

Birmingham

ISSUE 464 SEPTEMBER 2025

What's On

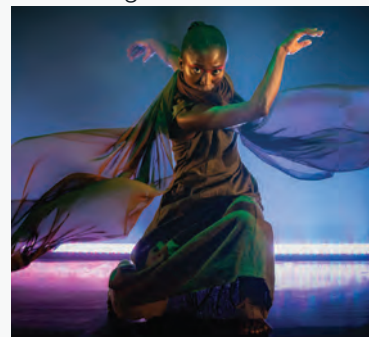
FILM | COMEDY | THEATRE | GIGS | VISUAL ARTS | EVENTS

birminghamwhatson.co.uk



inside:

DANCE DOUBLE BILL
as Ace Dance & Music present
contrasting visions of the world



JOANNE MCNALLY
still single, still unfertilised...
and heading to Birmingham



TWISTED THRILLER
the star-studded Murder At
Midnight stops off at The Rep



THE MULTI AWARD-WINNING HIT MUSICAL

SUNNY AFTERNOON

The KINKS

Music and Lyrics
RAY DAVIES

Book
JOE PENHALL

Original Story by
RAY DAVIES

Director
EDWARD HALL

LOLA

SUNNY AFTERNOON

DEAD END STREET

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A WELL RESPECTED MAN

DEDICATED FOLLOWER OF FASHION

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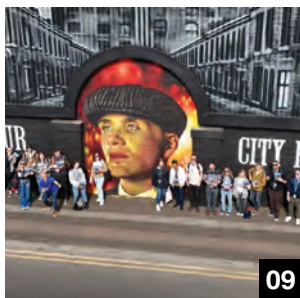
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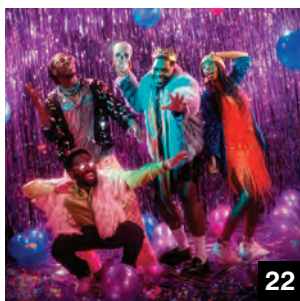
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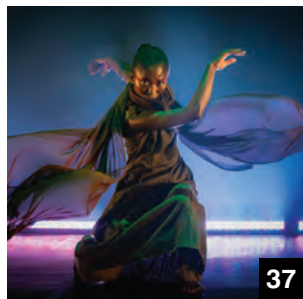
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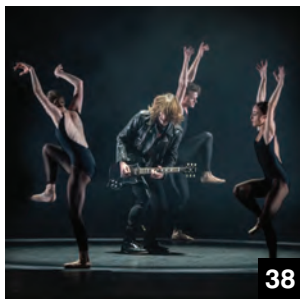
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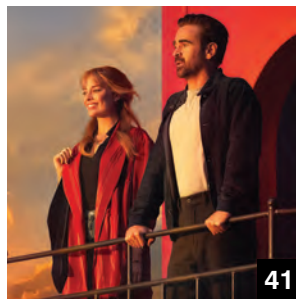
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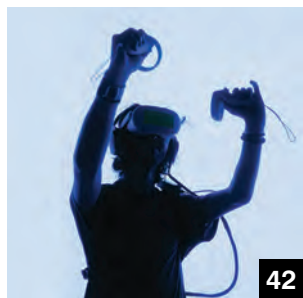
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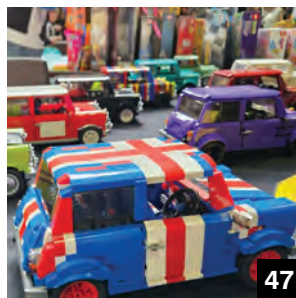
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What's On

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Birmingham What's On



Midlands venues to host British Art Show 2026

Three Midlands venues - Warwick Arts Centre's Mead Gallery, the Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, and Coventry University - will co-host the 10th edition of the British Art Show next year.

Developed and produced by Hayward Gallery Touring, the show is the largest and most significant recurring exhibition of contemporary art in the UK. Previous editions having featured works by David Hockney, Tracey Emin, Anish Kapoor and Sonia Boyce. The 2026 edition will open in September, after which it will head to four other cities across the UK. To find out more, visit the website at southbankcentre.co.uk

Return of the Mrs Barbara Nice & Friends podcast

Local comedian Janice Connolly has brought her Mrs Barbara Nice & Friends podcast back to Brum Radio after a five-year hiatus. Janice has been performing as Kings Heath housewife Barbara for much of her career and presents the podcast 'in character'. The show - which sees Barbara having 'an unfiltered chinwag' with her 'besties' - can be found on Brum Radio's website and via all major podcast platforms, with a new episode released each Thursday.



Museum's Ozzy tribute exhibition to stay open

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery has announced that its exhibition celebrating the late Ozzy Osbourne, who died in July, will remain available to view until the end of the year.

Working Class Hero was originally due to close on the final Sunday of this month. Making the announcement, Zak Mensah and Sara Wajid, the co-chief executives of Birmingham Museums Trust, said: "We are delighted to announce the extension of the exhibition to the end of the year. The public response to Working Class Hero has been overwhelming, demonstrating the love and affection for Ozzy from the people of Birmingham and beyond."



Birmingham filmmakers secure distribution deal

Two Birmingham filmmakers - Martin Tracey and DG Torrens - have secured a deal which will see their film, Birmingham: A City Rooted In Talent, being distributed by a Los Angeles-based company. The star-studded movie, which the duo describe as 'a love letter to Brum', tells the story of Birmingham's influence on culture; from Black Sabbath changing rock forever, to Aston Villa conquering Europe. The film won the Best Documentary Award at last year's Birmingham Film Festival.

Concert celebration of revered animator's films

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire is this month hosting a concert celebrating the films of Oscar-winning Japanese animator, filmmaker & manga artist Hayao Miyazaki (Saturday 27 September). Taking the title Miyazaki Dreams, the concert is presented by Mystery Ensemble. The company are promising "to take viewers into famous anime stories' atmosphere, and introduce brave heroines, magical creatures and characters inspired by Japanese folklore". To find out more, visit bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire



BCU students invited to London Fashion Week

Students from Birmingham City University (BCU) will brush shoulders with such iconic brands as Burberry, Simone



Rocha and Roksanda this month, after being invited to showcase at London Fashion Week. BCU will open the event with a two-hour presentation on Thursday 18 September. For more information, visit the website at londonfashionweek.co.uk

Christmas attractions at Severn Valley Railway...

The Severn Valley Railway got into the Christmas spirit early last month when it launched two new attractions for the festive season 2025: Santa's Steam Specials and the Elf Express. Both train rides will run at weekends from Saturday 29 November - and also on Christmas Eve, which this year falls on a Wednesday. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit svr.co.uk

Cross-genre community choir heading to Brum

Northants Sings Out - the cross-genre community choir who won millions of new fans after reaching the 2024 final of Britain's Got Talent - have announced their debut headline tour of the UK - including a stop-off at Birmingham's Hockley Social Club on Friday 24 October. Tickets for the choir's Club Classics Live On Stage show are available by visiting the website at skiddle.com

Burger Fest is back in Moseley

Popular street-food event Burger Fest returns to Birmingham next month. Taking place on Saturday 11 October at Uffculme Centre in Moseley, the annual get-together features some of the city's most popular burger street-food traders, including Flying Cows, Patty Freaks, Stripclub Street Food, Libertine Burgers, Filthy Burgers and Yardbirds. Tickets for the event can be purchased by visiting designmynight.com

Rugby trio return to the Midlands

The Good, The Bad & The Rugby is hitting the road again - and will be making two West Midlands stop-offs next month. The popular weekly podcast, featuring England legends James Haskell and Mike Tindall, alongside broadcaster Alex Payne, visits Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre on Wednesday 29 October and Birmingham theatre The Alexandra the following night (Thursday the 30th). For more information and to book tickets, visit the website of the relevant venue.

Town Hall date for Jason Byrne

Comedian Jason Byrne hits the road with his latest touring show, *Head In The Clouds*, this month, and will be visiting Birmingham Town Hall on Friday 10 October. Tickets can be purchased via his website at jasonbyrne.ie



Mel Giedroyc to star in acclaimed musical at The Rep

A critically acclaimed musical starring Mel Giedroyc will make a stop-off at Birmingham Repertory Theatre next month. Adapted from the same-named 2003 novel by bestselling author David Nicholls - and the popular film version which followed three years later - *Starter For Ten* is a coming-of-age comedy musical about love, belonging, 'and the all-

important difference between knowledge and wisdom'.

The production visits The Rep from Wednesday 22 October to Saturday 1 November.

An EP featuring the show's music is now available across all streaming platforms.

To purchase tickets for the production's run at The Rep, visit starterfortenmusical.com



Bat Out Of Hell on the big screen

Critically acclaimed stage show *Bat Out Of Hell: The Musical* is hitting the cinema next month - just in time for Halloween.

Jim Steinman & Meat Loaf's iconic rock musical shows on the big screen from Thursday 30 October.

To find out at which cinemas the production is being screened, visit the website at batoutofhellincinemas.com

Children's music brand Kidz Bop heading for Birmingham on tour

Kidz Bop - 'the number-one music brand for children, featuring today's biggest hits, sung by kids for kids' - is visiting Birmingham next month as part of the Kidz Bop Live Certified BOP Tour. The show takes place at Birmingham Symphony Hall on Tuesday 28 October. For further information and to book tickets, visit the website at bmusic.co.uk

Campaign to save city's libraries urges people to sign online petition

An umbrella campaign uniting Birmingham groups which are battling to save the city's libraries is urging people to join the fight by signing an online petition. Birmingham Loves Libraries is demanding that Birmingham City Council immediately reverse its plan to slash Saturday library openings across the city. In the petition, the group states: 'This is not efficiency - it's sabotage. The new model will cut Saturday access in half, reducing the number of libraries open every Saturday from 28 to just 14. Only 10 'hub' libraries will open every Saturday. Eight others will only open every other week. The other nine libraries will be shut every Saturday.' To access the petition and lend your support, visit: birminghamloveslibraries.org



Comedy night returns to Eastside Jazz Club

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's A Laugh Supreme comedy night returns this month at the venue's Eastside Jazz Club.

Taking place on Friday 19 September, the event features British-Sikh comedian Daman Bamrah and former Musical Comedy Awards winner Katie Norris. Further information is available via the website at bcu.ac.uk/conservatoire



Best of folk at Bromyard

Paul Downes and Phil Beer will kickstart this year's Bromyard Folk Festival when it opens on Thursday 11 September (running until Sunday the 14th).

The popular duo feature in a strong line-up of talent across the four days, with Dervish and Breabach also contributing.

To find out more and book tickets, visit the website at bromyardfolkfestival.co.uk

Oldbury Rep to stage girls' school comedy

Oldbury Rep is this month presenting an amateur version of Jimmie Chinn's comedy After September.

Set in the Gwendolen Kyte School for Girls, the play shows from Saturday the 6th to Saturday the 13th.

Visit oldburyrep.org to find out more.

Literature festival returns with over 400 events

Cheltenham Literature Festival returns next month (Friday 10 - Sunday 19 October) with an extensive programme of entertainment comprising in excess of 400 events.

The longest-running event of its kind in the world, the festival brings together the best new voices in fiction and poetry alongside literary greats, stars of stage and screen and incisive political thinkers.

Performances and literary happenings will be taking place at locations across the town throughout the 10 days.

Tickets are on general sale from 4 September at cheltenhamfestivals.org/literature



Let them bake cake!

Cake International - 'the world's premier cake decorating and baking show' - returns to Birmingham's NEC next month (Friday 31 October - Sunday 2 November).

Co-located with the also-returning Bake

International, the show is being publicised as 'the most spectacular yet, with new features, industry-leading exhibitors, hands-on workshops, and a landmark celebration to launch the Cake & Bake International Awards'. To find out more and book tickets, visit the website: cakeinternational.co.uk

A Big Green Weekender at Birmingham arts venue

Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre's (MAC) Big Green Weekender makes a return this month.

Taking place on Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 September, the family-friendly festival is a celebration of 'creativity and local action for our shared planet'. Events include creative workshops, live performances and inspiring talks. To find out more, visit macbirmingham.co.uk

Bullard and Fenners taking to the road in 2026

Football fans, brace yourselves - Jimmy Bullard and John 'Fenners' Fendley are hitting the road early next year with FC Bullard Live!.

The duo behind the FC Bullard podcast - in which they attempt to build a football club from the ground up - will be stopping off at three West Midlands venues as part of a nationwide tour: Birmingham Town Hall on Friday 20 February; Wolverhampton's Wulfrun Hall (Saturday the 21st) and Victoria Hall in Hanley (Friday 3 April).

For more information and tickets, visit the website at seetickets.com/tour/fc-bullard



Rep shortlisted for 'most welcoming theatre' award

Birmingham Rep is one of just three venues to be shortlisted for this year's prestigious Most Welcoming



Theatre title at the 2025 UK Theatre Awards. The annually held event celebrates the creative excellence and outstanding work seen in theatres across the UK.

The other nominees in the category are Royal & Derngate and Shakespeare North Playhouse. The winner will be announced at the UK Theatre Awards ceremony, which takes place in London next month.

Peppa Pig back with Big Family Show

Peppa Pig is heading back to the region in a brand-new production in 2026.

Bringing together 'music, adventure and surprises for little ones', Peppa Pig's Big Family Show visits Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Wednesday 11 & Thursday 12 February, Birmingham theatre The Alexandra on Tuesday 16 & Wednesday 17 June, and Stoke's Regent Theatre on Friday 7 & Saturday 8 August.

Tickets can be purchased via the show's official website: peppapiglive.com

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Man in the Mirror

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Brass Gala 2025

07 September | Symphony Hall



National Youth Brass Band | Have A Go Brass

07 September | Symphony Hall

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Eric Idle: Always Look on the Bright Side of Life, LIVE!

10 September | Symphony Hall



Classic Albums Live performs The Beatles White Album

15 September | Symphony Hall



ISMO: Woo Hoo!

16 September | Town Hall



Pop in & try!

Rice Bowls Four Ways B:Eats at Symphony Hall:

11am-4pm Mon-Sat & pre-show



The Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines: Live in Concert

18 September | Symphony Hall



A Night of Ska ft Bad Manners, The Beat ft Rankin Jnr & more

20 September | Town Hall



Lindisfarne

27 September | Town Hall



Björn Again

27 September | Symphony Hall



The Billy Joel Songbook

28 September | Symphony Hall

bmusic.co.uk

Great Nights Out
start with **B:Music!**

A portrait of Mel Giedroyc, a woman with blonde hair, smiling and wearing a white t-shirt. The background is a dark blue gradient. The text 'A HOME-GROWN BRITISH COMEDY' is overlaid in large white letters.

A HOME-GROWN BRITISH COMEDY

**Mel Giedroyc talks about starring in new musical
Starter For Ten, which visits Birmingham next month**

A critically acclaimed musical starring actor, TV presenter & comedian Mel Giedroyc visits Birmingham Repertory Theatre next month. Adapted from David Nicholls' bestselling novel of the same name, Starter For Ten is a coming-of-age comedy concerning love and belonging... What's On recently caught up with Mel to find out more about the show...

Having become a household name after presenting television competition shows, you might expect Mel Giedroyc to be a dab hand at quizzes. But, she says, that's not the case. Mel is discussing her buzzer ability as she prepares to return to the hit musical Starter For Ten, which centres around a University Challenge competition and plays Bristol Old Vic and Birmingham Rep this autumn.

Based on the bestselling novel by David Nicholls, which was then turned into a successful 2006 film, Starter For Ten follows the adventures of Bristol University student Brian Jackson, who dreams of winning the TV quiz show University Challenge. But how far will Brian go to take the prize?

Mel studied French and Italian at Cambridge's Trinity College, so did she ever fancy being on the University Challenge team?

"I cannot tell you how far that would have been from my university experience," she says. "My general knowledge is absolutely appalling. I'm good on Eurovision, but that's about it. My subjects are Eurovision, Italian and literature, and I'm not good at pretty much any of the others."

Fortunately, it's her acting ability, rather than her general knowledge, which is needed for Starter For Ten, in which she plays Brian's mum Irene and television executive Julia Bland. Mel is looking forward to returning to these roles after playing them last year when the show premiered in Bristol.

"I love the fact that it's a homegrown British comedy musical with real heart and soul," she says. "It was a total joy to be in it the first time round, so when they asked me to be involved with another outing of the show, I jumped at the chance."

"We will also have reworked the show, so it'll be Starter For Ten 2, to make things sharper and tighter - it's great to be involved in that process, too. We all believe in this show and want it to be the best it can possibly be."

There are both joys and challenges to playing two very different parts, says Mel, whose long-term partnership with Sue Perkins saw the two women presenting Light Lunch, The Great British Bake Off, and Mel And Sue together.

"Irene is so much fun to play. She's been a single mum to her teenage son Brian since her husband died. She's a no-nonsense grafter, a coper, adores Brian but acts as a bullshit barometer when she feels he's losing his head at Bristol University."

"Julia Bland is the vice executive on the Granada TV gameshow committee and is pure 80s powerhouse. University Challenge is her life, and she takes no prisoners. I'm a Gemini, and I think there is definitely both an Irene and a Julia lurking around in my personality. It's great to get the chance to unleash both of them in front of an audience."

"They couldn't be more different, so it makes both parts a real joy to play. You have to keep well on your toes. Irene has a heartbreaking song in the second act, so the dial has to be turned up and then down - which is challenging and fun. I have to get my power metal head on for Julia, and then find much more sensitivity for Irene."

Starter For Ten was premiered at Bristol Old Vic in 2024 to a sell-out run.

"It's a great combination of funny, tender, sad and utterly life-affirming. The storytelling is great, and you definitely feel like you are going on the journey with the characters in the show."

"It's a show about the joy and freedom of being young and a student, where anything is possible and your world is opening up on all sides. I think the young crowd love it because it's about them, and the older crowd do too, because it makes them feel so nostalgic. It's also set in the 80s. What's not to love?"

Despite being set in a decade famous for its pop music, the show features new songs.

"It's not a jukebox show. All the songs are newly written and wonderful - and that is such a rarity these days. The reaction that the music has got is amazing - and rightly so. All the songs are so cleverly crafted and catchy. And they're clever in that they give you hints of the 80s songs but without being complete scrapes. So you will hear whiffs of The Smiths, The Cure, Electronica, Kate Bush - all the greats, but without being able to say exactly how."

Mel is looking forward to the show visiting Birmingham, a city she's come to know well.

"My youngest has just graduated from Birmingham University - we've all loved getting to know it so much. And lovely to get to know it through the eyes of young people - what a fantastic, vibrant, friendly, cool place it is. We all know Selly Oak well now, love the Botanical Gardens - and I am personally slightly obsessed with Digbeth."

"I can't tell you how excited I am about being on stage at The Rep. I've never trodden its boards, and it's going to be an amazing

privilege to be doing so for two weeks. I need to sample many curries, and I already have a few favourite joints. I want to do big old walks along the canals and in the surrounding beautiful countryside."

Alongside taking part in countless television and radio shows, Mel has also built a strong stage presence in recent years, with roles in Stephen Sondheim's Company, The Crown Jewels, The Rocky Horror Show, Much Ado About Nothing and pantomime.

"I hope to be able to do more and more theatre. There's no feeling like it. I love the fact that every audience is different, so that there are different beats and the potential for different things to land every single performance."

"I'm never happier than being on stage, to be honest. I think it goes right back to being a six-year-old going to panto at the Thorndike Theatre in Leatherhead - which was always my favourite day of the year - running up onto the stage with the other kids and feeling like it was the best place to be."

Now Mel is thrilled to be treading such famous boards as the Bristol Old Vic and the Birmingham Rep.

"To be honest, I can't quite believe it. I'm an untrained actor, in that I didn't go to drama school. Any 'training' I've had has just been learning on the job for 37 years. There's a lot of me that will always feel like an eternal student - getting away with it and learning on the fly."

"So Starter For Ten, a celebration of the unfettered joy and heartache of being a student, is the perfect show to be part of. What an honour to be heading for the Bristol Old Vic and Birmingham Rep!"

Mel is confident that audiences will enjoy the show.

"It's a lovely story, really well told, with fantastic performances from this vibrant young cast. Plus, it's a new British comedy musical with all-new songs - this really doesn't happen very often."

"We want audiences to come along with us for the ride - to laugh, cry, and feel that they've been part of something really special."

.....
Starter For Ten shows at The Rep, Birmingham, from Wednesday 22 October to Saturday 1 November

A SPARKLING SEASON AWAITS



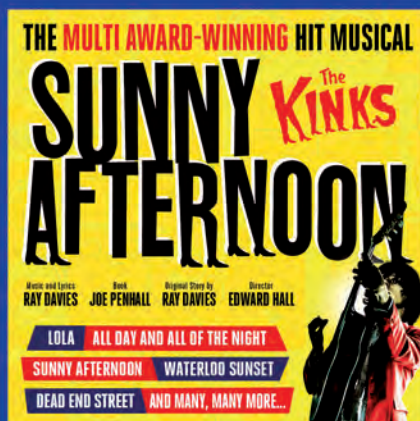
Sat 20 – Sat 27 Sep



Tue 7 – Sat 11 Oct
Tue 2 – Sat 6 Dec



Mon 13 – Sat 18 Oct



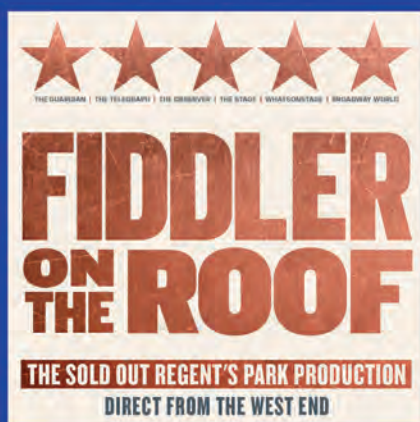
Tue 21 – Sat 25 Oct
CAP Thu 23 Oct 7.30pm



Tue 11 – Sat 15 Nov



Tue 18 – Sat 29 Nov
CAP Sat 22 Nov 2.30pm AD Sat 29 Nov 2.30pm



Tue 9 Dec – Sat 3 Jan 2026
CAP Thu 18 Dec 7.30pm AD Sat 20 Dec 2.30pm



Tue 27 – Sat 31 Jan 2026



Wed 11 – Sat 14 Feb 2026

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The return of Birmingham Heritage Week...

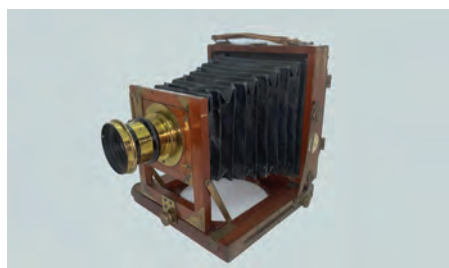
Birmingham Heritage Week is back, returning from Friday 12 to Sunday 21 September. Shining a spotlight on the city's fascinating history, the popular festival will see some of Brum's most important heritage locations and unique buildings opening their doors to members of the general public. Here are just some of the week's highlights...

100 Years of Camera Making in the Jewellery Quarter

The Hive, 43-47 Vittoria Street, Jewellery Quarter, B1 3PE

Explore local historian James Leighton's private collection of historical cameras and photographic equipment made in the Jewellery Quarter. On display in the Heritage Lounge at The Hive, the exhibition includes historic cameras and equipment dated between 1841 and 1950. This is a rare opportunity to see a collection of Birmingham-made photographic material not normally on public display.

Fri 12, Tues 16 - Fri 19 Sept | 10am-3.30pm. Free, booking not required.



Birmingham historical pub walking tour

The tour starts outside Snow Hill train station (Colmore Row entrance, B3 2BJ)

A fascinating exploration of Birmingham's brewing heritage and public-house history, this three-hour walk includes stop-offs at some cracking historical pubs. Explore how the city's story links to its beer and pubs, from early small-scale artisan brewers to today's desi pubs.

Fri 12 - Sat 13, Wed 17 & Sat 20 Sept | 1.30pm-4.30pm. £15, booking required.



Digbeth: Where Birmingham Gets Creative

The walk starts at the Bull statue by Nike Superstore in the Bullring and ends at the Polish Centre, Bordesley Street, Digbeth.

This tour explores Digbeth's colourful layers - from its industrial past to its bold, creative present - with giant murals, hidden gems and playful graffiti that turn the streets into one big outdoor gallery. Your guide, Jonathan Berg, is the author of Birmingham's Public Art. He will be bringing the area to life and handing out copies of his latest publication, *Discovering Birmingham* - a book packed with photos and 10 full pages about Digbeth.

Sat 13 & Sat 20 Sept | 10.30am-12.30pm. £8 adults, £7 students £6 children (7 - 16 years of age), booking required.



