

CRYPTIC by DA 20,965

NB - Free of any definition, each Couple Clue splices two wordplay elements that lead to two 6-letters partners. Can you fit them somewhere in the grid? All other clues are normal.

COUPLES

- A** - Dunny drawings? Fairly nasty name
- B** - Heard opening key, loosely grasped by mate
- C** - Penned 56 pastimes I skipped?
- D** - Ratbags? One ransacked hamlet
- E** - Ramshackle as townhouses for 11-across?
- F** - Cereal's right for one boozier hosting regular patrons

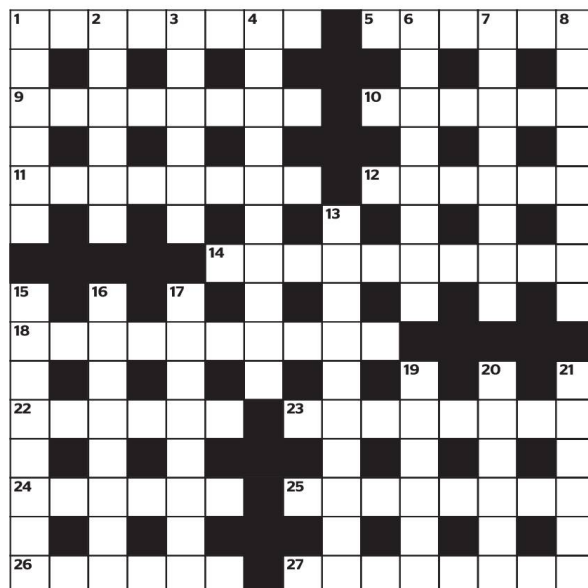
ACROSS

- 1** Dark characters quit depot, according to Spooner (4,4)
- 9** Captain blowing lead in rough ocean pursuit (8)
- 11** Antiseptic pioneer went off-limits, probing ear (8)
- 14** Thin one Atkinson role after series (6,4)
- 18** Adoring lad, suitor struck with love (10)

- 23** Bit into steak a dope stored? (8)
- 25** Fair Yugoslav in race circled island (8)
- 27** Audit was aware one split damn nouveau riche (3,5)

DOWN

- 4** Fancy concrete, just way out ridiculous! (10)
- 6** Saw a beer gaining head in edge (8)
- 7** Crankier airliners avoided India shemozzle (8)
- 8** Inn gets a whopping chunk of profits (3,5)
- 13** Abuse pilot heading off to claim soaring fame, briefly (10)
- 15** Look for rat on skates here? (4,4)
- 16** Means of warming a sixpack? Hardly! (3-5)
- 17** Crooks need a key witness, plain and simple (5,3)



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Yesterday's cryptic 20,964

