Your FREE essential entertainment guide for the Midlands

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HENRY TUDOR HOUSE

Shropshire

ISSUE 382 OCTOBER 2017

What's On

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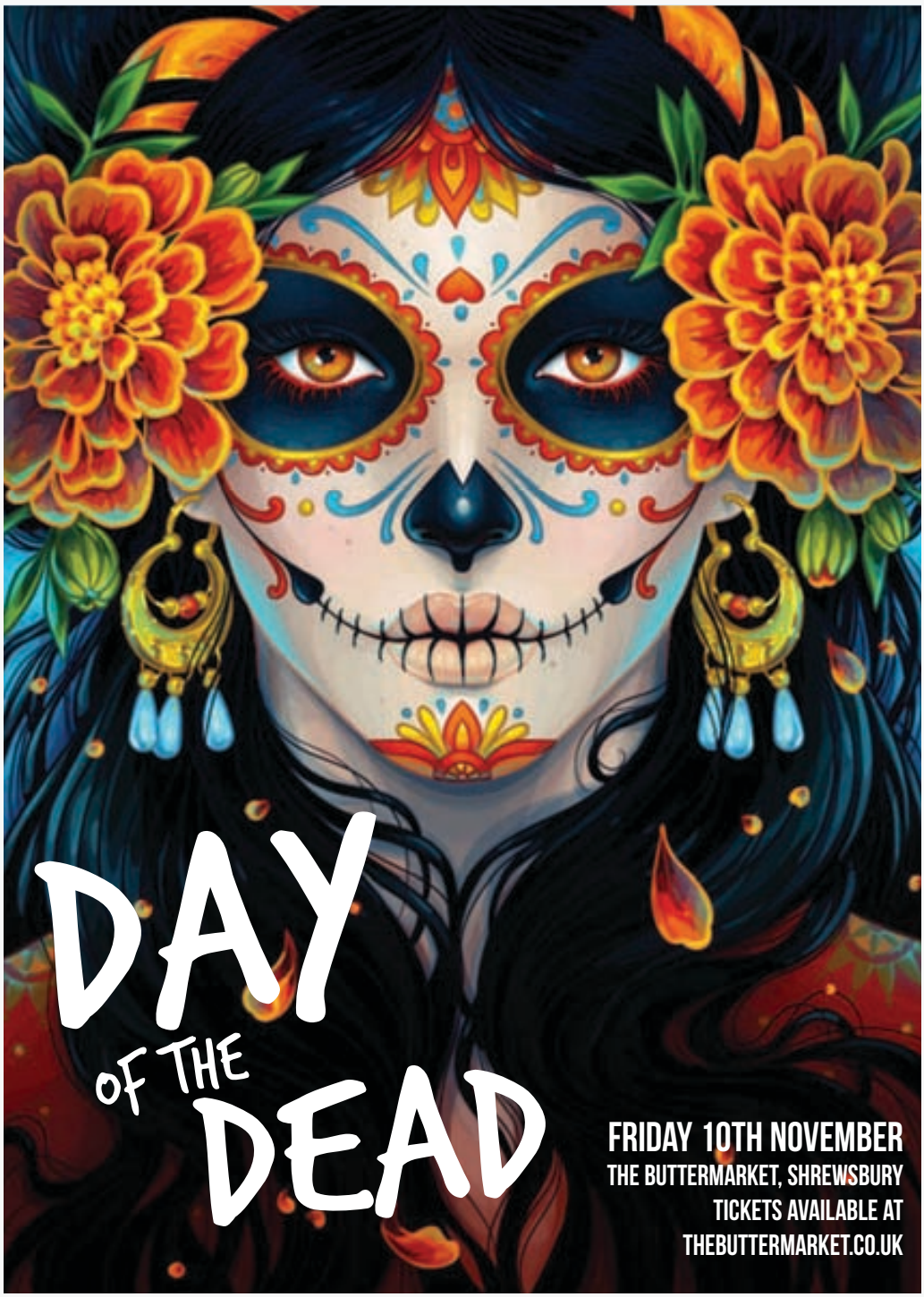

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A taste of Munich as new beer festival takes a bow

Munich is coming to the Shropshire town of Shrewsbury this month. Well, sort of. Legendary Munich beer festival Oktoberfest is the inspiration behind a brand new event from Shropshire Festivals.

Also using the Oktoberfest name, the event debuts in the town's Quarry Park from Friday 6 to Sunday 8 October.

As well as showcasing more than 150 ales with which to wet your whistle, the event also features process parlours, a gin den and mixology classes to shake things up. There's music to enjoy too, ranging from oompah bands to the very best local talent, as well as a comedy zone to get you laughing. Lederhosen is optional...

Telly show to premiere at classic motor event

A UK premiere screening of the first episode in the 14th season of hit TV show Wheeler Dealers will take place at next month's Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show at Birmingham's NEC.

Classic motoring enthusiasts are being given the chance to win two tickets to view the screening. If they book their show tickets before Thursday 26 October, they will automatically be entered into a prize draw.

The Lancaster Insurance Classic Motor Show returns to Birmingham's NEC from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 November. For more information, visit necclassicmotorshow.com

Work now underway on new Lichfield library

Work has begun to create a brand new library in Lichfield.

The new facility, which is to be modelled on Stafford Library, will include 3D printing facilities, wifi, touchscreen tables and computer tablets. It will be located on the ground floor at the city's St Mary's Church.

Wellbeing in the Midlands

The Wellbeing Festival is returning to Birmingham's NEC next month (3 - 5 November), with the organisation behind the show, Mind Body Spirit, this year celebrating its 40th anniversary.

The three-day event offers 'spiritual seekers' a safe place in which to commune and share their ideas, beliefs and philosophies.

Attractions at this month's show include a workshop programme presenting new ideas on relationships, awakening, inspired living, NLP, yoga, meditation, science & angels. New for this year is the Ceremony Space, an area in which visitors can focus on intimate ceremony-based experiences. For more information, visit mindbodyspirit.co.uk

Heartthrob Nigel back at the helm for Shrek tour

Former EastEnders heartthrob Nigel Harman will be taking the director's chair for Shrek The Musical when it visits the Midlands on its nationwide tour.

Nigel made his directorial debut on the first ever tour of the hit show, having previously originated the role of Lord Farquaad in the West End, a performance for which he won a coveted Olivier Award.

Shrek The Musical stops off at the New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Wednesday 14 to Sunday 25 February. It then returns to the region three months later for a run at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent (Wednesday 2 to Sunday 13 May).

Tickets can be purchased by calling 0844 871 7649 or visiting atgtickets.com

Cathedral opener for Lichfield fest

The Lichfield Festival Of Folk is this month taking place for a fifth year. A friendly event which has developed a devoted following of discerning music fans, L2F, as it's otherwise known, is kickstarted by a Lichfield Cathedral performance from Jon Boden of Bellowhead fame. As well as an impressive programme of music across the weekend, the event also features processions, dance, workshops and exhibitions.
L2F takes place at various venues from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 October.

Strictly tour to kick off in the Midlands

Strictly Come Dancing's 2018 live tour will kick off at Arena Birmingham on 19 January (until the 21st).
The stage version of the hit TV show will be hosted by reigning champion Ore Oduba (pictured), with Craig Revel Horwood (who directs for the eighth year) and Bruno Tonioli once again on the judging panel.
Commenting on the upcoming tour, Ore said: "Winning Strictly was the most unforgettable experience and a dream come true. This show and its fans will always hold a special place in my heart. I can't wait to travel the UK again and meet the fantastic audiences that make Strictly the phenomenon we know and love."

Joe Pasquale to star as Frank Spencer in Wolverhampton

Panto favourite and one-time I'm A Celebrity winner Joe Pasquale makes a welcome return to the region next spring, to star as the accident-prone Frank Spencer in a stage version of classic 1970s sitcom Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em. The show stops off at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from 15 to 19 May. The character of Frank Spencer was made famous by Michael Crawford in the popular TV series, which ran from 1973 to '78. Sarah Earnshaw portrays Frank's long-suffering wife, Betty, in the new show. For more info, visit grandtheatre.co.uk

Midlands writer set for Hollywood

A Midlands author's latest novel is being tipped for big movie success.
Liam Brown's Broadcast has been snapped up by a major Hollywood studio. It tells the story of YouTube sensation David Callow, a man who agrees to take part in a revolutionary new online show called MindCast.
"I can picture Tom Hiddleston as the lead," says Liam, 34, who lives in Birmingham with wife Simone and their two children.

Big town plan to transform Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council have unveiled a plan that would see the majority of Shrewsbury town centre pedestrianised.
The Big Town Plan also features a redevelopment of the riverside, increased cycleways and more green areas.
A special pop-up space, located in the town centre at 80 Wyle Cop, provides the public with the chance to view large-scale artist impressions of how Shrewsbury could be transformed.
People can also visit shrewsburybigtownplan.org to read the outline plan and suggest their own ideas to develop the project further.

All-star line-up for A Weekend Of Words in South Shropshire

A Weekend Of Words, Ludlow Assembly Rooms' very own literature festival, makes a welcome return this month (Friday 20 - Sunday 22 October).
The 2017 edition of the event features contributions from Shappi Khorsandi (pictured), Andy Hamilton, Peter Snow & Ann MacMillan and Tony Robinson.
As well as featuring numerous ticketed events, the festival also offers plenty of free entertainment to enjoy. Highlights include the screening of films from Rural Media's Random Acts project, and children's storytelling sessions with Karen Argent.
Tickets can be purchased via 01584 878141 or online at ludlowassemblyrooms.co.uk

'Victims of terror' memorial set for Arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire is to house a new memorial to British victims of terrorism overseas.
The new work, entitled Still Water, will be created by artist Alison Wilding and sculptor Adam Kershaw.
Commenting on the announcement, Sarah Montgomery, Managing Director of the National Memorial Arboretum, said: "This new memorial will play a valuable role in acknowledging the deaths of innocent British travellers at the hands of terrorists."

Wolverhampton aims to show it's a fun place to be

Wolverhampton is this month hosting a comedy festival in response to reports from the Office of National Statistics which suggest that the city is one of the 'unhappiest places in the UK'.
The Funny Things Festival runs at various venues from 23 October to 5 November. Contributors to the 14-day laugh-in include Jimmy Carr, Milton Jones, John Bishop, Tom Stade and Henning Wehn. For more information about the event, visit funny-things.co.uk

Paines Plough's pop-up plug-and-play theatre to stop off in Stoke-on-Trent

The world's first 'pop-up, plug-and-play theatre' is coming to Stoke-on-Trent. The venue, which is called Roundabout, is visiting the city for a third time. It will host a season of new shows presented by nationally touring company Paines Plough, as well as comedy from Hardeep Singh Kohli. The flatpack theatre pops up outside the newly built No 1 Smithfield in Hanley from 19 to 22 October.

Helping to *Reviive* an Ayckbourn classic...

Highly rated amateur ensemble Shropshire Drama Company (SDC) is next month staging a new version of classic Alan Ayckbourn comedy Bedroom Farce - with a little help from Shropshire recycling and resale organisation Reviive.
SDC will perform the play in the Walker Theatre at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn (Wednesday 8 to Saturday 11 November). The production makes use of three beds - all of which are being supplied by Reviive.
"The action requires three contrasting bedrooms in three separate houses to be simultaneously accommodated on the stage," explains the show's director, Jonathan Cross. "With the invaluable help and support of Reviive, we hope to achieve a visually interesting set which will provide just the right background for SDC's presentation of this hilarious play." For more information, visit theatresevern.co.uk

Folk stars to play Shrewsbury's sacred space

British folk ambassadors Show Of Hands are this month performing at St Mary's Church in Shrewsbury.
The award-winning duo, who blend sharp songwriting with unrivalled musicianship, will perform at the venue on Thursday 26 October. They're joined for the gig by Miranda Sykes.

PINK SARI REVOLUTION

Pink Sari Revolution is the world première of the true story of Sampat Pal and her fight for freedom in India. Based on the book by journalist Amana Fontanella-Khan, Curve Associate Director Suba Das is bringing Sampat's story to the stage following an extensive period of research and development both in the UK and India.

Tell us about your production of Pink Sari Revolution.

Pink Sari Revolution is a drama about an incredible woman, Sampat Pal, who has created one of the world's greatest feminist movements. She leads an army of 400,000 women in rural India who wear neon pink saris and say 'enough is enough'.
The play is based on a documentary account of her 'Gulabi Gang' written by journalist Amana Fontanella-Khan. The story is about these women who have real strength and are standing up for their rights but also about the cost of saying no to the system.

The book focuses on the Gulabi Gang's 2010 campaign to free falsely imprisoned teenager Sheelu Nishad after she was raped by a prominent local politician. How are you tackling the difficult issues brought up by this?

As a director, there's something very interesting about the idea of how you present violence, and certainly sexual violence, on the stage. I don't believe that theatre is there to be gratuitous; I think theatre is there to plant images and ideas. The greatest thing you can do when making theatre is encourage the audience to use their imagination. That's where something affects you totally and touches you the most.
In terms of what we're presenting, we are not shying away from the reality that the piece is motored by the very specific case that Sampat Pal became obsessed with. However, it's not going to be a production in which an audience will see sexual violence enacted on stage. I'm not interested in confronting audiences with that or asking actors to delve into that in a rehearsal room –I don't think we need to show the issue. It's a very serious, real experience.

Why is this story so important to you?

Sampat Pal is an incredibly inspirational woman; an iconic woman who has created one of the world's greatest and most vibrant feminist movements. She was married off at the age of 12, taught herself how to read, write and sew so that she could be economically independent. From those impoverished origins in one of the most lawless parts of India, she has achieved extraordinary things and even became one of The Guardian's '100 most important women in the world'.
I read Fontanella-Khan's book several years ago and when I heard about the Arts Council's Reimagine India funding to encourage cultural work between British and Indian organisations, I immediately felt like there was an opportunity to take this story that I've been so excited about and find a way to make a show. We've also received support for this production from the British Council's UK/IN 2017 programme and English Touring Theatre. This funding enabled us to go out and spend time with Sampat Pal both in her home and out on the campaign trail. I'm slightly in love with her! She's a force of nature; the most charismatic, extraordinary, fire-cracker of a human being you could ever imagine.
It's a real responsibility, when you meet somebody, you're telling a story about a real human being. The complexity as a theatre maker is then digging into that and knowing that we will create a show that does raise questions about whether she has always done the right thing.
Pink Sari Revolution is more than just a show about terrible things that happen far away; we know that these things take place all around the world and that's why this story is

so important and urgent to tell.

With two years in development, what has the process been to create the production so far?

One of the starting points for this play was our research and development process in India way back in December 2015. It felt like the only way to conceive of making this show would be to travel to India. Living with Sampat Pal and meeting with extraordinary Indian artists gave us a real sense of what this story means to the people in India.

All we had were ideas; we didn't know what the take up would be for the show. Artistically, reaching out to communities here in the UK felt so important because it is a daunting thing to be a young man wanting to tell this story about South Asian women. I met with book clubs and local Indian women community groups to discuss the story and what it means from their perspectives. Part of our process is turning all the facts and all the information we have into a story about a world that probably feels very alien and remote to so many of us, and turning that into a really human, exciting, theatrical drama.

Who have you met so far and who are you bringing along on this production?

A really important element of developing the show has been working with the Indian playwright Purva Naresh, an extraordinary feminist political voice from India. It felt so important for this piece to be written by a woman who is living through these realities and who is so passionate and angry and with so much social work in her own day-to-day life. Her family are from the biggest city near to Sampat Pal, she grew up hearing about her and the 'Gulabi Gang'.

We are also working with Tim Lutkin who is an Olivier award-winning lighting designer, Designer Isla Shaw, and Aakash Odedra (who recently won the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression award) as our Movement Director. It's a world-class, international team telling a global story.

This is a very powerful story, what do you hope audiences in the UK will take from it?

Pink Sari Revolution is a very specific story about this place and this moment in time in India, but it's also universal. The issues that sit at the heart of this are 'what does it mean to be a woman?', 'what does it mean to be a protestor?', 'what does it mean to say "no"?', and 'what does it mean to say 'this is enough'?'. Female rights, protests, resistance – they're themes that obsess everyone right now. We are all living in the shadow of not quite knowing whether our society works for us – that's not just in India, that's right here too. It's everywhere. What I hope is that this story of an amazing woman in India will unlock a wider conversation here in the UK. Sampat was leading thousands of women and men marching in pink a decade before the Women's Marches in Washington and across the world this year. Our hope is this tale of truth and resistance might in some way empower audiences in the UK and beyond.

Pink Sari Revolution runs at the Belgrade Theatre Coventry from Wednesday 11 to Saturday 21 October

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WARNING MOTORSPORT CAN BE DANGEROUS

by Heather Kincaid

Crazier than You

Carrie Hope Fletcher stars as Wednesday in The Addams Family UK tour

With her upbeat, playful and down-to-earth persona, and the warmth, wit and wisdom she imparts to her scores of young fans, multi-talented singer, actor, writer and internet sensation Carrie Hope Fletcher has been described as everyone's favourite big sister. Lately, however, she's been appearing as a big sister of a rather different ilk, starring as the borderline-psychotic Wednesday Addams in the UK tour of Andrew Lippa's Addams Family musical.

Straight black pigtails and scathing, deadpan looks make quite a change from the bright, curly-haired Carrie that we're used to seeing. But is this really the first time she's been in touch with her dark side? With the show soon to arrive in Wolverhampton, we asked her whether she'd ever 'gone goth' before.

"I did!" she laughs. "I had a real emo phase when I was about 14. I wore lots of Hellbunny clothing, black lace, skulls and crossbones and stripy purple and black hoodies with cat ears on the hood. I was really into My Chemical Romance. In fact, just today, when I was peeking out of the Addams Family letterbox before the beginning of Act Two, I spotted a girl on the front row wearing a My Chemical Romance hoodie. It made me really happy!"

With her angsty teenage years now behind her, Wednesday Addams is pretty far removed from parts that Carrie's accustomed to today. Happily, the Carrie fanbase seems to have accepted Wednesday in all her wonderful weirdness.

"They've taken to her much more than I expected - everyone seems to really love her! I think it's partly because she's 18, and the majority of my online audience is between the ages of 18 and 24, so they can identify with her. She's great because she's such an advocate for being confident and being who you are no matter what anyone says. There's a great line she sings in Crazier Than You which just sums her up so well: 'I'm crazier than you, so get on board or simply move along.'"

The version of Wednesday Carrie plays in the production is a bit older than previous incarnations - a fully fledged 18-year-old starting to assert her independence. Of course, she's never been one to stand for any mollycoddling or pay much heed to rules, but there are some lines that you simply don't cross - and one of them is falling for a boy like Lucas Beineke. Thankfully, his relative 'ordinariness' doesn't seem to have rubbed off on Wednesday too much, even if she does get overly worked up about how her 'meet the parents' dinner will play out.

"The thing about her is that instead of getting gooey and lovey-dovey, she gets crazy. You know when you see a kitten that's so cute that you want to hurt it? That's Wednesday to a tee. She loves Lucas so much, she wants to kill him, almost!

"But I also think that she's attracted to the fact that she can look after him. Lucas loves the darker side of life, but he's still quite a vulnerable, normal boy who is very out of his depth with her. I think she likes that she gets to stand in front of him wielding her crossbow, daring anyone to call him a dork. We always joke that she would never become Wednesday Beineke, it would always be Lucas becoming an Addams. Over time, I think he'll definitely become more like them - I don't think he has any choice!"

Indeed, the process seems already to be underway in the song Crazier Than You, a turning point both for Wednesday and Lucas and for Lucas' overwhelmed parents, Mal and Alice. But while the characters battle it out to claim the title on stage, behind the scenes, says Carrie, it's Cameron Blakely, who plays her father, Gomez, who's the craziest. "He's basically the same person on and off stage, just minus the Spanish accent!"

Carrie got her first taste of the show's music much earlier than her co-stars, having originally been invited to sing one of the songs, Pulled, in an Andrew Lippa concert. So enamoured was she by the idea of the show that she begged to be first in line for auditions if it ever came to the UK.

"I knew it wouldn't be exactly the same as the Broadway version because I'd heard that there'd been a few changes, so when I read it I was just so excited to find out what our story would be. I actually got the script about three or four weeks before we started rehearsals, and I was just itching to get to work straight away - it was everything I expected and more!"

Alongside her demanding role in the show, Carrie's also found time to promote her latest novel, All That She Can See, which was published in July. Conveniently, she's been able to sync up her stage tour with visits to bookshops near to the venues.

"It's been going really well. I had just over 200 people turn up to my signing in Manchester - and what's really nice is that a lot of the people who came had either been to see The Addams Family or were coming to see it, so it's lovely to be able to talk to them about that."

As if that wasn't enough, she's already writing something new, though won't reveal details yet...

"You'll just have to wait and see!" she exclaims.

Carrie Hope Fletcher stars in The Addams Family at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 October.

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Tom Kerridge headlines Lichfield dining experience

A new fine dining experience takes place in Staffordshire next month.

The main focus of the event - which includes live music and a Champagne reception - is a six-course menu designed and delivered by half-a-dozen Michelin-starred chefs and their teams, including the two-Michelin-starred Tom Kerridge, Richard Turner of Turners at 69 and Luke Tipping of Simpsons in Birmingham.

The event is being hosted by Sauce Supper Club and takes place at Grand Pavilion - part of the refurbished Alrewas Hayes - on 20 November. Tickets cost £150 and are expected to sell out quickly.

Sauce Supper Club founder Beth Toovey commented: "The evening we have planned at Alrewas Hayes is incredibly special. I don't actually know of anything similar, where such an amazing offering has been brought together for a single occasion. We wanted to do something really big for our end-of-year event, so we're really excited to be bringing together such a selection of talented chefs for this amazing gourmet experience."

REVIEW: Fairlawns Restaurant 178

Walsall venue offers exemplary service, tasty food and relaxed atmosphere

Family-owned Walsall hotel The Fairlawns has been in operation for 30 years. It comprises a four-star hotel & spa, wedding and private party facilities, an adult health club & gymnasium, nine acres of landscaped grounds and a restaurant that comes complete with two AA Rosettes for fine catering and a five-star rating for food hygiene.

Restaurant 178's aim is to create a relaxed, attentive and comfortable service - and that's certainly what they delivered the night we visited.

Having been shown to our table, we ordered two pints of lager to enjoy whilst perusing a menu that was well stacked with typical British flavours.

Shortly after we'd ordered our food, an amuse-bouche arrived. Comprising a mushroom velouté with coffee syrup and mascarpone arancini, this unexpected addition was delivered to our table with the compliments of the chef. The warm and creamy mushroom velouté was a little pot of heaven, presented in an espresso-sized cup and showcasing a strong, earthy flavour. The coffee syrup added a welcome sweetness and made for a perfect flavour combination. Whoever would've thought that mushroom and coffee would work so well together, but boy, they most certainly do! The mascarpone arancini was nicely cooked - crispy on the outside and soft and creamy on the inside.

The evening had certainly begun well!

For my starter, I chose the pork belly served with black pudding, a cherry sauce, an apple sauce and a pistachio crumb. Beautifully presented, the pork belly was tender, full of flavour and cooked to perfection. The pistachio crumb added a contrasting texture. The cherry and apple sauces provided the dish not only with extra flavour but also a welcome splash or two of colour.

My partner opted for the duck liver parfait served with duck ham and, again, cherry sauce and pistachio crumb. Served with some warm toast, the parfait tasted divine and the presentation was fantastic. The chefs here really know their stuff.

As tempting as the chateaubriand sharing board was, for my main course I chose the lamb rump and shoulder served with aubergine, yoghurt and broad beans. The rump, served medium rare, was simply stunning - cooked to perfection and seasoned nicely. The shoulder was tasty, the other elements serving as delicious accompaniments.

My partner chose the fillet of sea trout with elements of tartar, potato and mussel sauce and samphire. The flavour combinations were a match made in heaven. The salty samphire and mussels, allied with the soft and nicely cooked piece of fish, made for yet another highly enjoyable dish.

For the finale we shared the chocolate terrine and the coffee panna cotta. Served with an orange sauce and Aero-inspired cocoa nibs, the dish was rich, flavoursome and downright delicious! The panna cotta, served with pieces of coffee cake and a clotted cream ice cream, showcased a smooth, creamy taste and texture.

If you're a lover of tastefully presented, contemporary food made with high-quality ingredients, then Restaurant 178 is well worth a visit. Its commitment to exemplary service, tasty food and the creation of a relaxed atmosphere certainly makes for the kind of evening you'll be happy to experience time and again.

Lauren Foster

Food:	■■■■■
Service:	■■■■■
Ambience:	■■■■■
Overall value	■■■■■
OVERALL	■■■■■

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Lavish new restaurant & cocktail bar set to open in Selfridges store

The award-winning San Carlo is this month opening its new Fumo restaurant, champagne & cocktail bar on the fourth floor of Birmingham's Selfridges store.

Affording stunning views of the iconic Bullring, the £1million venue will feature a uniquely shaped grand marble bar.

Fumo's all-day menu will serve Italian small plate dishes to share, using only the finest ingredients from the produce markets of Milan and Sicily.

The bar will specialise in cocktails and Laurent Perrier Champagne.

Popular cocktail bar expands with a £1.4m refurbishment

One of Birmingham's most-loved cocktail bars has recently opened a second room, following a £1.4million refurbishment.

Located in Piccadilly Arcade, Be At One can now welcome up to 550 cocktail lovers through its doors.

The popular venue has one of the longest lists of cocktails in the industry. Favourites include blended specialities such as the sweet & salty popcorn-topped Popster, the superfood-packed Beetroot Retox and reimagined classic the Gin Re-Fashioned.

Commenting on the company, co-founder Steve Locke said: "Be At One is a cocktail institution, providing great service, an unbeatable party atmosphere and, most importantly, a pretension-free attitude."

Top chef unveils new wine collection

Following a launch event at his Birmingham Steakhouse Bar & Grill last month, award-winning chef Marco Pierre White has created a new and exclusive wine collection.

The wines have been created alongside celebrated wine-maker Jean-Luc Colombo and are exclusively available at Marco's UK restaurants.

Fuss-free Greek menu on offer in Shrewsbury

A new family-run Shrewsbury restaurant is promising to be a real hit with customers, thanks to its menu of fuss-free authentic Greek dishes.

Situated close to the town's Abbey Church, Niko's Greek Restaurant features traditional decor, a semi-open kitchen and a menu boasting the kind of cuisine that's much in evidence in less-touristy parts of Greece.

Diners at Niko's can choose from a selection of appetising mezze dishes, while main courses include grilled lamb chops marinated with Greek spices, Keftedes (Greek meatballs), sharing platters and moussaka.

Grilled aubergines with feta cheese, tomato sauce, extra virgin olive oil and Greek spices feature among the vegetarian options.

A healthy Greek yoghurt with honey and walnuts, and Halva - a moist cake made from semolina flour and cooked in a cinnamon syrup - are available for dessert.

The drinks menu features wines from Romania, Lebanon and the US. These sit alongside Greek classics Retsina and Ouzo, and coffee imported from Greece.

Niko's currently opens daily from 5pm until midnight. Bookings can be made online at nikosgreek-restaurant.co.uk

Wolverhampton restaurant celebrates its 35th anniversary

One of Wolverhampton's most popular restaurants has launched a new menu in celebration of its 35th birthday.

Bilash, which was opened by chef Sitab Khan in 1982, serves authentic dishes infused with a combination of traditional and modern Bangladeshi cuisine.

"We are very passionate about our local roots and the fact that we have grown into Wolverhampton's premier Asian restaurant," said Mohammed Khan, who now runs the business with his father.

"It has been a very exciting journey, from having a small place with no reputation to now boasting a Michelin rating and being featured in the AA, Waitrose and Haden's good food guides."

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KT PROMOTIONS

Nick Mulvey

Following a triumphant Glastonbury performance, British singer-songwriter Nick Mulvey embarks on a new tour in support of his new album Wake Up Now. Lauren Foster recently caught up with Nick to find out more..

Your new album, Wake Up Now, is out now. Can you tell us a little bit about it?