Family Friendly Led Ride

Start and end point of this ride is: Hub on the Green, 27 Sycamore Road, Bournville, B30 2AA

Discover the city's hidden heritage sites by bike, as ecobirmingham's trained ride leaders take you along one of their fantastic Secret Birmingham heritage cycle routes. The selected route is family-friendly and mostly traffic-free, taking in 'fantastic' green spaces, shared paths and some quiet streets. The cycle ride will take you past amazing local heritage points, including sites in Bournville Village. It also offers the chance to hear some interesting tales - such as the fascinating story of the Northfield Library Suffragettes - and learn about thousands of years of history via a search for ice-age stones in Cotteridge!

Sun 14 Sept | 10am-1pm. Free, booking required.

Museum Collection Centre Open Day

Museum Collection Centre, 31 Dollman Street, Nechells, B7 4RH

Enjoy a fun-filled day at the Museum Collection Centre, Birmingham Museums' 1.5-hectare store, holding over 80 percent of the city's collection all under one roof. Explore a mix of objects, many of which offer a real insight into life in Birmingham and the West Midlands over the centuries. Among the hundreds of thousands of items in the collection, you will find steam engines, sculptures, giant spider crabs, and even the kitchen sink!

Sat 13 Sept | 10am-4pm. £12 adult, £9 concession, children up to 15 years of age and Nechells residences (B7 postcode) free, booking required.



Walk This Way - A musical tour through Brum

Walk starts at Methodist Central Hall, 196-224 Corporation St, Birmingham

Following on from the Summer of Sabbath, this walking tour through the city centre will stop off at some of the sites most associated with Birmingham's rich music heritage - including a number of Black Sabbath sites which have sprung up since July's Back To The Beginning homecoming gig at Villa Park was first announced.

Find out about some of Birmingham's global superstars, visit the spaces and places they started out from, and pass by the locations of some of the city's most iconic music venues, both past and present.

Sat 13 Sept | 12pm-3pm. £10, booking required.

mac

Big Green Weekender

Sat 20 and Sun 21 Sep 2025

Join us in celebrating creativity and local action for our shared planet. Come along with friends and family and take part in workshops, join inspiring talks, live performances and more.



Eco Birmingham: Heritage ride

Sun 21 Sep | 11.30am



On Ya Bike!

Sat 20 Sep | 12.30pm and
2.30pm



Fruit & Nut Village

Sun 21 Sep | 12pm



Botanical Silk Scarves using Eco Dyes

Sat 20 Sep | 10am - 5pm



Park clean up

Sat 20 Sep | 1pm



Stalls and activities

All weekend | 11am - 4pm

Midlands Arts Centre, B12 9QH
macbirmingham.co.uk | 0121 446 3232



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



The return of Heritage Open Days...

This month also sees the return of Heritage Open Days, a nationwide festival of history & culture (Friday 12 - Sunday 21 September). The annual event offers people the chance to check out hidden places and sample new experiences - all for free. Here are some Birmingham-located options to enjoy...

Acocks Green Heritage Trail

Warwick Road, Acocks Green, B27 6RH

Take a walk around and find out all about Acocks Green, its religious history, street scene, buildings, transport changes, and the creation of The Green in the 1930s.

The walk follows boards one to five of the eight boards that make up the Acocks Green Heritage Trail. At the end of the walk, participants can visit boards six and seven on foot, while board eight at Fox Hollies is best visited by car afterwards.

Thurs 18 Sept | 10.30am-12pm, pre-booking required



Birmingham Hippodrome

Hurst Street, Birmingham, B5 4TB

Uncover the history of this famous old theatre by attending the Hippodrome's Heritage Morning event.

Significant items from the venue's archive will be on display, including the silk programme from its opening night in 1899. Heritage volunteers will be on hand to help you to discover the stories behind the on-show memorabilia.

To coincide with Birmingham Royal Ballet's performances of their critically acclaimed Black Sabbath ballet on the theatre's main stage, the Heritage Open Days event will also include a talk about the history of music staged at the Hippodrome. An additional talk, detailing the theatre's vast history, also features, as do two behind-the-scenes tours. However, due to limited spaces on the tours, you will need to be at the theatre early to reserve your space.

Sat 20 Sept | 9.30am-12.30pm, no pre-booking required



Birmingham Honey Show

Winterbourne House & Garden, 58 Edgbaston Park Road, B15 2RT

Although Winterbourne has seven acres of stunning botanical garden for you to explore, this particular event is all about its 'buzzing' residents: the honey bees. The Honey Show includes a chance to see the bees in glass observation hives, attend live bee demonstrations (weather permitting) and meet local beekeepers. Stalls for all the family, activities and plant sales also feature.

Sat 13 & Sun 14 Sept | 10.30am-5pm, no pre-booking required

Bournville Model Boat Club

Valley Parkway, Bournville Lane, Bournville, B30 1QS

Bournville Model Yachting Club was founded in 1923 at Rowheath Park. By 1926, George Cadbury had commissioned an area of marshland to be reclaimed, and the Valley Pool officially opened in 1933. The sailing of yachts and power boats has taken place there ever since. Heritage Open Days visitors will have the opportunity to see the boathouse, check out an artefact & photographic display, and get up close to the model boats in action.

Sat 13 Sept | 10am-4pm, no pre-booking required



Cadbury Archives

Mondelez International, Bournville Lane, Bournville, B30 2HP

The Cadbury Archives serve as a treasure trove of historical artefacts, documents and memorabilia, showcasing the evolution of the Cadbury business and brand from its very beginnings through to the present day. Featuring nearly 50,000 Cadbury items, including ones dating as far back as 1842, the archives are home to some of the rarest Cadbury documents and artefacts in the world.

Sat 13 Sept | 10am-4pm, pre-booking required

The Coffin Works

The Coffin Works, 13 - 15 Fleet Street, Birmingham, B3 1JP

Step into the sounds and stories of the Stamp Room with a free taster tour at The Coffin Works.

These bite-sized tours are the perfect introduction to the Coffin Works, exploring the Courtyard and Stamp Room of the original Victorian manufactory, where you'll get a glimpse into the factory's early years - complete with live demonstrations of the working Victorian machinery.

Tours run every 30 minutes, from 11am to 3pm, and last around half an hour. Spaces are limited and must be pre-booked.

Sun 14 Sept | 11am-3pm, pre-booking required



West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ

The West Midlands Police Museum now lives in the old Victorian Lock Up on Steelhouse Lane in Birmingham city centre.

In the atmospheric setting of a building that was opened in 1891, the museum houses a wide range of items and tells the fascinating story of policing in the West Midlands, going right back to its founding in the 1830s.

The museum manager will take visitors on special behind-the-scenes tours into the archives, where many of the oldest and most precious items are kept. These include some of the very earliest mugshots taken in the UK, criminal records going back over 150 years, and a number of more-delicate items too fragile to be on display.

Thurs 18 & Sat 20 Sept | Tours run at 11am, 12pm, 1pm and 2pm, pre-booking required

For further information about Heritage Open Days across the region, visit the website at heritageopendays.org.uk

INTO THE BOLLY-WOODS

**This month sees Rifco and the Wolverhampton Grand
present new Desi-pantomime Surinderella**



Rifco Theatre Company have been producing live entertainment celebrating contemporary British South Asian experiences for a quarter of a century. This month, they turn their attention to the beloved theatre tradition of 'the great British panto' - but they will, of course, be adding in a Bollywood-blockbuster twist! Co-produced with the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Surinderella promises magic, makeovers and selfie-obsessed stepsisters. What's On spoke to Rifco's associate director, Ameet Chana, to find out more...

Pantomime has arrived early - oh yes, it has! This month, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre launches new touring show *Surinderella* - a blend of traditional British panto and South Asian stagecraft.

Co-produced by Rifco Theatre Company and the Grand, the show promises to be an all-singing, all-dancing new take on the much-loved fairytale of Cinderella.

Written by Rifco Artistic Director Pravesh Kumar and directed by the company's associate director, Ameet Chana (pictured), the production sees Rifco bringing some of their own magic to the story of the little ash girl.

"If you've been to a Rifco show before, you're going to know exactly what you're going to get," says Ameet. "You're going to get big, you're going to get bold, you're going to get colours, you're going to get great music. Ultimately, what we love to do, and what we specialise in doing, is entertainment.

"If you've *not* been to a Rifco show before, you will get all of that but you will also be surprised. We've taken an amazingly brilliant British tradition, turned it on its head and Desi-fied it, to make panto more accessible; to make people feel like it's for them, if they maybe haven't felt that way before. It's just going to be a great afternoon or evening of pure entertainment for all the family."

Rifco have built up a reputation for combining cultures to create new narratives. Previous shows include *Frankie Goes To Bollywood*, *Pali And Jay's Ultimate Asian Wedding DJ Roadshow* and *Happy Birthday Sunita*.

"I think *Surinderella* is the reason Rifco exists," says Ameet, who has been involved with the company since its foundation in 2000. "Panto is such a great British tradition, but as a kid, I didn't really go to it that often because I didn't feel like it was for me. But this show is a brilliant take on a classic, and it's for *everybody*. I can bring my grandparents, and they'll get it; I can bring my four-year-old, and they'll get it. But at the same time, this show will introduce them to a genre which they might not have thought was for them in the first place."

The new production takes the original fairytale and not only places it in a South Asian context but also re-imagines some of the characters - as Ameet explains: "I think what we've done is really embrace the pantomime tropes, like the Ugly Sisters, like being in the woods, like falling in love with

the Prince and vice versa. But what we've also done is totally flip our Cinderella, who is *Surinderella*, and empower her a bit. The role of women within panto hasn't really evolved or progressed to modern-day women, and I think what Pravesh has done brilliantly is really empower *Surinderella*. She's a kind of eco warrior; she doesn't need a man in order to succeed, and she stands up to the Ugly Sisters. She's not passive toward them; she's quite strong and modern."

In order to reinvent the tradition, the team needed to fully understand pantomime, which meant seeing more than their fair share of shows.

"Over the past two or three years, since we've been toying with the idea, I've tried to catch more of the panto season," says Ameet. "I've caught about two or three shows each year."

Ameet's acting career began at the age of 15 when he was cast in the Film Four movie *Wild West*. He then undertook numerous stage roles - including in Rifco's *Bollywood 2000 - Yet Another Love Story* - before appearing on both the big and small screens; he played Tony in the hit movie *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Adi Ferreira* in *EastEnders*.

Even as his career developed, he remained closely linked with Rifco. He trained as a stage director through the company's Associates Programme - which he now manages.

"I shadowed Pravesh over two years, really getting to understand directing theatre, casting it, developing it, developing scripts and dramaturgy with him. I realise now that, having been part of developing, creating, and then going on to produce and direct shows for the company, it's probably what my 30 years of being an actor has led to.

"I'm now in a position to make work which I wish had existed when I was a younger actor - because this kind of rich, creative work for South Asian actors didn't exist back then; opportunities were so few and far between. It's so satisfying for me to be able to put a show on its feet - watching brilliantly talented British South Asian actors on stage and knowing 'we did that.'"

Surinderella is the first time Rifco have co-produced with the Wolverhampton Grand, and Ameet says it's a natural partnership: "I actually did a play at the Wolverhampton Grand as a young actor. The theatre is in the heart of a community that is our audience. I think when we took *Frankie Goes To Bollywood* there last year, it was a real eye-

opener, not just for the Grand but also for us. We asked ourselves, 'Why are we not bringing more shows here?' We had always looked at the bigger cities, but Wolverhampton is in the heart of a particular community, a Punjabi community, and both Pravesh and I come from British Punjabi backgrounds. It feels like a home for our work. And they've been so brilliant at the Grand - so warm and so welcoming through this process. It feels so right."

The production has also seen the team collaborate with Wolverhampton-based singer & music producer PBN.

"It's very cool to have someone who is local talent but celebrated internationally exploring theatre creatively for the first time in Wolverhampton," says Ameet. "It's been such a great journey. He totally gets what *Surinderella* and Rifco are about, as he's already watched our work. So there's something special in the coming together of me, Pravesh and PBN to create this and make it authentically right, and for it to open in his home city."

Ameet promises the show will be fun for all.

"Our audiences tend to be raised on an appetite of Hindi cinema, Bollywood, and big bhangra things at weddings and parties. You're going to get all of that. PBN is the king of making that fusion world of bhangra and South Asian sounds work really well with Western hip-hop beats and R&B and pop-commercial. The show will feature big, bold, bright songs and dance routines.

"We make work for everyone. We are commissioned, and we receive funding from the Arts Council to generate audiences that don't necessarily go to the theatre or feel like the theatre is for them. But by taking such a brilliantly authentic British story as *Cinderella*, and turning it on its head in this kind of Desi or South Asian way, we're saying 'You know *Cinderella*, I know *Cinderella* - let's bring this together and celebrate this amazing British tradition collectively.'

"[We want to] make it for everyone, because sometimes the traditional versions don't feel that way."

.....
Surinderella shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 September



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Peter Donohoe



16 Sep

A Laugh Supreme with Daman
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19 Sep

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25 Sep

Clybourne Park by Bruce Norris
@ The Crescent



9 – 11 Oct

The Art of Success by Nick Dear
@ The Crescent



9 – 11 Oct

Ben Elton: What Have I Done?



14 Oct

Jason Palmer



16 Oct

Tim Berne's Capatosta



23 Oct

Chartreuse



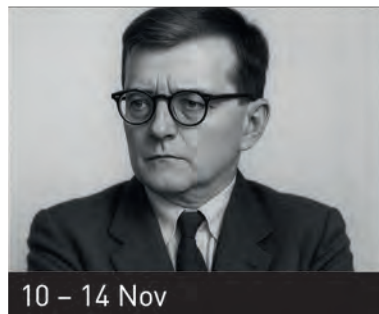
1 Nov

Dave Pegg & AJ Clarke +
Churchfitters



9 Nov

Shostakovich & His World



10 – 14 Nov



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Kazuki Conducts The Dream Of Gerontius

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 17 September

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's music director, Kazuki Yamada, is here joined by the ever-impressive CBSO Chorus, contralto Jess Dandy, tenor David Butt Philip and baritone Roderick Williams

to perform Edward Elgar's *The Dream Of Gerontius*. The piece was premiered at Birmingham Town Hall in 1900 and is widely considered to be the Worcestershire-born composer's finest choral work.

Peter Donohoe Celebrity Piano Recital

Royal Birmingham Conservatoire,
Tues 16 September

Unquestionably one of the foremost pianists of modern times, Peter Donohoe has built up an impressive repertoire during the course of a glittering half-century career.

The 72-year-old opens the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire's new season with a concert that sees him perform three much-loved works: Mozart's Piano Sonata in D K576; Messiaen *La Fauvette des jardins* (1972); and Beethoven's monumental *Sonata in B flat Op106 - Hammerklavier*.



Armonico Consort: JS Bach Mass in B Minor

Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick,
Sat 27 September; Malvern Theatres,
Sun 28 September

Armonico Consort here turn their attention to JS Bach's *Mass in B Minor* - a work which, in a sense, is a homage to the composer's own music.

Created over the final quarter-century of his life, the piece is scattered with music and references that Bach considered to be his best work. It also features movements which he'd allowed to develop over time, and to which he'd returned at a later date to make perfect. The *Mass* was never performed complete in Bach's lifetime. Armonico's performance of it will be given under the directorship of their founder & conductor, Christopher Monks.

Vaughan Williams' Piano Quintet

CBSO Centre, Birmingham,
Fri 26 September

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Centre Stage series makes a return with Vaughan Williams' Piano Quintet. Written



across three years in the early 20th century, the composition brings together violin, viola, cello, double bass and piano. As with all Centre Stage performances, the hour-long afternoon concert provides the audience with the chance not only to get closer to the music, but also to experience the artistry of the orchestra's members in an intimate setting.

Brad Kella Piano Recital

Birmingham Town Hall,
Thurs 18 September

"I was always fascinated with music," says pianist Brad Kella. "Even as a little boy, watching films with my mum, I'd be drawn to the sound effects from the TV. Then, later, when I went to high school, I heard a teacher playing the piano, and I remember thinking how amazing it was that someone could do that. It was like something in me clicked."

Brad's rags-to-riches story provides sweet inspiration for any ambitious young person who finds themselves faced with a set of challenging circumstances...

An unstable upbringing in a working-class suburb of Liverpool saw him and his twin brother being placed into foster care at the age of seven.

The move proved to be a real turning-point for the youngster. Suddenly finding himself in a more-stable environment, Brad flourished. Across time, he taught himself to tinkle the ivories to such excellent effect that last year he won Channel Four's national televised talent show, *The Piano*.



SAVE OUR SATURDAYS

in community libraries

Birmingham's local libraries will be closed on Saturdays, under the Council's current plan.

We say: Libraries are not luxuries. They are learning centres, safe spaces, warm hubs, and community lifelines. Birmingham needs **more** access, not **less**.

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Singer-songwriter

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BIMM at B:Eats 29.10
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Town Hall & Symphony Hall

Visit bmusic.co.uk for details of other free performances and confirmed performance times

Live music from across the city...

The New Eves

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham,
Mon 15 September

Lovers of primal rock & roll will find plenty to enjoy in the music of The New Eves. As will fans of transcendent ritual. Hailing from their adopted hometown of Brighton, the all-female quartet have been carving out an impressive reputation for themselves the length and breadth of the country, particularly via some truly mesmerising festival performances... Their Birmingham show comes in support of debut album *The New Eve Is Rising*, released last month.



James Morrison

Symphony Hall, Birmingham,
Tues 23 September

Scoring a hit with his 2006 debut single, *You Give Me Something*, Warwickshire-born James Morrison then achieved global fame with breakthrough album *Undiscovered*, released later that year. He has since established himself as a major name on the UK music scene, in the process picking up a Brit Award and releasing a further four albums. His latest offering, *Fight Another Day*, is slated for release early next month.



Self Esteem

O2 Academy, Birmingham,
Mon 15 September

Multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, songwriter & actor Rebecca Lucy Taylor launched her solo career under the Self Esteem moniker in 2017 - and she's been going great guns ever since.

The one-time member of Sheffield duo Slow Club writes and sings infectiously fun songs

which nevertheless come complete with some smack-in-the-mouth messages about hot and topical subjects; think, misogyny, toxic relationships and mental health.

"I'm trying to do a Trojan Horse thing," she explained to the Guardian. "You think you're getting this sugary injection of a pop song, but it's going to leave you with something more."

Self Esteem's Birmingham gig comes as part of her biggest tour to date.

Jon Boden & The Remnant Kings

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Thurs 18 September

A stand-out performer from his generation of traditional folk artists, Jon Boden is perhaps best known as a member of multi-award-winning band Bellowhead, with whom he played for 12 years until 2016. Away from his time as Bellowhead's lead singer and main arranger, Jon has enjoyed plenty of other successes, not least with his own band, The Remnant Kings, which he formed back in 2009. Hailed for their unique and swaggering brand of folk, they appear at MAC following the release late last year of their album, *Parlour Ballads*.

Deacon Blue

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Mon 22 September

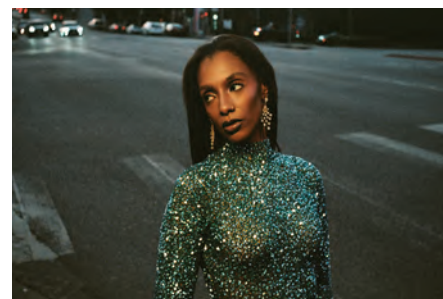
Taking their name from the title of the Steely Dan song *Deacon Blues*, the Glaswegian pop-rock boys came together in 1985, releasing the highly regarded concept album *Raintown* two years later. Follow-up offering *When The World Knows Your Name* topped the UK album charts in 1989, with further records being released in 1991 and 93, the latter just a year prior to the group splitting

up. The band re-formed on the eve of the 21st century, since which time they've released eight albums, the most recent of which is this year's *The Great Western Road*.

Mereba

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Mon 15 September

Showcasing melancholic tinges, metaphors connected to nature, and a raw and rebellious attitude and vocal, the songs sung by Alabama-born rapper & record producer Mereba focus on simple stories of everyday life, their melodies rooted in folk and country music even as her sound has evolved in a different direction. Having scored a major success with debut offering *The Jungle Is The Only Way Out*, she visits Birmingham this month in support of sophomore album *The Breeze Grew A Fire*.





HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Jason Byrne brings his new show to Birmingham Town Hall next month...

Jason Byrne is the kind of comedian who thrives on chaotic audience interaction - but how does he decide who to select from the crowd?

Well, for starters, he's probably going to go for someone sitting near the front, as, by now, those are the punters who'll know there's a good chance of them getting involved in his high-energy shows. He also tends to pick men, because their ineptitude at following instructions makes things even more entertaining.

"Every time I've picked a woman, they've done what I've asked them perfectly," says Jason, on the eve of taking his Edinburgh Festival Fringe show, *Head In The Clouds*, out on tour. "When a man does it, he's often facing the wrong way, he doesn't know what I'm saying, he's gone off and come back. Men between the ages of 30 and 60 are normally so used to being guided by their wives that they don't know what they're doing. Once, this guy couldn't hear what I was saying because his wife had forgotten to give him his hearing aids - to actually put them in his ears for him!"

Jason says the name for the new show comes from him having got lost in his own imagination as a kid. "The teachers would tell me I had my head in the clouds. I was obviously creating my own little world, and they were always telling me to stop daydreaming and go back to maths."

It's something he spoke about with the late Irish poet & playwright Seamus Heaney, some of whose teachers would regularly reprimand him for favouring scribbling away over following the rules. Imagine the art that would've been lost had that type of teacher succeeded in beating the dreams out of kids like that.

Jason's on a mission to get adults to enjoy the giddiness of mucking around - the sort of ridiculous fun you used to see on Vic Reeves & Bob Mortimer's shows, such as fruit being tromboned off people's heads.

"I'm not talking about things like office team building, which is horrendous. Nobody likes that," says Dubliner Jason. "This is just me orchestrating a silly night with some nice bits of stand-up."

One of the stunts he's got planned for the tour occurred to him after he received a shipment of clouds that he'd ordered from Temu. He put one on his head, and looking in the mirror, was reminded of Jamiroquai. So,

of course, he started dancing. It then got him thinking about the *Virtual Insanity* video, and how that might be recreated on the (comically) cheap. Without wanting to give too much away, it's going to involve sheets of lino and enthusiastic but baffled participation. And it might well result in Jason falling over.

In recent years, he's been saying he's got to be less physical on stage than he used to be. He does, after all, now have six stents in his body and is supposed to be taking things a bit easier. But, although what he's doing now is less dangerous than what he's done in the past (such as swinging on a mock wrecking ball in white vest and pants in 2013/14), he's never going to be the sort of comic who stands behind a microphone for the whole show.

In last year's outing - titled *No Show*, as it was largely improvised - he only really did one big bit of physical comedy, and that was miming the guy who works on the waltzers at the fair ground - walking around the stage backwards. Simple but hilarious.

One of the ideas he's playing with for the new show is a sort of acknowledgement of the multi-generational appeal of his comedy. "I hate the way younger people get dissed for being on their phones," he says, after underlining how much he likes seeing all ages in his audience. "I always say that if we had phones in the 1980s, we'd have been on the phones! We wouldn't have been saying, 'I'm not going on the phone, oh no, I'm going to build a raft or a fire.' We'd have been holding those things and going: 'Look at this!'"

So, again, without wanting to give too much away, he'll be calling a few younger people up on stage and getting them to guess the purpose of certain now-obsolete objects from the 1980s and 90s. This will all happen while somebody else does something ridiculously distracting (and specific) in the background. It's all carefully planned chaos.

Jason doesn't really have a problem with hecklers; if anything, his biggest on-stage challenges have involved audience members wanting to join in, but that always ends up in a fun time for everyone. On the odd occasion when someone isn't being terribly nice, he has, in the past, had a brilliantly creative way of dealing with it. He used to have Deal Or No Deal-type boxes across the back of the stage, and when someone was giving him a hard time, he'd say: "Ah, let's not fight. Do you

want to win some money?" They'd always say yes, and when they picked their number, he'd open the corresponding box to reveal the word, 'c**t'. Jason never uses that word on stage, so the effect is always jaw-dropping.

He's also had audience members heckle each other. Once, a Londoner described himself as a "building manager" and a Scot at the back of the auditorium said: "Ah, he's a janny."

"I was confused, so I asked what that is. A Scottish lady said: 'A janny is a janny.' Then, another woman stood up and went 'Janitor, Jason. She's trying to say janitor.' I went: 'Oh, who are you?' and she went, 'I'm a protestant,' and sat down. The crowd were killing themselves."

As well as putting together *Head In The Clouds*, Jason is currently working on an animation project which he hopes will be a sort of Irish version of *The Simpsons*. Based on Paddy Lama, his play about his late father, is an adult, 1980s/90s-set sitcom about an Irish family. It's being developed with Boulder Media, who make cult shows like *Captain Fall* and *Grimsburg*. Some of the people behind *Rick & Morty* are involved, and if it gets financed and commissioned, Jason will do some of the voices, working alongside a few well-known actors.

