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ISSUE 445 FEBRUARY 2024

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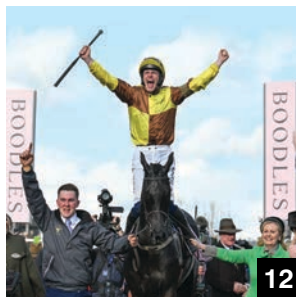
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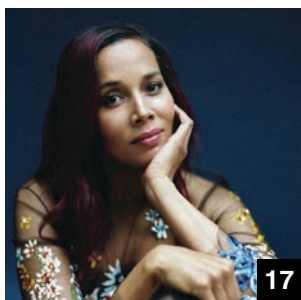
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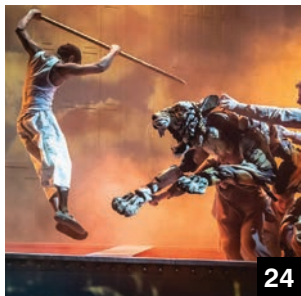
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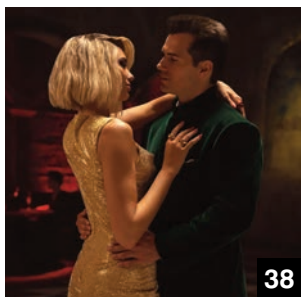
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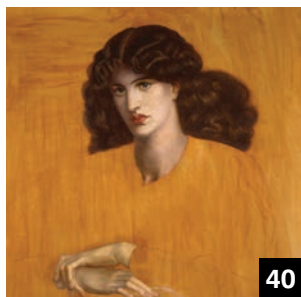
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What's On

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Ground-breaking musical festival makes a return

Ground-breaking musical festival CrossCurrents is making a return at the University of Birmingham this month (Saturday 24 February - Sunday 17 March). Weaving together new music, electronics, jazz and folk to create 'new sounds and never-before-heard experiences', the festival provides a showcase for the UK's most exciting emerging composers and artists, renowned guest performers and talented student musicians...

For further information about the CrossCurrents series and to check out the university's whole season of music, visit birmingham.ac.uk/musicevents

Folk festival announces first wave of performers

Irish folk legend Mary Black, American blues singer-songwriter Eric Bibb and chart-topping UK band Ward Thomas are among the first wave of artists announced for this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival. Talking place from Friday 23 to Monday 26 August, the popular event will also feature contributions from, among many others, Manran, El Pony Pisador and The Sentimentals, the latter of whom will be celebrating 20 years of playing together with two special shows... For further information, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

Pup-tastic event coming to Birmingham venue

Birmingham venue Revolución de Cuba is this month hosting a special Pup Up Cafe event for Midlands dog lovers. Taking place on Sunday 25 February, the get-together has a Valentine's theme and provides the opportunity for pups to mingle in a safe and secure space. More information is available at fatsoma.com



Lego looking for a new Mini Master Model Builder

Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham is on the lookout for its new Mini Master Model Builder.

Young Lego lovers are being urged to enter the bricktastic competition, with the winner having their creation displayed in the centre's Miniland. For more information, visit legolanddiscoverycentre.com



Funding boost for nine cultural & sporting events

Nine cultural and sporting events, set to take place in the West Midlands this year and next, have shared £3million of Commonwealth Games legacy funding to help bring hundreds of thousands of people together.

Giving an estimated £11.5million boost to the local economy, the events will celebrate the region's rich and diverse sporting, music and cultural heritage.

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the UK Government are supporting the organisers with money from the £70million Games underspend which is being reinvested back into the region.

Exhibitions programme set to ponder all things AI

University of Birmingham venue The Exchange is presenting a programme of exhibitions taking a journey into the future. The exhibitions will contemplate the subject of Artificial Intelligence (AI) through the lens of university research, in the process considering such questions as: Can AI create things, or is it just copying? Should we be scared? And what will the future actually look like?

The series of exhibitions will launch this month, with more information available at birmingham.ac.uk/the-exchange

Monster Jam Ramped Up heads to Birmingham

Adrenaline-charged motorsport event Monster Jam Ramped Up is heading for Birmingham.

Taking place at the city's Utilita Arena from Friday 29 to Sunday 31 March, the show features the Monstergon, a multi-sided metal ramp that launches 12,000lb Monster Jam trucks as they attempt a selection of fan-favourite stunts. For more information and to book tickets, visit theticketfactory.com



Conservatoire date for McKenna

Popular hypnotist & broadcaster Paul McKenna is making a stop-off at Birmingham Royal Conservatoire next month with his brand-new coaching event, Success For Life. Paul visits the venue on Saturday 16 March. For more information about the show and to bag yourself a ticket, visit MindBodySpirit.co.uk

Beatlemania returns to Brum

Birmingham-based Beatles lovers are in for a pre-Valentine's Day treat when Kings Heath's All You Need Is Love Festival returns on Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 February.

The event will mark the Fab Four's first-ever visit to Birmingham, on 15 February 1961, when they performed at Kings Heath's now-burnt-down Ritz Ballroom.

To find out more about the festival, visit wegottickets.com



Bottoms Up! Burlesque at the Old Joint Stock

Birmingham's Old Joint Stock is inviting theatre-goers to 'step into a world of glitz and glamour' courtesy of a bawdy new burlesque show. Titled Bottoms Up! and debuting on Friday 26 April, the production will feature 'sultry striptease, witty wisecracks and saucy songs'. To find out more, visit the Old Joint Stock's website.



RSC's new co-artistic directors hit the ground running

Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey are certainly hitting the ground running as the newly appointed co-artistic directors of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).

The pair's inaugural season will feature eight Shakespeare plays, three world premieres, a European premiere, a UK premiere, two major revivals and two visiting productions.

Commenting on the programme, Daniel and Tamara said: "We begin our chapter at the RSC

by announcing a whole year's worth of shows - 17 in total, across four stages. With this, our first season, we want to throw open the doors in every sense, collaborating with artists from across the globe on all of our stages, and ensuring we can welcome as many people as possible with a brand-new ticket initiative of 25,000 tickets across the season at £25 or less." To check out the Company's complete programme of shows in 2024, visit rsc.org.uk

Ben Elton to play Midlands dates

Ben Elton will visit three Midlands venues when he hits the road with brand-new show Authentic Stupidity in the autumn.

The popular comedian, playwright & author will stop off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Monday 9 September, the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Wednesday 2 October and Warwick Arts Centre in Coventry the following night (Thursday the 3rd). For further information and to book tickets, visit Benelton.live



New puppetry festival for the region

Black Country Touring (BCT) - an organisation dedicated to bringing the best in theatre, dance and cinema to the region - is this month presenting Smethwick's first-ever puppetry festival. Taking place across seven community venues during February half term (from Sunday the 11th to Sunday the 18th), the event features family-friendly puppet shows, puppetry workshops and exhibitions, and performances for adults.

BCT is also presenting two other shows this month: Oskar's Amazing Adventure, performed by Theatre Fideri Fidera at Blackheath Library on Saturday the 10th, and Mr Shadow (Great Barr Library, Saturday the 17th).

For further information about these shows and all of BCT's productions, visit its website at bctouring.org.uk

Midlands theatre launches new podcast

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has launched a podcast.

Aiming to lift the curtain on life at the venue, Spotlight will feature a variety of guests, including the stars of the shows and the people who work backstage.

The episodes will be available to watch on YouTube and Grand Theatre social-media channels.

New scheme to support aspiring screenwriters

An eight-week scheme to support new writing talent from across Birmingham and the Black Country will be launched in the summer.

Running from June to September, the new initiative will provide up to 12 aspiring writers with a crucial insight into writing for television.

The scheme sees BBC Writers - which works to support scriptwriting talent - and Create Central - which aims to turbo-charge the creative content sector in the region - join forces with Birmingham Rep, Script Sirens, Dudley Creates, Creative Black Country and Black Country Touring.

To find out more, including how to apply to take part, visit bbc.co.uk/writers

True meaning of football explored at the Old Rep

Hit podcast Football Clichés is out on the road again and heading for Birmingham. The live stage version of the show visits the city's Old Rep Theatre on Friday 1 March, with presenters Adam Hurrey, Charlie Eccleshare and David Walker promising fans 'the most pedantic footballing night of all time'... To find out more and book tickets, visit oldreptheatre.co.uk.

LoveBrum launches Hidden Heroes campaign

LoveBrum, a charity dedicated to supporting small and volunteer-led projects and causes across Birmingham, has announced the launch of its Hidden Heroes

campaign, a celebration of the unsung heroes who make a huge impact in the city...

For further information, visit lovebrum.org.uk



A multi-sensory spectacular at Midlands Arts Centre

Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) is this month presenting a 'multi-sensory spectacular' for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD). Frozen Light's The Bar At The Edge Of Time -

a story with words and music which is set in a cocktail bar - shows at the venue on Thursday 29 February & Friday 1 March. For more information and to book tickets, visit macbirmingham.co.uk

Professor Alice Roberts at Birmingham Town Hall

Professor Alice Roberts is visiting Birmingham Town Hall on Monday 26 February to launch her new book.

The final instalment of her highly acclaimed trilogy, Crypt explores life, death and disease in the Middle Ages and beyond... To find out more and book your seat for the show, visit bmusic.co.uk



Get snapping! Popular show returns to the NEC

The Photography & Video Show returns to Birmingham's NEC next month (Saturday 16 - Tuesday 19 March).

Visitors to the event will be able to test cutting-edge equipment from 250-plus brands, check out live demos and tutorials, access stage and theatre programmes and visit interactive areas and galleries.

For further information about the event, visit photographyshow.com

City of Birmingham Choir at Lichfield Cathedral

The City of Birmingham Choir will make its first visit to Lichfield Cathedral early next month, to perform a programme of choral music for Lent.

The Saturday 2 March concert will see the choir joined by four soloists and the orchestra of the Musical & Amicable Society. The programme will feature Haydn's Stabat Mater, JS Bach's Cantata no12 and Albinoni's Adagio for strings and organ.

To find out more, visit citychoir.org.uk

Wolverhampton's annual literature festival is back!

Wolverhampton Literature Festival returns early this month.

The popular annual event - which is being hosted by the city's council, with funding support from Arts Council England - takes place at various venues from Friday 2 to Sunday 4 February.

Sathnam Sanghera, Louise Minchin, Raphael Rowe, Lou Sanders and James O'Brien are among the celebrity contributors to the 2024 festival.

For further information about the event and who's taking part, check out the website at wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk

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Mischief & Mystery

In Moominvalley | 10 Feb | Symphony Hall



Candace Bushnell:

True Tales of Sex, Success & Sex and the City | 11 Feb | Symphony Hall



Armonico Consort & Rachel Podger: The Forgotten Scarlatti | 12 Feb | Town Hall



Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra: Fairytale & Legends | 15 Feb | Symphony Hall



The World According To Kaleb

19 Feb | Symphony Hall



Rhiannon Giddens

22 Feb | Town Hall



Ross Noble: Jibber Jabber Jamboree

24 Feb | Symphony Hall



Alice Roberts: Crypt

26 Feb | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for
everyone this February!

Seed Lights show still on display at the Gardens

There's still time to check out Birmingham Botanical Gardens' Saranjit Birdi exhibition documenting Seed Lights - a light & sound event featuring animations, poetry, music and live performance that took place at Winterbourne House & Garden. The show is available to view until the end of the month.

Wolverhampton theatre gets expansion grant

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has been awarded a grant by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to implement the first phase of its city-centre expansion plans. The theatre recently signed a 12-month exclusivity agreement with the owners of Amar House, which formally incorporated The Slade Rooms. Now, thanks to the grant, it can move forward with plans to acquire the building in totality. The Grand intends to transform the site into a multi-disciplinary arts venue, including a 250-seat studio theatre, a further smaller scale performance space, rehearsal rooms, exhibition facilities, an office and a creative business space.



B:Music to offer free and subsidised tickets

B:Music, the charity responsible for Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Town Hall, raised £20,800 as part of its festive fundraising campaign, the Gift of Music. The funds raised will enable B:Music to offer free and subsidised tickets to local families and groups who would otherwise be unable to visit the two city centre venues.



National Youth Theatre auditions come to Birmingham

The National Youth Theatre (NYT) is this month hosting free community auditions at Birmingham BOA Stage & Screen Academy (Saturday 10 February). Open to all young people aged from 14 to 25,

and disabled young people up to the age of 30, the auditions provide participants with a sense of what it's like to be part of the NYT community. For further information and to register, visit nyt.org.uk/auditions

Call-out for artists to exhibit at Biennale 2024

Artists, designers, craftspeople and students have until midnight on Sunday 25 February to submit for consideration up to three works of art to the British Glass Biennale. The flagship exhibition within the International Festival of Glass, the Biennale takes place at The Glasshouse in Stourbridge from Friday 23 August to Saturday 28 September. To find out more about how to apply, visit glassbiennale.org

Resonate Festival set to spark ideas and curiosity

A Coventry & Warwickshire-based initiative designed to spark ideas, curiosity and creativity is making a return in 2024. Presenting a year-round programme, Resonate aims to bring together fascinating work from the University of Warwick and community partners in an engaging and accessible way. The initiative is this year returning with three festivals - science & technology next month (Friday 8 - Sunday 17 March), arts & culture in the summer and social science in the autumn. Resonate is also hosting The Big Read - 'a day of authors, activities and read-alongs' at Warwick Arts Centre on Saturday 6 April. To find out more about the events, visit the website at resonatefestival.co.uk

AGBO Rally back at Weston Park next month

Fancy a family-friendly day of full-throttle action? If so, then be sure to get along to Weston Park on the



Shropshire/Staffordshire border on Sunday 17 March for the ever-popular AGBO Rally. The event will see 80 cars from numerous eras taking on the stages at Weston Park - including the famous watersplash! To find out more, visit weston-park.com/agbo-rally

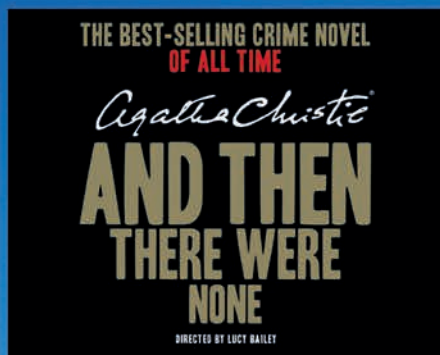
New patron for Lichfield Literature Festival

Lichfield Festival's Literature Festival returns to the city next month (various venues, Thursday 21 - Sunday 24 March), with author, historian, broadcaster & joint Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces, Tracy Borman, becoming a patron. The popular event will feature contributions from bestselling authors and also provide Lichfield audiences with the chance to 'immerse themselves in new fiction, memoir and biography'... For further information and tickets, visit lichfieldfestival.org

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Tue 12 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



Sun 24 Mar



Tue 26 Mar



Mon 1 – Sat 6 Apr
AD Sat 6 Apr 2.30pm



Tue 9 – Sun 14 Apr

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Image: Nikolai Foster - photography by Ellie Kurtz

LOVE IN THE 80S

Theatre maker Nikolai Foster talks about bringing a musical version of hit 1980s film *An Officer And A Gentleman* to the stage

Although it's been more than 40 years since *An Officer And A Gentleman* hit the big screen, the film has remained hugely popular - not least because of its famous finale, in which Richard Gere sweeps Debra Winger off her feet.

It is a classic moment in what has become a classic film - and this year fans can enjoy the story on stage, thanks to the UK tour of *An Officer And A Gentleman - The Musical*.

Created at Leicester Curve and helmed by the venue's artistic director, Nikolai Foster, the show, which premiered in 2018, aims to be as true to the movie as possible.

The film's original screenplay was written by Douglas Day Stewart, who based the story of the love affair between trainee navy pilot Zack Mayo and factory worker Paula Pokrifki on his own experiences training as a naval officer. And Nikolai was keen to ensure Douglas' gritty story remained at the heart of the musical.

"I really love the film," says Nikolai. "It's the quiet simplicity of it, the complexity of the relationships, and the quite desolate world that it presents which is really beautiful. I think Douglas did an incredible job - along with the film's director, Hackford Taylor - of depicting that world with real integrity and heart and humility.

"With the musical, we wanted to make really good theatre that inspires people and moves people, but also it had to be realistic about the source material and not pull it so far away from where it started that it's unrecognisable to audiences. The whole point is people are coming for the nostalgia, the enjoyment and the love they felt towards that film and those characters when they first saw it, so you don't want to disappoint them."

To develop the show as a musical, the team turned to much-loved songs from the 1980s, including Bon Jovi's *Blaze Of Glory* and Livin' On A Prayer, Blondie's *Heart Of Glass*, Madonna's *Material Girl* and Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*, along with the theme tune to the film, *Up Where We Belong*. The choice of song was very important to the ethos of the musical, says Nikolai.

"The only way I could see it working was if you take the original film script and you use songs of the period - the type of music that

those characters would have been listening to at pivotal moments of their lives, whether it was funerals or weddings or birthday parties.

"So it's not using those songs in the traditional musical theatre way, of songs carrying the story forward. That's not going to work with a load of random pop songs. It was about choosing songs which would reflect the poetry and the souls and the inner lives of those characters and hopefully give them an expression."

Nikolai worked closely with Douglas Day Stewart on the musical, and despite it being set in 1980s' America, they saw that the story resounded with British audiences of today.

"It's about working-class lives and working-class culture. When my family first came to this country, we were welcomed into working-class communities in the north of England. So my stepfather worked in a textile mill as an engineer and my mum worked in a shop. These weren't careers that would necessarily take you anywhere, they were very much nine-to-five standard jobs, and I could see the similarity in the lives Douglas had portrayed.

"I'm very moved and inspired by the beauty and the courage of the working-class experience, and I think that is what I could see in Douglas' writing. It's very hard-hitting, it's very true to the complexity of real life, and it's done with real heart and grace."

Plans for a second UK tour had to be delayed because of Covid-19.

"Had it not been for the pandemic, we would have brought the show back sooner. It only did 16 weeks in the UK, and we could have carried on, as theatres were crying out for it - those that didn't get it and those that did get it, it sold very well, so they were immediately asking to get it back."

The delay has also given the team time to make a few small changes to the show.

"We've worked on the design for this new version, and the joy of doing a second version is that you can re-write some things; you can have another go at it. We've put a new song in for Paula's mum in Act Two and a few other bits of tinkering, but there are no massive re-writes - what's the point when it works and it's good?"

Nikolai is looking forward to the show being back on tour.

"I'm very excited about it - it's been something I'm very proud of. I think there is something for audiences about your own life being reflected on stage. Working-class culture is a massive part of who we are in this country, but it's often derided or mocked or the source of comedy. Seeing a part of your experience, albeit removed and on another continent but still similar, is important to people.

"There's a nostalgia to the show, and you can experience the piece on different levels. You can see the politics of '80s Reaganism and the destruction as it was here with Thatcher and the coal mines and industry and how that marginalised those communities. You can see how women in society were ostracised through misogyny and sexism. You can take some of those themes from it if you like, or you can just have a really good night out, listening to some great songs, following a great love story and enjoying the romance."

Whatever levels people choose to see in the musical, Nikolai believes the show will lift their spirits.

"I hope they will feel really inspired and a little bit lighter. We all walk around with heavy hearts at the moment, with so much going on in the world and our own personal stuff. I hope they'll just be taken away from that and genuinely feel uplifted and inspired by having been transported to another place and time for a couple of hours.

"What people love about this story is the optimism, and of course the iconography of the piece. I mean, that ending - it's just iconic. Who doesn't want Richard Gere to come in and sweep you off your feet and take you off from your life? I mean, if he walked in now the way he looked in the '80s, I'd be 'Pick me up, Richard, I'm out the door with you!'"

.....

An Officer And A Gentleman shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Friday 23 February to Saturday 2 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 6 to Saturday 11 May; and the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, from Monday 23 to Saturday 28 September



100 YEARS OF THE GOLD CUP

Cheltenham Festival promises four extraordinary days of horse racing next month, and 2024 marks the centenary of its most celebrated race: The Gold Cup. With Gold Cup Day bringing the festival to a close on Friday 15 March, racing fans will be champing at the bit to experience the occasion. We took a dive into the history of Cheltenham's premier race, to find out more...

One of the most important events in the racing calendar, Cheltenham Festival's Gold Cup Steeplechase - sponsored by Boodles since 2022 - is celebrating its centenary this year.

The race takes place over a distance of three miles, two furlongs and 70 yards (or 5,294 metres in new money), with 22 fences to be jumped.

The Gold Cup was established as one of the first major steeplechase races run without a handicap - the practice of equalising the competitors' chances by adding weights to better horses. In its 100-year history, it has grown to become Britain's most prestigious non-handicap race.

And Cheltenham Racecourse is certainly commemorating its centenary in style, with the trophy itself featuring heavily in celebrations.

The now-iconic cup - first presented to Red Splash, the winning horse back in 1924 - is comprised of 9 and 18 carat gold, so the race is certainly fittingly named.

After being stored for some time in a bank vault, the original cup was returned to Cheltenham in 2018 to become the festival's perpetual trophy. A tour of schools, hospitals, care homes and clubs in the area is

planned in the run-up to Gold Cup Day, offering a taste of local history.

Another objective during the Gold Cup's centenary year is to raise funds for charity. The first allocation of funds has already been donated to worthy causes, including Cheltenham Tigers Wheelchair Rugby Club, Cass & Friends - which offers financial and mindset support to young and aspiring athletes - and Headway Gloucestershire, which works to improve life after brain injury.

