

Shropshire

ISSUE 385 JANUARY 2018

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interview inside...



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John Godber classic
at Theatre Severn



TATTOO FREEZE

specialist event returns to
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What's On

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Buddy Holly concert marks 60th Wolves anniversary

Tribute band Buddy Holly And The Crickets play the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on 7 March - 60 years to the very day after the real Buddy and the Crickets made their one and only appearance in the city.

As part of a 25-venue tour of England, the legendary American singer headlined a variety bill at the Wolverhampton Gaumont on 7 March 1958, with none other than Des O'Connor hosting the show.

One of rock'n'roll's earliest and brightest stars, Buddy was killed in a plane crash just 10 short months after playing Wolverhampton, but left behind him a back catalogue of songs that have certainly stood the test of time. For more information, visit grandtheatre.co.uk

Burma veterans exhibition at National Arboretum



A new photographic exhibition paying tribute to the World War Two British and Allied forces who fought in Burma has been unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Burma Veterans: Unforgettable features images taken by photographer Wendy Aldiss, whose father fought in Burma (now Myanmar) with the British Army's 2nd Infantry Division... The exhibition is on display until 25 February.

New Vic leads the way in celebrating the circus

The New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-under-Lyme is this year leading a celebration of 250 years of circus.

Circus Past, Present And Future is a programme of events, taking place in the town, which has been designed to 'spectacularly

showcase the extraordinary artform in its anniversary year'.

Commenting on the project, New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins said: "Circus traverses boundaries, crossing languages, continents and even the centuries to appeal to audiences of all ages. This year offers us the chance to celebrate it as an artform and to shine a spotlight on Newcastle-under-Lyme, the place where Philip Astley, its creator, was born. We can't wait to share our work with audiences."

New play pays tribute to Holocaust survivors

A brand new play telling the story of two Jewish prisoners in the Second World War Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz is being staged at Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre next month.

Presented in association with Lying Lips Theatre Company, Kanada has been written in honour of the Holocaust survivors, one of whom, Zigi Shipper, will be attending the opening night.

The production shows from Tuesday 6 to Saturday 10 February.

Hit Oscar Wilde comedy heads for the Midlands

A brand new production of classic Oscar Wilde comedy *The Importance Of Being Earnest* is visiting two Midlands venues this spring as part of a UK tour.

Produced by the Original Theatre Company and starring Gwen Taylor as Lady Bracknell and Susan Penhaligon as Miss Prism, the show stops off at the Courtyard Theatre, Hereford, from Monday 5 to Saturday 10 February. It then visits the Lichfield Garrick Theatre from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 March.



On your marks for the Shrewsbury Half Marathon!

Registration for the Shrewsbury Half Marathon is now open. Taking place on Sunday 17 June, the event is ideal for runners of all abilities and starts and finishes at the Shropshire County Show Ground. For information about how to register, visit shrewsburyhalf.co.uk

Get booking! Pantos announced for Xmas 2018/19

If you just can't get enough of panto, you'll be delighted to learn that three of the region's major theatres are already making preparations for their 2018/19 festive offerings.

The Wolverhampton Grand has announced that *Sleeping Beauty* will be catching some shut-eye at the venue from 8 December to 13 January, while Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre will be offering *Robin Hood* the chance to take a yuletide break from life in the depths of Sherwood Forest (14 December - 6 January).

Meanwhile, at Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury, the ever-eggcellent Brad Fitt will once again be donning the drag to play the Dame, on this occasion *Mother Goose* (28 November - 6 January).

A new plan for Himley Hall

Plans to maximise the potential of the historic Himley Hall & Park have been given the green light as part of a Dudley Council review of council buildings and land.

The council will now look at new ways of using the Grade II listed building to generate income for the authority. Himley Hall is already a popular venue for weddings and conferences.

The Himley estate was once home to the Earls of Dudley. It includes the Great Pool and a nine-hole golf course set in 180 acres of Capability Brown landscape and woodland.



Award-winning festival reveals initial line-up for 2018 event

Folk legends Steeleye Span, American singer-songwriter Gretchen Peters, Irish supergroup Usher's Island, festival favourites Show Of Hands and former Bellowhead frontman Jon Boden with his band The Remnant Kings (pictured above) are among the acts who'll be headlining this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival. They will be joined by, among many others, Peter Knight's Gigspanner Big Band, BBC Folk Award winner Daoirí Farrell and Scottish folk rockers Skerryvore.

Commenting on the 2018 edition of the award-winning event, Festival Director Sandra Surtees said: "The line-up is shaping up to be as eclectic as ever, with something for everyone. We pride ourselves on catering for a wide range of musical tastes, from traditional folk music to more contemporary performers, and with a selection of world music bringing a global element to the festival.

"There will be bands from all four corners of the UK - showcasing some of the best acts in today's folk and acoustic scene - with some of the North American flavour for which the event is renowned." The festival takes place at the West Mid Showground from 24 to 27 August.

The write stuff?

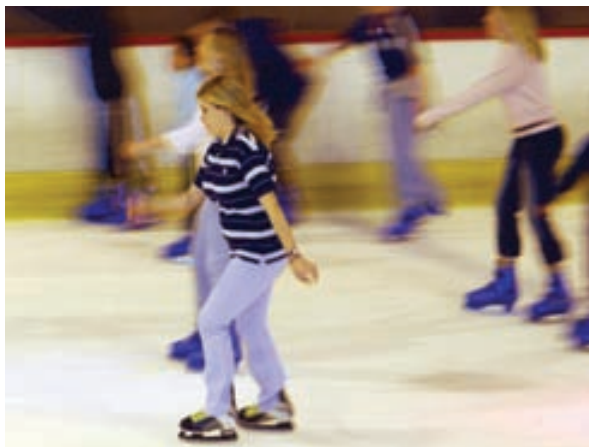
Staffordshire author Morton Morelli is this month taking time out from writing his second novel to host a series of exclusive masterclasses for people wanting to learn how to put pen to paper. Morton's first novel, the self-published *Sardine Packing*, is a fictional story that shifts in time from World War Two to the present day. The author is hosting his writing classes at Hoar Cross Hall, with a three-course buffet lunch included in the £87 per person price. The classes take place on 12, 19 and 26 January.

Spring into spring at Birmingham theatre

Matthew Bourne's *Cinderella* (pictured), spectacular Bollywood musical *Taj Express* and West End phenomenon *The Play That Goes Wrong* are among the shows visiting Birmingham Hippodrome this year.

Commenting on the venue's recently announced spring season, Hippodrome Artistic Director & Chief Executive Fiona Allan said: "Many of the stories you'll see on our stage this year feature strong female characters. From Elphaba and Glinda in *Wicked*, to Puccini's tragic *Tosca*, to everyone's favourite schoolgirl, *Matilda*. We also have stories of real women who had huge impact on the world around them - Carole King's story unfolds in *Beautiful* and Ballet British Colombia return with a programme of three breathtaking modern dance pieces, all by internationally acclaimed female choreographers." For more information about these and the venue's other 2018 shows, visit birminghamhippodrome.com





Time to get your skates on!

With the return to TV screens this month of *Dancing On Ice*, what better time could there possibly be to get your skates on and head for Telford Ice Rink?

The popular venue regularly offers extensive ice-skating lessons packages, from beginners level through to intermediate. The next six-week package begins on 20 January.

A crash course is also available, taking place during half-term week from Monday 19 to Friday 23 February.

For further details or to enrol on a course, ring 0845 155 9966 or visit telfordandwrekin-leisure.co.uk/iceskatinglessons

New Wolves show recalls childhood TV favourites

A new exhibition at Wolverhampton Art Gallery is set to bring back nostalgic childhood memories for fans of TV favourites Pogles' Wood, Noggin The Nog and Ivor The Engine. Clangers, Bagpuss & Co, a touring show from the V&A Museum of Childhood, pays homage to the creations of Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin, who started collaborating on children's television programmes back in the 1950s.

The exhibition shows at the gallery from 10 February to 29 April.



Not-for-profit trust takes control of high-profile council-run Stafford attractions

A number of high-profile venues in Stafford have been taken over by a not-for-profit trust.

Previously under the control of Stafford Borough Council, the venues - which include the Gatehouse Theatre, Stafford Castle and Izaak Walton Cottage - will be operated by the Freedom Leisure trust for the next 10 years. The trust has promised to spend a total of £6.4million improving its newly acquired sites.

As part of the deal, Freedom Leisure will also take responsibility for running numerous annual events, including Shakespeare In The Castle, the Stafford Half Marathon and the Stafford 10k.



Shrewsbury's international comedy festival welcomes back Abandoman

The Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival Gala is making a welcome return this summer.

Taking place on Sunday 22 July, the event will once again feature 'the hip-hop improv genius' of Abandoman.

Commenting on the 2018 show, Festival Co-Director Kevin Bland said: "It's a great feeling introducing audiences to new experiences, and we had that last year with Abandoman. They absolutely took the roof off. And they had so much fun themselves that they immediately told their agent to get in touch with us and have us book them in for this year, which we were only too happy to do."

It's All About Me: Joanna Lumley takes to the road

Joanna Lumley is heading out on her first-ever live tour in the autumn.

The popular actress, who became a household name when she starred in 1970s TV action series *The New Avengers*, will take her *It's All About Me* show on a 30-date UK tour, en route stopping off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit ticketmaster.co.uk

Beauty blogger honoured in Brum

An award-winning blogger who racks up more than one million YouTube views per month is being honoured by Birmingham City University. Beauty and lifestyle blogger and 'vlogger' Lily Pebbles, a former student at the university, will receive an Alumni of the Year award at a graduation ceremony on Tuesday 9 January.

The coveted award recognises and celebrates the achievements of graduates who are making a difference across the globe.



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THE DREAD OF A SCANDAL

Patrick Marber's take on Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler comes to Wolverhampton

Fresh from a celebrated National Theatre premiere, Patrick Marber's new version of Hedda Gabler is now embarking on a hotly anticipated UK tour, stopping off at the Wolverhampton Grand this month.

Widely viewed as one of the greatest female roles in theatre history, the title character of Henrik Ibsen's 1891 masterpiece already comes laden with a huge weight of expectation for any actor with the courage to take her on. But with Ruth Wilson's devastating star turn in London having been declared one of the top performances of the year, for her touring counterpart Lizzy Watts, there's even more than usual to live up to.

"I was really nervous before I started," she admits. "But as soon as you start getting into it, it becomes much easier. What's so brilliant about playing Hedda is that she seems to change so much from one day to the next. She's all over the place, and that's actually really fun. It's the first time I've played a part where I don't feel like I can go too far with her."

In some readings of the play, there's been an impulse to delve into Hedda's psychology for explanations of her erratic behaviour. Trapped in an unhappy marriage by her own professed cowardice and paralysing fear of public opinion, the newlywed becomes increasingly unpredictable, her frustration at her lot manifesting in everything from extra-marital flirtations and emotional blackmail to - in this production at least - a chaotic episode in which she ends up stapling dying flowers to the walls that imprison her. In this version, however, the team prefer to let the text and actions speak for themselves.

"It's really liberating not having to get bogged down in questioning every action and pulling apart every emotional turn," Watts continues. "Not having to explain too much as I was going along actually helped me to develop the character quicker than normal."

This freed-up approach is not unique to the portrayal of Hedda. In fact, it's a defining feature across the work of the production's Belgian director, Ivo van Hove. Actors learn their lines before rehearsals start, and the idea is that by homing in on the script and working through it chronologically, the story will emerge more organically than in a rehearsal process stuffed with supplementary research and studied character development strategies.

"We've never really talked about specific psychologies behind any of the characters," says Richard Pyros, who plays Eilert Løvborg, Hedda's ex-lover and her husband's former colleague. "Instead, you sort of just have bodies in a space acting really impulsively, and the way the audience reads that information can be filtered through their own ideas of what the characters' psychologies are. In a way, it feels a lot more like real life. You don't tend to sit back and think, 'Am I anxious? Am I depressed?' It usually takes someone else to tell you that."

"It's the sort of thing that, as actors, we might have been apprehensive about going in," adds Adam Best, who plays family friend and would-be lover to Hedda, Judge Brack. "But it's been really interesting. Having learned all the lines before you start actually feels very freeing, because all the emphasis is on the relationships."

It's not the only way in which van Hove has stripped away the standard features of traditional approaches to the text. Working together with designer and long-term collaborator Jan Versweyveld, he has developed an unspecified, loosely defined modern setting, removing the stiffness of period costume without adding in the digital distractions that tend to dominate our lives today.

A simple set evokes the minimalism of a chic, contemporary apartment, all neutral colours

and free from clutter. But for all its elegance, there's an unsettling air of decay about the place, a sense of something hastily thrown up and incomplete - a little like the unfulfilling future to which Hedda has condemned herself.

"It's really key that everything you see is from Hedda's point of view," explains associate director Rachel Lincoln. "There's a sort of vast, empty space that Hedda inhabits, but there are no doors, so no way to escape from her prison. You'll also see buckets and old tables and scruffy sofas, like everything is in a state of construction or deconstruction - almost like the builders have just kind of abandoned it and gone home."

It's oddly exposing, the fiery Hedda thrown into sharp relief against the blandness and emptiness of the world around her. Much like the satin nightdress that she wears throughout, it's both luxurious and rather insubstantial.

"There's an idea that she never gets dressed because she never really wants to leave the house," explains Watts. "But also when she's not wearing her dressing gown, it's very exposing. It's great for accessing her vulnerability, which isn't always the thing you first think of with Hedda Gabler, but is something this production taps into a lot."

Music, too, is modern and accessible, with Joni Mitchell's Blue and Nina Simone's Wild Is The Wind used to evoke particular moods. It's "almost like a film score", says Christine Kavanagh, who plays Aunt Juliana, adding, "I think the Patrick Marber adaptation is very fresh and contemporary. Together with the music, I think it will be hugely appealing for younger audiences."

Hedda Gabler shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 23 until Saturday 27 January.



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REVIEW: The Bilash

Michelin-rated Indian restaurant still going strong after 35 glorious years

Having now been established for 35 years, award-winning fine dining restaurant The Bilash is renowned for its modern and innovative Bangladeshi and Indian cuisine.

Situated opposite Wolverhampton's Civic Centre, the family-owned eatery boasts many an impressive accolade - including a Michelin rating - and has featured in the Sunday Times' list of the top 10 restaurants in the Midlands.

The Bilash is on two floors and blends a modern style with a relaxed and welcoming ambience.

On arrival we were politely greeted and shown to our table, which was located on the lower floor of the restaurant.

We perused the mouthwatering menu over a cold Tiger and some poppadsoms - surely a necessity when visiting an Indian restaurant.

The starter menu featured tiger prawn in pepper sauce, Neza Kebab (marinated chicken leg with flavour of green cardamom)

and Batata Vadas (battered spicy potato balls). My partner and I opted for the spicy tandoori lamb chops and the Jalpari Kebab, which comprised saffron-flavoured fish rolls stuffed with prawns to share. The kebab was a dish I'd never come across before. Light, and packed full of delicious flavours, it's something I'll most certainly be ordering if I see it on a menu again. The spicy tandoori lamb chops were divine; juicy, nicely seasoned and ever so flavoursome. So far, so good. We were seriously impressed.

Making our way down the menu, there wasn't a single dish that sounded less appealing than its predecessor, which made choosing our mains quite a problem!

After much deliberation, we selected the Maacher Jhool (spicy hot Bengali fish curry) and the Murgi Diya Doniya. The latter won Curry Of The Year in the 1999 and 2001 Wolverhampton & Central Region championships, and also came runner-up in the national finals. Comprising

chicken breast marinated in garlic and ginger puree, salt, pepper and sesame oil, then cooked with fresh onions, ground coriander, curry leaves, fresh mint, chives, finely chopped tomatoes, chopped coriander, homemade tomato paste and green chillies, it was extremely tasty. Served with stir-fried noodles, it wasn't your average Indian dish, but the flavour combination was absolutely spot on.

The real star of the show, however, was the Maacher Jhool. The beautiful Bengali fish was soft to the bite and fell apart at barely a touch. Boasting just the right amount of heat, the seasoning, comprising ground spices, ginger, fresh chillies and turmeric, was an incredible medley of stunning, full-bodied flavours. Every mouthful was an absolute joy to eat, and the dish proved to be the highlight of my Bilash experience.

We ordered sides of bhindi bha-jee (stir-fried spicy okra), shahi paneer (cottage cheese cooked in tomato, yoghurt and cashew nut paste), mushroom basmati rice and a garlic & chilli naan.

The shahi paneer was quite simply the most gorgeous paneer dish I've ever tasted, with the soft Indian cheese effortlessly

melting away in the mouth.

The moreish okra pieces were delicious - salty little bits of heaven. I could've eaten the dish three times over, despite ordering more than our fair share of food. The mushroom rice and garlic & chilli naan were extremely tasty and the perfect main-course accompaniments.

Although both feeling suitably full, the offer of sampling an authentic Indian dessert was one we just couldn't turn down.

We shared the gulab jamun (milk dumpling deep fried and soaked in scented sugar syrup) and the white chocolate mousse. Both were served with vanilla ice cream and a selection of fruit.

The sweet, sticky dumplings were as naughty as they sound; the mousse, nothing short of outstanding. The smooth, creamy taste and texture was to-die-for, and something I seriously urge everyone to try when they visit. A perfect end to a perfect dining experience.

All in all, our night at The Bilash couldn't have gone any better - it's no surprise that the restaurant has been in operation for more than 35 years! The food was exemplary, the flavours exceptional and every course was a showcase of excellent technical ability. The service was fantastic too, with the staff being both knowledgeable and friendly.

I can't wait to make a return visit, to sample some more of the outstanding cuisine that this gem of a restaurant has to offer.

Lauren Foster

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

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Blue Rose Code

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Mon 22 January; Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Tues 30 January

Edinburgh-born singer and creative Ross Wilson, musically known as Blue Rose Code, released his much-anticipated fourth studio album, *The Water Of Leith*, in November. Commenting on the album, Ross said: "It speaks to the journey home, my journey home, the man that I am today, so changed from the wee boy that ran away. I've found a peace that I left looking for, back on the same cobbled streets, looking at my life through a fresh pair of glasses. Controversially for a songwriter, it seems, I am contented; happier than I've ever been. Given up all hope of a better past, I'm rejoicing living in this beautiful series of moments."



Fire Red Empress

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Sat 20 January

Classic Rock Magazine once described five-piece rock band Fire Red Empress as 'bursting from the gates with a hard-charging, riff-fuelled, radio-baiting monster that sounds like all your favourite bands beating each other to death'. Enough said, we think. They play Wolverhampton this month as part of a UK tour.



Paramore

Genting Arena, Birmingham, Sun 14 January

Fronted by Hayley Williams, award-winning band Paramore are well established on the international rock star circuit.

From 2005's gold-certified debut, *All We Know Is Falling*, through to 2013's self-titled

album, the band have enjoyed a remarkable run of critically acclaimed releases.

Best known for hit numbers *Misery Business*, *Still Into You*, *The Only Exception* and *Ain't It Fun*, the hugely popular three-piece head to Birmingham this month in support of latest album *After Laughter*.

Steve Knightley

Lichfield Guildhall, Wed 31 January

Award-winning songwriter and Show Of Hands frontman Steve Knightley stops off in Lichfield on his highly anticipated solo tour, *Songs & Stories*, inviting his audience on a musical journey that charts 'the winding roads' of his impressive career.

Aynsley Lister Band

The Robin, Bilston, Thurs 18 January

With over 100,000 albums sold, plenty of critical acclaim and years of high-profile touring behind him, Aynsley Lister has firmly secured his position as a leading light in the revival of British blues-infused music. Commenting on his 2016 release, *Eyes Wide Open*, Lister said: "I wanted to keep the raw edginess and energy of a band, so that meant minimal takes and going with the ones that had the most spirit and passion over those with technical perfection. To me, music isn't supposed to be perfect. It's supposed to grab you and move you both emotionally and physically; it's supposed to connect with you."

Martyn Joseph

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 28 January

There's a versatility to Martyn Joseph's music that's hard to categorise. Many have tried, resulting in labels such as folk, rock, soul, folk-funk and Americana all being applied to his sound.

Nominated in the Hardest Working Artist category at the UK Independent Music Awards 2016, Joseph's overwhelming passion, unique percussive style and powerful, showstopping voice make for a memorable and thoroughly enjoyable live show.



NINE BELOW ZERO

**Dennis Greaves and Mark Feltham
get up close and personal at
Henry Tudor House**



South London blues band Nine Below Zero boast a cult following in Europe and a history stretching back 40 years. What's On caught up with founder member Dennis Greaves ahead of their early-February performance at Shrewsbury's Henry Tudor House

You're returning to Henry Tudor House with Mark Feltham next month, following a sell-out show there in 2015. What can your audience expect from this headline show?

Mark and I have been doing the duo now for a couple of years. It will be an intimate evening where we play songs that have influenced our career. We also chat about the great musicians we've had the luck to play with.

You'll be playing some unplugged versions of well-known Nine Below Zero material...

It's quite nice stripping those songs back to their creation. You tend to find new things in them that you never knew existed.

Your father bought you your first guitar. Did you come from a musical family?