In the meantime, though, he's focusing on *Head In The Clouds* - and trying to anticipate how long various stunts will take. He recently watched a YouTube video about the 1974 World Diddling Championships (all about the art of making Celtic-sounding musical noises with one's mouth, and known variously as 'fiddling' or 'lilting' in Ireland). He can't stop thinking about how funny it is.

"You sometimes have men in a pub with no talent, no ability to sing, and the whole place goes quiet while they start going 'fiddledee-dee'. The reason they do it is that the English took our instruments off us hundreds of years ago," he laughs, hinting at some comical onstage retribution being planned.

At a time when grim news is around every corner, it's the kind of silly fun we could all do with. As he puts it: "In case World War Three starts, it'll be really good if I get the show in just before then."

.....

Jason Byrne plays Birmingham Town Hall on Friday 10 October



Mark Watson

Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs, Fri 26 September; Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 27 September; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Wed 1 & Thurs 2 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 2 November; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sat 16 May

Well established on the UK comedy circuit, Mark Watson was born in Bristol to Welsh parents and initially delivered his act with a Welsh accent, claiming he felt more comfortable talking in a voice that he didn't quite recognise as his own.

"Comedy is certainly a time-consuming element of my life," he admits, "but then while I'm out touring and on stage, there are people at home doing far less glamorous things. There have certainly been times when I've been very happy to say, 'Of course I'd like to stay and help out with that plumbing crisis, but the Midlands awaits!'"

Dara Ó Briain

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 latest touring show, *Re:Creation*.



He Huang

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Sun 14 September

Dating failures, travel disasters, and life's dark absurdities. Nothing is off-limits to He Huang, who describes herself as 'single, Chinese, and navigating adulthood like it's an obstacle-course designed by my worst enemy'.

Born in the city of Chongqing, He is visiting the Midlands this month with her star very much in the ascendant, some three years after scoring a major hit on television's *Australia's Got Talent*. Her audition for the show went viral, garnering more than 60 million views worldwide.

Shaparak Khorsandi

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Wed 17 September; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Tues 30 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 1 March

A regular contributor to radio and television programmes, Iranian-born comedian Shaparak Khorsandi describes herself as a 'spit and sawdust' stand-up comic, happily pulling on her wellies and trudging through muddy fields to perform at any and every music festival that boasts a comedy tent. She visits the Midlands with long-touring show *Scatterbrain*.



Live At The Belgrade

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Fri 19 September

The Belgrade's latest 'uplifting night of laughter' brings together a strong line-up of comedians: Tez Ilyas, Nabil Abdulrashid, and the Midlands' very own Josh Pugh, Gary Delaney and Lindsey Santoro (pictured).



Eric Idle

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 10 September

You don't *need* to be of a certain vintage to know who Eric Idle is, but it probably helps, given that he's best known as a member of legendary comedy troupe *Monty Python*, whose heyday was way back in the 1970s. Eric's done plenty more besides, mind, in a career spanning 60-plus years. So he'll have no shortage of material for this brand-new one-man show - a nostalgic deep-dive into his life and times.

Ahead of the mid-month Symphony Hall stop-off, Eric is warning audience members to brace themselves for an evening containing comedy, music, philosophy and, er, "one fart joke".

Alan Davies

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 29 September; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 17 October

Alan Davies has been a high-profile television face for more than 30 years now, first coming to prominence in hit detective series Jonathan Creek.

Further and numerous TV credits have followed - perhaps most notably QI and Taskmaster - ensuring he's remained very much in the public consciousness...

He is here making a relatively rare headline appearance with brand-new touring show Think Ahead.



Angela Barnes

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Fri 26 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 14 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 6 December

When Angela Barnes' inspirational father died, it proved to be the catalyst for her to follow his advice - *finally* - and hurl herself into the rough, tough world of standup comedy...

And her success since then has proved that she definitely made the right decision.

A BBC New Comedy Awards winner, Angela is this month visiting the region with Angst, a new show that 'mostly features stories of unmitigated failure, a distinct lack of wisdom, a little bit of German and loads of jokes'.

Cally Beaton

Wolverhampton Arts Centre, Thurs 18 September; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Fri 19 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 6 November; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 21 February

Comedian Sally Phillips is among Cally Beaton's many and varied admirers. "She spins tales like Aisling Bea," says Bridget Jones star Sally, "has the hair and strength of Pippi Longstocking, and the punk edge of Debbie Harry. Do I want a Cally Beaton rebrand? Hell yeah!"

Cally is visiting the Midlands with Namaste Motherf*ckers, a show described by its publicity as 'a quick-witted, unexpected and unapologetic insight into life in midlife'.



ISMO: Woo Hoo! World Tour

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 16 September

Finnish comedians causing a stir on the UK comedy circuit are hardly ten-a-penny, so ISMO's Town Hall gig offers a perfect opportunity to bag yourself a novel experience. Combining sharp observational humour with a unique perspective on everyday life, the 46-year-old funnyman - full name Ismo Mikael Leikola - shot to stardom

in the United States a decade ago when he won comedy club Laugh Factory's Funniest Person In The World competition. Life since then has been pretty good for the Jyväskylä-born laughter merchant, whose clever wordplay and humorous takes on English quirks have helped him chisel out a refreshingly unique style of comedy.



Emmanuel Sonubi

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 26 September; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Thurs 9 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 11 November; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 13 November

Emmanuel Sonubi has been clambering up comedy's greasy pole at spectacular speed and looks set to achieve big things in the coming years.

An Edinburgh Comedy Award nominee, he's visiting the Midlands with a show in which he contemplates his life after surviving heart failure, in the process exploring the 'strange and funny ways we all find to keep going when life gets hard'.

Tom Stade

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 11 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 26 September; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Thurs 2 October; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 20 November; Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton, Sat 29 November

Clever, controversial and Canadian pretty much sums up Tom Stade, a familiar face on television programmes including Live At The Apollo and Mock The Week.

Having racked up 30 years on the comedy frontline, Tom is visiting the region with brand-new touring show Naughty By Nature.



FELINE GROOVY

**Griff Rhys Jones is happy to be back on the road
with stand-up comedy show The Cat's Pyjamas**



Comedian, writer, actor, TV presenter and national treasure Griff Rhys Jones brings his latest stand-up tour to the region next month. It's less about jokes and more about chatting to the audience, he tells What's On - which is just as well, because he does like to talk...

Remember Rowley Birkin QC, the rambling old barrister from The Fast Show who would witter on about randomly disparate events before admitting he was "very, very drunk"? Interviewing Griff Rhys Jones is a bit like that. A consummate raconteur, the 71-year-old (no, I couldn't believe it either) talks non-stop - with barely a pause for breath - regularly chuckles to himself and continually veers off-topic to another unconnected yarn. It's mercifully more endearing than infuriating, and in many ways reflects the haphazard nature of his varied career, which he cheerily admits can no longer be easily pigeonholed.

"I don't know what to put in my passport anymore - I have to fake it. If someone asks me what I do for a living, I say 'God knows.'" Griff has been performing for 50 years, and is probably best known as one of the stars of award-winning sketch show Not The Nine O'Clock News, where he forged a hugely successful double act with Mel Smith that saw them front their own prime-time TV series between 1984 and 1998 - and even introduce Queen at Live Aid.

Since then, he's gone on to embrace a range of roles, including stage acting - he has two Olivier Awards to show for it - and presenting TV shows (including 10 years of It'll Be Alright On The Night) and travel documentaries, the latter of which he admits came from his "inability to say no", as well as his curiosity about... well, pretty much everything.

"When the BBC said they'd like me to become one of their people who goes around the world saying how beautiful things are, I said okay," he claims. That attitude has also seen him risk life and limb by doing stunts like bungee jumping and riding shotgun in a drag race car ("you'll see me trying to find the seatbelt") just to appease the director's "need for jeopardy".

It all provides great material for anecdotes and tall tales, of course, and his autumn touring show, entitled The Cat's Pyjamas, is sure to feature a few. Or will it?

"I have a couple of people I work with, Mike and Will, and they say it's very difficult to organise my show, as I never tell the same story twice," chuckles the comic, instantly digressing into one. I drag him back on to the origins of the show's unusual title.

"I just like the expression - we had all sorts of funny titles about being groovy, but then I decided on The Cat's Pyjamas. My daughter said 'You can't call it that,' and I said why not, and she said 'Well, you'll have to be good.'

"As I explain to the audience, all this doesn't mean I'm the cat's pyjamas; it means *they're* the cat's pyjamas."

My query about whether the title is in fact the family-friendly version of a well-known expression involving part of a canine's anatomy takes him down an especially interesting rabbit hole.

"Well yes, and I do know a bit about this actually," he says, almost conspiratorially. "I thought I'd call it The Dog's Bollocks, but there was a general feeling that I couldn't. Then I looked up the dog's bollocks in the Oxford English Dictionary, and do you know the term is accredited to Mel Smith!

"I don't think the idea is that Mel made it up entirely - I think most of London would dispute that - but the truth is, he is the first person to officially use it in a publication. He wrote a play [with Peter Brewis and Bob Goody] called The Gambler, and it was in that.

"It's crazy. In 30 years of working with Mel, he never wrote a useful or good sketch for the two of us to do, and there he is."

Rather than dwell on the poignancy of this nod to his late comedy partner (who died in 2013), he's already off on another flight of fancy.

"Apparently, 'the cat's pyjamas' was invented in the 1920s when American journalism was at its finest, and it was all about some woman who used to take her cat for a stroll while wearing pyjamas."

Cats became quite a theme of our conversation at this point - how Griff unwittingly adopted one (Henry), which was then joined by a pregnant one, followed by kittens ("Henry is clearly not the father") and so on. "Maybe I should do a whole show about cats," he mused, having already noted how he likes to talk to audience members about their dogs, before guessing the breed based on the theory that owners end up looking like their pets.

Interacting with the audience is a key part of The Cat's Pyjamas, but unlike the first leg of

the tour, the upcoming shows will see the advertised Q&A element brought forward in the running order, simply to ensure there's time to fit it in.

"I used to say there'd be a chance for questions at the end, but by the time I got to the end of the show, I was looking at my watch thinking, there isn't time, because the last buses are all going."

Relying on the audience to provide interesting questions is obviously a risky business, but Griff's wide-ranging interests and penchant for diversion make for fairly easy pickings - although he *has* noticed that the topics (topiary and elastic-waisted trousers among them) tend to reflect the demographic of the ticket buyers.

"My audience have a wide range of interests, which corresponds to their general age and maturity," he says, acknowledging that interaction with younger people has become increasingly fraught with age-related woe in recent years.

"I used to get stopped in the street and people would say 'Griff, I'm your biggest fan.' Then it was 'My mum is your biggest fan,' then 'My grandmother is your biggest fan' - which is really alarming. Soon, it's going to be 'My ancestors were your biggest fans.'"

And as much as he enjoys the variety of his other work - he'll return to acting next year to star in a stage version of I'm Sorry Prime Minister, an update of the TV show Yes, Prime Minister - he admits that his return to stand-up comedy, which began soon after Smith died, has been hugely rewarding.

"There's something liberating about being able to walk on stage and just start with whatever has just happened to you," he says. "It's such a wonderfully new thing for me, even though I've now been doing it for 10 years.

"But I love doing it - I'm a comedian again."

.....

Griff Rhys Jones' The Cat's Pyjamas visits Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, on Tuesday 14 October; Malvern Theatres on Sun 2 November; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry on Thursday 13 November; Cheltenham Town Hall on Wednesday 26 November



Calamity Jane

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tuesday 9 - Saturday 13 September

Boasting songs such as *The Deadwood Stage*, *Black Hills Of Dakota*, *Windy City* and *Secret Love*, *Calamity Jane* tells the story of the Wild West's most notorious female outlaw, along the way offering an all-in combination of music, comedy, drama and dance.

The famous 1953 film version, starring Doris Day and Howard Keel, remains one of the best-regarded Hollywood musicals of its era.

Multi-award-winning West End performer Carrie Hope Fletcher takes the title role for this stage version.

"*Calamity* is one of those parts that has everything," says Carrie.

"She's got a love story; she's comedic; she's the action hero; she gets incredible songs. There are so few roles that do everything and manage to tick all of those boxes."

Blood Brothers

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 23 - Sat 27 September; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 20 - Sat 24 January; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 27 - Sat 31 January

Although it's effectively a class-driven 'scouse melodrama', to describe *Blood Brothers* as such is to greatly underestimate the emotional response it produces within its audience.

The show features adult actors playing children, a narrator who wanders through the scenes with warnings of impending doom, a good helping of sharp social awareness to counteract the sticky sentimentality, and a raft of much-loved musical numbers, including *Bright New Day*, *Marilyn Monroe*, and the emotionally charged *Tell Me It's Not True*.

Musical theatre veteran Vivienne Carlyle stars as Mrs Johnstone.



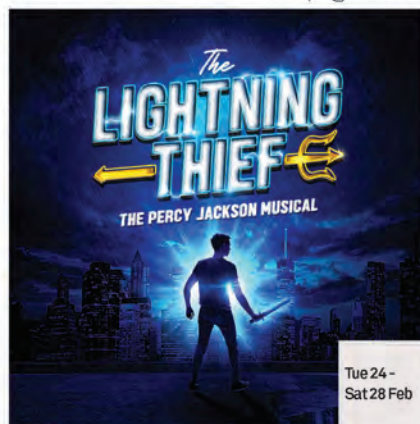
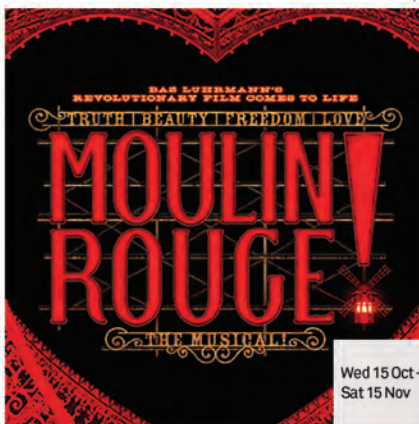
Fat Ham

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 13 September

Hot on the heels of its terrific traditional version of *Hamlet* and an extraordinary Radiohead mashup entitled *Hamlet Hail To The Thief*, the Royal Shakespeare Company is now presenting the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Fat Ham*, a hugely imaginative take on the Bard's most famous tragedy by American playwright James Ijames.

"I've just taken the elements and shaken them in a box," says James. "When I was writing it, reading it in a writers' group, and even when we were first doing it, I was like 'I hope people don't perceive this as a mockery of it', because I am really leaning into the humour of human folly. It's not jokes with setups and punchlines; it's much more than that. It feels in line with how Shakespeare used humour in his plays."







Juliet & Romeo

Thimblemill Library, Smethwick, Sun 21 September; Wolverhampton Arts Centre, Tues 23 September; Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge, Wed 24 September

Shakespeare's famous teenage lovers, Romeo and Juliet, didn't die in a tragic misunderstanding. Instead, they lived into middle age, with at least one of them then succumbing to a midlife crisis...

That's the scenario being explored in this interesting play from Lost Dog, a company whose productions brilliantly blend dance, theatre and comedy.

This latest show has certainly gone down well with the critics. Its Olivier Award-nominated director, Ben Duke, has been roundly praised for his smart and inventive writing and beautifully assured handling of the material.

The Pink List

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Sat 6 September

The Second World War came to an end in 1945, but the persecution of gay people in Germany continued well beyond the Nazi party's reign of terror; into the decades which followed, in fact. To make matters worse, the post-war prosecutions of homosexuals were based on information which had been gathered by *the Nazis* - the so-called Pink Lists...

This little-known real-life story is the subject of Michael Trauffer's one-man musical, this month showing in Birmingham on the back of a hugely successful run in Edinburgh during the summer.



Surinderella

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 September

Christmas is coming early to Wolverhampton this year, courtesy of this British South Asian pantomime, co-produced by the city's Grand Theatre and Rifco Theatre Company. Fusing the British tradition of panto with 'a spectacular Desi vibe', the show offers a delightfully fresh, all-singing, all-dancing take on the much-loved fairytale of, yes, you guessed it (the clue's in the title!), Cinderella. Expect a fabulous Devi Godmother, 'a cow with more attitude than a desi girl', two selfie-obsessed, Insta-vlogging stepsisters, and all the glitz and glamour of a Bollywood Ball.

American Candy Studio Tour

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 20 September

While many are legitimate businesses, some American candy stores here in the UK have been the subject of investigation, with claims being made that they may be connected to numerous questionable practices; think, tax evasion, money laundering and the selling of counterfeit goods.

As such, they make an ideal setting for Tom Murray's dark comedy about capitalism and corruption...

Candy-store employees Zaynab and Connor want to close up the shop for the night, but one customer refuses to leave. Ten minutes later, her unconscious body is in the basement - and what Zaynab and Connor uncover from there has a profound effect on the course of their lives...

"The American candy store is a perfect metaphor," playwright Tom is quoted as saying by broadwayworld.com. "A shop no one asked for, no one visits, and whose real purpose remains unknown - a 'front', not unlike the artificial roles many of us play in today's economy."

The Talented Mr. Ripley

The Rep, Birmingham, Mon 22 - Sat 27 September

The Crown's Ed McVey and EastEnders actor and Strictly Come Dancing finalist Maisie Smith star as Ripley and Marge respectively in this first-ever UK tour of The Talented Mr Ripley.

Adapted for the stage from the famous Patricia Highsmith novel - which is this year

celebrating its 70th anniversary - it tells a tale of deception, desire, deadly ambition, lies, identity theft, and murder. The show's producers are promising a production boasting razor-sharp dialogue, simmering tension, and a dangerously charismatic anti-hero.

The Complete Works Of Jane Austen (Abridged)

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 29 - Tues 30 September; Lichfield Garrick, Mon 6 October

Now, if you feel you really should pay more attention to the works of one of the world's greatest-ever romantic-fiction writers, but you really don't fancy ploughing your way through her brilliant but weighty tomes, then this is definitely the show for you!

All of Jane Austen's beloved heroines, friends, and love interests are here presented by 'three nimble actors'. And the talented trio do so pretty much in the blink of an eye, too - allowing you not only to become very knowledgeable very quickly about Austen's canon of work, but also to get down the pub in time for last orders...

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LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical promises to be epic in more ways than one...



Rick Riordan's hit series of fantasy books, Percy Jackson And The Olympians, follows its titular teen hero on an adventure of mythic proportions - an adventure undertaken after Percy learns that he's the son of the Greek god Poseidon... Previously adapted into a blockbuster film and a Disney+ TV show, the series' first book, The Lightning Thief, has now found new life as an on-stage musical, which visits the Midlands this month as part of a UK tour. Cast members Vasco Emauz, Kayna Montecillo and Cahir O'Neill share their perspectives on bringing the legendary tale into theatres...

This year marks 20 years since the publication of *The Lightning Thief* - the first novel in the Percy Jackson And The Olympians series by Rick Riordan. Riordan's books have sold more than 180 million copies worldwide, and to commemorate the special anniversary, a musical adaptation of that first novel has set off on a UK tour.

The Percy Jackson stories have already been adapted into blockbuster films and a Disney+ TV series. *The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical*, with a book by Joe Tracz and music & lyrics by Rob Rokicki, is the latest incarnation of the hit story.

In it, New York teenager Percy learns that he is the half-blood son of the Greek god Poseidon. With newly discovered powers that he can't control, a destiny he doesn't want, a whole textbook's worth of mythical monsters on his trail, and the future of the world hanging in the balance, Percy must learn what it means to be a hero, as he and his friends embark on an epic, edge-of-the-seat adventure.

Vasco Emauz is thrilled to be playing Percy: "I really love him as a character, and I think a lot of people will see themselves in him. Throughout our lives we've all felt misunderstood or lost. On his journey, Percy finds where he belongs and finds his value as someone who is worthy of love.

The actor sees a lot of himself in the character: "Like Percy, I'm also quite resilient, but when I was younger, I never felt like I had a place where I belonged, and I didn't really feel understood. Now that I'm a bit older, I'm a lot more self-assured and I know who I am."

This is only Vasco's second professional role. He previously played Marty McFly in *Back To The Future The Musical* at London's Adelphi Theatre. "It was a pipe dream to be in London doing musical theatre, let alone leading a whole show. Playing such an iconic character was beyond my wildest dreams. It was a blast!"

The Lightning Thief presents some new challenges - including mastering stage combat. "I've never toured before, and it's a whole different beast to doing a show in a static place. But that's exciting, and I can't wait to explore other parts of the country... I've never played with swords before, so that's a great new skill to learn. The fights look really cool."

And is there a message amidst all the fun and spectacle of *The Lightning Thief*? "Definitely. Percy's mum sings a song where she says that

'normal' is a myth, and that everyone has their own issues to deal with, which is a beautiful lyric - and it's true. Everyone is different in their own way, so what's normal anyway? Just be who you are and you will find your people and your place in the world."

Vasco is joined on stage by Kayna Montecillo, playing Annabeth, and Cahir O'Neill, who takes the role of Grover. And, as is the case for Vasco, *The Lightning Thief* is also the second professional appearance for his two young co-stars.

Wise and fearless Annabeth is the daughter of Athena (the goddess of wisdom and warfare) and has been waiting for someone to take her on a quest.

"When Percy turns up, she realises it's finally her moment," Kayna explains. "She's very ambitious and smart, and she has confidence in her skill set. She expects a lot of herself, and she wants the best for herself - as do I." Kayna admits she wasn't much of a reader when growing up, so she first encountered the Percy Jackson universe through the films. "They got me into Greek mythology, which I found fascinating, and I loved the stories - but most of all, I really loved the friendships."

She made her debut in the revival of *Starlight Express* at the Troubadour Theatre in Wembley Park, where she had to hone her skating skills. "When I landed the job, I was so excited, but then I thought 'Oh God, I've got to be on roller skates for a year!' I ended up having the most amazing time, and it made me so much stronger as a performer."

The daughter of Filipino parents, Kayna adds: "One time there was a young Asian girl in the audience who was clearly so excited to see someone who looked like her on stage. Since then, I've strived to be a person that younger people can see in a show and be like 'If she looks like me and she's up there doing it, I can do it as well.'"

Kayna also hopes that *The Lightning Thief* will engage a young audience. "With *Starlight Express*, I remember seeing so many little kids in the audience, and their eyes would just light up every time they saw the set come down for the first time. It's going to be the same with *The Lightning Thief*, because the set is incredible. The costumes, the props and the puppetry make it magical, too."

Co-star Cahir O'Neill concurs. "It's going to be pure magic, especially for young audiences. This kind of story is the

foundation of them getting into musical theatre, and they're going to be blown away by it."

Cahir plays Grover, who is Percy's satyr sidekick and protector. "But he's a bit different from the other satyrs, who are usually very cocky in the way they present themselves. Grover is the complete opposite. He's such a shy, loving, heartwarming character, and you can't help but fall in love with him."

The Ireland-born actor was quite shy himself when he was a youngster, so his parents encouraged him to take up musical theatre to help bring him out of his shell. "It worked! My confidence has grown over the years, and now Grover is showing me how to become an even more open and optimistic person, because he always tries to find the good in every situation... I'd never have thought I would learn so much from a half-goat!"

Cahir had seen the films, but hadn't read the books before landing the role. "Then I read *The Lightning Thief* and found it so funny and just a delight. I couldn't put it down, and the musical adaptation takes it to a whole other level."

Singing the praises of the musical's score - "vocally demanding, in the best possible way" - Cahir has also had a challenge getting used to the goat legs.

"They're actually quite comfy, and there's a lot of padding in them, so during rehearsals people would sometimes lie on my legs and take little naps!"

He, too, sees the show as one that empowers people to express their differences. "It touches on individuals who feel like outsiders and who suffer from, say, ADHD or dyslexia. It says that there's no such thing as being normal. We get people telling us 'Percy Jackson has meant so much to me over the years, so now to have it come to my hometown is great, because I get to see it with my family and friends.' That's so wonderful to hear."

.....
The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical shows at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 October, and at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Tuesday 14 to Saturday 18 October.

The production then returns to the region next year, showing at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 24 to Saturday 28 February



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Theatre previews from around the region



The Rocky Horror Show

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 22 - Sat 27 September; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 13 - Sat 18 April; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 6 - Sat 11 July

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the Midlands! Richard O'Brien's cult 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 Damn It Janet, Sweet Transvestite, 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)!

The Grand Babylon Hotel

The New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 13 September - Sat 4 October

This new adaptation of the Arnold Bennett novel of the same name is being described by its producers as a 'rollicking' comedy thriller. Written by the Potteries-born author in the early 20th century, the story focuses on the mysterious disappearance of a German prince...

"I've been itching to adapt The Grand Babylon Hotel for ages," says award-winning playwright Deborah McAndrew, who has indeed scripted this stage version of the novel. "It's a fast-paced story, with vivid, likeable characters, plenty of good jokes, and lots of twists and turns along the way. I'm looking forward to seeing it come to life."

