

Birmingham

ISSUE 414 AUTUMN 2020

What's On

FILM | COMEDY | THEATRE | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS | FOOD

birminghamwhatson.co.uk



inside:

MAKING THE GRADE

The Barber Institute awarded Grade I Listed Building status



BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

celebrating 30 glorious years...



BRICK OR TREAT

Halloween fun at Legoland Discovery Centre



Van Gogh *Alive* the experience

The most visited multi-sensory
experience in the world

Opens Thu 8 Oct



BOOK NOW

vangoghaliveuk.com



GRANDE
EXHIBITIONS

SENSORY4™
IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

H BIRMINGHAM
HIPPODROME

The experience has been created by Grande Exhibitions



MUSEUM &
ART GALLERY
BIRMINGHAM



© Arshdeep Singh

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR

N NATURAL
HISTORY
MUSEUM

17 Oct 2020 - 7 Feb 2021

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery | Admission Charges Apply

Pre-book at:

birminghammuseums.org.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

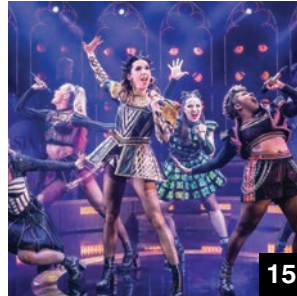




10



12



15



17



21



25



28



33



35



37



39



44

INSIDE:

First Word

4

Arts

10

Theatre

15

Film

25

Visual Arts

30

Events

33

Food

49

FEATURES:

Van Gogh Live 12

Going Wild at
Birmingham art gallery 28

Up for a laugh at Brum
Comedy Festival 44

What's On
MEDIA GROUP

Publisher and CEO: **Martin Monahan**
Managing Director: **Davina Evans** davina@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281708
Sales & Marketing: **Chris Horton** chris@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281704
Editorial: **Lauren Foster** lauren@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281707
Lauren Cole lauren.cole@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281733 **Abi Whitehouse**

abi@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281716 **Brian O'Faolain** brian@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281701
Subscriptions: **Adrian Parker** adrian.parker@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281714 Accounts: **Julia Perry** 01743 281717 Contributors: Graham Bostock, James Cameron-Wilson, Katherine Ewing, Jenny Ell, Patsy Moss, Sue Jones

This publication is printed on paper from a sustainable source and is produced without the use of elemental chlorine. We endorse the recycling of our magazine and would encourage you to pass it on to others to read when you have finished with it.

All works appearing in this publication are copyright. It is to be assumed that the copyright for material rests with the magazine unless otherwise stated. No part of this publication may be reproduced, or stored in an electronic system, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopied, recording or otherwise, without the prior knowledge and consent of the publishers.



@whatsonbrum
Birmingham What's On



fb.com/whatsonbirmingham
Birmingham What's On



@whatsonbrum
What's On Birmingham



Spirit of 2012 benefits Midlands arts projects

A share of £600,000 has been awarded to three West Midlands organisations to create inclusive arts & cultural projects linked to the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham in 2022.

The award has come about as a result of a collaboration between the London Olympic & Paralympic Games legacy funder - Spirit Of 2012 - and Birmingham 2022.

The successful projects - Creative Black Country, Caudwell Children and Playing Out In Canley, Coventry - have each been awarded £200,000. Collectively they will work with more than 1,600 disabled and non-disabled people 'to explore links between communities and Birmingham 2022, maximise the impact of the Commonwealth Games and leave a lasting social legacy'.

Restoration begins on historic bandstand

Restoration work on the historic Grade II listed bandstand in Birmingham Botanical Gardens is to start in October following a successful 12-month campaign to raise the required £138,000.

Conservation experts will be undertaking painstaking repairs to the local landmark, from where Neville Chamberlain made his first speech as prime minister in 1937.



Sleep Out 'so a young person doesn't have to!'

Birmingham charity St Basil's is urging people to 'sleep out so a young person doesn't have to!'

The St Basil's Big Sleep Out initiative usually takes place in the city's Cathedral Square, but due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the young people's charity is this

year asking people to 'make a difference' from home. St Basil's said: "For one night, 'sleep rough' in a tent or construct a shelter in your back garden, your work space or wherever a bunch of you can get together safely and be part of this amazing event. Even apart, we're in this together!" The St Basil's Big Sleep Out (from home) event takes place on Friday 27 November from 6pm to 6am. For more information, visit stbasils.org.uk

CBSO launches five-year fundraising campaign

To mark its 100th anniversary, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) has launched a five-year, £12.5million fundraising campaign. Entitled The Sound Of The Future, the campaign is 'designed to ensure the orchestra's recovery post-Covid and drive its longer-term renewal for a second century'. More than £4million has already been raised. To support the CBSO, visit cbso.co.uk/donate

Birmingham gets its first ever Art House

Birmingham's first 'Art House' is to open at Port Loop - the city's new island community. Called YARD, the venue will be home to three resident artists at any one time. The ground floor will include art and community space,

with a regular timetable of events including yoga classes, artist workshops, roundtable discussions, cook-outs, live music and poetry nights. The full schedule is due to begin in January.



Sampad launches major writing competition

South Asian arts development agency Sampad has launched an international writing competition for women and girls from diverse communities in Birmingham, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

My City, My Home is part of Transforming Narratives, a three-year project aiming to establish Birmingham as a global centre for contemporary arts from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

For more information about how to take part in the competition, visit sampad.org.uk

Community-led project is growing

A community-led scheme aiming to grow food and create green spaces in Birmingham has expanded its number of sites.

The Growing Project is a collaborative partnership between Grand Union art gallery, St Anne's Hostel in Digbeth, Crisis, Sifa Fireside, Modern Clay, and artists Carolyn Morton and Kirsty Clarke. Having initially used space at St Anne's, the project has now expanded to include a number of new garden areas within the city.

To find out more, visit grand-union.org.uk



Lichfield call-out to songwriters

Lichfield Arts is urging both professional and hobby songwriters to take part in its annual L2F songwriting competition.

The organisation is looking for songs that 'explore aspects of the theme of Lockdown To Freedom'.

An L2F spokesman said: "We're looking forward to receiving your entries and sharing your work with a wide audience, so get your creative hats on and let us hear what you've come up with." For more information, visit l2f.co.uk



'Horrible' drive-in Christmas show heading for the region

A drive-in Christmas show from the Horrible Histories team, Birmingham Stage Company and Car Park Party - an ensemble which presented the summer's only national tour of comedy, theatre and live music shows - is heading for the Midlands.

Car Park Panto's Horrible Christmas will see

historical characters including Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas join forces to save the festive season from 'a jolly man dressed in red'.

Dates and venues for the show are yet to be confirmed, but you can visit carparkparty.com to find out more.

The Hive to host pop-up cafe

An initiative which takes waste food from supermarkets, suppliers and manufacturers, then redistributes it around Birmingham in food boxes and events catering, is hosting a monthly community café pop-up at The Hive Café & Bakery in the city's Jewellery Quarter.

The Real Junk Food Project's Hive take-overs are being held on 10 October, 14 November and 12 December.

The café will operate on a pay-as-you-feel basis, meaning that diners can donate money, time or skills in exchange for a hot meal. Pre-booking is required via thehivejq.org

New poster celebrates Birmingham

Birmingham Museums Trust has teamed up with satirical collage artist Christopher Spencer - aka Cold War Steve - to produce a brand-new poster celebrating Birmingham and its people.

Benny's Babbies is Cold War Steve's most complex photo collage to date. The poster features, among others, comedian Joe Lycett, Duran Duran, members of Black Sabbath rocking out on top of the Rotunda building, and the character of Benny Hawkins from long-running Birmingham-made television soap opera Crossroads.

The A2 poster is printed with a white border framing the design. It costs £15 and is available from shop.birminghammuseums.org.uk





Memories of Wolverhampton video rental shop to feature in film festival

A short movie about a video rental shop in 1980s Wolverhampton will be available to view in October as part of BFI's London Film Festival. Jambo Cinema, by award-winning artist, filmmaker & producer Dawinder Bansal, is described as 'a story of family, migration, love, loss and video piracy set in a working-class South Asian family'. Commenting on her film, Dawinder said: "I'm honoured that Jambo Cinema has been selected from hundreds of others as part of the prestigious London Film Festival 2020. Jambo Cinema as a short film only just scratches the surface, and so I'm looking forward to developing it into a feature-length film." The movie will be available to watch for free on BFI Player from Wednesday 7 to Sunday 18 October.

Purnell's Journey: a new book of food favourites

Award-winning Birmingham chef Glynn Purnell has launched a brand-new book. *A Purnell's Journey: There And Back Again* features over 30 memorable dishes 'representing the best of Glynn, his innovative menus and the creative chefs and staff members who make up the Purnell's brand and family'. Glynn's third cookbook, the publication is available now, priced at £85, and is on sale at Purnell's or direct from its publisher at: awaywithmedia.com



Exploring the story of Indian dance

Stories, photographs, films and objects all feature in a new exhibition at Wolverhampton Art Gallery which explores the story of Indian dance in the Black Country during the second half of the 20th century.

Nritya Black Country celebrates the Indian subcontinent migrants who, having journeyed to the UK to begin a new life, used temples, community halls and cultural events to present their classical, folk and traditional dance styles.

The exhibition, which shows until Sunday 20 December, has been curated by the award-winning Wolverhampton arts organisation, Jaivant Patel Dance.



Success for THSH digital broadcasts

Birmingham Town Hall and Symphony Hall's (THSH) digital broadcasts during the Covid-19 crisis will continue during the autumn, with a number of pre-recorded concerts being made available to view online.

The broadcasts began in April during lockdown and have so far amassed over a quarter of a million views.

Commenting on the initiative, Nick Reed, chief executive for the music charity responsible for THSH, said: "The future of Birmingham's Town Hall and Symphony Hall, and our future as the music charity responsible for them, looks very different from the plans we began the year with.

"Throughout this global pandemic, many registered charities are relying on the generosity of their supporters more than ever. The digital performances and activities we have continued - and will continue to deliver - in these desperate times have been made possible with the support of Town Hall and Symphony Hall's audiences."

To find out more about the digital broadcasts and how to offer support to THSH, visit thsh.co.uk

Keane to perform at Forest Live in 2021



Keane will next summer perform in Cannock Chase Forest as part of Forest Live, the annual concert series presented by Forestry England.

The band last appeared as part of Forest Live in 2010.

The aim of the concert series is to introduce forests to new audiences by inviting people to enjoy live music in a number of natural woodland arenas around the country.

Over 1.9 million people have attended a Forest Live gig in the last 20 years. Keane will play Cannock Chase Forest on Saturday 12 June. Tickets are now on sale at forestryengland.uk/music

John Bishop: Right Here, Right Now

Comedian John Bishop will tour to the Midlands late next year.

John's eighth stand-up show, *Right Here, Right Now*, will stop off at: Dudley Town Hall, 5 October 2021; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, 21 January 2022; and Utilita Arena Birmingham, 1 & 2 April 2022.

Tickets are on sale now at johnbishoponline.com

Birmingham 2022 announces official partner

The University of Birmingham has been unveiled as an official partner for Birmingham 2022, signing the most comprehensive university partnership agreement in the history of the Commonwealth Games.

The university will be a competition venue for both hockey and squash and the principal campus village during the Games. The agreement also confirms the university as an Official Partner of the Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay: International Leg, which sees the ceremonial baton travelling through Commonwealth nations and territories in the run-up to the Games.



Bite-size panto in Lichfield

Lichfield Garrick Theatre is presenting a bite-size panto version of Jack And The Beanstalk this Christmas.

Having decided that putting on a large-scale show was too much of a risk during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Garrick has instead elected to present a shorter-run pantomime with fewer performers on stage. Ever-popular panto Dame, Sam Rabone, stars in the show, which runs from 18 December to 3 January. For more information, visit lichfieldgarrick.com



Christmas cheer comes early to Southside

Birmingham's Hurst Street, located in the heart of the city's Southside District, is set to be illuminated ahead of the festive season, in a bid to brighten up the area and boost safety. The lights, which are normally installed in



Park Bench Plays to pop up across the city

Birmingham Repertory Theatre is to present a dozen 10-minute-long plays in pop-up locations throughout the city, including bus stations, community centres, parks, public squares, foyers and train stations. The Park Bench Plays - a series of micro-plays that 'illuminate, interrogate and even celebrate today's socially distanced world', bring together emerging playwrights with some of the UK's biggest writing talents and

comedians.