Yes, he was a big inspiration to me. He sang but didn't play an instrument. It was my grandad who played almost anything he put his hand to. The Boston Arms in Tufnell Park is where me, my father and grandad have all sang and performed.

Nine Below Zero were originally formed in South London. How big an impact did that have on your musical style and early career?

Well, it was a place where you either boxed, played football, were a musician or became a thief, to get out of the gutter. I went to Walworth School in the Old Kent Road. The school backed onto the famous Thomas A Becket pub, where loads of bands would play. After school one night, I went to see Beryl the owner and asked for a gig. She gave me a Monday night residency. This is where we were spotted. South London made you a fighter in many ways.

Following the release of your second album in 1981, there was a period when Nine Below Zero were on TV almost

weekly. How was that experience?

You get used to it. TV programmes at the time loved NBZ because they knew we would deliver and not be trouble with egos etc. Going to the TV studios was amazing. We still bump into cameramen now who talk fondly of us.

You recently supported Squeeze on tour...

Well, they come from Deptford and we came from the Old Kent Road. We both used to play the same gigs in South London. We also were both signed by Derek Green to A&M Records. We have so much in common, so the tour was a pleasure and their fans loved us. Mark and I got up and played a few songs with them, and we're on the last two Squeeze albums.

R&B has remained popular for more than 70 years. Why is this?

If I knew, I'd be a millionaire. All I know is that if you play a Robbie Williams track from 10 years ago, it sounds dated. Play Smoke Stack Lightning by Howlin Wolf and it sounds so fresh. Maybe it's the fact that it's real musicians playing a groove with no click track? It just still feels so great.

Nine Below Zero have been going for four decades now. Did you ever imagine that would be the case when you first started out?

No, you just do it thinking it won't last long, so enjoy it while it lasts. But then it becomes a lifestyle and career, you perfect your craft and every day is a new challenge. In Keith Richards' book, he mentions this very subject and almost says the same thing.

As mentioned previously, you're playing next month's acoustic show alongside fellow founding member Mark Feltham, yet Nine Below Zero now boast eight members and perform as a big band. Do you have a preference?

I love them all. We have duo, eight-piece and a five-piece where Chris Rand plays keys and

sax. The reason we do this is so we stay fresh and don't become a cover band of ourselves, playing the same old stuff. I think it's important to keep moving when you've been around as long as us.

You're well known for your stylish attire. Who are your favourite designers?

I'm getting a lot of stuff from second-hand shops as well as a bespoke company called Art Gallery. My wife used to work at Gucci when Tom Ford was designing, which was handy. I get my scarves from Tootal. I like things in second-hand shops because normally they will be a one-off.

And your favourite outfit from over the years?

My wedding suit, made by Max Cohen, which was in the Aldgate, East End. He used to fit the Krays, and he still had his old patterns from the '60s buried away in the back of the shop.

What's your favourite hobby outside of music?

I really don't have any - maybe clothes and my Edwardian house. Both my sons are drummers and we jam together locally. My hobby is music, I suppose.

Are there any up-and-coming bands or artists you'd like to champion?

I've championed The Strypes and love what they're doing.

What does the future hold for Dennis Greaves and Nine Below Zero?

Wow! I suppose just to keep on going. I really love what I do, so just to keep playing and touring and keeping fit.

.....
Nine Below Zero perform at Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, on Sunday 4 February



THE CRIBS

Lauren Foster chats to Gary Jarman ahead of the band's Coventry show

The Cribs' seventh album, 24-7 Rock Star Shit, was released last year. Can you tell us a bit about it...

We recorded it in five days and released it with no promo. It's probably my favourite Cribs record.

How does it differ from your previous albums?

It has most in common with our debut, probably because of how quickly we made it. It's the only record we've ever made where we specifically knew it was going to be non-commercial, which was very liberating - to not have to worry about all the industry stuff that, even subliminally, ends up seeping into the mindset when releasing a record. Surprise-releasing it, not doing any promo or servicing any songs to radio was very liberating, as it took that whole element off the table.

Why 24-7 Rock Star Shit?

Just seemed to typify a mindset, really. We felt that we'd already eschewed a lot of the usual formalities of releasing a record, so it was already a pretty serious gamble. We felt like we could get away with a name like that cos it wasn't gonna be available in your local supermarket anyway.

The Cribs first became active on the gig circuit in 2002. Why do you think the band has remained so popular?

Hopefully it's because the people who like the band get something from us that's a bit less superficial than whatever is currently 'on trend'. We've tried to represent a specific ethos and approach that operates outside of and independently from the pop-culture realm. Hopefully that's what's been translated to the people who care about the band, and they appreciate and understand that. It's almost like we have our own small scene in some ways - the fans have always been really engaged and clued-in, which is just awesome.

The Cribs are a family band. Does being brothers have a greater number of positives or negatives?

More positives, for definite. The negatives can suck, for sure - you take criticism etc a little more personally cos you're naturally defensive of your siblings - but the positives of solidarity, integrity and commitment to a specific vision are worth so much more than those trivialities.

How would you describe the evolution of the band's sound?

We started off being pigeonholed as 'lo fi', which I always had a problem with cos we were trying to make the best-sounding records we could - we just had no money! We've always preferred the approach of passion over precision, so while the records were spirited, people thought they were 'raw' or 'lo fi' or whatever. We made a couple of records for a major US label which sounded technically better - and that was cool, I guess - but our heart has always been in trying to get the energy down, and we prioritise that above labouring over things for too long. I think that's always something we return to.

Career-wise, what are you most proud of?

We've been lucky to tour and play shows with some of our heroes - the Sex Pistols, Queen, Dave Grohl etc - but I would honestly say that what we're most proud of is having built a fanbase that believes in us and has been with us for 15 years. They're the reason we've had four top-10 records and headlined Leeds Arena and stuff like that. It's allowed us to operate outside the mainstream and still be able to sustain our momentum without having to constantly look over our shoulders. It's hugely empowering and also humbling, all at the same time.

What's your opinion of the current music scene in the UK?

We feel way more affinity with the new generation of bands that we've had on tour

with us recently. They have to be DIY by necessity. They're totally unspoilt, super-dedicated and motivated, and it's by necessity. There are no major labels mollycoddling and throwing money at guitar bands nowadays, like there used to be back in the 2000s. We were always more DIY than our contemporaries, who were signed to big labels and had massive promo campaigns etc. As a result we always felt like outsiders. The kids coming through now are way more on our wavelength than the bands back then, who all expected success and fame.

The Cribs are playing Coventry's Empire this month. What can your audience expect from your headline show?

We just honestly and sincerely put everything into it as much as we can. People who know the band know what to expect in terms of enthusiasm and effort. To people who don't know us, it probably seems really wild and crazy, but to people who do, they know it's just borne out of trying to make sure we give 100%, and that everyone who's paid for a ticket gets their money's worth.

Which UK city has the best audience?

Hard to say - Leeds is our sorta 'hometown' show, so is always really awesome. Glasgow is crazy, as is Manchester. But a lot of the time, when we get off the beaten path and go to cities that don't get as many shows as the big cities, that's where things can get really exciting.

And finally, what does the future hold for The Cribs?

We have a big stadium show with Foo Fighters in the summer, and we're maybe heading to Australia and Asia - but this is our last UK tour for the foreseeable future.

.....

The Cribs perform at The Empire, Coventry, on Saturday 27 January

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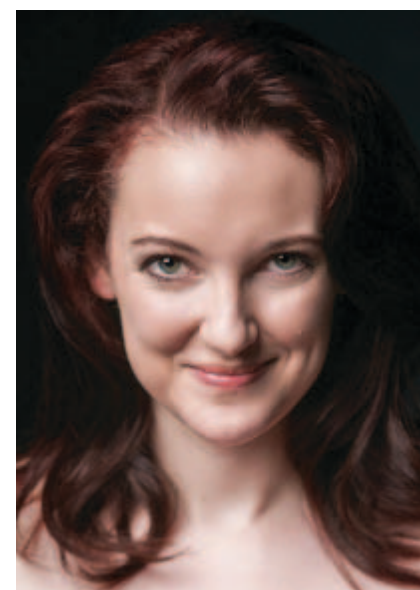
Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 January

One of the UK's top symphonic ensembles, the Manchester-based Halle is admired around the world for its extensive orchestral repertoire.

This Victoria Hall concert sees Stephen Bell taking the helm for a New Year celebration of Vienna.

Austria's capital city attracted many great classical composers during the 19th century and was home to the famous Strauss family, whose works feature heavily in the concert programme.

Soprano Jennifer France (pictured) also contributes to what will surely be an evening of exceptional musicmaking.



The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 11 January

The fact that Anton Bruckner heard the beginning of his seventh symphony in a dream, played by an angel, is perhaps not surprising, given the piece's distinctive 'other worldly' quality. At various times hailed as mystical, serene and ghostly, the work was largely misunderstood by audiences when it was first performed - a fate which befell a good deal of Bruckner's output... The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra is here conducted by Omer Meir Wellber and joined by pianist Yeol Eum Son. Mozart's Piano Concerto No21 completes the programme.

Innovation Ensemble: Quintets At Twilight

The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury, Sunday 14 January

Innovation Ensemble comprises five highly respected chamber musicians drawn from the circle of colleagues and friends of the late Peter Cropper. Repeatedly hailed for his creativity and fearlessness, and often lauded for an undoubted streak of genius, violinist Peter was the leader of the Lindsay Quartet for almost four decades. He died suddenly in late May 2014 at the age of 69. Among the musicians performing this early-evening concert are his son, Martin, and Ben Nabarro, both of whom are violinists. Robin Ireland and Sarah-Jane Bradley accompany on the viola, while Richard Jenkinson plays cello. The programme features Mozart's Quintet in G min K.516, Vaughan Williams' Fantasy Quintet and Brahms' Quintet in G maj Op.111.

K'antu Ensemble

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Wed 24 January

This six-year-old ensemble was founded by vocalist and violinist Ruth Hopkins to 'explore the less-trodden territories of early music'.

Compositions from Spain and South America feature heavily in K'antu's repertoire, as does the playing of an array of instruments from around the world.



Viennese Strauss Gala

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 21 January

The 33-piece British Philharmonic Concert Orchestra kickstart 2018 in style with a concert recalling the glories of Johann Strauss, Franz Lehar and Viennese operetta.

Featured works include Strauss' By The Beautiful Blue Danube, The Thunder And Lightning Polka and a taste of his masterpiece, Die Fledermaus.

Highlights from Lehar's Merry Widow also feature, along with a wealth of operetta favourites from, among other works, The Student Prince, The New Moon, The Gypsy Baron and The White Horse Inn.

A portrait of violinist Joshua Bell. He is standing against a plain, light gray background. He is wearing a black V-neck t-shirt and dark gray trousers. He is holding a violin in his left hand, with the body of the instrument resting against his chest. His right hand is holding a violin bow, which is positioned horizontally across his chest. He has short, dark brown hair and is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

Joshua Bell

“ I’ve always really enjoyed playing concertos as a soloist, but now with the Academy I still get to do that, while also working in much finer detail on what I want from them ”

Classical musician Joshua Bell & the Academy of St Martin in the Fields bring a new tour to Symphony Hall this month, presenting a programme fusing Vivaldi's classic Four Seasons with a brand new commission by Edgar Meyer...

There are few classical musicians who can lay claim to a fame that reaches beyond those already interested in their field, but even if you're not familiar with the work of violin virtuoso Joshua Bell, there's a chance you're at least vaguely aware of the 2007 Washington Post experiment that saw him busking incognito in a New York subway.

Over 10 years later, the story still crops up more often than he'd like - not least because he has much more to say about his phenomenal body of work before and since. Having made his solo debut aged just 14, he's gone on to become one of the world's most celebrated classical performers, winning multiple awards and being colourfully described as 'the Poet of the Violin'.

Latterly, he's been taking up new challenges as music director of the acclaimed Academy of St Martin in the Fields, succeeding its late founder, Sir Neville Marriner. It's in this capacity that he'll be heading to Birmingham's Symphony Hall this month, leading the orchestra in performances of Beethoven's exuberant Second Symphony, Vivaldi's Four Seasons and a brand new, 10-minute commission by his old friend and frequent collaborator, Edgar Meyer.

"Edgar comes from a background in Nashville, Tennessee, where as well as studying classical music, he was a bluegrass double bass player," says Bell. "He also played a lot of jazz, so his musical language brings together a real mix of different influences. It's hard to describe but I would say that although it's rhythmically very complex, it's also very tonal and accessible.

"What I like about it is that it's something that has emerged very organically out of who he is as a musician. A lot of composers who are focused on being different and finding their own voice can end up with something that sounds quite artificial and gimmicky. But somehow Edgar's music is always very

honest, and I find that quite refreshing."

Previous collaborations between the two include a double concerto for violin and bass, as well as the chamber music album Short Trip Home. As a bright, ambitious high schooler, Bell first met the older Meyer at Indiana University, where he was double majoring in Mathematics and Music.

"He plays to what he thinks are my strengths, but I sometimes think he overestimates my abilities! He has a brilliant mathematical mind and creates these incredibly complex, precise rhythms that I sometimes wonder if I'll be able to pull off at all.

"Luckily the Academy is really quick and open to new challenges. I think a lot of European orchestras would have struggled with a piece like this - the first time we performed it we were just happy to get through it without falling apart! But when we premiered it at the Bravo! Vail festival in Colorado, they had a lot of fun with it and Edgar was really pleased, so I'm excited about taking it out on tour."

Attracting large and diverse audiences for classic concerts can be difficult in and of itself, a challenge that's magnified where new compositions are involved. At the Bravo! Vail premiere, says Bell, people told him afterwards how "surprised" they were that they'd enjoyed it. It's not unusual for audiences to be so apprehensive, and as far as Bell's concerned, he doesn't blame them.

"Partly I think people in the classical world can be sceptical about new compositions just because we have so much great music that has stood the test of time. People know that a Beethoven symphony is going to move them - what are the chances that a new piece is going to have that kind of effect? Of course in every generation there is some great music and a lot of not so great music, but with older classical music, we've weeded out everything that's not so good from our programmes

today, whereas with new work it's still hit and miss.

"Also I think in recent years there's been a lot of music that seems quite random and dissonant that people have struggled to connect with. But listen, I'm one of those people who is pleasantly surprised when I like a piece of new music myself! I think it's important to keep challenging people with new work, but when I hear a piece that I can't relate to as a musician, it makes me wonder how someone who is outside the music world can get anything from it."

Those seeking the reassurance of more familiar titles will find it in the pieces programmed alongside Meyer's. In particular, The Four Seasons should be a significant draw - if you want to know why, look up Bell's superb 2008 recording (there's a Spotify link on the Academy website). Beethoven's Second, meanwhile, will be a first for him - one of just two Beethoven symphonies he has yet to perform. As usual, he'll also be managing the tricky balancing act of leading the orchestra while performing himself, without the help of a separate conductor.

"I love it! I've always really enjoyed playing concertos as a soloist, but now with the Academy I still get to do that, while also working in much finer detail on what I want from them. After years of playing these pieces, I have very strong convictions about how I want every aspect of them to be, and now I can control that without having to work through a conductor. I also really enjoy the way the orchestra responds without having a middle man with a stick. It feels more like playing chamber music and it's exciting for me as well."

.....
Joshua Bell and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields play Symphony Hall, Birmingham, on Tuesday 23 January.

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Festivals



When it comes to music, regardless of your preference - be it jazz, indie, folk, classical, world or pop - you're almost certain to find a festival in the Midlands to suit your taste. And 2018 looks set to be another bumper year for the region's festival-goers. Get your diary out and get booking!...

APRIL

NANTWICH JAZZ, BLUES & MUSIC FESTIVAL

Line-up includes Glenn Tilbrook, Thea Gilmore, Dennis Greaves and Mark Feltham from Nine Below Zero and Dr Feelgood. Thurs 29 Mar - Mon 2 Apr, various venues in Nantwich. More information at nantwichjazz.com

MAY

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes Randy Crawford, Beth Hart, Christian McBride Big Band and Kamasi Washington. Wed 2 - Mon 7 May, various venues in Cheltenham. More information at cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz

UPTON UPON SEVERN FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Mike Wilson & Damien Barber, Monty's Maggot English Ceilidh & Country Dance Band and Granny's Attic. Fri 4 - Mon 7 May, various venues, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonfolk.org

LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Pražák String Quartet, The Guarneri Piano Trio, Jana Nováková and Martin Kasík. Fri 4 - Tues 8 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa. More information at leamingtonmu-

sic.org

FIELDBOUNCE New for 2018. Line-up includes Scouting For Girls, Dappy and Danny Howard. Sat 5 May, The Venue, Oswestry. More information at fieldbounce.co.uk

HANDMADE FESTIVAL Line-up includes Circa Waves, Idles, Little Comets, Dinosaur Pile Up and Protomartyr. Sat 5 - Sun 6 May, O2 Academy, Leicester. More information at handmadefestival.co.uk

SWINGAMAJIG Brought to you by Electric Swing Circus, Swingamajig is back for its 6th year. Line-up to be announced. Sun 6 May, The Digbeth Triangle, Birmingham. More information at swingamajig.co.uk

BEARDED THEORY Line-up includes The Jesus & Mary Chain, Fun Lovin Criminals, Jimmy Cliff and Reverend And The Makers. Thurs 24 - Sun 27 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire. More information at beardedtheory.co.uk

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Red Rum, Skaciety, Estrella, New Generation Superstars, Chris Slade and Wicked Stone. Fri 25 - Sun 27 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove. More information at breakingbandsfestival.com

MELLO Line-up includes Soul II Soul, Toploader, Badly Drawn Boy, The Jive Aces, The Mariachis and Mike

Sanchez. Fri 25 - Sun 27 May, Seven End Country Estate, Hanley Castle, Worcestershire. More information at mellofestival.co.uk

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up includes Antarctic Monkeys, Coldplace, Four Fighters, Happy Mondaze and Letz-Zep. Fri 25 - Sun 27 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire. More information at glastonbudget.org

STAFFS FEST Line-up includes Mick Moylan, Mick Oakden, Mark Morris and Gary Lees. Fri 25 - Sun 27 May, Lower Drayton Farm, Penkridge. More information at staffsfest.co.uk

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN The world's largest philosophy and music festival. Line-up includes The Orb, The Correspondents, Laura Wright and Nerina Pallot. Fri 25 - Mon 28 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford. More information at hay.htlgi.ia1.tv

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Jez Lowe, Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar, Hannah James and Jim Moray. Fri 25 - Mon 28 May, Kelsall Village. More information at chesterfolk.org.uk

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up to be announced. Sat 26 - Sun 27 May, Birmingham Gay Village. More information at birminghampride.com

ROCK AND BOWL Line-up to be announced. Sat 26 - Mon 28 May, Picnic Area, Market Drayton. More informa-

tion at rockandbowlfestival.com

HIP HOP COLOUR POWDER FESTIVAL

Line-up to be announced. Sun 27 May, SK Cash & Carry, Digbeth Birmingham.