In June last year, a team of fundraisers from Cheltenham Racecourse were joined by familiar faces from racing to complete an exciting challenge on behalf of The Jockey Club's charity, Racing Welfare. In just four days, and accompanied by the Gold Cup trophy itself, they climbed the highest peaks in Ireland, Wales and England, before heading to Scotland for the final mountain of the challenge.

The team were joined by jockeys Barry Geraghty, who climbed Carrauntoohil, Ireland's highest peak, Graham McCourt for the Snowdon climb in Wales, and Richard Johnson for England's Scafell Pike.

The home stretch of the challenge was the ascent of Arkle, a mountain in the Scottish Highlands which shares its name with the

famous horse that won the Gold Cup three years in a row in the mid-1960s.

Although the Gold Cup is the pinnacle of the Cheltenham Festival, the four-day event has plenty else on offer for visitors to enjoy, with each day bringing something a bit different. Usually taking place around St Patrick's Day, the festival inspires a healthy rivalry between competitors from Ireland and Great Britain, as they battle it out to win the most races.

The festival also offers excellent shopping, impressive hospitality and plenty of live music - not to mention a truly memorable atmosphere: the celebrated 'Cheltenham Roar' from the crowd at the start of the first race has to be heard to be believed.

As usual, for fans of racing, the 2024 edition of the festival will have plenty of excitement on offer across the board. And this year's Gold Cup - run in the race's centenary year - will surely be an occasion that lives long in the memory... Don't miss it.

.....

Cheltenham Festival runs from Tuesday 12 to Friday 15 March at Cheltenham Racecourse, with The Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Steeplechase taking place on Friday 15 March

Did you know...

- Only eight horses have achieved more than one Gold Cup win. Golden Miller has most, with five consecutive victories from 1932 to 1936.
- The fastest Gold Cup winning time is six minutes 29.7 seconds, set by Long Run in 2011.

- The most successful Gold Cup jockey is Pat Taaffe, who won three times with Arkle from 1964 to 1966, and again on Fort Leney in 1968.
- Current jockey Paul Townend is close behind, winning with Al Boum Photo in 2019 and 2020, and Galopin Des Champs in 2023.

- The longest priced winner of the Gold Cup to date is Norton's Coin, who started at 100-1 in 1990.
- The shortest priced winner was Arkle, given odds of 1-10 in 1966, after winning the race the previous two years.

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Birmingham City Council

Haydn - Stabat Mater
Bach - Cantata 12: Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen
Albinoni - Adagio in G minor

REFLECTIONS

City of Birmingham Choir
conducted by Adrian Lucas


Lichfield Cathedral
Saturday, 2 March 2024, 7pm



Tickets: £20 (Students £10 | U16s Free)
From : ticketsource.co.uk and search for 'City of Birmingham Choir'



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Classical music from across the region...



Sibelius & Strauss with Sakari Oramo & The CBSO

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 28 February

Finnish conductor Sakari Oramo certainly made a splash during his decade spent as the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's (CBSO) music director. Nowadays chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, Sakari took up the position with the CBSO in the mid-1990s and is fondly remembered for his

outstanding contribution to musicmaking in the city.

He here conducts a concert featuring two works by Sibelius (his seventh symphony and *The Tempest: Suite No1*) plus Merikanto's *Ekho* and Strauss' *Four Last Songs*. The latter work sees Sakari joined by his wife, soprano Anu Komsu.

University Philharmonic Orchestra: Lunar New Year Celebration

Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall, University of Birmingham, Thurs 8 February

The University Philharmonic here teams up with internationally renowned Chinese pianist Di Xiao (pictured) for a concert that's being described as 'fizzing with orchestral fireworks to see in the Lunar New Year'. The performance includes the *Yellow River* piano concerto, a composition which, in its melding of Western and Chinese musical influences, is perfect for Di. "I want to become an international ambassador for the piano," she explains, "combining Chinese and Western repertoire in the programming of my concerts, thereby creating a bridge between two cultures." The concert also features music for pipa (Chinese lute) and guzheng (Chinese plucked zither).



Gould Piano Trio

Routh Hall, Bromsgrove School, Fri 23 February

With more than a quarter-century of experience behind them and rave reviews evidencing their incredible talent, the Gould Piano Trio make a Bromsgrove Concerts return with a programme featuring a rarely performed work by Haydn (*Piano Trio in B Flat Hob. XV:20*). Also included on the bill is Heinrich Marschner's *Piano Trio No6 in C Minor Op 148*, and Smetana's *Piano Trio in G Minor Op 15*. The latter was written in grief shortly after the composer had lost both of his daughters to illness.

Armonico Consort: The Forgotten Scarlatti Tour

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 12 February

Founded by organist & conductor Christopher Monks in 2001, Armonico are one of the largest organisations of their kind in the UK. Using authentic period instruments, the baroque consort regularly perform with some of the best solo musicians in the world.

This latest concert sees them presenting a programme of Francesco Scarlatti's rarely performed masterpieces in exclusive brand-new editions by Dr Geoffrey Webber.

The works are complemented by Bach and Vivaldi violin concertos performed by international violinist Rachel Podger.



Ex Cathedra Baroque Passion

Birmingham Town Hall, Sun 11 February

Long enjoying an international reputation as one of the UK's leading choral and early music ensembles, Town Hall associate artists Ex Cathedra here present a concert of 'heart-rending music that tells of sacrifice and healing'.

"Birmingham, perhaps surprisingly, has a proud and distinguished history in the field of Baroque music," says Ex Cathedra founder & conductor Jeffrey Skidmore (pictured), "and we here continue our exploration of Birmingham Baroque. [The concert] includes pieces from the full 150 years which define the period, from Monteverdi through Purcell, Charpentier and Carissimi to the great Johann Sebastian Bach."



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Authors, storytelling and more...

In the early days of February, Wolverhampton venues are opening their doors to the city's annual Literature Festival. Featuring talks by authors, storytelling for all ages, poetry and workshops, the 2024 edition of the event includes shows to suit every lit-lover - and a lot more besides. We've taken a look at six of this year's headliners, to provide a glimpse of what the festival has in store...

Pauline Black OBE

Thurs 1 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre

Spanning over 40 years, Pauline Black's music career began in Coventry in 1979 as founder member and lead singer of 2 Tone ska band The Selecter. Pauline continues to perform live, and her critically acclaimed memoir, *Black By Design*, was published in 2011. In an exclusive event kicking off this year's festival, she shares her story of 'music, race, family and roots'. The evening also provides the audience with an opportunity to put their questions to her.



Louise Minchin

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

After 20 years presenting BBC Breakfast, Louise has turned her hand to writing, with her latest offering inspired by the people she met on the breakfast sofa. Fearless: *Adventures With Extraordinary Women* brings female adventurers into a spotlight primarily held by men. At the festival, she will be recounting these women's exhilarating, moving and inspirational stories, and her own first-hand adventures as she joined them along the way.



Ghost Huns

Fri 2 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre

Join 'comedians, basic huns and horror stans' Hannah Byczkowski and Suzie Preece for a live manifestation of their podcast, *Ghost Huns*. Having regularly spooked their listeners - and themselves - since 2022, Hannah and Suzie promise plenty of laughter to go along with the screams, as they tell 'the world's creepiest ghost stories'. Depending how the night goes, they might even crack out the Ouija board... 'They get haunted, so you don't have to.'



Sohan Kailey

Sat 3 Feb, Whitmore Reans Library

Children under 10 - and their grown-ups - are invited to join Wolverhampton artist, actor, dancer & storyteller Sohan on a 'breathtaking journey'. The Maharajas' Express is a multi-sensory adventure full of puppets, music and dancing. Travel with Sohan through a magical book to meet dinosaurs and Bhangra pirates, venture into the jungle and to outer space, and discover the power of imagination together, singing and dancing as you go.



Raphael Rowe

Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

A familiar face of BBC journalism - and host of Netflix's *Inside The World's Toughest Prisons* - Raphael Rowe's career has taken him on adventures around the world. The journey that brought him here is even more remarkable, however: before being acquitted and released in 2000, Raphael served 12 years in a maximum security prison, after being falsely accused and tried. This latest show sees him telling his incredible story in person.



Lou Sanders

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

Idiosyncratic comedian Lou Sanders ponders life's twists and turns during an evening of 'laughter and candid conversation'. In support of her latest book, *What's That Lady Doing?*, Lou will share her unique perspective through tales of dead dads, bizarre encounters at the osteopath's and unexpected run-ins with the law. Expect an evening of 'side-splitting humour, profound insights, and relatable anecdotes that will leave you in stitches'.



Check out the full 2024 Festival programme at wolvesliteraturefestival.co.uk



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Live music from across the region...

The Vaccines

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Mon 5 February

Freddie Cowan may have left, but the euphoric hooks and melodies just keep on coming for The Vaccines. The boys stop off in Birmingham with a show in support of their sixth album, *Pick-Up Full Of Pink Carnations*, a record which has been described as so good that every track should be a single.

The four-piece have played with and opened for bands including The Rolling Stones and Arctic Monkeys, sold in excess of two million records, and been likened to Ramones, The Strokes and The Jesus And Mary Chain.



Rhiannon Giddens

Birmingham Town Hall, Thurs 22 February

Boasting an opera-trained voice which confidently embraces the challenges of numerous genres, Rhiannon Giddens' focus on the past is providing a success-filled present and promising an even more exciting future. The North Carolina-born musician has made it her career-long mission to cast light on the work of artists whose contribution to American musical history has been either unceremoniously erased or simply lost in the dark corners of history... She plays Birmingham the day after her 47th birthday.



The 1975

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Wed 21 February

Fronted by lead vocalist & rhythm guitarist Matty Healy, pop rock band The 1975 achieved chart-topping success with both their self-titled debut album and their follow-up offering. Their style left critics at something of a loss, but was eventually summed up as 'brooding art rock, crisp electronica, dancefloor R&B, helium hip-hop, shimmering balladry and '80s gloss pop'. The band themselves, however,

referred to it simply as 'the sum of our combined experiences'.

Although recent years have seen them named 'best group' at the Brits and hailed 'the band of the decade' by NME, it hasn't all been plain sailing; Healy last year kicked up a storm by criticising Kuala Lumpur's anti-LGBT+ laws while performing at the country's Good Vibes festival, and also found himself in hot water for making racist jokes about the rapper Ice Spice. The band visit Birmingham this month with their *Still... At Their Very Best* tour.

John J Presley

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Sun 25 February

Fulfilling "music's need for a new dark lord" - that's according to BBC Radio One's Phil Taggart - and garnering positive critical acclaim from the likes of *The Guardian*, *Q Magazine*, *Classic Rock* and *The Independent*, Walsall-born John J Presley brings folk-noir attention-to-detail to his powerhouse blues.

Citing Tom Waits, The Kills, Josh T Pearson and Duke Garwood among his influences, he plays Birmingham having last autumn ended a three-year hiatus with the release of second album *Chaos & Calypso*.

Poppy

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Mon 19 February

Bold, electronic beats and deep metal rock riffs, reminiscent of early 1990s industrial sounds, feature among the predominant elements of Poppy's latest album, *Zig*. The American singer-songwriter - real name

Moriah Rose Pereira - shot to fame when her subversive performance art went viral on YouTube in 2014. In the decade since then, she's released five studio albums and been nominated for a Grammy Award.

Pip Blom

The Castle & Falcon, Birmingham, Mon 5 February

Their commitment to creating and playing an infectious style of indie pop has seen the Amsterdam-based Pip Blom make a significant splash on the international music scene. The talented trio, who borrow their name from their lead singer, are visiting Birmingham this month in support of third full-length album *Bobbie*. Expect an impressively high-energy show that comes complete with dancing and headbanging.



BANGING ON

Actor & comedian Miles Jupp talks about how a major life event has helped him put things into perspective



A lot has happened to Miles Jupp since his last tour finished at the London Palladium in 2017... As well as acting in series including The Full Monty, Trigger Point and The Durrells, in comedy mode he's appeared on shows such as Frankie Boyle's New World Order and Have I Got News For You. Most notably, though, he suffered a brain seizure in August 2021 and had major neurosurgery. The seizure is the subject of his new touring show, On I Bang, which focuses on the funnier side of the experience. What's On caught up with him to find out more...

Your major life event in 2021 forms the basis of your new show, On I Bang. Without any spoilers, what happened?

Well, the big spoiler is... I survived. I had a brain seizure, which was actually quite lucky. It meant I was taken to hospital, where they ran tests. So having the seizure was an element of fortune because it's like a big helpful sign that something is up. And that something was a brain tumour the size of a cherry tomato, which had to be removed.

What were you doing when it happened?

I was filming the ITV series Trigger Point. I'd just finished my scene. Ludicrously, my character, a radio host, is speaking and then a bomb goes off roughly when it felt like a bomb had gone off in my own head. Luckily I was in a work environment, which meant there was a medic on the set, so they wrestled me into the appropriate position. It was only a day's work, but taking that job might have saved my life.

Was it completely unexpected?

The tumour was there, but I was totally unaware of it. They can't date it. It's not like trees or fossils. The swelling of the tumour causes the pressure. And it's the pressure that eventually causes a seizure. It could have happened at any time, but until about five minutes before, there was nothing. I just started feeling very dizzy very quickly, and there was some flashing of lights. I remember falling forward and then some people holding me down, and then it's just like a series of moments of consciousness. Next time, I was in an ambulance, and then I was in A&E at West Middlesex Hospital.

Has it changed your outlook on life?

It's very good for putting things in perspective. Not that I don't moan about all the pathetic things other people moan about as well, but after a while, you can go "Oh, I've got the freedom to moan about it!" You just think about things in a different way.

It must have been very worrying for your family...

I could be lying in a hospital bed plugged into stuff and actually feeling fine, whereas from their point of view it's "Oh no, he's lying in a hospital bed with lots of stuff plugged into him!" And they got the call from the programme's line producer to say I was on my way to hospital. So that's quite a shocking thing to get when you're on the bus! The luxury for me was that you go, "Well, all I can do is trust these people." In a way it's sort of freeing. It's all the unknowns that are stressful. Even dealing with being lucky is stressful, because you think, why? Why me?

You had surgery after three weeks to remove the tumour...

It was accessible but not totally straightforward. I found being in hospital very uplifting, actually - partly because you're just surrounded by people who are very caring. There must have been about five other people on that ward all in the same boat. So you don't feel alone in that sense. It is scary, and I've not experienced a thing like that. I can't pretend that it isn't.

So On I Bang is all about this event, before, during and after?

This is the show. It's a story told in a stand-up style. I promise you there are lots of jokes. It's not me moaning about unsatisfactory customer experience or something I've noticed about luggage. Hopefully it's a pure piece of storytelling, with a beginning, a middle and an end. I got a letter from a guy who saw a work-in-progress gig, and he's been through the same thing. He was saying people around him were worried, but it was very cathartic for him.

You started out as a stand-up, but many people will know you as an actor. You've done so much, from Balamory and Harry Potter to Rev and The Thick Of It...

I think filming my part in Harry Potter And

The Order Of The Phoenix took 20 minutes! My costume fitting took longer! I'm a sucker for a straight offer without an audition. There's a difference between working hard and working a lot. And I think if you're creating the work yourself, that counts as working hard. If you're just accepting the work that you're given, that's not the same. Working on my own has its pleasures in terms of control and being able to fix something quickly or make adjustments, but I really like the bit when you're making something in a team. The rehearsals are the best bits.

With acting, you don't know what's next...

I got a nice part in a thing in Antwerp, and then a week later I did one audition for Disney+'s The Full Monty on a Friday, got the part on the Tuesday, the next Friday had a costume fitting, then started filming on the following Monday for six months.

You clearly enjoy performing, but stand-up seems to be your first love.

I like walking out onto a stage somewhere. I think the best view of a theatre is nearly always from the stage. I find there's a sort of romance about touring. I remember with my show Fibber In The Heat appearing in Swindon on a Monday night. I turned up and there were 170 people there. I don't know Swindon; I didn't know anyone in Swindon. And I remember thinking "It's great that 170 people have come here to watch this thing." I just love touring for that. So I really look forward to walking on stage again and telling a story. And hopefully, you know, we'll have fun.

.....

Miles Jupp takes his On I Bang tour to The Roses, Tewkesbury, on Thursday 1 February, and then to Birmingham Town Hall on Thursday 8 February

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**BARBER
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Comedy previews from across the region...

Viggo Venn

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 24 February;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 26 June

Viggo Venn hit the big time last summer when he became the 2023 winner of ITV's Britain's Got Talent, since which time he's been basking in the glory of finally achieving his long-desired transformation from Norwegian clown to British comedian. The BGT judges were certainly effusive in their praise for the talented 34-year-old, with Bruno Toniolo hailing him one of the most memorable characters since Mr Bean and Simon Cowell declaring his act to be like nothing he'd ever seen before. Viggo visits the Old Rep this month as part of his first-ever national tour.



Tim Key

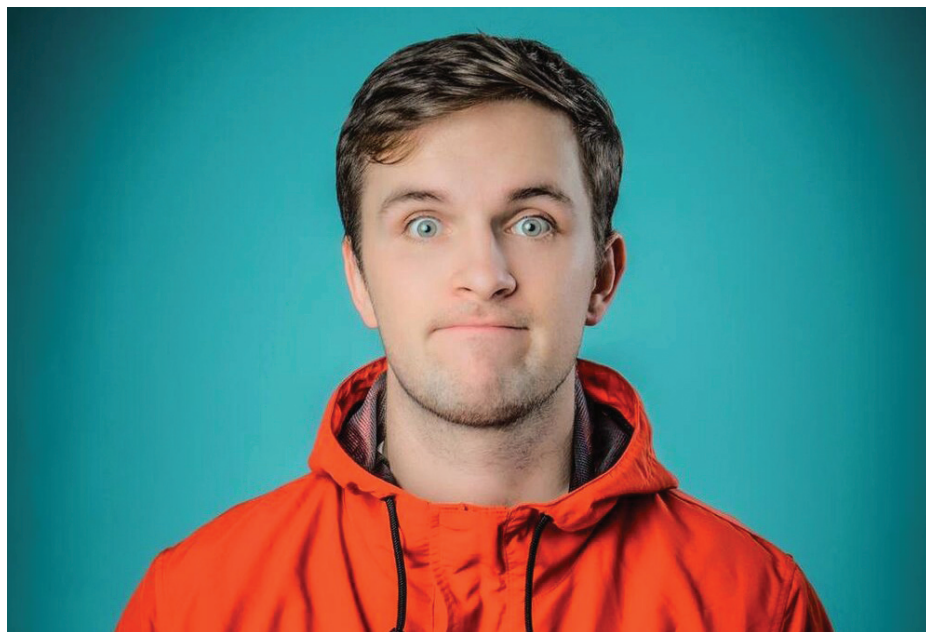
Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Wed 21 February

Tim Key's tour comes in support of his recently published anthology of poetry. Titled Chapters, it's a thin volume featuring worthy words on such subjects as canoodling with a rose and men getting stuck in webs!



Away from the challenges of writing verse, Tim is a regular Edinburgh Fringe performer and a familiar television face; he's probably best known for playing Alan Partridge's sidekick, Simon, in Mid Morning Matters, This Time and the film Alpha Papa. He also starred in the 2022 BBC Two comedy series The Witchfinder.

Tim's Birmingham stop-off this month will see him reading some of his poems, signing copies of the anthology and enjoying a chat with a guest interviewer.



Vittorio Angelone

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 11
February; The Glee Club, Birmingham,
Tues 19 March

Providing tour support at various points for well-established comedians including Russell Howard, Jason Manford, Adam Rowe, and Dan Nightingale, Italian-Irish funnyman

Vittorio Angelone here steps out on his own and 'looks inward to find out who exactly he thinks he is'.

Kickstarting his comedy career back in 2018 and enjoying a sold-out debut run at Edinburgh in 2022, Vittorio boasts a huge online following and is widely considered to be one of the UK's fastest-rising comedy stars.



Ross Noble

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 1 - Fri 2
February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Sat 24 February

Geordie laughter merchant Ross Noble may not have hit the heights once expected of him, but he's a hugely talented comedian nonetheless. Peddling a nice line in surreal and quirky stream-of-consciousness humour, he's heading for the Midlands this month with his 21st touring show, Jibber Jabber Jamboree. Examples of his comedy include "How come Miss Universe is only won by people from Earth?" and "I had to take the batteries out of the carbon monoxide detector. It was beeping all night."

Geoff Norcott

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 16 February; The
Roses, Tewkesbury, Thurs 29 February;
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 15 March;
Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 22 March; Theatre
Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 23 March; Palace
Theatre, Redditch, Sat 13 April

One of the sharpest tools in the comedy shed, Geoff Norcott is visiting the Midlands this month with Basic Bloke, 'a kindly and funny stock-take of both himself and his fellow man'.

Geoff will be taking a deep-dive into the business of being a fella, to try and find out what makes them tick. After all, there's got to be more to being a man than watching football, enjoying sheds, reading sporting autobiographies, wearing socks at all times and strategically burying your feelings whenever necessary. Hasn't there?...



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NEW ACTS MONTHLY

Comedy previews from across the region...

Adam Rowe

Dudley Town Hall, Fri 9 February; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 16 May

Adam Rowe well remembers the day he died in Stockport (only on stage, of course). "It was the day I got my A-Level results and realised I wasn't going to university for another year," recalls the Liverpool-born comedian. "I decided to rant about my day and not do my material. I died on my arse and got gonged off. Awful."

