

Shropshire

ISSUE 448 MAY 2024

What's On

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70
AGATHA CHRISTIE'S
The Mousetrap

70TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR

theatresevern SHREWSBURY

3 – 8 June 2024
theatresevern.co.uk

inside:

A STORMING SHOW

Yann Martel's *Life Of Pi* sails into Theatre Severn



LOOPFEST IS BACK!

Nubiyaw Twist join the party at Shrewsbury Castle



FILM FAVOURITES

Six Chick Flicks on tour
Feature inside...



PRESENTS

A night of stunning classical music and favourites inspired by

Classic Hall of Fame



Presented by: **Aled Jones**

Joined by Classical Brit Nominee Soprano **Carly Paoli** & Tenor **Gareth Dafydd Morris**

Conductor: **Anthony Brown**

Photo: Danny Kaan

Dates & Venues:

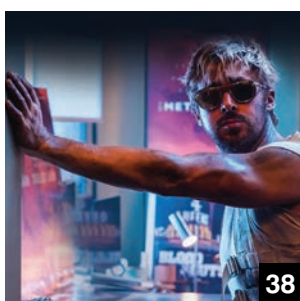
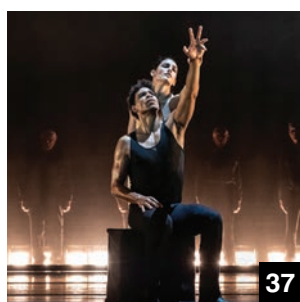
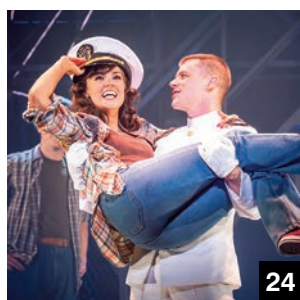
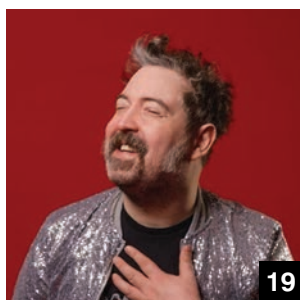
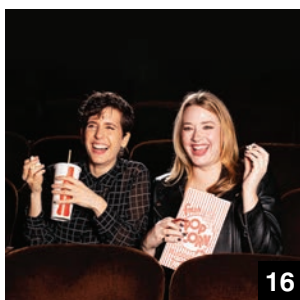
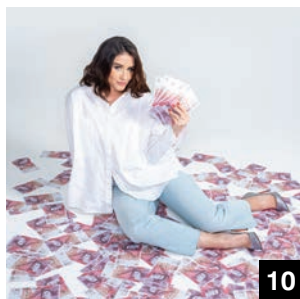
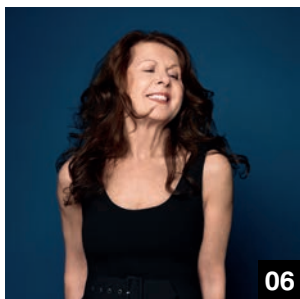
17 May - Bournemouth Pavilion
25 May - Birmingham Symphony Hall
26 May - Basingstoke Anvil
29 May - Cheltenham Centaur
30 May - Bath Forum

Tickets:



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What's On

MEDIA GROUP

Jessica Clixby jessica@whatsonlive.co.uk Subscriptions: subscriptions@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281714
Contributors: Graham Bostock, Diane Parkes, Patsy Moss, Steve Adams, Sue Hull, Reggie White, Sue Jones, Liz Day, Carol Lovatt

Publisher and CEO: **Martin Monahan** Accounts Administrator: **Julia Perry** julia@21stcd.com 01743 281717

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Chicago back on tour

Hit musical Chicago is to visit three Midlands venues as part of a new UK & Ireland tour. The much-loved show will stop off at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent in the autumn (Monday 25 - Saturday 30 November) before returning to the region in 2025, first at Birmingham's The Alexandra (Monday 14 - Saturday 19 April) and then at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton (Monday 23 - Saturday 28 June)... To find out more and book tickets, visit chicagothemusical.com

Trentham unveils plans to celebrate anniversary

Trentham Estate has unveiled a series of ambitious garden development plans. The plans form part of a programme of events and activities organised to mark the 20th anniversary of the gardens' re-opening. The popular visitor attraction's Gardens Revisited Project will focus on the Italian Garden and rose border developments with a three-year phased programme.



James Martin to cook up a treat in the Midlands

Celebrity chef James Martin will bring his all-new live tour to Birmingham's Symphony Hall next spring (Saturday 1 March). Commenting on the news, James said: "Be prepared for a laugh-out-loud, high-energy night out filled with tantalising flavours that will leave your tastebuds craving!" Tickets for the show are available by visiting ticketmaster.co.uk



Lymelight Festival returns to Newcastle-under-Lyme

Newcastle-under-Lyme's live local-music event, Lymelight Festival, returns this month. Taking place over the Bank Holiday weekend of Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 May, the festival will see more than 40 up-and-coming local artists performing across three outdoor stages in the town centre. For further details, visit the website: lymelightfestival.co.uk

Adam Garcia to star in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

Everybody's favourite flying car is stopping off in The Potteries this autumn.

A new production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang will land at the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent as part of a UK tour.

The show stars Masked Dancer finalist Adam Garcia as Caractacus Potts and Emmerdale actor Liam Fox as Grandpa Potts. To find out more about the production, which runs at the Regent from Tuesday 22 to Sunday 27 October, visit atgtickets.com/stoke



Unveiling stained glass artistry at Wightwick

An exhibition exploring the world of stained-glass artistry is currently on show at Wightwick Manor & Gardens in Wolverhampton.

Taking the title Out Of Darkness Cometh Light - and featuring never-before-seen designs from some of the Pre-Raphaelite greats - the display is available to view at the venue until Christmas Eve.

Covent Garden On Tour visits Wolverhampton

An escapologist, a stilt walker, a hula-hoop artist and a juggler are just some of the roaming street performers who will be dropping into Wolverhampton city centre as part of a brand-new, free-to-attend street-theatre festival this month.

The family-friendly Covent Garden On Tour event will take place along the city's Victoria Street and Bell Square on Saturday 18 May between 11am and 4pm.



An evening of classical favourites with Aled

Aled Jones (pictured) returns to Birmingham late this month (Symphony Hall, Saturday 25 May) to present a concert of classical favourites and cinema scores performed by 'the majestically large' Fulltone Orchestra. Led by Anthony Brown, the orchestra will perform alongside Classical Brit Awards nominee Carly Paoli and Welsh National Opera's Gareth Dafydd Morris. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk



Sir Ian at the Alex

A new play adapted from Shakespeare's Henry IV Parts I & II - and starring Sir Ian McKellen - is coming to the Midlands.

Stopping off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in the summer (Wednesday 10 - Saturday 13 July), Player Kings will see Sir Ian taking on the role of Sir John Falstaff.

For further information and to book tickets, visit the website atgtickets.com



Paul Smith joins festival line-up

Paul Smith has completed the bill for this year's Shrewsbury International Comedy Festival Gala show.

Paul joins previously announced Josh Pugh, Jack Gleadow, Janine Harouni, Scott Bennett and Thanyia Moore in a mouthwatering line-up of quality comics. Showing at the town's Theatre Severn on Sunday 14 July, the gala will round off four days of comedy gigs taking place at venues around Shrewsbury... To find out more, visit the website: theatresevern.co.uk



War Horse to return to the region's theatres next spring

The National Theatre's smash-hit production of War Horse is returning to the region next year. The critically acclaimed show, based on Michael Morpurgo's celebrated novel, will visit the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 4

to Saturday 8 March, and the Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, the following week (Tuesday 11 - Saturday 22 March). To find out more and book tickets, visit the theatres' websites.

Local football clubs in fundraising call to fans

Local football clubs West Bromwich Albion, Aston Villa and Birmingham City are encouraging fans to fundraise for their respective community foundations by tackling the Great Birmingham Run 10k or half marathon on Sunday 5 May.

To find out more about the running route and the charities, and to sign up, visit the website at greatrun.org



Johannes pulls on his Kinky Boots!

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe will star as Lola when a new touring production of hit musical Kinky Boots visits Birmingham Hippodrome next year. The show stops off at the venue from Tuesday 15 to Saturday 19 April. For further information about the production and to purchase tickets, visit the website: birminghamhippodrome.com

Matt Cardle to star in UK tour of hit show & Juliet

Former X Factor winner Matt Cardle will star as William Shakespeare when hit stage show & Juliet visits the Midlands in the autumn.



Created by the Emmy-winning writer from Schitt's Creek, David West Read, the jukebox musical flips the script on the greatest love story ever told and asks: what would happen next if Juliet didn't end it all over Romeo?

& Juliet shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 7 to Saturday 12 October. It then returns to the region next year, running at Birmingham Hippodrome from Monday 21 April to Saturday 3 May and at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 12 to Saturday 17 May.

Shrewsbury Food Festival named best in the region

Shrewsbury Food Festival has been named the Tourism Event/Festival of the Year at the West Midlands Tourism Awards 2024. The hugely popular show - this year returning to the town's Quarry Park on Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 June - features locally produced food & drink, performances by a line-up of local bands, and a selection of free activities for children to enjoy. Further information about the event is available at shrewsburyfoodfestival.co.uk

Programme announced for Lichfield Festival

The Lichfield Festival will this year take place from Thursday 4 to Sunday 14 July. Headline performers at the 2024 event include Mercury Music Prize nominee Seth Lakeman (pictured), swashbuckling sea-shanty singers The Longest Johns and Baroque violinist Rachel Podger. To check out the full festival programme and book tickets, visit lichfieldfestival.org



Elkie added to the line-up at Shrewsbury Folk Festival

One of the UK's most successful female rock, blues & jazz singers will take to the stage at this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival. Elkie Brooks - whose record, Pearls, became the most successful-ever chart album by a British female artist when it was released in 1981 - will headline the final day of the four-

day festival (Monday 26 August). Gangstagrass, Peatbog Faeries and The Celtic Social Club are among numerous other acts recently announced for the 2024 edition of the show. To check out the complete line-up and book tickets, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

It's Beautiful at Theatre Severn

Shrewsbury Musical Theatre Company is mounting a production of Beautiful - The Carole King Musical at the town's Theatre Severn next month. The show runs at the venue from Thursday 13 to Saturday 15 June.

Jarrold Dickenson brings his Big Talk to the Shire

Texas-born singer & guitarist Jarrold Dickenson returns to Shropshire next month to perform a gig in support of his third critically acclaimed studio album, Big Talk. Jarrold visits Shrewsbury's Morris Hall on Sunday 16 June. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit liveinthehouse.com

Something for all at the Stafford County Show

The Staffordshire County Show makes a highly anticipated return late this month (Wednesday 29 & Thursday 30 May). Highlights at this year's event include JCB Dancing Diggers, livestock competitions, birds-of-prey presentations, a country pursuits arena, rural crafts demonstrations,

displays of vintage cars and agricultural machinery, Punch & Judy shows and the chance to take a ride on a narrow-gauge steam railway. For further information and to book tickets, visit staffscountyshowground.co.uk



Three-day fashion event heading for the NEC

Tickets are now on sale for The Good Clothes Show - a first-of-its-kind three-day shopping event taking place at Birmingham's NEC in the autumn. Featuring sustainable boutiques, brands, artisan makers, vintage treasures, celebrity contributors and industry heavyweights, the show runs from Friday 20 to Sunday 22 September. Further information and tickets are available from thegoodclothesshow.com

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Kelly Jones

04 & 05 May | Town Hall



An Audience with Aggers & Tuffers

06 May | Town Hall



Dionne Warwick: Don't Make Me Over

11 May | Symphony Hall



London Symphonic Rock Orchestra

13 May | Symphony Hall



Lee John of Imagination

15 May | Town Hall



Wild Isles Live

17 May | Town Hall



Richard Marx

19 May | Symphony Hall



The Fulltone Orchestra, Carly Paoli & Aled Jones

25 May | Symphony Hall



The Lion Inside

25 & 26 May | Town Hall



The Zombies

28 May | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for everyone this May!

Outdoor theatre returns to Tamworth Castle

Families can enjoy four outdoor theatre shows in Tamworth's picturesque Castle Grounds this summer. Featured in the line-up of entertainment is Oddssocks' irreverent take on Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, productions of The Railway Children and Jeeves And Wooster, and an inventive family show called The Wagon Of Dreams: The Dragon Wagon. For further information and to book tickets, visit tamworthartsandevents.co.uk

An over-18s rebrand for popular Telford attraction

Telford attraction Putt Putt Noodle has undergone a rebrand in order to tailor its entertainment offer to the over-18s market. The popular Telford Shopping Centre venue, which combines crazy golf with food & drink, is relaunching as Putt Putt Social. It will be increasing its range of cocktails and serving up a greater number of themed music nights and guest DJs. To find out more, visit puttputtsocial.co.uk/telford



Anne-Marie set to perform Midlands Forest Live gig

Superstar singer Anne-Marie will perform in Staffordshire's Cannock Chase Forest on Thursday 27 June as part of the annual Forest Live festival. Forestry England uses the money Forest Live raises to run important conservation projects

and keep growing trees. More than two million people have enjoyed the Forest Live gigs since they started 23 years ago... To find out more and check ticket availability for Anne-Marie's gig, visit the website at forestlive.com



Flower Show welcomes competition entries

Local schools, nurseries, care homes and community groups are being invited by Shrewsbury Flower Show organisers to enter the event's gardening competitions. Interested parties should check out the how-to-enter details featured in the 'be part of the show' section of the event's website: shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk The Flower Show makes a welcome return to Shrewsbury's Quarry Park on Friday 9 & Saturday 10 August.



Weston Park Air Show back this summer

Weston Park Air Show International will return for its 27th year next month (Friday 14 - Sunday 16 June). Now firmly established as one of the foremost model air shows in the country, the event will this year see the Aerosparx display team and GliderFX display team in action as the Aerial Pyro Spectacular lights up the night sky. The finale will feature a spectacular display set to music by the Fire Monkey Pyro Fireworks Team. For further information and to book tickets, visit weston-park.com

Red Arrows set to thrill at RAF Cosford Air Show

The Red Arrows - the Royal Air Force's legendary aerobatic team - will be flying high in the Shropshire skies at next month's RAF Cosford Air Show. The talented team are celebrating their 60th anniversary this year and will be performing a brand-new display at the ever-popular event, which takes place on Sunday 9 June. Tickets for the show are now on sale at CosfordAirShow.co.uk



Shalamar return to Stoke - after 42 long years!

Iconic R&B group Shalamar will this month perform in Stoke-on-Trent for the first time in 42 years. Commenting on the long-overdue return - which will see the band bring their Greatest Hits tour to the Victoria Hall on Friday 31 May - lead singer Howard Hewett said: "We've seen the signs for Stoke many, many times over the years as we travelled up and down the M6 to other cities, but for whatever reason we seemed to miss out on Stoke itself, so it's great to be coming back. I can't promise I can move as quickly as I did back in 1982, but Jeffrey Daniels can still do The Moonwalk!" For further information and to book tickets, visit atgtickets.com/stoke

Opera company bring double bill to the region

Welsh National Opera return to Birmingham Hippodrome this month with a mouthwatering double bill. Taking up residence at the Hurst Street venue mid-month, the Cardiff-based company will present Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (pictured) on Friday 10 May and Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* on Saturday the 11th... To find out more and book tickets, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

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The Elvis Tribute Artist World Tour

Sat 4 May



An evening of music and 'Craic'

Seven Drunken Nights – The Story of the Dubliners

Sun 5 May



Based on the HIT 80s movie

An Officer and a Gentleman The Musical

Mon 6 – Sat 11 May



In Celebration of the 'Velvet Voice'

Luther Live

Sun 12 May



Join all of your favourite crack-a-lackin' friends

Madagascar The Musical

Thu 16 – Sun 19 May



TV's Dance Sensation

Johannes Radebe: House of JoJo

Sun 26 May

Victoria Hall



Celebrate the musical legacy of The Big O!

Barry Steele & Friends – The Roy Orbison Story

Fri 10 May



The legend, icon and immortal

John Lydon – I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right

Sat 11 May



An innovative twist on classic sounds

Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox

Sun 12 May



The Greatest Hits Tour

Shalamar

Fri 31 May



MONEY TALKS

Gaynor Faye, Brooke Vincent, Samantha Giles and Oliver Anthony chat about starring in Kay Mellor's *The Syndicate*, which comes to the Midlands in June...

The *Syndicate* was a family affair long before it arrived on television in 2012, complete with a cast of famous faces.

Written and produced by 'titan of TV' Kay Mellor, her daughter, actress Gaynor Faye, was the series' script editor.

"I just knew that it was going to be a hit," Gaynor recalls. "She captured the brothers, the family, the whole arena of what winning the lottery and such a substantial amount of money brings people - both the good and the not so good!"

The first series was adapted for the stage by Kay in what proved to be her final venture into theatre before her death in 2022. She had already asked Gaynor to co-direct the project with her, and now the actress is 'going it alone' in a move that she confesses has been rather daunting.

"Mum's shoes are big ones to fill, but I understand what her vision was for this production because I had been by her side from the very beginning. I'm excited for everyone to see it."

The play tells the story of five supermarket workers whose lottery syndicate numbers come in just as their jobs and livelihoods are under threat.

Will a share of the jackpot make their dreams come true or their nightmares a reality? One thing is for certain: the win of a lifetime will change their lives, loves and relationships forever...

Adding to the family feel of *The Syndicate* is Gaynor's son, Oliver Anthony, who will play the part of Jamie.

Oliver believes that having three generations of one family involved in the production brings a unique experience to audiences:

"There's real heart to this show and a lot of love for it; it just feels special. Kay had been mentoring me for the last four years. She knew how hard the industry can be and said she saw potential in me. She took me under her wing and really helped me learn the business, both in front of the camera and behind.

"To now be involved with the stage show, and Gaynor, my mum, directing it too, it just feels special. I have so many wonderful memories of my grandmother - every day beside her was a dream."

While he's no stranger to the *Syndicate* story - having starred in series four of the BBC drama - Oliver is making his theatre debut as Jamie.

"I've been a part of this story since Kay

adapted it into a theatre script. I played the role of Jamie in the development workshops of the play and actually read the part in the auditions for many of these other amazing actors. So to then be on the other side of the auditioning process as an actor, and get the part, is incredible. Now I really want to prove I deserve my place in the show and give it my best shot. I'm grabbing this opportunity with both hands."

After so much time playing Jamie during casting, what is it about the character that appeals to Oliver so much?

"He's so electric and brings this energy to the stage that I just absolutely love. He's very three dimensional - he's got a switch in him which can make him villainous - and that's always amazing to play as an actor - but then he's also got this real sense of love and connection with his brother, which I totally understand."

For actresses Brooke Vincent and Samantha Giles, the chance to work on a Kay Mellor production was too good an opportunity to miss.

Brooke, who became a household name playing Sophie Webster in ITV soap *Coronation Street* from 2004 to 2019, says landing the role of Amy was a real thrill: "I've kind of taken a step back to have my two boys, so this is my return to acting and I'm so excited. I love Kay's work; it's so real and there's such a sense of warm northern humour that I just adore."

Samantha, meanwhile, was looking for a new challenge after recently leaving the role of *Emmerdale*'s Bernice Blackstock, a part she'd played on and off for 26 years.

"A lot of people are only used to seeing me as Bernice, who is this glamorous person. My *Syndicate* character of Denise is the polar opposite!

"She's a bit on the frumpy side and life hasn't been so good to her. She's just totally different to Bernice, which is so lovely to play. I think Kay's writing is so good. She's able to create real stories and wonderful characters that people can relate to and who reflect how ordinary people live."

As veterans of TV drama, having navigated the fast pace of Soapland for so many years, Samantha and Brooke will surely find taking to the stage in front of a live audience a walk in the park... won't they?

Brooke laughs: "No, of course I'll be nervous! But the way I deal with it is just to think there's no point worrying now - I need to just wait until I'm on stage and then be nervous

and face the fear!

"It's that sense that you're in a team - you all have a part to play to bring the show to life, and you just need to feed off that."

Samantha agrees: "It's been 14 years since I've done a play, so I *am* feeling nervous, but I think if you weren't nervous you might not care. Nerves are good, and I think the more we do it, the more confident we get. I just think you can't beat live theatre. Just to hear the reaction from the audience and have that shared experience - there's nothing like it."

For Brooke, taking on the role of Amy has been a delight: "She's more Rosie Webster than Sophie Webster! I've never played a dolly bird before. She even comes out with hair extensions!

"I'm such a tomboy in real life, so the part has been great to take on, because usually when you read a role you can see yourself in the character. I love that Amy is so different to me."

Samantha is just as enthusiastic about the character *she* plays: "Denise is quite mumsy at the start, always putting everybody else before herself, and it's interesting to see the change that happens during the course of the play - especially when she gets her hands on the money!"

Part of the appeal of *The Syndicate* is that there won't be a theatregoer anywhere in the UK who hasn't dreamt of winning the lottery. So how would Brooke and Samantha react if their numbers came up?

Brooke dreams of "buying a giant house with my girlfriends and moving everyone in. But now, with all the kids, I'm not sure that would be a great idea!"

Samantha is more philosophical: "I know this might sound really glib, but I have everything I need. I've got a roof over my head, food on the table, and everyone is healthy. I'm not into designer clothes and things like that. But I suppose if I won the lottery I'd buy a place abroad.

"But this play is a reminder to be careful what you wish for. With money comes greed, and then a sense of desperation about what you're willing to do to keep it."

.....

The *Syndicate* shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 June, and then at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 25 to Saturday 29 June



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25 May, 7.30pm
The Bootiful South
Tickets: £15



10 May, 7.30pm
The Guitar Experience
Tickets: £18.50



27 May, 2pm
Lyngo Theatre Company: The Little Prince
Tickets: £8.50, Group of 4 £30



13 - 18 May, 7.30pm & 2.30pm Sat matinee
The Mellow Dramatics: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat
Tickets: From £13



1 June, 2pm
Comedy Club 4 Kids
Tickets: £10, Group of 4 £36

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23-24-25-26 AUG 2024

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- Elkie Brooks
- Gangstagrass
- Mary Black
- Eric Bibb
- Ward Thomas
- Jacqui McShee's Pentangle
- Beth Nielsen Chapman
- Mànran
- Mary Gauthier
- The Longest Johns
- Peatbog Faeries
- El Pony Pisador
- Le Vent du Nord
- The Sentimentals & friends
- Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening
- The Wandering Hearts
- Dream in Colors
- The Celtic Social Club
- London Afrobeat Collective
- Bella Hardy
- The Pleasures
- HEISK
- Suntou Susso Band
- Ranagri
- The Hello Darlins
- The Magpies
- Joshua Burnell Band
- NATI
- The Hunch
- Sidiki Jobarteh Trio
- James Delarre & Saul Rose
- Rosie Hood Band
- Joli Blon
- Lady Nade
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Classical music from across the region...



BBC Philharmonic: From The New World

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 3 May

Residing at the Corporation's Manchester home of Media City in Salford Quays, the BBC Philharmonic is no stranger to Stoke-on-Trent, regularly presenting Victoria Hall concert-goers with works from its impressive repertoire. This latest visit to the Potteries sees conductor & soloist Julian Rachlin (pictured) leading the orchestra in a performance of Antonín Dvořák's From The

New World. The work debuted more than 130 years ago and has since established itself as one of the most popular symphonies ever written.

The concert programme also features two compositions by Mozart: his Violin Concerto No3 (here performed by Julian) and Symphony No36, which he wrote in just four days.

Old World Symphony with the CBSO & Oksana Lyniv

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 29 May

Ukrainian conductor Oksana Lyniv takes the helm for a concert which is promising 'dark passions from the soul of Eastern Europe'. Oksana's fellow Ukrainian, Bohdana Frolyak, is one of three composers whose music (her adagio) features on the programme. The other two are Tchaikovsky - his Violin Concerto is performed by Andrii Murza - and Antonín Dvořák, whose Seventh Symphony completes the two-hour concert.



The London Tango Quintet

Blackburn Theatre, Prestfelde School, Shrewsbury, Fri 24 May

"It's fantastic fun," says London Tango Quintet's director & violinist, David Juritz, in talking about his experience of playing with the ensemble. "It's even wild at times - but that's not to say it isn't challenging as well. To do it justice, you have to approach tango just as you would any other great music - with a sense of style and your total commitment, but also leaving enough freedom to experiment. "When it 'happens', you feel like you've been set free. It's just exhilarating!"

