

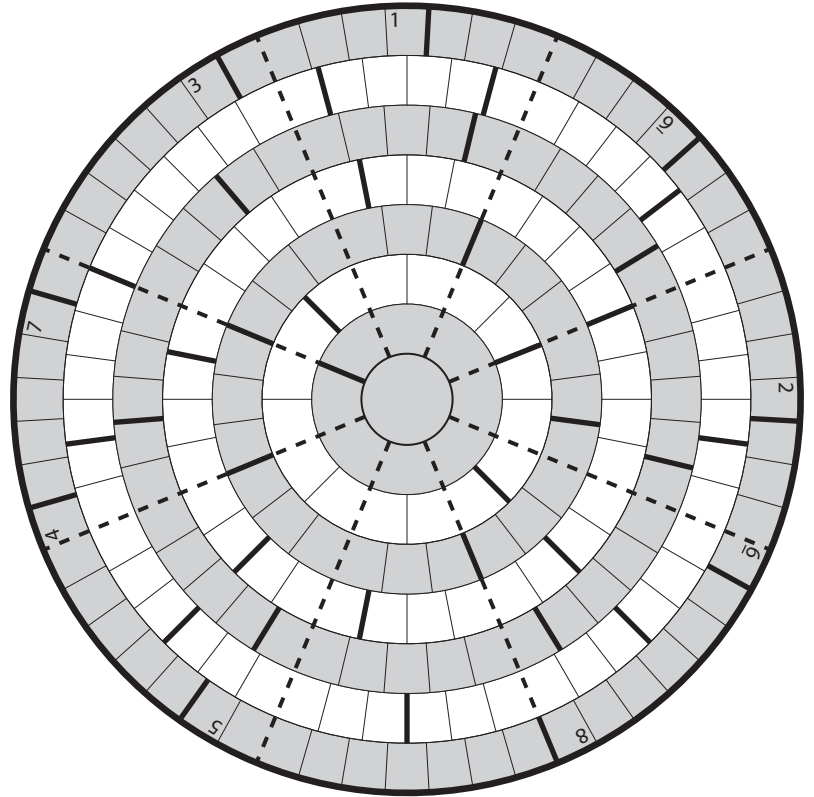
BANG!

by Mark Halpin

As the misfits and miscreants of *Assassins* could attest, sometimes when you take your shot, you end up shooting blanks. Fifteen of this puzzle's clues similarly miss the mark, containing missing elements which must be filled into the blanks in order to read the clues correctly.

Answers are to be entered in the concentric rings of the target, in an order to be determined by the solver. All answers in a given ring will run in the same direction, which may be either clockwise or counterclockwise. The clues for each ring are given in alphabetical order of that ring's answers. The positions of the outermost answers, which run counterclockwise, are given. As an aid in placing the answers, within any of the eight sectors delineated in the target by dashed lines, the letters of a given ring segment will contain all but one of the letters from the next segment outward, in some order.

Sometimes one achieves one's aim. Part of a Sondheim lyric celebrating this fact can be found along one axis of the filled grid. The lyric may be completed along the perpendicular axis by accurately firing a single well-chosen letter into the bull's-eye.



Ring One (Outermost)

- 1 Opening passages in operatic song about Troy (5)
- 2 Triumphs in maneuvering at sea inside gutted boat (7; 2 wds)
- 3 E.g. economi__ line of work preceded by head for business (7)
- 4 Youth opting for flight, one car and __aving first taken off (6)
- 5 Most fine or most sore after gym class? (9)
- 6 TV doctor's stuff that's listened to (4)
- 7 Some are guilty of unforgiveable lapse (5)
- 8 in hindsight, empty gallery is old-fashioned and dull (6)
- 9 Squat, backward troll is like an *Into The Woods* character (7)

Ring Two

- Keen Colorado native on the heels of means to keep cool (5)
- Noted mountains not quite completely as an afterthought (4)
- Nude featured in outré act in nightclub (7)
- Some cattle yours truly supplied to those w__ saw Venice (6)
- Christmas comedy featuring life story is, in retrospect, failing (6)
- __e up front in seat for rock musical (4)
- Quick: is good man briefly pursuing duo last seen in Oma__! (5)
- He__t by slurs, primarily those full of loathing (6)
- Somewhat missing home, son knocks (5)

Ring Three

- A bat is flying in Corsican port town (6)
- "\$1000 in body damage?! [oath]!!!" (5; 2 wds)
- Handles pole, moving front to back (5)
- Comrade to serve perfectly in posh abode (6)
- S__ribly showing *E.T.* with a whole new set of actors (6)
- Short hiatus in which two swap therapeutic massage (7)
- Foremost of wildlife getting Leah __e marine mammal (5)

Ring Four

- Grab a case full of hemp plants (6)
- Five hundred treated ebola, within the realm of possibility (6)
- Identify 62.5% of sugar pills (5)
- Was i__d tequila initially husband joined at a table? (7; 2 wds)
- Affected a__g leader described in pen (5)
- Expose lurid psychic Geller (3)

Ring Five

- Finally qui__er lab's devastated in explosion (5)
- Res__ustic moniker for a fellow (6)
- New York town with a cantilevered bridge (6)
- Where you might position a PC circuit (3)
- In every other instance, cybor__raining from the East (4)

Ring Six

- Jolson and I cry at sad dispatch (8)
- Strange, tacit story that's elevated above all others? (5)
- Yak starting to graze __ay in just a little bit (3)

Ring Seven (Innermost)

- Admiration expressed for __el muddied trial about label (8)