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THE SECRETS  
OF SPORTING  
SUCCESS

MUSIC  
RIDING HIGH  
ON UK JAZZ'S  
NEW WAVE

Travel in Technicolor

virgin atlantic

January 2022



## LIKE A BOSS

Meet Sam Fender:  
the Brit rocker  
set to be the next  
Springsteen

# Discover the Possibilities Within



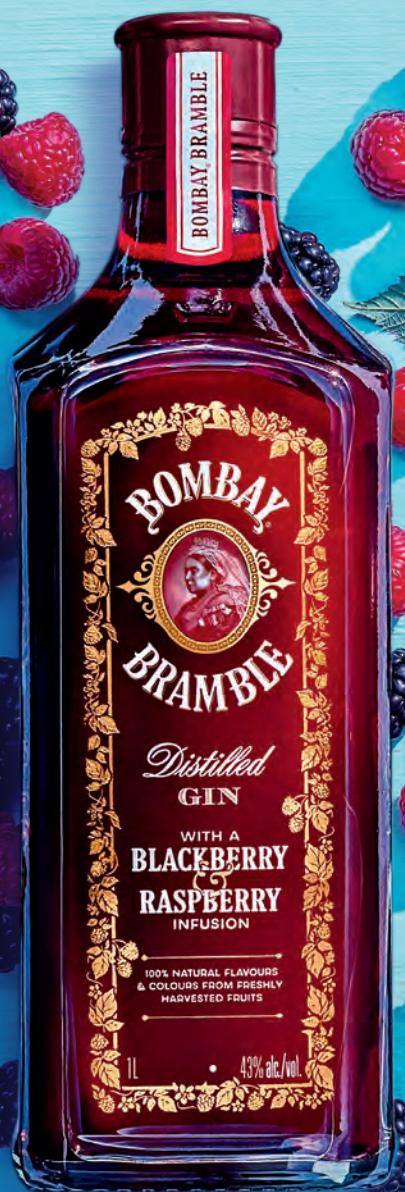
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Vera JANUARY 2022

## Cameos



### Marcus Barnes

London-based Marcus is a DJ and radio host as well as writer for the likes of *The Guardian*. He gave us the lowdown on new wave jazz artist Nubya Garcia.

See p75



### Charlotte Gunn

Former *NME* editor and founder/editor of *The Forty-Five* (a female-led music website), Charlotte got the best out of our cover star Sam Fender.

See p28



### Mathew Scott

An LA-based commercial and documentary photographer, Mathew works on a variety of projects, such as capturing the LA River and all its characters.

See p48

TAKE ME,  
I'M YOURS  
Enjoy this magazine  
onboard and  
at home



28-38

# IN THIS ISSUE

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### Red Hot

Reflect on Manhattan from Summit One Vanderbilt, get revitalised in London and learn why Orla Gartland decided to go it alone in our round-up of this month's essentials.

### Features

Sam Fender talks about turning hardship into relatable rock and how music can save lives. Plus, let us put some magic into your 2022 and discover the life along LA's concrete river.

### What's On

This month's biggest films include *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* and *The Green Knight*, accompanied by *Good Girls* and BTS in our knock-out inflight entertainment.

### Credits

The latest news from the Virgin Atlantic World: Flying Club has partnered with Virgin Red so you can earn extra rewards – and land with a spring in your step with our January tips.

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THINGS TO GET OBSESSED  
WITH RIGHT NOW

# Red Hot

WIDE ANGLE

## A SKY-HIGH HALL OF MIRRORS IN NEW YORK

Brooklyn artist Kenzo Digital has a shiny new permanent installation at the Summit, on top of 93-storey skyscraper One Vanderbilt. Comprising 2,300m<sup>2</sup> of mirrors plastered all over three mind-bending spaces, *Air* is basically a hall of mirrors but with the living Manhattan skyline as an endlessly inspiring fourth wall. A spellbinding work offering New Yorkers a fresh perspective on the hurly-burly of city life – and a place for quiet reflection.

 Fly to New York



FIRST TAKE

# EPIC MOVIE MASH-UPS

Finally we're getting the movies we've been waiting years to see, says **Al Horner**

**L**ate last year, Universal Pictures tweeted a picture of *Back to the Future*'s Marty McFly racing away on his skateboard from one of *Jurassic Park*'s snarling velociraptors. "What Universal films would you make a crossover event for?" asked the accompanying caption. In past decades, the thought of Doc Brown and co powering up the flux capacitor with a T-Rex on their tails would have been preposterous. These days, as Doc might say, Great Scott, how things have changed.

In 2021, films like *Free Guy* and *Space Jam: A New Legacy* featured characters and items crossing over from other movie franchises. Everyone from Superman to Rick and Morty turned up in the latter, adding to a trend that's been a fixture of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and went into overdrive when Steven Spielberg made his pop culture crossover explosion *Ready Player One* in 2018 – a movie that featured everyone from King Kong to Robocop.

It's a trend that shows no sign of slowing: *Ready Player Two* is in development, promising an even

bigger collision of characters from across all genres of beloved movies. Industry reports of a *Transformers* crossover film involving the Power Rangers have begun swirling and there's still a chance that the long-rumoured movie combining *Men in Black* with Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum's characters from *22 Jump Street* could soon see the light of day.

Why's this all happening? Studios buying up other studios is one major reason: Disney's

## JUST DESSERTS

Celebs  
are giving  
us sugar



Tyra Banks just launched her own line of ice cream, called Smize Cream. It means "smile with your eyes", which sounds perfect for these times.

Sweetness:



Craving unbridled full-fat indulgence? Try Whipshots from rapper Cardi B. Imagine whipped cream, but 10% of it is vodka. It comes in vanilla, caramel and mocha varieties.

Sweetness:



For a fancy dessert, Selena Gomez has you covered. She's co-owner of Serendipity 3, an Instagrammable New York spot vaunted for its Frrrozen Hot Chocolate.

Sweetness:



acquisition of Fox in 2019 made it possible for the Simpsons to meet Goofy in a recent short film, among all manner of other crossovers. Film fans seem to get a kick out of seeing characters from different movie franchises face-off and team up, and Hollywood has cottoned onto this. In other words, buckle up: *Jurassic Park to the Future* may actually one day happen.

Watch Free Guy and Space Jam: A New Legacy

ILLUSTRATION: GUY SHIELD / PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

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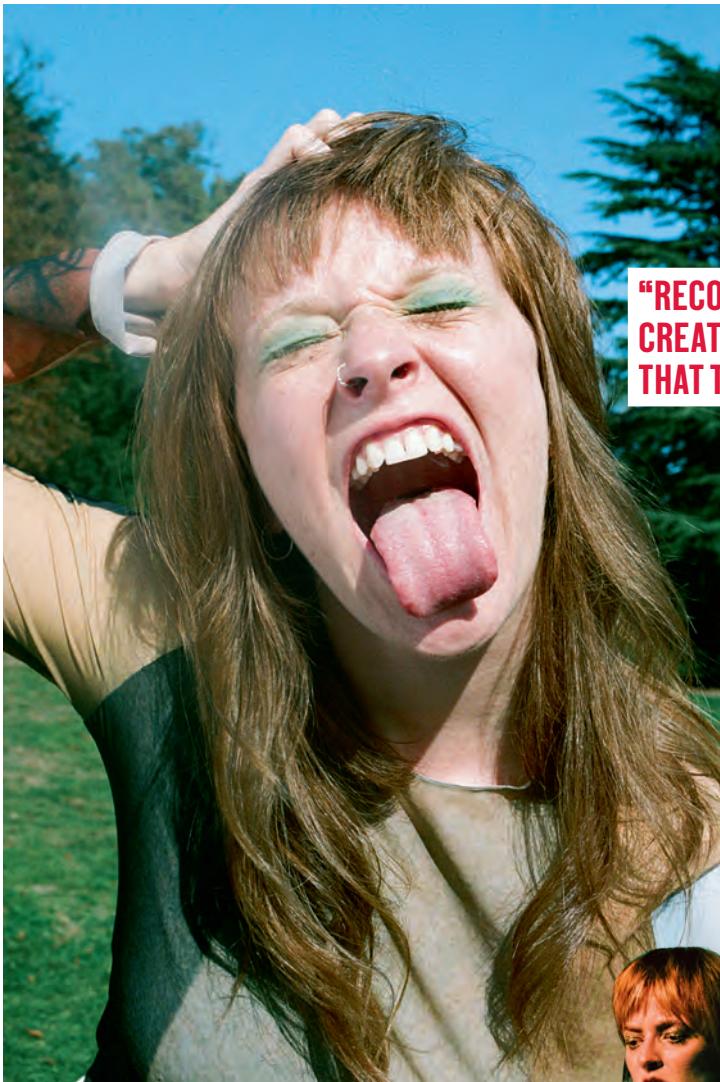


RISING STAR

# Internet iconoclast Orla Gartland

THE IRISH SINGER-SONGWRITER HAS SWAPPED YOUTUBE FAME FOR CRITICAL ACCLAIM. ALL BY BEING A CONTROL FREAK, SHE TELLS **LEONIE COOPER**

**WHEN ORLA GARTLAND** left Dublin in 2014 to pursue a music career in London, stardom was far from guaranteed. Although she had already started to make a name for herself on YouTube with acoustic cover versions, the 19-year-old singer-songwriter still needed to earn some kind of a living. She did so by working in a cafe that specialised purely in cereal. Following *Woman on the Internet* – her acclaimed and self-released debut album – Gartland's Cheerios days are now far behind her. Witty and self-aware, ➤



the record merges the delicate folk-pop of Phoebe Bridgers' confessionalists with a savvy synth-pop edge and the occasional punky power move. It's an utter blast from start to finish.

#### You put out *Woman on the Internet* on your own record label – why?

I flirted with the idea of signing a record deal, but I was so disheartened when I saw how dated they were. They're so un-artist friendly. They'll fund your endeavours, but in return they'll expect total creative control and can veto anything. That to me was a huge turn-off because I'm such a control freak.



#### Your first release was way back in 2011 – the *Laughing at My Own Jokes* EP. Why did it take a decade to follow it with a full-length album?

I didn't feel ready for a long time. Before I released an album I wanted a really confident live set, I wanted the right band and I wanted to learn how to produce it myself. It also costs loads of money to release an album independently, so I needed to save up!

**"RECORD COMPANIES EXPECT TOTAL CREATIVE CONTROL AND CAN VETO ANYTHING. THAT TO ME WAS A HUGE TURN-OFF"**

#### There's a scented candle to go alongside the record. What does it smell like?

You can go really all out with merch, but essentially no one really wants to buy anything apart from white T-shirts. Everyone's really boring! But I've always wanted to make candles. The official scent is sea salt and wood sage – it's fresh and quite light. I don't like candles that are perfumey or syrupy.

