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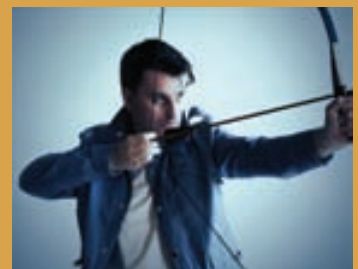
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First Word

Local motorsport show celebrates young talent

An annual historic motorsport show taking place in Warwickshire is this year looking to the future by celebrating the talents of three teenage racers.

Race Retro, which is being held at Stoneleigh Park from 24 to 26 February, will see 16-year-olds James Clarke and Ed Thurston and 17-year-old Benn Tilley showing off their driving skills. Commenting on the show's brand new Teenage Kicks feature, Daniel Nwaokolo, Race Retro's event director, said: "At a time in their lives when other boys their age are looking to learn to drive or buy their first moped, these youngsters are up there going tyre to tyre in a seriously competitive arena. They are dedicated to a future in motorsport, and historic motorsport in particular. We want to celebrate that commitment and give them a platform where they can encourage support from the industry to help them in their careers."

For more information, visit raceretro.com



Genting Arena to host its first outdoor concert

Birmingham's Genting Arena is to host its first ever outdoor concert in the spring. Taking place at the NEC venue's lakeside on Friday 26 May - the eve of the Slam Dunk Festival - the gig will feature performances from The Specials and Toots And The Maytals.

Commenting on the event, NEC Group Arenas Sales Executive Charlotte Smith said: "We're yet again pushing the boundaries of what can be done at our venues, in conjunction with the Slam Dunk Festival and NEC teams. This will be the first time ever that we've held a full outdoor concert on the lakeside adjacent to the Genting Arena and NEC, and we're pleased that such iconic British bands will be the first to try it. If successful, we hope to add many more outdoor events of this nature to the NEC Group Arenas' growing event portfolio."



Midlands actress Julie becomes ambassador for air ambulance charity



Birmingham-born actress Julie Walters has become an ambassador for the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity, on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. Since its inception in 1991, the air ambulance has airlifted and helped save over 46,000 lives. The charity covers a population in excess of six million, across the counties of Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and the West Midlands.

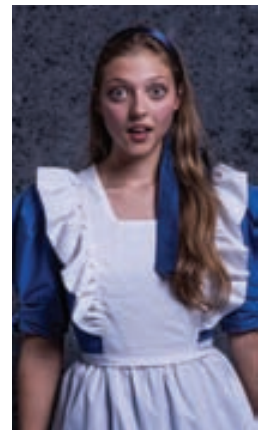
Commenting on her new role, Julie said: "I was astonished to learn that the charity has to raise £7million each and every year, receives no funding from either the Government or the National Lottery and relies solely on the generosity of people

across the Midlands. The pilots, flying doctors and paramedics all do an incredible and amazing job, literally saving lives every day. I fully support the lifesaving work of this brilliant charity across the entire Midlands area, and would encourage the public to make a difference by making a donation so that they can continue with their brilliant work saving lives for another 25 years."

Warwick theatre company is California dreamin'

A Warwick theatre company will this year tour its Christmas 2016 show to California. Playbox Theatre will perform Alice's Adventures In Wonderland at the Santa Monica Playhouse in the autumn.

Commenting on the news, Playbox's artistic director, Emily Jane Quash, said: "It will be superb to restage the show for audiences in Santa Monica later this year. Our cast are incredibly inventive and approach Lewis Carroll's story with a wild and zany enthusiasm!"



Leamington Music hits the ground running in 2017

Leamington Music is starting 2017 with a programme of 10 concerts in a period of just two months. The organisation, which celebrated its 10th anniversary last



October, will then present the annual Leamington Music Festival Weekend from 28 April to 1 May. The four-day event this year features singers Dame Felicity Lott and Roderick Williams (pictured), cellist Raphael Wallfisch, clarinettists Michael Collins and Jack McNeill, and pianist William Howard. The Leonore and Kinsky Piano Trios and the Doric, Jubilee, Gildas and Dante String Quartets also contribute. Leamington composer Howard Skempton, who turns 70 later this year, will write a new piece for the festival.

For further information about Leamington Music's 2017 programme of concerts, visit leamingtonmusic.org

Bright future for Coventry theatre?

The future of Coventry's Albany Theatre looks to have been secured, thanks to a probable pledge of support from the city's council.

The Earlsdon Park-located venue was under threat from developers, who wanted to knock down the rear of the theatre to provide car parking spaces for local office workers. To safeguard the Albany, and with the council's support, the theatre's Trust will take on a new space at Earlsdon Park. In return for doing so, the site's developers will drop plans to demolish part of the theatre. Council leaders will this month be asked to approve a proposal to act as guarantor for a 25-year lease for the new space, which will be used to provide arts centre facilities. Commenting on the news, David Meredith, chair of the Albany Theatre Trust, said: "This is the culmination of all the hard work and passion that went into the campaign to save the theatre over many years. If city council support is confirmed, we will be able to create new facilities that will allow us to develop our vision 'to promote wellbeing through arts for life'."



Shakespeare-inspired cartoons on show in Stratford

A free exhibition celebrating more than two centuries of political cartoons inspired by Shakespeare opens at the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon next month. Presented to coincide with the RSC's forthcoming season of Rome-based plays, Draw New Mischief will include historical works from key political moments in time.

Featured contemporary cartoons include Peter Schrank's 2015 depiction of Ed Miliband and Nicola Sturgeon as the star-crossed lovers Romeo and Juliet, and Morten Morland's April 2016 cartoon of David Cameron as Hamlet, gazing at Boris Johnson's skull.

The RSC has also commissioned five cartoonists to create brand new works. The cartoonists will use Shakespeare's Rome plays to respond to political events which occur during the period that the exhibition is on show (25 February - 15 September).

The Company's Rome season features productions of Julius Caesar, Antony & Cleopatra, Titus Andronicus and Coriolanus. For more information, visit rsc.org.uk

Coventry's cathedral ruins set to 'go techno'

A house and techno music event featuring four headline acts will take place in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral in the spring.

The open-air festival makes a return to the venue having debuted there last summer. Early-bird tickets for the Saturday 29 April event, entitled Ruins, cost £15 and are available from skiddle.com.



Monty Python star Eric Idle brings 'more nonsense to Coventry'

A musical adaptation of a book written by Monty Python star Eric Idle is one of the highlights of the Coventry Belgrade Theatre's spring season.

Idle's The Quite Remarkable Adventures Of The Owl And The Pussycat, showing at the venue from Saturday 18 February to Saturday 4 March, is inspired by the famous Edward Lear poem. The story sees its two main characters, the owl and the pussycat, heading out on a mission to save the world. In the process, they must defeat the dastardly Firelord, his imaginary dragon and his henchmen, Flicker and Brimstone. "I love the Belgrade Theatre," says Idle. "It's where we first performed Monty Python live on stage in January 1970 for three sold-out midnight shows. It's very close to where we opened my play, Pass The Butler, in 1982, and it's totally where The Quite Remarkable Adventures Of The Owl And The Pussycat will be sailing into the spotlight, to bring more nonsense to Coventry."

Other shows being staged at the Belgrade this season include: a new musical inspired by Federico Fellini's Oscar-winning masterpiece, La Strada; coming-of-age story The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin; an adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's novel, Running Wild; and numerous touring productions, including The Play That Goes Wrong, An Evening With Jasper Carrott & Alistair McGowan, and Shirley Valentine, starring Jodie Prenger.

First Word

Midlands dance company to premiere new work in Birmingham

Birmingham Repertory Theatre will host the world premiere of a brand new dance work in March.

MK Ultra is the latest offering from highly rated local ensemble Rosie Kay Dance Company. The piece has been inspired by 'the bizarre realm of pop culture, mind-control conspiracies and Illuminati imagery'.

Commenting on the show, the company's artistic director, Rosie Kay, said: "MK Ultra is the result of three years of intense research which has taken me through the world of surveillance, state police, torture and brainwashing, through to pop culture, mainstream media and celebrity breakdowns, all the way back to politics and a comment on the post-culturism state we are in now.

"At a time when everything is fake, or at least we don't trust what's real anymore, MK Ultra looks at what this world really feels like and what effect it is having on us, whether we know it or not."

The show can be enjoyed at The REP on Friday 17 & Saturday 18 March. For tickets, ring 0121 236 4455 or visit birmingham-rep.co.uk



Midlands rep theatre announces new arts project

A pioneering programme, teaming up West Midlands communities with emerging local artists in order to make new theatre, has been launched by the Birmingham Rep.

The project, which sees five artists working with people from Alum Rock,

Ladywood, Erdington, Sparkbrook and West

Bromwich, is part of The REP's Furnace scheme.

Commenting on the initiative, the venue's associate director, Tessa Walker,

explains: "Furnace is designed to inspire a new generation of theatre artists to work in new and ambitious ways by responding to the needs, stories and ideas from these communities.

These Furnace residencies combine The REP's desire to find new ways of making the most vivid theatre by the best new artists with our ambition to engage with the unheard voices and unheard stories of our city."

New Coventry road to be named after city's Doctor Who electronic music pioneer

The Coventry-born electronic music pioneer who created the Doctor Who theme tune is to have a road named after her in her home city.

Delia Derbyshire is credited with influencing some of music's biggest progressive rock bands, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Orbital, The Chemical Brothers and Pink Floyd.

She died of renal failure in 2001 at the age of 64.

The road which will take her name, Derbyshire Way, will be part of a new housing estate on the former Lyng Hall School playing fields in Stoke Heath.

The city council's decision to name the road after Derbyshire comes on the back of months of campaigning by Coventry Music Museum director Pete Chambers.

Children's favourite returns to the region

The live version of CBeebies favourite In The Night Garden makes a welcome return to Birmingham's Cannon Hill Park this summer (12 to 30 July).

The hit show sees characters including Igglepiggle, Upsy Daisy and Makka Pakka being brought to life on stage using costumes, puppets, music and projections.

Commenting on the forthcoming production, Andrew Collier, creative director for the show's producers, Minor Entertainment, said: "Parents tell us that children as young as a few months old engage with the live show, and the looks on the faces of the children and parents in the audiences are absolutely amazing. It's a huge responsibility and enormous privilege to give so many children their first experience of live theatre." Tickets go on sale from 27 January and can be booked at NightGardenLive.com or by calling 0330 120 0123.



Cash injection for cancer research in the Midlands

Scientists at Cancer Research UK's (CRUK) Birmingham Centre are set to receive a £5million cash injection from the charity over the next five years, as part of a national drive to accelerate advances in early detection and treatment.

A further £2million will be spent on continuing research at the city's Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC).

Commenting on the news, CRUK's chief executive, Sir Harpal Kumar, said: "CRUK's projections are that we will reach more than 500,000 new diagnoses of cancer a year in the UK by 2035. By that time, our goal is that three in four people will survive their cancer. Funding these Centres is one of the charity's most important strategic priorities, and one which will help us reach this ambition. This huge investment is only made possible through generous donations from the public and the tireless fundraising of our supporters."

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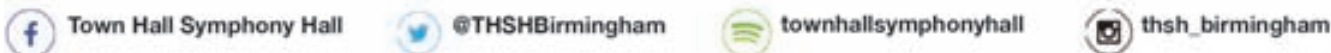


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STOMPING!

Heather Kincaid speaks to STOMP co-creator Luke Cresswell about the worldwide phenomenon visiting Warwick Arts Centre this month

It was in 1991 that STOMP first burst into London's Bloomsbury Theatre, going on to take not only the capital but soon the whole country by storm. Twenty-six years and more than 20,000 performances in 53 different countries later, as many as five official companies are still stomping their feet, banging bins and discovering rhythm in the unlikeliest of places in front of audiences all around the world.

Co-creator and director Luke Cresswell no longer performs in the show, but remains very much a part of the creative process as it develops and changes over time. We spoke to him to find out more about the STOMP story as it prepares to march into Warwick Arts Centre this month.

"The basic concept of using rhythm as a language and using found objects always stays the same," Luke explains, "which is why we've never seen any reason to make STOMP 2 or STOMP 3. But the routines have hugely changed since we started out. I'd say it's at least two thirds different material, and even the original stuff has been totally reworked."

This year's outing in Coventry forms part of a mini tour for the European company, with just a handful of stops around the UK sandwiched between shows across the continent. And even since the show's last UK tour in 2014, says Cresswell, there have been a few changes, notably to the Trolleys and Frogs routines. Sometimes

changes are made on a purely practical basis, with certain elements, however well received, proving too high-maintenance for lengthy runs.

"There was a routine which I really liked involving metal fold-up chairs that was really hard on the hands and knees as well as on the chairs themselves, so eventually we decided it was better to replace it. There was also one at the big show in Vegas where we had these huge cardboard boxes and it looked fantastic, but of course the boxes would break and you'd have to repair them. That's fine for a one-off show or a TV special, but when you're doing eight shows a week it's hard work!"

But as much as any planned or directed reinvention, it's the continual changes to the cast that ensure the show always feels fresh.

"I think the reason STOMP's been going for so long is because there's a lot of room within the show for the different individuals to bring their own characters and their own tastes and emphasis to it, so it's always a very different show depending on who's in the cast."

It's partly thanks to this that Cresswell doesn't miss being out on stage himself. Although he's stayed hands-on as far as possible, in many respects, through the contributions of various cast members over the years, the show has begun to take

on a life of its own.

"I think the main reason the show now is so different from what we started with is that the performers are better than me! Even though it's my show and I love it, it was never designed to be performed by 50-year-olds - my bones hurt too much!"

Rather unusually for such a high-profile show, STOMP is still cast through open auditions - literally anyone can show up on the day and give it a go.

"STOMP was always a show made by musicians, so we were never really part of the West End culture. In the first place, it was just eight people doing something we enjoyed, and it never occurred to us that we'd have to hold auditions - we just assumed the show would die when we got bored with it. When we first did auditions in New York, it was completely new to us - none of us had ever been to an audition, so we just did what we thought we ought to do and had an open call."

And while it might have come from a position of not knowing much about the 'done thing', the practice has stuck, and it's this, thinks Cresswell, that helps to make the show unique.

"It's great, because all sorts of people turn up. We get a lot of people from theatre and dance, and we get a lot of musicians, but we also get people who have never been on stage before, who have just been



inspired by the show or who wanted a change of direction in life. What I love about it is that it gives you the chance to find that gem who comes in looking at theatre from a slightly different angle that hasn't been taught by someone else. I think having really diverse and interesting people is what's kept the show so strong."

Auditions are held roughly every two years, but not everyone who gets accepted goes straight into the show. There's so much interest that there's a pool of people waiting for their chance to STOMP, which sometimes can take quite a while.

"We had around 800 people show up for the audition we did in spring this year, and out of those we chose twelve. Most of them are now in the show, but it'll more than likely take us a couple of years to get through all of them, because people tend to stay for quite a long time."

This is true regardless of people's backgrounds, or how easy it might be for them to procure other performance work. Some even return after a time away - once a part of the STOMP family, always a part of the STOMP family.

"It's funny, you get someone who's never been on stage before and they might stay with STOMP for 20 years, or they might stay for five years and go on to do other great things. But equally you'll have someone from the theatre world who

stays for just as long because they love the freedom - I think you're unlikely to get the same level of freedom as a performer in other shows. It's definitely a group of misfits, and if you fit the mould for it, it becomes comfortable very quickly."

Globally, STOMP has got through around 50,000 boxes of matches, 30,000 brooms, 20,000 bins, 10,000 drumsticks and 25,000 litres of black paint - not to mention countless other props. Even once they're too worn out to use, many old props remain part of the show, joining the piles of stuff that form its junkyard set. Yet while some things change, others stay the same. The world might look quite different now to when STOMP started, but some props are simply too iconic to replace.

"I think the biggest reflection of the changes over the last few years is the Dustbins routine. When I was growing up, people used to empty household rubbish into metal dustbins - that's what the lorries collected it from. But that's all gone now. In fact, I think we're one of the biggest customers for the manufacturer that we buy them from!"

Like the other found objects in the show, the dustbins speak to the directors' background in street performance, where they learned how to fully engage an audience and encourage people to participate without pushing them into

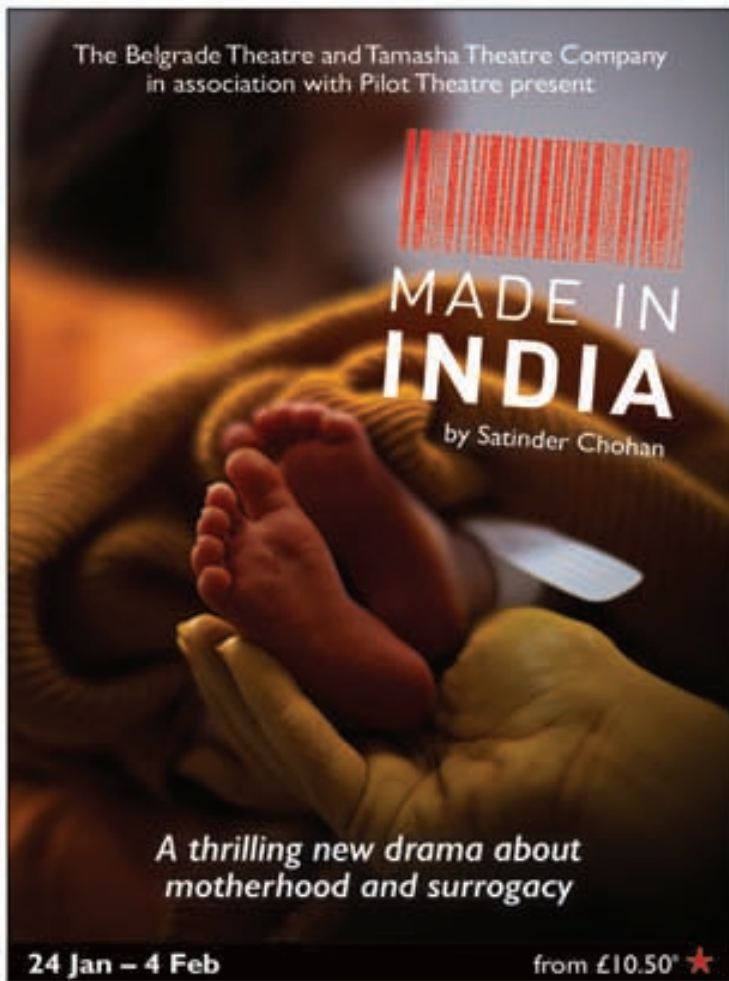
doing anything they didn't want to - a difficult skill to master without that training. Since then, STOMP has appeared in some of the biggest theatres internationally, not to mention on film, and in large part, its huge global success can be attributed to the fact that it is dialogue-free, allowing everyone, everywhere to enjoy the same experience.

Outside STOMP, Cresswell also works with the Lost And Found Orchestra (a music project based on a similar premise of making sound from found objects), as well as working as a musician in more conventional settings where he can. But with multiple STOMP companies and film projects to manage, it can be hard to find the time.

"It's one of those classic catch-22s where the success of STOMP allows you the freedom to do other work, but maintaining that success prevents you from doing other work. There are various other projects I'm looking at this year and next year, but STOMP is fairly all-consuming. Still, as long as I have a passion for it and the show is still good and growing, then it's rewarding work, and it never feels like a sacrifice."

.....
STOMP shows at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, from Tuesday 31 January to Saturday 4 February

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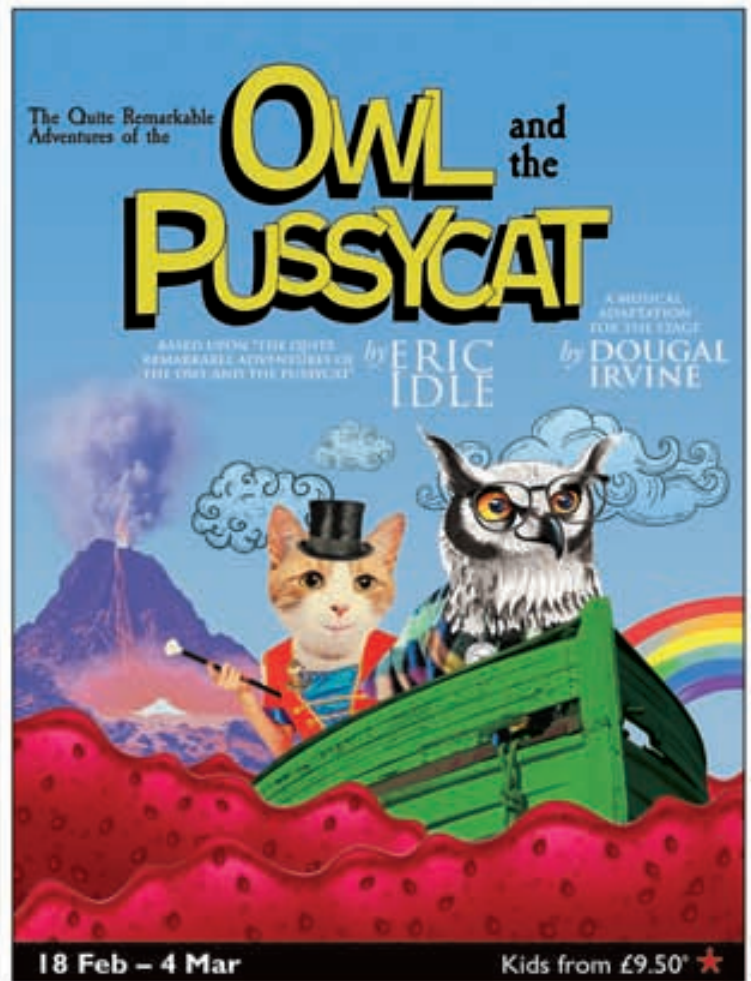
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Up-market Thai restaurant brings speciality cuisine to Kenilworth

A new up-market Thai eatery has opened in Kenilworth. Bua Luang Thai Restaurant & Wine Bar offers a menu of unique specialities from the north-east region of Thailand. The restaurant is owned by Somboon Buasaban. "I've had this idea for nearly two years," says Somboon. "Kenilworth is a

great culinary centre. The people are interested in good dining, and those I've spoken to have really been looking forward to having a restaurant like this in the area. I want to create a restaurant that serves excellent food, has great service and an ambience in keeping with high-class style."