Fortunately for Adam, most of his gigs bear no resemblance to that one. Blending an affable persona with a quick wit and clever material, he's now well established on the UK comedy circuit and is definitely worth a look.

Frankie Boyle

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 6 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 26 February; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 27 February; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 29 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 8 - Tues 9 April

Scottish funnyman Frankie has managed to make it big on the telly despite his reputation for peddling material which can often be spectacularly tasteless and incredibly insulting.

He managed to cause uproar in the build-up to London 2012, for example, by claiming that Olympic star Rebecca Adlington reminded him of "someone who's looking at themselves in the back of a spoon". He's also had a pop at, among other victims, Katie Price's disabled son Harvey, and leaves no stone unturned in his efforts to amuse, disgust and shock.

Andy Parsons

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 29 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 21 March; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 1 May; Evesham Town Hall, Thurs 23 May; The Regal, Tenbury Wells, Thurs 2 May

With complimentary reviews including such observations as "What he lacks in hair, he more than makes up for in originality," Andy

Parsons is a sharp and topical comedian who's well known from TV shows *Mock The Week* and *Live At The Apollo*.

Andy's big bag of jokes includes: "If you've been affected by any of the issues raised in tonight's episode of *EastEnders*, they must have been acting better than they usually do."



Bill Bailey

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Tues 13 February

Bill Bailey presents an act that nicely mixes displays of his musical virtuosity with straight-down-the-line standup.

He visits Birmingham this month with *Thoughtifier*, a show in which he promises to take his audience on a jaunt through the 'error-strewn, distracted, crumb-festooned, sometimes magnificent history of human thought'.



Dom Joly

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 21 February; The Old Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 22 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 13 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 16 March; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 26 March

From a launchpad provided by Trigger Happy TV, Dom Joly has led an intriguing and extraordinary life. Some of his more memorable experiences include world drinking, skiing down volcanoes, holidaying in Chernobyl, and trying to fly across the Grand Canyon strapped to an eight-foot rocket...

...Oh, and he's also eaten from the pants of Dr Gillian McKeith (remember her?) while imprisoned in the Australian jungle during a series of *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!*... Some guys have all the luck.



Harriet Dyer

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 10 February

Fascinating facts about Harriet Dyer include the revelation that she once asked her flatmate to use a mallet to try to break her arm for her - on account of the fact that she didn't fancy going into work that day...

At the time, Harriet thought such behaviour was simply representative of an eccentric personality. It was only years later that she was diagnosed as bipolar, with anxiety and depression thrown in for good measure... Away from the issue of her mental health, Harriet names her favourite heckle as the sound generated by an electric wheelchair as its unhappy owner headed for the exit after deciding she'd had enough of the comedian's show.



GANGSTER'S MOLL

A critically acclaimed musical telling the story of notorious gangster duo Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow is heading to the Midlands next month. Former Coronation Street star Catherine Tyldesley, who plays Clyde's sister-in-law, Blanche, chats to What's On about the show...

Catherine Tyldesley may be best known to most readers as Eva Price in Coronation Street, but the actress is also an accomplished singer and will be taking to the stage this spring in the UK tour of critically acclaimed musical Bonnie & Clyde.

Catherine plays Blanche Barrow, whose husband Buck is brother to Clyde. Together with Clyde's girlfriend, Bonnie, the foursome cause merry hell as they blast their way across Depression-era America.

Based on a true story, the show - with music by Frank Wildhorn, lyrics by Don Black and book by Ivan Menchell - premiered in the US in 2009 and was a huge hit on Broadway and in the West End. This spring sees its first UK tour, with EastEnders actor Danny Hatchard as Clyde, Katie Tonkinson as Bonnie and Sam Ferriday as Buck.

For Catherine, the chance to appear in the show proved to be irresistible.

"I've been approached about doing tours before for musical theatre, and for me to be away from home and the children for that amount of time, I'd have to really love it," she says. "The right thing just hadn't come along - and then Bonnie And Clyde came in.

"I wasn't familiar with the musical, and my husband Tom and I listened to my character's first song, and after the first verse Tom looked at me and said 'You have to do this show.' I looked at the script, I listened to the songs and I totally fell in love with it. I always thought 'When the right thing comes along, I'll know' - and I did."

Catherine likes the complexity of Blanche, who was the only survivor of the group of four who became known as the Barrow Gang.

"For me to explore the love story of Bonnie and Clyde and of Blanche and Buck in a world which was so dark, with so many horrendous adrenaline-spiking happenings throughout the show, is utterly gorgeous. I love Blanche. Hers is a great love story; she is willing to do anything for her man.

"She has a pure heart and actually wants a simple life. She would be more than happy to grow old with Buck - sat out on the porch, watching the grandchildren - and she tries really hard to get Buck to see that. She tries with Bonnie and Clyde as well.

"She is the show's moral compass, and I love the strength that gives to her. She wears the trousers in the relationship that she has with Buck, which I'm also a big fan of. Blanche is also very funny; she is the comic relief in the show."

While Bonnie, Clyde and Buck were all killed by police, Blanche went on to live into her 70s and wrote about her time with the Barrow Gang - a fact which gives Catherine plenty of source material to help with her portrayal.

"I've been reading her diaries. Obviously, there's creative leeway with the show, and there are differences between the real person and the character, but I would say that, on the whole, they've done an incredible job in being historically accurate. There are so many of her lines in the diaries that are similar to what she says in the show, so they have really honoured them as real people.

"Throughout the diaries, you see the love that she's got for Buck - it almost borders on an obsession. And the relationship between Bonnie and Clyde is also like an obsession - they can't be without each other. That's a really strong theme throughout the show, which is wonderful for an actress to delve into.

"If you want to go on a real emotional adrenaline high, this is the show for you. I think you would come out having been on a real journey with the highs and lows of the characters. And you'll learn a lot, and you'll surprise yourself in terms of judgement of the characters as well."

The tour includes visits to Birmingham and Wolverhampton, two cities Catherine has fond memories of from her time as a student at Birmingham School of Acting, where she graduated in 2005.

"I have so much love for Birmingham School of Acting - it's magical. The tuition was absolutely incredible, and it was really life-changing. I had a wonderful time in the city; the people are so friendly and welcoming. It was an awesome three years of my life.

"When I was at university, I worked at Superdrug in New Street in Birmingham, and I remember them saying Wolverhampton were a bit short at Christmas so did I want to

go there. So I did two or three months at Wolverhampton Superdrug.

"I saw shows at Birmingham Hippodrome as a student, but I've not been to the Grand Theatre, so I'm so excited to be going to those theatres. This tour is like a bucket list for me!"

Catherine has made a career out of stage, screen and singing performances, releasing studio album Rise in 2016. Now she is looking forward to a role where she can show her musical talent.

"I love singing and I've really missed it, so I'm chomping at the bit for this musical. Singing has always been a big part of my life, and I've always kept it bubbling away in the background. I'm very grateful for being so busy in television and film, but it's nice to have some singing to look forward to now."

Catherine also tried her hand at tripping the light fantastic in 2019, in the 17th series of Strictly Come Dancing and on its subsequent UK tour. Partnered with professional dancer Johannes Radebe, she says the competition really boosted her confidence.

"For me, the dance side of things I saw as my weak spot. I knew I could sing, I knew I could act, but I'd always avoided dance, so doing it for Strictly was very new to me. I've taken so much away from it - my confidence levels for dance are so much higher now. But if I could go back, I would try to worry less and enjoy the TV show more because when I got on tour it felt so much more chilled. You were doing the same dance every night, and I just rolled with it and in turn became a much better dancer.

"I'm still obsessed with the show, and I took Jojo (Johannes Radebe) away with me. He's one of my best friends, and I think he was the reason for me to do that show, to have him in my life. Dancing was something I felt so nervous about before, and my [newfound] confidence is thanks to Jojo, really."

Bonnie & Clyde shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 March and at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 September



Life Of Pi

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 12 - Sat 17 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel, *Life Of Pi*, was an immediate hit when it premiered at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre in 2019. A West End transfer followed in 2021, as did a handful of Olivier Awards - including for best new play.

The show tells the story of Pi, whose parents run a zoo in India but decide to sell up and emigrate to Canada. After a storm wrecks the ship on which they're travelling, Pi is cast adrift on a lifeboat, which he shares with some of the creatures from the zoo - most notably a

Bengal tiger named Richard Parker...

A menagerie of exotic creatures is at the heart of the show, all brought to life through the magic of puppetry.

"We're always improvising on stage, so it feels really live," reveals puppeteer Romina Hytten, who helps work the tiger. "That's part of making the animals feel as alive and as realistic as possible. We don't want it to be too choreographed or too set in stone. So there's room to play every night, and you get to feel that exciting buzz of not being quite sure what the tiger is going to do next."

The Rocky Horror Show

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 6 - Sat 10 February

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the Midlands! Richard O'Brien's cult classic tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky. Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings & suspenders (as many patrons do)!

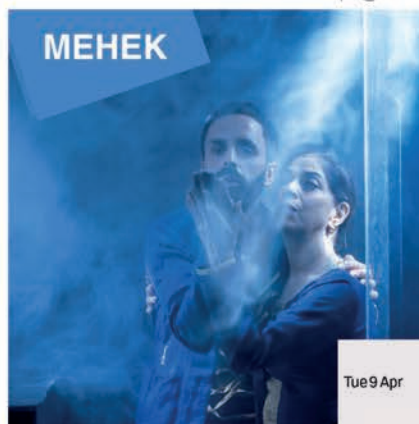


Blood Brothers

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 13 - Sat 17 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Although it's effectively a class-driven 'scouse melodrama', to describe Blood Brothers as such is to greatly underestimate the emotional response it produces within its audience. The show features adult actors playing children, a narrator who wanders through the scenes with warnings of impending doom, a good helping of sharp social awareness to counteract the sticky sentimentality, and a raft of much-loved musical numbers, including Bright New Day, Marilyn Monroe and the emotionally charged Tell Me It's Not True. One-time X-Factor semi-finalist Niki Colwell Evans takes the iconic role of Mrs Johnstone.







Jesus Christ Superstar

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 19 - Sat 24 February; Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 22 - Sat 27 April

Spreading the Gospel according to Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, the phenomenal rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar makes a welcome return to the Midlands. And the show really does rock... This gritty, reimagined production was originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre in 2016 and won the Olivier Award for best musical revival a few months later. With hits like I Don't Know How To Love Him, Gethsemane, Hosanna, and of course the title song itself to recommend it, the show tells the story of the final few days in the life of Jesus, as his teaching and preaching, performing of miracles and ruffling of the establishment's feathers eventually sees him condemned to death...

Karen

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 15 - Fri 16 February

Break-ups, breakdowns and bust-ups are very much the name of the game in Sarah Cameron-West's one-woman show, a clever work of theatre that's been described as the love child of Fleabag and The Office. Telling the tale of a woman whose former boyfriend starts dating her workplace nemesis - the Karen of the title - the show garnered plenty of praise when it debuted at last year's Edinburgh Fringe.

A Leap In The Dark

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Fri 9 February - Sat 2 March

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the UK's first-ever radio play - and to celebrate the occasion, the New Vic Theatre is presenting this stage premiere of a BBC Radio Four commission.

Described by its publicity as a hilarious comedy caper, the show tells the story of man-with-a-plan Cedric Maud, who firmly believes that a play made specially for the wireless could be just the thing to entertain listeners and put the newly formed BBC on the map.

But the venture is no walk in the park - as soon becomes apparent...

Eight actors take on a whole host of characters in this fast-paced homage to one of the most beloved artforms of the 20th century. Gwenda Hughes directs.

Oh What A Lovely War

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 5 - Wed 7 February; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 20 - Wed 21 February; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May

Joan Littlewood's brilliant satire on the folly of war resonates just as profoundly in the 21st century as ever it did way back in the 1960s, when it was originally produced. Blending performance and documentation from the First World War, the show is here revived for a 60th anniversary tour and features a host of songs from the era, including Long Way To Tipperary, Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit-Bag, Goodbye and Keep The Home Fires Burning.



King Arthur

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 9 - Sat 10 February

The highly regarded Le Navet Bete previously had Midlands theatre-goers laughing their socks off with hit comedy Dracula: The Bloody Truth. Now they're back with what they promise will be 'a hilarious retelling of the Arthurian legends'.

The show finds King Arthur worrying about his reputation, concerned that if he doesn't do something soon to make a splash, his court of Camelot risks being known as nothing more than a rather dull period in British history. But when three hapless squires approach him about changing his legacy, a legend is born...



Bhangra Nation

The Rep, Birmingham, Sat 17 February - Sat 16 March

Premiering at The Rep and set in the challenging world of American inter-college Bhangra competitions, Bhangra Nation tells the story of two students who love the dance form but want to take it in very different directions.

"It's a contemporary feelgood musical," explains the show's director, Stafford Arima. "We've had some great musicals that have had South Asian characters or stories, like Bend It Like Beckham and Bombay Dreams, but there is something unique about this piece. I have strong faith that, whether or not you're even a musical theatre fan, there's something here for everyone..."

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TUE 26 MAR '24
I'M SORRY I HAVEN'T A CLUE



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FRI 12 & SAT 13 APR '24
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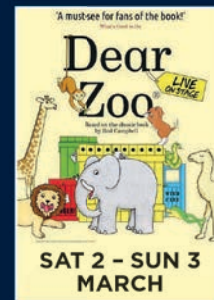
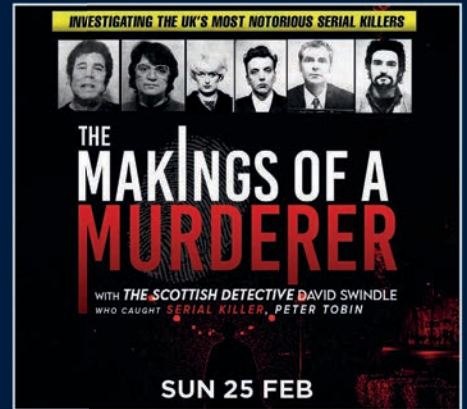


LIFE OF PI

WINNER OF EVERY MAJOR PLAY AWARD INCLUDING 5 OLIVIER AWARDS AND 3 TONY AWARDS

TUE 23 - SAT 27 APR '24
LIFE OF PI

WHAT'S ON IN FEBRUARY



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Theatre previews from around the region



The Woman In Black

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 6 - Sat 10 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, *The Woman In Black* is a classic ghost story first performed on stage in 1989 - since which time it has become one of the West End's most successful plays.

Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family has somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story - and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him - he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...

Spring Opera: Cinderella

Gas Street Central, Birmingham, Thurs 29 February - Sat 2 March

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department here transforms an old gasworks into a fairytale world to present Jules Massenet's four-act *Cendrillon*, an opera based on Charles Perrault's 1698 version of the Cinderella fairytale. This family-friendly production is sung in French with English surtitles.

Ben And Imo

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wed 21 February - Sat 6 April

Legendary composer Benjamin Britten's struggle to write an opera in time for the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth II provides the subject matter for *Ben And Imo*. Receiving its premiere in Stratford this month, the play focuses on the timely arrival in Britten's life of the inspirational Imogen Holst, the daughter of composer Gustav and an accomplished musician in her own right... Originally written by Mark Ravenhill for radio, the new production is directed by Erica Whyman.

2:22 - A Ghost Story

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 February

Husband & wife Jenny and Sam are divided. Jenny believes their new home is haunted; Sam isn't having any of it. Something certainly feels strange and frightening. Determined to find out the truth once and for all, they decide to stay up until 2:22 - at which time, all will be revealed. Or not... "We're beyond excited to be taking 2:22 - A Ghost Story around the UK," says Danny

Robins, the creator of popular BBC podcast *The Battersea Poltergeist* and the writer of this smash-hit supernatural thriller. "It's a play that will make you laugh, scream, cry, think, and jump out of your seat - a proper spooky night out!"

Premiering in the West End back in 2021, the show has not only become a major hit but also provided singers Lily Allen and, more recently, Cheryl with an opportunity to tread the boards.

This touring production features George Rainsford as Sam and Fiona Wade as Jenny. Vera Chok and *The Wanted*'s Jay McGuinness also star.



As SHE Likes It

Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 16 February; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 28 February; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 16 March

Eighty or so years before the emergence of the #MeToo movement, dancer and sometime movie extra Patricia Douglas made front-page news when she claimed to have been raped at a party by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer salesman David Ross.



The studio subsequently coordinated a smear campaign against her in order to minimise the damage caused to its reputation by the scandal.

Buried in the annals of history for the rest of the 20th century, Patricia's story was finally retold in the noughties, courtesy of a documentary titled *Girl 27*. Now, this new play - a fusion of live theatre and filmed footage - turns the spotlight on her traumatic experience once again, in the process posing the question: to what extent is the Hollywood of today different from the Hollywood of Patricia's day?

The show's UK tour is supported by Solace, a London organisation supporting women and children 'to build safe and strong lives'.

The Circle

Malvern Theatres, Tues 13 - Sat 17 February

Somerset Maugham's comedy of manners may be 103 years old but it still has plenty to say to a modern-day audience.

This latest revival of the play stars Jane Asher as Lady Kitty, a society beauty who notoriously abandoned stuffy husband Clive to elope with the handsome Lord Porteous. Thirty years later, with the couple's once-passionate love for one another having descended into non-stop squabbling, history looks set to repeat itself when Arnold - the son of Lady Kitty and Clive - finds himself faced with the prospect of seeing his wife Elizabeth elope with the dashing Teddie Luton...

Clive Francis and Nicholas Le Prevost co-star.



HALF TERM FUN



We're Going On A Bear Hunt
Sat 10 – Tue 13 Feb
Catchy songs, adventures and
a few surprises along the way.



Peppa Pig's Cinema Party
Wed 14 – Sun 18 Feb



My First Concert
Thu 15 Feb 1pm



Luna Loves Library Day: The Musical
Sun 18 Feb 11am



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Theatre for younger audiences



We're Going On A Bear Hunt

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Sat 10 - Tues 13 February

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

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

Dear Zoo

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 2 - Sun 3 March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 14 - Fri 15 March; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 29 - Sat 30 March; Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 - Sun 21 April

First published in 1982, Rod Campbell's lift-the-flap book, Dear Zoo, has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide. This hugely popular stage version of the story features child-friendly puppets, music and lots of audience participation.



Fireman Sam

Telford Theatre, Shropshire, Wed 14 February; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 17 February; Brierley Hill Civic, Tues 26 March; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 4 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 25 July; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Sat 3 August; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 24 August

Now an impressive 37 years into his firefighting career, Fireman Sam is still putting out blazes in Pontypandy and lighting up children's eyes with delight.

In this brand-new adventure, perpetual troublemaker Norman Price follows two famous animal explorers into the mountains and ends up stranded in a cave. As ever, it falls to Fireman Sam to come to the rescue and save the day...



The Gruffalo's Child

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry,
Fri 16 - Sun 18 February

Tall Stories' delightful adaptation of the much-loved Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler book finds the Gruffalo and his youngster caught up in an exciting adventure...

Despite her dad's warning to stay away from the deep, dark wood, the Gruffalo's Child decides it's time to go and explore, unworried by the legend of The Big Bad Mouse...



The Little Prince

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre,
Tues 13 - Sat 17 February

Kids' theatre company Lyngo here turn their attention to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's bestselling children's book, recounting the story of a young boy who lives on an asteroid and decides to visit Earth, courtesy of a passing flock of space-birds...

Exciting Science

Stourbridge Town Hall, Fri 16 February; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Tues 26 March; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 27 March

Designed to enlighten, educate and entertain children aged four and older, Exciting Science promises plenty of 'wiz, bang, pop and splurt', as the show's scientists carry out all manner of fun and fact-filled live experiments.

So if you think your kids would enjoy seeing some boffins create a volcanic eruption, turn a vacuum cleaner into a missile launcher and take careful aim with a smoke blaster, then this is definitely the show to check out.

Cartoon Circus Live

Brierley Hill Civic Hall, Mon 12 February;
Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Tues 13 February

The circus is coming to town this half-term holiday...

Marketed as 'a laughter-packed stage show', this hour-long lunchtime performance features 'some of Britain's funniest clowns', traditional slapstick comedy, the amazing girl in the spinning bottle, a giant dancing bear, cartoon characters, an acrobatic human slinky, puppets, prizes and surprises.

Science Museum Live

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 20 February; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 12 October

This brand-new family-friendly stage production - touring to Shrewsbury courtesy of London's world-renowned Science Museum - aims to 'ignite your curiosity, fuel your imagination, and inspire you in new and exciting ways'.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Lichfield Garrick, Mon 12 - Wed 14 February

In a career stretching back to the mid-1960s, the late Eric Carle illustrated more than 70 books - most of which he also wrote. None were more famous or successful, though, than his 1969 story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar, a picture book which has since been translated into more than 60 languages and sold in excess of 52 million copies.

This stage version of Carle's much-loved tale is presented alongside three other popular children's stories by the same author. The show features no fewer than 75 'lovable puppets'.



FEBRUARY



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FRI 9 FEB



THE THREE LITTLE PIGS
MON 12 FEB



VENUE TOUR
THU 15 FEB



SAM AVERY
SAT 17 FEB



NASHVILLE AT HEART
MON 19 FEB



DOM JOLY
THU 22 FEB



VIGGO VENN
SAT 24 FEB



ROSIE JONES
SUN 25 FEB

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Light entertainment from around the region



Candace Bushnell: True Tales Of Sex, Success, And Sex And The City

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 11 February

The woman whose newspaper column provided the inspiration for hit TV comedy-drama *Sex And The City* here makes her only West Midlands stop-off on a UK tour of her hugely successful stage show.