Sure! It's an album I wrote in parallel with my wife's pregnancy and the birth of our first kid. We recorded it last October in Real World studios, which is Peter Gabriel's studio out in Wiltshire. The songs look at the role of self-enquiry in our understanding of our predicament. I was ready as a writer to start having a bit more of an outward perspective. My first record was insular, and I think I was ready as a writer to look outwards. That feeling was amplified by becoming a dad and having that natural thing where you have a sense of responsibility for your small part of the world. Also, it was a product of the fact of writing an album in 2016 - it felt impossible not to talk about some of the big issues going on that are so prevalent right now. If you've grown up in the horn of Africa, or you were made homeless because there's not enough support for people at a certain level in housing, then issues have been screamingly loud for a long time, but the difference is that now, they allow for all of us. It's an increasingly exhausting act to be in denial about what's going on in the world. I couldn't do it. This album is a response to that.

Does it differ much from your debut album, First Mind?

The songs being more outward-looking is reflected a bit in the recording process as well, which is a difference between the two. I realised I needed to record in a very live way, with a group of musicians all in the same room. That way, you have sonic spillage over the microphone, so that there are symbols on the guitar mics and guitar mics on the vocal mics. It means you can't be such a control freak because you can't edit afterwards as much. You can't take out that instrument or rejig that structure. You have to commit to the structure and you have to go for the take. All of that was enormously helpful for me as an artist. It gave me a lot of confidence just to be like 'fuck it, let's do it like this'. It was a lot of fun; it freed me up just to play music and made it a really exciting journey.

What's the meaning behind the title?

The album is fundamentally about waking up to the mystery of life and celebrating being alive, and I don't mean just being alive in the sense that we normally mean. I think we've constantly overlooked the mystery of our own being, and that has a key role in our over-consumption, which is driving the planet to the edge . Therefore a greater sense of the mystery of absolutely every moment of every day has a role to play in our sense of knowing that we are already enough - and that's a joyful thing. That sense of joy and wonder is hard to feel if you live in debt or live with chronic pain, for example. It's hard to walk around going 'oh every day is wonderful'.

The track Myela was born out of the refugee crisis. Can you elaborate on this?

It was something I felt very strongly about, as was the cynicism of much of the British media. I was confused by that and wanted to write about it. I had this chord sequence that was brewing for many months. Loosely speaking, it was kind of flamenco, although my Italian friend that I worked with on this song, Frederico Bruno, said that the sequence reminded him of Southern Italy - so it's kind of Mediterranean, and that was important. We recognised that we couldn't write our own words about it because what experience do we have, so we decided to do some research and do it properly. We were inspired by Peter Gabriel's song, Biko, which is about Steve Biko and apartheid in South Africa in 1980, and which takes a more journalistic approach. We looked at online archives of refugees' accounts of their own journeys, and the song started to flow from that. We were fictionalising these characters. For example, there's a 10-year-old boy called Deogratius from Nigera, and when they asked him why he'd gone to Italy, he said he'd rather die once in the sea than die every day staying at home. From a 10-year-old kid that was just devastating to read, and that became the song. It was something I felt like I wanted to write. It's not perfect - people have told me that the 'I am your neighbour' bit at the end is a bit wordy, but the thing is, it's not saying a song is going to change the world. I don't think a song could change the world. People could change the world, but that's why songs matter, because our attitudes and actions are all shaped by the things we absorb, so I wanted to write something that mattered.

Last year saw the birth of your son, Inka. How's fatherhood treating you?

It's amazing! It's a wonder. We live in a barn where there are no stairs, but at the moment,

whilst I'm releasing the album, we've all moved to London, and there are stairs in this house and he just can't believe it! We just go up and down, up and down, up and down, and I'm happy because he's going to tire himself out and have a good sleep. That was me from 6.45am until about 8.30am, just up and down the stairs - it was joyful. It's hardcore as well. I've been very busy this summer and it's really stretched me to the edge. Being a parent brings up all your shit, you know - you realise where you're at, not where you think you're at. It's an amazing test, and I'm failing and having a wonderful time, if you know what I mean.

What's your dream collaboration?

I would love to collaborate with PJ Harvey. I think she's amazing. I love and admire the way that she dedicates her art to speaking about things that matter, I'm really inspired by that right now.

What's your first musical memory?

There was a lot of music in the house. My dad would always crank the music up and really enjoy it. Stuff like ZZ Top in the car. When you're five years old, that's massive. It completely blows your mind and is a really powerful experience. A little bit later, my sister used to feed me a lot of music, the cooler stuff like Massive Attack and Portishead and hip-hop, De Le Soul and stuff like that. She fed me a lot of hip-hop and drum and bass and jungle - a lot of stuff I went on to love.

You're well known on the festival circuit. Do you have a favourite festival?

I always love Green Man Festival. The curation, they always nail it there, and it's a beautiful site. I love Womad - always a winner. I love Glastonbury as well.

You opened Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage in 2014. What an achievement...

Yeah, it was awesome. It was the beginning of something, I feel. I still feel that on the second record. I feel like I have something to prove on this record and I'm excited to see where it goes.

You run a series of Meet Me There events throughout the country. Can you tell us a little bit about those?

It came from when we were releasing singles from my last album. We'd just got home, I was chatting to fans on the internet and my wife said, 'What do you think would happen if we put a postcode and a time?' I have a song called Meet Me There, which was the single that was on the radio at that time, so we just thought, let's try it. We put the name of a park around the corner from our house, 7pm, Meet Me There, and about eight people turned up. It was brilliant, and our mate came down and we filmed it. We never explained it, we just put the film up the next day. A week later, we did a different location somewhere else in Central London and 30 people came. A month later, it was 100.

You're playing Birmingham's O2 Institute in October. What can audiences expect from your show?

It's new level for me. This band is freer and we have a deeper connection than I've ever had before with musicians. I'm really, really excited about this UK tour. We're going to make a lot of people happy and we're happy doing it. I can't wait for them to meet the band. To my left on stage, so to their right, is Frederico Bruno, and he is amazing. He's a really special character and he's having a ball. He's very free and he's playing a lot of different instruments. Then, on my right, stage left, is FIfi. These are really old, dear friends of mine, and I can't believe we're all in a band together. She's a secret weapon - she's amazing. People are going to enjoy it.

Nick Mulvey performs at O2 Institute, Birmingham on Monday 9th October

Placebo

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, Sat 21 October

Comprising androgynous two-piece Brian Molko (pictured) and Stefan Olsdal, alternative rock band Placebo head to Wolverhampton this month as part of a world tour celebrating the 20th anniversary of their platinum-selling self-titled debut album.
With best-known songs including Pure Morning and Every You, Every Me - and a cult fanbase that's stood by them throughout - their career has seen them delve into the genres of glam rock, goth rock, grunge and punk rock.

Megson

The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 October

Since releasing first album On The Side in 2004, husband-and-wife team Stu and Debbie Hanna have developed an enviable reputation on the English folk music circuit.
The duo have been hailed as fresh and innovative - a description that's hardly surprising given that Debbie is classically trained and Stu's a former punk!
Specialising in self-composed melodies which bring together intimate harmony singing and multi-instrumental acoustic playing, the pair visit the Midlands this month as part of their 2017 autumn tour.

Amber Run

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Tues 10 October

Since releasing second album For A Moment, I Was Lost, at the start of the year, Nottingham four-piece Amber Run have played some of the biggest festivals in Europe, including Pink Pop in the Netherlands and Hurricane and Southside in Germany.
With a growing reputation as makers of beautifully emotive music, the band stop off in Wolverhampton this month as part of a 12-date autumn tour.

Blair Dunlop

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Sun 29 October; Stafford Gatehouse, Mon 30 October

Blair Dunlop's skills as a singer, guitarist and songwriter were much in evidence on his debut album, Blight And Blossom, and its well-received follow-ups, House Of Jacks (2014) and Gilded (2016). The award-winning singer, songwriter and guitarist is part of a famous musical dynasty. His father, Ashley Hutchings, is the famed co-founder of Fairport Convention.

The Young'uns

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 7 October; mac, Birmingham, Sat 21 October

Having won the Best Group gong at the BBC Radio Two Folk Awards in both 2015 and '16, The Young'uns have successfully cemented their position at the forefront of the English folk scene.
The talented Teesside trio return this month with an extensive UK tour and an eagerly anticipated new album, Strangers.

Louis Berry

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 25 October

Specialising in standout melodies and hard-hitting lyrics, Louis Berry delivers rock'n'roll for the 21st century.
"I want to be the biggest male artist on the planet," says Louis. "You name me one song in the charts right now that says anything about your life or my life. I can't name *one*! Chart music now is just candy - it doesn't feed your soul. An hour later you're hungry again."
Louis brings his UK tour to the Midlands following triumphant performances at Reading & Leeds this summer.

by Heather Kincaid

GODIVA ROCKS

A brand new show is this month celebrating the musical heritage of Coventry. What's On chats to the man behind Godiva Rocks, local playwright Alan Pollock...

You've heard of Madchester, Merseybeat and the heavy metal movement forged in Birmingham, but would you know how to define the sound of Coventry?

In his latest show, Godiva Rocks, local playwright Alan Pollock sets out to do just that. In what may well be the world's first musical based around the songs of a single city, the One Night In November scribe now turns his attention to homegrown hits through the story of a young couple searching for the essence of Coventry music.

"It's hard to avoid acknowledging that 2-tone really nailed it," says Pollock. "With the exception of a few late-'60s bands, that was the first time that black and white united to make music here. That hadn't really happened at all during the '70s, but when it came along, it just seemed like such a natural expression of who we are in this melting-pot city, which is a big theme in the play."

Many locals do feel a sense of ownership over their ska heritage, so it was no surprise when the iconic Ghost Town topped a recent public poll to find our favourite Coventry number one. Yet from the electronic experimentation of Delia Derbyshire to launching what has become Britain's biggest free music festival, there's so much more to the Coventry music scene than The Specials.

"I didn't actually have to dig very deep to come up with loads of songs from here," continues Pollock. "I think if Liverpool and Manchester are at the top in terms of musical output, we're certainly in the top three or four. But the thing I hear people saying a lot in rehearsals is, 'I didn't know that was from Coventry'. Lots of people don't realise, for example, that Funboy Three are basically a Cov band, that The Primitives and Panjabi MC were from Coventry, as was Frank Ifield, who had four number one hits before Elvis Presley had even had one! So there's a lot more than people think.

"There are one or two Specials songs in the show, but I felt like The Specials had already been celebrated elsewhere, so I wanted to get people to look at all the other stuff.

"Nobody's going to be disappointed - there will be something for everyone, from young people now right back to the '60s."

So why is it that this hotbed of musical invention has gone largely unrecognised until now? Well, one reason could be Coventrians' own self-perception. Unlike in London, Birmingham and powerhouses of the north, in Cov, we're quite a reticent bunch when it comes to extolling our own virtues. In fact, the biggest Coventry critics are almost always those who live here. To paraphrase Pollock at the Godiva Rocks launch, it feels as though we always wait for outside recognition before we'll acknowledge the merits of anything made here.

Trouble is, since the decline of our once-world-famous industry, such external affirmation has become increasingly rare. Nowadays, many people outside the Midlands would be hard-pressed even to say where Coventry is, let alone tell you anything about its cultural life, so if we're to be in with a chance of taking the City of Culture title, it's up to us to shout about what makes it special.

"Part of the point of doing this show about Coventry is getting people to be proud of stuff we've done. I've been unofficially involved with the City of Culture bid right from the start, and we talk about this a lot - getting people to be actively positive about what we've achieved."

And Pollock has certainly been doing his bit to celebrate Coventry for some years: neither this nor his controversial Coventry Blitz play One Night In November are his first time putting the city centre-stage.

"I've always found it fascinating. I grew up here, and even though I moved away for a while and lived all over the world, I found myself drawn back to the spirit of the place. Its history is so rich, and it's like a kind of symbol of the country as a whole, with its industrial background and its ups and downs. When my parents arrived in the early '60s, it had the highest average wage of any town in the country. Then it suffered badly in the '80s, but now we're starting to come back from that. So I've always seen it as a kind of place of resilience. Some of that is expressed in the music, and it's part of what I'm trying to extract and distil in this show.

"I'm extremely confident that we can win (City of Culture). I think if politics doesn't get in the way, ours is the strongest bid by a mile."

Godiva Rocks plays at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Saturday 7 to Saturday 21 October.

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The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 13 October

A trio of well-loved Beethoven compositions, performed alongside one of the masterpieces of British music, is the mouthwatering prospect awaiting classical music lovers attending this season-opening concert.
The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is in town to perform Beethoven's Emperor and Overture to Fidelio, while the world-renowned Simon Trpčeski (pictured) makes a welcome return to the venue to tackle the composer's 5th Piano Concerto.
The programme is completed by Elgar's magnificent Enigma Variations.
Comprising 14 variations on an original theme, the piece features musical sketches of some of the composer's closest acquaintances, as well as of himself and his wife.
"The sketches are not 'portraits'," explained Elgar in a concert programme note, "but each variation contains a distinct idea founded on some particular personality or perhaps on some incident known only to two people. This is the basis of the composition, but the work may be listened to as a 'piece of music' apart from any extraneous consideration."
The concert is conducted by Vassily Sinaisky, a man schooled in the tradition of Musin and Kondrashin and a former music director of Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre.

Armonico Consort

The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Shropshire, Tues 10 October

Founded by organist and conductor Christopher Monks in 2001, Armonico are one of the largest organisations of their kind in the UK.
Using authentic period instruments, the baroque consort regularly perform with some of the best solo musicians in the world.
This Oakengates concert sees them putting to music the saga of Beowulf, as recounted in the oldest-surviving poem in Old English.
The new piece boasts strong folk-pop influences, a fact that should make it an engaging experience for the whole family to enjoy.
Armonico are joined by harpist Catrin Finch.

Basel Symphony Orchestra

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 10 October

Celebrated cellist Sol Gabetta here joins forces with the Basel Symphony Orchestra (BSO) to present a programme culminating in Beethoven's hugely intoxicating Seventh.
British maestro Ivor Bolton is the man with the baton, having become the orchestra's conductor in 2016, the year during which the BSO celebrated its 140th anniversary.
The concert also features performances of Ferruccio Busoni's Lustspiel Overture and Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto.

Ex Cathedra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 14 October

Ex Cathedra have long enjoyed an international reputation as one of the UK's leading choral and Early Music ensembles. They return to Symphony Hall to present a performance of Johann Sebastian Bach's Magnificat - a composition widely recognised as a Baroque-era great.
Ex Cathedra founder and conductor Jeffrey Skidmore is the man at the helm for a concert that also features the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.
The programme is completed by two of Bach's famous cantatas and his resplendent Orchestral Suite No3.

London Mozart Players

Holy Trinity Church, Oswestry, Sat 28 October

A fresh new talent teams up with a well-established orchestra for this Shropshire Music Trust concert.
South Korean violinist Joo Yeon Sir (pictured), a fast-rising star whose stunning talent has seen her bag a dazzling array of awards, here performs alongside Britain's longest-established chamber orchestra, the London Mozart Players.
The evening's programme features Grieg's Holberg Suite Op40, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto No1 in D minor, Rossini's Sonata No1 in G and Dvorak's Serenade for Strings Op22.

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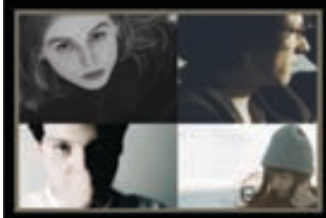

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Birmingham Comedy Festival exclusive interview

Matt Lucas

From Little Britain to Little Me: My Life From A-Z

Little Me is your first autobiography. What made you decide to write it, and what inspired the A-Z format?

Well, I decided it was time to upload some things out of my head and free up some space! I didn't want to write a conventional autobiography because I knew I wanted to steer clear of some things and obsess over others. This format allowed me to do that.

You talk very honestly and openly about going bald at the tender age of six, and about the lack of bald men in the public eye when you were growing up. Who were your role models as a child and how important were they to you?

Duncan Goodhew, because he was hairless and a winner. And Kojak, because he could always get hold of a lollipop.

You talk about your time at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys School in the book. How important were your schooldays in encouraging your love of theatre, and what's your happiest memory from school?

The school plays were my escape - and also in school holidays my mum and grandma would take me to the West End to see shows. There was nothing more thrilling than when the lights went down and the overture began.

Who are your comedy heroes?

Laurel & Hardy and Reeves & Mortimer. Perfect chemistry. Like brothers. Destined to be together.

We love your 'clangs' every time a famous person you've met and worked with is mentioned. Is there anyone you've never had the chance to work with but would love to?

Mike Leigh and Shane Meadows spring to mind. Chris Morris. And I think I would love to appear onstage with Nathan Lane and Patti Lupone.

You did your time on the comedy circuit before success with Shooting Stars and Little Britain. Do you have any advice for young comedians starting out?

Yes, record every gig on your phone and listen to it on the way home. It's never as bad (or as good) as you thought.

Little Britain was such a defining moment in British comedy. Are there any characters you regret, or ones you'd love to recreate and work on again?

There are some I like more than others, certainly some I wouldn't do now, but few I regret. It was a show of its time. I would love to play Marjorie again, but I think things are different now, and it would be considered fat-shaming. You have to move with the times.

You've created and played so many legendary characters. Do you have a favourite?

Probably Marjorie, Andy Pipkin, maybe Taaj from Come Fly With Me. I used to enjoy playing Gary Barlow. My favourite is Pompidou.

You've found success on stage, screen, and in the movies with roles in Les Mis, Bridesmaids, Alice In Wonderland and more. Do you have a favourite medium?

Actually my favourite thing to do is write, more than perform. And write music at that.

You're much loved by Doctor Who fans. What do you like about Nardole, and does he love the new female Doctor Who?

I liked playing Nardole because, let's face it, how often do you get to play a hybrid of alien, robot and human? He's a one-off. And I've loved all the Doctors. I doubt Nardole has any interest in the concept of love. There are worlds to save.

What's next...?

Cuppa tea.

What's the best thing that ever happened to you in Birmingham?

Once got a room at the Crowne Plaza for £25 a night. Tiny it was, mind.

Little Me: My Life From A-Z by Matt Lucas is published on 3 October by Canongate and priced at £20 hardback.

Matt talks about the book at Birmingham Town Hall on Saturday 14 October, at 2pm. For tickets, visit thsh.co.uk

Birmingham Comedy Festival is a 10-day extravaganza, with more than 60 events taking place at various locations from 6 to 15 October.

For more info, visit bhamcomfest.co.uk

Impractical Jokers

Arena Birmingham, Thurs 12 October

High school buddies Joseph Gatto, James Murray, Brian Quinn and Salvatore Vulcano stepped into the world of comedy at the end of the 20th century, forming live-improv troupe The Tenderloins. Over a decade later, the boys became the stars of TV's Impractical Jokers, a reality series in which they coerce one another into doing public pranks while being filmed by hidden cameras.

With six series of the show having aired since 2015 and a seventh on the way, the fellas have plenty of material around which to develop a successful live offering. But don't expect anything too sophisticated from the quartet. Pulling pranks on stage in the confines of a venue really isn't an option, so instead they play clips, tell jokes and revel in a friendship which has seen them grow a loyal and devoted cult following.

Jenny Eclair

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 8 October

As Jenny Eclair has matured, she's developed an appreciation of her womanhood which has cleverly informed her comedy routine.

"I think women get dirtier as they get older," she says. "The more your body lets you down, the more you have to find it funny. It produces more emissions, farts and little noises, and bibbly-bobbly bits that appear and disappear. And then there's giving birth. As soon as you do that, you have to lose all respect for your body. Maybe it's a cheap device, but it does make me laugh. I just think bumholes and fannies are hilarious. The first joke my father told me was a fart joke, and I still find it funny."

Jenny visits Stratford with her show, How To Be A Middle-Aged Woman (Without Going Insane).

Jo D'Arcy

mac, Birmingham, Thurs 12 October

A one-time teacher who knew that she faced a whole career being called 'the D'Arcehole' by her students, Jo D'Arcy decided to opt for a different kind of potential embarrassment and became a standup comedian. In a show that got full marks at the Edinburgh Festival, Jo uses a 'basic' powerpoint presentation to recall her days in a Stoke-on-Trent classroom, delivering the kind of lesson that would definitely have seen her sacked in her old job... Expect inappropriate jokes, a good amount of swearing, some Rik Mayall-style craziness and maybe even the odd technical glitch.

Henning Wehn

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington, 8 October; Birmingham Town Hall, 13 & 14 October; Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, 27 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, 12 November

The self-appointed German comedy ambassador's style of humour has been described as Teutonic jolliness at its best. We reckon that's such a good way of putting it, we have nothing further to add - except, that is, for the following Henning gags: "With standup in Britain, what you have to do is bloody swearing. In Germany, we don't have to swear. Reason being, things work," and "World War Two was a painful time for my family. My grandfather died in a concentration camp. He got drunk one night and fell out of his guard tower..."

Ed Gamble

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Thurs 26 October

"I'm essentially a great guy delivering humour through your classic microphone/speaker combo," says a tongue-in-cheek Ed Gamble in describing himself. "As well as being a standup comedian, I'm an actor and a writer - although to be honest, I very rarely act, and 'writing' is a very lofty term for the absolute filth I've committed to paper in the past."

Best known for his work with Ray Peacock on The Peacock And Gamble Podcast, Ed here presents Mammoth - a gig which the London-born comedian describes as "a brand new, lumbering beast of a comedy show".

Andrew Lawrence

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, 22 October

He's not a particularly well known or much-lauded comedian, but it's fair to say Andrew Lawrence's profile has been raised a bit by his involvement in various social media controversies.

On Facebook a while back, he accused television panel shows of indulging in "liberal back-slapping", claiming they featured "ageing, balding, fat men, ethnic comedians and women posing as comedians" who spent their time making jokes at the expense of UKIP and Nigel Farage.

He's also hit the headlines for posting a tweet about feminists and suicide that protesters claimed incited others to take their own lives.

"Currently being dogpiled by feminazis," Lawrence tweeted in response. "I think I like it..."

Jokes include: "Most of us have a skeleton in the cupboard. David Beckham takes his out in public."

Sofie Hagen

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 14 October

"My gigs are anxiety-safe," says Danish feminist comedian and one-time self-harming Westlife fan Sofie Hagen. "If you have anxiety over attending the show, you can email me at tour@sofiehagen.com and let me know what I can do to help. Maybe you want to reserve a specific seat? Maybe you want to ask a question? Either way, let's talk."

As well as wanting to ensure that her gigs are safe spaces for anxiety sufferers, Sofie also insists that all venues in which she performs have gender-neutral and disabled toilets.

Her current show is Dead Baby Frog. This month being presented in the Midlands as part of Sofie's post-Edinburgh tour, the show is a contemplation on the subject of anger - and the funeral of her psychopathic grandfather, who's not even dead yet...

Examples of Sofie's humour include the following: "I have the confidence to text a man first. And second. And third. And fourth. And fifth. And sixth. And seventh. Basically, until he answers," and, "The question you always have to ask yourself is: 'Is my depression back or am I just hungry?'"

Robin Ince

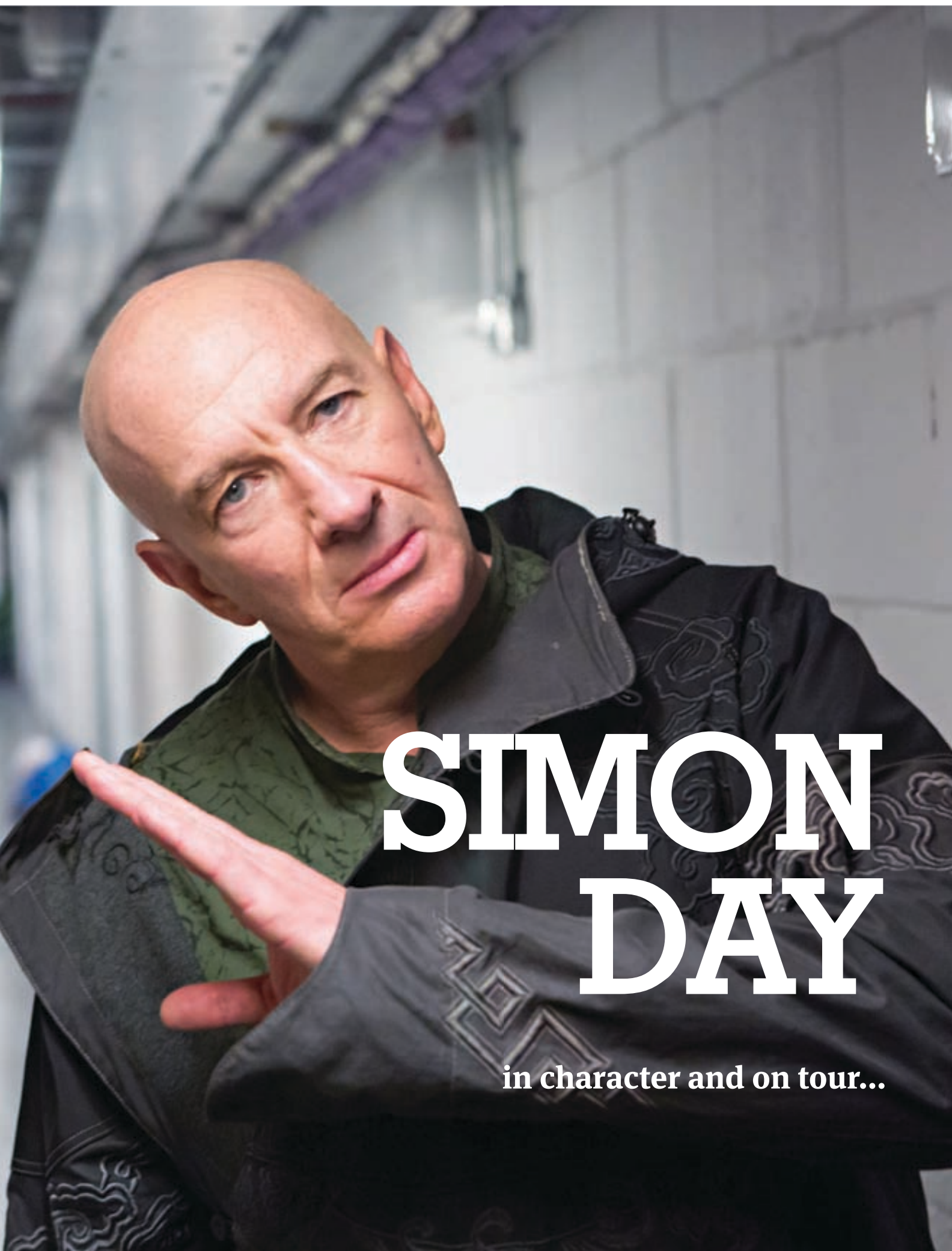
Comedy Junction, The Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield, Fri 13 October

Co-presenter of irreverent BBC Radio Four science show The Infinite Monkey Cage, Robin Ince is here making a return to the world of standup after taking a long break to spend more time with his family.

When quitting the circuit back in 2015, he was also honest enough to admit that professional paranoia had played a significant role in his decision. "I saw the work of [fellow comedians] Daniel Kitson or Bridget Christie or John Kearns and faced my limitations. I walked off satisfactory gigs with disappointment in my airways because I kept imagining I might have been capable of something that, in truth, I was not.

"I think I was starting to go mad. I didn't have some Hancockian black dog hovering above me, more a facetious little grey dog yapping."

Robin's new show, Pragmatic Insanity, is described as '90 minutes fizzing with ideas about creativity in science and art, as well as asking why we believe we see what we see and why we believe what we believe'.



SIMON DAY

in character and on tour...

Comedian, writer and actor Simon Day cut his teeth on the alternative comedy circuit of the early 90s. Under the guise of Music Hall raconteur Tommy Cockles, he teamed up with fellow travellers Vic and Bob before hitting the mainstream with seminal sketch series The Fast Show, and a raft of new characters, such as Competitive Dad and Dave Angel.

He's since appeared in a variety of TV shows, including Channel 4's recent comic drama Loaded, the BBC's one-off revival of 'Till Death Do Us Part, Paul Whitehouse's Nurse, Bellamy's People, and The Life Of Rock With Brian Pern.

Heading out on tour, Simon Day: In Character sees him revisiting four of his most popular creations – reformed criminal Tony Beckton, struggling Yorkshire poet Geoffrey Allerton, the Fast Show's well-meaning but utterly annoying pub bore Billy Bleach, and prog' rockin' Thotch frontman, Brian Pern. "The theme of the show is loosely how the characters are coping with life now," he says.

How was it starting out? How did audiences take to your Tommy Cockles character?

