

Staffordshire

ISSUE 447 APRIL 2024

What's On

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

staffordshirewhatson.co.uk



St George's Day Extravaganza!



www.tamworthartsandevents.co.uk

Tamworth Castle Grounds, Holloway, Tamworth, Staffordshire, B79 7NA

inside:

SPOOKY STORY

Susan Hill's *The Woman In Black* shows at Crewe Lyceum



TWELVE ANGRY MEN

classic courtroom drama stops off at Lichfield Garrick Theatre



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL

return to the Midlands with family-friendly production OVO





Seann Walsh



Molly Windsor



Natalie Anderson

TWELFTH NIGHT

*A Cornish Tale.
June 21 - July 7*

Directed by: Sean Turner Sound Design: Hattie North Musical Director: Stephen Hyde Lighting Design: Barry Smith

Movement Direction: Amy Lawrence Set & Costume Designer: Alfie Heywood

www.gatehousetheatre.co.uk 01785 619080



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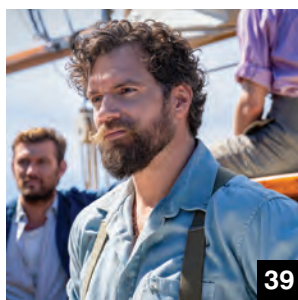
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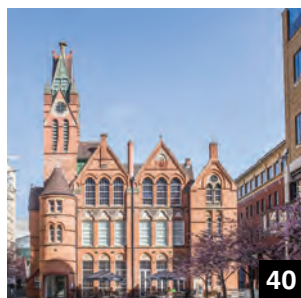
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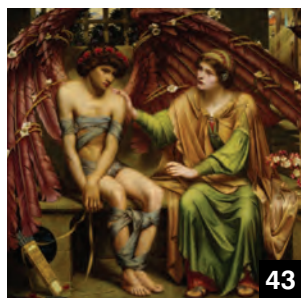
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What's On

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Rosemary Shrager at Shrewsbury Flower Show

Celebrity chef Rosemary Shrager will be one of the special guests at this year's Shrewsbury Flower Show, which returns to the town's Quarry Park on Friday 9 & Saturday 10 August.

The haute cuisine teacher and former reality TV star will appear on both days of the show. Other celebrities announced for 2024 include BBC Gardeners' World presenter Sue Kent, ITV's Love Your Weekend regular Camilla Bassett-Smith, and 'professional eater & drinker' Andy Clarke.

For further information and to purchase tickets, visit shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk

Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival returns

The Ironbridge Gorge Walking Festival returns next month for a 19th year. Taking place from Saturday 4 to Sunday 12 May, the event features more than 60 guided walks in and around the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. To find out more, visit ironbridgewalking.co.uk



Attractions at this year's event include multiple stages and arenas, fairground fun, games, street food, a newly announced Caribbean-inspired Jam Down zone and a wellness village. Artists already confirmed to appear at the festival include Embrace, Tom Meighan (formally of Kasabian), TV and Radio 6 personality Craig Charles, iconic 1990s band The Farm, and Mungos Hi Fi with vocals from Eva Lazarus. To find out more and book tickets, visit healfestival.co.uk

Deaffest event celebrates its 15th anniversary

The UK's leading Deaf-led film & arts festival will be celebrating its 15th anniversary when it returns next month.

Taking place from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 May, Deaffest is being held at three venues: University of Wolverhampton, The Halls Wolverhampton, and the city's Arena Theatre. To find out more about the event, visit deaffest.co.uk



Fancy becoming a heritage train driver?

The Severn Valley Railway (SVR) will run an enhanced programme of steam and diesel footplate experiences this summer and early autumn. Available from June to October, the

experiences provide visitors with the chance to drive and fire one of the SVR's locomotives. For more information about the programme and to purchase a package, visit svr.co.uk



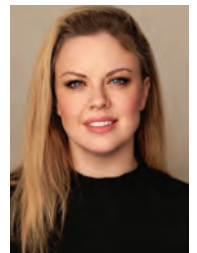
Shrewsbury Comic Con back for 2024

Shrewsbury is set to go comic-book crazy this month when the town's football club hosts a one-day comic convention.

Taking place at the New Meadow ground on Saturday 6 April, the event features a host of attractions, from numerous trade stands through to tabletop gaming and a cosplay competition. For further information, visit shrewsburycomiccon.com

Joanne Clifton to star in Hairspray at the Grand

Former Strictly favourite Joanne Clifton will star in hit musical Hairspray when the show visits the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre early next year. Joanne, who is currently playing Princess Fiona in the touring production of Shrek The Musical -



which stops off at Birmingham theatre The Alexandra this month - will take on the role of Velma Von Tussle. Hairspray shows at the Grand from Monday 3 to Saturday 8 February. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit grandtheatre.co.uk

BRB launches its 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal

Birmingham Royal Ballet's (BRB) principal dancer, Celine Gittens, has teamed up with the Company's first soloist, Rosanna El, and artist, Regan Hutsell, to help launch the 2024 Pointe Shoe Appeal.

The appeal aims to raise funds to keep dancers on pointe during BRB's forthcoming national and international tours later this year. For further information about how to donate, visit Pointe Shoe Appeal at the website: brb.org.uk

A Healing experience...

Shropshire's Heal Festival will return in the autumn, taking place at Shrewsbury's West Mid Showground on Friday 20 & Saturday 21 September.

Cosford 'role demo' display

An F35 fighter jet from RAF Marham will perform a 'role demo' display for the first time at this year's RAF Cosford Air Show, held at the venue on Sunday 9 June.

The role demo is expected to include high-speed passes and 'other thrilling manoeuvres' never before performed by an F35 from 617 Squadron... Tickets for the event are available at cosfordairshow.co.uk

Unitarian Church lets the light in

Letting The Light In, a series of alternative music gigs being presented in historic spaces, continues this month at Shrewsbury's Unitarian Church with a performance by French experimental electronic music artist Audrey Carmes (Thursday 18 April). Audrey will be joined for the show by Shrewsbury sound artist Roberto Biffarini.



Market hall's late nights are back

Shrewsbury Market Hall's popular Late Nights initiative - which sees the venue's cafes & bars staying open until 10pm - makes a return on Saturday 6 April. The event will also take place on 4 May, 1 June, 7 September, 2 November and 7 December. For more details: shrewsburymarkethall.co.uk



Acclaimed Tina Turner musical coming to the Midlands

Hit West End production Tina - The Tina Turner Musical will stop off at Birmingham Hippodrome next year as part of its first-ever UK & Ireland tour (Tuesday 17 - Saturday 28 June 2025). Commenting on the news, the show's producer, Tali Pelman, said: "Tina Turner played to

packed-out arenas across the UK and Ireland throughout her extensive career. We're thrilled to now be able to bring her extraordinary story to stages across the UK and Ireland for the first time." To find out more and purchase tickets for the show, visit birminghamhippodrome.com

Digbeth Dining Club on tour

Street-food-event specialists Digbeth Dining Club have unveiled their 2024 Summer Tour dates. The tour kickstarts this month, with events booked in until July. Locations include: Sandwell, Solihull, Wolverhampton, Lichfield, Sutton Coldfield, Warwick Castle, Bearwood, Compton Verney, Castle Bromwich, Telford, Shirley, Himley Hall, Walsall, Redditch and Tamworth. For the full schedule and to buy tickets (some events are free), visit the website: digbethdiningclub.com



Comedian Paul Whitehouse hitting the road with Only Fools And Horses

Comedian Paul Whitehouse will return to the role of Grandad when Only Fools And Horses The Musical visits Wolverhampton Grand Theatre in the autumn (Monday 21 - Saturday 26 October). Paul previously played the Peckham pensioner when the show first opened in the West End five years ago. Featuring 'an ingenious script and 20 hilarious songs', the touring production also stops off at Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre from Monday 2 to Saturday 7 December.

Midlands venue to keep its name until 2030

Utilita Energy and NEC Group have agreed an early extension to their existing multi-year partnership, which includes the naming rights for Utilita Arena Birmingham. As part of the seven-figure deal, the Birmingham city centre venue will carry Utilita's name through to 2030.

Comic Seann Walsh to make Shakespeare debut

Comedian Seann Walsh has joined the cast of this year's Stafford Shakespeare Festival production.

Twelfth Night: A Cornish Tale will show at the town's Gatehouse Theatre from Friday 21 June to Sunday 7 July, with Seann taking the role of Malvolio.

Commenting on the news, the venue's general manager, Gary Stevens, said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have Seann join us in Stafford this summer. He's a perfect fit for the role of Malvolio, and I can't wait to see his natural humour mixed in with Shakespeare's comedy writing. There's going to be laughs galore, that's for sure." For further information and to book tickets, visit gatehousetheatre.co.uk



World-class tennis returns to Shrewsbury

The biggest women's tennis tournament in the UK outside of the grass-court season is returning to Shropshire later this year. The Shrewsbury Club has been chosen by the International Tennis Federation and Lawn Tennis Association to stage the prestigious Lexus W100 Shrewsbury event. The tournament will take place from Sunday 13 to Sunday 20 October.



More performers added to Shrewsbury Folk line-up

Ladysmith Black Mambazo, singer-songwriter Beth Nielsen Chapman and Jacqui McShee's Pentangle are among the latest performers to sign up for this year's Shrewsbury Folk Festival (Friday 23 - Monday 26 August). Other artists recently added to the line-up

include Grammy-nominated Mary Gauthier, Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening, The Wandering Hearts, The Hello Darlins', The Pleasures, Suntou Susso, Anthony John Clarke and Al O'Kane. For further information and to book tickets, visit shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

BBC Gardeners' World Live back at the NEC

Urban gardens, a 'spectacular' edible show-garden by Adam Frost, orchids from all over the world, and a selection of new stages and workshops will all feature at this year's BBC Gardeners' World Live event, which returns to the NEC Birmingham from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 June.

For further information about this year's line-up of attractions and to book a ticket - which will also provide entry to the BBC Good Food Show Summer - visit the website: bbcgardenersworldlive.com

Stoke Rep Players to perform Arthur Miller play

Stoke Rep Players are this month presenting their production of the award-winning All My Sons, the play which established its author, Arthur Miller, as a supremely powerful voice in mid-20th-century American theatre. The show runs at Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 April. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit the website: stokereplayers.co.uk

The Three Musketeers is New Vic's festive show

Staffordshire's New Vic Theatre will present a stage version of classic adventure novel The Three Musketeers this Christmas. Adapted and helmed by Artistic Director Theresa Heskins, the production will run at the theatre-in-the-round from Friday 15 November to Saturday 25 January. Commenting on the news, Theresa said: "Christmas is a time of year when our local families and schools look forward to the treat of a theatre outing together, and so we asked them what they would like to see this year. The answer came back loud and clear. Theatre-in-the-round loves action, so their choice of an all-action adventure is perfect for the New Vic's unique space." For further information and to book tickets, visit newvictheatre.org.uk



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Paddington: Film with Live Orchestra

05 Apr | Symphony Hall



There's a Monster in Your Show

06 & 07 Apr | Town Hall



Champagne for Lulu

15 Apr | Symphony Hall



Leonkoro Quartet

15 Apr | Town Hall



Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra

16 Apr | Symphony Hall



The Queen's Cartoonists

19 Apr | Town Hall



Daniel Bedingfield

22 Feb | Symphony Hall



Max Amini

23 Apr | Town Hall



Lost in Music

26 Apr | Symphony Hall



Charles Esten

30 Apr | Town Hall



bmusic.co.uk

There's something for
everyone this April!

New three-day festival at Flaxmill Maltings venue

Shrewsbury's Flaxmill Maltings will this summer host a three-day festival featuring 'live music, performances, street food, beer and much more'.

Acts so far confirmed to appear at the Flaxmill Creates Festival are Sonic Boom, Jason Allen and Dan Owen.

The event takes place at the venue from Friday 19 to Sunday 21 July. Tickets are free and can be claimed from tickettailor.com

Disco dancing workshop fun in Shrewsbury!

A Shrewsbury-based dance troupe, who were responsible for bringing together more than 1,000 people to dance the Charleston in the town's Quarry in 2018, are looking to get people to boogie on down at a special event next month.

I Can Dance Shrewsbury will host a 1970s disco workshop in the Quarry on Saturday 18 May, to raise funds for Shropshire Mental Health Support.

Further information and updates can be found on the I Can Dance Facebook page.

Mile-long Stick Man trail at Memorial Arboretum

Midlands families visiting the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire can now enjoy a brand-new outdoor trail.

The free-to-experience mile-long attraction, based on Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's much-loved Stick Man story, features five carved wooden characters.

The trail was launched last month at an event which included themed arts & crafts, musicmaking inspired by the book, and free indoor screenings of The Stick Man adaptation.



Floella's Coming To England at the Lichfield Garrick

Former children's television presenter Baroness Floella Benjamin is bringing her award-winning stage show Coming To England to Lichfield Garrick Theatre in the autumn.

The critically acclaimed production, which

tells the story of Floella emigrating from Trinidad to the UK as a 10 year old, visits the venue from Wednesday 2 to Sunday 6 October.

For further information and to book tickets, visit lichfieldgarrick.com

Tickets on sale for Black Country Musicom event

Black Country Musicom Festival will make a welcome return at Dudley's Himley Hall this summer.

Taking place on Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 July, the event showcases performances by the Symphonix Rock Orchestra and a host of tribute bands. A comedy tent, a funfair, food & drink stalls, street entertainment and performances by local bands and musicians also feature in the line-up.

Deacon Blue complete Trentham Live's line-up

Deacon Blue have been announced as the final headline act at this year's Trentham Live.

They will be performing on the opening night of the four-day festival.

Taking place from Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 August, the event also features Busted, Jess Glynne and Manic Street Preachers.

For more information and to book tickets, visit trentham.co.uk/trentham-live



New football exhibition at Wolverhampton gallery

A large-scale international touring exhibition exploring the design story behind football opens at Wolverhampton Art Gallery next month.

Football: Designing The Beautiful Game (Saturday 25 May - Sunday 1 September) takes a look at the ways in which design has been used to push the game to its technical and emotional limits. To find out more, visit wolverhamptonart.org.uk

Shrewsbury Regatta to return next month

The 2024 Shrewsbury Regatta will take place on Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 May.

The free-to-watch event - one of the oldest in the rowing calendar - is this year expected to attract around 1,500 competitors from rowing clubs across the country.

Races will take place on the River Severn, between the town's English Bridge and the boathouses opposite Quarry Park.



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ARIAS
ELLEN KENT: CARMEN

TUE 9 APR
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ENGLISH YOUTH BALLET
– SLEEPING BEAUTY

FRI 12 & SAT 13 APR
REGENT THEATRE



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SUCCESSFUL ELVIS TRIBUTE SHOW
THE ELVIS TRIBUTE
ARTIST WORLD TOUR

SAT 4 MAY
REGENT THEATRE



AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND 'CRAIC'
SEVEN DRUNKEN
NIGHTS – THE STORY
OF THE DUBLINERS

SUN 5 MAY
REGENT THEATRE



BASED ON THE HIT 80S MOVIE
AN OFFICER AND
A GENTLEMAN
THE MUSICAL

MON 6 – SAT 11 MAY
REGENT THEATRE



LUTHER VANDROSS, THE LEGEND
LIVES ON
LUTHER LIVE

SUN 12 MAY
REGENT THEATRE



JOIN ALL OF YOUR FAVOURITE
CRACK-A-LACKIN' FRIENDS
MADAGASCAR
THE MUSICAL

THU 16 – SUN 19 MAY
REGENT THEATRE



WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF JOJO
JOHANNES RAABE:
HOUSE OF JOJO

SUN 26 MAY
REGENT THEATRE

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES
THU 11 APR | VICTORIA HALL

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND: YONKS!
FRI 26 APR | VICTORIA HALL

THE DIANA ROSS STORY
SAT 27 APR | VICTORIA HALL

BARRY STEELE & FRIENDS – THE ROY ORBISON STORY
FRI 10 MAY | VICTORIA HALL

JOHN LYDON – I COULD BE WRONG, I COULD BE RIGHT
SAT 11 MAY | VICTORIA HALL

SCOTT BRADLEE'S POSTMODERN JUKEBOX
SUN 12 MAY | VICTORIA HALL

SHALAMAR
FRI 31 MAY | VICTORIA HALL

RICHARD THOMPSON
SAT 1 JUN | VICTORIA HALL

A man with short dark hair, wearing a white blazer over a light blue shirt and a red patterned tie, stands in a dark wooden doorway. He is holding the door handle with his right hand and looking off to the side with a serious expression. The door behind him has the words "JURY ROOM" faintly visible. To his right, a wooden chair is partially visible in a dimly lit room.

A LIFE IN THEIR HANDS

**Twelve Angry Men, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama,
returns to the Midlands this month**

Starting life as a teleplay, Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, *Twelve Angry Men*, continues to grip audiences wherever it's staged. The latest touring version features a host of familiar names, including former *Emmerdale*, *Waterloo Road* and *Casualty* actor Jason Merrells, who plays the key role of Juror Eight. We recently caught up with Jason to find out more...

In the interests of justice, juries always meet in secret and their deliberations stay behind closed doors. But the classic play *Twelve Angry Men* takes us inside those secret discussions as we watch one jury struggle to reach a verdict on an unnamed suspect.

Ideas are explored, opinions voiced, bigotries exposed, arguments fought and minds changed in a drama which remains as resonant today as when it was first aired as a teleplay and film in the 1950s.

The key role is Juror Eight, who forces his fellow panel members to reconsider a decision which is initially made without any investigation of the facts. And gradually the audience sees that this may not be as cut-and-dried a case as they had at first suspected.

The role of Juror Eight is currently being played by Jason Merrells in a UK tour that includes stop-offs in Wolverhampton and Lichfield. The cast also features Michael Greco, Gray O'Brien and Tristan Gemmill.

Jason is a familiar television face, having played businessman Declan Macey in *Emmerdale*, head teacher Jack Rimmer in *Waterloo Road* and receptionist Matt Hawley in *Casualty*. And this isn't the first time he's portrayed Juror Eight.

"The first time round was in 2015 and it was very much a sort of favour to Bill Kenwright," he recalls. "He needed someone to do a small part of the tour, which was already on its way. I was between filming jobs, so it fitted perfectly, and it was a great part, so I snapped his hand off and said yes. I loved my time doing it and was fascinated by it as a piece."

And so when he was asked to join the current tour, Jason jumped at the chance - and then it took on an additional significance. "When I said yes to it, well, shortly afterwards, Bill died, and I'm really glad that we agreed to work together before that happened."

In 1957 *Twelve Angry Men* was made into an Oscar-nominated film with Henry Fonda as Juror Eight. Jason feels its message is just as important nearly 70 years on.

"The play is a New York cross-section of men; it's men because at that time that's what

juries were made up of. America is going through a serious tipping point of change; the Civil Rights movement is beginning the backlash against the way African Americans are treated in all the major cities of America. That is a background noise to 1957 that you can't ignore when you come to approach New York at that time.

"The kid on trial is Puerto Rican. Although that is never mentioned, that was the intention of the writer. And there is casual racism that's thrown around the room. We all have prejudices inside us - in fact, that's one of Juror Eight's speeches. He says that it's very difficult to get rid of your own prejudice but you have to try because if you don't it stops you seeing anything clearly."

And such prejudice hasn't gone away, says Jason.

"It's a really well-made play, and that is its continuing appeal. It just seems to me to have even more resonance now. It feels more pertinent than it did even in 2015. I'm reading about guys on Death Row in America at the moment. There are very strong cases against them being there because of miscarriages of justice or questions about the way the case was handled, and it's exactly what's happening in the play. No-one ever says and no-one ever knows if the kid at the centre of the play is innocent or not, but the benefit of the doubt is enough to say the state shouldn't be killing someone when there's doubt.

"I think this play has got everything. The essence of drama is conflict, and because it's theatre it's also a word-based medium - this is a conflict in argument, so you couldn't get anything more theatrical than that. It's got 12 very different, very distinct, really well-wrought characters, some of whom are very funny, some of whom are disturbing and some of whom you want to root for."

For Jason, Juror Eight may be unnamed but he has an important backstory. "I knew the film and Henry Fonda, and my memory of his style in the show was very quiet, very rooted, very straightforward and very gentle but with a moral firmness. I kind of remembered that, and I suppose that's how I approached it in 2015.

"What was really interesting, and one of the reasons that I wanted to do it again, is when I read it again, I felt quite differently about Juror Eight. I thought much more about who he was. So this is an architect in 1957 in New York; an academic. He's a progressive - he probably listens to bebop, Charlie Parker. He's probably well aware of the injustices going on across the country, and I would think he is someone who is also an abolitionist.

"I don't believe he would be thinking we should be killing anybody, certainly not frying them in a chair with a sponge on their head. I think he's of the opinion that that's barbaric, as am I. So I approached him much more with that in mind, and I think that makes my interpretation of him this time a bit more politically keen to see this guilty verdict turned over. That doesn't mean that I'm ignoring the massive questions that are still there, but I think he's saying: 'Look, there are these doubts, and therefore I'm really, really sure we shouldn't be burning someone alive in a chair.'"

So has Jason been a juror?

"I've never been asked to be on a jury, but I think I would be very careful to convict. It's very hard to keep emotions out of it. Juror Eight is trying to do that, but there are certain cases that click people's buttons. It's hard to keep personal emotions out of it, but I would do my best. The jury system is problematic, but it's better to have a system that has some moral code to it - which is that you must be sure because the burden of proof is on the prosecution, not on the defence. It's not for the defendant to out-and-out prove that you didn't do something; it's up to the prosecution to prove out-and-out that you did. And this is what is explored so well in the play."

.....

Twelve Angry Men shows at Lichfield Garrick from Monday 8 to Saturday 13 April and Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 6 to Saturday 11 May

With 12 Dance Bands

- Ladysmith Black Mambazo
- Mary Black
- Eric Bibb
- Mānran
- Ward Thomas
- Beth Nielsen Chapman
- The Longest Johns
- El Pony Pisador
- The Sentimentals & friends
- Mary Gauthier
- Le Vent du Nord
- Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening
- Jacqui McShee's Pentangle
- The Wandering Hearts
- Dream in Colors
- The Pleasures
- Suntou Susso Band
- Ranagri
- The Hello Darlins
- The Hunch
- Joshua Burnell Band
- NATI

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Tickets: £14-15

20 April, 7.30pm
Into the Shadows
Tickets: £16

10 April, 7.30pm
The Greatest Magician
Tickets: £24.50, VIP Meet & Greet £36

25 April, 7.30pm
Roger Parkes Piano Man
Tickets: £18

19 April, 8pm
Russell Kane HyperActive
Tickets: £22

27 April, 2.15pm & 6.45pm
Inspiration Dance & Theatre Kaleidoscope
Tickets: £10

The Queen's Cartoonists

Friday 19 April
Town Hall Birmingham

Pulling from over 100 years of animation from around the world, The Queen's Cartoonists bring animated films to life, perfectly synchronizing their performances with the films projected on stage.

A high energy performance leading the audience through a world of virtuosic musicianship, instrumental mayhem and comedy: Don't miss this one night only extra special event!

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Classical music from across the region...

Image credit: Ollie Ali



Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 April

The UK's oldest professional symphony orchestra is visiting the Potteries this month.

The award-winning Royal Liverpool Philharmonic has been at the heart of the city's cultural life since 1840, and each season performs around 70 concerts at venues including Liverpool's two cathedrals.

The orchestra's Victoria Hall visit sees them performing Coleridge-Taylor's Ballade and Edward Elgar's First Symphony. Former BBC Young Musician Sheku Kanneh-Mason (pictured) also contributes to the evening's programme with a performance of Weinberg's haunting Cello Concerto.

Classical FM Hall Of Fame with the CBSO & John Suchet

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 19 April

Classic FM's John Suchet presents, Michael Seal conducts, and Tessa Lark lends her exceptional talent as solo violinist to a City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra concert which is being publicised as 'the definitive countdown of Britain's favourite classical music'.

The two-hour programme features a wide array of much-loved compositions, from Sibelius' Finlandia, Elgar's Nimrod and Holst's The Planets (Jupiter), to works by famous film composers John Williams and Ennio Morricone.



Leonkoro Quartet

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 15 April

Hats off to Leonkoro, who visit the region laden with booty after winning a bagful of awards at the 2022 Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition. The Berlin-based musicians - Leonkoro means Lionheart in Esperanto, by the way - also came out victorious at the prestigious Bordeaux Competition, claimed the coveted Jürgen Ponto Foundation Music Prize, and became BBC New Generation Artists for a period of two years. In short, they're a terrifically talented ensemble who're well worth an evening of your time. Their mid-month Midlands stop-off sees them getting to grips with compositions by Schubert, Janáček and Beethoven.

Zoë Beyers and the English String Orchestra

St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury, Sun 14 April

Forty-four years of age and hailing from nearby Worcestershire, the English String Orchestra has garnered an impressive reputation across the decades for its artistic excellence and innovative programming.