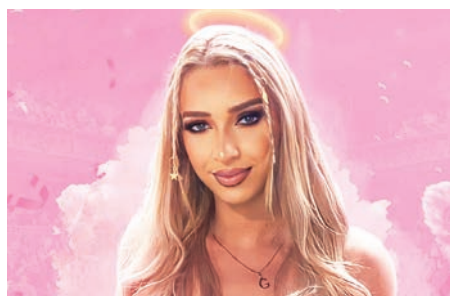
"It's about how I created *Sex And The City*," explains Candace Bushnell. "It's about my journey as, really, a single woman through the decades. And because this is a one-woman show, naturally I have to talk about some of the things I wouldn't normally talk about, including the failures, because the ups and downs are what make you human - and that's what makes you strong."

Saving Grace

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 17 February

An evening of surprise guests, outrageous stories and the juiciest of gossip is promised when the live version of famously unfiltered podcast *Saving Grace* comes to town this month.

The show is presented by podcast originator Grace Keeling, aka GK Barry. Grace shot to fame by posting funny and relatable videos on TikTok, an endeavour which has seen her amassing more than 3.2 million followers on the platform in the last couple of years.



Reverend Richard Coles

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sun 25 February

Having last year concluded that the BBC's decision to move its production of *Radio Four's Saturday Live* to Cardiff meant that it was no longer viable for him to co-host the show, the Reverend Richard Coles has now cut loose and hit the road with this brand-new offering.

And the former *Communards* star and one-time *Strictly Come Dancing* contestant certainly has plenty to chat about in the amusingly titled *Borderline National Trinket* -

from sex and drugs, to pop stardom and religious epiphany...

Expect an evening of engaging storytelling from a witty and talented raconteur.



Richard Jones: Soldier Of Illusion

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 17 February; Stourbridge Town Hall, Fri 1 March

Lance Corporal Richard Jones has followed up 10 years' service in Her Majesty's Royal Household Cavalry with a hugely successful career as a magician. The only prestidigitator ever to win Britain's *Got Talent*, Richard has also headlined a sell-out show in the London West End and will no doubt be packing out theatres across the country on this latest tour.



The World According To Kaleb

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 3 February; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 10 February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 19 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 21 February

Amusingly opinionated farmer Kaleb Cooper unexpectedly found fame when he appeared in Prime Video series

Clarkson's Farm, in which he attempted to teach Jeremy Clarkson a thing or two about farming.

Now, he's pointed his tractor in the direction of the world beyond Chipping Norton and embarked on a first-ever theatre tour.

Expect to hear Kaleb's views on all manner of subjects, from sheep ('stupid') and Clarkson (f***ing idiot), to New York ('if it's like London, where there are no tractors, that's no good').



Cirque Du Hilarious

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sunday 18 February

CBBC favourites Danny & Mick here head out on a brand-new adventure in a faraway land of mystery and magic.

Subtitled *Temple Of Delusion*, and taking inspiration from the *Indiana Jones* film franchise, the show is promising oodles of slapstick family fun as the hapless heroes uncover the ancient treasures of a forgotten civilisation...



A BEAUTY OF A BALLET



Birmingham Royal Ballet's largest production, Sir Peter Wright's version of *The Sleeping Beauty*, is ready to enchant Midlands audiences with a sprinkling of fairytale magic and a wardrobe of recently restored sumptuous costumes, as *What's On* recently found out...

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) production of the critically acclaimed Sir Peter Wright version of *The Sleeping Beauty* returns to the stage this spring - and after a major fundraising appeal, its elaborate costumes will be looking better than ever.

With the ballet this year celebrating its 40th anniversary, many of the costumes have been used repeatedly across the decades so were in urgent need of repair, restoration and even remake.

BRB reached its goal of £60,000 to restore the outfits ahead of its 2024 tour, which includes performances at Birmingham Hippodrome late this month. The money was raised through the Big Give Christmas Challenge, a match-funding campaign to help charities.

The Sleeping Beauty is BRB's largest production. Work on repairing the costumes began last spring, with staff cutting, sewing and dyeing for hundreds of different pieces - from princess tiaras to sumptuous ballgowns, and braided courtier jackets through to dramatic fairy costumes.

These alterations are needed not just because of wear and tear but also because dancers' bodies have changed over the last 40 years.

"We always go through the process to see what we can and can't use," says Head of Costume Elaine Garlick. "The vast majority of the work comes out of costume fitting with the cast, and that's to do with sizing.

"Many of the dancers now are much taller than they used to be. We have to fit and alter to make sure the costume fits the builds we have today, but we also need to refurbish the costumes. There may be rips, or we may be replacing sleeves or side panels. And this year we're doing all of this on a much bigger scale."

The process includes minute details like re-stitching a pearl onto a dress, as well as more large-scale updates such as new tutus. And every pearl, every inch of braid and every sequin matters.

"This show uses very traditional ballet costumes with lots of wigs, headdresses and footwear," says Elaine. "One costume can have up to 50 different sections. Many of the costumes are very heavily decorated, and they have several layers of petticoats and underdressing to create the silhouettes.

"And everything has to be the best it can be, as the effect is to do with depth and lighting. You won't see every pearl or diamante, but we tend to facet them because light bounces off them.

"We don't tend to use anything that's flat. Even our sequins are faceted so they have all these different angles to sparkle through. One little sequin can do a lot of work because of the angles and the lighting. You might not think you notice this, but you would definitely notice if it wasn't there."

Because of the age of the costumes, it can sometimes be difficult to find the perfect match, but the team are adept at creative thinking.

"Some fabrics are completely different from 40 years ago," says Elaine, "but the way we make dance costumes that work in rep is that we tend to work from a lot of base fabrics which are easily available and then we use braid and sequins, we dye and we pleat. The craft techniques are still available, and even if we can't find that specific pink taffeta, what we *can* find is a taffeta that we can make pink and we have a costume to match it to."

The team aim to be as sustainable as possible.

"It's like an eco-system. Things have been replaced in sections bit by bit over the years," says Elaine. "There is a lifespan of a tutu, but we strip down the pearls and stones and re-use them as much as we can."

And the work doesn't stop for the team when the show opens - they are behind the scenes, dressing the dancers, cleaning and checking the costumes and making continuous repairs.

"It requires total teamwork. And it needs constant work during the tour, as dance costumes take a huge amount of wear. They are lifted, they are pushed, they are dragged across the floor - there are few artforms which will destroy costumes as quickly as dance."

The team will be taking 44 rails of costumes, 11 headdress baskets and five shoe baskets on the tour of *The Sleeping Beauty* - ensuring the full company are lavishly dressed from head to foot for every performance. And the show's sets and costumes are one of the reasons Sir Peter Wright's production remains popular 40 years after it was first performed.

"*The Sleeping Beauty* is a calling card and an absolute classic staple of any ballet company's rep," says Elaine. "Visually, this production is unique to BRB. And if you're going to work at any level in the costume team in the ballet world, you've got to have worked on *Sleeping Beauty*."

Footwear supervisor Michael Clifford has also been busy, refurbishing hundreds of shoes - from knee-high cavalier boots to pink pointe shoes.

"We try to recycle as much as possible, and the only time I need to buy something is because we don't have the size. The last time we did *Sleeping Beauty* was 2018, and that means many of the company haven't done it before and we've needed new shoes. I've got lots of smaller sizes, but over the years they are gradually not being used because the sizes which the dancers need are larger."

And a well-fitted shoe makes all the difference to a performer on stage - so much so that the dancer preparing for Princess Aurora's famously difficult Rose Adagio will carefully select her footwear.

"Some of the girls will have spent ages just finding the right shoe for the one leg for the Rose Adagio because that leg needs to be rock solid," Michael says. "Once they've done that piece, they might change their pointe shoes and then they won't wear the same shoes in Act Three as Act One."

Michael says watching the show in all its glory makes the preparations worthwhile.

"When you see it on stage - and particularly if you see it here at Birmingham Hippodrome, which has such a big stage - it looks so good. When I see it at the dress rehearsals, I know it's worth all the work."

And costume technician Beth Pirie says the audiences will also see the results of the refresh.

"As the costumes get older, it would be very easy just to let them deteriorate and decline and think that nobody at the back is ever going to see that, but over time it's about maintaining that standard for as long as possible.

"The costumes in *Sleeping Beauty* are really special because you've got a 100-year span in the space of one show, so the amount of different periods and silhouettes you can cover in that time... it's so interesting. There's so much going on in the costumes. They are spectacular - they don't make them like this anymore."

.....

BRB's *The Sleeping Beauty* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Wednesday 21 February to Saturday 2 March

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Photo © Manvir Rai

Director Carlos Acosta

Sir Peter Wright's

The Sleeping Beauty

21 February – 2 March

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Dance previews from across the region



Edward Scissorhands

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tuesday 6 - Saturday 10 February

Since its debut in 2005, Sir Matthew Bourne and New Adventures' magical production of Edward Scissorhands has delighted thousands of people across the globe. Based on the classic Tim Burton movie starring Johnny Depp and Winona Ryder, the show presents a

touching and witty love story about 'the ultimate outsider'.

"Never has the story of Edward Scissorhands been more timely," says Sir Matthew. "In an era when uniqueness and identity is both celebrated and reviled, its story of how we treat anyone who appears to be different in our communities is as poignant and relevant as when my dear friend Caroline Thompson wrote the screenplay for Tim Burton's legendary movie fable some 34 years ago."

Northern Ballet: The Tortoise And The Hare

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent,
Wed 28 February; Crewe Lyceum Theatre,
Sun 24 March

Leeds-based Northern Ballet has developed a reputation for producing work which focuses not only on dancing but also on storytelling - a fact very much in evidence in its latest production for little ones.

The Tortoise And The Hare has been specially designed to provide an enjoyable and absorbing experience for young children who are sampling live ballet, music and theatre for the very first time.



One/Bird

Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome,
Wed 28 - Thurs 29 February

"Since the ice age," begins Amina Khayyam, in talking about her solo show, One, "our pre-historic ancestors have been crossing continents to find better habitual climates so that we, homo sapiens, got the chance to evolve to what we are now. Today we are doing no different - displaced by climate change, war, political extortion and many other reasons, many of us are following that same human trait: cross continents to survive or better ourselves.

"Yet 'migrants', 'foreigners', 'refugees' are words tarnished 'dirty' and 'negative' by the media, and harboured by politicians for political gain.

"[In One] I delve into the wealth and power of Kathak to portray the journey of migrants and refugees within that cyclic phenomenon all of us are all journeying."

The production is accompanied by Bird, a show which poses a question that crosses the minds of many women stuck in abusive relationships: "Where will I go?"



Tap Factory

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 16 February

A rhythm-based production described as 'Tap Dogs meets Stomp', Tap Factory has enjoyed huge success around the world.

The show sees eight internationally renowned male exponents of dance, gymnastics and acrobatics creating live music and choreography from all manner of everyday objects, including oil barrels, brooms and wood mallets.

The production stops off in Lichfield as part of its 10th-anniversary tour.

MORE THAN JUST LUCK

**Midlands-born Debbie Isitt talks about bringing new musical
I Should Be So Lucky to the stage**



No stranger to crafting hits for stage and screen, Birmingham-born BAFTA and Emmy award-winning writer & director Debbie Isitt - best known for the Nativity! films - is bringing the iconic songbook of Stock Aitken Waterman to life in new musical I Should Be So Lucky, which comes to Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in April. We recently caught up with Debbie to chat about the brand-new production, its generation-defining soundtrack, and the experience of working with the legendary Kylie Minogue...

What was the inspiration behind the musical, Debbie?

The songs! Stock Aitken Waterman songs were the soundtrack to my youth, and being asked to create a musical featuring all the hits was a very exciting proposition. The songs are about love, and that was my starting point for the story and the show! The songs spoke to me, the lyrics and the melodies, and I wanted to create a show about love in all its forms - romantic love, thwarted love, love of family, love of self - to create an experience that is emotional and fun and feelgood, just like their music makes me feel.

Without major spoilers, can you tell us the story of I Should Be So Lucky?

The story starts with a wedding that goes wrong. I guess that is a spoiler - sorry! But the bride Ella's family and her two best friends are not prepared to let her disappear in a puddle of grief and insecurity, so they accompany her on her honeymoon to Turkey to try and help her heal her broken heart. However, on the honeymoon they each have a transformative experience that changes their loves and lives forever. Meanwhile, Ella wrestles with a new love - the local tour guide - just as her old love turns up to try and win her back. With the help of her inner confidence [represented by a filmed contribution from Kylie Minogue], she begins to piece her life and broken heart back together and embarks on a journey of self-discovery.

I Should Be So Lucky features endless hits from the Stock Aitken Waterman catalogue, including Never Gonna Give You Up, Especially For You and the title track itself. Why do you think these songs make the perfect soundtrack for a musical?

Because they are absolute bangers! As soon as they start up, you can't help but feel engaged with the brilliant hooks and catchy choruses. But they also take some of us back to times when we were young and having fun. And the songs are stories too - stories that we can all relate to - about unrequited

love, yearning, and heartfelt human emotions. Lots of people know and love the songs, but younger audiences are discovering some of them for the first time, and it's so fantastic to watch that. Everyone - young or old - is up and dancing at the end.

Do you have a favourite song used within the show?

I love so many of them, but a lesser-known song, If You Were With Me Now, is a stand-out moment. The song is so beautiful and has such a lush arrangement by George Dyer, our music supervisor - matched only by Jason Gilkison's dream-like choreography - that it really transports me to another world. I also love the massive Sonia hit, Never Stop Me From Loving You, as our amazing Kayla Carter gives a dazzling performance of this beautiful song. And I adore the Kylie mega-hit, Better The Devil You Know, for the sheer euphoria it creates on stage and in the audience! But I genuinely love them all! In fact, I can't not mention Respectable - it's a brilliant moment in the show, and the audience absolutely love this song! And, of course, the iconic Never Gonna Give You Up, which has the audience up on its feet every single performance!

Kylie Minogue scored her first UK number one with I Should Be So Lucky, and she's also got a starring role in this musical. What has it been like to work with her?

Kylie was a real pleasure to work with. Our first meeting was via zoom - Kylie was in Melbourne and I was in London, casting the show. She was so enthusiastic about the musical, having watched the workshop where all the ideas were developed. Of course, she already had a great relationship with Stock Aitken and Waterman, but now it was time to create a story especially for her within the show. A few weeks later, when she was in London, I presented her with her character and storyline and script, and we worked together to hone down the scenes. The concept was Kylie being bride Ella's reflection in the mirror, playing her inner diva - her inner confidence, if you like. I wanted Kylie to play a version of herself but also to be properly integrated into the

story. Kylie later came into rehearsal and worked with the cast - which we were all very excited about - and then we were ready to film her sequences. Each sequence had to be filmed in single takes, with no edits, and had to be timed to perfection to allow interaction and dialogue with the brilliant Lucie-Mae Sumner, who plays Ella. It was a fabulous experience, as Kylie and Lucie worked so well together, and Kylie was so emotionally connected to both the story and the songs. Kylie is a genuine triple threat - a brilliant singer, actor and dancer. More than that, she is an inspirational icon, so we felt very 'lucky lucky lucky' to have her play such a big on-screen role in the musical production!

What do you hope audiences will take away from the show?

I've been so inspired by the audience reaction. Sitting amongst them and hearing huge belly laughs and gasps of recognition, and sensing their engagement with the story, and hearing them sing along to the songs, and watching them dance on their feet has been truly exhilarating. I want audiences to keep enjoying, keep escaping, keep feeling the utter joy that this musical has to offer. I want them to enjoy feeling the love and warmth that's created with every performance. I want audiences to leave the show feeling happier and stronger for having seen it, with the songs in their hearts.

What's the most important piece of advice you'd give to anyone thinking of stepping into the industry?

Whatever it is you have to offer the industry, do it to the best of your ability, with passion and integrity, and keep pushing to serve audiences - keep them in your heart and mind. Theatre is about coming together to experience emotions and share truths. Always be honest, always be emotional, always be true.

.....
I Should Be So Lucky shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Monday 1 to Saturday 6 April

Film highlights in February...

Argylle CERT tbc (135 mins)

Starring **Henry Cavill, Bryce Dallas Howard, Dua Lipa, Sam Rockwell, Brian Cranston, Ariana DeBose** Directed by **Matthew Vaughn**

A reclusive author of bestselling espionage novels, Elly Conway enjoys nothing better than a quiet night at home with her computer and her cat, Alfie. But when the plots of her fictional books - which centre on secret agent Argylle's mission to unravel a global spy syndicate - begin to mirror the covert actions of a real-life spy organisation, Ellie finds herself (*and Alfie, and a cat-allergic spy named Aidan!*) racing across the world to stay one step ahead of the bad guys...

Described by its publicity as a razor-witted, reality-bending, globe-encircling spy thriller, Argylle is directed by Matthew Vaughn, whose previous films include Kick-Ass and the Kingsman franchise.

Released Fri 2 February



American Fiction CERT tbc (117 mins)

Starring **Jeffrey Wright, Tracee Ellis Ross, Erika Alexander, Issa Rae, Sterling K Brown** Directed by **Cord Jefferson**

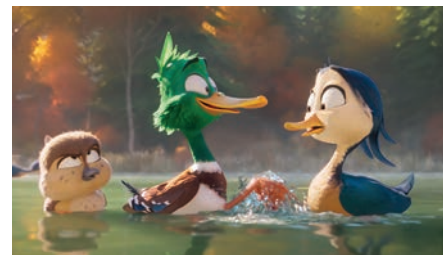
The cultural obsession with reducing people to outrageous stereotypes is the subject that's placed front and centre of Cord Jefferson's well-reviewed directorial debut. Frustrated novelist Monk is fed up with the establishment profiting from 'Black' entertainment that relies on tired and

offensive tropes. To prove his point, he uses a pen name to write an outlandish 'Black' book of his own - an undertaking that sees him propelled into the heart of the very madness he claims to loathe.

Released Fri 2 February

Migration CERT 12a (124 mins)

With the voices of **Kumail Nanjiani, Elizabeth Banks, Isabela Merced, Danny DeVito, Carol Kane, Awkwafina** Directed by **Benjamin Renner and Guylo Homsy**



The Mallard family is in a bit of a rut. While dad Mack is content to have his family safely paddling around their New England pond forever, mom Pam is eager to shake things up and show their kids - teen son Dax and duckling daughter Gwen - the whole wide world. After a migrating duck family alights on their pond with thrilling tales of far-flung places, Pam persuades Mack to embark on a family trip, via New York City, to tropical Jamaica... Focusing on multiple themes, including the importance of family and finding the courage to step out of your comfort zone, Migration is the latest film from Illumination, creators of the blockbuster Minions, Despicable Me, Sing and The Secret Life Of Pets. Although it's reviewed okay, an absolute, er, quacker of a movie it most definitely is not.

Released Fri 2 February



Madame Web CERT tbc

Starring **Dakota Johnson, Sydney Sweeney, Isabela Merced, Emma Roberts, Adam Scott, Zosia Mamet**
Directed by **SJ Clarkson**

When Manhattan paramedic Cassandra Webb, who may have clairvoyant abilities, is forced to confront revelations about her past, she forges a relationship with three young women destined for powerful futures - providing, that is, they can all manage to survive a deadly present-day danger...

Fifty Shades Of Grey star Dakota Johnson takes the lead role in this latest and somewhat different from usual superhero movie - a suspense-driven offering telling the stand-alone origin story of one of Marvel publishing's most enigmatic heroines.

Recent superhero films have failed to make a meaningful splash financially - raising increasingly loud questions in Hollywood about whether fan fatigue has finally kicked in - so it will be interesting to see how this latest addition to the genre fairs at the global box office...

Released Fri 16 February

Bob Marley: One Love

CERT tbc

Starring **Kingsley Ben-Adir, James Norton, Lashana Lynch, Michael Gandolfini, Anthony Welsh, Sam Palladio** Directed by **Reinaldo Marcus Green**

Celebrating the life and music of the reggae star who inspired generations, this eagerly awaited biopic chronicles Bob Marley's rise to fame and focuses on his historic performance at the One Love Peace Concert in Kingston, Jamaica, in April 1978.

Kingsley Ben-Adir, who stars as the legendary musician in the movie, is no stranger to the challenge of playing iconic historical figures, having previously appeared on film as Malcolm X and Barack Obama.

Released Fri 16 February



Wicked Little Letters CERT 15 (100 mins)

Starring **Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley, Anjana Vasan, Malachi Kirby, Timothy Spall**
Directed by **Thea Sharrock**

Based on a true scandal that stunned 1920s England, Wicked Little Letters centres on Edith Swan and Rose Gooding, neighbours in the seaside town of Littlehampton.

One day, a series of obscene letters begin to target Edith and others, with suspicion falling on Rose. As the outrageous missives continue to land, Rose risks losing both her freedom and the custody of her daughter. Police Officer Gladys Moss is determined to find the real culprit, and along with a group

of other women, seeks to solve the perplexing mystery...

After the success of 2021's Oscar-nominated The Lost Daughter, filmmakers decided it would be a good idea to cast Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley together for a second time. On this occasion, however, the result has been met with a somewhat more mixed reaction from the critics.

