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SAMANTHA WOMACK - INTERVIEW INSIDE...

Shropshire

ISSUE 399 MARCH 2019

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Calendar Girls set to bare all again

Hit musical Calendar Girls will stop off in the Midlands region later this year.

The much-loved Gary Barlow/ Tim Firth show will feature a number of new cast members, including Sarah Jane Buckley (Kathy Barnes in Hollyoaks), Sue Devaney (Debbie Webster in Coronation Street), Julia Hills (Dr Kemp in Broadchurch), Judy Holt (Cold Feet, Scott & Bailey) and Loose Women favourite Lisa Maxwell.

The production shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from 28 May to 8 June and then at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from 24 to 28 September.

Shylock's Stafford debut

Stafford Festival Shakespeare is this summer mounting its first ever production of The Merchant Of Venice.

Running from 27 June until 13 July, the show will be presented outdoors in the grounds of Stafford Castle.

Commenting on the announcement, Production Manager Richard Goodman said: "The Merchant Of Venice looks at issues that are just as relevant now as they were when the play was first performed. On top of that, it features one of Shakespeare's most iconic characters in Shylock."

The image below is from the festival's 2017 production of The Tempest.

Ed-Tech Convention lands at RAF Museum Cosford

Tablet Academy, one of the largest education training companies in the UK, has teamed up with Royal Air Force Museum Cosford to present the first Ed-Tech Convention at the venue on Tuesday 5 March.

Suitable for school leaders, classroom teachers and IT professionals, the event is designed to immerse attendees in hands-on technology workshops and a range of networking activities. For more information, visit tablet-academy.com

Plans approved for £21million transformation

Plans have been approved for the £21million transformation of the former bus-depot site in Wolverhampton's Cleveland Road, to make it a key gateway to the city centre.

The site's proposed new buildings have been carefully designed in 'a clean, modern style, to allow the elevations to stand the test of time and continually enhance the period architecture of the nearby former Royal Hospital building'.

The transformation of the bus-depot site forms part of a £3.7billion regeneration project taking place in Wolverhampton.

Himley Hall to host first Black Country Musicom

Dudley's Himley Hall is to host a huge outdoor music & comedy festival this summer.

Black Country Musicom takes place on Sunday 14 July and will include a lineup of high-quality tribute bands, demonstrations of traditional local crafts and a host of children's activities. A dedicated teenage area featuring DJs, gaming tournaments, glitter artists and a chill-out zone is also included in the festival's list of attractions.

For more information, visit dudley.gov.uk

Mum's the word...

Mum's most definitely the word at Ironbridge Gorge Museums this Mothering Sunday (31 March), when mothers can enjoy free admission to the Shropshire visitor attraction as long as they're accompanied by another full-paying adult. The free-entry offer includes Blists Hill Victorian Town, where a special Mother's Day afternoon tea will be available, complete with an optional glass of Prosecco and a selection of cakes.

Big Country head to Shropshire for 35th anniversary

Scottish rock band Big Country will visit Shrewsbury's Buttermarket venue in the autumn (Thursday 7 November) as part of a 35th anniversary tour to celebrate the release of their chart-topping 1984 album, Steeltown. The talented five-piece will be performing songs from the album alongside a selection of classic hits and live favourites from their extensive back-catalogue. For more information, visit thebuttermarket.co.uk

Banksy duo team up with Midlands opera company

Banksy collaborators Block9, who created the dystopian fairy-tale castle at the centre of the artist's Dismaland 'bemusement park' in 2015, are bringing their anarchic creativity to Birmingham this month for their first opera collaboration.
Stephen Gallagher and Gideon Berger are joining forces with the award-winning Birmingham Opera Company to mount Shostakovich's Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk at the city's Tower Ballroom. The show runs from Saturday 9 to Sunday 17 March.
For more information, visit birminghamopera.org.uk

Festival provides Launchpad for young Mids musicians

Shrewsbury Folk Festival has opened applications for its Midlands What's On Magazine-sponsored Launchpad stage, which provides young musicians with a platform to showcase their talents.
The festival is inviting people aged 16 to 26 who live in Shropshire, Mid Wales or the West Midlands to pitch for a performance slot.
To apply, send a short biography, links to performances (Soundcloud, YouTube etc) and your contact details to jo@shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk before 6 May. Only selected performers will be contacted.
Above image is of The Trials of the Cato who appeared on The Launchpad in 2017.

Headlining stars announced for city's Pride festival

Soft Cell icon Marc Almond, '80s favourites Human League (pictured) and electronic superstars Faithless are among the acts performing at this year's Birmingham Pride festival in the city's gay village.
The two-day event, as usual being held across the May bank holiday weekend (Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 May), is this year taking the theme of Love Out Loud.
Tickets are available from birminghampride.com.

The Grinch set to steal Christmas!

Dr Seuss' How The Grinch Stole Christmas! The Musical will stop off at Birmingham's Alexandra Theatre this winter (Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 December) as part of a UK tour. Featuring hit songs You're A Mean One Mr Grinch and Welcome Christmas, the production broke box-office records for two consecutive years on Broadway... For more information and to book tickets, visit grinchmusical.co.uk

Shrewsbury to host first ever Comics Salopia

An international festival celebrating the medium of comic art in all its forms takes place in Shrewsbury across the first weekend in June.

Comics Salopia features sessions with big-name comic-book artists, film screenings, Jedi fight training, face painting, a small press comics market, an interactive Judge Dredd event, live music, boat trips, a zombie walk, a Cosplay competition and live art events.

Highlight of the festival is sure to be an exhibition by local artist Charlie Adlard of Walking Dead fame.

For more information about the event, visit comicssalopia.com

RSC to work its magic on David Walliams classic

The Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) winter 2019 season includes the world premiere of a new musical adaptation of David Walliams' The Boy In The Dress.

Helmed by the RSC's Artistic Director, Gregory Doran, the show will feature songs by Robbie Williams and Guy Chambers.

The production runs at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre from Friday 8 November to Sunday 8 March.

For more information about this and other shows in the RSC's winter 2019 season, visit rsc.org.uk

Exploring Frontiers, Borders and Barriers at Lichfield Literature festival

The Lichfield Literature festival returns this month, taking the theme of Frontiers, Borders And Barriers.

Event highlights include a talk by Sunday Times bestselling author Barbara Erskine, storytelling with Radio Four's Lainy Malkani, and the chance to discover the History of Women via 100 objects (with Maggie Andrews & Janis Lomas). All sessions are interactive, featuring book readings and Q&A sessions.

Lichfield Literature runs at various venues from 7 to 10 March.

For more information and to book tickets, visit lichfieldfestival.org

Charity dinner for children with cancer

Shrewsbury Town Football Club is this month hosting a charity dinner-dance event to raise money for the Harry Johnson Trust, an organisation dedicated to supporting Shropshire-based children with cancer and their families.

The Saturday 30 March event includes a three-course meal, entertainment from rhythm & blues band Izzy & The Hotheads and an auction hosted by Flog It and Bargain Hunt's Christina Trevanion.

For more information, visit theharryjohnsontrust.co.uk.

Spring Into St George's Day in Telford

A popular family event celebrating St George's Day makes a return to Telford Town Park next month.

Spring Into St George's Day, taking place on Saturday 27 April, features a special visit from much-loved Paw Patrol characters Chase and Marshall.

Other attractions at the event include a dog show, a circus skills tent, pony rides, kids' go-karting and a magical musical bike.

It's Curtains for Jason Manford!

Comedian Jason Manford visits the Midlands later this year in a brand new production of Tony Award-winning musical Curtains.

A story of murder most foul in the theatre world - in which Manford stars as detective Frank Cioffi, a huge musical theatre fan - the show's score has been composed by John Kander and Fred Ebb, who also wrote Cabaret and Chicago.

Curtains visits Birmingham's Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 November, the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 December, and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 31 March to Saturday 4 April 2020.

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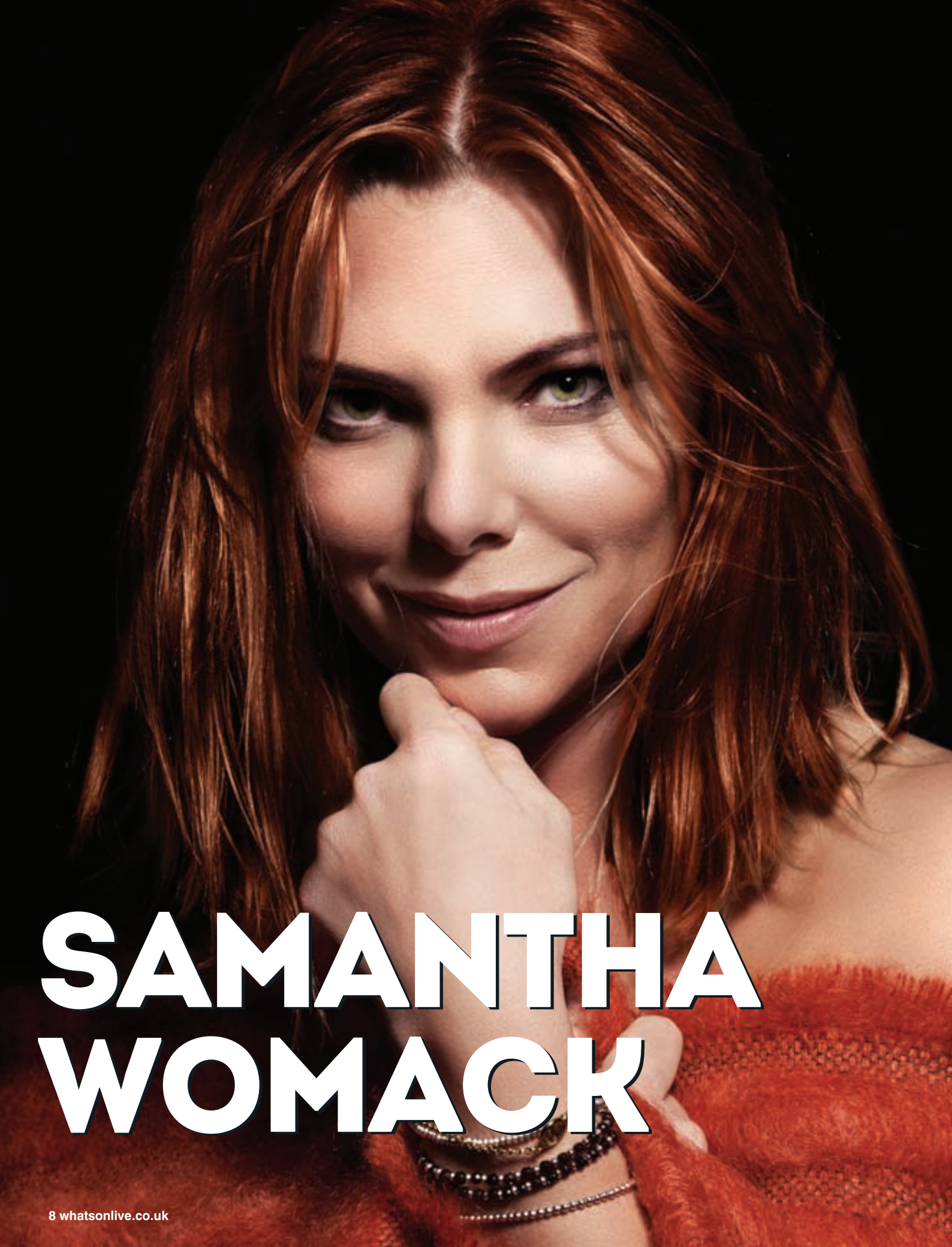

SAMANTHA WOMACK

by Lauren Cole

Eastenders' star rolls into the Midlands with The Girl On The Train

First a bestselling book, then a hit film, The Girl On The Train took the world by storm. Now, a touring stage adaptation of Paula Hawkins' 2015 novel is rolling into the Midlands, with EastEnders star Samantha Womack in the lead role of Rachel Watson.

"I think the stage version is a response to the obsessions of the public," says Sam, who shot to stardom in 1991 when she represented the UK in the Eurovision Song Contest. "Thrillers, detective & police programmes and real-life crime drama are incredibly popular. I know that all the shows I like to watch on Netflix are things like Making Of A Murderer and the new Ted Bundy Tapes series. I think people are more interested in things that are, or could be, real life now. I think people are moving away from genres like fantasy and towards thrillers. The book was such a strong brand and such a success that people are excited to see the story presented how it was in the book. A lot of people were disappointed in the film, I think - some people loved it and others really didn't. I mean, I loved it because I just love Emily Blunt and everything she does. But really, people just love a good thriller - they really do!"

The Girl On The Train combines thriller with voyeurism. Sam's character Rachel watches two couples from the train and over time becomes obsessed with them. Sam thinks the immense popularity of the story is largely down to Rachel.

"I think it's been so popular because Rachel is an anti-hero. She says the wrong things, she's inappropriate, broken and damaged, which the audience seems to really respond to. I know for sure that the audiences I've experienced in the theatre respond really well to Rachel's bad behaviour and the racy things she says. I think sometimes people enjoy characters who kind of rally against the appropriate way to behave."

This is also the main reason that Sam was drawn to the role.

"While Rachel is broken - covering up all her damage with drinking - and has this devil-may-care attitude, she also has this really interesting arc to her character. She's an incredibly bright, strong woman - she's just kind of lost her way. I was attracted to the recklessness that makes her so interesting. I like the whole renegade vibe she has, where she just disorientates everyone with her madness. I've never really been in a situation where I've felt the way Rachel does and gone off the rails like she has, so I don't have any direct inspiration for how to play her character, but sometimes these parts just come and get you. They appear right in front of you and you know exactly how you'd like to play them, so you just go and do it."

Sam also thinks the book lends itself really well to theatre: "There's actually a lot more licence with theatre to do the dream-like flashback and memory scenes from the book, so you can access Rachel's brain in these scenarios a lot more than I think you can with film. I think theatrically the plot of the book works really well because you're able to delve deep into what Rachel is thinking and feeling. Obviously with every new production and adaptation it will change. New actors will play the roles differently, and each adaptation adds things in and cuts things out, but the format is very much the same. I think what happens when audience members come to see it is that they almost forget the exact details of what they've already read because they're so involved in the piece - it's very captivating."

Rachel turns amateur detective when Megan, one of the women she's been watching from the train, goes missing. Sam explains why her character becomes so engaged with the disappearance.

"Rachel sees Megan going missing as the way to get herself back on track. For the first time in months she feels needed by other people and has a purpose. At this point, she's very much been consumed by her alcoholism and her lies about going to work, so trying to figure out the mystery brings her back from the abyss."

Playing Rachel is certainly a departure from the role for which Sam is best known - Ronnie Mitchell in EastEnders.

"I played Ronnie on and off for nine years, so I really got to know that character very well - to the point where, once I'd learnt the lines, I didn't really need to rehearse because I knew exactly how to play her. I feel like, with theatre, you just get so much more time to rehearse and build the character before going straight in. I'm also a bit of a control freak! I like the way I have complete control over creating the character. What you see is what you get: the adaptation itself can't be changed in writing, or edited afterwards, so you completely know what you're signing up for. I really like that element of control, where what I put out at that very moment is exactly what the audience will see.

"I would say I prefer stage to screen, partly because I'm very impatient and like being able to work the story from start to finish in one night. Television and movies take such a long time to film. Sometimes you're doing the same scene for a whole day! It's hard to stay fresh in that kind of environment. With theatre, as soon as you set off playing your character on the night, it feels like you're in a big race of emotions and acting - it's very exciting!"

Although she's thoroughly enjoying starring in The Girl On The Train, Sam admits that she's looking forward to taking a break afterwards.

"The production is proving very popular, so I know there's incredible demand for it to continue until after the already-scheduled dates and until the end of the year. I think I need to decide what it's going to take out of me. I've only been playing Rachel for one month and she's such a hard part to play, as she's just so emotional. Sometimes it kind of gets under my skin a bit. But I'm definitely having a long break over the summer.

The Girl On The Train shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 18 to Saturday 23 March. The show then visits Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn from Mon 27 May to Sat 1 June; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry from Mon 13 to Sat 18 May & The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham from Mon 26 August to Sat 31 August

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REVIEW: Five Rivers À La Carte Bringing a taste of India to Walsall

'Five Rivers offers the best Indian food in the Midlands' is the opening line on the Walsall-located restaurant's website - a bold statement which I simply couldn't ignore. I've eaten in many an impressive Indian eatery over the years, and after reading that declaration, I absolutely knew I needed to check the place out.

The award-winning restaurant boasts a sumptuous fine dining menu created by head chef and founder Rashpal Sunner, a man who has prepared banquets for the likes of former President of the United States Bill Clinton and ex-prime minister Tony Blair, to name but two.

One of the first things my partner and I noticed when we were welcomed into the restaurant were the numerous awards displayed in the main bar area. From Best Midlands Newcomer in the British Curry Awards to Best Restaurant in the Business Eye Asian Business Awards, Five Rivers certainly has an impressive amount of silverware to its name.

Featuring exposed brickwork and timber frames, the restaurant is stylish and boasts a contemporary feel. Chilled-out house music was playing through the speakers, which helped to create a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere.

Culinary delights on offer include Lasani Chilli Duck, Nihari Shank and Goan Fish Curry. However, on the evening we visited, we dined from the four-course Mother's Day menu, which started with an amuse bouche of Paneer Hara Bara - one of India's most famous barbecue dishes. The dish comprised Indian cottage cheese marinated with mint and coriander and the chef's signature spices, finished in the tandoor. Vibrant green in colour, it was an elegant and tasty dish with which to kick off proceedings.

As I was eating, I caught a glimpse of our neighbouring table's cocktails - they looked insanely good! Pity I was the designated driver for the evening! Naturally, I had a look through the menu to see what I was missing. A couple that particularly caught my eye were Solero - Amaretto, passionfruit puree, apple juice, lime zest and cream - and Millionaire's Stiletto - vanilla pod-infused vodka, fraise liquer, home-brewed vanilla syrup, strawberry puree and cranberry juice.

Next up was a choice of four starters - Aloo Tikki Chaat, Manchurian, Murgh Assiette and Fish Amritsari. I opted for the latter, which comprised succulent chunks of tilapia coated in an ajwain and gram flour batter which had been delicately spiced and deep-fried. Served with a tomato chutney, it was an absolutely stunning dish. The batter was perfectly spiced, boasted a rich, golden finish, and in no way overpowered the flavour of the tilapia. The chutney was sweet and spicy - the perfect accompaniment to the perfectly cooked fish. I could have eaten it three times over!

My partner chose the Murgh Assiette, which featured three beautifully tender cuts of chicken breast pieces marinated in Five Rivers' signature spices - Malai, Hariyali and the classic Murgh Tikka - all slow-roasted in the tandoor. The flavours from the Malai marinade, which featured garlic, chilli, lemon, spices and cheese, were impressively subtle, whilst those from the Hariyali - mint and coriander - and the Tikka were more apparent. Combined, they created a medley of tasty, authentic flavours and made for another triumphant starter.

For the main course, we were treated to a selection of Five Rivers' most popular dishes to share - Daal Bukhara, Saag Punjabi, Chatpata Gosht and Lasani Chilli Chicken. They were served alongside some jeera rice, a freshly baked tandoori naan and a garlic & coriander naan - a necessity when dining in an Indian restaurant.

Featuring slow-cooked black lentils and kidney beans infused in Indian spices and a rich creamy sauce, the daal was mouthwateringly good and one of the highlights of the evening - comfort food at its absolute best. Our wonderful waiter, Mehtab, told us that in India, locals eat this for breakfast, lunch and dinner - and I can very much see why!

Next up, the Saag Punjabi. This dish was named number one in the Hello Curry Awards and is sold at major airports across the globe. Featuring spinach, green mustard leaves, onion, garlic and a whole host of other ingredients, it was truly exceptional; another dish that I'd be happy to eat at any time of the day.

Now for the meat dishes. The Chatpata Gosht featured lamb two ways - fillet and fine mince - slow-cooked with five selected spices. Well known for being a Kashmiri speciality, it boasted an explosion of traditional flavours. Last up was the equally tasty chilli chicken. A native dish cooked with fresh garlic sauce, coriander and crisp green chilli, the chicken was tender and the flavour delicious, boasting a subtle chilli kick.

Following an ever-so-tasty lemon, coconut & lime sorbet palate cleanser came the gulab jamun crème brûlée. A dish I've become very familiar with over the years, gulab jamun is a classic Indian sweet or dessert made up of milk powder balls which have been dunked in rose-flavoured sugar syrup. Gulab jamun are delicious enough on their own, but encased in a beautifully creamy crème brûlée, they're absolute heaven! It was a perfect twist on the much-loved French classic.

I can't recommend this gem of an eatery highly enough. From its magnificent food and sophisticated presentation to its friendly and attentive service, Five Rivers provided us with some of the best - if not *the* best - Indian cuisine we've ever experienced.
Lauren Foster

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

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The Great British Gin Festival returns

The 2019 edition of the Great British Gin Festival takes place at The Mill in Birmingham on 17 & 18 May.
The event will feature over 100 international gins, from household names to exclusive small-batch varieties.
Event attractions include gin games, tasting samples and demonstrations.
Musical entertainment will be provided by a live swing band performing hits by icons including Amy Winehouse and Frank Sinatra.
Tickets for the festival cost £13.50 and are available by visiting thegreatbritishginfest.co.uk

Shrewsbury vegan fair at The Buttermarket

Shrewsbury's biggest vegan fair will take place at popular town venue The Buttermarket this summer.
The free event, which is being held on Saturday 8 June, will feature over 50 stalls across three floors, an outside hot-food area, a range of kids' activities and a basement-located chill-out zone.

Staffordshire gin distillery set to go international

The Uttoxeter-based Nelson's Gin Distillery has announced a partnership with Blackburn food & drink exporter Sovereign Beverage Company.
Sales Director at Nelson's Gin, Greg Kimber, said of the partnership: "With the distillery hitting its third year and seeing the huge growth we've had in sales, taking Nelson's Gin to the international market was the natural next step. We're really excited about working with Sovereign and know that they can see the enormous potential in our products."

Award-winning street food event returns to Shrewsbury

Award-winning Birmingham street food event Digbeth Dining Club is visiting Shrewsbury this month. Taking place at Severn Social on Saturday 23 March, the event features DJs, live music, cocktails, craft beer and (of course!) street food, including burgers, pizzas, Chinese cuisine with a twist, sweet treats and fried chicken... Shrewsbury Dining Club is both child and dog-friendly and runs from 1pm to 10pm. Tickets are £1 in advance or £2 on the door.

Weston Park to host new festival of music, food and fizz

A brand new festival featuring 'music, food and fizz' is coming to Weston Park on the Shropshire-Staffordshire border on Bank Holiday Monday the 27th of May.
Presented by Fizz Festivals, who are also hosting a Proms & Prosecco In The Park event at the venue the previous evening, Fireflies Festival is described as being 'relaxed and laid-back' with a 'multi-generational vibe'.
Commenting on their event, Fizz Festivals said: "With amazingly talented local performers, as well as tribute bands to get everybody on their feet, there truly is something to satisfy every musical taste. If you love the idea of a music festival, but hate the idea of huge crowds, parking miles away and stinky toilets, then this is the event for you."
For more information and to purchase tickets, visit fizzfestivals.com

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She won BBC Young Musician in 2018 after capturing millions of hearts with her thrilling rendition of Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto – this spring, the exceptionally talented Lauren Zhang graces Royal Birmingham Conservatoire once more.

