

Birmingham

ISSUE 456 JANUARY 2025

What's On

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

birminghamwhatson.co.uk



INDEPENDENT | DAILY MIRROR | DAILY EXPRESS | MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS | METRO

‘BACK WITH A BANG AND A VENGEANCE’
MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS

Bat out of Hell

THE AWARD-WINNING HIT MUSICAL
FEATURING JIM STEINMAN & Meat Loaf's GREATEST HITS

THE ALEXANDRA BIRMINGHAM
AN ATG ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

MON 10 - SAT 22 FEB
atgtickets.com/birmingham

Tour Coat 2023 - photography by Chris Davis Studio

inside:

PERPETUAL MOTION

Motionhouse premiere
dance-circus production



TERRIBLE INFLUENCE

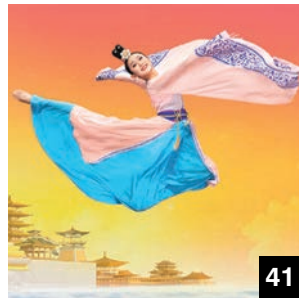
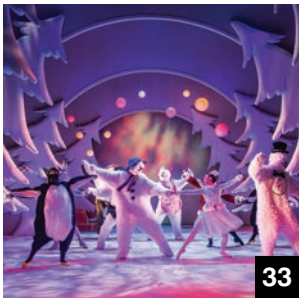
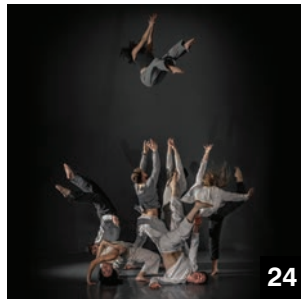
Dan & Phil bring their latest
show to Symphony Hall



AUTOSPORT ACTION

Europe's biggest motorsport
exhibition returns to the NEC





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What's On

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Birmingham What's On



Busted star set to battle Martians in Birmingham!

Busted and Fightstar frontman Charlie Simpson is set to battle a Martian invasion in Birmingham this spring, when he stars in a new touring production of Jeff Wayne's iconic stage show, *The War Of The Worlds*. Charlie will play *The Song Thoughts of the Journalist*, a role previously taken by Brian McFadden, Marti Pellow and Justin Hayward. The much-loved show - which visits the city's bp pulse LIVE venue on Friday 18 April - also features *EastEnders* and *Strictly* star Maisie Smith, *The Wanted*'s Max George and Enter Shikari keyboard player Rou Reynolds. For further information and to purchase tickets, visit thewaroftheworlds.com

Orchestra to explore Friends In Love And War

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO) will this month provide a musical response to an exhibition on display at the city's Ikon art gallery. Presented as part of their CBSO Explores series, the orchestra will perform a concert inspired by *Friends In Love And War - L'Éloge des meilleur-es ennemi-es*, which is showing at Ikon until Sunday 23 February. The 11 January concert, taking place at Symphony Hall, will include a programme of exploratory French and British pieces. Tickets are available at ikon-gallery.org



Entries now open for 2025 Great Birmingham Run

Entries for this year's AJ Bell Great Birmingham Run, taking place on Sunday 4 May, are now open. In a change from previous years, the Junior & Mini event will be held the day before (on Saturday the 3rd) at the Alexander Stadium. To find out more about the switch, and the 10k and half-marathon runs - and how to enter - visit greatrun.org

Two Birmingham dates for Pink Floyd tribute stars

Tribute favourites The Australian Pink Floyd Show will play Birmingham's Symphony Hall on two dates in the autumn, to mark the 50th anniversary of iconic Pink Floyd album *Wish You Were Here*. The talented counterfeits visit the second city on Monday 20 October and Monday 17 November. They will perform the album in full alongside a selection of Pink Floyd's greatest hits. Tickets can be purchased at bmusic.co.uk



Applications now live for gardening competition

Fancy sharing your garden design talent with tens of thousands of gardening enthusiasts? If so, then be sure to apply for the BBC Gardeners' World Live Beautiful Borders competition. The ever-popular show returns to the NEC Birmingham from Thursday 12 to Sunday 15 June and marks the height of the summer gardening season. To enter a Beautiful Border for the 2025 edition of the event, visit bbcgardenersworldlive.com and download the application form.

Brick Bank launched at British Motor Museum

The British Motor Museum in Gaydon, Warwickshire, has launched a new Brick Bank scheme, encouraging visitors to donate their unwanted or unused Lego bricks 'for a fantastic cause'. Museum volunteers will collate the bricks

into build kits, which will then be donated to children in the area via local 'community pantries'... To find out more about how to donate, visit britishmotormuseum.co.uk

The Fast Show is back!

A live version of the BBC's much-loved 1990s television sketch series *The Fast Show* is heading out on tour in the autumn. Stopping off at Birmingham's Symphony Hall on Thursday 13 November, *An Evening With The Fast Show* will see co-creators Charlie Higson and Paul Whitehouse reunite with Simon Day, John Thomson, Arabella Weir and Mark Williams. More information and tickets are available at Symphony Hall's website: bmusic.co.uk

Springtime date for trio of creative craft events

The Creative Crafts Show, Sewing For Pleasure and Fashion And Embroidery are returning to Birmingham's NEC in the early spring. The ever-popular trio of shows will take over the venue from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 March. To find out more and book your tickets, visit thenec.co.uk



Russell Watson's Evolution tour

Acclaimed tenor Russell Watson will visit three Midlands venues in October as part of a major tour celebrating the 25th anniversary of his groundbreaking debut album, *The Voice*.

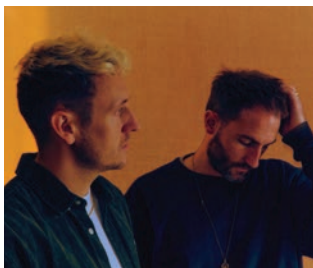
Russell will stop off at Shrewsbury's Theatre Severn on Monday the 20th & Tuesday the 21st, Stoke's Victoria Hall on Friday the 24th, and University of Wolverhampton at The Halls on Friday the 31st. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit the website aegrepresents.co.uk



Maribou State to play Mostly Jazz

Acclaimed dance duo Maribou State are the latest big-name headliners announced for 2025's Mostly Jazz Funk & Soul Festival (Birmingham's Moseley Park & Pool, Friday 11 - Sunday 13 July).

The duo join a line-up that also features Ezra Collective, War, Goldie, Seun Kuti & Egypt 80, and DJ Craig Charles. For more information and tickets, visit mostlyjazz.co.uk



The stars come out for Strictly Live at Birmingham venue

The live tour of *Strictly Come Dancing* foxtrots its way into Birmingham this month. Taking place at the city's Utilita Arena from Friday the 17th to Sunday the 19th, the show will see host Janette Manrara joined by judges

Shirley Ballas, Anton Du Beke, Craig Revel Horwood and Motsi Mabuse. To find out which celebrities are participating in this year's live tour, and to book your tickets, visit StrictlyComeDancingLive.com



Four-day festival to light up Brum

A series of artworks will illuminate Birmingham next month when local producing house OPUS (Outdoor Places Unusual Spaces) present a four-day 'light festival'. The event will feature eight light artworks, located within walking distance of each other, and an accompanying programme of events. Birmingham Light Festival takes place across the city from Wednesday 19 to Saturday 22 February.

Half-season tickets now on sale for Aston Villa Women's matches

Football fans are being invited to join Aston Villa Women at Villa Park for six fixtures in the Women's Super League. A half-season ticket package comes complete with 'a fantastic matchday experience and plenty of additional benefits'. Fixtures include Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester City, and the ticket can be bought online until Friday 24 January by visiting tickets.avfc.co.uk



Funding to help uncover 'overlooked local stories'

Historic England has announced new funding for three creative, youth-led projects in the West Midlands.



The History In The Making programme empowers under-represented young people to explore and celebrate their local hidden histories, in the process finding original ways to commemorate them.

Two of the funded projects are taking place in the rural Staffordshire Moorlands. One will bring together LGBTQIA+ young people to explore local queer history; the other aims to connect asylum-seeking young people to the local heritage.

The third West Midlands-based project will see young people exploring the history of Birmingham's Aston Hall in relation to local migrant communities.

Hippodrome announces new shows for 2025

Birmingham Hippodrome's Christmas 2025 pantomime will see theatre-goers joining comedy legend Matt Slack for a fun-packed adventure in Sherwood Forest.

The venue's sure-to-be-spectacular production of Robin Hood, running from Saturday 20 December to Sunday 1 February 2026, will bring to a close a year of quality programming at the Hurst Street theatre. Among the highlights for 2025 are: RuPaul's Drag Race Werq The World Tour, Motionhouse dance-circus company's Hidden, stage adaptations of all three of Nick Sharratt's Shark In The Park books, and blockbuster musicals including Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Calamity Jane, Only Fools And Horses (starring Paul Whitehouse, pictured below), Kinky Boots, & Juliet, Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Moulin Rouge and Mary Poppins.

Tickets for all shows can be purchased by visiting birminghamhippodrome.com



Steps musical heading for Wolverhampton in 2026

UK pop band Steps' official musical, Here & Now, is to revisit the Midlands in 2026, playing Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 10 to Sunday 15 March.

The hit show, which premiered in the region in autumn 2024, tells the story of four

supermarket colleagues - Caz, Vel, Neeta and Robbie - as they steer their way through a summer filled with happiness, heartache, hurt and humour.

Tickets for the show can be purchased by visiting grandtheatre.co.uk

Tattoo to commemorate the end of World War Two

Birmingham International Tattoo will return next month with 'three hours of pomp, pageantry and spectacle' to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.



Taking place at the city's bp pulse LIVE venue on Saturday 8 & Sunday 9 February, the 2025 edition of the hugely popular extravaganza will feature 'massed marching bands, the skirl of the pipes and drums, the fast-paced action of the field gun and flyball dog races, and the pomp and pageantry of the massed standard bearers'.

To purchase tickets, visit bhamtattoo.com

Springtime Midlands date for Celtic punk favourites

Anglo-Irish Celtic punk favourites The Pogues are heading to Birmingham to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their iconic album Rum Sodomy & The Lash.

The band stop off at the city's O2 Academy on Friday 2 May. Tickets are available at tix.to/ThePogues

Smethwick Puppetry Festival back next month

Black Country Touring's popular Smethwick Puppetry Festival returns next month. Featuring interactive puppetry workshops, an exhibition, and puppet theatre not only for children but also teenagers and adults, the event runs at community venues across Smethwick and Bearwood during February half term (Saturday 15 - Sunday 23 February). For more details about the festival, visit the website bctouring.org.uk/puppet



Showjumping to return to Shrewsbury Flower Show

Organisers of Shrewsbury Flower Show have announced that Pony Club showjumping will make a welcome return in 2025, with online entries available from Saturday 1 February. The Flower Show takes place in the town's Quarry Park on Friday 8 & Saturday 9 August. Tickets costing £25 are available until Monday 31 March, after which time the cost rises to £30. For further information and to book tickets, visit shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk

B:Music

Town Hall & Symphony Hall

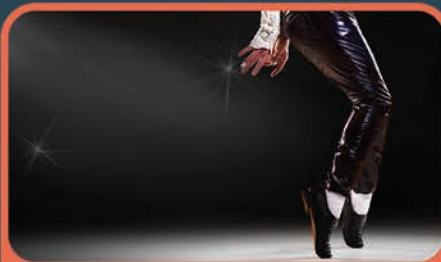
f @bmusicltd

ig @bmusic_ltd

☎ 0121 7803333



The Classic Rock Show
12 Jan | Symphony Hall



Man In The Mirror
15 Jan | Town Hall



Veganuary starts here!
B:Eats at Symphony Hall:
11am-4pm Mon-Sat & pre-show



**A Tribute to The Carpenters
ft The British Carpenters**
16 Jan | Town Hall



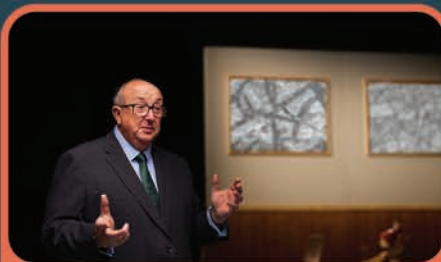
Magic of Motown
17 Jan | Symphony Hall



Get It On! The Glam Rock Show
17 Jan | Town Hall



**Sweet Caroline:
A Tribute to Neil Diamond**
18 Jan | Town Hall



The Makings of a Murderer 2
25 Jan | Town Hall



Boyzlife
30 Jan | Symphony Hall



Thank You For The Music
31 Jan | Town Hall



German National Orchestra | 16 Jan | Symphony Hall
Britten: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra | Holst: The Planets
Kids Go Free & £5 tickets for 16-30 year olds. See website for details

bmusic.co.uk

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

Kerry Godliman heads to the region with new show

Comedian Kerry Godliman will visit Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre in the spring (Saturday 17 May) with brand-new show *Bandwidth*.



One of the stars of Ricky Gervais' hit Netflix series *After Life*, Kerry describes her latest evening of comedy as the next stand-up instalment of the longest-running sitcom in her head. Further information and tickets are available at kerrygodliman.com

Fawlty Towers - The Play to stop off in the region

John Cleese's *Fawlty Towers - The Play* is coming to the Midlands in 2026. A two-hour stage version of the much-loved 1970s BBC TV sitcom - adapted by original co-creator & star Cleese - the show visits Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre from Tuesday 10 to Saturday 21 February, Stoke-on-Trent's Regent Theatre the following week (Tuesday the 24th to Saturday the 28th), and Birmingham's The Alexandra from Tuesday 17 to Saturday 21 March. Ticket information is available by visiting the theatres' websites.

Dance-theatre work to be premiered in Birmingham

A new dance-theatre production exploring 'the conditioned patriarchy enforced by women within family structures' will premiere in Birmingham in the spring, ahead of an extensive UK tour. Created by choreographer Amina Khayyam, loosely based on Federico García Lorca's *The House Of Bernarda Alba*, and set in contemporary inner-city marginalised new migrant communities, Bibi Rukiya's *Reckless Daughter* shows at Birmingham Hippodrome on Thursday 22 & Friday 23 May. To find out more and purchase tickets, visit the theatre's website.



Barber Institute to close again at the end of January

Birmingham's Barber Institute of Fine Arts will close again at the end of January to allow the next major phase of essential building improvements to get under way. The Midlands' very own mini National Gallery, located on the University of Birmingham's Edgbaston campus, contains masterpieces by most of the major names in Western art. So if you'd like to check out artwork by the likes of Gainsborough, Gauguin, Manet, Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Rossetti, Rubens, Toulouse-Lautrec and

Turner, you have until the 26th of the month (it's a Sunday) to do so. The gallery is also currently hosting a world-first exhibition. A multi-sensory exploration of how Victorian-period artists depicted aromas and smells in art, *Scent And The Art Of The Pre-Raphaelites* features a unique scent experience: three new perfumes have been created especially for the show to help bring to life two of the paintings. The Barber will re-open its doors in spring 2026.

Ikon partners university and opens on Tuesdays

A new partnership between Ikon and Birmingham City University (BCU) means the popular art gallery is now open for an extra day each week. BCU Tuesdays will continue until September and provide the general public with an extra opportunity to check out the venue's exhibitions for free. The new partnership will also see Ikon and BCU co-producing a 'creative careers fair' in the summer. The event will showcase professional development and employment opportunities within the West Midlands' arts & cultural sector.

Summertime pirate fun for PAW Patrol favourites

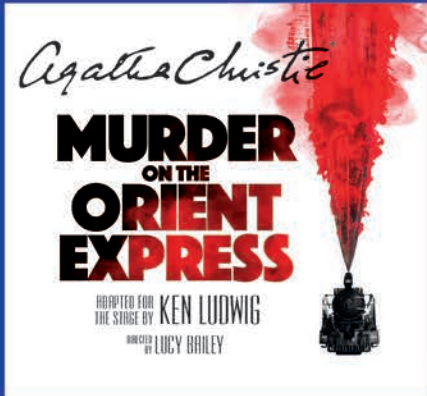
PAW Patrol is heading back to the Midlands this summer with brand-new production *The Great Pirate Adventure*. Based on Nickelodeon's top-rated animated pre-school series, the 'action-packed, music-filled' stage show visits Birmingham's Utilita Arena on Saturday 16 August. For more information and tickets, visit the venue's website.

Kabaddi World Cup event coming to the Midlands

The Kabaddi World Cup is coming to the West Midlands. Kabaddi is an ancient contact sport that sees teams broken down into raiders and defenders. Each team aims to score points by entering opposition territory, tagging an opponent, and making it back into their own half without being tackled to the ground. The 2025 World Cup competition will take place from Monday 17 to Sunday 23 March at venues across the West Midlands, with the semi-finals and final being held at Wolverhampton's Aldersley Stadium. Teams from 16 participating nations will be taking part in the contest. To find out more about the sport and the forthcoming World Cup, and to purchase tickets, visit kabaddiworldcup2025.com



A SPARKLING SEASON AWAITS...



Tue 28 Jan – Sat 1 Feb



Mon 10 – Sat 22 Feb
Sat 15 Feb 2.30pm CAP Thu 20 Feb 7.30pm



Tue 11 – Sat 15 Mar



Mon 17 – Sat 22 Mar



Tue 1 – Sat 5 Apr



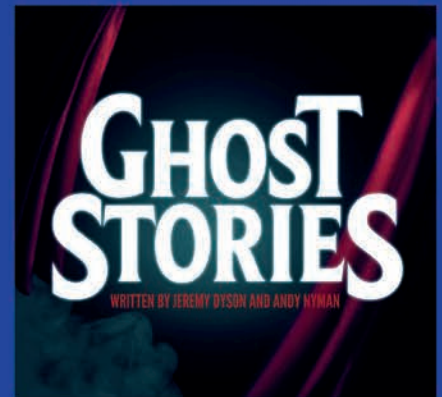
Mon 14 – Sat 19 Apr
Sat 19 Apr 2.30pm



Tue 29 Apr – Sat 3 May
Sat 3 May 2.30pm



Tue 6 – Sat 10 May
CAP Thu 8 May 7.30pm



Tue 20 – Sat 24 May
Sat 24 May 2.30pm

ATG TICKETS

THE
ALEXANDRA
BIRMINGHAM
AN ATG ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

atgtickets.com/birmingham*

*Fees apply

TOTO RIDING THE YACHT ROCK WAVE

The American rock band are finally getting the 'love and respect' they deserve...



California band Toto have been playing soft rock since the mid-1970s, but in more recent times, their sound has been re-labelled 'yacht rock'. The term reflects the genre's curious connection to the somewhat privileged and hedonistic southern Californian leisure activity of boating! More than 40 years after achieving global recognition with hit song Africa, Toto are enjoying a real resurgence - much to the delight of guitarist & founder member Steve Lukather...

These are unexpectedly active and exciting times for American 'yacht rock' outfit Toto. Rapidly approaching their 50th anniversary, the band are enjoying a huge resurgence in popularity, playing some of the biggest shows of their career, with streaming figures counted in billions. Most of their audience weren't even alive in the late 70s and early 80s when Toto's brand of slickly produced music was typically derided by the press, but Steve 'Luke' Lukather - the band's chatty guitarist and only surviving founder member - has scant time to stay bitter about their treatment back in the day.

"We're really enjoying this wave of success that we have honestly worked really hard for. We're finally getting some love and respect. The hipster punk rock journalists who hated our guts and refused to even mention us are either dead or 90 years old now. I was determined to prove them wrong."

He looks like he's getting his wish, if ticket sales for the band's upcoming European tour - which calls at bp pulse LIVE in February (a whopping 25 years after their last appearance at the same venue) - are anything to go by.

"We just sold out 25,000 tickets for an arena in Holland, and it's being moved up to 32,000, which is a personal best," Steve gushes enthusiastically. "We haven't played the UK in quite some time, but ticket sales are great. By the time we get there, the configurations we intended for the venues are gonna be sold out, I hope."

Never short of a wisecrack, Steve has a theory about what's behind the upturn in the band's fortunes.

"There are so many of the classic rock bands that are done - they either broke up or quit or are just too old or whatever - and there's a whole audience that we can take from them," he cackles.

The more likely reason for the upturn is the popularity of the 1982 hit Africa, which has racked up nearly two billion streams on Spotify and turns up everywhere, from TV shows South Park and Stranger Things to a recent advert for Barclays. The latter is a major bone of contention for the guitarist, even though it's not the Toto recording that's used, which, as their manager, Steve would never sanction. "It discredits the credibility of the band, and that really pisses me off - please print that!"

He thinks the situation will become the norm

as older artists sell off the rights to their catalogues.

"The people who write those big-ass cheques want their money back, and some. They're gonna take the whole classic-rock genre and turn it into a bad commercial. You're gonna find out when Bob Dylan and Springsteen and all these people sell their rights... Born To Run will be a diarrhoea commercial."

As for Africa, if the "silly song puts butts in seats" then Steve has no complaints.

"People love it, and I can't deny it's been great for our career. I said many years ago that if this thing's a hit record, I'll run naked down Hollywood Boulevard. That line's followed me round like herpes - I can't get rid of it!

"[But] you can't deny the infectious melody, the sound, the production... Yes, I know the lyrics are silly and don't necessarily geographically connect, but it's just a goofy little song. It's ironic that it's the weirdest song in our catalogue yet it's the one where people go 'that Africa band'."

"That band" has a fascinating history. Formed in 1977, the original line-up was comprised of high-school friends who also happened to become some of the industry's most sought-after session musicians, including noted drummer Jeff Porcaro and keyboard player David Paich. Aside from Africa, Toto are best known for the likes of Hold The Line and Rosanna, as well as Grammy Award-winning album IV, but also for the fact that band members have played on a bewildering 5,000 albums between them. They were effectively Michael Jackson's backing band on Thriller, and Steve has written for, or performed with, a whole host of music legends, including Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr (he's been a member of the All-Starr Band for the last 13 years), Eric Clapton, Elton John, Jeff Beck, Aretha Franklin and George Benson.

"The list is long, man. I got to work with almost every hero I ever had in my life. Miles Davis asked me to join his band, but I couldn't do it."

For all the incredible achievements, there has been significant heartache too, with Toto enduring more than its fair share of tragedy. Jeff Porcaro died in 1992 ("I miss him every day - there'll never be anybody like him as a human being or as a drummer"), his bass-playing younger brother Mike succumbed to Motor Neurone Disease in 2015, original

singer Bobby Kimball now has dementia, his initial replacement Fergie Frederiksen died of liver cancer in 2014, and ongoing health issues mean David Paich can no longer tour.

"It breaks my heart that the cats that were the original sound of the band are not intact, but people get old, some people die, some people don't have it anymore or are medically not capable - but I am. It's still Jeff and Dave's band; I'm just holding the candle, man. All I'm doing is keeping our music alive with the best musicians I can. I got A-listers, bro - I didn't find guys on the internet that 'sound like'; I got guys that were there and have history going back to the beginning as friends."

The band's current line-up features long-term vocalist Joseph Williams (son of iconic film composer John, no less), keyboard players Greg Phillinganes and Dennis Atlas ("the new kid"), Nashville session drummer Shannon Forrest, bassist John Pierce ("my first friend in life - our moms were pregnant at the same time on the same block") and multi-instrumentalist Warren Ham ("the Swiss army knife of any band - there's not an instrument he can't play").

"I just gathered the team together, you know? And if it was sucking or nobody showed up, it would be over. But it's the opposite - more people are coming, young people are coming, even the press are coming round."

The lack of props afforded by the latter clearly still rankles with the 67-year-old, particularly given all the extracurricular activity ("for a band that's played on over 5,000 albums, how bad can we really be?"), but it also fuels the fire for him to keep it all going.

"I've been working my ass off as the only guy standing from the first demo in January 1977 to the present day, and I said I'm not gonna quit till we gain some respect. That's why I stayed in it - out of respect for Jeff and Mike and Fergie and Bobby and David and everybody who's ever been in this band and contributed to it - to keep the legacy. At least when it's all over we get to die with respect instead of backhanded compliments about 'that Africa band'."

.....

Toto play bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham, on Sunday 2 February



VoxBox: The Songs of André
Caplet



Fri 24 Jan

Quartered: RBC Percussion
(Centrala)



Tue 28 Jan

Rachael Cohen



Thu 30 Jan

Global Traditions: Edgelarks
/ Keith Donnelly / Threaded



Sun 9 Feb

Kuss Quartet play Mozart &
Bartok



Wed 12 Feb

Nai Barghouti



Tue 18 Feb

Dustin O'Halloran



Sat 22 Feb

Spring Opera: Albert Herring



6 - 8 Mar

Royal Philharmonic Society
Awards



Thu 6 Mar

Peter Moore with RBC Wind,
Brass & Percussion



Fri 7 Mar

Birmingham Game Music
Ensemble



Wed 9 Apr

Neil Cowley Trio



Wed 23 Apr

Live music from across the city...

Livingston

O2 Institute, Birmingham, Mon 27 January

Diagnosed with autism at the age of 10 and bullied at school, Drake Jon Livingston Jr's path through life has been littered with challenges. Music provided an outlet for his emotions during those troubled earlier years, and after developing his keyboard skills, he started posting covers on Tik Tok. He has since blossomed into an alt-pop-music maverick, crafting songs which are positively teeming with film-worthy orchestration and sky-high hooks.



