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ILLUSION & SORCERY

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ROCK IT OUT

Circus Extreme set to delight with a brand-new spectacle







May 2025

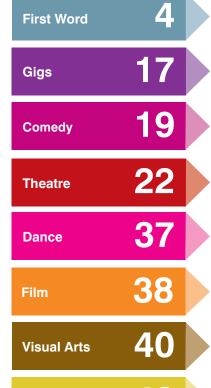
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What's On

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Kinks musical to bring sunshine to the Midlands

Award-winning musical Sunny Afternoon will visit Birmingham theatre The Alexandra in the autumn.

A celebration of iconic British band The Kinks, the show stops off in the second city from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 October. It then returns to the Midlands next spring, showing at Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 March and the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 April.

Further information is available by visiting the show's website at thekinksmusical.com

New festival launches in Brum's Kings Heath

Birmingham district Kings Heath is hosting a two-day arts festival at its All Saint's Centre this month.

Featuring attractions including familyfriendly activities, live music, spoken-word sessions, yoga workshops and a farmer's market, the event takes place on Saturday 3 & Sunday 4 May. More information is available by visiting kingsheathartsfest.co.uk

Gladiators stars on tour...

A live version of hit television series Gladiators is heading to the Midlands pre-Christmas.

The two-hour show will stop off at Birmingham's bp pulse LIVE arena on Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 December. Tickets are available at livenation.co.uk



Spring Fun Fest in the city

The month-long Spring Fun Fest will continue to present a programme of family-friendly entertainment in Birmingham's Centenary Square until Sunday 11 May. Attractions include a rollercoaster, a carousel, a helter skelter and a giant maze. To find out more, visit springfunfest.co.uk

In Conversation with Jess Phillips at Hockley Social

Birmingham Yardley MP Jess Phillips, who is also the UK Minister for Safeguarding, will be talking about her life and career during an evening of conversation at Hockley Social Club next month. The event



takes place at the venue on Sunday 22 June, with tickets available via skiddle.com

Bollywood panto fun at the Wolverhampton Grand

A British South Asian pantomime, coproduced by Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre, will this autumn head out on a short UK tour - after premiering at the Grand itself. Fusing the British tradition of pantomime with 'a spectacular Desi vibe', Surinderella shows at the venue from Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 September. Tickets for the show are available by visiting grandtheatre.co.uk

Big call for the return of Birmingham Light Festival

Birmingham Light Festival 2025 proved so popular that 99% of audiences want it to make a return in 2026 - according to recently revealed evaluation data.

The inaugural light fest took place in mid-February and saw the city centre transformed into an open-air gallery, with 11 illuminated installations brightening up the dark winter nights.

For more information about the event, visit birminghamlightfestival.co.uk

Avoncroft Museum enjoys visitor attraction success

Avoncroft Museum in Bromsgrove has been named Small Visitor Attraction of the Year in the Visit Worcestershire Tourism Awards. This year's ceremony, which featured 70-plus finalists and 16 winners, was held at Malvern's Three Counties Showground and celebrated the county's outstanding contributions to tourism and hospitality. For more information, visit avoncroft.org.uk



Serendipity Arts Festival coming to Birmingham

A special event 'celebrating cross-cultural dialogue' will take place across two Birmingham venues over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (Friday 23 - Monday 26 May).

Serendipity Arts Festival is described by its publicity as 'connecting South Asian traditions with Birmingham's diverse artistic landscape through immersive experiences and interdisciplinary cross-genre collaborations'. To find out more about the event, visit the website bcu.ac.uk

Eric looks on the bright side of life

Eric Idle will visit the Midlands in the autumn as part of a UK tour.

The much-loved Monty Python star appears at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Wednesday 10 September, presenting a show which he says "contains everything, including comedy, music, philosophy, and one fart joke". Tickets can be purchased at bmusic.co.uk



Utilita Arena date for Deadly Steve

A new live entertainment adventure featuring 'daring stunts, mind-blowing experiments, and cutting-edge science' is visiting Birmingham's Utilita Arena in the autumn (Thursday 30 October).

Taking the title Deadly Live!, the show is based on popular BBC franchise Deadly. BAFTA-winning wildlife presenter & adventurer Steve Backshall, who hosts the television series, will also front the live version. Tickets are available via the





Stage version of Fawlty Towers heading to the Midlands

Veteran stage & screen actor Paul Nicholas and Strictly Come Dancing favourite Joanne Clifton will star in the touring production of John Cleese's Fawlty Towers - The Play when it takes to the road later in the year.

Based on the classic 1970s BBC TV sitcom - which was co-written by and starred Cleese - the show visits the Midlands next year, stopping off

at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre (Tuesday 10 - Saturday 21 February), the Regent Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent (Tuesday 24 - Saturday 28 February) and Birmingham venue The Alexandra (Tuesday 17 - Saturday 21 March). For further information and to book tickets for the show, visit fawltytowerstour.co.uk



Madness bring hit show to Brum

Legendary ska and pop band Madness are bringing their Hits Parade show to Birmingham's Utilita Arena on Friday 19 December. And just as the concert's title suggests, the Camden Town funsters will be performing all of their most popular songs.

Tickets are available at utilitaarenabham.co.uk. The boys will be joined by special guests Squeeze.

The Bournville Bull goes to town!

To celebrate its 125th anniversary, Bournville Village Trust is providing the sculpture of a bull for a brand-new Birmingham art trail, showing in the city centre from Wednesday 16 July to Sunday 14 September.

The design of the sculpture will showcase 'all the things people think make the Bournville estate, managed by Bournville Village Trust, so special'. To find out more about both the Bournville bull and the Bulls In The City art trail - which is raising money for Birmingham Hospice - visit byt.org.uk





Dianne & Vito: Red Hot And Ready in Birmingham!

Strictly Come Dancing's Dianne Buswell and Vito Coppola are heading to the Midlands with a brand-new show.

Taking the title Red Hot And Ready, the production is being described as 'the ultimate high-voltage dance extravaganza,

exploding with jaw-dropping choreography, heart-pounding music and breathtaking moves'.

The show visits Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Friday 4 July. To find out more and book tickets, visit DianneandVito.co.uk

Poems, raps and great big dinosaurs at MAC

Children's poet Simon Mole and singerstoryteller Gecko are bringing their much-loved production The Great Big Dinosaur Show to Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre on Sunday 1 June (for two performances, at 11.30am and 2.30pm). Featuring poems, raps and songs, the show aims to give young dino fans 'a fun blast of interactive live entertainment'.

Further information and tickets are available at macbirmingham.co.uk



The best of Bollywood...

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra will be celebrating Bollywood on Friday 30 May.

Joined in a two-hour concert by dancers from Sampad Arts and 'a host of incredible vocalists', the CBSO will be performing a selection of 'the greatest and best-loved Bollywood songs'... For further information and to book tickets, visit bmusic.co.uk

'Spinetingling' music at summer supper event

Local choir Ex Cathedra will next month deliver a 'spinetingling choral performance' at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery as part of a special dining event.

Taking place on Tuesday 24 June, Summer Supper With Ex Cathedra also features a three-course meal and an opportunity for diners to explore the galleries 'after hours'. For further information, visit the venue's website at birminghammuseums.org.uk

Wolf & Owl podcast to go live in Birmingham

Comedians Tom Davis and Romesh Ranganathan are bringing a live version of their Wolf & Owl podcast to the Midlands this autumn. The much-loved duo will be stopping off at Birmingham Hippodrome on Monday 29 September. Tickets are available now by visiting the theatre's website.



Do You Hear The People Sing (Along)?

Birmingham's Old Joint Stock Theatre (OJST) is set to provide musical theatre fans with the chance to sing along to some of their favourite showstoppers.

Do You Hear The People Sing (Along)? - Musical Crowd-Pleasers is being publicised as a show in which 'you can let it go, defy gravity, and dance through life without fear of an usher's dreaded flashlight stopping the fun'. The event takes place at the OJST from Thursday 19 to Sunday 22 June.
For tickets, visit designmynight.com

Children's Hospital in bid to raise £170,000

Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity is aiming to raise £170,000 in order to transform the environment of Parkview Clinic, its in-patient mental-health facility for young people.

Explaining the project, Mark Brider, chief executive officer at Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity, said: "By raising £170,000, we will be able to completely transform the spaces in Parkview from a white and sterile environment to something colourful, creative and inspiring for our young people. We hope people will get behind this appeal." For further information and/or to donate, visit bch.org.uk/inspiring-spaces-appeal



Hippodrome unveils new musical for Christmas

As well as making its Edinburgh Fringe debut this summer with climate crisis musical Hot Mess, Birmingham Hippodrome's New Musical Theatre department will this Christmas be presenting 'a fun-filled musical adventure' entitled No Such Thing As Wolves.

Written by Gerard Foster and Richie Webb, two of the creatives behind the Horrible Histories franchise, the show will run in the theatre's Patrick Studio from Saturday 6 December to Sunday 4 January.

To find out more about the production, visit the website: birminghamhippodrome.com

Pairc festival returns

The Undertones will join previously announced headliners Saw Doctors and Nathan Carter when independent Birmingham-Irish festival Pairc Summer Series makes a return in late August. Taking place at the King's Heath Irish Centre on Saturday the 23rd & Sunday the 24th, the event will also feature, among other artists, Sharon Shannon Big Band, featuring Liam Ó Maonlai from Hothouse Flowers, Mundy, Camille O'Sullivan and Cait O'Riordan from The Pogues.

For more information and to book tickets, visit paircsummerseries.com

Ghostly goings-on for Stacey and Kevin

Real-life partners Stacey Dooley and Kevin Clifton will star in supernatural thriller 2:22 - A Ghost Story when it tours to the Midlands later this year and early 2026.

The smash-hit show stops off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre (Monday 29 September - Saturday 4 October), and Birmingham's The Alexandra (Monday 13 -Saturday 18 October).

2:22 - A Ghost Story then returns to the region next year to play Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 18 - Saturday 23 May.

For more information and to book tickets, visit 222aghoststory.com

Art and science collide as Resonate Festival returns

The University of Warwick's Resonate Festival returns to campus late this month with an array of hands-on activities, performances and creative demonstrations for visitors to enjoy.

The full programme is yet to be announced, but organisers are promising a fun and festival-style event in which art and science collide.

The Resonate Festival of Arts & Culture takes place in the University of Warwick's Faculty of Arts Building on Saturday 31 May (from 11am to 4pm). For further information, visit the website at resonatefestival.co.uk





Birmingham date for stage version of hit TV comedy

The stage version of award-winning television comedy series Inside No 9 will make an autumn stop-off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra.

The creation of League Of Gentlemen stars Steve Pemberton and Reece Shearsmith, the production shows at the city-centre venue from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 October. For more information and tickets, head to the website at atgtickets.com/venues/thealexandra-theatre-birmingham

Fantasy Forest Festival coming to Sudeley Castle

Sudeley Castle is once again hosting a familyfriendly fantasy forest festival this summer. Taking place at



the Gloucestershire venue from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 July, the event will feature the return of the ever-popular costume show and competition. To find out more, visit the website: sudeleycastle.co.uk

A Beauty of a Christmas show at the Belgrade

The Coventry Belgrade Theatre is turning to the famous fairytale of the Sleeping Beauty for its 2025/26 pantomime production.

Once again written by panto veteran Iain Lauchlan, the show runs at the venue from Wednesday 19 November to Saturday 3 January

The pantomime forms part of an autumn/winter line-up of entertainment at the Belgrade which also includes muchloved musicals Blood Brothers and The Rocky Horror Show, as well as a number of brand-new productions. The English

Touring Opera will make its debut at the venue with a staging of Britten's The Rape Of Lucretia, whilst younger audiences are sure to be entertained by Grandad Anansi - an uplifting tale that shines a light on the Windrush generation. For information on all future programming, visit belgrade.co.uk

Autumn date for Kidz Bop

Popular kids' music brand Kidz Bop is bringing a live touring show to Birmingham in the autumn, visiting the city's Symphony Hall on Tuesday 28 October.

For more information and to book your seat, visit myticket.co.uk/artists/kidz-bop

Girls In Dance Festival to debut in the summer

Birmingham charity Awa Dance are presenting their debut Girls In Dance Festival at the city's Midlands Arts Centre on Monday 28 July.

Developed with girls aged between 13 and 21 in mind, the event will feature dance workshops, interactive stalls, a marketplace selling some well-known brands, career insights from professional role models in the dance sector, and free goodie bags. Lunch will also be provided. To find out more, visit awadance.org/girls-in-dance-festival



in The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

CS Lewis' The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe tells the terrific tale of four siblings who travel through a wardrobe, find themselves in a magical land, and meet Aslan the Lion and the White Witch, the latter of whom is plotting their downfall. A smash-hit stage version of the much-loved children's story is returning to the Midlands to mark the 75th anniversary of the book's publication, this month playing Birmingham before heading to the Potteries in June and Wolverhampton in October. What's On spoke to Katy Stephens - who will be plotting evil as the icy, ruthless and shockingly wicked White Witch - to find out more...

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the publication of CS Lewis' The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe, in which Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy Pevensie travel through a wardrobe to the magical land of Narnia. The acclaimed 2017 stage version, directed by Mike Fentiman in its newest incarnation, has embarked on a national tour. It's a show packed with puppetry, music and spectacle. "I think what's really special about this production," says Katy Stephens, who plays the White Witch, "is that it captures the heart and soul of what CS Lewis was writing about. I really feel it captures the core of The Chronicles Of Narnia. It's a very beautiful, spectacular show, and there's a huge amount of talent on stage. We have actor-musicians, who pick up all kinds of instruments, put them down and pick up another instrument to play... We've got the most incredible ensemble of dancers; really talented dancers who can also act. The music is absolutely beautiful, and Mike Fentiman has done a fantastic job of lifting this beautiful book off the page and making it palpable for a live audience."

The White Witch famously freezes Narnia, making it always winter (but never Christmas), and tempts Edmund Pevensie to the dark side with enchanted Turkish Delight. While The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe is the most well known of CS Lewis' books, Katy has discovered more about her character in a different story. "You don't find out a huge amount about her in The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe we're at the end of her journey then. CS Lewis wrote a prequel, which he wrote after The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe, called The Magician's Nephew, and that's really interesting in terms of - what do they call it now? - a villain origin story! In The Magician's Nephew, the White Witch is much more feisty, much more 'punk rock' - she does incredible things. She accidentally gets taken to London, she robs a jeweller's store, she hijacks a handsome cab, she rips a lamp post out of the ground.

"When she goes back to Narnia, she eats an apple that gives her immortality, but by eating that apple, it resigns her to a life of misery. Not only does she freeze the world, she freezes herself... When Aslan returns, he thaws Narnia, and as he does that, he thaws her as well, I think, back to the person that

she was in The Magician's Nephew. It's an incredibly interesting journey. I do play a lot of baddies, and I think it's my job as an actor to find the sympathy, or find the root of that person, so that it doesn't become a 2-D evil performance."

While Katy has clearly explored the books to dive into the White Witch's background, the Narnia series was never a favourite of hers as a child.

"It wasn't really part of my childhood. I kind of always thought it was about posh kids - but I've grown up since then. It was really lovely for me as an adult to visit those books for the first time. I knew the gist. I knew there were kids that went through a wardrobe and into another world, but there are so many layers to the story. There's so much depth to it, and I think I've really appreciated that as an adult."

When producing The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe, you have to address the elephant - or over-sized feline - in the room, and work out how to bring Aslan the Lion onto the stage. In this version, the lion is partly represented by an enormous puppet, with three puppeteers operating its head, heart and tail.

"We also have an actor on stage: Stanton Wright, who's absolutely fantastic. He is Aslan the Man; he's the soul of Aslan. My interactions are with the man, whereas the Pevensie children interact with the puppet so actually, I don't get to look at the puppet much on stage. It's such a beautiful puppet. When I'm standing off-stage and it's looking into the wings, sometimes I really feel like it's looking into my soul.

"We've also got a beautiful cat puppet. When it's backstage, it just looks like a pile of rags, but once the puppeteer has got hold of it, it becomes alive. It's unbelievable!"

The Midlands is a familiar theatrical stomping ground for Katy, who is an associate artist at the Royal Shakespeare Company, where she appeared on stage during Sir Michael Boyd's time as artistic director. She performed in the award-winning History Cycle, which included all eight of Shakespeare's Histories, produced over two and a half years. In returning to the region, she will also be returning to her home.

"I actually really started out at the Belgrade.

It's a theatre that's very close to my heart.
The Belgrade used to have flats above it, and

I used to live in one with my dog, for about a year. I was living in London at the time. It was my experience at the Belgrade, and everybody who worked there, the people of Coventry, that actually made me fall in love with Coventry - I moved there 25 years ago." She also works with the locally based EGO Performance Company, which this season is touring a landmark production.

"We are completely inclusive. We have a huge range of abilities, but we also have an academy for actors with special needs. We've just embarked on our first UK tour, with a play called You Know My Mum. It's a really humorous, poignant look at how people with learning disabilities deal with grief." Having worked in the acting industry for over 30 years, it's perhaps unsurprising to learn that Katy has a preference for performing on stage over appearing on screen. As a parting thought, she explains the reason why - and reveals her favourite theatrical experience. "I love a live audience, but I also love being part of a company. You become like a family, and I love the social aspect. Also, artistically, I like to get on a wave and surf it all the way to the beach. What I find with TV or film is that you surf a little bit, and then you pick up your board and you get back on again. For me, I just love the flow of starting a character at A and ending up at Z - it just suits me as a performer.

"The greatest moment for me was doing the Histories. I played Joan of Arc in Henry VI Part One, and then I was burned at the stake. Then I reincarnated as Margaret of Anjou. I played Margaret as a young woman in Henry VI Part One and Part Two, as the leader of an army in Henry VI Part Three, and then as a crazy old crone in Richard III. I followed her journey all the way. Going back to what I was saying about surfing the wave - that was the biggest wave of all."

The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 May; Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 June and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 28 October - Saturday 1 November

AMATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH



Birmingham's groundbreaking festival explores the subject of death & dying through tattoos, poetry, art, talks, and plenty more...

A ground-breaking festival in Birmingham is taking place across a wide range of venues this year from tattoo studios to libraries, from pubs to undertakers and from country parks to art galleries.

Organised by community interest company BrumYODO, A Matter of Life and Death on May 5-17 offers author talks, walks, art installations, poetry workshops and discussions across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

BrumYODO, a volunteer-led group based in Birmingham, aims to create safe spaces to think and talk about death and dying. To coincide with the national campaign Dying Matters Awareness Week, BrumYODO has been running A Matter of Life and Death Festival since 2016 and is getting ready for another great year.

Birmingham was accredited as the UK's first Compassionate City in 2022, recognising it as a place where citizens support each other through difficult times. A member of the Compassionate City coalition, BrumYODO's festival provides opportunities for people from all communities to join in activities encouraging conversations around death, dying, grief and loss.

Helen Tomblin, one of the BrumYODO board members, says: "This year's festival hosts

some regular events such as a tour of an undertakers, a Birmingham death-related walk, an interfaith walk, an author event and numerous Death Cafes and In Memory events.

"Also this year, new venues and contributors have joined the festival including Lucky Rabbit Tattoo Studio and The Lickey Hills Country Park. We're really pleased to be offering a discussion on memorial tattoos, writing poetry in the Lickey Hills and are also really excited to bring many of our collaborators and creative arts together to culminate the festival in a 'Pop-Up Death' event at Birmingham Library.

"With Birmingham on the map as a Compassionate City we're really pleased to see that the momentum is growing to promote healthy and productive conversation about death and dying."

The programme kicks off with an annual festival favourite, a Death Cafe at The Sun Rising Burial Ground near Warwick, on May 6. In the evening, Birmingham undertakers A Natural Undertaking open up their new premises in Hall Green for the event Making Uncomfortable Conversations More Comfortable, an informal discussion over cheese and wine led by Evolve & Flourish's Suzanne McArthur.

On May 7 the festival will explore memorial tattoos at a new venue to the festival, Lucky Rabbit based in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. Back by popular demand, there will be an interfaith walk in Handsworth on May 8 discovering the rituals and practices following death and bereavement within diverse faiths. There will be stops at different places of worship to hear personal stories about what happens after someone dies including services, support and mourning. That evening people are invited to come together for discussion with the Death over Drinks event at Anjuna Lounge in Stirchley. In conjunction with The Heath Bookshop, Mary Stevens Hospice and No Barriers Here, the festival welcomes end-of-life care specialist and best-selling author of With the End in Mind Kathryn Mannix to speak on May 9 in Stourbridge. Demand for this event has been so high a second talk has been scheduled for the same day. Saturday May 10 sees the festival develop its

walking events. In the morning BrumYODO joins forces with Kevin Thomas who will lead a guided tour entitled Five Ways to Die in Birmingham. This walk will explore fascinating hidden stories of Birmingham including the lost Italian Cemetery at the International Convention Centre, the lost



Jewish Cemetery at Five Ways, the death of the inventor of the lightbulb, plague pits, and more.

In the afternoon, a new collaborator to the festival, former Birmingham Poet Laureate Giovanni Esposito AKA Spoz, and Holly Winter-Hughes, poet and therapeutic writing practitioner, will be leading a wellbeing walk Up the Lickey Hills. Participants can remember and share stories about a loved one who has died or simply enjoy being outdoors and the experience of being with nature and at peace. Participants will then have the opportunity to spend time writing thoughts and memories and try a bit of poetry.

May 12 sees another event new to the festival. People are invited to join Maggie Parsons at Thimblemill Library in Smethwick as she shares information about her Poetree project during Covid, and participants will have the opportunity to read and write poetry for the comfort it can bring.

A popular event each year, on May 13 there is a chance to Meet the Undertakers at A Natural Undertaking in Kings Heath – an opportunity for a tour and to ask those questions about end of life that you have been 'dying' to ask.

On May 14 the Northfield Neighbourhood

Network Scheme team at Northfield Community Partnership present To Absent Friends at The Navigation Inn in Northfield. This is an informal evening where people can share stories about loved ones who have died over a drink and a meal. Participants can bring an object or a photo, share stories in a safe space and then together raise a toast to 'absent friends'.

Following its recent renovations,
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery is
pleased to be returning to the festival with a
tour showcasing some of its exhibits on the
theme of death and dying on May 15 and then
later in the afternoon a Death Cafe in the
Edwardian Tea Rooms.

This year for the first time, the festival culminates in a 'Pop-Up Death' event at Birmingham Library on Saturday May 17. Exploring life and death through creativity, the event picks up the key festival themes and features some of its collaborators, community participants and arts projects across the West Midlands. With activities including coffin-designing for children and the Jukebox Challenge, it is open to all ages with activities, exhibits and opportunities to imaginatively explore the often taboo subject of death and dying.

Emma Waterford, BrumYODO board member

and creative practitioner, says: "We are delighted to close the festival at the Birmingham Library, right in the heart of Birmingham city centre. With its glass walls making the event visible to passers-by in Centenary Square, our hope is that, through the festival and final pop-up event, we will make this often hidden subject more visible by offering a space for more open conversations about death, dying and living well until we die."

Emma urges previous A Matter of Life and Death Festival supporters and new visitors to give the events a go.

"The festival includes so many very different events we hope we have something for everyone. We have done all we can to ensure as many as possible are free or low cost. Some need to be booked, some are simply drop-in. Please check our website for all the information - and we hope to see you there."

For full information, including booking details, see A Matter Of Life And Death Festival 2025 on the BrumYODO events page: brumyodo.org.uk/events.
You can also follow the festival on social media @BrumYODO

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bmusic.co.uk/bclassical



CBSO: Mendelssohn & Wagner

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 28 May
Famous and much-loved compositions by
Felix Mendelssohn start and finish this twohour City of Birmingham Symphony
Orchestra concert (including an interval).
Kickstarting proceedings is the Overture to A
Midsummer Night's Dream, written by the
composer 199 years ago at the tender age of
17... The afternoon of musicmaking is
brought to a sunny conclusion with a
performance of his 'Italian' symphony, a
work which has been described as
'reminiscent of beautiful blue skies'.
Alongside the double dose of Mendelssohn,

the concert also features, as its title makes clear, music by Richard Wagner - to be more specific, his sumptuous Wesendonck Lieder. A set of five songs for piano and female voice (in this case, Jamie Barton's), the work was inspired by the poetry of Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of Wagner's patron, with whom the composer somewhat unwisely fell in love.

The concert programme is completed by Roxanna Panufnik's Alma's Songs Without Words. Pierre Bleuse (pictured) conducts.

BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 29 May

The BBC National Orchestra of Wales bring their on-theroad concert season to a close with a programme that features two works which were written by composers for the women they loved.



Bartók's deeply personal two-movement concerto - composed for his muse, Stefi Geyer, and here performed by world-renowned violinist James Ehnes (pictured) - has been described as a rhapsodic outpouring... Mahler's Fifth Symphony, meanwhile - a token of his love for his new wife - comes complete with trumpet fanfares.