#### What's the appeal of being a solo artist to you?

I always think about this. I really would have loved to have been in a band and I'd love to do it some day, but I'm just really drawn to solo artists. There's something so powerful to me about a singular voice and outlook. I love Laura Marling and people with a lot of character. It's hard for individuals to shine through in a band. It was quite instinctive for me.

#### Your song *Did It to Myself* featured on the soundtrack of the BBC's adaptation of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*. That must have felt pretty cool...

There are so many naff and twee and incorrect depictions of Ireland in TV and film, but that series is exactly what living in Dublin is like. It felt so real. I knew 25 guys like [series' co-lead] Connell. My song being in it was just a cool bonus.

#### What did you learn from your time in the cereal cafe?

It left with me some very useless and untransferrable knowledge about all kinds of American breakfast foods.

Listen to *Woman on the Internet*



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INSIDE THE BOX

# SETS AND THE CITIES

New immersive experiences put you inside your favourite TV shows, reports **Kate Lloyd**

**E**ver considered what the *Friends* sofa would be like to sit on? Does it sag? Is it scratchy? Did it ever recover from that unfortunate trip to the fountain?

Perhaps you'd like to know how it feels to be Carrie Bradshaw, heading to bed after a long night writing "I couldn't help but wonder" over and over. Well, now you actually can.

A new type of cosplay has gone mainstream. TV superfans are immersing themselves in recreated sets from shows in the same way they might once have soaked up the atmosphere at historic or cultural landmarks. There's The Friends Experience in New York and Dallas where, for US\$45 (£34), you're able to chill in Monica's flat and pop to Central Perk for a soup bowl-sized cappuccino. For \$23 a night, you can rent out Bradshaw's fictional New York pad from *Sex and the City* and play dress-up in her iconic closet stuffed with designer outfits and Manolo Blahniks. Meanwhile, for £48 (\$64), you can treat yourself to a relaxing hour of international robbery at Money Heist: The

Experience in London and – as of March – be an honoured guest at The Queen's Ball, LA's Bridgerton-inspired immersive party.

The rise of this trend is in part due to social media – a snap of you on Joey's La-Z-Boy is bound to rake in the likes on Instagram, after all. But there's more to it than that. During lockdown the average Brit spent more than six hours per day watching TV. That's a third of our waking lives hanging out with imaginary characters and existing in their worlds. Did our brains end up getting



Clockwise from right: Dress up in Carrie's Airbnb apartment; a visit from Carrie herself; Sarah Jessica Parker; *Money Heist* hits London; Central Perk recreated



The *Sex and the City* flat was recreated ahead of the arrival of the sequel, *And Just Like That*.



PHOTOS: TARA RICE, KATE GLICKSBERG; AIRB&B,  
GETTY IMAGES; FEVER



## "THE LINES BETWEEN TV AND REALITY HAVE BLURRED AND, IT TURNS OUT, WE'RE ALL TOTALLY FINE WITH IT"

muddled between Andy Smith, friend from work, and Tony Soprano, fictional Mafia boss? Probably.

The lines between TV and reality have blurred and, it turns out, we're all totally fine with it. Give it a few years and maybe holidaymakers will head to New York for a city break and come back having only visited the *Succession* boardroom, *Seinfeld*'s apartment and Ilana's toilet from *Broad City*. In fact, maybe we're not even living in real life to start with. Maybe this is just a particularly experimental episode of *Black Mirror* and there's an events management team in the "real" reality pulling together an immersive experience of our lives as we speak. £24, including free key ring. No refunds.

Watch *Friends: The Reunion*, exclusive to Vera from HBO Max

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## DRINKS



## We're seeing the future in shrooms

We love mushrooms. Truly. Fungi are a climate-friendly protein source, can be used as a construction material, and did you know they're also dreamy in cocktails?

Reinvigorated Washington, DC, bar Columbia Room now serves spiritless Kentucky 74 tipplers with lion's mane mushroom tincture, spiced maple and pineapple gomme. Mushroom Spirits Distillery in upstate New York cunningly infuses vodka with shiitake – it's available at NYC farmers' markets or from its Seneca Falls tasting room.

And Fungrn brewery in London ships Chaga Lager to choice bottle shops. Caps off to all of them.

**✗ Fly to Washington**



## SNACKS

# SMASHING PUDDING IN LAS VEGAS

Larger-than-life Mexican restaurant **La Neta** promises a piñata party for dessert



**NO DOUBT YOUR** mother told you to never play with your food. Well, with respect, your mother can jog on. Diners at La Neta, a joyful new spot in Summerlin, Las Vegas, can – indeed, are downright encouraged to – treat this colourful candy-heart dessert like a birthday party piñata and clomp it with a wooden hammer till it disgorges its sweet cargo of brownies, chiffon cake, cookies and sprinkles all over your table.

La Neta – slang for “the truth” in Mexico – takes classic south-of-the-border staples and shoots them through with a lightning bolt of eccentricity. Take the Lobsta BFT, a ludicrously outsized taco with lobster meat and fennel citrus slaw in a cheese-stuffed flour tortilla. The space is every bit as spangly, but we can't get over this sweet piñata. Didn't your mother also say you'd be a heartbreaker?

**✗ Fly to Las Vegas**



SLEEPER HIT

## Jaipur's hidden gem

THE JOHRI BRINGS INTIMATE BOUTIQUE LUXURY TO THE CITY'S SPARKLING JEWELLERY QUARTER

**ARTISANS AND MERCHANTS** plying their trade in Jaipur's jewellery bazaar know a thing or two about refinement. So it's only fitting the neighbourhood's new Johri hotel – named after the Hindi word for jeweller – should be a cut above. Five spacious suites set around a quiet courtyard in a renovated family home belonging to the Kasiwal jewellery dynasty each take their cues from different gems. The Moti – pearl – suite has a private rooftop veranda. The Neelam, or sapphire, suite boasts striking zigzag columns and an upholstered swing suspended on wrought-iron cables. NYC-based designer Naina Shah lends a luxury gloss to classic Rajasthani design touches – scalloped arches, bone-inlay mirrors, richly embroidered headboards. Take high chai under hand-painted murals in the lavish Pukhraj lounge and gorge on gourmet veggie morsels at chef Sonu Singh's restaurant. Quite simply, it rocks.

**X** Fly to Delhi



Clockwise from far left: The Johri features antique furniture, art and textiles, all from Rajasthan; the Neelam suite boasts a plush swing and views of the bazaar



## 3 MORE BEJEWELLED BOLTHOLES

WORDS: VICTORIA BEARDWOOD PHOTOS: BHARAT AGARWAL, DELAIRE GRAFF ESTATE, THE CARLYLE, A ROSEWOOD HOTEL BY BVLGARI



### DELAIRE GRAFF ESTATE, CAPE TOWN

Jeweller Laurence Graff is behind this 40-hectare luxury vineyard retreat – all heated infinity pools, bling boutiques and snaking pathways lined with sculptures.



### BVLGARI HOTEL, SHANGHAI

The Italian brand loves an unashamed flex. Float serenely in a jade-green swimming pool, dine out at the Michelin-starred 47th-floor restaurant and get your glow back at the spa.



### THE CARLYLE, NEW YORK

This stately 1930s Upper East Side institution is home to HD Jewels, which overflows with glamorous vintage trinkets, from Belle Époque Cartier necklaces to iridescent Art Deco brooches.

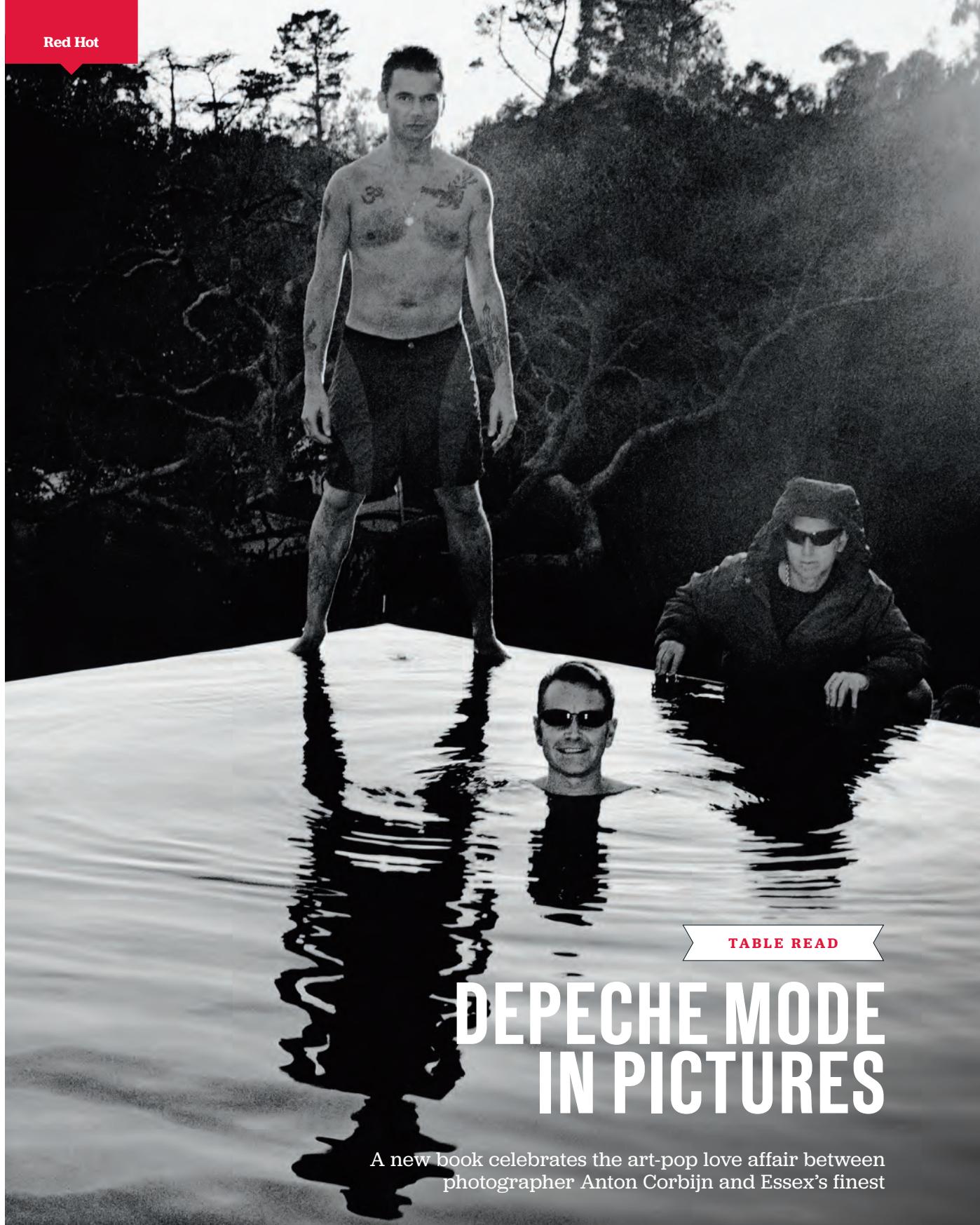
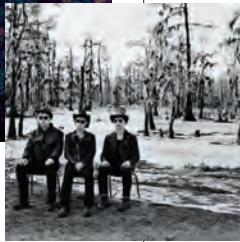
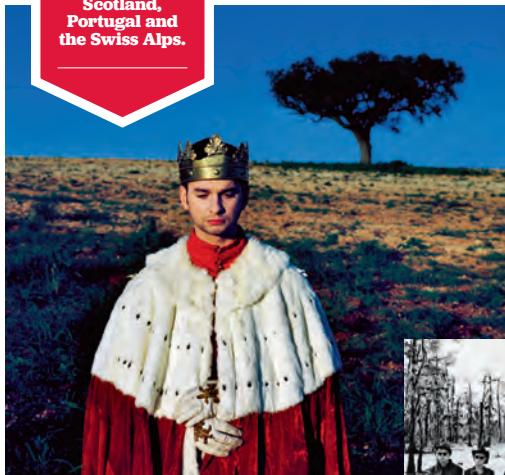


