a CP-140 Aurora patrol aircraft to the Indo-Pacific region for six weeks of sanctions enforcement, dubbed Operation NEON, according to a Canadian Armed Forces news release at the time. The operation has taken place annually since 2018 and was extended to 2026.

New Zealand also dispatched a P-8A Poseidon reconnaissance aircraft to the region for sanctions enforcement from April to May, according to a New Zealand Defense Force news release Wednesday.

The Security Council's sanctions require member states to inspect and seize ships in their waters that are suspected of illicitly trading with North Korea.

The communist regime is estimated to have imported over 1.5 million barrels of refined oil between January and September 2023 and is suspected of covertly supplying Russia with 1,000 containers of ammunition for the war in Ukraine, according to South Korea's Foreign Affairs Ministry and the White House.

On March 28, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Linda Thomas-Greenfield proposed a Security Council resolution to renew the independent panel of experts to monitor sanctions enforcement against North Korea.

Russia vetoed the resolution, although 13 of the 15 member states approved of the plan; China abstained.

## EUROPE

# US, European allies talk air defense cohesion

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The United States voiced an urgent need for NATO countries to better integrate air and missile defense capabilities during closed-door talks with European allies in Germany, officials said.

The 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command hosted the Tuesday talks, which examined Russia's military tactics in Ukraine among other things.

"The conflict in Ukraine is rapidly altering our conceptions of security in Europe," 10th AAMDC Commanding General Brig. Gen. Maurice Barnett told attendees at Sembach Kaserne, according to a transcript obtained by Stars and Stripes. "Many minds are now focused on how we fight large scale combat operations in an alliance structure against a peer adversary."

Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 prompted NATO to deploy various air and missile defense systems to the bloc's eastern flank to target possible incoming air threats.

While different systems continue to work alongside each other, they don't necessarily work ideally with each other.

For example, systems made by different countries often are unable to share air pictures collected by their radars because of technical and policy constraints.



U.S. Army

Col. Jus Kuijpers, from left, and Lt. Col. Tony Theunisse of the Netherlands military, and Lt. Col. Jimmy Wilhelmsson of the Swedish military, listen to Lt. Col. Derk Zielman of the German military speak during a NATO meeting on air defense hosted by 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command on Sembach Kaserne, in Germany, on Tuesday.

To date, efforts at integration have largely been slow and methodical, hampered by factors such as competition between arms manufacturers and disagreements among governments over the best way forward.

Maj. Ben Johnston, a British soldier assigned to the 10AAMDC who helped organize Tuesday's meeting, said the aim of the talks was to help allies come up with the

most effective ways to operate more cohesively.

"It's important to hold these talks now because the necessity to integrate air and missile defense capabilities grows more urgent by the day," Johnston said on the sidelines of the event.

Moscow has been observed targeting critical infrastructure in Ukraine with

cruise missiles and following up with dozens of one-way attack drones.

To combat this type of combined attack, NATO must have long-range, medium-range and short-range air and missile defense systems at its disposal, Johnston said.

After decades of focusing on counterterrorism, many alliance members have identified gaps in their air defense capabilities.

"Looking at the amount of assets we have to defend within NATO Europe and the available systems we have, there is a shortage," said Lt. Col. Tony Theunisse of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, who attended Tuesday's meeting.

Theunisse — who serves as the deputy director of the Germany-based Competence Center for Surface Based Air and Missile Defense — said as NATO members build air defense capabilities, it's important to ensure systems work with each other while also working to integrate current systems.

"It's a priority," Theunisse said. "We need change now. Air defense is not a small part of what we do within NATO Europe; it's a very big part."

Representatives from new NATO members Finland and Sweden participated in the talks, along with representatives from France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Romania. Non-NATO member Austria also took part.

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## MILITARY

# Soldiers recall Patriot's impact on Iraq base hits

By J.P. LAWRENCE  
Stars and Stripes

Capt. Joseph Remaniak feared one of his worst nightmares had become reality as sirens blared across al Asad Air Base in Iraq.

Troops rushed to bunkers and planes hastily lifted off the runway Jan. 20, minutes ahead of an incoming ballistic rocket attack.

"Truthfully, I thought we were about to take rounds to the face," Remaniak, commander of Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, said in a recent interview. "I thought we were about to get impacted. Soldiers were probably going to die."

The attack by an Iranian-backed militia, one of the largest against U.S. troops in the Middle East since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, left four American troops and one Iraqi soldier injured, U.S. Central Command said.

Most of the rockets were intercepted by the base's air defense

systems, but U.S. officials did not say how many. Soldiers in the battery said their Patriot missile system intercepted the threats deemed most likely to hit al Asad.

"Without us here, most of those missiles or rockets would have impacted the base and possibly killed a lot of people here," said Sgt. Henry Prol, a Bravo Battery operator and maintainer on a Patriot missile launcher.

The battery's actions that day marks a rare example in recent years of the almost 50-year-old anti-air weapon defending American troops overseas.

The U.S. military rushed several Patriot batteries to the Middle East after the Israel-Hamas war began. The Israeli response to the Hamas attack led to dozens of strikes against U.S. troops in the region by militant groups angered by Western support for Israel.

Within 72 hours of receiving notice of their deployment, the troops of Bravo Battery and their

Patriot systems had finished the journey from Fort Liberty in North Carolina to al Asad in Iraq, said Capt. Duy "Danny" Nguyen, a spokesman for the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade.

On Jan. 20, Spc. Joshkua Salazar was the first to notice rockets approaching on his radar screen. Within seconds, the soldiers verified the fast-moving objects they had detected.

"There was a window of only four to six seconds to posture the system to be able to engage," Chief Warrant Officer 2 Kristopher Martin said, adding that Salazar manually engaged several of the incoming rockets.

Soldiers began hearing booming explosions echo across the base. "I thought we might've just taken an impact," recalled Pfc. Tory Cenidoza, a battery crew member.

But the booms the soldiers heard were Patriot missiles launching and destroying incom-



DUY NGUYEN/U.S. Army

**Brig. Gen. Richard Harrison, commanding general of 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, observes Patriot launchers Nov. 19, at an undisclosed location in the Middle East.**

ing rockets midair, they recalled.

The strike was one of at least 184 attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, a recent tally by the Washington Institute said.

The Jan. 20 strike involved at least 30 munitions, including large rockets.

It was claimed by Islamic Resistance, an umbrella term for Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, according to a database compiled by the Washington Institute.

About a week after the attack on al Asad, a drone strike attack claimed the lives of three soldiers on Tower 22 in Jordan.

Since then, there has been a relative lull in attacks on U.S. troops. But U.S. officials say they are concerned about reprisal attacks on U.S. bases in the wake of an Israeli strike on two Iranian generals in Syria on April 1.

The soldiers with Bravo Battery said they are keeping themselves ready for whatever comes next, while being proud of their actions on Jan. 20.

"Ultimately, our soldiers courageously manned their battle stations and defeated the incoming aerial threat, saving certainly dozens of lives," Remaniak said.

## US Army post in Germany begins work to filter out PFAS

By MATTHEW M. BURKE  
Stars and Stripes

ANSBACH, Germany — Crews began constructing a system of pumps and filters at U.S. Army Garrison Ansbach this week to remove toxic "forever chemicals" from the groundwater.

Workers from Züblin, a Stuttgart-based construction and civil engineering firm, began digging trenches Wednesday alongside the base's western fence line for a hydraulic containment system.

The purification unit is designed to pump groundwater flowing from underneath a former firefighter training site near Katterbach Airfield and extract PFAS chemicals before they are released into the base's stormwater channels.

The work started the same day the Biden administration established the first legally enforceable national standards for PFAS allowed in drinking water, according to a statement from the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA says enforcement is expected to reduce exposure for about 100 million people and prevent tens of thousands of serious illnesses and deaths.

The purification system should be completed in October, said Stephan Haas, Ansbach remediation program manager.

"This project is not the final answer" to solve the problem, Haas said Wednesday as shovels pierced a nearby causeway. "It's one important step to prevent the contaminants from migrating."

PFAS, or manmade per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, are used to make coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease and water, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

PFAS compounds accumulate in the body over time and have been linked to a



MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes

**Stephan Haas, remediation program manager at U.S. Army Garrison Ansbach, points to a rendering of a PFAS contamination plume located alongside the garrison's western fence line in Ansbach, Germany on Wednesday.**

slew of adverse health conditions from increased cholesterol to liver and immune system damage, low birth weight and certain cancers, the CDC website said.

A study published Monday in Nature Geoscience found that nearly a third of 45,000 water samples taken around the world from sources without any readily identifiable source of contamination had PFAS at levels harmful to human health.

The class of chemicals, which includes PFOS and PFOA, were used for many years in firefighting foam expended on U.S. mil-

itary installations.

The garrison at Ansbach stopped using aqueous film forming foam in 2000, base spokeswoman Gerlinde Hoyle wrote in an emailed statement.

Under the new EPA guidelines, the enforceable maximums for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water were set to four parts per trillion, or approximately four nanograms per liter, which is close to the chemicals' lowest detectable levels, the EPA statement said. Three other PFAS chemicals were restricted to 10 parts per trillion.

By comparison, a new German drinking water law in June set a cumulative limit for a group of 20 PFAS substances of 100 nanograms per liter by January 2026 and 20 nanograms per liter for certain chemicals by 2028, according to the country's environmental protection agency.

Garrison officials did not provide water quality test results when asked this month, instead referring to a German-language report on the Ansbach city website.

The U.S. Army report on the website states the entire 226,000 square-foot investigation area, a small fraction of the base's 15 square miles, registers significant PFAS contamination, including 22,000 nanograms per liter in the groundwater in 2017, and 29,000 two years later.

The base's drinking water supply comes from two local German suppliers and is compliant with German safe drinking water standards, according to a 2021 base consumer confidence report.

Ansbach city officials acknowledged Thursday that elevated levels of PFAS also exist outside the installation fence line, but they remain within safety limits.

The base's first "pump and treat" system was installed at a northwest site back in 2016, said Jennifer Collins, chief of the garrison's environmental division.

The latest treatment system, located southwest of the base's heliport, will have nine extraction wells, nearly a half-mile of piping and granulated carbon filters, a base fact sheet said.

The garrison also plans to address PFAS in the soil as well, but no decisions have yet been made, Haas said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Alexander Riedel contributed to this report.

## PACIFIC

# DODEA kids in Japan submerged in STEM

## Annual aquatic robot race provides students with a 'unique experience'

By JENNESSA DAVEY  
*Stars and Stripes*

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — An annual robotics competition put students through their underwater paces this week at the homeport of the Navy's 7th Fleet.

Thirteen teams from Nile C. Kinnick High and the middle schools at Yokosuka and Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo competed in Sunday's SeaPerch Challenge at the Purdy Gym pool.

They navigated an underwater obstacle course using remotely operated vehicles they fashioned themselves. Each team was required to use identical motors, batteries and propellers to build their robots but were allowed to make their choice of adjustments and additions.

"Having this opportunity to build robots that not only move but move underwater and be able to swim is a really unique experience," Soul Vessels, president of Kinnick's Robotics Club, said at the event.

The competitive program is organized by SeaPerch, an Arlington, Va.-based organization that fosters learning in STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics. It sells \$270 kits and materials to get students underway.

The 13 teams, each composed of two to three students, had 10 minutes to complete the Purdy pool



The SeaPerch Challenge has become an annual event for students at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan.



PHOTOS BY JENNESSA DAVEY/Stars and Stripes

SeaPerch Challenge competitor Rafael Menzel places his team's remotely-operated vehicle into the aquatic obstacle course at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Sunday.

course.

In the high school category, first place went to Vessels, Chase Hassell and Quinn Hassell, with a time of 1 minute, 26 seconds. Second went to Nathaniel Lazaro, Pierce Supnet and Vince Gomez, whose robot finished in 2:32. Fiona Brooks and Ella Eriksen won third with a time of 3:27.

The top middle schoolers all came from Yokota. First place went to Louis Tomsic, Caleb Sangston and Aeson Overtonwon with a time of 2:32. Second went to Raffaele Ricco-Carson and Derek Bowie with a time of 2:33. Dylan Ishida, Noah Mills and Robbie Polan-

sky won third with a time of 2:38.

First-place winners are eligible for the SeaPerch International competition in Maryland between May 31 and June 1.

Naval Facilities Engineering Command provided a nearly \$4,000 grant to support STEM teachers at Yokosuka in 2022, which benefited students again this year, Angela Lewis, a biology teacher and sponsor for Kinnick's Engineering Club, said at the event.



Remington Herrin, left, and Rafael Menzel team up to compete in the SeaPerch Challenge, an aquatic robotics race.

## 3 stranded men were down to coconuts before Pacific rescue

By JOSEPH DITZLER  
*Stars and Stripes*

Three men rescued this week from a remote atoll in the Pacific were subsisting on coconuts and well water when a U.S. Navy plane spotted their plea for help Sunday, a Coast Guard spokeswoman said.

The three, all in their 40s, had set out March 31 from Polowat Atoll, Micronesia, in a 20-foot skiff with an outboard motor for Pikelot Atoll, a 31-acre, uninhabited speck in a vast ocean, according to a Coast Guard news release Wednesday. The men were not identified by the Coast Guard.

"Their initial goal was to fish around Pikelot, but the skiff was damaged when they approached the island due to the swells surging on the island and surrounding shoal," Chief Warrant Officer Sara Muir of Coast Guard Forces Micronesia, Sector Guam told Stars and Stripes by email Thursday. "They were originally going to meet up with another family from Satawal [Atoll] at Pikelot. The Sa-



U.S. Air Force

An aerial view of Pikelot Atoll, Yap State, Federated States of Micronesia.

tawal family ended up not going due to weather and sea conditions."

On Saturday a woman "reported her three uncles had not returned from Pikelot Atoll," approximately 115 miles northwest of Polowat Atoll, both part of the Federated States of Micronesia, according to the Coast Guard.

Pikelot, a low, teardrop-shaped coral island covered with palm trees and shrubs, is just 2½ miles

long and 1¾ miles wide in a search area the Coast Guard described as 78,800 square miles of the South Pacific.

Nearly four years ago, a similar episode unfolded when three mariners who went missing in a skiff also signaled military aviators over Pikelot.

In that case, an Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refueler spotted the letters "SOS" laid out in palm fronds with the missing boat alongside it on the beach.

The Stratotanker, with a crew of Hawaii and Pennsylvania Air National Guard members aboard, was searching for the overdue Micronesians. The men had gone off course after their motor ran out of fuel. They drifted to Pikelot, 120 miles from their departure point, and were stranded there for several days.

An Australian navy Tiger attack helicopter provided the men assistance and a Micronesian patrol boat, the FSS Independence, arrived later to carry them home.

Flash forward two years and another three men in a skiff were stranded at lonesome Pikelot.

The relative's call began a search by Joint Rescue Sub-Center Guam with a U.S. Navy P-8 Poseidon patrol aircraft from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, and the Guam-based Coast Guard fast response cutter Oliver Henry.

On Sunday, the Poseidon crew spotted the word "HELP" laid out in palm fronds on the Pikelot beach, according to the Coast Guard release. The crew dropped survival packages to the men.

On Monday, a Coast Guard HC-130J Super Hercules — a search-and-rescue aircraft engineered for long-range flights — from Hawaii dropped a radio to the men. The Oliver Henry changed course and arrived Tuesday.

"They were in good health other than being slightly dehydrated," Muir said by email. "Water was available through a well on the island. They ate meat from coconuts

until the deliveries from the P-8."

The three fishermen were excited and relieved to see the small boat from the Oliver Henry arrive, Muir said. A crewman from the cutter, Petty Officer 2nd Class Eugene Halishlius, spoke to them in their native language; "it was special," she said.

"As far as food goes, they had enough to survive, but not for much longer," Muir said. "The mariners did have a radio with them initially but were not able to make comms with other islands before their battery died."

The Oliver Henry took the men and their equipment, including their skiff, back to Polowat, according to the Coast Guard.

"This recent operation near Pikelot Atoll hits home the kind of difference we can make," Lt. Ray Cerrato, the Oliver Henry's commander, said in the release. "It's about more than just performing a duty; it's about the real human connections we forge and the lives we touch."

## MILITARY

# Health agency closing pharmacy at Ramstein

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — The Defense Health Agency is shuttering the satellite pharmacy in the base mall, a little over two years since spending \$3.2 million to open a second pharmacy at Ramstein.

The pharmacy on the top floor of the Kaiserslautern Military Community Center will permanently close after June 14. That is the last day customers can pick up active prescriptions, said Whitney Trimble, a Defense Health Network Europe spokeswoman, in a statement

Thursday.

Services prior to that will be reduced in phases. On May 4, Saturday hours will be eliminated. On June 6, the 86th Medical Group will take over operations at its main pharmacy, Trimble said.

The KMCC satellite pharmacy began filling prescriptions in late January 2022. At the time, Air Force officials at Ramstein said the project doubled the base's pharmacy space. They cited an analysis that showed the main clinic pharmacy was about half as large as it needed to be to support customer volume and clinic staff-

ing.

But a recent review found that the 86th Medical Group was capable of filling the prescriptions handled by the pharmacy, Trimble said.

"The Defense Health Network Europe routinely evaluates operations to ensure ready, reliable and effective care for our patients," Trimble said in a statement about the closure. "After careful review of the 86th Medical Group's operations, workload, and resources, we made the decision to close the KMCC Satellite Pharmacy and return all pharmacy operations to

the main pharmacy within the Military Treatment Facility."

From February 2023 to January 2024, the KMCC pharmacy filled 28,029 prescriptions, comprising about 28% of the 86th Medical Group's total prescriptions.

About 50,000 Americans live in the Kaiserslautern Military Community, including service members, civilian workers, contractors and their families.

The satellite pharmacy allowed customers to fill and pick up prescriptions while shopping, going to the movies or eating out at the KMCC. Being open until 6 p.m. on

most weekdays and Saturday hours gave swing-shift workers better access to pharmacy services, Air Force officials said in 2022.

Trimble said the Defense Health Network Europe is determining whether to expand pharmacy hours at other clinics. Starting July 1, the outpatient pharmacy at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center will open an hour earlier, at 8 a.m. Monday through Friday.

Eligible beneficiaries can save time waiting by activating prescriptions online or through the 24/7 ScriptCenter kiosk located in the hospital's pharmacy lobby.

## Recruitment: Army secretary touts efforts

FROM PAGE 1

recruiting force. Wormuth said Wednesday that the service has begun one of those newer efforts to build a corps of permanent enlisted and warrant officer recruiters in lieu of soldiers temporarily taking recruiting assignments.

The first tranche of soldiers who will train to work in those new specialties have been selected and will complete their training and reach recruiting stations by the end of summer, she said.

"We're picking soldiers that are a little bit more inclined to be good salespeople for the United States Army," Wormuth said, noting the recruiting course is also getting longer and more difficult. "So, we've really updated that and again, I think that's helped our recruiters be more effective in the field."

Rep. Mike Garcia, R-Calif., said he was worried outside factors could impact military recruiting.

His home state, he noted, adopted a \$20 minimum wage for fast food workers this month — a pay rate more than double what the most junior troops make early in their careers.

"We're competing from a recruitment perspective with fast food workers, right, and those guys aren't putting their lives on the line every day like our soldiers are," said Garcia, a former Navy pilot. "Right now if you've asked an 18-year-old if he wants to go work at the In-N-Out [Burger] for \$22 an hour or join the Army for the equivalent of \$12 an hour, you're going to get 95% of them going to In-N-Out even if they love the country, even if they want to serve — they just can't afford to go join the Army right now. And that's a fundamental problem."

Garcia proposed Congress adopt a bill to bolster pay for junior troops in the ranks of E-1 to E-6, starting service members at



ROBIN HICKS/U.S. Army

**New enlisted soldiers prepare for Basic Combat Training. The Army's goal is to ship 55,000 new recruits to basic training by Sept. 30, the end of fiscal 2024.**

about \$31,000 per year in basic pay. A similar measure was included in the House version of the 2024 National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill that sets lawmakers' spending and policy priorities for the Pentagon. But

the measure did not make the final NDAA that passed in December.

Garcia asked for Wormuth's help in pushing for the measure to become law later this year.

"We need help on this," he said.

"We need more pull from the secretaries, we need more pull, frankly, from the president in prioritizing this pay gap right now. ... There's other things driving the recruiting problems ... but the pay is significant."

## Ships: Lawmakers voice concerns over budget, shipbuilding

FROM PAGE 1

And I'm troubled by the Navy's request to decommission 10 ships before the end of their service life," Calvert said.

The budget hearing followed an announcement last week from the service that four of its critical shipbuilding plans are years behind schedule. The delays, from one to three years each depending on the program, come as the Navy and Pentagon pour billions of dollars into modernizing and upgrading shipyards to build and repair ships more quickly and keep pace with China's growing military.

The first Columbia-class submarine is projected to be between 12 and 16 months late. The fourth

and fifth blocks, or more modernized versions, of the Virginia-class submarines are 36 and 24 months late. The first Constellation-class frigate is approximately 36 months behind schedule. The third Gerald R. Ford-class aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise, is approximately 18 to 26 months late. Delays range from issues related to acquisition and contract strategy, the supply chain and having enough skilled workers.

"We cannot continue to divest ships without investing adequately in ship construction. I'm particularly troubled by the Navy's recent report," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee.

"These four programs ... are vital to counter China in the Pacific."

Cole said he believes the Navy budget is "too low" but recognizes Congress is under constraints forged last year under the Fiscal Responsibility Act. The law capped the Defense Department budget for 2025 at \$849.5 billion, a roughly 1% cut to the department's 2024 spending plan when adjusted for inflation.

He said shipbuilding is key.

"We can give you a lot of money but you clearly don't have the capacity to produce as quickly as we would like to," Cole said.

Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro, who testified about the service's budget at the hearing,

explained the approach that he introduced in the fall calls for a "whole-of-government effort" to build a comprehensive U.S. and allied maritime power in commercial and naval abilities. Del Toro said commercial shipbuilding has been "devastated" in the country since the 1980s.

"We stopped actually incentivizing and subsidizing the commercial shipbuilding industry. And it's because of that, that our shipyards went down from 30 to eight today that basically work with the Navy," the secretary said. "And that's a real challenge."

This leads to the problem of ships costing more to build in the U.S., he said.

A way to address the issue is through existing authorities. Title 46 of the Code of Federal Regulations allows the secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, the secretary of the Transportation Department and the Navy secretary to deem a ship to have dual use — commercial and military — which permits the builder to receive subsidies, Del Toro said.

"So if a ship costs, say \$100 million, to build here in the United States but actually costs \$80 million overseas, we could subsidize that shipbuilder with \$20 million. We have to get innovative [in] how we actually grow the commercial ship industry," he said.



## NATION

# Storms eye Ohio Valley after battering South

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Powerful storms rumbled over parts of the U.S. Southeast early Thursday, prompting a few tornado warnings, causing flash flooding, and delaying the start of one of the world's biggest sporting events, in Georgia.

The storm system, which has already been blamed for at least one death in Mississippi, demolished buildings and flooded streets in the New Orleans area on Wednesday. It continued to spawn flash flood and tornado warnings in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina on Thursday.

More than 100,000 customers lacked power early Thursday nationwide. That included more than 30,000 in Georgia, where the bad weather was ongoing, according to PowerOutage.us.

Now, forecasters say parts of Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia will be near the bull's-eye of a new area of concern Thursday. Those areas could see some tornadoes, damaging winds and large hail, according to the latest outlooks from the Storm Prediction Center.

In Augusta, Ga., the start of the Masters golf tournament was de-



SCOTT THRELKELD, THE TIMES-PICAYUNE/THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE/AP  
**E.C.O. Builders' Lynn Champagne surveys damage after the building was struck by an apparent tornado in Slidell, La., on Wednesday.**

layed, tournament officials announced. Forecasters predict wind gusts as high as 45 mph.

"Those wind speeds could easily knock down branches here and there," said Brad Carlberg, a National Weather Service forecaster. "Just be aware of the weather and gusts, especially if you are near trees, because a branch could fall down at any time."

Torrential rains early Thursday made roads impassable in Valdosta, Ga., an emergency manager reported. In Tallahassee, Fla., storms toppled trees and caused significant street flooding, the weather service said.

Damage has been reported from Texas to the Florida Panhandle.

A tornado struck Slidell, about 30 miles northeast of New Orleans, on

Wednesday. It ripped roofs off buildings and partially collapsed others in and around the city of about 28,000. Authorities said first responders had to rescue people trapped in one apartment building.

Slidell Mayor Greg Cromer estimated at a news conference Wednesday night that about 75 homes and businesses were damaged. Parish President Mike Cooper estimated that hundreds more homes were damaged outside the city.

Police video showed tree limbs littering the streets and flooded yards that resembled swamps. Outside a McDonald's restaurant, a car was on its side, power poles leaned, and large pieces of the trademark golden arches were strewn about.

"I've never talked to God so much before in my life," Robin Marquez said after huddling with co-workers in a two-story building where the roof was ripped away and walls caved in.

There were no reports of deaths or critical injuries in Slidell. The weather service posted on social media Wednesday that initial surveys indicate the area was hit by an EF-1 tornado, with winds from 86

mph to 110 mph.

Close to 8 inches of rain fell in parts of New Orleans. It came as the system of pipes and pumps that drains the city dealt with problems with its power generating system, forcing workers to divert power as needed.

"During intense rain, the mission sometimes shifts from keeping the streets dry to draining them as quickly as possible," the New Orleans Sewerage and Water Board said in a statement.

A woman died in central Mississippi when a power outage shut down her oxygen machine, officials said. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency said 72 homes were damaged.

In Texas, several people were rescued from homes and vehicles early Wednesday when flooding inundated parts of Jasper County, near the Louisiana line, authorities said.

In the Houston suburb of Katy, strong thunderstorms collapsed part of the roof of an auto repair shop. Storms also damaged businesses and cars in a strip mall, sending a large air conditioning unit on the roof crashing to the parking lot, officials said.

## O.J. Simpson, football star acquitted of murder, dies at 76

BY KEN RITTER

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — O.J. Simpson, the decorated football superstar and Hollywood actor who was acquitted of charges he killed his former wife and her friend but later found liable in a separate civil trial, has died. He was 76.

The family announced on Simpson's official X account — formerly Twitter — that Simpson died Wednesday after battling prostate cancer. Simpson's attorney confirmed to TMZ he died in Las Vegas.

Simpson earned fame, fortune and adulation through football and show business, but his legacy was forever changed by the June 1994 knife slayings of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ronald Goldman in Los Angeles.

Live TV coverage of his arrest after a famous slow-speed chase marked a stunning fall from grace for the sports hero.

He had seemed to transcend racial barriers as the star Trojans tailback for college football's powerful University of Southern California in the late 1960s, as a rental car ad pitchman rushing through airports in the late 1970s, and as the husband of a blonde and blue-eyed high school homecoming queen in the 1980s.

"I'm not Black, I'm O.J.," he liked to tell friends.

The public was mesmerized by his "trial of the century" on live TV. His case sparked debates on race, gender, domestic abuse, celebrity

justice and police misconduct.

A criminal court jury found him not guilty of murder in 1995, but a separate civil trial jury found him liable in 1997 for the deaths and ordered him to pay \$33.5 million to family members of Brown and Goldman.

A decade later, still shadowed by the California wrongful death judgment, Simpson led five men he barely knew into a confrontation with two sports memorabilia dealers in a cramped Las Vegas hotel room. Two men with Simpson had guns. A jury convicted Simpson of armed robbery and other felonies.

Imprisoned at age 61, he served nine years in a remote northern Nevada prison, including a stint as a gym janitor. He was not contrite when he was released on parole in October 2017. The parole board heard him insist yet again that he was only trying to retrieve sports memorabilia and family heirlooms stolen from him after his criminal trial in Los Angeles.

"I've basically spent a conflict-free life, you know," Simpson, whose parole ended in late 2021, said.

Public fascination with Simpson never faded. Many debated if he had been punished in Las Vegas for his acquittal in Los Angeles. In 2016, he was the subject of both an FX miniseries and five-part ESPN documentary.

"I don't think most of America believes I did it," Simpson told The New York Times in 1995, a week af-



SAM MIRCOVICH/AP

**On June 15, 1995, in a Los Angeles courtroom, O.J. Simpson grimaces as he tries on one of the leather gloves prosecutors say he wore the night his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were murdered. Simpson, the football superstar and Hollywood actor who was acquitted of charges he killed his former wife and her friend but later found liable in a separate civil trial, died Wednesday at 76.**

ter a jury determined he did not kill Brown and Goldman. "I've gotten thousands of letters and telegrams from people supporting me."

Twelve years later, following an outpouring of public outrage, Rupert Murdoch canceled a planned book by the News Corp.-owned HarperCollins in which Simpson offered his hypothetical account of the killings. It was to be titled, "If I Did It."

Goldman's family, still doggedly pursuing the multimillion-dollar wrongful death judgment, won control of the manuscript. They retitled the book "If I Did It: Confessions of

the Killer."

Less than two months after losing the rights to the book, Simpson was arrested in Las Vegas.

Simpson played 11 NFL seasons, nine of them with the Buffalo Bills, where he became known as "The Juice" on an offensive line known as "The Electric Company." He won four NFL rushing titles, rushed for 11,236 yards in his career, scored 76 touchdowns and played in five Pro Bowls. His best season was 1973, when he ran for 2,003 yards — the first running back to break the 2,000-yard rushing mark.

"I was part of the history of the

game," he said years later, recalling that season. "If I did nothing else in my life, I'd made my mark."

Orenthal James Simpson was born July 9, 1947, in San Francisco, where he grew up in government-subsidized housing projects.

After graduating from high school, he enrolled at City College of San Francisco for a year and a half before transferring to the University of Southern California for the spring 1967 semester. He married his first wife, Marguerite Whitley, on June 24, 1967, moving her to Los Angeles the next day so he could begin preparing for his first season with USC — which, in large part because of Simpson, won that year's national championship.

Simpson won the Heisman Trophy in 1968. He accepted the statue on the same day that his first child, Arnelle, was born. He had a son, Jason, and another daughter, Aaren, with his first wife; Aaren drowned as a toddler in a swimming pool accident in 1979, the same year he and Whitley divorced.

Simpson and Brown were married in 1985. They had two children, Justin and Sydney, and divorced in 1992. Two years later, Nicole Brown Simpson was found murdered.

"We don't need to go back and relive the worst day of our lives," he said 25 years after the double slayings. "The subject of the moment is the subject I will never revisit again. My family and I have moved on to what we call the 'no negative zone.' We focus on the positives."

## NATION

# New background checks set for gun buyers

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Thousands more firearms dealers across the United States will have to run background checks on buyers when selling at gun shows or other places outside brick-and-mortar stores, according to a Biden administration rule that will soon go into effect.

The rule aims to close a loophole that has allowed tens of thousands of guns to be sold every year by unlicensed dealers who don't perform background checks to ensure the potential buyer is not legally prohibited from having a firearm.

It's the administration's latest

effort to combat gun violence. But in a contentious election year, it's also an effort to show voters — especially younger ones for whom gun violence deeply resonates — that the White House is trying to stop the deaths.

"This is going to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and felons," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "And my administration is going to continue to do everything we possibly can to save lives. Congress needs to finish the job and pass universal background checks legislation now."

The rule, which was finalized this week, makes clear that

anyone who sells firearms predominantly to earn a profit must be federally licensed and conduct background checks, regardless of whether they are selling on the internet, at a gun show or at a brick-and-mortar store, Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters.

Biden has made curtailing gun violence a major part of his administration and reelection campaign, creating the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention overseen by Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden also has urged Congress to ban so-called assault weapons — something Democrats shied from even just a

few years ago.

But the rule is certain to prompt criticism from gun rights advocates who believe the Democratic president has been unfairly and unlawfully targeting gun owners.

The Biden administration first proposed the rule in August, after the passage of the most sweeping gun violence bill in decades, a bipartisan compromise in response to the massacre of 19 students and two teachers at a Uvalde, Texas, elementary school.

That law expanded the definition of those who are "engaged in the business" of selling firearms, and are required to become li-

censed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and therefore run background checks. The rule, which implements the change in the law, will take effect 30 days after it is published in the Federal Register.

There are already roughly 80,000 federally licensed firearms dealers. Administration officials believe the new rule will impact more than 20,000 dealers who have gotten away with selling firearms without a license and performing background checks at places like gun shows and over the internet by claiming they aren't "engaged in the business" of firearm sales.

## Water pouring out of Utah dam through 60-foot crack

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Workers hurriedly tried to shore up a rural Utah dam after a 60-foot crack sent water pouring into a creek and endangering the 1,800 residents of a downstream town.

State and local leaders don't think the Panguitch Lake Dam is in imminent danger of breaking open but have told residents to be prepared to evacuate if conditions worsen. Emergency management officials passed out a list of evacuation procedures to worried residents at a Wednesday evening town meeting meant to mitigate panic.

"I can't say that the emergency situation is entirely averted, but I'm very, very encouraged by the progress we've made today," Everett Taylor, an assistant state engineer for dam safety with the Utah Division of Water Rights, told residents of the southern Utah town.

Lowering the reservoir to below the affected area will take several days, he said. About 2 feet of water remained above the crack as of Wednesday evening, and workers had covered nearly 45 feet of the crack with boulders.

An ice sheet on the reservoir had pushed up against the dam,

causing the top to crack and tilt downstream, with water gushing through the opening, Taylor explained. His staff was able to relieve some of the pressure against the dam by making large cuts across the ice sheet. The ice has now pulled away, and the top of the dam has tilted back, he said.

Local officials discovered the fissure in the upper portion of the dam during an inspection Monday night, and state officials announced it to the public on Tuesday. The state has labeled it a level 2 breach risk — a designation in the middle of the three-prong scale that means there is potential for dam failure.

If a breach occurs, state and local law enforcement will work with the Red Cross to evacuate Panguitch, which sits about 10 miles downstream from the dam. Another tiny town, Circleville, is farther downstream and faces a lower flood risk.

Sgt. Jacob Cox of the Utah Highway Patrol, which has been tasked with helping prepare the town in case of an evacuation, told residents Wednesday that they should have ample time to gather their belongings and evacuate safely.

"This can be orderly," he said.



