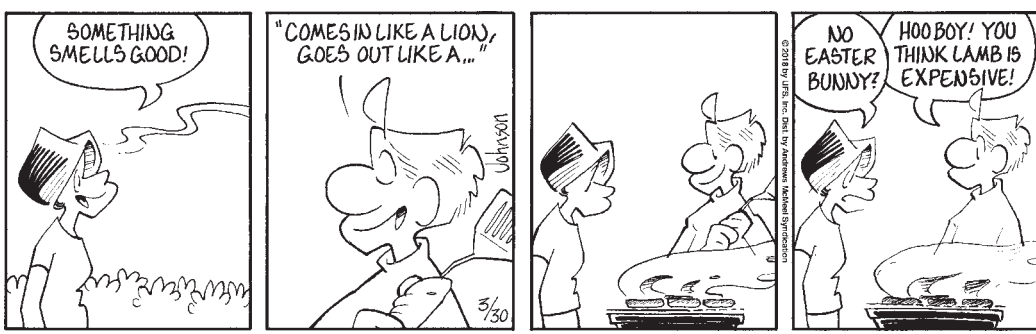
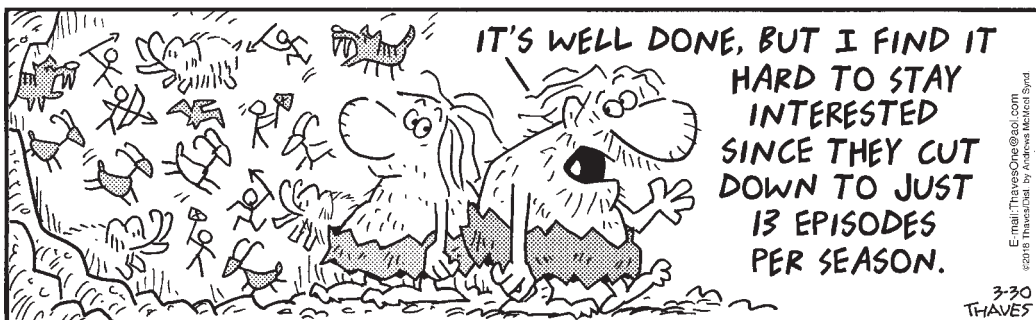