Contributors include playwright David Edgar, Janice Connolly (better known as her comedy character, Mrs Barbara Nice) and Frank Skinner. Commenting on the initiative, Frank said: "I'm really properly excited to be part of this project with The REP. I've had some life-changing experiences on park benches in the West Midlands, but I'm hoping this one will be a bit easier on the elbows."

November, will be switched on several weeks early thanks to sponsorship from Rainier Developments, a privately owned property developer. The increased lighting is one of a number of additional safety measures supported by Southside District following serious knife attacks in Birmingham. To find out more, visit southsidedistrict.co.uk

Artists awarded £75k to create new digital collaborations

Eighteen creative and cultural practitioners from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Birmingham have received grants worth a total of £75,000 to create new artworks, develop artistic relationships and hold online events. The grants have been awarded as part of the Transforming Narratives Digital Collaborations programme, which aims to link creative and cultural practitioners and communities in the three locations. The successful practitioners will create new works which span visual arts, music, dance, theatre and combined arts.

Artist highlights threat to orangutans

Environmentalism and artist Louis Masai has partnered with Meridian - the palm-oil-free nut butter brand - to warn Brummies about the very real prospect of orangutans becoming extinct.



Louis recently visited Birmingham as part of his latest initiative, #ProtectPongo ('Pongo' is Latin for orangutan). While in the city, the artist created striking portraits of orangutans interacting with the threats they face, from deforestation to palm oil production and potentially even Covid-19. Commenting, Louis said: "I have become fixated with the discussion of animal conservation. It's difficult to make people stop, think and change habits which impact a species on the other side of the world. But #ProtectPongo is designed to challenge people to consider a world without orangutans in it."



MAKING THE GRADE

Congratulations to the Barber Institute of Fine Arts at University of Birmingham, which has reopened this autumn having been awarded Grade I listed building status.

The home to an impressive collection of Old Master and Impressionist paintings - including works by Degas, Delacroix, Manet, Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Rossetti, Rubens and Van Dyck - the building, which opened over 80 years ago, is very much a work of art itself...

One of the Midlands' finest art Deco buildings, the Barber Institute of Fine Arts has been described as 'the perfect place to contemplate art'.

And when you look not only at the Barber's impressive collection of Old Master and Impressionist paintings but also at the sophisticated architecture of the building itself, it's easy to see why.

Built and opened in the 1930s and awarded Grade II listed status almost 40 years ago, the Edgbaston-located venue has reopened this autumn having now been given Grade I listed building status, the highest available heritage honour.

The updated listing is a real feather in the cap for the popular building, the construction of which was funded more than 80 years ago by the Henry Barber Trust. The Trust was founded in 1932 by Sir Henry's widow, Lady Hattie Barber, one of the University of Birmingham's greatest benefactors. Lady Barber explained that her vision - shared with her late husband, a Birmingham-born property developer who had died five years earlier - was to 'build, equip and endow' an 'art centre for the university'.

Her own death, in 1933, sadly deprived her of the chance to enjoy the building, the design of which was the brainchild of Nottingham-born architect Robert Atkinson. Atkinson worked on the project in close collaboration with the Barber's first Director and Professor of Fine Arts, Thomas Bodkin.

When opened in 1939 by Queen Mary, the galleries featured just 16 paintings, 31 drawings and watercolours, 19 prints and three sculptures. The collection has since been considerably enhanced with acquisitions by the Henry Barber Trust, under the expert advice of Bodkin and five successive Directors. It now boasts around 160 key paintings by most of the major names in Western art, along with more than 800 works on paper and a much-expanded collection of sculpture and decorative arts, as well as some 15,000 Roman, Byzantine and medieval coins.

An extension to the venue was built in the

1960s, and a glass roof extension added in the '80s.

Commenting on the upgrade, Director of the Barber Institute, Nicola Kalinsky, said: "There is no doubt in my mind that Professor Bodkin's involvement was instrumental in why Andy Foster, writing in Yale University Press' updated Pevsner Architectural Guide Birmingham, said: 'Among public buildings, Robert Atkinson's Barber Institute of 1936-9 at the university is an exceptional, nationally important example of this style. Cool and sophisticated, with interior finishes in beautiful materials, it is a perfect place to contemplate works of art'."

Nicola added: "The professor, mindful of the academic purposes of the then completely new university institute, also advised Atkinson to make space on the ground floor for the various rooms - lecture theatre, book and slide libraries, offices - needed to administer the museum and teach the History of Art to the university's students."

Explaining the reason for its updated listing, Historic England said: "The Barber is a building of exquisite architectural quality, with a sophisticated design which follows logically from its plan, arranged around the central auditorium; for the set-piece interiors, particularly the auditorium, which express the sophisticated style of the 1930s; for the remarkable quality of the detailing throughout, with even the smallest features contributing to the thoughtfulness of the overall design; for its survival with relatively little alteration... as what is thought to be one of, if not the first integrated facility of its type for the teaching of music and the arts, with gallery and exhibition space."



Barber Concert Hall

Masterpieces to enjoy at the Barber Institute...



Rossetti



Monet



Whistler



Botticelli



Degas



Turner



Dahl

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts is now open Tuesday to Sunday, 10am - 5pm. Admission is free by advance booking only via barber.arttickets.org.uk

Birmingham Royal Ballet: Lazuli Sky

The REP, Birmingham,
Thurs 22 - Sat 24 October

The first one-act ballet commissioned and presented by Carlos Acosta as director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, Will Tuckett's *Lazuli Sky* is inspired by ideas of social distancing. It here forms part of a brand-new mixed bill, being presented alongside Valery Panov's powerful solo piece, *Liebestod*, and Vicente Nebrada's *Our Waltzes*. The show has a running time of one hour.



An Evening With The Fizz

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 6 November

Back in the days when the UK sometimes won Eurovision, Cheryl Baker, Mike Nolan and Jay Aston came together with Bobby Gee to take the coveted song contest by storm. Winning the competition with *Making Your Mind Up* in 1981 - a performance made all the more memorable by the boys' mid-song ripping off of the girls' skirts - the foursome went on to enjoy chart success with hits like *Land Of Make Believe*, *My Camera Never Lies* and *Piece Of The Action*. Now Cheryl, Mike and Jay fancy another 'piece of the action', so have reformed as The Fizz.

"The evening," says the group, "is the 'warts and all' behind-the-curtain story of Bucks Fizz - from being put together and winning the Eurovision Song Contest to becoming one of the most successful bands of the 1980s, with five number-one hits and 10 top-10 songs."



Rosie Kay Dance: Absolute Solo II

The REP, Birmingham, Sat 21 November

Award-winning Birmingham-based choreographer Rosie Kay returns to the stage at The REP to perform the premiere of her new solo work, *Absolute Solo II*, as part of a triple bill.

Twenty-one years on from her first ever solo show - *Absolute Solo* - and five years after last appearing on stage herself, Rosie here presents works that look backwards and

forwards at her personal experience as a woman in the dance industry.

"It's very exciting to be preparing to go back onto the stage again, after five years of 'retirement'," says Rosie. "I feel very different as a dancer but incredibly at home performing again, and I can't wait for the thrill of being with a live audience."

Adam Hess

The Glee Club, Birmingham,
Friday 6 November

Adam Hess has built his reputation on his penchant for quickfire gags. These include, "In France, J-Lo is known as 'I have water'." And, "It's sad that we'll never know how many chameleons snuck into the Ark". Hess hits Brum with his 2019 Edinburgh show, *My Grandad Has A Fringe* - an hour of comedy which, the London-born funnyman proudly explains, will *not* see you leaving the venue any cleverer at the end of the night: "There's nothing pensive in it. Previous shows have had a point, or I've tried to say a clever thing, but this one's different. This one is without a single clever point. Even the title's stupid - it means nothing. I promise the show's a lot of fun, though."

For as long as he can remember, Adam has wanted to be a comedian. "I started writing jokes at the age of 15," he explains. "And I would obsessively write them, too -

thousands of jokes - and ended up with maybe 1,500 pages of notes. Not surprisingly, when I eventually found the courage to go on stage at the age of 22, I hit the ground running - I had seven years' worth of material already!"



Van Gogh *Alive* the experience

**The most visited multi-sensory
experience in the world**

Opens Thu 8 Oct



BOOK NOW

vangoghaliveuk.com



SENSORY4™
IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

H BIRMINGHAM
HIPPODROME

The experience has been created by Grande Exhibitions

VAN GOGH ALIVE

CUTTING-EDGE EXHIBITION MAKES ITS UK DEBUT IN BIRMINGHAM

Grande Exhibitions' Van Gogh Alive is a truly unique encounter with art where "you don't just look at his paintings, you step inside them and feel their power". Visitors can experience the Dutch artist's evolution - from under-appreciated painter into celebrated genius - via the projections at their fingertips, above their heads and beneath their feet.

Families and art lovers alike get to wander through an immersive gallery of over 3,000 images of Van Gogh's legendary works,

including *The Starry Night*, *Sunflowers* and *Wheatfield With Crows*. In the process, they come face-to-face with the vibrant colours and vivid detail that encapsulates his unique Post-Impressionist style.

Presented across the globe to great critical acclaim, Van Gogh Alive has been exhibited in a wide variety of locations - from a deconsecrated church in Florence, to the lake parks of Shanghai and the spectacular Louvre Abu Dhabi. The show is both a

biography and an expansive anthology of masterpieces, specially tailored for each space it visits. Artworks are displayed in all their glory, broken down to showcase certain sections, or even magnified on a breathtaking scale. Photographs, videos and deeply philosophical quotes from Van Gogh himself have been entwined with images of his works to call attention to snippets of his real-life inspiration.





Paintings are shown in such detail (thanks to state-of-the-art technology) that observers will be given fresh insight into the carnival of colours and precise techniques used by the artist. This ethereal experience of feeling fully submerged in Van Gogh's canvas is interwoven with waves of carefully chosen classical symphonies and bursts of fragrance to pique all the senses.

In addition to the main exhibition, Van Gogh Alive also features hands-on art stations, interpretative areas, a life-sized recreation of Van Gogh's bedroom in Arles, and a captivating mirrored room adorned with hundreds of sunflowers - perhaps Van Gogh's greatest muse.

Bruce Peterson, owner of Grande Exhibitions, says: "We're incredibly excited that Van Gogh Alive is set to make its UK debut in Birmingham. The global exhibition is a perfect Covid-aware experience for the whole family that will provide some escapism and education. We find that adults and children enjoy the experience in different ways, finding their own meaning in Van Gogh's work as they explore the galleries.

"We visited a number of venues in the UK, but as soon as we entered Birmingham Hippodrome, we knew we had to bring our Van Gogh Alive here. It's a unique, iconic

venue, and we truly believe once we tailor the experience to come alive in the Hippodrome, visitors won't believe their eyes at the size, scale and beauty within.

Van Gogh Alive is where technology and music meet forward-thinking art curation, boasting the title of most visited multi-sensory experience in the world

"Since announcing the opening in Sydney and reopening in Mexico City with Covid-safe measures in place, demand for tickets has been even higher than pre-lockdown. We're confident that the experience will be extremely popular in Birmingham, and we

can't wait to open the doors to our first ever UK showing!"

The exhibition marks the first time Birmingham Hippodrome has invited the public into the building since the closure of all theatres and other public spaces back in March. Birmingham has a long history of championing arts and culture, and Van Gogh Alive is an opportunity to continue to support one of the UK's most stimulating and essential industries.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, agrees: "Many sectors are going through an incredibly difficult period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the arts is no exception. Birmingham Hippodrome has had its challenges, but it's a critical venue for the West Midlands, and it's great to see how it's adapting and thinking outside the box to overcome these challenges.