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sun 27 May, various venues in Nottingham. More information at dottodotfestival.co.uk

SLAMDUNK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Good Charlotte, Jimmy Eat World, Taking Back Sunday, Sleeping Sirens and State Champs. Mon 28 May, Genting Arena, Birmingham. More information at slamdunkmusic.com

WIRRAL FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 31 May - Sun 3 Jun, The Whitby Club, Cheshire. More information at wirralfolkonthecoast.com

JUNE

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Buzzcocks, The Levellers, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Billy Bragg and Dhol Foundation. Fri 1 - Sun 3 Jun, Cheltenham Racecourse. More information at wychwoodfestival.com

THE ACOUSTIC FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN Line-up includes Ferocious Dog, Tom Dobb, Steve Harley, Chris Difford and The Brandy Thieves. Fri 1 - Sun 3 Jun, Uttoxeter Racecourse. More information at acousticfestival.co.uk

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Festivals

GATE TO SOUTHWELL FOLK Line-up includes Nine Below Zero, Lindisfarne, The Young 'Uns, Cara Dillon, Dallah, The Furrow Collective and Habadekuk. Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Jun, Southwell Racecourse, Nottinghamshire. More information at southwellfolkfestival.org.uk

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL Line-up includes Guns N' Roses, Ozzy Osbourne, Avenged Sevenfold, Rise Against and Marilyn Manson. Fri 8 - Sun 10 Jun, Donington Park, Derby. More information at downloadfestival.co.uk

SONIC ROCK SOLSTICE 2018 Line-up includes Evil Blizzard, Senser, Astralaria, Sonic Black Holes and Here & Now. Thurs 14 - Mon 18 Jun, Stoke Prior Sports and Country Club, Worcester. More information at sonicrocksolstice.com

FOXTON LOCKS FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sat 16 - Sun 17 Jun, Foxton Locks, Leicestershire. More information at foxtonlocksfestival.co.uk

NORTHAMPTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Sun 17 Jun, Market Square, Northampton. More information at northamptonmusicfestival.co.uk

UPTON JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Jun, The Riverside, Upton-upon-Severn, Worcester. More information at uptonjazz.co.uk

BEARDY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Nick Heyward, Skerryvore, False Lights, Jim Moray, 3 Daft Monkeys and Chris Helme. Fri 22 - Sun 24 Jun, Hopton Court, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire. More information at beardyfolkfestival.co.uk

SUPERSONIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 22 - Sun 24 Jun, various venues in Birmingham. More information at supersonicfestival.com

TEXTFEST Line-up includes Example & DJ Wire, Nick Grimshaw (DJ set), We Are Scientists, Tinchy Stryder and Beans on Toast. Fri 29 Jun - Sat 1 Jul, Market Harborough Showground, Leicestershire. More information at textfest.co.uk

JULY

NOISILY FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 5 - Sun 8 Jul, Coney Woods at Noseley Hall, Leicestershire. More information and tickets at noisilyfestival.com

NAPTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 6 - Sat 7 Jul, Village

Centre, Napton On The Hill, Warwickshire. More information at naptonfestival.co.uk

MOSTLY JAZZ FUNK AND SOUL Line-up to be announced. Fri 6 - Sun 8 Jul, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information at mostlyjazz.co.uk

CAMPERJAM Line-up to be announced. Fri 6 - Sun 8 Jul, Weston Park, Shropshire. More information at camperjam.com

THE ROCK AND BIKE FEST Line-up includes Sham 69, Evil Scarecrow, Circus Of Horrors, (Alice Cooper tribute act) and Gallus Cooper. Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Jul, Carnfield Hall, Derbyshire. More information at rockandbikefest.co.uk

BROMSGROVE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Damien Barber Roadshow, Cosmotheke, Dave Gibb, Ursula Holden Gill and Mumbo Jumbo. Thurs 12 - Sun 15 Jul, various venues across Bromsgrove. More information at bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

FUSE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 13 - Sun 15 Jul, Beacon Park, Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information at fuselichfield.org.uk

LET'S ROCK SHREWSBURY Line-up includes UB40, Kim Wilde, Midge Ure, Go West, Jason Donovan, From The Jam and Imagination. Sat 14 Jul, The Quarry, Shrewsbury. More information at letsrockshrewsbury.com

DEERSTOCK Line-up includes The King Blues, April Towers, Blackballed and John Otway. Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jul, Newton Cross Country Course, Nottinghamshire. More information at deerstock.co.uk

NOZSTOCK Line-up to be announced. Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jul, Rowden Paddocks, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information at nozstock.com

THE BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 20 - Sat 29 Jul, various venues around Birmingham and Solihull. More information at birminghamjazzfestival.com

SPLENDOR Line-up to be announced. Sat 21 Jul, Wollaton Park, Nottingham. More information at splendourfestival.com

WARWICK FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Show of Hands, Jon Boden & the Remnant Kings and Korrontzi. Thurs 26 - Sun 29 Jul, Warwick School and Warwick Town Centre. More information at warwickfolkfestival.co.uk

BAREFOOT FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 27 - Sun 29 Jul, Prestwold

Hall, Leicestershire. More information at barefootfestival.com

CARFEST NORTH Line-up includes Bananarama, Billy Ocean, Jools Holland, Rick Astley, Status Quo, Texas and The Feeling. Fri 27 - Sun 29 Jul, Bolesworth Castle, Chester. More information at carfest.org

INDIE TRACKS Line-up to be announced. Fri 27 - Sun 29 Jul, Butterley Station, Derbyshire. More information at indietracks.co.uk

MIDDLE OF NOWHERE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 27 - Sun 29 Jul, Lower Drayton Farm, Staffordshire. More information at monmusicfestival.co.uk

LUNAR FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 27 - Sun 29 Jul, Umberlade Farm Park. More information at lunarfestival.co.uk

MADE BIRMINGHAM Line-up to be announced. Sat 28 Jul, The Digbeth Triangle, Birmingham. More information at madebirmingham.com

AUGUST

110 ABOVE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 3 - Sun 5 Aug, Gospel Hall Farm, Leicestershire. More information at 110above.com

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR Line-up includes Judas Priest, Gojira, Nightwish, Emperor and DevilDriver. Thurs 9 - Sun 12 Aug, Catton Hall, Derbyshire. More information at bloodstock.uk.com

LAKEFEST Line-up to be announced. Thurs 9 - Sun 12 Aug, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire. More information at lakefest.co.uk

FARMER PHIL'S FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 10 - Sun 12 Aug, near Gatten Farm, Shropshire. More information at farmerphilsfestival.com

THE MOIRA FURNACE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Elbow Jane, Other Road, Vicki Swan & Johnny Dyer, Mike Silver and Risky Business. Fri 17 - Sun 19 Aug, Moira Furnace Museum and Monument Site, Derbyshire. More information at moirafurnacefolkfestival.co.uk

THE JUST SO FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 17 - Sun 19 Aug, Rode Hall Parkland, Cheshire. More information at justsofestival.org.uk

SHAMBALA Line-up to be announced. Thurs 23 - Sun 26 Aug. A secret location in Northampton. More information at shambalafestival.org

CREAMFIELDS Carl Cox announced as Friday night headliner. Thurs 23 - Sun 26 Aug, Daresbury, Halton, Cheshire. More information at creamfields.com

BEERMAGEDDON FESTIVAL Line-up includes Haerken, Footprints in The Custard, Shadowflag and Fjords. Fri 24 - Sun 26 Aug, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove, Worcester. More information at beermageddon.co.uk

SUNSHINE FESTIVAL Status Quo announced as first headliner. Fri 24 - Sun 26 Aug, Fish Meadow, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information at uptonfestival.co.uk

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Steeleye Span, Gretchen Peters, Jon Boden & The Remnant Kings and O'Hooley & Tidow. Fri 24 - Mon 27 Aug, Greenhous West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury. More information at shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

STONEDEAF Line-up includes Anvil, The Graham Bonnet Band, Massive Wagons and Hand of Dimes. Sat 25 Aug, Newark Showground, Nottinghamshire. More information at stonedeaffestival.co.uk

OFF THE TRACKS Line-up to be announced. Fri 31 Aug - Sun 2 Sep, Donington Park, Derbyshire. More information at offthetracks.co.uk

MOSELEY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 31 Aug - Sun 2 Sep, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information at moseleyfolk.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 6 - Sun 9 Sep, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information at bromyardfolkfestival.co.uk

WORCESTER MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced. Fri 14 - Sun 16 Sep, venues across Worcester. More information at worcestermusicfestival.co.uk

ROCKSTOCK AND BARREL Line-up to be announced. Thurs 27 - Sun 30 Sep, The Chimneys, Willington, Derbyshire. More information at rockstockandbarrelfestival.co.uk

OCTOBER

LICHFIELD FESTIVAL OF FOLK Line-up includes Sam Kelly and the Lost Boys and Megson. Fri 19 - Sun 21 Oct, venues around Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information at lichfieldarts.org.uk

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A full-page photograph of actor and comedian Tom Walker. He is wearing a black tuxedo with a white shirt and a dark tie. He has a playful, slightly mischievous expression, looking off to the side with his hand near his ear. The background is a plain, light grey.

A SLICE OF PIE

Actor and comedian Tom Walker talks about creating cult character, YouTube sensation and ranting reporter Jonathan Pie...

“So I made a few little films, one of them went viral and that was it. I suddenly had a career back”

What made you create the character of Jonathan Pie, Tom?

Desperation, really. I'd been out of work for a long time as an actor, and I felt that if I didn't do something myself nothing would ever happen. So I had him in my head for a while and I thought, just do it. So I made a few little films, one of them went viral and that was it. I suddenly had a career back.

Many people thought, at least on the first viewing, that Jonathan was real...

I think the first time you see him or come across him, you kind of go, 'God, is this for real?' I think by the second time, you go, 'Oh... no, it's not'. Nobody loses it that badly every week.

How did you go about evolving him as a character?

The evolution had to come very quickly because the first couple of videos I did happened to be about politics. The first one was about Jeremy Corbyn, and then the next week the story about our prime minister at the time and a pig got released, and you go, "I can't ignore that". Very quickly I realised it was the politics that people were tuning in for; it was the satire of it. Originally I conceived him as 'Isn't it funny when things go wrong to newsreaders' or 'Isn't it funny when a newsreader flips'. That's what it was all about, really - the political satire wasn't there when I originally conceived it, but very quickly I realised that people were seeing it as a piece of political satire, so that was what I needed to go with. I never once, before Pie, had been in the pub having a discussion about politics, but now that seems to be all anyone wants to talk to me about - which is fine - but I don't care as much as the character does, which I think actually helps me write him.

He certainly has left leanings, would you say?

Yes, he does. He's a lefty, a proper old-school lefty, which is why he likes Corbyn. But I think the satire is more balanced than he is. It's quite easy for him to hate Trump because I've not met anyone in this country who likes him, so that's a universal thing. But I think the other hot potato is Brexit, and when it

comes to Brexit he's actually pretty balanced. Because he's an old-school lefty, he knows what's wrong with the EU. He knows that it's not this eutopia full of different creeds holding hands and singing. He knows that it's a corporate block which is all about the interest of corporations, but he also knows that economically we're better off in it. So actually, when it comes to Brexit, he speaks for leavers and remainers. So I think, as I said, the satire is more balanced than he is.

Would you say that most people's politics are more nuanced than Pie's? As a character he simplifies things and people maybe find that more engaging?

It is simplified because I'm writing a three or four-minute piece each week, and normally there's one, maybe two, points that I'm trying to make. So he does over-simplify. But I don't think that people recognise their political views are nuanced. I think these days, especially on the left, people go, "You either agreed with me 100% or you're on their side." You know what I mean? Anyone who votes Conservative is a bigot and anyone who voted leave is a bigot. So I think the left are in danger of forgetting political nuance. I hope, actually, that Pie reminds them of it.

How does that transpire in the live show?

Well, I've got an hour or so to actually explore things harder, and so I'm much more able to have a go at the left because they're not going to turn off. In this new show I've just written, a main section in the middle is having a go at us lefties and saying where we're going wrong. I'm much more able, when I've got a bit of length to the show, to explore where the Tories are going wrong, where Trump is going wrong, but also where we're going wrong. So I think the satire is much more balanced in the live show.

Do you think that Jonathan will evolve further - for example, as Steve Coogan evolved Alan Partridge?

That would be great. I mean, I'd love to see Pie on TV, and I'd like to see where he comes from and where he works and to meet who he works with. But I don't think there's a TV channel out there that's quite ready for Pie. I think maybe 10 or 15 years ago they might

have been more open to it - I don't know if the BBC would make The Thick Of It now. I think from my few encounters with TV people, they're very risk-averse. I would love to see Pie evolve, but I need someone to take a punt on him first.

If Jonathan Pie existed in the real, minute-by-minute world and you met him in a pub, do you think you'd get on well?

I'm not sure, actually. Like I say, everyone wants to talk to me about politics in the pub, and on my downtime I'm not that interested because I spend my day following the news and reading articles. Every comedy character has a fault at their core, and Pie's is that he can't not talk about politics, and when he talks about politics, he can't not get angry. So I think after about half an hour I'd be like, "Can we talk about something else?" So I don't know.

Have you found yourself in any awkward situations midst recording your outside broadcasts?

No, not at all. Because I'm still cult - niche, if you like - the people who recognise me are the people who know me, and the people who know me are the people who like me. So I've never had anyone really have a go. I've had people interrupt recording, as they think it's funny to stick two fingers up at the camera, and that's when you can't really distinguish between the two of us, because I do tear them a new one. When I've got a suit on and a camera there, everyone recognises me; when I'm walking around in my hoody and have a hat on, looking scruffy, no one recognises me at all.

So in real life you're not swearly but really polite?

No, unfortunately not. I am a bit swearly. We have a similar vocabulary...

.....

Tom Walker appears as Jonathan Pie at Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on Thursday 1 March; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Wednesday 7 March; and New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, on Thursday 8 March.

Chris Rock

Arena Birmingham, Thurs 25 January

Grammy and Emmy Award-winning comedian, actor, director, writer and producer Chris Rock has certainly courted his fair share of controversy during a career spanning more than 30 years.

At the 2007 London Live Earth concert, for instance, his decision to call the crowd 'mother*****s' led to the BBC immediately terminating its live broadcast of the event, then issuing numerous apologies for having inadvertently aired the swear word at a pre-watershed time.

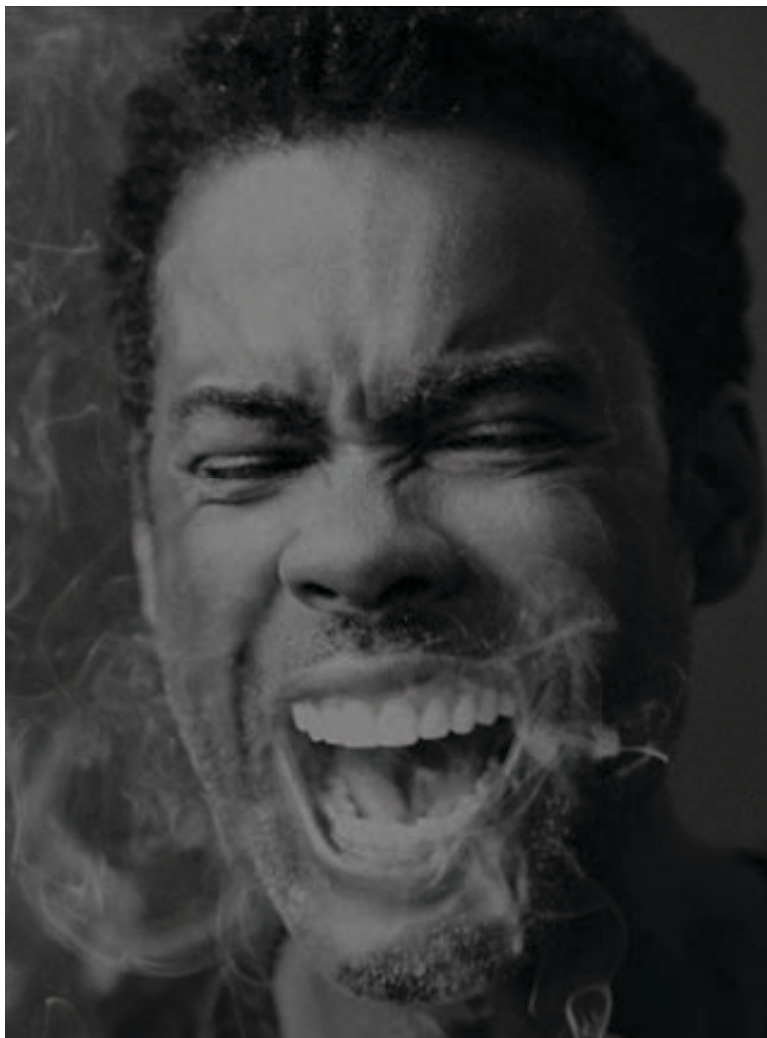
Rock has also been slammed by his hero Bill Cosby, both for his willingness to use the 'n' word and for his view that high-profile celebrities shouldn't be under extra pressure to behave as role models.

"Why does the public expect entertainers to behave better than everybody else?" he questioned in his memoir. "It's ridiculous. Of course, this is just for black entertainers. You don't see anyone telling Jerry Seinfeld he's a good role model, because everyone expects whites to behave themselves. Nowadays, you've got to be an entertainer and a leader. It's too much."

Rock's jokes include: "White man makes guns? No problem. Black rapper says 'gun'? Congressional hearing. 'Oh my God, that n***** said gun, *and* he rhymed it with fun!'" And also: "I had a cop pull me over the other day - scared me so bad, made me think I stole my own car. 'Get out of the car,' he said, 'get out of the f***** car! You stole this car!' I was like, 'Damn, maybe I did!'"

And finally... "We got so much food in America that we're allergic to food. Allergic to food! Hungry people ain't allergic to s***. You think anyone in Rwanda's got a f***** lactose intolerance?"

Touring the UK for the first time in 10 years, Rock stops off in Birmingham this month with his critically acclaimed Total Blackout show.



James Redmond & Adam Kay

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri 26 January

One-time international model James Redmond is relatively new to standup, having initially made a name for himself as an actor - most notably in the long-running BBC TV series *Casualty*.

Former obstetrician and gynaecologist Adam Kay has been playing the comedy circuit for a good while longer than James. He counts Stephen Fry among his many fans and always brings a palpable feelgood factor to his shows.



Adam Rowe

MAC, Birmingham, Wed 24 January

Adam Rowe well remembers the day he died in Stockport (only on stage, of course).

"It was the day I got my A-Level results and realised I wasn't going to university for another year," recalled the 25-year-old Liverpudlian in a recent interview with *The Skinny*. "I decided to rant about my day and not do my material. I died on my arse and got gonged off. Awful."

Fortunately for Adam, most of his gigs bear no resemblance to that one.

Blending an affable persona with a quick wit and material that's seen him likened to Jason Manford, he's widely considered to be one of the most promising new acts on the UK comedy circuit.



Guz Khan

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 8 January

Former school teacher Guz is fairly new to the comedy scene, but he's certainly made a big impact in a short time. He shot to relative fame a handful of years ago after seeing his YouTube clips go viral. Since then, the only way's been 'up' for the one-time Humanities teacher at Grace Academy in Coventry. "I think it's important to push against boundaries with comedy," says Guz, "and although I like to make people laugh while exploring issues such as religion, race and gender, I'm not somebody who's looking to cause offence just because I can."



Bill Bailey

 Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Mon 29 & Tues 30 January

Bill Bailey thinks his comedy should be educational. "From an audience perspective, it's great if they can leave one of my shows more informed than when they arrived," he says. "I'm delighted when I get messages from people saying, 'I was in a lecture and I knew who this artist was because I'd seen your show', or 'I was in a pub quiz and I got the answers right because I'd seen your show'. "I'm delighted by that, and it makes it all

worthwhile. Obviously, I want people to come along and be entertained, have a laugh and get taken out of themselves for a couple of hours, but if they can also glean something a bit longer-lasting than a couple of laughs, then all the better."

Bill is visiting Coventry with his show, *Larks In Transit* - "a compendium of travellers' tales and the general shenanigans of 20 years as a travelling comedian."

Ed Byrne

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 26 January;
Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 27 January

A highly regarded master of observational comedy, Ed Byrne admits to being a little uncomfortable about some of the 'more laddish' material he used in the early days of his standup career.

"My comedy reflected my life at that time - single and enjoying myself. Most of it was fairly harmless, but some of the stuff about an ex-girlfriend I can see was a bit angry, and I wouldn't do it now."

So 20-plus years after first dipping his toes into the decidedly dangerous waters of standup comedy, does Ed still enjoy touring?

"Apart from the travel involved, which no comic likes, I love it. You have people responding to something that you've written alone in your office, and the work comes alive in a roomful of people. I like the TV things I do, but nothing can beat a live comedy audience."

Ed tours to the Midlands this month with brand new show *Spoiler Alert*.



Beautiful

The Carole King Musical returns to the Midlands

“ It’s an amazing night!
It’s like a rock concert at
the end - there’s no other
feeling like it! ”

Having enjoyed great acclaim during its debut Midlands run late last year, **Beautiful: The Carole King Musical** makes a welcome return to the region. What's On recently caught up with leading lady Bronté Barbé to find out more....

After kicking off its first ever UK tour late last year, smash-hit Carole King musical *Beautiful* enjoyed a warmly received run at Birmingham Hippodrome in November. But even *If It's Over* and you missed out, don't think that *It's Too Late*. Though touring may have taken the show *Way Over Yonder and So Far Away*, it turns out pretty soon it's *Goin' Back* - on Wednesday 31 January to be precise. It seems something told the Hippodrome it was into something good...

And word must've filtered through to fellow Midlands venues the Wolverhampton Grand and Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre too, because *they've* booked the hit show as well. "It sold really well, and the theatre is so supportive of the work that arrives there," gushes Bronté Barbé, who takes over the tremendous task of playing Carole King from West End star Cassidy Janson. "They laid on a lovely welcome for us, and we had a great time in Birmingham. The audiences were fantastic!"

Telling the extraordinary story of the songwriter-turned-performer's rise to fame, the show takes us through King's personal trials and tribulations: overcoming her own insecurities, kicking back against convention, and breaking into what was then a very male-dominated 1960s music industry. "One of the first lines in the show is Carole's mum saying to her, 'Girls don't write music, they teach it,'" says Barbé. "She was so brave at that time, to go into those offices to present her songs. What's amazing is that despite her insecurities, she had the determination to stick at it and get what she wanted, especially when she was so young." Evidently, this 'Sweet Young Thing' 'Wasn't Born To Follow': we know that she eventually plucked up the courage to enter the limelight and became a star in her own right. But as

her relationship with husband and long-term writing partner Gerry Goffin breaks down during the 12-year period the show covers, there's plenty of tugging at heartstrings before the feelgood finale.

"I think Carole actually found it very hard to listen to the initial read-throughs of the show, because in a way it was like living through it again. But then I know she later went to the Broadway show in disguise and absolutely loved it. She even ended up getting on stage to sing with the cast!"

"It's a very different process playing a part like this. Because she's a real person, she's still alive and she worked so hard for this, you do want to honour her. I haven't met her and I don't know if I will - though I'd absolutely love to! - but I have watched lots of interviews and documentaries and videos of her, and I've read her book. So hopefully I'm living up to the task!"

