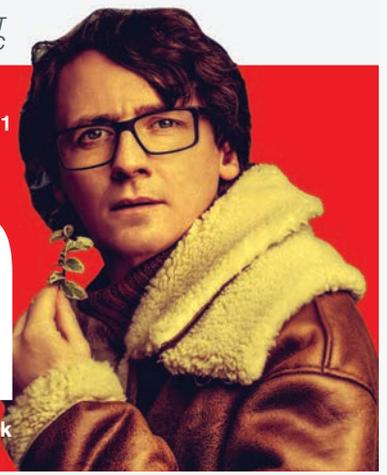


Warwickshire

ISSUE 413 MAY/JUNE 2021

What's On

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WARWICK CASTLE & KNIGHT'S VILLAGE

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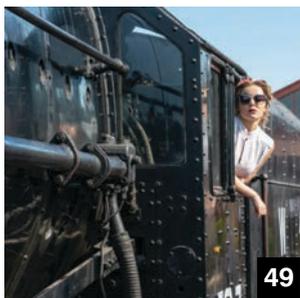
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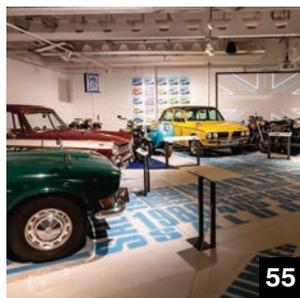
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What's On

MEDIA GROUP

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 : **Brian O'Faolain**
brian@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281701 : **Abi Whitehouse** abi@whatsonlive.co.uk
01743 281716

Subscriptions: **Adrian Parker** adrian.parker@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281714

Contributors: Graham Bostock, Lauren Cole, Katherine Ewing, Jenny Ell, Patsy Moss, Sue Jones, Steve Taylor
Publisher and CEO: **Martin Monahan** Accounts Administrator: **Julia Perry** julia@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281717

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UnNatural History comes to Herbert Art Gallery

An 'out of place' sculpture of a rhino and a time-travelling lab form part of a major new exhibition showing at Coventry's Herbert Art Gallery & Museum this summer.

UnNatural History, curated by art & environment organisation Invisible Dust, will run at the venue from 28 May until 22 August. The exhibition of works, by international naturalists and artists, will look at the link between art and science in terms of natural history, exploring its contribution to 'our understanding of ecology, climate change, extinction and threats to biodiversity'. Drawings, paintings, sculptures, installations, photographs, film, digital media and new technologies will all feature in the exhibition. For more information, visit theherbert.org

City of Culture community festival launched



Coventry & Warwickshire community performers are being given the chance to showcase their talents at a new outdoor festival during UK City of Culture 2021. Entitled Generate, the festival is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund and will see the Coventry City of Culture Trust working in partnership with The Albany Theatre Coventry to bring 'a relaxed, fun and family-friendly event to a green space in the city in August'.

Performers wishing to apply to contribute to the festival have until Wednesday 26 May to do so... To access an application form, visit: coventry2021.co.uk/generate

Mel C and Heather Small to headline Coventry's Big Foodie Weekend

Spice Girl Melanie C and M People's Heather Small will be the headline acts at Coventry's Big Foodie Weekend, taking place on Friday

23 to Sunday 25 July.

The pop superstars will be joined at the event by Karen Harding, Rozalla, Shena, Booty Luv, Big Brovaz, Katherine Ellis and DJ Paul Morrell.

Melanie C will lead the line-up on the Friday evening, showcasing her DJing skills with an exclusive set, while Heather will take top billing on the Saturday.

Tickets are available to purchase from Monday 31 May. For more information, visit coventryfoodfestival.com

Jodie Prenger goes it alone at Malvern theatre



Jodie Prenger is 'going it alone' this summer in a new production of Andrew Lloyd Webber & Don Black's classic one-woman musical, Tell Me On A Sunday (Malvern Festival Theatre, 15 to 19 June).

Charting the romantic misadventures of young English girl Emma in New York during the 1980s, the show features the number-one hit, Take That Look Off Your Face.

Commenting on the show, its producer, Jamie Wilson, said: "Tell Me On A Sunday, with its cast of just one actress, is probably the most naturally socially distanced musical in the world! We're delighted that Jodie is able to reprise her incredible performance as Emma."

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit: malvern-theatres.co.uk

A packed programme for half-term visitors to the British Motor Museum

The British Motor Museum in Gaydon, Warwickshire, is hosting a full programme of family-friendly activities this spring half-term to celebrate the Jaguar E-type's 60th birthday. Visitors will have the chance to meet Dotty or Dougie, the car designers from the Swinging '60s, and explore the car and its design.

Younger visitors will also have the chance to take home their very own cardboard cut-out Jaguar E-type.

There are also online celebratory activities available for those not able to visit the museum... For more information about what's on, visit britishmotormuseum.co.uk



Solihull Summer Fest 2021 line-up revealed

Solihull Summer Fest 2021 is set to go ahead at Tudor Grange Park on Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 July.

The fifth edition of the event will feature performances from headliners Billy Ocean and Kool & The Gang. Other artists appearing at the festival include Shaggy, Shalamar, The Brand New Heavies, Snap!, The Blow Monkeys, Tony Hadley, Belinda Carlisle, Nik Kershaw and Bad Manners...

For more information, visit solihullsummerfest.co.uk

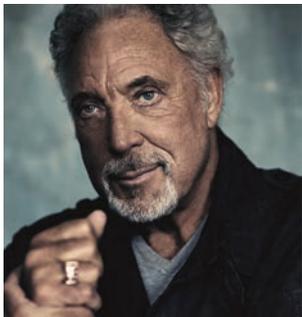


Sir Tom added to Lakefest line-up

Sir Tom Jones has been announced as the final headliner for this year's Lakefest.

The festival will take place at Eastnor Castle Deer & Country Park from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 August.

Echo & the Bunnymen, Seasick Steve, Razorlight, The Magic Numbers and Stereo MCs are among the other acts performing at the festival. Tickets are now on sale at lakefest.co.uk



RSC to present Comedy Of Errors in new outdoor space

The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) will this summer present its new production of The Comedy Of Errors outdoors in a specially constructed performance space.

The newly conceived Lydia & Manfred Gorvy Garden Theatre is located in the Swan Theatre gardens, which are flanked by the River Avon. Commenting on the initiative, RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran said: "By creating an

outdoor theatre space for The Comedy Of Errors, we hope audiences will feel safe to return to the theatre with confidence. Our buildings will gradually come back to life during the summer, through our café and restaurant, and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre will be ready for indoor performances in the autumn."

To find out about everything going on at the RSC this summer, visit rsc.org.uk



Stay overnight at Warwick Castle and live life like a knight!

If 15 months of mainly being confined to home by the pandemic has left you eager to spend time somewhere other than inside your own four walls, an overnight stay in Warwick Castle's Knight's Village might be just the getaway you're looking for.

Families staying in one of the village's cosy wooden lodges can enjoy a selection of evening entertainment, including battling knights, archery lessons and a brand-new storytime experience for youngsters that offers an ideal

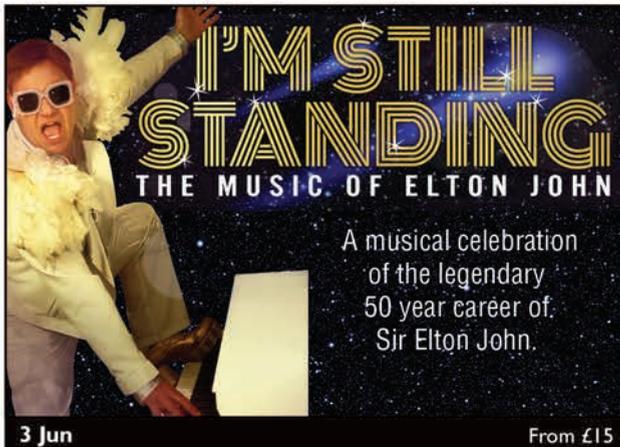
way of winding down before bedtime.

Sleeping up to five or seven people, each self-contained lodge comes complete with a private bathroom, private terrace and medieval-inspired decor throughout.

There are King's Tents available in which to stay, too. Sleeping up to four people comfortably, they include, among other features, medieval-style thrones and a four-poster bed.

For more information, visit: warwick-castle.com

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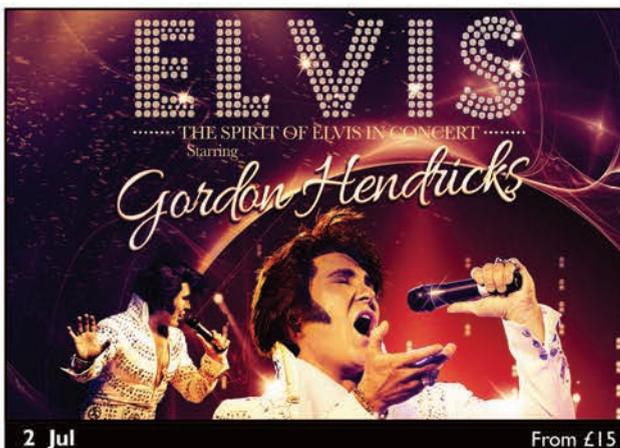
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Dickens' Carol at Coventry's Albany

Coventry's Albany Theatre will present its own production of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol this festive season. Advertised as 'the perfect family-friendly alternative to a traditional pantomime', the show runs at the venue from 4 to 26 December. It will feature 'breath-taking sets, spellbinding costumes, heaps of Christmas spirit and a sprinkle of spooky goings-on'. To purchase tickets, visit albanytheatre.co.uk or contact the venue's box office on 02476 99 89 64.



Mademoiselle F reopens Shop Front Theatre

Coventry's Theatre Absolute is reopening its Shop Front Theatre doors this summer with a production called Mademoiselle F. Described as 'a powerful and moving new work exploring isolation, mental health and our connection with the natural world', Vanessa Oakes' play explores how the environment impacts on an individual's search for recovery. The production shows from 9 to 12 June. For tickets, visit eventbrite.co.uk



Owners set to celebrate 30 glorious years at Nailcote Hall

The proprietors of Warwickshire's historic Nailcote Hall will be celebrating 30 years at the venue this summer.

Rick and Sue Cressman bought the hotel out of administration on 17 June 1991 and say that they have poured millions of pounds into turning the former 17th-century stately home into a thriving business.

"To say the impact of the pandemic has knocked us for six is an understatement," says Rick. "By the time we open on the 21st of June, it will have

been 15 months that the hotel hasn't operated as it should. We can't wait to open the doors, have people back enjoying themselves and breathing life back into this wonderful space."

Built in 1640, Nailcote Hall was ransacked by Oliver Cromwell's troops during the Civil War but survived to remain in the same family for around 300 years. Set in 13 acres of Warwickshire countryside, the venue still retains many of its original features. For more information, visit nailcotehall.co.uk

Hiking for the homeless...

Midlands charity St Basil's annual Hike For Homeless fundraising event will this year follow a route around the Warwickshire countryside. The hike takes place on Saturday 24 July. Participating teams can be made up of three to six people, so St Basil's is urging interested parties to 'grab their friends, family or colleagues and start training'. For more information or to register, visit: stbasils.org.uk or call the charity's fundraising team on 0121 772 9614.

Warwick Arts Centre awarded £250k by HS2 Fund for its ambitious 20:20 project

Warwick Arts Centre (WAC) has been successful in securing £250,000 towards its Warwick 20:20 project from the HS2 Community & Environment Fund.

The project involves replacing WAC's existing cinema with new state-of-the-art facilities and relocating the venue's Mead Gallery. Once upgraded, WAC will be well placed to function as a community hub for the arts, providing members of the public with opportunities to participate in programmes and projects.



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Fri 24th **Rickie's** THE 'ELVIS' TRIBUTE SHOW with KEVIN PAUL £35.00

OCTOBER

Sat 2nd **Rickie's** GEORGE MICHAEL TRIBUTE SHOW with MICHAEL GEORGE £35.00

Sat 9th **MARQUEE** PINK BALL – 'BLACK TIE' JAMES BOND CHARITY EVENT with RANG-A-TANG £45.00

Fri 15th **Rickie's** BACK TO THE 70's PARTY with CHRIS NOTT £35.00

Fri 22nd **MARQUEE** THE 'GREATEST SHOWMAN' PARTY with DAVID LAWRENCE & RANG-A-TANG £49.50

NOVEMBER

Sat 13th **MARQUEE** THE FREDDIE MERCURY SHOW with BRUCE GAME £40.00

Sat 20th **MARQUEE** 'STAR NIGHT' RAY QUINN – SWING CLASSICS & CHART HITS SHOW £49.50

Sat 27th **MARQUEE** THE SNOWBALL CHARITY PARTY with BORN IN THE 80's £49.50

DECEMBER

Fri 3rd **Rickie's** THE No.1 TRIBUTE TO WHITNEY HOUSTON with NYA KING £44.50

Sat 4th **Rickie's** CHRISTMAS MOTOWN DIVAS SHOW with THE DREAMETTES £44.50

Sat 4th **MARQUEE** 'PARTY ANIMALS' CHRISTMAS PARTY with RANG-A-TANG £49.50

Fri 10th **Rickie's** GEORGE MICHAEL TRIBUTE SHOW with MICHAEL GEORGE £44.50

Fri 10th **MARQUEE** SOUL & MOTOWN PARTY with SOULTOWN COLLECTIVE £49.50

Sat 11th **Rickie's** BACK TO THE 60's PARTY with THE REVOLVERS £44.50

Sat 11th **MARQUEE** 'MAMMA MIA' PARTY with BOOTLEG ABBA £49.50

Sun 12th **Rickie's** FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA with NOSTALGIC SONGS BY STACEY LYNN £29.50

Wed 15th **Rickie's** THE No.1 ROD STEWART TRIBUTE with GARRY PEASE £39.50

Thu 16th **Rickie's** SOUL AND MOTOWN PARTY with COLIN 'SUGARFOOT' MILLS £39.50

Fri 17th **Rickie's** THE ULTIMATE 90's PARTY with NOUGHTY 90's £44.50

Fri 17th **MARQUEE** THE 'TAKE THAT' SPECTACULAR with TAKE@THAT £49.50

Sat 18th **Rickie's** CHRISTMAS MOTOWN DIVAS SHOW with THE DREAMETTES £44.50

Sat 18th **MARQUEE** THE ULTIMATE 80's PARTY with ADDICTED TO 80's £49.50

Fri 31st **MARQUEE** NEW YEARS EVE 'BLACK TIE' BALL with RANG-A-TANG, SUZI WOODS & PIPER £90.00

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Nathan Evans to play Rialto Plaza

TikTok's sea-shanty star Nathan Evans will stop off at Coventry's Rialto Plaza on Sunday 19 December as part of a UK tour.

Nathan kickstarted an online phenomenon when he decided to upload sea shanties to TikTok after completing his morning duties as a postman. He then found himself at the centre of a new cultural movement... His videos have not only racked up millions of views, they've also introduced a whole new generation of music lovers to the 'genre' of 'multi-harmonised folk music with a fisherman theme'!



Worcester Pear Tree Project

The programme for the 2021 edition of the Worcester Festival is taking shape, with live music in the high street, colouring competitions, a teddy bears' picnic and face-painting activities already confirmed for the 17-day event. This year's festival, which takes place at various locations from 14 to 30 August, will also include the Pear Tree Project. An initiative focusing on 'community, charity and the environment', the project will see people's homemade pears - created from recycled household material - going on display on a giant tree in Worcester Cathedral for the duration of the festival. To find out more, visit worcesterfestival.co.uk/peartreeproject.



Not one but two Birmingham International Dance Festivals!

Birmingham International Dance Festival (BIDF) returns this year with not one but two editions - an 11-day online summer event and a 13-day live autumn festival.

From 3 to 13 June, BIDF presents a brand-new dedicated digital platform, BIDF TV, hosting screen dance performances and new film

commissions.

Then, from 21 September to 3 October, the festival will host an extensive outdoor programme, showcasing local touring, youth engagement, co-productions and digital work. For more information about both festivals and their respective programmes, visit bidf.co.uk

Film festival Flatpack makes a return

Birmingham's long-established film festival, Flatpack, kicks off a four-month season of events on Friday 21 May.

