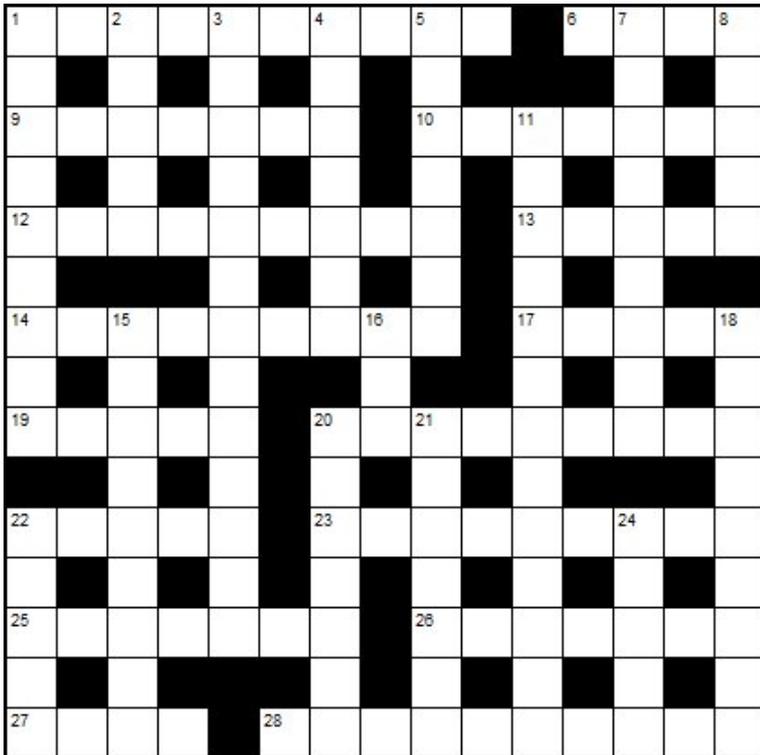


Puzzle by Starhorse

This is an excellent debut from Starhorse. He combines smooth surfaces with some very neat wordplay and a wide variety of clueing techniques. My favourites were 12 and 27 across and 3 and 24 down.



ACROSS

- 1 Europeans isolated and far from agreeable (5,5)
- 6 A bonus for every thousand (4)
- 9 One turned out to trespass (7)
- 10 Competent secretary featured in *Telegraph* (7)
- 12 Duck on hearing order from Armada's leader? (9)
- 13 Clubs offering endless satire opening in September (5)
- 14 Induces colleague of Marx to embrace objective and swap sides (9)
- 17 Reject story about Conservative glory (5)
- 19 Holly possibly needs a massage after tennis match finishes (5)
- 20 Win communist backing for confiscation of land (9)
- 22 Government activists initially following Tory party line? (5)
- 23 Brightened up extremely benign Rushdie novel (9)
- 25 Home rule is lawful (2,5)
- 26 Show eager support when hospital application is led by one if its departments (7)
- 27 It's not odd unless son is in the lead (4)
- 28 Genre of films covering medical drama for those in Europe or America? (10)

DOWN

- 1 Pagan leader's mysterious site exposed in the media (9)
- 2 Carefree, topless and graceful (5)
- 3 Someone to approach for an opinion re. clue for "uninterested"? (8,5)
- 4 English Queen in call for honour (7)
- 5 Fiddles a game (7)
- 7 Doctor angry about nothing after drug's mixed up (9)
- 8 Detains spy heading north then south (5)
- 11 May perhaps get ready to attend (5,8)
- 15 Reloading fancy candle-holder (9)
- 16 Soak in rosewater, regularly (3)
- 18 Note evidence of sunburn and fatigue (9)
- 20 Nice hostelry in France, to the east, visited by Austrian composer (7)

- 21 Peak cost of borrowing leads to outburst (7)
- 22 Rebuke accepted by French idealist (5)
- 24 Accommodate husband - a waste of space? (5)