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IN&AROUND covent garden

APRIL/MAY 2023



Get into the
Easter spirit at
Covent Garden
with Peter Rabbit

Welcome to another edition of *In & Around Covent Garden*. Once again, we let you know about the best of things to do around the central

London area – and sometimes beyond. In this issue we meet the casts of *Bat Out Of Hell! The Musical* and *Ain't Too Proud*, and look forward to new shows like *I Should Be So Lucky*, *Brokeback Mountain* and more. We also chat to actor Craig McGinlay, who we think would make a great James Bond; journalist Michael Cragg, who has just published a book that reveals the light and dark side of bubblegum pop bands; and Tunde Baiyewu from the Lighthouse Family, who says he is thrilled that his songs are embraced by fans when they need them most.

But before we let you enjoy the mag, we would just like to express our sorrow at the news that theatre PR Janine Shalom has died. She was director of theatre PR at Premier for 17 years, where she handled several high-profile productions like *Hamilton*, *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Les Misérables*. Without her, we would have had many empty pages. May she rest in peace.

Christian Guilteneane Editor



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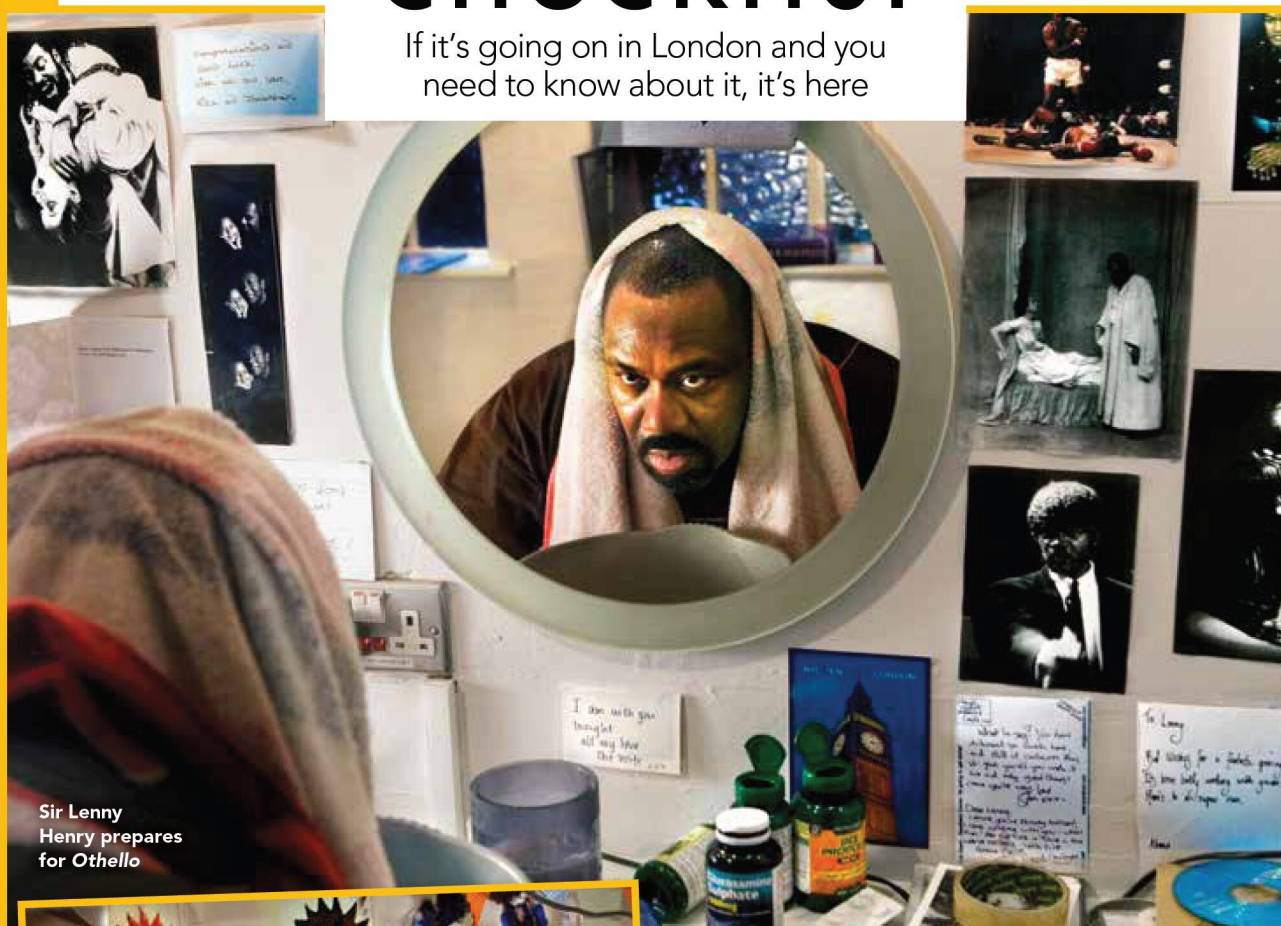
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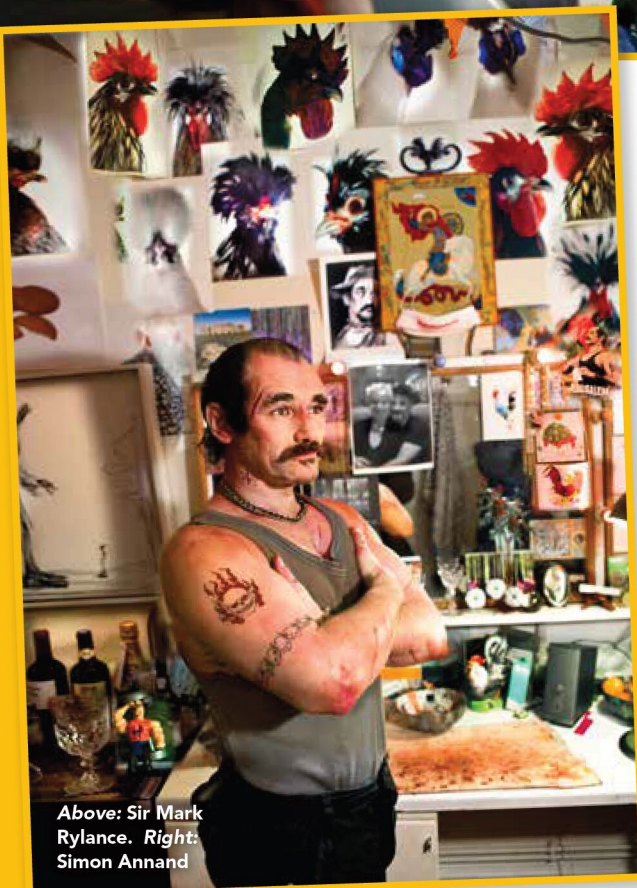
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checklist

If it's going on in London and you need to know about it, it's here



Sir Lenny Henry prepares for *Othello*



Above: Sir Mark Rylance. Right: Simon Annand

Annand in Theatreland

Imogen Moody steps into the world of prolific West End portrait photographer **Simon Annand**

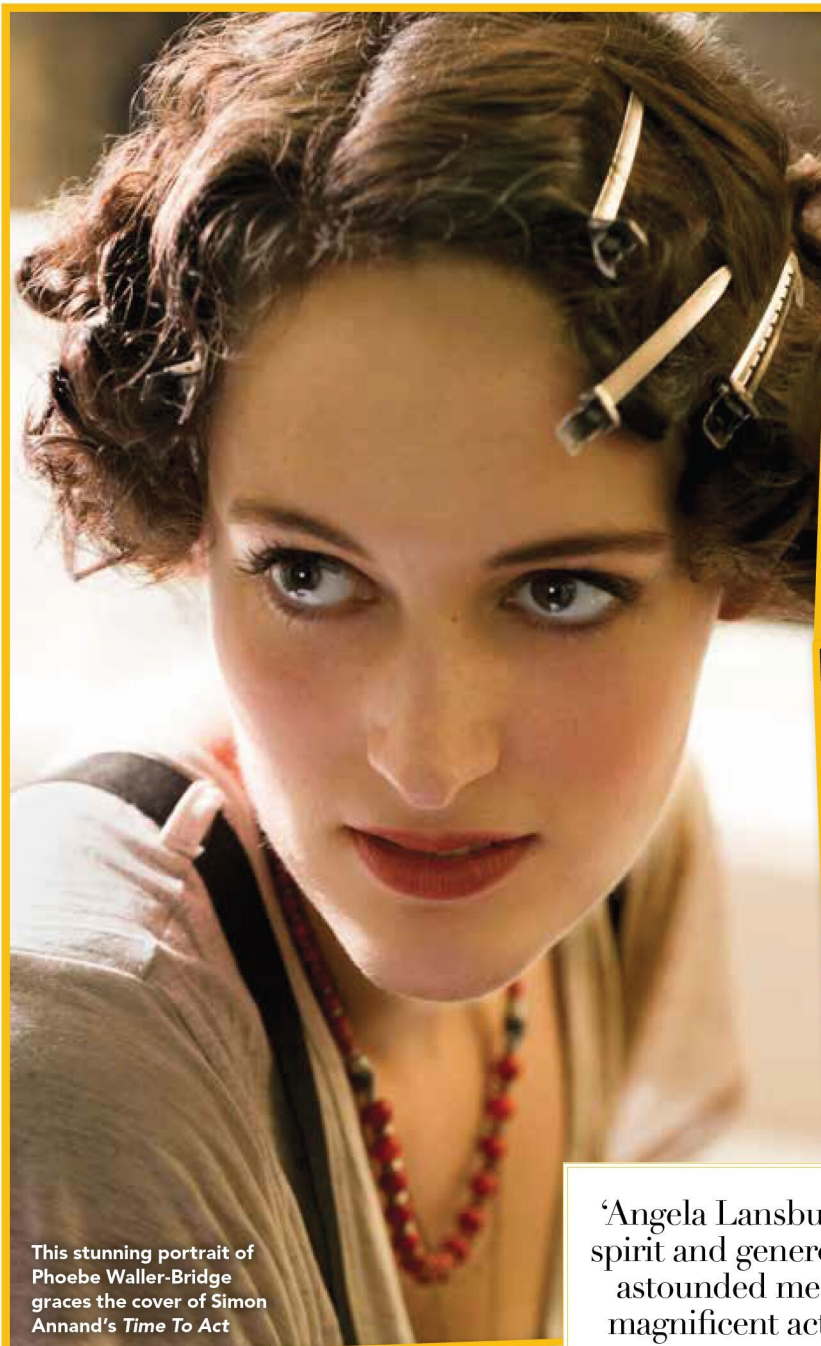
For decades, London's theatreland has seen some of the biggest stars tread the boards in front of appreciative crowds and hard-to-please critics. It has also introduced us to plethora of up-and-coming stars who have gone on to incredible things. And many of them have been captured backstage by celebrated photographer Simon Annand in their dressing rooms, known in the biz as 'the half' – the 35-minute

countdown before the actor takes to the stage. For the past 40 years he has been given unprecedented access behind the scenes.

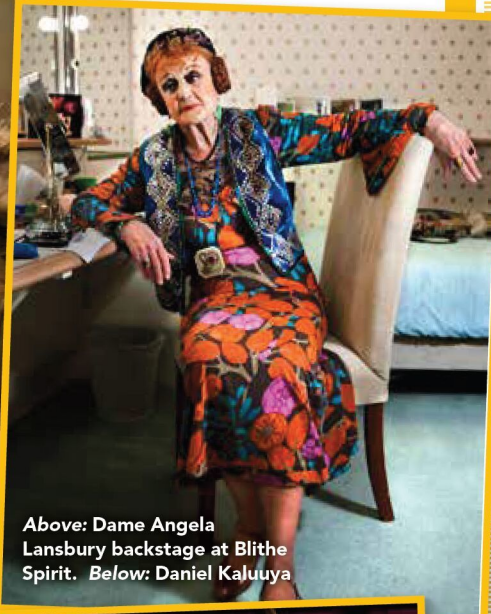
We sent Imogen Moody off to meet the talented fellow to chat about his years photographing some of the biggest stars in the world...