Here led by soloist Zoë Beyers, the ESO present a programme featuring works by Mendelssohn (Concerto for Violin and Strings in D minor), Tchaikovsky (Souvenir de Florence, Op 70) and the Midlands' very own Edward Elgar (Serenade for Strings in E minor, Op20).



North Staffordshire Symphony Orchestra

St John Fisher Catholic College, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sat 20 April

North Staffordshire Symphony Orchestra here marks its 120th birthday with one of four major symphony concerts it will be presenting during 2024.

The programme for the evening features Weber's Oberon Overture, Schumann's Piano Concerto and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Ludlow English Song Weekend

Ludlow Assembly Rooms & St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire, Fri 12 - Sun 14 April

The promotion of both familiar and unfamiliar English Song is at the heartland of this popular annual event, which across its 23 years has boasted a carefully curated mix of concerts, panel discussions, performance masterclasses, workshops, recitals and films. This year's line-up includes a celebration of Sir CV Stanford, a whistle-stop musical tour of cross-dressing in song, a screening of the film Michael Tippett: The Shadow And The Light, and an in-conversation event with its director, John Bridcut.

CELEBRATING FEMALE POWER

Emma Rice brings her own brand of theatrical wonder
to the ancient tale of Blue Beard



An ancient folk tale concerning a nobleman and his vanishing wives has been given the Emma Rice treatment. Celebrating female power, the ‘fearless’ director calls on a chorus of nuns to tell the story of Blue Beard in a touring production stopping off at Birmingham Rep this month. Here, Emma shares why she wanted to bring the story to the stage, and why it had to happen now...

Blue Beard is the fifth show that Emma Rice has made for her company Wise Children, which launched in 2018 after her very public departure from Shakespeare’s Globe. Before that, Emma ran the much-loved, and now closed, Kneehigh Theatre company. Many of Emma’s most successful works for Kneehigh were based on folk tales, like Blue Beard.

The story that took on a new meaning for her following the murder of Sarah Everard by the off-duty Metropolitan police officer Wayne Cousins.

“I’ve actually never liked the story of Blue Beard,” she says. “I love fairytales, but this is one I’ve always avoided.

“I thought it was just about controlling women, telling them off for asking questions and being curious. But something changed a couple of years ago, and the story started to nag at me.

“I have become more and more haunted by the regular chime of women being attacked, murdered and abused. Sarah Everard’s shocking murder and the ensuing chaos of her vigil captured the public’s imagination. However, for me, it was the murder of Zara Aleena that really brought home my anger and made me think about adapting Blue Beard.

“She was just walking home. A week later, her family, friends, and people she would never know, met at the spot where she was killed and walked her memory home. This was the moment that I knew I wanted to walk Blue Beard’s victims’ home. I wanted to use my craft, my platform and my experience to make a small difference.”

Rice says she realised that she wanted to tell this story, not to understand or excuse Blue Beard, but to breathe life into the women he tried to control. She wanted to express not just the rage, grief and heartbreak so many feel at lives cut short, but also to celebrate brilliant living women in all their wild and surprising glory. Her version of Blue Beard is very definitely about the women, about celebrating women.

“It’s about saying enough is enough! We will not be afraid anymore. Blue Beard has the weight and power of a classic drama - almost Shakespearean and most definitely Greek in structure. I hope audiences will feel entertained, moved and transported. We have found the subject matter very powerful in rehearsals, and there has been lots of laughter and tears. I hope audiences will share the joy, the darkness, the fury and the hope. It certainly won’t be boring!”

Music is key to Rice’s shows. As a practitioner of ‘devised theatre’, she always works closely with a composer, who is present throughout the rehearsal process, shaping, refining and reworking the music as the production develops.

“Music is shot through this magical tale. I’m working with my longtime friend and collaborator Stu Barker, who I also worked with on Brief Encounter, Tristan & Yseult, and many, many more.

“Stu is a composing genius who knows just when a song, a sting or an underscore is needed. I’m particularly loving working on this show because almost all my actors are also musicians. This means the music comes straight out of the heart of the show; it is all performed live by this incredibly talented ensemble of actor-musicians. They jump seamlessly between playing and acting, and I marvel at their talent. The songs are dynamite, and I go to sleep with them running through my head and wake up singing them.”

In Rice’s version of the tale, the character of Blue Beard is a magician, and we see part of his magic show onstage.

“My long-term collaborator and dear friend Tristan [Sturrock, who plays Blue Beard] worked with several magicians in preparation for the show. He can now make coins vanish and cards appear, cut ladies in half and throw knives. It has been brilliant fun and creates fantastic ‘old school’ entertainment.

“I decided to make my Blue Beard a magician

because it felt like a funny and surprising way to explore themes of lies, control and violence. The glamour of the magician’s assistant, mixed with the casual misogyny of these enduring acts, creates a heady cocktail which is the perfect match for Blue Beard.”

Although at times the show is challenging to watch, with themes of male violence and control, it is shot through with hope, comedic moments and a great deal of stagecraft that means the dark undertones are never graphic, more thought provoking. The production has been garnering rave reviews since it opened at Bath Theatre Royal.

“The production does not shy away from violence and its devastating effect. But it is also hopeful and empowering. I don’t think audiences will come away thinking everything’s awful and it’s never going to change; instead I want people to look these issues squarely in the eye and think: right, that’s it. The world does not have to be like this, and I feel inspired to do something about it.

“It’s also worth saying that I’m not a ‘naturalistic’ director. We use lots of different storytelling techniques to give the subject layers and nuance. This means a violent act could feature on stage as a dance, or a song. It won’t be graphic and unpleasant. Sometimes violence is suggested, sometimes it is shown in a metaphorical way, and at the end we have a huge, bloody, real-life struggle.

“Although the underlying themes are urgent and dark, the show is not all darkness by any means. Blue Beard pulses with stylish theatricality, gritty reality, and genuine emotion. There’s also comedy. I want the production to seduce with high comedy, tragedy, magic, romance and just a sprinkle of spine-tingling horror. It’s a blockbusting rollercoaster!”

Blue Beard shows at Birmingham Rep from Tuesday 9 to Saturday 20 April



CARL HUTCHINSON

Brand new stand-up comedy show *Today Years Old*
Saturday 13 April



POST OFFICE SCANDAL

Inside story with investigative journalist Nick Wallis
Friday 19 April



ROBERT VINCENT

Solo acoustic show with acclaimed singer-songwriter
Friday 19 April



JACKIE FABULOUS

Brand new stand-up comedy show *Full Circle*
Saturday 20 April



TREASURE ISLAND

An action-packed swashbuckling pantomime adventure
Sunday 21 April



YOU'RE BARD

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Friday 3 May



ED BYRNE

Brand new stand-up comedy show *Tragedy Plus Time*
Saturday 11 May



THE BOOTLEG ROCK SHOW

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Tuesday 21 May



SINATRA RETIREMENT CONCERT

Starring Richard Shelton and the Syd Lawrence Orchestra
Thursday 23 May



TOMMY BLAIZE

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Friday 24 May



NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN

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Saturday 25 May



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Live music from across the region...

Jay Phelps Quartet

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Fri 26 April

You don't get to work with the likes of Wynton Marsalis, Kamaal Williams, Amy Winehouse and Wizkid without being seriously good at what you do - and the fact that Jay Phelps has collaborated with all of the above speaks volumes for his incredible talent.

The London-based Canadian trumpeter, who last year released seventh solo album *The Now*, visits the Midlands late this month with band-of-three Nicola Guida (keyboards), Josh Vadilevoo (bass) and Jim Bashford (drums). The in-demand trio are widely admired for their ability to generate an energy that manages to be both modern and groovy, while at the same time retaining a sensibility of the great Jazz tradition.



The Academic

The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 22 April

Featuring four fellas - including brothers Matthew and Stephen Murtagh - from the small village of Killucan in Ireland's County Westmeath, The Academic started out a decade ago by playing Kings Of Leon covers in their local pub. In the years which followed, a winning combination of buoyant guitar hooks, earworm melodies and lyrics about teenage romance and tribulations in rural Ireland saw them make a real name for themselves. Their CV now includes two well-received albums and support slots for such stellar names as The Pixies, The Rolling Stones, Noel Gallagher and The Killers.



Johnny Marr

University of Wolverhampton at The Halls,
Sun 7 April

Venerable musician, singer and songwriter Johnny Marr is still going strong 30-plus years on from his days as guitarist and co-songwriter in The Smiths. Having clocked up a decade as a solo artist, he released *Spirit Power: The Best Of Johnny Marr* last autumn, a major new collection

featuring songs from his four top-10 solo albums, a scattering of stand-alone singles and two new cuts, *Somewhere* and *The Answer*.

"For me," begins Johnny, "the mission with these records was to make songs that you could listen to on the way to school, on the way to the gym, on the way back from work; you know, in the way that you had with, say, Blondie."

The Blackheart Orchestra

The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield, Sat 13 April

As orchestras go, Blackheart is a particularly small one, comprising just two members: the multi-award-winning Chrissy Mostyn and Rick Pilkington.

Hailed as a modern-day Pink Floyd and creating highly emotional contemporary rock music - in the process playing up to 13 instruments - the talented twosome are widely admired within the music industry. Genesis founder Steve Hackett, for example, has called their music "powerful and inspiring", while Motorhead's Phil Campbell has been even more effusive, describing their sound as "f***** beautiful".

pop', the brothers visit Shrewsbury with their 'stripped-down duo show'.

Hue & Cry

Shrewsbury Abbey, Fri 12 April

Scottish siblings Pat and Greg Kane have certainly kept themselves busy on a professional level since bursting onto the music scene more than 40 years ago. Even so, it's for early-career tracks like *Labour Of Love*, *Violently* and *Looking For Linda* - as well as for their first two albums, *Seduced And Abandoned* and *Remote* - that they probably remain best known. Composing and performing music which has been described as 'intellectual, soulful

Kate Rusby

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 21 April

Often referred to as 'the Barnsley nightingale', Kate Rusby is a superstar of the British folk scene.

Her beautiful interpretations of traditional songs and finely crafted self-penned tunes have secured for her not only enormous mainstream success but also a legion of followers whose dedication to her knows no bounds.

A Mercury Prize winner, Kate visits Shropshire this month 'with songs old and new', in celebration of 30 years of touring.





MANY HAPPY RETURNS!

David Graham's 'Eric' character is this year celebrating a quarter century of entertaining audiences at Newcastle-under-Lyme's New Vic Theatre...

Producer & actor David Graham's comic creation 'Eric' has become something of a cultural phenomenon, with shows at Newcastle-under-Lyme's New Vic Theatre regularly drawing a crowd from across the region. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Eric's first appearance at the venue, so he will be celebrating with three special shows - as David tells What's On...

When David Graham first pitched up at Staffordshire's New Vic Theatre to perform Itchycoo Park - a touring musical based on 1960s chart hits - he could never have imagined he'd be doing variations on the '60s musical' theme at the venue for the next 25 years.

Itchycoo Park proved to be so popular with the good folk of Newcastle-under-Lyme that the theatre's manager asked him to return the following year.

"Like a fool, I said yes!" David recalls. "When you're doing a 20-week tour, the cost of the whole thing is amortised over that time. But I ended up rehearsing, costuming, propping and doing everything else for a show that was only gonna run for two weeks - and I actually lost money on it. I was asking myself 'what am I doing here, this is costing me money' - little knowing it was probably the best investment I've ever made in my life."

He can say that again. And again. When David returned for that second year, the cast of his show included the character of 'middle-aged loser' Eric. Played by David himself, Eric was an instant hit with New Vic audiences. He has since been the star of dozens of shows at the venue. The productions feature a 60s soundtrack and take inspiration from all manner of sources - from the Carry On films and television's Downton Abbey, to the plays of William Shakespeare.

Since Eric made his debut, David's productions have been coming back to the New Vic twice a year. This year there will actually be *three* shows, including a 25th anniversary concert. "We're going to have a big brass section. Musically it's going to be quite stupendous compared to what we normally do - and there'll be a few surprises as well!"

The other two productions this year will be revivals of the two most popular Eric shows, as voted by the audience.

"I suggested the vote so I didn't have to write anything new," laughs David, who says the results were pretty much what he expected. Second place went to Strictly Eric, a show based on the popular TV dance contest, but the winner - which polled more than double the votes of every other production combined - was Eric's Full Monty.

"Whether that's because there are a lot of

ladies who buy tickets I don't know, but it came top by a long, long way - so that's going to be the Christmas show. Ticket sales are going great, and they've already added an extra week."

Eric's continuing appeal puzzles and delights David in equal measure.

"You'd think after 25 years it'd be tailing off a bit. I'll always want to get out before we're playing to 50 people, but it's crazy - 25 years on, we're still doing effectively the same character in a 60s musical and it's selling out."

Even though he can't put his finger on any one reason for the shows' popularity, David believes the contribution of iconic venue The Place in nearby Hanley plays a part. Often claimed to be the UK's first discotheque, the club not only helped break a lot of music stars in the 60s, it also generated a real appetite for live music in the area.

"From what I can gather, it was pretty much the most successful live-music venue outside of London in the 1960s. The guy who ran it was clearly a genius with a really good eye - he'd book artists who, by the time they came to play at the club, were number one in the charts."

David thinks that many of those who came to see the early Eric shows were people who'd spent their teens and early 20s watching bands at the venue.

"They really knew and loved their 60s music and [the Eric shows] really brought their youth back."

Another factor in the shows' success is the New Vic itself, with an intimate dynamic that encourages audiences to lose their inhibitions and really enjoy themselves.

"Because the theatre is 'in the round', you can see everybody - you can see all the faces and if they're having a good time. And the audience can not only see us, they can see each other, and they sort of give each other permission to laugh and join in.

"If you're sitting in an audience, you never want to be the first one to stand up and start dancing, because you don't know what anybody else is doing. Here, though, you can see that everybody else is just as keen as you are to get involved."

The shows have also become something of a family affair, with David proudly

acknowledging that he regularly sees up to three generations of the same family seated together and singing along with every word.

"It's not just a nostalgia show anymore; there's a generation, possibly two generations, that we see every time, and they're too young to remember the music."

"We've actually got somebody in the show who went into the business because his parents brought him to see an Eric show when he was eight years old - he's now in his thirties."

Whether that cast member calls his boss *Uncle Eric* is a moot point, but the nickname is one that David's been stuck with for more than two decades.

"I was Uncle Eric to a nephew who was in the show for about the first four years. I haven't been anybody's uncle in the show since about 2004, but people still call me it in the street and ring up the box office to book for Uncle Eric. I wanted to get away from it because I felt new people would think it sounds like a kids' show."

He accepts it with good grace now, of course, and genuinely appreciates the affection he and (Uncle) Eric enjoy in the region, as well as the connection he's developed to the area and its people.

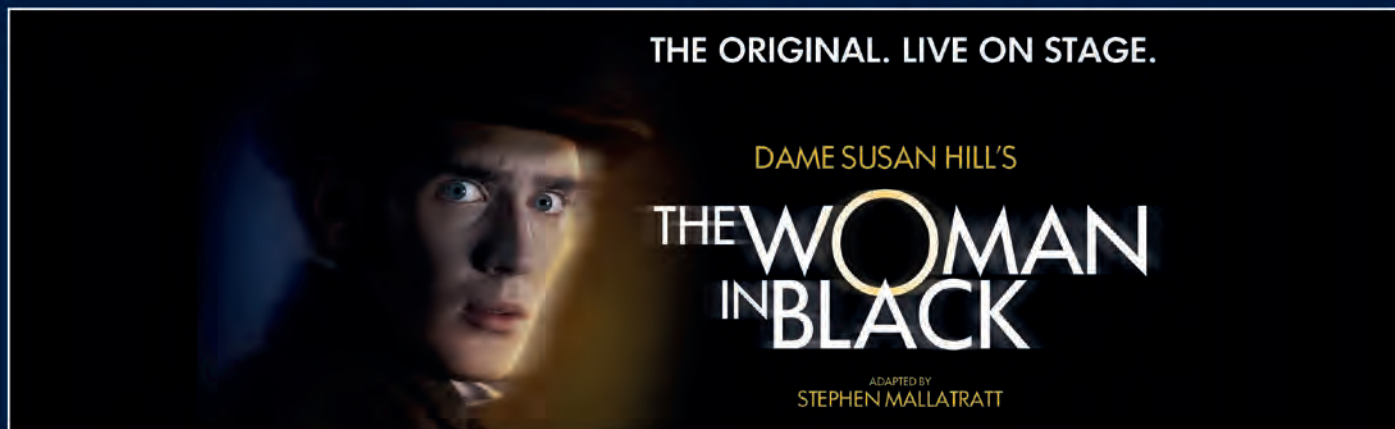
"What I am mostly is grateful. The security of having work year after year is fantastic. I've almost never wanted to try and establish the same thing in other places because it's so special in Stoke."

"When the theatre's general manager left Stoke and went to York, he asked us to go there and do a Christmas show. We had the most awful week - the character and structure of the piece just didn't take in the same way as it did at the New Vic. I decided then that this is a character for Stoke and that's it."

.....

Eric's 25th Anniversary Concert runs from Monday 13 to Saturday 18 May; Strictly Eric shows from Monday 22 July to Saturday 3 August and Eric's Full Monty runs from Monday 25 November to Tuesday 10 December.
All three productions will show at the New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

WHAT'S ON IN APRIL



TUE 23 - SAT 27 APR



FRI 5 APR



THU 11 APR



WED 17 - SAT 20 APR



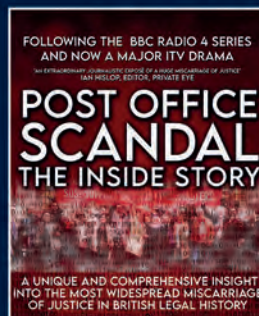
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THU 4 APR



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Peter Kay: Better Late Than Never

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 19 April; Fri 3 May; Fri 9 August; Mon 7 October; Fri 15 November; Fri 6 December; Fri 24 January 2025; Sat 7 June 2025; Fri 5 December 2025

Peter Kay has the magical ability to endear himself to just about everybody. Gregarious in nature and bringing to the stage bucketloads



of northern-style charisma, he peddles a line in comedy which is bold and biting but never cruel.

"It's good to get back to what I love doing best," he says, in talking about his return to stand-up comedy. "And if there's ever a time people need a laugh, it's now." Returning to the circuit after taking a 12-year break, he's offering tickets to his shows at the same starting price as the previous time he went out on tour, way back in 2010.

Carl Hutchinson

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 13 April; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 13 October; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 17 October; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 9 November; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 24 November

Observational comedian Carl Hutchinson makes a welcome return with a show that covers all manner of common-or-garden topics. Prior to becoming a full-time stand-up, Carl was a maths teacher. "There are certainly comparisons between the two professions," says the popular Geordie funnyman, "but the definite advantage with comedy is that if you have a bad gig, you can rest assured that you don't have to see the same audience the next day at 10am!" Carl visits the region this month with new show Today Years Old.



Max Amini

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 23 April

Iranian-American comedian Max Amini blends eccentric impressions and novel storytelling to deliver strong messages about

family ties, cultural trappings and social topics. No slouch when it comes to improvisation either, he's promising a joyride of a show 'that will have you rolling in the aisles from start to finish'.

Russell Kane

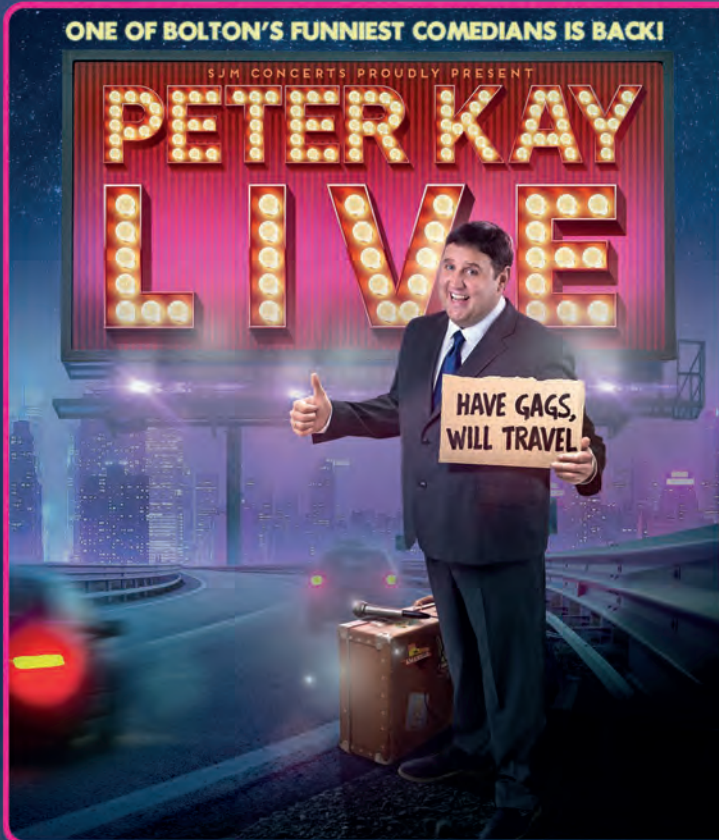
Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent, Fri 19 April; Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire, Sat 20 April; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 2 May; Swan Theatre, Worcester, Tues 14 May; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Sat 14 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Sun 15 September; Birmingham Hippodrome, Fri 15 November

Past publicity blurb for this fella said it all: "Strap in for some super-speed sunderings and inconvenient sociology in a show of self-soiling merriment that will leave you with rickets."

In short, Russell Kane is a very funny man - and it's not just his publicist who thinks so. Russell has been drawing a crowd since bursting onto the scene 20 years ago, serving up liberal doses of humour at a frenetic pace. The London-born comedian visits the Midlands this month with latest touring show HyperActive.



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Comedy previews from across the region...

Jackie Fabulous

Stourbridge Town Hall, Sat 20 April; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 23 April; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Tues 30 April

A former lawyer and one-time America's Got Talent semi-finalist, New York-born Jacqueline J Champagnie - aka Jackie Fabulous - is on a mission to entertain, encourage and empower her audiences. She stops off in the Midlands this month as part of her first-ever UK tour.



Laugh Out Proud!

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Fri 5 April

This brand-new event is billed as an LGBTQIA+ comedy night featuring 'the best in established and upcoming acts from the community on the UK comedy circuit'. The line-up features: Mark Cram, a man who describes himself as the less-than-grateful winner of the Bedford Comedian of the Year competition; Greggs brand ambassador Joe Sutherland (pictured) and American comic Kate McCabe, who Manchester Wire describes as 'just a goddamn delight'.



Julian Clary

Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 19 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 23 & Fri 24 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 26 May

Following in the footsteps of comics such as Kenny Everett and Larry Grayson, Julian Clary peddles a line in 'saucy postcard humour' that disguises an intelligent sarcasm which digs fun at both himself and his audience. The world of stand-up is undoubtedly where he's enjoyed most success, seeming to thrive on the close contact with a live audience. By contrast, his forays into television haven't always gone so well; indeed, a long-ago but infamous 'fisting' gag about a Conservative politician saw him blacklisted by TV producers for some considerable time. He's making a welcome return to the Midlands this month with brand-new offering A Fistful Of Clary. "Yes, it has a Western theme," says Julian of the show. "It was only a matter of time before I eased myself into some chaps..."



Clinton Baptiste

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Fri 5 April; Walsall Arena, Sat 6 April; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Thurs 16 May; Crewe Lyceum, Fri 7 June; Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 14 June

Actor Alex Lowe enjoyed big success with comic creation Clinton Baptiste when the character first appeared more than 20 years ago in Peter Kay's award-winning television series, Phoenix Nights.

A tacky and inept clairvoyant, medium & psychic, Baptiste was Kay's brainchild but has since been fleshed-out further by the man who plays him.

Despite the serious amount of work he's put into developing the character, Alex remains appreciative of Clinton's origin: "The fact that he's from Phoenix Nights is great! It's like having a head start, because I already feel four-nil up before I even get on stage, and I know the audience is going to laugh."

Chris McCausland

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 26 April; Walsall Arena, Fri 3 May

"A long time ago, when I'd only just started out as a comedian," recalls scouse funnyman Chris McCausland, "I walked out on stage and was telling a joke to break the ice about being blind, when somebody in the audience shouted out, pantomime style, 'We're behind you!' It was very funny!"

Chris has the eye condition retinitis pigmentosa. "It's been referred to in different ways across the years," he says, "from the rather dull and generic-sounding macular degeneration to the cool and groovy inverse cone-rod dystrophy!"

A touring comedian since the mid-noughties, Chris has also appeared on a host of television panel games and in series including EastEnders and Moving On. He visits the Midlands this month with latest show Yonks!.





DEATH IN VENICE

**Welsh National Opera and NoFit State Circus breathe new life
into Benjamin Britten's famous work...**

Welsh National Opera (WNO) has joined forces with contemporary circus company NoFit State to present a bold new production of Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice*. What's On catches up with three key creatives behind the show...