MATT CALL, UTAH DIVISION OF WATER RIGHTS/AP

Crews use heavy machinery to place boulders downstream of the cracked Panguitch Lake Dam to reinforce the wall Wednesday in Panguitch, Utah.



JASON ALLEN/AP

Former President Donald Trump greets a customer as he visits a Chick-fil-A eatery Wednesday in Atlanta.

## Trump says 160-year-old Arizona abortion ban is too restrictive

BY GREG BLUESTEIN

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

ATLANTA — Former President Donald Trump said that a 160-year-old Arizona law that bans nearly all abortions is too restrictive, and he called on Republicans to "very quickly" overhaul the measure after he arrived Wednesday for a private fundraiser in Atlanta.

But Trump stopped short of elaborating about what level of abortion restrictions he would support even as he defended the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn Roe v. Wade and grant states new authority to limit access to the procedure.

His remarks came a day after the Arizona Supreme Court upheld an 1864 anti-abortion law, ensuring that reproductive rights will remain front and center in the critical battleground state and embolden-

ing President Joe Biden and other Democrats who say the issue will energize their supporters.

"It'll be straightened out. And as you know, it's all about states' rights," Trump told reporters. "It'll be straightened out, and I'm sure that the governor and everybody else are going to bring it back into reason and that'll be taken care of very quickly."

The presumptive GOP nominee is trying to navigate tricky political territory by refusing to take a stance on a national ban while saying abortion rights should be left to the states.

That has led to fierce criticism from advocates on both sides of the issues, as conservatives want firmer national limits on the procedure while abortion rights supporters blame Trump and his agenda for the new restrictions.

Biden's campaign said Trump is

to blame for limits on reproductive rights, noting that he has long trumpeted that the three U.S. Supreme Court justices he nominated provided the pivotal votes to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that guaranteed a right to abortion.

"Trump lies constantly — about everything — but has one track record: banning abortion every chance he gets," Biden spokesman Michael Tyler said.

Pressed during a stop at an Atlanta Chick-fil-A, Trump again tried to sidestep questions asking for specificity on his abortion stance, including when asked whether physicians should face punishment for performing the procedure.

"Let that be to the states. Everything we're doing now is states, and states' rights. And what we wanted to do is get it back to the states," he said.

## WORLD

# Parliament OKs law for drafting boost in Ukraine

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukraine's parliament passed a controversial law Thursday that will govern how the country recruits new soldiers to replenish depleted forces who are increasingly struggling to fend off Russian troops.

Two years after Russia's full-scale invasion captured nearly a quarter of the country, the stakes could not be higher for Kyiv. After a string of victories in the first year of the war, fortunes have turned for the Ukrainian military, which is dug in, outgunned and outnumbered. Troops are beset by shortages in soldiers and ammunition, as well as doubts about the supply of Western aid.

Lawmakers dragged their feet for months over the new law, and it is expected to be unpopular. It comes about a week after Ukraine lowered the draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25.

The law will become effective a

month after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signs it — and it was not clear when he would. It took him months to sign the law reducing conscription age.

It was passed Thursday against a backdrop of an escalating Russian campaign that has devastated Ukraine's energy infrastructure in recent weeks. Authorities said Russian overnight missile and drone attacks again struck infrastructure and power facilities across several regions and destroyed the Trypilska thermal power plant, the largest power-generating facility in Kyiv region.

With Russia increasingly seizing the initiative, the law came in response to a request from Ukraine's military, which wants to mobilize up to 500,000 more troops, Zelenskyy said in December.

Incumbent army chief Oleksandr Syrskyi and Zelenskyy have since revised that figure down be-



EFREM LUKATSKY/AP

Ukrainian soldiers of the 80th separate airborne assault brigade fire a D-30 cannon toward Russian positions at the front line, near Klishchiivka, Donetsk region, Ukraine, on March 2.

cause soldiers can be rotated from the rear. But officials haven't said how many are needed.

The law — which was watered down from its original form — will make it easier to identify every draft-eligible man in the country, where even in war many have dodged conscription by avoiding contact with authorities.

But it's unclear that Ukraine, with its ongoing ammunition short-

ages, has the ability to arm large numbers of recruits without a fresh injection of Western aid.

Earlier this month, Volodymyr Fesenko, an analyst at the Center for Applied Political Studies, said the law is crucial for Ukraine's ability to keep up the fight against Russia, even though it is painful for Ukrainian society.

"A large part of the people do not want their loved ones to go to

the front, but at the same time they want Ukraine to win," he said.

Thursday's vote came after the parliamentary defense committee removed a key provision from the bill that would rotate out troops who served 36 months of combat — a key promise of the Ukrainian leadership. Lawmaker Oleksii Honcharenko said in a Telegram post that he was shocked by the move to remove the provision.

## S. Korea PM, top presidential officials offer to resign after election defeat

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea's prime minister and senior presidential officials offered to resign Thursday after their ruling party suffered a crushing defeat in parliamentary elections in a blow to conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol.

The results of Wednesday's elections mean the liberal opposition forces will prolong their control of parliament until after Yoon completes his single five-year term in 2027.

That will likely set back Yoon's domestic agenda and weaken his grip on the ruling party as he faces the opposition's intensifying political offensive during his remaining three years in office, experts say.

Prime Minister Han Duck-soo and all senior presidential advisers to Yoon, except those in charge of security issues, expressed their intentions to resign, according to Yoon's office. It didn't immediately say whether Yoon accepted their resignations.

Executive power in South Korea is heavily concentrated in the president, but the prime minister is the No. 2 official and leads the country if the president becomes incapacitated.

Yoon said he will "humbly uphold" the public sentiments reflected in the election outcome and focus on improving people's economic situations and reforming state affairs, said presidential chief of staff Lee Kwan-seop, in a televised briefing. Lee said he also offered to quit.

In a separate news conference, ruling People Power Party leader Han Dong-hoon said he would step down as well to take responsibility for the election defeat.

"I apologize to the people on behalf of our party, which wasn't good enough to win the people's choices," he said.

With all the votes counted, the main opposition Democratic Party and its satellite party won a combined 175 seats in the 300-member National Assembly. Another small liberal opposition party obtained 12 seats under a proportional representation system, according to the National Election Commission.

Yoon's People Power Party and its satellite party won 108 seats,

the election commission said.

The final voter turnout for South Korea's 44 million eligible voters was tentatively estimated at 67%, the highest for a parliamentary election since 1992, according to the election commission.

Regardless of the results, Yoon will stay in power and his major foreign policies will likely be unchanged.

But the elections were widely seen as a midterm confidence vote on the former top prosecutor who took office in 2022.

Yoon has pushed hard to boost cooperation with the United States and Japan as a way to address a mix of tough security and economic challenges. But he has been grappling with low approval ratings at home and a liberal opposition-controlled National Assembly that has limited his major policy platforms that require legislative approvals.

Hong Sung Gul, a public administration expert at Seoul's Kookmin University, said Yoon will likely find it more difficult to implement business-friendly policies and tax reforms, as the opposition parties are likely to aggressively flex their legislative muscles.

## Instagram blurs nudity to protect teens and fight sexual extortion

Associated Press

LONDON — Instagram said it's deploying new tools to protect young people and combat sexual extortion, including a feature that will automatically blur nudity in direct messages.

The social media platform said in a blog post Thursday that it's testing out the features as part of its campaign to fight sexual scams and other forms of "image abuse," and to make it tougher for criminals to contact teens.

Sexual extortion, or sextortion, involves persuading a person to send explicit photos online and then threatening to make the images public unless the victim pays money or engages in sexual favors. Recent high-profile cases include two Nigerian brothers who pleaded guilty to sexually extorting teen boys and young men in Michigan, including one who took his own life, and a Virginia sheriff's deputy who sexually extorted and kidnapped a 15-year-old girl.

Instagram and other social media companies have faced growing criticism for not doing enough to protect young people.

Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Instagram's owner Meta Platforms, apologized to the parents of victims of such abuse during a Senate hearing earlier this year.

Meta also owns Facebook and WhatsApp but the nudity blur feature won't be added to messages sent on those platforms.

Instagram said scammers often use direct messages to ask for "intimate images." To counter this, it will soon start testing out a nudity protection feature for direct messages that blurs any images with nudity "and encourages people to think twice before sending nude images."



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# TECHNOLOGY

# AI-operated jet will fly Air Force secretary in test

By TARA COPP  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Air Force is betting a large part of its future air warfare on a fleet of more than 1,000 autonomously operated drones, and later this spring its top civilian leader plans to climb into an artificial intelligence-operated warplane and let it take him airborne.

Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall told senators on Tuesday at a hearing on the service's 2025 budget that he will enter the cockpit of one of the F-16s that the service has converted for drone flight to see for himself how the AI-controlled plane performs in the air.

"There will be a pilot with me who will just be watching, as I will be, as the autonomous technology works," Kendall told the Senate Appropriations Committee defense panel members. "Hopefully neither he or I will be needed to fly the airplane."

Drone warfare has quickly expanded from the sidelines of combat to one of its primary weapons.

Drones are a daily threat in Ukraine and in the Middle East. In Ukraine, everyday citizens are targeted by Russian drones but also are assembling drones to collect video of Russian positions. In the Middle East, Iranian-backed Houthis and militant groups have regularly employed sophisticated air, sea and underwater drones to target U.S. bases and commercial ships in the Red Sea.

The Air Force began planning for its fleet of collaborative combat aircraft, or CCAs, several years ago, and it envisions a scenario in which one piloted jet will be able to quarterback multiple AI-driven, responsive drones, which the service calls "loyal wingmen."

The service has been tight-lipped on what the fleet of drones will look like in size or platform, whether they will be full-size warplanes or something smaller. Kendall said the converted F-16 test flight will be done for him to observe the technology behind the future fleet.

The fleet is being designed specifically with future warfare, and



MATTHEW LOTZ/U.S. Air Force

**An Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon flies over Afghanistan in March 2020. Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall told lawmakers Tuesday that he will enter the cockpit of one of the F-16s that the service has converted for drone flight to see for himself how the AI-controlled plane performs in the air.**

potentially a conflict with China, in mind. China has rapidly modernized its anti-access capabilities as more sophisticated air defense systems make it risky to send manned crews too close. Drone aircraft could augment the service's ability to breach those defenses, and they are envisioned to provide support in a variety of future missions such as surveillance or jamming.

The Air Force requested \$559 million in the 2025 budget to continue research and development of the

future CCA air system.

"The initial role for the aircraft was going to be counter-air, but it will have the potential to do other things," Kendall said.

The drone fleet is also expected

to be cheaper than developing new manned jets, Kendall said. The current goal is to have each cost about a quarter to a third of what an F-35 fighter costs now, or about \$20 million apiece.

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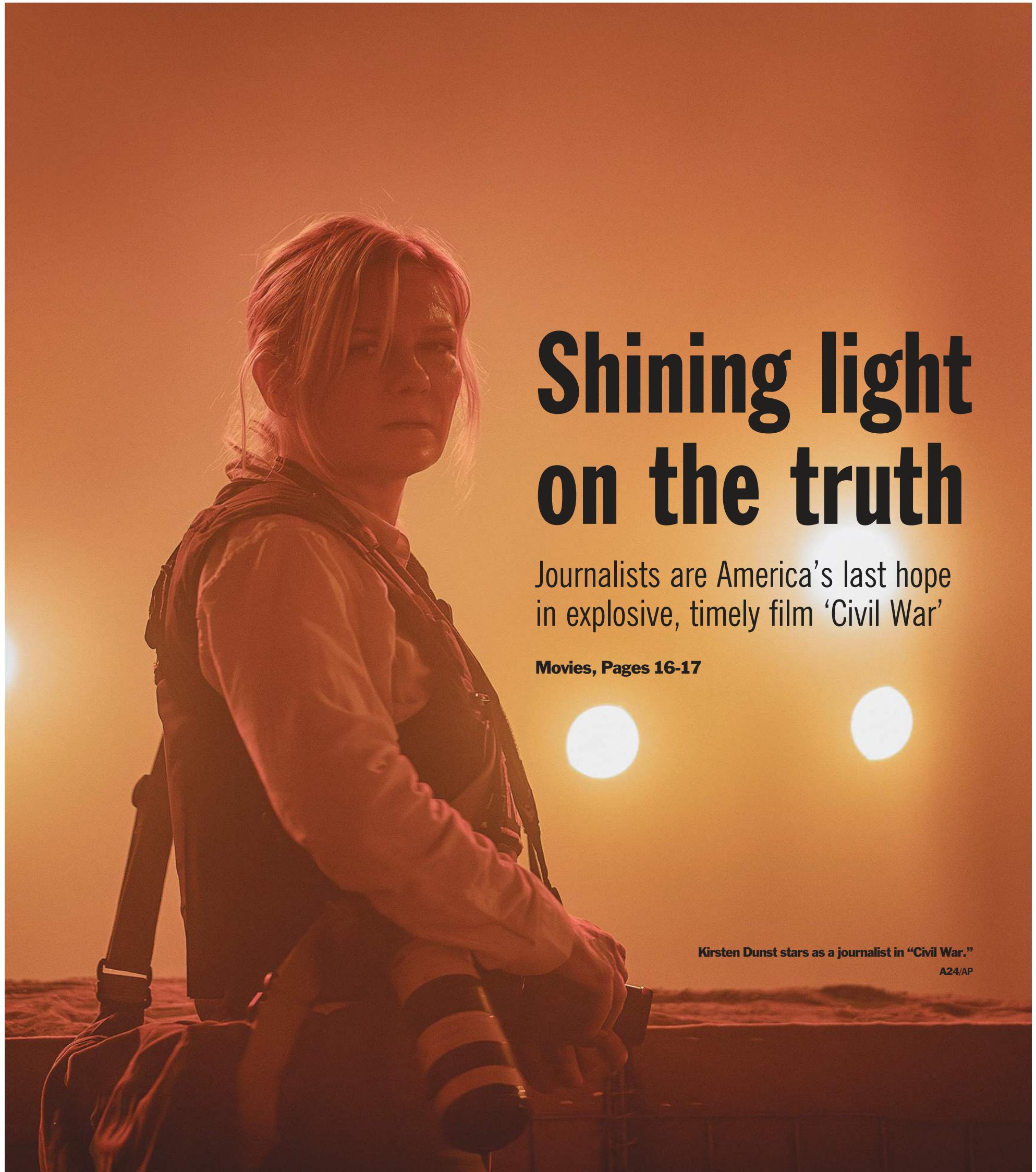


# WEEKEND



Vampire Weekend now acting its age

Music, Pages 28-29



## Shining light on the truth

Journalists are America's last hope in explosive, timely film 'Civil War'

Movies, Pages 16-17

Kirsten Dunst stars as a journalist in "Civil War."

A24/AP

## WEEKEND: GADGETS &amp; TECHNOLOGY

# YouTube's power over internet, us

Here's why the multimedia platform is the most critical technology in America

BY SHIRA OVIDE  
The Washington Post

**Y**ou think you know YouTube. It's where billions of people learn how to change a tire, follow a favorite yoga workout or catch footage of Monday's solar eclipse.

But maybe you don't know that YouTube is also the most popular way to hear music and one of the country's largest cable TV providers. YouTube is the healthiest economy on the internet. And it has been rocket fuel for artificial intelligence.

I'm digging into YouTube's identity because it's essential to understand the influence of technologies in our lives. As popular as YouTube is, its power over the internet and us is somehow still underrated.

Let me try to persuade you that YouTube is the most consequential technology in America:

## YouTube is No. 1 in video and music listening

YouTube might be best known for helping you to waste a few minutes at a supermarket check-out or on the toilet. (Sorry.)

YouTube, however, is also America's top living room streaming destination. Data from

Nielsen consistently shows that Americans spend more time watching YouTube on TV sets than we do any streaming service, including Netflix.

There isn't reliable data as to the combined time we stream on TV, phones, computers and other devices, but YouTube would likely top that metric, too.

YouTube TV, which is like cable TV but accessed over the internet, is also now one of the leading cable TV providers in the country.

In music, more people tune into songs on YouTube than they do on Spotify, the radio or any other audio service.

In a survey of people in several countries by Mark Mulligan of MIDiA Research, about two-thirds of respondents watched music videos on YouTube. About 43% listened to music online another way, and 31% have a streaming music subscription such as Spotify and Apple Music.

P.S. The most widely used social app among American adults is YouTube by a mile, Pew Research Center says. The most widely used app among teens isn't TikTok. It's YouTube again.

## It's the healthiest economy on the internet

If you post on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Reddit or X, you are basically making those companies' products free. YouTube doesn't work that way.

From each dollar that advertisers pay for commercials on many



iStock

**Americans use YouTube for more than just educational purposes. It's also the most popular way to listen to music and one of the country's largest cable TV providers. Americans also spend more time watching YouTube on TV sets than we do any streaming service, including Netflix.**

millions of YouTube videos, the person who made the video gets 55 cents. Google, which owns YouTube, keeps the rest.

YouTube has had this financial arrangement for close to 20 years. Still today, no other large app has such a consistent way for people to earn income from what they create and post online.

YouTube's revolutionary payment system matters to you even if you never earn a dime from making a YouTube video.

A healthy internet economy, like a well-functioning United States economy, is one in which everyone believes he or she has a shot to thrive. That includes you as the viewer, the people making the information or entertainment you're watching and the companies distributing the material.

YouTube is far from perfect on this score, but it may be the closest thing to the financially ideal online economy.

By the way, if you buy a subscription to YouTube Premium,

which lets you watch videos without ads, YouTube hands over portions of your money to the video makers, in proportion to your viewing time.

If you watch a lot of videos from MrBeast and Not Just Bikes, those YouTube channels will receive a large chunk of your subscription money. The relatively democratic system to pay the people making stuff is not how most music services like Spotify or Netflix work.

Even if you only listen to jazz music on Spotify, Taylor Swift will still get a bunch of your subscription money.

## YouTube is essential, controversial AI data fuel

You know an app is important when it becomes a wrestling match for companies grabbing every morsel of data to "train" their AI.

According to the New York Times, ChatGPT owner OpenAI invented a way to suck up more

than 1 million hours of YouTube videos and podcasts and turned the spoken words into fuel to coach its AI. Google has also transcribed YouTube videos to train its AI software, the Times reported.

What OpenAI did might violate YouTube's terms of service and what Google did might violate the copyright of people who make YouTube videos, the Times reported.

OpenAI said it uses "numerous sources including publicly available data and partnerships for nonpublic data." Google reiterated the YouTube CEO's recent comment that the company's AI is trained with some YouTube material, "in accordance with our agreements with YouTube creators."

YouTube is definitely flawed. It's been used to mislead and harass people and to spread propaganda. But for good or for ill, YouTube matters even more than you probably think.

# Use AirFly to watch plane media with your own headphones

BY GREGG ELLMAN  
Tribune News Service

The Twelve South AirFly has been around for a few years, and if you're not familiar with it, you should be, especially if you're taking to the skies anytime soon.

The gist is that it's a wireless adapter that you plug into the 3.5mm audio port on an airplane and then pair with your Bluetooth headset or earbuds. Once connected, whatever is playing on the entertainment system is transmitted directly to your ears.

The AirFly is built with a single 3.5mm out cord, an on/off switch and a USB-C charging port. It comes in several models: The AirFly SE (\$34.99) is for one set of Bluetooth headphones/earbuds. Once charged (USB-C), you'll get about 20 hours of battery life.

The AirFly Duo (\$44.99) can pair with



TWELVE SOUTH/TNS

**The AirFly comes in several models. The Pro model, which can pair with two set of headphones or earbuds and also connects to AUX IN, is shown above.**

two wireless headphones/earbuds simultaneously, with about 22 hours of playtime.

The AirFly Pro (\$54.99) also pairs with two sets of wireless headphones/earbuds simultaneously and will last for about 25 hours of playtime. It also allows you to stream music from your iPhone to an AUX IN in a car or on a speaker.

But these aren't limited to airplane travel. Any place there's an audio port is good, including gyms and video game systems. All three pocket-sized devices measure 2.2-by-0.1-by-0.4 inches, so remember, when the wheels hit the ground, unplug them and take them with you.

Online: [twelvesouth.com](https://twelvesouth.com)

The Laptop Strap is another summer travel accessory that keeps your laptop ready when you are, wherever you are.

The Laptop Strap has a flap that attaches to a computer with two sturdy Hypalon nylon loops. It then attaches to the adjustable 58-inch shoulder-length strap, whose connectors clip into the loops. Once connected, the laptop is secured with the strength and durability of a commercial-grade adhesive.

The ultra-strong adhesive peels off with

no residue and has been lab-tested to 114 pounds pull-strength. It installs in minutes with easy steps: clean your laptop and position the flap. Then remove the adhesive covering on the front and back and attach the strap.

After it's attached, it does not interfere with anything on the laptop, including access to ports or the opening and closing of the computer. According to their site, it is TSA-approved.

It comes in three sizes to fit most MacBook models and select PCs (small, medium, large), and a size chart on the website helps determine which you'll need. Styles include a dusty pink nylon flap with a white strap, a heather gray nylon flap with a black strap and a pebbled black vegan leather flap with a black strap.

Online: [thelaptopstrap.com](https://thelaptopstrap.com)  
Prices start at \$44.99

## WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES



Nintendo photos

In *Princess Peach: Showtime!*, the heroine takes on various stages as the lead performer, becoming the main character in every story.

# Showtime! for Princess Peach

Switch title emphasizes girl power, colorful fun

BY GENE PARK  
*The Washington Post*

Just after the year of Barbie, the first princess of video games is in a new title that definitively answers, “Yes, a woman can have it all.”

*Princess Peach: Showtime!*, out last month on the Nintendo Switch, is the first solo title in nearly 20 years for Princess Peach, an iconic character notoriously cast as gaming’s first damsel in distress. Maybe few are expecting a fictional royal to portray more than surface-level feminism and deconstruct the patriarchy. But *Showtime!* is notably leagues more progressive than her 2005 release, *Super Princess Peach*, which was a very fun Nintendo DS game with an outdated perspective on the kind of power a woman can wield (all of her powers revolved around “emotions”).

So it is heartwarming to see Peach finally “have it all” in 2024, especially after Anya Taylor-Joy’s wonderful portrayal in last year’s blockbuster film “*The Super Mario Bros. Movie*.” The premise is simple: This theater full of magical beings that put on performances is overrun by a dark force, and Peach will take on each “stage” as the lead performer, becoming the hero of every story, whether she’s a sheriff of the Old West, a thief with a code of honor or a dancing pastry chef. It’s much like Mario and his different outfits for powers. But instead of red overalls to throw fireballs, Peach is a kung fu martial artist.

The controls are alarmingly simple: There are two buttons. One of them jumps, and the other does an action specific to the role she plays, whether she’s swinging a sword in action-focused “swordmaster” stages or plopping whipped cream as she dances on a swing dangling over a giant cake. Nintendo makes games for all ages, but *Showtime!* is firmly in a suite of games that make greater allowances for children or less experienced players.

Veteran players will find little new here



Princess Peach dons different outfits to play the right part on different stages.

outside of Peach’s charming animations. Many of these levels are closer to mini-games. The mechanical limitations do restrict the inventiveness of play possible. *Showtime!* is akin to the Kirby games, with more challenging levels tucked away at the end.

Good thing that some of these performances can be breathtaking. The weirder the job, the more interesting the play, and the most creative performances avoid straight action. Peach uses her superpowers to “act out” being a superhero, including ferrying people to safety. A detective portion turns the game into a rudimentary but lively point-and-click adventure. The ice-skating portion needs to be seen to be believed.

The Switch console is showing its age as the frame-rate performance of *Showtime!* often hitches, even during loading sequences. It’s jarring to see curtains flow like stop-motion photography, and Peach’s luxurious animations call for more horsepower.

*Showtime!* displays great promise for a Peach franchise. It’s too bad the project feels more like a dainty step toward more substantive gameplay opportunities. There’s plenty already here, but it leaves you wishing some of these concepts had more room to stretch their legs.

Platform: Nintendo Switch



Two of *Princess Peach*’s many outfits are mermaid, above, and swordfighter, below.



## Inkbound lays groundwork for a great co-op

BY GIESON CACHO  
*The Mercury News*

**S**hiny Shoe is a small San Francisco studio that has big hopes for its latest project, *Inkbound: Rise of the Unbound*. The game was released in Early Access on Steam a little over a year ago, and this week, the online roguelike game is being fully released.

The team found success with its previous title, *Monster Train*, a roguelike deck-builder, and *Inkbound* follows the same path. It mixes elements of that game and others such as *Slay the Spire* and incorpo-



rates a turn-based combat that also requires positioning. It’s more tactical as players have to figure out safe spots to avoid enemy attacks

while also finding efficient ways to damage as many enemies as possible.

That’s just the tip of the iceberg. The element that truly sets *Inkbound* apart is its co-op multiplayer features. The game supports up to four players and they all make decisions in real time as they move about the battlefield. They also have a shared environment in the city of Athenium. That’s where players can see each other’s gear and socialize. It also hosts several nonplayable characters that offer quests.

When players first launch *Inkbound*, they’ll find four classes but they have the opportunity to unlock four more via quests. At the start of the run, they choose one of the classes, which has innate abilities, and draft the type of attacks they have. From there, they go dungeon diving across five worlds with a sixth being unlockable.

They battle monsters and clear rooms, which in turn rewards players with more abilities to draft or items to procure. Players have to keep in mind that they max out at five abilities and have seven item slots available. Over the course of a 20- to 40-minute run solo or a 30- to 60-minute run with multiplayer, they’ll have to make hard choices and craft their character so they take advantage of all the abilities and perks they acquire.

That means every run will be different, and this brings a deep replayability to *Inkbound*. The multiplayer factors in with some abilities meshing well with other. For example, one player can mark an enemy with a Binding that boosts an ally’s attack to double the power.

Every action in each turn has a mana cost, and when players use that up, it’s time to end the turn and let the enemies attack. In addition, the fighting arena shrinks over time, forcing players to be more aggressive and less defensive running away from enemies.

As a way to bring players back after each run, *Inkbound* unlocks more abilities and powers over the course of runs. This increases options when battling enemies and allows players to create builds they couldn’t before.

Online: [inkboundgame.com](http://inkboundgame.com)

## WEEKEND: MOVIES



A24/AP photos

“Civil War” is about a near-future America in the throes of all-out warfare. It features visceral scenes of bombings, firefights and executions.

# Achieving a delicate cinematic balance

‘Civil War’ revolves around widely held American anxieties but features only subtle connections to today’s polarization

BY JAKE COYLE  
Associated Press

Alex Garland’s films have vividly conjured a virus-caused pandemic (2002’s “28 Days Later”), an uncontrollable artificial intelligence (2014’s “Ex Machina”) and, in his latest, “Civil War,” a near-future America in the throes of all-out warfare.

Most filmmakers with such a record might claim some knack for tapping into the zeitgeist. But Garland doesn’t see it that way. He’s dealing, he says, with omnipresent realities that demand no great leaps of vision. He wrote “Civil War” in 2020, when societies around the world were unraveling over COVID-19 and the prospect of societal breakdown was on everyone’s minds.



Garland says. “That was pretty deafening back then,” Garland says. “So in a way, it’s slightly past zeitgeist. It’s actually oppressive.”

“Civil War” is an ominous attempt to turn widely held American anxieties into a violent, unsettling big-screen reality. Garland’s film opened in theaters April 12, the anniversary, to the day, of when the Civil War began in 1861. And it arrives just months ahead of a momentous presidential election, making it potentially Hollywood’s most explosive film of the year.

For months, the arrival of “Civil War” has been closely tracked as numerous trailers have drummed up intrigue. Texas



In the film, California and Texas have joined forces against a fascist president (Nick Offerman), who has seized a third term in office and disbanded the FBI.

and California aligned? “Science fiction,” wrote one commenter. Another said: “This single movie had the best 8 year marketing campaign of all time.”

Yet “Civil War” is something far more oblique than its matter-of-fact title. The film, which Garland wrote and directed, isn’t mapped directly against today’s polarization. In a war that’s already ravaged the country, California and Texas have joined forces against a fascist president (Nick Offerman) who’s seized a third term and disbanded the FBI.

A band of journalists (Kirsten Dunst, Cailee Spaeny, Wagner Moura) makes its way toward Washington. Much of the

film’s disquiet comes from seeing visceral encounters of war — bombings, firefights and executions — on contemporary American soil. (“Civil War,” to take advantage of tax breaks, was mostly shot in Georgia.) For everyone who has in recent years wondered “How bad can it get?” — a concern some polls have showed is shared by as much as 40% of the population — here is a sobering answer.

“When things collapse, the speed at which they collapse tends to surprise people — including people like intelligence officers whose job is to watch and predict when these things will happen,” Garland said in a recent interview.

“Things are always in a slightly more dangerous state than they might appear.”

The rapidity with which society can disintegrate has long fascinated Garland, the 53-year-old British-born filmmaker who emerged with the screenplay to the zombie apocalypse thriller “28 Days Later.” Western democracies, he says, can lean too much on their sense of exceptionalism. To him, “Civil War” isn’t an act of cynicism. It’s a warning shot.

“The consequences of it are so serious that to not take the threat seriously would, itself, be another kind of insanity,” says Garland. “It would just be complacent.”

In past election seasons, Hollywood has sometimes looked to channel, reflect or capitalize on political discord. Ahead of the 2020 election, Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions released “The Hunt,” a “Most Dangerous Game” riff in which liberals kidnap “rednecks” and “deplorables” to hunt on a private preserve. After the film became engulfed in right-wing criticism (then-President Trump said it was “made in order to inflame and cause chaos”), it was postponed. When “The Hunt” did hit theaters in March 2020, it revealed a more balanced satire of left and right than some feared.

While there have been online murmurings questioning the appropriateness of the timing for “Civil War,” controversy hasn’t yet clung to it. That might be owed to Garland’s approach. There are few direct allusions to the deepest fissures of

SEE POLARIZATION ON PAGE 17



## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

# America's last hope

Journalists take center stage in smart, compelling 'Civil War'

By LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

The United States is crumbling in Alex Garland's sharp new film "Civil War," a bellowing and haunting big-screen experience. The country has been at war with itself for years by the time we're invited in, through the gaze of a few journalists documenting the chaos on the front lines and chasing an impossible interview with the president.

Garland, the writer-director of films like "Annihilation" and "Ex Machina," as well as the series "Devs," always seems to have an eye on the ugliest sides of humanity and our capacity for self-destruction. His themes are profound and his exploration of them sincere in films that are imbued with strange and haunting images that rattle around in your subconscious for far too long.

In "Civil War," starring Kirsten Dunst as a veteran war photographer named Lee, Garland is challenging his audience once again by not making the film about what everyone thinks it will, or should, be about. Yes, it's a politically divided country. Yes, the president (Nick Offerman) is a blustery, rising despot who has given himself a third term, taken to attacking his citizens and shut himself off from the press. Yes, there is one terrifying character played by Jesse Plemons who has some pretty hard lines about who is and isn't a real American.

But that trailer that had everyone talking is not the story. Garland is not so dull or narratively conservative to make the film about red and blue ideologies. All we really know is that the so-called Western Forces of Texas and California have seceded from the country and are closing in to overthrow the government. We don't know what they want or why, or what the other side wants or why, and you start to realize that many of the characters don't seem to really know, or care, either.

This choice might be frustrating to some audiences, but it's also the only one that makes sense in a film focused on the kinds of journalists who put themselves in harm's way to tell the story of violent conflicts and unrest. As Lee explains to Cailee Spaeny's Jessie, a young, aspiring photographer who has elbowed her way onto their dangerous journey to Washington, questions are not for her to ask: She takes truthful, impartial pictures so that everyone else can.

"Civil War" is a film that is more about war reporters than anything else — the trauma of the beat, the vital importance of bearing witness and the moral and ethical



PHOTOS BY A24/AP

"Civil War" highlights the central role reporters, like the ones played by Wagner Moura, left, Kirsten Dunst, right, and Cailee Spaeny, below, have in capturing critical events in lethal conditions.



Jessie (Spaeny) is a young, aspiring photographer who has elbowed her way onto the other reporters' dangerous journey to Washington.

dilemmas of impartiality. Dunst's Lee is having a bit of an existential crisis, having shot so many horrors and feeling as though she hasn't made any difference — violence and death are still everywhere. She's also a pro: Hardened and committed to the story and the image. Her colleague Joel (Wagner Moura) is more of an adrenaline junkie, chasing the gunfire and drinking himself into a stupor every night. There's Jessie (Spaeny), the wide-eyed but ambitious newbie who is in over her head, and the aging

editor Sammy (the great Stephen McKinley Henderson), wise and buttoned up in Brooks Brothers and suspenders, who can't imagine a life outside of news even as his body is failing him. All are self-motivated and none of them have a life outside of the job, which might be a criticism for some movie characters but not here (trigger warning for any journo audiences out there).

The group must drive an indirect route to get from New York to Washington as safely as possible, through Pittsburgh and West Virginia. The roads and towns are set-dressed a little bit, but anyone who knows the area will recognize familiar sights of dead malls, creaky off-brand gas stations on two-lane roads, boarded up shops and overgrown parking lots that all work to provide an unsettlingly effective backdrop for the bleak world of "Civil War."

Dunst and Spaeny are both exceedingly good in their roles, effectively embodying the veteran and the novice — a well-written, nuanced and evolving dynamic that should inspire post-credits debates and discussion (among other topics).

Dread permeates every frame, whether it's a quiet moment of smart conversation, a white-knuckle standoff or a deafening shootout on 17th Street. And as with all Garland films, it comes with a great, thoughtful soundtrack and a Sonoya Mizuno cameo.

Smart, compelling and challenging blockbusters don't come along that often, though this past year has had a relative embarrassment of riches with the likes of "Dune: Part Two" and "Oppenheimer." "Civil War" should be part of that conversation too. It's a full-body theatrical experience that deserves a chance.

"Civil War" is rated R for strong, violent content, bloody/disturbing images and language throughout. Running time: 119 minutes.

## Polarization: Director says film is just a possibility, not a prediction

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American politics today in the film. Joining Texas and California together removes any "blue state" vs. "red state" dichotomy. Neither race nor income inequality appear as issues of division. The president's political party is unspecified.

"I had never read a script like this," said Dunst at the film's SXSW premiere. "And I had never seen a film like this."