With his background in photographing the stars of stage and screen, I thought it was fitting to meet Simon for our chat at The Ham Yard Hotel in Soho, between

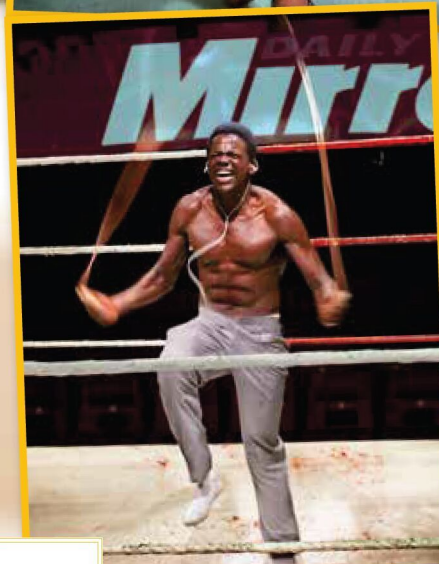




This stunning portrait of Phoebe Waller-Bridge graces the cover of Simon Annand's *Time To Act*



Above: Dame Angela Lansbury backstage at *Blithe Spirit*. Below: Daniel Kaluuya



‘Angela Lansbury’s spirit and generosity astounded me. A magnificent actor’

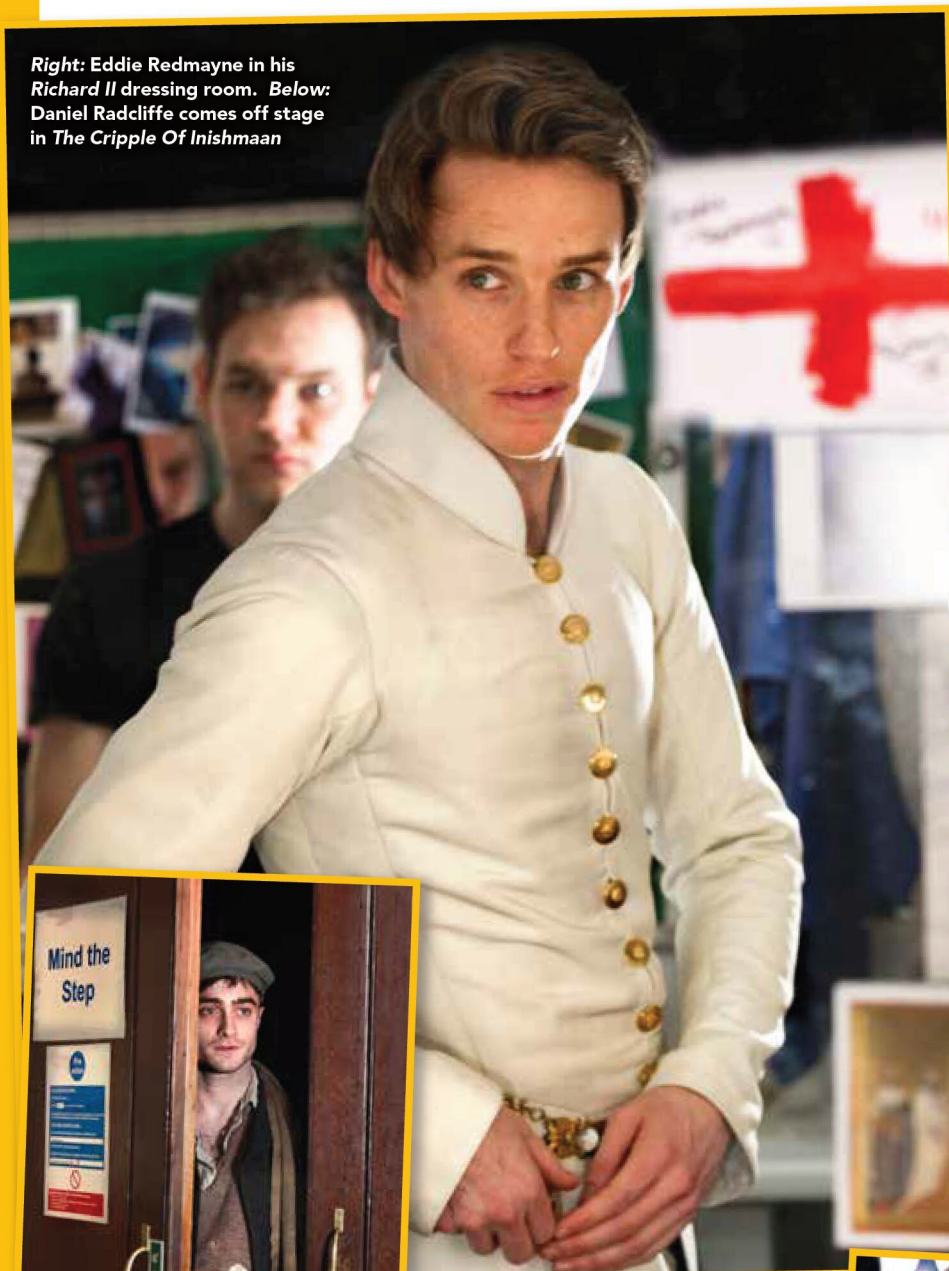
the Gielgud and Piccadilly Theatres. When Simon arrives, he is carrying his books *The Half* and *Time To Act*, which include a variety of intimate, candid shots of household names, taken backstage over the past four decades. On the cover of *Time To Act* is a striking image of a young Phoebe Waller-Bridge, looking reminiscent of a silent movie star. He tells me that he took it shortly after the then 24-year-old actress had graduated from RADA. At the time she was appearing in a production of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* at the Almeida Theatre in Islington in 2009.

As I flick through a Chinese edition of his first book *The Half* (2008), I zero in on a black and white photograph of comedian Griff Rhys Jones taken during a production of *Charley’s Aunt*. ‘I took it in 1982 while working as a bartender at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith’, he recalls and explains that he had been so impressed by the thunderous laughter he heard night after night that he wanted to capture the moment in some way. Never having used a camera before, he decided to try and photograph the show’s biggest laugh.



Griff Rhys Jones prepares to go on stage in *The Miser*

Right: Eddie Redmayne in his *Richard II* dressing room. **Below:** Daniel Radcliffe comes off stage in *The Cripple Of Inishmaan*



So 'emboldened by the cockiness of a 27 year old', he 'precariously climbed onto the lighting gantry' with his camera during the performance, and 'timed the shutter with the laugh', taking only two photographs during one of the funniest gags in the show: Griff pouring his tea into the top hat of his prospective father-in-law, by mistake.

The audience roared, the shutter clicked and it was his first ever production photo. Thirty-five years later Simon caught up with Griff Rhys Jones once again at the Garrick Theatre during a production of Molière's *The Miser* (2017). This time Griff was in his dressing room looking longingly at a fruit salad in a plastic glass, in full costume as Molière's skinflint protagonist. 'Griff is a master farceur, especially playing an ebullient character,' Annand laughs.

Next door at the Gielgud Theatre on Shaftesbury Avenue, Annand was delighted to get to photograph Dame Angela Lansbury in her dressing room, during her stint as the wonderfully dotty Madame Arcati in Michael Blakemore's production of Noël Coward's *Blithe Spirit* (2014). 'Angela's spirit and generosity astounded me,' he says. 'A magnificent actor still working at the age of 89, as she was then.'

The Gielgud Theatre was originally named The Globe but in 1994 was renamed after Sir John Gielgud. The actor spent the Blitz living around the corner at the prestigious Theatre Royal Haymarket, using room number



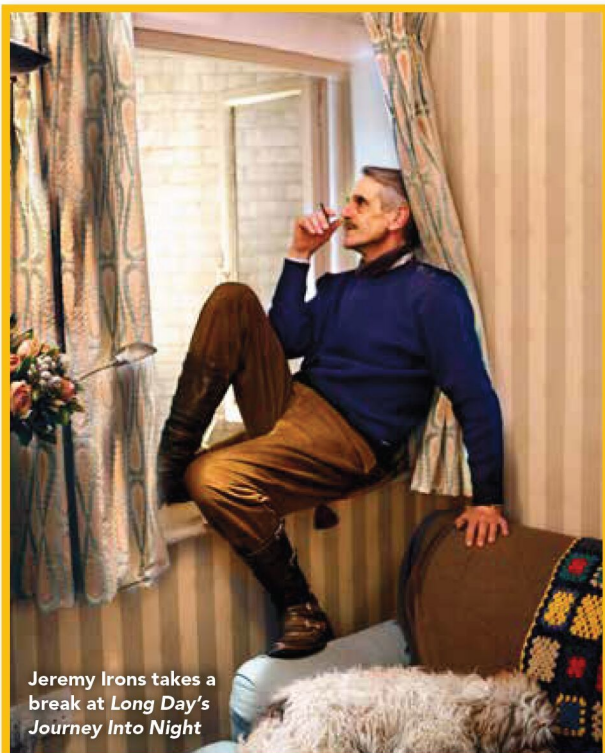
Meera Syal gets ready to play Annie's Miss Hannigan



Rachel Weisz prepares to go on stage in *A Streetcar Named Desire*



Gemma Arterton backstage at the Almeida for *The Master Builder*



Jeremy Irons takes a break at *Long Day's Journey Into Night*

10 as his flat. There have been hundreds of leading actors using this legendary room since then, and it was there that Simon saw Sir Ian McKellen and Sir Patrick Stewart in a production of *Waiting For Godot* (2009).

'The world knows these two men as huge movie stars, but their roots are in the theatre,' he says. 'The joy they share in performing is palpable.'

As we continue to flick through the pages of his books, he speaks about the wonderful Theatre Royal Haymarket, where he'd shot Sienna Miller preparing for her role as Doris the barmaid in *Terence Rattigan's Flare Path*, (2011).

That's also where we see Anna Friel as Holly Golightly in *Breakfast At Tiffany's* (2009); a pre-*Downton Abbey* Dan Stevens smouldering with confidence as he readies himself for Noël Coward's *Hay Fever* (2006); and a delightfully mirrored Sophie Okonedo as she prepares herself for *The Goat, Or Who Is Sylvia?* (2017).

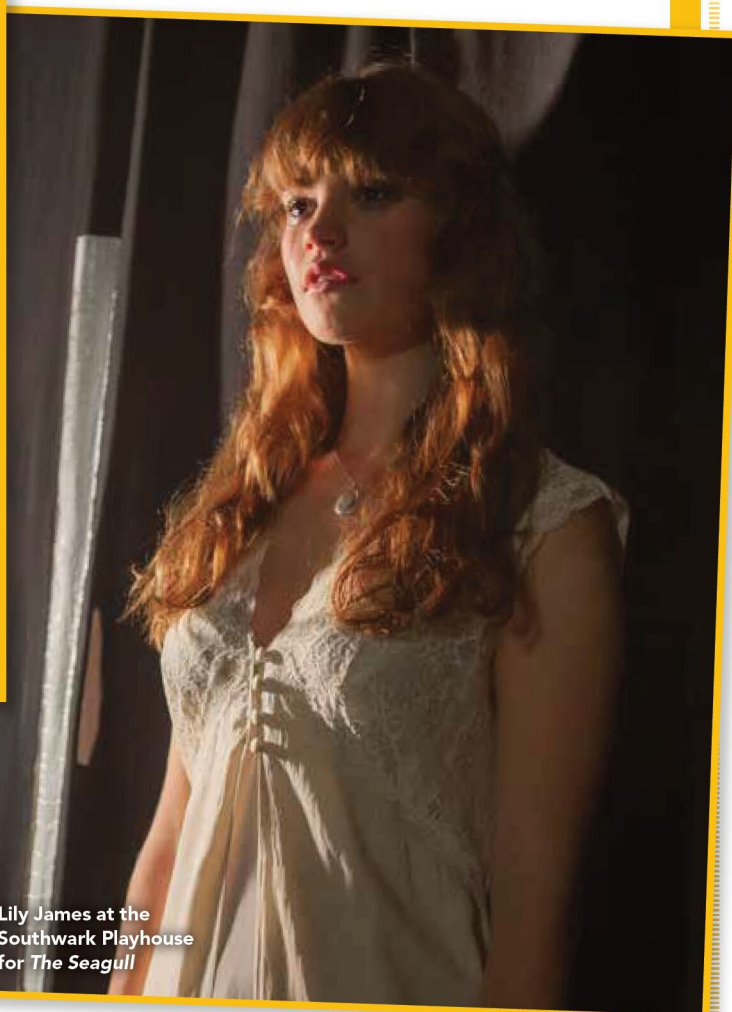
The Old Vic is another of Simon's favourite theatres, especially Laurence Olivier's dressing room. *Time To Act* opens with the same room, shot when Kim Cattrall was in a production of *Sweet Bird Of Youth* (2013). No one is in the photograph, just the make-up table, the mirror dotted with best wishes and the caption: 'How many leading actors across the generations have looked into this mirror?'

Simon goes on to tell me about more London theatres

including the Noël Coward, where he shot his portrait of Jim Broadbent backstage in *A Christmas Carol* in 2016 in full Scrooge costume. 'Jim is the most charming, gentle man with a riotous tongue, when he feels like it,' he laughs. Another shot sees Kelly Brook, laying on a bed during the half, in *Calendar Girls* (2009). He says: 'In terms of knowing what works in front of a camera, Kelly is one of the brightest people I have photographed.'

Another wonderful image is of Daniel Radcliffe as he comes off stage during a performance of *The Cripple Of Inishmaan* (2013). Simon also shows us his fellow Gryffindor Rupert Grint in *Mojo* at the Harold Pinter Theatre (2014). The pictures keep coming – he points out a shot of Sir Lenny Henry playing Othello at the Trafalgar Studios in 2009 with a towel on his head and focused in the mirror, commenting that 'he was reminiscent of a boxer before the fight'; David Suchet as the legendary Lady Bracknell at the Vaudeville Theatre in 2015; and Beverley Knight and cast singing off stage in *Memphis* at the Shatisbury Theatre in the same year.

'Lily James is blessed with irrepressible energy that can be fine-tuned into great subtlety'



Lily James at the Southwark Playhouse for *The Seagull*

Productions at the Donmar Warehouse in Covent Garden never disappoint. You can see by Annand's sensational portraits of Rachel Weisz how she is totally focused, just before her entrance as Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2009). Eddie Redmayne, as he prepares for *Richard II* (2012) at the same theatre, again

displays star quality that simply oozes from the photograph.

Many of Simon's portraits feature stars when they were just starting out.

In one we see Lily James in Chekhov's *The Seagull* (2012) at the Southwark Playhouse, not long after she graduated from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. 'Lily is blessed with irrepressible energy that can be fine-tuned into a moment of great subtlety with the click of a finger,' he recalls. He also proudly shares

stunning images of a 21-year-old Daniel Kaluuya working out to get ready for his role as Leon Davidson in *Sucker Punch* at the Royal Court in 2010.

Simon has taken thousands of theatrical and backstage photographs all over the world, in a career spanning four decades, two books and numerous exhibitions. Scattered with more stars than the night sky, his portfolio illuminates life in a working theatre, giving viewers a glimpse into the dressing rooms, and often the minds, of some of our favourite performers. 'My body of work is about the subject I love, the theatre,' he says.

All these photographs and dozens more can be found in Simon Annand's latest book *Time To Act*, with over 250 pages of intimate portraits of actors backstage, and a foreword from double Oscar winner Cate Blanchett, who he first met in London, 1999.

Time To Act: An Intimate Photographic Portrait Of Actors Backstage is out now.

Coming live from London...

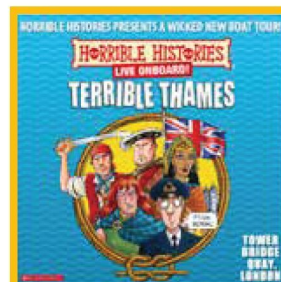


Elton John

We swear he's been saying for years that every tour he's done is going to be his last. But we guess you can't keep a good man down. Actually this Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour was postponed back in 2020 due to coronavirus but hurrah, Elton's still standing. Expect him to bang out all of his many hits like *Your Song*, *Sacrifice* and many more.