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FRI 22 MAR
7PM

YCAT AT THE CONSERVATOIRE: BENJAMIN BAKER (VIOLIN) AND DANIEL LEBHARDT (PIANO)
WED 27 MAR
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Birmingham City University

BBC Philharmonic

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 29 March

Residing at the Corporation's Manchester home of Media City in Salford Quays, the BBC Philharmonic is no stranger to Stoke-on-Trent, regularly presenting Victoria Hall music-lovers with works from its impressive repertoire.
This latest concert sees the Phil raising the roof with a performance of Dvorak's New World Symphony, while Viviane Hagner (pictured) brings to life Beethoven's violin concerto - a piece of music that's widely considered to be the most serene the composer ever wrote.

Blake

Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Thurs 14 March

Comprising Ollie Baines, Humphrey Berney and Stephen Bowman, Blake are credited with bringing classical music to the masses - an achievement that was emphatically acknowledged when their debut offering won the coveted 'album of the year' gong at the Classical Brit Awards in 2008.
The crossover trio stop off in the Midlands this month to showcase a selection of songs from their seven chart-topping albums.

English Touring Opera

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 25 & Tues 26 March

English Touring Opera (ETO) travel to more regions and play more venues than any other English opera company, presenting more than 100 performances every year.
The company's stated aim is to make opera accessible to everybody - an ambition, it's fair to say, that they achieve with each and every production.
ETO visit Wolverhampton this month with two shows from their 'kings & queens' season, following up Verdi's Macbeth on the 25th with a performance of Mozart's Idomeneo the next evening.

Sir Karl Jenkins: 75th Birthday Concert

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 10 March

"Karl Jenkins," says opera and concert star Bryn Terfel, "produces always impeccable writing for a multitude of voices and instruments. I wish I had his talent to compose tunes but am proud to consider myself one who adores to sing them."
Terfel is far from alone in his admiration of his fellow Welshman. A recent exhaustive survey revealed that Sir Karl is the most-performed living composer in the world. Indeed, his best-known work, The Armed Man: A Mass For Peace (which he conducts in this birthday concert, along with 6000 Pipes Organ Concerto, Palladio and excerpts from Symphonic Adiemus) has been performed more than 1,500 times in 20 different countries.

Carducci String Quartet

St Mary's Church, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, Sun 10 March

Performing approximately 100 international concerts each year, Carducci are one of the most successful string quartets in the business.
They here join forces with pianists Clare Hammond (pictured), Peter Caelen and Simon Callaghan to explore the romantic piano quintet masterpieces of Schumann, Saint Saens and Brahms.

“It’s a rollercoaster. People do end up on their feet often, and you try to take them along. I think that’s the point of music; it’s escapism, it’s about lifting people up and showing them something different. I think that’s important.”

by Stephen Taylor

Seth Lakeman

marks the 400th anniversary of The Mayflower's journey to the New World

As a native of Devon, folk singer-songwriter Seth Lakeman is planning to mark an important historical landmark for the county next year.

"The most recent project I've been working on is the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower, the Pilgrim Fathers' boat, and their journey over to the New World," explains Seth. "So I'm writing the music for a theatre show that's going to happen in June next year."

The Puritans who became known as the Pilgrim Fathers set sail on the Mayflower from Plymouth in September 1620. By the end of that year, they had established the 'Plimoth Plantation', one of the earliest English settlements in North America.

Lakeman has ambitious plans to mark their momentous journey: "We'll call it The Pilgrims' Tale, and it will be music with visuals - there'll be narration in between some of the songs - but the actual theatre show itself will be a big 80-person performance. It's a bit more of an epic, and we'll have a spin-off album alongside it."

Instead of following the usual pattern of presentation for a show - a West End debut followed by a tour of provincial theatres - Seth is hoping to take the production on a very special and unique route: "We'll pick the 11 towns and cities that the Puritans came from. We're going to be quite specific about it, so it'll include Nottingham, Leiden, in Holland - where they spent time - Dartmouth, Southampton, Boston, Darlington and Scrooby in Nottinghamshire. It'll be quite an unusual tour; not the usual venues."

And like the Pilgrim Fathers, Seth is hoping to head across the Atlantic: "Fingers crossed, it'll have a run in Boston in Massachusetts. That would be fantastic.

"When I was touring America, I met the Wampanoag tribe, the descendants of the original Native American Indians who met the settlers, and they're going to be part of the theatre show. So there's a lot that's going into it to cross the sea, cross the divide and make sense in Massachusetts, as well as over here in Plymouth. It's a big moment."

Before he follows in the Pilgrims' footsteps, though, Seth will continue to promote his most recent album, The Well Worn Path, which was released on Cooking Vinyl late last year.

"It's done incredibly well. The way people are receiving and responding to it is really positive. It's gone down very well, so it's certainly an exciting time, with a brand new line-up. It's always good to keep the cogs turning, keep things evolving, and it feels like we're doing that with this new band.

"It's a really strong band, so we're quite excited by it all. There's a guitarist, double bass player, drummer and myself. It's very groovy, quite uplifting at moments, and it's a very good show, we hope."

Seth reveals that the recruitment of Kit Hawes on guitar helped to influence the overall sound of The Well Worn Path.

"We were exploring the [Fender] Stratocaster guitar - that Richard Thompson sound and the way he writes within it - and it's certainly the sound that will come out in Shrewsbury and Birmingham. It's probably the coolest sound we've ever had."

The Well Worn Path is Seth's ninth album release. His second album, Kitty Jay, earned him a nomination for the prestigious Mercury Prize in 2005, alongside some notable company.

"It was a big year. Coldplay, KT Tunstall, the launch of Kaiser Chiefs, Bloc Party's first record - I was up against some big acts."

The eventual winner of the award was Antony And The Johnsons, but Seth acknowledges his nomination as a real turning point in his career: "The Mercury seemed more of an event back then than it does now. I was performing, and it was the biggest step in my career. I've had some incredible hurdles, but that was the one that broke my career."

Seth has since shared the stage with the likes of Billy Bragg, Jethro Tull, Mumford & Sons and the Levellers. More recently he's added the name of one of rock's legendary frontmen to his list of collaborators - Led Zeppelin's Robert Plant: "He's a bit like a father figure now. Robert is someone who's a massive inspiration and a very energetic, creative force who you can only look up to. I feel quite honoured to be part of his whole setup and to be able to call him a mate. He'll definitely come to some of the gigs that we do on this tour."

If Plant decides to rock up in Shrewsbury or Birmingham, what can he expect to see when Seth walks on stage?

"It's a real journey around the west country, from shipwrecks to farmers, to train drivers and legends of the moors. Musically, it's very colourful, it's very rhythmic, it's quite high energy, but there are also very stripped-back moments that are quite emotional.

"It's a rollercoaster. People do end up on their feet often, and you try to take them along. I think that's the point of music; it's escapism, it's about lifting people up and showing them something different. I think that's important."

Seth plays Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Sunday 3 March and Birmingham's Glee Club on Wednesday 27 March.

SOMEWHERE SPECIAL...

Photo credit: John Coles

by Stephen Taylor

Celebrating 40 years of 2-Tone at Coventry Music Museum...

In the summer of 1979, 2-Tone Records, an independent label from Coventry, released Gangsters by The Special A.K.A. (or The Specials, as they would become known). The single signalled the start of a musical revolution. Over the next few years, 2-Tone would become a voice of protest against the Margaret Thatcher-led Conservative government.

The 2-Tone movement boasted an exciting roster of bands and a distinctive black-and-white chequered logo featuring a sharp-dressed man in a pork-pie hat. And, in Jerry Dammers - who, as leader of The Specials, would be responsible for some of the most memorable tunes of the 1980s - it had an iconoclastic and gifted founder.

Forty years on, 2-Tone's contribution to British music is being celebrated at the Coventry Music Museum.

Pete Chambers, the museum's director and curator, remembers when Gangsters skanked its way from his home city to the top 10 in the UK chart: "The Clash had been playing with reggae and punk, but I think The Specials took it to another level, and it was incredible for Coventry. We happened to go on holiday to Lloret De Mar in Spain, and we were all there, skanking. Gangsters was being played and we were so proud. Some cities have got their own bands, but we ended up with a whole movement!"

As Chambers recalls, Coventry was "the epicentre of the British music scene for a while", but it was 2-Tone's international popularity that fired his passion to recognise the contribution the label had made to the city.

"A friend of mine was approached by two Japanese girls in Coventry city centre who were looking for the '2-Tone'. He reported this back to me, and I was disgusted that there was nothing. I decided to write a book called The 2-Tone Trail, and that's where it started."

The museum opened five years ago, and while its 2-Tone exhibits include items relating to Selecter, Madness and The Beat, all of whom released records on the label, it's The Specials who remain the chief reason why people visit the venue.

The band's single, Ghost Town - a damning indictment of Thatcher-led policies - topped the charts in July 1981. Its success coincided with an outbreak of inner-city rioting across Britain - a response to escalating racial tension and social deprivation.

The video for Ghost Town featured a scene where the band are singing the song's refrain in a classic Vauxhall Cresta. A re-creation of the car has become a popular new attraction at the Music Museum.

"We believe that parts of our Ghost Town car are from the original," says Pete. "People love the car - everybody wants their photo taken in it."

Just like the label that inspired a couple of female fans from east Asia to make a 6,000-mile pilgrimage, the Coventry Music Museum is an independent operation, with funding mainly provided by admission charges: "We're part of the 2-Tone Village, made *by* the fans *for* the fans. We've got two shops, the 2-Tone café, the Coventry Music Wall of Fame outside, and we've got the museum, so it's a lovely little enclave."

As 2-Tone nears its 40th anniversary, it seems appropriate that Encore, the first album of original material by The Specials in more than 20 years, went straight to number one in the UK album chart, less than a week after the band announced they would play four nights in July in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral. Also, one of the things we're doing is 'kids go free'. We want to educate the kids about 2-Tone, so throughout this year they can visit the museum for free, as long as they're accompanied by an adult. We've also got a little comic book that explains about 2-Tone in a child-friendly way."

While Pete acknowledges that the museum is inspired by 2-Tone, he's also keen to celebrate the work of other musicians, not only from Coventry but also neighbouring towns and cities. These include Frank Ifield, Lieutenant Pigeon, The Enemy and The Primitives. But it's the story of a Coventry-born woman who pioneered British electronic music which attracts a significant number of visitors to the museum...

As a member of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Delia Derbyshire took an original tune by Ron Grainer and helped to compose the Dr Who theme in 1963. Her innovative approach to recording music created some of the earliest electronic sounds, many of which were way ahead of their time. Derbyshire died in 2001 at the age of 64.

"After 2-Tone, she's the next most popular pilgrimage people make. Delia's definitely number two - we have a lot of people coming for that. It's a shame she never saw any of this.

"We got a road named after her in Coventry. The local authority wanted to call it 'street' or 'road', but I said we should have the double meaning of 'way', because Delia liked to do things her own way. So it became Derbyshire Way."

Coventry Music Museum is located at 80 Walsgrave Road, Coventry, CV2 4ED. For more information, visit covmm.co.uk

Greg Russell & Ciaran Algar

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Sun 10 March

BBC Radio Two Young Folk Award winners Greg Russell and Ciaran Algar released their debut album, The Queen's Lover, to great acclaim in 2012, since which time their touring schedule has seen them play at well-established annual get-togethers including Cambridge Folk Festival and Fairport's Cropredy Convention.
They're this month stopping off at Henry Tudor House as part of a UK tour.

Quill

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 7 March

When bass guitarist Ben Brain died suddenly in 2012, his wife and Quill's lead singer, Joy Strachan-Brain, was of a mind to call time on the band's 30-plus years of musicmaking. Eventually, though, she decided it was more important to battle on, in so doing ensuring that the songs Ben had written for a new album would eventually be heard... With support gigs for Van Morrison, The Pretenders and Simply Red featuring on their CV, the popular Tamworth band have garnered an enviable reputation for their unique musical style, creating a sound that incorporates numerous influences, including Celtic folk and rock.

Ferocious Dog

The Robin, Bilston, Sat 9 March

A popular act on the festival scene and well known for their high-octane live performances, Ferocious Dog are a full-on six-piece band that play folk music infused with rock, reggae and Celtic vibrations.
Each gig sees them liaising with local food banks to organise a charity food drop for the homeless. It's an undertaking which their fans have very much bought into, taking along non-perishable food, blankets and toiletries to their shows.

Jackie Oates

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 8 March

In the 16 years since appearing as a finalist in the BBC Radio Two Young Folk Awards, Staffordshire singer & fiddle player Jackie Oates has performed at festivals and venues across the country.
A founder member of Rachel Unthank And The Winterset, Jackie is now a permanent member of folk supergroup The Imagined Village.

The Coral

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 9 March

After a five-year hiatus, The Coral released seventh studio album Distance Inbetween in 2016. Their return saw the band joined by guitarist Paul Molloy, formerly of The Zutons. Best known for singles Dreaming Of You, In The Morning, Pass It On and Don't Think You're The First, the influential five-piece are on tour following the release of latest album Move Through The Dawn.

Hayseed Dixie

The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton, Sat 23 March

Although they've produced some pretty unforgettable and comically crude songs, including I'm Keeping Your Poop In A Jar and She Was Skinny When I Met Her, Hayseed Dixie are probably best known for their rollicking rockgrass covers. Co-founder, guitarist and frontman John Wheeler names Motorhead's Ace Of Spades as his favourite, but it's the music of AC/DC with which they're most closely associated. Kiss, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles and Queen are others to have received the Hayseed Dixie treatment.
Having played thousands of gigs in 30-plus countries, it's fair to say they're a much-loved act, so bag yourself a ticket asap.

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by Tom Silverton

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN

hoping to become *Wales' favourite daughter...*

Comedian and podcaster Kiri Pritchard-McLean is proving to be a major hit on the UK comedy circuit, not least as writer and director of highly rated sketch group Gein's Family Giftshop. What's On chatted to her ahead of her upcoming Midlands dates...

Rising star Kiri Pritchard-McLean is making a name for herself as a standup comedian, podcaster, MC and sketch trouper. She's also flying the flag for Wales - although born in Gloucester, she was raised on a farm in Anglesey. "I absolutely identify as Welsh. I love playing gigs in Wales because I think the audiences have got a peculiar sensibility. Maybe some of that seeps into my standup. I think it definitely shows in my sketch group because three out of four of us are Welsh."

The sketch group to which Kiri refers is Gein's Family Giftshop, which she formed with Kath Hughes and Edward Easton. Adam Scott-Rowley joined later. "Kath and Ed are the two funniest, most talented people I know, so spending time with them is amazing. When I start directing, they take direction so brilliantly and they're just a joy to watch. There's something about Geins that keeps us all coming back to working together and pursuing it. We love doing it so much and we love the little gang."

When she's not busy with standup, Kiri runs comedy musical night Amusical, where the audience enjoy (or are subjected to) standups performing their favourite musical numbers. "It's a really fun, silly, joyous, underdog, campy, naughty vibe, which is not like anything else that I do. I love it. And the band are incredible, so everyone sounds great whether they are or not! The audience are just brilliant; we're very, very lucky. I think Richard Herring is pencilled in to do it in June."

So has Kiri ever thought about creating a musical? "I'd need to have some time off to actually write it, but I'd love to. But it's also very hard at the moment, as the landscape's changed because everyone watched Hamilton and went, 'Well, what's the point... that's the benchmark!' You only want to do something if it's excellent, and do I think I could write an excellent musical? Probably not."

As though standup and a musical night aren't enough, Kiri also has a podcast with fellow comedian Rachel Fairburn, in which they discuss, amongst other things, serial killers - a macabre subject which seems peculiarly popular with comedians. Does she have any thoughts about why that might be? "People who do comedy tend to be weird outsiders, which that genre is all about. Comedians have a much darker sensibility with each other. Everyone I knew growing up, we were all into horror and comedy, and when you start doing comedy, you're like, 'That's quite enough of that!'"

To top off her already-jampacked schedule, Kiri has been hosting BBC Radio 4extra's topical comedy show, Newsjack. "It's had some great hosts, and you don't want to be the one who nobody talks about - or who everyone talks about! I just want to do a solid job and keep my integrity. I really believe in it as a programme because it's crowd-sourced and is a genuine opportunity for people to hone their skills and get writing. It's a dark art!

Surely with so demanding a professional life, something is going to have to give for Kiri. Might she, for example, jettison the standup comedy? "I would never want to do that. I basically feel like I've got several plates spinning - some things I'm doing badly, some things I'm doing well. Geins is doing a new show in Edinburgh this year, so I won't do a solo show there because I don't have time to do a good job of both of them. It's so annoying because you just wish you could do all of them! Sometimes stuff has to give, and at the moment it's going to be my standup, and that's fine, because it's important to me that Geins do a good show. I love everything I do, and I don't want to give up anything!"

Proving herself as a comedy force across so many different platforms, could a Netflix special be on the horizon? "Everyone would love a Netflix special, surely? I've just done a special for Comedy Central that'll be out soon. That was really fun to do. It's great because whole new audiences are opening up for people. The comedy coming out of Britain onto Netflix is only going to get better and better."

Unless you've been under a rock or wearing a blindfold, you might recognise Kiri not just for her standup but also her signature style - dressed to the nines in sequins. "Where did it come from, I hear you ask. I have a respect for old-school showbiz and love all that stuff. When I first started, I didn't think there was anything that stood out about me as a comic, so I thought maybe if I always wore something interesting and different, then people would at least remember that about me. I always like to dress up when I'm on stage because I spend my nights out gigging, so I've got all these great clothes I can't wear because I'm working. It's sort of a nod to working men's clubs and musicals."

Kiri definitely seems likes she's on the path to stellar success, even if she's being modest about it. So what might she call her autobiography - if she ever got round to writing it? "Well, I'm trying to push the agenda at the moment of 'Wales' favourite daughter', which I'm determined to become, so I'm going to call it that. Riding on the back of a corgi, with a Welsh dragon draped round my shoulders!"

Kiri Pritchard-McLean brings her Victim, Complex show to Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham on Thursday 14 March and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Friday 26 April

by Patsy Moss

Josie Lawrence

The Queen of Improv talks about starring in Edmond de Bergerac at The REP

Improv Queen and renowned actor Josie Lawrence is no stranger to Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Previously she's graced its stage with performances in Tom Stoppard's Hapgood and his translation of Chekov's The Cherry Orchard. She's also appeared in Eugene Ionesco's Amedee, Bill Alexander's The Alchemist and Bryony Lavery's production of Frozen.

Now she's preparing to return to the venue for a sixth time, taking on numerous roles in Jeremy Sams' translation of French theatre phenomenon Edmond de Bergerac. Directed by Roxana Silbert, the ensemble piece features Freddie Fox in the title role as Edmond Rostand, Henry Goodman as Constant Coquelin and Chizzy Akudulo as Maria.

"I play the actress Sarah Bernhardt, who just whisks herself in and whisks back out again," says Josie. "She's just one of the many parts I perform in the play. As well as Sarah, I play a prostitute, an old actress, a waitress and a can-can girl, so there'll be lots of different hats to wear..."

The winner of five Molière awards, Alexis Michalik's critically acclaimed comedy continues to play to packed houses at the Theatre du Palais-Royale in Paris.

'It's a very funny 'what if' play," Josie continues. "It's about how Edmond Rostand, the writer of Cyrano de Bergerac, got the idea to write his play. Everyone at the time thought it wasn't going to work because numerous things kept going wrong, but when it was first performed at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin in 1897, it received 40 curtain calls and the applause lasted for an hour. Cyrano made Edmond a huge hero in France, and here we have this slightly fictionalised version of a young man - played by Freddie - his journey, his woes and his success."

Midlands-born Josie is always happy to return to the region - and in particular to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre - to perform.

"It's a very friendly theatre, very well run, and I love working with Roxana. The space itself is lovely because it's huge. It has the feel of a studio to it because the seats go straight down onto the stage. It's still my local theatre, so I love it."

Born into a working-class family in Cradley Heath - her father worked at British Leyland and her mother was 'a lovely mum and housewife', Josie's early experiences of theatre consisted of trips into Birmingham to see pantomimes.

She made it known that she wanted to act from the age of five, and at 16 joined local theatre group Oldbury Barlow Players, where her first role was Honey in Who's Afraid Of Virgina Woolf. Three years at Devon's Dartington College of Arts (1978 - 1981) resulted in her receiving a Bachelor of Arts honours degree, since which time she's enjoyed a bountiful career on stage and radio and in television and film.
So which does she enjoy most?

"I love them all. My career trajectory hasn't followed any particular path. When I finished Theatre College I did a lot of serious theatre. If I had to choose my first love, it would be when I was playing someone who was manically depressed at the Donmar Warehouse with Peter Capaldi. It would've been in the early to mid-'80s, and they were doing late-night cabaret there. I stayed behind one night because they were doing improv and needed more girls, so I joined in.

"I then joined the Comedy Store Players, and a producer came along who asked if I'd be interested in doing this thing called Whose Line Is It Anyway. I'm very thankful for that because it made my name. It only used to take two weekends to film, and for the rest of the year I would carry on doing my theatre work, but Whose Line Is It Anyway was what I became mostly known for.

"People immediately started to refer to me as a comedian. I didn't mind that, as I like making people laugh. Equally, though, I like to be challenged, and to do things that I can really get my teeth into. This year is already turning out to be good. After playing Sarah here, I move straight into playing Aunt Ellie in Oklahoma!, which is a fantastic part."

As she approaches her 60th birthday in June, and with her career still in full flow, is Josie more selective about the roles she accepts?

"I'm not a huge fan of touring anymore. I'm a bit of a home bird. I love my home and where I live. I love coming up to the Midlands, but I don't think I could spend a year or so touring; its just not me. Some people love it, but I like to get back home in the evening - I like my own bed too much. When I was younger, I loved the partying every night and all of that, but now I live the quieter life, so that impacts on the decisions I make."

Regular performances with the Comedy Store Players - a troupe of six who turn up at London's Comedy Store with 'no script and not the faintest idea what will happen' - are still a big part of Josie's life. So what is it about improvisation - and her role with the Players - that holds such appeal?

"It's the best part-time job in the world and is so much fun to do. I've been part of the Comedy Store Players since 1985, on a Wednesday and a Sunday, and when I can't do it - like when I had to have two years off to perform with the Royal Shakespeare Company - they get guest performers in. Then, when I've finished the job, I come back again. It's immensely funny to do. I did the 30th birthday of Whose Line Is It Anyway at the Royal Albert Hall. It sold out for three shows and we played to about 17,000 people. It was like being a rock star!"

Edmond de Bergerac shows at The REP, Birmingham, from Friday 15 to Saturday 30 March.

Rhod Gilbert

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 3 March; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 7 March; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 17 - Sat 18 May

Welsh funnyman Rhod Gilbert has acquired a huge and still-growing following thanks to a high-energy brand of grumpiness that marks him out as one of the top comedians of his generation. With several sell-out UK tours to his name, the multi-award-winner is this month returning to the Midlands with a brand new show.
Rhod's best-loved gags include: "In the Bible, God made it rain for 40 days and 40 nights. That's a pretty good summer for Wales. That's a hosepipe ban waiting to happen." And "A spa hotel? It's like a normal hotel, only in reception there's a picture of a pebble."

Lucy Frederick

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 16 March

Lucy Frederick is a comedian who tries not to set the bar too high for herself. Asked in an interview what reaction she looks for in an audience, she replied: "Largely I look for laughter. But I will take smiling. Or not grimacing. Beggars can't be choosers."
It's in part this self-effacing attitude which has seen Lucy make her way up the greasy comedy pole at an impressive rate of knots. She's also got some very good gags and isn't averse to bearing her soul - a fact which goes some way towards explaining why she's called this latest show Even More Naked.

Olga Koch

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 3 March

The daughter of a former deputy prime minister of Russia who went on to become a game-show host and live in exile, Olga Koch recounts the story of her father's treatment at the hands of the country he once served with distinction. In the process, she invites her audience to join her on a journey through what is essentially a family album by sharing a selection of home videos from her childhood (as well as vintage clips of pro-Gorbachev TV adverts!).
An autobiographical show with a heavy dollop of espionage thrown in for good measure, this debut offering from Olga was nominated in the best newcomer category at last summer's Edinburgh Comedy Awards.