Ideal: Jonny Vegas

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 15 September

Comedian Johnny Vegas makes a one-night-only stop-off in Shrewsbury, to star in a stage adaptation of his same-named noughties TV comedy series. The storyline follows the misadventures of Moz, a small-time, Manchester-based cannabis dealer who needs to dispose of a dead body. But when he and gangsters Psycho Paul and Cartoon Head discover priceless diamonds inside the corpse, the situation spins dangerously out of control...



Austentatious

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 13 September

Taking the subtitle 'an improvised Jane Austen novel', Austentatious visits the Midlands having garnered plenty of praise on its previous visits. Lighthearted and delightfully throwaway, the show sees the performers utilising audience suggestions to develop a play that not only pays homage to Austen but also generates plenty of laughter along the way. Performed in period costume with live musical accompaniment, the production is described by its publicity as 'a riotous, razor-sharp show where swooning is guaranteed'. Great fun's a certainty - and who doesn't love a bit of a swoon?



Cyrano De Bergerac

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 27 September - Sun 15 November

Edmond Rostand's famous 1897 play tells the tale of the French poet and soldier of the title, Cyrano de Bergerac, who is desperate to win the love of the beautiful Lady Roxane. His efforts to do so, however, are somewhat complicated by the fact that he's got a proboscis that's almost as big as the Eiffel Tower (that's an exaggeration for effect,



obviously, but you get the idea). Making the situation even trickier for the big-hooted Cyrano is the fact that Roxane has fallen for the ever-so-handsome Christian. But wait... the course of true love never runs smooth, and Christian has a major problem of his own. He gets tongue-tied, and knows he needs to woo Roxane with poetic words. Enter, the magnificently verbose Cyrano, with a clever plan to save the young man's bacon... Birmingham-born actor Adrian Lester takes top billing in the title role.

Consumed

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 3 - Sat 6 September

Winner of the Women's Prize for Playwriting 2022, Consumed is a black comedy that sees four generations of Northern Irish women begrudgingly reunited for a 90th birthday party. It's a get-together that beautifully highlights how national identity, dysfunctional family dynamics and generational trauma can manifest themselves in emotional and mental-health issues. "I don't want to depress anyone!" says the play's writer, Karis Kelly. "My style is very much dark comedy, and I love making people laugh. I think that's a very specifically Northern Irish experience - finding humour in even the darkest of moments and making people laugh, because otherwise you might cry. That's very much the style of the piece. It's dealing with heavy themes but in a way that keeps the audience laughing - and I hope the ending is sufficiently uplifting."





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Theatre previews from around the region



2:22 A Ghost Story

Malvern Theatres, Mon 22 - Sat 27 September; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 29 September - Sat 4 October; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 13 - Sat 18 October; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 18 - Sat 23 May

Husband & wife Jenny and Sam are divided. Jenny believes their new home is haunted; Sam isn't having any of it. But something certainly feels strange and frightening. Determined to find out the truth once and for all, they decide to stay up until 2:22 - at which time, all will be revealed. Or not... 2.22 A Ghost Story premiered in the West End back in 2021, not only becoming a major hit but also providing both Lily Allen and Cheryl with an opportunity to tread the boards. This latest touring version of the show stars real-life couple Kevin Clifton and Stacey Dooley alongside Grant Kilburn and Shvorne Marks, pictured.

The Woman In Black

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 30 September - Sat 4 October; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 27 - Sat 31 January; Malvern Theatres, Tues 31 March - Sat 4 April

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, *The Woman In Black* is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989. It has since become one of the West End's most successful plays, and was memorably made into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe in 2012. Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story, and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him, he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...



The Ripper Files

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 16 September

The Ripper in question here is Jack, not 'The Yorkshire' - and as this 'spine-tingling whodunnit' has been making its way around the country, it's been met with mixed reviews. The 'action' - taking place some 13 years after Jack's 'autumn of terror' in Victorian-era Whitechapel - finds two policemen and a music-hall star touring a show in which they revisit the Ripper murders for audiences still fascinated by the macabre killings... There's certainly plenty to admire here, but

critics have complained that there's way too much exposition - and maybe a little less drama than a theatre production focusing on Jack the Ripper should provide.

Measure For Measure

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Sat 13 September - Sat 25 October

The darkest of Shakespeare's comedies, *Measure For Measure* is usually considered a problem play, which basically means that it asks more questions than it answers. The structure is simple enough. Poor old Angelo is left in charge of an anarchic Vienna, whilst the Duke pretends that he has work overseas. Instead, he uses the opportunity to spy on his diligent though misguided deputy, waits for a mistake, then reappears to make Angelo a convenient scapegoat for Vienna's woes. A stitch-up, or just judicial authority? No wonder politicians of all parties quote Shakespeare to justify their dark deeds...

Murder At Midnight

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 16 - Sat 20 September

According to its producers, 'deliciously twisted crime caper' *Murder At Midnight* will keep its audience guessing until the very end - which is pretty much what you're looking for from a high-quality murder-mystery. The show stars four well-known television faces in Jason Durr (*Heartbeat*), Susie Blake



(Victoria Wood's *As Seen On TV*, Coronation Street), Max Bowden (*Ben Mitchell* in *EastEnders*) and Katie McGlynn (*Waterloo Road*, *Coronation Street*). It also comes complete with a cast of intriguing characters: a notorious gangster, his glamorous wife, his trigger-happy sidekick, his mother - who's seeing things - her somewhat jittery carer, a vicar with something to hide, and a nervous burglar dressed as a clown. Throw in a suitcase full of cash, a stash of deadly weapons, one infamous unsolved murder, and ask yourself the question: what could possibly go wrong?... The award-winning Original Theatre is the talented company behind this latest offering from acclaimed playwright Torben Betts.

Diane's Deli

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 24 September

If you've seen and enjoyed *The Haunting Of Blaine Manor*, which toured to the region not so long ago, *Diane's Deli* could well be for you - it's been written (and directed) by the same fella: Joe O'Byrne. Telling a story of madness and murder, its action unfolds in a quiet café in Paradise Heights, where a burnt-out and bitter cop has quiet and unassuming café owner Sean Ginty under surveillance. Sean is a father figure to both his staff: Jake, a literary student, and Gabrielle, an artist and scarred survivor of a horrific fire that left her orphaned. When a woman turns up late in the café one night, a chain of events is set in motion that will have a devastating effect on the lives of all of them...

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Theatre for younger audiences



Pirates Love Underpants

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 27 and Sun 28 September; Dudley Town Hall, Wed 15 October; Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, Sat 18 & Sun 19 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 28 - Wed 29 October

Claire Freedman certainly knows a thing or two about writing for children. And she's no slouch on the subject of underpants either,

with her picture books including *Aliens Love Underpants*, *Aliens Love Panta Claus* and *Aliens In Underpants Save The World...*

It turns out pirates are pretty keen on underpants too, as evidenced by this stage adaptation of yet another of her publications. Shrewsbury Theatre Severn's legendary pantomime Dame, Brad Fitt, has written the show, which features a winning combination of 'music, puppetry and glittering pants of gold'.

Horrible Histories

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Tues 23 & Wed 24 September

If you love the Horrible Histories series - and why the heck wouldn't you?! - then this two-for-one presentation is a show well worth catching. Featuring both Gorgeous Georgians and Vile Victorians, the production asks such searching questions as: Are you ready to swing with a Georgian king? Dare you dance the Tyburn jig? And does the Duke of Wellington get the boot?

All will be revealed in a show that advertises itself as 'a horrible history of Britain, with all the nasty bits left in!'.



Spot's Birthday Party

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 27 September

Steve the Monkey, Tom the Crocodile and Helen the Hippo are poised to party with birthday boy Spot the Dog in this well-regarded theatrical adaptation of Eric Hill's classic book, *Happy Birthday, Spot*. Coming complete with singing, dancing and lots of interactive party games, the show is suitable for children aged two-plus.

2Faced Dance: Fish Boy

Malvern Theatres, Wed 24 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 14 October

As part of the journey towards their stated aim of becoming 'a worldwide leader in the production of breathtaking, physical and inspirational dance', Herefordshire-based 2Faced Dance Company here present the story of Tommy Minton, a young fella who's determined to discover where his best friend 'fish' has gone.

Bringing together dance and circus - and based on real stories - the show has been co-created with 115 primary school children from across Herefordshire.

Dinosaurs Live!

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 20 & Sun 21 September; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 27 September

Dinosaurs are once again roaming the region this year, thanks to this interactive show for all the family to enjoy.

Presented by the Natural History Museum in association with Mark Thompson Productions, *Dinosaurs Live!* provides youngsters with the chance to meet a host of impressive prehistoric creatures from the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. Taking audiences on a fun- and fact-filled journey, the show is suitable for children aged three-plus.



BODY LANGUAGE

**Adam Garcia stars in smash-hit musical
The Bodyguard at The Alexandra this month**



Australian actor, singer & dancer Adam Garcia appears as former secret-service agent Frank Farmer in award-winning musical *The Bodyguard* when it visits the Midlands this month.

Based on the Oscar-nominated 1992 movie starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, the musical features a host of irresistible and classic songs, including *Queen Of The Night*, *I Have Nothing*, *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*, and one of the biggest hits of all time: *I Will Always Love You*.

What's On caught up with Adam to find out more about his life and career...

Smash-hit musical *The Bodyguard* visits Birmingham this month, starring Adam Garcia as Frank Farmer, the titular character. Based on the 1992 movie of the same name, with Kevin Costner in the title role and Whitney Houston making her film debut, the story follows former secret-service agent Frank as he is hired to protect a superstar singer after she receives death threats from an unknown stalker.

"Frank is resolute, loyal and honourable," explains Adam. "He's kind of quiet, and speaks when he needs to. He's efficient, well-trained and possibly slightly jaded, but he's a good man. Am I anything like him? Not at all! I was speaking to my wife about this, and she was like 'Now, if you could just be like Frank...' The same thing happened when I did a show called *If/Then*, and she said 'The guy you played was really lovely... Maybe it'll wash off!'"

Adam and his family spend their time between the UK, Australia and the United States. It was in London that his interest in *The Bodyguard* was first piqued.

"I remember seeing opening night when it first played the Adelphi, and I loved it. The choreography is amazing, as is the way it's staged and structured. To transpose that from film to stage isn't easy because the film is grand gestures and small gestures at the same time."

Being a lover of both the movie and stage versions, Adam has his own ideas about why the story has been so successful.

"It's about heroes and villains, and it's about how these two people are drawn to one another - yet it's a forbidden love. There's something about the need of these two people, and yet they're not meant to have this, which is quite a beautiful story. I guess you can go into tropes, but there's a fantasy element of a knight in shining armour, or someone always there in the background to take care of you and your family. That's got romantic overtones, too. I'm looking forward to delving into how Frank and Rachel contrast, why they get on, why they might not get on, and where the friction is - because that's the exciting bit."

The film's Grammy Award-winning soundtrack, recorded by Whitney Houston,

features a host of well-known hits, including her chart-topping version of *I Will Always Love You*, written and originally recorded in 1973 by Dolly Parton. However, Adam's favourite number is a bit more upbeat.

"I've always loved *I Wanna Dance With Somebody*. I grew up with that song, and watching the dancers in the video. If I'm out somewhere and it comes on, then I'm up and dancing straight away; no problem, no questions asked!"

Adam quit Sydney University to appear in a touring production of the musical *Hot Shoe Shuffle*, but he has no regrets about his move into showbiz from academia.

"Every now and then, I look at universities or online universities to see whether I can still do a degree in ecology or soil biology. I was interested in mangroves and intertidal environments, of which there are lots in England because it's an island. And I love soil biology. I think it's a really important part of agriculture."

Adam came to fame in the stage-musical version of *Saturday Night Fever*, playing the lead role of Tony Manero in the original West End production in 1998.

"It was a blur at the time, but it has sort of crystallised the older I've got. I don't remember the fatigue of it all, but when I went into the Palladium recently, I saw the scale of it. When I was there in *Saturday Night Fever*, it didn't occur to me how big or how monumental it was. I think that was a benefit, otherwise it would've overwhelmed me. I just got on with the job."

Since then, he's played Fiyero in *Wicked* - alongside Idina Menzel - worked with Trevor Nunn and Hannah Waddingham in *Kiss Me, Kate*, and made appearances in numerous plays and musicals. He's also taken on the role of judge on *Got To Dance*, alongside Ashley Banjo and Kimberly Wyatt.

Although dancing has been a cornerstone of his career for over 20 years, Adam has managed to avoid any serious mishaps.

"I've been lucky - touch wood! On *Singin' In The Rain*, I had a torn calf, but other than that, I've had nothing that's really restricted me. And I still get to dance - which is pretty surprising for a 52-year-old!"

Having kept fit enough to strut his stuff on stage, has Adam ever considered becoming a bodyguard in real life?

"Yes, and no. Many years ago, I went to a club in London that was really hard to get into. There was a table that I really wanted to sit at, so I pretended to be a bodyguard for some other people who were there. It was all about the attitude of being unflinching, and scanning the room, and I did manage to get a good couple of feet in front of me where no one would come into the same space. They assumed the people I was pretending to be guarding were important. I don't actually think that they were, but it was about creating an illusion or a presence of power and authority. So, after that, I can say that I've had a taste of it!"

For now, however, Adam is sticking to the stage - and looking forward to touring different venues around the UK.

"The real joy is getting to see the country and getting to see different audiences and how they respond. For me, it's also about going to really lovely old theatres and phenomenal theatre towns where audiences love plays and musicals and the venues are packed every night. And it's about visiting relatively new theatres, too. The theatre scene and the touring scene around the UK seem really healthy to me - with audiences who support their local theatres and go regularly - so I'm very grateful for that."

And as Adam prepares for life on the road again, there's one commonplace item that he couldn't live without.

"I have a very special backpack that I've been touring with for a while. It's really efficient, and it packs everything I need. I also have a suitcase that goes on the bus, of course, but I like my trusty backpack. That, and a set of good headphones."

.....

The *Bodyguard* shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Saturday 20 to Saturday 27 September, and then at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Monday 3 to Saturday 8 November



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Crooners Uncaged

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 20 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sat 1 November; Dudley Town Hall, Fri 14 November; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 15 November; Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Thurs 27 November

A lighthearted evening of song awaits Midlands theatre-goers when Crooners Uncaged hits town. The show's creatives are promising a production in which Big Band swing, 'hilarious one-liners' and 'laugh-out-loud silliness' receive 'a splendiferous injection of Britishness'. Expect sounds from the nice'n'easy songbooks of crooning legends Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr, Matt Monro, Nat King Cole and Bobby Darin.

Dead Ringers

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 27 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 29 September & Sun 26 October; Malvern Theatres, Thurs 23 October

Topical satire show Dead Ringers has been delighting BBC Radio Four audiences for the last quarter century with its veritable smorgasbord of uncannily accurate and routinely amusing comedy impressions. To celebrate the 25th anniversary, long-standing cast members Jon Culshaw, Jan Ravens, Lewis MacLeod and Duncan Wisbey are hitting the road with the show's first-ever UK tour.



Attention All Shipping

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 11 September; Lichfield Garrick, Mon 15 September; Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Fri 14 November

Bestselling author and award-winning broadcaster Charlie Connelly considers the shipping forecast to be the greatest invention of the modern age. So given that it's just celebrated its 100th birthday, it's perhaps not surprising that he's decided to celebrate it. Taking a deep-dive into the history of the quirky broadcast, Charlie will be offering answers to all manner of shipping forecast-related questions, not least among which is, where the hell is North Utsire?! The show has been inspired by Charlie's bestselling book on the subject.

The James Bond Concert Spectacular

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 28 September; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sun 21 December; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 26 September 2026

Caroline Bliss, who played Miss Moneybags in both Timothy Dalton James Bond films - The Living Daylights and Licence To Kill - is the compere for this celebration of music from the long-running film franchise. Expect to hear 007 classics aplenty, including Goldfinger, Diamonds Are Forever and Live And Let Die.

Send In The Clowns: Little Flop Of Horrors

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 10 - Sat 13 September

Raucous drag revue night Send In The Clowns makes a welcome return with a show featuring unique takes on The Little Mermaid, Hadestown, Cabaret, Wicked and Little Shop Of Horrors. Described by its publicity as a celebration of the madness and magic of musical theatre, the production is hosted by drag-cabaret favourite Fatt Butcher.

Paul Zerdin: Jaw Drop

Lichfield Garrick, Wed 10 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 1 October; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 30 October

"As a ventriloquist, I can get away with jokes that other comedians can't," explains Paul Zerdin. "I've got the luxury of taking the p*ss out of myself, but through the characters, rather than me just being relentlessly self-deprecating.

"I can get away with having a go at the audience much more, too; you get to be

cheekier. Mocking the front row is a trademark of my characters, but I'm evolving my audience interaction beyond that." Comedian & ventriloquist Paul, who won the 10th season of America's Got Talent back in 2015, here returns to the Midlands with brand-new show Jaw Drop.

Dragged To The Musicals

Swan Theatre, Worcester, Thurs 25 September; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 3 October; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 11 October; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Thurs 16 October; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 25 October

RuPaul's Drag Race UK favourite Divina De Campo tops the bill in a show that brings together a quintet of camp-as-Christmas drag queens with some super-slick showstoppers from the world of musical theatre. And what's more, there won't be a lip-synch in sight - 'just unbelievable vocal talent, sprinkled with sass'.

Myra DuBois

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 19 September; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 17 October

"Most people would spend some time idling on the shores of some far-off semi-private island after enduring the workload 2024 dumped on my plate, but not me!"

So speaks much-loved drag queen Myra DuBois in talking about her latest tour. "How could I desert my public, right as I need them the most? I've consulted my own wellness guide, the very Reverend Dr Guru Malcolm, and he tells me that, right now, every star of the cosmos is looking at me with expectation. I don't think my new show, Cosmic Empath, shall let them down!"





THE HUMAN TOUCH

Motionhouse explores connection and
togetherness in new production Hidden...

Renowned for gravity-defying choreography and groundbreaking projections, Warwickshire-based dance-circus company Motionhouse hit the road again next month with their 2025 production, Hidden. An exploration of how, in an increasingly divided world, light can come out of darkness in times of crisis, the show received rave reviews at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre earlier this year. Motionhouse's co-founder & artistic director, Kevin Finnan, and the company's associate director, Daniel Massarella, explain more...

Dance-circus company Motionhouse's latest show, Hidden, has been wowing audiences in the UK and Europe - and this autumn it comes to Birmingham Hippodrome for two nights and a Saturday matinee.

The show, which brings together agility, acrobatics, dance, digital projection and a shape-shifting set, is the Warwickshire-based company's most ambitious theatre production so far - and, say the team, audiences have been responding brilliantly, both to its jaw-dropping feats and its important message.

Created by Motionhouse co-founder & artistic director Kevin Finnan, together with the company's associate director, Daniel Massarella, and the dancers, Hidden contemplates our sense of shared humanity. It also explores how, even in the darkest of times, people will come together to support each other.

"The reaction from audiences has been quite overwhelming," says Daniel. "We've had standing ovations at every venue. When a work is being created, you think it's going in the right direction, but it's only when it's in front of an audience that you really get to see its success.

"What's great about the work is that it's not one-dimensional. You can take away from it, however you are feeling on that day, or whatever has come out in the press or has happened in the world at that point.

"Hidden strips people back to their basic humanity, when all we have is each other, and that's the only way we can get through life's challenges."

The show makes bold use of projection, with performers interacting with moving images of land and cityscapes, speeding trains and digital screens.

"It's the first time we've used this amount of projection, and people are blown away by that," continues Daniel. "People are also blown away by the skill level of the company. It's one of the 'danciest' shows we've done, integrated with the highest level of circus. So there's something for everyone. Some people like the digital, the gaming and the more cinematic experience, while the 'more emotional' people really like that emotional draw, and the fact that it makes you feel something."

Kevin was inspired to create Hidden after

watching international catastrophes, including floods, wildfires and war. With every disaster, there emerges a resilience, which is achieved through human connection and kindness.

"Hidden is a show about us," he explains.

"There are things that are very dark moments for people all around the world. And as well as this, within our own lives, everyone encounters moments that are really, truly dark.

"But then Hidden is the thing that comes through in the darkest moments - it's when people can be at their very best, and work together and be together. So, rather than worrying about 'us' and 'them', we help each other and support each other.

"As well as the darkness, we are seeing that element of support which is so often hidden. We need to celebrate that, and celebrate humanity and the very good people we can all be."

Founded in 1988 and based in Leamington Spa, Motionhouse has built a reputation for breathtaking outdoor spectacle and imaginative indoor productions. These visual and physical effects are the company's way of telling its stories.

"When I make a show," Kevin explains, "all of the flying and the film - what that's there for is to engage and make the show entertaining to a wide range of people. But the reason to make the show is to connect with people as best we can.

"When someone comes up to me in tears and says 'That moved me more than I've been moved in a long time,' even if it's just one person on the tour, that's the point. The fact that we are getting that in most venues on this tour is the whole point of everything we do.

"You come to the theatre to be together with the artists and share the experience. Then, hopefully, after the show the audience will take something away. For me, the most important thing is saying 'we are not alone and you can communicate' - and that's what we should all be doing."

Motionhouse has a longstanding connection with Birmingham Hippodrome, and the team are looking forward to sharing Hidden with audiences there.

"It's a great thing that we're taking it to Birmingham at this point in the tour," says

Kevin. "We are one of the Hippodrome's associate companies, and they have supported us in the creation of the show and shown belief in it.

"It's absolutely invaluable in these times to have partners like the Hippodrome, who will support you. We now need to do our part and give their audiences a great show."

And the team promise there will be plenty of thrills both for people familiar with Motionhouse and for those for whom Hidden is their first experience of the company.

"It's not a dance show, it's not a circus show, it's not a film show," explains Daniel. "It combines all of those art forms. It's like having a smoothie with very different flavours which ultimately makes a very nice cocktail.

"When you come in, having seen what we do before, there is definitely a pressure and expectation there, especially for Kevin, because you always have to be better than your last show. But we did it, and the audience response speaks volumes for that."

The company are hoping that Birmingham audiences who have enjoyed their outdoor shows - including Wondrous Stories, which launched the Birmingham 2022 Festival in the city - will now come and experience Hidden.

"Motionhouse is a completely different experience outdoors and indoors," Daniel continues. "The same language is used, but the messaging and staging is very different. It touches lots of people who wouldn't normally go into a theatre setting, and we hope that will bring people indoors. The joy of theatre is something you can't buy online; you can't replicate it unless your bum is on the seat. Being in the theatre, watching a show like Hidden together, is something very special."

.....

Motionhouse presents Hidden at Birmingham Hippodrome on Friday 10 & Saturday 11 October. The company then returns to the region in early 2026, performing at Lichfield Garrick on Wednesday 25 February and at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Friday 20 March

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Sofia Linares © Perou.
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Director Carlos Acosta

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Dance previews from across the region

**BRB: Black Sabbath The Ballet**

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 18 - Sat 27 September

Birmingham Royal Ballet (BRB) once again turn up the volume with this full-length, three-act show featuring eight Black Sabbath tracks re-orchestrated for the Royal Ballet Sinfonia.

The production returns to the Hippodrome stage following a summer in which the heavy-metal stars from Aston have been very much in the news. The original quartet's homecoming concert at Villa Park - their first performance together since 2005, bringing down the curtain on a breathtaking 57-year journey - was then followed some 17 days later by the unexpected death of Ozzy Osbourne.

"The ballet is a great ambassador for the city," says Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi. "The exciting part is that there will be people in the audience who are Black Sabbath fans who have never been to a ballet before, and people in the audience who are ballet fans who don't know much about Black Sabbath. It's educating people in a different way; getting them to discover something new that they like."

Riverdance 30

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 4 - Tues 9 September;
Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 28 - Fri 31 October

When a show's been seen by millions of people across thousands of performances across the globe, it's fair to say it's one big mother of a hit!

Such are the statistics behind the mesmerising Riverdance, Michael Flatley's breathtaking dance extravaganza that's been wowing audiences for a staggering three decades.

Riverdance started out as a seven-minute

interval piece at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1994. Within a couple of years, it had become the brand-new craze, not only bringing traditional [Irish] dance to a contemporary audience but also inspiring spin-off shows such as Spirit Of The Dance and Lord Of The Dance.

If you've never before sampled its delights, this 30th anniversary tour is the perfect time to find out what all the fuss has been about.