Event highlights include the BAFTA-award-qualifying short-film competition - featuring more than 30 UK premieres - a feature & documentary film programme, and a selection of special events, including live-performance premieres, beer & film pairings, and a life modelling class. The festival can be enjoyed online, outdoors and, all being well, in the city's cinemas and auditoriums.



City of Culture store now open

Coventry City of Culture Trust's new retail store, ticketing & information centre is now open.

The unit, located at 31-35 Hertford Street, will remain open until May next year.

The store stocks Coventry City of Culture merchandise - from clothing and postcards to exclusive, bespoke and artisan items by local makers. The new location is also home to a studio for media broadcasts, a meeting space for visiting delegates from across the UK and beyond, and a refreshments offer featuring food & drink made by Coventry businesses.

Shakespeare Distillery adds white rum to its portfolio of products

A Stratford-based distillery whose product range is inspired by the Tudor period has added a new and unique white rum to its drinks portfolio. Jester is the latest offering from independent artisan spirit producer Shakespeare Distillery, which has been distilling Gin for the last five years on its own premises in the town. To find out more about Jester, visit: shakespearedistillery.com

Digbeth Dining reopen regional pop-ups

Street-food specialist Digbeth Dining Club (DDC) has reopened its pop-up events at Warwick Castle, Coventry Cathedral and Sixways in Worcester. Due to the popularity of the events, tickets sell out quickly, so keep an eye on the DDC website and social-media pages for information about ticket release dates.



Belgrade Theatre unveils its newly renovated café & bar

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre has unveiled its renovated café & bar. The newly refurbished café is open for takeaway and outdoor dining from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday. The café's new offering of

locally sourced food features nachos, loaded fries and loaded salad, with toppings including guacamole, tomato salsa, salsa verde, coleslaw and sour cream. A variety of soft and alcoholic drinks is also available.

Midlands brewers serve up tropical-flavoured craft beer

Midlands brewery owners Gary Meads and Al Smith, who last year launched pale ale Gypsy Water, have created a second craft beer. Having co-founded their Gypsy Brew company during last year's lockdown, Gary and Al have now developed Garrity Mash - a tropical fruit 3.9% ABV Session Pale Ale. 'Packed full of juicy notes of mango', it promises to be a real crowd favourite as the warmer weather approaches. You can order the beer at gypsybrew.co.uk.

Pizza & Tap Shack opens at Umberslade Farm Park

A new 'pizza & tap shack' has opened at Umberslade Farm Park in Warwickshire. From a purpose-built shack, the Dough & Flow team will be serving their traditional Neapolitan pizzas - topped with 'the finest ingredients and drizzles' - beers from Church Farm Brewery, and wine from their newest partner, the award-winning Hun Wines. Best friends Tom and Marc used the Covid lockdown to convert a Rice Richardson horse trailer into a mobile pizza palace. And from there, Dough & Flow was born... Opening hours at Umberslade Farm Park are: Friday, 12pm-9pm, Saturday, 12pm-9pm; and Sunday, 12pm-4pm.



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GHOST TOWN 2 HOST TOWN

**NEW EXHIBITION TRACKS
COVENTRY'S POST-WAR HISTORY**





A new exhibition tracking Coventry's post-war boom-time, the decline of its famous motor industry, and the city's current resurgence as City of Culture opens at the Coventry Music Museum in May. What's On caught up with venue director & curator Pete Chambers to find out more...

When 2-Tone ska band The Specials released *Ghost Town* in 1981, it captured the zeitgeist of the nation.

Margaret Thatcher was prime minister, and as unemployment edged past 2.5 million, the Coventry band's brooding tune - with lyrics that expressed the frustration and anger of disaffected people all over the country - hit top spot as Britain's cities burned, with riots breaking out in Liverpool, Birmingham and Manchester.

The residents of Coventry may not have manned the barricades, but the birthplace of the nation's motor manufacturing industry had taken a massive economic hit since the boom-time of the early 1960s, when the city was known as 'Britain's Detroit'.

As Coventry begins its tenure as UK City of Culture, the *Ghost Town 2 Host Town* exhibition at Coventry Music Museum documents the city's fluctuating fortunes, both in terms of its social history and its music scene.

The museum's director & curator, Pete Chambers, believes the new exhibition is a must-see show: "You can find out about Coventry's fascinating post-war story - from 'boom town' to 'ghost town' and now 'host town' for the City of Culture - and how Coventry put itself on the map as a city."

The show will certainly be a personal journey for Pete. A prominent figure on the Coventry music scene for the past four decades, he used to earn a living in the city's most famous industry: "I worked at British Leyland and was made redundant. I was on the scrap heap at 23! We've got a reproduction of the foreman's office at British Leyland in Courthouse Green, the Morris Engines factory. There's a telephone, and my story is on the telephone."

The impact of *Ghost Town* when it came out cannot be underestimated. Perfectly encapsulating the national mood of the moment, it was chosen as 'single of the year'

by NME, Melody Maker and Sounds.

Pete first heard the song shortly after its release: "I was at the Rock Against Racism gig (22 June 1981), the last time we'd ever see The Specials with the original line-up in Coventry, and they played *Ghost Town*. It was at the Butts stadium, and it was an amazing gig."

There was another artist from Coventry who also made quite an impression on Pete that day: "My outstanding memory, which still sends shivers down my spine, is when Hazel O'Connor sat dangling her feet off the stage as it started to get dark, and sang *Will You*. It was an amazing experience."

Ghost Town turned out to be a final, albeit triumphant, farewell for the band that had launched 2-Tone Records (and with it, a dynamic new musical genre). Three of its members left to form Fun Boy Three.

Pete recalls that the group's leader & songwriter, Jerry Dammers, had worked on the tune for quite some time: "It took him a year. He put a lot of thought and effort into that song, but it wasn't a pleasant time and the band were falling apart. Jerry famously said, 'I'm glad that The Specials stayed together long enough to actually make and release *Ghost Town*', but it was a car crash while they were making it!"

The song's accompanying video famously featured the band crowded into a classic Vauxhall Cresta. A recreation of the car has become a popular attraction at the museum - as has another piece of memorabilia connected to the song: "The *Ghost Town* car's still there, as is the *Ghost Town* keyboard, where the song was written and on which it was played. People can actually sit in the car. Obviously we disinfect everything after everybody's been in there."

Ghost Town 2 Host Town features other notable artists from Coventry, and also focuses on the city's role in the burgeoning progressive rock scene of the early 1970s.

"Although Coventry wasn't particularly known for its prog rock bands, the first big prog rock album was *Days Of Future Passed* by The Moody Blues. Originally they were a beat band and had a big number one with *Go Now*. The man who changed their musical direction was a Coventry guy called Tony Clarke, who, as producer - and along with The Moody Blues - could be credited with creating prog rock."

And for fans of TV favourite *Dr Who*, there's also a focus on Delia Derbyshire - the celebrated Coventrian who was responsible for realising Ron Grainer's memorable theme-tune for the series: "Delia was an electronic music pioneer, an absolute legend and a massive influence. Pink Floyd visited her at the BBC studios and loved what she did, and Paul McCartney wanted to do an electronic version of *Yesterday*."

Apart from Coventry's musical heritage, *Ghost Town 2 Host Town* also has something to offer visitors with an interest in the day-to-day life of the city: "This exhibition isn't just about music. We've got information posters showing you how much you could buy a house for in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, and things like that. We were the Motor City as well, of course, which fits in with the 2-Tone-Motown connection."

Ghost Town 2 Host Town will be in place for the duration of Coventry's period as UK City of Culture.

Pete is keen to stress that there are plenty of other attractions for visitors to enjoy, too: "It's not just the museum. We're part of the 2-Tone Village, which was built *by fans, for fans*. You've got the shops, the Coventry Music Wall of Fame and the 2-Tone café to explore as well as the museum."

The *Ghost Town 2 Host Town* exhibition runs until the end of 2021. For further information, visit, covmm.co.uk



CULTURED COVENTRY

Plenty has happened since that joyful occasion on 7 December 2017 when Coventry won the battle to be named the UK's City of Culture 2021...

What the team behind Coventry's City of Culture bid couldn't possibly have envisaged back in 2017 was the impact which a global pandemic would have on their best-laid plans for 2021.

With the arts & culture sector hit hard by Covid, Coventry's year in the spotlight was suddenly under significant threat.

Fast-forward 14 months, and with the arrival of a vaccine offering Brits hope of a return to a pre-pandemic way of living, Coventry is now set to enjoy the glory it so richly deserves - albeit a little later than originally anticipated!

Organisers have been working tirelessly and innovatively to rejig the year-long programme. And along the way they've even managed to add further value to what was already an eclectic and exciting line-up of events.

"When the city is faced with a challenge, we tackle it head on," says Chenine Bhatena, creative director of Coventry City of Culture. "The resilience and innovation that the city is known for around the world can be seen in the events we've announced. From city-wide stories to intimate experiences and small-scale events that will surprise and delight - whatever age you are, whatever brings a smile to your face, whatever makes you feel a little more alive, you will find it in Coventry City of Culture."

Programming for City of Culture officially launched on 15 May, with a festival of street art and artist-designed shop windows aiming to provide a warm welcome for visitors as they returned to the city centre.

Signature event Coventry Moves will take place online on 5 June. The digital/broadcast event features installation, performance and movement, "to create a powerful and diverse

vision of the city's future'. Audiences can expect plenty of surprises as Coventry celebrates its past whilst looking to its future.

The creative responsible for co-ordinating Coventry Moves is Justine Themen, deputy artistic director at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre.

Six young creatives from across the city will also play a pivotal role in the concept, narration and production of the highly anticipated opener.

Coventry's international reputation as a place of 'activists and pioneers, peace and reconciliation, innovation and invention' will be reflected in the 2021 programme. The featured events will showcase the city as a destination which is diverse and modern, moving forward and embracing culture, while at the same time connecting communities and changing lives.

Here's a taster of what will be happening during the year-long celebrations...

THEATRE AND FILM

The UK Asian Film Festival (UKAFF) is presented in association with the city's Belgrade Theatre (28 & 29 May).

As well as celebrating the centenary of acclaimed filmmaker Satyajit Ray via a selection of premieres based on the theme of 'Ray of Hope', UKAFF features a host of bold new movies, offering a platform for the next generation of British Asian film talent.

Coventry Cathedral provides the stage for **Romeo & Juliet** on 17 June, with **The Three Inch Fools** - a company of five actors - using a variety of musical instruments to present an innovative take on Shakespeare's famous romantic tragedy.

The company then returns to the venue with a 'calamitous' new production of **Robin Hood** on 25 August.

Acclaimed new-writing company Paines Plough presents a unique and intimate pop-up theatre event in the later summer. The community-focused **Roundabout** (Moat House Leisure & Neighbourhood Centre, 27 July - 8 August) will host plays by 'some of the nation's finest writers'.



In September, Coventry-based Highly Sprung Theatre Company showcases a major new production focusing on the environmental crisis. The all-female ensemble of **CastAway** presents a fusion of movement, gesture and dance on a stage of floating plastic. The production draws on the Great Pacific Garbage Patch (located between Hawaii and California) - a floating island of everlasting plastic that's grown to six-and-a-half times the size of the UK. CastAway will be imagined as being staged on the water in Coventry's Canal Basin, an important heritage site in the city and now a focus of cultural investment and activity.

Also in September, **Theatre Of Wandering** builds on the experience of those living with dementia. The 'playful and poignant

theatrical experience' sees shopkeepers, care workers and care-home residents working together to create and perform.

The Walk (27 October) is one of the most innovative and adventurous public artworks ever attempted. Co-created by Good Chance Theatre, Stephen Daldry, Handspring Puppet Company, David Lan and Tracey Seaward, it centres on the 8,000km journey through eight countries of Little Amal, a 3.5metre-tall puppet of a young refugee girl. Amal will walk for all the children - many unaccompanied and separated from their families - who are forced to undertake extraordinary journeys under life-threatening conditions.



In November, Belgrade Theatre's co-artistic director, Corey Campbell, and six emerging Midlands writers present a six-part digital television series titled **SeaView**. Inspired by a true story, SeaView is described as 'an urban drama celebrating the aspirations of a Black working-class family exploring urgent questions around choice and circumstance'.

MUSIC AND DANCE

One of Coventry's biggest musical names curates three days of music in the heart of the city in July. Best known from his days as frontman of The Specials and Fun Boy Three, Terry Hall curates a festival programme of intimate gigs and events at various locations. Bringing together international legends with contemporary pioneers, **Home Sessions** reflects Coventry's rich musical history and includes performances by Hall himself.

Launching on International Youth Day, **CVX Festival (12 - 15 August)** provides a platform for regional and national artists to take a stand against violence.

Rapper Jay1 is a lead ambassador for City of Culture and will co-produce live music for CVX with his brand, ONE Wave. ONE Wave invites young people in the city to collaborate in spreading messages of peace and unity, and also highlights how positive role models and creativity can transform lives.

VISUAL ARTS

Ruth Borchard Collection's Self-Portrait Prize 2021 will be on display at Coventry Cathedral until 28 June. The Prize is the only art competition of its kind to focus exclusively on self-portraiture. Also showing at the Cathedral until 30 June is **Concrete Collar** by Tom Illsley. The exhibition features photographs documenting the city's rapidly changing urban landscape.

The Turner Prize (1 October - 1 December) makes its Midlands debut at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum. The prestigious art show comprises work by shortlisted artists from the previous 12 months. The artists whose pieces will be featured at the venue are yet to be announced.

The Coventry Biennial takes place across Warwickshire between October and next January. Showcased work explores the legacies of artist-led networks, activism and ways of teaching that have emerged from and through the local area since the 1960s.

LITERATURE AND SPOKEN WORD

A new commission between Super Slow Way and artist collective Studio Morison takes place in July. A 'moving' tribute to the written word, **Small Bell Rings** will see a specially designed canal boat provide a home for 'the largest collection of short stories'. The boat will travel 5.5 miles of Coventry canal, with a small bell being rung each time a book is taken from the library.



Contains Strong Language (23 - 26 September) brings together various artistic practices in what will be the region's biggest poetry & performance festival. The event will present a line-up of impressive talent from across the UK.



To keep up to date with all Coventry City of Culture 2021 news and events, visit: coventry2021.co.uk

2021 LIVE SUMMER CONCERTS



May:		
Thursday 20	New York Counterpoint	Stratford Play House
Friday 28	English Music Festival	St Mary's Church, Horsham
June:		
Monday 14	Dreams & Fantasies	The Courtyard, Hereford
Friday 18	Petite Symphonie	Number 8, Pershore
Tuesday 22	Dreams & Fantasies	Stratford Play House
July:		
Tuesday 13	Carnival of Venice	Stratford Play House



www.orchestraoftheswan.org

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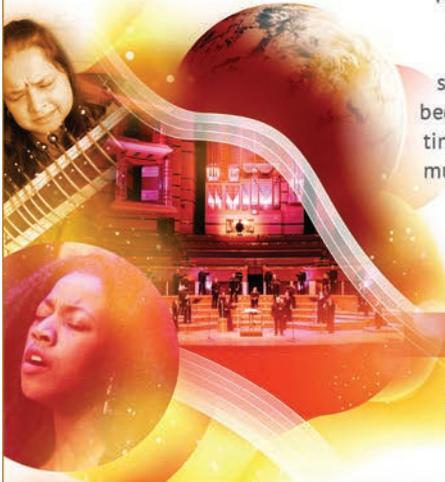


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Sun 6 Jun – Idagio Global Concert Hall (online)

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SUMMER MUSIC *by* CANDLELIGHT

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Wed 9 Jun – Hereford Cathedral
Sun 13 Jun – Symphony Hall
Sat 26 Jun – Idagio Global Concert Hall (online)

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**Birmingham
City Council**

CBSO: Mirga Conducts Weinberg

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 23 June



“Each piece is just greater than the last,” says City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra Music Director Mirga Gražinyte-Tyla, in talking about the long-neglected works of Polish composer Mieczysław Weinberg. “If you love Shostakovich and Mahler, it’ll sweep you off your feet.” Mirga and the CBSO’s recording of Weinberg’s 21st symphony was last autumn named the winner of the 2020 Gramophone award for recording of the year - so it’s a real no-brainer for the orchestra to once again be turning to his work... On this occasion they will be performing his powerful third symphony.

