

World Braille Day

World Braille Day celebrates the birth of Louis Braille, inventor of the reading and writing system, used by millions of blind and partially sighted people, all over the globe. Though not a public holiday in any country, World Braille Day provides an opportunity for teachers, charities and non-government organizations to raise awareness about issues facing the blind and the importance of continuing to produce works in Braille, providing the blind with access to the same reading and learning opportunities, as the sighted.

#PUBLIC SURVEY

Social Media generates billions In Ad Revenue

YouTube derived the greatest Ad revenue from users 12 and under (\$959.1 million), followed by Instagram (\$801.1 million)



Researchers estimated that Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, collectively, derived nearly \$11 billion in advertising revenue during 2022, from U.S. youth, who are vulnerable to negative mental health outcomes.

The study is the first to offer estimates of the number of young users on these platforms and how much annual Ad revenue is attributable to them.

According to researchers, the study's findings demonstrate the need for government regulation of social media platforms, in the absence of industry self-regulation.

According to a new study, led by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, collectively, derived nearly \$11 billion in advertising revenue from U.S.-based users, younger than 18, in 2022.

The study was published on December 27, 2023, in PLOS ONE.

"As concerns about youth mental health grow more and more, policymakers are trying to introduce legislation to restrict social media platform practices that may drive depression, anxiety, and disordered eating in young people," said senior author Bryn Austin, professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

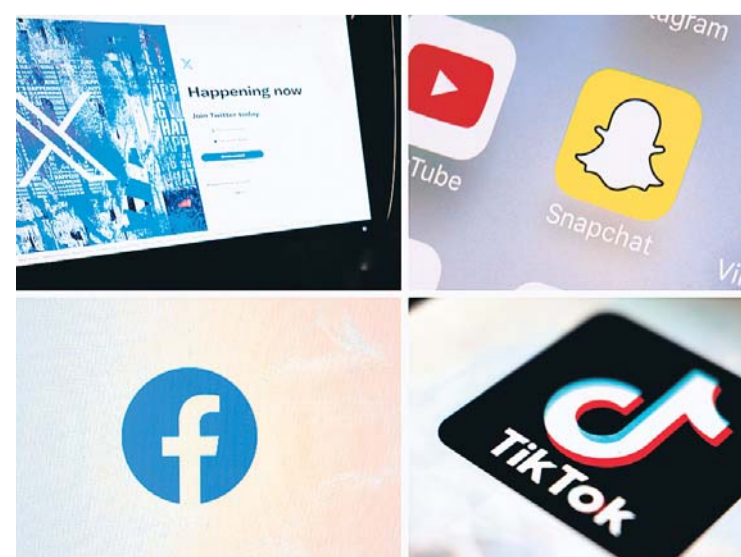
The researchers used a variety of public survey and market research data from 2021 and 2022 to comprehensively estimate Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X, and YouTube's number of youth users and related Ad revenue. Population data from the U.S. Census and survey data from Common Sense Media and Pew Research were used to estimate the number of people, younger than 18, using these platforms in the U.S. Data from eMarketer, a market research company, and Qustodio, a parental control app, provided estimations of each platform's projected gross ad revenue in 2022 and users' average minutes per day on each platform.

The study found that in 2022, YouTube had 49.7 million U.S.-based users, under the age of 18, TikTok had 18.9 million, Snapchat had 19 million, Instagram had 16.7 million, Facebook had 9.9 million and X had 7 million. The platforms collectively generated nearly \$11 billion in Ad revenue from these users, \$2.1 billion from users, aged 12 and under, and \$8.6 billion from users, aged 13-17.

YouTube derived the greatest Ad revenue from users, aged 12 and under (\$959.1 million), followed by Instagram (\$801.1 million) and Facebook (\$137.2 million). Instagram derived the greatest Ad revenue from users, aged 13-17 (\$4 billion), followed by TikTok (\$2 billion) and YouTube (\$1.2 billion). The researchers also calculated that Snapchat derived the greatest share of its overall 2022 Ad revenue from users under 18 (41%), followed by TikTok (35%), YouTube (27%), and Instagram (16%).

The researchers noted that the study had limitations, including that they relied on estimations and projections from public survey and market research sources, as social media platforms don't disclose user age data or advertising revenue data by age group.

"Our finding that social media platforms generate substantial advertising revenue from youth highlights the need for greater data transparency as well as public health interventions and government regulations," said lead author Amanda Raffoul, instructor in Paediatrics at Harvard Medical School.



