

Spy caper 'Argylle' so bad it's baffling

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TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

For months, one question has plagued moviegoers: "who is the real Agent Argylle?" It's a query posed by Samuel L. Jackson in the ubiquitous trailer for Matthew Vaughn's spy action-comedy "Argylle," though there are more pressing questions that the trailer presents, like, "who thought a flat-top on Henry Cavill was a good idea?" and, "why are we spelling argylle with two Ls?"

Alas, those latter questions remain a mystery, but the film does take up the former, delving into the convoluted identity of the real Agent Argylle for an absolutely unbearable 2 hours and 19 minutes. It's remarkable really, "Argylle" has bone-deep structural issues on a fundamental level, but it is also a failure of directorial execution from top to bottom, resulting in what has to be one of the most expensive worst movies ever made. It's honestly fascinating, this thing should be studied in a lab.

Alas, this review will have to do. The good news is that there are a



Peter Mountain/Universal Pictures/Apple Original Films/MARV/TNS

From left, Henry Cavill, Dua Lipa and John Cena in "Argylle."

couple of bright spots in "Argylle," amongst all the digital green-screen dreck. The first is that it does have an amusing premise, which is that a mousy, anxiety-ridden spy novelist, Elly Conway (Bryce Dallas Howard), gets swept up in a real-life globe-trotting espionage plot and it turns out she's actually pretty good at it. She's like if Jason Bourne were a cat lady, or if the Sandra Bullock vehicle "The Lost City" was less funny. Triangulate your

expectations somewhere around there, and then toggle them even lower.

Also, it is a real treat to see Sam Rockwell on screen again, doing his Sam Rockwell thing (dancing, being rakishly charming, holding down the emotional center of this airless train wreck). Rockwell plays Aidan, a real spy, not a fictional one, who scoops Elly off a train en route to her parents' house. He informs her that her wildly popular spy novels,

following the adventures of Agent Argylle (the aforementioned flat-top Henry Cavill) are eerily prescient about real-world espionage events.

Aidan is racing the nefarious organization "the Division" to capture Elly. They both want to uncover her final chapter and the whereabouts of a microchip from a hacker. What's on the microchip? That doesn't matter, what matters is Elly learning to get over her fear of flying, anxious attachment to

Review

'Argylle'
Rated PG-13
139 minutes
★ (OUT OF FOUR)

her cat Alfie, whom she totes around in a backpack, embracing her own power, and of course, dancing with Sam Rockwell. The hacker is just the MacGuffin.

Now for the bad news, which is a lot. The script, by Jason Fuchs, is excessively repetitive and wordy with the exposition and themes, and Vaughn doesn't bother with any "show don't tell" visual storytelling, saving all his image-making for a few wildly outlandish and silly action sequences. Of course, if you've seen a "Kingsman" movie, you know this is his thing, but with a lot more blood geysers. Since "Argylle" is PG-13, everything is bloodless, tame and juvenile.

"But it's fiction!" One could argue, "It's supposed to be fantastical!" But half the movie is not fiction - we can excuse the common-sense-

defying action for the sequences when Henry Cavill and pop star Dua Lipa shred their vehicles through a hilly Greek village because it's what's on Elly's page. You can see what they're going for when Cavill's Argylle starts mumbling through Elly's writer's block.

But the rest of it, "in the real world," should feel more real, and nothing about this movie feels even remotely grounded. It feels like everyone is in this movie - Bryan Cranston, Jackson, Ariana DeBose, Catherine O'Hara, John Cena, Richard E. Grant - and yet no one is in this movie at all. Each actor, aside from Howard and Rockwell, has a median average of five minutes on screen, usually spent in some inordinately cavernous room with two extras wandering around (the film was shot in June 2021, and it shows).

"Argylle" looks as flimsy and cheap as the ghoulish gold gown poor Howard has to wear for the film's third act (heinous crimes against costume design and hair-styling have been

See Argylle, Page B5

Vagina

From Page B1

ties and other differences. The play debuted in 1996. It remains relevant today, Andrews said.

"I believe it will always be relevant," she shared in the email. "It's not a stagnant piece, and it's constantly evolving as society evolves.

"There will always be women who are afraid to ask questions, or even talk about their bodies. This show not only covers many important topics, but may also help some women not feel alone.

"But this show is not just for women. I encourage men to see it to get a clear perspective of what many women go through. These monologues start conversations, important conversations, uncomfortable conversations. I believe it is the uncomfortable conversations that help us learn and grow."

Andrews calls her fellow castmates "amazing, intelligent and strong women." She has worked with all of them. They are Amberly Palmer-Bailley, Gina Decker, Linda

James, Stephanie Ruiz and Jennifer Ray.

"Our audiences are going to love them," Andrews wrote. "Barbara Norris is our brilliant director, and we too have worked together in the past."

