

Birmingham

ISSUE 443 DECEMBER 2023

What's On

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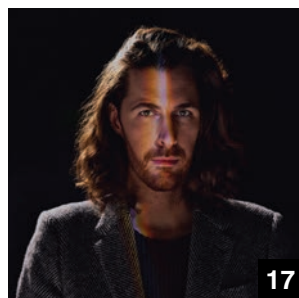
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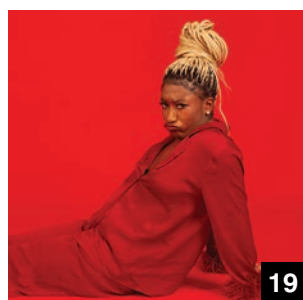
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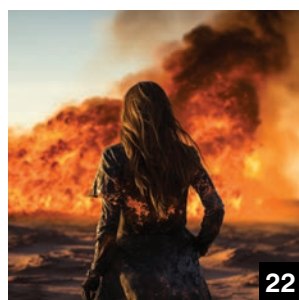
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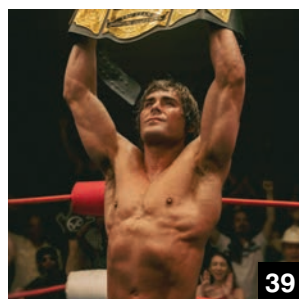
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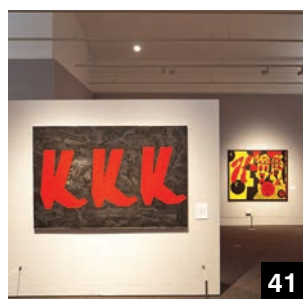
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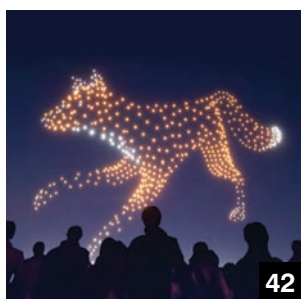
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Arenacross back in the city

Motocross and off-road racing fans can look forward to a Second City showdown in the new year, as Arenacross makes a welcome return at Birmingham's Resorts World Arena on Saturday 3 February.

Featuring a high-octane mix of indoor motocross racing and freestyle motocross (FMX) derring-do, the series has been thrilling crowds the length and breadth of the UK for over a decade now, during which time it's entertained 300,000-plus action-hungry fans.

For further information and to book tickets, visit resortsworldarena.co.uk

From TV's The Voice to Erdington Abbey...

Classical crossover favourite Nadia Eide is visiting Birmingham's Erdington Abbey on Monday 4 December to present a special Christmas concert. A finalist on television's The Voice, Scandinavian-born Nadia will perform a wide selection of festive favourites, including O Holy Night, Panis Angelicus, Carol Of The Bells and Do You Want To Build A Snowman.



Mohammed Ali tells the story of Birmingham

Birmingham street artist & curator Mohammed Ali is this month presenting a show that celebrates 'the graft that is embedded in the city's DNA'. Featuring digital visuals underpinned by lush soundscapes created by vocalist Cleveland Watkiss, Grit And Soul - Soul City Arts (Bramall Music Building, Friday 8 December) includes contributions from storyteller & author Polarbear and spoken-word artist Ayan Aden. Commenting on the show, Ali says: "Birmingham is no Paris, Tokyo or Milan; it is gritty but it has soul, and that's how we like it..." To find out more and book tickets, visit barber.org.uk



Walk Of Light returns to city's Cannon Hill Park

A charity walk in Birmingham next spring will aim to 'shine a light on blood cancer'. Organised by Blood Cancer UK, Walk Of Light will take place in the city's Cannon Hill Park on Saturday 30 March. It will feature a choice of two routes, one measuring 2.5km, the other 5km. To find out more about the event, visit bloodcancer.org.uk



One woman, 12 dates!

Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre (OJST) is presenting 'a heart-warming one-woman play' during the week between Christmas and New Year. The Twelve Dates Of Christmas sees Mary stumbling back into the dating world, 'where "romance" ranges from weird and creepy to absurd and comical'. The show runs at the OJST from Wednesday 27 to Saturday 30 December. To find out more and book tickets, visit oldjointstock.co.uk

Artist call-out to help save iconic Birmingham church

Artists and creators are being asked to donate a piece of art that will help raise funds for Birmingham's iconic St Paul's Church, which is located in the city's

Jewellery Quarter.

The Grade I listed church is at risk from catastrophic water damage.

Creatives have until Wednesday 31 January to submit an entry and will find further details at stpaulsjq.church/events.

To make a donation to help save the church, visit stpaulsjq.church/raise-the-roof

Cinders at the gas works

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC) will next year transform an old gas works into a fairytale world in order to present an opera telling the story of Cinderella.

The magical transformation will take place at Gas Street Central, where, from Thursday 29 February to Saturday 2 March, RBC's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department will present Jules Massenet's four-act Cendrillon. To find out more and book tickets, visit bcu.ac.uk

An unspoken love story told through dance

Two hugely respected South Asian dancers - Aakash Odedra and Aditi Mangaldas - are bringing a brand-new production to Birmingham Hippodrome in the spring.

Showing at the venue on Tuesday 9 April, Mehek is described as 'an exploration of the human heart, its desires, courage and resilience'. Centred around an older woman and a younger man, the dance delves deep into the different ways in which love can present itself. For further information, visit birminghamhippodrome.com



Nadiya and Kai on the road again

After success with debut tour *Once Upon A Time*, dance stars Nadiya Bychkova and Kai Widdrington are heading out on the road again in 2024. The dynamic duo will stop off at two Midlands venues: Malvern Theatres (Thursday 13 June) and Birmingham's Symphony Hall (Monday 24 June). For further information and to purchase tickets, visit ticketmaster.co.uk or nadiyaandkai.com



Rock band Elbow make spring visit

Rock band Elbow will visit Birmingham's Resorts World Arena next spring as part of a UK tour (Friday 10 May). Commenting on the news, lead singer Guy Garvey said: "We love the intimacy of theatres, but we have some very big songs, and the electricity of 20,000 people singing along cannot be denied. So, the big rooms it is, and big shows they will be. Can't wait to see everybody again." Further information and tickets are available at resortsworldarena.co.uk

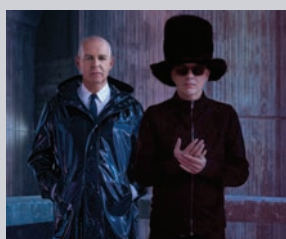


More Mormon magic as hit musical returns to Birmingham

Smash-hit Broadway and West End musical *The Book Of Mormon* will return to Birmingham next Christmas.

The Tony, Olivier and Grammy award winner, which follows the misadventures of a

mismatched pair of missionaries - will show at The Alexandra from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 28 December 2024. Further information and tickets are available at atgtickets.com



Pet Shop Boys bringing greatest hits to Brum

Pet Shop Boys will bring their critically acclaimed *Dreamworld* tour to Birmingham next summer. The duo's first-ever greatest hits tour will stop off at Utilita Arena on Saturday 8 June. For more information and to book tickets, visit petshopboys.co.uk

Cirque du Soleil set to dazzle again

Cirque du Soleil will return to the UK for the first time in six years next spring, with their new tour including a stop-off at Utilita Arena Birmingham (Thursday 25 - Sunday 28 April). The world-renowned company will be performing the critically acclaimed *OVO*, which they describe as 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects; a non-stop riot of energy and movement'. For further information and to book tickets, visit utilitaarenabham.co.uk



Bear Grylls announces his Never Give Up tour

Television adventurer Bear Grylls is hitting the road again next spring with brand-new show Never Give Up.

Featuring 'unseen, hair-raising images and remarkable behind-the-scenes videos', the show stops off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Saturday 27 April.

For more information and to book tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk

A Very Gospel Christmas boost for meals charity

Lichfield Gospel Choir is inviting Midlanders to join them for an evening of 'joyful music and festive cheer' at Birmingham's St Martin in the Bull Ring on Saturday 9 December. The highly regarded choir will present A Very Gospel Christmas in aid of Mary's Meals, which serves nutritious school meals to children living in some of the world's poorest countries. For more information, visit averygospelchristmas.eventbrite.co.uk

Major touring show to stop off in Birmingham

A Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition that 'plunges into the joys and heartaches, mess, myths and mishaps of motherhood' will make a stop-off at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) next year.

Featuring more than 100 artworks - 'from the feminist avant-garde to the present day' - Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood explores the lived experience of being a mum, offering a 'complex account' that engages with contemporary concerns about gender, caregiving and reproductive rights. The exhibition shows at MAC from Saturday 22 June to Sunday 29 September.



06 whatsonlive.co.uk



Free family trail sees Snowdogs Discover Birmingham

Visitors are being invited to, er, pup into Birmingham city centre this Christmas to explore a free family trail featuring 10 festive Snowdogs. Snowdogs Discover Birmingham is Central

BID's annual Christmas trail and has been created by Wild In Art, the company which previously brought Penguin Parade and Walking With The Snowman to the city.

Feeding Birmingham at the city's cathedral

A local charity on a mission to end homelessness will be serving hot drinks and breakfast items outside Birmingham's cathedral during the morning of Tuesday 2 January.

Let's Feed Brum will also be handing out essential supplies and clothing. To find out more about the initiative and the charity itself, visit birminghamcathedral.com

Applications open for The Alex's Stage Experience

Birmingham theatre The Alexandra's pioneering summertime youth project, Stage Experience, will next year present a production of The Sound Of Music (Thursday 15 - Saturday 17 August).

Applications are now open to children and young people aged between nine and 24, with both performer and technical places available.

For more information and to apply to participate (the deadline is Friday 12 April), visit the website: careers.atg.co.uk

A festive film festival!

Festive-film fans can catch up with some all-time Christmas-connected classics at a Birmingham venue this month.

The Luna Cinema is presenting a programme of much-loved movies at the city's Factory Works from Saturday 9 to Saturday 23 December.

Featured films include, among various others, Elf, Love Actually, Home Alone and The Muppet Christmas Carol.

To check out the whole programme, visit thelunacinema.com/winter

Blue Orange Arts to stage pantomime for grown-ups

Birmingham's Blue Orange Theatre is presenting 'a pantomime for the grown-ups' this month.

Blow White: The Adult Panto shows at the venue from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 December and will feature 'adult jokes, innuendo, silliness, strong language and slutty behaviour'.

To find out more, visit blueorangetheatre.co.uk

B:Festive

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07 Dec | TH
**Black Voices:
Christmas
Extravaganza**



15-16 Dec | SH
**Jools Holland & His
Rhythm & Blues
Orchestra**



17 Dec | SH
Candlelit Carols



19 Dec | TH
**The Lock In
'Christmas Carol' ft
The Demon Barbers**



20 Dec | TH
**The King's Singers:
When You Wish
Upon A Star**



21 Dec | TH
**The Amy Winehouse
Band: Celebrating
20 Years of Frank**



23 Dec | SH
**Christmas Carol
Singalong**



27-31 Dec | TH
**Oh No! Shark in the
Snow!**



2.30pm 31 Dec | SH
New Year's Eve Gala



DJ Gary Davies & special
guests Toyah Willcox,
Deniece Pearson & Carol
Decker!

9pm 31 Dec | SH
**New Year's Eve Special
BBC Radio 2 Sounds
of the 80s: Live**

Whether you're looking for a great night out with your bestie, a music experience to make lasting family memories, or gift vouchers for last minute pressies: there's something for everyone at **Town Hall & Symphony Hall** this festive season.

**From our stages to your homes:
We wish you a Merry Christmas
and a B:rrilliant 2024!**

bmusic.co.uk

Games legacy cash to help community projects

A £9million pot of Commonwealth Games legacy cash is being made available for grassroots projects that will unite communities across the West Midlands and get local people more physically and mentally active.

Grants of between £500 and £300,000 are available for projects that will ensure 'the positive and long-lasting legacy from last summer's Games is felt right across the region'. Full details about the Inclusive Communities Fund and how to apply are available wmca.org.uk

From Jane with love...

Jane McDonald will be making a stop-off in Birmingham next autumn as part of her With All My Love tour.

Promising a show 'filled with love, glamour and warm Yorkshire wit', Jane will perform at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 16 November. To check ticket availability for the show, visit cuffeandtaylor.com



Lord Of The Dance heads back to the Midlands

The world-renowned Lord Of The Dance returns to the Midlands next autumn. Michael Flatley's high-kicking extravaganza, which has been seen by more than 60 million people in 60 countries, stops off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra from Monday 30 September to Sunday 6 October as part of a brand-new tour. For more information and tickets, visit atgtickets.com/birmingham



Dear Evan Hansen coming to two Midlands venues

A new production of Olivier, Tony and Grammy award-winning musical Dear Evan Hansen will visit the Midlands next year - and again in 2025 - as part of its first UK tour. The show focuses on title character Evan, a high-school senior with social anxiety whose desire to fit in sees him telling a lie that

eventually catches him out.

The hit show visits Birmingham theatre The Alexandra from Tuesday 22 to Saturday 26 October. It then returns to the region in 2025, running at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 1 to Saturday 5 April.

Only Fools And Horses musical takes to the road

The stage musical version of long-running BBC TV comedy series Only Fools And Horses will visit the Wolverhampton Grand next autumn (Monday 21 - Saturday 26 October). Stopping off at the theatre as part of a UK tour, the show features material from the television series, 'an ingenious script and 20 hilarious songs'. For further information and to book tickets, go to: grandtheatre.co.uk

A cathedral Christmas

There's plenty of festive entertainment to enjoy at Birmingham Cathedral this month.

As well as the traditional Christmas In Cathedral Square market - which opened last month and runs until Sunday 17 December - the venue is also hosting numerous carol services, a screening of The Muppet Christmas Carol and a performance of Handel's Messiah. To find out what's happening when, visit birminghamcathedral.com



Time to get festive in Brum's Jewellery Quarter

Midlanders are this month being invited to discover Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter 'in a unique and festive way' - by exploring over 60 Christmas window displays. The popular area also boasts more than 100 jewellery-themed Christmas lights, an impressive 3m x 3m illuminated diamond ring, and two 30-foot Christmas trees.



A Christmas menu at Solihull Japanese eatery

Solihull Japanese restaurant Kibou is currently offering a special set menu for Christmas. Starters include prawn tempura and crispy takoyaki, with salmon teriyaki and duck & mushroom udon featuring on the main-course menu. A selection of decadent Japanese-inspired desserts is available to round off the culinary experience. To view the restaurant's complete menu, visit the website: kibou.co.uk/christmas2023

A SENSATIONAL SEASON OF THEATRE AT THE ALEX

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LONDON'S WEST END

2:22

A GHOST STORY

The Hit Play By
DANNY ROBINS
Directed by
MATTHEW DUNSTER
& ISABEL MARR

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SAT 20 JAN 2.30PM



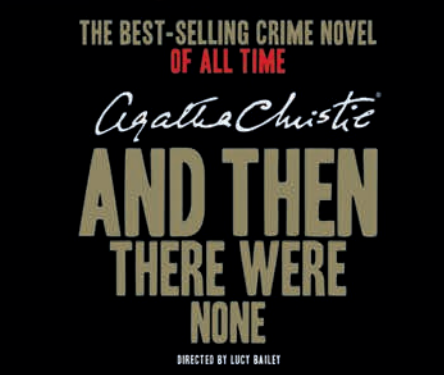
TUE 30 JAN – SAT 3 FEB



TUE 6 – SAT 10 FEB



FRI 23 FEB – SAT 2 MAR
AD SAT 2 MAR 2.30PM



TUE 5 – SAT 9 MAR



THU 14 – SUN 17 MAR
CAP SAT 16 MAR 3PM R SUN 17 MAR 3PM



MON 18 – SAT 23 MAR
AD SAT 23 MAR 2.30PM



MON 1 – SAT 6 APR
AD SAT 6 APR 2.30PM



TUE 9 – SUN 14 APR

THE
ALEXANDRA
BIRMINGHAM

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*Fees apply.



A FESTIVE TRIP TO NEVERLAND

JM Barrie's Peter Pan gets the musical treatment at the Old Rep this Christmas

Birmingham's Old Rep Theatre is hosting a production of the ever-popular Peter Pan this festive season - and audiences can expect a fresh new take on the firm family favourite.

Featuring a cast of professional actors alongside 14 students of the Birmingham Ormiston Academy (BOA) Group, the musical is aimed at people of all ages and hopes to cast a new light on the much-loved story.

JM Barrie's classic tale sees Wendy and her brothers, John and Michael, accompany Peter Pan - 'the boy who never grows up' - to the magical world of Neverland. Once there, they meet fairies and the Lost Boys, battle with pirates, and encounter the evil Captain Hook and a tick-tocking crocodile.

It's a familiar tale full of childhood adventure, and Director Alec Fellows-Bennett is aiming to use the new production to explore the story's meaning.

"We're very much looking at it as a rite-of-passage story, which seems pretty relevant at the minute. What was once conceived as a rite of passage was a very clear thing in the past, but where someone stops being young and starts taking responsibility seems very fluid these days."

So while the team are presenting the Peter Pan we all know and love, they have also given it a new angle.

"It's very much Wendy's rite of passage," says Alec. "I want people to see the story from her point of view because Wendy is the one who goes on a journey. Peter stays as Peter, nothing changes, but what happens is that Wendy realises that nothing's going to change, and that realisation changes something in her."

"Hook, again, is an archetype; he's the other side of the coin from Peter Pan. They live this game day after day after day, but the process of playing the game changes something within Wendy. So it's her saying: 'It's been useful and I've learnt stuff, but I'm ready to take the next step in life now. I'm going to take these lessons on and go forward.'"

For Alec and the team, the crux of the story is about what Wendy, and indeed all young people, choose to leave behind and what they choose to take into adulthood.

"Our guiding principle is that Wendy learns that being child-like is a wonderful thing - being imaginative, being creative, being accepting, being open to new experiences, being open to changing your opinion on things as you learn more. But being childish, which is what Hook and Pan are, is the bit that we have to walk away from."

"So I would say the story is told in the traditional way, and everyone will recognise all the usual bits, but I think the angle from which we are telling it is slightly different. We're telling possibly and hopefully a more relatable tale."

Taking the role of Peter Pan is Solihull-based actor Thea Jo Wolfe, who says her Peter has a part to play in helping Wendy move forwards into adulthood.

"We've come to the conclusion that Peter is almost a figment of Wendy's imagination," she explains. "The idea is that a Neverland exists for every child but is different for every child, and the same is true of Peter. You will be almost rescued by the Peter that is right for you. So a lot of Peter's interaction with Wendy, whether it's positive or slightly manipulative, comes from the fact that he's Wendy's specific Peter, to go on the journey that she needs to go on."

Peter Pan is the latest in a string of successful BOA productions staged at the Old Rep.

Previous festive seasons have seen the team presenting new musical versions of Alice In Wonderland, The Wind In The Willows and The Snow Queen.

The production features a professional creative team and professionals heading up all of the backstage departments. The students gain experience by taking on roles on and off-stage, including acting, lighting, sets and costume design.

Thea is enjoying the experience of working

alongside the young people.

"I wish somewhere like this had been around when I was a student," she says. "It's nice to have a production where you've got people coming into the industry and you've got that springboard for them to learn from the professionals - assuming that I get things right!"

"We're there to do our job and produce an entertaining show, but I'd like to think we can also be role models for the students. It also makes you think of the way you treat the process. You've got people watching, and you'd like to think you've had a positive impact on them."

The production is a revival of a version of Peter Pan first staged in 1985, with actor Ron Moody in the role of Hook. Although some tweaks have been made to the original, to bring the show into the 21st century, at its heart it retains everything that audiences love about the story - as Alec explains...

"Like any good show, whatever the message is shouldn't be rammed down your throat while you're watching it. You should just sit, watch and enjoy it. It's during the drive home or the train ride home that you think about what they were trying to say."

"And while having a message might matter to directors, it doesn't have to matter to an audience. This show is for families, and if they come and have a good time and enjoy the show, that's great."

"It's a full-blown musical with some great join-in songs and lots of great characters. We want to stage a show which is all-singing and all-dancing - and there's nothing more all-singing, all-dancing than giant crocodiles and people flying! Children and adults are going to really enjoy it."

Peter Pan The Musical shows at the Old Rep Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Sunday 31 December, with both BSL and relaxed performances available.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE CBSO



CHORAL CHRISTMAS

Tue 19 & Wed 20 Dec, 7:30pm
Symphony Hall, Birmingham

The CBSO's annual Choral Christmas concerts are like the market and the panto: a real Birmingham tradition!



CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES

Thu 21 Dec, 7:30pm
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We've packed a stocking full of the greatest music from the best-loved seasonal films of all time!



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B:Music Box Office on **0121 780 3333**
Tickets start from £26

CBSO.CO.UK

Classical music from across the city...



The King's Singers

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 20 December

Grammy Award-winning a cappella vocal ensemble The King's Singers are no strangers to a busy concert schedule, regularly touring to countries across the globe and performing at some of the world's greatest concert halls. Founded in the late 1960s by six Cambridge University choral scholars, the Singers have routinely performed a wide range of music, covering everything from jazz standards to pop-chart hits and taking in medieval

motets, spiritual songs, folk favourites and Renaissance madrigals along the way. Given such versatility, it's perhaps not surprising that they're here choosing to present a delightfully varied programme of music, in the process marking the 400th anniversary of Renaissance composer William Byrd and 100 years of Disney magic... A stockingful of Christmas crackers - including arrangements of traditional and modern carols - also features.

City of Birmingham Choir with the CBSO

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 8 December

The City of Birmingham Choir's December performance of Handel's magnificent choral masterpiece is a well-established element of the Midlands' festive music scene.

In a Christmas nutshell - and as the choir itself describes it - the work "compresses the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus' life into two-and-a-half hours and sets it to timeless and sublime music".

As re-tellings of the Christmas story go, this is definitely one worth hearing...

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra further add to the magic. Adrian Lucas conducts.



Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Sun 10 December

One of the Midlands' best known and most admired non-professional orchestras, the Birmingham Phil here presents Symphonic Transformations - a concert comprising Rimsky-Korsakov's Capriccio Espagnole and two works by Rachmaninoff: Rhapsody On A Theme of Paganini and Symphonic Dances... James Ham is the conductor; Cordelia Williams Charlton, the pianist.