Where: The O2, Peninsula Square, London SE10 0DX

When: April 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 24, May 30, 31, June 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18



Horrible Histories: Terrible Thames

The team behind the stage versions of the wickedly funny and informative books are back with a cool new show – on a boat! Climb aboard and prepare to hear the horrible history of the famous river, touching on the Tower Of London, Henry VIII and The Globe.

Where: Tower Bridge Quay, St Katharine's Way, London E1W 1LD

When: Until October 29

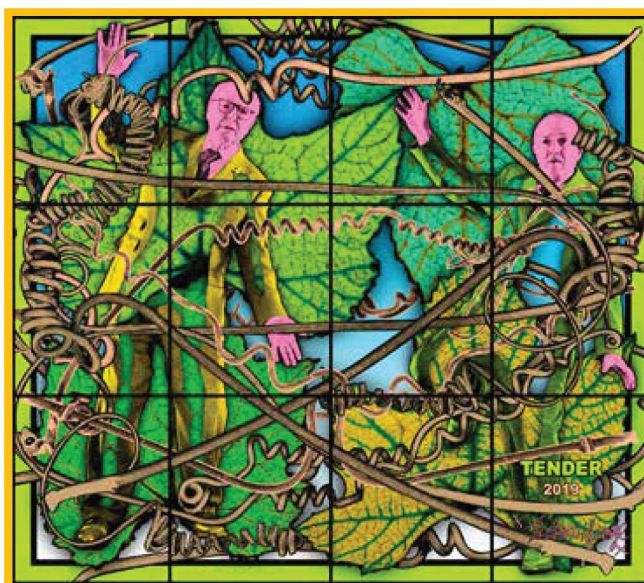


Jonas Brothers

The gorgeous Jonas Brothers are back with a new album called, er, *The Album* and are planning to support its release with a show at the Royal Albert Hall. The album has been a long time coming, having first been announced in 2020. However, back in February, the fellas hinted that the record would have a '70s rock and Americana flavour.

Where: The Royal Albert Hall

When: April 14



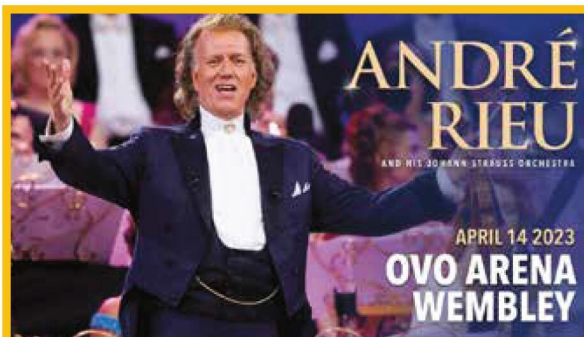
The Gilbert & George Centre

The artist duo, who met at St Martin's School of Art in 1967, open a permanent exhibition space just off Brick Lane, with a display of their *Paradisical Pictures* on show.

Admission is free because 'we want to make art for people, not for collectors', Gilbert says, with George adding: 'Our earliest slogan was "art for all!"'

Where: The Gilbert & George Centre, 5A Heneage Street, E1 5LJ

When: The *Paradisical Picture* exhibition is on until June 1

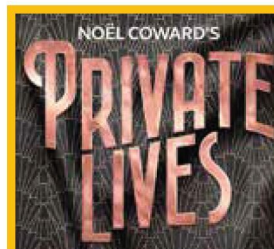


André Rieu

If you love the full sound of an orchestra playing music by some of the greatest composers, then book your tickets to see the insanely popular Dutch conductor André Rieu, known as the 'king of the waltz', who passes through London on his UK and Ireland tour with his 60-piece Johann Strauss Orchestra.

Where: OVO Arena Wembley, Arena Square, Wembley Park HA9 0AA

When: April 13-14

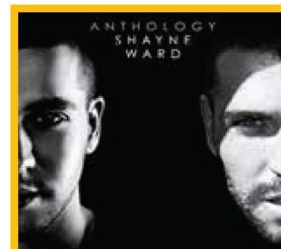


Private Lives

Hilarious comedy by the legendary writer Noël Coward about a divorced couple who bump into each other in the same hotel on their honeymoons with their new spouses. Stephen Mangan, Rachael Stirling, Laura Carmichael and Sargon Yelda star.

Where: Donmar Warehouse, 41 Earlham Street, London, WC2H 9LX

When: April 13 until May 27



Shayne Ward

It's hard to believe it's been almost 20 years since the handsome singer burst into our lives on *The X Factor*. After three albums, Shayne turned his hand to acting. Now, to support the recent release of an anthology, he is revisiting his old tunes at a show in London.

Where: O2 Academy Islington, N1 Centre, 16 Parkfield Street, N1 0PS

When: April 15

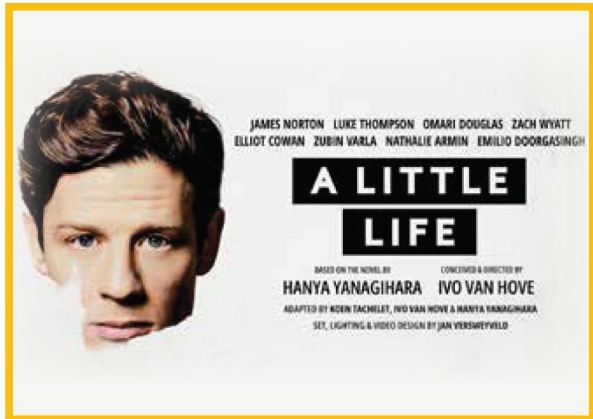


Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox

If you live your life like you're in Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby*, then Scott Bradlee and his Postmodern Jukebox and their amazing '20s-style jazz reworkings have no doubt provided you with the perfect soundtrack. Over the years, this sassy combo have given contemporary songs like ...Baby One More Time, Tearin' Up My Heart and We Found Love a makeover. Expect this show to be a romp!

Where: Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX

When: April 28



A Little Life

The 700-page book was a celebrated though tough-to-read novel by Hanya Yanagihara about four college friends in New York City. The stage version is no different. Don't expect any laughs, the tone and subject matter is pretty grim, but you'll be captivated by the strong cast that includes the gorgeous James Norton.

Where: The Harold Pinter Theatre, Panton Street, London SW1Y 4DN

When: Until August 5

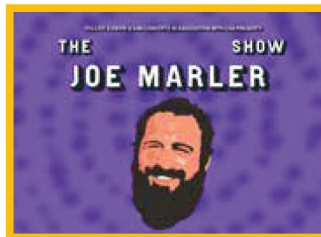


Parenting Hell Live

Josh Widdicombe and Rob Beckett's side-splitting podcast about being dads is so popular that not only have they published a book, they have also managed to sell out The O2, which is quite some feat for a podcast! Fans of the show will be delighted as the pair share stories about the ups and downs of being a parent.

Where: The O2, Peninsula Square, SE10 0DX

When: April 21



The Joe Marler Show Live

Former rugby player Joe Marler and his mate Tom Fordyce take their podcast to the London Palladium. If you're yet to listen to it, give it a spin, or brave it and try out the live show first.

Where: The London Palladium, Argyll Street, W1F 7TF

When: April 18



Kerry Ellis

Queen of the West End and Broadway Kerry Ellis hits the stage at the Adelphi to sing tracks from her new album *Kings & Queens*, as well as a few old musical favourites. The album is mainly original songs, along with a handful of hand-picked covers, and will see Kerry fuse her signature musical theatre style with a contemporary country rock theme. She has teamed up with some of music's biggest names, including singer/songwriters Newton Faulkner and Jamie Lawson, as well as legendary Queen guitarist and personal friend Sir Brian May. The title track is a rousing anthemic rock track, combining Kerry's powerful vocals with a striking melody.

Where: Adelphi Theatre, 409-412 Strand, London, WC2R 0NS

When: May 16



Crown To Couture

Don't miss this fascinating fashion exhibition featuring contemporary couture displayed alongside historic costumes from the royal courts. Focusing on the Georgian era, visitors can see how the striking fashions of the time have influenced many of the iconic celebrity looks we've seen on the red carpet.

It's the largest exhibition ever staged at Kensington Palace. Over 200 objects are on display, many of which you may recognise, including Lady Gaga's luminous green MTV Awards dress and the world-famous Silver Tissue Gown worn at the court of Charles II. Fans of Lizzo will be giddy to see her spectacular Thom Browne dress from the 2022

Met Gala, complete with gold cape jacket. Also on display is the Monique Lhuillier gown worn by Phoebe Waller-Bridge at the Emmys in 2019, and Billy Porter's spectacular Sun God outfit by The Blonds for the Met Gala 2019.

There's also the dress designed by Edith Head for the film *Roman Holiday* and worn by Audrey Hepburn. Stepping further back in time, there's a court mantua of white silk brocade (above), made in Spitalfields and possibly worn by Mary Flaxman, which dates back to 1750-53.

Where: Kensington Palace, Kensington Gardens, London W8 4PX

When: April 5 until October 29



'I always say it's the musical for people who hate musicals'

Lizzy Price meets the stars of *Bat Out Of Hell! The Musical*

For a musical that has it all – electrifying anthems, '80s dystopian costumes and a love story that blends *Romeo & Juliet* with *Peter Pan* – you'd be forgiven for thinking *Bat Out Of Hell! The Musical* is a veteran of West End theatres. What many audiences don't know is that it was almost 50 years between Meat Loaf's friend and long-time collaborator Jim Steinman putting pen to paper and finally seeing the musical take flight in 2017. And Glenn Adamson, who plays Strat, and Kellie Gnauck, who takes on Raven, are loving every magnetising minute. After its run at the Peacock Theatre ended on April 1, it's soon to embark on a tour.

As Meat Loaf said himself: 'I believe every song [Jim] ever written was written for this musical. It was in his mind the whole time – the drama, the boy-girl love story, all of it.'

Here, actors Glenn and Kellie fill us in on the show...

***Bat Out Of Hell!* must win the prize for the musical with the longest period from inception to first night. Why did it take 48 years?**

Glenn: It's really the love child of Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf. Back in the '60s Jim wrote *The Dream Engine* and found Meat Loaf to play the part of Strat, but they couldn't get the story off the ground because JM Barrie's estate were having none of it. The story was too closely linked to *Peter Pan*. So Jim said: 'Let's release it as a concept album,' a bit like *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It became one of the top ten best-selling albums of all time so it didn't



'It's really the love child of Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf,' Glenn says of the show

go too badly for him. Finally the show came back out of the woodwork in 2017 and it's incredible for Jim that he got to see his baby be realised on the stage. He never gave up on it. I love that.

You both joined in 2020 pre-Covid, but then the plug was pulled on live theatre. Were you immersed in the songs during lockdown?

Glenn: Absolutely. We got a little taster of the show for the few weeks before lockdown hit. But I was grateful in some ways as I needed to work on my stamina and the fact I was going to be topleless the whole show, so I went out running to the album. The goal was that I would be able to sing *Bat Out Of Hell* and jump through fire and do all these energetic things. My whole lockdown was *Bat Out Of Hell* boot camp.



'I can't do the show without chewing gum,' says Glenn, much to Kellie's relief!

'I'd Do Anything For Love starts with the piano intro and you just hear this palpable intake of breath from the audience'

Audiences come back for the colossal songs every night. What are your favourites to sing?

Kellie: I have always loved *It's All Coming Back To Me Now* and I'm really grateful I get to sing that every night.

Glenn: For me it's *I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)*. It starts with the piano intro and you just hear this palpable intake of breath from the audience – that's my favourite part of the job.

Is the show more for theatregoers or rock fans?

Kellie: A bit of both. I feel like the over thirties are Meat Loaf fans and the under thirties are theatre fans who don't know about Meat Loaf but fall in love with the characters. That what makes it so energetic.

Glenn: I always say this is the musical for people who hate musicals.

Does it take on something different because Jim Steinman and Meat Loaf have passed away?

Glenn: Oh yeah, it's so poignant. We sing *Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through* which is a song people might not know, but Meat and Jim wrote that about their friendship. We have the weight of that every night, just knowing that this was their beginning. There's something amazing about that.

Do you have any superstitions before a show?

Kellie: I don't know why but I have to go around and knock on everyone's door to say hello. I feel like it's weird if the first time I see someone is on stage with them.

Glenn: I can't do the show without chewing gum. I bin it right before I go on stage.

Kellie: When anyone plays Strat, all I say to them is: 'Please don't eat garlic,' but Glenn always smells of sweet chewing gum.

When: Don't miss the nationwide tour later this year.

Turn to page 32 to see the stars at the press night and after-party.

Lemar

He may have been discovered on the BBC's easily forgotten *Fame Academy*, but silky-voiced Lemar went on to scoop BRIT and MOBO Awards for songs like *If There's Any Justice*. Now, to support his new album *Page In My Heart*, the talented soulster will play an intimate gig to showcase his new material plus a few old favourites.

Where: Indigo at The O2, Millennium Way, Greenwich, London SE10 0AX
When: April 28

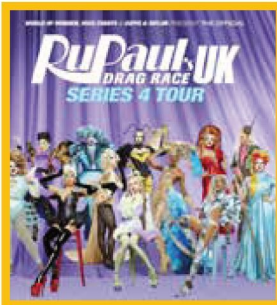


The Peter Rabbit Easter Adventure

Celebrate this Easter with The Peter Rabbit Easter Adventure, which takes place slap bang in Covent Garden. Hunt out the brand new pop-up Easter Adventure Shop, located in 10 Market Building, which is jam-packed with collectable Peter Rabbit merchandise. There is also an Easter activity area and café serving hot and cold treats every day from 10am to 5pm.

