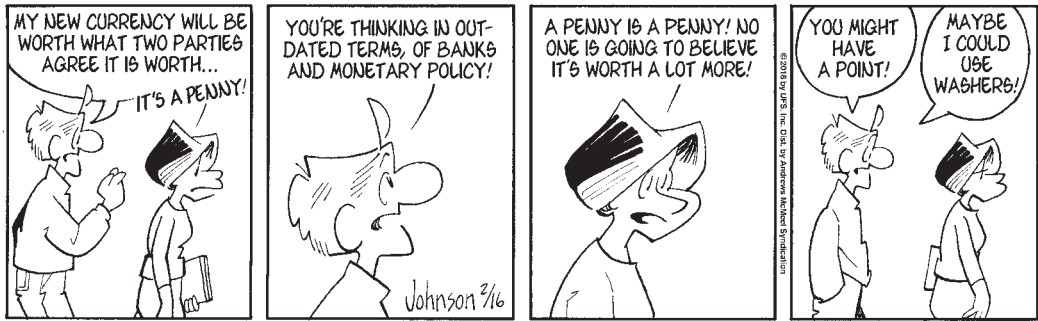## ARLO AND JANIS® by Jimmy Johnson

FRANK & ERNEST® by Bob Thaves
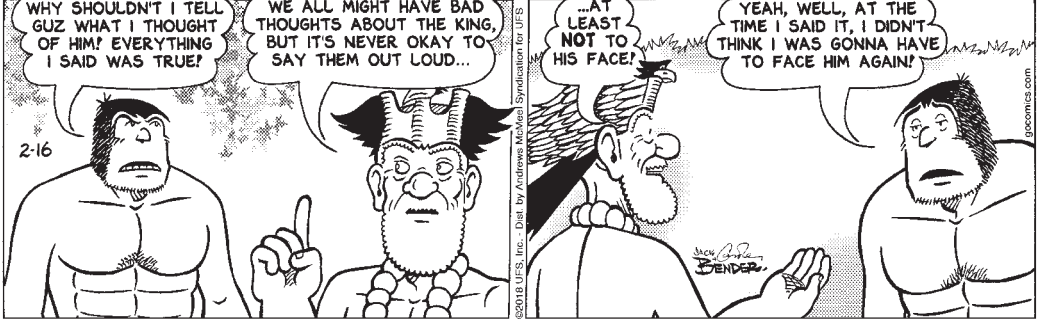

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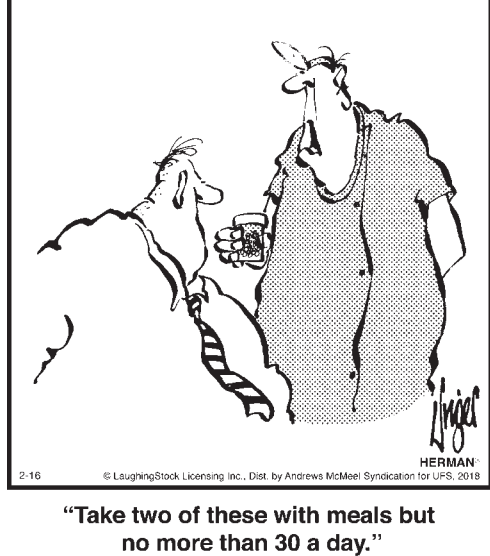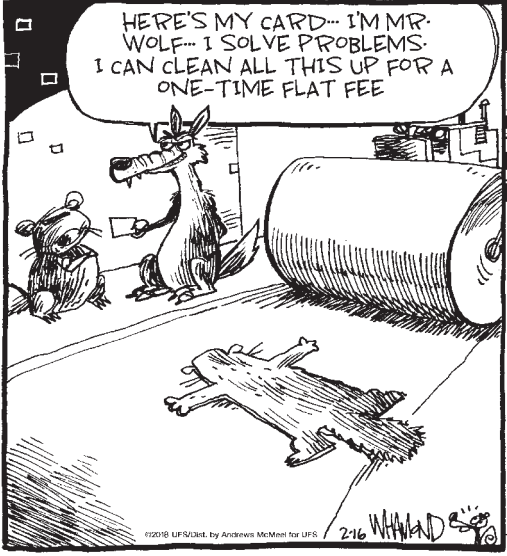## ALLEY OOP by Jack and Carole Bender

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"Take two of these with meals but no more than 30 a day."

REALITY CHECK® by Dave Whamond

AT THE MOVIES

'Black Panther' triumphs as great superhero movie

BY TY BURR
Reporter for the Boston Globe

No, "Black Panther" isn't the greatest movie ever made. It's probably not even the greatest superhero movie ever made. But it's very, very good — in its best scenes, exhilarating.