“Seven years ago, I hadn’t even heard the name Mieczysław Weinberg,” says Mirga, “but during the years since, he has become one of the most important composers for me. He is the composer I would like to stay on for the rest of my life. “I think that in days of ideological search and loss that we are living through right now, Weinberg stands as a symbol of humanism. His life and work are huge inspirations. Every score I’ve encountered so far is a masterwork.” The concert also features Weinberg’s Rhapsody On Moldavian Themes and Mahler’s Rückert-Lieder.

Ex Cathedra: Summer Music By Candlelight

St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 5 June; Hereford Cathedral, Wed 9 June; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 13 June

The sweet scents of summertime are very much in the air as Ex Cathedra soaks up the sun on a mini-tour of its own backyard. Presenting a concert inspired by ‘birdsong, holidays, sea and sunshine’, the Midlands early music ensemble perfectly demonstrates its versatility by performing a truly eclectic programme of choral music - from a world première by Liz Dilnot Johnson entitled The Windhover, to a seventh-century Latin chant (Te lucis ante terminum), with plenty of stop-offs in between. Benjamin Britten, Maurice Ravel, Penelope Thwaites and Alec Roth are other composers whose work features in a concert that carefully combines music and readings, all performed by the glow of candlelight. The ensemble’s founder, Jeffrey Skidmore, is the man with the baton.



Armonico Consort: Love Handels

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa, Thurs 27 May. Also available on demand

This year celebrating their 20th anniversary, the Warwick-based Armonico Consort, under the direction of founder Christopher Monks, here present a selection of arias and duets from Handel and other baroque masters. The included works will be paired with ‘letters, poetry and tales of love, to create an entrancing evening of musical delight’.



Orchestra Of The Swan: Dreams And Fantasies

Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon, Tues 22 June

Internationally renowned pianist Charles Owen lends his considerable talent to this Orchestra of the Swan (OOTS) concert, a presentation designed to reveal contrasting aspects of the Polish spirit. The two featured works are Gorecki’s Three Pieces In Old Style and Chopin’s piano concerto

No2. The former draws its inspiration from early music, and conveys a strong sense of the composer’s stark and uncompromising musical vision. The latter, heard here in a new arrangement, is described by OOTS as ‘illuminated with romantic elegance and the most finely sculpted turns of phrase’.

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THE AIR THAT WE BREATHE

We take a look at the true cost of travelling into Birmingham city centre from 1 June...

With the arts, culture, hospitality, retail and nighttime economy sectors desperate to put the past 14 months behind them and start welcoming back customers, there's one thing that people travelling into Birmingham city centre by car need to be aware of.

From Tuesday 1 June, the city will join with Bath in introducing the central government-enforced Clean Air Zone policy (CAZ). Although this is a step forward in terms of protecting the environment for future generations, the policy will have a negative financial impact on individuals who are driving cars of a certain age into the zone.

Despite widespread recognition that the environment needs to be protected, there have nevertheless been calls for Birmingham City Council to delay its implementation of the new policy until 2022.

Unions representing musicians, theatre workers and actors in Birmingham recently sent an open letter to City Council leader Ian Ward, urging him to put CAZ on hold and to implement a support scheme for the cultural sector. At the time of going to print, CAZ remains on schedule to come into effect on the 1st of June, and there's no word on any support scheme.

So what do people need to know about Birmingham's new Clean Air Zone policy?

WHO HAS TO PAY?

Vehicles meeting the following criteria are exempt from paying to enter the city's clean air zone.

Diesel Euro 6 (VI) standard or better. Roughly from the end of 2015 onwards

Petrol Euro 4 standard or better. Roughly from the end of 2015 onwards

Gas Euro 6 (VI) standard or better

Fully electric or hydrogen fuel cell all compliant and avoid any charges.

Hybrid Electric the diesel/petrol engine must meet the relevant criteria above

Check where you stand at gov.uk/clean-air-zones

IN THE ZONE:

Birmingham's Clean Air Zone, which is everywhere within the A4540 Middleway (but not the Middleway itself) will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Signage is to be installed on the road network surrounding the boundary, to inform motorists that they are approaching the zone.

CHARGES:

Cars, taxis and LGVs cost £8 per day. Coaches, buses and HGVs £50 per day. A day is classified as midnight to midnight. If you cross the threshold of this, you will be charged for two days.

PAYMENT:

Motorists can pay six days prior to, and up to six days after their visit. The onus is on the driver to ensure payment is made within this window, as no notification of charge will be issued. Failure to do so will result in a penalty charge of £120.

HOW TO PAY:

Call 0300 029 8888 (Monday - Friday, 8am - 4.30pm), or pay online at gov.uk

WHERE WILL THE MONEY GO?:

All revenue raised from CAZ and subsequent fines will be used to fund sustainable transport-related measures such as walking and cycling routes and public transport.

Financial incentives are available (eligibility applies) for taxi drivers, private hire drivers and those who work in the Clean Air Zone but live outside it.

More information about CAZ can be found at brumbreathes.co.uk

LET THE MUSIC PLAY!

The last 14 months have had a devastating impact on the music industry - but with the government's roadmap out of lockdown seemingly on track, what does the future hold for the live music scene?

More than 50 years ago, Joni Mitchell wrote, "You don't know what you got 'til it's gone," in Big Yellow Taxi. It's a lyric that might well sum up the feelings of UK concert-goers since the country first went into lockdown in March last year in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Of course, in the wider scheme of things, being deprived of a night out enjoying some live music is a small price to pay when there's a collective need to tackle a deadly virus which has already been responsible for more than 127,000 UK deaths.

However, as the percentage of the population vaccinated rises every day, and with the government's provisional road map to end the lockdown now in

place, there seems to be some light at the end of what has been a very bleak tunnel these past 14 months.

The Brit Awards welcoming an audience of 4,000 non-socially distanced music fans is a sign that the live-music scene may well be returning to some kind of normality. A look at the listings for local venues, meanwhile, shows quite a few gigs scheduled after the 21st of June - the proposed date for Step Four of the road map, when the government "hopes to reopen nightclubs and ease the restrictions on large events and performances".

So what damage has been done to the music industry since I saw The Pete Wylie Show in Chester more than 16 months ago,

oblivious to how appropriate the title of one of his most popular tunes, The Story Of The Blues, was going to be?

Well, swift government action to compensate employees who were laid off as a result of the lockdown certainly helped to avoid mass redundancies among permanent company staff. However, these handouts were, for the most part, unavailable to many people working in the live-music sector. Most musicians are self-employed, as are many sound engineers, lighting technicians and security staff - other vital spokes in the live-performance wheel.

The Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), a £1.57 billion source of grants set up by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media &



Sport earlier this year, offered welcome relief. One of the region's most popular live venues, Birmingham's Hare & Hounds, was a grateful beneficiary - as Adam Regan, Director of Leftfoot Venues Ltd and co-owner of the Kings Heath-located pub, explained:

"Without the two CRFs, we wouldn't be here - it's as simple as that, really. They've helped us pay our bills and kept the three remaining shareholders on a living wage.

"We've had many low points, when we thought we weren't going to make it through, but we're still here, so we must be more resilient than we thought!

"The short-term plans are to get open and not lose money. The building will be in great shape and the diary's filling up from late June onwards. If we can operate without too many restrictions, we should hopefully have a strong second half of 2021."

And the good news for Birmingham is that the city centre is gaining a new venue: the 3,500-capacity Forum Birmingham - which older readers might remember as The Ballroom. Or the Hummingbird. Or Top Rank Suite. Or the Carling Academy!

Commenting on the new venue, Billy Chauhan of Global Venues, the organisation which has breathed new life into the premises, said: "Prior to the pandemic, a quarter of a million people in the West Midlands worked in the culture, media and nighttime industries, and the relaunch of this historic venue will help to refuel this damaged part of our local economy... We're also extremely passionate about preserving Birmingham's musical heritage, and our work culminates with Forum Birmingham."

The new venue is very much welcomed by the CEO of Night Time Industries Association, Michael Kill: "The club scene is a huge part of British culture and heritage spanning decades. We need to preserve it so that future generations can share the experience and pursue careers and opportunities within this sector for years to come. At the moment, our clubs are fighting to survive during the pandemic, so it's really inspirational that Forum Birmingham will reopen, saving a cultural institution in the city and giving the local industry a much-needed shot of confidence."

To make up for the lack of live shows, musicians all over the world have taken to the internet, with the leader of The Wonder Stuff, Miles Hunt, not only performing a series of streamed concerts from his home in

Shropshire, but also offering fans a neat line in face masks on The Wonder Stuff website.

For Scottish post-rock band Mogwai, the latest lockdown coincided with their first number-one album - their 10th LP, *As The Love Continues*. However, as frontman Stuart Braithwaite told *What's On*, the pandemic inevitably affected the recording of the record: "We had to change our album plans. Originally, we were meant to record in America, but obviously that became impossible because of the lockdown. Also, like every other band, we had to shelve all live plans.

"Whenever putting out new music, I'm always nervous about whether people will actually like it or not, so I was really happy when the reviews were positive, and people seem to be receptive towards the album. It did really well, and that was obviously great too. So all in all, I was delighted with how it went."

Bad news though the pandemic has been for the industry these last 14 months, Stuart is able to see a silver lining: "I think the one positive is that people seem to value music more than, maybe, the day before the lockdown. People seem to really want to support artists, and I think that, in the future, because of this experience, people's attitudes towards music may change."

When the concert halls finally open, it will be interesting to see the audience demographic. If entry is going to be restricted to punters who can show that they've been vaccinated - the Covid-status certification scheme that's been mooted by the government - will gigs be made up of generation-Xers and baby boomers? Or will unrestricted access to shows deter older people, who might not relish sweating it out with a crowd of millennials?

There does appear to be a groundswell of enthusiasm building up amongst concert-goers to get back into venues, though - and that's despite any lingering fears about how Covid-secure a premises might be.

In terms of the outlook for summertime festivals, 2021 is proving to be a mixed bag. While the good news is that many events - such as Shrewsbury Folk Festival at the end of August and Moseley Folk early September - will go ahead, several others scheduled for the next few months have already been cancelled due to ongoing uncertainties caused by the pandemic. One such casualty is the *Bluedot* festival at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire. Announcing the cancellation, the

event's organisers said: "Despite continuous calls from our industry over the past six months, the government has refused to step up and provide us with protection via a government-backed insurance scheme. Without such a scheme, which would have provided us with security, the overwhelming risk and high upfront costs for us to hold *Bluedot* this year are, sadly, just too high."

And as if the region's live-music scene isn't already under enough pressure due to Covid, there will be additional obstacles caused by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. European artists intending to tour the country will face additional paperwork and increased expenses. For the Hare & Hounds, this will be another hurdle to overcome...

"The early signs are not great," says co-owner Adam Regan. "Music is not about just looking inwards - so restricting people's freedom to travel, tying them up in visas and paperwork, is very damaging. I hope the politicians find a way to enable the free movement of touring artists, because if they don't, all those great European bands will just side-step the UK. Some people will argue that this could see UK artists given more exposure, but if you look back over the last 50 years of UK music, so much is influenced by other cultures."

There's no question that the pandemic's impact on the live-music industry will continue to be felt even after everybody has been vaccinated to the eyeballs. But who knows, some of the changes which come about might even be beneficial to the Midlands music scene. For example, internationally touring artists faced with the inconvenience of Covid-19 tests at airports may elect to limit their travel, a decision which could potentially lead to a more locally based low-key live-music scene.

But there will still be plenty of large-scale music events to enjoy. Nostalgia concerts should do well, given that their main audience is people in the Covid-vaccinated age group. The ever-popular *Let's Rock* series, for instance, is making a welcome return and will surely prove a welcome tonic.

The festival stops off in Shrewsbury mid-July, with Pete Wylie one of numerous 1980s hitmakers who'll feature on the bill. And as a clarion call to music fans who might be feeling a bit hesitant about returning to the live-music fray, what better tune could there possibly be to fire up some positivity than that anthemic *Mighty Wah!* hit, *Come Back...*

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Box Office on 01902 42 92 12 for more details.

*Normal price £250

Shappi Khorsandi

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sunday 20 June

Iranian-born comedian Shappi found herself being moved to the UK some 40-plus years ago, after her father - the poet and satirist Hadi Khorsandi - wrote a poem that was perceived as being critical of Iran's revolutionary regime.

"Obviously there's free speech in Iran," says Shappi, "but little freedom after you've spoken."

A regular contributor to radio and television programmes, Shappi describes herself as a 'spit and sawdust' stand-up comic, happily pulling on her wellies and trudging through muddy fields to perform at any and every music festival that boasts a comedy tent. Jokes include, "I was going to India on holiday and wanted to know what the weather was like there. So I phoned my bank."

Shappi visits the Midlands with her new show, *Skittish Warrior...Confessions Of A Club Comic*.

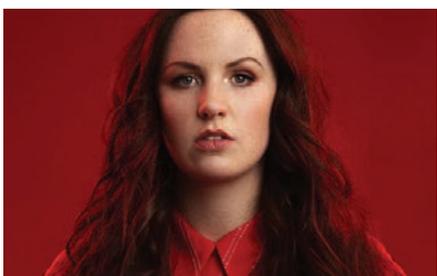


Catherine Bohart

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sat 12 June

'The OCD, bisexual offspring of a Catholic deacon', Catherine Bohart's natural enthusiasm ensures excellent rapport with her audience, for whom the Irish comedian seems to have a genuine affection.

Her jokes include: "Lesbian sex is like cricket: it goes on forever and there's a lot of men watching it at home, alone, on the internet."



Ed Byrne

The Forum, Birmingham, Fri 25 June; Just The Tonic, Coventry, Sat 3 July; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 11 September; Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 24 November; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 10 February 2022; Dudley Town Hall, Sat 12 February 2022; Walsall Arena, Wed 16 February 2022; The Core, Solihull, Wed 23 February 2022; The Place, Telford, Wed 15 June, 2022

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

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

So 20-plus years after first dipping his toes into the decidedly dangerous waters of stand-up comedy, does Ed still enjoy touring? "Apart from the travel involved, which no comic likes, I love it. You have people responding to something that you've written alone in your office, and the work comes alive in a roomful of people. I like the TV things I do, but nothing can beat a live comedy audience."

Jason Manford

Just The Tonic at The Assembly, Leamington Spa, Fri 25 June; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tuesday 31 August; The Place, Telford, Wed 1 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Mon 6 September

Becoming successful in comedy is no walk in the park, as Jason Manford knows.

And the former One Show presenter has some sage advice for wannabe comedians: "Don't take any of my work! I would also say to people, compare yourself to yourself. Don't think, 'Why has that guy got that?' or 'Why is Michael McIntyre doing so well?' or 'I'm really funny, so why is so-and-so doing that gig, not me?' You know what, just don't worry about it. If you're doing better now than you were six months ago, then you're doing well."





The Comedy Of Errors

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 15 - Thurs 17 June; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 10 - Sun 11 July; Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 17 July

Zany funsters Oddsocks make a welcome return with Shakespeare's much-loved laughter-fest. And actually, by comparison with a number of the bard's other comedies, this one really does have the capacity to

tickle a modern-day audience's collective funny bone. As indeed do Oddsocks, who've been touring the Midlands and beyond for 30 years. "Our inclusive approach means that varied communities across the UK are able to engage with theatre," say the company's founders and husband-and-wife team, Andy Barrow and Elli Mackenzie. "We aim to tell good stories in a fun, informative way, gently challenging people's perceptions and the way in which they react to theatre."

Macbeth

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 24 - Wed 26 May

Having been spurred into action by the prophecies of three supernatural women - and egged on by his conniving wife - Macbeth's desire to be king of Scotland sees him slaughtering first Duncan and then Banquo. As the pressure mounts and his grip on sanity weakens, he decides to commit even more atrocities - including the murder of women and children...

This latest version of Shakespeare's famous tragedy is presented by the award-winning Daniel Taylor Productions.