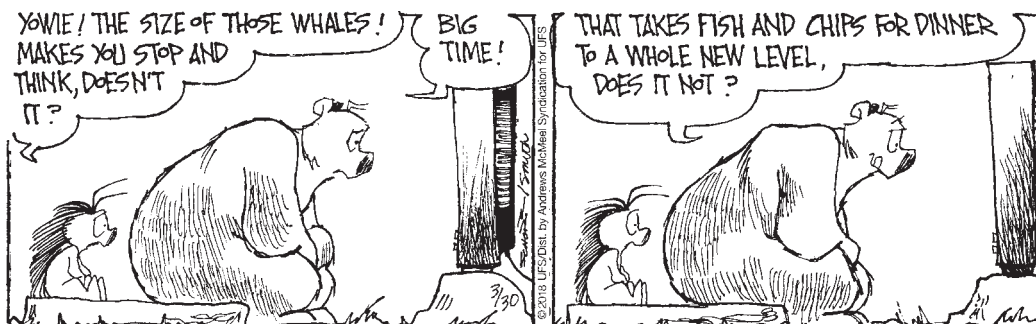
ARLO AND JANIS[®] by Jimmy Johnson



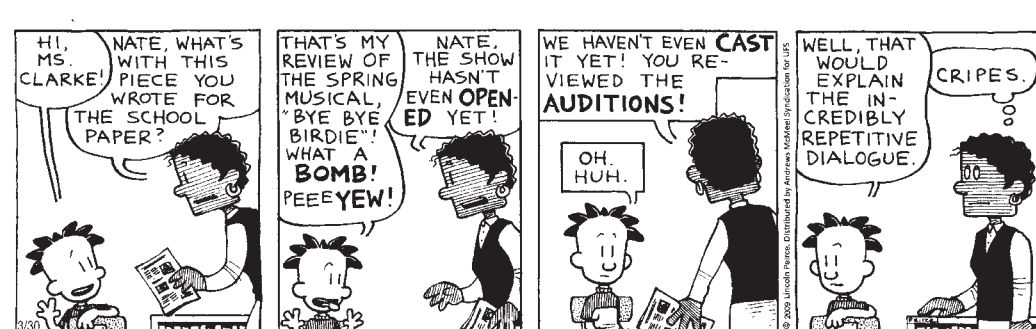
FRANK & ERNEST[®] by Bob Thaves



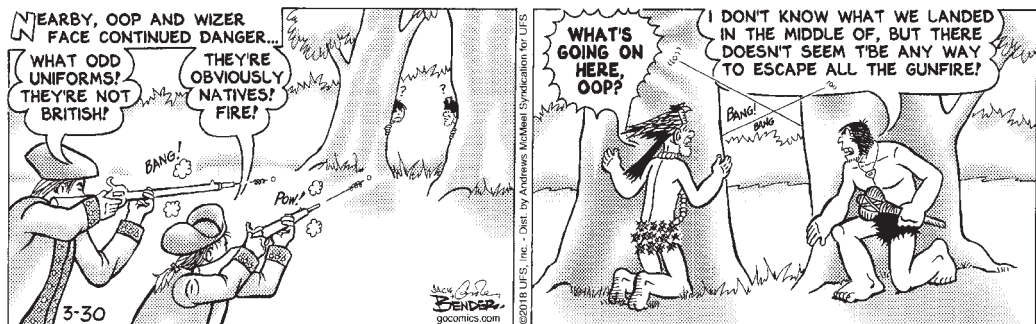
THE GRIZZWELLS[®] by Bill Schorr



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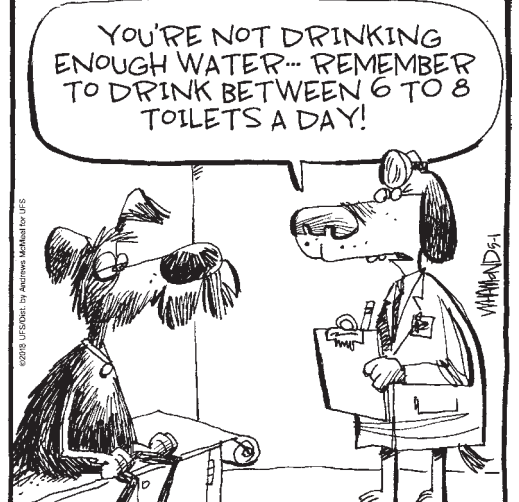
THE BORN LOSER[™] by Art & Chip Sansom



HERMAN[®] by Jim Unger



REALITY CHECK[®] by Dave Whamond



AT THE MOVIES

'Ready Player One' takes Spielberg back to future

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In Ernest Cline's novel "Ready Player One," the main character drives a DeLorean because of "Back to the Future," and uses a grail diary because of "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade." The films of Steven Spielberg loom large in the story littered with pop culture references. That the legendary filmmaker then ended up being the one to take Cline's futuristic-nostalgic vision to the big screen is a small Spielbergian miracle.

"There comes a point when I would have just had to defer to someone else who likes my movies and not make a movie about my movies," Spielberg said.

It meant co-screenwriter Zak Penn would have to lose a few of his Spielberg-inspired jokes and ideas that he'd written into the script before Spielberg signed on to direct, but he didn't mind.

"It would have taken you out of the narrative. He's too iconic a director," Penn said. "You'd be sitting there thinking, 'Oh, this is from a Spielberg film.'"

But everything was on the table, from the song Cline walked down the aisle to (the Hall & Oats song "You Make My Dreams," which plays during the credits) to a blink-and-you'll-miss-it nod to "Last Action Hero," Penn's first movie which he had wanted Spielberg to direct.