Martin James Bartlett Piano Recital

Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 9 May

Martin is here making his fifth appearance in the Piano Masters Series, a fact which speaks volumes not only for the sheer quality of his musicmaking but also the high regard in which he is held by Potteries-based classical music fans. Possessing a fearless technique - and playing with a maturity and elegance beyond his years - Martin will be performing a programme that includes works by, among other composers, Schumann, Debussy, Ravel and Gershwin.



Czech National Symphony Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Tues 21 May

Now in its 31st year, the Czech National Symphony Orchestra is one of Europe's top symphonic ensembles. With a repertoire that regularly encompasses both classical and contemporary, the orchestra this month visits the region to present a programme featuring works by Copland (Appalachian Spring), Beethoven (Piano Concerto No5 'Emperor') and Smetana (Vltava). The concert concludes with Dvořák's much-loved Symphony No8, a genial work packed with folk melodies and the sounds of the forest. The concert is conducted by Steven Mercurio (pictured).



ROTTEN TO THE CORE

John Lydon - aka the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten - is out on tour and heading for the Midlands...



John Lydon first took to the stage as Johnny Rotten, frontman of the Sex Pistols, almost 50 years ago - but his upcoming appearance at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is something a bit different. His UK touring show, I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right, offers an honest and uncensored glimpse into the life of a legend. Here, Lydon not only explains what the audience can expect from the evening but also talks about his loves and his losses - and last year's surprise Eurovision bid...

John Lydon is not a man who appreciates being censored. The legendary frontman and lyricist of the Sex Pistols and Public Image Ltd has caused his fair share of political earthquakes during a unique and extraordinary career.

The man they call Johnny Rotten has been dubbed many things. A revolutionary, an icon, a provocateur and an immortal, he became a poster boy for the cultural revolution which transformed music for good. And he's not finished yet. This year he's heading back out on the road for a fresh leg of his acclaimed spoken-word show, *I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right*.

Promising to 'tell it how it is' during the audience Q&A sessions, absolutely nothing will be off limits. This is John Lydon, live and untamed.

"This is a format which suits me down to the ground, to be honest," he says, "because if there's one thing you can guarantee, it's that I'm never gonna run out of words! I've basically spent my whole life being censored. So this is me; honest and unscripted. It's *my* thoughts, in *my* lingo, right or wrong, straight from the horse's mouth."

A lot of incredibly turbulent water has passed under the bridge since the last leg of Lydon's spoken-word tour.

He's lost two of the most important people in his life; his beloved wife of more than 40 years, Nora, and his long-time tour manager, Johnny 'Rambo' Stevens. He also had a crack at Eurovision.

"I just can't get over the loss of Nora; I don't think I ever will," says Lydon, who cared full-time for his wife in her later years as she battled Alzheimer's.

"It's hard at night, and I don't want to throw myself into creating more music right now which would just be a series of 'woe is me' misery songs. That's not the right thing to do."

The reason he threw his hat into the Eurovision ring last year, in a failed bid to represent Ireland, was entirely down to Nora.

The poignant and personal song, *Hawaii*, was inspired by one of the couple's favourite holidays and was, in his words, 'as close to accurately portraying the situation' as he could get.

"I'm very glad I was able to perform the song on Irish TV so I could show it to Nora before she died. It might not have been chosen, but it did put a big smile on her face, and she was very proud of me.

"But I'll never sing that song again, because

it's just too heartbreaking. I just can't go there; it was so deeply personal."

"And then I lost Rambo, my all-time best mate and manager. There never has been, and never will be, anyone remotely like him. He lived life to the full and enriched the lives of so many."

Life has thrown its fair share of curve balls in Lydon's direction over the years.

The son of working-class emigrants from Ireland and the eldest of four brothers, he grew up in the shadow of Arsenal FC's Highbury stadium, regularly having to care for his siblings due to his mother's ill health. At the age of seven, Lydon contracted spinal meningitis and spent a year in hospital. He suffered from hallucinations and severe memory loss that lasted several years. It was the first step towards the birth of Johnny Rotten.

He was kicked out of school at 15 for dying his hair green, and was soon on the London nightclub scene with the likes of Sid Vicious and Jah Wobble.

By 1975, he was hanging around SEX, the fetish clothing shop launched by Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood, meeting the people who would go on to form the Sex Pistols.

His scintillating vocal delivery and forthright lyrics - matched with the band's power and energy - soon saw the Pistols build up a word-of-mouth following.

Lydon looks back on those times with great fondness, but admits that the rift with his 'sneaky rat' former Pistols bandmates, which ended up in court in a bitter dispute over licensing of the back catalogue, can never be healed.

Relishing the opportunity to challenge and thrive, John Lydon remains a mischievous maverick who continues pushing back the boundaries.

"I make music because I love it. I've got an enormous record collection and every now and then recognise a gap in something I'd really like to hear - that will then be the seed for the next album I'll make.

"When I lose interest in music, I will stop. I don't force it. We're well known for taking long intervals between projects, but I think that benefits the work itself."

As a writer, Lydon has published two best-selling volumes of memoir: the excoriating *Rotten: No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs*, and the ridiculously entertaining and uncompromising *Anger Is An Energy: My Life*

Uncensored. But he credits his 2004 appearance on *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!* as the moment the majority of people got the chance to discover what he was really like. Which is why he's relishing the chance to get back on stage for a show he describes as 'unlike anything else I've done'.

"I like to think I've always been able to converse fluently in a down-to-earth way; not waxing lyrical with a load of toff talk. Once the ice is broken, it paves the way for a bloody good chat, and a good time to be had by all.

"The thing I love about this show is that I don't know exactly what I'm going to be doing from one venue to the next. I like that 'in at the deep end' approach; that's how to learn to swim. That's what the Sex Pistols was. There was no game plan, no greedy ambitions, which is why it was so excellent - ahead of its time, or maybe miles behind, depending on your point of view.

"This show's the same. I'll go on, on a wing and a prayer, and see what happens; do what feels right. And whatever questions I'm asked, I will give an honest answer.

"That's usually the recipe for a fantastic evening - it's like going into an atmospheric old pub for the first time and discovering that everyone in there is a mate."

So this show is all speech and no music, then?

"Well, not completely. I've been known to break out into a bit of karaoke on occasion and start an Abba singalong, and no two nights turn out the same way.

"This time I'm thinking I might go down the Alvin Stardust route - I think some of his classics need dusting off, don't you? Who doesn't love a bit of *My Coo-Ca-Choo?*"

He smiles. "This is what life should be, throwing point and purpose out the window and just enjoying it. Do what you feel.

"Everything is a gift. It's just that sometimes it can take time to find that out."

.....
John Lydon: I Could Be Wrong, I Could Be Right visits Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wednesday 8 May; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thursday 9 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Friday 10 May; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-trent, Saturday 11 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sunday 12 May & Walsall Arts Centre, Saturday 25 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sunday 9 June



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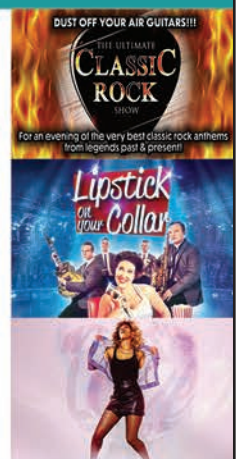
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Live music from across the region...

Lady Nade

St. Lawrence's Church, Biddulph, Wed 22 May

Folk, Americana, soul, jazz, blues and roots are combined to excellent effect in the music of Bristol-born Lady Nade - aka Nadine Gingell - who crowdfunded her first album and has since produced two further records. Boasting vocals that call to mind Nina Simone, she's stopping off at St Lawrence's to play her part in The Mystery Tour. The initiative sees her joining Daisy Chute 'to champion the essence of collaboration in music - paying homage to the strength and creativity of female artists in the industry'.

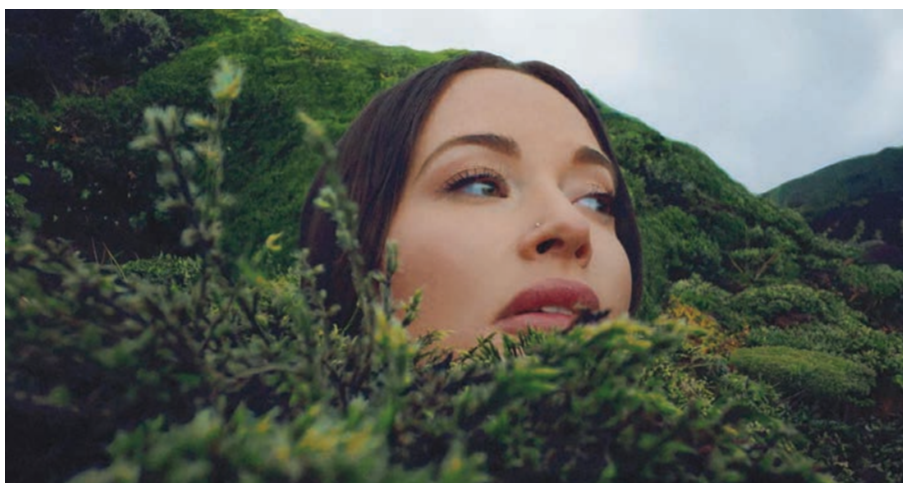


Emma Rawicz Quartet

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 31 May

Creating music that fuses multiple influences - from lilting Afro Cuban-inspired grooves to hard-hitting modern jazz & funk numbers - award-winning saxophonist & composer Emma Rawicz is a new star burning brightly in the musical firmament.

Voted best newcomer at the Parliamentary Jazz Awards in 2022, and a finalist in the BBC Young Jazz Musician competition that same year, she is joined for this Wolverhampton gig by Ivo Neame (piano), Freddie Jensen (bass) and Asaf Sirkis (drums).



Kacey Musgraves

The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton, Mon 13 May

Kacey Musgraves' fame and popularity was maybe built as much on her rebellion against the conventions of country music as it was on her talent - which, it has to be said, is considerable; an impressive seven Grammys bear solid testament to the Texas-born singer's musicmaking abilities.

Left-leaning politically - which is historically something of a rarity on the country scene - Kacey has been ploughing her energies into sixth studio album *Deeper Well*. A rootsy, folksy, contemplative, back-to-basics offering, it was released in March to favourable reviews.

Visiting Wolverhampton in support of the record, she is joined for the gig by special guest Madi Diaz.

These Wicked Rivers

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 18 May

"In a dark and cruel world," says These Wicked Rivers' lead guitarist, Arran Day, "we feel very honoured to provide an escape through music for our loyal followers." Soulful - indeed, bordering on spiritual - live performances of blues-infused modern rock have seen These Wicked Rivers develop a significant fanbase across the 10 years they've been performing.

Hailing from Derby and drawing inspiration from the likes of Black Stone Cherry and Rival Sons, the band play Stoke in support of new album *Force Of Nature*.



Blue Rose Code

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 17 May

Seamlessly blending folk, Americana, jazz, rock and pop, Blue Rose Code - led by Edinburgh-born singer Ross Wilson - visit Shrewsbury in support of brand-new offering *Bright Circumstance*. Coming nearly five years after the last studio album, the 10-track record is being marketed as 'a return of the Caledonian soul and roots mastery that has built them the kind of cult live following that most indie artists would kill for'.

Nubiyian Twist

Shrewsbury Castle, Sat 4 May

Visiting Shrewsbury this month as part of three-day music & arts event *Loopfest*, Nubiyian Twist have made a real name for themselves thanks to a genre-transcending style that draws on jazz, hip-hop, afrobeat, Latin, soul, reggae and dance music. Their appearance at the castle comes in support of fourth album *Find Your Flame*. "It's a snapshot of our collective influences and journeys throughout the time it was made," explains bandleader & producer Tom Excell, in talking about the record. "A catharsis for our struggles, yet a vessel for our joy... The collaborative process helped reignite a liberating fire of resistance in each of us."

ICONIC FILM MOMENTS

...but not as you know them!



A firm favourite at last year's Edinburgh Fringe, fast-paced stage show Six Chick Flicks features a selection of iconic film moments - although not as you'll remember them! What's On recently caught up with two of the production's creators - Kerry Ipema and KK Apple - to find out more...

You know that moment in the movie Titanic when Rose and Jack say goodbye in the freezing ocean?... Or remember that mega shopping trip that we'd all love to make in Pretty Woman?... Or how about the famous lift in Dirty Dancing?

These are all iconic moments in film history - and they're currently being parodied in a two-woman show that's coming to the Midlands this month.

Six Chick Flicks - alternatively known as A Legally Blonde Pretty Woman Dirty Danced On The Beaches While Writing A Notebook On The Titanic - takes Hollywood magic and turns it into a stage comedy.

Created by a trio of American actors and writers - Kerry Ipema, KK Apple and TJ Dawe - the show sees Kerry and KK taking on a host of roles from half a dozen carefully selected films and recreating them - with a twist or two!

Premiered in the United States in 2018, Six Chick Flicks was also a hit at last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, gaining both critical and audience acclaim. But when there are so many popular chick flicks, how did the team decide which to include?

"One of the criteria was we wanted movies that play constantly on TV," says Kerry, whose previous shows include One Woman Sex And The City. "So movies that would oftentimes play in the background, where you might not have to actively watch it to know exactly what's going on.

"So for example, Pretty Woman is one of the movies that we parody, and I don't think you need to have sat down and dug right into that movie and watched it a million times to know exactly what it's about. So it's movies that have reached the zeitgeist in a very obvious way.

"These movies span generations of chick-flick consumers. There are threads that connect them all, and I think one of those threads is truly our communal love for this genre of film."

In choosing which to parody, the team also asked the essential question, what is a chick flick?

KK says: "The 80s/90s/2000s definitely feels like the height of chick flicks as a Hollywood genre that was marketed to women. For some people, a chick flick is just any movie where the leads are women. For some people, it's movies that have pink and white DVD, or

rather VHS, covers. I think my condition is 'What is a movie that a straight man would be embarrassed to be caught watching?' Threads across the movies include friendship, love, loss - and a good dance sequence. Music, too - all of these movies have an iconic part of the soundtrack or songs inside of the movie. Sometimes music is the thing which unlocks your memory even more than the story. It's like, as soon as you hear My Heart Will Go On, you are in the movie theatre watching Rose and Jack fall in love.

"In the show, we like to reclaim that chick-flick identity and say there is something we all connected to, let's celebrate that. It's been fun to talk to audiences after the show because some people come in and they have seen every single movie millions of times and can quote them right along with us. There are some people who might have seen Titanic and none of the other ones. And then there are people who say they've never seen, for example, The Notebook, and now they want to go and see it."

Alongside parodying the films, Six Chick Flicks also celebrates friendship; that idea of going to a cinema together and having fun.

"So much of female friendship is about getting together and having a laugh," explains Kerry. "Whenever I'm having a bad day and I call a friend and we have a laugh, I feel better. And I think these chick flicks do that as well. If I'm having a bad day, I can still put on Dirty Dancing and feel warm and cosy from watching it.

"Our show celebrates a feeling of recognition, of being seen, and this community that we want to create every night. We want it to feel like you're with your schoolmates, your mum, your friends, whoever it is in your life, and you're watching these movies together and you're laughing at them together."

But the show also questions the roles women play in these films and how relevant they are to the lives women lead today.

"You're remembering that you watched them when you were eight years old," Kerry continues. "And now you're asking, what did this teach me or how did this condition me for the rest of my life, and can I call it into question?"

"There are big ideas in these films that are worth talking about, but also laughter opens you up and you can have these tough

conversations and feel heard. There's a nostalgia - that feeling of recognition and familiarity with these movies - that really makes people want to connect with them and consume them. We just hope that people come to our show to consume them in a comedic way."

Kerry and KK's roots are in improvisational comedy. They met at improv leading light the Upright Citizens Brigade Theatre in New York. Not surprisingly, therefore, while much of Six Chick Flicks is scripted, there are also opportunities for audiences to be involved.

"We don't call anyone up on stage or anything crazy," laughs KK. "But we do a whole improvised section where we incorporate maybe the audience's favourite chick flicks, and we use their stories as a way of bringing the audience together and connecting them to the chick flicks. The bones of that improv sensibility, of coming to the stage with a point of view and seeing what happens, is very much a part of the show; using that freedom to play with the audience and see how it shapes the show, because it's a little bit different every time."

When we speak, Kerry and KK have only been in the UK for three days and have just begun a tour lasting nearly three months. And they are hoping to indulge their love of films with a bit of sightseeing in between performances.

"We want to visit the cottage from The Holiday," Kerry reveals. "Notting Hill is also on our 'to do' list. My favourite is that we can visit 10 Downing Street as a famous Love Actually sight, not because of the prime minister.

"We love Bridget Jones's Diary, we love The Holiday, Love Actually. There are so many wonderful British chick flicks. So who knows... maybe if we get enough suggestions from people at our shows, we'll make a sequel."

.....

Six Chick Flicks shows at Tamworth Assembly Rooms on Wednesday 15 May; Worcester's Swan Theatre on Friday 17 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Saturday 25 May; Stourbridge Town Hall on Friday 31 May; and Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Friday 7 & Saturday 8 June

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Comedy previews from across the region...

Jessica Fostekew

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Thurs 16 May

"I exist in real life but am also a comedian, actor and writer," says Jessica Fostekew. "Since 2008 I've been throwing this job around like you would a walnut in a sock." Realising herself to be a feminist "the very first time somebody said: You're really funny for a woman", Jessica gets her comedy inspiration from her life, her family and, er, witchcraft - although reassuringly reveals that the latter source provides only around one per cent of her material.



Nick Helm

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 9 May;
Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 10 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sat
11 May

British Comedy Award winner Nick Helm once again hits the road with another audience-pleasing mash-up of gags, stories, poems and songs.

Nick's jokes include: "I needed a password eight characters long, so I picked Snow White And The Seven Dwarves."

The gag won the Edinburgh Fringe award for best joke way back in 2011 - since which time Nick has come up with numerous other crackers!



Tom Davis

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 11 May

"I've always thought of myself as an underdog," reveals Murder In Successville's Tom Davis to beyondthejoke.com, "though not necessarily in a negative way. I think that's what has made me. The bulk of my humour comes from constantly feeling like someone who's had a little bit of a kicking."

Having left school with no qualifications, Tom's road to comedy success proved to be a long and winding one: "I'd been working on building sites for 20-odd years. I just wanted to do something for myself. I tried stand-up, and straight away I just thought 'Wow! I feel like I'm actually quite good at something: making other people laugh.'"



Horatio Gould

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 24 May

Having enjoyed a sell-out success with his debut offering, *Sweet Prince*, at the Edinburgh Fringe, Horatio Gould is now taking the show to comedy venues across the country, including the Glee.

Running at a few minutes short of an hour, the set has been widely praised as a highly promising opening gambit from the 27-year-old comedian. Presenting himself as a beleaguered but defiant wannabe-alpha-but-sadly-beta male, Horatio has been described by UK comedy guide Chortle as 'basically a white Romesh Ranganathan'.

Rich Hall

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 22 May

With much of his comedy focusing on making fun of life across the pond in his homeland, Rich Hall is best known for his creation of Otis Lee Crenshaw, a bourbon-swilling redneck jailbird from Tennessee whose many wives have all been named Brenda.

Publicity for this latest touring show, *Shot From Cannons* - a combination of 'new rants, knife-edge observations and thrilling musical interludes' - advises that although you'll pay for the whole seat, you'll only need the edge of it.



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Ashley Blaker

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Thurs 16 May

Comedian and dad-of-six Ashley Blaker's touring show, *Normal Schmormal*, sees him focusing on a topic close to his heart.

The star of BBC Radio Four's hit comedy, *6.5 Children*, Ashley is presenting a show about the joys of being father to three youngsters with special needs.

"Between endless meetings, countless therapists, public humiliations, failed playdates, surreal monologues and occasional violence," says the show's publicity, "it's certainly not what anyone would call a 'normal' household - but would Ashley want it any other way?"



Lou Conran

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 11 May

"I trained at the Oxford School of Speech & Drama many years ago," reveals comedian Lou Conran, in providing readers with a flavour of who she is, "but I was told off for not taking acting too seriously; hence, me, now and this! I do TV warm-up, I do acting when I'm allowed, and I'm addicted to chillies, cheese and various other things beginning with the letter C.

"Oh, and I'm also one half of the award-nominated podcast *Spit Or Swallow*, which is flipping marvellous and you should listen to it immediately!"



Sukh Ojla

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Fri 3 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 18 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 19 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Sat 25 May; Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Thurs 6 June

With her life experiences including a teenage suicide attempt, a Spanish-retreat encounter with the psychoactive brew ayahuasca, and a train-station breakdown involving a cheese & onion pasty, Sukh Ojla has plenty of fantastic raw material around which to build a show.

She also has experience of being a thirtysomething living at home with her mom & dad, another situation that's provided her with plenty of comedy gold: "Living at home with my parents is essentially like living in the most passive-aggressive Air B&B of all time," she says, "except that you can't even leave them a bad review!"

Sukh visits the Midlands this month and next with *The Aunty Years*, a show in which she's set herself the challenge of 'figuring out middle age, pretending to be a grown-up and the joy of a Tupperware set'.



Ria Lina

The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire, Sat 4 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 29 May; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 30 May

The challenge of emerging from a global pandemic, the new normal, divorce, dating in a new digital world, motherhood, and what it really means to be a woman today are among the subjects that comedian and scientist Ria Lina puts under her microscope in debut touring show *Riawakening*.

Jokes include: "I wanted to do a show about feminism. But my husband wouldn't let me."

Jake Lambert

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 8 May; Glee Club, Birmingham, Wed 11 September

Hailed a 'joke machine' by one national newspaper, Jake Lambert is a relatively new kid on the comedy block who's made a big splash online (his videos have gained more than 150 million views).

Although visiting Shrewsbury and Birmingham as part of his first-ever national tour, the 33-year-old funnyman already has plenty of on-the-road experience under his

belt - he's previously been the support act for some of the UK's best-loved comedians, including Jack Dee, Alan Carr and Romesh Ranganathan...

Indeed, Jake is touring this debut show - titled *The Sunshine Kid* - while also fitting in arena dates supporting Michael McIntyre.

Ed Gamble

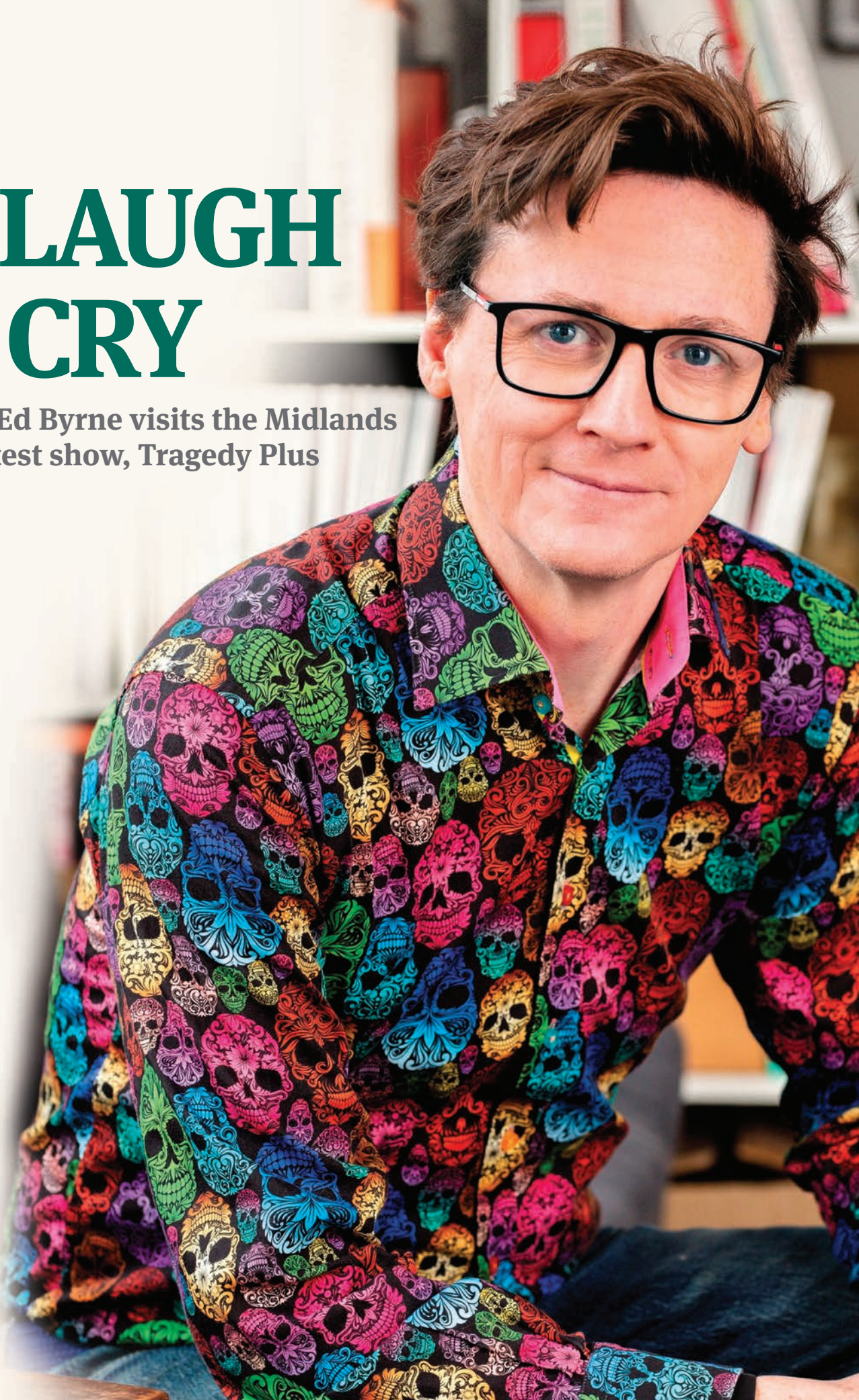
Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sat 1 June; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 6 June

"I'm essentially a great guy delivering humour through your classic microphone/speaker combo," says a tongue-in-cheek Ed Gamble in describing himself. "As well as being a stand-up comedian, I'm an actor and a writer - although, to be honest, I very rarely act, and 'writing' is a very lofty term for the absolute filth I've committed to paper in the past."