Carl Hutchinson

The REP, Birmingham, 9 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 23 March

Observational comedian Carl Hutchinson makes a welcome return with a show that covers all manner of common-or-garden topics, from the challenges of buying a house to the experience of having kids. Prior to becoming a full-time standup, Carl spent some time as a maths teacher. "There are certainly comparisons between the two professions," says the popular Geordie comedian, "but the definite advantage with comedy is that if you have a bad gig, you can rest assured that you don't have to see the same audience the next day at 10am!"

Ken Cheng

Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury, Wed 6 March; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 3 May

There's plenty more to Ken Cheng than a standup comedy routine. The son of Chinese immigrants in the UK, he not only earned a place at Cambridge to study mathematics, he also decided to drop out. He's a professional poker player too, so even if the jokes dry up, his cash flow hopefully won't. Ken won the Dave Funniest Joke of the Fringe award in 2017, beating the opposition with the gag: "I'm not a fan of the new pound coin, but then again, I hate all change."

Mark Steel

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 14 March; Evesham Arts Centre, Fri 29 March

"I started doing standup in 1982, around the circuit of bizarre gigs," recalls highly regarded writer and comedian Mark Steel. "I'd go on after jugglers and escapologists and people who banged nails into their ear. Since then, I've spoken at lots of demonstrations, union meetings, protests and benefits - and yet capitalism still seems to rule the world. Maybe I'm a jinx!"
A well-established performer on the UK comedy circuit, Mark's CV includes the BAFTA-nominated Mark Steel Lectures for BBC Two, BBC One's Have I Got News For You and Radio Four's News Quiz. He visits the Midlands with his latest touring show, Every Little Thing's Gonna Be Alright.

Kieran Hodgson

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Wed 27 March; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 28 March

With the epic Brexit saga continuing to excite and bore in equal measure, Kieran Hodgson here decides to take a stroll down memory lane and tell the tale of how Britain joined Europe in the first place. To do so, he returns to the decade that taste forgot and discovers that the 1970s were about way more than just 'TISWAS, the colour brown and the words "Let's go on strike again"'.
A three-time Edinburgh Comedy Award nominee, character comedian Kieran has built an impressive reputation on the standup circuit and is well worth a look.

Stephen Bailey

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Wed 20 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 23 March

Potty-mouthed comedian Stephen Bailey may not be a household name but he's certainly coming up fast on the tracks. Having supported Katherine Ryan and Jenny Éclair on sell-out UK tours, he's now hitting the road with his own show, Our Kid.
Describing himself as a 'working-class, ginger, gay, northern comic', Stephen has a black belt in tae kwon-do and freely admits to loving a conspiracy theory - preferably one involving a celebrity and a cucumber...

Podfest Birmingham

Town Hall, Birmingham, Sat 23 & Sun 24 March

Birmingham Town Hall is this month hosting the city's first ever Podfest.
The brand new event will see an array of podcasters bringing their expertise to the stage in an exclusive set of live shows.
Contributors include Stuart Goldsmith, whose Comedians Comedian shines a light on the joke-writing process, and Richard Herring, who will be chatting with a surprise guest from the city.
Others taking part include Scummy Mummies Helen Thorn and Ellie Gibson - whose podcast features YouTube and Instagram sensations Louise Pentland and Emma Conway - and Sofie Hagen with her MohPod (Made Of Human) podcast, in which the UK-based Danish comedian 'sits down with a lovely person and talks about life'.
Joe Lycett with panel game Do The Right Thing, Sarah Millican and Beverley Knight in the 'by women for women' Standard Issue, and the ever-brilliant No Such Thing As Fish complete the weekend line-up of shows.

Interview by Jenny Ell

Do You Hear The People Sing?

Storm the barricades! Les Misérables is returning to the Midlands...

It's been a whole decade since Les Misérables last visited the region, so to say that the production's springtime return to Birmingham Hippodrome is eagerly anticipated would be something of an understatement.
On the eve of the show opening in Manchester, Killian Donnelly, who stars as Jean Valjean, chatted to us about all things Les Misérables ...

How does it feel to have made your way through the Les Mis ranks, from starting as a swing to now playing Jean Valjean?

I feel a lot of pressure but am loving every minute of it. Starting as a swing in 2008, I looked up to the Valjeans of the day and asked them questions, but now I'm the one being asked questions! I just try to relay my experiences to them rather than saying, "Well, when I played so-and-so..." It's hard not to do that, but it's an incredible baton to be passed. I'm loving every minute of playing Jean Valjean - it's just so surreal that I'm now the older guy!

Who was Jean Valjean when you started with the production in 2008?

An American guy named Drew Sarich, who brought rock to the role. Drew came to work smiling every day, and smashed it out of the park at every performance. He didn't go round trying to inspire, he just naturally did. Following him, there was Simon Bowman and David Shannon, but I will never forget Drew. He gave the same performance on a Wednesday matinee as he did on a Saturday night and had a real swagger about him. He was a rock star!

Have you drawn inspiration from your predecessors for your interpretation of Jean Valjean?

I think Michael Bublé said that when you take something from another performer, people call it stealing. But if you take something from a bunch of other performers, it's research! My Valjean is definitely a mixture of Drew, a bit of Colm (Wilkinson) and John Owen-Jones etc.

You've performed in the stage show, the O2 anniversary concert and featured in the film. Do you have a Les Mis highlight?

With the O2 concert, I was excited to work with James Powell, who's our current tour director. I was able to see how he worked with a massive cast of 90, as opposed to a standard-size cast of thirtysomething. I played Courfeyrac (one of the students) in the concert, so it was a pleasure to watch James in action. Also, I managed to choose my moment backstage to speak to Colm Wilkinson - the original London Valjean and a special guest at the concert. He was so friendly, so encouraging, and asked me who I was playing in the show in town. I said Enjolras, and I had long blonde hair down to my shoulders at the time. He said, "Well at least you've got the hair for it!" It was nice Irish banter.
With the movie, my highlight was filming the barricade scenes. The director, Tom Hooper, had 60 extras dressed as peasants and students, plus five cameramen brought in about 20 minutes before the end of our call one day. We were stood on a purpose-built street in Pinewood Studios and Tom asked us to tear the place apart and build a barricade. So in 20 minutes, we ripped doors and shutters off their hinges, boosted each other up to get into houses and pushed pianos out of windows etc. We destroyed the place and couldn't believe we were running around and getting paid to do it! The production team had built another barricade on a neighbouring sound stage, which was meant to come in at the weekend, removing our makeshift one. But ours was so good that they just put screws and bolts into it to hold it together and used that for the film. As we built it with our bare hands, I could say that I knew where that shutter came from, where that coffin came from or the elephant tusk that came from down the street there, on the right. Moments like that will never happen again, so it was very special.

Have you been able to watch the BBC TV version of Les Misérables?

I haven't, but everyone's saying how brilliant it is. There was a moment the other day when I was flicking through channels and saw the part where Valjean was going to meet Thénardier and Thénardier attacks him. His whole gang pin Valjean down to a table, but with his strength, he pushes the gang off and puts a hot poker to his arm. I saw that and thought it looked incredible. I've heard that Fantine's story is stunning too and really

shows what I Dreamed A Dream is all about. Things you can't do on stage, you can replicate on TV and in film, so I'm dying to see it.

Do you have a favourite musical number in the show, either to perform or listen to?

Stars is the ultimate Les Mis moment for me. Ever since I was 23 and standing at the side of the stage watching Earl Carpenter sing it as Javert, it's been a real pinch-me moment. I still have those moments today. One minute I'm talking to Katie Hall (Fantine) backstage about our dogs, then she goes on stage to sing I Dreamed A Dream and I think to myself, "That's Fantine in Les Mis!" Also, when I grab Fantine and Éponine's hands towards the end of the show, I look at Tegan Bannister (Éponine) and think, "Wow, it's Éponine!" These things will never escape me, and it inspires me to love the show all over again. But the first moment for me was definitely Stars. Even now, when I hear *our* Javert, Nic Greenshields, belting it out over the tannoy, it's just incredible. I'm a huge fan!

You clearly still have an overwhelming passion for the show...

That's Drew Sarich again. Drew spoke so highly of the show and loved every minute of it. I think even if you sound like a crazy fan, it's important to love what you do. I don't work for a living because I get to perform Valjean in Les Mis every night. It's the show that keeps on giving, and once you get used to a moment, another one flashes up.

The last UK tour of Les Mis was 10 years ago, for the 25th anniversary. Why do you think it's taken so long to get the show back on the road?

I think it was about not sending it round again too quickly. It allowed things to settle, and when the producers decided to put another tour out, they knew that people would be hungry for it. The last time Les Mis was in Dublin, for instance, was 23 years ago, with Colm Wilkinson, and it was the fastest-selling show at the venue this time around. Cameron Macintosh has said that he's still blown away by the passion which longstanding fans have for the show. I don't think people can understand the power of Les Mis, especially in this version, until they see it. Also, I think people want to experience the cinematic feel of this new production.

Do you have an opinion about this new production of Les Mis replacing the original in the West End? It's a decision that's caused quite a stir...

I didn't realise what a ruckus it had created until recently, when I heard about a petition going round. When you compare the amount of signatures on it to the fact that, in one show, we perform the new version to 2,500 audience members who're on their feet at the end, I think people are generally commenting on something that they don't know the full facts about. You have to give new things a chance. Les Mis has always been a stunning production, but if you're able to add to it with new technology, why wouldn't you? It's got real colour, it's fast-paced and is much darker. My mam is the first person to say she loves or hates something, but the one thing she said after watching this version was that the storytelling was a lot clearer. There have been standing ovations every night of the tour so far, so we're really excited to visit other UK venues and find out what the public reaction is to the new version.

Most recently you've been playing Charlie in Kinky Boots, both in the West End and on Broadway. Donning heels every night seems a far cry from the French Revolution! Do you find it easy to switch from one character to another?

No, not at all. It's unlikely that I'll perform in a concert or release an album because I like to get lost in a character - as 'actor-y' as that sounds. Whatever's going on in my life, I can filter it out in some way. Valjean is the biggest gift ever because he takes me through every emotion. I had to go back and film the screening for Kinky Boots in the Les Mis break between Leicester and Dublin, so I still had the Valjean look. When I put the boots back on, my lower back was the first thing to go because I realised I didn't have the body for it anymore! I had a bit of a Ned Kelly belly going on and my calves were in bits! However, after about four or five hours walking around backstage, I got used to them again and muscle memory brought it back to me. Other than looking in the mirror and seeing Valjean, I had to almost separate myself from it and start being the English shoe salesman again. After finding a voice for Valjean, with my belly hanging out and needing to really use my diaphragm, I had to go back to singing Cyndi Lauper pop music as Charlie, which is using my upper chest. The musical director spent a long vocal session with me, and by the end of it, Charlie was back. But after filming ended, I only had one day of rest and then had to find Valjean's voice again. It's not like popping into one theatre and then another - it really strains you - but I wouldn't change it for the world.

Are you looking forward to spending some time in Birmingham?

I can't wait! I went to Birmingham to see my friend in Oliver! years ago, but I never got to experience the city properly. When I got offered the Les Mis tour, one of the main reasons I said an instant yes was so that I could see parts of the UK that I'd never seen before. When we get a proper sit-down for six weeks, like we have in Birmingham, I'll be able to drive around with my dog and find different locations to take him for walks. Also, there are so many people I know who've toured before and who make suggestions about where to go, including bars to drink in and good places to buy your coffee etc. I'm really looking forward to it."

Les Misérables shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 2 April to Saturday 11 May

War Horse

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 27 March - Sat 6 April

Described as 'the theatrical event of the decade' when it opened in the West End in 2009, War Horse has continued to garner great praise in the ensuing years. Based on Michael Morpurgo's hugely popular 1982 novel, it tells the story of a young man named Albert, whose horse, Joey, is sold to the cavalry and shipped to France at the beginning of the First World War. Joey's subsequent adventures lead to him finding himself alone in a no man's land. But Albert is in no mood to give up on his beloved companion, and sets out to find him and take him home to Devon.

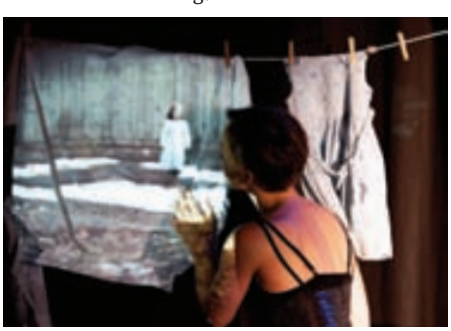
The show returns to the Midlands having played to more than seven million people in 11 countries around the world.

Bound

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Thurs 14 March

Justice In Motion are the ensemble behind this thought-provoking work, a two-hour production that ably fulfills the physical-theatre company's primary aim: to raise awareness of social injustice through powerful and visually stunning theatre.

Fusing dance, circus, music, poetry, parkour and projection, the performers present three very different but equally shocking accounts of human trafficking.



If My Father Only Knew

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 5 - Thurs 7 March

Charlie is a young man grieving the loss of his mother, struggling in his relationship with his father, and determined not to reveal the secret with which he's been living...

Birmingham writer Nathalie Bázan presents her fifth show at the Old Joint Stock - and is more than likely about to enjoy her fifth sell-out success too.

Focusing on themes of identity, sex and beauty in today's society, as well as the difficulties faced by young people wishing to express their true self, the play was originally showcased as a devised performance at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 2017.

Bázan established her theatre company, Lying Lips, five years ago, and has previously staged A Slave To Love, Billy Young: A Life On Death Row, The Virgin Marias and Kanada. So if you caught and enjoyed any or all of those previous productions, If My Father Only Knew is an absolute must-see.

ART

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 18 - Sat 23 March

Yasmina Reza's award-winning play revolves around a seemingly unremarkable painting and the major dispute it triggers between three old friends - a dispute that uncovers longstanding grievances and unspoken misunderstandings...

Nigel Havers, Denis Lawson and Stephen Tompkinson star.

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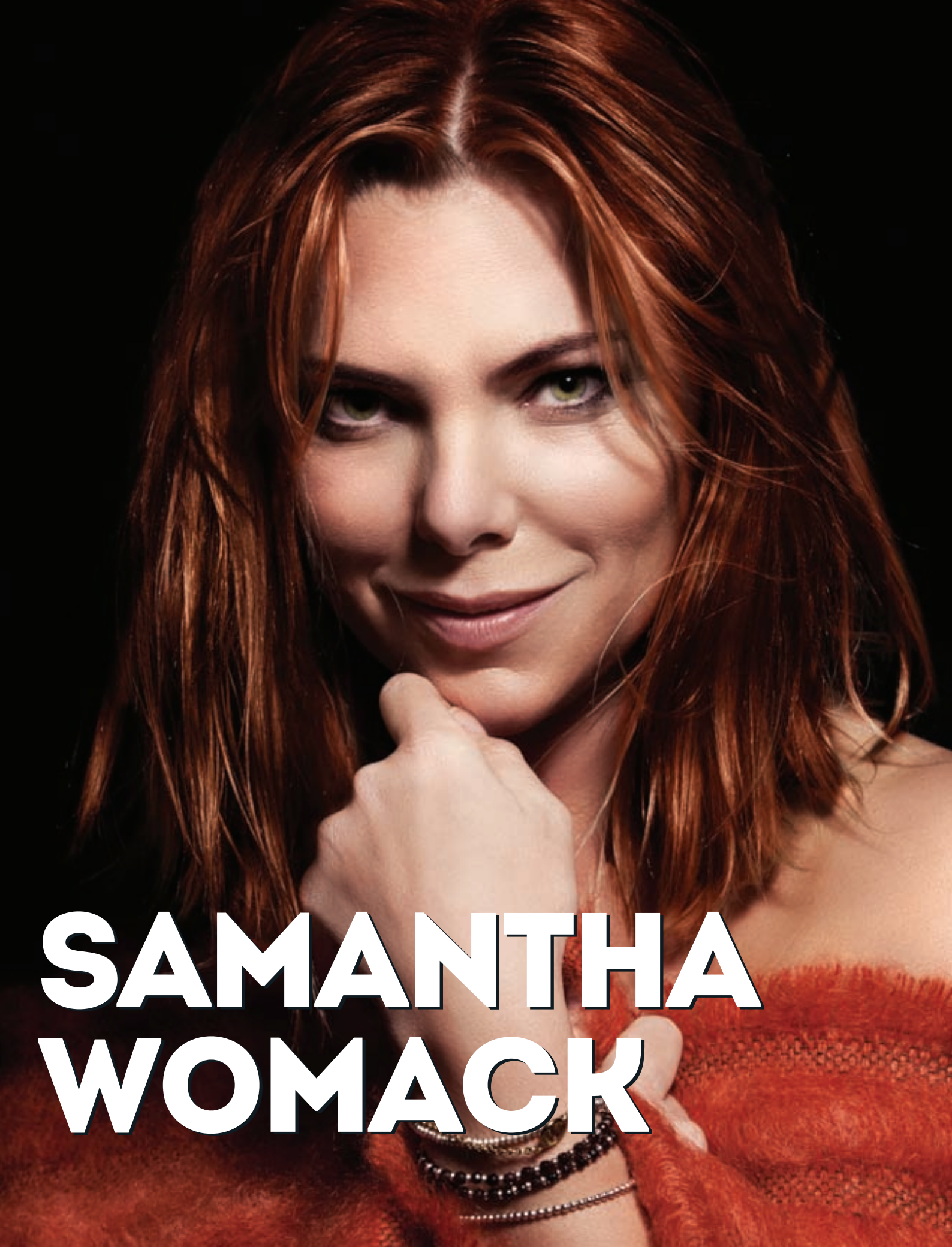
SAMANTHA
WOMACK

by Lauren Cole

Eastenders' star rolls into the Midlands with The Girl On The Train

First a bestselling book, then a hit film, The Girl On The Train took the world by storm. Now, a touring stage adaptation of Paula Hawkins' 2015 novel is rolling into the Midlands, with EastEnders star Samantha Womack in the lead role of Rachel Watson.

"I think the stage version is a response to the obsessions of the public," says Sam, who shot to stardom in 1991 when she represented the UK in the Eurovision Song Contest. "Thrillers, detective & police programmes and real-life crime drama are incredibly popular. I know that all the shows I like to watch on Netflix are things like Making Of A Murderer and the new Ted Bundy Tapes series. I think people are more interested in things that are, or could be, real life now. I think people are moving away from genres like fantasy and towards thrillers. The book was such a strong brand and such a success that people are excited to see the story presented how it was in the book. A lot of people were disappointed in the film, I think - some people loved it and others really didn't. I mean, I loved it because I just love Emily Blunt and everything she does. But really, people just love a good thriller - they really do!"

The Girl On The Train combines thriller with voyeurism. Sam's character Rachel watches two couples from the train and over time becomes obsessed with them. Sam thinks the immense popularity of the story is largely down to Rachel.

"I think it's been so popular because Rachel is an anti-hero. She says the wrong things, she's inappropriate, broken and damaged, which the audience seems to really respond to. I know for sure that the audiences I've experienced in the theatre respond really well to Rachel's bad behaviour and the racy things she says. I think sometimes people enjoy characters who kind of rally against the appropriate way to behave."

This is also the main reason that Sam was drawn to the role.

"While Rachel is broken - covering up all her damage with drinking - and has this devil-may-care attitude, she also has this really interesting arc to her character. She's an incredibly bright, strong woman - she's just kind of lost her way. I was attracted to the recklessness that makes her so interesting. I like the whole renegade vibe she has, where she just disorientates everyone with her madness. I've never really been in a situation where I've felt the way Rachel does and gone off the rails like she has, so I don't have any direct inspiration for how to play her character, but sometimes these parts just come and get you. They appear right in front of you and you know exactly how you'd like to play them, so you just go and do it."

Sam also thinks the book lends itself really well to theatre: "There's actually a lot more licence with theatre to do the dream-like flashback and memory scenes from the book, so you can access Rachel's brain in these scenarios a lot more than I think you can with film. I think theatrically the plot of the book works really well because you're able to delve deep into what Rachel is thinking and feeling. Obviously with every new production and adaptation it will change. New actors will play the roles differently, and each adaptation adds things in and cuts things out, but the format is very much the same. I think what happens when audience members come to see it is that they almost forget the exact details of what they've already read because they're so involved in the piece - it's very captivating."

Rachel turns amateur detective when Megan, one of the women she's been watching from the train, goes missing. Sam explains why her character becomes so engaged with the disappearance.

"Rachel sees Megan going missing as the way to get herself back on track. For the first time in months she feels needed by other people and has a purpose. At this point, she's very much been consumed by her alcoholism and her lies about going to work, so trying to figure out the mystery brings her back from the abyss."

Playing Rachel is certainly a departure from the role for which Sam is best known - Ronnie Mitchell in EastEnders.

"I played Ronnie on and off for nine years, so I really got to know that character very well - to the point where, once I'd learnt the lines, I didn't really need to rehearse because I knew exactly how to play her. I feel like, with theatre, you just get so much more time to rehearse and build the character before going straight in. I'm also a bit of a control freak! I like the way I have complete control over creating the character. What you see is what you get: the adaptation itself can't be changed in writing, or edited afterwards, so you completely know what you're signing up for. I really like that element of control, where what I put out at that very moment is exactly what the audience will see.

"I would say I prefer stage to screen, partly because I'm very impatient and like being able to work the story from start to finish in one night. Television and movies take such a long time to film. Sometimes you're doing the same scene for a whole day! It's hard to stay fresh in that kind of environment. With theatre, as soon as you set off playing your character on the night, it feels like you're in a big race of emotions and acting - it's very exciting!"

Although she's thoroughly enjoying starring in The Girl On The Train, Sam admits that she's looking forward to taking a break afterwards.

"The production is proving very popular, so I know there's incredible demand for it to continue until after the already-scheduled dates and until the end of the year. I think I need to decide what it's going to take out of me. I've only been playing Rachel for one month and she's such a hard part to play, as she's just so emotional. Sometimes it kind of gets under my skin a bit. But I'm definitely having a long break over the summer.

The Girl On The Train shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 18 to Saturday 23 March. The show then visits Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn from Mon 27 May to Sat 1 June; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry from Mon 13 to Sat 18 May & The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham from Mon 26 August to Sat 31 August

Kunene And The King

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 21 March - Tues 23 April

South African performer, activist and playwright John Kani has not only penned this brand new play, he's also starring in it.
The Black Panther actor is joined by Sir Antony Sher to tell the funny and moving story of two men from markedly different walks of life who are thrust together to reflect on a quarter-century of change in post-apartheid South Africa.
"The play marks 25 years since the first democratic elections in South Africa," explains Royal Shakespeare Company Artistic Director Gregory Doran. "John started to write the play when he was playing Caliban in 2009, opposite Antony as Prospero, in The Tempest, so we're thrilled to be staging Kunene And The King's world premiere."

The Life I Lead

The REP, Birmingham, Mon 11 - Wed 13 March

Quintessentially English gentleman actor David Tomlinson is best remembered for playing Mr Banks in Mary Poppins - but away from the screen, his own life featured more than its fair share of difficulty and heartbreak...
"I was attracted to The Life I Lead firstly because of the character of Tomlinson himself," says standup comedian Miles Jupp, who's starring in this touring version of James Kettle's biographical stage comedy. "He was a man whose acting performances seemed effortless but which concealed a great skill beneath the surface. It's a script that contains both comedy and moments of extraordinary sadness and pain, and I hope that I can do the play, and Tomlinson, justice."