**ACE Dance & Music: The World As We See It**

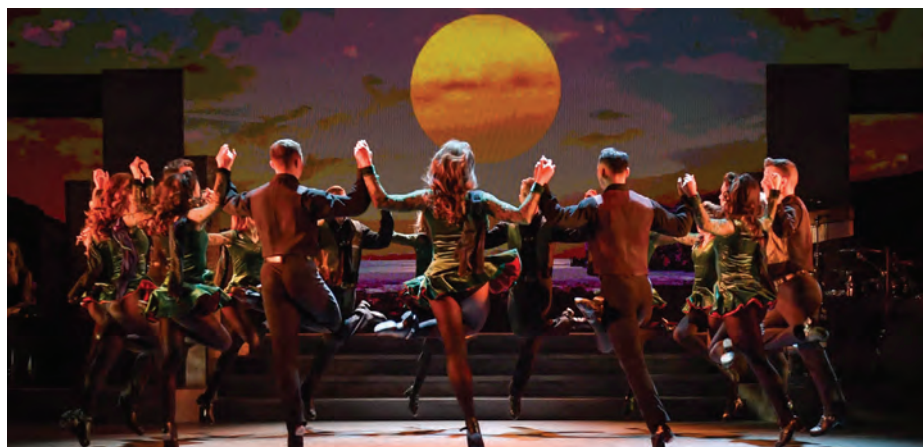
Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham,
Thurs 25 & Fri 26 September; Malvern
Theatres, Tues 21 October

What are you willing to die for?...

That's the thought-provoking question being posed by ACE Dance & Music in their latest double bill, a production which presents 'powerful and contrasting visions of our world today'.

Serge Aimé Coulibaly's piece, driven by a fierce soundscape and fusion of African and contemporary dance, captures the chaos of conflict...

In stark contrast, Vincent Mantsoe's work takes audiences to far-flung corners of the earth, where spirituality and harmony shape everyday life.



SABBATH SPECTACULAR

**BRB's Black Sabbath - The Ballet
returns to the Hippodrome stage**



Following Black Sabbath's last-ever gig in July, and Prince of Darkness Ozzy Osbourne's death just 17 days later, Birmingham is this month welcoming the return of an epic celebration of heavy metal in the city: Black Sabbath - The Ballet. Created in 2023 by Birmingham Royal Ballet, as part of a Birmingham-focused trilogy of shows, the production features full orchestrations of Sabbath's legendary tracks, with appearances by guitarist Marc Hayward. What's On spoke to Marc to find out more...

This month sees an iconic Birmingham institution celebrate the city's greatest band, as Birmingham Royal Ballet's Black Sabbath - The Ballet returns to the Hippodrome stage. Following Sabbath's epic final gig at Villa Park on Saturday 5 July, and Ozzy Osbourne's death less than a month later, the ballet serves as a fitting tribute both to the band and their lead singer, brilliantly celebrating the legacy of the Birmingham legends. Prior to Ozzy's death, What's On spoke to guitarist Marc Hayward, who appears onstage in the ballet, alongside the dancers. The production features orchestral versions of the band's iconic tracks, including Paranoid, War Pigs and Sabbath Bloody Sabbath. Marc's contribution to proceedings is the icing on the cake.

"I'd previously worked with Richard Thomas, who was the dramaturge," he told What's On. "I got a text out of the blue saying 'I'm working on this thing called Black Sabbath - The Ballet, and they want a guitarist - would you be interested?' How can you not be interested?! Before I knew it, I'm in a dance studio with trained ballerinas! I didn't quite know what to expect. That leaves you prepared for everything and nothing at the same time. You take everything in your stride, because you don't know what that stride is. 'Is it okay if we lift you up and carry you around? Can you still play guitar doing that?' Yeah, let's do it!"

The ballet features three acts, each created by a different choreographer and exploring a part of the band's legacy. Marc takes to the stage in Acts One and Three.

"I'm down as the Guitar Spirit. Act One is about the creation of Heavy Metal and Black Sabbath. The Guitar Spirit is moving the dancers, and moving with the dancers, as various songs from the Sabbath catalogue are coming in and out. It's quite a fluid scene - it's really fun. Later on in the ballet, I come back, and that particular act is about the fans, and the band's relationship with the fans. It's a joyous celebration of the power of the music."

Marc is usually found in more traditional gig settings, so being introduced into the world of ballet brought with it a few surprises -

particularly when creating the production alongside Birmingham Royal Ballet's dancers.

"They're such a wonderful team to work with. From the off, it felt like a huge band. Everyone was working together, and they were very supportive of bringing in someone else. I felt like part of the team. And being on stage with the dancers... they're incredible! They're absolute machines. The physicality of what they do is breathtaking. Every time you're with them, you're reminded of that - they're at the peak of their powers; it's quite awe-inspiring. It's like being in a band, but full widescreen. The stage is bigger, there are so many more things happening on stage, and then aside from that, the music is even bigger as well. With an orchestra, and the beautiful way that the composers, and especially Chris Austin, have taken the tracks - reimagined, reworked, and new pieces of music as well - it's an honour to play every time. Overriding the entire thing is the legacy of Sabbath, and what that means to everyone there."

The production is in a unique position, with the potential to reach two very different audiences. For those less familiar with the world of ballet, Marc is able to bridge the gap between the dancers and the crowd.

"I'm kind of putting my guitar through the fourth wall. The show has been attracting people who go to see ballet but perhaps are not so used to seeing a rock gig, and people coming from the rock world, who are at a ballet for the first time. Hopefully, I fit somewhere in the middle. The audience really gets into it. We've just got back from the States, and the audiences out there were crazy - it was great. As soon as the curtain went up, you saw the devil horns in the crowd. They knew they were in for a good night."

The influence of Black Sabbath stretches around the world - and for Marc, it goes right back to the start of his musical career.

"It's always been there. I remember doing a battle of the bands thing at school, and the older kids - who are always that little bit taller than you, the ones you look up to and ask to borrow their amps - they came out and

did a cover of Iron Man. You can't escape the influence; it's through everything. The breadth of their work - no matter which album you delve into, you can hear what has come since."

The ballet has offered up a few surprises in the past. At the world premiere at the Hippodrome in 2023, Marc was joined on stage by Sabbath's legendary guitarist, Tony Iommi.

"Again, one of those things you don't expect to happen! It was an honour to play alongside him - and no added pressure for opening night! You've got pre-match jitters, and then the person who actually wrote the music you're playing is going to be right there next to you... What an honour to play those riffs in sync with the man himself! Looking at him playing Paranoid, there's no-one else that sounds like him."

While Iommi's appearance at the premiere was a one-off, fellow guitarists might recognise the instrument that Marc uses on stage as being Tony's signature guitar.

"He's known for the Gibson SG, so it was kind of a prerequisite that I'd be playing one of those. I've always had a soft spot for them - the second guitar I owned was an SG, so it always felt like home. I've still got it upstairs somewhere! Great guitars. They lend themselves quite well to jumping around and running around a lot. Aerodynamic!"

Having been introduced to the world of ballet, Marc hopes to carry the spirit of the show into his future projects.

"It's been a game changer. Not only through the musicianship - having to delve deep into the work of someone who's regarded as one of the greatest guitarists of all time - but also the scale of the production, which is massive; the way that we're using the stage, and trying to occupy the space. I'd hope that a little fragment of that I can take with me. It's definitely an experience I'll never forget."

.....
Black Sabbath - The Ballet shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Thursday 18 to Saturday 27 September



FAMILY TIES

Vivienne Carlyle talks about playing Mrs Johnstone in a new touring production of Willy Russell's iconic musical, Blood Brothers...

For people who are new to the show, what's Blood Brothers all about, Vivienne?

Blood Brothers is by the amazing Willy Russell, who wrote the book and also wrote the music, and it's about a mother named Mrs Johnstone, who is trying to make ends meet. She's very poor. Her husband leaves her, she's left with seven children, and she then discovers she's pregnant again. When she finds out she's having twins, Mrs Johnstone confides in her employer, Mrs Lyons, who is childless and who persuades

her to give her one of the babies. Fast-forward to seven years later, and the two boys end up meeting. The show is about their story as well as their mother's, and how their lives are intertwined even though they're separated. They're brought back together with tragic results, but it's not just a heartbreaking show. There are huge comedy elements in it, and you have adults playing kids, which also strikes the imagination of our younger audiences. You become connected to these characters, and then you see them grow up, and you follow on their journey with them.

It's a very interesting piece of theatre, and in my opinion, one of the best shows I've ever performed in.

What do you like about the character of Mrs Johnstone?

I love her strength and her resilience. No matter how hard life is for her, and despite her feeling guilt for what she's done, she still tries to do the best she can with as much grace as she can muster. In spite of everything that happens, she still rises up at the end. I love that, and I think it's a great

message for us in life, because that's what we have to do. We've all had terrible things happen in our lives, and it's about how we deal with them, recover, move on, and live the rest of our lives.

Can you relate to her in any way?

Both of my parents were very encouraging in terms of how, when you have a problem, you work through it. They set the bar high for me in terms of saying 'We don't run away from our problems, we stand up to them, we do the best we can, we keep going and never take no for an answer' and all that sort of thing. I was very lucky that they instilled that in me, and in that way I can relate to Mrs Johnstone because I think I'm quite strong. I'm a feisty Scot, and Mrs Johnstone is a feisty scouser. She's a beautiful character to play.

What's your history with the show, and what's it been like returning to it for the UK tour?

I played Mrs Lyons in 2006, when Maureen Nolan was playing Mrs Johnstone, and I was also her understudy, so I got to play the lead for my first time back then. In 2007 and 2008, I played Mrs Johnstone for the Scottish dates of the tour, then returned to the role in 2012 for nine months at the Phoenix Theatre in London. Being back in the show now is just amazing, and hopefully I'm bringing new things to it. You grow as a person, and I feel like a completely different person now. Emotionally, I would say I'm tougher in some ways and more vulnerable in others. As an actor, you use your life experiences and try to dig deep. Our director, Bob Thomson, wants us to be as raw, as authentic, and as real as we can possibly be.

What makes Mrs Johnstone such an iconic musical-theatre character?

She starts out at around age 18, so you get to play this huge arc of a beautiful story and a beautiful journey. Life keeps throwing things at her, and she keeps rising. She keeps getting knocked down again, but she keeps going. I think that's what makes her so relatable, because that's what we all do. People watching it - and I don't mean just women, I think it's the same with men who come to see it as well - go 'Well, that's life, isn't it?'

How's the reaction been to the show from audiences on the tour so far?

They laugh, they cry, and they are very emotional at the end. It really touches people, a lot of whom come back to see it again. We get a lot of return visitors who have seen the show many times over the years. They come back, they see a different cast and

they fall in love with it all over again in a different way.

What's the nicest feedback you've received about it?

One time we were in Skegness and a boy aged around 14 or 15 had been to see it with his school the day before. He brought back his mum and dad the following night, and I was so touched by that because he had felt such a connection to the piece. He was really quite overwhelmed by it, and I just felt 'How fantastic is it that the show is still relevant to this age group when, you know, there's not a mobile phone in sight and none of the technology that we have today?' The show starts in the 50s and goes through to the 80s.

Blood Brothers premiered in 1983. Why do you think it has endured for all these years?

I think the story is really unique and gripping, and the characters are very strongly drawn. No matter who you are - whether you're in your teens, your 30s, your 70s, or whatever stage of life you're at - you'll come and see the show and there'll be some character in it that you can connect with. You go on this journey with the person that you connect with the most, and it moves you emotionally.

How would you sum up the magic of musical theatre?

Theatre is live, so you immediately connect with it, and it's got that sense of urgency. The stakes are higher when you're watching something that's unravelling in front of you. You can't press pause, which you can with streaming and things like that. Anywhere there's live theatre and live music, there's a level of excitement that you don't get anywhere else. It's like coming together as a community and watching something that bonds you. And, of course, with a musical, the emotions are heightened. As a performer, when I'm on stage, it's the music that moves me in an almost primal way.

What first sparked your interest in acting as a career?

My dad and gran started an amateur group in Glasgow called The Apollo Players, which is where he met my mum. I was pretty much raised in a trunk. They used to do two shows at the King's Theatre in Glasgow every year, so I was kind of weaned on musical theatre. One time, they were doing Gypsy, and I remember sitting in the audience, aged six or seven, listening to the orchestra tune up. Then they played the overture, and I just started crying. I felt so connected to it. As for what led to me taking it up as a profession, I'd gone to university thinking that acting

was something I'd like to do but never imagining it would happen. Then I was cast as the principal girl in panto at the King's Theatre in Glasgow, in Babes In The Wood, and that led to other work. I eventually travelled down to London and gave myself three months, vowing 'If I haven't got anything within that time, I'm going back to Scotland.' Within two months I was the Narrator on the tour of Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, and three years later I made my West End debut with Stephen Gately as Joseph.

Can you pick a few career highlights?

Doing Joseph was really special because it was my West End debut... I was a singer for Cirque du Soleil, which was another highlight, and I was Mother Gothel in Disney's Tangled: The Musical, where it was great fun playing a villain. And Blood Brothers is really dear to my heart, which is why I'm so happy to be back in the show. I'm just happy to keep working, and I hope the roles keep coming in.

Blood Brothers runs at the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, from Tuesday 23 to Saturday 27 September, and then at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Tuesday 27 to Saturday 31 January





Christy

CERT tbc (135 mins)

Starring **Sydney Sweeney, Merritt Wever, Katy O'Brian, Ethan Embry, Ben Foster, Tony Cavalero** Directed by **David Michôd**

Euphoria star Sydney Sweeney piled on the pounds - more than 30 of them in total - to take on the role of celebrated boxer Christy Martin. Along the way, she also traded her famous blonde locks for Martin's curly brown hair. "The film is about Christy as a young gay woman in small-town West Virginia in the 1990s," Australian auteur David Michôd, who helms the film, told Deadline. "She came from a relatively conservative family and wasn't allowed to be who she was, so she used boxing as a vehicle to express herself and her rage. She had to make some dangerous and fundamental compromises in her life, the most important of which was marrying an incredibly dangerous man."

Released Fri 5 September



The Conjuring: Last Rites

CERT 15 (135 mins)

Starring **Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Ben Hardy, Beau Gadsdon, Elliot Cowan, Madison Lawlor** Directed by **Michael Chaves**

Franchise veteran Michael Chaves here takes the helm for his fourth Conjuring movie. Last Rites is the ninth entry in the series, with Conjuring-universe films having so far brought in a total box-office return in excess of a staggering \$2billion.

Based on real events, the new movie sees Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson reunite for one last case as real-life paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren. "It was one of the last cases that [the Warrens] actually did," Chaves explained to IGN, "so chronologically, we're staying true to that. And the other reason was that it was just a return to the haunted-house experience, which is something that I was really excited about. Obviously, in the series and the spin-offs, we've explored some other things, but the idea that we would be returning to that for the final chapter felt right and really exciting. Beyond that, it's one of [the Warrens'] most intense cases."

Released Fri 5 September

Honey Don't!

CERT 15 (88 mins)

Starring **Margaret Qualley, Chris Evans, Aubrey Plaza, Charlie Day, Kristen Connolly, Lena Hall** Directed by **Ethan Coen**

Having last year directed lesbian road movie Drive-Away Dolls - his first film without the collaboration of brother Joel (excluding a documentary) - Ethan Coen here returns with its sequel.

Black comedy Honey Don't! focuses on the character of tough-talking private-eye Honey O'Donahue as she delves into a series of strange deaths tied to a mysterious church... The film - the second in Coen's intended 'lesbian B-movie trilogy' - was selected to be shown out of competition in the Midnight Screenings section at Cannes earlier this year, receiving a standing ovation. The critics have been somewhat less effusive in their reviews, however, in some quarters damning it with faint praise. The general sense is that Honey Don't! is a movie which they desperately wanted to really, really like, but just couldn't quite manage to.

Released Fri 5 September



On Swift Horses

CERT 15 (119 mins)

Starring **Daisy Edgar-Jones, Jacob Elordi, Will Poulter, Diego Calva, Sasha Calle, Don Swayze** Directed by **Daniel Minahan**

Young love, sexuality and identity are among the themes explored by director Daniel Minahan in this reasonably well-received film, set in the American West of the 1950s. Muriel and her husband, Lee, are beginning a bright new life in California after he returns from the Korean War. But their newfound stability is upended by the arrival of Lee's charismatic brother, Julius, a wayward gambler with a secret past.

A dangerous love triangle quickly emerges. When Julius takes off in search of the young card cheat he's fallen for, Muriel's longing for 'something more' propels her into a secret life of her own, gambling on racehorses and exploring a love she never dreamed possible.

Released Fri 5 September

A Big Bold Beautiful Journey CERT tbc (139 mins)

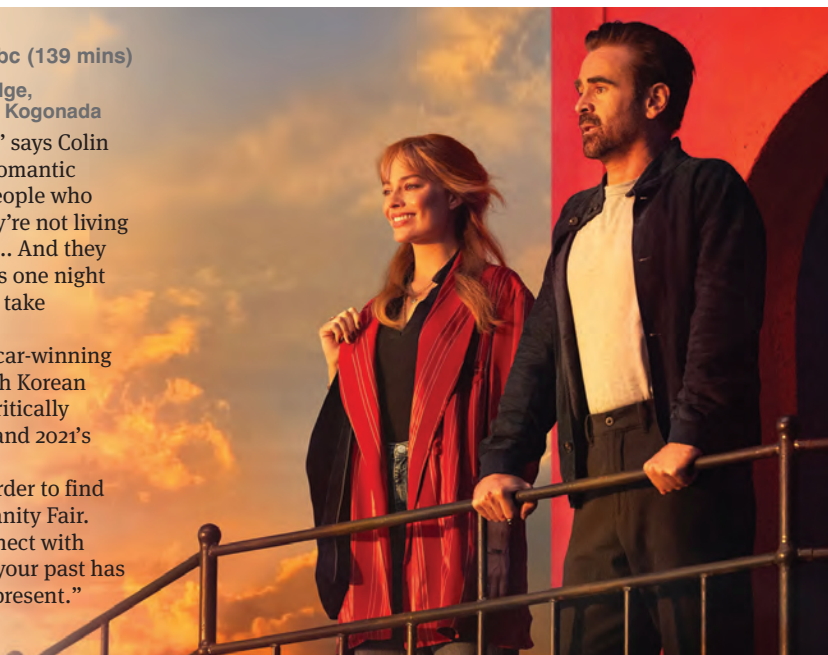
Starring **Colin Farrell, Margot Robbie, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Hamish Linklater, Lily Rabe, Billy Magnussen** Directed by **Kogonada**

"It's kind of a love story, but it's not a very typical one," says Colin Farrell, in talking to Collider about his latest film, the romantic fantasy *A Big Bold Beautiful Journey*. "It's about two people who find themselves at an emotional crossroads, where they're not living terrible lives, but life hasn't really worked out for them... And they begin to find that, through each other, as a result of this one night where they go on this fantastical journey... [they] get to take accountability for times where they hurt people."

Co-starring Margot Robbie in her first film since the Oscar-winning *Barbie*, *A Big Bold Beautiful Journey* is helmed by South Korean director Kogonada, who came to the project with two critically acclaimed movies already on his CV: 2017's *Columbus* and 2021's *After Yang*.

"This film is really about reckoning with your past in order to find the possibility of love in the present," he explains to Vanity Fair. "What do you have to reckon with in order to truly connect with other people? And I think as you get older, you realise your past has everything to do with how you understand love in the present."

Released Fri 19 September



Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale

CERT tbc (123 mins)

Starring **Joanne Froggatt, Paul Giamatti, Joely Richardson, Michelle Dockery, Dominic West, Hugh Bonneville** Directed by **Simon Curtis**

The well-drawn cast of characters inhabiting everybody's favourite English stately home make a welcome return in this latest cinematic offering.

The third and final film in the series follows the Crawley family and their staff into a new era. But the decade of the 1930s brings with it a fresh set of problems, as the family faces financial trouble, and the entire household grapples with the prospect of social disgrace. At the centre of it all is Mary, who finds herself caught up in a public scandal caused by her divorce...

By and large, the previous two *Downton* movies met with a favourable response from film critics and dedicated fans alike - and there's every reason to imagine that this final entry will receive a similarly positive reaction. **Released Fri 12 September**



The Long Walk

CERT 15 (108 mins)

Starring **Cooper Hoffman, David Jonsson, Garrett Wareing, Tut Nyuot, Charlie Plummer, Ben Wang** Directed by **Francis Lawrence**

Fans of Netflix's South Korean survival drama, *Squid Game*, may well find plenty to enjoy about this film adaptation of Stephen King's dystopian horror novel.

With the United States ruled by a totalitarian regime, a group of 100 young men take part in an annual walking contest - and the stakes couldn't be higher: anybody who fails to maintain a speed of at least four miles per hour risks execution. The contest ends only when a single walker remains alive...

An interesting titbit connected to the original novel: although Stephen King published it (under the pseudonym Richard Bachman) in 1979, he had actually started writing it in the mid-1960s - a fact which makes it his first-written novel, though not his first-published. *Carrie*, hitting bookshelves in 1974, holds that particular honour. **Released Fri 12 September**

One Battle After Another

CERT tbc (170 mins)

Starring **Leonardo DiCaprio, Benicio Del Toro, Sean Penn, Teyana Taylor, Wood Harris, Chase Ininiti**

Directed by **Paul Thomas Anderson**

Details about *One Battle After Another*'s storyline are thin on the ground at the time of writing.

Aiming simultaneously to be an action movie, black comedy and political satire, the film focuses on a group of ex-revolutionaries who reunite to confront the threat of an evil enemy resurfacing after 16 years.

The movie has been very loosely inspired by Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland*, a 1990 novel which *One Battle After Another*'s director, Paul Thomas Anderson, had at one point considered adapting. Instead - as he admits in *Esquire* - he "stole the parts that spoke to me and just started running like a thief"... The film marks Anderson's first project since 2021's *Licorice Pizza*, for which he received three Oscar nominations. It's also the first time the director has worked with Leonardo DiCaprio, who recently admitted his biggest regret was turning down the chance to star in Anderson's hit 1997 movie, *Boogie Nights*.

Released Fri 26 September



THE RETURN OF ACID BEATS

World-renowned VR experience comes to Warwick Arts Centre



An event where groups of people share the same virtual space to interact as rave-culture pioneers is returning to the Midlands this month. Having debuted as part of Coventry's City of Culture year, a new version of In Pursuit Of Repetitive Beats takes up residency at Warwick Arts Centre at the end of the month. And it's promising to be an adventure with a difference - as creator Darren Emerson explains...

"It really has a life of its own now," says East City Films' writer/producer Darren Emerson, moved by how his immersive Acid House virtual reality (VR) experience, *In Pursuit Of Repetitive Beats*, has won a generation-spanning global audience. "It's kind of exploded - people really connect to it!" Since premiering during Coventry's City of Culture year in 2022, the VR hit has enjoyed successful residences in Australia, Taiwan, Scandinavia, the US and across Europe, with visitors both young and not so young emerging elated.

"They cry, they dance, they hug each other," enthuses Darren, fresh from a sell-out run at London's Barbican. "I guess they're looking for that nostalgia, and that connection to something really special."

Set in the early days of the Acid House movement, the one-hour experience transports would-be party-goers back to 1989, when illegal raves invaded remote fields and empty warehouses. Powered by a pulsating soundtrack of relentless electronic beats, they offered a thrilling and unfettered freedom away from the humdrum experience of daily life. But finding the exact location of the all-night (or all-weekend) party often required some serious detective work involving flyers, phone calls, pirate radio call-outs and mystery meet-ups.

"The piece itself obviously uses a lot of technology," explains Darren, discussing *Repetitive Beats*' widespread appeal. "But it talks about a time with very little technology. You've got a map and a torch. You don't have a mobile phone, GPS tracking, or the internet. People were using pagers and FM radio, and people are fascinated about all those things now."

Though Acid House was a uniquely British phenomena, Darren believes the collective euphoria that comes with a shared party experience is something we all recognise, transcending geographical borders, age groups and communities. "Whether that's a nightclub in Taiwan or a big house party in Texas with kegs, it's all about being young. It's about adventure."

Darren's own clubbing epiphany came while studying film at university in Canterbury. The retiring son of a professional dancer, he shied away from bopping at family gatherings. But

a trip to Club UK, in Wandsworth SW18, proved to be life changing. He may have missed the Second Summer Of Love, but the legacy of that explosion was still being felt throughout the 90s, redefining club culture.

"I had an amazing time, and that was a seminal moment for me, really... the experience of dancing and the feeling of connection and inhibition.

"That whole period, 1995/1996, was spent travelling around the South of England, going to raves in fields, disused railway tunnels, submarines! I lived with a guy who had decks, so we always got invited places. We were going off constantly, driving around the countryside in a Peugeot or VW Beetle, walking through fields ..."

Although the moral panic about Acid House had (largely) dissipated by that point, with legal raves having become big business, the excitement and connectivity remained intact.

"That sense of adventure is really grounded in the piece, which is really what people come for - that feeling of being young again, getting into a car with some people and you don't know where the night's going to take you. That's the essence of this piece."

Once graduated, Emerson (no relation to the Underworld honcho of the same name) worked for MTV, record labels (with Adele and Ed Sheeran on his CV) and issue-based documentaries (social housing, London 7/7), yet increasingly felt restricted by the typical talking-heads documentary format.