Co-host (with James Acaster) of award-winning podcast *Off Menu*, a judge on *Great British Menu*, *Taskmaster* champion and host of *Taskmaster The Podcast*, Ed stops off in the Midlands this month with his brand-new touring show, *Hot Diggity Dog*.

TO LAUGH OR CRY

Comedian Ed Byrne visits the Midlands
with his latest show, Tragedy Plus
Time...



With an impressive 30-plus years on the comedy circuit behind him, Ed Byrne is a familiar face in the world of stand-up. However, his latest touring show, Tragedy Plus Time, offers something a bit different from usual, exploring the sensitive subject of grief and loss. Here, the County Dublin-born comedian explains how he has combined sadness and laughter for the show and talks about what prompted him to bring the bittersweet topic to the stage...

Is there no end to the man's talents? A staple of revered panel show *Mock The Week*, Ed Byrne has also sledded down the side of a volcano for Dara and Ed's *Great Big Adventure*, upstaged Martin Sheen and Robert Downey Jr on *The Graham Norton Show*, and demonstrated his driving skills on *Top Gear* and *The World's Most Dangerous Road*. He's also proven himself to be quiz-show dynamite on programmes including *The Chase: Celebrity Special*, *The Hit List*, *Pointless Celebrities* and *All-Star Family Fortunes*.

But for all his dalliances with the world of television light entertainment, Ed remains at heart a truly great stand-up comedian. He's honed his craft for a remarkable 30 years now, garnering a hatful of awards and a constant, borderline bewildering stream of five-star reviews along the way.

His 14th touring show, *Tragedy Plus Time*, which he's bringing to the Midlands this month, sees him heading into emotional new territory.

"It's something of a departure, and I'm slightly worried about that," he concedes. "I've never really had the desire to write a show that had an overly serious element to it. I got a lot of five-star reviews on the last show [2019's *If I'm Honest*], but some four-star ones that opined, 'Well it's funny, but that's all it is...' As if that's not enough these days. Frankly, just being funny is a furrow I've been happy to occupy. But this new show features some heart-wrenching, soul-bearing stuff."

That much is indisputable. For *Tragedy Plus Time*, Ed bravely ventures into the world of grief and loss, a decision prompted by the passing of his younger brother Paul, aged just 44, in February 2022. Comedy that takes death as its cue is not unprecedented, but it takes creative courage to explore.

"I was in two minds about whether to do a show of this nature. Then I decided this was the subject I was going to tackle, but I wasn't quite sure how to go about it. But once I started down that road, that was it... Then my main worry was, how funny is it going to be and is it going to work?"

These were legitimate concerns. This isn't gallows humour; it's something else entirely. "The first time I performed it, it lasted more than an hour. That surprised me, but it was too long, so I had to decide whether to cut funny jokes or material that's meaningful. That kind of decision was new to me, and

what's really annoying is that the one person I would have asked for advice on that is the guy the show's about. It's like when you get dumped by someone and you're heartbroken. The one person you'd usually want to talk to about it is the very person who dumped you. I've spoken to people who worked with Paul, who was a comedy director, and they've said that his thing was, 'You can be as emotional as you like and as serious as you like, but there has to be a joke.' So the idea of saying something purely for the emotional gut-punch was off the table."

Nor is *Tragedy Plus Time* unrelenting - the genius of it is that it takes the most difficult of subject matter and encourages the audience to laugh in its face in a way they would otherwise simply never do.

"Obviously I don't want the whole thing to be an onslaught. That's partly because of the digressions, and that's why they're there. But they also illustrate how grief works, in that you can still have a good time, you can still be happy, you can still have a laugh about other things and be frivolous. But grief is always there, waiting for you when you're done with being silly.

"The show does elicit a very pure emotional response in the audience. There's something about the fact that when somebody dies, everyone else carries on like nothing's happened. Because nothing has happened to them. So there's an anger in grief, too... how can everyone else carry on as though nothing has happened?"

Ed candidly admits that mining his family's bereavement for comedic effect challenges his performing skills - and emotional bandwidth - in a unique way. Is this a nightly catharsis for the Irish comedian? To an extent, yes.

"Death is universal. We will all lose someone. So the best thing to do is laugh at it... although I was aware, when I was first writing and performing this new show, that there was a danger I might, you know, lose it onstage. I did a work-in-progress at the Museum of Comedy and there was an audible crack in my voice. On the third performance, I did actually cry on stage, and I'm sure for anyone who was there [assumes a very theatrical voice] 'it was a very powerful experience.' But I don't want it to be the sort of thing where I rip my heart out and stamp on it for the audience's delectation. I've been able to throttle back my emotions and keep them in check."

What of the origins of the concept that 'comedy is tragedy plus time'? It's widely credited to American writer, humourist and quote machine Mark Twain, as many of these things are. Having researched it, Ed says there's no conclusive proof that he coined it. Twain's contribution to the arts might have benefitted from an audio/visual dimension, if such a thing had existed in the 1880s, but it's something Ed has avoided. Until now.

"There are WhatsApp messages from Paul that I wanted to share, and I could have just read them out. But that wouldn't have the same resonance, and you have to see them to fully appreciate the context. Then there's a video of a weird guy who produces celebrity obituaries... To be honest, I'm still tinkering with the audio/visual aspect, so there may well be more of that in the show. It's a supplementary element, though; it's not integral. I don't want anyone to worry unduly about the introduction of technology to the proceedings."

Tragedy Plus Time isn't Ed Byrne deconstructing comedy or going meta. That's not what he does. Nonetheless, this is a satisfyingly left-field move from one of the undeniable masters of comedy. It's every bit as moving as it is funny, and vice versa.

"Is it okay to talk about this stuff? I'd say this. Every night, hundreds of people who didn't know who Paul Byrne was will leave the theatre knowing who Paul Byrne was. I'm happy with that, and I think I give a good account of him on stage. I wouldn't say he's up there with me every night, but he's there every time I think about the show, and I've got to make sure I do right by him. I briefly entertained a notion of writing a one-man play, with me sitting and talking to him towards the end of his life. But you know, I'm a stand-up comic. It's what I do. I said to the audience in one of the early previews, 'Yes, it is sad - but don't worry because the show is funny. Because, believe it or not, I'm actually quite good at this.'"

Tragedy Plus Time shows at Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thursday 9 May; Dudley Town Hall, Saturday 11 May; Coventry's Albany Theatre, Thursday 23 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Thursday 26 September; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Friday 11 October; Regal, Evesham, Thursday 5 December

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elevates and amplifies your experience. Booking through Amplify promises to make any show unforgettable. Live entertainment has changed over the last five years, and audiences appreciate just how special seeing your icon on stage can be. Amplify gives everyone the opportunity to

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DINE IN STYLE

You can even make a night of it and order a meal with Amplify's bespoke pre-show dining. Catering for everything from casual bar snacks to classy four-course dining, Amplify will provide the perfect food to complement your night, maybe even with a themed snack (garlic bread before seeing Peter Kay, anyone?).

Funnyman Mo Gilligan visits Utilita on Saturday 30 November as part of his world tour, In The Moment. Amplify provides a Tapas 'Soul in a Bowl' package for £180, which includes everything from the VIP Bar package and much more. For two hours before the show, you have access to an exclusive bar - with inclusive drinks - and Amplify's informal tapas menu. You also have the option to order interval drinks in advance.



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If you want a truly special experience, try the very best Amplify has to offer, by splashing out on an all-inclusive private balcony. Private balcony Show Cubes accommodate up to 14 guests. Included in the price is your own cosy en-suite lounge, food & drink from your own bartender, and of course panoramic views of the arena. It's sure to make your evening really special - and might just be the perfect location for an extravagant birthday bash or anniversary celebration.

If you're more of a foodie, you might consider Amplify's Club Hospitality Packages. Pet Shop Boys will be appearing at Utilita on Saturday 8 June, with Club Hospitality Packages starting at £385. You'll get the best seats in the arena, a champagne reception, a bar with complimentary drinks, and table service in the private restaurant beforehand, in the interval, and even after the show is over.

The package includes a sumptuous four-course dining experience to make your evening elite and unique.



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For big fans of big shows, you might also want to consider an Amplify Membership, beginning at £250, with a dedicated account manager to ensure that you're always getting the best service.

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If you fancy some elbow room and an incredible view, then a seat on the balcony will suit you down to the ground - or perhaps up to the ceiling! Amplify has three balcony lounges, each with a private bar, toilets and extra space to get up and dance if the mood takes you. You won't miss out on the atmosphere either, with a spectacular view of the whole arena. Take That will be performing in six epic shows at Utilita between Tuesday 14 and Monday 20 May. Balcony Packages start from £130, with amazing seats and a private lounge & bar area making for a much more relaxed experience.

The crème de la crème is the Amplify Premier Lounge: seats cost £200, which includes a 'welcome' drinks reception and access to the private bar for 30 minutes after the event - meaning that you can keep the party going while you wait for the crowds to disperse.

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Sister Act The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May

After seeing her gangster boyfriend kill an employee, Reno lounge singer Deloris Van Cartier is placed on a witness protection programme and hidden in a convent, where she proceeds to take over the rehearsals of the in-house choir of nuns.

Thanks to her musical expertise, the choir becomes a huge success

and church attendances go through the roof. But in giving the church a new lease of life, Deloris may inadvertently have jeopardised her own safety...

Based on the hit Whoopi Goldberg movie of the same name, this fun-filled spectacular stars Sue Cleaver - who's best known for playing the character of Eileen Grimshaw in Coronation Street - as Mother Superior.

An Officer And A Gentleman

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 6 - Sat 11 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 September

If you're a nostalgia buff with a soft spot for the 1980s, this is a night out at the theatre not to be missed.

Based on the same-named Academy Award-winning film starring Richard Gere and Debra Winger, Leicester Curve's well-reviewed show tracks the heady romance that develops between Zack Mayo - a United States Navy Aviation Officer Candidate - and a young, captivating and seriously fiery woman named Paula Pokrifki.

The story unfolds against a backdrop of classic 1980s pop songs from the likes of Blondie, Bon Jovi, Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. It also features the Oscar-bagging hit, Up Where We Belong, which was recorded by Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes.



Life Of Pi

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury,
Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel tells the story of teenager Piscine Molitor 'Pi' Patel, 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."



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WITHNAIL & SHEEHAN

Actor Robert Sheehan prepares to bring an iconic character to the stage...



Photo credit: Manuel Hartan

The first-ever stage version of *Withnail & I* premieres at Birmingham Rep this month. The original 1987 film quickly became cult and launched the screen career of Richard E Grant, who played *Withnail*. Now it's Robert Sheehan who's taking on the role of the flamboyant out-of-work actor. Here, he talks about the challenge of playing the part and explains why he thinks the film is so widely adored...

When Robert Sheehan was offered the part of the garrulous dipsomaniac *Withnail* in the new stage adaptation of the hit 1987 film *Withnail And I*, he jumped at the chance. "It's a feast of a role to play," says the BAFTA-nominated actor. "It would have been a very difficult part to pass up because *Withnail And I* is just an incredibly well-written movie and play.

"It's such a rare piece because all the moves of the story come from these odd decisions and dynamics between the characters - and as a result of that, you have no idea how it's going to turn out."

Frequently included in 'best film ever' lists, *Withnail And I* features two out-of-work actors - *Withnail* and *Marwood* - who take a holiday in the Lake District in a cottage owned by *Withnail's* Uncle Monty, who then comes to visit - and mayhem ensues. Written by Bruce Robinson, who has adapted the script for the Birmingham Rep stage show, it is loosely based on his experiences as a young, unemployed actor.

The film catapulted Richard E Grant's *Withnail*, Paul McGann's *Marwood* and Richard Griffiths' Uncle Monty into cinematic history.

"Since as far back as I can remember," says Robert, "I've been aware of the movie and its unique status as a movie that is much adored and much quoted by everyone, and the reverence that surrounds it.

"It was very much one of those formative films, and since this job has come along, a lot of friends of mine, mainly male, have told me they got into acting because of this movie. I think it's a movie that showcases some wonderful acting, and that's why it lends itself so well to the stage.

"It's very much pushing the focus onto the wonderful, dynamic performances going on and through the brilliantly bizarre and eccentric characters who make strange decisions, and those decisions become the movie. So it's a very character-driven piece." Showing at Birmingham Rep this month, *Withnail And I* is a Rep production helmed by the theatre's artistic director, Sean Foley. Alongside Robert, Adonis Siddique plays *Marwood* and Malcolm Sinclair is Uncle Monty. So what are Robert's thoughts on

stepping into Richard E Grant's *Withnail*-sized boots?

"A lot of people have said to me it's a lot of pressure - but why is it? It's certainly pressure if you don't trust in your own ability, but if you work hard and everyone else is working hard, then you'll make something very interesting.

"The play obviously has the meat of the film because it's a very similar script, but I think it's being told quite differently. The physical universe of the stage and the changing of the scenes and the reality of trying to blend one scene with the next one all kind of accumulates to create something quite different."

For Robert, it is important to create his own *Withnail*.

"People are always going to bring a sense of the movie into the playhouse, but it's our job to tell the story and find our own way to do that. There's really no point in bringing the movie into the rehearsal room; you've got to step back from it and allow the intuitions in the room to take the story forward."

Robert first trod the boards at the age of 12, playing *Oliver* in *Oliver With A Twist* at his school in Ireland. As a teenager he appeared in Aisling Walsh's 2003 film, *Song For A Raggy Boy*.

He has since built up a successful career in a host of stage productions, including *The Playboy Of The Western World* at the Old Vic, *Endgame* at Dublin's Gate Theatre and *Trevor Nunn's Richard III* at the Rose Theatre.

That's alongside numerous television series, including playing his BAFTA-nominated Nathan Young in the sci-fi comedy series *Misfits*, Klaus Hargreeves in *The Umbrella Academy* and Darren Treacy in *Love/Hate*. Films have included *Mortal Engines*, *Season Of The Witch* and *The Mortal Instruments: City Of Bones*.

Despite Robert clearly having had plenty of acting jobs over the past two decades, it has to be asked - what does it feel like to be playing an out-of-work actor?

"Well, we've all been there," he laughs ruefully before pausing to think. "What is it like playing an out-of-work actor? I'm probably playing an out-of-work actor who is desperate not to be out of work, but at the

same time there's a huge hypocrisy going on with *Withnail*.

"At one point, a job is floated to him, but he thinks the job is beneath him, so the audience suspects he doesn't really want to be an actor.

"He wants to be a failed actor; he wants to be a guy who can go around, attend parties and say things and essentially perform his own life, but actually I don't think he can cope with the idea of getting up every morning and working hard and taking direction. Essentially he has completely the wrong attitude going into the world of acting." Robert believes the play taps into much within human nature.

"It says a lot about British personal identity and friendship. It demonstrates a friendship which is probably toxic. It's not the healthiest friendship in the world, but it's two people who allow for one another 100 per cent because *Withnail* has found in *Marwood* a friend who can tolerate him and enjoys him for all his flaws.

"The show is an embellishment of life, but it does have something very truthful at its core - that real friendship allows for warts and all." And he hopes audiences enjoy this new way of seeing the classic story and its characters.

"I would love people to go away and think it was great; it was like re-living the film, but there were aspects that were completely different. I hope they have a good laugh, because when you get an entire audience laughing, you get the most wonderful feeling. The rehearsal period has been hard work, but it's worth saying I haven't laughed this much in a long time. Kudos to Bruce Robinson's writing - you could come and see this show two or three times and not consciously absorb all the hilarious, bonkers images that Bruce is throwing at you. So don't just come see the show once - come and see it four or five times minimum."

.....
***Withnail And I* shows at The Rep, Birmingham from Friday 3 - Saturday 25 May**



Twelve Angry Men

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Familiar television face Jason Merrells (Emmerdale/Casualty/Waterloo Road) heads the cast in this brand-new touring version of Reginald Rose's gripping courtroom drama. Best known from the 1957 film starring Henry Fonda, Twelve Angry Men tells the story of one juror's battle to save the life of a man on trial for the murder of his father. Initially a lone voice in the wilderness, Juror Eight is faced with the monumental challenge of persuading his 11 fellow jurors to spare the defendant's life - a task made all the more difficult by the other men's prejudices and preconceptions about the trial...

The production also stars Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), Tristan Gemmill (Casualty/Coronation Street), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder).

Withnail And I

The Rep, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May

During the bohemian days of the late 1960s, two out-of-work thespians - Withnail and Marwood - leave behind them the bright lights of London in favour of what they hope will be a cathartic holiday in the countryside. But will their stay at the country home of Withnail's flamboyantly gay uncle help reinvigorate their booze- and drug-addled brains - and in so doing inspire them to kickstart their flagging acting careers?... Nearly 40 years after its release, the film of Withnail And I is widely considered to be one of the greatest British movies ever made - so the arrival of this brand-new and first-ever stage version will no doubt delight its legion of fans. The play has been written by Bruce Robinson - who wrote and directed the film - and is helmed by The Rep's artistic director, Sean Foley.

The Kite Runner

Malvern Theatres, Tues 28 May - Sat 1 June

Matthew Spangler's stage version of Khaled Hosseini's bestselling novel takes its audience on a journey across time and continents. At its heartland is the story of a friendship that exists between two young boys: Amir, a well-to-do Pashtun, and Hassan, a Hazara who's the son of Amir's father's servant. The youngsters spend their days together, flying kites and blissfully happy in one another's company - until, that is, their

friendship is devastated and their lives shattered by a display of shameful cowardice on Amir's part

Charles Dickens' The Haunting

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Fri 24 May - Sat 15 June

Charles Dickens' ghost stories are the inspiration for this spine-chiller of a play from Hugh Janes. Employed by a former associate of his uncle to catalogue a private library, book dealer David Filde encounters more than he bargained for when he visits a crumbling mansion on a desolate moorland...

You're Bard!

Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 3 May; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 4 May

Joining the likes of the Reduced Shakespeare Company and zany funsters Oddsocks in searching for ways to make the works of the bard a wee bit funnier than they might otherwise be, IK Productions here presents a show in which the audience decides just about everything - from which play is to be performed (out of a possible four), to the style in which the performance is to be presented. A quartet of experienced actors take on all the required roles.



The Rotting Hart: A New Queer Horror

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham,
Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May

Theatre, choreography and storytelling are the vehicles via which The Crested Fools deliver their 'new queer horror' - a production which, while tackling the history of homophobia in Spain, also takes a look at 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves'.

The show visits the Old Joint Stock having made a big impression at the Edinburgh Fringe, where it was nominated for the highly regarded OffFest Award.

English

The Other Place, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 9 May - Sat 1 June

Iranian American playwright Sanaz Toossi's humorous, poignant and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama is here making its European debut.

Set in a classroom in Iran, the play focuses on four adult students for whom learning to speak English is vital.

As the story unfolds and they attempt to perfect their accents, pronunciation and vocabulary, the classmates come to realise that there is far more to their lives than can ever be uttered through language... This Diyan Zora-directed production is being presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company in association with London's Kiln Theatre, to where it will transfer next month.

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Theatre previews from around the region



Love's Labour's Lost

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 18 May

Eager to pursue loftier pastimes, four young lads decide to boot their wenching ways into touch for a whole year. But then, as luck would have it, four young beauties unexpectedly arrive on the scene, putting the boys' resolve well and truly to the test!... One of Shakespeare's lesser performed works, *Love's Labour's Lost* gained in popularity for a while courtesy of Kenneth Branagh's film version. Taking as its theme men's preoccupation with the opposite sex, it's a work which has much to offer in the way of chuckleworthy entertainment - a claim which can't necessarily be made for *all* of the bard's comedies...

Nasty

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Fri 24 & Sat 25 May

"We are an autobiographical, confessional, queer theatre company comprised of three emerging artists," explain Succulent Theatre, the trio of



talented women behind this thought-provoking new show. "We make work based on our own lived experiences and perform this through a variety of story-telling, music and movement.

"[Our new play] *Nasty* guides the audience through the experiences of two 'big' women and showcases the battles they've had with body image, eating habits, bodily functions and their compulsive need for self-pleasure! Some stories are funny, some stories are strange, some might make you shed a tear. What connects them all is that every one single person can relate to at least one of them. Not holding back from the truth of what it is to be a human, we want to teach everyone that it's completely okay to be unapologetically you - as long as you are always kind."

The Olive Boy

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 18 May; Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 21 & Wed 22 May; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 25 May

When his mother dies unexpectedly, a grieving teen decides that the only way to move forward is to try and get a girlfriend. But some things in life are easier said than done... A month-long sell-out at the Edinburgh Fringe speaks volumes for the

quality of this coming-of-age comedy, a show which its producers are publicising as 'crude and compelling'.



The production has been deemed suitable for audience members aged 16-plus.

The Boy At The Back Of The Class

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

Having fled war-torn Syria, nine-year-old Ahmet now sits on a chair at the back of the classroom, a refugee kid separated from his parents, unable to speak English, and at the mercy of the school bullies.



But salvation is at hand... When one of his classmates learns of his plight, she and her friends determine to reunite the little Syrian boy with his family...

A thought-provoking exploration of the power of friendship and kindness - experienced in a world that doesn't always make sense - Nick Ahad's new play is adapted from Onjali Q Raúf's multi-award-winning children's novel of the same name...

Beautiful Evil Things

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 14 & Wed 15 May

A one-woman play from critically acclaimed theatre company Ad Infinitum, *Beautiful Evil*

Things views the epic tale of the Trojan War through the eyes of decapitated gorgon Medusa.

"We figured hers is the most infamous of female gazes," explains the production's performer and co-creator, Deborah Pugh. "So what if we could see some of these well-trodden stories through Medusa's eyes? What would be her take on it, and who would she focus on?"

"These stories are called epics for a reason - every thread you pull can go off in 15 different directions. Even in the moment Medusa is decapitated, she gives birth from her neck to a winged horse and a golden giant. We need the audience to ignore that because we need the story to go in another direction. It's still the Trojan War as you know it; we just follow a different thread."



Operation Julie: A Rock Musical

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May

Telling the true story of Wales' biggest-ever drugs bust, *Operation Julie* is described by its producers as 'Breaking Bad collides with *The Good Life*' and is presented against a 1970s prog-rock soundscape...

If you're looking to experience a refreshingly original night out at the theatre, we would humbly suggest that this might well be the show for you...

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Theatre for younger audiences

**Madagascar The Musical**

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June

The smell of the greasepaint and roar of the crowd has tempted the furry cast of Madagascar the movie to forsake New York's Central Park Zoo in favour of treading the boards on a UK theatre tour. Alex the Lion, Marty the Zebra, Melman the Giraffe and Gloria the Hippo are all present and correct in a show that producers promise will send your kids home positively wild (which may or may not be a good thing!). BBC and Strictly Come Dancing favourite Karim Zeroual stars.

Morgan & West's Massive Magic Show For Kids

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 19 May

Time-travelling magicians Morgan & West here make a welcome return with a show that combines 'conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs, and fantastic facial furniture'. All of which the dynamic duo intend to cram into one single solitary hour of non-stop family fun! Although the production has been designed with youngsters aged five-plus in mind, the fellas are confident that younger children will also enjoy the show.

