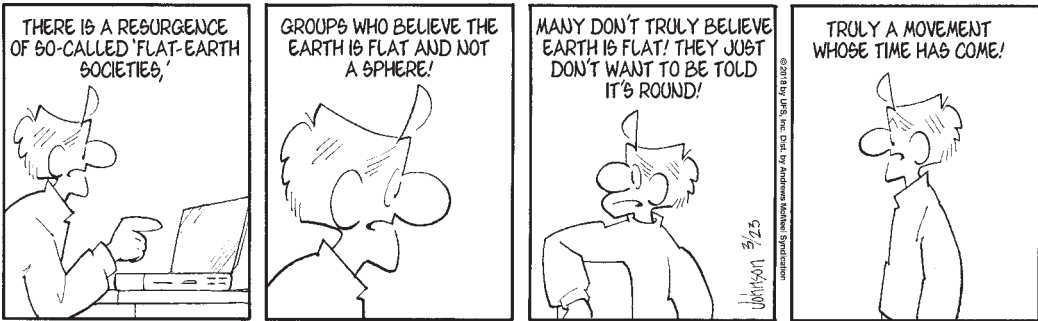
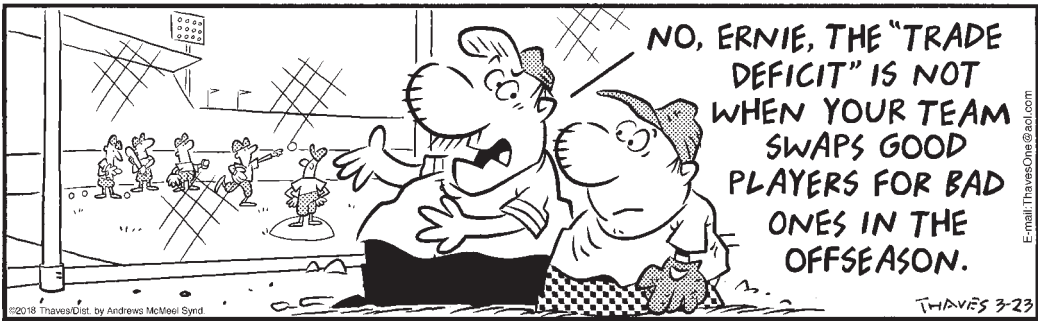