"The arrival of Grande Exhibitions and Van Gogh Alive is not only a boost for the Hippodrome, but it will also be great for the wider West Midlands economy, helping to draw visitors back to our region."

Van Gogh Alive shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Thursday 8 October to Thursday 31 December.

Take a Seat!

And play a part in our future

Support our charitable work by sponsoring or gifting
a seat in our historic auditorium

WOLVERHAMPTON
GRAND
THEATRE
125TH ANNIVERSARY

To celebrate **Wolverhampton Grand Theatre's 125th Anniversary** we're offering 100 seat sponsorships at the special price of £125* each.

A seat sponsorship includes a plaque on your chosen seat in our historic Victorian auditorium, inscribed with your own personal dedication (up to 50 characters) and a commemorative certificate to celebrate your part in our future, because as well as making a unique gift, the proceeds from your seat sponsorship will go towards helping the Grand Theatre's charitable work in the local community.

Purchasing a seat sponsorship is easy, visit grandtheatre.co.uk or call the
Box Office on 01902 42 92 12 for more details.

*Normal price £250

19 must see musicals coming to the Midlands...



Hairspray

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 April

It's 1962, and in Tracy Turnblad's Baltimore hometown, massive hairdos, dancing the twist and Corny Collins' daytime dance show are the hottest tickets in teen culture.

In some ways, life for the starry-eyed Tracy is as big, bright and breezy

as a bubblegum balloon - but there's trouble brewing just beneath the surface...

This Tony Award-winning hit of a show returns to the Midlands with a jukebox-worth of 1960s-style dance music and 'downtown' rhythm & blues. Hit songs include Welcome To The 60s, You Can't Stop The Beat and The Nicest Kids In Town.

Six The Musical

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 20 - Sun 25 April (tickets on sale, 1 December)
Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 14 - Sat 18 September

SIX's runaway success has shown no signs of abating since it premiered as a student production at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017. From Tudor queens to battling boss-women, the show features the wives of Henry VIII taking to the stage to tell their own versions of their lives.

This high-energy celebration of girl power sees the cast backed by all-female band The Ladies In Waiting.



Ghost The Musical

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Tues 6 - Sat 10 July



This ever-popular stage version of the award-winning 1990 movie starring Patrick Swayzee, Demi Moore and Whoopi Goldberg makes a welcome return to the Midlands. For those not in the know, the production tells the story of a ghost named Sam. Caught between this world and the next, he desperately attempts to communicate with his girlfriend, Molly, to warn her that she's in mortal danger from his murderer. A timeless tale about the power of love that beautifully blends the genres of romance and comedy, Ghost features The Righteous Brothers' Unchained Melody and numerous songs co-written by Eurythmics' Dave Stewart.

Rock Of Ages

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 6 - Sat 10 July; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 2 - Sat 6 November

Cinema-goers who caught the 2012 movie version of Rock Of Ages, starring Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, Russell Brand and Catherine Zeta-Jones, will know exactly what to expect from this feelgood musical. For those who didn't and therefore don't, it focuses on the romance between a small-town girl and a big-city rocker, and is packed to its proverbial rafters with classic 1980s numbers. So if you're someone for whom the decade of Glasnost, yuppies, Miami Vice and mullet hair-dos took place against a soundtrack of pounding rock anthems, this is the show for you. Songs include We Built This City, Here I Go Again, I Want To Know What Love Is and The Final Countdown.





©Matthew Cawrey

Nritya Black Country

Sat 19 Sep – Sun 20 Dec 2020

Nritya: Collecting The Story Of Indian Dance In The Black Country 1960-2000 shares stories, photos, film and objects collected from some of the pioneer dancers, teachers, choreographers and members of the local community. This exhibition is a collaboration between Jaivant Patel Dance & Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Nritya Black Country is supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Free Admission

#NrityaBC

www.NrityaBlackCountry.com

19 must see musicals coming to the Midlands...



Waitress

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 11 - Sat 15 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 29 November - Sat 4 December

Smash-hit Broadway and West End musical Waitress makes three Midlands stop-offs next year as part of its first ever UK tour.

Based on the 2007 movie, Waitress tells the story of Jenna, an expert pie maker in a small town who dreams of a way out of her loveless marriage. A baking contest in a nearby county and the town's new doctor may provide her with the chance of a new life, while her fellow waitresses offer their own recipes for happiness...

The show is being brought to life by a groundbreaking female-led creative team.

Mamma Mia!

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 2 - Sat 13 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 3 - Sat 14 May, 2022



This legendary show is of course a nicely contrived vehicle for the chart-topping music of 1970s super troupers Abba. The Swedish Fab Four scored mega-hit after mega-hit with catchy numbers including Waterloo, Dancing Queen, The Name Of The Game, The Winner Takes It All and Take A Chance On Me, all of which are present and correct in this blockbuster offering.

9 To 5 The Musical

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 25 - Fri 29 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 1 - Fri 5 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 3 - Fri 7 August;

"I'm so excited that 9 To 5 is heading to the Midlands," says Dolly Parton, in talking about her hit musical's three visits to the region in 2021.

"I'm hoping you have as much fun watching it as I had writing the music for it."



The show is perfect for anyone who's ever wanted to string up their boss, which is almost all of us. So come join the fun!"

As with the original 1980s movie and spin-off TV series, the stage production of 9 To 5 centres around the story of three office workers, who team up to turn the tables on their sexist and egotistical bigot of a boss. Expect to be dancing in the aisles...

School Of Rock

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 13 - Sat 27 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 20 - Sat 25 September; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 26 - Sat 31 July



There's a school of thought that School Of Rock would've been even better without Jack Black. And the great thing about Andrew Lloyd Webber's stage version of the hit 2003 movie is that you actually get to find out if that's true!

Alongside its lack of Black, the show has plenty else to recommend it, including no fewer than 14 new songs from Lord Lloyd Webber. All the original numbers from the movie also feature.

For those not in the know, School Of Rock

tells the story of wannabe rock star Dewey Finn. Posing as a substitute teacher at an elite prep school, Dewey not only introduces the students to 'his kind of music' but also helps the uptight headmistress to rediscover her inner wild child...

Chicago The Musical

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 12 - Sat 20 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 28 June - Sat 3 July; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 25 - Sat 30 October

Chicago's debauched glamour, jazz-tinged score and smouldering dance numbers give it a touch of real old-Broadway style decadence.

An astonishingly accurate satire on the shallow, media-obsessed world of the 21st century, it's almost impossible to believe it was first conceived over 40 years ago.

It also has the considerable lure of choreography by Broadway legend Bob Fosse - and he's the reason the show was re-conceived in 1996.

Set in the Chicago of the Roaring 20s, the action takes place in a jailhouse, as two ambitious and sexy 'cons battle it out to be the most notorious murderer...



ROOK
and
BONE

original british contemporary art & instant downloads



Etsy & 

[HTTPS://WWW.ETSY.COM/UK/SHOP/ROOKANDBONE](https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ROOKANDBONE)



Everybody's Talking About Jamie

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, date tbc;
The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 26 April -
Sat 1 May

Everybody's Talking About Jamie may have come from humble beginnings - it was inspired by a television documentary and premiered in Sheffield - but after only a matter of months it had transferred to the West End. Since then, the hit musical has enjoyed blockbusting success, with five Olivier Award nominations, an extensive UK tour and a forthcoming feature-film version testifying to its incredible popularity. The show, which follows Jamie New's quest for acceptance on his journey to becoming a drag queen, co-stars soap favourites Shane Richie and Shobna Gulati. Layton Williams takes the title role. "This musical tries to tell people to stay true to who they are and to be proud of themselves," says Layton, "and that if they're different, or feel like they don't fit in, then there's a place for them in the world anyway. It's all about having hope."

Footloose

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 15 - Sat 20 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 6 - Sat 10 April; Malvern Theatres, Mon 17 - Sat 22 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 2 - Sat 7 August



Featuring classic numbers such as Holding Out For A Hero, Almost Paradise, Let's Hear It For The Boy, and of course the title track itself, hit Broadway and West End musical Footloose tells the story of city boy Ren's arrival in Bomont - and of the impact which his dancing has on a town held back by the memory of a tragedy.

Something Rotten

The REP, Birmingham,
Thurs 7 - Sat 30 October

When the 16th century Bottom brothers - aspiring playwrights living in the shadow of William Shakespeare - find out from a

soothsayer that the future of theatre will see acting being combined with singing and dancing, they set about the task of writing the world's first ever musical...

Sean Foley has had a far from ideal first few months in his new role as artistic director of the Birmingham Rep, so he'll be crossing his fingers, along with the rest of theatreland, that 2021 will bring with it a return to normality. Assuming it does, Sean will no doubt relish getting his teeth into this hit musical comedy, an offering described by New York Magazine as "The Producers meets Spamalatot meets The Book Of Mormon... squared."

Menopause The Musical 2

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 25 February; Bedworth Civic Hall, Sat 27 February; Malvern Theatres, Fri 9 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 21 April; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 13 June

Female TV stars 'of a certain age' are much in evidence in this well-reviewed show, although the identities of those taking part on this particular occasion are yet to be revealed.

When four menopausal women meet in a department store, conversation quickly turns to the one thing they all have in common - the menopause. Cue innumerable one-liners

on subjects including forgetfulness, mood swings, wrinkles, night sweats and uncontrollable chocolate binges...

The Addams Family

The Alexandra, Birmingham,
Tues 13 - Sat 17 April

Samantha Womack and Cameron Blakely break out the gruesome makeup and theatrical cobwebs to star in this brand new production of the hit musical, based on the popular mid-1960s US TV series of the same name. So if you fancy a lightheartedly spiningling evening spent watching Uncle Fester howl at the moon, while Gomez and Morticia fight for supremacy and the ancestors create pandemonium, the gloomy old mansion at 0001 Cemetery Lane is the address to head for...





GIVE THE GIFT OF *THEATRE*

Can be used at more than 250 venues nationwide, including London's West End
TheatreTokens.com

*T&Cs: Offer valid on Gift Cards and eGifts from £5 only. Can only be claimed before 31 October 2019 via the official website or Tokenline when quoting 'WEEKENDER'. Maximum order is £500 per household. Full T&Cs at TheatreTokens.com/terms-of-sale

19 must see musicals coming to the Midlands...



We Will Rock You

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 8 - Sat 13 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 17 - Sat 29 May

A pulsating Ben Elton-written homage to the music of Queen, *We Will Rock You* may be short on storyline, but it's got bags of energy - and just about as brilliant a soundtrack as any musical's ever likely to boast.

The show's frontline performers give it their all to excellent effect, while the sets and choreography ensure a visual spectacle to remember. For those who care about the wafer-thin plot, the story is set in a future where originality has been quashed, musical instruments banned, and a hero is needed to bring back rock music...

Yes, it's all a bit contrived, but how else are you going to glue together all of Queen's greatest hits in a single show?

A fantastic evening's entertainment for fans of Freddie & Co, so catch it when you can...

Grease

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 3 - Sat 8 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 13 - Sat 17 July

Dust off your leather jackets, pull on your bobby-socks and get ready for the most fun-filled high-octane rock'n'roll party of them all!

Grease is the original high-school musical, featuring all the unforgettable songs from the hit movie, including *You're The One That I Want*, *Grease Is The Word*, *Summer Nights*, *Hopelessly Devoted To You*, *Sandy and Greased Lightnin'*.



The Magician's Elephant

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wed 14 October - Sat 1 January 2022

The Royal Shakespeare Company's Christmas offering this year would have been a new musical adaptation of *The Magician's Elephant*.

Sadly, the Covid crisis means that families will have to wait until next autumn to enjoy the stage version of bestselling author Kate DiCamillo's critically acclaimed novel.

The Magician's Elephant tells the story of orphan Peter Augustus Duchenne, who lives a frugal life in the lonely town of Baltese.

Then, one day, a magician conjures an elephant from the sky...

The animal's appearance sets off a chain of remarkable events that changes Baltese forever.

