

Wolverhampton & Black Country

ISSUE 464 SEPTEMBER 2025

What's On

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

wolverhamptonwhatson.co.uk



Dance Consortium presents

CIRQUE ÉLOIZE



10 RELOADED

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"Exhilarating"
The Guardian

★★★★★
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GRAND

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inside:

CALAMITY JANE

Whip-cracking musical rides into the Wolverhampton Grand



METAL MAGIC

BRB's Black Sabbath The Ballet returns to the stage



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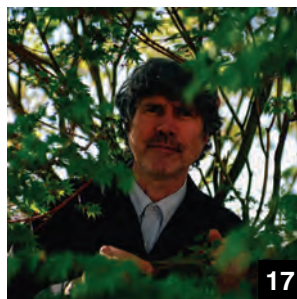
*Advance single fare. T&Cs apply.



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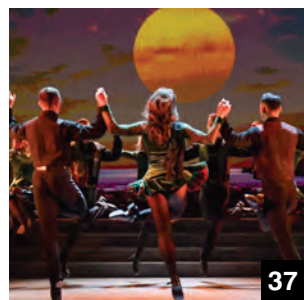
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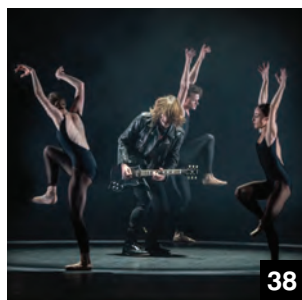
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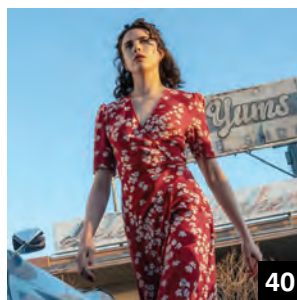
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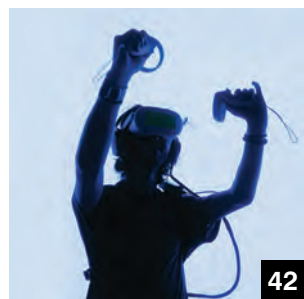
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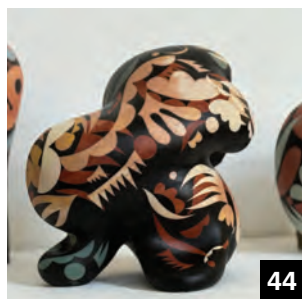
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What's On

MEDIA GROUP

Jessica Clixby jessica@whatsonlive.co.uk Subscriptions: subscriptions@whatsonlive.co.uk 01743 281714
Contributors: Graham Bostock, Diane Parkes, Patsy Moss, Steve Adams, Sue Hull, Reggie White, Sue Jones, Chris Eldon Lee
Publisher and CEO: **Martin Monahan** Accounts Administrator: **Louise Hunter** louise@21stdc.com 01743 281717

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Shen Yun to return to the Regent Theatre in 2026

A critically acclaimed show which takes its audiences on a journey through 'China's 5,000 years of divinely inspired culture' will make a welcome return to the Midlands early next year.

Classical dance, live orchestral music, authentic costumes and patented interactive backdrops are combined to excellent effect in Shen Yun, which visits Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre on Tuesday 17 & Wednesday 18 February. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit the website at atgtickets.com

A Shoddy Christmas in store at Lichfield Garrick

Festive family fun at Lichfield Garrick comes courtesy of an interesting new version of A Christmas Carol.

After causing a stir with their UK tour of A Shoddy Detective And The Art Of Deception, Shoddy Theatre will be getting their teeth into Charles Dickens' yuletide classic - but putting their very own spin on proceedings... When the production's cast fail to turn up, it's left to one actor, the panicking stage manager and the deluded director to perform the show themselves!

A Shoddy Christmas Carol shows at the Garrick from Thursday 4 December to Saturday 3 January. Tickets are available by visiting the website: lichfieldgarrick.com

Pentabus launches new youth theatre initiative

Award-winning theatre company Pentabus is launching a new youth theatre at Ludlow Assembly Rooms.

Beginning this month, the group will be run by Pentabus' recently appointed co-directors Ella Niblett and Emma Morgan (pictured). For more information and/or to sign up for the new initiative, visit pentabus.co.uk



Red House Glass Cone: a gold-standard attraction

Stourbridge's Red House Glass Cone venue, located at the heart of the town's historic Glass

Quarter, has once again achieved the prestigious Gold Standard following its latest



Visit England assessment.

The site, which continued to meet the criteria for an accredited visitor attraction under the national scheme, was praised by the assessors for its continued excellence across a range of categories.

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



Dudley museum acquires Black Country scooter

A lovingly restored and locally built scooter has been acquired by the Black Country Living Museum (BCLM).

The DKR Capella De-Luxe was a relatively affordable, reliable and convenient-to-use mode of transport back in the 1960s. The scooter was acquired by BCLM following the museum's recent expansion of its storytelling to include the 60s.



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.

Shrewsbury to welcome US singer Moira Smiley

American singer, songwriter & composer Moira Smiley will make a welcome visit to Shrewsbury next month (Saturday 11 October), where she will lead a singing workshop at Mereside Community Centre (1pm - 5pm), ahead of an evening concert at the town's Unitarian Church (7pm).

Moira's Shropshire stop-off is one of just four UK gigs in support of her latest album, The Rhizome Project - a selection of ancient and original folk songs.

Acclaimed duo Balladeste (Tara Franks and Preetha Narayanan) will assist Moira in presenting a folk repertoire with classical instrumentation.

The daytime workshop is open to all levels and ages, with participants then being invited to perform with Moira at her evening gig. For further information and to book tickets, visit moirasmiley.com/tour-2/



Image credit: Fiona Small

Rugby trio return to the Midlands

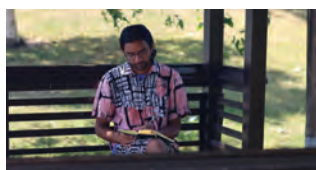
The Good, The Bad & The Rugby is hitting the road again - and will be making two West Midlands stop-offs next month. The popular weekly podcast, featuring England legends James Haskell and Mike Tindall, alongside broadcaster Alex Payne, visits Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre on Wednesday 29 October and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



New poetry trail at the Arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum's poet-in-residence, Arji Manuelpillai, has created a series of 10 powerful new poems exploring stories of bravery, sacrifice and service in the Far East during the Second World War.

Written to mark last month's 80th anniversary of VJ (Victory over Japan) Day, the poems can be listened to while standing alongside the memorials that helped inspire them. They will remain available to the public until Sunday 16 November.



Museum's Ozzy show to stay open until the end of the year

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."



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

Bouncers at The Buttermarket

Shropshire Drama Company will present their version of John Godber's hit comedy Bouncers at Shrewsbury's Buttermarket venue later in the autumn.

Tickets for the production, which shows on Wednesday 19 November, can be purchased at thebuttermarket.co.uk



Railway on track for Christmas fun

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 the railway's website at svr.co.uk



Wood-turning workshop at Shrewsbury venue

Crafting enthusiasts - and particularly those with an interest in wood - should make a beeline for Bicton Village Hall in Shrewsbury late this month, where the Shropshire Association of Woodturners is hosting an all-day demonstration.

Taking place on Saturday 27 September, the event will feature a 'masterclass' by one of the UK's most popular professional turners - 22-year-old Katie Armstrong.

Cathedrals on show at Lichfield Cathedral

A free-to-view exhibition of atmospheric photographs by the late Midlands-born Magnum photographer Peter Marlow opens at Lichfield Cathedral this month.

Featuring images of all 42 Anglican cathedrals in England - captured in natural light at dawn, with all artificial lighting turned off - Peter Marlow: The English Cathedral is available to view at the venue from Thursday 11 September to Sunday 2 November.

Go to sleep at Molineux!

Former Wolves goalkeeper Carl Ikeme is encouraging fans to spend the night sleeping inside the club's Molineux stadium, in order to support people experiencing homelessness and disadvantage across the city.

Carl has been a regular advocate for the fundraising Molineux Sleepout, and recently popped back to his footballing home to help promote this year's event, which takes place in the stadium's Stan Cullis Stand on the night of Friday 14 November...

To find out more about the Sleepout, visit the website at gsmwolverhampton.org.uk

A marketing success for Wolverhampton Grand

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre has won Marketing Campaign of the Year at the Wolverhampton BID Excellence Awards for its SpotLight magazine.

The publication is described by the Grand's publicity as offering 'audience members a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes, with engaging interviews, insights into the development of the theatre and exclusive photos from events with the stars'. SpotLight can be picked up for free at the Grand.



Anyone for cake? Popular event returns to the NEC

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

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

Stoke Rep Players stage Steven Moffat's farce

The Stoke Rep Players will next month present a 'farical comedy' written by Dr Who screenwriter Steven Moffat.

An exploration of the complexities of modern social interactions, The Unfriend shows at Stoke Rep Theatre from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 October.

Tickets are available at stokerep.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

New family trail launched in Ironbridge

A brand-new family trail is bringing 'animated magic' to six retail outlets in Ironbridge Gorge.

The trail, supported by Telford & Wrekin Council's Pride In Our High Street programme and created by award-winning animator Leo Wright - a graduate of the world-renowned Aardman Academy, the home of Wallace & Gromit - aims to put Ironbridge Gorge 'on the map in a whole new way'.

Leo's film, The Big Bad Wolf, was made at Aardman and features two characters - Billy the wolf and Richmond the pig - who now appear outside shops in Ironbridge as part of the trail.