The trick, you might say, is not to play her as your typical, emotionally demonstrative stock musical theatre character, but rather to make her feel like a *Natural Woman*. Paradoxically, though, seeming natural and spontaneous actually takes a lot of hard work and attention to detail, particularly when it comes to the vocals. With big fans of Carole King coming into theatres expecting to *Feel The Earth Move*, getting the singing right was always *Going To Take Some Time...*

"It was quite a long process because I wanted to get as close to Carole as I could without doing an impression, because that's not what it's about. So I listened to her intently for a long time, broke down what I thought were 'Carole-isms', wrote them out, put them in different places, and sang the songs over and over again with and without them."

For Barbé, as for many audience members, seeing the show for the first time in London

was a real eye-opener. Despite considering herself a fan, it wasn't until she saw friends performing in the West End production that she realised quite how prolific a songwriter King was.

"I had her album *Tapestry* on vinyl because my mum told me I had to get it when I first got a record player, and I just absolutely loved it. I probably overplayed it, actually. So I already thought she was fantastic, but I had no idea she'd written all of these other songs. I knew like *The Locomotion* and *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?*. There's a huge back catalogue of songs in the show."

It's partly this that makes *Beautiful* stand out from the numerous other biopic-style juke-box musicals around in theatreland at present.

"There's no other show that I know of where one character can present a song and then a whole other group of characters can sing the same song without you getting bored of it. Like with *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?*, I present it and then *The Shirelles* sing it in a completely different way. The combination of that and the fact that it isn't just about her and Gerry Goffin but also the other writing duo, Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann, means there's a great variety of music in the show." For those of an age to remember when King first made it big, the music and nostalgia it inspires will surely be the main draw, with many coming just to hear that one special *Song Of Long Ago*. Yet there's more to it than that. *Beautiful* aims to be a show not just for one generation, but for *Anyone At All*, guaranteed to have you *Dancing With Tears In Your Eyes*.

"There's so much heart to the piece and it's so incredibly relatable that I think there's something for everyone. It's an amazing night! It's like a rock concert at the end - there's no other feeling like it!"



Beautiful: The Carole King Musical returns to Birmingham Hippodrome from Wed 31 January to Sat 3 February. The show then plays at Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tues 24 to Sat 28 April and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tues 12 to Sat 16 June.

A sepia-toned photograph of a man and a woman in a romantic embrace. The man, on the left, is wearing a checkered blazer and has his eyes closed. The woman, on the right, is wearing a light-colored blazer over a white shirt and has her hand on the man's shoulder. They are about to kiss. The background is dark and out of focus.

**“Thanking you for
coming back to me”**

Kneehigh’s Brief Encounter returns to Birmingham REP

“It’s really important to me that you see the different layers of society, and that’s something that Noel Coward did beautifully”

There may come a time in the future where we shan’t mind about it any more, but for now, Kneehigh Theatre’s spectacular stage adaptation of *Brief Encounter* continues to tour to international acclaim.

Ten years after its 2008 premiere, the show returns to where it all started in a run at Birmingham REP that might mark the beginning of the end of its long life. But not quite yet.

“It’s one of those rare instances where if you could always make shows like this, you would, but in reality they don’t come along very often in a lifetime,” says writer and director Emma Rice. “Every time we’ve taken it out, we’ve made it a little bit better, a little bit deeper. It’s 10 years old this year, and still retains this incredible magic, so it felt absolutely right to bring it back again.”

Those who saw the show in its original incarnation will notice a few changes this time round, the story having been tightened up and distilled down to a “perfect gem”.

“On a really practical level, it used to have an interval but doesn’t now, so it runs more like a film. I remember re-watching the film after I’d made it and thinking there was something extraordinary about following this journey from beginning to end without getting off - a bit like being on a train.”

Attempts to recreate the atmosphere of a visit to the cinema have been a feature of the play since its inception. Upon arrival, audiences are greeted by 1940s-style ushers and popcorn sellers. Meanwhile, the show itself incorporates pre-recorded film footage in which the stage cast recreate scenes from the David Lean original, combining them with live performance in clever effects.

Much like its 1945 inspiration, in which the thrill of an illicit trip to the pictures is what kicks off the quiet romance between the separately married Alec and Laura, there’s an

extent to which this production feels like a love letter to the strange magic of the cinema. With her reputation for breaking theatrical conventions, it’s no surprise that Emma Rice would love to see her work freed from the perceived rules for theatre audiences, instead enjoyed in much the same way as a film.

“For one thing, cinema audiences tend to be younger and poorer. But generally I think there’s a sort of freewheeling sense of a good night out at the cinema which I would love to be what people felt when they come to the theatre.”

One might well wonder, then, what’s to be gained from presenting the story live on stage as opposed to simply screening the film. Her answer is surprisingly straightforward.

“You can’t really do magic on film. I know that sounds silly when there are so many special effects nowadays, but as a medium it’s much more, ‘what you see is what you get’. If you go and see *Harry Potter* they have to show you the witches and wizards flying around on broomsticks, whereas in the theatre, you only need to suggest it, and there’s a kind of magic to what happens in that moment.”

Interestingly enough, the plot of *Brief Encounter* first appeared on stage in Noel Coward’s short play *Still Life*. Set entirely in the station tea room where Alec and Laura have their first chance meeting, the original play harks back to a long theatrical tradition by making much more of the working-class characters whose own romantic subplots reflect on the main action. Rice’s version is an amalgamation of the two, with songs and poems by Coward thrown in for good measure.

“The original play is much more of a six-hander, and I loved that. There’s a beautiful Paula Rego painting called *The Dance Of Life* which shows love in all these different stages, and I think *Brief Encounter*’s a bit like

that: you’ve got first love with the young kids in the tea room; you’ve got impossible love between these two middle-aged, married people in Alec and Laura; and you’ve got last-chance love or surprise love between the older couple that find their way to each other.

“It’s really important to me that you see the different layers of society, and that’s something that Noel Coward did beautifully. It’s no mistake that he set *Still Life* in the tea room - it’s a great leveller, isn’t it? Everyone who’s waiting for a train goes in there for a cup of tea.”

While elements of *Still Life* have been added, some features of the film have had to be cut, notably the voiceovers which offer a window into Laura’s private thoughts - though certain lines from these internal monologues have made their way into song lyrics. Arguably, this helps to spread our sympathies between the characters. The film perhaps feels more like Laura’s story, while there’s a kind of ambiguity to Alec: we’re never quite sure if his motives are as honest and genuine as hers.

“It’s true that he’s not as well-drawn as Laura - I think mostly because Noel Coward had less empathy with the straight man than he did with the trapped housewife. There’s an interesting unanswered question there, and you could certainly read him as a predator, but I’m a romantic, so mine is quite a pure telling of the story.

“I always felt it was really important that they’re both in this together. To use the fairytale language I prefer, it’s like they’re both asleep. They’re sleepwalking through their lives and then they meet each other and awaken something in each other and have to decide what to do with it.”

.....
Brief Encounter shows at Birmingham REP from Friday 2 to Saturday 17 February.



Strangers On A Train

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Mon 29 January - Sat 3 February

Two strangers meet on a train journey and start chatting. One talks about an unfaithful wife; the other, a hated father. As the conversation continues, the charming but spoilt Charles Bruno hatches a plan, proposing to ambitious architect Guy Haines that they execute the perfect murder - by each killing the other's victim. Guy initially laughs off the suggestion, but then things start happening...

Brought to the New Alexandra Theatre by the company which recently visited the venue with *Gaslight*, *Strangers On A Train* stars Christopher Harper (Nathan Curtis in *Coronation Street*), John Middleton (Vicar Ashley Thomas in *Emmerdale*), Jack Ashton (*Call The Midwife*) and Hannah Tointon (*Mr Selfridge*).

The production is based on the 1950 novel of the same name by Patricia Highsmith. Her book was made universally famous the following year thanks to an Academy Award-winning 'film noir' adaptation by the legendary 'master of suspense', Alfred Hitchcock.

The Death Show

The REP, Birmingham, Fri 26 & Sat 27 January



Much admired for their playful and dynamic approach to making original, contemporary work, independent theatre makers Lucy Nicholls and Antonia Beck here get to grips with the grim reaper.

Preparation for *The Death Show* has included the duo working as artists-in-residence at a funeral parlour and spending time with patients at a hospice.

The pair here invite audience members to celebrate their own mortality, 'laugh, cry and stick two fingers up' at the aforementioned grim reaper, and discover why talking about death can be a life-affirming activity.

The Late Marilyn Monroe

The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Tuesday 30 January - Saturday 3 February

Marilyn Monroe was widely considered to be the sexiest female movie star of the 20th century - except maybe by Tony Curtis, who once said that making love to her was like 'kissing Hitler'. The woman who began life as Norma Jeane Mortenson courted controversy throughout her Hollywood career, her troubled life coming to an end at the tragically young age of 36.

This brand new production takes a look at the events of August 5 1962, the last day of Marilyn's life, and asks that eternally unanswerable question: what really happened?...

Austen The Musical

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 January

Having previously played both the Edinburgh Fringe and the Jane Austen Festival to great critical acclaim, Rob Winlow's celebration of the life, times and works of one of England's greatest ever writers stops off in Birmingham as part of a nationwide tour.

Broadway director Tim Tringham is the man at the helm of a production that re-counts Austen's struggle to get published in a male-dominated society.



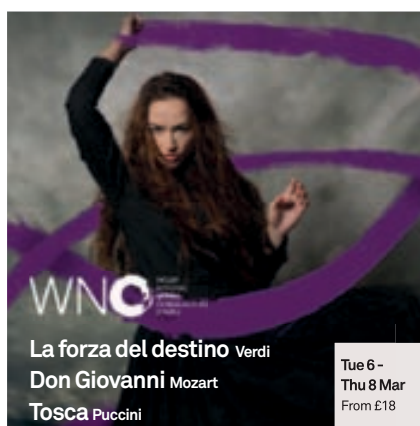


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Gallowglass

Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 18 - Sat 20 January;
Malvern Theatres, Wed 24 - Sat 27 January; Theatre Severn,
Shrewsbury, Tues 1 - Sat 5 May

Middle Ground Theatre Company have some seriously impressive form when it comes to delivering highly charged stage adaptations of literary works - recent successes have included productions of *The Verdict* and *A Murder Is Announced*.

This latest offering from the Worcestershire-based company - veterans of more than 40 productions since forming in 1988 - is a stage version of the same-named 1990 thriller by Ruth Rendell, writing under her pseudonym of Barbara Vine...

When Sandor snatches homeless youngster Little Joe from the path of a London tube train, the latter finds himself taking on the role of a 'gallowglass' - the servant of a chief - and becoming embroiled in a bizarre plot to kidnap a former model...

Quentin Crisp: Naked Hope

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 19 January

Quentin Crisp certainly had a talent for outrageous self-publicity. Back in the mid-20th century, 'mincing' around the streets of London in gaudy makeup and dying one's hair crimson was a pretty good way for a gay man to get himself not only noticed but also thoroughly duffed up - and Quentin certainly bagged a beating or two en route to the fame and fragility of his old age.

This 'glorious, uplifting celebration of the urgent necessity to be your true self' is directed by Linda Marlowe, who played Sylvie Carter in *EastEnders* for more than two years.



Teechers

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Wed 31 January - Sat 3 February



John Godber's highly acclaimed comedy tells the story of three school leavers, Salty, Hobby and Gail, who offer an account of their time in high school. Their memories focus mainly on their experience of Mr Nixon, the drama teacher who inspires them with his belief that all children should be treated equally... A play which deals with the sense of disillusionment evident not only in students but in many of those who educate them, *Teechers* remains as relevant today as it was when first performed at the Edinburgh Festival way back in 1987.

The Wizard Of Oz

The Place, Oakengates, Shropshire, Fri 12 January; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 14 January;
MAC Birmingham, Wed 21 & Thurs 22 February

Although zany funsters Oddsocks are probably best known for their humorous takes on the works of William Shakespeare, they occasionally like to shake things up a bit by looking for their inspiration elsewhere. This is one such occasion... L Frank Baum's splendid tale is here presented with a hearty dollop of the company's trademark comedy - not to mention brand new songs to add to the raft of classic numbers adored by generations...



GREAT SHOWS COMING UP AT WOLVERHAMPTON GRAND THEATRE

SAT 9 DEC 2017 – SUN 14 JAN 2018

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK



Jack and the Beanstalk
THE GIANT PANTOMIME SPECTACULAR

SUN 21 JAN

A VIENNESE STRAUSS GALA

VIENNESE STRAUSS GALA



SUN 28 – TUE 30 JAN

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RAYMOND GUBBAY PRESENTS
THE RUSSIAN STATE BALLET & ORCHESTRA OF SIBERIA

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ROMEO & JULIET
SWAN LAKE**



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
SERGEI BOBROV
MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CHIEF
CONDUCTOR
NATOLY TCHEPURNOI

SAT 3 FEB

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MON 26 FEB – SAT 3 MAR

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hairspray



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MON 5 MAR

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WED 7 MAR

BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS



THU 8 MAR

JOE BROWN

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER... *Just Joe*



Pantomimes and festive shows in January

Cinderella

Malvern Theatre, until Sun 7 January;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 13
January; Birmingham Hippodrome,
until Sun 28 January

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes.

Midlands-born soul diva Beverley Knight stars as the fairy godmother in the Hippodrome's spectacular version of the story. She's joined in the show by Danny Mac, Suzanne Shaw, Matt Slack and the Grumbleweeds. Ceri Dupree and David Dale don the giant wigs and altogether unpleasant manner to play the not-very-nice Ugly Sisters...

This year's Belgrade Theatre version of the famous fairytale features all the usual panto elements and has been written and directed by Mr Coventry Panto himself, the inimitable Iain Lauchlan...

Meanwhile, in Malvern, former Strictly Come Dancing contestant and This Morning regular Alison Hammond is joined by Gemma Naylor from Nick Jr's Go! Go! Go! show and Paul Hawkyard from CBeebies' Old Jack's Boat.

Robin Hood And The Babes In The Wood

Stafford Gatehouse, until Sun 7 January

Stafford Gatehouse's oft-used strategy of imbuing their annual pantomime with a real



Robin Hood And Babes In The Wood - Stafford Gatehouse

rock'n'roll flavour has proved so popular in previous years that the venue is giving the exact same treatment to its 2017 production. So... they've taken the story of Robin Hood, added a Babe In The Wood or two, stirred in a few time-honoured pantomime favourites and then seasoned liberally with all manner of rock'n'roll hits.

Sleeping Beauty

Swan Theatre, Worcester, until Sun 7 January

The tragic tale of a young princess who's tricked by an evil fairy and pricks her finger on a spinning-wheel, causing her to fall asleep for 100 years, offers a great story around which to build a pantomime production. And that's exactly what Worcester Repertory Company have done, with a show that's so far earned plenty of plaudits.

Jack And The Beanstalk

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
until Sun 14 January

Gareth Gates stars as Jack, with Lisa Riley returning to the venue as the wand-waving Spirit of the Beans.

Also getting back in the Grand Theatre pantomime saddle is 'queen of the Black Country' Doreen Tipton. Panto 'Dame' Ian Adams also features, with familiar television face Graham Cole starring as the oh-so-evil Fleshcreep.

Adam C Booth, meanwhile, is two potatoes short of a Christmas dinner in the comedy role of Simple Simon.



Jack And The Beanstalk - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
until Sun 7 January

The fact that Snow White is a 24-carat classic of a fairytale means that a pantomime version is always a surefire winner...

All the usual panto elements are present and correct in this brand new Theatre Severn offering, including a rouged-up Dame in colourful costumes, oodles of hearty thigh-slapping, singalong songs aplenty, slapstick comedy, and even a few naughty jokes to make sure the grown-ups don't feel too left out of things. Shropshire's 'favourite Dame', Brad Fitt, once more dons the dress.

Aladdin

Lichfield Garrick, until Sat 6 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 7 January

A perfect story for an evening of family entertainment finds street youth Aladdin trying against all odds to win the hand of the beautiful princess - and being helped in his efforts by the mystical genie of the lamp...

'Son of the Potteries' Jonathan Wilkes stars as the lad himself at the Regent, with his big pal Christian Patterson giving his usual larger-than-life performance as the Dame, on this occasion Widow Twankey...

Over in Lichfield, CBeebies Cat Sandion stars in the Garrick's version of the classic Arabian Nights tale. She's joined by Sam Rabone as Widow Twankey and Ben Thornton as Wishy Washy.



Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs - Theatre Severn



The Hundred And One Dalmatians

The Hundred And One Dalmatians

The REP, Birmingham, until Sat 13 January

Birmingham Rep has gone dotty for dogs this Christmas, courtesy of its brand new stage version of *The Hundred And One Dalmatians*. The REP's Associate Director, Tessa Walker, takes the helm for the festive-season family show, having previously directed the venue's yuletide productions of *A Christmas Carol* and *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*. Dodie Smith's delightful tale has been transformed for the stage by Debbie Isitt, writer and director of the hugely popular *Nativity!* films. Isitt's stage show, *Nativity! The Musical*, began its national tour at The REP in October.

Commenting on the venue's 2017 Christmas offering, Tessa Walker said: "I'm delighted to be bringing to life the magic of *The Hundred And One Dalmatians* in our unforgettable production, which features wonderful puppets and new music. Debbie's adaptation is packed with enchantment and humour, and brings a thrilling new sense of adventure to the story, making it fun for families and friends of all ages."

A Christmas Carol

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 4 February

Of all Dickens' festive stories, *A Christmas Carol* reigns supreme. The covetous sinning of the miserly Scrooge, the eternal hope offered by Tiny Tim, and the eerie visions of redemption - visiting Ebenezer in the shape of three yuletide ghosts (four if you count the chain-clanking Marley) - all combine to give the tale a real olde worlde charm.

The RSC version of the story has been penned by David Edgar, whose previous work for the Company includes his award-winning adaptation of Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby*. Phil Davis stars as Scrooge.



The Jersey Boys

The Jersey Boys

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, until Sat 6 January

Rockin' and rollin' New Jersey boys Frankie Valli And The Four Seasons scored some massive hits during the mid-1960s, with best-known numbers including *Walk Like A Man*, *Bye Bye Baby*, *Big Girls Don't Cry*, *Sherry* and *December 1963 (Oh, What A Night)*.

This massive jukebox musical tells their story. Taking a documentary-style format, the show is structured as four 'seasons', each being narrated by a different member of the band. The award-winning production is visiting Birmingham as part of a UK tour.

Stick Man

Birmingham Town Hall, until Fri 12 January

"Scamp Theatre send shivers down my spine," reveals Julia Donaldson, the co-creator (along with Alex Scheffler) of the hugely popular children's book on which this show is based. "They're so lively and innovative. I love their production of *Stick Man*, and so do the audiences."

Julia's not wrong - audiences most definitely do love the show, as a smash-hit season in the West End ably demonstrated.

Featuring a trio of performers, the production brings together puppetry, songs, live music and 'funky moves' to tell the story of *Stick Man*'s attempts to get back to the family tree. Suitable for children aged three and older.

We're Going On A Bear Hunt

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, until Sun 7 January

Written for children aged two-plus, this new adaptation of Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury's popular picture book follows the exciting adventures of a family as they head out on an intrepid quest to find a bear.



We're Going On A Bear Hunt

Catchy songs and interactive scenes are combined with no shortage of swishy swashy grass and oozy, squelchy mud, in a show that seems certain to keep youngsters well and truly entertained.

The Wind In The Willows

Albany Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 6 January

A firm festive favourite, Kenneth Grahame's classic story ably demonstrates the way in which one life can command the full attention of three others!

Mole, Badger and Ratty simply don't have time for any of their own interests - they're way too busy having to look after their reckless and irrepressible friend, Toad...

Treasure Island

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 27 January

When salty old seadog Billy Bones brings his papers to the Admiral Benbow Inn, he draws young Gem into the adventure of a lifetime, one which will see her not only setting sail in search of buried treasure, but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind...

Boasting live music, puppetry and swash-buckling sword fights, this brand new stage version of Robert Louis Stevenson's high-seas adventure is helmed by New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins.



Treasure Island

I'M A BELIEVER!

SHREK THE MUSICAL BACK IN BRUM





Described as ‘larger than life’, Shrek The Musical next month returns to the Midlands for a second outing. What’s On caught up with producer Caro Newling to track the journey of this ogre of a show...

If anything’s got layers, it’s Shrek The Musical. If you thought Shrek and Donkey had a long journey to Duloc and back, it’s got nothing on what’s gone into the making of this mega show.

Once upon a time (2002) in a land not so far away (Covent Garden), director Sam Mendes and producer Caro Newling were brainstorming ideas for new theatre pieces.

The co-founders of London’s Donmar Warehouse were leaving to set up their own independent film and theatre company, Neal Street Productions, which, from the off, had strong ties to DreamWorks, the Hollywood studio behind Mendes’ biggest movies, including the Oscar-winning *American Beauty*. DreamWorks had expressed an interest in making theatre with Neal Street, and it was Mendes who realised they had the ideal story in the form of their 2001 animated hit, *Shrek*.

“Musicals were a big part of what we did at the Donmar,” recalls show producer Caro Newling, “And Sam was clear that the ingredients of *Shrek* were brilliant for a musical.