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun

Stafford Gatehouse, Fri 4 June; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 5 June; Malvern Theatres, 9 June; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 20 June; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Wed 14 July; Brierley Hill Civic, Thurs 15 July; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 17 July; The Place, Telford, Thurs 9 September; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sun 12 September; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 16 September; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 22 September; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Sat 6 November

Linda Nolan and X-Factor finalist Niki Evans are two of the four women enjoying an evening of fun and frivolity in this brand new musical comedy.

Described as a no-holds-barred romp through everything life throws at a modern-day woman, the show is unlikely to pull up any trees when it comes to originality. That said, having previously helmed *Hormonal Housewives*, its producers absolutely know the market they're playing to, and are old

hands at giving their audience a fantastic night out.

So if you fancy channelling your inner diva for a couple of hours, you know what you need to do...

Dreamgirls

Venues and dates to be confirmed soon...

Take a rollercoaster ride back to the 1960s with this smash-hit musical inspired by the story of Diana Ross & The Supremes.

Dreamgirls debuted on Broadway 39 years ago but is best known from the 2006 film version starring Jamie Foxx and Beyoncé Knowles. A story of friendship, ambition, and how the former can sometimes be compromised by the latter, the show follows the fortunes of Effie, Lorrell and Deena - three talented young singers in the turbulent '60s who, managed by a former Cadillac salesman, aim to hit the high notes as girl group the Dreamettes. Featured numbers include *And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going*, *Listen, I Am Changing* and *One Night Only*.





CREATING A LEGACY

**BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET
CELEBRATES 30 YEARS**



In 1990, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet migrated to the Midlands to become Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB). In the 30 years since, the company has premiered a staggering 58 brand-new ballets in the heart of the second city.

It has also got through 75,000 pairs of pointe shoes (at a rate of 2,500 pairs a year) and emptied 3,000 cans of hairspray in the wigs department!

One of the company's premieres, presented in its first year in Birmingham, was the now-internationally acclaimed production of *The Nutcracker*. BRB's then-director, Sir Peter Wright, set himself the mammoth task of creating a new version of Tchaikovsky's classic. It opened 98 years after the very first performance of the ballet.

BRB's *The Nutcracker* was dedicated to the City of Birmingham as a token of appreciation for its support of the company. Since it debuted, there have been 619 performances of the production, 598 of which have taken place at BRB's Birmingham Hippodrome home. It remains a beacon of artistic excellence on a global scale, making a welcome return each Christmas.

Another Birmingham Royal Ballet classic making a return - in February 2021 - is *Cinderella*. Sir David Bintley's enchanting fairytale ballet, set to Sergei Prokofiev's sumptuous score, premiered at the Hippodrome 10 years ago and featured as the BBC Christmas ballet.

Both *Cinderella* and *The Nutcracker* boast the renowned and utterly spellbinding designs of John Macfarlane. Legendary productions in BRB's repertoire, the ballets dazzle visually, technically and emotionally, steeping Birmingham Hippodrome in glittering extravagance and generating an electric atmosphere.

Running alongside its performance schedule, BRB is heavily involved with the local

community via its Dance Track initiative. Dance Track was created 21 years ago to take ballets into schools, present dance to children who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to enjoy it, and scout for talent. Today, Birmingham Royal Ballet visits one-quarter of all the city's primary schools and runs workshops for 2,500 youngsters each year.

BRB's Freefall Dance company, meanwhile, is made up of performers with severe learning difficulties, and is just one example of the company championing inclusivity in the arts.

Continuing Birmingham Royal Ballet's distinguished legacy is its recently appointed director, Carlos Acosta. Taking over from the retiring Sir David Bintley last January, Cuban-born Carlos is one of the world's most iconic principal dancers. He also heads up his own contemporary dance company, Acosta Danza.

With Covid-19 meaning that many of BRB's plans have failed to come to fruition this year, the company is more determined than ever to deliver something special to the city of Birmingham in these uncertain times. This autumn, an innovative digital projection and augmented reality piece is being presented at Birmingham Repertory Theatre. *Lazuli Sky* will be the first one-act ballet to be commissioned and presented under Carlos Acosta, and utilises social distancing within the performance.

A hopeful piece by Birmingham-born choreographer Will Tuckett, *Lazuli Sky* explores the vast openness of the sky as a direct response to lockdown. It takes its inspiration from the deep, speckled blue of the treasured Lapis Lazuli gemstone - the pigment from which was the most expensive used in Renaissance oil paintings, including those of Leonardo Da Vinci. The unique production is set to Shaker Loops by John Adams and includes the work of designer Samuel Wyer and projection designer Nina Dunn.

A second brand-new offering from BRB takes 'honouring Birmingham' to the next level. *City Of A Thousand Trades* is a new one-act ballet celebrating and inspired by the rich and diverse heritage of the second city.

Birmingham became known as the City of a Thousand Trades as Britain's Industrial Revolution reached its peak. The city ballooned into the second largest in the UK, thanks to its central location and vast water network, which was essential for booming business. Skilled tradespeople migrated to the city from throughout the Commonwealth, including Ireland, India and the West Indies, to create the melting pot of cultures for which modern-day Birmingham is known and admired.

Commissioned as part of BRB's Ballet Now programme, which seeks to find exciting, diverse, international and creative talent, *City Of A Thousand Trades* will be brought to the Birmingham Rep's stage in May 2021 by choreographer Miguel Altunaga.

Commenting on the ballet, Carlos Acosta said: "As soon as I came here, I wanted to create a statement about Birmingham with a ballet about the history of the people of Birmingham. This is a large city and a city of immigrants who share the story of Birmingham, and I'm very interested that the work explores that."

"I also think we have a responsibility to break the stigma that ballet is elitist, white, and 'of yesterday'. I'm interested in the idea of giving a voice which is representative of the time we are living in, so that ballet is not about the past but also the present and into the future."

For more information on future Birmingham Royal Ballet performances, visit brb.org.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

75,000 pairs of pointe shoes have been used over the course of 30 years, at a rate of 2,500 pairs a year.

10,000 costumes are stored by BRB, mainly in a warehouse in Dudley.

3,000 cans of hairspray have been used by the wigs department since 1990.

1,397 pairs of pointe shoes have been used just for the role of Odette/Odile in *Swan Lake* since 1990. A principal dancer in that role tends to go through two pairs a show.

1,000 wigs are stored at BRB, all of which are made of real human hair. The longest wig,

featured in David Bintley's *E=mc²*, measures over one metre.

864 cans of silver sparkle body paint have been used by dancers playing the role of snowflakes in *The Nutcracker*.

660 performances of *Swan Lake* have been given since 1990, in 14 different countries, including Thailand, the US, South Korea, Israel, Japan and New Zealand.

500 costumes are needed for each full-length, three-act ballet, such as *Swan Lake*.

619 performances of *The Nutcracker* have been given, of which 598 have taken place at

Birmingham Hippodrome.

421 full days have been spent by the company in daily class since 1990, at a rate of 7.5 hours a week, 337.5 hours a year and 8,437.5 hours in 25 years.

270 weeks of performances by BRB have been given at its home of Birmingham Hippodrome since 1990.

150 different ballets have been performed by BRB at the Hippodrome.

58 brand-new ballets by 28 choreographers have been premiered by BRB, including 21 by Sir David Bintley.



PEAKY BLINDERS



THE LIVE ESCAPE GAME

THE OFFICIAL
PEAKY BLINDERS
ESCAPE ROOM
LOCATED IN
BIRMINGHAM

0121 572 3131 ESCAPELIVE.CO.UK

Wonder Woman 1984

CERT PG (151 mins)

Starring Gal Gadot, Connie Nielsen, Pedro Pascal, Chris Pine, Kristen Wiig
Directed by Patty Jenkins (USA)

Gal Gadot returns with her Lasso of Truth and impressively indestructible bracelets in the follow-up to 2017's Wonder Woman.

The first movie was that rarest of beasts, a DC Extended Universe film that wasn't utterly panned by the critics - so there's plenty riding on this much-anticipated sequel. The story finds Wonder Woman pitting her demigoddess wits against the wicked Cold War forces of sinister supervillains Maxwell Lord and Cheetah...

Lasso and bracelets at the ready...

Released Fri 2 October



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in October...

Eternal Beauty

CERT 15 (95 mins)

Starring David Thewlis, Billie Piper, Sally Hawkins, Penelope Wilton
Directed by Craig Roberts (UK)

A stellar cast of much-loved British thespians lend their considerable talent to this stylish and thought-provoking debut offering from actor-turned-director Craig Roberts. Having caused a significant stir in the Oscar-winning *The Shape Of Water*, Sally Hawkins is at it again here, starring as a woman whose battle against paranoid schizophrenia is brutally undermined by her thoroughly unpleasant and utterly self-centred family. David Thewlis' character of aspiring musician Mike provides her with a welcome port in a storm...

Released Fri 2 October



I Am Woman

CERT 15 (116 mins)

Starring Evan Peters, Tilda Cobham-Harvey, Danielle Macdonald, Matty Cardarople
Directed by Unjoo Moon (USA)



When Australian singer Helen Reddy - who died in September at the age of 78 - arrived in New York with her three-year-old daughter in the mid-1960s, she had nothing more than a suitcase and \$230 to her name. Within five years she had become a global superstar and seen her power anthem, *I Am Woman*, adopted by the increasingly assertive feminist movement...

This sensitively told biography has garnered plenty of praise after showing at a number of internationally renowned film festivals.

Released Fri 9 October

Connected

CERT tbc

With the voices of Abbi Jacobson, Danny McBride, Maya Rudolph, Olivia Colman
Directed by Michael Rianda & Jeff Rowe (USA)

When the not-altogether-functional Mitchell family head off on a road trip to deliver daughter Katie to her new college, their 'bonding' experience is interrupted by a scary tech uprising. As electronic devices across the globe take control, the Mitchells find themselves battling to save the planet - assisted only by two friendly malfunctioning robots and whatever level of family teamwork they can manage...

An animated movie, the film is produced by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, who previously collaborated on the *Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs* movies and the highly acclaimed *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse*.

Released Fri 9 October



Film highlights released in October...



The War With Grandpa

CERT PG

Starring **Robert De Niro, Uma Thurman, Christopher Walken, Jane Seymour**
Directed by **Tim Hill (USA)**

Expect rude humour and pranks aplenty in this star-studded romp from the admittedly not always reliable shared pen of Tom J Astle and Matt Ember, whose previous writing credits include the execrable rom-com, *Failure To Launch*.

Tim Hill's the man at the helm, so if you've loved his previous work - including *Muppets From Space*, *Alvin And The Chipmunks*, *The*

SpongeBob SquarePants Movie and *Garfield: A Tail Of Two Kitties* - a right royal laughter fest may well be on the cards for you.

The storyline's a straightforward one. Sixth-grader and all-round-average kid Peter (Oakes Fegley) is none too pleased when his recently widowed grandfather, Ed (De Niro), not only moves into the family home but is also given his bedroom. What's an ousted boy to do but try his very best to get the uber-annoying pensioner to sling his elderly hook... Problem is, it turns out Ed isn't interested in going anywhere

Released Fri 16 October

Cordelia

CERT tbc (88 mins)

Starring **Michael Gambon, Johnny Flynn, Catherine McCormack, Alun Armstrong**
Directed by **Adrian Shergold (USA)**

Haunted by past events, a young woman starts to unravel when she's left alone in her apartment... "I wanted to explore one weekend in this character's life, where everything starts to implode for her," explains the film's director, Adrian Shergold. "Did this happen? Is this weekend real? Or is it a figment of Cordelia's imagination?"

Released Fri 23 October



A Call To Spy

CERT tbc (123 mins)

Starring **Sarah Megan Thomas, Stana Katic, Radhika Apte, Linus Roache**
Directed by **Lydia Dean Pilcher (USA)**

What do you get if you bring together a female British intelligence officer, an American woman with a wooden leg and a female Indian Muslim pacifist?...

A brand spanking new Nazi-fighting spy unit, that's what!

Inspired by true stories, *A Call To Spy* follows the adventures of three 'plucky gals' as they play a key role in undermining the Nazi regime in France during World War Two. The movie has done outstandingly well at numerous film festivals - including Canada's annual Whistler event, at which 97% of people chose it as their favourite movie.

