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February 2022

GOOD FELLA?

Why Stephen Graham is the
nicest bad guy in Hollywood

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Cameos

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Andrew Dickens

Culture and lifestyle writer
Andrew has interviewed hundreds of legendary actors, so he was the ideal man to speak to a legend in the making, Stephen Graham, for our cover. **See p26**



Kate Lloyd

Kate is executive editor at *Time Out* magazine and also writes for titles such as *The Ringer*, *The Guardian*, *Vice* and more. For us, she interviewed our Rising Star, Joel Kim Booster. **See p11**



Levi Mandel

This New York-based commercial, portrait and editorial photographer shot (and ate) a bagel or two on a day out in Coney Island for our story on BYOB Bagel consultants. **See p36**



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Red Hot

Enter an alien world in south London, add a touch of horror to the dining table and just how valuable is a truffle pig – all in our round-up of this month's essentials.

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COVER PHOTO & TOP RIGHT: LEE MALONE. STYLING: MARK ANTHONY BRADLEY. GROOMING: JOE MILLS. CLOTHES: JACKET BY RICHARD JAMES, ZIP KNIWEAR BY FILIPPA & THIS PAGE: COAT BY ATELIER ARENA



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THINGS TO GET OBSESSED
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Red Hot



NOW SHOWING

WEIRD SCIENCE IN SOUTH LONDON

Modish set designer Lydia Chan, who creates eye-popping spaces for the likes of Stella McCartney, Gucci and Slowthai, crafted this psychedelic installation at Greenwich's Now Gallery. Inspired by Chan's dual obsessions - trippy alien monsters and, of all things, molecular chemistry - "Your Ship Has Landed" ingeniously incorporates augmented reality (open till 6 March). But even to the naked eye, Chan's lurid hues and freaky forms put the "extra" into "extra-terrestrial".

✂ Fly to London



Dexter: New Blood is set 10 years after forensic technician Dexter Morgan went missing.

FIRST TAKE

FRIENDS REUNITED

We're watching television like it's 1999 – and we can't get enough of it. Streaming services are rebooting past hits to form the future of entertainment, says **Al Horner**

Remind us, what decade is it again? Over the past few months, the Bada Bing! club has been packed again with mobsters, Joey, Monica and co have been back on the Central Perk sofa, and Carrie Bradshaw has once again been drinking cosmos across New York, living a life of glamour that this writer would like to point out is simply not reflective of real-life journalism salaries.

Yes, the 1990s were back with a vengeance as 2021 drew to a close, with *Sex and the City* getting a TV revival, *The Sopranos* seeing a long-awaited prequel movie (*The Many Saints of Newark*, available on today's in-flight entertainment) and

the cast of *Friends* reuniting for a TV special. And it's a trend that's just beginning – this month sees a reboot of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* hit screens, with a *Frasier* revival also promised for 2022.

Which begs the question: why exactly have 90s reboots been deemed "all that and a bag of potato chips," as the internet reliably informs us was a phrase back then? One theory is that, in our frantic age, audiences have been craving familiar comforts, full of nostalgia for simpler times. It's film and TV programmers' jobs to give it to them. The more complicated answer, however, is that a war between streaming services has erupted in the US recently, with each one resuscitating their biggest titles to



gain an advantage over their rivals. The *Fresh Prince* revival will debut on Warner Bros.-owned streamer Peacock, *The Many Saints of Newark* was made for HBO Max, etcetera etcetera.

Is it likely the TV reboot trend will end soon? "As if!" to use another 90s phrase. With the rivalry between streaming services just hotting up, expect more and more revivals - and not only from the 90s (after a decade off screens, hit 00s show *Dexter* returned recently, for example). Until then, if anyone needs us, we'll be googling, "When does the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* reboot arrive?"

 Watch *The Many Saints of Newark*

WORDS: ANDY HILL ILLUSTRATION: GUY SHIELD PHOTOS: ALAMY

CELEB THROWDOWN

Film stars are going pottery



Better known for glazed eyes than glazed ceramics, **Seth Rogen** is nonetheless a pottery obsessive. His psychedelic homespun vases get loads of love on Insta and he sells home-baked ashtrays. **Throwdown rating:** Hot to pot.



Oscar winner **Anjelica Huston** has a surprising side-hustle flogging tasteful handmade salad bowls and clay female nudes around Venice, Los Angeles. Wes Anderson, no less, is a fan. **Throwdown rating:** Glaze of glory.



Veteran heart-throb **Brad Pitt** loves to throw pots at home, and is said to enjoy one-on-one pottery sessions with fellow hunk Leonardo DiCaprio. Who brings over sandwiches, apparently. **Throwdown rating:** Spin class.



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SCAN ME



RISING STAR

Man on fire Joel Kim Booster

THE STAND-UP WHO MADE HIS NAME IN *SHRILL* IS LETTING IT ALL HANG OUT WITH *FIRE ISLAND*, HE TELLS **KATE LLOYD**

JOEL KIM BOOSTER'S finally ready to unleash his inner "corny loser". The 33-year-old, who was adopted from South Korea and raised in the American Midwest, has spent a decade building his name as a hip, honest stand-up. On stage, he cracks jokes about everything from gay porn to his super-religious dad trying to exorcise him. And he's done it all while bagging roles in celebrated series like *Big Mouth* and Aidy Bryant's *Shrill*. This summer he stars alongside *Saturday Night Live* stalwart Maya Rudolph in new Apple TV+ series *Tarzana*. But it's *Fire Island* the comedian's especially excited about. A romcom super fan, the movie's his own entry ▶



“ROMCOMS HAVE DAMAGED ME IN TERMS OF FINDING A PARTNER BECAUSE I HAD ALL THESE LOFTY ASPIRATIONS OF WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE”

is not a monolithic experience for a person of colour or a gay person. There was a point in this industry where there was only room for one of us, you know.

Have you experienced that kind of prejudice?

Yes. When I was starting out, I was only being called in for Chinese food delivery boys, lab technicians and tutors. And, five years ago, when I was first trying to sell *Fire Island*, people were like, “Hmm, it’s two

Asian guys and they’re both gays.” It’s so limiting [some producers] think that just because we’re both Asian, it’ll feel like a hat on a hat somehow.

***Fire Island* is due out this year. The film’s based on a real island in New York – what’s it like?**

A gay theme park. No cars, no cell service, just booze, drugs, parties and gorgeous architecture.

Why is the movie you’ve written about it so important to you?

I’ve always loved romcoms. I think it has damaged me in terms of finding a partner because I had all these lofty aspirations of what love was supposed to look like, ha! I’m also a deeply earnest person and I can’t really express that in my stand-up. I’m not going to be talking about the power of chosen family in a stand-up set. To finally be able to express those themes is a really big deal.

What do you mean by chosen family?

I had a tumultuous experience with my family because they’re very religious and I’m gay. My chosen family is made up of the people who made a conscious decision to unconditionally love me in the way that a family would.

Finally, what’s the best advice you’ve been given by someone in the industry?

It came from D’Arcy Carden from *The Good Place*. I had a show on NBC that had been cancelled. I was just like: I’m getting old? What am I doing? Is this it? D’Arcy said there is no correct timeframe for this stuff to happen. You can’t create that moment for yourself, but you can be prepared for when it happens.

 Watch Shrii

into the genre: a story of two gay Asian best mates going on a trip to a queer party town. Stereotype-smashing stuff, it’s been a long time coming.

You play Tony, John Cameron Mitchell’s character’s husband in *Shrii*. How is working on that show?

So special! Although I was naked in the very first scene I filmed. I landed in Portland, was driven straight to set, and then a producer put baby oil all over my body and took copious shots of my ass, ha! But it’s so fun. We go and have bonfires at John’s house after shooting. [His film] *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* was formative for me so it’s a dream.

You’re also working with another legend, Maya Rudolph. How’s that?

For me, the best *SNL* cast will always be her, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, Kristen Wiig... As a little gay kid, it was like, “Oh, these women are incredible.” The first table read we had was over Zoom and – even in her glasses, in her kitchen – her charisma penetrated the Zoom. And her kitchen? Nancy Meyers wishes!

You’re super open in your stand-up, talking about racism and homophobia. Do you think comedy is a good way to deal with hate?

I don’t think I’m changing hearts or minds but I think it is helpful for people to see that there

Below: With Patti Harrison in comedy hit *Shrii*



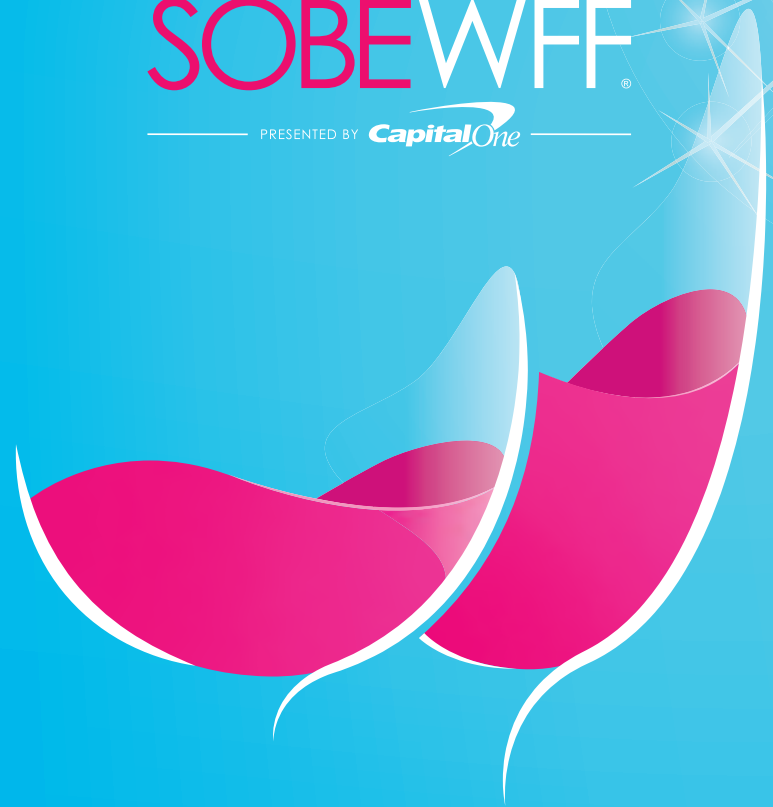


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SNACKS

BACON COOKIES IN MIAMI

Chocolate chip has had its day – dip into adventurous new bites at the **South Beach Wine & Food Festival**

IT'S NO SURPRISE that a city renowned as an adult playground should transform a childhood delight into something much more grown up. Inspired by both Miami's cuisine and its nocturnal hours, Andrew Gonzalez opened Night Owl Cookies to satisfy his patrons' post-party cravings, with such standouts as the Wake N Bacon. The chocolate-chip-dough confection with salted caramel, chocolate stout glaze and bacon was a highlight at last year's South Beach Wine & Food Festival – the annual four-day charity cornucopia of celebrity chefs and al fresco indulgences which returns this year from 24-27 February.

Night Owl will present intoxicating new creations at several of 2022's events, including a Rum and Coke for Andrew Zimmern's Bacardi



From top: Night Owl Cookies' Wake N Bacon is topped with salted caramel and bacon; SOBewFF on South Beach

Carnival (a cola-infused cookie with dulce de leche), a white-chocolate pastelito with queso and guava bordelaise for the

Burger Bash with Rachael Ray and José Andrés ("I'm going very Hispanic with that one," says Gonzalez) and, for the festival's 21st birthday celebration hosted by Buddy "Cake Boss" Valastro, a Drunken Girl Scout – a shortbread Samoa cookie infused with bourbon. As Miami icon and first-class gourmand Jackie Gleason used to say, "How sweet it is!"

✂ Fly to Miami. sobewff.org



DRINKS

Seattle cocktails float our boat

Cocktails were once a sophisticated, grown-up affair. Today, however, there's a move to add some more childlike fun to these blends of booze. Take the *Little Mermaid*-inspired Dinglehopper at Seattle's newly opened Inside Passage bar. The mixture of reposado tequila, mezcal, Suze, strawberry and lime is served in a sea-themed mug complete with shells and a decorative "dinglehopper". That's a fork to those who live above water.

✂ Fly to Seattle



TABLE READ

A RECIPE FOR HORROR

A gory new tome examines the link between food and frightening films

Horror is visceral, writes artist and chef DeVonn Francis in *Horror Caviar*, a deliciously improbable anthology of recipes inspired by scary movies. “You feel it in your gut,” he says. His contribution? An aspic tower studded with insect candy. Yum.

Hip entertainment studio A24 – the squad behind freaky modern flicks like *Midsommar* and *The Witch* – has crafted a tongue-in-cheek cookbook inspired by the horror aesthetic, with lavishly gory food photography from Justin J Wee.

Are *Horror Caviar*'s recipes any good? They certainly have shock value. Try lip-smacking “Clay-Baked Rabbit” – a nod to 1989 Stephen King adaptation *Pet Sematary*. Or a hearty side of “Focaccia 'n' Eyeballs” inspired by 1982's unforgettable *Slumber Party Massacre*. There's even

Horror Caviar features culinary riffs on such classic shlocks as *Slumber Party Massacre* (focaccia), *Audition* (dumpling), *Blood Diner* (mousse) and *Rosemary's Baby* (all clockwise from left)





"Last Picnic" is a roasted leg of lamb and carrot flan dedicated to *Rosemary's Baby* (1968).



a cocktail – warm vegan horchata, amaro and instant coffee – in tribute to that greasy stomach-busting critter from the *Alien* movies. To be clear, *Horror Caviar* cares not a whit for practicality. One recipe assumes you own a brain-shaped jelly mould. Another requires “three locks of voluminous Brunette hair”.

Still, you’ll lap up essays with irresistible titles like “Horror and the Refrigerator: Nine Theses”. As director Ti West notes in his foreword: “In the same way a good meal brings people together, the best horror movies take our collective fears and turn them into a shared cinematic experience.” Plenty of that to get your teeth into here.



■ **Horror Caviar: A Cookbook** is out now, published by A24



SET VISIT

James Bond goes the whole hog

Plenty of scenes for new Bond movie *No Time to Die* were shot in Jamaica, but no filming location had more impact on its lead actor than Piggy’s Jerk Centre. The tiny jerk joint on Port Antonio’s Foreshore Road has its few seconds of fame in the background of a scene when Bond leaves a Jamaican nightclub and attempts to start his car – to no avail. Its real role, though, was satiating the cast and crew’s hunger for tasty jerk chicken during filming. Star Daniel Craig came to love Piggy’s so much that, when it sadly burned down after the film’s production ended, he helped raise funds to rebuild it.

Watch No Time to Die

WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: COURTESY A24

SLEEPER HIT

Wine down in California

NAPA VALLEY'S FIRST AND ONLY RESORT WITHIN A WORKING WINERY HAS PLOKED DOWN IN HISTORIC CALISTOGA CITY





LONG FEARFUL THAT guests would start syphoning wine straight from the source, Napa Valley has so far kept its resorts and working wineries separate. Until now, that is. Four Seasons Napa Valley has just opened in collaboration with Elusa winery and world-class winemaker Thomas Rivers Brown, making it the first resort of its kind.

The boutique hotel sits right on the vineyard's edge, overlooking verdant grapevines and the imposing Palisades mountain range. To make the most of your stay, book the Complete Elusa Experience, a tour that takes you from the vines to the barrel cellar, where you'll sample a number of vintages. There's even something to keep the kids busy: a workshop to blend their own "Kid's Kab" grape juice. Also on site is Spa Talisa, which offers a Vineyard Scrub that uses grape seeds to exfoliate and nourish the skin. For those who've overdone it on the vino we recommend the hangover-curing Calistoga mud bath.