“For a start, it’s a big old love story as well as a search for friendship by people who feel a bit lost. Then there’s the idea of updating a fairytale and the battle of good versus evil. And those characters, even the fairytale creatures - they’re all so brilliantly drawn.”

Visiting the DreamWorks campus in Glendale, California, and seeing the original designs and models for *Shrek*, Newling was struck by the parallels between animation and theatre-making. “The ingenuity involved in making the whole *Shrek* franchise live and breathe was quite extraordinary,” she says. “And an idea that was floated over dinner and could have flopped around indefinitely got picked up immediately.”

Not only was DreamWorks Animation CEO

Jeffrey Katzenberg keen on the concept, but Bill Damaschke, Head of Creative, was a dyed-in-the-wool musicals man. And so Newling and Damaschke set out to assemble a team who could bring *Shrek* to the stage.

First on board in 2004 was David Lindsay-Abaire, the American writer of *Fuddy Meers*, Neal Street’s first production. Since then, he’s gone on to be a Tony-nominated, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer. And crucially, he got what they wanted to do with *Shrek*. *Shrek* was never a simple screen-to-stage adaptation. Mendes and Lindsay-Abaire spent a year knocking a new script into shape. Meanwhile, a small show called *Avenue Q* was making big waves Off-Broadway. Damaschke was onto director Jason Moore like a shot, convinced he’d found the right man for the *Shrek* project.

Moore took over script development with Lindsay-Abaire (freeing Mendes up for film work) and was later joined in the directorial chair by Rob Ashford, choreographer of such West End hits as *Guys And Dolls* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. “While Jason was busy dramaturging, Rob took on the big stage picture,” says Newling. “The perfect pairing.”

When it came to composers, Jeanine Tesori was high on everyone’s wish-list. The native New Yorker, best known for scoring Tony Kushner’s *Caroline Or Change*, was “absolutely a woman of the theatre,” says Newling.

“She writes music for plays as well as being a composer of musicals, but she’s also written for Disney and knows a lot about the film world. So she became more and more obvious a fit.”

Shrek The Musical made its debut at the 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle in September 2008, before heading back into rehearsals for its big opening on 14 December at the Broadway

Theatre in New York.

With musical stalwart Brian D’Arcy James as *Shrek* and the award-winning Sutton Foster as Fiona, the show became a top-five, Tony-nominated hit, running for 444 performances until January 2010 and departing on a mammoth North American tour that July.

London was in the picture from day one, according to Newling. “DreamWorks recognised it would go down well in the UK because of our phenomenal response to the original *Shrek* movies. A lot of the humour of the first *Shrek* (on which this show is based) is very British: pun, satire, that subtle updating of the fairytale. There’s a darkness to it, but also lots of self-deprecation and a big heart.”

The Muffin Man must be happy. “That was one of the running jokes with the original *Shrek* team, that if we ended up in London, we’d be on Drury Lane,” laughs Newling. “It really was a dream come true.” And nearly wasn’t, she adds, with *Shrek* waiting in line for the theatre behind *Oliver*!

Three years on from the opening on Drury Lane, *Shrek The Musical* embarked on its first UK and Ireland tour to huge acclaim.

Now the tour hits the road for a second time. “We’re very excited to be bringing *Shrek The Musical* to the best venues across the UK and Ireland once more,” says Newling. “It was a joy bringing this much-loved story to cities across the country three years ago, and we’re thrilled to be giving audiences another chance to experience their beloved swamp-dwelling ogre, Princess Fiona, Donkey and all their fairytale friends live on stage.”

Shrek The Musical shows at Birmingham’s New Alexandra Theatre from Wednesday 14 to Sunday 25 February.

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Swan Lake

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 7 January

The highly regarded St Petersburg Classic Ballet here presents its production of a timeless favourite, set to Tchaikovsky's mesmerising score.

Swan Lake tells the story of Odette, a beautiful princess who, caught under the spell of the evil Von Rothbart, must spend the daytime hours as a swan, returning to human form only when night falls...

A sumptuous visual feast, the production offers an evening of ballet which is ideal both for the first-time trier and the more-seasoned dance-goer.

Brendan Cole: All Night Long

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 29 January;
Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 16 March;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 20 March

Strictly Come Dancing star Brendan Cole makes a welcome return to the Midlands with this critically acclaimed solo spectacular.

As anyone who's seen any of Brendan's previous live productions will know, they offer a five-star all-round entertainment package, complete with incredible costumes, fabulous sets and carefully chosen music - all designed to appeal to an audience that spans generations.

"There's no through-narrative to the show," says Brendan, "but what it offers is a chance for people to experience a bit of Strictly magic first hand. When creating modern productions, I think it's really important to have something for everybody. Strictly has a very diverse audience covering all ages, and we have to try to cater for all of them. Hopefully it will be a really good night out, where people can celebrate what they know and love."



The Nutcracker

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Sun 28 January

Along with Coppélia, Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Romeo And Juliet, Cinderella and Giselle, The Nutcracker is one of the most frequently performed productions in the repertoire of the Russian State Ballet of Siberia, a company which is this year celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Boasting a magnificent Tchaikovsky score, The Nutcracker tells the story of a young girl named Clara as she's swept up in a fantasy of soldiers, giant rats, snow fairies, magic and mystery, before finally being transformed into a beautiful ballerina.

A magical, must-see show for little princesses everywhere...



Anton And Erin: From Broadway To Hollywood

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Sat 27 January

Celebrity dancing duo Anton du Beke and Erin Boeg return to Symphony Hall this month with their brand new show. Blending smart choreography, sassy tunes and sparkly costumes, the production features a host of much-loved numbers, including Cry Me A River, Mr Bojangles and New York, New York. The popular pair are joined by a 25-piece orchestra, six ensemble dancers and guest singer Lance Ellington. Richard Balcombe conducts.



GET YOUR SKATES ON

Ice skating superstars Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean found worldwide fame at the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, where they memorably took gold with their spectacular free programme, performed to the music of Maurice Ravel's Boléro. In more recent times, they returned to the limelight in ITV1's *Dancing On Ice*, a series that's back on our screens this very month following a four-year break. Jayne and Chris are back too, and will also be heading out on tour with the live version of the show. What's On caught up with the dynamic duo to find out more...

Dancing On Ice returns to ITV this month following a four-year hiatus. How will it differ from previous years?

Jayne: For us personally, the big difference is that we're actually going to be judging on the show. Chris and I are head judges. In the past, we've been responsible for choreographing all the routines for the celebrities as well as the opening numbers and our own routines. This time, workload wise, it's a lot less - but then we have that pressure on Sunday night to come up with the right points and the right decisions. It's quite different for us. We're really excited that it's coming back. It was a big part of our lives, and one that was very much missed in that January, February, March period of the year. It left quite a big void for a lot of people. We've had such positive feedback from people after hearing that it's coming back.

The 2014 edition was due to be the last show. Why the return?

Christopher: That's when we kind of retired, you might say. But having retired for a year or so, we got itchy feet again. We're really happy that it's coming back and really excited about the new role.

Following the increase in reality TV programmes, is there pressure to compete with other shows?

Christopher: I think everybody compares everything - but from our point of view, the show is unique. It's the only show on TV now that has all the jeopardy involved. It's a skill to be learned, to be able to do it in any competent way.

Jayne: At the same time, it's entertaining as well. It's a family show that everyone can sit down and enjoy.

Which celebrity surprised you the most in previous shows?

Christopher: We had the likes of Ray Quinn, who was just unique - he just seemed to be able to skate. If he'd been a skater from early

on, I think he would've been a champion - he just had a natural ability on the ice. He really blew everybody away. There's the likes of Hayley Tamaddon too, who brought all her theatrical performance to the ice, which really moved people. Then there were sports people like Beth Tweddle.

Who are you looking forward to seeing on the ice this year?

Christopher: I'm a big Corrie fan, so I'm looking forward to seeing Brook.

Jayne: I'm looking forward to seeing all the boys because on all the pictures, none of them have got their shirts on!

What are you looking forward to most about the Dancing On Ice UK tour?

Jayne: We've hosted before, but we're going to be hosting and judging, so pretty busy!

Will you be skating on the tour?

Christopher: We haven't hung up our boots yet. It's more than a maybe.

How active are you both on the ice nowadays?

Christopher: I never leave the ice. I live in America and coach and choreograph out there. I've been working with a lot of Olympic skaters this year, so I'm really looking forward to seeing their progress in the Olympics. Jane has had her skates on a little less.

Jayne: Where I live, I'm not close to an ice rink - it's about a two-hour drive to get to a rink, which takes a whole chunk out of your day.

What's the most important piece of advice you'd give to a budding skater?

Jayne: We always say bend your knees so that you lower your centre of gravity.

Christopher: Skating is all about bending the knees. It's a different feeling from ballet - you've got to bend down and get the glide.

Is ice skating as popular as it used to be?

Jayne: Oh, definitely! When the first series of *Dancing On Ice* came out, there were people flocking to local ice rinks. From that, over the years, more and more seasonal rinks are popping up around the country. They're continuing to pop up because the skating and the social side of it has become really, really popular.

What have been the highlights of your career?

Jayne: Obviously winning the Olympics was a massive highlight. Having a gold medal puts you in a special club and opens up lots of doors for the future. It certainly did for us. We've had lots of opportunities and enjoyed real longevity... Another highlight was going back to Sarajevo 30 years on, which is what we did in 2014, and being able to perform Bolero again in the same rink - it had actually been bombed but rebuilt - in front of a crowd of people who were so excited that we'd gone back there.

Christopher: We've also been given OBEs, which we're very humbled about.

What would be your dream project?

Christopher: I'd like to put on a skating show in a permanent theatre space, custom-built with all the whizzes and bangs that the Cirque Du Soleil has.

Jayne: I could help him with that!

What's the secret of your longstanding friendship and professional partnership?

Christopher: Tolerance! No, I'm being funny there.

Jayne: We never got married - I think that was a good thing!

Christopher: I think you said it - it's friendship.

.....
Torvill & Dean's Dancing On Ice Live Tour visits Arena Birmingham from Friday 13 to Sunday 15 April.

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Sablot, c. 1854 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London



Coco CERT PG

With the voices of **Anthony Gonzalez, Gael García Bernal, Benjamin Bratt, Alanna Ubach, Renée Victor, Edward James Olmos** Directed by **Lee Unkrich (USA)**

Footloose meets The Book Of Love in this cartoon from Pixar and Walt Disney. Twelve-year-old Miguel has always harboured an ambition to become a famous guitarist, like his idol Ernesto de la Cruz. But music is banned in his family, an embargo that has lasted generations. So Miguel pursues his dream to the Land of the Dead, where he believes his great-great-grandfather, a singer, resides... Here, Disney continues to expand its ethnic net, following its animated features *Mulan*, *The Princess And The Frog* and *Moana*. With a budget in the \$175–200million range, it is the most expensive cartoon ever to feature an all-Latino cast. In 3D.

Released Fri 19 January



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in January...

Brad's Status CERT 15 (102 mins)

Starring **Ben Stiller, Austin Abrams, Jenna Fischer, Luke Wilson, Jemaine Clement, Michael Sheen** Directed by **Mike White (USA)**

Brad, the manager of a non-profit consultancy firm in Sacramento, is suffering from peer envy. More significantly, he's having a midlife crisis. Then he finds himself becoming jealous of his own son, who looks like he has a good chance of getting into Harvard. If the message of Mike White's grey comedy is a little pat, it is engagingly enough played to hold the attention and to prompt the odd wry smile. And few actors do pent-up angst as well as Ben Stiller.

Released Fri 5 January

**Hostiles** CERT 15 (133 mins)

Starring **Christian Bale, Rosamund Pike, Wes Studi, Jesse Plemons, Adam Beach, Ben Foster, Timothée Chalamet, Peter Mulan** Directed by **Scott Cooper (USA)**

In the year 1892, a legendary captain in the American army reluctantly agrees to escort a Cheyenne chief and his family through dangerous terrain. Scott Cooper previously directed Christian Bale in the suspenseful and compelling *Out Of The Furnace* (2013) and here, by all accounts, Bale delivers one of the best performances of his career. Be warned, though, it is incredibly violent.

Released Fri 5 January

All The Money In The World

CERT 15 (133 mins)

Starring **Michelle Williams, Christopher Plummer, Mark Wahlberg, Romain Duris, Charlie Plummer, Timothy Hutton** Directed by **Ridley Scott (UK/USA)**

The man with the money is the oil tycoon Jean Paul Getty (Plummer). Then, when his grandson is kidnapped, his daughter-in-law Gail (Williams) begs him to pay the ransom. Originally, Ridley Scott had directed Kevin Spacey as the billionaire but, following Kevingate, Ridley re-shot all the scenes again with Christopher Plummer in the role. Charlie Plummer, who plays Jean Paul Getty III, is no relation to the actor who now plays his grandfather. **Released Fri 5 January**



Film highlights released in January...

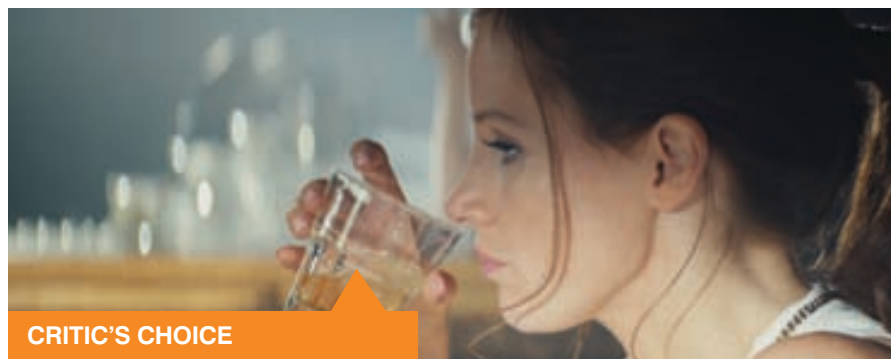
Molly's Game CERT 15 (140 mins)

Starring **Jessica Chastain**, **Idris Elba**, **Kevin Costner**, **Michael Cera**, **Jeremy Strong**, **Chris O'Dowd** Directed by **Aaron Sorkin** (USA)

Jessica Chastain turns in another sizzling performance as the real-life 'Poker Princess' Molly Bloom. After working as a hostess for someone else's game, Molly set up her own high-stakes enterprise at a high-end hotel and was soon entertaining movie stars, real-estate magnates, sporting legends and top-drawer aristocrats. However, when the FBI took her down, and she

was looking at a life behind bars, she refused to name names. The film marks the directorial debut of the scenarist Aaron Sorkin, whose screenplays include *A Few Good Men*, *The Social Network* and *Steve Jobs* - and his dialogue here positively crackles. But sometimes Sorkin is too smart for his own good: real people are seldom as articulate as his keyboard. Nevertheless, he supplies an extraordinary true-life episode with polish and pizzazz. There are moments here of blistering electricity.

Released Mon 1 January



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Eric Clapton: A Life In 12 Bars

CERT 15 (128 mins)
Directed by **Joe Wright** (UK)

As with Asif Kapadia's documentary about Amy Winehouse (2015), Eric Clapton's life story is related by interviewees off-camera. The widow of George Harrison and the object of Clapton's fixation, Pattie Boyd, has much to say, as do family members and the late BB King. But it's Clapton himself who narrates most of his own story, pieced together with home movies, concert footage and news reportage.

And it's a gripping narrative, a film that should appeal to those who don't actually care a jot that Clapton won 18 Grammys and was inducted three times into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

This is the story of a man who admits he was a racist, a heroin addict, a drunk and that he slept with his best friend's wife, that friend being George Harrison.

Released Fri 12 January

Darkest Hour CERT PG (125 mins)

Starring **Gary Oldman**, **Kristin Scott-Thomas**, **Lily James**, **Stephen Dillane**, **Ben Mendelsohn**, **Samuel West** Directed by **Joe Wright** (UK)

Joe Wright, who brought us *Pride And Prejudice* and *Atonement*, is a terrific director, although his last outing, *Pan*, was a horrendous flop. However, the word is that his latest drama is outstanding, helped no end by Gary Oldman's extraordinary reincarnation as Winston Churchill during the initial stages of the Second World War.

Released Fri 12 January



Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri

CERT 15 (115 mins)

Starring **Frances McDormand**, **Woody Harrelson**, **Sam Rockwell**, **Abbie Cornish**, **John Hawkes**, **Peter Dinklage**
Directed by **Martin McDonagh** (USA/UK)

When the police fail to solve the rape and murder of her daughter, Missouri divorcee Mildred Hayes (McDormand) decides to draw attention to the fact. So she rents three billboards just outside Ebbing to shame the local constabulary. From the writer-director of *In Bruges* and *The Guard*.

Released Fri 12 January

Insidious: The Last Key

CERT 15 (103 mins)

Starring **Lin Shaye**, **Angus Sampson**, **Leigh Whannell**, **Josh Stewart**, **Caitlin Gerard**, **Bruce Davison** Directed by **Adam Robitel** (USA)

The dead horse, which started with James Wan's genuinely unnerving *Insidious* seven years ago, is being flogged again. This time, the medium Elise Rainier (Lin Shaye) heads to New Mexico to sort out a haunting. This is the fourth chapter to date.

Released Fri 12 January



The Commuter CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **Liam Neeson, Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Jonathan Banks, Elizabeth McGovern, Sam Neill, Florence Pugh** Directed by **Jaume Collet-Serra** (UK/France/USA)

An insurance salesman on his regular commute finds himself at the heart of a criminal conspiracy as he is forced to uncover the identity of a fellow passenger. The Catalan filmmaker Jaume Collet-Serra previously directed Liam Neeson in *Unknown*, *Non-Stop* and *Run All Night*.

Released Fri 19 January



Downsizing CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Matt Damon, Christoph Waltz, Hong Chau, Kristen Wiig, Jason Sudeikis** Directed by **Alexander Payne** (USA)

With global resources running low, occupational therapist Paul Safranek (Matt Damon) decides to have himself shrunk to four inches in height in order to reduce his environmental footprint. There will be problems, though. From the director of *Sideways* and *The Descendants*. **Released Fri 19 January**



The Post CERT 12a (116 mins)

Starring **Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks, Sarah Paulson, Bob Odenkirk, Tracy Letts, Matthew Rhys** Directed by **Steven Spielberg** (USA)

That's *The Post* as in *The Washington Post* and Meryl Streep plays Kate Graham, the newspaper's publisher. More particularly,

Steven Spielberg's political thriller centres on the presidential cover-up of the US's military involvement in Cambodia and Laos during the Vietnam war.

Tom Hanks plays the newspaper's editor, Ben Bradlee.

Released Fri 19 January

Maze Runner: The Death Cure CERT tbc

Starring **Dylan O'Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Nathalie Emmanuel, Will Poulter, Patricia Clarkson** Directed by **Wes Ball** (USA)

Every maze has an end, we are told. Let's hope so, as the conclusion to this dystopian fantasy sees Thomas (O'Brien) search for a cure to the disease that has ravished the land.

Released Fri 26 January



12 Strong CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Chris Hemsworth, Michael Shannon, Michael Peña, Navid Negahban, Elsa Pataky, William Fichtner** Directed by **Nicolai Fuglsig** (USA)

Following the attacks on the World Trade Centre, 12 American soldiers were hand-picked to fly to Afghanistan. Their mission: to take down the Taliban. Based on a true story.

Released Fri 19 January



Early Man CERT tbc

With the voices of **Eddie Redmayne, Tom Hiddleston, Maisie Williams, Timothy Spall, Richard Ayoade, Johnny Vegas** Directed by **Nick Park** (UK)

The latest full-length plasticine project from Aardman Animations takes us back to the dawn of time. Here, a goofy caveman called Dug (Redmayne) finds himself at loggerheads with Lord Nooth (Hiddleston), who's already got one foot in the Bronze Age.

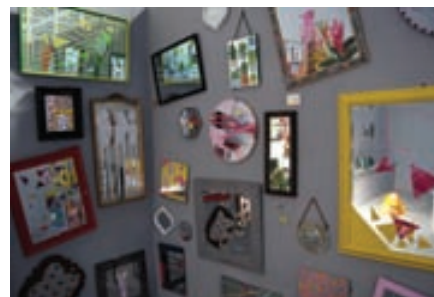
Released Fri 26 January



Lily Wales - Airspace Gallery, Stoke



Larissa Shaw - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery



Bryony Loveridge - Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

MIDLANDS MAKERS

New Art West Midlands showcases the region's hottest new artistic talent

Recent graduates from the region's six art schools will have the chance to see their work professionally exhibited this spring when New Art West Midlands (NAWM) returns with its annual showcase.

Now in its sixth year, the exhibition forms part of the NAWM organisation's wider mission to develop new talent and promote engagement with visual arts.

The show is this year being hosted by three venues: Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG), Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry and Airspace Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent. BMAG curator Lisa Beauchamp tells us more...

"The idea is that this is a multi-site exhibition rather than a tour, so there will be different artists presenting work at each of the galleries. Each venue curates their own exhibition, so they will all be communicating different themes and ideas through the work of the artists they show.

"Part of that will be based on what we feel is going to resonate with and appeal to our

audiences, which are quite different in each location. For example, Airspace is a dedicated contemporary art space that only has one exhibition at a time, whereas in Birmingham, we've got lots of things going on at once and all sorts of different visitors, from families to art students and from people who are already really engaged with art to people who may never have come into a gallery before. So all of that contributes to the choices we make."