The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 28 - Thurs 30 May; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June; Worcester Swan Theatre, Wed 17 & Thurs 18 July

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa... Adapted by David Wood from the late Judith Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripey tiger, of course!

**The Lion Inside**

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Rachel Bright & Jim Field's bestselling story is here given the theatrical treatment by Nicoll Entertainment, whose children's shows are tailored specifically to youngsters aged three and older.

With a running time of 55 minutes, the show tells the tale of a tiny little mouse who decides he'd like to roar like the lion who lives on top of the rock under which he (the mouse) resides.

Maybe the lion would teach him how to?... Or maybe he'd just gobble him up instead!... Playfully exploring themes including facing up to deeply held fears, dealing with the experience of change, and celebrating people's differences, the production brings together the ever-popular kids'-show ingredients of puppetry, music and song.

Dinosaur Adventure Live: Trouble On Volcano Island

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 28 May; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 29 May

The previous Dinosaur Adventure Live production was advertised as 'the greatest prehistoric show on Earth', providing audiences with a '65 million years in the making' hour of 'roarsome' fun that was 'totally T-rex-iffic'...

If this brand-new offering proves to be anywhere near as fun-filled and slick as the producers' pun-packed publicity, then the above-listed venues could well have a 'monster' hit on their hands! This latest adventure provides sure-to-be-awestruck youngsters with the chance to meet a selection of magnificent monsters from the mists of time - including, of course, the gigantic (but presumably in this instance not gigantically terrifying!) Tyrannosaurus Rex.

The Little Prince

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Mon 27 May

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...

Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 31 July & Thurs 1 August; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 18 & Thurs 19 September; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Wed 25 & Thurs 26 September

If you've taken your little ones to any of the previous Peppa Pig stage shows - and enjoyed the experience of watching them having a fantastic time - you'll be in no doubt that this latest production is well worth catching.

The show sees Peppa, along with her family and friends, enjoying a fun-packed day at the zoo and the beach.

Parents are advised to prepare their children for all manner of cracking capers, including singing and dancing with colourful scarecrows, feeding penguins, building big sandcastles, and swimming in the sea!... Looks like an oinktastic time is going to be had by all!



FOREVER FRIENDS

Award-winning musical *Come From Away* celebrates the human spirit
- and visits Birmingham this month...



Award-winning musical Come From Away is a joyous tale about people who are brought together in the most traumatic of circumstances. The real-life story of 7,000 air passengers grounded in Canada after 9/11, the smash-hit show is stopping off in the Midlands as part of its first-ever UK tour. What's On recently caught up with two of the show's creatives to find out more...

The musical *Come From Away* is an international blockbuster seen by audiences in the Americas, Europe, Australia and Asia. And yet when music & writing team Irene Sankoff and David Hein were asked if they were interested in the project, they discovered a number of people had already turned it down.

Perhaps the others felt it would be too difficult to re-tell the true story of how the people of one small town in Newfoundland came together to help 7,000 airline passengers stranded in the wake of the September the 11th terror attacks in 2001. But Irene and David took on the challenge, and *Come From Away* premiered in the United States in 2015 to huge acclaim. It transferred to Broadway two years later and then opened in the London West End in 2019.

Now, the musical - which won four Olivier Awards - is on tour, coming to Birmingham Hippodrome this month and the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in November.

Of course, in other hands the musical may not have been as beautifully told or as wonderfully successful, but Irene says the story had a special resonance for her and husband David, which is why they said yes. "We were living in Manhattan on September the 11th, uptown in a student residence with people from different countries around the world," she recalls. "A lot of them were working downtown. Mercifully everyone came back, and our community really came together. There were people at that residence from all over, refugees and Americans, and we helped each other get through that time." And so when Irene and David learned about how the Canadian community of Gander had pulled together, they were determined to pay tribute to the townspeople's generosity in the musical. The couple received a grant from the Canadian government to visit Gander on the 10th anniversary of 9/11, when the town was welcoming back friends they had made a decade before.

"It was amazing," recalls David. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to interview the Newfoundlanders and the 'Come From Aways', which is what the Newfoundlanders call anyone who's not from there. They were all returning to commemorate the incredible friendships they had made, practically becoming family members; they got adopted out there - and we got similarly adopted!

"We talked to everyone we possibly could, and everyone had hundreds of stories from that time. So we returned with thousands of stories that we wanted to fit into a 100-minute musical."

The couple were keen to ensure the musical was a true reflection of the experiences they had heard - but condensing all the tales into one show was no easy task.

"The very first draft, we were working with students, and we had about four hours and were about 100 pages in and the people still weren't off the planes!" recalls Irene. "So it was just a constant peeling away to get to the spine of the story, the truth of the story. There are some amalgamated characters, and some things happened to different people than we portrayed in the musical, but that was in an effort to get it into a succinct story."

And it was essential that the show reflected the experiences of both the townspeople of Gander and those passengers who had been helped.

"We tried to keep everything possible in there," David explains. "There was one story we were told about the local drugstore supplying medication to everyone around there, calling round the world trying to fill people's prescriptions and trying to speak whatever language was needed. Originally that was three scenes, and now it's one line in the show, but it's important to us because when that pharmacist came to see the show, they were like 'You got it right - that was the experience.'"

Irene and David wanted *Come From Away* to be a positive story about how people can come together to support each other, rather than a show about the horror of the attacks.

"In some ways we wrote the show because we were here over 9/11, but we didn't want anyone to be traumatised by it," David explains. "We say the word 'terrorist' in it once, and the World Trade Center once, because this is really a 9/12 story. It's a story about how a small town responded to strangers coming to their town, and how they opened their hearts and their homes and gave everything. It's about the potential that we all have to do good and to help in response to darkness. And after the pandemic it's become a show about how do you help, how do you open yourself to people you don't know but who might, after spending five days together, become lifelong friends?"

Come From Away has been popular in diverse cultures, and Irene and David believe its success is because its message is ultimately universal.

"I think it's a little bit of every person's story; you've all been in a position when you've needed help or you've been able to help," says Irene. "When we were in Japan for the show, I remember saying to the company manager 'I don't understand why you like this show' because 9/11 isn't really in their psyche the same as it is in America. And she said 'We've had our earthquakes, our tsunamis, our disasters, and it's just seeing people come together in a tragedy and help each other. That's really what speaks to us.'"

The show's international success has made the town of Gander famous worldwide - and yet many of the townspeople can't fathom what all the fuss is about; they simply did what they believe anyone would do.

"There is something about Newfoundlanders," says Irene. "I forget until I go back just how welcoming and helpful they are. It's just unbelievable. Maybe it's the cold winters, it's the being there for your neighbours, and you never know if you're going to be the next one who needs help."

"I think it took them a while to be proud of what they did. They don't understand why this is such a big deal. I think some people like the attention and some people are like 'We did what we did and we would do it again, but we're not looking for any attention for it.'"

Come From Away has also made Gander a surprising tourist destination.

"The show is playing out there each summer now," David says. "And the joy of that is that when we've been out to celebrate that, every hotel is booked, every cab company is booked, the restaurants are all full. So it's been wonderful for us to give back to the people who shared their stories with us and trusted us."

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Come From Away shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 21 May to Saturday 1 June, and then at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 5 to Saturday 9 November

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Light entertainment from around the region



JaackMaate's Happy Hour

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 13 May

Comedy podcast series JaackMaate's Happy Hour has hit the road again, and will no doubt be packing them in wherever it stops off.

The JaackMaate of the title is actually comedian Jack Carl Dean, who's been hosting the hugely successful online show since 2018. Joined on stage by podcast co-hosts Stevie White, Robbie Knox and Alfie Indra, Jack is promising 'incredible special effects, unbelievable costumes and an insanely creative plot'. That said, he does also point out that 'the incredibility of the special effects, unbelieveability of the costumes and insane creativity of the plot are subject to personal perspective and do not constitute a legally binding contract'! You have been warned...

Polly & Esther

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

This work-in-progress production, here being presented in preparation for a summertime run at the Edinburgh Fringe, blends drag performance, musical theatre and cabaret to tell a tale about 'finding family in unlikely places'. The show is written and performed by Cardiff-based mother & daughter drag duo Polly Amorous and Esther Parade.



Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers

Malvern Theatres, Fri 10 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thurs 16 May

Europe's longest-established taiko group, Mugenkyo fuse thundering rhythms on huge drums with layers of percussive soundscapes and the delicate sound of the shinobue bamboo flute. Since forming in 1994, the group have become widely admired for their energetic performances and impressive theatrical style, along the way making critically acclaimed appearances at numerous high-profile events, including the Brit Awards and the BBC's Last Night of the Proms. They've even performed in a Bollywood movie!



Mugenkyo visit the region this month as part of their 30th anniversary tour.

Dad's Army Radio Show

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 5 May; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 30 May

You've seen the TV show, now listen to the radio broadcast! And what a highly acclaimed one it is too, with a pair of talented actors taking up position behind their microphones to play more than 25 characters between them. The show comprises three Dad's Army episodes which have been adapted for radio for the very first time, complete with sound effects and vintage music. The featured episodes are: The Love Of Three Oranges, The Miser's Hoard and The Making Of Private Pike.



Kevin & Perry Go Large In Concert

Outdoors at the NEC, Birmingham, Mon 6 & Fri 17 May

Midlands-based fans of Kevin & Perry Go Large have the chance to enjoy the movie 'in concert' this month. Released in the year 2000 and starring Harry Enfield and Kathy Burke, the film is being screened in a big top tent, with the soundtrack provided live by the Silver Screen Symphony Orchestra. Kevin & Perry impersonators will be in

attendance at the show, there are free glow sticks with every ticket, and 1990s fancy dress is positively encouraged.

Mind Mangler: Member Of The Tragic Circle

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 27 - Wed 29 May

Alongside their better-established theatrical endeavours, The Play That Goes Wrong and Peter Pan Goes Wrong, the ever-resourceful Mischief Theatre have enjoyed enormous success with a more-recent show called Magic Goes Wrong, from which this touring production is a spin-off. The Mind Mangler of the title - played by Henry Lewis, here joined on stage by fellow Mischief maker Jonathan Sayer - is a staggeringly inept stage mentalist whose voice is deeper than his well of talent, and whose life collapses around him as he bumbles his way through far-from-successful attempts at mind-reading and hypnotism... With a running time in excess of two hours, the show for the main part is a bit of a one-trick pony, but fans of Mischief will no doubt find plenty to keep them amused.



ALL AT SEA

The award-winning stage production of Life Of Pi visits Shrewsbury in May...



Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel, *Life Of Pi*, stops off at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn in May as part of its first-ever UK tour. The story centres around Pi, a teenager who becomes stranded in the Pacific Ocean with a collection of zoo animals, including a tiger named Richard Parker - brought to life on stage through puppetry.

What's On recently caught up with actors Divesh Subaskaran and Adwitha Arumugam, who will alternate the role of Pi...

What are your backgrounds?

Divesh: I was born in Malaysia and grew up in Singapore. I came to London after I did two years of military service in Singapore. I've only lived in the UK for the last four years, and I've never been to most of the places we're touring to. It's so funny because unlike the character of Pi, I'm not a very adventurous person. It took this job for me to see the country, and I'm loving it!

Adwitha: I come from Chennai, which is a couple of hours away from Pondicherry, where the play is set, and I spent a lot of my childhood there. Playing Pi, I've been able to draw on real experiences, real people I know and real images I have in my head. I came to London about four years ago for drama school. I'm really looking forward to going on tour because it's a great opportunity to see the UK. In Sheffield, for example, we went for breakfast in this quaint café that we wouldn't ever have gone to if we weren't in the show - and I had the best iced chai of my life!

With its five Oliviers and three Tonys, the show is a proven success. Have you been able to discover the part of Pi for yourself?

Divesh: I definitely feel I've found my own way into it. The creative team of Max Webster, Finn Caldwell, Scarlet Wilderink and Lolita Chakrabarti have all worked on the show for so long and have an understanding of what the story is all about and the best way to tell it. But I've not felt any pressure to be like another performer. They've been extremely gracious to me in letting me figure out this character for myself. You would think they had a formula, but I don't feel I'm filling the shoes of somebody else. It's super-exciting to come at it from my own point of view.

Adwitha: There's no space in the play to robotically go through the moves. Yann's words and Lolita's words are so beautiful, and it's such an emotionally moving play that it can't be copied and pasted.

What do you bring to the part?

Divesh: As well as reading the novel and the script, I travelled to Pondicherry a month before rehearsals. I spent time living in the French quarter. Obviously, the fact that Pi is out at sea for a year is hard for anyone to match, but I've experimented with some things - for example, trying to fast and seeing

what hunger feels like. I fasted for a week. The very first bite I had to eat - it was a croissant - was like ecstasy. Every bite after that was kind of average! Being in India was great; the environment, the people. It's completely different from where I live in London. There's a certain freedom of expression. I felt what it was like to be in hot weather, to drink chai every day. Pi is very philosophical and spiritual, so I went to the temple, mosque and church. Whenever I would walk past a temple, I would just go and sit in it for a bit and try to surround myself with what the character did. It gives you the confidence that you've been to that place and you've seen what it's like. Your sweat is different. The way you experience heat is different.

Adwitha: Obviously, I'm playing Pi as female, and that in itself changes a lot of things. It's the 1970s in India, and gender roles were quite defined at that point. Relationships change, the way Pi sees the world changes, the perspective on things changes. I'm playing Pi very differently from Divesh, but we have a very collaborative relationship: when I'm doing my run-through, he watches it and tells me things he thought worked and things he might apply to his own performance. And similarly, when he's performing, I'm sat there in the front, giving him notes when he needs it because I've been through the process. Nobody else knows what it's like to be in these shows, so we've got each other's backs.

Why do you think *Life Of Pi* has proved so successful?

Divesh: A plethora of reasons. It's a story about survival, human nature and the animalistic side of human beings. To me, reading Yann Martel's book as someone who grew up in a Hindu household, I'm thinking this guy knows his stuff when it comes to all the religious texts. But ultimately it's a story about survival and how we have this dual nature that comes into conflict sometimes. We are not just one thing; we are multifaceted. And a story about being on a boat with a tiger for a year - what's not exciting about that?

Adwitha: It's such a human story. It's the story of life. It's what every one of us goes through. Every one of us has a Richard Parker, every one of us has a lifeboat, every one of us has been stranded in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and somehow found a way

to a magic island and finally ashore. All of us have been through it, all of us relate to it, because it's a story of family, hope, survival love, belief, faith. These are things that are fundamental to human society.

Is it important for you to know what's real in the story and what's not?

Divesh: For me as an actor, it's important. Pi truly believes he was on the boat with the animals. There's no other version for him. There are discussions in the play about what actually happened on the boat, but they end up believing his story and writing it in the report. I feel that Pi truly believes this story; it's not fiction to him. He needs Tomohiro Okamoto and Lulu Chen from the embassy to validate his existence. That's why those scenes are so powerful - Okamoto is asking about facts and wants to know what happened to the ship and how he survived, and he's telling a story about orangutans floating on a rock with bananas and saving a tiger, but he really believes it.

What's it like working with puppets?

Divesh: The puppeteers do such an amazing job that it's sometimes pretty scary being up there. They do these intense animal studies, and a lot of the sounds you hear on stage are coming from the puppeteers. At the beginning it was difficult to know what that relationship was going to be like, but the more you go through the movement patterns, the more you understand the relationship; if I take a step closer, this killing machine will eat me alive! It's about maintaining that level of tension between myself and the animal. The tiger has been built to look like a real thing, and it has a mind of its own. The puppeteers dictate where it goes, and it's not the same every time. We're playing this game - one night the tiger might actually kill me!

Adwitha: It's so much fun. It's almost better than working with human beings. With the tiger puppet, it's so much more alive because there are three human beings bringing it to life. The power and presence of the puppet is so much bigger. Irrespective of how many times you've seen the puppet, when the tiger is coming at you, trying to kill you, you run!

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Life Of Pi shows at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, from Tues 7 to Sat 11 May.

MAKING SOUNDWAVES

The RSC's *The Buddha Of Suburbia* features music by Niraj Chag, who here talks about his creative process



Musician Niraj Chag has composed music for everything from documentary soundtracks to West End musicals. His recent credits include the Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of *The Buddha Of Suburbia* - adapted by Emma Rice and Hanif Kureishi from the latter's 1990 novel - and Rifco Theatre Company's musical, *Frankie Goes To Bollywood*. Niraj stepped out of the recording studio to tell What's On about his creative practice and his journey to success...

How did you get involved in the RSC's *The Buddha Of Suburbia*, Niraj?

Emma Rice contacted me - I worked with her on a musical called *Wah! Wah! Girls*. I remember *The Buddha Of Suburbia* on TV growing up, so I was really excited about the project.

You've worked across multimedia: film, TV, radio and dance... Do you have a favourite medium to work in?

Every medium gives me something different, but I think if I were to choose, I really like documentary films. In things like natural history programmes for the BBC, your music is basically telling the story... The music is also mixed much louder than in any other medium, which is always quite nice!

How do you approach composing for theatre, in contrast with your other work?

It's interesting - I'm taking more from film and TV composition into how I work in theatre and dance. What I'm doing more and more in the early stages is, if I have early rehearsal video or footage, I can actually score it like a film. Directors love it as well, because they can watch the scene and the music in situ.

When you're in rehearsals, things come out - it's a more dynamic, changing beast. Instead of being a scene, it could turn into a dance segment or become a song, so it's a lot more changeable. I find if I have early rehearsal footage or some sort of visual - especially in things like dance - I can score it in time with the movement, and that really helps.

Rifco Theatre Company's *Frankie Goes To Bollywood* is coming to the Midlands in June and July - how do you park one project and move on to the next?

That's what I'm recording now - I'm doing some of the backing tracks. It's a case of time management and having a clear schedule in terms of what you're doing, when and how you're working... Time and space management - such a boring answer, isn't it!

What's the most challenging project you've worked on?

They're all so different... *Wah! Wah! Girls* was interesting because we were using a very unique technology which hadn't been used before. We were working in a totally new way, using stems and dynamic vamping - basically trying to have a live band without the live

band! It was quite an interesting challenge. When I first started in the early to mid-90s, I had a sampler which could only record 10 seconds of audio. It's what you do with that - amazing forms of music have come out of those limitations. Drum and bass came out of limited sampling, and that crunchy sound was because they had to reduce the quality, to get a longer sample time.

For me, limitation has become a part of my process as well, because now there's so much power - just having a laptop enables you to have power, which is so different to the power that was available in the 80s and 90s, or even the noughties. When you have a million sounds at your disposal, a part of the art becomes distilling that to what you want to use. The world's your oyster - limitation is a massive part of my process now.

What's your musical background?

I have no musical training - I'm self-taught. I was lucky enough to get into technology very early. I got kicked out of A-level music because I couldn't read and write music. I applied for four music degrees, and all four rejected me. I grew up in Southampton, and I moved to London just to get a record deal. That was my only mission - I got into any old course, just to get to London. That was the dream. Within a year, I had a record deal, and that gave me a little bit of confidence. That's my story in a nutshell.

You clearly had the drive and knew what you wanted to be...

That was the only thing that I had. Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be a musician. My dad was passionate about music, but it was never thought of as a career path for us. My dad came from East Africa in the early 70s. My parents didn't have any education, and my dad worked on the buses and then in a factory. Those are the two jobs he had, so it was unfathomable. The idea of the arts as a career was so esoteric to my family - but there was also this dichotomy that they both loved music.

What were your musical influences?

My brother was a big influence. It's probably because of my brother that I got into music, because he had a band. His band would do Bollywood covers. Growing up in the 80s, I had a lot of Bollywood influences, because my dad was an old-school Bollywood-head. My mum was into very devotional music, so

that was a big influence. Devotional music has this visceral power which strikes you, so it's one of the things that always resonated with me. Then 80s pop, growing up with Prince, Michael Jackson, Jean-Michel Jarre - because that was the cutting edge of technology - to early hip-hop as well.

You've earned many accolades throughout your career - which one means the most?

I wanted to be a musician, but I didn't have any training. I didn't have the opportunity to take piano lessons; I just had to learn through osmosis how to play piano. I had to learn music theory from books in my own time. I had to learn how synthesisers work, just through reading manuals for keyboards. For me, the greatest accolade is that I'm able to work in this industry.

I'm so happy and grateful that I get to do what I love every day, despite not having any technical qualifications - and probably massive imposter syndrome...

Sadly my father passed away a couple of years ago, and he loved 1940s and 50s Bollywood music - that was his thing. I never got to write anything like that for him. Doing *Buddha*, one of the themes is a 1940s piece of Bollywood. I got to compose what he would have been the proudest of. Part of me feels really gutted that I can't play this for him. It was emotional, but there's a bitter-sweet quality, because it's such an upbeat, happy track. A lot of that 1940s stuff was quite optimistic and joyful, and that's what my dad liked - he liked happy music.

What music do you turn to, when you have to unwind and get away from work?

The problem is, because I'm self-taught, I've learned through listening to music, and then deconstructing it, distilling it down. What's the harmonic component? What's the mix doing? What's the dynamic range? What's the mastering? So now if I listen to something, it's either nothing musical, or something so simple and innocuous that it doesn't trigger that response from me... It's like if you're a doctor, the last thing you want to do after eight joyful hours in the office is write prescriptions or do some diagnoses!

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The *Buddha Of Suburbia* shows at the Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 1 June

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Dance previews from across the region

Carlos Acosta: On Before

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Mon 6 & Tues 7 May

Given that he nowadays spends his time *behind the scenes* - as director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - it's nice to see legendary Cuban dancer Carlos Acosta back in the spotlight himself, presenting a show that he conceived 14 years ago as a homage to his late mother.

Telling the powerful story of a doomed relationship, the production boasts a diverse musical repertoire - ranging from Handel to Cuban contemporary composer Omar Puente - and features Carlos' own choreography alongside contributions from Russell Maliphant, Kim Brandstrup and Will Tuckett. Carlos is joined in the show - which he's performing in celebration of his 50th birthday - by Laura Rodríguez, a founding member of his Cuban dance company, Acosta Danza.



Johannes Radebe: House Of Jojo

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 26 May

Strictly Come Dancing favourite Johannes Radebe made a major splash with his sell-out debut tour a couple of years ago and has firmly established himself on the UK dance-show circuit. He now returns with what's being described as 'a theatrical celebration jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes, and of course, world-class dance'. Commenting on his new production, Johannes said: "Give the people what they want and need. Swirl, sip and knock it back. It's palatable, rich in taste and flavour. Served by yours truly... you're all invited down glamour street. Kindly RSVP to LOVE. Leave all your expectations at the door and welcome to the House Of Jojo!"



Strictly The Professionals

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 2 & Fri 3 May; The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton, Fri 31 May

Helmed by Strictly's creative director of choreography, Jason Gilkison, this annual extravaganza features the TV series' professional dancers strutting their stuff to a fabulous soundtrack.

Previous incarnations of the show have gone down a treat with Strictly fans, and there's every reason to suppose the 2024 edition will prove equally popular.

The 10 participating dancers are Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu.

Roshni: Sonia Sabri Company

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 16 May

"We've always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering," says Sonia Sabri. "I feel proud to say that we've presented something that's very new and very different. We've been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that's exactly what we intend to continue doing." Sonia's belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in Roshni. Bringing together wordless storytelling, eclectic music, percussive dance and upbeat audience interaction, the show comprises three distinctive dance works that explore 'the highs and lows of life today'.





The Fall Guy CERT 12a (126 mins)

Starring **Ryan Gosling, Emily Blunt, Aaron Taylor-Johnson, Hannah Waddingham, Teresa Palmer, Stephanie Hsu** Directed by **David Leitch**

If you're old enough to remember cult 1970s sci-fi series *The Six Million Dollar Man*, you'll likely also recall that its star, Lee Majors, followed up his stint as bionic astronaut Steve Austin by playing a stuntman named Colt Seavers in a show titled *The Fall Guy*. Well, some 43 years after debuting on US television network ABC, the long-running series has now inspired a movie.

Recent Oscar nominee Ryan Gosling here takes the title role as the working-class hero who has plenty on his plate - tracking down a missing movie star, solving a conspiracy, and trying to win back the love of his life - and all whilst engaging in the bone-crunching business of body-bruising stuntwork... *Bullet Train* and *Deadpool 2* director David Leitch is the man at the helm of this hugely entertaining action-comedy.

