

COMICS

'Rasputin' adds love, depth and darkness to Mad Monk's legend

Creators flesh out Russian mystic with a little bit of sympathy

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USA TODAY

The Mad Monk is getting a makeover.

Writer Alex Grecian and artist Riley Rossmo give the influential Russian peasant and mystic Grigori Rasputin a bit of immortality in an adventure full of mystery, murder, magic and even love in the Image Comics series *Rasputin*, which launches Oct. 29.

Grecian describes it as "Dracula in *Downton Abbey*" — set in pre-World War I Russia, the comic mashes up the historical soap opera and all its palatial intrigue and wartime tension with a dark, supernatural monster who takes the ruling class by surprise and turns everything upside down.

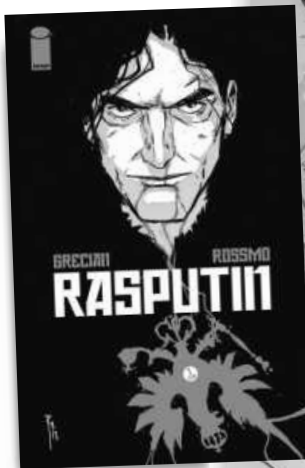
"There's something very sinister about Rasputin, and we're

throwing him into the lives of ordinary people who are just trying to get through the day alive," Rossmo says.

"Some of them won't," adds Grecian, who also worked with Rossmo on *Proof*, which imagined Bigfoot as a secret government agent.

Rasputin is based on true events — the real guy was an adviser to Czar Nicholas II and the ruling Romanov dynasty of the early 20th century. He was said to have helped Prince Alexei through a nasty bout of hemophilia. But the creators veer from history almost immediately, Grecian says.

His and Rossmo's *Rasputin* practiced sex magic and had supernatural powers as he ulti-



RILEY ROSSMO, IMAGE COMICS



"We imagined a Rasputin Johnny Depp or Joaquin Phoenix might play ... before he became crazy and old."

Writer Alex Grecian

mately took control of Russia's royal family and army.

The first issue shows the endpoint of an assassination plot by spies in Britain's MI5 and Rasputin's own court yet quickly jumps back in time to show how the infamous Russian winds up there.

There is espionage and historical fiction in *Rasputin*, yet Grecian, author of the book series *Scotland Yard Murder Squad*, did not want to portray the insane, bearded Rasputin most picture.

"What was he like as a young man? We imagined a Rasputin that Johnny Depp or Joaquin Phoenix might play in a film — the crazy old man before he became crazy and old," he says. "Deconstructing him gave us freedom to create something fresher and more modern."

The comic creators want to explore where Rasputin came from and why he looked so haggard and wild by the end of his life.

"The most enjoyable aspect of this series for us is taking a person who's basically a villain, not really a nice guy at all, and making readers care about him," Rossmo says. "If we do this right, you'll sympathize with him from the very beginning, and you'll have to take a step back in order to figure out that maybe you've sided with the wrong guy."

Adds Grecian: "Or maybe you haven't."

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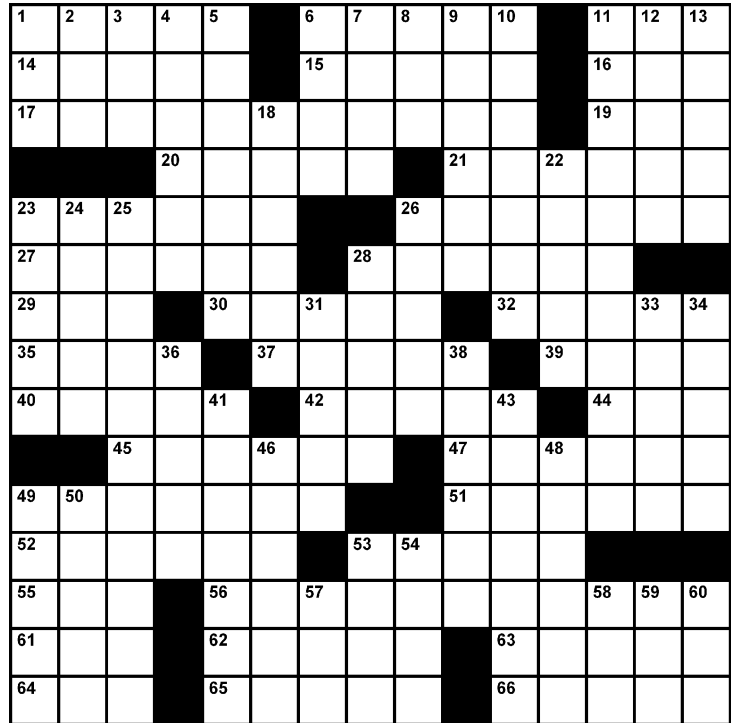
PUZZLES

