

## All That Zsasz

Scott Handelman (ft. Adam Maresca & Jonah Ostroff)

Answer: **GAS GIANT**

As promised, this is a standard cryptic crossword (granted that it's in an asymmetrical, barred grid) except for some unusual modifications. Six of the across clues don't fit properly with their wordplay, and six of the down clues seem to have had their first word removed.

S	Q	U	I	D	A	K	P	B	A	U	B	L	E
C	U	R	S	E	L	I	E	S	S	C	R	A	M
A	I	M	S	F	A	L	S	I	T	Y	I	W	B
R	T	O	U	T	S	N	O	R	E	C	A	F	E
P	S	P	E	W	T	H	E	I	R	L	R	U	R
R	E	E	D	A	R	U	B	A	W	I	E	L	D
I	M	R	M	N	E	M	O	N	I	C	X	A	I
C	I	A	O	D	E	P	O	T	M	E	A	L	S
E	C	H	L	O	R	I	N	E	P	C	M	I	P
T	H	E	E	H	A	D	E	S	B	L	A	M	E
A	A	N	N	A	C	A	N	N	Y	A	M	O	R
G	E	N	T	L	Y	H	P	O	T	I	O	N	S
S	L	A	L	O	M	O	T	T	E	R	K	Y	E

For the six modified Down clues, a NATO alphabet word (like VICTOR) is the missing first word; for the modified across clues, a palindromic substring five letters long (like ZSASZ) has been replaced with a single letter to form a different word. By looking at where these clues are in the grid, the modified clues form unique intersecting pairs. (The intersection squares don't matter.)

SCAR	OSCAR (O)	↔	SQUEEGEED	SQUID (I)
SIRI	ECHO (E)	↔	FALLIBILITY	FALSITY (S)
EMBER	NOVEMBER (N)	↔	BODY DOUBLE	BAUBLE (A)
MICHAEL	MIKE (M)	↔	REVERENTLY	GENTLY (G)
IDAHO	INDIA (I)	↔	CANADA DAY	CANNY (N)
ECLAIR	CHARLIE (C)	↔	POSSESSIONS	POTIONS (T)

The middle unclued word, MNEMONIC, serves as the focal point, but not the end. Each unique letter in MNEMONIC is represented by a missing word from a down clue; replace it with the letter that takes the place of the palindromic substring in the modified Across clue it crosses. For example, SIRI (Echo/E) crosses FALSITY/FALLIBILITY (S), so 'E' becomes 'S' in MNEMONIC. Do this for all six instances and MNEMONIC becomes the true answer, **GAS GIANT**.

## **Author's Notes**

Scott: This was my first gimmick-heavy cryptic, and I'm pretty pleased with how it came out. I think the fill is pretty clean (maybe too clean, as it turned out to be a pretty approachable cryptic) and Adam, Jonah and I had fun writing the clues. Inspiration from the puzzle was the thought that Victor Zsasz might use a signature on his victims as a calling card: a NATO letter for his first name and a palindrome for his last name. We originally had some \*very\* difficult clues for some of the pre-mutilated across answers such that people couldn't make progress, so hopefully we dialed it back a bit. I thought the missing NATO letters would be hard to see, but I underestimated the average hunt cryptic solver, clearly.

Adam: Yeah, people already well-versed in *Listener* crosswords will likely breeze through this, but I'm much happier with more approachable clues. The trick clues give it enough zest for me.

## Complete Solution

1A.	SQUEEGEED	SQUEE + GEE + D
8A.	BODY DOUBLE	ODD BLUE BOY anag.
13A.	CURSE	COURSE - O
14A.	LIES	oLd IdEaS
16A.	SCRAM	(MARCHES - HE) rev.
18A.	AIMS	MAIMS - M
19A.	FALLIBILITY	TIBIA ILL FLY anag.
20A.	TOUT	STOUT - S
22A.	SNORE	EROS rev. + N
23A.	CAFE	CARAFE - RA
25A.	SPEW	PE inside SW
27A.	THEIR	T + HEIR
29A.	REED	READ homophone
30A.	ARUBA	A + RUB + A
33A.	WIELD	I into WELD
37A.	MNEMONIC	{unclued}
39A.	CIAO	CIA + O
40A.	DEPOT	DESPOT - S
41A.	MEALS	METALS - T
43A.	CHLORINE	LICHEN OR anag.
47A.	THEE	THREE - R
48A.	HADES	SHADE, S to end
50A.	BLAME	BLAM + E
52A.	ANNA	hANNAh
53A.	CANADA DAY	CANADA DRY, R to A
54A.	AMOR	ROMA rev.
55A.	REVERENTLY	REVE(RENT)L + Y
56A.	POSSESSIONS	POS + SESSIONS
57A.	SLALOM	<ALL> in SOME
58A.	OTTER	O + T + T + ER

1D.	SCAR	OSCAR - O
2D.	QUITS	QUIETS - E
3D.	ISSUED	IS + SUED
4D.	DEFT	FED rev. + T
5D.	ALAS	SALAD anag. - D
6D.	KILN	L into KIN
7D.	PESO	POSE anag.
9D.	ASTER	DISASTER - DIS
10D.	BRIAR	FRIAR - F + B
11D.	LAWFUL	L + AWFUL
12D.	EMBER	NOVEMBER - NOV
15D.	SIRI	IRIS rev.
17D.	CYCLIC	Y, LI into CCC
21D.	OPERA	callIOPE RAdio
24D.	PRICE TAGS	P + RICE + TAGS
26D.	WAND	W + AND
27D.	TREE	waTer laRge grEen glEns
28D.	HUMP	CHUMP - C
31D.	BOONE	BOON homophone
32D.	ANTE	wANTED
33D.	WIMP	M into WIP
34D.	EXAM	AXE rev. over M
35D.	DISPERSE	PERSEIDS anag.
36D.	MICHAEL	<MALICE + H>
37D.	MOLE	ddef
38D.	ALIMONY	LIMO into ANY
42D.	ECLAIR	CHARLIE anag. - H
44D.	HENNA	HEN + NA
45D.	RACY	TRACY - T
46D.	IDAHO	InDiA sHoOk
48D.	HALO	Hear As Loud Ovation
49D.	SNOT	TONS rev.
50D.	BYTE	BY + T + E
51D.	AMOK	AM + O + K