B:Music

Town Hall & Symphony Hall

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0121 7803333



Man in the Mirror

05 September | Symphony Hall



Brass Gala 2025

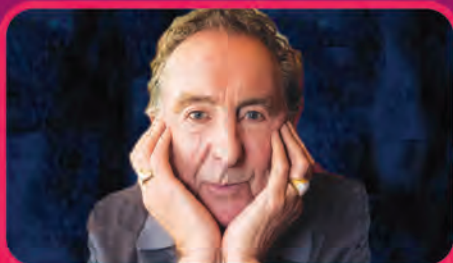
07 September | Symphony Hall



**FREE
FAMILY
FUN!**

National Youth Brass Band | Have A Go Brass

07 September | Symphony Hall



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!**

WORLD CLASS ENTERTAINMENT

ATG
TICKETS

Regent Theatre



One of Ireland's finest comedians for one night only

Dara Ó Briain: Re:Creation

Wed 17 Sep



The unmissable musical classic is back

Blood Brothers

Tue 23 – Sat 27 Sep



The stage phenomenon hits Stoke-on-Trent

2:22 A Ghost Story

Mon 29 Sep – Sat 4 Oct



Based on the best-selling book

The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical

Tue 7 – Sat 11 Oct



Celebrating 30 years of mesmerising dance

Riverdance 30: The New Generation

Tue 28 – Fri 31 Oct



Don't miss folk music icon

Suzanne Vega

Sat 1 Nov

Victoria Hall



Experience all the biggest hits from 'The Velvet Voice'

Luther Live

Fri 12 Sep



An electrifying tribute

Man In The Mirror – A Tribute To Michael Jackson

Thu 25 Sep



An epic ABBA-fest

Thank ABBA For The Music

Sat 4 Oct



The hit podcast live on stage

The Wittering Whitehalls: Barely Alive

Wed 8 Oct

News from around the region

New Vic set to stage Alan Ayckbourn's 91st play

Newcastle-under-Lyme's New Vic Theatre will host a production of Alan Ayckbourn's latest - and 91st - play next month. Not only written but also directed by Alan, *Earth Angel* asks the question: what makes someone a good person? The production runs at the venue from Tuesday 14 to Saturday 25 October. Liza Goddard stars. For more information and to book tickets, visit newvictheatre.org.uk

Shrewsbury date for Monty Python's Spamlot

Shrewsbury Musical Theatre Company will present their version of Monty Python's *Spamalot* at the town's Theatre Severn next month. The production shows at the venue from Thursday 9 to Saturday 11 October. Tickets are available via theatresevern.co.uk

Christmas comes early for the Lichfield Players

The Lichfield Players are next month presenting a play which they're publicising as being a cross between *Succession* and *Blackadder*...

A biting comedy about power, politics and family dysfunction, James Goldman's *The Lion In Winter* is set in the 12th century and finds King Henry II trying to pick an heir - over Christmas dinner!

The show runs at Lichfield Garrick Theatre from Wednesday 1 to Saturday 4 October.

Tales From The Dark at Shrewsbury's Hive venue

Symphonic metal band Serpentyne return to Shrewsbury's The Hive for the first time in nearly 10 years next month.

Fronted by Maggiebeth Sand, the quintet will visit the venue on Saturday 18 October, presenting a show based on their new CD/download album, *Tales From The Dark*. Further information is available via the venue's website at hiveonline.org.uk

**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

The Belfry opens new fitness & leisure club

The award-winning Belfry Hotel & Resort has opened 149 new bedrooms.

Built 'with comfort, style and choice in mind', the bedrooms enjoy 'unparalleled views' over the venue's Brabazon golf course. The development also includes a new state-of-the-art fitness & leisure club. For more information, visit thebelfry.com



which advocates for and empowers people 'with living and lived experience of alcohol and drugs'.

Florence Nightingale: the lady with the... hammer?!

Zany funsters Oddsocks are returning to the Midlands this autumn with a brand-new show about Florence Nightingale.

More usually found presenting high-spirited versions of Shakespeare plays - they even ramp up his comedies! - the long-established theatre company's latest offering instead takes a look at 'the bloody background of Britain's most famous nurse'. *Florence Nightingale The Lady With The Hammer* shows at The Anstice in Madeley on Wednesday 29 October, Ludlow Assembly Rooms on Saturday 1 November, and Bromsgrove's The Artrix on Saturday 8 November. Tickets can be purchased via the company's website at oddsocks.co.uk

**Wolverhampton to host UK Recovery Walk 2025**

Wolverhampton's West Park is this month hosting the UK Recovery Walk 2025 (Saturday 13 September).

The annual event, which includes a public march and a celebratory Recovery Village, is endorsed by the UK-wide human rights charity Faces & Voices of Recovery UK,



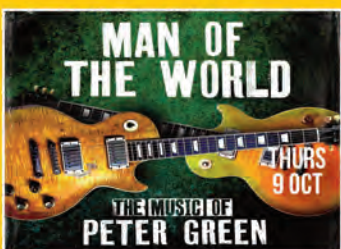
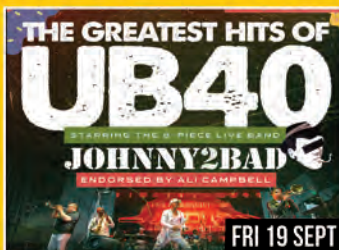
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LIVE!

SHREWSBURY



THE HOME OF BONGO'S BINGO IN SHROPSHIRE!

The return of Heritage Open Days...

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history & culture, taking place every September and involving thousands of local volunteers and organisations. Stories are told, traditions explored and histories brought to life. The festival provides members of the general public with the chance to see usually hidden places and try out brand-new experiences. And what's more, it's all absolutely FREE... The event returns this year from Friday 12 to Sunday 21 September - and here are just some of the venues you can explore around the region...

Black Country

Brierley Hill Market

Market Hall, High Street, Brierley Hill, DY5 3AP

Brierley Hill Market once again channels its inner 1920s swagger with a full-throttle Peaky Blinders-themed day, blending heritage with entertainment, fashion and fun. Visitors are encouraged to come in costume and soak up the atmosphere, with live performances from Gatsby dancers, vintage singer Vanessa Lee, and a guest appearance by the ever-so-dapper Sadlers Peaky Blinders.

Wander the stalls, meet the traders, and discover how markets like this shaped the working lives and social fabric of Brierley Hill for over a century.

Sat 20 Sept | 9am - 4pm, no pre-booking required

Bromwich Hall Museum

Manor House, Hall Green Road, West Bromwich, B71 2EA

Travel back 600 years to the late medieval period and the Wars of the Roses, as Buckingham's Retinue historical interpretation group set up camp in the grounds and bring the site to life. Visitors can see knights and ladies, learn about weapons and armour, take part in knight school, and see medieval soldiers fighting in a special combat display. Medieval dance, cooking displays, a short medieval play, and the chance to try some medieval games also feature in the programme of activities.

Sat 13 & Sun 14 Sept | 11am - 4pm, no pre-booking required



Dudley Castle

The Broadway, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 3AS

This Heritage Open Days event sees visitors being able to access the 11th-century Dudley Castle for free on two consecutive evenings. While on-site, they can check out the castle courtyard and keep, the undercroft and the castle visitor centre. Staff will be on hand to provide information about the history of the castle.

Thurs 18 & Fri 19 Sept | 5pm - 7pm, pre-booking required

St Michael's Church

Bell Street South, Brierley Hill, DY5 3EX

As dusk falls, visitors can step into the shadows of St Michael's Churchyard and uncover the fascinating lives behind the headstones, courtesy of The Graves At Night guided walk.

The atmospheric experience brings local history vividly to life and features carefully researched stories of ordinary people who lived extraordinary lives.

Expect to hear tales of war heroes, industrial pioneers, tragic losses and curious mysteries, all told with warmth and humour in true Brierley Hill fashion.

Tues 16 - Thurs 18 Sept | 7.50pm, pre-booking required

Wightwick Manor and Gardens

Wightwick Manor, Bridgnorth Road, Wolverhampton, WV6 8BN

With free admission on both days, experience the charm of Wightwick Manor & Gardens, a home filled with Pre-Raphaelite art and William Morris interiors.

The De Morgan Gallery, currently displaying an exhibition entitled Look Beneath The Lustre, will also be open.

Head to the orchard and kitchen garden to enjoy Apple Harvest Weekend celebrations, during which you can sample and purchase heritage apple varieties, play apple-themed games, and even pick your own fruit.

Sat 20 & Sun 21 Sept | 10am - 5pm, no pre-booking required

Staffordshire

Claymills Victorian Pumping Station

Meadow Lane, Stretton, Burton upon Trent, DE13 0DA

Operating 24 hours a day from 1885 to 1970 - pumping effluent from the Burton upon Trent beer industry - Claymills is one of



the most complete and fully restored pumping stations in the UK. Heritage Open Days visitors will be able to experience the grandeur of four beam engines, the original boilers, and more than 30 engines, exactly as they were used on site. The station will open in the evening on both open days, providing visitors with the opportunity to understand what it would have been like to work on the night shift. An introductory talk will be followed by guided, and self-guided, tours.

Sat 13 & Sat 20 Sept | 8pm - 10pm, pre-booking required

The Dudson Centre

Hope Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 5DD

The bottle kiln is a famous element of the Stoke-on-Trent skyline - and there aren't many original bottle ovens left to see. But, in the heart of Hanley stands the original Dudson kiln, housing the Dudson Collection. Following the Dudson factory's relocation in 1994, the site was kindly donated to the voluntary sector in Stoke-on-Trent. It is now a thriving community resource centre, home to many local charities and voluntary organisations, and includes a cafe for all to enjoy.

During the Heritage Open Days, visitors will take a trip back in time to find out about the centres restoration, the impromptu archaeological digs, and the grand opening by Queen Elizabeth II.

Fri 19 - Sat 20 Sept | 10am - 2pm, no pre-booking required

Walsall Arena and Arts Centre



September

Billy Joel - The Piano Man
Fri 26 Sept 7.30pm £26.50



October

Oh What A Night!
Fri 3 Oct 7.30pm £27.50



80's Mania
Sat 4 Oct 7.30pm £26.50



The Drifters
Fri 24 Oct 7.30pm £32.50



November

**Vincent Simone -
Tango Passions**
Tues 11 Nov 7.30pm
£33.50 & £37.50



**James B Partridge -
The Big Christmas Assembly**
Thurs 13 Nov 7.30pm £25,
£27.50 & £30.50



December

**The Wizard Of Oz:
A Wicked Pantomime**
6 - 21 Dec £12, £14 & £17



March

**A Tribute to Sting & The Police
starring The Rozzers**
Sat 14 Mar 2026 7.30pm £28



Box Office: 0300 555 2898



walsallarena.com



Walsall Council



SOLVE-ALONG-A-MURDER-SHE-WROTE
Unique and hilarious cult hit - featuring games, prizes and audience participation
Thursday 4 September



THE SWINGING 60's
An exhilarating matinee tribute to one of the most iconic decades in music history
Thursday 11 September



HITS FROM THE BLITZ
Unique feel-good 1940s matinee show, starring the fabulous Five Star Swing
Tuesday 16 September



THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY
An award-winning tribute to the UK's biggest selling singles artist of the 1980s
Friday 19 September



SPOT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY
Brand new engaging, interactive show - based on the beloved classic by Eric Hill
Saturday 27 September



THE BOHEMIANS
One of the UK's longest-running, internationally renowned Queen tribute bands
Saturday 27 September



STEWART COPELAND
Spoken word show from A-List rock star and one of the best drummers of all-time
Wednesday 1 October



JIMMY WHITE
An evening with 'The Whirlwind' plus snooker legends John Virgo and Ken Doherty
Wednesday 1 October



ANNABEL CROFT
A journey through the remarkable career of the beloved tennis pro turned broadcaster
Thursday 2 October



TONY 'BOMBER' BROWN
An evening with the Baggies legend, hosted by the voice of Midlands sport Tom Ross
Thursday 2 October



ABSOLUTE BENSON
Celebrating the ten-time Grammy Award-winning guitar legend George Benson
Saturday 4 October



WONDERS OF OUR UNIVERSE
A visually stunning afternoon of cosmic exploration, set to inspire minds of all ages
Sunday 5 October

01384 812812
boroughhalls.co.uk

@BoroughHalls Dudley Borough Halls

Dudley Town Hall - Stourbridge Town Hall - Halesowen Town Hall

The return of Heritage Open Days, continued...