Featuring work by a total of 28 artists, all of whom have completed either undergraduate or postgraduate courses within the last three years, the 2018 exhibition marks the second year running that Hereford Arts College has been involved, taking part alongside Coventry University, Birmingham City University, Staffordshire University and the universities of Wolverhampton and Worcester.

"We do always get good coverage from each of the universities taking part," continues Lisa, "and that just happens without us deliberately trying to get a spread, even

though they're obviously all different sizes. Birmingham City University has a huge number of students, so we do get a lot of submissions from there, but I think the fact that the exhibitions are still quite well-balanced really demonstrates the quality of the work that's coming through all of the art schools."

While gallery curators have the final say over which works they display, the selection actually begins with external judges working their way through hundreds of submissions and picking out the most promising. Unlike the artists, these selectors aren't necessarily from the region: this year's trio are Patricia Fleming (director of Patricia Fleming Projects in Glasgow), Sinead McCarthy (curator of Liverpool Biennial) and Ingrid Pollard (a London-based artist and photographer).

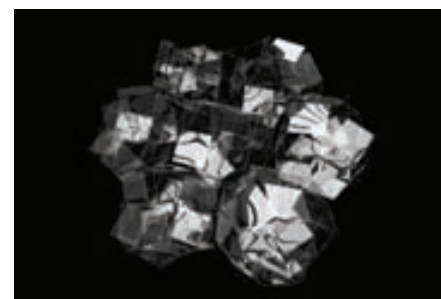
"All of our selectors are art professionals," says Lisa. "We always have at least one practising artist on the panel, and often the others teach art or lecture in higher education institutions. It's really important that they understand the level that these



Tony McClure- Airspace Gallery, Stoke



Keri Jayne- Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry



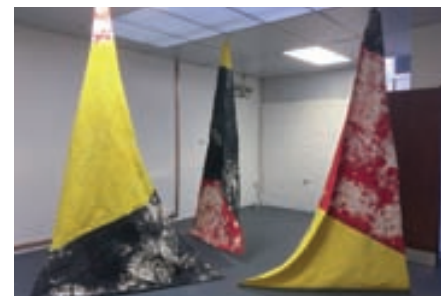
Valerija Zukoba- Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry



Olivia Peake- Airspace Gallery, Stoke



Sarah Walden - Airspace Gallery, Stoke



Maggie Shuter - Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry

recently graduated artists are working at, and that they also have an awareness of what's happening in art schools across the country, so we like to have a real mix."

Unsurprisingly, among the trends currently influencing young creatives is an interest in digital technology. Used variously as a medium, tool or theme, it's something that's been prominent across many of this year's submissions.

"There are quite a few artists working in digital mediums, and also others who are referencing ideas around social media, connectivity and surveillance, particularly in our selection in Birmingham.

"On the other hand, there are also artists who have taken a completely different direction and gone back to exploring the handmade and found materials, looking at things like everyday domestic items and the urban environment.

"There's a lovely playfulness to a lot of the work, with some of the artists creating quite immersive, large-scale sculptures and

installations. There's a really fun piece by Larissa Shaw called *Flesh Party*, which uses sampled music to reference the late Hacienda nightclub in Manchester. It has speakers that produce soundwaves to make parts of the sculpture vibrate, and visitors will be able to touch and interact with the vibrating parts."

Although it's only been running since 2013, the scheme has already boosted the careers of many of its former exhibitors, including Lucy Hutchinson and Chris Clinton - who've both had work enter the national Arts Council Collection - and Sikander Pervez, who's since held a solo exhibition at Walsall's New Art Gallery. More recently, Hereford graduate Lorna Brown was commissioned by the National Trust for a project at Berrington Hall, while Emily Sparkes' *An Ode To Christian Joy* has been acquired by the Birmingham Museums Trust's own collection.

In recognition of this success, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery will be running a 'Five Years On' NAWM alumni showcase alongside the main exhibition, displaying more recent

work by artists from previous years.

"Obviously this is the first major public exhibition that most of the artists have been involved with," says Lisa, "and it can take time for them to really flourish. But most of the work in the exhibition is for sale, and in previous years we've had plenty of artwork purchased by visitors and other organisations. Mainly, though, it's the publicity and promotion and advocacy around the exhibition that really helps them career-wise. This is a very competitive industry, so it's great for them to have a platform at an early stage in their development."

New Art West Midlands 2018 shows at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery from Thurs 15 February to Sun 13 May; Airspace Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent from Fri 23 February to Sat 31 March, & Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry, from Sat 24 February to Sun 13 May



Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender & Identity

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Sun 15 April

As the UK marks 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967, this new exhibition explores how shifting attitudes towards the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) experience have influenced visual art.

Part of a three-year national partnership between the Arts Council Collection and four UK galleries, *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender And Identity* comes to Birmingham fresh from its opening at Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery - but it's not simply been a case of transferring the exhibition wholesale...

The show has been 'reimagined' for Birmingham audiences, featuring new items and with an extensive engagement programme and gallery-trail running alongside.

Among the pieces which have joined the exhibition is Grayson Perry's *Claire's Coming Out Dress*, which he designed and wore to mark his entry into the art world as a transvestite.

The dress is being shown alongside his 1996 ceramic *Who Am I?*, marking stages in the artist's personal journey.

Local artists also get a look in, notably with three prints by Birmingham photographer Vanley Burke, capturing scenes from a Pride demonstration called in protest against the infamous 1988 Section 28 Act.

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REALITY DIMMED

Clare Woods' new exhibition debuts at Warwick Arts Centre

"Disquieting", "disorienting", "sensuous", "dangerous and beautiful", "vibrant, raw and exciting" - all words used to describe the strange, abstracted works of contemporary British painter Clare Woods, whose brand new solo exhibition, *Reality Dimmed*, opens at the Mead Gallery this month.

Straddling the divide between abstract and figurative art, Woods' large-scale works use thick, sculptural layers of brightly coloured paint to transform real subjects pictured in found photographs. Close-up, visible brushstrokes distort and break up images, while from a distance, they coalesce into dimly recognisable shapes, like hidden thoughts and feelings slowly surfacing from the subconscious. Indeed, Woods has described her own work as a means of painting out buried anxieties, and the overall effect is startlingly immediate and visceral.

Comparisons have been made to Munch's *Scream* - and it's easy to see why - while Woods herself cites artists like Bacon and Guston as influences. But such parallels don't quite do justice to her distinctive way of working: it's the method and medium she uses to express her ideas that are uniquely Woodisan. Originally trained in sculpture, she now brings to her painting a sculptor's eye for three-dimensional form, approaching it as a sort of construction process.

"I use aluminium (as a base) because it's a very stable, solid structure to paint onto," she explains. "I always work flat, and because I use quite a lot of paint, if I was working this way onto canvas it would sag."

When she talks about her influences, she describes the work of other artists in similarly practical terms, honing in on specific details or techniques that she is grappling with, such as a given artist's use of orange or pink. But her real interest lies in why those choices produce the particular effects they do, on the responses - conscious or otherwise - that they provoke from viewers.

It's not so much a case of form taking precedence over subject matter, then, as it is a sense that form is content, the means by which an apparently random source image is made to express a personal way of looking at the world - by which, if you like, we're invited to journey into the Woods...

"I wouldn't normally disclose my source material directly because it really is just a springboard for the painting. I'm using it as a starting point rather than making direct copies. The way I pick an image is, I find a photograph that works on a really practical, formal level, so I know it's going to be really challenging to paint. The question I'm asking myself is, 'How am I going to actually structurally form this in paint?'"

"I spent a lot of time trying to work out how all the source material linked up and fitted together, but eventually I realised that it doesn't at all. It's quite disparate. The only connection is that it all has some effect on me emotionally or conceptually. For me to want to paint something, it has to have some sort of emotional attachment, and then the act of painting it is a way of breaking that down."

Critics and commentators on her last exhibition - *Victim Of Geography* at Dundee Contemporary Arts - have picked up on what appears to be a focus on scenes of trauma in her latest work. Where early paintings were predominantly based on her own landscape photography, there's since been a shift towards exploring human figures and man-made objects and settings through images gathered from magazines, newspapers and online. War zones, hospital corridors and terror attacks are subjects mentioned in reviews, but it's something that Woods herself downplays.

"There was an image in Dundee that came from September the 11th, but it's actually just of a person so you wouldn't necessarily know that from looking at it. They're quite ambiguous. One of them was just based on a photograph of a chair."

The transformation works both ways, then: on the one hand, something as unassuming and everyday as a piece of domestic furniture can take on an uneasy, even sinister appearance, while on the other hand, scenes of genuine horror are cut loose from their original context, reinterpreted and even rendered oddly beautiful through paint.

It's here that the title of her latest exhibition comes in. Taken from Viktor Frankl's 1946 book *Man's Search For Meaning*, the quote refers to his observations of the psychological defence mechanisms employed by Auschwitz prisoners. "Reality dimmed, and all efforts and all emotions were centred on one task: preserving one's own life and that of the other fellow," he writes. As a psychiatrist, his own experiences as a Holocaust survivor led to a belief in the importance of finding meaning in even the most brutal forms of existence, and thereby a reason to continue living.

While few can claim to have experience of anything comparable, the idea of finding a means of processing trauma to get on with our lives is surely something to which anyone can relate, and chimes with Woods' own method of obscuring observed reality to reveal some personal truth.

"I read the book a long time ago, actually, but it's something that's really stayed with me - the idea that to really find meaning you have to strip everything away, strip it right back. I often collect titles from reading and hearing things, and this is one of those instances where the two words seemed to really fit what I was thinking about and what I was making at that moment, the notion of abstracting what you're actually looking at or what you're feeling."

.....

Reality Dimmed shows at the Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, from Monday 8 January until Saturday 10 March.



Saddleworth: Responding To A Landscape

MAC, Birmingham, until Sun 21 January

Saddleworth Moor in the South Pennines is a location that will forever be associated with the grotesque crimes of Ian Brady and Myra Hindley.

The moorland's connection to those horrific events of the 1960s makes Matthew

Murray's photographs all the more impressive. His images manage to look beyond the ever-present shadow cast by the Moors Murders and present the landscape in a far more positive way - as a picturesque, dreamlike and strangely beguiling space. Murray's epic series of photographs was made over a period of four-and-a-half years. This exhibition marks the first time the pictures have been on public display.



Crafts Of The Punjab

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 21 January

An exhibition specially created for the Herbert and featuring items from the impressive collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum, Crafts Of The Punjab celebrates the delicate and detailed artistry of craftspeople from the region.

The display boasts an extensive range of



arts and crafts from the second to the 19th century, and includes a number of never-before-exhibited works.

Among the featured items are examples of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain sculpture, delicately carved ivories, elaborate musical instruments and gold-inlaid steel artefacts.

An undoubted highlight of the show is the Golden Throne, made by a Muslim craftsman in Lahore for Ranjit Singh, the first Sikh Maharaja of the Punjab.

Edmund Clark: In Place Of Hate

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until Sun 11 March

Engaging with issues of censorship, security and control to create work that explores ideas of visibility, representation, trauma and self-image, Edmund Clark is Ikon's artist-in-residence at Europe's only entirely therapeutic prison - HMP Grendon in Buckinghamshire. This new exhibition of work, the culmination of his residency at the prison, comprises photographs, videos and installations.



Warhol To Walker: Nine American Prints From Pop To Today

Worcester City Art Gallery, until Sat 6 January

Works by Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg and Jim Dine are among the highlights of this exploration of great American printmaking. Covering the period from the Pop Art era of the 1960s to the present day, the display features nine key works from the British Museum's collection. Pieces from the Worcester City Collection are also included, highlighting the ways in which artists have pushed the boundaries of printmaking while exploring subjects as diverse as the Vietnam War, Bing Crosby, picnics and the universe.

Image credit: Andy Warhol, Campbell's green pea soup, 1968, Colour screenprint, 1981, 0620.37 © The Trustees of the British Museum



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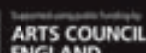
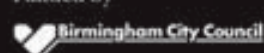
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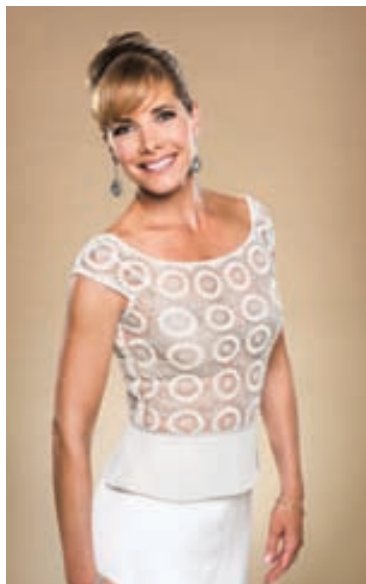
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Strictly Come Dancing Live

Arena Birmingham,
Fri 19 - Sun 21 January

The Strictly Come Dancing Live UK tour waltzes back into Birmingham this month.

The 2018 edition of the show sees Bruno Tonioli and Craig Revel Horwood joined on the judging panel by ballet star Darcey Bussell.

Reigning Strictly champion Ore Oduba hosts the show, while taking to the dance-floor this year are, among others, comedian Susan Calman and double paralympic champion Jonnie Peacock.

British Basketball Cup Finals

Arena Birmingham, Sun 28 January

One of the most eagerly anticipated dates on the British Basketball League (BBL) calendar, this annual event sees stars of the national game go head-to-head in pursuit of coveted silverware. The get-together also features some of Europe's top slam dunkers, giving it their all in a bid to become the BBL Slam Dunk Champion.



Arenacross 2018

Genting Arena, Birmingham,
Sat 20 January

An absolute must for extreme sports fans, the 2018 Arenacross tour brings indoors all the spectacular elements of Motorcross for a 'non-stop white-knuckle ride'.

Set to a pumping soundtrack and laser show, the event sees some of the world's top freestylers hitting the track to present what organisers describe as 'truly awe-inspiring entertainment'.

The National Running Show

NEC, Birmingham,
Sat 20 - Sun 21 January

Dame Kelly Holmes (pictured) opens this brand new addition to the NEC's calendar, a show designed as a one-stop shop for running enthusiasts. Highlights of the event include 'inspirational' talks from running experts, free advice on nutrition, training and equipment, the latest product launches, free trainer fitting and gait analysis and the chance to enter numerous on-site competitions.



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Autosport International

NEC, Birmingham,
Thurs 11 - Sun 14 January

Described as 'the world's greatest four-wheel indoor extravaganza', Autosport International caters for industry professionals and motorsport fans alike. Featuring every level of motor racing - from karting through to Formula One - the event offers visitors the chance to check out the latest performance road cars, chat to club members and watch precision-driving displays in the Live Action Arena. Ex-Formula One World Champion Nigel Mansell makes a special guest appearance at the show.

New Year Family Fun

British Motor Museum, Gaydon,
Tues 2 - Sun 7 January

Early-January visitors to the British Motor Museum can certainly expect an all-action start to the year. Young motor enthusiasts can get 2018 under way in style by using Lego to design a new car, then stepping back in time to find out about the most popular automobiles of 1927. A Motoring Treasures trail adds to the fun.



Tattoo Freeze

Telford International Centre,
Sat 13 - Sun 14 January

Following on from the success of previous shows, this specialist two-day event offers members of the general public the chance to get themselves tattooed by one (or more!) of the 200 talented tattooists who'll be in attendance. Show highlights include Katie Dee and her 'burlesque and magical fire show', robot-building, felt & fibre, BMX and circus workshops, a Scalextric rally challenge and a 10ft-long python named Julius!



Twelfth Night Wassail And Ceilidh

The Other Place and various venues
around Stratford, Sat 6 January

The Royal Shakespeare Company is hosting this special event in order to celebrate the last night of Christmas.

Choirs from across the Midlands sing traditional wassailing songs and carols, after which there's a winter procession and special ceilidh.

Roughly translated as 'be in good health', wassailing is an English tradition - taking place on the Twelfth Night of Christmas - which involves singing to the health of apple trees, in the hope that they might yield a good harvest.

The RSC wassail includes four specially commissioned arrangements by ex-Bellowhead member and choral arranger Paul Sartin. The event coincides with the Company's staging of Shakespeare's popular comedy, Twelfth Night.



Wolverhampton Literature Festival

Venues across Wolverhampton city centre,
Fri 26 - Sun 28 January

Wolverhampton's second literature festival features acclaimed authors, musicians, workshops and children's events.

Included among the festival's highlights is an appearance by novelist, journalist, political commentator and television personality Will Self (pictured).

Commenting on the 2018 festival, Councillor John Reynolds said: "The pilot festival was made possible by the generous contributions of artists and local businesses, and was a great celebration of literature in our city. I'm pleased that the festival will take place again in 2018. Already there's a great variety of entertainment lined up during the three-day festival, with even more authors and events soon to be announced."



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THE TIMES



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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
January 2018

the list



Circus of Horrors: Voodoo at Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, on Fri 26 January

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

What's On

Mon 1 to Sun 7 January



Black Country Communion at
Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

Tues 2 January

Mon 8 to Sun 14 January



Oddsocks' The Wizard Of Oz
at The Place, Oakengates

Fri 12 January

Mon 15 to Sun 21 January



From The Jam at The
Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Fri 19 January

Mon 22 to Wed 31 January



Jenny Eclair at
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Sat 27 January

THROUGHOUT JANUARY

Visual Arts

New Art Gallery - Walsall

LEGACIES: JMW TURNER AND CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICE Exhibition considering the ongoing legacy of JMW Turner through the lens of contemporary art, highlighting the enduring relevance of his work for artists practising today, until Sun 14 Jan

WALSALL SOCIETY OF ARTISTS 68TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION Featuring paintings, drawings, prints, watercolours, sculpture and craft, until Sun 21 Jan

WANTING TO SAY - FINDING A PLACE IN THE PAST Exhibition launching the Midlands Art Papers online research resource, developed by the Department of Art History, Curating & Visual Studies at the University of Birmingham, until Sun 11 Feb

PEOPLE'S CHOICE Featuring the voting public's favourite works from the Permanent Collection, until Sun 25 Feb

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

ANTHONY HAMMOND Exhibition of work by the North Staffordshire-based artist, sculptor and craftsman, who works predominantly on large-scale public art projects and is skilled in a number of green wood disciplines, until Mon 8 Jan

B(U)Y ME! FOR CHRISTMAS Christmas craft exhibition, until Mon 8 Jan,

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

FIRST WORLD WAR REPLICA TRENCH until Sun 11 Nov

MINI MUSEUM Reflecting all the collections held by the museum, this family-friendly exhibition will be asking visitors what their favourite objects are and how they would like to see them displayed, until Sun 3 Jan

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

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, until Sun 21 Jan

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

WINTER OPEN EXHIBITION Exhibition of work by both established and emerging artists, until Sat 6 Jan

BIJOUX Affordable, original pieces of art by members of Borderland Visual Arts (BVA). Featuring prints, ceramics, paintings, tapestry, jewellery and sculpture, until Sat 6 Jan

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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, until Mon 1 Jan

MICHAEL LYONS: FULL CIRCLE Exhibition tracing the roots of Michael Lyons' sculpture to the natural and industrial landscape of the West Midlands, until Sun 28 Jan

STILL LIFE AND THE SACRED Exhibition exploring 'the secret beauty and hidden stories' behind the spiritual and sacred messages that the included works convey, until Sun 4 Feb

Other VISUAL ARTS

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

SHROPSHIRE ART SOCIETY EXHIBITION Showcasing the work of David Jones and Freda Wem, until Fri 5 Jan, St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury

WINTER FEST EXHIBITION VAN members' festive exhibition of paintings, textiles, ceramics, jewellery, sculpture and cards, until Tues 16 Jan, VAN Gallery, Shrewsbury

SCENTS AND SENSIBILITY Exploration of the history of perfumery and the use of glass as a product to contain and preserve scent, until Sat 27 Jan, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley, Stourbridge

BURMA VETERANS: UNFORGETTABLE Photographic exhibition by Wendy Aldiss paying tribute to the British and Allied forces who fought in Burma during World War Two, until Sun 25 Feb, National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas

NEW ENJOYMENT OF COLOUR - A RETROSPECTIVE BY RITA BANKS Exhibition about the enjoyment of painting and the pleasure it gives, both to the artist and the viewer, Mon 8 Jan - Fri 23 Feb, Museum of Cannock Chase, Staffordshire

NEW BATTLEFIELD BLOOMS EXHIBITION Exhibition presented by VAN to coincide with the performance premiere of the musical, Poppyfields. The exhibition commemorates the end of the First World War, Sat 13 Jan - Sat 31 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

NEW CLAUDE CAHUN: BENEATH THIS MASK This Hayward Touring exhibition features the work of French female photographer Claude Cahun (1894-1954), whose practice investigates gender and identity, Mon 15 Jan - Sat 17 Mar, Keele University, Staffordshire

Gigs

EDWINA HAYES Mon 1 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham



BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION Tues 2 Jan, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

THE PASADENA ROOF ORCHESTRA Wed 3 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Staffordshire

