

# The New York Times

## PUZZLE MAKING

# Who Made My Puzzle?

This month's spotlight shines on constructor and prestidigitator David Kwong.



Illustration by Ben Kirchner

Where do you currently reside?

Los Angeles ... Well, right now, it's New York City, because my upcoming show, "[The Enigmatist](#)," will premiere January 4 at the Highline Hotel.

Where and when was your first puzzle published?

April Fools' Day, 2006. It was a collaborative construction with Kevan Choset, called "Think Outside the Box."

## How did you get into puzzling? What is your first memory of solving?

My love for words started with my mother. We played Scrabble together and solved the crossword. Here's a photo!



I also have a fond early memory of hearing Will speak at the Wellfleet Library on Cape Cod. He asked for an anagram of Special K +T and I got SKEPTICAL. Proudest moment of my childhood. Then I missed PEACE TIME switching to TIME PIECE and I have never forgiven myself.

Here's a [photo](#) of the autograph Will gave me at that event. It's moments like these that can change someone's life.

## What made you decide to try your hand at making a crossword puzzle?

Kevan had already constructed a few and I was filled with a jealous rage.

## Why do you do this to yourself?

For the glory! By the way, I hold this record I could not have planned; I hit for the cycle in 8 submissions. Someone can break it someday! And I will be filled with a jealous rage.

## What do you enjoy most about making puzzles?

I love pushing the envelope with the parameters of the crossword puzzles. Kevan and I were the first to put words [outside](#) the grid; we had a homage to the [Mad Magazine](#) Fold-In; and I am particularly fond of my [Halloween](#) puzzle from 2013. What's next? Maybe I'll construct a crossword where you can smell the answer.

## Do you use a computer software constructing program and, if so, which one? What do you like about it?

I use [CrossFire](#). It's great for rebuses, but sometimes you have to break out the graph paper and pencil!

## How many hours a week, on average, do you spend on refining your tools, like your word list?

My radar is always on for new marquee words. I have a spreadsheet always open on my computer and I jot down words as I come across them, filing them by word length.

## What is your favorite clue/answer pair ever?

"Emphatically, the key to making bozos boss?"

The answer was (9) SFORZANDO in a [Nov 6, 2016 cryptic](#) by Henry Cox and Emily Rathvon. *[Hint: That can be read as S FOR Z AND O. "Emphatically" is the definition. — D.A.]*

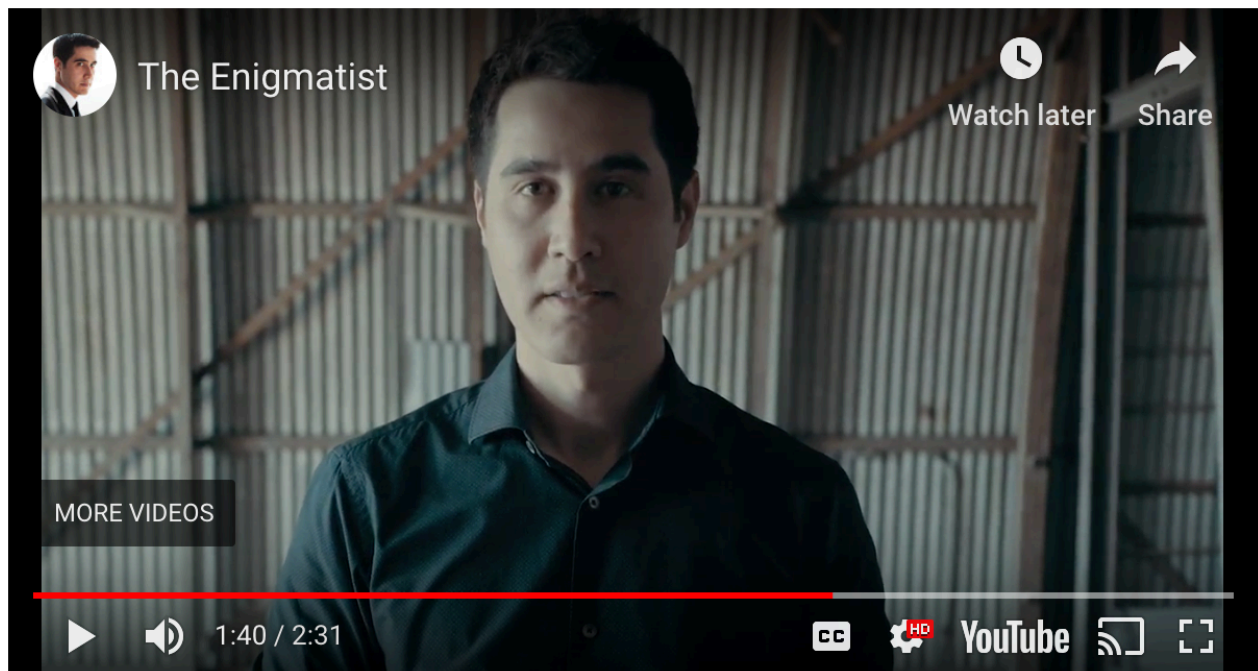
## What entry or entries would you NEVER put in a puzzle, and why?

I really try to avoid partial phrases like AN ARM or A DUCK when I'm constructing. I also try my best to stay away from Roman numerals, like DLIII (Date when Italy was annexed to the Byzantine Empire). Just looked that up!

That said, I'd like to start a petition to make UREA acceptable again. It's a compound used in the synthesis of plastics!

## Anything else you would like to tell us about?

I'm very excited about my show. It's an immersive evening of puzzle solving, cryptology and illusions ... that begins with a puzzle room. Please visit [our website](#) for tickets and information. Here's a fun peek at what you can expect.



Lots of puzzles to solve here! And if you can crack the code, it will lead to more puzzles.

Hoping fans of conjuring and cruciverbalism can make it in January!



<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/12/crosswords/who-made-my-puzzle-kwong.html?fbclid=IwAR0gDQAUNQC9KB3PrH09nVIq0H1ZDcG3vIxWxhNnIDyGPC5E3Kzbbbp3Y9g>