John Craigie

Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, Mon 27 January

Expressive and stirring songcraft, emotionally charged vocals, lively soundscapes and uncontainable spirit combine in the output of American folk-music troubadour John Craigie, whose Birmingham gig this month will no doubt see him performing material from his most recent album, Pagan Church. "The music is always evolving and devolving with each new record," explains John. "With my [previous] album, Mermaid Salt, I really wanted to explore the sound of isolation and solitude as everyone was heading inside [due to the Covid lockdown]. With Pagan Church, I wanted to record the sound of everyone coming back out."



Boyzlife

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 30 January

Take a member of 90s & noughties boyband supergroup Boyzone and a member of 90s & noughties boyband supergroup Westlife, put them together and what do you get?... Keith Duffy and Brian McFadden forming middle-aged-man duo Boyzlife, that's what!

The fun-loving fellas first came together almost a decade ago and are now once again reuniting for a global tour, including this late-month Symphony Hall gig. The show will see the dynamic Dubliners perform a mixture of hits from those heady boyband days, including Boyzone's I Love The Way You Love Me, All That I Need and No Matter What, and Westlife's My Love, I Lay My Love On You and Uptown Girl.

Bullet For My Valentine & Trivium

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Fri 31 January

Old friends coming together to celebrate a significant birthday is the story behind this concert. Pals for a good while, Bullet For My Valentine and Trivium are both marking the 20th anniversary of a significant album - in the former's case, The Poison, in the latter's, Ascendancy. It's therefore no surprise that, having decided to hit the road together for the first-ever time, they've decided to call the tour The Poisoned Ascendancy! Both iconic albums will be played in full, with support coming from Orbit Culture.

Neck Deep

O2 Academy, Birmingham, Fri 24 January

Naming Architects and A Day To Remember as bands from whom they've taken their inspiration, Welsh pop-punk favourites Neck Deep have been stirring things up for over a decade now. Last year releasing their fifth album, the boys stop off at the O2 this month with latest and imaginatively titled touring show, Dumbstruck Dumbf**k.

Night Swimming

Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham, Tues 28 January

While they're happy to give a nod in the direction of, among others, Wolf Alice, Daughter and Warpaint when it comes to artists who have influenced them, it's dream-pop band Night Swimming's love of film that lies behind the creation of their signature sound; a style of music that comes complete with a cinematic aesthetic. Hailing from Somerset, the band are drawn to music that is atmospheric in nature, revelling in their exploration of 'the darker nuances of human experience'.



Leamington Music Spring Season 2025



Friday 24 January • 7.30pm

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

Coull Quartet

Mozart • Prokofiev • Beethoven

Friday 14 February • 7.30pm

Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington

Fibonacci Quartet

Haydn • Bartók • Schubert

Tuesday 25 February • 7.30pm

St Mary's Church, Warwick

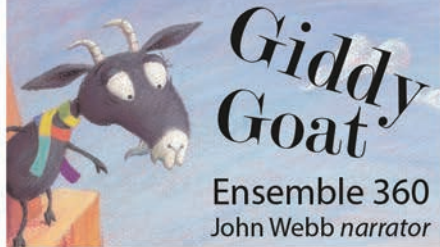
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CBSO: Viennese New Year Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 5 January

Symphony Hall welcomes in the new year with an afternoon concert performed by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Highly rated soprano Francesca Chiejina (pictured) lends her incredible voice to proceedings, as Stephen Bell conducts a

selection of playful polkas and wonderful waltzes. The programme is approximately two hours in length and includes Johann Strauss II's On The Beautiful Blue Danube.

CBSO: Romeo & Juliet

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Wed 15 January

In a programme designed to celebrate the rich heritage of Ukrainian musicians, Reinhold Glière's Concerto For Coloratura Soprano & Orchestra - here performed by Jennifer France - is sandwiched between two colourful treatments of Romeo And Juliet. The first of these is by Borys Lyatoshinsky, who studied with the aforementioned Glière, who taught the composer of the evening's second Romeo And Juliet: Sergei Prokofiev. Kyiv-born Kirill Karabits (pictured) conducts.



Thomas Trotter: Spaced Out!

Birmingham Town Hall, Mon 27 January

One of Britain's most acclaimed musicians, Thomas Trotter has performed with a host of revered conductors - Simon Rattle, Sir Charles Mackerras and Riccardo Chailly among them. He's also appeared alongside many of the world's leading orchestras. A former pupil at Malvern College, Thomas was appointed Birmingham City Organist in 1983, and has been providing sterling service ever since. Spaced Out! is one of his fortnightly lunchtime concerts at the Town Hall.

Sekine Quartet: Best Of Bridgerton On Strings

Birmingham Cathedral, Sat 11 January

Four talented former Royal Birmingham Conservatoire students here present an hour of music from hit Netflix series Bridgerton. As is the case with many of the all-female Sekine's performances, the concert will be taking place by the gentle glow of flickering candlelight.

German National Orchestra

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Thurs 16 January

A concert showcasing youthful high spirits, vital energy and impeccable playing is very much a guarantee when the German National Orchestra - official partner of the Berlin Philharmonic - appear at Symphony Hall this month.

The concert is conducted by the multi-talented Wayne Marshall (pictured), who will briefly put aside his baton in favour of the piano, to perform George Gershwin's Jazz Age masterpiece Rhapsody In Blue. Benjamin Britten's Young Person's Guide To The Orchestra kickstarts the evening, with a performance of Gustav Holst's The Planets bringing proceedings to an end.



Quatuor Agate: Outlaws

Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sun 26 January

Now here's an interesting way to spend a Sunday morning (the concert starts at 11am)...

Paris-based rising stars Quatuor Agate sink their teeth into the music of 'outlaw' musicians - artists who not only composed outside the musical norms of their time but also acted on the fringes of societal norms.

Featured composers include 16th-century prince and assassin Carlo Gesualdo, outspoken lesbian and imprisoned suffragette Ethel Smyth, and Stalin-declared 'enemy of the people' Dmitri Shostakovich... The concert is introduced by Princess Eleonora d'Este, the second wife of Carlo Gesualdo (he murdered his first!), who narrates the dark legend of her husband.

LOVE AND LOSS

**A stage adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' wartime novel
Birdsong comes to Birmingham Rep this month...**



Novelist Sebastian Faulks' bestselling World War One love story, *Birdsong*, turned 30 recently - and to mark the occasion, a new stage version, penned by Rachel Wagstaff with Faulks' approval, is currently touring the UK. Max Bowden of *EastEnders* fame stars in the production, and *What's On* recently caught up with him to find out more about the show...

Sebastian Faulks' great love story, *Birdsong*, visits Birmingham this month, taking audiences into the trenches of the First World War.

It is a daily battle for survival for the characters, and not least for British miner turned tunneller Jack Firebrace, who spends hours in darkness digging below the enemy trenches.

In the role of the doughty Jack is actor Max Bowden, perhaps best known for playing Phil Mitchell's son Ben for five years in long-running BBC TV soap *EastEnders*.

But it's not the first time Max has trod the boards in *Birdsong* - he also played the role of Private Tipper when the production toured in 2015. So why did he want to return to the show a decade later?

"It was partly the collaboration of an original team but also the fact the team was open for change and adaptation," he says. "I think Rachel Wagstaff, the director, has really nailed it this time round.

"On reading it, it just felt more resonant to me. I think we're looking at a time now when we're in a world in which war is looming in almost every continent, and World War One was supposed to be 'the war to end all wars'. It was the Great War - and yet here we are. So I think there was something that drew me to being able to relate to that story in a modern setting as well as focusing on the history of the piece."

The character of Jack particularly resonates with Max.

"Jack reminds me a lot of my grandfather. He was very much a Jack the Lad; he was a joke-teller who enjoyed making people laugh, but he also had that working-class edge to him; those old-school morals and that care for everybody around him. I think Jack represents a timely male, who has that kind of 'keep calm and carry on' outlook. This was something that my grandfather represented, and there was an element of wanting to play Jack because of that."

Portraying a tunneller is a significant challenge for Max.

"Physically, it's a gruelling role. I'm spending a lot of time on the ground and crawling through. The sappers, as they were, would

crawl through three-foot tunnels, so it's keeping me fit, that's for sure.

"And obviously there's the emotional stack of telling any sort of war story. There were several figures that stayed silent after the First World War because what they had seen and what they had done was enough to make you shudder. So I think the emotional journey of Jack Firebrace and a lot of the characters is harrowing but real and resonant of these people."

Published in 1993, Faulks' novel quickly became a bestseller, with sales of more than three million copies worldwide and frequent placings in 'best modern fiction' lists. As well as telling the story of British soldier Stephen Wraysford and his love for a French woman named Isabelle Azaire, it also vividly recreates life in the trenches, highlighting the importance of friendship in the face of danger.

"What makes *Birdsong* unique is that it never glorifies war," says Max. "It focuses on the themes that surround humanity during crisis, which are hope, love, trust, honour. It's a love story set against the backdrop of one of the most cruel and brutal things that has ever taken place in human history, yet the story that drives us through is one of love. It shows the human form at both its most beautiful and most toxic.

"I think its message is still so apparent and is close to home. We watch this three-hour play about destruction and brutality but also love, and actually, the thing that kept everyone going was love, not the destruction. So if we focus and hone in on the things which keep humanity burning, this brilliant light of hope, then wars will hopefully be slightly more thought out, less impulsive.

"This isn't just a play, it's an experience of humanity. Art provides an accessibility to the history of our country in a way which conversation often can't. We can gather the facts, but we can't gather the true moments of emotion which these men and women lived through. I think it's imperative for us as individuals to understand our ancestry, to understand how they lived, survived and fought to allow us to live the life we live today. *Birdsong* is a perfect representation of that."

Max is keen to bring as much veracity to the role as possible. Not only is he sporting a very dapper World War One moustache, but he's also worked hard to try and understand the experience of fighting on the Front.

"I think research is the key to any good performance, so I spent a lot of time in the Imperial War Museum. I also like exploring with art, so art galleries and finding these moments of art that sort of represent an image of a sort of subjectivity. So something I look at and think 'God, that's relatable to how Tipper or Firebrace would feel in this specific circumstance'.

"I try to find these tableaux to draw some emotional connection, but on top of that, it's very much trying to watch archive footage of people at the time. Humanity has evolved so much, even since then, and the way we speak and the way we listen and interact is very different from how it was then. So trying to gauge the time comes from watching archive footage and reading."

Alongside art and history, Max has also investigated the writing and music of the time.

"I read a lot of poetry, particularly Wilfred Owen, but also I'm a sucker for music. So as the show began, I would listen to It's A Long Way To Tipperary and Hold Your Hand Out Naughty Boy, with orchestras playing the tunes. It all helps to create impressions of those experiences."

The *Birdsong* tour marks the first time Max has appeared in any of Birmingham's theatres, but he *has* made a previous debut in the city - on the pitch at Villa Park!

"I played in a football match there, raising money for a local charity. It was fantastic. It's one of the oldest grounds in the world, and I'm a huge football fan, so it was a delight. There were a few old players playing; a mix of celebrities and old pros so that it was fair. We won by one goal!"

.....
***Birdsong* shows at The Rep, Birmingham, from Monday 27 January to Saturday 1 February**

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Festivals across the Midlands (and beyond) in 2025

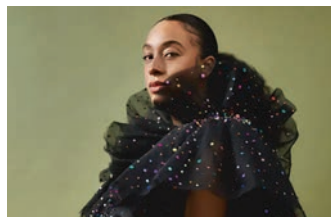


When it comes to music, regardless of your preference - be it jazz, indie, folk, classical, world or pop - you're sure to find a festival in the Midlands - and beyond, to suit your taste. So let's make 2025 a year to remember for all the right reasons... Get your diary out and get booking!

APRIL

NANTWICH JAZZ, BLUES & MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes Thea Gilmore, The Bluetones, Ed Tudor Pole, Thurs 17 - Mon 21 Apr, various venues in Nantwich, Cheshire nantwichjazz.com

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up includes David Gray, Corinne Bailey-Ray (pictured), Amadou & Mariam, Wed 30 Apr - Mon 5 May, Montpellier Gardens, Cheltenham cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz



MAY

UPTON UPON SEVERN FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 2 - Mon 5 May, various venues, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire uptonfolk.org

LIVERPOOL SOUND CITY Line-up includes The Royston Club, Nieve Ella & Panic Shack, Sat 3 - Sun 4 May, various venues in Liverpool soundcity.uk.com

FOCUS WALES Line-up includes Sprints, Nova Twins & Gruff Rhys, Thurs 8 - Sat 10 May, various venues in Wrexham, Wales focuswales.com

BEARDED THEORY SPRING GATHERING Line-up includes Iggy Pop, Manic Street Preachers, The Sisters of Mercy, Wed 21 - Sun 25 May, Catton Hall, South Derbyshire beardedtheory.co.uk

GLASTONBUDGET Line-up Absolute Bowie, Oasis, Flash, Thurs 22 - Sun 25 May, Turnpost Farm, Leicestershire glastonbudget.org

BREAKING BANDS Line-up includes Black Spiders, These Wicked Rivers, King Kraken, Thurs 22 - Mon 26 May, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove breakingbandsfestival.com

CHESTER FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Melrose Quartet, The Melsons, The Wilson Family, Fri 23 - Mon 26 May, Kelsall Village, Cheshire chesterfolk.org.uk

HOWTHELIGHTGETSIN Line-up tbc, Fri

23 - Mon 26 May, Hay on Wye, Hereford howthelightgetsin.org

BIRMINGHAM PRIDE Line-up tbc, Sat 24 - Sun 25 May, Birmingham Gay Village birminghampride.com

DOT TO DOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Horrors, Fat Dog, Sprints, Sun 25 May, various venues in Nottingham dottodotfestival.co.uk

FORBIDDEN FOREST Line-up includes Adam Beyer, Camelphat, Shy FX, Thurs 29 May - Sun 1 June, Belvoir Castle, Nottinghamshire forbidden-forest.co.uk

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL SKA & REGGAE FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Thornborough Farm, Birmingham

WYCHWOOD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up includes James, Fri 30 May - Sun 1 June, Cheltenham Racecourse wychwoodfestival.com

JUNE

PARKLIFE FESTIVAL Line-up includes Charlie XCX, DJ Heartstring, Confidence Man, Sat 14 - Sun 15 June, Heaton Park, Manchester parklife.uk.com

NOCTURNE LIVE AT BLENHEIM PALACE Line-up includes Richard Ashcroft, Lightning Seeds, The Zutons, Wed 18 - Sun 22 June, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire nocturnelive.com

GOTTWOOD FESTIVAL Line-up includes A Love From Outer Space, Carl H, Melody, Thurs 12 - Sun 15 June, Carreglwyd Estate, Anglesey gottwood.co.uk

BEARDY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up Skinny Lister, Sam Kelly & The Lost Boys, The Magic Numbers, Thurs 12 - Sun 15 June, Hopton Court, Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire beardyfolkfestival.co.uk

DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL Line-up includes Green Day, Korn and Sleep Token, Fri 13 - Sun 15 June, Donington Park, Derby downloadfestival.co.uk

SONIC ROCK SOLSTICE 2025 Line-up includes The Crazy World of Arthur Brown, Evil Blizzard, Poisoned Electric Head, Thurs 19 - Mon 23 June, Stoke Prior Sports and Country Club, Worcester sonicrocksolstice.com

PARKLANDS FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 20 - Sun 22 June, Telford Town Park, Shropshire

UPTON JAZZ FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 27 - Sun 29 June, various venues in Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire

More headliners to be announced!

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL
22-23-24-25 AUG 2025

- Levellers
- Oysterband
- Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy
- Skerryvore
- El Pony Pisador
- Judie Tzuke
- 9Bach
- Moonlight Benjamin
- The Henry Girls
- Jim Moray
- Melrose Quartet: Music, Heritage, Place
- The Fontanas
- The Laurettes
- Naomi Bedford & The Ramshackle Band
- Dan Owen
- Edwina Hayes
- Bryony Griffith & Alice Jones
- We Mavericks
- Harbottle & Jonas
- The Norfolk Broads
- Ceilidhs
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GAZ BROOKFIELD AND THE COMPANY OF THIEVES · AUDIOWEB · CLT DRP*

BENTLEY RHYTHM ACE · POPES OF CHILLTOWN · CASTLE RAT · MERRY HELL

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Festivals across the Midlands (and beyond) in 2025

JULY

WARWICK SESSIONS Line-up includes Elbow, The Stranglers, Train, Wed 2 - Sun 6 July, St Nicholas' Park, Warwick thewarwicksessions.co.uk

SOUNDS OF THE CITY Line-up includes Elbow, Shed Seven, Bloc Party, Wed 2 - Sat 12 July, Castlefield Bowl, Manchester

GATE TO SOUTHWELL Line-up includes Skinny Lister, Jon Boden & The Remnant Kings, El Pony Pisador, Thurs 3 - Sun 6 July, Kirklington, Southwell, Nottinghamshire gtsf.uk

ALDERFEST Line-up includes Ella Henderson, Pixie Lott, Vengaboys, Fri 4 - Sat 5 July, Alderford Lake, Shropshire alderfest.com

NAPTON MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 4 - Sat 5 July, Napton Village Hall Grounds, Napton On The Hill, Warwickshire naptonfestival.co.uk

CAMPERJAM Line-up tbc, Fri 4 - Sun 6 July, Weston Park, Shropshire/Staffordshire border camperjam.com

2000TREES FESTIVAL Line-up includes Alexisonfire, Taking Back Sunday, Kneecap, Wed 9 - Sat 12 July, Upcote Farm, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire 2000trees.co.uk

NOISILY FESTIVAL Line-up includes Chris Liberator b2b D.A.V.E The Drummer, Zen Mechanics, Aardvarkk, Thurs 10 - Sun 13 July, Barkestone Wood, Leicestershire noisilyfestival.com

MOSTLY JAZZ FUNK AND SOUL FESTIVAL Line-up includes Ezra Collective, War, Goldie, Fri 11 - Sun 13 July, Moseley Park, Birmingham mostlyjazz.co.uk

FUSE FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 11 - Sun 13 July, Beacon Park, Lichfield, Staffordshire lichfieldarts.org.uk



Manic Street Preachers - Beared Theory Festival

ALSO FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 11 - Sun 13 July, Park Farm, Warwickshire also-festival.com

LET'S ROCK SHREWSBURY Line-up tbc, Sat 12 July, The Quarry, Shrewsbury letsrockshrewsbury.com

BROMSGROVE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 17 - Sun 20 July, various venues across Bromsgrove bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BEAT-HERDER FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 17 - Sun 20 July, Dockber Farm, Clitheroe, Lancashire beatherder.co.uk

WOODSHROP Line-up tbc, Thurs 17 - Sun 20 July, West Mid Showground, Shropshire woodshop.co.uk

UPTON BLUES FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 18 - Sun 20 July, various venues around Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire upton-blues-festival.co.uk

SOLIHULL SUMMER FEST Line-up includes UB40 ftc Ali Campbell, Bitty McLean, Artful Dodger, Sat 19 - Sun 20 July, Tudor Grange Park, Solihull solihullsummerfest.co.uk

WARWICK FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Kate Rusby, Le Vent du Nord, Melrose Quartet, Thurs 24 - Sun 27 July, Castle Park, Warwick warwickfolkfestival.co.uk

TRUCK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Kasabian, Courteeners, Nothing But Thieves, Thurs 24 - Sun 27 July, Hill Farm, Oxfordshire truckfestival.com

WILDERNESS FESTIVAL Line-up includes Basement Jaxx, Thurs 31 July - Sun 3 Aug, Cornbury Park, Oxfordshire wildernessfestival.com

Y NOT FESTIVAL Line-up includes The Prodigy, The Courteeners, Madness, Thurs 31 July - Sun 3 Aug, Pikehall, Derbyshire ynotfestival.com



Skerryvore - Shrewsbury Folk Festival

AUGUST

LAKEFEST Line-up tbc, Wed 6 - Sun 10 Aug, Eastnor Castle Deer Park, Herefordshire lakefest.co.uk

BACK 2 FESTIVAL Line-up includes B*Witched, 2 Unlimited, Bad Manners, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Aug, Cattows Farm, Leicester back2festival.com

DEVAFEST Line-up includes Gloria Gaynor, Happy Mondays, Matt Goss, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Aug, Cholmondeley Castle, Cheshire devafest.co.uk

BLOODSTOCK OPEN AIR Line-up includes Trivium, Machine Head, Gojira, Thurs 7 - Sun 10 Aug, Catton Hall, Derbyshire bloodstock.uk.com

FARMER PHIL'S FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 8 - Sun 10 Aug, Near Gatten Farm, Ratlinghope, Shropshire farmerphilsfestival.com

ANOTHER WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 14 - Mon 18 Aug, Borrass Hall Lane, Wrexham anotherworldfest.co.uk

GREEN MAN FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 14 - Sun 17 Aug, near Crickhowell, South Wales greenman.net

THE MOIRA FURNACE FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Elbow Jane, Greenman Rising, Ian Bruce and Kev Green, Fri 15 - Sun 17 Aug, Moira Furnace Museum and Monument Site, Leicestershire moirafurnacefolkfestival.co.uk

CREAMFIELDS Line-up tbc, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Aug, Daresbury, Halton, Cheshire creamfields.com

SUNSHINE FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Aug, Fish Meadow, Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire

BEERMAGEDDON FESTIVAL Line-up tbc, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Aug, Stoke Prior Sports & Country Club, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire beermageddon.co.uk

SHAMBALA Line-up tbc, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Aug, a secret location in Northampton shambalafestival.org

LOST VILLAGE Line-up tbc, Thurs 21 - Sun 24 Aug, The Village, near Newark, Lincolnshire lostvillagefestival.com

THE BIG FEASTIVAL Line-up tbc, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Aug, Kingham, Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire thebigfeestival.co.uk

CAMPER CALLING Line-up tbc, Fri 22 - Sun 24 Aug, Ragley Hall, Warwickshire campercalling.com

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up includes Levellers, Oysterband, Skerryvore, Fri 22 - Mon 25 Aug, DMOS People West Mid Showground, Shrewsbury shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

MOSELEY FOLK & ARTS Line-up includes Fisherman's Friends, BC Camplight, Father John Misty (pictured), Fri 29 - Sun 31 Aug, Moseley Park, Birmingham moseleyfolk.co.uk



SEPTEMBER

BROMYARD FOLK FESTIVAL Line-up tbc Thurs 11 - Sun 14 Sept, Bromyard bromyardfolkfestival.co.uk



Ricky Gervais

Utilita Arena Birmingham,
Tues 28 & Wed 29 January

Ricky Gervais has been called the most influential British comedian since Charlie Chaplin...

In fact, he's been called all sorts of things, some of them far less complimentary. A comic who very much divides opinion - he's clever and talented but often criticised for peddling 'unacceptable' material, particularly about minorities - there's certainly no questioning the worldwide impact of the Reading-born 63-year-old.

After shooting to fame as David Brent in television's *The Office* - the BBC mockumentary he co-wrote with Stephen Merchant back in the early noughties - he's established himself as a star-name funnyman on both sides of the Atlantic, picking up his fair share of glittering awards, critical acclaim and severe reproaches along the way. This latest standup offering is called *Mortality*, a title which leaves no room for confusion as to what the show is all about. "We're all gonna die," says Ricky. "May as well have a laugh about it. *Mortality* looks at the absurdities of life. And death. Bring it on."

Katherine Ryan

Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 31 January;
The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton, Sat 8
February; Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sat 10
May

Taking a wry, warped and witty look at the world around her, Katherine Ryan often writes and performs material which proves that even the darkest of subject matter can have a funny side.

With her star very much in the ascendant at the moment, she's back on the road this month with her latest standup offering. "My show is called *Battleaxe*, because it means a tyrant and a loud, outspoken feminist," Katherine told BBC TV's *The One Show*. "And those are all positive terms for me, not negative ones. And I like reclaiming words; especially words about women that are negative."



Sukh Ojla

Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton,
Sun 5 January; Warwick Arts Centre,
Coventry, Fri 17 January; The Alexandra,
Birmingham, Sun 19 January

With her life experiences including a teenage suicide attempt, a Spanish-retreat encounter with the psychoactive brew ayahuasca, and a train-station breakdown involving a cheese & onion pasty, Sukh Ojla has plenty of fantastic raw material around which to build a show.

She also has experience of being a thirtysomething living at home with her mom & dad, another situation that's provided her with plenty of comedy gold: "Living at home with my parents is essentially like living in the most passive-aggressive Air B&B of all time," she says, "except that you can't even leave them a bad review!"

Sukh visits the Midlands this month with *The Aunty Years*, a show in which she's set herself the challenge of 'figuring out middle age, pretending to be a grown-up and the joy of a Tupperware set'.



Al Murray: The Pub Landlord

Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Thurs 30 January;
The Civic at The Halls, Wolverhampton, Fri 31
January; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Sat
1 March; Walsall Arena & Arts Centre, Fri 7
March; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa,
Sun 30 March; William Aston Hall, Wrexham,
Sat 26 April

"I love being a pub landlord," says Al Murray. "It's a truly great calling. You're there to soothe troubled souls, pour balm on troubled waters, make people's important moments in their lives extra special, and provide a range of snacks. What's not to like?"