Staffordshire Archives & Heritage

Unit G, Beacon Business Park, Weston Road, Stafford, ST18 0WL

Take time to look behind the scenes and view the fascinating stored collections on a guided tour; Staffordshire social history, costume, art, and the nationally significant carriage collection will all be available to view. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to highlight treasures, tell you about their conservation and heritage roles, direct you around the site and answer your questions.

Sat 13 Sept | pre-booking required

Tamworth Castle Grounds

Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7NA

Enjoy a fun, free, hands-on clay workshop in the Tamworth Castle grounds, inspired by the striking architecture of the castle. Guided by local potters, you'll design and make your own unique clay creation, drawing from the castle's most iconic features. Once finished, take your creation home as a special keepsake - but before you go, capture the moment in the castle-themed selfie frame.

Sat 13 Sept | 11am - 4pm, no pre-booking required



V&A Wedgwood Collection

V&A Wedgwood Collection, Wedgwood Drive, Stoke-on-Trent, ST12 9ER

Take a look behind the scenes of the Unpacking Project at V&A Wedgwood Collection with a guided tour around the collection storage space.

The team are currently in the process of unpacking and cataloguing all stored collections of more than 65,000 objects. Visitors can learn more about how they care for the collection, and the creativity behind the objects that they're unwrapping.

Thurs 18 & Fri 19 Sept | 11am - 12pm, pre-booking required

Shropshire

Broseley Pipeworks

Duke Street, Telford, Shropshire, TF12 5LX

The Broseley Pipeworks is an original 19th-century clay tobacco pipe factory. It was abandoned in the 1950s, but restored by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in the early 1990s. A unique time capsule, the site details the development of an industry whose products were exported all around the world. For the Heritage Open Days event, there will be guided tours focusing on how historic buildings like this are rescued, and opportunities to see archival material relating to the site. Demonstrations of pipe making will also take place during the day.

Sat 13 & Sun 14 Sept | 10am - 4pm, no pre-booking required



Dudmaston Hall

Dudmaston Hall, Quatt, Bridgnorth, WV15 6QN

Heritage Open Days visitors can enjoy free entry to this lived-in family home at the heart of a working Shropshire estate.

A much-loved home for over 875 years, the Hall features family rooms scattered with photos (and maybe with an odd pair of shoes or two peeping out from under a table!). The galleries create a total contrast, with their formal, crisp lines, designed by the last owner, Lady Labouchere. Meanwhile, the gardens provide amazing vistas and a real sense of tranquillity, while the orchard is the perfect place for adults to relax and children to let off steam.

Sun 14 - Thurs 18, and Sun 21 Sept | 10.30am - 4.30pm, no pre-booking required



Haughmond Abbey

Haughmond Abbey, Haughmond, Uffington, Shrewsbury, SY4 4RW

Join the expert team of English Heritage volunteers for an exclusive tour of Haughmond Abbey.

The extensive remains of the Augustinian abbey include its abbots' quarters, refectory and cloister. The substantially surviving chapter house has a frontage richly bedecked with 12th- and 14th-century carving and statuary, and a fine timber roof from around the year 1500.

Sat 13, Mon 15, Tues 16, Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Sept | 11am (and 1pm Mon, Thurs & Fri), pre-booking required

Ironbridge guided tours

The Iron Bridge, Telford, TF8 7JP

The world's first iron bridge was erected over the River Severn in Shropshire in 1779. This pioneering structure marked a turning point in English design and engineering; after it was built, cast iron came to be widely used in the construction of bridges, aqueducts and buildings.

Join knowledgeable volunteers to find out more about this fascinating site and its equally fascinating history.

Sat 13, Mon 15, Tues 16 and Sat 20 Sept | 11am & 1pm, pre-booking required

Oswestry South Signal Box

Cambrian Heritage Railways, 30 Oswald Road, Oswestry, SY11 1RE

Built in the 19th century for the Oswestry & Newtown Railway, Oswestry South Signal Box was operational for more than 100 years. Unlike much of the neighbouring railway infrastructure, it escaped demolition but was stripped of its contents and equipment and remained a shell for many years. A Grade II listed building, Cambrian Heritage Railways volunteers have spent countless hours refurbishing the structure and sourcing and installing appropriate equipment. The signal box has now been restored for operational use, so is no longer normally available to visit. However, as public-service trains are not running over the Heritage Open Days weekend, visitors will have a rare opportunity to look around the restored facility and see how it works.

Sat 13 & Sun 14 Sept | 11am - 4pm, no pre-booking required

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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29 September, 7.30pm

Much Ado
About Jazz

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17 October, 7.30pm

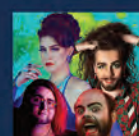
Ninebarrow in
partnership with
Burton Folk Club

Tickets: £20,
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2 October, 7.30pm
Sherlock Homes:
The Last Act

Tickets: £17,
Under 16s £12



22 October, 7.30pm

Absinthe:
Brewhouse Cabaret

Tickets: £12,
Concessions £8



3 October, 8pm
Brew-ha-ha
House Comedy

Tickets: £14



28 October, 2pm
Lyngo Theatre
Company: Puss
in Boots

Tickets: £8.50,
Group of 4 £30



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Live music from across the region...

Joanne Shaw Taylor

The Wulfrun at The Halls Wolverhampton,
Sat 27 September

Wednesbury-born Joanne Shaw Taylor has certainly made good on a dream start to her career. At the tender age of 16, her remarkable guitar playing caught the attention of Eurythmics star Dave Stewart, who was so impressed that he invited her to join his supergroup, D.U.P.. Before long, Joanne was garnering all manner of praise from some of the biggest names in the business, including Stevie Wonder, Annie Lennox and Joe Bonamassa.

Having turned 40 earlier this year, she continues to hit all the right notes with a blues-based sound that unapologetically borrows from rock, funk, soul and pop. Her Wolverhampton stop-off is part of a promotional tour for her recently released 10th studio album, *Black & Gold*. Folk duo Ferris & Sylvester also feature on the bill.



Gwenifer Raymond

The Darwin Room, Shrewsbury Library,
Sun 28 September

Welsh instrumentalist Gwenifer Raymond plays Shrewsbury just three weeks after the release of her new album, *Last Night I Heard The Dog Star Bark*. A champion of the finger-picked guitar, Gwenifer creates music which reflects her interest in folk horror and the avant-garde. This day time gig sees Gwenifer joined by fellow guitarist Elizabeth Still.



Gruff Rhys

Wolverhampton Arts Centre, Sun 7 September

Gruff Rhys finds inspiration for his music in a variety of unusual places.

The Pembrokeshire-born, Cardiff-based musician - best known, of course, as the singer and main songwriter for Super Furry Animals - has released albums based on all manner of subjects.

His first, 2005's *Yr Atal Genhedlaeth*, revelled in Welsh-language puns. This was swiftly followed by experimental pop albums *Candylion* and *Hotel Shampoo*, while 2014's *American Interior* followed the journey of 18th-century cartographer John Evans.

Babelsberg came along in 2018, offering a baroque take on the modern world, while 2019's *Pang!* created a multi-lingual mash-up driven by folkish bleeps crafted in collaboration with Zulu artist-producer Muzi.

A conceptual record about his own mountain, *Seeking New Gods*, became his most critically and commercially successful solo album yet, and was followed last year by the widescreen, baroque pop of *Sadness Sets Me Free*. Never a man to rest on his laurels, Gruff is this month releasing a new Welsh-language album entitled *Dim Probs*.

Level 42

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent,
Mon 29 September

Forty-six years after forming, and with more than 30 million albums sold worldwide, Level 42 have hit the road to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the album that set them on the path to superstardom.

The now-double-Platinum *World Machine*, their sixth studio album, was the record on which they cemented the sound and the style that led to them becoming one of the most successful bands in the world... They are joined at Victoria Hall by Roachford.

Stephen Fearing And The Sentimentals

The Hive, Shrewsbury, Wed 24 September

One of Canada's most respected performers, Stephen Fearing is a hugely talented guitar player with a smooth, intimate and powerful voice. He's joined for this Shropshire gig by his longtime collaborators, Danish indie-folk band The Sentimentals.

Xander And The Peace Pirates

Lichfield Guildhall, Fri 5 September

Making Keith Xander's guitar playing all the more remarkable is the fact that he was born without a right arm below the elbow, so plays the instrument using a prosthesis and hook with a pick attached...

But there's plenty more besides Keith's impressive musicianship to admire about this hugely talented quintet; coming complete with an infectious on-stage charisma, they boast a distinctive sound that's positively awash with haunting riffs and uniquely innovative melodies.





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.



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.

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'.



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."





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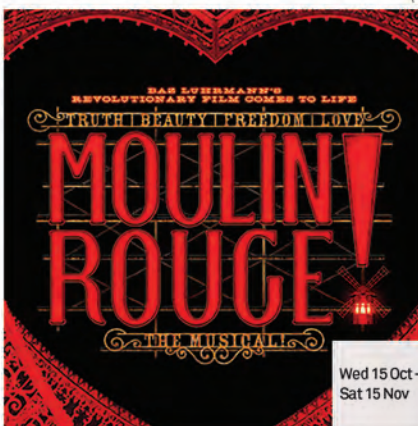


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Juliet & Romeo

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...

Seriously, what's not to like?



What will you see next?



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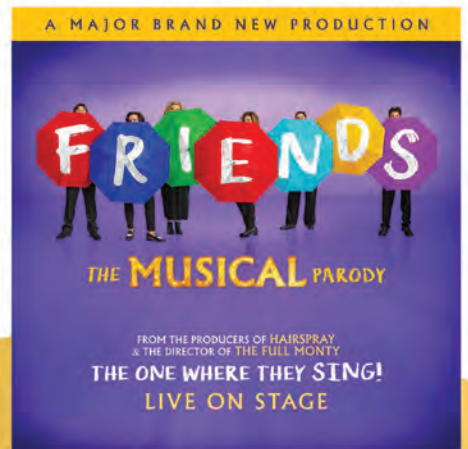
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The Rocky Horror Show

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."



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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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...



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...

(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...

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

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



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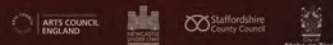
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Theatre for younger audiences



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."

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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 Moneypenny 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*s* 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."