DINO BAPTISTE TRIO Thurs 4 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

GUNS WITH ROSES Thurs 4 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT. 14 PIECES Fri 5 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NEARLY DAN Fri 5 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE BEAT BROTHERS Fri 5 - Sat 6 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

ROD STEWART & THE FACEZ Fri 5 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Fri 5 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BOWIE Sat 6 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham

JEAN GENIE Sat 6 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ANNIE DUGGAN Sun 7 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

NIK TURNERS NEW SPACE RITUAL Sun 7 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

Classical Music

JOHANN STRAUSS GALA Featuring the Johann Strauss Dancers & Orchestra in period costume. John Rigby (conductor), Corinne Cowling (soprano) & Nicky Spence (tenor), also star, Mon 1 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO VIENNESE NEW YEAR Featuring Martin Yates (conductor) & Ilona Domnich (soprano). Programme includes works by Suppé, J. Strauss II, Lehár & Novello, Fri 5 Jan, Malvern Theatres

VIENNESE NEW YEAR Featuring Martin Yates (conductor) & Ilona Domnich (soprano). Programme includes works by Suppé, J. Strauss II, Lehár, Waldteufel, Novello & Josef Strauss, Sat 6 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

ANDREW BIRD, ROGER MONKHOUSE, ASHLEY FRIEZE, ROB MITCHELL & SAM HARLAND Thurs 4 Jan, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Staffordshire

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY RICHARDSON AND COMIC TBC Thurs 4 Jan, The Glee Club, B'ham

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE, IAN D MONTFORD, HARVEY HAWKINS & SCOTT BENNETT Thurs 4 Jan, The George Hotel, Lichfield

JEN BRISTER, BEN NORRIS, PAUL TONKINSON & ROBIN MORGAN Fri 5 - Sat 6 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 6 Jan, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

Theatre

ALADDIN Family panto starring CBeebies favourite Cat Sandion. Sam Rabone also stars, until Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

CRIMES ON THE CHRISTMAS EXPRESS Inspired by Agatha Christie, The 39 Steps and the Jason Bourne movies, a cast of four bring to life a host of characters, until Sat 6 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Brad Pitt returns as the Dame in this festive family favourite, until Sun 7 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROBIN HOOD AND THE BABES IN THE WOOD Innovative rock'n'roll staging of the traditional adventure story, until Sun 7 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

TALL STORIES: THE SNOW DRAGON Tapping songs and 'lots of laughs' for everyone aged three and older, until Sun 7 Jan, The Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALADDIN Starring Jonathan Wilkes & Christian Patterson, until Sun 7 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE HUNDRED AND ONE DALMATIANS Dodie Smith's delightful tale, adapted for the stage by Nativiti! writer Debbie Issit, until Sat 13 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Starring Gareth Gates, Lisa Riley, Ian Adams & Doreen Tipton, until Sun 14 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

TREASURE ISLAND A journey across the high seas, complete with larger-than-life characters and swashbuckling sword fights, until Sat 27 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

CINDERELLA Soul diva Beverley Knight makes her pantomime debut

alongside Strictly finalist Danny Mac, Birmingham panto favourite Matt Slack, pop and television star Suzanne Shaw and comedy duo The Grumbleweeds. Ceri Dupree and David Dale star as the Ugly Sisters, until Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

A CHRISTMAS CAROL David Edgar's adaptation of Charles Dickens' festive classic. Phil Davies stars, until Sun 4 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

IMPERIUM: THE CICERO PLAYS, PART I CONSPIRATOR Mike Poulton turns his pen to the thrilling world of power politics in the Ancient Rome of Robert Harris' best-selling Cicero trilogy. Gregory Doran directs, until Sat 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

IMPERIUM: THE CICERO PLAYS, PART II DICTATOR Mike Poulton turns his pen to the thrilling world of power politics in the Ancient Rome of Robert Harris' best-selling Cicero trilogy. Gregory Doran directs, until Sat 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

TWELFTH NIGHT Ade Edmondson & Kara Tointon star in Shakespeare's tale of unrequited love, until Sat 24 Feb, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

STICK MAN Scamp Theatre's adaptation of Julia Donaldson & Alex Scelfer's popular children's book of the same name, Tues 26 Dec - Fri 12 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BLUE MAN GROUP Global smash-hit fusing art, music, comedy and state-of-the-art technology to create an 'unforgettable celebration of the human connection', Thurs 28 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, International Convention Centre (ICC), Birmingham

CINDERELLA DE Caversmill Theatre Company presents its version of the festive family favourite, Fri 5 & Sun 7 Jan, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Dance

SWAN LAKE St Petersburg Classic Ballet bring to life the greatest romantic ballet of all time, Sun 7 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Film

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS (12a) Crime/Drama. Starring Kenneth Branagh, Johnny Depp. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, until Thurs 4 Jan

THE STAR (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Steven Yeun, Kristin Chenoweth. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, until Thurs 4 Jan

PADDINGTON 2 (U) Adventure/Comedy. Starring Sally Hawkins, Brendan Gleeson. Stoke Film Theatre, Sat 6 Jan

WONDER (PG) Drama/Family. Starring Julia Roberts, Owen Wilson. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 5 - Thurs 11 Jan

PRETTY WOMAN (15) Comedy/Romance. Starring Richard Gere, Julia Roberts. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Mon 1 Jan

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI (12a) Action/Adventure. Starring Daisy Ridley, John Boyega. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Mon 1 - Thurs 4 Jan; Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Tues 2 - Thurs 11 Jan

BATTLE OF THE SEXES (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Emma Stone, Steve Carell. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Jan

SUBURBICON (15) Action/Adventure. Starring Julianne Moore and Matt Damon. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Tues 2 - Thurs 4 Jan

THE PARTY (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Kristin Scott Thomas, Timothy Spall. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Tues 2 - Thurs 4 Jan

FILM STARS DON'T DIE IN LIVERPOOL (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Jamie Bell, Annette Bening. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, Fri 5 Jan; Wem Town Hall, Shropshire, Tues 9 & Thurs 11 Jan

JULIETA (15) Drama/Mystery. Starring Emma Suárez, Adriana Ugarte. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 5 Jan

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME (15) Drama/Romance. Starring Armie Hammer, Timothée Chalamet. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 5 - Thurs 11 Jan

JUSTICE LEAGUE (12a) Action/Adventure. Starring Ben Affleck, Gal Gadot. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 5, Sun 7 - Thurs 11 Jan

PITCH PERFECT (12a) Comedy/Music. Starring Anna Kendrick, Brittany Snow. Highbury Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 6 Jan

BREATHE (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Andrew Garfield, Claire Foy. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, South Shropshire, Sat 6 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Mon 1 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

MOLLY'S GAME (15)

Released from Fri 5 Jan, showing at selected cinemas



Blue Man Group

International Convention Centre, Birmingham, until Sat 6 January

Close friends Chris Wink, Matt Goldman and Phil Stanton came up with the Blue Man Group (BMG) concept in New York City in 1991, since which time the famously blue and bald performers have entertained a staggering 35 million people across the world. Presenting shows that combine art, music, comedy and cutting-edge technology 'to create a sublime celebration of human connection', BMG is visiting the UK for the first time in nine years. Expect a blissful party atmosphere and innovation aplenty.

ALL THE MONEY IN THE WORLD (tbc)

BRAD'S STATUS (tbc)

HOSTILES (tbc)

JUPITER'S MOON (15)

Events

MAGICAL LANTERN FESTIVAL Prepare to enter a magical experience and discover life-sized and larger-than-life lanterns in all shapes and forms, until Mon 1 Jan, Kings Heath Park, B'ham

CHRISTMAS AT BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS There's something for everyone at this festive time of year, with a sparkling path winding its way through the Gardens as part of a magical after-dark experience, until Mon 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

WINTER WONDERLAND STOKE ON TRENT

Featuring ice skating, Santa in his beautiful wooden cabin, numerous rides, a Bavarian bar & food, games, and music, until Tues 2 Jan, Opposite Hanley Bus Station, Stoke-on-Trent City Centre

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Enjoy this winter sport in beautiful city surroundings, until Sun 7 Jan, Eastside City Park, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Raising money for Dudley Mind, the YMCA and Dudley Alzheimer's Society, until Sun 7 Jan, Red House Glass Cone, Wordsley, Stourbridge

THE FANTASTICAL WINTER TOYBOX Discover the toys which have been scattered around the grounds, from a giant working zoetrope to oversized babushka dolls. Visitors can explore surprising and fantastical installations, until Fri 9 Feb, Erddig Hall, Wrexham

NEW YEAR CRAFTS: CREATE A CALENDAR Use a variety of craft materials to design and create a unique calendar, Wed 3 - Thurs 4 Jan, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

MANSION WINTER TOURS Experience the atmospheric mansion and discover its stories, Sat 6 Jan - Sun 11 Feb, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

NEW YEAR'S WALK Three-and-a-half-mile walk exploring areas of the park not normally accessible to the visiting public, Sun 7 Jan, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL GIRLS NIGHT OUT!

WOMEN FLESH & BLOODS THE BROTHERS

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22 FEB

MILKSHAKE! LIVE

£17.00, £15.00 U16s

24 FEB

THE CROONERS

£25.00

3 MAR

SWING WITH LAUGHTER Bobby Davro

SWING WITH LAUGHTER

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8 MAR

CILLA & THE SHADES OF THE 60S

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15 MAR

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What's on...





Thursday 1 February, 7.30pm

NATHAN CARTER

Wednesday 7 February, 7.30pm

GERMAINE GREER

Sunday 11 February, 2pm & 6.30pm

CHINESE NEW YEAR EXTRAVAGANZA

Wednesday 21 February, 12pm & 3.30pm

MILKSHAKE! LIVE

Thursday 22 February, 7.30pm

JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW

Friday 23 February, 7.30pm

ALL STAR SUPERSLAM WRESTLING 2018

Friday 2 March, 8.00pm

CRAIG CAMPBELL

Saturday 10 March, 7.30pm

PURPLE ZEPPELIN

Wednesday 14 March, 7.00pm

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The Blue Jays - New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Gigs

THE JEEPS Tues 9 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

ARCHER & TRIPP' TRANCE SEND Tues 9 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

GOSPEL CENTRAL Wed 10 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

JAMIE FLANAGAN AS MICHAEL BUBLÉ Wed 10 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE BLUEJAYS Wed 10 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Staffordshire

THE HUNNA Thurs 11 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CAPITAL GROOVE Thurs 11 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

IN HER OWN WORDS + FOR THE WIN + BETTER THAN NEVER + VICTORY LANE + YOU KNOW THE DRILL Thurs 11 Jan, The Flapper, B'ham

OSCAR YOUNG 'WE ARE YOUNG' - EP LAUNCH Thurs 11 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KENI BURKE Thurs 11 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ASOMVEL Thurs 11 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

CATAPULT CLUB FT. ALI GILBERT Fri 12 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

6LACK Fri 12 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ONE NIGHT WITH ELVIS Fri 12 Jan, The Robin,

Bilston

T.REXTASY Fri 12 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BENNETT FAMILY SINGERS Fri 12 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

THE SUBTERRANEANS Fri 12 - Sat 13 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

THE MODFATHERS Sat 13 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

JEFF WILLIAMS QUINTET Sat 13 Jan, The Hive, Shrewsbury

FASTLOVE - A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL Sat 13 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

RODDY RADIATION & THE SKABILLY REBELS & THE SKA45S Sat 13 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BAD PRACTICE Sat 13 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SACK SABBATH Sat 13

Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BLACK ELVIS Sat 13 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham

SCOTT HAMILTON QUARTET Sat 13 Jan, Pizza Express Live, B'ham

PROGRESS WRESTLING PRESENTS CHAPTER 61: DON'T TOUCH ME ... DON'T ... DON'T TOUCH ME Sun 14 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE SURFING MAGAZINES Sun 14 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

DISSIDENT PROPHET Sun 14 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, B'ham

BRAVADO Sun 14 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

STEVIE NIMMO Sun 14 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

BRONNIE - REJEX TOUR 2018 Sun 14 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

PARAMORE Sun 14 Jan, Genting Arena, Birmingham



Jeff Williams Quintet - The Hive, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

BRUCKNER'S SEVENTH Featuring Omer Meir Wellber (conductor) & Yeol Eum Son (piano). Programme comprises Mozart's Piano Concerto No.21, K.467, 29' & Bruckner's Symphony No.7, 68', Thurs 11 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CENTRE STAGE: CBSO STRING ENSEMBLE Programme includes works by Schubert, Gade & Shostakovich, Fri 12 Jan, CBSO Centre, B'ham

IN ECHO Period instrument ensemble featuring Gawain Glenton (cornetto/recorder), Uri Smilansky (viol/recorder), Kirsty Whatley (harp), Richard Boothby (viol) & Katherine Hawnt (soprano), Fri 12 Jan, The Barber Institute, B'ham

ELIAS STRING QUARTET Sat 13 Jan, Henderson Hall, Moor Park, Ludlow, South Shropshire

Comedy

ANGELA BARNES, MAUREEN YOUNGER Wed 10 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN, PAUL THORNE & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 11 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE COMEDY HUT Acts tbc, Fri 12 Jan, The Civic, Stourport

TOM BINNS Fri 12 Jan, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN, PAUL THORNE, FIN TAYLOR & JAKE LAMBERT Fri 12 - Sat 13 Jan, The Glee Club, B'ham

MATT REED, SUZI RUFFELL, CHRISTIAN REILLY & JOSH PUGH Sat 13 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 13 Jan, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

take of L Frank Baum's classic adventure, Fri 12 Jan, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

ALADDIN Traditional family pantomime written by Ian Thompson, Fri 12 - Sat 20 Jan, Oldbury Rep

THE WICKED WIZARD OF FIZZOG Black Country theatre favourites Fizzog present their version of The Wizard Of Oz, Sat 13 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

FUTURETHEATRE: 90 DAYS & INVISIBLE DOUBLE BILL Thought-provoking double bill featuring a play set in the past - in 1972, in Uganda - and one set in the future - in 2025, in Birmingham, Sat 13 Jan, MAC, Birmingham

THRILLER LIVE Musical celebration of Michael & The Jackson 5, Mon 15 - Sat 20 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BONES Poignant and emotionally charged monologue about a young man trying to find his place in a world that doesn't want him, Tues 16 - Wed 17 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE SOUND OF MUSIC West End star Lucy O'Byrne stars as Maria in what's widely regarded as one of the greatest musicals of all time, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

GALLOWGLASS Middle Ground Theatre Company present the stage premiere of the 1990 thriller by Barbara Vine (aka Ruth Rendell), Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

QUENTIN CRISP - NAKED HOPE Much-acclaimed production which follows Quentin's story from the dawn of the 1970s through to his final years, Fri 19 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE WICKED WIZARD OF FIZZOG Black Country theatre favourites Fizzog present their version of The Wizard Of Oz, Fri 19 Jan, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Shropshire

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

KALEIDOSCOPE (15) Thriller. Starring Anne Reid, Sinead Matthews. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Mon 8 Jan; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 12 - Mon 15 Jan

CHURCHILL (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Brian Cox, Miranda Richardson. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 8 Jan; Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, Mon 8 Jan

TROPHY (15) Documentary. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Tues 9 Jan

Theatre

CLAIRE DOWIE DOUBLE BILL Stage2 Theatre Company present two of the author's monologues as full-cast one-act plays, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

AUSTEN THE MUSICAL New musical production exploring Jane's struggles to have her work published in a male-dominated world, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE WIZARD OF OZ Zany funsters Oddssocks present a lighthearted

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SUN 7 JAN EVE + PORT ERINE
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WED 10 JAN ALL SEATED SHOW
JAMIE FLANAGAN AS MICHAEL BUBLE
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THU 11 JAN + STILETTO FARM
'LOUDER THAN MOTORHEAD'
ASOMVEL

FRI 12 JAN
ONE NIGHT OF ELVIS
WITH LEE 'MEMPHIS' KING

SAT 13 JAN + THE JACK FLETCHER BAND
THE MODFATHERS
THE UK'S No.1 TRIP TO PAUL WELLS

SUN 14 JAN
BRAVADO
A TRIBUTE TO RUSH

WED 17 JAN + TIL DEATH US DO PART
GEOFF TATE
OPERATION MINDCRIME
30th ANNIVERSARY TOUR

THU 18 JAN + BORN HEALER
AYNSLEY LISTER BAND

FRI 19 JAN + LEFTOVERS
THE SUPERSKAS

SAT 20 JAN
G2 - DEFINITIVE GENESIS

SUN 21 JAN PROG SPECIAL
LIFESIGNS

WED 24 JAN FROM NEW JERSEY
BILLY WALTON BAND

THU 25 JAN + THE MESS FORTUNES
KING PLEASURE & THE BISCUIT BOYS

FRI 26 JAN ON STAGE 8.45pm
BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE

SAT 27 JAN SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
BOOTLEG ABBA
JIVE TALKIN' (BEE GEES)

SUN 28 JAN ACOUSTIC SHOW
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 **24th Jan, 7.30pm**
Once upon a Wednesday:
The Pongo's Dream by Sef Townsend
Tickets: £6 adv, £8 otd

 **31 Jan, 7.30pm**
In Good Company
Playshuffle
Tickets: FREE

 **1 Feb, 7pm**
Catch Up Film Club:
Baby Driver (15)
Tickets: £6

 **1 & 2 Feb, 8pm**
Aynsley Lister
Tickets: £10 adv, £12 otd

 **9 Feb, 7pm**
Floyd in the Flesh
Tickets: £12 adv, £14 otd

 **10 Feb, 1pm**
Louise White:
The Dead Sea
Tickets: £6, £20 Family of 4

 **14 Feb, 7.30pm**
Once upon a Wednesday:
Christine Genders - LOVE
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BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S (PG) Comedy, Drama. Starring Audrey Hepburn, George Peppard. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, until Tues 9 Jan

FILM STARS DON'T DIE IN LIVERPOOL (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Jamie Bell, Annette Bening. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 9 - Thurs 11 Jan

INVESTIGATION OF A CITIZEN ABOVE SUSPICION (18) Crime/Drama. Starring Gian Maria Volontè, Florinda Bolkan. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 10 Jan

BATTLE OF THE SEXES (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Emma Stone, Steve Carell. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 12 - Sat 13 Jan

ERIC CLAPTON: LIFE IN 12 BARS (15) Documentary. Mockingbird Cinema, Birmingham, Fri 12 - Thurs 18 Jan

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN (tbc) Biography/Drama. Starring Rebecca Ferguson, Hugh Jackman. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 12 - Thurs 18 Jan

MOLLY'S GAME (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Jessica Chastain, Idris Elba. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 12 - Thurs 18 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 12 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

DARKEST HOUR (PG)

ERIC CLAPTON: A LIFE IN 12 BARS (15)

INSIDIOUS: THE LAST KEY (15)

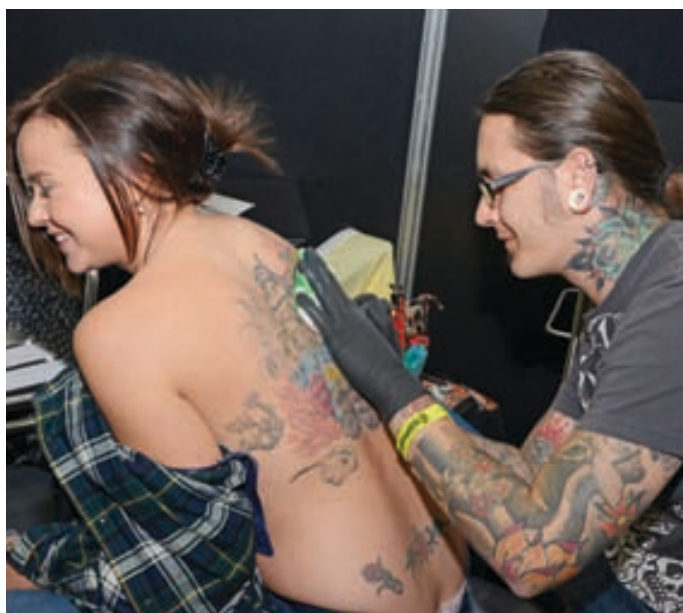
THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE OF EBBING MISSOURI (15)

Events

PERFORMANCE CAR SHOW Featuring iconic brands like Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren, Aston Martin and Porsche, the show is the ultimate destination for performance-car aficionados, Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

GHOST TOURS A tour of one of Britain's most haunted buildings, Sat 13 Jan, Aston Hall, Birmingham

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL Must-visit event for motorsport fans and performance-car aficionados, featuring cars, stars and action, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Jan, NEC, Birmingham



Tattoo Freeze - Telford International Centre, Shropshire

TATTOO FREEZE Admire great artists and artwork and get some new ink, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Jan, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

CAMPER MART One-day VW buying extravaganza, Sun 14 Jan, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

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FREE ENTRY

Coming Out

SEXUALITY, GENDER & IDENTITY

2 DEC 2017 – 15 APR 2018

A ground-breaking and vital contemporary art exhibition including works by Grayson Perry, Tracey Emin, Andy Warhol, Derek Jarman, Sarah Lucas, David Hockney, Chila Kumari Burman, Sunil Gupta and Steve McQueen.

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Coming Out is a touring exhibition conceived by National Museums Liverpool, in partnership with Birmingham Museums Trust as part of the Arts Council Collection National Partners Programme 2016-19. Arts Council Collection is managed by Southbank Centre on behalf of Arts Council England.