Latest show *Guv Island* sees Al going all out to help the great British public "make sense of the questions they probably already had the answers to"...



Hal Cruttenden & Friends

Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Fri 10 January

If you're thinking of heading along to a Hal Cruttenden gig but don't quite know what to expect from the experience, fear not - the man himself is a past master at describing his act. "It's funny, obviously," says Hal, "but it's also catty, surprising, angry, cleverish and chubby!"

Stewart Lee vs The Man-Wulf

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Fri 24 - Sun 26 January; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 12 May

At 56 years of age, Shropshire-born Stewart Lee is well aware that he's not the man he used to be - although he's maybe being a bit too hard on himself.

"In a way, my physical collapse has been a huge advantage," says Stewart, perhaps with his tongue in his cheek. "It's given the 'stage me' some tragedy, some gravity. Also, I'm going deaf and now wear hearing aids, which has been an interesting challenge on stage. My knees are shattered and don't work - I think I ruined them during the 200 dates I did of a show where I pretended to be Jeremy Clarkson kicking a tramp to death - and that's had an interesting effect on my physicality. If I jump off stage now or climb things, there's a genuine element of pain and danger. I'm like Eddie The Eagle or something."

Stewart returns to the Midlands this month with a brand-new show in which he'll be sharing the stage with 'a tough-talking werewolf comedian from the dark forests of the subconscious who hates humanity'...



Chris McCausland

Walsall Arena, Fri 17 January; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 26 January; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 30 January; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 27 March; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Tues 22 April & Wed 10 September; William Aston Hall, Wrexham, Wed 23 April; Dudley Town Hall, Sat 10 May; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 12 - Wed 14 May; The Regal, Evesham, Fri 16 - Sat 17 May; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Fri 23 May & Fri 7 November; Stratford Play House, Stratford-upon-Avon, Fri 12 September; Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Mon 6 - Tues 7 October; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sat 8 November

"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 TV series including EastEnders, Moving On, and most recently of course, Strictly Come Dancing. He visits the Midlands this month with latest show Yonks!.



Ed Byrne

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Sat 18 January; Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Wed 29 January

A highly regarded master of observational comedy, Ed Byrne admits to being a little uncomfortable about some of the 'more laddish' material he used in the early days of his standup career.

"My comedy reflected my life at that time - single and enjoying myself. Most of it was fairly harmless, but some of the stuff about an ex-girlfriend I can see was a bit angry, and I wouldn't do it now."

Ed is bringing his latest standup offering, Tragedy Plus Time, to a couple of Midlands venues this month. So does he enjoy touring the country?

"Apart from the travel involved, which no comic likes, I love it. You have people responding to something that you've written alone in your office, and the work comes alive in a roomful of people. I like the TV things I do, but nothing can beat a live comedy audience."



Alan Davies & Support

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 28 January

Alan Davies has been a high-profile television face for more than 30 years now, first coming to prominence in hit detective series Jonathan Creek. Further and numerous TV credits have followed - perhaps most notably *QI* and *Taskmaster* - ensuring he's remained very much in the public consciousness since his late-20th-century glory days.

Alan here makes a relatively rare headline appearance and will be topping a line-up of 'side-splitting comedians'.





PERPETUAL MOTION



Dance-circus favourites Motionhouse will next month premiere a dynamic new show...

Breathtaking dance-circus company Motionhouse will premiere latest show Hidden at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre in February. An exploration of how, in an increasingly divided world, we can come together to help one another through the darkest moments we face, the production uses innovative projection, set design, music and movement to create what promises to be a beautiful and engaging experience for theatre-goers. The award-winning Leamington Spa-based company's artistic director, choreographer & co-founder, Kevin Finnan, chats to What's On about the new show...

Award-winning dance-circus company Motionhouse will next month premiere new show Hidden here in the Midlands, after which the production will set off on a nation-hopping tour.

Founded by Kevin Finnan and Louise Richards in 1988, Motionhouse has since been gathering rave reviews across the world while working out of its base-camp in Leamington Spa.

The company are renowned for their dancers' feats of physical strength and agility, and also for a blend of remarkable set design, projection, music and movement, all of which are in evidence in Hidden.

"The show is an emotional response to the current state of the world," explains Kevin.

"There's the impact of the internet and social media - everybody hoped that it would bring us closer together. Sometimes it can, but it also seems to do equally well at tearing us apart... We seem to be facing a lot of conflict. We face conflict between ourselves - with people arguing endlessly - while on a wider scale, we can see global conflicts emerging around us."

Hidden features a blend of narrative and abstract performance, which Kevin believes will resonate deeply with audiences.

"We are extremely physical in the work that we make. We want our dancers to dance with passion and with great physicality. They are beautiful, technical dancers, but they can also lift each other, throw each other, balance on top of each other and fly. We try to connect with the audience with beautiful imagery during the show, and then blend that with an emotional dance language, where you can really feel the dancers' bodies move. This is what we're aiming for - you feel it in your heart; you can feel that energy, and you want to feel the emotions that they are going through. We want everyone to share the journey."

The creation of Motionhouse's shows is, of course, a collaborative endeavour. Kevin might be the person who maintains a bird's-eye view as the production comes together, but he's not the only one with design input. The dancers are credited as co-creators, and while some dance companies might work to music that has already been made, the score for Hidden is composed in response to the devised movement on stage. And it's a similar story when it comes to the

production's impressive visuals.

"The digital guys came over - they live in the mountains above Bilbao - and we spent a few days together, looking at the set, looking at projection, trying it out. We have a digital setup whereby they can add material in Spain and we can see it - 3D and fully realised - on our machine in Leamington.

We're working with them in a very engaged, collaborative way. The lighting designer is here with us - we're all working together.

"The most important thing in the process is to have playtime; to really play with things and find what you can make of something... how you can transform it, and how it can transform you. It's an exciting time, because we're all trying to find new things that we can do and new ways of interacting. My job is to hold the images together in my head, and try and work out what the structure is going to be."

One of Motionhouse's previous creations, entitled Nobody, featured a huge cube structure in the centre of the stage, interacting with the performers and projections. In Hidden, although Kevin wants some design elements to remain a surprise for audiences, the set promises to be equally impressive.

"We've got two structures that can become one, at various points. It allows us slightly more complex projection opportunities. Nobody was a fantastic show for us and really successful - we loved it! It was about that voice in your head that's driving you, whereas Hidden is about how we help each other with the outside world. It's related, but it's not the same.

"When we make shows, we like to use a set which gives us lots of options. We can transform it and create visual and physical wonders with it as we work. We have a structure that we're quite pleased with, and we're really exploring its potential."

For anyone who has never seen a Motionhouse production before - or, for that matter, anyone who is new to the world of dance - Kevin offers reassurance that the show will speak for itself, with visually stunning performances that are both thought-provoking and jaw-dropping.

"The dancers are astonishing to see. They can do things that will take your breath away - and they *will* take your breath away in this show! I think the whole experience will be

very beautiful in places and very dynamic in other places. It's really something to come and see, because you're going to have moments of 'Wow!', moments of being drawn in and being very moved, and moments that hopefully will help you rise up."

Motionhouse has been created with support from several major and local arts organisations. The company is most definitely a made-in-the-Midlands undertaking.

"Warwick Arts Centre is where we're going to be premiering it - we've premiered nearly all of our shows there. We're collaborating with FABRIC, who have bases in Nottingham and Birmingham and have given us commissioning support along with Birmingham Hippodrome, who we're an associate company of. We'll be performing at Birmingham Hippodrome to open the second tour, in the autumn."

With the company growing in scale and prestige, Kevin's dreams for Motionhouse's future are slowly coming to fruition. And he's naturally thrilled that venues are eagerly booking Hidden on the strength of the company's previous successes.

"We've got a super-full first tour; the second tour is looking pretty full as well, and we're already talking about the third tour. For me to ask for anything else is a bit much, really! I think Motionhouse has grown to a place where it's a really exciting company to work at, and I want to keep that going.

"When I make a show, I want it to be moving and enjoyable. Sometimes there'll be dark moments, but sometimes there'll be beautiful, light moments. I want people to come away feeling that they've been on a journey with us. When you go away, you have images or moments in your head that you carry with you. If we can do that, then we will have really succeeded. I want the people who come [to see us] to have that experience, and to remember the hour and a half that we shared together."

.....

Hidden premieres at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, from Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 February. The show then visits Birmingham Hippodrome in the autumn, on Friday 10 & Saturday 11 October



Murder On The Orient Express The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 28 January - Sat 1 February

Arguably Agatha Christie's most famous work of fiction - although there are plenty of other contenders - Murder On The Orient Express finds Hercule Poirot exercising his 'little grey cells' to unmask the person or persons unknown who are responsible for a terrible death on board the world's most famous train. But can the brilliant Belgian

detective work out 'whodunnit' before the killer strikes again?... After selling out its tour of And Then There Were None (yep, that's a Christie, too), Fiery Angel once again team up with Director Lucy Bailey to bring Ken Ludwig's adaptation of the 1934 novel to the stage. Michael Maloney stars as Poirot.

Blood Brothers

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 21 - Sat 25 January

Although it's effectively a class-driven 'scouse melodrama', to describe Blood Brothers as such is to greatly underestimate the emotional response it produces within its audience. The show features adult actors playing children, a narrator who wanders through the scenes with warnings of impending doom, a good helping of sharp social awareness to counteract the sticky sentimentality, and a raft of much-loved musical numbers, including Bright New Day, Marilyn Monroe and the emotionally charged Tell Me It's Not True. Vivienne Carlyle takes the iconic role of Mrs Johnstone.



The Shark Is Broken

Malvern Theatres, Tues 28 January - Sat 1 February;
The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 6 - Sat 10 May

Jaws - Steven Spielberg's breakthrough big-screen offering - opened in cinemas a half century ago this year and caused a major splash. Based on the same-named bestselling novel by Peter Benchley and starring theatre veteran Robert Shaw alongside two young Hollywood hotshots,



Richard Dreyfuss and Roy Scheider, the film told the story of a summer resort town being terrorised by a great white shark. Jaws may have become an immediate classic, but the cast and crew were certainly swimming in choppy waters during the making of the movie... This Olivier Award-nominated play is set in 1974 and takes a look behind the scenes of one of Hollywood's best loved and most famous blockbusters. Robert Shaw's son, Ian, stars as his own dad in a show that's described by its publicity as 95 minutes of 'short tempers and short circuits, with no intermission'.

ALISON HAMMOND MATT SLACK
DANNY MAC

Peter Pan
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10 NIGHTS

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Sat 8 Feb

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MATTHEW GOURRE'S

SWAN LAKE
THE NEXT GENERATION

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BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Cinderella

Wed 19 Feb
- Sat 1 Mar

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CASTING: LIAM FOX
CASTING: THE VIVIENNE

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Sun 9 Mar

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CALAMITY JANE

STARRING CARRIE HOPE FLETCHER

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Sat 22 Mar

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BY THE EAR PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

JACK DEE

SMALL WORLD

Sun 23 Mar

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DANCE CONSORTIUM PRESENTS

Eun-Me Ahn Dance Company's

DRAGONS

'Visually
thrilling'

Culture Whisper

Tue 25 &
Wed 26 Mar

CAP R

Shark in the Park!

Shark in the Park!
Windy Day!

Shark in the Park!
Windy Day!

Based on the book by
Nick Sharratt

Sat 29 Mar -
Sun 6 Apr

CAP R

WORLD EVENTS & MORE OF WOMEN PRESENTS

**WERG THE WORLD
AWARDS**

Sun 30 Mar

CAP R

ONLY FOOLS
and
HORSES
THE MUSICAL

Mon 31 Mar
- Sat 12 Apr

CAP R

AN EVENING WITH
SIR TIM RICE IS AN ALL-TIME HIGH!

TIM RICE

MY LIFE IN
MUSICALS

I KNOW HIM SO WELL

WITH THE
DUNCAN WAUGH BAND
& WEST END SINGERS

Sun 13 Apr

CAP R



The Red Shoes

Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 19 January

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's dark fairytale about a pair of enchanted shoes that take their wearer to places she doesn't want to go, *The Red Shoes* has here been reimagined by Nancy Harris, who adapted *The Magician's Elephant* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2021.

The production is helmed by Kimberley Rampersad, making her RSC debut. "Dance is my first love," says Kimberley, 'so, for me, the story is really touching because it's a dance story. I also love a female hero, and the thing I love about this fairytale is that she is imperfect, and I really cherish a hero who can still be imperfect. Like Hamlet, there's something incredibly endearing about a character with imperfections and foibles."

Birdsong

The Rep, Birmingham, Mon 27 January - Sat 1 February

Sebastian Faulks' epic and bestselling novel is set both before and during the Great War. It follows the fortunes of the young Stephen Wraysford as he embarks on a passionate and dangerous affair with the beautiful Isabelle Azaire...



This stage version was written by Rachel Wagstaff, who claims she got the nod from Faulks to adapt his novel after she impressed him by knowing the most recent result of his beloved football club, West Ham United.

Christmas Present & Correct

Lichfield Garrick until Sun 5 January

The highly regarded New Old Friends make a welcome return with a brand-new Christmas farce - not to mention a solemn promise that all their usual motifs (witty wordplay, theatrical set-pieces and small-cast, multiple-role mayhem) will be much in evidence.



A Christmas Carol: A Ghost Story

The Rep, Birmingham, until Sun 5 January

Mark Gatiss' retelling of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* comes complete with 'spiningling' special effects, a raft of positive reviews - and comedian Rufus Hound.



"The role they offered me in the show - Jacob Marley - was the role Mark himself had played when it was first staged," says Rufus. "So the idea of being in something written by Mark Gatiss, playing a part which Mark had ostensibly written for himself, was too good an opportunity to miss." Rufus is joined in the show by Matthew Cottle as grumpy old miser Ebenezer Scrooge.

Twelfth Night

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sat 18 January

As with a number of Shakespeare comedies, *Twelfth Night* features a case of mistaken identity, with Viola disguising herself as a boy and causing all manner of awkward romantic shenanigans.



However, the play's continuing popularity can mainly be attributed to its hilarious (well, by Shakespeare's standards anyway) comic sub-plot, in which the merciless Sir Toby Belch and his foolish companion Sir

Andrew Aguecheek seek to humiliate the pompous Malvolio, and achieve their aim with more than a little style... Samuel West (Siegfried Farnon in Channel Five's *All Creatures Great And Small*) stars as Malvolio, with former Doctor Who assistant Freema Agyeman taking the role of Olivia.

The Three Musketeers

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 25 January

There's plenty of swashbuckling fun to be had at the New Vic Theatre this month, courtesy of an imaginative stage version of Alexandre Dumas' classic adventure novel *The Three Musketeers*.

Adapted by New Vic Artistic Director Theresa Heskins and tailored to the venue's unusual 'in the round' setup, the two-hour production showcases a sharp-witted script, some seriously jaw-dropping fight scenes and action sequences, and no shortage of laughs.



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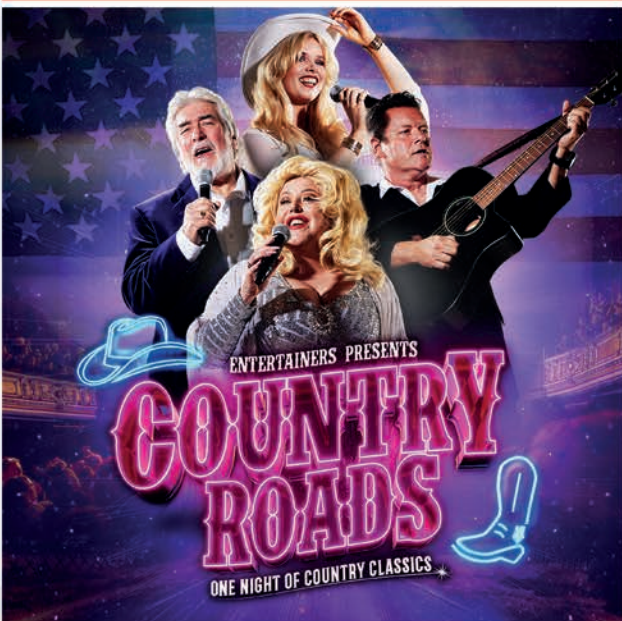
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Pantos continuing into January

Aladdin

Swan Theatre, Worcester, until Sun 5 January

A perfect story for an evening of family entertainment finds heroic street youth Aladdin trying against all odds to win the hand of the beautiful princess - and being helped in his endeavours by the mystical genie of the lamp. Flying carpets at the ready, everyone...



Beauty And The Beast

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, until Sunday 5 January; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, until Sun 5 January

When a young woman is captured by a hideous beast, she finds herself facing a life of isolation in his mysterious palace. The Beast, too, is trapped - seemingly forever - inside the grotesquery of his physical appearance, the consequence of a spell cast upon him by an evil witch. Only Beauty's ability to look beyond his ugliness and see the person within can save him... So, that's the storyline. Now, what about the panto element?

Well, there are plenty of traditional aspects of pantomime in evidence in both of the above-listed productions; we're thinking custard pies, double entendres, slapstick comedy and hilariously costumed Dames...

The Grand Theatre version (pictured) brings together Gladiator's Giant with Six star Jarnefa Richard-Noel and panto favourites Tam Ryan and Ian Adams.

And speaking of panto favourites, Sean Dodds makes a welcome return to the stage at Leamington's Royal Spa Centre.



Dick Whittington

Belgrade Theatre, until Sat 4 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, until Sun 5 January

The story of a young man who heads for London in search of fame and fortune is one of the most popular of all pantomimes - so it's hardly surprising that the intrepid Mr

Whittington has turned up at two of the Midlands' biggest theatres across the festive period...

The Coventry Belgrade version of the terrific tale comes complete with 'breathtaking sets, lavish costumes' and a typically fun-filled script by Iain Lauchlan (pictured). Potteries panto-lovers are in for a real treat too, courtesy of a production that sees Regent stalwarts Jonathan Wilkes, Christian Patterson and Kai Owen once again teaming up to tread the boards.



Goldilocks And The Three Bears

Telford International Centre, Shropshire, until Thurs 2 January

This much-loved fairytale, featuring a famously blonde girl who's rather particular about the temperature at which she likes her porridge, seems to have fallen out of favour with panto producers in recent times - so it's always nice to see a version pop up during the festive season. This one, we're reliably informed, features 'amazing circus acts, great songs, dazzling dance routines, stunning scenery, beautiful costumes and lots and lots of laughs'.

Jack And The Beanstalk

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, until Sun 5 January; Lichfield Garrick, until Sun 12 January

Staffordshire is definitely the Midlands county to head for if you like your pantomime fun to be of the beanstalk-clambering, ogre-grappling variety.



In Lichfield, Sam Rabone - returning to the Garrick stage as Dame Trott - is once again joined by Ben Thornton (as Billy). Midlands comedy legend Gill Jordan (pictured) - best known as 'lazy cow' Doreen Tipton - dons wings and waves a wand as Fairy Sugarsnap... Over in Stafford, meanwhile, the Gatehouse is promising a show packed with 'great jokes, bad jokes, terrible jokes, lots of laughs, music, dancing and magic beans!'

Peter Pan

Birmingham Hippodrome, until Sun 2 February

A trip to Neverland is on the cards for Hippodrome audiences this month, with the nowadays-near-legendary Matt Slack shivering the timbers as salty seadog Smee.



And, as usual, the show's humour is aimed at both children *and* adults.

"You've got to know where to draw the line and when to push the boundaries," explains Matt. "We *are* aimed towards a family audience, but we also want to entertain the adults. It's all about double entendre and disguising it - as long as it goes over the kids' heads and the adults are laughing, job done!" Birmingham's very own Alison Hammond (pictured) has joined Matt for the second year running, playing the Magical Mermaid. Andrew Ryan and Danny Mac also star.

Sleeping Beauty

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, until Sun 12 January; Palace Theatre, Redditch, until Sun 5 January

The gang is back together at Theatre Severn, starring in a panto version of Sleeping Beauty (pictured below).

Writer Paul Hendy has cooked up a storm; delightful Dame, Brad Fitt, has taken the directorial reins and also stars as Nurse Nellie; and Tommy J Rollason is wowing the crowds as juggling jester Jangles...

There are familiar faces returning at the Palace Theatre in Redditch too, with 'impressionist extraordinaire' Andrew Fleming and 'Redditch's favourite tap-dancing panto Dame', Simon Howe, once again contributing to the venue's turn-of-the-year offering.

X-Factor 2017 winner Myles Stephenson and Bad Girls and Emmerdale star Nicole Faraday also feature.



BIRMINGHAM ROYAL BALLET

Director Carlos Acosta

Sir David Bintley's

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The Snowman

The Rep, Birmingham, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 January

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

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

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

The Snowflake

The Rep, Birmingham, until Sun 12 January

Birmingham Rep here teams up with Polka Theatre and Little Angel Theatre for a stage adaptation of Benji Davies' enchanting and timeless wintertime tale.

Presented in the venue's Door studio, the show tells the story of a snowflake, a little girl and her Pappie - all longing for their own special place in the world...

Ministry Of Science Live

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Sun 12 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Wed 19 February; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 24 May

A refreshingly 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 brace yourself for the occasional loud bang!

Giant liquid hydrogen clouds, exploding oxygen and hydrogen balloons, fire tornados, hydrogen bottle rockets, ignited methane and even a self-built hovercraft all feature.

The Tiger Who Came To Tea

Birmingham Town Hall, until Sun 5 January

Everybody's favourite tea-guzzling tiger is back in town, dropping in on Sophie and her mum just as they're settling down for an afternoon cuppa...

Adapted by David Wood from Judith Kerr's 1968 book of the same name, this 55-minute show features singalong songs and plenty of magic - not to mention a big, stripy tiger, of course!



young musician named Astrid and the mischievous forest creature of the title. Created with three-to seven-year-olds in mind, the show stars Birmingham's very own Alexia McIntosh (*SIX The Musical*) in the title role and is directed by Anthony Lau.

"Nurturing the next generation of theatre makers and goers is so important," says Anthony. "And it's brilliant that Birmingham Hippodrome recognise this and see the value in investing in great work made especially for them. With *The Jingleclaw*, we're setting out to make a new musical for the whole family, and we can't wait to share the magic of that musical with them! With bats. And a power ballad. And a naughty, cuddly monster who can't stand festive cheer."

The Jingleclaw

Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome, until Sat 4 January

Set in a cosy village in the snowy mountains, Birmingham Hippodrome's brand-new musical, *The Jingleclaw*, tells the story of a





THE CUBAN TOUCH

Carlos Acosta is set to delight audiences at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre next month when his critically acclaimed Cuban dance company, Acosta Danza, inject some Latin American passion into a much-loved family favourite. What's On finds out more about brand-new show Nutcracker In Havana...

After a dancing and directing career spanning more than 30 years, Carlos Acosta has performed in and watched more than his fair share of productions of Tchaikovsky's classic ballet The Nutcracker. He has now created his own version - but it is a Nutcracker with a difference.

Nutcracker In Havana is set in Carlos' home city, features a blend of different dance styles and boasts a new Caribbean orchestration of the famous score.

The show, which visits Wolverhampton next month, is performed by more than 20 dancers from Acosta Danza, the company Carlos founded in Havana in 2016.

"I wanted to bring Acosta Danza the spectacle of a full-scale ballet," he says. "I thought that The Nutcracker makes sense because I could do something Cuban that would be different from the usual Nutcracker.

"I could place the story in Cuba, which paves the way for me to incorporate Cuban folk dance and music but at the same time keep it classical. It's a very important title and has been created to tour beyond just the largest theatres, to audiences in places that don't normally get the benefit of having a Nutcracker."

The show keeps the essential elements of the traditional story but re-invents it, setting the tale in a different context. It also features a score orchestrated by Cuban composer Pepe Gavilondo and including traditional Caribbean musical instruments.

"Everything is recognised from the original; the dance of the adults, the fight, the dance of the mirlitons, the humour - all those elements are going to be there. Basically it's The Nutcracker but in Havana. There's going to be snow in Havana! I'm looking forward to that, as it never snows in Havana.

"For the music there is calypso, jazz, all kinds of rhythms which heavily rely on brass and electric guitars. It speaks about Cuban music.

"The audience is going to get a show that feels different, authentic and funny - there's a lot of humour. They will see Tchaikovsky in a new light; they will never have heard Tchaikovsky like this. They will follow the

story, which is fun, but they will see great dancing as well - all forms of dancing, from Cuban folk, contemporary and ballet, at the highest level."

The production brings together elements of Cuban folk dance with the carnival spirit of the Caribbean. And thanks to Carlos' own experience of dancing top-level ballet, and his role as director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, he also understands the benefits of classical technique.

"The classical ballets like The Nutcracker are the ultimate hard dance, in the sense of physicality and being so specific. It's the base for the other dance forms. Ballet is about strength, it's about finesse, it's about posture, and I wanted to incorporate all of this into the company from the word go.