ARLO AND JANIS® by Jimmy Johnson



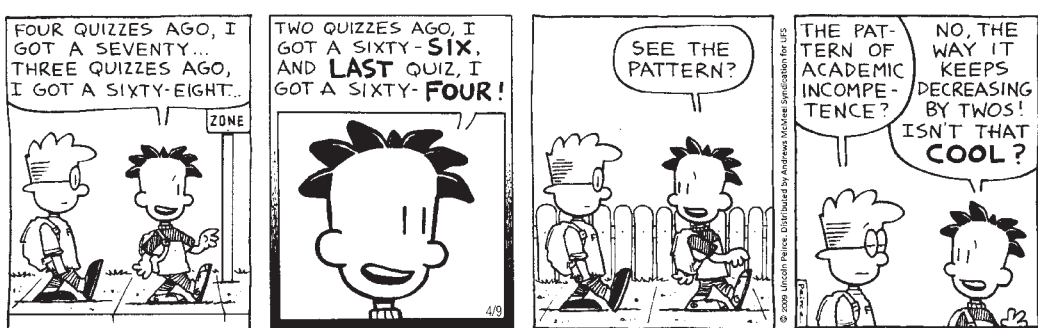
FRANK & ERNEST® by Bob Thaves



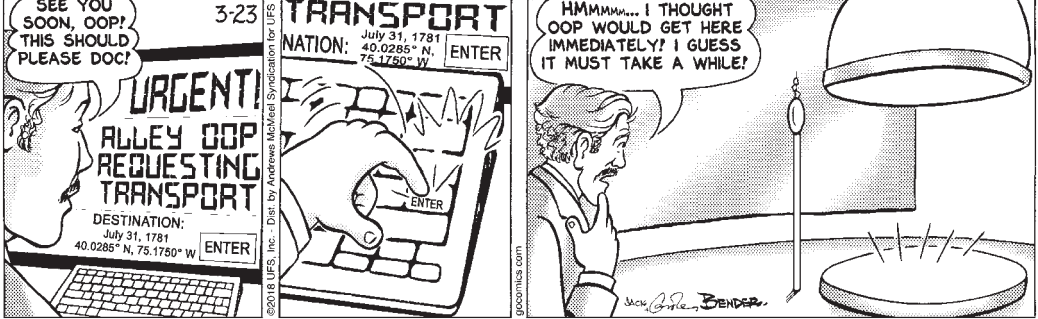
THE GRIZZWELLS® by Bill Schorr



BIG NATE® by Lincoln Peirce



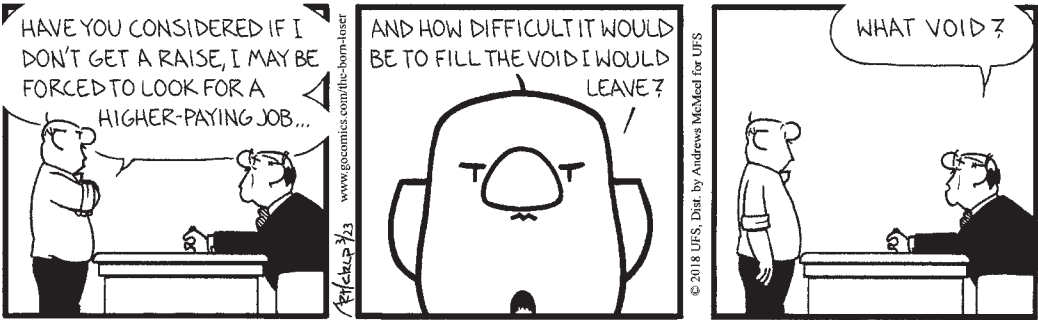
ALLEY OOP by Jack and Carole Bender



SOUP TO NUTZ by Rick Stromoski



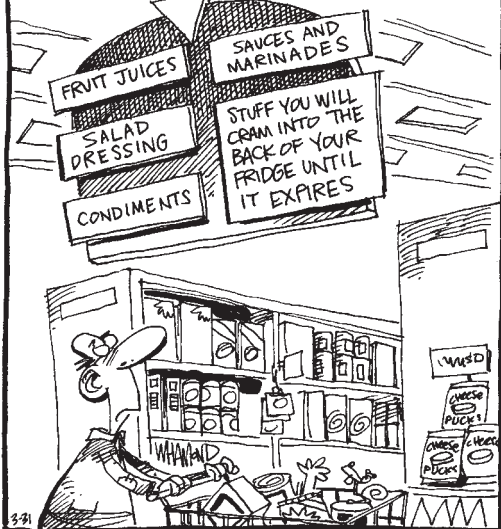
THE BORN LOSER™ by Art & Chip Sansom



HERMAN® by Jim Unger



REALITY CHECK® by Dave Whamond



AT THE MOVIES

'Pacific Rim Uprising' is cheer-at-the-screen fun

(AP) -- At the end of the monsters-versus-robots flick "Pacific Rim," a breach at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean is closed, plugging a hole that allowed hellish creatures to emerge and terrorize the globe. But after the movie earned \$400 million worldwide, was that portal really going to stay closed?

No, of course not. And, with sincere apologies to the front-line cities on the Pacific Rim facing a mauling, we say thank goodness, because the new sequel "Pacific Rim Uprising" is a visually-stunning, expertly crafted dose of cheer-at-the-screen fun. It's the definition of what a blockbuster sequel should be.

"Pacific Rim Uprising" uses a lighter palette and is geared toward a younger audience than its 2013 predecessor, but it keeps all the key elements, upping the special effects and finding honest moments and humor in the midst of world-destroying carnage. It satisfies on every front.

Success wasn't foreordained for the sequel. Original writer Travis Beacham and director-writer Guillermo del Toro haven't returned (though del Toro is still a producer), nor have its original stars, Charlie Hunnam and Idris Elba. (Elba had a very good reason for not showing up: He blew himself up in the final moments of the original to keep the Pacific portal closed).

Steven S. DeKnight, who created and ran the TV series "Spartacus" on Starz, was tapped to direct while del Toro focused on the smaller monster movie "Shape of Water." DeKnight also teamed up with Emily Carmichael, Kira Snyder and T.S. Nowlin to craft the new story, which champions outsiders and misfits as well as celebrates makeshift families and teamwork. Plus, some stuff gets pummeled.