Birmingham Bach Choir

St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Sun 17 December

A concert presenting both popular and lesser-known festive music, Birmingham Bach Choir's annual carol service is the perfect way to kickstart your Christmas celebrations.

O Come All Ye Faithful, Once In Royal David's City and Hark The Herald Angels Sing are among the featured carols, which will be interspersed with nine readings.

CBSO Choral Christmas with Anna Lapwood

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 19 & Wed 20 December

This firm festive family favourite - experienced in the company of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra - provides the perfect opportunity to park the pressures of preparing for Christmas in favour of enjoying a couple of hours of traditional carols and excellent musicianship.

The concert comes complete with singalong opportunities and the added attraction of one of the world's greatest organists: Anna Lapwood... Simon Halsey is the man with the festive baton.



Handel's Messiah

Birmingham Cathedral, Sat 9 December

Originally written for Easter and featuring a series of much-loved classics - including For Unto Us A Child Is Born and the legendary Hallelujah! -

Handel's Messiah was first performed in 1742 and had been much anticipated. Indeed, so large an audience was expected for its Dublin premiere that women who were attending were asked to wear dresses 'without hoops' in order to make 'room for more company'...

If you've never heard the oratorio, you've missed out on one of music's most uplifting experiences... Thankfully, this month offers some great opportunities to find out what all the festive fuss is about. Performances of the work at Symphony Hall - on the 3rd (by Ex Cathedra) and the 8th (see far left) - are followed by this Birmingham Cathedral concert, featuring the venue's very own choir, Tim Burton (tenor) & Hope Pugh (mezzo soprano), pictured.





CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS

Festive magic with Ex Cathedra



Birmingham's Ex Cathedra have been performing Christmas Music By Candlelight since 1970, and do so again this month in various venues across the region. Chris Morley chats to the critically acclaimed ensemble's founder & conductor, Jeffrey Skidmore...

Ex Cathedra chamber choir's renowned Christmas Music By Candlelight concerts were launched in St Francis' Church, Bournville, in 1970 - a year after the ensemble's founding - and moved to St Paul's, in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, the following year.

"One concert became two, then three, and now five," explains Ex Cathedra's founder & conductor, Jeffrey Skidmore. "Later we expanded to concerts throughout the region, and now in London, in Trafalgar Square's St Martin in the Fields."

Jeffrey is busy thinking about 'Candlelight' all year long. "I am constantly, throughout the year, looking for new works and new composers. I listen to other musicians' recommendations and have a pile of music sent to me over the years that I visit every now and then."

This Christmas, Ex Cathedra adds another string to its bow, giving the annual Symphony Hall performance of Handel's Messiah, which has long been the province of much larger choral societies.

"There are obvious differences - period instruments, smaller forces," Jeffrey continues. "But it's Ex Cathedra's infrastructure of students, amateurs and professional singers that creates the sound, the precision and the freshness associated with the group."

"Having a company of very special professional singers who are not only choristers and consort singers but also skilled soloists who have grown up with Ex Cathedra, this produces the all-important stylistic consistency. There is a team of 12 soloists for Messiah, and they all sing regularly with the group and know me and the group."

And this hints at the ethos of Ex Cathedra, as Jeffrey explains in talking about the ensemble's origin.

"It was formed in 1969. I was at school in Bournville, had been a chorister at St Francis'

Church and sang as an alto Lay Clerk at Birmingham Cathedral with Roy Massey. Ex Cathedra brought these three elements (school, church and professional) together to sing music I loved and which no-one else seemed to be doing in Birmingham, particularly Renaissance and Medieval repertoire.

"I continued to develop Ex Cathedra from Oxford (1970-73), where I was an Academical Clerk at Magdalen with Bernard Rose and David Wulstan (Clerkes of Oxenford), two giants of the burgeoning choral scene in the 1970s, and I introduced Oxbridge singers to the Ex Cathedra mix."

As someone who has reviewed the work of Ex Cathedra almost since its founding, I have always been struck by the way soloists in whatever piece, even in something as mighty as Bach's St Matthew Passion, emerge from the choral ranks, returning into them after delivering their contributions. Many of these have subsequently gained international stardom, such as Carolyn Sampson, Roderick Williams and Nigel Short.

How much of the original philosophy behind the founding of Ex Cathedra is still maintained today, and how have other things developed?

"I still perform music I love with musicians I like and admire," is Jeffrey's smiling answer.

"Much of Ex Cathedra's repertoire is still music relatively untouched by other ensembles - Latin American, French Baroque and commissions from local composers, and often composers at the beginning of their careers.

"I have always looked to develop local talent and talent from around the country - our pros and travelling amateurs often comment on this. Nurturing young talent has also been crucially important, and the recent Scholars Ensembles schemes are a massively important formalisation of what's been going on since the beginning."

Now into his 70s, Jeffrey is planning for his

eventual retirement, and is making sure his beloved Ex Cathedra will be left in a safe pair of hands.

"We've been nurturing five talented young associate conductors and are now asking for applications for the 'job' to widen the net, but also including the associate conductors in the mix."

The Ex Cathedra story continues to develop. The ensemble recently presented their first-ever programme (titled Byrd To Bacharach And Bach) in Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Bradshaw Hall.

"As a small tribute to the great songwriter Burt Bacharach, who died earlier this year, I arranged Anyone Who Had A Heart, one of his many great hits and a number one for Cilla Black in 1963. It was followed by a 'Swingle' arrangement of one of Bach's most popular Chorale Preludes - Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring."

The same mixture of new and old bubbles along in this year's Christmas Music By Candlelight programme - and we are also promised Summer Music By Candlelight next June. Before that, though, Ex Cathedra's season reaches its climax in Symphony Hall with a Good Friday performance of Bach's powerful St John Passion, 300 years after it was first performed in Leipzig.

.....

Ex Cathedra perform Christmas Music by Candlelight at St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, Fri 1 December; St John's Church, Hagley, Tues 5 December; Hereford Cathedral, Wed 6 December; Lichfield Cathedral, Thurs 7 December; St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton, Sat 9 December; Coventry Cathedral, Thurs 14 December; St Paul's Church, Birmingham, Fri 15 - Wed 20 December. Ex Cathedra also presents Angels, Stars & Kings - family Christmas concert at St Paul's Church, Birmingham on Sat 16 December.



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Live music from across the region...

Katie Gregson-MacLeod

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Tues 5 December

Although 21-year-old Katie Gregson-MacLeod cites Amy Winehouse and her mum's love of Joni Mitchell and Motown as her main influences, her dream duet would be with Tim Minchin. "I was 13 or 14 when I fell for his wordplay," she reveals. "Both his comedy and serious stuff blew me away. I felt the same at 18 when I heard Phoebe Bridgers. And when I discovered Leonard Cohen. But if I had to choose one, it would be Tim. He's my dream. I'm waiting for our TikTok duet!"



Hozier

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Wed 13 December

Irish singer-songwriter Hozier burst onto the music scene with the 2013 release of his single, Take Me To Church, which made it to number one in Belgium and peaked at number two in the UK, the US and Ireland. Subsequent performances at prestigious events including Glastonbury and Billboard Music Awards saw his career go from strength to strength... The 33-year-old is visiting Birmingham this month in support of third studio album Unreal Unearth.



Jools Holland

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 15 & Sat 16 December

Surely the UK's most popular pianist and bandleader, Jools Holland continues to dazzle in the company of his brilliantly talented Rhythm & Blues Orchestra. Jools and the ensemble have been touring the country on and off for many a year now, but there's no sign yet that they're growing

tired of living out of their suitcases. Indeed, this latest road trip sees them playing 30 shows, including these two mid-month Birmingham dates.

They are joined for the shows by Pauline Black and Arthur 'Gaps' Hendrickson, founding members of influential Coventry two-tone band and ska pioneers The Selector.

Ruby Turner, Louise Marshall and Sumudu Jayatilaka also contribute.

Gogol Bordello

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Fri 8 December

The high-energy Gogol Bordello are a well-established gypsy punk rock ensemble from Manhattan who're much admired for their theatrical stage performances.

Having enjoyed a career featuring numerous movie appearances and an impressive nine albums (not to mention various side projects and compilations), it's fair to say that they're an extremely busy and much-in-demand band. They've also amassed a not-inconsiderable number of former band members - which may or may not have something to do with their heavy touring schedule!... Support on the night is provided by Peat & Diesel and Puzzled Panther.

Electric Six

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Wed 6 December

Celebrating 20 years since the release of debut album Fire - featuring the hit single Danger! High Voltage - Detroit rockers Electric Six here make a welcome return with their unique blend of garage-rock, disco and punk.

The boys are no slouches when it comes to putting on a show, so this should definitely be a night to remember for Midlands-based fans.

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 15 December

Formed in 2010 by ex-Oasis star Noel, the High Flying Birds are widely credited with creating music that merges the melodies of The Beatles with the power of The Who. Nowadays bringing together former Oasis members Gem Archer, Mike Rowe and Chris Sharrock with one-time Zutons bassist Russell Pritchard, the band earlier this year released fourth studio album Council Skies to great critical acclaim.



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GEDDY WITH ANTICIPATION...

...is how Midlands-based fans of prog-rock band Rush feel at the prospect of the trio's singer, Geddy Lee, bringing his spoken-word tour to Wolverhampton this month...



Geddy Lee, the legendary singer & bass player of Canadian prog rock band Rush, is bringing his highly anticipated spoken-word tour to Wolverhampton this month.

The show, taking place to promote his long-awaited memoir, *My Effin' Life* - named after the singer's penchant for dropping 'F-bombs' in conversation - will see the Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Famer, born Gershon Eliezer Weinrib, offer an insight into his near-50-year career with the iconic rock trio, as well as his early family life and his parents' background as Holocaust survivors.

During the evening, Geddy will be joined on stage by a special guest interviewer - Hollywood star Paul Rudd took on the role at the opening show in New York City - before reading key passages from his memoir and taking questions from the audience.

The show is set to be a unique opportunity for Rush fans to hear the 70-year-old singer reflect on his family and childhood, as well as the history of his multi-platinum-selling band, from their determined pursuit of music - surviving and ultimately thriving against the odds - to personal memories of his life-long friends and bandmates Alex Lifeson and Neil Peart.

Much-lauded drummer Peart retired from the band after their last tour in 2015 and passed away in 2020 after a three-year battle with brain cancer, a pivotal event that Geddy

struggled to deal with, acknowledging that "the funk" he entered after losing his friend partly inspired him to write the book.

"I took that particularly hard," he said in a recent interview. "Around the same time, I watched my mother descend into dementia. She was losing her memory, and that was really disturbing for me. It made me realise how tenuous our grip on the past really is in some ways."

Geddy's mother subsequently died in 2021, aged 96. A period the singer terms "a fiesta of grief" was completed when guitarist Lifeson was hospitalised with potentially fatal Covid. Mercifully, the man who Geddy calls his "BFF" survived - but the traumatic events triggered thoughts of the past, while the ongoing Covid lockdown in Toronto meant he was twiddling his thumbs and looking for something to do. That combination, allied to the encouragement of the editor who'd worked on Geddy's *Big Beautiful Book Of Bass* book, eventually forced the musician's hand.

"I've never lived my life looking anywhere but forward, which is why I resisted doing this kind of thing for so long," he says. "Being in a band all those years was reassuring because it was an ongoing thing - it felt like it was forever. There was always unfinished business - the next record, the next set design, the next tour. It's been the

theme of my life.

"But you need a lot more determination to proceed in the world of music without the comfort of your bandmates, and I can only hope that finishing this book will release me to return to what I do and love best."

What he does and loves best is playing music - and although Rush is never 'effin' likely to reunite without Peart, Geddy admits there could be "a show that paid tribute to the songs of Rush". He says performing with Lifeson at last year's Taylor Hawkins tribute concerts - alongside drummers including Dave Grohl, Chad Smith and Omar Hakim - was a massive step for the pair.

Geddy has been too busy finalising the book, its audio version, tour, and even filming his own TV series (*Geddy Lee Asks: Are Bass Players Human Too?*) to repeat the jam session the best friends enjoyed last year, but he admits they're both keen to pick it up again. What that might mean in terms of future music and live performance is one of the topics sure to be discussed at what should prove to be a fascinating evening.

Geddy Lee In Conversation takes place at The Civic at The Halls in Wolverhampton on Sunday 10 December. Every ticket purchased for the show includes a copy of the book.



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Mo Gilligan

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Thurs 7 December 2023 & Sat 30 November 2024

London standup Mo Gilligan has enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame and fortune since first coming to wider public attention just a handful of years ago. It was back in December 2016 that Mo uploaded a video about grime MCs - since which time he's found himself catapulted to celebrity status. Hired by Channel Four to front The Lateish Show and rewarded for his television work with a coveted Bafta gong, Mo admits that his life has started to feel just a little bit crazy. "I wake up in the morning and think, 'This is nuts!'" admits the 35-year-old. "It's what I'd always dreamt about, and now that it's happened, I'm determined to make the most of it."

Mo visits Birmingham this month with the Black British Takeover Tour, a show that includes 'the very best in headline names and emerging artists from the Black British comedy circuit'.



Kojo Anim

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 10 December

Currently riding the crest of a wave, Kojo Anim's noteworthy success is long overdue. Kojo had been supporting other comics for the better part of two decades before an appearance on Britain's Got Talent gave his career an exciting new impetus.

The Hackney-born comedian is certainly making the most of his big break - he's been living in Los Angeles and is aiming to take Hollywood by storm!

This month's Birmingham stop-off sees him presenting brand-new show Man On Fire.



Live At Christmas

Birmingham Town Hall, Wed 13 December;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 14 December

As she attempted to establish herself on the circuit back in the early noughties, Jen Brister received a much-needed boost from a comedy legend. The occasion was the BBC New Act semi-finals in Brighton. The legend

in question, Spike Milligan, who was one of the judges. Although Jen didn't get through to the final, she did find out from the show's producer that Spike had voted for her. "He'd also remarked that I had 'a great pair of Bristols'," she recalls. "So clearly he had great taste in comedy and, er, tits!"

Jen here shares the festive-season limelight with David O'Doherty, Fern Brady, Josh Pugh and fast-rising newcomer Kyrach Gray.

Sophie Duker

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 7 December

Familiar television face Sophie Duker's favourite things include breaking hearts and telling jokes 'with the confidence of a cis straight middle-class white man'.

Nominated for best newcomer at Edinburgh in 2019, she returned there last year with Hag, the show she's bringing to Coventry this month and in which she waxes lyrical on subjects such as horoscopes, lesbian cruises and crystal witches. The set went down well with audiences at the Fringe but wasn't universally adored by critics, some of whom felt it was fragmented and incoherent.

Why not buy a ticket and check it out for yourself?...



Gary Pownland

Dudley Town Hall, Fri 22 December

"Life was tough growing up," says online sensation Gary Pownland, the alter-ego of Wolverhampton laughter merchant Jack Kirwan. "My mom and dad popped out for a loaf when I was younger, which is quite an ordinary thing, but I realised as they were leaving that they were carrying suitcases. Straight away I thought to myself, 'How much bread do they think we can eat?'"

Jack is very much enjoying his creation Gary's moment (or several) in the sun, but his own career in comedy hasn't always been plain sailing. "I've done my share of driving up to Newcastle for a 20 quid gig, getting back at 1am and needing to be up for work at five," says Jack. "And then there was the time I played Edinburgh and basically died on my arse every night for a month!"





QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

**Award-winning musical The Bodyguard is coming to
Birmingham theatre The Alexandra for the festive season...**

The stage musical version of hit Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner movie The Bodyguard is stopping off in Birmingham for Christmas. Playing the part of Rachel Marron - the character made famous by Houston in the 1992 film - is Australian singer Emily Williams, who first played the role six years ago. What's On recently caught up with her to find out more...

This Christmas, singer & actress Emily Williams takes on the role of Rachel Marron in blockbuster musical The Bodyguard at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra.

It's the second time the New Zealand-born performer has played the lead part in the show, which is based on the famous 1992 movie starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner.

Rachel Marron is a superstar singer at the height of her fame. But when she begins receiving death threats from a sinister stalker, her manager hires former secret-service agent Frank Farmer as a bodyguard to keep her and her young son safe.

The story provides an insight into the sometimes scary world of stardom, and Emily, who shot to fame as runner-up on television talent show Australian Idol, says she can very much relate to that fear. Having been part of successful Australian all-girl group Young Divas, and then building a solo career, she knows only too well what it's like to be in the spotlight.

"I've gone through similar experiences and situations as Rachel in the show," says Emily, who first played the part back in 2017. "So I can now identify why she acts the way she does, how these scenarios would come up, and why she gets so frustrated all the time.

"I think there's more understanding of the character than I had seven years ago. I now understand the idea of having so many security guards around. And the idea that you've had some obsessed fans that have sent you some really interesting things - you have to open up that fan mail.

"There have been shows when it's actually been a bit scary on stage because you know there are some really strange people out there who love you to the point of no return. I've been through all of that, and I understand a bit about it."

While Emily is quick to point out that she has never received death threats like those sent to her character, she *has* sometimes needed bodyguards.

"I do now understand the idea of singing at big shows and having all that security and having people beside you 24/7. As soon as you get onsite, these security guards won't let you out of their sight. Even when you're in the dressing room, there are two or three standing outside.

"So I do understand that side of it, and I can understand the frustration of Rachel, where she thinks she knows what's going on but she actually doesn't safety-wise. So to know and to have experienced some of the things she's gone through has helped me understand her more.

"I think the UK has got the best version of me playing Rachel. Back in 2017 when I played her, I was so excited to sing those songs that I hadn't really connected with the character as much as I do today."

But, says Emily, being in the public eye is part of the experience of being a performer.

"When I found my own fame, I realised this is something you can't escape from, so either you learn to deal with it or you drown. You sink or you swim.

"Rachel is very sharp but yet very vulnerable in certain parts of the show. When you first meet her, you don't realise that - but then, as you watch, you begin to see these vulnerable parts of her. My favourite part of playing her is showing people how vulnerable she really is. She's this absolute goddess of a superstar, but there's more to her than just that."

The part of bodyguard Frank is played by Ayden Callaghan, who's best known for playing Miles De Souza in Emmerdale and Joe Roscoe in Hollyoaks.

Emily says Rachel's behaviour towards Frank is probably her least attractive quality.

"What I don't like about her is probably the way she treats Frank in the beginning; it's pretty full-on."

Emily first discovered the film as a teenager but was a fan of Whitney Houston long before that.

"I started singing at a young age and was

listening to Whitney's songs. The music from this film is timeless."

And she loves being able to perform hits such as I Will Always Love You, Queen Of The Night, I Have Nothing, The Greatest Love Of All and How Will I Know.

"Probably the biggest challenge of the role is having to sing those difficult high-pitched songs every night - but at the same time, I'm so grateful to be singing those songs because not everybody can pull that off. You need a lot of sleep. You have to have the eight hours - a lot of rest, honey! - and don't talk when you don't need to.

"There are so many highlights of the show, but mine would probably be the end, when I sing I Will Always Love You. That's always a moment, and I feel like if I don't get that moment right, then I definitely haven't done my job. The audience have been waiting for that moment, so I have to nail it."

The Alexandra performances will be the first time Emily has visited Birmingham - and she is particularly looking forward to seeing it under the Christmas lights.

"It excites me to perform around Christmas. I know absolutely nothing about Birmingham, so I'm really looking forward to going there. I think a lot of the cast and crew members are really excited to show me around; they say it's a beautiful place."

And she is understandably keen for Birmingham theatre-goers to take a night off from pantomime and check out The Bodyguard.

"I hope everyone just really enjoys themselves. I want them to understand the story and what it's all about. It's such an incredible show. I feel like everyone will walk away either crying or blown away by how great it is."

.....
The Bodyguard shows at The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Monday 4 to Saturday 30 December



The Fair Maid Of The West

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 2 December - Sun 14 January

A play which featured in the opening programme of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre back in 1986, *The Fair Maid Of The West* this month makes a welcome return to the Stratford-upon-Avon venue for a short Christmas and New Year run.

The Thomas Heywood-written romp, first published in 1631, will certainly be in safe hands during its time at the RSC - the play is being directed by Isobel McArthur, whose West End show, *Pride &*

*Prejudice** (*sort of), last year won the Olivier Award for best comedy. This much-anticipated revival finds Amber James taking the lead role of Liz Bridges, a low-born tavern girl whose impressive skill at breaking up bar-room brawls comes in handy when - after receiving an inheritance - she purchases a ship, heads out on the storm-tossed seas, and finds herself unexpectedly engaging in the tricky business of international diplomacy...

Oil

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 December

Described as a play that blends 'family drama with riveting history, bringing the past vividly to life while shining a light on the future', Ella Hickson's explosive and critically acclaimed *Oil* focuses on the character of May, a woman who time-travels across more than 150 years. In so doing, she throws into sharp focus Britain's fraught relationship with its imperial past and its fossil-fuel dependence...

The production is being presented by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.



Saved

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 December

Controversial in its day, rarely revived in the decades since, and set in working-class South London in the 1960s, Edward Bond's *Saved* explores the way in which brutal and abhorrent behaviour can rear its ugly head when people exist in a dehumanising and morally bereft environment. When the play was originally staged in the mid-'60s, it outraged critics and caused alarm among audience members. Particularly shocking was a scene in which an illegitimate baby is stoned to death by a group of yobs...

This new production is presented by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

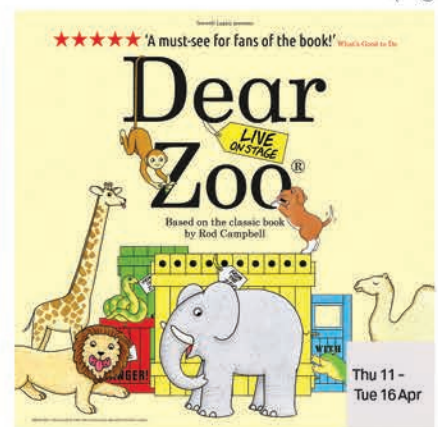
Six The Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 5 - Sat 9 December; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 27 February - Sun 3 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 18 - Sat 22 June

From Tudor queens to battling boss-women, the 2022 Tony Award-winning *Six The Musical* sees the wives of Henry VIII take to the stage 'to remix 500 years of historical heartbreak' and tell their own versions of their lives. In the process, the six aim to decide which of them was most badly treated by the notorious ex they all have in common...