With Tommy I used to die quite a bit, then Vic and Bob took me on tour, and we did a tour in 1990. I'd some out and the audience would boo, or talk over everything. I never had a plan-B with him, if he was being attacked I'd just say 'that's not nice ... I shall go off if this continues ...'. But when he went down well, he went down really well. I remember playing The Glee Club on a Saturday night, and it was straight down the line, full of 40-fags-a-night people ... that was hard. But usually he went down fine. There was only me and John Shuttleworth then, doing that quite gentle, quiet character comedy.

Was there much of a circuit back then?

There were plenty of gigs – pubs, comedy clubs, there was enough of it to keep you busy, places like Malcolm Hardee's up The Creek, in Greenwich.

Did you consider what you were doing to be 'alternative comedy'?

I did, although I didn't come from that left-wing,
smash-down-the-walls-of-Bernard-Manning-and-kick-him-to-the-ground thing that some acts came from. I read Stewart Lee's autobiography – How I Escaped My Certain Fate... - and I can see where he was coming from. But me, Jim (Vic Reeves) and Bob (Mortimer), we just wanted to have a laugh – we weren't overly political.

When your autobiography Comedy and Error: They Really Were Marvellous Times, came out back in 2011/2012, you discussed the possibility of turning it into a TV project ...

We did write it! But we were told no-one was interested in the 1980s ... and then lots of shows about the 1980s come on. Ha-ha! It's very hard to go from comedy to drama, but I'd like to have a go at doing it, even if it's just in a play. I want to do it.

You also said that you missed out a lot of stories - any plans for a Part 2?

People say there's no money in books, so I went off and did Brian Pern instead as I might as well write and perform than just write. And it was a bit grim, writing the book. But so many people have said that it's one of the best ... for what it is, it's one of the best. You can still get it on Amazon, and if you look at the reviews, it's got 40 five-star reviews – people get it! I think the publisher thought they'd got another Russell Brand book, but by comparison, it was a flop. No one reviewed it at the time, and it's very hard to move between the two (writing and TV/ comedy) ... 'he's not a writer!' It needed someone like Will Self to review it. I've read a lot of those books and some of them are so abysmal, so untrue, and there are so many of them – there's a cricketer one week, a couple of boxers the next, several war journalists, another footballer ... the celebrity book market is so crowded. But I'm proud of it, I'm proud I did it.

You know, Graham Linehan (Father Ted, The IT Crowd, Count Arthur Strong) phoned me up the other day and said 'your book is brilliant!' Great! Let's make it into a series! 'No!' That's showbiz for you. (laughs)

The Fast Show is one of those few programmes that helped define a generation and changed comedy. You were rock star comedians, playing arenas! How do you feel about those days now?

The Fast Show was so so long ago now. It was a big show and I'm recognised as much now for that as anything I've ever done. We only did three series and it's locked in that time now, when there were only four channels. It's there. You can't touch it. It didn't go stale. People grew up with it, were watching it at university, and oversees I get a lot about it – lots of expats, especially miserable ex-pats in South Africa, Australia, they remember it. Well they would wouldn't they? Being miserable (laughs). In many ways it was the perfect show. When I look back I see that it was good. Should I have done a Dave Angel sitcom? Maybe I should have, but at the time I was just enjoying it / not enjoying it.

The Brian Pern series' for BBC Four and BBC Two featured some great cameos - Sir Tim Rice, Monty Don, Christopher Eccleston, even Peter Gabriel. How did you get them? Did you approach them? Or did they approach you?

It was a mix. (Co-writer/ director) Rhys (Thomas) was very charming. He does like prog rock and Genesis and a lot of those people just don't get asked to do much. Some were reluctant, but then they saw the show on BBC Two and they got back to us – their agent's probably had a word with them. The Zombies asked to be in it, and they were turned down because they were not recognisable enough – (I said) 'you're turning down The Zombies? You can't do that!' Rod Stewart? He said 'no, I'll leave it to the actors,' and he was quite right, but we got Roy Wood and he was really good. The thing was that we didn't take the mickey, we were affectionate, we didn't push them out of their comfort zones.

Can we expect to see any more of Brian and Thotch on TV in the future?

There are no plans for more Brian Pern at the moment. The BBC said 'we're fine now for the moment, thanks.' (laughs)

How was it doing Alf Garnett / Till Death Do Us Part for the BBC's Lost Sitcoms series?

I didn't want to do it to be really honest, but I couldn't afford not to. They found one episode that wasn't racist and wasn't sexist. I thought that if I was going to do it, I wanted to do it as it was – and this isn't what the show was about. He was just a bit rude in it. But it was so good to be in.

Did you watch it back in the day?

I saw bits of it (growing up), but it was an odd one. I was more into watching Porridge, Monty Python, Dad's Army.

Simon Day: In Character is at The Glee Club, Birmingham, on Sunday 15 October 2017, as part of Birmingham Comedy Festival.

by Heather Kincaid

Shall we dance?

Strictly winners Caroline Flack & Tom Chambers star in Crazy For You

What's a would-be Broadway hoofer to do when his dreams of dancing with the Follies are dashed by a bungled audition?

In multi-award-winning Gershwin Brothers musical Crazy For You, starry-eyed Bobby Child is burdened with thwarted ambitions, as well as a boring day job in his family's banking business and the attentions of a girlfriend he doesn't love.

Sent by his mother on a mission to close the failing Gaiety Theatre out in Nevada, Bobby seizes the opportunity to get away from home, but soon ends up taking on more than he bargained for when he falls for the proprietor's daughter, Polly. Before long, he's decided to save their theatre by putting on a show of his own...

Joining the cast as Bobby and his frustrated fiancée, Irene, Tom Chambers and Caroline Flack both know a thing or two themselves about big dreams and how life often gets in the way of them. A few years back, almost at his wits' end with unsuccessful agents and auditions, Chambers was just about ready to give up on acting when he finally got the call from Holby City, off the back of a Fred Astaire routine that he'd recreated and sent out on spec.

"It was only when my agent fired me for not doing Bob The Builder: The Arena Tour that I decided to try this one last thing before I jacked it all in," says Chambers. "So I left London and went back to live with my parents, where I spent seven months watching this old VHS and trying to recreate it frame by frame. I sent out 1,000 copies, from which I got two replies. I'd actually gone into a fire station and got my papers to sign up to be a fireman when the phone rang to say I'd got an audition for Holby City. The funny thing was that they were actually looking for an American actor, and they'd obviously decided that because Fred Astaire was American, I must be too!"

Meanwhile, theatre-trained Caroline Flack makes her professional stage debut in Crazy For You, following a 15-year career as a TV presenter.

"When I was a kid I sometimes performed at the local village hall, and we also used to go and see shows in Norwich and in the West End," says Flack. "When I was about 10, I can remember asking my mum if people really did that as a job, and deciding that was what I wanted to do. So it's been in me since a really young age. I was really driven - I enrolled in loads of different classes and got myself a scholarship, but then when I left college I got snapped up by a TV agent."

Now an experienced stage performer, Chambers has built up something of a reputation as a go-to lead for Golden Age shows, thanks to sensational stints in the likes of Top Hat and Private Lives. Yet although the class and glamour of the era clearly comes naturally to him, he's happy to own that, without his winning run on Strictly Come Dancing, it's unlikely he'd have got to where he is now. For fellow Strictly winner Flack, the show also marked a major turning point.

"It wasn't until I did Strictly that my training all came back to me, and Pasha, my partner, said to me, 'This is what you should be doing - this is what you love. It opened a new door to me because suddenly all these theatres and shows were like, 'Come and work for us!'"

Joining an experienced team as a newcomer can be daunting, but Flack has been warmly received both by audiences across the UK and by her fellow cast members.

"Caroline is an absolute gem. She's like a little dynamo!" gushes Tom. "She's got a great energy about her - a bit sassy and cheeky, which is perfect for the part. Of course, we know that her dancing is flawless, but I can also say that her acting and character work are sublime."

Part of this success is no doubt due to the care she took in choosing her debut part.

"Initially they did ask me to read for Polly, but when I looked at the script, I just thought, 'That's not me. I haven't got that classic musical voice - my singing style's a bit more jazzy and soulful, which is perfect for Irene. Getting the right first part was really crucial for me, because it's all such a learning curve."

For Chambers, meanwhile, playing Bobby is pretty much a dream come true.

"Crazy For You is probably my favourite musical of all time. It's one of the first ones I ever saw, when I was about 15 or 16. Although its still Golden Era, the part is more classic Gene Kelly than Fred Astaire. Where Top Hat was very dapper and sophisticated and clipped, this is a bit more relaxed. And the script is just so funny! It's got all the key ingredients for me."

"The other thing about this production is that it's being done in a way in which the show has never been done before. Instead of having the orchestra in the pit, we've got music being played by the cast live on stage. So instead of a triple threat, it's like a quadruple threat - singing, acting dancing and playing instruments.

"When I first stepped into rehearsals, some of the cast had already been there a week, practising the music. I was just blown away when I heard them. I can't stress to you how talented they are. I've never met a group of people like it!"

Crazy For You shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 24 to Saturday 28 October.

Hairspray The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 9 - Sat 14 October &
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 26 February - Sat 3 March 2018

'Bigger, brighter and *beautifuller*!' is how Hairspray star Brenda Edwards describes this latest incarnation of the hit musical. "Audiences can expect energy, a lot of laughs and some fantastic songs played by a phenomenal band."
Set in 1962, the Tony Award-winning show boasts a jukebox-worth of '60s-style dance music and 'downtown' rhythm & blues. At its heart is the story of chubby teenager Tracy Turnblad, who enjoys an overnight rise to stardom when she earns the chance to appear on a local TV dance show.
One-time X Factor contestant Brenda takes the role of Motormouth Maybelle... "I think Motormouth's record shop is the central hub, where all the kids in the neighbourhood can come and hang out," says Brenda. "And the songs she sings are just fabulous! She has a big personality, just like me, so I think it's a perfect role."

Notorious

The REP, Birmingham, Fri 20 - Sat 21 October

An evening in the company of The Famous Lauren Barri Holstein has the potential to be a bit of a challenge for the faint-hearted.
Her previous performance work has seen her engage in activities such as inserting a knife handle into her vagina and urinating on stage (although not at the same time, we hasten to add - that would be just plain wrong!).
The Famous, as she's known, describes this latest show as a search for her real self - "for the pure me, behind this soiled shroud of promiscuity".

Pink Sari Revolution

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Wed 11 - Sat 21 October

This stage adaptation of a true story is based on the book by internationally renowned journalist Amana Fontanella-Khan. It's being presented as part of UK/India 2017, a year-long celebration marking India's 70 years of independence and showcasing British and Indian creativity.
Fusing together drama, music and movement, the production focuses on the pink-sari-wearing Gulabi Gang, a movement of over 400,000 women fighting for their rights in the 'Badlands' of Uttar Pradesh, where violence against females can be traced back into Indian mythology.
The show has been produced by the Belgrade in collaboration with Curve Theatre Leicester and West Yorkshire Playhouse.

Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Tues 24 - Sat 28 October

Joseph was Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings Jesus Christ Superstar and Evita. Fabulously fun and frothy, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home... X Factor winner Joe McElderry stars as Joseph.

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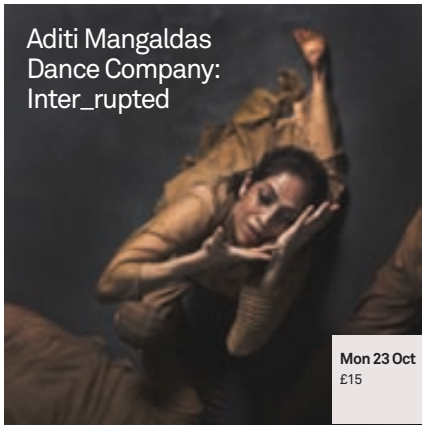

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Tue 7 - Sat 11 Nov
From £18

Sun 19 Nov
£16.50

Cilla The Musical

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 10 - Sat 14 October; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 14 - Sat 18 November

From Swinging '60s pop star to 21st century national treasure, Cilla Black enjoyed more than 50 glorious years in the showbiz limelight.

This brand new celebratory musical takes a look back at the life and times of the Liverpool lass who was Christened Pricilla White, and whose career was kickstarted by John Lennon's decision to introduce her to music mogul Brian Epstein.

Featuring all of Cilla's best-known hits, including Anyone Who Had A Heart, Alfie, Something Tells Me and Step Inside Love, the show stars newcomer Kara Lily Hayworth in the title role. "When I was 11, I was shopping with my mum, bumped into Cilla and asked for her autograph," recalls Kara. "I told her I wanted to be an actress - she laughed and said, 'It's a tough industry, but if you really work hard and go for it, you'll be just fine.' "She was a huge inspiration to me as a child; I grew up watching her on Blind Date every Saturday night with my nan. To be chosen to play her is such an honour, and I'm so excited to be taking on the role."

Duet For One

The REP, Birmingham, until Sat 7 October

Belinda Lang - a late replacement for Jemma Redgrave - and Oliver Cotton star in this new version of Tom Kempinski's critically acclaimed two-hander.

Premiered in 1980 and adapted for the cinema six years later, the play is based on the story of Jacqueline du Pré, the legendary cellist whose life and career were tragically cut short by multiple sclerosis.

About A Bird

mac, Birmingham, Sat 28 October

"Our works are accompanied by a commitment to consistent improvisation," explain Reset Theatre, the West Midlands company behind this one-act farce. "After all, improv is perpetually relevant and immediate, as well as a little bit of fun."

Reset's autumn offering is based on the lives of Romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth, and on the story of how their groundbreaking composition, Lyrical Ballads, came into being. "About A Bird breathes a manic new life into history," say Reset. "It tells a story about a temperamental partnership and the nature of creativity. Our works are sometimes inspired by history and classics but are always tailored to the world around us."

Rita, Sue And Bob Too

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 17 - Sat 21 October

By the time Andrea Dunbar was 20, she had written two critically acclaimed plays - The Arbor, at the age of 15, and the wickedly funny Rita, Sue And Bob Too, four years later. Hailed a genius straight from the slums, Dunbar spent time in a Women's Aid refuge, had three children by three different fathers, developed a serious addiction to alcohol and died of a brain haemorrhage at the age of 29. Both of her plays, but particularly Rita, are shining examples of an extraordinary talent that burned brightly for all too short a time...

When best friends Rita and Sue are given a lift home by married Bob after they've spent the evening babysitting his kids, they find themselves embarking on a sexual adventure that swiftly spirals out of control...

The play's original director, Max Stafford-Clark, co-helms this major new production.

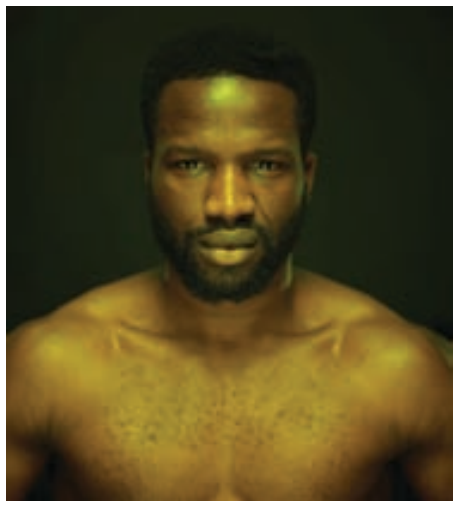
Coriolanus

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 14 October

By comparison with many of his works, Shakespeare's searing tragedy of political manipulation and revenge is rarely performed - although Ralph Fiennes' 2011 film version did help the play raise its head above the parapet a little.

Telling the story of the eponymous hero-soldier and his fractious and bloody relationship with the people of Rome, Coriolanus is here presented in a future world, and is the final entry in the RSC's Rome season.

Sope Dirisu (pictured) takes the title role.



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Austentatious

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 28 October;
Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Fri 17 November

Austentatious returns to the Midlands having garnered plenty of praise on its previous visits to the region.
Lighthearted and delightfully throwaway, it sees the performers using audience suggestions to develop a play that not only pays homage to Jane Austen but also generates plenty of laughter along the way.
The company's previous 'lost' Austen masterpieces have included Sixth Sense & Sensibility, Double O Darcy and Mansfield Shark, with no two performances ever the same.
"We're thrilled to be travelling the length and breadth of the country, rediscovering the lost classics Austen wrote and promptly forgot about," say Austentatious's cast of quick-witted comic performers. "We love and admire Jane's works, and the public deserve an intimate acquaintance with them, particularly the very prescient ones about Donald Trump!"

Wait Until Dark

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 10 - Sat 14 October;
Malvern Theatre, Tues 24 - Sat 28 October

With the arrival in her life of conmen searching for a heroin-packed doll, blind housewife Susy Hendrix finds herself fighting to survive... Written by Dial M For Murder playwright Frederick Knott and set in socially turbulent 1960s' London, Wait Until Dark is best known from its 1967 movie incarnation starring Audrey Hepburn. This latest stage revival stars Prime Suspect's Jack Ellis and Coronation Street favourite Oliver Mellor.

Cabaret

Malvern Theatre, Tues 10 - Sat 14 October

When a show visits the region which, between its stage and screen versions, boasts multiple Oscars, BAFTAs and Tony Awards, it makes sense to get along and check it out... Will Young here reprises the role of Emcee, with Louise Redknapp (pictured) stepping into the lead part of the legendary Sally Bowles, a nightly performer at the infamous Kit Kat Klub in early-1930s Berlin.
Featuring 'show-stopping choreography, dazzling costumes and some of the most iconic songs in musical theatre' - including Money (makes the world go around) and, of course, the famous title number - the show is helmed by National Theatre Artistic Director Rufus Norris. Olivier Award-winning Javier de Frutos is the choreographer.

Obama And Me

Old joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Wed 18 October

Black Brit Sylvia Arthur's one-woman show contemplates the political landscape of 2017, exploring the meaning of identity, politics, power and belonging 'in the post-post-racial 21st century'.
Now living and working in Brussels, Sylvia champions the benefits of a borderless EU. But just as America's first Black president, Barack Obama, faced resistance to his agenda, so too has Sylvia found her own dream crumbling beneath a European tidal wave of nativism, authoritarianism, misogyny and racism.
"I belong wherever I decide to belong," explains Sylvia in an interview with The Fem, "but whether or not I'm accepted there, or feel welcome, has a definite impact on one's sense of belonging.
"It's this space between belonging and acceptance, between the internal and the external, that I try to explore and excavate in my writing."

The Masks Of Aphra Behn

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 20 October

In the late 1660s, in the midst of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, a young woman returned home to England from a stint as a spy in Antwerp, only to be denied payment for her work by King Charles II...
The details of Aphra Behn's colourful life are sketchy, but it was around this time, crippled by debt and seeking a new source of income, that she began to write plays.
Behn would go on to become the country's first professional female playwright, achieving commercial success in the 1670s with her carnival comedy, The Rover. The play was last year revived to great critical acclaim by the Royal Shakespeare Company.
Claire Louise Amias stars as Aphra in this well-reviewed one-woman show.

BEVERLEY KNIGHT
as The Fairy Godmother

DANNY MAC
as Prince Charming

MATT SLACK
as Buttons

SUZANNE SHAW
as Cinderella

Cinderella

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER OF ALL PANTOMIMES

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as The Broker's Men

CERI DUPREE
PHIL RANDALL
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Awful Auntie

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 4 - Sat 7 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 18 - Sat 21 October; New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 22 - Sun 26 November

Frights, fights and friendships are the order of the day in this world premiere of David Walliams' much-loved story.

At the centre of the tale is a young girl named Stella. The sole heir to Saxby Hall, she finds herself in danger of losing both her inheritance and her life when she comes up against her thoroughly unpleasant Aunt Alberta...

Produced by the team behind the hugely successful stage adaptation of Walliams' Gangsta Granny, the show comes complete with a very old car, a very large owl, a very small ghost and plenty of opportunity to enjoy a jolly good chuckle.

The New Adventures Of Puss In Boots

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 October

If your kids are 'feline' in the mood for a singalong show boasting plenty of audience participation and no shortage of music, magic and mayhem, then this brand new offering should leave them purring like the cat that got the cream.

Telling the terrific tale of a marvellous moggy who helps make his master the top, er, dog, the show stars Grand Theatre pantomime dame Ian Adams and Cats star Julie Paton.

64 Zoo Lane

Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 25 - Sun 29 October

Branding itself as 'a perfect introduction to theatre' for children aged three and older, this brand new family-friendly musical is based on the award-winning British-French children's television series of the same name. Coming complete with catchy songs, puppets and 'loads of fun', the show features all the telly programme's favourite characters, including Georgina the Giraffe, Nelson the Elephant, Molly the Hippopotamus, Giggles & Tickles and, of course, the star of the show, seven-year-old Lucy.

The Girl And The Giraffe

mac, Birmingham, Tues 24 - Thurs 26 October

This thought-provoking Half Moon Theatre/Floods Of Ink production finds a girl making friends with a giraffe who really isn't very well. And not even bandages, a cup of tea and a magnificent cake make him feel any better. The giraffe's problems go deeper, and it's an altogether different kind of help that he needs...

Told from a child's perspective, The Girl And The Giraffe combines 'charming' puppetry, an 'enchanting' soundscape and 'beautiful' storytelling to carefully and sensitively explore themes around the subject of depression. The production is suitable for children aged between three and six.

Monstersaurus

The Roses, Tewkesbury, Wed 25 October; The Core, Solihull, Fri 27 October

Having created a whole world of whacky inventions and incredible monsters, young inventor Monty doesn't know what to do with them all...

The creators of Aliens Love Underpants make a return with this 'monster-ously good show', which comes complete with original music and plenty of audience participation.

Doris The Dragon

Stourbridge Town Hall, Tues 24 October

Doris's new home for down-and-out dragons - a dingy old castle whose owners have moved away - is proving to be a big hit with the dragon population. But when the members of her brand new fire-breathing family take turns looking after an unhatched baby dragon egg, it isn't long before all manner of mischief ensues... Boasting 'giddy games, panto-style slapstick and lots of audience interaction', this 100-minute show - suitable for children aged 10 and younger - has been written by Jonathan Blazer, a former producer of Sooty and Rainbow theatre tours.

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Motionhouse Artistic Director talks about the company's new multimedia show which makes its debut in Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre this month...

Motionhouse's new production will be aiming to spark our interest as it explores the power of electricity in our lives, loves and logic.

Charge explores the energy in our bodies and its relationship to the world around us in a dynamic combination of dance-circus and digital technology.

Forming the third part of a trilogy inspired by the earth and created by Motionhouse founder and artistic director Kevin Finnan, Charge follows the phenomenal success of Scattered and Broken.

"I wanted to make a show about energy and I wanted to tell it through the human body," Kevin says. "I became really interested in the idea of the human body as an electrical system and its relationship to the world we live in. It's all a flow and exchange of energy.

"We tend to think of energy as something external to us rather than something we are part of. But as soon as you start to look at it there's a sense of wonder at how the body operates as energy.

"The idea of making a show about energy has been in my mind for a very, very long time but its actual form and the commitment to making it started about three years ago. That's when I started a general period of research and it started coming together."

Kevin's research saw him working with professors at the University of Oxford as he sought to understand more of the mechanics of energy and of how humanity has discovered and comprehended electricity in human beings and in the world around us.

"I was looking for a poetic narrative that would tell the story of our relationship to energy," he says. "And what I discovered was

that it all comes down to a simple thing – ultimately thought is an electrical process. If your brain wasn't able to pass electrical signals around then there would be no love, there would be no memory, there would be no empathy. And that is so fundamental. When you turn on a light bulb you don't think 'without energy I couldn't love someone' but it's true.

"So I began to delve into a story where energy is the movement of our lives. A city is a hive of energy and moves things around by energy and we are familiar with that but we also have an internal energy hive in which energy moves from cell to cell. And so I began to overlap things. If you look at a map of a city at night or the planet from outer space and you see it all lighting up, well you have the same process with the human brain. When the brain is imaged, it's a massive fluctuation of light.

"It's also fascinating that with various mental conditions, things like Alzheimer's, when they scan people's brains it's like a city with certain areas blocked out. What happens is that areas of the brain just go dark and the messages that should pass through just don't go and gradually you're not making short term memory and you forget the ones you love. It's incredibly sad."

Kevin then looked at how to tell these stories in a dance piece.

"From all of this research I could feel the strands of the show coming together. It's about how the body is a cauldron of energy living in a cauldron of energy, which is our society, and then how all the subtlety of our lives is all electrical signals in our minds. So I began to make the poem that can be told in movement - and dance-circus is the perfect form for that because the body is energetic."

And added into this cauldron are elements of humanity's relationship with scientific discoveries around electricity.

"The first animation of tissue with an electrical charge was a massive conceptual shift in a society which understood, when it saw frogs' legs twitching, that we were electrical beings," says Kevin. "This was a massive revelation and there was an outbreak of wonder.

"And in Mary Shelley's book Frankenstein, it's not about mad scientists, it's this idea that electrical energy is within us. With the information they had at the time the idea that if biological elements were arranged and given energy it could create a life force was an interesting concept.

"This whole opening up of humanity in beginning to grasp that we are electrical is fascinating. There's a moment of comprehension of us being electrified beings and then something more once consciousness is present. That had to be part of the story – how we understand we are electric beings but then how we kind of forget that."

Founded in 1988 and based in Leamington Spa in Warwickshire, Motionhouse has built up a reputation for strongly physical and dynamic work, which blends dance, spectacle, circus and often digital projection. Kevin was keen for Charge to include these elements.

"I'm very interested in working with film as a digital element both on the environment and on the body. How you interact with the film is really important," he says. "Film can take you to places quickly and I really love film in theatre but it is two-dimensional, so for us it's all about 'how do we stretch that into a three-dimensional sense of space?' It's about how we interact with the imagery and the realities that we are able to create.

"For a show like Charge where one minute we are in a spinning urban environment and then for the next part of the scene we are inside the human heart and then in someone's house and then within someone's brain, that kind of mercurial transmission between places is really only possible with a real interaction with digital."

Having performed at venues and festivals both nationally and internationally, Motionhouse has become one of the leading independent dance companies in the UK. Founded by Kevin with his partner Louise Richards, former performer and now executive director of the company, Kevin says the priority has always been producing top quality and innovative work. This has seen them performing alongside diggers and JCBs, using giant sandcastles and taking to the air.

"With the hubris of the young you think 'I want people to see my work' but you don't really see beyond that when you first start up," recalls Kevin. "You really don't see beyond the next show – you are just struggling to build your reputation so you can get the money for the next show and then the next show. But you have a passion to make your work. And for us, it was always a passion to express ourselves through our work.

"Largely due to Louise guiding and developing the company, we are now in a position where the company is nearly 30 years old and what is really exciting for both of us is that, as we approach 30 years, we are more successful than we have ever been. We are more followed and more people come to our shows than ever happened in the past.

"It's a massively significant milestone for the company to be achieving 30 years and to be touring and growing and developing is incredible really. A lot of this is down to the hard work of everyone in the company.

"We seem to have expanded on three fronts – we've just been in Denmark working on a massive aerial piece working with aeroplanes and skydivers - so something really huge scale, then we're making Charge and we've already got two tours booked and our previous works are still touring and then our outdoor work has gone from strength to strength."

Motionhouse is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Charge is supported by Warwick Arts Centre, The Rothschild Foundation, the Ernest Cook Trust and TippingPoint Stories of Change with the Official Energy Partner of Charge being First Utility.

And the company's success has been supported by Arts Council England which has granted Motionhouse a 38 per cent uplift in funding for 2018-22. Kevin says this is a testament to the company's success.

"We have ever-expanding audience figures which is tremendous and the kind of physicality that we are exploring in our work really chimes with people," says Kevin. "We want to challenge our audiences, we want to engage them, we want to thrill them, we want to delight them and we want to share with them.

"We are a very audience-centric company and I think that is a large part of why we were awarded the uplift. The testament is the wide range of audience who come to our work. We know a lot of people who see our shows haven't seen a dance show before and when we do our outside work we touch huge numbers of people who may never have been in a theatre."

Motionhouse's Charge will be showing at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry from Wed 4 - Sat 7 October; The Roses, Tewkesbury on Tues 31 October and Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 13 March, 2018

Birmingham Royal Ballet: Aladdin

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 3 - Sat 7 October

As great introductions to ballet go, David Bintley's Aladdin is right up there with the best of them.

Recipient of widespread critical acclaim when first mounted a handful of years ago, the show is a fantastic way to get your kids in the mood for the soon-to-be-upon-them magic of Christmas.