When we drive through a forest of *chilgoza pine*, a small flock of *fire-fronted serin* bask on sun-drenched rocks, by the side of the road. I'm reminded of childhood trips to Kashmir and seeing this particular species of pine there. And of my grandmother, who always kept her *paan-daan* and *sarota* at hand and if dry fruits needed to be shelled, she would pull out her antique nut-cracker. This could tackle assorted sizes of nuts. The smallest slot for a chilgoza pine nut, a larger one for an almond shell, and the largest for a walnut!

Birds In The Snow



Kaza monastery



Yellow-billed chough



Sahdev Singh
Nature enthusiast,
Blogger and author

"We're probably not going to see too many birds in the winter in Spiti, but what we may find should be interesting," was a part of the conversation, when we were planning our trip.

And so it proves to be!

We have gotten away from Jaipur at our usual ETD of 4 AM, made the now familiar pit-stops (from previous trips) en-route, and by late evening, have rolled up to *Narkanda*, beyond Shimla. A night at 2700 M helps in the acclimatization process, because over the next six days in the *Spiti valley*, we will be at elevations of 3700 M and higher. Another early start in the pale light of a wintry dawn, is enticed by large flocks of *plain mountain finch*, flitting through leafless trees in an orchard, just across the road from the hotel.

In a car full of experienced birders, one should know when to



White-winged redstart



#A WINTER VISIT

As we begin to get back into the car, a symphony of assorted bird calls alerts us to the fact that we are now surrounded by a mixed hunting party. It is an early test for us to get the birding juices flowing. The inevitable tits can quickly be ticked off, spot-winged, great, rufous-vented and black-throated. There is also a woodpecker and some rock buntings.



call out anything interesting, or to just keep driving past. Today, we are aiming to reach *Nako* in the *Spiti valley* and it will be a long drive. We have tended to ignore any distant birds in order to maintain a driving rhythm. However, a solitary bird perched at the top of a conifer, belting out a loud chorus, is just too tempting to ignore. We stop the car to listen and to have a look. It is a *white-cheeked nuthatch*. Not quite doing what a nuthatch usually do, which is to scuttle up-and-down tree trunks and along branches, much like

woodpeckers. While stretching our legs, we soak in another stunning panoramic view of the *Greater Himalayas*, glistening in the distance. Later, today, we will need to thread our way through this formidable barrier by following the gorge of the *Sutlej river* through to the *Trans-Himalayas*.

As we begin to get back into the car, a symphony of assorted bird calls alerts us to the fact that we are now surrounded by a mixed hunting-party. It is an early test for us to get the birding juices flowing. The inevitable tits can quickly be ticked off, spot-winged, great, rufous-vented and black-throated. There's also a bar-tailed treecreeper, brown-fronted woodpecker, and some rock buntings. However, a tiny hyper-active nondescript bundle of feathers is proving rather more difficult for me. The most prominent feature is its bright golden-yellow eyebrow or so. It appears, even from a distance of mere yards, in the dense foliage of a tree above. And then for a brief moment, the jerkily-moving head is caught squarely, in focus in the binoculars and I realize that the 'golden eyebrow' is actually a single curved line in the middle of the forehead. *An auric tilak!*

It is a *goldcrest*. When we drive through a forest of *chilgoza pine*, a small flock of *fire-fronted serin* bask on sun-drenched rocks, by the side of the

road. I'm reminded of childhood trips to Kashmir and seeing this particular species of pine there. And of my grandmother, who always kept her *paan-daan* and *sarota* at hand, and if dry fruits needed to be shelled, she would pull out her antique nut-cracker. This could tackle assorted sizes of nuts. The smallest slot for a chilgoza pine nut, a larger one for an almond shell, and the largest for a walnut!

After the goldcrest and the *fire-fronted serin* (*Gelugpa*, or yellow hats and *Ayingmapa*, or red hats, respectively), birds with their foreheads daubed in sectarian Buddhist colours. What may we expect next? Perhaps, a long-forgotten animist bird species, sporting a differently coloured headband and singing verses from the ancient *Bon religion*, of which *Spiti* was once an outpost!