TABLE READ

# DEPECHE MODE IN PICTURES

A new book celebrates the art-pop love affair between  
photographer Anton Corbijn and Essex's finest

The video for *Enjoy the Silence* was shot in Scotland, Portugal and the Swiss Alps.



**W**hen Depeche Mode were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2020, singer Dave Gahan proffered a grateful shout-out. "I'd like to thank Anton Corbijn – who thank God came in at the right time and actually made us look cool."

The story of how a raffish synth-pop group from Basildon, Essex, became arguably the biggest cult band in the world owes plenty to Corbijn. The Dutch snapper – already famous for moody black-and-white portraits of artists like David Bowie – laid the foundations for Depeche Mode's brooding aesthetic in magazine shoots as far back as 1981. Discovering a shared affinity for bleak romantic themes, Corbijn eventually became the group's all-round visual guru, shooting record sleeves, directing videos and even designing stage sets.

This new book – a smaller-format, cheaper reissue of a tome that originally cost £2,000 – includes over 500 intimate photos of the band, on stage or at play on set for immortal videos like *Personal Jesus*, with insightful handwritten captions by Corbijn.

Why do they gel so well? Maybe because Depeche Mode tackle religion a lot and Corbijn's dad was a parson. More than that, it seems, the band – old-school hellraisers – were relieved to let this urbane, sophisticated fanboy take the creative reins. "I wanted it to be great for them," says Corbijn, who, four decades later, still can't get enough.

■ DM/AC 81–18 is out now, published by Taschen



WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: DEPECHE MODE BY ANTON CORBIJN, REUEL GOLDEN (EDITOR), TASCHEN



## SET VISIT

### This toy shop makes us go fuzzy all over

Fans of floppy-eared film bunnies rejoice. The toy shop in *Peter Rabbit 2* is a real place you can visit. In the movie, newlyweds Bea (Rose Byrne) and Thomas (Domhnall Gleeson) are proud owners of McGregors Toy Shop, where Peter, Benjamin and the cottontail crew hang out delighting kids with their fluffy antics. The Ambleside Toy Shop (Compston Road, Ambleside) was the perfect location. It's just a short hop from Manchester. And as the original books were set in the surrounding Lake District countryside, visitors are well placed to plunge down a Beatrix Potter rabbit hole.

✖ Fly to Manchester

LOCATION SCOUT

# LONDON'S WARMING GLOW

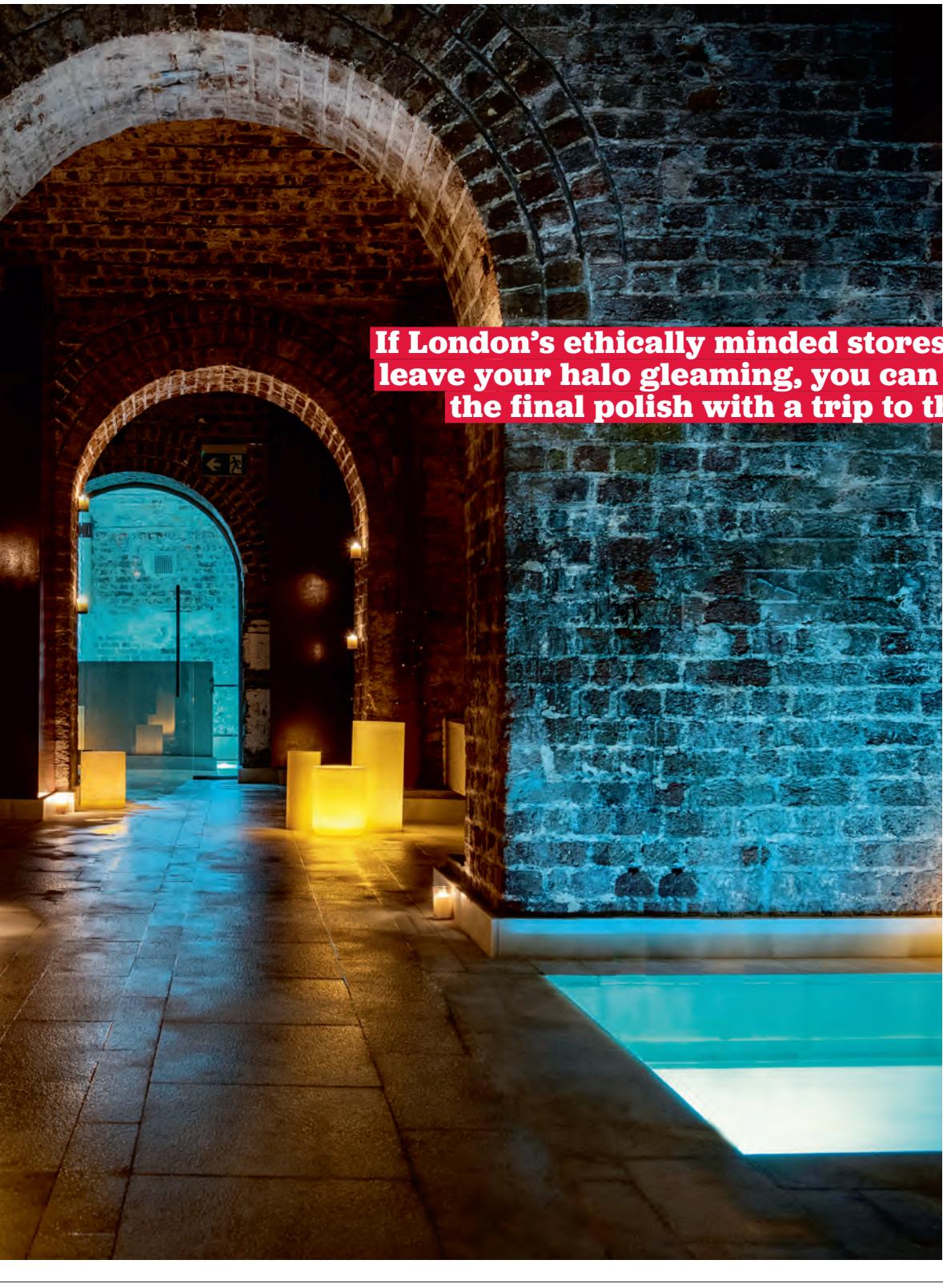
For its new year's resolution, the UK capital is ditching hedonistic abandon for sustainability and clean living, says London expert **Ed Cumming**

**J**anuary is the month to make up with your body, after the ravages of the preceding weeks. The situation is particularly bad this year, given that two years of pent-up festivity had to be unleashed. But for all London's hedonistic abundance, it holds plenty in store for the virtuous too. In notorious pubs and gilded cocktail bars, non-alcoholic options proliferate. Even where they are not vegetarian, restaurants are being guided by sustainability, with an eye on farming practices, through fishing and butchery.

From fashion labels that focus on their sourcing to bookshops that support good causes, there are plenty of ethically minded stores, as well as courses to suit every kind of self-improvement. London's ability to draw people from all over the world, plus the chastening effects of Covid, mean businesses are being more mindful about their practices. If that doesn't leave your halo gleaming, you can apply the final polish with a trip to the spa. Soon it will be February, time to start all over again.

Unsurprisingly, Hackney is the go-to place for many of the most thoughtful and sustainable new ▶





Already found in the USA, Spain and Denmark, AIRE Ancient Baths promises an atmospheric spa experience at its latest home behind the Strand

If London's ethically minded stores don't leave your halo gleaming, you can apply the final polish with a trip to the spa



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businesses, where zero-waste is taken as read. The visitor looking for a virtuous day out should start there. At **Bubala**, in Spitalfields, you might not even notice the absence of meat as you feast on slow-roast celeriac, charred skewers of oyster mushrooms or fried aubergine with zhoug and date syrup. Or try Hackney Wick's **Silo**, which has moved from Brighton and describes itself as "designed from back to front, always with the bin in mind"; everything from the menu to the furniture is set out to minimise waste, food miles and processing. On Hackney Road, **The BRIGHT store** is a destination for ethical products, as well as impeccably sourced coffee, while over in Broadway Market is **69b Boutique**, a shop dedicated to sustainable fashion and homeware. Don't forget charity shops, either: the Hackney branch of **The Salvation Army** charity shop is known as a Mecca for brand-hunters.

South London is leading the charge too, befitting its high concentration of young people. **The Keep Boutique**, in Brixton, was founded by a former stylist who had tired of fast fashion. Instead, expect clothes and gift options to suit every taste and budget, all from brands with integrity.

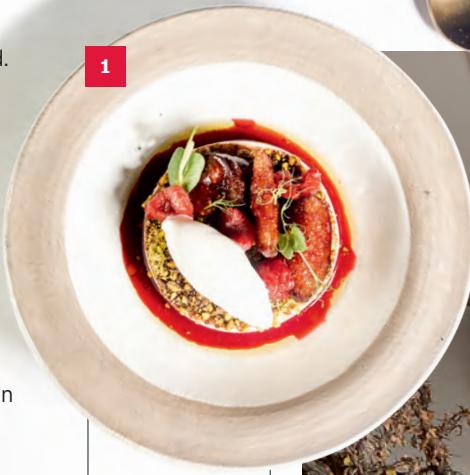
Not that central London is being left behind. For a vegetable-driven alternative to Ottolenghi and The Palomar, try the imaginative Tel Avivian-style dishes – such as chargrilled cauliflower, black lentil salad, saffron, cashew and cucumber gazpacho – available in Covid-friendly greenhouses at

**Chameleon (1)**, One Marylebone. What you put in your mind is as important as what put in your mouth, so make sure to test the popular Somerset well-being retreat **A Place to Heal**, which now has a branch in Holland Park. And there's always something to learn at **The School of Life**, in Bloomsbury, founded by writer Alain de Botton. It offers personal and professional development courses, as well as therapy.