Welsh National Opera's (WNO) *Death In Venice*, which plays Birmingham Hippodrome next month, will use a range of circus skills to re-tell the classic tale of writer Gustav von Aschenbach's descent into a world of fantasy after he becomes infatuated with Tadzio, a young man he meets in Venice.

Based on Thomas Mann's novella and sung in English with English and Welsh surtitles, Benjamin Britten's opera explores creativity, sexuality, ageing, obsession and the tension between reality and imagination.

Directed by Olivia Fuchs and designed by Nicola Turner, both of whom worked on last year's WNO production of *The Makropulos Affair*, the show will explore Aschenbach's search for creativity and his flights of imagination. Aerial work and other circus skills will blend with Britten's evocative music to create an innovative version of the compelling tale.

"*Death In Venice* is a beautiful opera," says Olivia. "On the face of it, the piece charts the inner struggle and the physical, as well as metaphorical, demise of a writer who has suppressed his sexuality in his search for creativity and beauty. His imagination is parched."

And there is a real depth to the work, explains Olivia: "For me, the piece is an exploration of the inner dimensions of our lives - our imagination, dreams and creativity - and how they are manifested, expressed and physicalised.

"It is all about 'seeing'. Aschenbach is inspired by the beauty of a young man - he sees, he observes, he imagines, he begins to feel again. After many years he becomes embodied, his sexual urges and his imagination run away with him, he becomes obsessed.

"I'm curious about the creative process, about the relationship between our inner worlds of the imagination and their physical expression through the body and art - the danger of how imagination can tip into fantasy, leading to objectification and disconnection from others."

Britten had originally conceived the roles of Tadzio and his family as silent characters to be played by ballet dancers, but Olivia was keen to develop this concept and explore

their physicality through another means - circus.

"Tadzio and his family express themselves physically; to Aschenbach they are exotic and otherworldly.

"The idea of Tadzio being an aerialist emerged early in my thinking, which then developed into having a group of five circus artists who can play Tadzio and his family, as well as help move the episodic story from scene to scene in surprising and delightful ways. Having seen NoFit State Circus' (NFS) work, I thought that a collaboration would be perfect."

WNO and NFS are both based in Cardiff and have worked together in the past on community shows, but this is the first time the two have collaborated on a full-scale touring work. The production features opera singers and circus performers, with Aschenbach being sung by tenor Peter Van Hulle in Birmingham and Tadzio being played by circus performer Antony César.

NoFit State's guest artistic director, Firenza Guidi, has plenty of experience of opera - she grew up in Milan, where she was frequently taken to world-renowned theatre La Scala. And she believes the collaboration will bring a new understanding to Britten's work.

"For me, circus is the best way to embody the kind of dichotomy in the story - the contradiction between flight and ground, between ethereal and carnal. All the kind of things that a circus performer can do is carnal but at the same time can be ethereal; it's a vision - something that will evaporate in the next image.

"So the long-buried desires and the inner struggle that go on in Aschenbach is represented not just in the singing but also by the circus performers. I'm very passionate about dramaturgy through the body. My role is to give each individual performer an inner life. So what we see is the outer body, but I'm there to give each performer's character a past, a present, a set of memories and wishes and desires which, although unspoken, are going to inform what they do with their body."

And that physical creativity encourages the audience to engage with those characters in a different way.

"Fundamentally everything relies on tempo," Firenza explains. "That creates that tiny little difference between prowess and gymnastic fireworks or creating someone that I am engaging with because that person produces questions in my head as a spectator. Who is he? Where does he come from? I want to engage in that narrative."

The collaboration is proving to be both innovative and exciting, says NFS Artistic Director Tom Rack.

"Some people might not consider opera to be a natural fit for our organisation, but that's what is interesting about it - seeing how our work can fit inside that context. It's not just about bringing a bit of circus into the background of the show - Olivia wanted to find physical ways of telling the story and bring our signature style, which is visual, anarchic and raucous, to the production."

For Tom, contemporary circus has a unique way of expressing a story.

"When we are creating story, we are painting pictures. We are creating images that are almost cinematic in scale. They have resonance, have theme, have meaning and have undercurrent in terms of the relationship between the characters, the relationship between the music and the movement, and the relationship between the rigs and the character."

Olivia is aiming to explore the opera's possibilities physically and visually, finding ways of expressing and counterpointing the music and giving audiences a new experience of *Death In Venice*.

"I want the audience to leave feeling uplifted, inspired and moved, and for them to question how we can live more fully in the world, embracing both body and mind, ugliness and beauty, imagination and reality. We have such extraordinary potential as human beings to imagine and create new worlds. Let's recognise this."

.....

WNO perform Benjamin Britten's *Death In Venice* at Birmingham Hippodrome on Saturday 11 May. They also perform Mozart's *Così fan tutte* on Friday 10 May



The Buddha Of Suburbia

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Thurs 18 April - Sat 1 June

Hanif Kureishi's first foray into the world of novel writing proved to be hugely successful. Published in 1990, *The Buddha Of Suburbia* won the Whitbread Award for best first novel, was later made into a four-part television series by the BBC, and kickstarted for British Pakistani playwright Hanif a career as a novelist which has since seen him listed by *The Times* as one of the 50 greatest post-war British writers. Set in South London in the late 1970s, the book tells the story of Karim

Amir, a 17-year-old mixed-race boy who describes himself as an Englishman born and bred; almost.

Eager to escape the suburbs and convinced that the bright lights of the city can provide him with the excitement he craves, he sets out on an adventure that sees him come face-to-face with all manner of interesting characters...

Dee Ahluwalia takes the lead role in this Emma Rice-directed stage adaptation, the publicity for which describes it as an 'irresistible, heart-breaking and joyful exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and, ultimately, belonging'.

Unfortunate: The Untold Story Of Ursula The Sea Witch

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre,
Thurs 11 - Sun 14 July

Marketed as a tell-all tale of sex, sorcery and suckers, *Unfortunate* has a subtitle that makes it pretty clear what the show is all about. Ursula, for those who've never come across the character before, is a villainous sea witch and the main antagonist in the 1989 animated film, *The Little Mermaid*. A Disney Diva par excellence, she's been making waves in her very own stage musical for the past five years and visits Birmingham this month in the form of Orange Is The New Black's Shawna Hamic. The show features strong language, partial nudity, scenes of a sexual nature and plenty of trademark filthy humour - so if you're of a decidedly delicate disposition, you may want to go swim in a different sea.



Shrek The Musical

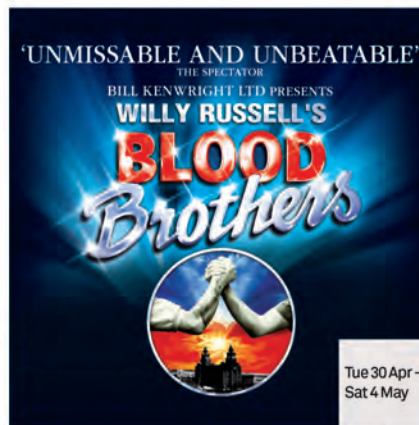
The Alexandra, Birmingham,
Tues 9 - Sun 14 April

The popularity of this family-friendly West End hardly comes as a surprise. After all, Dreamworks' animated *Shrek* movies - inspired by cartoonist William Steig's 1990 book - were absolutely huge. So it was only ever going to be a matter of time before everybody's favourite swamp-residing ogre made a big splash away from the silver screen.

Pretty much retelling the story of the first movie, the show peddles a line in humour that calls to mind both the surrealist Pythons and an evening of festive-season pantomime fare. There are plenty of new songs to enjoy too, presented alongside cult *Shrek* anthem *I'm A Believer*, originally a chart-topping hit for The Monkees way back in the mid-1960s...

One-time *Strictly Come Dancing* favourite Joanne Clifton stars as Princess Fiona.







Jesus Christ Superstar

Birmingham Hippodrome,
Mon 22 - Sat 27 April

Spreading the gospel according to Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber, the phenomenal rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar makes a welcome return to the Midlands.

And the show really does rock...

This gritty, reimagined production was originally staged by London's Regent's Park Open Air Theatre in 2016 and won the Olivier Award for best musical revival a few months later.

With hits like I Don't Know How To Love Him, Gethsemane, Hosanna, and of course the title song itself to recommend it, the show tells the story of the final few days in the life of Jesus, as his teaching and preaching, performing of miracles and ruffling of the establishment's feathers eventually see him condemned to death...

Emma Rice's Blue Beard

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 9 - Sat 20 April

A new play written and directed by Emma Rice, a one-time artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe theatre, Blue Beard tells the tale of a talented and tyrannous magician who meets his match in the form of his young bride...

Described as an exploration of curiosity and consent, violence and vengeance, the show is narrated by a chorus of nuns, has been widely praised as a music-fuelled celebration of female power, and comes complete with its innovative director's signature sleight of hand.

The Boy At The Back Of The Class

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 16 - Sat 20 April; Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 14 - Sat 18 May

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

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

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

Houdini's Greatest Escape

Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 April

The award-winning New Old Friends theatre company's previous on-stage successes include the much-loved Falcon's Malteser and the Agatha Christie, Noel Coward & PG Wodehouse-inspired Crimes On The Coast. If you caught either of those critically acclaimed productions - not to mention any of the company's other equally enjoyable theatrical offerings - then you'll no doubt be looking forward with eager anticipation to this fast-paced and farcical thriller.

In a nutshell, the show finds death-defying escapologist Harry Houdini and his wife Bess fighting to clear their names after being framed for murder by a gang of criminals who're in cahoots with the chief of police...

The production features four actors - playing multiple roles - and some sure-to-be-impressive magic and illusion by Pete Firman, who's probably best known from BBC One series The Magicians.

One Man, Two Guvnors

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme,
Fri 12 April - Sat 11 May

Brighton, 1963, and having been fired from his skiffle band, Francis Henshall becomes minder to Roscoe Crabbe, a small-time East End hoodlum who's travelled to the coast. But Roscoe is really his twin sister Rachel - posing as her own dead brother, who's been killed by her boyfriend, Stanley Stubbers. And then there's the involvement of Charlie the Duck to take into account...

You keeping up?...

Based on The Servant Of Two Masters - a 1743 Commedia dell'arte-style comedy written by Italian playwright Carlo Goldoni - Richard Bean's One Man, Two Guvnors has scored a big hit wherever it's played since debuting in the West End 13 years ago.

With that in mind, the New Vic is no doubt promising with extremely good reason that this Conrad Nelson-directed production will have you grinning from ear to ear. Well worth a look.

The Woman In Black

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April;
Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from the same-named Susan Hill novel, The Woman In Black is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989.

It has since become one of the West End's most

successful plays, and was memorably made into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe in 2012.

Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story, and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him, he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...





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Theatre previews from around the region



Life Of Pi

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 7 - Sat 11 May

Lolita Chakrabarti's innovative stage adaptation of Yann Martel's award-winning novel tells the story of teenager Piscine Molitor 'Pi' Patel, whose parents run a zoo in India but decide to sell up and emigrate to Canada. After a storm wrecks the ship on which they're travelling, Pi is cast adrift on a lifeboat, which he shares with some of the creatures from the zoo - most notably a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker...

A menagerie of exotic creatures is at the heart of the show, all brought to life through the magic of puppetry.

"We're always improvising on stage, so it feels really live," reveals puppeteer Romina Hytten, who helps work the tiger. "That's part of making the animals feel as alive and as realistic as possible. We don't want it to be too choreographed or too set in stone. So there's room to play every night, and you get to feel that exciting buzz of not being quite sure what the tiger is going to do next."

The Mad Ones

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 10 - Sat 20 April

This 'touching and heartfelt' musical - formerly known as The Unauthorised Autobiography Of Samantha Brown - debuted off-Broadway seven years ago and focuses in on the character of 18-year-old Sam as she reaches a crossroads in her young life.

"The basis of the story," explains Old Joint Stock Theatre manager James Edge, "is that Sam is making a decision about whether she wants to stay with her overbearing mother, or instead take a risk for the first time in her life, see what the future holds and drive away. It really is a beautiful work of theatre."

The Importance Of Being... Earnest?

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 April

Anybody turning up at the Gatehouse expecting to see a conventional version of Oscar Wilde's The Importance Of Being Earnest is in for a bit of a surprise. Sure, the show is based on Wilde's oft-performed Victorian comedy, but the company behind it, the interestingly named Say It Again, Sorry?, have very much put their own interactive spin on events.

When a traditional production of Earnest gets under way, everything seems to be going according to plan... until, that is, the lead

actor fails to arrive on cue. His non-appearance sees the situation quickly descend into chaos, with the company desperately needing the audience's assistance as they battle to get the performance back on track...

Pied Piper

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 17 - Sat 20 April

If you're dubious about the merits of hip-hop and beatbox but are open to the possibility of finding out more, this unique, clever and hugely energetic show is definitely one to check out. A 21st-century gig-theatre classic inspired by a well-known medieval fairytale, the show features beatboxers, musicians and special guest performers from the local community. The production is presented by BAC Beatbox Academy, who previously scored a hit with Frankenstein: How To Make A Monster.



Rewind

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Tues 30 April

Taking an intimate backward journey into the true and tragic story of a young woman in Latin America who dared to resist authoritarianism and paid the ultimate price,

Rewind is presented by Ephemeral Ensemble, a migrant-led company which specialises in creating theatre from fact-based stories and shining a light on current but hidden social issues.

The inspiration for this latest work of theatre comes from forensic anthropology, the first science in history to investigate human-rights violation.

Cluedo 2

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 23 - Sat 27 April; Malvern Theatres, Tues 30 April - Sat 4 May; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 23 - Sat 27 July

Inspired by the success of the original Cluedo play, this brand-new comedy whodunnit is based on the famous detective boardgame of the same name.

Heartbeat and Casualty star Jason Durr and Strictly champion Ellie Leach top-bill in a Swinging 60s-set show that features a new house, new suspects, and plenty of dead bodies...



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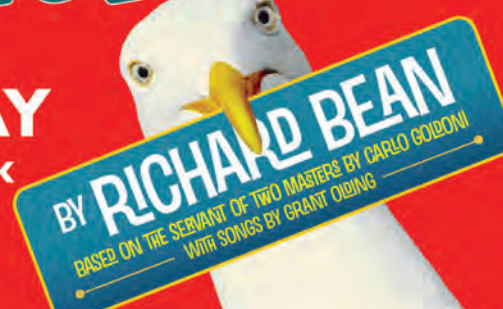
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Theatre for younger audiences



Charlie Cook's Favourite Book

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry,
Fri 5 - Sun 7 April

Given the success of so many other stage adaptations of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler's hugely popular stories, it's a real no-brainer to mount a live version of Charlie Cook's Favourite Book.

Presented via the ever-popular combination of clever puppetry and enchanting songs, the show follows Charlie's attempts to get his sister to read. Charlie himself loves reading. For him, there's nothing better than settling down to enjoy a favourite book about a pirate... who also has a favourite book... about Goldilocks... who also has a favourite book... about a knight... who also has a favourite book... You get the idea?... Created for children aged between three and eight, the show has a running time of one hour.

Little Big Dance: Club Origami

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham,
Sat 27 April

This gentle and interactive show from Japanese choreographer & dance therapist Takeshi Matsumoto

(presented at MAC twice on the 27th) invites families to immerse themselves in a world of paper and play. Produced as part of the Little Big Dance project - a pioneering national initiative aimed at creating new dance work for the under-fives - Club Origami presents 40 minutes of thoroughly absorbing paper-based entertainment (plus 10 minutes stay & play). In the process, the show encourages family audiences to create, imagine and explore whole new ways of thinking, playing and moving.



The Sooty Show

Worcester Swan Theatre, Fri 5 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 7 April

One of the 20th century's best-loved children's characters makes a welcome return. A simple glove puppet created by Harry Corbett, Sooty continues to go down a storm with generation after generation of youngsters, impressively bucking the trend for far more sophisticated, high-tech entertainment.

Richard Cadell's the fella now operating

Sooty and his longtime companions, Sweep and Soo, and is here joined by 'special guest stars' Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and 'circus superstar' Michael Jordan. Expect magic, music, mayhem and audience participation.

Ministry Of Science Live

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Wed 17 April;
Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sun 21 July;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 22 September

An anarchic approach to science communication is the name of the game when the Ministry Of Science comes to town. As well as taking a look at the inventors and engineers who've shaped and inspired the modern world, the show's presenters will be conducting clever demonstrations aplenty - so expect the occasional loud bang!

There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly

Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Mon 1 April;
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 27 April;
Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 12 October; Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton, Fri 18 & Sat 19 October

The People's Theatre Company - highly rated creators of the fabulous Don't Dribble On The Dragon - here bring one of the world's best-loved nursery rhymes to life.

Their show comes complete with colourful animal characters and numerous singalong songs, including If You're Happy And You Know It and Incy Wincy Spider...

There's A Monster In Your Show!

Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 6 & Sun 7 April;
Worcester Swan Theatre, Tues 30 April & Wed 1 May; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Fri 3 & Sat 4 May

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

The brand-new musical sees Little Monster being joined by friends Dragon, Alien and Unicorn for 50 minutes of comedy, chaos and high-energy fun.

Dear Zoo

Birmingham Hippodrome, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 April; Lichfield Garrick, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April; Worcester Swan Theatre, Sat 28 - Sun 29 September

First published in 1982, Dear Zoo - a lift-the-flap book by Rod Campbell - has delighted generations of children and accumulated millions of sales worldwide.

This hugely popular stage version of the story features music, child-friendly puppets and lots of audience participation.





THE INSIDE SCOOP

Drop The Dead Donkey stage show stops off in the Midlands



Televised on Channel Four between 1990 and 98, Drop The Dead Donkey was a satirical and topical sitcom set in the offices of GlobeLink News, a fictional TV news broadcaster. Thirty years later, the team has been brought back together in a brand-new play, which visits Birmingham theatre The Alexandra this month. What's On spoke to Jeff Rawle, who plays George Dent, the station's ill-fated editor, to find out more...

You've been on the road since January. What's the audience response been like?

It's been fantastic. We started out at Richmond and we sold every seat in the house, every show, and that's continued to be the case... We've had about six or seven weeks on the road now, and the response has been amazing. I have to say I didn't expect it to be quite so brilliant - there seems to have been an awful lot of love for the show, and people have booked tickets in advance not knowing quite what they were going to come and see. We get the impression that everyone's really liking it, and we're just thrilled to be able to get back together again.

The play, like the TV programme, is written by Andy Hamilton and Guy Jenkin. How did it feel, seeing the new script?

It was amazing. I think everyone had a certain amount of trepidation, thinking 'How can this possibly work?' Everyone was thrilled when it really did, and it was also extremely funny. To be rejoined with that wit... we'd kind of got used to it. I looked at a couple of episodes the other night. I haven't seen them since 1990, when we first started the show - I was 40 years old, and I'm now 73. I've always been very fond of the show, of course, but I thought everyone's performances were brilliant... Now we're back together again, it's great to climb back on board. When we had the first read-through, it was really quite moving because we hadn't seen each other for a great deal of time. Once we got that read-through done, they went away and worked on it a bit more, and a bit more... So over a period of a year - and I think it shows - they spent a lot of time and care on the script, and we reap the rewards of that every night.

Do you think modern politics or society has changed the way it's been written?

It does seem to me, maybe because I'm older, that the world's got more bonkers. It's the same format: we have a plotline, but within that there are moments where we know there'll be new topical material, and these are updated continually. The problem is that you have to learn it really quickly. These

often fall to Neil Pearson - I don't know why, but he seems to get the topicals. We have a meeting in a toilet at one point during the show, and I think 'Oh god, what's he going to say next?...'. That's really quite exciting - you never know what's going to be in it. The audience seem to love that - they realise that since that news story has only just broken, they're getting the benefit of a gag that's only just been made up half an hour ago, about something that happened half an hour ago. I think that's a unique selling point. The people who knew the TV show will not go away disappointed. They get dealt quite a raft of new topical humour, which could only have been written on that day. You get that injection of fun, within the main plotline.

When Drop The Dead Donkey ended, GlobeLink was disbanded. Has it been resurrected, or is the team working somewhere completely new?

We're working somewhere completely new. It's the launch of a new news station, so we're all rather suspicious about why we've been recruited - especially some of us who are in our older age... There's a question-mark hanging, about why they're employing us and why they're paying us so much money. That's where the story starts.

It's 30 years since the TV programme started. What's changed about news broadcasting during that time?

GlobeLink News was a pretty cockamamie, crazy place to work. Sir Royston Merchant owned the station... In 1990, the idea that someone owns a news station and they're chasing ratings seemed barmy. Now, when you look at the new stations that are cropping up, you can see that that's absolutely what they're doing. You'd have thought it impossible, back in 1990, that anyone would be so brazen as to go down that route. The news should be the news, and it should be about fact finding, journalism, truth and balanced reporting. That has, to a certain extent, gone out the window.

Are you enjoying playing George again?

Yeah, it's been great. I've always loved playing that character. He was so sad, and he

always had such terrible luck. It's so sweet. They've written that his life's turned around and he's got everything to play for - or so he thinks! That's where the play starts. It isn't long before it unravels, like one of his cardigans...

He's a bit of a hypochondriac. How's his health nowadays?

George's health is actually good; he's holding up well - but he does give a good rundown of problems he's had in the past. We get quite a lot of graphic medical information...

You grew up in Birmingham. What's it like revisiting the city?

I was born in Birmingham, in Handsworth Wood. I went to Cherry Orchard Primary School there, and then I went onto King Edward's Aston grammar school. I left Birmingham when I was about 14, to Sheffield. My dad worked for GEC, and he moved up north. My mum used to go to the Alexandra Theatre every week. I've done plays at the Alex and the Birmingham Rep - I've always liked going back. It's always very tempting to go and see the old house and wander around - but of course it's completely different from when I was a kid. I hardly recognise any of it, but it's always nice to return.

Do you add in any regional references when travelling around the country with Drop The Dead Donkey?

Yes - we don't put too many in because it begins to sound a bit like a pantomime if you're not careful, but we do. Especially if there's something that's happened up the road - that's always very tempting to put in. I think everyone will get the feeling that it's a freshly made show, for one night only. No two shows are alike - that's probably true for any show, but with this especially you do feel like you're getting something unique.

.....

Drop The Dead Donkey: The Reawakening shows at The Alexandra, Birmingham, from Tuesday 16 to Saturday 20 April

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Light entertainment from around the region



Cirque du Soleil: OVO

Utilita Arena Birmingham,
Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

Cirque du Soleil (or Circus of the Sun) is without question the ensemble which has done the most to restore people's view of the circus as a valid and desirable form of entertainment.

Founded in Quebec, Canada, 40 years ago, the company has presented a host of groundbreaking theatrical extravaganzas, seamlessly blending circus styles from around the world and proving to be a massive hit wherever it's set up its big-top tent. The troupe is here making its first visit to the UK in six years, stopping off in the Midlands this month with critically acclaimed show OVO. The family-friendly production is described by Cirque as 'a non-stop riot of energy and movement' that makes 'a colourful intrusion into a new day in the life of insects'.

Closet Confessions Live

Birmingham Town Hall, Fri 26 April

Bestselling author Candice Brathwaite and TikTok comedy star Coco Sarel bring their hit girl-talk podcast to Birmingham, presenting a show that's promising everything from 'laugh-out-loud confessions and hilarious accounts of dating disasters' to 'tales of bad behaviour and celebrity culture'.

The Noise Next Door

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 13 April

Praised for presenting their audiences with 'a superior kind of chaos', The Noise Next Door is a quartet of improvising comedians who've been garnering critical praise for a good few years now.

Big in Edinburgh at festival time, they pride themselves on their originality and quick-wittedness.

Previous on-stage endeavours have included a mini-musical embracing the uncomfortable bedfellows of pantomime, folk music and death-metal, and a surreal adventure in which the Magic Roundabout's Zebedee leads the forces of good against Darth Vader, who's holed up in Worcester Cathedral. They visit Shrewsbury this month with currently touring show Freewheeling.

The Night Sky Show

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 7 April

To Birmingham city centre - and beyond! Stargazing Midlandsers visiting the Alex to see this currently touring show will be taken on a

journey around the constellations, stars and planets by astronomer & author Adrian West - a man better known on social media as VirtualAstro.

Adrian is promising a gloriously visual and thought-provoking experience that's suitable for everyone - meaning there's no 'heavy-going science' or 'boring astronomy talk' to negotiate.

Indeed, according to the show's website, the universe has never been so much fun...

Rachel Stockdale: Fat Chance

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham,
Wed 24 April

As a plus-sized northern female, Rachel Stockdale was told there was fat chance she'd ever fulfill her dream of making a living from acting. "You're northern, you're fat and you're a woman," one casting director kindly pointed out. "You can only be two out of three to make it in this industry."

Fortunately for her rapidly expanding fanbase, Rachel ignored the negative voices. Instead, she followed her dream, creating a show which, having made a significant splash in Edinburgh last summer, is very likely to do exactly the same when she brings it to Birmingham late this month.