Released Fri 23 October



The Courier

CERT tbc (111 mins)

Starring **Benedict Cumberbatch, Merab Ninidze, Rachel Brosnahan**
Directed by **Dominic Cooke (UK)**

This autumn is certainly a bonanza season for spy-movie fans. Not only is there Jimmy Bond's return (see opposite page) and *A Call To Spy* (see elsewhere on *this* page), there's also this fascinating and true story of British businessman Greville Wynne (Benedict Cumberbatch). Along with his Russian source - Soviet spy Oleg Penkovsky - Wynne provided MI6 with crucial information that helped defuse the Cuban Missile Crisis back in 1962.

The film made its bow, under the title *Ironbark*, at this year's Sundance Film Festival, where it was warmly received.

Released Fri 30 October



Relic

CERT PG (89 mins)

Starring **Emily Mortimer, Robyn Nevin, Bella Heathcote, Jeremy Stanford**
Directed by **Natalie Erika James (UK)**

When the elderly Edna goes missing, daughter Kay and granddaughter Sam travel to her creaky old house in the mist-shrouded forest and end up experiencing more than they bargained for... Australian director Natalie Erika James' feature debut is a sinister nail-biter that received a massive thumbs-up when it premiered at Sundance early this year.

Released Fri 30 October



No Time To Die

CERT tbc (163 mins)

Starring **Daniel Craig, Ana de Armas, Ralph Fiennes, Léa Seydoux**
Directed by **Cary Joji Fukunaga (USA)**

Daniel Craig picks up his Licence To Kill for the fifth and final time in an adventure that sees everybody's favourite British secret service agent pitting his now-fiftysomething wits against a mysterious villain armed with dangerous new technology.

Actually, in this one, Bond has become everybody's favourite *former* British secret service agent, having retired to an idyllic life of peace and tranquility in sun-kissed Jamaica. But what's a highly trained ex-double-O operative meant to do but put down his vodka martini (shaken, not stirred) and spring into action when CIA pal Felix Leiter turns up asking for help... Craig has been a massive hit as Ian Fleming's famous super-spy, and is surely making the right decision by handing in his Walther PPK at the age of 52. Roger Moore played the role until he was nearly 60, a decision that did neither him nor the Bond legend any favours.

Released Thurs 12 November



CRITIC'S CHOICE

more films released in November...

The Duke

CERT 12a (96 mins)

Starring **Helen Mirren, Jim Broadbent, Fionn Whitehead, Aimée Kelly, Craig Conway**
Directed by **Roger Michell (USA)**



Even by his own remarkable standards, Jim Broadbent is in exceptional form in this five-star offering based on an amazing true story. Broadbent plays Newcastle resident Kempton Bunton, a man who, in the early 1960s, allegedly popped down south to the National Gallery and half-inched a £140,000 painting of the Duke of Wellington by Spanish artist Francisco Goya... Helen Mirren as Mrs Bunton rises beautifully to the challenge of matching Broadbent's brilliance.

Released Fri 6 November



Soul

CERT PG (90 mins)

With the voices of **Jamie Foxx, Tina Fey, Quest Love** Directed by **Pete Docter & Kemp Powers (USA)**

This computer-animated comedy sees middle-school band teacher and wannabe jazz musician Joe Gardner finding himself transported from the streets of New York to The Great Before -

a fantastical place where new souls are given their personalities, quirks and interests before they go to earth. Teaming up with a particularly precocious soul known as 22, Joe determines to return to his life - and finds himself learning a few invaluable lessons along the way...

Released Fri 27 November



GOING WILD...

A prestigious exhibition highlighting the breathtaking beauty of the natural world arrives in the Midlands this autumn. The 56th Wildlife Photographer Of The Year explores the world's richest habitats and offers an insight into the behaviour of a plethora of earth's creatures. Chosen by an international panel of experts, each image tells a fascinating story about the photographer's connection with the natural world.

This year's Wildlife Photographer Of The Year competition attracted more than 50,000 entries - with professional and amateur snappers all vying for the sought-after title.

Winning images are chosen for their creativity, originality and technical excellence - like the image above, which is the work of Hannah Vijayan from Canada, who was highly commended in the 15 to 17-year-old category.

Titled **The Perfect Catch**, Hannah's image shows a brown bear pulling a sockeye salmon from the shallows of a river in Alaska's Katmai National Park, where tourists gather to observe a concentration of bears catching salmon leaping up the falls. Hannah chose to capture a quieter scene and different style of fishing, with the large female Alaskan brown

bear choosing to immerse her head under water to look for her prey. Her reward is a nutrient-rich sockeye still in its ocean form - before it has developed its reproductive red colour and pronounced jaws.

An image sure to give arachnophobics the shivers is Jaime Culebra's **The Spider's Supper**.

The detailed photograph is highly commended in the Behaviour: Invertebrates section of the competition.

The image shows a large wandering spider pierce the egg of a giant glass frog with digestive juices before sucking its liquefied prey. It is one of 11 known species of wandering spider, which are thought to be key predators of these small, often translucent amphibians.

The spiders shelter in rainforest plants during

the day and hunt at night, usually by ambushing prey that ventures close enough. Jaime set up his shot to capture the precise moment the female spider grasped the thin jelly coating between her fangs, steadying the egg with her long, hairy palps. One by one, over more than an hour, she slowly devoured all the eggs.



UK photographer Matthew Maran's **The Rat Game** shows a young fox holding on tight to her trophy of a dead brown rat. Matthew spent four years photographing the foxes that live on a North London allotment. This image - highly commended in the Behaviour: Mammals section of the competition - was taken on an August evening as Matthew lay watching the youngsters at play. As one of them exploded out of the bushes with a dead rat in its mouth, the other three then began squabbling over it and a tug-of-war developed. When one got the prize, it would repeatedly toss it into the air and catch it.



Reflecting the talent of young UK photographer Evie Eastbrook, **Paired Up Puffins** is highly commended in the 11 to 14-year-old category. Evie's image shows a pair of Atlantic puffins, in vibrant breeding plumage, pausing near their nest burrow on the Farne Islands. Every spring, these small islands off Northumberland attract more than 100,000 breeding pairs of seabirds. While guillemots, razorbills, kittiwakes and fulmars crowd onto the cliffs, puffins nest in burrows on the grassy slopes above. Evie concentrated on this pair, aiming for a characterful portrait.



Peeking Possums, by Australian photographer Gary Meredith, sees two common brushtail possums - a mother and her joey - peeking out of their hiding place under the roof of a shower block in a holiday park in Yallingup, Western Australia. Gary had been eyeing up his subject all week. They popped up at sunset and kept an eye on campers until dark, before squeezing through the gap and heading to a peppermint tree where they would feed on its leaves. Ranked in the Urban Wildlife section, Gary's photograph captures the possums' vulnerability and resourcefulness.



This competition has an outstanding reputation in attracting the world's very best photographers, naturalists and young photographers. But there has never been a more vital time for audiences all over the world to re-engage with the natural world - and what better way than this inspiring and provocative exhibition

Dr Tim Littlewood, Executive Director of Science at the Natural History Museum

Amazon Burning by UK photographer Charlie Hamilton James is highly commended in the Wildlife Photojournalism: Single Image category. Charlie has been covering deforestation in the Amazon for the past decade, and this image captures a fire burning out of control in Maranhão state, northeastern Brazil. The image highlights a single tree which remains standing, almost in defiance. The fire would have been started deliberately, to clear a logged area of secondary forest for agriculture or cattle farming.



Tomohon Market in northern Sulawesi, Indonesia, is the subject of **A Risky Business**, by French photographer Quentin Martinez. Another highly commended in the Wildlife Photojournalism: Single Image category, **A Risky Business** shows a market trader slicing up fruit bats while surrounded by his other wildlife wares: pythons to his right, and bamboo-skewered 'bush' rats beneath them. Quentin was struck by the juxtaposition of contrasting economies: the name-brand clothes of the stallholders and the wild-animal body parts.



Italian photographer Andrea Pozzi hiked for hours to capture this image of the Araucanía region of Chile - named after its Araucaria trees. Taken from a ridge overlooking the forest after sunset, **The Forest Born Of Fire** emphasises the vista's rich colours. The trunks gleam like pins scattered on the landscape, and the image is framed to create the feeling that the whole world is clothed in this strange forest fabric. Andrea had been enchanted by this sight a year previously and had timed his return to capture it.



Wildlife Photographer Of The Year shows at The Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, from Saturday 17 October until Sunday 7 February. Tickets are £7.50 for adults and £3 for children & students, with under-threes going free.



Krištof Kintera

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham,
until Sun 22 November

"I am aware of our responsibility for drastic changes of climate, extinctions of species and all kinds of living organisms," says Krištof Kintera, a Czech artist widely acclaimed for his sculptural, often kinetic works. "And therefore we'll face, sooner or later, fatal problems. It is our shame; it is my shame."

This Ikon exhibition, installed across both galleries and also expanding into the public realm, is the most comprehensive presentation of Kintera's work ever to be mounted in the UK. Featuring new, recent and archival pieces, the show focuses on present-day 'apocalyptic environmental issues', but manages to do so with an evident sense of humour, albeit a dark one.

THE
BARBER
INSTITUTE OF
FINE ARTS

**WE'RE
OPEN!**

ADMISSION FREE

GALLERY OPEN
TUESDAY – SUNDAY
10am – 5pm
(closed Monday)

BOOKING
ESSENTIAL:
BARBER.ORG.UK

f t i @BarberInstitute

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

**SIGHTS of
WONDER**

Photographs from the 1862 Royal Tour

ON-LINE EXHIBITION

sightsofwonder.barber.org.uk

ROYAL
COLLECTION
TRUST

Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020



Birmingham Revolutions

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Sunday 28 February

Still available to view at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery are pre-lockdown exhibitions Birmingham Revolutions: Power To The People and Dressed To The Nines.

Voting reform, nuclear disarmament, trade unionism, anti-racism and human rights all feature in Power To The People, a presentation exploring the city's vibrant and varied history of protest and activism. Dressed To The Nines, meanwhile, focuses on the subject of dressing up and going

out. Covering the period from around 1850 up to the present day, the exhibition highlights some of the changes which have occurred in the types of clothing worn for special occasions.

Garments featured in the show include a 1930s beaded evening dress, an embroidered court uniform which belonged to Neville Chamberlain, and cocktail dresses by Christian Dior and Norman Hartnell.

Oh, and shoes. Lots and lots of shoes...

Thirteen Ways Of Looking

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Fri 2 October - Sunday 13 December

Contemplating big questions such as where art belongs, where it's experienced and who it's addressing, Thirteen Ways Of Looking brings together the work of (yes, you guessed it) 13 artists and curators. The exhibition takes its inspiration from a 1917 poem by Wallace Stevens entitled Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Blackbird. Stevens' 13-verse work presents multiple perspectives and viewpoints of the bird. In

so doing, it highlights the importance of flexibility and fluidity when creating space for multiple forms of experience, knowledge and understanding. The Herbert exhibition very much borrows from the poet's approach, presenting international, multicultural, multi-faith and feminist perspectives which shift like those of the blackbird in Stevens' poem.



Fabric: Touch And Identity

Compton Verney Art Gallery, Warwickshire, until Sun 3 January 2021

The ways in which clothes and textiles conceal, reveal and seduce through the lenses of art, design, fashion, film and dance is explored in this 'playful and provocative' exhibition.

Boasting works by Vivienne Westwood, Raisa Kabir and Cathy de Monchaux, the display also features a new immersive installation by Reiko Sudo.

Subjects explored in the show include the role of fabric in shaping and communicating identity, and the part it plays in expressing sensuality and sexuality in a variety of different cultures.



20:20 Twenty Years Of Collecting Contemporary Art

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Thurs 24 December

New Art Gallery's celebration of its 20th anniversary continues with this major exhibition. Exploring themes including the changing urban landscape, the Black Country, the impact of globalisation and people & places, the show brings together works of contemporary art collected over the last 20 years and spanning a wide range of media.

