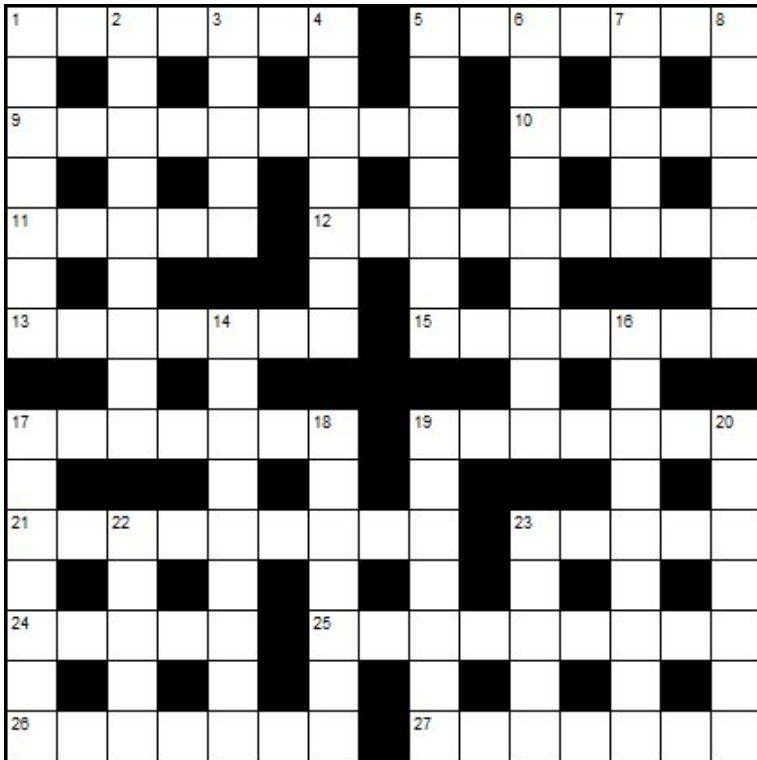


Puzzle by Conto

This debut puzzle from Conto contains a wide assortment of amusing tricks to give the solver an entertaining ride. There are a couple of clever &lit (all in one) clues thrown in for good measure. Favourite clue: 19 across, which made me laugh out loud, and that doesn't happen often. A special mention for 5 across too, for its neatness.



ACROSS

- 1 Before the end of term, school is the focal point of remorseless rifts (7)
 5 Do a class (7)
 9 Sleepy, squirming moles on abandoned nest (9)
 10 Look beside cot made up of small parts (5)
 11 Journalist repeatedly claims "Government won, just" (5)
 12 All of a dither, I came with punt that's air-powered (9)
 13 Wake up in T Rex's front pocket (7)
 15 Study I'm developing for a small fortune (4,3)
 17 American coin (gold) with the King on one side. And its lower half? A horse (7)
 19 For example, Ernie the cow might do this if roles were reversed (7)
 21 That woman will try to find out what's in Molly Malone's wheelbarrow (9)
 23 Made cry, at first, following assault? (5)
 24 Fine-tipped dart (5)
 25 About 100 nameless lionesses playing the triangle? (9)
 26 Say, Arabian and Syrian bothered to return with only two seconds remaining (7)
 27 18 holes within golf's arenas (7)

DOWN

- 1 Feel Colossus' pectoral girdles (7)
 2 Produced here, in line, in garden's borders? (9)
 3,14 One with a keen appetite? (5,9)
 4 What's beneath the train? An unconscious body? (7)
 5 One may be in the GP's waiting room, waiting calmly (7)
 6 One looked up to St Paul's roof (from below), then the top of "Eros", in turn (4,5)
 7 Golden piece of chewing gum? (5)
 8 In short, modern music – pointlessly grotesque? It is a little (7)
 14 See 3
 16 Mark half of tract (9)
 17 Yellow gloopy stuff forming a crust on diamonds (7)
 18 Dried fruit and Algerian pop? These are transgressions against Allah? (7)
 19 Game John plays in which a character (eastern) is discarded? (3-4)
 20 They're often naked, and endlessly diss "crazy clothes" (7)
 22 Takes home each lot of sailors and soldiers, to begin with (5)

23 Barely distinguishable sound of Conto's bird (5)