"If you really want a skilled ballet dancer in the company, then you have to incorporate that type of repertoire. Acosta Danza is still very much a contemporary company, but I'm also very keen to incorporate classical and neo-classical, so that the company grows up with that kind of training."

Nutcracker In Havana is a co-production with Norwich Theatre and Valid Productions. The show premiered last month at Norwich Theatre, where Stephen Crocker is chief executive & creative director...

"Throughout this process, we've been continuously working on creating a show that reflects Carlos' artistic quality, has broad appeal, and connects in different ways," says Stephen. "The connection to the audience, and making a Nutcracker which is fresh and will bring new audiences into the theatre, is something which is really valuable. We are marrying professional dance standards and high-quality production values."

Carlos and the producers worked on the show with Acosta Danza in Havana. The experience of being in the city in which the story is set very much cemented the creative team's feeling that the score needed to be adapted.

"The music is something that we hit upon when we were out in Cuba," says Stephen. "Havana is such a noisy city; the sound is constant, whether it's cars or music, and it was clear to us that this choreography

needed its own musical language in order to make it soar.

"So we hit upon the notion of recording a Cuban version of the score, which includes some traditional instruments - to get the harmony and melody across - but also some sounds of Havana. So you've got some world instruments in there and some voices tracked into it, some percussive stuff like the occasional castanet - the sounds of that place.

"Carlos' studio in Havana is amazing. It's glass-fronted, and you see all those old Chevrolets going by and people going about their business. So we thought, we need to create this soundscape for the audience, so that when they sit in their seat, it's all-encompassing."

The team were keen to ensure the show could play mid-scale theatres, many of which might struggle to host the typical grand-scale classical ballets.

"All the versions of The Nutcracker I've ever seen sit in a particular narrative place," Stephen continues. "It's kind of European, it's opulent, it's huge - and on a practical level, so few of them can tour this country because they are so big.

"I feel very passionately about getting the best work out as widely as possible, so I wanted a Nutcracker that could tour to venues that don't usually get that type of ballet. It's great that we can take that show out and reclaim the joy of that story and witness some of the very best dancing."

And the team hope that Wolverhampton audiences find something new to enjoy in Nutcracker In Havana.

"I want people to be surprised by what they see," says Carlos. "I hope they will experience something different, with joy and fun, and I hope that they will want to come back every year to give this production a chance."

.....
Carlos Acosta's Nutcracker In Havana shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Monday 13 & Tuesday 14 January

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Director Carlos Acosta



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Twenty-five for '25

Check out our selection of 25 great plays and musicals to see in 2025...

2:22 - A Ghost Story

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

Husband & wife Jenny and Sam are divided. Jenny believes their new home is haunted; Sam isn't having any of it. Something certainly feels strange and frightening. Determined to find out the truth once and for all, they decide to stay up until 2:22 - at which time, all will be revealed. Or not...

"We are beyond excited to be taking 2:22 - A Ghost Story around the UK again," says Danny Robins, the creator of popular BBC podcast The Battersea Poltergeist and the writer of this smash-hit supernatural thriller. "It's a play that will make you laugh, scream, cry, think, and jump out of your seat - a proper spooky night out!"

The show premiered in the West End back in 2021, not only becoming a major hit but also providing Lily Allen and, more recently, Cheryl and Stacey Dooley with a chance to tread the boards.



A Thousand Splendid Suns

The Rep, Birmingham, Fri 11 April - Sat 3 May

Khaled Hosseini's spiritual sequel to The Kite Runner finds orphaned Laila all alone in an Afghanistan ravaged by war. But then her older neighbour Rasheed takes her as his second wife and makes her pregnant. Rasheed's decision kickstarts a rivalry between Laila and his first wife, Mariam. But as the Taliban take over and life becomes a

desperate struggle against starvation and brutality, the two women find themselves engaging in an unlikely alliance...

Former Birmingham Rep Artistic Director Roxana Silbert returns to helm the show.

Bat Out Of Hell

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 10 - Sat 22 February; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 30 June - Sat 5 July; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 14 - Sat 19 July

A jukebox musical set in a dystopian future and positively awash with greatest hits from an impressive back-catalogue, Bat Out Of Hell is not to be confused with Queen's stage blockbuster We Will Rock You, which can be pretty much summed up in exactly the same way.

Premiered in 2017, the Jim Steinman/Meat Loaf extravaganza is heavy on rock music and light on plot - which is yet another thing it has in common with We Will Rock You.

The story is a loose retelling of Peter Pan and unfolds in a Manhattan of the future - one which has been turned into a desolate wasteland and is lorded over by a ruthless dictator named Falco. The evil tyrant is determined to rebuild the city by destroying disused tunnels and subways which have become residential areas for the homeless community. But a group of kids whose DNA is permanently frozen - meaning they will be 18 years of age forever - are equally determined to thwart his dastardly plans... Featured hits include I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That), Paradise By The Dashboard Light, Two Out Of Three Ain't Bad, Dead Ringer For Love, and of course, Bat Out Of Hell.



Boys From The Blackstuff

The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 18 - Sat 22 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 10 - Sat 14 June

Television viewers of a certain vintage are likely to remember Boys From The Blackstuff and the impact that it made.

Alan Bleasdale's bleak, Liverpool-located, award-winning seminal drama series from 1982 followed the trials and tribulations of five out-of-work tarmac layers struggling to make ends meet in an era of high unemployment. The series made a star of actor Bernard Hill, whose portrayal of mentally disintegrating headbutter Yosser Hughes - complete with his catchphrase of "Gizza job. Go on, gizza job. I can do that" - captured the nation's imagination...

This powerful new stage adaptation of Bleasdale's iconic masterpiece is visiting the region direct from the National Theatre and London West End.

Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story

Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 27 - Sat 30 August; Malvern Theatres, Tues 9 - Sat 13 September; Crewe Lyceum Theatre, Fri 19 & Sat 20 September; Lichfield Garrick Theatre, Mon 2 - Sat 7 March 2026



Seen by millions of people across the globe, Buddy is an enormously enduring and touchingly affectionate portrayal of one of rock & roll's earliest and brightest stars. Charting the singer's meteoric rise to fame and fortune, and following his career through to his very last performance, the show features timeless Buddy classics such as That'll Be The Day, Peggy Sue, Oh Boy, Rave On and Everyday.



Calamity Jane

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 18 - Sat 22 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 17 - Sat 21 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 9 - Sat 13 September

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

The famous 1950s film version, starring Doris Day and Howard Keel, remains one of the best-regarded Hollywood musicals of its era.

Multi-award-winning West End performer Carrie Hope Fletcher takes the title role.

Coming To England

The Rep, Birmingham, Wed 19 - Sat 22 February

"I was 10 years old," recalls television personality Baroness Floella Benjamin, in talking about her arrival in the UK in 1960. "When we got to England, we lived in one room in London. There were eight people in that one room, but my mum said, 'Don't cry, because this room is full of love.'

The story of Floella's journey from her home in Trinidad to begin a new life in the UK is here being told on stage, returning to the Midlands with a new look. "This show is so joyful," she says, "the music, the sets, the colour; it's like a cauldron of excitement. It's a rich tapestry of sadness, frustration, laughter and joy, all coming together as the big H - hope."



Eternal Love

Buxton Opera House, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 March; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 27 March

Steve Steinman here presents the next chapter in his epic Vampires Rock chronicles. Brand-new rock musical Eternal Love is set in 'a fantastical dark world filled with vampires', where the Vampire Baron - played by Steve himself - is searching for his next bride...

If the show is in keeping with previous Vampires Rock offerings, audiences can expect a humorous narrative which not only parodies classic vampire tropes but also combines the drama and romance of musical theatre with elements of a rock concert. All in all, then, a fun night out seems in prospect - always assuming vampires are your thing, of course!

Friends! The Musical Parody

Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 13 - Sat 18 October; Malvern Theatres, Tues 25 - Sat 29 November

If it's not broken, don't turn it into a stage musical, would surely have been the advice that millions of Friends fans would've given the creative team who set out to make this show. So it's probably a good thing that those millions of fans were never actually canvassed for their opinion, because Friends! The Musical Parody makes for a thoroughly enjoyable night out at the theatre.

Lovingly lampooning the hit TV sitcom from the 1990s and early noughties, the show is a good-hearted romp through the series' most memorable moments, but with the addition of some high-energy song & dance routines. What's not to like?...



Ghost Stories

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

After a couple of years spent giving London West End theatre-goers the heebie jeebies, Ghost Stories is this year spooking audiences across the UK! The brainchild of Andy Nyman - co-creator of Derren Brown's television and stage productions - and The League Of Gentlemen's Jeremy Dyson, the show focuses on the character of Professor Goodman, a 'man of reason' who's determined to debunk the paranormal. But when he embarks on an investigation into three apparent hauntings, as recounted by a night-watchman, a teenage boy, and a businessman awaiting his first child, the professor finds himself at the outer limits of rationality - and fast running out of explanations for what he's experiencing...

Hamlet Hail To The Thief

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wed 4 - Sat 28 June

This 'dynamic' new version of Hamlet sees Shakespeare's words illuminated by seminal Radiohead album Hail To The Thief, with the deconstructed record - reworked by the band's frontman, Thom Yorke - performed live on stage by a cast of 20 musicians and actors.

Commenting on the unique theatrical initiative, the Royal Shakespeare Company's co-artistic directors, Daniel Evans and Tamara Harvey, said: "Hamlet Hail To The Thief is a momentous project for us. To combine the totemic talents of William Shakespeare, with Radiohead and Thom Yorke, into a thrilling experiential piece of theatre... is a dream. It's an event that embodies a core strand of our work, which is to be a meeting place for the work of our in-house playwright with the most exciting artists of our time, both nationally and internationally."

Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 20 May - Sun 1 June

Joseph was Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber's first foray into the world of musical theatre, paving the way for later offerings Jesus Christ Superstar and Evita. Fabulously frivolous, frothy and fun, the show offers great entertainment for anybody who fancies the kind of night out that lets you leave your brain at home. Joseph sees the future in dreams, and tells his 11 brothers that he's had a vision in which he's seen them all bowing down to him. Not surprisingly, the lads are a tad annoyed with him about this - and feel even less enamoured towards their happy-go-lucky sibling when their dad gives him a coat of many colours...



Moulin Rouge! The Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 15 October - Sat 15 November

Moulin Rouge! The Musical can-cans its way into the Midlands this year, complete with all the glitz, glamour and grandeur that you might expect from the stage adaptation of visionary director Baz Luhrmann's extraordinary 2001 film. Neither the movie nor the musical are to everybody's taste - Moulin Rouge is most definitely a 'Marmite' experience - but if

you love and adore the film, then this is most definitely an evening at the theatre not to be missed.

As with the movie, the stage show celebrates 160-plus years of music - from Offenbach to Lady Gaga - and features in excess of 70 iconic songs.

Best brace yourself for an evening of eye-popping excess!

Little Women

Malvern Theatres, Tues 15 - Sat 19 April;
The Rep, Birmingham, Tues 20 - Sat 24 May

Adapted for the stage by Anne-Marie Casey, Louisa May Alcott's famous tale was written in the 19th century and is widely considered to be the first US children's novel to become an enduring classic.

The story focuses on four sisters - Jo, Beth, Meg and Amy - as they experience passion, romance, heartache and hardship during the brutal and challenging years of the American Civil War.

Kinky Boots

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 15 - Sat 19 April

The newly appointed manager of his late father's shoe factory in Northampton, Charlie Price has got some tough decisions to make as he attempts to save the struggling business. After a chance meeting with drag queen Lola, Charlie identifies a potentially lucrative niche market: creating footwear to cater for men who like to dress as women...

A topical story about diversity and acceptance, Kinky Boots is based on the 2005 film of the same name and features music & lyrics by '80s pop star Cyndi Lauper. Expect a feelgood evening of catchy tunes, fierce anthems and warm-hearted humour. Strictly Come Dancing's Johannes Radebe stars as Lola.





Mary Poppins Birmingham Hippodrome, Wed 16 July - Sat 23 August

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious! Everybody's favourite magical nanny is opening her umbrella and flying back into the Midlands! PL Travers' popular fictional character has been a global superstar since Julie Andrews brought her to life in Walt Disney's hugely successful 1964 movie. Not surprisingly, the success of the film led to a stage version, albeit some 40 years later - and Disney and Cameron

Mackintosh's award-winning musical has been doing great business in theatres across the world ever since. The show's timeless score includes the songs Jolly Holiday, Step In Time, Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious and Feed The Birds. New songs and additional music & lyrics are provided by the Olivier Award-winning British team of George Stiles and Anthony Drewe.

NOW That's What I Call A Musical

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 11 - Sat 15 March

EastEnders' Nina Wadia, former X Factor winner Sam Bailey (pictured) and 80s pop icon Sonia are the terrific trio tasked with lighting up this brand-new musical comedy. Directed & choreographed by Craig Revel Horwood, and marking 40 years of the chart-topping NOW That's What I Call Music compilation albums, the show is set in Birmingham and finds old school friends Gemma and April facing up to the challenges of a 20th anniversary school reunion... Featured hits from an evening of 80s classics include Gold, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Tainted Love, Hey Mickey and Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves.



Ordinary Days A Musical

The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 9 - Sun 20 April

The success eight years ago of Ordinary Days' initial run at the Old Joint Stock Theatre no doubt played its part in the venue's decision to make the show its latest in-house production. Hailed by its publicity as 'a life-affirming and heartfelt musical that will leave audiences laughing one second and weeping uncontrollably the next', the show follows the fortunes of four young New Yorkers whose lives intersect as they search for fulfillment, happiness, love... and cabs.

Pig Heart Boy

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Wed 2 - Sat 5 April; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 8 - Sat 12 April

Cameron wishes his life was all about having friends, going to school, and diving to the bottom of his local swimming pool. But it isn't. The 13-year-old desperately needs a heart transplant, and time is running out. When he's finally offered a new heart, he finds himself needing to choose how far he will go in order to get his life back... Written by Malorie Blackman, the multi-

award-winning author of Noughts And Crosses, Pig Heart Boy is here brought to life in a brand-new adaptation by Winsome Pinnock.

The Girl On The Train

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Tues 11 - Sat 15 March; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 29 April - Sat 3 May; Malvern Theatres, Tues 17 - Sat 21 June

Rachel Watson thinks the couple she watches through the train window every day are happy and in love. But when she discovers that one of them has disappeared, she finds herself inextricably drawn into a truly baffling mystery - not only as a witness but also as a suspect...

First a bestselling novel, then a hit film, Paula Hawkins' The Girl On The Train took the world by storm, so there's little wonder Rachel Wagstaff & Duncan Abel's stage adaptation has made a similarly impressive impact.

Giovanna Fletcher takes the lead role at Theatre Severn. Casting for the show when it visits The Alex has yet to be announced. Laura Whitmore plays Rachel during the production's Malvern Theatres run.



The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe

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

This much-loved story from the pen of CS Lewis is rightly regarded as an all-time classic of children's literature. It sees the lion-god Aslan coming to the aid of four youngsters who've accidentally stumbled into his mystical world of Narnia - via a wardrobe...

Making a welcome return to the Midlands, this highly acclaimed stage adaptation

25 shows for you to see in 2025...

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

The Rocky Horror Show

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 17 - Sat 22 March; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 5 - Sat 10 May

Hook up your fishnets, tighten your corsets and prepare to 'do The Time Warp again' - The Rocky Horror Show is returning to the Midlands! Richard O'Brien's cult production tells the tale of the straight-laced Brad and the deliciously corruptible Janet, who arrive at the castle of the alien transvestite Frank N Furter and witness the birth of the monster, Rocky. Along the way, they take the audience through a selection of love-'em-or-loathe-'em musical numbers, including Sweet Transvestite, Damn It Janet and The Time Warp. Great fun's a guarantee - particularly if you get into the spirit of things and attend the show dressed in your very best stockings & suspenders (as many patrons do).



Tina: The Tina Turner Musical

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 17 - Sat 28 June

This celebration of the late, great Tina Turner visits Birmingham as part of its first-ever UK tour and tells the story of one of the brightest stars in the musical firmament. Taking audiences on a journey from Tina's humble beginnings in Nutbush, Tennessee, the musical was fully endorsed by the rock & roll legend prior to her death. "It's really important to me to have the chance to share



War Horse Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 4 - Sat 8 March; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 11 - Sat 22 March

Described as 'the theatrical event of the decade' when it opened in the West End in 2009, War Horse has continued to garner great praise in the ensuing years. Based on Michael Morpurgo's hugely popular 1982 novel, it tells the story of a young man named Albert, whose horse, Joey, is sold to

the cavalry and shipped to France at the beginning of the First World War. Joey's subsequent adventures lead to him finding himself alone in a no man's land. But Albert is in no mood to give up on his beloved companion, and sets out to find him and take him home to Devon...

my full story," said Tina. "This musical is not about my stardom. It is about the journey I took to get there. Each night, I want audiences to take away from the theatre that you can turn poison into medicine." Expect a pulse-pounding soundtrack of Tina's iconic hits, including The Best, What's Love Got To Do With It?, Private Dancer and River Deep, Mountain High. The show has been written by Olivier Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Katori Hall (The Mountaintop) and is helmed by the internationally acclaimed Phyllida Lloyd, who's best known for directing Mamma Mia!



Vamos: Boy On The Roof

Arena Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 6 - Sat 8 February; The Bridge House Theatre, Warwick, Tues 11 & Wed 12 February; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Wed 26 & Thurs 27 February; MAC Birmingham, Fri 28 February; The Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sun 9 March

Vamos Theatre has an impressive reputation for presenting shows which tackle difficult subject matter - and they're at it again here. The Worcester-based company uses full masks to tell its stories without words - and having previously turned the spotlight on dementia, the health service, post-traumatic stress and death, they're here returning with a show that tells the tale of an unlikely friendship between a young man struggling with ADHD and a lonely pensioner.



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Light entertainment from around the region



Shen Yun

The ICC, Birmingham, Fri 3 - Sun 5 January; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 28 & Wed 29 January

Shen Yun Performing Arts' stated mission is to revive five millennia of civilisation. That's no small order, but they nonetheless make a more-than-decent fist of it with their high-energy shows, taking the audience on a journey that brings together 'exquisite' beauty and ethnic traditions with 'profound wisdom from dynasties past'.

Magical legends and heavenly realms are much in evidence too, as are impressive animated backdrops, exquisite costumes and a range of dance styles, from classical Chinese to ethnic and folk.

If you've never caught one of Shen Yun's shows before, bag yourself a seat and find out why celebrities from Shirley Ballas to Cate Blanchett have been waxing lyrical about them.

Crooners Uncaged

Sutton Coldfield Town Hall, Sat 11 January; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 31 January; Birmingham Town Hall, Sat 15 March

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



Richard Jones: Soldier Of Illusion

Lichfield Garrick, Sun 19 January; The Albany Theatre, Coventry, Sat 1 February

Lance Corporal Richard Jones has followed up years of sterling service in Her Majesty's Royal Household Cavalry with a hugely successful career as a magician.



The only prestidigitator ever to win Britain's Got Talent, Richard has also headlined sell-out shows in the London West End, and will no doubt be packing out theatres across the country on this latest tour.

Pretty Vacant: The Story Of Punk And New Wave

The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 23 January; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 26 January; Lichfield Garrick, Thurs 30 January; Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 4 March; Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Fri 7 March

Actor Kevin Kennedy - best known for playing the character of Curly Watts in Coronation Street - is the narrator of this brand-new show, a production which is promising to take audiences on a nostalgic journey from the beginnings of punk in the 1970s, to its later movements in the 1980s and 90s. Expect hits from, among others, The Sex Pistols, The Clash, Blondie, The Damned, Ramones, Buzzcocks and The Undertones.

Giovanni: The Last Dance

Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent, Sat 25 January; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 1 & Sun 2 February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, February, Sat 22 February; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Fri 25 April

Giovanni Pernice will probably be relieved to see the back of 2024, a year during which his reputation took a significant battering following allegations made by his former Strictly Come Dancing dance partner, the actor Amanda Abbington.



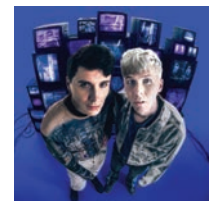
This new tour will provide the 'Italian stallion' with the perfect opportunity to reconnect with his legion of fans and let his dance steps do the talking.

Presenting 'a mesmerising production that transcends the boundaries of live performance', Giovanni is once again joined by his company of 'world-class performers'.

Dan & Phil: Terrible Influence

Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Monday 13 & Wednesday 22 January

The Dan & Phil of the title are Daniel Howell and Phil Lester, a pair of YouTubers who've been working together as entertainers for the past 15 years.



Publicity for their Terrible Influence show promises an evening of theatrical plot twists, a savage roast of social media, and a host of scandalous stories they couldn't share before. Oh, and just so you know... Phil has gone blond...

A Little Bawl Of Pain

Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 January

After enjoying success with previous offering I Screamed A Scream, West End Best Friend and the Old Joint Stock Theatre have once again teamed up to produce this brand-new celebration of musical tearjerkers. Both classical and contemporary heartbreakers abound in a production that's promising to bring audiences to tears - in the best possible way!

Film highlights in January...



We Live In Time CERT 15 (108 mins)

Starring **Andrew Garfield, Florence Pugh, Grace Delaney, Lee Braithwaite, Aoife Hinds, Adam James**
Directed by **John Crowley**

If you fancy kickstarting 2025 with a romantic weepie, the decade-spanning *We Live In Time* could well be the movie to choose.

When Almut (Florence Pugh) and Tobias (Andrew Garfield) are brought together in a surprise encounter that changes their lives, they embark on a path which is challenged by the limits of time - and along which they must learn to cherish each moment of their unconventional love story...

"[The movie] was joyful," British-American one-time *Spider-Man* star Garfield told *Collider*. "It was a vehicle and a vessel where I could explore loss and love, and the cost of living life to its fullest. The reality; the set-up that, if we love things, if we love people, if we love life, then baked into that is the loss of the very things we love. There's no way around it, so let's celebrate."

Released Wed 1 January



Maria CERT tbc (124 mins)

Starring **Angelina Jolie, Valeria Golino, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Alba Rohrwacher, Haluk Bilginer, Pierfrancesco Favino**
Directed by **Pablo Larrain**

Pablo Larrain's psychological portrait of the singer Maria Callas during the final days of her life finds Angelina Jolie in fine form. The 49-year-old Academy Award winner takes the title role as the legendary soprano, whose often turbulent life was brought to an abrupt end in 1977 when she suffered a heart attack at the age of just 53.

The film is the final entry in Chilean director Larrain's so-called 'Great Woman trilogy', following on from his biopics about Jackie Kennedy (*Jackie*, 2016) and Diana, Princess of Wales (*Spencer*, 2021). *Peaky Blinders* creator Steven Knight, who wrote *Spencer*, has provided the screenplay for this one too.

Released Fri 10 January

Babygirl CERT tbc (114 mins)

Starring **Nicole Kidman, Harris Dickinson, Antonio Banderas, Sophie Wilde, Esther McGregor, Vaughan Reilly** Directed by **Halina Reijn**

Anybody who took a punt on *Babygirl* without having first found out what the film is all about would get a fairly good idea pretty quickly, as Nicole Kidman's character, Romy, seemingly enjoys an intense orgasm while lovemaking with husband Jacob, played by Antonio Banderas.

But the reality of Romy's experience is somewhat different, as is soon evidenced by her compulsive pleasuring of herself at her laptop while watching pornography.

Her yearning for something more exciting than lovemaking with her husband is both profound and palpable; which perfectly explains why the high-powered CEO decides

to put her career and family on the line by engaging in a torrid affair with her younger intern...

Babygirl received a thumbs-up at the Venice Film Festival last summer and is certain to benefit from Kidman's no-holds-barred interviews while promoting the film.

"There were times when we were shooting where I was like, 'I don't want to orgasm anymore,'" she told *The Sun*. "Don't come near me. I hate doing this. I don't care if I am never touched again in my life! I'm over it. It was so present all the time for me that it was almost like a burnout."

Released Fri 10 January



A Complete Unknown CERT tbc

Starring **Timothée Chalamet, Elle Fanning, Edward Norton, Monica Barbaro, Boyd Holbrook, Scoot McNairy**
Directed by **James Mangold**

New York, 1961. Against the backdrop of a vibrant music scene and tumultuous cultural upheaval, an enigmatic 19-year-old from Minnesota arrives with his guitar and a revolutionary talent - one which will soon see him change the course of American music forever...
Timothée Chalamet steps into the shoes of legendary troubadour Bob Dylan in James Mangold's thoughtful biopic of one of the 20th-century's most iconic and celebrated singer-songwriters.

A star-studded supporting cast lend their talent to proceedings with portrayals of some of the 60s' most famous musicians, including Joan Baez, Johnny Cash and Woody Guthrie.

Early reviews of A Complete Unknown have been generally positive, with Chalamet being hailed for a groundbreaking performance as Dylan.

Released Fri 17 January



Here CERT 12a (104 mins)

Starring **Tom Hanks, Robin Wright, Paul Bettany, Kelly Reilly, Laura McQueen, Harry Marcus**
Directed by **Robert Zemeckis**

The director, writer and stars of Forrest Gump are reunited for a film adaptation of Richard McGuire's acclaimed and same-named graphic novel.