Wolf Hall In Concert

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 30 May

Birmingham-born and Midlands-based actor Anton Lesser (pictured) will be reading extracts from Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall as part of this late-month concert. Anton played the part



of Thomas More in the BBC television adaptation of Mantel's acclaimed trilogy and it's the original music featured in the series, composed by the award-winning Debbie Wiseman, that the Locrian Ensemble of London will here be performing.

Expect a memorable evening of drama, intrigue and storytelling.

Andre Rieu

bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham, Sat 10 May

Often referred to as the King of Waltz, Andre Rieu is a superstar violinist whose YouTube videos have been viewed in excess of one billion times. His Facebook account.



meanwhile, is followed by nine million fans, while sales of his albums have now topped the 40 million mark.

Andre is also the creator of the waltzplaying Johann Strauss Orchestra, which he conducts using his violin bow, mimicking the famous characteristics of Strauss himself. His concerts are well known for inspiring audience members to leave their seats and dance in the aisles, an activity which counts as something of a phenomenon at a classical music gig! This springtime return to Birmingham comes as part of a tour to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Strauss' birth.

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 15 May

Having notched up their half century a couple of years back, the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra (PPO) visit Symphony Hall this month with a much-deserved reputation for being one of the Asia-Pacific region's top musical ensembles.

They perform to the masterfully wielded baton of their acclaimed music director & principal conductor, Grzegorz Nowak, who has been the inspiration behind their output since 2023.

The orchestra's Birmingham appearance sees them presenting a programme of music that begins with a short work by the PPO's composer-in-residence, Jeffrey Ching (which he's written especially for the UK tour) and ends with Beethoven's always-thrilling Fifth Symphony. Performed in-between the two compositions is Bizet's Carmen Suite no1, Ralph Vaughan Williams' The Lark Ascending, and two works by Tchaikovsky: Swan Lake Suite and Rococo Variations.

HELLO, CRUEL WORLD

Cruel Intentions: The 90s Musical brings a Bitter Sweet Symphony to Birmingham



Based on the 1999 cult American teen movie of the same name, the stage musical version of Cruel Intentions takes its audience back to a pre-smartphone time when wealthy high-schoolers filled their summer days with sex, drugs, and millennial hits. Tongue-in-cheek silliness will meet racy melodrama - with a side order of highly watchable intrigue and deceit - when the production visits Birmingham Hippodrome in June. What's On caught up with some of the show's cast members to find out more...

Cruel Intentions, starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, Ryan Phillippe, Reese Witherspoon, and Selma Blair, hit cinema screens just before the new millennium, presenting a world of wealthy, New York teenagers that was brimming with scandal and seduction. A jukebox musical version of the hit film is now touring the UK for the first time and visits Birmingham Hippodrome next month. Spaghetti straps, chunky heels and oblong sunglasses abound in a cheekily self-aware show that follows the manipulative schemes of leads Kathryn and Sebastian, all of which are played out to a cracking 90s soundtrack. Nic Myers, who plays Kathryn, and Lucy Carter, who stars as Cecile, offer a breakdown of the plot for the uninitiated.

"The show follows Kathryn and Sebastian, who are step-siblings," explains Lucy. "We're in the summer before school starts for their final year, and they hatch a plan to try and corrupt Annette Hargrove, who is the new headmaster's daughter."

"They're trying to ruin her innocence!" Nic adds.

"Yes - well put!" Lucy continues. "We meet lots of other people on the way, who get stuck in their web of manipulation, lies and deceit."

One of the individuals who finds herself caught in that web is the innocent Cecile, who quickly succumbs to Kathryn's suggestion that she should get as much sexual experience as possible before making a move on her crush. Cecile and Kathryn are polar opposites - and both actors are clearly having a great time on stage.

"Sociopathic and manipulative - that is fun!" says Nic. "I've never played the baddie before. I think I would more naturally have been a Cecile at one point in my life, but it's very fun to be sat on this side of it."

The delicious ruthlessness of the characters - particularly Kathryn - is certainly part of the show's appeal, but don't be under any misconception that it's a hard-hitting, serious drama.

"It's raunchy, it's fun, it's nostalgic!" says Nic. "It's just a blast... with a bangin' 90s soundtrack!"

The show is perfect for fans of late 90s and early noughties pop, and for people who were entering their teens during that period. With hits by Britney Spears, the Spice Girls, NSYNC and Christina Aguilera all featuring, the pop quota is definitely reached - but there are also songs from the original film's alt-rock

soundtrack by The Verve, Placebo, Counting Crows... the list goes on.

For some of the cast, this marks the first time they've stepped out on a national tour. Among them are Midlands-born-and-raised Olivia Brookes (Ensemble & Kathryn cover) and Joe Simmons, playing Greg, who hails from Wolverhampton.

"I feel like I've not gone anywhere outside of London or the West Mids," says Olivia. "It's great to see all of these different areas in the UK."

"We don't get too much time to explore, though," adds Joe, with a proper Wolverhampton accent that is worlds away from the voice he uses for his character in the show, 'American Jock'. "I've never been to York, and that was such a beautiful city. Cheltenham was a bit crazy because we were there during race week..."

The added bonus of performing at the Hippodrome is that there will be some friendly faces in the audience. According to Nic, "Friday night is sold out by the Simmons [Joe's family]!" It's a statement which Joe sheepishly confirms: "Pretty much, yeah..." The cast have a real camaraderie, which is essential when you're living and working together on the road. And their infectious energy definitely makes its way onto the

"It's so much fun," says Olivia. "We've got a really good group of people - on stage, off stage - we all just have a laugh! It's such a silly show. It's so outrageously camp, it's just brilliant."

"You're going to have a good time, because we're having a good time!" adds Nic.

"Even relatives that I really didn't think would enjoy the show..." says Lucy. "I said to them 'Please no! I do unspeakable things!' But they enjoyed it."

The production is fast-paced, with equal parts drama and silliness. And of course, it's enhanced by the soundtrack. One of the cast's favourite numbers is Boyz II Men's I'll Make Love To You, sung in the show by Cecile, with a group of teenage boyz - sorry, boys - providing the backing vocals. Lucy gives a hilarious physical performance of the song, while hitting every belting note.

"It's my favourite to watch in the wings."

"It's my favourite to watch in the wings," admits Nic.

Joe is one of the lads keeping a straight face on stage, so gets to see the response to the song first-hand: "Every night, Lucy does something different, and the audience absolutely eats it up."

"Bitch is *my* favourite one to sing..." Nic reveals, referring to her character Kathryn's version of Meredith Brooks' top-10 single. "And I love..." interjects Lucy, "I always call it Bohemian Rhapsody, but what is it really? Bitter Sweet Symphony! I love it! I love Kiss Me as well. It's based around that image of Selma Blair and Sarah Michelle Gellar in the park."

"At the time, it was the longest kiss of two women on screen, ever." Nic explains. "It was very shocking to people back then. It's a lot more earnest in the film than what we're doing..."

This raises a question: the stage production is inspired by the film - with the addition of musical numbers - but how much have the cast been influenced by those original performances?

"It was a bit of a hard line to walk," says Nic, "paying homage to the film and doing Sarah Michelle Geller justice."

"When is it an impression or an impersonation, and when is it an interpretation?" muses Lucy. "I wouldn't go into any other show and think about how someone else has played it before. There are certain boundaries - the content that you can't stray from - but why do people go and see Wicked every time there's a new cast? They want to see the new interpretation."

"The script is verbatim," Nic continues, "so for some moments that I feel are really iconic, I've gone back and looked at a scene. We do burst into song, which you can't move away from - Sarah Michelle Geller's not giving it Genie In A Bottle!"

For anyone who fancies giving the musical incarnation of Cruel Intentions a go, you're in for a treat - it's as sharp, bubbly and moreish as a round of mimosas.

"In Manchester," says Lucy, "on the outside of the theatre, they summed it up perfectly: 'The theatre equivalent of a bottomless brunch'! It's so true - but you don't have to have done that before the show. It's just a good craic. It doesn't take itself too seriously. It's such good fun - a bit of escapism. Come and have a laugh!"

Cruel Intentions shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 3 to Saturday 7 June



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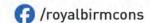
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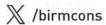
21 June

RBC Folk Ensemble









Scissor Sisters

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sun 25 May

Camper than Julian Clary in a pink tent, Scissor Sisters made a name for themselves thanks in no small part to bitchily observational lyrics that were every bit as sharp as the band's name suggests. Cheerfully ignoring the main trend of their native New York, as peddled by the likes of The Strokes, their cheesy party music worked equally well whether experienced in a dark, sweaty club or outside in the garden with the sun beating down...

Their Birmingham gig this month forms part of a tour which sees them playing live for the first time in 13 years, having announced an indefinite hiatus back in 2012.



Panic Shack

Castle and Falcon, Birmingham, Thurs 8 May
Describing their style as 'No f*cks given',
Panic Shack formed seven years ago and have
been making waves pretty much ever since.
The party-starting, punk-loving, Cardifflocated funsters decided to try their luck in
the rough, tough world of professional
musicmaking having grown tired of watching
indie rock & roll boybands strut their stuff.
Learning to play their instruments in under a
year, they released debut EP Baby Shack three
years ago and performed their first headline
tour in 2023, blending quirky, alternative
music with choreographed dance breaks and
a significant side-order of accessible humour.





Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Mon 12 May Selling themselves with the slogan 'today's music yesterday' Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox reimagine modern-day earworms and iconic pop hits in classic genres like 1920s jazz, swing, doo-wop and Motown. To get a handle on their music, the band advise that you think The Great Gatsby meets 'Sinatra at the Sands' meets Back To The Future...

"If we've learned anything from 10 years of touring the world," reveals Scott, "it's that great music has the ability to transcend time and space in a way that's best described as 'magic'... In fact, all of us likely have a song or two that instantly transports us to another place.

"Our Moonlight & Magic World Tour is meant to celebrate this phenomenon through breathtaking live performances that will be remembered long after the curtain falls..." Audience members are being advised to 'dress vintage, for the full effect!'

Acid Mothers Temple

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Sat 10 May

Japanese rock band Acid Mothers Temple was founded 30 years ago by guitarist Kawabata Makoto with a very particular aim in mind. "I had never been fully satisfied with the trippy psychedelic records I'd listened to," says Makoto, "and that's when I began wanting to create a really extreme trip music."

Makoto has certainly fulfilled his ambition, with AMT having pumped out a staggering 100-plus studio albums of entertainingly deranged and utterly head-melting music. They are stopping off at the Hare & Hounds this month with latest and magnificently named show Dark Within Of Astropia.

Sunday (1994)

a band of their own.

Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham, Wed 21 May After many a year spent writing songs for other artists and composing music for sync deals and adverts, romantic partners Paige Turner and Lee Newell decided during the

Accompanied by an anonymous and enigmatic drummer referred to simply as 'X', they launched Sunday (1994), writing and

pandemic that it was high time they created

performing music which they describe as dreamy, nostalgic and whimsical...
Their Birmingham appearance this month comes as part of their debut tour.

Pixies

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Tues 20 May

Comprising Black Francis, Joey Santiago, David Lovering and new member Emma Richardson, Pixies are best known for singles including Where Is My Mind? and Here Comes Your Man, their lyrics across the years having covered such offbeat subjects as extraterrestrials, incest and biblical violence... They're visiting Birmingham this month in support of brand-new studio album The Night The Zombies Came. Bringing together country-tinged ballads and furious punk numbers, the record takes its inspiration from 'surf rock, gargoyles, bog people, and the distinctive dry drum sounds of 1970s Fleetwood Mac'.



SIMPLY THE BEST

Holly Bannis talks about playing Tina Turner in hit show What's Love Got To Do With It?



whatsonlive.co.uk

After a spectacular 2024, during which more than 60,000 Tina Turner fans danced in the aisles at performances of What's Love Got To Do With It?, the hit show - a critically acclaimed tribute to Tina - is back with a bang in 2025. What's On caught up with Holly Bannis, who plays the rock & roll legend in the production, to find out more...

Whether you've been a fan of Tina Turner for decades or are discovering her magic for the very first time, What's Love Got To Do With It? promises to be an inspiring and uplifting experience that's sure to make you want to sing along. Holly Bannis stars as Tina, and is at the forefront of an evening of unstoppable energy and unforgettable music...

How did you land the part of Tina in the show, Holly?

I'd been singing semi-professionally for 10 years while working a day job - music was always part of my life. My dad, Greg Bannis (ex-Hot Chocolate lead singer), was a big influence.

In 2021, I auditioned for Starstruck on ITV, where I had to perform as three icons. Tina was one of my choices. The show happened during lockdown, so I had time to study her performances and style. The What's Love Got To Do With It? team saw me on TV and got in touch. I started as a backing singer and understudy but stepped into the lead role within a few months.

What makes Tina such a special artist?

When I prepared for Starstruck, I watched a lot of her live performances, studying her energy, movements and mannerisms. But what really struck me was her back story her resilience, her strength, and how she overcame so much.

She once said that she didn't like her own voice because it was different, which really resonated with me. Learning about her helped me embrace my own voice and understand where I belong musically.

What can audiences expect from the show?

It's a full-on concert experience with a 10-piece band, backing singers, dancers, and all of Tina's biggest hits. We recreate the energy of her live shows - right down to the walk, the moves, and the way she connected with audiences. By the end of the night, it's a party! People always tell us how much it feels like a real Tina show. That's the best compliment we can get.

How did Tina's passing in May 2023 impact the show?

We were mid-show when she passed, but we didn't know until the end. The audience's energy shifted - more phones were out, people were crying. Backstage, we found out why. Since then, we've felt a deeper responsibility to honour her legacy. We haven't changed the show, but we know it carries more weight now. Fans want to keep her spirit alive, and we're proud to help do that

What are your favourite songs to perform?

Private Dancer is a special moment. It starts with dialogue, and you can feel the audience's anticipation. The lights, the band solos, our sax player stepping forward... it's magic! Then there's Nutbush City Limits, one of the only songs Tina wrote herself. By then, the audience are on their feet dancing, and the energy is through the roof.

How do you keep up with the demands of touring?

Life on the road is intense - sometimes we drive six hours before even setting up. But we have a great team, and we take care of each other. Staying fit and healthy is key. I warm up and cool down my voice religiously, work with a vocal coach, and keep up with physical training. Singing as Tina isn't natural - it's a very specific sound that takes work to maintain safely. Even now, I still watch her performances and pick up new details to incorporate.

What's your pre-show ritual?

After setup and dinner, I start my makeup - Tina's dark eyeshadow and signature red lips. I put on my first of three wigs and my custom-made costume. The last step? Red lipstick. That's when I know I'm ready. Once that's on, I am Tina until the show is over.

Why should people go to see the show?

If you love Tina Turner or rock & roll, this show is for you. Even people who don't think they know her music are blown away - so many of her songs are classics. It's a show for all generations - parents, grandparents.

Everyone knows and loves Tina. And if you're not a fan before, you'll leave as one!

How important is Tina's legacy?

Tina will always be the Queen of Rock & Roll. Her music is timeless, but her story is just as important. She spoke openly about her struggles at a time when few did, and that changed lives. For me, this show has been life-changing. Through her music, I've found where I truly belong as a performer. Every night on stage is a privilege, and I can't wait to share that energy with new audiences.



What's Love Got To Do With It? The Ultimate Tina Turner Tribute shows at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, on Sun 11 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sun 6 July; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Wed 29 October; Malvern Theatres, Fri 23 January 2026; The Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, Sun 28 March 2026; Dudley Town Hall, Sun 9 May 2026





WEEKEND



SUMMER EDITION

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Comedy

Dara Ó'Briain

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 15 & Fri 16 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 17 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 17 September; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 5 & Thurs 6 November

Charismatic, fast-talking and very, very funny, Dara Ó'Briain is a familiar face on the telly thanks to shows like Mock The Week and Have I Got News For You.



Jokes include: "If we were truly created by God, why do we occasionally bite the insides of our mouths?" and "Even though you're still allowed to smoke in your own house, do you have to stub it out when a burglar breaks in, as your house is now his workplace?" Dara stops off in the region with his new touring show, Re:Creation.

Jamali Maddix

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, Fri 16 May; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 21 May; Glee Club, Birmingham, Thurs 5 June

One-time Chortle Student Comedian of the Year Jamali Maddix has been hailed for his frank yet ironic take on everyday racism and his willingness to tackle the hot-potato subject of terrorism.

He visits the Midlands three times across the next couple of months with his brandnew touring show, Aston.

Jonny Cole

Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, Fri 2 May; Dudley Town Hall, Thurs 8 May; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 16 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 18 May; Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge, Fri 23 May; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 24 May; Rugeley Rose Theatre, Fri 6 & Sat 7 June; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Wed 11 June; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Thurs 12 June; Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge, Fri 13 June; Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, Sat 14 June; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 19 June

"It's difficult for me to put my brand of comedy into an industry-standard soundbite," says local comedian Jonny Cole. "There are a lot of people who love Black Country humour and who'd love to go into a rough & ready Black Country pub just to listen to the banter - and that's exactly what I do. I've absorbed Black Country humour the whole of my life. I take it out of that pub - where people wouldn't dare go, in case they got their teeth knocked out - and I put it into a safe, controlled environment where they can enjoy it."



Zakir Khan Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 18 May

"I've been writing jokes ever since I was a kid," says Indian comedian Zakir Khan. "My early years were spent in a boys' school, a fact that gave me a near-unlimited stock of tales that I could use to make people roll around on the floor. The challenge for me was working out the best way to present

them."

The winner of Comedy Central's India's Best Standup award, Zakir has performed more than 1,000 sold-out shows in venues across the world. His Symphony Hall show this month will be performed in Hindi.

Kerry Godliman

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 17 May

Comedian & actress Kerry Godliman's new touring show, Bandwidth, contemplates how life looks for a middle-aged woman 'who is busy parenting teenagers, feels bogged down



with knicker admin, and is giving some serious consideration to the possibility of dealing HRT on the black market'...
You may remember Kerry from such TV shows as Miranda, Our Girl and Ricky Gervais' Extras, Derek and After Life. She's also had her own show on Radio Four. But it's live standup that's closest to her heart. "It's such a creative opportunity to say all the stuff I want to say about things like politics and parenting," she explains. "And that's amazing. There aren't many jobs where you can just say exactly what you like."

Sophie McCartney

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 4 May; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 10 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Fri 16 May

Having previously toured a show based around her experience of the perilous world of parenting, award-winning comedian Sophie McCartney now sets about tackling her perimenopausal panic by asking the question: what does life look like when you're too old to be young, but too young to be old? Sophie is urging her fans to grab their glow sticks and ready themselves for an evening of sequins, snorty laughs, and a pair of killer orthopaedic heels...



A SPARKLING SEASON AWAITS



Tue 27 - Sat 31 May



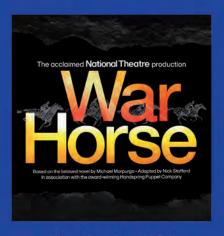
Tue 10 – Sat 14 Jun Thu 12 Jun 7.30pm



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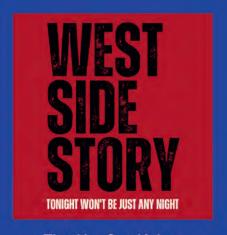


Tue 24 - Sat 28 Jun





Tue 22 - Sat 26 Jul





Sat 20 - Sat 27 Sep



Mon 13 - Sat 18 Oct





Comedy

Andy Hamilton

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sun 18 May; The Roses, Tewkesbury, Sun 15 June

"A lot of comedy shows are confessional, aren't they?" says Outnumbered writer and long-established standup comedian Andy Hamilton, in talking to Cambridge Independent. "People get up and talk about their struggles with their demons. But I don't really have any demons. I mean, maybe I should get some, and then I could do jokes about them!"

Andy is visiting the region with a show that's been described as an intimate evening of comic reflection, reminiscence and revelation.

The second half of the evening will feature a Q&A session with the audience.



Julian Clary

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 23 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 24 May

Following in the footsteps of comics such as Kenny Everett and Larry Grayson, Julian Clary peddles a fine line in 'saucy postcard humour' that disguises an intelligent sarcasm which digs fun at both himself and his audience.

The world of standup is undoubtedly where he's enjoyed most success, seeming to thrive on the close contact with a live audience. By contrast, his forays into television haven't always gone so well; indeed, a long-ago but infamous 'fisting' gag about a Conservative politician saw him blacklisted by television producers for some considerable time.

He's making a welcome return to the region this month with critically acclaimed standup offering A Fistful Of Clary. "Yes, it *still* has a Western theme," says Julian of the much-toured show. "It was only a matter of time before I eased myself into some chaps once again..."



Ellie Taylor

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 9 May; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 24 May

Ellie Taylor kickstarted her comedy career in her late 20s, performing in standup reality TV series Show Me The Funny. "I got some other television work out of that and a few bookings," recalls Ellie, "but people's expectations outweighed what I was able to provide. I wasn't really good enough at that stage."

Now in her early 40s, Ellie's comedy has come a long way. Part of the secret of her success, she believes, is 'the way she tells 'em'. "I enjoy doing comedy with a narrative. A lot of standup shows have absolutely no narrative whatsoever, but a beginning, middle and end is very important to me."

David O'Doherty

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 22 May

David O'Doherty spent a lot of time wondering whether he actually wanted to be a stand-up comedian. His subsequent award-winning career as a comic shows he's absolutely made the right choice. Jokes include: "I like the Ten Commandments but have a problem with the ninth. It should be: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's ox - except in Scrabble."

Bring The Laughter

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 17 May

There's the promise of 'pure comedy and good vibes' when Bring The Laughter makes a welcome return this month, with Muhsin Yesilada and Raj Poojara (pictured) being joined by Birmingham's Shazia Mirza. One of the UK's most creative female comedians, Muslim Shazia has never been averse to treading a delicate line when it comes to her material. Her post-9/11 joke, "My name's Shazia Mirza - at least, that's

what it says on my pilot's licence", marked her out as a comedian happy to balance on the very precipice of acceptable humour. Other examples of her style and content include: "My parents really want me to get married. But Muslim men don't want to marry me because... I speak" and "My dad said if I went out with a black man, he'd burn me. Which would be good, because then I'd be black, too"



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POWER TRIP

The RSC explores Shakespeare's bloodiest play, Titus Andronicus, through the lens of 21st-century aggression...



One of Shakespeare's earliest - and goriest - tragedies, Titus Andronicus is also one of his least-performed works. Actress Emma Fielding, who stars in the Royal Shakespeare Company's current production, explains to What's On why the play's themes of power, conflict and revenge make it as compelling and relevant as ever...

Written around 1590 and considered to be Shakespeare's earliest tragedy, Titus Andronicus has had something of a chequered history. Initially one of his most popular plays, it has since become widely regarded as his worst, with 17th-century dramatist Edward Ravenscroft notably referring to it as "a heap of rubbish" and numerous scholars debating whether the Bard wrote it at all.

Theories about how much of the play Shakespeare wrote continue to this day, and although it remains one of the least performed from his repertoire - even the RSC hasn't staged it since 2017 - much of the criticism has abated in recent times.

The latest production is directed by Max Webster - fresh from recent successes working with Doctor Who actors David Tennant (in Macbeth) and Ncuti Gatwa (The Importance Of Being Earnest). Now showing at the company's Swan Theatre, it stars celebrated actor Simon Russell Beale in the title role, with Emma Fielding as his sister, Marcia. The award-winning actress has been

an RSC regular since spending a season there

straight out of drama school, and is now one

of the company's associate artists. She firmly

believes the historical debate over who wrote

Titus Andronicus is less important than how

exciting and relevant the play remains. "Shakespeare might not have written all of it, but that's the same with a lot of plays written at the time," she says. "There was lots of collaboration - people came in to do a bit of a tidy up, or *he* came in to do a bit of a tidy up. "The watchword is that it's his bloodiest tragedy, but it's always about much more than that, and it absolutely has resonance today."

The play revolves around a bloodbath of violent retribution that's set into motion when the titular Roman general, returning victorious from a war against the Goths, executes his enemy's son in a ruthless act of vengeance. The violence that follows highlights the bloody horror of war, which the current production views through the lens of 21st-century aggression.

"We're definitely not doing it in Elizabethan dress," says Emma, while remaining coy

about precisely how the play will look. "I'm trying not to give any spoilers! There is violence written in the script - and we're playing the script largely as written - but it'll be done slightly differently. It's not like Reservoir Dogs!

"Sometimes, if you do things with concealed pouches of blood, everyone spends five or 10 seconds thinking 'How did they do that?' But if you do it a different way, it lets you get on with the story a bit quicker."

Telling the story is crucial, and is one of the reasons Emma enjoys the "on the job training" of rehearsals, where she says the actors not only find out what the words they're saying mean, but why they're saying them.

"It's like we're decoding it. Sometimes it can be really clear, but sometimes it's like a crossword puzzle. And that's fine; that's the joy of it. Ultimately, you've got to communicate it to an audience - that's the most important thing. Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed and not have people scratching their heads and being terribly po-faced about it."

Emma believes the rhythms in the language are there to help, not hinder, the cast or audience. She is confident the story will be clear, as will its underlying theme - the horror and futility of war - even as hostilities rage around the globe.