There were several reasons Andrews wanted to be part of the show, including returning to performing and stepping outside her comfort zone.

"I started out as a dancer at a young age and fell in love with musical theatre, which I have done most of my life. This opportunity came along at the right time and I was ready for the challenge," she wrote.

Her next project is choreographing "Anything Goes" for Solano College Theatre.

Andrews has been choreographing and performing for more than 40 years, including Lucky Penny's "Miracle on 34th Street" musical; Vallejo Music Theatre's "Gypsy" and several Solano College Theatre productions including "How to Succeed in Business" and "Grease."

Some of her favorite performing credits include Beggar Woman in "Sweeney Todd" and Dotty Otley/Mrs. Clackett

in "Noises Off." Both were Solano College Theatre productions.

"The Vagina Monologues" serves as the centerpiece of V-Day, a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. February is Teen Dating Violence

Awareness Month.

"The Empowerment Project is honored to be chosen as a partner for the upcoming presentation of 'The Vagina Monologues,'" said Sonia McClellin, the organization's founder and president, in press materials.

"The mission of The Empowerment Project, which is to bring awareness about intimate partner abuse in order to stop the cycle of domestic violence, is right in line with Eve Ensler's mission."

"I'm so pleased and happy that On Stage Vacav-

ille has chosen SafeQuest Solano to support through their production of "The Vagina Monologues," said executive director Mary Anne Branch, in press materials. "I've attended the play several times. It's a great comedy and well worth seeing."

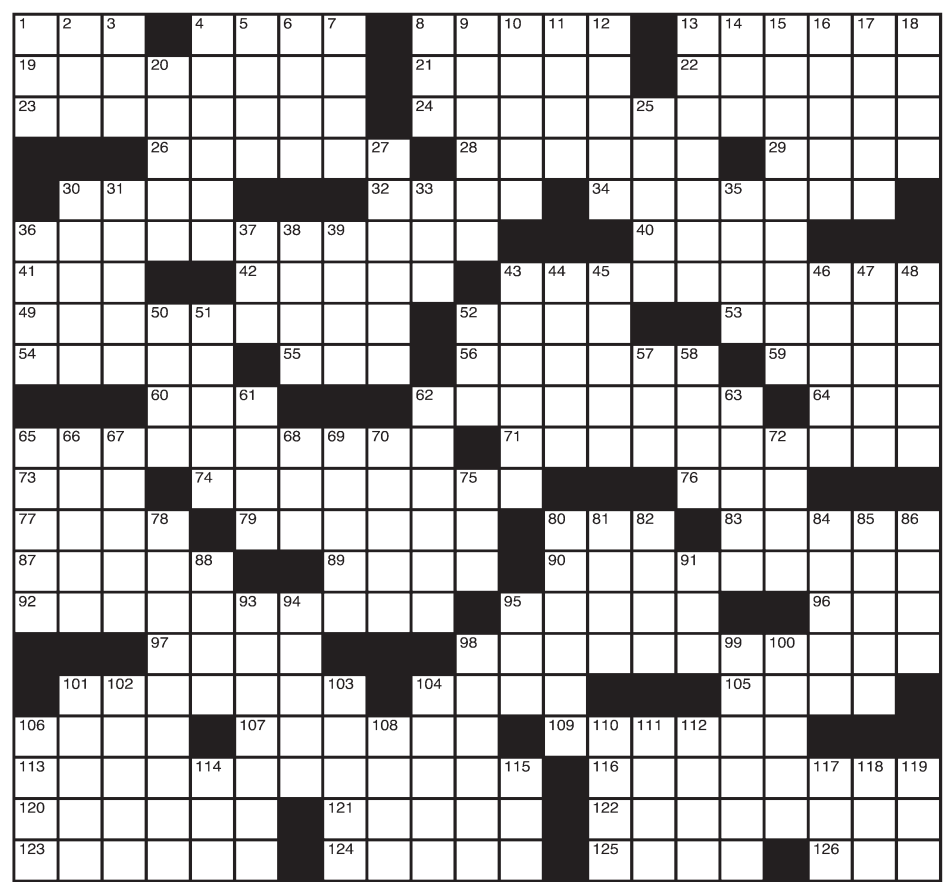
Los Angeles Times Sunday Crossword Puzzle