REVIEW: Giggling Squid, Stratford-upon-Avon

The dining equivalent of a friendly tentacle around the shoulder...



Thai tapas restaurant chain Giggling Squid is one of the UK's gastronomic success stories. The enterprise started life in a tiny converted cottage in Brighton in 2002. It's been stretching its tentacles ever since, with a second restaurant opening in 2009. The chain now has 20 outlets, and founders Pranee and Andrew Laurillard have plans for many more.

The chain's newly opened Warwick outlet, on the walkway to the town's famous medieval castle, follows the winning Giggling Squid formula to a tee, providing a lovely, relaxed atmosphere, cheery service and excellent food. One of the couple's pre-requisites is that their

restaurants are relatively neutral in appearance - they look more like a café than a Thai restaurant from the outside, and have subtle Asian-inspired décor within. The food presentation follows suit. My partner was especially enamoured with the contemporary wine glasses - as well as her New Zealand Sauvignon - and even the obligatory prawn crackers (terrifically thick and crunchy) came in an impressive tin dish. But let's not dwell on the crockery; instead let's concern ourselves with the excellent food it contained.

The chain specialises in Tapas-style lunches, but evening diners can sample the same fare on the starters menu, with dishes

priced from £5.50. My partner and I opted for the sharing platter (£16.75 for two), which provided a good overview, even though it contained the least exciting option in vegetable spring rolls. There was nothing wrong with them, I'd just have preferred one of the more exotic choices (roast duck on baby leaf canapés, for instance).

Thankfully the remaining options more than compensated - skewers of grilled marinated pork that truly melted in the mouth, wonderfully meaty Thai-style fish cakes, and, best of all, salt and pepper squid. The latter came in a delicately crisp batter, was flavoured with salt, pepper, spring onion and sliced chilli, and - if you'll excuse the horrific pun - was quite simply to Thai for. A giggle for the squid indeed - and in case you're wondering, the chain's unlikely name was prompted by Pranee once remarking that the couple's two-year-old son 'looked like a giggling squid' as he laughed and wriggled on her lap.

And just as their son has grown, so has the Giggling Squid's menu, with a creative selection of main dishes (priced from £8.50 to £16.50) to complement the tapas. Since my visit was on the Sabbath, I opted for the nearest thing to a Sunday roast, in the shape of lamb shank Massaman curry - an inventive as well as wholly unlikely combination that worked beautifully. The rich, mild sauce of coconut milk, sweet spices and cinnamon was the perfect

accompaniment to more melt-in-the-mouth meat that tumbled off the bone almost on its own.

My partner chose a colourful dish of crisp-fried sea bream in a medium-spiced green curry that also contained green beans, courgette, and red, yellow and green peppers. The tasty fish was cooked in the lightest of batter, while the sauce's hidden kick meant it merited extra attention and mopping up with the (very) sticky rice we shared.

As usual we were pretty sated after our main dishes but summoned the appetite to share a chocolate feuillantine from the dessert menu - and we were certainly glad that we did. The lovely mousse - bizarrely light and rich at the same time - was just the sort of comfort food needed as we gloomily contemplated the working week ahead.

Giggling Squid's menu is realistically too fresh and exciting to be termed comfort food, but the overall experience is definitely the dining equivalent of a friendly tentacle around the shoulder, and you can never have enough of that. *Steve Adams*

Food:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Service:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Ambience:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Overall value:	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
OVERALL	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Giggling Squid
23 High Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6AU
Tel: 01789 268733

VISUAL ARTS

Subodh Gupta

From Far Away Uncle Moon Calls

Sat 14 Jan – Sat 11 Mar

Image: Subodh Gupta, 'Santitas' (2011) - 2016
Photo: Stefan Albrecht
Photography: Sarah Lawrence College and Museum of Art



DANCE

**This is an
Irish Dance**

by Jean Butler & Neil Martin

Thu 26 – Sat 28 Jan



CLASSICAL MUSIC

**An Evening of
Chamber Music with
Nicola Benedetti**

Fri 27 Jan



MUSIC

Ruby Turner

Fri 27 Jan

THEATRE

STOMP

Tue 31 Jan – Sat 4 Feb



MUSIC

**Aurelio
Martinez**

Tue 31 Jan



COMEDY

**Danny
Baker**

Cradle To The Stage

Fri 3 Feb



**FAMILY
OILY CART**

In a Pickle

Sat 4 & Sun 5 Feb

Ages 3 – 5

COMEDY

Stephen K Amos

World Famous

Sun 12 Feb



DANCE

Tango Fire

by German Cornejo

Thu 23 Feb



Amber Arcades

The Tin Music & Arts, Coventry,
Fri 20 January



Amber Arcades is the moniker of Annelotte de Graaf. The Dutch musician released her first, self-titled EP back in 2012. Three years later, she flew out to New York to record a collection of songs in Brooklyn's Strange Weather recording studio, backed by a band consisting of Kevin Morby and members of Real Estate and Quilt. The result was her debut album, *Fading Lines*, which was released on Heavenly Recordings last year.

A Day To Remember

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham,
Wed 25 January



Since their inception in 2003, A Day To Remember have sold over one million records, racked up over 400 million Spotify streams, 500 million YouTube streams and produced two gold-selling albums. The metalcore/pop punk five-piece visit Birmingham in support of their much-anticipated new album, *Bad Vibrations*. Support on the night comes from New Found Glory, Neck Deep and Moose Blood.



Darlingside

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Tues 31 January

Massachusetts-based four-piece Darlingside are rapidly becoming one of the most talked-about bands in contemporary American music.

Taking their influences from '60s folk, bluegrass, indie rock and classical, the band were last year named Folk Alliance International's Artist Of The Year.

Their name originates from a songwriting

class taken by members at Williams College. "Pesticide is used to kill pests," explains the band's Dave Senft. "Fratricide is when you kill your brother. A former teacher of ours used to say 'kill your darlings', which is to say, if you fall in love with something you've written, you should cross it out. "We like that idea, and we thought a good name for it might be 'darlingcide', but we changed the 'c' to an 's' because we're not super into death."

Jim Moray

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Sat 21 January

An established star of the contemporary folk scene, Jim Moray is widely considered to be one of the most consistently inventive performers working in English traditional music today.

His debut album, *Sweet England*, changed the sound of the folk song, in the process winning awards for its innovative melding of orchestration and electronica.

Sixth album *Upcetera* heralds a new chapter in Jim's career and has received five-star reviews from Mojo, fRoots and R2 magazines.

The Macclesfield-born singer visits Coventry in support of the album.



Tommy Emmanuel

Town Hall, Birmingham, Fri 20 January

Australian guitarist, songwriter and occasional singer Tommy Emmanuel is best known for his complex fingerstyle technique, energetic performances and the use of percussive effects on the guitar.

With a career spanning five decades, he's a household name down under and boasts thousands of fans worldwide. In recent times he's also become a bonafide YouTube sensation, accumulating over 29 million views.

Tommy is here promoting his album, *It's Never Too Late*, which features original music with no vocals or guests.

Two Door Cinema Club

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Tues 24 January

Comprising Alex Trimble, Kevin Baird and Sam Halliday, Two Door Cinema Club released debut album *Tourist History* back in 2010. Their follow-up offering, *Beacon*, went to number one in the Irish albums chart and number two in the UK chart.

Re-energised by a self-imposed hiatus, the band return for an extensive headline tour in support of third studio album *Gameshow*.

La Strada

Sally Cookson premieres a new stage adaptation of Federico Fellini's classic movie *La Strada* at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre

Film director Federico Fellini once described an artist as “a provincial who finds himself somewhere between a physical reality and a metaphysical one”. The quote could just as easily describe the unconventional heroine of his 1954 movie masterpiece, *La Strada* (The Road), and her journey through a world that mixes fairytale fantasy with the mundane and often bleak reality of life in impoverished rural Italy.

Launching a brand new stage adaptation at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre next month, acclaimed director Sally Cookson describes the story as a “folk tale-like odyssey” about finding one's purpose in life.

“My first encounter with the film was as a child,” recalls Sally. “My father was a fan and I happened to be in the room while he was watching it. At the time, I didn't understand it, but I was completely beguiled by the strangeness of it. It was only when I watched it again while I was at drama school in my 20s that I realised what a powerful piece of film it is, and it's stayed with me ever since then. So when the producer, Kenny Wax, came to me with the idea of adapting it for the stage, it felt like a really good match.”

The film follows the journey of a young woman, Gelsomina, who is effectively sold by her mother to serve as assistant to

a travelling street performer. Zampano, a strongman who previously employed Gelsomina's older sister Rosa (now dead under mysterious circumstances), proves to be a cruel master, beating Gelsomina when she fails to meet his standards and abandoning her at the first sign of alcohol and pretty women.

After some time on the road, the pair come across an itinerant circus which they briefly join. Before long, however, Zampano gets into a scrap with the Fool, Il Matto, who mocks Zampano's repetitive, unimaginative act and takes a shine to Gelsomina. While Zampano spends a night in jail, Gelsomina is faced with a choice: to join the circus and leave with them, to head off on a new adventure with Il Matto, or to await Zampano's release and return to the life she knows.

For a director like Cookson, known for openly challenging gender norms in productions like her gender-reversed *Sleeping Beauty*, her consciously Wendy-centred *Peter Pan*, and a highly acclaimed adaptation of *Jane Eyre*, the story does present some challenges.

“Gelsomina can certainly be seen as a victim, but I'm determined that we find her... action, if you like. The relationship between Zampano and Gelsomina is an abusive one, certainly, but Gelsomina doesn't just lie down and take it - she

confronts him and questions and provokes all the way through the story. Like *Jane Eyre*, she's constantly looking for a better life and striving to discover her potential, but circumstances make that very difficult for her. I've also cast Audrey Brisson, who's a really feisty, incredibly brilliant and wonderfully strong actor, and she'll bring her personality to the part, which should make the character anything but passive.”

Under Cookson's unconventional style of direction, Brisson, along with the rest of the cast, will play a direct role in shaping and developing the show and characters, rather than simply interpreting a pre-written part. This means that the finished piece is likely to end up being substantially different from the film.

“My way of creating theatre is through devising, which means we don't start with a complete script. The story itself is a very powerful one, so we will be following the narrative quite closely, but I think it would be really dangerous to just lift the film script straight onto the stage - I don't think that would make a very interesting piece of theatre. I'm working very closely with a dramatist called Mike Akers as well as with the actors, and we all collaborate together in the room to find the best way of bringing the story to life.”

This can make finding the right cast for



the job a rather long and tricky process, however.

“Casting takes forever! I spend a long time casting because I need to find actors who are not only brilliant and skilled at interpreting characters as performers, but also people who are able to investigate a story and have ideas and come up with their own dialogue. On top of that, with this show, we’re looking for very physical performers who can sing and move and play instruments, so it’s a very multi-talented company.”

In the film, both Gelsomina and Il Matto are musicians, and a melancholy air - performed by Gelsomina on the trumpet and by Il Matto on a miniature violin - serves as an ongoing emotional link between them, even when they’re apart. The stage version will be slightly different - Cookson’s Fool plays the accordion rather than the violin, and a new score by her long-term collaborator Benji Bower will replace the original Nino Rota soundtrack - but collectively the cast will be performing all the music.

“It won’t be a musical, but there will be a lot of music in the piece. I always use music to help place the story and create the right feeling, and I work very closely with Benji to do that. When we workshoped the story in spring, the music really helped us to excavate that

folk story-cum-fairytale world. There’s a real cross between a sort of gritty, realist world and a very imaginative, strange one, and having music enables us to lift it out of a naturalistic setting.”

Visually, audiences should not expect too great a degree of realism, either. The film shows Zampano and Gelsomina travelling through several locations, but while Katie Sykes, another frequent collaborator of Cookson’s, will be designing the sets, the team will be employing a whole range of different techniques to evoke a sense of the world and the characters’ passage through it.

“You have to engage the audience’s imagination - I won’t be feeding it all to them on a plate. We will be creating the atmosphere of the impoverished Italian roadside through very simple means, but I’m not entirely sure how we’ll do it yet. That’s what’s really exciting about devising - at this stage, before we go into rehearsals, we haven’t got all the answers yet.”

As well as their musical abilities, Cookson also intends to make use of the circus skills of some of her leading performers, though again, not to the extent that this becomes a circus show rather than a piece of theatre.

“I want to use the real skills of the circus

performers, but also the skills of the actors to theatrically create the family of the circus in an imaginative way. So I think we’ll be using a mixture of the skills these actors have and then finding ways of suggesting things like someone on a trapeze without actually having them up in the air.”

Unusually for a touring rather than an in-house production, the show will be making its debut at the Belgrade Theatre in February, at the start of a longer UK tour which will eventually end with a London run.

“It was ultimately down to the producers, but I was very supportive of the idea. It’s great to take work out into the regions and I’m really happy to be working in Coventry. I love the theatre there - I think it’s a fantastic space and they’ve got great energy. It’s also really important to me to bring my work to theatres that haven’t seen it yet, so it’s very exciting for me.”

.....

La Strada shows at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Saturday 11 to Saturday 18 February, and The REP, Birmingham, from Monday 8 to Saturday 13 May



What's on



Celia Craig

TUE 17 JAN

**CELIA CRAIG CELEBRITY
RECITAL**

1.05pm Birmingham Conservatoire

FRI 20 JAN

**SCHOENBERG'S PIERROT
LUNAIRE AND JAZZ**

7.30pm Crescent Theatre

FRI 20 JAN

EASTERN PROMISE

7.30pm CBSO Centre

Directors **Chris Houlding &
Douglas Mitchell**
Birmingham Conservatoire Wind &
Brass Ensembles



Fumiko Miyachi

TUE 31 JAN

**PIANO PROJECT
PREMIÈRES**

7.30pm Birmingham Conservatoire



Chun-Chieh Yen

THU 2 FEB



**CBSO PRE-CONCERT
SHOWCASE: BIRMINGHAM
CONSERVATOIRE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

1pm Symphony Hall

Conductor **Michael Seal**

Ravel Daphnis et Chloé:
Suites 1 & 2



Duke Ellington

FRI 3 FEB

**DUKE ELLINGTON:
WE LOVE YOU MADLY**

7.30pm Town Hall

**Birmingham Conservatoire
Ellington Orchestra**

MON 20 – FRI 24 FEB

SPECIAL EVENT

PARISIENNE FESTIVAL

Bringing you the warmth,
colour, mystery and joie
de vivre of French music
in wintry Birmingham



TUE 7 FEB

**NOBUKO IMAI CELEBRITY
RECITAL**

1.05pm Birmingham Conservatoire

WED 22 FEB



**CBSO PRE-CONCERT
SHOWCASE: SOLO PIANO**

6.15pm Symphony Hall

Featuring works by **Brahms**
and **Scriabin**



Alistair McGowan

FRI 3 - SAT 4 MAR

GALA PIANO ALL-NIGHTER

7.30pm Town Hall

Featuring **Alistair McGowan, Peter
Donohoe, Gerely Boganyi, Dr Anna
Scott, Mark Bebbington** and a
mystery special guest

FRI 3 MAR

**COMPOSERS' PLATFORM @
DIGBETH FIRST FRIDAYS**

6.30pm Eastside Projects



Louis Lortie © Elias

TUE 7 MAR

**LOUIS LORTIE CELEBRITY
RECITAL**

1.05pm Birmingham Conservatoire

THU 9 MAR – SAT 11 MAR

**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO BY
WOLFGANG AMADEUS
MOZART**

Thu 7pm

Fri 7pm

Sat 2pm & 7pm Crescent Theatre



Jennifer Pike
© Tom Barnes

TUE 14 MAR

**JENNIFER PIKE CELEBRITY
RECITAL**

1.05pm Birmingham Conservatoire

FRI 17 MAR

**BIRMINGHAM
CONSERVATOIRE
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

1pm Town Hall

Includes **Schubert** Symphony No.5





Evening Of Chamber Music With Nicola Benedetti

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 27 January

Scottish-born violinist Nicola Benedetti is one of classical music's most sought-after performers, her road to fame beginning when she won Young Musician of the Year in 2004. A former pupil at the Yehudi Menuhin School for young musicians, Benedetti won Best Female Artist at both the 2012 and 2013 Classical BRIT Awards, and has performed with some of the world's most renowned conductors.

She is joined for this particular concert by her partner, Leonard Elschenbroich, and highly rated Ukrainian pianist Sasha Grynyuk.

Alongside Ravel's Trio for Piano, Violin and Cello and Brahms' Piano Trio No1 in B major Op8, the evening's programme also features Mark Anthony Turnage's Duo for Cello and Violin - especially created for the performers - and Piano Trio, Butterflies Remember A Mountain, a new mini-masterpiece by Arlene Sierra.

Ensemble Epomeo

Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Sun 22 January

Fast-rising string trio Ensemble Epomeo were formed in 2008 at the Ischia Chamber Music Festival in Italy. The group features Diane Pascal (violin), David Yang (viola) and Kenneth Woods (cello).

This Worcester concert, preceded by a master-class, presents the following programme: Dohnanyi - Serenade Op10; Hans Krása - Passacaglia and Fuga; Beethoven - String Trio in D Op9 No2.



St Petersburg Philharmonic

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 26 January



Russia's oldest symphony orchestra makes a welcome return to the Midlands to perform a concert that features two of the country's most spectacular orchestral showpieces - Prokofiev's Romeo And Juliet and Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade. The programme is completed by Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No3. Yuri Temirkanov, the orchestra's chief conductor since 1988 and its 10th in all, leads from the front in a concert that also features the masterly Nikolai Lugansky (pictured) on piano.

Royal String Quartet

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 27 January

Poland's Royal String Quartet will no doubt be making it six of the absolute best when they visit Leamington this month, their previous five performances in the town having been met with great acclaim from critics and audiences alike. Compositions by cult composers Philip Glass and Henryk Gorecki are framed by two Mozart quartets in this latest offering, the fourth in Leamington Music's International String Quartet Concerts series.



Robert Plane and The Sacconi Quartet

Malvern Theatre, Thurs 26 January

It's been 10 long years since the award-winning Sacconi Quartet gave their first Malvern Concert Club performance - an occasion when, as ever, they were praised for the quality and integrity of their musical interpretations.

They make this welcome return in the company of clarinetist Robert Plane, whose distinguished career has seen him play with the London Symphony, Philharmonia, Royal Philharmonic and BBC Symphony Orchestras.

The principal clarinetist of the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Robert here teams up with Sacconi to play the following programme: Haydn - String Quartet in G, Op76, No1; York Bowen - Phantasy Quintet for bass clarinet and strings, Op93; Glazunov - Oriental Reverie for clarinet and strings, Op14; Brahms - Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Op115.



Get **VOTING** for your favourite
Midlands events and venues in the...

What's On Readers' Awards 2017

Some of last year's winners...



Yes, it's time for you to show just how much you appreciate Birmingham and the West Midlands' ever-vibrant arts and entertainment scene.

Nominate and vote online for your favourites to help them secure a place in our **What's On Readers' Awards Top 5 Shortlist**.

The shortlist will be announced in our February issue, when you'll have another chance to VOTE for your WINNER in each category. So get voting now!

And, complete our Readership Survey for the chance to **WIN £1000 cash!**

VOTE for your NOMINATIONS by Monday 23 January 2017

The Top 5 Shortlist in each category will be announced at the end of January - you'll then get the chance to VOTE one more time for your WINNER. Voting closes the end of February.

WINNERS will be announced in the Spring

CATEGORIES INCLUDE:

Best Large Regional Theatre
Best Small Theatre
Best Touring Musical
Best Home Produced Show
Best Home Produced Theatre
Best Touring Show
Best Kids Show
Best Arts Venue
Best Large Music Venue
Best Independent Live Gigs Venue
Best Gallery
Best Exhibition
Best Midlands Band
Best Dance Production
Best Operatic Production
Best Midlands Personality
Best Midlands Comedian
Best Place To Visit
Best Event
Best Festival
Best Restaurant
Best Nightclub
Best Regional Orchestra
Best Independent Cinema
Best Amateur Theatre Company
Best Amateur Production
What's On Achievement Award

VOTE today at
whatsonlive.co.uk

Festivals



When it comes to music - regardless of your preference, be it jazz, indie, folk, classical, world or pop - you're almost certain to find a festival in the Midlands to suit your taste. And 2016 looks set to be another bumper year for the regions festival goers. We here at What's On will keep you updated as further line-up announcements are revealed.

