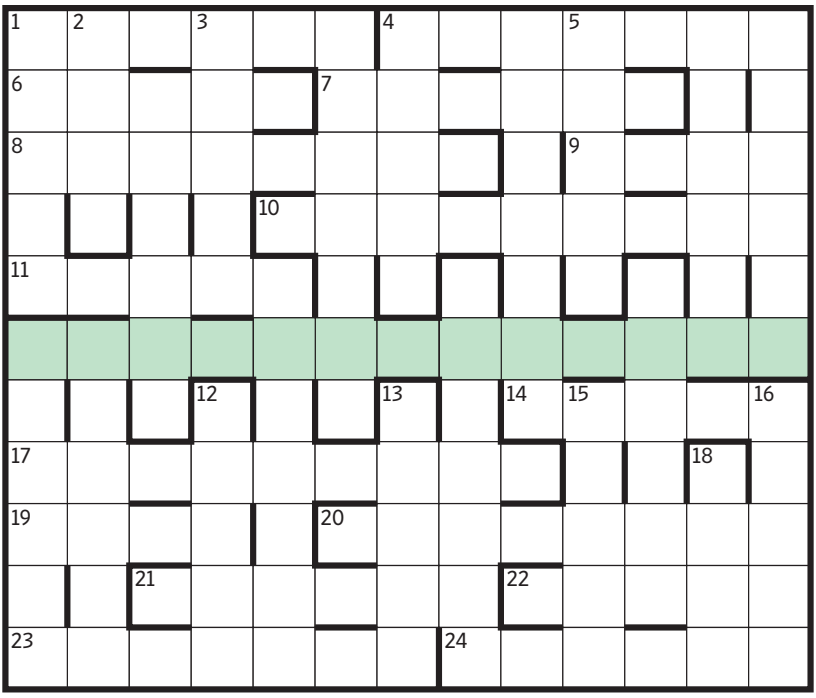

Balance | *a cryptic puzzle by Emily Cox & Henry Rathvon*

We're trying to balance our puzzle act by making it what the shaded central entry spells out. To meet our current goal, each clue answer crossing that entry gains or loses a single letter before it's entered in the grid. Affected answers are clued separately and in no special order, under the heading "Balance." Their lengths must be deduced. All other clue answers may be entered normally.

Across

1 Enthusiastic, exaggerated laugh from the rear (3-3)

4 Demon offspring admitted to occupying America (7)

6 A small bed scarf (5)

7 Heavy load carried by any Shakespeare lover? (6)

8 Impostor employs private eyes (8)

9 Publishing ID is initials of "Barnes & Noble" (4)

10 "Doctor of Desserts" sent to the west English town (9)

11 Like taking out convertible cars (5)

14 Wretched Republican lawyer (5)

17 Eater told off bore (9)

19 Listened to hard and soft rock (4)

20 By studio, changed snug garment (8)

21 Midwest capital pizza order containing goof (6)

22 Conductor combined two notes of the scale (5)

23 Time to recover Strayed novel (4,3)

24 Stops holding sort of dash contests (6)

Down

1 Rex, Hollywood pooch, dreads owner? (5)

2 Gray area with shrink (4)

3 Joey embracing me and lover (5)

4 Still turn over, losing velocity (5)

5 Somewhat fun if you join together (5)

12 Accord with dash including "Empty/Full" (5)

13 Level account (5)

15 Minister overlooking the first felonious act (5)

16 Mythical creatures still may be found (5)

18 Jot will, perhaps to be read aloud (4)

Balance

a Playing here and there, run too wild (2 wds.)

b Extremely unsatisfactory wine choice went bad

c Trial engulfing our ruined party

d Examine Indian lentil dish, subject of much rumor

e Roast reformed Houston ballplayer

f Catholic council going around Manitoba Lake District county

g Humbles Charles with perfect scores

h Given a rank, surrendered in speech

i Cat fur flying around large load on a wagon

j Pronounce total

▶ **Get the solutions** to this week's Journal Weekend Puzzles in next Saturday's Wall Street Journal. Solve crosswords and acrostics online, get pointers on solving cryptic puzzles and discuss all of the puzzles online at **WSJ.com/Puzzles.**