If you fancy taking part, head to Floral Street's Chestnut Bakery where you can join Beatrix Potter's much-loved characters for an immersive guided adventure around the area. There will be live performances and puppetry and a mini ROVER obstacle course to keep the littl'uns happy. For tickets visit peterrabbiteasteradventure.com/london/

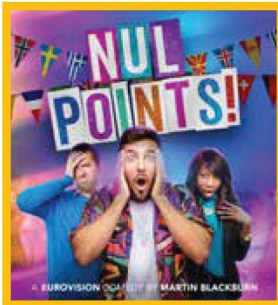
When: Until April 16



RuPaul's Drag Race Season Four Tour

After the lacklustre season three failed to excite the nation – though admittedly did introduce us to stand out star Kitty Scott-Claus – series four made up for it with its mix of characters and dramas. Now the cast that includes the brilliant Dakota Schiffer, Jonbers Blonde and ultimate winner Danny Beard are heading out on tour and stop off in London.

Where: The Royal Albert Hall
When: April 28



Nul Points!

As you'll be aware, this year the Eurovision Song Contest takes place in the UK – Liverpool, to be exact. You'd think we'd won the show by the way it's being talked up, but it was actually war-torn Ukraine who scooped the trophy, and we're merely hosting it on their behalf. Tickets have sold out, so enjoy this comedy set over five years of Eurovision parties instead.

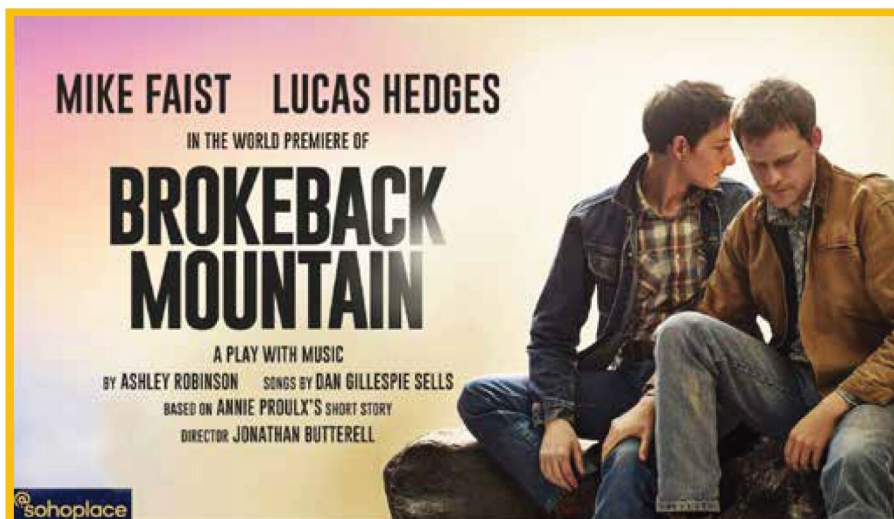
Where: Union Theatre, 229 Union Street, London SE1 0LR
When: April 26 – May 30



Jason Donovan

If you can't wait for the upcoming Stock Aitken Waterman musical, then boogie on down to Indigo at The O2 to see Jason Donovan. Expect dazzling tunes from his pop days like *Too Many Broken Hearts*, *When You Come Back To Me*, *You Can Depend On Me* plus tunes from the musicals, like *Any Dream Will Do* and many more.

Where: Indigo at The O2, Millennium Way, Greenwich, London SE10 0AX
When: April 27



Brokeback Mountain

While many will remember *Brokeback Mountain* as the award-winning film starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal, it was originally based on a short novel by Annie Proulx. This new production – described as a play with music – is written by debut playwright Ashley Robinson and features songs co-written by Dan Gillespie Sells, which will be sung by Fairground Attraction singer Eddi Reader. Tony and BAFTA-nominated Mike Faist plays Jack, and Academy Award-nominated Lucas Hedges is Ennis.

Dan Gillespie Sells said: 'The material and this complex story is inspiring to compose for. I've really enjoyed reconnecting with a genre of music I grew up with and using it to serve the drama of each moment.'

Where: @sohoplacel, 4 Soho Place, Charing Cross Road, W1D 3BG
When: May 10 – August 12.

Society photographer **Edward Lloyd's**

Diary News

The 23rd Annual WhatsOnStage Awards

Some of the biggest names in theatre came together to celebrate the 23rd Annual WhatsOnStage Awards.

The spectacular celebratory show at the Prince of Wales Theatre – which is usually home to *The Book Of Mormon* – included renditions of *People Will Say We're In Love* from Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*, *I Could Have Danced All Night* from *My Fair Lady*, *Too Late To Turn Back Now* from *Bonnie & Clyde*, *The Musical*, *The Show Must Go On* from *We Will Rock You* and *Rise* from *The Great British Bake Off Musical*.

Winners included Jodie Comer for Best Performer In A Play for her role in *Prima Facie*, Joe Locke for Best Professional Debut Performance for *The Trials*, and the Best Performer In A Musical went to Courtney Bowman

for her performance in *Legally Blonde* at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre. Dame Arlene Phillips received the Choreography Award for *Grease*, and Best New Musical was awarded to *Bonnie & Clyde*.

Where: Prince of Wales Theatre
When: February 12
Website: awards.whatsonstage.com



Dame Arlene Phillips



Jodie Comer



Guys & Dolls star Marisha Wallace



Back To The Future's Ben Joyce, Amber Davies and Oliver Nicholas



Rebekah Lowings, Charlotte Kennedy, Lesley Garrett and Anne Wensak



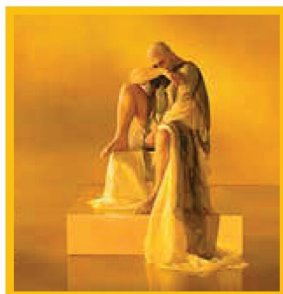
David Dolman, Billy Differ, Sir Cameron Mackintosh and Bonnie Langford



Bonnie & Clyde's Jordan Luke Gage and Frances Mayli McCann



SINE Services To Theatre winner Nica Burns

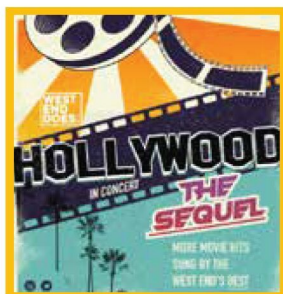


Sam Smith

The flamboyant singer has come a long way since they embarked on their hugely successful career, notching up smash hit albums plus gongs galore. This latest tour supports the recent release of Sam's new album *Gloria*, which they have described as more theatrical than previous shows – so expect lots of kooky dance moves and even madder outfits

Where: The O2, Peninsula Square, London SE10 0DX

When: April 18, 19, 22, 25



West End Does: Hollywood The Sequel!

Stars of the West End once again come together to perform well-loved songs from Hollywood movies.

Expect to hear from the likes of Alice Fearn, Ricardo Afonso, Carrie Hope Fletcher, Frances Mayli McCann, Lauren Byrne, Joel Montague, Rob Houchen and more.

Where: Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace, London SW1X 9DQ

When: April 30



An Evening With Stanley Tucci

We know him from so many films – including *The Devil Wears Prada* and *The Hunger Games* – plus his recent foray into food appreciation and cocktail making. For one night only, he will be in conversation looking back at his life and career, sharing some behind-the-scenes secrets from his numerous movies, plus a little about how he found fame.

Where: Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AP

When: April 29



Selling like hot cakes

Grab a ticket for *The Great British Bake Off Musical* before the hit show ends its London run

If you have a sweet tooth and enjoy taking in a show, then *The Great British Bake Off Musical* is just perfect for you. But be warned, there are only a few weeks before the smash hit ends its London run.

Described as a 'slick, colourful production' by *The Telegraph* and 'uplifting, hilarious, and touching' by *Lost In Theatreland*, the fictional take on the global smash hit TV show tells the story of eight amateur bakers seeking to impress the judges and battle their way to be crowned Star Baker. The audience are taken on a sentimental journey of catchy tunes and lively dance numbers as the bakers face their share of trials, tribulations and baking failures along the way.

In this production, the judges are fictional though very recognisable. Blue-eyed silver fox Phil Hollinghurst is played by West End legend John Owen-Jones and is rather reminiscent of a certain Paul Hollywood, while Haydn Gwynne's iconically stylish Pam Lee could be Prue Leith's long-lost relative. But the real stars of the show don't mind, and have embraced the sell-out show. 'I loved the show so much – I'm coming back and bringing my mum,' Paul Hollywood gushed, while Prue Leith added: 'It is an uplifting, funny, heartfelt story which will have you singing and dancing out of the theatre with a huge smile. A theatrical sweet treat. Just what we need right now.'

Where: Noël Coward, St Martin's Lane WC2N 4AU

When: Until May 13



Agatha Christie: Lucy Worsley On The Trail Of The 'Queen Of Crime'

Anyone who loves Agatha Christie's murder mysteries and wonders what helped her dream up such mind-boggling plots will not only want to feast on Lucy Worsley's book about the great author, but also listen to her discuss her life and work, using papers from the Christie archive.

Where: The British Library, 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB

When: April 30



Peter Doherty

Once upon a time this rocker was all over the tabloids, living a pretty rock and roll lifestyle, dating supermodels, doing all manner of drugs, getting into fights and even ending up in prison. These days he's a lot more relaxed, and this show is a lot more laid back than his *Libertines* days, as he performs an acoustic show as part of his solo UK tour.

Where: Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AP

When: May 5



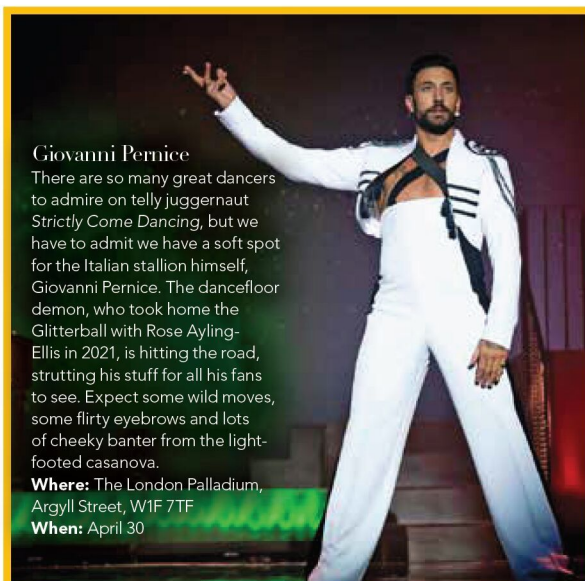
Pub In The Park

The food and music festival is going on tour, bringing weekends of fabulous food and incredible tunes to ten locations. The first one is this one in Wimbledon, hosted by Simon Rimmer on Friday, Ainsley Harriott on Saturday and Anna Haugh on Sunday. Expect music from Bananarama, Judge Jules, Clean Bandit, DJ Spoony, Gabrielle and The Christians.

Where: Wimbledon Park, Home Park Road, London SW19 8AU

When: Friday May 12 to Sunday May 14

checklist



Giovanni Pernice

There are so many great dancers to admire on telly juggernaut *Strictly Come Dancing*, but we have to admit we have a soft spot for the Italian stallion himself, Giovanni Pernice. The dancefloor demon, who took home the Glitterball with Rose Ayling-Ellis in 2021, is hitting the road, strutting his stuff for all his fans to see. Expect some wild moves, some flirty eyebrows and lots of cheeky banter from the light-footed casanova.

Where: The London Palladium, Argyll Street, W1F 7TF
When: April 30



Strictly Come Dancing: The Professionals On Tour

Following on from the recent celebrity *Strictly Come Dancing* tour comes the one with just the professionals. Among the pros taking part are Dianne Buswell, Karen Hauer, Gorka Márquez, Nikita Kuzmin, Jowita Przystal, Nancy Xu, Vito Coppola, Carlos Gu, Neil Jones and Luba Mushtuk.

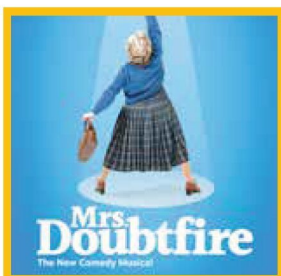
Where: The London Palladium, Argyll Street, London W1F 7TF
When: May 19



Magic At The Musicals

Jason Manford and Ruthie Henshall host Magic FM's 'one night only' performance, celebrating the best of the West End. Expect rousing renditions of songs from shows like *Crazy For You*, *Guys & Dolls*, *The Great British Bake Off Musical*, *Matilda The Musical* and *We Will Rock You*.

Where: Royal Albert Hall, Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AP
When: May 14



Mrs Doubtfire

Yet another big screen classic is being given the musical treatment. This time it's the hilarious *Mrs Doubtfire* about a man who has to dress up as a female home help to see his children after he loses custody following a bitter divorce. *Mrs Doubtfire* originally started out as a book but is best known as the Hollywood blockbuster starring Robin Williams and Sally Field.

Where: Shaftesbury Theatre, 210 Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2H 8DP
When: May 12 until January 13.



Aspects Of Love

Remember the '80s? Then you will no doubt recall the joyous strains of the chart-topping tune *Love Changes Everything*, sung by the fresh-faced musical star Michael Ball. Both featured in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Aspects Of Love*. The show has been revived and Michael Ball will return, performing alongside opera singer Danielle de Niese.

Where: The Lyric Theatre, 29 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES
When: From May 12 to November 11



Måneskin

For many years, anyone taking part in Eurovision would never be heard of again. But these days – just as it was in the very early days – a lot of the talented singers who take part find themselves going from strength to strength. Take 2021 winner Måneskin, for example. Already a credible rock band in their home country of Italy, they went on to be global superstars. They now arrive in the UK on their Loud Kids world tour to support the release of their *Rush!* album.

Where: The O2, Peninsula Square, London SE10 0DX
When: May 8

gig review



'Thank The Fizz for the music!'

It might be a year too late to celebrate the group's 40th anniversary – damn that coronavirus – but that isn't stopping The Fizz from throwing one hell of a party! No sooner did they step on stage than the ravenous and happily nostalgic Indigo at The O2 crowd were transported back to a time when our lives were simpler and music was catchy as hell. Hits like *My Camera Never Lies*, *The Land Of Make Believe* and *Can't Stand The Heat* sound as majestic as ever. Newer tracks from their recent collab with Mike Stock sound superstrong, but need a little longer to bed in to our brains for an eternal stay like the old classics do. Looking 30 years younger than they are actually, Cheryl, Jay and Mike looked and sounded amazing, and had their legions of long-in-the-tooth fans – including this one – having the time of their lives. Thank The Fizz for the music!