FEBRUARY

HRH METAL 2017 Celebrating its 10th year, the festival will feature over 40 bands across three arenas over two days, line up includes Skindred and Sodom, Sat 11- Sun 12 Feb, O2 Academy, Birmingham. More information at hrhmetal.com

THE INTER VARSITY FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL The 66th IVDFD will see performances from Sons Libres, Purcell's Polyphonic Party, Playford Minor Contravention, Fri 24 - Sun 26 Feb, various venues in Coventry. More information at ivfdf.org

MARCH

DARKER DAYS FESTIVAL Featuring seven bands from the UK and overseas specialising in the darker side of the aural arts, Sat 18 Mar, The Musician, Leicester

APRIL

NANTWICH JAZZ, BLUES & MUSIC FESTIVAL Celebrating its 21st year, the line up includes Geno Washington, King King, Rebecca Downes, Thurs 13 - Mon 17 April, various venues in Nantwich. More information and tickets available at nantwichjazz.com

CHELTHENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Chick Corea Trio, Snarky Puppy and Meshell Ndegecello, Wed 26 Apr - Mon 1 May, various venues in Cheltenham. More information and tickets at cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz

HANDMADE FESTIVAL Line-up yet to be announced, three-day family friendly music festival, Fri 28 Apr - Sun 30 Apr, various venues in Leicester. More information and tickets at handmadefestival.co.uk

UPTON UPON SEVERN FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Barber Sisters, Huw Williams and Hekety, Fri 28 Apr - Mon 1 May, various venues, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information and tickets at uptonfolk.org

LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes baritone Roderick Williams, Fri 28 Apr - Tues 2 May, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa. More information at leamingtonmusic.org

DEMENTIA AWARE FEST Line-up includes White Tyger, Martyr De Mona and Left for Red, Sat 29 - Sun 30 Apr, The Roadhouse, Birmingham. More information and tickets at theroadhousebirmingham.com

FUDGESTOCK Line-up has yet to be announced, Sun 30 Apr, Robin 2, Wolverhampton. More information at therobin.co.uk

SWINGAMAJIG Line-up has yet to be announced, Sun 30 Apr, The Rainbow Venues, Birmingham. More information at and tickets at swingamajig.co.uk

MAY

BEARDED THEORY Line-up includes Slaves, Skunk Anasie and Cast, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire. More information and tickets at beardedtheory.co.uk

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Forgotten Remains, Seething Akira and Massive Wagons, Fri 26 - Sun 28 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove. More information and tickets at breakingbandsfestival.com

MELLO Line-up includes Hawkwind, Goldie Lookin Chain and Altered Images, Fri 26 - Sun 28 May, Throckmorton Airfield, Worcestershire. More information at mellofestival.co.uk

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Chris Sherburn & Denny Bartley, Belshazzar's Feast and

The Wilson Family, Fri 26 - Mon 29 May, Kelsall Village. More information and tickets at chesterfolk.org.uk

UPRISING 2017 Line-up includes Onslaught, Lawnmower Deth and Kill II This, Sat 27 May, De Montfort Hall, Leicester. More information at demontforhall.co.uk

SLAMDUNK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Enter Shikari, Don Broco and Bowling For Soup, Sat 27 May, Genting Arena, Birmingham. Tickets can be purchased from slamdunkmusic.com

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up to be announced, Sat 27 - Sun 28 May, Birmingham Gay Village. Information and tickets at birminghampride.com

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Sun 28 May, various venues in Nottingham. More information at dottodotfestival.co.uk

JUNE

WIRRAL FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Lindisfarne, Martin & Eliza Carthy and Vin Garbutt, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 June, The Whitby Club, Cheshire. More information and tickets at wirralfolkonthecoast.com

THE ACOUSTIC FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN Line-up includes Gaz Brookfield, Boy on a Dolphin and TV Smith, Thurs 1 - Sun 4 June, Uttoxeter Racecourse. More information and tickets at acousticfestival.co.uk

LICHFIELD BLUES & JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 2 - Sun 4 June, various venues, Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information and tickets at lichfieldarts.org.uk

WYCHWOOD FESTIVAL Line-up includes Levellers, OMD and Katie Ashworth, Fri 2 - Sun 4 June, Cheltenham Racecourse. More information and tickets at wychwoodfestival.com

ASPARAFEST Line-up includes 3 Daft Monkeys, The Pyrates and Brimstone, Fri 2 - Sun 4 June, Ashdown Farm, Evesham, Worcestershire. More information and tickets at asparafest.co.uk

ENGLISH HAYDN FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Wed 7 - Sun 11 June, Bridgnorth. Information at englishhaydn.com

GATE TO SOUTHWELL FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Kate Rusby, Jon Boden and Le Vent dy Nord, Thurs 8 - Sun 11 June, Southwell, Nottingham. More information and tickets at southwellfolkfestival.org.uk

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL Headlining are System of a Down, Biffy Clyro and Aerosmith, Fri 9 - Sun 11 June, Donington Park, Derby. Information and tickets at downloadfestival.co.uk

SONIC ROCK SOLSTICE 2017 Line-up includes Doctor and the Medics, Heavy Metal Kids and Night of the Hawks, Fri 16 - Sun 18 June, Stoke Prior Space Port, Bromsgrove. More information and tickets at sonicrocksolstice.com

UKULELE FESTIVAL OF GREAT BRITAIN Line-up has yet to be announced, Fri 16 - Sun 18 June, various venues in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. More information and tickets at ukulelefestival.co.uk

KINETON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Sat 17 June, Kineton Sports and Social Club, Little Kineton. More information and tickets at kinetonmusicfestival.co.uk

LEAMINGTON PEACE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Sat 17 - Sun 18 June, Pump Rooms Gardens, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. More information at peacefestival.org.uk

FOXTON LOCKS FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Sat 17 - Sun 18 June, Foxton Locks, Leicestershire. Information and tickets at foxtonlocksfestival.co.uk

GLASTONBURY The first headliners to be confirmed is Radiohead, Wed 21 - Sun 25 June, Worthy Farm, Somerset. More information at glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

UPTON-UPON-SEVERN JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes Alan Barnes, Bent Persson and Dart Valley Stompers, Thurs 22 - Sun 25 June, venues across Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire. More information and tickets at uptonjazz.co.uk

BARN ON THE FARM FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Thurs 29 June - Mon 3 July, Over Farm Market, Gloucestershire. Information and tickets at barnonthefarm.co.uk

NIBLEY MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Fri 30 June - Sat 1 July, North Nibley, Gloucestershire. Information and tickets at nibleyfestival.co.uk

ALSO FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Fri 30 June - Sun 2 July, Park Farm, Compton Verney. More information at also-festival.com

JULY

LLANGOLLEN INTERNATIONAL MUSICAL EISTEDDFOD Line-up to be announced, Mon 3 - Sun 9 July, Royal International Pavilion, Llangollen. More information and tickets at international-eisteddfod.co.uk

2000TREES FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Thurs 6 - Sun 9 July, Upcote Farm, Cheltenham. More information and tickets at twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk

NOISILY FESTIVAL Line-up includes Gabriel Ananda, Zen Mechanics and Beardyman, Thurs 6 - Sun 9 July, Coney Woods at Noseley Hall, Leicestershire. More information and tickets at noisilyfestival.com

FUSE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 7 - Sun 9 July, Beacon Park, Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information and tickets at fuselichfield.org.uk

LINTON FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 7 - Sun 9 July, The Alma Inn, Linton, Herefordshire.

More information and tickets at lintonfestival.org

CAMPERJAM Line-up to be announced, Fri 7 - Sun 9 July, Weston Park, Shropshire. Information and tickets at camperjam.com

MOSTLY JAZZ, FUNK AND SOUL FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 7 - Sun 9 July, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information and tickets at mostlyjazz.co.uk

ELECTRIC DAISY CARNIVAL 2017 Line-up to be announced, Sat 8 July, Milton Keynes. More information and tickets at uk.electricdaisycarnival.com

BROMSGROVE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes 3 Daft Monkeys, The Lost Notes and Thirsty Work, Thurs 13 - Sun 16 July, various venues across Bromsgrove. More information and tickets at bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

LATITUDE 2017 Line-up has yet to be announced, Thurs 13 - Sun 16 July, Henham Park Estate, Suffolk. More information and tickets at latitudefestival.com

LOVEBOX 2017 The first act to be confirmed is Frank Ocean, Fri 14 - Sat 15 July, Victoria Park, London. More information and tickets at loveboxfestival.com

BIRMINGHAM FEST Line-up to be announced, Fri 14 - Sun 30 July, various theatres across Birmingham. More information and tickets at birminghamfest.co.uk

BUG JAM Line-up to be announced, Fri 16 - Sun 18 July, Santa Pod Raceway, Northamptonshire. More information and tickets at bugjam.co.uk

DEERSTOCK 2017 Line-up to be announced, Fri 21 - Sun 23 July, Newton Cross Country Course, Nottinghamshire. More information and tickets at deerstock.co.uk

NOZSTOCK Line-up to be announced, Fri 21 - Sun 23 July, Rowden Paddocks, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information and tickets at nozstock.com

SPLENDOUR Line-up to be announced, Sat 22 July, Wollaton Park, Nottingham. More information and tickets at splendourfestival.com

WARWICK FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Oysterband, Spooky Men's Chorale and Andy Kershaw, Thurs 27 - Sun 30 July, Warwick School, Warwick. More information and tickets at warwickfolkfestival.co.uk

BAREFOOT FESTIVAL Line-up has yet to be announced, Fri 28 - Sun 30 July, Prestwold Hall, Leicestershire. More information and tickets at barefootfestival.com

CARFEST NORTH Line-up has yet to be announced, Fri 28 - Sun 30 July, Bolesworth Castle, Cheshire. More information and tickets at carfest.org

MADE BIRMINGHAM Line-up has yet to be announced, Sat 29 July, The Rainbow Venues, Digbeth. More information and tickets at madebirmingham.com

AUGUST

110 ABOVE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 4 - Sun 6 Aug, Gospall Hall Farm, Leicestershire. More information and tickets at 110above.com

BULLDOG BASH Line-up to be announced, Thurs 10 - Sun 13 Aug, Long Marston Airfield, Stratford Upon Avon. More information and tickets at bulldogbash.co.uk

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR Amon Amarth, Hatebreed and Hell headline, Thurs 10 - Sun 13 Aug, Catton Hall, Derbyshire. More information and tickets at bloodstock.uk.com

LAKEFEST Line-up has yet to be announced, Thurs 10 - Mon 14 Aug, Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire. More information and tickets at lakefest.co.uk

FARMER PHIL'S FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 11 - Sun 13 Aug, near Gatten Farm, Shropshire. More information and tickets at farmerphilsfestival.com

THE JUST SO FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 18 - Sun 20 Aug, Rode Hall Parkland, Cheshire. More information and tickets at justsofestival.org.uk

FLASHBACK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 18 - Sun 20 Aug, Thoresbury Estate, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. More information and tickets at theflashbackfestival.com

GLOWORM Line-up to be announced, Sat 19 - Sun 20 Aug, Clumber Park, Worksop, Nottinghamshire. More information and tickets at glowormfestival.co.uk

V FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Sat 19 - Sun 20 Aug, Weston Park, Shropshire. More information and tickets at vfestival.com

FAKE FESTIVALS The UK's only touring tribute bands festival. Oasis, Guns n' Roses and New 2 announced, Sat 26 Aug, The Quarry, Shrewsbury. More information and tickets at fakefestivals.co.uk

SHAMBALA Line-up to be announced, Thurs 24 - Sun 27 Aug, a secret location near Market Harborough, Northamptonshire. More information at shambalafestival.org

PRESTEIGNE FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Thurs 24 - Tues 29 Aug, Powys, Wales. More information and tickets at presteignefestival.com

CREAMFIELDS Line-up to be announced, Thurs 24 - Sun 27 Aug, Cheshire. More information at creamfields.com

READING FESTIVAL Muse, Major Lazer and Bastille are amongst the first to be announced, Thurs 24 - Sun 27 Aug, Little John's Farm, Reading, Berkshire. More information at readingfestival.com

SUNSHINE FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Three Degrees, The Wurzels and Elkie Brooks, Fri 25 - Sun 27 Aug, Fish Meadow, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire. More information and tickets at uptonfestival.co.uk

BEERMAGEDDON Line-up to be announced, Fri 25 - Sun 27 Aug, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove. More information and tickets at beermageddon.co.uk

GREENBELT FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 25 - Mon 28 Aug, Boughton House, Northamptonshire. More information and tickets at greenbelt.org.uk

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Alma, Coven and Maz O'Connor, Fri 25 - Mon 28 Aug, Greenhouse West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury. More information and tickets at shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

SEPTEMBER

MOSELEY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 1 - Sun 3 Sept, Moseley Park, Birmingham. More information and tickets at moseleyfolk.co.uk

ONBOARD THE CRAFT FESTIVAL Terminal Cheesecake, Bernie Torme and Quartz have been announced, Fri 8 - Sat 9 Sept, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove. More information and tickets at sonicrocksolstice.com

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Sept, Bromyard, Herefordshire. More information and tickets at bromyardfolkfestival.co.uk

WORCESTER MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up to be announced, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Sept, venues across Worcester. More information and tickets at worcestermusicfestival.co.uk

OCTOBER

LICHFIELD FESTIVAL OF FOLK Line-up to be announced, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Oct, venues around Lichfield, Staffordshire. More information at lichfieldarts.org.uk

For full festivals listings for 2017, head to whatsonlive.co.uk

REGINALD D HUNTER

Back on the road with a brand new show for 2017



Following a tour around Ireland over the summer, TV, radio and stand-up comedy star Reginald D Hunter is back on the road with a brand new show for 2017, stopping off in Leamington, Birmingham, Stafford and Shrewsbury in the spring.

Since moving to the UK 20 years ago, the US-born comic has become as familiar as any home-grown talent, with a reputation for thoughtful, politically conscious and often deliberately provocative routines - and his latest offering, *Some People vs Reginald D Hunter*, looks set to be no different. Having worked the circuit for so long, he's well placed to give a verdict on the state of modern comedy, and as far as he's concerned, current offerings leave something to be desired, though the reasons are more complex than you might imagine...

"At the minute, I am concerned about comedy in general," Hunter confesses, "there's something about it that seems kind of muted. It seems as if it's become very fractured and politicised, and too self-conscious about trying to be anti-backlash..."

"I don't want to come off like I'm blaming comedy. In recent times, it's gotten a little too easy in Western culture to attribute blame. I think comedians just don't quite know what to say at the moment, because so much of comedy is based on having an object of satire or ridicule, and in this day and age, it's so easy to offend people, in a different way to how it has been in the past. I worry that comedy is getting more and more afraid to speak its mind."

There is evidence to support his point of view. Remarkably, Hunter has himself come under fire for his treatment of race in routines - whether it's his choice of language or, in one notable instance,

including jokes on the subject at all. His last tour, *The Aluminium Negro*, provoked walk-outs (not all that unusual) and he has spoken in the past about those he dubs “Outragists”, those who come along to shows specifically to be offended by what they hear - a relatively recent phenomenon he believes has its roots in discussions around political correctness going back to the '90s.

“My momma used to say, 'It's one thing to be offended, and it's yet another thing to go out of your way to be offended.' There's something new about this, and I think it's in large part to do with the growth of identity politics, which makes people insistent that their specific group's plight and history be recognised and given its due.”

As a medium that's designed to comment on the society in which it finds itself, it's inevitable that changes in comedy should reflect the wider cultural and political shifts we've been experiencing over the last few years.

“Ever since the '80s, our media, our leaders and our culture have been repeatedly stressing personal happiness and individualism, and all of those things are fine and well, but they're also the opposite of community. So all those of us who embraced those ideas of individualism, being able to custom design our entertainment and our lives, all of a sudden, one day we went, 'Hey, where's the community?' It's hard to have community when half the room has on headphones and the other half are staring at their phones.”

To an extent, the growth of the internet and increasing globalisation, coupled with a focus on personal freedom over collectivity and solidarity have collapsed the distinctions between nations, resulting in a kind of disconnect and insularity spread across much of Europe and America.

“The greatest problem with having maximum choice is a lack of consensus. I do believe the power to change things resides in us, and that we have the numbers, but we're too busy bickering amongst ourselves. I mean, I love England and everything, but if you go to a town hall meeting and somebody's talking

about getting this new park installed so the kids have somewhere to play, somebody's gonna raise their hand and say, 'Well, what colour we gonna paint the slides?' or 'Where're disabled people gonna park?' And they ain't even finished talking yet! That's what makes me fear for fascism - it's like, out of a supreme lack of consensus, someone will rise and be thrust into a place where they will be involved in creating a new consensus. We forget that, before 1945, fascism was considered a legitimate form of government.”

In a way, it should be comedy's job to criticise and satirise these issues - just as it's the job of a political opposition to tackle them head on. At present, however, both seem to be struggling to present a coherent and effective challenge.

“The problem with the stillness and the stagnation of stand-up comedy is the same as the problem with our politics: there are too many people - often hidden people - invested in the status quo. On the one hand, if you are profiting from a system, even if most people aren't, then why would you want to change it? On the other hand, there are a lot of people opting for the status quo even though they know it's not that great because they're scared the alternative will be worse.”

All of this will doubtless surface in his new show. While his last tour was described as containing some of his most personal material in years, he now feels that “there's a whole lot of things to comment about other than my life right now”. And as long as comedy remains half-asleep, he feels a responsibility to try to “shake it back up”.

“Having written most of this [new show] before Trump got elected, I've been thinking a lot in this material about the OJ Simpson case, which I think directly leads us to the racial moment in America right now,” he offers, tantalisingly, but won't say more. “Movies do trailers...” he laughs.

But for all his keeping an eye on developments back in the motherland, after two decades away, he's getting closer and closer to having lived in Britain for as long as he was in the States.

“It's just surprising,” he says, sounding genuinely bemused. “It feels more like 10 years than 20!”

Asked whether that diminishes his ability to riff on his outsider status and observe us from a distance, he's not so sure.

“I felt like an outsider in America when I was growing up, and I feel like an outsider in Britain now. The difference is that feeling like an outsider in Britain seems... normal. There are people who've lived here all their lives who feel like outsiders, but one of the things I love about Britain is that it makes room for what y'all like to call the eccentric. I mean, hell, Britain makes a warm and comfortable space for mother****ers who just like staring at trains! I think that's very evolved.”

There's reason to be optimistic then, despite the grown sense of division born out of contemporary political discourse, and despite the fact that he's anticipating more walk-outs and “p****ed off people” when he embarks on his tour in April. As he already said, he believes the power to make a change lies within us. And the simplest thing that we can do to start with?

“Start calling things what they are. There's so much euphemistic language - things like 'war on terrorism' or 'perception management' - that's just a fancy way of saying lies. I think when we collectively in Western culture don't call things what they are, added to all the drugs - prescription and otherwise - and all the propaganda nonsense in the system, it's no wonder people are going f***ing crazy! If you eliminate the euphemisms, I think you'll find that a lot of the mental health issues people are suffering will begin to clear up a bit, I really do.”

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Some People vs Reginald D Hunter shows at: Royal Spa Centre, Leamington, Saturday 6 May; New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Friday 12 May; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Saturday 20 May; and Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wednesday 24 May



Jack Whitehall

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Thurs 19 - Fri 20 January; Genting Arena, Birmingham, Thurs 16 February; Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, Sun 26 Feb

A fella who's had no trouble whatsoever getting his boat race on the goggle-box, Jack Whitehall's highly animated style of delivery is developing all the time, as is his repertoire of material. Subject matter has ranged from his father's desperate attempts to get quoted in his show, to his 2010 cocaine shame, as exposed at the time by the News Of The World. As for his jokes, previous chuckle-muscle exercisers have included: "I've never laughed a woman into bed, but I've laughed one out of bed many times," and "I'm posh, but I don't take any stick for it. It's like I always say, sticks and stones may break my bones but f*** it, I'm with Bupa."

Six of the best...

Lee Hurst

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 13 January

Back in the mid-1990s' era of lads' mags, Brit Pop and Euro '96, Lee Hurst was one of the most popular and familiar funny-men on television. It's strange to think, therefore, that his later career has included a decade's gap between one national tour and the next. He's reacquainted himself with life on the road in the last few years, presenting an act that's as sharp, cheeky and witty as ever it was. A proudly no-nonsense comedian, Lee's called this latest offering Comedy Show No 9, for the simple reason that, as the man himself explains, "it's a show, it's the ninth one and it's comedy - what else do you need to know? Come along for a night of laughs with that bald bloke you thought was dead."



Duncan Oakley

Couture, Stafford, Sat 21 January; Religion, Wolverhampton, Sat 21 January

Just as comfortable with the guitar, harmonica, drums and piano as he is with a big bagful of top gags, Duncan Oakley presents what's probably most easily described as a musical comedy act. He's a performer best kept out of earshot of your grandmother, with his stand-up routine being liberally peppered with four-letter expletives and gags about drinking and having sex. There's some silly stuff in there too - a previous musical composition bore the title The Girl With A Bum For A Face...



Paul Sinha

The Bramall, Birmingham, Thurs 19 January

A gay Asian doctor turned funnyman, Paul Sinha has enjoyed great success at the Edinburgh Festival. He's also a clever and articulate contributor to numerous radio and television shows, perhaps most notably ITV's award-winning quiz series, The Chase, where he's been one of the regular 'Chasers' since 2011. Alongside his stand-up, Paul has also carved out a further career for himself as a professional quizzier, attaining grandmaster status a couple of years ago and reaching a career-high UK ranking in 2015. His stand-up routines often include anecdotes and one-liners about gay dating, including: "I've recently downloaded a new smartphone app to give me the location for all the single, middle-aged men in my area. It's called Uber."



Tiff Stevenson

mac, Birmingham, Thurs 26 January

She may not be the most inventive of comedians, but 2011 Show Me The Funny contestant Tiffany Stevenson more than makes up for a lack of imagination with her charming personality and engaging style of delivery. She's been described as 'a breathing version of Heat magazine', is appealingly self-disparaging, and ensures that her audience never have to wait too long for a punchline.

An example of her style of humour is as follows: "You can tell how good a medical person is in bed depending on which area of medicine they work in. The paramedics obviously like a quick 'get in and out', the GPs cover a lot of areas but don't really know what's going on, and the surgeons like to go in there, rummage around, mess things up and then leave something behind that shouldn't have been there."



Andrew Ryan

The Glee Club, Birmingham, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 January

Irishman Andrew Ryan is a rising star on the UK comedy circuit, albeit one who would greatly benefit from finding a unique selling point. With his amiable persona and confident style of delivery ensuring his show is a comfortable ride for his audience, he peddles a self-deprecating and hugely endearing line in humour, happily waxing lyrical about his low self-esteem, ever-present anxiety and tendency towards paranoia. Although an occasional impulse to over-explain his material puts an unnecessary brake on the laughometer from time to time, he's got an act which, if carefully polished, could really start to shine.



Gary Delaney

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Fri 13 January; The Glee Club, Birmingham; Sun 15 January; Henry Tudor House, Thurs 19 January

"The hardest part of running competitively in Wales must be keeping up with the Joneses," quips Gary Delaney. Gary's certainly no one-gag pony: "My girlfriend's dog died, so to cheer her up I went out and got her an identical one. She was livid and yelled, 'What am I going to do with two dead dogs?'" Or how about: "The president of France said that the English are arrogant with their refusal to learn foreign languages. At least I think that's what he said. It all just sounded like haw-he-haw-he-haw-he-haw to me."



Ruth Graham

Old Joint Stock, Theatre, Fri 27 January

At the last count, Ruth Graham reckoned she'd made 27 house moves during the course of her life and been employed in 46 jobs, ranging from bellydancer to funeral celebrant. Judging by those statistics, it would seem she likes to move on quickly, so fingers crossed she at least stays in the Old Joint Stock for long enough to finish this show... Often compared to Fascinating Aida and Victoria Wood, Ruth presents a set that's big on comedy characters and original songs, covering topics that range from internet dating and social media to childhood and the trials and tribulations of running a B&B.



Wonderland

Curiouser and curiouser! Broadway composer Frank Wildhorn tumbles down the rabbit hole in a spectacular new musical



Kerry Ellis



Wendy Peters



Dave Willetts

It was in 1886 that the wacky world of Alice's Adventures In Wonderland first made it onto the stage, in an adaptation that the novel's author, Lewis Carroll (otherwise known as Cambridge mathematician Charles Dodgson), had a hand in.