"Civil War," set in a near-future, instead plays out with more subtle connections to today's fractured politics and cultural splits. Jesse Plemons plays a heinous militant who interrogates the main characters, asking them: "What kind of American are you?" Though it's never seen, Charlottesville, Va. — site of the 2017

white supremacist rally — is referred to as a battlefield.

Asked about that choice, Garland replies: "The film is just reporting."

But the director acknowledges finding the right balance was a challenge.

"Yes, it was a (expletive) delicate balance," Garland says. "We thought about it, we discussed it, we talked about what was appropriate. Look, the plan is to make a compelling and engaging film, and the product of the compelling and engaging film is a conversation. So the questions are: How do you make sure that you're not dismantling a conversation in the first part of that equation?"

That led to Garland foregrounding "Civil War" with journalists. As much as any-

thing, Garland's film is about the central role reporters play in capturing critical events in lethal conditions. Unbiased reporting, Garland says, has been eroded. In "Civil War," it's literally under attack.

"What I wanted to do was present journalists as reporters," Garland says. "They may be conflicted, they may be compromised as individuals, but they're holding on to an idea of journalism."

"Civil War," which cost \$50 million to make, is the largest budgeted film yet from A24. The indie studio is pushing to expand its reach beyond arthouses ("Civil War" will play on IMAX screens).

"A lot of the boldness is not actually mine," Garland says. "I think it belongs to A24. You would find there are always

people attempting to make these films. The question is whether they've been given the support to make them."

"Civil War" is just a possibility, the director stresses, not a prediction. Still, months after he finished writing it, Garland watched an insurrection play out on live television when a mob stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021. At the time, his thoughts weren't on his script.

"What I had was this incredibly intense feeling that this is a disgrace," Garland says. "Later, as time went by, some of that anger fed into the project. Not so much in terms of rewriting scenes or dialogue or anything. But more to do with an internal sense of motivation. Something that felt more distant felt less distant."

## WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

# Unconventional but functional

‘Housekeeping for Beginners’ a small but complex story about a Romanian family trying desperately to hold it all together

By MARK KENNEDY  
Associated Press

The film “Housekeeping for Beginners” begins with a shot of a painting on a wall hanging just a little askew. It’s an apt metaphor for what’s in store.

Writer and director Goran Stolevski gives us an atypical family portrait that’s brilliantly political without being preachy, loving without being maudlin and epic by being specifically tiny.

This is the complex story set mostly in a villa outside Skopje, the capital city of North Macedonia, that has become a refuge for those not in the mainstream — queer, Roma or a mix of both, ethnic minorities colliding with sexual ones in a repressive, traditional society.

Shot entirely with handheld cameras and using subtitles, “Housekeeping for Beginners” may seem daunting at first as viewers are thrust into a chaotic, multigenerational household with no navigation.

But Stolevski’s use of cinema verite — shaky close-ups, capturing routine things like the brush-

ing of teeth — and globalization mean we see things we know even if it is North Macedonia — boring bus commutes, Grindr, the joy of picking up kids from kindergarten, Adidas footwear and singing loudly along to very bad pop songs in the living room. They might be Serbian pop songs, but no matter.

Eventually, Romanian actress Anamaria Marinca — absolutely brilliant — emerges as the fulcrum. She is Dita, a no-nonsense Albanian healthcare worker and den mother with a deep well of love and patience. Along for the ride is her Roma lover and her two children, her longtime Albanian gay friend Toni and his younger lover Ali, and various young social exiles who have found the home a good place to figure out who they are.

In the first half, Dita’s partner, Suada, faces a health scare and the household must try to adjust if she doesn’t make it. As a single mother, Suada pleads with Dita to legally adopt her two girls — one a sullen teen and the other an exuberant 5-year-old. Without legal protection, who knows what



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Dzada Selim, left, and Anamaria Marinca in a scene from “Housekeeping for Beginners.”

will happen to them in a world where their ethnicity is denigrated?

The movie’s second half shows this ragtag family trying to pass as what passes for normal — Dita and Toni going to parties pretending to be a couple, the two girls pretending both of the adults are their parents. “Nothing has to change,” Dita tells them, but the strain of not being who they are is overwhelming.

Cinematographer Naum Doksevski’s camera spins and swoops as the family bursts out of his frame, constantly in motion and animated. Scenes never really end, just become a hectic

series of vivid postcards adding up to an emotional connection as various hotheaded decisions threaten to rip this family apart.

In addition to Marinca, Samson Selim is superb as the sweet young lover to Ali, instantly a protector and big brother to the youngest daughter, trying to ensure her childhood is loving and happy, something his eyes say he did not enjoy himself. Vladimir Tintor, who plays Toni, is a stoic slow-burner but powerfully reveals the fear of being aged out of love.

A neat conclusion is not in store for this family, but a satisfying one is. Like magnets pulled

together, the various pieces might fly apart, but there’s a grudging admiration and appreciation that keeps them together. It’s love, and that’s the same in the Balkans or Brazil.

It may come as somewhat of a shock to discover that the movie, so rooted in North Macedonia, could have been set elsewhere. The Macedonia-born, Australia-based Stolevski initially considered Australia. And that’s the point: It’s what happens in the house that matters, not where the house is.

“Housekeeping for Beginners” is rated R for sexual content, language throughout and some teen drinking. Running time: 107 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

# ‘The First Omen’ a solid but unnecessary horror prequel

By JOSHUA ROTHKOPF  
Los Angeles Times

“The First Omen,” as it happens, is neither the first “Omen” (1976’s half-loved horror hit) nor the first “Omen” reboot (a misbegotten 2006 attempt). It’s not even this spring’s first movie about nuns in trouble and baby bumps in the night; that would be March’s “Immaculate” starring an unbound Sydney Sweeney, a film that compares favorably to this one for being crazier, gorier and ultimately more defiant.

But “The First Omen” does have a certain swagger, like it was the only evil-pregnancy thriller in the world. Let’s credit debuting feature director Arkasha Stevenson with the stylishness to pull off a potent sense of atmosphere and the kind of lovely period detail that deep studio pockets can fund but rarely have cause to summon. The movie is set in the seething, hippified Rome of 1971.

Traipsing into these lushly hued shadows is Margaret (Nell Tiger Free of “Game of Thrones”), a wide-eyed novice who is quickly supplied with the type of companions that naive Americans typically get in these movies. There’s a kindly-but-clearly-malevolent mentor, Cardinal Lawrence (Bill Nighy); a louche, sexually experienced roommate unlikely to be taking vows anytime soon named Luz (Maria Caballero); and a spooky overseer, Sister Silvia (Sônia Braga).

Margaret, it is hoped, will be able to connect to the wayward generation currently protesting in the streets. (“A rejection of authority,” sighs Nighy’s cleric — as



20th Century Studios

Nell Tiger Free and Nicole Sorace are among the cast of “The First Omen,” which is set in Rome in 1971.

scripted by Stevenson, Tim Smith and Keith Thomas, this is a film that often says the quiet part out loud.) But mainly we’re waiting for the creaking, clanking scaffolding mishaps of “Omen” movies of yore: the rooftop suicide leaps and mark-of-the-beast reveals.

Those moments do arrive, confidently, in ways that fans will tick off approvingly without ever being wholly traumatized by.

There is a genius at work here, though: the makeup and prosthetics designer Adrien Morot, elsewhere the creator of the vicious robot girl in “M3GAN” and an Oscar win-

ner for “The Whale.” Morot has a blast with these full-to-bursting wombs; one nightmarish image, surely pushing the R-rating to the limit, shows an unlikely clawed digit emerging from where delivery doctors would anticipate a crowned head. (I can’t wait to watch this on a plane.)

How long will it be before Margaret, teetering around in heels at a disco, suffers a mysterious pregnancy that somehow manifests in weeks, not months?

Don’t question “The First Omen” too hard. Its dark magic, such that it works, functions in sensory impressions: the gravelly basso of “The Witch” star Ralph Ineson’s voice (a special effect in itself) or the choral doom of Jerry Goldsmith’s original score from 1976, revived to fine effect.

The problem, of course, is that you know where this is going. You even know, somehow, that the final word uttered in the film will be a boy’s name, famous to even non-horror fans.

A prequel to one of the most conservative movies of the 1970s, “The First Omen” is destined to disappoint anyone hoping for something a little more imaginative. It brings us straight to Gregory Peck’s ambassador, detailing a backstory we never needed in the first place.

But it mainly speaks in a language of suspense, not jump scares, and if you ever wanted to spoil an omen with an omen beforehand, it should get you converted for a couple of hours.

“The Omen” is rated R for violent content, grisly/disturbing images and brief graphic nudity. Running time: 120 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DRINK

# Bringing the London Fog latte home

Coffee shop specialty drink combines Earl Grey, flavored syrup, steamy frothed milk

BY BECKY KRYSAL  
The Washington Post

I'm not much of a coffee drinker, so when I suggest to someone that we "go out for coffee," what that usually translates to in my head is grabbing a pastry, ordering something sugary that bears little resemblance to actual coffee or, ideally, getting a nice cup of tea.

Often what passes for tea at shops or restaurants is little more than a cup of hot water and a tea bag. I'm thrilled if I can even acquire loose-leaf tea brewed in water at the proper temperature, but I get especially excited when I see specialty tea drinks on the menu. Coffee drinkers shouldn't have all the fun, right?

Chai is at the top of my must-order beverages list, but there's another one I'll always go for if it's available: a London Fog latte.

Sometimes referred to as a London Fog, Earl Grey latte or tea latte, the formula is pretty simple: Earl Grey tea, steamed/frothed milk and flavorings, usually in the form of a syrup. The syrup may be scented with vanilla, but my favorite iterations — and what I am sharing here — include lavender in the mix, for just the right amount of delicate floral aroma. As to the name? Well, the cream-colored tea topped by a cloud of frothy milk does indeed bring to mind a murky morning in my favorite city.

The most-cited origin story involves a pregnant woman in the 1990s in Vancouver looking for a coffee alternative at her local shop, but there are accounts that predate that tale. My own personal history with the London Fog latte is similarly fuzzy. I don't remember when or where I first had it. What I do know is that sometime in the last few years during a stressful, anxious pandemic when I didn't feel much like going out, I started making my own London Fog lattes, particularly after my backyard lavender started going bananas with dozens of little purple buds.

Call it self-care if you will. This small luxury and ritual might be just the thing to bring cozy comfort to your living room, too. Last year, I posted a down-and-dirty video primer on Instagram and the warm response I received prompted me to finally get around to writing down my recipe to share with an even broader audience.

Here are a few things to know about each of the elements of my London Fog latte:

**The tea:** With citrusy notes of bergamot, Earl Grey tea has the aromatic personality to cut through the dairy richness of the milk and still play nice with the lavender. My favorite is the Earl Grey Supreme from Harney & Sons; the brand sells a lovely Victorian London Fog blend that includes lavender and vanilla already in it, if you don't mind doubling up on those flavors. I also enjoy Earl Grey from Twinings, Fortnum & Mason and, locally in Washington, Teatism. My colleague Olga Massov recommends the "extra bergamot" Earl Grey from Upton Tea and the Earl Grey French Blue from Mariage Frères.

For the best flavor, loose-leaf is really what you want. And it doesn't require much extra equipment — a simple strainer you can set over your mug will do when it comes time to pouring out the brewed tea. If you absolutely will only use tea bags, go with two instead of one. Brewing the tea for five minutes might sound like a lot, but remember it will be softened by the milk and syrup.

**The lavender:** Be sure you use culinary lavender! Whether you're plucking buds from your backyard plant or buying it online, this is key. Either freshly picked (grab them before the purple flower blooms) or dried lavender will work. Save a few buds for a pretty garnish, if desired.

**The milk:** I prefer reduced-fat (2%) milk because it splits the difference between lean skim milk and richer whole milk, but use what you like. Heating the milk in the microwave or on the stovetop briefly, until it's about 150



iStock

A London Fog, also known as an Earl Grey latte or tea latte, may include flavorings like lavender.

## London Fog Latte

1 serving (makes 1 latte)

Active time: 10 mins; Total time: 45 mins, including cooking and cooling the syrup

### Ingredients

For the lavender syrup:

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup (150 grams) granulated sugar

$\frac{2}{3}$  cup (160 milliliters) water

1 teaspoon culinary lavender buds (freshly picked or dried)

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon almond extract

$\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon vanilla extract

For the latte:

2 teaspoons loose-leaf Earl Grey tea (regular or decaf)

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups (360 milliliters) water

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup (120 milliliters) reduced-fat or whole milk

1 tablespoon lavender syrup

culinary lavender buds, for garnish (optional)

### Directions

Make the lavender syrup: In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the sugar, water and lavender to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer to infuse the syrup for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat, stir in the almond and vanilla extracts and let cool for 20 minutes.

Use a fine-mesh strainer to strain the syrup into a clean, lidded container. You can use it right away or refrigerate until needed. You should have about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup.

Make the latte: When the syrup has 5 to 10 minutes left to cool, place the tea in your teapot, boil the water in a tea kettle or pot on the stove and pour it over the tea leaves to brew for 5 minutes. (Alternatively, bring the water to a boil in a small saucepan, remove from the heat and add the tea to steep.)

While the tea is brewing, microwave the milk in a high-sided, microwave-safe measuring cup or jar on HIGH for 50 seconds, or until very hot — you're aiming for about 150 degrees. (You can also heat the milk in a small saucepan on the stovetop over medium-low heat.) Using a milk frother (hand-held or on an espresso machine) or immersion blender, froth the milk until it reaches your desired level of foam. If you don't have the equipment for the foam or don't like it, just use the steamed milk as is.

Add the lavender syrup to a large, heatproof mug (ideally one with more than a 2-cup capacity).

Strain the tea directly into the mug and stir to combine with the syrup. Pour the frothed milk over the top and garnish with a few lavender buds, if desired. Serve hot.

degrees, primes it for frothing and cools down the very hot tea to the point that you can drink it almost right away. Don't like the foam, or don't have a frother? Use the steamed milk as is. Feel free to swap in a nondairy milk alternative of your choice.

**The syrup:** We're making what is called a "rich syrup" here, a simple syrup with a slightly higher proportion of sugar than water for a thicker, sweeter mixer for the tea. The primary flavor comes from steeping the lavender buds, but I add supporting players in the form of vanilla and almond extracts. (Use all vanilla if you have a nut allergy.) The yield of the recipe gives you enough for 12 lattes ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of syrup), though you could also use the syrup to flavor lemonade, sparkling water, cocktails and

zero-proof drinks. Or try brushing it over cake. If you don't want to make the lavender simple syrup, buy it from brands including Sonoma Syrup Co., Torani and Monin.

**The equipment:** I don't use anything fancy. I steep the tea leaves in my go-to teapot with built-in strainer and froth the milk with an inexpensive hand-held wand. I first saw the Peach Street frother recommended by Deb Perelman of Smitten Kitchen, and it's a keeper. Be sure you have an extra-large mug for serving the drink — ideally with a capacity of more than 2 cups because of the volume of the drink and frothed milk. If not, portion it out incrementally or share with a friend. There's definitely enough for two if you don't feel like drinking it all. Not surprisingly, I always drink the whole thing.

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Nice: French Riviera's laid-back capital

A hundred years ago, bigwigs from London to Moscow began flocking south to the French Riviera and the sun-drenched city of Nice. They came to socialize, gamble and escape the dreary weather at home, and ended up creating Europe's first tourist boom. Today, this classy resort town is a popular fun-in-the-sun destination that caters to everyone.

Those early English visitors wanted a place to stroll and admire Nice's perfect crescent bay without getting their shoes dirty. So they built the seaside Promenade des Anglais ("Walkway of the English") and studded it with palm trees. Today, this iconic pathway is a fun people scene, where the chicest of the chic and the cheapest of the cheap scramble for a spot in the sun.

The beach has something for everyone: volleyball, table tennis, paddleboats, windsurfing. While some stretches of the beach are public, much of it is private. Anchor yourself in a beach chair to watch Europeans at play. It's about \$45 to rent a spot for the day, complete with towel, matress, lounge chair and umbrella.

But Nice is much more than its beach and the sea. With its fine palette of museums (most of which are free), good food and ramble-worthy old town, Nice is the enjoyable big-city highlight of any Riviera visit.



Rick Steves

The city is reinventing its public spaces, creating green parkways and demolishing old eyesores. A modern, smooth-as-silk tramway running through the center of town makes it cheap and easy to get around.

The old center itself is traffic-free. With its soft orange buildings and steep narrow streets, this part of town feels more Italian than French. It's not surprising, because until 1860, Nice was ruled by an Italian king. The fresh-pasta shops (which you'll find nowhere else in France) and many gelaterias remind you how close Italy is.

The plaza called Cours Saleya, a commotion of color, sights, smells and people, has been old Nice's main market since the Middle Ages. Boisterous flower



Rick Steves

Walk the Promenade des Anglais to admire the azure Mediterranean and soak in the vibes.

and produce stalls trumpet the season with strawberries, white asparagus, zucchini flowers and more. Whatever's fresh gets top billing. Locally produced soaps, sachets and spices are attractively packaged and make good souvenirs. On Mondays, antique vendors take over the space.

Nice's sublime light and

weather have attracted not only tourists, but many influential artists. In the early 20th century, Henri Matisse and Marc Chagall were among the masters who came here, and the city has a museum devoted to each.

For a grand finale to your day, hike up Castle Hill, the rocky promontory that moors one end

of the beach. Take a picnic and a bottle of local wine, and soak up the sensational 360-degree views of the grand promenade and the spectacular Alps-to-Mediterranean scenery.

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## Flea markets host a heady mix of trash, treasure and tourists

One never knows what treasures await at a flea market. The thrill of stumbling upon that perfect find can make a drive worthwhile. Here are some places to look.

## Belgium

The Ciney Expo, located in Wallonia in the French-speaking region of southern Belgium, hosts one of the country's largest flea market and antiques fairs. Three times a year, its grounds are the site of



Karen Bradbury

editions of Ciney Puces & Antiquités, a vast event attracting buyers and sellers from all over Europe. At 2 p.m. on a Friday, trucks begin unloading their treasures straight onto the pavement, to the delight of the tens of thousands gathered. Furniture, precious metals, art, semi-precious stones and jewelry, crystal and more await new ownership inside the halls. An expert is on hand to advise about the pieces on show, a service offered for free.

The next market is scheduled for July 19-21. Adult tickets cost 10 euros for entry on Friday and 8 euros on Saturday and Sunday. Show hours inside the hall are 10 a.m.-8 p.m. all days. The autumn edition of the market will take place on Oct. 11-13. (A separate event at which military memorabilia is sold will take place on April 28.) Online: cineyexpo.be

## France

Of all the country's major flea market events, the "Grand Braderie de Lille"



CAROLIN LEPIARCZYK/MTK

**The 24-hour Konstanz flea market stretches across the German/Swiss border. The next iteration will begin the evening of June 15.**

stands out. Each year in September, Lille hosts what's billed as the biggest flea market in Europe, and with more than two million visitors, the claim sounds legitimate. From 7 p.m. Sept. 13 until 6 p.m. Sept. 15, the medieval city close to the Belgian border will heave with buyers and sellers. According to longstanding tradition, the food fueling the masses will be mussels. Online: braderie-de-lille.fr

## Germany

Fürth: This Bavarian city northwest of Nuremberg is home to a market known as the Grafflmarkt. Twice a year, the city's

pretty Old Town attracts thousands of shoppers. Kids have their very own market around the Michaelis Church. Upcoming dates and times include 4 p.m.-10 p.m. on June 28 and 8 a.m.-4 p.m. June 29. Online: tinyurl.com/2sfe8hpx

Homburg: This city's market takes place on grounds known as Am Forum on the first Saturday of the month; upcoming dates in 2024 include May 4, June 1, July 6, Aug. 3, Sept. 7, Oct. 12, Nov. 2 and Dec. 7. Goods are sold from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Online: tinyurl.com/2rm6h6cm

Konstanz: This overnight flea market's unusual claim to fame is its border-straddling nature. Rows of wares on sale in this town by Lake Constance (or the Bodensee, as it's known in German) spill across the Swiss border and into the neighboring town of Kreuzlingen. Should all the vendor's stalls be laid out straight, they'd stretch over five miles. Street musicians add a special flair to the long summer evening. The next flea market will unfold on the evening of June 15 and continue for 24 hours. Online: tinyurl.com/4fwa58ts

Ludwigsburg: This city some eight miles north of Stuttgart holds an antiques market in early fall. The "Ludwigsburger Antikmeile" takes place Sept. 28-29. Sellers set up shop in the town's baroque market square from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. both days. Online: tinyurl.com/bd737mze

Munich: The Oktoberfest is preceded in spring by what's affectionately referred to as its little sister, the "Frühlingsfest," or Spring Festival. On April 20, the grounds known as the Theresienwiese will offer not only rides, stalls and beer tents but

also a bustling flea market run by the Bavarian Red Cross. The selling starts at 7 a.m. Online: tinyurl.com/5n727rzp

Nuremberg: Twice a year, the city's gorgeously medieval Old Town transforms itself into a bargain hunter's delight. From 4 p.m. until midnight on Friday evening and from 7 a.m. until 8 p.m. on the following Saturday, Germany's largest inner-city flea market sees up to 4,000 stalls. The so-called Trempelmarkt is set to take place May 10-11 and Sept. 6-7 in 2024. Online: tinyurl.com/5n8v24kf

Stuttgart: While there's an antiques market held on the Karlsplatz on most Saturdays, a bigger one takes place once in spring and again in the fall. This year's big spring market has been scheduled for May 12, and its autumn edition is planned for Sept. 15. Online: tinyurl.com/yf38786n

Wiesbaden: The grounds adjacent to the stately Biebrich Castle host a small but satisfying market. Goods are on sale here from 7 a.m.-4 p.m. Upcoming dates include April 20, June 15, July 20, Aug. 17, Sept. 21 and Oct. 19. Online: tinyurl.com/38n9te79

## Netherlands

Mark calendars for Saturday, April 27, the date of King's Day. Citizens of towns and cities great and small will celebrate the House of Orange and take their orange-hued party to the streets. In many cities, notably Amsterdam and Utrecht, miles of sidewalk are transformed into a selling space for private vendors as part of the longstanding "vrijmarkt" tradition. Online: tinyurl.com/2u3eu86e

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

# Quest for quiet

Travelers seek to escape the noise of everyday life, be more introspective in this recent industry trend

By **KIM COOK**  
Associated Press

At home in the New York City suburbs, Oscar Sandoval has lots of friends and an active social life. But when it's time for vacation, he prefers to keep it quiet. Like, literally.

Sandoval began practicing Zen Buddhism a few years back, and has been on silent retreats to Buddhist monasteries around San Francisco and elsewhere. He'd stroll, sit, do some gardening and generally contemplate life for a week. More recently, he's done solo backpacking trips across Spain.

"The internal experience varies from times of very little thinking to periods of many thoughts or songs playing in my head," he says. "The utter peace and stillness is impossible to put into words."

Travel journalist Chloe Berge be-moaned the buzzing interruption of a drone while she was hiking the Faroe Islands' remote coastline during the pandemic.

"The world is getting louder, and it's increasingly harder to escape the noise, even in nature," she said.

But it's worth a try, say the travelers who are seeking relief in silence. Or as close as they can get to it.

From serene nature retreats to silent walking, the quest for quietude has become one of modern travel's latest trends. Conde Nast Traveler said last month it was "the travel trend we're most obsessed with this year."

For many, quiet travel goes beyond escaping the cacophony of everyday life while on vacation. It can be a shift toward introspection, a deeper connection with where we are, literally and figuratively.

You might even feel healthier.

In a study published in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry* in late 2022, for instance, mindfulness meditation worked as well as a standard drug for treating anxiety.

"Transformative travel's a trend we're tracking for growth," says Alex Hawkins, editor at the trend forecaster and consultancy The Future Laboratory. "It taps into consumers' desire for self-reflective tourism experiences."

The "wellness tourism industry," he says, includes "demand for hyper-personal holidays and health-driven stays."

## Peaceful pampering

The company Dark Retreats Oregon offers a five-day "Dark Retreat" in Tidewater, Ore., as "a great space for self-care" through darkness, digital detoxing and a healthy diet. Participants can keep the lights off as much as they want during

their stay, and can also decide how much they talk to others.

BookRetreats, which urges clients to "Unplug. De-stress. Recharge," offers silent meditation retreats in Bali, Portugal, Mexico and the Netherlands, as well as North American locales such as North Carolina, Quebec and California.

Finland's Utula Nature offers a silent stay amid the pines on Lake Saimaa, about five hours from Helsinki.

## Serene strolling

Ditching the phone, zipping your lip and putting on your comfy hikers: that's the silent walking trend that's found thousands of friends on TikTok.

Gordon Hempton is an acoustic ecologist in Washington state also known as The Sound Tracker. He's spent several decades roaming rainforests, coastlines and deserts looking for interesting and

often rare nature sounds — sounds you can't easily hear when there's human-made noise.

"I care very deeply about quiet," he says.

He's a co-founder of Quiet Parks International, a non-profit created to raise awareness of the benefits for both people and wildlife of less noise. Ecuador's Zabalo River park was the first to receive quiet park designation — it's not technically "quiet," of course: Howler monkeys, birds, insects and the thrum of the river provide a natural soundtrack. But the nearest concentration of human activity is a village of roughly 200 people, about 10 miles away.

There are even a couple of urban areas designated as quiet parks — one just outside the bustling metropolis of Taipei, Taiwan's capital. Another is in Hampstead Heath, about 30 miles from central London. The grassy, 800-acre park inspired C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia."

Quiet Parks International offers experiences like forest bathing, where you open your senses to the meditative and relaxing elements of a walk in the woods.

For those who can't get outside, the Quiet Parks website has recordings of wildlife and weather in the rainforest; morning in the West Texas desert; and day and nightfall in northern Alaska.

For those who can't get outside, the Quiet Parks website has recordings of wildlife and weather in the rainforest; morning in the West Texas desert; and day and nightfall in northern Alaska.

## Low-key lost

Black Tomato's got an interesting proposition for you. The avant-garde travel company offers a trip it calls Get Lost. You fill out an extensive questionnaire on what you're expecting from your escape, but you'll have no idea where you're going till you get you there. Environment options are Polar, Desert, Coastal, Jungle or Mountain.



BLACK TOMATO/AP

A tranquil scene in the Canadian wilderness. Avant-garde travel company Black Tomato offers a trip it calls Get Lost in which travelers fill out an extensive questionnaire to get sent to unknown place in a Polar, Desert, Coastal, Jungle or Mountain environment.

You're given pre-trip prep advice and navigation instruction, and then, at trip time, all the transfers, gear and mapped-out checkpoints you'll need. Your progress is monitored by a specialist in the chosen environment and by a local guiding support team. You can bail out at any time.

"We've sent clients to Iceland and Alas-

ka," says Black Tomato's co-founder Tom Marchant. "We sent one solo traveler to Mongolia." A woman trekked on her own across Morocco's Atlas Mountains.

Marchant says there's the challenge of managing the environment, but "it's also a time to truly disconnect from daily life in an entirely new way."

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY ALISON BATH/Stars and Stripes

The Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon is home to an ancient villa built in the 1st century B.C. and eventually owned by the first Roman emperor Augustus. Much of the villa is under the sea, but other structures are visible.



The villa at Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon had spa facilities, gardens, fountains, quarters for workers, port structures and a complex system of fish ponds.



Visitors to the site can take in views of the Tyrrhenian Sea, including of a protected marine area.

# Roman ‘respite from worry’

Visit Naples’ Villa Pausilypon to see archaeological site where elites made merry

BY ALISON BATH  
*Stars and Stripes*

**N**estled on the promontory of Posillipo Hill overlooking the Bay of Naples is Villa Pausilypon, a testament to a real Roman holiday.

Much of the villa, near the ancient town of Baia, has been lost to the sea. But its amphitheater, Odeon or smaller theater, gardens and other structures still are visible.

Part of an archaeological park and nature preserve, Villa Pausilypon offers a glimpse of the hard-partying summer life of the Roman Empire’s elite.

It’s at Baia and other locations along Naples’ coastline that the general and statesman Julius Caesar; one of his assassins, Marcus Brutus; the infamous emperor Nero; and others would drink, eat, listen to music and pursue other pleasures in opulent villas with stunning views of Mount Vesuvius and the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Built in the 1st century B.C., Villa Pausilypon was the summer home of Publius Vedius Pollio, a Roman equivalent of a knight and friend of the first Roman emperor Augustus. He dubbed the estate, thought to once comprise about 22 acres, Pausilypon, which means “respite from worry” in Greek.

Pollio was known for his lavish lifestyle and cruelty. He kept a pool of lampreys — jawless fish with toothed, funnel-like sucking mouths — to torture and kill servants who displeased him, according to lore.

Augustus, who reportedly put a stop to that practice, inherited the villa when Pollio died in 15 B.C. The property later became an official imperial estate.

You can’t visit the villa and its archaeological site without a tour guide or accompanied visit. Guided tours are only available once a day Tuesday through Friday, and twice a day on weekends and holidays, according to the park’s website. The tours are in Italian, but visitors can call ahead to arrange for a guide who speaks English. Tickets are available online.

Accompanied visits are free but scheduled just once a day and do not include any interpretative talks about the site, according to the website.

To see the villa, visitors must first traverse Grotta di

## On the QT

**Location:** Discesa Coroglio, 36, Naples, Italy

**How to get there:** Public transportation is limited but there is bus service to the site. The park is an easy drive from most places in Naples, but there is only street parking nearby.

**Cost:** 7 euros for adults; 4 euros for children, ages 7-14; and children 6 and under free for guided tours. Accompanied entry (without a guided tour) is free.

**Hours:** Guided tours (1.5 hours): 11 a.m., Tuesday-Friday; 10:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m., Saturday-Sunday and holidays. Accompanied entry (1 hour): 9:15 a.m., Tuesday-Sunday.

**Information:** +39 328-594-7790 or online: [areamarinaprotetta-gaiola.it/pausilypon](http://areamarinaprotetta-gaiola.it/pausilypon)

Alison Bath

Seiano, a nearly 2,300-foot-long Roman tunnel that connects the town of Bagnoli and the large volcanic caldera known as Campi Flegrei to the Gaiola valley.

The tunnel was used to transport goods not only to the villa but also the village near it, our tour guide said.

It has 120 arches, a single air hole that keeps it remarkably well-ventilated and another room dug out into the wall that once was likely used as a restroom. During World War II, the tunnel was used as an air-raid shelter for Bagnoli’s residents, according to our guide.

Its western end is marked by the remains of the headstone bearing an ancient Roman engraving from the grave of a freed man.

Once out of the tunnel it’s an easy, short walk on a meandering path lined with Mediterranean trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses to the villa. Toward the end, you’ll see the remains of the villa and its private theater straight ahead.

On the right is what was once a 2,000-seat public amphitheater built into the hillside. Visitors can’t walk on or sit in the amphitheater but can admire its architecture. Like much of the villa, it’s incorporated into the natural beauty of the landscape.

An adjacent building was not part of the original estate and likely was built later by a successive emperor, the guide said.

From there, the tour takes visitors to a terrace with



To see the Parco Archeologico del Pausilypon, visitors must traverse the Grotta di Seiano, a nearly 2,300-foot-long ancient Roman cave and tunnel built through the hill of Posillipo to connect Bagnoli with the Gaiola valley.

views of the Gaiola marine preserve and the island of Nisida, where Brutus is thought to have had a villa and potentially hatched the plot to kill Caesar.

You also can see the Odeon where Augustus, sitting well apart from other theatergoers with an unobstructed view of the stage, probably listened to musical performances or heard poetry readings, the guide told us.

The 90-minute tour also includes a short walk through a few rooms with ancient tilework and a fresco, and a view of a small garden laid out in a geometric pattern.

Much of the site, which also included a Nymphaeum or room with a fountain and plants, is off-limits to visitors. Excavation and studies of the villa are ongoing.

For example, a 2,000-year-old mosaic floor in the villa’s main living room was uncovered in 2022 by researchers from the University of Naples L’Orientale, The Charlotte Observer reported in 2022.

A visit to Villa Pausilypon offers a chance to explore some of Naples’ less well-known but equally important archaeological sites while enjoying the sun and sea views of Posillipo.

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# WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY JOHN VANDIVER/Stars and Stripes

Asparagus season dishes at Bauerle, a farm restaurant in the town of Fellbach, come with a heaping serving of 500 grams (about a pound) of stalks. You can choose between green or white asparagus and toppings of hollandaise sauce, melted butter or a vinaigrette.



Bauerle serves its asparagus-focused menu from late March until June 23. The asparagus is grown on site. The restaurant's modern atmosphere indoors contrasts with that of its farm setting.



There are a variety of entrees to choose from to eat alongside the asparagus at Bauerle. The smoked salmon with green asparagus in a vinaigrette was especially fresh.

# Bauerle best for spargel

Fellbach farm restaurant held in high regard for quality of stalks it serves

By JOHN VANDIVER  
Stars and Stripes

It was early March and the eye-catching asparagus was already on prominent display at my local grocery store, which was a surprise to me and an elderly lady standing nearby.

“Früh,” it’s early, she said in an excited pitch that quickly turned to disappointment.

She walked off empty-handed after closer inspection revealed the bright green stalks were from Spain rather than Germany. Indeed, “Spargelzeit,” the much-anticipated time of year when the asparagus starts to sprout, only really counts when it’s grown locally.

With the lady’s disappointment still fresh in my mind, I decided to seize the spargel moment now that the season is in gear. Bauerle, a farm restaurant in the town of Fellbach that’s held in high regard for the quality of its stalks, has been on my list of places to visit for years.

The restaurant is classic farm-to-table, with the asparagus grown on site along with a wide range of other produce. When they launched their annual asparagus menu on March 26, my family made a reservation just a few days later.

The eatery was packed when we arrived. Reservations are a must. As we sat down, we were brought a small serving of asparagus broth to get our palates



## Bauerle

**Location:** Height 1, Fellbach  
**Hours:** Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
**Information:** Make a reservation at 0711-534-128. Online: [bauerle-fellbach.de](http://bauerle-fellbach.de)

John Vandiver

warmed up.

The asparagus menu, which lasts until June 23, includes many dishes with white and green stalks served in different ways. Typical options include 500 grams (about a pound) of asparagus served in hollandaise sauce, melted butter or a vinaigrette. I ordered the green served with a side of smoked salmon. Another in our party opted for the white asparagus with hollandaise and a crispy schnitzel.