Many of the included pieces have been produced by artists who have featured in the gallery's exhibitions programme at one time or another.

National
SEA★LIFE
Birmingham

**NEW
2020**

Meet the UK's first and only sea otters

Come face-to-face with our
cuddly pair, Ozzy and Ola



visitsealife.com/birmingham



Scarefest

Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire, Fri 9 - Sat 11 October & Fri 16 October - Sun 1 November

There's certainly no shortage of fright-tastic fun to be had at the UK's biggest theme park this Halloween, as Alton Towers once again hosts the ever-popular Scarefest - and a new spine-tingling addition, Freak Show: Toxic Junkyard. Set in an open space replicating an abandoned junkyard, the walk-through experience features menacing psycho clowns, circus rejects and malevolent misfits lurking in the shadows, plotting their next big entrance to make you tremble in your boots...

More freakish fun can be had during a tour of Altonville Mine, which is inhabited by village outcasts 'the Skin Snatchers'. Or maybe you fancy a seafaring fright aboard the infamous 'Mutiny' ghost ship, as part of the award-winning

pirate-themed attraction, Darkest Depths... The dark nooks and crannies of a dungeon are always perfect spooking spaces, and Alton Towers Dungeon is no exception, promising a 'hideously hilarious journey through Staffordshire's darkest history'...

Also new for 2020 is the Garden Lights Walk: Whispering Souls, described as an 'otherworldly' stroll through the resort's listed gardens... Freaky Fun Zone and the CBeebies Land Monster Ball provide age-appropriate spooky fun for younger visitors, while The Alton Ancestors make a welcome return for the scary season - rising from their graves to entertain visitors with some socially distanced flash mob entertainment.

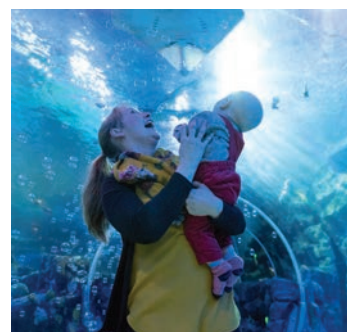
Book at altontowers.com



National Sea Life Centre: A-Scarium

National Sea Life Centre, Birmingham, Sat 17 October - Sun 1 November

Step into the creepy depths of Sea Life by navigating A-Scarium's immersive trail, which takes you past some of the ocean's most weird and wonderful creatures. Discover facts about many of the sea's freakiest inhabitants, including black tip reef sharks, garden eels and big eye fish. Make sure you keep an eye out for the magical unicorn fish in the aquarium's 360-degree Ocean Tunnel. **Book at visitsealife.com/birmingham**



The Haunted Castle

Warwick Castle, Sat 24 October - Sun 1 November

Spooky tales, scary fun and themed attractions and activities should ensure visitors' spines are well and truly tingled at Warwick Castle this half-term holiday.

Ghosts, ghouls, wizards and witches abound as the popular visitor attraction goes all out to provide a Halloween adventure brimming with things that go bump in the night (*and* in the daytime!). Visitors can meet the famous Witches of Warwick, explore the gruesome truths of history in the Horrible Histories maze, search the spooky mansion, navigate the Haunted Hollows and discover even more quirky characters in 'spellbinding shows' live on the Dead Centre Stage.





Step back in time this autumn at Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge.

Open Wednesday to Sunday from 10am.

Book your timed admission now at
IRONBRIDGE.ORG.UK



Spooky Spectacular

West Midland Safari & Leisure Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, 10 October - 1 November

Brighten up the spookiest of seasons by taking part in West Midland Safari Park's brand new Scratchcard Trail for Halloween. Solve the mystery of the pumpkin thief and earn a sweet treat as your reward. Illuminated, themed scarecrows and hundreds of pumpkins will be on display throughout the popular 100-acre family attraction. West Midland Safari & Leisure Park is

home to a variety of exotic and unusual species, many of which you're sure to encounter during the course of the four-mile drive-through safari. Expect to see elephants, rhinos, giraffes, lions, wallabies, tigers, emus, camels, zebras, gnus, elands, ankole cattle, yaks, przewalski's horses, Asian buffaloes, wolves, llamas and all manner of antelope!

Other attractions include Land Of The Living Dinosaurs, Ice Age, African Village and an Adventure Theme Park featuring rides for all age groups. **Book at wmssp.co.uk**



Scream Train

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, 29 - 31 October

This all-new adults-only attraction promises to offer a real edge-of-the-seat experience. After boarding the train at Kidderminster, visitors will be shown to their own private

compartment, where they will remain trapped while monsters roam the corridors looking for blood. And who knows what else is lurking just around the next corner?...

Tickets are £20 per person, based on six people travelling together in a private compartment

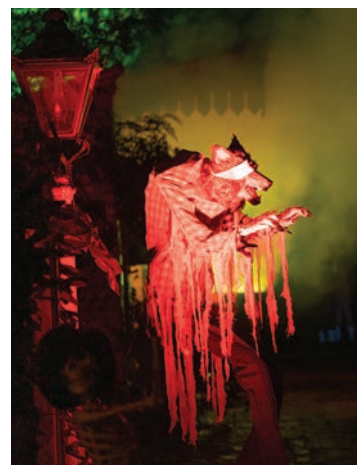
Book at svr.co.uk

Ghost Trains

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Thurs 29 - Sun 31 October

Not for the faint-hearted, this trip through Severn Valley Railway's haunted stations unveils a host of ghosts and ghouls lurking where you'd least expect. The after-dark spooktacular invites families to make their way along the station's dark platform before boarding their very own compartment. The train's destination is Arley - home of the living dead...

Tickets are available from £15 per person, based on six people travelling together in a private compartment. **Book at svr.co.uk**



Tudor Spooktacular

Tudor World, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 17 October - Sun 1 November

The town of Stratford-upon-Avon gets splendidly spooky this Halloween, when one of its most haunted buildings hosts an array of creepy events for all the family to enjoy.

Daytime visitors to Tudor World can take part in a Halloween quiz, complete with a chance to win a ghoulish prize.

A fortune teller and storyteller will also be on hand on selected days.

Nighttime entertainment comes in the form of a Victorian Seance Evening and Jack The Ripper Evening.

Numbers will be limited for both events due to social distancing.

Book at tudorworld.com

WEST MIDLAND
**SAFARI
& LEISURE
PARK**

SP^oo^oKY SPECTACULAR!



THE MYSTERY OF THE PUMPKIN THIEF

WMSP.CO.UK/SPOOKY

Half-term events from around the region



Brick Or Treat Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham, Sat 17 October - Sun 1 November

Plenty of fang-tastic adventures await little monsters visiting Legoland Discovery Centre this month. As well as having access to millions of Lego bricks, rides, build and play zones - and a 4D cinema - visitors can also get involved in numerous Halloween-themed activities. Build your own pumpkin and add it to the site's Hall of Fame Pumpkin Patch for the chance to win a prize. Follow the clues and solve the

puzzle of the perilous pumpkins in Skavenger Hunt, and choose to have a socially distanced meet-and-greet with Scarecrow and other Lego characters. The centre is also offering a chance to have a family picture with one of its Halloween Heroes. **Book at birmingham.legolanddiscoverycentre.co.uk**

Pumpkinfest

Park Hall Countryside Experience, Oswestry, North Shropshire, Sat 17 October - Sun 1 November

A free pumpkin for every paying child to choose, carve and take home is part of the offer at this award-winning visitor attraction. A spooky scarecrow trail through the woods and a walk through the haunted farm are sure to keep youngsters entertained. There will also be a daily Halloween fancy-dress competition for those attending in their spookiest outfits. **Book at parkhallfarm.co.uk**

Halloween at Witley

Witley Court, Great Witley, Worcestershire, Sat 24 October - Sun 1 November

There's no shortage of ghoulish fun to be had at English Heritage's Witley Court this month. Spooky Woodland Walks featuring ghost-hunting storytellers with tales of strange and silly goings-on are perfect for children aged five to 12. Each tour is outdoors and takes about 45 minutes.

Wear your scariest outfit to be in with the chance of winning a prize in the daily fancy-dress competition.

Elsewhere, Ghost Tours for visitors aged 16-plus will relay tales of ghouls, supernatural sightings and horrors from history. Definitely not something for the faint-hearted! **Book at english-heritage.org.uk**



Halloween Spook-tacular

National Forest Adventure Farm, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, Sat 10 & Sun 11 October; Sat 17 October - Sun 1 November

Enjoy all the usual fun of the farm plus a host of spooky-themed events. Check out the attraction's broomstick training via an interactive show, then venture into one of the site's three mazes. Find

the ingredients hidden in Cauldron Chaos to help you concoct a potion; see how many mummies you can find in the Mummy Maize Hunt; and be prepared for the fright of your life in the Haunted Mirror Maze. Wear your scariest costume and be in with a chance of winning a prize in the Halloween fancy-dress competition. **Book at adventurefarm.co.uk**



SANTA TRAINS

STEAM INTO A WINTER WONDERLAND



01562 757 900

svr.co.uk

THE COVENTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

The 2-Tone Village, Shops, Cafe,
Restaurant and Museum



The Ghost Town Car – now YOU can ride in it...

The Coventry Music Museum now boasts the ultimate 2-Tone exhibit, the actual Ghost Town car, lifted straight from the Ghost Town music video. Thanks to master mechanic Steve Kearns and his team, who not only found the car, but carried each section up bit by bit, finally creating the famous 1961 Vauxhall Cresta PA car complete with the 4218 R0 number plate. Special fans have been queuing up to get into the car for the ultimate photo opportunity, one Ghost Town Car rider said: "For just a moment we felt like we were starring in our own Ghost Town video". It has already attracted the likes of: Jerry Dammers, Neville Staple and Lynval Golding, Roddy Byers, Neol Davies, John Shipley, Trevor Evans and Paul Heskett. So now I guess it's your turn.

More information ring 07971171441
or email godivarocks@yahoo.co.uk
80 Walsgrave Rd, Coventry CV2 4ED



The Ghost Town Car

Learn about Coventry's
place in World Music

Rude Boys Bedroom

Be a
Three Minute Hero

Vote in our charts

Number one on Trip Advisor

Covid-19 compliant



Where's Wally? Spooky Museum Search

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, Wed 21 October - Sat 31 October;
British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire, Fri 23 October - Mon 2 November

Organised by Walker Books and Kids In Museums, this touring show invites families to hunt for Wally amongst museum collections, and to spell out a spooky phrase with letters hidden alongside mini Wally standees.

A special I Found Wally? bookmark will be awarded to those who complete the search. There's also the chance to enter the Where's Wally? & Kids In Museums grand prize draw

competition, to win an ArtFund Family Membership and a bundle of Where's Wally? goodies.

**For Blists Hill, book at ironbridge.org.uk.
For British Motor Museum, visit britishmotormuseum.co.uk**

For other Midlands venues, visit:
kidsinmuseums.org.uk

This Makes That With These: Whacky Wonders

Coventry Transport Museum,
Tues 27 October

This hands-on session provides an opportunity for young visitors to discover engineering skills using a variety of everyday items. Although themes may change due to current circumstances, sessions will continue to provide the tools and knowledge on how to build your own invention.

Book at transport-museum.com

Rocket-Fuelled Family Science Show

British Motor Museum, Gaydon,
Warwickshire, Fri 23 October -
Mon 2 November

Professor Pickle and Doctor Pumpkin will be taking up residence at the British Motor Museum at half term. The duo will host daily shows comprising interactive demonstrations and rocket-inspired science. The shows take place in a large conference room with marked-out spaces to allow for social distancing.

More rocket fun can be had on Wednesday 28 October when STEM ambassadors from MOD Kineton deliver an outdoor rocket workshop between 11am and 3pm. Children can design and build their own rocket and see how far it flies from the pneumatic launcher.