Early next morning in the *hamlet of Nako*, we find that *robin accentors* are house sparrows of the village, their orange breasts like little beacons of colour in the icicle-dripping bare bushes and stunted trees, thinly lining the narrow lanes. As we drive from *Nako* to *Kaza*, a large flock of *Brandt's mountain finch* chitters down on to the pebbly roadside. The finches are not quite as dark as illustrated in the bird guide-books because they are now in their paler winter plumage. We wind our way down to the infa-

PART:3



the rocky ground, under the surface of the snow, is nice and hard, but a shallow ditch is full of glutinous mud and my boots are immediately covered in the glop. Of the *chukar*, there is only a tantalizing glimpse or two. And then, an unfamiliar bird flies up to a perch in the trees. It looks like a female bunting, but which one? I take several photos from different angles, getting my boots further mud-encrusted, but feeling rather pleased that making ID should now be easy from the photos. When I regain the road, my companions are looking at a perched male bunting, which can be easily identified as the black-throated bunting. The bird, I have been chasing, was obviously the female of the species. Oh, well, better try and get the mud off the boots

A lone golden eagle perches high on a rocky crag which juts out over the valley. Eventually, it does sally forth, launching itself with its heavy wings, beating at the thin air. Trackside, a sparsely vegetated ravine snaking down to the *Spiti river*, holds a smattering of birds which includes brown accentors. A *Tibetan snowcock* is flushed, allowing only a brief glimpse.

Most of our birding has been from the road, by stopping the vehicle at likely spots and walking along the track. I have been itching to ramble off-track. An opportunity presents itself when a large covey of *chukars* cuttle across the snow into a cove of willows. I decide to try and follow them to get a photograph. At first,

then, so that I'm allowed back in the vehicle. A flat stone with a sharp edge takes care of the lug sole, and the mud, plastering the sides of the boot is removed, without too much difficulty, by raking it vigorously on freshly piled snow on the road. It is only much later, back in the guest house, when I take off my boots, that I realize my socks are sodden. Tiny ice crystals had obviously penetrated my new (and supposedly snow-proof) boots when I had tried to clean them off the mud.

Mornings in Kaza

We wake to the delight of sunlight, pouring in through the windows of the guest house. The early risers include the *corvids*, here represented by *yellow-billed choughs*. Crow-like in their utter disdain for anything that doesn't catch their fancy, yet, most attentive, if there is any chance of grabbing a tidbit when you happen to attract their attention. *Tibetan snowfinch*, in loose flocks, hug the jagged surface of the steep hill above the *gompa* or monastery, becoming instantly invisible when they alight on snow-dusted rocks. Mixed flocks of pigeons wheel round in exuberant flight. Hill pigeons are similar to our familiar rock pigeons, except for a bright white band across the middle of the tail, and snow pigeons are more silvery white than the rock. We see, it en-route, parked safely but seemingly abandoned beside the track. It is entirely possible that if the cleared snow, which has been piled high on the verges, topples onto the road, we will get trapped here, since this road is the only entry and exit to and from the valley.

Pin valley

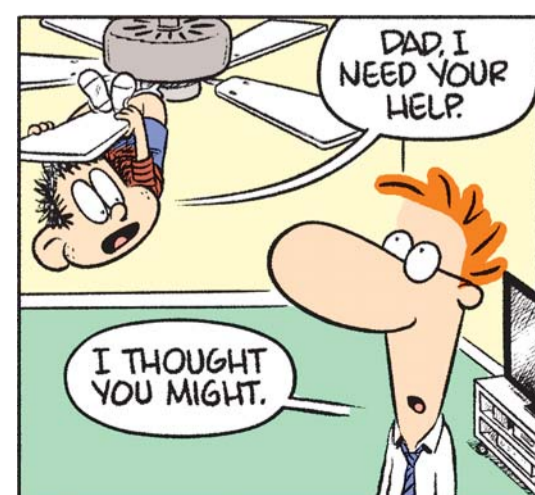
The day before we are to depart *Spiti*, we drive up the *Pin valley*. The *Pin river* flows almost directly northwards to join the *Spiti river*. There has been fairly heavy snowfall, the night before. A snowplow has been deployed here earlier today to open the road. We see, it en-route, parked safely but seemingly abandoned beside the track. It is entirely possible that if the cleared snow, which has been piled high on the verges, topples onto the road, we will get trapped here, since this road is the only entry and exit to and from the valley.

Pin valley has a different character from the *Spiti valley*. It is a narrow, picturesque valley. The track for the most part is not much higher than the level of the river. The mountains rise steeply on either side, restricting the hours of direct sunlight onto the valley floor. As a result, the river is more ice and snow than water. Giant boulders in the river are cast in mantles of white and overhanging banks of snow, completely hiding the glittering river in places.