"There are so many conflicts going on in the world at the moment, where people fly in and think there can be a quick and easy fix, not realising it's generation upon generation and cycles of violence, revenge and inherited trauma.

"Look at Israel and Palestine, Ukraine, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo. All over the world, at any time, there's constant military action, which is never a solution in itself because no one ever thinks about 'the day after', sitting down and having a chat. A military solution will never bring peace."

Rather than simply condemn it, she says Titus Andronicus explores why conflict occurs - and, as usual, it involves Shakespeare observing the human condition. "Without ramming it home and dressing people up in a particular way, audiences will get that it's about whatever conflict you want it to be about, because it's about human nature and our need to get one over on each other in that animalistic, feral way. We're human, we're flawed, we're... difficult. People make rash decisions very quickly. "It's also about a crumbling empire, and what you do to try to hold on to power. These are massive themes that will always be current somewhere. It's beautiful and horrific at the same time. I love it."

She also loves working with Olivier and BAFTA Award winner Simon Russell Beale, who, although he is Shakespearean acting royalty, is the absolute opposite of a daunting presence to his fellow actors.

"Simon's the least intimidating person you could meet," laughs Emma. "I've known him a very long time. He's incredibly skilful at what he does, but he's also really great to have in a room. He's so encouraging, he's really kind, and I just hope a tiny bit of his talent will rub off on me."

The actress also claims a relaxed vibe in the rehearsal room - where everyone can contribute - is critical to her own enjoyment ("it's why I love doing theatre"), as well as the success of the production.

"Max actively encourages people to make suggestions, and we've got a really great creative team. Any play you do, I think - because I'm an old bag - should always be greater than the sum of its parts, and if you don't allow people to contribute, then it never will be that. With this production, that's what we've got - a really great collaborative environment to try and do our best

"You've got fabulous language, great performances, and a story that goes like an express train - people won't even stop to think. If you want to be shaken and stirred, you should come and see it - it'll be an exhilarating watch."

Titus Andronicus shows at the RSC's Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Saturday 7 June



Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 20 May - Sun 1 June

Joseph was Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings Jesus Christ Superstar and Evita.

Fabulously fun and frothy, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home.

Joseph sees the future in dreams, and tells his 11 brothers that he's had a vision in which he's seen them all bowing down to him. Not surprisingly, the lads are a tad annoyed with him about this - and then feel even more aggrieved when their dad gives him a coat of many colours...

Much-loved Hippodrome panto favourite Matt Slack stars as Pharaoh.

...Earnest?

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Mon 12 - Tues 13 May; The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 17 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 24 & Sun 25 May

"When I pitch it to my nontheatre friends," explains Simon Paris, the director & co-writer of ... Earnest?, "I say we're putting on a very traditional, classical play [Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest], and it's all going well until the lead actor doesn't show up. The



director comes out, apologises, and says 'It's okay, because one of *you* is going to do it.' We then find the best person in the audience to play this role, and *they* do it."

What could possibly go wrong? Well, in common with shows such as Noises Off, the answer is, pretty much everything, with the desperate director (of the play within the play) doing his best to keep the production on track as more and more audience members are drafted in to replace an ever-thinning cast...

A fun evening is definitely in prospect - particularly if you have aspirations to tread the boards yourself!

Ghost Stories

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, Tues 1 - Sat 5 July; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 15 - Sat 19 July; Malvern Theatres, Tues 22 - Sat 26 July

After a couple of years spent giving London West End theatre-goers the heebie jeebies, Ghost Stories is this month spooking audiences in the Midlands!

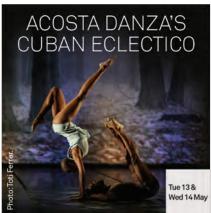
The brainchild of Andy
Nyman - co-creator of
Derren Brown's television
and stage productions and The League Of
Gentlemen's Jeremy Dyson,



the show focuses on the character of Professor Goodman, a 'man of reason' who's determined to debunk the paranormal. But when he embarks on an investigation into three apparent hauntings, as recounted by a night-watchman, a teenage boy, and a businessman awaiting his first child, the professor finds himself at the outer limits of rationality - and fast running out of plausible explanations for what he's experiencing... Clive Mantle, Eddie Loodmer-Elliot, David Cardy and Dan Tetsall, star.

$0121\,689\,3000\,\,birming ham hippodrome.com\,\,$ Lines open Mon-Fri 10 am-6 pm excl. Bank Holidays.

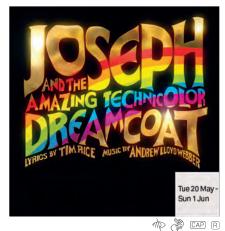










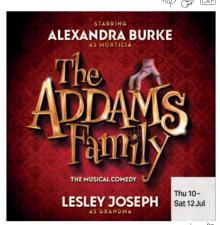


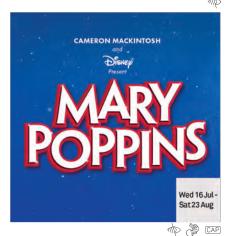














A Shoddy Detective And The Art Of Deception

Regal Theatre, Tenbury Wells, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 23 - Sat 24 May; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 27 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Wed 28 May

If slapstick is the name of your game comedywise, then bag yourself a seat for this high-energy show from the well-regarded Shoddy Theatre.

A small group of one-time East 15 Acting School students, the ensemble have previously made a significant splash at the Edinburgh Fringe, where they were nominated for three Offie Awards for their coming-of-age comedy The Olive Boy. They're visiting various Midlands venues this month with the first show they ever produced, a lively whodunnit that sees four actors taking on the challenge of playing a dozen characters.

A Beginners Guide To Widowhood

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 9 May

With her husband having passed away, Suria takes her children on holiday and finds herself facing plenty of challenges - from the turbulent dynamics of a newly fractured family, to dealing with sympathetic head tilts and the use of the dreaded 'W' word... A one-woman show, A Beginner's Guide To Widowhood explores the experiences of young, widowed women as they deal with the loss of their loved one. In the process, the play asks the question: why does society find it so hard to talk about death?



Welsh National Opera

Birmingham Hippodrome. Thurs 8 - Sat 10 May

Welsh National Opera are stopping off in Birmingham this month with two shows. Mozart's The Marriage Of Figaro sees love and laughter converge in a whirlwind of clever schemes...

Benjamin Britten's Peter Grimes (pictured), meanwhile, is an iconic tale of isolation and prejudice which comes complete with

dramatic choruses, enthralling solos and the famous Sea Interludes.

There's only one Hippodrome performance of each, so be sure to book your seat as soon as possible.



The Pocket Dream

Lichfield Garrick, until Sat 3 May

Lichfield Garrick's latest in-house production is this reworking of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Written by Elly Brewer & Sandi Toksvig - and first performed by Nottingham Playhouse more than 30 years ago - The Pocket Dream tells the story of a company of strolling players whose production of the bard's most popular comedy hangs in the balance. Can a motley crew of makeshift mechanicals possibly save the day?...

The Garrick's longtime pantomime favourites, Sam Rabone and Ben Thornton here reuniting far earlier in the year than usual - are joined in the show by Joe Feeney. Joe starred alongside Sam and Ben in last Christmas' production of Jack And The Beanstalk, playing the character of the ne'erdo-well Luke Backinanger (geddit?).

Bosie

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 23 & Sat 24 May

Making a welcome return some eight years after its critically acclaimed debut, Rik Barnett's one-man play - here produced by Northern Rep Theatre and starring Barnett himself - focuses the spotlight on Oscar Wilde's beau, Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas otherwise known as Bosie.

As Wilde's scandalous story unfolds prior to his sensational trial, the privileged and petulant Bosie ruminates on his own sexuality and prowess, his hunger for position and status - and the part he has played in the very public downfall of his celebrated lover...

Jarman

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Tues 27 & Wed 28 May

"Audiences can expect dynamism, inspiration and spontaneity," explains Mark Farrelly, who has written and performs this one-man



tribute to filmmaker Derek Jarman, "Derek was a wondrous polymath; a writer, painter, gardener, filmmaker and activist. He lived a life without boundaries or convention and is a beacon for anyone who wants to express themselves without restriction. He also showed tremendous, heart-breaking courage in dealing with and dying from Aids. So, in this show, you get a thrilling, funny and authentic encounter with this man, who still has so much to teach us."



What will you see next?



SUN 4 MAY '25 JAMACIA LOVE



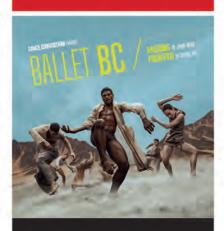
SAT 1 JUN '25 THE CRAZIEST SHOWMAN



MON 2 JUN '25 THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE



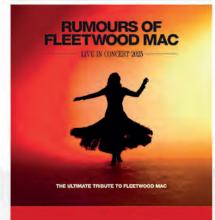
WED 4 JUN '25 LUKE COMBS UK: A TRIBUTE TO LUKE COMBS



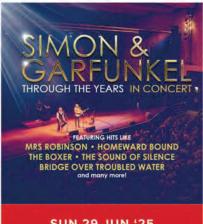
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Rhiannon Faith Company: Lay Down Your Burdens Wed 14 May 7.30pm

Step into an evening at the local pub like no other.

Earnest?

Sat 24 May & Sun 25 May 7.30pm

This one-of-a-kind comedy sensation is completely different, completely chaotic, and completely Wilde every single night.

Kim's Convenience Tue 27 – Sat 31 May

Now a global smash hit, this is the hilarious and heartwarming drama about a family-run Korean store that inspired the Netflix phenomenon.

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Dr Julie Smith In Conversation Sun 25 May 5pm

Dr Julie has amassed an audience of over 8 million, and is the go-to online resource for mental health tips and tricks for millennials and Gen Z.

Kirsty Gallagher: Your Cosmic Purpose Live Tue 3 Jun 7.30pm

The Sunday Times bestselling author will share her newest work, *Your Cosmic Purpose*, a simple yet profound guide to uncovering your life's true path.

Michael Rosen: Getting Through It Wed 11 Jun 7.30pm

Poetry legend Michael Rosen presents his new one-person show, formed of a double-bill of monologues: *The Death of Eddie and Many Kinds of Love.*





Marie & Rosetta

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May

Wolverhampton's very own Beverley Knight returns to her home city to star as African American singer-songwriter Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Sister Rosetta's distinctive gospel recordings - blending spiritual lyrics with the sound of the electric guitar - saw her scoring a major hit with mid-20th-century rhythm & blues and rock & roll audiences. Set in Mississippi in 1946, the story catches up with her at a time when her nightclub performances have seen her shunned by straitlaced church folk. Having persuaded a saintly singer named Marie Knight to join her on a tour of the segregated southern states, Rosetta must first of all convert the younger woman's pure Sunday sound into something that has just a little more swing...

& Juliet

Birmingham Hippodrome, until Sat 3 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 12 - Sat 17 May

Premiered in 2019 and featuring a string of hits by Max Martin, & Juliet tells an alternative story of Shakespeare's famous heroine.



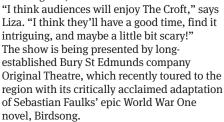
In sharp contrast to the original tale, this one sees Juliet realising that she *can* survive without Romeo - a revelation that prompts her to set off on her own journey, both in love and life.

The award-winning production, which has proved a massive hit across four continents, visits the Midlands this month with Wanted band member and 2015 Strictly Come Dancing winner Jay McGuiness taking top billing. Steps favourite Lee Latchford-Evans co-stars. Featured pop anthems include Britney Spears' Baby One More Time and Katy Perry's Roar, as well as chart toppers Since U Been Gone, It's My Life and Can't Stop The Feeling.

The Croft

The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; Malvern Theatres, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 10 - Sat 14 June

Two women arrive at a former crofter's hut in the deserted village of Coillie Ghille. The remote Scottish Highlands seems the perfect place to get away from it all - until, that is, the two friends find themselves enveloped by The Croft's dark and dangerous history... Written by Ali Milles and based on a true highland story, the show stars Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), Caroline Harker (A Touch Of Frost - pictured) and, topping the bill, veteran television actor Liza Goddard (Doctor Who and Bergerac).



The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 3 - Sat 7 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 28 October - Sat 1 November

This much-loved story from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. It sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of four



youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia... Visiting Birmingham this month having last stopped off in the city at The Rep for the Christmas 2023/24 season, the show features 'magical storytelling, bewitching stagecraft

and incredible puppets'.

"We have this epic stage and fantastic imagery," says the production's director, Michael Fentiman, "but there's not a lot of literal depiction of location of the show. Instead, we're asking the audience to take a leap with us. We work with an illusionist to try and do things that seem impossible. So the way we use magic and lighting and shift-of-focus achieves the possible from the seemingly impossible."

The show's Midlands stop-offs, this month, next month, and in the autumn, come as part of a UK-wide tour to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the novel's publication.

Whatever Happened To Phoebe Salt

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 31 May - Sat 21 June

Forming part of the Arthur Berry 100 and Stoke-on-Trent centenary celebrations, Whatever Happened To Phoebe Salt is here receiving its world premiere, 37 years after unsung local playwright Berry wrote the play. Born and raised in the industrial heartland of Stoke-on-Trent, Phoebe spends her days working in the meat market but desperate to break into showbusiness. Soon enough, opportunity comes knocking. But will a TV appearance help her finally escape the trials and tribulations of her working life?... "Arthur was writing specifically for our theatre-in-the-round with Phoebe Salt," explains New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins. "It's such a privilege to be producing his final play, written for the New Vic but never performed."

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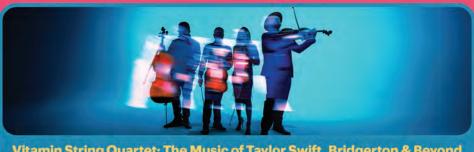


Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra 15 May | Symphony Hall



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Much Ado About Nothing

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until 24 May

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

Fresh from his tenure as artistic director of the Donmar Warehouse, Michael Longhurst takes the helm of this imaginative new version of the bard's oft-performed romcom. Its action is relocated to the world of topflight football and celebrity culture, 'where scandal-filled rivalries are the hottest new thing, and lads and WAGs collide'. Freema Agyeman (Doctor Who) and Nick Blood (Day Of The Jackal, Slow Horses) topbill as Beatrice and Benedick.

One Man Poe

Black Cat...

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 10 May
Paying homage to the works of Edgar Alan
Poe, Stephen Smith directs himself in a oneman presentation which not only completely
sold out during its run in Edinburgh last
summer but also picked up the Fringe's
Spookies Award for Best Horror Solo Show.
Featuring Poe's original text, the production
includes four of the legendary author's most
famous stories: The Tell-Tale Heart; The Pit
And The Pendulum: The Rayen: and The

Suitable for audience members aged 12-plus.



Pride & Prejudice* (*Sort Of)

Lichfield Garrick, Tues 13 - Sat 17 May

A unique and audacious retelling of Jane Austen's most iconic love story, Pride And Prejudice*(*sort of) has proved a winner with critics and audiences alike. Indeed, celebrity fan Sir Stephen Fry has described it as an evening of "hilarity, romance, madness and

utter theatrical joy".

Alongside the raucously irreverent but admirably affectionate retelling of Austen's rollercoaster romance, the 2022 Olivier Award winner also boasts a host of pop classics, including Young Hearts Run Free, Will You Love Me Tomorrow and You're So Vain.



Spitfire Girls

Malvern Theatres, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May; The Rep, Birmingham, Mon 16 - Sat 21 June

The real life but rarely acknowledged war-effort contribution of the women of the Air Transport Auxiliary



(ATA) is joyously celebrated in this heartwarming new play from Tilted Wig. Paying tribute to the pioneering pilots who took to the skies during the Second World War to ferry warplanes between factories, maintenance units and front-line squadrons, the show has been developed and produced with support from the National Theatre's Generate Programme.

The Rocky Horror Show

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 5 - Sat 10 May; The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 22 - Sat 27 September

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the region!

Richard O Brien's cult production tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky.

Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings & suspenders (as many patrons do)! Motherland star Jackie Clune - she played school receptionist Irene Lamb in the hit BBC TV comedy series - takes on the role of the Narrator at the Regent.



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The Dinosaur That Pooped: A Rock Show

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 17 May; Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 30 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 20 July; Malvern Theatres, Sat 25 October; Lichfield Garrick, Wed 29 October

Tom Fletcher and Dougie Poynter are promising their brand-new production will come complete with new songs, a lot of laughs and (not surprisingly given the show's title) a whole load of poo!

Based on Tom and Dougie's bestselling

children's books, The Dinosaur That Pooped follows Danny and Dino as they try to get hold of the last two tickets to their favourite rock band's last-ever concert. But with a villainous band manager lurking, nothing goes to plan... Will the band perform? Will Danny rock out? Or will Dino's rumbling tummy save the day?...

Little Bulb: Four Seasons

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sun 25 May

Olivier Award-winning Little Bulb bring together puppetry, physical theatre and clowning fun for yet another of their enchanting and innovative theatre shows. This one catches up with an intrepid team of magical gardeners as they tend to a marvellous menagerie of flora and fauna across the seasons of the year. The action unfolds against a score of seasonally inspired tracks - including, as might be expected given the production's title, Vivaldi's iconic violin concerti, The Four Seasons.



You Choose

Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Tues 27 & Wed 28 May; Halesowen Town Hall, Fri 6 June

The highly rated Nonsense Room have plenty of form when it comes to providing top-quality theatre experiences for youngsters to enjoy - their touring productions of Shark In The Park and Hairy Maclary have been met with pretty much universal acclaim wherever

they've visited.

The company's latest venture, You Choose, is an interactive musical based on the samenamed picture book by Pippa Goodhart and Shark In The Park author Nick Sharratt. Using the book as inspiration, and via a series of games and challenges, Nonsense Room promise that each show will be a unique experience, 'featuring different locations, costumes and much more, every time!'

An Ant Called Amy

The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Fri 30 & Sat 31 May

"Amy the ant is missing her brother, Andy," explains Julie Sharkey, the playwright behind this wellreviewed 40-minute



touring show. "This is a gentle tale. It's entertaining and fun. It's not going to uncover an awful truth or discuss serious illness. Simply, we meet this little ant Amy, who is working to forget - until her supposed arch enemy, the Brown Spider, gently nudges her to find Andy in the everyday..."

The Wiggles

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 14 May "We love touring the UK," says founding Wiggle Anthony Field. "We're all looking forward to seeing our old friends, as well as meeting some new ones."

Bringing their signature mix of entertainment and education to Birmingham, the fun-loving Australian



music group will be joined by all their Wiggly friends, including Dorothy the Dinosaur, Wags the Dog, Henry the Octopus, Captain Feathersword and TikTok sensation The Tree of Wisdom.

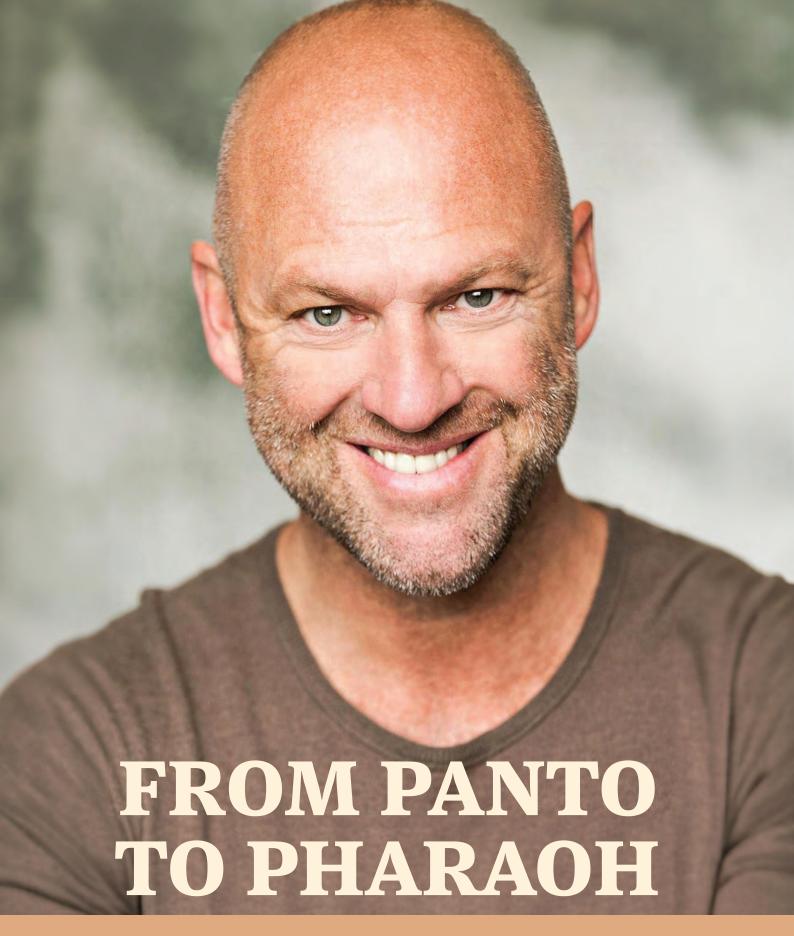
There's A Monster In Your Show

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 10 & Sun 11 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 13 & Wed 14 May

Children's author Tom Fletcher's critically acclaimed Who's In Your Book? series here makes the leap from page to stage.

The hit musical sees Little Monster being joined by friends Dragon, Alien and Unicorn for 50 minutes of comedy, chaos and highenergy fun.





Hippodrome pantomime star Matt Slack is back... in Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat!

Matt Slack may be the king of comedy in Birmingham Hippodrome's pantomime every Christmas, but his next appearance at the venue is taking place in springtime and sees him donning an altogether different crown - as the rock & roll character of Pharaoh in the currently touring production of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.

Matt spoke to What's On about appearing in Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic musical, and about the wide-ranging and sometimes entirely unpredictable nature of life as an actor...

Matt, we usually see you causing chaos in the annual panto - how do you feel about your side-step into the Hippodrome's musical theatre programme?

It's fantastic. I'm extremely honoured and privileged to be asked. Michael Harrison - the producer of Joseph, and of course the pantomimes - when he asked me, I said it would be an honour. Such a prodigious role in such a prestigious show - I'm very, very lucky; I can't wait to do it. It's very nice to do something different from panto at the Hippodrome.

What's your history with musical theatre - have you dabbled before?

I've had a very varied career - a lot of people don't know that. I do screen, stage, and serious drama. My first taste of musical theatre was Boogie Nights, the 70s musical. I played a part which was the understudy to the lead role of Roddy, and eventually I played the lead - I loved it. It was something very different to what I was used to, but I took to it straight away. My second real taste was when I went to see Blood Brothers in Torquay, where I'm originally from. The show just blew my mind. It blew me away, and still does to this day. I'm very proud that, after I watched it, about six months later, I was in it!

You've got a long history of working with Michael Harrison, Joseph's producer. Did that influence you when you were asked to play the role of Pharaoh?

He's an incredible man, Michael Harrison, and I owe everything to him - my success at Birmingham, he opened the door for me. He's one of the biggest producers of musical theatre in the country, and he took pantomime to a different level.

When I'm asked to go and appear for two weeks only in Birmingham, what is there to say 'no' to? I couldn't say no. I know there'll be a lot of people who will go to see Joseph because they're Joseph fans - musical theatre fans. I'll bring a new audience, and vice versa - people may go away going 'Oh, we must go and see him in the panto!'

What's your Pharaoh going to be like?

It's a tricky one, because originally it was 'The King' - it's based on Elvis Presley. I was a massive Elvis fan as a kid... I think they still want to stick true to that, but I shall make it my own. It's kind of an amalgamation or a hybrid with Matt Slack - whoever that is, I

don't know! The man is very different from the performer.

There will be elements of Elvis in there. It doesn't have to be just an impression of Elvis. I don't need an Elvis wig and sideburns! The show's moved on from how it was originally played when it first came out. The associate director just said "Have fun with it!"

Does your working year usually follow the same pattern?

It's a funny old life, really, because it's either 100 miles an hour, or it's the complete opposite. It can be testing to get back into gear, if you switch off too much... I've just moved home and I've got a 10-month-old baby, so I'm being a dad, doing runs to the tip and things like that, painting and decorating. So I've got one finger on that pulse. The other thing is, after pantomime, I need that down time - just to rest my voice for a start!

I was in episode six of Bergerac, the remake. That was nice. You just don't know; sometimes you've got something on the horizon - next week, I could be cast in a movie! That happened a couple of years ago when we were on honeymoon in Mauritius. I had a casting for a Netflix film. I did a short thing with a phone, just handheld, and I got the job! It turned out to be an award-winning movie alongside Millie Bobby Brown and Ray Winstone. It's very exciting; you just don't know what's around the corner.

What would you say about Joseph to an audience member who comes to see you in panto every year?