Desert Island Flicks

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Sat 30 March

Two women and some of cinema's most memorable scenes here combine to provide what's being described as 'a blockbuster adventure and rom-com rolled into one'.
The ladies in question reimagine, remake and spoof all manner of magic movie moments from timeless classics and modern-day marvels. In the process, they present a production which they describe as existing somewhere between a dance performance, a sketch show, a night at the movies and an epic game of charades.

Romeo & Juliet

The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 13 - Sat 16 March

Widely regarded as Shakespeare's fifth tragedy, this story of a forbidden and secret love tends to fair less well critically than the rest of the playwright's high-profile works. Its popularity is nonetheless ensured by its timeless themes and its regular appearance as a study text on the National Curriculum.
The show is presented by the National Production Company.

Crimes On The Nile

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 March

The ever-inventive New Old Friends make another welcome return to the Garrick stage with their latest splendidly inventive comedy thriller. The sister production to last year's Crimes Under The Sun, this brand new show finds Belgian detective extraordinaire Artemis Arinae embroiled in a challenging murder-mystery while taking a cruise along the Nile. Expect outrageous characters, clever set pieces and a highly motivated cast of four.

The 39 Steps

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Fri 8 - Sat 30 March

Anybody who remembers the various film versions of John Buchan's classic spy thriller will be hard-pressed to call any of them 'humorous'. So it's a bit weird, to say the least, to think of Patrick Barlow's stage version of the story having bagged the Olivier Award for best new comedy. Nonetheless, that's exactly what it managed to do back in 2007, courtesy of some imaginative thinking on the part of its creative team.
So why not catch up with handsome hero Richard Hannay as he battles to remain impressively stiff-upper-lipped in the face of dastardly murders and life-threatening encounters with double-crossing secret agents. Oh, and there are some beautiful and mysterious women involved too, so it's not all bad news for our intrepid hero!
Four fearless actors play no fewer than 120 roles in this real gem of a show.

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LET'S GET *Kinky!*

Kinky Boots struts onto the Birmingham Hippodrome stage...

IN CONVERSATION WITH KAYI USHE

We caught up with West End star Kayi Ushe, who will be putting on the boots to play drag queen Lola when the show heads to Birmingham this month...

What's the best thing about playing Lola in Kinky Boots?
Being able to sink my teeth into such a multifaceted and exuberant character every day is such an incredible experience. But I can honestly say the best thing about playing Lola is knowing how many people resonate with the character and feel empowered to be themselves after seeing the show.

How easy is it for you personally to relate to the character/ What's your personal experience of drag?
I have no personal experience of drag. I've admired it from a distance as an art form and now having done it and continuing to do it as this character, I have a much deeper appreciation for the holistically transformative art form that it is. It's really easy for me to personally relate to the character, and I think that's what makes this part and this show so unique. We've all been the oddball at some point in our lives without realising that actually, oddness and uniqueness is what makes us who we are. We shouldn't shy aware from it.

Give us 3 good reasons why people from the Midlands should bag themselves a ticket NOW!...
Everybody should come and see this show, it really is a show for all. Come and feel seen. Come and feel represented. Come and let us raise you up!

Do you have a favourite one-liner from the show?
My favourite one liner in the show is "I'm not looking for you to say anything." I think it's so poignant because how I look, how I dress, how I feel comfortable when I'm being me is not something I need your approval on. Be that men in dresses, women in miniskirts, people wearing their cultural garb, people with tattoos...the list goes on!

How long does it take you to get into character - tell us about the process?
On an average day I get into work about 2 and a half hours before the show, usually to stretch and warm up. Then about 2 hours before the show we start the makeup, which takes 45 minutes. Then there is company vocal warm up and parish notices. After that, it's back to the dressing room to add the costume, mics and the wig. I'll usually sing a few bits from the show and then head to the stage for my entrance.

Did you have to have your boots made specially?
All my heels were custom made by Jodie Morrison, owner of "Steppin' out". I was fitted for them on my 30th birthday in Chester as it was the only time that worked for all of us and I was already there performing in rep at the Storyhouse.

One of the Kinky Boots sentiments is Be Someone's Reason To Smile! - what brings a smile to your face?
Seeing audience members up on their feet and singing along at the end of the show, it really is an incredible atmosphere that I feel so happy and grateful to be a part of.

Kinky Boots shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday 11 to Saturday 23 March

A Song At Twilight

Malvern Theatres, Mon 25 - Sat 30 March

Noel Coward's A Song At Twilight was first performed in 1966 at London's Queen's Theatre. The production not only marked the legendary actor/playwright's farewell stage appearance - Coward played the semi-autobiographical role of Sir Hugo Latymer - but also a revival in his fortunes with the critics.
"The most incredible thing has happened," the playwright wrote in his diary. "Not only has A Song At Twilight opened triumphantly, but the press notices have on the whole been extremely good. Most particularly the Express and the Evening Standard. Fortunately the Sun struck a sour note... which convinced me that I hadn't entirely slipped."
Simon Callow and Jane Asher star in this touring revival of the play, in which the old, rude and haughty Sir Hugo sees life take an unexpected turn with the arrival of an old flame...

Vulvarine: A New Musical

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 2 March; Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 20 - Sat 23 March

Women intending to check out this brand new musical comedy are advised to grab their tights, spanx and most supportive sports bra in preparation for an evening of female superheroics.
The superhero in question is the astoundingly average Bryony Buckle, whose life seems to be heading nowhere fast. Until, that is, a dose of hormone therapy gone wrong and a well-timed bolt of lightning turn her into Vulvarine, the superhero saviour of all womankind...

Under The Umbrella

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 2 - Sat 16 March

This Belgrade run marks the world premiere of a play about a UK-based Chinese woman whose grandmother fears she may be left 'on the shelf'.

Amy Ng's Under The Umbrella is set in Coventry and Guangzhou - the capital of Guangdong province in southern China - and is described by the playwright as 'an exploration of tradition, trauma and triumph in the art of finding love'.
After its run at the Belgrade, the play will visit Poole, Liverpool and London.

Truth

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 13 - Thurs 14 March

In an era of fake news, what better time can there be to turn the spotlight on the (maybe) once-simple notion of 'truth'?
Singer-songwriter Helen Chadwick and Olivier Award-winning Steven Hoggett team up to present this thought-provoking evening of song theatre, basing their production around a selection of real testimonies collected from across the world. "Some are brutal, some hilarious," says Helen, "but we intend that all are presented in a fresh and exhilarating style!"

Rouse, Ye Women!

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 5 March; Netherton Arts Centre, Dudley, Thurs 7 March; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 8 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 31 March; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Tues 9 April; Cradley Heath Library, Thurs 18 April

In 1910, the women chainmakers of the Black Country laid down their tools to strike for better money. They were inspired to do so by charismatic union organiser Mary Reid Macarthur, whose campaign struck a real chord with the nation and led to the introduction of the minimum wage...
Townsend Theatre Productions are the company behind this lively and informative show, revealing the horrors of sweated labour through a selection of rousing traditional songs and moving ballads.

MITTON MANOR

CHERRY TREE WALK

Sunday 5th May, 2019

See our Cherry Tree Walk in full bloom. Enjoy the beauty that Spring brings to Mitton Manor Gardens. Treat yourself to Afternoon Tea and a glass of beer or champagne to celebrate the Bank Holiday weekend.

LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS

Saturday 29th June, 2019

We are thrilled to be hosting the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra at Mitton Manor Gardens. This spectacular classical concert promises to be a night to remember for the whole family.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2019

SPRING – CHERRY BLOSSOM PAINTING IN ACRYLIC Saturday 11th May, 2019
Following our Cherry Tree Walk, come along to a Painting Workshop in association with local artist, Debbie Chatfield.

PRIDE & PREJUDICE Thursday 4th July, 2019
Garden Theatre production of Pride & Prejudice, in association with Chapterhouse Theatre Company.

NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME OPEN DAY Sunday 7th July, 2019

AUTUMN – FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE PAINTING IN ACRYLIC Saturday 14th September, 2019
As the Autumn foliage starts to turn into fiery colours, join us for another Painting Workshop with local artist Debbie Chatfield.

AUTUMN TOUR & TALK Sunday 29th September, 2019
Our annual Autumn Tour & Talk with Elizabeth Gooch MBE and guests, with an optional three-course Autumn lunch.

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Animalcolm The Musical

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Sun 31 March; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April

The award-winning Story Pocket Theatre present a stage adaptation of David Baddiel's much-loved book.
Malcolm's family are wild about animals. Malcolm himself, though, is less than impressed. But when he goes on a school trip to a farm, he starts seeing his four-legged 'friends' in an altogether different light...

Tom Gates Live On Stage

The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 13 - Sat 16 March

Birmingham Stage Company makes a welcome return to present this brand new production inspired by author and illustrator Liz Pichon's award-winning Tom Gates stories.
Liz's series of books about the character have been translated into 40-plus languages, selling more than four million copies worldwide.
"So far there are 15 books in the series, with the 16th due out this year," says Liz. "But there could be 17 books, or maybe more, if I have loads of other ideas!"
The new show, written especially for the stage, finds young Tom doing his best to stay out of trouble and make sure he doesn't miss the school trip.

Rabbit Girl & The Search For Wonder

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 31 March

Rabbit Girl and her dad pack their tent, head out into the wilderness and share campfire tales of love, loss and wonder...
Designed for children aged between four and eight, the production is presented by the North Kirklees-based Creative Scene as part of Arts Council England's Creative People & Places programme. The initiative funds projects in parts of the country where involvement in arts and culture is significantly below the national average.

Bing Live!

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 12 & Wed 13 March; The REP, Birmingham, Sat 6 - Sun 7 April

Bing Live!'s promoters are confident that their show is a perfect 'first theatre trip' for pre-schoolers and their families. And why wouldn't they be, given that it's awash with 'fun, laughter, music and dressing-up'?... For those not in the know, the show is based on an animated CBeebies television series. The stage production is visiting Shrewsbury for the very first time.

Dinosaur World Live

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Mon 18 & Tues 19 March; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 28 - Wed 29 May; Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 30 - Fri 31 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 13 - Sat 15 June

Dinosaurs are once again roaming the earth this spring, thanks to this interactive family show. Youngsters get to meet a host of impressive prehistoric creatures - including, of course, every child's favourite flesh-eating giant, the Tyrannosaurus Rex.
A special meet-and-greet after the show offers brave explorers the chance to make a new dinosaur friend.

The Girl, The Bear And The Magic Shoes

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 16 March

Not only a girl, a bear and some magic shoes but also mermaids, unicorns and a whole host of glittering characters are visiting Town Hall for this live draw-along session.
Long-time Julia Donaldson collaborator and award-winning illustrator Lydia Monks is in attendance too, for a show that's being presented as part of Birmingham's annual Bookfest event.

The Sooty Show

Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Sat 9 March; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 20 April

One of the 20th century's best-loved children's characters makes a welcome return.
A simple glove puppet created by Harry Corbett almost 70 years ago, Sooty continues to go down a storm with generation after generation of youngsters, impressively bucking the trend for far more sophistocated, high-tech entertainment.
Richard Cadell is the fella now operating Sooty and his longtime companions, Sweep and Soo, and is here joined by circus star Michael Jordan and ultraviolet specialists Fantasie de la Nuit.
Expect magic, music, mayhem and plenty of audience participation.

STRIP ADVISOR

The last chance to see them dance, Vicky Edwards gets the naked truth from the cast of The Full Monty as they embark upon the final tour of the show...

It may be the last ever tour of this particular production, but it is the story that keeps on giving. Originally an award-winning movie, as a stage play The Full Monty has won both awards and hearts. In fact, such is the show's popularity that as fast as one tour gets underway, producers David Pugh and Dafydd Rogers are compelled to map out the next. Few shows can sustain that level of repetition. But then The Full Monty isn't an ordinary show.

"It is special," insists Gary Lucy (famous for playing Luke Morgan in Hollyoaks as well as for roles in EastEnders, The Bill, Footballers' Wives and as a Dancing on Ice winner) who plays Gaz. Having starred in almost every 'Monty' tour to date, he knows just how readily people fall for this funny, poignant and bitter-sweet story.

"People really love it. From proper theatregoers in Cambridge to Blackpool hen parties, everyone has an absolute ball. It is a gift of a role for me."

Louis Emerick, recently on our screens in Coronation Street, concurs. "This is the third tour for me and it really is a special show. It is a great story that still resonates now. They are also a lovely company to work and travel with."

Telling the story of six out-of-work steelworkers from Sheffield who put on a strip show to raise much-needed cash, the film went on to become one of the most successful British movies of all time. Writer of both the screenplay and the stage script, Simon Beaufoy is also the talent behind The Hunger Games: Catching Fire and Slumdog Millionaire. Joe Gill (familiar to Emmerdale viewers as Finn Barton) believes the play's credibility is key to its success.

"It is my first time on the show [he plays Lomper] but everyone knows how iconic it is and what a culture it has, so they come knowing that they will enjoy it."

Another 'Monty' virgin, James Redmond has done lengthy stints in Hollyoaks and Casualty but has never toured in a stage play before. However, that doesn't stop him recognising the show's broad appeal.

"We can all relate to it and it is very moving. The poverty these guys lived in; Maggie Thatcher encouraged them to buy their council houses and then closed the steelworks so they were desperate. It's a heart-warming story that still feels relevant today. Because half of us voted remain and half voted leave none of us know what the future holds."

Liz Carney who plays Jean is keen to chip in. "It appeals to men and women of all ages and from all classes. The girls in the play tell their own story, so audiences connect with them too."

Playing Mandy, Amy Thompson voices her agreement, adding: "And the thing that I find really special is that it gets people coming to the theatre who haven't been before. "

Well known for roles including Rhys in Torchwood and Pete in Hollyoaks, Kai Owen returns to the role of Dave and admits that he loves the audience reaction.

"They may start shouting at the start, but this isn't Dream Boys or The Chippendales and as soon as they realise that it is a story they settle down. It is so well written that they get immersed and carried along until the end. Then everyone goes crazy!"

A play that covers a huge range of modern issues – as well as unemployment themes include financial insecurity, mental health, divorce, sexuality and body image – the mix of comedy, pathos, warmth and sadness is perfectly balanced.

And then there are the bums and willies. There's no way to pussy foot around the subject of the boys getting naked, so I ask outright: Is it absolutely terrifying?

"I'm sure we'll break Joe and James in gently," says Louis with a naughty grin, recounting the first day in 2014 when he first had the 'undress' rehearsal.

"We had only been rehearsing for three days and we hardly knew each other. But we did it, although we all looked each other firmly in the eye! From then on it was pretty easy. It's much more of a man's story in many ways and it is great when you see blokes in the audience."

"It is done really well on stage, although you do have to trust the lighting technicians, and some venues do have slow-closing curtains," chuckles Andrew, best known for playing Tony in TV's Dinnerladies.

Talking of different venues, the tour schedule is so full that it gives me motion sickness just reading it.

"I've been on stand-up circuit for nine years and I do like to explore and learn about where I am. I am looking forward to it," declares James, while Andrew admits that he hates the rigmarole of searching for digs. Joe, nodding his head, chimes in: "It's my first tour and finding accommodation is more daunting than getting my kit off!"

"I'm not a veteran tourer like Andrew, and it is difficult in the sense that I have three young children and I do like my own bed. That said, it's great to absorb different towns and cities," says Louis, explaining that he and Andrew generally share digs, trying to book places that will give them a daily walk into the theatre.

With most venues being return visits there are some that the cast are especially looking forward to revisiting.

"Shrewsbury has a lovely theatre and is a great little town," Andrew tells me. The pub at the back of the theatre did such good business last time we were there that the landlord did the full Monty to celebrate!"

It sounds very much like the good publican should up the ante this time – rope in a few barmen to join him and then they can all drop 'em to raise money for a local charity, perhaps?

"Good idea," laughs Gary.

The youngest member of company, sixteen-year-old Fraser Kelly is an old hand, having already been in the production previously. Telling me that they have been blessed with some excellent children playing the role of Nathan, the returning cast are unanimous that Fraser has something special. He in turn can't wait to embark on his first tour without needing to be formally chaperoned. Over the chorus of fond banter and mickey taking, he says:

"I can't wait to start. It is a privilege working with such great people and great actors."

Ah, but are they great role models?

"No! He's our role model" says Kai, as they all collapse into fits of giggles.

The last word goes to Gary: "There is no better show on the road. Come along and I'll prove it to you."

That sounds like a challenge, Mr Lucy. And one that I am delighted to accept.

The Full Monty will show at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury Monday 4 - Saturday 9 March

WISE CHILDREN

Emma Rice talks about her stage adaptation of Angela Carter's final novel

by Lauren Cole

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre next month presents a stage adaptation of Angela Carter's novel, Wise Children - produced by a theatre company that's also called Wise Children! What's On caught up with Artistic Director Emma Rice to find out more...

Showbiz, sex, scandal and family drama lie at the heart of Wise Children, the late Angela Carter's final novel. Emma Rice's theatre company of the same name is next month presenting a stage adaptation of the book at the Coventry Belgrade. Indeed, Wise Children will be Wise Children's debut production!

"I've loved Angela Carter's work for many, many years," says Artistic Director Emma. "I previously did an adaptation of Nights At The Circus, so have been thinking about doing Wise Children for a long time. I was certainly thinking about putting it on at The Globe before I left the post of artistic director there. After I'd had artistic differences with the board at The Globe, I decided to start my own theatre company so that I could work for myself and have complete creative licence. So when I woke up with a clean slate in front of me, I already knew I was going to do this piece. It's really a love letter to theatre, so it felt perfect for me at this time. With this piece, I could celebrate theatre, the family of choice that is theatre, and all the work, the highs and the lows that is theatre. I thought Wise Children would be perfect for the company name as well. I'm at a time in my life where I need to be really smart and clever with the direction I take myself in, but at the same time I don't want to lose that joy in theatre which is almost like childhood innocence. I thought that me being a wise child and my company being Wise Children was just perfect."

Wise Children closely follows the trials, tribulations and triumphs of theatrical twins Nora and Dora Chance. Emma explains why she thinks their story makes for such good theatre: "I think Wise Children really encapsulates why people go to the theatre - the glamour, the sawdust, the threat! It's a cracking good story. We've really put time and care into our characters, and we go through an intense history with them that's very theatrical. It really sends the audience out into the world afterwards feeling positive about their ability to endure hardship, and feeling aware of what a joy it is to dance and sing, which is what my lead characters say all the way through the play.

"Nora and Dora are just fantastic birds! Top birds, as I like to call them! They work hard. They talk a lot about being illegitimate in every way throughout the play. They were born on the poor side of the tracks and have really grafted through showbusiness the hard way. They're not completely identical twins. Dora has got secrets in her past and is much more guarded and sharp than Nora, while Nora is very emotional. With the Chance twins, we really go through their history in its entirety - their loves, their losses and the abuses that they suffer. Yet throughout, they're such good fun and are never victims. They're always joyful, irreverent and, actually, very sexy. We initially meet them when they're 75 and they're still sexy and full of sauciness!"

Emma made the decision to be fluid in terms of age, gender and race when casting Wise Children: "I just made the decision straight away that to cast a type for a lot of the characters in this play would be so narrowing. Imagine how hard it would be to find two 75-year-old women who look alike and could sing and dance! Honestly, when you're telling stories, the audience will go anywhere with you. Anything is possible. It didn't matter what gender, what background, what race anybody I cast was from. So I've gone for a completely diverse company where each person is cast because of their spirit, and it just works. The audience doesn't for a minute start separating men and women. We tell them what gender each character is, what their relationship to each other is, and the audience just believe it because the actors are so brilliant."

The Belgrade is one of only two venues where Emma herself will be taking to the stage as Nora - but it seems she didn't have much choice in the matter: "The actor who's playing Nora couldn't do the last two dates, so the choice was either to get somebody else or for me to do it. So I thought *I* would, and I'm really looking forward to it!"

Organising Wise Children as an ensemble theatre company was an absolute no-brainer for Emma: "Ensemble theatre is what I've done all my life. I trained quite classically as an actor at the Guildhall, and then went on to do a lot of work in children's theatre using storytelling forms where you work very tightly as a company. Then I spent some time in Poland and very much worked in an ensemble, and spent some time doing chorus work. I think ensemble is just the way I like to work. Everybody's on stage all the time, everybody tells the story, everybody sings, everybody dances, and that's just where my whole career and practice has led to. I never like choosing a famous play and just sticking a famous person in it. The focus for me is to find a great story and a great ensemble to tell it."

She has high hopes for the future of the company: "I just hope we make fantastic, positive theatre that enhances the lives of the audience and those in the company creating it, and that we also train the next generation of brilliant artists at the same time."

Emma is very secretive about what she has in the pipeline for Wise Children: "I do have specific plans, but they're secret, so I'm not going to tell you! I have the next four years planned out, but I'm not going to tell anyone just yet."

So why does she think people should visit the Belgrade next month to see Wise Children? "The show is a celebration of theatre. It's funny, full of music, and is really a modern Shakespeare full of twists and turns, knots, twins and cases of mistaken identity. But ultimately, it's a show about endurance, joy and hope."

Wise Children shows at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 April.

Juliet And Romeo

The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 14 March

Ben Duke and Lost Dog's brilliant dance-theatre piece has been showered with praise by audiences and critics alike - and little wonder. Clever, sexy and utterly absorbing, it takes the story of Romeo & Juliet as told by William Shakespeare and steers it in an altogether different direction - one in which the star-crossed lovers survive into middle age, only to find that familiarity has started to breed a level of contempt. Their passion having subsided, the couple find themselves re-living and re-assessing the key moments in their shared history - an exercise that leads them to some staggering and unexpected conclusions...

"At the point that this piece is set, Romeo and Juliet are in something of a marital crisis," explains choreographer Ben Duke. "Basically they love each other and sometimes they wish the other one were dead. The bloom of teenage romance has faded but it haunts them...

"I was inspired to make this piece by a feeling that we aren't all that honest about relationships in our culture, and that too many stories focus on how relationships start rather than how they continue. My hope is that audiences will take away a sense of realistic optimism about the state of their relationships - past, present or future."

Here Come The Girls

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 30 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 23 June; Lichfield Garrick, Sun 30 June

Strictly stars Dianne Buswell and Amy Dowden are here joined by one-time Britain's Got Talent semi-finalist Chloe Hewitt for a show that blends individual performances and group numbers.

Featuring a mix of ballroom and Latin routines, the production has been choreographed by another Strictly dancer, Patrick Helm.

KOKO

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Sat 16 March

'KOKO is a piece which revolves around sequins and sadness,' explain Fin Projects of their brand new production. 'There's an unravelling of muchness through a bizarre and garish fantasy, where *she* becomes *he* and *he* becomes *she*.

'Featuring eclectic music, a weird topia of dysfunctional feelings embodies a party of self-understanding. Struggling to balance comfort into one person, the ghosts of the past visit, represented through a single ever-changing character, depicting and directing the revelations of inner-self until he is deconstructed, the real flesh and bones, an extravagant mess.'

Fagin's Twist

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 13 & Thurs 14 March

"I've always been excited by the idea of retelling a popular tale," says Tony Adigun, the artistic director of innovative hip-hop and contemporary dance company Avant Garde. "I wanted to add a mischievous twist that would play with and challenge the audience's perspectives of a much-loved classic."

The classic to which he refers is Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist, which Adigun and his company are here reimagining. The piece delves deep into the back-stories of the novel's most prominent characters: Oliver, Fagin, Bill, Nancy and the Artful Dodger. "We've examined the relationships between the five of them," explains Adigun. "The back-stories will allow the dancers who're playing these dynamic people to be engrossed by the characters and to really embody the roles."

Pepperland

The internationally acclaimed Mark Morris Dance Group pay tribute to The Beatles' groundbreaking album, Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

by Roz Laws

It's probably the most iconic album ever made and is still a much-loved bestseller, 50 years on.

