

People & Places

Books

'Strong' new thriller

Oprah's O Mag to end regular print editions

LOS ANGELES, July 28, (AP): O, The Oprah Magazine is ending its regular monthly print editions with the December 2020 issue after 20 years of publication.

The brand, which is among the most recognizable magazines in the US, is not going away but will become more "more digitally-centric," a Hearst spokeswoman Monday said. There will be "some form of print" after the December issue "but what it is exactly is still being worked out," she said.

Oprah Winfrey launched O with Hearst in 2000 and today is the editorial director. "I'm proud of this team and what we have delivered to our readers over the past 20 years," Winfrey said in a statement provided by Hearst. "I look forward to the next step in our evolution."

Hearst declined to answer why it was dropping the regular print edition, saying only it was a "natural next step" for the brand. Magazines have been trying to grow their digital properties as print advertising shrinks and people spend more time online.

The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has further hurt print advertising sales, with research firm Magna in June predicting a 23% drop for US national magazines this year.

On its website, O Magazine says it has a total audience of 10 million, while industry tracker Alliance for Audited Media said the magazine had a total circulation of about 2.3 million as of the last six months of 2019.

Hearst, a private company, is in the midst of executive turmoil. The president of Hearst Magazines, Troy Young, resigned abruptly last week after the New York Times reported on sexist comments he made at work. Hearst named its CFO, Debi Chirichella, as acting president of Hearst Magazines, which publishes major magazines including Elle, Esquire, Cosmopolitan and Good Housekeeping. Hearst's other businesses include local TV stations, newspapers and ratings agency Fitch.

Winfrey, meanwhile, is busy with her deal with Apple TV Plus, which launched in fall 2019 as one of a slew of new streaming services from tech and entertainment companies aiming to challenge Netflix for viewers' attention.

Famous for her long-running TV talk show that ended in 2011, Winfrey has a new talk show debuting Thursday on Apple's service called "The Oprah Conversation." She also has two other series on Apple TV Plus, "Oprah Talks COVID-19" and "Oprah's Book Club."



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"Strong from the Heart," by Jon Land (Forge)

Fans of Jon Land's thrillers featuring fifth-generation Texas Ranger Caitlin Strong will be pleased to hear that the new book in the series is a lot like the first 10 as the hero, a cross between Wild Bill Hickok and Wonder Woman, dispatches a series of Bond-villain wannabes with extravagant use of gun play and explosives.

"Strong of Heart" does differ from its predecessors in one respect, however: It is better written. Clumsy sentences that cropped up in the earlier works are not much in evidence this time.

The action begins when Caitlin is dispatched to the little Texas desert town of Camino Pass, where all but one of its 288 residents have perished from unknown causes. Meanwhile, her lover — former bad guy Cort Wesley Masters — is on a rampage against illegal pill mills responsible for his youngest son's near-fatal drug overdose. From the get-go, fans of this formulaic, action-packed series will suspect that the mysterious deaths and the pill mills are somehow related — and they'll be right.

Also, as always, Caitlin's investigation has a hidden connection to a case handled by one of her Ranger ancestors. This time, it's her great grandfather William Ray Strong, who once joined forces with Mexican bandit Pancho Villa at Camino Pass to battle a Chinese cross-border drug gang.

Land's crew of colorful characters from previous books are in evidence, including Caitlin's often exasperated commander D.W. Tepper, a mysterious Homeland Security agent whose real name is unknown, and a former South American desert squad commander who has become Caitlin's guardian angel.

This time around, the bad guys are part of a Specter-like conspiracy with powerful Washington, D.C., connections, but nothing can save them from the righteous wrath of Caitlin and Masters in a conclusion as violent and destructive as the climax of any James Bond movie.

Also:

LONDON: Best-selling British novelist Hilary Mantel and American author Anne Tyler are among 13 writers on a US-dominated list of contenders for the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction.

Mantel was named among competitors for the 50,000-pound (\$63,000) literary prize Tuesday for the "The Mirror and the Light," the third installment in her trilogy about Tudor power broker Thomas Cromwell. She won the Booker for both its predecessors, "Wolf Hall" and "Bring up the Bodies."