Released Fri 23 February





A ROYAL OCCASION

Erica Whyman talks to What's On about directing Ben And Imo, Mark Ravenhill's new play about the often tumultuous creative relationship between composer Benjamin Britten and Imogen Holst, the daughter of Gustav, whilst writing the opera Gloriana for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II...

What is the story of Ben and Imo, Erica?

In the autumn of 1952, Imogen Holst came to work alongside Benjamin Britten as he wrote his third opera, *Gloriana*, for a gala performance to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953. They worked closely and at breakneck speed, and Mark's play tells the story of an intimate friendship between a gay man - brilliant, troubled, sometimes ferociously cruel - and an equally brilliant woman, who loves music above all else and finds herself enchanted by and embroiled in Britten's struggle to make a work of art fit for a queen.

Many people will have heard of Benjamin Britten, but they might not have heard of Imogen Holst. Can you tell us a bit about her?

She was quite wonderful, and I wish I had had the chance to meet her! The daughter of [composer] Gustav Holst, famous for *The Planets* [a work of classical music], she was determined to make her own way in the world. A composer herself, she also conducted and arranged music, and all of her life she taught music, often to amateurs and children. In the Second World War she toured the South West, working for the very beginnings of the Arts Council, with a suitcase on the back of her bicycle, bringing music and dance, forming choirs, unearthing folk traditions in every tiny village. After *Gloriana* she continued to work with Britten and became deeply involved in the Aldeburgh Festival, making it her home until she died in 1984. She was a restless spirit, warm, exacting and passionate. She brought so much joy - through music - to thousands of people.

And why do you think we haven't heard of her?

I suspect being a woman had something to do with it! Her compositions are not perhaps as groundbreaking as her father's or Britten's, although interest in them continues to grow and they are very beautiful. Her contribution to our understanding of English folk and other early music is immense, as is her influence on the programming in

Aldeburgh over two decades, and she changed fundamentally how we think about teaching music in schools; I think we still have a tendency now only to remember the lead artist, the singular star, and not to value fully the key collaborators without whom their work would not have been possible.

A version of the play was originally broadcast on BBC Radio Three in 2013, but this is the first time a stage production has been mounted. How did you come across the play?

Mark sent me a draft of the new script - for theatre - in early 2021. He had picked it up in the early months of the pandemic and begun to revisit it, as he liked the characters so much - and their time-sensitive task of making an opera was a little like a lockdown! It appealed to me immediately because it asks big questions about why art matters, and in those dark days when the theatres were shut, I found it a real tonic. Their clarity about the role of artists in turbulent times is very bracing.

Have you worked with Mark before?

I've known him for more than a decade, but this is the first time I have directed his writing. He was writer-in-residence at the RSC when I started and helped me commission work for the new *Other Place* that we opened in 2016. He is a delight to collaborate with - he really understands the roles of actor and director, so he is helpful without getting in anyone's way. He has such a clear grip on how theatre comes alive in a space.

The play is a two-hander, with Samuel Barnett and Victoria Yeates taking the titular roles. What do you think these actors will bring to the parts of Ben and Imo?

Samuel is perfect for Ben; he is funny and razor-sharp and unafraid to go to the dark places Ben frequently lives in when he is composing. Victoria brings a delicious vibrancy to Imo and is going to bring to vivid life her wit, her steely resolve and her courage in speaking the truth.

You've said the play is about "love, music and, importantly, power". Can you elaborate?

It is a very fresh take on the 'gay best friend', as it is about the love between two people who are not going to have a sexual relationship but find themselves entangled because of a shared endeavour - the music - which forces them to really share the depths of themselves. Ben has enormous power over Imo, because he is a man, an increasingly famous composer, and he is employing her. And sometimes he abuses that power, and sometimes she is more powerful than him because she is not afraid of some painful truths.

The play portrays Britten as often a very cruel but highly talented man. Do you think bad behaviour is ever justifiable in the pursuit of artistic excellence?

Justifiable, no, but is it something we can and should try to understand? I think so. Too many artists have been given a free pass to be abusive, to exploit their status at the expense of other people's confidence and safety. So no, I don't think that is ever acceptable, but I do think we must try to discover why someone behaves like that, what is it that is torturing them - very often they are ashamed or afraid or both - and we can feel compassion for that and do what is needed to help them change their behaviour.

Your acclaimed and award-nominated production of *Hamnet* enjoyed a successful run in Stratford, and is currently playing in London. What's next for you after *Ben And Imo*?

I'm starting a really interesting piece of work in Oxford looking at how communities can use stories to influence research, and I'm working with some colleagues in France on how to make Shakespeare more relevant there!

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Ben And Imo shows at The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Wednesday 21 February to Saturday 6 April



Victorian Radicals

The Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, from Sat 10 February

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art here goes on display in the city for the first time in more than five years.

Taking the subtitle 'From The Pre-Raphaelites To The Arts & Crafts Movement', Victorian Radicals features vibrant paintings and exquisite drawings presented alongside jewellery, glass, textiles and metalwork. The show provides visitors with the chance to discover the story of the Pre-Raphaelites - Britain's first modern art movement - and learn about their influence on artists and makers well into the 20th century.



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Charmaine Watkiss (born 1964), *Double Consciousness: Be Aware of One's Intentions*, pencil, water-soluble graphite, watercolour and ink, 2021. Acquired with Art Fund and Rootstein Hopkins Foundation support. © 2023 The Trustees of the British Museum. Reproduced by permission of the artist.

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Image credit: Juan Jesus Gonzalez Ahumada

Wildlife Photographer Of The Year

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, until Sun 18 February;
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 prestigious show - visiting Coventry and Shrewsbury as part of an extensive tour - features a host of awe-inspiring images capturing fascinating animal behaviour and breathtaking landscapes.

Incarcerated: Contemporary Arts From The Victorian Prison

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, until Sun 18 February

Aiming to prompt conversations about living and working conditions in historical institutions, Incarcerated brings together photography by Andy Aitchison with drawing, sculpture, crafts and writing by inmates of prisons which were built nearly 200 years ago.

The exhibition is being presented by the Universities of Birmingham and Bath, in partnership with the Howard League for Penal Reform.

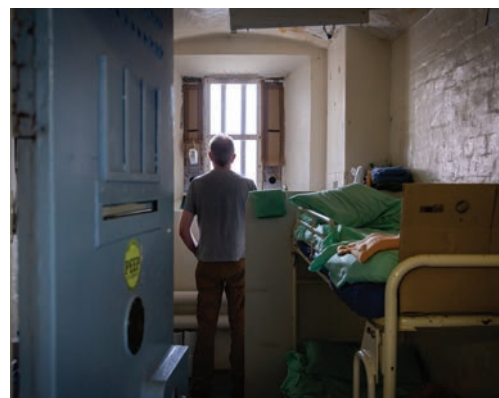


Image credit: Andy Aitchison, UK Justice HMP Liverpool

Exodus Crooks: Epiphany (Temporaire)

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 9 February - Sun 21 April

Exodus Crooks' art practice centres on the relationship with self and contemplates the role that religion and spirituality play in a journey to enlightenment.

The Midlands-based British-Jamaican artist's Ikon exhibition features sculpture, film, text and sculptural installation.

Carboniferous Monsters: 100 Million Years Before The Dinosaurs

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 3 February - Sun 2 June

This sure-to-be-popular exhibition is being promoted as 'a must-see for prehistoric monster fans of all ages'. Visitors to the show will get to meet a host of bizarre and ferocious monsters, some of which had even larger teeth than the Tyrannosaurus Rex!



Image: Sin Wai Kin - what have you gained along the way 2017

Drawing Attention

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 10 February - Thurs 16 May

This thought-provoking British Museum touring exhibition features artwork produced by some of the most promising up-and-coming names in the field of contemporary drawing, displayed alongside a selection of works by celebrated artists including Mary Delany, Edouard Manet, Barbara Hepworth, Andy Warhol and Yinka Shonibare.

The exhibition showcases a wide range of techniques and practices, with artists showing how drawing - often considered a quiet or private medium - can be used to challenge social norms, explore identity and protest injustice.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF BHANGRA

A new musical celebrating the competitive world of
the popular dance form opens at The Rep



A new musical about finding your true self opens at Birmingham Rep this month. Described as a 'brash, intoxicating and joyous musical comedy for today', Bhangra Nation is also providing a platform for local artists to showcase their talent. One such performer is Ajay Sahota, from Great Barr, who will be making his professional stage debut in the show. What's On recently caught up with the talented 22-year-old to find out more...

The joyful musical Bhangra Nation is offering local performers the chance to be involved in a large-scale professional theatre production on their doorstep.

Making its UK premiere at Birmingham Rep this month, the uplifting dance show has brought together an international team of creatives with local artists. And for some, including 22-year-old Ajay Sahota from Great Barr, this will be their first time on a professional stage.

Ajay, who recently completed a BSc in Medical Sciences at Leeds University, had never dreamed he would be on stage at The Rep, and is loving the experience.

"I saw on The Rep's Instagram that they had open auditions for South Asian males and females who could sing, act and dance, and I thought 'Well, this is my ideal moment.' I sent a video of me singing and then went through all the stages, and they cast me. I was super lucky."

Ajay had been an enthusiast in both dance and theatre but had never dreamed he could step into the limelight.

"When I was about eight or nine to when I was about 12, I had done bhangra dancing with my cousins. It was very much that our parents thought it would be a good idea to get us dancing, so we went to a class a week, in the back room of a pub.

"I've only done amateur musicals at university and at school, but I've always loved musical theatre and performing, and this show is a combination of dancing, singing and the cultural part of being a South Asian in the UK. It's my first professional show, and it's the perfect opportunity."

Bhangra Nation originally premiered at the La Jolla Playhouse in California under the name of Bangin' It in 2022. Directed by Stafford Arima, the show is set in the world of collegiate bhangra contests. When students with new ideas come up against those with a more traditional outlook, the competition becomes about much more than just the dancing.

Ajay plays Gobind, one of the students.

"Gobind is a really fun and joyous character to play," he says. "He begins the story with a zest for life and especially for bhangra and

his own South Asian culture, but he isn't the most coordinated dancer, and he's not born with the natural ability to dance. During the show, he learns a lot more about the people around him, and he becomes a lot more confident. And he becomes a pretty good bhangra dancer - if I say so myself!

"I think the bhangra dancing is my favourite part of the show. It's the part that comes most naturally to me. It's like the rhythm - once you've learnt it, along with the way to move and the way to understand the music, that's coming back to me from when I was a kid. And it's nice to be surrounded by so many other dancers who are amazing at what they do. It might be their first time doing bhangra dancing, so we're all in the same boat, learning what we can."

But bhangra does pose its challenges.

"The most difficult part is that bhangra dancing is very energetic, and a lot of stamina is required to put on the amazing dance routines that we're doing," Ajay says. "And we have to make sure we're still singing the right notes and sound lovely whilst we are making sure that each dance move is clean and crisp."

Now that Ajay has the musical theatre bug, he is hoping to perform in other productions in the future.

"Being part of this show is a dream. Having a show which is so ethnically diverse, and having people of so many different heritages and backgrounds, is all I could dream of. All I've ever wanted is to be part of something that could make young boys and their families believe that it is possible for people of South Asian heritage to be part of musical theatre and to be on stage rather than just viewing it. I want to show people to just go for it if it's something you love.

"I'm hoping this is the start - a springboard into a career with more musical theatre, more singing and acting, because this is my true passion in life: performing and telling a story to an audience."

Ensuring Ajay and the other performers are convincing dancers is bhangra consultant Parambeer Samrai of Walsall-based Ultimate Bhangra.

"I am teaching bhangra to these amazing

cast members," he says. "No-one really had specific bhangra experience, and my role is not just to teach the movements but also to help them understand why each move is important in our culture. It's like telling the story through the dance, feeling the music and having fun with bhangra."

For Parambeer, who grew up in Smethwick and now lives in Halesowen, bhangra has always been a part of life. And he is now enjoying seeing the dance form being appreciated across different cultures.

"This show is fostering an understanding of cultural appreciation whether you're South Asian, black or white. We're creating a memorable performance for all ages, and we want this show to be accessible to anybody and everybody. It's not just for South Asians - the show is about bringing everyone together.

"Bhangra is a super-cool dance and music tradition that lots of people in Birmingham enjoy, but it's not just about dancing. It's about bringing people together and having fun. In any workshop that I've done, whether the audience is South Asian or not, you hear that dhol drum and your shoulders start bouncing. The dhol beat is so infectious, and when people leave, everyone is beaming from ear to ear."

And he says the cast, many of whom were bhangra beginners, have also caught that enthusiasm.

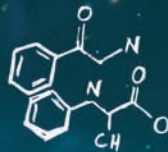
"What is exciting is that I'm able to share the authentic cultural traditions of bhangra with all these cast members. They are excellent in their current dance forms and whatever they have learnt previously - and now they are learning bhangra. They are amazing dancers, so it's like mixing all these ingredients to create a special dance which is new and exciting and joyful.

"I'm so lucky to be part of this team. A big thank you to The Rep for bringing this to Birmingham. We can't wait to show these amazing performances and this show to Birmingham and to the whole of the UK."

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Bhangra Nation shows at Birmingham Rep from Saturday 17 February to Saturday 16 March



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Events previews from around the region

**Chinese New Year Trail**

Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffordshire,
Sat 10 - Sat 24 February

Given that it's known for its stunning Chinese garden, it comes as no surprise that Biddulph Grange Garden is getting involved with New Year celebrations. The family-friendly trail runs throughout February half term, during which visitors can go on a hunt for their zodiac animal, which will be hidden somewhere in the garden.

**Lunar New Year** Southside, Birmingham, Sun 11 February

Produced by Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee and Birmingham Chinatown Business Association, the Lunar New Year celebrations have become a staple event in the city's calendar. Taking place in and

around the Hippodrome and throughout the Southside District, attractions include a selection of family activities, a range of craft market stalls around which to browse and a spectacular firework finale to welcome in the Year of the Dragon.

Celebrate the Chinese New Year of the Dragon

Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, nr Kidderminster,
Sat 10 - Sun 18 February

Visitors to Hartlebury Castle this half term can welcome in the Year of the Dragon by taking part in a special lantern trail around the museum and learning about the Chinese zodiac.

To further add to the fun, from Tuesday the 13th to Friday the 16th the venue is hosting crafting workshops, offering families the chance to make their very own Chinese lantern and create dragon crafts to take home.

**Chinese New Year Of The Dragon**

The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 11 February

The Potteries Museum is once again hosting its annual Chinese New Year celebration. Visitors to the venue can expect plenty of lively and colourful entertainment, from

traditional music and dance - including dragon and lion dance performances - to firecracker displays, acrobatics and Chinese craft workshops.

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Events previews from around the region



The 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Sat 10 & Sun 11 February

One of the first events to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings, the 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo serves up more than three hours of pageantry and spectacle, the culmination of which is a grand finale that features a staggering 1,200

performers. Displays include the Inter-Service Field Gun competition and the British Flyball Association competition. Land Of Hope And Glory and The Evening Hymn also feature in the show's programme of entertainment.

Arenacross British Championship

Resorts World Arena, Birmingham, Sat 3 February

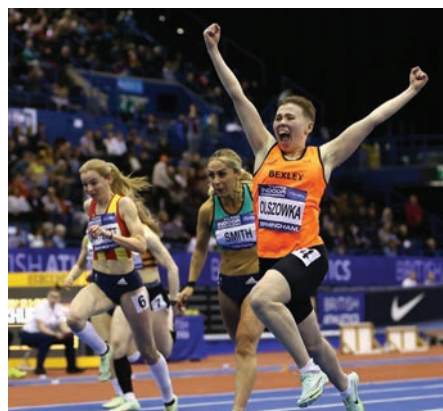
Europe's leading indoor freestyle motocross & race show returns to Birmingham this month as part of a seven-round tour of the UK.

The show sees some of the world's fastest professional motocross racers competing for the Arenacross title, whilst freestyle motocross (FMX) riders will be showing off their mind-blowing skills with a variety of tricks and jumps (up to 60ft in the air!).



UK Athletics Indoor Championships 2024

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sat 17 & Sun 18 February



Top-class British athletics makes a welcome return to Birmingham this month. With prestigious national titles on the line, the Championships will also serve as the official trial event for the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Glasgow. Expect a hugely entertaining weekend of high-quality action to kick-start this Olympic and Paralympic year.

Spectacle of Light

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 18 February

Midlanders are being invited to discover the nighttime wonder of Compton Verney via a spectacle of light and sound this month. The team at Squid Soup are back with a whole host of brand-new installations, while visitors can also enjoy a range of street food from Digbeth Dining Club and grab a drink from the fully stocked bar inside the venue.



The Classic Dirt Bike Show

Telford International Centre, Sat 10 & Sun 11 February

The UK's biggest classic off-road show is back in Telford.

As well as hundreds of off-road bikes, the show features the UK's biggest collection of off-road trade & autojumble stands selling dirt biking gear - from spares, parts and accessories to riding kit.

The biggest clubs in the country will also be in attendance, as will multiple world champions Kelvin Tatum, Neil Hudson and Yrjo 'Vesty' Vesterinen.





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Places to visit across the Midlands



British Motor Museum

Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warwickshire
CV35 0BJ britishmotormuseum.co.uk

Home to the world's largest collection of historic British vehicles, the British Motor Museum tells the stories of the people and places behind the cars.

Themed trails, touch-screen exhibits, an interactive zone, costumed guided tours, and a varied programme of themed activities make for an inspiring day out.

THIS HALF TERM: From Saturday the 10th to Sunday the 25th, the museum will host its Enthralling Energy event, giving visitors a fun and fascinating glimpse at the future of energy through a variety of activities.

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon Street Birmingham, B4 7XG birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank

Thinktank features more than 200 interactive exhibits on science and discovery, a programme of workshops, shows and demonstrations, and a digital planetarium. It also boasts its very own mini city: MiniBrum - a child-sized world created for youngsters under the age of eight. Meanwhile, outside, the Science Garden provides fun activities and surprises for the whole family to enjoy.

THIS HALF TERM: The museum is holding an International Women And Girls In Science Day on Sunday the 11th, celebrating women in STEM with activities and workshops to inspire those who are looking to join the field. Plus, the museum's planetarium will host matinee showings of Pink Floyd's The Dark Side Of The Moon - a full dome experience featuring 10 tracks from the iconic album set to stunning 360° visuals.



Blists Hill Victorian Town

Legges Way, Telford TF7 5UD
ironbridge.org.uk

One of 10 award-winning museums that make up the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Blists Hill Victorian Town offers visitors the chance to step back in time to the days of Queen Victoria.

Set over 52 acres, the museum is very much an interactive experience. Attractions include Victorian shops and cottages, authentic food & sweets and the chance to see craftspeople demonstrating their trades.

THIS HALF TERM: From Saturday the 10th to Sunday the 18th, visitors can step back in time to the world of silent movies and enjoy Georges Méliès' 1902 film, A Trip To The Moon. Fans of the film will also be able to create a personalised poster at the town's Printer's Shop.



West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ museum.west-midlands.police.uk

Set in a Victorian lock-up, the West Midlands Police Museum showcases more than 200 years of policing history. The lock-up was built in 1891, and during its time housed more than one million prisoners, with the cell doors closing for the final time in 2016. As well as bringing together an unrivalled

collection of police artefacts, the museum also offers a range of hands-on activities, providing visitors with the opportunity to play the role of detective at a crime scene, examine evidence in a forensics lab, take their own police 'mugshot' and dress up in police uniforms from years gone by.



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  **West Midlands Police MUSEUM**

 The Lock-up, Steelhouse Lane
Birmingham, B4 6BJ

THE COVENTRY MUSIC MUSEUM

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SUNDAYS - 10.00am to 3.00pm
last entry 2.30pm.

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*CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT

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

Places to visit across the Midlands



The Bear Grylls Adventure

Exhibition Way, Marston Green, B40 1NT beargryllsadventure.com

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this popular visitor attraction. Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, axe throwing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

For the 'more courageous' visitor, there's the Shark Dive, which involves getting 'up close and personal' with black tip reef sharks and cownose rays...

...Or, if you fancy experiencing the thrill of free-falling at 12,000ft, check out iFly.

Coventry Transport Museum

Millennium Place, Coventry, CV1 1JD
transport-museum.com

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

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

THIS HALF TERM: The museum's 'tinker, make & play' interactive drop-in sessions provide little ones with the chance to make brick cars to play with on a map of Coventry.



Severn Valley Railway

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

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a journey of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley. The journey includes a stop-off at The Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where passengers can check out some special locomotives.

Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

THIS HALF TERM: From Tuesday the 13th to Thursday the 15th, an iconic character from children's literature will be making an appearance at Highley's Engine House for meet & greets.



National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

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

Housing more than 2,000 creatures - including a colony of gentoo penguins, black-tip reef sharks and a giant green sea turtle - National SEA LIFE Centre features a world-class rescue Marine Mammal facility, which houses the UK's first-ever sea otters, Ozzy and Ola.

Other highlights include a 4D cinema, the zebra shark in Shark Lagoon and the Clownfish Kingdom tunnel. The venue also boasts the UK's only 360° Ocean Tunnel, providing visitors with the truly unique experience of 'walking through the sea'.

DOCTORS IN THE HOUSE



Husband & wife Dr Michael Mosley and Dr Clare Bailey are taking to the road with a new live theatre show in which they aim to help us Eat (Well), Sleep (Better) Live (Longer!). Here, the couple talk about what audiences can expect from the show. And with this month's Valentine's Day in mind, they also tell us a bit about how they met - and Michael's romantic proposal!