Released Thurs 2 May

Kingdom Of The Planet Of The Apes CERT tbc (145 mins)

Starring **Freya Allan, Kevin Durand, William H Macy, Dichen Lachman, Owen Teague, Peter Macon** Directed by **Wes Ball**

More monkey business from the franchise that just keeps on giving!

It's over half a century since the original *Planet Of The Apes* film hit cinema screens, with astronaut Charlton Heston crash-landing on a future Earth ruled by simians and uttering the immortal line "Take your stinking paws off me, you damn dirty ape!" In the decades which have followed that first film's release, there have been a further nine movies, a television series and numerous novels and comic books. This latest film is set several generations in the future, in a world in which apes are the dominant species, living harmoniously, and humans have been reduced to existing in the shadows. As a new tyrannical leader builds his empire, one young ape undertakes a harrowing journey that will cause him to question all that he has known about the past - and to make choices that will define a future for apes and humans alike...

Released Thurs 9 May



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga

CERT tbc

Starring **Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth, Charlee Fraser, Nathan Jones, Tom Burke, Angus Sampson** Directed by **George Miller**

Planet Of The Apes (see left) and *Garfield* (see right) aren't the only film franchises being revived this month...

The first *Mad Max* movie caused a significant stir way back in 1979, with Mel Gibson starring as a police officer seeking revenge for the biker-gang murder of his wife and child. Three films followed, including 2015's *Fury Road*, which went on to win six of its 10 Academy Award nominations.

Mad Max creator George Miller now returns with this all-new and original standalone action adventure that reveals the origins of Imperator Furiosa, a powerhouse character from *Fury Road*.

As the world falls, young Furiosa is snatched from the Green Place of Many Mothers and falls into the hands of a great Biker Horde led by the Warlord Dementus.

Sweeping through the Wasteland, they come across the citadel presided over by The Immortan Joe.

As the two tyrants battle for dominance, Furiosa must survive numerous trials as she plots a way back home...

Released Fri 24 May

IF CERT tbc

Starring **Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Cailey Flemming**, with the voices of **Steve Carell, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Maya Rudolph** Directed by **John Krasinski**

Post-trauma, Bea finds that she can actually see other people's imaginary friends (the IFs of the title)...
 ...Or rather, she can see the imaginary friends that other people *used to have*, before they grew up and discarded them.
 And Bea isn't the only one with the extraordinary superpower either - the fella who lives upstairs (played by Ryan Reynolds) can see them too. Blessed - or should that perhaps read *cursed* - with such a remarkable ability, what's a girl to do but try to help the rejected IFs find a new purpose in life?...

Jack Ryan and The Office actor John Krasinski directs and appears in this family-friendly offering, which he also wrote. He's joined by an all-star cast of both live-action and voice actors.
 "Imaginary friends are adorable and all those things," Krasinski told Collider, "but they're also time capsules of your hopes, dreams and ambitions when you were the most fertile of a brain, and it never goes away. I think we're told that we're adults, instead of, what if you realise that you never stopped being a kid..."

Released Fri 17 May



The Garfield Movie CERT tbc

With the voices of **Chris Pratt, Samuel L Jackson, Hannah Waddingham, Ving Rhames, Nicholas Hoult, Cecily Strong** Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Lasagna-loving indoor cat Garfield is about to have a wild *outdoor* adventure...
 After an unexpected reunion with his long-lost father - scruffy street cat Vic - Garfield and his canine friend Odie find themselves catapulted from their perfectly pampered life into a somewhat more challenging situation - joining Vic in a 'hilarious, high-stakes

heist'...
 Garfield started out as a Jim Davis cartoon-strip in the 1970s. He became such a massive hit that he's since been the star of numerous television series and a couple of live-action/CGI feature films in which Bill Murray voiced the character. Neither movie went down particularly well with the critics. Dedicated fans of the fabulous feline will no doubt be hoping that this first-ever theatrically released *animated* movie fares rather better...

Released Fri 24 May



Young Woman And The Sea CERT tbc (100 mins)

Starring **Daisy Ridley, Tilda Cobham-Hervey, Stephen Graham, Kim Bodina, Jeanette Hain, Ethan Rouse** Directed by **Mark Dindal**

Star Wars' Daisy Ridley here takes on the role of Gertrude 'Trudy' Ederle, the first woman to swim across the English Channel. A gold-medal winner at the 1924 Olympics, Gertrude determined to join the roll call of swimmers who had previously swum the 21-mile stretch.
 Designing a two-piece swimsuit and sealing her goggles with candle wax, the 20-year-old New Yorker duly made history on the 6th of August 1926, taking 14 hours and 34 minutes to swim from Cape Gris-Nez in France to Kingsdown in Kent.
 Although her Channel crossing was enthusiastically celebrated at the time, it is now largely forgotten, so this new film will provide some richly deserved publicity for what was a truly magnificent achievement.

Released Fri 31 May



Hermione Wiltshire, Nicola Preparing for Birth, 2008, Courtesy the artist

MUM'S THE WORD

MAC Birmingham is set to host a new exhibition which will put the hidden history of artist mothers in the spotlight...

Hettie Judah is the curator behind Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, an exhibition which opens at Birmingham’s Midlands Arts Centre next month. Presented by Hayward Gallery Touring, this major show brings together over 100 works of art by mothers - from the feminist avant-garde to the present day - and touches on the themes of creation, maintenance and loss. What’s On recently caught up with Hettie to find out more about her highly anticipated show...

A new exhibition, curated by Hettie Judah and touring to Birmingham’s Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) next month, explores the joys and heartaches, mess, myths and mishaps of motherhood.

Under the title Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood, the exhibition approaches motherhood as a creative enterprise, albeit one which at times is tempered by ambivalence, exhaustion or grief. It’s also designed to be a welcoming space, with colourful galleries and an area where visitors are invited to sit at a kitchen table and respond to the art around them.

The inspiration behind the exhibition came in 2019, when Hettie was researching the impact of motherhood on artists’ careers. The project was commissioned by Dr Kate McMillan of the Freelands Foundation, who was in turn researching representation of women in the art world.

During her research, Hettie interviewed over 50 artists, and began to realise that the relationship between art and motherhood was largely uncelebrated. She started to consider how that could be rectified.

“A couple of things came out which really set my mind working as to how I might change the picture,” Hettie explains. “One was the fact that very often when people were at art school or were starting out in careers, they received this really strong message that motherhood was incompatible with being an artist, and that motherhood wasn’t a good subject for art.”

Hettie experienced this message first-hand, studying in the early to mid-1990s. Acts Of Creation now seeks to bring the experiences of artist mothers into the limelight.

“The two things that I wanted to do with this show were to make a case for motherhood being an important subject for art - that it’s potentially a subject for really good art - and to highlight that there are artists who have successfully combined motherhood and art making, and to make them visible.”

Hettie was keen to collect works from earlier generations of artists who had engaged with the subject of motherhood. Each work in the show can be seen to approach the topic in a unique way.

“What was really striking, when you start to look historically, is that the same works are being remade over and over again. There was very little awareness of artists who had made

work in previous generations. It goes back to the point about motherhood not being seen as a particularly legitimate subject, and even within feminist art history, not necessarily being embraced.

“Overall I’ve been trying to build up a very complex and diverse picture of the experience of motherhood.”

The exhibition has three themes which address these diverse experiences: Creation, which looks at conception, pregnancy, birth and nursing; Maintenance, which explores motherhood and caregiving in the day-to-day; and Loss, which touches on miscarriage and involuntary childlessness, as well as reproductive rights.

“Ever since I’ve been thinking about this exhibition, I’ve been thinking about doing a progression all the way from conception, and issues around fertility and infertility, right through to addressing maternal grief. That shape has always been part of my conception of the exhibition. There is a fourth section, which is The Temple - a big gallery that is full of self-portraits, in each of which the artist portrays themselves in relation to motherhood.”

The remaining section of the exhibition addresses an experience of motherhood which is perhaps most common but most overlooked...

“It was really important to me to have Maintenance as part of the show, because in general, when we think about motherhood in art, we tend to think about the Madonna and Child, pregnancy and breastfeeding, and really tiny children. I wanted to highlight the fact that motherhood doesn’t finish when a child is one year old; it’s something that continues for the rest of your life.

Maintenance really addresses motherhood in the day to day; that ongoing labour of motherhood that’s maybe less visible but still dominates people’s lives.”

Alongside the exhibition are related attractions, such as a gig theatre event from The Queer Motherhood Project, and a season of film screenings entitled Bad Mums: Motherhood In Cinema.

MAC is also hosting in-tandem exhibitions: Hidden Mothers by Tereza Buskova, and Who Cares?, produced by the venue in collaboration with Kaye Winwood and Balsall Heath CATS - an organisation supporting families who care for disabled children and

young people.

The programme also holds space to explore more sensitive topics within the theme.

“MAC are really brilliantly going to be hosting a symposium in September, which particularly addresses maternal loss and infertility. They’re going to dedicate an entire day to that, in the context of the exhibition.” The symposium takes place on Thursday 12 September, with presentations by artists, writers and art historians who will be sharing their research and personal work around the subject.

On the evening of the same day, an ‘in conversation with’ panel discussion will feature artists Felicity Allen, Jai Chuhan and Su Richardson. The panel is chaired by Hettie herself, who is certainly enthusiastic about the lively public schedule which MAC is programming to coincide with her exhibition. “It’s a real dream for me. That idea of having a really engaging public face has been central to how I’ve planned the show. I couldn’t be more thrilled that MAC have taken that idea and run with it, with this very strong public programming strand.”

Many of the events programmed around Acts Of Creation - and of course the exhibition itself - are free to enter. MAC’s standing as a cultural hub for the local community is something that Hettie wants to celebrate. “It’s not like a big, ticketed, blockbuster exhibition where you’ve got your one-hour time slot when you need to be in and out... There’ll be lots and lots to look at and read, but it should all be quite inviting. I’m really happy that people feel they can drop in for about 15 minutes, and come back on another day to revisit their favourite works. My dearest wish is that the community around MAC makes it their own.”

.....
Acts Of Creation: On Art And Motherhood shows at MAC from Saturday 22 June to Sunday 29 September

Acts Of Creation: Symposium & Panel Discussion take place on Thursday 12 September

Tereza Buskova: Hidden Mothers runs from Saturday 1 June to Sunday 29 September

Who Cares? runs from Thursday 6 June to Sunday 22 September



Summer Exhibition

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 3 May - Sun 23 June

Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre is hosting three concurrent exhibitions this month and next.

Bologna-based Rwandan artist Francis Offman's *Economics Of Painting* showcases canvases that tell stories of friendship, conversation and travel, while Swiss creative Nicole Bachmann's *There Are Tides In The Body* is a new film commission. Set across two locations in Kent and Spon End in Coventry, the film considers the body as a site of knowledge by using movement and voice to 'embody vocabulary' and create new meaning.

Completing the trio of exhibitions, *Activate/Assemble/Amplify* contemplates the creative future of Coventry's children and young people. Sharing artworks and performances made throughout the year as part of youth and schools projects, the exhibition explores the participants' vision for themselves and their city.

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International Watercolour Masters

Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May

The International Watercolour Masters (IWM) makes a welcome return to Shropshire this month, and as usual the exhibition will be showcasing a selection of impressive artwork by some of the world's most talented creatives. Alongside the paintings by global

masters, IWM will also present (via a giant screen in the main exhibition arena) the top 200 entries in the show's hugely popular watercolour competition, which this year was entered by thousands of people from across the world.



Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Fri 10 May - Sun 8 September

A major solo exhibition, Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia sees the artist remodelling everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle. The exhibition also includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting Dion's father.

After The End Of History: British Working Class Photography 1989 - 2024

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 16 June

The challenges, beauty and diversity of contemporary working-class life - as depicted by working-class artists using the medium of photography - are explored in this fascinating exhibition, curated by acclaimed photographer, writer & broadcaster Johnny Pitts.

A Hayward Gallery Touring show, the collection features work from 1989 onward and marks the 35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall (which happened on 9 November of that year).



John Piper And 20th Century Art

Barton Court, Colwall, Herefordshire, Sat 11 - Mon 20 May

Barton Court's 10th anniversary exhibition showcases more than 50 fabrics, limited-edition prints and original works by John Piper, a Surrey-born 20th-century artist whose work often focused on the British landscape.

An official war artist in World War Two, Piper's depictions of bomb-damaged churches and landmarks, including and most notably Coventry Cathedral, hugely enhanced his reputation and led to his work being acquired by a number of public collections.

A selection of work by other 20th-century artists also features in the exhibition.



Landscape And Imagination: From Gardens To Land Art

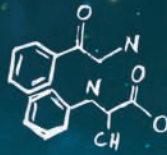
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 16 June

Works by celebrated artists including JMW Turner, Nicolas Poussin and Anya Gallaccio feature in this new exhibition at Compton Verney, a show which explores the question of how art might work together with nature to reverse the decline of the UK's green spaces.

An accompanying selection of playful interactive activities in the exhibition galleries will provide families with the opportunity to imagine their own colourful and fantastical landscapes.



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Birmingham Museums

Events previews from around the region



Brick Fest Live NEC, Birmingham, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May

The world's largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut! Offering a wide range of hands-on building activities, Brick Fest Live provides families with the chance to help build a Guinness World Record-setting floor mosaic, race brick-built cars down derby ramps and play

in a brick pit with hundreds of thousands of Lego bricks. The show also features a marketplace - selling rare collectibles - and a selection of 'mind-blowing creations' from around the world, including life-sized Lego models.



Makers Central NEC, Birmingham, Sat 18 & Sun 19 May

Makers Central - the UK's largest gathering for inventors, makers and DIY enthusiasts - is this month returning to the NEC for the fifth year running. The popular family event features hands-on workshops and live demonstrations by some

of the country's most talented makers. YouTube stars and social-media influencers, including Clin Furze, The Hacksmith and Nick Zammeti, will also be in attendance at the show.

1950s Evening

The Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 11 May

Step back in time at Black Country Living Museum this month and immerse yourself in the cultural revolution of the 1950s! Visitors to the venue will enter a world of rock & roll, skiffle and rhythm & blues, as live performers take to the stage. The line-up includes Rockin'em, The Bitter Lemons, The Washboard Resonators, Lola Lamour, Helen Pearson and Joe James Thomas. The event also offers the chance to check out some vintage fashions and dance the night away in the museum's iconic streets.



UK Slot Festival

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Sat 11 & Sun 12 May

This Scalextric-sponsored weekend features a wide range of slot cars from major manufacturers, a massive retail area 'selling everything you need for your next great race', and a host of fun activities, including family racing competitions and a stunt show.



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Events previews from around the region



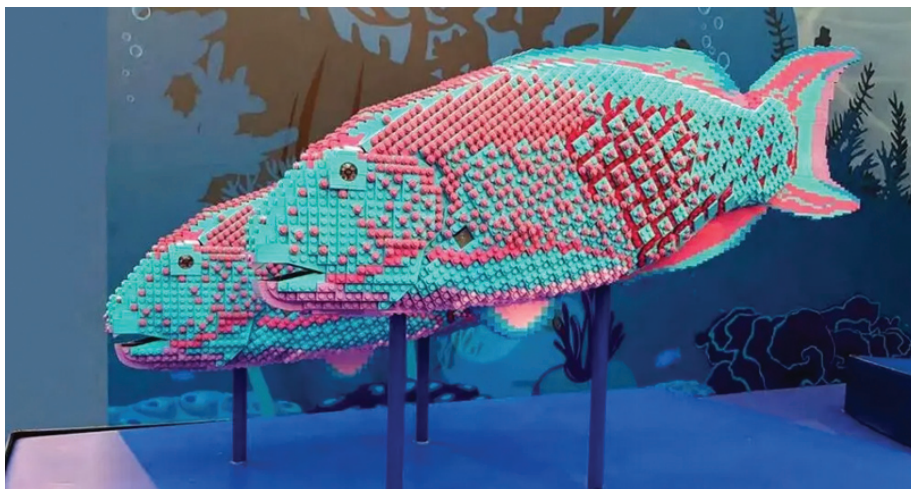
RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 May

Taking the theme 'gardening for change', the RHS Malvern Spring Festival is this year celebrating evolution in the world of horticulture - and embracing the positive impact which this has on planting, people and wellbeing...

As well as showcasing new attractions, including features promoting the growth of houseplants, the festival also boasts

contributions from Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Gardeners' World regulars Adam Frost, Frances Tophill and Toby Buckland. RHS Vice President James Alexander-Sinclair takes on hosting duties. Numerous well-established elements of the festival also make a return, including show & feature gardens, the floral marquee and the Tips & Tricks Theatre.



Brick Ocean at The Engine House

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June

Families travelling the Severn Valley Railway during this month's half-term holiday will get the chance to go 'under the sea' and admire a selection of ocean-themed brick-model installations.

Making a pit-stop at The Engine House at

Highley, visitors will find 13 impressive installations to check out, including an octopus, a parrot fish, a mako shark and a large squid - each one hand-built using thousands of bricks.

Deaffest

Various venues across Wolverhampton, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May

The UK's premiere Deaf-led film & arts festival is back for 2024 and celebrating its 15th anniversary.

Marking the special occasion with a music theme, the festival includes subtitled film screenings and numerous accessible events, including an art & photography exhibition, panel discussions, workshops and a stalls fair. The highly anticipated ninth Film & TV Awards Gala & Late-Night Party - offering plenty of excellent networking opportunities - also features.



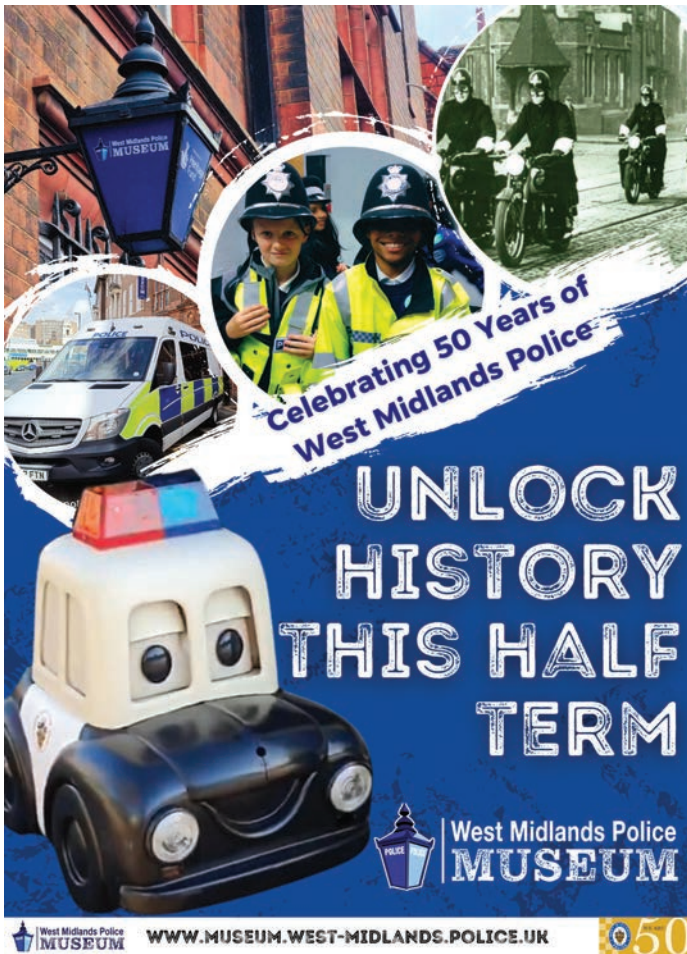
Marvellous Materials

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May

The Thinktank team are turning the spotlight on different materials and their properties during this month's half-term holiday...

Families can investigate which materials are conductors of electricity and which are insulators, try their hand at fishing for magnetic fish, and learn about the differences between solids, liquids and gases.





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Events previews from around the region



Eastnor ChilliFest

Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire, Sun 5 & Mon 6 May

Eastnor ChilliFest is sure to pack a punch when it returns this May Day Bank Holiday weekend. Daring diners can get stuck into all things chilli related, with a wide variety of food & drink on offer to get their tastebuds tingling. The day's entertainment also includes a children's cookery school and Eastnor's ever-popular chilli-eating competition. Stilt walkers, fire-show performers, Bhangra dance workshops and live music further add to the fun.



Midlands Air Festival Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June

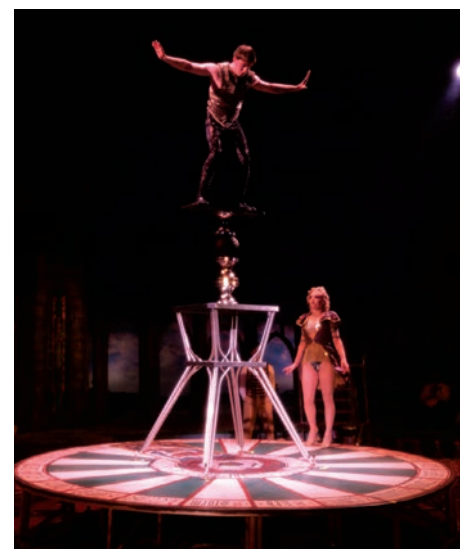
Returning to Ragley for a sixth year, the Midlands Air Festival sees more than 100 hot-air balloons taking to the sky two times a day, with special-shape balloons such as The Orient Express and Hyla the Frog making their festival debuts. And the balloons won't be the only reason for visitors to keep their eyes to the skies; the programme of entertainment also features World War Two Warbirds, World War One air

displays, fast jets, helicopters, gyroplanes, aerobatic displays, aerial ballet and flying circus acts as well as parachute and formation display teams. The festival's hugely popular Nightfire show also returns, featuring an air display of aircraft fitted with pyrotechnics, fireworks and lighting systems, a set-to-music balloon nightglow, and a sure-to-be-spectacular fireworks finale.

Giffords Circus

Sudeley Castle & Gardens, Cheltenham, Fri 10 - Mon 20 May

Giffords Circus returns to Sudeley Castle with a brand-new 'extravaganza' titled Avalon. Coming complete with 'lavish costumes, an opulent set' and a live band, the show brings together acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns from all over the world to present a colourful medieval world of pageantry and Arthurian legend.



Birmingham Pride

Birmingham Gay Village & Smithfield, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 May

Celebrating the Midlands' LGBTQIA+ community, Birmingham Pride will once again be getting the city partying this month. It's expected that more than 40,000 revellers will attend the event across the weekend, with an impressive 75,000-plus people either

participating in or watching the annual Pride parade through the city's streets. The festival's Smithfield site is the centre of the action, featuring a main stage, the Conrad Guest Cabaret Stage and Chic Dance Arena. Headline acts include Loreen, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Beverley Knight.