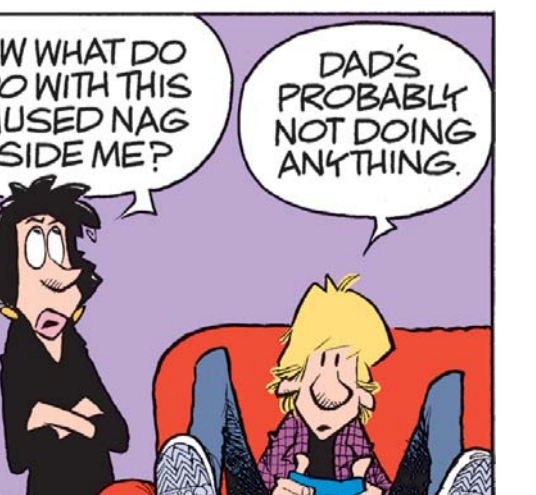
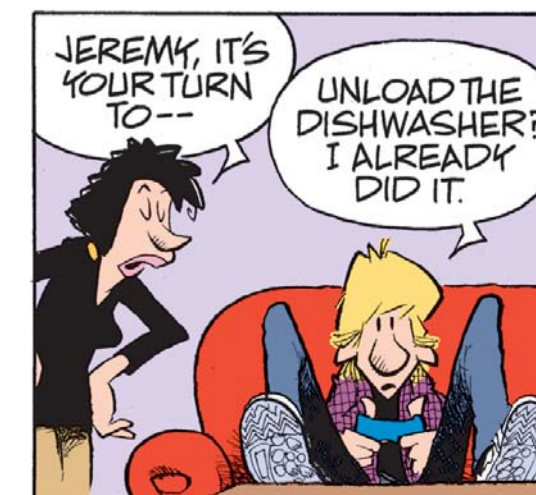
For all the scenic beauty and wild isolation of the *Pin valley*, we have to admit that the afternoon's birding is rather thin. There are only a few representatives of the bird species that we have already seen in the *Spiti valley*. When we do turn around for *Spiti*, a solitary *white wagtail* flies across the *Pin river* to bid us farewell. ...concluded.

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BABY BLUES



ZITS



#ENTERTAINMENT

New OTT Releases To Stream This January

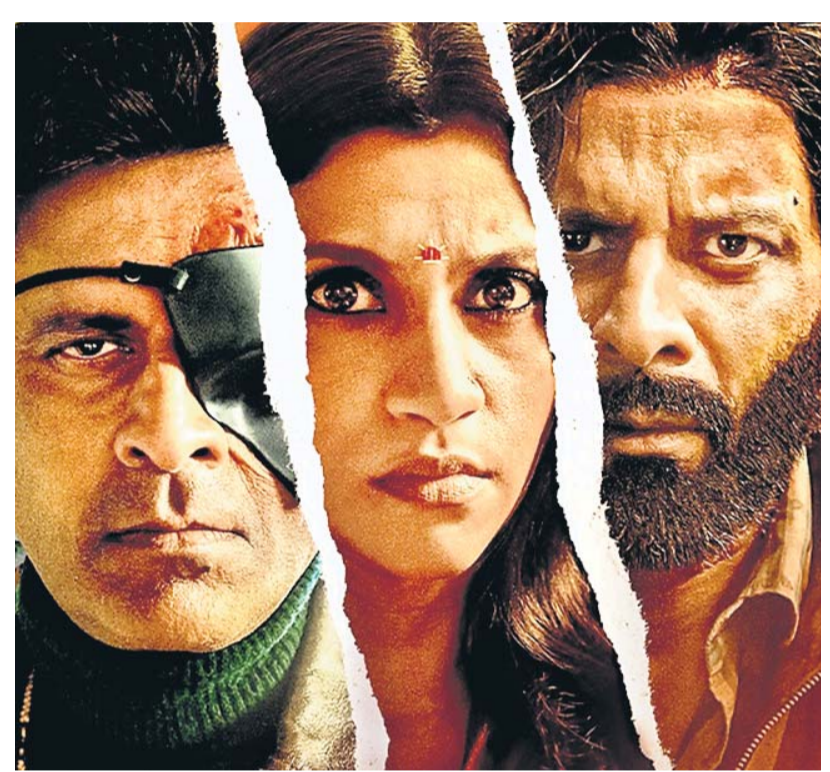
Let's see, what the first month of the year has, in store for you

2023 gave us a lot of entertaining content on OTT and by the looks of it, 2024 won't be any different. You can expect a perfect mix of fresh offerings that cater to your binge-watching needs. And if you're looking forward to a host of new shows and movies to add to your watchlist, then here's what to expect from leading streaming services in January 2024.