Above: Stage manager Kate McDowell chats to Cheryl and Louise Ford

Backstage at 2:22...

Join us for a sneak peek behind the scenes of the hit spookfest

We all love a good scare, and there's no doubt that 2:22 A Ghost Story will put the willies up you. That's why the show has been packing out theatres across the West End for the past couple of years. The latest iteration of the story stars pop superstar Cheryl, who has surprised critics with her amazing acting skills, pulling off the role of terrified mum Jenny with aplomb.

Even though what happens on stage is pretty scary, it also looks a little spooky in these amazing moody backstage pictures of the cast, which also includes Scott Karim, Louise Ford and

Jake Wood. If you want to see this current line-up then act fast, because the current run with this cast comes to an end on April 23.

Speaking about 2:22, Cheryl said that while many thought her stage debut would be in a musical, she admitted that although she loves to watch them she would rather not act in one. Luckily for those keen to hear her vocals, Girls Aloud are reuniting later in the year to release new material to mark the group's 20th anniversary!

Where: Lyric Theatre, 29 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES
When: Until April 23

Above: Jake Wood and Scott Karim. Above right: Cheryl cuts a spooky silhouette backstage

Above: Louise Ford and Cheryl. Right: Scott Karim



Above: Songwriting geniuses Mike Stock, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman

We should be so lucky!

A jukebox musical featuring the music of Stock, Aitken and Waterman is hitting the stage

After years of rumours, an official Stock Aitken Waterman musical has finally been announced.

I Should Be So Lucky is due to premiere at Manchester Opera House on November 1 as part of a UK tour, and will call at a variety of cities including Cardiff, Plymouth, Leeds and Southampton. At the time of writing, no London dates have been announced, but with a hefty back catalogue of glittering pop songs to choose from, we're convinced that the show will extend its run and no doubt find a good home for itself in the West End.

Not only does it feature the songs of Mike Stock, Matt Aitken and Pete Waterman, it has been written and directed by Debbie Isitt, who wrote and directed the *Nativity!* films.

Choreographed by Jason Gilkison of *Strictly Come Dancing* fame, the show is

about a young couple called Ella and Nathan, who are planning on getting hitched – until it all goes wrong and Ella is left wondering what to do. Will she be better off without him? Or can they be together forever?

Speaking about the show, songwriter Mike Stock said: 'We have been approached many times over the years to authorise a musical using the songs from the Stock Aitken Waterman catalogue and have always resisted, until now! What Debbie, Jason and the team behind the show have created is a truly original and shamelessly enjoyable rollercoaster ride through our hits.'

Debbie Isitt added: 'The music of Stock Aitken Waterman has been the soundtrack to both my life and the lives of all my friends. Their songs range from wonderful ballads to real pop anthems to dancefloor classics, which are all perfect for an original musical.'



While the show is full steam ahead, back in 2020 the musical's future looked in doubt when Mike Stock revealed that Covid had played havoc with the writing process. Back then, author and TV presenter Dawn O'Porter had been challenged with penning the show, which was then a time travel love story similar to *When Peggy Sue Got Married*.

'This Covid nonsense has stopped progress,' Mike told *Kylie* podcast *The Diminutive Collection* in 2020. 'We still hadn't got to the stage where we were putting it on stage yet. We were still working through script ideas. There has been some script creative, but we're not entirely happy with it yet.'

But now the show is ready to hit the road and we can't wait.

Find tour dates and buy tickets at soluckymusical.com

Eight great SAW tracks you must listen to!

You know their massive hits like *Never Gonna Give You Up* and *I Should Be So Lucky*, but SAW were also responsible for writing and producing some brilliant lesser known tunes...

Turn It In To Love – Kylie Minogue

Although Hazell Dean had a chart hit with this track in 1988, it originally appeared on Kylie's debut album in a much poppier, more satisfying form.



Listen To Your Heart – Sonia

While *You'll Never Stop Me Loving You* was the smash hit, the ginger Scouser's third single release was just as disco-tastic.



RSVP – Jason Donovan

By 1990, Jason's chart domination was on the wane, but one of his final collabs with SAW was this slightly brooding slice of dance pop! Delicious.



What Do I Have To Do – Kylie Minogue

We couldn't resist suggesting this track by La Minogue. The third release from the *Rhythm Of Love* album is a chunky arms-in-the-air pop anthem!



We're In This Love Forever – Big Fun

Their best single was *Handful Of Promises*, but this tune was a highlight on their little heard album *Pocketful Of Dreams*.

That's What Love Can Do – Boy Krazy

Although this track failed to chart it the UK, the two times it was released by this little known US girl band it is in fact one of SAW's best tunes.

If I Have To Stand Alone – Lonnie Gordon

Her debut dance track *Happenin' All Over Again* was a huge chart hit, but this follow-up flopped. Shame, as it is just as catchy and amazing!

Nothing To Lose – Kylie Minogue

Yes, another Kylie track, but they did write the best songs for her. This featured on her brilliant second album *Enjoy Yourself* but was cruelly denied a single release.

EXHIBITIONS + ATTRACTIONS + THEATRE + MORE...

It's a West End Word Hunt

These days many stage blockbusters are inspired by movies and TV shows. Check out the West End and Broadway hits below, all based on films and TV programmes, and see how many you can find!

N A P T H E L I O N K I N G L X M F O O U A B F W
O G Q 1 O 1 D A L M A T I A N S R U K E T S A I L
M T H E A D D A M S F A M I L Y S A L B H B C F U
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W E R S D T O N M D U P A U H N O E D M K A T U C
B C T Y F K J H L O K Y P X S E U A L H V S O S B
O G J S P B I U G G U T B N Q D B T G Y H U T S Y
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J W K M U A Y L D L C A Q S K Y X B I E B U I E Q
H T A W W H R M U O V Q E A T I Y Z B F X S M N Y
T H E G R E A T B R I T I S H B A K E O F F K K E

Back To The
Future

Brokeback
Mountain

The Great
British Bake Off
Moulin Rouge

Mrs Doubtfire

Shirley Valentine

Dear Evan

Hansen

The Exorcist

Heathers

Legally Blonde

101 Dalmatians

The Lion King

Mary Poppins

Hairspray

Newsies

Kinky Boots

Beetlejuice

The Addams

Family

School Of Rock

Xanadu

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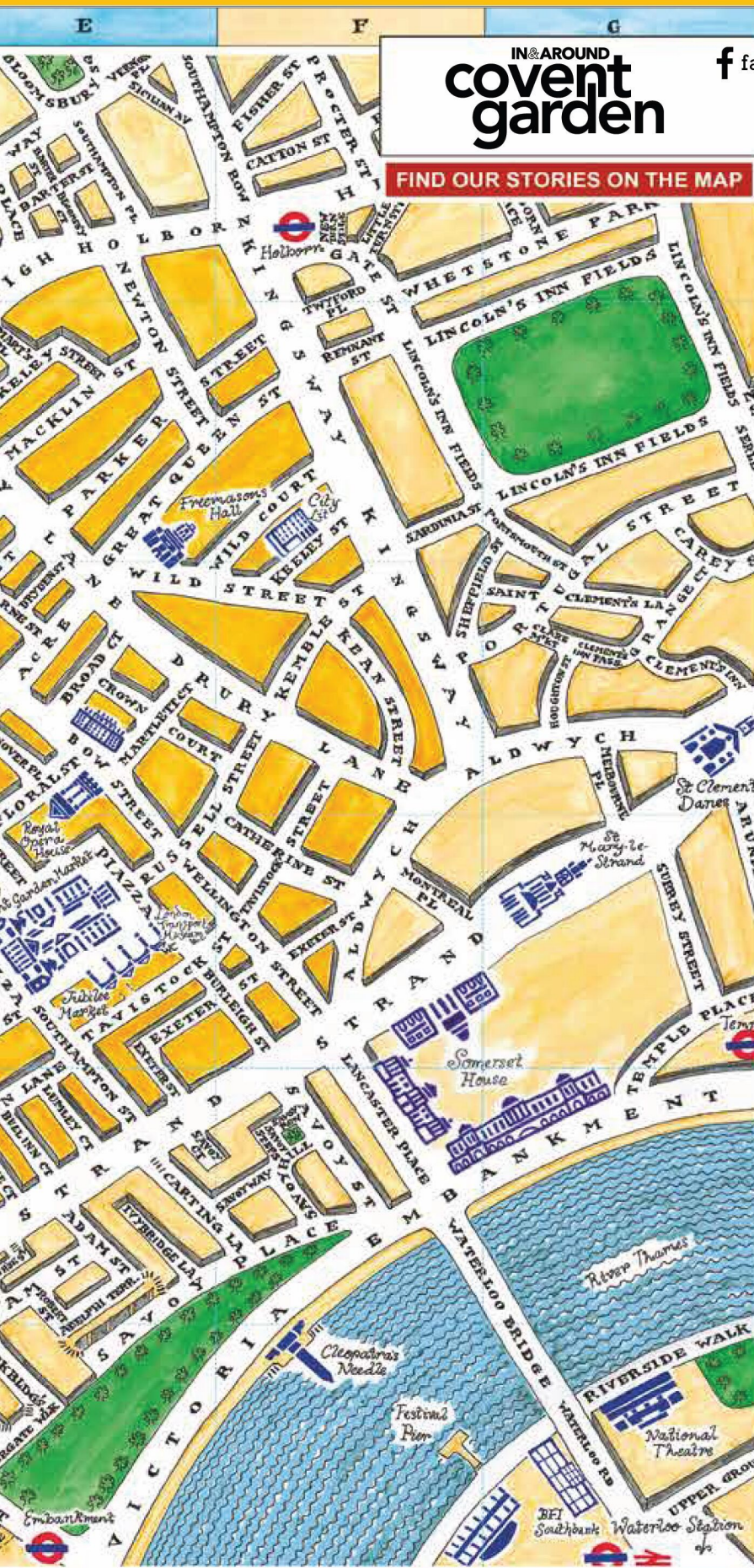
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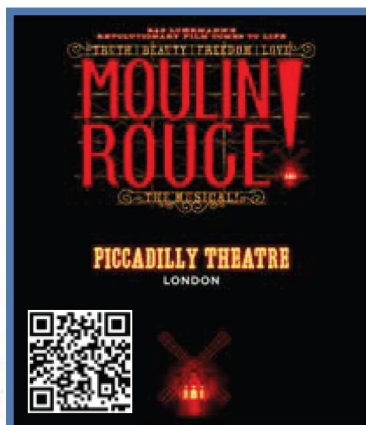


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Curtain up

Your handy guide to what's on stage

2:22 A Ghost Story

The highly acclaimed spookfest – currently starring Cheryl – is back in the West End due to popular demand.
Where: Lyric, 29 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES

Ain't Too Proud

Enjoy the story and the music of The Temptations.
Where: Prince Edward, 28 Old Compton St, W1D 4HS

Aspects Of Love

Michael Ball stars in the Andrew Lloyd Webber classic, directed by Jonathan Kent. Opens May 12.
Where: Lyric, 29 Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 7ES

Back To The Future

Fantastic musical based on the '80s movie classic.
Where: Adelphi, Strand, WC2R 0NS **Map Ref:** E5

Bleak Expectations

If you're a fan of the Radio 4 comedy, you'll already know you're in for a treat with this hilarious Dickens spoof. From May 3.
Where: Criterion, 218-223 Piccadilly, St James's, W1J 9HR.
Map Ref: A5

Book Of Mormon

Outrageous musical comedy about the madcap adventures of a mismatched pair of missionaries.
Where: Prince of Wales, Coventry Street, W1D 6AS
Map Ref: B5

Cabaret

Take your seat at the Kit Kat Club for this immersive version of the musical legend. Seven Olivier Awards can't be wrong.
Where: Playhouse, Northumberland Ave, WC2N 5DE **Map Ref:** D6

Choir Of Man

Is it a concert? Is it a party? Who knows – you'll be having too much fun to care!
Where: Arts Theatre, 6-7 Great Newport Street, WC2H 7JB **Map Ref:** C2

Frozen

Samantha Barks plays Elsa in this stage version of the Disney blockbuster.
Where: Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, Catherine Street, WC2B 5JF
Map Ref: F3

The Great British Bake Off Musical

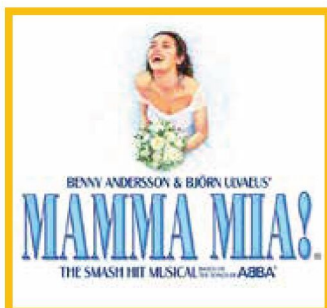
Prue Leith has called the show 'a theatrical treat', which is frankly all you need to know. Until May 13.
Where: Noel Coward, St Martin's Lane, WC2N 4AU
Map Ref: C4

Guys & Dolls

Daniel Mays stars as Nathan Detroit in this musical classic.
Where: Bridge Theatre, 3 Potters Fields Park, SE1 2SG

Hamilton

Award-winning musical



about the life and times of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton.
Where: Victoria Palace, Victoria Street, SW1E 5EA

Harry Potter And The Cursed Child

Catch up with Harry and his family years after his spell at Hogwarts.
Where: Palace, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1V 8AY **Map Ref:** C3

Heathers The Musical

Outsider Veronica sees her dreams of popularity come true when she is accepted into the Heathers clique. Based on the 1989 film.
Where: The Other Palace, 12 Palace St, SW1E 5BJ

Jersey Boys

Jukebox show about Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons packed with hit songs.