So it's a brave man indeed who dares to meddle with Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. As composer Ethan Iverson admits: "There's nothing potentially more terrible than a Beatles' covers project."

Thankfully he's pulled it off, and his innovative score is far from terrible. He provides the music for Pepperland, a production from the acclaimed Mark Morris Dance Group.

The New York-based contemporary company was asked to create the piece by the City of Liverpool to mark the 50th anniversary of Sgt Pepper.

Pepperland made its debut in May 2017, with one critic describing it as a "truly joyous, celebratory work of art", and is now embarking on a seven-week international tour, including 11 UK dates presented by Dance Consortium.

Frequently at the top of lists of the greatest albums of all time, and described by Rolling Stone magazine as "the most important rock & roll album ever made", Sgt Pepper is packed with Beatles' hits.

Ethan intersperses his own arrangements of With A Little Help From My Friends, A Day In The Life, When I'm Sixty-Four, Within You Without You, Penny Lane and the title track with six original Pepper-inspired pieces.

Speaking from his New York home, the talented pianist said: "When Mark Morris called me to say he'd been asked to create a piece on Sgt Pepper and would I like to compose the music, I realised what a daunting project we were taking on. It could be awful, but Mark's such a genius that I thought I could do it with him.

"The album is a favourite record of mine from high school. They made a masterpiece, really. It has that kind of weight, and each new generation discovers it with awe.

"I was Mark Morris's musical director for five years around the turn of the century and played hundreds of performances with him. I quit that wonderful job to become a jazz pianist with my own band, The Bad Plus, but kept in touch with Mark.

"We became known for our reconstruction of rock and pop music by everyone from David Bowie and Nirvana to Black Sabbath and Pink Floyd. I know Mark liked our version of Blondie's Heart Of Glass. I had experience of looking at material in a way that's intriguing and trying to do something new with it, which is what I've done with Sgt Pepper.

"It's important to note that Pepperland isn't like a Beatles' concert and people shouldn't expect that. Their music is the fundamental backbone of the piece, but the album now is essentially a piece of folk music. We take liberties with it like we would with Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, pieces we know so well but can change.

"It's a hit show and audiences love it, though there are still one or two people who don't quite get it because they're expecting a Beatles' show. Instead The Beatles open a door to thinking about other things, like dance and the Swinging '60s.

"The score is played by these remarkable jazz musicians, the best in the world. They need to be, as it's an incredibly complicated album. Your average bar band couldn't play covers from it. It's almost symphonic in scope."

Ethan, 45, is a pianist in Pepperland's half-a-dozen-strong ensemble, which includes voice, saxophone, percussion, trombone and organ, plus the more unusual instruments of harpsichord and theremin.

"Part of the commission was a request to include an electronic element. They probably wanted a DJ or hip-hop sampling, but trying to do the latest thing felt forced. So I went for the first electronic instrument, which is nearly 100 years old. Invented by Leon Theremin in the 1920s, it's incredibly difficult to play it well and it requires a particular type of genius.

"I'd listened to this wonderful theremin player, Rob Schwimmer, playing Bach's Air On A G String. It was one of the most beautiful things I'd ever heard, and it made me cry. I really wanted to work with him, and Pepperland was the perfect opportunity.

"When Rob starts to play our version of A Day In The Life on the theremin, it stops the show. It's a heck of a moment which makes the hairs stand up on the back of your neck."

Sgt Pepper has a wide range of musical styles - from psychedelic and Indian to music hall - and Pepperland has a nod to them all.

Ethan's six original pieces are based on the classical forms of Allegro, Scherzo, Adagio and the blues, and take their cue from specific parts of the album.

For example, a single line of trombone from Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band is turned into a fully-fledged sonata for the Allegro section, while a chord progression becomes a cat-and-mouse chase for harpsichord and piano in the Scherzo section.

"The first thing we hear on the album is a guitar blues lick, which I expanded into a blues piece for horns. I know Mark so well that while I was composing, I kept thinking of dance moves he could put to it. It was like giving him a softball and saying, 'Go on, knock this one out of the park!' Of course, the choreography didn't really turn out like that."

Ethan is a self-confessed anglophile who is very much looking forward to the UK tour.

"I grew up watching the BBC. I'm a huge fan of Agatha Christie, and as a child I was obsessed with Doctor Who. I really like the composition of the new theme tune.

"I've been to England a lot and love your music. I wouldn't say The Beatles were the best British band ever, but I do think the best rock has been made by British bands.

"I had to come on the tour. It's a thrill-and-a-half to be part of Pepperland, and as long as they perform it, I want to do it. It's a really fun show. There's a certain amount of darkness, but it's a very joyful piece. At the end we feel good, and I hope the audience does too.

"It's a soul-destroying, dark time out there in some ways, but Pepperland has no political commentary whatsoever. It's joy for joy's sake, an escape which takes you to another place."

Pepperland shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 26 & Wednesday 27 March.

FREE ENTRY

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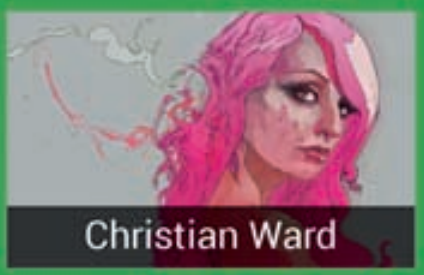
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Captain Marvel CERT tbc (128 mins)

Starring **Brie Larson, Samuel L Jackson, Ben Mendelsohn, Djimon Hounsou, Lee Pace, Lashana Lynch, Gemma Chan, Annette Bening, Clark Gregg, Jude Law**
Directed by **Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck (USA)**

After Patty Jenkins steered Wonder Woman to box-office glory in the summer of 2017, it made sense to get a woman on board the next female superhero behemoth. Well, at least one-half of the directorial team of Boden and Fleck is female and, to be fair, they do tend to work together.

This is the story of Carol Danvers, a bright spark and former US Air Force fighter pilot who, when her DNA is accidentally merged with that of an alien race, finds that she can fly and is much stronger than she used to be. Perfect, then, to help out when Earth is threatened by the repercussions of two extraterrestrial species battling each other to the death.

Incidentally, Birds Of Prey, the Harley Quinn movie with Margot Robbie, is also being directed by a woman, Cathy Yan.

Released Fri 8 March

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in March...

The Aftermath CERT tbc (108 mins)

Starring **Keira Knightley, Alexander Skarsgård, Jason Clarke**
Directed by **James Kent (UK/USA/Germany)**

Based on the 2013 novel by Rhidian Brook, this drama sees an English woman (Keira Knightley) move into a Hamburg house still occupied by its owner, a German widower (Alexander Skarsgård) and his daughter. It is Keira's husband, a British colonel (Jason Clarke), who is tasked with helping to rebuild Hamburg after the Second World War.

Released Fri 1 March

Serenity CERT tbc (106 mins)

Starring **Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway, Jason Clarke, Diane Lane, Djimon Hounsou, Jeremy Strong**
Directed by **Steven Knight (USA)**

Shades of Double Indemnity and Body Heat here as a woman approaches a man to help knock off her abusive husband. The twist is that the man she approaches is her former husband, the skipper of a fishing boat. From the co-creator of Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?

Released Fri 1 March

What They Had

CERT **15 (101 mins)**

Starring **Hilary Swank, Michael Shannon, Robert Forster, Blythe Danner, Taissa Farmiga, Josh Lucas**
Directed by **Elizabeth Chomko (USA)**

What they had was a life together, but when Ruth Everhardt develops Alzheimer's, her husband must learn to say goodbye to the woman he has always known and loved. Premiered at the Sundance festival last year, the film received glowing reviews from American critics.

Released Fri 1 March

Miss Bala CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring **Gina Rodriguez, Ismael Cruz Córdova, Anthony Mackie, Aislinn Derbez**
Directed by **Catherine Hardwicke (USA/Mexico)**

A remake of the Mexican film of the same name, this action-thriller stars Gina Rodriguez (Deepwater Horizon) as a make-up artist from Los Angeles who visits her friend Suzu in Tijuana. When the latter is kidnapped by a Mexican drug cartel, our heroine takes the law into her own hands...

Released Fri 1 March

Everybody Knows

CERT **15 (113 mins)**

Starring **Javier Bardem, Penélope Cruz, Ricardo Darín, Bárbara Lennie**
Directed by **Asghar Farhadi (Spain/France/Italy)**

Returning to Spain for her sister's wedding, Buenos Aires native Laura (Cruz) is confronted by bruising secrets from her past. From the Iranian director of the Oscar-winning A Separation (2011) and The Salesman (2016).

Released Fri 8 March

The Kindergarten Teacher

CERT **12a (97 mins)**

Starring **Maggie Gyllenhaal, Parker Sevak, Anna Baryshnikov, Rosa Salazar, Michael Chernus, Gael García Bernal**
Directed by **Sara Colangelo (USA)**

Films about child prodigies always make for interesting viewing, but this one takes an unexpected route. Maggie Gyllenhaal is the eponymous teacher who discovers a prodigious literary bent in a boy in her charge.

Released Fri 8 March

Rosie CERT 12a (84 mins)

Starring **Sarah Greene, Moe Dunford, Natalia Kostrzewa**
Directed by **Paddy Breathnach (Ireland)**

When her landlord sells her Dublin flat, Rosie Davies (Sarah Greene) must learn what it means to be homeless. From an original screenplay by Roddy Doyle.

Released Fri 8 March

Fisherman's Friends

CERT **12a (112 mins)**

Starring **Daniel Mays, James Purefoy, David Hayman, Dave Johns, Tuppence Middleton, Noel Clarke** Directed by **Chris Foggin (UK)**

Not a film about the menthol lozenges, but a true story in which a group of Cornish fishermen regularly get together to sing sea shanties. What they didn't expect was an executive from Universal Records to show a commercial interest in their music.

Released Fri 15 March

Girl CERT 15 (109 mins)

Starring **Victor Polster, Arieh Worthalter, Katelijne Damen** Directed by **Lukas Dhont (Belgium/Netherlands)**

Lara, 15, is undergoing hormone replacement therapy and dreams of being a ballerina... Inspired by the story of Nora Monsecour, a trans female dancer from Belgium, the film won the Caméra d'Or at Cannes last year.

Released Fri 15 March

The Prodigy CERT 15 (92 mins)

Starring **Taylor Schilling, Jackson Robert Scott, Colm Feore, Paul Fauteux, Brittany Allen**
Directed by **Nicholas McCarthy (USA)**

Young Miles may be a child prodigy but when he starts to exhibit more disturbing behaviour, his mother (Schilling) suspects that evil forces are at play. Expect some "disturbing and bloody images."

Released Fri 15 March

What Men Want

CERT **15 (117 mins)**

Starring **Taraji P Henson, Aldis Hodge, Richard Roundtree, Wendi McLendon-Covey, Tracy Morgan** Directed by **Adam Shankman (USA)**

A vague remake of the Mel Gibson romcom What Women Want (2000), this comic fantasy sees a struggling sports agent (Henson) discover the ability to read men's thoughts. Shiver her timbers.

Released Fri 15 March

Ben Is Back CERT 15 (103 mins)

Starring **Julia Roberts, Lucas Hedges, Courtney B. Vance, Kathryn Newton**
Directed by **Peter Hedges (USA)**

Not a million miles from the subject of Beautiful Boy, this drama focuses on a mother (Julia Roberts) attempting to reconcile her son's drug addiction. Lucas Hedges, from Boy Erased, is Ben and is the son of the writer-director Peter Hedges.

Released Fri 15 March

Us CERT tbc

Starring **Lupita Nyong'o, Winston Duke, Elisabeth Moss, Tim Heidecker**
Directed by **Jordan Peele (USA)**

Well, there's us and then there's them. Here, the 'them' are doppelgängers and they are very threatening indeed. From the writer-director of modern horror classic Get Out.

Released Fri 22 March

The White Crow

CERT **12a (127 mins)**

Starring **Oleg Ivanko, Adèle Exarchopoulos, Chulpan Khamatova, Ralph Fiennes**
Directed by **Ralph Fiennes (UK/France)**

Inspired by Julie Kavanagh's book Rudolf Nureyev: The Life, this biography of the legendary ballet dancer is scripted by Sir David Hare. It marks Ralph Fiennes' third directorial outing, following Coriolanus (2011) and The Invisible Woman (2013).

Released Fri 22 March

Captive State CERT 12a (110 mins)

Starring **John Goodman, Ashton Sanders, Jonathan Majors, Colson Baker, Vera Farmiga**
Directed by **Rupert Wyatt (USA)**

The state in question is our own planet in the future, when it has been occupied by an alien force seeking a peaceful unification. But even now, in a Chicago neighbourhood, there are collaborators and dissenters.

Released Fri 29 March

CRITIC'S CHOICE

Dumbo CERT tbc

Starring **Colin Farrell, Michael Keaton, Danny DeVito, Eva Green, Alan Arkin, Roshan Seth, Finley Hobbins, Nico Parker**
Directed by **Tim Burton (USA)**

An elephant with outsize ears is able to fly ("The ninth wonder of the universe! The world's only flyin' elephant!") and is the star attraction of a circus that subsequently falls into the hands of a dastardly entrepreneur (Michael Keaton).
Tim Burton is still one of the most anarchic, top-dollar filmmakers working today.
And, like Roald Dahl, he seems to have tapped into a different kind of 'family-friendly' audience. Here, he takes the classic Disney cartoon of 1941 and gives it his own inimitable, live-action spin.
And this is just the first of three live-action remakes of animated Disney classics to be released this year, preceding Aladdin and The Lion King.
Thandie Newton's daughter, Nico Parker, co-stars as Dumbo's little friend, Milly.

Released Fri 29 March

At Eternity's Gate

CERT **12a (111 mins)**

Starring **Willem Dafoe, Rupert Friend, Mads Mikkelsen, Mathieu Amalric, Emmanuelle Seigner, Oscar Isaac, Amira Casar**
Directed by **Julian Schnabel (USA/UK/France)**

Willem Dafoe received an Oscar nomination for his portrayal of Vincent Van Gogh in this biopic from the American painter and filmmaker Julian Schnabel. The film focuses on the artist's last years in the South of France. Oscar Isaac plays Paul Gauguin.

Released Fri 29 March

by Lauren Foster

Child's Play

Kidtropolis returns to Birmingham's NEC for a second year running

Not sure where to take the kids during the Easter holidays? Fear not, for popular children's event Kidtropolis is returning to Birmingham's NEC for a second year.

Packed full of live shows, activities, much-loved brands, characters and entertainment, this year's event is taking place from Saturday 13 to Monday 15 April.

Founder Gemma Gallagher launched Kidtropolis in London in 2016. She has since organised a further two events in the capital, as well as last year's sell-out show in Brum.

So what was the idea behind the event?...

"We really wanted to produce a great experience full of lots of activities and shows which was cost-effective to attend. Days out are generally expensive and there aren't many family experiences which are affordable."

Tickets for Kidtropolis cost £12, and visitors can currently take advantage of a limited 'buy one get one half-price' adult offer.

"Kidtropolis is an amalgamation of inflatables, rides, different brand activities, live shows, character meet-and-greets and more. We like to give families the opportunity to meet celebrities too. It's a bit different to a festival, as there's no overnight camping, but it's a very similar mechanic. Luckily for us, it doesn't matter what the weather's like, as we're located indoors. We don't need to worry if it's raining, and obviously the price is a lot different to what a festival ticket would cost. We saw a gap in the market to create something that families could enjoy together, with lots of different things going on for different age groups, all under one roof. We then decided to branch out into Birmingham because it's pretty central. Travel-wise it's great; the NEC is very accessible as a venue, so it seemed completely sensible to host it there."

Attractions at the 2019 edition of Kidtropolis include a Baby Shark live mini show on the Saturday - in which Pinkfong and his best friend get dancing - and appearances by TV royalty Sam and Mark, who'll be hosting their very own live show on the Saturday and Sunday.

Also announced for this year is a 200ft-long inflatable assault course that allows children to venture through a number of different and imaginative zones, including the Arctic and a jungle.

Kidtropolis events are aimed at children aged 12 and under, as Gemma explains: "We say 12 because we do get a lot of parents asking if older siblings can come along too. We do recommend that people look at the website to see what's on before they purchase a ticket. Ultimately, it's up to the parents to decide whether it's appropriate for their child.

"People have asked us why we don't zone our events as a three-year-old zone, a five-year-old zone etc, and that is purely down to visitor experience. If mum or dad is on her or his own with two children of completely different ages, it would be harder to manage. We like our content to be presented in a way that means everyone can enjoy it at the same time. We try to bring in lots of different content related to all age groups.

"Kidtropolis isn't just about putting inflatables into an event or putting live shows in the auditorium, it's about putting exciting and fun content on the showfloor too, so that when people are walking past, they can see something that they might not have realised was on - something that families can all enjoy together; an immersive experience. It's all about the atmosphere. We try and book lots of things that appeal to different people - things that are entertaining as well as hands-on, so that the whole family can get involved together."

Kidtropolis takes place at Birmingham's NEC from Saturday 13 to Monday 15 April. For further information, visit kidtropolis.co.uk/birmingham/tickets/

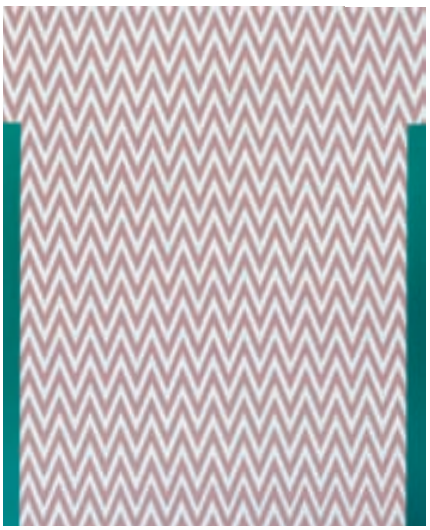
Painting Childhood: From Holbein To Freud

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 16 March - Sun 16 June

This celebration of children, childhood and innocence brings together a selection of iconic paintings, sketches and sculptures.

Painting Childhood: From Holbein To Freud explores the creative process and specific challenges posed by producing artwork featuring children as the subject matter. It also contemplates the place of family within an artist's life, and the ongoing tension between biography and creativity.

Addressing themes such as royal portraiture, play and learning, the exhibition features loans from, among other venues and sources, the Royal Collection and the National Gallery. Hogarth, Gainsborough and Millais are among the artists whose work is featured.



Tess Jaray

The Barber Institute, University of Birmingham, until Sun 12 May

The celebrated Art Deco architecture of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts provides the inspiration for From Outside, the Tess Jaray exhibition currently showing at the venue. One of the UK's most distinguished living artists, Tess uses the show to continue her career-long meditation on space, colour, form and pattern, presenting minimal, abstract compositions in subtle shades of green, blue, buff and pink.

A selection of drawings made by Tess throughout her career accompanies the exhibition, not only shedding light on her method of work but also demonstrating her interest in experimentation and her meticulous eye for detail.

A display of 1930s photographs and architectural blueprints of the Barber further complements the exhibition.

Make Art Not War

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 23 - Sun 31 March

'What does peace mean to you?'

That was the question asked of young people nationwide, who were invited to present their answer via a creative response. The artwork on show in this exhibition has been produced by students at City of Wolverhampton College, the Midlands' chosen representatives for the project. Make Art Not War is being presented by 14-18 NOW, a major cultural programme designed to mark the centenary of the First World War.

Leonardo da Vinci: A Life In Drawing

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Mon 6 May

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's (BMAG) display of 12 drawings by Leonardo da Vinci forms part of a nationwide event to mark the 500th anniversary of the artist's death.

Featuring a total of 144 of the Renaissance master's greatest artworks, drawn from the Royal Collection and displayed in 12 simultaneous exhibitions across the country, A Life In Drawing provides the widest-ever UK audience with the opportunity to see the work of a truly extraordinary artist.

None of the 12 drawings on display at BMAG have ever before been seen in Birmingham. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of talks and tours, as well as a programme of events aimed at 'bringing to life' Leonardo's techniques, to enhance visitors' appreciation of the drawings on show.

Handsworth Self-Portrait: 40 Years On

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 23 March - Sun 2 June

A groundbreaking 'selfie' project in 1979 saw Derek Bishton, Brian Homer and John Reardon create a pop-up photography studio in Birmingham's Handsworth area, inviting passers-by to take their own photograph by handing them the shutter release.

More than 500 people participated in the project, which is here being celebrated 40 years on. Offering a snapshot of a vibrant, multicultural community at the moment it first became visible, the exhibition features the original photographic prints, many of which have never before been on public display.

Daniel Silver

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 2 June

Juxtaposing existing works and new pieces - including a series of mannequins presenting links between the classical and contemporary depiction of the human body - Daniel Silver's New Art Gallery exhibition is his most ambitious in the UK to date.

The display not only celebrates the venue's long-standing commitment to sculpture but also marks the 60th anniversary of the death of sculptor Jacob Epstein. The gallery has a strong connection with Epstein via his widow, Lady Kathleen, whose family hailed from the Black Country and who gifted the Garman Ryan collection to Walsall in 1973.

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Yonex All England Open Badminton Championships

Arena Birmingham, Wed 6 - Sun 10 March

Now in its 109th year, Yonex is one of badminton's five 'majors', as well as being the sport's oldest and most prestigious competition. This latest edition of the championship features 155 matches, more than 50 hours of live badminton and appearances by the world's greatest players. In short, it's a must-attend event for dedicated fans of the sport...

Practical Classics Classic Car & Restoration Show

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 22 - Sun 24 March

Midlands classic car enthusiasts can really immerse themselves in their passion at this specialist event. Featuring in excess of 1,000 magnificent motors, the show also boasts live demos, expert tutorials, workshops, celebrity appearances and hundreds of exhibitors selling a wide range of popular products.

Other attractions include an autojumble, a 'cars for sale' area, the Practical Classics Live Stage and the UK's biggest collection of barn find displays.

Pit Stop

Enginuity, Ironbridge, Sat 9 & Sun 10 March

Ironbridge Gorge Museums have partnered with the University of Wolverhampton Race Team to stage this high-energy family event.

Including four interactive sessions based around engineering, racing and science, the show's highlights include a talk by Shane Kelly about his life as a Formula 3 race driver.

There's also a wealth of hands-on activities to enjoy, including the chance to change a racing-car tyre and the opportunity to try out Forensic, Biology & Physics STEM (science, technology, engineering & maths) experiments.

Robot Day

Coventry Transport Museum, Sat 9 March

A major science & technology event aimed at everyone from toddlers to academics, Robot Day explores 'all things robotic'.

Visitors to the free get-together have the chance to build their own robot, get hands-on with coding, hear from experts about how robots improve people's lives and experience virtual reality.

Bomb disposal, industrial robot and drone displays also feature, as does a specially created performance in which Imagineer Productions' six-metre-high Lady Godiva engages with the Urban Astronaut and the Hummingbird drone.

Other attractions include craft and dance workshops, a range of static and moving exhibits, and inspirational talks and lectures from some of the world's leading robotics experts.

Crufts

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 March

The world's biggest dog show is back. With over 22,000 canine companions competing for the coveted title of Best In Show, the event features a range of displays and competitions across its four days.

Away from the arena, there are more than 550 trade stands to explore, a Good Citizen Dog Scheme training ring and plenty of activities to keep the kids entertained.

Youngsters under the age of eight get free entry into the show.

In short, if you're a dog lover, you'd have to be absolutely, er, 'barking' not to attend...

