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## Smooth Jazz

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First, we notice that all of the clues seem to be referencing words. Some of the clues are a bit ambiguous, but we can try addressing the clues with a unique solution.

Hong Kong _____ (cartoon)	PHOOEY
solution to maintain stable pH	BUFFER
Pikachu, I _____ you	CHOOSE
Mrs., expanded	MISSUS
lamb meat	MUTTON

We can notice that all of the words are six letters long – and all have double letters in the middle! This property is also shared by “smooth” (multiple puzzlers have commented that we should’ve changed the title to “smooth jazz-er”). Armed with this knowledge, we can deduce the remaining clues:

dovetail shuffle	RIFFLE
Hong Kong _____ (cartoon)	PHOOEY
reduce the effect of	LESSEN
remains of an ancient organism	FOSSIL
adherent of primary religious denomination in Iran	SHIITE
spring allergen	POLLEN
murderer	KILLER
women of royalty	QUEENS
opposite of former	LATTER
character, symbol	LETTER
filled with optimism and confidence	CHEERY
landlocked SE England county	SURREY
solution to maintain stable pH	BUFFER
Pikachu, I _____ you	CHOOSE
Mrs., expanded	MISSUS
lamb meat	MUTTON
in an unrestricted manner	FREELY
archaic term to address inferiors	SIRRAH

While reading the first letters does not seem to yield a readable message, reading the central letters (that are repeated in each word) does yield a message:

FOSSIL LETTER FOSTER

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We can recognize both FOSSIL and LETTER from our list of words! In addition, we can construct FOSTER by taking the first half of FOSSIL and combining it with the second half of LETTER. This hint implies that we should pair up the clues in a similar matter.

But how? Notice that FOSSIL's clue has a number in the left column while LETTER has a number in the right column. In addition, we can see that there are the same number of clues with numbers in the left column as those with numbers in the right column. This implies that we should be matching words whose clues have numbers in the left column with words whose clues have numbers in the right column. There is actually a unique solution that successfully pairs all the words:

Left Word	Right Word	Combined Word	Left Number	Right Number
RIFFLE	KILLER	RIFLER	1	-5
PHOOEY	MUTTON	PHOTON	3	+3
FOSSIL	LETTER	FOSTER	7	-5
POLLEN	SHIITE	POLITE	8	+2
LATTER	FREELY	LATELY	6	-9
SURREY	BUFFER	SURFER	9	+1
CHOOSE	LESSEN	CHOSEN	5	+6
MISSUS	CHEERY	MISERY	4	-12
SIRRAH	QUEENS	SIRENS	2	-4

Noting that the left numbers are the numbers from 1 to 9, we can reorder the combined words by the left number.

Combined Word	Left Number	Right Number
RIFLER	1	-5
SIRENS	2	-4
PHOTON	3	+3
MISERY	4	-12
CHOSEN	5	+6
LATELY	6	-9
FOSTER	7	-5
POLITE	8	+2
SURFER	9	+1

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The right numbers seem to represent a letter shift (ex. +1 represents moving forward by one letter in the alphabet, wrapping after Z if necessary). Applying these shifts to the first letters of the combined words yields:

Combined Word	Right Number	Resulting Letter
RIFLER	-5	M
SIRENS	-4	O
PHOTON	+3	S
MISERY	-12	A
CHOSEN	+6	I
LATELY	-9	C
FOSTER	-5	A
POLITE	+2	R
SURFER	+1	T

yielding the final answer **MOSAIC ART**.