Clare, how do you view the prospect of performing live for the first time in Britain with Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!)?

Clare: In some ways it's quite daunting, as I'm not experienced doing live shows, where anything can happen, but I'm also really looking forward to it. I think the audiences will be very warm, and I think it will be fun.

Michael: I first met Clare at medical school 43 years ago, and we've been married for 36 years, so I'm obviously biased, but Clare's written a lot of wonderful recipe books that people love; she is one of the UK's best-selling cookery writers, but I suspect most people don't know that her books have sold in the millions. She hasn't done live shows in the UK before, so this is a rare opportunity to meet Clare and have a chat. We did a few shows in Australia in 2013, and they were very popular - particularly the cooking demos. People bought lots of books to be signed, and they clearly loved chatting to Clare after the shows. They wanted to tell her about how much they love her recipes.

Will you be cooking some of your recipes on stage, Clare?

Clare: Yes, I'm really looking forward to demonstrating a couple of easy, tasty and healthy recipes. The other thing I would love, for those who are not yet fermenting foods, is to show how tasty and affordable it is to do! It's basic kimchi or sauerkraut. It's easy and becomes almost addictive. You slash and chop it all together with a bit of salt, give it a massage, put it in a bowl, stuff it in a jar with a few spices and seal it. Hey presto - sauerkraut! It does need gas releasing every day for about a week, as the microbes leap into action. We will also share some of the health benefits you get from fermented food.

Michael: The idea is that Clare will be doing the demos, and I will be chatting through some of the science and interrupting. We will basically be doing it as a kind of double act. We will be like a medical version of The Hairys Bikers...

What do you enjoy about the live experience?

Michael: I love the audience interaction because when you're doing a podcast, or

you're doing a TV show, you don't get any live response. Plenty of people stop me in the street to chat about my books, TV programmes or podcasts, but normally long after the event. I like telling stories. I also love the fact that you get to meet the audience. We have a Q&A section in the show, when you hear from the audience and get their reaction to the stories you tell. And afterwards, we always hang around for an hour or so to take questions and do selfies. A lot of people come along because they want to share their stories. A lot of people have questions, but many of them just want to say "Look, you changed my life in this way..." And that's lovely and very heartwarming.

You're running parenting courses, Clare. Is parenting going to be part of Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!) as well?

Clare: We would like to incorporate it, because if you get children early, you can set their appetites and bring them up with a much healthier diet. Michael grew up being allowed to drink fizzy drinks and eat sweets, and for him it's been a bit of a struggle at times. Whereas if you can try and set up good things like meals together as a family, you tend to eat better.

What else will you be discussing during Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!)?

Michael: I'm going to be doing quite a big section on sleep. I've got a book on sleep coming out - 4 Weeks To Better Sleep - and I've just made a three-part TV series on sleep. It's an obsession of mine. There is a big audience out there who are curious about sleep, what goes on during sleep, and how you can improve it. You really can make big changes and drastically improve your health... There are four pillars to health. One of them is losing weight and then maintaining it, which is the area we're best known for. The second is obviously eating well, the third is sleeping well, and the fourth is being active. So we're going to touch on the different ways you can do these things.

And you will also be addressing the subject of ageing...

Michael: Yes. I've just made a series called Secrets Of The Superagers, and I'll be showing some exclusive clips from that. In

that series, I went around the world looking at people who are in their 70s, 80s, 90s. It's the science of ageing. What is the latest science of ageing? If you want to hold back the clock, what should you do? How good is the science, where is it? It will be practical tips on staying young.

Clare, do you remember when you and Michael first met at medical school?

Clare: I have to say, my first memory of Michael was of him baring his torso in the anatomy lab. They used him to draw where the liver is and where the heart is, and where the other organs are. I wouldn't say it was love at first sight! We didn't get together for a while after that. It wasn't the most romantic of settings!

Michael: We had a mutual group of friends. One of the things we did at medical school were very silly live comedy shows. I'd really got interested in writing and performing in revues when I was at Oxford University - I was a contemporary of Rowan Atkinson. And so I introduced some of those sketches at medical school. We used to sing some appalling songs, like 'Save All Your Kidneys For Me', and entertain our fellow medical students. And that's where Clare and I got together, I suppose, because we have a mutual interest in being ludicrous.

Tell us about how Michael proposed to you, Clare?

Clare: I was in the jungle in deepest, darkest Peru. I was doing my elective as a student with Save The Children's Fund, giving vaccinations in the jungle. Michael managed to trace me. We'd gone way upriver, and there was no access to the town that we were in. Michael managed to find somebody to paddle him up the Amazon in a canoe. He asked, "Where are the gringo doctors?" When he arrived, it was a total surprise!

.....

Michael and Clare take Eat (Well), Sleep (Better), Live (Longer!) to Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Monday 12 February and Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Wednesday 14 February

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*Your week-
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listings guide*
February 2024

the list



Niall Horan at Resorts World Arena, Birmingham - Tues 27 February

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

What's On

Thurs 1 - Sun 4 February



Bluey's Big Play -
Birmingham Hippodrome

Thurs 1 - Sun 4 February

Mon 5 - Sun 11 February



Mischief & Mystery In Moomin
Valley - Symphony Hall

Sat 10 February

Mon 12 - Sun 18 February



Gauri B - The Glee Club,
Birmingham

Tues 13 February

Mon 19 - Thurs 29 February



Alison Goldfrapp -
O2 Academy

Tues 27 February

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

The Exchange, Centenary Square, Birmingham

AI FUTURES Programme of exhibitions and events exploring Artificial Intelligence through the lens of university research, Launching Feb 2024

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

WARWICKSHIRE'S JURASSIC SEA

Discover the amazing creatures that lived in Coventry & Warwickshire during the time of the dinosaurs, until 23 Feb

COVENTRY'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

Exhibition exploring a community history that dates back to the 12th century, until Sept 2024

CASE: COVENTRY ART SOCIETIES

EXHIBITION A new, varied exhibition showcasing work by members of art societies and groups in Coventry & Warwickshire. Includes paintings, sculpture, ceramics and more, from Fri 2 Feb - Sun 3 Mar

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

START THE PRESS! With a vintage, flatbed printing press as a centrepiece, West Midlands printmakers will produce original prints to fill the gallery walls, making work in real time. Presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year, Fri 9 Feb - Sun 21 Apr

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

MATERIAL EVIDENCE Exhibition of textile art by current and former members of pan-European group Quilt Art, inspired by the life and work of founder member Mary Fogg, until Mon 27 May

NEW NARRATIVES IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Showcasing new work by artists based in Pakistan (Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar) who use photography in innovative ways. The works explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora, Sat 3 Feb - Mon 6 May

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

PHANTOM SCULPTURE: COVENTRY

BIENNIAL Exhibition bringing together sculptures by some of the most important artists working today, and putting them into conversation with key works by older artists. The show reopened last month with new works added, from artists including Kira Freiji, Barbara Hepworth and Kim Lim, until Sun 10 Mar

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

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

RBSA FRIENDS EXHIBITION

A show celebrating the talents of RBSA Friends, a community of artists who annually exhibit work in the Gallery, until Sat 10 Feb

THE BLACK COUNTRY: PHOTOGRAPHS

BY PHIL LOACH, 1970-90 Exhibition of the photographer's private archive of documentary photographs, which demonstrate his ability to see the unusual aspects of life within his home region of the Black Country, Tues 13 - Sat 24 Feb

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

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

ED ISAACS: DRAWING PLACES

Exhibition of intricate, large-scale pencil drawings. Wolverhampton-based artist Isaacs primarily focuses on capturing the 'spirit of an environment', until Sun 24 March

Elsewhere:

CYLINDER, FIGURE, GEM, SPECTRUM,

STONE Polyphonic programme of short films from multiple artists, screened across the gallery on continuous loops, Fri 2 - Sat 3 Feb, Eastside Projects, Birmingham

DAS TÖR: HOME GROWN WINDOW

RESIDENCY Ryan Asbury's artwork depicts a portal from 'Plutopia', turning the building into 'a gateway for queer visibility within Birmingham', until Tues 13 Feb, Stryx JQ Gallery

CIRCULAR CATALYSTS Documentary exhibition, presenting objects, texts, sound and photographs collected by Ioana Cîrlig during a residency working with craftspeople in rural Romania, until Sat 24 Feb, Centrala, Birmingham

DREAMS OF BRUM On-tour exhibition from Ikon Gallery, featuring portraits by Birmingham-based photographer Maryam Wahid, until Sun 31 March, Handsworth Library



Bombay Bicycle Club - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Gigs

CHARTREUSE +

WILDFORMS Thurs 1 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BRIT FUNK ASSOCIATION

Thurs 1 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

XENTRIX + TORTURED

DEMON + ELYREAN Thurs 1 Feb, Devil's Dog, Digbeth

BAT SABBATH +

MARGARITA Thurs 1 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

JOHN O'GALLAGHER,

FAITH BRACKENBURY,

JOHN POPE AND TONY

BIANCO Thurs 1 Feb,

Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire

SLOW LEAVES

Thurs 1 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

KODO

Thurs 1 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TRY2SMILE

Fri 2 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

OASIS MAYBE?

Fri 2 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

KNOCK OFF +

SUCKERPUNCH + THE

LIARBITLITS + THE

BUTTERS ALIENS Fri 2

Feb, Devil's Dog,

Digbeth

SKABUCKS

Fri 2 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

ANDI

Fri 2 Feb, O2

Institute, Digbeth

THERAPY?

Fri 2 Feb, O2

Institute, Digbeth

BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB

Fri 2 Feb, O2 Academy

MALI SHEARD

Fri 2 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell

Performance Space,

Symphony Hall, B'ham

80S LIVE

Fri 2 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

BOOTLEG ABBA

Fri 2 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

OASIS

Fri 2 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

DESPERADOS - A

CELEBRATION OF THE

EAGLES Fri 2 Feb, The Robin, Bilston

THE RONNIE SCOTT'S

STORY Fri 2 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

REND COLLECTIVE +

CHRIS RENZEMA Sat 3

Feb, O2 Institute,

Digbeth

AFTERTHOUGHT +

WOODEN DOG +

SHOPTALK + EVER +

BLINDEYE Sat 3 Feb, O2

Institute, Digbeth

NIRVANA UK + THE

SUNSET LIMITED Sat 3

Feb, O2 Academy

BEMUSED - A TRIBUTE TO

MUSE Sat 3 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THANK YOU FOR THE

MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE

Sat 3 Feb, Birmingham

Town Hall

ONE NIGHT IN DUBLIN

Sat 3 Feb, The Core

Theatre, Solihull

SOUL JUNCTION

Sat 3 Feb, The Rhodehouse,

Sutton Coldfield

SUPREME QUEEN

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton

Grand Theatre

HEADSHRINKERS+ THE

LYDONS + SANCHO

PANZA Sun 4 Feb, Hare

& Hounds, Kings Heath

EMILIO SANTORO AS

ELVIS Sun 4 Feb, The

Glee Club, Southside

JOHN CALVIN ABNEY

Sun 4 Feb, Kitchen Garden,

Kings Heath



Headshrinkers - Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

Classical Music

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: MYTH OF VENICE Featuring Gawain Glenton (cornetto) and Silas Wollston (early keyboards). Programme includes works by Gabrieli, Willaert, Palestrina and Merulo, Fri 2 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

BOURNVILLE LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Boglárka György (violin) and Amy Butler (piano), Fri 2 Feb, Bournville Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham

ECHO RISING STARS: SEBASTIAN HEINDL - CHARLIE CHAPLIN'S THE GOLD RUSH Organ concert improvising a soundtrack to Chaplain's classic silent comedy, Sun 4 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

PRIMROSE PIANO QUARTET Featuring Susanne Stanzeleit (violin), Dorothea Vogel (viola), Andrew Fuller (cello) and John Thwaites (piano). Programme includes works by Brahms and Chausson, Sun 4 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PIANO-PLAYING STYLES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY Five day symposium exploring the history of keyboard playing in the Baroque and Classical style. Performances feature an array of historical instruments, Sun 4 - Thurs 8 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: SHOWTIME! Featuring Richard Laing (conductor). Programme includes works by Gershwin, Porter, Rodgers, Sondheim and more... Sun 4 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy

JANINE HAROUNI Thurs 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE & COMICS TBC Thurs 1 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL MCINTYRE Thurs 1 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

JEFF INNOCENT Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

JONATHAN PIE Fri 2 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ANIA MAGLIANO Fri 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD, HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE, BLANK PENG & COMIC TBC Fri 2 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DARREN HARRIOT, NINA GILLIGAN, VINCE ATTA & WAYNE BEESE Fri 2 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

SAM CAMPBELL Fri 2 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GUZ KHAN Fri 2 - Sat 3 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

STEWART LEE Sat 3 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD, HATTY PRESTON, PAUL THORNE & COMIC TBC Sat 3 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

PHIL ELLIS, RICKY BALSHAW, NAOMI COOPER & TOM TOAL Sat 3 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

UROOJ ASHFAQ Sat 3 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

AURIE STYLA Sat 3 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

THE FULL MONTY New production celebrating the 25th anniversary of the film of the same name. Starring Danny Hatchard (EastEnders), Jake Quickenden (Footloose, Hair & X Factor), Bill Ward (Coronation Street/Emmerdale), Neil Hurst (Fat Friends The Musical), Ben Onwukwe (The Shawshank Redemption) & Nicholas Prasad (Around The World In 80 Days), until Sat 3 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

ABIGAIL'S PARTY Highbury Players present an amateur version of Mike Leigh's 1970s classic, until Sat 3 Feb, Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE 1936 Tracy-Ann Oberman stars as Shylock in a reimagining of Shakespeare's play. The production is back at the RSC following a sell-out run in 2023, until Sat 10 Feb, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM Mathew Baynton (Horrible Histories/Ghosts) stars as Bottom in Shakespeare's captivating comedy, until Sat 30 March, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THIS IS A LOVE STORY Workshop performances of a brand-new pop musical, telling the 200,000-year love story of Earth and Humanity, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

MOTHER GOOSE Presented by Startime Variety, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 Feb, Halesowen Town Hall

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Fri 2 Feb, Hobs Moat Library, Solihull

HOUSE & GARDEN The Crescent Theatre Company presents two Alan Ayckbourn comedies - performed simultaneously by the same cast at the venue's Main House and the Ron Barber Studio, Sat 3 - Sat 10 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

BLUEY'S BIG PLAY Brand-new theatrical adaptation of the Emmy award-winning children's television series, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome



THE MAHARAJA'S EXPRESS Sohan Kailey presents a multi-sensory storytelling and up-close theatrical experience with colourful puppetry and enchanting music. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Whitmore Reans Library, Wolverhampton

DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR UK Entertaining and interactive children's shows conveying the message that embracing differences is a positive experience. Presented by Aida H Dee as part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Sat 3 Feb, The Core Library, Solihull

Light Entertainment

QUEENZ - THE SHOW WITH BALLS Dazzling divas deliver a night of fun and fabulousness with live vocals and a set list of party pop anthems, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

TALES OF THE WINDRUSH CHILDREN The stories of the descendants of Windrush pioneers, born into Caribbean homes in the UK, and the Caribbean in the 1940s, 50s, 60s & 70s. Hosted by Marcia M Spence and delivered through book readings, song and dance. A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

LINE DANCING WITH THE DOUBLE DOLLY'S An evening of comedy, Dolly Parton songs sung live and line dancing... Sat 3 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KALEB Join the celebrity farmer as he presents his views on everything from farm animals to Jeremy Clarkson, Sat 3 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

OH WHAT A NIGHT! Musical journey through the career of Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons, Sat 3 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Talks & Spoken Word

IN CONVERSATION WITH PAULINE BLACK OBE Exclusive event in which the Coventry-born singer-songwriter shares her story of music, race, family and roots - as chronicled in her critically acclaimed memoir, Black By Design, Thurs 1 Feb, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

INCARCERATED ARTIST TALK Join Andy Aitchison, whose work features in MAC's current installation, Incarcerated, and Dean Kelland, artist-in-residence at HMP Grendon, for a conversation with Dominique Moran - Professor in Carceral Geography at the University of Birmingham, Thurs 1 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

CONFESSIONS OF A TELETUBBY Join Nikky Smedley (the original LaaLaa) as she spills the beans on the iconic children's TV show, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

JAMES O'BRIEN IN CONVERSATION One of the UK's most popular talk radio hosts will discuss how a select few have conspired - sometimes by incompetence, sometimes by design - to bring Britain to its knees. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Fri 2 Feb, The Halls, Wolverhampton

NOTORIOUS: IN CONVERSATION WITH RAPHAEL ROWE An evening with the celebrated investigative reporter and host of Netflix's Inside The World's Toughest Prisons. A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Fri 2 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

SIR RANULPH FIENNES: MAD, BAD & DANGEROUS An evening with the world's greatest explorer, Fri 2 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

FRED KARNO - THE LEGEND BEHIND THE LAUGHTER David Crump talks about his new book, which sheds fresh light on the early careers of Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Fri 2 Feb, Georgian Gallery, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

FEARLESS: IN CONVERSATION WITH LOUISE MINCHIN Louise shares a host of exhilarating adventures - from freediving under the ice in the dark in Finland, to cycling across Argentina - and recounts the compelling stories of some of the women she met along the way. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery

MANZ DEM Join Edgbaston-born musician Derrick Wallace as he



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discusses his book, *Manz Dem* - a musical project carried out by 15 of the most important African/Caribbean/Caribbean dual heritage guitarists. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

VOICES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS An evening of storytelling, spoken word, drama and dance that breaks the silence surrounding domestic abuse. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

TALES UNFINISHED A semi-improvised live storytelling experience using Green Ronin's Fantasy AGE RPG system. Part of Wolverhampton Literary Festival, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

DANCING BAREFOOT - IN CONVERSATION WITH GLYN BROWN A Wolverhampton Literature Festival event, Sat 3 Feb, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

WHAT'S THE LADY DOING? IN CONVERSATION WITH LOU SANDERS An evening of 'side-splitting humour, profound insights, and relatable anecdotes that will leave you in stitches and make you reflect on your own journey through life'. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival,

Sat 3 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery
THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER Join Scottish detective David Swindle to find out what makes a serial killer tick, Sun 4 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ROBIN INCE: WEAPONS OF EMPATHY Expect 'a chaos of words and ideas, love and delight. And also a very long reading list'. Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival, Sun 4 Feb, Wolverhampton Art Gallery



Events

SPECTACLE OF LIGHT After-dark experience for all the family, until Sun 18 Feb, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

SEED LIGHTS A light & sound event, with animations, poetry, music and

live performance inspired by artist Saranjit Birdi, until Thurs 29 Feb, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

WOLVERHAMPTON LITERATURE FESTIVAL

Celebrating arts and culture in the city with Sathnam Sanghera, Louise Minchin, Raphael Rowe, Lou Sanders, James O'Brien and many more, Fri 2 - Sun 4 Feb, various venues in Wolverhampton

GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE

Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides and see real finds from the site on display in the visitor centre, Sat 3 Feb, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

EXPLORE SAREHOLE MILL Enjoy the sights and sounds of a traditional 18th-century water mill at your own pace, Sat 3 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

ASTON ARTS CLUB A free arts club where you can make something inspired by Aston Hall and its history, Sat 3 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

2023/24 ARENACROSS BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP A high-octane mix of indoor motocross racing, Sat 3 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

BEYOND THE MASK Look at some 18th & 19th-century arsenic poisoning

cases with a retired Coventry West Midlands police officer, Sat 3 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

TATTOO FREEZE 2024 Hundreds of tattoo artists all under one roof, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

LAMBING WEEKENDS Meet new-born lambs and expectant mums, Sat 3 - Sun 4 Feb, Forge Mill Farm, West Bromwich

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 4 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

BACKSTAGE THEATRE TOUR Find out what it's like to be involved in the theatre, Sun 4 Feb, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

COLOUR BOX: THE CAT RETURNS Drop-in craft workshop, followed by a relaxed screening of the Japanese animation, Sun 4 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SPRING FAIR A marketplace for wholesale home, gift and fashion, Sun 4 - Wed 7 Feb, NEC, B'ham

THE BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO

Experience the pomp and pageantry of Britain's biggest indoor Tattoo

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- Massed Parade of Standard Bearers
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Róisín Murphy - *The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton*

Gigs

TUMMYACHE Mon 5 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE VACCINES Mon 5 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

PIP BLUM Mon 5 Feb, Castle & Falcon

THE CHISEL + RIFLE Mon 5 Feb, The Flapper

GORDIE TENTREES & JAXON HALDANE Mon 5 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY SHOW Mon 5 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE CLOCKWORKS Tues 6 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE MENZINGERS Tues 6 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

CURRENTS + BEING AS AN OCEAN + OCEANS ATE ALASKA + SENTINELS Tues 6 Feb, XOYO, Digbeth

THEA GILMORE + LIAM FROST Tues 6 Feb, The Glee Club, Southside

JUNIOR BROTHER + CEITIDH MAC Wed 7 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BIG WOLF BAND Wed 7 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

JON SANDY'S OPEN MIC Wed 7 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

BELINDA O'HOOLEY +

THE CHERRY STONES Wed 7 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club

AL LEWIS Wed 7 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

CHUCK RAGAN + HANNAH ROSE PLATT Thurs 8 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

TOGETHEREFFECT Thurs 8 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JOHNNY2BAD Thurs 8 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