Several meals offering asparagus with crepes or meat offerings were in the 20 euro range. The focus, though, was the asparagus, which is iconic in Germany, Europe’s top producer. The white and green asparagus all were cooked to perfection, firm and not the least bit soggy. And the flavor beats that of any import likely to be found at the local commissary.



Bauerle also has a winery. This is a glass of Trollinger mixed with Lemberger, a popular blend in the greater Stuttgart area.

Unlike in the United States, where it seems like asparagus is available year-round and not particularly popular, it’s mostly a seasonal affair in Germany. That tendency to eat in season adds to the experience of Bauerle, which has an appealing modern atmosphere indoors that contrasts with that of the farm setting.

After asparagus season, the farm’s restaurant turns to a beef-oriented menu in August and a goose-focused one in the fall. Meanwhile, the produce is for sale year-round, except in January.

A couple days after our successful dinner, I made a return trip for a little more Spargelzeit — this time at the produce stand for takeout.

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## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING



PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER GREEN/Stars and Stripes

Four Nerd is a café that opened last fall in a former motorcycle shop near Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

# Gun your engine over to biker-themed café

Four Nerd has pastries, hot dogs, good vibes near Camp Humphreys

BY CHRISTOPHER GREEN  
Stars and Stripes

**F**ans of coffee, pastries and good vibes should check out Four Nerd just outside the Yoon Gate at Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

Also known as 4NERD, this eye-catching café opened around mid-October next door to the popular Savory Restaurant.

At first glance, you might mistake it for Bike Manager, the motorcycle repair shop this café replaced.

It retains a striking motorcycle-themed interior and exterior and with a large 4NERD sign, there is no way you can miss it. Inside, the walls are decorated with neon lights and motorcycle helmets adorned with the names of motorcycle companies like Harley-Davidson and West Coast Choppers.

The décor is unique, with outdoor seating in the front and back. The tables and chairs are made of metal barrels and planks. The staff is very friendly, and patrons may place an order with them or use a kiosk.

Four Nerd has coffee, tea and various pastries — the usual menu you'll find at most cafés. My caramel macchiato and croissant set me back about 8,000 won, or \$5.91. Both were delicious.

What's unique about Four Nerd is that it serves three varie-



A delicious caramel macchiato and croissant cost the equivalent of less than \$6 at Four Nerd in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.

ties of hot dogs — original, cheese and jalapeno — for between 4,900 won to 5,500 won. Add-ons include bacon and onion flakes, along with typical condiments such as mustard, ketchup and mayo.

The café is family friendly and has converted motorcycles everywhere upon which anyone can sit.

The walls are decorated with neon lights and motorcycle helmets adorned with the names of motorcycle companies like Harley-Davidson and West Coast Choppers.

Overall, it was a great experience, and I look forward to another visit.

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@ChrisJGreen8



## Four Nerd

**Location:** 3 Naeri-gil, Paengseong-eup, Pyeongtaek-Si-Si, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea

**Hours:** Open daily, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
**Prices:** Coffee is 4,000 to 6,000 won; special tea is 6,000 to 7,000 won; iced beverages are 7,000 to 8,000 won; non-coffee drinks are 7,000 won.

**Dress:** Casual

**Directions:** A five-minute drive from Camp Humphreys, South Korea.

**Information:** 1577-6954

Christopher Green

## How to banish cooking odors

BY AARON HUTCHERSON  
The Washington Post

Bacon. Cauliflower. Seafood. Anything fried. These are some of my favorite things to cook and eat, but while their aromas can be enticing in the moment, no one wants to smell these foods hours or even days after they've been cooked and consumed.

"Getting rid of cooking odors is both super simple and impossible," said Dani Reed, chief science officer of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia. "It's super simple because all odors are just molecules floating in the air. They're light enough to float, to get sucked into the nose and get into our olfactory epithelium. And that's how odor happens."

So, you just need to remove those molecules from the air, right? Yes, but that can be easier said than done. "The odors of cooking, especially the sort of the fried fishy type of odors, they permeate different surfaces and then they're released over time. And so it's really impossible because when you're cooking they go everywhere."

Here how's to best keep that from happening — and how to deal with it when it inevitably does.

### Control air flow

This is probably common sense, but it nonetheless bears repeating: When you're cooking, especially if you're frying, open a window or exterior door and turn on an exhaust fan (if you have one that vents outside).

Open floor plans are all the rage, but the downside is that those unwanted odors have access to all of the rugs, curtains, couches, pillows and other absorbent surfaces in your living area. If you have a kitchen with a door, close it to keep cooking odors from spreading throughout your home.

### Clean ASAP

The longer food lingers out in the open, the more its aroma has time to infiltrate the air. So, try to clean up as soon as possible instead of letting dirty dishes linger. And for frying oil that you're waiting to cool before it can be put away or disposed of, cover the pan with a lid to keep the odors trapped inside.

### Trap the odor molecules

Back to the science: There are a few different available products that can easily trap smelly molecules. The first is common air-freshener spray products. "Sprays like Febreze do more than just covering up smelly molecules with even more pungent ones," science writer Rachel Feltman wrote in The Post. "They use chemical compounds called cyclodextrins to literally



STACY ZARIN GOLDBERG  
For The Washington Post

**Cooking odors can hang around longer than you want them to. One tip that can help: Clean up as soon as you can.**

trap odor molecules."

Another option is activated carbon, which can be found in air purifiers and specific odor-absorbing splatter screens. Also referred to as activated charcoal, active charcoal and active carbon, it works "by using a physical stickiness that is essentially chemistry-blind," former chemistry professor and former Post Food columnist Robert L. Wolke wrote. "Gases find their way into its enormous interior network of microscopic pores, where they stick by a phenomenon called adsorption."

What about the box of baking soda many people have in their refrigerator? Can you just set one out on the counter? Long story short, it's not very effective and doesn't work for all types of smells (unlike activated carbon).

### Grab a bottle of vinegar

Vinegar is another tool in your arsenal, and its odor absorption has been promoted by social media cooking and cleaning influencer Barbara Costello, or, Babs, among others. She suggests setting a bowl of it next to the stove while cooking to neutralize odors. However, it can take some time and may need to be left out for a few hours and up to overnight for really potent smells.

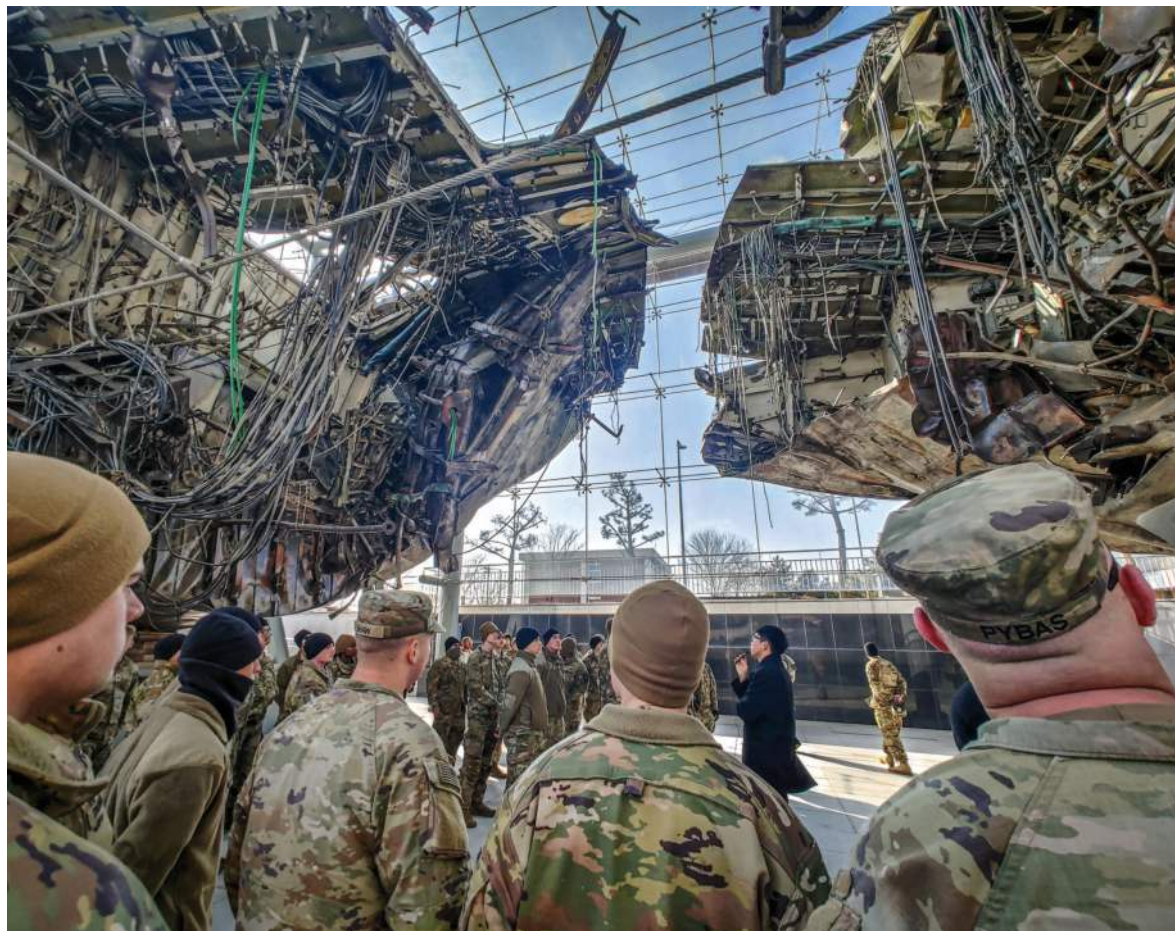
For a faster fix, throw vinegar on the stove. "In a small saucepan, mix half a cup of vinegar with a cup of water, and let it simmer on low to medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes," America's Test Kitchen assistant editor Sarah Sandler wrote. Yes, it makes the kitchen smell like vinegar while it simmers, but the aroma dissipates quickly.

### Mask it with good smells

Chef and cookbook author Abra Berens recommends making something with a stronger, more pleasant aroma, by brewing coffee or melting chocolate, though she says the latter is not great for fish smells. Food blogger Marta Rivera Diaz's go-to is to simmer a pot of water with lemon slices, bay leaves and cloves, as a stovetop potpourri of sorts. (Your choice of aromatics can also be added to the pot of simmering vinegar water mentioned previously.) Other options include scented candles and oils.



# WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



The ROKS Cheonan Memorial is at 2nd Fleet Command headquarters in Pyeongtaek, South Korea.



Above and lower right: U.S. soldiers visit the remains of the ROKS Cheonan on March 7.

PHOTOS BY LUIS GARCIA/Stars and Stripes

# Recovered navy ship has a tale to tell

## Wreckage of South Korean vessel apparently torpedoed by North Korea testifies to weapon's destructive power

By **CHRISTOPHER GREEN**  
*Stars and Stripes*

**T**he ROKS Cheonan Memorial is a must-see site near Osan Air Base and Camp Humphreys that honors 46 South Korean navy sailors who perished 14 years ago when their ship sank after an attack in the Yellow Sea.

A North Korean torpedo is believed to have struck the corvette, and the resulting explosion split the vessel in two. Nearly half its crew of 104 perished when it sank.

The ship's stern was raised a month after the attack.

In January, Cmdr. Park Yeon-soo, who as a young navy lieutenant survived the sinking, took command of a Daegu-class corvette, also called the Cheonan, promising to remember the "46 warriors" of its namesake.

Located at 2nd Fleet Command headquarters in Pyeongtaek, the tour begins with a series of videos explaining the history behind the memorial and its significance to the South Korean people.

A guide shows visitors to a hall where

artifacts and miniatures provide further detail and context about the event. The artifacts include weapon systems pulled from the ship and sections of the vessel.

The tour then takes you underneath what remains of the Cheonan. Sight of the damage really puts into perspective the massive destructive power of the torpedo.

Next, visitors go to Cheonan Memorial Hall for a self-guided tour, which includes a replica of the Cheonan ship's flag.

Throughout the memorial hall are rooms built to re-create the interior of the Cheonan, including the engine room, bunks and radar control room.

The Floral Tribute Table brings the entire experience into perspective. The lost sailors' ID tags are suspended from the ceiling and their names are displayed on a wall beneath the tags.

The Cheonan Memorial is a moving tribute to these sailors' sacrifice. A visit requires a reservation for one of three time slots at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. or 3 p.m.

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@ChrisJGreen8



Above and lower right: The fallen ROKS Cheonan sailors' ID tags and names are displayed inside a memorial at 2nd Fleet Command headquarters in Pyeongtaek.

### On the QT

**Directions:** A short drive from Camp Humphreys or Osan Air Base. Gyeonggi-do, Pyeongtaek-si, Poseung-eup, 2hamdae-gil, 122 KR

**Times:** Open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.

**Costs:** Free, but reservations are required.

**Food:** None at the memorial.

**Information:** Phone: 031-685-4123; Online: navy.mil.kr

Christopher Green



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## WEEKEND: BOOKS



MAGGIE SHANNON/For The Washington Post

Valerie Bertinelli poses in her home near Los Angeles. Her new cookbook is called "Indulge: Delicious and Decadent Dishes to Enjoy and Share."

# An invitation to indulge

Valerie Bertinelli choosing to reject a life of dietary suffering with new cookbook

BY MAYUKH SEN  
The Washington Post

**F**our years ago, when Valerie Bertinelli turned 60, a switch flipped. The years preceding that birthday had been defined by dietary abnegation: policing calories, frowning at the digits she saw on the scale, chasing purity at the expense of pleasure.

"What wasn't working for me was living my life by a number," Bertinelli, who turns 64 later this month, said in an interview in February as she sat in her home in Los Angeles. "Because no matter what that number was, it wasn't going to be good enough."

"Indulge," the actress and food personality's third cookbook (out this month from Harvest), is a rejection of the restriction that had dominated her life. The title of the book is as much an invitation as it is a reclamation of what some finger-waggers would have you believe is a dirty word.

"Why can't we indulge every flipping day of our lives?" Bertinelli said. (She has a charming tendency to alternate between dropping f-bombs and their airwave-friendly substitutes). "We only have one of these."

The book's recipes are unrepentantly joyous: There's a vegetable galette with a painterly rainbow of produce, white chocolate chip cookies with bursts of lemon and lime. She takes the kumquats blooming on a bush in her backyard and braises them with chicken on the stove, where the fruit's bitter flesh mellows against the

heat, coaxing the sweetness from their rind.

For Bertinelli — a sitcom star-turned-mainstay of the Food Network, where she was the host of such shows as "Kids Baking Championship" and "Valerie's Home Cooking" for a total of eight years — "Indulge" arrives after a time rocked by losses and absences. Her first husband, the musician Eddie Van Halen, died in 2020; a painful divorce from her second husband, the businessman Tom Vitale, was finalized in 2022. The essays bridging these recipes are meditations on healing and forgiveness. The book that resulted from this trying period is her way of working through, and finally silencing, "the same stuff that's been going through my head my entire life," she said.

Having grown up in a peripatetic family thanks to her auto executive father's job at General Motors ("I call myself the GM Brat," she quipped), Bertinelli began acting when she was 12, learning the heartbreak of rejection early. "I think I went on 99 to 100 interviews before I got my first commercial," she said. "That can really mess with a kid's head."

Her break came in 1975, when the showrunner Norman Lear decided to reshoot the pilot for the sitcom that would become "One Day at a Time" (1975-1984). As the younger of two daughters to a divorced single mom, Bertinelli's Barbara Cooper was the picture of precocity, displaying her rapier wit in zippy one-liners.

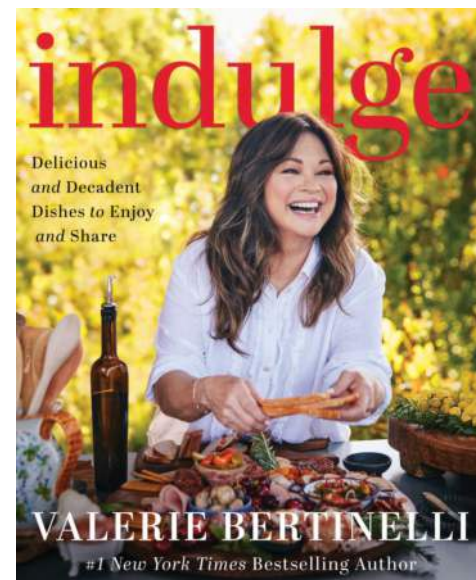
In a performance that would win her

two Golden Globes and make her a household name, Bertinelli aged before America's eyes over the course of the show's nine-season run. "One Day at a Time" was "my college, I like to call it," Bertinelli said. "Because I was in the college of learning how to socialize with adults. My college of learning how to do a craft I wanted to learn."

Fame also brought Bertinelli into the orbit of her rock star first husband, whom she married in 1981, when she was just 20. Bertinelli's Indonesian mother-in-law (whom she still calls "Mrs. Van Halen") introduced her to the cornucopian wonders of such salads as gado-gado and the fluffy banana fritters known as pisang goreng, far from the pork chops and strawberry rhubarb pies Bertinelli's English-Irish mother had weaned her on. "All these things that I'd never heard of," she said. "And they're un-flipping-believable delicious." (Sambal, a condiment popular in Indonesia, features heavily in "Indulge.")

Despite cooking's prominence in Bertinelli's life, not even she can make sense of what motivated her to transition into food after years of acting: "Who the f--- knows?" she said, laughing. Her first cookbook, 2012's "One Dish at a Time," came from her desire to share the culinary knowledge that her Italian grandmother and the other women in her family had impressed upon her.

But her food television career began in earnest in 2015. The TV Land sitcom "Hot



in Cleveland," in which she had a starring role, came to an unceremonious end after five years. (She still doesn't understand that decision, by the way: "I don't know how you have Betty White as the star of your show and you cancel it," she said. "Like, are you insane? You can see I'm not still bitter about it.")

The same year, an offer came to host "Kids Baking Championship" on the Food Network.

Thus began Bertinelli's second chapter as a television cook, a path she didn't intend to walk — but for her fans, the leap seemed logical.

Seeing Bertinelli pop up on food television was "heartwarming," said Kathleen Collins, author of 2009's "Watching What We Eat," a history of food television in America, in an email. Collins had grown up watching Bertinelli on "One Day at a Time" and was infatuated with her, admiring and relating to the misunderstood kid she saw on screen. Watching Bertinelli

SEE INDULGE ON PAGE 27

## WEEKEND: BOOKS

## Author takes on faux celebrity scammers

BY RACHELLE HAMPTON  
Special to *The Washington Post*

In 2022 alone, according to some estimates, hopeful singles looking to find love online lost between \$30 billion and \$50 billion to scammers. Online romance scams come in a dizzying array of iterations — there are the now-familiar Nigerian princes and the lonely military personnel trying to get home; then there are the pig butchers, the Tinder swindlers, the Nigerian Yahoo Boys and their Ghanaian corollary, the Sakawa boys. But there are also scams that don't have names yet, scams whose devastating effects are almost certainly already playing out in lives the world over. It's enough to make a girl permanently delete her dating apps, or maybe just throw her phone straight into the ocean.

And if you're anything like Becky Holmes, it might be enough to radicalize you.

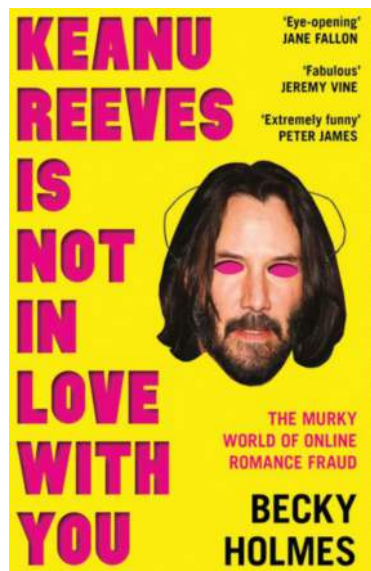
Better known to her social media followers as @deathto-spinach, Holmes' journey into the dark underbelly of romance fraud began innocuously enough. Like many, she joined Twitter in 2020 during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. And like many, she was instantly bombarded with messages from "impossibly handsome men who were absolutely desperate to get to know me."

At first, like most, Holmes simply blocked and reported her would-be lovers. But as she documents in her new book, "Keanu Reeves Is Not In Love With You: The Murky World of Online Romance Fraud," out of a mixture of boredom and curiosity she soon began corresponding with these scammers, who were impersonating not only oil rig

engineers and doctors but also, rather implausibly, celebrities. After Holmes started sharing her exchanges with a royal flush of faux-celebrities — among them Reeves, Liam Neeson, Prince William and Elon Musk — with her growing audience, victims of these scams began to reach out with stories of their own. It is these stories, many of which ended in heartbreak and financial ruin, that form the backbone of "Keanu Reeves Is Not In Love With You."

One need only look at the online response to a recent essay by the Cut's financial advice columnist, Charlotte Cowles, in which she details how she lost \$50,000 to an "Amazon" scam call, to understand that the average reaction to online fraud victims is derision. It's fear of that reaction that keeps victims of these scams from speaking to the press or the police. Fortunately, Holmes, a self-described "technological dunce," belongs to neither institution. Her expertise is delivered in homespun prose with pops of vulgar blue. At times, she veers off into the sort of asides that one might expect in a Twitter thread or a Tumblr post.

Holmes is at her strongest when drawing on her relationships with the victims she's befriended. Her prose radiates empathy, with none of the artificial distance that journalists or academics enforce between themselves and their subjects. The result is firsthand stories of women whose lives were ruined — or, at least, whose life savings were emptied — because they had the audacity to desire love. Women who were, almost without exception, left with little legal or financial recourse to recoup



their losses because of the international and digital nature of most of these crimes, as well as the impotence of the government bureaus newly tasked with prosecuting them.

The compassion that makes this book so persuasive isn't reserved just for the mostly Western victims of romance fraud.

When Holmes learns of the thousands of people held captive in scam compounds in countries like Cambodia, her bitterness at a state of affairs that allows this kind of human trafficking to go largely unpunished is clear.

"When I learned of this, I had to keep checking to make sure I'd got it right," Holmes writes of the compounds, where abductees are forced to perpetrate the very crimes she'd been rebuffing and mocking. "We are well into the 21st century — how the hell is this happening?"

There are dozens of answers to her question, running the gamut from sociological to geopolitical to philosophical. But what Holmes makes clear is that those answers don't really matter to the victims of these crimes, or to those who, sometimes unwillingly, commit them.

## A wife faces many options in comic novel 'The Husbands'

BY CHRIS HEWITT  
Star Tribune

Some say a good marriage is when you wake up and choose your spouse again, every day, a truism a Londoner named Lauren repeatedly puts to the test in Holly Gramazio's rollicking "The Husbands."

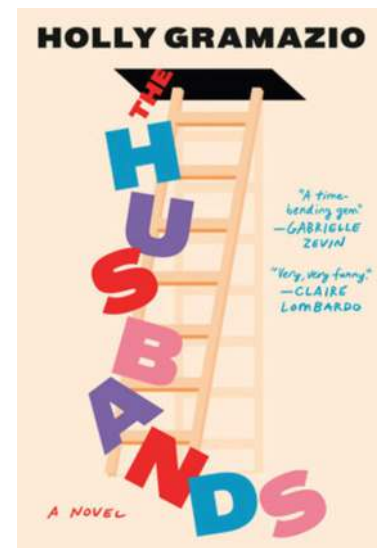
As the book opens, a tipsy Lauren is returning home from a bash when she encounters a strange man in her apartment, claiming to be her husband. One problem — she's not married. Hundreds more problems? Lauren quickly discovers that when her possible-husband goes up into the attic, a completely different husband comes down. Over the course of the book, set during one year, she repeatedly sends husbands into the attic in search of better models, cycling through up to a dozen a day.

It's a screwball setup that Gramazio has tons of fun with. There's this encounter with a husband named Michael, who informs her she has a cat who is named after former British prime minister William E. Gladstone because of their matching sideburns (Lauren whips through many spouses who turn out to have ear hair, rotten children or upsetting hobbies):

"Lauren is sure she doesn't know what Gladstone's sideburns looked like. What did Gladstone do? How racist was he? Does she have a problematic cat? This is perhaps not her most pressing issue."

The most pressing issues are: Does Lauren even want a husband? And, given the panoply of options, can she stand any candidate for more than a few days?

"The Husbands" plays like a wildly entertaining variation on "Groundhog Day," in which



Lauren keeps repeating the concept of marriage, learning about herself from each spouse. Gramazio, a game designer making her fiction debut, keeps the concept lively by inventing real-world solutions that make sense in Lauren's magic-attic world.

Faced with a job she doesn't know how to do, for instance, Lauren quickly learns she can call in sick a lot because she knows she'll be bailing on her husband/acquiring a new life soon. She also can spend all her money because it turns out new lives/new husbands generally bring new bank accounts.

Lauren may strike readers as too flip — one theme of "Husbands" is that she needs to figure out who she is — but Gramazio has invented a heroine who is great company and who's as quick with a quip as she is to send a husband with bad table manners packing.

Even if Lauren doesn't have much luck with marriage, this book is a match made in heaven for readers in search of a zippy read.

## Indulge: Cookbook pushes back against excessive discipline

FROM PAGE 26

on the Food Network made Collins feel as if Barbara Cooper had grown up and was still showing women of her generation the way. "Her youthful energy is the same as it ever was, and it's a natural for food TV," Collins said.

Though food television has long been dominated by megawatt personalities — see Julia Child, Martin Yan and Graham Kerr — the turn of the millennium marked an even more seismic shift toward character-driven cooking shows, Collins noted, making Bertinelli an obvious fit for the genre. While interviewing Food Network executives for "Watching What We Eat," Collins found that they prized affability above all else. "Valerie has that warm, engaging, down-to-earth and relatable way about her that is exactly what those execs and what the viewers want," Collins said.

Even as she had a high-profile gig on the Food Network, though, Bertinelli found her relationship to food became fractious over the years because of the stressors of her personal life. Her self-image started to corrupt. When people made snide comments about her weight, she found herself agreeing with them.

She started realizing she was using food to mask deeper and untended-to pain. "And if I try to push it away, shove it away, eat it away, the feeling's not going to go anywhere," she said "It's going to pop up again." She was relying on premade meals and barely cooking.

Then, she snapped herself into cognizance, realizing she'd had enough.

"It's not the food that's bad for us," she said of her epiphany. "It's how, or why, we're eating it. If we're eating it unconsciously, if we're eating it to soothe an emotion."

With its embrace of maximalism and comfort, "Indulge" is part of a recent pushback in food publishing against rigorous self-discipline and abstinence.

"Well, the pressure to 'just get on Ozempic' (as though it were financially, logistically or physically easy) has definitely heightened the stakes, but I see this cultural moment of semi-rejection of diet culture norms as being long overdue," said Emma Specter, author of "More, Please," a book on binge eating disorder out from Harper in July, in an email.

Specter is frustrated by what she terms "faux-progressive diet and 'wellness' brands" talk down to consumers. The weight-loss industry in America, too, grew to nearly \$90 billion in 2023, a figure that analysts expect to rise this year. "We deserve better as a society, and I'm glad that's becoming less controversial to say," Specter said.

For Specter, it took time to see her relationship to food as "something anchored by enjoyment, not shame," as she put it. "I love the idea of Valerie's cookbook helping someone else to initiate that self-work."

The process is ongoing for Bertinelli herself, she admits. Her time with the Food Network came to an end last year after her contract expired, much to the chagrin of her battalion of devotees on social media, though she herself is unfazed. ("Business is business," she said, diplomatically.)

Now, she dreams of one day fusing her two careers into one — maybe playing a cookbook author or chef in a sitcom.

Bertinelli knows she's been lucky; starring in two beloved sitcoms is a rare experience. Most actresses don't even get to take part in one.

"But," she said, "I'll never stop cooking."

## WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEW



Michael Schmelling

From left: Chris Baio, Ezra Koenig and Chris Tomson of Vampire Weekend take a sobering step into midlife on their fifth studio album.

# Punks to prep-school gangsters

Vampire Weekend grow into their boat shoes on 'Only God Was Above Us'

By CHRIS RICHARDS  
*The Washington Post*

When they first arrived in their khaki and their cable-knit, either you gawked at Vampire Weekend or you were in on the trick. Yes, these fine young men appeared to be preppy Columbia grads, but surprise, they were actually agents of the indie-rock counterculture, dressed in the garb of the enemy — not unlike “youth crew” hardcore boys clad in varsity jackets, or the Milanese paninaro set in their designer fashions, both subcultures preceding Vampire Weekend’s style games by roughly two decades.

Then came the real trick. In 2010, Vampire Weekend suddenly became the biggest rock band in America, with a chart-topping sophomore album and a song placement in a Honda commercial that could not be forgotten, forgiven or escaped. Trying to keep up felt like watching a spy movie that refuses to clarify which side the main character is working for.

Now it’s 2024, and that intrigue feels long gone. Frontman Ezra Koenig is about to turn 40, and his band’s fifth album, “Only God Was Above Us,” finds him singing ornate, erudite, midtempo songs,



## Vampire Weekend

Only God Was Above Us (Columbia Records)

only now from the vantage of midlife. There’s a tiny revelation to be felt in his new circumstances, at least — about how Vampire Weekend wasn’t playing with fashion all those years ago so much as time. Let’s not forget that back in 2008, this band worshiped Paul Simon above all, and whenever Koenig sang his winking lyrics about the rapper Lil Jon, he sounded like a high school administrator trying to win over an uninterested afternoon assembly. Vampire Weekend weren’t pretending to be preps. They were pretending to be boomers.

Accepting this idea turns “Only God Was Above Us” into something of a test for Koenig and his mates, bassist Chris Baio and drummer Chris Tomson: What’s this music’s animating tension now that its makers have grown into their Top-Siders?

As a lyricist, Koenig addresses time as the unstoppable force that it is, often letting it steamroll him. On “Gen-X Cops,” a punk-like song played with cello and harp, he sings about how “each generation makes its own apology.” Over the pretty plod of “Capricorn,” he mulls the dilemma of “sifting through centuries for moments of your own.” Musically, however, time never pushes or shoves in these songs. Tomson’s drums tend to dip in and out of

the mix, allowing us to better follow Koenig’s every word.

The best of them resemble punk lyrics. On “Classical,” Koenig points at the non-perishable nature of evil, and how “the cruel, with time, becomes classical.” That “Gen-X Cops” song opens with a line you’d expect to find on a Poison Ruin album: “Blacken the sky and sharpen the ax.” Singing obliquely about his second-favorite subject, war, Koenig ends the pitter-patting “Pravda” with one of the most astonishing warnings I’ve ever heard in a song: “I hope you know your brain’s not bulletproof.”

And while each of these lines wants to be shouted, Koenig only knows how to whimper, sigh and pirouette. Like your parents waiting for you at the kitchen table at 3 a.m., he isn’t angry, just disappointed. Is it unfair to feel disappointed by that? The fundamental contrast he has going here — hard words, soft voice — is a reliable device, but it results in music that feels unable to act on its own anger. Is that what midlife is? A powerlessness you can’t fully understand until you’re halfway through the ride, still waiting for the world to stop getting worse? Unlike any other Vampire Weekend album, this one frightened and depleted me.

## WEEKEND: MUSIC

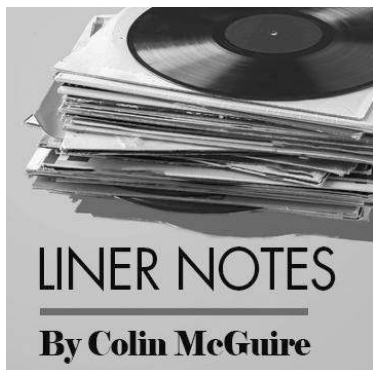
## BEAT forms; Black Keys set to hit the road

Perhaps some of us attended prog legends King Crimson's final-ever U.S. show. Perhaps some of us own the live album that came from that performance as well as the documentary that chronicled said final tour. And then perhaps some of us were delighted to read about BEAT, a supergroup that announced last week they will launch a fall tour performing only King Crimson material from the 1980s.

Or, perhaps that's just me.

Either way, the project, featuring Tony Levin, Adrian Belew, Tool's Danny Carey and Steve Vai, is set to hit a ton of North American venues beginning Sept. 12 when they kick things off in San Jose, Calif. The trek will run all the way until Nov. 8 when they wrap things up in Las Vegas. At more than 40 dates, almost anyone who wants to check it out will have the ability to do so, so ... um ... see you there?

If I don't, then maybe you're one of the zillions of people who seem to be going to see Luis Miguel these days. The bestselling Latin artist of the 1990s sits atop the latest edition of Pollstar's Live 75 chart, which ranks worldwide active tours by average tickets sold for shows performed over the past 30 days. Miguel narrowly edged Karol G on the list for the week of April 1, moving about an average of 33,000 tickets. The biggest sur-



prise on this month's chart? Blake Shelton appears at No. 8 with an average of roughly 12,000 tickets sold over the past 30 days.

I mean, I can't be the only one who thought he was still leading teams on "The Voice," can I?

Something tells me Killer Mike would agree. Speaking of the Run The Jewels rapper, he announced last week plans to tour this summer. Dubbed the "Down By Law — Summer 2024 Tour," Mike is set to kick things off May 4 in Memphis before winding down Oct. 15 in Los Angeles. Maybe the most interesting stop on his journey will be a late May date at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Kendrick Lamar walked so Killer Mike can run.

There will be no running when it comes to Orville Peck's tour (I mean, come on: Have you ever heard that guy's drawl?), which he announced last week. Spanning more than 43 stops, the masked singer will be on the



CHARLES SYKES/AP

Patrick Carney, left, and Dan Auerbach of the Black Keys perform at the 8th annual Love Rocks NYC concert benefiting God's Love We Deliver at the Beacon Theatre on March 7 in New York.

road from May to October.

Slightly more upbeat, but no less unhappy, emo stalwarts Dashboard Confessional will embark on their creatively titled "The Places You Will Come To Hear The Most" tour, playing off the band's 2001 seminal record. They will be joined by Boys Like

Girls and will hit midsize venues far and wide until the end of October.