Venues are also doing their bit. The Wellcome Trust is offering calm at its **Tranquillity (2)** exhibition (ends 9

January), while on 23 January The O2 Arena hosts a screening of David Attenborough's **Our Planet** documentary, complete with live orchestra, to reconnect with

1



4



3



Below: The design of cashmere brand Ganni's store in Covent Garden is inspired by its Danish founders' family home



**Conservatory Archives'**  
plants and  
two shops can  
be hired for  
events and  
photo shoots.

the climate crisis in style. Feeling inspired? Green your own rooms with a beautiful bloom from east London's **Conservatory Archives (3)**.

Covent Garden is regaining its reputation as a home of thoughtful independent businesses.

**Ganni (4)** is one of Europe's coolest young labels, but at their flagship in Covent Garden they will accept your old clothing and donate to good causes while they do it. The circular economy has never been easier. Round the corner, The Conduit, a private



2

members' club focused on sustainability, has opened its first public-facing restaurant, **Warehouse**.

If you are still in need of literal cleansing, London's most unusual new spa lurks beneath a 17th-century building a short walk away. **AIRE Ancient Baths**, which opened last June, is the latest outpost of a small international chain that specialises in putting spas in unique properties. The baths are inspired by the ancient world; there's even one where you bathe in Spanish red wine. Coincidentally, the property used to be owned by JM Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan*. After a few days of eating, drinking and pampering like this, anyone would be feeling ageless. Or at least a bit less aged.

✖ Fly to London

## 3 SPOTS FOR VIRTUOUS COCKTAILS

PHOTOS: AIRE ANCIENT BATHS, MORGAN WHITE 2021; COURTESY OF CONSERVATORY ARCHIVES, JOHN VALENTIN, STEVEN JOYLE, JAMES MCDONALD, NIALL CUTTON, MIKE POSTLOCK, MY BODY IS A TEMPLE OF GLOOM, JASIEKA KAUF 2021; TRANQUILLITY, WELLCOME COLLECTION, PHOTO STEPHEN PEacock 2021; CC-BY-NC



### LYANESS, SOUTH BANK

Many of the drinks at superstar bartender Ryan Chetiyawardana's reinvented bar come in boozefree versions, which use Seedlip, Aorcorn and Three Spirit instead.



### SUSHISAMBA, LIVERPOOL STREET

Sample drinks made with Gimber, an organic alcohol-alternative made from concentrated ginger, at the top of Liverpool Street's Heron Tower.



### THE MONDRIAN, SHOREDITCH

At Christina's bar in the new Mondrian Shoreditch hotel try the Echolalia, a refreshing blend of Three Spirit Livener, apple, rhubarb and cucumber soda.

## SCREEN TEST

# How do you get out of a time loop?

DO YOU LIVE IN FEAR OF WAKING UP TO GROUNDHOG DAY?  
**RALPH JONES** SEES IF SCIENCE CAN HELP US CREATE AN ESCAPE PLAN

**T**ime-loop films are having their day in the sun at the moment; a day that is being replicated again and again and again. Following in the footsteps of *Groundhog Day* and, more recently, *Russian Doll* and *Palm Springs*, *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* is the latest in a repeating cycle of films and TV shows to ask: what if you had to experience the same day over and over?

Because time travel is theoretically possible (a heated debate that has dissenting physicists throwing pens and paper at each other), so is a time loop. Stephen Hawking thought that it was scientifically possible to travel back in time but that nature would never actually let it happen. But, in theory at least, Einstein's work allows for loops to exist. Theoretical physicist Paul Davies writes that in order for them to work, a wormhole (a phenomenon like a black hole that connects two points in space) would have to be involved.

Luckily for us, the writers of time-loop films tend not to bog their audience down by analysing this complex physics. The immediate problem their characters encounter is that they can't get out of the loop. In *Groundhog Day* the answer is basically love; and in *Palm Springs*

- spoiler alert - it involves the protagonists blowing themselves up. Without giving too much away, *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things* involves four-dimensional cubes and epiphanies about "perfect moments".

The reason these solutions are so varied is



because it isn't at all clear how one would escape a time loop. There are speculative solutions involving negative mass and rotating universes, but the truth is that we'd be even more confounded than the people in these films. It is unlikely that we would actually be able to harness whatever elusive cosmic powers are necessary to get out of there.

It's important to remember that it isn't just the protagonists of these films who are stuck in the time loop - it's everyone. The unfortunate truth, therefore, is that if you really are stuck in a time loop, you're unlikely to be the Bill Murray in the situation; you would probably, in fact, have absolutely no idea you were stuck - making escape impossible. See you around!

Watch *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*



## THE VERDICT

It's hard to imagine escaping from something that has probably never existed before in the history of the universe. It's hard to imagine escaping from something ...

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# DONE GOOD



ONE OF BRITAIN'S HOTTEST YOUNG  
ROCK STARS IS ALSO ONE OF ITS MOST  
SWITCHED ON. SAM FENDER TELLS  
**CHARLOTTE GUNN** ABOUT TAKING HIS  
STADIUM-SIZED SONGS FROM PUBS INTO  
ACTUAL STADIUMS - AND WHY MUSIC  
HAS THE POWER TO SAVE LIVES

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID TITLOW





Open cardigan & top:  
Lazy Oaf  
Trousers: Carhartt

**“IT’S GONNA  
BE A LONG,  
LONG TIME  
BEFORE WE  
PLAY A ROOM  
THIS SMALL  
AGAIN,”**

Sam Fender shouts. He’s on stage in a packed church hall in the city of Bristol, UK, dressed in a psychedelic mushroom-emblazoned jacket he pinched from our photo shoot earlier in the day. It’s his last tour date for a while: an intimate – by his standards – show for fans who bought his second chart-topping album, *Seventeen Going Under*. They’ve been queuing outside since lunchtime.

“I’m not saying that out of arrogance, either,” he goes on. “It’s just based on what we’ve sold!” ➤

It's true, he has no trouble shifting tickets. In a crowded field of young British musical talent, Sam Fender stands out as a particular one to watch. His anthemic rock songs have hit a nerve, both with younger generations feeling disaffected and disenfranchised, and more seasoned lovers of proper rock 'n' roll, who've been waiting years for a genuine star to emerge.

Fender is from North Shields, near Newcastle in the north of England, and was first spotted playing a gig in his local pub back in 2013. And while his inspiration lyrically is the ennui of his hometown life, musically he stretches across the Atlantic to emulate – with spectacular success – the bold, big-hearted sound of The Boss himself, with saxophones and belt-'em-out choruses included. There's a reason why, around Tyneside, they call Fender "the Geordie Springsteen".

Not that he's relying on the comparison. Already Fender has picked up a prestigious BRIT award, had two No 1 albums (*Hypersonic Missiles* was the first, in 2019) and a sold-out arena tour. This summer

there are some status-cementing mega-concerts on the horizon, including a headliner to 40,000 fans in London next summer. The big time beckons, but, touchingly, he made only two significant purchases when the record label cheques started coming in. The first: a house in Newcastle. The second: a "proper nerdy" red lightsabre.

"But I don't like to buy anything daft, just things that will retain their value," he says, more seriously. "I'm terrified."

We meet backstage at Bristol's Trinity Centre for a nice cup of tea before he begins his soundcheck for the show. "Make mine the colour of a *Geordie Shore* tan," Fender jokes, referring to the suspiciously bronzed members of *Jersey Shore*'s

**"I don't ever want to be where I was with my mother ever again. I couldn't help her. I was in massive debt before I'd even had a job."**

## Class act

### SAM FENDER'S CV

#### Born

25 April 1994 to Alan and Shirley Fender in North Shields, in the north east of England.

#### Education

John Spence Community High School and sixth form at Whitley Bay High School in North Tyneside. After college, Fender worked in a call centre and his local pub, where he was discovered performing by manager Owain Davies in 2013.

#### Interests

A Newcastle FC supporter, Fender was invited to speak on BBC Breakfast



after the club was bought by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. While on air he admitted to being "really, really hungover".

#### Key works

##### Dead Boys EP (2018)

Fender's breakthrough EP bagged him Critics' Choice at the 2019 BRIT Awards.

##### Hypersonic Missiles (2019)

Fender's first UK number one album was certified gold and saw him return to the BRITs as a Best New Artist nominee (pictured).

##### Seventeen Going Under (2021)

Fender's latest LP also debuted at number one and earned him *NME*'s Album of the Year.

UK counterpart. The gig venue is a listed building, built in the 1800s, with light spraying inside from beautifully patterned stained glass windows. "I get PTSD when I'm in a church, like," Fender says, sipping on his brew. "We used to go to a proper evangelical one when I was young."

In a group setting, Fender looks like your average 27-year-old – goofing around, pulling silly faces and busting out impressions (he does a mean David Bowie) – but dig into his music and terrified Sam quickly reappears. Fender was raised by his mother, a nurse and single parent, who fell ill with fibromyalgia and found herself without help and unable to work. As a result, her son spent much of his teens feeling desperate.

"I don't ever want to be where I was with my mother ever again," he says. "I couldn't help her. I was in massive debt before I'd even had a job. I want to make sure we're going to be alright."

He saw a government who was failing to care for a woman who had looked after other people her whole life. Ten years later, that story is told in the achingly real and totally cathartic title track of the album *Seventeen Going Under*.

*She said the debt, the debt, the debt  
So I thought about shifting gear  
And how she wept and wept and wept  
Luck came and died 'round here*

Not everyone gets painfully perfect rock songs out of such hardship, however, and Fender's experiences resonate with plenty of people who are going through their worst times right now. His life ➤

Top: Fila  
Trousers: Carhartt



# MORE ONES TO WATCH

The inescapable sounds of the year ahead from Britain's finest new musicians



## Orla Gartland

**The one you'll be singing for days**  
Indie-pop with an edge, Orla Gartland's razor-sharp lyrics are just one of the things we love about her. The Irish artist's debut

album, *Woman on the Internet*, carefully blends the many reaches of guitar music with pop choruses and modern malaise. *Read our interview with her on page 12.*  
**Listen to:**  
*More Like You.*



## Sea Girls

**The one for a night out with the lads**  
Walk past a venue when Sea Girls are playing and you'll see queues around the block. The Midlands four-piece make Gallagher-worthy singalongs

to mosh to with your mates and they're fast climbing the bills at festivals. With second album *Homesick* due out this month, this is a group with staying power. **Listen to:** *All I Want to Hear You Say.*



## Wet Leg

**The one for the festival scrum**  
Wet Leg are the Isle of Wight duo making sassy and slightly surreal indie floorfillers. You will have heard their catchy debut single *Chaise Longue* by

now: it's been played on the radio since last summer. With a self-titled debut album out in January, 2022 is set to be a huge one for the oddball indie heroes. **Listen to:** *Chaise Longue.*



## Nuby Garcia

### The one for your next dinner party

Nuby Garcia's smart jazz earned her a Mercury Prize nomination in 2021 and she continues to be one of the most exciting additions to London's

burgeoning neo-jazz scene. Garcia's first solo album, *Source*, is a meandering and experimental piece full of beautiful instrumentation. See *Audio opener*, page 75.