Activities are suitable for children aged five-plus with adult supervision.

britishmotormuseum.co.uk



Pumpkin Flotilla

Sarehole Mill, Birmingham, Fri 30 October -
Sun 1 November

A Halloween event with a difference, the Pumpkin Flotilla sees Sarehole's mill pond lit by floating, illuminated pumpkins following a visit from the ghostly ferryman. Attendees are invited to enjoy a hot chocolate - or a bowl of Vampire's Delight soup - and listen to spooky stories ahead of viewing the flotilla. There will also be time for you to make your own lantern to guide you through the mill pond. Pumpkin Flotilla experiences last 90 minutes. Tickets cost £45 for a bubble of up to five people.

Book at ticketsbirminghammuseums.org.uk



**BRITISH
MOTOR
MUSEUM**

**Fuel their
imagination**

this October
half-term
24 Oct - 1 Nov

Tommy, 5.
Future Astronaut

britishmotormuseum.co.uk/families
J12 M40, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ



**JOIN US FOR A
GREAT DAY OUT**

Located less than two miles from Birmingham city centre, explore exotic glasshouses, Japanese gardens, traditional tea rooms and enjoy a variety of fun events for the whole family.

birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk

Find us on:    

Thank you for your support it keeps our Gardens growing
The Gardens are a registered Educational Charity No: 5289981

**THE BIRMINGHAM
BOTANICAL
GARDENS**
AN EDUCATIONAL CHARITY



**LEGO
LEGOLAND
DISCOVERY CENTRE
BIRMINGHAM
ARENA BIRMINGHAM**

**BUILD CREATE
& PLAY**

At the ultimate indoor
LEGO® playground

BOOK NOW: Birmingham.LEGOLANDDiscoveryCentre.co.uk

LEGO, the LEGO logo, the Brick and Knob configurations, the MiniFigure and LEGOLAND are trademarks of the LEGO Group. ©2019 The LEGO Group.





Bear Grylls Adventure

Birmingham International Railway Station

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this indoor/outdoor visitor attraction.

Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course. Most are suitable for visitors aged eight-plus.

For the 'more courageous' (as if some of the above didn't require courage!), The Fear Zone challenges you to 'sharpen your mind and find your inner strength' by attempting to navigate the area in

complete darkness.

Alternatively, try venturing to the depths of the deep blue sea with Shark Drive. The site's tropical tank allows adventurers to get 'up close and personal' with black tip reef sharks and cownose rays.

All dive and safety equipment is provided.

Fancy experiencing the thrill of free falling at 12,000ft without having to jump out of a plane? Then iFly is probably for you. This weightless adventure takes place in a wind tunnel and comprises two one-minute flights to get the adrenaline pumping.

Book tickets at beargryllsadventure.com

Sky Reach Adventures

Telford Town Park, Shropshire
Open until 1 November

Four adrenaline-pumping activities await visitors to this Telford Town Council-run attraction. Located within the Town Park, Sky Reach Adventures comprises a climbing wall, Tree Course, Skyline Course and Quick Jump - all with different levels of challenge to suit different age groups.

The Sky Reach system allows participants to move at their own speed and make their own route choices... The climbing wall is 10 metres high, has four routes and uses two auto-belay systems to ensure climbers are always safe... The Tree Course takes visitors on a journey through the Town Park woods at squirrel height... The Skyline Course features 12 obstacles and requires balance, physical skill and nerve... Last but not least, Quick Jump allows visitors the chance to experience the sensation of free-falling through the air.

Book at skyreach.org.uk

Go Ape Tree Top Adventure

Midlands venues include Cannock, Coventry, Sherwood Forest & Wyre Forest

With 'branches' (geddit?) in some of the UK's most spectacular forests and parks, Go Ape Tree Top Adventure comprises two to three hours of flying down zip wires, leaping from Tarzan swings and navigating obstacles, crossings and rope bridges.

Tree Top Junior is suitable for 'mini Tarzans' aged six to 12 and offers an hour of tree-to-tree crossings with a zip line finale.

The Forest Segway, meanwhile, is an option for those preferring to keep their feet on the ground (well, almost!). The hour-long activity is a great way to explore the terrain of the forest.

Health & safety is a priority with all Go Ape Adventures, with age-related regulations in place for all activities. **Book tickets at goape.co.uk**





Winchcombe Farm

HOLIDAYS

HOME TO FOUR BESPOKE LUXURY HOLIDAYS HOMES
NESTLING IN AN IDYLIC AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY
IN THE ROLLING WARWICKSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE



WINCHCOMBE FARM, SHENINGTON ROAD, UPPER TYSOE, WARWICKSHIRE CV35 0TH
WWW.WINCHCOMBEFARM.CO.UK

Christmas events booking now...

Festive



Santa Safari

West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley

Families visiting West Midland Safari Park this festive season can meet an elf, climb on board a sleigh and head for the North Pole. And that's just for starters! Having arrived at their destination, young visitors can then say hello to Santa Claus, tell him what's on their Christmas wish-list and pose with the great

man while a helpful elf takes a picture. But wait, there's more... After meeting Santa, children can also select their own present in the elves' workshop and sample a special walk-through 'discovery trail'...

Book tickets at wmssp.co.uk

Santa's Winter Wonderland

Snowdome, Tamworth, Staffs,
Sat 14 November - Thurs 31
December

Snowdome's popular Santa Show sees the white-bearded one preparing for his big festive performance of The Twelve Days Of Christmas - but finding his efforts somewhat hampered by two elves who have a decidedly different perspective on how to present a yuletide showstopper... Suitable for all age groups, the show is just one element of the festive fun on offer at Tamworth's snowy indoor attraction.

Visitors can also explore Santa's Christmas snow trail, take a walk through an enchanted forest, enjoy a game of snowballs, hitch a ride on a sledge, meet Santa's furry friends and check out the brand new traditional children's carousel. **Book tickets at snowdome.co.uk**



Steam In Lights

Severn Valley Railway, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, Fri 27 & Sat 28 November & various dates in December

Magical creatures, sparkling lights, flurries of snow and plenty of thrills are all present and correct on this sure-to-be-memorable illuminated adventure. Steam In Lights debuted in 2019, and like all good visitor attractions is aiming to be 'bigger and better' this year. Board your private compartment at Bridgnorth station, then sit back, relax and enjoy the ride as your train steams out

into the darkness and the magic unfolds. Passengers can then immerse themselves in a story of mischief and mystery, helping to make the lights shine along the line during their quest to find the Christmas Cacklers. The Steam In Lights train journey lasts around an hour, travelling from Bridgnorth to Hampton Loade and back. **Book tickets at svr.co.uk**



Luminate Light Trail

Coombe Abbey Country Park, Wed
25 November - Wed 23 December

Described as a 'timeless experience to be enjoyed by all, young and old alike', Luminate at Coombe takes visitors along a mile-long trail comprising 'stunning lighting elements and fabulous light play, all set to ambient music'. **Book tickets at luminate.live/coombe-abbey**



whatsonlive.co.uk 43



UP FOR A LAUGH!

With the Birmingham Comedy Festival returning in October, we caught up with Maureen Younger - leading female comic on the city circuit - to chat about the award-winning event, women in comedy, and the challenges facing the live entertainment industry as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic...

How long have you been involved in comedy in Birmingham, Maureen?

I started MY Comedy Birmingham in Kings Heath in 2009, originally as a one-off, but it sold out so I kept on going! Dave, who runs Birmingham Comedy Festival, then asked me to be on the selection committee for the Breaking Talent Award in 2014, and I've been doing that ever since. I think shows and awards like this are so important to highlight

what's going on in the Midlands. I'll always back Birmingham Comedy Festival as a whole because I think they're so supportive to us comics and really affordable too. I love gigging in Birmingham, and there's a really good comedy scene here. I have to say that Midlands audiences are some of my favourites, some of the nicest in Britain. Every comic I know loves gigging in the Midlands.

Where can we catch you at Birmingham Comedy Festival this year?

It's all still very uncertain on the live comedy front. I'm going to be a guest on Objectivity with James Sandy, which is a series on Switch FM as part of the festival. It was really interesting. We discussed these objects that mean something to me for different reasons, and he'd really done his research! It definitely makes you think about what

objects mean to you, whether that be The Family Object, The Dark Object or The Random Object. My random object was actually from my time studying in the old Soviet Union - although I still pretend to be 38, so don't work out the maths on that one...

Next year's edition of the Birmingham Comedy Festival marks its 20th anniversary. How do you think the comedy circuit has changed over that time?

I think 20 years ago the TV comic was only just starting to come out on top. But now, you have the issue as a promoter that you can put on a gig with a load of really great comics and it won't sell too well. Having a TV name definitely makes it easier, but I think it's a shame because people are missing out on so much great comedy just because they haven't seen the act on TV. I was in Band Of Brothers as an angry German housewife, but I don't think that's quite what they're looking for! It's a bit disappointing. There are certainly more opportunities for women than when I started. At that time, you'd only ever get one woman on the bill if you were lucky, but now you might even get two!

Getting more women on the bill was the idea behind your MY Comedy gigs, then?

The motivation behind it when we first started was exactly that - that you could never get more than one woman on a bill. You wouldn't even get a woman alongside a black comic; only one 'speciality act' is what one promoter called it. There was this idea too that having more than one woman on the bill meant that people wouldn't come. MY Comedy was to prove that it was possible; you can have an all-female bill and people will come!

It's a safe environment, not only for the performers but for the audience too. The situation has changed somewhat because now you *will* get more than one woman on the bill for standard gigs, but I think my audience in particular likes the fact it's a different atmosphere. Some comedy gigs - not all, though - can be quite lairy and feature misogynistic or other derogatory material. I think at MY Comedy we really promote a friendly, inclusive environment. Maybe the reasons we set the gig up in the first place have become less valid, but it still feels like a very nurturing space. It's the same as when you go to an urban gig - it just has that different kind of vibe that you don't get at a mainstream gig.

What obstacles do you think women in comedy face?

The assumption is that women aren't funny. There's no female comic on this earth that hasn't had someone come up to them - usually also a woman - and say, 'I usually don't like female comics, but you're really good!'. They mean it as a compliment, but if you ask them about other female comics, they can't even name one. The standard for comedy is that a straight white man goes out on stage and talks about himself - and he'll be judged on how funny he is. That's stand-up. That's the 'norm'. If a woman goes on stage, or if a black person goes on stage, and we talk about ourselves, we're no longer talking about the norm. The assumption is that women will only appeal to women, a few gay men and maybe the odd vegan. Whereas the assumption when a straight white man talks about himself is that everyone will be interested - but as we well know, that's really not the case!

Every female comic will be judged for always talking about themselves, or for talking about being a woman too much. No one would go up to a male comic and say, 'hey, that was too blokey, and stop talking about your girlfriend or wife so much. We know you're straight and male, but you don't have to shove it down our throats all the time!'. Nobody would do that! But if a gay person 'banged on' about their love life, the reaction would be entirely different. Women are really pleased to hear their own voice reflected back at them from a female comic because they don't get that too often in live comedy, TV and films. Particularly if you're a middle-aged or older woman, you don't hear your own voice anywhere.

You present podcasts, such as Women Talking B*locks, with other female comics, as well as MC'ing your online comedy gigs. Do you think that podcasts and other online or radio content could ever replace live comedy?

It's a whole different kettle of fish. Nothing can ever compete with live comedy. The energy you get from being in the same room as the audience for live comedy, and even theatre, can't be replicated elsewhere. It's like a tennis match: back and forth, back and forth, between audience and performer. In fact, the interaction between the act and the audience can actually make the comic funnier. It's all about rhythm and timing. Whereas when I do Zoom gigs, it's more of a comedy monologue, and podcasts become just funny exchanges between you and a

friend - the audience is silent. But in the absence of live comedy, it's been the best available to us.

How are you feeling about the changes live comedy is facing right now?

It's scary because as soon as lockdown started, all our gigs disappeared - and I live off performing live. For comedy, you want the exact opposite of lockdown: a small room with everybody crowded together. It was weird to try and think of ways that I could keep performing. So I've been running MY Comedy Chats every Thursday over Zoom, which is a comedy chat show essentially. I'm starting up MY Comedy Birmingham at Kitchen Garden Cafe again now, but with a lot less people. Work opportunities are few and far between, but even when we're getting gigs, we're getting paid a lot less.

What do you hope for the future of comedy in the UK?