✈ Fly to San Francisco



From left: Four Seasons Napa Valley has one pool for adults and another for kids too; Elusa winery is celebrated for its Cabernet Sauvignon; premier rooms sit in the heart of the vineyard



3 MORE **BOOZY** BOLTHOLES



GORGEOUS GEORGE, CAPE TOWN

Enjoy cocktails galore and breathtaking views in the Gigi Rooftop Bar, or escape the hustle of downtown Cape Town with visits to the nearby vineyards of South Africa's wine country.



KINGSLAND LOCKE, LONDON

Boasting its own in-house microbrewery, this newly opened "aparthotel" – think serviced apartment meets boutique hotel – is making its mark on London's buzzing Dalston neighbourhood.



THE SOURCE AT SULA, NASHIK

Nestled within the vineyards of India's most popular winery, this luxury resort combines rustic treehouses with expertly designed wine-tasting experiences.

LOCATION SCOUT

THE FLAVOURS OF GRENADA

Known for its spices and chocolate, the cuisine of this Caribbean island also includes blue tea and sea-grown superfoods, says **Victoria Beardwood**

With the nickname Spice Island, it's obvious why Grenada is attractive to epicurean travellers. Nutmeg, mace, cloves, turmeric, cinnamon, allspice – Grenada has been exporting these ingredients and more for centuries. Though Indonesia ships slightly more nutmeg, Grenada's is thought to be the world's best, thanks to the fecund volcanic soil in which it's grown. Take that, Indonesia.

Spices make their way into just about everything you consume here, sweet or savoury. There's nutmeg ice cream, turmeric white chocolate, and mellow and meaty crab back, which is a speciality dish of crab shell stuffed with crab meat, Grenadian herbs and spices, wine and cheese sauce. It must be tried at **BB's Crabback (1)**, followed by a rich goat curry. You can barely make it through a conversation with a local without them recommending this beloved Caribbean restaurant, overlooking Carenage harbour in the capital of St George. To take some spices home, visit the fragrant **Grand Anse Craft & Spice Market**, a 10-minute drive away.

And it's not just spices which are abundant. Everywhere you look you'll see tree branches heavy with avocados, papayas, mangoes, starfruits, breadfruits and cocoa pods. ▶



1



Spices make their way into just about everything you consume here, from nutmeg ice cream to meaty crab back

BB's Crabback restaurant is celebrated as St George's best lunch spot and is famous for its "crab back", as well as other Grenadian dishes, such as its "Creole crayfish" (seen here)



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“This is why Grenada has such a low crime rate – because it’s basically impossible to go hungry,” jokes our guide at **Belmont Estate (2)**, grabbing a fresh-picked custard apple from a pile on the ground. “There’s free food everywhere, year round.”

Belmont, in the north-eastern parish of St Patrick, is a 17th-century plantation that’s grown everything from coffee and cocoa to sugar cane and bananas. Today it’s a huge organic farm owned by the Nyack family, who were the first Grenadians of Indian descent to own an estate here. Try the traditional artisanal chocolate, made on site from bean to bar (the white chocolate filled with crunchy cacao nibs is delightful), or the estate’s newest project: cheese made from Belmont’s goat dairy farm.

The Grenadian OG of chocolate makers, though, is the nearby **Grenada Chocolate Company**. Split into two simple buildings – a bonbon shop and a tiny factory – it has been producing organic chocolate since 1999. The shop has containers filled to the brim with glossy shards of chocolate unlike any you will have tasted elsewhere – spicy, fruity and aromatic. The natural biodiversity in the areas where the cacao is grown means it takes on the flavours of the neighbouring plants.

A 10-minute drive to the east is the **River Antoine Rum Distillery**. While most of the other distilleries on the island import molasses to make their rum, River Antoine draws from the 400 hectares of sugar cane grown in Grenada. They like to do things old-school here, using 19th-century machinery powered by a huge waterwheel to crush and transport sugar cane and ferment the juice. If it ain’t broke...

A stop at the Distillery completes the trifecta of Grenada’s best-known food and drink experiences, but there are plenty of unsung ones to discover, as we find out on a tour with Simon Green, owner of **Hidden Treasures Hikes and Heritage Tours**. He’s been getting more requests for gastro-inspired outings since the island and its smaller sisters, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, were named the world’s first Culinary Capital by the World Food Travel Association last year, he tells me.

One of our first stops is the roadside **J’s Roti Shop (3)**. We visit early in the morning to see Jay working the dough and frying each flat disc



2

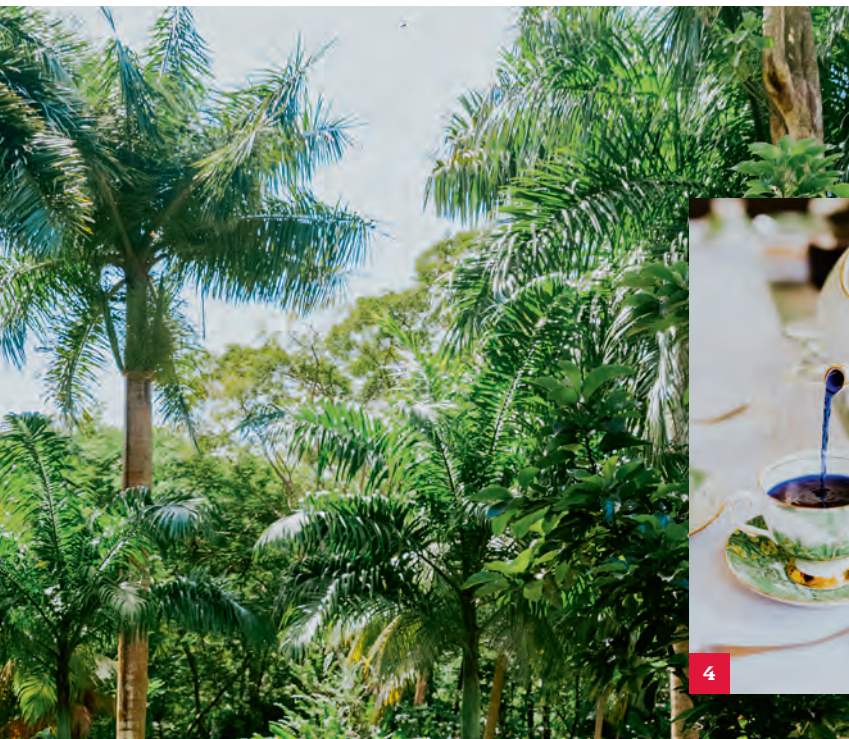


At Jessamine Eden Botanic Garden you can sample honey and take jars home with you.

Below: J’s Roti Shop, on the road to Grenville, is the go-to spot for this taste of Grenada’s Indian culture



3



of bread to perfection. Rotis were brought over by Indian indentured labourers in the mid-1800s following the emancipation of slaves, and both their ancestors and their delicious food have remained. We try one filled with hearty chicken curry and another with “lambie”. “It’s lambie, not lamb,” laughs Simon, seeing my confusion as I bite into seafood flavour. “That’s what we call conch.”



Another roadside stop-off is **Nyie’s Hot Spot**, on the island’s east coast. It’s just a regular convenience store, but if you speak to Miss Gustina behind the counter, she’ll hook you up with a home-made sea moss smoothie – which is tastier than it sounds, and extremely good for you. Sea moss is a powerful superfood, cultivated in the ocean and then dried out in the sun.

Moving on to **The Tower Estate (4)**, here you can have a civilised afternoon tea – albeit blue tea, made from the butterfly pea flower, which is said to help with a



host of bodily functions and afflictions, from eyesight to anxiety. Then over at **Jessamine Eden Botanic Garden (5)**, on the west of the island, pick up a jar of health-filled honey. Owner Dr Valma Jessamy has created a honeybee haven, covering her 24 hectares with some 135 species of medicinal plants, 22 types of palm trees, and a variety of other trees and flowers.

“Of course people hear about our spices. Many also know about our national dishes, like crab back, but there are so many incredible foods and drinks here that no one else has any idea about,” says Simon. It’s been a treat to share in that knowledge. And, of course, there’s been plenty to go around.

✈ Fly to Grenada

3 MORE BEVERAGES TO SOAK UP IN GRENADA



BABASH

We can’t condone the selling of fiery, under-the-counter, overproof rum, but ask for babash around sugar harvest time, and it will knock your socks off.



COCOA TEA

The love child of hot chocolate and spiced tea, this beloved local drink is found all over the island (we tried it at Tower Estate). It’s tasty and full of antioxidants.



RUM PUNCH

Rum, grenadine and fruit juices – this is the taste of the Caribbean. Our fave place to sip it is Morne Rouge Beach, also known as BBC Beach. Don’t tell Auntie...

SCREEN TEST

How valuable is a truffle pig?

EVEN THE MOST PLEBEIAN AMONG US KNOW THAT TRUFFLES ARE PRICEY, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BEASTS THAT FIND THEM? **RALPH JONES** SNUFFLES OUT THE ANSWER

In Nicolas Cage's new film (though he will have made another one before you've finished this sentence), the actor plays Rob Feld, an ex-chef whose beloved truffle pig is stolen. *Pig* explores Rob's anguish and his efforts to find the people who took the animal from him. It's *Taken* but with a pig, basically.

Because you may never have eaten a truffle in your life (just one could easily cost you £100), this could be the first you've heard of truffle pigs. To Rob, however, his is his livelihood – he needs its powerful sense of smell when he is foraging in the woods for those fragrant black fungi. Before long, Rob and an associate are rooting around for answers in a criminal underworld.

The film is not miles away from reality. Truffles are so highly sought that people may trespass on land in order to poach them, poison the animals who have sniffed out the treasure, or stop truffle hunters in their cars in order to steal the truffle haul in the boot. An entire book, *The Truffle Underground*, has been written about these niche crimes.

A reliable truffle pig is a valuable friend. They tend to be female because of a compound within truffles that is similar to a pheromone found in the saliva of male pigs. The fact that the pigs are drawn to the smell anyway means that they require little training. Their natural attraction to the truffles is, however, a drawback: they often try to eat them.

But in 2022 truffle pigs are outdated. "Pigs are not used these days," says



James Feaver of The English Truffle Company. A more realistic title for the film would have been *Dog*. Feaver quotes me £400 for two hours hunting with a truffle hound. Using a pig is illegal in countries like Italy, he says. And there are other disadvantages: moving them around is complicated because of the paperwork required and, "If anyone saw you going into a wood with a pig they would know exactly what you were doing."

Perhaps this is why Rob was so vulnerable: a man with a pig is a rather obvious target. In the film, a price of \$25,000 (£18,400) is given at one point. All in all, this seems about right: though it might gobble the occasional find, a trusty sow could unearth discoveries worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. So, what are you waiting for? Start sniffing.

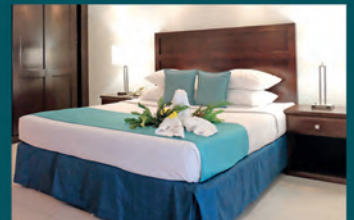
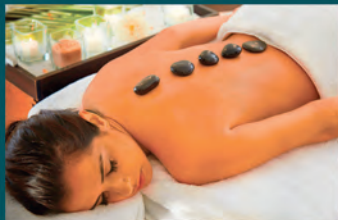
 Watch Pig

THE VERDICT

Probably best to put a collar on your truffle pig, it could be the most expensive pet you ever buy.




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Stephen Graham



NOT SO

Plucky detective or bent copper? Career gangster or guy on the wrong side of the tracks?

BLACK

Stephen Graham's characters are often lost in the moral maze. **Andrew Dickens** discovers

AND

where the *Venom: Let There Be Carnage* actor draws the line

WHITE

PHOTOGRAPHS: LEE MALONE

here is, I tell Stephen Graham, a “classic Stephen Graham” role and, surprisingly, he listens without pulling a face.

It is, I explain, a complex, vulnerable, struggling and extraordinarily ordinary man we all relate to and who Graham plays singularly well. No other actor so effectively takes us to the edge of where good men might tread if pushed hard enough, examines the darkness we all have within and makes us wonder, “Would I do the same?”

He’s every man’s everyman, I tell him. And every woman’s. It’s like a superpower. So why is he so good at it?

“I don’t know,” he says, looking upwards thoughtfully through dark-rimmed specs. “You obviously draw on your own experiences as best you can. It’s a really tricky question. I don’t know what it is in me. I love the

challenge of portraying the human condition. I like to play these three-dimensional characters.”

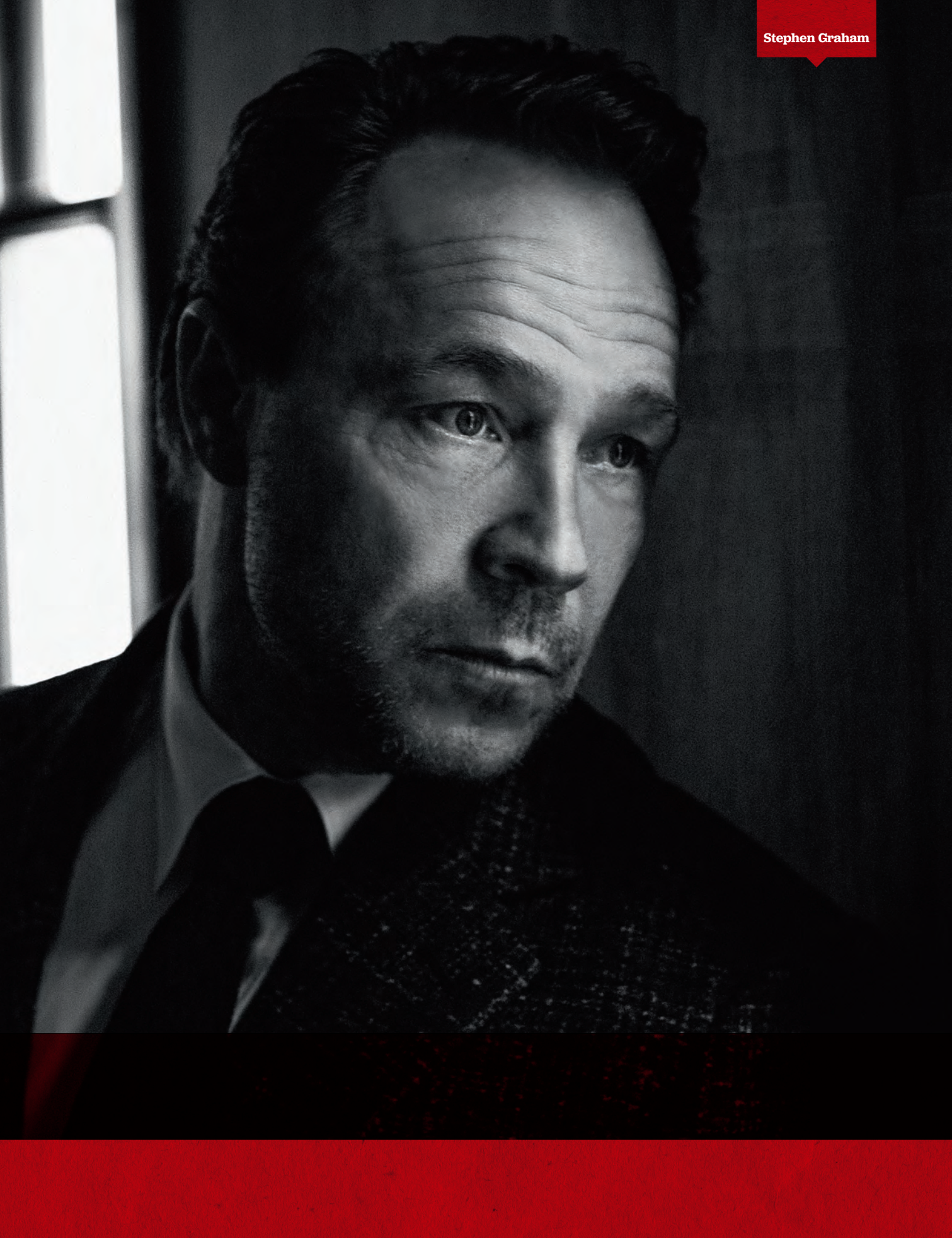
Today we’re talking over Zoom, but our conversation for this magazine first began over chicken burgers in London’s Mayfair in March 2020, before... well, we all know what happened next.