Bintley's choreography, the dancers' exceptional performances, the stunning set designs of Dick Bird and a magnificent score by the Bafta Award-winning Carl Davis are beautifully combined to create a truly breathtaking production. Indeed, it's hard to imagine how the show could be any more magical even if the genie of the lamp himself had conjured it up.

Motionhouse: Charge

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 4 - Sat 7 October; The Roses, Tewkesbury, Tues 31 October; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 13 March, 2018

Leamington-based Motionhouse's new multimedia show about energy is the third element of Kevin Finnan's 'Earth Trilogy'. It develops on the theme of 'man's relationship with water and the earth', as previously explored in Scattered (2009) and Broken (2013).

Making use of digital projections to create an on-stage world in which dancers and images interact seamlessly, the show features six performers using dance and acrobatics to explore the human body, 'tracing the incredible story of energy in our lives'.

"Charge is an incredible collaboration between artists and scientists," explains Motionhouse co-founder Finnan. "I find the science behind the show fascinating, and I want to use my inspiration from this to create a presentation for audiences to enjoy - but which also makes them think about the role that energy plays in our lives."

Autin Dance Theatre: A Positive Life

mac, Birmingham, Tue 17 October

Project-based professional company Autin Dance Theatre make a welcome return to mac with a show that 'delivers an uplifting and engaging message on self-love, sexual health and sex education'.

An immersive theatre experience, inspired by the individual journeys of five characters around the issues of sex, love and relationships, the show brings together dance, physical theatre and spoken word...

Birmingham-based Autin Dance have been performing across the Midlands and beyond since 2013.

"We draw on contemporary social issues and events to make work which is beautifully crafted, accessible and relevant," says founder Johnny Autin.

"The company is gaining a reputation for creating powerful performances, catapulting audiences into intense dance-worlds which we hope will resonate with them long after they leave the auditorium."

Acosta Danza

Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 18 - Sat 21 October

Ballet star Carlos Acosta's Havana-based company stops off in Birmingham as part of its first ever UK tour.

Comprising performers trained in ballet and contemporary dance styles, the ensemble is building its reputation by presenting programmes of work which feature both new and existing pieces by Cuban choreographers.

The UK show, which sees Acosta himself making a guest appearance, includes works by Cuban choreographer Marianela Boán and Sadler's Wells' Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui.

A CHRISTMAS CRACKER!

Birmingham Repertory Theatre is getting into the Christmas spirit this month by staging the world premiere of Nativity! The Musical. Based on the popular UK film franchise, the show is written and directed by Debbie Isitt, who also created the movies...

by Heather Kincaid

In the world of Birmingham-born, Coventry-based writer and director Debbie Isitt, the past 10 years have been a bit like the White Witch's Narnia in reverse: it's always Christmas and only occasionally winter. But with three Nativity films now behind her, a fourth one in the works and a hotly anticipated stage musical version premiering at the Birmingham REP this month, is the Queen of Britain's festive-film scene starting to tire of Christmas every day? Not likely.

"I just love it!" she exclaims. "I really genuinely love Christmas and I always have, so doing it all the time is brilliant!"

And really, you'd have to love it. If you're the sort of person who wants to tear your own ears off the second shops start playing carols in November, best not to even imagine writing Christmas songs the whole year round. On the other hand, if you're coming to see Nativity! The Musical this autumn, you'd better be ready for a lot of them, since the stage show features all the songs from all the films plus about as many new ones.

"It really does change the dynamic. It gives you much more insight into the characters and their backstories. And the emotions are more intense, like with the love story between Mr Maddens and Jennifer - it feels even bigger now because they're singing duets.

"Hollywood Are Coming is the big Act One song. When Mr Poppy overhears the rumours and spreads them around town, that grows into a great big feelgood song. And there's a really sweet song towards the end of the first act, which is the letter to Santa. So there's a lot of variety."

As in the films, the child cast is made up of ordinary children with no professional acting training, all of them from around the West Midlands. Of course, an all-singing, all-dancing live show is a more demanding ask of primary school-aged kids than a film that can be cut, re-shot and edited - particularly given Isitt's signature improvisational style.

Is it all starting to feel as crazy as one of the nativities in her stories?

"A little bit! And it can only get crazier. A lot of the things we did in the film are more difficult to get working on stage - like the flying. But that's what makes it fun. It's so boring just to find your mark and say your line. In this case, everyone knows the story, so they can steal lines from the film, but they can also change them and add new ones. It's been a bit of trial and error in rehearsals, but they'll no doubt keep coming out with things that surprise me every night.

"We've got 27 children in total, split up into three teams of nine: there's an Oakmoor nine, a St Bernadette's nine and an understudy nine, and they rotate. So there's an awful lot for them to learn, and it's a big challenge to make sure all the teams are getting enough attention and aren't forgetting which school they're in. But they'll all be virtuoso performers by the time they're finished with us!"

As if that weren't enough to keep the crew on their toes, there are also plans involving live animals.

"Obviously if it was left up to me, I'd be saying, 'Yes, bring camels and walk them through the auditorium!' Unfortunately, in theatre, there are lots of health-and-safety rules, which is probably a good thing for the animals. But there will be something - I won't say what!"

It'll be alright on the night, as they say. And even if it's not, in a story like this, it's all part of the charm, adding to the comedy that's made the films such a resounding commercial success.

"It was a big surprise to me that the first one became as well-loved as it did. I think part of that is the fact that the children get an opportunity to see themselves reflected on the big screen, which is so rare! The great thing about adapting something they already know is that they're so excited to be part of it. They all come in talking about how much they love the films, and you get the feeling that they're living their dream, which just lifts the whole rehearsal. It's fantastic!"

Isitt's unusual way of working is partly a product of her own acting training. As a directionless 16-year-old, she was "sent to Coventry - literally!" to do an acting course, based on her mum's suggestion that she was "quite dramatic". Though she soon turned to writing and directing with her own company, Snarling Beasties, that grounding is still manifest in the respect she has for actors, and in her lack of preciousness about her scripts - for her, it's more about the subtext anyway.

Yet for all her success since, she's never felt the lure of London. On the contrary: from local schools to Coventry Cathedral, she's proud to be showing the nation what the Midlands has to offer.

"It's a brilliant region because it has everything I need. In terms of locations, we have the most diverse landscape, from big cities to beautiful countryside. We also have really diverse communities, and I like to work with a lot of non-actors - adults as well as children.

"At the moment we still don't really have the financial support to keep a lot of our skilled people here. But the great thing about touring this show is that you get to go around the country talking about the Midlands. I think that's really important. Now, every time I start a new project, people are keen for me to keep working here because they know it's vital that everyone has a voice and that we don't just keep repeating the same kind of messages with the same people."

Nativity! The Musical is at Birmingham REP from Friday 20 October to Sunday 12 November. Debbie Isitt's adaptation of 101 Dalmatians also shows at the REP, from Thursday 30 November to Saturday 13 January.

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Is that the not-too-distant jingling of Christmas bells we can hear?...
Yep, that's right, 'the season to be jolly' is once again on its merry old way, and will no doubt be upon us in the blink of a red-nosed reindeer's eye! At the time of going to print, for instance, we're just 51 short days away from the opening of the Christmas Markets in Birmingham City Centre, and 58 days away from the launch of the region's first panto - Cinderella at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre.

In short, it's time to start thinking about how best to celebrate and enjoy the fabulous festive season. If you're struggling for ideas, fear not - there are plenty of fun-filled events taking place across the region...

Looking for some Christmas gifts inspiration? Then check out next month's Festive Gift Fair at the NEC (16 - 19 November). With more than 350 stalls bursting with unique and unusual gifts, it's a one-stop shop to help you get your Christmas shopping wrapped up in plenty of time.

Wanting to sample a traditional Christmas? Then head to Blists Hill in Shropshire or the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, where they'll be celebrating the season of good will in classic Victorian style.

Let it snow! One place where the fluffy white stuff is guaranteed is SnowDome in Staffordshire. The venue's Santa's Winter Wonderland attraction (17 November - 31 December) is always a seasonal hit, coming complete with real snow trail, an all-new Santa Show and real reindeer.

And with pantos aplenty reporting record early ticket sales this year, now's the time to book yourself a theatre seat. So if you're on the lookout for some on-stage yuletide magic, check out the below list of festive shows taking place at venues across the region this Christmas...

Festive shows across the Midlands...

TREASURE ISLAND Classic tale of buccaneers and buried gold, featuring live music, humour & puppetry, Sat 18 Nov - Sat 27 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ALICE IN WONDERLAND Embark on a magical adventure through the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's classic tale, Tues 20 - Sat 30 Dec, The Old Rep, Birmingham

CINDERELLA Featuring Iain Lauchlan as director and Dame, Wed 22 Nov - Sat 13 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Phil Davies, Kara Tointon and Adrian Edmondson star in Rachel Kavanaugh's version of Dickens' famous festive tale of redemption and compassion, Mon 27 Nov - Sun 4 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Featuring Brad Pitt and Eric Smith, Wed 29 Nov - Sun 7 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ALADDIN Featuring CBeebies presenter Cat Sandion as Aladdin, Sam Rabone as Dame Widow Twankey and Ben Thornton as Wishy Washy, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE ONE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIONS Debbie Issit's staging of Dodie Smith's delightful tale, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 13 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

RAYMOND BRIGGS' FATHER CHRISTMAS Featuring live music, songs and playful puppetry, Thurs 30 Nov - Sat 30 Dec, mac, Birmingham

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY SISTERS A rootin' tootin' spaghetti western where the glass slippers have spurs, and the bells chime for high noon, Sat 2 - Sat 30 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SLEEPING BEAUTY Sat 2 - Sun 31 Dec, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE Glyn Robbins' dramatisation of CS Lewis' much-loved fantasy, Sun 3 - Sun 16 Dec, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SLEEPING BEAUTY Mon 4 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

PETER PAN Swashbuckling pantomime adventure starring Bernie Clifton, Adam Kelly and Charlotte Griffiths, Wed 6 - Sun 31 Dec, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

SNOW WHITE Starring Nicole Faraday and Britain's Got Talent winner Jai McDowall, Wed 6 - Sun 31 Dec, Palace Theatre, Redditch

SANTA'S MIXED-UP MARTIAN Featuring Santa, Ellie, Rudolph and a very friendly visitor from outer space, Thurs 7 - Sun 24 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

WIND IN THE WILLOWS Staging of Kenneth Grahame's much-loved riverside tale, Thurs 7 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

ROBIN HOOD Rock'n'roll version of a traditional adventure story, Fri 8 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Malcolm Stent, Fri 8 - Sun 31 Dec, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CRIMES ON THE CHRISTMAS EXPRESS Alternative Christmas comedy for adults, Fri 8 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Gareth Gates, Lisa Riley, Doreen Tipton, Ian Adams, Graham Cole and Adam C Booth, Sat 9 Dec - Sun 14 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS Fun-filled adventure for younger audiences, featuring clumsy sheep, lost birds, stranded farmers and mayors in a pickle, Tues 12 - Sun 31 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

THE SNOW DRAGON Tall Stories present a seasonal show featuring toe-tapping songs and lots of laughter for everyone aged three-plus, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 Dec, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

CINDERELLA Featuring Alison Hammond & Cbeebies' Paul Hawkyard, Thurs 14 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Malvern Theatre

ALADDIN Starring Jonathan Wilkes and Christian Patterson, Fri 15 Dec - Sun 7 Jan. Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

CINDERELLA Presented by All & Sundry, Sat 16 - Sat 23 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Dickens' supernatural tale of redemption and the Christmas spirit, Sat 16 - Sat 30 Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

JERSEY BOYS Internationally acclaimed jukebox musical featuring all the hits from Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Sat 16 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DEAR SANTA Festive tale for younger audiences from the author of well-loved children's book Dear Zoo, Sun 17 - Sun 24 Dec, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CINDERELLA Starring soul diva Beverley Knight, Strictly star Danny Mac, Suzanne Shaw, comedy duo The Grumbleweeds, Hippodrome favourite Matt Slack, and Ceri Dupree and Phil Randall as the Ugly Sisters, Tues 19 Dec - Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

PETER PAN: CHRISTMAS IN NEVERLAND Starring Bradley Walsh as Mr Smee, Martin Kemp as Captain Hook & Matt Knight as Peter Pan, Thurs 20 - Sun 24 Dec, Arena Birmingham

SKELLIG David Almond's haunting story of mystery, imagination and childhood... Thurs 20 - Sun 30 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE SNOW DRAGON Tall Stories present a seasonal show featuring toe-tapping songs & lots of laughter for everyone aged three-plus, Thurs 21 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

SNOW WHITE Fri 22 - Sat 30 Dec, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

SANTA'S CHRISTMAS WISH Festive musical adventure for two-to-seven-year-olds, Sun 24 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN Playful and inventive take on the well-known legend. Perfect for ages three-plus, Wed 27 Dec, Artrix, Bromsgrove

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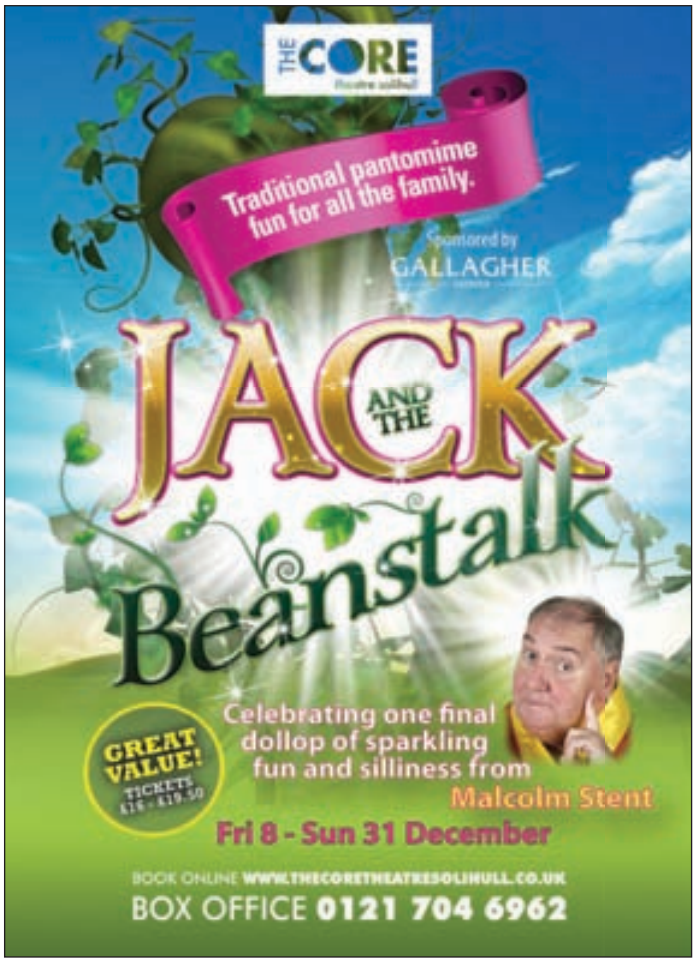
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Aladdin

David Bintley's critically acclaimed production ventures into a fantastical world of genies, flying carpets and magic lamps...

Lachlan Monaghan and Yaoqian Shang are dancers with Birmingham Royal Ballet. Together they will be performing the lead roles of Aladdin and the Princess Badr al-Budur in Aladdin, which tours to Salford, Birmingham, Plymouth and London. After dancing with the ballet company for six and five years respectively, they are starting to break into principal roles and discover what it means to be at the top of their profession. Here, they talk about Aladdin, coping with long hours of rehearsal and what makes the perfect partnership.

To start, tell us a little about yourselves:

YS: My name is Yaoqian Shang, I am Chinese and I'm a Soloist with Birmingham Royal Ballet. I started dancing properly at Beijing Dance Academy when I was 9 years old and went to the Royal Ballet School when I was 16.

LM: I'm Lachlan Monaghan, I'm Australian and I'm a First Artist with Birmingham Royal Ballet. I started tap and jazz when I was about 11 because of my sister, and ballet when I was about 13. I went to the McDonald College in Sydney and then to the Royal Ballet School when I was 17.

Will audiences be familiar with the story of Aladdin, or is it quite different from the famous Disney film?

L: It is quite different. In the ballet our Director David Bintley goes back to the original story from the Arabian Nights rather than the Disney version. We don't have a monkey or a talking parrot but we do have flying carpets and genies!

You're less than two weeks away from your first performances at The Lowry in Salford. How are rehearsals going?

L: It's quite nerve-wracking to think that we will perform our first show in less than two weeks. The first things you attempt to conquer in rehearsal are the pas de deux. As an audience member you might think the pas de deux or the solos are the hardest part, and they do have the most difficult steps, but actually it's all the transitions, interactions with the other characters and the props that are the difficult things to get a handle on. They take time to learn, and it's not really until we get to full cast rehearsals that we see it come together.

Alongside Aladdin and the Princess, do you have other roles you need to learn?

Y: I'm also performing as one of the Princess' attendants (one of her girlfriends), sapphires and rubies (the jewels that Aladdin finds in the cave). It's not too bad because all my other roles are quite short so it's not like I'm on the go all of the time.

L: I'm finding it difficult with the Djinn, Aladdin and also one of his two friends. There are a lot of scenes where all of those characters are on stage at the same time. For example, there are times where Aladdin and the Djinn are in the same scene, both fighting the Mahgrib, and the moves are one count after each other. It's certainly testing my brain, but it's really fun.

There must be fine balance between relaxing after a long day of rehearsals, and thinking over the work you've done that day. How do you manage that?

Y: I prefer to just switch off. I like to think about the work before I do it rather than later. There can be a lot of corrections, and if you keep thinking about them you just pile extra pressure on yourself, and I really don't like that. The next day, before I have rehearsals, I'll go through corrections then and see what I have to work on.

L: Immediately after rehearsal, I like to reflect a little bit on the positive things. There's always going to be something that's gone wrong – I don't think you ever walk away going 'well, that was perfect' – but that's the beauty of performing a character role because every day can be different. The way we play Aladdin and the Princess in our first show will be different from the way we play it in our second show. That's what's exciting – the growth, and the change, and responding to each other. I like to switch off as well; watch TV, listen to music, do all those normal things. It's good to chill out and remind yourself that, as brilliant as ballet is, there's a big world out there.

What do you think makes a good partnership, both in rehearsal and on stage?

Y: It's definitely important to have fun. We've had a lot of laughs.

L: There are some quite challenging lifts in Aladdin where, holding her weight, I'll have to go down on my knee and drop to the floor. There have been some quite heavy crash landings to laugh about. I think it's really important to have a good sense of humour and to have fun.

Y: It's true. Also, Lachlan is so clever. I always say that; he just knows exactly where you are. We've never really danced together before Aladdin but we've worked really well from the start. With partnering you need to find your co-ordination together, and things feel different from one partner to another, but for us there's been nothing difficult that we've had to fix.

L: Yaoqian is brilliant; she's just such a natural dancer. There've been so many rehearsals where we hadn't even tried bits before, and decided to just do a section with the music. We'd do it and it would work, so we'd just keep going. We enjoy dancing together so much that each section just falls into place. That's what audiences seem to remember – the rapport of a partnership, and the way you look at each other.

Finally, if you weren't a ballet dancer, what would you be doing?

Y: I'd quite like to learn some interior design because I've always liked drawing but I've never had time to work on it properly. It's my dream to build my own house.

L: I'm very interested in photography. I think being a dancer teaches us so many skills, and being a dancer turned photographer is rare. I also play piano and my dream is to one day choreograph my own ballet, and also write the score. That's my ultimate goal.

Birmingham Royal Ballet present David Bintley's Aladdin at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 October

www.lichfieldgarrick.com | Box Office 01543 412121

Blade Runner 2049 CERT tbc

Starring **Ryan Gosling, Harrison Ford, Ana de Armas, Mackenzie Davis, Jared Leto, Robin Wright, Dave Bautista, Lennie James, Edward James Olmos, Barkhad Abdi, Hiam Abbass**
Directed by **Denis Villeneuve (USA)**

It's been a long time coming. Regarded as one of the seminal sci-fi films of all time, Ridley Scott's original Blade Runner presented a grim but credible view of the year 2019 (from the perspective of 1982). The sequel jumps 30 years on and features Ryan Gosling as a younger blade runner (or android tracker) who discovers a frightening secret that could signal the end of mankind. So he searches for his legendary predecessor Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford), who has been missing for three decades...
The new director is none other than Denis Villeneuve, who, on the evidence of Incendies, Prisoners, Sicario and especially Arrival, is a worthy successor to Ridley. We don't know yet what role Mackenzie Davis plays, but she displays more than a passing resemblance to Daryl Hannah, who was Pris in the original. In 3D.

Released Thurs 5 October

CRITIC'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in October...

The Glass Castle

CERT **12a (127mins)**

Starring **Brie Larson, Woody Harrelson, Max Greenfield, Sarah Snook, Naomi Watts**
Directed by **Destin Daniel Cretton (USA)**

Based on Jeannette Walls' 2005 memoir, The Glass Castle tells of the author's unconventional childhood. Leading a largely nomadic life, Jeannette grew up in abject poverty with her eccentric mother (Watts), alcoholic father (Harrelson) and three siblings.

Released Fri 6 October

The Mountain Between Us CERT tbc

Starring **Idris Elba, Kate Winslet, Dermot Mulroney, Beau Bridges**
Directed by **Hany Abu-Assad (USA)**

Based on the 2011 novel by Charles Martin, this survival romance sees Idris and Kate forced to rely on each other after their plane crashes in the snowy High Uintas Wilderness of Utah.
From the director of the Oscar-nominated Palestinian films Paradise Now (2005) and Omar (2013).

Released Fri 6 October

Loving Vincent CERT 12a (93 mins)

With the voices of **Douglas Booth, Jerome Flynn, Helen McCrory, Chris O'Dowd, Saoirse Ronan, Eleanor Tomlinson** Directed by **Dorota Kobiela** and **Hugh Welchman (UK/Poland)**

Van Gogh would certainly approve.
This is not just a biography of the troubled, legendary painter but the first fully painted animated film.
Each of the film's 65,000 frames is an actual oil painting on canvas, applying the same technique that Van Gogh himself used.

Released Fri 13 October

Thor: Ragnarok CERT 1tbc

Starring **Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston, Cate Blanchett, Idris Elba, Jeff Goldblum, Tessa Thompson, Karl Urban, Mark Ruffalo, Anthony Hopkins, Benedict Cumberbatch**
Directed by **Taika Waititi (USA)**

The world must be in trouble again. Actually, it's the Norse domain of Asgard that's looking doomed, but before the mighty Thor can put things to rights - and battle the loathsome Hela (Cate Blanchett) - he must do battle with the Hulk, his former ally. It's complicated, okay? But what a cast: Ms Blanchett as the Norse goddess of death (a nice role if you can get it), fellow Oscar-winner Anthony Hopkins as Odin and Benedict Cumberbatch as Doctor Strange. The director Taika Waititi previously brought us the highly acclaimed New Zealand film Hunt For The Wilderpeople (2016). In 3D.

Released Tues 26 October

CRITIC'S CHOICE

The Lego Ninjago Movie

CERT **tbc**

With the voices of **Dave Franco, Justin Theroux, Michael Peña, Kumail Nanjiani, Abbi Jacobson, Jackie Chan**
Directed by **Charlie Bean, Paul Fisher** and **Bob Logan (USA/Denmark)**

The chunky Danish figures that were used to lampoon various superheroes in The Lego Movie (2014) and The Lego Batman Movie (2017) now take a swipe at the martial arts genre. Borrowing from the Lego Ninjago brand, this animated feature tells the story of six high school kids who struggle with their alma mater during the day but as ninja warriors kick major butt at night. In 3D.

Released Fri 13 October

The Party CERT tbc

Starring **Patricia Clarkson, Bruno Ganz, Emily Mortimer, Cillian Murphy, Kristin Scott Thomas, Timothy Spall**
Directed by **Sally Potter (UK)**

A black comedy from the director of Orlando (1992) and The Tango Lesson (1997), The Party starts with a merry, congratulatory get-together to toast the appointment of the new health minister (Scott Thomas). But you know what parties are like...
The critics loved it.

Released Fri 13 October

The Ritual CERT 15 (94 mins)

Starring **Rafe Spall, Arsher Ali Robert James-Collier, Sam Troughton**
Directed by **David Bruckner (UK)**

If you go down to the woods... Here, we have another reunion (cf. Girls Trip, Rough Night), but this time the outcome for a quartet of old college friends is a little more supernatural and sinister...

Released Fri 13 October

The Snowman CERT tbc

Starring **Michael Fassbender, Rebecca Ferguson, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Val Kilmer, JK Simmons, Toby Jones**
Directed by **Tomas Alfredson (UK/USA)**

Not to be confused with the Raymond Briggs cartoon, this is actually based on the chilling 2007 Norwegian novel by Jo Nesbø.
Michael Fassbender plays Detective Harry Hole, who follows up the disappearance of a woman whose pink scarf is found wrapped round the neck of a snowman. Tomas Alfredson previously directed the highly acclaimed 2011 film version of Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy.

Released Fri 13 October

The Death Of Stalin

CERT **15 (107 mins)**

Starring **Steve Buscemi, Paddy Considine, Rupert Friend, Michael Palin, Andrea Riseborough, Jeffrey Tambor**
Directed by **Armando Iannucci (UK/France)**

When Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin shuffled off his mortal coil, a power vacuum - and a shambles - resulted in the Kremlin's corridors of power. Having dissected British politics in his TV satire The Thick Of It, the writer-director Armando Iannucci now turns his attention to Russia. And while he lays on the gags, he's not afraid to confront the horror, either.

Released Fri 20 October

Jungle CERT 15 (113 mins)

Starring **Daniel Radcliffe, Alex Russell, Thomas Kretschmann, Yasmin Kassim, Joel Jackson, Jacek Koman** Directed by **Greg McLean (Australia/Colombia)**

Based on the real-life story of the Israeli backpacker Yossi Ghinsberg (Radcliffe), Jungle is a tale of survival and human endurance from the director of Wolf Creek. Hoping for new experiences, Yossi tags along with an American photographer (Russell) and a Swiss teacher (Kretschmann) and heads deep into the unforgiving heart of the Amazon. Not for weak stomachs.

Released Fri 20 October

Geostorm CERT 12a (109 mins)

Starring **Gerard Butler, Jim Sturgess, Abbie Cornish, Ed Harris, Andy García, Alexandra Maria Lara** Directed by **Dean Devlin (USA)**

Now, when did we last talk about the weather? This sci-fi disaster movie looks into the future when a satellite initiative is designed to mitigate the catastrophic effects of climate change. But when Hollywood messes with science... We can't wait. In 3D.

Released Fri 20 October

Happy Death Day CERT tbc

Starring **Jessica Rothe, Israel Broussard, Ruby Modine, Rachel Matthews**
Directed by **Christopher B Landon (USA)**

Think Groundhog Day with a horrific twist: poor Tree (Rothe) is forced to re-live the day she died at the hands of a sicko in a mask and then wakes up to live her whole last day again.
What's really sad is that it's her birthday - and each day she is killed in a different way.

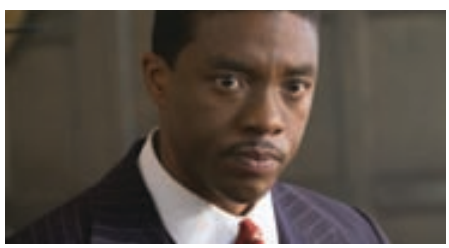
Released Fri 20 October

Marshall CERT 15 (118 mins)

Starring **Chadwick Boseman, Josh Gad, Kate Hudson, Dan Stevens, Sterling K Brown, James Cromwell**
Directed by **Reginald Hudlin (USA)**

Thurgood Marshall (Boseman) was the first African-American justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. This is his story. Incidentally, Chadwick Boseman has previously played on film the American footballer Floyd Little, the baseball star Jackie Robinson and the singer James Brown.

Released Fri 20 October



Earth: One Amazing Day

CERT **U (95 mins)**

Narrated by **Robert Redford**
Directed by **Richard Dale, Lixin Fan** and **Peter Webber (UK)**

Utilising previously unavailable technology, this sequel to the BBC's Earth (2007) chronicles Nature in all its diversity over the course of one day. If it's anywhere near as good as the first film, this is one documentary you should not miss.