CROSSWORD

EDITED Timothy Parker
BY Henry Quarters

IT'S DEBATABLE

- ACROSS**
- Hundred-eyed giant
 - Palindromic rulers
 - Mouse catcher
 - Safari sight, briefly
 - On the up and up
 - Last name in hockey legends
 - Thoughtful
 - Maiden-name preceder
 - Chip away at
 - Pilgrimage destinations
 - Hosted
 - Inept
 - Revealed the end to?
 - Like some equations
 - Motel kin
 - Small finch
 - Airheaded (var.)
 - Abbr. after many a general's name
 - Sonata section
 - "Give that ___ cigar!"
 - Flight segment
 - Word after "human"
 - Neither's go-with
 - Old-time vendors
 - One hundredth of a drachma
 - Spoiled
 - Bays
 - Art gum, for one
 - Sleep disruption
 - Sis, to bro
 - House person
 - "Do re mi fa ___ ."
 - Australian
 - Aborigine's call
 - Adult insect
- DOWN**
- Line made with a compass
 - Frat letter
 - Certain card game
 - Invisible
 - After-dinner parties
 - Gravity-powered vehicle
 - "From ___ to Eternity"
 - Khan's title
 - Hired assassin
 - Prepared tea, in a way
 - Symphonic work with solos
 - Bailiwicks
 - Amount of hair
 - Walk unsteadily
 - One can stake it or file it
 - Eastern VIPs
 - "Haystacks" painter
 - Possible to control
 - Delhi tongue
 - Flax fabric
 - Clad, as a judge
 - Schnozzola
 - "The one that got away" and others
 - Chops veggies
 - Doing a web search, e.g.
 - "Cheers" character
 - First Bible book
 - Dark
 - purplish-red
 - TV type
 - Artist's paste
 - Belted constellation
 - Grows older
 - It's hunted
 - Negative word
 - Factor of cosmetics
 - Long, long ___
 - "Smoking or ___?"



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7/10

Wednesday's Answer

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

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WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

7/10

- Find and Circle:
Seven four-letter words starting with W
Birthday ____
Three five-letter words related to bowling
Two dwarf planets
Two words with OO in the middle

Wednesday's answer: GOOD GOLD GOWN GOOP GOAL GOLF / AMERICAN UNITED DELTA / PORTUGAL FRANCE SPAIN / LONG WINDING ROAD / BRADY BUNCH

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes

7/10

"___ Me, Rhonda" [][][][][]

Eurasian mountains [][][][][][][][]

"Lovely ___" [][][][][][]

1985 film, "___ Wolf" [][][][][][][]

2008 film, "The ___ Locker" [][][][][][][][]

Pennsylvania city [][][][][][][]

___ittle_fter_ime_xpected?
[][][][][][][][][][]

(Business [?] ahead)

Wednesday's Answer
TIPS
IDEA
KILL
IDLE

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

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt

7/10

1. THE

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

FEE

Clues:
1. Cold northern region
2. The shallowest of its kind
3. Lobster's home
4. House diagram
5. ___ attack
6. Recently
7. Library penalty

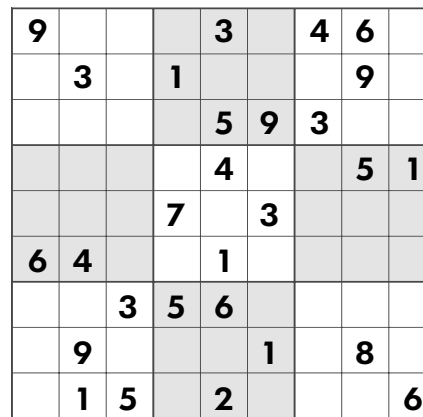
Wednesday's Answer
DENZEL WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON
IRVING
BERLIN
WALL
STREET
CORNER
STORE

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SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

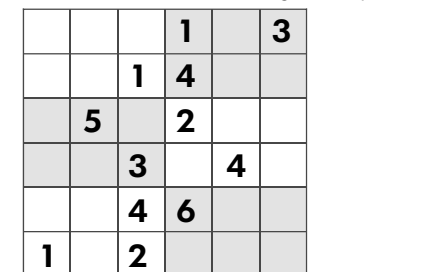


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DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).



DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★★★

Wednesday's Answer

9	1	3	6	4	5	8	7	2
4	7	5	2	3	8	1	6	9
2	6	8	1	9	7	4	3	5
7	3	1	5	6	4	2	9	8
5	2	4	9	8	3	6	1	7
6	8	9	7	1	2	5	4	3
1	4	2	3	5	9	7	8	6
3	5	6	8	7	1	9	2	4
8	9	7	4	2	6	3	5	1

TXTPERT

Across: 1. 26262, 5. 28748639, 6. 697837, 9. 27326
Down: 2. 237473, 3. 29873, 4. 5233, 5. 256633, 7. 7673, 8. 7586

Today's theme: Colors

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C... and 5678 could be LOST

CANBERRA
O A I E
N A I R O B I
A A N O P
K D G R
R O S L O A
Y H T I
K A M P A L A

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DON'T QUOTE ME

Poet Ralph Waldo Emerson talks about trying to impress other people.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
BUY CREAM DARE FRIEND MAKING PLEASANT TRUST WIT

“ WE _____ NOT _____ OUR _____ FOR _____ OUR HOUSE _____ TO OUR _____, SO WE _____ ICE _____.”

Wednesday's Answer: "When you see a married couple walking down the street, the one that's a few steps ahead is the one that's mad." -Helen Rowland

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