Fool Me Once
If you love the thriller genre, then you're probably familiar with *Harlan Coben's* popular novel-turned-series like *'The Stranger'* or *'The Innocent.'* Coben's latest project *'Fool Me Once'* is an eight-part limited series, surrounding a widow named *Maya*. In the days, after her husband's murder, *Maya* is shocked to find him paying their daughter a visit, after reviewing footage from a nanny camera, set up at home. Upon further investigation, she learns that her sister was killed with the same gun that killed *Joe*, suggesting that the two deaths are connected. What follows is a homicide investigation by a detective that opens up a can of worms for everybody involved.

Release date: January 1

Echo
A first for Marvel Studios, *Echo* is the first MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) show to premiere under a binge model. The five-episode series stars *Alaqua Cox* as the deaf superhero character of *Echo*, who was introduced in the *Jeremy Renner* and *Hallel Steinfeld*-led show *Hawkeye*, in November 2021. *Echo* aka *Maya Lopez* is a hearing-impaired Native American



Killer Soup

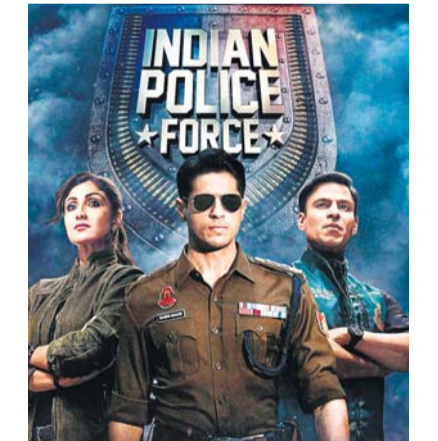
This is a show that you just don't want to miss! Starring *Manoj Bajpayee* and *Konkona Sen Sharma* in lead roles, the series revolves around the life of *Swathi Shetty* (Sharma), an aspiring home chef, who schemes a plan to replace her husband, *Prabhakar* (Bajpayee), with her lover, *Umesh* (also played by Bajpayee). Things, however, don't go to plan, as a local inspector along with a bunch of amateur criminals stir up trouble, leading to chaos and a recipe for laughter.

Release date: January 11

Indian Police Force

Indian Police Force is set to deliver a thrilling entertainment experience, offering audiences worldwide an immersive journey into the next instalment of *Rohit Shetty's* cop universe. Making his digital directorial debut, *Shetty* presents a spectacle, featuring *Siddharth Malhotra* in a refreshing cop role, supported by a stellar cast including *Shilpa Shetty Kundra*, *Vivek Oberoi*, *Shweta Tiwari*, *Nikhil Dinesh*, *Rituraj Singh*, *Mukesh Rishi*, and *Lalit Parimoo* in key roles. This high-octane series is a tribute to the dedicated service and unwavering patriotism of Indian police officers.