The film, presented in a nonlinear narrative, follows the stories of love, life and death that are played out across time on a single spot of land; from dinosaurs roaming the area, through to the devastation wrought by the Covid-19 virus.

Its main stars, Tom Hanks and Robin Wright, play a 20th-century couple who, after getting pregnant, raise their daughter in the house which stands on the land...

The movie hasn't pulled up many trees with the critics but is certainly noteworthy (although by no means unique) for taking advantage (not always successfully) of the cutting-edge technology that allows actors to be aged and de-aged.

Released Fri 17 January

The Brutalist CERT 18 (215 mins)

Starring **Adrien Brody, Felicity Jones, Guy Pearce, Joe Alwyn, Raffey Cassidy, Stacy Martin**
Directed by **Brady Corbett**

The Brutalist has been called an 'electrifying film', a 'towering tribute to the immigrant experience' and a movie of 'staggering ambition'. And given that it will eat up three-and-a-half hours of your day, it had better be all of those things.

Fortunately, if the reaction at last year's Venice Film Festival is anything to go by, it absolutely is; The Brutalist was positively deluged with critical acclaim and roundly hailed a masterpiece.

Making an escape from Europe following the

war, visionary architect László Toth arrives in America to rebuild his life, his work, and his marriage to his wife Erzsébet (after being separated from her during wartime by shifting borders and regimes).

Finding himself on his own in a strange new country, László settles in Pennsylvania, where wealthy and prominent industrialist Harrison Lee Van Buren recognises his talent for building.

But power and legacy come at a heavy cost...

Released Fri 24 January



SWANNING ALONG

Sir Matthew Bourne's groundbreaking production of
Swan Lake returns to Birmingham Hippodrome



Now a household name, Sir Matthew Bourne caused a significant stir in the ballet world in 1995, when his reimagined version of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake was premiered at Sadler's Wells Theatre. In the production, a fairytale love story, the traditionally female cohort of delicate swans are replaced with male dancers - strong, hissing and overtly masculine. What's On spoke to James Lovell - who plays the protagonist Prince - Bryony Wood - the character's inappropriate Girlfriend - and Alistair Beattie - who appears as one of the swans - to discover why, 30 years later, the production still has impact...

What was the journey that led you to performing with New Adventures?

Alistair Beattie: I watched Swan Lake when I was 14 or 15 years old. I was still in training, and I do remember it quite clearly - I watched it and thought 'That's what I want to do when I'm older.' I furthered my training in Birmingham at Elmhurst School for Dance. I spent three years training there, and then a couple of years after I graduated, I auditioned for the company for the first time.

Bryony Wood: My journey with the company started quite similarly. I watched Swan Lake - I actually vividly remember watching James as the Prince. We've had similar training; I'd just found out I was going to be doing Romeo & Juliet, playing the role of Juliet, and it was a massive thing. It was my first job, and I remember watching James on the stage and thinking to myself 'Oh my god, that's gonna be me one day!' It was such a beautiful moment.

James Lovell: I had a pretty surreal journey into it. I was really, really young. I had done one year of professional ballet school at Elmhurst Ballet School in Birmingham. It was during the summer break of my second year that the National Youth Ballet - which is a summer school for kids up to 19 - did a gala performance at Sadler's Wells, and Matthew was watching... A week later, I was back at school, feeling a bit glum because it had all finished, and I got an email saying 'Could you come along to these workshops? We're calling them Swan School.' It was the first round they'd done. I joined in with that - all while I was doing my second year.

This tour is in celebration of the production's 30th anniversary. Why do you think it has endured and is still so popular?

Alistair: It's just an incredible production... It's pretty much sold out wherever we go. We get such amazing responses from the audience, and I think even now, 30 years on, it's still sort of groundbreaking. It's crazy to think that a piece that's 30 years old is still pushing boundaries. It says a lot about our society.

Bryony: One thing about New Adventures is that you can't compare it to anything else. It stands on its own, and this show in particular, with the male swans and their ferocity. You just can't take your eyes off

anything. You're so drawn in, there isn't a single moment where you're distracted or thinking about something else.

James: I think the themes within the show will forever be relevant. It depends who comes to see it and how they want to view it - whether it's the Prince falling in love with an idea of something, or actually falling in love with a man... It's all actually more relevant now than ever, especially with a character like the Girlfriend in the palace - there's hints of Megan and Fergie!

The Girlfriend is a very funny character. Bryony, during the rehearsal process, were you able to be quite playful as you developed your performance?

Absolutely! I was told to make it my own. To begin with, it was quite tricky because you just want to play the character, and that's what the audience finds funny. If you're trying to be funny, it doesn't read the same - so you have to really believe it but also know that what you're doing is very much a character and is very over the top; it's so humorous! I was allowed a lot of freedom, and with that you try things, you play with things. There's a lot of guidance in that as well, which is really lovely. I think with any role that you do in this company, you're allowed to put your own stamp on it. I personally love when I act with a different person - James and Steven play the Prince completely differently, and that's really lovely because it gives you a different take on the show. It keeps everything really fresh.

James, would you ever want to see the other side of the coin and play the big swan?

Absolutely not - it terrifies me! There's only ever one person who's played both the Prince and the Swan, and I think it goes without saying, really, that you're built one way or the other, normally. They're so different. Someone compared it to Roxy and Velma in Chicago. Roxy is the throughline; it's a marathon. Velma is the sprint - she's only on for half the show, if that, but when she's on, she's belting or she's dancing. I'm much more of a marathon. I'm a tortoise, and I'm happy with that - I'm the emotional tortoise!

Alistair and James, how much involvement with Birmingham Hippodrome did you have in your time training in Birmingham?

Alistair: When I was a student, I was lucky to get the opportunity to work with Birmingham Royal Ballet, who are based there, so I've spent quite a lot of time at the Hippodrome. It's always a bit surreal - I really strongly think back to that time when I was a student. I didn't have a job, but I was working with professionals, and it's what I wanted to do.

James: I did The Nutcracker with BRB in my second year, and it's so special. I know my way around the Hippodrome - it's nice when you know a theatre. I think all of my teachers are still at Elmhurst Ballet School. I always try to pop in on the students, because it always meant a lot when I was training if someone from the theatre would come in. It's what you crave. Ultimately, that's why you trained - because you want to perform.

For any young people aspiring to join you on stage, do you have any advice?

Bryony: Yes! Take as many classes as you can, work with as many different choreographers, push yourself with loads of different styles, go and take acting classes... Just learn and evolve and push yourself in so many different aspects, because if you've got that strong foundation, the sky is your limit; you can do anything.

Alistair: Being proactive is great, especially if you want to work with New Adventures. They provide so many opportunities; open days, Swan School - I think they did a Cygnet School this time around... This may sound weird, but put yourself in uncomfortable situations and push yourself, because then you're going to have a broad range of experiences, and that's really going to help and mould who you are as a performer.

James: The outreach that the company does is amazing... A lot of it is free, and if you take part, you get a ticket to a show, normally. You get to see part of what you've been working on, on stage with the people who do it for a living. I think it's inspiring.

.....
Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake visits Birmingham Hippodrome from Thursday 6 until Saturday 15 February



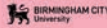
FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR L'ÉLOGE DES MEILLEUR-ES ENNEMI-ES

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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. 528892. Image: Hetaïa Péllet, Don't Look at The Finger (2017). © Hetaïa Péllet, Courtesy of British Council Collection.

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SCENT
& the Art of the Pre-Raphaelites

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–
26 JANUARY 2025

Visual Arts previews from around the region



Scent And The Art Of The Pre-Raphaelites

Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, until 26 January

“The exhibition has a sensory experience,” explains Andrew Davies, communications & marketing manager at the Barber, in talking about Scent And The Art Of The Pre-Raphaelites. “We’ve actually produced scent in the gallery. There was a belief in Victorian times that

you could smell a rainbow - it smelt like spring flowers and meadows...

“One of the paintings we’ve borrowed comes from Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. It’s called The Blind Girl, where they’re breathing in the scent of the rainbow in the background.”

Victorian Radicals

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, until 5 January

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.

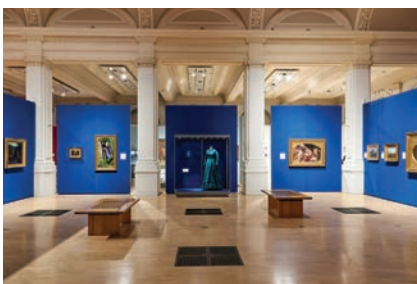


Image: Lubaina Himid, A Rake's Progress Hole in her Stocking (2022)

The Future Is Today

Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Wed 15 January - Sun 9 March

Taking the subtitle Prints And The University Of Warwick, 1965 To Now, this brand-new major survey exhibition of work from the university’s art collection - and from other museums, artists and private collectors - examines the ideas that have been explored by successive generations during the 60 years since the university opened and the collection was founded.

The exhibition contains a free, working print studio, where visitors can make monoprints inspired by what they see in the show.

The Taotie

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, until Wed 26 March

This show from Gayle Chong Kwan features seven photographic works produced during the 50-year-old artist’s 18-month residency at Compton Verney.

Responding to the venue’s internationally renowned Chinese collection, alongside which the works are being displayed, Gayle’s art incorporates references to Chinese, Taoist and Buddhist cultures and explores ideas around food, soil and the body.



Waste Age: What Can Design Do?

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Sun 23 February

MAC’s first collaboration with the Design Museum is a group exhibition focusing on a new generation of designers who are ‘rethinking our relationship to everyday things’.

Telling the story of the environmental crisis, the show explores how design can transform waste into valuable resources.

The exhibition features a new sculptural commission inspired by clothes waste markets in Nigeria. The work has been created by Birmingham-based artist Abdulrazaq Awofeso.

Earthbound

New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 8 June

Work by nine artists and community makers is featured in this topical exhibition, a show set within the context of global anxiety about the climate crisis.

Addressing earthbound themes that connect people with soil, plants, seeds, mycelium, animals and birds - and the histories, cultures and knowledge surrounding these - the exhibition includes sculpture, drawing, painting and installation, as well as work produced via natural art-making techniques.

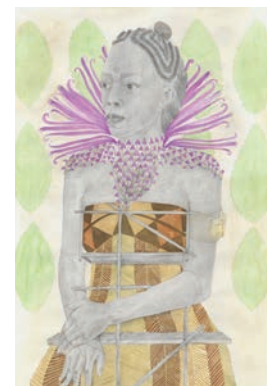


Image: Charmaine Walkie, The warrior focuses intent to overcome adversity, 2022.



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Festive-season events continuing into January...

Ice Skate Birmingham

Centenary Square, Birmingham, until Sun 5 January

As 2025 gets under way, Ice Skate Birmingham and the Big Wheel remain available to experience until the first weekend of January. While the wheel offers the opportunity to enjoy fantastic views across the city, the weather-proofed ice rink accommodates up to 300 people per session... And when skaters have finished their Torvill & Dean routine, they can warm themselves up with some festive fare in the nearby Ice Lounge and double deck rooftop bar.



Winter Funland NEC, Birmingham, until Wed 1 January

Winter Funland's rides and attractions are all included in the price of your ticket. Visitors can enjoy a giant ice rink, a 1,200-seater circus, a motorbike stunt show and unlimited funfair rides. And if you work up an appetite having all that fun, a selection of food & drink vendors will be on hand with some sure-to-be-tasty refreshments.

Winter Wonderland Stoke-on-Trent

Lichfield Street, Stoke-on-Trent City Centre, until Sun 5 January

Winter Wonderland Stoke-on-Trent comes complete with a real ice rink, funfair rides, lots of games and an array of food & drink. The event also features brand-new addition The Santa Express Experience, a virtual journey to Lapland that offers participants the chance to say hello to the main man himself and meet his elves! The event is free to enter, but it's best to pre-book the Santa Express Experience and ice skating, as slots fill up fast. Other rides can be purchased on a pay-as-you-go basis, or by buying a best-value-for-money unlimited-ride wristband lasting for four hours.

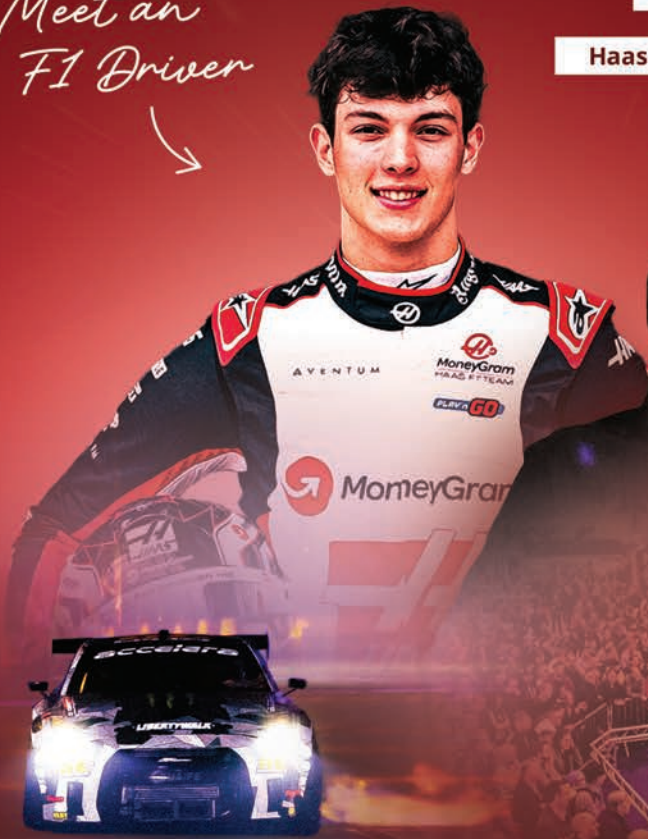


Winter at Compton Verney

Compton Verney, Warwickshire, throughout January

Compton Verney's illuminated Christmas Present Trail attraction continues into the first week of the new year, taking over the galleries and grounds and featuring a sweet-treat reward for visitors who manage to find all of the lost gifts and figure out a hidden word. Other January events at the venue include Artist Play Days in the learning studio (Thursday the 2nd to Sunday the 5th) - during which families can create glowing and magical scenes - and a multicultural contemporary wassail (Saturday the 18th), featuring a lantern parade and Bhangra dance party.

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Autosport International NEC, Birmingham, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 January

Europe's biggest dedicated motorsport exhibition is celebrating 75 years of F1 with a series of special features. Anniversary highlights include the appearance of a MoneyGram Haas F1 car and a contribution from driver Oliver Bearman, who will be

chatting about his grand prix preparations. Numerous motorsport clubs and an assortment of cars also feature, as does the 5,000-seat Live Action Arena, providing visitors with the chance to enjoy 'smoking stunts, deafening drifting and racing thrills'.

Winter Steam Gala

Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster, Sat 4 & Sun 5 January

If a cosy train ride spent admiring the winter landscape of the Severn Valley sounds right up your street (or should that be 'right along your railway track?'), then look no further than the Winter Steam Gala.

Back by popular demand, the event will see six locomotives in service and operating a busy timetable. One of them, the GWR Auto Tank 1450, is returning after an overhaul. The Engine House at Highley will be open throughout the gala weekend, as will gift shops along the line - the perfect place for fans of steam to spend their Christmas dosh!



The National Running Show Birmingham

NEC, Birmingham, Sat 25 & Sun 26 January

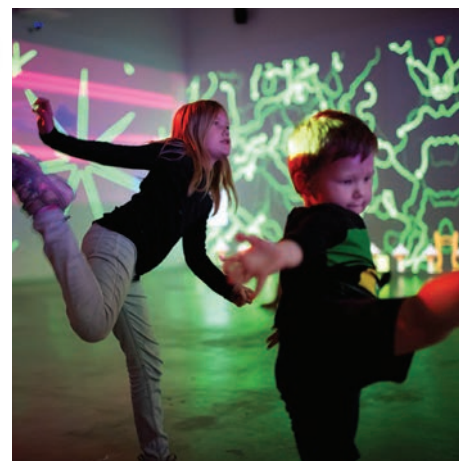
On your marks... Get set... Go! The National Running Show caters for a runner's every need and features cutting-edge technology and the latest in kit and nutrition products. Visitors can get tips from expert coaches and gain inspiration from an impressive line-up of speakers across the weekend, including Chris Thompson, Colin Jackson CBE and Dame Denise Lewis DBE.

Microworld Coventry

Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, until Sun 23 February

Touring exhibition Microworld is described as an immersive art space filled with digital creatures that respond to the audience in a variety of ways... The popular show - it's proved a major hit on its travels around Europe, the US, the Middle East and Asia - is fully immersive, interactive and adaptive; a 'living' space that provides families with the opportunity to create art together...

The project is produced by Lumen Studios and designed and programmed by UK-based collective Genetic Moo, whose art is inspired by ecology, artificial life and evolution.



Super League Basketball Trophy Finals

Utilita Arena Birmingham, Sun 26 January

The Super League Basketball Trophy Finals make a welcome return to Birmingham's Utilita Arena late this month.

Four of the biggest professional teams in UK basketball will be going all out for glory as they bid to secure the Super League men's and women's trophies.

In between the two finals, fans will be treated to a slam dunk contest and a variety of other 'top-class entertainment'.





SHAKESPEARE ALL RAPPED UP

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre is presenting a brand-new
take on the world's greatest love story...

An inventive new version of Romeo And Juliet, featuring original rap songs, has its world premiere at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre next month. Director Corey Campbell tells What's On why the fresh take on Shakespeare's classic tragedy is an example of the theatre's ongoing co-creation model at its best.

A brand-new adaptation of Romeo And Juliet, featuring an original score that contains rap, R&B and soul music, will have its world premiere at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre next month.

One of the theatre's flagship in-house productions, the show is part of a new strand of work which sees the venue collaborate with the local community, reinforcing its stated commitment to the process of co-creation.

The show, which is being co-produced with Bristol Old Vic and the Hackney Empire, has been a community-led project from the outset, according to the Belgrade's creative director, Corey Campbell.

"Romeo And Juliet is a great example of how our approach to co-creating with our communities can work in practice. We had already been running workshops in Coventry's Extended Learning Centres (ELCs) when we started discussing the idea of creating a rap theatre production with a new local company called That's A Rap. The company is all about challenging the way theatre incorporates rap as an artistic form, so we brought the two together, and now the young people from the ELCs are co-creating songs for the show."

Corey, who will direct the production, says it will follow the traditional script of the lyrical love story. By including rap and R&B, he aims not only to appeal to people who love the music of the spoken word, but also to provide the play with a contemporary resonance and relevance for younger audiences.

"The production will follow and respect Shakespeare's text, but the songs will add a layer of context, to ground it in a world that is recognisable for today's young people.

"I'm from a very working-class background, and often times when it comes to classical work, it's looked on as if we can't do it. I wanted young people from the ELCs to see that there's a way of delivering this work which doesn't make it feel like a foreign language."

Corey says approaching it from a new angle wasn't just about helping *young* people connect with the classic text, but audiences in general.

"Regardless of the rap and the music, I want them to see there's a style that we can create where the rhythm, language and stress-points will make [the text] sound as familiar to you as our conversation now."

He also says the youngsters brought fresh insights and contemporary perspectives that have impacted the tone, style and way the piece will be performed.

"Working with them, I've been struck by Romeo's obsession with ending the violence that surrounds him. Growing up around rival gangs in Birmingham, I often saw fragile peace grow out of romantic relationships between members of clashing groups."

Politics - with a capital P - will also play a central role, with the Montagues and Capulets portrayed as opposing political parties rather than families.

"There's a layer of politics that's already there and we're exploiting it. This is where we'll continue co-creating with audiences every night. They'll be able to vote for which of the 'dignified' households they'd like to see take charge."

Attitudes to Mantua - the city that Romeo is banished to - and its working-class people "who pay for what the privileged do" are also part of the mix, as is the way politicians' words can have an instant impact on the streets.

"It makes this work all the more potent," says Corey, citing a number of examples, including the storming of the US Capitol Building in January 2021 and far-right violence in London in November 2023, events arguably triggered by the comments of Donald Trump and Suella Braverman respectively.

"That's the world that we've created, but it's been identified by the young people in these schools and we're taking their lead. It's been incredible."

And with musical numbers at the heart of everything ("it's definitely all-singing, all-dancing but with that deep layer of classical verse"), the show will also be quite a spectacle. "Our creative team is very exciting, and you best believe the choreography, the movement, the dancing and the singing is all gonna be on point."

Ticking all those boxes makes it quite a challenge for the cast. "The dialogue goes straight into the rap and the songs, which is a big ask of an actor, and a new ask of an actor," he admits, suggesting their closest reference point is the musical Hamilton, "but that's very sing-song in its rhythmic rap, whereas this is slightly more drill."

Corey also hopes, and expects, the show will find its feet - and an audience - more readily than the 'hip-hop Shakespeare' of performers such as rapper Akala that he remembers from his youth.

"Back then, rap wasn't as popular in culture as it is now. People just saw it as violent expression as opposed to the deep expression that was in the work. But I believe we're really on to something special. The two lads from That's A Rap, Corey Weekes ('Corey 2.o') and Kieren Hamilton-Amos, are on a development journey with the Belgrade and are just so talented - we're gonna unlock what they call new-form poetics. It's a really exciting time."

That excitement includes the success of Swim Aunty Swim!, the Belgrade in-house production that was recently named Best New Play at the UK Theatre Awards.

"It feels great to be producing work at that level," says Corey, who sees the national recognition as testament to all the work that has been going on under the radar for years. "We're now producing work that's of national significance, and people around the country are actually travelling to the Belgrade these days, which is fantastic. The other part of it, which is just as important, is the work we're doing in schools, the work we're doing with community, and our co-creation model, which I believe is ground-breaking. Works like Romeo And Juliet and Swim Aunty Swim! don't come around unless we're in our communities, because they're *from* our communities."