Old Herbaceous

The Core Theatre, Solihull, Sat 19 June



This well-reviewed one-man show brings with it a sense of nostalgia for a bygone age. Described as 'Downton Abbey with gardening tips' (a sure sign that it's offering something a little bit different!), it sees Giles Shenton playing Old Herbaceous - the legendary head gardener, Herbert Pinnegar - and presenting a humorous but poignant observation of relationships between the classes in a simpler time. As an added bonus, you may well return home with a much-improved understanding of all matters horticultural...

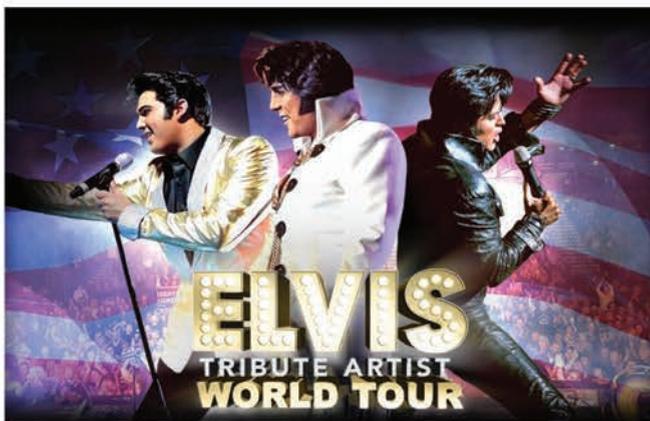
Absurd Person Singular

Malvern Festival Theatre, Tues 29 June - Sat 3 July; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry - Wed 23 - Sat 25 June

Alan Ayckbourn's Absurd Person Singular charts the progress - and decline - of three couples in three kitchens during three Christmas gatherings, with each couple ending up getting more than they bargained for. One of the playwright's most pleasing comedies, it's an enduring piece that's lost none of its biting edge and, typically, showcases human failings with hilarious results.



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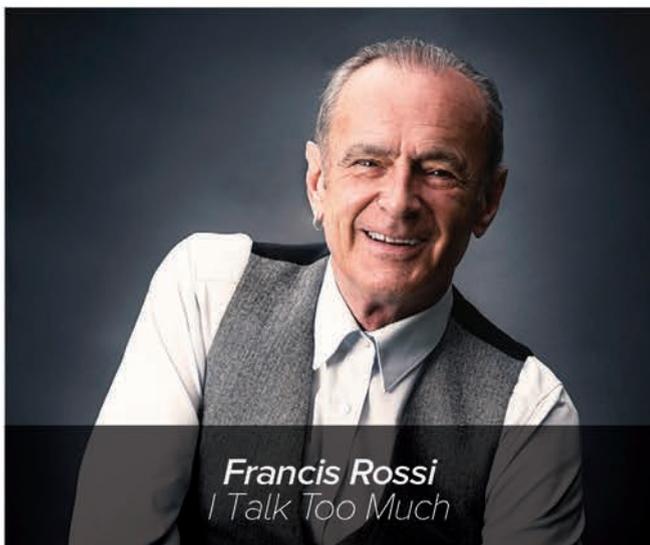
*Elvis Tribute Artist
World Tour*

Sunday 04 July - 7.30pm



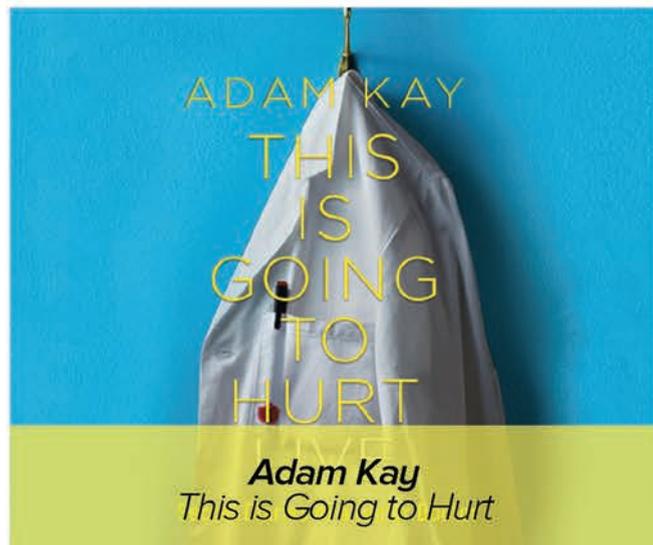
*Jane McDonald
Let The Light In*

Saturday 10 July - 7.30pm



*Francis Rossi
I Talk Too Much*

Monday 19 July - 7.30pm



ADAM KAY
THIS
IS
GOING
TO
HURT

*Adam Kay
This is Going to Hurt*

Sunday 25 July - 7.30pm



Judy & Liza

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Wed 19 May;
Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 12 June;
Lichfield Garrick, Sat 26 June.

In 1964 Liza Minnelli performed on stage with her mother, Judy Garland, for the one and only time.

Minnelli was on the threshold of great things, including winning a Tony Award a few months later and, a handful of years afterwards, the 'best actress' Academy Award for her performance in Cabaret. Garland, in stark contrast, was on an addiction-strewn pathway towards self-destruction that would ultimately lead to her untimely death before the decade was out...

Now celebrating its 10th anniversary, Judy And Liza showcases one of Hollywood's most famous and turbulent mother-daughter relationships, along the way boasting a playlist of memorable numbers including Cabaret, Maybe This Time, The Trolley Song and The Man That Got Away.

Constructed

The REP, Birmingham, Thurs 27 - Fri 29 May



Presented by Lightpost Theatre Company - an ensemble of young black men from the Midlands region - this brand-new play by CJ Lloyd Webley is set on a failing construction site and explores the culture of working-class black men in Britain.

Commenting on the play, CJ, who also co-directs the show, said; "My inspiration first came when looking through some of history's most iconic structures; we are all aware of their existence, but who were the labourers behind these great landmarks? What is their story and how does this apply in the modern context? We almost never hear of, or celebrate, the skilled tradespeople who build our megastructures further than the architect who designed them. "In the middle of writing the play, George Floyd was murdered, and the Black Lives Matter movement began. I started to think,

where do we go from here and how can this inform some of the narrative in Constructed - exploring 'the possible' and 'seemingly impossible' for working-class black men in modern Britain."

Petticoat Council

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 15 - Thurs 17 June

Storytelling and dance combine with a playlist of timeless folk arrangements and dancehall classics in this fascinating new offering from local writer Frankie Meredith. Telling a true tale, it focuses on a group of women from Bishop's Itchington in rural Warwickshire, who, in the post-Second World War years, became the first female-majority council in Britain, aiming to bring about hope and change on a local level whilst also inspiring a nation.

The Turville Militant Pacifists

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 10 June

With its main claim to fame being that it was used for outdoor scenes in both The Vicar Of Dibley and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, the Buckinghamshire village of Turville is hoping to be back in the news once again - by being named home to the country's very best pacifist group! Setting aside their predilection

to argue about all manner of matters, including whether a Bourbon biscuit trumps a custard cream for quality, Peter, Claire, Luke, Sarah, Eddie and Gary join forces in an attempt to bring home the coveted title - and they're certainly not afraid to fight dirty in trying to achieve their aim!

Third Time Lucky, Eric

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 29 May

Actor David Graham's delightfully dysfunctional character, Eric Smith, has certainly earned his place in the hearts of New Vic audiences since making his first appearance at the venue way back in 1999. The Staffordshire favourite here makes a welcome return with the aim of 'lifting spirits post-lockdown with toe-tapping '60s music and laugh-out-loud humour'.





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Image credit: Quantum Theatre

FRESH AIR THEATRE

Blankets, chairs and picnics at the ready as the Midlands prepares for a summer of theatrical performances in the great outdoors

A long-time staple of the UK's summertime events calendar, open-air theatre productions are understandably even more in evidence in Covid-affected 2021. Whether in a purpose-built space such as the RSC's newly constructed Garden Theatre, or set against the majestic backdrop of a stately home or castle, there are outdoor performances galore for Midlanders to enjoy in the coming months.

Younger audiences

The Tale Of Peter Rabbit And Benjamin Bunny

Renowned for touring new adaptations of classic texts, London-based Quantum Theatre bring to life Beatrix Potter's much-loved tale of two mischievous rabbits and their adventures in Mr McGregor's garden.

Showing at: Stokesay Court, Onibury, South Shropshire, Sun 20 June; Bowring Park, Wellington, Shropshire, Wed 11 August

28 whatsonlive.co.uk

The Jungle Book

Immersion Theatre's adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's family favourite is being hailed the company's 'wildest show to date'. Expect original music and plenty of opportunities for audience participation.

Showing at: Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Thurs 22 July; Alderford Lake, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Sun 25 July

Alice's Adventures In Wonderland

Take a trip down the rabbit hole with Chapterhouse Theatre

Company and meet a host of colourful characters in a brand-new version of the Lewis Carroll classic.

Showing at: Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire, Fri 9 July

Mr Stink

Leamington-based Heartbreak Productions presents its version of David Walliams' bestselling children's book. Packed with fun and humour, this touching tale not only delivers a heart-warming message but also provides plenty of great family entertainment.

Showing at: Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sun 30 May; Leamington Rugby Club, Fri 4 & Sat 5 June; The Green, Worcestershire, Sat 12 June; Bewdley Museum QEII Gardens, Sun 27 June; Eastnor Castle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, Sun 25 July; Brueton Park, Solihull, Tues 27 & Wed 28 July; Bosworth Battlefield, Nuneaton, Thurs 5 August; Bowring Park, Wellington, Tues 10 August; Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens, Thurs 12 August; Coventry Cathedral Ruins, Tues 24 August; Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, Thurs 26 August; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sat 4 September; The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 5 September

Little Red And The Big Bad Wolf

Join Little Red as she sets off through the forest to visit Grandma, aiming at every step to outsmart the hungry wolf who'd very much like to make her his next meal... Presented by Folksy Theatre.

Showing at: Martineau Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Sat 10 July; The Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sun 18 July; Biddulph Grange Gardens, Staffordshire, Sat 7 August; St John's House Garden, Warwick, Sat 14 August

Horrible Histories Live On Stage

The Gorgeous Georgians meet the Vile Victorians in this history of Britain 'with all the nasty bits left in'. Presented by Birmingham Stage Company.

Showing at: Soultion Hall, Wem, Shropshire, Sun 20 June



The Wizard Of Oz

A pantomime in May, y'say?... Immersion Theatre promises a faithful retelling of the story of Dorothy and her friends as they follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City...

Showing at: Alderford Lake, Whitchurch, North Shropshire, Sat 29 May - Fri 4 June

The Further Adventures Of Doctor Dolittle

Award-winning theatre troupe Illyria presents a brand-new musical adventure featuring Jip the Dog, Dab Dab the Duck, Gub Gub the Pig and Polynesia the Parrot.

Showing at: Sunnycroft, Wellington, Sun 29 August; Hanbury Hall, Droitwich, Mon 30 August

Twirlywoos Live

This theatrical adventure for younger audiences comes from the producers of The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show and Sarah And Duck Live. Expect mischief, music and delightful puppets.

Showing at: MAC's Outdoor Theatre, Canon Hill Park, Birmingham, Fri 25 - Sun 27 June



Wonder With Grimm

An evening of 'enchanted' storytelling full of magic, puppetry and music, this Heartbreak Productions show takes audiences into the fantastical world of the Brothers Grimm - complete with altered endings and modern twists.

Showing at: Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa, Fri 11 - Sat 12 June; Coventry Cathedral Ruins, Fri 6 August; The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 3 September

Outdoor Shakespeare

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Shakespeare's tale of tangled lovers, warring fairies and hapless human-beings is another much-loved yarn to be taking its place in Heartbreak Productions' summertime line-up of shows. This particular production sees the company focusing on the importance of the environment and the need to make sensible use of the earth's resources. The costumes and sets are all made from recycled materials.

Showing at: Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa, Tues 8 & Wed 9 June; Eastnor Castle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, Sun 13 June; Castle

Bromwich Hall Gardens, Wed 23 June; Tamworth Castle Grounds, Fri 2 July; Brueton Park, Solihull, Tues 20 July; Warley Woods, Smethwick, Wed 4 August; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 2 September

Macbeth

Supernatural magic and unbridled ambition combine in Shakespeare's no-holds-barred examination of the dreadful consequences of one man's insatiable lust for power. Presented by all-male theatre company The Lord Chamberlain's Men.

Showing at: Winterbourne House & Garden, Birmingham, Fri 25 June; Shrewsbury Castle, Fri 16 July & Tues 3 August; Alderford Lake, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire, Tues 17 August; Haden Hill House, Cradley Heath, Sat 21 August; Bantock House & Gardens, Wolverhampton, Fri 27 August



Much Ado About Nothing

The course of true love never runs smooth in one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies. Beatrice and Benedick conduct their courtship through sarcasm and verbal sparring. The younger Claudio and Hero, meanwhile, find their heady romance cruelly compromised by the villainous Don John, who's determined to stop them tying the knot. Presented by Ilyria.

Showing at: Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, Fri 16 July

The Twelfth Night

Following an acclaimed performance of The Two Gentlemen Of Verona in 2020, British Touring Shakespeare makes a welcome return to Shropshire to present one of the

bard's best-loved romantic comedies.

Showing at: Soultion Hall, Wem, Shropshire, Sat 26 June

The Comedy Of Errors

Shakespeare's fairytale farce of everyday miracles and mistaken identity is here presented by the RSC...

Showing at: Garden Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Tues 13 July - Sun 26 September

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Set in a forest, Shakespeare's best-loved comedy is a perfect play for the great outdoors. Lysander and Demetrius both fancy Hermia, Helena's sitting on the shelf, Titania and Oberon are up to no good, and mischief-making Puck's got his fairy finger in more pies than Mr Kipling. Add in a group of rude mechanicals and the recipe for success is guaranteed...

Presented by Quantum Theatre.

Showing at: Stokesay Court, Onibury, South Shropshire, Sun 20 June; Bowring Park, Wellington, Wed 11 August

Macbeth

The HandleBards are a troupe of cycling Shakespearean actors who carry sets and props on the backs of their bikes. Here they present a farcical - and bicycle-powered! - retelling of Shakespeare's bloodiest tragedy.

Showing at: Coventry Cathedral, Thurs 22 July; Moira Furnace Museum, Swadlincote, Fri 23 July





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Pictured: Material Bodies dir. Dorothy Allen-Pickard

The Tempest

Folksy Theatre's multimedia adaptation of Shakespeare's final play fuses live performance, music and puppetry. Expect an evening of shipwrecks and supernatural magic.

Showing at: Biddulph Grange Gardens, Staffordshire, Fri 13 August; The Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 14 August; Martineau Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Tues 17 August



Contemporary Classics

She Stoops To Conquer

Held in high regard for their outdoor renditions of classic comedies, Rain Or Shine Theatre Company here present Oliver Goldsmith's much-loved masterpiece.

Showing at: Honeybourne Village Hall, Evesham, Wed 4 August; Severn Valley Country Park, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, Fri 13 August; The Elms Hotel & Spa, Worcester, Thur 26 August; Evesham Golf Club, Worcestershire, Sun 29 August; Wenlock Priory, Shropshire, Fri 3 September; Stokesay Castle, Craven Arms, South Shropshire, Sat 4 September; The Dodington Lodge Hotel Lawn, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Sun 5 September

Animal Farm

National Youth Theatre present the George Orwell classic as a sharp-witted 'allegory for our own times', exploring the theme of revolution and asking questions about the price of sovereignty and power.

Showing at: Soulton Hall, Wem, Shropshire, Wed 16 - Sat 19 June

The Hound Of The Baskervilles

British Touring Shakespeare takes a break from performing the plays of Stratford Will to present a brand-new version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's most famous Sherlock Holmes adventure.

Showing at: Soulton Hall, Wem, Shropshire, Sun 27 June

All Mirth And No Matter

The RSC's Next Generation ACT company presents a fusion of new writing and Shakespeare's text which takes its inspiration from the wedding of Claudio and Hero in Much Ado About Nothing.

Showing at: Garden Theatre, RSC, Stratford-upon-Avon, Fri 23 July

Elsie & Norm's Macbeth

Worcester Repertory Company here presents John Christopher-Wood's 1990 comedy concerning a couple's attempt to make one of Shakespeare's most famous works 'snappier and more punchy'. Following a bit of judicious re-writing, the couple re-enact the Stratford bard's famous 'Scottish play', taking on all of the roles between them.