First, a step back for anyone not familiar with this horrific near-future: Aliens have sent giant monsters called Kaiju to soften up humans up ahead of world domination. But we've created 270-foot tall robots called Jaegers to fight back. They're so big they need to be manned by pairs of operators who build a neural bridge between their minds so they can work together.

The new film opens in 2035, 10 years after the last Kaiju was defeated and the breach closed. It's the calm before the storm. Our heroes now are Jake (John Boyega), the rebellious son of Elba's character, and the teen orphan Amara (Cailee Spaeny), who builds her own Jaeger out of spare parts. They join together to help the military fight a new opponent — a rogue Jaeger that comes out of the sea and stomps around menacingly. It is soon clear there's a conspiracy afoot.

Boyega, fresh off his "Star Wars" gig, is a dashing rogue who struggles under his father's shadow but soon earns the respect of his peers. "

Charlie Day and Burn Gorman reprise their roles as squabbling scientists, and Rinko Kikuchi is back as the adopted daughter of Elba's character. The rest of the cast is multiethnic, competent and very sweaty. The robots now have hologram interiors

and the monsters seem less homages to past movie Kaijus and more designed to permanently upset our dreams.

If the first movie's fight sequences were often set in the rainy dark, "Pacific Rim Uprising" embraces the light. Cities are flattened during the day as monsters and robots slug it out. Skyscrapers get punched, debris cascades down and cars get swiped around. The connection between special effects and human actors is seamless and astonishing. The level of detail — from complex cityscapes like Shanghai and Tokyo to the icescapes of Siberia — is brilliant.

Part of the success of the "Pacific Rim" films is they have cobbled together enough elements of other films to make them familiar yet newish. They owe "Blade Runner," "Independence Day," "Minority Report," "Star Wars" and, of course, "Transformers" — not to mention every Godzilla movie ever made — some residuals. But they also have defined and introduced their own world and language.

"Pacific Rim Uprising," a Universal release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sequences of sci-fi violence and action, and some language." Running time: 111 minutes.



CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

1 Slugger  
4 Alehouses  
8 Moist  
11 Lagoon  
13 Opera tune  
14 Any ship  
15 Vicinity  
16 Whale's nostril  
18 Door topper  
20 Soothe  
21 Bill and —  
22 Road-map org.  
24 Shogun's domain  
27 Seasoned vet (2 wds.)  
30 Put one's foot —  
31 "Blue Tail Fly" singer  
32 Resistance unit  
34 JAMA subscribers

35 "Garfield" pooch  
36 Shaft locale  
37 Tugged  
39 Claw  
40 "Patience" — virtue  
41 Coach  
42 Baez or Rivers  
45 Concert hall cry  
49 Not desired  
53 Hound's track  
54 Proper, as respect  
55 Tidy  
56 Sports squad  
57 NASA counterpart  
58 Jacques' date  
59 Tijuana "Mrs."

DOWN

1 Exam type  
2 Garr of "Mr. Mom"  
3 MTV watcher  
4 Picasso or Neruda  
5 Web addr.  
6 Library sect.  
7 Viewed  
8 Horse halter  
9 Lampreys  
10 Shade giver  
12 Moneybags (2 wds.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

JAM BIO PERT  
USE GAOL LEIA  
THAILAND ALOU  
EDDIE MIST  
LTD YON  
GOMEZ SVELTE  
DIA YIPE YALE  
SNIP NASH MIL  
KNACKS IMPEL  
ICY DRY  
JARS RINDS  
MAGI JEANAUEL  
ANON RUNG KAI  
YEGG SRO ETE

17 Stack  
19 Long time  
22 Toward  
23 shelter  
23 TV plugs  
24 Muppet master  
25 Mayberry sheriff  
26 Galileo's hometown  
27 Roman poet  
28 Muddy the waters  
29 Yipes! (2 wds.)  
31 Light bulb, in comics  
33 Chess units  
35 Go-aheads  
36 Team symbol  
38 Baja boy  
39 Winyer cask  
41 Silver Midler  
42 "Hey —"  
43 Nasty task  
44 Perplexed  
46 Byron's works  
47 Crowd noise  
48 "Cope Book" aunt  
50 Merkel of the movies  
51 Ruby, e.g.  
52 "Ball —"

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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 58 59

3-27