If you're a fan of me, fantastic - you'll see me in a different light. I'll still have that little wink and that 'comedy walk', because that lends itself to the role. There are parts that I've played where people wouldn't recognise me. That's what I do; I'm a comic and an actor, and it's not all going to be the same. With this role, they can see a bit of Matt Slack, and the Joseph fans will see an actor they don't necessarily recognise or know, playing the part of Pharaoh - making it as good as I possibly can. It's a great gift of a role. It's a showstopper moment.

There's often a lot of bare chests on show in Joseph. Have you felt any pressure to hit the gym before you hit the stage?

I'll be honest... with having a 10-month-old baby, keeping fit has not been my priority.

You don't have time! It's full-on being a dad again at 54 - nearly 55 - so I'm gonna try and get in shape as much as I possibly can. I don't mind if I've got a bit of a beer belly, though - I'll use that to my comedy advantage! I've got no qualms about the costume - if Joe McElderry can wear it, I can wear it! I've not put it on yet, and I'm having some boots made. I did see footage of Donny Osmond [playing Pharaoh], and he is really fit! I don't know how old he is, but he's an incredible man. I promise, just for the mums, I'll get in the gym - at least once!

Do you have a favourite musical number in the show?

Obviously the number that I'm doing, which is Song Of The Pharaoh - a rock & roll number. That's great fun, with the ensemble performing as well. I think the music, from the off, is just enchanting. It's captivating, it's mesmerising, and it's addictive. Everything seems familiar, because it *is* familiar! Even if you've never seen the show, you will recognise at least one tune, one melody. You just feel very safe - it's like a warm mug of musical theatre.

Close Every Door is just incredible, and there's one moment in Act Two, with all the brothers. They are absolutely fantastic - it's such a talented cast. They do a big, epic number, and the harmonies, and that's a highlight moment.

If you had your pick of another musical in the future, which would you choose, and who would you play?

I've always been a fan of Les Mis and the role of Thénardier. I'd love to play that, and it was on the cards a while ago. If that came around again, that would be fantastic. I'd also love to play someone like Fagin... Those 'character roles', I would love. Who knows?! The whole point about being an actor - a comic actor or a straight actor - is the diversity of those roles. That's what I find exciting... I find getting laughs from an audience just as rewarding as making an audience emotional or making them cry. I need both ends of the spectrum.

Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 20 May to Sunday 1 June

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Murder She Didn't Write

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 14 May; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 1 June

Improvised shows are seemingly all the rage nowadays - and this one has certainly got plenty to recommend it...

First and foremost, it was a multiple-sell-out hit at the Edinburgh Fringe...

Secondly, it's presented by a critically acclaimed company - Degrees Of Error - who are past masters of the improv genre...

Thirdly, the show is a real hoot. An Agatha Christie-inspired whodunnit, it features a classic murder-mystery which is created 'on the spot'. Audience members are then encouraged to don their deerstalkers (if they've brought them along), grab a magnifying glass and make sure their 'finger of suspicion' is 'at the ready'... The show runs for two hours, including an interval.

Showdown

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Thurs 8 - Sat 10 May

Exploring the concept of 'healthy competition' via six fearless contestants pushed to their limits in a no-holds-barred race to the top, Showdown brings together comedy and audience interaction with a bold mix of circus, spoken word, UK hip-hop, grime and Afrobeat.

The show is presented by local contemporary circus company Upswing.



MC Hammersmith

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 17 May; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Fri 30 May; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 31 May

Widely considered to be the greatest rapper ever to emerge from the 'ghetto' that is middle-class west London - the competition for such a coveted accolade must be fierce indeed! - MC Hammersmith specialises in improvised freestyle rap comedy based on audience suggestions.

"As a straight, cisgender, privately educated white male," he told voicemag.uk, "I think it's important to acknowledge my struggle: sometimes, I can't get a slot on a professional comedy night in London because too many of my school friends are already on the bill. Cut me a break, society..."

Susan Murray: How Not To Die In A Plane Crash

Wolverhampton Arts Centre, Sat 10 May

Comparisons with Kerry Godliman and Sarah Millican have done wonders for Susan Murray's profile, playing their part in establishing her reputation as one of the UK's funniest female



comedians. Her currently touring show sees Susan promising to make her audience 'laugh and cry at the same time' with a host of 'useful death-defying survival tips, all wrapped up in fantastic jokes'.

Danny Lee Grew: 24K Magic

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 9 May

Danny Lee Grew's publicity advises would-be audience members to expect their jaws to do some serious dropping during 24K Magic, a 'spellbinding' production awash with 'illusion,



laughs, gasps, and stunning sleight-of-hand sorcery'. With celebrities including David Beckham, James Corden, Stormzy, Pink and Chris Hemsworth rumoured to be among his biggest fans, Danny will be hoping to impress a whole new generation with this latest show - a family-friendly offering that's suitable for youngsters aged eight and older.

Nick Mohammed Mr Swallow: Show Pony

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 15 May

He may have been one of the worst contestants in Taskmaster history, but Nick Mohammed has proved himself a winner in pretty much every other aspect of his showbiz career. His success has been due, in



no small measure, to his much-loved alterego Mr Swallow, the attention-seeking man-child who he's been playing for more than a decade. Nick and Mr S are here making a welcome return in a brand-new show, one which has been described by the latter as "payback for everyone who didn't come to the last tour". Expect magic, music, 'and a whole load of brand-new mistakes'.

Jamaica Love

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 4 May

The 77th anniversary of Windrush is marked via this critically acclaimed show, which was nominated in the Best Musical Production



category at the Black British Theatre Awards. Reflecting on the deep and intertwined history of Britain and Jamaica, the production brings together singers John McLean and Celia Wickham-Anderson (of Black Voices fame) for a journey through Jamaica's rich musical heritage, from ska and rocksteady, to reggae, dub and dancehall.



CELEBRATIONS EN POINTE

BRB2's Gala performance will take audiences back to the roots of modern ballet - as Carlos Acosta explains...

A new show by ballet company BRB2 promises to bring the very best past, present and future dance to the stage, according to Carlos Acosta, the director of Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB).

BRB's junior company, BRB2 aims to identify, develop and showcase talented young dancers from around the world in theatres across the UK.

The new production, Carlos Acosta's Ballet Celebration - which shows at Birmingham Hippodrome early this month - takes audiences back to the roots of modern ballet and pays tribute to legendary stage impresario Sergei Dhiagilev.

With the programme featuring The Firebird, Spectre de la Rose, Les Sylphides, Les Biches and Scheherazade, the performance is a showcase of some of the most revolutionary works of ballet, danced by the stars of the future.

"These are very talented young dancers, who, hopefully, in a couple of years' time or in a year's time, will join our company and rise all the way through the ranks," says Carlos. "Some may choose to stay with BRB, but it all depends on people's ambitions and what they want from life. Others will stay with BRB for a time and then go to other companies.

"But this is a chance to see them as they are, starting out. They are excellent dancers. We have brought talented young dancers from Australia, from America, from Cuba, from Ukraine, as I am very aware not just to operate on our own doorsteps but to reach out to different countries to see what talent is there as well.

"It's always nice when you are part of the beginning of somebody's career and you can look back and say 'I saw them when they first started."

Launched three years ago, BRB2 features an annual cohort of roughly half a dozen dancers, aged from 18 to 22, who undergo two years of intensive training and development. Along the way, they perform in shows such as The Nutcracker and Swan Lake with the main company, but also tour their own repertory.

The five dancers of the first cohort have all joined the main BRB company as artists. The current BRB2 company comprises dancers now in their second year of the programme and a new cohort on their first tour.

From the very beginning, Carlos and BRB2

From the very beginning, Carlos and BRB2 artistic co-ordinator Kit Holder have been determined to push the dancers to their limits in terms of the shows they perform. And the new tour puts these young dancers

through their paces with a host of classic works.

"This programme is a tribute to Diaghilev and the beginning of modern ballet," says Carlos. "Diaghilev created a movement that launched the career of artists like Picasso, Cocteau, Stravinsky and Massine, as well as the dancer Nijinsky and the choreographer Fokine. So this programme is a homage to that era.

"If people like their ballet and their dance, it's great to see where it all began. This show is a chance to explore how much ballet has evolved from that time. These dances may be from the past, but they help us understand so much more about where we are going in dance."

Many of the works have a special resonance for Carlos, who performed them during his glittering career as a top principal with companies including the Royal Ballet.

"These are ballets that are very dear to me because I grew up with them. I remember Scheherazade when I was in English National Ballet, performing it when I was 19 - and that is exactly the age that these BRB2 dancers are. And that was the age that Nijinsky was when he danced Scheherazade.

"I have performed Spectre de la Rose in many places, including at The Met with American Ballet Theatre, and I remember when I rehearsed Les Sylphides with Dame Alicia Markova and I was 18.

"I wanted to pay tribute to that era and also my beginnings by bringing these ballets back to the stage. When I came to the UK in the 90s, they were pretty much part of the fabric of the repertory of many companies, but they don't get seen on stage so much these days. And yet they are fantastic ballets."

The pieces are also works which ask a lot of their performers.

"The whole point of BRB2 is to develop these dancers, and the only way to do that is by having them do hard things, technically and artistically. They are still at the beginning of the road, and the only way to develop a dancer is to expose their body to hard training.

"Dancing is a battle between mind and body. The mind has to be able to cope. It has to be trained to absorb all the information, and the more you have access to complexity of work, the better you will be prepared in the future. "What is special about BRB2 is that it has a tailor-made repertory just for that company, while they are also touring with the main company and featuring in their works. So for two years they are pretty much part of the

company, but at the same time they have a lot to work on with their own rep. That develops the dancers quicker and faster. They are being challenged and pushed, and you can see it in their performances."

For Carlos, who grew up in Cuba's capital city of Havana and became a ballet phenomenon, BRB2 is giving young people a chance to reach for the sky. And the project has been hugely supported by donors including the Jerwood Foundation, the Oak Foundation, Charles Holloway OBE, Linbury Trust, Mary Laing and the late David Laing, the George Cadbury Fund, The Kirby Laing Foundation and The Noël Coward Foundation.

"BRB2 is the only company in the UK of its kind which will be launching the careers of the stars of tomorrow. And we are seeing that there is a demand for this kind of company. We see this in the ticket sales and also from the perspective of donors. Everyone wants to help the next talent out there."

The tour's choreography, sets and costumes retain Mikhail Fokine's original vision and have been adapted for smaller stages. In most venues, the music will be a Royal Ballet Sinfonia recording made exclusively for the tour and presented with live piano.

Carlos is looking forward to bringing the show to Birmingham Hippodrome. It will be the first time the junior company have danced on the main stage.

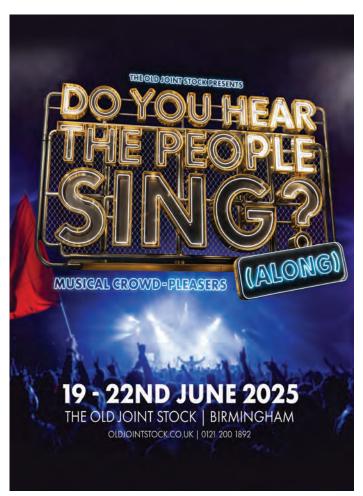
"I'm really pleased to be bringing BRB2 to the Hippodrome, our home stage, where BRB perform so regularly. We have a full-scale orchestra for Birmingham, and for the dancers to have exposure to that sound is fantastic. It's good to develop them for that scale at home, where they have the limelight themselves, not sharing with everyone else. It's fantastic."

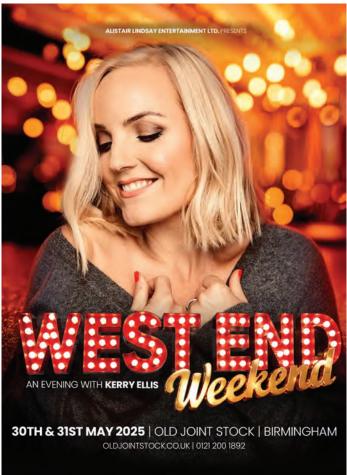
And taking the junior company to mid-scale venues and stages which may not often receive live ballet helps BRB reach new audiences, says Carlos.

"The aim of the tour is to bring ballet with great dancers and full production values to people who don't normally have the access or means to come and see these shows in maybe London or other large-scale venues.

"It is important that BRB brings ballet to everywhere in the UK. That's our mission as a touring company."

Birmingham Royal Ballet's BRB2 perform at Birmingham Hippodrome on Tuesday 6 May









Acosta Danza: Cuban Eclectico

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 13 & Wed 14 May

Danceworks inspired by Cuban culture - but which come complete with a 'twist' - are brought together in this latest creation from Birmingham Royal Ballet Director Carlos Acosta.

The show is presented by Carlos' critically acclaimed ensemble, Acosta Danza, which performed a Latin American-inspired version of The Nutcracker at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton earlier in the year. This latest production will see the company showcasing dance that ranges from modern to Afro-Cuban. The featured works, created in tandem with Carlos by highly regarded choreographers from across the globe, incorporate flamenco, capoeira and hip-hop. A Q&A session will take place post-show on the opening night.

Rhiannon Faith Company: Lay Down Your Burdens

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 14 May "The constant in all my work is love," explains socially conscious choreographer Rhiannon Faith, who this month brings critically acclaimed show Lay Down Your Burdens to Coventry. "I know how that might sound, but actually, I think it's brave to say. I make work about the human experience, and at the heart of that, the most essential thing that we truly know and we truly need, is love; to give it and to receive it." Set in an on-stage pub and exploring themes of grief, serious illness and personal suffering, Rhiannon's Olivier Awardnominated show combines physical performance, personal testimonials, music from a live Ceilidh band and a selection of pub games. Its stated aim? To 'draw together those who have been estranged or never even dreamed they were connected'.

A free-but-ticketed workshop takes place the night before the show (Tuesday the 13th) from 6pm to 7.3opm.



Nikita: Midnight Dancer

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 2 May; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 11 May; Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 17 May

International champion and Strictly Come Dancing star Nikita Kuzmin's first-ever solo tour sees him joined by 'a sharp and chic cast of talented dancers and vocalists... for an evening bursting with happiness, euphoria, and (of course) world-class dance'.



Aljaž & Janette: A Night To Remember

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 23 May Strictly Come Dancing favourites Aljaž

Škorjanec and Janette Manrara here make a welcome return to the region with a brand-new show in which they're promising 'unforgettable

'unforgettable dancing, great music and plenty of laughter'. Supported by their own big band and an

ensemble cast of dancers and singers, the husband & wife team will be performing routines to a wide selection of music, including classics from the Great American Songbook and various modern-day favourites.

Bibi Rukiya's Reckless Daughter

Patrick Centre, Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 22 & Fri 23 May

Bibi Rukiya's Reckless Daughter is a new dance-theatre production exploring 'the conditioned patriarchy enforced by women within family structures'.

Created by choreographer Amina Khayyam and loosely based on Federico García Lorca's The House Of Bernarda Alba, the story is set in contemporary inner-city marginalised new migrant communities.

The piece was developed over 18 months through an extensive programme of outreach workshops with women's community groups nationwide.



IT'S KICKING OFF...



Showing at Stratford-upon-Avon's Royal Shakespeare Theatre this month is a version of Much Ado About Nothing that side-steps the play's original setting in favour of the world of professional football. And what's more, the production comes complete with a celebrity wedding, fake news, and a swimming pool! Director Michael Longhurst spoke to What's On about his bold new take on Shakespeare's much-loved comedy...

Michael, why have you chosen this play, and why this setting?

I had a conversation with Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey, the co-artistic directors of the RSC, and we were discussing various titles -Much Ado was a title that crossed over on both of our lists. I was circling around it, trying to think about how I would bring it to life. I was mentally going through various historical wars, trying to find a setting for the play, and was not particularly inspired or excited by the ideas that I was having... What was interesting to me was, it's a group of men coming back from a victory - which started me thinking about the world of professional sport. As soon as that idea had risen in my mind, it became very exciting. I think the play is about masculinity, about the dynamics of masculine relationships brought into contact with feminine relationships. I was looking for figures within the world, and Silvio Berlusconi was someone I started researching - as soon as I understood that he was prime minister of Italy, a major owner of a media company and he was the president of AC Milan... that's literally what Leonato could be.

Can you describe what your rehearsal process has been like?

Joyous! There's something that happens when there are footballs to be kicked, and a bunch of guys that enjoy kicking footballs. There's an energy that automatically happens, which is amazing. What this has allowed us to do is to make a really unique world. The actors can be vounger, because they're from the world of football, and it's a working-class sport, so I was determined that the voice and identity of the actors playing these roles would be authentic. I think that adds a really brilliant spin on how we might be used to hearing Shakespeare and what's 'the proper way' to speak it. It's been really fun to hear how vivid the world is that we've collectively created. It's a play full of movement - with the masques and dances and all that jazz - and once you're trying to do comic sequences involving a swimming pool... it's been a lot of fun!

Did anything surprise you while you were directing?

I'm always surprised by how little contact Beatrice and Benedick actually have together in the play. They are technically the subplot that we all fall in love with as the leads, but it's extraordinary the speed of development in their relationship, with very little contact time. It's a masterclass in playwriting to watch how we're so quickly hooked into their relationship. We were just working on Act Four Scene One... What an extraordinary scene, starting with the wedding, where Claudio slanders Hero, through to Beatrice and Benedick declaring love to each other. It's just sort of epic to go from polite titters at a wedding, to the absolute trashing of someone's dreams and reputation essentially the cancelling of someone through to the rollercoaster of emotion into declaring love. It's the kind of thing that I can imagine in modern telly you'd be told by a script editor "That's not believable, take the edges off it." Shakespeare just writes through it and doesn't let you simplify it, and that is extraordinary to stage and play. So watching the company get their teeth into such a big scene is really thrilling.

Are you a football fan, or have you come to this production from outside of that world?

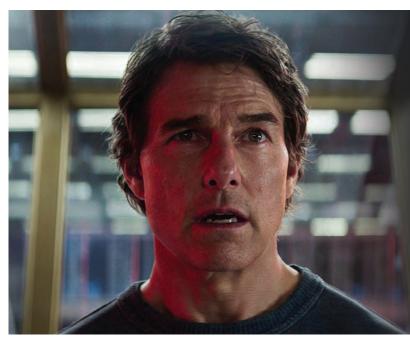
In honesty, I am absolutely not a football fan. I have three brothers; they're all very sporty. Match Of The Day was on the telly on a Saturday, and I had to sit very quietly through it, and it was not my cup of tea. I have been football-adjacent. The job of directing is to become a mini expert before you go into rehearsal. Whether it's the conflict in the Middle East, or the climate emergency, or urban isolation, or quantum physics, - or, in this case, football! It's always something that, as a director, I'm trying to learn in a crash course... All our footballers went to meet players, training staff and members of the PR team at Watford Football Club. They came back with some extraordinary stories, which absolutely fuelled the characters. Once you do that work, you realise these kids have often been obsessively training on that one thing, from a very young age. They have been moved away from their families, and the team is their life. Their lives are controlled by the managers, and every bit of their life, every beat of their diet, is scheduled and controlled for them. People love to come and share their stories in the rehearsal room, because theatre is an amazing medium for exploring facets of the world that we don't get to walk in ourselves. Or, if you have something important to say, we can be the means by which we share a discussion about it. The boys came back with amazing insights from their time with the footballers.

Of the play's two love stories, which have you found most interesting to direct?

I think I identify more strongly with Beatrice and Benedick because of my age. Hero and Claudio are a very young couple; their love is speedy and instant, and historically would have been in the form of romantic chivalry. Today, it's got sucked into the world of influencers and images - the surface veneer of it. Beatrice and Benedick are a much more experienced couple. The parallel between war and love in the original play really holds between sport and love - with the same sort of nationalistic language. We're here to conquer enemies, we're here to vanquish, we're doing national service... those sorts of things.

You have to 'surrender' to be in love. What does it mean to risk that at a certain age, when you may have been hurt in love before? I find it very moving to watch the two actors play all that wit, all the sharp, defensive, protective mechanisms, and then to watch that melt away - as it suddenly does. It's beautiful when that catches. When Freema Agyeman, who's playing Beatrice, declared her love for Benedick, I watched every eye in the rehearsal room wet immediately, and just thought - that's good! It feels like we're on to something.

Much Ado About Nothing shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratfordupon-Avon until Saturday 24 May



Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning CERT the

Starring Tom Cruise, Vanessa Kirby, Hannah Waddingham, Simon Pegg, Tramell Tillman, Hayley Atwell, Angela Bassett Directed by Christopher McQuarrie

Tom Cruise continues to take on impossible missions like there's no tomorrow...

The Final Reckoning was filmed back-to-back with its predecessor, Dead Reckoning, and takes the number of M:I movies to an impressive eight.

And Cruise may not be ready to hand in his Impossible Missions Force (IMF) badge just yet either, with the 62-year-old actor having pointed out that Harrison Ford was still playing Indiana Jones as he approached his 80s. This latest addition to the hit franchise (costing a cool \$400million - making it one of the most expensive movies ever made) sees Cruise's Ethan Hunt carrying on where he left off in Dead Reckoning - namely, trying his damnedest to destroy an AI system called The Entity, which is housed in a sunken Russian stealth submarine.

Released Wed 21 May

Shadow Force CERT 15 (104 mins)

Starring Kerry Washington, Omar Sy, Mark Strong, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Ed Quinn, Sala Baker Directed by Joe Carnahan

Kyrah and Isaac were once the leaders of a multinational special forces group called Shadow Force. Problem was, they broke the rules and fell in love. In order to protect their son, they go underground. But with a large bounty on their heads, and the vengeful Shadow Force hot on their trail, one family's fight quickly becomes an all-out war... Kerry Washington (Django Unchained, Little Fires Everywhere, and hit thriller series Scandal) becomes a fully fledged action hero in this highly anticipated movie. The film has been produced by Lionsgate, a company that knows a thing or two about making classics out of initially-under-theradar actioners. Their previous such offerings include Fall, Den Of Thieves 2: Pantera, and the John Wick franchise (including its upcoming spinoff movie, Ballerina, which is currently slated for release next month).

Released Fri 2 May



The Wedding Banquet

CERT 15 (102 mins)

Starring Bowen Yang, Lily Gladstone, Kelly Marie Tran, Han Gi-Chan, Joan Chen, Youn Yuh-jung Directed by Andrew Ahn



Korean rich kid Min's student visa is set to expire, and he desperately needs a green card. Frustrated with his commitment-phobic boyfriend Chris and running out of time, he makes a proposal to their friend Angela: a green-card marriage, and in exchange he will pay for her partner Lee's expensive IVF treatment. Min and Angela prepare to quietly elope, but then their plans are upended by the arrival from Korea of Min's sceptical grandmother, who insists on staging an allout Korean wedding extravaganza... Director Andrew Ahn's comedy of errors - a reimagining of Ang Lee's same-named 1993 Oscar-nominated romcom - played pretty well with the critics when it was screened at the Sundance Film Festival earlier this year.

Released Fri 9 May

The Surfer CERT 15 (103 mins)

Starring Nicolas Cage, Finn Little, Rahel Romahn, Michael Abercromby, Alexander Bertrand, Julian McMahon Directed by Lorcan Finnegan

The Surfer is intense, unnerving, and made a real splash at last year's Cannes Film Festival.

When Nicolas Cage's unnamed title character and his teenage son arrive at a beach with the intention of riding the waves, they find themselves confronted by a gang of unpleasant, bullying surfers, who make it clear that only local people are permitted in the area. But The Surfer isn't about to go home quietly. As he attempts to stand his ground, he finds himself being gaslit by his aggressors, a strategy that leaves him struggling hard to hold onto his sanity... Very much a slow-burn film. The Surfer makes for an absorbing watch, comes complete with a twist in its tale, and looks highly likely to acquire cult-movie status at breakneck speed.

Released Fri 9 May



Lilo & Stitch CERT the

Starring Maia Kealoha, Sydney Agudong, Billy Magnussen, Tia Carrere, Hannah Waddingham and the voice of Chris Sanders Directed by Dean Fleischer Camp

Lilo & Stitch have been around since the early years of the new millennium. Debuting in an animated, cinema-released movie, they then starred in a further three straight-to-video films as well as appearing on television.

For those not in the know, Lilo is an orphaned Hawaiian girl who loves hula, surfing and wildlife. Stitch is a genetically engineered runaway extraterrestrial creature who Lilo adopts as her 'dog'.

This 2025 remake of the original 2002 film is a live-action & computer-generated-animation hybrid. The storyline finds Lilo & Stitch getting involved in an adventure that sees them pursued by aliens (who are attempting to recapture Stitch) and bothered by the delightfully named and oh-so-strict social worker Cobra Bubbles (who's not convinced Lilo's older sister can do a good enough job of looking after her sibling). The original film's co-writer/co-director, Chris Sanders, once again provides the voice of Stitch, just as he did back in the 2002 version. **Released Fri 23 May**



Hurry Up Tomorrow

CERT 15 (105 mins)

Starring The Weeknd, Jenna Ortega, Barry Keoghan, Paul L Davis, Roy Williams Jr, David Moskowitz Directed by Trey Edward Shults



"It's about an artist, you could say, on the verge of a mental breakdown," explains Hurry Up Tomorrow's director & co-writer, Trey Edwards Shults. "He meets this woman, and they go on this odyssey together. It's a mix of psychological thriller and drama." The movie stars Abel Tesfave, aka The Weeknd, who recently released his sixth studio album, also titled Hurry Up Tomorrow. "The film actually inspired the album," Tesfaye told Variety. "It offered me a chance to express a lot that I needed to release, with cinema serving as the ideal medium for exploration. The openness of film allowed me to delve into these themes freely."