Outlining how countless documentaries feature seated figures recounting life-changing events, the producer says: "It's great, but I want to be there! I want to feel it! So *Repetitive Beats* was an attempt to update that sort of documentary; to say, okay, you're still hearing from people, but you can also experience it as well; you can travel through these different scenes; you're able to pick up flyers; you're in your mate's bedroom tuning into pirate radio; you're in the back of the car; you're *present* ..."

Consequently, *In Pursuit Of Repetitive Beats* does feature first-hand accounts - from the likes of Nev Fivley (from Coventry's pioneering Amnesia), Tony McCook (Black Crusader soundsystem), Mick Wilson (Parks & Wilson), MC Man Parris, and pirate DJ Lee Fisher (Starlight FM). However, these

interviews illustrate a wider heroic quest, as the visitor attempts to navigate their way through an immersive and interactive CGI world.

Piecing it together has been a significant creative and technical challenge, one akin to a major film production.

"It utilises motion capture, volumetric capture, photogrammetry, 3D modelling, 360-degree video, 180-degree video, and standard video animation," lists Emerson, before detailing the VR headsets, the role of audio, and the wearable tech vests.

"The haptic vests give you the feeling of bass, and work at certain points in the experience. For instance, when you're walking around the warehouse, trying to find the entrance, as you get closer, you feel the bass coming through the vest - Boom! Boom! - which is there not only for the music, but also to give you a feeling of anticipation, of anxiety, a little bit of fear."

The latest appearance of *Repetitive Beats* in the Midlands is the third, but the first for the new version. There's still bangers from *Orbital*, *Joey Beltram* and *Rhythmic*, and the same narrative arc, but *V2.0* boasts a multiplayer upgrade.

"Four people can now experience it together - you can see each other in VR, and you can pick stuff up and pass it to each other.

"We thought it would be great to walk into that [virtual] warehouse at the end with people who you've been on a journey with, and dance with your friends. Going to a rave is such a collective thing, and you'll see these other people coming out, and there is this moment of 'Ohhhh!'"

"People talk about VR as a hybrid between cinema, theatre and gaming, but it's very much its own thing. For me, if it's done really well, it's a unique medium that can offer so much."

In Pursuit Of Repetitive Beats shows at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre from Monday 29 September to Monday 13 October



Image credit: Olga Siruk, Incantation, courtesy of the artist

British Ceramics Biennial: Fresh 2025

Spode Works, Stoke-on-Trent,
Sat 6 September - Sun 19 October

British Ceramics Biennial returns for its ninth edition this month.

Taking place across six weeks, the festival features free exhibitions, screenings, talks and events, all of which are being presented across the site of the original Spode factory in the heart of Stoke-on-Trent.

"It's wonderful to be back at Spode," says Clare Wood, CEO & artistic director of British Ceramics Biennial. "We'll be animating this important post-industrial site with ambitious, imaginative and important works in clay and ceramic."

"The Biennial is a true celebration of clay's creative potential, both for making beautiful objects and for tackling some of the most pressing issues of our time."

"I'm looking forward to sharing the work of more than 60 outstanding artists with our thousands of visitors over the course of the Biennial."

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Image - Paul Kidby with Massive Massif



Designing Terry Pratchett's Discworld

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, Sat 13 September - Sun 4 January

This brand-new exhibition displays the artwork of Paul Kidby - Terry Pratchett's 'artist of choice' for his Discworld books. Explaining why he selected Paul, the late author once said: "He sees things my way about 75 per cent of the time, which suggests either mind reading is

happening or that my vision of my characters is really rather vague until I see his drawings."

The exhibition includes colourful paintings, 'exquisite' pencil drawings, 'and a rogue's gallery of favourite Discworld characters'.



Sari Stories

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham, until Sun 19 October

The companion presentation to The Offbeat Sari - a major exhibition, celebrating the contemporary sari, which is also currently showing at MAC - Sari Stories is a collaboration between the venue and the critically acclaimed local South Asian arts organisation Sampad. The show shares joyful and moving reflections on the sari, all of which were submitted - through an open call - by people from across the Midlands region. "The sari reflects a very rich tapestry of South Asian culture," explains Priya Khanchandani, The Offbeat Sari's curator. "It represents womanhood, it represents identity across regions, across classes, communities and history."

GIANTS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Sun 2 November

Entertainment and education are brought together in this new exhibition, a show which celebrates the 'awe-inspiring creatures' that roamed the Earth after the extinction of the dinosaurs.

Featuring life-sized 3D models and nearly complete skeletons, GIANTS includes interactive elements that allow visitors to step into the shoes of palaeontologists and biologists, providing a not-to-be-missed opportunity to engage with the scientific processes that lie behind fossil discovery and reconstruction.



Commodities: Sculpture & Ceramics By Renee So

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 20 September - Sun 8 March

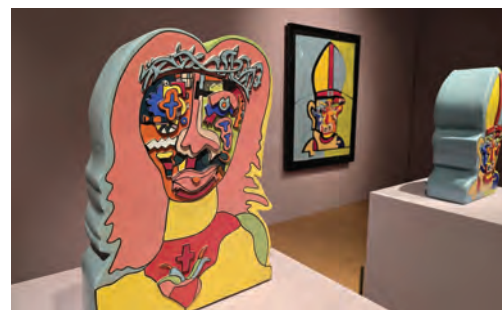
Hong Kong-born artist Renee So's latest exhibition may well be a game changer in terms of how Compton Verney's world-renowned collection of Chinese Bronzes is viewed... Specialising in darkly playful ceramic sculptures, Renee's work explores how perceptions of history can be distorted, re-fashioned and changed, asking the question: 'How do we create the new stories that we tell ourselves today?'

Billy Dosanjh Endz Of The World - Coded Furnaces

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 21 September

Film, photography, sculpture, printmaking and painting all feature in the artistic output of Billy Dosanjh, much of whose practice is set in the de-industrialised factory towns of the Midlands.

This latest exhibition of Billy's work considers the subject of technical evolution, examining the similarities between the Industrial Revolution and current technological developments, in particular the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI).



Jesus & The Pope By Robbie Williams

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 7 December

Burslem-born Robbie Williams has teamed up with local ceramic design brand 1882 Ltd to transform two of his 'inkling' drawings into abstract works of art depicting Jesus and The Pope.

The superstar singer's technicolour pieces sit alongside a collection of works donated by 60 of the UK's leading artists, architects, designers, musicians and creative polymaths.

The artworks have been transformed into plates by the Barlastan-based company and are being auctioned off to fund an apprenticeship scheme. Publicising the show, Robbie said: "I'm from the Potteries, Burslem born & bred. Clay built our city. We are of the earth - we are earthy people."

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Events previews from around the region



Image credit: Harry Bradley

Autumn Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster, Thurs 18 - Sun 21 September

A highlight of Severn Valley Railway's 60th anniversary year is the hotly anticipated Autumn Steam Gala. Following repairs to the northern section of the line earlier in the year, guest and home locomotives will be undertaking their full journey once again.

There will be an overnight service running on the Friday and Saturday evenings, and locomotives BR Standard Class 5 73082 'Camelot' and Merchant Navy 35006 'Peninsular and Oriental S N & Co' will both make their inaugural visit to the railway.



Coventry Brick Festival

Coventry Building Society Arena, Sat 13 September

Coventry Brick Festival features a whole host of Lego activities for visitors to enjoy, with highlights including lightning-fast speed building competitions, inventive mosaic making, and a special minifigure hunt. The festival also features traders selling

bricks, minifigures and accessories, and new and retired Lego sets. A unique selection of display builds and a dedicated building area - in which visitors can unleash their creativity - further add to the fun.

Walsall MakerFest

Across Walsall Town Centre, Sat 13 September

MakerFest this month returns to the heart of Walsall for a second year.

A vibrant celebration of creativity and community spirit, the event features showcases, performances, storytelling, and a full day of hands-on, family-friendly, creative workshops. An artisanal Makers' Market and the chance for youngsters to check out a 'magical mythical garden' also feature.



TrialGP Of Great Britain

Boughton House Estate, Northamptonshire, Fri 5 - Sun 7 September

The world's most prestigious trials motorcycle championship returns at a brand-new UK venue this month, promising a weekend of elite motorsport, the chance to see world-class riders, and an opportunity to enjoy a selection of immersive fan experiences. Highlights include demos, meet & greets and thrilling feats of balance, control, and nerve.

Medieval Experience Weekend

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 13 & Sun 14 September

Hear the clash of swords at Avoncroft Museum, as faction fights faction for the crown! Demonstration battles take place throughout the weekend - courtesy of The Beaufort Company re-enactment group - while living history camps around the site offer visitors a glimpse into life as it would have been lived during the medieval period.



OUTSIDE

peak wildlife park

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IN ASSOCIATION WITH WESTONS

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Three Counties Showground, Malvern WR13 6NW

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Events previews from around the region



The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Festival

Ironbridge, Shropshire, Fri 12 - Sun 14 September

Head to the West Midlands' very own UNESCO World Heritage Site mid-month for the 2025 edition of The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Festival. Celebrating the history and culture of the

town, the event features walks, art, music, poetry, walkabouts and activities for youngsters. The festival also features the return of the popular Coracle Regatta on Sunday the 14th.

A Place In The Sun Live

NEC, Birmingham, Fri 19 - Sun 21 September

If you've ever dreamed of relocating to sunnier climes, or maybe just owning a property overseas, that dream could well be turned into reality courtesy of A Place In The Sun Live. The UK's largest overseas property exhibition features inspirational seminars, expert advice, appearances by the stars of the long-running Channel Four television programme, and information about a wide range of international properties.



Peaky Blinders Night

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, Sat 27 September and Sat 15 November

Peaky Blinders fans can travel back in time to the gritty industrial landscape of the 1920s at the Black Country Living Museum (BCLM) this month. Visitors are invited to don their finest threads and frocks for a night of revelry and entertainment on the popular venue's historic cobblestone streets.

The evening includes the chance to explore 'Charlie's Yard' and other BCLM locations which featured in the hit television series.



Malvern Autumn Show

Three Counties Showground, Fri 26 - Sat 28 September

Malvern Autumn Show returns this month, offering veteran gardeners and new growers alike the chance to immerse themselves in the UK's largest harvest-season celebration. The show boasts supersized veg at the Guinness World Record-busting CANNA UK National Giant Vegetables Championship,

floral displays from the RHS Flower Show, and guest speakers including Monty Don and Adam Frost, of Gardeners' World fame. New for 2025 is the inaugural Three Counties International Perry Competition, and Incredible Edibles, a vibrant and inventive installation to inspire home-grown living.





TIME OF DEATH

Pathologist Dr Richard Shepherd talks about his new theatre show - and why *time* is so important in forensic medicine...

You toured with the show *Unnatural Causes* in 2022/23 and are embarking on your second theatre tour this autumn. What do you like about touring?

I've always enjoyed talking to people and explaining what I do and why. I've spent a lot of time giving lectures to medical students, policemen, paramedics and the public, and I've never found it difficult to speak to large groups. So going on tour is just another way of trying to give people a little bit of an understanding about what we really do, as so much of the work goes on in the background. Many people think that what I do is just

destructive, and some people may think it's an awful thing to do, but my focus is always on finding the truth and then trying to make sure that the relatives understand. The truth may be difficult to hear - but it is ultimately far less distressing than not knowing, or having unanswered questions, about the death of someone you're close to.

What can we expect from your new show, *Time Of Death - More Unnatural Causes*?

When I retired as a Home Office pathologist, I took up a long-held interest in learning how to mend clocks. As someone then pointed out, I'd spent my whole career taking things

apart and not being able to put them back together again - mending clocks meant I was taking complex things apart in the hope that I could put them back together and get them to work again.

It made me think again about how time is so important in terms of forensic medicine. When did the crime happen? How old is that injury? How long did someone survive? All crucial questions. So, we are going to be talking about the importance of time in forensic medicine, using examples of some interesting and different cases that I've dealt with.

Have you ever had anybody in an audience become quite overcome or emotional during one of your shows?

Only one, and they had to leave - I couldn't help but notice as they were in the middle of the front row! But they did come to see me afterwards, when I was signing books, and we were able to have a little chat... Also, a long time ago, when I was lecturing senior police officers at Hendon Police College, one of them collapsed, and it didn't look as if they were coming around, so I thought I'd better see what was going on. As I got near, they seemed okay, so I went back to my lectern muttering that "nobody wants to wake up from a faint to see a forensic pathologist leaning over them." Unfortunately, I'd forgotten that my microphone was still switched on, so the whole room heard what I had said to myself - and cheered! Years later, I met that man again, who described himself as "the one person who escaped Dick Shepherd's knife."

You also appear on Channel Five's Cause Of Death, looking at cases at Preston Coroner's Court. The series illustrates just how compassionate all the staff involved in sudden deaths are...

As a group of professionals, we all do what might be considered an awful job, but we must always remember that the people who are most important in the entire process are the relatives (and friends) of the person who has died. Obviously, I talk to my colleagues, the coroner and police officers about cases, and they're important too, but we've got to make sure the relatives understand, because if they don't, they worry - and that can significantly add to their distress.

How do you explain the public's huge interest in true crime on TV, and do you think women are more interested than men?

I think that people have always been both scared and fascinated by violent crimes - the victims, the perpetrators and those who must investigate them. Initially, it was the Penny Dreadful magazines from the 18th & 19th centuries, with dramatic hand-drawn pictures of the events and very descriptive stories. These were often sold at the time of the execution of a convicted perpetrator! Nowadays, we have more sophisticated

magazines, books and TV programmes to satisfy this interest, this continuing need to get into the nitty-gritty of how crime works! After the tours I've done and the books I've written, I'm fascinated that people are prepared to spend an evening listening to me! I'm not sure of the demographic of the various audiences - I'm just pleased to hopefully be able to show that there is empathy as well as investigation and punishment.

What made you interested in pathology?

When I was about 13, a school friend of mine bought a forensic textbook by the celebrated pathologist Keith Simpson into school. It suddenly opened my eyes to this whole intriguing world of murders, and I decided that that was what I wanted to do. I wasn't a stranger to death, as my mum had died of heart disease when I was nine, so it was my dad who encouraged my interest in medicine. I only ever wanted to be a pathologist. Surprisingly, I really enjoyed obstetrics and delivering babies, but settled into a life of crime! I do appreciate how lucky I've been to have found a career that I enjoy so much.

Your wife is in the same business. How did you meet?

Linda is a forensic doctor, too - although she looks after living victims - and we met at a forensic meeting in London where I was lecturing. We spent time afterwards chatting about bruises. Very romantic! She declined my offer of a drink, as she had to buy some shoes, which defined my true place in the world. The rest, as they say, is history - nearly 20 years and counting!

Did you find it difficult to balance your job and family life?

When the kids were younger, this was very much an issue. If I had had a heavy day, I would stop the car around the corner from the house and spend a minute or two mentally moving myself from work mode to family mode. The kids always knew what I did and weren't phased if the police came round to the house with bits and pieces to show me. In fact, one daughter has followed me into the profession. She and I chat quite frequently about cases, and it's nice having her as a close colleague - especially as she's a much better pathologist!

Are there any stand-out cases that have never left you?

Obviously, cases that have a high public profile, like that of Princess Diana or David Kelly or Gareth Williams ('the spy in the bag'). However, it's often the smaller, more personal cases that leave a bigger, permanent mark. In Unnatural Causes, I wrote about a teenager who had epilepsy and died suddenly overnight. That case changed the way I interacted with bereaved families. There was also a case of a family who went to France on holiday; the mother and her eight-year-old daughter were crossing the road to go shopping, and the daughter didn't look the correct way for French traffic, stepped out and was instantly killed. As a parent, I still shiver at that thought. Lives can be changed in a fraction of a second, and despite all my years as a forensic pathologist, I just cannot imagine how you ever move on from that.

Why do you think we're obsessed with true crime, yet reluctant to discuss death?

Some people are very reluctant to believe that their relatives will/could ever die, no matter how old or ill they are. And when the inevitable happens they believe that something must have gone wrong. We no longer openly talk about 'death'; we talk euphemistically about 'passing on', so people are no longer used to the experience of death and don't know how to behave in the face of sudden strong emotions. Not that long ago, the body would lie in the house before the funeral, with family, neighbours and friends coming in to pay respect. I am struck by the public response to a member of the royal family 'lying in state', which shows that there's still a need for that chance to say goodbye. The experience of death is now diminished, so that when it does happen, there haven't been any rehearsals for what it's going to be like, and they struggle to understand their emotions, which makes death much harder to cope with.

.....
Dr Richard Shepherd's tour Time Of Death stops off at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on Mon 29 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 6 October; Lichfield Garrick, Tues 28 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 31 October; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 1 November

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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
September 2025

thelist



The Bodyguard at The Alexandra, Birmingham - Sat 20 - Sat 27 September

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 September



Rhys James - The Glee Club,
The Arcadian, Birmingham

Wed 3 September

Mon 8 - Sun 14 September



Osamason - O2 Institute,
Digbeth, Birmingham

Wed 10 September

Mon 15 - Sun 21 September



GIANTS Late - Birmingham
Museum & Art Gallery

Sat 20 September

Mon 22 - Tues 30 September



Trish Clowes - Royal
Birmingham Conservatoire

Thurs 25 September

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

OZZY OSBOURNE: WORKING CLASS

HERO A celebration of the solo achievements and global awards of rock icon Ozzy Osbourne, and the album art of the original Black Sabbath line-up to coincide with their historic homecoming concert, until Sun 18 Jan

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.

CHRISTOPHER SAMUEL: WATCH US

LEAD Through 9 newly recorded interviews, Watch Us Lead highlights the experiences of disabled people of colour in Birmingham, combining these stories with stained glass and drawings by the artist.

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

THREAD THE LOOM A group exhibition celebrating the art of weaving. An AVL Studio Dobby loom will be activated through a series of micro-residencies with five West Midlands weavers, until Sun 7 Sept

SEULGI LEE: SPAN Lee has developed a unique artistic practice, combining conceptual approaches with artisanal methods. For her exhibition at Ikon Gallery, she explores a historical measurement - the span of the human hand, until Sun 7 Sept

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

AMAZING ARTBOXES A free family trail for the summer holiday. Local makers have produced joyful, playful and imagination-igniting miniature worlds, located throughout MAC's building, until Sun 21 Sept

THE OFFBEAT SARI A major exhibition celebrating the contemporary sari, and exploring how designers, wearers and craftspeople are reshaping how the sari is understood, designed, made and worn in contemporary urban India, until Sun 2 Nov

JASHAAN GILL: A NEW FASHION

COMMISSION INSPIRED BY THE SARI In the spirit of The Offbeat Sari's ode to fashion innovation, MAC has commissioned Jashaan Gill, the

designer behind internationally recognised Birmingham brand Jheez, to create a new fashion piece inspired by the sari, until Sun 2 Nov

MADE AT MAC: CONNECTED BY THREAD

A showcase of textile works by learners from MAC's creative courses, until Sun 25 Jan

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

CURTIS HOLDER: PORTRAITS OF

BROTHERHOOD Exhibition comprising more than 20 works on paper, including a series of large-scale multi-layered portraits, and exploratory drawings, centred around shared experiences as Black and Brown men, Tues 2 - Sat 13 Sept

RBSA WATERCOLOUR PRIZE 2025 The first RBSA Prize of its kind for over a decade celebrates work created using water-based media, including watercolour, ink, gouache, and acrylic paint, by artists from all around the world, until Sat 13 Sept

Elsewhere:

CAROLYN BLAKE: FURTHER THAN

MEMORY CAN REACH Exhibition of paintings which takes a journey around the grounds of Winterbourne House, from the time it was built to the present day, until Sun 14 Sept, Winterbourne House and Garden, Birmingham

BMI SUMMER SHOW Artists who have shown work at the Birmingham & Midland Institute during the last two years are invited to submit paintings to be exhibited, until Sat 27 Sept, The Birmingham & Midland Institute

BETH KETTEL: DEAD RECKONING New sculptural installation, featuring reactive materials, which will explore internal and external navigation and the ways our internal worlds are communicated, translated and distorted, until Sun 14 Dec, Eastside Projects, Birmingham

UOB 125: THROUGH THE ARCHIVES

In celebration of the University of Birmingham's anniversary, this exhibition features photographs of the campus, staff and students over the past 125 years, until Wed 31 Dec, University of Birmingham Library

INSIDE THE PLAYROOM Imaginative new exhibition inviting children, and their families, to become art collectors! The gallery will be transformed into a colourful playroom where a selection of affordable, child-friendly illustrations, paintings, collages and soft sculptures will be for sale, until Sat 31 Jan 2026, Stryx Gallery, Digbeth, Birmingham



Kashmir - O2 Academy

Gigs

THE NORTHERN POP

GIRLIES Mon 1 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

INOHA Tues 2 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

HILLTOP HOODS Tues 2 Sept, O2 Academy

DADDY LONG LEGS + BOB LOG III Wed 3 Sept, The Night Owl, Digbeth

GERMA ADAN Wed 3 Sept, B:Eats, Symphony Hall

PAULA JACKMAN'S JAZZ MASTERS Wed 3 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

UPTOWN GIRL - THE BILLY JOEL COLLECTION Wed 3 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

JOHNSON & FINNEMORE Thurs 4 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

AN EVENING OF EDWIN STARR Thurs 4 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

ONLY THE POETS Thurs 4 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

TOM GRENNAN Thurs 4 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham



JAMES WALSH & BEN OTTEWELL Thurs 4 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

JOE SPINOZA AND FRIENDS Thurs 4 Sept, Grand Hotel, B'ham

THE COAL PORTERS Thurs 4 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE SEARCHERS & HOLLIES EXPERIENCE Thurs 4 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE ROCKET MAN Thurs 4 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

KING KRAB + MISTRUSTED + SHOTGUN MARMALADE Fri 5 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

GATHERING OF STRANGERS Fri 5 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

CHARLOTTE YOUNG Fri 5 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

HOWLIN' RIC & THE ROCKETEERS Fri 5 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

ALAN BARNES QUINTET Fri 5 Sept, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

ERADIKATOR + CARTOONS CAN'T DIE + BURNT CHAPTER Fri 5 Sept, The Flapper, Kingston Row

DINOSAUR PILE UP + THE XCERTS Fri 5 Sept, XOYO, Digbeth

OAS-SIS + MAN MADE MOON Fri 5 Sept, The Victoria, Birmingham

MAN IN THE MIRROR Fri 5 Sept, Symphony Hall

DOWNFALL 77 + LOVE NOR MONEY + THE PASTLES + BERETTA + ILLUMINAL Fri 5 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth

PHIL BEER Fri 5 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

THE NASHVILLE SOUNDS EXPERIENCE Fri 5 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

A COUNTRY NIGHT IN NASHVILLE Fri 5 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

VOX POCKETS Fri 5 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

CHRIS DIFFORD Fri 5 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

XANDER AND THE PEACE PIRATES Fri 5 Sept, Lichfield Guildhall

SWING FROM PARIS Fri 5 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE ANT HILL MOB Fri 5 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

GENEVIEVE JAZZ Fri 5 - Sat 6 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

URBAN INTRO Fri 5 - Sat 6 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

LUKA STATE + RATS + TBC + DIRTY BLONDE + HEAVY NORTH Sat 6 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

A WEEK FULL OF MONDAYS Sat 6 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

SKASTUDS Sat 6 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

SHADOWPLAY - JOY DIVISION TRIBUTE Sat 6 Sept, The Night Owl, Digbeth

KASHMIR Sat 6 Sept, O2 Academy

THE DAVIDSON TRIO Sat 6 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

RICH DICKINSON'S DRIVING FORCE FT

BROKEN SOUND PARKWAY
Sat 6 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

BRUM PUNX PICNIC 2025
Sat 6 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

GANS Sat 6 Sept, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Sat 6 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

CON JOVI Sat 6 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

90S V 00S Sat 6 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

NEARLY DAN Sat 6 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE ROZZERS - TRIBUTE TO STING & THE POLICE Sat 6 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

JUST DOIN' IT - STATUS QUO TRIBUTE Sat 6 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

D'YANI Sun 7 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath



COURDS Sun 7 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

THE SHAKEDOWN BROTHERS Sun 7 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

THE GARRY ALLCOCK TRIO Sun 7 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

THE RE-COVERED Sun 7 Sept, Snobs, Broad St

JAKE VAADELAND & THE STURGEON RIVER BOYS Sun 7 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

A TASTE OF BOLLYWOOD Sun 7 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston

AMIT DATTANI Sun 7 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

GRUFF RHYS Sun 7 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Sun 7 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

Classical Music

CBSO CUPPA CONCERT Featuring a small ensemble of CBSO musicians. A short, relaxed concert programmed with those living with Dementia and their carers in mind, Fri 5 Sept, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

GRAND ORGAN OPENING CONCERT Featuring Paul Carr (organ). Programme includes works by S.S. Wesley, J.S. Bach, Haydn & more..., Sat 6 Sept, St Bartholomew's Church, Penn

Comedy

RHYS JAMES Wed 3 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham



STEPHEN BAILEY, ESTHER MANITO & MICHAEL AKADIRI Wed 3 Sept, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