Showing at: The Commandery, Worcester, Wed 30 June - Sun 11 July

HMS Pinafore

Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera cheerfully mocks the British class system, the concept of patriotism, and the Royal Navy. Presented by Ilyria..

Showing at: Church Stretton Festival, South Shropshire, Sat 31 July

The Three Musketeers

Described as a 'swashbuckling adventure of epic proportions', Immersion Theatre's action-packed adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' classic tale combines 'excitement, danger and comedy'.

Showing at: Shrewsbury Castle, Sun 1 August; Alderford Lake, Whitchurch, North Shropshire, Mon 2 August



The Great Gatsby

Heartbreak here partner with the Nick Carraway Quartet for an evening of hot & sultry jazz music - prohibition-style! The show transports audiences back to the summer of 1922, as Nick tells amazing tales of his next-door neighbour, the infamous Jay Gatsby.

Showing at: Jephson Gardens, Leamington Spa, Wed 2 - Thurs 3 June; The Green, Worcestershire, Thurs 10 June; Bosworth Hall Hotel Walled Garden, Nuneaton, Wed 23 June; Hill Close Gardens, Warwick, Tues 13 July; Hanbury Hall, Droitwich Spa, Sat 7 August; Bewdley Museum QEII Gardens, Sun 8 August; Ryton Pools, Coventry, Tues 10 August; Attingham Park, Nr Shrewsbury, Sat 14 August; The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 4 September

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David Walliams
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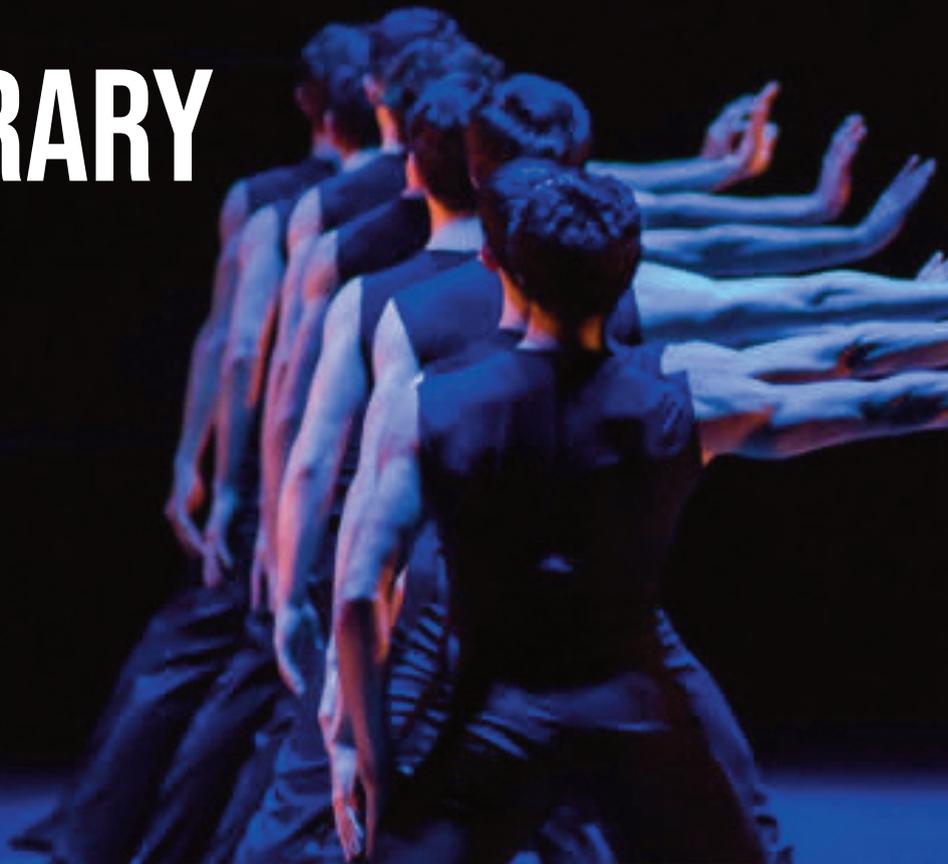
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CONTEMPORARY CARLOS

Birmingham Royal Ballet's summer season features a world premiere dedicated to the city - and even a heavy metal score. And there's plenty more to come from BRB during the remainder of 2021 too, including Romeo & Juliet meeting Radiohead! Company Director Carlos Acosta explains how he's aiming to ensure that BRB is contemporary and cutting-edge...



Birmingham Royal Ballet is looking forward to presenting a summer programme - in partnership with Birmingham Rep - and then a 'spellbinding' autumn season back at its Birmingham Hippodrome home.

Cuban ballet and contemporary dancing star Carlos Acosta took over as Director of BRB in January 2020, just two months before the UK went into lockdown for the first time. It's fair to say that his first year in charge has been challenging in the extreme...

"We're working on two world premieres and one UK premiere for our Curated By Carlos triple bill, which runs for a weekend," he

explains. "Then we also have the beautiful and popular classic, Cinderella. We can't wait for them to come to life with an audience. The future is looking very optimistic and the morale within the Company is high. We're getting into a creative mindset, despite all the chaos, and we're constantly looking for opportunities for both the Company and the Royal Ballet Sinfonia. I'm so positive about how our vision for the future is coming together and the goals we want to reach."

The first piece in the Curated By Carlos triple bill is Miguel Altunaga's City Of A Thousand Trades - a work dedicated to Birmingham, its

history and its heavy metal heritage.

"City Of A Thousand Trades came about through our Ballet Now initiative," says Carlos. "The idea is that with the support of the Oak Foundation, we give up-and-coming designers, choreographers and musicians the leg-up they need. Miguel Altunaga is one of these talented choreographers. This is his big break. People used to call Birmingham 'the city of a thousand trades' because it was the shop of the world; everyone was making things. The city is largely fuelled by immigrants, and we think these legacies of industry, diversity and multiculturalism

should be celebrated. I'm incredibly happy with the result. The music by Mathias Coppens is beautiful and very different. It's a true love letter to the city. In my directorship, I want to capture the imagination of the local community - and also for that community to know that we're going to be reaching out to them. We're going to be collaborating with so many artistic institutions in creating ballets that resonate with communities, which is why City Of A Thousand Trades is so special."

Second on the bill is an abstract work inspired by the unstable times in which we live. Imminent touches on the subjects of the burning Amazon, democracy, and the rise of populism. "I've been taking a sneak peek into rehearsals, and choreographer Daniela Cardim is doing such a great job of tackling the topics," says Carlos. "This world premiere has a much larger score than City Of A Thousand Trades and is composed by Paul Englishby. Imminent is more of a classic piece, like the Company is used to - pointe shoes and all. It's great to present the full spectrum of what the Company can do in one single evening. City Of A Thousand Trades is much more contemporary, whilst Imminent is much more classically based. I really want BRB to be very versatile. I want to show we can do it all, and that we're current. I want us to be able to say 'we do ballet the best, but we can also expand into other areas'. This will bring the very best dancers, choreographers, musicians and more to us as well. By challenging the way things have been done at the Company before, I hope to raise the level."

The last work in the triple bill is Chacona, which will here be receiving its UK premiere and is choreographed by Spaniard Goyo Montero.

"Goyo is currently the principal choreographer at the Nuremberg Ballet. I've known him a long time, as he was studying at the ballet school in my home country of Cuba. I'd been following his career closely, so when I founded my own contemporary dance company, Acosta Danza, I made him the resident choreographer. We've worked on a lot of pieces together, and I really love his work. Chacona is set to Bach's Chaconne. It's really beautiful and a great way to close the triple bill."

The other half of BRB's summer season features Company classic Cinderella, which has been adapted for the current climate by its choreographer and former BRB Director, Sir David Bintley.

"Everybody thinks about the number of

dancers being the only consideration for social distancing, but actually the number of crew is important as well," Carlos points out. "Cinderella is a very large production, and David Bintley and John Macfarlane - the designer who's also behind the world famous creations for The Nutcracker - have been very gracious in readapting it. We had to make sure the production hadn't changed to the point that the narrative had been compromised. Also, as we're working within bubbles, we have two entire casts for just one production. Should a bubble need to be removed due to illness, then we have another there to carry on the show. We're not a company of hundreds of people, so this also made it an opportunity to ask for help from students and freelancers. We want to involve them in our work because they are the people who have been most affected by this situation. They weren't as able to travel to new auditions and get up to speed. There also weren't many contracts for hiring in general. An entire generation is in danger of being lost in the arts world, but we want to help create opportunities to stop that."

BRB will then return in the autumn...

"I'm calling it my very first season as Director again, because obviously all my plans for my previous first season had to be ditched. We're starting with a Romeo & Juliet celebration, including the magnificent traditional version and Radio & Juliet - a ballet set to the music of Radiohead from Slovenian choreographer Edward Clug. Then we'll also be collaborating with others on another production that we're not ready to announce yet, but the idea is to have a huge celebration of the story and its topics. After a long absence from Birmingham Hippodrome, it will be great to get back to our base. Of course we will be returning with The Nutcracker, and also have a show coming up in the spring. Next year will be a very important one for us and, with the Commonwealth Games, for the city."

Although Carlos is very much focused on the future, he nevertheless takes time out to reflect on BRB's achievements during the past extremely challenging 14 months: "I feel very proud that, despite the pandemic, we have achieved incredible things. Even while we were closed, we were creating and learning - Lazuli Sky and our first live stream of The Nutcracker. I think we've done a really good job at keeping the Company together and morale high. We keep reminding ourselves of the positive future to come, which lifts our spirits. Already there's massive interest in coming and working with

us. For me as Director, this is very encouraging. People are taking notice. I look forward to getting back to a place where I can be very mobile, getting out into the world, meeting up with other leaders at different companies, spreading the word about Birmingham Royal Ballet, and creating alliances. We want there to be this awareness that BRB has set itself a new path and identity going forward. I'm very proud of the team that's worked with me in establishing this direction. Achieving greatness isn't easy, but we will definitely get there."

With a government roadmap to reopening the country set out but not yet confirmed, Carlos is keen to see people returning to UK venues: "Streaming is a mechanism that we had to use constantly during the pandemic in order to keep our audience connected with us - and we hope to continue that in the future. I don't see why stage and streaming can't exist side by side for companies moving forward. But we have to do it in a way where they don't compete with one another. Nothing can top the thrill of going to see a live performance. But streaming is the next best thing if you're abroad in Texas, New York or even further. Throughout the pandemic, digital brought companies some essential cash to keep them going. With that money, we then have the means to dream bigger and make big investments into new productions. But streaming will never replace live performance.

"We don't want to send the wrong message to local people: that if they can log onto a show in their living room, there's no point bothering to come out to an actual venue. I would encourage everyone to go to their local theatres, their local institutions - anywhere they can - and consume art. Not only for their own spirit, but because this brilliant part of life is at risk if people don't. Going to a production and being totally invested in the music, the dance, the design and the thrill is something we all need. This last year has been traumatic. The arts is the perfect way for people to come together and heal."

.....

BRB present Curated By Carlos at The REP, Birmingham, from Thursday 10 to Saturday 12 June. Cinderella shows at The REP, Birmingham from Friday 18 to Saturday 26 June.

For further details on Birmingham Royal Ballet, visit: brb.org.uk

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Momoko Hirata as Cinderella.
© Sam Robinson

Autin Dance Theatre: A Positive Life

Walsall Arena & Arts Centre, Wed 9 June

Project-based local company Autin Dance Theatre make a welcome return with a show that 'delivers an uplifting and engaging message on self-love, sexual health and sex education'. An immersive theatre experience inspired by the individual journeys of five characters around the issues of sex, love and relationships, the show brings together dance, physical theatre and spoken word.

Birmingham-based Autin have been performing across the Midlands and further afield since 2013. "We draw on contemporary social issues and events to make work which is beautifully crafted, accessible and relevant," says founder Johnny Autin. "The company is gaining a reputation for creating powerful performances, catapulting audiences into intense dance-worlds which we hope will resonate with them long after they leave the auditorium."



Transitions Dance Company: Triple Bill

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 30 June

Didy Veldman, Dog Kennel Hill Project and Rahel Vonmoos are the creatives behind the trio of impressively diverse contemporary works here being presented by Transitions

Dance Company. Comprising no fewer than 14 international dancers and working under the artistic direction of David Waring, Transitions has established a reputation for presenting daring and imaginative choreographic commissions, combining graceful precision with a trademark innovative approach.

Birmingham Royal Ballet: Curated By Carlos

Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Thurs 10 - Sat 12 June

Carlos Acosta is now into his second year as BRB Director, his first 15 months having been badly undermined by the impact of the pandemic. With that in mind, he will no doubt be hoping to get up a real head of steam in the next few months, starting with this eagerly anticipated show. A triple bill well worth catching, it comprises two world premieres and one UK premiere... City Of A Thousand Trades celebrates the richly diverse cultural and industrial heritage of Birmingham... Imminent, meanwhile, is a new and abstract work inspired by the feeling that 'something significant is looming' and that change is on its way... The triple-bill is completed by Chacona, a 'thrilling, physical piece set to exhilarating music by JS Bach'... Live music in the show is performed by BRB's highly acclaimed orchestra, the Royal Ballet Sinfonia.

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Film highlights released in May & June...

Cruella CERT tbc (120 mins)

Starring **Emma Stone, Mark Strong, Emma Thompson, Paul Walter Hauser**
Directed by **Craig Gillespie**

This is the story of Cruella de Vil before she set her evil sights on *The Hundred And One Dalmatians*. *La La Land* Academy Award winner Emma Stone stars as Cruella, back in the days when she was still Estella - a young grifter in punk-era London who's determined to make it big with her clever and creative fashion designs. An encounter with two young thieves takes her life in an unexpected direction, as does a meeting with fashion legend Baroness von Hellman (Emma Thompson), setting in motion a series of events that will soon see Estella embracing her wicked side...

Released Fri 28 May



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Spiral: From The Book of Saw

CERT 18 (93 mins)

Starring **Morgan David Jones, Samuel L. Jackson, Ali Johnson, Chris Rock**
Directed by **Darren Lynn Bousman**

This latest entry in the *Saw* horror franchise stars comedian Chris Rock as Ezekiel 'Zeke' Banks, a brash detective on the trail of a cop-taunting serial killer whose modus operandi seems unsettlingly familiar. Samuel L. Jackson adds gravitas as a veteran policeman, with Max Minghella in the role of Rock's rookie partner. Interestingly, the film is being compared not so much with previous entries in the franchise but rather with 1995 psychological crime thriller *Seven*, starring Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman.

Released Mon 17 May



A Quiet Place Part II

CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Emily Blunt, Millicent Symonds, Cillian Murphy, Noah Jupe, Djimon Hounsou**
Directed by **John Krasinski**

The massive success of *A Quiet Place* (2018) meant that a sequel movie was a no-brainer for Paramount Pictures. As with the first film,

this new release finds the Abbott family fighting for survival in a post-apocalyptic world inhabited by blind monsters with an acute sense of hearing. Basically, if they hear you, they hunt you. But on this occasion, Lee, Evelyn and the kids discover that the creatures who hunt by sound are not the only threats that lurk beyond the sand path...

Released Fri 4 June



Luca CERT tbc

With the voices of **Jacob Tremblay, Maya Rudolph, Jack Dylan Grazer, Jim Gaffigan**
Directed by **Enrico Casarosa**



Pixar's latest animated offering tells the tale of a young boy named Luca and his new pal, Alberto, as they enjoy adventures in a seaside town on the Italian Riviera. But the pair are hiding a secret - they are both sea

monsters from a world beneath the ocean's surface. A coming-of-age comedy fantasy, Enrico Casarosa's movie is described by the director himself as both a homage to legendary Italian filmmaker Federico Fellini and a celebration of childhood friendship.