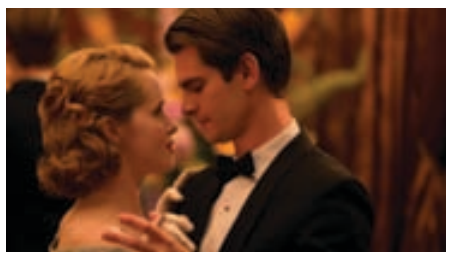
Released Fri 20 October

Breathe CERT 12a (117 mins)

Starring **Andrew Garfield, Claire Foy, Tom Hollander, Hugh Bonneville, Dean-Charles Chapman, Ed Speleers** Directed by **Andy Serkis (UK)**

Andrew Garfield plays Robin Cavendish, an army man and entrepreneur who contracts polio and fights the disease like a warrior. Based on the inspiring true story of Cavendish - the film is produced by his son, Jonathan - the movie is scripted by William Nicholson OBE (Shadowlands, Gladiator, Les Misérables) and marks the directorial debut of Andy Serkis.

Released Fri 27 October



Call Me By Your Name

CERT **15 (132 mins)**

Starring **Armie Hammer, Timothée Chalamet, Michael Stuhlbarg, Amira Casar, Esther Garrel**
Directed by **Luca Guadagnino (Italy/USA/Brazil/France)**

Based on the novel by André Aciman, this coming-of-age drama is set in north Italy during the summer of 1983. There, the 17-year-old Elio Perlman (Chalamet) lives an enchanted life reading and playing classical music. Then his world is turned upside down when he meets the handsome and charming American academic Oliver (Hammer), who's staying at his parents' villa.

Released Fri 27 October

Jigsaw CERT 18 (109 mins)

Starring **Tobin Bell, Mandela Van Peebles, Laura Vandervoort, Brittany Allen, Callum Keith Rennie**
Directed by **The Spierig Brothers (USA)**

It was all meant to end with Saw 3D: The Final Chapter (2010). But you know what studios are like. Jigsaw is the eighth instalment in the Saw franchise and focuses on a series of murders that match the modus operandi of the twisted John Kramer (aka Jigsaw). But hasn't Kramer been dead for over a decade?

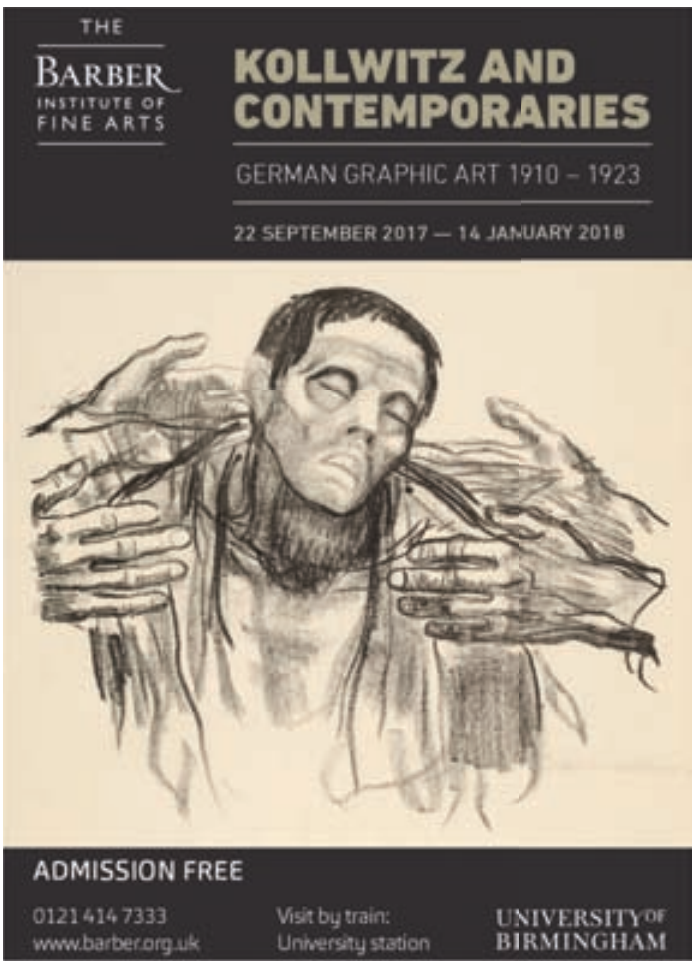
Released Fri 27 October

Kaleidoscope

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 5 October - Sat 9 December

The relationship between colour and form, rationality and irrationality, order and waywardness is the central focus of this celebration of 1960s' British art. Featuring work by more than 20 artists, Kaleidoscope turns the spotlight on the sense of repetition, sequence and symmetry that underpinned the style of the time - a style noted for its bold, artificial colours and unpredictable shapes and forms.

The show features examples of the mind-bending surfaces so closely associated with Op Art, the flattened repetition of Pop, the mathematical order of Constructivism and the sequential placement of brightly coloured abstract units found in New Generation sculpture.



Pride And Persecution

The Barber Institute, Birmingham, Fri 27 October - Sun 21 January

The fascinating history of the Barber's Jan Steen masterpiece, The Wrath Of Ahasuerus, is explored in this exhibition. The show also focuses on the 17th century Dutch Golden Age during which the painting was produced, the emerging Dutch nation's links and associations with the Biblical Israelites and the connections of these paintings with contemporary Dutch theatre.

The Wrath Of Ahasuerus is one of 70-plus paintings by Steen which narrate scenes from the Bible and classical mythology and history. Despite his impressive output of artwork inspired by these subjects, Steen was better known for his exuberant, humorous and gently moralising scenes of everyday life.

Pride And Persecution is complemented by Tales From History (showing from 27 October to 18 February), an exhibition focusing on rarely shown prints and drawings by Steen's contemporary, Rembrandt, and some of the latter's pupils.

Quentin Blake: Inside Stories

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 21 October - Sunday 17 December

An exhibition featuring the work of one of the world's best-loved illustrators, Inside Stories offers a unique insight into some of Quentin Blake's most popular creations.

The show features a huge range of the artist's drawings, not only from the Roald Dahl books with which he's most closely associated, but also from David Walliams' The Boy In The Dress and Michael Rosen's Sad Book.

Clive Barker: Pop Art. 1961 - 1981.

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 21 October - Mon 1 January

It was while working with chrome-plated and leather car parts on the Vauxhall Motors assembly line that Clive Barker found the greatest inspiration for his art.

In the high-profile career which has followed, Barker has not only applied chrome finishes to his pieces but also chosen to work primarily in polished cast metals.

Widely considered to be the most important sculptor of the British Pop Art movement, Barker has produced work covering themes as diverse as portraiture, conceptual art, classical art and war & conflict.

This new exhibition, although celebrating a 20-year period in the artist's career, mainly focuses on work produced by Barker throughout the 1960s and into the early '70s.

Sofia Hultén: Here's The Answer, What's The Question?

Ikon, Birmingham, until Sun 26 November

This selection of sculptures, installations and films - contemplating the nature of the material world and the way people navigate it - constitutes the most comprehensive exhibition to date of Sofia Hultén's work.

Focusing on the Berlin-based artist's interest in shuffling the chronological order of things, the show includes highly rated video work Nonsequences, in which a sequence of events is re-enacted to defy expectations of cause and effect.

One example of this features an apple, which, having been polished on jeans, is then dropped into dirt before being disposed of in a plastic bag. This is followed by a sequence in which the apple is placed in the bag *before* being dropped in dirt.

In Hultén's art, common sense no longer holds sway, as the artist provides the viewer with answers to which they must then make up the corresponding questions.

The Horse Of The Year Show

NEC, Birmingham, Wed 4 - Sun 8 October

Now heading towards its 70th anniversary, the Horse Of The Year Show was launched in 1949 as a way to mark the end of the equestrian season.

The event has undergone considerable change since that inaugural show with its 400 entries. Nowadays there are 1,600 horses and ponies taking part, with competitors numbering 1,500 and a staggering 65,000 spectators sampling the show's numerous delights.

Highlights this year include two never-before-seen displays from Atkinson Action Horses and The Caspian Horse Society. There's also a full programme of International Showjumping classes, one of which includes the world-famous Puissance.

Other featured attractions are a dressage masterclass from former Olympic gold medallist Charlotte Dujardin and the ever-popular Virbac 3D worming Pony Club Mounted Games.

The 24th Carole Nash Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show

Staffordshire County Showground, Sat 14 - Sun 15 October

Club stands, live action, autumn sales, classic off-road machines and special guest stars from iconic eras of motorcycling are all featured in a show which regularly welcomes more than 30,000 enthusiasts through its doors.

Celebrating the growing popularity of emerging and modern classics from the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the show features hundreds of traders and dealers, as well as numerous autojumble stands offering a wealth of parts and spares for every project.

Wedding Fair

Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, Sat 21 - Sun 22 October

This month's show features wedding experts aplenty, offering advice on everything from flowers and favours to cakes and cars.

Bridal boutiques, florists and catwalk shows are all present and correct too, as is the Vintage Village, celebrating the ever-evolving trend for yesteryear-style weddings.

The Motorhome And Caravan Show

NEC, Birmingham, Tues 17 - Sun 22 October

Attracting huge crowds and filling numerous halls of the NEC, the Motorhome And Caravan Show 2017 is promising to be 'bigger and better than ever'.

The always-popular event features hundreds of UK exhibitors, offering visitors the chance to check out all the new 2018 caravan, motorhome, holiday home, trailer tent and folding caravan models.

The show also provides free help and advice on all aspects of touring - from finance, insurance and security to the best tow cars on the market. A wide range of accessories are available at show-only prices.

Disney On Ice Presents Passport To Adventure

Arena Birmingham, Wed 18 - Sun 29 October

Yep, it's that get-your-skates-on time of year again, with Disney's ever-popular line-up of children's favourites once more taking to the ice to astound and delight.
This time out, Midlands families are invited to explore the African Pride Lands with Simba and friends, voyage to Ariel's underwater kingdom and fly from London to Neverland with Peter Pan. They also travel to Arendelle, for an 'extraordinary' adventure with sisters Anna and Elsa, mountain-man Kristoff and huggable snowman Olaf.
And for those who like their Disney characters more 'long in the tooth', there are appearances by Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald, Goofy and Daisy.
Oh, and there's also a pre-show party featuring Zootropolis to enjoy, to help get your youngsters in the mood for all the fun to come.

The Birmingham Literature Festival 2017

Various venues, Sat 7 - Sun 15 October

A host of top literary talent has been lined up for the 20th Birmingham Literature Festival.
From humble beginnings back in 1998, the event has developed into one of the city's most high-profile celebrations of the arts.
Highlights this year include contributions from India's best-selling female writer, Preeti Shenoy, debut novelist Chinelo Okparanta and children's writer Christopher Edge.
There's also a showcase of work produced by marginalised writers across the UK, a collection of pieces by up-and-coming regional authors, performances of poetry and numerous debates.
An evening with Birmingham comedian Joe Lycett and Yardley MP Jess Phillips also features.

Mad Science Children's Activities

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Thurs 26 October

'Education wrapped in entertainment' is the name of the game at Mad Science's hugely popular interactive learning events.
The science-themed shows offer children the chance to thoroughly engage in all manner of imaginative pastimes. These include creating foggy dry ice storms, finding out how a foam factory functions, building super-bouncy balls, making magic mud and altering soundwaves.
And if that little lot doesn't wear out the kids and buy you some much-needed half-term peace and quiet, then nothing will!

Grand Designs Live

NEC, Birmingham, Wed 11 - Sun 15 October

The UK's leading contemporary home show makes its annual visit to Birmingham this month, with design guru Kevin McCloud once again presiding over proceedings.
Kevin hosts various events in the show's Grand Theatre, where guest speakers offer tips and advice on a variety of homebuilding issues.
This year's show also features tons of inspiring ideas, state-of-the-art bathroom products, suggestions for making the most of available kitchen space, and 'must have' products for gardens and outdoor spaces.

Dive 2017

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 21 - Sun 22 October

Boasting hundreds of exhibitors - including manufacturers and retailers of diving equipment, and travel agents offering dive holiday destinations - Dive 2017 also features an unrivalled programme of guest speakers.
Special features include two large in-hall presentation stages, pools, mini-theatres, TekDeck and prominent dive-travel, training and underwater photography areas.

Half-term fun at the Motor Museum

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire, Sat 21 - Sun 29 October

Get your motor running in the direction of this hugely popular visitor attraction this half term.
Activities include numerous art-based workshops, a brand new trail for kids to enjoy in the company of costumed guides and, returning by popular demand, the Black Cat Halloween trail.

Join us for
Spooktober!
Take part in spooky story walks, creepy arts and crafts, freaky face painting and more at Birmingham Botanical Gardens this October half term.
23 – 27 October
11am – 3pm
FREE admission for under 16s
Discover more at
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Your support keeps the Gardens growing
THE BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS
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HALLOWEEN THEMED - MULTIPLE DJS
MAIN ARENA - 7PM- 11PM
ADVANCED TICKETS £10 - £12 ON THE DOOR
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Tamworth Castle
Autumn fun & activities
Half-term hunting, spooky family fun, fireworks, ghost search and lanternory!
Haunted Castle
Mon 23rd to Fri 27th October
11.30am-4.00pm
Bring the family to enjoy the ghostly goings-on at the Castle. You'll encounter a series of spooky characters and activities as you tour the Castle. Complete the challenges set by the horrible hags, and try not to lose your body parts as you meet Master Slaughter! Have you got the courage to complete the tour?
Half-term Weeks!
Ghost Search
Tues 31st October 7.30pm-Midnight
Join us for a night with a difference on our ghost walk around the Medieval Castle, with vigils conducted in reputedly haunted rooms. Cameras or camcorders can be used, and we advise warm clothing and rugs or cushions for use during the vigils as rooms can be chilly!
Bonfire Night
Sat 4th November 5.00pm-8.00pm
This is a chance to visit Tamworth Castle after dark before enjoying the ever-popular breath-taking firework display in the Castle grounds. Castle Grounds activities start at 6.00 p.m. with Fireworks at 8.00 p.m.
There is no access to Castle tower or parapets to view the firework display. Visitors cannot enter the Castle after closing time at 8.00 p.m. or during the firework display.
Children's Halloween Evening
Sat 28th October 5.00pm-8.30pm
A fun evening hosted by the Friends of Tamworth Castle charity. Bring all the family, get dressed up in your spookiest costume and enjoy the ghostly goings on around the Castle. This is a very popular event, so please book your time slot in advance.
For information regarding the Friends of Tamworth Castle charity please visit www.tamworthcastlefriends.org
Lanternory - The lantern-lit story!
Sat 18th November
Join us in a brand-new storytelling concept that follows the exploits of Raixe a young thief as he attempts to acquire treasures from the Castle. The story is revealed in parts as visitor's tour through the Castle lit by lantern light.
Family slots every half hour from 5.00 pm-7.30pm
Adult themed slots every half hour from 8.00pm-9.30pm
Plan your family event now
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www.tamworthcastle.co.uk
Tamworth Castle, The Holloway, Tamworth, Staffordshire B79 7NA

Great half-term events

Halloween Nights

The Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Wed 25 - Sat 28 October

Expect ghoul and ghost and goblin host to be dancing around the Black Country Living Museum this month, as the popular visitor attraction gets into the Halloween 'spirit'. Treats, tricks and 'terrifying tales of old' abound, the venue's gaslit streets coming alive with all manner of street entertainment. The museum's mine has been suitably spook-ified for the occasion, and there's also the chance to win a prize for best-dressed ghoul in a costume parade.

Alton Towers' Scarefest

Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire, Sat 7 - Sun 8, Sat 14 - Sun 15 and Fri 20 - Tues 31 October

Alton Towers' hugely popular Scarefest attraction makes a welcome return this month.

The venue has a great reputation when it comes to putting the heebie jeebies up its October-time visitors - but only in a family-friendly way, of course!

Alongside the theme park's impressive selection of usual rides, the Staffordshire visitor attraction is hosting four live shows for very young children. There's also a House Of Monsters maze and Freak Show scare-zone to sample, as well as four terrifying scare mazes for those who consider themselves the bravest of the brave.

Ghostly Gaslight

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Sat 28 October

This spine-tingling but family-friendly annual event sees the amiable characters of Blists Hill Victorian Town replaced by ghosts, ghouls and creepy-crawlies.

When night falls and street lamps cast their shadows across the cobbled streets, visitors are advised to keep their eyes and ears open, as weird apparitions and spooky sounds take over the town's shops, cottages and work places.

Anybody who fancies doing some 'spooking' of their own is more than welcome to hit the fancy-dress shop beforehand...

Halloween Spooktacular

British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, Shropshire, Friday 27 October

We're reliably informed that 'staff are readying the fake blood and scream-inducing decorations' at the British Ironwork Centre, where youngsters who enjoy feeling the hairs on the back of their necks stand on end are set to enjoy some ghoulish fun at the end of the month.

Highlights include a whole host of spooks and spectres, the venue's classic pumpkin hunt, a 'devilishly delicious' doughnut challenge and both pumpkin and face-painting opportunities.

Visitors who think they're brave enough can also take on the challenge of the 'fear boxes', or head for the 'scream-extracting' terror tunnel (over-12s only). Fancy dress is of course encouraged, with prizes to be won for the ghastliest of outfits.

BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN

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IN A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

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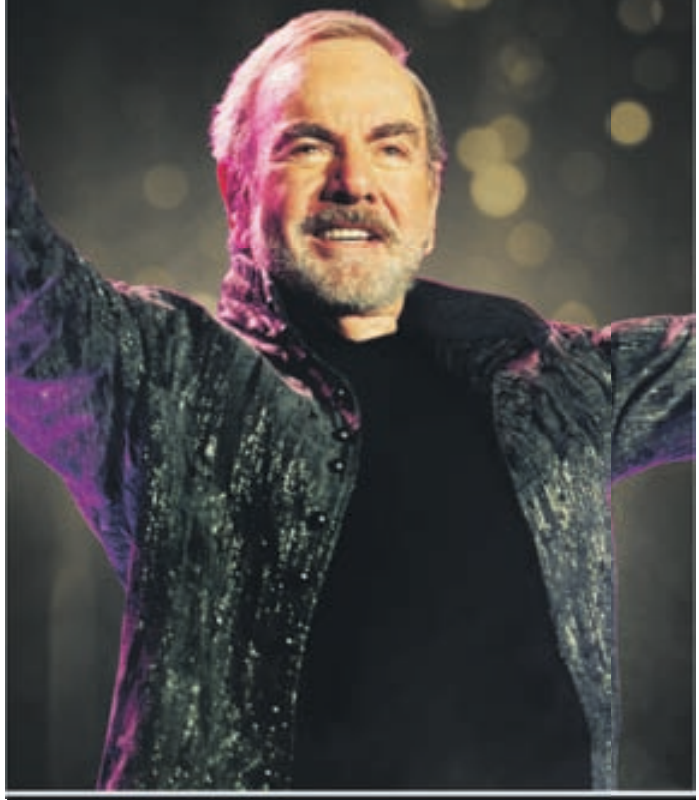
50 YEAR ANNIVERSARY WORLD TOUR



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Spooky Science Week

Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 23 - Fri 27 October

There's no shortage of spellbinding fun to be had at Thinktank during this month's half-term school holidays.

An after-hours Spooky Science Night (Sat 28, 6 - 9 pm) includes eerie experiments and a science-of-fright show, not to mention encounters with creepy crawlers in the company of Thinktank's expert handlers. Arrive attired in fancy dress and you'll be entered into a 'fantastic' prize draw on the night.

More spooktacular fun can be enjoyed over at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery on 25 October, when a Monster Party in the Waterhall Gallery includes music, dancing and plenty of ghoulish games. And the Halloween fun continues at the venue throughout the week, courtesy of some gruesome object handling sessions and a spooky portrait studio.

Spooktober

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Mon 23 - Fri 27 October

Birmingham's Botanical Gardens is promising visitors the chance to get up close and personal with cackling witches, petrifying pumpkins and ghastly ghouls this Halloween season.

Spooky storytelling, freaky face-painting and an opportunity to make some scary arts & crafts are among the October attractions at the popular venue.

There's even a spot of pond-dipping thrown in for good measure!

More Treat Than Trick

Drayton Manor Theme Park, Sat 14 - Sat 26 October

Drayton Manor Park is inviting families to dust off their broomsticks and batwings and treat themselves to some ghoulish Halloween fun this month.

Creepy capers to enjoy include the chance to see the ever-popular Thomas Land attraction transformed into the 'spooktacular' Island of Sodor. More-courageous youngsters can face their fear of the unknown by taking part in the 'five mystery boxes' challenge. The theme park's fabulous white-knuckle rides provide the perfect opportunity to add a churning stomach to that Halloween-induced tingling spine!

Halloween Family Boat Trips

Dudley Canal Trust, Fri 27 - Tues 31 October

What better way can there be to get into the Halloween spirit than by exploring Dudley Canal Trust's naturally spooky tunnels and caverns? The Trust is running special children's boat trips this half-term holiday, during which youngsters will encounter some truly impressive glow-in-the-dark Halloween puppets.

The boat trips are 'spooky' but not scary, and should be suitable for children over three years of age.

And the fiendish fun doesn't end there. On various days of half-term week, families can get creative with a selection of Halloween-themed craft activities. Children can make a witch or wizard hat, have a go at creating an animal superpower potion and add a spooktacular creation to the Trust's gruesomely ghastly ghostly gallery.

Haunted Castle

Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire, Mon 23 - Fri 27 October

Take advantage of this long weekend of ghostly goings-on at Staffordshire's spooktacularly haunted castle.

There are Halloween activities aplenty to sample, including the chance to play ping-pong eyeballs with some not-entirely-pleasant hags. Visitors are also advised to keep their wits about them throughout their stay, to ensure they remain beyond the clutches of the eerie executioner and the ever-so-spooky St Editha...

Ghost Tour

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 27 October

It's believed that at least five ghosts haunt the nooks and crannies of the New Alexandra Theatre, and this sure-to-be-fun ghost tour offers a great opportunity to meet them! For super-brave ghost-busters, there's even an add-on 'lock in' event, offering the chance to experience the auditorium in the dark and disconcerting depths of the night. Don't forget your torch. And your big bag of courage.

Torch-Lit Pumpkin Walk

Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, Fri 27 - Sun 29 October

Apple bobbing, marshmallow toasting, spooky storytelling and creepy craftmaking keep the kids active and amused at this special Halloween event.

The main attraction, though (as ably evidenced from the event's title) is the torch-lit pumpkin walk, a fun undertaking that sees families making their way round the big pool in search of pumpkins with letters carved into them. Unscramble the letters to make a Halloween word - and when you're done, grab yourself a bowl of pumpkin soup to keep the nighttime chills away!

Visitors are invited to bring along their very own carved pumpkin - there's a prize for the best one...

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*Offer only available in advance for a limited time. Advance box office closes at midnight on 22 November 2017. Offer applies to the standard ticket price of £16.

Images, left to right: Julian Eade, Andrew Muir, Thomas Glover and Scandinavian by Design

BLONDIE

We spoke to the band's drummer Clem Burke ahead of their Birmingham show...

Blondie's 11th album, Pollinator, was released earlier this year. Can you tell us a bit about it?

We're all really happy with it, and I think it's the record that Blondie fans have been waiting for. I mean, I think the chemistry of the band really comes across. The three other guys in the band, Tommy, Lee and Matt, have been with us for quite a while, along with me, Chris and Debbie. The idea was to go in and record all the basic tracks together and really have the sound of the band come across. The last couple of albums that we did, the songs were there but they were done in a different method. They were more computer-generated, and then we found when we went to do the songs in our show, we would have to rearrange them and make them band performances. We kind of felt that people were a lot more receptive to the songs when they actually heard the band playing them. We kind of have a history of doing cover songs, starting with things like Denis and Hanging On The Telephone, which was by a band called The Nerves. Tide Is High is by The Paragons and was written by John Holt. I think we have a knack of taking other people's songs and making them sound like Blondie songs, so that's what we decided to do with Pollinator. We're really, really happy with the way it's turned out, and I think it's definitely one of our best albums. Blondie fans are all really happy with it too - we're just trying to get other people to hear it. It was received really well and went in the charts at number four here in the UK. We're having a good time playing a handful of songs from Pollinator, along with the expected songs, in the current Blondie show, so it's been good. The album has given us the impetus to want to continue, so we're going to be making another record. Everything's great within the band, and we're really looking forward to the UK tour.

What's the meaning behind the album's title - Pollinator?

Deb came up with the name, but it has to do with the fact that we're kind of infusing other people's music with our music - and then along came the bee crisis. A weird twist of fate - we were supposed to be doing a gig in London the day after the tragedy in Manchester, and of course everything stopped the next day. We weren't really aware of the worker bee symbol of Manchester, so that kind of came to light too. And then I was looking at GQ and there was a guy in a Gucci suit with bees on it. Bees all of a sudden seem to be kind of trendy - unbeknown to us, as we were really in our own little bubble when we came up with that idea.

You started playing drums for Blondie in 1975. How did that come about?

We were all hanging out in New York City in a club called Club 82. It was kind of like a dance club that had glam rock bands on one night a week, whether it be New York Dolls or Teenage Lust or other bands. I had a band called Sweet Revenge and Deb and Chris had a band called The Stilettos, and we were all on that scene. It was kind of like the last hold-out of glam rock. Everything kind of moved South West a block or so. People like Bowie informed British punk rock, so the Bowie, Lou Reed thing was going on and that kind of transitioned into a more bohemian, William Borrows, Andy Warhol, Patty Smith vibe. It was all kind of coming together at that point during the mid-'70s.

Why do you think the band remain so popular?

The music is the legacy of the band and obviously Debbie's image opened the door for the band, and she's still a lovely, very beautiful woman. Her looks overshadowed her musical ability, her lyrics and everything. Musically, to me, she's more like Bowie or Jim Morrison, not really like the obvious other blonde singers. Culturally in the mid-'70s there was a lot of really significant stuff going on in New York that was only really influencing the people who were there. We were the sound of New York in a way. We were being influenced by our peers, by certain artists, different areas of the city, the whole hip-hop thing. The internet is a big help now. I think we're the first generation where our whole band life is on the internet as far as performances and photos go. For younger people, that kind of lets them connect the dots on what Blondie was all about and what was going on. You look at a photo of Debbie from 1976 and it looks very modern, but you look at a photo of somebody from Bon Jovi in the '80s and it doesn't look very modern. The Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol had a lot to do with influencing Blondie. They were an underground phenomenon at the time. I think Blondie's music stands up. I think The Pollinator record is a great record, and I'm not just saying that because it's the most recent one - it's definitely one of our better albums.

During Blondie's hiatus, you played drums for numerous musicians, including Bob Dylan, Iggy Pop and The Ramones. Can you tell us a little bit about that, and who did you enjoy working with the most?

The Eurythmics. I met Annie Lennox at a club in Piccadilly called Planets around 1980, when I was living in London. Lemmy was there, Michael Jackson was there. He was sitting on a chair next to me when Annie came over and started talking to me about the new band that she was starting up with Dave. So I went round to their place and had Sunday lunch, then recorded their first album with them in Germany. I had a great time with them - we became friends. With Iggy, that was a really amazing time. He was promoting this album party, I went on tour with him for six weeks and we opened for the Rolling Stones. Everything that's come about has been as a result of Blondie, whether that be Debbie's acting career or Chris' photography, me working with all these other people. It's good when people go away and do that stuff because they then bring it back into the band. Working with Dylan was unbelievable - just being in his genius presence. At the end of the day, the love of music is what really comes through. Whether it's Bob Dylan or a kid in a garage banging on a guitar, they're all doing it for the same reason. It starts there and goes on from there. If I was a kid today, I'm not sure if I would choose the music business as a career, but then who knows?

How does life on the road now compare to back in the '90s, for example?

Well, it's easier now. Something like making a phone call back in the day was a big deal, trying to reach somebody in another country. Once again, technology has brought everyone together. The production's a lot easier. You live and learn. I was always into taking care of myself. I did this thing, the Clem Burke Drumming Project, which I got a doctorate for a few years ago from Gloucestershire University, and it's just about having a positive spin on what it means to be a musician. It studies all the mental and physical aspects of being on the road. That's a big part of the study - the endurance etc. It got a bit controversial because my stats were lining up with premier footballers half my age. I think we just try to take care of ourselves more now. I don't think I went to the gym or any of that back in the day because I was too hungover or whatever. That's the great thing about playing an instrument - as time goes on, it just gets better and better.