A colourful show that sits somewhere between a Girls Aloud gig and a traditional musical, the one-act production - premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2017, where it was performed by a group of Cambridge University students - is a loud and proud 80-minute celebration of 21st-century girl power. The show sees the cast being ably supported by all-female band The Ladies In Waiting.







The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

The Rep, Birmingham, until Sun 28 January

This much-loved story from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. It sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of four youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia... Visiting Birmingham direct from the West End, the show features 'magical storytelling, bewitching stagecraft and incredible puppets'. "We have this epic stage and fantastic imagery," says the production's director, Michael Fentiman, "but there's not a lot of literal depiction of location of the show. Instead, we're asking the audience to take a leap with us. We work with an illusionist to try and do things that seem impossible. So the way we use magic and lighting and shift-of-focus achieves the possible from the seemingly impossible."

The Box Of Delights

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 7 January

The Box Of Delights, the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) festive family treat, is based on Poet Laureate John Masefield's fantasy novel of the same name, first published in 1935. Returning home for Christmas, schoolboy Kay Harker finds himself unexpectedly entrusted with a small wooden box that has magical powers beyond his wildest dreams. But a ne'er-do-well wizard is after the box and will stop at nothing to get it, even threatening to cancel Christmas... The RSC is promising theatre-goers a 'fantastically festive' production, with Justin Audibert taking the director's chair. Justin's previous work for the Company includes a critically acclaimed version of The Taming Of The Shrew back in 2019. The Box Of Delights is suitable for children aged seven-plus.



Nativity! The Musical

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Fri 8 - Thurs 28 December

Debbie Isitt's 2009 movie, Nativity!, proved so popular that it spawned three further films. It also inspired the Birmingham-born writer & director to create a musical stage adaptation. For those unfamiliar with the plot, it concerns the children of St Bernadette's primary school and their ambition to present a musical version of the nativity. An already big challenge for the kids is made all the trickier by false promises, a complicated love interest and a rival school vying with St Bernadette's for the critics' award... Not surprisingly, chaos ensues! "I always believed that Nativity! would make a fantastic stage musical," says Debbie. "It's so full of joy, the children are so sweet and the songs so catchy - it really does lend itself to being the perfect Christmas musical." This brand-new production features a cast of professionals performing alongside local young people and is suitable for audience members aged four and older.

Our Christmas Carol - A Musical

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 6 December - Sun 24 December

When Harold is widowed and his life comes to a grinding halt, daughter Sylvia is determined to put a spring back in his step. To do so, she hatches a plan to revive one of

her parents' special festive-season traditions - a performance of Dickens' A Christmas Carol, which they would routinely present for appreciative audiences in local venues. Now, with her mother having passed away, it falls to Sylvia to team up with Harold and perform the Dickens classic - albeit 'virtually'! 'Catchy songs, spontaneously created costumes and some very questionable props' all feature in this brand-new musical, which is here receiving its world premiere.

Rumpelstiltskin

Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Thurs 30 November - Sun 3 December

Now here's a fairytale that's rarely afforded the pantomime treatment. For those not familiar with the original story... A miller's daughter can spin pure gold from straw, and the nasty king expects her to do just that. But there's too much straw to spin in the time she's been allocated by the impatient monarch. Enter, Rumpelstiltskin, a curious little imp with supernatural powers, who is more than happy to save the young girl's bacon... as long as she agrees to his truly shocking demand...



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Snow White

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 2 December - Sun 7 January; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Fri 8 December - Wed 3 January; Prince of Wales, Cannock, Sat 23 - Sat 30 December

There's no guarantee nowadays that a pantomime version of Snow White will include her 'magnificent seven' mining pals - but even if the fellas are missing in action, there's still plenty about the much-loved fairytale to enjoy. Versions of the story are being presented at three major Midlands venues this Christmas... The Wolverhampton Grand's panto is always a high-energy and fun-filled extravaganza, and this year's production will be no exception, with ex-Eternal star Kéllé Bryan starring as Good Fairy Elementa.

Kéllé is joined in the show by CBeebies' Gyasi Shepp and Evie Pickerill, X Factor favourite Niki Colwell Evans, Tam Ryan and Ian Adams... Meanwhile, in Redditch, the stars of the Palace Theatre's production are Steps' Lee Latchford-Evans and Britain's Got Talent finalist Andrew Fleming... Snow White's wicked stepmother will also be asking "who's the fairest one of all?" - and not enjoying the answer she receives! - over in Cannock, where Maureen Nolan top-bills.

Cinderella

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 13 January; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 8 - Sun 31 December; Walsall Arena, Sat 9 - Sat 23 December; Malvern Theatres, Thurs 14 December - Sun 7 January

With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice, and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes (not this year, mind, where beanstalks are popping up all over the place!)

As is usual with the Belgrade's main-stage Christmas show, this year's production of Cinders has been written & directed by the multi-talented Iain Lauchlan... But Cinderella isn't going to the ball only in

Coventry this year. She's pulling on her bestest frock in Malvern and Walsall too - and also in Crewe, where you'll find X Factor winner Matt Terry joined by Malcolm Lord, Ste Johnson and Eve Parsons (pictured).



Peter Pan The Musical

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Tues 5 - Sun 31 December

Second star to the right and straight on till morning - that's the way to Neverland... This new theatrical production offers sure-to-be-awestruck young audiences the chance to fly away with the boy who wouldn't grow up to a magical island filled with adventure. The 'swashbuckling' production comes complete with 'captivating costumes, spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences'.

The Nutcracker

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

"The ambition to do a stage play of The Nutcracker is one I've treasured for some time," says New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins. "I want to bring together ETA Hoffman's original story, the adaptation by Alexandre Dumas and Tchaikovsky's music to tell the story of the enchanted Nutcracker, who takes a journey up the Christmas tree to the Kingdom of Sweets to settle a score with the ferocious Mouse Queen.

"It's going to be a gripping story that's absolutely jam-packed with magic, beautiful music and Christmas sparkle!"



FROM THE PRODUCERS OF  A CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR

PETER PAN



BOY GEORGE
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PANTO MEETS CIRQUE - BE AMAZED

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Peter Pan

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham,
Fri 22 & Sat 23 December

The producers behind last year's arena-filling pantomime *Elf The Musical* are at it again this festive season. A new production of *Peter Pan*, which they're proclaiming a 'supersize spectacle', comes complete with special effects, aerial stunts, immersive digital sets and even a huge floating galleon. Oh, and there's a cast of 50 as well, including a dozen cirque performers, a troupe of Irish and Highland dancers, rising comedy star Jordan Conway, and pop icon Boy George (another Boy who never grew up?) as the villainous Captain Hook. "Although the show has traditional pantomime elements," says George, "it is so much more, being a mix of cirque and 'spectacular event'. And what's more, I get the chance to fight a giant animatronic crocodile! What's not to like?!"

Beauty And The Beast

Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 7 January; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 8 - Sun 31 December; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 2 December - Sat 6 January

When a young woman is captured by a hideous beast, she finds herself facing a life of isolation in his mysterious palace. The Beast, too, is trapped - seemingly forever - inside the grotesquery of his physical appearance, the consequence of a spell cast

upon him by an evil witch. Only Beauty's ability to look beyond his ugliness and see the person within can save him... So that's the storyline, but what about the panto element? Well, it's fair to assume that all the traditional aspects of pantomime will be present and correct in the three above-listed productions; we're thinking custard pies, double entendres, slapstick comedy and hilariously costumed Dames...

And speaking of the latter... Sam Rabone will yet again be donning a nice frock or several at the Garrick, where this year he's returning to star as Madame Bellie Fillop. Stafford Gatehouse's production, meanwhile, sees CBBC star and one-time Pop Idol contestant Mark Rhodes headlining... As for the Roses production, although it doesn't boast a 'star name', we're confident it will nevertheless prove to be a real, er, Beauty of a family show...



Mark Rhodes



Lichfield Garrick



Roses Theatre Tewkesbury

Treasure Island

Telford Theatre, Oakengates, Shropshire,
Fri 8 December - Sat 6 January

Robert Louis Stevenson's high-seas caper here gets the pantomime treatment, as young Jim Hawkins heads off on the adventure of a lifetime - one which will see him not only setting sail in search of buried treasure, but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind... Boasting 'beautiful scenery, colourful costumes, a live band, dazzling dance routines, great songs and plenty of

laughter', this brand-new show stars *Strictly Come Dancing*'s Katya Jones, West End favourite Shelley Anne Rivers and Coronation Street actor Tom Roberts.



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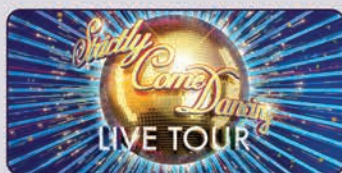
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bluestone

Jack And The Beanstalk is popping up all over the region...



Birmingham Hippodrome



Artrix, Bromsgrove



Swan Theatre, Worcester

Jack's back!

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, until Sun 7 January; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Mon 4 December - Sun 7 January; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 9 December - Sun 7 January; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Sat 9 - Sun 31 December; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 15 December - Sun 7 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 15 December - Sun 7 January; Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 16 December - Sun 28 January

Big and beautiful beanstalks are bustin' out all over the Midlands this festive season! No fewer than seven of the region's theatres are presenting pantomime versions of much-loved fairytale Jack And The Beanstalk - a story which sees a young lad named, yep, you guessed it, Jack, selling the family cow in return for a handful of beans...

But these are no ordinary beans, of course. These are magic beans. Beans from which a mighty beanstalk grows! And when Jack climbs to the top of it, he finds himself face-to-face with a decidedly unfriendly money-counting ogre...

The story of Jack And The Beanstalk is thought by some to be a staggering five millennia old. It was presented in print form

for the first time, so far as anyone knows, in 1734, under the title The Story Of Jack Spriggins And The Enchanted Bean.

Its history as a pantomime, meanwhile, stretches back to the early 19th century, since which time it's been a popular choice with theatres across the land at Christmastime... And clearly never more so than this year, given the number of productions available for Midlandsers to enjoy!...

Birmingham Hippodrome's pantomime is routinely considered to be the region's biggest, and 2023 sees the venue once again mounting a sure-to-be-spectacular show. Alison Hammond, Samantha Womack and Hippodrome favourite Matt Slack top-bill in the company of Doreen Tipton and 'panto dame extraordinaire' Andrew Ryan...

If you fancy seeing Jack climbing a beanstalk in the north of the Midlands, then check out the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent, where Jonathan Wilkes is headlining as usual. Johnny is this year joined by one-time Hear'Say star Noel Sullivan and Hollyoaks and Torchwood actor Kai Owen...

Over in Shrewsbury, the inimitable Brad Fitt is both pulling on the frocks and sitting in

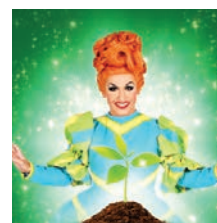
the director's chair for Theatre Severn's offering, which opened late last month...

Heading to the south of the region, the ever-fabulous JP McCue is starring as Dame Dolly in the Royal Spa Centre Leamington's version of the popular fairytale...

There's also some beanstalk-climbing, ogre-slaying action unfolding at the Swan Theatre Worcester and Artrix in Bromsgrove, the latter of which is this year hosting The Core Solihull's pantomime...

Last but certainly not least, Jack is also biting off more than he can comfortably chew at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, in a show being presented by pantomime specialists TaleGate Theatre Productions.

To discover more about these various versions of Jack And The Beanstalk, check out the venues' websites. Then buy yourself a ticket or several and get ready for some no-holds-barred festive-season family fun!



Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



Sutton Coldfield Town Hall



FULL OF BEANS!

Much-loved television personality Alison Hammond makes her home-city panto debut this festive season, taking on the role of Spirit of the Beans in Birmingham Hippodrome's production of Jack And The Beanstalk. What's On caught up with the Great British Bake Off star as she prepared to bring some added sparkle to the second city's giant of a pantomime...

You're playing Spirit of the Beans - can you talk a little bit about the character?

She brings the magic, she brings the nature, she brings the lols, she brings the vibes. That's what the Spirit of the Beans is gonna be doing in this panto. I'm gonna bring it, babes, I'm gonna be bringing the vibes!

And this is obviously your debut Brum panto...

I've done panto before, but yes, this is my first Brum panto, which I've wanted to do all my life. I'm really excited!

What initially drew you to panto?

Well, my mum brought us up on panto. Every year we'd go and see panto on Boxing Day. Boxing Day is a bit of a pants day anyway, a bit dry, so we always went to panto. I went into pantos after Big Brother, and then I stopped for, like, 10 years. This is my first panto back. I might be a little bit rusty, but I can't wait.

What are you most looking forward to about the production itself?

Working with Matt Slack because he's so funny. I find him hilarious! I've seen and met him before but never worked with him, so I'm looking forward to that, and to seeing what his creativity is like. Meeting the cast, going out for drinks. You become a kid again! I'm also really looking forward to going home to my own bed every single night! I've never had that. Every panto I've done I've been away from home, so this is lovely! It's a six-week run and it's going to be so much fun.

What makes the story of Jack And The Beanstalk suitable for the panto treatment?

You've got giants, you've got beanstalks, you've got the comedy, the dancing element, the singing. You've got me! What more do you need?!

Did you have a favourite pantomime growing up?

Cinderella is my favourite, if I'm honest with you. One day I will be Cinderella. I know it's gonna happen. It's always been my favourite. I

don't know why; it's just a story I've always loved. I've never done Jack And The Beanstalk, though, so I can't wait!

Do you have any Christmas traditions that you're determined to fit in, despite the heavy workload?

It's lovely because I will be at home. I'll be able to do all the decorations! It's going to be lovely not having to drive into London all the time. Traditions? I've definitely got to do the German market because I'll be in town. We always go if we can. Always buy a new tree! I'll get a nice, fresh turkey ordered, a nice table setting; all of that.

And what would your perfect Christmas Day look like?

It looks like the typical Christmas Day. Wake up early. I put the turkey in early, 5am. I know that sounds really early! All the veg is prepared the night before. Get that food on, so that by 12 we're eating dinner. I'm an early-dinner person! King's speech, chill out, fall asleep, games in the evening, goodnight. More turkey sandwiches before I go to bed too.

What was your best Christmas present, or something that was really memorable to you?

So, you know I love Chinese? I asked Mum if Santa could bring me a Chinese for Christmas - and low and behold, Santa is amazing and brought me spare ribs and fried rice. I had it for breakfast, and it was one of the best Christmases ever! I loved it. Santa is the best. It's true!

Obviously Birmingham has changed a lot since you were younger. In what ways is the city different?

I used to know Birmingham like the back of my hand! I go in now and get lost and end up with a ticket because I've gone down a bus lane or a taxi lane. I never know where to park, so I just try and get the train now into Moor Street and go and do my shopping and stuff. I just don't know it as well. Then there's the clean-air charge too.

Do you still love it?

Yeah! I still go to the same shops - I'm quite boring. Same old shops, do my threading, get my hair done, go to the wig shop, get some colour for my hair. Go to McDonald's. I do all the same things.

You're often referred to as the Queen of Birmingham. How does it feel to have that title?

Well, it's pretty silly really because I'm not royalty, first of all! I do quite like it, though. I do secretly like the title, but in my heart I'm just me.

How was the Bake Off experience for you?

It was one of the most wonderful experiences I've ever had. Think about it, your work place is outside, sunny weather, cake everywhere! You can eat as much as you want; there's no restriction. Lovely clothes. Lovely bakers! The nicest bakers! Honestly, I fell in love with them. There were tears from me too.

Is this series one of the best to date?

Obviously - I'm in it! It's never had me in it before, so of course!

And finally, if you could change one thing about the world in 2024, what would it be and why?

I'd stop social media and go back to life without it. I think it would solve a lot of issues and help a lot of teenagers and a lot of people.

Alison stars as Spirit of the Beans in Jack And The Beanstalk at Birmingham Hippodrome from Saturday 16 December to Sunday 28 January.

For further information and bookings, visit: [.birminghamhippodrome.com](https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com)



Oh No! Shark In The Snow

Birmingham Town Hall,
Wed 27 December - Sun 31 December

Nick Sharratt has illustrated hundreds of books, a significant number of which have been his own. One of these is the hugely successful *Shark In The Park!*, a children's story about a young lad named Timothy who goes to his local park to try out his new telescope. While there, he thinks he spots a shark - and not just on one occasion either, but several times in several places! The popularity of the book prompted Nick to write and illustrate two follow-ups - *Shark In The Dark!* and *Shark In The Park On A Windy Day!*... Now, this fun new production brings together the original story (plus *Shark In The Dark!*) with *Oh No! Shark In The Snow* - 'an enchanting winter tale' that puts a fresh and festive twist on the original.

Motionhouse: Starchitects Save Santa!

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
until Sat 30 December

After scoring a stellar success with *Starchitects*, Motionhouse dance company now returns with a family-friendly sequel-show - and not a moment too soon, by the look of it! Why? Because it's Christmas Eve, Santa's gone missing, and the festive season is in serious danger of being cancelled. Cue, the *Starchitects* - a group of adventurous friends who blast off into the galaxy to rescue the gift-dispensing Mr Claus.

Featuring 'gravity-defying choreography and amazing digital projections', this brand-new production is being hailed by Motionhouse as 'a visual spectacle like no other'. If the company's first *Starchitects* show is anything to go by, you won't be disappointed.



Dear Santa

Octagon Stafford, Sat 2 - Mon 4 December;
Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 11 - Sun 24
December; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues
12 - Sun 24 December

Presented with the intention of giving children aged two to seven both a fun introduction to theatre and a memorable yuletide treat, Rod Campbell's *Dear Santa* tells the tale of Father Christmas' backfiring attempts to sort out the most fantastic of festive gifts for a girl named Sarah. With the assistance of his cheeky Elf, he finally settles on the perfect prezzie...

Snow Play

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
Tues 12 - Sun 24 December

There's no curbing Lyngo Theatre's enthusiasm when it comes to entertaining young audiences. Not only are they touring with *Little Red Riding Hood* (see opposite page), they're also out and about with *Snow Play*, a production that's described as a showdown between Winter and Spring over 'who gets to stay and who has to go away'. Audiences can join in the fun by making a snowman and getting stuck into a massive snowball fight. Seriously, what's not to like?...

Santa's Sparkly Surprise

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Thurs 7 - Sun 24 December

Quite where Iain Lauchlan gets his energy and enthusiasm come the festive season is a mystery. But no matter what the answer is to

that particular yuletide conundrum, there's no denying his impact on 'Christmas at the Belgrade'. Not only is he directing this year's pantomime production of *Cinderella*, he also wrote the show *and* managed to find time to scribe this sure-to-be-magical production for pre-school audiences.

The 35-minute presentation catches up with Rudolph and Mouse at the North Pole, as they realise that everybody's been so busy getting presents ready for children around the world that they've completely forgotten to prepare for Christmas themselves.

With no decorations, no Christmas tree and no prezzies, they're going to need the help of all the children in the audience to make sure that Christmas is every bit as special as it should be...

Little Red Riding Hood

The Rep, Birmingham,
Thurs 7 December - Sat 6 January

Inspired by the spectacular success of last year's *Jack And The Magic Beanstalk*, The Rep has once again created a show to delight audience members aged three to six.

This year's offering takes families into the darkness of the woods for an adventure with *Little Red Riding Hood*, a young girl who's not only good at looking after her grandma but also knows a thing or two about outwitting big hairy wolves who'd like to make a meal of her...





The Gruffalo

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 2 - Sun 31 December

With millions of copies of the book having been sold, it's fair to say that Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's award-winning Gruffalo has captured the hearts and minds of children everywhere.

Tall Stories' stage adaptation follows Mouse as he heads out on a journey through the deep dark wood, scaring away hungry animals with tales of the terrifying Gruffalo...



Imagine his surprise, then, when he suddenly finds himself coming face-to-face with the very creature he's imagined!

Tall Stories' delicate yet playful approach to their material - and their ability to let whatever story they're telling speak for itself, without flashy gimmicks or over-the-top costumes - places them at the very forefront of family theatre.

An imaginative and engaging musical that comes complete with some good old-fashioned audience participation, The Gruffalo offers truly 'monstrous' fun for children aged three and older.

Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 28 December

The Horrible Histories team visits Birmingham in the dying days of 2023 to present 'the terrific tale of Christmas'.

Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas himself are among the characters who turn up in Horrible Histories, Horrible Christmas - a show that features everything from 'Victorian villains and medieval monks, to puritan parties and Tudor treats'.



the Peak District-based Vagabonds. "We believe that stories have the power to connect us, inspire us, and teach us about ourselves and the world around us. We create stories that are both entertaining and thought-provoking, and we hope that our work will leave a lasting impression on our audiences." There's every chance that this festive-season offering will do just that, as main character Lucy engages in a wild turkey chase of epic proportions, hoping against hope that she can somehow manage to recover her bothersome brother's beloved bear from the mysterious Christmas Toyshop...



whom think they've got the answer... Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer, Jingle Bells, When Santa Got Stuck Up The Chimney, The Twelve Days Of Christmas and We Wish You A Merry Christmas are among the songs featured in this 45-minute show. Created for kids aged two to eight, the production also includes a meet-and-greet with Father Christmas, who'll be handing out a gift to every youngster.

Little Red Riding Hood

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Sat 9 - Sun 10 December

Hailed for their exceptional visual style and imaginative use of props, children's theatre company Lyngo here turn their attention to the famous fairytale in which a little girl discovers that there's way more to Granny than initially meets the eye...



The Christmas Toyshop Mystery

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Sat 16 - Sat 23 December

Those Babbling Vagabonds make a welcome return with a show that's set to delight family audiences this Christmas.

"Our work is rooted in storytelling," explain

Santa's Christmas Wish

The Civic, Stourport-on-Severn, Fri 1 December; Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 9 - Sun 10 December; Benn Hall, Rugby, Sat 9 December; Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock, Sun 10 December

Dotty the Elf is wondering what Santa wants for Christmas and needs help to find out. Enter, Dasher the Reindeer, Pompom the Penguin and Snowy the Snowman, all of



JOLY GOOD FUN

Probably best known from hit Channel Four series *Trigger Happy TV*, Dom Joly is heading out on the road with brand-new offering *The Conspiracy Tour*... What's On chats to him about the show, his life, and what makes him angry...