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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 Lihares, © Perou.
Illustration © Beth Ingleton

Director Carlos Acosta

The Heavy Metal dance experience

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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."

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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



Film highlights in September...



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 Fivey (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

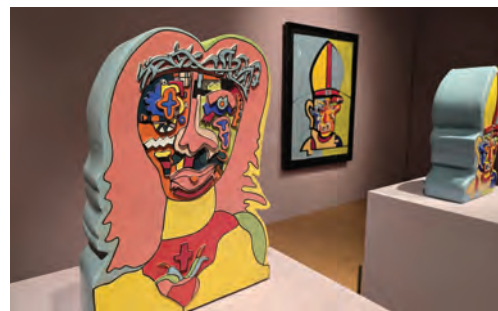
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, Sat 20 September - Sun 8 March

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.



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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.



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.

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.





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.

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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



2:22 A Ghost Story at Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent - Mon 29 September - Sat 4 October

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 September



Murder, She Didn't Write -
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury
Mon 1 September

Mon 8 - Sun 14 September



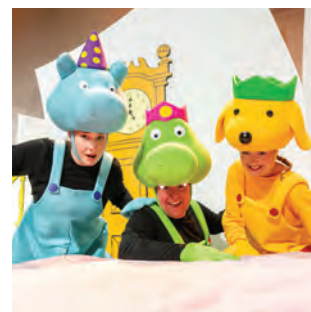
Martin Simpson -
Wolverhampton Arts Centre
Sat 13 September

Mon 15 - Sun 21 September



The Mushroom Show - Caldmore
Community Gardens, Walsall
Sat 20 September

Mon 22 - Tues 30 September



Spot's Birthday Party -
Stourbridge Town Hall
Sat 27 September

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

OSZY 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

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

New Art Gallery, Walsall

SHELTER An exhibition of works from the New Art Gallery & Outside In's collections, accompanying the national exhibition on the same theme, until Sun 19 Oct

NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY A group exhibition of newly commissioned works by Mia Banks, Mandeep Dillon and Tegen Kimbley, variously exploring ecocriticism, 'looking' as a contemplative act and the abstraction and reinterpretation of everyday materials, until Sun 9 Nov

HANNAH MAYBANK: UN-STILL Maybank, whose practice was heavily influenced by access to the Garman Ryan Collection, has created of a brand new painting featuring chrysanthemum flowers, as a gift for the Gallery's 25th birthday, until Sun 17 May 2026

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

100 YEARS, 60 DESIGNERS & 1 FUTURE A specially commissioned collection of plates, hand decorated by 1882 Ltd.'s potters, working from artwork donated by 60 of the UK's leading artists, architects, designers, musicians and creative polymaths, until Sun 7 Dec

THE NATIONAL GALLERY: ART ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is the first partner in the National Gallery's new national touring project. Fifteen life-size, printed masterpieces are installed in an outdoor exhibition in Bethesda Gardens, opposite the Gallery, until Wed 7 Jan 2026

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

YOUR ART, YOUR CITY A

documentation of a community curation project which engaged local community groups with the Wolverhampton Art Gallery collection, until Sun 28 Sept

COME AS YOU REALLY ARE A joyous celebration of local hobbies, creativity and passion, conceived by award-winning artist Hetain Patel, showcasing objects crafted, modified or collected by hobbyists based in the Midlands and beyond, until Sun 5 Oct

Elsewhere:

SOCIETY OF STAFFORDSHIRE ARTISTS EXHIBITION Until Mon 8 Sept, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

BEAR STEPS ART GALLERY SOLO EXHIBITION Featuring works by Debbie Chatfield, Claire Valentine & Sue Chatterton, until Sat 13 Sept, Bear Steps Art Gallery, Shrewsbury

ARTHUR BERRY ON THE STREETS A pop-up, open-air exhibition exploring Arthur's life and work. The exhibition 'cubes' will also feature some of the Three Counties Open Art Exhibition Arthur Berry Prize-winners, shining a light on his lasting legacy, until Sun 14 Sept, Stoke-on-Trent City Centre

STRIKE A MATCH: ELLIOT WALKER & BETHANY WOOD A tribute to the pair's shared practice and an exploration of their distinctive artistic voices, showcasing a broad spectrum of glassmaking techniques, until Sat 8 Nov, Stourbridge Glass Museum

THROUGH THEIR EYES: 80 YEARS ON Installation produced by the Royal British Legion, using powerful stories and portraits to honour the service, sacrifice, lives and legacy of those who served during the Second World War, until Sun 16 Nov, National Memorial Arboretum, Staffs

UNTHEMED Showcase of works, with no specific constraints, by artists from around the UK, here presented to celebrate the boundless nature of artistic expression, Sat 13 - Sun 21 Sept, Footprint Gallery, Telford

LYNNE WIXON Exhibition of industrial paintings, in celebration of Lynne's 40-year career as a practising painter, Tues 23 Sept - Sun 5 Oct, Footprint Gallery, Telford



The Christians: Unplugged - New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

Gigs

THE NORTHERN POP

GIRLIES Mon 1 Sept, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ELECTRONIC MUSIC OPEN

MIC Mon 1 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE LOCKDOWN TRIO

Mon 1 Sept, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow

Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

INOHA Tues 2 Sept, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

HILLTOP HOODS Tues 2 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

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

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, Birmingham

ONLY THE POETS Thurs 4 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

JAMES WALSH & BEN OTTEWELL Thurs 4 Sept, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

TOM GRENNAN Thurs 4 Sept, Utilita Arena, Birmingham

THE COAL PORTERS Thurs 4 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

CHRIS STAPLETON UK Thurs 4 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

BRAVE RIVAL Thurs 4 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE ROCKET MAN Thurs 4 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

PAUL DRAKELEY ALLSTAR

BIG BAND Thurs 4 Sept, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

WALK LIKE A MAN - FRANKIE VALLI Thurs 4 Sept, Crewe Lyceum

KING KRAB + MISTRUSTED + SHOTGUN MARMALADE Fri 5 Sept, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

GATHERING OF STRANGERS Fri 5 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

CHARLOTTE YOUNG Fri 5 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

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

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

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

MAN IN THE MIRROR Fri 5 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PHIL BEER Fri 5 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

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

VOX POCKETS Fri 5 Sept, The Rhodhouse, Sutton Coldfield

YESTERDAY ONCE MORE - THE CARPENTERS Fri 5 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

THE SIGNATURES Fri 5 Sept, Bierley Hill Civic, Dudley

21ST CENT. TENNESSEE Fri 5 Sept, Dudley Town Hall

DIRTY DC Fri 5 Sept, The

River Rooms, Stourbridge

LIVE/WIRE - THE AC/DC SHOW Fri 5 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

RICKY COOL AND THE IN CROWD Fri 5 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

CHRIS DIFFORD Fri 5 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

ELTONESQUE Fri 5 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

XANDER AND THE PEACE PIRATES Fri 5 Sept, Lichfield Guildhall

THE TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Fri 5 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FLEETING RUMOURS + JUST PRETENDING UK Fri 5 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

GOOD TO GO Fri 5 Sept, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SKASTUDS Sat 6 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

KASHMIR Sat 6 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BRUM PUNX PICNIC 2025 Sat 6 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

GANS Sat 6 Sept, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

NO JACKET REQUIRED - THE PHIL COLLINS TRIBUTE Sat 6 Sept, Stourbridge Town Hall

BORN IN THE 80S Sat 6 Sept, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BEATLEMANIA Sat 6 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

BIG JIM & THE ALABAMA BOOGIE BOYS Sat 6 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

NEARLY DAN Sat 6 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

HEADSTICKS REVOLUTION GATHERING FESTIVAL Sat 6 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ASOMVEL Sat 6 Sept, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

THE CHRISTIANS Sat 6 Sept, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

CLIMAX BLUES BAND Sat 6 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

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

DARKSIDE Sat 6 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE RONALDOS Sat 6 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

DIVAS Sat 6 Sept, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

D'YANI Sun 7 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

COURDS Sun 7 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

THE SHAKEDOWN BROTHERS Sun 7 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

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

AMIT DATTANI Sun 7 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

SMILE - THE MUSIC OF NAT KING COLE AND GREGORY PORTER Sun 7 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

DURAN Sun 7 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

GRUFF RHYS Sun 7 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

BABYLON A.D + BAD ACTRESS Sun 7 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Sun 7 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

SHAPE OF YOU: THE MUSIC OF ED SHEERAN Sun 7 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TOTAL REX Sun 7 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

Classical Music

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring James Kellas (organ), Fri 5 Sept, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

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

SATURDAYS AT NOON: TIM COLLINS ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Marchand, Buxtehude, Mendelssohn & more..., Sat 6 Sept, Shrewsbury Abbey

CATHY LAMB ORGAN RECITAL Programme includes works by Rheinberger, Haydn, Mendelssohn & more..., Sat 6 Sept, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

SUNDAY AFTERNOON ORGAN MUSIC: PAUL CARR (ORGAN) Programme includes works by Hollins, J.S. Bach, Verdi & more..., Sun 7 Sept, Holy Trinity Church Wordsley

Comedy

RHYS JAMES Wed 3 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

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

PHIL WANG & SPECIAL GUESTS Wed 3 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

RAHUL DUA Fri 5 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

HARRIET DYER Fri 5 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

JIMMY CRICKET & COMICS TBC Fri 5 Sept, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

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, B'ham

MATT STEWART Sat 6 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AURIE STYLA Sun 7 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

HI-DE-HI ERIC A 'fun-filled frolic and fabulous foolishness' is on the cards as New Vic regulars Eric and Bev forgo an expensive foreign holiday for a season break in the UK, until Fri 5 Sept, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

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



Murder, She Didn't Write - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

MURDER, SHE DIDN'T WRITE Improvised murder-mystery, in which the audience becomes the author and the cast act out an Agatha Christie-inspired masterpiece live on stage, Mon 1 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

COME FROM AWAY Five Towns Theatre present an amateur version of the hit Broadway show, telling the real-life story of 7,000 air passengers who were grounded in Canada in the wake of 9/11, and the small Newfoundland community that invited them into their lives, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Sept, Stoke Rep Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

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

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING Cycling theatre troupe The Handlebards present a bicycle-powered production of Shakespeare's much-loved comedy, Sun 7 Sept, Bowring Park, Telford, Shropshire

Dance

RIVERDANCE 30: THE NEW GENERATION

Award-winning music and mesmerising choreography comes together in this special anniversary show, Thurs 4 - Tues 9 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE RETURN OF THE LEGENDS Featuring Strictly favourites Brendan Cole, James Jordan, Pasha Kovalev, Vincent Simone and Ian Waite, Sun 7 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Light Entertainment

AN EVENING WITH JIMMY TARBUCK

Anecdotes and video clips re-living iconic moments from a life on stage and screen, Mon 1 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

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

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

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

RICHARD JONES: THE SOUND OF MAGIC Join the military illusionist as he highlights the link between music and the imagination, Sat 6 Sept, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

YOU'RE THE TOP - THE LIFE AND SONGS OF COLE PORTER Sally Jones presents a celebration of the Golden Age of Hollywood, Sat 6 Sept, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

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

COVENTRY BRICK FESTIVAL

13TH SEPT 2025

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SOCIETY ARENA

AMAZING LEGO DISPLAYS
NEW & RETIRED LEGO SETS
BUILD CHALLENGES
ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES



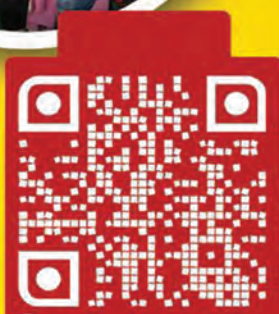
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2ND NOV 2025
NEW BINGLEY HALL

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

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', Tues 2 Sept, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

PATTIE BOYD: MY LIFE IN PICTURES Sat 6 Sept, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

Events

A SUMMER OF VICTORIAN CHILDHOOD

Have a go at old-fashioned games and activities, until Mon 1 Sept, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

READY, SET... GAME!