American contenders include Tyler for "Redhead by the Side of the Road," Diane Cook for "The New Wilderness," Avni Doshi for "Burnt Sugar," Kiley Reid for "Such a Fun Age," Brandon Taylor for "Real Life," and C. Pam Zhang for "How Much of These Hills is Gold."

British writers on the list are Gabriel Krauze for "Who They Was," Douglas Stuart for "Shuggie Bain" and Sophie Ward for "Love and Other Thought Experiments." Rounding out the longlist are "Apeirogon" by Ireland's Colum McCann; "This Mournable Boy" by Zimbabwe's Tsitsi Dangarembga and "The Shadow King" by Ethiopian-American writer Maaza Mengiste.

The prize, subject to intense speculation and a flurry of betting, usually brings the victor a huge boost in sales and profile.

A six-book shortlist will be announced Sept. 15, and the Booker winner will be revealed in November.

NEW YORK: A new literary award with a \$50,000 cash prize will honor those best at telling a New York story.

The Gotham Literary Prize, announced Thursday, came out of a conversation between businessman-philanthropist Bradley Tusk and political strategist Howard Wolfson, who told The Associated Press that they first thought of the award last year and saw a renewed urgency for it after the spread of the coronavirus.



La Scala general manager Dominique Meyer poses at the end of a press conference to present the fall 2020 program of concerts and ballets in Milan, Italy on July 27. The presentation marks the reopening of one of the world's most renowned theaters following the coronavirus lockdown as well as support of artists who were left without work during the shutdowns. (AP)

Music

Cultural life resumes after virus lockdowns

La Scala announces fall season

Keeping New York alive amid pandemic, one song at a time

By Jaime Holguin

MILAN, July 28, (AP): The famed La Scala opera house on Monday announced a fall program of concerts and ballets aimed as a signal of confidence that European cultural life can resume in full following the coronavirus lockdowns, and in support of artists who were left out of work during the shutdowns.

La Scala's musical director, Riccardo Chailly, will launch the season Sept. 4 by conducting Verdi's Requiem in Milan's Duomo dedicated to victims of the coronavirus, followed by dates in Bergamo and Brescia, in solidarity with two of the hardest-hit provinces in the Lombardy region that has accounted for nearly half of Italy's dead and nearly 40% of all confirmed infections. Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala praised the decision to reprise the Requiem in the two-hard hit provinces, saying "in a region that had nearly 17,000 dead, it had deep meaning." The Sept. 4 concert will also be broadcast in churches throughout the region.

The theater itself will reopen on Sept. 12 with a performance reserved for health care workers of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with its optimistic "Ode to Joy" movement. The limited calendar runs through Dec. 5, when La Scala's former musical director, Daniel Barenboim, returns to the theater for a piano concert. Chailly will conduct 14 dates this fall, while Zubin Mehta takes on 12.

The fall program is envisioned in two parts, with distancing rules in play both on and off stage through Oct. 21, followed by a full opening of the theater, with productions and seating both normalized. That will mean two operas, La Traviata and Aida, will be presented as concerts in the first half, while La Bo-

heme will be fully staged in November. A ballet featuring principal dancers including Roberto Bolle will be performed as a gala, before Giselle is staged in full.

"I am optimistic," general manager

To a wide-eyed 23-year-old from Las Cruces, New Mexico, New York offered unexpected adventures and limitless possibilities. Inspiration was always around the corner.

One night I ended up in the basement of the fabled CBGB, rubbing elbows with Iggy Pop, Joey Ramone and Neil Young while watching Sonic Youth perform a private set. Another evening, I landed in a makeshift studio, deploying my nascent recording skills for a session with Gordon Gano of the Violent Femmes.

New York's serendipitous moments have long been fueled by the streets and subway tunnels, its arteries. These great equalizers compel coexistence, pushing inhabitants into its daily motion, fabric and swell. What is left when the people — the hemoglobin in this multicultural organism — disappear? Does New York die?