.....
Romeo And Juliet shows at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre from Friday 21 February to Saturday 8 March



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Your week-
by-week
listings guide
January 2025

the list



Carlos Acosta's *Nitcracker* in Havana - Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 13 & Tues 14 January

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

What's On

Wed 1 - Sun 12 January



Friends In Love and War -
IKON Gallery, Birmingham
until Sun 23 February

Mon 13 - Sun 19 January



Felicity Ward - Warwick Arts
Centre, Coventry,
Thurs 16 January

Mon 20 - Sun 26 January



Blood Brothers -
Wolverhampton Grand
Tues 21 - Sat 25 January

Mon 27 - Fri 31 January



Beaux Gris Gris & The
Apocalypse - KK's Steel Mill
Wed 29 January

VISUAL ARTS IN THE MIDLANDS



Friends In Love And War - L'Éloge des meilleur.es ennemi.es - Ikon Gallery, B'ham

Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham

UNSTILL LIFE Exhibition exploring global mobility and consumerism in still-life paintings which convey changing attitudes towards globalisation, capitalism and consumer culture over time, until Sun 26 Jan

WOMEN IN POWER: COINS FROM THE BARBER COLLECTION Spanning nearly 2,000 years and more than 2,500 miles, the exhibition focuses on historical women who have appeared on coins, until Sun 26 Jan

PEACE AND NOISE: SOUNDS OF THE LANDSCAPE Exploring the elements of implied sound evident in historical landscapes from the Barber's prints and drawings collection, until Sun 26 Jan

RECLAIMING NARRATIVES: VOICES FROM THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH Exhibition featuring works by Marley Starskey Butler at College of Medicine and Health students, interrogating whether the portraits on the medical school walls really represent those who work and learn there, until Sun 26 Jan

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR Exhibition of powerful photographs showcasing animal behaviour, spectacular species and the fragility of our planet, until Sun 20 Apr

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

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

Compton Verney, Warwickshire

CHILA KUMARI SINGH BURMAN: SPECTACULAR DIVERSIONS The largest exhibition by the leading contemporary artist, featuring a dazzling array of works including drawings, prints, collage, sculpture, neons and installation, until Sun 26 Jan

THE REFLECTED SELF A 'sumptuous' exhibition diving into the fascinating history of portrait miniatures, until Sun 23 Feb

REUNITED: THE LAMENTATION ALTERPIECE After 30 years of its central panel being housed in the National Gallery of Scotland's collection, this is a chance to see a rare masterpiece, reunited, until Fri 28 Feb

SCULPTURE IN THE PARK Major new sculpture park, featuring works by eight contemporary artists in response to the grounds and landscape at Compton Verney, until Sun 2 May 2027

Coventry Music Museum

OUR TOWN A tribute to This Town through the eyes of a supporting artist, including memorabilia and costumes. The museum also features tributes to The Specials' Terry Hall and Roddy 'Radiation' Byers

Herbert Museum & Art Gallery, Coventry

MICROWORLD COVENTRY Immersive and interactive artwork for all ages, filled with digital creatures, until Sun 23 Feb

COLLECTING COVENTRY Exhibition reflecting the museum's collection practice, via a catalogue of objects accumulated since the founding of the Herbert in 1949 and Coventry Transport Museum in 1980, until Sun 27 Apr

COVENTRY RUGBY CLUB A new display celebrating 150 years of Coventry Rugby Club, until Tues 30 Sept

WARWICKSHIRE'S JURASSIC SEA

Discover the amazing creatures that lived in Coventry & Warwickshire during the time of the dinosaurs, until Sat 21 Feb 2026

DIPPY IN COVENTRY: THE NATION'S FAVOURITE DINOSAUR Dippy the diplodocus is in Coventry on a three-year loan from the Natural History Museum

Ikon Gallery, Birmingham

FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR - L'ÉLOGE DES MEILLEUR-ES ENNEMI-ES Curated collaboratively, the exhibition interrogates friendship as a fundamental human relationship essential to individual wellbeing and society, until Sun 23 Feb

Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum

25 YEARS | 25 OBJECTS | 25 ARTISTS Celebrating 25 years of Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum at the Royal Pump Rooms. Twenty-five artists, including recent winners of the Open 2024, have been invited to display and sell artworks that will form part of a pop-up shop within the exhibition space, until Sun 12 Jan

Midlands Arts Centre, Edgbaston, Birmingham

RUBBISH REDESIGNED: INNOVATIVE DESIGNERS FROM THE MIDLANDS Group exhibition exploring the range of imaginative approaches to circular design and waste innovation across the West Midlands, and addressing the pressing need to reconsider how we utilise and recycle our planet's resources, until Sun 2 Mar

New Art Gallery, Walsall

REFLECTOR Exhibition marking the culmination of a ten-month development programme for emerging photographers, artists and curators from diverse backgrounds from across England. Each works with photography but with different approaches and perspectives, until Sun 9 Mar

EQUAL + ABLE = NOT A LABEL Exhibition exploring ableism through the New Art Gallery Walsall Collections, until Sun 18 May

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

MAURICE WADE: A PAINTER FROM NO.57 Local artist Wade was inspired by the stark beauty and atmospheric melancholy of the various landscapes of North Staffordshire. The exhibition includes over 90 paintings highlighting Wade's enduring fascination with the region, until Sun 26 Jan

THE SOCIETY OF STAFFORDSHIRE ARTISTS This exhibition has been assembled to celebrate the 100 Years of Stoke-on-Trent as a City and as a centre for artistic creativity, as well as 90 years of being a focus and

showcase for the Society's Members' work, until Sun 23 Feb

NO GOING BACK Display of photographs and memorabilia by North Staffs Miners Wives, to mark the 40th anniversary of the Miners' Strike, until Sun 2 Mar

RBSA Gallery, Birmingham

RBSA ANNUAL EXHIBITION 2024 Exploring both traditional and contemporary approaches, the RBSA's Annual Exhibition showcases over 150 artworks by RBSA members, all of which are for sale, until Sat 4 Jan

RBSA FRIENDS EXHIBITION 2025 Exhibition of works by the wider RBSA community, showcasing artists at all stages of their careers, Thurs 9 Jan - Sat 8 Feb

Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

SUN & FIRE: LIFE AND DEATH AT THE DAWN OF HISTORY Step into the ancient Shropshire landscape in an interactive exhibition exploring the lives of the people who lived there before written records, until Wed 30 April

Wolverhampton Art Gallery

A PERFECT SENTENCE Oliver Frank Chanarin's new exhibition interrogates the photographic image in the age of the algorithm. At the centre of the installation are two machines made by the artist in collaboration with Tom Cecil and Ruairi Glynn, continuously rehangng framed photographs, until Sun 23 Feb

PAINTED DREAMS: THE ART OF EVELYN DE MORGAN Exhibition revisiting the gallery's historic 1907 show, and reuniting several of De Morgan's most significant works in Wolverhampton. The show features 30 artworks from one of the most impressive artists of the late Victorian era, until Sun 9 Mar

POP, PRINT, PROTEST Exploring how Pop artists used mixed media collage and combined text and image in order to convey powerful, persuasive challenges to capitalism, racism and conflict, until Sun 11 May

Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

ATCHIN TAN: TRAVELLING THROUGH ART A visual journey through time, co-curated with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Works by Turner, Munnings and Gainsborough hang alongside newly commissioned artworks by Romani artists, until Sun 5 Jan

WORCESTER SOCIETY OF ARTISTS: 76TH ANNUAL EXHIBITION Annual exhibition celebrating and supporting local artists, and illustrating the wealth of creative talent in Worcestershire, until Feb 2025

Gigs

EDWINA HAYES Wed 1 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

THE DRIFTERS Fri 3 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

BORN IN THE 80S Fri 3 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

SHAM 69 + BUZZSAW RADIO + MERRY WORTH TRIO Fri 3 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

NICKLEBACK UK Fri 3 Jan, The Station, Cannock

CHANGE AT BAKER STREET Fri 3 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

NANNA RADLEYS Fri 3 - Sat 4 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

TUBIAS + REVIVECHIZL + SK4 Sat 4 Jan, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

BORN IN THE 80S VS BORN IN THE 90S Sat 4 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ED SHEERAN EXPERIENCE Sat 4 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

HELLFIRE + GIN ANNIE + WHITE RAVEN DOWN + IN SEARCH OF SUN + REGIONAL ONE Sat 4 Jan, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE Sat 4 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

STATEASE QUO Sat 4 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

DARK SKY BURIAL Sun 5 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE FIREBIRDS Sun 5 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

ROXY MAGIC + DAISY JANE Sun 5 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

RICH PARSONS Sun 5 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

MARTIN THOMAS AND ROSIE GREEN Sun 5 Jan, Bill's Kitchen, Ludlow Assembly Rooms

FILTHY LUCRE + THE JOHNSON BROTHERS + THE SWAPS Wed 8 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

THE PASADENA ROOF



The Classic Rock Show - Symphony Hall, Birmingham & Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

ORCHESTRA Wed 8 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

JUDY BLU JAM Thurs 9 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

TRYPL Thurs 9 Jan, Marris Bar, Worcester

BAND OF FRIENDS Thurs 9 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

TAYLORMANIA Thurs 9 - Fri 10 Jan, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

FLUX SESSIONS Fri 10 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE STYLE COUNCILLORS Fri 10 Jan, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

REPUNK'D Fri 10 Jan, Marris Bar, Worcester

MIDLIFE CRISIS Fri 10 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

ARCTIC ROLL - ARCTIC MONKEYS TRIBUTE Fri 10 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

ULTIMATE BLINK 182 Fri 10 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

STONESTHROW + LIZ SIMCOCK Fri 10 Jan, Fenton Town Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

TOTAL WHO Fri 10 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

RIP IT UP Fri 10 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

DOOKIE - GREEN DAY TRIBUTE Fri 10 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

WRONG JOVI Fri 10 Jan, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE COLLECTIVE Fri 10 - Sat 11 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

COUNTRY BY CANDLELIGHT Fri 10 - Sat 11 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

BLACK ELVIS Sat 11 Jan, The Night Owl, Birmingham

MAN IN THE MIRROR - MICHAEL JACKSON TRIBUTE Sat 11 Jan, Coventry Building Society Arena

ESSENTIAL 80S V 90S Sat 11 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

A FOREIGNER'S JOURNEY Sat 11 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

TOTALLY BLONDIE Sat 11 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

POPESTARS - GHOST TRIBUTE Sat 11 Jan, The Station, Cannock

CHLOE JOSEPHINE & THOMAS HEPPELL Sat 11 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

LOADED REVOLVER Sat 11 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

ALISON RAYNER QUINTET Sat 11 Jan, The Hive, Shrewsbury

INFECTED RAIN + SEMBLANT + ELYOSE + MIRUTHAN + SKIN ON FLESH Sun 12 Jan, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW Sun 12 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JESS SILK Sun 12 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK - ROD STEWART TRIBUTE SHOW Sun 12 Jan, Aston Hall, Wrexham

Classical Music

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL
Programme includes works by Mussorgsky, Grieg, S.S. Wesley & more..., Thurs 2 Jan, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

HALLE: NEW YEAR IN VIENNA
Featuring Eduardo Strausser (conductor) & Alexandra Lowe (soloist). Programme includes works by Strauss, Lehar & more..., Fri 3 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

VIENNESE GALA: A NEW YEAR CELEBRATION Featuring the Stourbridge Choir & Orchestra, Sat 4 Jan, Stourbridge Town Hall

CBSO: VIENNESE NEW YEAR Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor) & Francesca Chiejina (soprano). Programme includes works by Strauss, Lehár, & Korngold, Sat 4 Jan, Malvern Theatres

ENGLISH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA: VIENNESE MAGIC Featuring April Frederick (soprano), Zoë Beyers, (violin) & Kenneth Woods (conductor). Programme includes works by Strauss II, Brahms, Dvořák & more..., Sat 4 Jan, Cheltenham Town Hall

CBSO: VIENNESE NEW YEAR Featuring Stephen Bell (conductor) & Francesca Chiejina (soprano). Programme includes works by Strauss, Lehár, & Korngold, Sun 5 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PAUL CARR ORGAN RECITAL
Programme includes works by Faulkes, J.S. Bach, Langlais & more..., Sun 5 Jan, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham

THE NATIONAL YOUTH ORCHESTRA: ILLUMINATE Featuring Jaime Martin (conductor). Programme includes works by Ravel, A Thorvaldsdottir & Nielsen, Sun 5 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

ORGAN RECITAL: MESSIAEN'S LA NATIVITÉ DU SEIGNEUR Featuring Martyn Rawles (organ), Mon 6 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

RBC LUNCHTIME CONCERT SERIES: HARPS Thurs 9 Jan, St Paul's Church, Jewellery Quarter, B'ham

THOMAS HOWELL ORGAN RECITAL Fri 10 Jan, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL SERIES
Featuring Katherine Cooper (mezzo soprano), Fri 10 Jan, St Mary's Church, Warwick

CBSO EXPLORES: FRIENDS IN LOVE AND WAR Featuring Ilan Volkov (conductor) & Héloïse Werner (soprano). Programme includes works by H Werner, Debussy, Satie & Bridge, Sat 11 Jan, Symphony

Hall, Birmingham

ORIFLAMME WIND ENSEMBLE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERT
Featuring Antione Mitchell (conductor), Lindsay Martin (flute), Aoife Dudley (oboe) & Da Hee Kim (piano). Programme includes works by Mozart, Sat 11 Jan, St Mary's Church, Warwick

WORCESTER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: NEW YEAR FAMILY FAVOURITES Featuring Dan Watson (conductor) & Graham Longfils (leader). Programme includes works by Prokofiev, Grieg, Rossini & Strauss, Sat 11 Jan, Number 8, Pershore

BLACK DYKE BRASS BAND IN CONCERT
Featuring Nicholas J. Childs (musical director), Sun 12 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

MELODIES OF A NEW DAWN Featuring Brio Arts and Music, Sun 12 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Comedy

DANNY MCLOUGHLIN, LATEEF LOVEJOY, SARAH CALLAGHAN & JENNY TIAN Fri 3 - Sat 4 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ROB DEERING, MIKE CARTER, ANDREA HUBERT & ANDREW ROBINSON Sat 4 Jan, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sun 5 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

SEAN HEYDON, PAUL TONKINSON, EDDY MIDGLEY & DAVE TWENTYMAN Thus 9 Jan, Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffordshire

BEN ELTON Thus 9 Jan, Aston Hall, Wrexham

HAL CRUTTEDEN & FRIENDS Fri 10 Jan, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

JAY LAFFERTY, ELLIOT STEEL, MICHAEL ODEWALE & MATT REED Fri 10 - Sat 11 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ANDREW O'NEILL, PRAKASH JIRJADHUN, JOE ZALIAS & KAZEEM JAMAL Sat 11 Jan, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

RICHARD BLACKWOOD Sun 12 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton



SCOTT BENNETT Sun 12 Jan, Station Pub, Sutton Coldfield



Winter Funland - NEC Birmingham

Theatre

GOLDOLOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS

Family pantomime featuring circus acts and laughs aplenty, until Thurs 2 Jan, Telford International Centre, Shropshire

DICK WHITTINGTON Iain Laughlan stars in a festive favourite, with plenty of laughter guaranteed, until Sat 4 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

CINDERELLA: THE PANTOMIME Fun-filled festive show for all the family, until Sat 4 Jan, The Roses, Tewkesbury

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Family panto promising laughter, music and plenty of surprises, until Sat 4 Jan, Talisman Theatre & Arts Centre, Kenilworth

A CHRISTMAS CAROL: A GHOST STORY Mark Gatiss' acclaimed retelling of Dickens' festive classic. Matthew Cottle stars as Scrooge, with Rufus Hound as Jacob Marley, until Sun 5 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD A 'whacky' adventure for audiences young and old that features a host of popular fairytale characters who've got lost in the woods..., until Sun 5 Jan, Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham

SLEEPING BEAUTY Family panto, until Sun 5 Jan, Priory Theatre, Kenilworth

SLEEPING BEAUTY Featuring Britain's Got Talent star Andrew Fleming, Nicole Faraday (Emmerdale & Bad Girls), Redditch's favourite Dame, Simon Howe, and Abbie Chambers, who's making her panto debut in the title role. Various dates until Sun 5 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Family pantomime starring Jenny Ryan (The Chase) as The Enchantress. Malcolm Lord and Ste Johnston also star, until Sun 5 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

SLEEPING BEAUTY Starring Ellie Dadd (EastEnders' Amy Mitchell) as Princess Rose, until Sun 5 Jan, Malvern Theatres

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Family pantomime starring Spa Centre

favourites JP McCue and Sean Dodds, until Sun 5 Jan, Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa

ALADDIN Traditional panto presented by the Worcester Repertory Company, until Sun 5 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

DICK WHITTINGTON Jonathan Wilkes takes the title role in his 20th Potteries panto. He's joined by Christian Patterson as Sarah the Cook and Kai Owen as King Rat. Gina Murray (Spirit of the Bells) and Samara Casteallo (Alice Fitzwarren) also star, until Sun 5 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Festive family fun. Casting includes panto favourites Tam Ryan and Ian Adams, Gladiator's Giant, SIX actor Jarnefa Richard-Noel, Blood Brothers' Timothy Lucas and Waitress star Olivia Mitchell. Tom Lowe, who recently starred as King Triton in Unfortunate, also features, until Sun 5 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

CHRISTMAS PRESENT & CORRECT New Old Friends present a brand-new Christmas farce complete with witty wordplay and small-cast, multiple-role mayhem, until Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Wink, Wendy and Theo star in a giant of a panto that promises plenty of festive family fun, until Sun 5 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK A giant family pantomime starring Sam Rabone, Ben Thornton and Gill Jordan, until Sun 12 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

SLEEPING BEAUTY Fun-filled family pantomime starring Brad Fitt, Tommy J Rollason (Britain's Got Talent), Dionne Ward-Anderson (SIX The Musical) and Gemma Sutton (Strictly Ballroom), until Sun 12 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

TWELFTH NIGHT Samuel West stars as Malvolio, Gwyneth Keyworth as Viola, Freema Agyeman as Olivia, and Bally Gill as Orsino in Shakespeare's

bittersweet winter masterpiece, until Sat 18 Jan, Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE RED SHOES New production based on Hans Christian Andersen's dark fairytale about a young woman and a beautiful pair of red shoes that take her to places she doesn't wish to go..., until Sun 19 Jan, The Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE THREE MUSKETEERS Innovative and fast-paced adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' classic adventure. Adapted and directed by Theresa Heskins, until Sat 25 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

PETER PAN High-flying panto featuring Alison Hammond as the Magical Mermaid, Matt Slack as Smee, Danny Mac as Captain Hook, Rhiannon Chesterman as Wendy and Noah Harrison as Peter Pan. Resident 'Dame' Andrew Ryan and Billie-Kay (Tink) also star, until Sun 2 Feb, Birmingham Hippodrome

KOMEDY OF ERRORS - CIRCUS

BERZERCUS FAMILY SHOW Starring Gerald the gentleman juggler and Wallace the circus trainee, Fri 3 Jan, St Patrick's Church Hall, Wolverhampton

SLEEPING BEAUTY Community version of the popular fairytale, Sat 4 - Sun 12 Jan, The Albany Theatre, Coventry

CINDERELLA THE PANTO The Tamworth Pantomime Company promise its biggest and best panto yet, Sat 4 - Sun 19 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

CINDERELLA Classic rags-to-riches story packed with songs, comedy, misfortunes and mishaps, Sat 4 - Sat 25 Jan, Theatre On The Steps, Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

A CHRISTMAS CAROL One-man performance starring Jonathan Goodwin as Charles Dickens, Sun 5 Jan, Regal, Tenbury Wells

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK Post-Christmas adventure promising 'catchy songs, high-energy dance routines and side-splitting humour', Thurs 9 - Sun 12 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

TINDERELLA: TWO BIG BALLS, ONE HAPPY ENDING A 'scandalous' adults-only twist on a classic fairytale, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Jan, The Old Rep, Birmingham

BROKEN PARTY A contemporary take on a classic murder-mystery, Fri 10 - Sat 11 Jan, The Benn Hall, Rugby

SNOW WHITE Birmingham Youth Theatre present an amateur production of the fairytale favourite, Fri 10 - Sun 12 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY Filthy and wicked panto featuring the voice of Christopher Biggins, Sat 11 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DRAG

QUEENS Naughty north-east adult panto starring Scarlett Moffatt and David Potts alongside Ru Paul's Drag Race icons Michael Marouli and Tomara Thomas, Sun 12 Jan, Wulfrun Hall, The University of Wolverhampton at The Halls

Kid's Theatre

THE JINGLECLAW Brand-new musical for younger audiences, featuring original songs, festive magic 'and a little bit of naughtiness', until Sat 4 Jan, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

THE TIGER WHO CAME TO TEA Join the tea-guzzling tiger in this delightful family show, featuring oodles of magic, a selection of singalong songs and plenty of clumsy chaos, until Sun 5 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall



POLARIS THE SNOW BEAR Kate Bramley's family show concerns a travelling bear who embarks on a journey in search of Mr Hat-In-Burrow, a human naturalist who holds the key to saving the polar world, Sun 5 Jan, Quatt Village Hall, Nr Bridgnorth, South Shropshire

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS Stuff And Nonsense Theatre Company present a classic fairytale with a festive twist, until Sun 5 Jan, Macready Theatre, Rugby

THE SNOWFLAKE The tale of a snowflake, a little girl and her pappie - all longing for their own special place in the world. Suitable for children aged between three and six, until Sun 12 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham



POLARIS THE SNOW BEAR Kate Bramley's family show concerns a travelling bear who embarks on a journey in search of Mr Hat-In-Burrow - a human naturalist who holds the key to saving the polar world, Sat 4 Jan, Leominster Community Centre

THE SNOWMAN Enchanting live show based on Raymond Briggs' much-loved story about a snowman who comes to life on Christmas Eve,

Wednesday 1 - Sunday 12 January

Thurs 9 - Sun 12 Jan, The Rep, Birmingham

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE LIVE - SCIENCE SAVED THE WORLD Education and entertainment come together in a show featuring 20ft liquid nitrogen clouds, exploding oxygen & hydrogen balloons, fire tornados, hydrogen bottle rockets, ignited methane and a self-built hovercraft, Sun 12 Jan, The Alexandra, B'ham



Light Entertainment

THE RAT PACK LAST VEGAS LIVE Starring David Alacey (Lovejoy) as Frank Sinatra, Paul Drakeley as Dean Martin and Central TV's 'Mr Weather' Des Coleman as Sammy Davis Jnr, Wed 1 Jan, The Crescent, Birmingham

BOTTOMS UP Bawdy burlesque show featuring the creme de la creme of the cabaret world, Sat 4 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BIG PANTS PARTY Live concert-style performance celebrating sisterhood and featuring hits from the likes of Abba, Sister Sledge, Tina Turner and Whitney..., Sat 11 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham



THE CROONERS - UNCAGED A show packed with one-liners, silliness and musical numbers. The nine-piece Mini Big Band also feature, Sat 11 Jan, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

Events

FESTIVE SEASON SERVICE See a selection of the SVR's fleet of steam engines and heritage diesel locomotives in action, Tues 31 Dec - Wed 1 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

WINTER FUNLAND The UK's largest indoor fairground, 'filled with festive fun', until Wed 1 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

BODENHAM ARBORETUM CHRISTMAS TRAIL Featuring two themed trails,

until Wed 1 Jan, Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster

LUMINATE 2024 Mile-long trail featuring 'stunning lighting elements and fabulous light play, all set to music', until Wed 1 Jan, Birmingham Botanical Gardens

THE ENCHANTED GARDENS

WONDERLAND Tumble down the rabbit hole with Alice, courtesy of this popular light trail, until Thurs 2 Jan, Webbs at Wychbold, Worcestershire

CHRISTMAS AT THE CASTLE Featuring an open-air ice rink and light trail, until Sun 5 Jan, Warwick Castle

MAGICAL DAYS OUT Enjoy 'a sleighful of festivities', including the UK's only CBeebies Land At Christmas plus some all-new experiences, until Sun 5 Jan, Alton Towers Resort, Staffordshire

WIGHTWICK MANOR DECORATED FOR A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS Check out the handiwork of talented volunteers as you enjoy 'the real decorated trees and arrangements, lit by candlelight throughout the ground floor of the manor', until Sun 5 Jan, Wightwick Manor & Gardens, Wolverhampton

SANTA'S WINTER WONDERLAND Featuring real snow, real animals and the all-new winter wonderland show, until Sun 5 Jan, SnowDome, Tamworth

WINTER WONDERLAND STOKE Festive extravaganza complete with real ice rink, funfair rides, games, and an array of festive food and drinks, until Sun 5 Jan, Stoke-on-Trent City Centre

UNWRAPPING CHRISTMAS Explore the period shops and houses, until Sun 5 Jan, Black Country Living Museum, Dudley

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Featuring a collection of real Christmas trees, decorated by local businesses, schools and charities, until Sun 5 Jan, Lichfield Cathedral

IT'S CHRISTMAAAS! Take a trip down memory lane as the Hall is dressed for a 1970s and 80s Christmas party, until Sun 5 Jan, Hanbury Hall, Droitwich Spa

A DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS Step back in time as the first floor of the castle transforms into a charming Victorian wonderland, inspired by Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, until Sun 5 Jan, Powis Castle, Welshpool



WIGHTWICK MANOR DECORATED FOR A TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS Enjoy the real, decorated trees and



Ice Skate Birmingham - Centenary Square

arrangements lit by candlelight throughout the ground floor of the manor, until Sun 5 Jan, Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

WINTERLAND WOLVERHAMPTON

Featuring an ice rink, themed funfair and food & drink, until Sun 5 Jan, Market Square, Wolverhampton

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Free community festival displaying trees decorated by local schools, charities and organisations, until Sun 5 Jan, Red House Glass Cone, Stourbridge

CHRISTMAS AT SHUGBOROUGH Enjoy 'magical festive displays' celebrating food, gift giving, games and family traditions, until Sun 5 Jan, Shugborough Estate, nr Stafford



CHRISTMAS PRESENT TRAIL Follow the colourful lights and festive decorations to find lost presents, until Sun 5 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

ICE SKATE BIRMINGHAM Enjoy the big wheel and weatherproof ice rink before they disappear for another year, until Sun 5 Jan, Centenary Square, Birmingham

CHRISTMAS TRAIL: THE SERVANTS' WISHLIST Help Mary Elizabeth, the mistress of Charlecote, find gifts for her servants by finding clues and solving riddles, until Sun 5 Jan, Charlecote Park, Warwickshire

BRUM'S CHRISTMAS REINDEER TRAIL Santa's nine reindeer are visiting Birmingham as part of a 'magical sculpture trail', until Mon 6 Jan, Birmingham City Centre

CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL Featuring trees from charities, schools, businesses, community groups and others from across the region, until Mon 6 Jan, Worcester Cathedral

CHRISTMAS AT THE BUTTERFLY FARM Meet the minibeasts and enjoy daily butterfly lifecycle demonstrations, until Mon 6 Jan, Stratford Butterfly Farm, Stratford-upon-Avon

LIGHT CYCLES Night walk that celebrates the natural world through five immersive art installations, until Sun 19 Jan, Stonebridge Golf Club, Coventry

RAILWAY 200 LOCOMOTIVE WHISTLE CELEBRATION Whistle celebrations to mark the start of Railway 200, celebrating the 200th anniversary of modern rail travel, Wed 1 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

ARTIST PLAY DAYS Use torches, neon lights, glow-in-the-dark materials and more to create a glowing and magical space, Thurs 2 - Sun 5 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

NEW YEAR FUN AT THE MUSEUM Featuring a range of Lego craft activities and a family trail, Thurs 2 - Mon 6 Jan, British Motor Museum, Gaydon

THE ARENACROSS TOUR Experience epic high-octane motocross action with the Arenacross World Tour, Sat 4 Jan, bp Pulse LIVE, Birmingham

WINTER STEAM GALA A collection of steam locomotives operating a busy timetable, Sat 4 - Sun 5 Jan, Severn Valley Railway, Bewdley, nr Kidderminster

AUTOSPORT INTERNATIONAL SHOW 2025 Celebrate 75 years of Formula One at Europe's biggest dedicated motorsport show, Thurs 9 - Sun 12 Jan, NEC, Birmingham



DOLLS HOUSE FAIR Organised by MGM Fairs, Sun 12 Jan, Staffordshire County Showground

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Gigs

THE BEN HOLDER TRIO

Mon 13 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

PETER ANDRE - THE BEST OF FRANKIE VALLI Tues 14 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

