CROSSDROMES

LORI WIKE
Salt Lake City, Utah

A few years ago I began making up palindrome riddles for friends in a game I call Name that Palindrome. The answer to each clue in the game is a palindrome phrase of two or more words. Example: Blue vehicle? Answer: Navy van

1. Astronaut headgear?
2. Bitter bug?

This game has led to many hours of fun, both in designing and solving riddles. Following an idea of my bassoonist and palindromist colleague John P. Falcone (also an excellent palindrome riddle and crossdrome designer), I indicate the punctuation and number of letters in each word of the answer phrase for more difficult riddles:

3. Strike sandwich shop following a "well-tempered" nightclub act that disappointed friends? (4 4 5 1 4 7 6 4!)
4. Athenian foe, toss up lunchmeat snares! (7, 2 3 7 5!)

Answers:
1. Space caps
2. Tangy gnat
3. Slap deli after a Bach cabaret failed pals!
4. Spartan, go lob bologna traps!

I wanted to try and develop an overarching structure to the game so that each riddle in a set could be connected to the others in some fashion, rather than having each riddle stand entirely on its own. I initially thought of a crossword grid structure and discarded the idea, based on the fact that it would be next to impossible to design multiple palindrome crossdrome puzzles following the "no unchecked squares" rule of traditional crossword construction. Such a constraint would give one extremely limited possibilities for a palindrome puzzle.

Grid symmetry was another point of hesitation for me. Given that crossdromes already contain a major symmetry constraint in their palindromic answer structure, I initially thought grid symmetry was an unnecessary additional constraint. My first few crossdrome puzzles were 15x15 grids without any attempt at grid symmetry. John Falcone then demonstrated that crossword-style radial symmetry is completely possible by designing a wonderful 11x11 symmetrical crossdrome puzzle. I then decided to discard the traditional crossword ban on unchecked squares, but to keep the rule of grid symmetry, an especially pleasing goal for a palindromist.

The guidelines I have followed in constructing crossdromes are as follows:
All answers are palindromes made up of one or more words, including abbreviations.
Longer phrases need at least two points of intersection with other answers. Each checked square or point of intersection has a doubling effect as it reveals its counterpart in the other half of the palindrome (unless, of course, the checked square is in the exact middle of the palindrome).
Less than half of the squares should be shaded. The puzzle should be filled with as many palindromes as possible.
All answers contain three or more letters. (No need for a million clues about volcano lava and Red Ryder guns!)

Here are two of the crossdromes that I have designed thus far. The first is a 15x15 "Daily" crossdrome and the second is a 21x21 "Sunday" crossdrome. In general, the longer palindrome phrases are of my own construction (to the best of my knowledge); the shorter ones tend to belong to the English language itself. Enjoy!

There was an old woman, as I've heard tell,
Who started for the market her eggs for to sell,
She started for the market all on a market day,
But was held up by a dog on the king's highway.

Find the owner of the dog.
Crossdrome #1 by Lori Wike

Across:
1. Fight waistband bill?
5. Sister
8. Sumerian sun god
10. Take America to court?
12. ___ Offensive
13. Resumé for outdated media device?
14. Band's job
15. Ancient Sanskrit greeting hooks a husband! (A yoga class for singles slogan?)
16. Baby's neckwear
17. ___ a fuss
18. Text messaging service
19. Male and female
20. Photographer Goldin
22. Here, to Pierre
23. Knock out peculiar cop snacks?

Down:
2. This musical break is a trap!
3. Rapper ___ Wayne
4. Home of the Aggies in the Beehive State
6. Student error
7. Demons survived
9. This Washington feline blends into the scenery
11. A week's worth of twilight?
20. ___ composes mentis
21. Type of vegetarian?
Across:
1. Cuff's comrades?
5. Spanish gold
8. ___ Goes the Weasel
9. Midday
10. 1987 Solovyov cult film
12. Film studio with a lion logo
15. Pyridoxal phosphate (abbr.)
16. Intrepid tennis shot?
18. Inuit "woman's knife"
19. Surgical procedure for dad?
20. Music school in NYC
21. Grammy-nominated Three Kings supergroup
23. An expert whispers peculiar gossip, dad!
25. Actress in 22 down
29. Don't do it, Yoko!
30. ___ carte
31. Foolish trend
32. The letter L, in Spain
35. VHS successor
36. ___ est percipi, according to Berkeley
38. Search engine NASDAQ symbol
39. Persona ___ grata
40. Ages Beyond Myst title
41. Famous ill-mannered children

Down:
1. Bro's counterpart
2. Parody: uh-oh!
3. Waterfall near Hilo
4. Toilets are clean, Arthurian land!
6. Entertain Pilsner or Bock?
7. Santa ___ winds
9. Sound-induced wound?
11. Troubles? Submit request for this fragrant Valentine's gift--ouch!
13. Wise men against petroleum fuel?
14. Francis and Benedict against soda?
17. Famous New Zealand dolphin
22. Tell this Brady kid to get some running exercise!
24. Uprising aficionado?
26. Laughter text
27. Offer Dylan or Marley skewered meat?
33. 2013 Uruguayan Oscar entry
34. Growth hormone initials
37. Mayday!