Report from Week 953

in which we printed this filled-in crossword grid, by Bob Klahn of CrossSynergy syndicate, and asked for creative clues to the words and phrases: Some of the clues are omitted below, while others get more than one definition. Just as for many challenging crosswords, you have to use mental flexibility to get some of the clues; for example, the clue for ISH requires you to read it as "I'sh." More clues, along with some help in figuring out the trickier entries, appear in the online Invite at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

2 Winner of the Tupac and animal-poo decks of cards: ACADEMY: Last word in the song “My Aca Lies Over the Ocean” (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)
3 WHATAMES: GOP mantra — drop second “K” for Democrats’ version (Barry Koch, Calif.)
4 GAY: Baby name not in the top 1,000 since 1969 (Robert Gallagher, Charleston, S.C.)

SOS: Proposed currency to replace the euro (Robert Schecter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)
SUREY: Answers Cobb’s question “Did you file my spikes nice and sharp?” (Harold Mantle, Lafayette, Calif.)
ALITO: The Washington Post, (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
WHATAMESS: Italy’s national slogan
WINNER OF THE INKER
BOXED OUT:

ESPERANTO: Even Rosetta Stone won’t claim you’ll speak it like a native (David Ballard, Reston)
COHAN: Solo double (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)
WHATAMES: A female whatam. (Jim Lubelt, Mechanicsville, Md.)
ALITO: What a neon RIDIES sign needs (Nick Yokanovich, Arnold, Md., a First Offender)
YARD: Having only three feet, this critter needs constant care (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)
MALLE: Where to find Ye Olde Navy and Mixed & Taylor (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
N.E.E.: An unfulfilled need (Jeff Contompasis)
M.N.E.E.: Identity thief’s favorite word in your mom’s obit (Pam Sweeney, Burlington, Mass.)

DIES ELOI! ASTRO ESPERANTO COHAN WHATAMES ALITO
WASSER SHAPIRO ADAM AMUSING SEPTEMBER MALLE
ODIE ART GUN SOS NINO SURETY TAYK
QUAGMIRE SMILE ERIN NED SLEEPER DARE
CAR CARESS BILE ADA AGO DELE
ONE LION LEAP E DZINE SUGARLOAF
RELIN EVOLVE WANTED N A NAGE SAY SAY

BY BOB KLAHN

ATE: Common reaction to Cockney pub food (Barr Weiner, Washington)
ODIE: Specialized tool for making Cheerios. (Cathy Lamaze, North Potomac)
ARTGUM: Holder of the Carney cuspids. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
SOS: Italy’s national slogan (Benjamin Yeager, Alexandria, a First Offender)
SOS: Iron Man’s exfoliation pad. (Barbara Turner)

FOG: Hazy recollection found in fogies (Larry Yungk, Arlington)
ONE: Can live as cheaply as one. (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)
THINASARAIL: Metro’s margin of error in cold weather (Steve Glomb, Alexandria)

REUTERS: Reverses a hysterectomy (David Garratt, Glenn Dale; Nan Reiner, Waldorf)

MONONGAHELA: Medical condition in which you have only one nigehaha. (Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md.)
EDDEGLEY: Ed Begley Jr.’s father’s name (Ted Weitzman, Tex.)
SORTA: Mattress doubling as filing cabinet (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
NIL: What most of us remember from Latin class. (Beverly-Sharp)

Next week: Fight Call, or Tiff Competition

2012 FRANTIC ENERGY: Rap-rave outfit Die Antwoord, including Ninja, left, and Yo-Landi Vi$$er, aims to reign some buzz with “Ten$ion.”

Die Antwoord

TENSION

South African rap-rave outfit Die Antwoord got noticed in what has become the usual way, with a viral video that led to a major-label deal and a corresponding amount of blogosphere buzz.

The deal fizzled, the blogosphere moved on, and Die Antwoord, a Cape Town-based trio made up of a DJ, a female singer and a energetically nutty frontman, must now use their second official disc, “Ten$ion,” to address a nagging question: Are they a serious-ish post-post-modern party band, or LMFAO for hipsters?

A little bit of both, as it turns out. “Ten$ion” is an all-encompassing party album that’s better than it needs to be, but not as good as it thinks it is. It doesn’t explore different dance subgenres as much as roll over them in a tank and glitter bomb the ruins. “Ten$ion” is an aural eyesore of Euro-pop, beatboxes, Afro-pop, rave and hit-or-miss skits.

Even the simplest songs are hopelessly complex, with two vocalists (high-voiced, childlike Yo-Landi Vi$$er, who sings, and the group’s supremely confident frontman Ninja, born Watkin Tudor Jones, who raps) performing in two languages, English and the South African language of Afrikaans.

For all its frenetic overbusyness, “Ten$ion” is peppered with great moments, like the primal, percussive “Fatty Boom Boom” (“Taking over America / Blowing up everything,” they enthuse, a trifle optimistically), the trancy-ye “I Fink U Freeky” featuring one of Ninja’s trademark halting raps (He loves, Unlikely, Passes,) or the techno explosion “Baby’s on Fire,” with lyrics so dirty we can’t even quote them in Afrikaans.

— Allison Stewart

THIS WEEK’S CONTEST: WEEK 957

Fearful symmetry

“He who hath smelt likely dealt this, too, eh?”

A couple of years ago, in Week 948, we broadened your vocabulary — the Style Invitational, after all, is The Post’s go-to source for intellectual edification — with a contest for rhopalic sentences: ones in which each word was one letter longer than the previous one. Four weeks later we turned the process around; that time, the successful words were shorter. Now, Loser Craig Dykstra suggests one more variation: Write a clever passage whose successive words are one letter longer until the middle of the passage, and then become one letter shorter, as in Craig’s 2-3-4-5-6-5-4-3-2 example above or vice versa. The passages may be of any length and may be more than one sentence. Compound words joined with hyphens may count as either one or multiple words. A contraction is one word; punctuation doesn’t count as a letter. If the line has an even number of words, the two words in the middle will be the same length; if it’s an odd number, the longest/shortest word will be right in the middle.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a genuine copy of Playboy — in braille — which the Library of Congress distributes. It is big and plain white, except for the name and bunny logo on the cover, and it’s one that you do read for the articles — no braille pictures.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yarmeed for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a treeshaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losmes@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 13; results published March 4 (March 2 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 957” in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week is by Tom Witte; the subhead for this week’s honorable mentions is by Jeff Contompasis. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Et tu, Brute?

BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

By Pat Myers

POP CD REVIEW

Die Antwoord

TENSION

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