You're hitting the road with new show The Conspiracy Tour in February. What can we expect?

It's a companion to my latest travel book, *The Conspiracy Tourist*, in which I travelled the globe looking into the strange world of the Conspiracy theorist. I will take the audience through some of the wackiest conspiracy theories out there and explain what I think of them. I'm pretty much a sceptic, and so, for balance, I'll be joined by an eminent conspiracy theorist: Dr Julian Northcote (author of the book *COWS! Britain's Secret Killers*). Expect fireworks.

What sort of conspiracy theories did you look at?

I took my long-suffering wife to Finland for a holiday in order to prove that it exists. There's a theory that it doesn't. I also went on a massive road trip across America, popping into Denver International Airport - rumoured to be the assembly point for the Illuminati come the Rapture. I investigated UFOs with a visit to Roswell, New Mexico. I looked into the JFK assassination in Dallas. I chased Alex Jones, the Info Wars grifter, around Austin, Texas. I also took a flat-earther to one of the four corners of the square flat earth - an island called Fogo, off Newfoundland. It didn't go well...

Why the interest in conspiracy theories?

Conspiracies used to be fun. Did we land on the moon, Bigfoot, was Paul McCartney cloned? Nowadays they've gone batshit insane. They've infected the body politic, with the actual President of the United States supporting Q Anon and urging people to inject themselves with bleach. It's dangerous and being used by a series of grifters to terrify gullible people and fleece them for money. It makes me angry, but it's also often very funny.

This isn't your first travel book...

No, it's my fifth. Over the last 15 years or so, I've travelled to more than 100 countries and written about some pretty strange stuff. I went on a coach trip around North Korea, an assassination vacation across America, skiing in Iran, walking the length of Lebanon, monster-hunting in the Congo, and joined an illegal crossing of the US/Mexican border. I even spent a night in Swindon! I seem to be attracted to dark destinations...

You grew up in Lebanon. Is this why you like this sort of travel?

Possibly. I grew up in the middle of a vicious civil war, and yet I had an unusual but wonderful childhood. Lebanon is an exciting, beautiful place, and I always try to find the

same in other places that maybe have a bad public image. My favourite fact about growing up in Lebanon was that I went to school with Osama Bin Laden for a year. I was six, he was 18, so we weren't friends, but I long to get a school photo. The weirdest part is that it was a Quaker school - Quakers being famous for pacifism.

You first shot to fame in Trigger Happy TV. How did that happen?

I did my life the wrong way round... most people do silly stuff when they're young and then knuckle down. I did the opposite. I was a diplomat in Prague and a producer for ITN in parliament. Then I started making satirical comedy but fell into just trying to be as funny as possible when Channel Four spotted my stuff and asked me to make *Trigger Happy TV*. I am immensely proud of it; I put blood, sweat and tears into every episode. We sold the show to 80 countries and it opened so many doors for me.

What were your favourite moments making the show?

Often they were the behind-the-scenes, private jokes. We used to work next to the office where Tony Blackburn worked, and we got his autograph every morning, at exactly the same time for seven months, and he never noticed. Also, while dressed as a traffic warden, I once gave a fire engine a ticket while they were putting out a small fire, only to find that I'd lost my cameraman and nobody was filming! My favourite *Trigger Happy* sketch was probably the large snail crossing the road, because only in Britain would the traffic stop and wait so patiently as I crawled across excruciatingly slowly.

What makes you laugh?

If I had to sum it up, it would be 'travelling vast distances and making an enormous effort to do something totally pointless'. My favourite sketch of all time was actually in a sequel to *Trigger Happy TV* called *World Shut Your Mouth*, in which we flew all the way to Northern Canada to 'frighten an Eskimo' by sneaking up behind him and crashing a large pair of cymbals together before running away and flying back home in triumph.

What makes you happy?

My dogs. All dogs, actually - except for little ones. No dog should be smaller than a cat.

What makes you angry?

How much time do you have? Jacob Rees Mogg, trains, bigotry, bullies, injustice, poor grammar, Boris Johnson, tax dodgers, people failing upwards, grifters, Covid deniers, bureaucracy, traffic wardens, people who

stand up the moment the plane lands, people who say eXpresso, automated customer services, Elon Musk, religious zealots, scammers, Q&As, Swindon...

What have been the highlights of your career so far?

Learning to fly a hot-air balloon. Getting the BBC to pay for me to visit all Seven Wonders of the World in one trip, just to stand in front of each one and say, "That...is shit..." Making a show called *Dom Joly's Happy Hour* for Sky One, in which I travelled the world getting drunk with my best friend; the Sky lawyers got nervous and asked me not to say that I was 'getting drunk' - would I instead mind saying that I was 'investigating cultural attitudes towards alcohol'. Surviving for three weeks on *The Island With Bear Grylls*; I lost three stone and nearly my leg. Getting my Alexa to turn on all the lights in my sitting room when I tell it to.

What do your family think about your life?

A strange mix of pride, confusion and disappointment. My wife, Stacey, is Canadian, much nicer than me, and is often very embarrassed by my behaviour. My daughter, Parker, just graduated from Oxford Uni and is now working at the university looking into a cure for Alzheimer's. My son, Jackson, has just started at Durham and has exceptional music taste, which I like to think I had a part in. We are a very argumentative family. We once drove across the Canadian Rockies in a motor home. If we'd recorded the trip, I'm convinced that we'd have had the best reality show in history... except for *Below Deck*.

What does the future hold?

Who bloody knows? I'm developing a *Trigger Happy* movie. I'm working on a TV series of *The Conspiracy Tourist* for the US. I've only just really discovered radio, and it's something that I really want to explore further. I also have a list of places I've yet to go to. Algeria is currently top of my list. I'm obsessed with the place. My son and I want to go storm-chasing in America. I want to walk the Cotswold Way with my dogs.

.....
Dom Joly: The Conspiracy Tour visits Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Wednesday 21 February; The Old Rep, Birmingham, on Thursday 22 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday 13 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, on Saturday 16 March and Lichfield Garrick Theatre on Tuesday 26 March

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Light entertainment from around the region



Sh**ged, Married, Annoyed

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Wed 13 December

With their Sh**ged Married Annoyed podcast boasting more than 100 million downloads, it's no surprise that amiable husband & wife team Chris & Rosie Ramsey decided to take the show out of the studio and onto the road. The first leg of the tour met with a lukewarm response from the critics, with many feeling that the sense of intimacy generated in the podcast was somewhat lacking in the cavernous spaces of the UK's biggest arenas. With all of that in mind, and lessons probably learned, Chris & Rosie are now out on the road again. The show deserves to succeed, so fingers crossed it ticks the boxes.

Fairytale Of New York

Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 14 December

With a West End run and two sell-out tours under its belt, Fairytale Of New York visits the Midlands in fine fettle and with an enviable reputation in tow.

The high-energy production - described by its publicity as 'the ultimate feelgood Irish-inspired Christmas show' - features a cast of singers, musicians & dancers performing a selection of much-loved yuletide songs - from chart-toppers such as White Christmas to traditional carols like Silent Night. Throw in some of 'the greatest Irish singalong songs of all time' and you've got the kind of show that should well and truly put you in the Christmas spirit.

Ladbaby: Live, Laugh, Love - Live

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 17 December

LadBaby's history makes for quite the story. The fella behind the name is Mark Hoyle, who found fame on YouTube back in 2016 when he used the platform to document his own journey from 'lad to dad'. Joined in his humorous endeavours by wife Roxanne, LadBaby has since released a number of Christmas songs (to raise money for food-bank charity The Trussell Trust), published bestselling children's books, launched sell-out clothing lines and a podcast, and is now hitting the road with this 'Christmas extravaganza'.

Mark and Roxanne are promising plenty of singing, dancing and audience participation - and even some 'on-stage head-to-head live couples battles'!

Favourite podcast features, such as Date

Night Diaries, Living With A Southerner, Dial A Dilemma and Guess That Sound, are also included.

Home Alone In Concert

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Wed 20 December

The experience of watching hit 1990 festive family film Home Alone on a giant HD screen, while a live orchestra and choir perform its John Williams-composed score, has been bringing pleasure to Christmas audiences for a decade now.

For those who've never seen the movie but would appreciate a heads-up, it tells the story of eight-year-old Kevin McCallister (played by Macaulay Culkin in his breakthrough role), who is accidentally left behind when his family leaves for a Christmas vacation.

To make matters worse, Kevin finds himself having to defend the family home against two bungling burglars, brilliantly played by Daniel Stern and, at the height of his Goodfellas-inspired fame, the inimitable Joe Pesci...

The Rat Pack: Christmas In Vegas

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 December

The warm and authentic friendship between Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr - particularly during its heyday in the late 1950s and early 1960s - continues to be the stuff of legend.

The three superstar singers, affectionately known as The Rat Pack, were fun-loving guys who brought entertainment to millions with a nice'n'easy style it was hard to dislike... This seriously impressive touring show, paying loving tribute to Frank, Dean and

Sammy, is packed to its yuletide rafters with memorable tunes - from Frank's My Way, through Dean's Amore, to Sammy's Mr Bojangles. It also features a host of festive favourites, including Winter Wonderland, Let It Snow and White Christmas.

The D-Day Darlings: A Christmas To Remember

Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 22 December

With their appearance on Britain's Got Talent having worked wonders for their profile and record sales, The D-Day Darlings usually specialise in nostalgic songs from the wartime era but are here extending their repertoire to include a selection of much-loved festive favourites.

Featuring The D-Day Darlings Voices Choir, young trailblazers The D-Day Juniors, 'dazzling costumes and eye-catching choreography', the show includes such classics as Jingle Bells, Santa Clause is Comin' To Town and When A Child Is Born. The ensemble's much-loved duet of White Christmas with the late Dame Vera Lynn also features.

An Evening Of Burlesque

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 12 December

Fun, feathers and fabulous costumes abound when the UK's longest-running burlesque show brings some wintertime cheer to Birmingham Town Hall this month.

Alongside the obligatory champagne showgirls, there's cabaret, comedy, music and circus to enjoy. The entertainment is all brought together in a manner that means the evening is best attended only by audience members who're 18 years of age or older.



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Dance previews from across the region



Birmingham Royal Ballet: The Nutcracker

Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 17 November - Sat 9 December

Sir Peter Wright's version of this firm festive favourite returns to the Hippodrome courtesy (of course) of Birmingham Royal Ballet. Created in 1990 as a thank-you to the city for its support of the company following its move to the Midlands from London's Sadler Wells, Sir Peter's production is seen by many as the finest interpretation of Tchaikovsky's magnificent and mesmerising score.

In true Christmas spirit, the story follows the young Clara as she's swept up in a fantasy of soldiers, giant rats, snow fairies, magic and mystery, before finally being transformed into a beautiful ballerina. A magical, must-see show for theatre-going dance lovers everywhere, the production was last year enhanced by a £1million makeover.

Dancing In A Winter Wonderland With Aljaz And Janette

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Sun 10 December

Janette Manrara and Aljaz Skorjanec take to the stage in a production that sees them combining 'world-class choreography, fabulous costumes and amazing sets' with the greatest hits of Christmas. The Strictly Come Dancing favourites are joined in the show by a supporting cast of dancers and singers.



Wizard Of Oz

Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock,
Wed 13 December

Ballet Theatre UK are inviting audiences to join them on the Yellow Brick Road this Christmas, as they visit Cannock with their two-act full-length ballet adaptation of L Frank Baum's iconic story. First performed by the company in 2019 and set to a classical score, the production is presented with 'beautiful backdrops, stunning theatrical sets' and costumes evoking the iconic sketches by WW Denslow that featured in the original book, published in 1900.

All About The Fight: Going The Distance!

Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton,
Tues 19 December

Sterran Dance Theatre have partnered with Bright Star Boxing Academy to develop this cross-discipline presentation, exchanging skills and 'exploring the creative possibilities between dance and boxing'. Drawing on the personal experiences of members of the company, the highly physical piece explores the emotional fight which people can face for approval, survival, recognition and success.



SAVING SANTA!



**Dance company Motionhouse's
Starchitects return, this time
to save Christmas...**

Motionhouse is offering young theatre-goers the chance to enjoy a cosmic Christmas treat at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre this month. A follow-up to the Leamington-based dance company's critically acclaimed Starchitects, brand-new production Starchitects Save Santa! finds the same group of intrepid children engaging in a fun-filled space adventure...

Dance-circus company Motionhouse have teamed up with Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) to present a new festive show which promises to be an absolute Christmas cracker.

Featuring high-flying choreography and dramatic digital projection, Starchitects Save Santa! tells the story of a group of children who are blasted into space to find Santa Claus after he disappears on Christmas Eve. Racing against time to ensure youngsters everywhere receive their presents, the kids soon find themselves caught up in an intergalactic adventure like no other.

The production follows on from the huge success of Motionhouse's Starchitects show, which first introduced audiences to these intrepid children and their fun-filled space missions.

Both shows have been created and choreographed by Motionhouse's founder & artistic director, Kevin Finnan, who says the new production will appeal to children and adults alike.

"To make a really good Christmas show and a really good children's show, what you do is try and make it fun for everyone. So we're performing with a high level of skill, and there are a lot of things to watch and admire for adults and children together.

"We've been really pleased with the success of Starchitects. It's the same characters this time too; so a bit like the Famous Five, I think the Starchitects are going to have lots of different adventures.

"The new story is easy to follow. This time the Starchitects are all excited, it's nearly Christmas and everyone is waiting. But then something happens to Santa in space, so the Starchitects take it upon themselves to rescue him and save Christmas."

The Leamington Spa-based company has built up a worldwide reputation for its dramatic combinations of circus, dance and projection, and Kevin says the new show very much builds on that.

"It's always been Motionhouse's ambition to make really exciting, immersive shows, so we interact with projections, we use dance-

circus, we use aerial work and we include a lot of fun.

"This works really well in children's shows, as they're built around a sense of play, so we combine all these elements as dynamically as we can. So the dancers interact with the films to create an exciting explosion of action."

Starchitects Save Santa! is the first time Motionhouse has created a production for the festive season.

"I've never done a Christmas show in my life, and it's been tremendous fun," says Kevin. "We've really enjoyed creating the show and have been looking forward to bringing it to children.

"MAC has been there for us for years and years and has been a great supporter, so it's a real pleasure to be working with the venue to bring this new commission to the audience there."

MAC's chief executive & artistic director, Deborah Kermode, first discovered the Starchitects four years ago - and was immediately eager to bring their adventures to the Cannon Hill Park-located arts centre.

"I saw Starchitects at the Motionhouse studio space in Leamington, and it was really cheeky," she says. "Like all their work, it was really high quality, but it had a real playfulness about it. I thought it would be interesting to invite them to present it as a Christmas show.

"It's really unusual because most Christmas shows tend to have a much more familiar storyline or a more traditional approach to Christmas - even things like panto or some very well-known children's books. What excited me about the work was that it's more universal, in terms of our international community that we serve and what the festive season means to them. For some of these communities, the festive season doesn't always mean a traditional Christmas, but it is a chance to be with their families, have time off, and come to MAC to see a show."

For Deborah and the team, Christmas is a key part of their annual programme.

"We are absolutely committed to doing a high-quality family show at Christmas every

year, and it tends to be for younger children rather than for older teens. We really want young ones to feel at the heart of that Christmas presentation and feel the joy and the buzz about it.

"Christmas is the only show where we make a commitment to so many performances - more than 60 this year - so it's our commitment to doing a long run."

Although MAC aims to put itself at the heart of the community all year round, this is especially true at Christmas. Audience members are offered the chance to 'gift a ticket' - providing an opportunity for a child to enjoy a show which they might not otherwise have been able to see - and there are relaxed and British Sign Language performances available throughout the run.

"More and more people are visiting our relaxed performances," says Deborah. "Relaxed isn't just about children; it could be a family member with dementia, or someone who has considerations of their own. It's about making theatre open to as many people as possible."

MAC has a long relationship with Motionhouse, having showcased many of the company's works in the past. Deborah is proud the arts centre is premiering Starchitects Save Santa!.

"It's fantastic to be thinking that organisations such as MAC can pioneer in this relationship with this work and send it on its way. We want to have a generous relationship with the sector; it's really important that we keep making new work or adapting work.

"I think audiences will be excited about the physicality of Starchitects Save Santa!. There are lots of fantastic visuals, and the chemistry between the dancers is really beautiful. It's very daredevil and I'm sure all of our audiences will be impressed."

.....
Starchitects Save Santa! shows at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, until Saturday 30 December

Film highlights in December...

Wonka CERT tbc (116 mins)

Starring **Timothée Chalamet, Olivia Colman, Hugh Grant, Sally Hawkins, Rowan Atkinson, Matt Lucas**
Directed by **Paul King**

It's certainly proving to be a sweet end to 2023 for Midlands fans of *Charlie And The Chocolate Factory*. Not only did the touring stage musical make an autumn stop-off in the region, but now there's this intriguing new film to enjoy.

In a story that's set a quarter of a century before the events of Roald Dahl's classic children's book, Timothée Chalamet stars as Willy Wonka, a young man who's chockful of ideas and determined to change the world one delectable bite at a time...

The character was first brought to life by Gene Wilder in a 1971 big-screen adaptation - and it's that much-loved film which proved to be the inspiration for Wonka director Paul King.

"What I wanted this movie to be was like a companion piece to that movie," Paul told EW. "If you imagine those people in that world 25 years earlier, that was my starting process. Eventually, he would grow into that person and that factory."

Released Fri 8 December



Renaissance: A Film By Beyoncé (170 mins)

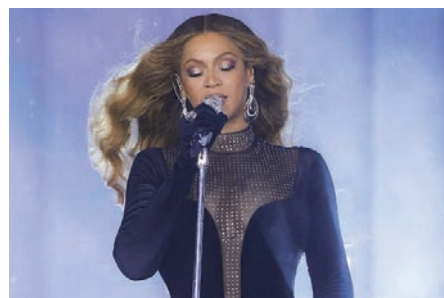
Starring **Beyoncé, Blue Ivy Carter**

If you love Beyonce but weren't able to get a ticket to see her on her record-busting Renaissance world tour earlier this year, fear not - you can now catch up with your idol and her critically acclaimed production on a cinema screen instead!

As well as featuring footage of the show itself, the film follows Queen Bey's creative journey in producing the concert, reflecting her involvement in every aspect of the process.

Renaissance isn't the first time Beyonce has released a film about herself. Most notable among previous such endeavours was the Netflix documentary *Homecoming*, which focused on a set she played at Coachella in 2018.

Released Fri 1 December



Eileen CERT 15 (97 mins)

Starring **Thomasin McKenzie, Anne Hathaway, Shea Whigham, Sam Nivola, Siobhan Fallon Hogan, Tonye Patano**
Directed by **William Oldroyd**



This film version of Ottessa Moshfegh's debut novel made a big impression at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and looks set to score a hit with the cinema-going public when it's released this month.

The title character works in a youth prison in 1960s Massachusetts and longs for some excitement in her life. Enter, glamorous and enigmatic prison psychologist Dr Rebecca St John, who captivates Eileen from the off. But as the two women grow closer, Eileen's life takes a dark and sinister twist, as she becomes unwittingly entangled in Rebecca's mysterious past.

Released Fri 1 December

Aquaman And The Lost Kingdom CERT tbc (115 mins)

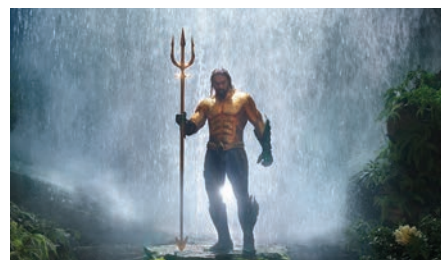
Starring **Jason Momoa, Ben Affleck, Patrick Wilson, Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Dolph Lundgren, Nicole Kidman**
Directed by **James Wan**

Having failed once before to defeat Aquaman, Black Manta - still driven by the need to avenge his father's death - will stop at nothing to take down the King of Atlantis once and for all.

But defeating Aquaman is no paddle in the sea, particularly when our underwater hero forms an unlikely alliance with his imprisoned brother, Orm...

DC Comics continues to trail arch rivals Marvel when it comes to making movies that chime with superhero-loving cinema-goers, so the company will surely be hoping against hope that this sequel Aquaman movie goes at least some way towards shifting that long-term-stubborn dial.

Released Wed 20 December



The Iron Claw CERT tbc (130 mins)

Starring **Zac Efron, Holt McCallany, Harris Dickinson, Jeremy Allen White, Michael Harney, Lily James**
Directed by **Sean Durkin**

Driven to succeed by their domineering father, the inseparable Von Erich brothers made history in the intensely competitive world of professional wrestling during the early 1980s.

But for all their success, tragedy held them in a headlock from which they just couldn't seem to escape, leading to rumours that a curse had been placed on the family.

"They put these walls up to the outside world in order to stay strong enough to persevere through everything they had to do," Iron Claw star Zac Efron told Entertainment Weekly. "They had to be perfect all the time..."

"It just doesn't seem like this could all happen to one family. There's a huge element of the movie that is, of course, about wrestling and the showmanship aspect. But really, at its core, this movie's an incredible story about family, love, loss, and ultimately the triumph of a man who tries to break the cycle of a crazy curse."

Released Fri 22 December



Anyone But You CERT tbc

Starring **Sydney Sweeney, Glen Powell, Alexandra Shipp, Darren Barnet, Bryan Brown, Joe Davidson** Directed by **Will Gluck**

Bea and Ben look like the perfect couple and have an amazing first date. But then something happens that turns their fiery hot attraction ice cold.

The next time they meet is at a destination wedding in Australia; at which point they do what any two sensibly minded adults would surely do - they pretend to be a couple!... Featuring a familiar enough storyline that sees two people who ostensibly don't like one another finally finding themselves falling in love, *Anyone But You* is released on Boxing Day. If you're a romcom fan, it might therefore offer a perfect - albeit temporary - distraction from the serious business of eating and drinking yourself into a festive-season stupor.