As well as exploring the twentysomething Teesider's true-life experience of weight gain, from size eight to size 18, the one-woman



production also sees Rachel talking about her ongoing efforts to make it big in the rough, tough world of showbiz.

Staying Relevant: Sam Thompson & Pete Wicks

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sun 14 April

Sam Thompson and Pete Wicks head for Birmingham just a handful of months after Sam won the most recent series of I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here!.

The Made In Chelsea star and TOWIE favourite Pete have been big pals since meeting on Celebs Go Dating a few years back. They're here bringing the live version of their hugely popular podcast to the West Midlands as part of a UK tour.

Box Of Frogs

1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Wed 10 April; The Core Theatre, Solihull, Fri 26 April; 1000 Trades, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, Wed 8 May; Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield, Fri 24 May

A night of 'high-octane improvised comedy nonsense' - based entirely on the audience's suggestions - is the entertainment on offer when Birmingham-based Box Of Frogs head out on tour.

The talented ensemble - who've been steadily building an enviable reputation as quick-witted purveyors of impromptu mirth - are promising improv-loving patrons a pair of hours positively awash with spontaneous songs and spur-of-the-moment sketches and scenes.

LABOUR OF LOVE

**Former doctor and familiar television face Tony Gardner
makes his Shakespeare debut at the home of the bard this month**



The Royal Shakespeare Company's new production of *Love's Labour's Lost* features a number of Stratford debutants. Among them is *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon* and *My Parents Are Aliens* actor Tony Gardner, whose first appearance at the home of Shakespeare is just what the doctor ordered - as he explains to What's On...

It's fair to say that Tony Gardner has taken an unorthodox route to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage, where he makes his debut this month at the age of 60.

He'll be familiar to TV viewers for roles in the likes of *Last Tango In Halifax*, *Lead Balloon*, *The Thick Of It*, *Gentleman Jack*, *My Parents Are Aliens* and many more. He's also appeared in a host of plays and films, but got his first taste of the business as one half of a comedy duo that performed five sell-out seasons at the Edinburgh Fringe, earning two Perrier Award nominations in the process.

Both he and his one-time comedy partner Phil Hammond have gone on to bigger things since then, but not in their intended fields - both are qualified doctors, and they met during their early years of training at Bristol's Frenchay Hospital. Each qualified in 1987, and they became GPs in 1991, but neither could find a cure for the showbusiness bug they caught while performing Christmas review shows at their respective hospitals. So much so that when Phil called to say he'd been doing some stand-up routines about medicine and healthcare, Tony instantly suggested they team up and head for Scotland.

"We formed a double act and went up to Edinburgh, which you could do then - it was the place to try stuff out. We were called *Struck Off And Die*, and we worked there from 1990 to 1995. As a result we got an agent and a Radio Four series, and that's how I started falling into acting."

The fall was obviously a significant one career-wise, but Tony had a safety net to hand.

"I was still working as a locum GP between acting jobs. It would have been mad to leave general practice and 100 per cent employment to enter the acting profession."

Eventually he did just that, partly through the support of his wife, a consultant anaesthetist, and partly because of the success of *My Parents Are Aliens*, which gave him regular acting work for eight years.

"It was never, ever my intention - even when we started going to Edinburgh, which was just a bit of a jolly - but it snowballed. Eventually I felt like I wasn't doing enough medicine, and there was more and more acting coming in, so I stopped in 2000 and I've never been back.

"So that's my story, really. I loved being a doctor - it's all I ever wanted to do - but I found something else. All my friends are doctors, my wife's a doctor, my son's a

medical student, so it's very much who I am, and I wouldn't have been an actor if I wasn't a doctor.

"It's a strange journey and one I'm often asked about. I can't recommend it or anything, it's just my journey and I don't know any other way. But I'm very, very happy doing what I'm doing."

His working-class parents clearly made sacrifices to put him through medical school - so had they complained when he packed it in to join the (acting) circus?

"Yeah is the answer! It must have been quite difficult for them because it was an amazing thing for me to go to medical school and become a doctor, the first doctor in the family. My father was a lorry driver from Bristol, so it was always a case of (adopts West Country accent) 'You can always go back to general practice if it doesn't work out.'"

It was his recurring role in BBC comedy-drama *Last Tango In Halifax* and, crucially, being watched by their mates, that finally ended his parents' doubts, says Tony.

"All their friends started saying they'd seen me in it, so they realised this was what I do now."

Mercifully no more tuition fees were required either - for all the years of training it took to become a doctor, Tony's had precisely none to be an actor, having to learn everything 'on the job'.

"I've been very lucky because I've been in quite a few shows that went on for more than one series," he says, citing the five seasons of *Last Tango*, four of *Lead Balloon*, and eight of *My Parents Are Aliens* - which ran for an amazing 106 episodes.

"That meant a lot of screen time. I'm not trained, I didn't go to drama school, so that was my education into television and screen acting."

Stage performance came a little later. After initially failing to get, let alone get through, any auditions, he crossed paths with one of theatre's greatest directors, who also happens to be the founder of the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC).

"I couldn't get seen by anyone for theatre until Peter Hall saw me and cast me. So my first three plays were with [him] over two years, and that was my very steep learning-curve into acting on stage."

That was nearly 20 years ago, and Tony's clearly delighted to have finally made it to his mentor's spiritual home. He'll play

Holofernes in director Emily Burns' contemporary new production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, which stars fellow RSC debutants Luke Thompson (aka Benedict Bridgerton from the popular Netflix drama), Melanie-Joyce Bermudez, Ioanna Kimbook and Rilwan Abiola Owokoniran.

The play is the first to be programmed by the RSC's new co-artistic directors, Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey - so the stakes are high, admits Tony.

"We all feel very privileged but also nervous as a result because there's gonna be a huge magnifying glass on the production," he says. But his overriding emotion is excitement, and I've come across few actors so genuinely enthusiastic about their latest role.

"When I was offered the part, I was overwhelmed, and I still am. I've just turned 60, so to be offered my first Shakespeare is incredible.

"I just adore acting, and this is obviously a huge big deal for me. I've never done any Shakespeare before, so again I'm on this steep learning curve - and doing it at the RSC!"

It turns out there's quite a bit of learning too, with voice coaches, movement coaches and even lectures about various aspects of the play, both historical *and* contemporary - the production is set at the swanky resort of a tech billionaire on an unnamed Pacific Island.

"I think the vision Emily has will really bring the play out. You'll be able to see it with new eyes, and also see how brilliant the writing is, as there are so many themes within this play.

"We've had lectures on the oceanic islands, migration, language, flora, fauna - it's all going to come into the play. We've all soaked it up and know what problems those islands are having. For example, global warming and the climate-change crisis is gonna hit the Pacific Islands before it hits anyone else.

"It's fascinating to get all this information when you just thought you'd turn up to play a bit of Shakespeare."

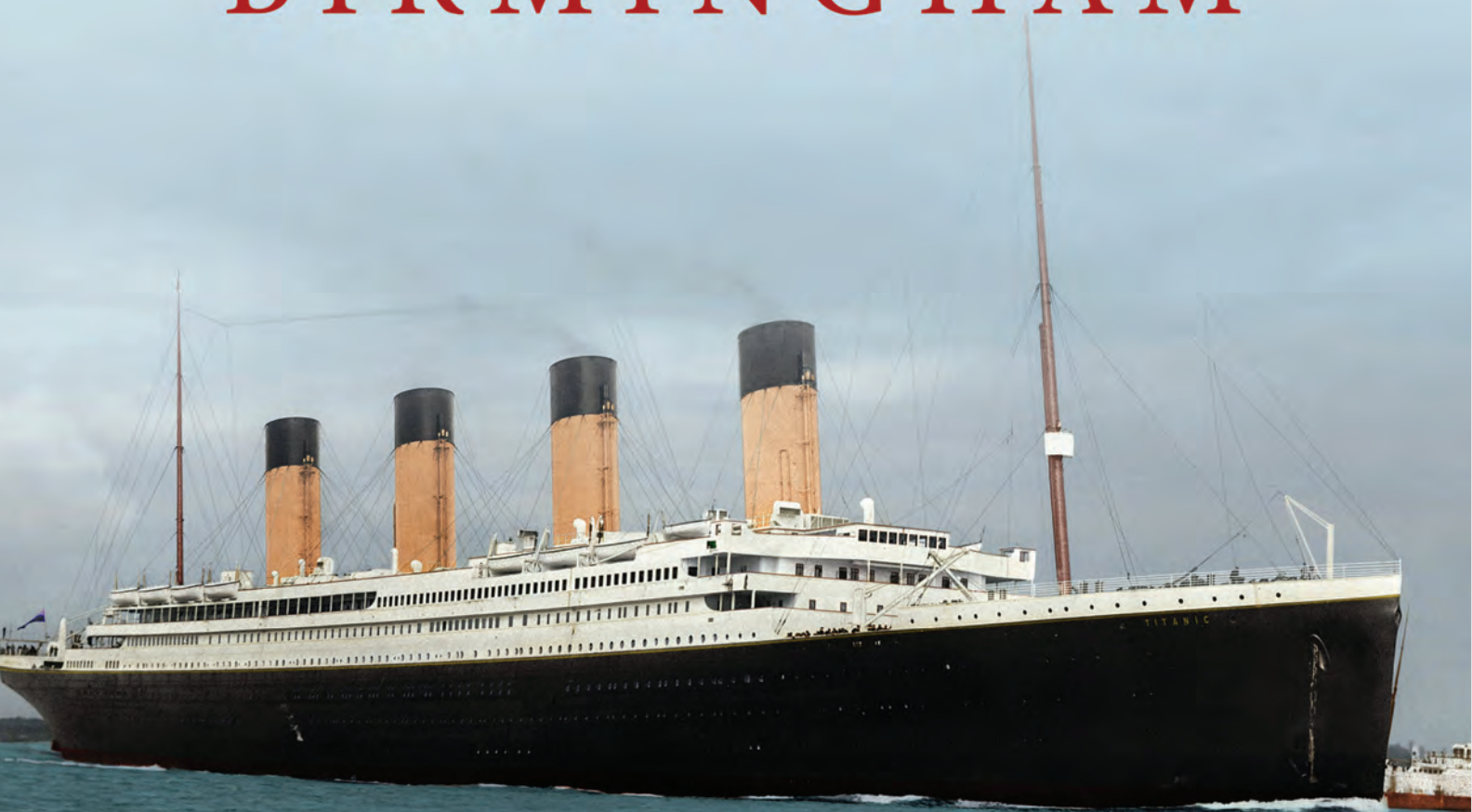
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Love's Labour's Lost shows at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, from Thursday 11 April to Saturday 18 May

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Dance previews from across the region



Mehek

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 9 April

Two internationally renowned kathak choreographers & dancers here come together to present a brand-new work. Birmingham-born Aakash Odedra and New Delhi-based Aditi Mangaldas have joined forces to create and perform Mehek, a work which explores the power of love, memory, desire, attraction and resilience. The show focuses on the often taboo subject of love between an older woman and a younger man.

"I guess one thing we would like with this piece is to gently remind ourselves that we needn't be judgmental," explains the project's dramaturg, Karthika Nair. "And that we can just let ourselves be happy that others are happy; that who you love is a personal thing. And also that we should be so lucky, whatever our age, to find someone to love us or to find someone to love. Life is short and horribly unpredictable. Love, for all the messiness that it brings, is also salvation."

Sonia Sabri Company: Roshni

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sat 6 April

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



U.Dance West Midlands

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, Sat 20 April

Providing a regional youth dance platform, the organisers of U.Dance West Midlands are promising an evening 'full of vibrant and exciting dance genres and themes, performed by some of the best young talents from across the West Midlands'... The event forms part of a national programme that annually provides high-quality dance opportunities for young people.

English Youth Ballet: Sleeping Beauty

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 12 - Sat 13 April

Founded in 1998, the award-winning English Youth Ballet offers young people who're interested in dance the opportunity to perform classical ballet alongside professional dancers and tutors... This latest production comes complete with 'sparkling new costumes and splendid scenery'.

Giovanni Pernice: Let Me Entertain You

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 4 April; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 5 April

Persistent rumours of a rift between Giovanni Pernice and his 2023 Strictly dance partner, Amanda Abbington - who quit the show mid-

series, citing 'personal reasons' - saw the Bafta-winning Italian take up more than his fair share of column inches over the following few months.

Now, though, Giovanni is out on the road, doing what he does best in a brand-new dance extravaganza. He's joined for the occasion by a talented cast of professional dancers and West End performers.

Graziano Di Prima - Believe: My Life On Stage

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 11 April

Strictly's Graziano Di Prima stops off in the region to present his very first 'solo' show. Promising 'an electrifying evening of Latin and ballroom dancing', the production pays tribute to Graziano's Italian ancestors. It also tells his own Billy Elliot-style story - the inspiring tale of a young boy from Sicily who grew up working in the vineyards with his father and dreaming about one day becoming a professional dancer. Graziano is joined in the show by his wife, Giada Lini.



CLOWNING AROUND

**Inimitable circus clown Tweedy
brings slapstick to Shakespeare...**



Stopping off at two Midlands theatres this month, a brand-new version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sees the comic character of Bottom the Weaver being played by Tweedy the Clown, a vaudeville-style entertainer hailing from Gloucestershire. What's On caught up with him to find out more...

What sets this production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* apart?

We're aiming very much for a family audience, to try and encourage younger people to come. I've got a large 'young' fanbase, and we've put a lot of slapstick in the play. Shakespeare was famous for his clowns, so we thought, let's have a real, actual clown in the show. There's going to be a lot of physical comedy in there. It's going to be a good, fun version, aimed at the whole family.

What makes Tweedy the best man to play Bottom?

Oh! I dunno. I'm gonna play it my way. A lot of the time when I've seen Bottom, he's arrogant and not a likeable character, so I'm kind of playing it more as myself - or my character - and he's just really excited to be there. I'd like to think he's a more likeable character... I don't know if that makes me the perfect person for Bottom, but that's my take on it, and that's how I'm going to play it.

What have you had to consider when bringing clowning into the show?

With *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I kind of find that the clowns - the 'mechanicals', as Bottom and his compatriots are dubbed in the play - are quite separate from the rest of the story. It almost feels natural to me that you've got the serious bits, and then the clowns come in and do funny bits. It's like in the circus: you watch a daring act, where you might be on the edge of your seat and get a bit nervous, and then the clowns come in as light relief.

You were also in *Waiting For Godot* with the Cheltenham Everyman. Have you set your sights on any other classic works?

That was the last play I did. Not really. I'd be interested if the right play came up, but nothing's jumping out at me. I'd always wanted to do *Waiting For Godot*, and then they approached me about this. I'd always fancied doing a bit of Shakespeare, because of that Shakespeare clown tradition.

Are you going to improvise on stage and be spontaneous?

I'll stick to the words but physically improvise all over the place - which I won't

be able not to do. If something happens, I just naturally react to it. Obviously that keeps it fresh and interesting for the audience as well.

This production is hot on the heels of the RSC's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Stratford-upon-Avon, with Mathew Baynton as Bottom. Have you seen it?

No, I was going to, and then a couple of people - including Mat Baynton - kind of said 'I don't think you should because it might influence you too much' and affect my characterisation. I'd think 'Oh, that's really good, that bit, I'll do it a bit like that...' But he did tell me it's gonna be filmed - I do really want to see it.

Speaking of Stratford, Tweedy's Massive Circus is premiering there, from Friday 24 May. What can Tweedy fans expect?

Yes, it's a brand-new show - I'm devising it now. It's in a tiny little Big Top. Basically, I'm trying to put on a massive spectacle circus and, as you can imagine, it all goes a bit wrong. It's a very small cast. Essentially it's a clown show. There's a narrative in there, there's circus in there, but it doesn't turn out to be a big spectacular circus. It's opening at Stratford and will also be in Cheltenham, from 4 July.

They say never work with children or animals, which is a bit of an occupational hazard in the circus... Do you have any experiences which corroborate that?

I had a Shetland pony as a sidekick one time, who just didn't like me. First of all he would rear up and come at me, and then, on the last day in the ring, he got hold of my little finger and wouldn't let go. I'm there going 'He's got my finger!' which the audience were finding hilarious. I tried to open his mouth with my other hand and opened it a bit, but then he clamped down on those fingers as well. That wasn't great, but my fingers are alright now.

You wouldn't think a Shetland Pony had it in him!

No! 'Little Man' Syndrome...

How do you make sure you're always at the top of your game?

Practising things, trying to come up with new ideas... But the main thing is just enjoying it

and letting the audience in. If I stopped enjoying it, then I wouldn't be a good clown anymore.

And how did you get started in clowning?

I was going to go to art school to do animation, and then had a realisation: actually, this is very boring! You're basically sat in an office, drawing. Then I thought 'No, I want to be the cartoon; that's what this is about.' There was no internet then, because I'm quite old... Nowadays it's so easy! You just Google 'How do I become a clown?' and there's all these options. I did a season at Butlins as a red coat, saving up to go to circus school, but it went bust. So I sent a questionnaire out to lots of circuses, just as personal research. I got two back, out of about 50. One was from a clown in Cirque du Soleil - which was some Canadian show that I hadn't heard of! The other one was from Zippos circus, and he said the best way was to learn from other clowns, by being on the road. He offered me a job as a publicity clown, handing out leaflets and doing school and promotional shows - but then the clown got stuck in traffic in my first week. I jumped in and got offered a job off the back of that. A lot of people ask 'Where did you train?' because there are clown schools. Everyone goes on about Gaulier, but I've never been to those places. It's the same with stand-ups - they don't go somewhere to train; they go and try. That's basically what my training was: going in front of an audience. I just learned on the road.

Have you noticed the demand for your act change over the years?

It took a while to get to this stage. Initially, I'd always have nothing on in January, February or March, and I'd become a delivery driver or something like that. It's been a long, hard slog, but I've loved every minute of it.

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A Midsummer Night's Dream plays Malvern Theatres from Tuesday 2 to Saturday 6 April and Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, from Wednesday 24 to Saturday 27 April

Film highlights in April...



Back To Black CERT tbc (122 mins)

Starring **Marisa Abela, Eddie Marsan, Jack O'Connell, Juliet Cowan, Lesley Manville, Ansu Kabia**
Directed by **Sam Taylor-Johnson**

In dying from alcohol poisoning 13 years ago, Amy Winehouse became a member of the so-called 27 Club - the group of on-the-rise musicians and pop & rock stars who made it past 26 but never lived to celebrate their 28th birthday (think Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain).

In an all-too-short career, Winehouse made a huge impression on the music scene, her brilliance, for the most part, outshining the demons which plagued her throughout her life. *Back To Black* - the film takes the title of her second and final album - tells her extraordinary story, painting a vivid picture of the Camden streets she called home and the challenges she encountered in the face of global stardom.

The biopic comes complete with a strong cast of talented actors but hasn't been universally welcomed by Amy's fans, many of whom fear it will be awash with ghoulish depictions of the late singer's alcoholism and drug addiction.

Released Fri 12 April

Monkey Man CERT 18 (113 mins)

Starring **Dev Patel, Sharlito Copley, Sobhita Dhulipala, Sikandar Kher, Pitobash, Brahim Chab** Directed by **Dev Patel**

Night after night, in an underground fight club in a slum in a fictitious Indian city, a young man known as Kid pulls on a gorilla mask and ekes out a meagre living by being beaten to a bloody pulp by other fighters. A victim of childhood trauma and full of suppressed rage, he finally finds a way to exact revenge on those who have done him wrong...

Slumdog Millionaire and Best Exotic Marigold Hotel actor Dev Patel not only takes the title role here but directs and produces a film he's also written.

The critical response to *Monkey Man* has been mainly positive, but even the more-admiring reviews come with a caveat. Namely, that this is a graphically violent and unrelentingly grim 'revenge' movie, most likely not for the fainthearted, and certainly not for those fans of Patel who enjoy seeing him in lighthearted Marigold Hotel mode.

Released Fri 5 April



The First Omen CERT 15 (120 mins)

Starring **Bill Nighy, Charles Dance, Ralph Ineson, Nell Tiger Free, Sonia Braga, Anton Alexander** Directed by **Arkasha Stevenson**

When a young woman is sent to Rome to begin a life of service to the church, she not only encounters a darkness which causes her to question her own faith but also uncovers a terrifying conspiracy to bring about the birth of 'evil incarnate'...

Nearly half a century on from the first film - in which Satan's spawn Damien caused mayhem after being adopted by an American diplomat and his wife - famous horror franchise *The Omen* makes a return with this prequel movie explaining the origin of the antichrist.

Despite the original movie's box-office success, a 2006 remake and 2016 television series have failed to greatly rekindle interest in the *Omen* franchise. With that in mind, 20th Century Studios executives will no doubt be keeping everything firmly crossed that this latest offering achieves a so-far-elusive spark with 21st-century horror-loving cinemagoers.

Released Fri 5 April



The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare

CERT tbc (120mins)

Starring Henry Cavill, Freddie Fox, Henry Golding, Alex Pettyfer, Alan Ritchson, Hero Fiennes Tiffin
Directed by Guy Ritchie

Guy Ritchie has turned to some recently declassified files from the British War Department to find the inspiration for his latest film. An action-comedy, *The Ministry Of Ungentlemanly Warfare* tells the story of the first-ever special forces organisation - a unit formed during World War Two by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and a small group of military officials, including James Bond author Ian Fleming.

Composed of a motley crew of rogues and mavericks - and using entirely unconventional and utterly 'ungentlemanly' fighting techniques - the top-secret combat unit heads out on a daring mission against the Nazis. Their audacious approach to combatting the forces of evil not only changed the course of the war but also laid the foundation for the British SAS and modern Black Ops warfare.

Released Fri 19 April



Civil War

CERT tbc (109 mins)

Starring Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura, Callee Spaeny, Stephen McKinley Henderson, Sonoya Mizuno, Jefferson White
Directed by Alex Garland

Set in a fractured, near-future America which is in deep and violent conflict with itself, *Civil War* follows a team of journalists as they head for Washington DC in the hope of interviewing the president before he surrenders to separatist 'western forces' led by Texas and California...

English filmmaker Alex Garland's latest offering has met with waves of critical acclaim. It's also caused its fair share of consternation, however; its depiction of a profoundly polarised America, which has become embroiled in an all-out civil war, has seemed just a little too prescient for some commentators and cinemagoers.

Released Fri 12 April



Challengers

CERT tbc

Starring Mike Faist, Josh O'Connor, Zendaya, Darnell Appling, Bryan Doo, Shane Harris
Directed by Luca Guadagnino

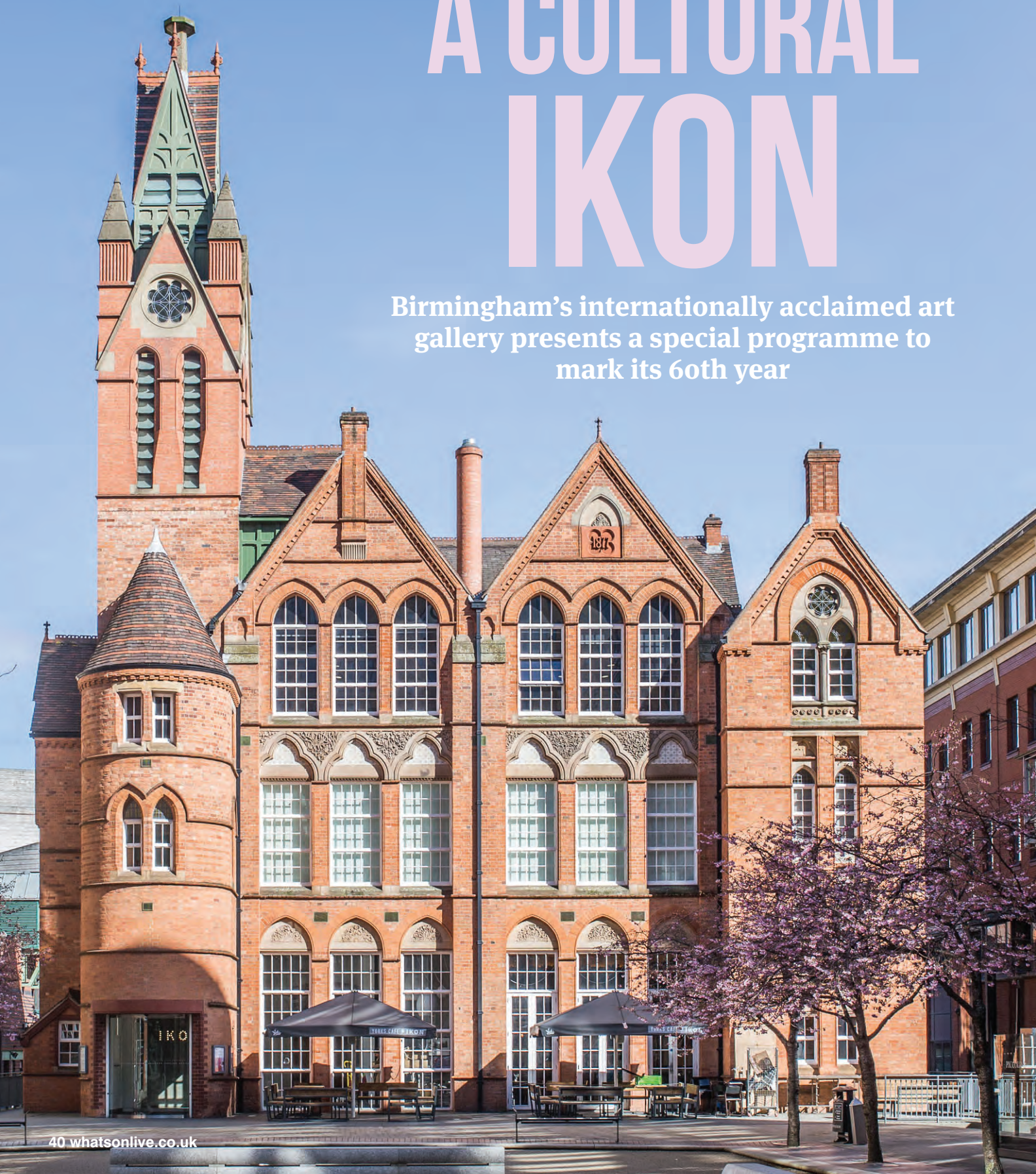
Set in the world of professional tennis, visionary filmmaker Luca Guadagnino's *Challengers* stars Zendaya as Tashi Duncan, a one-time tennis prodigy-turned-coach whose husband has to play her former boyfriend in an important match. As past and present collide, and with tensions running high, Tashi must ask herself, what will it cost to win...