Just as important, it's a breakthrough in an entirely new direction: a smart, propulsive action fantasy starring a hero of color leading a strong, unbowed nation of color. The movie doesn't reinvent the superhero genre so much as reclaim and reenergize it — archetypes, cliches, and all — for viewers hungry to dream in their own skin. That's why its arrival feels like a cultural inflection point and a cause for exultation in some quarters. Made with punch and conviction, "Black Panther" has the pop power that can rise from a long time coming.

The film doesn't feel like the usual corporate franchise contact high but, rather, the work of a singular sensibility, that of director/co-writer Ryan Coogler. The Oakland-born Coogler has steadily worked his way out from his home base, debuting with 2013's stark "Fruitvale Station," about the 2009 police shooting of Oscar Grant, then jump-starting the "Rocky" series by telling it from the other side of the ring in "Creed" (2015). Now he has been handed the keys to the Marvel kingdom.

He has triumphed, but with a property ready-made to carry weight and resonance. Created in 1966 by Marvel's Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, the character of Black Panther is actually King T'Challa, ruler of the fictional African country of Wakanda. Situated atop a bedrock of all-powerful vibranium, Wakanda has developed technology that positions it far ahead of the rest of Earth — flying cars and everything — but to protect its people from colonial predations, the country's rulers have cloaked their cities and marvels behind invisible shields, the better to pose as "just another" Third World nation.

That's an incredibly powerful what if — an alternate history that end-runs centuries of enslavement and exploitation — and Coogler builds it into his movie's very bones. Hannah Beachler's Afrofuturist production design for "Black Panther" brilliantly interweaves gleaming digitized machinery with the riotous colors, patterns, landscapes, and rhythms of sub-Saharan Africa. The cinematography by Cambridge-born Rachel Morrison (Oscar-nominated for her work in "Mudbound") vividly captures and contains the multiplicity; a fine soundtrack, curated and performed by Grammy winner Kendrick Lamar, bounces between rap, nu-soul, and classic Afro-pop.

As the movie's hero, Chadwick Boseman moves with the regal assurance of a born king. "Black Panther" at last allows him to be a movie star on his own terms, both in and out of the sleek ebony nanotech cat suit.

But Coogler fills the screen with strong personalities and performances. Daniel Kaluuya, of "Get Out," and Winston Duke play Wakandan noblemen with their own agendas and allegiances. Forest Whitaker is the aged adviser and totemic shaman, schooled in the sources of the king's power. As a helpful CIA agent, Martin Freeman ("The Hobbit") is the film's token white good guy (try that on for a change), and Andy Serkis slips out of his usual pixels to play a rollicking nasty named Klaue.

But it's the women in "Black Panther" who make the difference, and the villain who brings it all home. Angela Bassett plays T'Challa's mother, the majestic Queen Mother, and Lupita Nyong'o finally gets a worthy follow-up to "12 Years a Slave" as Nakia, successfully fighting against the hero's-best-girl straitjacket. The young Letitia Wright is delightful as Shuri, T'Challa's tech-genius little sister (she's basically this movie's Q), and Danai Gurira ("The Walking Dead") brings a glowering ferocity to General Okoye, leader of the King's all-female warrior bodyguards.

Okoye is as much at the center of the action sequences as her boss, and Nakia and Shuri get their licks in, too; "Black Panther" says it takes a village, a nation, and all the women in your life to fight through obstacles. Just in case you were worried, Coogler aces the foot chases, car chases, shootouts, and fistfights, and because the movie's so rooted in character — in the characters' self-possession and self-worth — the mayhem carries an extra fizz.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

1 Kind of board
5 Utter
8 Panhandles
12 Garfield's housemate
13 Attach
14 Diva's tune
15 Lynx and ocelot
16 Tailor's job
18 Alloy components
20 Vexes
21 Genre
22 "— to Billie Joe"
23 Caterwauls
26 Saffron dish
29 Sailor's cry
30 Man of the haus
31 Tummy muscles
33 Earth orbiter of yore
34 Attila's horde
35 Rum mixer
36 Approved
38 Looked the joint over
39 Guitarist — Paul
40 Chinchilla or ermine
41 Sprinkle
43 Partial refund
46 Beat
48 Lyra's brightest
50 Tall tale
51 Mormon predecessor
52 Nile sun god
53 Aphrodite's child
54 — -Mex cuisine
55 Bird's home

DOWN

1 MD, familiarly
2 — West of "Batman"
3 Ceremony
4 Grumpily
5 Piece of celery
6 Feels under par
7 Up till now
8 Cask
9 Viking name
10 Processes cotton
11 Slump
17 Fluffy quilt
19 Hirt and Pacino
22 Boat movers
23 Candied item
24 Toledo's state
25 Toil
26 Remain undecided
27 Burma neighbor
28 Fully qualified
30 Shades
32 Blue
34 African scavenger
35 Travel group
37 Sci-fi thriller
38 Chicago pro
40 DHL rival
41 Nuture
42 Big hairdo
43 Nerve network
44 Monsieur's pate
45 "I" problems
46 Do batik
47 Well-known Pharaoh
49 Formic acid producer

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