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the list

Your week-
by-week
listings guide
May 2024



*Madagascar The Musical - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June*

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

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 5 May



There's A Monster In Your Show
- Tamworth Assembly Rooms

Fri 3 - Sat 4 May

Mon 6 - Sun 12 May



Ed Byrne -
Stourbridge Town Hall

Sat 11 May

Mon 13 - Sun 19 May



An Evening With Richard Marx -
Symphony Hall

Sun 19 May

Mon 20 - Fri 31 May



Julian Clary - Theatre Severn,
Shrewsbury

Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

VICTORIAN RADICALS Exhibition presenting works by 19th-century artists, designers & makers, from the Pre-Raphaelites to the arts & crafts movement, until Thurs 31 Oct

New Art Gallery, Walsall

PLANET BRILL RESIDENCY

Presentation exploring seasonal eating and food waste through discursive online work and the creation of a mural on the studio walls, until Sun 5 May

PRIDE & PRIVILEGE AT THE CLASS ACT

Temporary exhibition exploring class and identity, until Sun 26 May

THE WORLD THAT BELONGS TO US

Featuring works by intergenerational artists from the South Asian diasporas of the UK, US and Canada, the exhibition explores community, belonging, migrant storytelling and queer world-making, until Sun 9 June

...AS WE GATHERED ON THE SHARDS OF A FALLEN MIRROR BALL

Exhibition of new work by Sophia-Layla Afsar (based in Karachi, Pakistan) and Alex Billingham (based in the West Midlands) which follows on from the artists' back-to-back residences in Karachi and Walsall, until Sun 30 June

THE MAGIC MONEY TREE

'Epic piece of protest art' in which documentary photographer Kirsty Mackay, working collaboratively with groups and individuals across England, explores the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, until Sun 28 July

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

FRESH AIR FOR THE POTTERIES

Exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the birth of local photographer William Blake, until Tues 5 May

CARBONIFEROUS MONSTERS: 100 MILLION YEARS BEFORE THE DINOSAURS

Exhibition for all ages, exploring prehistoric forests and swamps, and the ancient creatures that lived there. Until Sun 2 June

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

THE MOUNT: OPENING A WINDOW ON THE DARWINS' LEGACY

Exhibition featuring photographs from the late Victorian era telling the story of the house and gardens of Charles Darwin's childhood home, until Sun 19 May

STORY TIME TRAIL: THE WORLD OF PETER RABBIT

Immersive exhibition for children aged six and younger. Crawl under the garden gate and

hide in a watering can, 'just like Peter Rabbit!' until Sun 30 June

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

DRAWING ATTENTION Touring exhibition from the British Museum, in which emerging artists take the medium of drawing in new directions, until Mon 6 May

VIRASAT: BRITISH SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE, CULTURE AND EXPERIENCE FROM 1950 - 2000 Virāsāt, meaning legacy or inheritance in Hindi, delves into the heritage of British South Asian migration, diasporic culture and lived experience, until Sun 16 June

FOOTBALL: DESIGNING THE BEAUTIFUL GAME Large-scale international touring exhibition from the Design Museum, London, exploring how design has been used to push the game to its technical and emotional limits, Sat 25 May - Sun 1 Sept

Elsewhere:

BEAR STEPS GALLERY: SOLO EXHIBITIONS Featuring works by Caroline North and Paul Janczykowski, until Sat 11 May, Bear Steps Gallery, Shrewsbury

COLOUR MEMORIES Series of energetic semi-abstract paintings by Susan McCall, inspired by the colours, light and textures in nature, until Sat 11 May, New Vic Theatre, Staffordshire

LUKE PERRY: [ROUNDABOUT] Unveiling of four steel sculptures created in collaboration with the local community as part of Perry's Asylum Art Gallery residency, Sun 19 May, Chapel Ash Underpass, Wolverhampton

BELFREY CERAMIC ARTISTS EXHIBITION Showcasing the works of six contemporary Shropshire ceramic artists: Sharon Griffin, John Snocken, Jana Ward, Rasa Eggerton, Suki, & Michael White, until Fri 24 May, Gateway Gallery, Shrewsbury

BEAR STEPS GALLERY: SOLO EXHIBITIONS Featuring works by John Finn and the Jill Leventon Group, Sun 12 May - Sat 25 May, Bear Steps Gallery, Shrewsbury

WOLVERHAMPTON SOCIETY OF ARTISTS Exhibition of work by members of the society, featuring a wide range of media, until Mon 29 May, Weston Park, Staffordshire

THREADS THROUGH CREATION A sequence of 12 huge textile panels by Jacqui Parkinson, telling the creation story from the Book of Genesis, until Sun 2 June, Lichfield Cathedral

Gigs

LIL YACHTY + JEAN DAWSON Wed 1 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FLETCHER + ARXX Wed 1 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MICA PARIS Thurs 2 May, The Jam House, B'ham

MADONNA BY KNIGHT Thurs 2 May, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

GRN BARTLEY Thurs 2 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Thurs 2 May, Wulfrun Hall at The Halls, Wolverhampton

RATS Thurs 2 May, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

LEDISI Fri 3 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE MERCIANS + THE ULTRA VIOLETS + JOEL FOSTER Fri 3 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FESTIVAL Fri 3 May, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

TRASHCAN SINATRAS Fri 3 May, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

MOSH TALGIA Fri 3 May, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE MODERATORS Fri 3 May, The Robin, Bilston

SAMANTICS Fri 3 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

BUTCHER'S BREW Fri 3 May, The Quarter at Potbank, Stoke-on-Trent

TALON Fri 3 May, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SHE'KOYOKH Fri 3 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Fri 3 May, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

AN EVENING OF JAMES TAYLOR Fri 3 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE BEAT INSTITUTE Fri 3 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE SIGNATURES Fri 3 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PIGDAZE Fri 3 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

MIDDLE SPACE Fri 3 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

IMPERIAL LEISURE Fri 3 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE NIGHTINGALES Fri 3 May, The Firefly, Oakengates, Telford

NEW AMEN CORNER Fri 3 May, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

THE MOONS OF JUPITER + DREAD LAGOON & KOTONIC Fri 3 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

A VISION OF ELVIS Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, Lichfield Garrick

HAUNT THE WOODS Sat 4 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE FEELING + DAYTIME TV Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JAMES MCVEY Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

CVC Sat 4 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JIM BOB Sat 4 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KEANE + THE LATHUMS Sat 4 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

KIRA MAC + JAYLER Sat 4 May, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

HANNAH SANDERS & BEN SAVAGE Sat 4 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BRAVADO - RUSH TRIBUTE Sat 4 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WORLD TOUR Sat 4 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

NORTHERN LIVE Sat 4 May, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

KD AND THE DOGS Sat 4 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

VICKY JACKSON IS PINK Sat 4 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE RONALDOS Sat 4 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

MAD SPANNER +

KOTONIC + COWER, HOUNDS! + OSCAR MIC + BEDROOM TAX + BAXTER BUMSTEAD + PACKET RACKET + LUNA KISS Sat 4 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

DIE TWICE + OSCAR MIC Sat 4 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

JOHN DOYLE + CHRIS QUINN Sat 4 May, Hermon Arts, Oswestry, North Shropshire

ALEXANDER O'NEAL Sun 5 May, Dudley Town Hall

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Sun 5 May, Crewe Lyceum

CODY PENNINGTON COUNTRY SHOW Sun 5 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE + FRIDAY Sun 5 May, Utilita Arena B'ham

TASHA LEAPER AS MADONNA Sun 5 May, The Robin, Bilston

TYGERS OF PAN TANG + THIS HOUSE WE BUILT Sun 5 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BLAIR DUNLOP Sun 5 May, The Hive, Shrewsbury

WHO'S NEXT Sun 5 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

BLACK TAPE + FUNERALCARE + SOAPER + A PIG CALLED EGGS + BAUDELAIRE + SEPRONA + HAIG + IMPERIAL LEISURE Sun 5 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SAVANNA WOODS Sun 5 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE WEDDING PRESENT Sun 5 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS Sun 5 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ROY ORBISON STORY Sun 5 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GORDON GILTRAP & JOHN ETHERIDGE Sun 5 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PALOMA FAITH Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Classical Music

CBSO: PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Jeremy Denk (piano). Programme includes a UK premier of ATLAS by Anna Clyne, and works by Gershwin, Ravel & Mussorgsky, Wed 1 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC PHILHARMONIC: FROM THE NEW WORLD

Featuring Julian Rachlin (conductor). Programme includes works by Mozart & Dvořák, Fri 3 May, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SIMON EARLE ORGAN CONCERT

Fri 3 May, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL

Programme includes works by Smart, Wolstenholme, Bonnet, Saint-Saëns & more... Sat 4 May, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

CARL GRAINGER ORGAN CONCERT

Sat 4 May, Shrewsbury Abbey

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL

Programme includes works from around Europe, by Haydn, Peeters, Buxtehude, Sibelius & more... Sun 5 May, Holy Trinity Church, Wordsley, Stourbridge

ELISABETH BRAUSS PIANO RECITAL

Programme includes works by Beethoven, Prokofiev & R Schumann, Sun 5 May, Shrewsbury School



Comedy

NURSE GEORGIE CARROLL Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BASSEM YOUSSEF Wed 1 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

MARK NELSON, HAYLEY ELLIS, FREDDY QUINNE & ROBIN MORGAN Wed 1 May, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Thurs 2 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

GLENN MOORE, DANNY WARD, ALEX CAHILL & DAVE TWENTYMAN Thurs 2 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

KUM-N-AVALOFF - COMICS TBC Thurs 2 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

RUBY WAX Thurs 2 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

PAUL SMITH Fri 3 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SULLY O'SULLIVAN, JOHN WAGSTAFFE & DANI JOHNS Fri 3 May, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Fri 3 May, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

SUKH OJLA Fri 3 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

TOMMY SANDHU Fri 3 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

JOE PASQUALE, BARBARA NICE, GAVIN WEBSTER & WAYNE BEESE Fri 3 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

MICHAEL ODEWALE, MATT PRICE, GEORGE LEWIS & SID SINGH Fri 3 - Sat 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

EDDY BRIMSON, SULLY O'SULLIVAN, DANNY DEEGAN & CARL JONES Sat 4 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BIG DEAL COMEDY NIGHT Sat 4 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 4 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



TERRY ALDERTON & COMICS TBC Sun 5 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

TOM DAVIS Sun 5 May, Aston Hall, Wrexham

Theatre

ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS Mayhem, music and fast-paced physical comedy combine in Richard Bean's tale of mistaken identity. Based on Carlo Goldoni's *The Servant Of Two Masters*, until Sat 11 May, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme



LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST Luke Thompson (Bridgerton) and Tony Gardner (Gentleman Jack/Last Tango In Halifax) make their RSC debuts in a contemporary take on Shakespeare's vibrant comedy, until Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, until Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE FERRYMAN Birmingham Ormiston Academy's Year 13 students present



Blood Brothers - Birmingham Hippodrome

Jej Butterworth's hit play, set during The Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1981, Tues 30 Apr - Thurs 2 May, The Old Rep, Birmingham

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's legendary musical tells the cautionary tale of two twins who, separated at birth, grow up on opposite sides of the track... Tues 30 Apr - Sat 4 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

REVISION ON TOUR: DR JEKYLL & MR HYDE Dickens Theatre Company present a new version of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic masterpiece, Wed 1 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LOVE NEVER DIES West Bromwich Operatic Society present the UK amateur premiere of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Wed 1 - Sat 4 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

GUYS & DOLLS Musical Theatre Stafford present an amateur version of the iconic romantic comedy, Wed 1 - Sat 4 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

REVISION ON TOUR: ROMEO & JULIET Dickens Theatre Company breathe new life and wit into Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers, Thurs 2 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

FLASHBANG An 'exuberant, explosive and gut-punching rollercoaster ride' through the ties that bind five best mates together and what happens to them when that world is blown apart. Contains strong language, loud noises, adult themes, and references to drugs, mental health and bereavement, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR Blackeyed Theatre Company present a new version of Joan Littlewood's classic musical, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

OUR HOUSE TADLOP present an amateur version of Tim Firth's

romantic comedy, set to the music of Madness, Thurs 2 - Sat 4 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

YOU'RE BARD! Shakespeare like you've never seen before, with four actors, four Shakespeare shows and endless possibilities... Fri 3 May, Halesowen Town Hall

GENERATIONS A Black British-themed spoken-word poetry piece exploring generational expectations, trauma, culture, identity and family differences, Fri 3 - Tues 7 May, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

WITHNAIL AND I Premiere of Bruce Robinson's new stage version of the iconic 1987 film starring Paul McGann and Richard E Grant, Fri 3 - Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

Kid's Theatre

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW Brand-new musical stage version of author Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures for big imaginations, Fri 3 May, Tamworth Arts Centre



TOSCANA STRINGS: MONKEY PUZZLE & THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS Tosca Strings are joined by former BRB soloist Laura Tye in a retelling of two family favourites - Julia Donaldson's *Monkey Puzzle* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind In The Willows*, Sun 5 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

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Dance

STRICTLY THE PROFESSIONALS

Featuring 12 of the TV show's professional dancers alongside singers and a live band. The line-up features Dianne Buswell, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Karen Hauer, Neil Jones, Nikita Kuzmin, Gorka Marquez, Luba Mushtuk, Graziano di Prima, Jowita Przystal, Michelle Tsiakkas and Nancy Xu, Thurs 2 - Fri 3 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

THE TIGERFACE SHOW A 'joyful and melancholic' comedy which asks us to rethink what it was we wanted to be when we grew up, in the hope of finding some childlike happiness in adulthood, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic show featuring comedy, rock'n'roll and pop culture from the 1950s right through to the 80s, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Lichfield Garrick

SIR TIM RICE: MY LIFE IN MUSICALS Join the internationally renowned lyricist as he reflects on his illustrious career in musical theatre and shares anecdotes from 'behind the songs', Wed 1 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

EAGLES BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band performing 20-plus Eagles hits, Wed 1 - Thurs 2 May, Lichfield Cathedral

DREAMBOYS The Stripped Back Tour featuring dance, chart-topping music and plenty of audience participation. Strictly 18 plus, Fri 3 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE MUSIC OF ABBA BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring the UK's leading Abba tribute act, Abba Reunion, Fri 3 May, Lichfield Cathedral

GEORGE MICHAEL BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring over 25 years of smash-hit songs, Sat 4 May, Lichfield Cathedral

DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Perry & Croft's classic 1970s BBC comedy series is brought to life by two actors playing over 25 characters, Sun 5 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Events

PLAY UNSTOPPABLE Design your own spirit animal, add your creation to the Lego Flower Cart and share your best moves at the Play Unstoppable Dance Party, until Mon 6 May, Legoland Discovery Centre B'ham

SPRING BULB FESTIVAL Annual festival providing visitors with 'an amazing,

uplifting, immersive and colourful experience' as they walk through the gardens, until Fri 31 May, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

KNITTED BLOSSOM AND POETRY TRAIL Admire the blossom in the gardens and the knitted blossom displays produced by talented volunteers and local craft groups, until Sun 9 June, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

THE WORLD OF PETER RABBIT - STORY TIME TRAIL Take advantage of photo opportunities and sample a selection of fun activities as you immerse yourself in the world of Peter Rabbit, until Sun 30 June, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

STAFFORDSHIRE DAY Enjoy free taster tours of the Wedgwood factory, Wed 1 May, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

EARLY BIRD SONG WALK Hear and see around 30 woodland bird species, including summer migrants, Thurs 2 May, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

STOKE CULT FILM CLUB: HELLRAISER Screening of the 1987 British supernatural horror film, Fri 3 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Fri 3 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

LOOPFEST 2024 A three day multi-venue, music, arts and creative festival, with gigs performed in pubs, churches and public spaces. Entertainment for younger audiences, spoken word events and DJ sets also feature, Fri 3 - Sun 5 May, various locations in and around Shrewsbury town centre. For full programme visit loopfest.co.uk

CAMP SEVERN KIDS FESTIVAL Featuring a jam-packed itinerary, Fri 3 - Mon 6 May, West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

A SPRING SOUL PICNIC An evening of live music in the gardens, Sat 4 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a 'delectable' spread on traditional vintage chinaware, Sat 4 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SHREWSBURY COLOUR RUN Raising funds for Lingen Davies, Sat 4 May, Sansaw Estate, Shrewsbury

ABBA PARTY RACEDAY FEATURING THE STAFFORDSHIRE PLATE Witness some competitive jump racing, including the Staffordshire Plate Race, followed by a live performance from an Abba tribute band, Sat 4 May, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN 19TH CENTURY SHROPSHIRE Author & lecturer Richard Ireland gives an



Camp Severn Kids Festival - West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

overview of prisons in the 19th century, Sat 4 May, Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury

THE YEAR WAS 1944... Including live music, dance workshops and children's vintage-themed crafts & games, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL Weekend packed with racing and entertainment, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Donington Park, Derby

DINE N DEVOUR FOOD FESTIVAL A selection of international street food from around the world, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Tamworth Castle Grounds

MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Featuring over 30 of the UK's most popular displays and layouts, presented at the Highley Visitor Centre, Sat 4 - Sun 5 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

STEAM GALA The railway's first gala since 2019, Sat 4 - Mon 6 May, Churnet Valley Railway, Staffordshire

BURTON'S FLOATING MARKET A 'unique shopping experience featuring 'food, drink, clothes, gifts and much more', Sat 4 - Mon 6 May, Shobnall Leisure Complex, Burton upon Trent

THE GREAT BRITISH FOOD FESTIVAL 'Showcasing the very best of Great British produce', Sat 4 - Mon 6 May, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

WEDDING FAYRE Featuring a selection of suppliers and providing the perfect opportunity to check out the Assembly Rooms as a wedding venue, Sun 5 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

QUADROPHENIA OUTDOOR ROOFTOP FEST Featuring Who's Next - 'Europe's number-one tribute to The Who', Sun 5 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

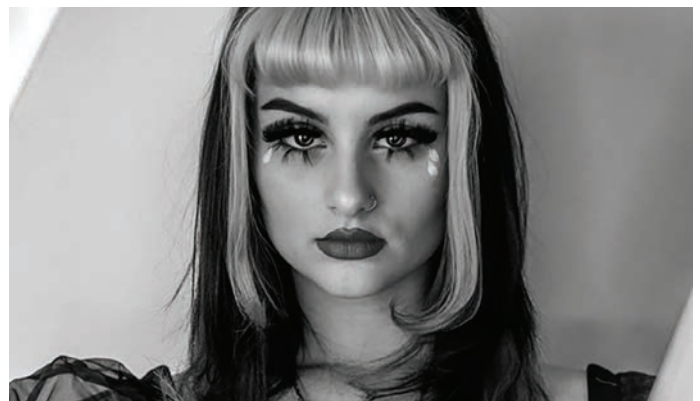
BREATHE WRESTLING Two hours of high-flying, hard-hitting, heart-stopping action, Sun 5 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

BLUEBELL WALK Three-and-a-half miles of easy walking on field paths and lanes, Sun 5 May, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

ARTISAN FOOD AND FARMER'S MARKET A wide range of stalls, as well as live music from The Lavender Girls, Sun 5 May, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

WORD OF MOUTH MAY BANK HOLIDAY TERRACE PARTY Evening of house anthems, club classics & old skool RnB, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, The Crown Codsall, Wolverhampton

LACE WARS RE-ENACTMENT Portrayal of life during the mid-18th century, Sun 5 - Mon 6 May, Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire



Bridie - The Ol'Chemist, Shrewsbury (part of Loopfest 2024)

Gigs

MITSKI + MIYA FOLICK Mon 6 May, The Civic at The Halls, W'hampton

BRYSON TILLER Tues 7 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TENACIOUS D + DAVE HILL Tues 7 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

THE JAPANESE HOUSE Wed 8 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Wed 8 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SIMPLY BARBRA - A TRIBUTE TO STREISAND Wed 8 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

LOUIS COPE Wed 8 May, Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

LADY MAISERY Wed 8 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

THE URBAN VOODOO MACHINE Thurs 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CARDINALS Thurs 9 May, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

A CERTAIN RATIO Thurs 9 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

BIG SPECIAL Thurs 9 May, XOYO, B'ham

THE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WORLD TOUR Thurs 9 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TAYLORMANIA Thurs 9 May, Dudley Town Hall

ERASURED Thurs 9 May, The Robin, Bilston

DEAN FRIEDMAN Thurs 9 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

THE SOAP GIRLS Thurs 9 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

CHRIS LESLIE Thurs 9 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Thurs 9 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

VACATIONS Fri 10 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

CAMERA OBSCURA + LIZ LAWRENCE Fri 10 May, O2 Academy, B'ham

THOMPSON TWINS' TOM BAILEY Fri 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ELBOW + THE WAEVE Fri 10 May, Resorts World

Arena, Birmingham

BOOTLEG ABBA Fri 10 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BILLY JOEL TRIBUTE UK Fri 10 May, The Robin, Bilston

THE BIG HELL Fri 10 May, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

MOMENTS OF PLEASURE - KATE BUSH TRIBUTE Fri 10 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

BARRY STEELE & FRIENDS - THE ROY ORBISON STORY Fri 10 May, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SOUNDS OF ROD STEWART Fri 10 May, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

MICHELL, PFEIFFER & KULESH Fri 10 May, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE GUITAR EXPERIENCE Fri 10 May, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

FRANKIE'S GUYS Fri 10 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PET SHOP BOYS, ACTUALLY Fri 10 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DRESSED TO KILL - KISS TRIBUTE Fri 10 May, The Station, Cannock

THE DIRTY ROCKING SCOUNDRELS Fri 10 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

MT JONES Fri 10 May, Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

TOTALLY TINA Fri 10 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

C DUNCAN Fri 10 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

MICROBABY Fri 10 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE GLASS HOUSE + HEATHEN BABY Fri 10 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE SEARCHERS Fri 10 May, Crewe Lyceum

OLIVIA RODRIGO + REMI WOLF Fri 10 - Sat 11 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

BAILEY ZIMMERMAN + JOSH ROSS Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

BANNERS + IAMTHELIVING Sat 11 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DIONNE WARWICK Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GOGO PENGUIN Sat 11 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

SWEDE DREAMZ - ABBA TRIBUTE Sat 11 May, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

QUIREBOYS + WILLIE DOWLING & THE INVISIBLE BAND + MATTY JAMES CASSIDY & THE REAL VILLAINS Sat 11 May, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

SARAH RICHES AND THE DREAMCATCHERS Sat 11 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE ROZZERS - TRIBUTE TO STING & THE POLICE Sat 11 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TOM OLLENDORFF TRIO AND TIM GARLAND Sat 11 May, The Hive, Shrewsbury

THE MARLEY EXPERIENCE Sat 11 May, The Buttermarket, S'bury

THE VERTIGO BAND Sat 11 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

RADIO RUMOURS Sat 11 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

KATHRYN WILLIAMS & WITHERED HAND Sat 11 May, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

WES NELSON Sun 12 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BUDDY HOLLY & THE CRICKETERS Sun 12 May, The Robin, Bilston

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Sun 12 May, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LUTHER LIVE Sun 12 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE LEGENDS OF MOTOWN Sun 12 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

MISSING FINGERS Sun 12 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

TALISK Sun 12 May, Wem Town Hall, North Shropshire

Classical Music

CBSO: FRENCH FANTASIES Featuring Jérémie Rhorer (conductor), Elizabeth Llewellyn (soprano) & the CBSO Youth Chorus. Programme includes works by Debussy, Ravel & Stravinsky, Thurs 9 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TØKIO MYERS: AWAKE BUT DREAMING A solo classical piano tour, featuring stripped back arrangements of his most popular works, Thurs 9 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

JAMES BARTLETT PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by R Schumann, Debussy, Ravel, Granados, Ginastera & Gershwin, Thurs 9 May, Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: DOUBLE REED BAROQUE ENSEMBLE Featuring Emmet Byrne & Rachael Pankhurst (oboes) and Nikolaj Henriques (bassoon). Programme includes works by Handel, Madeleine Drink & Zelenka, Fri 10 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

RICHARD WALKER ORGAN CONCERT Fri 10 May, St Chad's Shrewsbury

MIDDAY MANTRA: TAGORE SPECIAL Featuring Sampad South Asian Arts & Heritage. Performance includes South Asian song & spoken word, Sat 11 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO FAMILY CONCERT: CARTOON CLASSICS Featuring Olivia Clarke (conductor) & Tom Redmond (host). Programme includes works by Rossini, Wagner, Strauss, Elfmán & more... Sun 12 May, Birmingham Town Hall

LICHFIELD SINFONIA Featuring Gerard Flotats (cello). Programme includes works by Dvořák, Offenbach & Rossini, Sun 12 May, Lichfield Guildhall

PAUL F TAYLOR Tues 7 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

NICO YEARWOOD Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT Wed 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAKE LAMBERT Wed 8 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, RACHEL FAIRBURN & KAZEEM JAMAL Thurs 9 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROSIE HOLT Thurs 9 May, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

NICK HELM Thurs 9 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ED BYRNE Thurs 9 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN, JOHN LYNN & ANDY ROACH Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

LIAM WITHNAIL Fri 10 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SHAZIA MIRZA Fri 10 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

MIKE MCCLEAN, FREDDIE FARRELL, MIKE CARTER & RYAN GOUGH Fri 10 May, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

NICK HELM Fri 10 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

BEN NICKLESS Fri 10 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TEZ ILYAS, TONY COWARDS, RICKY BALSHAW & STEPHANIE LAING Fri 10 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

TOM DAVIS Sat 11 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KAZEEM JAMAL, NICK DOODY, RACHEL FAIRBURN & JOHN LYNN Sat 11 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NICK HELM Sat 11 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

STEVE ROYLE Sat 11 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

SCOTT BENNETT Sat 11 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

NATHAN CATON Sat 11 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

JUSTIN MOORHOUSE Sat 11 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

KIRI PRITCHARD-MCLEAN Sat 11 May, Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

LOU CONRAN Sat 11 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

BOBBY DAVRO Sat 11 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ED BYRNE Sat 11 May, Stourbridge Town Hall



Comedy

CURTIS WALKER, RICHARD BLACKWOOD, WAYNE 'DIBBI' ROLLINS, TOJU & QUINCY Sun 12 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOSS JONES Sun 12 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

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**THE PIONEERS
STRANGER COLE**

**SYMARI P • RHODA DAKAR
BASIL GABBIDON (STEEL PULSE)
KIOKO • THE EQUATORS • AKA THE SYNDICATE
THE AC30s • DAKKA SKANKS • LOBSTER**