Released Fri 18 June (on Disney+)

In The Heights CERT tbc (143 mins)

Starring **Stephanie Beatriz, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Anthony Ramos, Jimmy Smits, Ariana Greenblatt, Corey Hawkins**
Directed by **Jon M. Chu**

If this movie version of the hit musical of the same name enjoys a similar level of success as the stage version, its producers will be happy bunnies indeed. Opening on Broadway in 2008, the show was nominated for an impressive 13 Tony Awards, winning four, including the gongs for best musical, original score and choreography. Set over the course of three days in New York City's Latino neighbourhood of Washington Heights, the show boasts a score that features hip-hop, salsa, merengue and soul music.

Released Fri 25 June



Lights, camera, ACTION! 2021 is the year of the blockbuster...

Infinite CERT tbc

Starring **Mark Wahlberg, Wallis Day, Rupert Friend, Dylan O'Brien, Jason Mantzoukas**
Directed by **Antoine Fuqua**

The troubled Evan Michaels is a schizophrenic who discovers that his hallucinations are actually visions from past lives. And then he discovers that there's a secret society of other people who have experiences similar to his own. But before Evan can join the so-called Cognomina, he must prove that he truly is one of them... Adapted from D Eric Maikranz's novel, *The Reincarnationist Papers*, *Infinite* was made after Rafi Crohn, a junior executive at a Hollywood production company, responded to the author's front-page challenge to his readers - to earn 10% of any advance by introducing the novel to a Hollywood producer who would adapt the book into a movie. Crohn was subsequently paid the promised money - \$10,000 - by Maikranz.

Released Fri 10 September



Black Widow CERT tbc

Starring **Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh, Rachel Weisz, William Hurt, David Harbour**
Directed by **Cate Shortland**

Black Widow has popped up in more Marvel movies than the Incredible Hulk owns pairs of pants, so it's nice to see her finally getting her very own film. This latest offering from the Marvel Cinematic Universe finds former

KGB assassin Natasha Romanoff (Scarlett Johansson) pursued by a force that will stop at nothing to bring her down. No wonder she's quick to reach for the spandex...

Released Fri 9 July

The Matrix 4 CERT tbc

Starring **Keanu Reeves, Priyanka Chopra, Jonathan Groff, Carrie-Anne Moss, Jada Pinkett Smith, Neil Patrick Harris**
Directed by **Lana Wachowski**

Why let a couple of storyline deaths get in the way of popular characters making a return? That certainly seems to be the perspective of the production team behind this latest entry in the Matrix franchise, with both Keanu Reeves's Neo and Carrie-Anne Moss's Trinity very much back in the saddle despite having met their demise at the end of *The Matrix Revolutions*.

Not much is known about the plot of this latest film, although according to one of its stars, Yahya Madul-Abteen II, it "touches on themes people should be talking about in 2020, 2021, 2022". Reeves, meanwhile, reveals that it has a "beautiful script that is a love story", adding that it's "another version of a kind of call to wake up. It entertains... it has some great action. All will be revealed."

Released Wed 22 December



No Time To Die CERT tbc (163 mins)

Starring **Daniel Craig, Ana de Armas, Ralph Fiennes, Lea Seydoux**
 Directed by **Cary Joji Fukunaga**

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 30 September



Venom: Let There Be Carnage CERT tbc

Starring **Tom Hardy, Michelle Williams, Woody Harrelson, Stephen Graham, Naomie Harris**
 Directed by **Andy Serkis**

Despite almost universally being described as a train wreck of a movie, Venom was the seventh highest-grossing film of 2018 - hence this sequel. Tom Hardy's performance in the first film didn't exactly pull up any trees, but was nevertheless considered to be one of the movie's saving graces. The usually excellent

Hardy will no doubt be aspiring to better things in this second outing as the Marvel Comics character. He's joined by Woody Harrelson as Cletus Kasady, a psychotic serial killer who becomes the host of an alien symbiote known as Carnage

Released Wed 15 September

Top Gun: Maverick CERT tbc

Starring **Tom Cruise, Jennifer Connelly, Miles Teller, Val Kilmer, Jon Hamm**
 Directed by **Joseph Kosinski**

It's certainly been a long time coming, but fans of Top Gun have finally got the sequel they've been wanting for the last 35 years. There's no Kelly McGillis this time - apparently she wasn't approached about appearing in the film - but Val Kilmer does return, as of course does the main man himself, Tom Cruise, as hotshot test pilot and flight instructor Captain Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell. Although information about the storyline is sketchy, it's reported that the film will focus on the end of the dogfighting era and the role of drones in modern aerial warfare. Expect breathtaking flight sequences aplenty.

Released Fri 23 July





VAN GOGH ALIVE

CUTTING-EDGE INTERACTIVE EXHIBITION
RETURNS TO BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME



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'.

This month sees the groundbreaking interactive exhibition reopening Birmingham Hippodrome for the second time in a year. After the show's UK premiere at the venue last autumn, the theatre then had to close in November when the country went into a second lockdown.

Visitors to Van Gogh Alive can find out all about 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

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...

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.

Van Gogh Alive was a big hit in the city last year, welcoming 28,000 socially distanced visitors in only one month.

Commenting on the show, Bruce Peterson, founder of Grande Exhibitions, said: "We visited a number of venues in the UK, but as soon as we entered the Hippodrome, we knew we had to bring our Van Gogh Alive here. It's a unique, iconic venue. Van Gogh Alive was met with such a heartwarmingly positive response by audiences at Birmingham Hippodrome. It's just brilliant that the doors can reopen once again. The global exhibition is a perfect Covid-aware experience for the whole family that will



provide some escapism and education. Adults and children seem to enjoy the experience in different ways, finding their own meaning in Van Gogh's work as they explore the galleries."

The venue and its patrons are just as thrilled by the return of the exhibition...

"Van Gogh Alive is incredibly important to us all at the Hippodrome," shares Fiona Allen, artistic director & chief executive at the theatre. "It was the only way we found to reopen the building during a year without any live performance. We were taken aback by the public response we had, both to the beauty and joy of this enriching cultural experience, and how safe our visitors felt with the timed entry and social-distancing measures in place. It's brilliant that we've found a way to reopen Van Gogh Alive for a limited run, as we know so many people were disappointed to miss out when we went back into lockdown last November."



Birmingham has a long history of championing arts & culture, and Van Gogh Alive is once again presenting an opportunity to support this important UK industry - as West Midlands Mayor Andy Street pointed out prior to the exhibition's premiere last autumn: "Many sectors are going through an incredibly difficult period due to the 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. 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 Tuesday 25 May to Sunday 11 July.

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Photo - Great Crested Grebe Courtship photo by Andy Rouse for the British Wildlife Photography Awards

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www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk



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2 Tone: Lives & Legacies

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 12 September

This sure-to-be-popular show marks the very first time the Midlands-born 2 Tone music movement has been the subject of a dedicated UK exhibition. Originating in Coventry in the 1970s, 2 Tone derived from the same-named record label - founded by The Specials' Jerry Dammers - which referenced a desire to transcend and defuse Britain's much-in-evidence racial tensions of the time. The exhibition examines the label's

philosophy, political and social message, its impact on the music charts of the day, and also highlights the bands that were part of the label - most specifically The Specials, The Selecter and other ska-influenced ensembles such as Madness, The Beat and The Bodysnatchers. Items and memorabilia featured in the show include the iconic 2 Tone suit, Roddy Radiation's pork pie hat, a Fred Perry polo shirt and the Harrington jacket.

British Wildlife Photography Awards Retrospective Exhibition

The Commandery, Worcester, Tues 18 May - Thurs 17 June

Presented in celebration of the British Wildlife Photography Awards' 10th anniversary, this touring exhibition brings together all the overall winners, along with a selection of category winners and highly commended images. Although ostensibly created to celebrate photographic talent, the awards have also

served to highlight the great wealth and diversity of British natural history, in the process raising awareness about biodiversity, species and habitats. The main exhibition will be located outside in The Commandery's gardens, with a digital exhibition available to view inside the museum.



Grey seal photo by Kirsty Andrews for the British Wildlife Photography Awards



Red fox photo by Samuel Morris for the British Wildlife Photography Awards

Titanic: Honour & Glory

Worcester Art Gallery & Museum, until Saturday 11 September

Visitors to this national touring exhibition will find themselves coming face-to-face with one of the most famous and tragic events in 20th-century British history.

The Titanic was a passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean on 15 April 1912 during its maiden voyage.

Honour & Glory features a diverse range of very rare artefacts from the vessel, as well as examples of the liner's luxurious interior fittings, and props and costumes from the 1997 James Cameron film, Titanic.



China: Through The Lens Of John Thomson 1868 - 1872

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 22 August

Inspired by his fascination with Asia and its people, Edinburgh-born John Thomson produced a set of photographs that constitutes one of the 19th century's most extensive records of any region of the world.

The achievements of Thomson - who went on to be appointed photographer to the British royal family by Queen Victoria - are all the more staggering given the method via which photographs were being taken at the time of his travels to far-flung territories. Referred to as the wet-collodion process, the method entailed an exposure being made onto a glass negative. This had to be done in complete darkness, on location, and in a portable darkroom tent - a requirement which saw Thomson having to travel with large numbers of crates, glass negatives, and bottles of highly flammable and poisonous chemicals... This touring display of Thomson's photographic prints is complemented by an exhibition of Chinese artefacts selected from the museum's own collections.



Rebecca Louise Law: Seasons

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Mon 30 August

Rebecca Louise Law's site-specific installation aims to reflect the ebb-and-flow of life. Featuring thousands of preserved seasonal flowers and plants - collected by the artist over the last three years and here suspended on copper wires - the artwork takes the viewer on 'an undulating, physical and experiential journey through the year', concluding with natural materials foraged from Compton Verney's very own grounds. An Instagram nature diary kept by Rebecca forms part of the exhibition.

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11 June – 26 September 2021

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Anj Smith: A Willow Grows Aslant The Brook

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 5 September

The creation of multiple, fragmented and complex narratives is the name of the game for British painter Anj Smith. The forty-three-year-old artist draws on a wide range of source material to achieve her desired outcomes, from designer fabrics and jewellery, to the histories of art, literature and popular culture. Along the way, she explores issues including identity, eroticism, mortality and anxiety.

“I love the idea that painting - pointless technologically - can still hypnotise and seduce us,” says Anj. “For me, this is where the uniquely profound nature of painting is located, as no other medium offers this specific legacy. Its multiple deaths, resuscitations and evolutions make it especially apt in negotiating the great global and personal uncertainties of now.”



Making A Mark: Dutch And Flemish Drawings From The Royal Collection

The Barber Institute, University of Birmingham, Fri 11 June - Sun 26 September

The Royal Collection Dutch and Flemish Old Master drawings here presented alongside some of the Barber’s own masterworks on paper, have been selected for display by students from the University of Birmingham. The exhibited artworks were chosen from

more than 700 drawings, among which are pieces by Golden Age 17th-century artists such as Rubens, Van Dyck, Goltzius and Avercamp. The collection also includes work from the 16th, 18th and early-19th century by talented artists whose names are nowadays less familiar.

Caroline Walker: Women’s Work

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Sat 31 July

Caroline Walker’s thought-provoking exhibition has been updated to reflect - as MAC’s chief executive, Deborah Kermode, puts it - ‘the chaotic time that we’ve been living in’.

Caroline’s show comprises preparatory studies and both small and large-scale paintings depicting women at work. The pieces examine the often unseen jobs that women perform and the roles which they take, such as tailors and chambermaids. Journalist Maria Margaronis has produced a series of personal interviews with some of the women featured in Caroline’s paintings. The interviews document the women’s experiences and the journeys which have led them to the roles they now undertake.



A Very Special Place: Ikon In The 1990s

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 18 June - Mon 30 August

Following on from three previous surveys, examining Ikon’s artistic programme in the 1960s, ’70s and ’80s respectively, this latest exhibition focuses on the decade during which the gallery became more



internationalist, placing particular emphasis on the Americas and Australia.

The ’90s also saw the venue presenting a greater amount of work by black and minority ethnic artists, many of whom were locally based. Significant British artists featured at Ikon during the decade included experimental practitioners Georgina Starr and Mark Walling (pictured), and painters Basil Beattie and Lisa Milroy.



WELCOME BACK TO THINKTANK!

THE POPULAR VISITOR ATTRACTION REOPENS
WITH A NEW GALLERY: OUR CHANGING PLANET



Steam engines, interactive technology displays, spectacular planetarium shows and the child-sized world of MiniBrum await visitors to Birmingham’s award-winning Thinktank science museum post-lockdown.

As indeed does Our Changing Planet - a ‘fun and informative’ gallery opening to the public for the first time.

The new and permanent fixture is ideal for older children and adult visitors, and explores ‘how humans have changed the world, and how these changes are affecting the wildlife around us’.

Highlights of the gallery’s 150-item exhibition include pre-historic tools, the first plastic invented in Birmingham, the first prototype vehicle to travel under its own power on Britain’s roads, and part of the first computer used at the Longbridge motor factory.

In stark contrast to the man-made inventions featured in the gallery, Our Changing Planet also investigates how pollution, habitat destruction, species extinction and climate change are radically altering landscapes and people’s lives all over the world.

Commenting on the venue’s reopening, Thinktank Museum Manager Laurence Butler said: “We’re over the moon to be able to welcome back visitors. Our steam engines will be pumping, the city of MiniBrum will be open for play, and the new Our Changing Planet gallery will be ready to explore.

“We’ve got four floors, 10 galleries, a science garden and a planetarium. There’s a lot to see, but we’ve created a safe, fun and inspiring experience for as many people as we can. We’re limiting capacity, and admission is by ‘pre-booking only’, to ensure our visitors have a safe and fun-packed day out.”

Before the pandemic forced Thinktank to close its doors, the museum had just enjoyed

one of its most successful-ever years, with more than 243,000 people and 45,500 school children visiting. Those impressive figures were due in no small part to the opening of the child-sized world of MiniBrum, which proved to be a huge hit with visitors.

Featuring some of Birmingham’s most iconic landmarks - the canals, Selfridges and the University of Birmingham’s Old Joe Clock Tower being among them - the gallery also boasts various play zones, including a home area where children can build a den, a burrow in which kids can find hidden animals, a race-track inspired by Birmingham’s upcoming Commonwealth Games, a construction zone with a climbing tower and slide, a post office and a salon.

OUR CHANGING PLANET EXPLORES HOW HUMANS HAVE IMPACTED ON THE WORLD, AND HOW THE CHANGES ARE AFFECTING THE WILDLIFE AROUND US.

As well as 200-plus interactive displays, Thinktank also showcases a selection of items from the city’s science & engineering collection, including the Smethwick Engine - the world’s oldest working steam engine.

Other attractions to enjoy at the popular venue include the planetarium, where visitors ‘can journey to the stars and learn about the wonders of the night sky’, and an outdoor ‘science garden’, providing the opportunity to explore the science behind

energy, mechanics and mobility.

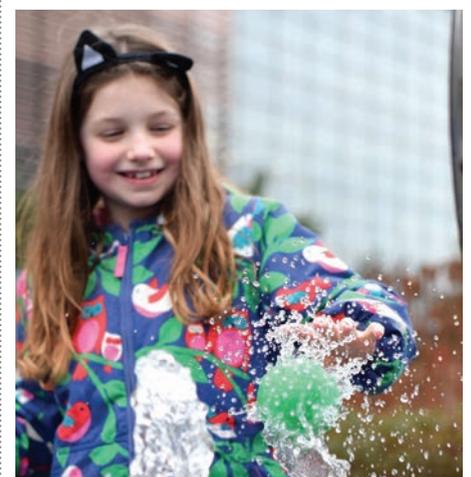
Visitors also get the chance to take home a memento from the museum, courtesy of a brand-new shop. From space and science, to animals and Birmingham-inspired gifts, the outlet offers a range of products chosen to reflect the venue’s collections.

Safety is Thinktank’s top priority, and visitors are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the guidelines before arrival.

Visitors can still enjoy a variety of hot and cold lunches at Signal Box Cafe, including the signature Signal Box Burger. New for 2021 is Platform 2, an outside kiosk serving up tasty treats for people preferring to eat outdoors.

.....

