



Gridlock: Crossword Puzzles and the Mad Geniuses Who Create Them

Matt Gaffney

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In the spirit of *Word Freak* and *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, *Gridlock* is a chronicle of the quirky subculture of America's crossword puzzles. Tens of millions of Americans solve crossword puzzles regularly, but few know a thing about their genesis. Who writes crosswords, how—and for God's sake, why? Matt Gaffney is one of two dozen people who earns a living as a cruciverbalist. In *Gridlock* he provides an insider's look at the people who put that puzzle in your paper every day. With verve and gusto, Gaffney traces his own starving-artist struggle to find paying puzzle gigs, including marketing hip crosswords to the Gen-X market. He then moves on to topics like the effect of computers on crossword writing, including a man versus machine battle he stages to see who writes better crosswords; the ever-evolving crossword puzzle book market, where a top-selling series now has books shaped like a toilet seat; and a trip to the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, where the "Cru" (collective slang noun meaning "the crossword puzzle writing community") hangs out in person once a year. *Gridlock* also features an interview with crossword rock star Will Shortz.

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