Released Tues 26 December



Ferrari CERT tbc (130 mins)

Starring **Adam Driver, Shailene Woodley, Sarah Gadon, Patrick Dempsey, Penélope Cruz, Jack O'Connell**
Directed by **Michael Mann**

Behind the spectacle and danger of Formula One, ex-racer Enzo Ferrari is in crisis: bankruptcy stalks the company he and his wife built from nothing a decade earlier, he's torn between his marriage and his mistress, and his drivers' passion to win pushes them to the edge.

In 1957, all their fates converge in a single race - an iconic but treacherous 1,000-mile endurance slog across Italy known as Mille Miglia...

Although it never really puts its pedal to the metal, there's nevertheless plenty to enjoy in Michael Mann's new movie, which performed impressively at the recent Venice Film Festival. The appropriately named Adam Driver gives a solid performance as petrolhead turned automotive mogul Enzo, while the race scenes themselves are something to behold.

Released Fri 29 December



Next Goal Wins CERT tbc (103 mins)

Starring **Michael Fassbender, Oscar Kightley, Will Arnett, Elisabeth Moss, David Fenech, Rachel House** Directed by **Taika Waititi**

Helmed by Jojo Rabbit and Thor: Ragnarok director Taika Waititi, *Next Goal Wins* follows the story of the infamously terrible American Samoa soccer team, best known for once losing a game 31-0.

With the 2014 World Cup Qualifiers approaching, the team hires maverick but down-on-his-luck coach Thomas Rongen (Fassbender), hoping against hope that he can somehow manage to turn around the fortunes of the world's worst soccer team... There have been plenty of seriously impressive sports movies down the years - think *The Wrestler*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *I, Tonya*, *Moneyball*; the list goes on and on and on - but this misfiring comedy is not one of them.

Released Fri 29 December





NASTY NIK

Niki Colwell Evans made a name for herself when she reached the semi-final of The X Factor in 2007. Since then, she's become a musical theatre powerhouse, starring in Blood Brothers, Kinky Boots and Legally Blonde. She's returning to Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre this Christmas to play the ever-so-evil Queen Dragonella. What's On caught up with her for a pre-panto chat...

You've often played 'goodie' characters. Do you enjoy playing the 'baddie'?

I've been the baddie - this will be my fourth time. I think everybody likes playing the baddie, but today I forgot that I was - and what I looked like! I was on the back of a train in Dudley Zoo. I thought, "Ooh, yeah - I've got horns on my head, I'm the evil one!" It's fun!

Are you modelling your panto character of Dragonella on any real-life baddies?

I don't really know any real-life baddies. Well, I do - but they'd have to be male! I'm channelling some nasty man. My voice might go down...

What makes the Grand so special to you personally?

The Grand is my go-to theatre. If I'm going to watch anything, I'll go to the Grand. It's just the most stunningly beautiful theatre; it's got so much history, and it's nostalgic. I played my very first panto there - 2008, I think it was; Cinderella - and I played the Fairy Godmother. It's just like coming home, and it always feels like Christmas. I get that 'Christmassy butterflies' feeling at the Grand, whether I'm doing Kinky Boots, playing Mrs Johnstone in Blood Brothers or doing Legally Blonde... And today I've caught up with everybody's kids!

Obviously you're not on stage on Christmas Day. What have you got planned for the day itself?

I normally cook Christmas dinner, running back and forth from panto. This year I'm at home. I live in a small village, and I normally go to Midnight Mass. I can't wait not to have to rush to get to Midnight Mass, to rush home, to get the kids, to do this, to do that... I've booked a meal at 3 o'clock. It's going to be really weird - it's just me and my husband this year. Instead of fretting about cooking dinner - I'm a vegetarian, so he has to eat a

lot of turkey! - I thought we'd just go and have a nice meal out this Christmas.

You're used to long theatre runs and tours. What do you do differently for panto?

The difference with panto is it's a short, sharp shock to the system. Your body gets used to doing the same thing every day. With panto it's so quick, you've got to be on it - there's a whole story to do in half the time of a musical, and you've got to entertain the kids, and they want to scream at you, which is completely different to being on tour. You get different audiences. You get the kids in the daytime, who just want to scream and go 'Booo!' - I can't wait to be booed; I love it! - and then the adults of an evening, who get the 'older' humour. Sometimes you wait for a laugh that doesn't come - which can be quite embarrassing. It's something new every day. And the cast! Because I've been away, it's kind of the first time I've met them all today. I do a lot of shows with Tam Ryan [who's playing Muddles], and that's going to go badly, because I just can't stop laughing at him. I'll be playing a baddie that just wants to laugh all the time!

Do you have a pre-show routine?

I've got one of the biggest voices you've probably ever heard, and I have to use it all the time - I don't want my voice to decline. You tend to get into a routine - not knowing that you're doing the same routine - and if it slightly changes, you start to panic... I'll come in quite early, then I'll do a half an hour of vocal warm-up, and then - I don't know how I got into this because I'm not very healthy! - I always have to have fresh ginger and lemon; I have to have that before I go on stage. And I like to chill a little bit.

You're an experienced panto performer - you must have some stories to tell! What's your biggest mishap?

Somebody last night who came to see Blood Brothers in Brighton said, "I remember you

in the Grand doing Cinderella. It was the night you broke your leg!" That was pain. I came down the stairs to do my lovely curtsy, and I thought something had gone wrong, but I was in shock. I curtsied and I just went over like a Weeble... And I thought, "Ooooh that really hurts!" Jeanette Crankie jumped over me to do her bow and then one of the dancers, Peter Houston, who was just lovely, dragged me off. And then the company manager just went "Ugh!" cos my foot was swinging. I couldn't see because of the dress! Two days after that, I was back on, with my cast, flying through the air! Once I'd got the cast on, it was fine, so I finished the run in the cast. There were a lot of jokes about that. The worst thing is, I had to speak to the kids over the airwaves because they were so upset that the Fairy Godmother had hurt herself. How sweet is that?!

People come back to see panto year after year. What do you think is the appeal?

I think it's a release, it's a family thing, and it's hopefully a chance for people to get away from their normal lives and have a laugh for an hour and a half; to get with like-minded people who love Christmas and love to have a giggle. You get the kids in the morning, who are so excited; it's going to be really hard for me not to get excited with them this year. Christmas for a lot of people is a scary time. I've had Christmases in the past, when the kids were little, thinking: "Where am I gonna get it from? What am I going to do?" Hopefully it gives a bit of respite for the adults, watching their kids' faces, seeing something that's live rather than on a tablet. There's nothing that compares to it. That's what really gets me: watching the youngsters and seeing how excited they get.

Niki stars as Queen Dragonella in Snow White at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Saturday 2 December to Sunday 7 January

Visual Arts previews from around the region



Coventry Biennial

various locations across Coventry,
until Sun 14 January

The fourth Coventry Biennial investigates 'humankind's complex relationship with the world' and features the work of 15 artists displayed across five venues. Included in the programme is an immersive installation by Turkish artist Can Altay which draws inspiration from the rich traditions of public water fountains in Ottoman cities, most notably Istanbul. Also featuring in the Biennial is a site-responsive installation from A History Of Frogs, Vietnamese American artist Dinh Q Lê's powerful multi-screen installation The Colony, and local artist Janet Tryner's installation and sculpture examining the impact of housing developments on rural ecosystems. For further information, visit: coventrybiennial.com

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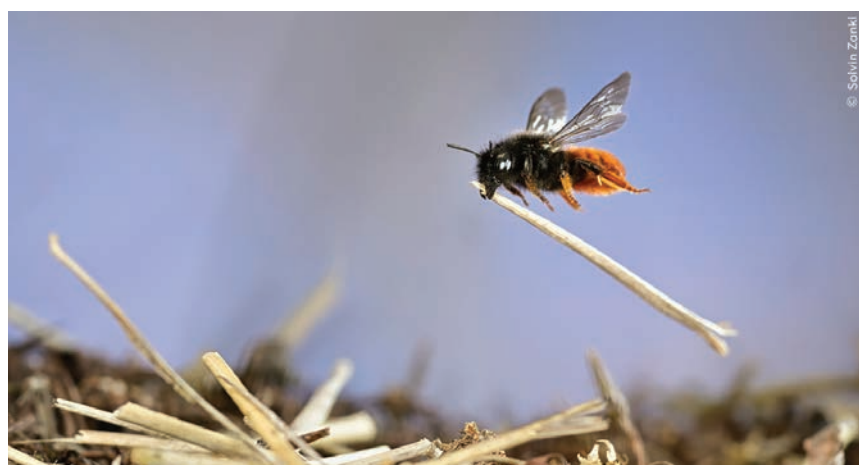


Derek Boshier: Image Revolt

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 21 January

Derek Boshier's lifelong fascination with the power, use and function of images is much in evidence in this celebration of his 60 years as a restlessly inventive artist.

Taking a rare overview of his career, the exhibition features examples of his artwork from the post-war period, right through to the digital age. His more-recent work includes expressive paintings and drawings confronting gender, technology and war at the height of the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.



Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Mon 1 April

"We are facing urgent biodiversity and climate crises, and photography is a powerful catalyst for change." So says Dr Doug Gurr, director of the Natural History Museum, which has developed and produced this year's Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

competition. "The exhibition reveals some of nature's most wondrous sights," adds Dr Gurr, "whilst also offering hope and achievable actions that visitors can take to help protect the natural world." The hugely prestigious show - visiting the Herbert as part of an extensive tour - features a host of awe-inspiring images capturing fascinating animal behaviour and breathtaking landscapes.

Mali Morris: Calling

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, until Fri 22 December

Visual arenas in which colour moves through space and space moves through colour are a signature aspect of recent work by British artist Mali Morris.

Mali has been exploring the possibilities of abstract painting for more than half a century; she first mounted a solo exhibition at Ikon way back in 1979.

This latest show, featuring paintings produced during the past 25 years, illustrates the way in which she has rethought the role of gesture within abstract painting, using layers of colour to create luminous spaces which, although visually clear, are full of precisely judged ambiguities.



The World That Belongs To Us

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 9 June

Autobiography and activism come together in this multimedia exhibition showcasing painting, photography, film, animation, wall drawing and site-specific installation.

Featuring work by intergenerational artists from the South Asian diasporas of the UK, US and Canada, the show aims to stimulate conversations around a wide range of subjects, from community and belonging, to migrant and diasporic storytelling and queer & feminist world-building.

Fresh Air For The Potteries

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 5 May

Fresh Air For The Potteries marks the 150th anniversary of the birth of William Blake, whose reputation as a photographer is mainly built around the popularity of his 'Smokies' - photos that depicted the Potteries' industrial landscape of bottle ovens and chimneys.

Blake also travelled throughout the region, taking photographs of the towns and villages he visited. In so doing, he built up a visual record of north Staffordshire during the early 20th century.

EYES TO THE SKY

**new light show takes audiences on
a journey through the story of evolution...**



Flying into Wolverhampton this month is Evolution, a new aerial spectacle that sees hundreds of drones not only illuminate the skies but also take viewers on a journey through time and space. Dominic Mills, the founder of the company organising the event, explains what audiences can expect...

Wolverhampton is in for a unique treat this month when it hosts the world premiere of Evolution, a brand-new drone light show from award-winning storytellers Celestial.

One of the top drone-show operators in the world, the company has put on displays at an array of high-profile events, including New Year's Eve celebrations in London, the Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool and the City of Culture celebrations in Coventry.

Celestial's production team, which includes animators, filmmakers and tech specialists, creates shows using hundreds of illuminated drones that fly in formation in a spectacular display of light and colour.

Evolution - which will also be performed at Bristol's Seat Unique Stadium - pushes the creative collective's boundaries even further, as it's the first show they've devised as a standalone production.

Dominic Mills, founder & CEO of Yuup, a three-year-old Bristol-based local experiences company that puts on events by partnering with creative and venue partners, saw the potential for creating a unique show - as opposed to fulfilling an external commission or brief - after meeting Celestial's founder, Tony Martin, last year.

"We talked about what they do," he says, "which is typically drone light shows that are part of some other event such as London's New Year's Eve, the launch of Eurovision, brand campaigns and so on.

"But a lot of people haven't seen a drone light show - or if they have, they've seen it in the background on the TV - so we said, wouldn't it be great to create a standalone production that the general public could attend? That's where the idea came from."

Dominic explains that Evolution will take audiences on a journey through time and space, telling the story of life on Earth, from the beginning of creation, through the reign of the dinosaurs, and eventually to life as we know it today.

"It's a narrated story that starts with the Big Bang and inception of the universe, and then journeys through the emergence of the sun, the solar system and the planets within it. It will take the audience on a voyage,

accompanied by narration and a cinematic soundtrack."

The latter elements, both new territory for Celestial, will take the show to a whole new level, according to Dominic.

"Even people who have seen them before are in for something exciting and new," he says, explaining that Evolution has been put together in similar fashion to a Hollywood movie.

"If you imagine you're making a short, animated film, you'd have a brief and a script and a storyboard, which animators use to create a 3D show using software. Once that process is complete, it's then programmed and uploaded to the drones.

"Accredited drone pilots are responsible for their operation, but the show itself is pre-programmed. As you can imagine, if you're flying hundreds and hundreds of drones, it needs to be tightly controlled - so the flightpaths, formation changes and light effects are all pre-programmed."

Flightpaths are, of course, an important consideration - drone shows obviously can't interfere with other aircraft and need to be licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). With this in mind, Dominic thinks the venue of Wolverhampton Racecourse is ideal.

"As you can imagine, there are a lot of constraints and you need CAA approval. Delivering a safe show from everyone's perspective is obviously very important to us. The racecourse is a perfect space because there's a big open area to put on a fantastic show and maintain the required distance between the humans and the drones. Everyone should have a fantastic view, as there's obviously a great line of sight when it takes place in the sky."

Another reason the show is being performed in the West Midlands is that Yuup expanded its operation to Birmingham earlier this year and has already recruited around 100 'experience hosts' in the region.

Going forward, Dominic believes that drone shows could well play a big part in his company's offering. He very much sees them as the future of entertainment, partly because rapidly developing technology is

enabling bigger and better spectacles to be created, but also because the format's green credentials make it environmentally friendly.

"It's an incredible new form of entertainment - like nothing people will have seen before. It's storytelling in the sky, and the sky is a huge canvas on which to tell stories.

"If you think about an equivalent type of show, pre-drones it was fireworks, and obviously there are environmental concerns in terms of the waste and the effect they can have on animals and so on. One of the things about a drone show is that you can put on a spectacular event in a way that is very friendly to the environment."

Celestial's green credentials also include charging the drones using renewable energy sources. But if that, and the fact that the shows are performed by pre-programmed machines, all sounds a little mechanical, then Dominic is quick to point out that audiences typically make a human, and often visceral, connection to what they are seeing.

"When you watch people watching these shows, the emotional reaction is often quite strong, which I think is partly because they don't perhaps expect the scale of it in the sky. And the storytelling element is really quite compelling."

The Evolution show tells its story in just 16 minutes, but Dominic says there's much more to the evening's family entertainment in Wolverhampton. As well as a 15-minute 'pre-show' - featuring lights and music - there's also a large funfair in the middle of the racecourse and a food village selling a variety of festive cuisine.

"People can come along and have a great evening with family and friends, get some food and enjoy the fairground. The combination of the sheer size of the display and the number of drones, coupled with the soundtrack and the narration, and what is arguably the greatest story of all time - the story of evolution - should make for a pretty special evening."

Evolution takes place at Wolverhampton Racecourse, Dunstall Park, on Thursday 14 December



LEGO
DISCOVERY CENTRE
BIRMINGHAM

25th NOV
- 24th DEC

**CHRISTMAS
BRICKTACULAR**

© 2023 The LEGO Group

BOOK ONLINE AT [LEGOLANDDISCOVERYCENTRE.COM/BIRMINGHAM](https://legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham)

This poster features a central LEGO minifigure of Santa Claus with a white beard and red suit, set against a red background with white snowflakes and two white Christmas trees. The text 'CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR' is prominently displayed in a red, blocky font. A yellow circle in the top right corner indicates the dates '25th NOV - 24th DEC'. The bottom of the poster has a yellow banner with the booking website.



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Birmingham

**JOIN
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CONSERVATION CREW**

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place and its marine animals!

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ON THE
NICE LIST!**
25th Nov -
24th Dec

LIMITED TIME ONLY! Book online now @ visitsealife.com/christmas

The poster has a winter theme with a snowy background, a sleigh pulled by reindeer, and a snowman. In the foreground, a man and two children are looking up. The text 'SEALIFE Birmingham' is at the top, followed by 'JOIN SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW'. Below this is the tagline 'Discover more about this amazing place and its marine animals!'. A red circular badge on the right says 'GET ON THE NICE LIST! 25th Nov - 24th Dec'. The bottom features a green banner with the booking information.

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



Winter Funland NEC, Birmingham, Sat 9 December - Mon 1 January

Described as a 'full-on festive extravaganza', Winter Funland is home to the UK's largest indoor Christmas funfair. Attractions include an ice rink, a 1,200-seater circus and the chance to enjoy unlimited rides. As an added treat, youngsters can visit a

special festive grotto (pre-booking is essential), where Santa will be checking out who's been naughty or nice while his mischievous elves make themselves available for some not-to-be-missed photo opportunities.

Winter Glow

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, until Sat 6 January

The 2023 edition of Winter Glow features a number of new activities, including elf circus-skills workshops and pet experiences (on selected dates).

One of the event's key features, the outdoor light trail, is 'bigger than ever' this year and takes visitors on a journey around the North Pole.

Other highlights include personalised 'Santa experiences', an indoor ice rink, a food quarter, a fairground and a Christmas market (which is available to visit without a ticket).



Christmas at Compton Verney

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

Compton Verney is a hive of yuletide activity this month, with attractions at the venue including festive lunches (7 - 15 December), a Winter Wassail (on the 9th) and numerous Christmas concerts.

Those visiting on the weekend of the 16th & 17th will be greeted by the Christmas camel and his donkey friends, with opportunities available to stroke the animals and take a photo with them.

The following week sees Santa stopping off at the venue (from the 22nd to the 24th) and hiding out in the grounds and galleries, waiting for visitors to find him and share their festive plans and Christmas wishes.



Christmas at Aston Hall Aston Hall, Birmingham

With Christmas trees and twinkling flameless candles much in evidence, Aston Hall is dressed for the season and ready to welcome visitors!

On Sunday 10 December, the magnificent 17th-century mansion will host Aston Alive: Christmases Past, an event that will see a

cast of historical characters share stories about how they used to celebrate Christmas. Then, on Sunday the 17th, visitors can enjoy a day of action, humour and adventure courtesy of two cracking Christmas tales from the Court of King Arthur.





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8th Dec
1st Jan

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winterfunland.com



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



Victorian Christmas Weekends

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire, Sat 9 - Sun 10 and Sat 16 - Sun 17 December

Take a step back in time this month and sample a Blists Hill Christmas Weekend (or two!). As well as enjoying the popular Victorian town's usual exhibits - decorated for the season - kids will also be able to whirl down the helter skelter, check out Punch & Judy shows and meet Santa in his grotto.

Candle dipping and Victorian Christmas card-making also feature, and there's a Christmas Emporium too, providing shoppers with the chance to purchase some unique gifts. A choir, brass band, reindeer and snow further add to the festive feel.

Santa's Grotto Experience

National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham, until Sat 24 December

Get ready to dive into the ultimate, er, *fish-mas* adventure at the National SEA LIFE Centre in Birmingham, as Santa and his elves set about the business of spreading some serious Christmas cheer!

Sea explorers can check out more than 2,000 incredible creatures - including a colony of Gentoo penguins, jaw-some sharks and the UK's only sea otters - before heading to Santa's spectacularly snowy grotto, where every child will receive a special gift to take home with them.



Christmas Bricktacular

Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham, until Sat 24 December

Have yourself a brick-tastic little Christmas at Legoland Discovery Centre.

Get into the festive spirit by joining in with a selection of magical activities, including a scavenger hunt in the winter wonderland-themed Miniland. There's also the chance to build a Christmas tree out of Lego and meet Lego Santa in his brick grotto.

Fun rides, build & play zones and a 4D cinema further add to the popular visitor attraction's festive offer.



Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham, until Sun 7 January

Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel is back at Centenary Square for the festive season.

While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the weather-proofed ice rink accommodates up to 300 people per session.

Younger or inexperienced skating enthusiasts can keep upright by using special penguin aids.

And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge and double deck rooftop bar.

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CHRISTMAS EVENTS



9, 10, 16 & 17 December

BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN

CHRISTMAS WEEKENDS



2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17 December

COALBROOKDALE

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



13 & 20 December, 6pm - 9pm

BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN

CHRISTMAS LATES



2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 17 December

COALBROOKDALE

FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA

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**THIS CHRISTMAS MAKE
FAMILY MEMORIES TO CHERISH**

VINTAGE SLEIGH EXPERIENCE
25th November - 23rd December



Santa Claws

Join us for roar some
fun this Christmas

A Santa Claws Show & a Raptor
training session run by elves
Saturday 9th December



Herbert

Art Gallery & Museum

Book your tickets in advance via
dippyncoventry.co.uk

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas...



The Enchanted Express

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster, every weekend from Sat 2 - Sun 24 December

Severn Valley Railway's ever-popular Enchanted Express will return to its Bridgnorth station each weekend until Christmas.

The voice of Dame Julie Walters will guide passengers aboard the train, where they will meet train driver Luna Loco, Pip the Christmas Mouse, Brigadier Dimple the Toy Soldier, Violet the Sugarplum Fairy, Mama Lumi the Post Elf and Father Christmas himself.

Once everyone has settled into their very own private compartment, an enchanting Christmas tale and festive music will play as the train steams through a winter wonderland. As the journey progresses, characters will appear to personally sign guests' hardback books, with each child receiving a gift from Father Christmas. And to top it all off, the experience includes a free 2024 return ticket for each child.



Christmas Light Show

Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire, Sat 16 - Wed 20 and Fri 22 December

Acclaimed animation team Illuminos return to Lichfield Cathedral this month with another festive light spectacular. The audio-visual shows will be displayed outside against the cathedral's Bishop's Palace and West Front, using the popular carol In The Bleak Midwinter to tell the

Christmas story. Visitors will be introduced to a kind and generous fox, who gives gifts to other animals he meets as he makes his way to see the newborn baby Jesus. The festive experience will then continue inside the cathedral, where visitors can check out the Christmas Tree Festival.