Challengers featured in the prestigious opening slot at last year's Venice Film Festival and drew fulsome praise from festival director Alberto Barbera, who said: "With a light hand and sporting self-confidence, Guadagnino sets no limits to his creative energy in this film, as he deals with topics such as love, friendship and male rivalry, and brings to life an enthralling and affecting movie, full of irony, sensuality and good nature. Cinema in its purest form."

Released Fri 26 April

A CULTURAL IKON

Birmingham's internationally acclaimed art
gallery presents a special programme to
mark its 60th year



Birmingham's Ikon Gallery is marking its 60th year in 2024 by celebrating the art of printmaking and inviting collaborations and contributions from Midlands-based artists. The venue will also host a master portrait by Artemisia Gentileschi as part of National Treasures - a National Gallery initiative forming part of its 200th anniversary programme...

Birmingham's Ikon Gallery has launched a programme of exhibitions which celebrate and commemorate its 60th year.

The spring & summer season includes a close look at a master painting, brand-new art literally hot off the press, and exhibitions ranging from personal introspectives to playful celebrations of the everyday.

Ikon is situated in an ex-schoolhouse in Oozells Square. Surrounded by cherry blossom in springtime, the gallery feels light and inviting. It's a breath of fresh air for those working in the many corporate buildings nearby, or travelling into Birmingham city centre by way of the (in)famous Broad Street.

Start The Press! exhibits in the first-floor gallery until Sunday 21 April. Its centrepiece is an antique flatbed printing press - on loan from Wolverhampton School of Art - an impressive piece of mechanical sculpture in its own right. The press is being used by visiting local printmakers to create art in real time, which fills the walls of the gallery space.

In the anterooms adjacent to the press is a more static collection showcasing the art of printmaking and featuring individual works from Lubaina Himid, David Hockney, Yinka Shonibare and Catherine Yass. There's also a series of evocative 1970s prints from Pamela Scott Wilkie, who first exhibited art at Ikon in 1966.

Differing from the hive of activity on the first floor, Exodus Crooks' Epiphany (Temporaire) inhabits the second-floor gallery in contemplative stillness.

The first room feels like another world - a dark, solitary space with a faint atmosphere of incense. The exhibition takes a journey through the artist's inward and outward reflections, ancestry and spirituality.

Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) kick off Ikon's 60th-year programme and will be followed by more and varied installations.

Ikon has been chosen by London's National Gallery for their National Treasures programme, in which 12 iconic and well-loved paintings from the collection are exhibited by galleries around the UK. All 12

displays launch simultaneously on Friday 10 May - the 200th anniversary of the National Gallery opening - at which point 50% of the UK's population will be within an hour's drive of one of the paintings.

The Ikon's visiting painting is an engaging self-portrait by the Italian Baroque painter Artemisia Gentileschi. Dated around 1616, the artist models herself as Saint Catherine of Alexandria. She is pictured with the remains of a spiked execution wheel; the grizzly inspiration behind the 'Catherine Wheel'.

Ikon will present Gentileschi's self-portrait within Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, a solo exhibition by Dublin-based contemporary artist Jesse Jones which creates a ritualistic environment, preparing visitors for their viewing of Gentileschi's painting.

"What I'm hoping is that it's a staging, rather than an exhibition with a Gentileschi in it," says Jesse.

Conducting research for the exhibition, Jesse discovered that the Christian story of Saint Catherine's martyrdom is based on an earlier historical figure: the mathematician, philosopher & astronomer Hypatia of Alexandria, a pagan killed by Christians. "So what we see in Saint Catherine is a kind of 'through the looking glass' mirror image."

Gentileschi's choice to paint herself as a famous martyr reflects the difficulty and violence of her early life, in spite of which she went on to have a prolific artistic career.

Jesse expands: "At the heart of Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon is this sense of the recurring martyr image through histories of women's experience: through Gentileschi herself and her experience of violence and resistance, through Saint Catherine, the saint who was very famously martyred and was really persecuted for her intellectual rigour, and then the actual origin story, which is Hypatia. There's three female portraits in the one portrait.

"You don't need to know all of this going in, but I hope that people will have an experience of an intimate relationship with the Gentileschi painting looking directly at you, as a viewer."

Jesse's ritualistic surroundings include water

gathered from holy wells in Ireland as an 'eye cure', a curtain that circles as a dancing body in the space, and a 16mm film opening up the stories of the women who inspired the work. In the centre of this is Gentileschi's captivating self-portrait - which is well worth a visit in its own right.

"Whenever we see it in the National Gallery, it's full of people and the room is really bright, and there's a Caravaggio on the other side... She really holds her own in that space, but this framing of her in a more intimate space - it's about having a really intimate encounter with Gentileschi."

In contrast with this reverent installation, Ikon's second-floor gallery will be hosting a major solo exhibition by Dion Kitson: Rue Britannia. Using sculpture, painting, film and found objects, Dion remodels everyday objects to isolate and elevate ubiquitously 'ordinary' sights, such as a burst football or discarded plastic bottle.

The exhibition includes Council House Of Kitson - a new installation featuring a pebble-dashed façade and footage documenting the artist's father.

Outside of the gallery spaces, Ikon boasts a newly renovated shop with a selection of art books, prints and more. Meanwhile, Yorks Café offers scenic, post-gallery refreshment in the form of coffee or brunch looking out over the square.

The gallery is a registered charity, historically supported by funding from Birmingham City Council. At a precarious time for arts venues in the city, Ikon intends to remain free and open to all, maintaining its place as an essential part of Birmingham's cultural landscape.

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Start The Press! and Epiphany (Temporaire) are exhibited at Ikon until Sunday 21 April. Ikon then exhibits National Treasures: Artemisia In Birmingham, Jesse Jones' Mirror Martyr Mirror Moon, and Dion Kitson's Rue Britannia from Friday 10 May until Sunday 8 September



New Narratives In Photography

Midlands Arts Centre (MAC),
Birmingham, until Mon 27 May

A desire to explore narratives of community, public space and diaspora is the motivation behind the work of the four artists whose photos are showcased in this exhibition. The featured creatives - Asad Ali, Hira Noor, Ume Laila and Waleed Zafar - are all based in Pakistan and use photography in new and innovative ways. The exhibition is being presented as part of an international-residency collaboration between two arts organisations, both of which are photography-led: Grain Projects (which is located here in the West Midlands) and Tasweerghar (from Lahore in Pakistan).



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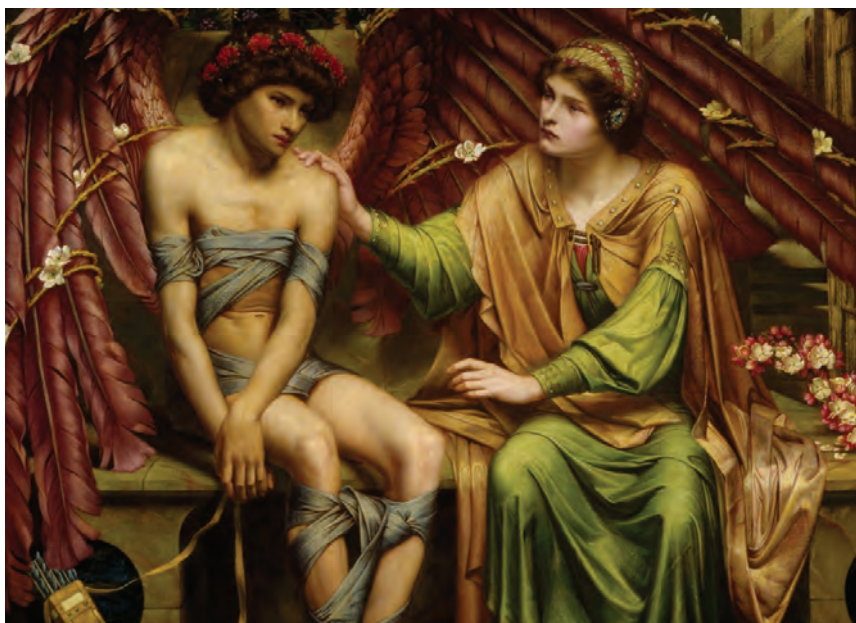
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IKON/60

Ikon is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. Ikon Gallery Limited trading as Ikon. Registered charity no. 528886. Images: Ikon Gallery. Photo by Tod Jones.



Hope Comforting Love in Bondage. 190. Artist: Sidney Harold Meynard



Victorian Radicals Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until Thurs 31 October

Birmingham's impressive collection of Pre-Raphaelite art is here being displayed in the city for the first time in more than five years.

Taking the subtitle 'From The Pre-Raphaelites To The Arts & Crafts Movement', Victorian Radicals features vibrant paintings and exquisite drawings

presented alongside jewellery, glass, textiles and metalwork.

The show provides visitors with the chance to discover the story of the Pre-Raphaelites - Britain's first modern art movement - and learn about their influence on artists and makers well into the 20th century.

Hidden Voices

Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 3 November

Fitting in nicely (just as you'd expect!) with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's (SBT) multi-year Women Who Made Shakespeare theme, Hidden Voices focuses on the important females in the life of the bard, exploring their impact as mothers, wives, widows, businesswomen and managers of a busy household at New Place, the site of the grandest house in Jacobean Stratford-upon-Avon. The exhibition also seeks to dispel many of the myths which have persisted across the centuries: that William didn't love wife Anne, because he left her the 'second best bed'; that daughter Susanna was his favourite; that younger daughter Judith was illiterate; and that because Shakespeare's mother Mary was a farmer's daughter, she was less upwardly mobile.

Numerous objects from SBT's collection are featured in the exhibition, including artefacts from the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

Dame Laura Knight - I Paint Today

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, until Sun 30 June

The first female artist ever to be welcomed into the Royal Academy, Dame Laura Knight felt a

profound love for Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills. Indeed, her emotional connection to the area provided her with a great deal of artistic inspiration during the later years of her life.

Curated by Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum, this new exhibition, titled I Paint Today, pays homage not only to the artist herself but also to her relationship with the local countryside.

The show features works from the Worcester City collection alongside loans from regional and national collections, including Tate.



A Spirit Inside

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Sun 1 September

With its themes ranging from mythology and internal contemplation to external and political expression, A Spirit Inside comprises a selection of works produced by women and non-binary artists across a period of 100-plus years. The featured pieces have been drawn from the Women's Art Collection - Europe's biggest collection of work by female artists - and The Ingram Collection, one of the UK's best collections of modern and contemporary British art. Artists whose work is featured in the show include Leonora Carrington, Winifred Nicholson, Bridget Riley, Man Fung Yi and Perminder Kaur.



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

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

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

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





NEW LIFE IN ART

Polish artist Tatiana Wolska breathes new life into discarded items by repurposing them into captivating sculptures. Plastic bottles, foam from old mattresses, salvaged timbers and rusty nails are all utilised in her art, as she explains in this recent interview...

Currently showing at Birmingham's Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Tatiana Wolska's *Leisure As Resistance* marks the artist's first solo exhibition in a UK institution.

In her artistic practice, Tatiana utilises recycled materials, evoking the resourcefulness ingrained in her during her childhood in communist Poland, where recycling became a necessity due to the scarcity of goods. Describing herself as a 'junk collector', she transforms once-polluting materials into captivating sculptures.

Her drawings mirror her sculptural work, and Tatiana reveals enigmatic forms, with ribbed surfaces and folds, through ink, pen, pencil and paint.

The exhibition at MAC will include a monumental hut created from repurposed wood and materials.

Forming a space for audiences to relax, *Leisure As Resistance* invites people to engage in the workshop & talks programme in the exhibition, read books from the on-site library, or bring items for a clothes and seed swap.

Can you tell us about the emphasis on resourcefulness that underpins the exhibition and the work you are creating?

I use resourcefulness symbolically. I am inspired by barter systems and the transformation of material. This comes from my childhood in Poland, where everything was transformed. When I arrived in France in 2000, everybody was speaking about ecology. I discovered a new appreciation of recycling and sustainable processes.

Do you hope to inspire people to consider being more resourceful in their approach to making and creating art?

Yes, everyone has their own approach. After *Frieze* in London, I received dozens of messages a day from people reacting to the exhibition. Their amazement at the recycled nature of the work inspired people to think about the potential of waste. This is what I wanted to develop for my exhibition in Birmingham, in particular through the workshops. I want to raise people's

awareness and create a place for community and exchange. There is a real exponential and contagious effect to the project, where new ideas are born through dialogue. By organising workshops, there is the activation of a community already working on these subjects. I offer them a place to meet and exchange ideas, so that their projects can come together.

You give found objects a second life through your works and sculpture. What is your collection process like? Where do you find your materials?

I find them everywhere: in the street, in the garbage cans... I collect everything that crosses my path. It also happens that friends mobilise and bring materials directly to my studio. I used to take absolutely everything, but now I need more space in order to create.

The exhibition also features a number of your drawings. Do you see your drawing process as a form of mindfulness?

Drawing has a therapeutic aspect for me. What I qualify as 'lazy drawing' is a completely free creative mechanism that is not influenced by any particular thought process. I draw for myself, without the stress of a useful production or obligation. In a society where everything has to make sense in a precise, organised and efficient way, I need this freedom. I think that drawing allows you to release stress and to free creativity. It is a motor that propels ideas. When someone tells me they have no ideas, I advise them to draw.

A key part of the exhibition will be a makeshift shelter, inviting audiences to engage with a clothes swap, seed swap, and a library. How important is it for you to create a place for leisure and rest within the exhibition?

This idea goes back to the project of the municipal gallery in Nice, which took the form of a utopian vision of nomadic, democratic and relational architecture. In Birmingham, it was important to create a comfortable, welcoming space where people could relax, let their children play, meet up

and have a cup of tea. In the city, there is a lack of spaces where people can relax for free. The exhibition is also a reaction against this economy of comfort and rest, so it is crucial that visitors can make the space their own.

What do you hope audiences gain from attending the series of workshops and participatory events, and from visiting the exhibition?

I hope there will be a collective contamination. Every time I host a workshop, there are interesting exchanges of ideas. A lot of people are working on parallel economies and dreaming of another way of life, far removed from overconsumption and capitalist excess.

Is the idea of collaborating with local community groups something you will continue in your practice?

Yes, I like to amplify the collective aspect via my work. Capitalist society separates us from one another, and the lack of solidarity, distrust of others is prevalent. Collective utopias are unfortunately stigmatised, and I want to go against that in my practice.

Finally, how important is it for you to be showcasing your work in Birmingham?

My exhibition in Birmingham is the realisation of many projects that I have had in mind for a long time. There were already premises in other projects, but never in such an accomplished and polymorphous way as here. Birmingham also has a special character as an industrial city. Writer Caroline Perez talks about the place of women in England and the breakdown of close ties. A network of mutual aid and support is built up in parallel, and it is precisely in this axis that my artistic practice is articulated.

.....

Tatiana Wolska: *Leisure as Resistance* shows at Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), until Sunday 2 June.

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Spring In Your Step! Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, until Sun 7 April

The feather dusters are out, as historic characters at the Black Country Living Museum get busy giving their homes and shops a spring clean.

Visitors will discover homemade tips, how Edwardian families washed their clothes without a washing machine, 1950s hair-care

methods and how to look after prized musical instruments. There will also be Easter celebrations on site, including choir practice, traditional street games, a family discovery trail and a selection of seasonal treats, from hot cross buns to battered scotch eggs!

International Living History Festival

Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Sat 20 & Sun 21 April

Avoncroft Museum comes to life as 40-plus living-history reenactment groups set up their camps in and around the venue's historic buildings, representing life from the Stone Age, through the Viking era, to the 1940s and beyond.

Visitors can check out lots of hands-on activities, explore the historically themed market and delve into trader stalls selling historically inspired artefacts.



Spring Steam Gala

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

Severn Valley Railway's four-day festival of steam makes a welcome return this month. The 2024 edition of the show will feature appearances from 72 'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29, Stanier Mogul 13268 - in LMS lined black livery and bearing its original number - and the SVR's flagship locomotive, 4930 'Hagley Hall'.

Plus, subject to examination and agreement on testing and commissioning, new-build locomotive 6880 'Betton Grange' will be making its first-ever gala appearance.



Space, Race and Fly RAF Museum Midlands, Cosford, until Sun 7 April

Family-friendly STEM-based events are all the rage at RAF Museum Midlands this Easter holiday! Attractions include time-travelling science show A Volatile History Of Chemistry

(Tuesday 2 & Wednesday 3 April) and a 3D film about space flight presented in an immersive mobile planetarium (Thursday 4 - Sunday 7 April).

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Explore thrilling displays of aircraft, vintage cars, models, tanks and even life-sized Russian dolls.

The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands offers a fun, entertaining day out for all the family – children love our free aviation themed playground. Entry is free. We're open daily from 10.00am.

rafmuseum.org/midlands
01902 376 200



**Lysander Avenue, Cosford,
Shropshire, TF11 8UP**

The Royal Air Force Museum is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC000922) and is a charity registered in England and Wales (1197541)

Events previews from around the region



St George's Day Extravaganza

Tamworth Castle Grounds, Sat 20 April

Tamworth's ever-popular St George's Day Extravaganza is back for 2024 and as usual will be taking over the castle grounds. The line-up of entertainment features a host of festival favourites, including the Grand Medieval Joust, falconry displays, a living-history camp, Epico the dragon, archery and a selection of fairground rides.

Workshops, displays, a medieval encampment and living-history demonstrations also feature, as do numerous traditional children's games, including post-mills, hobby horses, peg dolls, ball & cup, stilts, quoits and Nine Men's Morris.



Model World Live

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 27 & Sun 28 April

The brainchild of the organisers of the Great Electric Train Show, the brand-new Model World Live event combines modelling disciplines with model railways, scale modelling displays, demonstrations,

presentations, manufacturer support and trade stands. Event highlights include the chance to check out two full-size, restored military vehicles.

Easter at Thinktank

Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum, until Sun 7 April

As well as enjoying the venue's usual attractions - the 4K Planetarium, MiniBrum, Science Garden and the natural history collections - holiday visitors to Thinktank can also explore the world from space. Every weekday during the Easter fortnight, families can enjoy an interactive show in which they can build the sun, moon and Earth out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation. Thinktank's holiday offer also includes Science Busking, where visitors can find out all about satellites, and sensory stay & play sessions for the under-threes.



Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival 2024

Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Shropshire, Sun 28 April

Raising funds for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity and attracting more than 6,000 bikers and pillions, Bike4Life Ride Out & Festival is one of the UK's most popular and biggest events of its kind. Alongside famous faces Carl Fogarty, James Whitham, Steve Parrish, Ollie Ollerto and Allen Millyard, the bikers will begin their 26-mile convoy in Shrewsbury, eventually arriving at Weston Park for the Bike4Life Festival, which comes complete with bands, trade stands, food and entertainment.



RHS Malvern Spring Festival

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Places to visit around the region

Birmingham Cathedral

Colmore Row, Birmingham B3 2QB.
Free to visit

Birmingham Cathedral is the oldest building in the city centre still used for its original purpose. The cathedral has four stained-glass windows, designed by Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones, which were fully conserved and returned to their original glory last year.



The Black Country Living Museum

Tipton Rd, Dudley, DY1 4SQ.
Adults £25.95, Children (3-16yrs) £12.95

Get stuck into some good old-fashioned fun at this award-winning venue, as you experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the Black Country through rebuilt, replica or recreated shops, houses and industrial workshops.

British Motor Museum

Banbury Rd, Gaydon, CV35 0BJ.
Adults £19, Children £10 (pre-booked online)

The museum features the world's greatest collection of classic, vintage and veteran British cars, with over 400 vehicles on display. Free tours and hands-on family activities provide an opportunity to learn about the stories behind the collection.

Cotswold Farm Park

Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5FL.
Adults £17.50, Children (4-15yrs) £15.50

Cotswold Farm Park is home to more than 50 flocks and herds of farm animals, provides visitors with the chance to learn about farming past and present, and features an adventure playground, a farm safari, a maze, sandpits, jumping pillows and plenty more.



Roundhouse Birmingham

1 Sheepcote St, Birmingham, B16 8AE.
Activities range in price

A unique Grade II listed building at the heart of Birmingham's canal network, The Roundhouse is dedicated to sharing stories of the city's industrial heritage in new and imaginative ways. Attractions include walks, cycle tours, boat trips and a range of kayak and paddleboarding tours.



The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands

RAF Museum Midlands, Lysander Avenue, Cosford, TF11 8UP. Free to visit

Telling the story of aviation history and housing one of the largest collections of its kind in the UK, RAF Museum Midlands is home to more than 70 historic aircraft displayed in three wartime hangars on an active airfield.

Severn Valley Railway

Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX;
Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX.
Freedom of the Line ticket - Adults £25,
Children (4-17yrs) £16.50

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a route of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley.

Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm

Swan's Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 7LS. Adults £8.95, Children (3-16yrs) £7.95

Set in a large greenhouse landscaped with waterfalls, ponds and tropical plants, Stratford-upon-Avon Butterfly Farm is home to hundreds of the world's most spectacular butterflies.



Sudeley Castle

Winchcombe, Cheltenham, GL54 5JD.
Adults £22, Children (3-15yrs) £10

Walk in the footsteps of notable characters from the mists of time at Sudeley Castle. Boasting a fascinating history stretching back over 1,000 years, the castle is surrounded by 10 award-winning gardens. There's also an adventure playground and a fun fort for younger visitors to enjoy.



Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

Millennium Point, Curzon St, Birmingham, B4 7XG. Adults from £15.50, Children (3-15yrs) from £7.50

From steam engines and talking robots to gurgling guts and a chocolate-wrapping machine, Thinktank features more than 200 hands-on science & technology displays.

West Midlands Police Museum

Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham, B4 6BJ.
Adults £10, Children (3-15yrs) £6

Located in a Victorian lock-up, the West Midlands Police Museum showcases an unrivalled collection of police artefacts, explores more than 200 years of policing history and offers visitors the chance to enjoy a selection of hands-on activities.

Weston Park

Weston-under-Lizard, Shifnal, TF11 8LE.
Adults £8.80, Children £5.20 (pre-booked online)

Weston Park house is set in 1,000 acres of beautiful Capability Brown-landscaped parkland. The venue is home to a nationally important art collection, with other attractions including a restaurant, a woodland adventure playground, a miniature railway, a deer park and holiday cottages.