Released Fri 16 May

The Phoenician Scheme

CERT tbc

Starring Scarlett Johansson, Tom Hanks, Benedict Cumberbatch, Bryan Cranston, Rupert Friend, Bill Murray Directed by Wes Anderson

Wes Anderson has teamed up with longtime collaborator Roman Coppola for The Phoenician Scheme, the pair having previously co-written Asteroid City and Moonrise Kingdom.

A tale of espionage, boasting an all-star cast and described by Anderson as a "three-hander", the film focuses on the character of Zsa-zsa Korda, one of the richest men in Europe, who names his daughter - a nun, and one of his six children - as his heir. He does so, however, without disclosing why he's made the decision, other than to reveal that he's embarking on "the most important project of my lifetime."

Further details about the film are few and far between at the time of writing, but Anderson's legion of fans will care not a jot about that, enthusiastically signing up to anything and everything that passes through the critically acclaimed director's hands.

Released Fri 23 May



Karate Kid: Legends

CERT tbc (118 mins)

Starring Joshua Jackson, Jackie Chan, Ralph Macchio, Ming-Na Wen, Shaunette Renée Wilson, Sadie Stanley Directed by Jonathan Entwistle



The sixth film in the Karate Kid franchise is set three years after the events of the Cobra Kai series. It follows the story of kung fu prodigy Li Fong, who, after a family tragedy, is uprooted from his home in Beijing and forced to move to New York City with his mother

Once in the US, Li struggles to let go of his past as he tries to fit in with his new classmates, and although he doesn't want to fight, trouble seems to find him everywhere. When a new friend needs his help, Li enters a karate competition - but his skills alone aren't enough.

Li's kung fu teacher, Mr Han (Jackie Chan), enlists original Karate Kid Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) for help, and Li soon learns a new way to fight, merging their two styles into one for 'the ultimate martial arts showdown'...

Released Fri 30 May

Sofia Lineace, © Percot.

Director Carlos Acosta

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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



With previous roles in touring productions of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Rock Of Ages, We Will Rock You and Aladdin under his belt, musical theatre star Adam Strong is currently wearing the iconic heels of Frank N Furter in The Rocky Horror Show.

What's On recently caught up with Adam to find out more about his performance pathway so far...

Where are you from, Adam?

I grew up in Sunderland and am based just outside of Durham - although I'm never there, due to work.

When did you first realise you had some talent, and who encouraged you?

My sister was a dancer for many years, and I used to love watching her, especially in the panto at the Sunderland Empire, which she did for many years. She was the one who encouraged me to get started in musical theatre and helped me land my first role, which was Jerome in The Sound Of Music at the Sunderland Empire. I've loved musicals since being a child - the first time I saw The Phantom Of The Opera on stage, I was hooked.

Was there a moment when you realised you wanted to be a professional performer, and is there a role that changed everything for you?

When I auditioned for We Will Rock You. I'm a massive Queen fan, and I knew it was time to move from understudy to playing a role of my own. And it worked out.

What was your first major role, and is there a role that has a special significance.

My first musical as an adult was Jesus Christ Superstar - the arena tour starring Tim Minchin and Mel C. I played a priest and understudied the role of Annas. I had the most amazing time touring the world with that show - and performing in arenas was just unbelievable.

Also, playing Jafar in Disney's Aladdin was very personal to me. Watching the animated film was the first time I had seen anyone who looked like me on screen [Adam describes himself as half Middle Eastern]. Disney is so conscientious about casting a diverse company.

You've performed all over the world. Do you have any highlights?

I have many career highlights, but I think performing opposite Brian May for our gala performance of We Will Rock You will always stick out as one of my proudest moments.

What do you love about playing Frank N Furter?

It's such an empowering role, and I get to sing all of my favourite songs and be part of the musical's history. I've been a massive Rocky Horror Show fan for many, many years, and I've studied many different Franks - so for me, it just felt like the right fit.

The Rocky Horror Show fanbase is legendary. What's your experience of them?

The fans are so supportive of the show! I get a lot of gifts, which is very kind, as I love show memorabilia.

Rocky Horror has been pushing boundaries for 50 years. Do you think it still has that same rebellious edge in 2025?

Oh, I think the show is timeless and always will be! I had a chat with our wonderful director, Chris Luscombe, in rehearsals, and we had a look at the script from the 1970s - it's almost identical!

Adam Strong stars in The Rocky Horror Show when it visits the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 5 to Saturday 10 May, and the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Monday 22 to Saturday 27 September



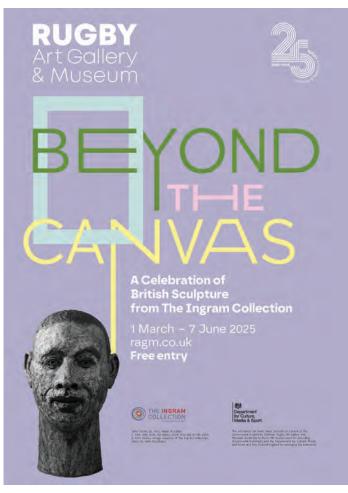
Elizabeth And Stanhope Forbes: A Marriage Of Art

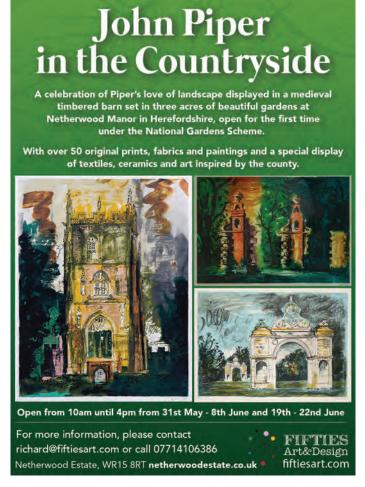
Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 29 June

Elizabeth and Stanhope Forbes were very much the power couple of British Impressionism, with both artists already well established and enjoying success at the time of their marriage in 1889.

This brand-new exhibition features what's being described as a 'sumptuous' selection of their artworks. The show includes many pieces that are on loan from Penlee House Gallery & Museum, and which are visiting Worcester for the very first time.

Also on display in the exhibition is Stanhope's Chadding On Mounts Bay, one of the most widely admired and beloved paintings in Worcester City's Fine Art collection.







Mao Ishikawa

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 1 May - Sun 22 June

Warwick Arts Centre is this month and next presenting the first institutional exhibition in the UK of revered Okinawan photographer Mao Ishikawa.

Featuring more than 60 photos from the 1970s onwards, the show includes images

from some of Mao's best-known projects. Among these is an iconic series focusing on Okinawan women who formed relationships with African American servicemen stationed at US military bases on the island.

Beyond The Canvas

Rugby Art Gallery, until Sat 7 June

Taking the subtitle A Celebration Of British Sculpture From The Ingram Collection, Beyond The Canvas explores the diverse styles and techniques that defined British sculpture throughout the 20th century.

The Ingram Art Foundation boasts one of the most significant collections of modern British art in the UK. The collection is here sharing space with pieces from the widely admired Rugby Collection.

The display is being presented as part of the gallery's 25th anniversary celebration.



Suzanne Holtom: And Hills Bore Scars

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 29 June

"During the pandemic, I lost my dad," explains Suzanne Holtom, "and as a result, my



trips back home to the West Midlands became far more frequent. It was this continuing return to my original home, contemplating and experiencing this embodied landscape, that initiated a new direction in my work."

A deep mapping of place - encompassing geological time, personal experiences, social histories and memory - has become the primary motivation in Suzanne's art. The paintings featured in And Hills Bore Scars - which draw from 'geosites' in the Black Country Global Geopark - contemplate bodily forms, land masses, histories, patterns of energy and industry, layered materiality and shifting terrains. Visitors to the gallery on Saturday 10 May can join Suzanne for a printmaking session and a tour of her exhibition.

John Piper In The Countryside

Netherwood Manor, Herefordshire, Sat 31 May - Sun 8 June

This major exhibition draws together a wide selection of originals, prints and fabrics by John Piper, a Surrey-born 20th-century artist whose work often focused on the British landscape. An official war artist during 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.

The Netherwood Manor display includes a selection of artworks featuring the local region.



Through Their Eyes: 80 Years On

National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, Sat 3 May - Sun 16 November

Marking this month's 80th anniversary of the end of World War Two, Through Their Eyes is part of the National Memorial Arboretum's The Year Was 1945... project. The initiative comprises displays, events, services, talks and tours, its aim being to share the stories of those who served during wartime

Through Their Eyes has been produced by the Royal British Legion, the UK's largest charity solely dedicated to supporting the needs of the Armed Forces community.

PARTY TIME

August Strindberg's Miss Julie has been radically reimagined for a new audience



A radically reimagined version of August Strindberg's Miss Julie shows at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre this month. Directed by Holly Race Roughan and written by Laura Lomas, The House Party is set in modern times and explores themes of class, power and privilege. Holly and Laura spoke to What's On about their critically acclaimed play...

August Strindberg's play Miss Julie has been reimagined numerous times since it was first staged in 1888, but when director Holly Race Roughan and writer Laura Lomas approached the story, they decided to create a radical new version for audiences today. Where the original tells of the fall-out of a brief moment of passion across the class divide, The House Party explores the relationships between three teenagers - Julie, her friend Christine, and Christine's boyfriend, Jon - and how one night changes their lives forever.

As artistic director of Headlong Theatre, which has produced The House Party along with Frantic Assembly and Chichester Festival Theatre, Holly says it was essential that the story spoke to modern audiences and made us hear this classic afresh.

"I think Miss Julie is one of the best plays ever written about the intersection between the personal and the political," she says. "But I re-read it and realised we needed a new version, with more about the psychology and humanity of the characters. Laura was the right person to contemporise it but also complicate it.

"As a production company, we are interested in making a version where you *feel* first for the characters before you then *think* about them. What is genius about Lomas' and the Strindberg version is that it's so balanced; you can't really come down on one side. Who's the victim and who's the perpetrator? Each page slides you back round the drama triangle."

The team also decided to give the play its new name, The House Party, to signify its differences from Miss Julie.

"I'm really interested at Headlong in estranging audiences from works they think they know really well, in order to allow them a contemporary experience of hearing those stories for the first time. Having a different name is partly to acknowledge that this is quite a radical new interpretation. It's so exciting when you don't know what's going to happen next when you're sitting in the theatre. If it's called The House Party and is based on Miss Julie, you know the playground it's in but you don't really know what's going to happen next. That allows us to create experience that feels more like a modern-day thriller."

When the show premiered at Chichester in May last year, one of the great joys for the creative team was seeing how it appealed to people of all ages but especially younger audience members.

"We were quite knocked out by the reaction from different generations. It's in the mouths of 18-year-olds, but it's an inter-generational theatrical experience.

"Headlong's place in the theatre ecology is - in part, I believe - to be a 'gateway drug'. So what really excites me - as well as playing to brilliant and loyal core audiences - is playing to first timers. What Laura has written is such a tense, exciting show that if it's your first time going to the theatre, you're going to want to come back."

In writing The House Party, Laura was keen to retain the original play at the heart of her version, but also to give it a greater relevance and modern-day resonance.

"Strindberg is so immediate," she says.
"Dramatically, it grabs you by the throat and never stops. The challenge in trying to make it contemporary is being able to update it while also holding onto that propulsive drama.

"It's very emotional, and there's something quite teenage and hormonal about that. And so the idea of setting it in a teenage house party arose. Along with that came the idea of making this party really vibrant and anarchic.

"I think it's a play about friendship and class, and it's about three teenagers who don't fully understand the external pressures that are bearing down on them and the destructive force of that. So in some ways it's an awakening or a coming of age for them. But I've also written humour into it, so it's funny and entertaining."

The friends face the power of external pressures such as social media.

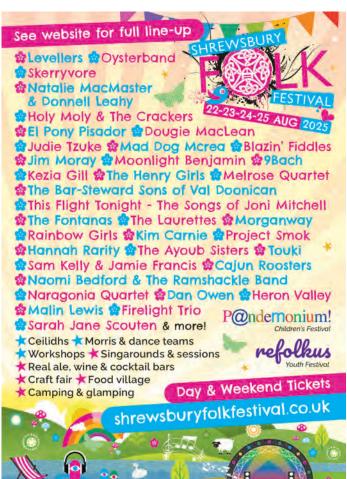
"It's about Julie's experience of being sexually shamed online, so it's also about misogyny. There's a sense that Julie is a bit of a femme fatale in the original, and I really wanted to address that in this updating. I wanted us to find a way of understanding Julie as someone who is also marginalised and objectified and acting out of the social violence she has experienced by being told that her only worth is her sexual currency.

"There are so many big intersections in all of the characters - so race, gender, class - but there are also smaller intersections, which hopefully mean that different people will hook into different things with each of these characters.

"There's so much going on in the knot between them that your sympathies will shift, but hopefully within that journey you will understand them all."

The success of The House Party would not have been possible without the collaboration of the three producing partners - something of which show director Holly is very aware: "The production really is a love child of the dynamic movement of Frantic Assembly, Headlong's commitment to vivid, robust, thrilling new writing, and Chichester's 'Yes we can' attitude to producing. All three of us felt deeply proud of the show last year. We felt we had surpassed what we could do without each other."

The House Party shows at The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Thursday 8 to Saturday 10 May









Laithwaites Wine Festival The Custard Factory, Birmingham, Sat 10 May

Glasses at the ready - the Laithwaites Wine Festival is on its way to Birmingham. Dozens of producers from around the world will be gathering at the city's Custard Factory venue this month to serve their wines and share the stories behind them. The event also includes a selection of fun and informative masterclasses - including cocktail winemaking and a cheese & wine pairing session.



Digbeth Dining Club Summer Tour

Warwick Castle, Fri 2 May; Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sat 3 May; Brueton Park Lake, Solihull, Sun 4 May; Bromsgrove Recreation Ground, Mon 5 May; Waterfront, Brierley Hill, Fri 9 May; Sutton Coldfield Rugby Club, Sat 10 May; Lightwoods Park, Smethwick, Sun 11 May; Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sat 17 May; Codsall Village Hall, Sun 18 May; Compton Verney, Sat 31 May; Barton Marina, Burton-on-Trent, Sat 31 May

Digbeth Dining Club is back on the road, with the award-winning street-food operator touring local parks, fields and beauty spots across the region over the next few months. Hawker Dan, Original Patty Men, Beef On The Block, Cofton Pizza, Urban Spice Box and Bournville Waffle Co are just a few of the

100-plus street-food traders taking part in the summer tour.

Chilled DJ sets, family-friendly activities and drinks stations - such as cocktail caravans and fizz bars - all add to the experience for diners, whose dogs (if they have any) are very welcome, too.

Whitchurch Food & Drink Festival

Jubilee Park, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Sat 24 May

Whitchurch Food & Drink Festival makes a welcome return after a five-year break. A celebration of local produce, the free one-day event features chef demonstrations, exhibitors from across the region, and handson food sustainability activities presented by local organisations.

Live entertainment takes place on the bandstand throughout the day, and a kids' area will feature a host of free activities, including inflatables, vintage games, alpacas, and have-a-go circus skills and sports.



90's Baby Bottomless Brunch

Gosta Green, Birmingham, Sat 17 May; The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury, Sat 17 May

Get ready to party like it's 1999 as The Brunch Club bring their 90s-themed event to two Midlands venues this month.

Guests can enjoy all their favourite 90s hits courtesy of live performers and the resident DJ - whilst also tucking into their brunch dish and making the most of a not-to-be-missed 60-minute 'bottomless booze' option.

Weston's Spring Fling

Weston Park, Shropshire, Sun 25 & Mon 26 May

Weston Park's popular Spring Fling features unique crafts, a selection of street food, and a line-up of local artisan food producers. Live music is provided by the Dirty Rockin Scoundrels, with fairground rides available to keep visitors of all ages entertained. The whole estate - including the house and its collection, the miniature railway and the woodland adventure playground - is open to explore across the two days.



SERENDIPITY ARTS MINION FESTIVAL

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY





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RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Three Counties Showground, Malvern, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May

Taking the theme Plants & People, the RHS Malvern Spring Festival is this year encouraging visitors to explore the numerous ways in which plants bring a positive impact to their lives.

As well as showcasing new attractions - including the first RHS-judged Indoor Plant Gardens and the Give It A Grow Theatre - the

festival also boasts contributions from Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Gardeners' World regulars Adam Frost, Frances Tophill and Rachel de Thame.

Numerous well-established elements of the popular event also make a return, including show and feature gardens, the floral marquee and the Tips & Tricks Theatre.



Makers Central NEC, Birmingham, Sat 17 & Sun 18 May

Makers Central is back at the NEC, bringing together creators, hobbyists and artists from all over the world.

Visitors young and old can get involved with a selection of interactive sessions, including woodworking, metalworking, electronics and leathercraft.

Everyone from experienced makers to families and first-time triers can have a go at

making things with new technologies, along the way gaining a better understanding of the science behind how things are made. Numerous makers-community YouTube stars and social-media influencers will be putting in an appearance across the weekend, including Britain's very own inventor & maker Colin Furze and the star of Netflix's Making Fun, Jimmy Diresta.

Spring Diesel Festival

Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster, Worcestershire, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 May

Severn Valley Railway's four-day festival of traction is back this month and features both guest and home locomotives operating a busy timetable between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade.

Guest locomotives include the Freightliner Class 66, Freightliner Class 70, Rail Adventure Powercars 43468 and 43480 and Colas Class 56 x 2 (expected to be 56090 and 56094). The Kidderminster Diesel Depot & Carriage Shed will be open for tours, which can be booked on the day.



Giffords Circus

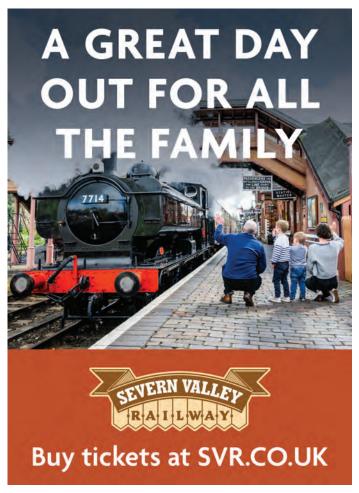
Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham, Fri 9 - Mon 19 May

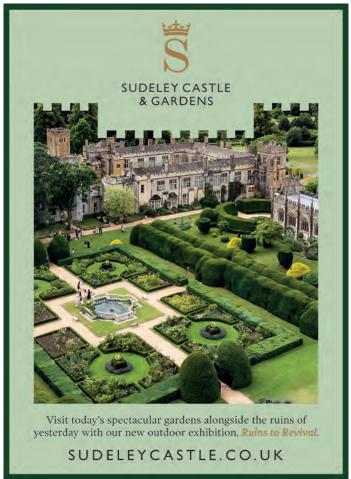
This year celebrating their 25th anniversary, Giffords Circus return to Sudeley Castle with brand-new offering Laguna Bay.
Set in the 'buoyant and sunny era' of 1050s

Set in the 'buoyant and sunny era' of 1950s America, the show features a cast of top-rated acrobats, magicians, musicians and clowns.



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Three Counties Showground, Malvern

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Circus Extreme NEC, Birmingham, opposite Resorts World, Fri 16 May - Sun 1 June

Combining live rock music and 'world-class' circus stunts, Circus Extreme returns with brand-new show Rock It Out.

The two-hour extravaganza features, among

other acts, the Extreme Freestyle Motocross Team, South American stunt legend Paulinho, and The Danguir Troupe's Double Wheel Of Death (pictured).



Birmingham Pride

Birmingham Gay Village & Smithfield, Birmingham, Sat 24 & Sun 25 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 Cabaret Stage and Dance Arena. Headline acts this year include Clean Bandit, Cascada and Bananarama.

Staffordshire County Show

Staffordshire County Showground, Wed 28 & Thurs 29 May

The 2025 Staffordshire County Show offers something for visitors of all ages to enjoy. The Country Pursuits Area will host the West Lancs Dog Display Team, birds-of-prey presentations, a ferret roadshow, a sheep show and giant tortoises.

The Main Ring programme, meanwhile, includes the Bolddog Lings Motorcycle Display Team, the Mounted Games, show jumping, a parade of hounds, and young farmers' floats.

There will also be a grand parade of livestock - the show features over a thousand cattle, sheep, pigs and goats - and more than 1,500 horses and ponies, some of which will be participating in various competitions across the two days.

Four hundred-plus trade stands and a food hall further add to the event's appeal.



AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run

Birmingham City Centre, Sat 3 & Sun 4 May

The Midlands' biggest running event returns across the first weekend of the month.

Saturday the 3rd sees the junior and mini Great Birmingham Runs taking place at the Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr.

On Sunday the 4th, the city hosts the 10k and

half marathon races. Participants will be running past some of Birmingham's best-known landmarks and areas, including the Jewellery Quarter, St Paul's Square, the Mailbox and Grand Central. The event begins in Centenary Square, with both runs ending at Smithfield in Southside, where there will be food stalls and a party to enjoy.













World War Two Week

RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June

The RAF Museum Midlands is travelling back to the 1940s this half-term week, to highlight the importance of World War Two in terms of the development of technology, engineering

and community.

Attractions include talks, make & take sessions, a selfie station, Lego racers, and the return of the popular Spy Hunter Trail.



Half term fun at Thinktank Science Museum

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, Mon 26 - Fri 30 May

Thinktank will be keeping youngsters entertained during the half-term holiday with daily events and activities.
Highlights include the return of the Roving Robots Family Show, during which kids (and adults) can learn how space rovers are powered, what they might be up to on other

planets, and how they get there. The venue's line-up of entertainment also includes Lunar Lego Lab workshops, providing youngsters with the opportunity to build, program and customise their very own Science Royer.

Brick Dinos

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, Sat 31 May - Sun 7 September

This new exhibition provides families with the opportunity to step back in time to the prehistoric world.

The show's attractions include a range of Lego dinosaur sculptures - created in collaboration with palaeontologists - behind-the-scenes videos, photo opportunities, and the chance to uncover fossils at an interactive 'dino dig'.

Visitors can also get creative with hands-on Lego and Duplo play, design their own dinosaurs on a graffiti wall, and take home dinosaur-themed colouring sheets.



VE80 Anniversary Celebrations

Tamworth Castle, Staffordshire, Sat 10 & Sun 11 May

Tamworth Castle is marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe with a weekend of activities and entertainment. Visitors can try their hand at sending Morse Code and decoding secret messages, see if they can pass the army medical, and take the air raid shelter survival test.

Tamworth Games Club will also be contributing to the weekend by reenacting some of World War Two's most significant battles.





The Croft, a haunting play by Ali Milles, is on the last leg of its 2025 tour, visiting three Midlands venues in May and June. Based on a true story and set in the remote Scottish Highlands, the play explores the history of an ancient former crofters hut and the terrifying truth hidden within its walls. Taking top billing in the show is Liza Goddard, a familiar television face across the decades who nevertheless feels most at home treading the boards in front of a live audience. She chatted to What's On about The Croft, her life and her career...

Liza Goddard has been a fixture on our screens for decades, from her breakthrough in BBC series Take Three Girls, through children's TV favourite Woof!, to hit shows including Bergerac and Doctor Who. But her first love, she says, has always been the stage - and she's delighted to have returned to it this year, starring in Original Theatre's acclaimed production of atmospheric thriller The Croft.

"The concept of the play is really interesting," she explains. "It's set in the Highlands, and I play a former inhabitant of a croft, who reveals her story to the modern-day visitors. I love the idea of it being a ghost story." The production, which also stars Caroline Harker (A Touch Of Frost) and Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street), is visiting venues across the country, including three theatres here in the Midlands region.

Liza says the setting of the play feels close to home. "I've spent a lot of time in the Highlands. We have relatives who live in the Trossachs, and I absolutely adore it. I'd love to have my own little croft. I just hope they don't burn me at the stake for my Scottish accent."

Smethwick-born Liza is no stranger to life on the road, having appeared in countless travelling productions. These include the recent hit revival of the Michael Frayn farce Noises Off. "The nice thing about touring is that you get to see so many different cities. I probably know this country better than anyone, thanks to my work."

Like many actors, her first theatre credits were in regional rep. She even appeared as a baby on stage at the Aldershot Repertory Theatre, where her father, David Goddard, worked before moving to the BBC to become a producer. "They used to hang my Moses basket on the pegs backstage," she says. "I've loved theatres ever since."

She got her first taste of stardom shortly afterwards, at the age of six, when she appeared in a TV show her father was working on. But her big break came after the family relocated to Australia, when she was cast to play Clancy Merrick in Skippy The Bush Kangaroo. The show became "a huge international hit".