**Listen to:** *The Message Continues*.



## PinkPantheress

### The one for an after-hours party

PinkPantheress was quietly making songs in her bedroom and uploading them to TikTok when they started to blow up. The 20-year-old

Londoner is now being tipped as one of 2022's most relevant and boundary-pushing talents. Her music blends sugary vocals with drum 'n' bass beats.

**Listen to:** *Just for Me*.

has given him firmly held political beliefs, though he's the first to admit that his left-wing views no longer chime with many in the north of England.

"A lot of left-wing people who are the loudest online seem to be very, very middle class," he considers. "There's an air of snobbery to it that just completely alienates people. A lot of the left are fighting the culture wars at the moment. Let me say that I'm not disagreeing. We completely need to fight for gender equality, racial equality, LGBTQ+ issues. I think it's amazing that we're living in a time where we are starting to combat these things. But class seems to be something that's always forgotten about. Class threads through all of these things."

Fender's breakthrough as an artist came in 2018, with the release of the EP *Dead Boys*. Its six tracks shed light on the alarming male suicide rates in North Shields. It's a topic that's close to him and one that threads through all his work, as well as his life.

"Just recently I had a friend in crisis," he says. "That's the sad truth of this country. In the North East, where I live, it's really bad, y'know? It's societal, and it's because of the economy and because of the way we're raised. There's a multitude of reasons why boys do it." ▶

Top: Stan Ray  
Joggers: Fila



Top: Stan Ray  
Joggers: Fila  
Trainers: Reebok



To speak out about this issue felt like a step forward, and Fender is now also frank about his own time in therapy and the influence it's had on his songwriting. "I was doing it at the time, so all I was talking about was my childhood," he says of writing *Seventeen Going Under*. "My parents splitting up, staying with my dad and then with my mother. It was quite a topsy-turvy time as a teenager. Talking about a lot of that stuff brought up all these stories."

Fender's single *Spit of You* examines the complexities of his relationship with his dad, as well as toxic masculinity and the importance of opening up. "I can talk to anyone, I can talk to anyone/I can't talk to you," Fender sings. It's a poignant message that, despite its criticisms, is still a love letter to his dad. In the song's video, his father is played by Liverpudlian actor Stephen Graham (*The Irishman*, *This Is England*).

"He's a hero of mine. I bumped into him in a hotel in Shepherd's Bush and ran over to him saying, 'Mate, you're a national treasure.'" To Fender's surprise, the feeling was mutual. "He was like, 'Are you Sam Fender? Me and my wife listen to your *Dead Boys* EP in the car.'"

The pair took selfies and swapped numbers. "We became pally. He was just lovely to me when I was having a really rough time. And he asked me to do a song for his film *Boiling Point*. ▶

A young man with dark, wavy hair is captured in mid-dance against a solid blue background. He wears a bright yellow button-down shirt over a dark t-shirt with a red and black plaid pattern on the shoulders. He is also wearing black jogger pants with a colorful, patterned stripe down the side and white sneakers with green accents. His pose is dynamic, with one arm extended forward and his legs in motion.

Jacket & top:  
Stan Ray  
Joggers: Fila  
Trainers: Reebok

**"I meet so many other people in this industry who are from such wealthy backgrounds and I just think, how do kids like me make it?"**

Jacket: Carhartt  
Jumper: Reebok



But to say this celeb love-in was down to chance would be selling Fender short. Not every boy singing in a pub gets a record deal. And not every film star agrees to do favours for on-the-rise musicians. He's the first to admit that he struggles with imposter syndrome – his background making him sometimes feel out of place in the music industry. "I definitely have a chip [on my shoulder]. I meet so many other people in this industry who are from such wealthy backgrounds and I just think, how do kids like me make it?"

Yet Fender's success is proof that people want diversity in their pop stars. Not just glossy, perfectly packaged songs about broken hearts and first loves: something real that represents what people are feeling, even when it's not all roses.

"I just want my music to provide the same catharsis for other people as it does for me," he says. "And from the lovely messages I get from my fans, that does seem to be the case."

The standout story is that of a father of two who got in touch to thank Fender for saving him. When the man heard Fender on the radio talking about friends he'd lost to suicide, he changed his mind



about taking his own life and called a crisis line instead.

"For working-class people who don't do therapy and meditation, music can provide that," he says. "And that gives your job a lot more clout. Musicians aren't the heroes

of the world – that's the doctors and nurses and people caring for the elderly during the pandemic. But every now and then, something happens, and you think, 'That was a good thing.' And that's lush."

Sam Fender, then: a rock star with heart, a strong head on his shoulders and a killer book of songs. There's a reason he's the boss.

**The website for Open Counseling keeps a list of international crisis hotlines at [opencounseling.com/suicide-hotlines](http://opencounseling.com/suicide-hotlines)**

Listen to Hypersonic Missiles



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# HEX APPEAL

FROM CINEMATIC WIZARDRY TO ENCHANTING WELLNESS TREATMENTS, MAGIC IS THE MOST POWERFUL TREND OF 2022. HERE ARE 13 JUST-FOR-FUN WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

WORDS: CAMILLE TENNESON, VICTORIA BEARDWOOD & JESSICA PRUPAS  
ILLUSTRATIONS: OLIVIA HEALY



# 1

## TAROT HITS THE MAINSTREAM

Tarot is on the cards for 2022. Formerly associated with mystics and clairvoyants, today tarot reading has become almost commonplace among millennials and zoomers. Heck, it's so popular Disney has released its own themed decks, decorated with its most famous villains, while Urban Outfitters sells a tarot-themed colouring book. You can even hit the high street to find out what your future holds. London department store Selfridges offers readings with the

Psychic Sisters, a team trained by Jayne Wallace (her clients include Kim Kardashian West and Kylie Jenner). If you're worried constantly shelling out to have your cards read will mean your future will involve bankruptcy, then there's always the possibility to learn to do it yourself. Try a tarot-reading workshop with Amanda Yates Garcia, known as "the Oracle of LA". Her next one (on 16 January) is all about the card of the year - the Lovers.

## WELLNESS IS GOING DRUID

Thought Druids were extinct? Well, not only are the Celt mystics still around, they've got a pretty modern hustle: leading wellness retreats at luxury hotels. If you visit the very fancy Beaverbrook hotel in Surrey, near London, you can learn the ways of this mysterious ancient order in day-long workshops led by card-carrying Druids Jo Dunbar and Adrian Rooke. Drawing on the nature-centric teachings of Druidry, the duo helps participants better themselves by getting right with the natural world - sacred singing, fire rituals and, yep, some literal tree-hugging are all involved. "People are

# 2

finally hearing the song of the Earth," says Rooke. "They're waking up to nature's capacity for deep healing and realising they need to protect it." If you fancy embracing some evergreens yourself, the next retreat is due to take place at the Beaverbrook hotel on 19 and 20 January.

## PEOPLE ARE HEXING THEIR EXES ON V-DAY

# 3

We've all got that ex we'd love to get one over on, right? We're not talking anything truly life-changing here - no disappearing appendages or spell-induced comas - just something a little bit mischievous. At Brooklyn's Catland Books, a self-described metaphysical boutique and event space, you can take part in a "hex your ex" ceremony on Valentine's Day. The store, which also offers divination, spellwork consultations and yoga for witches, has held similarly cathartic events in the past, including public hexings of political figures. This time, it's more personal. Ghosters and gaslighters beware. ▶



# 4

## YOU CAN HAVE A HIPSTER AURA READING

Ever had someone tell you they like your vibe? That's your aura they're sensing – in other words, the energy that radiates from you. Now you can actually see people's auras, not just feel them, by taking a "New Age selfie" with Adara Schwartz. A self-taught clairvoyant who's been seeing colours surrounding people since she was a teen, Schwartz is one of the readers at east London magic boutique She's Lost Control. The Aura Photography experience has become so popular you pretty much need magical powers to get an appointment. It's not all about mysticism, though: it's based on Kirlian photography, a technology invented in 1939 to make electric fields around the subject visible. During a session, you hold a biometric data sensor that reacts to your body warmth and heartbeat. Your portrait then reveals colours associated with the chakra system around you, which are interpreted by a reader.



# 5

## HARRY POTTER'S HAVING A MOMENT [AGAIN]

Potterheads have got not one but two events celebrating The Boy Who Lived to enjoy this year. On 1 January, HBO Max special *Harry Potter 20th Anniversary: Return to Hogwarts* sees the cast and crew of the iconic franchise reunited, including Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson (name a better trio – we'll wait). Then *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* showcases props, costumes and installations from *Harry Potter*, *Fantastic Beasts* and the rest of the Wizarding World. It makes its world debut at The Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, on 18 February, before flying round the world on a Nimbus 2000.

# WITCHES ARE TAKING OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

No, we're not making a wry commentary about evil online trolls, there's actually a social media platform especially for witches. Megan Killion's Coven Cloud aims to build a community of "spiritual nomads" and provide a space for them to share spells and news, organise local events and support one another in magical exploration.

In days of yore, sorcerers had to master spells through some risky trial and error. Now they can just post their queries online and hear back instantly – wizard! The beta site was launched at the end of last year, and seller, learning and coven matchmaking platforms will be added to it throughout 2022. Coven Cloud isn't the only online occultism out there, though. The pandemic has been powerful catalyst for the ever-increasing number of witches to unite online. Instagram accounts to check out include popular @witchessociety and @thehoodwitch, while fans of TikTok should sift through #WitchTok, which has received more than 21 billion views to date, and #babywitch – for newbies to the Wiccan world – which has over 2 billion views.