I would love it if people went to comedy nights without caring if there was a TV credit or not... like it used to be, where people knew that it was a good local club and the promoter knew how to pick quality acts. Without small clubs for comics to learn and develop in, we wouldn't have the Michael McIntyres and Frankie Boyles. Great little venues with a fantastic performance space that were run really well are closing down right now. On the reduced audience capacity right now, they just won't be able to pay their staff and the acts. They're a huge loss to local communities, and I think they desperately need to be preserved.

It's the same with other entertainment industries. No band starts off playing the O2! People reckon The Beatles were so good because they spent so many hours doing live gigs in bars and other venues that nobody had ever heard of. Then The Beatles blew up and now The Cavern in Liverpool is famous. In order to be a good comic, you have to put in those same hours gigging - and without the small venues, that won't happen. It's hard to know when we will get back to 'normal', or if we ever will. Coming out the other side of coronavirus, there will probably be far fewer venues and, consequently, far fewer comics. It will be a massive shame. I hope we can find some positives coming out the other side.

Birmingham Comedy Festival runs from Friday 2 to Sunday 11 October. To find out more, visit bhamcomfest.co.uk



TAKING LIBERTIES

Geoff Norcott has been a regular on the comedy circuit for a number of years now. His writing credits include *Have I Got News For You*, *8 Out Of 10 Cats* and *Judge Romesh*. He's also a regular correspondent on satirical news show *The Mash Report*. This month, Geoff resumes his *Taking Liberties* tour, where he'll be talking about the challenges of being a right-wing comedian in a left-leaning industry. What's On recently caught up with him to find out more...

What's your story in terms of becoming a comedian, Geoff - was it a long-held dream fulfilled or a sudden and unexpected lightbulb moment?

It will probably annoy the modern 'career comedian', but I did fall into it. I was just messing about with an old mate doing a double act. He decided it wasn't for him, so I egotistically decided to honour the dates as myself. It was a mere six years before I learned how to be funny on my own!

How has the pandemic and lockdown impacted the material in your show?

I think it's made the show better because so much has happened since lockdown, and comedy does well throwing light in shade. Plus I can do an impression of blokes in petrol stations with a t-shirt pulled up over their nose.

What do comedians do during pandemic lockdowns?!

We're just like everyone else - we do more stuff online. That was fine for a while, but there was a point when I was doing one show and had to mute a bloke because his dog was barking. From *Live At The Apollo* to doing crowd control on a laptop!

You've said you don't like being told what to do, but is there anything we *should* be told to do?

Yes. Remember that social media is just the

stuff people type whilst sitting on the toilet. The importance it's given is bizarre. You could get cancelled for something stupid you wrote while passing the time of day between movements.

What's your view on free speech in comedy - are there any limits, and if so, what are they?

The limit is the audience. On the whole, people are decent. If you get a joke wrong, the audience will soon let you know in the form of silence or contempt. It's a great system.

Why are there so few right-leaning comedians?

Well, based on my Twitter feed since that BBC announcement, it's because we're racist, sexist and exactly like Bernard Manning! The serious answer is there are a few more than there seem, but not everyone wants to talk about it.

Why is it, do you think, that Tories are 'shy'?

I'm not sure they are so much these days. The moment the Labour Party got investigated for racism, it became less obvious to treat it as a simple case of goodies and baddies.

Who's the comedian from a different generation you most admire and why?

I love Dave Allen. He could do it all. One-

liners, stories, observational. And he never seemed that desperate for the laughs. They seemed like an accidental consequence of the things he was saying.

You've said you like to take ideas on their merit, but which 'woke' position/idea/belief has the least merit for you, and which has the most?

I think promoting the idea that straight white men are evil is a tough sell in a country where a large chunk of the people are straight, white and male. I think people should always look to progress the idea of equality, but not presume that everyone will think the same way as their campus discussion forum on gender hate crimes.

How have Midlands audiences tended to respond to your politics by comparison with audiences elsewhere?

For whatever reasons, Midlands audiences seem to take themselves the least seriously. Shrewsbury punters also like to have their reference points acknowledged, and laugh at outsiders for not having enough money for that bloody toll bridge.

.....

Geoff Norcott performs at The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sunday 18 October & Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa on Friday 16 April

SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER

**BOTTOMLESS
PANCAKE &
PROSECCO
BRUNCH**

SERVED FROM 12-2PM

TICKETS
£29.50
PER PERSON



**The
Peach
Tree**

POP IN OR CALL 01743 355055 OR BOOK ONLINE WWW.THEPEACHTREE.CO.UK

18-22 ABBEY FOREGATE, SHREWSBURY. SY2 6AE.



REVIEW: Dishoom

Authentic Indian dishes and a buzzing atmosphere at new kid on the... square

It's been a bumpy old ride, but Dishoom has finally launched in Birmingham. The Indian restaurant collective was originally due to open its eighth eatery on 1 April, but the Covid-19 pandemic meant the launch was delayed until the end of the summer.

Paying homage to the old Irani cafes of Bombay, Dishoom opened its first restaurant in Covent Garden in 2010. It has since developed a cult following thanks to the quality of its food and the authenticity of its restaurants.

Occupying part of the ground floor of One Chamberlain Square, overlooking Grade I listed Birmingham Town Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery and the Chamberlain Monument fountain, Dishoom has been a major hit with Brummies since its opening.

Executive Chef Naved Nasir's menu of Bombay comfort food is served from breakfast onwards. Dishes are cooked in Hindu, Muslim, Irani and Parsi traditions. They include favourites such as Murgh Mali - chicken-thigh meat steeped overnight in garlic, ginger, coriander stems and cream; Paneer Pineapple Tikka - Indian

cheese, marinated and gently charred with pineapple; and Gunpowder Potatoes - potatoes with brown skins, smoky-grilled, broken apart and tossed with butter, crushed aromatic seeds and green herbs.

Our feast commenced with Prawn Koliwada and Keema Pau. Originating from the Kolis - a small fishing community - the koliwada recipe involves dipping pieces of fish - or, in this case, meaty king prawns - into spicy batter and deep-frying them. The delicate, crispy morsels boasted subtle hints of cumin, chilli and garlic, and were accompanied by a selection of tasty chutneys - tamarind, mint & coriander and tomato & chilli.

A classic of Irani cafes, the Keema Pau consisted of well-balanced and spiced minced lamb & pea mix - imagine a comforting samosa filling - with a toasted and buttered home-made bun. My partner and I gave both dishes a big thumbs-up.

I already knew I had to try the Chef's Birmingham Special of Mutton Chaap Korma, and Dishoom's signature dish - the House Black Daal. Cooked over 24 hours for extra harmony, the daal certainly lived up to expectations - dark, rich and

deeply flavoured. A term that I often use when describing a cracking, creamy and wholesome daal is 'the ultimate comfort food' - and Dishoom's offering was just that.

The korma was exemplary, too. Featuring marinated chops of mutton lavished with a rich, nourishing onion & cashew sauce, it was up there with some of the nicest curries I've tried anywhere. Mopped up with the accompanying soft and spongy khamiri roti, it was a truly delicious dish.

I adore okra fries, so happily added them to our order too, alongside some nicely cooked steamed basmati rice.

On our waiter's recommendation we also ordered the spicy lamb chops. Untrimmed for juiciness, the meat itself was beautifully cooked and melted in the mouth. Marinated overnight in lime juice, warm dark spices, ginger and garlic, the two chops were brimming with flavour and served with pomegranate seeds for that extra little burst of sweetness. Superb!

Our waiter then recommended the Basmati Kheer for dessert. Now, although I always favour savoury over sweet, I think this might just have beaten the korma in the 'highlight of the evening' stakes. Comprising silky caramelised basmati rice pudding cooked nicely with vanilla-infused coconut milk, cardamom and cashews, every mouthful was an utter joy. Cooled and layered with blueberry compote, this is an absolute must-try if you visit Dishoom! It's dairy-free too, so unless you have a good reason - a nut allergy, for example - there really is no excuse. Save room for it. Honestly, you'll thank me for the recommendation.

Dining out, understandably, may not be at the top of your priority list at the moment. You may not feel comfortable being in close

proximity to people, or you may find it hard to trust that a restaurant and its staff are fully complying with the current Covid health & safety measures. But from the supervised, socially distanced queue to enter the restaurant, through to the ample hand-sanitising pumps and the sufficient spacing between the tables, Dishoom really does have everything covered. Every member of staff was wearing a mask (and this was before it was legally required) and abided by the correct distancing measures, as much as physically possible, whilst serving. The service itself was exceptional too, with the staff ticking all the boxes - friendly, attentive, knowledgeable and informative. Five stars from us.

Many people, myself included, like to champion the independents - and with the current state of the hospitality industry, they need our support more than ever. Whilst technically a chain, Dishoom is definitely worth adding to your list (alongside those independents, of course!) if you haven't previously done so. The overall experience is one that you won't forget in a hurry.

And if you needed a bit more persuading... for every meal served at Dishoom Birmingham, the team will donate a meal to one of their long-term charity partners, Magic Breakfast and Akshaya Patra - two charities that provide free, nutritious meals to children who might otherwise go hungry.

Lauren Foster

Food:
 Service:
 Ambience:
 Overall value:
OVERALL

Dishoom
 One Chamberlain Square
 Birmingham
 B3 3AX
 Tel: 0121 809 5986



It's time to book your Christmas celebration at Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill in Birmingham

Christmas definitely *isn't* cancelled at one of Birmingham's most iconic restaurants. Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill offers panoramic views across the city and spectacular signature dishes.

The team is already full of festive cheer and ready to welcome you with a free glass of fizz on all bookings made before the end of October... You can book your festive celebration at mpwrestaurants.co.uk

Popular Digbeth venue to host two-day Social BBQ Fest

The Bond Company in Birmingham's Digbeth district is hosting The Social BBQ Fest on Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 October. The get-together is the latest in the Seasonal Markets series, which showcases the best of the city's food, drink, arts and music. The event will be split into sessions over both days for social distancing and safety purposes. Visitors can expect BBQ street food, bars, music, a handful of market traders and more. Participating food traders include Dicks Smokehouse, Little Urban BBQ, Street Souvlaki and - all the way from London - Smoke And Bones. The Cocktail Caravan at The Bond Company will be offering everything from beer, cider and prosecco to soft drinks and coffee. Tickets must be bought in advance. Tables of up to six people cost £12, tables for two are £6.

50 whatsonlive.co.uk



Get 50% off steak and pasta until November at Lost & Found

Well known for its avant garde décor and creative botanical cocktails, Birmingham's Lost & Found bar is now offering patrons the chance to 'make Tuesday the new Saturday'. For lunch and dinner every Tuesday until 10 November, guests can enjoy 50% off steak and pasta when dining-in - a deal that means prime British aged steaks can be enjoyed from just £8. All the steaks at Lost & Found are aged for a minimum of 21 days and served with triple-cooked chips and a confit tomato.

Authentic Italian opens at Millennium Point

The team behind Edgbaston-based authentic Italian restaurant Laghi's Deli have opened a new city-centre eatery at Millennium Point. In common with its well-established sister venue, Mulino offers 'the best in pizza, pastries and prosecco'.



BBQ smokehouse opens in Birmingham

DJ Quinn's in Hall Green (formerly Behan's Bar) has launched a BBQ smokehouse restaurant. The 100-seat eatery will serve an American-inspired menu seven days a week, from 12pm to 9pm, consisting of sharers, pub classics, burgers and smoked meats. Home-cooked roast dinners with all the trimmings will be served every Sunday, and there are plenty of vegan and vegetarian options available too.

HALLOWEEN

at Alton Towers Resort



9th - 11th October & 16th October - 1st November 2020

**Book your Scarefest tickets
now at [altontowers.com](https://www.altontowers.com)**

BIRMINGHAM



Director Carlos Acosta

Sir David Bintley's

Cinderella

31 Mar – 10 Apr 2021

On sale: 8 Oct from 11am

H BIRMINGHAM
HIPPODROME

birminghamhippodrome.com



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

ROYAL BALLET

Monoko Hirata as Cinderella.
© Sam Robinson