After returning to the UK in the late 60s, "with the aim of earning enough money to get back to Australia", Liza soon got cast in Take Three Girls, which was the first drama series to be broadcast in colour. More roles soon followed, including in The Brothers, in which she appeared alongside Colin Baker, who became her first husband. Future co-stars would include luminaries such as Ben Kingsley and Richard Burton.

"I've worked with some amazing actors," she says, "and I've also had some fantastic collaborators on stage. I've worked a lot with the playwright Alan Ayckbourn, and later this year will be returning to his theatre in Scarborough, my spiritual home, for his 96th play."

When she's away from the stage, she enjoys relaxing at home in Norfolk. "I live in a village that has lots of activities to keep me busy, such as keep-fit classes and OAP lunches. I find village life very entertaining. I also walk for miles with the dog. I love dogs - when I was in Woof! I had nine of them, because people kept giving me strays!"

But despite the fact that Liza greatly enjoys her downtime, the lure of the footlights remains as strong as ever. "Acting is the only thing I know how to do, and it's quite addictive. I don't think there's anything better than live performance, with everyone experiencing the same thing together. And that's especially true in this age of AI, when you can't really trust what you're watching on screen."

Based on a true story, and set in the real-life former settlement of Coillie Ghille, The Croft was first seen in 2020, finding a wider audience when it was broadcast during the pandemic. The play explores a range of issues, from the paranormal through to generational trauma and the nature of relationships. Ali Milles' writing is reminiscent of the work of Conor McPherson, particularly his perennially popular play The Weir. "It really resonates with me," says Liza. "I live in an old house, and you're fully aware of the events that have happened there before - it's almost seeped into the stones." Producers Original Theatre are marking their 20th anniversary this year, and Liza says she was impressed when she recently saw their landmark production of Birdsong. "It was absolutely wonderful, and very timely, with its theme of the futility of war. The production values were fantastic, as was the ensemble."

The tour of The Croft will take her to some familiar places. "I've probably played Malvern every year for the past 30 years. And the Yvonne Arnaud is somewhere I've performed since childhood, as I used to live in Farnham."

But she's also excited to explore some new venues, including Salisbury Playhouse and Liverpool Playhouse. As she puts it, "Even after so many years in the business, I still have new stages to discover."

The Croft shows at The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 May. The tour continues at Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 May, and then at Birmingham Rep from Tuesday 10 until Saturday 14 June



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

What's On

Thurs 1 - Sun 11 May



Mario - O2 Academy Birmingham

Thurs 1 May

Mon 12 - Sun 18 May



Katherine Ryan - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Sat 10 May

Mon 19 - Sun 25 May



Jurassic Gardens - Birmingham Botanical Gardens

Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June

Mon 26 - Sat 31 May



An Evening with Kerry Ellis - The Old Joint Stock Theatre

Fri 30 & Sat 31 May

thelist

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

REMBRANDT: MASTERPIECES IN BLACK AND WHITE A collection of exquisite etchings, on tour from Rembrandt House Museum in the Netherlands, highlighting the full range of Rembrandt's output along with those he influenced across the centuries, until Sun 1 Jun

MODERN MUSE BY ARPITA SHAH A series of photographic portraits celebrating the identities and experiences of young South Asian women from Birmingham and the West Midlands.

CURTIS HOLDER: DRAWING CARLOS
ACOSTA Curtis Holder, winner of Sky
Arts Portrait Artist of the Year in
2020, was commissioned to draw
Carlos Acosta, director of
Birmingham Royal Ballet. This
display brings together portraits
Curtis made during the competition
and his working sketches.

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

EMII ALRAI: RIVER OF BLACK STONE Inspired by the disruptive nature of volcanic eruption and paintings of Vesuvius in the gallery's Naples collection, Emii Alrai weaves together ancient mythologies, research and nostalgia as a critical response to our times, until Sun 15

TOWERING DREAMS: EXTRAORDINARY ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS Exhibition exploring how architects of the 18th and early 19th centuries understood the world around them. Featuring extraordinary architectural drawings for amazing buildings, both real and imagined, until Sun 31 Aug

THE TAOTIE After an 18-month residency, Gayle Chong Kwan presents an exhibition of her new work alongside the venue's renowned Chinese collection, until Tues 31 March 2026

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

HTEIN LIN: ESCAPE A major solo exhibition by the multidisciplinary artist from Myanmar, evoking his lifelong commitment to documenting human experience in difficult times, until Sun 1 June

MAHTAB HUSSAIN: WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE? Show exploring the line between photo documentation and surveillance culture, and revealing the vibrancy and diversity of Birmingham's Muslim community, until Sun 1 June

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

MADE AT MAC: WORKING WITH METAL A stained glass and jewellery exhibition, showcasing the talents of students and tutors who work with metal on MAC's 12-week creative courses, until Sun 18 May

SU RICHARDSON: IN STITCHES The largest retrospective of Richardson's work to date, and the first solo exhibition in her home town. Works include recent soft sculptures that explore themes of motherhood, the maternal body, breastfeeding, loss and illness, until Sun 1 June

MARCIA MICHAEL: THE FAMILY ALBUM
Powerful and moving solo exhibition.
A multidisciplinary artist of
Caribbean descent, Marcia
reimagines the family album to
explore the beauty and depth of
Black family connections in British
history, until Sun 1 June

SARI STORIES People from Birmingham and the Midlands are invited to share a photograph - and tell the accompanying story - that reflects a special memory or significant life event tied to their sari, Sat 24 May - Sun 19 Oct

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

TWO FRIENDS FROM MOSELEY SCHOOL OF ART Exhibition of paintings and original prints by RBSA members Peter Shread and Colin Simmonds, who have remained close friends since meeting at Moseley School of Art in the 1950s, until Sat 10 May 25 FOR 25 Celebrating 25 Years of the RBSA Gallery in its Jewellery Quarter location, Sat 10 - Sat 24 May

Also:

STOCK POT STORIES: SOUP PT VII Final group exhibition by the artists taking part in the Stock Pot Stories residency, until Sat 31 May, Stryx Gallery, Minerva Works, Birmingham

PERFECTION IS A LIE (AN ODE TO YOUR POTENTIAL) Interested in the politics of borrowing from different disciplines and cultural movements-like DIY or punk - Alice Theobald considers what it means to be an amateur, and how success is measured in contemporary society, until Sat 5 July, Eastside Projects, Birmingham

OBSERVE PROTOCOL A work in development by Vivid Lab resident Oscar Cass-Darweish, representing the invisible interactions that take place between our digital devices in real time, until Thurs 31 July, Vivid Projects, Birmingham

UOB 125: THROUGH THE ARCHIVES In celebration of the University of Birmingham's anniversary and featuring photographs of the campus, staff and students over the past 125 years, until Wed 31 Dec, University of Birmingham Library



Skipinnish - Birmingham Town Hall

Gigs

CERYS HAFANA Thurs 1 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ELLE-J WALTERS
CELEBRATES TINA
TURNER & DONNA
SUMMER Thurs 1 May,
The Jam House,
Jewellery Quarter

TOBY LEE + ISABELLA COULSTOCK Thurs 1 May, O2 Academy

MARIO Thurs 1 May, O2 Academy



DETROITWICH FUNK MACHINE Thurs 1 May,
Tower Of Song,
Pershore Road

HOTEL LUX + SHORTWAVE Fri 2 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

TARA CHINN Fri 2 May, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

BLACK SHERIF Fri 2 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE POGUES Fri 2 May, O2 Academy

EMF + SCANT REGARD Fri 2 May, O2 Academy

PASSIVE FIX Fri 2 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth

GNOME + WALL Fri 2 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street **ULTRA FOXX** Fri 2 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

TATT00 MOLLY Fri 2 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

SKIPINNISH Fri 2 May, Birmingham Town Hall

ANDY BELL Fri 2 May, Symphony Hall CHASE & STATUS Fri 2

May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE GREY GOOSE BLUES BAND Fri 2 May, Tower
Of Song, Pershore Rd

CLASS OF '79 Fri 2 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

COPSE + STILL Fri 2 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Fri 2 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE Fri 2 - Sat 3
May, The Jam House,
Jewellery Quarter

GARY BARLOW Fri 2 - Sat 3 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

SLAUGHTERHOUSE FESTIVAL Fri 2 - Sun 4
May, Castle & Falcon,
Balsall Heath

STANLEYS + THE VIZ + THE BLOOMS Sat 3 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

LOWKEY Sat 3 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

RHYTHM OF THE 90S Sat 3 May, O2 Academy TREY SONGZ & JEREMIH Sat 3 May, O2 Academy ANNA MOSS Sat 3 May,

Dead Wax, Digbeth

IMPERIAL AGE +

GROTESCO KARMA +

AEON GODS + SEVENTH

STATION Sat 3 May, The

THE 9075 Sat 3 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

Asylum, Hampton St

THE FLEETWOOD MACK EXPERIENCE Sat 3 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS FEAT. LEBA HIBBERT Sat 3 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

MONICA AND THE EXPLOSION Sun 4 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley

INHUMAN NATURE Sun 4 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

G0 WEST Sun 4 May, Symphony Hall

THE GARRY ALLCOCK TRIO Sun 4 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Rd

ANDY MCKEE Sun 4 May, The Glee Club, The Arcadian

DOM PIPKIN Sun 4 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath





Thursday 1 - Sunday 4 May

Classical Music

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS JOY Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Kian Soltani (cello). Programme includes works by Berlioz, Fauré, Saint-Saëns & more..., Thurs 1 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

QUATUOR BOZZINI Featuring Clemens Merkel & Alissa Cheung (violins), Stéphanie Bozzini (viola) & Isabelle Bozzini (cello). Programme includes works by RBC student composers, Thurs 1 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MESSIAEN: QUARTET FOR THE END OF TIME Featuring Luanah Lefebvre (violin), Gemma Andrews (clarinet), Nicholas Trygstad (cello) & Alex Wyatt (piano), Thurs 1 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BEAST FEAST: SOUTHEAST/NORTHWEST
A celebration of the global diversity of electroacoustic practices, featuring a host of international artists and special guests across eight performances, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

LINES/REDGRAVE/QUIGLEY TRIO
Featuring Timothy Lines (clarinet),
Rose Redgrave (viola) and David
Quigley (piano). Programme includes
works by RBC student composers,
Fri 2 May, Royal Birmingham
Conservatoire

RBC SINFONIETTA: SIEGFRIED IDYLL Featuring Tommaso Nista & Huyan Liu (conductors). Programme includes works by G Williams, Wagner, Ibert & Skempton, Fri 2 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ECHO RISING STARS: LUKAS STERNATH (PIANO) Programme includes works by R Schumann, Liszt, and a new commission by Patricia Kopatchinskaja, Sun 4 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ORGAN RECITAL: SOUND THE TRUMPET Featuring Paul Carr (organ). Programme includes works by Suppé, Clarke, Spicer & more..., Sun 4 May, Holy Trinity Church, Wordsley

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, IAN COPPINGER & COMIC TBC Thurs 1 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO & COMICS TBC Thurs 1 May, Cherry Reds Cafe Bar, B'ham

MIKE RICE & COMICS TBC Thurs 1 May, Hockley Social, Birmingham

SALLY ANNE HAYWARD, JAMES COOK & ABBIE HALE Thurs 1 May, Bear Tavern, Birmingham

KEVIN DANIEL, KWAME ASANTE, DOM BANT & DAN SMITH Thurs 1 May, Stourbridge Town Hall **NATHAN CATON** Fri 2 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JONNY COLE Fri 2 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

ASHISH SURI, IAN COPPINGER & COMIC TBC Fri 2 - Sat 3 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAZEEM JAMAL, KEEFY JEWELL, ALEXANDER BENNETT & JAMES COOK Sat 3 May, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

MAISIE ADAM Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

DORU OCTAVIAN DUMITRU Sun 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, OLA LABIB, PRINCE ABDI & AATIF NAWAZ Sun 4 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TEZ ILYAS, OLA LABIB, PRINCE ABDI & COMICS TBC Sun 4 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS Roxanna Silbert's 2019 stage adaptation of novelist Khaled Hosseini's spiritual sequel to The Kite Runner, until Sat 3 May, The Rep, Birmingham

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING Michael Longhurst relocates Shakespeare's original romcom to the world of football, where scandal-filled rivalries could undermine the final result, until Sat 24 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

TITUS ANDRONICUS Simon Russell Beale takes the lead in Max Webster's reimagining of Shakespeare's bloodiest play, until Sat 7 June, Swan Theatre, Stratfordupon-Ayon

THE GIRL ON THE TRAIN Louisa Lytton stars as Rachel Watson in the stage version of Paula Hawkins' bestselling novel of the same name, Tues 29 Apr - Sat 3 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

HANDBAGGED Moira Buffini's fly-onthe-wall comedy takes a look at what might have happened when Queen Elizabeth II and Margaret Thatcher came face-to-face in the privacy of the palace, Tues 29 Apr - Sat 3 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BUFF Solo-performed play reflecting on body-image pressures, socialmedia jealousy and one gay man's journey to self-acceptance..., Wed 30 Apr - Fri 2 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

UBU ROI Birmingham Newman University Drama Students present an amateur version of Alfred Jarry's farcical play, which challenges cultural rules, norms and conventions. The production contains strong language, Thurs 1 - Fri 2 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE Warwick University Drama Society and The Drama Collective present Bertolt Brecht's parable about a peasant girl who rescues a baby and becomes a better mother than its wealthy biological parents, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL ON STAGE!

Presented by Youth On Stage, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 May, The Dovehouse Theatre, Solihull

TWO PINTS Roddy Doyle's observational comedy, exploring the enduring friendship between two men supporting each other's highs and lows in life - one pint at a time! Fri 2 - Sat 24 May, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry



SHREK THE MUSICAL Presented by Indigo Arts and based on the Dreamworks Animation Motion Picture and book by William Steig, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JAMAICA LOVE A musical celebration of Windrush and legacy, bringing to life the intertwined history of Britain and Jamaica through the power of music, storytelling and culture, Sun 4 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Light Entertainment

THE MUSIC OF TAYLOR SWIFT BY CANDLELIGHT Featuring live band & vocalist, Fri 2 - Sat 3 May, Lichfield Cathedral

MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU

Comedian Mike Capozzola presents a multimedia show in which he mocks and celebrates all things Star Wars, Sun 4 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

WE ARE SOLIHULL Show celebrating the reopening of The Core theatre and featuring live music, spoken word, dance and a special VIP guest performer, Sun 4 May, The Core, Solihull

WONDERS OF OUR UNIVERSE 'Cosmic exploration that weaves together distinctive storytelling, live demonstrations, breathtaking visuals and live music', Sun 4 May, Dudley

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH PHIL 'THE POWER'

TAYLOR Join the 16x world darts champion for an insight into his incredible achievements and personal experiences, Sat 3 May, Birmingham Town Hall

Events

ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW HORIZONS

Collect character stamps, discover interesting facts about the inhabitants of SEA LIFE and meet with Tom Nook & Isabelle, until Mon 5 May, National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

BUILD THE THRILL Grab your Pit Pass and choose an F1 team to join, until Sun 29 June, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

BETMGM PREMIER LEAGUE DARTS 2025

Featuring the sport's top stars, including reigning champion Luke Littler and world number one Luke Humphries, Thurs 1 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

AI SUMMIT + DISRUPT BIRMINGHAM Join tech enthusiasts for an afternoon of Al related appellars, a panel

of Al-related speakers, a panel, Disrupt lightning talks, and networking, Thurs 1 May, Aston University, Birmingham

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW Boasting a huge variety of off-roaders, from 1948 to the present day, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

MODEL RAILWAY WEEKEND Featuring 25 of the UK's most popular layouts, all on display at the Highley Visitor Centre, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, Severn Valley Railway, nr Kidderminster

KINGS HEATH ARTSFEST Local arts festival celebrating the creative and diverse community in and around Kings Heath, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, All Saints Centre, Kings Heath, B'ham

MORRIS INTO MAY Featuring a free falconry display, May crown crafts, music, garden tours and more, Sun 4 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

GREAT BIRMINGHAM RUN The Midlands' biggest running event, Sun 4 May, Birmingham City Centre

MEDIEVAL MAY DAY AT THE MANOR

Meet the villagers and learn about everyday medieval life, Sun 4 - Mon 5 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Festivals

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes Roger Daltrey, Lulu, Tom Walker, Wed 30 Apr - Mon 5 May, various venues in Cheltenham

UPTON UPON SEVERN FOLK FESTIVAL

Line-up includes Oxford Nags, Granny's Attic, Nancy Kerr and James Fagan, Fri 2 - Mon 5 May, various venues, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire

FAMILY ★ SPORT ★ MUSIC

20+ sports | fitness classes | wellness & spa | sports massage bands & DJ | food village | camping | glamping



SPORTING LEGENDS INCLUDE:

Sydney Gregson • Kate & Helen Richardson-Walsh
Alex Goode • Karen Greig • Alan Campbell • Amanda Parker
Suzanne Shaw • Ben Youngs • Austin Healey
Rachael Burford • Ryan Sidebottom • Derek Redmond
Tamsin Greenway • Graeme Swann

www.festivalofsportuk.com

Rugby, golf, archery, netball, hockey, trampolining, football, judo, skateboarding, lacrosse, rowing, cricket, athletics, climbing... and more!



thelist

Gigs

BROWN HORSE Mon 5 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DECAPITATED Mon 5 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

DEATH VALLEY GIRLS + BELLA AND THE **BIZARRE** Tues 6 May. Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

VUNDABAR Tues 6 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK Tues 6 May, O2 Academy

ELIJAH LYONS Tues 6 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

TWENTY ONE PILOTS Tues 6 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham



WALTER TROUT Tues 6 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

LAURIE WRIGHT Wed 7 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

AMBER RUN + **BILLIANNE** Wed 7 May, O2 Academy

WORMWITCH + **UNDERDARK** Wed 7 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

SARAH MCQUAID + **ROB PETERS** Wed 7 May, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Rd

PUP Wed 7 May, XOYO, Digbeth

MILLTOWN BROTHERS Thurs 8 May, Hare &

Hounds, Kings Heath

LUCY MELLENFIELD Thurs 8 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

TOM MEIGHAN Thurs 8 May, O2 Academy

PANIC SHACK + THE PILL Thurs 8 May. Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

WHO SAVES THE HERO + SECOND CITIES + MISTAKES WORTH MAKING Thurs 8 May, The Flapper, Kingston Row

BAD ACTRESS Thurs 8 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

TANGERINE DREAM Thurs 8 May, Birmingham Town

Hall DANIEL O'DONNELL Thurs 8 May, Symphony Hall

PETE COE Thurs 8 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

THE FIXX + WRECKLESS ERIC Thurs 8 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

DAVID GRAY Thurs 8 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

MICHAEL CERA PALIN Fri 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MUSCLECARS Fri 9 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

VANITY FAIRY + ALISHA Fri 9 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

SORRY Fri 9 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

450 LIVE + SUPAHEAT + LOYAL SQUAD Fri 9 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE SMYTHS + BILLY BLAGG Fri 9 May, O2 Academy

THE K'S Fri 9 May, O2 Academy

GOLD PANDA + BABA ALI Fri 9 May. Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

CALIBAN Fri 9 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

RUM BUFFALO Fri 9 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

STEVEN WILSON Fri 9 May, Symphony Hall

TRACK DOGS + BANTER Fri 9 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

TROY REDFERN + RED GIANT Fri 9 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE CAROLINE BOMB + ALL HER SONS + **GENERAL CONSENSUS** + SAY LESS Fri 9 May, The Rainbow,



The Sherlocks - O2 Institute

Digbeth

THE FUREYS Fri 9 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SOUL'D OUT Fri 9 May. Artrix, Bromsgrove

BOOTLEG ABBA Fri 9 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE JO BALDWIN PROJECT Fri 9 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE + 7D **GRAFTERS** Sat 10 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DESTINATION DISEASE + ACCELERATED MUTATION + CRACK THE FLAGS + MORE Sat 10 May, The Dark Horse, Moseley

THE SHERLOCKS Sat 10 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ABDUL HANNAN Sat 10 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

DAFT FUNK LIVE Sat 10 May, O2 Academy

COLDPLACE Sat 10 May, O2 Academy

BANCO DE GAIA + PYE CORNER AUDIO + WARRINGTON-**RUNCORN NEWTOWN** DEVELOPMENT PLAN Sat 10 May, Castle &

Falcon, Balsall Heath WHEN WE'RE DEAD + ROOTED + LORENKA Sat 10 May, The Asylum, Hampton St

FROM THE JAM Sat 10 May, Birmingham Town Hall

COUNTRY SUPERSTARS - DOLLY **PARTON & FRIENDS** Sat 10 May, The Crescent, Sheepcote Street

THE GREAT STONE **REVIVAL** Sat 10 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

ROXY MAGIC Sat 10 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

TALON Sat 10 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE GLEN CAMPBELL STORY Sat 10 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

NAP EYES Sun 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

PREOCCUPATIONS Sun 11 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE STEVE GIBBONS BAND Sun 11 May, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

VANITAS + EARTHBOUND + 40000 LEAGUES Sun 11 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

BETH MCCARTHY Sun

11 May, XOYO, Digbeth

THE GEORGE HARRISON PROJECT Sun 11 May, The Crescent, B'ham

REGGAE FEST BIRMINGHAM Sun 11 May, Tower Of Song, Birmingham

MIDNIGHT CITY SOUL BAND Sun 11 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

ABIGAIL LAPELL + STEPH CAMERON Sun 11 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE SANDY DENNY **EXPERIENCE SHOW** Sun 11 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? **CELEBRATING TINA** TURNER Sun 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre. Coventry

UK PINK FLOYD EXPERIENCE Sun 11 May, Lichfield Garrick

RICH PARSONS Sun 11 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield



Nap Eyes - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

Classical Music

BIRMINGHAM NEW MUSIC: NEW FORMS Royal Birmingham Conservatoire ensembles present new premieres by RBC composers, Wed 7 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT SERIES: PIANO Featuring Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire students, Thurs 8 May, St Paul's Church, Birmingham LUNCHTIME RECITAL: ASHLEY WAGNER

AND DAVID HARDIE (PIANO DUETS) Fri 9 May, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT Featuring Joseph Houston (piano). Programme includes works by Michael Zev Gordon, Scriabin, Radulescu & Debussy, Fri 9 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

BRAUTIGAM/HOPPE/POLTÉRA TRIO Featuring Ronald Brautigam (piano), Esther Hoppe (violin) & Christian Poltéra (cello). Programme includes works by Beethoven, Honegger & Schubert, Fri 9 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

ANDRÉ RIEU Featuring the Johann Strauss Orchestra & international soloists. A concert celebrating 200 years of Johann Strauss, Sat 10 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

EROICA: A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC Featuring Lesley Morson (oboe), Hollie Whittles (clarinet) & Peter Marks (director). Programme includes works by Mozart, Haydn & Tartini, Sat 10 May, St Nicolas

Church, Kings Norton MIDLAND SINFONIA: FAMILY CONCERT Featuring music suitable for all the family including Ravel's Mother Goose Suite, Sat 10 May, St

Laurence Church, Alvechurch LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL CHORUS: **ELGAR'S DREAM OF GERONTIUS**

Featuring Ben Lamb (conductor), Ailsa Cochrane, Robert Jenkins & Philip Lancaster (soloists), Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra & Lichfield Cathedral Chorus, Sat 10 May, Lichfield Cathedral

Comedy

STUART MITCHELL Wed 7 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JAMIE HUTCHINSON & COMICS TBC Wed 7 May, Herbert's Yard, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, KEITH FARNAN & ROBERT WHITE Thurs 8 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KEVIN HART Thurs 8 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

thelist



CHRISTIAN BRIGHTY Thurs 8 May, Cherry Reds, Birmingham

JONNY COLE Thurs 8 May, Dudley Town Hall

RICHARD HERRING Thurs 8 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MILTON JONES Thurs 8 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JEFF ARCURI Fri 9 May, Birmingham Town Hall



ELLIE TAYLOR Fri 9 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

DOMINIC FRISBY, KEITH FARNAN, ROBERT WHITE & COMIC TBC Fri 9 - Sat 10 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROGER MONKHOUSE, JORDAN DUCHARME, FAIZAN SHAH & JON PEARSON Sat 10 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

KATHERINE RYAN Sat 10 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Sat 10 May, Dudley Town Hall

SUSAN MURRAY Sat 10 May, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

FAMILY COMEDY SHOW WITH BARBARA NICE, AARON SIMMONDS & ADA CAMPE Sun 11 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT Sun 11 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

Theatre

LA TRAVIATA Verdi's tragic tale, performed by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Tues 6 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

AN INSPECTOR CALLS Stephen Daldry's

Katherine Ryan - Utilita Arena Birmingham

National Theatre production of JB Priestley's compelling thriller, Tues 6 Sat 10 May, The Alexandra, B'ham

THE SHARK IS BROKEN Acclaimed drama that dives behind the scenes of 1970s blockbuster movie Jaws, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May, The Rep, B'ham