Within the writer's lifetime then, the topsyturvy story and its cast of colourful characters were already delighting audiences in performance, and a mere 17 years later, they were being interpreted through the exciting new medium of film.

One of the latest companies to join the long and noble tradition of reinventing Alice is led by Broadway composer Frank Wildhorn, whose work on shows like *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Victor/Victoria* and *Bonnie & Clyde* has earned him international acclaim. First performed in 2009, *Wonderland* has already enjoyed success in the States; now a reworked version with a brand new British cast is making its way to UK shores for a tour beginning later this month.

Following a sneak preview of some of the fabulous songs from the show, both cast and creative team were on hand to tell us more about what we can expect when it hits Birmingham in early February.

"In the late '90s, I was fortunate enough to have three shows on Broadway," says Wildhorn, "*Jekyll & Hyde*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Civil War*, and so I was living on the Upper West side in a big high-rise building. I have two sons, and the elevator up to our home was always broken. Eventually I was running out of stories to tell my kids about why they couldn't fix the elevator, and for some reason I told them that if anyone did

manage to get on it, and take it all the way down through Macy's department store, they'd eventually get to Wonderland."

Wildhorn's kids are by no means an unusual source of inspiration for him. A previous family musical, *Excalibur*, came about as an attempt to engage his children with the story of *Camelot*, which his parents had loved and taught to him, but which his own kids didn't seem to "get". Departing somewhat from Carroll's vision, the story of *Wonderland* taps into this parent-child dynamic and the idea of the passing on of stories. Like the recent Tim Burton films, it sees Alice return to *Wonderland* as an adult, only this time, she's middle-aged, a mother going through a messy separation with her partner, as well as a schoolteacher with ambitions of becoming a children's writer. Much like the books then, it aims to present a child's eye view of the complexities and contradictions of the grown-up world.

"It all starts with the idea of the child within us all," Wildhorn continues. "The opening lyrics of my song, *Finding Wonderland*, are 'We move too fast; we miss so much'. And it's true - there is a *Wonderland* in all our lives if we could only take a breath and notice it. In this particular adventure, Alice has to rescue her own child, and in doing so, she rediscovers the child within herself."

"Frank's taken the Lewis Carroll story and done something really exciting with it," adds Director Lotte Wakeham. "In the original, Alice doesn't really do very much - she's essentially a tourist in *Wonderland*. We've looked at how we can make the heroine of our show go on a great, energising adventure with her daughter



and the audience.”

Having conceived the show while living in New York, it's perhaps no surprise that Wildhorn chose the city as the setting for its original stage outing. Just like in his story to his children, Alice ends up back in Wonderland via the lift to her apartment. However, when the show arrives in Britain, it will feature a completely reimagined setting and design.

“For the UK tour, we're going back to the original story, and it will be UK based, with a relevant look and sound,” says Wakeham. “We're still making some changes to the script, and we're really excited about it. Since the source material is so quirky and quintessentially British, this version of the show will be exactly that, too.”

“I've been inspired by the original illustrations and other incarnations of the story, but I've also tried to give it a fresh angle,” explains Costume Designer Grace Smart. “I've been looking at a lot of the UK's eccentric celebrities, so that we can keep the British feel yet keep true to the original story.”

“It's about looking at what's been done before and thinking about what we can bring to the whole Alice In Wonderland world,” agrees Set Designer Andrew Riley. “It's a very episodic story - she goes to a lot of locations, and I wanted to create a contemporary visual that people will recognise.”

For the cast, getting to put their own stamp on roles completely new to UK audiences with almost no precedent to turn to has also been a thrill.

“My job is to be creative,” says Wendi Peters, who plays the Queen of Hearts. “I don't like doing anything for too long, and I just love the process of reading something off the page and thinking through how I can best tell the story. In the case of Wonderland, we've got nothing really to copy, and that's lovely. I don't think that any actor should ever copy what's been before, though of course if the material's out there you're going to have a sneaky look at what's been done previously! But apart from a performance by the Broadway cast at the Tony Awards, there's little else online - and I love that because I can think through the character myself and hopefully bring something new to it.

“It's always fun to play baddies, but you must find something in them that makes people like them a little bit. I'd like to think there'll be a bit of all my comedy heroes in my Queen of Hearts: Molly Sugden, Peggy Mount and Patricia Routledge, who played Hyacinth 'Bouquet' Bucket in Keeping Up Appearances. She's a monster, but part of you can't help loving her!”

While more than a century's worth of adaptations might have made the characters familiar in other forms, the versions of them in Wonderland will be unlike any you've previously encountered.

“This won't be a revival of any kind,” says Dave Willetts, who plays the White Rabbit. “It's essentially a new creation, and Frank is allowing us all to be a part of that. One of my grandchildren told me I had to have rabbit ears, and I guess there might be, but part of the magic is actually leaving a lot to the imagination of the

audience. It's about the characterisation, the mannerisms, what you say and the way in which you speak.”

One of the most obvious breaks from tradition is the Mad Hatter, who will be played by a young woman, Natalie McQueen. There's a good reason for this change. We can't give away too much, but rest assured, in McQueen's own words, “It's not the Hatter that you know.” Instead of the mad old man we're used to, McQueen's Hatter is feisty, edgy and full of attitude. For her, getting to play the part has been a dream come true.

“Alice in Wonderland is up there with The Little Mermaid as one of my favourite films,” she gushes. “It's just completely bonkers and I love it. When I was up on stage last night, I actually had to have a moment to convince myself that the orchestra was really there, and that it was really happening. I was sure there must have been a mistake - it just seemed too good to be true!”

Frank Wildhorn hopes that audiences from eight to 80 will be just as entranced by the magic of Wonderland as McQueen has been, and wants everyone who comes along to fully immerse themselves in the spirit of the show.

“We're hoping the audience will come dressed up as the characters,” he laughs. “You should definitely encourage that!”

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Wonderland shows at the New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, from Mon 6 to Sat 11 February; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 10 - Sat 15 July; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Mon 31 July to Sat 5 August

Evita

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 31 January - Sat 4 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 9 - Sat 13 May

Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice's third major collaboration opened to rave reviews way back in the late 1970s. It has since garnered a reputation as one of the greatest musicals ever to grace West End and Broadway stages.

Telling the real-life story of Eva Peron, wife of former Argentine dictator Juan Peron, the show is packed to the rafters with memorable numbers, including On This Night Of A Thousand Stars, Buenos Aires, You Must Love Me, Another Suitcase In Another Hall and, of course, the classic Don't Cry For Me Argentina.

Casting is yet to be confirmed...



Lady Chatterley's Lover

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 26 January - Fri 3 February

Although DH Lawrence's most famous novel was first published in the late 1920s, it was more than 30 years before the unexpurgated version finally saw the light of day. When it did, its explicit descriptions of sex and use of words which were at the time unprintable made it the subject of a watershed obscenity trial. The jury found for the defendant, the novel's publisher, Penguin Books, who went on to sell more than three million copies of the title at breakneck speed.

This Blue Orange version of Lawrence's book, recounting the story of Lady Chatterley's affair with working-class gamekeeper Oliver Mellors, heads out on tour after its seven-performance run in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter.

Not surprisingly given the subject matter, the show contains full-frontal nudity and scenes of a sexual nature.

housing costs, gentrification and the challenges of forced relocation away from London.

The performance is followed by an interactive theatrical debate, with the audience being invited to participate in a live rewriting of the story.



Cathy

mac, Birmingham, Thurs 19 - Fri 20 January

A half century after Ken Loach's ground-breaking film Cathy Come Home turned the spotlight on the issue of homelessness in the UK, London theatre company Cardboard Citizens explores its resonances in 21st century British society.

The ensemble's mission statement is to create 'life-changing theatre' with and for homeless people, a task which they've been pursuing with great success for the last 25 years. This latest work, a new play by the award-winning Ali Taylor, reflects on the social and personal impact of spiralling

What's In A Name?

The REP, Birmingham, Fri 27 January - Sat 11 February

British theatre director, writer and translator Jeremy Sams is the man behind this new adaptation of award-winning French farce *Le Prénom*, here receiving its British premiere. When Elizabeth and her husband invite her brother - father-to-be Vincent - his partner Anna and childhood friend Claude to dinner, an evening of mature and sophisticated conversation seems very much in prospect. Until, that is, the name of Vincent and Anna's expected child is revealed, precipitating a full-blooded argument that soon spirals spectacularly out of control...

A film version of Alexandre de La Patellière and Matthieu Delaport's original play met with great critical acclaim when it was released in 2012.

Casting includes Nigel Harman, Sarah Hadland and Ray Coulthard.

Gaslight

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Sat 14 January

Patrick Hamilton's play comes with a royal seal of approval, with both King George and Queen Elizabeth having insisted on seeing it during its hugely successful West End run. *Gaslight's* reputation was further secured by its three-plus years on Broadway, during which period it was performed an impressive 1,295 times.

All of which should nicely whet the appetite for this latest version.

Bella Manningham's life is a fun-free zone. Feeling trapped in her gloomy home, she sits alone each night dreading the sound of footsteps from locked and empty rooms, and waiting for the gaslight to dim.

When a retired detective arrives one evening with a terrifying tale to tell, Bella must work out whether her visitor is really there to help, or if she's about to descend into a pit of madness from which there can be no return...

Kara Tointon, Rupert Young and Keith Allen star.

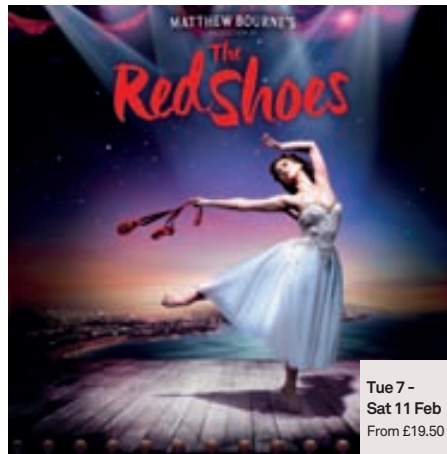




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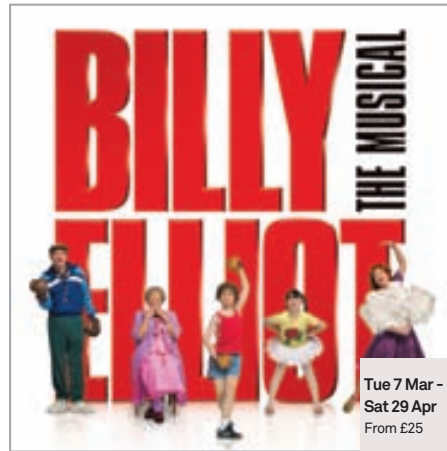
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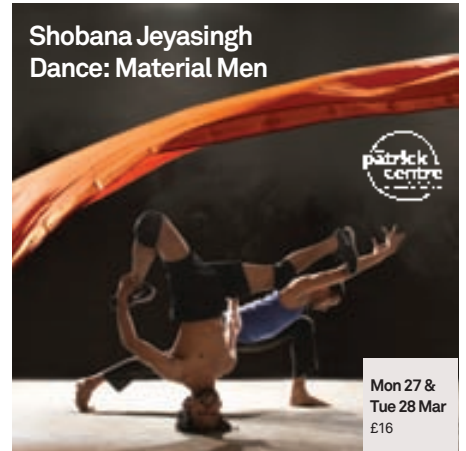
Wed 15 - Sat 25 Feb From £16



Fri 3 & Sat 4 Mar £15



Tue 7 Mar - Sat 29 Apr From £25



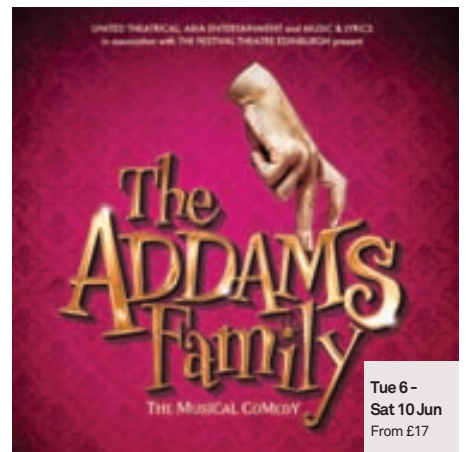
Mon 27 & Tue 28 Mar £16



Mon 8 - Sat 13 May From £22



Mon 29 May - Sat 3 Jun From £15



Tue 6 - Sat 10 Jun From £17

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The Play That Goes Wrong

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 23 - Sat 28 January; Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton, Mon 3 - Sat 8 April; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 1 - Sat 6 May; The REP, Birmingham, Mon 19 - Sat 24 June; Malvern Theatre, Mon 17 - Sat 22 July

A play about a play that goes wrong isn't a new idea but it's certainly a winning one - as the plaudits garnered by this cheeky Fringe hit ably illustrate. One reviewer laughed so much he feared he was going to hyperventilate, while another admitted his funny bone had been well and truly struck by the piece. Actress Joanna Lumley, meanwhile, laughed until 'the tears ran down'.

Mischief Theatre Company's Edinburgh Festival show arrives in the region on the back of a fantastic reputation and a couple of successful West End runs. For those not in the know, the play focuses on the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society's attempt to put on a 1920s-set murder-mystery. The only trouble is, the bumbling thespians are more than a little accident-prone - so much so, in fact, that they're not even sure they'll manage to reach the curtain call...



Frankenstein

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Wed 25 January; Malvern Theatre, Mon 13 - Wed 15 February; Lichfield Garrick, Fri 17 - Sat 18 February

Theatrical versions of Mary Shelley's classic gothic horror story are rare indeed, so this Blackeyed Theatre production should be well worth an evening of your time. Shelley's 1818



novel finds Dr Frankenstein giving life to a creature who so horrifies him that the scientist flees into the night. But although he can run from his ghoulish creation, he cannot hide. Soon enough Frankenstein finds himself face to face not only with the 'monster' but also with the chance to play God for a second and final time...

Blackeyed Theatre presented a hugely successful version of Dracula in 2013, so are well versed in the business of adapting classic horror stories for the stage.



The Singular Exploits Of Sherlock Holmes

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton, Saturday 28 January

Everybody's favourite fictional sleuth makes a welcome return, donning the deerstalker, puffing the pipe, wielding the magnifying glass and, on this occasion, breaking the fourth wall to regale the audience with stories from his glittering career as the world's greatest detective.

The always-value-for-money Don't Go Into The Cellar are the theatre company staging this one-man touring show, which has met with an altogether favourable response on its travels over the past few months.

The Seven Acts Of Mercy

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Fri 10 February

Anders Lustgarten's visceral new play is based on the Italian painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's masterpiece, The Seven Acts Of Mercy.

Originally commissioned by the Church of Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples, where it still hangs today, the painting presents (not surprisingly, given its title) seven merciful acts. These are: to visit the imprisoned; feed the hungry; bury the dead; shelter the homeless; clothe the naked; visit the sick; and refresh the thirsty. Created in 1606, the painting was Caravaggio's first after killing a man in Rome

and fleeing the city.

Four hundred years later, a retired dock worker eager to teach his grandson about the tragedy and beauty of the life he will face, turns for inspiration to the only thing he has left - a book of great works of art...



Thelma

Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 20 January

A pilot-night showing of this one-woman production was given a big thumbs-up by its audience, who variously described it as hilarious, poignant, touching and 'excellently written and executed'. All of which must have pleased its writer and executor Gina George no end, as she prepared to take the show out on the road.

Bringing together powerful spoken word, both tender and not-so-tender musical moments and the chance to grapple with the delights of the Geordie dialect, the production focuses on the interaction between three generations of women - a grandmother, mother and daughter - and the effect of idolisation and isolation on their relationship with one another.

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The Bee Gees Story

SAT 28 JAN

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SUN 12 FEB

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Pantomimes and festive shows in January

Dick Whittington

Birmingham Hippodrome, until Sun 29 January & Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, until Sat 7 January

Doctor Who and Torchwood star John Barrowman will be hoping the streets of the second city are paved with gold this Christmas, when he takes the title role in Birmingham Hippodrome's pantomime production of Dick Whittington.

Joining John on stage this year, to star as King Rat, is Steve McFadden, best known as EastEnders bad boy Phil Mitchell. Support comes from The Krankies (as Councillor and Jimmy Krankie), Hippodrome favourite Matt Slack (as Idle Jack), West End star Jodie Prenger (as Fairy Bow Bells) and popular Midlands panto Dame, Andrew Ryan (as Sarah the Cook).

The story of a young man who heads off on his travels in search of fame and fortune, Dick Whittington is one of the most popular of all pantomimes. It's therefore no surprise to find that our eponymous hero's journey sees him stopping off at not one, not two, but three theatres across the Midlands this Christmas.

As well as the Hippodrome, Dick's also visiting the Coventry Belgrade, where the venue's long-term panto writer, director and Dame, Iain Lauchlan, is returning for his 22nd show. Iain's heading up a production that comes complete with 'singalong songs, amazing sets and extravagant costumes' - and which will no doubt be packed to its festive rafters with action, comedy and family fun.

Aladdin

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, until Sun 22 January

The Wolverhampton Grand is certainly on a roll when it comes to providing high-quality



Dick Whittington at Birmingham Hippodrome

panto fare - and the venue's Christmas 2016 offering looks set to be every bit as energised and entertaining as any of its illustrious predecessors.

X-Factor winner Joe McElderry takes the title role in a show that also sees internet sensation Doreen Tipton making her panto debut as the Lazy Empress Of China.

Pantomime stalwart Lisa Riley stars as the Slave Of The Ring, with CBeebies' Mr Bloom - Ben Faulks - threatening to feel a collar or two as the Chief of Peking Police.

Britain's Got Talent soprano Lucy Kay appears in the role of Princess Jasmine, while illusionist Stefan Pejic plays the evil sorcerer Abanazar.

Panto regular Ian Adams dons a plethora of glamorous outfits as Widow Twankey.

Aladdin: The Wok'n'Roll Panto

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, until Sun 8 January

They've done it before and now they're doing it again. Yep, Stafford Gatehouse's oft-used strategy of imbuing their annual pantomime with a real rock'n'roll flavour has proved so popular in previous years that the venue is giving the exact same treatment to its 2016 production. So... they've taken this famous Arabian Nights story, stirred in a few time-honoured pantomime favourites, and then seasoned liberally with all manner of rock'n'roll hits - including favourites from Aretha Franklin, The Monkees, James Brown, The Temptations and The Jackson Five.

Sleeping Beauty

Malvern Theatre, until Sun 8 January

The tragic tale of a young princess who's tricked by an evil fairy and pricks her finger on a spinning wheel, causing her to sleep for



Aladdin at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

100 years, offers a great story around which to build a pantomime production of real quality.

Star of The Sooty Show, Chris Pizzey, stars as Silly Billy. Chris will be joined by a top-billing Gillian Wright - aka EastEnders' Jean Slater - Channel Five's Milkshake presenter Amy Thompson and Casualty's Rebecca Wheatley. Quinn Patrick dons the poorly applied rouge and comedy wig to play Nurse Nelly.

Cinderella

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury & Swan Theatre, Worcester, until Sun 8 January

'Son of the Potteries' Jonathan Wilkes dons the tights to star as Buttons in this ever-popular pantomime tale. Homecoming hero Jonathan is pretty much a festive fixture at the Regent Theatre nowadays, as is his good pal Christian Patterson, who's also making a welcome return. With its comical Ugly Sisters, matchmaking fairy godmother, drop-dead-gorgeous Prince Charming, super-cute mice and fits-one-foot-only glass slipper, Cinderella can justifiably lay claim to being the most popular of all pantomimes. And the Regent Theatre production isn't the only incarnation of this legendary fairytale delighting Midlands audiences this Christmas...

Theatre Severn's version of the story features all the usual panto elements of comedy, singing, dancing, audience participation and 'stunning' sets and costumes. And also very much as usual, it stars the ever-popular Brad Fitt, on this occasion appearing 'as you've never seen him before'...

Cinders is this year also putting some elbow grease into scrubbing the stage at the Swan Theatre in Worcestershire, courtesy of the well-regarded Worcester Theatre Company.



Cinderella at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



The Snowman

The Snowman

The REP, Birmingham,
Wed 11 - Sun 15 January

Making a welcome return to The Rep in its now almost-traditional New Year slot, Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman* is best known for Howard Blake's classic song, *Walking In The Air*.

When a young boy's snowman comes to life on Christmas Eve, the two set off on a night-time quest for excitement. On their travels, they meet reindeer, dancing penguins and some of the Snowman's many and varied friends.

The adventure's not without its anxieties, though, with the evil Jack Frost eager to get his icy mits on the pair of unlikely chums...

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show

New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham,
Mon 30 - Tues 31 January

In a career stretching back to the mid-1960s, Eric Carle has illustrated more than 70 books - writing most of them too. None have been more famous or successful than his 1969 story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

The popular picture book has been translated into more than 60 languages, selling in excess of 52 million copies.

This stage version of Carle's much-loved tale is presented alongside three other popular children's stories by the same author - *The Artist Who Painted A Blue Horse*, *Mister Seahorse* and *The Very Lonely Firefly*.

The Snow Queen

The Blue Orange Theatre,
Wed 4 - Sat 7 January

The Snow Queen is ruler of all she surveys. When she kidnaps young Kay, it's left to his friend Gerda to save him from a bleak future in the frostbitten wastelands...

Jars Of Clay Theatre Company give this Hans Christian Andersen work a brand new treatment, presenting a timeless tale featuring 'rip-roaring fights, brand new songs and a traditional battle of good versus evil'.



The Jungle Book

The Jungle Book

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Fri 13 - Sat 14 January; Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sun 15 January; The Place, Oakengates Theatre, Telford, Sun 5 February

Although zany funsters Oddsocks are probably best known for their humorous takes on the works of William Shakespeare, they occasionally like to shake things up a bit by looking for their inspiration elsewhere. This is one such occasion.

Made universally popular by the classic Walt Disney movie, Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* tells the story of a young boy named Mowgli who's been raised in the jungle by a family of wolves. His friends, Baloo the bear and Bagheera the panther, are determined to save him from the evil intentions of Shere Khan the tiger.

But keeping Mowgli safe is no walk in the jungle, as his two furry pals soon find out...

Little Howard And The Magic Pencil Of Life And Death

mac, Birmingham, Sun 29 January

If you've never heard of Big Howard and Little Howard, you're not watching enough CBBC television.