The UK's Best Kids Event

Kidtropolis

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13 - 15 April 2019 NEC Birmingham

CHECK WEBSITE FOR APPEARANCE DAYS KIDTROPOLIS.CO.UK

MCM Comic Con Birmingham

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 23 & Sun 24 March

Thirty-five thousand fans are expected to descend on the NEC for this action-packed celebration of pop culture. The two-day show features brand new interactive content, numerous talks and panel-based events, a selection of exclusive screenings and multiple opportunities to meet the stars and creators of some of the world's most popular movies, video games, comics and TV shows. Celebrities making live appearances at the event include Game Of Thrones' Ser Meryn & Syrio Forel, Supernatural's Felicia Day and Osric Chau, and Merlin favourites Alexander Vlahos, Tom Hopper and Rupert Young.

You Are Here!

Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham, Sat 2 & Sun 3 March

Join the hosts of Wow Tours for a family show combining live theatre with an immersive 360-degree full-dome planetarium experience.
A 30-minute presentation designed for children and their families, You Are Here! sees the show's hosts 'attempting to put everything in its place - in the solar system, the universe and beyond!'
In the process, the hosts are confident they'll provide audiences with a truly out-of-this-world experience - as they're happy to explain: "With Jupiter as the ultimate 'behind you' moment, a zoom through Saturn's rings and a voyage down to the surface of Mars, this is a tour you'll never forget!"

Springtime Babies

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 16 March

Families can celebrate the arrival of spring by checking out this utterly delightful 'farm on wheels', which visits Stoke complete with baby chicks, ducklings, rabbits and young lambs. Children can pet and bottle-feed the new arrivals while at the same time finding out about the life processes of the animals and their young.

Elizabethan Living History

Harvington Hall, Kidderminster, Sat 2 & Sun 3 March

Presenting a wide range of displays and activities across the weekend, this interactive event invites visitors to abandon modern comforts, travel 400-plus years back in time and learn about the lives of the Elizabethans. Attractions include archery and musket-firing displays, cookery and craft presentations, and music recitals and dancing. There's even the possibility of stumbling across a secret chamber or two...

Extensions Builds Renovations Conversions

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the list

Your week-by-week listings guide
March 2019

The National Theatre's Macbeth, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 12 - Sat 16 March

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

What's On

Fri 1 to Sun 10 March

Ken Cheng at Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury
Wed 6 March

Mon 11 to Sun 17 March

Pipeline Theatre's Drip Drip Drip at Theatre Severn
Tues 12 March

Mon 18 to Sun 24 March

Crimes On The Nile at Lichfield Garrick
Thurs 21 - Sat 23 March

Mon 25 to Sun 31 March

The Government Inspector at The Brewhouse Arts Centre
Wed 27 March

THROUGHOUT MARCH

Visual Arts

New Art Gallery - Walsall

MAHTAB HUSSAIN - MITTI KA GHAR Exhibition extending from Mahtab Hussain's Floor Three exhibition, Going Back Home To Where I Came From, until Sun 31 Mar

RODIN - RETHINKING THE FRAGMENT Linked to the 2018 British Museum exhibition, Rodin And The Art Of Ancient Greece, this Spotlight loan from the British Museum brings key national works to three regional galleries across the UK, until Sun 28 Apr

SARAH TAYLOR SILVERWOOD - DAPHNE Sarah uses drawing and language as material to produce publications, animation and installation works. Her exhibition considers the relationship between women and language, taking the ancient Greek myth of Daphne & Apollo as a focus, until Sun 12 May

Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

PLACES, PEOPLE, FACES Display of artwork by Keith Turley & Brian Fletcher, featuring a variety of portraiture and landscapes, until Sun 19 May

HIMLEY HALL & DUDLEY CASTLE EXHIBITION New exhibition about Dudley Castle & Himley Hall from 1066 to the present day, until Sun 6 Oct

Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery

NEW OPEN ART AND CRAFT EXHIBITION 2019 Annual exhibition featuring work by Staffordshire artists, Sat 16 Mar - Sun 12 May

Potteries Museum & Art Gallery - Stoke-On-Trent

NEW CROWN STAFFORDSHIRE Selection of pieces from the Charles Green collection of Crown Staffordshire bone china, famous for its tableware, ceramic flowers and figures, Sat 2 Mar - Sun 12 May

NEW APOLLO 50: COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST MANNED LUNAR LANDING Multimedia exhibition featuring models and memorabilia telling the epic story of the Apollo programme, Sat 23 Mar - Sun 3 Nov

NEW ANIMALS IN LITERATURE Showcasing some of the wildlife which inspired the stories and illustrations of Beatrix Potter, Sat 30 Mar - Sun 2 June

Qube Gallery, Oswestry

NEW HOMEFRONT HEROINES Two-year project exploring the lives and roles of the women of World War One, Thurs 14 Mar - Mon 29 Apr

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

BEARS! Meet loveable and cuddly bears including Winnie The Pooh and Paddington, until Sun 28 Apr

The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

NEW #7 FRAGMENTS Exhibition of ceramics, mixed-media, 3D, paint, textile and lens-based media by seven artists, Sat 2 Mar - Sat 27 Apr

NEW RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION BY LIZ STANCER Exhibition based around the subjects of birth and death, youth and age, love and hate, belief and disillusionment, Sat 2 Mar - Sat 27 Apr

The Willow Art Gallery, Oswestry

NEW PAINTING WITH WORDS Open exhibition celebrating the influence of literature and language on the visual arts, Sat 16 Mar - Sat 11 May

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

NEW LISA HENDERSON LANDSCAPES Exhibition featuring paintings, drawings and collagraphs inspired by wild and natural landscapes, Sat 9 Mar - Sun 9 June

NEW MAKING AN IMPRESSION: PRINTS BY MANET, PISSARO AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES Showcasing the work of masters of 19th century French Impressionism, including Manet, Pissaro, Cézanne and Renoir, Thurs 28 Mar - Sun 9 June

NEW RADICAL LANDSCAPES: PRE-RAPHAELITES AND THEIR FRENCH CONTEMPORARIES Featuring the landscape paintings of Pre-Raphaelite painters including Ford Madox Brown, William Homan Hunt and John Everett Millais, Thurs 28 Mar - Sun 9 June

Other VISUAL ARTS

NEW THREE COUNTIES OPEN PHOTOGRAPHY 2019 Display of for-sale pictures by photographers from Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire, Fri 1 - Sun 31 Mar, Spode Works Visitor Centre, Stoke

NEW OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS - BIRDS IN WATERCOLOUR Artists Christina Hopkinson AGSA and John Horton present an exhibition of paintings of birds in watercolour, Sat 2 - Sun 31 Mar, Weston Park, Nr Shifnal

NEW GREENS Exhibition featuring work by gallery artist Claire Scott alongside pieces by Angharad Taris, Rachel Rea, Dean Melbourne and others, Fri 8 Mar - Sat 6 Apr, Twenty Twenty Gallery, Ludlow

Manran - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Gigs

OASIS MAYBE AT COME TOGETHER Fri 1 Mar, Night Owl, B'ham

PURE WHITNEY HOUSTON Fri 1 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

U2 -UK Fri 1 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

S-X & FRIENDS Fri 1 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

SOMEONE LIKE YOU: THE ADELE SONGBOOK Fri 1 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Shropshire

THE SCRIBES FEAT DJ D-DOPE Fri 1 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

GODSMACK Fri 1 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Fri 1 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

GREEN HAZE (GREEN DAY) & ONE EIGHTY TWO (BLINK 182) Fri 1 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

GEMMA RAY/THOMAS TRUAX Fri 1 Mar, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

MANRAN Fri 1 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CATAPULT CLUB FT. THE BUTTERS ALIENS Fri 1 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AN ORCHESTRAL RENDITION OF DR. DRE: 2001 Fri 1 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

JAH WOBBLE'S INVADERS OF THE HEART Fri 1 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

DAN SHAKE Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BILLIE EILISH Sat 2 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

VAN HALEN UK VS SURREAL PANTHER Sat 2 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

HEADSTICKS PLUS JESS SILK Sat 2 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

ASHA BHOSLE Sat 2 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

OCTAVIAN Sat 2 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

SNAKEOIL Sat 2 Mar, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW & THE LOW RIDERS FEATURING THE HI RIDERS SOUL REVUE Sat 2 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Sat 2 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

GUS DAPPERTON Sat 2 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

OUT OF TIME Sat 2 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

WOOD AND NAILS, DEARIST, GEORGE GADD, LAST LIGHT Sat 2 Mar, The Flapper, B'ham

MAET LIVE Sat 2 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

HARRY JORDAN + RAI KAH MERCURY Sat 2 Mar, The Night Owl, Birmingham

DREADZONE Sat 2 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

JON BODEN & THE REMNANT STRINGS Sun 3 Mar, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

PAUL CARRACK Sun 3 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

VU - A HOMAGE TO VELVET UNDERGROUND Sun 3 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SETH LAKEMAN Sun 3 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BIG WOLF BAND + CHRIS BEVINGTON ORGANISATION Sun 3 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

Classical Music

HALLE ORCHESTRA Featuring Jamie Phillips (conductor) & Ning Feng (soloist). Programme includes works by Mozart, Mendelssohn & Beethoven, Fri 1 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

NEW MUSIC ENSEMBLE Featuring Daniele Rosina (director) & Sabrina Ko & Olivia Tait (conductors), Fri 1 Mar, The Barber Institute, B'ham

Comedy

MATT FORDE Fri 1 Mar, Stourbridge Town Hall

BILL BURR Fri 1 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

TONY LAW Fri 1 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ALLYSON SMITH, JOHN FOTHERGILL, ANDREW RYAN & ED PATRICK Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANA ALEXANDER, CHRISTIAN REILLY, PAUL PIRIE & FREDDY QUINNE Sat 2 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

RHOD GILBERT Sun 3 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JOHN-LUKE ROBERTS Sun 3 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON WOZNIAK, GEORGE RIGDEN, CHARLIE BAKER & DAN NIGHTINGALE Sun 3 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

AURIE STYLA, JASON PATTERSON, SPECIAL P, MR CEE & DIZZLE Sun 3 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

THE KING'S SPEECH The Nonentities present an amateur staging based on the Oscar-winning screenplay, until Sat 2 Mar, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

THE BAND Tim Firth's much-acclaimed jukebox musical, featuring the songs of Take That, until Sat 2 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CONCUBINE Urgent look at womanhood, sexuality and faith, written and performed by Amahra Spence, until Sat 2 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

ME AND MY DOLL Birmingham-based theatre company Paperback explore the challenges, joys and pitfalls of allowing yourself to be vulnerable, until Sat 2 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

METAMORPHOSIS Beyond The Horizon bring Franz Kafka's acclaimed novella to life using state-of-the-art makeup and prosthetic effects, until Sat 2 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

AS YOU LIKE IT Kimberley Sykes directs a riotous version of Shakespeare's romantic comedy, until Sat 31 Aug, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CROONERS Brand new comedy music show paying homage to some of the greatest crooners of all time, Fri 1 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

A SMALL FAMILY MURDER & THE BUNDLE Two short plays performed by Stourbridge Theatre Company, Fri 1 Mar, Stourbridge Town Hall

A BLACK COUNTRY NIGHT OUT Featuring Black Country comedy act Dandy, musicians The Empty Can & compère Wayne Beese, Fri 1 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

MEDEA ELECTRONICA Chilling tragedy originally told by Euripides in 431BC and best known for a mother's savage act of infanticide, in revenge for her husband's adultery, Fri 1 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SHOWSTOPPER! THE IMPROVISED MUSICAL Brand new musical comedy created from scratch at each performance, Sat 2 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

THE SHY MANIFESTO Bittersweet comedy drama about a boy who's fed up of being told to come out of his shell, Sat 2 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

VULVARINE The astoundingly average Bryony Buckle finds herself transformed into a superhero... Sat 2 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DANGEROUS OBSESSION Amateur staging of NJ Crisp's psychological thriller, Sat 2 - Sat 9 Mar, Oldbury Rep, Birmingham

YAMATO DRUMMERS: PASSION Theatrical performance of Japanese Taiko drumming, Sun 3 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Shows

THE CAT IN THE HAT Riotous rhymes & infectious laughter in a new stage show based on the much-loved book by Dr Seuss, until Sun 3 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Interactive show for children aged three-plus & performed by Birmingham Royal Ballet's dancers & orchestra, Fri 1 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

Dance

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Birmingham Royal Ballet presents its version of the classic fairytale, until Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

GISELLE Presented by English Youth Ballet, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ASIAN SPRING Sampad hosts an evening of performances from some of the most exciting dance groups in the country, Sun 3 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

FLEXUS DANCE COLLECTIVE Showcase of youth dance from across the Midlands, Sun 3 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE SEAGULL (12a) Comedy/Drama. Starring Annette Bening, Corey Stoll. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 1 Mar

STAN & OLLIE (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring John C. Reilly, Shirley Henderson. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 1 Mar

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Saoirse Ronan, Margot Robbie. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Fri 1 Mar

SHOPLIFTERS (15) Drama/Crime. Starring Lily Franky, Sakura Andôl. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 Mar

GREEN BOOK (12a) Comedy/Biography. Starring Viggo Mortensen, Mahershala Ali. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Mar

BEAUTIFUL BOY (15) Drama. Starring Steve Carell, Timothée Chalamet. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 - Thurs 7 Mar

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 1 Mar, showing at selected cinemas

THE AFTERMATH (tbc)

SERENITY (tbc)

WHAT THEY HAD (12a)

Events

JAWSOME SHARKS Come face-to-fin with some of the venue's most 'jawsome' species, until Sun 10 Mar, National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham

THE GOBLIN'S REVENGE The Goblin of Eymore Wood is back to seek his revenge on the Little Folk of Arley who live in the woods... until Fri 12 Apr, Arley Arboretum, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SLIP CASTING COURSE One-day session in which participants produce a classic replica of a Craven Dunnill piece, Fri 1 Mar, Jackfield Tile Museum, Telford, Shropshire

THE NATIONAL WEDDING SHOW Featuring hundreds of wedding specialists, from bridal boutiques and florists to jewellers and photographers, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

NIGHT RUN - EXPERIENCE ATTINGHAM IN A NEW LIGHT Have fun at your own pace, meet new people, explore Attingham after dark and raise funds for ongoing conservation work, Sat 2 Mar, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

SUTTON COLDFIELD BOOKFEST A day of workshops and storytelling for children up to the age of 12, Sat 2 Mar, Sutton Coldfield Library

WEDDING FAIR Featuring exhibits from wedding specialists, including jewellery, millinery, stationery and decorations, and related services such as photography, florists, car services and cake design, Sat 2 Mar, Bantock House & Park, Wolverhampton

THE GIN TRAIN A gin-tasting experience with a twist, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

YOU ARE HERE! Live theatre combines with an immersive 360-degree full-dome planetarium experience, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Mar, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

OPEN ASTON Take a wander around the grand old mansion, Sun 3 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

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THE ESKIES
FLEETWOOD BAC
THE WORLD NO1 TRIBUTE TO FLEETWOOD MAC
CLIMAX BLUES BAND
LIL' JIMMY REED
FEROCIOUS DOG
THE LUCK
10 EARTH
BLAZE BAYLEY FULL METAL BAND
SOLD OUT
THE SOUND AKA + BRITANNIA BEAT
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KICK UP THE 80'S
10TH ANNIVERSARY!
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25TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
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Sunday 31st Ashley Hutchings
APRIL
Friday 19th The West Coast Eagles
Saturday 20th Gigspanner
Sunday 21st King Pleasure & the Biscuit Boys

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Lichfield Arts Blues & Jazz Festival 2019
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lichfield-jazz.co.uk

Lichfield Arts FUSE FESTIVAL 2019
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Lichfield Arts L2F 2019
18-20 OCTOBER
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MUSIC
Wednesday 6 March, 7.30pm
DUSTY & THE SHADES OF THE 60S

FAMILY
Saturday 9 March, 11am & 2.30pm
THE SOOTY SHOW

MUSIC
Friday 22 March, 7.30pm
GORDON HENDRICKS IS ELVIS

MUSIC
Tuesday 26 March, 7.30pm
JIMMY BUCKLEY
IRELAND'S FAVOURITE COUNTRY SINGER

MUSIC
Friday 5 April, 7.30pm
THE TINA TURNER EXPERIENCE SHOW

MUSIC
Thursday 11 April, 7.30pm
ELO AGAIN
'RETURN TO THE BLUE' TOUR.

COMEDY 16+
Friday 12 April, 8.00pm
STEWART FRANCIS:
INTO THE PUNSET

MUSIC
Saturday 13 April, 7.30pm
PURPLE ZEPPELIN
THE ULTIMATE ROCK TRIBUTE SHOW

COMEDY 16+
Sat 27 April, 8.00pm
GARY DELANEY
GAGSTER'S PARADISE

Gigs

MIKE AND THE MECHANICS Mon 4 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SHAKIN' STEVENS GREATEST HITS - AND MORE! Tues 5 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

BAS Tues 5 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DUSTY & THE SHADES OF THE 60S Wed 6 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

BRIT FLOYD - ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL Wed 6 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

VONDA SHEPARD & SHARON CORR Wed 6 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

JOEL CULPEPPER Wed 6 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ZOE RAHMAN Thurs 7 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

CLIMAX BLUES BAND Thurs 7 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

JAKE MARTIN Thurs 7 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

QUILL Thurs 7 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

JON BODEN & THE REMNANT STRINGS Thurs 7 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

P.O.D. | ALIEN ANT FARM Thurs 7 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NICK HARPER Thurs 7 Mar, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

HIS WAY: THE FRANK SINATRA STORY Thurs 7 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

PETER ANDRE Thurs 7 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

MIRANDA SYKES Thurs 7 Mar, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

ELIZA Thurs 7 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE ESKIES Thurs 7 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

HAYSEED DIXIE Thurs 7 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

MR EAZI Thurs 7 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

BELIEVE: THE CHER SONGBOOK Fri 8 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

MAN OF MOON Fri 8 Mar, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK Fri 8 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

THE VERY BEST OF BURT BACHARACH Fri 8 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS Fri 8 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CLIMAX BLUES BAND Fri 8 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

SOEUR Fri 8 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

LIVEWIRE - TRIBUTE TO AC/DC Fri 8 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

WEST COAST EAGLES Fri 8 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

JACKIE OATES Fri 8 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

DURAN THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE Fri 8 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BLAK TWANG, RODNEY P & TY Fri 8 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CATAPULT CLUB FT. SHALLOW GLOW Fri 8 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JACK & JACK Fri 8 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

CROOKED COLOURS Fri 8 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SWINGHOPPERS Fri 8 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

CITIZEN Sat 9 Mar, The Hive, Shrewsbury

PEACH CLUB / KILLER BOB / DOLLCANOES: RIOT GRRRL NIGHT Sat 9 Mar, Scruffy Murphys, Birmingham

NAUGHTY NINETIES Sat 9 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

RODNEY BRANIGAN Sat 9 Mar, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

THE MERSEY BEATLES Sat 9 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

HOUSE JAMMERZ Sat 9 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

10CC Sat 9 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NEARLY DAN Sat 9 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

STEVE AJAO AND THE BLUES GIANTS Sat 9 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

FEROCIOUS DOG Sat 9 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

PETER ANDRE - CELEBRATING 25 YEARS Sat 9 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JO HARMAN Sat 9 Mar, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE Sat 9 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

THE LANCASHIRE HOTPOTS - HIGHWAY TO HULL TOUR Sat 9 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

FREYA RIDINGS Sat 9 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CATS IN SPACE - ROCK GODDESS Sat 9 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

LUTHER - LUTHER VANDROSS CELEBRATION Sat 9 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE CORAL Sat 9 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

IO EARTH Sun 10 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

TOMMY EMMANUEL: ACCOMPLICE ONE TOUR Sun 10 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROAD TRIP - ROAD TRIP 2.0 TOUR Sun 10 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

LOREENA MCKENNITT Sun 10 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

THE ORB Sun 10 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GREG RUSSELL & CIARAN ALGAR Sun 10 Mar, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME MUSIC: BEETHOVEN Featuring Ruifan Xuan (piano), Olga Eckert (violin) & Elizabeth Haughan (piano), Mon 4 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PETER MOORE IN RECITAL Also featuring Jonathan Ware (piano). Programme includes works by Christian Gouinguene, Jacques Casterede, Roxanna Panufnik, Brahms & Gershwin, Tues 5 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

LUCY RUSSELL (VIOLIN) & SEZI SESKIR (FORTEPIANO) Programme includes works by Beethoven, Mozart & CPE Bach, Thurs 7 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CHETHAM'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC Featuring Rose McLachlan (piano), Joanne Lee (flute) & Nick Oliver (piano). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Sancan & Boehm, Fri 8 Mar, The Barber Institute, B'ham

OSLO PHILHARMONIC: SIBELIUS' FIFTH Featuring Vasily Petrenko (conductor) and Nikolai Lugansky (piano). Programme includes works by Delius, Grieg and Sibelius, Fri 8 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - EARLY MUSIC TREASURES Fri 8 Mar, Organ Studio, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

SIR KARL JENKINGS: 75TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT Featuring Sir Karl Jenkins (conductor), Manchester Concert Orchestra, Kathryn Rudge (mezzo soprano) and Jonathan Scott (organ soloist), Sun 10 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

LOST VOICE GUY Mon 4 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEN CHENG Wed 6 Mar, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

RHOD GILBERT Thurs 7 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SCOTT BENNETT, ALAN HUDSON, JOBY MAGEEAN & DAVE WILLIAMS Thurs 7 Mar, The George Hotel, Lichfield

DAN NIGHTINGALE & STEVE GRIBBIN, PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 7 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KUM-N-AVALOFF Thurs 7 Mar, Stourbridge Town Hall

MATT FORDE Fri 8 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PAUL MCCAFFREY Fri 8 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAN NIGHTINGALE, STEVE GRIBBIN, EMMANUEL SONUBI & COMIC TBC Fri 8 - Sat 9 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

JASON MANFORD Sat 9 Mar, Dudley Town Hall

RICH HALL Sat 9 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

CARL HUTCHINSON Sat 9 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

JESSIE CAVE Sat 9 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

LAUREN PATTISON, DAVE LONGLEY, NICK DOODY Sat 9 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

MAUREEN YOUNGER, JUDI LOVE, GLENDA JAXSON & DANA ALEXANDER Sun 10 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

THE FULL MONTY Gary Lucy, Andrew Dunn, Louis Emerick, Joe Gill, Kai Owen & James Redmond star in Simon Beaufoy's staging of the Oscar-winning film, Mon 4 - Sat 9 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR The classic radio comedy, live on stage, Tues 5 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

FLIGHT PATHS New work of live performance presented within a multimedia landscape, Tues 5 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

INTO THE LIGHT An international cast of performers with and without learning disabilities present a show about the right to be seen and heard... Tues 5 - Wed 6 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

BAD GIRLS THE MUSICAL 'An exhilarating mix of gritty reality, rebellious spirit, emotional honesty and irreverent humour, that touches hearts and kicks up a riot', Tues 5 - Wed 6 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

IF MY FATHER ONLY KNEW Nathalie Bazán's devised exploration of identity, sex and beauty in today's society, Tues 5 - Thurs 7 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR The classic radio comedy, live on stage, Wed 6 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, B'ham

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA Welsh National Opera present Verdi's tale of love, power and politics, Wed 6 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

TONY STOCKWELL Evening of mediumship, Wed 6 Mar, Prince Of Wales

ENTERTAINMENT
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MARCH

ROBERT WHITE
Thursday 7 March
7.30pm • £19.50

THE DUBLIN LEGENDS
Wednesday 13 March
7.30pm • £22

JOE LONGTHORNE
Thursday 14 March
7.30pm • £23

BEYOND THE BARRICADE
Friday 15 March
7.30pm • £21.50

BEE GEES FEVER SHOW
Saturday 16 March
7.30pm • £21

VOICE OF THE HEART
Saturday 23 March
7.30pm • £20

MERSEY BEATLES
Friday 29 March
7.30pm • £18.50

STEELEYE SPAN
Sunday 31 March
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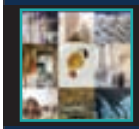
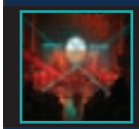
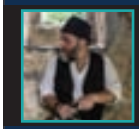


2nd Mar - 27th Apr
Exhibition
#7 Fragments
Tickets: FREE Exhibition



16th Mar, 7pm
Floyd in the Flesh: Pink Floyd Tribute Show
Tickets: £15



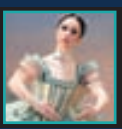
20th Mar, 7.30pm
Once Upon A Wednesday:
Dave Tong, Tales of an Itinerant Teller
Tickets: £7 adv, £8.50 otd

27th Mar, 7pm
Shifting Sands Theatre presents:
The Government Inspector
Tickets: £10, £8 conc.