## MAGIC IS THE NEW MAKE-UP

Foundation, contouring, chemical peels – people have tried all sorts of lotions and potions to enhance their looks. Now the beauty industry is turning to magic and spirituality. You may have already seen crystal facial rollers but mysticism has permeated even deeper. At

ORLY Color Labs in LA, for example, you can book a Colour Magic Session during which you'll discuss what you're currently manifesting and come out with a nail polish in a colour that will help enhance your intention. Vyrao, meanwhile, aims to fuse scents with energetic healing to

invoke positive emotions with its range of perfumes. Each bottle contains a supercharged Herkimer diamond crystal, "for purifying and raising energy", claim the perfumiers. Then there's Ark Made's zodiac crystal aromatherapy mists for each star sign and elixirs that act as natural perfumes. ▶

# 7

# 8

## STRANGER THINGS 4 IS HAPPENING

Our favourite supernaturally entangled scamps are back for a hotly anticipated fourth season this summer. With production having been pushed back due to the

pandemic, the makers of Netflix's horror drama *Stranger Things* have had plenty of time to produce some pleasingly paranormal plotlines to get our teeth

chattering. The new series sees telepath Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) starting a "normal" life in California, but evil still finds her through a new gateway. Naturally.



# 9

## THIS 12 APRIL IS INTERNATIONAL LUCID DREAMING DAY

Have you ever had a pleasant dream turn sour? Perhaps you were about to make out with David Gandy and he morphed into a swamp-dwelling monster. Well, never again – it turns out you can control your night-time hallucinations through lucid dreaming – the art of accessing conscious awareness during REM sleep. It's been around for thousands of years and became the subject of scientific research in the 1970s.

"It could be considered as nature's own virtual reality," says American expert Daniel Love, who's hosting International Lucid Dreaming Day on 12 April to bring together fellow Oneironauts (dream explorers). Those who aren't yet au fait with the techniques of lucid dreaming can train with Tree Carr, a witch who has several workshops and retreats coming up across the UK (London, in April; Scotland, July) and the USA (Joshua Tree, date to be confirmed).

# 10



## MYSTICAL RETREATS ARE THE NEW FLEX

Yoga retreats have long been the pinnacle of the spiritual holiday, but a spate of new mystical retreats is showing there are other ways to connect body and soul. Apparate to Artful Magic's Annual Salem Witches Retreat (2–5 October) for group seances, spell casting and tea-leaf fortune readings. Or frolic through the New Forest with your family during the Fairy Festival's 10th anniversary celebrations in August. Healer and natural skincare entrepreneur Desirée Pais also leads new Benshen co-working retreats this year aimed at gathering a community of women to explore spiritual practices.

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS: ADOBE STOCK

## YOU CAN NOW LEARN MAGIC BY THE BOOK

From the persecuted witches of Salem and 19th-century voodoo priestess Marie Laveau to Hermione Granger and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s Willow Rosenberg, we've seen many depictions of the "witch". New coffee-table book, *Witchcraft. The Library of Esoterica*, due to be published in March by Taschen, explores the various incarnations of magical beings through "mother, nymph and crone – seductress and destroyer", plus the complex history of witchcraft itself. With illuminating essays by modern practitioners, as well as interviews with authors and scholars covering the perception, oppression and glorification of witches through the ages – all accompanied by spellbinding visuals. ➤

# 11

# 12

## HOCUS POCUS 2 IS FINALLY COMING OUT

It's been almost three decades in the making but we'll finally be able to watch the sequel to supernatural stalwart *Hocus Pocus* this autumn. The long-awaited film, showing on Disney+, sees Bette Midler, Sarah Jessica Parker and Kathy Najimy (name a better trio – oh, wait...)

reprising their roles as the Sanderson sisters. The stars have kept their tarot cards firmly close to their chests when it comes to divulging details about the plot, but what we do know is that the iconic siblings will return from the dust and face off against another trio of high-school students trying to put a stop to them. Expect plenty of magical high jinks.



## 13 WITCH SCHOOL IS REOPENING

Iron your uniform and grab your pencil case – there's a school you might actually want to go to, just outside London. Bothwell School of Witchcraft is a LARP (live action role-playing game) that takes place inside the 15th-century Herstmonceux Castle. With potions, defence against the dark arts classes and hallway duels, it's

essentially like going to real-life Hogwarts.

After a very extended school holiday (thanks, Covid-19), the institution is reopening between 28 April and 1 May for its newest and most ambitious LARP. WereWar sees Bothwell School turned into a command centre during a magical war that's raging across Europe. Could you fight alongside your fellow students and still get straight As?

In the mood for something spooky? Watch *The Green Knight* on Vera



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# ALIVE STREAM

Photographer Mathew Scott has spent six years photographing the LA River - the concrete watercourse that connects all life within one of the world's most diverse cities. He introduces **Leonie Cooper** to its characters

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATHEW SCOTT

# LA'S BEST KEPT SECRET

isn't a plush Hollywood cocktail bar that you access through a hidden door, but rather the 82km-long stretch of surprises that is the LA River. An oasis of escapism and serenity, it connects the disparate people and places of North America's most dense urban area, starting in the foothills of the San Fernando Valley and flowing all the way to the Pacific Ocean, via Griffith Park, Downtown, Compton and Long Beach.

Yet this river isn't like other rivers. Encased in an imposing concrete channel, it's a triumph of 20th-century Brutalism as well as being home to a vibrant ecosystem – but many of the city's residents hardly know it exists.

Photographer Mathew Scott has made it his mission to capture the lucky ones who do, with an ongoing portrait project documenting those who rely on the river for recreation, revitalisation and refuge. "Every other city in America that has a river cherishes it, but because this one is made out of concrete, most people ignore it," he explains. ▶

## **Geo and Starr**

Vernon

Geo and Starr recently met through an online dating app. "They were coming down to the river as it's a more secluded area where they can ride, hang out and get to know each other better," says Scott. "Like a date but in the LA River."



## The concrete river

THROUGH LOS ANGELES TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN



"Hollywood, the beach and Disneyland – that's the kind of stuff people think of when they think of LA, but this is such a fascinating part of the city and it's never mentioned anywhere, ever."

Before it was shrouded in sandy slabs, the LA River was a wild and unpredictable thing, prone to

**"THE FIRST TIME SCOTT CAME HERE, HE FOUND THAT METRES FROM HIS STUDIO, HE HAD BEEN TRANSPORTED TO AN ALTERNATIVE WORLD"**

catastrophic flooding. In February 1938 over a year's worth of rainfall came down in a few days; more than 100 people were killed, over 5,600 homes and businesses destroyed, railroads wrecked and farms ruined. For the first time ever the Academy Awards were postponed after movie stars found themselves unable to reach the Downtown hotel where the ceremony was taking place.

This devastation saw the city finally decide to take action and over the next 20 years an epic channel was built to contain the river, using 3.5 million barrels of cement. When finished, the striking structure was firmly out of bounds, surrounded by chain link fences and "No trespassing" signs. But somehow nature struck a deal with this man-made ➤



**Rissi  
Atwater**

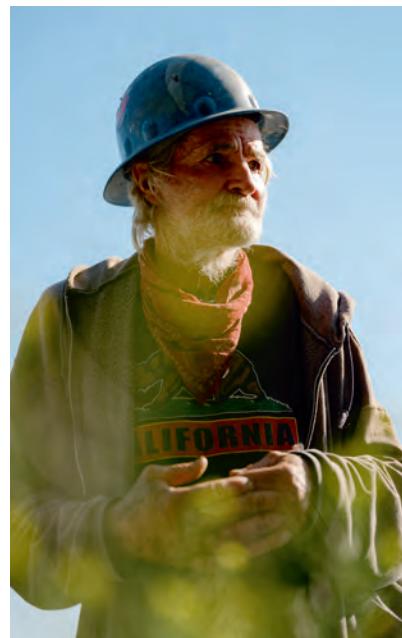
Rissi has spent the last few years travelling the world but has settled in LA for the time being, taking a job at a local horse stables. "Since discovering this area of river, she has been coming down at least once a day to meditate and connect with nature," says Scott.





monolith, and the river and its sturdy new banks were reclaimed by its former residents, including bobcats, coyotes and deer, as well as cormorants, blue herons, tilapia and carp. Today, over 250 species of birds call it home. In the 1980s, local poet Lewis MacAdams decided the river should be open to everyone – not just the wildlife that had found its way back. He founded the Friends of the Los Angeles River and campaigned for the right to roam. Slowly but surely, access was granted. In the late 1990s the first bike path along the river opened and in 2010 the environment agency deemed the river safe.

I meet Scott at the Spoke Bicycle Cafe in Frogtown, a historically Latino area named after the swarms of tiny western toads that invaded its streets in the middle of the last century. Like nearby neighbourhoods Silver Lake and Echo Park, where house prices now rival those in swanky West Hollywood, the creep of gentrification is palpable. Here stylishly dressed patrons tuck into date and hemp granola and cauliflower farro bowls as they tap out screenplays on their laptops, but seven years ago it was a very different scene. ▶



**Ron  
Compton**

Originally a construction worker, Ron has been exploring the river for the past few years and has developed an affinity for the flora that has sprung up between the concrete slabs. “He has a knack for finding and foraging edible plant life that grows along the river,” says Scott. “Such as cattails, which can be used in soup.”

## **Skater** Frogtown

This was the moment Scott discovered the LA River's hidden depths, after he followed a local skater and found "a makeshift hang-out built using old pallets, tarp and a fire hose, all things scavenged from the riverbed," he remembers. "Just like everything else down here, this is only temporary. Once the winter rains come the river swells and everything is washed away. A seasonal reset, ready for the next round of neighbourhood teenagers looking for a place to escape."



Originally from Portland, Oregon, when Scott arrived in LA he rented a studio space next door to an early incarnation of the cafe, back when the coffee was free and served from a cart in an abandoned auto-body shop. It took him a year to discover the adjacent section of the river, which is criss-crossed by fast-moving freeways above, the cars and trucks which speed along them oblivious to the strange solitude that exists below.

On one of his early expeditions to the river in 2015, Scott saw a teenager skateboarding along the bike path. Without warning, the skater hopped down the bank of the river and disappeared into the lush green overgrowth. "It looked like he'd walked into a vortex," remembers Scott, who decided to follow him. What he discovered surprised and thrilled him in equal measure. "I went through the weeds and down this stream - he'd built this tree fort with his friends. There was a ladder coming down it and they were all just hanging out there." Mere metres from his studio, Scott had been transported to an alternative world.

**"LIKE THE PEOPLE HE'S FOUND HERE, SCOTT GOES TO THE RIVER FOR SOME TIME OUT FROM THE STRESSES AND STRAINS OF THE CITY"**

"It was impossible to imagine that you were in the middle of the city," he says, grinning at the memory. After firing off a few portraits of the people he met that day, Scott vowed to return.