FAT PENGUIN COMEDY CLUB Wed 3 Sept, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO, FIONA ALLEN & COMICS TBC Wed 3 Sept, The Tamworth Tap, Tamworth

JONNY COLE Wed 3 - Thurs 4 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

PROJECT MAYHEM Thurs 4 Sept, Scruffy Murphy's, Birmingham

RAHUL DUA Fri 5 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DEAGE PAXTON, OMAR BADAWY, WILL HITT & COMIC TBC Fri 5 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SEAN PERCIVAL, ANT DEWSON, JOSH JAMES & COMIC TBC Sat 6 Sept, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

DEAGE PAXTON, OMAR BADAWY & COMICS TBC Sat 6 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MATT STEWART Sat 6 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LINDSEY SANTORO, DINESH NATHAN, HARRY JENKINS & CERYS HELMES Sat 6 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

AURIE STYLA Sun 7 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

FAT HAM James Ijames' compelling and Hamlet-inspired examination of love and loss, pain and joy, until Sat 13 Sept, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

INSPECTOR MORSE: HOUSE OF GHOSTS Colin Dexter's beer-drinking crossword-solving Oxford detective makes a return, this time on stage. Tom Chambers plays

Morse, until Sun 14 Sept, The Rep, Birmingham

CONSUMED A 'pitch-black and twisted comedy' about dysfunctional family dynamics, generational trauma and national boundaries, Wed 3 - Sat 6 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

JEKYLL & HYDE One-man show in which Jonathan Goodwin plays both characters from Robert Louis Stevenson's chilling Gothic tale, Fri 5 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE PINK LIST A 'haunting' one-person musical inspired by untold stories of queer men in post-war Germany, Sat 6 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

AFTER SEPTEMBER Amateur version of Jimmie Chinn's schoolroom drama, offering 'a warm and touching depiction of female relationships', Sat 6 - Sat 13 Sept, Oldbury Rep

Dance

RIVERDANCE 30: THE NEW GENERATION Award-winning music and mesmerising choreography come together in this special anniversary show, Thurs 4 - Tues 9 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

NORTHERN LIVE - DO I LOVE YOU Featuring an 11-piece band, with four lead vocalists performing over 30 original hits, Tues 2 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SOLVE-ALONG-A-MURDER-SHE-WROTE Interactive screening of the classic Murder, She Wrote episode Paint Me A Murder. Games, prizes and plenty of audience participation also feature, Thurs 4 Sept, Stourbridge Town Hall

ROBBIE CUMMING: CANAL BOAT STORIES... A 'fun and interactive' evening of canal-themed escapism, during which visitors can discover a secret world of winding waterways, leaky locks and canal characters, Thurs 4 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

ELVIS LESLEY: BURNIN' LOVE BINGO Join award-winning comedian Tracey Collins (Shell Suit Cher and Audrey Heartburn) for an evening of musical comedy, bingo chaos and reworked hits..., Fri 5 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



WEST END TENORS Featuring leading performers from the West End. Expect well-known hits from Les Miserables, The Phantom Of The Opera, Mamma Mia!, Miss Saigon and more..., Fri 5 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

OPERA BOYS: A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS An evening of 'power-house vocals, immaculate four-part harmony, breathtaking musical medleys, and stunning solo performances', Fri 5 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

GLADIATORS OF WRESTLING Live over-the-top body-slamming action, Sun 7 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Talks & Spoken Word

STRANGE BUT TRUE CRIME WITH JENNIFER REES Join the ex-forensics lecturer as she explores some of the world's 'most shocking and unbelievable cases', Mon 1 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH ASTON VILLA LEGENDS Andy Townsend, Lee Hendrie and Ian Taylor take to the stage to talk about their action-packed football careers, Tues 2 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

Events

SUMMER AT THE BUTTERFLY FARM Featuring 'competitions, butterfly life cycle, mini-beast, beetle mania and pupae demonstrations', until Mon 1 Sept, Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm



WHERE'S WALLABY? Free trail of colourful and quirky wallaby sculptures, until Fri 5 Sept, across the Staffordshire Moorlands

BRICK DINOS Featuring Lego dinosaur sculptures designed in collaboration with palaeontologists, until Sun 7 Sept, Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

POLLINATOR TRAIL Learn all about the Gardens' insects and the flowers they love, until Sun 7 Sept, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

PIRATE TREASURE HUNT Join Captain Careless on a swashbuckling adventure, until Sun 7 Sept, National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham

OLI & NEL'S HARE-RAISING ADVENTURE Interactive trail following the story of Weston's resident hares, until Sun 14 Sept, Weston Park, Shropshire

WYCHBOLD: FLORA FIELDS 2025 A pick-your-own dahlia field, showcasing a collection of 60-plus varieties and

COVENTRY BRICK FESTIVAL

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thousands of dahlias in full bloom, until Mon 29 Sept, Webbs at Wychbold, Droitwich Spa

KATHERINE PARR CELEBRATION Clues to the life, loves and legacy of Katherine can be found in the castle gardens, within the exhibition spaces, and in the chapel where she is laid to rest, Mon 1 - Sun 7 Sept, Sudeley Castle, Cheltenham

AN INTRODUCTION TO POTTERY WITH THE FLYING POTTER Discover a range of hand building and potter's wheel techniques, Wed 3 Sept, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

HIDDEN SPACES TOUR Rare opportunity to explore areas of the building that are usually closed to the public, Thurs 4 & Sat 6 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery



ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOUR & FINDS HANDLING Join archaeologist &

Compton Verney volunteer Hilary Calow as she brings the site's past to life, Fri 5 Sept, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

VEXPO Non-profit convention centred on streaming culture, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Sept, NEC, Birmingham

LADIES EVENING Featuring ABBA The Party, Sat 6 Sept, Wolverhampton Racecourse

WEEKEND BEAVER SAFARI Meet Trentham's beavers and discover the venue's story of restoration and biodiversity, Sat 6 Sept, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 6 Sept, The Halls Wolverhampton

THE STRONGMAN OPEN & MUTANT WORLD DEADLIFT CHAMPIONSHIPS 2025

The greatest names in Strongman go head-to-head in five tests of strength, speed and raw power, Sat 6 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

END OF SUMMER SILENT DISCO Dance the night away in the unique surroundings of the cloisters area and grounds, Sat 6 Sept, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

SARI DRAPING WORKSHOP Discover the art of sari draping in this women-only



Sari Draping Workshop - Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

workshop, Sat 6 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

RETRO TRUCK SHOW Bringing together over 300 trucks, from 1971 to 2001, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Sept, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

PAINT THE DAY 2025 Produce a representation of the area using any visual medium, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

SVR AND GB RAILFREIGHT WEEKEND A weekend of modern and heritage

traction, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Sept, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

WAKE UP THE ZOO Early morning guided tour providing visitors with the opportunity to go behind the scenes and get close to a variety of exotic animals, Sun 7 Sept, Dudley Zoo

COLOUR BOX: EVEN MICE BELONG IN HEAVEN Craft activity followed by a screening of the film, Sun 7 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

Mon 27 Oct - Sat 1 Nov 2025

Join us for MAC's family-friendly digital festival, with live shows, gaming, hi and lo-fi tech plus creative workshops for little (and big) geeks

Smart Play Zone
Mon 27 & Tue 28 Oct
10am - 4pm | All ages

Meet local artists and explore sound, movement and light. Get hands on and try out new and retro kit.

Soundplay Dome
Wed 29 & Thu 30 Oct
10am - 4.30pm | Ages 5+

Explore a world of sound through movement and touch, with responsive animation and audio.

Ambient Arcade
Wed 29 & Thu 30 Oct
10am - 4.30pm | All ages

Play with audio visual sculptures on retro-style gaming units and old school computer terminals.

Creative Courses
Throughout the week
Ages 6+

Join us for fun-filled workshops including LED T-shirt making, Digital Creepy Creatures Camp and more.

WHO WANTS TO PLAY? macbirmingham.co.uk/littlegeeks

Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, B12 9QH
0121 446 3232

THE OUTLAWS ARE BACK!

The Old Joint Stock Presents

BONNIE & CLYDE

Book by
IVAN MENCHELL

Lyrics by
DON BLACK

Music by
FRANK WILDHORN

Directed by
EMILY SUSANNE LLOYD

OCTOBER 1ST - 26TH 2025

THE OLD JOINT STOCK | BIRMINGHAM

PERFORMED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL



OsamaSon - O2 Institute, Digbeth

Gigs

DOM MALIN AND LUNA KELLER Mon 8 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

MARTIN FRY Mon 8 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

GENITORTURERS + PSYCLON NINE + DEADFILMSTAR Tues 9 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

MICA PARIS Wed 10 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

OSAMASON Wed 10 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

49TH & MAIN Wed 10 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

HARRIET ROSE Wed 10 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth

NIGHT VERSES + DVNE Wed 10 Sept, The Asylum, Digbeth

MIDNIGHT RODEO Wed 10 Sept, The Victoria, John Bright Street

GO YOUR OWN WAY - THE FLEETWOOD MAC LEGACY Wed 10 Sept, The Alexandra, Suffolk St

LUKE MORLEY Wed 10 Sept, The Glee Club, The Arcadian

HOW SWEET IT IS - CELEBRATING JAMES TAYLOR Wed 10 Sept,

Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

EASY STREET SPANKERS Wed 10 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

THE ALAN FLETCHER BAND Wed 10 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

ANNURAL KHALID Thurs 11 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

GREG FREEMAN Thurs 11 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

PHOENIX Thurs 11 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Qtr

ANIKA NILLES + NEVELL Thurs 11 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

TEN56. + VCTMS + THE DALI THUNDER CONCEPT Thurs 11 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

DANCE MYTH + DEREK ZANETTI Thurs 11 Sept, The Flapper, Digbeth

SWEETPOOL + THE BRACKISH Thurs 11 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

TRASH BOAT Thurs 11 Sept, The Asylum, Hampton Street

ENGELBERT

HUMPERDINCK Thurs 11 Sept, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

THE MUSIC OF JASON ROBERT BROWN Thurs 11 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

WE MAVERICKS Thurs 11 Sept, Bromsgrove Folk Club

THE CLUB 80'S LIVE Thurs 11 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

BYE BYE BABY - FRANKIE VALLI TRIBUTE Thurs 11 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

AN EVENING OF JAMES TAYLOR Thurs 11 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

GEMMA BALLAM + BLUEWALK + IZUZVO Fri 12 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

LEVI WASHINGTON Fri 12 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

BAYAAN Fri 12 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BIG WOLF BAND Fri 12 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

BACK ON THE ROAD Fri 12 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

BEN SHANKLAND TRIO Fri 12 Sept, 1000 Trades, Jewellery

Quarter

DAVID BLACK Fri 12 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE VIZ Fri 12 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth

BOLU2 DEATH + NYMPHIC + FALSE THOUGHTS Fri 12 Sept, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

ROB LAMBERTI PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE Fri 12 Sept, Symphony Hall

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Fri 12 Sept, The Alexandra

U2 UK Fri 12 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL NOISE - THE MUSIC OF NEIL DIAMOND Fri 12 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JERSEY BOYS + MOTOWN Fri 12 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BLONDISH Fri 12 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE RIZE Fri 12 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

JOSIE SODEN Fri 12 - Sat 13 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

APOLLO GOLD Fri 12 - Sat 13 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

CALLING PLANET EARTH Fri 12 - Sat 13 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

THE HEELS Sat 13 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

DEZ DARE + DAD BOD + B.B. KAIZO Sat 13 Sept, The Dark Horse, Moseley

BIG BOSS MAN Sat 13 Sept, The Night Owl, Digbeth

CODY PENNINGTON COUNTRY SHOW Sat 13 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

RILEY GREEN Sat 13 Sept, O2 Academy

SMALL FAKERS Sat 13 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

SCREAMING DEAD + STEP FORWARD Sat 13 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Rd

BLITZED IN

BIRMINGHAM Sat 13 Sept, The Flapper, Digbeth

BEAUTIFUL TRAUMA - PINK TRIBUTE Sat 13 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 13 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE PAUL MCCARTNEY PROJECT Sat 13 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

GEORGE HARRISON TRIBUTE Sat 13 Sept, Dudley Town Hall

MARTIN SIMPSON Sat 13 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

JAYLER + TYLER KENT Sat 13 Sept, Lichfield Guildhall

JEREMY SASSOON'S MOJO Sat 13 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE STONE HILL COLLECTIVE Sun 14 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

PETE HYDE & VIEILLARDS Sun 14 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

DADI FREYR Sun 14 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SHOOTING DAGGERS + ROMAN CANDLE + BLACK MOULD + UPTIGHT Sun 14 Sept, The Flapper, Kingston Row

THE BUSH PILOTS Sun 14 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

REGGAE FEST BIRMINGHAM Sun 14 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

CHAS LEMAN AND BAND Sun 14 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth

HEATHER FERRIER TRIO Sun 14 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

NEIL COLEY BIG BAND Sun 14 Sept, The Dovehouse, Solihull

THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL Sun 14 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME RECITAL: DR ELISABETH FRENCH (PIANO) Programme includes the piano music of F. Edward Bache (1833-1858) of Birmingham, Fri 12 Sept, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

Comedy

LUKE MORLEY Wed 10 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED BYRNE, TERRY ALDERTON, KEITH FARNAN + ADA CAMPE Wed 10 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

ROB MULHOLLAND Thurs 11 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOM STADE Thurs 11 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

JOSH JONES Fri 12 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOSH BERRY Fri 12 Sept, The Old Rep, Birmingham

ADAM ROWE, JEFF INNOCENT + LARRY DEAN Fri 12 Sept, Herbert's Yard, Birmingham

JONNY COLE Fri 12 Sept, Halesowen Town Hall



MARK SIMMONS, LOUISE ATKINSON, GARETH WAUGH + JASON PATTERSON Fri 12 - Sat 13 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MIKE COX, SEAN MORAN, KEVIN DANIEL + DAVE LONGLEY Sat 13 Sept, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

JAY HANDLEY Sat 13 Sept, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

HE HUANG Sun 14 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GARY MEIKLE Sun 14 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

CALAMITY JANE Carrie Hope Fletcher takes the lead in a touring production of the whip-crackin' musical comedy, Tues 9 - Sat 13 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE PARTY GIRLS Amy Rosenthal's 'compelling, touching and witty' new play, exploring the story of the Mitford sisters, Tues 9 - Sat 13 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

TROUBLED Storytelling, projection

THE LICHFIELD PLAYERS PRESENT

THE LION IN WINTER

WRITTEN BY JAMES GOLDMAN DIRECTED BY DAVID TITLEY



ONE KING,
THREE SONS,
ONE MISTRESS, & ELEANOR

WED 1 - SAT 4 OCT
SAT MATINEE | 2.45PM

LICHFIELDGARRICK.COM BOX OFFICE 01543 412121

THIS AMATEUR PRODUCTION IS PRESENTED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH CONCORD THEATRICALS

'Will the staff at the Gwendolen Kyte School for Girls get the term off to a flying start, or will the schools inspector throw the book at them?!' - a funny and touching tale.

After September

by Jimmie Chinn



September
6th to 13th

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Stratford Literary Festival

Autumn Festival

30th October - 2nd November 2025

Graham Norton	Joanna Page
Sir Philip Pullman	Andrew Lownie
John Cleese	Martin O'Neill
Lyse Doucet	Dame Denise Lewis
Gyles Brandreth	Michael Mansfield KC
Mick Herron	Lord Jonathan Sumption
Tony Robinson	Lucy Easthope
Nicola Sturgeon	Jonathan Dimbleby
Lady Brenda Hale	Baroness Sue Campbell
Alice Loxton	Writers' Weekend
Mark Radcliffe	AND MUCH MORE



Halloween Fun for Kids
Plus Craft, Books & Comic Workshop

See the full programme and book now at stratlitfest.co.uk





ON SALE NOW

and audience interaction combine in 'an explosive tale of love, loss and human connection', Wed 10 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

HAIRSPRAY Coleshill On Stage present an amateur version of the Broadway musical, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

DISNEY'S BEAUTY & THE BEAST Script Youth Musical Theatre Company present an amateur version of the Disney classic, Fri 12 - Sat 13 Sept, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

ABIGAIL'S PARTY The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of Mike Leigh's 1977 comedy, Sat 13 - Sat 20 Sept, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE GRAND BABYLON HOTEL Stage adaptation of Arnold Bennett's 'rollicking' comedy thriller, Sat 13 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

MEASURE FOR MEASURE Emily Burns returns to the RSC to direct Shakespeare's razor-sharp thriller, Sat 13 Sept - Sat 25 Oct, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

WHY DIDN'T I GET MARRIED Drama exploring the reasons behind the high level of single black women within the church, Sun 14 Sept, The Old Rep, Birmingham

Light Entertainment

PAUL ZERDIN: JAW DROP New show from the former America's Got Talent winner, Wed 10 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

SOLVE-ALONG-A-MURDER-SHE-WROTE Interactive screening of the classic Murder, She Wrote episode Paint Me A Murder. Games, prizes and plenty of audience participation also feature, Wed 10 - Thurs 11 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

SEND IN THE CLOWNS: LITTLE FLOP OF HORRORS A 'raucous, wild and tantalising' drag revue show, celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BOX OF FROGS 'High-octane comedy' from Birmingham's award-winning improv group, Sat 13 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

DES COLEMAN AND THE ALL STARS BIG BAND: SUNSHINE & SHOWERS TOUR Join Des for a night of music, laughter and stories, Sun 14 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

TEENAGER IN LOVE SHOW A celebration of dreamy 1950s & 60s singalong hits. Stephen James & Kelly Brazil star, Sun 14 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH KATIE PRICE AND KERRY KATONA A tell-all evening in which the celebrity duo share stories of marriage, divorce, bankruptcy, being part of I'm A Celebrity, family, the media and more..., Tues 9 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

CAT ON THE ROAD TO FINDOUT BOOK TOUR Join Yusuf/Cat Stevens for an evening of tales, tunes and other mysteries, in a show that accompanies the release of his long-awaited memoir, Thurs 11 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

AN EVENING WITH MARK KERMODE & JENNY NELSON An evening of 'cinematic insight, sharp wit and passionate debate', Fri 12 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

SAVING GRACE Expect an evening of unfiltered opinions and outrageous confessions as Grace Barry plays agony aunt in a bid to solve audience dilemmas, Sat 13 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Events

HIDDEN SPACES TOUR A rare opportunity to explore areas of the building that are usually closed to the public, Thurs 11 & Sat 13 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

EXPLORE BLAKESLEY: HERITAGE OPEN DAY AND BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK Open Day opportunity to visit the Tudor house and beautiful gardens of Blakesley Hall, built in 1590 by Richard Smalbroke, Fri 12 Sept, Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

CURATOR'S TOUR AND TEA: EMMA TALBOT: HOW WE LEARN TO LOVE Enjoy exclusive access to the exhibition. Curator Oli McCall is the guide, Fri 12 Sept, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

ADULT NIGHT Experience the ultimate indoor Lego playground completely kid-free, Fri 12 Sept, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham

SOUTH AMERICAN WINES TASTING EVENT Try six wines from Argentina and Chile, Fri 12 Sept, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

MONSTER JAM RAMPED UP Featuring big air jumps, sky wheelies, cyclone donuts, two-wheel skills and backflips, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SUTTON COLDFIELD FOOD FESTIVAL Featuring over 100 food & drink traders, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Centre

BLACK COUNTRY BOATING FESTIVAL Event celebrating the rich history, culture, and community spirit of the Black Country, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Sept,



Saving Grace - The Alexandra, Birmingham

Dudley No. 2 Canal at the BumbleHole, Netherton

MUSEUM COLLECTION CENTRE: BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK OPEN DAY Full day of family-friendly activities exploring the artefact-packed warehouse, Sat 13 Sept, Museum Collection Centre, Birmingham

HEIRESSSES BY MIRANDA KAUFMANN: TALK AND BOOK LAUNCH Join Black Tudors author Miranda as she explores the hidden ways slave-produced wealth poured into Britain through inheritance and matrimony, Sat 13 Sept, Aston Hall, Birmingham

THE MANUALS THAT SAVED APOLLO 13 - PLANETARIUM LATE Special talk at the Space Vault Exhibition, Sat 13 Sept, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

THE CAT SHOW LIVE The popular annual event returns, with more than 5,000 cat lovers expected to be in attendance, Sat 13 Sept, NEC, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK: THE EXCHANGE HERITAGE OPEN DAY Enjoy hands-on art & craft activities, follow a heritage trail, and go on a mini tour of the building, Sat 13 Sept, The Exchange, 3 Centenary Square, Birmingham

WALSALL MAKERFEST 2025 Celebration of Walsall & the Black Country's rich and diverse creative community, Sat 13 Sept, The New Art Gallery, Walsall

HERITAGE DAY Event offering visitors the chance to enjoy a rare glimpse behind the scenes, Sat 13 Sept, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 13 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE MURDER OF NINA KEANE A wedding-inspired murder-mystery night, Sat 13 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

BRICK FESTIVAL A celebration of all things Lego, Sat 13 Sept, Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry

BIRMINGHAM HONEY SHOW 2025 Presented in association with the Birmingham & District Beekeepers, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Sept, Winterbourne House & Garden, Birmingham

MINIATURA AUTUMN SHOW Featuring workshops, demonstrations and over 120 exhibitors, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Sept, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

MEDIEVAL EXPERIENCE Learn all about medieval times with The Beaufort Company, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Sept, Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove

DR1VR SHOW Event bringing together modern and classic stance, track builds, and timeless classics, Sun 14 Sept, British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire

MIDLANDS JAGUAR DAY INCL. CLASSIC CAR & MOTORCYCLE SHOW Featuring up to 1,000 vintage, classic and modern classic cars and motorcycles, Sun 14 Sept, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

WARWICKSHIRE OPEN STUDIOS PLEIN AIR Meet artists from across the region as they make and create new work in response to Compton Verney's landscape, Sun 14 Sept, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

Festivals

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Breabach (pictured), Dervish, Paul Downes and Phil Beer, Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Sept, Bromyard, Herefordshire



SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL Featuring over 50 original new music artists, Sat 13 Sept, Burton upon Trent



Jon Boden & The Remnant Kings - Midlands Arts Centre (MAC)

Gigs

THE NEW EVES Mon 15 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

MEREBE Mon 15 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

SELF ESTEEM Mon 15 Sept, O2 Academy

HELMS ALEE Mon 15 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth

CLASSIC ALBUMS LIVE PERFORMS THE BEATLES WHITE ALBUM Mon 15 Sept, Symphony Hall

JESSIE REID Mon 15 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

JONATHAN OGDEN & TAYLOR ARMSTRONG Tues 16 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JESSIE REYEZ Tues 16 Sept, O2 Academy

VIOLENCIA Tues 16 Sept, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

COURTNEY HADWIN Tues 16 Sept, The Victoria, John Bright Street

LUMI HD Tues 16 Sept, B:Eats, Symphony Hall

BUSTED VS MCFLY Tues 16 - Wed 17 Sept, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

JOLIE HOLLAND Wed 17 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

INCOGNITO Wed 17 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

OLIVER ANTHONY Wed 17 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

TIGRESS + HYPE THEORY + CHASING AUGUST Wed 17 Sept, The Asylum, Hampton Street

JEZ LOWE + JULIA DISNEY Wed 17 Sept, Red Lion Folk Club, Vicarage Road

THE HOT TOMALIES WITH RICHARD BENNETT Wed 17 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

ELKIE BROOKS Wed 17 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

FIRST TIME FLYERS Thurs 18

Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

LED BIB + DIDDY SWEG Thurs 18 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

AN EVENING OF BOB MARLEY Thurs 18 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

THE NEW ROSES Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

GRENTPEREZ Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ASLAN Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Academy

WINTER GARDENS Thurs 18 Sept, The Victoria, John Bright Street

THE MASSES BANDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES Thurs 18 Sept, Symphony Hall

FEELING GOOD - A CELEBRATION OF JAZZ Thurs 18 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

JON BODEN & THE REMNANT KINGS Thurs 18 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Cannon Hill Park

STEP OUT + VIOLET SQUARE + KIERAN VICKERY + JOSEPH DAVIS Thurs 18 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth

CHRISTINE COLLISTER Thurs 18 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

TONY CHRISTIE Thurs 18 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE WUN YEN CHAN BAND Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

WOLFGANG FLÜR Fri 19 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

GRATEFUL DUDES Fri 19 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE Fri 19 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

CASEY MCQUILLEN Fri 19 Sept,

The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

THE JAM'D Fri 19 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE + THE FABULOUS MURRAY BROTHERS Fri 19 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Fri 19 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

BRIGITTE BERAHA Fri 19 Sept, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

THE EXPLOITED Fri 19 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

ARMOR FOR SLEEP + HELLOGOODBYE + VINNIE CARUANA Fri 19 Sept, The Asylum, Hampton Street