Ruby Turner - New Vic Theatre, Staffs

Gigs

SEAWAY Mon 15 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JACOB & DRINKWATER Mon 15 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

CREATE TO INSPIRE Tues 16 Jan, The Asylum, B'ham

AND YOU KNOW US Tues 16 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

RUBY TURNER Wed 17 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Staffs

THE DECADES BAND Wed 17 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

GEOFF TATE Wed 17 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

SINACH WAYMAKER Thurs 18 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Thurs 18 Jan, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Staffordshire

RICKY COOL & IN THE CROWD Thurs 18 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

AYNSLEY LISTER BAND Thurs 18 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BRAD O'NEILL & MYLO MEMPHIS Thurs 18 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

KING KING Thurs 18 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

CATAPULT CLUB FEAT. THE AT-TICS Fri 19 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SUPERSKAS Fri 19 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri 19 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

CRAIG CHARLES Fri 19 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FROM THE JAM Fri 19 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

TALON Fri 19 Jan - Sat 20 Jan, Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

G2 - DEFINITIVE GENISES Fri 20 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

36 CRAZYFISTS Sat 20 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE SONGS OF NICK DRAKE Sat 20 Jan, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE Sat 20 Jan, The Place, Oakengates

Theatre, Telford

TO KILL A KING Sat 20 Jan, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

ALEX OHM Sat 20 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

HUDSON TAYLOR Sat 20 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CLAUDE BOURBON Sat 20 Jan, Birchmeadow, Broseley, South Shropshire

JAKE MITCHELL Sat 20 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FIRE RED EMPRESS Sat 20 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

HELLBENT FOREVER Sat 20 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ONE LOVE BAND Sat 20 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

WOMEN IN ROCK Sat 20 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

RAVENEYE Sun 21 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

LIFESIGNS Sun 21 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

NEW VIC

A spectacular, swashbuckling adventure for the whole family this Christmas!

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Classical Music

INNOVATION ENSEMBLE: QUINTETS AT TWILIGHT Featuring Ben Nabarro & Martin Cropper (violins), Robin Ireland & Sarah-Jane Bradley (violins) & Richard Jenkinson (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart, Vaughan Williams & Brahms, Sun 14 Jan, The Lion Hotel, Shrewsbury

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by J.S Bach, C.P.E Bach, C.H.H Parry, E.H Lemare & Wagner, Mon 15 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC RADIO 3 NEW GENERATION ARTISTS: MARIAM BATASHVILI (PIANO) Programme includes works by Bach/Busoni & Liszt, Tues 16 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BARTÓK'S CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Ning Feng (violin). Programme includes works by Haydn, Bruch, Brahms & Bartok, Wed 17 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DOMONKOS CSABAY PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Schubert, Bartók, Janáček & Britten, Wed 17 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

KENNETH HAMILTON LECTURE-RECITAL Programme comprises works by Frédéric Chopin, Fri 19 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

BARTÓK'S CONCERTO FOR ORCHESTRA Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Ning Feng (violin). Programme includes works by Haydn, Bruch, Brahms & Bartok, Sat 20 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A VIENNESE STRAUSS GALA Programme includes works by Strauss & Lehar, Sun 21 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Comedy

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY! Mon 15 Jan, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

NATHAN CATON, CARL DONNELLY, BEN VAN DER VELDE Thurs 18 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham

PETER WHITE, CARL DONNELLY & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 18 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ZALTZMAN Fri 19 Jan, Glee Club, Birmingham

PETER WHITE, CARL DONNELLY, KATE LUCAS & NATAN CATON Fri 19 - Sat 20 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GUZ KHAN, MICKEY P KERR, STEFANO PAOLINI & JESSICA FOSTEKEW Sat 20 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

MATT REED Sat 20 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 20 Jan, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

Theatre

THRILLER LIVE Musical celebration of Michael & The Jackson 5, Mon 15 - Sat 20 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BONES Poignant and emotionally charged monologue about a young man trying to find his place in a world that doesn't want him, Tues 16 - Wed 17 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE SOUND OF MUSIC West End star Lucy O'Byrne stars as Maria in what's widely regarded as one of the greatest musicals of all time, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

GALLOWGLASS Middle Ground Theatre Company present the stage premiere of the 1990 thriller by Barbara Vine (aka Ruth Rendell), Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

QUENTIN CRISP - NAKED HOPE Much-acclaimed production which follows Quentin's story from the dawn of the 1970s through to his final years, Fri 19 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE WICKED WIZARD OF FIZZOG Black Country theatre favourites Fizzog present their version of The Wizard Of Oz, Fri 19 Jan, The Place, Oaken-gates Theatre, Telford, Shropshire

Dance

AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND DANCE WITH BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET Featuring BRB director David Bintley, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia and world class dancers from the Company, Fri 19 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

LOVING VINCENT (12A) Animation/Biography. With the voices of Douglas Booth, Jerome Flynn. Stoke Film Theatre, Mon 15 Jan

A DOG'S PURPOSE (PG) Comedy/Drama. Starring Josh Gad,



Thriller Live

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 15 - Sat 20 January

In a career spanning 40 years, Michael Jackson sold a phenomenal 750 million records worldwide, with his Thriller album becoming the world's bestselling recording of all time. This high-energy stage tribute includes more than two hours of non-stop hit songs, in the process paying homage to the breathtaking spectacle of Jackson's legendary live performances. Expect all your favourite numbers, including I Want You Back, ABC, Can You Feel It, Beat It, Billie Jean and, of course, Thriller.

Dennis Quaid. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 15 Jan

SUBURBICON (15) Drama/Mystery. Starring Matt Damon, Julianne Moore. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Tues 16 - Thurs 18 Jan

BATTLE OF THE SEXES (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Emma Stone, Steve Carell. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 16 & Thurs 18 Jan

HAPPY END (15) Drama. Starring Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Louis Trintignant. Foreign language, subtitled. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 16 & Thurs 18 Jan

FERRARI: RACE TO IMMORTALITY (15) Documentary. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Thurs 18 Jan

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI (12a) Action/Adventure. Starring Daisy Ridley, John Boyega. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Fri 19 Jan

THE GREATEST SHOWMAN (tbc) Biography/Drama. Starring Rebecca Ferguson, Hugh Jackman. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 19 - Thurs 25 Jan

THE OTHER SIDE OF HOPE (12) Comedy/Drama. Starring Ville Virtanen, Dome Karukoski. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 19 Jan

ONLY THE BRAVE (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Josh Brolin, Miles Teller. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 19 Jan

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL (18) Action/Drama. Starring Takuya Kimura, Hana Sugisaki. Foreign lan-

guage, subtitled. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 19 - Sat 20 Jan

THE POST (tbc) Biography/Drama. Starring Meryl Streep, Tom Hanks. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 19 - Thurs 25 Jan

THE DINNER (15) Drama/Thriller. Starring Richard Gere, Laura Linney. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 19 - Thurs 25 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE: Released from Fri 19 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

COCO (tbc)

THE COMMUTER (15)

DOWNSIZING (15)

THE POST (tbc)

Events

THE ARENACROSS TOUR 2018 Arenacross is 'short, sharp and shockingly spectacular', with huge triple jumps, killer mogul sections and fast, banked corners all designed to provide a high-octane sensory feast, Sat 20 Jan, Genting Arena, Birmingham

NATIONAL RUNNING SHOW Brand new show for running enthusiasts, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

WEDDING OPEN DAY Couples can view the venue, speak to catering managers and chat to the registrars about the special day, Sun 21 Jan, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley



Steve Knightley - Lichfield Guildhall

Gigs

LOUISE Mon 22 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

BLOODSHOT DAWN + GEHTIKA + REPRISAL + XVII Mon 22 Jan, The Flapper, Birmingham

BLUE ROSE CODE Mon 22 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BLACK VEIL BRIDES & ASKING ALEXANDRIA Tues 23 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOE BROWN Tues 23 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Tues 23 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THIS IS THE KIT Wed 24 Jan, Glee Club, B'ham

RAVENEYE Wed 24 Jan, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

JOE BROWN Wed 24 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BILLY WALTON BAND Wed 24 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

SAM LAVERY Wed 24 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

AUGUST ALSINA Thurs 25 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS Thurs 25 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE COUNTERFEIT STONES Thurs 25 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE ORIGINAL 1968-77

ELVIS TCB BAND WITH SPECIAL GUESTS THE IMPERIALS & DENNIS JALE Thurs 25 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

EAST OF THE SEVERN Thurs 26 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

UK GUNS N' ROSES Thurs 26 Jan, The River Rooms, Stoke-on-Trent

BAI BAND + BARA-NOVICH Thurs 26 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY Thurs 26 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

WITT LOWRY Fri 26 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

MOTIONLESS IN WHITE Fri 26 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HOLLYWOOD UNDEAD Fri 26 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH MARK STANWAY Fri 26 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Fri 26 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

YOUR ALIBI Sat 27 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

JONN'S ATOMIC MEMOIR WON'T WRITE Sat 27 Jan, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

SONGWRITING WORKSHOP WITH DAN WHITEHOUSE Sat 27 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE JAM'D Sat 27 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BOOTLEG ABBA + JIVE TALKIN Sat 27 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

DIRT BOX DISCO Sat 27 Jan, The Asylum, Birmingham

MONGOL HORDE Sat 27 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ALVAREZ KINGS Sat 27 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

STAMINA TOUR Sat 27 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ALVAREZ KINGS Sun 28 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE QUIREBOYS - ACOUSTIC Sun 28 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

MARTYN JOSEPH Sat 28 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ANNETTE GREGORY Sun 28 Jan, The Hive, Shrewsbury

WILL VARLEY Tues 30 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW 2018 - GUITAR GREATS Tues 30 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

MOON DUO Tues 30 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BLUE ROSE CODE Tues 30 Jan, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

PAUL DUNMALL/JOHN O'GALLAGHER/JOHN EDWARDS/MARK SANDERS Tues 30 Jan, Mac, Birmingham

THE HEMPOLICS Tues 30 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PETE FIJ & TERRY BICKERS Tues 30 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

YUNGBLUD Wed 31 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE WEATHER STATION Wed 31 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LADY GAGA Wed 31 Jan, Arena B'ham

STEVE KNIGHTLEY Wed 31 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

BARRY STEELE AND FRIENDS Wed 31 Jan, Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton

Classical Music

JOSHUA BELL - VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS Also featuring the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Programme includes works by Vivaldi, Edgar Meyer & Beethoven, Tues 23 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC RADIO 3 NEW GENERATION ARTISTS: ASHLEY RICHES (BASS BARI-TONE) Also featuring Sholto Kyn-toch (piano). Programme includes works by Schubert, Dvorak & Brahms, Tues 23 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BERNSTEIN - STAGE AND SCREEN Featuring John Wilson (conductor), Vocalists to include Kim Criswell & the University of Birmingham Voices, Wed 24 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC FM MOVIE: MUSIC HALL OF FAME Featuring Michael Seal (conductor) & Tommy Pearson (presenter), Fri 26 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CENTRE STAGE: CBSO BAROQUE ENSEMBLE Fri 26 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

KENNETH HAMILTON LECTURE-RECITAL Programme comprises works by Frédéric Chopin, Fri 26 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

ORGAN PROM WITH IAN TRACEY Sat 27 Jan, Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP - CELEBRATING CARTER Featuring Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla (conductor) & Pierre-Laurant Aimard (piano). Programme includes works by Elliott Carter, Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

CHRISTOPH SIETZEN IN RECITAL Featuring the WAVE Quartet & Christoph Sietzen (percussion). Programme includes works by J. Groban, J.S Bach, I. Boumanns, Piazzolla & Rodrigo y Gabriela, Mon 29 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by J.S Bach, I. Flagler, R. Downes, A. Wammes, P. Whitlock & Saint-Saëns, Mon 29 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BBC RADIO 3 NEW GENERATION ARTISTS: QUATUOR AROD Programme includes works by Mozart & Mendelssohn, Tues 30 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: RACHMANINOV'S SECOND Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Dejan Lazi (piano). Programme includes works by Glinka, Beethoven & Rachmaninov, Wed 31 Jan, Symphony Hall, B'ham

KATE ROYAL (SOPRANO) & JOSEPH MIDDLETON (PIANO) This evening concert features a programme of works by Lieder, and art song, as well as operatic arias from some of the many roles that Kate has played over the years, Wed 31 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

Comedy

ADAM ROWE Wed 24 Jan, MAC, Birmingham

CHRIS ROCK Thurs 25 Jan, Arena Birmingham

MIKE BUBBINS, ANGELA BARNES & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 25 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED BYRNE Fri 26 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JAMES REDMOND, ADAM KAY & CHRIS PURCHASE Fri 26 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

FERN BRADY Fri 26 Jan, Glee Club, Birmingham

MIKE BUBBINS, ANGELA BARNES, PHIL JERROD & IAN SMITH Fri 26 - Sat 27 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED BYRNE Sat 27 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

GEOFF BOYZ, ALISTAIR BARRIE, NOEL JAMES & DANNY MCLOUGHLIN Sat 27 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

COMEDY IN THE MET Sat 27 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JENNY ECLAIR Sat 27 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



ROFL! COMEDY CLUB Sat 27 Jan, The Old Post Office, Stoke-On-Trent

ROUGH WORKS - NEW MATERIAL NIGHT Sun 28 Jan, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

HEDDA GABLER Contemporary production of Ibsen's masterpiece, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ELF THE MUSICAL (JR) Amateur staging presented by Face2Face Perfor-

mance Academy, Thurs 25 - Fri 26 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE GIN CHRONICLES - A SCOTTISH ADVENTURE 'Delightfully silly' show featuring an Australian, a pair of Spaniards, a reindeer, some bagpipes and a band of pirates... Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

DICK WHITTINGTON Amateur staging presented by CCDS, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Jan, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

VAMPIRES ROCK GHOST TRAIN Steve Steinman ramps up the vamp in the sequel to the phenomenally successful Vampires Rock, Fri 26 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FORGET ME NOT - THE ALZHEIMER'S WHODUNNIT Rob Gee's award-winning one-man show explores how we perceive people with dementia, Fri 26 Jan, Harley Village Hall, Harley, Shropshire, SY5 6LP

CIRCUS OF HORRORS: VOODOO Amalgamation of bizarre and fantastic circus acts, all woven into 'a sensational shock/horror story featuring the darkest of magic', Fri 26 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent



THE DEATH SHOW Two-hander celebrating mortality, Fri 26 - Sat 27 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

HAYFEVER Amateur staging of Noel Coward's riotous comedy, Fri 26 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, Hall Green Little Theatre, Birmingham

FORGET ME NOT - THE ALZHEIMER'S WHODUNNIT Rob Gee's award-winning one-man show explores how we perceive people with dementia, Sat 27 Jan, The Talbot Theatre, Whitchurch, North Shropshire



LET THE RIGHT ONE IN The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur staging of John Ajvide Lindqvist's Swedish vampire novel of the same name, Sat 27 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

DI JAMAICAN BIG BROTHER HOUSE Glenda Jaxson & Charles Tomlins star in Devon Morgan's comedy of love, envy, jealousy and backstabbing, Sun 28 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

SNOW WHITE: THE RETURN OF THE LITTLE THINGS Angel Heart present 'a heartwarming introduction' to theatre for audiences aged four-plus, Sun 28 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

STRANGERS ON A TRAIN Christopher Harper, John Middleton, Jack Ashton & Hannah Tointon star in a 'gripping' thriller based on a fateful encounter, Mon 29 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

NO SEX PLEASE WE'RE BRITISH Amateur staging presented by the Nonentities, Mon 29 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

THE LADYKILLERS The Lichfield Players present an amateur staging of Graham Linehan's classic black comedy, Wed 31 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

TEACHERS Blackeyed Theatre presents its version of John Godber's classic comedy about life at a struggling school, Wed 31 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BEAUTIFUL: THE CAROLE KING MUSICAL A 'joyful story of musicality, success and self-discovery' which tells the inspiring true story of King's remarkable rise to stardom, Wed 31 Jan - Sat 3 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Dance

DANCE TO THE MUSIC New touring production featuring ex-Strictly dancer & choreographer Kristina Rihanoff and singers Chris Maloney (X Factor finalist) and Beth Sherburn, Wed 24 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE NUTCRACKER Presented by Moscow City Ballet, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ANTON & ERIN Featuring Anton du Beke & Erin Boag, Richard Balcombe (conductor) and Lance Ellington (star vocalist), Sat 27 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE NUTCRACKER The Russian State Ballet of Siberia presents its version of the most famous of fantasy ballets, Sun 28 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ROMEO AND JULIET Shakespeare's tale

Circus Of Horrors: Voodoo

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 26 January

"Our show contains some nudity and language of an adult nature," warn the Circus Of Horrors. "It is not suitable for children, people of a nervous disposition, chavs and sissies. This show contains nuts!"

An off-kilter affair that bears more resemblance to a freak show than any modern definition of a circus, the one-time Britain's Got Talent finalists here present a world beyond political correctness and taste. With the performers dressed in a manner reminiscent of The Rocky Horror Show, there's no denying the skill of those participating, or indeed the ensemble's sheer 'wow' factor.

This latest offering, which sees a voodoo curse causing all manner of devastation, comes complete with 'devil-driven rock'n'roll' and 'the darkest of magic'...

of primal passion and timeless tragedy is brought to life by Prokofiev's soaring score, Mon 29 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BRENDAN COLE: ALL NIGHT LONG Expect tantalising tango, fiery pasodoble, elegant foxtrot, breathtaking waltz - and a few surprises in between, Mon 29 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SWAN LAKE The Russian State Ballet of Siberia bring to life the greatest romantic ballet of all time, set to Tchaikovsky's haunting score, Tues 30 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Talks

AN AUDIENCE WITH MATT DAWSON

Thurs 25 Jan, The Bramall, B'ham

STEVE PARRISH M.A.D TOUR Hosted by Steve's daughter, Frankie, the M.A.D tour sees the British motorcycling champion talk candidly about his life, loves and experiences, Wed 31 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

LOST IN PARIS (12a) Comedy. Starring Fiona Gordon, Dominique Abel. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 22 Jan

GIFTED (12a) Drama. Starring Chris Evans, McKenna Grace. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 22 Jan

HAPPY END (15) Drama. Starring Isabelle Huppert, Jean-Louis Trintignant. Foreign language, subtitled. Light House Media Centre, Wolverhampton, Mon 22 - Thurs 25 Jan

SULLY (12) Biography/Drama. Starring Tom Hanks, Aaron Eckhart. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Tues 23 Jan

THE LOST HONOUR OF KATHARINA BLUM (15) Crime/Drama. Starring Angela Winkler, Mario Adorf. Foreign language, subtitled. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 23 Jan

STAR WARS: THE LAST JEDI (12a) Action/Adventure. Starring Daisy Ridley, John Boyega. Wem Town Hall, Shropshire, Tues 23 & Thurs 25 Jan

THE HEADLESS WOMAN (12) Mystery/Thriller. Starring Maria Onetto, Claudia Cantero. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 24 Jan

THE PRINCE OF NOTHINGWOOD (15) Documentary. Starring Qurban Ali, Sonia Kronlund. Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 25 Jan

INGRID GOES WEST (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Aubrey Plaza, Elizabeth Olsen. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 26 Jan

DARKEST HOUR (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Gary Oldman, Lily James. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 26 - Wed 31 Jan

MY COUSIN RACHEL (12) Drama. Starring Rachel Weisz, Sam Claflin. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 29 Jan

THE LOST HONOUR OF KATHARINA BLUM (12) Crime/Drama. Starring Angela Winkler, Mario Adorf. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 31 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 26 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

12 STRONG (tbc)

EARLY MAN (tbc)

MAZE RUNNER: THE DEATH CURE (tbc)

WHITE BOY RICK (tbc)

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SAT 24TH FEBRUARY - THE OLD REP THEATRE - BIRMINGHAM
www.aldreptheatre.co.uk

THUR 1ST MARCH - BREWHOUSE THEATRE - BURTON-UPON-TRENT
www.brewhouse.co.uk

FRI 9TH MARCH - FESTIVAL DRAYTON CENTRE - MARKET DRAYTON
www.festivaldraytoncentre.com

SAT 10TH MARCH - THE ALBERT HALL - LLANORNODD WELLS, WALES
www.thealberthall.co.uk

www.californiadreamers.co.uk

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Thu 25 Jan



Fri 26 Jan



Tue 30 Jan

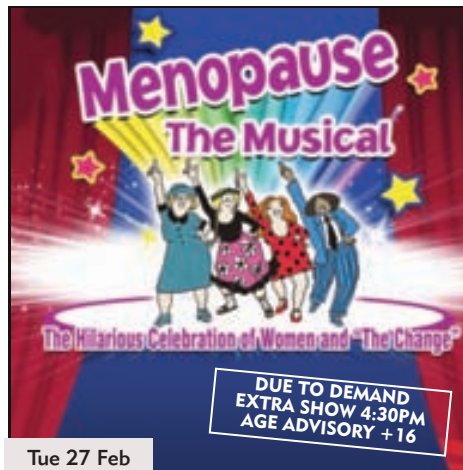
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