Shropshire Horticultural Society
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*Your week-
by-week
listings guide*
April 2024

the list



Cirque du Soleil OVO - Utilita Arena Birmingham, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 April

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

What's On

Mon 1 - Sun 7 April



Motionhouse: Nobody -
Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Tues 2 April

Mon 8 - Sun 14 April



Carmen - Wolverhampton
Grand Theatre

Fri 12 April

Mon 15 - Sun 21 April



KVN Dance Company: Coppelia
- Lichfield Garrick

Tues 16 April

Mon 22 - Tues 30 April



The Leisure Society -
Shrewsbury Abbey

Sat 27 April

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

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

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

START THE PRESS! With a vintage, flatbed printing press as a centrepiece, West Midlands printmakers produce original prints to fill the gallery walls, making work in real time. Presented as part of Ikon's 60th anniversary year, until Sun 21 Apr

EXODUS CROOKS: EPIPHANY (TEMPORAIRE) Exhibition combining sculpture, film and text in an exploration of memories, histories and traditions transferred through time and shared space, until Sun 21 Apr

New Art Gallery, Walsall

PLANET BRILL RESIDENCY

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

PRIDE & PRIVILEGE AT THE CLASS ACT Temporary exhibition exploring class and identity, until Sun 26 May

THE WORLD THAT BELONGS TO US

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

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

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

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

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SEE ME Balcony exhibition by photographer Ming de Nasty featuring 14 new portraits of older members of the LGBT+ community in Shropshire. Exhibitions curated from the project can also be viewed at Shrewsbury Library and two of the

town's arts venues, Theatre Severn and The Hive, until Sun 14 Apr

THE MOUNT: OPENING A WINDOW ON THE DARWINS' LEGACY Exhibition featuring photographs from the late Victorian era and telling the story of the house and gardens of Charles Darwin's childhood home, until Sun 19 May

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

FRESH AIR FOR THE POTTERIES

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

CARBONIFEROUS MONSTERS: 100 MILLION YEARS BEFORE THE DINOSAURS Exhibition for all ages, exploring prehistoric forests and swamps, and the ancient creatures that lived there, until Sun 2 June

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

POP ART AND POETRY A kaleidoscope of Pop ceramics by key artists from around the world, until Sun 7 Apr

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

Elsewhere:

A WOMAN WITHIN Exhibition featuring the work of Maryellen Butler, until Sat 6 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ASSOCIATION OF ANIMAL ARTISTS A selection of artwork 'as diverse as nature itself', in an array of media and styles, until Thurs 25 Apr, Rose Paterson Art Gallery, Weston Park, Shropshire

SHUGBOROUGH PARKLAND TREES

Exhibition of watercolour studies by local artist RN Clarke, inspired by Shugborough's gardens and grounds, until Sun 28 Apr, Shugborough Estate, Staffordshire

SPRING EXHIBITION 2024 Featuring paintings and ceramics by Lucia Fraser, drypoint intaglio prints by Faith Chevannes, and dreamlike abstracts by Karen Ulph, until Tues 28 May, Ironbridge Fine Arts, Shropshire

CONTEMPORARY PÂTE DE VERRE: THE MATERIAL OF TIME Unique exhibition of internationally acclaimed Pâte de Verre glass artists, until Sun 23 June, Stourbridge Glass Museum

THREADS THROUGH CREATION A sequence of 12 huge textile panels by Jacqui Parkinson, telling the creation story from the Book of Genesis, Wed 17 Apr - Sun 2 June, Lichfield Cathedral



Mika - University of Wolverhampton at The Halls

Gigs

HIGH SOCIETY DUO Mon 1 Apr, Bill's Cafe, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

LORDI Tues 2 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JOLIE HOLLAND Tues 2 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

ADWAITH Wed 3 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

EXORCISM + MAGNATAS COURT + DENIED LEGACY Wed 3 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SUICIDAL ANGELS + DUST BOLT Wed 3 Apr, Devil's Dog, B'ham

STARSAILOR + ANDREW CUSHIN Wed 3 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NANOWAR OF STEEL + WARLOCK A.D. Wed 3 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

INCANTATION + CELESTIAL SANCTUARY Wed 3 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

AFTER SMOKE CLEARS + MONETOPIA + MELIORA Wed 3 Apr, Subside Bar, Birmingham

SPACED + GOING OFF + UNCERTAINTY Wed 3 Apr, Dead Wax, Birmingham

RUMOURS OF FLEETWOOD MAC Wed 3 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

HANNAH RARITY Wed 3 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

TAYLORMANIA - TAYLOR SWIFT TRIBUTE Wed 3

Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

HAWKWIND Wed 3 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE LITTLE MIX SHOW Wed 3 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

VAN HOUTEN + HULA GIRLS + MICHAEL B THOMAS Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

IST IST Thurs 4 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

ELEANOR K Thurs 4 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

SOPHIE FAITH Thurs 4 Apr, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

ERIC BELLINGER Thurs 4 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

THE LILACS + THE CAVS + JACK CATELL Thurs 4 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham

SOUTHERN BEAUTY Thurs 4 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

PAUL YOUNG Thurs 4 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre



LAS VEGAS LIVE WITH THE RAT PACK Thurs 4 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

GO YOUR OWN WAY - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Thurs 4 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

GET IT ON Thurs 4 Apr, Crewe Lyceum

AMIKA + HUNTER BAVARO + ANGEL VILE Fri 5 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JUNIPER + FILKINS DRIFT + POTTER Fri 5 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

NO FACE NO CASE + FINAL WORDS + PARJURE + SWARMS UK + SPIRAL DOWN Fri 5 Apr, Devil's Dog, B'ham

THE LEN PRICE 3 + THE HUMDRUM EXPRESS Fri 5 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

CAITY BASER + BETH MCCARTHY Fri 5 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

FLINT FIRE - THE PRODIGY TRIBUTE Fri 5 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

TROPHY EYES Fri 5 Apr, The Asylum, B'ham

IAIN BALLAMY Fri 5 Apr, 1000 Trades, B'ham

THE RESIDENTS Fri 5 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

ROB.GREEN Fri 5 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

THE VERTIGO BAND Fri 5 Apr, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

NIRVARDY - NIRVANA TRIBUTE Fri 5 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

FLEETWOOD BAC Fri 5 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

CASSYETTE Fri 5 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

MIKA Fri 5 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton
THE UPBEAT BEATLES Fri

5 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER Fri 5 Apr, Foxt Village Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CELEBRATING GEORGE MICHAEL Fri 5 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

HONEY AND THE BEAR Fri 5 Apr, The Albion, Burton upon Trent

MAGIC QUEEN Fri 5 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

SHAPE OF YOU - THE MUSIC OF ED SHEERAN Fri 5 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

YOURTHMICS Fri 5 Apr, The Station, Cannock

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Fri 5 Apr, Lichfield Guildhall

THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS Fri 5 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROBERT VINCENT Fri 5 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

GUNS 2 ROSES Fri 5 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

CALL OF THE KRaken Fri 5 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BREAK THE RECORD Fri 5 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

CHRISTINA ALDEN & ALEX PATTERSON Fri 5 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

STRAIGHT FOR THE SUN + RAISED BY WOLVES + COWER, HOUNDS! Fri 5 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

ELKIE BROOKS Fri 5 Apr, Crewe Lyceum



THE MERSEY BEATLES Fri 5 Apr, Aston Hall, Wrexham

TAT VISION Sat 6 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

POST-PARTY + IONA Sat 6 Apr, The Sunflower

Lounge, Birmingham

LOW RED MOON + MODERN LITERATURE + INTELLIGENCE OF PLANTS + SEAN THOMPSON-DEWOLFE Sat 6 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

OVERPASS + PASTEL + THE KITES Sat 6 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BORN ZERO + WITHER + AWAKEN ETERNITY + ERA'S END Sat 6 Apr, The Flapper, Birmingham

OASIS Sat 6 Apr, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE SPECIALS LTD Sat 6 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

ELECTROMANTICS Sat 6 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

NAVI - THE KING OF POP Sat 6 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

TERRORVISION + THE HOT DAMN + SHE BURNS Red Sat 6 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

WILL PAGE Sat 6 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton



BARENAKED LADIES Sat 6 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE FLEETWOOD MAC SONGBOOK Sat 6 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

KILLERSTREAM Sat 6 Apr, The Quarter at Pot Bank, Stoke-on-Trent

THE ULTIMATE 50S AND 60S EXPERIENCE Sat 6 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE ROCKET MAN - A TRIBUTE TO ELTON JOHN Sat 6 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

ADRIAN MICHAELS - GEORGE MICHAEL TRIBUTE Sat 6 Apr, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

FOO FIGHTERS GB Sat 6 Apr, The Station, Cannock

REMORAE + WILDFORMS Sat 6 Apr, Sandfields Pumping Station, Lichfield

THANK ABBA FOR THE MUSIC Sat 6 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LOVE DISTRACTION - HUMAN LEAGUE TRIBUTE Sat 6 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

GRANT PRITCHARD BLUES BAND Sat 6 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

BOOTLEG SHADOWS Sat 6 Apr, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

MARTIN HARLEY Sat 6 Apr, Hermon Arts, Oswestry, North Shropshire

PYROFOX + WOLVES IN ALCATRAZ + HOUSEMAN + NEW AGE GRACE Sat 6 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

SIMON & GARFUNKEL THROUGH THE YEARS Sat 6 Apr, Aston Hall, Wrexham

FIVIO FOREIGN Sun 7 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GIANT WALKER + TITCHY + INSERO Sun 7 Apr, Subside Bar, Birmingham

SONU NIGAM Sun 7 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

JAMES BLUNT Sun 7 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JOHNNY MARR + GAZ COOMBS Sun 7 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

ATHENAS REVENGE + MAGIC MARY + SOMA Sun 7 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

HELLO AGAIN - THE NEIL DIAMOND SONGBOOK Sun 7 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

TUBULAR BELLS LIVE Sun 7 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE UNDERCOVER HIPPIE Sun 7 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury



Classical Music

ROYAL LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA Featuring Andrew Manze (conductor) & Sheku Kanneh-Mason (soloist). Programme includes works by Coleridge-Taylor, Weinberg & Elgar, Fri 5 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

LUNCHTIME CONCERT IN THE ROUND Featuring Paul Mccroft (baritone) & John Jenkin (piano), Fri 5 Apr, St Chad's, Shrewsbury

TRIBUTE TO STUDIO GHIBLI Featuring Nicolas Horvath (piano). Programme includes works by Joe Hisaishi, Sat 6 Apr, St Paul's Church, Birmingham

Comedy

JOE WILKINSON: WORK IN PROGRESS Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

JAMIE HUTCHINSON Tues 2 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 3 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE MCCABE Thurs 4 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDREW BIRD, GERRY K, BEN TURNER & DAVE TWENTYMAN Thurs 4 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

KUM-N-AVALOFF Thurs 4 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

TOM LAWRIKSON Fri 5 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MICK MILLER, JO ENRIGHT, JONNY COLE & WAYNE BEESE Fri 5 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

JOHN FOTHERGILL, SPRING DAY, MC HAMMERSMITH & SUSIE MCCABE Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

CLINTON BAPTISTE Sat 6 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

Theatre

MINORITY REPORT Staging of Phillip K Dick's sci-fi thriller, which challenges beliefs about justice and free will in a real-time chase through a London of the future, until Sat 6 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

BEN AND IMO New play exploring the working relationship of two of the 20th century's greatest musical minds: Benjamin Britten & Imogen Holst, until Sat 6 Apr, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

DICK WHITTINGTON Easter pantomime based on the classic tale of Dick and his faithful feline friend, who travel to London to seek their fortune, Fri 29 Mar - Sun 7 Apr, The Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY World premiere of the official Stock Aitken Waterman musical, featuring a soundtrack of pop hits from Rick Astley, Kylie Minogue, Jason Donovan, Bananarama and more... Mon 1 - Sat 6 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham



SOME MOTHERS DO 'AVE 'EM Little Theatre Company present a farcical production based on the BBC TV series of the same name, Tues 2 - Sat 6 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

ANIMAL FARM The Young Garrick present an amateur version of George Orwell's novella, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

ANIMAL FARM: A TWISTED MUSICAL TAIL British Youth Music Theatre in partnership with Birmingham Hippodrome present a new version of George Orwell's novella, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

JEKYLL AND HYDE Jonathan Goodwin's one-man version of Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic tale, Fri 5 Apr, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

THE ADDAMS FAMILY Get Your Wiggle On present an amateur version of the 'kooky' musical comedy, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ROBIN HOOD Easter panto starring Britain's Got Talent winners Ashleigh and Sully alongside show finalists Jamie and Chuck. Dancer and choreographer Louie Spence and Easter panto tour favourites Ryan Greaves and Kate Salmon also star, Sat 6 Apr, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PART OF MAIN: BLOODY MARY LIVE! Theatre, comedy and an interactive set combine as Olivia Miller takes on the role of Mary Tudor and 'tackles the dramas every #queenager deals with: divorced parents, sibling rivalry and religious purges', Sat 6 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

THE PROMISE World premiere of Deafinitely Theatre's drama, inspired by the 'extraordinary experiences of deaf people living with dementia', Sat 6 - Sat 13 Apr, The Rep, B'ham

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND Box Tale Soup journey down the rabbit hole into a timeless world of wondrous fantasy, Sun 7 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

KOMEDY OF ERRORS Chaotic and fun



Motionhouse: Nobody - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

entertainment featuring Gerald the gentleman juggler and Wallace the circus trainee, Sun 7 Apr, Lightwoods House, Bearwood, Smethwick

Kid's Theatre

THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY The People's Theatre Company combine animation & puppetry in an interactive retelling of a classic children's tale, Mon 1 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE LITTLE MERMAID TaleGate Theatre Productions present a fast-paced Easter pantomime featuring pop songs, magic & puppetry, Tues 2 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

THE WIZARD OF OZ Amateur version presented by Get Your Wigle On's junior performers, Tues 2 - Thurs 4 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE AMAZING BUBBLE MAN Comedy, artistry & audience participation come together in a bubble-filled stage show for younger audiences, Wed 3 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE LOST FOREST Indigo Moon fuse puppetry and digital projection in a tale of climate change and deforestation for younger audiences, Thurs 4 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THUMBELINA Speedwell Dance fuse music, dance & song to tell the tale of a miniature girl finding her way in the big wide world, Sat 6 Apr, Thimblewell Library, Smethwick

THERE'S A MONSTER IN YOUR SHOW Brand-new musical stage version of author Tom Fletcher's interactive adventures for big imaginations, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

ALICE IN WONDERLAND Immersion Theatre fuse music, comedy and audience interaction in a family show based on Lewis Carroll's classic tale,

Sun 7 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE SOOTY SHOW Join Sooty, Sweep and Soo for a very special birthday party. Guests include Butch the bulldog, Ramsbottom the snake and circus superstar Michael Jordan, Sun 7 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Dance

MOTIONHOUSE: NOBODY Dance circus adventure with gravity-defying choreography as seven characters embark on a journey of discovery, Tues 2 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

GIOVANNI: LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU The Strictly favourite is joined by a cast of professional dancers and West End performers for a show of 'non-stop action', Thurs 4 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

GIOVANNI: LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU The Strictly favourite is joined by a cast of professional dancers and West End performers for a show of 'non-stop action', Fri 5 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Light Entertainment

SIR RANULPH FIENNES: MAD, BAD & DANGEROUS Join 'the world's greatest living explorer' as he shares stories from his exploits, Mon 1 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



LAS VEGAS WITH THE RAT PACK

Featuring David Alacey as Frank Sinatra, Paul Drakeley as Dean Martin & Des Coleman as Sammy Davis Jnr, Thurs 4 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

PADDINGTON IN CONCERT Watch the award-winning 2014 film on a giant HD screen, accompanied by the London Concert Orchestra playing Nick Urata's calypso-infused score live, Fri 5 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

KIDZ BOP: NEVER STOP LIVE TOUR Sing and dance along with the Kidz Bop Kids as they perform today's biggest hits, live on stage, Sat 6 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

TW*TS - SEND IN THE CLOWNS Drag revue show celebrating the magic and madness of musical theatre, Sat 6 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE OPERA BOYS: A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS Sat 6 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO TAYLOR SWIFT Experience the music of Taylor Swift while surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

CANDLELIGHT: A TRIBUTE TO ABBA Experience the music of ABBA surrounded by the gentle glow of candles, Sat 6 Apr, Birmingham Cathedral

THE NIGHT SKY SHOW Astronomer and author Adrian West (aka VirtualAstro) presents 'a visual and thought-provoking experience for everyone that looks up and wonders'... Sun 7 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Talks & Spoken Word

LUKE WRIGHT'S SILVER JUBILEE One of Britain's most popular live poets navigates audiences through a warm and honest hour of poems and stand-up, Thurs 4 Apr, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

JOHN OSBOURNE: THE NEW BLUR ALBUM The story of John's life, love & friendship, with the new Blur album as a constant backdrop, Fri 5 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Events

INSOMNIA THE GAMING FESTIVAL Immerse yourself in a world of non-stop gaming, with everything from the latest video games to retro classics, until Mon 1 Apr, NEC, B'ham

WORKERS OF THE ROUNDHOUSE TOURS Pop in for a free drop-in tour and get to know the curious survivor on the canal, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

EXPLORE HIDDEN BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR Discover Birmingham's canals, exploring areas accessible only by water, until Mon 1 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

EASTER EXTRAVAGANZA Take a walk through the magical woodland and see the park dressed with all things Easter, until Mon 1 Apr, Wonderland Midlands, Telford

ALICE IN EASTER WONDERLAND Explore the mysterious tunnels and caverns with Alice and her Wonderland pals, until Tues 2 Apr, Dudley Canal & Caverns

EASTER EGG HUNT Make your way along the trail and find nature-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Tues 2 Apr, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

OUR WORLD FROM SPACE FAMILY SHOW Build the planets out of people to see how they move in space, discover how rockets take off, recreate the orbits of satellites, and learn how they play a big role in wildlife conservation, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

OUR WORLD FROM SPACE BUSKING Featuring activities designed to give you the chance to look at the world as satellites do, until Fri 5 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

CASTLE DRAGONS & EGGS TRAIL Find the eggs hidden around the castle grounds, until Sat 6 Apr, Shrewsbury Castle

ALDERFORD'S EASTER EGG HUNT Search around the picturesque Alderford Lake to find hidden letters, until Sat 6 Apr, Alderford Lake, Shropshire

EASTER EGG HUNT Make your way along the trail and find spring-inspired activities for the whole family to enjoy, until Sun 7 Apr, Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

DINO EGG HATCHERY Help find dino eggs around the farm - then watch them hatch!, until Sun 7 Apr, Lower Drayton Farm, Staffordshire

EASTER WONDERLAND Featuring The Great Alice In Wonderland Egg Hunt and egg-hunt trails around the farm, until Sun 7 Apr, Park Hall Countryside Experience, Oswestry, North Shropshire

EGGSTRONAUTS Design a special spacecraft to protect the egghead crew from a messy end, until Sun 7 Apr, Enginuity, Ironbridge, Shropshire

OSZY OWL'S EASTER TRAIL Complete the trail and find the letters around the museum to spell out a special treat, until Sun 7 Apr, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

SPRINGTIME FAMILY FUN Explore the themes of nature and springtime with plenty of family activities, until Sun 7

Apr, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings

SPRING IN YOUR STEP! Watch as the historic characters get busy cleaning their homes and shops, until Sun 7 Apr, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

IMAGINATION PLAYGROUND Play, build and explore with giant Imagination Playground blocks, until Sun 7 Apr, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SPACE, RACE AND FLY! A STEM-based event featuring activities, shows and more, until Sun 7 Apr, Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA Join the egg hunts, meet Bramble Bunny and enjoy a range of themed activities, until Sun 7 Apr, West Midland Safari Park, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FREDDO'S EASTER EGG-STRAVAGANZA Join Freddo for an eggs-tra special show filled with chocolatey fun, until Sun 7 Apr, Cadbury World, Bournville, Birmingham

LAMBING LIVE Share the joy of lambing season by seeing the estate's rare breed sheep, until Sun 14 Apr, Trentham Estate, Staffs

HOPPING MAD Create your own unique bunny out of air dry clay, until Sun 14 Apr, Coalport China Museum, Ironbridge

AN EGGSTRAORDINARY EASTER Join the residents at Blists Hill Victorian Town for egg hunts, a poster trail and Victorian egg dancing, until Sun 14 Apr, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

EASTER ADVENTURE QUEST Hunt for clues in the castle grounds, track down the Easter eggs and get rewarded with a tasty chocolate treat, until Sun 14 Apr, Stokesay Castle, Shropshire

SPRING BULB FESTIVAL Annual festival providing visitors with 'an amazing, uplifting, immersive and colourful experience' as they walk through the gardens, until Fri 31 May, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

FEATHERED ADVENTURES - EASTER HOLIDAY ACTIVITY Featuring bird-themed activities, including crafts and a scavenger hunt, Mon 1 - Fri 5 Apr, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

CHICK HANDLING Join the farming team in the hatchery for a hands-on experience getting to know the new arrivals, Tues 2 - Sat 6 Apr, Shugborough Estate, Staffordshire

THE BRICK PEOPLE Series of free-flow workshops, including speed builds and timed towers, Thurs 4 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (mac), B'ham

A DISCOVERY SPRING CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY CLUB Explore the Onny Meadows and learn about and enjoy nature, Thurs 4 Apr, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, South Shropshire

SPRINGTIME AT HADEN HILL Event featuring crafts and trails inspired by the wildlife in Haden Hill Park, Thurs 4 - Fri 5 Apr, Haden Hill House Museum, Halesowen

CINEMATICA Digital project that allows you to create 'mind-controlled' art, Thurs 4 - Sat 6 Apr, Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum

FOSSIL PRINTMAKING WORKSHOP Print a fossil design on a T-shirt, tote bag or tea towel, Fri 5 Apr, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SPRING CRAFT FAIR Explore a range of local artisan craft tables, Fri 5 - Sat 6 Apr, Fordhall Organic Farm, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

ALICE'S ADVENTURES TO WONDERLAND Join Alice on her journey to Wonderland in this fully immersive production, Fri 5 - Sun 7 Apr, Telford Steam Railway

COLLECTIONS TOUR Join gallery assistant Julie Jones for a tour featuring highlights from the Flowers and Still Life Room in the Garman Ryan Collection, Sat 6 Apr, The New Art Gallery Walsall

GUIDED TOUR OF WEOLEY CASTLE Explore Weoley Castle with experienced guides and see real finds from the site on display in the visitor centre, Sat 6 Apr, Weoley Castle, Birmingham

SAUSAGE & CIDER FESTIVAL RACEDAY Indulge in a variety of sausage and cider flavours while enjoying a day at the races, Sat 6 Apr, Uttoxeter Racecourse, Staffordshire

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

DINO FUN WEEKEND Join dino experts for a dinosaur-themed weekend featuring shows, face painting, rides and stalls, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Trentham Estate, Staffordshire

OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND Go behind the scenes in areas not usually open to visitors, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

SHROPSHIRE WAY 80K FESTIVAL 2024 Hundreds of runners and walkers take to the Shropshire Hills, Sat 6 - Sun 7 Apr, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, Craven Arms, Shropshire

PUP UP CAFE Meet up with other dogs and their owners, enjoy photo opportunities and unlimited treats, Sun 7 April, The Lost & Found, Birmingham

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 7 Apr, Sarehole Mill, Birmingham

THE PINK PRINCESS PARTY Fun with Aurora, Rapunzel and special guest,



Space, Race And Fly! - Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

Barbie, Sun 7 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

TOY COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring more than 500 stalls packed with thousands of new and old collectables for sale, Sun 7 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

SPORTACCORD WORLD SPORT & BUSINESS SUMMIT Presidents and CEOs from global sporting organisations come together for the 18th edition of 'sport's most influential industry gathering', Sun 7 - Thurs 11 Apr, ICC, Birmingham

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The Amy Winehouse Band - Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Gigs

NITIN SAWHNEY Mon 8 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

PAULI THE PSM Tues 9 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

KIRSTEN ADAMSON Tues 9 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

PUPIL SLICER + COLIGUNS + GOD ALONE Wed 10 Apr, Devil's Dog, Birmingham

KID KAPICHI Wed 10 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

FRANK SINATRA: THE RETIREMENT CONCERT Wed 10 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

DECLAN MCKENNA + WUNDERHORSE Wed 10 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

TINY DANCER - THE MUSIC OF ELTON JOHN Wed 10 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE AMY WINEHOUSE BAND Wed 10 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MARTIN STEPHENSON AND THE DAINTIES Wed 10 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

POLICE DOG HOGAN Thurs 11 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

ADMT Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

SONGER + KILLOWEN Thurs 11 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DAGGER THREAT + EGO Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

ESOTERICA Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

THUNDERFK AND THE DEADLY ROMANTICS + KONTROL FREAKS** Thurs 11 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

SOUL KINDA WONDERFUL -

DRIFTERS TRIBUTE Thurs 11 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

DAN PATLANSKY Thurs 11 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE BOOTLEG BEATLES Thurs 11 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE STORY OF GUITAR HEROES Thurs 11 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE TOTAL STONE ROSES + OAYSIS Thurs 11 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

MONICA AND THE EXPLOSION Thurs 11 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

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

BLACKLIST + THRASHERWOLF + WARGRAVE + EXAUST Fri 12 Apr, Devil's Dog, B'ham

IZUZVO + CHANDNI + KITTY BELLA Fri 12 Apr, The Night Owl, Birmingham

DREAM STATE + GRAPHIC NATURE + FANGS OUT Fri 12 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

BRONNIE Fri 12 Apr, The Rainbow, Digbeth, B'ham

THE ELVIS YEARS Fri 12 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

THE KILKENNYS Fri 12 Apr, Halesowen Town Hall

ULTIMATE COLDPLAY Fri 12 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

CLOUDBUSTING - THE MUSIC OF KATE BUSH Fri 12 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