Visit Santa: Vintage Sleigh Experience

Coventry Transport Museum, until Sat 23 December

The Vintage Sleigh Ride experience returns to Coventry Transport Museum for Christmas. Wander through a magical winter wonderland of festive activities and snowy scenes before taking a ride on an enchanting vintage sleigh pulled by two trusty reindeer. Your next stop? Lapland. Meet Santa, tell him your Christmas wishes and collect a special gift!... The Vintage Sleigh Ride experience includes museum admission tickets for the day of your visit.



Step into Christmas at Cadbury World

Cadbury World, Birmingham, weekends until Sat 23 December, and also Thurs 21 - Fri 22 December

Festive celebrations are in full swing at Cadbury World this month. The popular venue is presenting a whole host of seasonal activities for families to enjoy, all of which come complete with that ever-important chocolate twist.

Visitors can catch one of the 17 daily performances of the Santa Show (included in the ticket price), where the super-helpful elves will be handing out gifts to young audience members.

Before heading for home, be sure to swing by the world's biggest Cadbury shop to pick up some handmade Christmas chocolates.



THE 12 FILMS OF CHRISTMAS

Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose... and a fabulous festive film on the telly to warm the cockles of your heart! Yes, Christmas is a-coming - but which magnificent yuletide movies should you choose for your holiday viewing? Here are 12 much-loved classics to consider...

It's A Wonderful Life

For many people, Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946) is *the* festive film of all festive films. Although it was shot during a summer heatwave, its heart and soul is pure Christmas!

James Stewart stars as George Bailey, a man whose sense of duty sees him forsaking his own dreams and aspirations for the good of his family and community. Weighed down by his heavy responsibilities and no small amount of ill fortune, George decides he'd be better off dead - until, that is, his guardian angel, Clarence, makes him see the error of his ways...



Home Alone

The film that made a child star of Macaulay Culkin, *Home Alone* (1990) also features Joe Pesci - fresh from his time spent whacking fellow mobsters in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* - and Daniel Stern as a pair of incompetent house-breakers. When the bumbling burglars attempt to rob a suburban Chicago home, they get plenty more than they bargained for: Kevin McCallister's family

has gone on vacation and accidentally left him behind. Home alone, he's determined to keep the property safe and sound...



Love Actually

Riding on the back of his successes with *Four Weddings And A Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, Richard Curtis sent this film out into the festive ether back in 2003 and scored a giant Christmas hit. Sickly sweet and cringeworthy though it may be in many places (*many, many* places!), the film also features some truly touching and genuinely poignant scenes - not to mention stand-out moments to remember forever, such as Hugh Grant as the prime minister dancing around Number 10 to the Pointer Sisters' *Jump (For My Love)*.



Elf

There are those for whom no Christmas is complete without watching *Elf*. The now-cult movie - a stage-musical version of which is visiting the Midlands this month - finds Will Ferrell in fine form as Buddy, a man-child who, having been raised at the North Pole by Santa's elves, determines to head to New York in search of his biological father, played by Godfather actor James Caan... Celebrating its 20th anniversary next year, *Elf* is a movie that's positively overflowing with yuletide cheer. It also comes complete with many a visual gag to keep the kids happy.



The Muppet Christmas Carol

What do you get if you combine a much-loved story by the Victorian era's most famous writer, with an ensemble cast of puppets and an Academy Award-winning actor? The *Muppet Christmas Carol*, of course! Charles Dickens' 1843 short story about a grumpy old sinner who's taught the error of his miserly ways by a trio of festive phantoms provides plenty of opportunity for

the Muppets to peddle their absurdist style of comedy. Michael Caine, the Oscar-winning actor mentioned above, stays rock-steady as Ebenezer Scrooge amid the puppet-powered pandemonium.



How The Grinch Stole Christmas

Jim Carrey's career was very much firing on all cylinders when he took the starring role in this Year 2000 big-screen adaptation of Dr Seuss's classic story. The mean-minded, green-skinned Grinch lives at the top of a mountain overlooking Whoville, a town that certainly knows how to keep Christmas in style. Favouring isolation over living in the town - where he'd been brought up but bullied - the Grinch decides it's high time he took his revenge on the citizens of Whoville - by stealing all of their presents, decorations and food while they're asleep...



Miracle On 34th Street

New York's 34th Street has seen more than its fair share of Miracles down the years, but there's no question that the two most popular ones happened in 1947 and 1994. Both versions have become perennial festive family favourites, with the original released just one year after that other classic Christmas cracker, It's A Wonderful Life... When New York's biggest department store finds itself short of a Santa, an old fella named Kris Kringle steps in to help out. So far, so good. But the store soon finds itself at

the centre of controversy when the benign senior citizen claims that he is, in fact, the real Santa Claus...

The Holiday

Bolstered by an all-star cast, Nancy Meyers' 2006 romantic comedy has established itself as a modern-day Christmas classic and is considered by many to be essential yuletide viewing. The wafer-thin but effective storyline sees two thirtysomething singletons who've never met deciding to swap homes for Christmas, with Kate Winslet's Iris Simpkins heading for LA and Cameron Diaz's Amanda Woods travelling in the opposite direction to a cottage in the English countryside. Both women are recovering from heartbreak, but it isn't long before each of them finds the gift of a new romance in their festive stocking...



Nativity!

You've seen the musical (or if you haven't, book yourself a ticket at the Birmingham Rep, where it's running across the festive season), now check out the original film! Midlands writer Debbie Isitt's movie was the surprise Christmas hit of 2009, bringing together an impressive cast of big-name performers and, in due course of time, spawning three sequels. Set in Coventry and partially improvised, the film follows the attempts of St Bernadette's Catholic primary school to pick up the prize for the best nativity play. But things threaten to spiral out of control when the teacher in charge of the production tells a big fat festive lie...

The Polar Express

Listed in the 2006 Guinness Book of Records as the world's 'first all-digital capture' film, The Polar Express stars Tom Hanks in a variety of roles and follows the story of a young boy who's starting to wonder whether Santa Claus really exists. On Christmas Eve he sees a mysterious steam locomotive

outside his bedroom window. But this is no ordinary train; this one is transporting its passengers to the North Pole for a meeting with the man himself. The boy is invited on board the locomotive and the adventure begins...



Scrooge

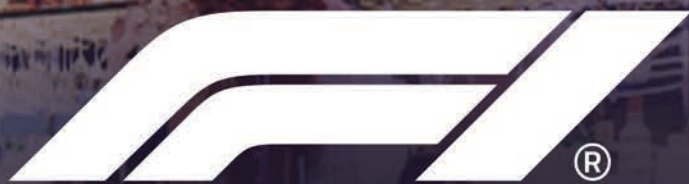
Of all the versions of A Christmas Carol to grace our cinema screens in the post-war years, this 1951 British offering is widely considered to be the greatest - not least because of a show-stopping portrayal of the title character by legendary English actor Alastair Sim.

Sim went on to voice Scrooge in an animated version of the Carol some 20 years later. His interpretation of the character on both occasions was so memorable that Jim Carrey decided to mimic him when he himself lent his voice to old Ebenezer (in another animated version of the story, released in 2009).

The Snowman

This wordless, half-hour, made-for-television animated film was first screened in 1982, four years after the publication of the Raymond Briggs book on which it's based. It's a simple tale about a snowman who comes to life and takes a small boy on an adventure through the starry night sky. The film is routinely screened every Christmas (often alongside its sequel, The Snowman And The Snowdog) and is undoubtedly best known for the central song of its Howard Blake-composed score: Walking In The Air.





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Your week-
by-week
listings guide
December 2023

the list

Peter Pan: The World's Biggest Panto Arena Tour, Fri 22 - Sat 23 December - Resorts World Arena Birmingham



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

What's On

Fri 1 - Sun 10 December



Donny Osmond at Resorts
World Arena
Sat 9 December

Mon 11 - Sun 17 December



Kate Rusby -
Birmingham Town Hall
Sat 16 December

Mon 18 - Sun 24 December



Dear Santa Live On Stage -
Birmingham Hippodrome
until Sun 24 December

Mon 25 - Sun 31 December



Sukh Olja in Desi Central
Comedy Show at The Rep
Fri 29 December

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

PORTRAIT MINIATURES: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GRANTCHESTER COLLECTION

Showcasing over 40 miniatures from the 16th, 17th & 18th centuries, many of which are on show in public for the first time, until Sun 31 Dec

SENSING NAPLES Works from the gallery's Naples Collection, re-hung and reimagined, until Sun 31 Dec

COMPTON VERNEY AND COVENTRY BIENNIAL EXHIBITION AND RESIDENCY

The result of a project in which artists created new work in collaboration with communities in Nuneaton, until Sun 11 Feb

JO GANE: LIQUID SILVER Part of Coventry Biennial. A solo exhibition of new co-created artworks by Nuneaton-based artist & researcher Jo Gane that explores early photographic processes and techniques and their relationships to people and the environment, until Sun 11 Feb

HISTORY IN THE MAKING New exhibition exploring the stories of materials and making in the collections of Woburn Abbey and the Crafts Council, 700AD to now, until Sun 11 Feb

Grand Union, Birmingham

ED WEBB-INGALL: A BEDROOM FOR EVERYONE Newly commissioned animation exploring the role of filmmaking in the UK's current housing crisis, until Fri 1 Dec

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

DEAN KELLAND: IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Exhibition featuring a number of Dean's new films, prints and sketchbooks that reimagine the psychoanalytic dialogue that has occurred between Pop Art and prison art since the 1960s, until Fri 22 Dec, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

DIGITAL ZINES Exhibition of work created by seven Birmingham secondary schools during summer 2023 as part of Reframe, a new digital-skills project sponsored by Apple, until Sun 7 Jan

MARLEY STARSKEY BUTLER: THIRTY-SIX

First solo exhibition exploring Starskey Butler's lived experience of social work. Photography, video, audio & text all feature, until Sun 28 Jan

RB SA Gallery, Birmingham

RB SA MEMBERS & ASSOCIATES EXHIBITION Annual exhibition in

which all members and associates of RB SA are invited to display their work. There are over 150 pieces on show, and an opportunity to meet the artists every Saturday during the exhibition, Thurs until Sat 6 Jan

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PHANTOM SCULPTURE Exhibition bringing together sculptures by some of the most important artists working today, and putting them into conversation with key works by older artists, until Sun 10 March

New Art Gallery, Walsall

ANNETTE PUGH: HAPPENSTANCE

Featuring newly commissioned oil paintings that explore traces of human presence in the landscape, until Sun 7 Jan

PRIDE & PRIVILEGE AT THE CLASS ACT

Temporary exhibition exploring class and identity, until Sun 9 June

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

SOFT POWER Su Richardson's humorous and subversive crocheted sculptures confront notions of femininity and domesticity, until Sun 10 Dec

POP PARADE Showcasing the gallery's most iconic pop artworks by leading British and American artists, until Sun 31 Dec

POP ART AND POETRY A kaleidoscope of Pop ceramics by key artists from around the world, until Sun 7 April

Elsewhere:

WHERE WE ONCE GATHERED

Showcase of Herbert Walters' photographic works, taken on the silent and still streets of Birmingham in the first four weeks of the 2020 Covid lockdown, until Fri 8 Dec, The Bramall, University of Birmingham

ATHAC CREATIVE ARTISTS A group exhibition of Handsworth-based artists, presented by Ort Gallery, until Sat 9 Dec, The Gap Arts Project, Blrmingham

ALIENVILLAGE An immersive, collaborative installation, a 'speculative commons' looking to the future and exploring themes of migration and community, until Sat 16 Dec, Eastside Projects, Birmingham

NATASHA MACVOY: U & I An enveloping installation featuring film & sculpture and exploring performance in motherhood, until Sat 16 Dec, Eastside Projects, Birmingham



Jah Wobble - Hare & Hounds

Gigs

SISTERS OF MURPHY Fri 1 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DANNY MELLIN Fri 1 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge

RITUAL KING + DUSKWOOD + THE GHOULES + THIS SUMMIT FEVER Fri 1 Dec, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

OASIS MAYBE Fri 1 Dec, The Night Owl

HALOCENE + LAUREN BABIC Fri 1 Dec, O2 Institute

BILLY LOCKETT Fri 1 Dec, O2 Academy

BATTLE BEAST + BRYMIR Fri 1 Dec, The Asylum

BRING OUT YOUR DEAD! + JOHANNA REY + HAND OF THE HOST + CHAPLAIN + MOTHKEEPER Fri 1 Dec, The Flapper

LUKE BACCHUS Fri 1 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ ORCHESTRA Fri 1 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

KUMAR SANU, UDIT NARAYAN AND ABHIJEET BHATTACHARYA Fri 1 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE ELO ENCOUNTER Fri 1 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

EXTREME + LIVING COLOUR Fri 1 Dec, The Civic at The Halls

Wolverhampton

TRU GROOVE Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

UK FOO FIGHTERS Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, O2 Academy

DEAD AIR Sat 2 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge

HECTOR + THE COURTESY GROUP Sat 2 Dec, The Dark Horse, Moseley

THE ATLANTIC PLAYERS Sat 2 Dec, The Night Owl

AGAINST THE CURRENT Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute

PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS + THE CARDS + SWEET ELECTRIC Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute

COROOK + BLAIR Sat 2 Dec, O2 Institute

UNIT 47 Sat 2 Dec, Castle & Falcon

BLOOD COMMAND Sat 2 Dec, The Flapper

FLEETWOOD BAC Sat 2 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Sat 2 Dec, The Civic at The Halls W'hampton

ASH COOPER Sat 2 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

HAMMERED Sat 2 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

MARK MORRISS & ADAM DEVLIN Sun 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JAH WOBBLE Sun 3 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ASHNIKKO + HEMLOCKE SPRINGS Sun 3 Dec, O2 Institute

WOLFSBANE + THE SPANGLES + LUKE APPLETON POWER TRIO Sun 3 Dec, The Asylum

PENGSHUI Sun 3 Dec, Devil's Dog

CORY BAND Sun 3 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

NOT SO YOUNG - THE MUSIC OF NEIL YOUNG Sun 3 Dec, Fletchers Bar

LIL YACHTY + JEAN DAWSON Mon 4 Dec, O2 Academy

GORGOROTH + AETERNUS + IMPALEMENT + ARAN ANGMAR Mon 4 Dec, The Asylum



Raye - O2 Academy

ROACHFORD Mon 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall
RAYE Tues 5 Dec, O2 Academy

VIVID SOUL Wed 6 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

KATIE GREGSON-MACLEOD Tues 5 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CARROLL THOMPSON Wed 6 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

OF MICE & MEN + CASKETS + DEFECTS Wed 6 Dec, O2 Institute

ELECTRIC SIX + US Wed 6 Dec, O2 Academy

BEREND BONSEMA + YONDERLAND Wed 6 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club

ICE CUBE + CYPRESS HILL + THE GAME Wed 6 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

ARNIE SOMOGYI, ADRIAN UTLEY AND SEBASTIAN ROCHFORD + ABYSSAL TRIO Wed 6 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

LIVE KILLERS UK - QUEEN TRIBUTE Wed 6 Dec, The Rainbow, Digbeth

MATT DEIGHTON Wed 6 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

C4 Thurs 7 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MICKEY CALLISTO Thurs 7 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MIST Thurs 7 Dec, O2 Institute

ERIC PASLAY Thurs 7 Dec, O2 Institute

SELINA ALBRIGHT Thurs 7 Dec, Castle & Falcon

THESE WICKED RIVERS Thurs 7 Dec, The Asylum

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Thurs 7 Dec, Symphony Hall

BLACK VOICES: CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA Thurs 7 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

FOOTE, LONDON, FARMER, BANNER, TAYLOR Thurs 7 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

D12 Thurs 7 Dec, XOYO, Birmingham

THE FURROW

COLLECTIVE Thurs 7 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Edgbaston

JENNIFER BOLTON Thurs 7 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

GOGOL BORDELLO + PEAT & DIESEL + PUZZLED PANTHER Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute

TEN TONNES Fri 8 Dec, O2 Institute

MOVING PICTURES - A TRIBUTE TO RUSH Fri 8 Dec, Castle & Falcon

PHIL BATES Fri 8 Dec, The Flapper

THE OVERTONES Fri 8 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

OASIS + THE ABSOLUTE STONE ROSES Fri 8 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE CHARLATANS Fri 8 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

LUCAS D & THE GROOVE GHETTO Sat 9 Dec, Nortons, Digbeth

THE PALE WHITE Sat 9 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge

POLAR Sat 9 Dec, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

SURFIN' LLAMAS! Sat 9 Dec, Nortons, Digbeth

LANDSLIDE - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Sat 9 Dec, The Night Owl

TURIN BRAKES Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute

GROW YOUR OWN STUPID + ECHO THEORY + THE WESTLANDS + MAN MADE MOON + SUPERSEEDERS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Institute

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS Sat 9 Dec, O2 Academy

THE USED + THE HOME TEAM + HONEY REVENGE Sat 9 Dec, O2 Academy



Donny Osmond - Resorts World Arena

R.E.M. BY STIPE Sat 9 Dec, Castle & Falcon
DECADENCE FT ALISON LIMERICK LIVE Sat 9 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

DONNY OSMOND Sat 9 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

SEAMUS MOORE Sat 9 Dec, Irish Centre, Kings Heath

LEVELLERS + NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN + STEVE LAMACQ Sat 9 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

SCOTT MATTHEWS Sat 9 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

THE WATCHDOGS Sat 9 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE YOUNG'UNS Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

BLACK BOMBERS + DESPERATE MEASURES + RACHEL MAYFIELD Sun 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CRYWANK Sun 10 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BIG SHIP ALLIANCE Sun 10 Dec, The Night Owl

THE RNB & SLOW JAMS EXPERIENCE Sun 10 Dec, O2 Institute

WARGASM + HARPY + DROPOUT KINGS Sun 10 Dec, XOYO

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE Sun 10 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE FATHER TEDS Sun 10 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

KIM WILDE Sun 10 Dec, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

GEDDY LEE Sun 10 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton



Paul Lewis: Schubert Piano Sonatas - Birmingham Town Hall

Classical Music

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE Fri 1 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

ADELPHI QUARTET Featuring Maxime Michaluk & Esther Agustí Matabosch (violins), Adam Newman (viola) & Nepomuk Braun (cello). Programme includes works by Stravinsky & Beethoven, Fri 1 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF INDIA WITH ZAKIR HUSSAIN Featuring Alpesh Chauhan (conductor), Zakir Hussain (tabla), Niladri Kumar (sitar) & Rakesh Chaurasia (bansuri). Programme includes Strauss Rosenkavalier Suite, Hussain Triple Concerto & Stravinsky Petrushka (1947), Fri 1 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PROMS NIGHT SPECTACULAR! - AN ENCHANTED EVENING Programme includes works by Suppé, Ravel, Walton, Elgar, Howard Blake, John Williams & Rodgers & Hammerstein, Sat 2 Dec, Symphony Hall, B'ham

BOURNVILLE CLARINET CHOIR WINTER CONCERT Featuring Malcolm Pollock (musical director), Sat 2 Dec, United Reformed Church, Green Meadow Road, Birmingham

UNIVERSITY CHORUS Programme includes works by Mozart, Parry, Roxanna Panufnik, Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, Handel and Byrd, Sat 2 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM GAY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: A CHRISTMAS CRACKER Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Anderson, Custer, Wiffin and more... Sat 2 Dec, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

MATHIS STIER BASSOON CONCERT Programme includes works by

Philipp Böddecker, Paula Matthusen, Saint-Saëns, Maria Sigfúsdóttir, Clara Schumann, Alain Bernaud & Daniel Schnyder, Sun 3 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Margaret Lingas, Imogen Russell & Katie Trethewey (sopranos); Gabriella Liandu, Martha McLorinan & Anna Semple (altos); Sebastian Hill, James Robinson & Bradley Smith (tenors); Thomas Lowen, Themba Mvula & Lawrence White (bass), Sun 3 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LICHFIELD SINFONIA Featuring James Gilbert (clarinet). Programme includes works by Mozart, Dvorak & Berlioz, Sun 3 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

UNIVERSITY PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Programme includes works by Mussorgsky, Lyadov and Dvořák, Sun 3 Dec, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

SING CAROLS WITH THE CITY ORGANIST Featuring Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir, Julian Wilkins (conductor), Jeremy Nicholas (compere) & Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 4 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE PICCADILLY SINFONIETTA: THE FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Featuring Harriet Mackenzie (violin) & Warren Mailley-Smith (piano). Programme includes works by Corelli, Mozart & Vivaldi, Mon 4 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

LUNCHTIME MUSIC WITH VICTORIA HARLEY (SOPRANO) & JONATHAN FRENCH (PIANO) Programme includes works by Handel, Dvořák, Massenet, Mendelssohn, Heggie, Clarke & Lehmann, Mon 4 Dec, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PAUL LEWIS: SCHUBERT PIANO SONATAS 3 Programme comprises Sonata for Piano No 4 in A minor, D537, Sonata

for Piano No 9 in B major, D575 & Sonata for Piano No 18 in G major, D894, Tues 5 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Tues 5 Dec, St John's Church, Hagley

MIRGA GRAŽINYTĖ-TYLA & THE CBSO Also featuring Eugene Tzikindelean (violin), Oliver Janes (clarinet), Marie-Christine Zupancic (flute), Adam Römer (viola) & Onutė Gražinytė (piano), Programme includes works by Čiurlionis, Weinberg, Loboda & Kakhidze, Wed 6 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Thurs 7 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

UNIVERSITY VOCAL CONSORT Directed by Georgia Tuke, Thurs 7 Dec, The Dome, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Thurs 7 Dec, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM CHOIR WITH THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Adrian Lucas (conductor), Kathie Trethewey (soprano), Kate Symonds-Joy (alto), Nicholas Mulroy (tenor), Jamie Woollard (bass), Thomas Trotter (harpichord) & Martin Perkins (organ), Fri 8 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL CHOIR: HANDEL'S MESSIAH Featuring Tim Burton (tenor), Hope Pugh (alto) & David Hardie (conductor), Sat 9 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham

PHOENIX SINGERS & MIDLANDS HOSPITALS' CHOIR: CHRISTMAS JOY Featuring James Llewelyn Jones (leader), Gemini Brass, Joanna Cooke (soprano), Charles Matthews (organist), Charis Tai (pianist) & the Bournville Village Primary School Choir, Sun 10 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring James Ham (conductor) & Cordelia Williams Charlton (piano). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov & Rachmaninoff, Sun 10 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy

DARIUS DAVIES, JOSH HOWIE & KAREN BAYLEY Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

BARRY DODDS, SCOTT BENNETT, ELEANOR TIERNAN & MARK NELSON Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

JO CAULFIELD Fri 1 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



JIMMY CARR Fri 1 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

NABIL ABDULRASHID Sat 2 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

NABIL ABDULRASHID Tues 5 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS COMEDY SPECIAL - COMICS TBC Wed 6 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRIS WASHINGTON, FREDDY QUINNE, PETER BRUSH & MC HAMMERSMITH Wed 6 Dec, Herberts Yard, B'ham

THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB Wed 6 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

MO GILLIGAN Thurs 7 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

UNDER THE RAINBOW COMEDY Thurs 7 Dec, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

GAVIN WEBSTER, PHIL PAGETT & COMIC TBC Thurs 7 Dec, Bear Tavern, Birmingham

STEVE GRIBBIN & COMICS TBC Thurs 7 Dec, Hockley Social Club, B'ham

SOPHIE DUKER Thurs 7 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PIERRE NOVELLIE, CARL HUTCHINSON, LAURA SMYTH & DAVE FULTON Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

UPSTAIRS AT CHERRY REDS Fri 8 Dec, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

ADAM BLOOM, ROGER MONKHOUSE & KAREN BAYLEY Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

BARBARA NICE'S CHRISTMAS CRACKER Sat 9 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

VIR DAS Sat 9 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GARY DELANEY Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KOJO ANIM Sun 10 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOMASZ KAROLAK Sun 10 Dec, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

Theatre

SLEEPING BEAUTY Festive fun for all the family in this timeless classic 'packed with romance, comedy, magical songs, dance routines and audience participation', until Sat 9

Dec, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Amateur comedy presented by The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society, until Sat 9 Dec, Highbury Hall, Sutton Coldfield

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's festive family show follows an orphaned schoolboy who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams, until Sun 7 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family favourite starring Sam Rabone as Madame Bellie Fillop, Ben Thornton as Phillipe, Kat Chatterton as Belle, Melad Hamidi as the Prince and the Beast, Natalie Pilkington as the Fairy and Sarah Annakin as the Enchantress, until Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

CINDERELLA Festive fun aplenty in Iain Lauchlan's panto adaptation of the much-loved rags-to-riches tale, until Sat 13 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

INTO THE WOODS The Midlands Drama Academy presents an amateur version of Stephen Sondheim's musical fantasy, Sat 2 Dec, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

FROZEN JR Amateur version presented by Script Youth Musical Theatre Company, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SNOW WHITE Panto favourite starring Kelle Bryan as Good Fairy Elementa, Gyasi Sheppy as the prince, Niki Colwell Evans as the wicked queen, Evie Pickerill as Snow White, Tam Ryan as Muddles and Ian Adams as Nanny Nolly, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST Isobel McArthur presents an 'open-armed' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's Elizabethan romp, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner.

Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, Mon 4 - Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham



BLOW WHITE: THE ADULT PANTO 'An unforgettable night of cheeky, naughty, grown-up laughs', Tues 5 - Sat 9 Dec, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Amateur version of Dickens' festive favourite, Tues 5 - Sat 16 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', Tues 5 - Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding family traditions, Wed 6 - Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

GHOULS GALLERY Don't Go Into The Cellar present an anthology stage show based on a selection of tales of terror, Thurs 7 Dec, Lapworth Museum, University of Birmingham

OIL Ella Hickson's explosive play exploring Britain's fraught relationship with its imperial past, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

SAVED Royal Birmingham Conservatoire present a production of Edward Bond's landmark drama, Thurs 7 - Sat 9 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS GETAWAY New Old Friends present a fast-paced farce inspired by PG Wodehouse, Noel Coward and classic British comedy, Fri 8 - Sun 31 Dec, Lichfield Garrick

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK TaleGate Theatre Productions promise songs, slapstick and audience participation aplenty in a traditional pantomime packed with fairytale magic, Sat 9 - Sun 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec,

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

THE GRUFFALO Songs, laughter and monstrous fun for children aged three-plus. Adapted from the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, Sat 2 - Sun 31 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, Thurs 7 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

SANTA'S SPARKLY SURPRISE Audience participation and festive magic aplenty in Iain Lauchlan's festive production for pre-school children, Thurs 7 - Sun 24 Dec, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Dance

THE NUTCRACKER Birmingham Royal Ballet's sumptuous festive production. Expect magic, falling snow and a spectacular 30ft Christmas tree, until Sat 9 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome



DANCING IN WINTER WONDERLAND WITH ALJAZ AND JANETTE The Strictly couple are joined by a supporting cast featuring some of the UK's very best dancers and singers, Sun 10 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

FATT BUTCHER'S CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Join the cabaret superstar for 'an unmissable evening', Thurs 30 Nov - Fri 1 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



KEVIN JAMES THORNTON Rising TikTok/IG star Kevin has built a vast following by posting 'hilarious and heartfelt' moments of self-reflection, Fri 1 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

SOMETHING MAGICAL: ONCE UPON A TIME The People's Orchestra performs themes from popular storybooks and Christmas classics, Sat 2 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA Screening of Disney's 1992 musical comedy, accompanied by a live score, Mon 4 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LOVE ACTUALLY IN CONCERT: FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA A full, live orchestra perform Craig Armstrong's score as the film is projected onto the big screen, Tues 5 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS: THE FILM WITH LIVE ORCHESTRA Large-screen showing of the festive favourite, accompanied by a full orchestra performing the film's soundtrack live to screen, Sat 9 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BUBLÉ CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a live band and 'the UK's top Michael Bublé tribute act', Sat 9 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

TOWN HALL GOSPEL CHOIR 15TH ANNIVERSARY CHRISTMAS CONCERT An evening of contemporary Gospel songs with a twist, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 10 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SUPERSONIC KIDS GIGS: BEN SADLER FESTIVE SPECIAL A kids' gig created by 'the UK's premiere experimental music festival' and hosted by alt-rock and psycho-storyteller Anna Palmer from Dorcha, Sun 10 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

CHRISTMAS IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE Featuring Midlands-based crafts, gifts and food & drink traders, until Sun 17 Dec, Cathedral Square, Birmingham

THE POLAR EXPRESS™ 2023 TRAIN RIDE Father Christmas spreads festive cheer in his tree-mendous stage show, until Fri 22 Dec, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffordshire

CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ELF TRAIL Spot the cheeky elves around the museum on this festive trail, until Sat 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET Offering a large range of traditional gifts and a selection of tempting food & drink, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACULAR Get into the



Christmas In Cathedral Square

festive spirit with Christmas activities in the Lego playground, until Sun 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

SANTA SAFARI A magical festive day out for the whole family, combining a four-mile winter Safari and a visit to Santa in his Grotto, until Sun 24 Dec, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals which live there, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTTO Get ready to dive into the ultimate underwater fish-massy adventure with Santa and his elves, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND Featuring all-new festive shows and attractions, Thomas Land rides & shows, plus over 500 animals in the zoo, until Sun 31 Dec, Drayton Manor Resort

LUMINATE BIRMINGHAM Experience a 'spectacular illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue', until Tues 2 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

SNOWDOGS DISCOVER BIRMINGHAM Enjoy a festive sculpture trail inspired by the animated sequel to the late Raymond Briggs' timeless picture book *The Snowman*™, until Thurs 4 Jan, across Birmingham City Centre

WINTER GLOW Immerse yourself in all things seasonal with a line-up of festive activities, until Sat 6 Jan, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

SAFARI SKATING Get your skates on and try the Safari Park's first-ever festive ice rink, until Sun 7 Jan, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND

Experience a whole world of festive fun at the resort, until Sun 7 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth

CHRISTMAS AT ALTON TOWERS

Experience a whole world of festive fun at the resort, until Sun 7 Jan, Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire

CANDLELIT CHRISTMAS

Enjoy an intimate and extended tour of Shakespeare's childhood home, experienced by the magic of candlelight, Fri 1 - Sat 2 Dec, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon

WINTER NIGHTS BY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Climb on board and journey through the festive tunnels, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, Dudley Canal & Caverns

THE SUPER WEEKENDER 2023

Dancers can compete, perform, train and exhibit under one roof, with unmissable competitions and world-class training, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

MCM BIRMINGHAM COMIC CON Three-day weekend celebrating all the fandoms, from gaming and anime, to collectibles and memorabilia, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham



CLASSIC ANTIQUE FAIRS Over 100 specialist dealers offer a wide variety of high-quality pieces, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ASTON ARTS CLUB Make something inspired by Aston Hall and its incredible history, Sat 2 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham





Lyngo Theatre Presents:

Little Red Riding Hood

PERFECT FOR 3+

TICKETS FROM: **£5.85**
(EARLY BIRD EXTENDED)

MAGICAL CHRISTMAS THEATRE

SAT 9th - SUN 10th DEC
11am & 2pm

50 minutes of pure childhood joy

Newhampton Arts Centre, Dunkley Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 4AN
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AN OLD JOINT STOCK THEATRE PRODUCTION

THE UK PREMIERE OF A BRAND NEW MUSICAL THAT PUTS A TWIST ON A CHRISTMAS CLASSIC

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL

6TH-24TH DECEMBER 2023 | £20
7.30PM + 2.30PM MATINÉE SATURDAYS & 3PM SUNDAYS

WWW.OLDJOINTSTOCK.CO.UK

Santa Trains

depart Kidderminster on selected dates from 25 November



 Get tickets from **SVR.CO.UK** or call **01562 757 900**

EXPLORE SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill at your own pace, Sat 2 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

BEWDLEY LIGHTS SPECIAL TRAIN SERVICE Travel in style to see the Christmas lights switch-on event at Bewdley, Sat 2 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE FIZZOGS BIG FAT CHRISTMAS QUIZ Quiz night with the popular comedy trio, Sat 2 Dec, Himley Hall, Dudley

KIDS WARHAMMER CLUB Free drop-in table-top gaming club, Sat 2 Dec, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

SANTA'S TOY WORKSHOP Help Santa and his elves make wooden reindeer in this special workshop, Sat 2 Dec, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

SINGING SANTA Santa entertains the children with a session of songs and lots of child-friendly interactions, Sat 2 Dec, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE ENCHANTED EXPRESS Inspired by the classic poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, journey through a winter wonderland, meeting fun characters along the way, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ELF CADET TRAINING Learn how to load the sleigh, pick the right aircraft for the job and map a route for Santa, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AND FESTIVE TRAIN RIDE Join Santa in the Courtyard Kitchen for a special festive breakfast, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

SANTA AT THE VALLEY Visit Santa and his elves in his cosy grotto, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

SANTA'S GROTTO AND MAGICAL TRAIN RIDE Immerse yourself in festive fun with a magical train ride, a visit to Santa and an all-new VR sleigh ride, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Heart of England Conference & Events Centre, Coventry

BIRMINGHAM CAT EXTRAVAGANZA AND RESCUE AWARENESS EVENT Cat lovers unite for a family furr-iendly weekend supporting local charities and rescues, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

MAC'S CHRISTMAS ARTS MARKETS Treat your loved ones to unique, hand-crafted gifts, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered

sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville

ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS KINGDOM See the park transformed into a winter wonderland full of activities and festive entertainment, Sat 2 - Sun 3 Dec, Hatton Adventure World, Warwickshire

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Check out the array of real Christmas trees decorated by local businesses, schools and charities, Sat 2 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

CHRISTMAS WREATH WORKSHOP Make your own beautiful Nordic-inspired Hygge eco Christmas wreath, Sun 3 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 3 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

THE POLAR EXPRESS (2004) AND SANTA VISIT The festive favourite presented on Birmingham's biggest screen - plus a visit from Santa himself, Sun 3 Dec, Millenium Point, Birmingham

WINTER FELT MOUSE WORKSHOP Make felt mice Christmas decorations, Wed 6 Dec, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

ILLUMINATED ARBORETUM Visit the Arboretum after hours and begin the festive season by enjoying a kaleidoscope of colour, Thurs 7 - Sat 23 Dec, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

GLAD TIDINGS With costumed characters to meet and street entertainers to watch, experience 'a heart-warming magical night', Fri 8 - Sat 9 Dec, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

DRIVING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS Navigate the Great Elf Hunt trail around the museum before taking part in some Christmas crafts, Fri 8 - Sat 23 Dec, British Motor Museum, Warwickshire

EXPLORE ASTON HALL ON A MATCH DAY Explore Aston Hall on an Aston Villa Football Club match day, Sat 9 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

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Snow Dogs Discover Birmingham at various locations across the city

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MAGICAL SANTA SHOW Join Santa and his elves for a fun-packed show full of festive cheer, songs and merriment, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Tamworth Castle,

Staffordshire

CHRISTMAS CRAFT MARKET Featuring a wide variety of makers selling locally made crafts and gifts, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

SANTA AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet Santa in the Little Parlour and see Blakesley Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 9 - Sun 10 Dec, Blakesley Hall, B'ham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 10 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

ASTON ALIVE: CHRISTMAS PAST Meet a cast of historical characters and discover how they celebrate Christmas, Sun 10 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS IN THE COURTYARD Featuring an evening of carols, Christmas crafts and a special tour of the houses, Sun 10 Dec, Birmingham Back to Backs

ELF (2003) WITH COCKTAILS Join the team at The Wine Events Company as they shake up a snow globe of festive cocktails to drink alongside a showing of this modern classic Christmas movie, Sun 10 Dec, Millennium Point, Birmingham

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, Sun 10 Dec - Tues 2 Jan, NEC, Birmingham





Kate Rusby - Birmingham Town Hall

Gigs

GINGER WILDHEART

Mon 11 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MODERN NATURE

Mon 11 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HEJIRA: CELEBRATING JONI MITCHELL Tues 12 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

URNE + MOUNTAIN CALLER + TRIBE OF GHOSTS Tues 12 Dec, O2 Institute

KINDRED THE FAMILY SOUL Wed 13 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

REASON Wed 13 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MILLIONZ Wed 13 Dec, O2 Institute

THE BIG MOON Wed 13 Dec, O2 Institute

BRUTUS + KARIN PARK Wed 13 Dec, The Asylum

THE LOST NOTES + ARI-ANNE MILLS Wed 13 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club

HOZIER + THE LAST DINNER PARTY Wed 13 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

SUEDE + DESPERATE JOURNALIST Wed 13 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

HOUSE GOSPEL CHOIR Thurs 14 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

WIRELESS Thurs 14 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE KINGS OF SPAIN Thurs 14 Dec, Tilt, Union Street

NAMVULA + BABAK ARIA Thurs 14 Dec, Jennifer

Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

STEELEYE SPAN Thurs 14 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

SOPHIE ELLIS-BEXTOR Thurs 14 Dec, Symphony Hall

LEONA LEWIS Thurs 14 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

GERRY COLVIN BAND Thurs 14 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

BIG SPECIAL + THE BIG HELL + NOT SOUP Fri 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

PLAID + SUBCITIZEN + BROKEN JOE + JARED RADISH Fri 15 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ON THE SESH! Fri 15 Dec, The Asylum

FIT FOR A KING + EMMURE + THROWN + GLOOM IN THE CORNER Fri 15 Dec, O2 Institute

JOE + 112 + NEXT + BOBBY V + J HOLIDAY Fri 15 Dec, O2 Academy

BIRMINGHAM JAZZ ORCHESTRA Fri 15 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS + TOM MEIGHAN Fri 15 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE Fri 15 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

THE TWANG + PASTEL Fri 15 Dec, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

VICTORIAN PARENTS + MEMBERS OF ARTFUL

DODGER + VIRGIL SPLINT Fri 15 Dec, Lichfield Guildhall

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM AND BLUES ORCHESTRA Fri 15 - Sat 16 Dec, Symphony Hall

CHECK THE RHYME Sat 16 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE MERCIANS Sat 16 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge

THE JAM'D Sat 16 Dec, Actress & Bishop

THERAPY? + BOKASSA Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute

THE FRONT BOTTOMS + WE WERE PROMISED JETPACKS Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute

SHORTWAVE + RIVERBUD + PARADISO + LEX + JESS BRETT Sat 16 Dec, O2 Institute

BOB MARLEY REVIVAL Sat 16 Dec, O2 Academy

THE WONDER STUFF + IAN PROWSE Sat 16 Dec, O2 Academy

RIDING THE LOW + JOSEPH HOOLIGAN Sat 16 Dec, Castle & Falcon

DECAPITATED + OBSCURA INFERI + THE MATERIA Sat 16 Dec, The Asylum

GASOLINE + MATCHES + JACK & TIM + GINA LARNER + THE RISING + SARAH RICHES Sat 16 Dec, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

KATE RUSBY Sat 16 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

TOM JONES + GERMEIN Sat 16 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

MADNESS + LIGHTNING SEEDS Sat 16 Dec, Utilita Arena B'ham

THE DARKNESS Sat 16 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

JACKIE OATES & JOHN SPIERS Sat 16 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

JOHN BRAMWELL Sun 17 - Mon 18 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

Classical Music

UNIVERSITY CAROL SERVICE Featuring the University Upper Voices Choir, conducted by Mariana Rosas, Mon 11 Dec, Great Hall, Aston Webb Building, University of Birmingham

LUNCHTIME CONCERT FEAT. JIYU CHEN (TENOR) & ROBIN BOWMAN (PIANO) Programme includes works by Schumann, Mozart & Lu Zaiyi, Tues 12 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BEETHOVEN'S EROICA WITH KAZUKI YAMADA & THE CBSO Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Eduardo Vassallo (cello) & Chris Yates (viola). Programme includes works by Strauss & Beethoven, Wed 13 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE HALLÉ CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor) & Rodney Earl Clarke (baritone). Programme includes works by Saunders, Handel, Mozart, Offenbach, Korngold, Adam, Jessel, Prokofiev and more... Wed 13 Dec, Butterworth Hall, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: SYMPHONIC SIX Programme includes works by Bach, Bizet, Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert, Chopin & more... Fri 15 Dec, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

ROYAL BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE REPERTOIRE ORCHESTRA Featuring Daniele Rosina (conductor). Featuring works by Walton and Beethoven, and a world premiere of Cry by Vinicius Motta, Fri 15 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

EX CATHEDRA: CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Rupert Jeffcoat & Nicholas Wearne (organ), Fri 15 - Wed 20 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: ANGELS, STARS & KINGS - FAMILY CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Ex Cathedral Choir & Academy of Vocal Music, Rebecca Ledgerd & George Parris (conductor) & Nicholas Wearne (organ), Sat 16 Dec, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

DANIEL GRIMWOOD PIANO CONCERT Programme comprises Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, Sat 16 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham

VIENNESE CHRISTMAS SPECTACULAR Performed by the London Concertante, Sat 16 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, B'ham

CANDLELIT CAROLS Programme includes works by Cullen, Willcocks, Handel & Bach - alongside a selection of well known carols, Sun 17 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: NINE LESSONS & CAROLS SERVICE Sun 17 Dec, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

THE JOHN RUTTER QUARTET CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Lydia Rae (soprano), Nick Allen (tenor), Deb Allen (alto) & Chris Allen (bass). Ian Stephenson accompanies on piano, Sun 17 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Comedy

DAVID O'DOHERTY, FERN BRADY, JEN BRISTER, JOSH PUGH & KYRAH GRAY Wed 13 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

KANE BROWN & COMICS TBC Wed 13 Dec, Herberts Yard, Birmingham



ESTHER MANITO, SCOTT BENNETT, GARRETT MILLERICK & ROB ROUSE Wed 13 - Sat 16 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KANE BROWN & COMICS TBC Thurs 14 Dec, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, ROB MULHOLLAND, ADAM BEARDSMORE & MIKE NEWALL Thurs 14 Dec, Red Brick, Wellington

DAVID O'DOHERTY, FERN BRADY, JEN BRISTER, JOSH PUGH & KYRAH GRAY Thurs 14 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STEVE HARRIS, RICKY BALSHAW & KAREN BAYLEY Fri 15 - Sat 16 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

ANDREW BIRD Sun 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS COMEDY SPECIAL - COMICS TBC Sun 17 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

HARE OF THE DOG COMEDY Sun 17 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

Theatre

OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding family traditions, until Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, until Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK TaleGate Theatre Productions promise songs, slapstick and audience participation aplenty in a traditional pantomime packed with fairytale magic, until Sun 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', until Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's festive family show follows an orphaned schoolboy who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams, until Sun 7 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family favourite starring Sam Rabone as Madame Belle Fillop, Ben Thornton as Phillippe, Kat Chatterton as Belle, Melad Hamidi as the Prince and the Beast, Natalie Pilkington as the Fairy and Sarah Annakin as the Enchantress, until Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

CINDERELLA Festive fun aplenty in Iain Lauchlan's panto adaptation of the much-loved rags-to-riches tale, until Sat 13 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST Isobel McArthur presents an 'open-armed' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's Elizabethan romp, until Sun 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

DICK WHITTINGTON Amateur version presented by From The Top Theatre Company, Tues 12 - Sat 16 Dec, Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield

LIOLA Royal Birmingham Conservatoire presents its version of Pirandello's pastoral comedy, Thurs 14 - Sat 16 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Charles Dickens' supernatural tale of redemption, Fri 15 - Sun 24 Dec, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Award-winning Little Wolf Entertainment promise 'giant jokes and marvellous moo-sic' in a festive show for all the family, Fri 15 Dec - Sun 7 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove (Booking via The Core, Solihull)

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Alison Hammond, Matt Slack, Samantha Womack, Doreen Tipton, Andrew Ryan & Alexandra O'Reilly star in a 'giant panto full of fun', Sat 16 Dec - Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