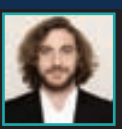
5th Apr, 8pm
Angela Barnes: Rose-Tinted
Tickets: £14, £12 conc.

17th & 18th Mar, 10am - 3.30 pm
Easter Holidays
Have some fun with animation!
Tickets: £15 (or £12 each for 2 siblings)

18th Apr, 6.30pm
Kevin Quantum: And For My Next Trick
Tickets: £12, £10 conc.



9th May 7pm
Vienna Festival Ballet: Coppelia
Tickets: £18, £16 conc.



11th May, 8pm
AT BURTON TOWN HALL:
Seann Walsh: After This One, I'm Going Home
Tickets: £15

Box office:
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Brewhouse Arts Centre
Union Street, Burton-upon-Trent
Staffordshire DE14 1AA

Centre, Cannock

HIS WAY: THE FRANK SINATRA STORY Wed 6 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

GOOD DOG Arinzé Kene's story of growing up in a multicultural community and the everyday injustices that drive people to take back control, Wed 6 - Sat 9 Mar, The REP, B'ham

I AIN'T AFRAID OF NO GHOST Take a nostalgic trip back to the '80s for a comic exploration of a childhood haunting, where nothing is quite as it seems, Thurs 7 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SPARKPLUG Box Of Tricks explore family, race, identity and love, Thurs 7 - Fri 8 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Rock'n'roll variety show featuring hits from the '50s, '60s & '70s, Thurs 7 - Fri 8 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE PRODUCERS MUSCOM present an amateur staging of Mel Brooks' classic comedy, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE MAGIC FLUTE Welsh National Opera's production of Mozart's famous work, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

CHICAGO Amateur staging presented by Cabaret Theatre Company, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Mar, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK: THE ROD STEWART STORY Fri 8 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

ROBERTO DEVEREUX Acclaimed production by Welsh National Opera. Sung in Italian, with English surtitles, Fri 8 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE CHICAGO BLUES BROTHERS: MOTOWN MISSION The Chicago Blues Brothers head for Detroit to take on some of the biggest and best-loved Motown anthems, Fri 8 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

ROUSE, YE WOMEN! Folk opera based on the story of Mary Macarthur and her universal campaign for equality in the workplace, Fri 8 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

DORIAN Contemporary retelling of Oscar Wilde's acclaimed novel, Dorian Gray, Fri 8 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

THE FOOTSIE CLUB An exclusive evening of 'delectable femme fatales, quirky comedy and extraordinary performances', Fri 8 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE 39 STEPS Fast-paced comedy caper based on John Buchan's famous spy novel, Fri 8 - Sat 30 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW Justin Audibert directs Shakespeare's comedy of gender and materialism, Fri 8 Mar - Sat 31 Aug, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

VOICES OF 1919 Sat 9 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

KNIGHTMARE LIVE Comedy stage adaption of the cult TV classic, Sat 9 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

ORLANDO Dyad Productions explore 'what it means to find our place in the world whilst remaining utterly true to who we are', Sat 9 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

OPEN MIC NIGHT Featuring local companies and singers showcasing their talents, Sat 9 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

HOLDING BABY: THE REALITIES OF KINSHIP CARE Rag City Productions present a poignant insight into the lives of carers and the cared for, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Mar, CircusMash, Kings Heath, Birmingham

Kids Shows

THE SOOTY SHOW Brand new magic show featuring guest appearances by circus star Michael Jordan and ultraviolet specialists Fantasie de la Nuit, Sat 9 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Shropshire

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK CBeebies' Patrick Lynch presents the classic fairytale, Sun 10 Mar, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

Dance

VERVE: MIXED BILL Northern School of Contemporary Dance presents a programme of new work by award-winning choreographers Joan Clevillé (Catalonia), Maxine Doyle (UK) and Ben Wright (UK), Wed 6 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

BRENDAN COLE: THE SHOW MAN Thurs 7 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

U.DANCE WM 2019 A 'vibrant and exciting' mix of dance genres and themes, celebrating some of the best young performers from the West Midlands, Sun 10 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE LITTLE STRANGER (12a) Drama/Horror. Starring Domhnall Gleeson, Will Poulter. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 4 Mar

THE CHILDREN ACT (12a) Drama. Starring Emma Thompson, Stanley Tucci. The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 4 Mar

COLETTE (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Keira Knightley, Eleanor Tomlinson. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Mon 4 Mar

BLACKKKLANSMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring John David Washington, Adam Driver. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 5 Mar

GREEN BOOK (12a) Comedy/Biography. Starring Viggo Mortensen, Mahershala Ali. Stoke Film Theatre, Tues 5 Mar; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 8 - Thurs 14 Mar

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Saoirse Ronan, Margot Robbie. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 5 & Thurs 7 Mar; Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 8 Mar

VICE (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Christian Bale and Amy Adams. Stoke Film Theatre, Thurs 7 Mar

SHOPLIFTERS (15) Drama/Crime. Starring Lily Franky, Sakura Andôl. Foreign language, subtitled. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, Shropshire, Fri 8 Mar

CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME? (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Melissa McCarthy, Richard E. Grant. Stoke Film Theatre, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Mar

BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (12a) Biography/Music. Starring Rami Malek, Lucy Boynton. Stourbridge Town Hall, Thurs 7 Mar; Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Mar

A DOG'S WAY HOME (PG) Adventure/Family. Starring Ashley Judd, Jonah Hauer-King. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 9 Mar

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 8 Mar, showing at selected cinemas

CAPTAIN MARVEL (tbc)

EVERYBODY KNOWS (15)

THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER (12a)

ROSIE (12a)

Events

CANDLELIGHT TOURS Experience the atmospheric Back to Backs by candlelight, Tues 5 Mar, Birmingham Back to Backs

YONEX ALL ENGLAND OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIPS Featuring the world's best players, Wed 6 - Sun 10 Mar, Arena Birmingham

CRUFTS 2019 Twenty-two thousand dogs compete for the title of Crufts Best In Show, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

LICHFIELD LITERATURE FESTIVAL This year's festival theme is Frontiers, Borders And Barriers, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Mar, Various venues in Lichfield

THE MURDER OF LOUISA SMITH There's been a murder at the Back to Backs. Can you get to the bottom of what happened to poor Louisa Smith? Fri 8 Mar, Birmingham Back to Backs

DANCING WITH THE STARS WEEKEND Featuring the stars of Strictly Come Dancing at the Alton Towers Resort Hotel, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Mar, Alton Towers, Stoke-on-Trent

DISCOVER RAG RUGGING Sat 9 Mar, Birmingham Back to Backs, B'ham

BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR Discover the world behind the curtain, Sat 9 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

PIT STOP Brand new interactive event packed with hands-on activities based on science, technology, engineering and maths, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Mar, Enginuity Museum, Ironbridge, Shropshire

WORLD BOOK DAY WEEKEND Weekend of displays and workshops, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ULTIMATE DUBS 2019 Bringing together the Ultimate VW, Audi, Seat & Skoda Show Cars from all over Europe, Sun 10 Mar, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

Ultimate Dubs- Telford International Centre, Shropshire

thelist

Gigs

LARKIN POE Mon 11 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SWMRS Mon 11 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

AS IT IS Mon 11 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

SELF ESTEEM Tues 12 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

YUNGBLUD Tues 12 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ROY HARPER Tues 12 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SMOKEPURPP Tues 12 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE DUBLIN LEGENDS Wed 13 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

WILKO JOHNSON Wed 13 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

NEON COLLECTIVE Wed 13 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE NAT KING COLE STORY Wed 13 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ELLES BAILEY Wed 13 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HOODIE ALLEN Wed 13 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NSG Wed 13 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOE LONGTHORNE Thurs 14 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

SHINDIGERY Thurs 14 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

BILLY OCEAN Thurs 14 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

STEVE GIBBONS BAND Thurs 14 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Thurs 14 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

NICKI MINAJ AND FUTURE Thurs 14 Mar, Arena Birmingham

ELIO PACE PRESENTS ELVIS PRESLEY Thurs 14 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

UFO 50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Thurs 14 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

DODIE Thurs 14 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

DESPERATE JOURNALIST Thurs 14 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BECKY HILL Thurs 14 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RE-TAKE THAT GREATEST HITS Fri 15 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

OH! WHAT A FEELING Fri 15 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

CAPTAIN ACCIDENT AND THE DISASTERS Fri 15 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

HIGHWAY + MOOSE JAW Fri 15 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

3 DAFT MONKEYS Fri 15 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

TYKETTO Fri 15 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

JACK LUKEMAN Fri 15 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SYKED Fri 15 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE WAILERS Fri 15 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JAMES Fri 15 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LENE LOVICH BAND - STATELESS 40TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Fri 15 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SWEET CAROLINE - NEIL DIAMOND TRIBUTE Fri 15 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MIKE AND THE MECHANICS Fri 15 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NOTORIOUS JIG Fri 15 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE ATLANTIC PLAYERS Fri 15 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ELLES BAILEY Fri 15 Mar, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

ALIVE AND BREL Fri 15 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FAITH - THE GEORGE MICHAEL LEGACY Sat 16 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER Sat 16 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ABSOLUTE BOWIE - 50 YEARS OF BOWIE Sat 16 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Shropshire

THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Sat 16 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

LEGEND - THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY Sat 16 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

FLOYD IN THE FLESH Sat 16 Mar, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

LIVEWIRE - THE AC/DC SHOW Sat 16 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

THE STRANGLERS Sat 16 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LABOUR OF LOVE - UB40 Sat 16 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE AMY WINEHOUSE EXPERIENCE - A.K.A LIONESS Sat 16 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR: THE RECKLESS HEART TOUR Sat 16 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE DUBLIN LEGENDS Sat 16 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

PRETTY FEELS Sat 16 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

BEE GEES FEVER Sat 16 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

THE JONI MITCHELL SONGBOOK Sat 16 Mar, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

YES PLEASE Sun 17 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

MILE TWELVE Sun 17 Mar, The Hive, Shrewsbury

GEORGE EZRA Sun 17 Mar, Resorts World, Birmingham

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme comprises Fauré's Requiem, Mon 11 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DI XIAO FEMMES DE LÉGENDE Featuring Di Xiao (piano). Programme includes Schumann, Mcdowall, Chopin and Mélanie Hélène Bonis, Tues 12 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

BLAKE Thurs 14 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford, Shropshire

FIDELIO TRIO Featuring Darragh Morgan (violin), Adi Tal (cello) & Mary Dullea (piano). Programme includes works by Michael Zev Gordon & Fauré, Fri 15 Mar, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY SINGERS & YALE GLEE CLUB Featuring Simon Carrington & Jeffrey Douma (conductor). Programme includes works by Byrd, Paul Crabtree, Schumann, Bob Chilcott & Bernstein, arr. Edgerton, Fri 15 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University Birmingham

CBSO: MIRGA CONDUCTS SHOSTAKOVICH Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinyte-Tyla (conductor), Anna Vinnitskaya (piano) and Jonathan Holland (trumpet), Sat 16 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HALESOWEN ORCHESTRA: BEETHOVEN'S SECOND Programme includes works by Brahms, Mozart & Beethoven, Sat 16 Mar, Cornbow Hall, Halesowen

Comedy

JASON MANFORD Wed 13 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MARK STEEL Thurs 14 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

KIRI PRITCHARD MCLEAN Thurs 14 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY RICHARDSON FEATURING COMEDIAN TBC Thurs 14 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JIM DAVIDSON Fri 15 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

NISH KUMAR Fri 15 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

JACK DEE Fri 15 Mar, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

ROB ROUSE, VIKKI STONE, ALISTAIR BARRIE & TOM LUCY Fri 15 - Sat 16 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DALISO CHAPONDA, DAISY EARL, MICHAEL LEGGE & DAMION LARKIN Sat 16 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

EDDIE BRIMSON, JESSICA FOSTEKEW, JAMIE HUTCHINSON & FREDDY QUINNE Sat 16 Mar, The Comedy Loft, B'ham

LOL COMEDY CLUB Sat 16 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Theatre

THE LIFE I LEAD Miles Jupp brings to life the story of actor David Tomlinson, best remembered for playing Mr Banks in Mary Poppins, Mon 11 - Wed 13 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

KINKY BOOTS Acclaimed musical which takes audiences on a journey from the factory floor of Northampton to the glamorous catwalks of Milan. Songs come courtesy of pop icon Cyndi Lauper, Mon 11 - Sat 23 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

DRIP DRIP DRIP Pipeline Theatre present a 'break-neck, darkly comic and taboo-busting journey through an NHS phantasmagoria', Tues 12 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

A SELF-HELP GUIDE TO BEING IN LOVE WITH JEREMY CORBYN Performance poetry show about Labour, the Tories and the division of the left, Tues 12 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

MACBETH The National Theatre brings Shakespeare's bloodiest play into the 21st century, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BETTY BLUE EYES Stoke Repertory Theatre present an amateur staging of Alan Bennett's screenplay, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Mar, Stoke Repertory Theatre

NARCISSIST IN THE MIRROR A dark comedy about life, ambition and millennial expectation, Wed 13 - Thurs 14 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

NANJING Jude Christian's monologue about identity, flawed heroes and the consequences of war, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

ROMEO & JULIET Presented by the National Production Company, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

LABURNUM GROVE JB Priestley's tale of intrigue, set in sleepy suburbia, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE TERROR New physical theatre production fusing film, music and live action as characters and events from history crash into each other, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

BOUND Justice In Motion fuse dance, theatre & aerial acrobatics in a thought-provoking tale of 'dreams & broken promises, hope, optimism

National Theatre's Macbeth - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

and resilience in harrowing circumstances', Thurs 14 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

THE THINKING DRINKERS PUB CRAWL Enjoy five free drinks as the award-winning experts take you from the symposiums of Ancient Greece to the classic British boozer via Wild West saloons, Victorian gin palaces and the secret Speakeasy, Fri 15 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE WONDERFUL DISCOVERY OF WITCHES Dawn State's new play, inspired by the true story of Britain's bloodiest witch hunt, Fri 15 Mar, The Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge

BEYOND THE BARRICADE 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Featuring music from iconic West End & Broadway musicals, Fri 15 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

PARLOUR TRICKS Time-travelling magic duo Morgan & West present 'a spectacular show chock full of jaw-dropping, brain-bursting, gasp-eliciting feats of magic', Fri 15 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

PAPER CINEMA'S MACBETH Shakespeare's tragedy, vividly told via illustration, puppetry and a live score, Fri 15 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

EDMOND DE BERGERAC Josie Lawrence & Freddie Fox star in the award-winning play inspired by the story of Cyrano de Bergerac, Fri 15 - Sat 30 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

HANCOCK'S HALF HOUR The classic radio comedy, live on stage, Sat 16 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

A SELF-HELP GUIDE TO BEING IN LOVE WITH JEREMY CORBYN Performance poetry show about Labour, the Tories and the division of the left, Sat 16 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

CLOSER Oliver Mellor (Coronation Street) & Darren John Langford (Hollyoaks) star in Patrick Marber's iconic play of seduction, lies and betrayal. Contains adult themes, Sat 16 Mar, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

BLINDSIDE One-eyed storytelling champion and cancer survivor Stephanie Morin-Robert recounts her life as a feisty seven-year-old who wields her glass eye as a superpower, Sat 16 Mar, Women's Centre, Ludlow, South Shropshire

THE WONDERFUL DISCOVERY OF WITCHES IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER Dawn State's new play, inspired by the true story of Britain's bloodiest witch hunt, Sun 17 Mar, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

Kids Shows

BING LIVE! Join Bing, Sula, Coco and Pando as they find out how to tell stories by pretending, dressing-up and singing songs. Tues 12 - Wed 13 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MADAGASCAR JR Performed by Stafford Gatehouse Youth Theatre, Wed 13 - Fri 15 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

TOM GATES LIVE ON STAGE! Birmingham Stage Company bring Liz Pichon's popular characters to life, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

LYDIA MONKS' THE GIRL, THE BEAR & THE MAGIC SHOES Mermaids, unicorns and a whole host of glittering characters and sparkling stories come to life before your very eyes... Sat 16 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

Dance

JULIET & ROMEO Lost Dog Dance fuse dance, theatre & comedy in a performance that imagines what life would've been like for the world's most famous lovers if they had lived into their 40s, Thurs 14 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

KOKO Fin Projects present a choreographed piece revolving around sequins and sadness... Sat 16 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Talks

AN EVENING WITH AGGERS One of cricket's best-known commentators talks about his life in sport, Thurs 14 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

MISHA GLENNY: MCMAFIA Award-winning author and journalist Misha talks about his international best-seller, McMafia, Fri 15 Mar, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

BLACKKKLANSMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring John David Washington, Adam Driver. Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 11 Mar

ALPHA (12a) Adventure/Drama. Starring Kodi Smit-McPhee, Jóhannes Haukur Jóhannesson. The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 11 Mar

THE MULE (15) Crime/Drama. Starring Bradley Cooper, Clint Eastwood. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Mon 11 Mar

WAJIB (15) Drama. Starring Mohammad Bakri, Saleh Bakri. Foreign language, subtitled. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 12 Mar

CAT BALLOU (PG) Comedy/Romance. Starring Jane Fonda, Lee Marvin. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Tues 12 Mar

BEAUTY & THE BEAST (PG) Musical/Fantasy. Starring Emma Watson, Dan Stevens. This is a sing-a-long showing. Lichfield Garrick, Tues 12 Mar

COLETTE (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Keira Knightley, Eleanor Tomlinson. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 12 & Thurs 14 Mar

SOUND OF MUSIC (U) Musical. Starring Julie Andrews. This is a sing-a-long showing. Dudley Town Hall, Fri 15 Mar

EL SUR (PG) Drama. Starring Omero Antonutti, Sonsoles Aranguren. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 15 Mar

IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK (15) Crime/Drama. Starring KiKi Layne, Stephan James. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 15 - Thurs 21 Mar

SMALLFOOT (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Channing Tatum, James Corden. Shropshire Hills Visitor Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire, Sat 16 Mar

GREEN BOOK (12a) Comedy/Biography. Starring Viggo Mortensen, Mahershala Ali. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 16 Mar

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 15 Mar, showing at selected cinemas

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS (12a)

GIRL (15)

MISS BALA (15)

THE PRODIGY (tbc)

WHAT MEN WANT (15)

Events

THE BIG BANG FAIR 2019 The UK's largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) for young people, Wed 13 - Sat 16 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

SEWING FOR PLEASURE/FASHION & EMBROIDERY Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

THE CREATIVE CRAFT SHOW Featuring knitting, cross stitch, paper crafting, jewellery, dressmaking, felting or new craft trends, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY WITH JAMESON A meet-the-distiller evening celebrating St. Patrick's Day and featuring traditional foods paired with whiskey tastings, Fri 15 Mar, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

BLUE PLANET II LIVE IN CONCERT Based on the Bafta-winning BBC One television series, Sat 16 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW Offering everything an amateur or pro could need to take their stills creations to the next level, Sat 16 - Tues 19 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

STORE STORIES: A BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR Check out Attingham's hidden treasures and meet the team carrying out conservation work at the property, Sun 17 Mar, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury

ST. PATRICK'S DAY FESTIVAL The annual parade through the streets of Digbeth followed by a day of music on St Pat's Rock Stage opp The Irish centre, Sun 17 Mar, Digbeth, Birmingham

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Gigs

JUAN MARTIN Mon 18 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE SLOW READERS CLUB Mon 18 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

PETER KNIGHT & JOHN SPIERS Tues 19 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TELFORD SINGS Tues 19 - Wed 20 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

DAMO SUZUKI Tues 19 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JACK LUKEMAN Tues 19 Mar, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

D BLOCK EUROPE Tues 19 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

RUSSELL WATSON Wed 20 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE SLOW READERS CLUB Wed 20 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KT TUNSTALL Wed 20 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

MARTY WILSON-PIPER Wed 20 Mar, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

LOW ISLAND Wed 20 Mar, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE SEARCHERS Wed 20 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

MAD DOG MCREA Thurs 21 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

PIANO MAN - THE MUSIC OF BILLY JOEL Thurs 21 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

STEVE HOWELL Thurs 21 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

THE WORLD OF HANS ZIMMER Thurs 21 Mar, Arena Birmingham

SHARON VAN ETTEN Thurs 21 Mar, The Mill, Digbeth, Birmingham

SMOKESAC Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MANILOW - A CELEBRATION OF BARRY MANILOW Thurs 21 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

JAMES Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

YUNGBLUD Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

PICTURE THIS Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

AJ TRACEY Thurs 21 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CORDUROY Thurs 21 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SHERIDAN SMITH: A NORTHERN SOUL Thurs 21 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GORDON HENDRICKS IS ELVIS Fri 22 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

NIRVANA UK Fri 22 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

JIZZY PEARL LOVE/HATE Fri 22 Mar, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

ROY ORBISON & TRAVELING WILBURYS EXPERIENCE Fri 22 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

WHO'S WHO AND SMALL FAKERS Fri 22 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

MARTIN TAYLOR & ULF WAKENIUS Fri 22 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BARS AND MELODY Fri 22 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KAMELOT - THE SHADOW TOUR PT. II Fri 22 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

NAO Fri 22 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PURE PURPLE Fri 22 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

SLEAFORD MODS Fri 22 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

BETH PRIOR COLLECTIVE Fri 22 Mar, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

ARRIVAL - THE HITS OF ABBA Sat 23 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

THE SLEAZE BROTHERS Sat 23 Mar, Lichfield Guildhall

SLEAFORD MODS Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

INTERROBANG Sat 23 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SUGARTHIEF Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

HAYSEED DIXIE Sat 23 Mar, The Slade Rooms, W'hampton

THE LOUNGE KITTENS Sat 23 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

KRISTIN HERSH Sat 23 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FLEETWOOD BAC Sat 23 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

VOICE OF THE HEART: KAREN CARPENTER TRIBUTE Sat 23 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

I LOVE REGGAETON Sat 23 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FOREVER ELTON Sat 23 Mar, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

CHICAGO BLUES BROTHERS: BACK IN BLACK Sat 23 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

RESPECT - THE ARETHA FRANKLIN SONGBOOK Sat 23 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

40 YEARS OF DISCO 2 Sun 24 Mar, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN Sun 24 Mar, Henry Tudor House, Shrewsbury

THE FISH BROTHERS Sun 24 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

A PALE HORSE NAMED DEATH Sun 24 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

LOSKI - MAD MOVE TOUR Sun 24 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

Classical Music

CBSO: SCHUMANN'S RHENISH SYMPHONY Featuring Jac van Steen (conductor) and Steven Osborne (piano). Programme includes works by Smetana, Shostakovich and Schumann, Wed 20 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE WORLD OF HANS ZIMMER Thurs 21 Mar, Arena Birmingham