And then there's the Black Keys, who in support of their latest album, "Ohio Players," will head out for 31 shows with The Head And The Heart. Kicking off Sept. 17 in Tulsa, Okla., the jaunt

will see the fellas make stops all around North America before heading to Detroit to wrap things up on Nov. 12. No word on if the actual Ohio Players, one of the 1970s' best funk bands, will be joining the rockers on stage or in spirit. Oh, well.

Happy concert-ing!

## Lizzy McAlpine

Older (RCA)

The opening track on folk-pop singer-songwriter Lizzy McAlpine's third album, "Older," is only one minute and 40 seconds long. In that time, "The Elevator" carries the listener into McAlpine's internal world, climbing a steady piano melody toward a drum-led instrumental before the song meets an abrupt end — depositing the listener at the second track, but more importantly, in the thick of McAlpine's current conundrum.

"It wasn't slow, it happened fast," she sings in a near-whisper, readying her heart-rendering thought. "I think we can make it; I hope that I'm right."

The track sets the listener up for the album that follows: "Older" is a rich world for the listener to live within precisely because the songs vary in range and emotionality. Her songs tend to focus on maturation, entering and leaving relationships, learning to trust and be trusted. On "Older," that includes navigating grief and growing older, while watching others grieve and grow older, too.

"Older" follows McAlpine's 2021 album, "Five Seconds Flat," and its viral hit "Ceilings," McAlpine's first entry into the Billboard Hot 100.

The ballad soundtrack hundreds of thousands of social media videos, revered by fans for the song's cinematic telling of a (spoiler alert) imagined love story.

McAlpine, 24, evolves her visual, scene-driven songwriting on "Older" — which is sure to please



fans of "Ceilings."

McAlpine's folk-pop tunes have always felt informed by musical theater styling (fitting, for a drama fan and one-time collaborator of composers Benj Pasek and Justin Paul of "Dear Evan Hansen" and "La La Land"), if mostly for her ability to infuse each song with character, as if acting.

Lyrical, she does that by referencing details — rocks thrown in water, a rejected cigarette, a crooked tie, a carousel ride — and telling blunt truths, like on "Drunk, Running," when she admits: "I'm so sorry I stay / When I shouldn't" atop piano.

The record is then effective when that intimacy is met with bold production that swells to meet the performer where she is at, and not in an attempt to impress. Take "Broken Glass," which crescendos into a bridge that sees McAlpine belting above a drumbeat. The penultimate song, "March," is an aching but even piano-driven ode to McAlpine's father, who died on March 13, 2020. Since his passing, she's determined to dedicate a song in his honor on each of her projects, ideally track No. 13. Here, "March" brings reflections on grief: "Tryna find the lesson in it all but / I haven't learned anything." And: "I didn't know it'd be this hard / So far away and then it hits you."

The title track, "Older," ends with McAlpine repeating the refrain: "I wish I knew what the end is."

Tucked within McAlpine's worried words is exactly what listeners look to her for: A still-confident tone, a pretty melody and reflections that only assure listeners in their own troubles.

— Elise Ryan  
Associated Press

## Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams

All This Time (Royal Potato Family)

Drawing from personal experience, husband-and-wife duo Larry Campbell and Teresa Williams sing about first-rate romance on their latest collaborative album, "All This Time."

Their marriage of 35 years — he from New York City and she from Peckerwood Point, Tenn. — had a partnership that was "love at first note," as Williams describes it, and has blossomed musically with the release of four duet albums. "All This Time" is the best yet, a rousing and romantic testament to the power of love both forever and fleeting.

Campbell wrote seven of the 10 songs and produced the set. It's rooted in his relationship with Williams and also the traditions of classic country, honored lustily on a cover of George Jones' "That's All It Took."

Nostalgia and sentimentality are leavened with humor, swagger, keening harmonies and Campbell's guitar. An understated elegance distinguishes his playing even when he makes like Eric Clapton or serves up Southern rock riffs, and the mood is such that laughter accompanies his solo on the funky "The Way You Make Me Feel."

The backing band includes Little Feat pianist Bill Payne and Levon Helm, who recorded the drum part for "That's All It Took" shortly before he died in 2012.

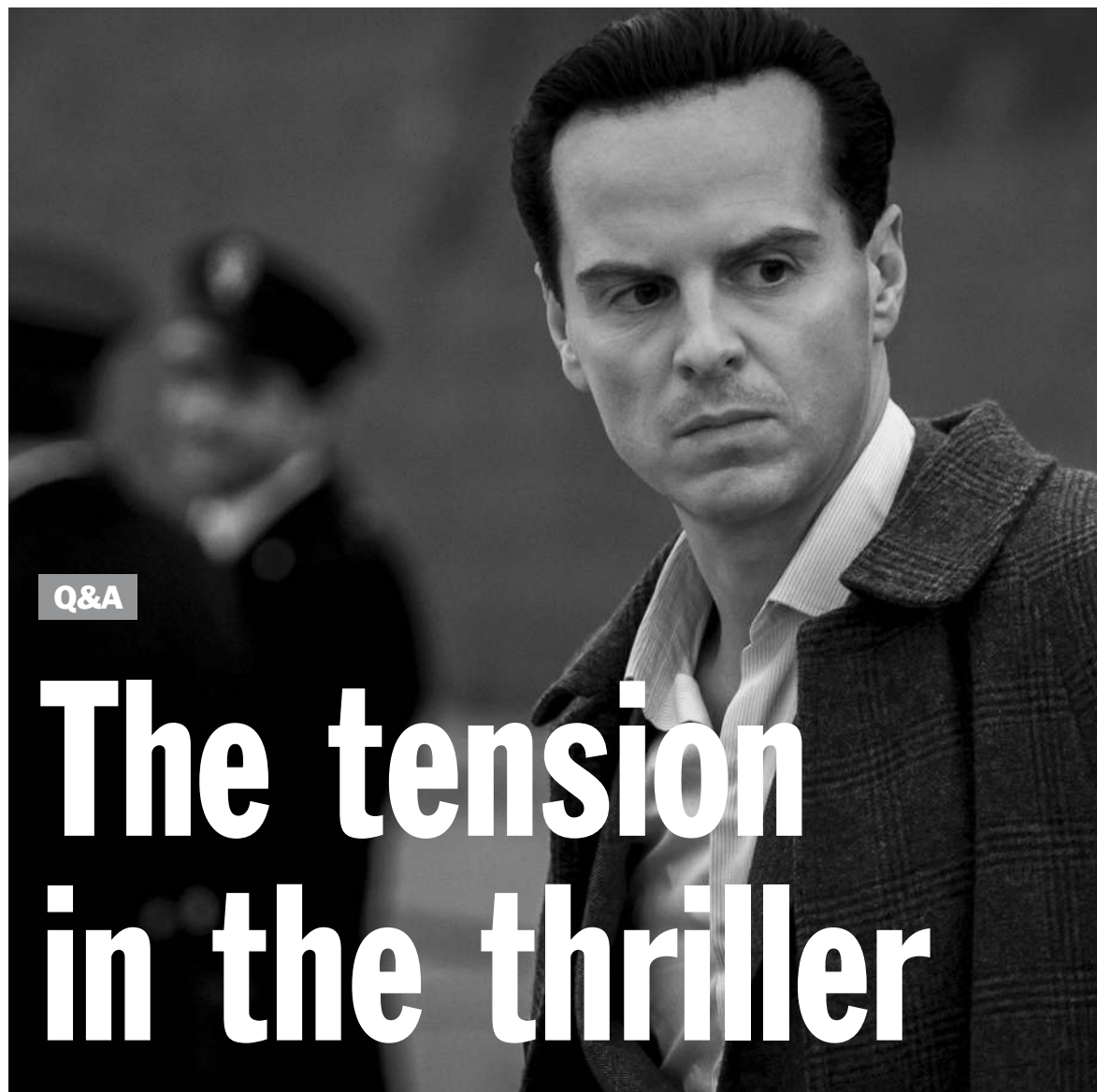
Campbell's life-threatening bout with COVID-19 in 2020 looms on the ballad "A Little Better," an ode to simple joy. Other highlights include the inviting ballad "Ride with Me," the New Orleans-style shuffle "I Think About You," and the honky-tonkin' working-class anthem "We Done Earned It," which rhymes "steak supreme" with "château du vin."

Campbell and Williams swap lead vocals and sound terrific singing together, which should be no surprise. After all, harmony is what a good marriage is about.

— Steven Wine  
Associated Press



## WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Q&amp;A

# The tension in the thriller

NETFLIX/AP

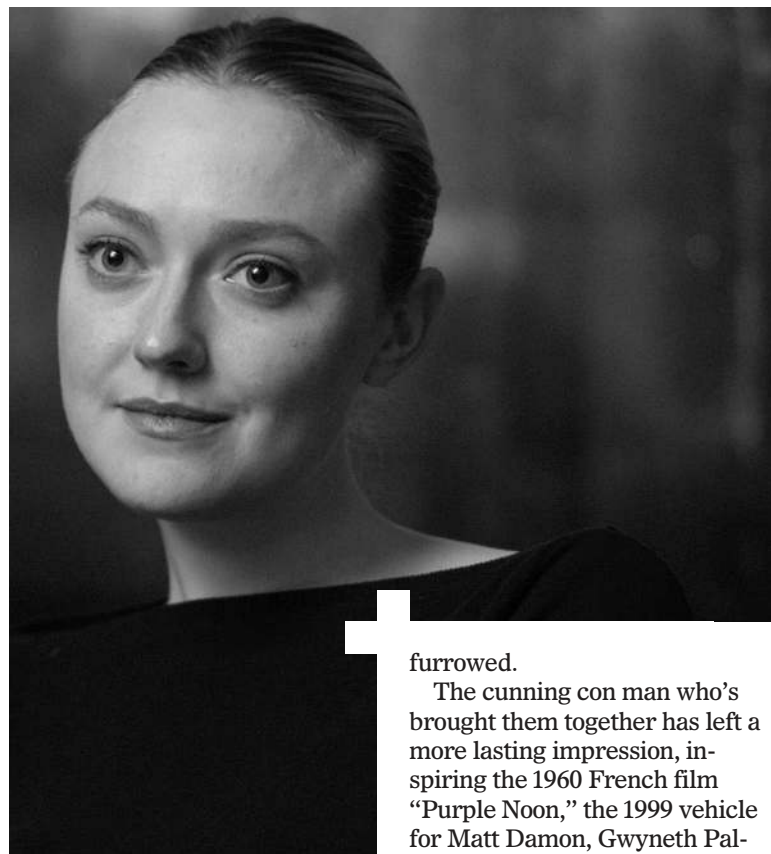
Andrew Scott as Tom Ripley, left, and Dakota Fanning as Marge Sherwood are pictured in scenes from the eight-part Netflix series "Ripley," based on Patricia Highsmith's 1955 novel "The Talented Mr. Ripley."

Andrew Scott and Dakota Fanning play 'frenemies' as a familiar American grifter goes to Italy to live his best life in the bloody Netflix series 'Ripley'

BY YVONNE VILLARREAL  
Los Angeles Times

**I**n early March, as the collective obsession it spawned was at its height, I had the chance to ask: Have Andrew Scott and Dakota Fanning seen the viral TikTok series "Who TF Did I Marry?"

The actors were seated in a sparsely decorated holding room at a Hollywood screening venue where their new series, "Ripley," was about to be pre-viewed. Nearly seven decades after Patricia Highsmith's novel "The Talented Mr. Ripley" first introduced the world to its titular grifter, Tom, the story of one of pop culture's most infamous pathological liars is now getting an eight-episode treatment on Netflix. And the 50-part social media saga by Reesa Teesa (real name Tareasa Johnson) about a walking red flag — an ex-husband who allegedly made up family members, faked phone conversations and, in their search for a home, duped her with fake bank statements that turned out to be screenshots from Google Images — was further proof that stories of scammers and fraudsters never go out of style.



furrowed.

The cunning con man who's brought them together has left a more lasting impression, inspiring the 1960 French film "Purple Noon," the 1999 vehicle for Matt Damon, Gwyneth Paltrow and Jude Law, and now "Ripley."

Developed for television by Steven Zaillian ("The Night Of"), the series was set up at Showtime before moving to Netflix, with production spanning from summer 2021 to spring 2022. The lavish thriller, which is shot in black and white, stars Scott as the eponymous scam artist; Johnny Flynn ("Emma") as Dickie Greenleaf, the wayward heir to a wealthy Manhattan dynasty with whom Ripley becomes obsessed; and Fanning as Marge Sherwood, Dickie's girlfriend, who is suspicious of the new man in town.

The dark, subversive antihero saga begins as Tom is enlisted by Dickie's father, who mistakenly assumes Tom is a friend of his son, to venture to Italy to cajole him into returning home. Tom becomes infatuated with Dickie and his lifestyle, then kills him to avoid being deserted — and the cover-up spirals from there. It's an apt parable for the social media age, in which the carefully crafted image can be seductive to a damaging degree. Zaillian didn't embark on the adaptation with that in mind.

"It had nothing to do with now," Zaillian said by telephone. "The big draw for me was to spend more time with this particular character. ... I think there's a lot of things about him that are like all of us. He has aspirations, he has envy, pride — he might have more than we have, or he's just willing to go further to get it. I think one of the reasons that he's endured as a character so well over all these years, is because we do relate to him."

While Dickie is the person Tom becomes fascinated by, the



PHOTOS BY TAYLOR JEWELL, INVISION/AP

Scott and Fanning pose for portraits to promote "Ripley" on March 26 in New York.

"Oh, my God, I know!" Fanning said, her eyes wide with excitement. "I wanted to watch that, but haven't. There are a lot of videos, right?"

"What is this?" Scott asked, curious to understand the enthusiasm.

"It's this woman who got scammed by her ex and made these videos where she is, like, filming in the bathroom or her car and telling the story," Fanning said.

"Oh, wow," Scott said, brows

SEE TENSION ON PAGE 31

## WEEKEND: TELEVISION

## Tension: 'Ripley' actors discuss dislike of feeling duped

## FROM PAGE 30

Tom/Marge dynamic brings the tension. "Their relationship changes," Zaillian said. "From the moment she meets him, Marge is suspicious of him. At a certain point, he appeals to her vanity. She starts to think, 'Well, maybe he is OK,' because, frankly, she's gonna get something out of it. And so it kind of goes back and forth. Her opinion on him constantly changes."

Scott, 47, and Fanning, 30, talked about their own experiences being duped, why we can't get enough of con artists, and climbing all the series' stairs.

**Los Angeles Times: What do you think it is about con artists that audiences stay fascinated by?**

**Scott:** We talk so much about backstory when we're talking about characters and I sometimes think that's just mythical, because when you've got backstory about somebody, you have power. When you don't, [the character has] all the power. It's more sinister.

**Fanning:** I think Tom Ripley is the original catfish. Also, what kind of separates it from other interpretations of con men, or whatever you want to call it, is you kind of get to see how he does it all, in pretty gripping detail. Sometimes some of those details are glossed over; in this, you're on that ride of how it's all done and I think that makes the particular character of Tom Ripley even scarier. Also, you start sympathizing with him.

**Scott:** And you see his mistakes.

**Fanning:** I should want him to get caught, but I don't.

**Scott:** I was always like, "I want to be able to feel what it's like to be him, not necessarily be a victim of his" ... "What would I do if I was him in these moments?"

**"The Talented Mr. Ripley" really asks the question, "Is it better to be a fake somebody than a real nobody?" And it grapples with the cost of buying into the life you're led to believe is ideal. What did you find interesting in exploring the complexity of those themes against the social media era we live in?**

**Scott:** It's about somebody who's literally not being seen by a lot of people. Really just lives in the undergrowth. What I find moving about it is that I think he's got a great appreciation for all the stuff that Dickie Greenleaf just takes for granted. He's really brilliant at what he does. Dickie and, to a certain extent Marge, are not great artists, but they have that totally at their disposal. There's a theme of who gets access to the arts, and who is able to go to these beautiful locations and educate [themselves]. Tom, as he's doing all these extraordinary things, is actually falling in love with Italy, painting and food and clothes and just the beauty of the world.

**As an actor, your goal is to make an audience believe that you're somebody else and you will go to your own lengths to do that. Did it give you insight into what's driving Tom or how far he'll take it?**

**Scott:** He's not a natural-born killer. He's not going over there with any of this in mind. He's trying to survive.

**Fanning:** Somebody approached him.

**Scott:** Exactly. Somebody approached him. He didn't do anything. Then he caught some feelings. Then that happened. All these extraordinary places he goes to aren't because he's going, "Oh, I always

wanted to go to Venice." He goes there because he has to.

**Maybe not to the extent of what we see in this series, but have you ever been duped?**

**Fanning:** The feeling that I hate the most is being tricked and duped — even in small ways when you feel like everyone else knows something that you don't know. I hate that. It's awful.

**Scott:** I will give you a specific example that happened to me last week. I arrived to Los Angeles. I was really jet-lagged, it was about 8 o'clock. I thought: OK, I'm going to go to the gym to keep me alive. And it's a well-known, good gym. Went to do my workout and put my stuff in the locker. When I finished and went to take a shower, I thought, I'm not gonna put my trainers into my locker; I'm only going to be in the shower for five minutes. I come out and someone had stolen my trainers! There's just one sock there. I was like, "What the f—?" You just feel so violated.

And I'm thinking, "I have to go home. My shoes are gone." So I had to wear these extraordinarily massive flip-flops from the spa. I still can't believe someone stole my trainers and one sock. But it is a really weird feeling to be stolen from.

I know you can be emotionally conned. I've experienced that before as well, with one of those bank fraud things. You do feel something has just been ripped from you. It's a horrible feeling.

**Tom is always paranoid about being watched. You both are public figures. Can you understand that paranoia?**

**Fanning:** It doesn't just have to do with being an actor or a celebrity anymore. I try and keep everything together. But there was one time that I was learning to drive and I was with my mom. We didn't have a destination; I was just practicing. And there was paparazzi following behind me every turn and watching me park. I finally got out of the car and I was like, "I am trying to learn to drive. I am not going anywhere. You're going to be going up and down this hill all day." He was very nice. One time, I was moving into my house and my garage and he — it happened to be the same man — was parked nearby and I was like, "Please don't film me moving my personal items into my house." But in general, I think now everybody worries about being surveilled in some way.

**Andrew, do you notice when it's happening to you? When someone has their phone positioned a certain way?**

**Scott:** Absolutely. And my real feeling about it is: just be better at it. Be better at disguising it! Not for anything to do with what my job is, just as a human being. It's the fact that you think I can't notice how obvious you are making it. Recently, I was

on the tube in London, it was this relatively empty tube, and this girl [mimics person pointing phone in his direction] and she very badly took a photo and the flash went off. And I turned and was like, "If you want a picture, please just ask me." And she was like, "I didn't take a picture of you." Somebody from down the car was like, "Mate, we saw it. You did. The flash went off." So then she got up and got off at the stop. The shame. She was Tom Ripley! She was just lying to my face.

**I want to talk more about the Marge-and-Tom dynamic. Unlike the 1999 adaptation, where Marge is more warm and welcoming to Tom and wants him to fit in, in the series, like in the novel, she's skeptical of him from the start. How did you map out the pacing of her wariness?**

**Fanning:** The interesting thing about the novel and the scripts is that they're written from Tom's perspective. The other characters have to fill in a lot of blanks. At

first, that felt overwhelming. But Steve's gift is his precision as a writer and as a director and the fact that he, whether it's what you want to hear or not, knows exactly what he's looking for and what he wants. I think my instinctual interpretation of Marge he was happy with, which was a relief to me. But we definitely played with it, like, "Let's do a take where she doesn't believe him" or "Let's do one where she isn't so skeptical." And then he would figure it out later — what Marge knew, what Marge didn't know. It was a little bit of a puzzle of keeping track of the timeline of her skepticism. But I was thrilled to play a character, a woman, that wasn't completely duped. I love that this Marge is quite skeptical

from the beginning, and we got to have fun with that.

**They're very much a mirror of each other.**

**Fanning:** And her background is also not a privileged background. The jealousy of her is, "You and I are alike, but you have it and I don't. And you don't deserve it still."

**Scott:** They see through each other. They're threatened by each other, and you dislike about other people what you see in yourself. But I really believe that Tom loves Marge. I think it's too easy to think: "Oh, he hates her." I think he finds her inconvenient because she, of all people, might mess it up for him. And Dickie is a little bit more trusting, or maybe just not as emotionally intelligent.

**Fanning:** They're frenemies.

**Sexuality in Patricia's novels is sort of up to interpretation sometimes; it's subtext. Andrew, what discussions did you have with Steven about how you wanted to approach that part of his identity?**

**"They see through each other. They're threatened by each other, and you dislike about other people what you see in yourself. But I really believe that Tom loves Marge."**

**Andrew Scott**

on the dynamic between the characters he and Dakota Fanning play in the Netflix series "Ripley"

**Scott:** I suppose it was something that I thought about a lot myself; it was very important to me to not label him too much. I did have some brief conversations with Steve about that. ... We're very concerned with labeling in 2024. I feel like he's a character with a lot of secrets. And talking around it too much, I feel I've got to protect that character. I think you have to dramatize asking the questions rather than drowning the character in giving the easy answer to appease certain people's ideas. To my mind, he's a character who is Other. I feel like he wouldn't be comfortable in a gay bar; I feel like he wouldn't be comfortable in a straight bar.

Sometimes I think his sexuality or sensuality comes out of his relationship with things — art, clothes, props, music. I love the fact that we don't know. I think there's a lot of people who can relate to that. I enjoy the idea of pushing that — for him to be flirtatious with a man; for him to be flirtatious with a woman — and not diagnose him too much and not to impose too much of a sexuality. And I applied that to everything about him, not just his sexuality. He's the hero, but he's an unreliable hero.

**In the book, the three characters are very clearly telegraphed as being in their early to mid-20s, fresh out of college. How does a version of these characters who are somewhat closer to your age change your understanding of their behavior?**

**Fanning:** I didn't think about it. I feel like everyone is almost ageless in it. Obviously with Marge, you can tell she's somebody who is kind of bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and finds herself in this place and hasn't had a lot of experience. She's not a world traveler. This could be her first time out of the country. If I was thinking about age, I was thinking this is all still kind of new for her.

**Scott:** It was a concern because, obviously, in the book, he's younger than I am... But that's not what [Highsmith] concerns herself with too much. Again, the sort of slipperiness of watching their behaviors and not caught up with: "What's the age difference here?" We're not playing something like the evolution of teenagers. That's not what the theme of it is and, so, it isn't really something that we thought about.

**Fanning:** Steve didn't care, so we didn't care.

**Andrew, talk to me about the stairs. You had to endure a lot of stairs in the series.**

**Fanning:** Oh, God.

**Scott:** There was a lot of stairs. We got a lot of coverage ... of a lot of stairs.

**I can't tell by the tone if he's really upset by the memory.**

**Fanning:** [laughs] No, he's not upset. It's just the truth.

**Scott:** [laughs] It's just the truth. That's the thing — it's very evocative because when you go [to Italy], you're going up lots of stairs. There's no choice. To see what it's like for a person from New York, who's experiencing this for the first time and has no money, and he's making mistakes, he can't speak the language. But yes, there's a lot of those stair scenes where he's got up and life is just tough. Steve isn't a one-and-done guy, so we certainly had a lot of takes with the stairs.

## WEEKEND: HEALTH &amp; FITNESS

# Working out walking pads

Are the smaller, lighter cousins of the treadmill worth it or just a fitness fad?

BY TATUM HUNTER  
*The Washington Post*

**D**uring a regular day in the office, I last about five minutes at my desk. Then I get antsy and move to the table in the office kitchen. Then to the conference room. Then back to the kitchen.

For whatever reason, deskbound work is a challenge for me. At home, I rotate from the couch to the floor to the roof of my apartment, stopping at intervals to pick at my cuticles and wonder why I can't sit still like a normal person. If only there were some type of human-size hamster wheel I could install in the living room, I remarked grimly to my husband after another day nail-biting and leg bouncing. Then in October, I opened TikTok and saw a woman on a walking pad.

In fitness corners of TikTok, the “walking pad” — the treadmill's smaller, lighter cousin — reigns supreme. One TikToker starts her day at 5 a.m., watching “Keeping Up with the Kardashians” from her walking pad. Another pledged to walk a half marathon during the workday. Internet searches for “walking desk” and “walking pad” spiked this year, as people on TikTok promoted the tiny treadmills. I bought one expecting some cautionary tale about the dangers of self-optimization and productivity culture — then the thing remade my entire professional life. Suddenly, I could work in the same spot for hours with minimal damage to my cuticles and self-esteem.

It's not just me: Early research suggests walking pads may help with mood and stress in the workplace, and some people credit their walking pads with improvements to their health, productivity or happiness.

But the walking pad's position in a long series of social media wellness trends deserves a raised eyebrow. Social media creators promote an endless stream of wellness products that are supposed to make us happier or skinnier. Plenty of walking pads will gather dust next to our vibration pads and gua sha sets. Plenty more will remain under our desks, pressuring us to overexert or joylessly count steps.

Walking pads aren't for everyone, but with some reflection, you can dodge the downsides and reap the benefits. Here's everything you need to know before diving in:

## Why use a walking pad?

Burgeoning interest in portable treadmills is a testament to TikTok's power in influencing consumer trends, said Forrester vice president and principal analyst Dipanjan Chatterjee.

“We've seen the nature of product and brand discovery



shift over the years, from Google searching to Amazon browsing to TikTok scrolling,” Chatterjee said.

Videos promoting walking pads show people enjoying fitness on their own schedules — which might mean during the workday or a reality TV marathon. Many of us became more sedentary during the pandemic, and walking pads look like an easy way to get back on our feet.

Prolonged sitting has been linked to early mortality, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, depression and anxiety, and even exhaustion and job dissatisfaction. Interrupting sedentary sessions with spurts of activity, meanwhile, has been shown to improve these measures of health.

To get those benefits, we need the time and space to move. In 2020, researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, asked students and faculty members why they were sedentary much of the day. Participants cited “environmental constraints” and “social acceptability.” (In other words, doing jumping jacks in the library or cafeteria is embarrassing.)

Enter the walking pad, which lets you move around without stopping your task or changing locations.

Psychologists have long theorized that before we can pay attention, we need some arousal or stimulation. Too little arousal, and we're distracted. Too much, and we're overwhelmed.

That process works the same for everyone, but the amount of stimulation we need to focus varies. It's why some people need background noise to focus, while others prefer silence.

For some of us, walking while working will be a helpful source of stimulation. For others, juggling both tasks will feel impossible. If you're hoping a walking desk would help you stay energized at work, make sure to test that theory before you buy. Visit a friend with a walking pad or bring your laptop to the gym. Can you work and walk at the same time?

Generally, walking pad sessions are good for simple or repetitive tasks, said productivity researcher Lucas Miller, who teaches at the University of California, Berkeley. Catching up on your email? Yes. Drafting an important presentation? Less so. The more weighty or important your brain perceives a task to be, the harder it gets to deal with the extra stimulation, Miller said.

Carver Bain, a 26-year-old writer in San Diego, said he struggles to stay focused, especially while he reads. He started wanting a walking pad after attending an event where author Ann Patchett said she wrote the entirety of her novel “Tom Lake” on a treadmill. (A representative for Patchett confirmed the detail.)

Bain decided to test Patchett's strategy: He brought his book outside and walked around the neighborhood while

he read — being extra careful before crossing the street, he noted.

The hack worked, Bain said, and now he's considering a walking pad more seriously: “When my body is occupied doing something, I'm not thinking, ‘What's on my phone?’”

Making exercise easier and more accessible is a smart way to boost our activity levels, said Michelle Segar, a researcher at University of Michigan and author of “The Joy Choice: How to Finally Achieve Lasting Changes in Eating and Exercise.” For decades, the fitness industry has pushed the long-term health benefits of exercise, but that hasn't motivated many Americans to participate, Segar said. Perhaps there's a better, more immediate approach.

“Look at it like a wine tasting,” she said. “We experiment, we savor, we use self-awareness to say, ‘How does this taste? How does this feel? Do I like it?’”

Future-oriented goals such as weight loss — or matching the routine of a TikTok fitness influencer — are liable to kill any joy you might get from the walking pad, Segar said. Instead, let yourself notice how your time on the pad makes you feel. Maybe you feel slightly less achy or a little bit proud of yourself. Those observations make you more likely to come back for more, Segar said.

If that fails, you can always engineer some joy with mood lighting, a big or little screen, your favorite beverage and some music. One TikTok user calls that “cozy cardio,” complete with a pumpkin sugar candle.

## Will I look unprofessional?

Let's be clear: Your boss and colleagues have nothing to lose by supporting the accommodations that help you do your best work.

That said, the corporate world can be slow to change, and most people are unaccustomed to seeing a bobbing head on the Zoom grid. Talk to your team ahead of time and let them know why the walking desk is beneficial to your work. Maybe you'll decide to save the pad for your off-camera hours — or double down and become the resident Walking Pad Guy.

## Which walking pad should I buy?

In this case, don't worry about fancy brands. I got mine on Amazon for \$195 after browsing the reviews on three models. Check that the item's dimensions will fit its intended space, then glance at the speed and weight limits.

Like BowFlex, ThighMaster and Peloton before it, the walking pad may be a fitness fad. But if you, like me, find it easier to get things done when you're moving, there's nothing quite like a portable hamster wheel.



## WEEKEND: FAMILY



# Preparing to go potty

Experts offer 5 tips for parents teaching their kids how to use the bathroom

BY KATE SEQUEIRA  
Los Angeles Times

**P**otty training isn't easy, and it can vary a lot from child to child. The Times spoke with experts about how parents can best navigate this chapter, how they can prepare their child for a new level of independence and how they can tell that it's actually time to start.

Here are five takeaways from a discussion among Jenny Gold, LA Times early childhood reporter; Heather Anderson, administrator of the Mamahood Facebook group; Whitney Casares, Modern Mommy Doc founder and pediatrician; and Quiara Smith, CEO of Aloha Integrative Therapy and occupational therapist. They spoke to the Mamahood Facebook group.

**Let your child's development dictate when you begin to potty train:** Children will generally be ready to potty train between 2 and 3 years old, but there are also individual developmental factors that come into play. You should make sure your child is able to physically sit on the toilet, has the desire to go to the bathroom and can communicate with you that they need to go, Casares said.

A child needs to understand what it feels like when their bladder is full, Smith added. They need to be able to link that feeling to control over the necessary muscles, which is dependent on their development.

It's important to choose potty-training methods that suit your child's needs. Casares recommends starting with the three-day method, which recommends parents commit to leaving their child naked from the waist down for three days, while having them drink lots of liquids and encouraging them to use the bathroom every 15 minutes. It's meant to teach kids to grow more in tune with their body's cues. From there, adapt to your child's needs as you see fit, she said.

Choose a time to potty train when you can be present with your child and can observe whether they are resisting your chosen method, so that you can adapt, Casares said. You might find success by introducing a rewards chart, for example.

You'll want to demonstrate flexibility, patience and understanding.

**You can encourage your child to learn even when they aren't quite ready to start:** You can help grow interest in potty training concepts early on through play, books and songs. Some kids might show curiosity before they're ready to start. It's OK to indulge them and bring out a kid's potty, Casares said, but don't start the training until they have the skills to do it.

Help them learn about their bodies in a playful manner. Draw pictures of the body with them. Explain what it is and why it's happening. It's important to remember that your child is absorbing all the information and looking for you to guide them, she added.

Establish a fiber-rich diet early on so that your child can develop bowel regularity. Feed them leafy greens as well as fruits and vegetables. And make sure they're staying hydrated as well so that the fiber can take effect. It'll help them avoid problems with pooping and constipation when they start potty training.

**Find ways to make public bathrooms more comfortable both at school and beyond:** Public bathrooms can be intimidating. Loud noises, bright lights and funny smells can make your child nervous, especially if they deal with sensory processing issues.

Smith recommended creating a sensory bag for your child that can include items like sunglasses if your child is sensitive to the bathroom's bright lights, noise-canceling headphones if they're scared of the flush and smelly hand sanitizer that they can spray to mask the bathroom smell. If your child is scared of automatic flushing, you can also cover the automatic flush sensors with a sticky note, Smith said.

If your child deals with anxiety or sensory issues, Casares recommends teaching your child to make a "nest" out of toilet paper to cover the toilet seat. As they transition to using a bathroom outside of their home, it might bring your child comfort to have a similar surface to sit on no matter where they go.

**Help your child understand concepts involved with going to the bathroom:** Teach them to wipe surfaces around the house to get them to understand that the point of wiping is to clean. Then transition to on-body wiping. You can put soap on their arm in the bath and have them wipe it off, Smith suggested. Once they start wiping themselves, help them learn the movement by wiping with your hand over theirs. These practices will help them develop the fine motor control they need to do it on their own, Smith said.

**Potty training can take time. Assess what's working and what isn't:** Don't sweat it if your child has mastered some aspects of potty training but is struggling with others. Some days might feel less productive, and that's normal.

If your child is scared to potty train, talk to them about why. Validate their feelings and let their answers help you problem-solve.

Understand what factors might be affecting their progress. If your child is successfully peeing in the potty, but is struggling to poop, lots of times it's because they've been dealing with constipation since infancy, Smith said. They might not trust the sensation and withhold it, in turn causing more constipation.

If you're worried that your child is still wetting the bed at night, know that it's normal for many kids who are simply not developmentally ready to prevent accidents at night. It's OK to still rely on pull-ups if you need to. Some kids may wet the bed until they reach puberty, Casares said.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



# Permanently waving goodbye to hair trend

I tend to wax poetic about the way it was in the '80s when ignorance was bliss, before modern advancements turned us all into anxious, over-informed, indulgent ingrates, dependent on 24/7 digital information and instant gratification.

But I have to admit, there are a few modern improvements that have made life better today. Way better.

"Are we doing a few foils to brighten your color up today?" my hair stylist asked recently, as I sat in her cozy chair frowning at my gray roots in the mirror.

"Definitely," I smiled, and sipped coffee from my mug.

I've been using the same hair stylist since our Navy family PCSed to Rhode Island in 2013. We've settled into a comfortable routine, getting cut and colored every seven weeks to hide my mousy grays and tame my natural frizz.

My salon is a bastion of beauty and relaxation, with contemporary, organic decor, thriving greenery, pleasant scents of coconut and jasmine and soothing background music.

During my appointments, I chatter softly with my stylist about this and that, whilst my hair is delicately painted with enriching colorants, tenderly bathed in warm water and moisturizing conditioners, softly snipped, gently dried, expertly styled, then finished with a lightweight holding spritz.