The pair have enjoyed huge success with their series, *Little Howard's Big Question* - so much so that heading out on a live tour is an absolute no-brainer for the boys.

Big Howard is human, Little Howard is an animated six-year-old who's discovered 'the magical pencil of life' that drew him - although somewhat disturbingly for the young chap, on the opposite end of the pencil is 'the eraser of death'...

What's equally disconcerting for Little H is that Big Howard has had a real-life baby - and one who's getting a little bit too much attention...

Interactive stand-up, 3D animation and a succession of singalong songs should ensure the show's young audience will be every bit as enthralled by the 'live' Howards as when they're watching them on the telly at home.



The Boy Who Bit Picasso

The Boy Who Bit Picasso

Bridge House Theatre, Warwick,
Sun 29 January

Play-clothes are very much the order of the day with this show - it's fair to say things could get decidedly messy!

An interactive theatre production for children aged four and older, *The Boy Who Bit Picasso* tells the story of how a young lad became friends with one of the greatest artists who ever lived. Along the way, the show offers audience members the chance to get really hands-on by making their own art - hence the play-clothes recommendation!

Treasure Island

The REP, Birmingham, until Sat 7 January

This latest theatrical version of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale, a modern adaptation by Bryony Lavery, puts an interesting spin on the author's swashbuckling story, with the chief protagonist being a girl rather than a boy.

When pirates ransack her grandmother's inn, fearless Jim is drawn into the adventure of a lifetime - one which will see her not only setting sail in search of buried treasure but also spending time in the company of a one-legged pirate with murder in mind...



The Red Shoes

Heather Kincaid catches up with choreographer Matthew Bourne to talk about his stage reinvention of ‘the greatest dance film ever made’



“How would you define ballet?”

So asks the tyrannical dance instructor, Boris Lermontov, in Powell and Pressburger's 1948 classic, *The Red Shoes*, going on to reveal that, for him, “it is religion.”

Widely regarded as the greatest dance film ever made, *The Red Shoes* centres on young ballerina and star in the making Vicky Page. When Vicky falls for the company's charismatic composer, Julian Craster, the jealous Lermontov forces her to choose between love and her career, knowing full well that for Vicky, dancing is as much a necessity as living.

In a sumptuous new adaptation headed for Birmingham Hippodrome next month, Matthew Bourne reinvents the story live on stage, delving deep into the film's strange, unsettling atmosphere and the complex psychology of its characters. It's one that's been on his to-do list for quite some time.

“Generally, I don't really like films about dance, or dance about dance, so in some ways it was an odd choice for me,” Bourne reveals. “I first saw the film when I was a teenager, before I'd ever even seen a ballet, so really, it was the thing that introduced me to the world of dance, and I think that's true for many people. It was a kind of weird and eccentric world that I fell in love with the idea of.”

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairytale about a pair of enchanted shoes that force their wearer to dance until she dies, the film reworks Andersen's warning against vanity into a tale of all-consuming, almost Faustian ambition. Upon rewatching the movie, Bourne says he was surprised to find himself feeling more sympathetic

towards the manipulative instructor than he had been in the past. Years of experience with dancers have taught him that to be the best at something invariably demands sacrifice, and there is some truth to the view that love can be a distraction.

“People do have a problem sometimes with defining someone who is very ambitious as someone who is too pushy or whatever, but I don't think ambition should be frowned upon so much. I feel like [Vicky] knows that she's good. She doesn't expect everything to happen to her, but she knows she has talent, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that.”

In Bourne's own take on the story, Vicky has even more reason to be ambitious. A wartime orphan living with an increasingly distant aunt, she's far less privileged than in the film. Like Bourne himself, she begins as something of an outsider to this world, taking nothing for granted and accustomed to striving hard for success. To have come so far perhaps makes the prospect of hanging up her ballet shoes all the more difficult to accept.

“If you watch the film, in her very first appearance, she's sitting at the ballet in a beautiful dress with a sort of crown or tiara on her head. It's quite extreme, and perhaps that's one of the things people like about it, but when you're telling a story today, people tend to prefer the idea of someone who has to struggle a bit more. She's only from slightly more humble beginnings - she's not a Little Match Girl waif - but it's not a foregone conclusion that she's going to get everything she wants.”

In addition to rewriting Vicky's backstory, Bourne has also fleshed out the life and work of the company as a whole, providing them with a repertoire of their own.

“We have several little ballets in the piece which the company are either rehearsing or performing. There's a beach ballet which creates a link to the actual beach when they visit Monte Carlo. In the second half, we have what we call the 'Good vs Evil' ballet - it's called Concerto Macabre in the programme - which

reflects the atmosphere of what's going on in the story at that point. That's based on a famously barefoot ballet Frederick Ashton did called Dante's Sonata. We also do a bit of Les Sylphides, and then there's a big, grand, glamorous, waltzy ballet near the beginning to represent the world Vicky wants to be a part of. So it's almost like watching a bit of dance history - you can see all the references.”

It's a history that Bourne has been encouraging his dancers to investigate and work into their performances. As well as picking up on similarities between Ballet Lermontov and his own company, New Adventures, he's based his vision of them on his knowledge of 1940s Sadler's Wells, before it became the Royal Ballet, when things were still a little rough around the edges.

“The dancers in a ballet company are very different now - much more sleek and technically advanced than they would have been in those days. I always get (the dancers) to do a lot of research for my shows, and it's been quite a fun project for them to get to know what it was like then, though there were a couple of things we couldn't follow. The men at that time weren't very good, for example - anyone who was vaguely interested would be in a company because male dancers were so hard to come by, so I've told them that they have to dance better than that!”

Famously, the big finale is a new ballet version of the original Hans Christian Andersen tale, with striking visuals and an almost unreal quality. In Bourne's dance version, The Red Shoes ballet has been made to deliberately stand apart from the more traditional, period styles of design and movement employed earlier in the show.

“We've tried to make it feel like they're doing something new and original and forward-looking, so the movement is more contemporary in some ways. We've also tried to create a look that's very different from the rest of the show - I don't want to give away too much because it comes as quite a surprise when it happens, but the whole set changes. I guess it's a bit like an MGM musical with Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire where they'd have what they used to call a dream ballet.”

Not only does this mark a sharp change from the rest of the production, it's also something of a departure for Matthew Bourne and New Adventures, involving the sort of complex point work he's always tended to avoid. Even the music has been chosen to lift this sequence out of its time, pushing it into the brave new world of the 1960s with excerpts from the score of Truffaut's Fahrenheit 451.

In keeping with the movie inspiration, the whole score for the production has been pieced together from works by the legendary film composer Bernard Hermann - best known for his iconic soundtracks to The Twilight Zone and, among various other Hitchcock films, Psycho.

“Herman has a wonderful sort of bittersweet feeling about his music which really suits the story very well. I think it's one of the real surprises of the piece, how amazing the score is, and it's all been brought together and arranged by Terry Davies, so it sounds like one score rather than lots of different bits and pieces.

“I made a decision not to use any of the Hitchcock scores because people would be thinking about other things if they heard those, so I've chosen less well-known stuff from the '30s and '40s. There are some concert pieces he wrote, as well as some from a film called The Ghost And Mrs Muir, which I've always felt has one of the most beautiful film scores ever. There's also some from Citizen Kane, which I've known for many years but never realised before how great the music is for dancing.”

With the current abundance of TV talent shows, a growing obsession with celebrities and increasing competition for creative careers, the story of what it takes to be a star feels in many ways more timely now than ever, even if dancers don't yet enjoy the same recognition as their contemporaries in acting and music. But perhaps the success of shows like Strictly is set to change all that...

.....
The Red Shoes shows at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 February

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Motionhouse: Scattered

Old Rep, Birmingham, Tues 31 January - Fri 3 February; Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Thurs 16 - Fri 17 February

Touring since 2009, Scattered sees local company Motionhouse bringing together their trademark physical dance theatre and mesmerising aerial imagery to create a unique interaction between film and live performance.

The critically acclaimed work explores the majesty and savagery of water, with seven dancers plunging into an ocean, wrestling a raging tide and sliding on an avalanche to a frozen landscape of arctic beauty.

“The Motionhouse dance experience cradles virtually all other art forms,” says the company’s co-founder and director, Kevin Finnan. “We’re working with people who are filmmakers, composers, visual artists and digital artists to create our productions. Our dancers are gymnasts, break dancers, aerialists - and this diversity in skills and art forms means a production can be a very moving experience, but also an extraordinary visual event. You should explore it even if you think it’s not for you, because it really is so incredibly diverse.”



Anton & Erin: Swing Time

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 28 January; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 24 February



Celebrity dancing duo Anton du Beke and Erin Boeg return to Birmingham’s Symphony Hall this month with their brand new show. Blending smart choreography, sassy tunes and sparkly costumes, the production pays homage to the golden years of swing and features a host of much-loved numbers, including I Got Rhythm, Moondance, Guys And Dolls, Strike Up The Band and I Could Have Danced All Night.

The popular pair are joined by a 25-piece orchestra, six ensemble dancers and guest singer Lance Ellington. Richard Balcombe conducts.

ACE Dance & Music: Ten

Lichfield Garrick, Fri 27 January

“I’m interested in exploring the concepts of moving away and leaving,” explains Ten’s choreographer, Jose Agudo, “of surviving in a land without a place to go, of looking at how and why people choose previously unimagined destinies over the lives they’d always thought they’d live - and how power can reflect the fragility of the human being.” Humanity’s universal stories are placed

under the microscope by Agudo, whose new work strikes an overarching tone that’s both epic and poetic. In the process, the choreographer brings ‘hints of Flamenco movement to the contemporary vocabulary underpinned by ACE Dance & Music’s inimitable African style’.

“Ten will build on the themes of spiritual dedication and striving,” explain ACE. “Ultimately this piece will be about humanity’s urge to reach for the power of 10 - the universal symbol of completion.”

Sonia Sabri Company: Akaar

The Old Rep, Birmingham, Sat 28 January

“We’ve always tried to create something which is groundbreaking and pioneering,” says Sonia Sabri. “I feel proud to say that we’ve presented something that’s very new and very different. We’ve been at the forefront of creating new ideas, and that’s exactly what we intend to continue doing.” Sabri’s belief in the need to push the boundaries of dance is reflected in this special performance event. “It aims to celebrate emerging and undiscovered talent,” she explains, “and to support the interest and breadth of South Asian arts being created across the Midlands.”

Featuring both individuals and groups, the show includes non-South Asian artists and performers who are presenting work with a South Asian flavour.



Highly Sprung: Fall Out

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Fri 13 - Sat 14 January



This latest work from Midlands-based Highly Sprung Performance Co has been produced in response to what the company describes as a growing concern about young people ‘no longer having a voice or control over their own future’.

The story focuses on three teenagers on the roof of a nightclub, thrown together through circumstance, who’re all searching for an answer to the same question - who, if anybody, cares?

A young revolutionary named Jay thinks he knows how to bring about change:

“Thousands of us,” he says, “on the last day of exams - we’re all gonna jump. They’ll have to listen to us then, they’ll have no choice...”

Set in empty studio spaces, Fall Out combines physical theatre performance with the experience of a club night.

“Audiences are invited to enter a nightclub,” Highly Sprung explain. “Dance becomes interspersed with story, movement and dialogue, and action takes place around and above the audience. It’s a self-contained, interactive, promenade experience.”



WHY CULTURE MATTERS

When it comes to art and culture, the West Midlands region has plenty to shout about. Peter Knott, the Midlands Area Director for Arts Council England, explains why...



Art, culture and creativity are big business. Without them, the West Midlands would be a much poorer place, culturally, socially and financially.

I spend a lot of my time in Birmingham, where one of the Arts Council's national offices is based. But I'm lucky enough to travel across the region, seeing how our investment is making great things happen in a constantly evolving landscape.

It's a privilege to work in what I consider to be England's most vibrant and interesting sector, and I'm continually impressed by the creative energy and ambition of the West Midlands.

Looking back over the last year, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery was the most visited civic museum in England. Ironbridge Gorge celebrated its 30th year as one of the country's first UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Coventry's Belgrade scooped a UK Theatre Award for its promotion of diversity. And Creative Black Country helped get off the ground more than 32 new artistic and cultural projects produced by local people.

These are just a few of the cultural highlights our region has been - and should be - shouting about. But all this doesn't happen by accident. It's down to the hard work and dedication of the people who work within this thriving sector.

Despite increasing budget pressures - and a very real need to balance the books - our ambition is to see art and culture continue to flourish in the West Midlands. Through our local investments, we want to see more people enjoy opportunities to experience the very best of our nation's creative talent in the places where they live. But we also want to see culture continue to fuel our region's economy.

In Birmingham alone, artistic and cultural

organisations are adding more than £300million to the regional economy. This is a fantastic return on the Arts Council and other major stakeholders' investment. For me, it reinforces why, during times of austerity, investing in arts and culture remains crucial.

I was struck by John Clancy's words as the leader of Birmingham City Council when he talked about the arts as a 'key indicator of a city's success and as important as quality housing to driving investment.'

Since the end of last year, the Arts Council has invested more than £15.7million in arts and culture in the West Midlands, building on the £46.5million already announced for the region in July 2014. It's fantastically exciting to see the impact this is having.

In his autumn statement last year, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer described cutting public funding for the arts as a false economy. I couldn't agree more, and the evolution of the West Midlands Combined Authority is a prime example of why.

More and more people are choosing to relocate to the West Midlands - particularly from London. The cultural offer here and the dynamic this creates, combined with affordable living, is a key reason for this.

Henrietta Brealey of the Greater Birmingham Chamber summed this up when she said: "There's more to England than the North and London, the Midlands has a unique offer."

With three of the region's major cities all vying to be UK City of Culture in 2021, this unique offer is poised to really take off over the next few years. Coventry, Hereford and Stoke each have their own distinctive heritage on which to build their bids. But what is perhaps most exciting, is the energy and pride that putting culture

at the heart of city-wide plans is generating for each place.

The lasting impact of this concerted effort to make art, culture and creativity central to their visions for the future is a reminder that the value of art goes beyond just enjoyment and economics.

As well as making a huge impact on health, wellbeing and crime prevention, arts and culture are at the heart of human expression. They bring people together. They help foster pride in the places we come from. And they provide an opportunity for us to talk about our lives in a unique and continually evolving way.

Creative Black Country's work with the landlords of Desi Pubs is testament to this. In a story of east meets west, these landlords have worked with artists to celebrate and share the heritage of their local community with punters.

From great art enjoyed over a curry and pint to the legacy of the world's greatest playwright, the West Midlands offers something to suit everyone's artistic tastes.

With the New Year before us, now is the time for us to think even harder about what art and culture can do for people in the West Midlands. But we can only do that in conversation with you.

We need more and better partnerships at a local level. It's not only about the Arts Council working with local authorities. It's also about the Arts Council, local authorities and local people working together, brokering partnerships that involve higher education, businesses and development agencies.

So, as a resolution for 2017: Never undervalue the power of arts and culture. It's a mistake we can't afford to make.

Win!

Tickets to Made In India



Closes Thursday 19 January

Tickets to What's In A Name?



Closes Friday 20th January

Tickets to Cirque Beserk



Closes Monday 13 February

Tickets to The Snowman



Closes Friday 6 January

Tickets to The Fizzogs



Closes Friday 6 January

Tickets to Tattoo Freeze



Closes Monday 23 January

Tickets to MCM Comic Con Midlands



Closes Friday 27 January

Tickets to Matthew Bourne's The Red Shoes



Closes Monday 30 January

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Film

La La Land CERT 12a (128 mins)

Starring **Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone, John Legend, Rosemarie DeWitt, JK Simmons, Finn Wittrock, Tom Everett Scott**
Directed by **Damien Chazelle (USA)**

At the date of going to press, *La La Land* is the movie to beat at the 2017 Oscars - particularly for best picture, best actor, best actress and best director. It's what insiders say has 'The Artist' vote - an original that has the finesse to out-gun all the portentous, well-meaning dramas.

Chazelle's last film, the suspenseful and distinctive *Whiplash*, won an Oscar for best supporting actor (JK Simmons). But *La La Land* is a musical, and a romantic musical at that.

Emma Stone plays an aspiring actress who meets a jazz pianist (Ryan Gosling) in Los Angeles (hence the title) and they fall in love. It's as simple as that. Well, not quite. The chemistry between the stars was a given as they'd previously played lovers in *Crazy, Stupid, Love* (2011) and *Gangster Squad* (2013).

Released Fri 13 January



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Film highlights released in January...



Silence CERT 15 (161 mins)

Starring **Andrew Garfield, Adam Driver, Liam Neeson, Tadanobu Asano, Ciarán Hinds**
Directed by **Martin Scorsese (USA/Taiwan/Italy/Mexico)**

Before he became a filmmaker, Martin Scorsese wanted to be a priest, and his interest in spiritualism and transcendence kept his interest in an adaptation of Shūsaku Endō's titular novel alive for over 20 years. The story of two Jesuit priests who travel to 17th century Japan to locate their mentor (Liam Neeson) has elicited considerable Oscar buzz. Scorsese describes it as a thriller.

Released Sun 1 January

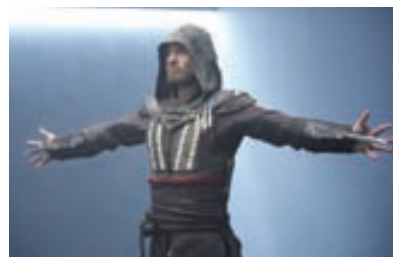
Assassin's Creed

CERT 12a tbc

Starring **Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard, Jeremy Irons, Brendan Gleeson, Charlotte Rampling, Michael K Williams**
Directed by **Justin Kurzel (UK/France/Hong Kong/USA)**

Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard were previously paired in Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* (last year) and obviously got on so well that they've all reunited for this. But far from that blasted heath, *Assassin's Creed* is set in 15th century Spain as well as in the present day. Fassbender plays Callum Lynch, a career criminal who is plugged into the skillset of his ancestor Aguilar de Nerha, a renowned assassin. Based on the video game franchise of the same name. In 3D.

Released Sun 1 January



A Monster Calls

CERT 12a (108 mins)

Starring **Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones, Toby Kebbell, Lewis MacDougall, Geraldine Chaplin**, and the voice of **Liam Neeson**
Directed by **JA Bayona (Spain/UK/USA)**

Based on the unusual novel by Patrick Ness, this Spanish co-production with the UK and the USA does not fall easily into any category. It stars Lewis MacDougall as a young boy whose mother (Felicity Jones) is dying of cancer. He then finds unexpected help in the form of a monstrous, story-telling yew tree. Tree-huggers should love it.

Released Sun 1 January

Manchester By The Sea

CERT 15 (137 mins)

Starring **Casey Affleck, Michelle Williams, Kyle Chandler, Lucas Hedges, Gretchen Mol, Matthew Broderick**
Directed by **Kenneth Lonergan (USA)**

Another film trailing Oscar murmurings sees Casey Affleck (a shoo-in for a best actor nomination) as Lee Chandler, a man who returns to his roots. After his brother dies, Lee is made legal guardian of his nephew, which brings him back in touch with his ex-wife (Williams).

The director Kenneth Lonergan may not be a household name, but with films like *You Can Count On Me* (2000) and *Margaret* (2011) to his credit, he is a critics' favourite.

Released Fri 13 January



CRITIC'S CHOICE

Lion

CERT PG (118 mins)

Starring **Dev Patel, Rooney Mara, David Wenham, Nicole Kidman, Sunny Pawar**
Directed by **Garth Davis (Australia/USA/UK)**

At the age of five, Saroo Brierley found himself alone on the teeming streets of Calcutta, 1,500 kilometres from his home and family. He managed to survive and was eventually adopted by an Australian couple in Tasmania. But Saroo never for-

got his real family and many years later he began to search for them on Google Earth...

Saroo's experiences were recorded in his memoir, *A Long Way Home*, from which this international co-production was adapted. The film received rave reviews at the Toronto Film Festival, particularly for the performances of Patel and Kidman.

Released Fri 20 January

Underworld: Blood Wars

CERT tbc

Starring **Kate Beckinsale, Theo James, Tobias Menzies, Charles Dance**
Directed by **Anna Foerster (USA)**

A sequel to *Underworld: Awakening* (2012), this is the fifth instalment in the *Underworld* series. Selene, the so-called vampire 'death dealer,' is now really miffed at being betrayed by the Lycan clan and the Vampire faction and sets out to end the conflict between them. It could cost her dearly, of course.

Released Fri 13 January



The Bye Bye Man

CERT 15 (96 mins)

Starring **Douglas Smith, Lucien Laviscount, Cressida Bonas, Doug Jones, Carrie-Anne Moss, Faye Dunaway**
Directed by **Stacy Title (USA)**

The Bye Bye Man joins the ranks of the Grim Reaper, Freddy Krueger, the Candyman and the Babadook as characters you really wouldn't want to spend time with. So it's bye-bye for three college students who stumble across the identity of this mean-spirited entity. And, yes, it's that Cressida Bonas who plays the hapless Sasha.

Released Fri 13 January

Irreplaceable

CERT 12 (98 mins)

Starring **François Cluzet, Marianne Denicourt, Isabelle Sadoyan**
Directed by **Thomas Lilti (France)**

In his parish, Jean-Pierre Werner (Cluzet) was more than just the local doctor. He helped, comforted and even healed his patients. Then, one day, he discovers that he, himself, is seriously ill...

Released Fri 13 January



xXx: Return Of Xander Cage CERT tbc

Starring **Vin Diesel, Deepika Padukone, Donnie Yen, Tony Jaa, Samuel L Jackson, Toni Collette** Directed by **DJ Caruso (USA)**

Just when you think that Vin Diesel couldn't pop out another sequel, along comes one more. Here, he reprises his role as Xander Cage (aka xXx), the government agent who's rather adept at extreme athletic pursuits. When he fears for the future of the world, Xander emerges out of exile in the hope of recovering a horrendous weapon known as 'Pandora's Box.'

Released Thurs 19 January



Jackie CERT 15 (100 mins)

Starring **Natalie Portman, Peter Sarsgaard, Greta Gerwig, Billy Crudup, John Hurt, Richard E Grant** Directed by **Pablo Larraín (USA/Chile/France)**

After the derided biopics on Princess Diana and Princess Grace, it's a relief to report that this is not a turkey. It's the story of Jackie Kennedy and how she copes after the assassination of her husband, JFK. Natalie Portman would seem destined for an Oscar nomination.