From young couples on Tinder dates to kayakers and mountain bikers, as well as members of LA's homeless population who have made the river their home, Scott has shot all kinds down on the river. In a city that remains ravaged by divisions between rich and poor, on the LA River there's a kind of democracy to be found. Everyone is welcome - you just have to know it's there. "Each section has its own little vibe to it," explains Scott. "Up in Studio City it's all film industry people with earbuds talking about production. Then you have Boyle Heights, which looks like a messed-up movie

set with an apocalyptic vibe, but dig a little deeper and you'll find a community that loves that place."

Today getting onto the river is easy – though sturdy footwear is a must. Scott leads me down the banks with his coffee in one hand and a camera in the other, and we jump over wet stones to arrive at an islet covered with willow trees. Among them is a shopping cart which has now become as much a part of the river as the rocks, subsumed by the moss that clings to its rusted metal frame. Water rushes below you as the roaring freeway above makes a not entirely dissimilar sound. This might be one of the most easily accessible stretches, but on a weekday afternoon we're the only ones here aside from a pair of thirty-something men fishing and a couple sitting further down the bank, deep in conversation.

Scott has seen almost everything on the river, from big-budget car ad shoots to birthday parties, firework displays, litter-picking community groups and late-night film screenings. Scott uses it too. When he's not taking photos he has a favourite concrete slab – the perfect spot for drinking a couple of beers and watching the sunset. Like the people he's found here, he goes to the river for some much-needed time out from the stresses and strains of the city. "The main thing for people I've met here is escapism," he says. "Until you notice the top of a power structure, you'll completely forget where you're at."

#### **✖ Fly to Los Angeles**



## Basin instinct

### LA'S WATERWAYS IN MOVIES



#### **Grease (1978)**

Renamed Thunder Road for the hit musical, the LA River culvert is the site for the pivotal drag race between

John Travolta's

Danny, in revamped car Greased Lightnin', and gang-leader Leo, in front of ex Sandy (Olivia Newton-John).



#### **Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991)**

John Connor and the Terminator flee on their motorbikes from the unrelenting

T-1000 (in an 18-wheeler truck) down the spillway of Bull Creek – a tributary of the LA River in the San Fernando Valley.



#### **Point Blank (1967)**

Walker (a typically stony Lee Marvin) sets up a mob boss and finds he's been double-crossed himself beneath the

4th Street bridge. British director John Boorman's classic revenge thriller has become a byword for 60s LA chic.



ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: LANDMARK MEDIA/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO/H. G. ALBUM/ALAMY/STAR PICTURES/ALAMY

A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT  
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

# What's On

## CRUISE CONTROL

With a reputed US\$200 million budget, *Jungle Cruise* entered the top 100 most expensive films ever made – credit the apparently enduring draw of theme-park ride adaptations and, perhaps more importantly, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson. There’s elements here of Indiana Jones and, dare we say it, 1951 Hepburn-Bogart boating classic *The African Queen*. Hop aboard for the ride.

 Watch *Jungle Cruise*



## THE BEST OF WHAT'S ONBOARD

61-68

### Movies

The Green Knight rides into battle while Free Guy tries to break out of the game in our feast of films.

69-74

### TV

Savour Sir David Attenborough's relaxing tones or chill out with Headspace – it's all here.

75-77

### Audio

From BTS's K-pop to Nuby Garcia's dance-inflected jazz, these are the tunes 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 January.

# THE CHOICE IS YOURS

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

## SCREEN TIME

Onboard this month we have

**132**

Movies

**430+**

Albums & playlists

**290+**

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



## 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

### 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.

### Subtitling

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

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 CLICHE-BUSTING CINEMATIC SELECTION

# Movies

## EMPOWERED

Western cinema has struggled in its depictions of Eastern culture, says Yuan Ren. But does *Shang-Chi* nail it?

AT THE HEIGHT of the West's obsession with Chinese martial arts in the 70s, Marvel Comics introduced a new supervillain, Fu Manchu, and his son and mortal enemy Shang-Chi, an evil scientist and martial arts master respectively. Now, after the rest of the Marvel crew have smashed the world to bits, Shang-Chi is ready to step into the spotlight and finally resolve his daddy issues in *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*.

But is this the superhero we've been waiting for? Fu Manchu is an offensive trope from a distant era, yet in recent decades Hollywood has still stereotyped East and Southeast Asian people, often as exotic, enigmatic women and weedy, desexualised men. The 2018 smash *Crazy Rich Asians* offered a hunk in shirt-phobic former model Henry Golding, but omitted to make him a three-dimensional character.

Thankfully, Marvel's "first Asian superhero" is much more nuanced. A master of martial arts, Shang-Chi is also vulnerable, conflicted and deeply human. Simu Liu performs many of the terrific fight sequences himself (with his clothes on), and Asian cinema is represented by acting royalty Michelle Yeoh and Tony Leung – with Leung's performance as Fu Manchu-inspired patriarch Xu Wenwu laying some issues of sensitivity to rest. The film's themes of honour and obligation resonate much further than its geographic setting. In fact, in rounding out its characters, Marvel may have made its most broadly appealing film to date.

Watch *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*

ADDITIONAL PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK





## The Green Knight

Dev Patel,  
Joel Edgerton

15  
130 mins

**WRITER-DIRECTOR DAVID LOWERY** says he was inspired by fantasy films of the 1980s such as *Willow* and *Excalibur* for his epic Arthurian tale. Film buffs will also notice a nod to the Stanley Kubrick classic *Barry Lyndon*. The rest of us, however, can wallow in a critically acclaimed tale of King Arthur's nephew, Sir Gawain. Brilliantly played by Patel, Gawain embarks on a dangerous quest to face off with the titular knight, dealing with ghosts, giants, thieves and schemers along the way. In Lowery's more-than-capable hands, the crowd-pleasing aspects combine with more philosophical moments, meaning you can watch it as both grungy actioner and idiosyncratic meditation on masculinity and heroism.



## No Sudden Move

Don Cheadle,  
Benicio Del Toro

15  
115 mins

Never one to squander a superb cast, Steven "Ocean's" Soderbergh turns this crime caper into something truly special, as a gang of criminals tries to work out why a job has gone wrong. Watch out for an uncredited turn as Mr Big from Matt Damon, who stars in...



## Stillwater

Matt Damon,  
Abigail Breslin

15  
140 mins

Not only is this a Matt Damon film, but it's a really good Matt Damon film, as he plays a fish-out-of-water oil worker who travels from Oklahoma to France to help his imprisoned (and rather ungrateful) daughter, played by Breslin. Yes, we know – we had you at Matt Damon.



## The Suicide Squad

Margot Robbie,  
Idris Elba

132 mins

Never has the definite article been so important as in this sequel to 2016's *Suicide Squad*. Confused? Don't be. Just enjoy what turns out to be a rollicking shoot 'em up with Harley Quinn and co sent to battle an alien starfish. See right



## Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings

Simu Liu,  
Awkwafina

120 mins

Marvel's fabled master of weapons-based kung fu gets his origin story in this action-packed adventure, where Shang-Chi is drawn into the infamous Ten Rings organisation. See opener



## Space Jam: A New Legacy

LeBron James,  
Don Cheadle

115 mins

The last time we heard from the *Space Jam* crew was all the way back in 1996. For this *Looney Tunes*-derived sequel, a mischievous artificial intelligence has kidnapped the son of legendary basketball player James, but Bugs Bunny rides to the rescue.

TOP 5

## New members of The Suicide Squad

- 1 Bloodsport**  
Idris Elba plays a potty-mouthed weapons obsessive who once shot Superman with a kryptonite bullet.



- 2 King Shark**  
Sylvester Stallone's burly shark-man hybrid scoffs people alive for fun, yet somehow remains very likeable.



- 3 Ratcatcher 2**  
Daniela Melchior can summon a rodent army, just like her dad, Ratcatcher, did to pester Batman back in the day.



- 4 Peacemaker**  
A man so committed to pacifism he'll quite happily murder you in the name of it, played by John Cena.



- 5 Polka-Dot Man**  
Obscure, spot-obsessed Gotham City oddball played by David Dastmalchian to dotty perfection.



VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES

[Watch The Suicide Squad](#)

LAUGHS



## Zola

18

Taylor Paige,  
Riley Keough87  
mins

**WE'VE HAD FILMS based on board games, video games and even theme-park rides, but *Zola* may well be the first one based on a viral Twitter thread.** Two grifting strippers (Paige and Keough) embark on a road trip to make some serious money, supporting themselves by doing, er, "other stuff" on the side. By now you'll probably have made your mind up as to whether *Zola*'s for you. What awaits is a raucous, zany, truth-is-stranger-than-fiction story that satirises social media and casts a light on the shady corners of the sex industry. Needless to say, you'll want a broad mind for this one; if nothing else, *Zola* will definitely challenge your inner prude.



## Queenpins

15

Kristen Bell, Kirby Howell-Baptiste

110  
mins

Comedy, crime and a big heart, with Bell and Howell-Baptiste as down-on-their-luck housewives who hatch a multimillion-dollar coupons scam. Things really hot up when they find themselves the object of an investigation by a dogged agent.



## Ride the Eagle

!

Jake Johnson,  
Susan Sarandon88  
mins

Quirky indie comedy here, with Johnson as stoner Leif, who not unreasonably expects to inherit his estranged late mum's fancy Yosemite cabin when she pops her clogs. However, she's left him a somewhat dubious "to do" list first.



## Free Guy

Ryan Reynolds,  
Jodie Comer

12

115  
mins

**WHAT'S AN NPC**, you ask? Good question, and one that's central to understanding the appeal of *Free Guy*. An NPC is a non-playable character in a video game. They just hang around getting shot and being in the background. In *Free Guy*, Reynolds plays Guy, a bank teller, who discovers that he is in fact an NPC in a violent game, *Free City*. In short order he's teamed up with player Millie (Comer) and the two are trying to save their world from deletion. Reynolds is brilliant, as is Comer, and with the whole thing coming on like a delirious mash-up of *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show*, *Grand Theft Auto* and *Ready Player One*, it is, as you might imagine, an action-packed laugh-riot from soup to nuts.



## The Ice Road

Liam Neeson,  
Lawrence Fishburne

12

109  
mins

Whoever saw *Ice Road Truckers* and thought, "There's a great idea for an action movie starring Liam Neeson" deserves a pat on the back, because Liam driving on treacherous roads while on an impossible rescue mission does indeed make for a cracking action flick.



## Copshop

Gerard Butler,  
Frank Grillo

15

107  
mins

An action-packed exercise in ever-increasing tension, *Copshop* is a tough, hard-boiled treat. The plot concerns on-the-run con artist Grillo, who hatches a plan to hide out inside a police station – only for a hitman (Butler) to get in there, too.



## F9: The Fast Saga

Vin Diesel,  
Michelle Rodriguez

12

143  
mins

This latest in the *Fast and the Furious* franchise is so star-studded it's not even funny. In fact, as the team go after a terrorist in their usual high-octane style, the only thing the movie has more of than A-list names is gobsmacking stunts.



