

Do the Math

TO KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR PROPERLY, I'm offering another puzzle from the team of Bob Fink and Jerry Miccolis. It's getting too confusing for me to title the column differently than the puzzle, so "Do the Math" is all there is. Here is their introduction to a puzzle I think you'll enjoy:

Happy New Year! The first part of this puzzle is a straight-forward cryptic—except that, in the midst of all the holiday festivities, we've neglected to number the Across clues or put them in their proper order. So, that part's up to you.

There is one proper noun (and another that could be, but isn't clued that way). All other grid entries are playable in Scrabble. As always, beware of punctuation, which has been known to deceive.

Now, if you figured there's more to the proceedings than just filling in the grid, you figured right! Your submission should also include the timely four-character solution that the completed grid prompts you to derive. Specifically, you'll need to find five key, symmetrical-placed entries and complete their implied actions. Then, you'll need to subject your five results to certain operations that can be found hidden within four interweaving (and also symmetrically-placed) entries. As they say in math class, be sure to show your work!

As a bonus, you'll earn a champagne toast (with, perhaps, a ceremonial dumping), not to mention a shout-out in the next issue, if you correctly complete the payoff phrase by reordering four remaining entries—of the same orientation as

the nine you've already utilized—to fill in the blanks. The payoff phrase is tied to the four-character solution.

Let us know if you used any of the hints that we've posted upside-down in the box below.

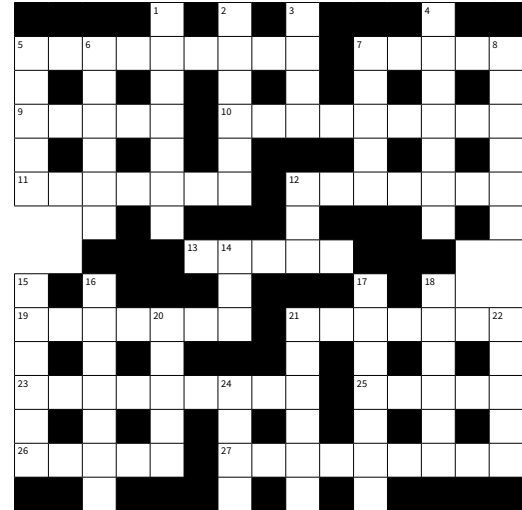
Thanks to Tom Toce and Eric Klis for test-solving this puzzle and offering valuable editorial advice.

Across

- Governor imprisons General to establish undisputed term of power (5)
- Actress MacDowell, after Elijah initially gets cast, confronts director Howard to make a "Fire Wood!" stand (7)
- Cryptic clue: "Sin(mu) is very small" (9)
- OKs start of ballad and Les croons (9)
- Porcelain cups not available after Bulls' appearance in arena (5)
- Oren, while not taking sides, joined team near the end and conformed (7)
- Aggressive go-getter takes up residence in district I gerrymandered (5)
- Doug, stopping short, gushed, "Made it to second base!" (7)
- Grieves without embracing Ike (7)
- Audibly consumed wrap on Buddhist path (9)
- A fact Lori misconstrued concerning a machine shop (9)
- Alien seen in the buff returning for shower (5)
- Hexahedron-shaped copper crib (5)

Down

1. Located redcoats' leader close to Valley Forge (7)
2. Kidded about a condom's texture (6)
3. After taking finals, docudrama pupil to write treatment for Burns (4)



4. Tortures a group of Spielberg's treasure-hunting kids that lost ring (7)
5. Axes made from tree and extremely sharp heads (5)
6. Mouse activity heard in club (6)
7. Shocked and mocked, losing last bit of composure (5)
8. Endure Twisted Sister (6)
12. Observe bishop's jurisdiction (3)
14. Get paid for singing in jar (3)
15. Defile Apple model on runway (6)
16. Yemen's provisional capital before Original Issue Discount? It can take your breath away after inflation! (7)
17. Oh, you texting fools! Fools! (7)
18. Well-lit fine mark above drawing (6)
20. Dreadlocked Jamaican announces team's make-up in Boston? (5)
21. Remove sand from physician on shore (6)
22. Challenged prosecutor Rose (5)
24. Drug addict in American trauma center (4)

Solution:

--	--	--	--

Bonus Payoff Phrase:

The _____ of the _____ in _____

HINTS

Hint 1: The Across clues, in the order presented, relate to grid entries 9, 19, 23, 10, 26, 11, 7, 21, 12, 27, 5, 25, and 13, respectively.

Hint 2: The "implied actions" that need to be completed on the five "key, symmetrical-placed entries" involve the grid entry numbers as operands.

Hint 3: The four hidden "operations" are simple arithmetic operations and can be found near or at the beginning of the Across entries 10, 12, 19, and 23.