Edited by Patti Varol

SIGNS OF THE TIME By Zhouqin Burnikel

ACROSS

- 1 Muscles toned by planks
- 4 Does, e.g.
- 8 Goes out swinging?
- 13 Longest reptile in the world
- 19 "Gosh, that was a long time ago"
- 21 Buck in the Baseball Hall of Fame
- 22 Bring back on board
- 23 "Canaries"
- 24 "Bar food served with blue cheese and vegetable sticks"
- 26 Gets slippery
- 28 Patronize, as a hotel
- 29 Hush-hush docs
- 30 Bundle of hay
- 32 Caustic cleaners
- 34 Enter stealthily
- 36 "Orange flowers that represent wealth in some Asian traditions"
- 40 ___ Domani: Italian wine brand
- 41 Promising letters?
- 42 Really bothered
- 43 "Peace Train" singer
- 49 "Atlanta event for sci-fi fans"
- 52 Actress Shawkat
- 53 Museum item
- 54 "Thumbs up" answers
- 55 Smashing success
- 56 Provided at no cost
- 59 Wealthy
- 60 "r u coming soon?"
- 62 Call to the on-deck circle
- 64 Beads on blades
- 65 "Sacred Hopi ritual"
- 71 "Western, slangily"
- 73 "One Mississippi" star Notaro
- 74 Dulse and nori seaweeds, e.g.
- 76 ___-mo video
- 77 Coup target
- 79 "You can't do that!"
- 80 Aggravate
- 83 Top-tier celebs
- 87 Basic font
- 89 Window shade
- 90 "Absurdly chaotic situation"
- 92 "Playground fixture"
- 95 Russian crepes
- 96 Short "Stop!"
- 97 Vinaigrette acronym
- 98 "Spray behind a speedboat"
- 101 Act omnipotent
- 104 Burkina ___
- 105 Assns.
- 106 Some ballpark figs.
- 107 Total accord
- 109 Mogadishu resident



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2/4/24

- 113 "Sheet with a folded corner"
- 116 "Ashtray for trash, e.g."
- 120 "Let me rephrase that ..."
- 121 Appointed
- 122 Soul mate
- 123 Sandwiches made with bolillos
- 124 Secret rendezvous
- 125 Black bit inside a papaya
- 126 Vietnamese New Year, which is represented by the Zodiac animals at the starts of the answers to the starred clues
- 14 Tree with flexible wood
- 15 Weigh, in a way
- 16 Main language of India
- 17 Heart, but not soul
- 18 Legendary loch
- 20 Use TurboTax, perhaps
- 25 Pool divisions
- 27 Easily influenced
- 30 "Free your pores" brand
- 31 ___ frescas: fruity Mexican drinks
- 33 So far
- 35 Maker of eco-friendly Vero computers
- 36 Neat and clean
- 37 PC hookup
- 38 Rash symptom
- 39 Sainted pope called "the Great"
- 43 Put into gear?
- 44 Have the intention of
- 45 Thin candle
- 46 Drop in pronunciation
- 47 More pleasant
- 48 Phonetic symbol
- 50 ___ Squad: Best Buy tech support team
- 51 KitchenAid rival
- 52 Covered California statute, for short
- 57 Critical-care ctrs.
- 58 Club fees
- 61 Major Yemen port
- 62 Starts
- 63 Quite cold
- 65 Cook dim sum, say
- 66 Part of TNT
- 67 "Encore!"
- 68 Big deal
- 69 Trade pact from 1994 to 2020
- 70 Debussy's "___ de lune"
- 72 Casual collared shirt
- 75 Sketchy subject?
- 78 Waiting room directive
- 80 Digs in the snow
- 81 Versailles residents
- 82 Philosopher Immanuel
- 84 Pet pendant
- 85 Tractor-trailers
- 86 Plug away (at)
- 88 Impose, as a tax
- 91 Hair ___
- 93 Cultured products?
- 94 Bret with four Gold Gloves
- 95 Red Sox, on scoreboards
- 98 Hot spots
- 99 Got going
- 100 "Judge Judy" event
- 101 Product pitch
- 102 Light brew
- 103 Failed to
- 104 Like bubble baths
- 106 Make a long story short?
- 108 Trade jabs
- 110 Makes a choice
- 111 Bog down
- 112 Shivering fit
- 114 "Blonde" star de Armas
- 115 Summer hrs. in Philly
- 117 Kiddo
- 118 "Or so ___ heard"
- 119 Pickleball need

Last Sunday's Puzzle Solved



Janric Classic Sudoku

				3				2
3		6		2				5
	8		1		5	4		
8		3		4				1
	4		9		1		8	
2				5		6		7
		9	7		6		2	
5				3		7		4
1			5					

2/4/24

Difficulty level: SILVER

Solution to 2/4/24:

9	5	4	8	6	3	1	7	2
3	1	6	4	2	7	8	9	5
7	8	2	1	9	5	4	3	6
8	7	3	6	4	2	9	5	1
6	4	5	9	7	1	2	8	3
2	9	1	3	5	8	6	4	7
4	3	9	7	1	6	5	2	8
5	6	8	2	3	9	7	1	4
1	2	7	5	8	4	3	6	9

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver to Gold (hardest).