Thinktank Science Museum reopens on Saturday 29 May. It will open Wednesday to Sunday between 10am and 5pm during term time, and seven days a week from 10am to 5pm during Birmingham school holidays. For further information about the venue, visit: birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank





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Step Back To The 1940s

Severn Valley Railway, Sat 26 & Sun 27 June & Sat 3 & Sun 4 July

Always one of Severn Valley Railway's most popular annual events, Step Back To The 1940s encourages visitors to dress in period costume

and relive the decade through music, food, dance and 'a whirlwind rail adventure'. Features include a 1940s wedding, rifle training, vintage vehicles, marketplaces, living history displays and military encampments. There'll be re-enactors in evidence as well, complete with a surprise or two!



Circus Week at Blists Hill

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, Mon 31 May - Fri 4 June

Roll Up! Roll Up! The Circus is in town - and a Victorian one at that. Visit the award-winning Blists Hill Victorian

Town during the half-term holiday and try your hand at period circus skills and routines with Leo Locus Circus. The event is one of many taking place at the venue in the coming months. Other highlights include a sport-themed weekend, the return of the ever-popular Steampunk gathering and a Victorian dog show.

National Metro & Mini Show

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire, Sun 6 June

The main event of the year for Metros and both classic and modern MINIs, this ever-popular show features hundreds of models, including 621 AOK - the first Mini produced in 1959 - and X411 JOP, the last ever classic Mini to be produced at Longbridge (in the year 2000).

For visitors wanting to make a weekend of it, camping is available on Saturday 5 June.



Weston's Spring Fling

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 30 - Mon 31 May

Live music, homemade Pimm's Picnics to savour, local crafters selling their wares, food stalls providing all manner of culinary delights, and more than 1,000 acres of gardens and parkland for visitors to enjoy at their leisure... Weston Park's brand-new Spring Fling! should certainly make for a relaxing and enjoyable day out over the bank holiday weekend. Youngsters are well catered for too, courtesy of the woodland adventure playground and maze, ensuring that this first-of-its-kind two-day event will most definitely boast a family-friendly feel.





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Circus Extreme

NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 20 May - Sun 6 June
 A brand new death-defying show featuring extreme stunts and classic clown escapades inside the UK's largest socially distanced

circus big-top. Merging modern and contemporary styles of performance, Circus Extreme features the high-wire Danguir Troupe, the Extreme FMX team, aerial artist Laura Miller and Henry, the Prince of Clowns.

Midsummer Garden Life Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Wed 23 - Fri 25 June
 The sounds, tastes and smells of the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Far East all feature in this brand-new three-day gathering. Celebrating the summer solstice via theatre, poetry and talks in a spacious outdoor area, Midsummer Garden Life Festival features specially constructed zones taking visitors to far-flung places, and alfresco dining opportunities provided by artisan food producers. Gardening guru and RHS Malvern favourite Carol Klein (pictured) hosts music and musings sessions.



Mardi Gras

Alton Towers, Staffordshire, Sun 22 May - Sun 20 June
 This carnival-inspired 'takeover' is new for 2021.

Visitors can expect an explosion of colour and sound, plus 'plenty of high-energy entertainment', as they enjoy the theme park's rollercoasters and rides until sunset. A selection of food from around the world will also be available to enjoy.

Midlands Air Festival

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Fri 4 - Sun 6 June
 This year's event features 'the largest display of special shape character hot-air balloons in Europe'. Other aerial attractions across the weekend include World War One air displays, World War Two Warbirds, fast jets, helicopters, gyroplanes, aerobatic displays, aerial ballet, flying circus acts, and parachute & formation display teams.



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ZOG™

The Quest for the Golden Star

BRAND NEW FOR 2021, an exciting new 3D interactive trail starring Zog the lovable dragon has landed at Warwick Castle.

From flying high without actually leaving the ground, to testing-out fearsome roars... and of course learning to capture a Princess, children will collect a stamp at every task.

After joining in with Sir Gadabout's school for ambitious Knights as a final challenge, Zog will be available for a meet-and-greet to hand out golden stars and to pose for a photo with every child.

*PARENT AND TODDLER OFFER

Tickets are available on selected dates in 2021, and include Warwick Castle admission for one adult and one toddler (child up to 5 years)

Zog and The Quest for the Golden Star is available every day until 5 September 2021 and is included in the price of your Warwick Castle entry ticket.

Book online at warwick-castle.com

Zog © 2010 Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler. Licensed by Magic Light Pictures Ltd.

**WARWICK
CASTLE**

& KNIGHT'S VILLAGE



A big roar for Zog

What's On checks out Warwick Castle's latest family attraction...

Warwick Castle is open for business, with outdoor activities and single-household stays at the Knight's Village Woodland Lodges having been available to enjoy since April.

Also on offer is a brand-new themed activity trail: Zog And The Quest For The Golden Star. The trail is based on Julia Donaldson's bestselling children's book and has seen Warwick Castle team up with Magic Light Pictures.

With a map and Dragon School Stamp Activity Card in hand, participants meander through the grounds to undertake five different tasks in order to qualify as a fully-fledged dragon.

A flying Zog greets you upon entry to the grounds, not only creating a perfect photo opportunity but also providing a chance to collect a first stamp.

On heading towards the world's first ever Horrible Histories adventure maze, you find the second and third tasks, which, through clever installations, allow youngsters to try and make Axel Scheffler's instantly recognisable dragon illustrations roar and

breathe fire.

Journeying to the mighty trebuchet, at the far side of the castle on the River Avon, you must then find Pearl in order to capture a princess and complete the fourth task, after which you have to learn to fight on the Oak Tree Lawn with Sir Gadabout.

Once all five stamps have been collected and the training completed, a golden star is awarded to each successful participant.

A meet-and-greet with Zog, available at various times during the day, provides the perfect end to a thoroughly enjoyable experience.



Now that Warwick Castle has fully reopened, there's even more to enjoy at the venue across the summer months, including the return of the UK's largest birds-of-prey show - The Falconer's Quest.

Roaming actors, who interact 'in character' with visitors, further add to the overall Warwick Castle experience. Currently they're assuming the guise of knights on horseback and, so we're told, Georgians from the Bridgerton era!

Extremely friendly staff, intrinsic Covid-19 safety measures and (if you're lucky the day you go) beautiful sunny weather ensure that a late spring or summertime visit to Warwick Castle makes for a safe, relaxed and extremely enjoyable day out.

Zog And The Quest For The Golden Star - available every day until Sunday 5 September - is included in the price of your entry ticket to Warwick Castle. Zog Play-and-Stay packages are also available. For further information, visit: warwick-castle.com

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Places to visit across the Midlands



Coventry Transport Museum

Millennium Place, Hales St, Coventry, CV1 1JD
 transport-museum.com Tel: 02476 234270

This popular museum not only houses the largest publicly owned collection of British vehicles on the planet, it also tells the story of a city which changed the world through transport.

There are 14 fully accessible galleries to enjoy at the venue, featuring, among other attractions, pioneering bicycles, transport champions, innovative, memorable and luxurious vehicles from the last 200 years, and (last but certainly not least) the world's fastest vehicle.

The museum is also home to the world's two fastest cars - the ThrustSSC and Thrust2.

Hatton Adventure World

Dark Lane, Hatton, Warwick, CV35 8XA
 adventure.hattonworld.com Tel: 01926 843411

An array of indoor and outdoor activities awaits visitors to this popular Warwickshire attraction.

Youngsters are sure to enjoy participating in the venue's nature trail, watching Zoobee's Open Air Family Show, cheering the contestants in Hatton's Sheep Racing Grand National and marvelling as birds of prey take

to the skies in twice-daily falconry displays. For older visitors, laser combat and the nearby Tulleys Escape Rooms & Games are sure to be a hit. The latter features two games - Mutiny and The Outfitters - both of which aim to test the skills of even the most experienced of escapees.

If you fancy a retail fix, then check out Hatton Shopping Village, featuring a wealth of independent shops, a cafe, a bar and plenty of outdoor seating.



Tudor World

Sheep Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6EE
 tudorworld.com Tel: 01789 298070

An independent award-winning museum set within a 16th-century property in the heart of Stratford-upon-Avon, Tudor World explores what life was like during the time of William Shakespeare, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Sir Francis Drake. It even includes some nasty aromas from a bygone world!

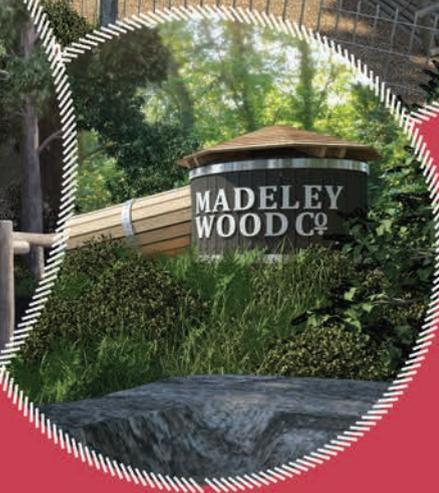
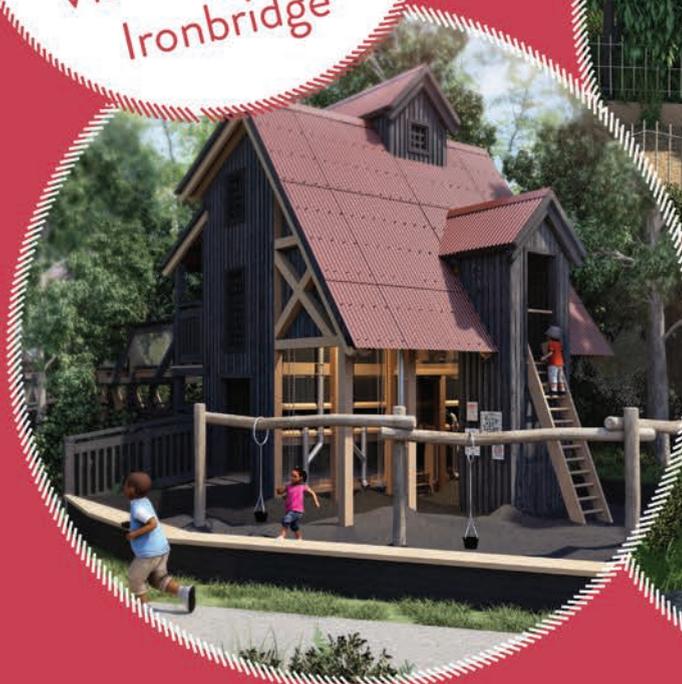
Pirates are very much at the heart of the venue's summer holiday programming. Young seafaring bandits will be able to take part in a specially themed quiz, picking up a prize from the treasure chest and a pirate certificate on completion.

Exhibits, interactive activities and numerous themed events throughout the year make this family-run attraction a great option for anybody wanting an entertaining and educational day out.



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Warwickshire, CV35 9HZ
 comptonverney.org.uk Tel: 01926 645 500

Compton Verney's Georgian house is set in more than 120 acres of Grade 2 listed classical parkland. The grounds were landscaped by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, the most eminent landscape architect of the 18th century. Although the original estate was split up and sold a century ago, the parklands still

clearly reflect the sweeping grassland, ornamental lakes and Cedars of Lebanon for which Brown is famous.

Current exhibitions in the venue's internationally renowned art gallery include the works of natural scientist, farmer & artist Mary Newcomb, and an installation by artist Rebecca Louise Law. Entitled Seasons, Rebecca's display is composed of thousands of preserved seasonal foliage and flowers, suspended on copper wires. The installation aims to reflect the ebb and flow of life.

Stratford Butterfly Farm

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon
 CV37 7LS
 butterflyfarm.co.uk Tel: 01789 299288

Stratford Butterfly Farm is home to hundreds of the world's most spectacular butterflies.

The popular venue features a 'discovery zone' inhabited by giant silkmoths and their cocoons, and the Minibeast Metropolis, home to snakes, reptiles, amphibians and other invertebrates. The latest arrivals to this particular part of the attraction are the pumpkin patch tarantula and red clawed crayfish.

The Butterfly Farm's connections to the rainforests of Belize and the Maya civilisation are also in evidence, with more than 30 replicated ancient Maya artefacts on display throughout the attraction.



Coventry Music Museum

80 Walsgrave Road, Coventry, CV2 4ED
 covmm.co.uk Tel: 07971171441

If you love music, revel in nostalgia and enjoy perusing all manner of memorabilia, a visit to the Coventry Music Museum is an absolute must.

Recounting the story of the city's musical heritage, the museum pays homage to old-style music hall, 1950s rock'n'roll, the 1960s Beat scene, the 2-Tone days of The Specials, The Selecter and Madness, the 1980s successes of Hazel O'Connor, The Primitives and King, and the Bhangra magic of the 1990s.

The museum's collection of memorabilia includes the Lennon Bench - commemorating the famous Acorns For Peace event - the actual car from The Specials' Ghost Town video, and a selection of items connected to the city's 21st-century hitmakers, Stereo Nation and The Enemy.



Twycross Zoo

Norton Grange, Norton-Juxta-Twycross,
 Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 3PX
 twycrosszoo.org Tel: 01782 659845

This popular Warwickshire venue is one of Britain's most notable zoos, occupying over 100 acres and attracting more than 450,000 visitors per year.

As well as having one of the most diverse primate collections in the western world, Twycross is also home to several endangered species, including two Sumatran tigers named Jahly and Sialang.

The zoo features an outdoor play area and a nature reserve, both of which are included in the ticket price.



Introducing a new film programme!

We're not back to normal yet, but only a few more weeks to go! We had new cinema and screening equipment fitted in 2020... to give you even more reasons to visit us!

We won't be screening arthouse or new releases, just an eclectic mix of great films to suit all tastes and ages!

Sat 15 May **Everything is Absolutely Fine** live drama 7.30pm
(Live theatre streaming-view online at home only)

Wed 19 May **The Personal History of David Copperfield** 7.30pm

Sat 22 May **Judy** biographical drama with Renee Zelleweger 7.30pm

Wed 26 May **Black Panther** action - Chadwick Boseman 7.30pm

Thu 27 May **The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert** 7.30pm

Sat 30 May **Frozen II** animated adventures 2.30pm

Sun 6 Jun **Paddington** family fun with an all star cast 2.30pm

Wed 9 Jun **The Lady in the Van** starring Maggie Smith 7.30pm

Wed 16 Jun **Bombshell** drama with a strong female cast 7.30pm

A full film & live screening programme begins in September once current Covid-19 regs are relaxed. The above screenings will be socially distanced.



Buy online anytime at www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk
Box Office: T: 0121 704 6962 9.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat (10am Weds)

E-type 60

E-type Jaguar Diamond Anniversary celebration

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Hillclimb activity on both days • theatre events • specialist exhibitors • motoring celebrities • food • shopping • live music

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- Period dress encouraged, but not compulsory!

Shelsley Walsh
Worcestershire
WR6 6RP

Tickets: £25 per person (£22 advance)

www.etype60.com





Celebrating the 60th Birthday of the Jaguar E-type

This May half-term
29 May – 6 June



Reopening on 17 May

britishmotormuseum.co.uk/whats-on
J12 M40, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ

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★★★★ *The Independent*
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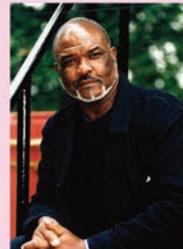


St Matthew Passion

ARMONICO CONSORT
Director: CHRISTOPHER MONKS
Evangelist: IAN BOSTRIDGE
Christus: SIR WILLARD WHITE

1st July 2021, 7:00pm
Malvern Theatres
01684 892277 www.malvern-theatres.co.uk

8th July 2021, 7:30pm
Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick
01926 334418 www.armonico.org.uk




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www.armonico.org.uk



National SEA LIFE Centre

The Water's Edge, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HL
visitsealife.com/birmingham

As well as featuring more than 2,000 creatures - including a colony of gentoo penguins, black-tip reef sharks and a giant green sea turtle - National Sea Life Centre Birmingham is now also home to a world-class rescue facility. As part of a pioneering education & conservation project, the centre welcomed the UK's first ever sea otters, Ozzy and Olain, early last year. Other Sea Life Centre highlights include the 4D cinema, the zebra shark in Shark Lagoon and the Clownfish Kingdom tunnel. The centre also boasts the UK's only 360° Ocean Tunnel, in which visitors can marvel at hundreds of underwater creatures swimming overhead and underneath as they enjoy the truly unique experience of 'walking through the sea'!