Graham has had quite the time since. No furlough for him. To my count, his output in the past two years has been four feature-length films, four TV shows, a short film, a BBC podcast and at least one music video. They include several roles that fit the “classic Stephen Graham” label: a gifted chef suffocated by pressure and addiction in *Boiling Point*, an honest prison guard forced into dishonest acts in *Time*, and the captain of a 19th-century whaling ship torn between pride and necessity in *The North Water*.

Arguably his most potent performance, however, involved a different struggle. In *Help*, a made-for-television film set in his home city of Liverpool, he plays Tony, a man with early onset dementia living in a care home during the first lockdown.

The illness means that this three-dimensional character can, in the blink of an eye, have his dimensions temporarily altered or removed to the most devastating effect – all in an environment ▶

Twill blazer:
Atelier Arena
Shirt: Filippa K
Tie: Turnbull
& Asser







Coat: Atelier
Arena
Knitwear: YMC
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Shoes: Grenson

swamped with PPE and panic. It's best illustrated in an early scene when Tony absconds from the home and is found walking to his mother's house, only to remember that she died years earlier. Graham was desperate to get it right.

"I reached out to this charity that I've now become involved with," he says. "I had coffee mornings on Zoom with seven lovely, beautiful people, not much older than me, who all suffered from early onset dementia. They were so open. I asked if anyone had lost their parents and forgotten that they'd passed away. They went, 'Yeah, a couple of times. It's horrible because it's like hearing it again for the first time.' The sadness in something like that... you know what I mean?"

It's easy to know what Graham means because, even over Zoom, I feel like I'm getting a mini-masterclass. Laptop Stephen Graham has so far been a picture of relaxed, homely contentment, chatting away in a comfy grey hoodie from his family's home in the small Leicestershire town of Ibstock – unrecognisable from the pained, strained and often dangerous man we see on bigger screens. But now he's changing. He's leaning towards the camera, hands out, gesturing, animated, completely

"AS ANY ACTOR SHOULD, I'VE GOT A GREAT IMAGINATION. WHEN I GO WITH IT AND I BELIEVE IT, THEN IT FEELS RIGHT"

blocking the fish tank behind him. There's an energy, a magnetism that transcends the flat screen. He feels so present in my house I want to offer him a cuppa.

Graham hopes that *Help* "shines a light" on people who suffered because of Covid and not just from it, in particular those living and working in care homes: a collective he thinks "were forgotten about and treated like second class citizens". This is because Graham is a nice man. Yes, 99% of magazine articles talk about their ever-so-grounded subject who offered the writer a plate of down-to-earth biscuits with their humble A-list hands, but judging by our chats and everything everyone's ever told me about him, he's a next-level "good bloke".

I call him the "Scouse Tom Hanks" and he likes it – "I'll take that. Tom's a great guy." But, as mentioned, many of his best roles are about our relationship with light, darkness and the uncertain shades in between. The reformed racist in *This Is England*, the dangerously submerged undercover cop in *Line of Duty*, the literally-in-purgatory Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* and a much-teased role in the soon-to-air season six of *Peaky Blinders*. So where does this good guy find his inner bad guy? ▶

"It's the beauty of the duality of humans," he says. "I try to be the very best version of me every single day, but there's stuff I can pull from and, as any actor should, I've got a *great* imagination. I just go with it and when I go with it and I believe it, then it feels right. It's acting. Yes, there are things that I've experienced and lived through, but it's also like when you're a kid in the garden running around, going 'bang, bang, got you' and you really believe that you've shot your mate. It's having that conviction to go for it."

In a time when some actors can almost look ashamed to talk about pure "acting", it's refreshing to hear Graham talk about the power of imagination and pretending to be someone else. Not that he doesn't have plenty of real-life darkness to draw from.

When we spoke in 2020, it was shortly after Graham had surprised a lot of people, not least himself, by revealing on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* that he attempted suicide as a young man. The attempt was triggered by an acting exercise in which he had to recall a traumatic moment from his past. It was too much for him but, thankfully, he lived to share his tale – and, by doing so, I have zero doubt that he's saved lives.

He told me at the time that he still uses this "emotional memory" technique. Surely, I ask him now, he must fear that the darkness could take over? That it could win?

"Not any more," he says. "I meditate regularly and that really helps me. I've also matured. I'm more comfortable with who I am and what I'm about. Not in an egotistical sense at all, but I'm more comfortable with my journey now. I'm gonna say it to you, I'm a Spiritual Scally. I love me footy, I love me trainers, but I also love a little bit of the Dalai Lama and a bit of Buddha. And that's what keeps me going."

The last line is accompanied by a cheeky prayer gesture and an enormous smile. A reminder that it's not all about inner turmoil when it comes to Graham's work. He's been outright villainous gangsters in things like Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman* and *Boardwalk Empire*, played for laughs in the sitcom *Code 404*, and now he's entered the Marvel Cinematic Universe – something he describes as "great entertainment and escapism" – in *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*, opposite Tom Hardy. Forget acting your freshly laundered socks off in a heart-rending drama, bagging a Marvel role is how you impress your kids.

"My son Alfie was buzzing, made up," he says. "I said, 'They've asked me to be in *Venom*. This character, I think he's a copper, but then he could turn into a character called Toxin or something.' And Alfie was like, 'Dad! He's like a super, super villain. He's boss. You've gotta do it, please dad!'"

Suede blouson jacket:
Atelier Arena
Trousers:
Thom Sweeney
T-shirt: Sunspel
Shoes: Grenson

Golden Graham

OUR STEPHEN'S CV

Born

Stephen Joseph Graham was born in Kirkby, Lancashire, on 3 August 1973 to a Jamaican-Swedish father and an English social worker mother, who first raised him on her own, then with Graham's stepfather, a mechanic who retrained as a paediatric nurse.

Education

Attended Overdale Primary School in Kirkby, where his talent was spotted – playing Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island*, aged eight – by local actor Andrew Schofield, who introduced him to the Everyman Theatre. He also attended Ruffwood Comprehensive and the Rose Bruford College.



Key Works

Snatch (2000)

Graham's big break came as gormless sidekick Tommy in Guy Ritchie's Brit gangster flick.

Gangs of New York (2002)

Martin Scorsese picked Graham for Shang, dogsbody to Leonardo DiCaprio, in this violent historical drama before going on to cast him as Al Capone in TV series *Boardwalk Empire* and Tony Pro in 2019's *The Irishman*.

This Is England (2006)

Shane Meadows' bleak portrait of 1980s skinheads hinged on Graham's sociopathic turn as racist Combo.

Line of Duty (2019)

As John Corbett – an ordinary undercover copper in over his head – Graham excelled in season five of the hit BBC series, ratcheting up the tension and enhancing his scene-stealing reputation.

Graham loves his job, but I'd wager it's a distant second to his family. His face is an enthusiasm gauge. Ask a question he doesn't like and, despite his acting chops, you see the needle drop. Mention his "best mates" – his wife, the actor Hannah Walters, and their two teenage children, Alfie and Grace – and it nearly pings off the dial. He describes himself as a "home bird" who lives a "blessed, beautiful, lovely little life". He's so happy, it makes his ability to wallop an audience with a gut punch of angst and agony even more impressive.

"I pick my kids up from school," he says. "I go to the Co-op. I walk the dogs. I go to the skip regularly. That garage is full of f***ing stuff! See ▶



**"I'M VERY IN TOUCH WITH REALITY AND
WHAT'S HAPPENING OUTSIDE MY FRONT DOOR,
IN MY LOCAL COMMUNITY ESPECIALLY"**



Coat:
Atelier Arena

how easily I can lose my Zen? That's why I have to meditate! I just happen to do this job where I get dressed up and create these characters."

Is it this normality that allows him to play the everyman so effectively?

"I really think it does, because I'm very in touch with reality and what's happening outside my front door, in my local community especially. I'm glad you picked up on it earlier, but I suppose I do play the everyman. Maybe some people see something in me that resonates within them or I just seem like a normal, ordinary fella who could live on your street. And for people round here, I do!"

Like so many Zoom calls, this one ends with talk of the future. Graham seems to be in the second act of his career where, after years of hard graft, the best in the business know him, like him and want to work with him. His third act will surely contain great things. I offer him three options: "Academy Award-winner Stephen Graham", "Stephen Graham as James Bond" or "Stephen Graham, national treasure?"

He ponders, his gaze again drifting upwards. "I don't want to be James Bond, but I'll take being a baddie in James Bond. A Bond villain with a lair in Liverpool."

A "classic Stephen Graham" Bond villain? A tormented, troubled and complicated man who's just been pushed too far? Sounds great, but there's one obvious problem - the way Graham does things, the audience might want him to win.

📺 Watch *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*

Recipe for success

WHAT GOES INTO STEPHEN GRAHAM'S HARD-BOILED CHARACTERS

1

Take three parts repressed emotion to one part raw humanity.

2

Mix well, while desperately trying to keep a lid on things.

3

Introduce a dash of violence or vulnerability to taste.

4

Wait for tempers to rise.

5

Quickly turn your preconceptions on their head. It might get messy.

6

Serve. The results should be bittersweet and very moreish.

From left to right:
With Sean Bean in *Time*, and in *Line of Duty* and *Boiling Point*



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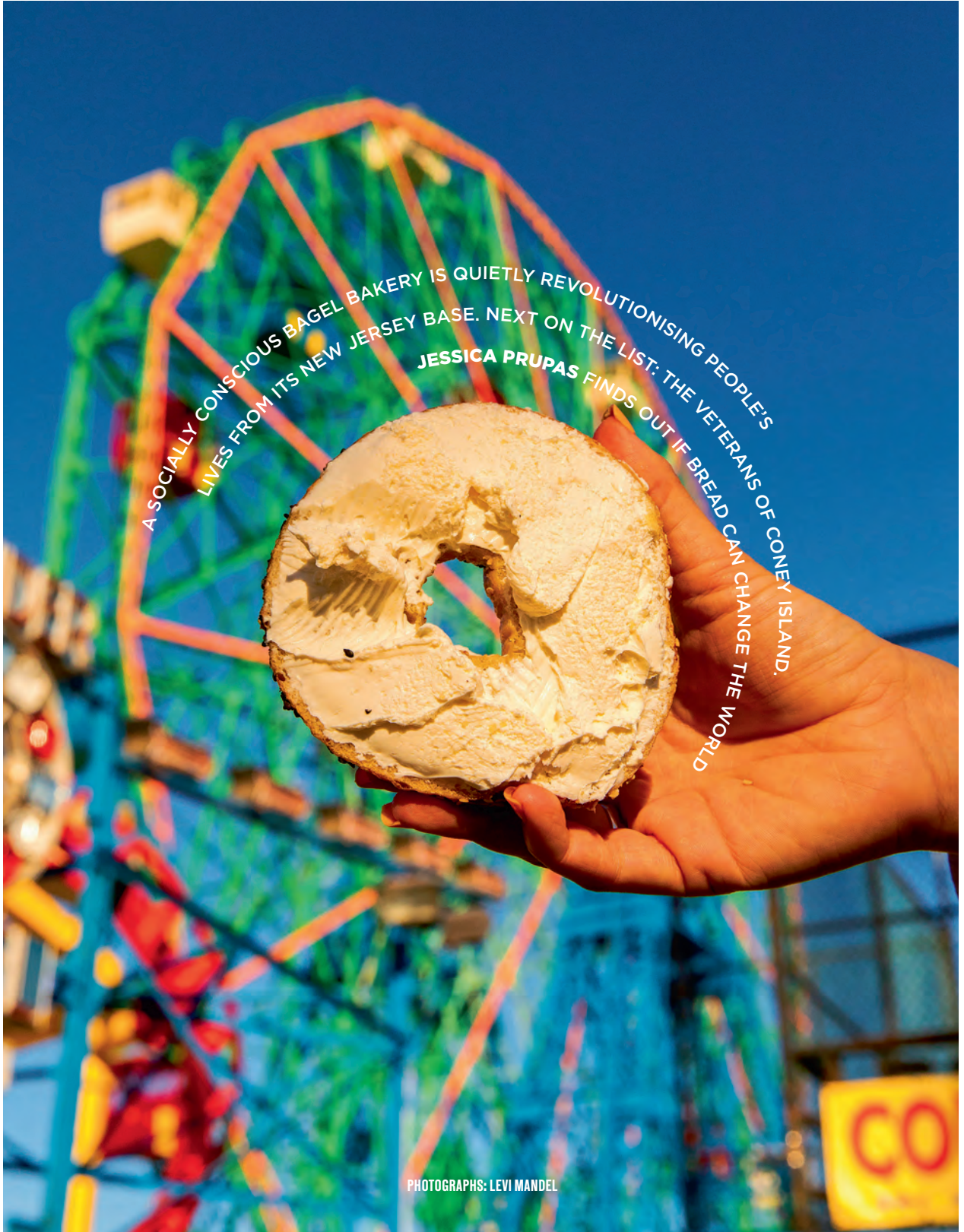
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saviour?**



A SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS BAGEL BAKERY IS QUIETLY REVOLUTIONISING PEOPLE'S LIVES FROM ITS NEW JERSEY BASE. NEXT ON THE LIST: THE VETERANS OF CONEY ISLAND. JESSICA PRUPAS FINDS OUT IF BREAD CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

PHOTOGRAPHS: LEVI MANDEL

Beth George is crying about bagels.



Left: BYOB co-owner Frank waxes lyrical about bagels. Opposite: Boss Beth takes a bite

Well, it's not really about bagels, exactly. It's more about what they represent – the bagel, not just as a ring of yeasted bread but a talisman.

"I'm sorry," she apologises, blinking back tears. "It's just that when I think about all the people whose lives we've changed with these bagels, I get emotional."

These life-altering rings of bread are the product of Beth's company, BYOB Bagels. The unshortened name – Be Your Own Boss, Build Your Own Business, Bake Your Own Bagels – hints at what they're about: Beth and her business partner, Frank Mauro, are the world's only full-time bagel consultants.

It is, admittedly, a niche market, which is why Beth and Frank have managed to corner it (or, rather, encircle it) entirely. They help aspiring bagel-shop owners nail their recipe, sketch out business plans, lay out their kitchens, and give rise to their doughy empires. So far, they've helped build nearly 100 bagel shops across four continents – you'll find their fingerprints on businesses in Paris, Brisbane, Saudi Arabia and beyond. And, though they've been quietly in business since 2013, the pandemic supercharged demand: it seems, suddenly, that everyone wants to open a bagel shop.