Play your way through 60 years of gaming, from retro 70s classics to today's favourites, until Mon 1 Sept, Enginuity, Ironbridge

FARMARAMA Five gigantic paddling pools and over 250 tonnes of golden sand transform the farm into 'the best beach going', until Mon 1 Sept,

National Forest Adventure Farm, Staffordshire

SUMMER OF PLAY Explore a range of family-friendly games on the Great Lawn, until Tues 2 Sept, Powis Castle and Garden, Welshpool

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

SUMMER OF PLAY Set sail on the haybale ship HMS Shugborough, and toddler-sized haybale tugboat, and explore the play hub, which comes complete with sandpits, a maze and outdoor games, until Sun 7 Sept, Shugborough Estate, nr Stafford

OLI & NEL'S HARE-RAISING ADVENTURE

Interactive trail following the story of Weston's resident hares, until Sun 14 Sept, Weston Park, Shropshire



MAISY'S MAIZE MAZE Follow the clues to find your way out of the maize maze, until Sun 28 Sept, Park Hall Farm, Oswestry, North Shropshire

A GUIDED BUS TOUR OF TRENTHAM GARDENS Step aboard the red bus for a 90-minute guided tour through Trentham Gardens, Wed 3 - Wed 24 Sept, Trentham Gardens, Staffs

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

TAMWORTH BEER FESTIVAL Featuring 75-plus ales, including festival specials and many new brews, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Sept Tamworth Assembly Rooms

FRIDAY TWILIGHT - THE TRAGEDY OF LIDICE Talk by Second World War historian Dr Kate Vigurs, Fri 5 Sept, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

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

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

SARI DRAPING WORKSHOP Discover the art of sari draping in this women-only workshop, Sat 6 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

OH MY DAYS! 80S DAYTIME DISCO All proceeds to Penkridge-based charity, Brighter Days Dog Rescue, Sat 6 Sept, Top Of The World, Stafford

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

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP With award-winning playwright Hattie Naylor, Sun 7 Sept, The Hive, Shrewsbury



COME AS YOU REALLY ARE

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12 JUL - 5 OCT 2025 FREE ADMISSION

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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

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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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This amateur production of "After September" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd. on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. concordtheatricals.co.uk



The Rheingans Sisters - Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

Gigs

DOM MALIN AND LUNA KELLER Mon 8 Sept, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

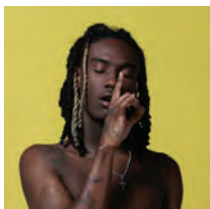
THE DROWNS + THE SKATE PUNK Mon 8 Sept, Redrum, Stafford

MARTIN FRY Mon 8 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

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

MICA PARIS Wed 10 Sept, The Jam House, Birmingham

OSAMASON Wed 10 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham



49TH & MAIN Wed 10 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

HARRIET ROSE Wed 10 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

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

MIDNIGHT RODEO Wed 10 Sept, The Victoria, Birmingham

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

LUKE MORLEY Wed 10 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

HOW SWEET IT IS -

CELEBRATING JAMES TAYLOR Wed 10 Sept, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

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, Birmingham

GREG FREEMAN Thurs 11 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ANIKA NILLES & NEVELL Thurs 11 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

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

DANCE MYTH + DEREK ZANETTI Thurs 11 Sept, The Flapper, B'ham

SWEETPOOL + THE BRACKISH Thurs 11 Sept, Tower of Song, Birmingham

TRASH BOAT Thurs 11 Sept, The Asylum, Birmingham

ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK Thurs 11 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE SWINGING 60S Thurs 11 Sept, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE K'S Thurs 11 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

SHOWADDYWADDY Thurs 11 Sept, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

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, Birmingham

LEVI WASHINGTON Fri 12 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE - LANDSLIDE Fri 12 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

BAYAAN Fri 12 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BIG WOLF BAND Fri 12 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

BACK ON THE ROAD Fri 12 Sept, Tower of Song, Birmingham

BEN SHANKLAND TRIO Fri 12 Sept, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

DAVID BLACK Fri 12 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE VIZ Fri 12 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

ROB LAMBERTI PRESENTS PERFECTLY GEORGE Fri 12 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Fri 12 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

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

INTO THE SHADOWS Fri 12 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

THE SONS OF PITCHES Fri 12 Sept, St. Matthew's Church, Walsall

GO YOUR OWN WAY - THE FLEETWOOD MAC LEGACY Fri 12 Sept, Dudley Town Hall

HIGHWAY + RED BY NIGHT Fri 12 Sept, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Fri 12 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

BLACKGOLD + DEADWAX Fri 12 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

BLONDISH Fri 12 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

MOTLEY SCREW + DREAM ON - AEROSMITH TRIBUTE Fri 12 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

LUTHER LIVE Fri 12 Sept, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

DOUG EUNSON & SARAH MATTHEWS Fri 12 Sept, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SUPREME QUEEN Fri 12 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE RIZE Fri 12 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE GEORGE MICHAEL LEGACY Fri 12 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ABSOLUTE BOWIE Fri 12 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE SMYTHS Fri 12 Sept, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

CHRISTINE COLLISTER Fri 12 Sept, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock

THE RHEINGANS SISTERS Fri 12 Sept, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

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

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

THE HEELS Sat 13 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

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

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

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

RILEY GREEN Sat 13 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SMALL FAKERS Sat 13 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

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

BLITZED IN BIRMINGHAM Sat 13 Sept, The Flapper, Birmingham

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

ELECTROMANTICS Sat 13 Sept, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BRAIN OF J - PEARL JAM TRIBUTE + NIRVANA UK Sat 13 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

KERRY WORTON + TIM PARKES Sat 13 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MARTIN SIMPSON Sat 13 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre



OVERPASS Sat 13 Sept, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

MORETALICA Sat 13 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ROUGH KUTZ Sat 13 Sept, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

FLEETWOOD MAC SONGBOOK Sat 13 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JAYLER + TYLER KENT Sat 13 Sept, Lichfield Guildhall

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

CLOUDBUSTING Sat 13 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

BARBARA DICKSON Sat 13 Sept, Shrewsbury Abbey

AUDIOTHIEVES Sat 13 Sept, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

A NIGHT IN THE CANYON Sat 13 Sept, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

BYE BYE BABY - FRANKIE VALLI TRIBUTE Sat 13 Sept, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

THE STONE HILL COLLECTIVE Sun 14 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

PETE HYDE & VIEILLARDS Sun 14 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

DABI FREYR Sun 14 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

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

REGGAE FEST BIRMINGHAM Sun 14 Sept, Tower of Song, Birmingham

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

HEATHER FERRIER TRIO Sun 14 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

NICKELBACK UK Sun 14 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

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

LICHFIELD FOLK ON THE FARM Sun 14 Sept, Woodhouse Farm and Garden, Lichfield

RICH PARSONS Sun 14 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

MERSEY BEATLES Sun 14 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

RHINESTONE COWBOY - THE STORY OF GLEN CAMPBELL Sun 14 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury



Calamity Jane - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Classical Music

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring music scholars from Shrewsbury School, Fri 12 Sept, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

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

MARK STEEL Wed 10 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROB MULHOLLAND Thurs 11 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOSH JONES Thurs 11 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

ED BYRNE, ESTHER MANITO, GLENN WOOL & NINA GILLIGAN Thurs 11 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

JOSH JONES Fri 12 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOSH BERRY Fri 12 Sept, Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

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

JONNY COLE Fri 12 Sept, Halesowen Town Hall

STEVE ROYLE, DANNY POSTHILL, INGRID DAHLE & BEN BRIGGS Fri 12 Sept, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

PAUL CHOWDHRY Fri 12 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

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

JONNY COLE Sat 13 Sept, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

GEORGE EGG Sat 13 Sept, Ludlow

Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

GARY MEIKLE Sun 14 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARK SIMMONS Sun 14 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

LINDSEY SANTORO (PICTURED), ALFIE CARTER, DEAN COUGHLIN & FREDDY QUINNE Sun 14 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



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

ANNIE THE MUSICAL DE Caversmill Theatre Company present an amateur version of the classic rags-to-riches story, Tues 9 - Sat 13 Sept, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

HOW TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY AND NEVER BE FOUND Fin Kennedy's masterpiece, performed by Stone Revellers, Wed 10 - Sat 13 Sept, Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone

TOSCA North Wales Opera present Puccini's dramatic political thriller, Fri 12 Sept, St Alkmund's Church, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

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

Kids Theatre

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE Entertaining and educational show featuring 20ft liquid nitrogen clouds, exploding oxygen & hydrogen balloons, fire tornadoes and a self-built hovercraft, Sat 13 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Dance

RIVERDANCE 30: THE NEW GENERATION

Award-winning music and mesmerising choreography comes together in this special anniversary show, until Tues 9 Sept, The Alexandra, 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

ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING: A CELEBRATION OF THE SHIPPING FORECAST Charlie Connelly brings the shipping forecast vividly to life, Thurs 11 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THAT'LL BE THE DAY A unique blend of rock & roll, pop, and comedy, featuring timeless hits from the 1950s through to the 1980s, Thurs 11 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LIPSTICK ON YOUR COLLAR Evening of back-to-back hits from the 1950s and 60s, Fri 12 Sept, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

KNIGHTMARE LIVE Smash-hit comedy show based on the cult TV classic from the 1990s, Sat 13 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SUPER STARS TADLOP (Telford And District Light Operatic Players) present a concert tribute to the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, Sat 13 Sept, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