What's your first musical memory?

I started playing drums when I was quite young. For my generation, The Beatles on Ed Sullivan in the States was a turning point. I was too young for Elvis in terms of musical memories. Top 40 radio in the States, you'd have Frank Sinatra next to the Rolling Stones.

Blondie are bringing their UK tour to Birmingham this winter. What can audiences expect from your show?

We've been on the road in the States for the last seven weeks, touring with the band Garbage. Before that, we went to Australia, so the band is very road-worthy. We're playing a handful of songs from Pollinator along with the expected hits and some deeper Blondie cuts. A pretty well-rounded show. We're trying to make people aware of the Pollinator album. It's all go. Everyone is in a great space and enjoying performing, so it's going to be good. Along with Holland and Australia, this is where the initial success was with Blondie. The UK has always been a second home - we spend a lot of time here.

Blondie play Arena Birmingham on Monday 13th November

thelist

Your week-by-week listings guide

October 2017

Russian State Ballet's Swan Lake - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 14 October

Music I Comedy I Theatre I Dance I Film I Events I Visual Arts I and more!

What's On

Sun 1 to Sun 8 October

Stone Food & Drink Festival at Westbridge Park

Fri 6 - Sun 8 October

Mon 9 to Sun 15 October

Katherine Ryan at Dudley Town Hall

Sat 14 October

Mon 16 to Sun 22 October

Arlene Phillips at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Sun 22 October

Mon 23 to Tues 31 October

West Midlands Vegan Festival at Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

Sat 28 - Sun 29 October

THROUGHOUT OCTOBER

Visual Arts

Bilston Craft Gallery

FOSSIL FUELLED Exhibition featuring objects from many of the town's industries, including cut steel jewellery, bicycles and the world famous Bilston Enamels, until Sun 31 Dec

New Art Gallery - Walsall

NEW ADAM GRÜNING Adam works with installation, photography and video to explore the relationship between authentic and inauthentic experience and notions of value and spectacle, Tues 17 Oct - Sun 17 Dec

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

HEARTBEAT Installation promoting Warli culture and including more than 30 Warli paintings alongside film works, sculptural pieces, clay and ceramic materials, objects and sound works. A collaboration between artists, artisans and craftspeople from India and the UK, the show is presented in partnership with the British Ceramics Biennial, until Sun 12 Nov

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

NEW SAMURAI: WARRIORS OF JAPAN An exhibition that graphically brings to life the story of the Samurai and their fall from power, as Japan opened up to the West, Mon 16 Oct - Sun 21 Jan

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

NEW UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON MA SHOW Featuring a wide range of creative work covering a variety of practice disciplines such as painting, sculpture, glass, ceramics, installation, graphics, photography, illustration, audio-visual and multimedia, Sat 14 - Sun 22 Oct

NEW YANG FUDONG: THE NIGHTMAN COMETH Yang is one of the leading figures in China's contemporary art world and independent cinema, Sat 14 Oct - Sun 3 Dec

NEW CLIVE BARKER: POP ART. 1961 – 1981. Exhibition which concentrates on works from the 1960s and early 1970s, illustrating Barker's important contribution to the story of Pop Art, Sat 21 Oct - Mon 1 Jan

Other VISUAL ARTS

SHROPSHIRE ART SOCIETY EXHIBITION Showcasing the work of Angela Jones and Wen Williamson, until Fri 6 Oct, St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

DANIEL YEOMANS Daniel is an acclaimed portrait artist with a traditional training at the internationally renowned Charles H Cecil studios in Florence, until Sat 4 Nov, The Willow Gallery, Oswestry

BRITISH CERAMICS BIENNIAL Featuring work by Neil Brownsword, Juree Kim and Central Saint Martins College Ceramic Design students, until Sun 5 Nov, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

ART OF THE COMMUNITY EXHIBITION Exhibition forming part of a celebration to mark the Trust's 50th anniversary, until Tues 2 Jan, Coalbrookdale Gallery, Ironbridge

MADE IN THE MIDDLE Recurring touring exhibition showcasing some of the Midlands' best contemporary craft and applied art, Sat 30 Sept - Sat 25 Nov, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

NEW PLAY & DISPLAY - PAPER AND CARD TOYS EXHIBITION Collection demonstrating the popularity and versatility of paper and card toys, Sun 1 - Fri 13 Oct, Museum of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

NEW ABSTRACT EDGE EXHIBITION - ARTISTS ON THE EDGE OF ABSTRACTION Showcasing the work of a group of artists who have a shared interest in painting in an abstract or semi-abstract way, Tues 3 - Sat 28 Oct, VAN Gallery, Shrewsbury

NEW SUPNAA: DREAMS OF OUR FATHERS Exhibition inspired by the artist's upbringing in Park Village, Wolverhampton, in the 1970s and early '80s, Wed 4 Oct, Wolverhampton City Archives

NEW FUNNY THINGS: CLICKING COMEDIANS PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION Steve Best's many years on the comedy circuit have allowed him to build trust with some of the funniest people on earth. This exclusive access has given him an opportunity to take hundreds of intimate, deeply moving images - from backstage to front of stage, from very new comedians and seasoned professionals to the downright famous, Mon 23 Oct - Sun 5 Nov, Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton

NEW ARGAZKI MAC - 'NATURAL STAFFORDSHIRE' Argazki Mac, aka Neal McIntosh, has produced a breathtaking portfolio of wildlife photography, with all photos having been taken in Cannock Chase, Stafford and Hednesford Hills, Mon 23 Oct - Fri 15 Dec, Museum of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

NEW NEW YEAR: NEW BEGINNINGS Exhibition exploring the identity of the museums service and featuring pieces and stories from the collection, Sat 28 Oct, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley, Stourbridge

Gigs

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK - THE ROD STEWART STORY Sun 1 Oct, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

LORDE Sun 1 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CRYSTAL PALACE Sun 1 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

HABADEKUK Sun 1 Oct, Lichfield Guildhall

TEXAS Sun 1 Oct, Symphony Hall, B'ham

RIVRS Mon 2 Oct, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

DERVISH Mon 2 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs

LUKE JACKSON Mon 2 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

KIP MOORE Mon 2 Oct, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS Mon 2 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

KING NO-ONE WITH SPECIAL GUESTS Tues 3 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JOE LONGTHORNE Tues 3 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LOYLE CARNER Tues 3 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

STARS OF IRISH COUNTRY SHOW Tues 3 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

MEGSON Wed 4 Oct, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

THE STRYPES Wed 4 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SHANE FILAN Wed 4 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

AN EVENING WITH FENNE LILY, PAUL THOMAS SAUNDERS, SIVU & SIV JAKOBSEN Wed 4 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

THE BEATLES UNPLUGGED Wed 4 Oct, Theatre On The Step, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

WILLE AND THE BANDITS Wed 4 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PRETTY VICIOUS Wed 4 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JARROD DICKENSON Wed 4 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARTIN TURNER EX WISHBONE ASH Wed 4 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

IAN MOSS Thurs 5 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

INHEAVEN Thurs 5 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

CHANTEL MCGREGOR Thurs 5 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ELIO PACE PERFORMS THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK Thurs 5 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PAPA ROACH Thurs 5 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JUSTIN HAYWARD Thurs 5 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

TOM GRENNAN Fri 6 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MEGSON Fri 6 Oct, The Hive, Shrewsbury

JESS MORGAN & DAN WHITEHOUSE Fri 6 Oct, mac, Birmingham

THE HOOSIERS Fri 6 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

U2+1 VS ALIVE & KICKING UK Fri 6 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER Fri 6 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SHELLAC Fri 6 Oct, The Asylum, B'ham

SQUEEZE WITH SPECIAL GUESTS 9 BELOW ZERO. Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, Symphony Hall, B'ham

ALLMAN BROWN & DAN BETTRIDGE Fri 6 Oct, Ort Cafe, Birmingham

MARTY STUART Fri 6 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

THE GLORIA GAYNOR EXPERIENCE Fri 6 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BLUES BROTHERS TRIBUTE SHOW Fri 6 Oct, National Brewery Centre, Burton upon Trent

ZOE GILBY QUARTET Fri 6 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ULTIMATE EAGLES Fri 6 Oct, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

FRED ZEPPELIN Fri 6 Oct, Route 44, B'ham

WHITESNAKE UK Fri 6 Oct, Eleven, Stoke on Trent

ARCANE ROOTS Fri 6 Oct, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

RHINO AND THE RANTERS Sat 7 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KING NO-ONE WITH SPECIAL GUESTS Sat 7 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE YOUNG 'UNS Sat 7 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

AFROCARIBFEST 2017 - XFACTOR INVASION Sat 7 Oct, Telford Arena & Live Lounge, Telford

INGLORIOUS Sat 7 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

TUBULAR BELLS FOR TWO FEATURING SUPPORT FROM GYPSYFINGERS Sat 7 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Sat 7 Oct, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

REBECCA DOWNES Sat 7 Oct, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

MARTINA EDOFF Sat 7 Oct, Eleven, Stoke on Trent

BEVERLEY KNIGHT Sun 8 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TAKE A CHANCE Sun 8 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

SKINNY GIRL DIET Sun 8 Oct, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

DRU HILL Sun 8 Oct, O2 Academy, B'ham

ANDY MCKEE Sun 8 Oct, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

FAUSTUS Sun 8 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

THERAPY? Sun 8 Oct, The Glee Club, B'ham

Classical Music

MOZART'S CLARINET CONCERTO Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinyt-Tyla (conductor) & Jörg Widmann (clarinet). Programme to include works by Weber, Mozart, Jörg Widmann & Brahms, Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CEMPR Early Music Lecture - recitals: Early Strings with Miki Takahashi and Andrew Kirkham, Thurs 5 Oct, The Bramall, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: WIDMAN & WEBER Featuring the CBSO musicians & Jörg Widmann (clarinet/artist in residence), Fri 6 Oct, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Comedy

THE LAUGHING SOLE COMEDY FOR KIDS Sun 1 Oct, mac, Birmingham

COMEDY OF BLACK ORIGIN (COBO) BRINGS A BLACK HISTORY MONTH SPECIAL Sun 1 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOEL DOMMETT Sun 1 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ABANDOMAN Wed 4 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MIKE GUNN, LOST VOICE GUY & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 5 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MAFF BROWN, DALISO CHAPONDA, GARY MEIKLE & JIM SMALLMAN Thurs 5 Oct, The George Hotel, Lichfield

DAN NIGHTINGALE, RAY BADRAN, SIMON LOMAS, JAMIE HUTCHINSON & LOU CONRAN Thurs 5 Oct, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

KUM-N-AVALOFF COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 5 Oct, Stourbridge Town Hall

JIMMY MCGHIE, MARK SIMMONS & TREVOR COOK Fri 6 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, Birmingham

ANGELOS & BARRY Fri 6 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

BREAKING TALENT AWARD 2017 Fri 6 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB ROUSE, GERRY K. & MARTI Fri 6 Oct, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

RICH HALL Fri 6 Oct, Burton Town Hall, Burton-upon-Trent

MIKE GUNN, LOST VOICE GUY, JOE BOR & MARTIN MOR Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEITH FARNAN, ANDRE VINCENT & TWO COMICS TBC Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM COMEDY FESTIVAL Fri 6 - Sun 15 Oct, Various locations, throughout Birmingham

JIMMY MCGHIE, MARK SIMMONS & TREVOR COOK Sat 7 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, Birmingham

JAY HANDLEY Sat 7 Oct, mac, B'ham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 7 Oct, The Old Post Office, Burton-upon-Trent

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 7 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE SCUMMY MUMMIES SHOW Sat 7 Oct, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Theatre

THE PITMEN PAINTERS Feelgood play based on the true story of coal miners who begin evening classes with a Master of Painting from Kings College Newcastle, until Sat 7 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

DUET FOR ONE Revival of Tom Kempinski's award-winning play, taking a look at what happens when unexpected events lead you to revaluate your life, until Sat 7 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

DODGER Amateur staging of Terry Pratchett's Victorian tale, inspired by Charles Dickens' character, the Artful Dodger, Fri 29 Sept - Sat 7 Oct, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

I KNEW YOU Highly anticipated second play from Birmingham-born writer and performer Steven Camden, aka Polarbear, taking a look at family dynamics. Featuring Lorna Laidlaw (Doctors), Fri 29 Sept - Sat 7 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

SKYLIGHT The Crescent Theatre Company present David Hare's witty political play, Sat 30 Sept - Sat 7 Oct, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Music, mirth and merriment with Dandy, Ian 'Sludge' Lees, The Empty Can, Bev Pegg & Jess Silk, Sun 1 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE GOLDEN DRAGON Music Theatre Wales present a compelling fable of modern life, which begins with the discovery of a decayed tooth found in a bowl of soup, Tues 3 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

YOU FORGOT THE MINCE Imagine If Theatre present a story of falling in love and falling apart, Tues 3 Oct, mac, Birmingham

SPAMALOT Eric Idle's award-winning Monty Python musical comedy, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Oct, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

LETTERS TO EMMA New play based on the life of Anna Seward, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

THE WEDDING SINGER Ray Quinn, Cassie Compton, Roxanne Pallett and Ruth Madoc star in a new production of the popular musical, based on the hit film of the same name, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PAUL ZERDIN: ALL MOUTH The acclaimed ventriloquist is joined by new characters and old favourites, Wed 4 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SNOW WHITE AND ROMEO & JULIET Double bill of work, performed by The Nuworks Theatre Company, Wed 4 Oct, Dudley Town Hall

SLEEPING TREES: SCI-FI? A journey into the deep and infinite unknown... Wed 4 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Acclaimed touring show featuring a host of popular hits spanning the 50s, 60s, 70s & 80s, Wed 4 - Thurs 5 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PROMISE AND PROMISCUITY: A NEW MUSICAL Penny Ashton brings a full cast of Austenesque characters to life with song, dance - and appalling cross-stitching... Thurs 5 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SLEEPING TREES: MAFIA? The award-winning comedy duo deliver their version of every gangster film they've ever seen... Thurs 5 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Music, mirth and merriment with Dandy, Ian 'Sludge' Lees, The Empty Can, Bev Pegg & Jess Silk, Thurs 5 Oct, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

LOADED Violent, lyrical and thought-provoking theatre fusing an evocative original sound score with texts ranging from ancient literature to modern science, Thurs 5 - Fri 6 Oct, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

ENTERTAINING MR SLOANE Joe Orton's acclaimed black comedy, featuring themes of murder, homosexuality, nymphomania and sadism, Thurs 5 - Sat 14 Oct, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Music, mirth and merriment with Dandy, Ian 'Sludge' Lees, The Empty Can, Bev Pegg & Jess Silk, Fri 6 Oct, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

PROMISE AND PROMISCUITY: A NEW MUSICAL Penny Ashton brings a full cast of Austenesque characters to life with song, dance - and appalling cross-stitching... Fri 6 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE BASTARD KING Sketch comedy duo The Awkward Silence present their latest show, Fri 6 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Acclaimed touring show featuring a host of popular hits spanning the 1950s, '60s, '70s & '80s, Fri 6 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BURNING BOOKS A powerful and humorous look at an education system buckling under government cuts and targets - a story of protest and the teachers who chose to fight back, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, Arena Theatre, B'ham

AKSHAYAMBARA Experimental play creating a contemporary narrative that raises questions about female representation and male ownership, Sun 8 Oct, mac, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH GERVASE PHINN The bestselling author shares his anecdotes, Sun 8 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Kids shows

SING-A-LONG FROZEN Full screening of Disney's Frozen with lyrics on screen to help you sing along during the film, Sun 1 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

AWFUL AUNTIE New staging of David Walliams' tale of frights, fights & friendship, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

DINOSAUR DETECTIVES Clydebuilt Puppet Theatre performance, featuring rod puppets, shadow play and large-scale projections, Thurs 5 Oct, SpArC Theatre, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

DINOSAUR DETECTIVES Clydebuilt Puppet Theatre performance, featuring rod puppets, shadow play and large-scale projections, Fri 6 Oct, Ellesmere College Arts Centre, North Shropshire

MISTER MAKER & THE SHAPES Live show encourages kids to sing, dance and make some noise, Sun 8 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

DINOSAUR DETECTIVES Clydebuilt Pup-

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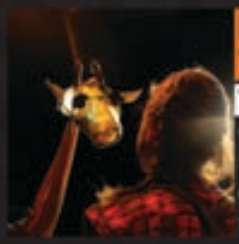
Highlights

MAC Camp: Animation
Mon 23 - Thu 26 October, 8.30am - 5.30pm
Make a short animated film using stop frame animation techniques from scratch. For 6-11yrs



Half Moon Theatre: The Girl And The Giraffe
Tue 24 - Thu 26 October
Charming puppetry, an enchanting soundscape and beautiful storytelling combine in this show about wellbeing and friendship, told from a child's perspective.

R Relaxed performance: Wed 25 October

Monster Island
Fri 27 - Sun 29 October
When young Lucas finds out he's not really a human, the news changes his whole world. He runs away to find his true home, taking him on a fabulously scary journey!

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pet Theatre performance, featuring rod puppets, shadow play and large-scale projections, Sun 8 Oct, Meole Brace Peace Memorial Hall, Shrewsbury

KING ARTHUR Michael Morpurgo's tale of magic, heroism, love and betrayal, Sun 8 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Dance

ALADDIN Birmingham Royal Ballet perform David Bintley's critically acclaimed adaptation of the famous story, Tues 3 - Sat 7 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

8 MINUTES Choreographer Alexander Whitley in collaboration with space scientists from STFC RAL Space, Tues 3 Oct, DanceXchange, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

AN EVENING OF DIRTY DANCING Fully choreographed celebration of the music from the iconic movie, Sat 7 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Talks

DAVID STARKEY: HENRY VIII THE FIRST BREXITEER Join David as he draws on his unique knowledge of Henry's reign to illuminate both the Tudor age and our own, Sun 1 Oct Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BACK IN TIME Kath Reynolds presents a series of talks which reflect a personal interest in people and social history, Tues 3 Oct, Middleport Pottery, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent

AN EVENING WITH AN IMMIGRANT Inua Ellams shares his personal story of immigration, from escaping fundamentalist Islam to drinking wine with the HM The Queen, Tues 3 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

JUST AN ORDINARY LAWYER Tunji Sowande, the first Black Head of Chambers before becoming the first (part-time) judge in Britain, muses on Imperialism, Colonialism and Black people's struggles for freedom, justice and human rights, Thurs 5 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

WAR STORIES WITH PETER SNOW & ANN MACMILLAN The husband-and-wife team present a fascinating, illustrated account of ordinary people swept up by the horror of war, Thurs 5 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

AN EVENING WITH BRYAN ROBSON The former England and Manchester United player talks about his life in football, Fri 6 Oct, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

STORIES CROSSING BORDERS: AN AFTERNOON WITH PREETI SHENOY Join one of India's most celebrated authors as she discusses her latest book, Sat 7 Oct, The Studio @ The REP, Birmingham

BARBARA TAYLOR: THE LAST ASYLUM Hear about Taylor's own experience of mental breakdown and healing, Sun 8 Oct, The Door at The REP, Birmingham

Film

DETROIT (15) Crime/History. Starring John Boyega, Anthony Mackie. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 6 & Thurs 12 Oct

SULLY (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Tom Hanks, Aaron Eckhart. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 2 Oct

NATURE OF THE BEAST (PG) Documentary. Starring Dennis Skinner. Stoke Film Theatre, Mon 2 Oct

LOGAN LUCKY (tbc) Comedy/Crime. Starring Channing Tatum, Adam Driver. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Mon 2 - Tues 3 Oct

FINAL PORTRAIT (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Armie Hammer, Geoffrey Rush. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 3 Oct

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO (12A) Documentary. Starring Samuel L. Jackson, James Baldwin. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 3 Oct

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS (U) Documentary. Starring Samuel L. Jackson, James Baldwin. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 3 Oct

HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING (U) Comedy/Musical. Starring Robert Morse, Michele Lee. Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke, Tues 3 Oct

HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD (15) Documentary. Starring Bill Darnell, David Garrick. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Wed 4 Oct

THE DARK TOWER (12A) Action/Adventure. Starring Idris Elba, Matthew McConaughey. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Wed 4 Oct

LA LA LAND (15) Comedy/Music. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone. Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Thurs 5 Oct

HOTEL SALVATION (PG) Comedy/Drama. Starring Adil Hussain, Lalit Behl. Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 5 Oct

TBORG/MCENROE (U) Biography/Drama. Starring Shia LaBeouf, Stellan Skarsgård. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 - Thurs 12 Oct

Fount

Airspace Project, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 5 November

Ceramic artists Elena Gileva and Mark Malarko here present their proposals for a replacement fountain for the city's Fountain Square. In creating their works, Elena and Mark have paid particular attention to the function, purpose and relevance of contemporary public fountains.
Fount is the fifth AirSpace Gallery exhibition to be held in partnership with the British Ceramics Biennial.

GOD'S OWN COUNTRY (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Josh O'Connor, Alec Secareanu. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 6 - Sun 15 Oct

WHO'S GONNA LOVE ME NOW? (15) Documentary. Starring Alon, London Gay Men's Chorus Band. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sat 7 Oct

WHILE YOU WEREN'T LOOKING (15) Drama. Starring Camilla Waldman, Sandi Schultz. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sat 7 Oct

TANGERINE (15) Drama/Comedy. Starring Kitana Kiki Rodriguez, Mya Taylor. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sat 7 Oct

THE SUMMER OF SANGAILE Drama. Starring Julija Steponaityte, Aiste Dirziute. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sun 8 Oct

SIGNATURE MOVE Drama/Comedy. Starring Fawzia Mirza, Shabana Azmi. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sun 8 Oct

THEO AND HUGO (18) Drama. Starring Geoffrey Couët, François Nambot. Foreign language, subtitled. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Sun 8 Oct

Events

BRIDAL FAYRE Showcasing everything needed for your special day, Sun 1 Oct, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

HARVEST FESTIVAL SERVICE Re-enactment of a traditional harvest festival service in the 1837 Darby Hand Chapel, Sun 1 Oct, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

HORSE OF THE YEAR SHOW Wed 4 - Sun 8 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

BBC FLOG IT! VALUATION DAY Thurs 5 Oct, RAF Cosford, Shifnal

OKTOBERFEST STOKE A traditional Bavarian bash, Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, Bet365 Stadium, Stoke-on-Trent

CODSALL BEER FESTIVAL Fri 6 - Sat 7 Oct, Codsall Village Hall

STONE FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL Complete with the Festival Farmers' Market on the Saturday, Fri 6 - Sun 8 Oct, Westbridge Park, Stone

SHROPSHIRE OKTOBERFEST Over 150 real ales, ciders, bubbles and more, served alongside live music, street food, a farmers' market, comedy club and masterclasses, Fri 6 - Sun 8 Oct, The Quarry Park, Shrewsbury

SCAREFEST Complete with spooks, frights, thrills, and remaining open until 9pm, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Oct, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

SOOTY'S BIRTHDAY BAKE-OFF Sat 7 - Sun 8 Oct, Cadbury World, B'ham

NIMROD TOURS Step on board the Nimrod and learn about its intelligence-gathering role in the Royal Air Force, Sat 7 - Sun 8 Oct, RAF Cosford, Shifnal, Shropshire

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SHOW HIGHLIGHTS

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CRYSTAL PALACE
+ SUPPORT THIS WINTER MACHINE

MON 2 OCT SOUTHERN ROCK LEGENDS
KENTUCKY HEADHUNTERS

TUE 3 OCT SYMPHONIC METAL FROM ITALY
SOUND STORM
+ SPECIAL GUESTS MIRRORMAZE

WED 4 OCT CLASSIC ARGUS ALBUM...
MARTIN TURNER
EX WISHBONE ASH

THU 5 OCT + SUPPORT GWYN ASHTON
LEGENDARY COLD CHISEL GUITARIST
IAN MOSS

FRI 6 OCT DOUBLE TRIBUTE
U2 vs SIMPLE MINDS
U2+1 vs ALIVE & KICKING UK

SAT 7 OCT
SOLD OUT

SUN 8 OCT CHARITY EVENT
TAKE A CHANCE
(ABBA)

MON 9 OCT + SPECIAL GUESTS REDLINE
SWEDISH ROCK VOCALIST
MARTINA EDOFF

TUE 10 OCT + HALF PAST FOUR (CANADA)
KARIBOW
(GERMANY)

WED 11 OCT DOUBLE HEADER
THE KITCHEN
COLLECTIVE + KHALIQ

THU 12 OCT
ANDY
FAIRWEATHER LOW
& THE LOW RIDERS

FRI 13 OCT WITH THE BLACK RHINO BAND
JAKE & ELWOOD
BLUES BROTHERS

SAT 14 OCT + SUPPORT SAVANNAH
THE JAM'D
WITH DJ TOMMY GUNN

SUN 15 OCT GENERAL PUBLIC ENTRY 10.30am
TOY & COLLECTORS
FAIR

SUN 15 OCT FROM HOLLAND PROG LEGENDS
FOCUS FEAT THIJS VAN LEER
+ SUPPORT THEBOOM

TUE 17 OCT + SUPPORT SAM SCHORR
WALTER TROUT

THU 19 OCT + SUPPORT BLACK WATER COUNTY
FOLK ROCK, POP, GYPSY JAZZ, BLUEGRASS...
MAD DOG MCREA

FRI 20 OCT SOUL & MOTOWN PARTY
SOUL'D OUT

SAT 21 OCT BCMA PRESENTS
THE VERY BEST OF
BRITISH CONCERT

SUN 22 OCT 11.30am - 3.00pm
RECORD & CD
FAIR

SUN 22 OCT
THE SOUTH
PLAYING THE MUSIC OF
THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

MON 23 OCT + SUPPORT HEAVY OIL
SKINNY MOLLY
FEAT MIKE ESTES (EX LYNYRD SKYNYRD)

TUE 24 OCT AN EVENING OF CLAIRVOYANCE
WITH FAMOUS PSYCHIC MEDIUM
PHILIP SOLOMON

WED 25 OCT FROM IRELAND
AWARD WINNING BLUES ARTIST
KAZ HAWKINS BAND

THU 26 OCT A NIGHT OF
ROXY MUSIC & BRYAN FERRY
ROXY MAGIC

FRI 27 OCT HEADBANGER HALLOWEEN
LIVE & LET ROCK
+ DEVILDRIVE, BITCHES CREED, THE NEW SAINTS

SAT 28 OCT + SUPPORT GUN ANNIE
Y & T

SUN 29 OCT ALL SEATED SHOW
JUDIE TZUKE
PEACE HAS BROKEN OUT TOUR

MON 30 OCT
ELECTUS
+ WAKEDOWN + SHYTHS + MICHAEL
PEDDARS

TUE 31 OCT + SUPPORT SON OF JOHN
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Gigs

LADY ANTEBELLUM Mon 9 Oct, Arena Birmingham

THE BIG MOON PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS Mon 9 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

GOOD LOVELIES Mon 9 Oct, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

THE XCERTS Mon 9 Oct, The Flapper, B'ham

NICK MULVEY Mon 9 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SUPERSUCKERS Mon 9 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARTINA EDOFF Mon 9 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

HEG & THE WOLF CHORUS Mon 9 Oct, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

KARIBOW Tues 10 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

SOUTHERN EMPIRE Tues 10 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

UNEVEN STRUCTURE Tues 10 Oct, The Flapper, Birmingham

ZERVAS AND PEPPER Tues 10 Oct, Kitchen Garden Cafe, B'ham

FLYTE Tues 10 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SUPERFOOD Wed 11 Oct, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

THE KITCHEN COLLECTIVE & KHALIQ Wed 11 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

THE SHEE Wed 11 Oct, mac, Birmingham

GARY NUMAN Wed 11 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CHURCHFITTERS Wed 11 Oct, The Red Lion Folk Club, B'ham

DRAGONFORCE Wed 11 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOE FOX Thurs 12 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MILES HUNT & ERICA NOCKALLS OF THE WONDER STUFF Thurs 12 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

MIKE SANCHEZ BAND Thurs 12 Oct, The Jam House, Birmingham

BROTHER STRUT Thurs 12 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

STILL REMAINS Thurs 12 Oct, The Flapper, Birmingham

DWEEZIL ZAPPA: 50 YEARS OF FRANK Thurs 12 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

YAK Thurs 12 Oct, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

JEFFREY LEWIS & LOS BOLTS Thurs 12 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW AND THE LOW RIDERS Thurs 12 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