"We are tired," confides Beth. "But I keep going, because I like seeing the results – it's about showing people they can do something, helping them take control of their destiny."

Now Beth and Frank are extending that bootstrap philosophy to their first BYOB-run storefront. The shop – opening later this year in Surf Vets Place, an affordable, mixed-use housing development in Coney Island – will employ some of the formerly homeless veterans that make up most of the building's residents, equipping them with new skills and helping them take a leap back into the job market. It will also bring Beth's proprietary bagel recipe to this underserved corner of Brooklyn, which Beth considers a quasi "food" ▶



desert” due to the limited choice of fresh food options in the neighbourhood.

The bagel shop will be a departure from the faded Burger Kings and hot-dog stands that dominate the peninsula. Once a thriving seaside escape visited by New Yorkers from every borough, Coney Island began to decline in popularity after World War II, when it was forced to compete with the new, less-crowded amusement parks and beaches of Long Island. Many of the restaurants – often owned by Italian and Polish immigrants – that thrived in the last century have now shuttered. The long-neglected boardwalk is lined with the same food stalls that have been around since the 60s, decorated with clown mascots and burnt-out marquees.

Beth and Frank are working hard to bring their bagels to Coney Island and beyond. When I first meet them, they’re buzzing around their industrial bakery and office space in New Jersey, training a family of aspiring bagel-shop owners from Connecticut in the art of the schmear (cream cheese spread). Open on the worktop is a laptop screen of spreadsheets, each detailing – down to the half ounce – the exact ingredient ratios for Beth’s signature spreads (she has so far developed two dozen varieties). “I know this is a little unorthodox,



“They have the weight and shape of a classic New York bagel, only once you bite through the crispy, sesame-studded crust, there’s a twist – the dough is lighter, but still has a satisfying chewiness”

but I love this recipe,” she says, dripping melted chocolate into a bowl of cream cheese.

“Stop it with the chocolate bagels!” the octogenarian Frank wails, his Downtown Manhattan inflection exaggerated in outrage. “I told you I don’t like chocolate bagels.”

“If you weren’t here, I’d smack him,” Beth says to me, half grinning.

After more than 12 years of working together, Beth and Frank have settled into a professional dynamic – Beth is the scrappy doer and face of BYOB; Frank is the back-seat businessman, handling the finances and occasionally offering full-throated critiques. The two met when Beth was running a spelt bagel business out of her home in Maine.

Beth, a lawyer by trade, began baking spelt-based breads to accommodate her son’s digestive issues. When she decided to turn it into a full-time gig, she needed a large oven – and Frank worked at a company that manufactured them. So she called him up.



Clockwise from right: The all-important sesame seed dredge; bagels ready to bake; hot from the oven



“When she told me what she was doing, I told her she was crazy,” says Frank. “I said there was no way in hell she could make a bagel out of spelt flour.”

But when Beth fed him one of her creations, he ate his words. He was so impressed by her ingenuity that he convinced his business partner to lend her an industrial space he owned in New Jersey. Beth moved her family and business to the Garden State; they’ve been “squatting” – as Beth puts it – at that same warehouse ever since.

“When I moved to New Jersey, Frank convinced me I should consider becoming a bagel consultant,” says Beth. “But I didn’t want to do it if I wasn’t making the best bagels myself.”

So she started experimenting with wheat bagels. She began tinkering away at BYOB’s HQ, tweaking and perfecting her own take on a New York bagel. It obsessed her for eight years. It wasn’t until the 2020 lockdowns – when she spent long stretches in her kitchen, free of life’s usual distractions – that she finally nailed it: the perfect bagel.

“Making bagels is an art, it takes creativity,” says Frank. “What Beth has done is a new level in bagels.”

It’s a lofty claim – but after I taste one, I can’t help but agree: they have the weight and shape of a classic New York bagel, only once you bite through the crispy, sesame-studded crust, there’s a twist – the dough is lighter, but still has a chewiness that’s as satisfying as a mouthful of Gummy Bears. When they’re hot, each bite releases a cheek-warming puff of steam. They are delicious – this time, tears of joy are warranted.

But what exactly makes these bagels so special is a closely guarded secret. Beth is tight-lipped about her recipe. “Everyone is always trying to ▶

The hole truth

FOUR TOP TIPS FOR MAKING THE PERFECT BAGEL



A great bagel starts with simple high-quality ingredients: water, flour, salt and yeast. Focus on sourcing the very best of each and you’re halfway there.

Bread flour is best for a New York style bagel – using all-purpose flour is fine, too, they just won’t be as chewy.

BYOB uses a futuristic steaming machine to pre-cook the bagels before they’re baked, but you’ll most likely be boiling them. Add some barley malt syrup to the water to give their crust that sweet, golden crunch.

Don’t neglect the schmear (cream cheese spread) – get creative with it by mixing in leftfield flavours like blueberry or jalapeño, and add a bit of soda water for a perfectly spreadable topper.

get information out of me,” she says. “I can’t give away too much.”

The only thing she’ll tell me is that they’re made from five simple ingredients – water, flour, sugar, salt and yeast – that are sourced from trusted vendors. I also manage to piece together that they are fermented for less time than your average deli variety, and baked in a clever oven that steams the bagels before baking them. The only people who know the recipe are BYOB’s clients – and they sign a strict non-disclosure agreement.

Beth may keep her bagel recipe close to her chest, but she has no problem feeding her bagels to people. When we visit the sea-facing Surf Vets Place – a few blocks west of the looping, Technicolor rides of Luna Park – Beth comes with an army of fresh-baked bagels. Her trusted intern, Sergio (a friend’s teenage son, on an extended visit from Mexico), hauls two cool boxes filled with schmears into the building. They cut them and pass them out to the building’s residents and staff. A muffled, full-mouthed chorus of “Mmmm” and “Oooh” rises around me. People mingle happily, dots of cream cheese speckling their cheeks.

I’m reminded of something Frank said earlier that day: “The bagel is a universal symbol of joy.” He tells me that whenever he travels – as he often does for work – everyone, from South Korea to central Europe, is desperate to try their bagels. When I ask him why that is, he says he doesn’t know. He alludes to the bagel’s appeal being alchemical, beyond the realm of language.

I have some guesses, though. First, the overstuffed bagel we associate with New York City is uniquely American – a variation of the original, which was introduced to New York City with the arrival of Jewish migrants from Poland in the 1800s. They were originally a street food, small, hand-rolled and baked – a staple among poor migrant workers. By the 1980s, the size of the



“The bagel represents melting pot America – migrant communities, ordinary people striving, bootstraps and helping hands”

average bagel nearly doubled and the voluptuous New York City bagel as we know it, oozing with schmear and lox and butter, was born.

Beth is keen to stress that many communities have their versions of boiled, yeasted bread: the Turkish have twisted, crunchy simit; Ukrainians sprinkle poppy seeds on top of chewy bublik. Beth herself is of Lebanese descent, and her family eats sweet rings of ka’ak.

Today the bagel not only puts you in a New York state of mind, it’s reminiscent of melting pot America – the America of migrant communities, of ordinary people striving, of bootstraps, of helping hands extended to neighbours.

It’s this symbolism that fascinates Beth – the bagel as an area of commonality, a bit of sustenance passed between people. It got her thinking. She looked into it, and realised that the bagel is not actually a circle, but a solid torus – the same shape as a life buoy, thrown to keep people afloat in the water.

From top: The Coney Island ferris wheel is as iconic as the NYC bagel and schmear; Beth chats about plans with her contractor



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WAY OF THE DRAGON



A new *Game of Thrones* Studio Tour means now is the time for superfans to visit the show's spiritual home – Northern Ireland. Here's our geekiest possible guide to the attractions of real-life Westeros

WORDS: ANDY HILL
ILLUSTRATIONS: HARRISON EDWARDS

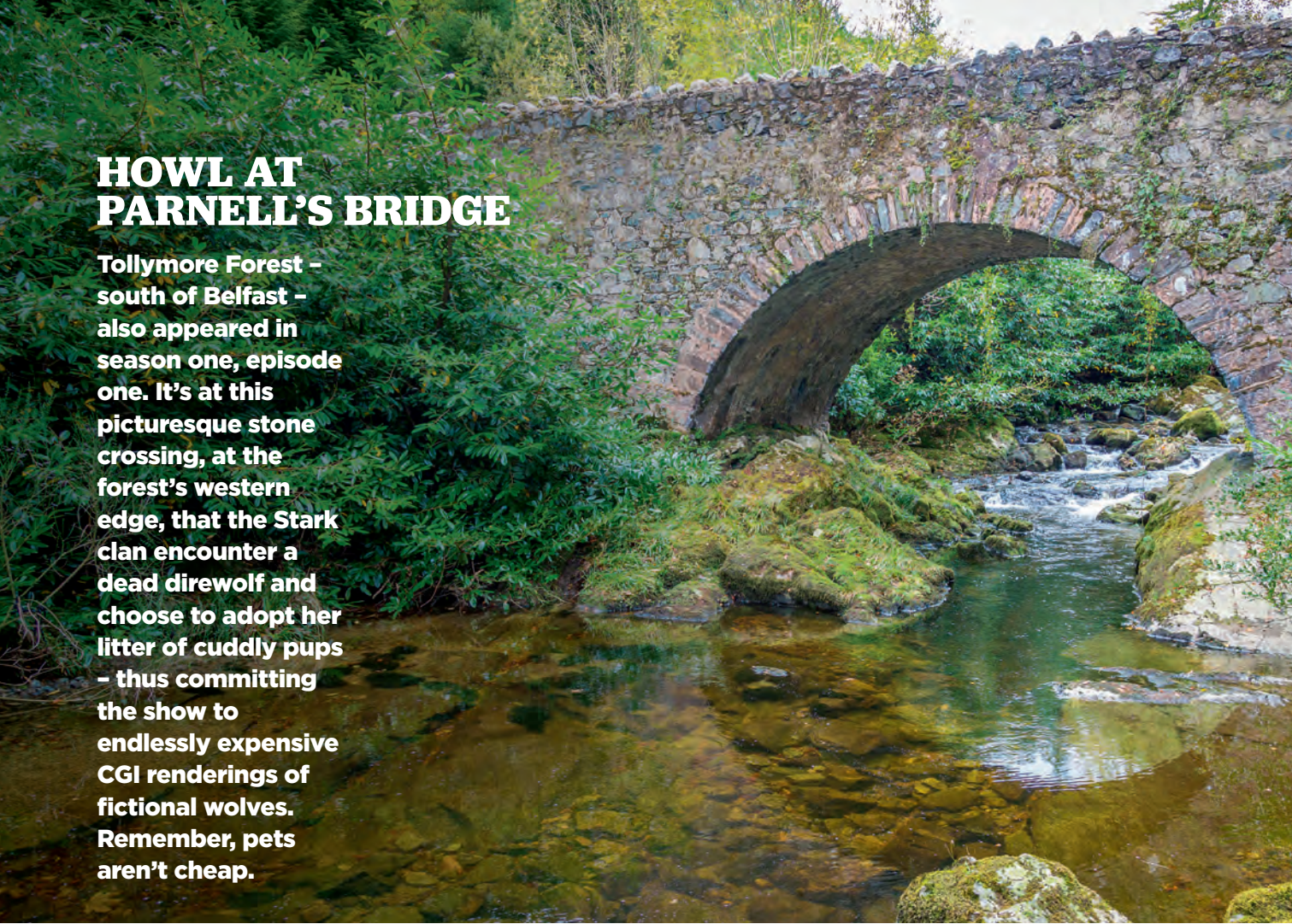


PROTECT YOUR NECK AT CAIRNCASTLE

Our tour starts at the village of Cairncastle, specifically this ravishing hillside, a pleasant half-hour drive north out of Belfast, which made a scene-stealing appearance in *Game of Thrones* season one, episode one. You might recall Ned Stark (Sean Bean) reluctantly beheading a Night's Watch deserter here, though that scene is now perhaps most famous for being the inspiration behind countless "Winter is coming" memes. In reality, Cairncastle is an exceptionally beautiful lookout close to the award-winning Ballygally Beach. In season three it also stands in for the region of Harrenhal and is the Dothraki Sea at the climax of season five, so there are plenty of moments to re-enact. Just don't lose your head. ▶

HOWL AT PARNELL'S BRIDGE

Tollymore Forest – south of Belfast – also appeared in season one, episode one. It's at this picturesque stone crossing, at the forest's western edge, that the Stark clan encounter a dead direwolf and choose to adopt her litter of cuddly pups – thus committing the show to endlessly expensive CGI renderings of fictional wolves. Remember, pets aren't cheap.



Get your coffee to go, Targaryen-style

Fantasy devotees were outraged – but also secretly delighted – when they spotted a 21st-century takeaway coffee cup chilling on a table in front of Emilia Clarke during a season eight feast scene at Winterfell. Widely reported to be from Starbucks, the offending brew was in fact purchased from groovy Belfast café the Paper Cup in the city's smart Titanic Quarter. Luckily Conleth Hill – the actor who played eunuch Lord Varys – owned up to the mistake, it was later edited out, and nobody got in hot water.



GO STARK BATHING BONKERS AT CARNLOUGH HARBOUR

In season six, Arya Stark is knifed by a mean-spirited Braavos waif, and has to dive into the harbour to make her escape. The fictional city of Braavos was largely based in sunny Croatia, but location scouts returned to sleepy Carnlough, less than an hour north of Belfast, to find the perfect harbourside steps. Swimming not advised.



The joy of sets

INSIGHTS FROM
GOTEXTRAS

Stay face down
Extras thought if they died in a battle scene it was best to lie face down, so they'd be cast again and live to fight another payday.

A little goes a long way
Shorter extras tended to get more screen time, as they helped make stars like Kit Harington look more "heroic".

Don't mess with the animals
Kenny Gracey (see *overleaf*) was also employed as an extra to soothe his porcine charges.

Shop at the jewellers that forged Joffrey's crown

Husband and wife team Dan Spencer and Brona Steenson-Spencer, of Steensons jewellers, were already avid fans of *Game of Thrones* from reading the original books. So imagine their glee when they were asked by show runners to create lavish pieces for the HBO show. What pieces? Not one but two of Joffrey's crowns, Daenerys' dragon brooch and Sansa Stark's necklace. Swing by their store in Belfast, or better still watch the experts at work in their open-to-the-public workshop in Glenarm.



RIDE TO THE DOTHRAKI SEA



Horses were the secret stars of *Game of Thrones*. Jon Snow's horse, Tornado, even had its own stunt double. For the authentic equine experience you can take a horseback tour of filming locations with Sheans Horse Farm in Ballymoney, County Antrim, including the King's Road (in real life, the famous avenue of beech trees known as the Dark Hedges) and the beaches of the Isle of Pyke and the Dothraki Sea. A true Dothraki bloodrider walks with a saddle-induced bow-legged gait, so get practising your swagger. ➤

Got spots

ALTERNATIVE PILGRIMAGES AROUND BELFAST

Skinworks

Sophie Turner (Sansa Stark) and real-life bezzie Maisie Williams (Arya Stark) got matching tattoos from Kat Paine at Belfast City Skinworks. Adorably, they begged the studio not to share pics on social media until they'd told their mums.

Kelly's Cellars

This 18th-century pub just around the corner from the Titanic Studios, where much of the show was filmed, was frequented by parched *GoT* crew and cast including Emilia Clarke (Daenerys), Kit Harington (Jon Snow) and Peter Dinklage (Tyrrion Lannister). Who drinks, you'll recall, and knows things.