THE GRUFFALO Songs, laughter and monstrous fun for children aged three-plus. Adapted from the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, until Sun 31 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, until Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, Mon 11 - Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Popular festive show featuring choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, Sun 11 - Mon 12 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE Fusion of cabaret, comedy, music, circus and burlesque, Tues 12 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE BIG CHRISTMAS ASSEMBLY! Evening of pure nostalgia featuring singalong tunes from Christmas past, Thurs 14 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS: LOVE ACTUALLY, HOME ALONE & MORE Enjoy Christmas soundtracks by the gentle glow of candlelight, Thurs 14 Dec, Birmingham Cathedral St Philip's

CHRISTMAS MUSIC BY CANDLELIGHT Sat 17 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

LADBABY: LIVE, LAUGH, LOVE - LIVE An insight into the crazy world of the popular podcasting duo, Sun 17 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall



A CHRISTMAS WASSAIL Popular festive show featuring choral music, solo songs, spoken word and comedy, Sun 17 - Mon 18 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Events

CHRISTMAS IN CATHEDRAL SQUARE Featuring Midlands-based crafts, gifts and food & drink traders, until Sun 17 Dec, Cathedral Square, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

ELF TRAIL Spot the cheeky elves around the museum on this festive trail, until Sat 23 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BIRMINGHAM FRANKFURT CHRISTMAS MARKET Offering a large range of traditional gifts and a selection of tempting food & drink, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham City Centre

SNOWY'S CONSERVATION CREW Join Snowy on an arctic adventure to learn about the North Pole and the animals which live there, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

SANTA'S GROTTO Get ready to dive into the ultimate underwater fish-massy adventure with Santa and his elves, until Sun 24 Dec, National SEA LIFE Centre, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS BRICKTACAL Get into the festive spirit with Christmas activities in the Lego playground, until Sun 24 Dec, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

LUMINATE BIRMINGHAM Experience a 'spectacular illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue', until Tues 2 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, until Tues 2 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

SNOWDOGS DISCOVER BIRMINGHAM Enjoy a festive sculpture trail inspired by the animated sequel to the late Raymond Briggs' timeless picture book The Snowman™, until Thurs 4 Jan, across Birmingham City Centre

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

EVOLUTION Epic drone light show taking audiences on a mesmerising journey through time and space, Thurs 14 Dec, Wolverhampton Racecourse

80S SILENT DISCO Boogie away under a giant glowing moon, Fri 15 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE MURDER OF NICHOLAS PICKLE A Christmas party-inspired murder-mystery night, Fri 15 Dec, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

WINTER NIGHTS BY CHRISTMAS LIGHTS Climb on board and journey through the festive tunnels, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Dec, Dudley Canal & Caverns

THE HOLIDAY (2006) AND BOTTOMLESS PROSECCO BRUNCH Enjoy 90-minutes of bottomless prosecco and food before a screening of the popular festive film, Sat 16 Dec, Millennium Point, Birmingham

TOUCH SCREEN: WINTER Join artist Sarah Hamilton Baker in MAC's cinema for a sensory journey through film, Sat 16 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

THE ENCHANTED EXPRESS Inspired by the classic poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, journey through a winter wonderland, meeting fun characters along the way, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA AT THE VALLEY Visit Santa and his elves in his cosy grotto, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville



SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Sat 16 - Sun 17 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW: A LIGHT SPECTACULAR BY ILLUMINOS Enjoy a light show and listen to popular carols, Sat 16 - Wed 20 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

CHRISTMAS TALES FROM THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR Listen to two tales of 'Medieval yuletide splendour fit for the court of Camelot and Queen Guinevere herself', Sun 17 Dec, Aston Hall, Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 17 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham



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The Amy Winehouse Band - Birmingham Town Hall

Gigs

SOLID SOUL Tues 19 - Wed 20 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

JOHNNY FOREIGNER Wed 20 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE LOVELESS FT MARC ALMOND Wed 20 Dec, Castle & Falcon

MAD JOCKS & ENGLISHMEN Wed 20 Dec, Red Lion Folk Club

SWING INTO CHRISTMAS Wed 20 Dec, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

STEVE GIBBONS Wed 20 Dec, The Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

90'S LIVE! Wed 20 Dec, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE DESTROYERS + ODMANSBOX Thurs 21 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE AMY WINEHOUSE BAND Thurs 21 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Thurs 21 Dec, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

TIM GARLAND AND JASON REBELLO Thurs 21 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

BIG IMAGE Fri 22 Dec, The Sunflower Lounge

ISSA + WOODEN DOG + JET BLACK ORANGE + MOLLY GONE MAD + LIAM HAYES Fri 22 Dec, O2 Institute

THE TOTAL STONE ROSES + THE SMITHS PRESUMABLY + OAYSIS Fri 22 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

NATHAN DAWE Fri 22 Dec, O2 Academy

SHOTTY HORROH Fri 22 Dec, The Flapper

TALON Fri 22 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

UNDER THE COVERS Fri 22 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE JACK FLETCHER BAND Fri 22 Dec, Newhampton Arts Centre, W'hampton

RUBY BRIDGE Fri 22 Dec, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE JFBS Fri 22 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE TWANG + THE DREAM MACHINE Fri 22 - Sat 23 Dec, O2 Institute

SIGNING OFF - UB40 TRIBUTE Sat 23 Dec, The Night Owl

SLADE + SONS OF THE SEVENTIES Sat 23 Dec, O2 Academy

DISCHARGE + ROTUNDA + FACE UP! + BIG BLACK EYE + FATAL DOSE + ASYLUM Sat 23 Dec, Castle & Falcon

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 23 Dec, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE CONTRA BAND Sat 23 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

SYMPHONY HALL CAROLS Featuring the Salisbury Cathedral Choir, David Halls (conductor) & Thomas Trotter (organ), Mon 18 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CHORAL CHRISTMAS WITH ANNA LAPWOOD Also featuring Simon Halsey CBE (conductor), CBSO Chorus, CBSO Youth Chorus, CBSO Children's Chorus & SO Vocal, Tues 19 - Wed 20 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE KING'S SINGERS: WHEN YOU WISH UPON A STAR Programme includes works by Grieg, Byrd & Saint-Saëns, Wed 20 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

CHRISTMAS AT THE MOVIES WITH THE CBSO Featuring Michael England (conductor), Gary Williams & Louise Dearman (singers). Programme includes scores from Home Alone, Love Actually, The Holiday, Elf, Gremlins, Miracle on 34th Street, The Polar Express, The Snowman and more... Thurs 21 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHOIR: CHRISTMAS BY CANDLELIGHT Thurs 21 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

RODERICK WILLIAMS: CHRISTMAS CONCERT Featuring Susie Allan, including a performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams' Song of Travel, Thurs 21 Dec, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

THE CBSO: DECK THE HALLS An evening of seasonal favourites performed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), accompanied by the Wolverhampton Chamber Choir and guest singer Tommy Blaize (Strictly Come Dancing), Fri 22 Dec, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

family traditions, until Sun 24 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, until Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

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Comedy

UNDER THE RAINBOW COMEDY Wed 20 Dec, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

MIKE GUNN & COMICS TBC Wed 20 Dec, Herberts Yard, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, MATT BRAGG, PAUL MCCAFFREY & LINDSEY SANTORO Wed 20 - Sat 23 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARK SIMMONDS & COMICS TBC Thurs 21 Dec, Hockley Social Club, B'ham

GARY POWNDLAND & FRIENDS Thurs 21 Dec, Dudley Town Hall

Theatre

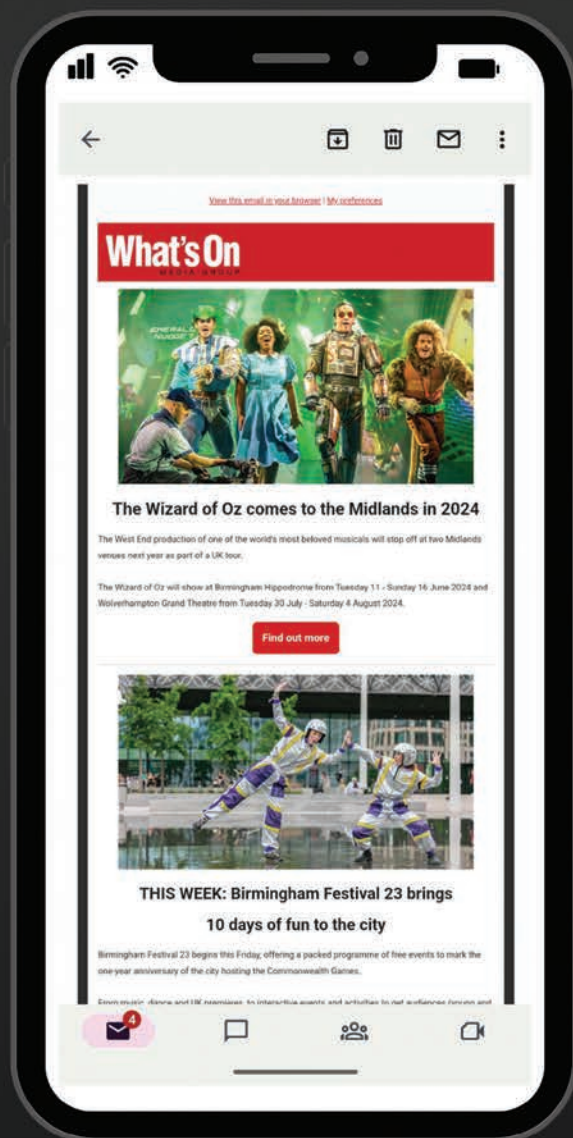
OUR CHRISTMAS CAROL - A MUSICAL UK premiere of a brand-new musical Christmas story about upholding



Big Image - The Sunflower Lounge

What's On

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SIMPLY SCAN THE QR TO SIGN UP TODAY

"I AM..." Brand-new play exploring diversity and what it means to be individual. Written and devised by the young people of Stage2 Youth Theatre, Wed 20 - Sat 23 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

PETER PAN: THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PANTO ARENA TOUR Boy George stars as Captain Hook and Jordan Conway as Peter Pan in a big-budget version of JM Barrie's much-loved story, Fri 22 - Sat 23 Dec, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE WIZARD OF OZ Blue Orange Arts present a festive family adventure based on L Frank Baum's iconic story, Sat 23 Dec - Sat 6 Jan, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

DEAR SANTA A festive introduction to theatre, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved children's book, until Sun 24 Dec, Birmingham Hippodrome

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LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, until Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

Light Entertainment

HOME ALONE IN CONCERT The festive favourite, shown on the big screen and accompanied by The Heritage Orchestra and choir performing the score, Wed 20 Dec, Utilita Arena Birmingham



THE SNOWMAN FILM WITH ORCHESTRA Also including Wallace & Gromit: The Wrong Trousers, Sat 23 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL SING-A-LONG MAC's annual family-friendly singalong screening, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)

Events

CHRISTMAS PARTY WORLD 2023 A night of 'high-octane' entertainment, food & drink, all presented within the themed venue, until Sat 23 Dec, NEC, Birmingham

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FESTIVE DOGS' DINNER EVENINGS WITH SANTA Take your dogs along to enjoy a dinner feast with Santa in the Courtyard Kitchen, Wed 20 - Thurs 21 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

CHRISTMAS AT CADBURY WORLD Discover the chocolatey zones and see Santa in his very own stage show, Thurs 21 - Sat 23 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW: A LIGHT SPECTACULAR BY ILLUMINOS Enjoy a light show around the Close and on the front of the Cathedral, and listen to popular carols, Fri 22 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral



Dear Santa Live On Stage - Birmingham Hippodrome

FESTIVE SILENT DISCO Grab your dancing shoes, put on your Santa hat and prepare to watch three DJs battle it out, Fri 22 Dec, Millennium Point, Birmingham

SANTA AT THE VALLEY Visit Santa and his elves in his cosy grotto, Fri 22 - Sat 23 Dec, Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, West Bromwich

SANTA TRAINS Travel on a steam train to see Santa in a pantomime, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA AT THE SCHOOLROOM Join Santa, his elves and some very special friends for a magical history tour for all ages, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Dec, Shakespeare's Schoolroom & Guildhall, Stratford-upon-Avon

ENCHANTED CHRISTMAS KINGDOM See the park transformed into a winter wonderland full of activities and festive entertainment, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Dec, Hatton Adventure World, Warwickshire

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Sat 23

Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

REEL & MEAL: ELF A screening of the 2003 film, complete with a three-course themed meal, Sat 23 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

CAROLS AROUND THE TREE Popular readings and Christmas carols, featuring a live brass band, Sat 23 Dec, Lichfield Cathedral

SANTA AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet Santa in the Little Parlour and see Blakesley Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 23 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

THE ENCHANTED EXPRESS Inspired by the classic poem 'Twas The Night Before Christmas, journey through a winter wonderland, meeting fun characters along the way, Sat 23 - Sun 24 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 24 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham



Peter Pan: The World's Biggest Arena Tour - Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



Motorheadache - O2 Academy

Gigs

ACOUSTIC SESSIONS

Wed 27 Dec, The Jam House, Birmingham

TRANSMISSION - THE SOUND OF JOY DIVISION

Wed 27 Dec, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA

Wed 27 Dec, Symphony Hall,

Birmingham

BAD MANNERS + MAX

SPLODGE + THE RIFFS
Wed 27 Dec, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

DEL CAMINO

Thurs 28 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

BASIL GABIDON

Fri 29 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

FRED ZEPPELIN

Fri 29

Dec, The Flapper

SIGNING OFF - UB40

TRIBUTE Fri 29 Dec, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

FLASH - QUEEN TRIBUTE

Fri 29 Dec, The Robin, Bilston

INNER EMPIRE

Fri 29 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

CIVIL WRONGS

Sat 30 Dec, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

THE GERRY CINNAMON

EXPERIENCE Sat 30 Dec, O2 Academy

MOTORHEADACHE

Sat 30 Dec, O2 Academy

GBH + DRONGOS FOR

EUROPE + DIRTBOX
DISCO + KNOCK OFF +

ANGRY ITCH Sat 30 Dec, Castle & Falcon

THIRSTY WORK

Sat 30 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

UNDERCOVER HEROES

Sun 31 Dec, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

PICCADILLY SINFONIETTA: VIVALDI'S FOUR SEASONS AT CHRISTMAS Sat 30 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham



LONDON CONCERT ORCHESTRA: NEW

YEAR'S EVE GALA Featuring Anthony Inglis (conductor - pictured). Programme includes works by Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Rossini, Elgar, Grieg & Verdi, plus classics Nessun Dorma & Land Of Hope And Glory, Sun 31 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Comedy

RICHARD BLACKWOOD, SLIM, NABIL ABDULRAHID & DALISO CHAPONDA Wed 27 Dec, The Glee Club, B'ham

SCOTT BENNETT, JACOB NUSSEY & PHIL PAGETT Wed 27 Dec, Bear Tavern, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO & COMIC TBC Thurs 28 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO, KARL PORTER & COMIC TBC Fri 29 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA (PICTURED), TOMMY SANDHU, FAIZAN SHAH & NABIL ABDULRAHID Fri 29 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham



ANDY ROBINSON, LINDSEY SANTORO, KYRAH GRAY & MATT BRAGG Sat 30 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICHARD BLACKWOOD, NABIL ABDULRAHID, CURTIS WALKER & SLIM Sat 30 Dec, The Rep, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, KYRAH GRAY, MATT BRAGG & GARRETT MILLERICK Sun 31 Dec, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SIMON WOZNIK, HASAN AL-HABIB, RICKY BALSHAW & DAVE LONGLEY Sun 31 Dec, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

Theatre

THE BODYGUARD Acclaimed musical based on the iconic film starring Whitney Houston & Kevin Costner. Australian Idol runner-up Emily Williams stars as Rachel Marron (evenings only) alongside Ayden Callaghan (Emmerdale, Hollyoaks), as Frank Farmer, until Sat 30 Dec, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK TaleGate Theatre Productions promise songs, slapstick and audience participation aplenty in a traditional pantomime packed with fairytale magic, until Sun 31 Dec, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

PETER PAN THE MUSICAL

Swashbuckling production complete with 'spectacular songs, creative choreography and fantastic flying sequences', until Sun 31 Dec, Old Rep, Birmingham

THE WIZARD OF OZ Blue Orange Arts present a festive family adventure based on L Frank Baum's iconic story, until Sat 6 Jan, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE BOX OF DELIGHTS The RSC's festive family show follows an orphaned schoolboy who finds himself the guardian of a small wooden box with powers beyond his wildest dreams, until Sun 7 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon



JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Award-winning Little Wolf Entertainment promise 'giant jokes and marvellous moo-sic' in a festive show for all the family, until Sun 7 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove (Booking via The Core, Solihull)

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family favourite starring Sam Rabone as Madame Belle Fillop, Ben Thornton as Philippe, Kat Chatterton as Belle, Melad Hamidi as the Prince and the Beast, Natalie Pilkington as the Fairy and Sarah Annakin as the Enchantress, until Sun 7 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

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Art Gallery & Museum



Dinh Q. Lê. Chincha Norte Island. Production shot of The Colony. 2016. Photo courtesy of Artangel and the artist.

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CINDERELLA Festive fun aplenty in Iain Lauchlan's panto adaptation of the much-loved rags-to-riches tale, until Sat 13 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE FAIR MAID OF THE WEST Isobel McArthur presents an 'open-armed' adaptation of Thomas Heywood's Elizabethan romp, until Sun 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia, in this magical adventure based on C.S. Lewis' classic children's book, until Sun 28 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Alison Hammond, Matt Slack, Samantha Womack, Doreen Tipton, Andrew Ryan & Alexandra O'Reilly star in a 'giant panto full of fun', until Sun 28 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE TWELVE DATES OF CHRISTMAS A one-woman play offering 'a hilarious and modern alternative to the old standards of the holiday season', Wed 27 - Sat 30 Dec, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

MOTIONHOUSE: STARCHITECTS SAVE SANTA! New festive show for families, fusing gravity-defying choreography, digital projections and magical characters, until Sat 30 Dec, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

THE GRUFFALO Songs, laughter and monstrous fun for children aged three-plus. Adapted from the book by Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler, until Sun 31 Dec, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Rep presents a fresh look at the classic fairytale, in a new production for children aged three to six, until Sat 6 Jan, The Rep, B'ham

OH NO! SHARK IN THE SNOW! A 'fantastic family musical combining three exciting adventures', Wed 27 - Sun 31 Dec, Birmingham Town Hall

HORRIBLE HISTORIES: HORRIBLE CHRISTMAS 'Hair-raising adventure' in which Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas join forces to save the festive season, Thurs 28 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

THE RAT PACK CHRISTMAS IN VEGAS Starring Des Coleman as Sammy Davis Jnr, Tues 26 Dec, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS: LOVE ACTUALLY, HOME ALONE & MORE...

Thurs 28 Dec, St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO COLDPLAY Discover the music of Coldplay 'under the gentle glow of candlelight', Thurs 28 Dec, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

CANDLELIGHT: MAGICAL MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS Experience movie soundtracks 'under the gentle glow of candlelight', Thurs 28 Dec, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

THE MUSIC OF LORD OF THE RINGS, GAME OF THRONES & BEYOND Featuring music from Lord Of The Rings, The Hobbit, The Witcher, Game Of Thrones, The Chronicles Of Narnia, How To Train Your Dragon & Pirates Of The Caribbean, Fri 29 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN Discover the music of Queen 'under the gentle glow of candlelight', Fri 29 Dec, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

SHEN YUN Travel back to the magical world of ancient China via an acclaimed theatrical performance of Chinese dance, orchestral music and high-tech backdrops, Fri 29 - Sun 31 Dec, The ICC, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF ZIMMER VS WILLIAMS Presented by the London Concert Orchestra. Programme features scores from Star Wars, Batman Begins, Harry Potter, Jurassic Park, Pirates Of The Caribbean, The Dark Knight Rises and many more... Sat 30 Dec, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

LUMINATE BIRMINGHAM Experience a 'spectacular illuminated trail, full of wonder and intrigue', until Tues 2 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's biggest indoor funfair, with all festive activities included in the ticket price, until Tues 2 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

SNOWDOGS DISCOVER BIRMINGHAM Enjoy a festive sculpture trail inspired by the animated sequel to the late Raymond Briggs' timeless picture book *The Snowman*™, until Thurs 4 Jan, across Birmingham City Centre

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Birmingham's largest, all-inclusive undercover ice rink is back! until Sun 7 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

FREDDO'S MAGIC SHOW Everyone's favourite chocolate frog brings his magic show to Cadbury World, Wed 27 - Sat 30 Dec, Cadbury World, Bournville

SANTA'S SCIENCE SPECTACULAR SHOW From the science behind Rudolph's glowing nose to rocket-powered sleighs, this show is sure to get everyone in the festive spirit, Wed 27 - Sun 31 Dec, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum



Santa at Blakesley Hall

WINTER DIESEL DAY A festive-season diesel day, with 40106 and D182 both providing steam-heat, as well as Pannier Tank 7714 double-heading with D9551 or D8568, Fri 29 Dec, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SANTA AT BLAKESLEY HALL Meet Santa in the Little Parlour and see Blakesley

Hall dressed for Christmas, Sat 30 Dec, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK

A guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 31 Dec, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

Carols THROUGH TIME

Candlelit carol concert of traditional favourites & unknown medieval gems as featured on The Telling's Carol CD, Classic FM's "absolute favourite" (2019)

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Win! A family ticket to see The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe!

Direct from the West End, The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe shows at Birmingham Rep until Sunday 28 January. We have a family ticket to give away for the evening performance on Friday 19 January.

Competition closes Monday 8 January



Win! Four tickets to see Horrible Histories: Horrible Christmas!

Join Charles Dickens, Oliver Cromwell, King Henry VIII and St Nicholas himself as they team up to save the festive season! We have four tickets to give away as one prize for the Thursday 28 December performance at Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Competition closes Monday 18 December



Win! Four tickets to see Peter Pan!

Starring Boy George as Captain Hook, this big-budget adaptation of JM Barrie's much-loved tale flies into Resorts World Arena Birmingham this month. We have four tickets to give away as one prize for the Saturday 23 December performance.

Competition closes Friday 15 December



Win! A family ticket to see Evolution drone light show!

Witness an epic-scale theatrical presentation of the story of evolution, told via a swarm of mesmerising drones flying in unison. We have a family ticket to give away for the show at Wolverhampton Racecourse on Thursday 14 December.

Competition closes Monday 4 December

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:
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