I walk out of the salon feeling confident and refreshed, wishing I had somewhere to go other than the commissary.

Not so long ago, hairstyling was very, very different.

As a child, I recall my mother flitting around our brick ranch with her hair in pink plastic rollers, usually covered with a padded scarf. She'd have her rollers in all day, sometimes overnight, before her hair was set. Then, she'd enamel everything in place with an aerosol cloud of Aqua Net. Back then, it was common to see a woman in a grocery store, bank or gas station with her rollers in. It's what women endured just to curl their hair.

One year, my mother was gifted a square case containing a heavy-duty shower cap attached to the motorized case by a long hollow hose. She'd put rollers in, put the cap over her head, plug the case in and flip the switch. Hot air blew through the hose, inflating the cap.

Tethered to the case, my mother had at least an hour to smoke cigarettes, read the paper and watch an episode of "Laverne & Shirley" before her hair was dry.

Thankfully, in high school, I owned a curling iron. But the curling irons of the '80s were very hot and had small barrels. Hence, teenage girls like me showed up at school with elongated burns on their foreheads and bangs that looked like curved links of kielbasa.

When "permanent waves" became trendy, I decided to get one. All I had to do was sit in the beautician's chair for two hours while she painstakingly put a gazillion tiny hair rollers all over my head, then doused it with an acrid ammonia-based liquid. If I managed to survive the chemical fumes, I was guaranteed to have ringlets like Sarah Jessica Parker or Stevie Nicks. However, after sitting under the hair-drying hood, my perm was flat on top and poofed on the ends. To make matters much worse, I'd driven my moped to the salon without a helmet. It was the '80s, after all. By the time I arrived home, I looked like a blonde bride of Frankenstein.

In the late '90s, while stationed in rural England, I went to the village hair salon for "highlights." The hairdresser placed a thick, perforated rubber cap over my head, then used a crochet hook to pull tufts of my hair through, then proceeded to smear a harsh-smelling bleaching paste over the exposed strands. An hour later, I walked out of the establishment looking like I had a striped polecat on my head.

Despite all my griping about our modern life, I'm actually very grateful for the amazing advances in cosmetology. The cost of a day at the salon may have quadrupled, but it's the one place that money can buy happiness.

Read more at [themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com) and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: [meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com](mailto:meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com)

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

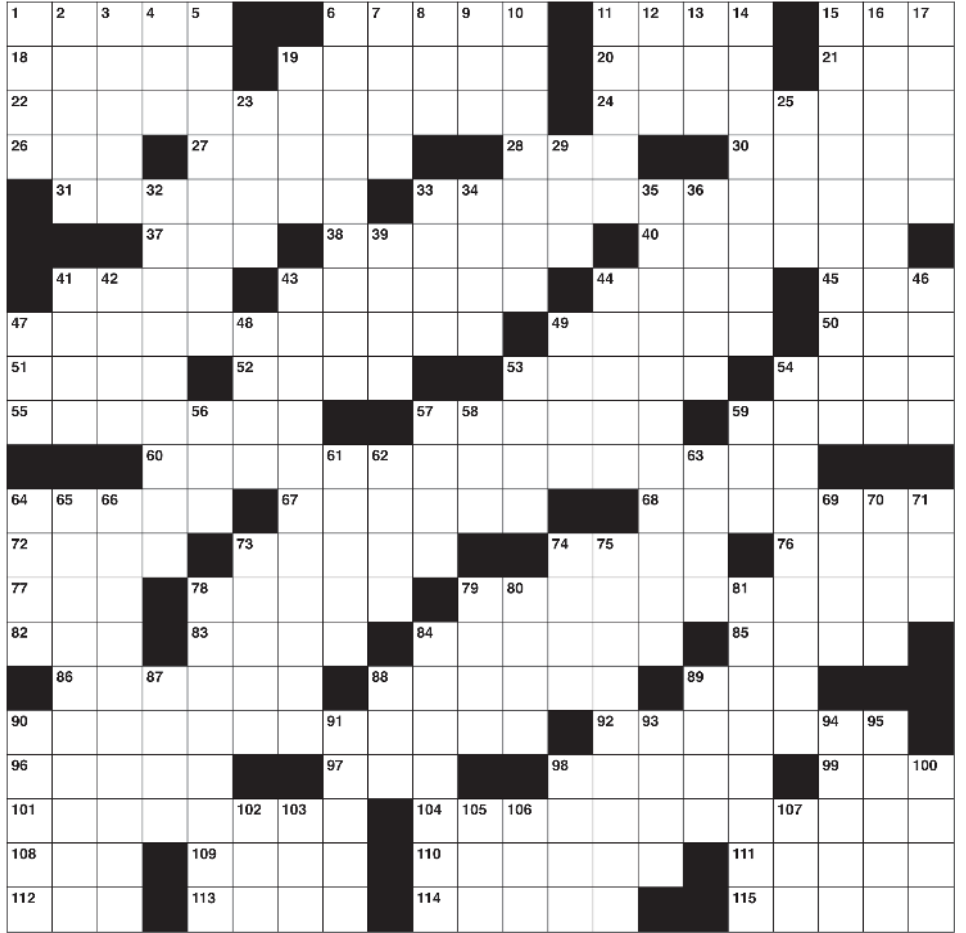
## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### URNS OF PHRASE

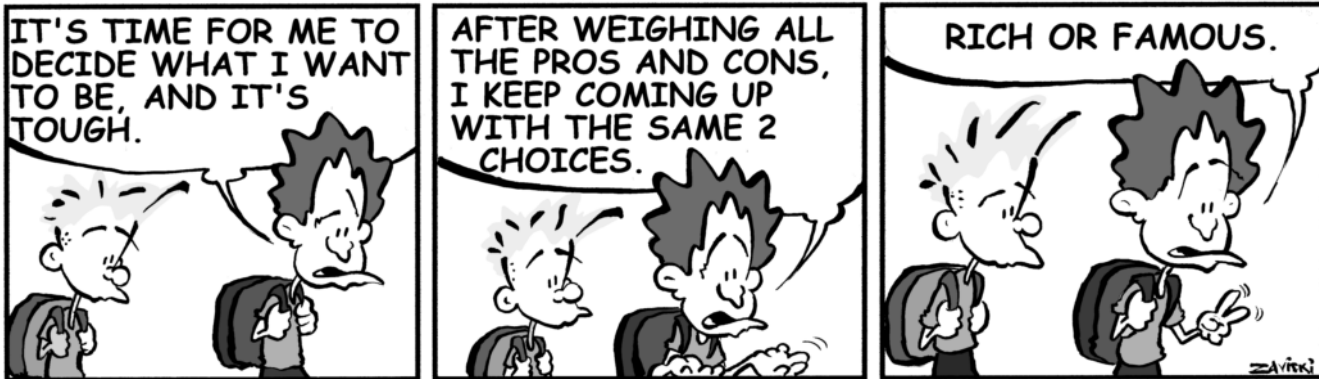
BY SPENCER LEACH / EDITED BY JOEL FAGLIANO

Spencer Leach is a third-year mechanical-engineering student at Virginia Tech. Their engineering background influences how they generate themes — for this puzzle, they used a custom bit of Python code to compare a list of homonyms against common phrases. Spencer is currently in the midst of a summer-internship search and hopes any would-be employers enjoy this puzzle!

- ACROSS**
- 1 "Let me repeat . . ."
  - 6 Musical speeds
  - 11 When repeated, a cry of approval
  - 15 Like many creatures in modern sci-fi movies, for short
  - 18 Light wood
  - 19 Cross figure
  - 20 New Jersey's Sea \_\_\_\_ City
  - 21 Spot for a shot
  - 22 Spook some creatures in an aquarium's touch tank?
  - 24 Fiery matches?
  - 26 Band with the 1994 hit "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?"
  - 27 Some vocal solos
  - 28 In the style of
  - 30 "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" playwright Edward
  - 31 Bad material for a silk purse, proverbially
  - 33 Deliver a blow to Dracula?
  - 37 With "the," a sudden flip from attraction to disgust, in modern parlance
  - 38 Brand whose stock price increased 50 percent in the first six months of 2020
  - 40 Blooms named for their shape
  - 41 Set of selections
  - 43 "You sure?"
  - 44 Before-
  - 45 No. calculated from letters
  - 47 References a Vatican Library source?
  - 49 Went down a slippery slope
  - 50 \_\_\_\_ Palmas, Canary Islands
  - 51 Kind of history
  - 52 About, on a memo
  - 53 Certain Ivy Leaguer
  - 54 Support
  - 55 "Forget it!"
  - 57 Welcomes at the door
  - 59 Tender spots
  - 60 Referees a Tennessee football game poorly?
  - 64 Common pet fish
  - 67 Superlative held by the Atacama Desert
  - 68 "Barry" or "Ballers"
  - 72 Stadium sounds
  - 73 Plain
  - 74 Cap's place
  - 76 It might be a stretch
  - 77 Suffix with Manhattan or meteor
  - 78 Fortitude
  - 79 Write an ode to a caffeinated soda?
  - 82 Airport abbr.
  - 83 Addresses online
  - 84 Sound unit found in many Asian languages
  - 85 Nip and tuck, so to speak
  - 86 Like some teas
  - 88 Kind of edition with bonus tracks, perhaps
  - 89 Stadium cheer
  - 90 Start preparing borscht?
  - 92 Fully commit
  - 96 Court cry
  - 97 Garnet is its birthstone: Abbr.
  - 98 Sculpting stuff
  - 99 Super \_\_\_\_ (GameCube predecessor)
  - 101 "Bather in the Woods" painter
  - 104 Make smash burgers?
  - 108 Pretty cool stuff
  - 109 Burn a little
  - 110 Decides that one will
  - 111 Major artery
  - 112 \_\_\_\_ cha beef (Chinese dish)
  - 113 Jumped over, as a checkers piece
  - 114 Michelangelo work whose name translates to "compassion"
  - 115 Suddenly think of
  - 10 Comment from someone exiting the mall on Black Friday
  - 11 Pedal-operated instrument
  - 12 That, in Toledo
  - 13 Umbrella term for eboys or goth girls
  - 14 Struck out
  - 15 Stealthy criminal
  - 16 City feature that's been found to improve mental health
  - 17 "None for me, thanks"
  - 19 Kind of seeds in a healthful smoothie
  - 23 Footslog
  - 25 Balm ingredient
  - 29 \_\_\_\_ Luthor, nemesis of Superman
  - 32 Vintage restaurant items?
  - 33 Spoil, with "on"
  - 34 Git
  - 35 "Just a little longer!"
  - 36 Lauder of cosmetics
  - 39 Do some light work on?
  - 41 Barcelona museum subject
  - 42 H's on some college houses
  - 43 "The Lorax" setting
  - 44 Actress Cravalho who voiced Moana
  - 46 Doesn't just assume
  - 47 Swindle
  - 48 Wedding-cake layer
  - 49 Survive
  - 53 Chuck, slangily
  - 54 Final phase of a video game, perhaps
  - 56 Big name in records
  - 57 [Actually, don't change that]
  - 58 Sounds of doubt
  - 59 \_\_\_\_-Caps (candy)
  - 61 Birds known for their loud, complex songs
  - 62 Royal title
  - 63 Assist in a crime
  - 64 Goey pairing with fig jam
  - 65 Economic-justice catchphrase
  - 66 Its water is nearly 10 times saltier than ocean water
  - 69 Animal product
  - 70 Foreboding sign
  - 71 "Impressive!"
  - 73 Who cries, "You get a car, you get a car!" in a viral meme
  - 74 Toy brand for a budding engineer, maybe
  - 75 "I don't like that," in Spanish
  - 78 Take away
  - 79 Police captain on "Brooklyn Nine-Nine"
  - 80 Burden
  - 81 Enthusiastic agreement
  - 84 Genre for many a boy band
  - 87 GPS suggestions: Abbr.
  - 88 Part of the D.O.J.
  - 89 It's a four-letter word, aptly
  - 90 Neighbors of the Navajos
  - 91 One-named singer born in Reykjavik
  - 93 What Ove's name was changed to for the American film adaptation of "A Man Called Ove"
  - 94 Like neon
  - 95 "Groovy!"
  - 98 Sibillant summons
  - 100 "South Park" boy
  - 102 Density symbol, in engineering
  - 103 1990s Indian prime minister
  - 105 Sch. in N.Y.
  - 106 Quebec's Festival d'\_\_\_\_
  - 107 "You're accusing me?!"



## GUNSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and online at gunstonstreet.com.

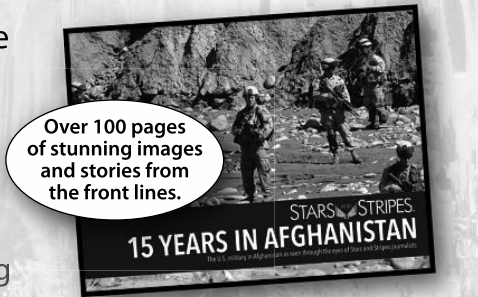
## RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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## FACES

# Something 'Wicked,' 'Blair Witch' coming

Musical's stars rave to CinemaCon about 'dreamy' experience; 'Twisters' on the way

By LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

With the dust settled from a big 2023, winning best picture and topping the box office, Universal Pictures is looking to the future. The studio's upcoming releases include the big screen adaptation of "Wicked," "Twisters" and the newly announced sequel to "Five Nights at Freddy's."

Universal brought some of the stars of its biggest films, like Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Michelle Yeoh, Jeff Goldblum, Glen Powell, Lupita Nyong'o, Daisy Edgar Jones and Anthony Ramos to CinemaCon in Las Vegas on Wednesday to get the audience of theater owners and exhibitors excited for what's to come as well.

"This whole experience is absolutely impossible to put into words," said Grande, who with Erivo introduced some new footage from the Thanksgiving release.

Goldblum was also on hand to talk about "Wicked," in which he plays the man behind the curtain.

"I've been chased by dinosaurs, I flew into the belly of a humongous spaceship ... I turned into a fly," Goldblum said. "But I have never been part of the particular flavor or magic that is this movie. ... The whole experience has been dreamy."

The first part of "Wicked" arrives in theaters on Nov. 25, with part two coming in 2025, also over Thanksgiving. Directed by Jon M. Chu, the film stars Erivo as the green-skinned Elphaba and Grande as the popular Glinda. Yeoh plays the headmistress at their school, and the studio recently announced, Peter Dinklage will be Dr. Dillamond, a history professor and goat.

Producer Marc Platt has been on the "Wicked" journey for 25 years, since he first read the novel. "I always intended 'Wicked' to be a movie," he said.

"Twisters" star Powell introduced intense new footage from the film, which is storming theaters July 19. The companion to the 1996 Jan de Bont blockbuster "Twister" was directed by "Minari" filmmaker Lee Isaac Chung and produced by Frank Marshall and Steven Spielberg, who Chung said is a "tornado fanatic."

"We really tried to make this film as immersive and real as possible," Chung said. "This is meant to be a joyful, fun ride."

Universal was the top grossing studio in 2023 thanks to the likes of



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

**Ariana Grande, left, and Cynthia Erivo discuss "Wicked" onstage during the Universal Pictures and Focus Features presentation Wednesday at CinemaCon 2024 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.**

juggernauts like "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" and "Oppenheimer," which accounted for more than \$2.3 billion in ticket sales alone, and other hits like "M3GAN," "Cocaine Bear," "Fast X" and "Five Nights at Freddy's," the video game adaptation that made more than \$295 million worldwide despite its day-and-date release. All told, Universal made nearly \$5 billion in ticket sales. It's the first time that Universal topped the charts since 2015, before Disney dominated in first place for almost a decade.

"Audiences are sending us a very clear message: They've fired off a bright green flare telling us they're ready for something new," said Jim Orr, Universal's head of distribution.

Also, he added, "We released more movies in theaters than any other studios."

Universal plans to release more than 20 films theatrically in 2024, too, more than any other studio for

the third year in a row, spanning all genres and including original titles and franchises.

Chris Meledandri, the founder and CEO of Illumination, spoke about the upcoming "Despicable Me 4" (July 3) and a new Mario movie that's in development for 2026, but also said that their "commitment to producing original animated films remains steadfast."

Their original "Migration," released in late 2023, became a slow-burn hit earning nearly \$300 million globally.

Universal also has DreamWorks Animation offerings, which has "The Wild Robot" set for September, based on the children's book by Peter Brown and featuring Lupita Nyong'o's voice.

Horror films are also a key component of the mix as one of the most consistent box office genres in recent history.

Coming up, the studio has "Wolf Man," with Julia Garner and Christopher Abbott, coming in January; "Speak No Evil," a remake of a Danish horror with James McAvoy set for Sept. 13 (a Friday); and then "Five Nights at Freddy's 2" in the fall of 2025.

Lionsgate, Blumhouse developing version of 1999 horror hit; 'Monopoly' in the works

By LINDSEY BAHR  
Associated Press

Margot Robbie has her sights on another toy. The "Barbie" producer and star is making a Monopoly movie, with Hasbro and Lionsgate behind it, the companies announced Wednesday at the CinemaCon conference in Las Vegas.

Robbie, and her production company LuckyChap, were the ones who got "Barbie" to the finish line after many years in development stagnation. The film topped the box office in 2023 with more than \$1.4 billion in ticket sales worldwide. And now they'll bring that vision to the classic board game.

Lionsgate is also developing a new version of "The Blair Witch Project" with the horror experts at Blumhouse, the studio behind "The Purge" and "M3GAN." It will be the first in a multi-year pact between Jason Blum's company and Lionsgate, drawing on the studio's library titles.

The first "Blair Witch" was released in 1999 and became a phenomenon at the box office. It earned \$248 million, spawned two sequels and changed the look of many horror movies to follow.

"I'm a huge admirer of 'The Blair Witch Project,' which brought the idea of found footage horror to mainstream audiences and became a true cultural phenomenon," Blum said in a statement. "I don't think there would have been a 'Paranormal Activity' had there not first been a 'Blair Witch,' so this feels like a truly special opportunity and I'm excited to see where it leads."

Lionsgate had a good 2023, with films like "John Wick 4," "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes" and "Saw X" and is optimistic about its upcoming theatrical releases, including the long-delayed "Borderlands," Eli Roth's adaptation of the popular video game series, set for an August theatrical release.

Starring Kevin Hart, Cate Blanchett, Jamie Lee Curtis and Ariana Greenblatt, "Borderlands" was first announced in 2015 and wrapped shooting in 2021 but has faced behind-the-scenes issues and delays. But both Roth and Greenblatt were overwhelmingly positive about the experience.

"We had the time of our lives making it, and I think that audiences are going to love it," Roth said. "It was this crazy, fun, weird,

dysfunctional functional family."

The company also has a new version of "The Crow," directed by Rupert Sanders and starring Bill Skarsgård and FKA twigs, which will hit theaters on Aug. 23.

Brandon Lee starred in the original film, based on the comic book series and released in 1994. Lee died during its filming after being shot with a prop gun that contained a makeshift bullet instead of blanks. The director of that film, Alex Proyas, has been critical of the idea of remaking it.

Henry Cavill took the stage to talk about a new "Highlander" movie he's making with "John Wick" director Chad Stahelski, and a new Guy Ritchie action pic with Jake Gyllenhaal, "In the Grey," set for release in 2025.

Aziz Ansari gave exhibitors a look at his new film "Good Fortune," which he wrote, directed and stars in alongside Keanu Reeves, who plays an angel, and Seth Rogen.

"Good Fortune" is about a guy who is down on his luck who switches lives with a more successful man, and learns the wrong lesson that money did solve all his problems. It does not yet have a release date.

Fogelson closed the presentation with a look at Antoine Fuqua's Michael Jackson biopic "Michael." Producer Graham King, whose credits include "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "The Departed," took the stage to talk about the movie, which is currently filming.

King said it was "an inside look into the most prolific artist that ever lived" and promised the movie will "get into all of it" including his public and private life. The movie will include 30 of Jackson's songs and re-creations of performances.

Jaafar Jackson (Michael's nephew) stars in "Michael," set for April 2025.

Other upcoming Lionsgate films include Ritchie's "The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare," out next week; the Renny Harlin horror film "The Strangers: Chapter 1," in May; the Halle Berry thriller "Never Let Go" in September; and "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" in November.

The studio is also in production on Mel Gibson's Mark Wahlberg-starring action movie "Flight Risk" and finishing the John Wick spinoff "Ballerina," starring Ana de Armas, which will be out next year.



Robbie



Cavill



Powell

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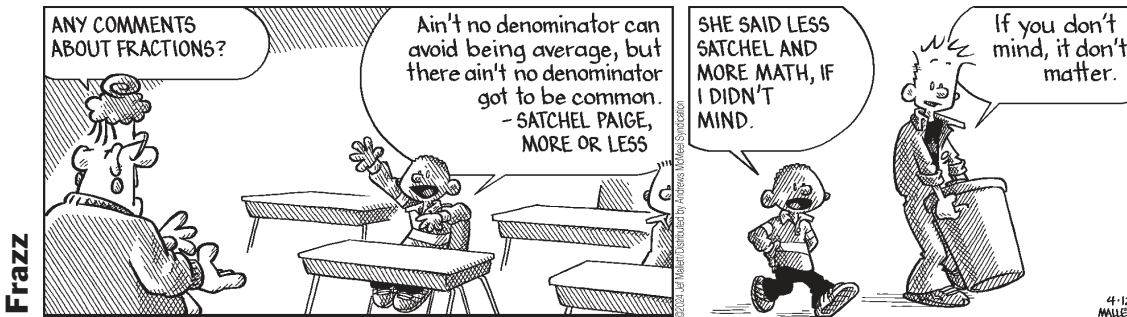
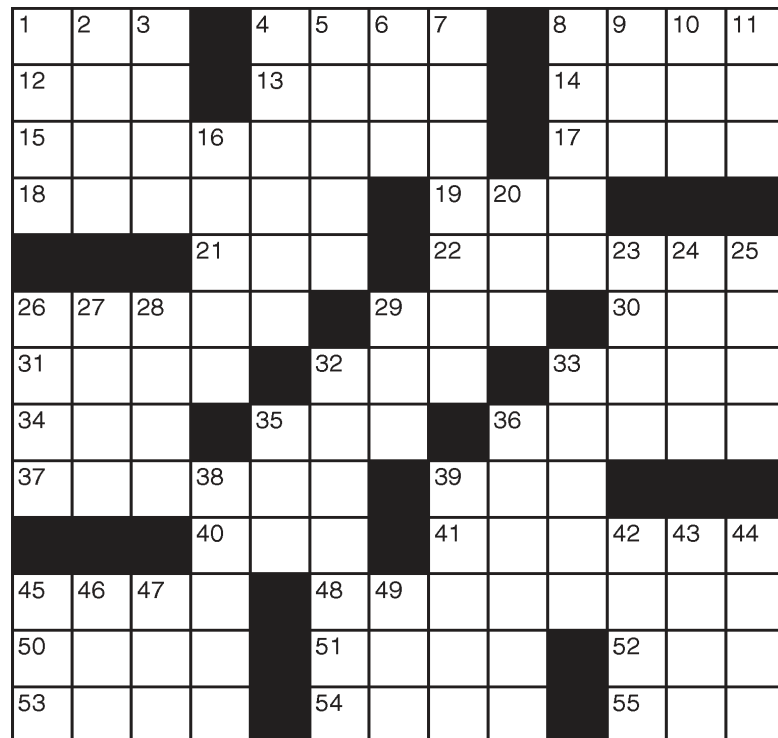
Bizarro



Loose Parts



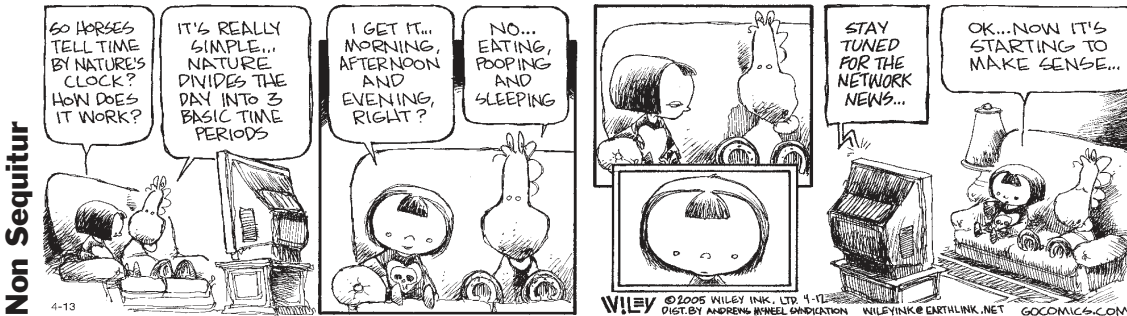
Eugene Sheffer Crossword



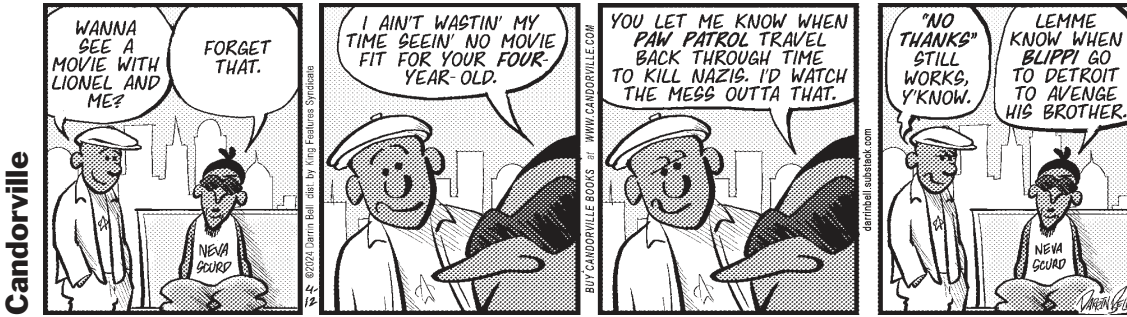
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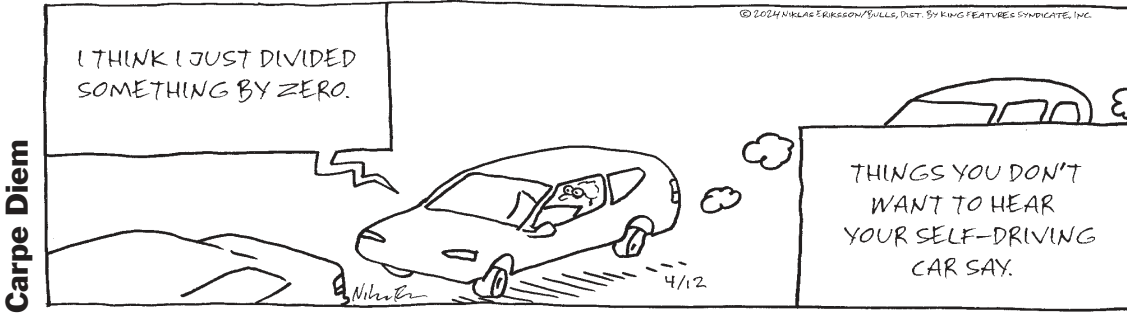
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey

ACROSS

- 1 Knock
- 4 Pile
- 8 Blacken on a grill
- 12 Outback bird
- 13 Killer whale
- 14 Uncivil
- 15 Reprieve authority
- 17 Rice-shaped pasta
- 18 Long step
- 19 AAA job
- 21 DDE's opponent
- 22 Topical antiseptic
- 26 Car in a Beach Boys song
- 29 Irritate
- 30 Estuary
- 31 Friend
- 32 Math ratios
- 33 Apple computers
- 34 "Crooklyn" director Spike

DOWN

- 3 On deck
- 4 Three- — sloth
- 5 Snake's warning
- 8 Blacken on a grill
- 12 Outback bird
- 13 Killer whale
- 14 Uncivil
- 15 Reprieve authority
- 17 Rice-shaped pasta
- 18 Long step
- 19 AAA job
- 21 DDE's opponent
- 22 Topical antiseptic
- 26 Car in a Beach Boys song
- 29 Irritate
- 30 Estuary
- 31 Friend
- 32 Math ratios
- 33 Apple computers
- 34 "Crooklyn" director Spike

Answer to Previous Puzzle



- 35 Gridlock
- 36 "Olympia" artist
- 37 Arrow on a screen
- 39 Pouch
- 40 CEO's deg.
- 41 Noah's landfall
- 45 Crimson Tide, briefly
- 48 Thoroughfares
- 50 Say it's so
- 51 Rim
- 52 "Uh-huh"

4-12

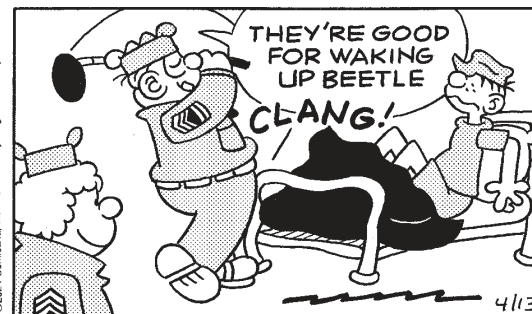
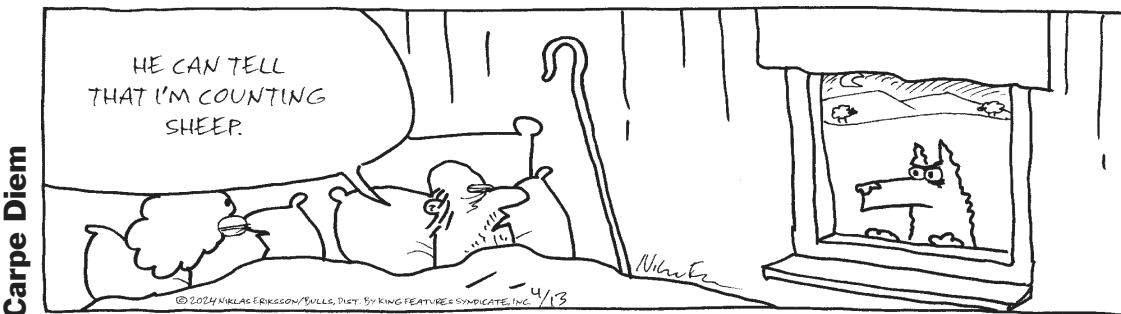
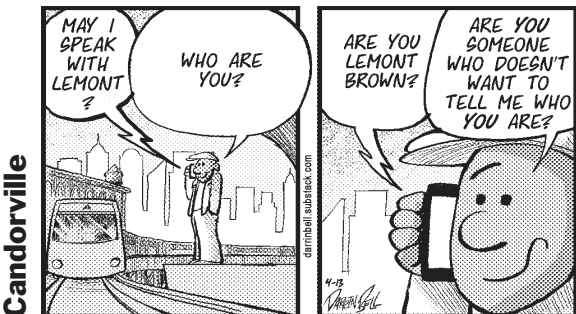
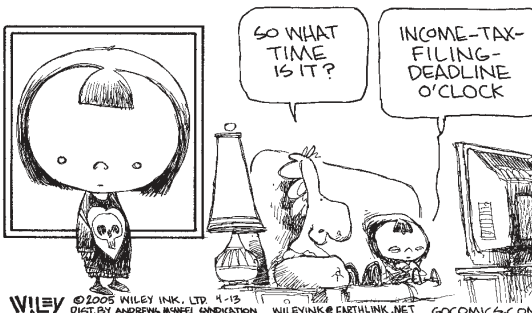
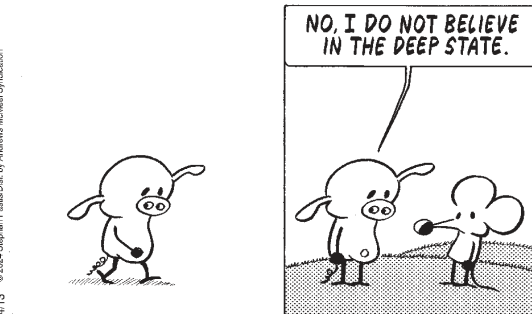
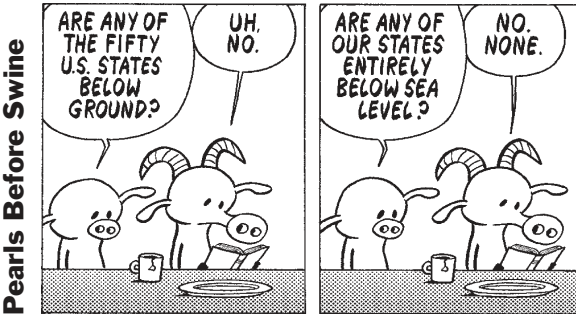
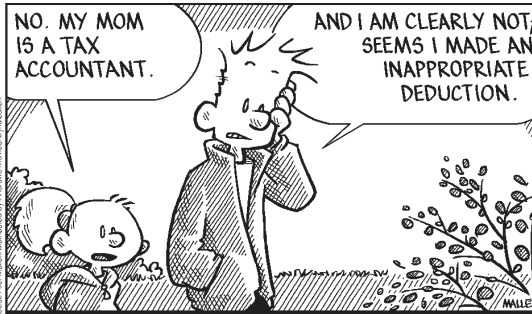
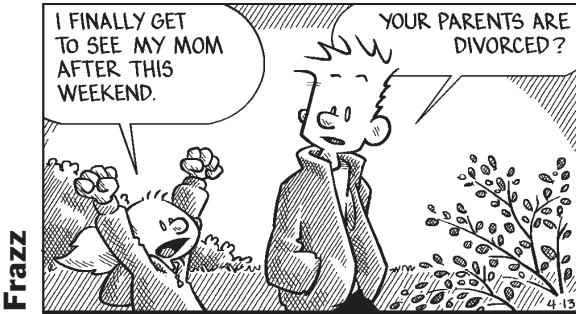
CRYPTOQUIP

Q I W D X G M C C W K Z B K  
 O I V P O B V D - O B D B P X A O D B C I X E ,  
 C Q B E W D D H Z M H E E V K Z , " A B K  
 Q X K B Q B M P Z P V H V G G V P X D ."  
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: CATCHY BEATLES TUNE THAT HAS BECOME AN ANTHEM FOR BREAD AFICIONADOS: "ALL YOU NEED IS LOAF."  
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals G

**Bizarro**



**Loose Parts**



**Eugene Sheffer Crossword**

	1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11
12							13					
14							15					
16					17	18				19		
			20	21			22	23				
24	25	26		27			28		29		30	31
32			33					34				
35					36					37		
		38		39		40			41			
42	43			44	45				46	47	48	49
50			51					52	53			
54								55				
56								57				

**ACROSS**

- 1 "Vamoosel!"
- 6 Convent authority
- 12 African desert
- 13 In a dreary way
- 14 Beer gut
- 15 Angular measure
- 16 "Mamma Mia" group
- 17 "I smell —!"
- 19 Reuben bread
- 20 Lawn mower brand
- 22 — Na Na
- 24 Catchall abbr.
- 27 Tibetan monk
- 29 Molecule part
- 32 Prudence
- 35 Deal (with)
- 36 Lotion ingredient
- 37 "Help!"
- 38 Dol. fractions
- 40 "Once — a time ..."
- 42 Italian article
- 44 "Meet Me — Louis"
- 46 Fascinated by
- 50 Become fond of
- 52 "Nothing for me, thanks"
- 54 Tarzan type
- 55 Available
- 56 G.I. Joe producer
- 57 Curt denial

**DOWN**

- 1 Swedish car
- 2 Great Lakes fish
- 3 Rushed toward
- 4 Curved line
- 5 Hindu royal
- 6 Taj Mahal city
- 7 Spoiled kids
- 8 Auction action
- 9 Arab states
- 10 Do in
- 11 "Auld Lang —"
- 12 Hot tub
- 18 Brother to Remus
- 21 Vintage
- 23 Glazed Easter entree
- 24 Computer key
- 25 Overly
- 26 Iced bakery treats

- 28 Animal shelter activity
- 30 Sean — Lennon
- 31 Peaks (Abbr.)
- 33 Safety precaution for an acrobat
- 34 Logical beginning?
- 39 "Norwegian Wood" instrument
- 41 Dark period
- 42 Hexagonal state
- 43 Valley in California
- 45 Forbidden act
- 47 Linguist Chomsky
- 48 Vocal quality
- 49 Quirky
- 51 Diplomat's res.
- 53 6 on a phone

**Answer to Previous Puzzle**

R	A	P		H	E	A	P			C	H	A	R					
E	M	U		O	R	C	A			R	U	D	E					
P	A	R	D	O	N	E	R			O	R	Z	O					
S	T	R	I	D	E					T	O	W						
				A	E	S				I	O	D	I	N	E			
T	B	I	R	D			V	E	X			R	I	A				
A	L	L	Y			P	I	S			M	A	C	S				
L	E	E				J	A	M			M	A	N	E	T			
C	U	R	S	O	R					S	A	C						
						M	B	A			A	R	A	R	A	T		
B	A	M	A							P	A	R	K	W	A	Y	S	
A	V	E	R							E	D	G	E			Y	E	P
N	E	X	T							T	O	E	D			S	S	S

**4-13**

**CRYPTOQUIP**

NB MUTMSU WIU YNKAWQUD  
WXTVA JGWA NK EITJNDE TD  
AIUU AIVDQK, AGUIU ZTVSC  
XU YTKK ZTDBVKNTD.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHILE PUTTING ON CHARCOAL-COLORED CLOTHES, TWO SILLY GUYS SANG, "DON WE NOW OUR GRAY APPAREL."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: M equals P

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## OPINION

## Abortion fight becomes split-the-difference agreement

BY GEORGE F. WILL

The Washington Post

Although many participants in it do not recognize this, and some who do recognize it regret it, the intensity of the debate about abortion policy is waning. This is partly because in 2022 the Supreme Court temporarily intensified the debate. And partly because the debate has been modulated by medical technology that has given the abstract debate the concreteness of visual vividness.