KOSHEEN Thurs 8 Feb, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Thurs 8 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CATCH THE RAIN Thurs 8 Feb, Bromsgrove Folk Club

ELLIE GOWERS Thurs 8 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LUKE COMBS TRIBUTE Fri 9 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

YOU DIRTY BLUE + DIRTY HOUND Fri 9 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

SHARON SHANNON Fri 9 Feb, Nortons, Digbeth

JOHN MYRTLE + BRIAN LIGHTNING + MYLES NEWMAN Fri 9 Feb, The Night Owl, Digbeth

KRYPTIC + UNDERGROUNDRIOT + VERLOREN + CREEDITE + ROOTED Fri 9 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

KING HERD + OVERDRAMATICS Fri 9 Feb, The Asylum

KING NUN Fri 9 Feb, The Victoria

HIGH FADE Fri 9 Feb, Mama Roux's

THE FOOZ FIGHTERS Fri 9 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

FISHERMAN'S FRIENDS Fri 9 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MAGIC MARY + THE MASSES + PASSIVE FIX + LUCEITH Sat 10 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

THE HEELS Sat 10 Feb, Actress & Bishop

THE SCHIZOPHONICS Sat 10 Feb, The Night Owl

JEFF ROSENSTOCK + SHIT PRESENT Sat 10 Feb, Castle & Falcon

THE SUPERSEEDERS + MAN MADE MOON + FLUOXETINE + BLUE LOTUS Sat 10 Feb, The Victoria

SEA POWER Sat 10 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

TRANSATLANTIC SESSIONS Sat 10 Feb, Symphony Hall

MAREK POSPIESZALSKI AND FRIENDS Sat 10 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)

COURTING Sat 10 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

DIRE STREETS Sat 10 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ERASURED Sat 10 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

RÓISÍN MURPHY Sat 10 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

BOOGIE WOOGIE DOUGIE Sun 11 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

TV PINS + YOU, ME AND THE TREES Sun 11 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MAJID JORDAN Sun 11 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SIMPLE PLAN Sun 11 Feb, O2 Academy

DIRTY HONEY Sun 11 Feb, O2 Academy

OLD RED EYES: SOLO TRIBUTE TO PAUL HEATON Sun 11 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

Classical Music

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION

Featuring Di Xiao (piano), Jennie Zhan (pipa), Pinyan Lin (guzheng) & the University Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Daniele Rosina. Programme includes Xian's Yellow River Piano Concerto, Thurs 8 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Programme and performers TBC, Fri 9 Feb, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT

Featuring Ivana Gavric (piano). Programme includes works by Janáček, Frances-Hoad, Chaminade, Watkins and Rachmaninov, Fri 9 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

EX CATHEDRA: BAROQUE PASSION, MUSIC OF HEARTBREAK & HEALING

Featuring Jeffrey Skidmore (conductor), Andrew Skidmore (cello) and the Ex Cathedra Consort & Continuo. Programme includes works by JS Bach, Purcell, Lotti, D Scarlatti, Monteverdi and Carissimi, Sun 11 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

Comedy

FRANKIE BOYLE Tues 6 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ALISON SPITTLE Wed 7 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RUSSELL HICKS, JOSH JONES, GBEMI OLADIPO & FREDDY QUINNE Wed 7 Feb, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

MILES JUPP Thurs 8 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, JACOB HAWLEY & MIKE RICE Thurs 8 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JIMEOIN Fri 9 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ED BYRNE Fri 9 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

SHAZIA MIRZA, JACOB HAWLEY, MIKE RICE, CHRIS YATES & BELLA HULL Fri 9 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MATT GREEN Fri 9 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JARLATH REGAN Fri 9 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

MIKE NEWALL, KYRAH GRAY, HAL CRUTTENDEN & DIANE SPENCER Sat 10 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

SHAZIA MIRZA, JACOB HAWLEY, MIKE RICE & COMIC TBC Sat 10 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BIG DEAL COMEDY Sat 10 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

TOM HOUGHTON Sun 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

VICTOR PĂTRĂȘCAN & COMICS TBC Sun 11 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

VITTORIO ANGELONE Sun 11 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Stage adaptation of Susan Hill's chilling ghost story, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW The return of Richard O'Brien's legendary rock & roll musical, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ALADDIN Cloc Musical Theatre Company present a fun-filled pantomime adventure featuring toe-tapping tunes, puppetry and audience participation, Wed 7 - Sat 10 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

FANTASTICALLY GREAT WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD From explorers to artists and scientists to secret agents, hear the stories of some of history's strongest mothers, sisters and daughters; all independent icons who really did change the world. Based on Kate Pankhurst's popular children's book, Wed 7 - Sun 11 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

KING ARTHUR Le Navet Bete present a brand-new comedy retelling of the Arthur legends, Fri 9 - Sat 10 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

A LEAP IN THE DARK Ron Hutchinson's fast-paced comedy caper sees eight actors take on a whole host of characters to pay homage to the BBC and the invention of radio plays, Fri 9 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Kids Theatre

A PIRATE ADVENTURE Join Pirate Jenny and Parrot Pantstinky on board the Good Ship Barnacle Bottom for an interactive swashbuckling adventure packed with singalong songs, fun and games, Fri 9 - Sat 10 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MISCHIEF & MYSTERY IN MOOMINVALLEY Heart-warming children's show based on the much-loved novels of Tove Jansson, Sat 10 Feb, Justham Family Room & Jane How Room, Symphony Hall, B'ham

OSKAR'S AMAZING ADVENTURE Theatre Fideri Fidera fuse storytelling, physical theatre, clowning, puppetry & music to tell the tale of a puppy's search for friendship in the wilderness of the Alps, Sat 10 Feb, Blackheath Library, Rowley Regis

WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT Smash-

hit production for children based on Michael Rosen & Helen Oxenbury's much-loved children's book, Sat 10 - Tues 13 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Dance

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS Sir Matthew Bourne's acclaimed production, based on Tim Burton's iconic movie, Tues 6 - Sat 10 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

CAMILLE O'SULLIVAN: DREAMING Intimate evening of storytelling through song, accompanied by Feargal Murray and multi-instrumentalist Charlotte Glasson, Thurs 8 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DAVE BIBBY: BABY DINOSAUR Songs, characters and stand-up combine in a show about parenthood and dinosaurs, Thurs 8 - Fri 9 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

CANDACE BUSHNELL: TRUE TALES OF SEX, SUCCESS, AND SEX AND THE CITY! Acclaimed one-woman show from the creator of TV's Sex And The City. Age guidance is 18-plus, Sun 11 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CIRQUE: THE GREATEST SHOW Variety spectacular combining musical theatre and circus performances, Sun 11 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Talks & Spoken Word

POETRY JAM LIVE'S 11TH BIRTHDAY Monthly open-mic platform, to jam, perform and click with a community of creatives, Thurs 8 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

MATERIAL EVIDENCE: ARTISTS TALK Join artists Karina Thompson, Sara Impey, Jette Clover and Gabi Mett as they reflect on their work as featured in the venue's Material Evidence exhibition, Thurs 8 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Events

CASTLE KIDS PLAYGROUP A stay & play group for children up to the age of five, Tues 6 Feb, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

THE BEATLES BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band performing the best-loved songs of The Beatles, Wed 7 - Fri 9 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

TODDLER THURSDAY: PLANETARIUM A family-friendly relaxed Planetarium experience, Thurs 8 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

ADULTS NIGHTS Visit the ultimate Indoor Lego playground completely kid-free - and this month with a Valentine's theme, Fri 9 Feb, Legoland Discovery Centre, B'ham

GHOSTS AT THE LOCK UP A night of ghost stories and spooky tales, Fri 9 Feb, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

EXPLORE ASTON HALL Explore Aston Hall on an Aston Villa Football Club match or stadium-event day, Sat 10 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON New, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Sat 10 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

MORNING EXPLORERS Autism-friendly visiting times and activities, Sat 10 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

ELVIS BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a live band, backing vocalists and one of the UK's leading Elvis tributes, Sat 10 Feb, Lichfield Cathedral

THE 2024 BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL TATTOO Bringing together massed marching bands, pipes and drums, and displays including the Inter-Service Field Gun Competition, dog-racing during the British Flyball Association competition, plus massed dancers, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

CLASSIC DIRT BIKE SHOW 2024 The UK's biggest classic off-road show, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

BRITISH FLY FAIR INTERNATIONAL Premier fly fishing show, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Sat 10 - Sun 11 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

LAMBING WEEK Meet new-born lambs and expectant mums, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Forge Mill Farm, West Bromwich

CELEBRATE THE CHINESE NEW YEAR OF THE DRAGON Follow the lantern trail



Mischief & Mystery In Moomin Valley - Symphony Hall, Birmingham

around the museum and learn about the Chinese zodiac, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, nr Kidderminster

A TRIP TO THE MOON Step back in time to the world of silent movies with Georges Méliès' 1902 film, A Trip To The Moon, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge, Shropshire

COMETS AND CONSTELLATIONS Family-friendly immersive adventure uncovering the marvels of the universe with VR and AR experiences, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Enginuity, Ironbridge, Shropshire

SKY'S THE LIMIT RAF thrills & spills courtesy of theatre shows and storytelling sessions, Sat 10 - Sun 18 Feb, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

DINOSAUR BREAKOUT Step into the dino-verse to enjoy a pre-historic expedition, Sat 10 - Tues 20 Feb, Drayton Manor Resort, Staffordshire

THE PIRATE TAKEOVER Set sail and discover buried treasure! Sat 10 - Sun 25 Feb, Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire

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 11 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE DAY Visitors can explore the museum at their leisure using the 'Women in STEM'-focused map, Sun 11 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

MEET THE MAKERS WEEKEND Meet the makers behind some of the artworks in Compton Verney's latest exhibitions: History In The Making and Liquid Silver, Sun 11 Feb, Compton Vernery, Warwickshire

WEST SIDE STORY WITH WINE Join wine geek Tony Elvin for a unique screening of Steven Spielberg's award-winning film, Sun 11 Feb, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

LUNAR NEW YEAR 2024 One of the largest Lunar New Year celebrations in the UK, produced by Birmingham Hippodrome and Birmingham Chinese Festival Committee, Sun 11 Feb, Southside, Birmingham



The 2024 Birmingham International Tattoo - Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

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SPONSORS AND PARTNERS





Here At Last - O2 Institute, Birmingham

Gigs

THE NONE Mon 12 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ANGEL HOTEL Mon 12 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

NIEVE ELLA Mon 12 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ABC Mon 12 Feb, Symphony Hall

OUR MAN IN THE FIELD Mon 12 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MICKEY CALLISTO + CONOR COLEY Tues 13 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

TAMERA Tues 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

J.I. Tues 13 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

KIM PETRAS + GEORGIA + ALEX CHAPMAN Tues 13 Feb, O2 Academy

LIQUID STATE + BITHER + MONETOPIA + PHOWAR Tues 13 Feb, Subside Bar

KEZIA GILL, JADE HELLIWELL, DEMI MARRINER AND JESS THRISTAN Tues 13 Feb, Symphony Hall

OUTLIERS Tues 13 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Tues 13 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW Tues 13 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ELLE-J WALTERS Wed 14 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

OPEN MIC WITH KOWALSKI'S ACOUSTIC CLUB Wed 14 Feb, The Dark Horse, Moseley

NIEVE ELLA Wed 14 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

LOUISE & CHRIS ROGAN + THE MISSED TREES Wed 14 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club

THE GILMOUR PROJECT Wed 14 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

STORNOWAY Wed 14 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

FRANK CARTER AND THE RATTLESNAKES + THE MYSTERINES + HOTWAX Wed 14 Feb, Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

O. Thurs 15 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HEATWAVE Thurs 15 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

HERE AT LAST Thurs 15 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE MECHANIST + AKKADIAN + INFESTIONS + IMPERIAL AVENUE Thurs 15 Feb, Subside Bar

TOLLEF OSTVANG, TREVOR WATTS AND JOHN EDWARDS Thurs 15 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)

CERYS HAFANA Thurs 15 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE LEGEND OF BARRY WHITE Thurs 15 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SOLAR EYES Fri 16 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MICHAEL CERA PALIN Fri 16 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

JORDAN MACKAMPA Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

JORDAN DAVIS + ASHLEY COOKE Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE LUKA STATE Fri 16 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

EXAMPLE Fri 16 Feb, O2 Academy

FROZEN SOUL + CREEPING DEATH + FORSEEN + PHOBOPHILIC Fri 16 Feb, The Asylum

PETE WYLIE AND THE MIGHTY WAH! Fri 16 Feb, The Flapper

GLOWSEEKER Fri 16 Feb, Symphony Hall

BLOXX Fri 16 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

BEN THOMPSON AS ELVIS Fri 16 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

XODUS: TRIBUTE TO BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS Fri 16 Feb, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

BOWLING FOR SOUP + LESS THAN JAKE + VANDOLIERS Fri 16 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

ELLE-J WALTERS BAND Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

THE ATLANTIC PLAYERS + CATWALK VILLAINS + FALLEN HORSE Sat 17 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath



Cerys Hafana - Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

ANIMALIA Sat 17 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

THE DEADSHOTS Sat 17 Feb, Actress & Bishop

HELLRAISER + WHILE SHE SLEEPS Sat 17 Feb, Devil's Dog

MARIAH THE SCIENTIST Sat 17 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

PLASTIC FICTION + THE JETTYS + KALEIDOSCOPE + THE ACCENTS + CERYS CURTIS Sat 17 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

6LACK + SPINALL + SADBOL Sat 17 Feb, O2 Academy

THE PHONICS + A BAND CALLED MALICE Sat 17 Feb, O2 Academy

SHOWADDYWADDY Sat 17 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

THE QUAD ROX Sat 17 Feb, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

PROMISES AND LIES - THE UB40 YEARS Sat 17 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CHANTEL MCGREGOR Sat 17 Feb, Lichfield Guildhall

HIDDEN MOTHERS + COPSE + HEALING WOUND Sun 18 Feb, Devil's Dog

SLOWDIVE + WHITELANDS Sun 18 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

MATT MALTESE Sun 18 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ZARA LARSSON Sun 18 Feb, O2 Academy

DEAD BOYS + DESPERATE MEASURES + THEE ACID TONGUE Sun 18 Feb, The Asylum

OH WHAT A FEELING! THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Sun 18 Feb, The Core Theatre, Solihull

RICH PARSONS Sun 18 Feb, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

ORGAN CONCERT WITH THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by JS Bach, J Stanley, J Dove, G Fauré and L Boellmann, Mon 12 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

ARMONICO CONSORT: THE FORGOTTEN SCARLATTI Featuring Rachel Podger (violin) and the Armonico Consort, directed by Christopher Monks. Programme includes works by Francesco Scarlatti, Bach and Vivaldi, Mon 12 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

RBC PERCUSSION: CLAPTRAP Featuring Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's percussionists. Programme comprises a showcase of cutting-edge repertoire for percussion and multimedia, Tues 13 Feb, Centrala, Birmingham

CBSO: VALENTINE'S DAY CONCERT Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Vassily Sinaisky (conductor) & Natalya Romaniw (soprano). Programme includes works by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, Wed 14 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

STRASBOURG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: FAIRYTALES AND LEGENDS Featuring Marko Letonja (conductor) and Nikolai Lugansky (piano - pictured). Programme includes works by Berlioz, Rachmaninov, Franck and Ravel, Thurs 15 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Niamh O'Sullivan (mezzo soprano) and Gary Beecher (piano). Programme includes works by Lizst, Schubert, Vaughan Williams and Dvorák, Fri 16 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

BOURNVILLE LUNCHTIME CONCERT Early music recital, played and sung by Emily Baines, Arngair Hauksson and Dick Price, Fri 16 Feb, Bournville Quaker Meeting House, Birmingham

MIDDAY MANTRA: INDIAN CLASSICAL Presented by Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage, Sat 17 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

STEVEN OSBORNE PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by R Schumann, Debussy, Bauer, Meredith Monk, Rzewski and more,

Sat 17 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

CBSO YOUTH ORCHESTRA Featuring Jordan Ashman (percussion) and Jac van Steen (conductor). Programme includes Mahler's Symphony No. 5, and Honstein's Juvenalia, Sun 18 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BAROQUE-CLASSICAL ORCHESTRA Featuring Andrew Kirkman (director) & Yeo Yat-Soon (harpsichord - pictured). Programme includes works by Purcell and Blow, Sun 18 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham



Comedy

BASKETMOUTH Tues 13 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BILL BAILEY Tues 13 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

GAURI B Tues 13 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham



FIONA ALLEN Wed 14 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH IGNACIO LOPEZ, MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON & COMICS TBC Thurs 15 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDY ROBINSON, MICHAEL AKADIRI, IGNACIO LOPEZ, MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON & ALEX STRINGER Fri 16 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GEOFF NORCOTT Fri 16 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove (booking via The Core, Solihull)

JOSH PUGH Fri 16 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STEVE HALL & STEVE WILLIAMS Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

PAUL MCCAFFREY, KATE MARTIN, THE NOISE NEXT DOOR & DAVE LONGLEY Sat 17 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

ANDY ROBINSON, MICHAEL AKADIRI, IGNACIO LOPEZ & MARJOLEIN ROBERTSON Sat 17 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SAM AVERY Sat 17 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

RICHARD JONES Sat 17 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove (booking via The Core, Solihull)

SAM CAMPBELL Sun 18 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

HARE OF THE DOG COMEDY Sun 18 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JOHNATHAN PIE Sun 18 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

LIFE OF PI 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in this multi-award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Mon 12 - Sat 17 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

CARMEN Opera International's award-winning Ellen Kent production of Bizet's tale of passion, sexual jealousy and death, Wed 14 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LA BOHEME Ukraine's Dnipro Opera presents Puccini's passionate love story, set in 19th-century Paris. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Wed 14 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MY BLOODY VALENTINE Obsidian Theatrical Productions present 'a musical collection of all dimensions of love', Thurs 15 Feb, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

CARMEN Ukrainian's Dnipro Opera present Bizet's popular opera, which tells of the downfall of Don José, a naive soldier who falls head over heels in love with Carmen, a seductive, free-spirited femme fatale. Sung in French with English surtitles, Thurs 15 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

KAREN A comic emotional rollercoaster as the show's heroine faces office hell when her ex starts dating her arch-nemesis: Karen, Thurs 15 - Fri 16 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK - P*SSSED UP PANTO Featuring strong language and adult themes, Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

DUPLICITY FOR BEGINNERS A modern take on a classic farce, featuring a potentially murderous husband and obsessed stalker, Fri 16 - Sat 24 Feb, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

BHANGRA NATION A 'brash, intoxicating and joyous musical comedy' celebrating 'traditions we inherit and those we create', Sat 17 Feb - Sat 16 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR Joan Littlewood's epic musical offers an amusing yet heart-breaking snapshot of the life lived by those caught in the crossfire of conflict, Mon 19 - Wed 21 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

Kids Theatre

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS: THE OINK-TASTIC MUSICAL Lost The Plot Theatrical present a family classic concerning three piglets - Poppy, Penny & Pat - who leave the family sty in search of adventure, Mon 12 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW Four of Eric Carle's stories, brought to life using puppetry & music, Mon 12 - Wed 14 Feb, Lichfield Garrick



CARTOON CIRCUS LIVE! Featuring traditional slapstick comedy, illusions, a giant dancing bear, cartoon characters, an acrobatic human slinky, prizes and surprises, Tues 13 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Tues 13 Feb, Sense TouchBase Pears, Selly Oak, Birmingham (11am & 1.30pm)

SQUIRREL A story of new growth and new beginnings, with a sprinkling of magic and puppetry to charm audiences of every age, Tues 13 - Sun 18 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Wed 14 Feb, Jubilee Park, Tipton Muslim Community Group (11am)

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Thurs 15 Feb, Chinnbrook Children's Centre, Yardley Wood, Birmingham (2pm)

MY FIRST CONCERT: COME TO THE

CIRCUS Presented by professional musicians with a passion for sharing their love of classical music. Suitable for children aged up to seven, Thurs 15 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Fri 16 Feb, West Heath Community Centre, Condoover Rd, Birmingham (11am & 1.30pm)

THE GRUFFALO'S CHILD Tall Stories' enchanting version of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's much-loved children's book, Fri 16 - Sun 18 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FIREMAN SAM LIVE! THE GREAT CAMPING ADVENTURE Brand-new show for younger audiences, Sat 17 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

MR SHADOW One person (and his shadow) meet and go on an incredible, imaginative, shadowy journey where creatures emerge, engage and transform beautifully. Suitable for audience members aged four-plus, Sat 17 Feb, Great Barr Library, Birmingham



LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD The Birmingham Rep's re-telling of this much-loved fairytale takes to the road, showing in libraries and community venues across the region, Sat 17 Feb, The Dorothy Parkes Centre, Smethwick (3pm)

LUNA LOVES LIBRARY DAY THE MUSICAL New production for younger audiences based on the critically acclaimed book by Waterstones Children's Laureate, Joseph Coelho, Sun 18 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Dance

TAP FACTORY Eight male performers present an evening of dance, acrobats, music and comedy in a show for all ages, Fri 16 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

Light Entertainment

SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA THE MUSICAL Fancy-dress is strongly encouraged

Monday 12 - Sunday 18 February

and full audience participation essential, Tues 13 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

STEP INSIDE THE 60S Two hours of pure nostalgia with performances from Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich, and The Fortunes, Thurs 15 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove (booking at The Core, Solihull)