Released Fri 20 January



Split CERT 15 (117 mins)

Starring **James McAvoy, Anya Taylor-Joy, Jessica Sula, Haley Lu Richardson, Betty Buckley** Directed by **M Night Shyamalan (USA)**

That's split as in split personality. Kevin (James McAvoy), whose pastime is the abduction of teenage girls, has 23 distinct personalities. But there's another, and it's about to be unleashed...

Released Fri 20 January

Denial CERT 12a (110 mins)

Starring **Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson, Timothy Spall, Andrew Scott, Jack Lowden, Caren Pistorius** Directed by **Mick Jackson (UK/USA)**

It's another of those amazing-but-true stories. The American professor Deborah E Lipstadt (Rachel Weisz) is forced to prove in an English court that the historian David Irving (Timothy Spall) was lying when he said that the Holocaust never happened.



Released Fri 27 January

Hacksaw Ridge CERT tbc

Starring **Andrew Garfield, Sam Worthington, Luke Bracey, Teresa Palmer, Hugo Weaving, Rachel Griffiths, Vince Vaughn** Directed by **Mel Gibson (USA/Australia)**

Another of those stories too true to be believed: Desmond Doss (Garfield) was a Seventh-day Adventist and conscientious objector who participated in the Pacific conflict in WWII and was awarded the Medal of Honor – even though he refused to pick up a firearm.



Released Fri 27 January

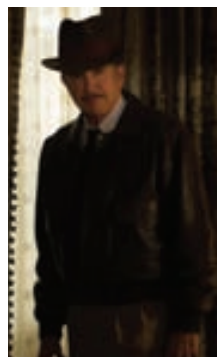
Rules Don't Apply

CERT 12a tbc

Starring **Warren Beatty, Lily Collins, Alden Ehrenreich, Annette Bening, Matthew Broderick, Candice Bergen** Directed by **Warren Beatty (USA)**

Howard Hughes (Beatty) applies strict rules to his staff: nobody in his employ is allowed to dally with an actress. But then Hughes' driver Frank (Ehrenreich) meets the gorgeous Baptist virgin Marla Mabrey (Collins) who is on the brink of appearing in the movies...

Released Fri 27 January



Sing CERT U (108 mins)

With the voices of **Matthew McConaughey, Reese Witherspoon, Seth MacFarlane, John C Reilly, Taron Egerton, Scarlett Johansson** Directed by **Garth Jennings (USA)**

It's the X Factor - except with animals. From the company that brought us Despicable Me and The Secret Life Of Pets. In 3D.

Released Fri 27 January



The White King

CERT 12a (88 mins)

Starring **Lorenzo Allchurch, Agyness Deyn, Ross Partridge, Fiona Shaw, Greta Scacchi, Jonathan Pryce** Directed by **Alex Helfrecht and Jörg Tittel (UK/Germany/Sweden/Hungary)**

György Dragomán's titular 2005 Hungarian novel has been translated into 28 languages. It has a whiff of Orwell's 1984 about it and now, in this international co-production directed by the husband-and-wife team Helfrecht and Tittel, joins a long list of recent films set in a dystopian future. The best bit is the opening credits, where the set-up is animated in a stark, monochromatic design that would have thrilled the likes of Lenin and Stalin. What follows, though, is a misjudged interpretation in which a seemingly idyllic, agricultural central European backwater is populated by Americans.

As the 12-year-old Djata (Allchurch) tries to reconcile his father's absence, a ragbag of foreign actors makes his life hell.

It's the tone that ultimately emasculates the film's intentions, being an earnest warning against the ills of Communism that its author suffered first-hand under the regime of Nicolae Ceausescu.

Released Fri 27 January



Chanda Mama door ke (From Far Away Uncle Moon Calls)

The Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat 14 January - Sat 11 March

The widely acclaimed Subodh Gupta works across painting, sculpture and installation, transforming everyday materials of Indian life into pieces of often spectacular art. He seeks not only to reflect upon his country's economic transformation, but also to encourage viewers to question the material, cultural and spiritual values attributed to the objects that he uses. "My themes are universal," explains the 52-year-old Indian artist, "and this is despite the fact that my references may be termed 'Indian village traditions', such as the importance of food and the usage of cow dung. The paradoxes of our life are there for all to see in my art's combination of local and global languages."



The Play's The Thing

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon



The Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) first ever permanent exhibition, The Play's The Thing allows visitors to explore the imaginative ways that Shakespeare's stories, settings and characters have been brought to life on stage. Treasures from the Company's archive, such as rarely seen props, exquisite costumes and original set designs, are much in evidence, as are hands-on digital experiences - visitors can try on virtual costumes and stand on the RSC stage via state-of-the-art technology.

The exhibition also reveals some of the RSC's more gory theatrical secrets. These include how a snapping carrot can replicate the noise of a bone breaking, how crispy cereals and glue are mixed to make scabs, and how actors keep soup in their mouths so that they can 'vomit' on stage.

Spectrum: Colour And Abstraction

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Sat 14 January - Sun 26 March

Described as 'a spectacle of pure pigment and form', Spectrum provides visitors with a rare opportunity to enjoy the best of Wolverhampton Art Gallery's collection of 20th century abstract paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures.

Renowned artists whose work is featured in the exhibition include Joan Miro, Patrick Heron, Gillian Ayres, Joe Tilson, Gary Hume and Bridget Riley.

With the expectation that the artwork will inspire the creativity of those who view it, the gallery has set up a space for visitors to create and display cut-paper abstract collages.



Image © The Estate of Patrick Heron.

On Reflection

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham, Mon 9 January - Sat 4 March

"My most recent work," explains Angela Dooley in talking about her latest exhibition, "has been inspired by the reflections created by the city landscape, distorting old and new buildings in intricate changing patterns, providing an embellishment and view not predicted at the time of construction."



A former art teacher, Angela has been able to devote much more time to her love of painting since retiring after 37 years in the classroom.

"I work mainly in watercolour and acrylics, choosing a wide range of subjects for inspiration, initially trying to capture and develop studies of atmospheric light, shade and spatial depth in land and city scapes.

"Images created by trees, water and the modern city landscape have all been a source of inspiration."

Mechanical Things: Adventures And Inventions From The World Of Rowland Emett

Thinktank at Millennium Point, Birmingham,
until Sun 5 March

Known for his quirky paintings and fantastical mechanical contraptions - most famous among which is surely Chitty Chitty Bang Bang - Rowland Emett took a lighthearted and modest approach to his art. "It's a well-known fact that all inventors get their first ideas on the back of an envelope," he once said. "I take slight exception to this; I use the front, so that I can incorporate the stamp - and then the design is already half done."

This new presentation of work by Emett, who died in 1990 aged 84, features some of his most significant creations, including the aforementioned Chitty and his last and largest machine, A Quiet Afternoon In The Cloud Cuckoo Valley.

Quirky inventions by a number of Emett-inspired artists are also displayed, as are interactive kinetic art and exhibits from Stratford-upon-Avon's MAD (Mechanical Art & Design) Museum.



Roger Hiorns

7 December 2016 – 5 March 2017

Ikon Gallery, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
www.ikon-gallery.org / 0121 248 0708
Tuesday – Sunday, 11am–5pm – free entry

Roger Hiorns (seated) Military aircraft engine, fire, youth
Courtesy of the artist and Convi-Mora, London
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Exhibition supported by Convi-Mora, London; Annet Gelink, Amsterdam, Lühring Augustini, New York and the Ikon Investment Fund. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528992.

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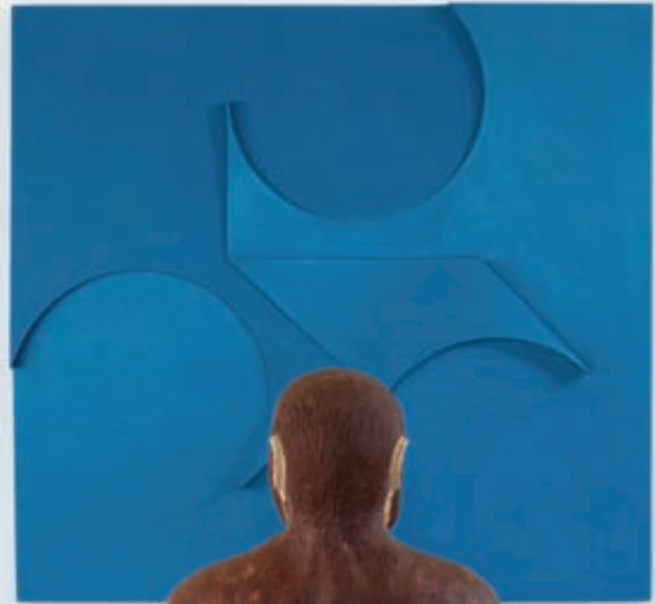
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Arts Council Collection

Garth Evans, *Blue No. 30* (1964) observed by Kerry Stewart, *Untitled* (2003) (1996), Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London. © the artists 2016. Photo: Anna Arca.

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Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, Fri 20 - Sun 22 January

The Strictly Come Dancing Live UK tour will be celebrating 10 years on the road when it waltzes into Birmingham this month.

The 2017 edition of the show sees Len Goodman and Craig Revel Horwood joined on the judging panel by the 2006 winner of the TV series, professional dancer Karen Hardy.

Countryfile's Anita Rani, a semi-finalist in the 2015 series and a con-

testant on last year's live tour, makes her debut as the show's host. "The live tour always has such a great atmosphere," says Len Goodman, "and this 10th tour will definitely be one to remember, especially as it comes as I complete my final year on the TV series as Head Judge. Rest assured, audiences, this tour will be a 10 from Len!" Taking to the dancefloor this year are, among others, presenter and singer Louise Redknapp, model Daisy Lowe, actress Lesley Joseph, sports presenter Ore Oduba, actor Danny Mac and former shadow chancellor Ed Balls.

Wolverhampton Literary Festival

Various venues across Wolverhampton,
Fri 27 - Sun 29 January

Wolverhampton's first ever literary festival features acclaimed authors, musicians, workshops and children's events.

Included among the festival's highlights is a contribution from internet sensation, regional treasure and notorious 'lazy cow' Doreen Tipton.

Ned's Atomic Dustbin singer Jonn Penney (pictured) also features, talking with best-selling author Martin Roach about the common thread between music, books and independence, while former Birmingham Poet Laureate Roy McFarlane gives an hour-long solo performance at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

Budding young authors and poets can take part in weekend workshops and find out about Japanese Haiku poetry, honing their skills at character writing or combining crafts and the written word in a special 'paperverse' session.

Commenting on the new festival, Councillor John Reynolds, cabinet member for City Economy, said: "We've got a diverse literary tradition in Wolverhampton and across the Black Country, and what better way of celebrating it than by hosting our own festival. Already there's a great variety of entertainment during the weekend, with even more authors and events still to be announced."





SCALE NEW HEIGHTS IN 2017

Rock Up is the thrilling indoor climbing adventure waiting for you to explore. There are over 26 climbs, towering 25 feet in the air; a soft play area for under 6's and a café for everyone to relax in. There is no better way to get active and get adventurous together. Book online for climbing at rock-up.co.uk or just turn up for soft play.

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A Cassie Jaye film



THE RED PILL

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They tried to ban it in Melbourne, they tried in Berlin but despite the protests, the controversial documentary The Red Pill is now being screened worldwide and is coming to Birmingham.

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 Birmingham Museums



Tattoo Freeze

The International Centre, Telford,
Sun 29 January

Following on from the success of previous shows, this specialist one-day event offers members of the general public the chance to get themselves tattooed by one (or more!) of the 200

talented tattooists who'll be in attendance. Past shows have featured some of the world's greatest graffiti artists, BMX and skateboard champions, shopping stalls, children's activities, national roller derby tournaments and ice sculpture demonstrations and workshops.

Basketball Cup Finals

Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, Sun 15 January

One of the most eagerly anticipated dates on the British Basketball League (BBL) calendar, this annual event sees stars of the national game go head-to-head in pursuit of coveted silverware. The get-together also features some of Europe's top slam dunkers, giving it their all in a bid to become the BBL Slam Dunk Champion.



Camper Mart

The International Centre, Telford,
Sun 29 January



"The aim of Camper Mart," explain the event's organisers, "is to cater for every conceivable need for people who own, are restoring, maintaining, customising or who just simply display an interest in owning a Volkswagen Camper. Our trade stalls display a plethora of VW goodies, giving our visitors excellent choice.

"And if you're having problems with your bus, want some general advice on tuning, modifications or anything bus related, our resident 'bus doctor' team is on hand to help out."

Lichfield Winter Beer Festival

Lichfield Guildhall,
Fri 27 - Sat 28 January

An annual event on the Guildhall calendar, the Lichfield Winter Beer Festival provides a perfect opportunity to banish those New Year blues by sampling ales from some of the country's finest breweries. In addition to high-quality beer and the promise of a friendly atmosphere, this popular two-day event offers a choice of traditional ciders, a range of wines and a selection of fine foods. Entertainment comes courtesy of two local bands - 3's Company on the Friday evening and Last Orders on the Saturday.



Autosport International

NEC, Birmingham,
Thurs 12 - Sun 15 January

Described as 'the world's greatest four-wheel indoor extravaganza', Autosport International caters for industry professionals and motorsport fans alike. Featuring every level of motor racing - from karting through to Formula One - the event offers visitors the chance to check out the latest performance road cars, chat to club members and watch precision-driving displays in the Live Action Arena.



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Your week to week
listings guide
January 2017

the list



The Tempest at Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon until Sat 21 January

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

What's On

Sun 1 to Sun 8 January



The Johnny Cash Roadshow at Artrix, Bromsgrove
Fri 6 January

Mon 9 to Sun 15 January



The Jungle Book at Bridge House Theatre, Warwick
Fri 13 - Sat 14 January

Mon 16 to Sun 22 January



Stephen K Amos at Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
Thurs 19 January

Mon 23 to Tues 31 January



Dirty Dancing at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
Mon 30 January - Sat 4 February

THROUGHOUT JANUARY

Visual Arts

Artrix, Bromsgrove

BILLY BAKER: SUNRISE TO SUNSET

Familiar places of beauty, with a strong use of colour creating dream-like, atmospheric and dramatic imagery, until Tues 3 Jan

MIDLANDS TEXTILE FORUM: TEN YEARS ON

Exhibition marking the 10th anniversary of the Midlands Textile Forum and showing the breadth of creative work produced, Wed 4 - Sun 29 Jan

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

EAST MEETS WEST Presenting the work of 16 emerging artists working with moving image or photography, until Fri 6 Jan

CELEBRATING GANESHA A touring exhibition across seven venues around the UK. Part of the British Museum's National Programmes, until 8 Jan

HONOURING VC INDIAN SOLDIERS IN WORLD WAR ONE Exhibition telling the stories of South Asian soldiers of the British Indian Army who were award-

ed the Victoria Cross during the First World War, until Sat 28 Jan

NIGHT IN THE MUSEUM: RYAN GANDER CURATES THE ARTS COUNCIL COLLECTION

Leading British artist Ryan Gander's selection of artworks from the Arts Council Collection, until Sun 12 Feb

CONNECTED HISTORIES: MUSLIMS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR A new exhibition which explores the untold stories of more than 400,000 Muslim soldiers in the First World War, until Sun 5 Mar

BIRMINGHAM BIG ART PROJECT

Birmingham Big Art project is commissioning a major new work of public art for the city. The exhibition of shortlisted artists' proposals is here on the final leg of its tour. This is the last chance to see the models and have your say, until Sun 23 Apr

BIRMINGHAM PEOPLE AND CHANGE IN THE INNER-CITY Birmingham People explores the ways in which ordinary Brummie folk have been represented in art during the 20th and 21st centuries... until Fri 31 Mar 2017

FAITH IN BIRMINGHAM, Exploring how different faiths have influenced and shaped the city, until Sun 3 Feb 2019

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry

BRICK WONDERS Exhibition of over 70 models, including the Great Wall of China and Niagara Falls, until Sun 15 Jan

MADE IN THE MIDDLE A recurring touring exhibition highlighting some of the Midlands' best contemporary craft and applied art. Part of Craftspace's 30th anniversary programme, until Sun 5 Feb

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

COLIN HITCHMOUGH DICTIONARY OF SILENCES A showcase of new works presented alongside a selection of key pieces from his portfolio, from the early 1970s to the present day, until Sun 8 Jan

Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery

CRAFTED FOR YOU Exhibition of jewellery, glassware, ceramics and other handmade crafts. A great opportunity to buy unique Christmas gifts, until Sat 7 Jan

WORCESTER SOCIETY OF ARTISTS'

ANNUAL EXHIBITION An eclectic selection of art created by local artists, until Sat 21 Jan

Other VISUAL ARTS

A PLACE CALLED RUGBY Exploring Rugby's past with an exhibition of railway track plans, aerial photographs and Luftwaffe target maps, until Sat 14 Jan, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

CONDUCT THE STORM Free-to-visit installation running in conjunction with the theatre's Christmas show, *The Tempest*. Through gestures and physical actions, visitors will be able to 'conduct the storm', whip up waves and create thunder and lightning, until Sat 21 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

NEW CINDY WILLIAMS Worcestershire-based pastel artist who mostly draws her inspiration from 1920s & '30s silent film divas, Tues 10 Jan - Mon 6 Mar, Evesham Arts Centre

NEW SCULPTING THE MUSEUM Michael Shaw presents dynamic contemporary sculpture that puts a smile on the face, Sat 28 Jan - Sat 25 Mar, Rugby Art Gallery & Museum

EX CATHEDRA
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Dido & Aeneas

Purcell's opera tells the tragic tale of the Queen of Carthage as she falls in love with a Trojan Prince, and her heartbreak when he abandons her; culminating with the haunting melancholy of the famous lament - "When I am laid in earth".

Sun 5 February, 4pm
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2017 Season

Fri 13 January 2017 at 8pm
Navarra Quartet
Magnus Johnston violin, Marije Johnston violin
Simone van der Giessen viola, Brian O'Kane cello

Haydn: String Quartet in G minor Op 20 No 3
Britten: String Quartet No 3
Schubert: Quartettsatz in C minor D703
Brahms: String Quartet in A minor Op 51 No 2

Fri 3 February 2017 at 8pm
Mark Bebbington (piano)
Schubert: Piano Sonata in A major D664
Matthew-Walker: Fantasy-Sonata: Hamlet (1980)
Matthew-Walker: A Bad Night in Los Angeles (2016) (1st performance)
Bliss: Triptych (1970)
Beethoven: Piano Sonata in F minor Op 57 'Appassionata'

Fri 10 March 2017 at 8pm
Retorica (2 violins)
Philippa Mo violin, Harriet MacKenzie violin

William Croft: Sonata 1V
David Matthews: Eight Duos Op 79 (2001)
Moeran: Sonata for 2 Violins (1930)
John McCabe: Spellend (2003)
Rawsthorne: Theme and Variations (1938)

Fri 7 April 2017 at 8pm
Britten Oboe Quartet
Nicholas Daniel oboe, Jacqueline Shave violin
Clare Finnimore viola, Caroline Dearnley cello

Mozart: Adagio K580a for Cor Anglais and Strings
Lennox Berkeley: Oboe Quartet
Moeran: Phantasy Quartet
Schubert: String Trio Movt in B Flat D471
Richard Rodney Bennett: Arethusa (Oboe Quartet)
Francaix: Cor Anglais Quartet

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Gigs

- EDWINA HAYES** Sun 1 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham
- THE WEDDING CRASHERS** Wed 4 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham
- BRIC A BRAC** Wed 1 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham
- CAPITAL GROOVE** Thurs 5 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham
- BROKEN HUMANITY** Thurs 5 Jan, The Marr's Bar, Worcestershire
- MARCH OF FATE** Thurs 5 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
- URBAN INTRO** Fri 6 - Sat 7 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham
- ROD AND THE FACEZ** Fri 6 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
- NEARLY DAN** Fri 6 Jan, The Robin, Bilston
- CHERISH + MIZZ PINK** Fri 6 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge
- BAD PENNY** Fri 6 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham
- JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW** Fri 6 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove
- HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT** Fri 6 Jan, The Empire, Coventry
- JEAN GENIE - TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE** Sat 7 Jan, The Robin, Bilston
- KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS** Sat 7 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove



- OLLIE HUGHES AS ROBBIE WILLIAMS** Sat 7 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge
- THE AC30'S** Sat 7 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
- BOWIE NIGHT** Sat 7 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham
- CLASSIC WONDER VETERANS WITH SOLO BANTON & CREW** Sat 7 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
- THE MIGHTY WRAITH** Sun 8 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
- THE RAT PACK WITH SPECIAL GUEST ANITA HARRIS** Sun 8 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove
- NIK TURNERS NEW SPACE RITUAL** Sun 8 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

Classical Music

- JOHANN STRAUSS GALA** With the Johann Strauss Dancers. Conducted by John Rigby & featuring soprano Corinne Cowling, Sun 1 Jan Symphony Hall, Birmingham
- MANCHESTER CAMERATA: VIENNESE NEW YEAR GALA** Featuring Jean-

Claude Picard (conductor), Ailish Tynan (soprano), Adi Brett (violin) & Hannah Roberts (cello), Programme includes works J.Strauss II, Vaughan Williams & Lehar, Fri 6 Jan, Malvern Theatres



- JOHN WILSON CONDUCTS THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN** Featuring Tamara Stefanovich on piano. Programme includes works by Brett Dean, Szymanowski & Rachmaninov, Fri 6 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
- CBSO: THE MAGIC OF VIENNA** Featuring Aleksandar Markovic (conductor) & Jack Liebeck (violin). Programme includes works by J.Strauss II, Kreisler & Waldteufel, Sun 8 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy Gigs

- ADAM HESS, ANDY ASKINS, PHIL JERROD & MARK OLVER** Fri 6 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham
- JACK BARRY, ANDY ASKINS, PHIL JERROD & MARK OLVER** Sat 7 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

A CHRISTMAS CAROL Tread The Boards Theatre Company present a new version of Charles Dickens' festive tale, until Mon 2 Jan, Albany Theatre, Coventry