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

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), B'ham

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

THE MANUALS THAT SAVED APOLLO 13 - PLANETARIUM LATE Special talk at the Space Vault Exhibition, Sat 13 Sept, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

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

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

LUDLOW FOOD FESTIVAL Event celebrating the Marches region's culinary heritage, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Sept, Ludlow Castle, South Shrops

BLACK COUNTRY BOATING FESTIVAL Event celebrating the rich history, culture, and community spirit of the Black Country, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Sept,

Monday 8 - Sunday 14 September

Dudley No. 2 Canal at the BumbleHole, Netherton

OPEN DOORS AT POWIS CASTLE AND GARDEN Take advantage of free entry and explore the castle, Clive Museum, and 'world class' garden, Sat 13 Sept, Powis Castle, Welshpool

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, B'ham

WEEKEND BEAVER SAFARI Meet Trentham's beavers and discover the venue's story of restoration and biodiversity, Sat 13 Sept, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

WALSALL MAKERFEST 2025 Celebration of Walsall & the Black Country's rich and diverse creative community, Sat 13 Sept, The New Art Gallery Walsall

VIP-FEST (VERY IMPORTANT PENSIONERS) The UK's only festival dedicated to the over-65s, Sat 13 Sept, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

HERITAGE DAY Event offering visitors the chance to enjoy a rare glimpse behind the scenes, Sat 13 Sept, Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

WALK TO REMEMBER A 5k fundraising walk for Katharine House Hospice, Sat 13 Sept, Shugborough Estate,

Stafford

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 13 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

BRICK FESTIVAL A celebration of all things Lego, Sat 13 Sept, Coventry Building Society Arena, Coventry

MINIATURA AUTUMN SHOW Featuring workshops, demonstrations and over 120 exhibitors, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Sept, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

ALL ABOARD FOR ROAD, RAIL & ALE From vintage trucks, tractors and cars to steam traction engines, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Sept, Statfold Country Park, Tamworth

HOME RUN HOUNDS PEDIGREE, SIGHTHOUND AND FUN DOG SHOW Sun 14 Sept, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY SHOWGROUND WEDDING SHOW Featuring 80-plus exhibitors, Sun 14 Sept, Staffordshire County Showground

CLASSIC & RETRO CAR SHOW With live music, shopping and entertainment for the kids, Sun 14 Sept, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

EXOTIC EXPRESS Zookeepers will be bringing some of their animal friends onto the train for passengers to see up close, Sun 14 Sept, Telford Steam



Peter Chand at Walsall Makerfest 2025 - The New Art Gallery, Walsall

Railway, Shropshire

WORLD OF WEDGWOOD ARTISAN MARKET Featuring independent local makers and small businesses from Staffordshire, Sun 14 Sept, World of Wedgwood, Stoke-on-Trent

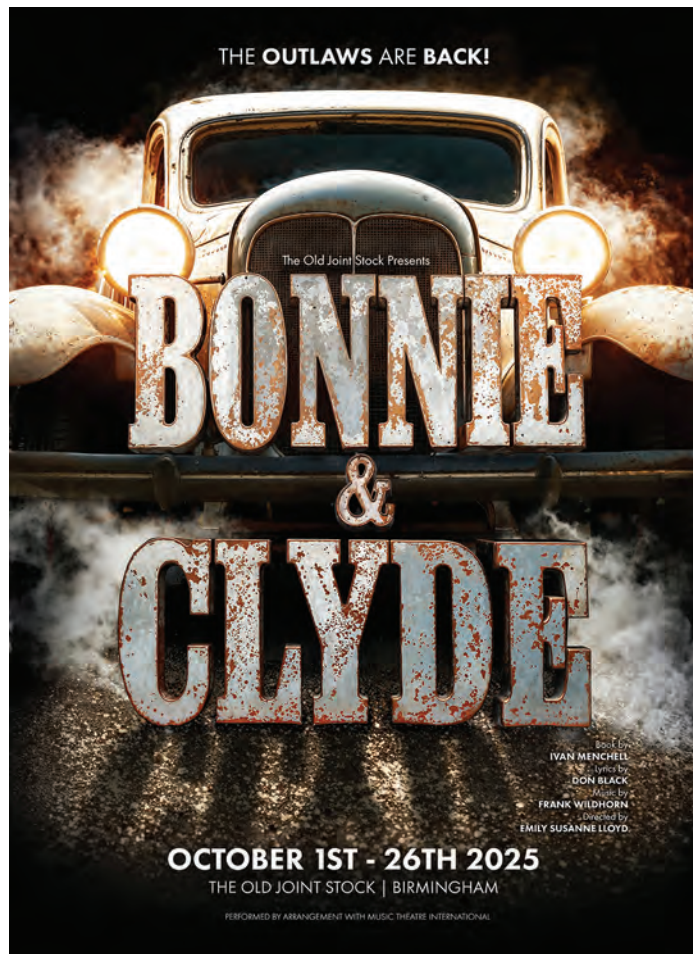
Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Sept, Bromyard, Herefordshire



SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL Featuring over 50 original new music artists, Sat 13 Sept, Burton upon Trent

Festivals

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Breabach (pictured), Dervish, Paul Downes and Phil Beer,





The New Eves - Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath

Gigs

THE NEW EVES Mon 15 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

MEREBÄ Mon 15 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SELF ESTEEM Mon 15 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

HELMS ALEE Mon 15 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth, B'ham

CLASSIC ALBUMS LIVE PERFORMS THE BEATLES WHITE ALBUM Mon 15 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JESSIE REID Mon 15 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham



JONATHAN OGDEN & TAYLOR ARMSTRONG Tues 16 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JESSIE REYEZ Tues 16 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

VIOLENCIA Tues 16 Sept, The Flapper, Birmingham

COURTNEY HADWIN Tues 16 Sept, The Victoria, B'ham

BUSTED VS MCFLY Tues 16 - Wed 17 Sept, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

JOLIE HOLLAND Wed 17 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

INCOGNITO Wed 17 Sept, The Jam House, Birmingham

OLIVER ANTHONY Wed 17 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

TIGRESS + HYPE THEORY +

CHASING AUGUST Wed 17 Sept, The Asylum, B'ham

JEZ LOWE + JULIA DISNEY Wed 17 Sept, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

THE HOT TOMALIES WITH RICHARD BENNETT Wed 17 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

ELKIE BROOKS Wed 17 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE DOLLY SHOW Wed 17 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE BRYAN BRINDLEY BAND Wed 17 Sept, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE MUSIC OF LIONEL RICHIE Wed 17 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

FIRST TIME FLYERS Thurs 18 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LED BIB + DIDDY SWEG Thurs 18 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE NEW ROSES Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

GRENTPEREZ Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ASLAN Thurs 18 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

WINTER GARDENS Thurs 18 Sept, The Victoria, B'ham

THE MASSED BANDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES Thurs 18 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

FEELING GOOD - A CELEBRATION OF JAZZ Thurs 18 Sept, Old Joint Stock, Birmingham

JON BODEN & THE REMNANT KINGS Thurs 18 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

STEP OUT + VIOLET SQUARE + KIERAN VICKERY + JOSEPH

DAVIS Thurs 18 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

CHRISTINE COLLISTER Thurs 18 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

ASOMVEL + DEVERE Thurs 18 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

FURY Thurs 18 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' - THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY Thurs 18 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

A HEAD FULL OF COLDPLAY Thurs 18 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SUPREME QUEEN Thurs 18 Sept, Crewe Lyceum

THE DRIFTERS Thurs 18 - Fri 19 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

WOLFGANG FLÜR Fri 19 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CASEY MCQUILLEN Fri 19 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

FAYE Fri 19 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

VINCENT FLATTS FINAL DRIVE + THE FABULOUS MURRAY BROTHERS Fri 19 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Fri 19 Sept, Tower of Song, Birmingham

BRIGITTE BERAHA Fri 19 Sept, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

THE EXPLOITED Fri 19 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

ARMOR FOR SLEEP + HELLOGOODBYE + VINNIE CARUANA Fri 19 Sept, The Asylum, Birmingham

DARIUS ZALTASH Fri 19 Sept, The Victoria, Birmingham

VYBZ KARTEL Fri 19 Sept, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

ELO ENCOUNTER Fri 19 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

MADCHESTER EXPERIENCE Fri 19 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

JIVE TALKIN' Fri 19 Sept, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' - THE SHAKIN' STEVENS STORY Fri 19 Sept, Halesowen Town Hall

BAD CO. LEGACY Fri 19 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

DES TONG AND BEV BEVAN Fri 19 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

FM + ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM Fri 19 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

AIRTIGHT 80S Fri 19 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE CARPENTERS EXPERIENCE Fri 19 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

HEADWIRE + THE VIZ + THE VENGEANCE Fri 19 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

TARGET Fri 19 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

TOTALLY BLONDIE Fri 19 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

JOHNNY 2 BAD Fri 19 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

VOODOO SIOUX Fri 19 Sept, Albert's Shed, Telford

SONS OF THE BLUE + LE BONE Fri 19 Sept, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shrops

EASY CURE Sat 20 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

UNDER THE COVERS Sat 20 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS Sat 20 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

FLORENCE BLACK Sat 20 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

UBMAD4SKA Sat 20 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

SYNTH Sat 20 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

ANDREW CASSARA Sat 20 Sept, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

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



RUBII Sat 20 Sept, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER MOTOWN SHOW Sat 20 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

SYSTEM EIGHTIES Sat 20 Sept, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE ONE LOVE BAND Sat 20 Sept, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

KICK UP THE 80S Sat 20 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS + CJ WILDHEART Sat 20 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

MISHA MULLOV-ABBADO GROUP Sat 20 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

PORKPIE Sat 20 Sept, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

MADONNA BY TASHA LEAPER Sat 20 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

MOONAGE - DAVID BOWIE TRIBUTE Sat 20 Sept, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

1ST FENTON FOLK DAY Sat 20 Sept, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

PROJECT GEMINI + THE CRYSTAL TEARDROP Sat 20 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

RAG N BONE MAN TRIBUTE Sat 20 Sept, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

ULTIMATE RNB Sat 20 Sept, The Station, Cannock

TWO TONE REVOLUTION Sat 20 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE JOHN MARTYN PROJECT Sat 20 Sept, Shrewsbury Abbey

FRED ZEPPELIN Sat 20 Sept, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

JUKEBOX 1264 - LED ZEPPELIN Sat 20 Sept, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

THE CLASSIC BLUES SHOW Sat 20 Sept, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

VINCENT FLATTS Sun 21 Sept, Actress & Bishop, B'ham

WSTR + DREAM STATE + HAPPY DAZE Sun 21 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BUSHBURYS Sun 21 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

BEN THOMPSON LIVE AS ELVIS Sun 21 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE ILLEGAL EAGLES Sun 21 Sept, Crewe Lyceum