Kremlin

Hodor actor Kristian Nairn performed as a drag queen – and spun tunes as a techno DJ – at Belfast gay club Kremlin. Considering his character's whole deal was “holding”, apparently he was also quite good at drops.

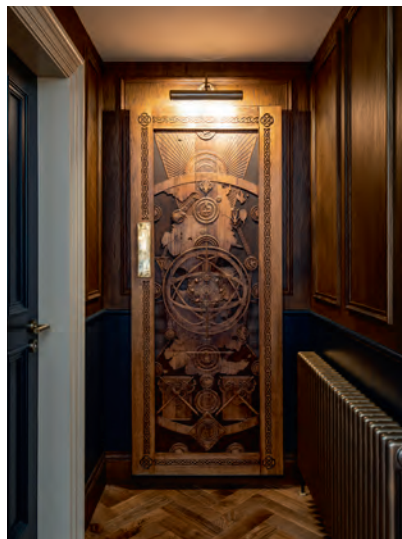
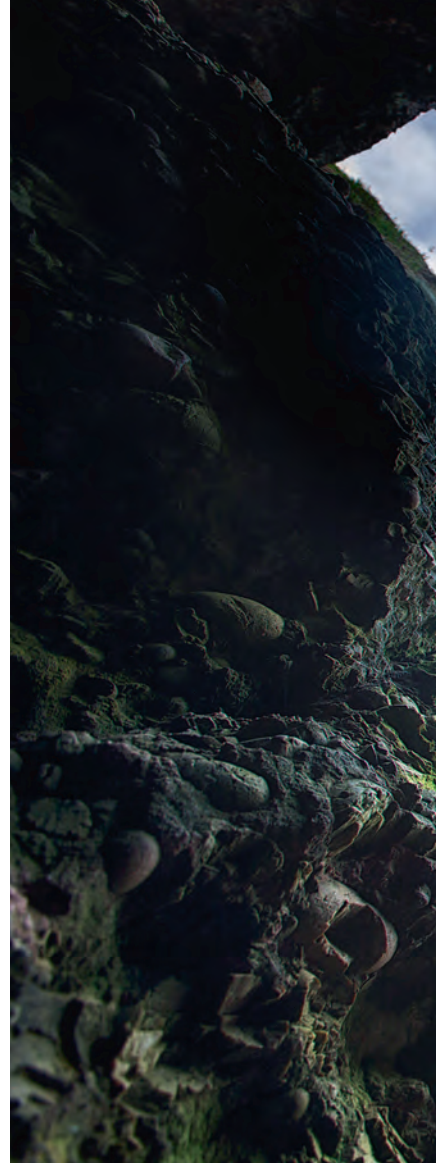


Buy from the farmer who bred Westerosi pigs and goats

Kenny Gracey is a rare-breed farmer from Tandragee, Co Armagh, 40 minutes south-west of Belfast. After the 2008 financial crisis his farm shop business was looking shaky.

Luckily, however, Gracey's bacon was saved – at least partly thanks to *Game of Thrones*. “The

production needed some olde worldly-looking animals, specifically pigs,” he told us. “We couldn't use boar, because they're wild. So I set about cross-breeding some of my rare breeds – Tamworth and Old Spot, among others – to create the Iron Age pig. You see my pigs from series two onwards.” Gracey's farm shop – which is well worth a visit – now sells tasty organic sausages and bacon made from his new archaic-style breed. They have a stronger flavour than regular porkers.



HOLD THE DOOR AT THE CUAN

In 2016, two of the gnarly beech trees that make up the Dark Hedges – a beautiful arboreal avenue planted in the 18th century – were knocked over in a storm. HBO and the local tourist board decided to make the best of it and commissioned 10 wooden doors to be crafted in Westeros style from the timber and situated at key tourist spots around the country. If you're already at the Dark Hedges then nearby Gracehill House boasts a creepy three-eyed raven on its elegant egress. In Belfast, the door at The Dark Horse cocktails and coffee spot has a *Thrones*-y theme, but perhaps our favourite example can be seen at The Cuan – a Strangford, Co Down, hotel that hosted the cast during filming. The carvings reference the show's iconic opening titles, and the hotel offers a *Game of Thrones* banquet or picnic for hungry fanatics.

PHOTOS: PETER BRUCE PHOTOGRAPHY; BRIAN MORRISON/COURTESY OF TOURISM NORTHERN IRELAND

DIG INTO THE CUSHENDUN CAVES

Carved out by wind, rain and merciless seas over 400 million years, these caves north of Belfast were the backdrop to several grisly moments on the show, including season eight's fight between Euron Greyjoy and Jaime Lannister, which ended atop an angled rock near the entrance. If you're going to prostrate yourself like a wounded Greyjoy pirate, do wear sunscreen.

✂ Fly to Belfast



Winter is here

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW 10,200M² GOT STUDIO TOUR OPENING IN BANBRIDGE THIS MONTH

Props to them

Take a pew on Daenerys' Dragonstone throne, and marvel at Valyrian steel weapons, lavish wedding dresses and rich fur coats and cloaks – the height of Beyond the Wall fashion.

North stars

Step inside the Great Hall at Winterfell – where Jon Snow was proclaimed the “King in the North” – plus the Greyjoy stronghold at Pyke and Riverrun, home of the Tullys.



Face facts

Explore the creepy basement of the hall of faces, then learn how the magic of Westeros was brought to life thanks to interactive exhibits revealing the show's green-screen secrets.

Art and soul

Pore over original sketches from the visionary artisans and designers who set about willing George RR Martin's epic vision into life.

■ gameofthronesstudiotour.com

NO 11

The Connaught Bar, London

THE LOWDOWN

The vogue for the classic Dry Martini is no passing fad. The Connaught's director of mixology, Agostino Perrone, has spent over a decade perfecting his bar's signature serve and his efforts have earned this deservedly raved-about Mayfair institution the No 1 slot in the World's 50 Best Bar awards for two consecutive years. Released in 2020, the No 11 is the bar's 11th-anniversary riff served in a bespoke, Jackson Pollock-inspired coupe glass.

THE RECIPE

- 1oz Grey Goose vodka
- 1.5oz Connaught gin
- 0.5oz Martini Ambrato
- Amalfi lemon oil
- 0.35oz Château La Coste wine distillate
- 5 drops Connaught bitters

Aerate ingredients in an *escanciador de sidra* (cider pourer), bottle and store in a freezer. Pour over an ice diamond in a Martini coupe.



The strongest case for the Martini having a moment might be made in New York. Late last year, Harry and Meghan were out on the town. Where did they go? Not some hip, natural-wine bar in Brooklyn, but rather Bemelmans, the swanky watering hole at The Carlyle hotel that has been pulling in the old-money, Upper East Side set since it opened in 1947. The royal-not-royal couple's choice was trendier than it seemed, however. A couple of months later, the *New York Times* ran a story: "Why Gen Z is flocking to New York's old-school bars." Classic haunts like Bemelmans now had a "nightclub energy", it turned out, with queues forming in the early afternoon and bouncers. What was everyone drinking? Dry Martinis – lots of them.

The case continues: in Midtown, a new rooftop bar, Daintree, separates its menu as follows: "Martinis" and "Everything else". Then there's Sidney's Five that joins Brooklyn's Gage & Tollner as new restaurants with a Martini slant. Or how about the fact that the trend has not one but two

MARTINIS ARE FOREVER

BOND ISN'T THE ONLY REASON WHY MARTINIS ARE BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT, SAYS ALEXANDER BARLOW. HERE ARE THE BEST EXAMPLES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROB LAWSON

sub-categories: the caffeine-charged espresso Martini and the "extra-dirty" Martini (both trending heavily for brunch and beyond).

In San Francisco, Chezchez does one of the best 50/50 Martinis (half gin/vermouth) on the West Coast. Hong Kong's options were recently extended with the opening of dedicated Martini bar, Kyle & Bain, that joins Argo, Darkside and Terrible Baby as the city's go-tos for a classic or sensitively re-wrought Martini.

In London, Mayfair's Dukes (est 1908) will tell you good Martinis never went out of fashion. And what about the Connaught Bar? It has been named No 1 in the World's 50 Best Bar awards for two consecutive years with a rep solidly built on its exquisite handling of the Dry Martini.

So why is it such an enduring drink?

"It's got a kind of cinematic elegance," says The Connaught's director of mixology, Agostino Perrone. "The way the glass is shaped, you can't help but hold it delicately, sip slowly. The whole ritual makes you feel like a Bond character. It's timeless." ▶



THE LIQUID PICNIC

**Thunderbolt,
Los Angeles**

THE LOWDOWN

“Reads like a salad, drinks like a Martini.” While a standard, stirred Martini is diluted by ice, this pre-batched variant gets its subtle salinity from an unlikely ingredient: tomato water. “It acts as the dilution in the drink but also adds to the mouthfeel and lends a savoury, umami backbone,” says Thunderbolt bar manager Mike Capoferri. A Dirty Martini for those that like it, well, not too dirty.

THE RECIPE

- 2oz London dry gin
- 0.75oz Nardini Acqua di Cedro liqueur
- 0.5oz Dolin dry vermouth
- 0.75oz Clarified tomato water
- 1 bar spoon Massenez Garden Party rosemary liqueur
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch black pepper

Combine all ingredients in a bottle and store in a freezer for five hours, before ice crystals form. To serve, pour 4oz into a Nick & Nora glass. Spritz and garnish with lemon peel.



DRY MARTINI

Bemelmans Bar, New York

THE LOWDOWN

According to a *New York Times* report in November, Gen Z are now flocking to the city's once desperately uncool olde-timey cocktail bars

like Bemelmans. What are they drinking? The classics, and the Dry Martini is now the only trending tippie that matters. Perfection.

THE RECIPE

- 5oz Bombay Sapphire (or gin or vodka of choice)
- 1 drop vermouth

At Bemelmans Bar, they make them ultra-dry, stirred the traditional way: fill a shaker with ice and stir gently (so as not to release the botanical oils) until icy cold. Strain half into the Martini glass and the other half into a sidecar placed in shaved ice. Garnish with a lemon twist or olives. >

Best Martinis





DUKES MARTINI

**Dukes Bar,
London**

THE LOWDOWN

This is the Mayfair boîte where Ian Fleming himself used to drink – and the first to use Amalfi lemons and English vermouth. Bar manager Alessandro Palazzi pays strict homage to the original recipe with an emphasis on temperature: served from a frozen bottle, the Dukes Martini is seriously cold. And seriously strong: the gin-vermouth ratio is firmly in the favour of the stronger spirit. “For cocktail lovers it is a pure drink,” says Palazzi. “There is no hiding.”

THE RECIPE

- 4oz No 3 gin
- 4 dashes Sacred dry vermouth

Dash the vermouth into a frozen Martini glass, then pour in the gin. Do not stir. Spritz with Amalfi lemon peel, then add to garnish. ▶

FEATHERWEIGHT

Union Trading Company, Shanghai

THE LOWDOWN

In his simple, shouldn't-work-but-does


rework of the Dry Martini, Union Trading Company owner-operator Yao Lu subs out the dry vermouth for a mix of Green Chartreuse and *huangjiu* (yellow wine) that, like sherry, includes many varieties – from super dry

to super sweet. “It’s not a well-known ingredient outside China,” he says. “But it adds this subtle, layered, sour-savoury note to the drink that’s hard to replicate with anything else on the bar shelf.”

THE RECIPE

- 2oz Chamomile-infused London dry gin
- 0.75oz Huangjiu (yellow wine)
- 0.5oz Green Chartreuse
- 2 dashes plum bitters

Add all ingredients to an ice-filled mixing glass, stir until chilled. Serve in a tall-walled Nick & Nora glass and garnish with fresh chamomile flowers.

 Watch No Time to Die



— New —
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A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

What's On

A BOND FAREWELL ... AND A DEBUT

All the attention may have been on Daniel Craig for his fifth – and final – outing as 007 in *No Time to Die*, but just as eye-catching is the signing of director Cary Joji Fukunaga. He made his name with Spanish-language drama *Sin Nombre* (2009) and cemented his rep helming the first season of TV's *True Detective* before providing the necessary fireworks for Bond 25.

Watch *No Time to Die*



THE BEST OF WHAT'S ONBOARD

61-68

Movies

Dune, *Spencer* and *Pig* are just three of the much-talked-about films showing onboard.

69-73

TV

Delve into *Guilt*'s moral dilemma or indulge in new US comedy smash *Shrill* – it's all here.

74-77

Audio

Go behind the scenes at Abbey Road Studios, and enjoy tunes that are sure to make your flight fly by.

VERA LOVES



We're one of the few airlines that selects their own movies and TV, with lots of new content onboard each month. Look out for anything labelled with a heart – that means we think it's the best of the best. We champion big blockbusters, quirky shorts, binge-worthy box sets and ace docs. Read on for our top picks for February.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Tune into **Vera**, our award-winning world of entertainment

SCREEN TIME

Onboard this month we have

132

Movies

450+

Albums, podcasts & playlists

293

Hours of TV shows

28

Destination guides

77+

Hours of kids' content



ARE YOU A fan of grime, rock, pop or classical music? Do you like dark movie thrillers or light-hearted comedies? Whatever you're into, we have it onboard. But what if you've got eclectic taste and you like all these things – and more?

Well, on our aircraft you can create your own bespoke playlists for music and watchlists for TV and movies. Here's how:




- Select an album from Music, a TV show from TV or a movie from Movies.
- For Music, click on the star symbol next to your chosen track or album.
- For Movies and TV click Save Show/Movie for Later.
- Depending on which aircraft you are on, you'll see a tab or star at the top of your screen.
- Click on it and you'll see the items you've selected.
- Select Music, Movies or TV. Now you can work through your personally curated list of top entertainment at 30,000ft.

SEATBACK CHAT
If you receive a message from a seat or name you don't recognise, you have the option to accept or decline it

Parental blocking
If you want to block by rating or specific content, please talk to a member of the cabin crew.

Headphones
Using your headphones? Our PAs are recorded at levels that work with the headphones we provide onboard, so be prepared if you use your own.

Viewing guide

-  Not suitable for nervous flyers
-  Unsuitable for children
-  Vera Loves

Languages

Most movies have several language options available. To find them, pick a movie, select the dropdown language box, choose your language and enjoy! We also have a selection of Hindi and Chinese movies onboard.

Subtitled

Subtitles and audio descriptive titles (AD) are available on a selection of movies onboard.



Pair your device

The entertainment screens on our sleek new A350 aircraft are all touchscreen, but you

can also choose to navigate our awesome selection of movies, TV and music with your own device too. All you need to do is pair your phone or tablet and, hey presto, it turns into a remote control. Here's how:

- On your entertainment screen, select the pairing button (see left) to get your four-digit code.
- On your personal device, select the "Virgin-Atlantic" WiFi network.
- Your device will

automatically take you to our WiFi page.

- Select Control Your Screen.
- Select the pairing button and enter your four-digit code when it asks you.
- Ta-da! You can now use your device as a remote.

A STELLAR CINEMATIC LINE-UP

Movies

SPICE WORLD

Get to know the politics of sci-fi epic *Dune* with **Jonny Ensall's** useful guide

House Atreides

One of the Great Houses of the *Dune* universe, the Atreides clan is headed by Duke Leto and his heir, Paul (Timothée Chalamet), and ordered by the Emperor to take over Arrakis.

House Harkonnen

The scheming Baron Harkonnen and his violent nephew Beast Rabban (Dave Bautista) have made vast wealth overseeing Arrakis and are bitter to see their stewardship end.