- DICK WHITTINGTON** Written by and starring Iain Lauchlan, until Sat 7 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- ROBIN HOOD & THE BABES IN THE WOOD** Featuring a gallant hero, a feisty damsel and a villainous baddie to boo off stage... until Sat 7 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury
- TREASURE ISLAND** Bryony Lavery's modern adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's swashbuckling classic, until Sat 7 Jan, The REP, Birmingham
- SLEEPING BEAUTY** Starring Gillian Wright (Jean Slater from EastEnders)



Robin Hood & The Babes In The Wood

Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, until Sat 7 January

As if Robin Hood didn't already have enough on his plate, dealing with the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, wooing the delicious Maid Marion and wondering how to stop the colossal Friar Tuck from eating everything in his path, the festive season also finds him getting tangled up in the many and varied traditions of pantomime. When the dastardly sheriff hires a pair of bungling baddies to put paid to his brother King Richard's children - the 'Babes' of the title - he thinks his wickedness will secure him the throne of England. But he's reckoned without our dashing hero, a Santa's Sack-worth of audience participation and more corny gags than you could fit into a giant-size Christmas stocking.

alongside Channel Five's Milkshake presenter Amy Thompson, Chris Pizzey from The Basil Brush Show, Casualty's Rebecca Wheatley and Quinn Patrick as Nurse Nelly, until Sun 8 Jan, Malvern Theatres

ROOM ON THE BROOM Stage adaptation of Julia Donaldson's best-selling book that's sure to provide a magical, musical treat for children and families alike, until Sun 8 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

MOSCOW STATE CIRCUS The world-renowned circus presents Xhelanly, an 'awe-inspiring' show based on Russian folklore, until Sun 8 Jan, Star City, Birmingham

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Starring Midlands Today and BBC Coventry & Warwickshire presenter Joanna Tidman as Fairy Bowbells. Award-winning funnyman Marc Alden Taylor returns by popular demand to play Funny French Franc, with John-Robert Partridge as Dame Doty, until Sun 8 Jan, The Attic Theatre, Coventry

CINDERELLA Starring Lucy Jane Quinlen in the lead role, Sam Patrick as Buttons and Ben Humphrey as the Fairy Godmother, until Sun 8 Jan, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

WHAT THE LADYBIRD HEARD Stage adaptation of Julia Donaldson & Lydia Monks' colourful farmyard adventure, until Wed 11 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

THE TEMPEST Shakespeare's magical exploration of revenge, forgiveness,

love and magic, until Sat 21 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

ALADDIN Magical pantomime adventure starring Joe McElderry, Lisa Riley, Ian Adams, Ben Faulks and 'Lazy Cow' Doreen Tipton, until Sun 22 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DICK WHITTINGTON Starring John Barrowman as Dick Whittington, EastEnders bad lad Steve McFadden as Fairy Bow Bells, Jodie Prenger as Fairy Bow Bells, legendary double act The Krankies as Councillor & Jimmy Krankie, Matt Slack as Idle Jack, and Andrew Ryan as Sarah the Cook, until Sun 29 Jan, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN Based on Chaucer's The Knight's Tale, The Two Noble Kinsmen is attributed to John Fletcher & William Shakespeare and is best described as a tragicomedy exploring the intoxication and strangeness of love, until Tues 7 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon





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The Albany Theatre
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THE SEVEN ACTS OF MERCY Anders Lustgarten's visceral new play, which confronts the dangerous necessity of compassion in a world where it is in short supply. Directed by RSC Deputy Artistic Director Erica Whyman, until Fri 10 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE ROVER Aphra Behn's anarchic restoration comedy, rich with seduction, intrigue & danger, set in the topsy-turvy world of the carnival. Loveday Ingram returns to the RSC to direct, until Sat 11 Feb, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE SNOW QUEEN Jars Of Clay Theatre Co. present a new version of the Hans Christian Andersen classic, complete with rip-roaring fights, brand new songs and a traditional battle of good versus evil, Wed 4 - Sat 7 Jan, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW A celebration of Johnny Cash's career, capturing the essence of what it would have been like at one of his shows, Fri 6 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

GASLIGHT Kara Tointon stars in a brand new staging of Patrick Hamilton's mystery thriller, Fri 6 - Sat 14 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre

THE LION THAT LOST ITS ROAR Written by Carolyn Young, this amateur production for young children requires plenty of audience assistance to help Larry the Lion roar again, Sat 7 Jan, The Swan Theatre, Worcester

THE WILL Expedition Arts present Pierre Carlet De Marivaux's sexy comedy about love and money, Sat 7 Jan, The Crescent Theatre, B'ham

Dance

SWAN LAKE Performed by Saint Petersburg Classic Ballet, Sat 7 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS (U) Documentary. Starring Daisy Ridley, Aisholpan. mac, Birmingham, until Thurs 5 Jan

MOANA (U) Adventure/Comedy. With the voices of Dwayne Johnson, Alan Tudyk. mac, Birmingham, until Thurs 5 Jan

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY (12a) Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Felicity Jones, Mads Mikkelsen. mac, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Mon 15 Jan

SILENCE (15) Drama/History. Starring Adam Driver, Liam Neeson. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sun 1 Jan

FROZEN (PG) Adventure/Comedy. With the voices of Kristen Bell, Idina Menzel. mac, Birmingham, Mon 2 Jan

THE QUEEN OF KATWE (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Madina Nalwanga, Lupita Nyong'o. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 5 Jan

A MONSTER CALLS (12A) Drama/Fantasy. Starring Sigourney Weaver, Felicity Jones. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Fri 6 Jan

LONG WAY NORTH (PG) Animation/Action. With the voices of Christa Théret, Féodor Atkine. mac, Birmingham, Sat 7 Jan

I, DANIEL BLAKE (15) Drama. Starring Dave Johns, Hayley Squires. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Wed 4 - Fri 6 Jan; mac, Birmingham, Fri 6 - Sun 8 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Sun 1 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

ASSASSIN'S CREED (tbc)

A MONSTER CALLS (12a)

SILENCE (TBC)

Events

THE CHRISTMAS ICE RINK until Mon 2 Jan, Webbs Garden Centre, Wychbold, Worcestershire

FESTIVE SEASON SERVICE Let the Christmas festivities continue with a leisurely steam train journey along the beautiful Severn Valley, hopefully with a sprinkling of snow, until Mon 2 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster

MAGIC LANTERN FESTIVAL Celebrating over 2,000 years of lantern festivals, this 'illuminating' event sees visitors accessing the venue through a giant lantern entrance before following a lantern-lit trail around the gardens. ntil Mon 2 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

THE THEATRE OF CHRISTMAS See Packwood dressed for Christmas by professional artist Jennifer Collier, until Fri 6 Jan, Packwood House, Solihull

MOSCOW STATE CIRCUS until Sun 8 Jan, Star City, Birmingham

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Located within the iconic Centenary Square, Ice Skate Birmingham gives you the opportunity to enjoy this winter sport in beautiful city surroundings, until Sun 8 Jan, Centenary Square, B'ham

NATIVITY TRAIL Follow the stars and answer the Christmas questions before reaching the live Nativity scene in the barn buildings. You may even be lucky enough to see a newborn donkey, until Sun 8 Jan, Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster

BACKSTAGE TOUR: FAMILY Discover the rarely seen backstage areas of the theatre as The REP invites you to be an audience member, set builder, prosthetics maker and assistant stage manager, Sat 7 Jan, The REP, Birmingham



Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham until Sun 8 January

It's been a long time since Birmingham experienced a white Christmas, but there is at least one place in the city where people can enjoy the delights of a winter wonderland. As in previous years, Ice Skate Birmingham is offering fun-seeking Midlanders the chance to pretend they're Torvill or Dean by taking a yuletide spin across the 'icy wastes' of Centenary Square. For those just wishing to spectate, the Ice Lounge Bar offers a viewing platform where visitors can partake in a hot chocolate & marshmallows or, for those performing something a little stronger, a glass of mulled wine or cider. Another attraction at the site is the Big Wheel. Take a ride right up to the top and enjoy beautiful views of Birmingham's skyline which are pretty spectacular, whether you're taking a ride in the daytime or at night.



Magic Lantern Festival

Birmingham Botanical Gardens, until Mon 2 January

Celebrating over 2,000 years of lantern festivals, this 'illuminating' event sees visitors accessing the venue through a giant lantern entrance before following a lantern-lit trail around the gardens. Aside from enjoying the collection of beautifully constructed lanterns and the natural scenery, visitors to the festival can also catch up with Santa and his reindeer.

Other attractions include a 12-metre-wide lantern scene - featuring penguins, snowmen, Christmas trees and baubles - and a special fairy-themed area, complete with a floating fairy, beautiful butterflies and thousands of bright and tiny lights. Read more about the Magic Lantern Festival online at whatsonlive.co.uk

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Gigs

THE WYZE GUYZ Tues 10 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham
MARTIN CARTHY Tues 10 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, B'ham
ALAN BARNES & GILAD ATZMON Wed 11 Jan, Stratford Artshouse
WATERLOO Thurs 12 Jan, The Swan Theatre Worcester
APOLLO SOUL Thurs 12 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham
POETS OF THE FALL Thurs 12 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham
SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES Fri 13 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
THE OTHER COVERS TRIO Fri 13 Jan, The Marr's Bar, Worcester
FRANKLY SINATRA Fri 13 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
DEVIL YOU KNOW Fri 13

Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham
AVENGED SEVENFOLD Fri 13 Jan, Genting Arena, Birmingham
MESHUGGAH Fri 13 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham
DPC VS THE MOST MISERABLE TIME OF THE YEAR Fri 13 - Sat 14 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
THE EVACS Fri 13 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham
IN2MINDS Fri 13 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge
WILL YOUNG: JAZZ SESSIONS Fri 13 - Sat 14 Jan, Pizza Express Live, Birmingham
ENDORPHINMACHINE: PRINCE TRIBUTE Sat 14 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham
SARA COLMAN Sat 14 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham
IVOR & LYN'S CLASSIC ROCK DISCO Sat 14 Jan, Route 44, B'ham
TOM PAXTON Sat 14

Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester
THE MAGIC OF MOTOWN Sat 14 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
BORN IN THE EIGHTIES Sat 14 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge
BETTER THAN NEVER Sat 14 Jan, The Asylum, Birmingham
BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY Sat 14 Jan, Bedworth Civic Hall
IVORY WAVE Sat 14 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham
NTH CAVE Sat 14 Jan, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham
CALORIES & FRIENDS Sat 14 - Sun 15 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham
THE SOUNDS OF ROD FEATURING STAN TERRY Fri 13 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester
RICKY NELSON TRIBUTE - TRAVELIN' MAN Sun 15 Jan, The Roadhouse, B'ham

Classical Music

THE HEATH QUARTET Featuring Oliver Heath & Cerys Jones (violins), Gary Pomeroy (viola) & Christopher Murray (cello). Programme includes works by Beethoven & Dvorak, Tues 10 Jan, Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
ANDRIS NELSONS CONDUCTS BRUCKNER Programme includes works by Maxwell Davies & Bruckner, Thurs 12 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



OBOE QUARTETS WITH RAINER GIBBONS Featuring Rainer Gibbons (oboe), Jonathan Martindale (violin), Christopher Yates (viola) & David Powell (cello). Programme includes works by JC Bach, Britten & Mozart, Fri 13 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

CATALIAN STRING QUARTET Featuring Sini Simonen & Daniel Roberts (violins), Charlotte Bonneton (viola) & Christopher Graves (cello). Programme comprises Haydn's String Quartet in G, Op. 76 No.1 & String Quartet in D, Op 76 No. 5 'Largo', Fri 13 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

NAVARRA STRING QUARTET - BROMSGROVE CONCERTS Programme includes works by Haydn, Britten, Schubert & Brahms, Fri 13 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

OBOE QUARTETS WITH RAINER GIBBONS Featuring Jonathan Martindale (violin), Christopher Yates (viola) & David Powell (cello). Programme includes works by J.C Bach, Britten & Mozart, Fri 13 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

13 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham
GARY DELANEY Sat 14 Jan, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham



MARKUS BIRDMAN, PHIL NICHOL & MARK SIMMONS Sat 14 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham
ANDREW RYAN, TOM DEACON & COMIC TBC Sat 14 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham
GARY DELANEY Sun 15 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

A WAYNE IN A MANGER Stage2 present a staging of Gervase Phinn's funny and touching nativity play anecdotes, Wed 11 - Sat 14 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS Fun-packed family pantomime from Three Spires Musical Society and the Guildhall, Wed 11 - Sun 15 Jan, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE SNOWMAN Stage show based on Raymond Briggs' popular children's book, Wed 11 Jan - Sun 15 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

VAMPIRES ROCK: GHOST TRAIN Classic rock spectacular, a sequel to the phenomenally successful Vampires Rock Musical Concert, Thurs 12 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FIZZOGS 'SUCK IT & SEE' TOUR Brand new comedy sketch show featuring Black Country comedian Jonny Cole, Thurs 12 - Sat 14 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE JUNGLE BOOK Oddsocks bring their inimitable humour to Rudyard Kipling's empowering story, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Jan, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick and Sun 15 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove



Comedy Gigs

FAT PENGUIN IMPROV Wed 11 Jan, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

LEE NELSON Thurs 12 Jan, Henry Tudor House

ANDREW RYAN, COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON & COMIC TBC Thurs 12 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CENTRAL IMPRACTICAL JOKERS Fri 13 Jan, Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham

ANDREW RYAN, TOM DEACON, ABIGOLIAH SCHAMAUN & COMIC TBC Fri

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Dance

FALL OUT Highly Sprung Performance Company present a high-energy physical theatre performance which explores the story of three young people whose night out leads to a journey of self-discovery, testing friendships and questioning identity and loyalty, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

I, DANIEL BLAKE (15) Drama. Starring Dave Johns, Hayley Squires. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 9 Jan

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS: THE MOVIE (15) Comedy. Starring Jennifer Saunders, Joanna Lumley. Stourbridge Town Hall, Mon 9 Jan

LIFE, ANIMATED (PG) Documentary/Drama. Starring Jonathan Freeman, Gilbert Gottfried. mac, Birmingham, Mon 9 - Tues 10 Jan

SULLY (12a) Drama/Biography. Starring Tom Hanks, Laura Linney. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 11 - Thurs 12 Jan

DAVID BOWIE IS - ENCORE SCREENING (PG) Documentary. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Tues 10 Jan

THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH (18) Sci-Fi/Drama. Starring David Bowie, Candy Clark. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 10 Jan

CHI-RAQ (15) Crime/Drama. Starring Nick Cannon, Teyonah Parris. mac, Birmingham, Tues 10 - Thurs 12 Jan

A STREETCAT NAMED BOB (12a) Biography/Comedy. Starring Bob the Cat, Luke Treadaway. mac, Birmingham, Fri 13 - Sat 14 Jan



THE LIGHT BETWEEN OCEANS (12a) Drama/Romance. Starring Michael Fassbender, Alicia Vikander. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Thurs 12 - Fri 13 Jan

LA LA LAND (12a) Comedy/Musical. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone. Fri 13 - Sun 15 Jan; Electric Cinema, Birmingham, from Fri 13 Jan

COLLATERAL BEAUTY (12a) Drama. Starring Will Smith, Kate Winslet.

Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Jan

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY (12a) Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Felicity Jones, Mads Mikkelsen. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 13 - Sun 15 Jan

REBECCA (PG) Drama/Film-Noir. Starring Laurence Olivier, Joan Fontaine. Screening will be preceded by a forty minute lecture from Professor Linda Williams. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Sat 14 Jan

FINDING DORY (U) Adventure/Comedy. With the voices of Ellen DeGeneres, Idris Elba. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 14 Jan

MOANA (U) Adventure/Comedy. With the voices of Dwayne Johnson, Alan Tudyk. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Jan

BLUE VELVET (18) Mystery/Thriller. Starring Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper. mac, Birmingham, Sun 15 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 13 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

THE BYE BYE MAN (tbc)

IRREPLACABLE (12)

LA LA LAND (12A)

MANCHESTER BY THE SEA (15)

UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS (tbc)

Events

PERFORMANCE CAR SHOW Featuring iconic brands like Lamborghini, Ferrari, McLaren, Aston Martin and Porsche, the show is the ultimate destination for performance car aficionados, Thurs 12 - Sun 15 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

JACOB SHEEP WALK & TALK Join the ranger to meet Jacob Sheep and find out a little more about these woolly friends, Fri 13 Jan, Charlecote Park, Warwick

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL A must-see event for motorsport fans and performance car aficionados, Sat 14 - Sun 15 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

BACKSTAGE TOUR: MEET THE SNOWMAN Meet The Snowman on stage and have your photo taken with him before enjoying a behind-the-scenes guided tour. Visit some of the areas of the theatre usually closed to the public and join in with special activities, Sat 14 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

PROGRESS WRESTLING - CHAPTER 42 Sun 15 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

MUSIC MAZE Creative, participatory workshops for children aged eight to 11 inclusive, Sun 15 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham



Vampires Rock: Ghost Train

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 12 January

Steve Steinman's cult rock show focuses on the exceedingly evil doings of the undead creature of the night that is Baron Von Rockula, malevolent owner of the Live And Let Die club. When the ill-fated venue burns to the ground, the baron and his band of blood-sucking vampires take refuge in the Ghost Train - an old, abandoned fair-ground ride - and hatch a cunning plan to lure victims into a world of rock'n'roll hell...

Expect classic anthems aplenty, including We Will Rock You, Bat Out Of Hell and Sweet Child Of Mine.

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Gigs

MC HANSEN AND CARLY DOW Mon 16 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

HALFNOISE Mon 16 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

POSITIVELY FOURTH STREET Tues 17 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

ANA POPOVIC AND HER BAND Tues 17 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BUTTERNUT Tues 17 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

SARAH GAIL BRAND Tues 17 Jan, mac, Birmingham

THE BOOGIE BAPTISTES Wed 18 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

BIG GIRLS DON'T CRY Wed 18 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

DINOSAUR Wed 18 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BETH ROWLEY Wed 18 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SNFU Wed 18 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

JAMIE FLANAGAN AS MICHAEL BUBLÉ Wed 18 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

SARA COLMAN Wed 18 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

OH WHAT A NIGHT: JERSEY BOYS TRIBUTE Thurs 19 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SUPREME QUEEN Thurs 19 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE PITMEN POETS Thurs 19 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

AYNSLEY LISTER BAND

Thurs 19 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE BLUE AEROPLANES Thurs 19 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

UNFATHOMABLE RUINATION, THE ATROCITY EXHIBIT & SPAWNED FROM HATE Thurs 19 Jan, The Flapper, Birmingham

TOMMY EMMANUEL Fri 20 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

THE PRETTY RECKLESS Fri 20 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SOLID SOUL Fri 20 - Sat 21 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

THE SMYTHS Fri 20 Jan, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

ARRIVAL UK - THE NO.1 INTERNATIONAL ABBA TRIBUTE Fri 20 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

THE SUPERSKAS Fri 20 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

AMBER ARCADES Fri 20 Jan, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

TRUE GOLD - SPANDAU BALLET TRIBUTE Fri 20 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

THE COUNTERFEIT STONES Fri 20 & Sat 21 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SHOWADDYWADDY Fri 20 Jan, Bedworth Civic Hall

FROM THE JAM Fri 20 Jan, The Copper Rooms, Coventry

FR3 SPIRIT PRESENTS SUBLIME MUSIC Fri 20 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

FRED ZEPPELIN Fri 20 Jan, Route 44, B'ham

KING CREOSOTE Sat 21 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE BUSBY BABES Sat 21 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BRAXIMUSIC Sat 21 Jan, Albany Theatre, Coventry

FALLEN Sat 21 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

THE DEFINITIVE ELVIS EXPERIENCE Sat 21 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE WHITE BUFFALO Sat 21 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ALIVE AND BREL Sat 21 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

BOLLYWOOD BRASS BAND Sat 21 Jan, mac, Birmingham

THE PETE BODDIS BAND Sat 21 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

REAL TO REEL - MARILLION TRIBUTE Sat 21 Jan, Route 44, Birmingham

BACK TO THE 80'S PARTY WITH THE GR8'S Sat 21 Jan, Nailcote Hall, Warwickshire

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK Sat 21 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

BLACK DYKE BAND Sun 22 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

STRAY Sun 22 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

GIRL BAND Sun 22 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN Sun 22 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE HUNNA Mon 23 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE CARRIVICK SISTERS Mon 23 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT - THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by J.S Bach, Handel, Gounod, Widor & E. Bonnal, Mon 16 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BERGEN PHILHARMONIC FEAT. EDWARD GARDNER Programme includes works by Grieg, Elgar & Walton, Tues 17 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CELIA CRAIG OBOE RECITAL Programme comprises Poulenc's Sonata, followed by public masterclass at 5.45pm, Tues 17 Jan, Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Vassily Sinaisky (conductor) & Benjamin Beilman (violin). Programme includes works by Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev & Dvorak, Wed 18 - Sat 21 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

DIE FLEDERMAUS Presented by Opera Warwick, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATOIRE WIND & BRASS ENSEMBLES: EASTERN PROMISE Featuring Chun-Chieh Yen (cello) & Craig Hughes (euphonium).