The Supreme Court's initially divisive decision overturning its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling has catalyzed a consensus, albeit nationally uneven and slowly emerging. The consensus is as blurry as the improved sonogram images that perhaps are helping to catalyze it are sharp: By 15 weeks, it is untenable to talk, as some abortion advocates do, about what is pictured by the sonogram as "fetal material." It looks like a baby.

Robert Nisbet, a philosophically sophisticated sociologist who provided intellectual ballast to conservatism in the second half of the 20th century, considered it incoherent for conservatives to make opposition to abortion a fundamental tenet of their doctrine. He said "the major theme of Western conservatism" is "the preservation, to the extent feasible, of the autonomy of social groups against the state." And particularly the preservation of "the family's authority over its own."

Abortion has been considered an intractably divisive issue because it supposedly was not amenable to the basic business of politics: the splitting of differences. Nisbet noted, however, that "there is no record of any religion, including Christianity, ever pronounc-

ing an accidental miscarriage as a death to be commemorated in prayer and ritual." This, Nisbet implied, indicates an ancient, durable and widespread cultural tendency to say this: Societies that assert an interest in protecting life before birth are not required, by custom or a settled, articulated logic, to ban all deliberate terminations of pregnancies.

This month, the Supreme Court of the nation's third-most-populous state allowed the legislature's recently enacted six-week ban on abortion to go into effect next month. (Before this, Florida had a moderately permissive abortion law.) But the court also, and perhaps more importantly, approved a ballot initiative that this November might undo what the legislature has done: If the initiative garners 60% support (current polling shows more than 60% support), it would establish a state constitutional right to abortion up to the point of viability (currently understood as 23-24 weeks).

The Economist says that more than 1 million signatures (150,000 reportedly from registered Republicans) launched this referendum in the state whose 86,000 abortions in 2023 were one-twelfth of the nation's total. The Economist notes that Florida has been a destination for women from neighboring states with stricter abortion limits:

"Florida was one of the states that saw the greatest increase in abortions following the Dobbs ruling that overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The state's ban will cut off nearly all access to abortion in the South."

Until its recent deepening redness (Donald Trump carried it in 2016 and 2020 by 1.2 and 3.3 percentage points, respectively; Barack Obama carried it in 2008 and 2012 by 2.8

and 0.09 points, respectively), Florida was the largest swing state.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, who calls himself pro-life, has said he would sign legislation restricting abortion to the first 15 weeks. Another Republican governor, New Hampshire's pro-choice Chris Sununu, accepts his state's 24-week (viability) limit, and especially with each state working out its consensus. At six weeks, many pregnant women do not know their condition; recently, more than 90% of U.S. abortions have occurred within the first 15 weeks of gestation.

If most Republicans would reject a six-week threshold, and eschew an unconservative clamor for re-federalizing the subject with a national abortion ban, the taint of extremism would shift to Democrats. Many of them insist on a right to abortion until birth, when sonograms give a disturbing (one hopes) picture of what abortion would end, and why society can at this point reasonably assert an interest in protecting the visible infant's life.

Alexander Hamilton said that because the Supreme Court has neither the power of the purse nor of the sword, it is the government's "least dangerous" branch. Actually, the court today is the uniquely powerful branch because it lacks the power of the purse or sword, and must resort to persuasive public reasoning. Nowadays presidents and Congresses attempt this rarely, and only clumsily.

The debate the U.S. Supreme Court fueled two years ago is being ameliorative. North Dakota and South Carolina will continue to differ about abortion, but probably not forever as much they do now.

## Kill the zombies! Undead laws can come back to bite you.

BY KATE COHEN

Special to The Washington Post

Adultery is a crime in New York state, but no one pays much attention to the 1907 law that made it so. It is seldom enforced, and never since 2010 — perhaps not coincidentally the year that New York adopted no-fault divorce.

So why bother removing it from the penal code, as legislators are trying to do?

A bill repealing the law recently passed both state houses with bipartisan support, a few votes against ("I don't support adultery in any way," said Republican state Sen. James Tedisco of Saratoga) and some grumbling about wasting time in the middle of the budget process.

The bill's sponsor, Democratic Assemblyman Charles Lavine of Long Island, argued "any criminal law that penalizes intimate behavior between consenting adults does not deserve to be on the books." Agreed.

And also: These days you never know when a "dead" law could come back to bite you.

That's the terrifying scene that confronts us in Arizona this week, with the resurrection of an antiabortion law from 1864 — a near-total ban on the procedure, a potential penalty of 2 to 5 years imprisonment for doctors, enacted decades before Arizona was a state and more than 50 years before women had the right to vote.

There are laws — so-called zombies — that remain on the books though they've been found (or are assumed) to be unconstitutional or unenforceable, unless someone musters the political will to repeal them. Which is often never.

For instance, seven state constitutions bar atheists from holding public office, although the Supreme Court struck down those provisions in 1961's *Torcaso v. Watkins*. Roy Torcaso was a Maryland atheist whose refusal to declare a belief in God cost him a government appointment. He sued and won at the highest level. But because the state never changed its constitution, Maryland still technically discriminates.

The word "technically" surfaces often in reference to zombie laws — also "arcane," "relic" "antiquated" and "obsolete." These laws have been left for dead under the assumption, I suppose, that the future is a road that leads toward social progress.

Indeed, it's hard to imagine anyone actually trying to bar an atheist from office — or arrest someone for adultery in any of the 16 states with anti-adultery statutes. After all, as Lavine said, "America is changing."

But, if *Dobbs v. Jackson* taught us anything, it's that America could change back.

The future might lead us backward, where the zombies can attack.

When *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, Wisconsin's 1849 abortion ban, some 50 years moribund, sprung back to life, shutting down Planned Parenthood's clinics for more than a year. Arizona's 1864 ban similarly wrought horror-movie havoc after *Dobbs*; no one knew whether it or a more recent, less restrictive ban took precedence. As the Arizona Supreme Court just decided: the zombie lives.

In his concurrence on *Dobbs v. Jackson*, Justice Clarence Thomas called for overruling the "demonstrably erroneous decisions" of *Griswold v. Connecticut*, *Lawrence v. Tex-*

as and *Obergefell v. Hodges* — the court cases that made contraception, homosexual sex, and same-sex marriage (respectively) legal all across the country, no matter what state laws said. Some states repealed the unconstitutional laws in question. But some let them lie dormant, with the potential to rise again. Today, *Lawrence v. Texas* holds back undead laws in 12 states where sodomy is still technically against the law. In 13 states, *Obergefell v. Hodges* is all that protects the right to same-sex marriage.

Meanwhile, right-wing activists are plotting to reanimate the 1873 Comstock Act, which criminalizes the mailing of abortifacients. The Comstock Act really is a relic, the legislative result of Victorian moral panic and an anti-vice crusader's revulsion at the "wickedness" he witnessed in New York City. But in last month's Supreme Court hearing on *FDA v. Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine*, which seeks to limit access to the abortion drug mifepristone, Justice Samuel Alito called the Comstock Act "a prominent provision . . . not some obscure subsection of a complicated obscure law." In other words, very undead.

Sen. Tina Smith, D-Minn., has vowed to repeal Comstock. But to do that she would need weapons: a Democratic majority in the House and a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

Zombie lore is unclear on what can actually kill the undead. Sometimes, it's sonic waves or a blood transfusion. Sometimes, it's a bullet to the brain. Sometimes, it has to be voters rising up out of fear for their rights.

Kate Cohen, a Washington Post contributing columnist, is the author of "We of Little Faith."



# SCOREBOARD/OLYMPICS

## TENNIS

### Monte Carlo Rolex Masters

**Wednesday**  
**At Monte Carlo Country Club**  
**Monte Carlo, Monaco**  
**Purse: Euro 5,950,575**  
**Surface: Red clay**  
**Men's Singles**  
**Round of 32**  
 Alexei Popyrin, Australia, def. Andrey Rublev (6), Russia, 6-4, 6-4.  
 Lorenzo Sonego, Italy, def. Felix Auger-Aliassime, Canada, 6-4, 7-5.  
 Alex de Minaur (11), Australia, def. Tallon Griekspoor, Netherlands, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3.  
 Karen Khachanov (15), Russia, def. Francisco Cerundolo, Argentina, 4-6, 6-4, 6-3.  
 Jannik Sinner (2), Italy, def. Sebastian Korda, United States, 6-1, 6-2.  
 Stefanos Tsitsipas (12), Greece, def. Tomas Martin Etcheverry, Argentina, 6-1, 6-0.  
 Ugo Humbert (14), France, def. Zhang Zhizhen, China, 6-1, 6-4.  
 Hubert Hurkacz (10), Poland, def. Roberto Bautista Agut, Spain, 7-5, 7-6 (4).  
 Daniil Medvedev (4), Russia, def. Gael Monfils, France, 6-2, 6-4.  
 Casper Ruud (8), Norway, def. Alejandro Tabilo, Chile, 6-2, 6-4.

## DEALS

### Wednesday's transactions

**BASEBALL**  
**Major League Baseball**  
**American League**  
**BALTIMORE ORIOLES** — Selected the contract of 2B/SS Jackson Holliday from Norfolk (IL). Designated INF/OF Tony Kemp for assignment.  
**BOSTON RED SOX** — Agreed to terms with INF/OF Ceddanne Rafaela on an eight-year contract. Sent 2B Rob Refsnyder to Worcester (IL) on a rehab assignment.  
**CHICAGO WHITE SOX** — Placed 3B Yoan Moncada on the 10-day IL. Recalled OF Oscar Colas from Charlotte (IL).  
**CLEVELAND GUARDIANS** — Transferred RHP Shane Bieber from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Optioned RHP Wes Parsons to Columbus (IL).  
**HOUSTON ASTROS** — Optioned RHP Wander Suero to Sugar Land (PCL). Selected the contract of RHP Spencer Arrighetti. Designated OF Cooper Hummel for assignment.  
**TORONTO BLUE JAYS** — Traded RHP Wes Parsons to Cleveland for cash considerations. Sent C Danny Jansen on a rehab assignment to Buffalo (IL).  
**National League**  
**ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS** — Signed 2B Kolten Wong to a minor league contract.  
**CHICAGO CUBS** — Sent RHP Jameson Taillon to Iowa (IL) on a rehab assignment.  
**CINCINNATI REDS** — Sent RHP Ian Gibaut on a rehab assignment to Louisville (IL).  
**MILWAUKEE BREWERS** — Optioned RHP Kevin Herget to Nashville (IL). Reinstated LHP Wade Miley from the 15-day IL.  
**NEW YORK METS** — Optioned RHP Pedriel Nunez to Syracuse (IL). Selected the contract of LHP Tyler Jay from Syracuse. Transferred RHP Kodai Senga from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL.  
**PITTSBURGH PIRATES** — Optioned RHP Carmen Mlodzinski to Indianapolis (IL).  
**SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS** — Sent RHP Sean Hjelle on a rehab assignment to Sacramento (PCL).  
**WASHINGTON NATIONALS** — Recalled C Drew Millas from Rochester (IL). Optioned RHP Joao Adon to Rochester.  
**FOOTBALL**  
**National Football League**  
**GREEN BAY PACKERS** — Signed CB Geomon Green.  
**JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS** — Re-signed OLB Josh Allen to a five-year contract extension.  
**PITTSBURGH STEELERS** — Signed K Matthew Wright.  
**HOCKEY**  
**National Hockey League**  
**ANAHEIM DUCKS** — Reassigned C Nikita Nesterenko to San Diego (AHL).  
**CALGARY FLAMES** — Sent D Etienne Morin to Calgary (AHL).  
**CAROLINA HURRICANES** — Signed F Jackson Blake to a three-year, entry-level contract.  
**CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS** — Loaned F Paul Ludwinski to Rockford (AHL).  
**COLORADO AVALANCHE** — Sent RW Chris Wagner to Colorado (AHL).  
**COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS** — Recalled RW Trey Fix-Wolansky from Cleveland (AHL).  
**DALLAS STARS** — Reassigned D Tristan Bertucci from Flint (OHL) to Texas (AHL).  
**DETROIT RED WINGS** — Recalled LW Zach Aston-Reese from Grand Rapids (AHL).  
**FLORIDA PANTHERS** — Agreed to terms with D Mikulas Hovorka on a two-year, entry-level contract.  
**LOS ANGELES KINGS** — Assigned C Alex Turcotte to Ontario (AHL) on a long-term conditioning loan.  
**MINNESOTA WILD** — Recalled F Liam Ohgren from Iowa (AHL).  
**NEW JERSEY DEVILS** — Recalled F Graeme Clarke from Utica (AHL). Reassigned F Brian Halonen and G Akira Schmid to Utica.  
**PITTSBURGH PENGUINS** — Recalled Raimond Zohorna from Wilkes-Barre/Scranton (AHL).  
**WASHINGTON CAPITALS** — Recalled D Lucas Johansen from Hershey (AHL). Assigned D Garin Bjorklund to South Carolina (ECHL) from Hershey (AHL).  
**COLLEGE**  
**ARKANSAS** — Hired John Calipari as head men's basketball coach.  
**OKLAHOMA STATE** — Hired Keiton Page as assistant men's basketball coach.

## PRO SOCCER

### MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
New York	4	1	2	14	11	7
Philadelphia	3	0	3	12	12	7
Inter Miami CF	3	2	3	12	16	12
Columbus	3	1	3	12	10	7
Cincinnati	3	1	3	12	7	5
Atlanta	3	2	1	10	10	5
Toronto FC	3	3	1	10	6	9
D.C. United	2	1	4	10	10	9
Charlotte FC	2	3	2	8	6	6
Chicago	2	3	2	8	11	14
CF Montréal	2	3	1	7	8	13
Nashville	1	2	4	7	8	13
NYCFC	1	4	2	5	5	9
Orlando City	1	3	2	5	5	11
New England	1	4	1	4	5	11
WESTERN CONFERENCE						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	4	1	1	13	14	6
LA Galaxy	3	1	3	12	14	11
Real Salt Lake	3	2	2	11	11	8
Minnesota	3	1	2	11	9	7
LAFC	3	3	1	10	11	10
Houston	3	2	1	10	7	6
Sporting KC	2	1	4	10	12	10
Austin FC	2	2	3	9	11	12
Colorado	2	2	3	9	10	12
Portland	2	3	2	8	14	14
St Louis City	1	1	5	8	11	11
Seattle	1	3	2	5	9	7
FC Dallas	1	4	1	4	6	10
San Jose	1	6	0	3	10	17

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

### Saturday's games

Los Angeles FC at Portland  
 Toronto FC at Charlotte FC  
 Orlando City at D.C. United  
 Cincinnati at CF Montréal  
 New England at New York City FC  
 Chicago at New York  
 Seattle at FC Dallas  
 Miami at Sporting Kansas City  
 Houston at Minnesota  
 Columbus at Real Salt Lake  
 LA Galaxy at Vancouver  
 Colorado at San Jose

### Sunday's games

Philadelphia at Atlanta  
 Austin FC at St Louis City

### NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	3	0	0	9	11	7
Chicago	2	0	1	7	5	2
North Carolina	2	1	0	6	7	3
Washington	2	1	0	6	4	3
Houston	1	1	1	4	4	7
San Diego	1	1	0	3	2	2
Gotham FC	1	1	0	3	1	1
Orlando	0	0	3	3	4	4
Louisville	0	0	3	3	4	4
Bay FC	1	2	0	3	4	5
Seattle	1	2	0	3	2	3
Utah Royals FC	1	2	0	3	3	5
Portland	0	2	1	1	6	8
Angel City	0	2	1	1	3	6

**Note:** Three points for victory, one point for tie.

### Friday's games

Washington at Houston  
 Orlando at Utah Royals FC

### Saturday's games

Portland at North Carolina  
 San Diego at Louisville  
 Angel City at Chicago

### Sunday's games

Kansas City at Gotham FC  
 Seattle at Bay FC

### Friday, April 19

San Diego at Orlando

## PRO HOCKEY

### PWHL

	GP	W	L	OW	OL	Pts	GF	GA
Toronto	19	10	6	3	0	36	50	41
Minnesota	19	8	4	4	3	35	47	35
Montreal	18	7	5	3	4	31	44	45
Ottawa	19	7	6	0	6	27	50	50
Boston	19	4	9	4	2	22	38	48
New York	19	3	9	4	3	20	39	49

Teams awarded three (3) points for a regulation win, two (2) points for an overtime or shootout win, one (1) point for an overtime or shootout loss, and zero (0) points for a regulation time loss.

**Sunday, March 24**  
 Minnesota 3, Montreal 2, SO  
**Monday, March 25**  
 New York 3, Boston 2  
**Thursday, April 18**  
 Toronto at Boston



RICK BOWMER/AP

Canada's Chloe Dufour-Lapointe competes in a World Cup freestyle moguls competition at Deer Valley Resort in Park City, Utah. Salt Lake City displayed its enduring enthusiasm for the Olympics on Wednesday when members of the International Olympic Committee visited.

# Salt Lake City one of few cities eager to play host

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM  
*Associated Press*

**SALT LAKE CITY** — The International Olympic Committee was effusive Wednesday in its support for a decadeslong effort to bring back the Winter Games to Utah's capital city in 2034.

Unlike so many other past hosts that have decided bringing back the Games isn't worth the time, money or hassle, Salt Lake City remains one of the few places where Olympic fever still burns strong. Olympic officials praised the city for preserving facilities and public enthusiasm as they kicked off their final visit ahead of a formal announcement expected this July.

Reminders of the 2002 Winter Games are nestled throughout the city, from a towering cauldron overlooking the valley to an Olympic emblem stamped on manhole covers downtown. Leaving the airport, a can't-miss arch amid snow-capped mountains shows visitors they're entering an Olympic city.

Those remnants are part of a long-term strategy Utah leaders launched on the heels of their first Olympics to remind residents that the Games are part of the fabric of their city, and that being a host city is a point of pride.

Olympic officials said they were greeted with such excitement Wednesday that it felt like the 2002 Winter Games never ended.

In the decades since Salt Lake City first opened its nearby slopes to the world's top winter athletes, the pool of potential hosts has shrunk dramatically. The sporting spectacular is a notorious money pit, and climate change has curtailed the number of sites capable of hosting.

Even though Salt Lake City got caught in a bribery scandal that nearly derailed the 2002 Winter Olympics, it has worked its way back into the good graces of an Olympic committee increasingly reliant on passionate communities as its options dwindle. The city is now a prime candidate if officials eventually form a permanent rotation of host cities, Olympic Games

Executive Director Christophe Dubi told reporters.

"We are in an environment here where we look for opportunities more than concerns," Dubi said. "For the next 10 years, we're not so much looking at what is challenging, but what are the opportunities to work together."

The committee was left with only two bid cities for 2022 — Beijing, China, and Almaty, Kazakhstan — after financial, political and public concerns led several European contenders to drop out.

"The International Olympic Committee needs Salt Lake City a lot more than Salt Lake City needs the International Olympic Committee, or the Olympics," said Jules Boykoff, a sports and politics professor at Pacific University.

For Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, securing the bid is central to his goal of cementing the state as North America's winter sports capital.

Cox has continued a long-running push by state leaders to beckon professional sports leagues and welcome international events like last year's NBA All-Star Game that could help burnish its image as a sports and tourism mecca, while chipping away at a lingering stigma that Utah is a bizarre, hyper-religious place.

About half of the state's 3.4 million residents and the majority of state leaders belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, widely known as the Mormon church.

The 2002 Games, widely regarded as one of the most successful Olympics, brought government funding for a light-rail system and world-class athletic facilities. The city grew rapidly in its wake.

Utah bid leaders declined to release a budget estimate, saying they should be able to provide one next month. But they assured the committee that they could keep costs down by using most of the same venues they've spent millions to maintain since 2002. They also touted bipartisan support for hosting in the Democratic capital city of a predominantly Republican state.

With few options remaining for the Olympic committee, Salt Lake City has leverage to dictate terms, Boykoff said.



Dubi

## NHL/SUMO WRESTLING

## Carlson still plays big minutes at 34

BY STEPHEN WHYNO  
Associated Press

John Carlson has played more hockey than anyone in the NHL this season not named Drew Doughty, and that volume has not gone unnoticed around the league.

“He’s playing a lot of minutes,” Detroit winger Patrick Kane said. “As time goes on, you don’t get any younger, but he seems to be keeping his endurance and stamina up and obviously capability for the team, as well.”

A decade since playing with Kane for the U.S. at the Sochi Olympics, Carlson recently passed the 1,000-games milestone and is still shouldering a heavy workload at age 34. While Washington’s longtime No. 1 defenseman isn’t quite sure how he has been able to log so many minutes for so long — “I don’t know, I think you just do it” — more than a half-dozen of his teammates from the 2014 Games believe Carlson’s durability and longevity are a credit to his smarts and the ability to do everything on the ice, from scoring and setting up goals to preventing them by opponents while not letting all the shifts take a toll.

“His brain is just elite at how he plays the game offensively, defensively, so I think he’s able to be super efficient,” said winger James van Riemsdyk, now with Boston. “His physical tools kind of speak for themselves, but you don’t play that long and that high of a level, especially at this age, unless you have a really good hockey sense.”

Carlson is averaging nearly 26 minutes of ice time a game for the Capitals, who lean on him in all situations as they’re trying to return to the playoffs. Veteran Max Pacioretty, who got to know Carlson with Sochi and is teammates with him again, compared him to Hall of Famer and seven-time Norris Trophy winner Nicklas Lidstrom.

“He doesn’t expend useless energy,” Pacioretty said. “He knows when to use it, kind of when to be a little bit more reserved, and I think that’s a skill that so few people have.”

Retired defenseman Brooks Orpik knows all about needing to



Nick Wass/AP

Washington Capitals defenseman John Carlson celebrates his goal against the Boston Bruins on March 30 in Washington. At age 34, Carlson has the second-most minutes played in the NHL this season.

pace oneself throughout a long season, as Carlson has over his 15 years in the NHL, skating more than 26,600 shifts comprising 23,700 minutes of ice time. And Orpik thinks his 2018 Stanley Cup-winning teammate has gotten better about picking his spots.

“He has the ability to be physical when he has to be; he probably is a little bit more in the playoffs than he is regular season,” Orpik said. “It’s impossible to play that way with the minutes he’s playing, so I think he’s gotten smarter as he’s gotten older, too, which is kind of learning when to kind of go at it a little bit harder and then when to maybe conserve his energy.”

While Carlson is known more for his offense — 670 points in 1,005 regular-season games — his defensive acumen is often underappreciated, given how many tough

matchups the Natick, Mass., native by way of New Jersey has been tasked with throughout his career. Ryan Callahan felt more than a few shoves in front of the net from Carlson over the years, especially in Capitals-New York Rangers playoff series.

“He definitely had some snarl to his game,” said Callahan, now an ESPN analyst. “As a teammate, when you see an offensive guy, a defenseman like that who puts up those points but also has that little bit of a bite to his game, it drags the rest of the guys to have that compete and have that bite.”

With that bite, Callahan pointed out, also comes Carlson being a reliable player whose consistency makes him predictable and easy to work with. Watching some highlights recently, Bruins defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk notices his

former teammate “making these typical big-time John Carlson plays” to keep the Caps in the playoff race.

“There’s no moment too big for him,” Shattenkirk said. “Nothing seems to faze him. That usually comes with experience, but he seemed to have that from the start.”

T.J. Oshie, who has played with him since 2015 after sharing the Sochi Olympic experience, saw that from afar when he was with St. Louis in previous years and thought Carlson had the ability to be a “mainstay” in Washington. He has been, skating nearly 30 minutes—including the final 4:38—in a crucial victory at Detroit on Tuesday.

“He doesn’t seem like he’s slowing down all that much,” Orpik said, “even at this age.”

## Scoreboard

## Eastern Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-N.Y. Rangers	79	53	22	4	110	274	223
x-Carolina	79	50	22	7	107	267	206
x-Boston	79	46	18	15	107	260	215
x-Florida	79	49	24	6	104	256	196
x-Toronto	78	46	23	9	101	288	241
x-Tampa Bay	78	44	27	7	95	279	253
m-N.Y. Islanders	78	36	27	15	87	232	253
Washington	78	37	30	11	85	210	250
Pittsburgh	78	36	30	12	84	237	233
Detroit	78	38	32	8	84	258	256
Philadelphia	79	36	32	11	83	229	258
New Jersey	79	37	37	5	79	257	273
Buffalo	79	37	37	5	79	236	237
Ottawa	78	34	40	4	72	244	270
Montreal	78	30	36	12	72	222	271
Columbus	79	26	41	12	64	227	287

## Western Conference

	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
x-Dallas	79	50	20	9	109	293	229
x-Vancouver	79	48	22	9	105	270	217
x-Colorado	79	49	24	6	104	296	242
x-Winnipeg	78	48	24	6	102	241	194
x-Edmonton	77	48	24	5	101	279	219
x-Nashville	79	45	29	5	95	256	239
p-Los Angeles	78	41	26	11	93	243	206
Vegas	78	42	28	8	92	252	235
St. Louis	79	42	32	5	89	232	242
Minnesota	78	37	32	9	83	237	249
Seattle	77	33	31	13	79	207	219
Calgary	77	35	37	5	75	234	254
Arizona	79	34	40	5	73	243	264
Anaheim	79	26	48	5	57	196	285
Chicago	78	23	50	5	51	171	273
San Jose	78	18	51	9	45	173	310

**Note:** Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

x-clinched playoff spot  
y-clinched division  
z-clinched conference

(a, c, m, p)-top three in their division

## Wednesday's games

St. Louis 5, Chicago 2  
Edmonton 5, Vegas 1  
Arizona 4, Vancouver 3, OT

## Thursday's games

Columbus at Florida  
Detroit at Pittsburgh  
New Jersey at Toronto  
Ottawa at Tampa Bay  
Philadelphia at N.Y. Rangers  
Washington at Buffalo  
Montreal at N.Y. Islanders  
Winnipeg at Dallas  
San Jose at Seattle  
Calgary at Los Angeles

## Friday's games

Carolina at St. Louis  
Nashville at Chicago  
Arizona at Edmonton  
Calgary at Anaheim  
Minnesota at Vegas

## Saturday's games

N.Y. Islanders at N.Y. Rangers  
Seattle at Dallas  
Winnipeg at Colorado  
Buffalo at Florida  
New Jersey at Philadelphia  
Tampa Bay at Washington  
Detroit at Toronto  
Montreal at Ottawa  
Boston at Pittsburgh  
Columbus at Nashville  
Vancouver at Edmonton  
Anaheim at Los Angeles  
Minnesota at San Jose

## Sunday's games

Seattle at St. Louis  
Colorado at Vegas  
Carolina at Chicago  
Arizona at Calgary

## Hawaii-born champion Akebono dies of heart failure

Associated Press

TOKYO — Hawaii-born Akebono Taro, one of the greats of sumo wrestling and a former grand champion, has died. He was 54. He was the first foreign-born wrestler to reach the level of “yokozuna” — or grand champion — in Japan.

“It is with sadness that we announce Akebono Taro died of heart failure earlier this month while receiving care at a hospital in the Tokyo area,” the family said in a statement.

His wife Christine Rowan, in an email to



Akebono

The Associated Press, said he died “within the past week” but declined to give details.

“I had to tend to personal matters that needed to be done prior to publicly announcing my husband’s death,” she said.

Akebono grew up on the rural side of the Koolau mountains from Honolulu and was born Chad George Ha’aeo Rowan.

He moved to Tokyo in the late 1980s and

won his first grand championship in 1993.

At the prime of his career he was a true giant, reported at the time to weigh 500 pounds and stand 6-feet-8.

The United States ambassador to Japan, Rahm Emanuel, sent his condolences on social platform X.

“I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Akebono, a giant in the world of sumo, a proud Hawaiian and a bridge between the United States and Japan,” Emanuel posted.

“When Akebono became the first-ever

foreign-born grand champion, sumo’s highest rank, in 1993, he opened the door for other foreign wrestlers to find success in the sport. Throughout his 35 years in Japan, Akebono strengthened the cultural ties between the United States and his adopted homeland by uniting us all through sport.”

Akebono was an 11-time grand tournament winner and he retired in 2001.

The family’s statement said friends and family will hold a “private celebration of his life.” He is survived by his wife, Christine, daughter and two sons.

# NHL

## On AFN



**New York Islanders  
at New York Rangers**  
AFN-Sports2  
6:25 p.m. Saturday CET  
1:25 a.m. Sunday JKT



**Seattle Kraken  
at Dallas Stars**  
AFN-Sports2  
9 p.m. Saturday CET  
4 a.m. Sunday JKT



**Tampa Bay Lightning  
at Washington Capitals (JIP)**  
AFN-Sports2  
Midnight Saturday CET  
7 a.m. Sunday JKT



**Boston Bruins  
at Pittsburgh Penguins**  
AFN-Sports2  
2 a.m. Sunday CET  
9 a.m. Sunday JKT



**Colorado Avalanche  
at Vegas Golden Knights**  
AFN-Atlantic  
9:30 p.m. Sunday CET  
4:30 a.m. Monday JKT



**Carolina Hurricanes  
at Chicago Blackhawks**  
AFN-Atlantic  
Midnight Sunday CET  
7 a.m. Monday JKT

# Salt Lake City prepares for team

BY STEPHEN WHYNO  
Associated Press

Preparations are being made behind the scenes and in the public eye in case an NHL team is in Salt Lake City sooner than later, perhaps as early as this fall.

After prospective owner Ryan Smith earlier this week solicited suggestions for a team name, word emerged Wednesday that the league has been working on contingency plans in case the Arizona Coyotes move this summer.

The NHL has been working on two schedule drafts for next season in case the team is in Arizona or playing under a different name in Utah, according to a person familiar with the planning. The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no decisions have been made.

The schedule for next season is usually released in late June, after the Stanley Cup is handed out, around the draft and before free agency opens July 1. Commissioner Gary Bettman, when asked last month about the schedule and the possible contingency plans, said only, "We still have some time."

While the NHL, Coyotes and Smith Entertainment Group declined comment on the dual-schedule report, other machinations are underway to prepare for possible relocation. According to multiple published reports, the league sent a memo to owners updating them on the situation while cautioning there are moving parts and nothing is done.

If a sale to Smith happens soon, it would come after months of



DARRYL WEBB/AP

The Arizona Coyotes are playing their second season in a 5,000-seat arena in Tempe, Ariz.

speculation after the owner of the NBA's Utah Jazz announced in January not only his interest in having an NHL club in Salt Lake City but the ability to make that happen immediately.

Smith's group asked at the time for the initiation of an expansion process, something multiple groups in Atlanta are also eager for.