JEHST Thurs 12 Oct, O2 Academy, B'ham

NEIL DIAMOND Fri 13 Oct, Arena B'ham

DIIO - A TRIBUTE TO RONNIE JAMES DIO Fri 13 Oct, Eleven, Sandyford, Stoke on Trent

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri 13 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BIG GINGER KID Fri 13 Oct The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

HOUSE OF JEALOUS LOVERS Fri 13 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LETS-HANG-ON Fri 13 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

THE MUSICAL BOX: THE BLACK SHOW Fri 13 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BEASTDOME: FOOTSTEPS Fri 13 Oct, The Bramall, Birmingham

THE ALARM Fri 13 Oct, O2 Academy, B'ham

LITTLE MIX Fri 13 Oct, Genting Arena, B'ham

LETHAL BIZZLE Fri 13 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JAKE & ELWOOD WITH THE BLACK RHINO BAND Fri 13 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

YOUNG PILGRIMS Sat 14 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

A FOREIGNERS JOURNEY Sat 14 Oct, Eleven, Stoke on Trent

LULU Sat 14 Oct, Theatr Hafren, Newtown, Powys

J. COLE Sat 14 Oct, Arena Birmingham

HMLTD Sat 14 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LEGENDS LIVE Sat 14 Oct, Genting Arena, Birmingham

DUA LIPA Sat 14 Oct, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE ROY ORBISON STORY Sat 14 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

BABY IN VAIN Sat 14 Oct, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ORGAN PROMS Sat 14 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

FILTH + RASCALTON Sat 14 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

GEM RECITALS - FOLK CONNECTIONS WITH DENNIS TJIOK. Sat 14 Oct, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

THE JAM'D Sat 14 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

ORGAN PROMS Sat 14 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ROY ORBISON STORY Sat 14 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

NEIL DIAMOND Sun 15 Oct, Genting Arena, Birmingham

ANDRÉ KRENGEL & ROLAND KRAUSE Sun 15 Oct, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

FOCUS FEAT THIJS VAN LEER Sun 15 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

THE PRETENDERS Sun 15 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JAZZ LUNCH Sun 15 Oct, The Cliffe at Dinham, Ludlow, Shropshire

Classical Music

CANADIAN BRASS Featuring Caleb Hudson & Chris Coletti (trumpets), Bernhard Scully (horn), Achilles Liarmakopoulos (trombone) & Chuck Daellenbach (tuba), Mon 9 Oct, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

THOMAS TROTTER LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT: BIRDS OF A FEATHER Mon 9 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

CEMPR Early Music Lecture - recitals: Natural horn with Anneke Scott, Mon 9 Oct, The Bramall, Birmingham

BEOWULF Featuring Armonico Consort & AC Academy Singers, Elin Manahan Thomas (soprano), Catrin Finch (harp), Toby Young (keyboards) and Christopher Monks (conductor), Tues 10 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Shropshire

RHYDIAN ROBERTS, RICHARD & ADAM Evening of classic arias & contemporary songs, Tues 10 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BASEL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Ivor Bolton (conductor) & Sol Gabetta (cello). Programme comprises Busoni's Lustepiel Overture Op 38, 8"; Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto, 19" & Beethoven's Symphony No 7, 36", Tues 10 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

SHOSTAKOVICH'S TWELFTH Featuring Vassily Sinaisky (conductor) & Simon Trp eski (piano). Programme comprises Beethoven's Fidelio: Overture, 6' & Piano Concerto No.5 (Emperor), 38' plus Shostakovich's Symphony No.12 (The Year 1917), 39', Wed 11 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MARIINSKY ORCHESTRA - SYMPHONIC DANCES Featuring Valery Gergiev (conductor) & Denis Matsuev (piano). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov's Suite from The Golden Cockeral, 25", Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No.2, 31" & Rachmaninoff's Symphonic Dances Op 45, 35", Thurs 12 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BAGATELLES AFTER BEETHOVEN: PRESTEIGNE FESTIVAL TOUR Featuring Tim Horton (piano). Programme features works by Beethoven & a set of newly commissioned Bagatelles, written to celebrate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Presteigne Festival, Fri 13 Oct, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Vassily Sinaisky (conductor) & Simon Trpčeski (piano). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Elgar, Fri 13 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

ZOE BEYERS: BACH BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 13 Oct, Methodist Church, Church Stretton, South Shropshire

EX CATHEDRA: BACH'S MAGNIFICAT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Elizabeth Adams, Katie Trethewey & Amy Wood (sopranos), Martha McLorinan (alto), Bradley Smith (tenor) & Greg Skidmore (bass), Sat 14 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ORGAN PROMS Sat 14 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE PEOPLE'S ORCHESTRA Performing live music from Harry Potter & The Prisoner of Azkaban, Games of Thrones, Lord of the Rings, Star Trek and many more... Sat 14 Oct, West Bromwich Town Hall

CWMACH MALE CHOIR Sat 14 Oct, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA - FANTASTIC SYMPHONY Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor), Sun 15 Oct, Elgar Concert Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor) & Michael Webb (clarinet). Programme includes works by Berlioz & Weber, Sun 15 Oct, The Bramall, Birmingham

Comedy

BARBARA NICE Sun 8 Oct, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

LEE NELSON Sun 8 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GREG DAVIES Mon 9 - Tues 10 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

WOODY ALLEN(ISH) Wed 11 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LARA A. KING, KAREN BAYLEY, LINDSEY SANTORO & MAUREEN YOUNGER Wed 11 Oct, Kitchen Garden Cafe, B'ham

ANDY PARSONS Wed 11 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

PAUL CHOWDHRY Thurs 12 Oct, Dudley Town Hall

IMPRACTICAL JOKERS Thurs 12 Oct, Arena Birmingham

ELLIE TAYLOR Thurs 12 Oct, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

ZOE LYONS, JONNY AWSUM Thurs 12 Oct, The Bramall, Birmingham

JOSH PUGH Thurs 12 Oct, mac, Birmingham

JO D'ARCY Thurs 12 Oct, mac, Birmingham

MATT PRICE, THE NOISE NEXT DOOR & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 12 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROBIN INCE Fri 13 Oct, Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield

GLENN WOOL, HARRIET DYER, JOSH PUGH & CHRIS PURCHASE Fri 13 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

MATT PRICE, GAVIN WEBSTER, ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN & COMIC TBC Fri 13 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CARL DONNELLY, PAUL MCCAFFERY, MANDY KNIGHT & COMIC TBC Fri 13 - Sat 14 Oct, The Comedy Loft, B'ham

JAYDE ADAMS Fri 13 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BEST OF BRUM COMEDY SHOWCASE # 2 FEATURING STU WOODINGS, GARETH BERLINER, DANNY CLIVES, MASAI GRAHAM, EMILY BROOKS & JOSHUA JACKSON Fri 13 Oct, Cherry Reds Cafe-Bar, Birmingham

ANDREW LAWRENCE Fri 13 Oct, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

MATT PRICE, GAVIN WEBSTER, ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN & GORDON SOUTHERN Sat 14 Oct, The Glee Club, B'ham

JARLATH REGAN, ALLYSON SMITH & JOHN PEARSON Sat 14 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, Birmingham

JOHN HEGLEY Sat 14 Oct, mac, Birmingham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 14 Oct, The Old Post Office, Burton-upon-Trent

MATT LUCAS Sat 14 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

SIMON AMSTELL Sun 15 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

SIMON DAY Sun 15 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

A TALE OF TWO CHIPPIES Little Earthquake draw upon real-life stories of integration and isolation, harmony & hostility, to explore what it means for Eastern Europeans to make a home in 'the wild West Midlands', Mon 9 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

FREEMAN Play inspired by the true story of a black man put on trial in 19th century New York whose case was the first in America to use 'insanity' as a defence, Mon 9 - Tues 10 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

HAIRSPRAY Starring Brenda Edwards and Norman Pace, Mon 9 - Sat 14 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

BAD GIRLS THE MUSICAL Original British musical based on characters from the award-winning and hugely popular television drama, Tues 10 - Wed 11 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SON OF A PREACHER MAN Diane Vickers, Debra Stephenson & Ian Reddington star in a new musical featuring the greatest hits of Dusty Springfield, Man Tues 10 - Sat 14 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

WAIT UNTIL DARK Jack Ellis (Bad Girls/Prime Suspect) & Oliver Mellor (Coronation Street) star in a new staging of Frederick Knott's thriller, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

CILLA THE MUSICAL Musical telling the story of the young girl from Liverpool whose teenage dreams of stardom led to her becoming one of Britain's best-loved entertainers, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Oct, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

SPAMALOT Amateur production presented by South Staffs Musical Theatre Company, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PRIVATE PEACEFUL New version of Michael Morpurgo's classic tale, Tues 10 - Sat 14 Oct, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

TAKING STEPS Alan Ayckbourn farce about a tongue-tied solicitor sent to oversee the sale of a large and crumbling house, reputedly a haunted former brothel..., Tues 10 - Sat 28 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE SIX WIVES OF HENRY VIII Living Spit present an ill-researched lesson in Tudor history... Wed 11 Oct, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

CAT WEATHERILL - THE KING OF DENMARK'S SON & OTHER TALES Storytelling nights for grown-ups, Wed 11 Oct, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

FRANKENSTEIN Ambient Night Productions presents its version of the classic Gothic tale, Wed 11 - Thurs 12 Oct, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

Son Of A Preacher Man - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

HOLY DAY Birmingham School of Acting present a chilling tale set in the Australian outback, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Oct, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

5 LESBIANS EATING A QUICHE Will the Sisters of Gertrude Stein be able to keep their cool when the Communists threaten their idyllic town? Wed 11 - Sun 15 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

DIRTY LAUNDRY Claybody Theatre present Deborah McAndrew's environmentally-conscious play, set in a potter's house in 1950s Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 11 - Sat 21 Oct, Spode Works Visitor Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

LET'S TWIST AGAIN Nostalgia show reliving the fun, laughter and music of the rock'n'roll era, Thurs 12 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BLOODY BLOODY ANDREW JACKSON Birmingham School of Acting present the British premiere of the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical - a satirical and irreverent comedy with a 'killer rock' score, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Oct, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WOMEN World premiere of Alan Ayckbourn's romantic comedy, Thurs 12 - Sat 28 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Music, mirth and merriment with Dandy, Ian 'Sludge' Lees, The Empty Can, Bev Pegg & Jess Silk, Fri 13 Oct, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

INSTRUCTIONS FOR BORDER CROSSING Political thriller written and performed by Daniel Bye, Fri 13 Oct, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

TRES TRES CABARET Evening of 'saucy decadence', Fri 13 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

IDLE WOMEN OF THE WARTIME WATERWAYS Alarum Theatre present a double bill of theatre, poetry and music, whisking audiences back to the days of World War II, when a shortage of crews to keep the working boats going brought a new breed of boater to the canal, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Oct, Oldbury Rep

BILMANKHWE: THE TEMPEST Urban production of Shakespeare's last play, featuring contemporary African dance choreography, Sat 14 Oct, mac, Birmingham

JANE EYRE - AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY One-woman show, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

TALES OF BIRBAL Using humour, puppetry, music and the occasional fake beard, Mashi and Bhanji bring to life timeless and treasured fables from the Indian sub-continent, Sun 15 Oct, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

PRISCILLA QUEEN OF THE DESERT - THE MUSICAL Performed by Stourbridge Amateur Operatic Society, Sun 15 - Sat 21 Oct, Stourbridge Town Hall

Dance

ZERO Humanhood merge surround sound/music, intricate lights, original costume, textured set design and mesmerising movement, Tues 10 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SKIN 201 Dance Company use hip-hop to explore a boy's journey through gender transition, Wed 11 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

MI FLAMENCO: INCOGNITO A show with 'the spirit of authentic, pulsating flamenco', Thurs 12 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE HEAD WRAP DIARIES Uchenna Dance present an interactive show about people and their ongoing relationship with hair, Thurs 12 Oct, SpArC, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

TWO FOLD Contact Dance Company explore themes of connection and separation,, Fri 13 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE HEAD WRAP DIARIES Uchenna Dance present an interactive show about people and their ongoing relationship with hair, Fri 13 Oct, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

5 SOLDIERS: THE BODY IS THE FRONTLINE Award-winning portrait of army life by Rosie Kay's dance company, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Oct, The REP, B'ham

SWAN LAKE The Russian State Ballet & Opera House presents its version of the much-loved story of Odette & Odile, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROMEO & JULIET The Russian State Ballet & Opera House presents its version of 'the world's greatest love story', Sun 15 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TAP FACTORY Rhythm-based production described as 'Tap Dogs meets Stomp', Sun 15 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Talks

GORDON BUCHANAN: ANIMAL FAMILIES & ME The BBC TV wildlife presenter and cameraman shares stories of the natural world, Mon 9 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

STORIES CROSSING BORDERS: CHINELO OKPARANTA IN CONVERSATION Join Chinelo as she discusses identity, the testing of faith and the uncovering of histories through the personal journeys of her characters, Mon 9 Oct, The Studio @ The REP, Birmingham

MARK RADCLIFFE - SHOULD YOU BE INTERESTED Songs and stories of middle-aged angst, Tues 10 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ADVENTURES IN POETRY: BRUM STANZA FESTIVAL SPECIAL Roz Goddard talks to poet Wayne Holloway-Smith, Tues 10 Oct, Waterstones, Birmingham

TOLKIEN'S OLD WORCESTERSHIRE AND OXFORD Illustrated talk covering JRR Tolkien's life, Thurs 12 Oct, Selly Manor, Bournville, Birmingham

KAMILA SHAMSIE: HOME FIRE Join the Pakistani author as she talks about her new novel, which tells the heartbreaking tale of two British Muslim families with differing ideas about loyalty to the state, Thurs 12 Oct, The Studio @ The REP, Birmingham

WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITES Join the House Steward for a relaxed talk followed by a walking tour of the collection, featuring work by such artists as Evelyn De Morgan, Lizzie Siddal and Lucy Madox Brown, Sat 14 Oct, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

JACKIE MORRIS: THE LOST WORDS Discussion about the lost words of our childhood and the intoxicating magic of language, Sat 14 Oct, The Studio @ The REP, Birmingham

HOLLIE MCNISH Join Holly as she reads from and chats about her new collection, Plum, Sun 15 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

JACKIE (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Natalie Portman, Peter Sarsgaard. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 9 Oct

INSYRIATED (15) Drama. Starring Hiam Abbass, Diamand Bou Abboud. Foreign language, subtitled. Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 9 & Thurs 12 Oct; Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 10 Oct

THE HANDMAIDEN (18) Crime/Mystery. Starring Min-hee Kim, Jung-woo Ha. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 10 Oct

A MAN CALLED OVE (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring Rolf Lassgård, Bahar Parsk. Foreign language, subtitled. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 10 Oct

GOD'S OWN COUNTRY (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Josh O'Connor, Alec Secareanu. Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 12 Oct

DETROIT (15) Crime/History. Starring John Boyega, Anthony Mackie. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Oct

GOODBYE CHRISTOPHER ROBIN (PG) Biography/Family. Starring Margot Robbie, Domhnall Gleeson. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 13 - Thurs 26 Oct

VICTORIA & ABDUL (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Judi Dench, Adeel Akhtar. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 13, Mon 16 - Wed 19 Oct

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 13 Oct, showing at selected cinemas

DOUBLE DATE (tbc)

HELLRAISER (18)

LOVING VINCENT (15)

THE LEGO NINJAGO MOVIE (tbc)

THE PARTY (tbc)

THE RITUAL (15)

THE SNOWMAN (tbc)

Legacies: JMW Turner And Contemporary Art Practice

The New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 14 January

This major new exhibition - reflecting the ongoing legacy of JMW Turner through the lens of contemporary art - features oil paintings, sketchbooks and watercolours from the Turner Bequest. These are presented alongside pieces by significant 21st century practitioners - artists whose work has either been inspired by Turner or which explores themes and subjects connected to his output.

The show includes Turner's first exhibited oil, Fisherman At Sea (1796).

Events

GRAND DESIGNS LIVE Wed 11 - Sun 15 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

PHOTOGRAPHY WALK Spend the morning familiarising yourself with the basics of photography, Thurs 12 Oct, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Stafford

BEHIND THE SCENES TOURS Sat 14 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

DIWALI Discover the story of Diwali via traditional music, dance and craft activities, Sat 14 Oct, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Hanley

CRAFT BEER FESTIVAL Sat 14 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SPOOKLEY PUMPKIN FESTIVAL Family-friendly alternative to Halloween, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Apley Farm Shop, Norton

SCAREFEST Compete with spooks, frights, thrills, and remaining open until 9pm, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Alton Towers, Staffordshire

ATTINGHAM HARVEST: DEER RUT WALKS Learn about the fallow deer herd and watch the rut in progress as the deer look for mates, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

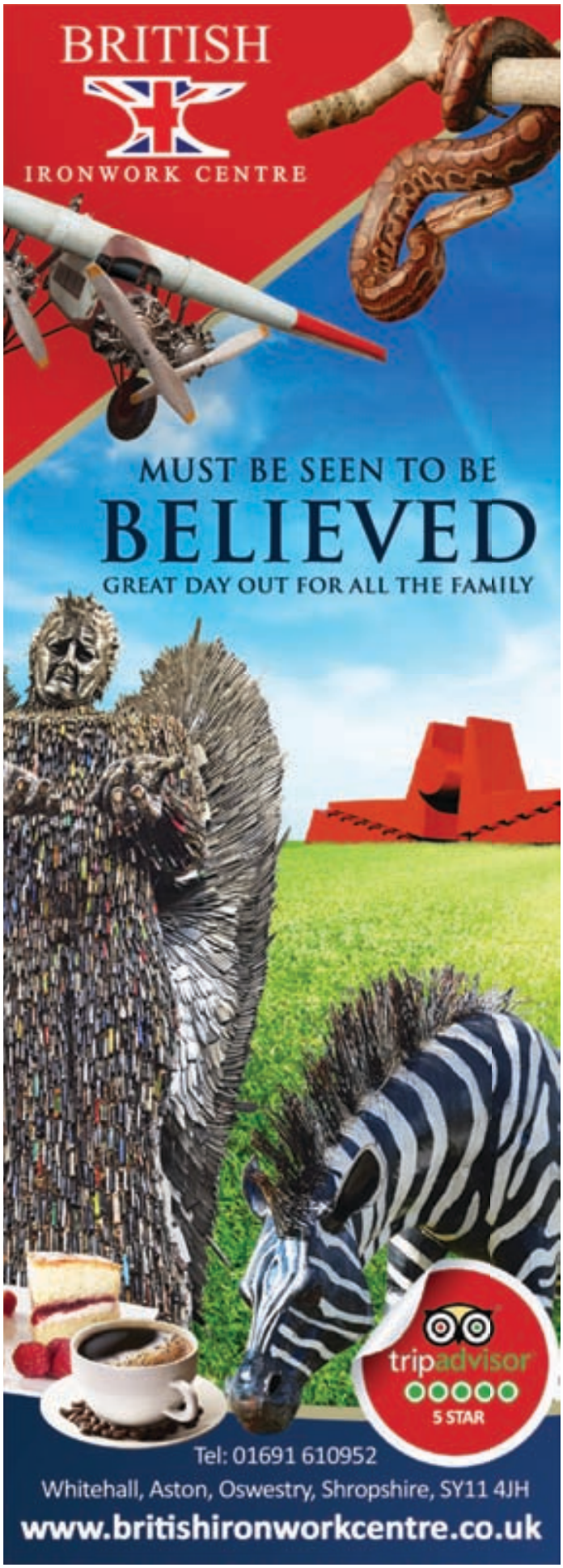
HISTORIC LIGHTING WEEKEND Learn about how we moved from candlelight to electric lamps, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

CHARACTER WEEKEND Pose for photographs alongside Freddo, Caramel Bunny or friends as they meet and greet visitors, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Oct, Cadbury World, Birmingham

MORE TREAT THAN TRICK Prepare for some spine-tingling fun, Sat 14 - Thurs 26 Oct, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

TUNNEL TEDS Bring along your furry friend for a day of bear-themed fun on and around the canal, Sun 15 Oct, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

WEDDING OPEN DAY View the venue, speak to catering managers and chat to the registrars, Sun 15 Oct, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley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Tickets: £8, £6 adv
14th Oct, 12pm
GEM Recitals
English Folk Songs
Tickets: £5
19th Oct, 8pm
Phill Jupitus: Juplicity
Tickets: £15
26th Oct, 4pm
Pangottic Circus Theatre: Pang On!
Tickets: £6, £20 (family of 4)
7th Nov, 7.30pm
Actors of Dionysus: Antigone
Tickets: £12, £10 conc, £5 student
8th Nov, 7pm
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Gigs

SHANE FILAN Mon 16 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

PALE WAVES Mon 16 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KING OF POP – THE LEGEND CONTINUES… Mon 16 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

MICHAEL KIWANUKA Mon 16 Oct, Symphony Hall, B'ham

MELLOW GANG, NONSUCH & CROP CIRCLES Tues 17 Oct, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

THE ESKIES Tues 17 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MARC ALMOND Tues 17 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MILES HUNT & ERICA NOCKALLS Tues 17 Oct, The Glee Club, B'ham

WALTER TROUT Tues 17 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

STARSAILOR Tues 17 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LUCA STRICAGNOLI Wed 18 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JUSTIN CURRIE & THE PALLBEARERS Wed 18 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SEETHER Wed 18 Oct, O2 Institute, B'ham

MATTHEW E. WHITE Wed 18 Oct, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

GREG RUSSELL & CIARAN ALGAR Wed 18 Oct, The Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

STONE FOUNDATION Wed 18 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOHN MAYALL Thurs 19 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CLEAN CUT KID Thurs 19 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE WATERBOYS Thurs 19 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE NIGHTINGALES, FUZZBOX & TED CHIPPINGTON Thurs 19 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

O'HOOLEY AND TIDOW Thurs 19 Oct, Kitchen Garden Cafe, B'ham

MAD DOG MCREA Thurs 19 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

COLLIE BUDDZ Thurs 19 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROACHFORD Fri 20 Oct, O2 Academy, B'ham

BECKY HILL Fri 20 Oct, O2 Institute, B'ham

DIZZEE RASCAL Fri 20 Oct, O2 Academy, Birminghan

LED INTO ZEPPLIN Fri 20 Oct, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE VOICES OF ABBA Fri 20 Oct, National Brewery Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

TIM AMMAN X-TET Fri 20 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SOUL'D OUT Fri 20 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

AC/DC UK Fri 20 Oct, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

W.A.S.P Fri 20 Oct, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton,

GABRIELLE APLIN Fri 20 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CLONE ROSES Fri 20 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE BLUES BAND Fri 20 Oct, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

MAGIC Fri 20 - Sat 21 Oct, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

PLACEBO Sat 21 Oct, Civic Hall, W'hampton

THE YOUNG'UNS Sat 21 Oct, mac, Birmingham

THE VERY BEST OF BRITISH CONCERT Sat 21 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

JOHN MAYALL Sat 21 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

RAINBOW RISING Sat 21 Oct, Eleven, Stoke on Trent

THE KAR-PETS Sat 21 Oct, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

ABBA MANIA Sat 21 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

TRAIN Sat 21 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TOO MANY T'S Sat 21 Oct, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

HUGH CORNWELL Sat 21 Oct, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

THE SOUTHMARTINS Sat 21 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TIGERCUB Sat 21 Oct, The Flapper, B'ham

METRONOMY Sat 21 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT Sun 22 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MARLEY REPRISED Sun 22 Oct, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

CLEAN CUT KID Sun 22 Oct, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

THE SOUTH: EX THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH Sun 22 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

BANKS Sun 22 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MEAT LOUD Sun 22 Oct, Lichfield Guildhall

T-REXTASY Sun 22 Oct, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

Classical Music

BRILLIANT BRAHMS - CBSO BENEVOLENT FUND CONCERT Featuring Alpesh Chauhan (Conductor), Nicola Benedetti (Violin), Leonard Elschenbroich (Cello). Programme comprises Brahms' Three Hungarian Dances, 12'; Double Concerto, 31" & Symphony No. 3, 37", Wed 18 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BEETHOVEN TRIO Featuring John Thwaites (Piano), Jonathan Martindale (violin), Michael Jenkinson (viola), Helen Edgar (cello), Oliver James (clarinet) & Elspeth Dutch (horn). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Dohnányi, Thurs 19 Oct, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

CBSO: CLASSIC FM SMOOTH CLASSICS Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Michael Seal (conductor) & John Brunning (presenter). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Barber, Debussy, Mendelssohn, Grieg, Bizet, Rachmaninov, Massenet, Elgar, J S Bach & Borodin, Fri 20 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RICHARD JENKINSON & ALEXANDER BOYD LUNCHTIME CONCERT Programme comprises Kodály's Sonata Op.4 & Rachmaninov's Sonata in G minor, Fri 20 Oct, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

KARL JENKINS - THE ARMED MAN Featuring the Manchester Concert Orchestra, Sir Karl Jenkins (conductor), Manchester Chorale, Joo Yeon Sir (violin) & Kathryn Rudge (mezzo-soprano), Sat 21 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: MYTHS AND LEGENDS Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; Jonathan Bloxham (conductor) & Tom Redmond (presenter). Programme includes works by John Williams, Wagner, Sibelius, Copland, John Williams & Stravinsky, Sun 22 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY! Mon 16 Oct, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

DANNY BHOY TUES 17 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

BRIAN GITTINS Wed 18 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAN RAVENS Thurs 19 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

DAVID TRENT, JOSH PUGH & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 19 Oct, The Glee Club, B'ham

LUISA OMIELAN Thurs 19 Oct, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

MATT REED, DAMIAN CLARK, LEO KEARSE & COMIC TBC Fri 20 - Sat 21 Oct, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

DAVID TRENT, JOSH PUGH, IAN MOORE & BRUCE DEVLIN Fri 20 - Sat 21 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SULLY O'SULLIVAN & NIGE Sat 21 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, B'ham

ROB ROUSE, MARK SMITH, TOM WARD & DAMION LARKIN Sat 21 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

HARDEEP SINGH KOHLI Sat 21 Oct, Roundabout, Stoke-on-Trent

SEANN WALSH, PATRICK MONAHAN, VINCE ATTA, JAKE LAMBERT & WAYNE BEESE Sat 21 Oct, Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Dudley

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 21 Oct, The Old Post Office, Burton-upon-Trent

ANDREW LAWRENCE Sun 22 Oct, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

Theatre

DOREEN: RISE OF THE YAM YAM Join the What's On Personality Of The Year as she sets out to challenge Darwin's Theory of Evolution... Mon 16 Oct, Prince of Wales Centre, Cannock

FRANKENSHOW A 'lo-fi monstrosity of epic proportions', Tues 17 Oct, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE CRIMSON COBBLES Quirky show in which Holmes stalks Jack the Ripper, Tues 17 Oct, Tamworth Arts Centre, Staffs

OUR HOUSE A Sutton Coldfield Musical Theatre Company production, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

SISTER ACT Amateur staging by Musical Theatre Stafford Tues 17 - Sat 21 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

KICK IN THE BAUBLES Get set for a car-crash Christmas, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

THE ADDAMS FAMILY Samantha Womack, Les Dennis and Carrie Hope Fletcher star in this stage version of the cult TV series, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

OBAMA AND ME One-woman show that explores the meaning of identity,

politics, power and belonging in the post-post-racial 21st century, Wed 18 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

MURDER BY GASLIGHT Don't Go Into The Cellar Theatre Company present a ghoulish evening with two infamous poisoners, Wed 18 Oct, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

OKLAHOMA! Presented by Telford & District Light Operatic Players (TADLOP), Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

PRESENT LAUGHTER Mad Cow Productions present an amateur staging of Noel Coward's farce, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MACHINAL Birmingham School of Acting presents its version of Sophie Treadwell's modern classic, based on the true story of American murderer Ruth Snyder, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

NORMA Midland Opera Company presents its production of Bellini's masterpiece, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, The Old Rep, Birmingham

BEDLAM - I HAD A BLACK DOG Comic story of survival, based on the book of the same name, Thurs 19 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

QUARTER LIFE CRISIS Movement 89 Productions explore what it means to be an adult, Thurs 19 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

HENCEFORWARD Amateur staging of Alan Ayckbourn's classic comedy, Thurs 19 Oct, The Belfrey Theatre, Wellington, Shropshire