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR Brownhills Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber musical, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May, Lichfield Garrick

LA BOHÈME Presented by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv, with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Wed 7 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

BOT BROTHERS: A STORY OF OUR TIMES Clown double-act Harris Morris and Joe Smith star as two robo-clones who are separated at birth and raised by different families. Critically acclaimed show loosely based on Willy Russell's Blood Brothers, Wed 7 - Thurs 8 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE HOUSE PARTY Laura Lomas' modern-day play exploring themes of class, power and privilege, Wed 7 - Sat 10 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

KIPPS, THE NEW HALF A SIXPENCE MUSICAL Amateur version presented by Manor Musical Theatre Company, Wed 7 - Sat 10 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

WNO: THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO Welsh National Opera present Mozart's tale of love, loyalty and mistaken identities, Thurs 8 May, Birmingham Hippodrome



MADAMA BUTTERFLY Puccini's heartbreaking story of a young Japanese girl who falls in love with an American naval lieutenant. Performed by the Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv with international soloists, a highly praised chorus and full orchestra, Thurs 8 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO WIDOWHOOD Uplifting one-woman show exploring the experiences of young widowed women, Fri 9 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

TALKING ABOUT THE FIRE Chris Thorpe's one-man show about a new nuclear weapons treaty, Fri 9 - Sat 10 May, The Rep, Birmingham

WNO: PETER GRIMES Welsh National Opera present Britten's iconic tale of isolation and prejudice, Sat 10 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

(TITLE OF SHOW) The Crescent Theatre presents an amateur version of the Tony Award-nominated Broadway show - a love letter to musical theatre and the joy of collaboration, Sat 10 - Sat 17 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

HUMBLE BOY Amateur version of Charlotte Jones' comedy about broken vows, failed hopes and the joys of bee-keeping, Sat 10 - Sat 17 May, Oldbury Rep

Kids Theatre

SCIENCE MUSEUM - THE LIVE STAGE SHOW Family entertainment which promises to ignite curiosity and fuel imagination, Sun 11 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE ULTIMATE BUBBLE SHOW Join international bubbleologist and Guinness World Record holder Ray Bubbles as he uses various gases to craft stunning bubble sculptures and effects, Sun 11 May, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

Dance

BRB2: CARLOS ACOSTA'S BALLET CELEBRATION Brand-new gala production celebrating Serge Diaghilev and the birth of the modern ballet, Tues 6 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

READY TO SHINE Showcasing the talents of pupils from local cheerleading squads as well as dance and musical theatre schools, Sun 11 May, Symphony Hall, B'ham

NIKITA KUZMIN - MIDNIGHT DANCER The Strictly star's first-ever solo show sees him joined by a cast of talented dancers and vocalists in what promises to be 'an unforgettable night of entertainment', Sun 11 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Light Entertainment

SOUNDS OF THE 60S LIVE: HOSTED BY TONY BLACKBURN OBE Featuring live music and stories from the most iconic decade in fashion, music and pop culture, Wed 7 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE PRAT PACK Banter, jokes and songs from Bradley Walsh, Brian Conley, Shane Richie and Joe Pasquale, Wed 7 May, Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

DANNY LEE GREW 24K MAGIC Expect a 'spellbinding evening of jaw-dropping magic, illusion, laughs, gasps, and stunning sleight-of-hand sorcery', Fri 9 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE CABARET Variety show blending cabaret, comedy, music and burlesque, Fri 9 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CRAIG REVEL HORWOOD: REVELATIONS
An evening of 'big songs, tall tales
and glamour', Fri 9 May, Dudley Town
Hall

THE ABSOLUTELY DRAGULOUS SHOW
Starring husband & husband stage
duo Marilyn & Amanda Fockhard.
Expect 'side-splitting comedy,
dazzling costume changes, West End
vocals and more make-up than the
Kardashians put together', Sat 10
May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre,
Birmingham

CHOIR! CHOIR! CHOIR! Epic anthems singalong during which audience members get to sing their way through 'the greatest songs of alltime', Sun 11 May, Birmingham Town

DAD'S ARMY RADIO SHOW Highly acclaimed stage production in which two actors bring Perry & Croft's classic BBC comedy to life, Sun 11 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH LOUISE MINCHIN: WORDS Join the former BBC Breakfast presenter as she discusses her writing career and debut novel, Isolation Island, Wed 7 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Monday 5 - Sunday 11 May

PEP TALK WITH DEO KATO FEAT. BLACK VOICES A 60-minute conversation charting Deo Kato's epic 16-month challenge, running from Cape Town to London to tell the historic story of human migration from Africa to the rest of the world, Fri 9 May, Grosvenor Road Studios, Handsworth

Events

FAMILY FUN DAY Featuring horseracing action and plenty of family activities, Mon 5 May, Warwick Racecourse

BIG BUTTERFLY TRAIL Follow the trail, make your own butterfly to take home with you, and do some butterfly painting, Mon 5 May, The Commandery, Worcester

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND
Join Alice and her friends in
Wonderland for a fun day of activities,
Mon 5 May, Hartlebury Castle,
Worcestershire

ARTISAN MARKET Featuring local craftspeople and producers, Tues 6 May, Chancellors Court, University of Birmingham

MATCHROOM UK OPEN POOL CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025 Featuring a stellar 256-player field, including the top 128 professionals from the World Nineball Tour, Tues 6 - Sun 11 May, Telford International Centre, Shrooshire

PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH Enjoy a traditional and hearty ploughman's lunch while travelling along the railway, Wed 7 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

EUROPHILEX BIRMINGHAM 2025 British international stamp exhibition featuring 2,000 frames of exhibits from 40 countries and over 60 dealers and trade stands, Wed 7 - Sun 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

CURATOR TOUR WITH BSL An informal BSL-interpreted guided tour with Dominique Nok, the curator of Marcia Michael's exhibition The Family Album, Thurs 8 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

REMEMBERING VE DAY - 80 YEARS ON The Royal British Legion hosts a special VE Day Tea Party and Commemorative Service, Thurs 8 May, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

THE BISTRO EXPRESS SPRING Twocourse lunch in a show-stopping first-class carriage, Thurs 8 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

STRATFORD LITERARY FESTIVAL

Featuring well-known names and bestselling authors, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May, venues across Stratford-upon-Avon

RHS MALVERN SPRING FESTIVAL One of the first major flower shows of the

year, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 May, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

VAPER EXPO Bringing together leading players from across the vaping sector, Fri 9 - Sun 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

THE BABY SHOW Featuring over 350 leading baby brands and thousands of products, Fri 9 - Sun 11 May, NEC, Birmingham

FLATPACK FESTIVAL Expect a mix of films, performances, contraptions and surprises, Fri 9 - Sat 17 May, various venues in Birmingham

GIFFORD'S CIRCUS Back with new show Laguna Bay, Fri 9 - Sun 19 May, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

DOZE UNDER DIPPY Stay overnight in the museum, snoozing under the feet of a 26-foot Diplodocus, Sat 10 May, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

THE CRYSTAL MILE FACTORY WALKING TOUR Tour taking you on a journey through time, highlighting the key sites and events that shaped the area's glassmaking industry, Sat 10 May, Stourbridge Glass Museum

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a spread of sandwiches, cakes, tea and coffee, Sat 10 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

SPICE GIRLS DRAG BOTTOMLESS BRUNCH Join a drag queen trio as they perform all the best Spice Girls classics, Sat 10 May, Gosta Green, Birmingham

LAITHWAITES BIRMINGHAM WINE FESTIVAL Taste from a range of 100 wines from 20 different producers, Sat 10 May, Custard Factory, Birmingham

MINISTRY OF SOUND IBIZA ANTHEMS RACE NIGHT Evening of racing and live music, Sat 10 May, Warwick Racecourse

MOTHERS WHO MAKE: POSTAL ART WORKSHOP Make small, postable works to exchange with friends, Sat 10 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

MEET THE BODGERS Learn about and watch demonstrations of green woodworking and heritage woodland crafts, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

UK SLOT CAR FESTIVAL Showcasing a wide range of the major slot car manufacturers, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

VE DAY CELEBRATION Weekend of interactive workshops and live performances, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

DOGFEST Enjoy live entertainment, expert talks, and a vibrant marketplace, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May,



An Inspector Calls - The Alexandra

Street, Birmingham

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP - HERITAGE RAILWAYS Learn more about the theory behind photography, Sun 11 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

BACKSTAGE THEATRE TOUR Sneak a peek at what goes on behind the scenes at a working theatre, Sun 11 May, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

the army medical and take the airraid shelter survival test, Sat 10 - Sun 11 May, Tamworth Castle BIRMINGHAM HISTORY TOUR: DISCOVER THE HISTORY OF WARSTONE LANE CEMETERY Uncover the venue's rich

and intriguing past, Sun 11 May, Vyse

VE80 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS Try

secret messages, see if you can pass

your hand at morse code, decode

RHS Malvern Spring Festival

Thu 8 - Sun 11 May 2025

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thelist



Gigs

ROSE CITY BAND + BANANAGUN Mon 12 May. Hare & Hounds, Kings

LIANG LAWRENCE Mon 12 May, O2 Academy

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX Mon 12 May, Symphony

YOUNG GUN SILVER FOX + SMITH & LIDDLE Tues 13 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SIMEON HAMMOND DALLAS

Tues 13 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MEKONS Wed 14 May. Hare & Hounds, Kings

ELLIE GOWERS + MIA KELLY Wed 14 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

YOLANDA CHARLES' PROJECT PH Wed 14 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

BOTTLE ROCKETS Wed 14 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

ZIMMER90 Wed 14 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SUPERGRASS Wed 14 May,

O2 Academy

MANILLA TIMES Wed 14 May, The Victoria, John **Bright Street**

THE LOST NOTES TRIO + MARIANNE & ANGEL Wed 14 May, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

SAM AMIDON Wed 14 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

OSIBISA Thurs 15 May. Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

ADA MORGHE Thurs 15 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

MARKETPLACE + EDLARS Thurs 15 May, The Sunflower Lounge,

Smallbrook Queensway A LEXICON OF LIFE: AN INTIMATE EVENING WITH MARTIN FRY Thurs 15 May. Birmingham Town Hall

NICK HARPER Thurs 15 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MISS AMERICANA - A TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR SWIFT Thurs 15 May,

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SWELL MAPS C21 + CULT FIGURES + MAGNATAS COURT Fri 16 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

WEATHER SYSTEMS + HAUNT THE WOODS Fri 16 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE CUREHEADS + SIOUXSIE AND THE BUDGIEES Fri 16 May, O2 Academy

GYPSY PISTOLEROS + THE **OUTLAW ORCHESTRA** Fri 16 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

CLOCKWORK ORANGE Fri 16 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth

MAKE THEM SUFFER + RESOLVE + CONJURER + IF NOT FOR ME Fri 16 May, The Asylum, Hampton St

THE WATERBOYS Fri 16 May, Symphony Hall

OLLY MURS + BLUE Fri 16 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

VASELINE Fri 16 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett WITCHZ Fri 16 May, Mama Bradley Simpson - O2 Institute Roux's, Digbeth

THE TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Fri 16 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE ELO ENCOUNTER Fri 16 May, The Rhodehouse. Sutton Coldfield

APOLLO SOUL Fri 16 - Sat 17 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

A.C.R SOUNDSYSTEM + TOM **BELTE & LOVE VIGILANTES** Sat 17 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MIKE STOYANOV Sat 17 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

BRADLEY SIMPSON Sat 17 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

MOVING PICTURES Sat 17 May, O2 Academy

TONY VISCONTI AND WOODY WOODMANSEY Sat 17 May, O2 Academy

NOASIS Sat 17 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

CLEARWATER CREEDENCE REVIVAL Sat 17 May. Birmingham Town Hall

TYLER, THE CREATOR Sat 17 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

KNOXSVILLE HIGHWAY Sat 17 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

WEST COAST EAGLES Sat 17 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

ONEFOUR Sat 17 May. Mama Roux's, Digbeth

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 17 May. The Rhodehouse. Sutton Coldfield

JORDAN ADAMS Sat 17 May, Lichfield Garrick

DANA GILLESPIE & DINO BAPTISTE Sat 17 May, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE JOURNEYMEN Sat 17 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

HYPHEN Sun 18 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE VINTAGE EXPLOSION Sun 18 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BUS STATION LOONIES + THE DODO APPRECIATION SOCIETY + EVISCERATEDBAND + PLUTONIUM + BOSS MADRA Sun 18 May, The Dark

Horse, Moselev

GAELYNN LEA Sun 18 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space. Symphony Hall

ROBIN TROWER Sun 18 May, Birmingham Town Hall

BRYAN ADAMS Sun 18 May. bp pulse LIVE, B'ham

THE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WORLD TOUR Sun 18 May, The Alexandra

THE BELL BAND'S OPEN MIC Sun 18 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

GRANNY'S ATTIC Sun 18 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

RIPPLE MUSIC FESTIVAL Sun 18 May, Lichfield Garrick

COUNTRY SUPERSTARS Sun 18 May, Lichfield Garrick

Ellie Gowers - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT WITH **THOMAS TROTTER** Programme includes works by J S Bach, Holst, Anderson & more..., Mon 12 May, Birmingham Town Hall

CEMPR SMALL ENSEMBLES A selection of early music chamber groups give their annual concert, Tues 13 May, The Dome, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

MARTYN RAWLES ORGAN RECITAL Tues 13 May, Lichfield Cathedral

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: CAREER ACCELERATOR CONCERT Featuring Yuliya Ostapchuk (violin), Irene Katsenelson (viola), Josh Mountford (cello) & Yiiia Cui (double bass). Thurs 15 May, CBSO Centre, B'ham

PHILIPPINE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Featuring Grzegorz Nowak (conductor), Wen-Sinn Yang & Diomedes Saraza Jr (soloists). Programme includes works by Bizet, Vaughan Williams, Tchaikovsky & more..., Thurs 15 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



FOUR SEASONS & LARK ASCENDING BY **CANDLELIGHT** Performed by London Concertante. Programme includes works by Mozart, Vivaldi & Vaughan Williams, Thurs 15 May, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

GEORGIA MAE ELLIS (MEZZO SOPRANO) & SHOLTO KYNOCH (PIANO)

Programme includes works by Mahler, Berg, Gibbs & more..., Fri 16 May, Elgar Concert Hall, University of Birmingham

INTO THE MELTING POT Featuring Héloïse Bernard, Avital Raz & Maya Levy (singers), Emily Baines (recorders), Giles Lewin (oud) & Jean Kelly (harp). A concert play written by award-winning writer Clare Norburn and BAFTA-nominated director Nicholas Renton, Sat 17 May, Selly Oak Methodist Church Hall, B'ham

LICHFIELD SINFONIA SPRING CONCERT Featuring Ignas Maknicknas (piano) & Sara Birchall (conductor). Programme includes works by Weber, Rachmaninov & Tchaikovsky, Sat 17 May, Lichfield Cathedral

Comedy

MARK NORMAND Mon 12 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham STEWART LEE Mon 12 May. Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Monday 12 - Sunday 18 May

MICHELLE SHAUGHNESSY Tues 13 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JARLATH REGAN Wed 14 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN Wed 14 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB BECKETT Wed 14 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



SHARON WANJOHI, BRENNAN REECE & COMIC TBC Thurs 15 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NICK MOHAMMED Thurs 15 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

KAMIKAZE CLUB COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 15 May, 1000 Trades, Birmingham DARA Ó BRIAIN Thurs 15 - Fri 16 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

OMID DJALILI Fri 16 May, Birmingham Town Hall

HORATIO GOULD Fri 16 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SOPHIE MCCARTNEY Fri 16 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

HARRY HILL Fri 16 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JONNY COLE Fri 16 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JACOB NUSSEY, MARTIN MÓR, SHARON WANJOHI & BRENNAN REECE Fri 16 -Sat 17 May, The Glee Club, B'ham

DARIUS DAVIES, AARON WOOD, KATE LUCAS & PAUL REVILL Sat 17 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

MUHSIN YESILADA, SHAZIA MIRZA & RAJ POOJARA Sat 17 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

DARA Ó BRIAIN Sat 17 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

KERRY GODLIMAN Sat 17 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ZAKIR KHAN Sun 18 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

RORY O'HANLON Sun 18 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

SHOWSTOPPER! THE IMPROVISED MUSICAL Join the Olivier Awardwinning Showstoppers for an ingenious blend of comedy, musical theatre and spontaneity, Mon 12 -Tues 13 May, The Rep, Birmingham

PRIDE & PREJUDICE* (*SORT OF) A unique and audacious retelling of Jane Austen's most iconic love story, Tues 13 - Sat 17 May, Lichfield Garrick

ALL MY PRETTY ONES Play telling the

story of the Nazi massacre that took place in a small, tranquil village in south west France, Wed 14 - Sat 17 May, The Rep, Birmingham

THE NARCISSIST Dr Carlette L Norwood's original story about toxic love and finding the strength to break free, Fri 16 May, The Black Box, Harford Street, Birmingham

STEPTOE & SON - LIVE! Show comprising four episodes of the iconic BBC television series, performed live on stage, Fri 16 May, Halesowen Town Hall

...EARNEST? Spoof performance based on Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest, Sat 17 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW High-energy family adventure in which favourite characters from Tom Fletcher's books come to life on stage, Tues 13 - Wed 14 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE WIGGLES Interactive live show for younger audiences which promises to spark creativity and a love of learning, Wed 14 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Dance

ACOSTA DANZA - CUBAN ECLECTICO
Carlos Acosta's Cuban dance
company showcase works ranging
from modern to Afro-Cuban fused
with flamenco, capoeira and hip-hop.
A post-show Q&A features on the
opening night, Tues 13 - Wed 14 May,
Birmingham Hippodrome

RHIANNON FAITH COMPANY: LAY DOWN YOUR BURDENS A radically tender dance theatre show inviting audiences to explore the beauty of humanity and the eternal need for community and compassion, Wed 14 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

NIKITA KUZMIN - MIDNIGHT DANCER The Strictly star's first-ever solo show sees him joined by a cast of talented dancers and vocalists in what promises to be 'an unforgettable night of entertainment', Sat 17 May, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

SPIRIT OF THE BLITZ Variety show featuring a 1940s songbook including Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree, Leaning On A Lampost and We'll Meet Again. Andy Eastwood, Helen Farrell & Steve Barclay star, Tues 13 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BOX OF FROGS An evening of 'highoctane improvised comedy nonsense', based entirely on audience suggestions, Wed 14 May, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham



MURDER SHE DIDN'T WRITE Degree Of Error create an improvised murdermystery in which the audience is the author..., Wed 14 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FLAMENCO EXPRESS Featuring La Joaquina, guitar virtuoso Chris Clavo, vocalist Antonio El Pola, and new guest Kuky Santiago - 'a unique master of flamenco suspense', Thurs 15 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH THE TWO TOMS Join viral star Thomas Benjamin Wild Esq and London cabaret virtuoso Tom Carradine for an evening of singalong fun and musical humour, Fri 16 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham



GEORGE ELIOT IN WORDS AND MUSIC Featuring Hermione Norris (Spooks, Cold Feet), Eurovision singersongwriter SuRie and Orchestra Of The Swan, Fri 16 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BOX OF FROGS An evening of 'highoctane improvised comedy nonsense', based entirely on audience suggestions, Fri 16 May, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

EUROVISION VIEWING PARTY Expect cocktails, games, dancing, and a right old Euro-pop knees-up, Sat 17 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Events

AN EVENING WITH MIKE BREWER Car dealer turned TV presenter Mike Brewer takes the hot seat to chat cars and shows with Paul Cowland, Mon 12 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

MUSEUM TOUR Join staff members for a guided tour of the museum, Mon 12 May, Lapworth Museum of Geology,

University of Birmingham

QUIZ NIGHT AT THE LAPWORTH MUSEUM Test your knowledge across a variety of categories, Wed 14 May, Lapworth Museum of Geology, University of Birmingham

SPRING DIESEL FESTIVAL A feast of diesel traction across four intensivelytimetabled days, Thurs 15 - Sun 18 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

BCIMO FAMILY DAY Celebrate 200 years of rail as part of 'Railway 200', Sat 17 May, Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre, Dudley

90'S BABY BOTTOMLESS BRUNCH Get ready to party like it's 1999 at this 'totally rad 90s-themed brunch', Sat 17 May, Gosta Green, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM TOUR: WARSTONE LN CEMETERY UNDERGROUND TUNNEL Explore Warstone Lane's underground tunnel, used as air-raid shelters during World War Two, Sat 17 May, Vyse Street, Birmingham

STREET ORGAN GRINDERS WEEKEND Enjoy organ music and chat to members of the British Organ Grinders Association, Sat 17 - Sun 18 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

MAKERS CENTRAL Bringing together makers, creators and inventors from all over the world, Sat 17 - Sun 18 May, NEC, Birmingham

1960S WEEKEND A weekend of 'far-out fun', Sat 17 - Sun 18 May, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

AVONCROFT GARDENING DAY Featuring plants for sale, specialist talks and demonstrations, Sun 18 May, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

FAMILY EXPLORERS: BUG HUNTING Join conservation ranger Sila to explore the woodland areas, Sun 18 May, Birmingham Botanical Gardens



VAUX ALL Bringing together hundreds of classic, modern classic and retro models from Vauxhall, Opel and Bedford, Sun 18 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

SPECIALIST GLASS FAIR Run by Premier Glass Fairs, Sun 18 May, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

BIRMINGHAM GAMING MARKET Find rare and collectible video games, Sun 18 May, The New Bingley Hall, Birmingham



Monday 19 - Sunday 25 May

Gigs

BROGEAL Mon 19 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

KRS-ONE Mon 19 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

TATE MCRAE Mon 19 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



WAYSIDE + POST PROFIT Mon 19 May, The Asylum, Hampton Street

KANEKOAYANO Tues 20 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

PIXIES + BIG SPECIAL Tues 20 May, O2 Academy

FROGLORD Tues 20 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth

TOTORRO Wed 21 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

SUNDAY (1994) + BEAUX Wed 21 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

OLD TIME SAILORS Wed 21 May, O2 Academy

EDWINA HAYES + **EMILY SLADE** Wed 21 May, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Rd

NASHVILLE SOUNDS IN THE ROUND Wed 21 May, Justham Family Room & Jane How Room, Symphony Hall

DARYL HALL + GLENN TILBROOK Wed 21 May, Symphony Hall

CATHERINE MACLELLAN & LUCY FARRELL Wed 21 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

TOM HILL & PHIL BOND JAZZADELIC EXPERIENCE Wed 21 May, Cathedral Hotel, Lichfield

DESMOND DEKKER'S ACES Thurs 22 May, The Jam House. Jewellery Quarter

ABORTED + CRYPTA + THE ZENITH PASSAGE + ORGANECTOMY Thurs 22 May, O2 Academy

DONNY BENET Thurs 22 May. Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

UNDER THE SURFACE Thurs 22 May, Dead Wax, Digbeth

WITNESS + DATURA Thurs 22 May, Subside Bar, High St

THE JINS Thurs 22 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street NICOLE MITCHELL

WITH NEIL CHARLES **AND MARK SANDERS** Thurs 22 May, Midlands Arts Centre

(mac), Edgbaston MISHRA Thurs 22 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

K.O.G. Thurs 22 May, Warwick Arts Centre. Coventry

EAST STREET BAND Thurs 22 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HUEY MORGAN + MELYS Fri 23 May, O2 Academy

GREEN JELLY + THE CONVALESCENCE +



Daryl Hall & Glenn Tilbrook - Symphony Hall

THRASHATOUILLE + **CAPTAIN GOBSHITE &** THE BAWBAGS Fri 23 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE OUTCHARMS Fri 23 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

RIZWAN-MUAZZAM QAWWALS Fri 23 May, Birmingham Town Hall

SEMPRE FADO -ANTIGO E NOVO Fri 23 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

MAZ MITRENKO BAND Fri 23 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY Fri 23 May, The Core Theatre. Solihull

OASIIS Fri 23 May. The Rhodehouse. Sutton Coldfield

BACK INTO HELL: A TRIBUTE TO MEATLOAF & JIM STEINMAN Fri 23 May, Lichfield Garrick

UP4 THE DOWNSTROKE : Cofton Hackett Fri 23 - Sat 24 May,

The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter PAINT ME IN COLOUR

+ THE ROYALS + GINGHAM + **GENEVIEVE MILES** Sat 24 May, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

SANCTUM **SANCTORIUM** Sat 24 May, O2 Academy WUNDERHORSE + JUNODREAM Sat 24 May, O2 Academy

CANAAN COX Sat 24 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath



AN AFTERNOON OF **QAWWALI** Sat 24 May, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space. Symphony Hall

ACROSS OCEANS Sat 24 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

OLLY MURS + BLUE Sat 24 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Sat 24 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

HELL'S BELLS Sat 24 May, Joe Joe Jims,

BACK TO BACHARACH Sat 24 May, Royal Spa Centre. Leamington Spa

THE SUBTERRANEANS Sat 24 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

FRANCIS ROSSI Sat 24 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

TEMPTED 2 TOUCH Sun 25 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

HALF • ALIVE Sun 25 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BEWITCHER + **DEVASTATOR** Sun 25 May, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