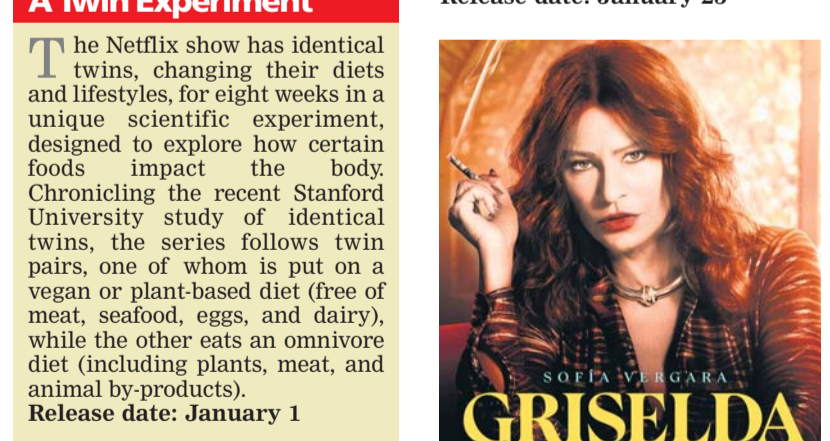
Release date: January 19



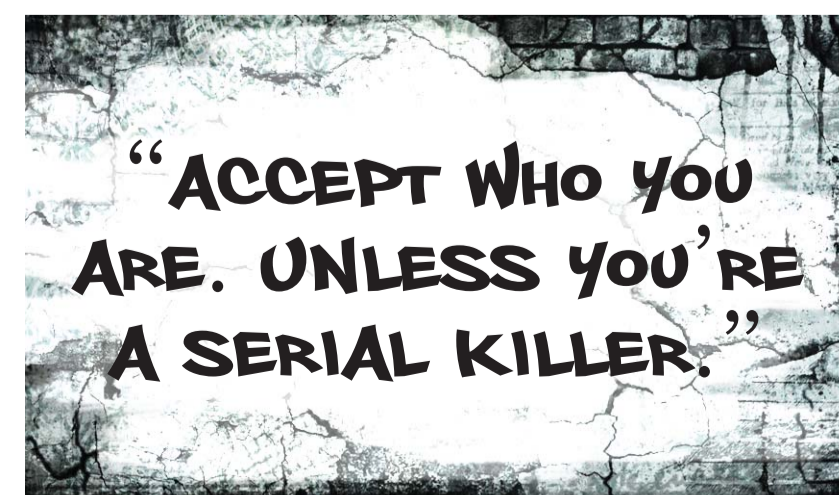
Griselda

The six-part limited series is inspired by the real-life story of *Griselda Blanco*, a Colombian businesswoman turned drug lord aka "The Godmother" of the criminal underworld of 1970s *Miami, Florida*. Playing the titular role is *Sofia Vergara*, who takes on a completely different role compared to everything else that we've seen her in, before. The official Netflix synopsis reads, "Griselda is inspired by the life of the savvy and ambitious *Griselda Blanco*, who created one of the most profitable cartels in history. In 1970s-80s *Miami*, *Blanco's* lethal blend of unsuspected savagery and charm helped her, expertly navigate between business and family, leading her to become, widely known as, "The Godmother."

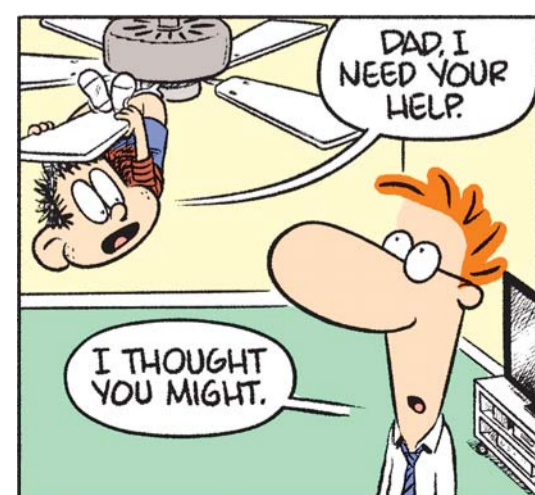
Release date: January 25



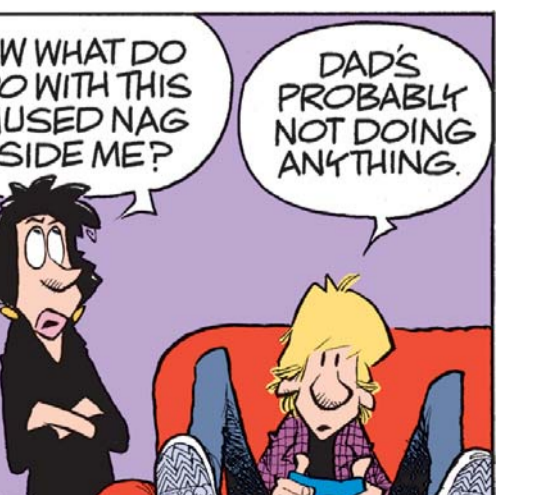
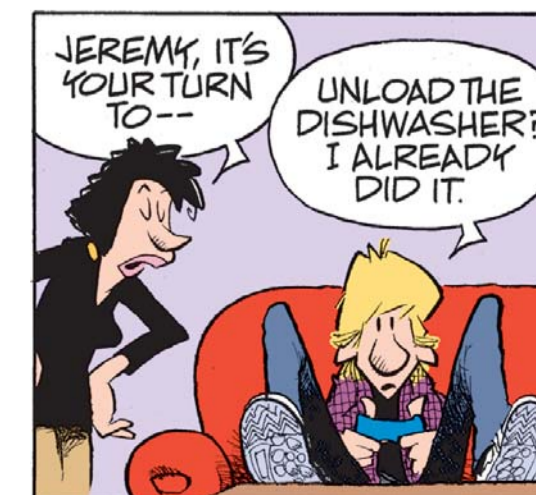
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



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