LIVE FOREVER - THE RISE OF OASIS Tues 14 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

JOHN PRIMER AND GILES ROBSON Wed 15 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

MAN IN THE MIRROR - MICHAEL JACKSON TRIBUTE Wed 15 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

DOLLY PARTON AND FRIENDS TRIBUTE SHOW Wed 15 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

AN EVENING WITH SINATRA Thurs 16 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

ALESTORM + ENSIFERUM + TYR + HEIDEVOLK + ELVENKING Thurs 16 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

THE BRITISH CARPENTERS Thurs 16 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

MIKE WILLIAMS QUARTET Thurs 16 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PETE ROTH TRIO FEAT. BILL BRUFORD Thurs 16 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

THE ULTIMATE ELVIS Thurs 16 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

MOONAGE: THE BEST OF BOWIE Thurs 16 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

GORDON HENDRICKS AS ELVIS Thurs 16 - Fri 17 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

DURAN Fri 17 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

THE MAGIC NUMBERS Fri 17 Jan, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham



THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES Fri 17 Jan, O2

Academy, Birmingham

GET IT ON! THE GLAM ROCK SHOW Fri 17 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BACK TO BACHARACH Fri 17 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

TOBIAS BEN JACOB Fri 17 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

STORMO + SHOOTING DAGGERS + GRAIL GUARD Fri 17 Jan, The Tin At The Coal Vaults, Coventry

THE SILVER LINES Fri 17 Jan, hmv Empire, Coventry

BLONDISH Fri 17 Jan, Marris Bar, Worcester

GENESIS CONNECTED Fri 17 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

THE JOHNNY CASH ROADSHOW Fri 17 Jan, Malvern Theatres

KEITH JAMES - THE MUSIC OF YUSUF / CAT STEVENS Fri 17 Jan, Stourbridge Town Hall

PINK - BEAUTIFUL TRAUMA Fri 17 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

GUNS 2 ROSES Fri 17 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

LUTHER LIVE Fri 17 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ROXETTE UK Fri 17 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

GIRL POWER EXPERIENCE Fri 17 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

THE SIMON AND GARFUNKEL STORY Fri 17 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

NORTHERN LIVE Fri 17 Jan, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE EMINEM SHOW Fri 17 Jan, The Station, Cannock

BADNESS Fri 17 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

THE DIRTY ROCKING SCOUNDRELS Fri 17 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE WILD MURPHYS Fri 17 Jan, Rugeley Rose Theatre

THESE SMITHS Fri 17 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

SOLID SOUL Fri 17 - Sat 18 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

UNDER THE COVERS Sat

18 Jan, Actress & Bishop, B'ham

JOSHUA BASSETT + THOMAS DAY Sat 18 Jan, O2 Institute, B'ham

SOUNDS OF SEATTLE Sat 18 Jan, Castle & Falcon, B'ham

SWEET CAROLINE: A TRIBUTE TO NEIL DIAMOND Sat 18 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BLOOD ON BLOOD + JONO WRIGHT Sat 18 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

BRITPOP UNITED + ALL4INDIE Sat 18 Jan, Marris Bar, Worcester

OASIS Sat 18 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THE JERSEYS LIVE! Sat 18 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

TOO MUCH TOO YOUNG - THE STORY OF 2 TONE Sat 18 Jan, Dudley Town Hall

ELECTROMANTICS Sat 18 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

NIN UK + SPOUKY KIDS + KORN AGAIN + DEAFONES Sat 18 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

SOUNDATIONS Sat 18 Jan, Churchill's, Wednesbury

HI ON MAIDEN Sat 18 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE STORY OF SOUL Sat 18 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

H ARIANA LIVE Sat 18 Jan, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

ROADRUNNER Sat 18 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

THE UPBEAT BEATLES Sat 18 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

TAXI FOR JESUS Sun 19 Jan, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

THE MISSED TREES Sun 19 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

FRANKIE'S GUYS Sun 19 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE MUSIC OF MADNESS Sun 19 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

RICH PARSONS Sun 19 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT Mon 13 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

CBSO: ROMEO & JULIET Featuring Kirill Karabits (conductor) & Jennifer France (soprano - pictured). Programme includes works by Lyatoshinsky, Glière & Prokofiev, Wed 15 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



UNITED STRINGS OF EUROPE: THROUGH THE NIGHT Programme includes works by Shaw, Purcell, Boccherini & more..., Wed 15 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

GERMAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA Featuring Wayne Marshall (conductor & piano) & The German-British Choir Academy Choir. Programme includes works by Britten, Gershwin & Holst, Thurs 16 Jan, Symphony Hall, B'ham

PACE: LUNCHTIME CONCERT SERIES Featuring Suzie Purkis (mezzo), Flora McNicoll (cello) and Chris Bowden (saxophones).

Programme includes works by Purcell, C Knibbs, Németh & more..., Thurs 16 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

SPIRES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA & CHORUS: PLAY & SING DAY Programme comprises Bach's St John Passion, Sat 18 Jan, Burgess Hall, Coventry

ORGAN PROMS: DANIEL BISHOP Programme includes works by Bach, Haydn, Soler & more..., Sat 18 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

CBSO: MUSIC AT THE MOVIES Featuring Ben Parry (conductor) & Petroc Trelawny (presenter). Programme includes works by J Horner, H Shore, J Williams, H Zimmer & more..., Sun 19 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

INTERNATIONAL PIANO RECITAL: MARIAM BATSASHVILI Programme includes works by Haydn, Beethoven, Brahms & more..., Sun 19 Jan, St Chad's Church, Shrewsbury

COCO TOMITA & SIMON CALLAGHAN Programme includes works by Schubert & Beethoven, Sun 19 Jan, Festival Drayton Centre, Market Drayton, North Shropshire

PAVEL HAAS QUARTET Featuring Veronik a Jarůšková & Marek Zwiebel (violins), Šimon Truszká (viola) & Peter Jarůšek (cello). Programme includes work by Dvorak, Martinu & Smetana, Sun 19 Jan, Malvern Theatres



Comedy

TONY CARROLL Wed 15 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

WILLIAM HANSON Thurs 16 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, GARRETT MILLERICK & COMIC TBC Thurs 16 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

KAMIKAZE CLUB COMEDY NIGHT Thurs 16 Jan, 1000 Trades, Birmingham

FELICITY WARD Thurs 16 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry



CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Fri 17 Jan, Walsall Arena & Arts Centre

SUKH OJLA Fri 17 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

JIN HAO LI, CHANTEL NASH, GARRETT MILLERICK & JULIAN DEANE Fri 17 - Sat 18 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

QUINCY, TREVOR BICKLES, ANDREW WHITE & DAVE LONGLEY Sat 18 Jan, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

KATE MARTIN, DAMION LARKIN & COMICS TBC Sat 18 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

ED BYRNE Sat 18 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

ADAM KAY Sat 18 Jan, Stratford Playhouse



RICHARD BLACKWOOD Sun 19 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

SUKH OJLA Sun 19 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

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Theatre

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE The Mellow Dramatics present an amateur version of the much-loved musical, Tues 14 - Sat 18 Jan, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

DRACULA Blackeyed Theatre fuse Victorian Gothic with the contemporary in a new production of Bram Stoker's classic story, Tues 14 - Sat 18 Jan, Malvern Theatres



THE ANCIENT OAK OF BALDOR Frozen Light presents a folk tale of love, loss and interconnections..., Wed 15 - Thurs 16 Jan, Malvern Theatres

SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY Filthy and wicked panto featuring the voice of Christopher Biggins, Thurs 16 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester

CINDERELLA Amateur version of the festive classic, performed by Phoenix Theatre Group, Thurs 16 - Sun 19 Jan, The Henrican, Evesham

THE EFFECT The Crescent Theatre Company present an amateur version of Lucy Prebble's play, which explores questions of sanity, neurology and the limits of medicine, Sat 18 - Sat 25 Jan, Crescent Theatre, Birmingham

THE LAST WORD Bridge House Young Company present an enchanting comedy adventure taking a look at 'what would happen if the words we take for granted suddenly started to disappear.', Sun 19 Jan, Bridge House Theatre, Warwick

Dance

CARLOS ACOSTA'S NUTCRACKER IN HAVANA Brand-new production offering a Cuban take on a festive classic, Mon 13 - Tues 14 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

Light Entertainment

DAN AND PHIL: TERRIBLE INFLUENCE An evening with the entertaining YouTube duo. Expect scandalous stories, theatrical plot twists and a savage roast of social media, Mon 13 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

YOUNG VOICES Concert experience for primary school children, Mon 13 - Fri 17 Jan, bp Pulse Live, Birmingham

A LITTLE BAWL OF PAIN Mourn the new year in style with an evening of contemporary heartbreaking ballads performed by stars of the West End and hosted by James Edge, Thurs 16 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE GIRLPOWER EXPERIENCE A singalong concert featuring songs by The Spice Girls, Beyonce, Madonna, Taylor Swift, Aretha Franklin and more..., Fri 17 Jan, Victoria Hall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent

STRICTLY COME DANCING LIVE TOUR Featuring a full line-up of celebrity and professional dancers alongside judges Shirley Ballas, Anton Du Beke, Craig Revel Horwood and Motsi Mabuse, Fri 17 - Sun 19 Jan, Utilita Arena Birmingham

YIPPEE KI YAY - THE PARODY CELEBRATION OF DIE HARD Richard Marsh's acclaimed rhyming retelling of the classic Bruce Willis actioner. Expect 'divorce, foot trauma and German terrorists', Sat 18 Jan, Swan Theatre, Worcester



KICK OUT CANCER CABARET Evening of burlesque, comedy, song and dance, Sat 18 Jan, Regal, Tenbury Wells

RICHARD JONES: SOLDIER OF ILLUSION An evening with the first and only magician to win Britain's Got Talent, Sun 19 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

Events

CANDLELIT GHOST TOURS Enjoy an atmospheric tour of the castle and hear stories of strange noises and mysterious sightings, Fri 17 Jan, Tamworth Castle

MOTORHOME AND CAMPERVAN SHOW Pop-up multi-dealer motorhome and campervan sale, Fri 17 - Sun 19 Jan, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

CV SOUNDS: ETERNAL TAAL WITH LANTERN PARADE Multicultural contemporary wassail hosted by Eternal Taal, an all-female Bhangra company Sat 18 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire



ULTIMATE BRITISH WRESTLING Featuring top stars from the British independent circuit, Sat 18 Jan, The



Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour - Utilita Arena Birmingham

Albany Theatre, Coventry

TATTY DEVINE JEWELLERY MAKING WORKSHOP Learn how to make a piece of iconic Tatty Devine jewellery, Sat 18 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

NATIONAL WEDDING FAYRE Featuring over 130 exhibitors, Sat 18 - Sun 19 Jan, NAEC Stoneleigh, Warwickshire

THE PRINCESS PARTY WITH ARIEL AND BELLE Featuring singalongs, games and more..., Sun 19 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

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Gigs

CARDINALS Tues 21 Jan, Hare & Hounds, Birmingham

BELAKO Tues 21 Jan, The Victoria, B'ham

THE MEFFS + CARSIK Wed 22 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY Wed 22 Jan, The Alexandra, B'ham

CLOUDBUSTING: THE KATE BUSH SONGBOOK Wed 22 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

GO YOUR OWN WAY - FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE Wed 22 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

LOOSE ENDS Thurs 23 Jan, The Jam House, Birmingham

HIGH FADE Thurs 23 Jan, Castle & Falcon, Birmingham

SILENT PLANET + LIKE MOTHS TO FLAMES + VEXED + AVOID Thurs 23 Jan, XOYO, Birmingham

TAYLOR FEVER Thurs 23 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

PRETTY VACANT Thurs 23 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

JAS KAYSER & CHUMS Thurs 23 Jan, Marris Bar, Worcester

MARTYN JOSEPH Thurs 23 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

THOMAS ATLAS + TYLER KENT + THE DAVIDSON TRIO + MICK MCCONNELL & BLUE THUNDER Thurs 23 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE HALO EFFECT + PAIN + BLOODRED HOURGLASS Thurs 23 Jan, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

HEARTBREAK: THE TOM PETTY TRIBUTE SHOW Thurs 23 Jan,

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

HERMAN'S HERMITS Thurs 23 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

THE BEST OF GROHL Thurs 23 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

BETTER LOVERS + FRONTIERER + GREYHAVEN Fri 24 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

DESTROY BOYS Fri 24 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

NECK DEEP + THE WONDER YEARS + ONE STEP CLOSER Fri 24 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

K NOVELLA Fri 24 Jan, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

DETROITWICH FUNK MACHINE Fri 24 Jan, Tower Of Song, Birmingham

PHIL BATES Fri 24 Jan, The Core Theatre, Solihull

BOOTLEG ABBA Fri 24 Jan, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

LET'S ROCK THE 70S Fri 24 Jan, Albany Theatre, Coventry

THE GLAM ROCK SHOW - GET IT ON Fri 24 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

NORTHERN LIVE Fri 24 Jan, Dudley Town Hall

KERRANG'D Fri 24 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

THE BLACK CHARADE + FELL OUT BOY Fri 24 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

CYDONIA KNIGHTS - MUSE TRIBUTE Fri 24 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

MADE IN TENNESSEE Fri 24 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

LAURENCE JONES Fri 24 Jan, The Station, Cannock

THE MODERATORS Fri 24 Jan, The Buttermarket,

Shrewsbury

HEY PIXIES Fri 24 Jan, Albert's Shed, Southwater, Telford

THE WASHBOARD RESONATORS Fri 24 Jan, Ludlow Assembly Rooms, South Shropshire

WARD THOMAS Fri 24 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

CUCAMARAS Sat 25 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

JACOB ALON Sat 25 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

MIDNIGHT CITY SOUL Sat 25 Jan, Actress & Bishop, B'ham

LIVEWIRE: THE AC/DC SHOW Sat 25 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

THE VIOLENT HEARTS + WOOD AND NAILS Sat 25 Jan, The Flapper, Birmingham

REWIND - QUEENS OF THE 90S Sat 25 Jan, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

SPEAKING IN TONGUES - TALKING HEADS TRIBUTE Sat 25 Jan, XOYO, Coventry

MAD JOCKS AND ENGLISHMEN Sat 25 Jan, Kitchen Garden, B'ham

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS + THE COLD HEART REVUE Sat 25 Jan, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

DANIEL KIMBRO Sat 25 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

DARKSIDE - THE PINK FLOYD SHOW Sat 25 Jan, Albany Theatre, Coventry

ARRIVAL - ABBA TRIBUTE Sat 25 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

JEAN GENIE - BOWIE TRIBUTE Sat 25 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

DRESSED TO KILL - KISS TRIBUTE Sat 25 Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

THE RISE OF THE FAB FOUR! Sat 25 Jan, King's Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

DARK SIDE OF THE WALL - PINK FLOYD TRIBUTE Sat 25 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

NOT RADIOHEAD + SIG & THE FIREPILOTS Sat 25 Jan, The Station, Cannock

IAN MCNABB Sat 25 Jan, Lichfield Guildhall

CHASING MUMFORD Sat 25 Jan, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

GAMBLER Sat 25 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

MARTYN JOSEPH Sat 25 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

MAGNUM Sat 25 - Sun 26 Jan, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THE MELVIN HANCOX BAND Sun 26 Jan, Actress & Bishop, Birmingham

KUBLAI KHAN Sun 26 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

ISABEL RUMBLE & GEORGE BOOMSMA Sun 26 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

MEATLOU Sun 26 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

MG BOULTER Sun 26 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

FOREVER JACKSON Sun 26 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE SIGNATURES Sun 26 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

RYAN EVANS - HEART 'N' SOUL OF NASHVILLE Sun 26 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

JAMIE LAWSON, JOHN SMITH & SCOTT MATTHEWS Sun 26 Jan, Aston Hall, Wrexham, North Shropshire

Classical Music

RBC: LUNCHTIME MUSIC

Featuring Ellie Bagshaw (tenor horn), Mon 20 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

PRE-CBSO RBC PERFORMANCE: VAGABUNDO TRIO Featuring Luanah Lefebvre (violin), Gen Li (cello) & Maria Linares Molero (piano). Programme comprises Ravel's Piano Trio, Thurs 23 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO: MENDELSSOHN & BRAHMS Featuring Robert Treviño (conductor) & Benjamin Grosvenor (piano). Programme also includes music by Mozart, Thurs 23 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

CBSO CENTRE STAGE Programme includes works by Mozart, Arensky & Schubert, Fri 24 Jan, CBSO Centre

RBC VOXBOX: THE SONGS OF ANDRÉ CAPLET Fri 24 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

LUNCHTIME RECITAL Fri 24 Jan, St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham

LUNCHTIME RECITAL SERIES Featuring Alexander Wilson (organ), Fri 24 Jan, St Mary's Church, Warwick

COULL QUARTET Featuring Roger Coull & Philip Galloway (violins), Jonathan Barritt (viola) & Nicholas Roberts (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart, Prokofiev & Beethoven, Fri 24 Jan, Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa

ARMONICO CONSORT: SUPERSIZE POLYPHONY 2 Featuring Christopher Monks (director). Programme includes two world premieres by Hollywood composer, David Buckley, and works by Josquin, Byrd, Tallis & more..., Fri 24 Jan, Malvern Theatres

ARMONICO CONSORT: SUPERSIZE POLYPHONY 2 Featuring Christopher Monks (director). Programme includes two world premieres by Hollywood composer, David Buckley, and works by Josquin, Byrd, Tallis & more..., Sat 25 Jan, St Mary's Church, Warwick

LEAMINGTON SINFONIA YOUNG SOLOISTS COMPETITION Featuring Leamington Sinfonia & Joe Davies (conductor), Sat 25 Jan, Holy Trinity Church, Leamington Spa

CBSO WINDS PLAYS MOZART

Featuring Nicholas Daniel (oboe). Programme also includes Anna Clyne's Overflow, Sun 26 Jan Birmingham Town Hall

ECHO RISING STARS: QUATUOR AGATE - OUTLAWS Programme includes works by Gesualdo, Shostakovich, Glass & more..., Sun 26 Jan, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

PRISM Featuring Melissa Morris (piano) & Joe Price (lighting design). A reimagining of Marie Jaëll's Prisme, with Chloe Knibbs, Sun 26 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

ORCHESTRA OF THE SWAN: A BEAUTIFUL THREAD Featuring Anton Lesser & Lucia Bonbright (narrators), Judy Reaves (director) & David Le Page (music director). A celebration of Thomas Hardy in words and music, Sun 26 Jan, Warwick Hall

WORCESTER CONCERT CLUB: THE MUSICAL AND AMICABLE SOCIETY Featuring Anna Curzon & Catherine Martin (violins), Heather Birt & Kate Fawcett (violas) & Jonathan Rees (cello). Programme includes works by Mozart, Sun 26 Jan, Huntingdon Hall, Worcester

Comedy

FUN! WITH BARBARA NICE Wed 22 Jan, Herbert's Yard, B'ham

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, FELICITY WARD & MARLON DAVIS Thurs 23 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

JIMMY CARR Thurs 23 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

BARRY DODDS, FELICITY WARD, MARLON DAVIS, ROGER O'SULLIVAN & ALEXIS ROY Fri 24 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

NINA GILLIGAN Fri 24 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

PETER KAY Fri 24 Jan, Utilita Arena Birmingham

STEWART LEE Fri 24 - Sun 26 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

SAM AVERY, ANT DEWSON, JAY NEALE & DAVE TWENTYMAN Sat 25 Jan, Rosies Nightclub, Birmingham

BARRY DODDS, FELICITY WARD, MARLON DAVIS & COMIC TBC Sat 25 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

GEOFF NORCOTT Sat 25 Jan,

Foxlowe Arts Centre, Leek, Staffs
IMPROV WOLVES Sat 25 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

EL BALDINIHO, LINDSEY SANTORO, NICK EVERITT & JAMES COOK Sat 25 Jan, Abbey Theatre, Nuneaton

DANNY MCLOUGHLIN, LUCAS JEFCOATE, ANDREW WHITE & DAVE LONGLEY Sat 25 Jan, Macready Theatre, Rugby

BRENNAN REECE Sun 26 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Sun 26 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

Theatre

AWOL Rob Gee's play follows two old men who escape from a care home to embark on an adventure at a metal festival, Mon 20 Jan, Central Library, West Bromwich

SISTER ACT SAPA Youth Theatre present an amateur version of the heavenly musical comedy, Tues 21 - Wed 22 Jan, Palace Theatre, Redditch

PRIDE & PREJUDICE* (*SORT OF) Comedy retelling of Jane Austen's iconic love story, Tues 21 - Sat 25 Jan, Malvern Theatres

BLOOD BROTHERS Willy Russell's legendary musical, set in his native Liverpool. Score includes Bright New Day, Marilyn Monroe and Tell Me It's Not True, Tues 21 - Sat 25 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

HOME, I'M DARLING The Highbury Players present an amateur version of Laura Wade's thought-provoking comedy, Tues 21 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Highbury Theatre, Sutton Coldfield

MEDEA Amateur version of Ben Power's contemporary production of Euripides' timeless tale of love, vengeance and betrayal, Wed 22 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Loft Theatre, Leamington Spa

THREE MEN IN A BOAT One-man show in which Giles Shenton stars as Jerome K Jerome as he recounts the story of his boating holiday along the River Thames, Thurs 23 Jan, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

SLEEPING WITH BEAUTY Filthy and wicked panto featuring the voice of Christopher Biggins, Thurs 23 - Fri 24 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

ROBIN HOOD Amateur version, presented by Cannock Chase Drama Society, Thurs 23 - Sun 26 Jan, Prince of Wales Theatre, Cannock

THE GLASS SLIPPER Amateur version, presented by Kays Theatre Group, Thurs 23 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, Swan Theatre, Worcester

ALADDIN Family-friendly post-Christmas panto, Fri 24 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, Rugby Theatre

DREAMGIRLS Amateur production taking audiences on a sweeping and

inspirational journey through 20th-century American pop music, Sat 25 Jan, The Old Rep, Birmingham

JACK AND HIS GIANT STALK A company of three actors present an adult version of Jack And The Beanstalk, Sat 25 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

RAPUNZEL A 'hair-larious' pantomime by Tom Whalley, Sat 25 & Sun 26 Jan & Sat 1 Feb, The Little Theatre, Donnington

WHY I STUCK A FLARE UP MY AE FOR ENGLAND** Alex Hill's 'blisteringly funny' new play explores what it means to belong to a club that you live for, Sun 26 - Mon 27 Jan, Macready Theatre, Rugby

Dance

PLUE Performance artist Eli Lewis joins forces with dance artist & choreographer Joe Garbett to present 'a disappearing act examining queer visibility and intimacy', Thurs 23 Jan, Patrick Studio, Birmingham Hippodrome

GIOVANNI: THE LAST DANCE Brand-new show in which the Strictly star is joined by a company of world-class performers, Sat 25 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

Light Entertainment

AN EVENING WITH WEST BROM LEGENDS Kevin Phillips and Darren Moore share stories from their action-packed football careers, Tues 21 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE BLACK BALL FINAL: 40TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT Join Steve Davis & Dennis Taylor as they recreate the match that gripped the nation. John Virgo is the host for the evening, Tues 21 Jan, Malvern Theatres

PSYCHIC SALLY Evening of mediumship, Tues 21 & Wed 22 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

DAN AND PHIL: TERRIBLE INFLUENCE An evening with the entertaining YouTube duo. Expect scandalous stories, theatrical plot twists and a savage roast of social media, Wed 22 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

AN EVENING OF BURLESQUE A night of laughter, cabaret, mystery and glamour, Wed 22 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE BLACK BALL FINAL: 40TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT Join Steve Davis & Dennis Taylor as they recreate the match that gripped the nation. John Virgo is the host for the evening, Wed 22 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

YOGA & SEX... FOR WOMEN OVER 40 Join Kath as she delves into the Kama Sutra, finds out what 'the four

different types of women' smell like, and almost does some yoga, Thurs 23 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

THE BLACK BALL FINAL: 40TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT Join Steve Davis & Dennis Taylor as they recreate the match that gripped the nation. John Virgo is the host for the evening, Thurs 23 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

PRETTY VACANT Coronation Street star Kevin Kennedy narrates a homage to punk and new wave music, Thurs 23 Jan, The Roses, Tewkesbury

MUSICAL THEATRE OPEN MIC NIGHT Hosted by some of the country's top working professionals, Fri 24 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

CATCH YOUR BREATH: THE SECRET LIFE OF A SLEEPLESS ANAESTHETIST Join anaesthetist, comedian & author Ed Patrick as he shares stories about becoming a junior doctor and working for the NHS, Fri 24 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

MADE IN TENNESSEE A night of country music presented live on stage, Fri 24 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

SING-A-LONG-A MATILDA Screening of the hit musical, complete with on-screen lyrics so that everyone can join in, Sat 25 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

SING-A-LONG-A THE GREATEST SHOWMAN Screening of the hit musical, complete with on-screen lyrics so that everyone can join in, Sat 25 Jan, The Alexandra, Birmingham

IMPROV WOLVES Featuring completely new comedy sketches created on the spot and based entirely on audience suggestions, Sat 25 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

