

Play Till You're Loopy

by Ucaomihu

Four players have found yet another game that (like Monopoly) is one big loop. However, they each have different points to make about it:

The Builder: This loop just something to build! I'll start in the southeast corner of the grid. In each of twelve Across clues, one letter is extraneous and must be deleted before solving; for each of these, in clue order, where the extra letter is in the n th word, I'll move n squares in the direction indicated by the letter (which will be N, S, W, or E), and highlight all the squares I enter!

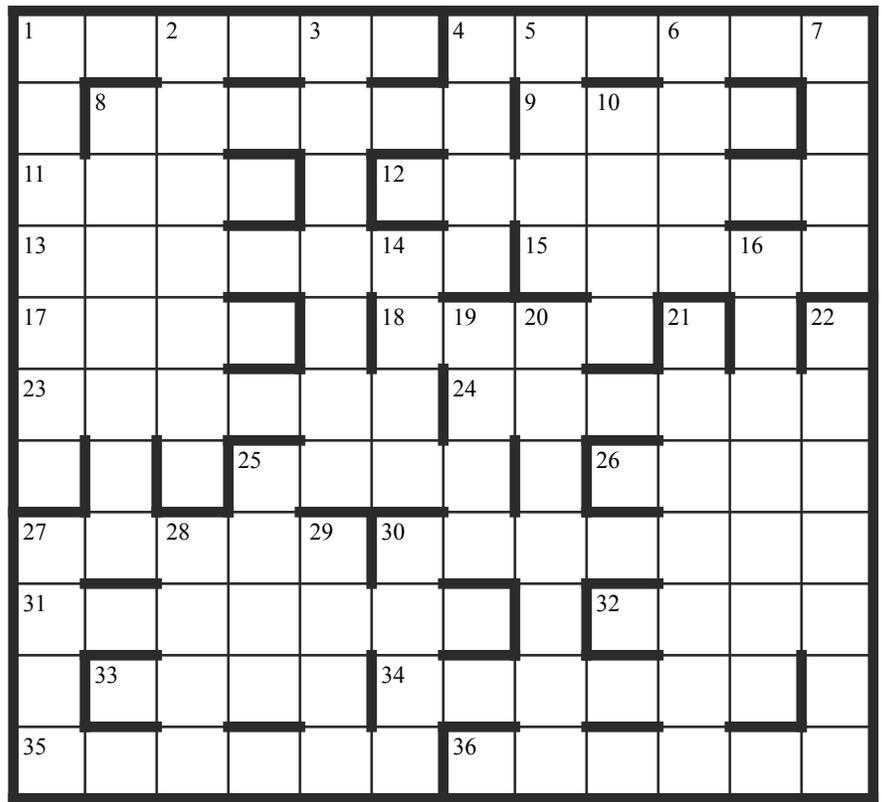
The Runner: This loop is just something to travel along! I'll start in the southeast corner of the grid. In each of eighteen Down clues, one letter is extraneous and must be deleted before solving; for each of these, in clue order, where the extra letter is in the n th word, I'll move n squares along the loop the builder highlighted, and circle the letter I come to!

The Outsider: This loop is just a box to think outside of! In two Across clues and two Down clues, the answer will have one nonalphabetic symbol which is nonetheless *treated as a letter of the answer* — it gets a square in the grid, is (arguably) included in the wordplay, and is counted when determining the number(s) in the enumeration. See how those symbols stay outside the loop, in their own little rectangle?

The Recluse: The loop is just a sanctuary to hide inside, and contemplate! Eight Across clues remain; in each, the wordplay yields a letter sequence with two extra letters enclosing the actual answer. How cozy . . . oh, wait, I get it! The length of the loop the Builder built is a hint — the extra letters the Runner found (in clue order) say what the loop is. Because of what the Runner did, the rectangle the Outsider referred to should be cut out and transferred to the only other outside-the-box location to “activate” it. With this done, all the first extra letters I found, and then all the last extra letters I found (each in clue order) will say where in the grid (if you switch at the logical place) you can see where we are. Finally, [phrase you get by reading the circled letters along the path]!

ACROSS

1. Sewing material Troy examined closely will absorb a bit of wheat (6)
4. Trees tot put near narcs, unrightfully (6)
8. Loved by thought-resistant, vacuou bovine (4 2)
9. Equipment ate timeless Latvian city (4)
11. To besmirch none protected by Solomon (4)
12. Tease welder hollowly when penned in by corruption (7)
13. Unusual she-asp with doubly curved form (7)
15. Where spines work to soak up cola, more or less (5)
17. Suffix meaning “sugar-addled Eos” (4)
18. Semi-nosiness about false, false dispatches (4)
23. Cuban digs bottles up with trio of vulgar snore-producers (6)
24. City manager/ballplayer Durocher recalled father and child (2 4)
25. Russian that's incorrect up till now goes after last of silicone (4)
26. Pale whip yellowed externally (4)



27. Characteristic of foul air between Utah and Texas (5)
30. Lee captivates bird by sending on fab Beatles song (3 2 2)
31. Twice, wrap makes Penny that disheartened — a hopeless situation (7)
32. Joan, who painted and sculpted nickel (a ferrous metal) (4)
33. Doe's bad spill, perhaps (4)
34. Verbose coututiere finally entering Post Office 59 (6)
35. Yes, spawn wears large bowed item as skirt (6)
36. Grape-growing valley near Chi, inhabited by eastern Native Americans (6)

DOWN

1. Stop US-changing 50-50 proposition (7)
2. Siri, use bananas Earl put out again (7)
3. Access fort basement, showing more distrust of *Porcus bostoniensis*? (7)
4. Hurst shooting deity from below (4)
5. Type of acid inside Curt? Ick (4)
6. Hare next to German substance that induces maturity (4)
7. Every yellow, top-grade bean (4)
8. Ocean-hugging white-cliffed town offers second chance (7)
10. Siberia's leading couple lives with bird (4)
14. Cask for reciters of *The Raven's Creator* (4)
16. Actress Courtney gets wood and boron to make a container for Mooney (7)
19. Free to hold undershirt party (4)
20. Ship fancy individual coatis late, making English cross (7)
21. Of the belly lint Mr. Astley mentioned (7)
22. John, who wrote “Glovers' Infiniteness” about the old elder woman (7)
25. Staid sweater-makers' fabrics must be lousy things (4)
27. Initially trap random rice behind paper in Chi (4)
28. All letters abut Q, Z, and the ones in between or above (4)
29. Clock, mostly, is very French (4)
30. Takes ink using a tongue that's partly collapsed (4)