PAUL WELLER Fri 12 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

BOB FOX Fri 12 Apr, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

SINGAROUND Fri 12 Apr,

The Albion, Burton upon Trent

GRACE Fri 12 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

FASTLOVE - GEORGE MICHAEL TRIBUTE Fri 12 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Fri 12 Apr, The Station, Cannock

CAMENS + THE JACK CATTALL BAND + FLUOXETINE Fri 12 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

HUE & CRY Fri 12 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

DIRTY ROCKIN' SCOUNDRELS Fri 12 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE FABULOUS BORDELLOS Fri 12 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

PSYDOLL + DEF NEON + INGÉNUÉ Fri 12 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE COOPERS + LOZ RABONE Sat 13 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

JERUB Sat 13 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, B'ham

DONNA KEEN Sat 13 Apr, The Night Owl, B'ham

LORD APEX Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE K'S + THE CLAUSE + EIGHTY EIGHT MILES Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

TANKUS THE HEDGE Sat 13 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

ENDORPHINMACHINE - PRINCE TRIBUTE Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

BRYSON TILLER Sat 13 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BILLY JOEL SONGBOOK Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

UB40 FEATURING ALI CAMPBELL + BITTY MCLEAN

Sat 13 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

ELVIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE DIXY ROCK N ROLL BAND Sat 13 Apr, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE GEORGE HARRISON PROJECT Sat 13 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

MILLIE MANDERS & THE SHUT UP Sat 13 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

RICHARD DIGANCE Sat 13 Apr, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

KRIS BARRAS BAND + SOUTH OF SALEM + THE NOCTURNAL AFFAIR Sat 13 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

80'S LIVE Sat 13 Apr, Wulfrun Hall, W'hampton

THE ROLLIN STONED Sat 13 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

ROBERT VINCENT Sat 13 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

T-REXTASY Sat 13 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

ALL4INDIE + BRITPOP Sat 13 Apr, The Station, Cannock

THE BLACKHEART ORCHESTRA Sat 13 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

EMO FEST Sat 13 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE ENDINGS Sat 13 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

PARTIKEL TRIO + NATALIE ROZARIO Sat 13 Apr, The Hive, Shrewsbury

DOMINO SUGAR Sat 13 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

SKABURST Sat 13 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

JAGUAR SUN Sun 14 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

THE DUNWELLS Sun 14 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

LEMAR Sun 14 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

BACK TO BACHARAC Sun 14 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND Sun 14 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

TALON Sun 14 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE NICK DEWHURST BAND Sun 14 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT

Programme includes works by N Gade, J Gardner, C Frances-Hoad, D Bourgeois & CM Widor, Mon 8 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME PIANO CONCERT WITH ALISTAIR MCGOWAN Tues 9 Apr, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury



CBSO: BERLIOZ, SYMPHONIE

FANTASTIQUE Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor) & Benjamin Grosvenor (piano). Programme includes works by Fauré, Prokofiev & Berlioz, Wed 10 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PAUL LEWIS: SCHUBERT PIANO SONATAS Programme comprises Schubert's piano sonatas No 19 in C minor, No 20 in A major & No 21 in B flat major, Thurs 11 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT Part of Ludlow English Song Weekend. Featuring Roderick Williams (baritone), Leon Bosch (double bass) & Iain Burnside (piano). Programme includes works by W D Browne, A Beach, R Clarke & more... Sat 13 Apr, St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, South Shropshire

CBSO: BERLIOZ, THE DAMNATION OF FAUST Featuring Kazuki Yamada (conductor), Pene Pati (tenor), Grace Durham (mezzo-soprano), Nahuel di Piero (baritone), Jonathan Lemalu (bass), CBSO Chorus & Men from the Hallé Choir, Sat 13 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THOMAS KEOGH ORGAN PROM Programme includes works by A Guilment, E MacDowell, S Campbell & more... Sat 13 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-On-Trent

SHREWSBURY CANTATA CHOIR Featuring Tony Coupe (musical director), Paul Carr (organ), Gemma King & Samantha Lewis (soloists). Programme comprises Vivaldi's Gloria & Poulenc's Gloria, Sat 13 Apr, Shrewsbury United Reform Church

THE BREWOOD SINGERS: SPRING SONGS Also featuring Vocabella, Sat 13 Apr, Pittingham Village Hall, Staffordshire

ZOË BEYERS AND THE ENGLISH STRING ORCHESTRA Featuring Zoë Beyers (violin). Programme includes works by Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky & Elgar, Sun 14 Apr, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury



Miles Jupp - Crewe Lyceum

Comedy

FRANKIE BOYLE Mon 8 - Tues 9 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

JOSH BAULF & FRIENDS Tues 9 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RAY BRADSHAW Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 10 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

THE ALTER COMEDY CLUB Wed 10 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN Thurs 11 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MILES JUPP Thurs 11 Apr, Crewe Lyceum

LAURA SMYTH Thurs 11 - Fri 12 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DANIEL O'REILLY Fri 12 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

STEPHEN BAILEY, DAN ANTPOLSKI, IAN CRAWFORD & WAYNE BEESE Fri 12 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

MARTIN MOR, JENNY HART, DANI JOHNS & ROB MULLHOLLAND Fri 12 Apr, Crewe Lyceum

ROBIN MORGAN, LEROY BRITO, CHRISTIAN SCHULTE-LOH & ELEANOR TIERNAN Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

RICH WILSON, ERIC RUSHTON, DIANE SPENCER & JON PEARSON Sat 13 Apr, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

CARL HUTCHINSON Sat 13 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

SORIN PĂRCĂLAB, CRISTI POPESCO & IOANA LUIZA Sun 14 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SLIM, AXEL BLAKE, JUNIOR BOOKER, WILSON & KANE BROWN Sun 14 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NOREEN KHAN, SUKH OJLA, SAMIRA BANKS & ESTHER MANITO Sun 14 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

Theatre

TWELVE ANGRY MEN Touring version of Reginald Rose's famous courtroom drama, starring Jason Merrells (Casualty/Emmerdale), Gray O'Brien (Coronation Street/Peak Practice), Tristan Gemmill (Coronation Street/Casualty), Michael Greco (EastEnders), Ben Nealon (Soldier Soldier) and Gary Webster (Minder/Family Affairs), Mon 8 - Sat 13 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

AUSTEN'S WOMEN: LADY SUSAN One-woman show starring Rebecca Vaughan and based on Jane Austen's first full-length work, Tues 9 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

CARMEN Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv presents Bizet's tale of passion and sexual jealousy, Tues 9 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent



LES MISÉRABLES Schools edition presented by Lichfield Musical Youth Theatre, Tues 9 - Sat 13 Apr, Lichfield Cathedral

SHREK THE MUSICAL Join Shrek and his trusty sidekick Donkey as they set out on a quest to defeat the fearsome dragon and rescue the beautiful Princess Fiona. Based on the much-loved Dreamworks movie, Tues 9 - Sun 14 Apr, The Alexandra, B'ham

EMMA RICE'S BLUE BEARD A music-fuelled feminist revenge plot 'infused with high comedy, tragedy, romance, and just a sprinkling of spine-tingling horror', Tues 9 - Sat 20 Apr, The Rep, Birmingham

MORT Ambient Night Productions present a stage version of Terry Pratchett's fantasy novel, Wed 10 - Thurs 11 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE MAD ONES A brand-new musical based on Kait Kerrigan & Bree Lowdermilk's tale of dreams and expectations, Wed 10 - Sat 20 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, B'ham

BEHOLD YE RAMBLERS Neil Gore's new play about The Clarion newspaper and the organisations formed by its readership... Thurs 11 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

WHAT BROKE BRUM-LEIGH? Mike Venables' dark comedy follows the plight of Nye Eve - a senior finance auditor of Brum-Leigh City Council who is struggling with the fact that his beloved city is going broke, Thurs 11 Apr, The Townhouse, Sutton Coldfield

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING... EARNEST? New interactive production based on Oscar Wilde's classic play, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

UNFORTUNATE: THE UNTOLD STORY OF URSULA THE SEA WITCH Critically acclaimed smash-hit parody musical starring Shawna Hamic (Orange Is The New Black) as Ursula and River Medway (RuPaul's Drag Race) as Ariel, Thurs 11 - Sat 13 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST Luke Thompson (Bridgerton) and Tony Gardner (Gentleman Jack/Last Tango In Halifax) make their RSC debuts in a contemporary take on Shakespeare's vibrant comedy, Thurs 11 Apr - Sat 18 May, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

CARMEN Ukrainian Opera & Ballet Theatre Kyiv present Bizet's tale of passion and sexual jealousy, Fri 12 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

A CARAVAN NAMED DESIRE Split Infinite Theatre present a one-hour show exploring desire, sex and artistic collaboration through interactive performance, Fri 12 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

CINDERELLA AND THE TWO UGLY S!*@S Adult panto starring Liam Mellor as Buttons and Jimmy Burton-Iles & Robert Squire as the Ugly Sisters, Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

ONE MAN, TWO GUVNORS Mayhem, music and fast-paced physical comedy combine in Richard Bean's tale of mistaken identity. Based on Carlo Goldoni's The Servant Of Two Masters, Fri 12 Apr - Sat 11 May, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in

Italian with English surtitles, Sat 13 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

OLD HERBACEOUS Giles Shenton's one-man play is a humorous love story about a single-minded gentleman with a passion for plants, Sat 13 Apr, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

FLASHDANCE THE MUSICAL Amateur version presented by Curtain Call Theatre Company, Sat 13 - Sun 14 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Kids Theatre

DEAR ZOO LIVE! Interactive show for younger audiences, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved lift-the-flap book, Thurs 11 - Tues 16 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

KITCHEN ZOO: THE THREE BEARS Original music and puppetry combine in 'a tale you thought you knew', Sun 14 Apr, Midlands Arts (MAC), Birmingham

Dance

MEHEK Aakash Odedra Company and Aditi Mangaldas Dance Company present a choreographed version of an unspoken and overlooked love story, Tues 9 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

CHARITY DANCE SHOW Featuring Strictly winner Vito Coppola and Luba Mushtuk. All profits will go to Macmillan Cancer Support, Tues 9 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

INTO THE NOVACENE Jack Philp Dance present a fast-paced production about the beginnings of a new age and new world, Thurs 11 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

ENGLISH YOUTH BALLET: SLEEPING BEAUTY A sumptuous production of a much-loved story, Fri 12 - Sat 13 Apr, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

Light Entertainment

BAILEY J MILLS: UNFILTERED & SCUMMY Comedy, play, gameshow and sketch show combine as audiences are taken on 'a rollercoaster journey through the world of the rising star and social sensation', Wed 10 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

JAMES PHELAN: THE GREATEST MAGICIAN Magic show which promises to leave you 'aching from laughter and dizzy in disbelief', Wed 10 Apr, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE DORIS DAY STORY Musical journey through the life of the film icon, Thurs 11 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

JAMES PHELAN: THE GREATEST

MAGICIAN Magic show which promises to leave you 'aching from laughter and dizzy in disbelief', Sat 13 Apr, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE

STORY Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about 'the scandal that has gripped the nation', Sat 13 Apr, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

THE NOISE NEXT DOOR Improvised show packed with off-the-cuff gags, scenes & songs, all of which are based on audience suggestions, Sat 13 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

CIRQUE: THE GREATEST SHOW Variety spectacular combining musical theatre & circus performances, Sun 14 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE

STORY Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about 'the scandal that has gripped the nation', Sun 14 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Events

2024 BETMGM PREMIER LEAGUE DARTS
Night 11 of the Premier League,

Thurs 11 Apr, Utilita Arena B'ham

BARRIOKE Singalong fun with 'Barry from EastEnders', Fri 12 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR

See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 12 - Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

STEP INTO STORIES An immersive experience with bestselling author MG Leonard, Sat 13 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE CRYSTAL MILE FACTORY WALKING

TOUR A walking tour of the Crystal Mile, exploring the history of the iconic glassmaking factories that once lined the canal in Stourbridge, Sat 13 Apr, Stourbridge Glass Museum

STEAM IN MINIATURE WEEKEND

See the streets filled with steam and smoke as miniature steam engines 'roam around the town', Sat 13 - Sun 14 Apr, Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge

KNITTED BLOSSOM AND POETRY TRAIL

Admire the blossom in the gardens and the knitted blossom displays produced by talented volunteers and local craft groups, Sat 13 Apr - Sun 9 June, Wightwick Manor, W'hampton



Mehek - Birmingham Hippodrome

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR

TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 14 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

THE MACABRE MUSEUM - STORIES OF

MURDER AND MAYHEM Hear tales of the real Peaky Blinders, find out about Birmingham's connection to Jack the Ripper, and check out some of the most notorious items in the archive, Sun 14 Apr, West Midlands

Police Museum, Birmingham

BRUM HIGHLIGHTS PADDLE TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Sun 14 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

WEDDING FAIR Featuring a selection of products and services, Sun 14 Apr, Bantock House, Wolverhampton

CRAFT & GIFT FAIR Featuring a wide range of stalls and gifts. Live music is provided by The Lavender Girls, Sun 14 Apr, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley



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Gigs

LULU Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

SLUM VILLAGE Tues 16 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

GEORGE BOOMSMA Tues 16 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

MARDUK + ORIGIN + DOODSWENS Wed 17 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

JIM MORAY + FRANKIE ARCHER Wed 17 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

KAISER CHIEFS Wed 17 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

THE BLUETONES Wed 17 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

ALFIE JUKES Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BAS Thurs 18 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

INGESTED + FALLUJAH + VULVODYNIA + MELANCOLIA Thurs 18 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

TWOMANTING Thurs 18 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ROD STEWART STORY Thurs 18 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

ERIC CANTONA Thurs 18 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

LEGEND - THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY Thurs 18 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

WHITNEY - QUEEN OF THE NIGHT Thurs 18 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

SINATRA: RAW Thurs 18 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

THE HARRY DIPLOCK TRIO Thurs 18 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

AUDREY CARMES + ROBERTO BIFFARINI Thurs 18 Apr, Unitarian Church, Shrewsbury

WE THREE KINGS OF ROCK N ROLL Thurs 18 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shrops

SEB LOWE Fri 19 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

CAM COLE Fri 19 Apr, O2 Academy, B'ham

ROBERT VINCENT Fri 19 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall



DESERT MONKEYS - ARCTIC MONKEYS TRIBUTE Fri 19 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE WHO TRIBUTE Fri 19 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

POM POKO + PERSONAL TRAINER Fri 19 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

JACK RUTTER Fri 19 Apr, The Albion, Burton upon Trent

COUNTRY SUPERSTARS Fri 19 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE MERSEY BEATLES Fri 19 Apr, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

BERNARD BUTLER Fri 19 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

ROXY MAGIC Fri 19 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

THE WEEKENDERS Fri 19 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

HOTROX Fri 19 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

CEREBRAL SCAR + IN WHICH IT BURNS + INHERITOR Fri 19 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

EVERYONE YOU KNOW Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JON PARDI + DILLON CARMICHAEL Sat 20 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JETHRO TULL Sat 20 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS Sat 20 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

BRAIN OF J - PEARL JAM TRIBUTE Sat 20 Apr,

The Robin, Bilston

IAN PROWSE Sat 20 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

CJ WILDHEART Sat 20 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

ANTARCTIC MONKEYS Sat 20 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

ROB LAMBERTI: PERFECTLY GEORGE Sat 20 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

LOVE DISTRACTION - HUMAN LEAGUE TRIBUTE Sat 20 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE LACK OF COMMITMENTS Sat 20 Apr, The Quarter at Pot Bank, Stoke-on-Trent

INTO THE SHADOWS Sat 20 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

DARK SIDE OF THE WALL - PINK FLOYD TRIBUTE Sat 20 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE SPIRIT OF RUSH Sat 20 Apr, The Station, Cannock

ELO EXPERIENCE Sat 20 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY Sat 20 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ADRIAN COX Sat 20 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

THE ENDINGS Sat 20 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

CHLOE MOGG Sat 20 Apr, Hermon Arts, Oswestry, North Shropshire

THE WARNING Sun 21 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

OKEAN ELZY Sun 21 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

ADMT Sun 21 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SEARCHERS Sun 21 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

KATE RUSBY Sun 21 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE K'S Sun 21 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

KING OF POP STARRING NAVI & JENNIFER BATTEN Sun 21 Apr, Aston Hall, Wrexham

Classical Music

LEONKORO QUARTET Featuring Jonathan Schwarz & Amelie Wallner (violins), Mayu Konoe (viola) & Lukas Schwarz (cello). Programme includes works by Schubert, Janáček & Beethoven, Mon 15 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

RBC LUNCHTIME MUSIC Featuring Jodie Lambert-Tandy (soprano) & Jonathan French (piano). Programme includes works by Handel, Dring, Verdi & more... Mon 15 Apr, Recital Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

QUEEN MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL SPRING CONCERT Mon 15 Apr, The Rock Church, Walsall

DRESDEN PHILHARMONIC Featuring Stanislav Kochanovsky (conductor) & Maria Loudenitch (violin). Programme includes works by Mussorgsky, Shostakovich & Tchaikovsky, Tues 16 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME PIANO CONCERT WITH HARRY NEWBOULD Tues 16 Apr, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

CBSO: BRITTEN & TCHAIKOVSKY Featuring Gergely Madaras (conductor) & Ian Bostridge (tenor). Programme also includes Thorvaldsdottir's Dreaming, Wed 17 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

A CONCERT FOR TWO PIANOS Featuring Peter Bradley-Fulgoni & John Moore (pianos). Programme includes works by Rachmaninoff, Mozart & Bach, Thurs 18 Apr, Alington Hall, Shrewsbury School

CBSO: CLASSIC FM HALL OF FAME Featuring Michael Seal (conductor), John Suchet (presenter) & Tessa Lark (violin). Programme includes works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Vaughan Williams, Debussy & more... Fri 19 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE CENTRAL BAND OF THE RAF & RBC WIND ORCHESTRA Featuring Lt Michael Parsons (Director). Programme includes works by Tomlinson & John Williams, Fri 19 Apr, Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

THE RUSTY PLAYERS ORCHESTRA SHOWCASE Featuring a massed orchestra of ensembles from South Birmingham, the Black Country, Carmarthen & Barry Island, Sat 20 Apr, Halesowen Town Hall

HALESOWEN CHORAL SOCIETY: REQUIEM MASSES Featuring Gemma King & Daniel Marles (soloists), Simon Palmer (organ) & Stephen Davis (conductor). Programme includes works by Bob Chilcott & Ian Higginson, Sat 20 Apr, St Margaret's Church, Hasbury

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA Featuring Juan Ortuño (conductor) & Ffian Jones (soloist). Programme includes works by Weber, Schumann & Beethoven, Sat 20 Apr, St John Fisher Catholic College, Newcastle, Staffordshire

SHREWSBURY ABBEY: SATURDAYS AT NOON Concert in celebration of the Royal College of Organists' International Organ Day, Sat 20 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

Comedy

RHOD GILBERT Tues 16 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MIKE RICE Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT + FRIENDS Wed 17 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COUNT ARTHUR STRONG Wed 17 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MARC JENNINGS & TAMER KATTAN Thurs 18 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SOPHIE MCCARTNEY Thurs 18 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



PETER KAY Fri 19 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

RUSSELL KANE Fri 19 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

TERRY ALDERTON, DAWN BAILEY, STEPHEN DODD & WAYNE BEESE Fri 19 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

DANIEL O'REILLY Fri 19 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

JO CAULFIELD Fri 19 Apr, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

FRANK SKINNER Sat 20 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

ALISON SPITTLE Sat 20 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

GARY DELANEY, DARIUS DAVIES, JENNY HART & WAYNE BEESE Sat 20 Apr, Brierley Hill Civic, Dudley

JACKIE FABULOUS Sat 20 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

HAYLEY ELLIS Sat 20 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

RUSSELL KANE Sat 20 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

JOSH PUGH, SEAN GORMAN, JENNY HART & CERYL NEMES Sun 21 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Theatre

WUTHERING HEIGHTS - THE PLAY

Chapterhouse Theatre Company presents its version of Emily Brontë's famous tale of love, obsession and revenge, Mon 15 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE DRIFTERS GIRL Acclaimed musical telling the story of The Drifters' legendary manager, Faye Treadwell, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE BOY AT THE BACK OF THE CLASS

Onjali Q Raúf's warm-hearted tale highlights the power of friendship and kindness in a world that doesn't always make sense, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

DROP THE DEAD DONKEY The smash-hit TV series comes to the stage. Featuring original cast members Susannah Doyle, Robert Duncan, Ingrid Lacey, Neil Pearson, Jeff Rawle, Stephen Tompkinson and Victoria Wicks, Tues 16 - Sat 20 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

ALL MY SONS Stoke Repertory Theatre present an amateur version of Arthur Miller's critically acclaimed play, Tues 16 Apr, Stoke Repertory Theatre

KINKY BOOTS Presented by Crewe Amateur Musicals Society, Wed 17 - Sat 20 Apr, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

REVISION ON TOUR: ROMEO & JULIET Dickens Theatre Company presents a new version of Shakespeare's famous tale of star-crossed lovers, Thurs 18 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION Stourbridge Theatre Company presents its version of Agatha Christie's courtroom drama, Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

CHICAGO Amateur version presented by Gatehouse Youth Theatre, Thurs 18 - Sat 20 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE BUDDHA OF SUBURBIA Emma Rice stage adaptation of Hanif Kureishi's exploration of family, friends, sex, theatre and belonging, Thurs 18 Apr - Sat 1 June, Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

IRISH ANNIE'S Ash Murphy's musical comedy, featuring live music by Shenanigans. Ricky Tomlinson & Catherine Rice star, Fri 19 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CINDERELLA AND THE TWO UGLY S!@S Adult pantomime, Sat 20 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

ELLEN KENT: MADAMA BUTTERFLY Acclaimed production of Puccini's heartbreaking love story. Korean soprano Elena Dee stars. Sung in Italian with English surtitles, Sun 21 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

TREASURE ISLAND A swashbuckling adventure featuring Davina the Sea

Witch and her notorious crew of pirates, Sun 21 Apr, Stourbridge Town Hall

Kids Theatre

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE LIVE Fun and education combine in this show for younger audiences. Expect 20ft liquid nitrogen clouds, oxygen & hydrogen balloons, fire tornados, hydrogen bottle rockets, igniting methane and a self-built hovercraft, Wed 17 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

CAPTAIN CALAMITY Magic and mayhem for younger audiences. Expect baffling balloon bursting, beautiful bubbles, silly science, gigglesome games, cheeky tunes and one or two custard pies... Sat 20 Apr, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

DEAR ZOO LIVE! Interactive theatre for younger audiences, based on Rod Campbell's much-loved lift-the-flap book, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

Dance

COPPELIA KVN Dance Company present Kevan Allen's contemporary reimagining of a classic ballet, Tues 16 Apr, Lichfield Garrick



U DANCE WEST MIDLANDS A platform for young dancers from across the region to showcase their skills, Sat 20 Apr, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

Light Entertainment

ALED JONES: FULL CIRCLE One-man show in which Aled shares tales from his remarkable career, Mon 15 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

CRAIG MORRIS: AN EVENING OF CLAIRVOYANCE Tues 16 Apr, Halesowen Town Hall

THE MUSIC & LAUGHTER SHOW Doug Parker, Steve Ashcroft & Martin Lewis present a fast-moving show of clean comedy and musical hits from the 1960s & 70s, Wed 17 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

DREAMCOAT STARS Keith Jack and stars of Joseph sing a hand-picked selection of hits, Wed 17 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE QUEEN'S CARTOONISTS Music from over 100 years of animation from around the world, performed live on stage, Fri 19 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

THE POST OFFICE SCANDAL - THE INSIDE STORY Journalist & broadcaster Nick Wallis reveals even more shocking details and stories about 'the scandal that has gripped the nation', Fri 19 Apr, Dudley Town Hall

BOWJANGLES IN DRACULA IN SPACE Featuring an irreverent, anarchic group of genre-spanners who present music, theatre and comedy 'in a way you've never seen before', Sat 20 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

PIAF: THE LIFE STORY OF EDITH PIAF One-woman show in which Sally Jones pays homage to the iconic French singer, Sat 20 Apr, Bilston Town Hall

STUART MICHAEL: PSYCHIC MEDIUM Sat 20 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

NEWLYWEDS: THE HONEYMOON TOUR Jamie Laing and Sophie Habbao share their 'hilarious experiences navigating married life', Sun 21 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

ALED JONES: FULL CIRCLE One-man show in which Aled shares stories from his remarkable career, Sun 21 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

Talks & Spoken Word

THE MAGIC OF TERRY PRATCHETT Join author and comedian Marc Burrows as he journeys through the life and work of the bestselling fantasy author, Thurs 18 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek

Events

WWE LIVE See your favourite WWE superstars in action, Wed 17 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