Arrakis

Not a power, but the desert planet in the middle of everything, Arrakis (or Dune) is the only place in the universe that can be mined for the addictive, mind-enhancing and life-extending drug, spice – hence its strategic importance.

The Bene Gesserit

Nuns? Spies? Scientists? The Bene Gesserit are hard to describe, but this quasi-religious group of women stays close to power and uses superhuman methods of control to advance their own secretive causes. Paul's mother, the Lady Jessica (Rebecca Ferguson), is a member.

The Padishah Emperor


The Emperor comes from the wealthy House Corrino and wields supreme power through the crack troops of his ruthless Sardaukar army, trained on the prison planet, Salusa Secundus. But, does the growing popularity of House Atreides threaten that control?

The Spacing Guild

The Guild's shadowy navigators – who survive in suits full of mysterious gas – are the only ones who have mastered faster-than-light interstellar travel, and thus have a universal monopoly on transport and trade routes. Kind of like a spicy space Amazon.

The Fremen

The native people of Arrakis, the Fremen have learned to survive despite the lack of water, almighty sandworms and decades of ruthless Harkonnen rule. Fremen tribe members include the smart and resourceful Chani (Zendaya).

 Watch *Dune*

ADDITIONAL PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK

HOT RIGHT NOW



Dune ♥

12

Timothée Chalamet,
Zendaya

149
mins

IT'S NOT THE first time someone's had a crack at filming Frank Herbert's classic tale of interstellar feuding and giant sandworms. In 1984, David Lynch delivered a big-budget spectacle that bombed at the cinema. Now comes the wonderful Denis Villeneuve, hot off sci-fi epics *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049*, to helm a two-film adaptation, the first of which is here. Does he deliver? Yes. Villeneuve is a master of the sumptuous visual and, sure enough, this is gorgeous – proper eye candy. Not only that, he also makes a decent fist of untangling an often knotty plot. Factor in a commanding performance from Chalamet and this is a great first instalment promising further riches to come. *See opener*



Dear Evan Hansen

12

Ben Platt,
Amy Adams

137
mins

This big-screen version of the acclaimed musical stars Platt as the anxiety suffering Evan who, when a schoolmate takes his own life, finds himself on a journey of self-discovery. It's not your usual musical, but it works a treat thanks to brilliant songs and performances.



Venom: Let There Be Carnage

15

Michelle Williams,
Tom Hardy

98
mins

The brilliant Andy Serkis takes the directorial reins for this second *Venom* outing, again starring Hardy as the titular symbiote. The result? A fast and funny sequel with a committed central turn and an unexpectedly strong emotional undercurrent.



No Time to Die ♥

12

Daniel Craig,
Léa Seydoux

163
mins

The long wait was more than worth it. Craig's swansong as Bond is an epic adventure that not only features some of the best action sequences of the franchise (that opening – wow) but finds new emotional depths for the character.



The Electrical Life of Louis Wain ♥

PG

Benedict Cumberbatch,
Claire Foy

111
mins

As an eccentric artist whose state of mind was often reflected in his work, Wain's life was ripe for biopic treatment. In the hands of Cumberbatch, and with a supporting cast to die for, it makes for an uplifting yet bittersweet experience.



Pig ♥

15

Nicolas Cage,
Alex Wolff

91
mins

Cage reins in the craziness for this slow-burn, offbeat and truly excellent drama, turning in a superb performance as a truffle hunter whose beloved pig is kidnapped. Embarking on a quest to recover his piggy pal, he must take a trip into his own troubled past.

FAMILY FEUDS

MOVIE BLUFF

DON'T KNOW WHO
LOUIS WAIN IS?



Louis who?

Louis Wain is the spiritual father of the cat meme. Way before anyone realised that watching felines do funny things was the pinnacle of human existence, he was painting adorable, anthropomorphised animals with oversized eyes. The Victorians lapped it up.

So, people wasted their days with kitten pics back then too?

Wain tapped into the appetite for sentimentality and the growing love for pets throughout the 19th century. He found great fame with his drawings and cartoons.

And riches too, presumably?

Ah, no. Wain was known to be naive. He squandered much of his cash on ill-advised investments and believed cats were evolving to communicate with humans – among other delusions.

So, no pawfect happy ending?

You'll have to see the movie. Benedict Cumberbatch puts in a fine performance as the talented, troubled Wain, and Claire Foy shines as his loving wife Emily. It's far more rewarding than watching cat videos on YouTube – trust us.

Watch *The Electrical Life of Louis Wain*



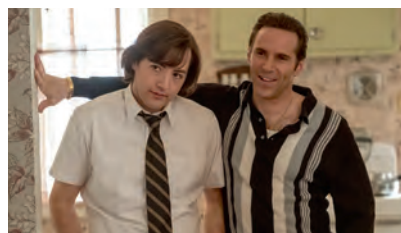
Spencer

12

Kristen Stewart,
Timothy Spall

111
mins

IF WE WERE to tell you that *Spencer* is a film about Princess Diana, with Kristen Stewart in the title role, you'd be forgiven for expecting either another crack at the standard biopic last attempted by the ill-fated Naomi Watts' version in 2013, or a big-screen version of *The Crown*. What you won't be expecting is this – a Christmas weekend in the life of Princess Diana, treated as a claustrophobic, hallucinatory psychodrama that has more in common with *The Shining* than it does *The Crown*. Anchored by an astonishing performance from Stewart, what emerges is an intense and challenging study of Diana's state of mind that makes for brilliant, if at times uncomfortable, viewing.



The Many Saints of Newark

15

Ray Liotta,
Billy Magnussen

149
mins

Sopranos fans, prepare to be happy – this long-awaited feature-length prequel, set in the 1960s, fills in tons of the award-winning series' backstory, as well as boasting a simply stunning performance from James Gandolfini's son Michael as the young Tony.



Blue Bayou

15

Justin Chon,
Alicia Vikander

117
mins

Korean-American Antonio (Chon) works his fingers to the bone providing for his family. But his discovery that he might be deported means he must confront the ghosts of his past. Featuring great support from Vikander, this is a beautifully wrought drama.

MYSTERIOUS



Last Night in Soho

18

Anya Taylor-Joy,
Matt Smith

116
mins

BABY DRIVER DIRECTOR Edgar Wright once again proves he's Mr Wright (see what we did there?) with this horror-cum-mystery set in the London enclave of the title: Soho. It's here that fashion and 1960s-obsessed Eloise (Thomasin McKenzie) arrives in order to study design. It doesn't quite meet her expectations at first, but things look up when she finds herself able to time-travel back to the classic 60s Soho of her dreams, transforming into Sandi (Taylor-Joy). However, what starts off as a joyful journey into her fondest imaginings soon takes a rather dark turn. We'll say no more for fear of spoilers, but suffice to say this is an atmospheric, evocative and at times gory journey with strong turns from all involved. *See also below right*



The Power

Vidyut Jammwal,
Salil Ankola

133
mins

Spine-chiller set in 1974, where a young nurse must work the night shift in a crumbling London hospital as striking miners switch off Britain's electricity. However, inside the hospital lurks a terrifying presence that threatens her and everyone in its vicinity.



The Lost Daughter ❤️

Olivia Colman,
Jessie Buckley

121
mins

The directorial debut of Maggie Gyllenhaal was rightly applauded at its world premiere in Venice. It stars Colman as Leda who, while on holiday, becomes obsessed with a pair of fellow tourists for reasons that become clear as the mystery gradually unfolds.



The Beta Test

18

Jim Cummings,
Olivia Applegate

93
mins

Edgy satire of Hollywood sexual mores (much of the dialogue is taken verbatim from genuine testimony) of a Hollywood agent (Cummings) who receives a mysterious sexual invitation. Does he accept the enticement? Yes, he does.



Death of a Telemarketer !

Lamorne Morris,
Alisha Wainwright

88
mins

A deft mix of comedy, satire and nail-biting drama, with Morris as Kasey, a telemarketer who finds himself in a hostage situation and at the mercy of a bloke he tried to swindle. Can Kasey pass an ethics test and save his own life?



The Protégé !

Samuel L. Jackson,
Maggie Q

109
mins

Bond director Martin Campbell assembles a great cast for this action-adventure about Anna (Maggie Q), a skilled assassin who vows revenge when her mentor, Moody (Jackson), is killed. And if that's not a recipe for the best kind of bish-bash-bosh, then what is?

TEAR JERKERS



Joe Bell !

Mark Wahlberg, Connie Britton	93 mins
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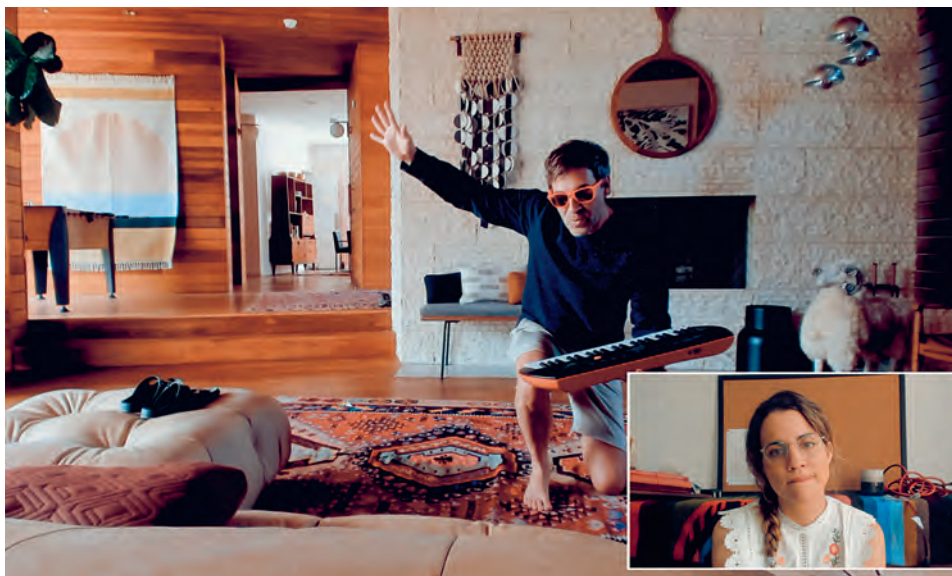
Wahlberg delivers an evocative performance in this true story of a small-town, working-class father who embarks on a solo walk across the US to crusade against bullying after his son is tormented in high school for being gay.



A Mouthful of Air !

Amanda Seyfried, Finn Wittrock	105 mins
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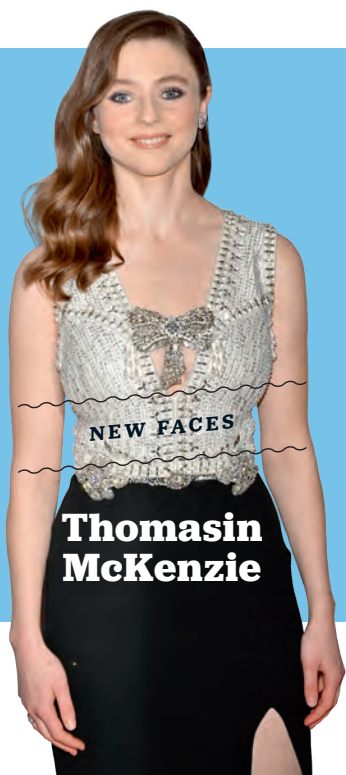
Julie (Seyfried) has a gorgeous baby and a loving marriage – but something's not right. She's finding motherhood tough and before long is spinning out of control in what emerges as a heart-wrenching treatise on post-natal depression.



Language Lessons ❤️ !

Natalie Morales, Mark Duplass	91 mins
----------------------------------	------------

STARS MORALES AND Duplass (who also co-wrote, with Morales directing) are the only two actors to appear on screen in this touching and creatively structured comedy-drama. The idea is that Adam (Duplass) has been given the gift of 100 online Spanish lessons by his husband. Adam is pretty underwhelmed at first and doesn't take it seriously, leading to some awkward initial encounters. But gradually, he and his teacher (Morales) strike up a bond which, despite her attempts to keep things on a professional footing, continues to grow stronger with each subsequent lesson. When tragedy strikes, their friendship proves to be a vital lifeline for him and the language lessons become something much, much more. Touching, funny and sad, this is a real gem.



NEW FACES

Thomasin McKenzie

I'm sure I've seen her hiding in the woods. You might well have – this high-flying Kiwi starred in 2018's *Leave No Trace*, a big-screen hit in which she lived in a remote forest in the Pacific Northwest with her father, a military vet suffering from PTSD. She's certainly come a long way since those first appearances in a soap and kids' show in New Zealand.

She's becoming more visible, I see. And some! After supporting roles in

Jojo Rabbit and *True History of the Kelly Gang*, she takes centre stage in Edgar Wright's sparkly but sinister extravaganza, *Last Night in Soho*. (That's Soho in London, not the NYC knock-off.)

So what *did* happen last night in Soho? McKenzie's retro-loving Eloise moves to London from rural England to study fashion design. She finds herself able to travel back in time to the Soho of the swinging 60s, but it's not all groovy there – she

inhabits the persona of a wannabe starlet who falls in love with an exploitative wrong 'un – Matt Smith.

A busy night, then? Wright's evocative film is tirelessly energetic and a stylish tribute to London's liveliest neighbourhood. McKenzie dazzles as a young woman discovering the dark side of a glamorous era, and this film has turned the world on to a hot new talent. She won't be hiding now.

📺 Watch *Last Night in Soho*

PHOTO: ALAMY



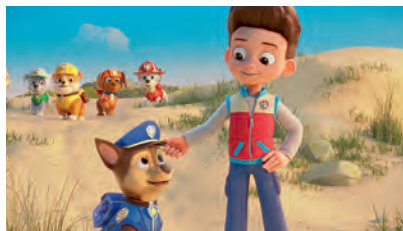
Space Jam: A New Legacy



LeBron James,
Don Cheadle

115
mins

LAST TIME we saw the Space Jam crew was way back in 1996, when one of pro basketball's all-time greats, Michael Jordan, was called upon to help the Looney Tunes earn their freedom from Moron Mountain. In this sequel, *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, a mischievous AI traps NBA king of the alley-oop LeBron James and his fictionalised son Dom inside a digital space. LeBron gets them home safely by leading Bugs Bunny and a gang of incorrigible Looney Tunes to victory on the court against the AI's champion ballers. Anyone who's been trapped under a heavy object for yonks and has no clue who the mighty LeBron is, an opening sequence showing highlights of his dazzling career will convince you he's Tunetastic!



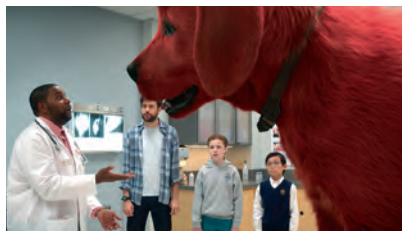
PAW Patrol: The Movie



Will Brisbin,
Marsai Martin

88
mins

Big-screen adventures for the kids, as leader of the pack Ryder and the patrolling pups are summoned to Adventure City. Their job? To prevent Mayor Humdinger and his Kitten Catastrophe Crew from imposing a state of chaos on the bustling metropolis.



Clifford the Big Red Dog



Jack Whitehall,
John Cleese

97
mins

Big and red, Clifford is still the cutest puppy ever, but when he grows up to be the biggest dog in New York City, he starts to attract the wrong kind of attention, so he and his beloved owner Emily must go on the run to escape the forces of greed. A fun family adventure.