The sci-fi spectacle with a reported \$175 million production budget presents a near-future vision of a dystopian society that has all but abandoned the real world for an escapist virtual reality existence. In 2045, most people, including the teenage hero Wade (Tye Sheridan), spend their lives as avatars (Wade's is a cooler version of himself named "Parzival") in the virtual world of the OASIS — a VR game created by an eccentric genius, James Halliday (Mark Rylance), who has promised his wealth to whomever wins and finds the "Easter egg."



Penn, for his part, had said "no" to a proposed reference and was surprised when he saw one in the final cut. Cline had gone behind his back to persuade the folks at ILM to do it.

Most of the references amount to set-dressing, packing every frame in the OASIS with eggs that would take even the most eagle-eyed viewer multiple viewings to catch.

The production used cutting-edge technology to simulate the OASIS for the cast and crew with VR headsets that would give everyone a 360-degree view of what the virtual world looked like. And the film itself is a mash-up of past and present technologies, including motion capture, computer animation and even film stock, which Spielberg used to shoot the live-action sequences.

It's because of Halliday, who, like its author, came of age in the 1980s, that the OASIS is chalk full of 80s nostalgia from Atari to Buckaroo Banzai. It's also why Cline assumed that "Ready Player One" would be impossible to adapt. How would anyone be able to secure all the rights?

That it ended up being Spielberg doing the asking helped a little, but producer Kristie Macosko Krieger is the one he credits for getting everything from Chucky to the Iron Giant in the film. She spent three years working with Warner Bros. to obtain all the necessary clearances from various studios. Some they didn't use, like the main "Star Wars" icons (although you may spot an X-Wing or R2-D2 in a few frames), and some Spielberg just nixed himself, like the mothership from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." He didn't want too many of his old movies in his new movie.

Whether audiences will flock to theaters to soak up the nostalgia and the visionary tech is a big question. Waithe said the film is a feel-good escape, and Sheridan stresses that it's a, "great metaphor for the world that we live in in 2018 and the balancing act from your digital profile to your real world self." Early tracking pegs the film, which has received strong reviews, for a \$45 million opening. Spielberg might not have lost his touch, but mass audiences might also be too distracted to notice.

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

- "Beowulf" and others
- Cellar contents
- Hobby knife
- Kung fu cousin
- Analyzed
- Puts up
- Commands
- Fond du —, Wis.
- Kind of drill
- ER picture (hyph.)
- Woosnam of golf
- Alley from Moo
- Spineless one
- Wire nail
- Dew glistener
- Jingle or limerick
- Cafe handout
- Tokyo, to shoguns
- Venue
- Jiffies
- Wyo. neighbor
- Sleep phenom
- Stretchy fabric
- Jetty
- Hawaii's Mauna —
- Crater Lake locale
- Leave on a trip
- Shining brightly
- Postpones action
- Scram! (2 wds.)
- Speakeasy risk
- Big pitchers

DOWN

- Stage scenery
- Logging tool
- Petrol
- Thespian
- Sound system
- European capital
- Rage
- Chemist's salt
- Jazzy — James
- Weird
- Deborah of old films
- PC button
- Speed up
- Cab costs
- Silly
- Puppy noises
- Apple rival
- Have debts
- Watered silk
- Sellers or Lorre
- Get down
- Slangy physique
- Dues payer, for short
- Napped noisily
- Orbit extreme
- Vexes
- Acquired kin (hyph.)
- Tolerated
- Bradley or Sharif
- "Fernando" band
- Chitchat
- "Rope-a-dope" boxer
- Hot time in Quebec
- Broadcast
- Atlas abbr.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	P	I	C	E		B	O	X	E	D					
S	H	O	O	E		L	O	U	V	R	E				
W	I	L	D	L		P	O	S	I	E	S				
A	V	A	I	L		I	N	S	T						
Y	A	R	N		S	R	S		E	A	R	P			
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S	P	A		A	M	I	N	O		D	I	S			
H	U	B		L	I	T	E	R		A	N	T			
A	M	B	L	E		A	R	K	S						
M	A	Y	A		U	N	D		A	R	A	B			
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A	S	T	E	R	N					L	O	A	M	A	
V	I	E	N	N	A					A	L	M	O	N	D
E	L	A	T	E						B	L	I	N	D	

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