The timing, while preparations are underway for Salt Lake City to host the 2034 Winter Olympics, coincided with continued uncertainty surrounding the Coyotes,

who are playing a second season in a 5,000-seat arena and are still looking for a long-term home.

NHL Players' Association executive director Marty Walsh has repeatedly expressed frustration over the Coyotes' current situation as the second tenant in a building on Arizona State's campus in Tempe. Bettman has said owner Alex Meruelo is working on it.

"It's hard work, and he's committed to it," Bettman told The Associated Press last month. "I think people are craving certainty. And we are, too, but this isn't a 60-min-

ute game where the light goes on and the game's over."

The Coyotes last week said they're committed to winning an auction for a plot of land in Phoenix that would house a 17,000-seat arena and entertainment district. The Arizona State Land Department set the auction for June 27 with a starting bid of \$68.5 million.

An arena already exists in downtown Salt Lake City, and the Jazz ownership plan calls for using the Delta Center as a temporary home for a hockey team until a new building is constructed.

# Brink: Guentzel's return lit fire under Penguins

FROM PAGE 48

followed. It wasn't until Guentzel's return in a Hurricanes uniform that the Penguins appeared to wake up. A 4-1 win over Carolina in which Pittsburgh skated with a purpose and discipline that's been elusive over the previous five months provided a reminder to the guys in the room that the Penguins could still hang with the league's best when they're not sulking or making the kinds of mistakes that let multi-goal leads evaporate, a common theme during their first 70ish games.

That confidence has surged in lockstep with the emergence of Nedeljkovic. Signed in the offseason to serve as the backup to Tristan Jarry, Nedeljkovic has become a fixture in the lineup during the most important time of the season.

Not that he wants to talk about it. Nedeljkovic, who is 6-0-2 in his past eight starts, shrugs when asked about his impact. Instead, he points to what's going on in front of him.

"We haven't given up a lot of odd-man rushes," Nedeljkovic said. "We haven't given up a ton of grade-A chances. We've done a good job of keeping things to the outside and then when it matters in the last five, six minutes of the game we've really buckled down."



Sullivan

franchise captured three Stanley Cups and reached the Final in another, lacking.

The reality is, it's been that way for a while. Pittsburgh hasn't won a playoff series since the second round in 2018. The Penguins missed the postseason for the first time in 17 years last spring and they've spent most of this season looking very much like the NHL's oldest team that they are.

Changes have been made. More are likely coming over the summer. Yet Crosby and long-time teammates Evgeni Malkin, Kris Letang and Bryan Rust are raging against the dying of the light.

Mike Sullivan, the NHL's second-longest tenured head coach, called the brand of hockey his group is currently playing "inspiring."

"I always use the phrase when the five guys on the ice have the same heartbeat," Sullivan

said. "I think that's what it looks like to me right now."

And because of that, the Penguins have a pulse. One that is quickening as the regular season barrels into its final days.

Pittsburgh is the only one of the four teams who entered play Thursday within two points of the wild-card spot with a winning record over its past 10 games. The Caps and Wings are treading water. Philadelphia is in a freefall.

Only the Penguins, whose core knows a thing or two about winning in the spring, are playing as if they want to make it to the postseason. Yet they are also well aware of how fickle their odds are. It's a game-by-game proposition at this point. It has been for a while. Their wiggle room is almost nonexistent.

Almost. Then again, having little margin for error beats having none at all. Considering where they were two weeks ago, they'll take it.

"For the last 2-3 weeks here, we've been right in it," said Crosby, who has 40 goals in his 19th season and was voted the NHL's most well-rounded player by his peers on Wednesday. "I think it's brought out the best in us. We are playing good hockey. I think we believe in our game. We need to continue to do the same thing."

## MASTERS

## Woods has hope of another jacket

By DOUG FERGUSON  
Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Tiger Woods still thinks he can win another Masters. Recent evidence would suggest that might be a steeper climb than walking up to the 18th green at Augusta National.

Never mind he is 48 and has had more surgeries than his 15 major titles. Or that in his 10 rounds at the Masters since he won in 2019, he has broken par — and not by much — only three times. Or that his body has allowed him to play only 24 holes of tournament golf this year.

Woods was asked Tuesday what he was capable of doing against Scottie Scheffler and defending champion Jon Rahm, against a field that brings together the best from the PGA Tour and LIV Golf for the first time since July.

“If everything comes together, I think I can get one more,” Woods said. He paused briefly before adding, “Do I need to describe that any more than that?”

The answer will start to reveal itself Thursday. As always, there is much curiosity about the one player who once was as predictable as golf allows.

There is a practical side to Woods. He knows the limitations of age and injury because he said he feels it just about every day.

“Some days, I just feel really good,” he said. “Other days, not so much.”

That’s a product of knee surgeries, a fused lower back, a fused ankle. He is not limping as much, like last year when he wound up withdrawing before he could finish the rain-delayed third round at the Masters.

But his hope going into 2024 was to play once a month. That seemed to be a reasonable plan until he skipped all of the Florida swing in March.

“My body wasn’t ready,” he said. “My game wasn’t ready.”

Woods said he doesn’t practice

nearly as much as he once did, even with his own short-game course in the backyard of his Florida home. His future has been so clouded that even his private jet being spotted on its way to Augusta a few weeks ago became news.

To him, the Masters is another chance to compete on his favorite course at his favorite major. That still matters. For as long as he has played, as often as he has won, with so many trophies he doesn’t know where most of them are, it doesn’t get old.

“I love golf. I do,” he said with a warm smile. “I’ve always loved it. I played other sports growing up, but I just have always loved this sport. I love to compete. And to be able to have the love I have for the game and the love for competition be intertwined, I think that’s one of the reasons why I’ve had a successful career.”

He took a few clubs with him on the front nine when he arrived Sunday, then played the back nine with Will Zalatoris on Monday and the front nine with Fred Couples and Justin Thomas on Tuesday.

They all had wonderful reviews of Woods and how he is swinging. That’s become its own tradition at every major over the last few years. He does just enough, even now, to make people wonder if there’s one more left in him.

There is little normal about Woods these days, not after all he’s been through on and off the golf course, particularly the injuries that have limited his practice and his tournaments.

That he still believes he can win is normal. He always says that. But there will come a time when his best isn’t good enough — Woods was talking about that when he was still in his late 20s and at the peak of his game.

“I don’t know when that day is, when that day comes,” Woods said. “But I still think that I can. I haven’t got to that point where I don’t think I can’t.”



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Scottie Scheffler lines up a putt on the 10th hole Wednesday during a practice round at Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, Ga. Scheffler is the favorite to win the Masters, which started Thursday.

# Favorite Scheffler aims for 2nd title in 3 years

By DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Scottie Scheffler is not, by nature, a selfish person. It’s not how he was raised, nor how he chooses to live his life, and if that ever were to change, he knows he can rely on his wife, Meredith, to bring him back to center.

The problem is that Scheffler plays a selfish sport. “You’re out there by yourself,” he explained, “and when you’re at the peak of your game, you know, people need stuff from you a lot of the time, and you have to be selfish with your time. And it’s not easy to say no, but you have to learn how.”

Nobody is peaking higher these days.

Two years after winning the Masters, Scheffler is back at Augusta National this week, still the world’s No. 1 player and perhaps hotter than ever. The 27-year-old from Dallas has been in the top 10 in seven of eight starts this year, including his back-to-back wins at the Arnold Palmer Invitational and the Players Championship, where he became the first to ever defend his title.

In his last start, two weeks ago at the Houston Open, his modern-era record of 28 consecutive rounds under par finally ended with an even-par 70 in the second round, and Scheffler wound up one shot off a playoff in second place.

So it’s not surprising that there are heavy demands on Scheffler’s time these days.

He is asked to speak at various functions. Children lining the ropes beg for his autograph. (Adults do, too.) He’s had Netflix crews filming him for its docuseries, “Full Swing,” and the list goes on, seemingly building with every trophy he raises.

“You have to learn how to say no to certain people,” he said, “because ultimately, when you come out to a golf tournament, you’re here to compete, and you’re here to do your best. And you can’t really get caught up in all the stuff that’s going around you.”

Make no mistake: Scheffler’s almost placid demean-

nor masks an intense desire to win. That was evident after he played a practice round with Nick Dunlap, who earlier this year became the first player since Phil Mickelson in 1991 to win a PGA Tour event as an amateur, and Scheffler was asked whether he had any insights to pass along.

“No, he’s too good,” Scheffler replied with a smile. “I don’t want to give him any of my secrets.”

Scheffler was kidding, of course, because — as we’ve established — he was not raised to be a selfish person. His parents, Scott and Diane, provided that foundation, just as they made sure that golf was never the most important thing in his life.

“My parents pushed more education and being kind to people on me,” Scheffler said. “Sometimes you see a lot of parents who really want their kid to become really, really good at something, and they think that’s what is going to bring them joy. But becoming a really good golfer may bring you a little bit of momentary joy, but it doesn’t sustain it for very long.”

In fact, Scheffler said that winning a tournament “makes me happy for about five minutes.

“The way I was raised, golf wasn’t really a huge deal in my house. It was just something that I always loved to do,” he said. “I had a very supportive family in doing so. I have three sisters, and I’m sure they went to way more golf tournaments than they would have hoped to when I was growing up. But just had a great support system at home. And I feel like I’ve said it a bunch, golf is not just — it’s something that I do. It’s not my life, you know?”

He happens to be really good at it, though. That’s why Scheffler is the 4-1 favorite to win this week, according to FanDuel Sportsbook, the most overwhelming favorite to win the Masters since Tiger Woods more than a decade ago. In fact, Scheffler is such a heavy favorite that some sportsbooks are giving betters the opportunity to wager on him or the entire rest of the field.



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Tiger Woods watches his shot on the fourth hole during a practice round Tuesday. In the 10 rounds he’s played at the Masters since he won in 2019, he’s broken par only three times.

## MASTERS

# McIlroy confident as he eyes career Slam

BY DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — Rory McIlroy made that familiar turn off Washington Road and onto Magnolia Lane a year ago, the one that seems to suck in those fortunate enough to make it back in time, and felt as certain as ever that it was his time to win the Masters.

After all, McIlroy had been playing well. His confidence was soaring. He had a belief in himself that was more than just a hunch.

More like a premonition.

Yet by Friday afternoon, when storms would fell three towering Georgia pines and cause the second round to push into the weekend, all those positive vibes had disappeared. After opening with an even-par 72, and still believing he was oh-so-close to stringing it all together, McIlroy shot a second-round 77 and missed the cut.

His wait to win the green jacket, and complete the career Grand Slam, had stretched to a full decade.

“No question, he’ll do it at some point. He’s just — Rory’s too talented, too good,” said Tiger Woods, who along with Gene Sarazen, Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player are the only players to have completed the modern slam.

“He’s going to be playing this event for a very long time,” Woods added. “He’ll get it done. It’s just a matter of when.”

Might be this week.

Much like last year, McIlroy drove down Magnolia Lane on Tuesday feeling good about his game. He had played well at PGA National and Bay Hill earlier this year, finished in the top 20 at The Players Championship and recently spent time in Las Vegas with renowned coach Butch Harmon, which paid dividends with a third-place finish last week at the Texas Open.

**“I feel like I’ve got all the tools to do well this week.”**

Rory McIlroy

That’s not an event McIlroy typically plays before the Masters, but it was part of a plan put in place months ago. The idea was to play more often earlier in the year, getting his game sharp not only for Augusta National but the rest of the majors as well.

“This is my 16th start in the Masters, so I feel like I’ve done it quite a few different ways,” McIlroy explained, “and I guess just trying to bring a little bit of normalcy into what I sort of try to do week in, week out. I play 25 weeks a year, and there’s no point in doing anything different this week compared to other weeks, I guess.”

Even if the Masters is a week unlike any other.

Rather than arriving early and laboring through practice rounds, McIlroy instead

popped into Augusta National last week for a two-day scouting trip before heading to Texas. In fact, he skipped Monday’s practice round altogether — even Woods played nine that day — and was planning to play just nine holes by himself on Tuesday and Wednesday.

“I feel like I’ve already got most of my prep work done. So it’s just about going out there and being relaxed and being in the right frame of mind,”

McIlroy said, “and the more I can do that, the more I’ll be able to execute on the golf course.”

He’s come so close so often that nobody would fault McIlroy if his frame of mind these days was as skewed as a snap hook into Rae’s Creek. He had a four-year streak of finishing in the top 10 beginning in 2014, the year he won the British Open and PGA Championship. He was fifth on an eerily empty course in 2020, when the pandemic pushed the Masters into the fall. Two years ago, a blistering final-round 64 still left him



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

**Rory McIlroy walks off the 11th green during a practice round on Tuesday. McIlroy has played the Masters 10 times with a chance to complete the career Grand Slam.**

three shots back of Scottie Scheffler.

Over time, the 18-year-old Northern Irishman with the cherubic face and limitless potential, who ticked off those first four major championships in a four-year span, has grown up. McIlroy is 34 now, leaner and stronger but also wiser, and it’s almost hard to believe he has spent nearly a third of his life chasing the only major to elude him so far.

“If I cast my mind back to 18-year-old Rory and I’m driving down Magnolia Lane for

the first time, how would I feel and I think? It’s just always trying to go back to being grateful and feeling incredibly lucky that you can be a part of this tournament,” he said Tuesday. “Thankfully, I’ve improved a bit since my first start here, and I feel like I’ve got all the tools to do well this week.

“But, again, to bring those tools out, I think one of the most important things is to enjoy it,” McIlroy added with a smile, “and smell the — I guess not the roses, the azaleas along the way.”

## US Open champ Clark among rookies seeking win

BY STEVE REED  
Associated Press

AUGUSTA, Ga. — It doesn’t faze Wyndham Clark that no player has won in his Masters debut since Fuzzy Zoeller 45 years ago.

“Stats like that are meant to be broken,” Clark said.

Of course, Clark is not your ordinary Masters newcomer.

He has the rare distinction of playing in his first Masters as the U.S. Open champion, not to mention being one of the hottest players on the PGA Tour.

Clark followed up two PGA Tour victories last year by winning at Pebble Beach in February and finishing second at the Arnold Palmer Invitational Pro-Am and The Players Championship, where he finished one shot behind world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler in a three-way tie.

Ranked fourth in the world, Clark enters this tournament with a 40-1 shot to win, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

While Clark acknowledged that

winning as a Masters rookie would be a tall task, he’s quick to add that few could have predicted he would win the U.S. Open last summer.

“So I like my chances,” he said.

Clark isn’t the only notable newcomer playing this week at Augusta National.

Ludvig Aberg of Sweden, ranked No. 9 in the world, is a popular pick despite never testing the slippery greens at Augusta National. He won a PGA Tour event as a rookie and had two wins in four-somes at the 2023 Ryder Cup in Rome, helping the Europeans dominate.

And don’t forget about Alabama sophomore Nick Dunlap, who stunned the golf world in January by becoming the first amateur to win a PGA Tour event in 33 years when he captured The American Express.

He’s since turned pro and is ready to cash in at the Masters.

“It’s a tricky balance because obviously I’m feeling all the first-time feelings that everyone’s feel-



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

**Wyndham Clark prepares for a practice round for the Masters on Wednesday. Clark won the US Open but is playing the Masters for the first time.**

ing, but I’m also trying to be OK with all those things coming at me,” Aberg said of his Masters debut. “I guess all I’m trying to do is just embrace all the nerves and all

the excitement that I feel, and at the same time know my capabilities and know that that’s probably going to be good enough to compete.”

All 20 newcomers have been given an opportunity to play practice rounds at Augusta National in the weeks leading up the tournament. Some even played a round or two here in college.

So it won’t be like they’re playing Amen Corner for the first time.

Clark has played 72 holes leading up to Thursday’s first round, so there is some familiarity with the undulations of the greens.

But he knows the course becomes a whole different beast this week.

“Come tournament week, just how firm and fast the greens are versus when you come here six, eight weeks ago and it’s nice and receptive,” Clark said. “That’s a little bit of a difference.”

Clark said he’s approaching this tournament just like any other — trying to have fun, while realizing

he’s living his childhood dream of playing the Masters.

This was his favorite tournament to watch growing up.

His father attended in 2005, the year Tiger Woods made that remarkable chip in on the 16th hole en route to his fourth green jacket. Clark watched that at home on television, looking for his dad in the crowd.

Whether Clark or another newcomer can pull off a similar bit of magic amid the towering pines and flowering azaleas and win the Masters remains to be seen.

But he wouldn’t be shocked if it happens.

“If it’s not me this week it could be Ludvig or someone else that does it,” Clark said. “I think the guys that are playing professional golf now have gotten so good, and I don’t think we really listen to all of that. We just see the golf ball and put it where we want to put it and wherever the ball ends up, we go and hit it again and try to win a golf tournament.”

## MLB

# Left-handers not always natural leftys

By KRISTIE RIEKEN  
Associated Press

Houston's Jordan Alvarez might be the top left-handed hitter in Major League Baseball. Teammate Framber Valdez ranks among the best left-handed pitchers, too.

Other than that, those guys are all right.

Literally — neither player considers himself left-handed at all.

MLB and its history are dotted with men who played out of their natural handedness, a phenomenon that is seen occasionally in other sports but is a regular occurrence on the diamond. Thumb through a pack of baseball cards from just about any era and you're likely to see players who bat one way and throw the other. Ask them to sign that card and there's no telling which hand would hold the pen.

Valdez writes, eats and even hits (before the introduction of the universal designated hitter) with his right hand. His left arm has helped him make two All-Star teams and throw a no-hitter. What else does he use it for?

"Nothing, nothing, nothing," he said with a laugh.

Valdez simply decided at a young age that he wanted to be a left-handed pitcher.

"I used to throw lefty every single day, like day by day," he said in Spanish through a translator. "When I was 11, I felt very comfortable throwing lefty, even though I did everything else righty."

Lefties accounted for around 26% of innings pitched in the majors last year, even though only 10-12% of the general population is estimated to be left-handed. Demand for good lefty pitchers is high, and Valdez recalls having an affinity for all of them.

"When I was growing up, I was always told that it is very important to have a lefty pitcher, that all the best pitchers were lefties as well," he said. "So, I told myself: 'Hey, I want to be a lefty.'"

Alvarez throws, writes and eats with his right hand — that sweet, powerful swing is his only left-handed activity. Like many young players, he aspired to be a switch-hitter. Oddly, he ended up more comfortable on his non-dominant side.

"But I just got accustomed to hitting left-handed," he said via translator. "And it was very interesting because my dad is the same thing. He hits left-handed, but he does everything else right-handed."

Players like Alvarez are common across the majors, with 95 position players currently on active rosters listed as batting left and throwing right, including superstar two-way player Shohei Ohta-



ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH/AP

**Houston Astros starting pitcher Framber Valdez is a natural right-hander, but decided growing up that he wanted to be a left-handed pitcher. In the years since then, the demand for lefty pitching has not waned.**

ni.

Houston has the only two position players in the league who throw left and bat right in outfielders Chas McCormick and Jake Meyers.

"My dad throws left and hits right so that's what I do, too," Meyers said. "I picked up a baseball with my left hand and started throwing it and picked up a bat and wanted to swing right-handed and that's kind of what he believed and now I'm here. Chas McCormick is the only other guy I've played with that does that."

Toronto outfielder George Springer, a righty hitter and thrower, startled teammate Justin Turner this spring by writing with his left hand.

"It's really weird," Turner said. "I saw him sign an autograph the other day and I was like, 'What the hell are you doing?'"

Springer, the 2017 World Series MVP, calls himself left-handed and says the only things he does righty are play baseball and golf. His parents tell him he started grabbing the ball with his right hand at a young age and stuck with it.

"That's just who I am," Springer said. "I've never really thought anything of it. I guess it is cool that I can do things with each side of my body and I'm not so one-way dominant."

Dr. Stephen D. Christman, a professor in the psychology department at the University of Toledo and an expert in handedness, said cases like Springer's aren't that surprising.

"It's easier for a lefty to learn to use their right hand than for a righty to learn to use their left hand because most left-handers lean more towards being ambidextrous," said Christman, who has studied handedness for more than two decades.

Christman said studies have found only 1-2% of people are uniformly left-handed across the 10 activities used to measure handedness, including writing, drawing, throwing, brushing teeth and hair, opening a box and using a spoon.

Because lefties are forced to adapt — like when only righty scissors are available — they're more likely to learn to use both hands.

Though it's rare in other sports for guys to play out of their natural handedness, there is a huge exception in the NBA. Superstar LeBron James is like Springer in that he's naturally left-handed but plays right-handed. James, who turns 40 in December, joked about his handedness late last year.

"I'm gonna play until I'm 40. Then, after 40, I'm gonna go all left-hand until I'm 45," he joked to

reporters. "I'm gonna score 5,000 points with my left hand. Then I'll be done."

Valdez, Alvarez and Springer follow in a line of great MLB players who played out of their natural handedness. The list even includes Babe Ruth, who batted and threw left-handed but can be seen in photos using his right hand to sign autographs. John Thorn, MLB's official historian, says Ruth was naturally left-handed, but teachers at the time routinely discouraged children from writing with their left hand because lefties were "thought to represent the dark side."

Though not for the same reasons, Houston first baseman Jon Singleton ended up doing the same thing as Ruth. He both bats and throws left-handed but writes with his right hand.

"My mom's a school teacher, and she taught me how to write with my right hand when I was young, and I think that translated to me eating with my right hand so on and so forth," he said. "But for the most part, I think I'm left-handed."

Though things might come easier for elite athletes, Christman said anyone can learn to do things with their non-dominant hand.

"I think practice can overcome any innate handedness difference just about," he said.

## Scoreboard

### American League

#### East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	10	3	.769	—
Baltimore	7	4	.636	2
Boston	7	5	.583	2½
Tampa Bay	7	6	.538	3
Toronto	6	7	.462	4

#### Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	9	3	.750	—
Kansas City	8	4	.667	1
Detroit	7	4	.636	1½
Minnesota	4	6	.400	4
Chicago	2	10	.167	7

#### West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	7	5	.583	—
Los Angeles	6	6	.500	1
Seattle	5	8	.385	2½
Oakland	4	8	.333	3
Houston	4	9	.308	3½

### National League

#### East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	7	3	.700	—
Philadelphia	6	6	.500	2
Washington	5	7	.417	3
New York	4	7	.364	3½
Miami	2	11	.154	6½

#### Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Pittsburgh	9	3	.750	—
Milwaukee	8	3	.727	½
Chicago	7	5	.583	2
Cincinnati	6	6	.500	3
St. Louis	6	7	.462	3½

#### West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	10	5	.667	—
San Diego	7	8	.467	3
Arizona	6	7	.462	3
San Francisco	5	8	.385	4
Colorado	3	10	.231	6

### Wednesday's games

Minnesota 3, L.A. Dodgers 2  
Seattle 6, Toronto 1, 10 innings  
Tampa Bay 4, L.A. Angels 2  
Cleveland 7, Chicago White Sox 6, 10 innings  
Baltimore 7, Boston 5  
Miami 5, N.Y. Yankees 2  
Kansas City 11, Houston 2  
Texas 6, Oakland 2  
Philadelphia 4, St. Louis 3  
San Francisco 7, Washington 1  
Arizona 5, Colorado 3  
Milwaukee 7, Cincinnati 2  
San Diego 10, Chicago Cubs 2  
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta, ppd.

### Thursday's games

N.Y. Mets at Atlanta  
Milwaukee at Cincinnati  
Houston at Kansas City  
Oakland at Texas  
Pittsburgh at Philadelphia  
Baltimore at Boston  
Minnesota at Detroit, ppd.

### Friday's games

Pittsburgh (Falter 0-0) at Philadelphia (Sanchez 0-1)  
Minnesota (Ryan 0-1) at Detroit (Maeda 0-1)  
San Francisco (Winn 0-2) at Tampa Bay (TBD)  
Milwaukee (Hall 0-1) at Baltimore (TBD)  
Colorado (Feltner 0-1) at Toronto (Gausman 0-1)  
Kansas City (TBD) at N.Y. Mets (Severino 0-1)  
L.A. Angels (Detmers 2-0) at Boston (TBD)  
Atlanta (Fried 0-0) at Miami (Rogers 0-1)  
N.Y. Yankees (Schmidt 0-0) at Cleveland (Carrasco 0-0)  
Cincinnati (Abbott 0-1) at Chicago White Sox (Flexen 0-2)  
Texas (Dunning 1-1) at Houston (France 0-1)  
Chicago Cubs (Wicks 0-1) at Seattle (Miller 1-1)  
Washington (Irvin 0-1) at Oakland (Blackburn 1-0)  
St. Louis (Matz 1-0) at Arizona (Pfaadt 1-0)  
San Diego (King 2-0) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 1-1)

### Calendar

**April 27-28** — MLB World Tour: Houston vs. Colorado at Mexico City  
**June 8-9** — MLB World Tour: N.Y. Mets vs. Philadelphia at London  
**June 20** — MLB at Rickwood Field: St. Louis vs. San Francisco at Birmingham, Ala.  
**July 12-16** — All-Star Week at Arlington, Texas  
**July 14-16** — MLB Draft at Arlington, Texas

# NBA

## Scoreboard

Eastern Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
z-Boston	62	17	.785	—
x-Milwaukee	49	31	.613	13½
x-New York	47	32	.595	15
Cleveland	47	33	.588	15½
Orlando	46	34	.575	16½
Indiana	46	34	.575	16½
Philadelphia	45	35	.563	17½
Miami	44	36	.550	18½
Chicago	37	42	.468	25
Atlanta	36	44	.450	26½

Western Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
x-Denver	56	24	.700	—
x-Minnesota	55	25	.688	1
x-Oklahoma City	55	25	.688	1
y-L.A. Clippers	51	29	.638	5
y-Dallas	50	30	.625	6
New Orleans	47	32	.595	8½
Phoenix	47	33	.588	9
Sacramento	45	34	.570	10½
L.A. Lakers	45	35	.563	11
Golden State	44	35	.557	11½
Houston	39	40	.494	16½
Utah	29	50	.367	26½
Memphis	27	53	.338	29
Portland	21	58	.266	34½
San Antonio	20	60	.250	36

x-clinched playoff spot  
y-clinched division  
z-clinched conference

### Tuesday's games

Dallas 130, Charlotte 104  
Philadelphia 120, Detroit 102  
Indiana 140, Toronto 123  
Milwaukee 104, Boston 91  
San Antonio 102, Memphis 87  
Miami 117, Atlanta 111, 2OT  
Houston 118, Orlando 106  
Minnesota 130, Washington 121  
New York 128, Chicago 117  
Oklahoma City 112, Sacramento 105  
Denver 111, Utah 95  
New Orleans 110, Portland 100  
L.A. Clippers 105, Phoenix 92  
Golden State 134, L.A. Lakers 120

### Wednesday's games

Cleveland 110, Memphis 98  
Charlotte 115, Atlanta 114  
Dallas 111, Miami 92  
Brooklyn 106, Toronto 102  
Oklahoma City 127, San Antonio 89  
Milwaukee 117, Orlando 99  
Phoenix 124, L.A. Clippers 108  
Denver 116, Minnesota 107

### Thursday's games

Chicago at Detroit  
New York at Boston  
Houston at Utah  
Golden State at Portland  
New Orleans at Sacramento

### Friday's games

Chicago at Washington  
Orlando at Philadelphia  
Brooklyn at New York  
Charlotte at Boston  
Indiana at Cleveland  
Atlanta at Minnesota  
Denver at San Antonio  
L.A. Lakers at Memphis  
Milwaukee at Oklahoma City  
Toronto at Miami  
Detroit at Dallas  
Houston at Portland  
New Orleans at Golden State  
Phoenix at Sacramento  
Utah at L.A. Clippers

### Saturday's games

No games scheduled.

### Sunday's games

Washington at Boston  
Charlotte at Cleveland  
Atlanta at Indiana  
Toronto at Miami  
Milwaukee at Orlando  
Chicago at New York  
Brooklyn at Philadelphia  
Denver at Memphis  
Phoenix at Minnesota  
L.A. Lakers at New Orleans  
Dallas at Oklahoma City  
Utah at Golden State  
Detroit at San Antonio  
Houston at L.A. Clippers  
Portland at Sacramento

### End of regular season

### On AFN

#### Milwaukee at Oklahoma City

AFN-Sports  
2 a.m. Saturday CET  
9 a.m. Saturday JKT

#### Phoenix at Sacramento

AFN-Sports  
4:30 a.m. Saturday CET  
11:30 a.m. Saturday JKT

## AROUND THE LEAGUE

# Foreign players once again dominate

BY TIM REYNOLDS  
Associated Press

The voting hasn't taken place yet, though it's fairly obvious that Denver's Nikola Jokic will be the NBA's MVP this season and therefore extend the record streak to six consecutive years in which a foreign-born player wins that trophy.

That's not the only international trend that will be continuing in award season.

Unless New York's Jalen Brunson averages at least 101 points per game this week, which seems unlikely, the scoring champion will be Dallas' Luka Doncic. Sacramento's Domantas Sabonis will win the rebounding title over Minnesota's Rudy Gobert, barring some big change in the numbers. Gobert could win defensive player of the year again. San Antonio's Victor Wembanyama will be the blocked-shots champion, plus is a lock for rookie of the year.

Jokic is from Serbia. Doncic is from Slovenia. Sabonis was born in the United States, but hails from a Lithuanian family and represents that country in international play. Wembanyama and Gobert are from France, which will play host to an Olympics now less than four months away. Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo (Greece) and Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (Canada) seem certain to be All-NBA picks, probably first-team ones. And it must be noted that Cameroon-born Joel Embiid, who is now an American citizen and likely a U.S. Olympian this summer, was on pace for a scoring title and MVP honors before injuries derailed those quests.

This is not a new thing, of course. Jokic and Antetokounmpo



LM OTERO/AP

Perennial MVP candidates Nikola Jokic, left, and Luka Doncic represent the top European talent in the NBA. Jokic looks to lead the Denver Nuggets to another title while Doncic is on pace to be the scoring champion.

already have NBA titles and MVP trophies. It's only a matter of time before Doncic gets an MVP award. The only U.S.-born player to make first-team All-NBA last season was Boston's Jayson Tatum, and that'll probably be the case again this season even with Embiid ineligible for such an award because of the new NBA rules surrounding participation and a 65-game minimum required for consideration.

"Obviously, all great candidates," Embiid said of the top MVP candidates — the likes of

Jokic, Gilgeous-Alexander, Doncic and Antetokounmpo. "They all deserve to win. It's just unfortunate that only one person has to win."

James Harden was the last U.S.-born player to win MVP, and that was in 2018. International players have gotten 456 of a possible 503 first-place MVP votes since (there are 100 voters, and there was an extra "fan vote" in three of those years). That's 91% of first-place nods going to international players in that span, and don't expect this year to be any different. Every first-place vote in 2022 and 2023 went to an international player.

And with the playoffs fast approaching, those international names are going to be in the brightest part of the spotlight once again. Jokic and the Nuggets have a title to defend. Antetokounmpo and the Bucks have a chance to shake off a frankly disappointing second half of the regular season. Doncic and the Mavericks are back in the playoffs after last season's collapse. Gilgeous-Alexander and the Thunder are going to have home-court in Round 1; not bad for a franchise that some likely figured was still in rebuilding mode entering the year. Orlando has the inside track on a top-four seed in the Eastern Conference, and Franz Wagner — one of the reasons Germany won the Basketball World Cup last summer — is a big part of the

Magic surge.

"Players in this league — not referring to All-Stars but overall now — represent 45 countries and are roughly 30% of this league, and a number that's continuing to grow, including, of course, some of the very best players, MVP-quality players in this league," Commissioner Adam Silver said at the All-Star break.

Silver told CNN a couple of weeks ago that the league is kicking around new ideas to try to fix the All-Star Game, and one of the notions is again the concept of a U.S. vs. The World game. He wants a competitive game; players listened to those pleas and still played absolutely no defense in this year's game at Indianapolis, where the 200-point mark by a team got crossed for the first time. So it's time for a new idea, and playing into the depth of the international star roster is a solid one.

"Look at the magnitude of the pool of international players coming into this league," Silver said. "Look at the amount of basketball that's being played on a global basis ... it's remarkable to watch what these guys now physically are able to do on the floor."

And it has been for some time. This was always David Stern's vision when he was commissioner — a global league, a global game with global stars. The NBA has it, maybe at a higher level than ever. That'll be evident in both the playoffs and the award voting.



PETER K. AFRYIE/AP

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, of Canada, has led the Oklahoma City Thunder to a playoff spot with a chance for the top Western Conference seed.

# SPORTS



## Setting sights on green jacket

World No. 1 Scheffler seeks second title in three years » **Masters, Page 44**



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby has helped the Penguins make a late-season push that has them in contention for the last wild-card berth in the postseason.

# Back from the brink

## Crosby, Penguins furiously battle way into postseason mix

BY WILL GRAVES  
Associated Press

**S**idney Crosby insists he's not a scoreboard watcher.

Not publicly anyway. Maybe it's because the Pittsburgh Penguins' longtime captain is too occupied with his team to worry about anyone else. Or maybe it's because Crosby never had much reason to check during Pittsburgh's run to 16 straight playoff berths between 2007 and 2022.

Or maybe it's simply because Crosby doesn't have to check his phone to figure out where the Penguins stand. The evidence is on the countless videoboard that greet players inside PPG Paints Arena.

### INSIDE

At 34, Carlson still plays big minutes for Capitals  
**Page 42**

"When I come to the rink, it's on everywhere," Crosby said with a smile. "So it's hard to miss it."

So is his team's sudden — and unexpected — late-season push.

Two weeks ago the Penguins were nine points out of the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. Fourteen days and 12 out of a possible 14 points later, Pittsburgh took the ice Thursday against Detroit tied

with the Red Wings for ninth in the East, just one point back of Washington with four games remaining.

Heady territory for a team that looked as if it was going through the motions in the aftermath of the trade that sent Stanley Cup-winning forward Jake Guentzel to Carolina. The night the move was made, the Penguins were in a daze while getting drilled 6-0 by Washington. The cloud lingered.

"You acknowledge it and you try to push it down, you try not to think about it, but it affects everybody," goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic said.

Seven losses over their next nine games

**SEE BRINK ON PAGE 43**



MATT FREED/AP

Signed in the offseason as a backup, goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic has become a fixture in the lineup during the most important time of the season.

## Foreign players to dominate awards again » **NBA, Page 47**