West Midland Safari & Leisure Park

Spring Grove, Bewdley, DY12 1LF
wmssp.co.uk Tel: 01299 402114

West Midland Safari & Leisure Park offers a great opportunity to enjoy seeing animals roaming freely - and to do so from the safety of your own car!

The 100-acre venue 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 (take a deep breath at this

point, if you're reading this out loud to somebody!): 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! The venue also boasts an adventure theme park - Land Of The Living Dinosaurs - and an Ice Age attraction.

New for 2021: Luxury accomodation is now available at the site's Safari Lodges where guests can have an 'up-close and immersive overnight wildlife experience like no other.'



Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings

Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove, B60 4JR
avoncroft.org.uk Tel: 01527 831363 / 831886

Spread over 19 acres of Worcestershire countryside, England's first open-air museum covers in excess of 700 years of Midlands history.

The site includes a collection of 20-plus historic buildings, ranging in date from Worcester Cathedral's 14th century Guesten Hall roof, to a post-Second World War Birmingham prefab.

Visitors to Avoncroft can also enjoy a wildflower meadow, period gardens and a traditional cider & perry orchard.

And if checking out the aforementioned attractions works up an appetite, the museum also boasts an award-winning tearoom, complete with a selection of cakes and light lunches made with fresh, local produce (some of which comes from the venue's very own period gardens).



Warwick Castle

Warwick, Warwickshire, CV34 6AH
warwick-castle.com Tel: 01926 406610

Boasting history tours, detailed exhibits, programmed activities and 64 acres of landscaped garden, Warwick Castle offers a winning combination of attractions that makes for a thoroughly enjoyable family day out.

The UK's biggest bird of prey show, The Falconer's Quest, makes a welcome return for the summer. Featuring up to 60 magnificent birds, with huge wingspans of up to nine feet, the display showcases species from across the globe.

Other attractions at the castle include the Horrible Histories Maze.

New for 2021: Themed activity trail Zog And The Quest For The Golden Star - based on Julia Donaldson's bestselling children's book.

Shakespeare's Birthplace

Henley St, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6QW
shakespeare.org.uk Tel: 01789 204016

Find out what life was like for the world's most famous playwright during his growing-up years in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The venue's attractions include numerous rare objects, one of which is an original folio of Shakespeare's complete works.

Visitors can also hear stories of the bard's family life, check out his father's glove-making workshop, and take a stroll through gardens which may well have inspired some of Shakespeare's most poetic writings.

There are four other Shakespeare Family Homes & Gardens in the Trust's care: Anne Hathaway's Cottage, Shakespeare's New Place, Hall's Croft and Mary Arden's Farm.



Bear Grylls Adventure

National Exhibition Centre, Marston Green, Birmingham, B40 1PA
beargryllsadventure.com
Tel: 0121 725 2616

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

Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

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 taking on the challenge of navigating 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.

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



Blists Hill Victorian Town

Legges Way, Ironbridge, TF7 5UD
 Tel: 01952 433424
ironbridge.org.uk/explore/blists-hill-victorian-town

One of 10 award-winning museums that make up the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Blists Hill Victorian Town offers visitors the chance to step back in time to the days of Queen Victoria. Set over 52 acres, the museum has plenty to offer and is very much

an interactive experience. There are general drapers, blacksmiths, a pharmacy (also home to a particularly gruesome dentist room) and the bank, where you can exchange your new money for old and try to manage with pounds, shillings and pence. Thankfully Victorians liked food & drink just as much as we do(!) - so if you're feeling peckish, pay a visit to the fried fish dealer and enjoy traditionally cooked fish & chips.

Alternatively, pop into the New Inn - not only does it serve a fine ale, it also has a tearoom upstairs with some healthier-eating options. Blists Hill has a funfair, too - complete with carousel, chair-o-planes and game stalls - a funicular train and a clay mine ride to enjoy.

New for 2021: An exciting outdoor adventure experience with elevated walkways, a log-style basket swing, seesaw and lookout tower with a coal chute slide.

Severn Valley Railway

Kidderminster: Station Dr, Kidderminster
 DY10 1QX Bridgnorth: 2 Hollybush Rd,
 Bridgnorth WV16 4AX
svr.co.uk Tel:01299 401776

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a journey of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley. The journey includes a stop-off at The Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where passengers can enjoy an exhibition telling the story of how the Victorians constructed the viaduct at Falling Sands. Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

New for 2021: Enjoy 15 months' unlimited visits for the price of 12 with the all-new Severn Valley Railway Loyalty Pass, including free entry to the Engine House Visitor Centre.



22 THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2022

TWENTY-TWO TERRIFIC REASONS FOR MIDLANDERS TO LOOK FORWARD TO NEXT YEAR...

There's every chance that 2022 could well see a return to something resembling our pre-pandemic way of living. And if that proves to be the case, there'll be plenty of fantastic events to attend, shows to enjoy and places to visit right here in the marvellous Midlands! Here are 22 things we're looking forward to most...



1. Birmingham Commonwealth Games

The most anticipated event to take place in the UK in 2022, Birmingham Commonwealth Games not only presents a high-profile platform on which Britain's best athletes can demonstrate their talent, it also provides a fantastic opportunity for the region

to showcase its always-impressive cultural offer. The latter comes via the Culture Festival, an event being produced in association with the Games. More detailed information about its content will be made available in the forthcoming months, so watch this space...

2. Minions: The Rise of Gru

This much-anticipated film is the fifth installment in the Despicable Me franchise. The story follows on from 2015 spin-off prequel Minions and brings together a star-studded cast of voice actors. The 1970s-set plot sees 12-year-old Gru hoping to join a supervillain group known as the Vicious 6. But things go badly awry, and when Gru steals a precious object from the 6 with the help of Kevin, Stuart, Bob, Otto and the other Minions, he suddenly finds himself the mortal enemy of the apex of evil...



4. Reopening of the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

This much loved space will remain closed for the remainder of 2021 while essential electrical works are undertaken. During the closure, BMAG's iconic Round Room will be transformed, ready for reopening ahead of the Commonwealth Games with a new display reflecting the people of 21st Century Birmingham.



3. Matthew Bourne's The Nutcracker

Featuring family-sized helpings of the choreographer's trademark wit and pathos, Matthew Bourne's *The Nutcracker* takes inspiration from the lavish Hollywood musicals of the 1930s. The story follows Clara's bittersweet journey from a darkly comic Christmas Eve at Dr Dross' orphanage, through a shimmering, ice-skating winter wonderland, to the scrumptious candy kingdom of Sweetieland. Expect a sprinkling of delicious new surprises in this reinvented production for 2022.



6. The Commitments bring soul to Wolves Grand

Back out on tour following a record-breaking run in the West End, *The Commitments* musical is adapted from Roddy Doyle's award-winning book. It tells the story of Jimmy Rabbitte, a young working-class music fan who shapes a bunch of amateur musicians and friends into the finest soul band Dublin has ever produced.

5. New industrial quarter at Black Country Living Museum

The first stage of BCLM's Forging Ahead project will come to a conclusion in 2022 when the museum reveals its new industrial quarter - an attraction dedicated to Black Country industry and its post-war manufacturing success. A town featuring an NHS clinic, a record shop, a barbers and a Co-operative supermarket will provide visitors with an immersive experience of everyday life as it was lived during the mid-20th century. A visitor centre and learning spaces will also be included in the industrial quarter.



22 THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2022...



7. Dreamgirls for Christmas

Direct from the West End and based on the film of the same name, Dreamgirls tells the story of singing trio The Dreams - Effie, Lorrell and Deena - as they aim for fame and fortune, discover the ruthless realities of showbusiness, and find their friendships tested to the very limit. Nicole Dennis stars as Effie, with further casting yet to be announced.

8. World debut of Akram Khan's Jungle Book

Akram Khan's reimagining of Rudyard Kipling's iconic tale is described as 'a deeply personal interpretation', with the celebrated dance practitioner having played the part of Mowgli in an Indian dance production at the age of 10. Decades after this pivotal moment in his life, Khan explores the story from a different perspective, viewing it through the lens of modern-day youngsters.



64 whatsonlive.co.uk



9. Return of the Crazy Races

Previously called Wacky Races, this fun family day out brings the zany 'sport' of soapbox racing to four Midlands locations next year. After a successful debut in Shrewsbury in 2019, the event returns to the town's Quarry Park next year in May. The Crazy Races calendar for 2022 also includes stop-offs in Northwich in June, Wolverhampton town centre in August, and Sandwell Park Farm in September.

10. James Martin Live at Symphony Hall

Whipping up culinary treats along the way - and with some very special and yet-to-be-announced guests in tow! - the celebrity chef and former Saturday Kitchen host is set to visit 18 towns and cities across the UK next year.



11. The Make 'Em Ups Bumper Blyton

'Chock full of innuendo and lashings of puns', this homage to Enid Blyton aims to take audience members 'of a certain age' back to their childhoods, in the process presenting satirical takes on such literary classics as The Famous Five and Mallory Towers.



12. Reopening of the RSC's Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon

Early in the first lockdown, the Royal Shakespeare Company announced that it would be keeping the Swan Theatre closed for the foreseeable future. Although no reopening date has yet been confirmed, it's hoped that this intimate venue will be back up and running some time in 2022.

13. Les Miserables at Birmingham Hippodrome

One of the world's most popular theatrical productions, Cameron Mackintosh's acclaimed version of Boublil & Schönberg's musical returns to Birmingham having enjoyed a sell-out run in the city in spring 2019.



14. Shropshire Kids Festival

Promising to be bigger and even better in 2022, Shropshire Kids Festival offers youngsters the chance 'to let off steam and have fun by the bucketload'. Taking place completely under cover, the festival caters for kids up to the age of 14. It includes baby changing and breastfeeding areas, a dedicated zone for the under-fives, and a quiet zone for children with additional support needs.

15. Swingamajig at Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Bringing a modern twist to the sights and sounds of the 1920s, Swingamajig fuses music, dance and cabaret to create one big high-energy party. In addition to its eclectic programme of musical performances - vintage swing, rock & roll, hip-hop & jungle - the festival also boasts a fine array of street food, a vintage market and some of 'the best dressed ladies and gents' in Brum.



16. Singin' In The Rain at Birmingham Hippodrome

Journey back to the Roaring '20s and the glamour of Hollywood in Jonathan Church's acclaimed adaptation of this all-time classic. The new tour sees Adam Cooper star as Don Lockwood - the role made famous by Gene Kelly in the original 1952 movie version.



17. British Art Show at Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Originally planned to take place in 2021, British Art Show 9 will now launch in Wolverhampton in January 2022, ahead of touring to three other UK venues. Introducing visitors to 40-plus artists working in Britain over the past five years, the exhibition is recognised as a significant marker of recent developments in contemporary art.

22 THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2022...



18. The Snowman at Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Raymond Briggs' much-loved children's book will once again be brought to life next January. A staple of The REP's festive programming for the past 25 years, this enchanting live show continues to delight audience members of all ages. Its dancing penguins are a particular highlight.

20. Crowded House at Genting Arena

With new album *Dreamers Are Waiting* due for release on 4 June, New Zealand five-piece Crowded House recently announced a rescheduled date of 14 June 2022 for their Birmingham Utilita Arena performance.



21. Planet Earth Live II In Concert

This live concert features specially selected footage shown in 4K ultra high-definition on a gigantic LED screen. Accompanying the film will be the City Of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra, playing music by film-score composers Hans Zimmer, Jacob Shea & Jasha Klebe. Science & natural history TV presenter Liz Bonnin hosts.



22. Shrewsbury Flower Show

This prestigious event is once again being presented online in 2021 - only the third time in the show's 133-year history that it hasn't taken place in the town's Quarry Park. Organisers have promised that the event will be bigger and better when it returns next year (on Friday 12 & Saturday 13 August).



19. Forest Live

This outdoor summer concert series is presented by Forestry England and sees some of the music industry's biggest names perform in spectacular woodland locations across the UK.

Dates for all gigs at Cannock Chase in Staffordshire have been postponed until 2022. Jess Glynne will now play on Thursday 9 June, Rag'n'Bone Man on Friday the 10th and Keane on Saturday the 11th.

As we welcome the world.
We look at Coventry's influence on
global music in Music City, Coventry.



GHOST TOWN 2 HOST TOWN

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Explore Coventry's recent past and bright future
- All wrapped up in an iconic song



Ride in the
actual Ghost
Town Car

Hear how Cov Kid
Pete Chambers
has lived the
Coventry
"Stereotype"



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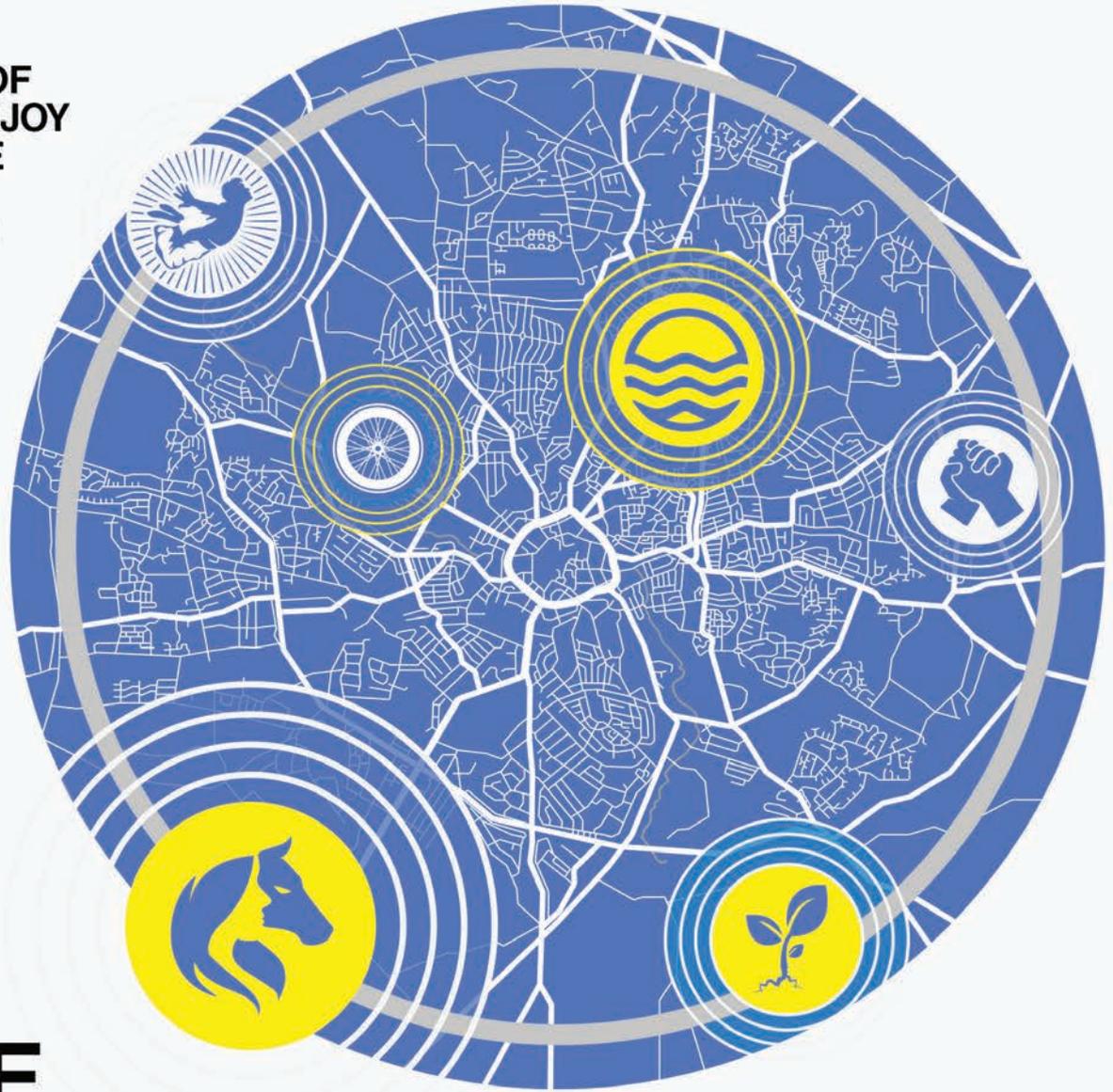
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