BLACK MOUNTAIN Tense psychological thriller about betrayal and forgiveness... Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Oct, Roundabout, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

THE RAMSHACKLE HOUSE Upswing Aerial Theatre Company present a physical comedy about a family tumbling, balancing and flying as they try to hold their home together, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Oct, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

HI-DE-HI Amateur adaptation of the popular TV series, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Oct, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL Jars of Clay Theatre present a heart warming tale, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Oct, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE MASKS OF APHRA BEHN Thought-provoking one-woman show which brings to life one of theatre's most brilliant raconteurs, Fri 20 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

OUT OF LOVE Paines Plough present a tale of friendship, love and rivalry, Fri 20 Oct, Roundabout, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

BEDLAM - MY BEAUTIFUL BLACK DOG Poetically wild musical exploring the beauteous complexity of our fragile minds, Fri 20 Oct, The REP, B'ham

FORGET ME NOT - THE ALZHEIMER'S WHODUNNIT One-man show from comic, poet & psychiatric nurse Rob Gee, Fri 20 Oct, Clungunford Parish Hall, Nr Craven Arms, South Shropshire

FRANKENSTEIN 1899 Don't Go Into The Cellar present a unique reimagining of the classic Gothic horror, Fri 20 Oct, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

NATIVITY! THE MUSICAL Major new stage adaptation based on the film of the same name, Fri 20 Oct - Sun 12 Nov, The REP, Birmingham

NOTORIOUS The Famous Lauren Barri Holstein contemplates representations of women, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

BEDLAM: HEARING THINGS Provocative drama exploring the dilemmas of psychiatry from the points of view of patients, relatives and staff, Sat 21 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

POPE HEAD: THE SECRET LIFE OF FRANCIS BACON A dark, comedic drama exploring the life, art, sexuality, psyche and philosophies of artist Francis Bacon, Sat 21 Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CLAPPER BOX Quirky adaptations of favourite movies using puppetry and the imagination, Sat 21 Oct, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LORE OF AVERAGES Treefrog Theatre Company take a light-hearted look at what happens when stories from the distant past are brought into the present day, Sat 21 Oct, mac, B'ham

FORGET ME NOT - THE ALZHEIMER'S WHODUNNIT One-man show from comic, poet and psychiatric nurse Rob Gee, Sat 21 Oct, Chelmarsh Village Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

TEECHERS Starcross Youth Theatre present an amateur staging of John Godber's comedy, Sat 21 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

HOW TO BE A KID Join Molly, Joe and her nan for a larger-than-life story of family, friends and fitting in. Contains dancing, chocolate cake and an epic car chase! For ages seven-plus. Sat 21 - Sun 22 Oct, Roundabout, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

MULTIVERSE UK premiere in which Louis Vanhaverbeke is a multifunctional disc-jockey with a set of odd props. Forms part of the Fierce Festival 2017, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Oct, mac, Birmingham

OUT OF LOVE A tale of friendship, love and rivalry over 30 years, Sun 22 Oct, Roundabout, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

DOREEN: RISE OF THE YAM YAM Join the What's On Personality Of The Year as she sets out to challenge Darwin's Theory of Evolution... Sun 22 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DISCOVERY DAY: BEDLAM SHOWCASE Innovative local companies showcase groundbreaking work, Sun 22 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

Kids shows

AWFUL AUNTIE Staging of David Walliams' tale of frights, fights and friendship, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DISNEY ON ICE: PASSPORT TO ADVENTURE Journey to the timeless worlds of The Lion King, The Little Mermaid, Peter Pan and Frozen, Wed 18 - Sun 29 Oct, Arena Birmingham

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Box Tale Soup present a new version of Kenneth Grahame's much-loved classic, Fri 20 Oct, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

Dance

A POSITIVE LIFE An immersive theatre experience featuring dance, physical theatre and spoken word, Tues 17 Oct, mac, Birmingham

ACOSTA DANZA Featuring new and existing pieces by Cuban choreographers and newly commissioned work by international choreographers taking inspiration from their native countries, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

I RIDE IN COLOUR AND SOFT FOCUS, NO LONGER ANYWHERE Choreography that prioritises density over going anywhere, noise over silence, now over yesterday and pleasure over doing it right. Presented as part of Fierce Festival, Thurs 19 Oct, mac, Birmingham

PILGRIM A physical journey through the mystical sound scores created by electronic musician James Holden. Presented as part of Fierce Festival, Fri 20 Oct, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

HIGHER Michele Rizzo explores the cathartic power of dance, as a form of prayer and celebration of existence. UK premiere presented as part of Fierce Festival, Sat 21 Oct, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

Talks

FRIENDS' TALK: LORD BYRON IN LONDON Wed 18 Oct, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

HEADZ 20 Stories High offer an insight into the lives of Liverpool's young people through a series of contemporary urban monologues, Thurs 19 Oct, mac, Birmingham

MEL NICHOLLS: PARALYMPIAN & ADVENTURE STORYTELLER Join Mel as she talks about her ambitions for her sporting future, her love of adventure and her desire to push boundaries, Thurs 19 Oct, The Roses, Kidderminster

THE LIFE OF MAY MORRIS Join the House Steward for a relaxed talk followed by a walking tour of the collection, Sat 21 Oct, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

AN EVENING WITH AGGERS & BUMBLE Cricket commentators Jonathan Agnew and David 'Bumble' Lloyd team up, Sun 22 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ARLENE! THE GLITZ. THE GLAMOUR. THE GOSSIP Join Arlene Phillips as she talks about her lifetime in dance, Sun 22 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

VICEROY'S HOUSE (PG)
Biography/Drama. Starring Gillian Anderson, Michael Gambon, Hugh Bonneville. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 16 Oct

20TH CENTURY WOMEN (15)
Comedy/Drama. Starring Annette Bening, Elle Fanning. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shrop-

shire, Mon 16 Oct

LOVING (12A) Biography/Drama. Starring Ruth Negga, Joel Edgerton. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 17 Oct

EARTH: ONE AMAZING DAY (U) Documentary. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 Oct

BRIMSTONE (18) Thriller/Western. Starring Carice van Houten, Kit Harington. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 20 - Thurs 26 Oct

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 20 Oct, showing at selected cinemas

EARTH: ONE AMAZING DAY (U)

GEOSTORM (12a)

HAPPY DEATH DAY (tbc)

JUNGLE (15)

MARSHALL (15)

MY LITTLE PONY, THE MOVIE (tbc)

THE DEATH OF STALIN (15)

Events

THE MOTORHOME AND CARAVAN SHOW Snap up the most up-to-date accessories and gadgets, Tues 17 - Sun 22 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

GIN JAMBOREE Craft distillers and expert bartenders mix amongst the crowds, offering samples and explaining why their gin or mix is so special, Fri 20 Oct, Shrewsbury School

CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL Featuring music, entertainment, and food stalls selling a range of indulgent and unusual treats, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Oct, Brindleyplace, Birmingham

A WEEKEND OF WORDS Featuring an eclectic array of authors, musicians, actors & comedians - including Shappi Khorsandi, Julian Glover, Peter Snow and Andy Hamilton, Fri 20 - Sun 22 Oct, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

SCAREFEST Complete with spooks, frights, thrills, and remaining open until 9pm, Fri 20 - Tues 31 Oct, Alton Towers, Staffs

MURDER-MYSTERY EVENING Sat 21 Oct, The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury

DIVE 2017 The UK's biggest event for scuba divers, Sat 21 - Sun 22 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

VICTORIAN HALLOWEEN The residents of Blists Hill Victorian Town celebrate Halloween in traditional style, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Blists Hill, Ironbridge

SPOOKLEY PUMPKIN FESTIVAL Family-friendly alternative to Halloween, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Apley Farm Shop, Norton, Nr Shifnal, Shropshire

SPOOKY CREATURES OF ATTINGHAM WOOD TRAIL Explore the grounds via a spooky family trail, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR Help Witchy Woo Woo and Wolfman beat cheating villain Franky Frankenstein, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Cadbury World, Birmingham

NIMROD TOURS Step on board the Nimrod and learn about its intelligence-gathering role in the Royal Air Force, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, RAF Cosford, Shifnal

OCTOBER HALF-TERM Explore the estate on the pumpkin trails and sample a seasonal recipe in one of the tea rooms, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Shugborough Historic Working Estate, Staffordshire

SPOOKY TALES AND CRAFT Frightening fun, have-a-go crafts and spooky stories, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Stokesay Castle, Nr Craven Arms, South Shropshire

FOUL FOODS - HALF-TERM ACTIVITIES Become a Victorian food detective and help separate foul foods from tasty treats, Sat 21 - Sun 29 Oct, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

Gigs

STRANGE BONES Mon 23 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

IRIT Mon 23 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LONDON GRAMMAR Mon 23 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MARMOZETS Mon 23 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SKINNY MOLLY Mon 23 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

CHARLOTTE CARPENTER WITH AUTUMN EVANS Mon 23 Oct, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

RALPH MCTELL Tues 24 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

RAYMOND FROGGATT Tues 24, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

LULU Wed 25 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Wed 25 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

EMELI SANDÉ Wed 25 Oct, Genting Arena, Birmingham

LOUIS BERRY Wed 25 Oct, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

KAZ HAWKINS BAND (BH) Wed 25 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

THE KAZ HAWKINS BAND Wed 25 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

THE SENSATIONAL 60S EXPERIENCE Thurs 26 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LIAM FRAY Thurs 26 Oct, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

LES MCKEOWNS BAY CITY ROLLERS Thurs 26 Oct, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

KIOKO Thurs 26 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ROXY MAGIC Thurs 26 Oct, The Robin, Wolverhampton

SHOW OF HANDS: THE CATHEDRALS TOUR Thurs 26 Oct, St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

FAIRPORT CONVENTION Thurs 26 Oct, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, Ludlow, South Shropshire

SLEAFORD MODS Thurs 26 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ULRICH SCHNAUSS Thurs 26 Oct, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

ROXY MAGIC Thurs 26 Oct,The Robin, Bilston

POWER QUEST Fri 27 Oct, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

BRANDY CLARK Fri 27 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

WEEZER Fri 27 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Fri 27 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TIMMY TRUMPET Fri 27 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Fri 27 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

FOZZY Fri 27 Oct, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE PIGEON DETECTIVES Fri 27 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BACK:N:BLACK Fri 27 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

LULU Sat 28 Oct, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

BELLA HARDY Sat 28 Oct, The Hive, Shrewsbury

Bella Hardy - The Hive, Shrewsbury

Y&T Sat 28 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

DR HOOK FEATURING DENNIS LOCORRIERE Sat 28 Oct, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

ERIC BENÉT Sat 28 Oct, O2 Institute, B'ham

SAX IN THE CITY Sat 28 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JEAN GENIE - TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE Sat 28 Oct, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

O'HOOLEY AND TIDOW Sat 28 Oct, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

BUGZY MALONE Sat 28 Oct, O2 Institute, B'ham

DECLAN MCKENNA Sat 28 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

LULU Sun 29 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BLAIR DUNLOP & SPECIAL GUEST BROOKE SHARKEY Sun 29 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

JUDIE TZUKE Sun 29 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

SKINNY MOLLY Sun 29 Oct, Lichfield Guildhall

JOSE JAMES Mon 30 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

METALLICA Mon 30 Oct, Genting Arena, B'ham

BLAIR DUNLOP & SPECIAL GUEST BROOKE SHARKEY Mon 30 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PP ARNOLD Mon 30 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire

AILBHE REDDY Mon 30 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

AKON WITH KONVICT KARTEL Mon 30 Oct, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ELECTUS Mon 30 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

JASON ISBELL AND THE 400 UNIT Tues 31 Oct, Symphony Hall, B'ham

GHOSTPOET Tues 31 Oct, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

HARRY MANX Tues 31 Oct, The Robin, Bilston

DJ FORMAT & ABDOMINAL Tues 31 Oct, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by J S Bach, Dowland, Francaix & Reubke, Mon 23 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

QUATUOR VAN KUIJK The French String Quartet present works by Haydn, Janácek, Édith Canat de Chizy & Ravel, Mon 23 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: VERDI'S REQUIEM Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Edward Gardner (conductor), Tamara Wilson (soprano), Karen Cargill (mezzo soprano), Gwyn Hughes Jones (tenor), Brindley Sherratt (bass) & the CBSO Chorus, Wed 25 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN Featuring David Curtis (conductor) & Julian Bliss (clarinet). Programme includes Rossini's The Barber Of Seville (Overture), Weber's Clarinet Concerto No 2 in E-flat major & Beethoven's Symphony No.8 in F Major, Wed 25 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

LONDON MOZART PLAYERS Featuring Joo Yeon Sir (violin). Programme includes works by Grieg, Mendelssohn, Rossini & Dvorak, Sat 28 Oct, Holy Trinity Church, Oswestry, North Shropshire

EUROPEAN UNION CHAMBER ORCHESTRA Featuring soloists from the orchestra and guest harpsichordist, Steven Devine. Programme includes Handel's Concerto Grosso Op. 6 No.7; Haydn's Concerto for violin with Harpsichord; Mozart's Divertimento in F; JS Bach's Harpsichord concerto in D minor & Telemann's Polish Concerto, Sat 28 Oct, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA: SPANISH FIESTA Featuring Mirga Gražinyt-Tyla (conductor) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Debussy, Bizet & Falla, Sun 29 Oct, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DAME MITSUKO UCHIDA: SCHUBERT SONATAS Dame Mitsuko Uchida plays the piano sonatas of Schubert including Sontata in B major D 575, 25'; Sonata in A minor D845, 30" & Sonata in D major D 850, 39", Mon 30 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

HALLOWEEN SILENT MOVIE SPECIAL Nigel Ogden performs a double-bill of classics on the organ comprising the score from Frankenstein & Nosferatu, Tues 31 Oct, Birmingham Town Hall

Comedy

JOE LYCETT, DALISO CHAPONDA, JEN BRISTER & ANDY ROBINSON Wed 25 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED GAMBLE Thurs 26 Oct, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

TOM STADE THURS 26 Oct, Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

MARC JENNINGS, THOMAS RACKHAM & ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN Thurs 26 Oct, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

LARRY DEAN, NIGEL NG & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 26 Oct The Glee Club, Birmingham

RUBY WAX Fri 27 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DAMIAN CLARK, DAVID WARD Fri 27 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, B'ham

ADAM BLOOM, IAN BOLDSWORTH, ANDREW RYAN & COMIC TBC Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, The Comedy Loft, B'ham

ANDY ROBINSON, LARRY DEAN, MICHAEL LEGGE & GORDON SOUTHERN Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, The Glee Club, B'ham

ALI COOK Sat 28 Oct, mac, B'ham

DAMIAN CLARK, DAVID WARD Sat 28 Oct, Jongleurs Comedy Club, B'ham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 28 Oct, The Old Post Office, Burton-upon-Trent

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 28 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PATRICK MONAHAN, PRINCE ABDI, KAE KURD & THAT INDIAN GUY Sun 29 Oct, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BRIGHT CLUB Mon 30 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Theatre

MAD ABOUT THE MUSICALS Whistle-stop tour of the shows, from the heart of London's theatreland to the glitz of Broadway, Mon 23 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

THE MAGIC FLUTE OperaUpClose perform a brand new take on Mozart's classic, Mon 23 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THERE AND BACK AGAIN - AN ODYSSEY Patrick Lynch launches Ulysses and his companions on a fantastic voyage, Mon 23 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ALL IN Atresbandes Theatre Company's darkly playful exploration of the millennial condition, Mon 23 Oct, mac, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM IMPROV FESTIVAL Featuring completely improvised plays, musicals, sketches, songs, drama, cabaret and workshops, Mon 23 - Sun 29 Oct, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

DIRTY DUSTING Heartwarming comedy starring Crissy Rock, Dolores Porretta, Leah Bell & Lee Brannigan, Tues 24 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

THE CARPENTERS STORY Homage to one of the most successful pop duos in history, Tues 24 Oct, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

FINDING JOY Masked theatrical company Vamos explore the subject of dementia 'through humour and humanity', Tues 24 - Wed 25 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT X Factor winner Joe McElderry dons the coveted coat in Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's sparkling family musical, Tues 24 - Sat 28 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

CRAZY FOR YOU Caroline Flack, Charlotte Wakefield and Tom Chambers star in George Gershwin's popular musical, Tues 24 - Sat 28 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

LET'S TWIST AGAIN Nostalgia show reliving the fun, laughter and music of the rock'n'roll era, Wed 25 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

5 A DAY - MOMENTS OF LOVE AND DEATH Play about our search for 'a good death' - an end without pain, loneliness or fear, Wed 25 Oct, SpArC, Bishops Castle, South Shropshire

DOREEN: RISE OF THE YAM YAM Join the What's On Personality Of The Year as she sets out to challenge Darwin's Theory of Evolution... Wed 25 Oct, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS Re-imagining of HG Wells' masterpiece, Wed 25 - Tues 31st Oct, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE RED ROOM New take on HG Wells' classic ghost story, Thurs 26 Oct, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

PANGOTTIC CIRCUS THEATRE: PANG ON! Featuring comedy, audience participation and improvisation, Thurs 26 Oct, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

DOUBLE DICKENS... Featuring The Trial Of Pickwick - from The Pickwick Papers - and Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions - a colourful Dickens tale, Thurs 26 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

WHERE DO ALL THE DEAD PIGEONS GO? A story of friendship, love and loneliness, set on the dark side of the moon, Thurs 26 Oct, mac, B'ham

FINDING JOY Masked theatrical company Vamos explore the subject of dementia 'through humour and humanity', Thurs 26 - Fri 27 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

OH WHAT A NIGHT Market Drayton Amdrams present a tribute to the American jukebox, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Oct, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

DELIGHTFUL Exploration of love, grief and how the state of our minds can affect how we remember our past, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Oct, The REP, Birmingham

DOREEN: RISE OF THE YAM YAM Join the What's On Personality Of The Year as she sets out to challenge Darwin's Theory of Evolution... Fri 27 Oct, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

5 A DAY - MOMENTS OF LOVE AND DEATH Play about our search for 'a good death' - an end without pain, loneliness or fear, Fri 27 Oct, The Hive, Shrewsbury

STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL & MR HYDE Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale, brought to life in a one-man show, Fri 27 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SINGALONGA ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW The camp cult classic gets the sing-along-a treatment it's been screaming for! Sat 28 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

14/48 FOR LAUGHS Four short comic plays, written, rehearsed and staged in just 24 hours, Sat 28 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

DOREEN: RISE OF THE YAM YAM Join the What's On Personality Of The Year as she sets out to challenge Darwin's Theory of Evolution... Sat 28 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford,

AUSTENTATIOUS Improvised comedy play, Sat 28 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THAT'S LIFE - THE FRANK SINATRA STORY Celebrating the life and music of Ol' Blue Eyes, Sat 28 Oct, Lichfield Garrick

HELLOWORLD Immersive four-hour event, Sat 28 - Sun 29 Oct, Genting Arena, Birmingham

Double Dickens With Ian Pearce And Tim Knight

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 26 October

Dickens at the double is the name of the game at the Arena this month, courtesy of two well-reviewed presentations. The Trial Of Pickwick sees Tim Knight retelling one of the most memorable episodes from The Pickwick Papers. Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions, meanwhile, visits the Midlands after wowing audiences at the Edinburgh Fringe. Ian Pearce is the talented performer bringing to life one of Dickens' most heartwarming and colourful tales. A truly engaging and profoundly touching piece.

MACBETH The Crescent Theatre Company presents its version of Shakespeare's famous tragedy, Sat 28 Oct - Sat 4 Nov, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

WUTHERING HEIGHTS Hotbuckle present Emily Bronte's Gothic classic, Sun 29 - Mon 30 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LOOK BACK IN ANGER Rumpus Theatre Company present John Osborne's kitchen-sink drama, Mon 30 Oct - Sat 4 Nov, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

KHOVANSHCHINA Mussorgsky's epic opera, addressing themes of politics, madness and death, Tues 31 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

WE ARE THE LIONS, MR MANAGER! The remarkable story of Jayaben Desai, the inspirational leader of the 1976-78 Grunwick Strike, Tues 31 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

NEXUS:WHISPERS Vexed Theatre present an 'edge-of-your-seat experience', Tues 31 Oct, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE ELVIS DEAD Cult classic horror movie Evil Dead 2, reinterpreted through the songs of Elvis, Tues 31 Oct, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CHARLES DICKENS' GHOST STORIES Featuring two of Dickens' most chilling supernatural tales - The Signalman and The Haunted Man, Tues 31 Oct - Sat 11 Nov, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Kids shows

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF PUSS IN BOOTS Starring Julie Patton from Cats and Grand Theatre panto dame Ian Adams, Mon 23 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DICK AND DOM LIVE The BAFTA-winning stars, live on stage, Mon 23 Oct, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

DORIS THE DRAGON 'Fun-packed' show for children, Tues 24 Oct, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE GIRL AND THE GIRAFFE Half Moon Theatre story about wellbeing and friendship, told from a child's perspective, Tues 24 - Thurs 26 Oct, mac, Birmingham

64 ZOO LANE Family-friendly musical based on the award-winning children's series of the same name, Wed 25 - Sun 29 Oct, Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

THE CHRIS AND PUI SHOW New stage show with toys and characters from the hit TV programme, Thurs 26 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

SIGNOR BAFFO Interactive children's show, Thurs 26 Oct, Newhampton

Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BOUNCING CATS & BOOM BOOM PUPS Immersive performance for children, Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

HAIRY MACLARY & FRIENDS Family show featuring music, song and characters from the much-loved books, Sat 28 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DICK AND DOM LIVE The BAFTA-winning stars, live on stage, Sun 29 Oct, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Dance

INTER_RUPTED Brand new creation by Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company - a high-octane work based on disintegration, fragility, vulnerability, age and transience, Mon 23 Oct, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE NUTCRACKER Seasonal favourite featuring the music of Tchaikovsky, Wed 25 Oct, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

INFUSION EMPORIUM Boundary-pushing displays of bellydancing, Fri 27 Oct, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE JUNGLE BUNCH (tbc) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Paul Borne, Philippe Bozo. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Mon 23 - Tues 24 Oct; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Mon 23 - Sat 28 Oct

THE EMOJI MOVIE (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of T.J. Miller, James Corden. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, South Shropshire, Tues 24 Oct

LETTERS FROM BAGHDAD (PG) Documentary. Starring Ammar Haj Ahmad, Adam Astill. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 24 Oct

THE BOSS BABY (U) Animation/Comedy. With the voices of Alec Baldwin, Steve Buscemi. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Tues 24 Oct

I AM NOT YOUR NEGRO (12A) Documentary. Starring Samuel L. Jackson, James Baldwin. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 24 Oct

SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE (U) Animation/Comedy. With the voices of Demi Lovato, Rainn Wilson. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Wed 25 Oct

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (PG) Fantasy/Musical. Starring Emma Watson, Dan Stevens. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Thurs 26 Oct

THE NUT JOB 2 (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Will Arnett, Katherine Heigl. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 24 - Wed 25 Oct; Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, South Shropshire, Thurs 26 Oct

VICEROY'S HOUSE (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Gillian Anderson, Michael Gambon, Hugh Bonneville. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Thurs 26 Oct

MY LIFE AS A COURGETTE (PG) Animation/Comedy. With the voices of Gaspard Schlatter, Sixtine Murat. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Thurs 26 Oct

DETROIT (15) Crime/History. Starring John Boyega, Anthony Mackie. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 27 - Tues 31 Oct

THE GLASS CASTLE (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Brie Larson, Woody Harrelson. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 27 - Tues 31 Oct

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (PG) Fantasy/Musical. Starring Emma Watson, Dan Stevens. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 30 Oct

DENIAL (12A) Biography/Drama. Starring Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson. Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Tues 31 Oct

A MAN CALLED OVE (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring Rolf Lassgård, Bahar Parsk. Foreign language, subtitled. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 31 Oct

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Tues 24 Oct, showing at selected cinemas

THOR: RAGNAROK (tbc)

BREATHE (12a)

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME (15)

JIGSAW (18)

Events

MAD SCIENCE Hands-on indoor Halloween-themed experiments involving vampire blood and Frankenstein snot, Mon 23 - Wed 25 Oct, Trentham Gardens, Stoke-on-Trent

AIRFLIX MAKE AND TAKE Suitable for seasoned model makers or those new to Airfix, Mon 23 - Fri 27 Oct, RAF Cosford, Shifnal

HAUNTED CASTLE Encounter a series of spooky characters and activities as you tour the castle, Mon 23 - Fri 27 Oct, Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire

CHILLS AND THRILLS Visit the Deadly Dungeon for some half-term Halloween fun, including fierce face painting, freaky fancy dress, gruesome games and a creepy colouring competition, Mon 23 - Sun 29 Oct, Trentham Monkey Forest, Stoke-on-Trent

HALLOWEEN HUNT The ghouls and ghosts of Himley Hall have escaped onto the park. Find them all and claim your spooky certificate, Tues 24 Oct, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

PUMPKIN CARVING Try your hand at making a traditional Halloween decoration, Tues 24 - Wed 25 Oct, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE GRAND Wed 25 Oct, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

MURDER BY GASLIGHT A ghoulish audience with two of the most infamous poisoners in British history - William Palmer and Harvey Crippen, Wed 25 Oct, Lightwoods Park, Birmingham

THE GHOST WALK Explore the ghostly avenues and alleyways of ancient Bridgnorth, where lurking in the shadows are 10 ghosts who met grisly ends, Wed 25 - Thurs 26 Oct, Various locations in Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

HALLOWEEN NIGHTS Trick-or-treat along the gaslit cobbled streets and enjoy street entertainment from circus performers, fire-jugglers and magicians, Wed 25 - Sat 28 Oct, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

HALLOWEEN HOCUS POCUS Visit the candlelit pumpkin patch, enjoy creepy crafts & colouring, take a spooky selfie with Lou the Bat and enjoy Dippy's Halloween show & disco, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Oct, Dudley Zoological Gardens

BRICK LIVE Celebrating all things Lego, Thurs 26 - Sun 29 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

BLACKOUT - LOCK IN Event offering after-dark access to all areas - with only a torch to guide you, Fri 27 Oct, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR Fri 27 Oct, The British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

PARANORMAL EVENING Featuring a history/ghost tour, vigils, use of paranormal equipment and more, Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, Dudley Zoological Gardens

HALLOWEEN ADULT ONLY GHOST TOURS Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, National Brewery Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

THE MURDEROUS MANSION Meet the master of the mansion, hear his spooky tale and take on his tricky task, Fri 27 - Sat 28 Oct, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

CHILDREN'S HALLOWEEN Enjoy special children's boat trips through Dudley's fantastic underground caverns, Fri 27 - Sun 29 Oct, Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust

SKY-FI FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR A 'galactic gathering' which sees fireworks set to music from popular classics, including Doctor Who, Star Trek, Star Wars and Guardians Of The Galaxy and many more, Fri 27 - Sun 29 Oct, Drayton Manor Theme Park, Tamworth

GCCF SUPREME CAT SHOW Sat 28 Oct, NEC, Birmingham

CHILDREN'S HALLOWEEN EVENING Get dressed up in your spookiest costume and enjoy the ghostly goings on around the castle, Sat 28 Oct, Tamworth Castle

HORRIBLE WILLENHALL HISTORIES Featuring a spooky trail and family-friendly ghost stories, Sat 28 Oct, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

WEST MIDLANDS VEGAN FESTIVAL Sat 28 - Sun 29 Oct, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

GHOST SEARCH Ghost walk around the castle, with vigils conducted in reputedly haunted rooms, Tues 31 Oct, Tamworth Castle

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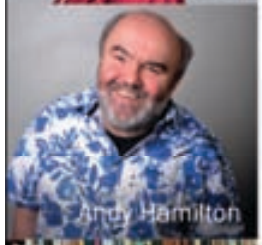
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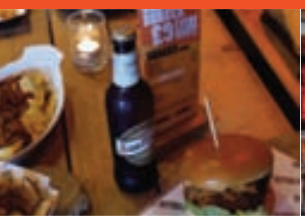

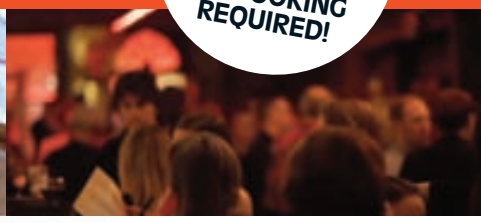

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