

Favourite Festive Casualties

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Above all, the existence of drunken unreality makes reality, with its dullness, unhappiness, stress and a certain end, almost tolerable, even enjoyable. The sneaky thing about alcohol is that it likes to distract your brain so it can mug your liver.

Every New Year's Eve for a decade I was playing in a band somewhere in Australia. The good part was you got to earn four times as much as any other night of the year. The bummer was that the gigs often went on 'til 3am, while the crowd was already completely pissed by 6pm. Everyone was hosed out at dawn.

While the lead singer tended to avoid substances that made him feel smarter,

stronger or better looking than he knew he was, the backing vocalist took any substance she could lay her hands on for exactly the opposite reasons. There were, in the lead singer's opinion, drugs that diminished ego and drugs that engorged ego, meaning, there are revelatory drugs and delusory drugs. On a psychic level, he favoured awe over swagger. For a purely mild diversion, he lent on alcohol. "I'm a much better person when I've had a few." "And a much worse singer," we chorused.

What's more, being in a band, he was conditioned to continue his dynasty. He had plenty of sex, but rarely in places that would do him or the resulting offspring any good.

work at weekends: Abandoned: could destroy partner's self-confidence.
Spend less: What? And cause an economic downturn?

As anyone over 15 would admit, New Year's Eve hangovers can be seismic. An extract from the new diary, dated January 3: "I awoke to the sensation of a bludgeoned Orc eating Kellogg's Special K in the centre of my brain. The Orc, which possessed an outsize Walkman turned to maximum volume, was listening to a CD of Elf-ish classics, remixed by Fatboy Slim's Albanian counterpart. I felt for my tongue, which tasted of out-of-date butterscotch and talcum powder. Both had apparently been applied with an old lavatory brush.

Have you ever kept a personal account of the New Year resolutions you failed to keep? I have, unfortunately.

Here's the casualty list from a 2000 diary:

Read Proust: Filtered through a translation, it isn't really Proust; grated through my French, it isn't really anything.

Early to bed, early to rise: Getting up half asleep and going to bed wide awake produced no dividends in health, wealth or wisdom.

Be more assertive: Only led to people being more assertive back.

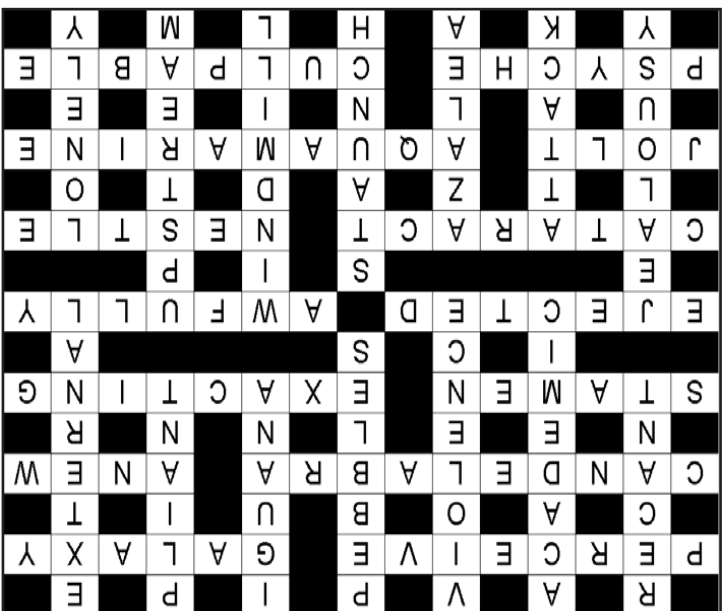
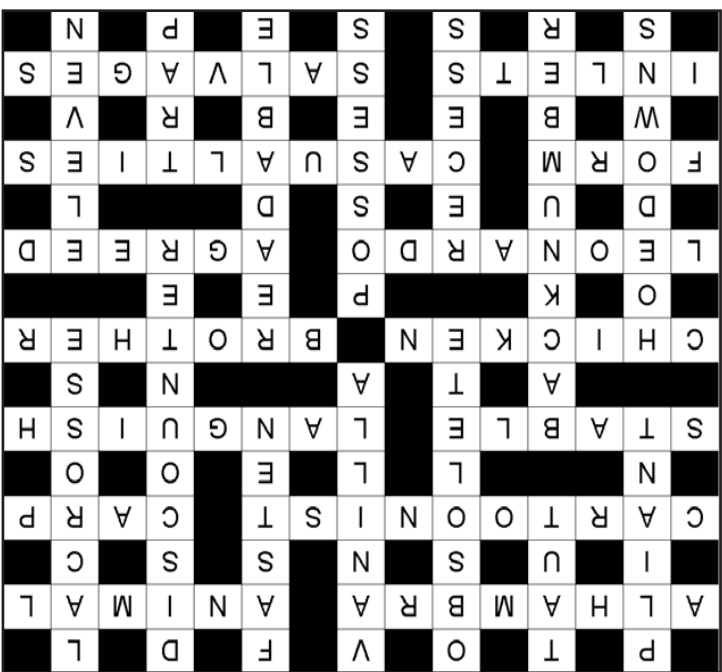
Take over house-

"Are you all right?" my partner had asked. All right? No. Some bastard appears to have stuck cheap cellophane over my eyes. But my powers of speech were located somewhere near my knees, and, as I forced them in the direction of my mouth, I found that they brought with them small balls of straw that had been greased with lard. It was then that I discovered that my head had been nailed to the table with a plastic tent-peg.

You could of course refrain from any alcoholic beverages at all, spend four hours in heavy traffic to watch some fireworks and arrive home exhausted rather than exhilarated.

Or you could nip down to Masseuses Sans Frontieres in Klong Toei for that definitive rub and tug to rid the body of the last remnants of the passing year.

Predictions for 2004? None. These matters require advance enlightenment. But then, if I could see the future, I'd probably start my own religion.



Answers from Page 15

Cryptic Crossword - left: Number Crossword - bottom: One Weigh to Go - below

To complete the task in one weighing, take one coin from the first box, two from the second and so on. Now when the coins are weighed, the number of 1/15ths light will tell us which box contains the counterfeits. For example if it was box 5, the weighing would be 5/15 too light.