BINGO AT TIFFANY'S Join award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins (Tina Turner Tea Lady) as she hosts an evening of hilarious bingo games, raucous singalongs and glamorous dancing, Fri 16 - Sat 17 Feb, The Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

SAVING GRACE: THE SIZE MATTERS TOUR Based on the chart-topping podcast and promising surprise guests, belly laughs and outrageous stories, Sat 17 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham

RICHARD JONES: SOLDIER OF ILLUSION An evening with the only magician ever to have won Britain's Got Talent, Sat 17 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove (booking at The Core, Solihull)

CIRQUE DU HILARIOUS: TEMPLE OF DELUSION Family entertainment in which CBBC stars Danny & Mick embark on another adventure full of mistakes, pitfalls and danger, Sun 18 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Talks & Spoken Word

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY & DR CLARE BAILEY: EAT (WELL), SLEEP (BETTER), LIVE (LONGER) The husband & wife team reveal how simple changes can transform your life, Wed 14 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AN AUDIENCE WITH LUCY WORSLEY ON AGATHA CHRISTIE Join the historian as she uncovers the real Agatha - a person who, despite obstacles of class and gender, became a successful working woman, Fri 16 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Events

PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON A new, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Mon 12 - Fri 16 Feb,

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BLUEY & BINGO Meet and interact with children's favourites Bluey & Bingo, Mon 12 - Fri 16 Feb, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

KIDS WARHAMMER CLUB Take along your own models and paint and play with fellow Warhammer enthusiasts, Tues 13 Feb, Weoley Castle, B'ham

FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Tues 13 - Thurs 15 Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

HUNT FOR THE LOST TIME MACHINE Brand-new project in which children aged nine to 12 get to help an intrepid team of time travellers, Tues 13 - Fri 16 Feb, Aston Hall and The Rep, Birmingham

CARAVAN, CAMPING AND MOTORHOME SHOW The UK's largest start-of-year showcase for motorhomes, camper vans, caravans, tents and trailer tents, Tues 13 - Sun 18 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

VICTORIAN VALENTINES Celebrate the day of love the Victorian way, Wed 14 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

THE BIG DIPPY BIRTHDAY BASH Celebrating the first anniversary of Dippy's arrival at the Herbert, Wed 14 Feb, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

LIGHT NIGHT Worcester city centre's annual festival of creative work and playful street performances, Wed 14 - Thurs 15 Feb, Worcester

KIDS JEWELLERY WORKSHOP AT SAREHOLE MILL Have a go at making your own bracelet or pendant, Thurs 15 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

BOATLIFE 2024 Featuring over 200 boats, well-known faces on the live stage, family activities, an indoor pool, a range of demonstrations and plenty more besides, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 Feb, NEC, Birmingham

TALL TALES FROM AROUND THE WORLD: RAPUNZEL Family storytelling session, exploring Aston Hall with a much-loved tale, Sat 17 Feb, Aston Hall, Birmingham

MIDNIGHT IN PARIS WITH WINE Valentine's showing of Midnight In Paris presented alongside a fun wine tasting, Sat 17 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

UK ATHLETICS INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024 The very best of British athletics, Sat 17 - Sun 18 Feb, Utilita Arena Birmingham

FEBRUARY HALF TERM SERVICE Enjoy a journey on the Severn Valley Railway, with both steam and heritage diesel locomotives hauling trains the full length of the line, Sat 17 - Sun 18



The Three Little Pigs: The Oink-tastic Musical - The Old Rep, Birmingham

Feb, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

LIVING HISTORY Explore living history encampments and watch military displays, Sat 17 - Sun 18 Feb, The Commandery, Worcester

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 18 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

QUIET SESSIONS The ultimate indoor Lego playground with fewer people and no music - an all-round quieter experience! Sun 18 Feb, Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham

What's On

MEDIA GROUP



STAY IN THE LOOP!

SIGN UP TO OUR FORTNIGHTLY E-NEWSLETTER TO RECEIVE THE LATEST ENTERTAINMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE REGION - AS WELL AS COMPETITIONS AND OFFERS FOR THEATRES, GIGS, DINING OUT AND MORE...



SIMPLY SCAN THE QR TO SIGN UP TODAY



Show Of Hands - Red Lion Folk Club

Gigs

THE DEEP BLUE Mon 19 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SPEEDY ORTIZ Mon 19 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

POPPY + WARGASM Mon 19 Feb, O2 Academy

LOS FASTIDIOS + SPIRAL DOWN Mon 19 Feb, Subside Bar

GIRLSCHOOL + ALCATRAZZ + RAVEN Mon 19 Feb, The Asylum

RBC BIG BAND: CHARLES MINGUS Mon 19 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MADDIE MORRIS AND KATY ROSE BENNETT Mon 19 Feb, Kitchen Garden, King Heath

KINGFISHER Tues 20 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

NOTHING MORE + SIM + SIAMESE Tues 20 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

WASIA PROJECT Tues 20 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SUFFOCATION + SANGUISUGABOGG + ENTERPRISE EARTH + ORGANECTOMY Tues 20 Feb, The Asylum

BARBARA DICKSON Tues 20 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT Tues 20 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

GARETH GATES IN THE BEST OF FRANKIE VALLI & THE FOUR SEASONS Tues 20 - Wed 21 Feb, Artrix, Bromsgrove

(Booking at the Core Theatre, Solihull)

MODERN LITERATURE Wed 21 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

IN-FUSION Wed 21 Feb, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

FERRIS & SYLVESTER + JACK FRANCIS Wed 21 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

TESSERAECT + UNPROCESSED + THE CALLOUS DAHOYS Wed 21 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SOUTHALL + WIGHT LIGHTERS Wed 21 Feb, O2 Academy

PSYCHEDELIC PORN CRUMPETS Wed 21 Feb, O2 Academy

SHOW OF HANDS Wed 21 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

THE 1975 Wed 21 Feb, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

MY LIFE STORY Thurs 22 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JASON MANNS & PAUL CARELLA Thurs 22 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

PEST CONTROL + DEMONSTRATION OF POWER Thurs 22 Feb, Devil's Dog

VANT Thurs 22 Feb, The Night Owl

RAYE Thurs 22 Feb, O2 Academy

BEACH FOSSILS Thurs 22 Feb, Castle & Falcon

KITE THIEF + KHARMA + LILITHS ARMY Thurs 22 Feb, Subside Bar

RHIANNON GIDDENS

Thurs 22 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall
SARA OSCHLAG: MINGUS AND MONK Thurs 22 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LOUIS BRENNAN Thurs 22 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

POP WILL EAT ITSELF Fri 23 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JET BLACK ORANGE + VIBRANT DUCKS + STONE COLD BEAUTY + THE GROVE DAISY ROAD + DOWN N OUT Fri 23 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE BLACKOUT Fri 23 Feb, O2 Academy

GILLA BAND Fri 23 Feb, Castle & Falcon

MERYL STREEK Fri 23 Feb, The Victoria

RICK WAKEMAN Fri 23 Feb, Symphony Hall

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR Fri 23 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

NO PROOF Sat 24 Feb, The Sunflower Lounge

BETWEEN YOU AND ME + BROADSIDE + YOUNG CULTURE Sat 24 Feb, The Asylum

ADEKUNLE GOLD Sat 24 Feb, Forum

MANGA ST. HILARE Sat 24 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 24 Feb, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

A COUNTRY NIGHT IN NASHVILLE Sat 24 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

JOHN J. PRESLEY Sun 25 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

YOUNG GRAVY Sun 25 Feb, O2 Institute, Digbeth

DILLAGI FEAT. CHAND ALI KHAN Sun 25 Feb, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ANDY SKELLAM Sun 25 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

QUEEN EXTRAVAGANZA Sun 25 Feb, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

Classical Music

KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR & BEETHOVEN PART 1 Featuring Alice Sara Ott (piano) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme also includes Walton's Spitfire Prelude and Fugue, Wed 21 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ROYAL NORTHERN SINFONIA WITH JULIAN BLISS (CLARINET) Featuring Dinis Sousa (conductor). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Mozart and Beethoven, Wed 21 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR & BEETHOVEN PART 2 Featuring Maria Dueñas (violin) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Elgar's Enigma Variations, Thurs 22 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CENTRE STAGE: ELGAR PIANO QUINTET Featuring Chris Yates (viola), Kate Setterfield (cello) and Robert Markham (piano), Fri 23 Feb, CBO Centre, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Featuring Hope Pugh (alto) and David Hardie (accompanist). Programme includes Britten's A Charm of Lullabies, and works by Howells, Purcell, Quilter and Vaughan Williams, Fri 23 Feb, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Sterling Elliot (cello) and Joseph Havlat (piano). Programme includes works by Debussy, Ravel, D'Indy, Poulenc and Boulanger, Fri 23 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

GOULD PIANO TRIO Featuring Lucy Gould (violin), Richard Lester (cello) and Benjamin Frith (piano). Programme includes works by Haydn, Marschner and Smetana, Fri 23 Feb, Routh Hall, Bromsgrove School

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Zlatomir Fung (cello) and Shiyeon Sung (conductor). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Haydn and Dvořák, Fri 23 Feb, Butterworth Hall, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CROSSCURRENTS: HER ENSEMBLE Concert comprising works by female composers - including two world premieres from Sasha Scott and Joanna Borrett, Sat 24 Feb, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

FAMILY CONCERT: THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO THE ORCHESTRA Presented by Catherine Arlidge MBE. Featuring the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra & Bertie Baigent (conductor). Programme includes

works by Britten, John Williams, Dukas, Brahms and more... Sun 25 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ECHO RISING STARS: AXELLE FANYO Featuring Axelle Fanyo (soprano) and Kunal Lahiry (piano). Programme includes works by Weill, Schoenberg, Sofia Avramidou, Gershwin and more... Sun 25 Feb, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

JOHN KEARNS Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CELYA AB Wed 21 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TIM KEY Wed 21 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

UNDER THE RAINBOW COMEDY Wed 21 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, RACHEL FAIRBURN & IAN COPPINGER Thurs 22 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DOM JOLY Thurs 22 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

DANIEL SLOSS Fri 23 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall



AARON SIMMONDS Fri 23 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CONNOR BURNS Fri 23 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



PHIL ELLIS, MARLON DAVIS, RACHEL FAIRBURN & IAN COPPINGER Fri 23 - Sat 24 Feb, The Glee Club, B'ham

ROSS NOBLE Sat 24 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO, AARON WOOD, NJAMBI MCGRATH & JON PEARSON Sat 24 Feb, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

VIGGO VENN Sat 24 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

CHLOE PETTS Sat 24 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

GUZ KHAN Sat 24 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

STEWART LEE Sat 24 - Sun 25 Feb,

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT Sun 25 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHLOE PETTS Sun 25 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROSIE JONES Sun 25 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham



Theatre

OH WHAT A LOVELY WAR Joan Littlewood's epic musical offers an amusing yet heart-breaking snapshot of the life lived by those caught in the crossfire of conflict, Mon 19 - Wed 21 Feb, Lichfield Garrick



JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR A reimagined production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic rock musical, Mon 19 - Sat 24 Feb, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

2:22 A GHOST STORY Award-winning supernatural thriller starring Jay McGuinness (The Wanted), Fiona Wade (Emmerdale & Silent Witness), George Rainsford (Call The Midwife & Casualty) and Vera Chok (Hollyoaks & Cobra), Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

LES MISÉRABLES SCHOOL EDITION Amateur version presented by Sutton Coldfield Musical Youth Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME The Lichfield Players present an amateur version of Oscar Wilde's comedy thriller, Tues 20 - Sat 24 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

VAMPIRE'S ROCK: GHOST TRAIN Steve Steinman's classic rock spectacle combining comedy, horror and rock anthems, Wed 21 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BEN AND IMO New play exploring the working relationship of two of the 20th-century's greatest musical minds: Benjamin Britten & Imogen Holst, Wed 21 Feb - Sat 6 April, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN THE MUSICAL Timeless story of love, courage and redemption, based on the award-winning 1980s movie of the same name, Fri 23 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, The Alexandra, Birmingham

EDUCATING RITA Amateur version of Willy Russell's modern classic, Sat 24 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Dance

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY Birmingham Royal Ballet present Sir Peter Wright's production of the much-loved fairytale, with Tchaikovsky's magical score played live by the Royal Ballet Sinfonia, Wed 21 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO KALEB Join the celebrity farmer as he presents his views on everything from farm animals to Jeremy Clarkson, Mon 19 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE GREATEST STAR - BARBRA STREISAND TRIBUTE SHOW Kearra Bethany (ITV's Starstruck) takes audiences on a musical journey through the back catalogue of one of the world's best-known artists, Thurs 22 Feb, Crescent Theatre, B'ham

RAVE ON Nostalgic journey through music's most revolutionary decades, Thurs 22 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

FASCINATING AIDA - THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY SHOW Join Britain's 'raciest and sassiest' musical cabaret trio for an evening of 'much-loved favourites and wickedly hilarious new songs', Thurs 22 - Fri 23 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



RIA JONES & CERI DUPREE: MISS-LEADING LADIES Celebration of some of the greatest grand dames of stage and screen, Sun 25 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

REVEREND RICHARD COLES: BORDERLINE NATIONAL TRINKET Intimate evening in which the former vicar, pop star and Strictly contestant lifts the lid on a life truly and truthfully lived, Sun 25 Feb, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham



Birmingham Royal Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty* - Birmingham Hippodrome

Talks & Spoken Word

VERVE POETRY FESTIVAL 2024 Featuring performance poetry, workshops, collaborative work and open-mic poetry, Wed 21 - Sun 25 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

Events

THE PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2024 Telford International Centre's first World Snooker Tour tournament for 14 years, Mon 19 - Sun 25 Feb, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

AN EVENING WITH JIMMY WHITE AND JOHN VIRGO Jimmy and John play a few frames and chat about their illustrious careers, Wed 21 Feb, Stourbridge Town Hall

VICTORIAN PRINTERS EXPERIENCE DAY Learn the art of printmaking and discover the intricacies of a traditional letterpress as you design and typeset your very own poster in the historic setting of John Edmund's Print Shop, Wed 21 - Thurs 22 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

VICTORIAN BLACKSMITH EXPERIENCE DAY Under the watchful eye of an expert, learn the fundamentals of the blacksmith's craft, including how to prepare and light a coke-fired forge, Fri 23 Feb, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

RACE RETRO Event bringing together motorsport enthusiasts of all kinds, Fri 23 - Sun 25 Feb, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

DOZE UNDER DIPPY Stay overnight in the museum, snoozing under the feet of a 26-foot Diplodocus! Sat 24 Feb, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

PINK FLOYD'S THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON A new, full-dome experience featuring 10 tracks from The Dark Side Of The Moon set to stunning 360° visuals, Sat 24 Feb, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

SATURDAY CLUBS - LET'S ANIMATE Workshop with professional animator Gemma, who will create a stop-motion animated short film with an automotive theme, Sat 24 Feb, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

SUNS & MOONS - FANTASTIC JOURNEYS FAMILY DAY Immersive music and colour experience, Sat 24 Feb, The New Art Gallery, Walsall

LAMBING WEEKENDS Meet new-born lambs and expectant mums, Sat 24 - Sun 25 Feb, Forge Mill Farm, West Bromwich

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 25 Feb, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

4X4 EXPO The biggest indoor 4x4 show in the UK, Sun 25 Feb, Staffordshire County Showground

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Alison Goldfrapp - O2 Academy, Birmingham

Gigs

WALDO'S GIFT Tues 27 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ALISON GOLDFRAPP Tues 27 Feb, O2 Academy

SEIZURE + TYRANNUS + MORBID ATROCITY + HOLLOW RITUAL Tues 27 Feb, Subside Bar

PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY BANGERS LIVE! Tues 27 Feb, Symphony Hall

NIAL HANAN Tues 27 Feb, Resorts World Arena

CRAIG FINN + SCOTT LAVENE Tues 27 Feb, The Rainbow, Digbeth

RENEE RAPP + SEKOU + TOWA BIRD Wed 28 Feb, O2 Academy

HAZJAK + DOMINIQUE Wed 28 Feb, Red Lion Folk Club

WARD THOMAS + KEZIA GILL Wed 28 Feb, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton



SETH LAKEMAN Wed 28 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

JAMES MADDOCK Wed 28 Feb, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

BEANS ON TOAST Thurs 29 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DEL CAMINO Thurs 29 Feb, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE SILHOUETTES + SURGE + ROOTED Thurs 29 Feb, Subside Bar, Birmingham

CHURCHFITTERS Thurs 29 Feb, Bromsgrove Folk Club

TAYLORMANIA - TAYLOR SWIFT ERAS TRIBUTE Thurs 29 Feb, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall



Seth Lakeman - Birmingham Town Hall

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT

Programme includes works by JS Bach, F Danksagmüller, R Vaughan Williams, Patterson, D Wirén and CM Widor, Mon 26 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

SAKARI CONDUCTS SIBELIUS & STRAUSS

Featuring Sakari Oramo (conductor), Anu Komi (soprano) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Sibelius, Strauss and Merikanto, Wed 28 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO BENEVOLENT FUND CONCERT

Featuring Sakari Oramo (conductor), Daishin Kashimoto (violin) and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Programme includes works by Elgar, Mozart and Sibelius, Thurs 29 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

MIZ CRACKER Mon 26 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

FRANKIE BOYLE Tues 27 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, KATE BARRON & PAUL MCCAFFREY Thurs 29 Feb, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TED ILYAS, LIAM FARRELLY, JULIAN DEANE & FREDDIE QUINN Thurs 29 Feb, Hockley Social Club, B'ham

ANDY PARSONS Thurs 29 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

CATHERINE BOHART Thurs 29 Feb, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SARAH MILLICAN Thurs 29 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

PROTEST New play by Hannah Lavery exploring what it takes to make a difference, the power of friendship, and the importance of believing in your own voice, Mon 26 - Wed 28 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BLACK IS THE COLOR OF MY VOICE

Apphia Campbell's acclaimed play, inspired by the life of Nina Simone, follows a successful singer and civil rights activist as she seeks redemption after the untimely death of her father, Tues 27 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, The Rep, Birmingham

SIX THE MUSICAL Smash-hit musical in which the six wives of Henry VIII take to the stage to tell their stories by fusing historical heartbreak and 21st-century girl power, Tues 27 Feb

- Sun 3 Mar, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE BAR BY THE EDGE OF TIME Frozen Light present a multi-sensory spectacular for audiences with profound and multiple learning disabilities, Thurs 29 Feb - Fri 1 Mar, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

THE WIZARD OF OZ SOSage Factory present an amateur version of L Frank Baum's classic tale, Thurs 29 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Artrix, Bromsgrove

CINDERELLA RBC's Vocal & Operatic Studies Department present Massenet's Cendrillon, based on the story of Cinderella, Thurs 29 Feb - Sat 2 Mar, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

FARM BOY A Lichfield Garrick production of Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel to War Horse, Thurs 29 Feb - Sun 10 Mar, Lichfield Garrick

Kids Theatre

STARCHITECTS Dance, circus and visual projections combine in Motionhouse's magical family adventure for younger audiences and their grown-ups, Wed 28 Feb, Walsall Arena

Dance

JAMES WILTON DANCE: THE FOUR SEASONS A visual feast blending capoeira, acrobatics, martial arts and classical dance, set to Max Richter's recomposed version of Vivaldi's seminal work, Tues 27 Feb, Lichfield Garrick

ONE/BIRD Amina Khayyam's solo performance tells contemporary stories of migrants tarnished by media and politicians, spreading fear for those risking their lives to make a better future, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 Feb, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

PROFESSOR ALICE ROBERTS: CRYPT Alice Roberts presents the final instalment of her acclaimed trilogy which delves into life, death and disease in the Middle Ages and beyond, Mon 26 Feb, Birmingham Town Hall

JIMMY CRICKET'S BIG SHOW!

Featuring Andy Eastwood (host), virtuoso musician Gordon Cree, mezzo soprano Cheryl Forbes and Barbra Streisand tribute Kearra Bethany, Thurs 29 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Enter now at whatsonlive.co.uk to be in with a chance of bagging one of these fabulous prizes!



Win! A family ticket to Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Situated in Millennium Point, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum has four floors to explore with more than 200 hands-on displays, historical collections and natural science specimens to enjoy. The popular visitor attraction is offering a family ticket to one lucky What's On reader - date to be arranged.

Competition closes Friday 8 March



Win! Four tickets to see Madagascar The Musical

Join in the fun as Alex, Marty and friends escape from their home in New York's Central Park Zoo and embark on a journey to the madcap world of King Julien's Madagascar.

We have a family ticket (four people) to give away for the Thursday 14 March performance at The Alexandra, Birmingham.

Competition closes Monday 4 March



Win! A pair of tickets to see The RSC's A Midsummer Night's Dream

Ghosts actor Matthew Baynton is currently starring as Bottom in the RSC's latest production of A Midsummer Night's Dream (showing at the Stratford venue until 30 March).

We have two tickets to give away for the Saturday 2 March performance.

Competition closes Friday 23 February



Win! Two tickets to see And Then There Were None

Holby City's Bob Barrett and Joseph Beattie (Silent Witness) star in Lucy Bailey's staging of Agatha Christie's gripping thriller which comes to Birmingham next month.

We have two tickets to give away for the show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham on Tuesday 5 March.

Competition closes Friday 23 February

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:
whatsonlive.co.uk



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