BANDA BRASILEIRA Sun 25 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

GHAZALS AND OLD BOLLYWOOD CLASSICS Sun 25 May, Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire **SCISSOR SISTERS** Sun 25 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SKABUCKS Sun 25 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

LAUREN HOUSLEY & THE NORTHERN COWBOYS Sun 25 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

RICH PARSONS Sun 25 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

VITAMIN STRING QUARTET: THE MUSIC OF TAYLOR SWIFT, BRIDGERTON, AND **BEYOND** The celebrated classical crossover ensemble promises an unforgettable night blending the beauty of classical instruments with the vibrancy of modern hits, Wed 21 May, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: MAX **RICHTER'S THE FOUR SEASONS**

Programme includes Max Richter's Recomposed, a 21st century reimagining of Vivaldi's The Four Seasons, Thurs 22 May, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL: ASSOCIATE ARTISTS FROM WELSH NATIONAL **OPERA** Featuring William Stevens (bass), Eiry Price & Erin Rossington (sopranos), Fri 23 May, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: THE FRENCH CONNECTION Featuring Rachel Harris & Kathryn Parry (violins), Tatty Theo (cello), Carolyn Gibley (harpsichord) & Lisete da Silva Bull (recorder/historical flute). Programme includes works by Telemann & Leclair, Fri 23 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

CBSO NOTELETS: STRING ENSEMBLE Fri 23 - Sat 24 May, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

CBSO: VIDEO GAMES IN CONCERT Featuring Eímear Noone (conductor - pictured) & CBSO Chorus. Programme includes orchestral arrangements of video game soundtracks, Sun 25 May,



DUDLEY INTERNATIONAL PIANO COMPETITION FINAL Sun 25 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, Birmingham

Comedy

DAN TIERNAN Tues 20 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACK SKIPPER Wed 21 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AL MURRAY Thurs 22 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LAURA BELBIN Thurs 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham



Old Time Sailors - O2 Academy

thelist



COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Thurs 22 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RUSSELL PETERS Thurs 22 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

ELENA GABRIELLE Thurs 22 May, 1000 Trades Jewellery Quarter, B'ham

SCOTT CAPURRO, MICHAEL MAY, CRAIG HILL, HANNAH BYCZKOWSKI & ROB MORIARTY Fri 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICH WILSON, JAMES COOK & SEAN GORMAN Fri 23 May, The Station, Birmingham

ED NIGHT Fri 23 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JULIAN CLARY Fri 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Fri 23 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ELLIE TAYLOR Sat 24 May, Birmingham

Town Hall

KATE MARTIN, ASHLEY FRIEZE, FREDDIE

FARRELL & DANI JOHNS Sat 24 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

SCOTT CAPURRO, MICHAEL MAY, CRAIG HILL & COMIC TBC Sat 24 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JONNY COLE Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Lichfield Garrick



BENJI WATERHOUSE Sun 25 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PROJECT MAYHEM COMEDY Sun 25 May, Cherry Reds Cafe Bar, B'ham

Theatre

HANSARD Highbury Players present an amateur version of Simon Woods' domestic drama concerning an MP's Julian Clary - Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

troubled marriage, Mon 19 - Sat 24 May, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

12TH NIGHT (ALL INCLUSIVE) & WHAT YOU WILL South Staffordshire College present a new adaptation of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, Tues 20 - Wed 21 May, Lichfield Garrick

GHOST STORIES A 'truly terrifying' theatrical experience, co-created by The League Of Gentleman's Jeremy Dyson, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LITTLE WOMEN Belinda Lang, Honeysuckle Weeks, Jack Ashton and Grace Molony star in Anne-Marie Casey's new version of Louisa May Alcott's classic tale, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Rep, Birmingham



SWEENEY TODD: A MUSICAL THRILLER
Bournville Musical Theatre Company
present an amateur production
based on Stephen Sondheim's The
Demon Barber Of Fleet Street. The
show contains violent scenes, Tues
20 - Sat 24 May, The Crescent
Theatre, Birmingham

THE CROFT Liza Goddard, Caroline Harker and Gray O'Brien star in Ali Milles' Scottish Highlands-set thriller, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING
TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT Panto
favourite and award-winning comic
Matt Slack stars as the roof-raising
Pharaoh in Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd
Webber's smash-hit musical, Tues 20
May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham
Hippodrome

MARSHMALLOW ME The 'heartfelt and hilarious' story of Ruby, a young Scarborough girl who moved to the big city in pursuit of her acting

dreams, Wed 21 - Thurs 22 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SNATCHES - SET A Collection of 'moving, funny, tragic and empowering' monologues, addressing the constant efforts of women to assert their rights, both in domestic and public spheres. The programme includes: Pritilata by Tanika Gupta; Reclaim The Night by Charlene James; Pig Life by EV Crowe; and Outside by Theresa Ikoko, Thurs 22 - Sat 24 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

RAPTURE Middle-class dreams unravel in Joanna Murray-Smith's play, performed by Royal Birmingham Conservatoire actors, Thurs 22 - Sat 24 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SNATCHES - SET B Collection of 'moving, funny, tragic and empowering' monologues, addressing the constant efforts of women to assert their rights, both in domestic and public spheres. The programme includes: Compliance by Abi Morgan; Bovril Pam by Vicky Jones; Multiples by Zinnie Harris; and Tipping Point by Rachel De-lahey, Fri 23 - Sat 24 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

...EARNEST? Spoof performance based on Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Kids Theatre

LITTLE BULB - FOUR SEASONS A theatrical love letter to nature for children and their families, Sun 25 May, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Dance

CHARITY DANCE SHOW HEADLINED BY AMY DOWDEN & CARLOS GU Amy will be supported by her students from Art In Motion Dance Academy, Loyd Griffiths, Bailey Ariyah School of Dance, Sorella Academy of Dance and MHSOD, Thurs 22 May, Dudley Town Hall



BIBI RUKIYA'S RECKLESS DAUGHTER Amina Khayyam Dance present a new work exploring conditioned patriarchy enforced by women in family structures, Thurs 22 - Fri 23 May, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome ALJAZ & JANETTE: A NIGHT TO REMEMBER Join the Strictly favourites in a brand-new show that features routines performed to a wide selection of music - from the Great American Songbook through to modern-day classics, Fri 23 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

NACHLE RAQS 2025: BOLLYWOOD MEETS BELLYDANCE Two internationally acclaimed dance masters share the stage in a spectacular dance showcase celebrating movement and culture, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, The Old Rep, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

SHOWTIME! Performed by leading West End showband Too Darn Hot, Tues 20 May, Dudley Town Hall

PULMAN & STILGOE: A COUPLE OF SWELLS Music and laughter with two unique entertainers: songstress and one-third of Fascinating Aida, Liza Pulman, and virtuoso pianist, songwriter & singer Joe Stilgoe, Thurs 22 May, Lichfield Garrick

THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY
SPELLING BEE Student production in
which six nerdy teens (and four
members of the audience) enter a
slapstick spelling bee, desperate to
prove their worth and claim the title of
Champion Speller, Thurs 22 - Sat 24
May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TALE OF A PORK CHOP Join drag performer Just May for an evening of knock-off Ginger Spice, giant wigs, silly games and stupid songs, Fri 23 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SING THE MUSICALS Singalong spectacular featuring hits from Mamma Mia!, The Greatest Showman, Rocky Horror, Oliver!, We Will Rock You, Mary Poppins and more..., Fri 23 May, Dudley Town Hall

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET 'The creme de la creme of the cabaret world take to the stage to surprise and delight with sultry striptease, witty wisecracks and saucy songs', Sat 24 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

ADHD UNMASKED Join ADHD speaker, coach, former TV & radio presenter and late-diagnosed ADHDer Hester Grainger for 'an evening of conversation, laughter, and a refreshingly honest look at life', Thurs 22 May, Birmingham Town Hall

SERENDIPITY: AN EVENING OF POETRYFeaturing works from curator Gregory

Monday 19 - Sunday 25 May

Leadbetter and special guests, including New Delhi-based writer Uttaran Das Gupta, Sun 25 May, Eastside Jazz Club, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Events

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE OPEN DAY Explore Court 15 and the ground-floor rooms of the back-to-back houses, Sat 24 May, Birmingham Back to Backs

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Celebrating the city's LGBTQ+ community, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Birmingham City Centre

BEES AND BUGS FAMILY TRAIL Naturethemed trail for National Children's Gardening Week, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

PREHISTORIC PLANTS TRAIL Explore plants from prehistoric times on this special trail, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

JURASSIC GARDENS 2025 Mighty dinosaurs are back in Birmingham for the third year running! Sat 24 May -Sun 1 June, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

MAY HALF TERM FUN & GAMES Featuring outdoor hands-on activities, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire

TIME TRAVELLERS CHALLENGE Fix the historical errors made by the mischievous time traveller, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Tamworth Castle

WORLD WAR TWO WEEK Featuring the Raid The Shelter experience, Lego racers, talks, make & take sessions, and a selfie station, Sat 24 May - Sun 1 June, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

TUCKED Featuring a selection of some of the UK & Europe's best car builds and highly modified show cars, Sun 25 May, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR

Featuring traders selling a wide range of items from yesteryear, Sun 25 May, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

VEGAN MARKET Featuring a host of independent and eco-focused companies, Sun 25 May, Winterbourne House & Garden, Birmingham

ASIANA LIFESTYLE SHOW South Asian celebration of culture, fashion, entertainment, food and more, Sun 25 May, The New Bingley Hall, Birmingham



Jurassic Gardens 2025 - Birmingham Botanical Gardens

WESTON'S SPRING FLING Featuring a line-up of local artisan food producers, unique crafts, street food, live music from the Dirty Rockin Scoundrels and fairground rides, Sun 25 - Mon 26 May, Weston Park, Shropshire / Staffodshire border

Festivals

BEARDED THEORY SPRING GATHERING Line-up includes Iggy Pop, Manic

Street Preachers, Paul Heaton, Wed 21 - Sun 25 May, Catton Park, Derbyshire

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Black Spiders, These Wicked Rivers, King Kraken, Thurs 22 - Mon 26 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN Line-up includes Joe Goddard, Zero 7 and Molotov Jukebox, Fri 23 - Mon 26 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford





thelist



The Sheepdogs - Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

Gigs

CONSERVATOIRE FOLK ENSEMBLE Mon 26

May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THUMRI IN THE CHAMBER Mon 26 May, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE GARAGE BAND Mon 26 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

MARK RADCLIFFE AND DAVID BOARDMAN Mon 26 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

SCOTTY MCCREERY Tues 27 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE SHEEPDOGS Tues
27 May, Castle &
Falcon, Balsall Heath

EXIT VELOCITY FESTTues 27 May, Royal
Birmingham
Conservatoire

ANDY WHITE Tues 27 May, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE LUMINEERS +
MICHAEL MARCAGI
Wed 28 May, Utilita
Arena Birmingham

THE BLONDIE EXPERIENCE Wed 28 May, The Crescent, Birmingham

SIMPLY DYLAN Wed 28 - Thurs 29 May,

Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath GUTTER PUPPY Th

GUTTER PUPPY Thurs 29 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DEL CAMINO Thurs 29 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

CALL OF CTHULHU Thurs 29 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SEMATARY + GHOST MOUNTAIN + HACKLE + ANVIL Thurs 29 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

GRACE PETRIE Thurs 29 May, O2 Academy

PARLIAMO Thurs 29 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

SONNY TENNET Thurs 29 May, The Rainbow, Digbeth

MIKE SILVER Thurs 29 May, Bromsgrove Folk Club

JOOLS HOLLAND AND HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA Thurs 29 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TAYLORMANIA Thurs 29 May, Dudley Town

PH0ENIX Fri 30 May, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter J0J0 Fri 30 May, O2

Institute, Digbeth

COMBICHRIST + EXTISE + CRIMSON VEIL + ESOTERIK Fri 30 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

KIP MOORE Fri 30 May, O2 Academy

SPEAR OF DESTINY Fri 30 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

DEAFDEAF DEAF Fri 30 May, The Victoria, John Bright Street

JOHN LEGEND Fri 30 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham

MOMENTS OF PLEASURE Fri 30 May, Tower Of Song, Pershore Road

CHRIS JAGGER Fri 30 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

ONE NIGHT OF ADELE Fri 30 May, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Fri 30 May, Lichfield Garrick

THE BEAT INSTITUTE Fri 30 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

U2 BY CANDLELIGHTFri 30 - Sat 31 May,
Lichfield Cathedral

SEXTILE Sat 31 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

BIG SKY ORCHESTRA Sat 31 May, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath
THE BLACK JEANS Sat

31 May, The Jam

House, Jewellery

Quarter **THE LOVELESS** Sat 31

May, Actress &

Bishop, Ludgate Hill

BRELAND Sat 31 May, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ULTIMATE RNB Sat 31 May, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE TWANG Sat 31 May, Birmingham Town Hall

KYLIE Sat 31 May, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

LOVE THE BEATLES Sat 31 May, Joe Joe Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE SOUL CONNECTION Sat 31 May, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 31 May, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

RED HOT CHILLI PIPERS Sat 31 May, The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton

JORJA SMITH + MYCHELLE Sat 31 May, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

LOADED REVOLVER Sat 31 May, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

CBSO: MENDELSSOHN & WAGNER

Featuring Pierre Bleuse (conductor) & Jamie Barton (mezzo soprano). Programme also includes a work by Roxanna Panufnik, Wed 28 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BBC NATIONAL ORCHESTRA OF WALES Featuring Ryan Bancroft (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme includes works by Bartók & Mahler, Thurs 29 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: BEST OF BOLLYWOOD Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), Shin DCS, Priti Kaur, Navin Kundra, Rekha Paunrana (vocalists) & Dancers from Sampad Arts. Programme features an orchestral performance of much-loved Bollywood songs, Fri 30 May, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

WOLF HALL IN CONCERT Featuring Grace Davidson (soprano), Anton Lesser (reader) & the Locrian Ensemble of London. Programme includes works by Debbie Wiseman, Fri 30 May, Birmingham Town Hall

BARBER LUNCHTIME CONCERT: A GIFT FOR YOUR GARDEN Featuring Mary-Jannet Leith (recorders), Magdalena Loth-Hill baroque (violin), Florence Petit (baroque cello) & Thomas Allery (harpsichord). Programme includes works by Oswald, Handel, Telemann & Graun, Fri 30 May, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

Comedy

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN & MARC JENNINGS Thurs 29 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PATRICK LEWIN Thurs 29 May, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

JONNY PELHAM, JARRED CHRISTMAS, ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN & MARC JENNINGS Fri 30 - Sat 31 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GLENN WOOL, MAXINE WADE, RUSSELL ARATHOON & ERIC LAMPAERT Sat 31 May, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

PAUL CHOWDHRY Sat 31 May, Utilita Arena Birmingham



MITCH BENN Sat 31 May, Droitwich Working Mens Club, Droitwich Spa



Kylie - BP Pulse LIVE, Birmingham

Monday 26 - Saturday 31 May

I, TOM MAYHEWQ Sat 31 May, The Old Cock Inn, Droitwich Spa

COMEDY BITES Sat 31 May, The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa I

J0EY PAGE Sat 31 May, Droitwich Working Mens Club, Droitwich Spa

TIFF STEVENSON Sat 31 May, The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa

SHAPARAK KHORSANDI Sat 31 May, The Norbury Theatre, Droitwich Spa

TONY SLATTERY TRIBUTE SHOW IN AID OF MIND Sat 31 May, Droitwich Working Mens Club, Droitwich Spa

NATHAN CASSIDY Sat 31 May, Arch Rivals, Droitwich Spa

Theatre

A SHODDY DETECTIVE AND THE ART OF DECEPTION A laugh-out-loud slapstick whodunnit featuring four actors, a dozen characters and whole load of chaos, Tues 27 May, Lichfield Garrick

RUM Darkly humorous new play that wrestles with masculinity, mental health and addiction in the plastering trade, Tues 27 - Wed 28 May, The Rep. Birmingham

JARMAN Solo play in which Mark Farrelly (Quentin Crisp: Naked Hope, Howerd's End) tells the story of renowned filmmaker Derek Jarman, Tues 27 - Wed 28 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE Step through the wardrobe into the magical kingdom of Narnia. Based on CS Lewis' classic children's story, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, The Alexandra, Birmingham

KIM'S CONVENIENCE Ins Choi's heartwarming comedy drama about a family-run Korean store, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

MARIE & ROSETTA Beverley Knight stars as 'godmother of rock & roll' Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Tues 27 - Sat 31 May, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DICK WHITTINGTON ADULT PANTOFeaturing strong language and adult themes, Fri 30 May, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Kids Theatre

MISS RACHEL - TRIBUTE SHOW Mon 26 May, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

YOU ARE THE SUN Hurlyburly Theatre fuse gentle classical singing with sensory play in a musical adventure for babies and very young children, Thurs 29 May, The Belgrade Theatre,

A MUSICAL JOURNEY: MY FIRST CONCERT Relaxed and interactive concert designed especially for babies and children. Presented by professional musicians, Thurs 29 May, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

AN ANT CALLED AMY Julia Sharkey's
charming story about a busy little ant
learning to slow down. Suitable for

learning to slow down. Suitable for children aged five to nine, Fri 30 - Sat 31 May, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

SUZI SCARECROW AND HATTIE HENS BARNYARD TALES Classic animal stories with rhyme and song retold, Sat 31 May, Droitwich Library

Dance

PHOENIX DANCE THEATRE: INSIDE GIOVANNI'S ROOM A full-length dance production, inspired by James Baldwin's ground-breaking 1956 novel, Giovanni's Room, which tackles themes of love, sexuality, guilt and self-acceptance, Wed 28 May, The Rep, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

BOX OF FROGS An evening of 'highoctane improvised comedy nonsense', based entirely on audience suggestions, Wed 28 May, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham

THAT'LL BE THE DAY A celebration of the most iconic moments in music and comedy from the 1950s, 60s, 70s & 80s, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 May, Lichfield Garrick

PATRICK LEWIN: DELUSIONAL (WORK IN PROGRESS) Join the comedian, content creator and occasional showtune belter for an evening in which he takes audiences through 'the ups, the downs, and the fabulously awkward moments of living life in his (tap) shoes', Thurs 29 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre. Birmingham

SING THE MUSICALS Singalong spectacular featuring hits from Mamma Mia!, The Greatest Showman, Rocky Horror, Oliver!, We Will Rock You, Mary Poppins and more..., Fri 30 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

MC HAMMERSMITH Fri 30 May, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE D-DAY DARLINGS - VE DAY 80
ANNIVERSARY TOUR Brand-new tribute show, Fri 30 May, Halesowen Town

WEST END WEEKEND: AN EVENING WITH KERRY ELLIS An intimate concert with the musical-theatre icon, Fri 30 - Sat 31 May, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

OPERA BOYS: A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS Sat 31 May, The Core, Solihull

YEH DOSTI: CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SHOLAY Music & dance show honouring a movie that has



Kim's Convenience - Warwick Arts Centre. Coventry

captivated viewers for half a century, Sat 31 May, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

COMING OUT WITH DOCTOR WHO

Comedian and storyteller SJ brings an bittersweet, interactive show about how Doctor Who helped them come to terms with being a bi polar, queer, neurodiverse, wannabe activist, Sat 31 May, Emms, Droitwich Spa (12noon); Droitwich Coffee Culture, Droitwich Spa (4pm) & Ale Hub, Droitwich (4.30pm)

IDENTITY THEFT A surreal show where Uxbridges third hardest man, Mad Ron, tries to guide his comedy apprentice, Yorkshires least successful Mexican wrestler, Jerry Bakewell, as a glamorous game show host, Sat 31 May, Arch Rivals, Droitwich Spa. Part of the Rik Mayall Comedy Festival

FEVER PITCH Post-punk spoken word, comedy and 'sonic journeys', Sat 31 May, Barbertown, Droitwich Spa. Part of the Rik Mayall Comedy Festival

THE CREW A dark adult comedy by Robin Pearson, Sat 31 May, Droitwich



Events

OAK APPLE DAY Step back in time to 1660 and celebrate the restoration of the crown, Mon 26 May, The Commandery, Worcester

VINTAGE AFTERNOON TEA Travel in style in a luxurious vintage carriage and indulge in a spread of sandwiches, cakes, tea & coffee, Mon 26 May, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderninster

WHAT'S IN YOUR GARDEN? Create your own wild art, enjoy mini den building, and learn about the animals just beyond your back door, Mon 26 May, Hartlebury Castle, Worcestershire

MAY HALF TERM ACTIVITIES Journey back to 1945 and explore the stories of those who lived and served 80 years ago, Mon 26 - Fri 30 May, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire

ROVING ROBOTS FAMILY SHOW Learn how space rovers are powered by electricity, what they might be up to on other planets, and how they get there, Mon 26 - Fri 30 May, Thinkthank Birmingham Science Museum

PANORAMA TOWER OPEN DAY Enjoy panoramic views of the countryside from the balcony, Tues 27 May, Croome, Worcestershire

SEPHORA X THE BRIDAL BEAUTY CO. MASTERCLASS With panel talks, mini treatments and goody bag, Wed 28 May, Sephora Bullring, B'ham

KINETON RAF STEM Kineton RAF STEM are back, presenting 'fun-filled days of design and engineering', Wed 28 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

DIG & DELVE DAYS Dig & Delve return to Sudeley with wildlife-themed crafting and twig & tale adventure sessions, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 May, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

Monday 26 - Saturday 31 May



B-SIDE Hip-Hop Festival - Birmingham Hippodrome

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY SHOW The two-day agricultural show returns, Wed 28 - Thurs 29 May, Staffordshire

PAINT STARRY NIGHT OVER BIRMINGHAM

County Showground, Stafford

A sip & paint experience, Thurs 29 May, Box Brindleyplace, Birmingham

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS -MAY HALF-TERM Workshop space in which to take stuff apart, make old and new things that move and engage in colourful play, Thurs 29 May, Coventry Transport Museum

GET MUCKY GET MAKING Build bird nests, make and decorate clay eggs, mix up muddy delights and find hidden bunnies, Thurs 29 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

JUNIOR FALCONRY EXPERIENCE

Opportunity for under-16s to get up close to owls and birds of prey, Fri 30 May, Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens, Birmingham

A WALK IN THE PARK SUMMER STROLL Join landscape manager Fiona Tansey to explore and connect to the natural world in Compton Verney's grounds, Fri 30 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

UK GAMES EXPO The largest tabletop games convention in the UK, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, NEC Birmingham

MIDLANDS AIR FESTIVAL Returning for a seventh year, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

EMO BOTTOMLESS BRUNCH Teenage nostalgia combined with beats and booze, Sat 31 May, Gosta Green, Birmingham

LDN WRESTLING Top American wrestling stars square up to the very

best home-grown talent and fans' favourites, Sat 31 May, Dudley Town Hall

FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT WITH WREN PERFORMING ARTS Family fun event with face painting, stilt walker, balloon modelling, giant bubbles and have a go circus skills, Sat 31 May, St Andrew's Shopping Centre, Droitwich Spa

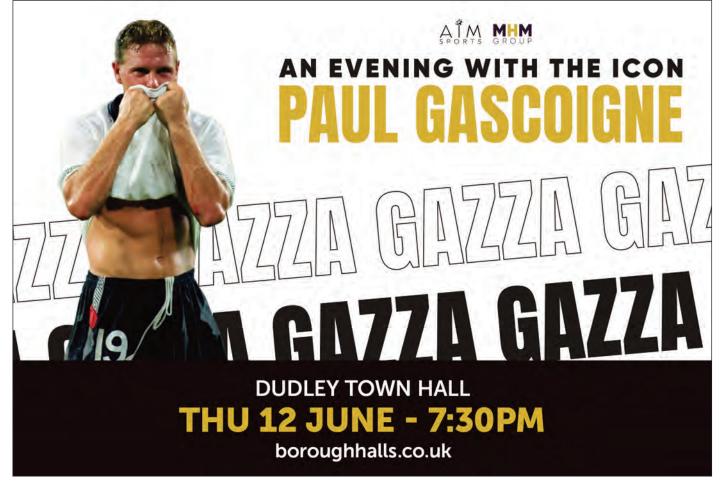
COMPTON VERNEY DINING CLUB

Digbeth Dining Club present their usual mouthwatering selection of award-winning street food, Sat 31 May, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

TINKER | MAKE | PLAY ENGINEERS -MAY HALF-TERM Workshop space in which to take stuff apart, make old and new things that move and engage in colourful play, Sat 31 May, Coventry Transport Museum

B-SIDE HIP-HOP FESTIVAL 10th anniversary event featuring dance battles, MCs & DJs, Graffiti performances, exhibitions, workshops & tours, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Birmingham Hippodrome

BRICK DINOS Featuring Lego dinosaur sculptures designed in collaboration with palaeontologists, Sat 31 May -Sun 7 Sept, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry



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