Where: Trafalgar, Whitehall SW1A 2DY
Map Ref: C6

The Lehman Trilogy

Directed by Sam Mendes, this tells the story of a family – and a company – which changed the world. Until May 20.
Where: Gillian Lynne, Drury Lane, WC2B 5PW
Map Ref: E2

Les Misérables

A stone cold classic – an epic story packed with epic songs.
Where: Sondheim, Shaftesbury Avenue W1D 6BA
Map Ref: B4

The Lion King

Breathtaking musical featuring songs by Sir Elton John.
Where: Lyceum, Wellington Street, WC2E 7RQ **Map Ref:** E4

A Little Life

Happy Valley's James Norton stars in the play about four college friends.
Where: Harold Pinter Theatre, Panton St, London SW1Y 4DN
Map Ref: B5

Mamma Mia!

Classic ABBA musical that just runs and runs.
Where: Novello, Aldwych, WC2B 4LD
Map Ref: F3

Matilda: The Musical

Hugely popular musical, written by Tim Minchin, which is based on the hit 1996 film.
Where: Cambridge, Earlham Street, WC2H 9HU **Map Ref:** D3

Medea

Sophie Okonedo and Ben Daniels star in the Euripides classic, adapted by Robinson Jeffers and directed by Dominic Cooke. Until April 22.
Where: @sohoplace, 4 Soho Place, Charing Cross Road, W1D 3BG

Moulin Rouge! The Musical

Already a smash on Broadway, this stage version of the Baz

Lurhmann musical is everything you might expect... and more.

Where: Piccadilly, Denman Street W1D 7DY
Map Ref: A4

The Mousetrap

The murder mystery which has kept audiences guessing for 70 years and shows no sign of stopping any time soon.
Where: St Martin's, West Street WC2H 0DP **Map Ref:** C3

Mrs Doubtfire

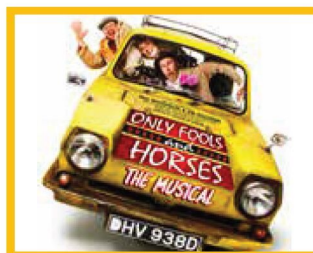
After losing custody of his children, out-of-work actor Daniel takes on the role of a lifetime to win them back. Opens May 12.
Where: Shaftesbury, Shaftesbury Avenue WC2H 8DP. **Map Ref:** D2

OKLAHOMA!

The Rodgers & Hammerstein classic has been reimagined for the 21st century.
Where: Wyndham's, Charing Cross Road, WC2H 0DA
Map Ref: C4

Only Fools And Horses

Catch up with Del Boy, Rodney and Grandad. Until April 29.
Where: Theatre Royal, Haymarket, SW1Y 4HT
Map Ref: A5



Phantom Of The Opera

Andrew Lloyd Webber's legendary musical of the classic horror tale.
Where: Her Majesty's, Haymarket, SW1Y 4QL
Map Ref: B6
Pretty Woman
Musical version of the smash hit movie. It'd be a big mistake not to book tickets. Big. Huge!
Where: Savoy, Strand WC2R 0ET **Map Ref:** E5

Shirley Valentine

Sheridan Smith plays the

housewife dreaming of sunnier climes and a life beyond four walls.

Where: Duke of York's, St Martin's Ln, WC2N 4BG

Six

Smash hit musical about the six wives of Henry VIII.
Where: Vaudeville, Strand WC2R 0NH **Map Ref:** E5

A Streetcar Named Desire

Paul Mescal, Patsy Ferran and Anjana Vassan take to the stage in the Tennessee Williams classic.
Where: Phoenix, Charing Cross Road, WC2N 5DE
Map Ref: C2

The Play That Goes Wrong

Hilarious slapstick romp about a drama society.
Where: Duchess, Catherine Street, WC2B 5LA

Tina – The Tina Turner Musical

Musical biopic of the legendary singer.
Where: Aldwych, WC2B 4DF **Map Ref:** F3

The Unfriend

Sherlock and Doctor Who writer Steven Moffatt's debut play, directed by Mark Gatiss, stars Reece Shearsmith, Frances Barber and Amanda Abbington. Until April 16.
Where: Criterion, 218-223 Piccadilly, St James's, W1J 9HR **Map Ref:** A5

To Kill A Mockingbird

Acclaimed Aaron Sorkin-produced reworking of the classic novel. Until May 20.
Where: Gielgud, Shaftesbury Avenue, W1D 6AR **Map Ref:** B4

Vardy V Rooney: The Wagatha Christie Trial

Relive the showbiz trial that had the nation gripped, in a limited run from April 6 to May 20.
Where: Ambassadors, West St, WC2H 9ND

Wicked

Fun romp about Elphaba and Glinda's trip to see the Wizard Of Oz.
Where: Apollo Victoria, Wilton Road, SW1V 1LL



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'These are some of the most talented performers I've ever worked with'

We meet the cast of the West End triumph *Ain't Too Proud*

Already a smash hit on Broadway, the all-singing, all-dancing musical *Ain't Too Proud* has finally arrived in London and settled into Mary Poppins' old home, the Prince Edward. Telling the story of how Motown legends The Temptations became global superstars, this glitzy show is packed with all their classic tracks like *My Girl* and *Get Ready* as well as a Supremes medley. We caught up with the cast – Tosh Wanogho-Maud who plays lead singer David Ruffin; Sifiso Mazibuko, who takes on the role of founder Otis Williams; Mitchell Zhangazha who plays the sweet voice of the group, Eddie Kendricks; Kyle Cox who takes on Paul Williams, the heart and soul of the group; and Cameron Bernard Jones, who plays Melvin 'Blue' Franklin, the bass singer – to chat about coming together for this much-lauded production...

You're all so young – what did you know about the group before you signed up for the show?

Tosh: I knew a fair amount, purely because their music is so integral as a part of black culture, especially to the older generation like my mum and my nan. It meant I grew up with that music – Motown music was part of my everyday listening. There's a thing that dads do, I know my dad certainly did, where you're in the car and he'd introduce me to 'his' music (while telling me how bad my taste in music was), so it wasn't new to me.

Mitchell: I knew a lot about their music, but in terms of their individual stories I didn't know much about them, which is what's great about this musical – you get a chance to learn all about their individual trials and tribulations.

What's your favourite part of the show?

Kyle: Sifiso's song in the finale, *What Becomes Of The Brokenhearted*, just gets me every time.

Mitchell: For me it's *Ain't Too Proud To Beg*. Once the drum intro starts you feel an adrenaline rush, and with the choreography and everything it's my favourite part.

Cameron: I love *Superstar*, it's such a huge number and you really get to see a difference between the '60s and '70s versions of The Temptations.

Tosh: I love all of The Temptations moments and watching and listening to the guys – these guys are some of the most talented performers I've ever worked with. I'm always in awe of my fellow classic

Temps. But for me, my favourite moment is when Diana Ross comes in. It's the first moment in the show that we celebrate the women of the cast.

Sifiso: I think for me it'll have to be *I Wish It Would Rain*. For us in the musical it happens just after we find out Martin Luther King Jr has been shot. Being from South Africa I understand a lot about racial oppression and what it means to fight for something you believe in, and so I always





Left: Sifiso, Cameron, Tosh, Kyle and Mitchell are taking the West End by storm. Right: Outside *Ain't Too Proud's* home, the Prince Edward Theatre

'There's a sense of responsibility that you have when telling their story as they're real people'

go back to a part of me that remembers how important this was for them in their journey. They were making music and trying to integrate different races, and there were places they were being shot at. This was not, 'we can go around anywhere in America and sing a song', this was, 'you're going to die if you go too far south'. It really hits home when we get to that part of the show, and I always find that a very touching moment.

Do you have a favourite song by The Temptations, and does any of their music hold a special meaning for you?

Cameron: My favourite is *My Girl*. In high school I was in a lot of barbershop quartets and that was one of the songs we learned. Whether it's a capella or with music, it's a special song for me.

Kyle: I'd also say *My Girl*. When I was growing up it was always on in the background when my parents were cooking – I knew it

meant nice food was coming!

Mitchell: I feel boring saying this, but my favourite is also *My Girl* – that was my song growing up. It's an iconic tune.

Sifiso: I don't know what it is about the song, but the first time I heard Eddie Kendricks' vocal on *Just My Imagination* it got me, and I never forgot it.

Tosh: My favourite song changes, mainly because I now have context for what was happening during the time the songs were written. It was *My Girl* but then it became (*I Know*) *I'm Losing You*. But now it's probably *Get Ready* because it's the first time it feels like we're performing as The Temptations. It's a real moment!

When starting to research the show, did you find out anything about The Temptations that surprised you?

Cameron: Learning how humble of a start and rooted in spirituality they were, from their connection with God and growing up in church... Even though their routes of getting to Detroit were different, knowing that they all came from the south and had similar styles of upbringing, it was remarkable to see it all come together.

Tosh: There's a sense of responsibility that you have when telling their story as they're real people. I don't know much about American geography, but I really enjoyed hearing that David was from a place called Whynot, Mississippi. It sounds like a magical, made-up place, and it was really interesting finding little tidbits like that to spark your imagination. It has been remarkable to find out things about David that mirror my own life – playing David, for me, has become a process of exorcising my own stuff that I've been through. It's something really special that doesn't happen very often with roles.

Sifiso: We're reminded that we're living in a generation that will have been able to go to a

Temptations show – some of The Temptations are still alive and touring – so it's not so far removed, and we have to do our part in making sure we give due diligence to each and every story and person that is represented on stage.

Have you met Otis Williams, the founding member of The Temptations, whose book *Ain't Too Proud* is based on? What was it like?

Sifiso: I was fortunate enough to see the US touring production of *Ain't Too Proud* open in Los Angeles. Otis Williams went to see the show there, so I was able to meet him and have a few words with him about joining the show in London.

Tosh: I met him on the off chance when I was in *The Drifters Girl*. The Temptations were touring and he came to watch the show. We were told he was in, but what I didn't realise were the lights were going to be bouncing off his glasses when I came out on stage – I thought they'd have him hidden at the back! He's such a lover and he celebrates other people's talent and voices. He came to the stage door afterwards and he told me



loads of stories about David. There's something special about Otis, you feel like you're in the presence of greatness.

Did you know each other before you were cast – what's the group dynamic like?

Tosh: Sifiso is definitely the daddy bear!

Mitchell: He keeps us grounded and is the calm one.

Sifiso: These guys are really good at what they do – you could almost look at each and every one of us and think, of course you would play Paul or, of course you would play Eddie. To me, Mitchell is the joker of the group. He's a sly joker. It's very much an Eddie thing, Eddie was very mischievous, and he always poked the bear.

Cameron: He might not shout, but he'll definitely poke the bear!

Kyle: Or it's just with a look...

Mitchell: Always with love, though!

Where in Soho or Covent Garden do you guys hang out when you're not performing?

Cameron: I am obsessed with Old Compton Brasserie – it's a problem that it's only doors down from the theatre.

Tosh: Forbidden Planet, the comic book store.

Mitchell: There's a few! I love Wingstop. Everywhere in this area has so many great spots.

Where: Prince Edward Theatre, Old Compton St, London W1D 4HS

When: Booking until October 1. Visit london.ainttooproudmusical.com

‘It must have been hard for those pop stars whose dream was taken away from them’

Christian Guilteneane meets **Michael Cragg**, whose new book *Reach For The Stars* reveals the truth about being a cheesy pop star!

While many snooty music journos write snobby books about how great The Beatles' *White* album was and sing the praises of the Bristol trip hop scene of the late '90s, hardly a soul has ever stood up to praise the cheesier end of the pop food chain. You know the stars we mean – Steps, S Club, 5ive, allSTARS, the Spice Girls, 911 and all those bands who sang catchy pop songs while chucking some well-timed shapes. Now one clever so-and-so has decided to celebrate a genre of music that has constantly been dismissed as throwaway, but which has outlasted its expiry date.

In his new book *Reach For The Stars*, Michael Cragg catches up with bubblegum pop stars of the past to find out about life in the middle of the pop tornado and what life has been like since...

To write a book that so affectionately celebrates a genre of music that was derided by critics, suggests you must have had a genuine love for this period of time...

When the Spice Girls came out I was 15, so I guess I was getting into different kinds of music at that point. I had loved pop. I was a huge fan of Michael Jackson. *Dangerous* was the first album I ever owned. He was my first concert that I went to. Music was really my thing. But then as I started to get older, I veered

away from it slightly. I went to university and thought I needed to try different types of music. But my uni flatmate loved Blue and 5ive and I realised that I was completely obsessed with pop music. When I started doing the book during lockdown, I decided to look at it from a slightly different perspective, because I hadn't been a super fan of it at the time. And I fell in love with it for the first time. I knew all of the pop stars. I loved how it upset a lot of people that these stars had been so manufactured. But I wanted to take the music more seriously, while also at the same time showing how fun it was and how ridiculous it was and how much fun those groups were having – or not having, as the case may be.

Yes, we've since discovered that life wasn't actually all that great being a hugely successful band...

I don't know if people always wanted to see behind the sheen. It was an escapist kind of experience for people, and you could disappear into S Club 7 and it was all fun and games. But obviously it wasn't always as glossy as it was on the surface, and I wanted to show that in the book. However, I also didn't want the journey to be purely negative and to be a constant downer. I wanted to show the ups and downs, but I also wanted to make sure that everyone in the book had come to terms with what happened. As it turned out they genuinely did seem to all look back fondly on this period. But of course, it was 20, 25 years later

It's funny that groups like Steps and Take That – that gave so many people so much joy – were criticised as throwaway back then, and now all these bands are having an amazing second wind...

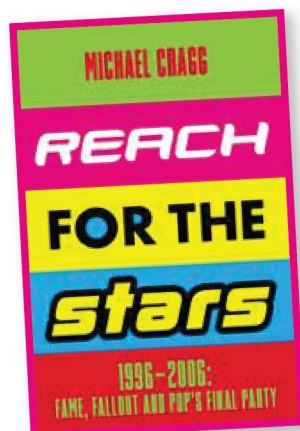
There's an interesting bit in the book where the guy who signed Belle and Sebastian jokes that they are still around 25 years later and asks where are Steps. I had to tell him: 'Well, they're still headlining and selling out arenas 25 years later.' So even now, I think there's still a perception that a lot of these groups were one-hit wonders or a flash in the pan, when obviously they are still going. I mean, it was amazing how many of the acts still have PR managers, or are still playing shows, or are still doing stuff even if it's not a complete band.

