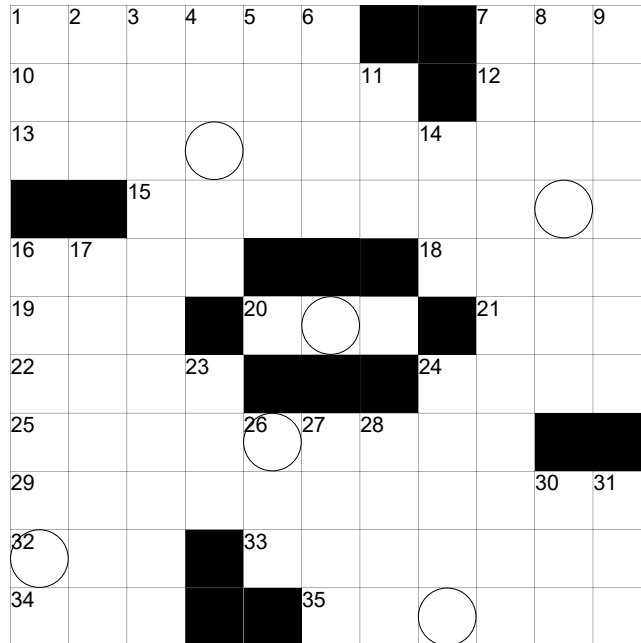


Eliminator (1983)

When asked if I could provide something lighthearted from my experience of the past weeks of flattening the curve, "perhaps a crossword?", two things sprang to my mind. First, that some days ago I had been lucky enough to accidentally help edit a cryptic clue. Yay! (It became [Nothing with me instead of nothing, as it happens (4)]. If you're into cryptics, be sure to check out @stellaphone's #crypticclueaday on Twitter!) But, alas, something cryptic is still waaay out of reach for me. The other thing was one of my punny-ish Tweets that had gone largely unnoticed. After some mulling over the what and the how, it should become the bonus solution of the standard crossword I was determined to construct. So here we are: a lighthearted puzzle around the overwhelming COVID-19 situation, framed by a more-or-less punny ZZ Top reference. Only my lighthearted might be your dark-humoured, so please proceed with caution!

ACROSS

1. Popular Mexican beer
7. [Looking for a viable clue, I found the Arab Foundation For Freedoms & Equality]
10. Reproduction number, for one
12. How to acquire immunity without acquiring the disease, for short
13. Weighty moment in some sports, or before an actual lockdown, depending on hyphenation
15. "Don't Stand So Close to Me" band (1980)
16. László __, inventor of the __
18. City that has been granted Saudi ceasefire to battle COVID-19
19. Viral messenger
20. "Have a Cuppa __": Kinks song with the lyrics "It's a cure for hepatitis, it's a cure for chronic insomnia, it's a cure for tonsillitis and for water on the knee." (See what I did there?)
21. 20th century monopolist formerly known as the Bell Telephone Company
22. "The doctor __."
24. When repeated over and over, "Heeere kitty kitty!"
25. Corona outbreaks of a sort
29. Unlike solitaire
32. British author Deighton who wrote, among others, "The IPCRESS File", "Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain" and "Où Est le Garlic"
33. Drone alternative for aerial shots
34. Non-standard bit of energy
35. [Let's not go there yet!]



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DOWN

1. One of perhaps 400 in your third ~lockdown~ breakfast of the day, for short?
2. II in your IIIrd ~lockdown~ breakfast of the day?
3. __ order (another essential kind of social distancing)
4. Kin of pseudo- and ano-
5. Silver of statistics
6. Oil company whose logo is a fire-breathing six-legged dog
7. How to treat thy neighbour these days (unless you're Jesus)
8. Lavatorial whatsit that might have surpassed the throne in importance
9. Oft-questioned parameters of governmental pandemic risk management
11. "My Chemical Romance" genre
14. Peace activist Gandhi
16. One of many on a pig or a broomstick
17. Agency that ought to provide affordable care
23. Technol. at the heart of contact tracing
24. Smallish pet dogs (who have inbred breathing problems)
26. German fast food sandwich, or German motor vehicle
27. Suffix with symptom or err
28. __ avis: unique person (I can never NOT read this along the tune of "baa, baa, black sheep")
30. When doubled, 2015 dance craze
31. Std. by which Big Ben tolls
.....
BONUS ANSWER - sing along with me:
"Gimme all your COVID, all your SARS and __, too!"