SPIRITUAL PSYCHIC NIGHT Marilyn & Tia - 'The Three Wishes' from Hereford are back after four previous sold-out appearances, Wed 17 Apr, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

SPRING STEAM GALA Featuring 72

'Fenchurch', Lambton Tank 29 and 6880 'Betton Grange', Thurs 18 - Sun 21 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 19 - Sun 21 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

ST GEORGES DAY EXTRAVAGANZA Medieval-themed fun for the whole family, Sat 20 Apr, Tamworth Castle Grounds

OKTAGON 56 MMA A fight card packed with British talent, Sat 20 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham

RUNWAY 25 PRESENTS OPPOSING SOLO An evening with former United States Navy Blue Angels display pilot Mark 'UTah' Provo, Sat 20 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

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

TUNNEL TOUR Opportunity to explore the tunnels beneath the Stourbridge Glass Museum, delving into the rich history of the Stuart Crystal factory that once stood on the site, Sat 20 Apr, Stourbridge Gass Museum

MAKE PLASTIC HISTORY Take part in a range of family-fun activities with researchers from Staffordshire University, Sat 20 Apr, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

RECYCLED BUGS Recycle plastic waste and, using clay, turn it into a bug, Sat 20 Apr, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

THE INTERNATIONAL CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE SHOW Featuring trade stands and autojumble plots, club stands and private-entry displays, the Classic Racer GP Paddock and plenty more, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Staffordshire County Showground

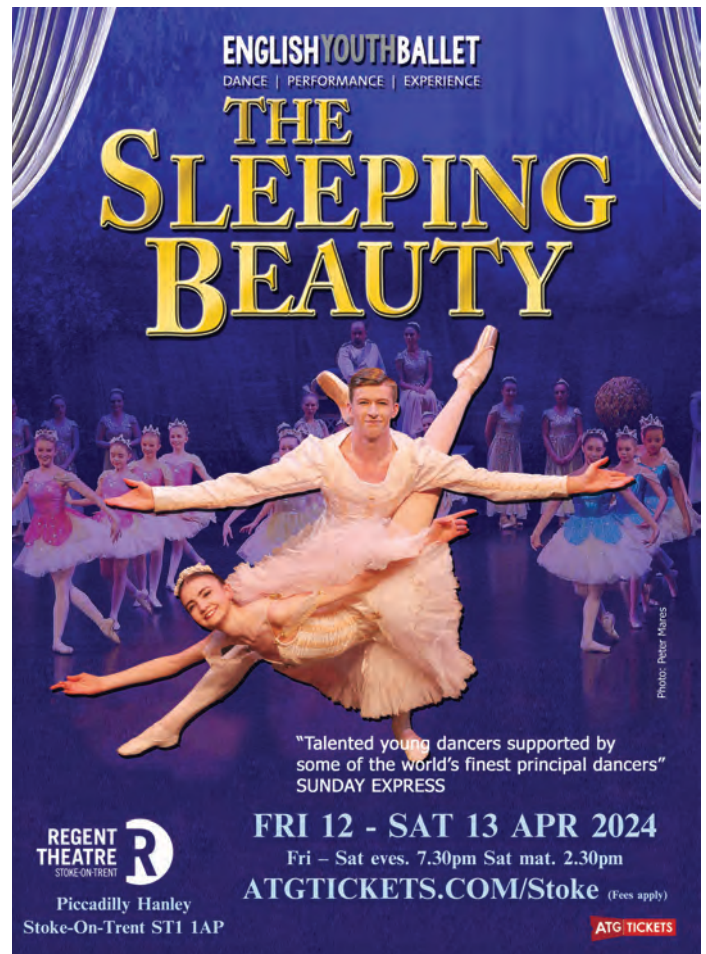
ST GEORGE'S DAY Celebrations for all the family in the castle courtyard, Sat 20 - Sun 21 Apr, Dudley Zoo & Castle

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 21 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

ST GEORGE'S DAY See the knight in armour and learn about the real St George, Sun 21 Apr, Oak House Museum, West Bromwich

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR Featuring traders from across the UK selling a wide range of items from yesteryear, Sun 21 Apr, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley

SPRING INTO ST GEORGE'S DAY Featuring jousting contests from the Knights of Nottingham, creative workshops, climbing wall, exotic zoo and stage show from Animal Guys, Sun 21 Apr, QEII Arena, Telford Town Park





The Leisure Society - Shrewsbury Abbey

Gigs

DANIEL BEDINGFIELD
Mon 22 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE ACADEMIC Mon 22 Apr, The Sugarmill, Stoke-on-Trent

HEJIRA - A CELEBRATION OF JONI MITCHELL Mon 22 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

JOHN MOSEDALE & RED MADOG Mon 22 Apr, Bill's Cafe, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

ROYAL SOUTH Tues 23 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BARRY STEELE - THE ROY ORBISON STORY Tues 23 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE MANATEES Wed 24 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

MICHAEL MARCAGI Wed 24 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE ACADEMIC Wed 24 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DAN WHITEHOUSE Wed 24 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

NORTHERN SOUL ORCHESTRATED Wed 24 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

FLEETWOOD MAC BY CANDLELIGHT Wed 24 - Sat 27 Apr, Lichfield Cathedral

BOOGIE WOOGIE DOUGIE Thurs 25 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

CHIP WICKHAM Thurs 25 Apr, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

EVERYTHING WE DO Thurs 25 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

ANSON SEABRA + BILLY LOCKETT Thurs 25 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

TOM WALKER Thurs 25 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

SAMARA JOY Thurs 25 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

BLACK TOP, XHOSA COLE, AND SOFIA JERNBERG Thurs 25 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

ULTIMATE BLINK-182 + PARAMORE GB Thurs 25 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

OLI BROWN & THE DEAD COLLECTIVE + ZAC AND THE NEW MEN Thurs 25 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

KULA SHAKER Thurs 25 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

ROGER PARKES Thurs 25 Apr, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

JOHN BRAMWELL & THE FULL HARMONIC TRIO Thurs 25 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

THRASHER Thurs 25 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

THE AC30S Fri 26 Apr, The Night Owl, B'ham

ORBITAL Fri 26 Apr, O2 Institute, Birmingham

PEARL SCAM + ANGRY HAIR Fri 26 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE KVB Fri 26 Apr, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

KAREN SHARP QUARTET Fri 26 Apr, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

LOST IN MUSIC Fri 26 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE GREATEST HITS OF MOTOWN Fri 26 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

LAUREN RUTH WARD Fri 26 Apr, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

THE DIANA ROSS STORY Fri 26 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

ICONIC 80S V 90S Fri 26 Apr, The Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BACK 2 THE OLDSKOOL Fri 26 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

AIRTIGHT 80S Fri 26 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

THE TREATMENT + BAR STOOL PREACHERS + JAMES & THE COLD GUN + FURY Fri 26 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, W'hampton

JAY PHELPS QUARTET Fri 26 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

NEW MODEL ARMY Fri 26 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

TATE MCRAE + CHARLIE ON A FRIDAY Fri 26 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

MIDNITE CITY + CONTINENTAL LOVERS Fri 26 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

COUNTRY ROADS Fri 26 Apr, Octagon, Stoke-on-Trent

SINGAROUND Fri 26 Apr, The Albion, Burton

upon Trent

CHIC OUT Fri 26 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

ULTIMATE MADNESS Fri 26 Apr, Two Gates Club, Tamworth

RISING FROM THE DEEP Fri 26 Apr, The Station, Cannock

THE RESIDENTS Fri 26 Apr, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

TALON Fri 26 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

INDIGO MACHINE Fri 26 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

REVOLUTION Fri 26 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

CHASING MALLORY + PASSIVE FIX Fri 26 Apr, Firefly, Oakengates, Shropshire

FLEETWOOD SHACK Fri 26 Apr, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth

MIND IMPERIUM + THIRTEENTH TURN + JEREMIAH A.D Fri 26 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar, Whitchurch, North Shropshire

LAURIE WRIGHT + THE MOLOTOVS Sat 27 Apr, Hare & Hounds, B'ham

SWIM SCHOOL Sat 27 Apr, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

DEFINITELY MIGHTBE + CHANGING MAN Sat 27 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

AKON Sat 27 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

TRANSGLOBAL UNDERGROUND Sat 27 Apr, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

KILL THE LIGHTS Sat 27 Apr, The Asylum, Birmingham

AVERAGE WHITE BAND Sat 27 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JALEN NGONDA Sat 27 Apr, The Crossing, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE ELO EXPERIENCE Sat 27 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

MAGGIE MAY - THE ROD STEWART YEARS Sat 27 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

SUPERSONIC QUEEN Sat 27 Apr, The

Rhodehouse, Sutton Coldfield

BUDDY HOLLY'S WINTER DANCE PARTY Sat 27 Apr, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

KILLERSTREAM Sat 27 Apr, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

COUNTERFEIT STONES Sat 27 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

GIANT AND THE GEORGES Sat 27 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

BOB VYLAN + AS DECEMBER FALLS + BLACKGOLD + SAINT AGNES + CALVA LOUISE + NORTH ATLAS Sat 27 Apr, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

TRAIN + ILSEY Sat 27 Apr, The Halls, Wolverhampton

HARMONY REGGAE Sat 27 Apr, Churchill's, Wednesbury

CHIC OUT Sat 27 Apr, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE DIANA ROSS STORY Sat 27 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

KILLER RHAPSODY - QUEEN TRIBUTE Sat 27 Apr, Mitchell Arts Centre, Stoke-on-Trent

CAVEGIRL AND THE NEANDERGALS Sat 27 Apr, The Underground, Stoke-on-Trent

PAUL WALKER & KAREN PFEIFFER Sat 27 Apr, Room Broughton Parish Room, Wetwood, Staffs

CHINA CRISIS Sat 27 Apr, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs

A KICK UP THE 80S Sat 27 Apr, The Station, Cannock

THE LEISURE SOCIETY Sat 27 Apr, Shrewsbury Abbey

GOOD TO GO Sat 27 Apr, Albert's Shed, Shrewsbury

RED BY NIGHT Sat 27 Apr, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED? - JIMI HENDRIX TRIBUTE Sat 27 Apr, Firefly, Oakengates, Shropshire

ANY GIVEN REASON + CARNIVWHORE Sat 27 Apr, Percy's Cafe Bar,

Whitchurch, North Shropshire

THE STORY OF THE DUBLINERS Sun 28 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

THE ULTIMATE COMMITMENTS & BLUES BROTHERS EXPERIENCE Sun 28 Apr, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

THE BUSKATEERS Sun 28 Apr, Katie Fitzgerald's, Stourbridge

REBECCA WING Sun 28 Apr, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

CALYPSO MOON Sun 28 Apr, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

RICH PARSONS Sun 28 Apr, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE TAKE THAT EXPERIENCE Sun 28 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

JOSHUA BURNELL + ANNIE DRESSNER Sun 28 Apr, The Hive, Shrewsbury

TAYLORMANIA Sun 28 Apr, Aston Hall, Wrexham

OLIVIA DEAN Mon 29 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham



ARI ABDUL Mon 29 Apr, O2 Institute, B'ham

KATHRYN ROBERTS AND SEAN LAKEMAN Mon 29 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), B'ham

MADULA Mon 29 Apr, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

LEGENDS OF AMERICAN COUNTRY Mon 29 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

DARIUS RUCKER Tues 30 Apr, O2 Academy, Birmingham

CHARLES ESTEN Tues 30 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

FOCUS Tues 30 Apr, The Robin, Bilston

KATHRYN ROBERTS & SEAN LAKEMAN Tues 30 Apr, Birchmeadow Centre, Broseley, Shropshire

Classical Music

LUNCHTIME ORGAN CONCERT Featuring Peter Holder of Westminster Abbey. Programme includes works by Handel, Byrd, Harris, Elgar, Weir & Walton, Mon 22 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

CLIO DUO Featuring Inis Oírr Asano (viola) & Alexia Daphne Eleftheriadou (piano), Tues 23 Apr, St Alkmund's Church, Shrewsbury

CBSO: BRUCKNER, SYMPHONY NO. 7 Featuring Markus Stenz (conductor) & James Ehnes (violin). Programme also includes R Schumann's Violin Concerto, Thurs 25 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SINFONIA OF BIRMINGHAM: OSCAR WINNERS Featuring Michael Seal (conductor & narrator). Programme includes works by Newman, Williams, Powell, Bernstein & more... Sat 27 Apr, Bradshaw Hall, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR: COME & SING! Annual day of singing led by Paul Spicer. All singers welcome. Programme comprises Puccini's Messa di Gloria, Sat 27 Apr, Wyldre Green United Reform Church, Sutton Coldfield

STAFFORD CHORAL SOCIETY: MOZART'S REQUIEM Featuring Charlie Perry (conductor) & the British Sinfonietta. Programme includes works by Mozart, Cadara & Wainwright-Johnston, Sat 27 Apr, Rising Brook Community Church, Stafford

ECHO RISING STARS: JÚLIA PUSKER Programme includes works by L Boulanger, Debussy, E Tanguy, Brahms & more... Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO SYMPHONIC SESSIONS: IN C Programme includes works by Terry Riley & Andy Akiho alongside a DJ set from Echo Juliet, Sun 28 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CANDLELIGHT: A NIGHT AT THE OPERA Programme includes works by Puccini, Delibes, Mozart, Rossini & more... Sun 28 Apr, Lichfield Cathedral

Comedy

TINA BURNER Mon 22 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

MAX AMINI Tues 23 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall

JACKIE FABULOUS Tues 23 Apr, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

ARI ELDJÁRN Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JOE LYCETT & FRIENDS Wed 24 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

TOMMY TIERNAN Wed 24 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

RICHARD HERRING Wed 24 Apr, Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield



SIMON MUNNERY Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, JASON SALMON & SLIM Thurs 25 Apr, The Glee Club, B'ham

AL MURRAY Thurs 25 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

ALASDAIR BECKETT-KING Thurs 25 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ED PATRICK Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON, SLIM & LOVELL SMITH Fri 26 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PAWEŁ CHAŁUPKA & TOMASZ BORAS Fri 26 Apr, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Fri 26 Apr, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

AMY MATTHEWS, MATT BRAGG, JASON SALMON & SLIM Sat 27 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

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

TEZ ILYAS, FAIZAN SHAH, AATIF NAWAZ & NABIL ABDULRASHID Sun 28 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JACKIE FABULOUS Tues 30 Apr, The Glee Club, Birmingham

Theatre

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR New production of Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's iconic rock opera, Mon 22 - Sat 27 Apr, Birmingham Hippodrome

CLUEDO 2 Casualty's Jason Durr & Strictly champion Ellie Leach star in a new whodunnit packed with murder, mystery and secret passageways, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LIFE OF PI 'Jaw-dropping visuals and world-class puppetry' combine in an award-winning production based on Yann Martel's book, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



THE ADDAMS FAMILY Amateur production presented by Bournville Musical Theatre Company, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE WOMAN IN BLACK Susan Hill's chilling ghost story, Tues 23 - Sat 27 Apr, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

A BUNCH OF AMATEURS Highbury Players present an amateur version of Ian Hislop & Nick Newman's comedy, Tues 23 Apr - Sat 4 May, Highbury Theatre Centre, Sutton Coldfield

THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT An empowering story about friendship, adolescence, and life not going to plan... Wed 24 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

BEHOLD YE RAMBLERS Neil Gore's new play about The Clarion newspaper and the organisations formed by its readership... Wed 24 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE BALD PRIMA DONNA Birmingham Newman University Drama Students present an amateur version of Eugene Ionesco's satire concerning the hollowness and banality of societal customs and communication, Thurs 25 - Fri 26 Apr, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

BLEAK EXPECTATIONS Tower Players present Mark Evans' chaotic caper based on the award-winning BBC Radio Four series, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Apr, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

BILLY LIAR Amateur version presented by The Little Theatre, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Apr, The Little Theatre, Donnington

HOUDINI'S GREATEST ESCAPE The story of 'the world's greatest entertainer', performed by New Old Friends in association with Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

REVISION ON TOUR: MACBETH Dickens Theatre Company present a fresh version of the Bard's blood-spattered tragedy, Mon 29 - Tues 30 Apr, The Alexandra, Birmingham

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

Kids Theatre

DISNEY'S FROZEN JR Amateur version presented by Ludwig Theatre Arts, Thurs 25 - Sat 27 Apr, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

CARDBOARD CARNIVAL Lempen Puppet Theatre Company present an accessible, visual production using cardboard, movement & invention, Fri 26 Apr, Glasshouse Arts Centre,

Stourbridge

THE LITTLE PRINCE Lyngo Theatre & Norwich Puppet Theatre fuse puppetry and song to tell the story of how the boy who fell to Earth teaches his friend the Aviator about love, life and real happiness, Sat 27 Apr, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THERE WAS AN OLD LADY WHO SWALLOWED A FLY The People's Theatre Company combine animation and puppetry in an interactive retelling of a classic children's tale, Sat 27 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

LITTLE BIG DANCE: CLUB ORIGAMI Dance, fashion and live music meet the magic of origami in an inspiring adventure which takes place in a land made purely of paper and play, Sat 27 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

Dance

GREAT BIG DANCE OFF - WEST MIDLANDS HEAT Primary and secondary schools from across the region compete against one another, Mon 22 Apr, The Alexandra, B'ham

VERVE: TRIPLE BILL Northern School of Contemporary Dance presents a 'bold' programme of dance, including new commissions from Matteo Marfoggia & Joy Alpuerto Ritter, Thurs 25 Apr, Arena Theatre, W'hampton

ALICE IN THE HOOD Lewis Carroll's classic tale gets a hip-hop makeover by street-dance students from RockSchool UK, Sun 28 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

SHOWMAN: AN EVENING WITH ANTON DU BEKE Evening of song, dance & laughter with special guest Lance Ellington, Mon 29 Apr, Lichfield Garrick

SHOWMAN: AN EVENING WITH ANTON DU BEKE Evening of song, dance & laughter with special guest Lance Ellington, Tues 30 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury



Light Entertainment

TONY STOCKWELL An evening of mediumship, Mon 22 Apr, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

RACHEL STOCKDALE: FAT CHANCE

Funny, celebratory and politically powerful one-woman play exploring Rachel's true-life experience of weight gain, Wed 24 Apr, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

FLEETWOOD MAC BY CANDLELIGHT

Featuring a cast of West End singers and a live band, Wed 24 - Sat 27 April, Lichfield Cathedral

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL OVO High-energy production providing a colourful intrusion into a day in the life of insects, Thurs 25 - Sun 28 Apr, Utilita Arena Birmingham

DREAMCOAT STARS Keith Jack and stars of Joseph sing a hand-picked selection of hits, Thurs 25 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

BOTTOMS UP: BURLESQUE & CABARET

Step into a world of glitz and glamour as the creme de la creme of the cabaret world take to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CLOSET CONFESSIONS LIVE Candice Brathwaite (author, journalist & TV presenter) and Coco Sarel (actor and TikTok sensation) bring their hit podcast to the stage, Fri 26 Apr, Birmingham Town Hall



FROM THE HEART: PAUL POTTS THE UK TOUR 2024 Fri 26 Apr, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

BURNIN' LOVE BINGO Join award-winning character comedian Tracey Collins (Shell Suit Cher & Audrey Heartburn) as she brings her latest 'ridiculous' act, Elvis Lesley, to the stage, Sat 27 Apr, Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

FROM THE HEART: PAUL POTTS THE UK TOUR 2024 Sat 27 Apr, Festival Drayton, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

HAGS: A MAGICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Three fearless females present an evening of magic tricks, physical comedy & live music, Sat 27 Apr, Thimblemill Library, Smethwick



TRÈS TRÈS CABARET A 'silly & saucy' night to tickle your fancy, Sat 27 Apr, The Hub @ St Mary's, Lichfield

STAND BY YOUR NAN Rachel

Sambrooks tells tales that span Quinton, Warley Woods, the 1930s, both World Wars and Attingham Park in the 1960s, Sat 27 Apr, Smethwick Heritage Centre

BEAR GRYLLS: THE NEVER GIVE UP TOUR

Join the global adventurer in a show designed to inspire and captivate audiences of all ages, Sat 27 Apr, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

THE OPERA BOYS: A NIGHT AT THE MUSICALS

Sun 28 Apr, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

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

THAT'LL BE THE DAY Comedy sketches, impersonations and music combine in a popular touring show celebrating iconic moments in pop culture from the 1950s through to the 1980s, Tues 30 Apr - Wed 1 May, Lichfield Garrick

Talks & Spoken Word

HOLLIE MCNISH: THE LOBSTER TOUR

Join the bestselling writer as she talks about her brand-new book, *Lobster And Other Things I'm Learning To Love*, Sun 28 Apr, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Events

THE RAF IN THE MIDLANDS: HISTORY AND LEGACY WORKSHOP

Event exploring the history and legacy of the RAF in the Midlands, Thurs 25 Apr, The Royal Air Force Museum Midlands, Cosford

SHUTS & PASSAGES - GUIDED WALKING TOUR

Walking tour through some of the many famous shuts and passages of Shrewsbury, Fri 26 Apr, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

FRIDAY TWILIGHT - INDIAN AND ENGLISH CULTURAL DANCE FUSION EVENING

Innovative fusion of classical South Indian Bharatanatyam dancing with traditional English morris dancing, Fri 26 Apr, The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

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

BUSTLING BIRMINGHAM KAYAK TOUR

See Birmingham from a different perspective, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Roundhouse, Birmingham

ESL ONE BIRMINGHAM 2024 An offline British tournament organised by ESL Gaming, Fri 26 - Sun 28 Apr, Resorts World Arena, Birmingham



Cirque du Soleil OVO - Utilita Arena Birmingham

ORIENTAL EXPRESS Chinese-inspired dining experience, Sat 27 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

FISH AND CHIP SPECIAL Eat fish & chips while enjoying a train ride from Spring Village to Horsehay & Dawley via Lawley Village, Sat 27 Apr, Telford Steam Railway

ARTISAN, CRAFT AND GIFT MARKET

Talented makers, creators and enterprises from across the region sell their wares, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Bantock House, Wolverhampton

MODEL WORLD LIVE Bringing together railway and scale modellers, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, NEC, Birmingham

STAFFORDSHIRE WELL BEING SHOW

Event focusing on wellbeing and alternative ways to a better lifestyle, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Staffordshire County Showground, Stafford

GIN TRAIN

Learn about the history of gin whilst enjoying a selection of drinks, Sat 27 - Sun 28 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

THE WORLD OF PETER RABBIT - STORY

TIME TRAIL Take advantage of photo opportunities and sample a selection of fun activities as you immerse yourself in the world of Peter Rabbit, Sat 27 Apr - Sun 30 June, Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

ORIGINS OF MIDDLE-EARTH: JRR TOLKIEN AND SAREHOLE GUIDED WALK

Guided walk introducing the scenery that inspired JRR Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child, Sun 28 Apr, Sarehole Mill, B'ham

ITALIAN AUTORAIL A gathering of over 100 Italian road vehicles from across the decades. Organised in collaboration with the Italian AutoMoto Club, Sun 28 Apr, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, Nr Kidderminster

BIKE 4 LIFE One of the UK's most popular and biggest ride-outs, attracting more than 6,000 bikers and pillions, Sun 28 Apr, Weston Park, Shropshire

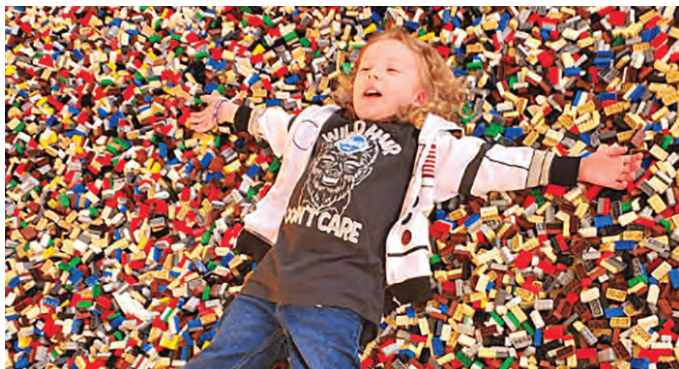
SPRING VEGAN MARKET Featuring street food, drinks, artisan traders, children's entertainment and a live DJ, Sun 28 Apr, Himley Hall & Park, Dudley



Houdini's Greatest Escape - Lichfield Garrick

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Win! A family ticket to Brick Fest Live

The world's largest hands-on LEGO® event, Brick Fest Live, is set to make its UK debut at the NEC this spring. A roaring success across the pond, the event will showcase in Birmingham from 25 to 27 May, with over a million LEGO® bricks on display and ready for play.

Competition closes Friday 10 May



Win! Two tickets to see 101 Dalmatians: The Musical

Telling the story of fashionista Cruella de Vil's attempts to swipe all the Dalmatian puppies in town to create a fabulous fur coat for herself, this hit musical visits the region direct from London's West End.

We have two tickets to give away for the show when it stops off at The Alexandra, Birmingham on Tuesday 2 July.

Competition closes Friday 21 June



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