DARIUS ZALTASH Fri 19 Sept, The Victoria, John Bright Street

VYBZ KARTEL Fri 19 Sept, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

THE STARS OF IRISH COUNTRY Fri 19 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

SKABUCK Fri 19 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

FAYE Fri 19 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

ELO ENCOUNTER Fri 19 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JIVE TALKIN' Fri 19 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

HEADWIRE + THE VIZ + THE VENGEANCE Fri 19 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

TARGET Fri 19 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

EASY CURE Sat 20 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

FLINT MOORE Sat 20 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 20 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS Sat 20 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

FLORENCE BLACK Sat 20 Sept,

O2 Academy

UBMAD4SKA Sat 20 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

SYNTH Sat 20 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

ANDREW CASSARA Sat 20 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth

JETSKI + THE LOSING SCORE + PALE SAILOR Sat 20 Sept, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

A NIGHT OF SKA FT. BAD MANNERS + THE BEAT FT RANKIN JNR + MORE Sat 20 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

ONEREPUBLIC Sat 20 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

MR APOLLO + SMALL CHANGES Sat 20 Sept, The Crescent, Sheepcote Street

RUBII Sat 20 Sept, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

STEP INSIDE THE 60S Sat 20 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

10CCLO - 10CC AND ELO TRIBUTE Sat 20 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER MOTOWN SHOW Sat 20 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

SYSTEM EIGHTIES Sat 20 Sept, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

MISHA MULLOV-ABBADO GROUP Sat 20 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

TWO TONE REVOLUTION Sat 20 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

VINCENT FLATTS Sun 21 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

KEVAN & THE BLACK COUNTRY SONS Sun 21 Sept, Snobs, Broad Street

WSTR + DREAM STATE + HAPPY DAZE Sun 21 Sept, O2 Academy

LOZ RABON Sun 21 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

GERRY COLVIN BAND Sun 21 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath



Jessie Reid - Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath



Florence Black - O2 Academy

Classical Music

PETER DONOHOE CELEBRITY PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Mozart, Messiaen & Beethoven, Tues 16 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CBSO: KAZUKI CONDUCTS ELGAR'S DREAM OF GERONTIUS Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Jess Dandy (contralto), David Butt Philip (tenor), Roderick Williams (baritone) & CBSO Chorus, Wed 17 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: OKTOBERFEST An evening of Bavarian traditional folk and polka music, alongside contemporary classics, Thurs 18 Sept, Hockley Social Club, Birmingham

THE MASSES BANDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES: LIVE IN CONCERT Programme includes a mix of military classics, rousing film scores, and solo performances, Thurs 18 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SYMPHONIC QUEEN Featuring Alfonso Casado Trigo (conductor), Nicole Raquel Dennis, Rob Houchen, Ross Hunter & Jodie Steele (vocalists). A symphonic spectacular paying tribute to one of the UK's greatest-ever rock bands, Sat 20 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM CONTEMPORARY MUSIC GROUP: LIFE CYCLE Featuring Anna Dennis (soprano) & Stephan Meier (conductor). Programme includes works by J Anderson, M Rock & C Bray, Sun 21 Sept, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

Comedy

ISMO Tues 16 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE Tues 16 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CALLY BEATON Thurs 18 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

HELEN BAUER Fri 19 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

LIAM FARRELLY, ALISTAIR BARRIE, MATT RICHARDSON, MEL OWEN & MARCUS BEEBY Fri 19 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DAMAN BAMRAH & KATIE NORRIS Fri 19 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LINDSEY SANTORO, TEZ ILYAS, NABIL ABDULRAHID, JOSH PUGH & OLLIE REYHART Fri 19 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

GARY DELANEY, JOSH PUGH, NABIL ABDULRAHID, TEZ ILYAS & LINDSEY SANTORO Fri 19 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

DARIUS DAVIES, MARK BITTLESTONE, OMAR BADAWY & ERIC LAMPAERT Sat 20 Sept, Rosies Nightclub, B'ham

LIAM FARRELLY, ALISTAIR BARRIE, MATT RICHARDSON & COMIC TBC Sat 20 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICHARD BLACKWOOD, JOSH PUGH, FARHAN SOLO & MICHAEL LEGGE Sat 20 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

TEZ ILYAS, DINESH NATHAN, PREET SINGH, RICHARD BLACKWOOD & ADAM COUMAS Sun 21 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

PLAY/TEST Scratch night to showcase work-in-progress theatre pieces. Audience members will be invited to offer their feedback, Tues 16 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

MURDER AT MIDNIGHT Torben Betts' 'twisted crime caper' stars Jason Durr (Heartbeat, Casualty), Susie Blake (Dinner Ladies, Coronation Street) and Max Bowden (Ben Mitchell in EastEnders), Tues 16 - Sat 20 Sept, The Rep, Birmingham

ROCK OF AGES Lichfield Operatic Society present an amateur version of the hit musical comedy, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

AND THEN THERE WERE NONE The Highbury Players present an amateur version of Agatha Christie's classic thriller, Tues 16 - Sat 27 Sept, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

FULL HOUSE A 50-minute rollercoaster of bingo, betrayal and borderline psychosis, Thurs 18 Sept, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

BATTLE CRY One-act, one-man play, based on the true stories of former soldiers battling PTSD, Fri 19 Sept, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE BODYGUARD Award-winning and smash-hit musical starring Sidonie Smith as Rachel Marron and Adam Garcia as Frank Farmer, Sat 20 - Sat 27 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

JULIET & ROMEO Dance, theatre and comedy combine in an imaginative new take on Shakespeare's famously tragic love story, Sun 21 Sept, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick

Kids Theatre

THE WITCH WHO COULDN'T SLEEP Sing-along family musical featuring live action, music and animation, Sun 21 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

Dance

BRB: BLACK SABBATH THE BALLET Production showcasing 'thrilling' dance presented alongside full orchestrations of legendary Black Sabbath tracks, including Paranoid and Iron Man. New orchestral works inspired by the band's music also



The Bodyguard - The Alexandra, Birmingham

feature, Thurs 18 - Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING: A CELEBRATION OF THE SHIPPING FORECAST Charlie Connelly brings the shipping forecast vividly to life, Mon 15 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

JIMMY CRICKET'S BIG SHOW Jimmy celebrates his 80th birthday by performing in this afternoon show hosted by Andy Eastwood. Magician Mark Shortland, tap dancer Katie Lewis and pop duo Abba Vinyl also star, Tues 16 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

LINE DANCING WITH THE DOUBLE DOLLY'S Evening of comedy, Dolly Parton songs and line dancing..., Sat 20 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU Comedian & cartoonist Mike Capozzola's multimedia nerd-comedy show mocks and celebrates all things Star Wars, Sat 20 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SAMARITANS LISTEN UP! Talent, tunes and togetherness, presented in support of Samaritans Tamworth, Sat 20 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

CIRQUE DE CELINE Circus meets melody in what's being described as 'the ultimate tribute to Celine Dion', Sat 20 Sept, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

Talks & Spoken Word

AN EVENING WITH SIR GEOFF HURST Join the footballing legend as he shares stories from his illustrious career, Tues 16 Sept, The Core

Theatre, Solihull

ERIC KNOWLES - WHAT'S IT WORTH? 'A witty and entertaining look at the world of antiques with one of its best raconteurs'. Take along your treasures for a free valuation, Wed 17 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

KILLER COUPLES Emma Kenny unravels the complex psychology of couples who commit the unthinkable, Thurs 18 Sept, Walsall Arena

CRIME VIRAL: MURDER STAGED Research psychologist & psychopathy expert Cheish Merryweather explores the lies embedded in crime scenes, and explains why 90% of people believe they can get away with murder, Thurs 18 Sept, The Hub @ St Mary's, Lichfield

Events

BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK TOUR Learn about the stained-glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones and crafted by the workshop of William Morris, Mon 15 & Thurs 18 Sept, Birmingham Cathedral

HIDDEN SPACES TOUR A rare opportunity to explore areas of the building that are usually closed to the public, Thurs 18 & Sat 20 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

CENTERING ON CIVIC WALKING TOUR Join Ben Waddington, author and founder of Still Walking, for a walk around the block, Thurs 18 Sept, The Exchange, 3 Centenary Square, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM'S VICTORIAN TRUE CRIME TALES A walking tour & talk, during which crime & policing historian Adam Wood tells gruesome tales of Birmingham's Victorian past, Thurs 18 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

HERITAGE OPEN DAY - COLLECTIONS STORE TOUR Delve into the archives and check out some of the museum's



Heritage Open Day - West Midlands Police Museum

oldest and most precious objects, Thurs 18 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

AUTUMN STEAM GALA A festival of steam, featuring both guest and home locomotives operating a busy timetable, Thurs 18 - Sun 21 Sept, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

THE DANCING GRANNIES QUIZ NIGHT Fri 19 Sept, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

OLD YARDLEY WALK: BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK Join local expert Mike Byrne in a leisurely stroll around the village of Yardley, Fri 19 Sept,

Blakesley Hall, Birmingham

FLAT CAP KILLER: A MURDER MYSTERY Immersive experience presented by Murder By Appointment, Fri 19 Sept, Tamworth Castle

A WALK IN THE PARK: LATE SUMMER LANDSCAPE TOUR Join Landscape Manager Fiona Tansey to explore and connect with the natural world in Compton Verney's grounds, Fri 19 Sept, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

A PLACE IN THE SUN LIVE Explore the possibility of buying a holiday home or moving abroad, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Sept, NEC, Birmingham

GIANTS LATE Step into the museum after dark for an event in which science, stories, and supersized creatures come to life, Sat 20 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

HERITAGE OPEN DAY - COLLECTIONS STORE TOUR Delve into the archives and check out some of the museum's oldest and most precious objects, Sat 20 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

FIREWORK CHAMPIONS Three finalists light up the sky in a 'thrilling competition', Sat 20 Sept, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

BATTLE OF BRITAIN PROMS Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Hercules aircraft, this open-air concert honours the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sept, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

BATTLE OF BRITAIN BIG WEEKEND Featuring live entertainment, family activities, stalls and more, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sept, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

FREE HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND Explore the 19-acre Avoncroft Museum, featuring more than 30 buildings and structures, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sept,

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove
HERITAGE OPEN DAYS APPLE HARVEST WEEKEND Explore the manor, gallery and gardens, then head to the orchard and kitchen garden for heritage apples, games and harvest fun for all the family, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sept, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

CRYSTAL MILE WALKING TOUR Explore the history of the iconic glassmaking factories that once formed 'the crystal mile', Sun 21 Sept, Stourbridge Glass Museum

HERITAGE OPEN DAY Event supported by local community groups, Sun 21 Sept, Forge Mill Needle Museum, Redditch

THE MACABRE MUSEUM - STORIES OF MURDER AND MAYHEM Hear tales of true crime, horrendous acts and dastardly deeds, Sun 21 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, B'ham

Festivals

HEAL FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Fratellis, The Sherlocks, Dub Pistols, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Sept, DMOS People West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

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THE BLACK PUG, WARWICK
WED 10 SEPT, 12.30PM

COBBS FARM SHOP, STRATFORD
WED 10 SEPT, 3.15PM

TOUCHDOWN CAFE, WELLESBOURNE
THU 11 SEPT, 9.45AM

MASON'S ARMS, LONG MARSTON
THU 11 SEPT, 12.30NOON

THE BELL, ALDERMINSTER
THU 11 SEPT, 2.50PM

BOSTON TEA PARTY, LEAMINGTON SPA
FRI 12 SEPT, 10.15AM

CUSTARD CORNER/STATION HOUSE, KENILWORTH
FRI 12 SEPT, 4.00PM

WANT TO MEET JAMES MAY?

TV legend James May is cycling across the country on a musical adventure, for a charity bike challenge to raise funds for Armonico Consort, a music charity supporting community outreach.

Grab a great opportunity to meet James and some special guests who will be at **THESE VENUES** this September!

PLEASE NOTE: Timings are approximate and may vary due to the unpredictable nature of the cycling challenge.

If you would like to know more about the charity bike tour or would like to donate to Armonico Consort's community work please scan the QR code or visit www.armonico.org.uk/bike2025

www.armonico.org.uk
Registered charity no: 1103159

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Monday 22 - Tuesday 30 September



Deacon Blue - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Gigs

EHST Mon 22 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

DEACON BLUE Mon 22 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

CHLOE MORIONDO Tues 23 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

UNIVERSITY Tues 23 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

JAMES MORRISON Tues 23 Sept, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

JIM LEGXACY Tues 23 Sept, Mama Roux's, Digbeth

LEWIS CAPALDI Tues 23 - Wed 24 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE ZAC SCHULZE GANG Wed 24 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

WEIRD ON PURPOSE Wed 24 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE WHISKEY BROTHERS Wed 24 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Smallbrook Queensway

AS IT IS Wed 24 Sept, O2 Academy

CHRIS & LOUISE ROGAN + JOHN & CAROL HOARE Wed 24 Sept, Red Lion Folk Club, Victoria Rd

SPATS LANGHAM'S HOT FINGERS Wed 24 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

PENFRIEND Thurs 25 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

CLIMAX BLUES BAND Thurs 25 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

NIKO B Thurs 25 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

BACH AND ARTHUR Thurs 25 Sept, O2 Academy

THE CRANE WIVES Thurs 25 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

ALEX THOMPSON AND GEORGIA BRAY Thurs 25 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

TRISH CLOWES Thurs 25 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire



SCOTT LAVENE Thurs 25 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Kings Heath

BARRY STEELE PRESENTS THE ROY ORBISON STORY Thurs 25 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE CHURCHFITTERS Thurs 25 Sept, Bromsgrove Folk Club

QUILL Thurs 25 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

M(H)AOL Fri 26 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

RED LEMONS Fri 26 Sept, The Jam House, Jewellery Quarter

FRANCIS ROSSI Fri 26 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall



SEAN REEVES Fri 26 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

THE LET'S GO'S Fri 26 Sept, The Night Owl, Digbeth

REND COLLECTIVE Fri 26 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

UNDER THE COVERS Fri 26 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

EDDIE GRIPPER Fri 26 Sept, 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter

ALAN FLETCHER Fri 26 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

POPPY DANIELS Fri 26 Sept, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall

ALEX THOMPSON AND FRIENDS Fri 26 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

KEYSHIA COLE Fri 26 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

EVAN PARKER Fri 26

Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Cannon Hill Park

DIRE STREETS Fri 26 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove

ADELE PERFORMED BY CHLOE BARRY Fri 26 Sept, The Dovehouse, Solihull

XODUS: TRIBUTE TO BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS Fri 26 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BILLY JOEL - THE PIANO MAN Fri 26 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

FRANKIE'S GUYS Fri 26 Sept, Dudley Town Hall

THE SMITHS LTD Fri 26 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

SLADE FANS CONVENTION Fri 26 - Sat 27 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

SPEAKING IN TONGUES Sat 27 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

THE LOVELESS Sat 27 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

THE AC30S Sat 27 Sept, The Night Owl, Digbeth

BROOKE ALEX Sat 27 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THEATRE OF HATE Sat 27 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

THE ROOTERS Sat 27 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

THE OGRETONES Sat 27 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Balsall Heath

THE GRUNGE ADDICTION Sat 27 Sept, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

LINDISFARNE Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

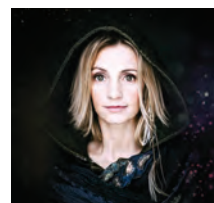
BJÖRN AGAIN Sat 27 Sept, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

DINO BAPTISTE FEAT DANA GILLESPIE Sat 27 Sept, Grand Hotel, Birmingham

PIERCE THE VEIL Sat 27 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SNAYX Sat 27 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth

CARA DILLON Sat 27 Sept, Artrix, Bromsgrove



ELVIS, UP CLOSE & PERSONAL Sat 27 Sept, The Dovehouse, Solihull

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 27 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

QUEEN OF THE NIGHT - WHITNEY HOUSTON TRIBUTE Sat 27 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

THE BEAST UK - IRON MAIDEN TRIBUTE Sat 27 Sept, Dudley Town Hall

THE BOHEMIANS - QUEEN'S GREATEST HITS Sat 27 Sept, Halesowen Town Hall

LANDSLIDE - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Sat 27 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

POPPY JAM Sat 27 Sept,

The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

KYLE WELCH Sun 28 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre



TAXI FOR JESUS Sun 28 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Ludgate Hill

ATREYU Sun 28 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

STEVE GIBBONS BAND Sun 28 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Cofton Hackett

MENACE + DRONGOS FOR EUROPE Sun 28 Sept, Tower of Song, Pershore Road

THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK Sun 28 Sept, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square

THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK Sun 28 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

RICH PARSONS Sun 28 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE DUKE SPIRIT + SCROUNGE Tues 30 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

LOWKEY Tues 30 Sept, O2 Institute, Digbeth

ESOTERICA Tues 30 Sept, The Flapper, Cambrian Wharf

URBAN SOUL TRIO Tues 30 Sept, B:Eats, Symphony Hall, Centenary Square



The Crane Wives - Birmingham Town Hall

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Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT: PRESENTING PIPES AND PEDALS

Featuring Thomas Trotter (organ) & David Gallichan (organ builder). A musical sights and sounds tour around the Birmingham Town Hall organ, Mon 22 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

CHINEKE! ORCHESTRA Featuring Roderick Cox (conductor), Tai Murray (violin), Sheku Kanneh-Mason (cello) & Isata Kanneh-Mason (piano). Programme includes works by Coleridge-Taylor, Beethoven & W Dawson, Wed 24 Sept, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

CBSO: BRITTEN & ELGAR Featuring Nicholas Collon (conductor), Vilde Frang (violin) & Lawrence Power (viola). Programme also includes Thomas Adès Hotel Suite, Thurs 25 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE: VAUGHAN WILLIAMS' PIANO QUINTET Featuring Nate Bomans (violin), Chris Yates (viola), Helen Edgar (cello), Julian Atkinson (double bass) & John Thwaites (piano). Programme also includes Fauré's Piano Quartet No.1 in C minor, Fri 26 Sept, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL: ASHLEY WAGNER (ORGAN) Programme includes works by J.S. Bach, Mulet & Reubke, Fri 26 Sept, St Philip's Cathedral, B'ham

MYSTERY ENSEMBLE: MIYAZAKI'S DREAMS Programme includes works by Hisaishi, Asazaki & Cage, Sat 27 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy

SCOTT BENNETT Thurs 25 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, LAUREN PATTISON & THE RAYMOND AND MR TIMPKINS REVUE Thurs 25 Sept, The Glee Club, B'ham

ESTHER MANITO Fri 26 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

EMMANUEL SONUBI Fri 26 Sept, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JAMIE D'SOUZA, HARRY STACHINI, LAUREN PATTISON & THE RAYMOND AND MR TIMPKINS REVUE Fri 26 - Sat 27 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARK WATSON Sat 27 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham



VLAD ILICH, JORDAN DUCHARME, JOSEPH EMSLIE & JON PEARSON Sat 27 Sept, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

THOMAS GREEN Sun 28 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOANNE MCNALLY Sun 28 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALAN DAVIES Sun 28 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

GREG JAMES Tues 30 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RORY O'HANLON Tues 30 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY New stage adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's famous novel. Ed McVey (The Crown), Maisie Smith (EastEnders) and Bruce Herbelin-Earle (Netflix's Free Rein) star, Mon 22 - Sat 27 Sept, The Rep, Birmingham

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW Richard O'Brien's legendary rock & roll musical, featuring timeless classics Sweet Transvestite, Dammit Janet, and the pelvic-thrusting Time Warp, Mon 22 - Sat 27 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

JULIET & ROMEO Dance, theatre and comedy combine in an imaginative new take on Shakespeare's famously tragic love story, Tues 23 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES Award-winning actor Jonathan Goodwin plays Sherlock Holmes and a host of other characters in a stage adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's legendary tale, Tues 23 Sept, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

SURINDERELLA Panto with a difference. Expect laughter, romance, masala moves and a dazzling Bollywood ball, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre present an amateur version of Roald Dahl's much-loved story, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

GREASE Tudor Musical Comedy Society present an amateur version of the famous high-school musical, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JACK ABSOLUTE FLIES AGAIN Amateur version of the Richard Bean/Oliver Chris comedy, reimagining Sheridan's The Rivals and relocating it to a country house during the Battle of Britain, Sat 27 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE WIZARD OF OZ Amateur version presented by Theatretrain Solihull, Sun 28 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

EMMA New version of Jane Austen's comedy of manners, presented in



Joanne McNally - Birmingham Hippodrome

celebration of the 250th anniversary of the author's birth, Mon 29 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, The Rep, Birmingham

Dance

ACE DANCE: THE WORLD AS WE SEE IT New double bill 'featuring two contrasting visions of our world today', Thurs 25 - Fri 26 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham



Light Entertainment

CONFESSIONS OF A TELETUBBY Having played LaaLaa for six years, Nikky Smedley provides a revealing peek behind the scenes of the global TV phenomenon, Wed 24 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

THE PHANTOMS Lee Mead stars alongside former West End Phantoms in a celebration of musical theatre's most iconic shows, Thurs 25 Sept, The Core Theatre, Solihull

THE REAL QUEENS OF BOLLYWOOD Take a nostalgic journey through Bollywood's most iconic songs - from golden-era classics to modern-day anthems, Fri 26 Sept, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

CANDLELIGHT: THE BEST OF BOLLYWOOD ON STRINGS Discover the music of Bollywood on Strings at St Paul's Church under the gentle glow of

candlelight, Sat 27 Sept, St Paul's Church, Birmingham (7pm)

CANDLELIGHT: QUEEN VS ABBA Discover the music of Queen and ABBA at St Paul's Church under the gentle glow of candlelight, Sat 27 Sept, St Paul's Church, Birmingham (9pm)

THE JAMES BOND CONCERT SPECTACULAR Tribute to the music of James Bond. Compered by former Miss Money Penny, Caroline Bliss, Sun 28 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

IRELAND THE SHOW Celebration of Irish culture featuring music, laughter, impressions and dance, Sun 28 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

SAM RABONE'S BIG BOSTIN' VARIETY SHOW The Garrick's favourite pantomime Dame makes an autumn return, Sun 28 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

WOLF & OWL Romesh Ranganathan and Tom Davis' hotly anticipated live show. Get ready for an evening of laughs, surprises and shooting the breeze, live and unedited, Mon 29 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET The 'creme de la creme of the cabaret world' take to the stage to surprise and delight, Mon 29 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

NINA CONTI: WHOSE FACE IS IT ANYWAY? Ventriloquist Nina presents her brand-new show, Tues 30 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham



Talks & Spoken Word

CHAI AND CHAT: MY MARATHON SARI Sari-wearing marathon runner and mental-health champion Poppy Jaman shares sari stories from communities across the UK, Thurs 25 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET - PRE PERFORMANCE TALK Take a peek behind the curtain to find out more about Birmingham Royal Ballet's shows. Pre-performance talks last approximately 30 minutes, Fri 26 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

TIM PEAKE: ASTRONAUTS - THE QUEST TO EXPLORE SPACE Join Tim for a celebration of space exploration, Mon 29 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

NATALIE HAYNES: NO FRIEND TO THIS HOUSE Join the bestselling author as she previews her latest literary offering - a dive into the enduring tale of the Argonauts and the Golden Fleece, Tues 30 Sept, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Events

HIDDEN SPACES TOUR A rare opportunity to explore areas of the building that are usually closed to the public, Thurs 25 & Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

FUSION ART FAIR Featuring over 90 artists and galleries from around the UK, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Sept, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

MALVERN AUTUMN SHOW Featuring the CANNA UK Giant Vegetables Championship, Great Malvern Cake Off competitions, talks from celebrity experts, and the chance to sample delicious local food, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Sept, Three Counties Showground, Malvern

SHREWSBURY PRIDE Celebrating the local LGBTQIA+ community, Sat 27 Sept, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

PEAKY BLINDERS NIGHT Walk in the footsteps of Birmingham's most notorious gangs, Sat 27 Sept, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET: CLASS ON STAGE Take a peek behind the scenes as Birmingham Royal Ballet's dancers prepare for one of their performances, Sat 27 Sept,



Railway 200: The Show - Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

Birmingham Hippodrome

COMIC CON MIDLANDS Celebrating all things pop culture, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Sept, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

SCAREFEST The award-winning Alton Towers Scarefest makes a return, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Sept, Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire

RAILWAY 200: THE SHOW Travel by train to the Engine House at Highley and enjoy an educational and entertaining look back at the history of the railways, Sun 28 Sept, Severn Valley

Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

WEDDING OPEN DAY Sun 28 Sept, Weston Park, Shropshire

QUIZ NIGHT An evening promising 'fun, laughter, and a little friendly competition', Mon 29 Sept, Old Joint Stock Pub & Theatre, B'ham

IN PURSUIT OF REPETITIVE BEATS Travel back in time to the heart of the Acid House scene, courtesy of 'the UK's biggest VR experience', Mon 29 Sept - Mon 13 Oct, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

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