MOVIE QUIZ

Take on our featured films



1

The Lost Daughter's Olivia Colman first found fame in the sitcom *Peep Show*. Which comic played her boyfriend (and later husband) Mark?

2

Cry Macho director Clint Eastwood appeared on stage at the 2012 Republican National Convention, ranting at an empty chair. Who or what did it represent?

3

Andy Serkis turns director for *Venom: Let There Be Carnage*. He's best known for playing Gollum in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. What was Gollum's real name?

4

Nicolas Cage has been widely praised for his performance in *Pig*. Which film earned him his only Best Actor Oscar?

5

Daniel Craig bows out as Bond in *No Time to Die*. What veggie-named family have been producing the films since the very first one, *Dr No*?

Answers on the right

DRAMA



Cry Macho 12

Clint Eastwood, Natalia Traven	103 mins
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At 91, director-actor Clint Eastwood is still exploring issues of masculinity with insight and sensitivity. Here, he plays an ex-rodeo star who takes a job helping a young boy and along the way teaches him the meaning of being a good man.



12 Mighty Orphans 12

Luke Wilson, Robert Duvall	118 mins
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This true-life sports film is set during the Great Depression and tells the story of high school football coach Rusty Russell (Wilson), who takes an unpromising side of orphans to the State Championship. Together, they inspire a nation.

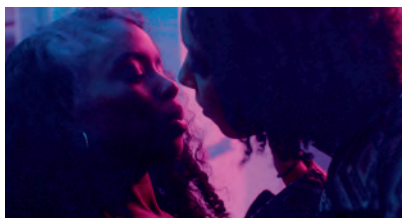


The Card Counter 15

Oscar Isaac, Tye Sheridan	111 mins
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HAVING PENNED OR CO-WRITTEN SEVERAL Martin Scorsese films, including *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*, and having directed 19 of his own, Paul Schrader is a movie legend. In *The Card Counter*, he tells the tale of ex-army interrogator William Tell (Isaac) who makes a living as a professional gambler. Tell taught himself to count cards during a stint in a military prison. Now all he wants to do is play cards, but he needs to keep his head down. His low-key presence on the casino trail is turned on its head when he's approached by a young man, Cirk (Sheridan), looking for help to execute his plan for revenge on a retired military major. Somehow, Tell sees this newfound friendship as a chance at redemption. But, as he soon finds out, the past has a nasty habit of making its presence felt.

SHORTS



Night Out !

Tsion Habte, Shalisha James-Davis	11 mins
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Director Amelia Hashemi won the London Calling Award for her short film, *Night Out*. As an ex-casting director, she knows how hard it is to figure out who you want to be when you're a teen. Sometimes, a "night out" is all you need.



Sylvia !

Jolie Lennon, Gaynor Fraser	17 mins
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Great short telling the story of Sylvia Pankhurst, the daughter of Suffragette Emmeline who, having started life as an artist, followed in her mother's footsteps to become a prominent activist-Suffragette herself.



Bertie !

Alison Steadman, Arthur Darvill	16 mins
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Parenthood, bereavement and a cute little pug called Bertie feature in this short film. Bertie's the dog next door to new arrivals Tom and Lisa, but he isn't just a normal canine. The question is, does he have special powers?



Hi, Mom

Ling Jia,
Xiaofei Zhang

128
mins

THE BIGGEST FILM of the year in China (try a box office of US\$821,000,000 at the last count) is also one of the most charming. Not bad for a first-time director – in this case Ling Jia – who also co-wrote as well as starred in *Hi, Mom*. The plot of this Mandarin-language movie finds a woman shooting back in time to the 1980s, where she must make sure that all the right people meet and fall in love in order to prevent herself being erased in the future, as well as securing her mother's happiness. Yes, if you're thinking of *Back to the Future* you're far from the first, but let's face it, there are far worse movies to be, er, inspired by. Besides, when the experience is this funny, and romantic, and charming, you really won't care.



Madam Chief Minister

15

Richa Chadda,
Saurabh Shukla

130
mins

Hindi political drama about Tara, a fiery, determined woman who decides to enter politics and sets her sights on becoming the chief minister of India's Uttar Pradesh. No easy task in such a politically charged state, but Tara's more than equal to the challenge.



Endgame

Andy Lau,
Regina Wan

119
mins

A Mandarin movie that's an exuberant mix of action and comedy. A down-on-his-luck actor accidentally causes a man to slip on a piece of soap and fall into a coma. Seeing a chance, he switches places with the comatose man – only to discover that he is a renowned assassin.



Crazy Alien



Tom Pelphrey,
Huang Bo

114
mins

Sci-fi comedy in Mandarin about a monkey trainer whose act goes belly-up when his monkey is injured by a crash-landing alien. Desperate to keep on performing, he tries to train the alien to fill in instead. It's fair to say this one is quirky.

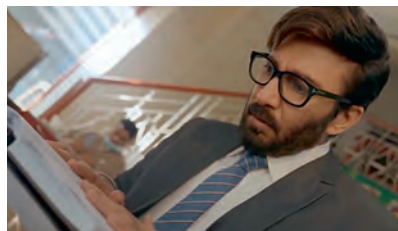


Laxmii

Akshay Kumar,
Kiara Advani

141
mins

A mix of comedy and action in this Hindi movie about Aasif who, while visiting his wife's parents, becomes possessed by the spirit of a vengeful woman. Soon enough, Aasif is dressing and behaving like his new female counterpart, Laxmii.



Future Imperfect

Aijaz Aslam,
Mashal Khan

67
mins

Hailing from Pakistan, this Urdu-language film is a mix of supernatural thriller and fantasy. It revolves around a diary written by Zahid, an emotionally conflicted medical sales rep. The twist is that it's written by Zahid's future self and sends him on a quest to change his future.

SHOWS THAT GET YOU ASKING QUESTIONS

Television

GUILTY PARTY

Hit show *Guilt*, written by Neil Forsyth, is a banquet of culpability, shame and remorse. He invites you to revel in the experience

ON THE WAY home from a wedding, two brothers run over an old man in the middle of the night. Their shock turns to panic. They're over the alcohol limit. Max, a lawyer, persuades younger brother Jake to carry the man into his nearby, empty house. Inside, they discover the man is dying of cancer. They leave. They get on with their lives. Jake feels crushing, all-consuming guilt. He can't sleep. Max feels no guilt at all. He can sleep fine.

This is how my show *Guilt* begins. With a moral quandary – which brother do you agree with? – that I hope is not easily resolved. They have killed a man and should call the police. But what difference would that make? Should they ruin their lives for ending a life soon to end anyway? If they lie, where should the lying stop? Should relatives' lives be turned upside down or should the burden be shouldered alone?

My position is that guilt and morality exist not in black and white, but in the grey of human experience, which is where true drama lies. The same incident can affect the people that experience it in very different ways, and no reaction to trauma is objectively right or wrong. Max's starting position appears one of narcissism – he will not let this incident ruin his life – but as we discover more about him, we see his innate sense of survival with more empathy. With Jake, his building obsession with the dead man and immersion in his own guilt can begin to look performative and a tool of revenge over his brother.

Like guilt itself, nothing in the story is black and white. We remain in the grey, where the good stuff is.

 Watch Guilt

MUST WATCH



Shrill !

Box set	25 mins
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COMEDY SHOWS CREATED by *Saturday Night Live* alumni tend to shine (think *30 Rock*, *Parks and Recreation*) and *Shrill*, written by and starring SNL's Aidy Bryant, is no exception. She plays Annie, a larger woman who is more than happy with her body and loves to live life by her own rules. That being the case, things would be great for Aidy, were it not for certain other aspects of her life. There's her job writing for *The Thorn*, for example; there's her boyfriend, her ex-boyfriend, her parents – you name it. Perhaps worst of all is the fact that she seems to have attracted a stalker, a figure she knows only as “The Troll” – the kind of day-to-day bugbears that conjure a bingeable and very funny comedy. We have three seasons available to watch.



Guilt ♥ !

Box set	59 mins
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Quite simply one of the best British series of the last, oh, 100 years, *Guilt* expertly combines delirious comedy and genuine thrills to tell the story of Max and Jake, whose hapless attempts to cover up a terrible crime spiral into chaos and tragedy. See *opener*



Friends: The Reunion 15

Feature	99 mins
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If you're a fan of *Friends*, there's plenty to love in this special, hosted by James Corden, in which the original cast come together and reminisce, swap memories and anecdotes, and reveal a few secrets. Special guests including David Beckham also make an appearance.



Married at First Sight UK !

Box set	47 mins
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Is it a cheesy reality show or a bold and fascinating social experiment? Maybe it's both. Either way, it certainly makes for compelling TV, as experts match couples who will meet for the first time on... wait for it... their wedding day.



A World of Calm ♥

Box set	Up to 30 mins
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Featuring narration from some of the world's best-known actors (Kate Winslet, Idris Elba, Nicole Kidman, Keanu Reeves), *A World of Calm* is a “slow TV” experience with breathtaking visuals aimed at promoting rest and relaxation.



The Flight Attendant ♥ !

Box set	45 mins
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Waking up beside a corpse, boozy flight attendant Cassie (Kaley Cuoco) tries to piece together the events of the night before in this much talked about comedy-mystery – all the while plagued by the creeping feeling that she may actually be the murderer.



IN NUMBERS

The maths
of MAFS

In *Married at First Sight UK*, couples meet for the first time on their wedding day. We've worked out the stats...



6

seasons

23

couples married

12

couples stayed together to the end of the show

3

couples still together

29

countries have a version of MAFS

PHOTOS: ADOBE STOCK

Watch *Married at First Sight UK*



Alice Street ♥

Feature

70 mins

THIS ACCLAIMED documentary focuses on Chilean studio painter Pancho Peskador and graffiti artist Desi Mundo – both of whom are based in Oakland, California. Pairing up, the two are an unlikely but creatively fertile partnership and soon hatch an ambitious plan: they want to paint a four-storey mural. What soon becomes clear, however, is that the two can't simply rock up and start daubing. There are profit-minded property owners to negotiate, residents who feel their concerns should be addressed and, of course, the fact that our two heroes don't always agree. It's an uphill struggle from start to finish. For them, a tough old job and no mistakes. For us, an inspiring tale of artistic ambition.



Amy Winehouse: Back to Black !

Documentary

60 mins

Excellent insight into the inspiration behind Amy Winehouse's bestselling *Back to Black* album. Archive footage and interviews, in which the troubled singer talks broken hearts, beehives and, of course, very bad behaviour, remind us that she was truly a force of nature.



Red Dot on the Ocean: The Matt Rutherford Story !

Documentary

77 mins

As a young tearaway, Matt Rutherford was labelled a "youth at risk". Learning how to sail helped him turn his life around and at 30 he embarked on a solo 27,000-mile trip around the Western Hemisphere in a tiny craft.

NAIL-BITERS



The Beast Must Die ❤️ !

Box set

60 mins

THE ALWAYS BRILLIANT Jared Harris heads the cast in this tale of a woman, Frances Cairns, whose life is tuned upside down by the death of her six-year-old son in a hit-and-run. With the perpetrator still at large and the cops drawing a blank, a grief-stricken Frances takes matters into her own hands and launches her own investigation. Turns out she makes a pretty good detective, and before long she's identified the man she believes is the culprit. The next step in her plan is where the action in this nail-biting saga really takes off, as Frances poses as a writer in order to inveigle herself into the man's family home – her aim being to exact the ultimate revenge. The series is adapted from a novel by Cecil Day-Lewis – father of Sir Daniel – and all six hour-long episodes screen onboard.

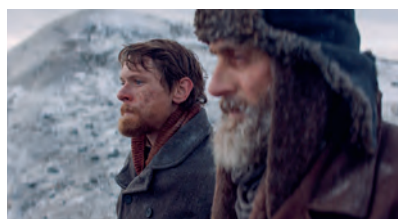


Ridley Road !

Box set

60 mins

Set in a brilliantly realised and bracingly grimy East End in the 1960s, this lauded BBC drama follows the adventures of Vivien (Agnes O'Casey), who finds herself forced into going undercover to infiltrate a British fascist group.



The North Water !

Box set

57 mins

Featuring lots of your favourite actors sporting shaggy beards, *The North Water* tells of an ex-surgeon (Jack O'Connell) on a whaling expedition, who suddenly finds himself in conflict with a psychopathic harpooner (Colin Farrell).

SPORTS

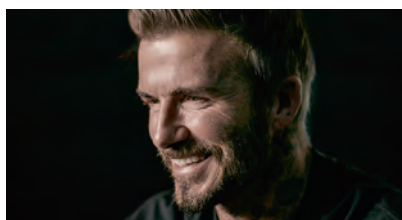


Anna Gasser – The Spark Within !

Documentary

67 mins

You won't see better snowboarding footage than in this breathtaking, action-packed documentary about Austrian snowboarder Anna Gasser, who came late to the sport but has since become an international superstar.



Fever Pitch! The Rise of the Premier League !

Box set

59 mins

Set in the early days of its formation, this documentary features superstars of the Premier League – Eric Cantona, David Beckham, Alan Shearer – dishing the dirt on the creation of the world's most famous sporting confederacy.



Roger Federer – The Reunion !

Documentary

52 mins

World tennis champ Federer returns to his mother's native South Africa in order to play a one-off match against his biggest rival, Rafael Nadal. The tennis is great, of course, but at heart this is a film about friendship and, most of all, family.

FOR THE LOLS



Alma's Not Normal ❤️ !

Box set 30 mins

Acclaimed sitcom in which director-star Sophie Willan plays the eponymous Alma, who is trying give her life meaning while also holding her dysfunctional family together. It's funny, it's raw, it tugs at the heartstrings – and it's all onboard.



Bump ❤️ !

Box set Up to 32 mins

THIS MIX OF drama and comedy (a “dramedy”, if you don't find that word too horrible) hails from Australia and centres on Oly (Nathalie Morris) a high-achieving and promising student at an inner-city high school in Sydney. All is going swimmingly for young Oly, who has ambitious plans for the future – until, that is, one impulsive night followed in short order by a positive pregnancy test. A huge, record-breaking hit on streaming services, the series follows the life-changing repercussions, not just for Oly but also for the father of the imminent child, as well as the wider families involved. What emerges is not only a superb exploration of the impact of unplanned parenthood on the characters involved but also holds a mirror to Aussie socio-cultural issues.



The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air 12

8 episodes 22 mins

Funny how things come round – the sitcom that first aired in 1990 and launched the career of Will Smith as the Fresh Prince, a streetwise kid from Philly who goes to live in upscale Hollywood, has never been more popular.

EYE-OPENERS



21st Century Mythologies with Richard Clay !

Documentary 60 mins

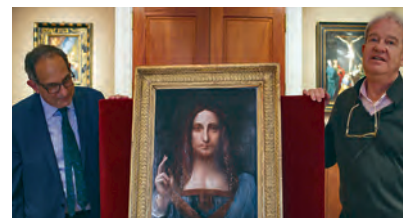
On a journey that takes him everywhere from Paris to Margate, art historian Richard Clay follows in the footsteps of philosopher Roland Barthes to cast a light on his seminal work, *Mythologies*.



David Attenborough's Conquest of the Skies

Box set 51 mins

Mini-series in which the estimable Sir David explores flight in nature, from the evolution of the very first insects to the array of creatures ruling the roost today – all captured in glorious footage.



The Lost Leonardo ❤️ 15

Documentary 96 mins

This documentary tries to unpick the bewildering story of *Salvator Mundi* – a work credibly attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, the first to be discovered for more than a century, and whose fate is driven by fame, money and power.