CBSO: LET THERE BE LOVE, A CELEBRATION OF NAT KING COLE Featuring Guy Barker (conductor) and Gary Williams, Cherise Adams-Burnett (vocalists) & the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Fri 22 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PETER DONOHOE PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Schumann, Tchaikovsky & Mussorgsky, Fri 22 Mar, The Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ORGAN PROM Sat 23 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CBSO: MUSICAL MYSTERY FAMILY SHOW Featuring Tianyi Lu (conductor) and Tom Redmond (presenter). Programme includes works by Elgar, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Quincy Jones and Britten, Sun 24 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Michael Lloyd (conductor). Programme includes works by Mendelssohn, Stravinsky & Brahms, Sun 24 Mar, St Mary's Church, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire

UNIVERSITY PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Programme includes works by Ives, Respighi & Shostakovich, Sun 24 Mar, Elgar Concert Hall, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

Comedy

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY Mon 18 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, B'ham

BRUM CRAIC Wed 20 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LEE NELSON Wed 20 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACK DEE Thurs 21 Mar, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

NATHAN CATON, GARY LITTLE & HAYLEY ELLIS PLUS COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 21 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDREW BIRD Fri 22 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NATHAN CATON, GARY LITTLE, HAYLEY ELLIS, JENNY COLLIER & MICK FERRY Fri 22 - Sat 23 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CARL HUTCHINSON Sat 23 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROB ROUSE, PIERRE HOLLINS, MARK SIMMONS & HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 23 Mar, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

LIMMY Sun 24 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROUGH WORKS Sun 24 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

ART Nigel Havers, Denis Lawson & Stephen Tompkinson star in Yasmina Reza's theatrical phenomenon, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN Samantha Womack stars alongside Oliver Farnsworth in a stage adaptation of Paula Hawkins' bestselling novel, Mon 18 - Sat 23 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ONCE UPON A WEDNESDAY: DAVE TONG, TALES OF AN ITINERANT TELLER Comical evening celebrating the highs and lows of Dave's life as a storyteller, Wed 20 Mar, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent

GUYS AND DOLLS JR Performed by Stafford Gatehouse Youth Theatre, Wed 20 - Fri 22 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PRONOUN The Crescent Youth Theatre presents its version of Evan Placey's love story about transition, testosterone and James Dean, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

VULVARINE The astoundingly average Bryony Buckle finds herself transformed into a superhero... Wed 20 - Sat 23 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

PICNIC Staging of William Inge's mid-20th century play, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

JULIAN CLARY - BORN TO MINCE 'Outrageously camp' new show in which the prince of innuendo 'bares his soul as never before in the interests of light entertainment', Thurs 21 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

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SAVE EUROPE NOW: FRIENDS OF ENEMIES Work-in-progress event with strong echoes of current political tensions... Thurs 21 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

STARS OF LES MISERABLES Featuring The Barricade Boys, Thurs 21 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

CRIMES ON THE NILE Award-winning theatre company New Old Friends return with another inventive comedy thriller, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA Amateur staging presented by Birmingham Ormiston Academy's Year 13 musical theatre students, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, B'ham

OTHELLO Scott Ellis directs Shakespeare's tale of jealousy, betrayal and deceit, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

KUNENE AND THE KING World premiere of John Kani's 'moving and funny' play, which sees two men from contrasting walks of life thrust together to reflect on a quarter-century of change in South Africa. Sir Antony Sher stars alongside Kani himself, Thurs 21 Mar - Tues 23 Apr, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AMERICAN SERVICEMEN IN BRITAIN Evening of laughter and silliness as a crack team of experts attempt to explain the rules of British life, Fri 22 Mar, Silverstone Horne Institute, Church Stretton, South Shropshire

FORBIDDEN NIGHTS Evening of 'thrilling action and provocative choreography', Fri 22 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

OUR DAY OUT Starcross Youth Theatre present Willy Russell's much-performed play about a school trip for remedial students, Sat 23 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

SIGH OF THE MUSAAFIR This fusion of text, spoken word, soundscapes, dance, visual projections and live music forms part of the Transforming Narratives Project - a three-year initiative which aims to establish Birmingham as a leading international centre for contemporary South Asian arts practice, for the mutual benefit of Birmingham and cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Sat 23 Mar, The REP, Birmingham

THOSE WERE THE DAYS Variety show featuring musical entertainers Andy Eastwood, Pete Lindup & Maggie O'Hara, Sat 23 Mar, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

Children

DINOSAUR WORLD LIVE Roarsome interactive show for all the family, Mon 18 - Tues 19 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

HORRIBLE HISTORIES - TERRIBLE TUDORS From the horrible Henries to the end of evil Elizabeth, hear legends (and lies!) about the torturing Tudors, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

HORRIBLE HISTORIES - AWFUL EGYPTIANS From the fascinating pharaohs to the power of the pyramids, discover foul facts about death and decay with the meanest mummies in Egypt, Tues 19 - Sat 23 Mar, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Dance

REMEMBERING THE MOVIES Strictly's very own Aljaz and Janette are back on tour with a brand new show, Sat 23 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Talks

FRIENDS' TALK: PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN A HERITAGE CONTEXT A talk by Joanna Turska, the Industrial Heritage Support Officer for England, Wed 20 Mar, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Ironbridge, Shropshire

A GROWN-UP EVENING WITH MICHAEL ROSEN Michael presents an evening of stories and performance poetry, Thurs 21 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

BEN FOGLE: TALES FROM THE WILDERNESS 'Thrilling tales' from a modern-day journeyman, Sun 24 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

BLACKKKLANSMAN (15) Biography/Crime. Starring John David Washington, Adam Driver. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 18 Mar

VICE (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Christian Bale and Amy Adams. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton,

Horrible Histories: Awful Egyptians - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

North Shropshire, Mon 18 Mar; Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 22 - Thurs 28 Mar

FIRST MAN (12) Biography/Drama. Starring Ryan Gosling, Claire Foy. Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 18 Mar

CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME? (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Melissa McCarthy, Richard E. Grant. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 19 Mar; Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 23 Mar

THE FAVOURITE (15) Biography/Comedy. Starring Olivia Colman, Emma Stone. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 19 Mar

FUNNY COW (15) Comedy/Drama. Starring Maxine Peake, Paddy Considine. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 20 Mar

HUMAN FLOW (12) Documentary. Starring Israa Abboud, Hiba Abed. The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-upon-Trent, Thurs 21 Mar

ALL IS TRUE (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Kenneth Branagh, Lolita Chakrabarti. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 22 Mar

A STAR IS BORN (15) Musical/Drama. Starring Bradley Cooper, Lady Gaga. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 22 - Sat 23 Mar

THE LADYKILLERS (U) Comedy/Crime. Starring Alec Guinness, Peter Sellers. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, South Shropshire, Sun 24 Mar

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 22 Mar, showing at selected cinemas

US (tbc)

THE WHITE CROW (12a)

Events

FORBIDDEN NIGHTS Full-production male variety show combining circus and acrobatic skills, Thurs 21 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

NATIONAL SHIRE HORSE SHOW The world's largest gathering of Shire horses, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Mar, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

PRACTICAL CLASSICS CLASSIC CAR & RESTORATION SHOW Officially the UK's fastest-growing classic car show, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Mar, NEC, Birmingham

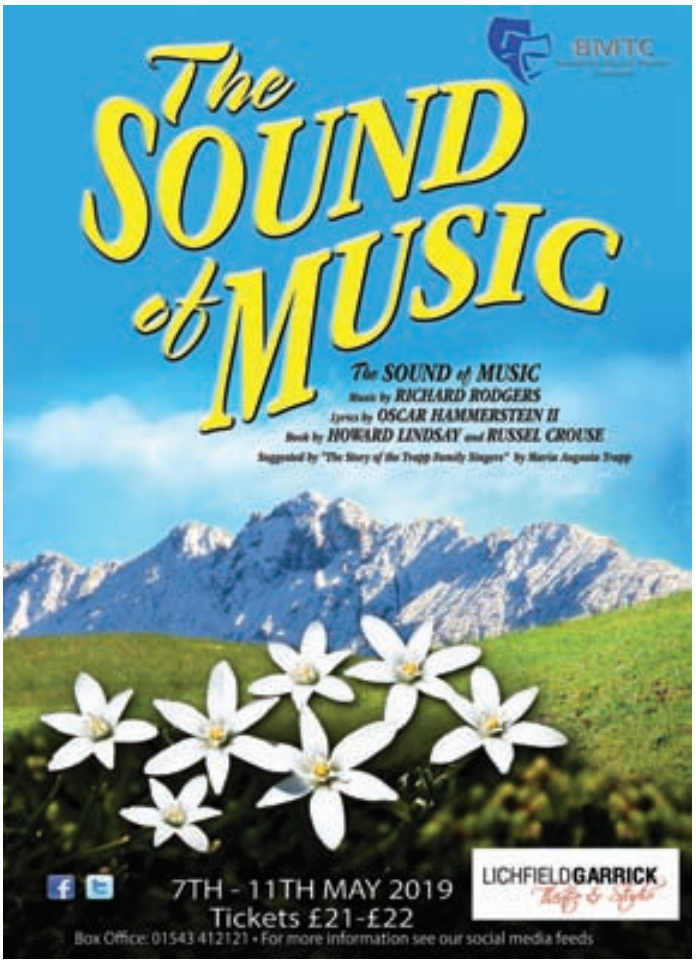
GYMNASTICS WORLD CUP Featuring some of the world's best gymnasts, Sat 23 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

GHOST TOURS An evening ghost tour of one of Britain's most haunted buildings, Sat 23 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

MURDER-MYSTERY DINNER A pilot has been found dead. Was it an accident or did someone deliberately tamper with his Spitfire? Sat 23 Mar, Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham

THE GIN TRAIN Gin-tasting experience with a twist, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Mar, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MCM BIRMINGHAM COMIC CON The ultimate show for comic-book fans, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Mar, NEC, Birmingham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IN BIRMINGHAM
TO BOOK TICKETS AND BE WOWED
ALLENGLANDBADMINTON.COM/WHATSON
YONEX
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TOTAL
Arena Birmingham
Birmingham City Council
BWF

Gigs

LIL ' JIMMY REED - LOUISIANA BLUES WITH BOB HALL & HILARY BLYTHE Mon 25 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

THE MOUSE OUTFIT Mon 25 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ALY BAIN AND PHIL CUNNINGHAM Mon 25 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

PIST.ON Mon 25 Mar, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE INTERNET Mon 25 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NEON WALTZ Mon 25 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

PANIC! AT THE DISCO Tues 26 Mar, Arena Birmingham

JIMMY BUCKLEY Tues 26 Mar, Oakengates Theatre at The Place, Telford

THE GALLERYS LIVE Tues 26 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

STEWART COPELAND LIGHTS UP THE ORCHESTRA Tues 26 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

THE ZUTONS Tues 26 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham**DRAKE** Tues 26 - Thurs 28 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

SETH LAKEMAN Wed 27 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GRACE CARTER Wed 27 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SLOWTHAI Wed 27 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

POPPY AJUDHA Wed 27 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FRANKIE STEW & HARVEY GUNN Wed 27 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE LUCK Wed 27 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

SOUNDS OF THE FORTUNES Wed 27 Mar, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

THE RAVEN AGE Wed 27 Mar, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

ELO EXPERIENCE Thurs 28 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BLAZE BAYLEY Thurs 28 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

SMOKIN PILCHARDS Thurs 28 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

WILLE AND THE BANDITS Thurs 28 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DEAF HAVANA Thurs 28 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

NONAME Thurs 28 Mar, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE LOUNGE KITTENS Thurs 28 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ERJA LYYTINEN Thurs 28 Mar, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

GABRIELLE Thurs 28 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

THE ROLLING STONES STORY Fri 29 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

ARETHA - RESPECT Fri 29 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PINK - BEAUTIFUL TRAUMA Fri 29 Mar, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE SOUND AKA + BRITANNIA BEAT Fri 29 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

BUSTED Fri 29 Mar, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

UB40 FEAT ALI CAMPBELL & ASTRO Fri 29 Mar, Arena B'ham

WATSKY Fri 29 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CRYBABY PLUS JIM KIRKPATRICK'S RORY Fri 29 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

MERSEY BEATLES Fri 29 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

DAVID GRAY Fri 29 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA Fri 29 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Fri 29 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

KICK UP THE 80'S Sat 30 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

STILLMARILLION Sat 30 Mar, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE DUALERS Sat 30 Mar, The Slade rooms, Wolverhampton

NETHERHALL Sat 30 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

UNDERCOVER HIPPY Sat 30 Mar, Katie Fitzgeralds, Stourbridge

JAMES MORRISON Sat 30 Mar, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MANOEUVRES Sun 31 Mar, The Robin, Bilston

ASHLEY HUTCHINGS Sun 31 Mar, Lichfield Guildhall

STEELEYE SPAN Sun 31 Mar, Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock

GERRY CINNAMON Sun 31 Mar, O2 Academy, Birmingham

RIZWAN MUAZZAM QAWWALI Sun 31 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW Sun 31 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

The Raven Age - The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Programme Includes works by Bach, Dove, Vaughan-Williams, Delius & G. Litaize, Mon 25 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

ALBION QUARTET IN RECITAL Featuring Tamsin Waley-Cohen & Emma Parker (violins), Rosalind Ventris (viola) and Nathaniel Boyd (cello). Programme includes works by Kate Whitley, Elizabeth Maconchy and Kate Soper, Tues 26 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO FUNDRAISING CONCERT: RATTLE CONDUCTS BEETHOVEN Featuring The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Sir Simon Rattle (conductor), Iwona Sobotka (soprano), Chrystal E. Williams (mezzo soprano), Joshua Stewart (tenor) and Eric Greene (bass). Programme includes works by Jonathan Dove, Imogen Holst and Beethoven, Thurs 28 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MENDELSSOHN & ENESCU STRING OCTETS Featuring Jeffrey Armstrong, Alicja Humeniuk, Olga Eckert & Mark Lee (violins); Mabon Llyr & Yue Yu (violas); Flora McNicoll & Bora Kim (cellos), Thurs 28 Mar, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BBC PHILHARMONIC Featuring Rory Macdonald (conductor) & Viviane Hagner (soloist). Programme includes works by Debussy, Beethoven & Dvorak, Fri 29 Mar, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: MUSIC FOR PASSIONTIDE Sat 30 Mar, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

CBSO: WEINBERG'S VIOLIN CONCERTO Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Mirga Gražinyte -Tyla (conductor) and Gidon Kremer (violin). Programme includes works by Schubert and Weinberg, Sun 31 Mar, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

JETHRO Thurs 28 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ED GAMBLE Thurs 28 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FOIL, ARMS AND HOG Thurs 28 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

KIERAN HODGSON Thurs 28 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

DANA ALEXANDER, JOHN MOLONEY & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 28 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

HENNING WEHN Fri 29 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

GARY POWNDLAND & FRIENDS Fri 29 Mar, Stourbridge Town Hall

IVO GRAHAM Fri 29 Mar, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

DANA ALEXANDER, JOHN MOLONEY, JOHN LYNN & STUART MITCHELL Fri 29 - Sat 30 Mar, The Glee Club, B'ham

HENNING WEHN Sat 30 Mar, William Aston Hall, Wrexham

JARLATH REGAN, ADAM STAUNTON, ROGER MONKHOUSE & FREDDY QUINNE Sat 30 Mar, The Comedy Loft, B'ham

HENNING WEHN Sun 31 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BARBARA NICE Sun 31 Mar, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

ROMANY WOOD Musical for children starring 250-plus young people from across Shropshire, Mon 25 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MACBETH English Touring Opera present Verdi's interpretation of Shakespeare's famous tragedy, Mon 25 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JULIAN CLARY - BORN TO MINCE 'Outrageously camp' new show in which the prince of innuendo 'bares his soul as never before in the interests of light entertainment', Tues 26 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

IDOMENEO English Touring Opera present Mozart's story of high ideals and deep emotions, Tues 26 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

IOLANTHE Birmingham Savoyards present Gilbert & Sullivan's political satire, Tues 26 - Sat 30 Mar, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

42ND STREET Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company present an amateur staging of the hit musical, Tues 26 - Sat 30 Mar, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR Shifting Sands presents Gogol's political satire, Wed 27 Mar, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton-on-Trent

MACBETH All & Sundry presents its version of one of Shakespeare's bloodiest plays, Wed 27 - Sat 30 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL Midlands Academy of Musical Theatre presents its version of the musical comedy, based on the cult film starring Dolly Parton, Wed 27 - Sat 30 Mar, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

GLORY DAZED Dark comedy examining the plight of ex-servicemen in modern Britain, Wed 27 - Sun 31 Mar, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

WAR HORSE Acclaimed West End show based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo, Wed 27 Mar - Sat 6 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

DOREEN'S BIG TOP Doreen Tipton's unique travelling Circus of Loffs comes to town, Fri 29 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR Shifting Sands presents Gogol's political satire, Fri 29 Mar, The Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge

A BRAVE FACE Worcestershire-based full mask theatre company Vamos explore the subject of post-traumatic stress, Fri 29 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

A REGULAR LITTLE HOUDINI Award-winning tale of fantasy and escapism, Fri 29 Mar, Alveley Parish Memorial Hall, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

I TALK TOO MUCH: AN EVENING OF CHAT AND MUSIC WITH FRANCIS ROSSI Anecdotes aplenty from the Status Quo star, Fri 29 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SUNSET BOULEVARD TADLOP presents Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's award-winning masterpiece, Fri 29 - Sun 31 Mar, The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford

WILLNE AND STEPHEN TRIES LIVE An evening with two of YouTube's 'funniest (looking) men', Sat 30 Mar, The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DESERT ISLAND FLICKS Two leading ladies reimagine, remake and spoof the most memorable movie moments of all time, Sat 30 Mar, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

A REGULAR LITTLE HOUDINI Award-winning tale of fantasy and escapism, Sat 30 Mar, Chapel Lawn Village Hall, Bucknell, Shropshire

SING-A-LONG-A THE GREATEST SHOWMAN Sat 30 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A BRAVE FACE Worcestershire-based full mask theatre company Vamos explore the subject of post-traumatic stress, Sat 30 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

MHT Comedy drag show featuring Paul Carroll as Mrs T & Lee Sanderson as Peggy Lee, Sat 30 Mar, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

I TALK TOO MUCH: AN EVENING OF CHAT AND MUSIC WITH FRANCIS ROSSI Anecdotes aplenty from the Status Quo star, Sat 30 Mar, Birmingham Town Hall

THE CIRCUS OF HORRORS Brand new show featuring sword swallowers, demon dwarfs, knife throwers, contortionists and more... Sat 30 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

COLLABORATION Exploration of the relationship between composer Richard Strauss and his librettist, Stephan Zweig, Sat 30 Mar - Sat 6 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

AFTER THE FALL The Crescent Theatre Company presents Arthur Miller's powerful and moving study of a man struggling to come to terms with himself and the world... Sat 30 Mar - Sat 13 Apr, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

ROUSE, YE WOMEN! Folk opera based on the story of Mary Macarthur and her universal campaign for equality in the workplace, Sun 31 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Children

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE LIVE! Anarchic stage show for younger audiences which takes a look at the inventors and engineers who've shaped the modern world, Wed 27 Mar, Forest Arts Centre, Walsall

ARISTOCATS Amateur staging performed by Stafford Gatehouse Youth Theatre, Wed 27 - Fri 29 Mar, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

RABBIT GIRL & THE SEARCH FOR WONDER New show for younger audiences inspired by stories from families about coping with loss and finding wonder in the world again, Sun 31 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham

Talks

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY Michael talks about an unconventional journey that he himself has travelled, from swallowing tape worm to uncovering revolutionary new ways to lose weight, get fit and reduce stress, Wed 27 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TED X YOUTH@BRUM 2019 A day of discussions, conversations and ideas dedicated to young people in Birmingham. This year's theme is 'an age of change', Wed 27 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

AN EVENING WITH BRIAN BLESSED The actor and mountaineer shares anecdotes from his illustrious career, Wed 27 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

AN AUDIENCE WITH SIMON REEVE Simon recounts tales from his trips to the remote and extreme corners of the planet, Thurs 28 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HIT THE ODE Unique performance poetry night featuring Kamil Mahmood, Amani Saeed and Oshanti, Fri 29 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

AN EVENING WITH THE HAIRY BIKERS Sat 30 Mar, Symphony Hall, B'ham

AN EVENING WITH TYSON FURY Sat 30 Mar, Second City Suite, Birmingham

Dance

PEPPERLAND Mark Morris Dance present a 50th-anniversary tribute to The Beatles' Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album, Tues 26 - Wed 27 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

CONFESSIONS OF A COCKNEY TEMPLE DANCER One-man show in which Shane Shambhu combines Indian dance and standup comedy to lead audiences on a journey through his life, Thurs 28 Mar, The Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

SPIRIT OF BOLLYWOOD Dance journey of Indian Cinema, from its early tunes to its current hits, Sat 30 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

HERE COME THE GIRLS All-new show featuring ballroom and Latin routines choreographed by Strictly's Patrick Helm, Sat 30 Mar, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GIOVANNI PERNICE - 'IL BALLO È VITA' (DANCE IS LIFE) Strictly favourite Giovanni presents his smash-hit dance show, Sun 31 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

COLD WAR (12) Drama/Music. Starring Joanna Kulig, Tomasz Kot. Foreign language, subtitled. Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Mon 25 Mar

GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY (12) Drama/History. Starring Jessica Brown Findlay, Tom Courtenay. Forest Arts Centre, Walsall, Tues 26 Mar

THE GUILTY (15) Crime/Drama. Starring Jakob Cedergren, Jessica Dinnage. Foreign language, subtitled. Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 26 Mar

ON THE BASIS OF SEX (12a) Biography/Drama. Starring Felicity Jones, Armie Hammer. Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire, Tues 26 & Thurs 28 Mar

PETERLOO (12a) Drama/History. Starring Rory Kinnear, Maxine Peake. Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 29 Mar

LOVELESS (15) Drama. Starring Maryana Spivak, Aleksey Rozin. Foreign language, subtitled. The Hive, Shrewsbury, Fri 29 Mar

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS (12A) Comedy/Drama. Starring James Purefoy, Tuppence Middleton. Old Market Hall, Shrewsbury, Fri 29 - Sun 31 Mar

A PRIVATE WAR (15) Biography/Drama. Starring Rosamund Pike, Jamie Dornan. Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 30 Mar

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 29 Mar, showing at selected cinemas

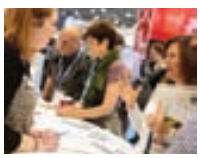
AT ETERNITY'S GATE (tbc)

CAPTIVE STATE (12a)

DUMBO (tbc)

Events

THE NATIONAL HOMEBUILDING & RENOVATING SHOW Featuring interior designing, exterior landscaping, roofing, flooring, restoration and new-builds, Thurs 28 - Sun 31 Mar, NEC, B'ham



ASTON HALL LATE: JACOBEAN MUSIC AT THE MANSION Pay a nighttime visit to the grand old mansion at night, Fri 29 Mar, Aston Hall, Birmingham

MINIATURA Featuring some of the world's best miniature craftsmen, Sat 30 - Sun 31 Mar, NEC, B'ham

Charity Dinner Dance

MARCH 30TH 2019

SOVEREIGN SUITE,
SHREWSBURY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB @ 7.00PM

WELCOME DRINK AND MUSIC WITH
THE ALEXANDRIA STRING QUARTET

THREE COURSE DINNER AND
ENTERTAINMENT WITH MAGIC KEV

AUCTION PRESENTED BY
CHRISTINA TREVANION (BBC FLOG IT)

LIVE MUSIC WITH IZZY AND THE HOTHEADS

Evening dress: black tie optional

£50 per person (table/group booking on request)

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TO PURCHASE TICKETS please see the website

ALL PROCEEDS TO The Harry Johnson Trust

SUNDAY 31 MARCH

Happy Mother's Day

BRUNCH

8 - 11.30AM

LUNCH • DINNER

12 - 9PM

2 COURSES £18.50 3 COURSES £22.50

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