Back then the bands were fun and didn't take themselves seriously. Do you think that's the same these days? It does feel like everyone is too cool for school...

These days there is K-Pop, which is glossy and the videos are just explosive and huge. The groups and singers are still trying to hang onto this notion that a pop star should be otherworldly and slightly fantastical and live in their own kind of world. And then on the other side, you have a new girl band like Flo, who look like their fans. They look like the generation that they represent.

Of all the people you spoke to in the book, who do you think looked back the most fondly without bitterness?

I feel like Tony London from Liberty X knew exactly what he wanted out of the experience, and it happened. He was able to talk about that period in a detached way, that it was just part of his life. Now he works in film and editing and he looks back on it as quite an interesting time in his life that happened and that no one can ever take away from him. He was pleased that they had enjoyed huge success. They had a number one single, they had top tens, they won a BRIT Award – you know, all those things that I'm never going to have in my lifetime. I think the people who had their experience suddenly taken away from them are still frustrated by what happened. You know, the ones who got dropped because





Above: 'I wanted to take the music more seriously, while also at the same time showing how fun it was,' Michael says of his book (below left)

of external issues or a band member had left and suddenly their dream was shattered. It must be so tricky to think about what could have been. It must be awful for them to walk down the street and have people recognise them but not as that successful person any more. And that must be quite difficult to deal with.

These days people in the public eye talk about their mental health – back then there was less space for pop stars to open about their troubles...

It's a shame that some of the conversations we have now weren't happening back in the day, because it would've helped some of the pop stars I spoke to. Sean from 5ive talks about how conversations weren't

really happening around mental health at all and he suffered because of it.

It must have been hard for those young pop stars to deal with this high pressure world...

'It was an escapist kind of experience... you could disappear into S Club 7 and it was all fun and games'

When TV talent shows arrived in 2000, things changed. The makers of these shows claimed we'd see what happens behind the scenes when making a pop group, but they weren't really – it was a much more accelerated much more stressful, traumatic version of it.

What they did was shine a light on the whole thing but in a very sped up way – going from living at home to living in this mansion with paparazzi everywhere.

Hear'Say, the first of those reality TV groups, were number one one minute and finished the next!

It's amazing to remember just how quickly they fell from grace. Their second album was rush released after just nine months and then they were done and everyone had turned against them. They were booed at

the BRITs. What was interesting was that Liberty X were in the background of Hear'Say and had the time to develop and become who they wanted to be.

Reach For The Stars by Michael Cragg is out now.

Michael's three favourite groups



Sugababes

I just love Mutya. I think her voice and attitude are incredible. The first and second albums were great, even though they obviously had all the line-up changes, and it became more about the brand than the band.



Girls Aloud

I was worried that their amazing songs would date, that the Xenomania style of 'throwing everything at the kitchen sink' would get a bit old. But I listen to them all the time. There was so much invention, experimentation in those songs. You can't discredit the girls' involvement in the tracks, even if they weren't actually writing the songs.

Mis-Teeq

I think the singles they had in that short space of time were quite an achievement. It was also amazing they were talked about in the same breath as Destiny's Child, which is amazing for a UK band who came at it via garage. Their voices were great. It worked. They looked amazing.



My favourite songs

Round Round by Sugababes is always one of my favourites. It's just such a weird song to get to number one. It's like 16 different songs stuck together, but it kind of works.

Call The Shots by Girls Aloud is one of the greatest things to ever happen.

Day and Night by Billie Piper because of the Britney-isms. I loved how Billie decided to retire from pop because she wasn't having fun and then went on to become a hugely successful, talented actor.

Back in the '90s the Lighthouse Family captivated audiences with beautifully crafted soulful tunes like *Lifted*, *High* and *Ocean Drive*. But even though it's been almost 30 years since those songs first wafted into our lugholes, their legacy lives on in their hearts of their fans, who wrap themselves up in the tunes when times get rough. Former lead singer Tunde Baiyewu took time out from his UK tour to chat about what it's like to have written songs that have changed people's lives...

You're heading off on tour across the country with quite a large catalogue of songs – it must be hard to choose the right ones...

I'm in a fortunate position because there's a whole back catalogue of stuff to pick from. In one way it's a good thing because I'm spoilt for choice, but then it's a bad thing because you wonder, what songs am I allowed to leave out? Mostly I lean towards creating a set list for the fans, because people know a lot of our Lighthouse Family material. Everywhere I go, especially when I'm on tour, I meet people who tell me some pretty moving stories about how some of those songs have meant so much to them when they were going through a particularly poignant point in time. It's always really heart-warming and moving to hear that people find comfort in our songs. So ultimately when it comes to the set list I have to include the ones the fans will want, but I will also be singing songs from my solo career too that just mean a lot to me.

A lot of artists go through a period of time when they get sick of performing their big hits, reject them and then embrace them again – have you been through that process?

I remember there was a time in the Lighthouse Family we'd be playing arenas back to back, and it was just constant. I wouldn't say I got sick of the songs, but over time I felt like I was on automatic. I wasn't thinking any more. I just went out there and reeled off the songs and that was why I started to do solo

records. So you go off and you have your own time and you make your solo records the way you want to make them. One of the less pleasing aspects of being in a band is every little decision has to be vetoed by – in our case – two people at the time, things get slowed down. And it's the same thing when making records within a band. There's always a little bit of friction, a bit of knocking of heads because things aren't always as smooth as people from the outside perceive them to be.

'It's heart-warming that people find comfort in our songs'

Lighthouse Family frontman **Tunde Baiyewu** tells Christian Guilteneane about his impact on fans and impressing his mum!



You say people tell you their stories about your songs...

Yes, all the time, people tell me how our songs soundtracked a pivotal moment for them, that it made a difference in their lives. And when you hear

those songs you realise that the songs have a life of their own and are embraced into people's lives. And when you hear about this, it's quite humbling. It changes your perception of those songs and what they mean, whether you do them ten times or a thousand times.

They do indeed have a life of their own. On *Dancing On Ice* recently, Joey Essex performed to one of your songs because he said it reminded him of his late mum...

That's a perfect example of what I mean. For that to be a sort of landmark for somebody that meant so much to someone, it makes me feel good that it makes people feel a connection with someone. I heard a story from a radio DJ recently about a family whose mum was very poorly. Her favourite song was *Lifted*. The family had gathered around her bed in hospital to say their goodbye, and suddenly in the background on the hospital radio they started to play *Lifted*, just as she took her last breath. It was like a movie and it meant the world to the family because they knew she was safe because it was her song. You write the song, you finish it and then it goes out into the world and it's out of your hands. You're fortunate to get feedback, to hear these amazing stories



Above: 'When it comes to the set list I have to include the ones the fans will want,' Tunde tells us ahead of his London date. 'But I will also be singing songs from my solo career'

When you're performing those songs, you must see the change in people's faces...

I always look at the crowd not as individuals but as one entity. It's like a person. It's this one thing. And you are gauging the reaction of this person as you are doing these songs and performing. You can tell there's a point where there's this release moment in that one group, and that's the moment that you hop on that wave and you just go cruising and riding along with them.

You've had a lengthy career – what have been your biggest 'pinch me' moments?

When I first started doing this and told my mother I was doing this music thing, she used to

laugh and say to me: 'You do realise that's just a hobby, right? You've got to get a proper job.' And I was like: 'Yeah, yeah, whatever!' You see, growing up in a traditional African family, the African mentality is

'People tell me how our songs soundtracked a pivotal moment in life for them that it made a difference in their lives'

that parents want their kids to either be a doctor or a lawyer or an engineer. But when the band started becoming really successful, we did a tour and played at the Royal Albert Hall.

It was a sellout show and it was the first time my mother had come to see a Lighthouse Family show. Afterwards, she came backstage and I could read in her eyes that she finally got it. That was a 'pinch me' moment. My other was when I was in New York with a manager, and we were in a diner and this guy sat down on the next table and everyone was saying hi to him. My manager's face lit up and he whispered to me excitedly: 'That's Jeff Buckley.' At the time, I didn't know who he was, so my manager gave me

his back story. Jeff overheard and said: 'What did you say, man?!' My manager explained that he was a big fan and that we had just been signed and then he calmed down and we had a chat! I look

back and I think, I wish I'd had a longer chat with him.

Do you miss the old days of music?

Something's lost in the way the whole thing has changed. In the days we got signed, there were record stores and you'd go get a hard copy on vinyl. But most importantly record labels stuck by you. They helped you through your development stage, they stood by you and helped you grow as an artist. I don't think that exists any more. That said, with new technology, something's gained because artists have the freedom to record their own music at home and use social media to share their music and make money from it. Being on TikTok can make a potential artist attractive to record companies. They have a ready-made following. They don't have to spend money to develop the artists, to build that market for that particular artist. It also means artists have a bit more control.

There's more access for people to make music, but it's not so easy to get it heard, is it?

Yes, what you hear on the radio is very limited. It's hard to be heard. It's like the powers that be are trying to dictate what people should like.

Adele, Sam Smith and Ed Sheeran are among the biggest stars in the world and yet their music is not cutting edge or rebellious – a far cry from the angsty '90s...

They are great artists, but I think that within the music industry people are led to make music that fits a certain demographic or what is deemed acceptable to the mass market. And the problem with that is, there's little variety on offer. Variety is there, but it doesn't get the opportunity to be aired so people can be exposed to it. So what happens is, because of radio playlists and limited TV spots, everything gets narrowed down to what is deemed good music and what you find is that a lot of the time, it's very easy to listen to, so when you do switch on the radio you can't really tell one artist from another.

Where: Lafayette London, 11 Goods Way, Kings Cross, London N1C 4DP

When: June 3



A treat for your tastebuds

Four West End eateries for your ‘must visit’ list

The Theatre Royal Drury Lane – affectionately known as The Lane – recently reopened to the public after a two-year, £60 million restoration overseen by Andrew and Madeleine Lloyd Webber. The theatre has been restored with the inclusion of exciting new five-star food and drink spaces, making The Lane the must-visit venue in Covent Garden to eat, drink and be entertained.

Whether you have a ticket to see Frozen or not, head to the cocktail bar, named after

high society photographer and theatre costume designer Cecil Beaton. There you will be served theatrically-curated cocktails by renowned mixologist Tristan Stephenson. The menu includes an Eliza Doolittle (No3 Gin, white port, creme de violet, lemon juice, Franklin & Sons soda), Beautiful Wasp (Bacardi Cuatro, pineapple, tonka, saffron, coconut sugar) and also non-alcoholic options like Peter Pan (Everleaf Forest, mint, apple, Franklin & Sons tonic water). Cecil Beaton opens from 10am daily.

The Rotunda is where champagne flows and Georgian architecture shines. Its most historical elements have been preserved, including the King’s and Prince’s separate entrances, a result of a spat between George III and the then Prince of Wales (later, King George IV).

The Grand Saloon serves a Regency-inspired afternoon tea created by one of the UK’s top cake makers, Lily Vanilli. The crockery features mythical characters taken from costume design illustrations for the

theatre’s previous ballets, comic operas, pantomimes and Edwardian musical comedies. Seated in the soft pink and green marble-lined room, tuck into delicate pink lemonade tarts with elderflower jelly and a mini sticky toffee pudding with an oozing centre of custard and salted caramel.

Where: The Lane, Catherine Street, London, WC2B 5JF is open every day from 9.30am, to all visitors, not just theatre-goers. Visit thelane.co.uk



Floral Court

If you stroll away from the main part of Covent Garden and head along King Street, keep an eye out for a blink-and-you'll-miss-it archway called Floral Court. There you will find two very elegant restaurants – The Petersham, an Italian-inspired restaurant from Petersham Nurseries. The menu boasts treats including lobster with bagna cauda and artichoke salad, and roasted pigeon with blue cheese, chestnuts and leeks. Mains include roasted duck with radicchio tardivo and orange, and halibut with grilled fennel, potato and lemongrass. Across the way is La Goccia, a vibrant restaurant with a wood-fired oven, large grill and dining bar. Dishes are prepared by chefs in front of guests, adding an element of drama and theatre.

Where: Floral Court, WC2E 9FB. Visit petershamnurseries.com/covent-garden/floral-court/



Ave Mario

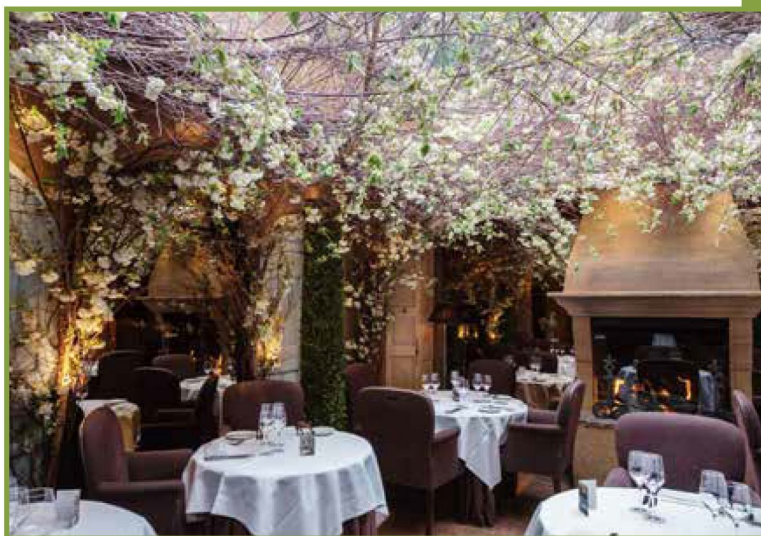
If you've been to the kitsch Gloria in Shoreditch or Circolo Popolare on Rathbone Place, you will love Ave Mario, an Italian restaurant with oodles of style. Set over 7,000 square feet, there are three separate dining areas, the biggest of which is a green and white Duomo-stripped dining room, lit by skylights. Downstairs, you'll find a basement room with serious '70s vibes and mirrored walls, featuring counter dining, where Ave Mario's pizzaiolos work their magic. Elsewhere, a cosy indoor courtyard boasts one of the restaurant's two dining terraces, and most eye catching of all there's a jaw-dropping bar with a bottle wall of 3,500 spirits.