**THE REGGULITES • THE PIRAGONS • XODUS: A TRIBUTE TO BOB MARLEY
THE LLOYD MCGRATH COLLECTIVE • CARISOUL VIBES • ISLAND COLLECTIVE
NATURAL RIGHT • LUIBH LAOCH • AFROBIANS • DJS TROJAN EXPLOSION
THE NIGHT OWL • THE SKA & SCORCHA SHOW • MAZZY SNAPE
SONNY & SPARE • CONAL KENNEDY • ERROL BURKE • DON'T CALL ME SKA FACE
SUNDAY GIRL & COMPÈRE LIV LINLEY • BARS/CAMPING/STREET FOOD/TRADERS
TICKETS FROM BHAMSKAFESTIVAL.CO.UK**

Theatre

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN THE MUSICAL A timeless story of love, courage and redemption, based on the award-winning 1980s movie, Mon 6 - Sat 11 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

DISNEY BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Amateur version presented by Burton & South Derbyshire College, Tues 7 - Wed 8 May, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

TWELVE ANGRY MEN Touring version of Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, starring Jason Merrells (Casualty/Emmerdale), Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street/Peak Practice), Tristan Gemmill (Coronation Street/Casualty), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder/Family Affairs), Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

OKLAHOMA! Amateur version presented by Brownhills Musical Theatre Company, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Lichfield Garrick

LIFE OF PI 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in an award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

JUMP Dark comedy that takes an unusual look at contemporary gay life, Wed 8 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

COMMUNITY SERVICE Stan's Cafe present an emotional and uplifting theatre show inspired by the life of Trevor Prince, one of the Midlands' first Black police officers, Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

ANYTHING GOES Amateur version presented by Manor Musical Theatre Company, Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

9 TO 5 THE MUSICAL CWAGMS present an amateur version of the Dolly Parton musical, Wed 8 - Sat 11 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

PEPPER AND HONEY A timely play about change, cultural difference, and the conflict between upholding the traditions of the 'old country' and embracing those of the new, Thurs 9 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

ENGLISH European premiere of Sanaz Toossi's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, set in a classroom in Iran where four adult students grapple with the challenge of learning English, Thurs 9 May - Sat 1 June, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

COSI FAN TUTTE Welsh National Opera present a brand-new production of Mozart's comic opera, Fri 10 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

DEATH IN VENICE Welsh National

Opera collaborate with No Fit State in a reimagining of Britten's atmospheric opera, Sat 11 May, Birmingham Hippodrome



Dance

CARLOS ACOSTA: ON BEFORE The world-famous dancer - and director of Birmingham Royal Ballet - pays homage to his late mother in his most personal work to date, Mon 6 - Tues 7 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

AN AUDIENCE WITH AGGERS AND TUFFERS Jonathan Agnew and Phil Tufnell present an evening of anecdotes from the world of cricket, Mon 6 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under a big-top tent, Mon 6 May, NEC, Birmingham

DAVID SCHEEL: DON'T SHOOT ME, I'M ONLY THE PIANO PLAYER One-man send-up of classical music, Thurs 9 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SEND IN THE CLOWNS: TW*TS A 'raucous, wild and tantalising drag revue show' celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre. Hosted by Fatt Butcher (The Voice UK & winner of Drag Idol UK). A 'stellar line-up' of the UK's finest drag & cabaret talent also features, Thurs 9 - Fri 10 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

TJ HIGGS: PSYCHIC MEDIUM Grief Is Love Tour 2024, Fri 10 May, Bilston Town Hall

BEN NICKLESS: THIS IS ME Join the Britain's Got Talent finalist for an evening of comedy and vocal impressions, Fri 10 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the

former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Sat 11 May, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

GHOSTBUSTERS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sat 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

MIDDAY MANTRA: SONG AND SPOKEN WORD Expect poetry, readings and music during this relaxed afternoon from Sampad South Asian Arts and Heritage, Sat 11 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Sun 12 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

MATILDA IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

Events

PIZZAS + PINTS BANK HOLIDAY MONDAY The Pizza Girls return to fire up their oven and serve fresh pizzas, Mon 6 May, Ludlow Brewery, Ludlow, South Shropshire

DINO-FEST 2024 Check out Jurassic park cars, roaming dinosaurs and fossil hunters, Mon 6 May, Hoo Zoo & Dinosaur World, Telford

UK OPEN POOL CHAMPIONSHIP 2024 The UK's biggest nine-ball pool party heads to Telford, Tues 7 - Sun 12 May, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

PAINTING, POPSTARS & PROSECCO Enjoy a soundtrack featuring some of the best pop bands from the 1980s, 90s, noughties and beyond, all whilst learning to paint a vase, Wed 8 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SHUTS & PASSAGES - GUIDED WALKING TOUR Walking tour through some of Shrewsbury's famous shuts and passages, Fri 10 May, Shrewsbury

STOKE-ON-TRENT COMEDY FESTIVAL The city's first-ever comedy festival, Fri 10 - Sat 11 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

LUDLOW SPRING FESTIVAL Featuring specially selected food & drink producers from the Marches, as well as a live music and comedy line-up, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, Ludlow Castle, South Shropshire

BIRTHDAY WEEKEND Celebrate Roundhouse's 150th birthday with a weekend of special events and tours, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, Roundhouse Birmingham

THE BABY SHOW WITH LIDL GB The UK's leading pregnancy, baby and parenting event, Fri 10 - Sun 12 May, NEC, Birmingham

FLATPACK FESTIVAL Featuring a programme of screenings and performances, walks and installations, Fri 10 - Sun 19 May, various locations across Birmingham

ROBOTS Join the St John Fisher Catholic College Robotics Teams and make seed bombs and table-top hovercrafts, Sat 11 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

ENGLAND WOMEN VS PAKISTAN WOMEN Women's IT20 cricket match, Sat 11 May, Edgbaston Stadium, B'ham

WHATEVER THE WEATHER Join Meridith Towne for 'a lively and fun talk on dressing for the weather', Sat 11 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

THE MURDER OF JANE JACKSON: A 1950'S MURDER MYSTERY A 1950s-inspired murder-mystery night, Sat 11 May, West Midlands Police Museum

1950S EVENING Enjoy the sounds of the 1950s with live rock & roll, jive and skiffle music, Sat 11 May, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

THE SPICE TRAIN Indulge in an evening of curry with friends while travelling on the Severn Valley Railway, Sat 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

HERITAGE GLASS AND CHURCH WALKING TOUR A journey through the history of glass, exploring the churches, canals, factories and people that made the Stourbridge glass industry what it is today, Sat 11 May, Stourbridge Glass Museum

CIRCUS FUN DAY Featuring circus entertainment, giant bubbles, model ballooning, face painting and craft activities, Sat 11 May, Sparrow Park, Leek

HEAVY HORSE WEEKEND Demonstration of how horses helped tradesmen and industrialists carry out their work, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

GIN TRAIN Learn about gin's tumultuous past whilst sipping, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

STEAM IN MINIATURE Featuring a 'huge' variety of rare, unique and historic locomotives, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum, Tamworth

WESTON PARK TRIATHLON Always Aim High Events return to Weston Park Triathlon for a third year, Sat 11 - Sun 12 May, Weston Park, Shropshire

ARTISAN, CRAFT AND GIFT MARKET Featuring talented makers, creators and enterprises from across the region, Sun 12 May, Bantock House Museum, Wolverhampton

WAKE UP THE ZOO An early-morning guided tour giving visitors the opportunity to go behind the scenes and get up close to a variety of exotic animals, Sun 12 May, Dudley Zoo

Gigs

RIVERSIDE + KLONE
Mon 13 May, O2
Institute, Birmingham

**LONDON SYMPHONIC
ROCK ORCHESTRA** Mon
13 May, Symphony
Hall, Birmingham

**ERIC CLAPTON + ANDY
FAIRWEATHER LOW AND
THE LOW RIDERS** Mon
13 May, Resorts World
Arena, Birmingham

LOVE FAME TRAGEDY
Tues 14 May, O2
Institute, Birmingham

NEWTON FAULKNER
Tues 14 May, Theatre
Severn, Shrewsbury

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS
Tues 14 - Wed 15 May,
Utilita Arena B'ham

MYLES SMITH Wed 15
May, O2 Institute,
Birmingham

PVRS + SCENE QUEEN
Wed 15 May, O2
Academy, Birmingham

**LEEEO JOHN OF
IMAGINATION** Wed 15
May, Birmingham Town
Hall

THE PAPERBOYS Wed 15
May, Katie Fitzgerald's,
Stourbridge

**OMEGA NEBULA +
JAMJAH SOUND** Thurs
16 May, Hare &
Hounds, Birmingham

**FRANKIE AND THE WITCH
FINGERS + MARGARITA
WITCH CULT** Thurs 16
May, Hare & Hounds,
Birmingham

TEDDY SWIMS Thurs 16
May, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

THE SHIRES Thurs 16
May, Birmingham Town
Hall

HUE & CRY Thurs 16
May, The Robin,
Bilston

**BRUCE DICKINSON +
BLACK SMOKE TRIGGER**
Thurs 16 May, The
Civic at The Halls,
Wolverhampton

**BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY -
FRANKIE VALLI & THE
FOUR SEASONS TRIBUTE**
Thurs 16 May,
Octagon, Stoke-on-
Trent

**SKERRYVORE + DEVON
MAYSON** Thurs 16 May,
Theatre Severn,
Shrewsbury

THROUGH THE DECADES

**WITH BUDDY HOLLY AND
ROY ORBISON** Thurs 16
May, Theatre On The
Steps, Bridgnorth

BRETT YOUNG Fri 17
May, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

**A COUNTRY NIGHT IN
NASHVILLE** Fri 17 May,
Sutton Coldfield Town
Hall

SYSTEM EIGHTIES Fri 17
May, The Rhodehouse,
Sutton Coldfield

MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri
17 May, Dudley Town
Hall

**LABOUR OF LOVE - UB40
TRIBUTE** Fri 17 May,
The River Rooms,
Stourbridge

TOM ROBINSON Fri 17
May, Katie Fitzgerald's,
Stourbridge

GREY DAZE Fri 17 May,
KK's Steel Mill,
Wolverhampton

THE DEVOUT Fri 17 May,
Newhampton Arts
Centre, W'hampton

**RAMMLIED - RAMMSTEIN
TRIBUTE** Fri 17 May,
Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

**BEAUTIFUL TRAUMA -
PINK TRIBUTE** Fri 17
May, Stafford
Gatehouse Theatre

BLUE ROSE CODE Fri 17
May, Theatre Severn,
Shrewsbury

FLEETING RUMOURS Fri
17 May, The
Buttermarket,
Shrewsbury

WINGWALKERS Fri 17
May, Albert's Shed,
Southwater, Telford

STRICTLY ABBA Fri 17
May, Theatre On The
Steps, Bridgnorth,
South Shropshire

**MY DARLING
CLEMENTINE** Fri 17 May,
Hermon Arts,
Oswestry, North
Shropshire

**CUTTING CORNERS +
RAGING MABELS** Fri 17
May, Percy's Cafe Bar,
Whitchurch, North
Shropshire

SANCTUM SANCTORIUM
Fri 17 - Sat 18 May,
The Hub at St Mary's,
Lichfield

TAKE THAT + OLLY MURS
Fri 17 - Mon 20 May,
Utilita Arena B'ham

IYAMAHA Sat 18 May, O2
Institute, Birmingham

**MOVING PICTURES -
RUSH TRIBUTE** Sat 18
May, O2 Academy,
Birmingham

BLANCMANGE Sat 18
May, O2 Institute,
Birmingham

**THE DARKSIDE OF PINK
FLOYD** Sat 18 May,
Brierley Hill Civic,
Dudley

ULTIMATE RNB Sat 18
May, The River Rooms,
Stourbridge

ODYSSEY Sat 18 May,
The Robin, Bilston

HAYSEED DIXIE Sat 18
May, KK's Steel Mill,
Wolverhampton

BLACKMORE'S BLOOD
Sat 18 May,
Newhampton Arts
Centre, W'hampton

**THE BLACK CROWES +
JIM JONES ALL STARS**
Sat 18 May, The Civic
at The Halls,
Wolverhampton

THESE WICKED RIVERS
Sat 18 May, The
Sugarhill, Stoke-on-
Trent

OCEAN COLOUR SCENE
Sat 18 May, Uttoxeter
Racecourse

EZIO Sat 18 May,
Lichfield Garrick

ERASURED Sat 18 May,
The Buttermarket,
Shrewsbury

**MAELIVE AND THE
NEVER NEVERLAND
EXPRESS** Sat 18 May,
The Buttermarket,
Shrewsbury

BLACK HEART ANGELS
Sat 18 May, Albert's
Shed, Southwater,
Telford

ELO AGAIN Sat 18 May,
Festival Drayton
Centre, Market
Drayton, North Shrops

JACOB AND DRINKWATER
Sat 18 May, Hermon
Arts, Oswestry, North
Shropshire

BOWEN * YOUNG Sun 19
May, O2 Institute,
Birmingham

BELLAH MAE Sun 19
May, O2 Institute,
Birmingham

RICHARD MARX Sun 19
May, Symphony Hall,
Birmingham

DEAN FRIEDMAN Sun 19
May, The Buttermarket,
Shrewsbury

Classical Music

**LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH
THOMAS TROTTER** Programme
includes works by CHH Parry, JS
Bach, J Weir, M Duruflé & G Holst,
Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

VIOLIN & PIANO DUO Featuring Alison
Loram (violin) & Chris Symons
(piano), Tues 14 May, St Alkmund's
Church, Shrewsbury

CBSO: NEW WORLD SYMPHONY
Featuring Joshua Weilerstein
(conductor), Michael Mulroy
(soprano) & The CBSO Chorus.
Programme includes works by Haas,
Bernstein, Shaw & Dvořák, Wed 15
May, Symphony Hall Birmingham

**HUW WIGGIN & NORIKO OGAWA IN
CONCERT** Programme includes works
by Debussy, JS Bach, Rachmaninov
& more... Wed 15 May, Ludlow
Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire
CELEBRATING SANCTUARY Featuring
Iryna Muha (guitar and traditional
instruments) & Volodymyr Vasylenko
(accordion). Programme features
eastern european contemporary folk
music, Thurs 16 May, Symphony
Hall, Birmingham

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring
students from Cheltenham's school
of music, Fri 17 May, St Chad's
Church, Shrewsbury

SPRING INTO SUMMER Featuring
Gentleman Songsters &
Kidderminster Valentines, Sat 18
May, Halesowen Town Hall

LUDLOW ORCHESTRA: SPRING CONCERT
Featuring Claire Tocknell (leader),
Jonathan Lyness (conductor) &
Gamal Khamis (piano). Programme
includes works by Kodály, Greig &
Nielsen, Sat 18 May, Ludlow
Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LIANA STOREY PIANO RECITAL
Programme includes works by
Beethoven, Chopin & Rachmaninov,
Sun 19 May, St Alkmund's Church,
Shrewsbury

Comedy

THE USELESS HOTLINE Mon 13 May,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

EMMANUEL SONUBI Wed 15 May, The
Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 15 May,
The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAUL FOOT Wed 15 May,
Newhampton Arts Centre,
Wolverhampton

PUNT & DENNIS Wed 15 May, Theatre
Severn, Shrewsbury

**COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY
ROBINSON, MICK FERRY & CARL
HUTCHINSON** Thurs 16 May, The Glee

Club, Birmingham

SIMON BRODKIN Thurs 16 May, The
Alexandra, Birmingham

ASHLEY BLAKER Thurs 16 May,
Midlands Arts Centre (mac), B'ham

JESSICA FOSTEKWE Thurs 16 May,
Newhampton Arts Centre,
Wolverhampton

**MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON,
GARETH WAUGH, THENJIWE & VINNY
SHIU** Fri 17 May, The Glee Club,
Birmingham

ELLIOT STEEL Fri 17 May, The Glee
Club, Birmingham

MILES JUPP Fri 17 May, Lichfield
Garrick

JO CAULFIELD Fri 17 May, Lichfield
Garrick



**JON PEARSON, PETE PHILLIPSON, NICK
CLARKE & CHRISTIAN REILLY** Fri 17
May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms,
South Shropshire

**MICK FERRY, CARL HUTCHINSON,
GARETH WAUGH & COMIC TBC** Sat 18
May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ALFIE MOORE Sat 18 May, Theatre
Severn, Shrewsbury

PAUL SMITH Sat 18 May, Crewe
Lyceum Theatre

FRANK SKINNER Sat 18 - Sun 19 May,
The Alexandra, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sun 19 May, The Glee
Club, Birmingham

Theatre

SISTER ACT THE MUSICAL Brand-new
production featuring Sue Cleaver as
Mother Superior, Mon 13 - Sat 18
May, Birmingham Hippodrome

**JOSEPH AND THE TECHNICOLOUR
DREAMCOAT** The Mellow Dramatics
present an amateur version of the
Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber
musical, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, The
Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon
Trent

SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy
which parodies a selection of
popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical,
fast-paced show', Wed 15 May,
Tamworth Assembly Rooms

GUYS AND DOLLS Tinkers Farm Opera
present an amateur version of the
iconic romantic comedy, Wed 15 -
Sat 18 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

LIBERATION SQUARES Three teenage
girls forge an unlikely friendship in a
play inspired by graphic novels, hip-

hop, pop culture and real-world activists, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, The Rep, Birmingham

MATILDA THE MUSICAL JR Amateur version presented by Gatehouse Youth Theatre, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ABIGAIL'S PARTY Amateur version of Mike Leigh's modern classic, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Dudley Little Theatre

WHAT'S NEXT? Middle-Weight Theatre present a one-woman show that delves into the remarkable life of Harriet Quimby, a trailblazing figure in aviation history, Fri 17 - Sat 18 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

CHARLIE COOK'S FAVOURITE BOOK Puppetry & song come together in a new stage version of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's children's book, Fri 17 - Sun 19 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

PRIDE & PREJUDICE Hotbuckle theatre present a fast-paced production based on the Jane Austen classic, Sat 18 May, Conover Village Hall, Nr Shrewsbury

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST The Pantaloons present their version of Oscar Wilde's comic masterpiece, Sun 19 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Kids Theatre

MORGAN & WEST'S MASSIVE MAGIC SHOW FOR KIDS 'Conjuring capers, mysterious magic tricks, larger-than-life laughs and fantastic facial furniture', all crammed into one hour of non-stop fun for all the family. Recommended for ages five-plus, Sun 19 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

MADAGASCAR THE MUSICAL CBBC star Karim Zeroual stars as King Julien in an adventure musical based on the hit DreamWorks film, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Dance

ROSHNI - SONIA SABRI COMPANY An intimate crafting of dance and live music, made up of three distinctive and engaging dance works: The Call, The Light, and The Wave, Thurs 16 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

JAACKMAATE'S HAPPY HOUR Join podcast favourites Jack, Stevie, Robbie & Alfie as they head out on a

magical quest, Mon 13 May, Birmingham Town Hall

PSYCHIC SALLY Evening of mediumship, Mon 13 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE GREATEST MAGICIAN Featuring James Phelan, the magician famous for jamming the BBC switchboard after correctly predicting the lottery, Mon 13 May, Lichfield Garrick

ERIC'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT Join Eric and friends as they throw a huge party to celebrate a quarter of a century performing at the New Vic, Mon 13 - Sat 18 May, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

WOLVES WEMBLEY WONDERS Steve Daley, Kenny Hibbitt, John Richards, John McAlle, Derek Parkin, Geoff Palmer, Phil Parkes and Barry Powell re-live the iconic match that saw Wolverhampton Wanderers win the 1974 League Cup Final against Manchester City, Tues 14 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HENRY COLE ON TOUR An evening with the presenter of The World's Greatest Motorcycle Rides. Hosted by Henry's good friend, Steve 'Stavros' Parrish, Wed 15 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MUGENKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS Thurs 16 May, Crewe Lyceum

STAGES THROUGH THE AGES Celebration of musical theatre, showcasing iconic songs from 1920 to 2020, Thurs 16 - Sat 18 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

WILD ISLES LIVE Featuring highlights from the acclaimed BBC series alongside never-before-seen footage and insight from visionary documentary producer Alastair Fothergill, Fri 17 May, Birmingham Town Hall

AN EVENING WITH SIR BRADLEY WIGGINS Join the Tour De France & Olympic medallist as he discusses his fantastic career, Fri 17 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TOP GUN: OUTDOOR CINEMA Open-air screening of the original Top Gun movie, Fri 17 May, Chirk Castle, Wrexham

ELTON JOHN BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band, Fri 17 May, Lichfield Cathedral

KEVIN & PERRY GO LARGE IN CONCERT A film-with-orchestra experience under the big-top tent, Fri 17 May, NEC, Birmingham

HELP I SEXTED MY BOSS Comedy podcast in which posh etiquette expert William Hanson and Jordan North, an authority on all things common, help audiences navigate the everyday problems of modern life, Sat 18 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DIRTY DANCING: OUTDOOR CINEMA Open-air screening of the hit 1980s



Great British Dog Walk - Weston Park

movie, Sat 18 May, Chirk Castle, Wrexham

THE MAGIC OF TERRY PRATCHETT Join author & comedian Marc Burrows as he journeys through the life and work of one of the greatest storytellers of all time, Sat 18 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SING THE MUSICALS Featuring songs from some of the greatest musicals of all time, performed by a live orchestra and character singers, with a giant screen featuring singalong lyrics, Sat 18 May, Dudley Town Hall

WE'LL MEET AGAIN Join the Bluebird Belles on a musical journey as they take you back in time to wartime Britain, Sat 18 May, Bilston Town Hall

JAMES BOND GALA NIGHT Tom Roberts comperes an evening of iconic Bond anthems. Gladstone 'G' Wilson (musical director), Clare Andress & Tom Roberts (vocals) also feature, Sun 19 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Talks & Spoken Word

EMMA KENNY: KILLER CULTS Psychology expert Emma Kenny continues her journey into true crime and explores the mysterious and manipulative world of cults, Thurs 16 May, Dudley Town Hall

Events

MUSEUM TOUR Join staff and volunteers for a guided tour of the museum, Mon 13 May, Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL WATERCOLOUR MASTERS Exhibition and festival featuring the world's best watercolour artists, Wed 15 - Fri 24 May, Lilleshall Hall, Shropshire

ROGUES, VILLAINS & PEAKY BLINDERS - CRIMINALS OF THE LOCK-UP Explore the museum after hours and enjoy an

evening talk about some of the criminals held at the lock-up in its 125 year history, Thurs 16 May, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

STAFFORD MUSIC & FOOD FESTIVAL Featuring live music, street food and retail stalls, Thurs 16 May, Market Square, Stafford

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL Featuring both modern and heritage locomotives, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

WORD OF MOUTH THE ORIGINALS OVER 25\$ A night of nostalgia and originals, Fri 17 - Sat 18 May, The Parisian, Wolverhampton

ANNUAL DUCK RACING DAY Watch rubber ducks race down the stream Sat 18 May, Carding Mill Valley, Church Stretton, Shropshire

I CAN DANCE 70S DISCO WORKSHOP Learn a fun and uber-funky disco routine with hundreds of other locals, Sat 18 May, Quarry Park, Shrewsbury

BIG 80S OUTDOOR TERRACE PARTY LIVE Featuring Erasure's greatest hits and 80s party, Sat 18 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

1940S EXTRAVAGANZA Expect bunting, big-band sounds, boogie woogie, period vehicles & costumes, jive lessons - and maybe even spam fritters! Attendees are encouraged to dress for the occasion, Sat 18 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

MAKERS CENTRAL Offering a chance for budding and established makers to learn, share skills and get creative, Sat 18 - Sun 19 May, NEC, B'ham

FORD MODEL T EVENT Display of Ford Model T cars at the Spring Village station, Sun 19 May, Telford Steam Railway, Shropshire

GREAT BRITISH DOG WALK Sponsored walk to help transform deaf people's lives, Sun 19 May, Weston Park

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring traders from across the UK selling a wide range of items from yesteryear, Sun 19 May, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

Gigs

TAYLORMANIA Mon 20 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

STEVE & JULIE WIGLEY Mon 20 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LEAH KATE + HUNTER DAILY + CEARA CAVALIERI Tues 21 May, O2 Institute, B'ham

BOOTLEG ROCK SHOW Tues 21 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

ICE NINE KILLS Wed 22 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

THE MUSIC OF CHAKA KHAN Wed 22 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ECHOBELLY Wed 22 May, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

KARINE POLWART Wed 22 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

THE TOM JONES SONGBOOK Wed 22 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

NICKELBACK + LOTTERY WINNERS Thurs 23 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