Classical Music

PETER DONOHUE CELEBRITY PIANO RECITAL Programme includes works by Mozart, Messiaen & Beethoven, Tues 16 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

JILL CROSSLAND PIANO RECITAL Tues 16 Sept, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

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 MASSED 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

JONATHAN HOPE ORGAN RECITAL Fri 19 Sept, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

APOLLO SAXOPHONE QUARTET Featuring Rob Buckland, Carl Raven, Andy Scott & Jim Fieldhouse (saxophone). Programme includes Traditional Bulgarian music, a piece by Django Bates and more..., Fri 19 Sept, Barnes Theatre & Foyer, Shrewsbury School

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

LUDLOW SONG YOUNG COMPOSERS 2025 Featuring George Robarts (baritone). Programme includes works by this year's LS Young Composers, Sun 21 Sept, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

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

MILTON JONES Mon 15 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Mon 15 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

ISMO Tues 16 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

MARCUS BRIGSTOCKE Tues 16 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ADAM KAY, ALEX KEALY & TADIWA MAHLUNGE Tues 16 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DARA Ó BRIAIN Wed 17 Sept, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SHAPARAK KHORSANDI Wed 17 Sept, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

MICK FERRY, SOL BERNSTEIN & DANNY MCLOUGHLIN Wed 17 Sept, Morris Hall, Shrewsbury

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

CALLY BEATON Fri 19 Sept, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

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

HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 20 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

GARY DELANEY, MATT RICHARDSON & SUSAN MURRAY Sat 20 Sept, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

TEZ ILYAS, DINESH NATHAN, PREET SINGH, RICHARD BLACKWOOD & ADAM COUMAS Sun 21 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

IDEAL Johnny Vegas stars as Moz, Manchester's longest-serving weed dealer, in 'a dope opera of epic proportions', Mon 15 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE RIPPER FILES! A 'spine-tingling whodunnit' based on the world's most famous murder-mystery, Tues 16 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THIRD CLASS: A TITANIC STORY One-man theatre show based on the life of Titanic survivor Edward Dorking, Tues 16 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

SUNSHINE ON LEITH Mellow Dramatics



The Mushroom Show - Caldmore Community Gardens, Walsall

present an amateur version of the popular musical comedy featuring songs by The Proclaimers, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Sept, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

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

CURTAIN UP ON MURDER Kidderminster Operatic & Dramatic Society present an amateur version of Bettine Manktelow's darkly comic whodunnit, Wed 17 - Sat 20 Sept, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

BUDDY: THE BUDDY HOLLY STORY Award-winning West End show celebrating one of rock & roll's earliest stars. Featured hits include 'That'll Be The Day, Oh Boy, Rave On, La Bamba, Chantilly Lace, Peggy Sue and many more...', Fri 19 - Sat 20 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

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 MUSHROOM SHOW Educational and entertaining family show featuring interactive games, playful music and lots of laughs..., Sat 20 Sept, Caldmore Community Gardens, Walsall

DINOSAURS LIVE Family show fusing fun and facts, as life-like dinosaurs once again roam the region! Sat 20 - Sun 21 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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 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

THE DOLLY SHOW Featuring Kelly O'Brien - the only Dolly Parton impersonator endorsed by the Parton family, Wed 17 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

INTERLINKED Sean Heydon and Kerry Jay present 'a fast-paced, mind-blowing live show, where the impossible happens right in front of your eyes', Fri 19 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

LINE DANCING WITH THE DOUBLE DOLLY'S Evening of comedy, Dolly Parton songs and line dancing..., Sat 20 Sept, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

SARGAM, A VIBRANT EVENING OF LIVE INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC Inclusive and family-friendly evening featuring some of the country's best British South Asian musicians and vocalists, Sat 20 Sept, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

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



The Fratellis @ Heal Festival - DMOS People West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

SAMARITANS LISTEN UP! Talent, tunes and togetherness, presented in support of Samaritans Tamworth, Sat 20 Sept, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

IRELAND THE SHOW Celebration of Irish culture featuring music, laughter, impressions and dance, Sat 20 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE MAGIC OF TERRY PRATCHETT Join author & comedian Marc Burrows as he explores the life and work of one of the greatest storytellers of all time, Sun 21 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Talks & Spoken Word

MIRIAM MARGOYLES: FROM A - Z An evening of 'wit, wisdom and unfiltered stories', Wed 17 Sept, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

AN EVENING WITH MARY BEARD Step into the world of Ancient Rome as the renowned historian uncovers the stories that history forgot, Wed 17 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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 Sept, Birmingham Cathedral

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

BIRMINGHAM HERITAGE WEEK TOUR

Learn about the stained-glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones and crafted by the workshop of William Morris, Thurs 18 Sept, Birmingham Cathedral

HERITAGE OPEN DAY - COLLECTIONS

STORE TOUR Delve into the archives and check out some of the museum's oldest and most precious objects, Thurs 18 Sept, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

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

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

STOKE CULT FILM CLUB - MYSTERY MEN 1985 Fri 19 Sept, The Potteries

Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

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

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 20 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

COUNTRY RACENIGHT Line-dance the night away to a host of country classics, Sat 20 Sept, Wolverhampton Racecourse

FIREWORK CHAMPIONS Three finalists light up the sky in a 'thrilling competition', Sat 20 Sept, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire

WESTON'S WOOF WALK Take along your furry friend for a scenic 5K walk through Weston, Sat 20 Sept, Weston Park, Shropshire

VINTAGE STATIONARY ENGINE RALLY

Featuring small steam, petrol and diesel engines, Sat 20 Sept, Etruria Museum, Stoke-on-Trent

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

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

Festivals

HEAL FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Fratellis, The Sherlocks, Dub Pistols, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Sept, DMOS People West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

CLUB CLASSICS LIVE ON STAGE

THE POWER OF A CHOIR.
ENERGY OF THE DANCEFLOOR.

NORTHANTS SINGS OUT .GO.UK

6TH SEPTEMBER
BEAM THEATRE, HERTFORD

12TH SEPTEMBER
GAIA AT THE CORE IN CORBY

24 OCTOBER
HOCKLEY SOCIAL CLUB,
BIRMINGHAM

1 NOVEMBER
PECKHAM LEVELS, LONDON

8 NOVEMBER
WHITE ROCKS THEATRE,
HASTINGS

29 NOVEMBER
ROYAL & DERNGATE THEATRE,
NORTHAMPTON

19 DECEMBER
THE DEAF INSTITUTE,
MANCHESTER

NORTHANTS
SINGS OUT

BRITAIN'S GOT
TALENT
FINALISTS

Monday 22 - Tuesday 30 September



Level 42 - Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Gigs

JEHST Mon 22 Sept, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

DEACON BLUE Mon 22 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SOUL BROTHERS SYNDICATE Mon 22 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CHLOE MORIONDO Tues 23 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

UNIVERSITY Tues 23 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JAMES MORRISON Tues 23 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JIM LEGXACY Tues 23 Sept, Mama Roux's, Birmingham

LEWIS CAPALDI Tues 23 - Wed 24 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

THE ZAC SCHULZE GANG Wed 24 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

WEIRD ON PURPOSE Wed 24 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE WHISKEY BROTHERS Wed 24 Sept, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

AS IT IS Wed 24 Sept, O2 Academy, B'ham

CHRIS & LOUISE ROGAN + JOHN & CAROL HOARE Wed 24 Sept, Red Lion Folk Club, Birmingham

SPATS LANGHAM'S HOT FINGERS Wed 24 Sept, Boldmere Sports and Social Club, Sutton Coldfield

BEATLEMANIA Wed 24 Sept, Stafford

Gatehouse Theatre

STARS OF IRISH COUNTRY Wed 24 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

STEPHEN FEARING AND THE SENTIMENTALS Wed 24 Sept, The Hive, Shrewsbury

PENFRIEND Thurs 25 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CLIMAX BLUES BAND Thurs 25 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

NIKO B Thurs 25 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

BACH AND ARTHUR Thurs 25 Sept, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE CRANE WIVES Thurs 25 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

TRISH CLOWES Thurs 25 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

SCOTT LAVENE Thurs 25 Sept, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

MEDICINE HEAD Thurs 25 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

JESS SILK Thurs 25 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MAN IN THE MIRROR - A TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL JACKSON Thurs 25 Sept, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL - WHITNEY HOUSTON TRIBUTE Thurs 25 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

WE THREE KINGS OF ROCK 'N' ROLL Thurs 25 Sept, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

UPTOWN GIRL - THE

BILLY JOEL COLLECTION Thurs 25 Sept, Aston Hall, Wrexham

M(H)AOL Fri 26 Sept, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

SEAN REEVES Fri 26 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

THE LET'S GO'S Fri 26 Sept, The Night Owl, Birmingham

REND COLLECTIVE Fri 26 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

UNDER THE COVERS Fri 26 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

EDDIE GRIPPER Fri 26 Sept, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

ALAN FLETCHER Fri 26 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

FRANCIS ROSSI Fri 26 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall



KEYSHIA COLE Fri 26 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

EVAN PARKER Fri 26 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

XODUS: TRIBUTE TO BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS Fri 26 Sept, The Rhodhouse, 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

NICKELBACK UK Fri 26 Sept, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

MUCH ADO ABOUT JAZZ Fri 26 Sept, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

ULTIMATE GREENDAY Fri 26 Sept, The Station, Cannock

SIGHT N SOUND Fri 26 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

AND FINALLY... PHIL COLLINS Fri 26 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CARTOON VIOLENCE + BOOM BOOM WOMB Fri 26 Sept, Oscars, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

SLADE FANS CONVENTION Fri 26 - Sat 27 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

SPEAKING IN TONGUES Sat 27 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE LOVELESS Sat 27 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

THE AC30S Sat 27 Sept, The Night Owl, B'ham

BROOKE ALEX Sat 27 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THEATRE OF HATE Sat 27 Sept, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ROOTERS Sat 27 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

THE OGRETONES Sat 27 Sept, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE GRUNGE ADDICTION Sat 27 Sept, The Flapper, Birmingham

LINDISFARNE Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Town Hall

BJÖRN AGAIN Sat 27 Sept, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PIERCE THE VEIL Sat 27 Sept, Utilita Arena Birmingham

SNAYX Sat 27 Sept, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 27 Sept, The Rhodhouse, 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

THE JAM'D Sat 27 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

NEXT LEVEL FOLK CLUB Sat 27 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

BEATLES COMPLETE Sat 27 Sept, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

THE REAL PEOPLE Sat 27 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

RAMMLIED Sat 27 Sept, The Station, Cannock

LANDSLIDE - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Sat 27 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

POPPY JAM Sat 27 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

BLACK HEART ANGELS Sat 27 Sept, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

AMIT DATTANI Sat 27 Sept, Oscars, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