DRAG ME TO THE 80S A cast of 80s divas present 'a fusion of nostalgia, empowerment and celebration'. Featuring classic hits from the likes of Kylie, Madonna, Whitney and Tina Turner... Sat 25 Jan, Walsall Arena and Arts Centre

A GOOD NEET AHT A show about 'the places we grow up in', Sat 25 Jan, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

REWIND - QUEENS OF THE 90S Featuring Alisha Chinai, Kavita Krishnamurti, Alka Yagnik and Anuradha Paudwal, Sat 25 Jan, bp pulse LIVE, Birmingham

BURNIN' LOVE BINGO Join character comedian Tracey Collins as she takes to the stage equipped with nothing more than a home-made costume, pelvic gyrations, reworked songs and a bingo habit, Sat 25 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

STAND UP & ROCK Featuring comedians Stan Boardman and Scott Bennett, with music courtesy of Birmingham's Jam House regulars

The Subterraneans, Sat 25 Jan, Stratford Playhouse, Stratford-upon-Avon

THE BEST OF HANS ZIMMER AND FILM FAVOURITES ILLUMINATED Immersive tribute to Hans Zimmer, showcasing some of cinema's most iconic music, Sun 26 Jan, Victoria Hall, Stoke-on-Trent

PRETTY VACANT Coronation Street star Kevin Kennedy narrates a homage to punk and new wave music, Sun 26 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

I'LL CATCH YOU IF I CAN Shrewsbury panto star Tommy J presents a fast-paced one-man show complete with juggling, unicycling, zany comedy and audience participation, Sun 26 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Talks & Spoken Word

16 YEARS OF THE INBETWEENERS An 'in conversation' event with actor & comedian Joe Thomas, Fri 24 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

AN EVENING WITH AGGERS Featuring stories from Jonathan Agnew's illustrious cricketing career - both on and off the field, Sat 25 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

THE MAKINGS OF A MURDERER 2: THE REAL MANHUNTER Former head of the Metropolitan Police murder squad, Colin Sutton, shares stories of how he caught some of the UK's most evil murderers, Sat 25 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

AN EVENING WITH AGGERS Featuring stories from Jonathan Agnew's illustrious cricketing career - both on and off the field, Sun 26 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Events

GHOSTS AT THE LOCK UP Experience a night of ghost stories and spooky tales, Fri 24 Jan, West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham

LIVE WRESTLING SPECIAL! Featuring bone-crunching superstars of LDN Wrestling, Fri 24 Jan, The Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

BONGO'S BINGO The original bingo rave sensation, Sat 25 Jan, The Buttermarket

NATIONAL RUNNING SHOW A show bringing together inspirational speakers, cutting-edge technologies and the best in nutrition, all under one roof, Sat 25 - Sun 26 Jan, NEC, Birmingham

SUPER LEAGUE BASKETBALL TROPHY FINALS The top men's and women's teams in the country compete for the coveted title, Sun 26 Jan, Utilita Arena Birmingham

Gigs

LIVINGSTON Mon 27 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

JULIAN TAYLOR Mon 27 Jan, Kitchen Garden, Birmingham

THE CLASSIC ROCK SHOW Mon 27 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

NIGHT SWIMMING Tues 28 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

CATTLE DECAPITATION + SHADOW OF INTENT + REVOCATION + BULVODYNIA Tues 28 Jan, O2 Institute, Birmingham

BROTHERS OSBORNE + TYLER BRADEN Tues 28 Jan, O2 Academy, B'ham

FLORAL IMAGE Tues 28 Jan, The Victoria, Birmingham

TONY CHRISTIE Tues 28 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE NO COVERS CLUB Wed 29 Jan, The Dark Horse, Moseley

SKYDADDY Wed 29 Jan, Dead Wax, Digbeth, Birmingham

THE HARA Wed 29 Jan, The Asylum, Birmingham

LUNA BLUE Wed 29 Jan, The Victoria, Birmingham

BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE Wed 29 Jan, KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

SUPREME QUEEN Wed 29 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

THE BLUEJAYS Wed 29 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

HERMAN'S HERMITS Wed 29 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

THE SIMON & GARFUNKEL STORY Wed 29 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

PAUL JONES & DAVE KELLY Wed 29 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

SHRIMP EYES Thurs 30 Jan, The Sunflower Lounge, Birmingham

NEW YEARS DAY + CONQUER DIVIDE + FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS Thurs 30 Jan, O2 Academy, Birmingham

DANKO Thurs 30 Jan, The Victoria, Birmingham

BOYZLIFE Thurs 30 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

JOE BAYLISS Thurs 30 Jan, Bromsgrove Folk Club

PAUL JONES & DAVE KELLY Thurs 30 Jan, Number 8, Pershore

FULL METAL JUKE BOX Thurs 30 Jan, Marrs Bar, Worcester

AMERICAN FOUR TOPS Thurs 30 Jan, Malvern Theatres

HIGH ON ADAMS + MIKE CASS Thurs 30



The Hara - The Asylum, Birmingham

Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE K'S Thurs 30 Jan, Keele University, Stoke-on-Trent

HELLO AGAIN: THE NEIL DIAMOND SONGBOOK Thurs 30 Jan, Stafford Gatehouse Theatre

W.M.D + QUESTIONS OF ANGELS + LYNUS Thurs 30 Jan, The Station, Cannock

JIVE TALKIN' - BEE GEES TRIBUTE Thurs 30 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

APOLLO ANTHEMS BAND Fri 31 Jan, The Jam House, B'ham

NIALL MCNAMEE Fri 31 Jan, The Victoria, Birmingham

GIULIA MARRO DUO Fri 31 Jan, Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space, Symphony Hall, Birmingham



Beaux Gris Gris & The Apocalypse - KK's Steel Mill, Wolverhampton

THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC - ABBA TRIBUTE Fri 31 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE + TRIVIUM Fri 31 Jan, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JIM MORAY + AMELIA COBURN Fri 31 Jan, Midlands Arts Centre (MAC), Birmingham

WOMEN IN ROCK Fri 31 Jan, Artrix, Bromsgrove

THE REZILLOS Fri 31 Jan, The Assembly, Leamington Spa

JAMES 'JAY' LEWIS Fri 31 Jan, Temperance, Leamington Spa

LUKE COMBS UK Fri 31 Jan, Sutton Coldfield Town Hall

BOOTLEG BLONDIE Fri 31 Jan, hmv Empire, Coventry

LAST RESORT Fri 31 Jan, Queens Hall, Nuneaton

THE UNRAVELLING WILBURYS Fri 31 Jan, The Market Theatre, Ledbury

VIN UK + KORN AGAIN Fri 31 Jan, Marrs Bar, Worcester

TAYLORMANIA Fri 31 Jan, Malvern Theatres

THE BON JOVI EXPERIENCE Fri 31 Jan, The River Rooms, Stourbridge

RICK BUCKLER FROM THE JAM Fri 31 Jan, The Robin, Bilston

THE GUNS N ROSES EXPERIENCE Fri 31

Jan, Eleven, Stoke-on-Trent

SOUL BROTHERS SYNDICATE WITH FRIDA TOURA Fri 31

Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme

THE SOUNDS OF SIMON Fri 31 Jan, Brewhouse Arts Centre, Burton upon Trent

THE MAGIC OF THE BEATLES Fri 31 Jan, Tamworth Assembly Rooms

EVERLY BROTHERS & FRIENDS TRIBUTE SHOW Fri 31 Jan, The Prince Of Wales Theatre, Cannock

ULTIMATE BLINK 182 Fri 31 Jan, The Station, Cannock

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Fri 31 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

THE BEAT INSTITUTE Fri 31 Jan, The Feathers Inn, Lichfield

YOUNG ELTON Fri 31 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

TOM HINGLEY PLAYS INSPIRAL CARPETS Fri 31 Jan, The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury

CARTOON VIOLENCE + CHOKED Fri 31 Jan, Ludlow Assembly Rooms

THE BOOKSHOP BAND Fri 31 Jan, Welshampton Parish Hall, North Shropshire

Classical Music

THOMAS TROTTER ORGAN CONCERT: SPACED OUT! Mon 27 Jan, Birmingham Town Hall

RBC LUNCHTIME MUSIC: CHOPIN Featuring Haoen Li (piano), Mon 27 Jan, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

RBC PERCUSSION: QUARTERED Programme includes works by R Lott, M Saunier, Reich & more..., Tues 28 Jan, Centrala, Birmingham

ALEXANDER GAVRYLYUK PIANO CONCERT Programme includes works by Mozart, Chopin, Debussy & Rachmaninov, Thurs 30 Jan, Stoke-on-Trent Repertory Theatre

A CONCERT FOR TWO PIANOS Featuring Peter Bradley-Fulgoni & John Moore, Fri 31 Jan, Shrewsbury School

CSBO: MUSICAL MAGIC Featuring much-loved songs from the world of musical theatre, Fri 31 Jan, Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Comedy

ALAN DAVIES, LAURA LEXX & DINESH NATHAN Tues 28 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

RICKY GERVAIS Tues 28 - Wed 29 Jan, Utilita Arena Birmingham

JAKE LAMBERT Wed 29 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

ED BYRNE Wed 29 Jan, The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury

COMEDY CAROUSEL WITH ANDY ROBINSON, MC HAMMERSMITH & BETHANY BLACK Thurs 30 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

DALISO CHAPONDA Thurs 30 Jan, New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme



CHRIS MCCAUSLAND Thurs 30 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre

AL MURRAY Thurs 30 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

THOMAS GREEN, ERIC RUSHTON, MC HAMMERSMITH & BETHANY BLACK Fri 31 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

CHRIS WASHINGTON, LUCAS JEFCOATE, STEPHEN BAILEY & SUSAN MURRAY Fri 31 Jan, The Glee Club, Birmingham

AL MURRAY Fri 31 Jan, The Civic at The Halls Wolverhampton

SARAH STENTON Fri 31 Jan, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, South Shropshire

KATHERINE RYAN Fri 31 Jan, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry

Theatre

BIRDSONG Acclaimed stage adaptation of Sebastian Faulks' epic story of love and loss, Mon 27 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Rep, Birmingham

THE TURN OF THE SCREW The Nonentities present an amateur version of Henry James' novel, Mon 27 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Rose Theatre, Kidderminster

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS Lucy Bailey directs Ken Ludwig's stage adaptation of the Agatha Christie classic. Michael Maloney (Truly, Madly, Deeply; Belfast; Young Victoria and The Crown) stars as celebrated sleuth Hercule Poirot, Tues 28 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Alexandra, Birmingham



THE SHARK IS BROKEN Smash hit play that dives behind the scenes of the making of Jaws, Tues 28 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, Malvern Theatres

13 THE MUSICAL Get Your Wigle On present an amateur staging of the coming of age story, Wed 29 - Thurs 30 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

KEVIN, KING OF EGYPT Rob Gee's story about unlikely hero Kevin who embarks on a journey that will change his life forever..., Thurs 30 Jan, The Hub at St Mary's, Lichfield

TALKING HEADS Amateur staging of two Alan Bennett classics - A Chip in the Sugar and Bed Among the Lentils, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 1 Feb, The Old Rep, Birmingham

THE WIZARD OF OZ Amateur staging presented by Startime Variety, Thurs 30 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, Halesowen Town Hall

COMMUNITY A coming-of-age comedy drama set in the heart of Birmingham which explores themes of identity, belonging and friendship, Thurs 30 Jan - Sat 8 Feb, The Rep, B'ham

Dance

SKY'S THE LIMIT Flexus Dance Collective present an empowering and aspirational performance event inspired by the artistic works of multi-

disciplinary visual artist Kanj Nicholas, Wed 29 Jan, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Light Entertainment

SHEN YUN Journey through China's 5,000 years. Featuring dance, orchestral music, authentic costumes and interactive backdrops, Tues 28 - Wed 29 Jan, Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent

SEND IN THE CLOWNS; C*CK OF AGES Cabaret superstar Fatt Butcher hosts a stellar line-up of the Midlands' finest drag & cabaret talents, including Dahliah Rivers, Blü Romantic and Alanna Boden, Wed 29 Jan, The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham

ANDY EASTWOOD'S BIG VARIETY SHOW Featuring Phil Fryer as Frank Sinatra, comedy magician Martin Daniels and The Bluebird Belles, Wed 29 Jan, Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

FESSHOLE LIVE: WOLVERHAMPTON Rob Manuel 'digs into the bin of unpublished confessions and uncovers the depths of human grotesqueness', Thurs 30 Jan, Newhampton Arts Centre, Wolverhampton

PRETTY VACANT Coronation Street star Kevin Kennedy narrates a homage to punk and new wave music, Thurs 30 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

FORBIDDEN NIGHTS Celebrating nine years of muscles, mayhem and over 11,000 shirt rips, Thurs 30 Jan, The Benn Hall, Rugby

QUEENZ - DRAG ME TO THE DISCO! A live vocal drag-stravaganza where dancing queens and disco dreams collide, Fri 31 Jan, Wolverhampton Grand Theatre



JASON FOX: LIFE AT THE LIMIT Join the ex-special forces soldier and star of TV's SAS: Who Dares Wins as he shares stories from on and off the battlefield, Fri 31 Jan, Crewe Lyceum Theatre

MICHAEL STARRING BEN Hit theatre production featuring Ben Bowman as Michael Jackson, Fri 31 Jan, Lichfield Garrick

DRAG ME TO THE 80S A cast of 80s divas present 'a fusion of nostalgia, empowerment and celebration'. Featuring classic hits from the likes of Kylie, Madonna, Whitney and Tina

Turner..., Fri 31 Jan, Regal, Tenbury Wells

SARAH STENTON: MIDDLE AGE MADNESS Comedy show about ageing and the menopause, Fri 31 Jan, The Edge Arts Centre, Much Wenlock, Shrops

THE CROONERS - UNCAGED A show packed with one-liners, silliness and musical numbers. The nine-piece Mini Big Band also feature, Fri 31 Jan, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

Talks & Spoken Word

SCIENCE RE-PUBLIC An evening of science, mayhem and comedy, Mon 27 Jan, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

R.M. FRANCIS IN CONVERSATION WITH KERRY HADLEY-PRYCE Part of Wolverhampton Literature Festival 2025, Fri 31 Jan, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

THE ODE TO PARTITION - TRIBE ARTS Powerful spoken-word film in which four British Asians confront the complexities of their dual identity. Part of Wolverhampton Literature

Festival 2025, Fri 31 Jan, Arena Theatre, Wolverhampton

Events

CURATOR TOUR AND TEA THE REFLECTED SELF: PORTRAIT MINIATURES Take a guided tour of The Reflected Self: Portrait Miniatures with exhibition curators Emma Rutherford and Oli McCall, Tues 28 Jan, Compton Verney, Warwickshire

ALL THINGS MUSHROOM A Q&A with the founders of Shrooma - Oswestry's new mushroom-growing and research centre. A screening of the film Fantastic Funghi (15) also features, Wed 29 Jan, Hermon Chapel Arts Centre, Oswestry, North Shropshire

FRIDAY TWILIGHT SILENT DISCO Dance the night away at a silent disco against the backdrop of the legendary Spitfire, Fri 31 Jan, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

WOLVERHAMPTON LITERATURE FESTIVAL A programme of literature, poetry, dance and more, Fri 31 Jan - Sun 2 Feb, various venues in Wolverhampton



STAY IN THE LOOP!

SIGN UP TO OUR FORTNIGHTLY E-NEWSLETTER TO RECEIVE THE LATEST ENTERTAINMENT NEWS FROM ACROSS THE REGION - AS WELL AS COMPETITIONS AND OFFERS FOR THEATRES, GIGS, DINING OUT AND MORE...



SIMPLY SCAN THE QR TO SIGN UP TODAY

WIN! with What's On...



Win! Four tickets to The Red Shoes at the RSC!

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's dark fairytale about a pair of enchanted shoes that take their wearer to places she doesn't want to go, *The Red Shoes* shows at the RSC's Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon until Sunday 19 January. We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win four tickets to see the 1pm matinee performance of the show on Saturday 11 January.

Competition closes Friday 3 January



Win! Four tickets to Autosport International!

Europe's biggest dedicated motorsport exhibition, Autosport International returns to Birmingham's NEC from Thursday 9 to Sunday 12 January.

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win four tickets to the event on a day of their choosing.

Competition closes Friday 3 January



Win! A family getaway at The Belfry!

The Belfry Hotel & Resort is offering a fantastic selection of activities to keep your little ones occupied throughout February half term: go-karts, swimming, mini golf, archery - the list goes on...

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win a half-term overnight stay for up to two adults and two children, with a full English breakfast included.

Competition closes Monday 20 January



Win! Two tickets to see BRB's Cinderella!

Birmingham Royal Ballet will present Sir David Bintley's timeless production of *Cinderella* at Birmingham Hippodrome next month (Wednesday 19 February - Saturday 1 March).

We are offering one lucky reader two tickets to see the fairytale favourite on its opening night (Wednesday the 19th, at 7.30pm).

Competition closes Friday 24 January

For your chance to WIN! with



Win! Four tickets to Birmingham International Tattoo!

A parade unlike any other, the Birmingham International Tattoo brings together massed marching bands and dancers, pipes and drums, displays from the Inter-Service Field Gun Competition, and dog-racing during the British Flyball Association Competition. We are offering the chance to win four tickets to see the show at bp Pulse LIVE, Birmingham, on Saturday 8 February.

Competition closes Friday 24 January



Win! Two tickets to see Hairspray!

Boasting hits including Welcome To The 60s, You Can't Stop The Beat and Good Morning Baltimore, smash-hit musical Hairspray will be visiting Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday 3 to Saturday 8 February.

We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win two tickets to see the show on its opening night (Monday the 3rd, at 7.30pm).

Competition closes Monday 27 January



Win! Two tickets to see Motionhouse's Hidden!

Internationally renowned dance-circus ensemble Motionhouse premiere their latest production, Hidden, at Coventry's Warwick Arts Centre from Thursday 6 to Sunday 9 February.

We are offering one lucky reader two tickets to see the matinee performance of the show on Sunday the 9th (at 2.30pm).

Competition closes Monday 27 January



Win! Two weekend camping tickets to Shrewsbury Folk Festival!

Shrewsbury Folk Festival returns to the DMOS People West Mid Showground from Friday 22 to Monday 25 August, with Levellers, Oysterband, Skerryvore and Jim Moray amongst the performers. We are offering one lucky reader the chance to win two weekend camping tickets to this year's event.

Competition closes Friday 31 January



Win! A family pass to Cadbury World!

There's an assortment of chocolatey attractions to explore at Birmingham's Cadbury World, including the Have A Go zone, the 4D Chocolate Adventure Cinema and the new Cadbury Chocolate Quest ride.

We have a family pass for four (including a maximum of two adults) to give away for the Bournville-located attraction.

Competition closes Friday 31 January



Win! A Young Driver experience!

Young Driver is the UK's largest pre-17 driving scheme, boasting 70 venues across the UK. Children as young as 10 can learn to drive in dual-control cars, with government-approved instructors on a road system located on private property.

We are offering a package of 2 x30 minutes lesson vouchers, which can be used at any Young Driver venue.

Competition closes Friday 31 January



Win! Two tickets to see Chitty Chitty Bang Bang!

A brand-new production of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang visits Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday 4 to Sunday 9 March, with Ore Oduba starring as Caractacus Potts, Liam Fox playing Grandpa Potts and The Vivienne taking on the role of the Childcatcher.

We have two tickets to give away to the show on Tuesday 4 March at 7pm.

Competition closes Friday 21 February



Win! Two tickets to The Creative Craft Show!

Taking place at Birmingham's NEC from Thursday 13 to Sunday 16 March, The Creative Craft Show features a wide range of exhibitors and showcases the very latest products and creations.

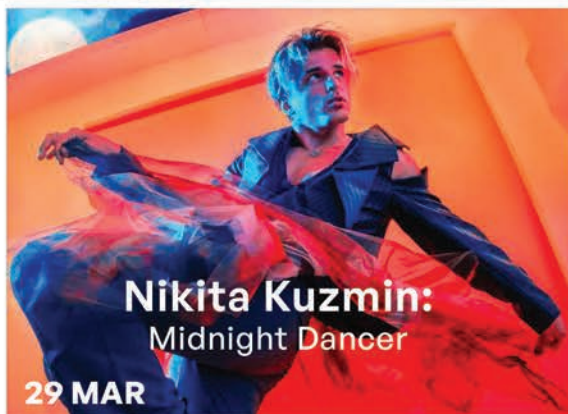
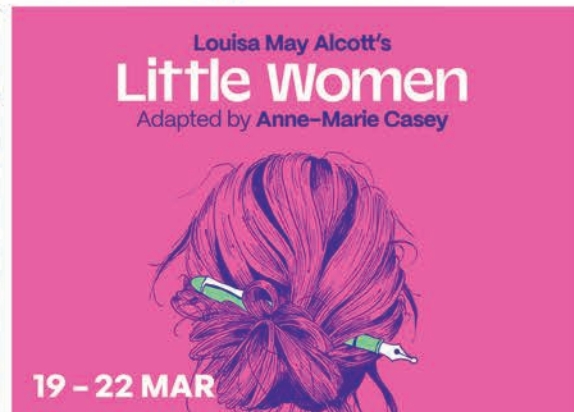
We are offering three lucky readers the chance to win a pair of tickets each to visit the ever-popular event.

Competition closes Friday 28 February

For your chance to WIN! with What's On, visit:

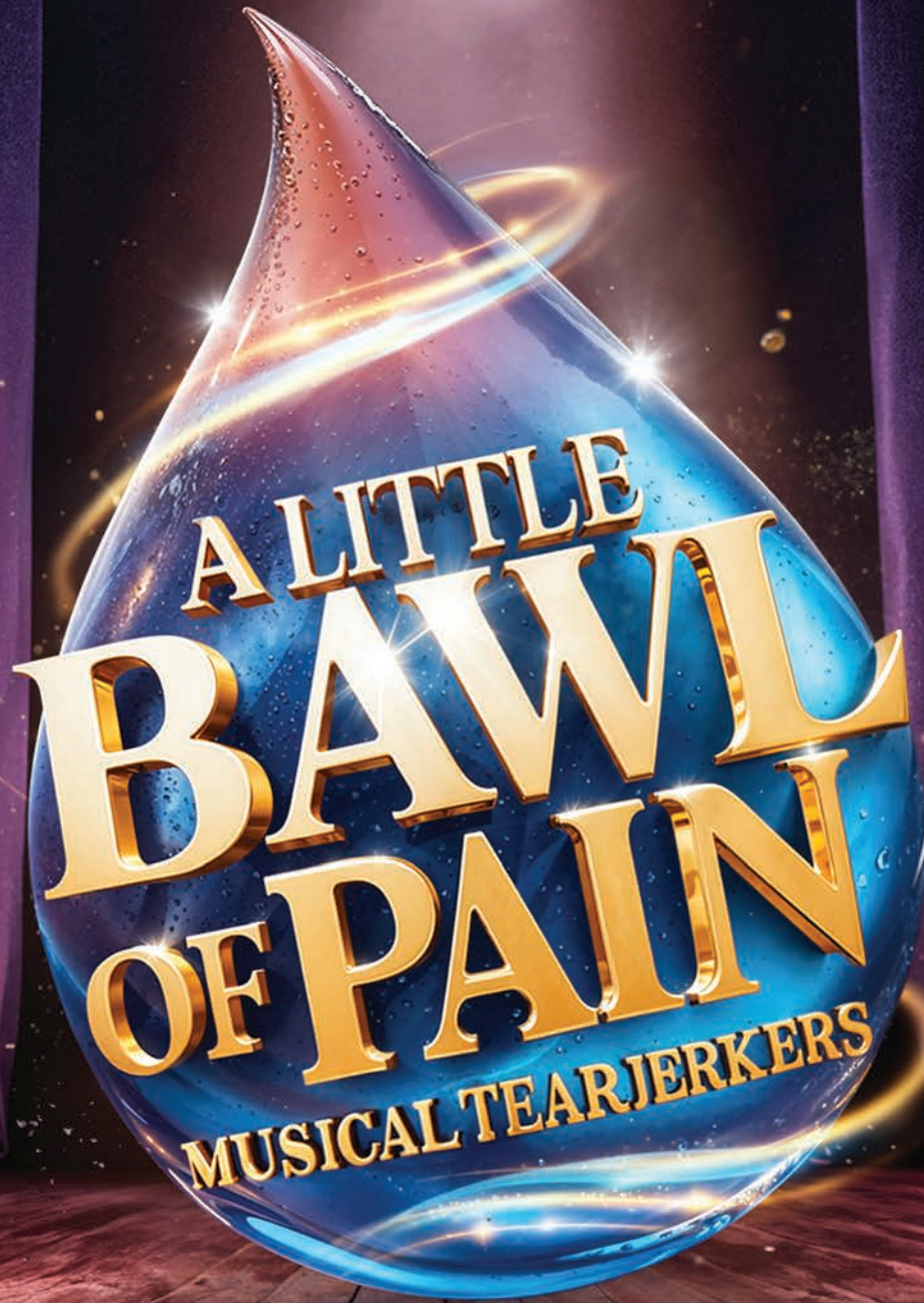
whatsonlive.co.uk

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