FRANK SINATRA - THE RETIREMENT CONCERT Thurs 23 May, Dudley Town Hall

KARINE POLWART Thurs 23 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

ALIBIS Thurs 23 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

TARA CLERKIN TRIO + HARESS Thurs 23 May, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

SONU NIGAM Fri 24 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

DRESSED TO KILL - KISS TRIBUTE Fri 24 May, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

TOMMY BLAIZE Fri 24 May, Dudley Town Hall

DEFINITELY MIGHT + ADORED Fri 24 May, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ELVIS: AS IT WAS Fri 24 May, The Robin, Bilston

CHRIS CATALYST + THE

MIDNIGHT MEN Fri 24 May, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

SUNDARA KARMA Fri 24 May, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

FOOFIGHTERS GB Fri 24 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE PEAK DISTRICT BIG BAND Fri 24 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

STORMBRINGER Fri 24 May, The Station, Cannock

JORDAN ADAMS Fri 24 May, Lichfield Garrick

RIP IT UP Fri 24 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

IN THE AIR TONIGHT - PHIL COLLINS TRIBUTE Fri 24 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE RUFFNECKS Fri 24 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE GTS Fri 24 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

SUNTOU SUSSO Fri 24 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LENNOX & THE FLAWED + THE DISPOSABLES + KK VERKEFNI Fri 24 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE DIANA ROSS STORY Fri 24 May, Aston Hall, Wrexham

BARRY STEELE Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

SONS OF THE EAST + PAT BURGNER Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DANNY BROWN Sat 25 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SMYTHS Sat 25 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE PIRAGONS - JOHN HOLT TRIBUTE Sat 25 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN Sat 25 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

NOUGHTY NINETIES Sat 25 May, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

T.REXTASY Sat 25 May,

The Robin, Bilston

THE CIRCLES Sat 25 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ELECTROMANTICS Sat 25 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE BOOTIFUL SOUTH Sat 25 May, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Sat 25 May, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

LOST IN MUSIC Sat 25 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE MOTEL 6 Sat 25 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

AUDIO THIEVES Sat 25 May, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

DURAN DURAN EXPERIENCE Sat 25 May, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

ATHENAS REVENGE + MAGIC MARY + KUFF DAM Sat 25 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

WESTWORLD WEEKEND XX Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

NICKI MINAJ Sun 26 May, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

DOOKIE + BLINKED-182 + THE SKATE PUNK Sun 26 May, The Robin, Bilston

MARQUIS DRIVE + SIG AND THE FIREPILOTS Sun 26 May, The Station, Cannock

THE DRIFTERS Sun 26 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE RYAN EVANS COUNTRY MUSIC SHOW Sun 26 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

EGO FRIENDLY Sun 26 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BARN54 + CAPER CLOWNS Sun 26 May, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

COLDPLACE - COLDPLAY TRIBUTE Sun 26 May, Aston Hall, Wrexham

Classical Music

CZECH NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Steven Mercurio (conductor) & Mark Bebbington (piano). Programme includes works by Copland, Beethoven, Smetana & Dvořák, Tues 21 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SHREWSBURY SCHOOL ENSEMBLES CONCERT Tues 21 May, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

RBC: DANNY ELFMAN PERCUSSION QUARTET Pre-CBSO concert showcase, featuring musicians from Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's Percussion department. Programme includes works by Sartorius, Glass, Shaw & Elfman, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BERNSTEIN & ELFMAN Featuring Fabien Gabel (conductor) & Colin Currie (percussion). Programme includes works by Bernstein, Elfman & Weill, Thurs 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA Candlelit concert with live orchestra, Thurs 23 May, Shrewsbury Abbey

MARTIN JAMES PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Debussy, Couperin, Ravel Granados & Ginastera, Thurs 23 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

CHARLES OWEN PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Chopin, Faure, Ravel & Cecile Chaminade, Thurs 23 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

MUSIC FOR SOPRANO, FLUTE & PIANO Featuring Sarah Westwood, Chris Lacey & Richard Silk, Fri 24 May, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

THE LONDON TANGO QUINTET Featuring Miloš Milivojević (accordion), David Juritz (violin), Craig Ogden (guitar), David Gordon (piano) & Richard Pryce (bass). Programme includes works by Piazzolla & Troilo, Fri 24 May, Prestfelde School, Shrewsbury

THE FULLTONE ORCHESTRA, CARLI PAOLI & ALED JONES Also featuring Anthony Brown (conductor) & Gareth Dafydd Morris (voice). Programme includes music from classical favourites and cinema, Sat 25 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CHRISTINE MCMMASTER PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Byrd, Rachmaninov, Cage & Debussy, Sat 25 May, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

TOMOS BOYLE PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by C Schumann, Chopin & Ravel, Sun 26 May, Palmers Hall, Ludlow College, South Shropshire

SCIPIONE SANGIOVANNI PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works

by Handel, Duke Ellington, Radiohead & more... Sun 26 May, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

Comedy

ANUVAB PAL Tues 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICH HALL Tues 21 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

KANAN GILL Wed 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB DEERING, JOSH JONES & BARBARA NICE Wed 22 May, Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

RICH HALL Wed 22 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Thurs 23 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

SIMON EVANS Thurs 23 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

PAUL SMITH Thurs 23 May, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

TOM ALLEN Thurs 23 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JULIAN CLARY Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

HORATIO GOULD Fri 24 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEVIN PRECIOUS Fri 24 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ROBYN PERKINS, ANDREW WHITE, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICHAEL MCINTYRE Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Sat 25 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sat 25 May, The Rep, Birmingham

KEVIN J, MR CEE, GBEMI OLADIPO, KYRAH GRAY & JAZZIE ZONZOLO Sun 26 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

THE OLIVE BOY A 'crude and compelling' coming-of-age comedy, written & performed by Ollie Maddigan, Tues 21 - Wed 22 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

KINKY BOOTS Sutton Coldfield Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the Tony Award-winning musical, Tues 21 - Sat 25 May, Lichfield Garrick

COME FROM AWAY Olivier & Tony award-winning musical telling the real-life story of the 7,000 air passengers from all over the world who were grounded in Canada during the wake of 9/11, Tues 21 May - Sat 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

OPERATION JULIE Breaking Bad

collides with *The Good Life* in this anarchic play accompanied by 1970s prog-rock music, performed live on stage by nine talented actor-musicians, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

THE ROTTING HART - A NEW QUEER HORROR The Crested Fools present a new queer horror tackling the history of homophobia in Spain and 'the enduring hate that persists inside ourselves', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

THE WITCHING HOUR National tour of James Williams' terrifying tale, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR Amateur version of Joan Littlewood's classic musical, Fri 24 May, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

NASTY Succulent Theatre present an autobiographical, confessional theatre piece exploring 'the hidden side of what it means to be a woman', Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS University of Wolverhampton School of Performing Arts present an amateur version of the comedy rock musical, Fri 24 - Sat 25 May, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CHARLES DICKENS' THE HAUNTING Ghost story inspired by one of Britain's best-loved authors, Fri 24 May - Sat 15 June, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

LES MISERABLES SCHOOL EDITION Performed by Curtain Call Theatre Company, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Kids Theatre

THE ZOO THAT COMES TO YOU Meet an eclectic group of animals as they discuss their life experiences and the challenges they face in a rapidly changing world dominated by humans. Suitable for children aged five plus, Wed 22 May, Old Park School, Brierley Hill

HONK! THE UGLY DUCKLING MUSICAL Five Towns Theatre present an amateur version of the heart-warming children's musical, Wed 22 - Sat 25 May, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE LION INSIDE Puppetry, music and song feature in a new stage adaptation of Rachel Bright & Jim Field's much-loved story for younger audiences, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Town Hall

PEPPA PIG'S FUN DAY OUT Join Peppa and her family & friends for a fun-packed day complete with songs, dance and muddy puddles, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

JOHANNES RADEBE: HOUSE OF JOJO Brand-new theatrical celebration 'jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes and world-class dance', Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JOHANNES RADEBE: HOUSE OF JOJO Brand-new theatrical celebration 'jam-packed with roof-raising music, dazzling costumes and world-class dance', Sun 26 May, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Light Entertainment

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Acclaimed production celebrating the King of Pop. Featuring a live band, dazzling costumes and the performer's iconic dance routines, Mon 20 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic show featuring comedy, rock'n'roll and pop culture from the 1950s right through to the 80s, Tues 21 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

PSYCHIC SALLY Evening of mediumship, Thurs 23 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

TO MOVE IN TIME Tyrone Huggins' performs a monologue in which an unnamed protagonist speculates playfully about what he'd do if he were able to travel through time, Thurs 23 - Fri 24 May, The Rep, Birmingham

THE REAL FULL MONTY A group of local people dare to bare all in support of three Stafford-based charities, Thurs 23 - Sat 25 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE 'An evening of laughter, cabaret, mystery and glamour', Fri 24 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

SYMPHONIC IBIZA ORCHESTRA FEATURING HEATHER SMALL The legendary sounds of Ibiza 'as you've never heard them before', Fri 24 May, NEC, Birmingham

THE D-DAY DARLINGS A musical journey back to the heart of 1940s wartime Britain, Sat 25 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT: AN EVENING WITH JOHN LYDON Join the former Sex Pistols frontman as he talks about his unique and extraordinary career, Sat 25 May, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Nostalgic show featuring comedy, rock'n'roll and pop culture from the 1950s right through to the 80s, Sat 25 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

LOOKING FOR ME FRIEND: THE MUSIC OF

VICTORIA WOOD A whistle-stop tour through some of Victoria Wood's best-loved songs, Sat 25 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

IMPROV WOLVES Featuring new comedy sketches devised on the spot and based entirely on audience suggestions, Sat 25 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

POLLY & ESTHER A chaotic mother-daughter drag cabaret, written and performed by Polly Amorous & Esther Parade, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

THE D-DAY DARLINGS A musical journey back to the heart of 1940s wartime Britain, Sun 26 May, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

Events

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN 19TH CENTURY SHROPSHIRE Author & lecturer Richard Ireland gives an overview of prisons in the 19th century, Tues 21 May, Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury

HALLS FINE ART VALUATION ADVISORY DAY Free antique & fine art valuations and advice, Tues 21 May, Weston Park, Shropshire

SHUTS & PASSAGES - GUIDED WALKING TOUR Walking tour through some of Shrewsbury's shuts and passages, Fri 24 May, Shrewsbury

CLUBFEST 2024 Featuring live music, family activities and food vendors, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Weston Park, Shropshire

SHROPSHIRE COUNTY SHOW The family-friendly agricultural event makes a welcome return, Sat 25 May, West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 25 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

HAGLEY HALL'S 95TH BIRTHDAY AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage with bubbles and afternoon tea, Sat 25 - Sun 26 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

BRICK FEST LIVE The largest hands-on Lego event of its kind makes its UK debut, Sat 25 - Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

MADE IN THE BLACK COUNTRY Celebrate the things, people and products that came from the Black Country, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

CHARACTER WEEK Meet your favourite kids' characters across the half-term holiday, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, West Midlands Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

VICTORIAN FOOD WEEK Watch cooking demonstrations in a special show,

make sweets with the Blists Hill residents and taste samples of some 'more unusual' Victorian dishes, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

OH CRUMBS! Celebrate all things biscuits, creating your own biscuit using air dry clay, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Coalport China Museum, Ironbridge

MAY HALF TERM Learn more about the incredible world of butterflies and bees, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Chirk Castle, Wrexham

BRICK OCEAN AT THE ENGINE HOUSE Go under the sea and discover ocean-themed brick model installations, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

MEDIAVAL MAYHEM Medieval fun for all the family, Sat 25 May - Sun 2 June, Tamworth Castle

DINO FAMILY FUN RACEDAY Watch out for the giant T-Rex, a triceratops, raptor, and baby dinosaurs roaming around the racecourse, Sun 26 May, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

WORD OF MOUTH THE OVER 30S DAYCLUB Sun 26 May, Hoofbeats The Venue, Walsall

MEDIAVAL LIFE Meet characters from the past and hear tales from centuries ago in a living history encampment, Sun 26 - Mon 27 May, Stokesay Castle, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

Festivals

BEARDED THEORY SPRING GATHERING Line-up includes Jane's Addiction, Amyl And The Sniffers & Sleaford Mods, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up includes The Bon Jovi Experience, Absolute Bowie & Young Elton, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Tailgunner, Stickman & Dead Man's Whiskey, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Greg Russell, Wet The Tea & Calan, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Kelsall Village, Cheshire

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN Line-up includes The Orb, Sea Power, Hercules & Love Affair, Fri 24 - Mon 27 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up includes Loreen, Natasha Bedingfield & Heather Small, Fri 24 - Sun 26 May, Birmingham Gay Village

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes Jockstrap, Wunderhorse & The Magic Gang, Sun 26 May, various venues in Nottingham



Tool - Resorts World Arena

Gigs

JENNY COLQUITT + CRAIG GOULD Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

HIS LORDSHIP Mon 27 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE LOVELY EGGS Mon 27 May, XOYO, Birmingham

QUADE + MOTHS OF THE MOON Tues 28 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

TEENAGE DADS Tues 28 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

TINY HABITS Tues 28 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ZOMBIES Tues 28 May, Birmingham Town Hall

DOBERMANN Tues 28 May, The Robin, Bilston

WOMAN LIKE ME: THE LITTLE MIX SHOW Wed 29 May, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD + GRACE CUMMINGS Wed 29 May, The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton

TOOL + NIGHT VERSES Thurs 30 May, Resorts World Arena, B'ham

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Thurs 30 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

NOT THE ROLLING STONES Thurs 30 May, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

ALEXANDER O'NEAL Thurs 30 May, The

Robin, Bilston

JACQUI DANKWORTH Thurs 30 May, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

CONCRETISM + BUNKR Thurs 30 May, The Victoria, Birmingham

MARTY WILDE & THE WILDCATS Thurs 30 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

PURE JOVI Thurs 30 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

GORDON HENDRICKS - ONE NIGHT WITH YOU Thurs 30 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

GARY NUMAN Fri 31 May, O2 Institute, Birmingham

TEDDY SWIMS Fri 31 May, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Fri 31 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SAN QUENTIN Fri 31 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE INTERPRETERS Fri 31 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

PROMISES AND LIES - THE UB40 YEARS Fri 31 May, Dudley Town Hall

WHITESNAKE UK Fri 31 May, The Robin, Bilston

EMMA RAWICZ QUARTET Fri 31 May, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

OASISH Fri 31 May, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

SHALAMAR Fri 31 May,

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

MURPHY'S MARBLES Fri 31 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

SIMON AND GARFUNKEL: THROUGH THE YEARS Fri 31 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

I'M EVERY WHITNEY Fri 31 May, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

LOST IN MUSIC Fri 31 May, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

ULTIMATE GREENDAY Fri 31 May, The Station, Cannock

THE ROCKET MAN - ELTON TRIBUTE Fri 31 May, Lichfield Garrick

THE PITMEN POETS Fri 31 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GORDON HENDRICKS IS ELVIS Fri 31 May, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

DOGHOUSE DERELICTS Fri 31 May, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE ROTUNDAS Fri 31 May, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

SAN QUENTIN Fri 31 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

JASON ALLAN Fri 31 May, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE BLED + STILL IN LOVE Fri 31 May, The Asylum, Birmingham

OLI HAYHURST Fri 31 May, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

TARA CLERKIN TRIO Fri 31 May, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

Classical Music

FRENCH HORN CONNEXION Tues 28 May, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

CBSO: OLD WORLD SYMPHONY Featuring Oksana Lyniv (conductor) & Andrii Murza (violin). Programme includes works by Frolyak, Tchaikovsky & Dvořák, Wed 29 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BEST OF BALLET Featuring Martin Yates (conductor) & Zenaida Yanowsky (presenter). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev, Stravinsky & Massenet, Fri 31 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JULIA HARTMANN PIANO RECITAL Fri 31 May, St Chad's Shrewsbury

Comedy

MICHELLE BRASIER Tues 28 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WATCH WHAT CRAPPENS Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRISTOPHER MACARTHUR-BOYD Wed 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, AMY MATTHEWS & FREYA MCGHEE Thurs 30 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROMESH RANGANATHAN Thurs 30 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



BRENNAN REECE, DAVE LONGLEY, ROBERT WHITE & AMY MATTHEWS Fri 31 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

PRIDE & PREJUDICE Hotbuckle theatre present a fast-paced production based on the Jane Austen classic, Wed 29 - Thurs 30 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



SIX CHICK FLICKS Smash-hit comedy which parodies a selection of popular chick flicks in a 'hysterical, fast-paced show', Fri 31 May, Stourbridge Town Hall

OLIVER! Get Your Wigle On present an amateur version of Lionel Bart's award-winning musical, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Kids Theatre

THE LITTLE PRINCE Lyngo Theatre Company fuse puppetry and song to tell a story of love, life and happiness. Based on the bestselling children's book, Mon 27 May, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE LITTLE MERMAID JR Get Your Wigle On present an amateur version of the magical underwater adventure, Mon 27 - Tues 28 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DINOSAUR ADVENTURE LIVE - TROUBLE ON VOLCANO ISLAND An immersive theatrical adventure for the whole family, Tues 28 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA Join the tea-guzzling tiger in a delightful family show packed with oodles of magic, singalong songs and clumsy chaos. Based on Judith Kerr's bestselling children's book, Tues 28 - Thurs 30 May, Lichfield Garrick

MILKSHAKE LIVE ON HOLIDAY All-singing, all-dancing show for younger audiences, Wed 29 May, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MADAGASCAR THE MUSICAL CBBC star Karim Zeroul stars as King Julien in an adventure musical based on the hit DreamWorks film, Thurs 30 May - Sun 2 June, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



Light Entertainment

MIND MANGLER: MEMBER OF THE TRAGIC CIRCLE New mentalism comedy from Henry Lewis and Jonathan Sayer - creators of the smash-hit The Play That Goes Wrong and BBC series The Goes

Monday 27 - Friday 31 May

Wrong Show, Mon 27 - Wed 29 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE SOUND OF MUZAK Dan Driver's one-man show explores 'music's profound impact on our lives', Wed 29 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



POP DIVAS LIVE! Pop-concert experience featuring family-friendly choreography and lyrics, Wed 29 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE An evening of 'laughter, cabaret, mystery and glamour', Thurs 30 May, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

AN EVENING WITH SIR BRADLEY WIGGINS Join the Tour De France & Olympic medallist as he discusses his fantastic career, Fri 31 May, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

THE PITMEN POETS A night of songs and stories, faced with North East

humour and humanity, Fri 31 May, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



Talks & Spoken Word

SIMON ARMITAGE Join the Poet Laureate for readings from Sir Gawain & The Green Knight. Book signings also available, Thurs 30 May, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

Events

RED EVENT WEDDING FAYRE Day of wedding inspiration featuring 'top-quality suppliers', Mon 27 May, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

STREET JAM FESTIVAL DANCE COMPETITION Featuring a

performance from Diversity and 100-plus dance schools from around the UK, Mon 27 May, NEC, Birmingham

MARVELLOUS MATERIALS BUSKING Fun activities exploring different materials and their properties, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

MAY HALF TERM - SEEING IS BELIEVING Create your own basic kaleidoscopes, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

MARVELLOUS MATERIALS FAMILY SHOW Interactive family show featuring demonstrations and audience participation, Mon 27 - Fri 31 May, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

BUTTERFLY CRAFT Create a piece of butterfly art with help from the ranger team, Tues 28 - Wed 29 May, Chirk Castle, Wrexham

DINOSAUR ANTICS Meet a walking T-Rex, see animals dating back to prehistoric times and check out dinosaur props, Wed 29 May, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY SHOW Two-day agricultural event for all the

family, Wed 29 - Thurs 30 May, Staffordshire County Showground



ETHICAL ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS WITH ZOOLAB Get up close and hands-on with real live animals, including snakes and tarantulas, Fri 31 May, Moseley Old Hall, Wolverhampton

Festivals

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL SKA & REGGAE FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Pioneers, Stranger Cole & Basil Gabbidon, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Thornborough Farm, Birmingham

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Sister Sledge, Texas & Ocean Colour Scene, Fri 31 May - Sun 2 June, Cheltenham Racecourse

THE OLD JOINT STOCK PRESENTS

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A COMEDY MUSICAL

BOOK BY AUSTIN WINSBERG
MUSIC AND LYRICS BY ALAN ZACHARY AND MICHAEL WEINER
DIRECTED BY JAMES EDGE

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Win! A family ticket to see Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out!

Packed full of singing and dancing (and muddy puddles!), Peppa Pig's Fun Day Out guarantees giggles and snorts for all Peppa fans - *and* provides a perfect introduction to theatre for your little ones. We have a family ticket (4 tickets) to give away for this oinktastic stage show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham, on Wednesday 31 July.

Competition closes Friday 19 July



Win! Two adult weekend camping tickets to Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Shrewsbury Folk Festival returns late summer (West Mid Showground, Friday 23 - Monday 26 August) with four days of folk, Americana, blues and world music.

We are offering one reader the chance to win two adult weekend camping tickets for this year's get-together.

Competition closes Monday 5 August



Win! Tickets to ALSO Festival 2024!

Leading lights in the worlds of music, comedy, wellness, food and nature will come together when ALSO Festival heads to Compton Verney in Warwickshire from Friday 12 to Sunday 14 July. We are offering three readers the chance to each win a family ticket (4 tickets) or a pair of adult weekend tickets worth £300!

Competition closes Friday 31 May



Win! Two tickets to BBC Gardeners' World Live!

Green-fingered fans of BBC Gardeners' World Live will be delighted to know that the much-loved annual event is returning to Birmingham's NEC next month (Thursday 13 - Sunday 16 June). And better still... we're offering two readers the chance to each win a pair of tickets to the final day of the show!

Competition closes Monday 27 May

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:

whatsonlive.co.uk

LIVE EVENTS IN SHREWSBURY

MAY/JUNE 2024

THE BUTTERMARKE
SHREWSBURY
SHROPSHIRE'S LIVE MUSIC & EVENTS VENUE



COMEDY HOTSPOT
SHREWSBURY
THURS 9 MAY

FEATURING:
JON PEARSON
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SAMI SERRANO
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Totally TINA!
THE ORIGINAL AWARD-WINNING TINA TURNER SPECTACULAR!
FRI 10 MAY

ONE LOVE
A CELEBRATION OF BOB MARLEY
FEATURING THE MARLEY EXPERIENCE
BOB MARLEY'S NO.1 TRIBUTE BAND
SAT 11 MAY

LEGENDS of MOTOWN
SUN 12 MAY

FLEETING RUMOURS
GREATEST HITS TOUR
FRI 17 MAY

THE BIG 80s OUTDOOR TERRACE PARTY!
SAT 18 MAY
FEATURING ERASURE
THE ULTIMATE ERASURE TRIBUTE

Meat Loaf
BAT OUT OF HELL
GREATEST HITS LIVE!
SAT 18 MAY

Dean Friedman
IN CONCERT
FEATURING THE HITS:
Lucky Stars
Woman Of Mine
Lydia
Ariel
and many more!
SUN 19 MAY

IN THE AIR TONIGHT
THE UK'S LEADING SHOW CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF
Phil Collins & Genesis
AS SEEN ON BBC AND THE KELLY CLARKSON SHOW
FRI 24 MAY

HARD ROCK NIGHT IN THE CELLARS
FRI 24 MAY
RUFFNECKS
SHROPSHIRE'S PREMIER HARD ROCK BAND!

THE RYAN EVANS
COUNTRY MUSIC SHOW
PLUS SPECIAL GUEST TOM BYRNE
SUN 26 MAY

GORDON HENDRICKS
ONE NIGHT WITH YOU
THURS 30 MAY

GORDON HENDRICKS
AS THE KING'S VOICE
FRI 31 MAY

The Dolly Show
SAT 1 JUNE

LONDON CALLING
play
THE CLASH
'GIVE 'EM ENOUGH ROPE'
45th Anniversary Tour
FRI 7 JUNE

DBP
BOXING
SUMMER SIZZLER
ALL DAY CHAMPIONSHIP BOXING
SATURDAY 8 JUNE

DEFINITELY GALLAGHER
FRI 14 JUNE
THE CELLARS

THE DEFINITIVE TRIBUTE TO
QUEEN
FRI 14 JUNE

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BIGGEST SCREEN IN SHREWSBURY!
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I'M EVERY WHITNEY
STARRING KIESHIA CHUN & HER MILLION DOLLAR LIVE BAND
FRI 21 JUNE

SKA
Outdoor Festival
LIVE ON STAGE!
THE SUPERSKAS
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