Programme includes works by Janacek, Ricardo Lorenz, Seiber & Gulda, Fri 20 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

CHINESE NEW YEAR CONCERT Featuring Di Xiao (piano), Jiaxin Lloyd Webber (cello) & Eleanor Turner (harp), Fri 20 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham



BIRMINGHAM HARP DAY An exhilarating and inspiring day packed full of harp performances and workshops for all ages and abilities, Sat 21 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham University

SWEENEY TODD IN CONCERT Featuring Amy Churchman (director) & Geddy Stringer (Musical Director), Sat 21 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Richard Laing (conductor) & Richard Jenkinson (cello). Programme includes works by Korngold, Herrmann, Shostakovich & Arnold, Sun 22 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham

ENSEMBLE EPOMEQ Sun 22 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Comedy Gigs

TOADALLY FREE COMEDY! Mon 16 Jan, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

JETHRO Mon 16 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

STEPHEN K AMOS Thurs 19 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester



PAUL SINHA, LARRY DEAN & BARRY DODDS Thurs 19 Jan, The Bramall, Birmingham

GLENN WOOL, MIKE GUNN & COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 19 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RH COMEDY WITH LAURA MONMOTH Thurs 19 Jan, The Roadhouse, B'ham

JACK WHITEHALL Thurs 19 - Fri 20 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

GLENN WOOL, JARLATH REGAN, TOM ALLEN & MIKE GUNN Fri 20 - Sat 21 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RHYS JAMES, THE RAYMOND & MR TIMPKINS REVUE & COMIC TBC Sat 21 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

Theatre

BACKSTAGE IN BISCUIT LAND Jess Thom intertwines comedy, puppetry, singing and incredible tics to explore spontaneity, creativity, disability, and things you never knew could make you laugh. No two shows can ever be the same, Tues 17 - Sat 21 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

CATHY Cardboard Citizens present a powerful and emotive Forum Theatre show exploring the way in which Ken Loach's 1966 film, Cathy Come Home, still resonates today Thurs 19 - Fri 20 Jan, mac, Birmingham

THELMA One-woman show exploring the power of idolisation and isolation within a grandmother/mother/daughter relationship, Fri 20 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

SONGS FOR A NEW YEAR Join the Old Joint Stock Musical Theatre Company for an intimate concert featuring the music of composer Jason Robert Brown, Fri 20 - Sat 21 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham



The Hunna - O2 Institute, Birmingham

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26/1	Malc Stent's Songs Of Praise	£16.00
1-2/2	The ELO Experience	£22.00
3-4/2	Let's Hang On	£22.50
11/2	Talon - The Acoustic Collection	£16.00
21/2	Morpurgo's King Arthur	£10.00
22/2	Gerry Cross The Mersey	£22.00
23/2	Lady Chatterley's Lover	£12.00
25/2	Viva Neil Diamond	£15.00
3/3	Let's Twist Again	£21.00
4/3	The Fizzogs	£15.00
15/3	The Fureys	£20.00
18/3	The Roy Orbison Story	£21.00
29/3	The Dublin Legends	£27.00
30/3	An Evening with Pam Ayres	£25.00
31/3	Tommy Flemming	£18.00
1/4	The Legend Lives On - Elvis	£18.50
19/4	The Matt Monro Story	£24.00
20/4	The Searchers	£22.00
21/4	An Evening of Dirty Dancing	£20.00
3/5	The Garth Brooks Story	£20.00
5/5	Whitney - Queen of the Night	£20.00
18/5	The Fourmost & The Dreamers	£18.50
24/5	Pasha Kovalev & His Dancers	£25.00

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Comedy

Comedy Night

Thursday
19 January, 8.00pm

Join us for an hilarious evening of entertainment with Barry Dodds (comper), Larry Dean and Paul Sinha.

Medically qualified Paul Sinha is now an international stand-up comedian as well as being a regular on ITV's award-winning quiz show The Chase.



Classical

Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra

Sunday
22 January, 3.00pm

The BPO will perform favourites from the silver screen, including West Side Story Symphonic Dances, Stars - the Phantom Menace and classics from The Mission and Out of Africa.



An Audience With...

Simon Weston

Thursday
26 January, 6.30pm

Join us for an evening with the inspirational Simon Weston CBE.

Simon will not only talk about overcoming adversity and positive mental attitude but also his experiences of being in the public eye over the last 30 years.



Classical

Peter Donohoe

Thursday
23 February, 7.30pm

Peter Donohoe has built an extraordinary world-wide career, encompassing a huge repertoire and spanning over forty years. Acclaimed as one of the foremost pianists of our time, he will be performing works by Chopin, Scriabin and Schubert.

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UNIVERSITY OF
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The
Bramall

Monday 16 - Sunday 22 January



Arenacross

Genting Arena, Birmingham, Sat 21 January

An absolute must for extreme sports fans, the 2017 Arenacross Tour brings indoors all the spectacular elements of Motorcross for a 'non-stop white-knuckle ride'.

Set to a pumping soundtrack and laser show, the event sees some of the world's top freestylers taking to the track to present what organisers describe as 'some truly awe-inspiring entertainment'. The show also features racing gladiators from as young as seven taking to the circuit in search of Arenacross glory...

Dance

ROMEO & JULIET Ballet UK's innovative recreation of the world's greatest love story, Thurs 19 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

Talks

AN EVENING WITH NADIYA HUSSAIN
The British Bake Off winner talks about her debut book *The Secret Lives Of The Amir Sisters* which is available to buy from 12 January, Mon 16 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall



An Evening With Nadia Hussain

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

HALF WAY (15) Documentary. Directed by Daisy-May Hudson. mac, Birmingham, Mon 16 - Tues 17 Jan

COLLATERAL BEAUTY (12a) Drama. Starring Will Smith, Kate Winslet. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 16 - Thurs 19 Jan

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY (12a) Adventure/Fantasy. Starring Felicity Jones, Mads Mikkelsen. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 16 - Thurs 19 Jan

SNOWDON (PG) Biography/Drama. Starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Shailene Woodley. mac, Birmingham, Mon 16 - Thurs 19 Jan

A STREETCAT NAMED BOB (12a) Biography/Comedy. Starring Bob the Cat, Luke Treadaway. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Mon 16 - Wed 18 & Fri 20 Jan

CATHY COME HOME (PG) Drama. Starring Carol White, Adrienne Frame. mac, Birmingham, Tues 17 Jan

THE BIRTH OF A NATION (15) Biography/History. Starring Nate Parker, Armie Hammer. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 18 Jan

THE UNKNOWN GIRL (15) Drama/Thriller. Starring Adèle Haenel, Olivier Bonnaud. mac, Birmingham, Wed 18 - Thurs 19 Jan

THE EAGLE HUNTRESS (U) Documentary. Starring Daisy Ridley, Aisholpan. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 19 Jan

THE BLACK HEN (12a) Drama. Starring Khadka Raj Nepali, Sukra Raj Rokaya. Foreign language, subtitled. mac, Birmingham, Sat 21 Jan

SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS (PG) Family. Starring Kelly Macdonald, Andrew Scott. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Sat 21 Jan

LA LA LAND (12a) Comedy/Musical. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone. mac, Birmingham, Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jan; Roses theatre, Tewkesbury, Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jan

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 20 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

xXx 3: THE RETURN OF XANDER CAGE (tbc)

JACKIE (15)

LION (tbc)

SPLIT (15)

Events

JACOB SHEEP WALK & TALK Join the ranger to meet Jacob Sheep and find out a little more about these woolly friends, Mon 16 Jan, Charlecote Park, Warwick

STRICTLY COME DANCING THE LIVE TOUR Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jan, Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham

SPARK YOUNG WRITERS GROUP A monthly writing group for young people who are interested in creative writing from poems to plays, and editing to dialogue, Sat 21 Jan, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE MONSTER ENERGY ARENACROSS TOUR Sat 21 Jan, Genting Arena, Birmingham

Tuesday 24 January at 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Warwick
EMMA KIRKBY and CHELYS CONSORT OF VIOLS
The Sorrows of John Dowland



Friday 27 January at 7.30 pm
Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington
ROYAL STRING QUARTET
Mozart, Philip Glass, Gorecki, Mozart



Wednesday 8 February at 7.30pm
Royal Spa Centre, Leamington
O DUO percussion
Bubbling Bach to Bongo Fury!

Tuesday 14 February at 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Warwick,
THE SOCIETY OF STRANGE AND ANCIENT INSTRUMENTS
Sound House devised by Clare Salaman

Friday 24 February at 7.30 pm
Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington
STAMIC STRING QUARTET
Haydn, Mucha, Dvorak

Wednesday 1 March at 7.30pm
Royal Spa Centre, Leamington
BOREALIS SAXOPHONE QUARTET
Bach, Barber, Gershwin & contemporary

Tuesday 14 March at 7.30pm
St Mary's Church, Warwick
THE BROOK STREET BAND
Bach, Handel, Telemann

Sunday 19 March at 11.30am
Royal Spa Centre, Leamington
THE CHIMPANZEES OF HAPPYTOWN
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Sunday 19 March at 3.00pm
Royal Spa Centre, Leamington
ENSEMBLE 360
Mozart Flute Quartet & Piano & Winds Quintet, Beethoven Septet

Friday 24 March at 7.30pm
Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington
BRODSKY STRING QUARTET
Schubert, Webern, Zemlinsky, Schubert

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Jane Robertson, @JArtspace, Photography Kate Brown

Gigs

SPECTRUM Tues 24 Jan, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB Tues 24 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

THE HOTELIER Tues 24 Jan, The Rainbow Venues, Birmingham

HAPPY BIRTHDAY SYMON WITH LEE BENSON Tues 24 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

PROPER ORNAMENTS Tues 24 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ERIC SARDINAS & BIG MOTOR Wed 25 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

A DAY TO REMEMBER Wed 25 Jan, Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham

THE SYD LAWRENCE ORCHESTRA Wed 25 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

DECLAN MCKENNA Wed 25 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SEAN FORAN'S TRICHOTOMY Wed 25 Jan, Stratford Artshouse

EXMAGICIAN Wed 25 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

HEATWAVE Wed 25 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

OATHBREAKER Wed 25 Jan, The Flapper, Birmingham

KING PLEASURE AND THE BISCUIT BOYS Thurs 26 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE BOWIE EXPERIENCE Thurs 26 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DEL CAMINO Thurs 26 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

DAVID KNOPFLER AND HARRY BOGDANOV Thurs 26 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

HOME FREE Thurs 26 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FOLK & ROOTS CLUB Thurs 26 Jan, The Roadhouse, B'ham

RUBY TURNER Fri 27 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre

DETROIT SOUL Fri 27 Jan - Sat 28 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

RESURRECTION MEN, THORIA & THE COURTESY GROUP Fri 27 Jan, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

THE BEE GEES STORY - NIGHTS ON BROADWAY Fri 27 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

PAUL JONES & DAVE KELLY ACOUSTIC DUO Fri 27 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

LEGEND - LEGENDS OF ROCK Fri 27 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

SSEX PISTOL Fri 27 Jan, Route 44, B'ham

MIKE SKINNER & MURKAGE PRESENT TONGA Fri 27 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

SOMEONE LIKE YOU - THE ADELE SONGBOOK Fri 27 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

THE KING BLUES Fri 27 Jan, The Asylum, Birmingham

STANLEY DEE - STEELY DAN TRIBUTE Fri 27 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

VEX RED Fri 27 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

ATOMIC ROOSTER & SNAFU Fri 27 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ONE NIGHT OF SKA Fri 27 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

EMULSION FESTIVAL Fri 27 Jan, mac, Birmingham

MILES HUNT - THE WONDER STUFF Fri 27 Jan, The Slade Rooms, Wolverhampton

SHAKE THE BASS Fri 27 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

UNDER A BANNER Fri 27 Jan, The Marr's Bar, Worcestershire

THE CARPENTERS STORY Sat 28 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

KILLERSTREAM Sat 28 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

BOOTLEG ABBA & BEE GEES FEVER Sat 28 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

BLOBBIE WILLIAMS Sat 28 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE WESTENDERS Sat

28 Jan, Number 8 Community Arts Centre, Pershore

THE SENSATIONAL 60'S EXPERIENCE Sat 28 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR Sat 28 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

SABOTAGE - BLACK SABBATH TRIBUTE Sat 28 Jan, Route 44, Birmingham

THE UB40 EXPERIENCE Sat 28 Jan, The Roadhouse, Birmingham

GUNTHER PRAGUE Sat 28 Jan, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

LET'S HANG ON Sat 28 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

CHASING YESTERDAY Sat 28 Jan, The Marr's Bar, Worcester

PLAYAZ BIRMINGHAM Sat 28 Jan, The Rainbow Venues, Birmingham

BOOTLEG BARLOW Sat 28 Jan, Nailcote Hall, Warwickshire

JOJO Sat 28 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SPECIAL KINDA MADNESS Sat 28 Jan, The Empire, Coventry

THE DELRAY ROCKETS Sun 29 Jan, The Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

MEXRRISSEY - MEXICO GOES MORRISSEY Sun 29 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

DOLLY MAVIES Sun 29 Jan, The Tin Music And Arts, Coventry

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA Sun 29 Jan, Kitchen Garden Cafe, Birmingham

TYKETTO 25TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR Mon 30 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE HEAD AND THE HEART Mon 30 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

MARTHA WAINWRIGHT Mon 30 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

FAIRPORT CONVENTION Tues 31 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

DARLINGSIDE Tues 31 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Classical Music

EMMA KIRKBY SINGS DOWLAND Tues 24 Jan, St Mary's Church, Warwick



BRASS FACULTY RECITAL Featuring Alan Thomas (trumpet), Chris Houlding (trombone) & Joanne Sealey (piano), Tues 24 Jan, Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire

JAYSON GILLHAM PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Bach/Rachmaninov, Schubert, Chopin, Debussy & Schumann, Wed 25 Jan, Evesham Arts Centre, Worcestershire

CBSO: HANDEL'S SEMELE Featuring Richard Egarr (conductor), Mhairi Lawson (Semele); Louise Alder (Iris) & Tim Mead (Athamas), Wed 25 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO BAROQUE ENSEMBLE Programme includes works by Handel, Pepusch, Cervetto, JC Bach & Loeillet, Thurs 26 Jan, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

ROBERT PLANE & SACONNI QUARTET Programme includes works by Haydn, York Bowen, Glazunov & Brahms, Thurs 26 Jan, Malvern Theatre

ST PETERSBURG PHILHARMONIC PERFORMS PROKOFIEV Featuring Yuri Temirkanov (conductor) & Nikolai Lugansky (piano). Programme includes works by Rimsky-Korsakov & Prokofiev, Thurs 26 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

KENNETH HAMILTON LECTURE RECITAL: ON TOUR WITH LISZT Programme includes works by Chopin, Liszt, Thalberg, Pixis, Herz & Czerny, Fri 27 Jan, The Barber Institute, Birmingham

AN EVENING OF CHAMBER MUSIC WITH NICOLA BENEDETTI & the Benedetti Elschenbroich Grynyuk Trio. Programme includes works by Ravel, Turnage, Sierra & Brahms, Fri 27 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ROYAL STRING QUARTET Programme includes works by Mozart, Philip Glass & Gorecki, Fri 27 Jan, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

JUNIOR CONSERVATOIRE ORCHESTRAL CONCERT Featuring Daniele Rosina, Jeffrey Snowdon & Timothy English (conductors). Programme includes works by Saint-Saens & Dvorak, Sat 28 Jan, Elgar Concert Hall, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham

CBSO: BEETHOVEN'S FIFTH Featuring Mirga Grazinyte-Tyla (conductor) & Francesco Piemontesi (piano).

Programme includes works by Haydn, Mozart & Beethoven, Sun 29 Jan - Thurs 2 Feb, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT - THOMAS TROTTER Programme includes works by C.M Widor, J.S Bach, Mozart, L. Anderson, W. Russell & G. Bizet, Mon 30 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

FUMIKO MIYACHI PIANO RECITAL Programme includes new works by Peter Bell, Rob Crehan, Patrick Ellis, Robin Morton & Roche van Tiddens, Tues 31 Jan, Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy Gigs

FAT PENGUIN COMEDY Wed 25 Jan, The Patrick Kavanagh, Birmingham

RUBY WAX Thurs 26 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

TIFF STEVENSON Thurs 26 Jan, mac, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON Thurs 26 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RAW COMEDY Fri 27 Jan, Evesham Arts Centre

RUTH GRAHAM Fri 27 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

JIMMY MCGHIE, ED GAMBLE, MARLON DAVIS & COMIC TBC Fri 27 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ELLIE TAYLOR, BEN NORRIS & PHIL ELLIS Sat 28 Jan, The Comedy Loft, Birmingham

JIMMY MCGHIE, MARLON DAVIS, ED GAMBLE & COMIC TBC Sat 28 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG Fawley Towers meets Noises Off in this award-winning West End comedy, Mon 23 - Sat 28 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

MURDERED TO DEATH The Nonentities present an amateur staging of Peter Gordon's tongue-in-cheek take on the Agatha Christie genre, Mon 23 - Sat 28 Jan, Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

HAIRSPRAY Bromsgrove School present an amateur production of the smash-hit musical, Tues 24 - Thurs 26 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

MADE IN INDIA New play about motherhood and blood ties between women and nations in a brave new world, Tues 24 Jan - Sat 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FRANKENSTEIN Blackeyed Theatre present a brand new version of Mary Shelley's gothic tale, Wed 25 Jan, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

THE VERDICT Middle Ground Theatre Company present a staging of Barry Reed's powerful courtroom thriller. Clive Mantle, Jack Shepherd and

Richard Walsh star, Wed 25 - Sat 28 Jan, Malvern Theatre

MALCOLM STENT'S SONGS OF PRAISE Hymns and songs with a comedy sparkle, Thurs 26 Jan, The Core, Solihull

THE PSYCHIC PROJECT A mind-reading show based on the true story of the Cold War's psychic spies, Thurs 26 Jan, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

LOVE New play by Alexander Zeldin, written through a devising process in which the audience are invited to bear witness to an intimate story of family love, Thurs 26 Jan - Sat 11 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

EUROHOUSE Two performers - one Greek, one French - dance and shout, cry and sing, agree and disagree, about life in the Eurohouse. A darkly comic look at the EU's founding ideals and what got lost along the way, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Presented by Nuneaton Panto & Revue Society, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Jan, Bedworth Civic Hall

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER New staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, Thurs 26 Jan - Fri 3 Feb, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

MOTHER GOOSE Amateur staging presented by Kays Theatre Group, Thurs 26 Jan - Sun 5 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Premiere of Jeremy Sams' adaptation of the French film and stage sensation, Le Prenom. Starring Nigel Harman and Sarah Hadland, Fri 27 Jan - Sat 11 Feb, The REP, Birmingham

AND THERE WAS WAR Biblical narrative deeply entrenched in the concepts of the immense controversy between good and evil, Sat 28 Jan, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

FRANKENSTEIN The Crescent Theatre Company presents a staging of Mary Shelley's thrilling and deeply disturbing gothic tale, Sat 28 & Tues 31 Jan, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

LITTLE HOWARD AND THE MAGIC PENCIL OF LIFE AND DEATH Family comedy show, as seen on BBC's The Slammer and ITV's Comedy Cuts. Suitable for children aged five-plus... Sun 29 Jan, mac, Birmingham

THE BOY WHO BIT PICASSO Interactive theatre show for children aged four and older, featuring storytelling, music and the chance to make your very own art, Sun 29 Jan, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

MARY SHELLEY The Crescent Theatre Company presents Helen Edmundson's compelling drama about the early life of one of the world's most famous writers of gothic fiction, Sun 29 Jan - Sat 11 Feb, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER Amateur staging of DH Lawrence's most famous novel, Mon 30 Jan, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW

A menagerie of 75 lovable puppets faithfully adapt four of Eric Carle's stories for children, Mon 30 - Tues 31 Jan, New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham

DIRTY DANCING The story of Baby and Jonny, told through heart-pounding music and sexy dancing, Mon 30 Jan - Sat 4 Feb, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

STOMP A British theatrical sensation fusing percussion, dance, theatre and comedy with an exhilarating soundtrack, Tues 31 Jan - Sat 4 Feb, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ALYSIA HARRIS & SPECIAL GUESTS An evening of 'mindblowing poetry & live music', Tues 31 Jan, The REP, Birmingham

Dance

BRENDAN COLE: ALL NIGHT LONG A brand new show for 2017, Brendan hosts another spectacular production featuring his guest dancers, a new leading lady and a 14 piece band and singers live on stage. Thurs 26 Jan Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THIS IS AN IRISH DANCE Jean Butler's new duet, created and performed with Belfast based cellist Neil Martin, further unearths her roots by exploring the often-invisible interplay between dancer and musician in live performance, Thurs 26 - Sat 28 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ANTON & ERIN... SWING TIME Brand new show from the nation's favourite ballroom couple, Sat 28 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SONIA SABRI COMPANY: AKAAR Birmingham-based Sonia Sabri Company here showcase the talents of guest artists from across the region, together with students from local groups and communities who have been nurtured through the company's dedicated teaching, Sat 28 Jan, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

SCATTERED Motionhouse Dance Theatre fuse physical dance theatre, mesmerising aerial imagery and film graphics to explore our relationship with water in all its forms, Tues 31 Jan - Fri 3 Feb, The Old Rep Theatre, Birmingham

Talks

TOM KERRIDGE'S DOPAMINE DIET One of the UK's top chefs shares how his ground-breaking diet worked for him, and how it can be used to transform health, Mon 23 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

DEAN STRANG AND JERRY BUTING An



Dirty Dancing

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, mon 30 January - Sat 4 February

Seen by millions across the globe, Eleanor Bergstein's worldwide smash-hit musical tells the classic story of Baby and Johnny, two fiercely independent young spirits from different worlds who come together for what will prove to be the most challenging and triumphant summer of their lives. Hit numbers include *Hungry Eyes*, *Hey Baby*, *Do You Love Me?* and *I've Had The Time Of My Life*.

evening of conversation with two compelling figures who featured in the Netflix docuseries *Making A Murderer*, Tues 24 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

SIMON WESTON: MY LIFE, MY STORY Inspirational talk about one man's journey from the front line of war, being on the edge of death, to today being a happy and contented father, grandfather and national treasure, Sat 28 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

Starring Casey Affleck, Michelle Williams. mac, Birmingham, Fri 27 - Tues 31 Jan

PADDINGTON (PG) Comedy/Family. Starring Hugh Bonneville, Julie Walters. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Sat 28 Jan

STORKS (U) Animation/Adventure. With the voices of Andy Samberg, Jennifer Aniston. mac, Birmingham, Sat 28 Jan

THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO (PG) Comedy, Fantasy. Starring Mia Farrow, Jeff Daniels. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 30 Jan

Film

INDEPENDENT LISTINGS:

LA LA LAND (12a) Comedy/Musical. Starring Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Mon 23 - Thurs 26 Jan; mac, Birmingham, Mon 23 - Tues 31 Jan

SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (U) Musical. Starring Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds. Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Tues 24 Jan

GHOST IN THE SHELL (12a) Animation/Action. With the voices of Atsuko Tanaka, Iemasa Kayumi. Foreign language, subtitled. Electric Cinema, Birmingham, Wed 25 Jan

ARRIVAL (12a) Mystery/Sci-Fi. Starring Amy Adams, Jeremy Renner. Artrix, Bromsgrove, Fri 27 & Mon 30 Jan

MANCHESTER BY THE SEA (15) Drama.

NEW FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE:

Released from Fri 27 Jan, showing at selected cinemas

HACKSAW RIDGE (tbc)

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