STUDIO SECRETS AND MIXING-DESK MAGIC

Audio



LONDON'S ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS must be the world's the best-known recording venue. It was The Beatles' favourite place to make music; they named their 11th studio LP after it and countless fans still make the pilgrimage to the famous road crossing shown on the album cover.

But there is more to Abbey Road than just The Beatles as a new docu-series, *Behind Number 3, Abbey Road*, reminds us. Through six episodes, journalist Paul Sexton chats to the people who have worked behind the scenes at the studio during its 90 years. Here, they share with us some of their most treasured Abbey Road stories.

FIVE THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ABBEY ROAD

Insiders reveal their favourite stories about the world's most famous recording studios

1 It's produced classified material
"Glenn Miller made his last recording here, just three months before he disappeared. The recordings from September 1944 with the Allied Forces band and Dinah Shore were only released in 1994 as they were technically owned by the United States Army, and remained under lock and key under the heading of 'propaganda.'
– Mark Stiles, head of audio products

2 Gardening tools have graced the mics
"Some of the most famous film scores of all time have been recorded in Studio One, including *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but few people know that one of the more unusual sounds on these sessions is captured by placing a microphone in a watering can."
– Jeremy Huffelman, general manager

3 John Lennon had a sensitive tush
"All sorts of stories are passed down through the Abbey Road family. My favourites are John Lennon writing a letter to the then managing

director, Ken Townsend, complaining about the quality of the toilet roll, the engineer sent out for chicken bones to get a different drum sound for Muse, and the singer [not named] who wanted the bubbles stirred out of her champagne."
– Isabel Garvey, managing director

4 Recording the *Star Wars* score was a battle
"In the past, it wasn't simple to make sure movie music lined up and complemented the picture – it might be that certain elements need to line up exactly with hits such as scene cuts and actions. The conductor would need to carefully watch the picture and guide the musicians to line up. In *Abbey Road*, the orchestra would be laid out with the conductor's back to the control room and on the opposite wall a giant screen would show the film. The original *Star Wars* films were





In the mix:
Glenn Miller,
Star Wars,
Indiana Jones,
Robert Smith
and John
Lennon

done this way. So the next movie you watch onboard, think about how the music brings out important parts of the film.”
– *George Oulton, recordist*

5 Even stars think *Abbey Road* is a big deal
“I find it interesting seeing how artists react to being at *Abbey Road*. Robert Smith spoke during mixing *The Cure’s* Rock and Roll Hall of Fame performance of loving the energy in Studio Three and reacting to the ‘pressure’ of recording at *Abbey Road*, even though he was already very much a part of our story. He put pressure on himself to perform; people use the history in different ways.”
– *Gordon Davidson, engineer*

🎧 Listen to Behind Number 3, *Abbey Road* for even more insider stories from Isabel Garvey and others

WORDS: CHARLOTTE GUNN PHOTOS: ALAMY, LUCASFILM, ADOBE STOCK

ALL THAT JAZZ



Tony Bennett & Lady Gaga

<i>Love for Sale</i>	Jazz
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Settle back as the pop diva and the legendary crooner wow with their artful vocal chemistry on Great American Songbook standards like *I Get a Kick Out of You* and the title track, Bennett’s favourite on the album. Knowing this is Bennett’s last release of new material (the 95-year-old announced his retirement in late 2021) adds an extra touch of poignancy to the buoyant arrangements. They’ve given us a gem.



Various Artists

<i>Jazz Kingdom</i>	Jazz
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Jazz developed in the US in the early 20th century and its evolution was led by the likes of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. Now the UK is developing its own string of greats and this playlist showcases them. From Skinny Pelmbe and Slow Loris to brass maestros Nubya Garcia and Theon Cross, these are the all-new UK artists who are shaping the modern jazz scene.



Nubya Garcia

<i>Source</i>	Jazz
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Tenor saxophonist Nubya Garcia, a key member of the thriving London jazz scene, essays a heartfelt and emotive take on modern jazz on this swoonsome debut album. Garcia’s multidimensional jazz sounds are layered with soul, afro-diaspora beats and just a hint of dubstep. The title track blends together reggae, jazz and myriad sounds from the award-winning artist’s youth. Don’t sleep, jazz fans – this is not an album to miss.



Carla Bruni

<i>French Touch</i>	Jazz
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This is Carla Bruni’s fifth studio album, an English-language collection of covers of some of her favourite songs, by bands including Depeche Mode, Abba and even AC/DC. The Italian-French singer-songwriter, supermodel and former first lady of France (imagine being able to boast all that on your CV) adds a sultry flavour to some well-known songs, giving them a “French touch” – as only the Gallic can.

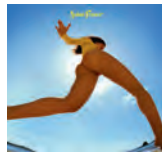
POP BOPS



Lorde ❤️

<i>Solar Power</i>	Pop
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THE THIRD ALBUM from the creatively fertile mind of Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O'Connor, aka Lorde, sparked a lot of talk online, partly because of its, um, “eye-catching” cover, and partly because of its noble intentions. “I didn’t wanna make something that would end up in a landfill in two years,” she said, which was why purchasers of the CD had to make do with a download code instead. Unsurprisingly, eco concerns have found their way into the music which – from its gloriously sunny lead single, also called *Solar Power*, onwards – looks to psychedelic pop and folk for inspiration. The end result is a beach-ready, blissed-out gem, which marks an interesting stylistic change for Lorde, who rightly stakes her claim as one of the most creative singer-songwriters at work today.



Sam Fender ❤️

<i>Seventeen Going Under</i>	Rock/pop
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Sam Fender grew up loving Bruce Springsteen and began writing his own songs at 13. This, his second album, finds him expanding his sound to almost universal acclaim, with *The Guardian* calling it “urgent, incisive and brave”.



Halsey !

<i>If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power</i>	Pop
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Halsey describes this, her fourth, as “a concept album about the joys and horrors of pregnancy and childbirth”. Produced by Atticus Ross and Trent Reznor (see below), it has all the hints of a film score.



FINNEAS ❤️

<i>Optimist</i>	Pop
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Since Finneas O'Connell is the composer behind his sister Billie Eilish's songs, it's unsurprising that his debut album reaches the same levels of greatness. He has a knack for moulding pop into often strange, avant-garde shapes.



Florence + the Machine

<i>Ceremonials</i>	Abbey Road
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“Big” is a fair way to describe this storming second album from the irrepressible Ms Welch. Starting and ending with her soaring, transcendent vocals, everything is turned up to eleven, making for an album chock full of bangers.



THE DUO BEHIND HALSEY'S LATEST



US singer-songwriter Halsey has worked with producers Atticus Ross and Trent Reznor for her new album, *If I Can't Have Love...*
2002 Atticus Ross and Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor work on side project Tapeworm. **2010** Create the music for *The Social Network*, which wins an Academy Award for Best Original Score. **2011** Score *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* and win a Grammy for Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media. **2014** Compose the soundtrack for *Gone Girl*. **2019** Score TV series *Watchmen*, for which they win an Emmy. **2021** Produce and co-write Halsey's Grammy-nominated fourth album, *If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power*.

🔊 Listen to *If I Can't Have Love, I Want Power* by Halsey

BRILLIANT BANDS



Oasis

<i>Be Here Now</i>	Abbey Road
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Oasis's third album in 1997 met with accusations of self-indulgence – 20 years later it's been reappraised. The younger Gallagher defended it all those years ago: "It's a top record, man." Turns out Liam was right.



The Lathums ♥

<i>How Beautiful Life Can Be</i>	Alternative
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Fast-rising stars The Lathums have a nifty talent for balancing euphoria and melancholy in equal measure – all shot through a mid-00s indie lens, sure to find favour with fans of Arctic Monkeys, The Kooks and Blossoms.



Foster the People

<i>Torches X</i>	Alternative
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Los Angeles indie-pop band Foster the People unleashed their debut, *Torches*, in 2011. Now expanded as *Torches X*, it includes the original album and some bonus tracks, and has lost none of its brilliance in the intervening years.



The Darkness !

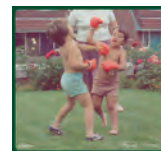
<i>Motorhead</i>	Rock
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The Darkness formula features an exuberant brand of heavy metal that nods to AC/DC, Def Leppard and Queen, alongside a hefty dose of camp and laugh-out-loud lyrics. Do they change it for this seventh album? Nope.

Elbow ♥

<i>Flying Dream 1</i>	Alternative
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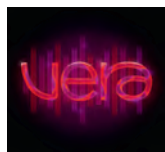
"WE REALISED we were making a record free of the usual creative guidelines," says Elbow frontman Guy Garvey about their ninth studio album, *Flying Dream 1*. This is the Bury band's lockdown album, with each member composing at home before recording at the Theatre Royal in Brighton. The result, as Garvey says, is a project influenced by "patient, quiet, whole albums" by artists such as Kate Bush, Van Morrison and Talk Talk.



EXCLUSIVES

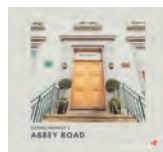
**Vera Presents...
New Music February 22**

If you need to know what's tickling the nation's musical tastebuds, then step this way for a zeitgeist surfing grab-bag of the month's best new music.



Behind Number 3, Abbey Road ♥

EMI Recording Studios was renamed Abbey Road in honour of The Beatles and their 11th album, and the studio remains a crucible for music. In this series, journalist Paul Sexton chats with Abbey Road's behind-the-scenes heroes. *See opener*



**The List with Justin Hawkins
– The Darkness**

The Darkness make rock that's sometimes tongue-in-cheek but always joyous and anthemic – as are the songs frontman Justin picked in this episode of The List.



PHOTOS: OPHELIA MIKELSON JONES, ALAMY



virgin atlantic 

Sleeping on the job

Business travel,
Virgin Atlantic style

CREDITS.

Virgin Atlantic news and views



We value the benefits of our uniforms so much that we've just opened our own crew boutique dedicated to them. Here's what we've got in store...

Not to blow our own trumpet, but Virgin Atlantic's uniforms are iconic (toot toot!). Our pristine cabin crew members are not only easy to recognise from their burgundy three-piece suits and tailored scarlet ensembles, but also extremely memorable, too. But then, what else would you expect from a collection designed by revered British designer Vivienne Westwood, who put her spin on the Virgin look back in 2014?

"Her style and her ethos align with ours. We're an airline but we're very mindful of sustainability, always looking at ways we can reduce our impact on the planet, such as using materials with a recycled plastic content," says uniforms manager Tanya Miller about the partnership. "The uniforms she created are glamorous, tailored and traditional but with a twist. They're something we're very proud of - and they're standing the test of time too, eight years down the line." ▶



They're about more than looking good, however. While uniforms have sometimes been used to homogenise a group, Virgin Atlantic's aim is to help our people feel special and as though they are part of something bigger.

"We support over 6000 uniform wearers, including cabin crew, pilots, airport and Clubhouse teams, engineers and turnaround officers," says Tanya, who's been at Virgin Atlantic for 14 years. "Whoever we're dressing, we want them to feel amazing in what they're wearing – empowered, even – so they can just get out there and focus on enjoying their job and being their best."

Closed Loop Recycling in Virgin Atlantic uniforms means fibres from worn polyester clothing can be woven into new fabrics

"We like to give a great experience to each individual... We want people to feel valued"

It's for this reason that we have opened a uniform boutique in our CAE training facility in Crawley, England, where we're based. "We've got all our uniform size ranges and shoes arranged beautifully, with fitting cubicles so our people can try the garments on and embrace their new uniform look. We like to give a great experience to each individual; we want our people to feel valued," says Tanya.

"We're here to make sure that our people look absolutely fabulous and feel a part of Virgin Atlantic from day one." It's great to be around that kind of excitement and we want people to hold on to that feeling as they go out there into the world of Virgin."



WAITING IN THE WINGS

GROUP 860'S CABIN CREW TRAINING WAS DELAYED BY THE PANDEMIC, BUT NOW THEY HAVE THEIR WINGS



WITH UP TO 10,000 applicants per recruitment drive, being chosen to take part in Virgin Atlantic's cabin crew training is a pretty big deal. "They go through a screening process and we're very selective with the crew that we pick," says Justin Ho, Master Trainer, Customer Service. You can imagine, then, the disappointment that the trainees in group 860 felt when the pandemic came in March 2020 and put a stop to their training two weeks into their four-and-a-half-week course. In the two years that followed, many went on to work in other unrelated roles but had set their hearts on returning to Virgin.

Now they've finally finished what they started. They completed their cabin crew training and, last month, we held the first Wings Ceremony for two years. "We wanted to recognise that it's a big deal – they've achieved something so great with all the odds stacked against them," says Justin, who hosted the event. It's not only a celebration but also the day they receive their actual "wings" badge, which only crew wear on their uniforms.

"It feels surreal but amazing to finally get our wings," says the newly qualified Georgia Wilson. "I can't wait to get into the skies, visit Virgin's incredible destinations and have some of those 'pinch me, is this really my job' moments."



JOIN THE CREW IN... SAN FRANCISCO

Stephen Wilson gives us his top tips for where to go in the Golden City



Start the day with a ride on the cable car from Market St down to the restaurant **Mama's on Washington Square**. Order the dynamite eggs Benedict and a side of tasty pancakes.



Then walk to Fisherman's Wharf, where you can see the seals and **pick up a bike** to ride over the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito.



Get yourself in the mood for a night on the town with a visit to **El Techo** in the Mission District for Latin American street food and margaritas with a rooftop view.



If you feel like dancing, head over to the Castro for some LGBTQ culture and the go-go dancers at **Beaux**.

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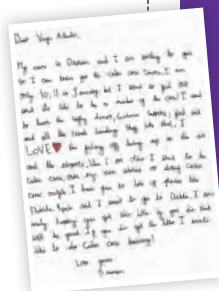
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Aiming high

One of our goals is to inspire the next generation to pursue careers in aviation, so it was encouraging when our CEO, Shai Weiss, received a letter from 10-year-old Dawson recently. In the letter, he explains his love of flying and desire to one day train as cabin crew. While plenty of our crew members have written back to him with advice, Shai has also invited Dawson to visit the crew training facility. We look forward to officially taking him under our wing once he turns 18.



Midlands Area Manager Litza Vasiliou loves the rush that comes from motivating her team

"I've been working for Virgin Holidays for more than nine years and my role is to lead a team of 26 staff across five retail stores, which is where customers

can come to enquire about booking their next trip. The job involves a mix of driving sales, maximising sales opportunities and being commercially aware of what our competitors are offering.

"I really enjoy sales – it's the

competition and the success of it. In my role, it's up to me to create a culture where my team is buzzing and hungry for those sales too. And that's the thing I really love about my job: my team. Everyone shares the same determination to be the best version

of themselves, so I'm incredibly passionate about ensuring our team members are supported and empowered, as well as developing staff members who are ready to take the next step in their careers.

"For example, I had a team member who was

brilliant but didn't think she'd successfully get a promotion. I started giving her extra responsibilities and when the opportunity of a promotion arose again she was ready. I find it so rewarding to empower people like that."

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How to connect

- 1 Turn on your WiFi-enabled device and connect to the "Virgin-Atlantic" WiFi network.
- 2 If you don't automatically connect to the WiFi portal, don't worry. Just take a look at the safety card in your seat pocket to see what type of aircraft you're on.

If you're onboard...

- A 787-9 or an A350-1000, open your browser and navigate to virgin-atlantic-wifi.com
- An A330-300, open your browser and

navigate to airborne.gogonflight.com

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