I decided to keep my city alive by revisiting my relationship with it one audio file at a time. Each box I opened yielded a different medium, a different state of mind. My first instrument was the microcassette recorder. I'd play it like a turntable, jerking the forward/reverse switch to "scratch" the sounds I'd collect — from a radiator to a frozen lake to a revving engine. (AP)

Dominique Meyer said. "It is clear we can't do the traditional theater from the beginning, but we will do our best so that these emotions of the theater can be rediscovered as soon as possible."



This undated handout photo released on July 25 by the Royal Communications, shows artist Miriam Escofet after unveiling her painting of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. The painting was commissioned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), as a 'lasting tribute to her service' to diplomacy. The Queen paid a virtual visit to the FCO via video call, to hear about their response to the COVID-19 outbreak and join the official unveiling of the new portrait painting. (AP)



Depp



Wootton

Variety

ATHENS, Greece: A point of pride for Greece was touched by controversy Monday, as the country's prime minister was criticized by an opposition party for using a military helicopter during a trip to celebrate with Tom Hanks and his wife, Rita Wilson, on being granted Greek citizenship.

In an Instagram post on Sunday, Prime Minister Kyriakos shared a photograph of showing him and his wife Mareva Grabowski-Mitsotaki at a meeting with Hanks and Wilson, who were holding up their new Greek passports.

"Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks are now proud Greek citizens," Mitsotakis wrote in the post. Greece offered citizenship to Hanks, Wilson, and their two children, in recognition of the family's help in raising funds for the victims of a deadly wildfire near Athens in 2018. Wilson, an actress and producer, has Greek and Bulgarian ancestry.

Government spokesman Stelios Petsas said Monday that the prime minister and his wife had used a commercial flight on Saturday to travel to the island of Paros, and then traveled to nearby Antiparos, where Hanks and Wilson have a holiday home. They then used a military helicopter for a trip to the ancient theater of Epidaurus on Sunday to watch a performance of an ancient tragedy.

The main left-wing opposition Syriza party accused the prime minister of using Greece's military helicopters like a "personal radio taxi."

Petsas argued that Mitsotakis was performing his duties as prime minister by attending an "important cultural event."

Neither Petsas nor Syriza referred to Hanks by name. (AP)

LONDON: A lawyer for British tabloid The

Sun claimed Monday that Johnny Depp was "a hopeless addict" whose violence toward ex-wife Amber Heard was fueled by misogyny and a toxic combination of drink, drugs, jealousy and anger.

Attorney Sasha Wass was summing up

at Depp's libel case against the newspaper over an article alleging he physically abused Heard — a high-stakes celebrity trial in which the reputations of both former spouses are at stake.

Depp is suing News Group Newspapers,

publisher of The Sun, and the newspaper's executive editor, Dan Wootton, at the High Court in London over an April 2018 article, which called him a "wife-beater." He strongly denies being violent to Heard.

The case was due to end Tuesday, but judge Andrew Nicol is not expected to deliver his ruling for several weeks.

"There is no doubt that Mr Depp regularly and systematically abused his wife," Wass said in her closing argument. "The characterization that he is a wife beater is entirely truthful."

She said Depp was "a hopeless addict who repeatedly lost his self-control and all ability to restrain his anger."

"Permeating all of the evidence in this case is the character of Mr Depp himself — his well-documented evidence of violence and destruction over his adult life which have occurred when he was under the influence of drink and drugs."

Depp, 57, and Heard, 34, met on the set of the 2011 comedy "The Diary" and married in Los Angeles in February 2015. Heard filed for divorce the following year, and the divorce was finalized in 2017.

The former spouses have both been in court throughout three weeks of testimony at the grand neo-Gothic court building, though Depp did not attend on Monday.

Lawyers, journalists and members of the public, spread across several video-linked courtrooms to allow for social distancing, have heard lurid details of the couple's tempestuous relationship. (AP)



In this Oct 16, 2012 file photo, Hilary Mantel, winner of the Man Booker Prize for fiction, poses with her prize for the photographers shortly after the award ceremony in central London. Mantel and American author Anne Tyler are among 13 writers on a US-dominated list of contenders for the prestigious Booker Prize for fiction. (AP)