Where: 15 Henrietta Street, WC2E 8QG. Visit www.bigmammagroup.com/en/trattorias/ave-mario

Clos Maggiore

With its wood-panelled rooms, atmospheric candlelight, retractable glass roof and pretty foliage, you can see why it has won many awards, including one for being London's most romantic restaurant. The French cuisine is presented with a flourish from the kitchen, and the pre-theatre set menus are incredibly good value, but what is most impressive is the 100-page wine list, which includes over 2,500 bottles. Keep your eyes peeled, as Prince Harry has dropped in on occasion – the next time he's in the UK, book a table just in case.

Where: 33 King Street, WC2E 8JD. Visit www.closmaggiore.com



Let your pup shine

London-based Soho Poms produces Rose Oil Shampoo, a high-quality pet shampoo made from natural, organic ingredients and the finest Damascus Rose Oil. It will leave your pet's coat shiny, silky to the touch, and smelling ever so slightly of rose petals.

This luxurious shampoo is gentle on your pet's skin, a natural repellent of parasites, and will not disturb your furry friend's delicate sense of smell. Also, please find our wide range of pet accessories on our website.

Order online at www.sohopoms.com and follow Instagram @sohopoms



Meet the pampered pooches of *Bridgerton*

The rags-to-bitches story of how the hit show's cute canines got their superstar makeover

As beautiful as the cast of *Bridgerton* are, nothing can quite compare with the furry stars of the period drama – Queen Charlotte's pet pooches. While most of the characters are whipping off their clothes and indulging in some rather raunchy activities, the supersoft Pomeranians provide the show with that good old fashioned 'aww' factor. But while they look very at home in their regal setting, in real life these cute pups didn't start life as prosperously.

While they are now well looked after by devoted businesswoman Nathalie Knauf, the showbiz canines and their fluffy siblings were once in danger of being sent to a dogs' home because their breeder simply couldn't find them homes. Luckily, in the nick of time, Nathalie came across them and rescued them.

'They came from a breeder who couldn't get rid of them,' she says. 'They were adorable, so my husband Philippe and I rescued 11 of them and it took three years to de-worm and de-flea. But now they're out there earning money and all the funds go back into the Kennel Club Charitable Trust.'

And if you're wondering if the superstar dogs' luscious coats are the result of a dream team of Hollywood hair and make-up artists, think again. Nathalie's fur babies have been treated to a selection of specially designed shampoos – or should that be shampoooch? – all created by devoted dog owner herself.

'When I first got the dogs, I bought lots of things for them like harnesses and coats but I found that they just didn't fit or would fall apart,' Nathalie tells us. 'After having experienced so many bad products, I thought maybe I can do better. And so with the help of the guy who runs my jewellery web shop, we developed lots of dog accessories that sold really well. Then I decided that I would like to do a dog shampoo.'

'I am fortunate that I had a friend who owns a factory for women's cosmetics. Her products smell so lovely so I suggested that we team up and try to produce the perfect dog shampoo. We spoke to some dog groomers to find out what kind of product they would be looking for to take care of their pets' fur, and as a result created a formula using essential Bulgarian rose oils – it not only cleans dogs' fur but also leaves it smelling and feeling amazing. We were surprised with



Queen Charlotte's furry friends are a fixture of the show

the results! Then we were talking to groomers and asked them what they wanted the shampoo to do. Now we have three types of shampoo – a classic formula, a hypoallergenic version for

sensitive skin and a filthy dog version for hunting dogs.'

To check out more products for pampered pooches, visit sohopoms.com

Nathalie's Poms filming at Blenheim Palace for season three – Mini, Jane, Polly and Spy



Above: Julian Bennett and Nathalie Knauf. Above right: Nathalie's shampoo had a stand at Crufts

The biggest names at the hottest events around Covent Garden and Soho



Sharon Sexton,
Kellie Gnauck
and Rob Fowler



Grecia De La Paz



Abbie Quinnen



Strictly Come
Dancing's Nikita
Kuzmin and
Graziano Di Prima



Richard Arnold



EastEnders stars
Matthew Morrison
and Clair Norris



Jo Wood



Lucrezia Millarini

Bat Out Of Hell press night and after-party

The stars were out in force celebrating the return of *Bat Out Of Hell* to the West End stage, where it enjoyed a strictly limited run until April 1. After the show, the cast and celeb guests partied the night away at Sway.

Where: Sway **When:** February 21

Website: www.batoutofhellmusical.com/london



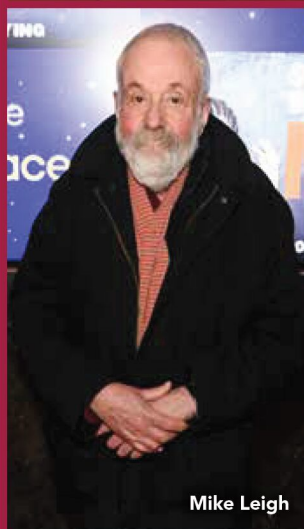
Dominic Cooke, Kate Horton,
Sophie Okonedo, Kate
Pakenham and Nica Burns



Lily Cole



Ian Hislop



Mike Leigh



Marion Bailey



Imelda
Staunton and
Bessie Carter



Denise Gough

Medea opening night

Medea stars Sophie Okonedo and Ben Daniels were joined by a host of A-listers for the show's big night.

Where: @sohoplace **When:** February 17

Website: www.sohoplace.org



Penelope Wilton



Ben Daniels



Amy Trigg



Gabriel Clare-Hunt
and Melvyn Bragg

‘Hanging out in Covent Garden inspired me as a new actor’



‘I would love the chance to play James Bond,’ Craig tells us – he gets our vote!



Filming the Haig Club advert with David Beckham



Craig with Henry Cavill

Actor **Craig McGinlay** chats about his role in *You* and working with Guy Ritchie and David Beckham

Barbara Broccoli, we’ve saved you a lot of hard work and found you your next James Bond! Meet Craig McGinlay, a broodingly handsome actor with a soft but masculine Scottish lilt, who you’ll no doubt have spotted eating up scenes in Guy Ritchie’s *King Arthur: Legend Of The Sword*, the cult smash hit *Outlander* and more recently *You*, season four. Not only can he act his more experienced peers off the screen, but he can also perform fight scenes like an action star and do his own stunts. So, Barbara, what are you waiting for?

You must hear it all the time, but you are so James Bond...
I’d love to play Bond. Superman and 007 are two of my favourite roles, and I think it is time for a second Scottish Bond! Sean Connery was so good and Daniel Craig brought something else to the role – Daniel brought a Jason Bourne feel to the role. He was a little bit rougher around the edges. He was in shape and could fight. I think what is needed next is a combination of Sean and Daniel. I would love the chance to play James Bond. I think it’s a distant dream but hey Barbara, Michael... I’m here for the audition and ready to go.

We’ve just seen you in the latest series of *You*, which has been a huge success...
It was great to film. I was so grateful to play security agent Hugo McNamara. It was so great to work with an amazing cast like Penn Badgely, Greg Kinnear, Ed Speleers, and Charlotte Ritchie. They were all so welcoming. The crew were great too and I’ll be forever grateful to the casting directors at Sophie Holland’s office for getting me involved. One of my four episodes was directed by Penn, his directorial debut, which was special. He did a great job and I’m excited to see what he directs next.

Before acting, you were modelling, weren’t you?
I started modelling quite randomly – a production company came down to the rugby club I was playing at looking for some burly guys. I was selected and cast in an advert and from that I got a modelling agent and did some really nice campaigns before moving into acting full time.

Tell us how you embarked on your acting journey...
I was extremely lucky. I studied a master’s degree in sport science and physiology and was working with elite level

athletes at the time. One day when I was taking them through their strength and conditioning programmes I was asked by a production company if I would be in the Commonwealth Games promotional advert playing a weight lifter. I said yes and from that I was asked by a director if I would audition for their short film and I got the lead role. This gave me some encouragement to join an extras agency just to get a feel for being on set. I played 'man in background' for a show called *River City* in Scotland then got cast in an advert by Kathleen Crawford to feature in a major whiskey commercial for Diageo's Haig Club. It was directed by Guy Ritchie and I worked alongside David Beckham. It made me instantly think when we finish this commercial I'm going to leave my job, move to London and give acting a go.

That's amazing. What do you consider your big break?

I'd say Kathleen casting me in the Haig Club advert, and then meeting Guy and working with him and his team was a major turning point for me. If I hadn't been cast in the whisky ad, would I be acting? Would my career be on the same path it is now? I really don't know, but there is no question they helped me get my first feature film roles, so I will be forever grateful as casting director Reg Poerscout-Edgerton and Guy cast me in the *King Arthur* movie. Without their support it may not have been possible.

Who has been the most awe-inspiring co-star you've had the opportunity to work with?

Charlie Hunnam is incredibly hard working. Jude Law is effortlessly brilliant. Djimon Hounsou can go big but can also do so much with so little – his voice is so powerful. Caitriona Balfe will get an Oscar one day, I reckon – she's an excellent actor. Penn Badgley is very meticulous and seemed very well prepared, as we all should be. George MacKay is one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. So humble, polite, kind and immensely talented. The Oscar nomination is definitely coming for him one day and I'm so proud of him and glad to call him one of my best friends since moving to London. I can honestly say I've been so lucky to work with such amazing cast members on every job and I've learned something from every single one of them.

King Arthur looked like it was a right romp to film...

That was a fantastic experience. Unforgettable. I was brought in to play a small character called Harry, then early on my character grew and I was given a bigger role of Sir Percival. I learned how to sword fight and horse ride. The entire cast and crew were great and as this was my first feature film role they were all very supportive and welcoming. As we didn't have a gym at the hotel in Wales, when we filmed for a time in Snowdonia for a short stint, I took a bunch of the actors – Freddie Fox, Kingsley Ben-Adir, Charlie Hunnam and Djimon Hounsou – for a gym session in the park using benches, goal posts, and resistance bands to maintain our 'knights of the round table' muscle mass!

Working with Guy Ritchie must have been amazing...

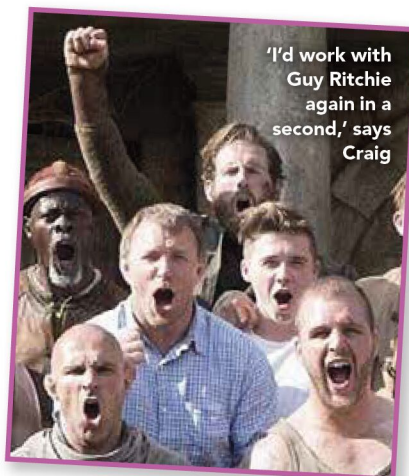
Definitely. I've worked with Guy twice now. He would step on set every day and give the main cast a hug and say good morning, just chat to us like we're one of the guys. But then when it was time to get to work, his vision was his vision and he knew what he wanted to get. Very professional but friendly too. I'd work with him again in a second.

You played a baddie in *Outlander* – another huge global show. What is it like to be part of these big shows?

I've been very lucky to be in some major projects so far – I just hope the roles I play live up to what the super fans expect.

You've also starred in a Bollywood film, which is a huge industry. What was working in that world like?

I knew Bollywood was big but I didn't quite realise just how big. It's a massive! I loved every minute of it and would definitely work there again. I played a late 19th century British soldier and half of my dialogue was in Hindi, so I was given a Hindi coach to run my lines with in preparation for the role. This



'I'd work with Guy Ritchie again in a second,' says Craig

was a massive challenge but I loved it and I'm very pleased that I wasn't dubbed, and my Hindi performance was received very well over there, thankfully.

I also stunt trained with Pyranha Stunts, who got me up to speed to be able to do all of my own stunts.

I'm so proud to have played one of the leading roles in

this film, alongside two of Bollywood's biggest stars – Sanjay Dutt and Ranbir Kapoor. Ranbir is like the heart-throb in India and Sanjay is like the De Niro. I had a two-page monologue

in Hindi to do with him. I knew I had to get that nailed so I worked very hard to get the Hindi on point. I wanted to step into a scene with effectively film royalty and do the scene and the film justice, so I did spend a lot of time on Hindi training.

You're built like a superhero – would you like to take over from Henry Cavill as Superman?

I have met Henry a few times as we have mutual friends. I think he was an excellent Superman and it's a shame what happened [he was ditched by incoming DC Comics CEO James Gunn], but as Dwayne Johnson said, it's almost like a new coach looking for a new quarterback and it is what it is. I'd obviously love to take

on this role but it sounds like they'll go much younger than me at 36 years old. I am a huge Superman fan and Christopher Reeve will always be the best for me not just because of his take on the man of steel but his Clark Kent was brilliant. His ability to change his body shape/posture, mannerisms, voice speed and tone when putting on the glasses was so good. He was a genius.

You spend a lot of time in L.A. Where do you hang out when you're there?

I love Chateau Marmont, Sunset Tower, and the Beverly Hills Hotel. Anywhere with that real old Hollywood feel. I love it. It's got great energy and the weather is good. I've got a lot of good friends there now so love going out every year.

Where is home?

I live in London but love going home to Scotland as much as possible. Having moved away I appreciate Scotland even more now. I love going back when I can.

See Craig in *You* on Netflix.

'The Punch & Judy was fun to go to and I loved the Bond In Motion museum in Covent Garden'

Craig's favourite London hangouts

When you're in London, where do you like to hang out?

I don't go 'out out' much any more. I love going to an Electric Cinema or a Curzon, or going for a really good cup of coffee somewhere. Live music and a drink is always good at The Rosewood Hotel bar, Scarfes Bar, which isn't too far from Covent Garden. The area is so cool, and full of rich history. I have to admit that I don't have a particular part that I love, but when I first moved to London the vibe around Covent Garden and theatre land really inspired me as a new actor. The Punch & Judy was fun to go to, and I loved the Bond In Motion museum in Covent Garden – I went there with my dad and one of my best friends. We booked our tickets and went in there like three 007 geeks! I loved it.



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