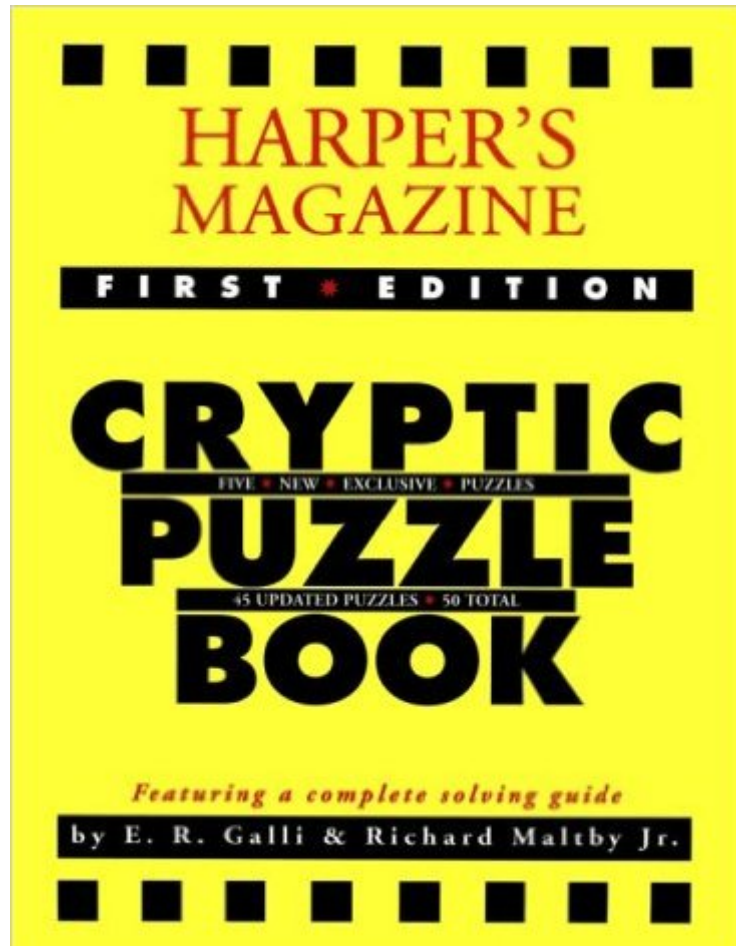


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Harper's Magazine Cryptic Puzzle Book, 1st Edition



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you discovered the magazine "Tough Cryptics" too late (as I did - alas, its no longer in publication), you've missed out on puzzling pleasure, unless you buy the Random House anthologies... edited by Stanley Newman. From there, progress to this one - every puzzle is a *variety* cryptic from Harpers Magazine sometime between 1976 and 1979 (according to the book itself; I can't confirm it) - the authors promise that all the "timely" clues have been edited away. A warning though, if you can't work through the regular cryptics in Games Magazine (where you will regularly see works by Maltby and Galli), then this book is possibly not for you - every variety puzzle is probably twice as hard as a regular cryptic. So far, I've found it to be almost on a par with the Henry Hook collections, although I feel that Maltby and Galli use a few more obscurities than Hook. On the other hand, they give a quite nice "solvers guide" as introduction together with some well-worked example puzzles whereas Henry wants his readers to suffer. :-) To the dedicated cryptic cruciverbalist, this book will be a treat. A. "Buy it"

I agree with the other reviewers that these puzzles were tough & enjoyable. Every puzzle has a "trick" besides the clues themselves. Most novices would find them almost impossible. (It is hard to believe that the first reviewer learned to do cryptics with this book.) The reason, however, that I wanted to do this review, and the reason for my title, is to warn everyone that there are quite a few errors in the clue sections. For example, puzzle #27 is missing clue #27 and puzzle # 30 is missing clue #39 down. There were others in the front of the book but at first I didn't write them down. Oh

well, just another challenge in a great book.

This book is definately worth getting! The editors are the same who do the puzzle at the back of Harper's, so if you do the Harper's puzzles you will love this. There are 2 Dodacahedrons, a Chinese Puzzle Box, and tons of other "gimmick" puzzles. Hours and hours of fun!

I ordered this book from in May 2006 at the list price, then was notified in May 2007 (one year later) that they'd be unable to fulfill the order. So I went to Plan B, which was to look up these puzzles in back issues of Harper's at the library and work them that way. These are fun puzzles and a valuable find, especially considering the limited supply of variety cryptic crosswords on the market today. It's unfortunate, however, that (unlike, say, Rathvon and Cox) Galli and Maltby like to throw in risqué words now and then, which prevents me from sharing their work with my bright nieces and nephews. Harper's awards a prize for the first few solvers of each month's puzzle, which makes it especially surprising how poorly the puzzles were proofread when they were originally printed. I'd estimate that 1 out of 3 puzzles has some sort of typographical error, whether it's missing or misnumbered clues, improperly drawn diagrams, or something else. (And what's especially galling is that more often than not the errors are not acknowledged in the solution in the next month's issue.) Perhaps the errors were corrected the second time around when the puzzles were compiled into this book. With the astronomical prices that even used copies are going for nowadays, I'm not about to find out! June 2008 update: Since I wrote the review, prices for this book have dropped like a rock. If you're a variety cryptic fan, and the prices stay this low, I'd say this is a must purchase regardless of the proofreading. (Unless, like me, you've worked all the Harper's puzzles.)

This is an excellent guidebook for learning about cryptic puzzles and solving them. The first section presents the basic categories of clues, with an explantion of how to solve each. Next come 45 puzzles, often organized around themes. Lastly come the answers. Each puzzle is very challenging, generally requiring much quiet puzzle-solving time, and a dictionary and thesaurus to really explore the clues. All-in-all, solving this collection is a highly rewarding, fun exercise. There are some annoying typos to be fixed in the next edition, but otherwise it's excellent.

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