NWOCR LIVEFEST 4 Sat 27 - Sun 28 Sept, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

TAXI FOR JESUS Sun 28 Sept, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ATREYU Sun 28 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

STEVE GIBBONS BAND Sun 28 Sept, Jo Jo Jims, Birmingham

MENACE + DRONGOS FOR EUROPE Sun 28 Sept, Tower of Song, Birmingham

THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK Sun 28 Sept, Symphony Hall, B'ham

AMY LOU Sun 28 Sept, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

REGRESSIVE HYPNOSIS - DREAM THEATER TRIBUTE Sun 28 Sept, The Robin, Bilston

KYLE WELCH Sun 28 Sept, Wolverhampton Arts Centre

THE GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK Sun 28 Sept, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

RICH PARSONS Sun 28 Sept, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

GWENIFER RAYMOND + ELIZABETH STILL Sun 28 Sept, Shrewsbury Library

LEASHED + PROPRICEPTION + SWEET FANTASY Sun 28 Sept, The Hive, Shrewsbury

NASHVILLE COUNTRY SHOW STARRING RYAN EVANS Sun 28 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

LEVEL 42 Mon 29 Sept, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE DUKE SPIRIT + SCROUNGE Tues 30 Sept, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

LOWKEY Tues 30 Sept, O2 Institute, B'ham

ESOTERICA Tues 30 Sept, The Flapper, Birmingham

THE K'S Tues 30 Sept, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent



Deacon Blue - Utilita Arena Birmingham

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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

LUNCHTIME PIANO RECITAL: SHUNTA

MORIMOTO Tues 23 Sept, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

ORGAN RECITAL: PETER KING Tues 23 Sept, Lichfield Cathedral

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

CONCERTS IN THE ROUND Featuring Gina Taylor (harp), Fri 26 Sept, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

MYSTERY ENSEMBLE: MIYAZAKI'S

DREAMS Programme includes works by Hisaishi, Asazaki & Cage, Sat 27 Sept, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

GEMA LU PIANO RECITAL Tues 30 Sept, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

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

JONNY COLE Thurs 25 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ED PATRICK Thurs 25 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ESTHER MANITO Fri 26 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MARK WATSON Fri 26 Sept, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs



TOM STADE Fri 26 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

GERRY K, STEPHEN DODD & BOY'S FROM

THE ALL NIGHT CHEMIST Fri 26 Sept, Drayton Golf Club, Tamworth

FITZ OF LAUGHTER Fri 26 Sept, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

JONATHAN MAYOR, BELLA HUMPHRIES, PETE OTWAY & TADIWA MAHLUNGE Fri 26 Sept, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

JAMIE D'SOUZA, HARRY STACHINI, LAUREN PATTISON & THE RAYMOND AND MR TIMPKINS REVUE Fri 26 - Sat 27 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

VLAD ILICH, JORDAN DUCHARME, JOSEPH EMSLIE & JON PEARSON Sat 27 Sept, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

MARK WATSON Sat 27 Sept, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), Birmingham

GLENN MOORE Sat 27 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SIMON BRODKIN & GUESTS Sat 27 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CHRISTIAN REILLY, KATE LUCAS & PAT MONAHAN Sat 27 Sept, Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shrops

ROUGH WORKS: NEW MATERIAL NIGHT Sun 28 Sept, The Glee Club, B'ham

THOMAS GREEN Sun 28 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOANNE MCNALLY Sun 28 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

ALAN DAVIES Sun 28 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

STEPHEN K AMOS Sun 28 Sept, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

GREG JAMES Tues 30 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RORY O'HANLON Tues 30 Sept, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NINA CONTI Tues 30 Sept, The Alexandra, 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

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

SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE SIGN OF FOUR Radio play performed live on stage. Colin Baker (Doctor Who, The Brothers) and Terry Molloy (The Archers, Doctor Who) star, Tues 23 Sept, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

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

SHREK THE MUSICAL ACT Shropshire present an amateur version of the



2:22 A Ghost Story - Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

much-loved Dreamworks film, Tues 23 - Fri 26 Sept, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

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

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's iconic musical, telling the moving story of twins who are separated at birth and grow up on opposite sides of the tracks, only to meet up again with fateful consequences, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Sept, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

JULIET & ROMEO Dance, theatre and comedy combine in an imaginative new take on Shakespeare's famously tragic love story, Wed 24 Sept, Glasshouse Arts Centre, Stourbridge

DIANE'S DELI: A TALE FROM PARADISE HEIGHTS Joe O'Byrne's tale of mayhem, madness and murder, Wed 24 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROPE Amateur version of Patrick Hamilton's thriller, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Sept, Dudley Little Theatre

A NORTHERN TR*NNY HOOTENANNY Join trans artist Hunter King on his gender journey of self-discovery. Part of Shrewsbury Pride, Sat 27 Sept, The Hive, Shrewsbury

CYRANO DE BERGERAC Adrian Lester makes his RSC debut in a lyrical tale of love and lies, longing and disguise, Sat 27 Sept - Sat 15 Nov, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF JANE

AUSTEN, ABRIDGED Three actors tackle the entire canon of Jane Austen's works - in just 90 minutes! Mon 29 - Tues 30 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

EMMA New version of Jane Austen's comedy of manners, presented in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the author's birth, Mon 29 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, The Rep, Birmingham

2:22 A GHOST STORY Kevin Clifton & Stacey Dooley star in Danny Robbins' edge-of-your-seat supernatural thriller, Mon 29 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

TRULY, JACK THE RIPPER Jonathan Goodwin plays numerous characters in this exploration of the famous Victorian murders, Tues 30 Sept, Middleport Pottery, Stoke-on-Trent

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Susan Hill's spine-tingling ghost story, Tues 30 Sept - Sat 4 Oct, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Kids Theatre

SPOT'S BIRTHDAY PARTY Theatre for younger audiences based on Eric Hill's much-loved books. Suitable for children aged two-plus, Sat 27 Sept, Stourbridge Town Hall

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 feature, until Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Hippodrome

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), Birmingham

ALICE'S MAGICAL ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND Presented by the Judith Bibby Academy of Dance, Fri 26 - Sat 27 Sept, Stoke Repertory Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Light Entertainment

IRONING BOARD MAN Physical comedian Jody Kamali masterfully transforms everyday household items into the tools of a Hollywood-style, action-packed romance, Tues 23 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

STARS OF IRISH COUNTRY Featuring four of Ireland's top acts: Philomena Begley, Shawn Cuddy, Sean Wilson and Stephen Smyth, Wed 24 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

WANNABE FEATURING THE HITS OF THE SPICE GIRLS Live stage show celebrating the career of 'the world's biggest girl band,' Sat 27 Sept, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

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

DREAMCOAT STARS Evening of musical theatre favourites and brand-new songs and arrangements, Sun 28 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SAM RABONE'S BIG BOSTIN' VARIETY SHOW The Garrick's favourite pantomime Dame makes an autumn return, Sun 28 Sept, Lichfield Garrick

CAN'T COUNT ON HEROES - A THEATRICAL DRAG SHOW Expect 'sarcastic cats, formidable superpowers, and weird songs' in this 'high-camp, manic musical comedy drag extravaganza'! Part of Shrewsbury Pride, Sun 28 Sept, The Hive, Shrewsbury

ROUND THE HORNE: 60TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Radio comedy classic, live on stage, Sun 28 Sept, Crown Wharf Theatre, Stone

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, B'ham

DEAD RINGERS The multi-award-winning topical satire show takes to the road. Jon Culshaw, Jan Ravens, Lewis MacLeod and Duncan Wisbey star, Mon 29 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

NINA CONTI: WHOSE FACE IS IT ANYWAY? Ventriloquist Nina presents her brand-new show, Tues 30 Sept, The Alexandra, Birmingham

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..., Mon 22 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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 23 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

AN AUDIENCE WITH AIRLINE'S JANE BOULTON An intimate evening filled with 'honest conversations, hilarious anecdotes, and plenty of surprises', Sat 27 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

MATHEW HORNE: IN CONVERSATION Find out about Mathew's Gavin & Stacey journey, including his favourite moments from the show, Sun 28 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TIM PEAKE: ASTRONAUTS - THE QUEST TO EXPLORE SPACE Join Tim for a celebration of space exploration, Mon 29 Sept, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DR RICHARD SHEPHERD: UNNATURAL CAUSES - TIME OF DEATH Step into the world of forensic investigation as Dr Shepherd explores why the understanding of the passing of time is one of the most important factors in unravelling the secrets of a life cut short, Mon 29 Sept, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

Events

OCEAN FILM FESTIVAL Featuring a new collection of 'the world's most incredible ocean films', Tues 23 Sept, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

HIDDEN SPACES TOUR A rare opportunity to explore areas of the building that are usually closed to the



Ironing Board Man - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

public, Thurs 25 & Sat 27 Sept, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Fri 26 Sept, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

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

COMMUNITY DAY Featuring hands-on demonstrations, live music and energetic dance performances, Sat 27 Sept, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

SHREWSBURY PRIDE Celebrating the local LGBTQIA+ community, Sat 27 Sept, Shrewsbury Town Centre

ZOOOPER HEROES - WALK FOR WILDLIFE A 5K sponsored walk to raise funds for Painted Dog Conservation and DZC's conservation projects, Sat 27 Sept, Dudley Zoo & Castle

GINGER AND SPICE FESTIVAL 2025 Celebrating the town's rich culinary heritage and historic links to gingerbread, Sat 27 Sept, Market Drayton, Shropshire

PEAKY BLINDERS NIGHT Walk in the footsteps of Birmingham's most notorious gangs, Sat 27 Sept, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

WOODTURNING MASTERCLASS See logs of wood magically turned into works of art in this masterclass from Katie Armstrong, the UK's youngest professional registered woodturner, Sat 27 Sept, Bicton Village Hall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

LIVE WRESTLING SPECIAL The bone-crunching superstars of LDN Wrestling are back by popular demand, Sat 27 Sept, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

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, Birmingham Hippodrome

DAY OUT WITH THOMAS: THE PARTY TOUR Spend the day creating family memories and celebrating 80 years of Thomas, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Sept, Staffold Country Park, Tamworth

STAFFORD RAILWAY CIRCLE ANNUAL MODEL RAILWAY EXHIBITION Sat 27 - Sun 28 Sept, Staffordshire County Showground

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

POTTERS 'ARF MARATHON Sun 28 Sept, Stoke-on-Trent

SHREWSBURY HALF MARATHON Half marathon following a scenic route showcasing Shrewsbury, Sun 28 Sept, West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury

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



ANYTHING GOES DIESEL GALA Featuring an intensive timetable, brake van rides and double heading, Sun 28 Sept, Telford Steam Railway

WEDDING OPEN DAY Sun 28 Sept, Weston Park, Shropshire

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