## Black Widow

Scarlett Johansson,  
Florence Pugh

12

133  
mins

Has the wait for this MCU production been worth it? Answer: yes. Because not only do you get Johansson doing her well-drilled Black Widow stuff brilliantly, but new-to-the franchise Pugh acquits herself superbly.



## Jolt

Kate Beckinsale,  
Jai Courtney

15

91  
mins

"When people do bad things, Lindy cannot control herself." So says Lindy (Beckinsale), who tries to suppress said outbursts using self-administered electric shocks. Add a revenge quest into the mix and you have a funny, profane and action-packed treat.

## TEAR JERKERS

**The Father**

12

Anthony Hopkins,  
Olivia Colman97  
mins

Hopkins has been raking in the awards for his perfectly calibrated performance as Anthony, who is beginning to succumb to dementia. Colman is the daughter who desperately wants to help, despite his strenuous objections.

**Four Good Days**

!

12

Glenn Close,  
Mila Kunis140  
mins

Close is the mother who helps her daughter, played by an unrecognisable Kunis, survive four days of drug withdrawal. True, it's not exactly a barrel of laughs, but well worth a look to see two fine actors at the top of their game.

**Nowhere Special** ❤James Norton,  
Daniel Lamont96  
mins

**YOU'LL THANK US** for pointing you in the direction of this brilliant – and heartbreakingly moving – Britflick. It stars Norton as window-cleaner John, who has pretty much devoted his life to bringing up his four-year-old son, Michael, after the lad's mum left soon after giving birth. To say John's a good dad is an understatement and the two share an unbreakable bond. However, John is nursing a secret. He only has a few months to live. Now he must spend his remaining time trying to find a new family for Michael, while also trying to maintain his shattering secret. Admit it, you're welling up already, aren't you? Script and direction come from Uberto Pasolini, a nephew of master Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti and someone who has long supported UK cinema, notably as producer on 1997's *The Full Monty*.

ANSWERS: 1 MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, 2 A PROTOTYPE TOY TRUCK, 3 JAMES BOND: LICENCE TO KILL, 4 APOCALYPSE NOW!, 5 MICHAEL JORDAN PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

**MOVIE QUIZ**

**TAKE ON OUR FEATURED FILMS**

1

Kate Beckinsale plays a murderous bouncer in *Jolt*, but she made her movie debut as an innocent young woman in Kenneth Branagh's 1993 film version of which Shakespeare play?

2

*PAW Patrol: The Movie* is a big-screen outing for the

hugely popular kids' TV show – but what provided the inspiration for the original series?

3

Benicio Del Toro (*No Sudden Move*) is no stranger to onscreen violence, but in which long-running British film franchise did he first appear as a vicious thug?

4

Martin Sheen and Robert Duvall star in true-life

football drama *12 Mighty Orphans*, but they've appeared together before in one of the greatest war films ever made – what is it?

5

*Space Jam: A New Legacy* stars basketball player LeBron James alongside Bug Bunny – but which basketball player starred alongside the wacky rabbit in 1996's original *Space Jam* movie?

**Answers on the left**



## Jungle Cruise

Emily Blunt,  
Edgar Ramírez

127  
mins

**EVER SINCE THE** first *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie proved to be a runaway success, Disney have wanted to make a movie of *Jungle Cruise*, also based on one of their famous theme-park rides. After one or two (or three or four) false starts, it took Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, a huge fan of the ride, to finally get the project back on the rails. He even recorded a personal video message for co-star Emily Blunt in order to persuade her to get onboard. Johnson's persistence was worth it. This supernatural-tinged tale of a group of travellers taking a riverboat ride through a danger-infested river is a fun, action-packed, family adventure that's proved so popular a sequel is already planned. So to you, Mr Johnson, we say, "Cheers, skipper."



## PAW Patrol: The Movie

Will Brisbin,  
Iain Armitage

88  
mins

Big-screen adventures for the kids' favourites as Ryder and the patrolling pups find themselves summoned to Adventure City. Their job? To prevent Mayor Humdinger from imposing a state of chaos on the bustling metropolis.



## Hero Mode

Chris Carpenter,  
Sean Astin

88  
mins

Rare is the film the whole family can enjoy – but here's one. Facing bankruptcy and ruin, the boss of a games company desperately needs a hit and gives the job to her son, Troy, a nifty coder. Oh, and he needs to do it in 30 days. No pressure.



7 DATES IN  
THE IRRIZISTIBLE  
RISE OF...

RIZ AHMED

**1982 – Birth** Born in north London, Ahmed studied PPE at the University of Oxford before going on to the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

**2006 – The Road to Guantánamo** Ahmed kicked off his screen acting career with this indie-award-winning film from Michael Winterbottom about three British men captured by US troops in Afghanistan.

**Post 9/11 Blues** Ahmed's talent extends beyond acting – he's an adept musician and this rap

single, under the name Riz MC, marked him out as someone to watch.

**2014 – Nightcrawler** He officially hit Hollywood with this thriller, playing an assistant to Jake Gyllenhaal's morally dubious cameraman.

**2016 – Rogue One** It doesn't get much bigger than *Star Wars*. Ahmed entered the screen stratosphere with a role in the biggest-grossing movie of the year.

**2018 – Venom** And then he got to enter the Marvel

Comics Universe, playing inventor Carlton Drake to Tom Hardy's Eddie Brock.

**2019 – Sound of Metal** Adding to his many other accolades, Ahmed became an Oscar, BAFTA and Golden Globe nominee for this drama about a drummer losing his hearing.

**2020 – Mogul Mowgli** Ahmed co-wrote and stars in this critically acclaimed movie about a British-Pakistani rapper with a degenerative disease.

 Watch Mogul Mowgli

## DRAMATIC

**Farewell Amor**Ntare Guma Mbaho  
Mwine, Zainab Jah87  
mins

Reunited after 17 years apart – and living in a cramped one-bedroom flat – things don't go well for a refugee and his family. Until, that is, they discover a shared love of music and dancing. The result is a simple, intimate and beautifully told story.

**A Brixton Tale**Lily Newmark,  
Ola Orebixi76  
mins

"Candid", "raw" and "powerful" are just some adjectives to describe this tale of a YouTuber who uses a shy young man as the subject for a documentary. They fall for each other, but the desire for edgy footage leads them down a violent path.

**Mogul Mowgli** ❤Riz Ahmed,  
Aiysha Hart90  
mins

**ONE OF THE** bravest actors at work today, Ahmed (*Rogue One*, *Four Lions*) is outstanding in this masterful tale. The idea for it dates back to 2017, when Ahmed met the writer-director Bassam Tariq, and the two of them mulled over a project about a British-Pakistani rapper who is diagnosed with a degenerative autoimmune disease just when he's on the cusp of huge success. (Ahmed himself performs IRL under his rap name Riz MC.) Two years later, a script was ready and Ahmed was announced to star as the New York-based rapper, Zed, who discovers he's ill shortly before a major tour and returns to see his family in London. The result is raw, provocative, challenging and, while certainly not for everyone, more than repays its audience's investment. See below left

## FOR SPORTS FANS

**Embattled**Stephen Dorff,  
Darren Mann

15

Dorff is in gripping form in this bone-crunching mixed-martial-arts drama. He plays an MMA champ who's also probably the world's worst dad. Now his son wants to follow in his footsteps – but must first break the cycle of abuse.

**12 Mighty Orphans**Luke Wilson,  
Robert Duvall

12

Based on a true story, this beautifully mounted sports film is set during the Great Depression and tells of high-school football coach Rusty Russell (Wilson), who takes an unpromising side of orphans to the State Championship.

**Dream Horse**Toni Collette,  
Damian Lewis

PG

If you're in the mood for an uplifting true story, then step right this way for the tale of a barmaid, Jan (Collette), who with no experience or money decides to breed and train a championship race horse, Dream Alliance.

ANIMATED



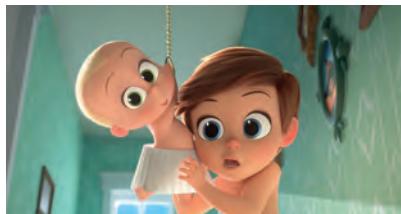
**Luca**

Jacob Tremblay,  
Jack Dylan Grazer

U

95  
mins

The latest from Pixar is set on the Italian Riviera, where Luca seems to live an idyllic life of ice cream and scooter rides. What few people know, however – like literally nobody – is that Luca is in fact a sea monster posing as a human.



**The Boss Baby: Family Business**

Alec Baldwin,  
James Marsden

PG

107  
mins

*The Boss Baby* acquires a colon and a subtitle in this animated sequel, and the “family business” entails the Templeton brothers teaming up in order to defeat a horrid new boss baby. Result? Plenty of fun for the little ones.



**Raya and the Last Dragon**

Kelly Marie Tran,  
Awkwafina

PG

90  
mins

There’s just one dragon left in the realm of Kumandra and guess who’s on a mission to find him? As you can imagine, coming from Disney, this is a gorgeously rendered and endlessly entertaining treat.

SUPERB SCI-FI



**Nine Days**

Winston Duke,  
Zazie Beetz

124  
mins

**MEET WILL, WHO** lives in the middle of the desert where his job is to interview souls. Yes, you read that right: he interviews souls in order to determine which one of them should be born and given life on Earth. And when he’s not doing that, he checks on the progress of those souls he has previously approved. As you might imagine, this is one to avoid if you’re in the mood for car chases, explosions and such. If, however, it’s a thought-provoking, mind-bending fantasy that floats your boat, then look no further, for this is a film that ponders notions of life and death, and, as *Variety* says, “invites you to reconsider your entire worldview”. Spike Jonze – director of *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation* – is executive producer, which is both reassurance and goes some way to explaining *Nine Days’* out-there feel.



**The Map of Tiny Perfect Things**

Kathryn Newton,  
Kyle Allen

12

98  
mins

Teen Mark lives in a *Groundhog Day*-style time loop in this romantic comedy. Until, that is, he meets Margaret, also stuck in the same loop. Needing to be together the two try to figure out how to escape their never-ending day. See p26



**Reminiscence**

Hugh Jackman,  
Rebecca Ferguson

12

115  
mins

It’s no coincidence that fans of hunky, charismatic actors tend also to be fans of Jackman. Here, the man who would be Wolverine stars in a sci-fi/crime thriller as a private detective whose latest case turns his world upside down.

SHOWS THAT KNOCK IT OUT OF THE PARK

# Television

**US SPORTS REPORTER** Master Tesfatsion – we're not being overly formal, that's his name – came up with a ballsy idea for his series *Untold Stories*. He challenged some of the nation's biggest athletes – including Terrell Owens and Jason Terry – to a game of pool and interviewed them as they played. Pool is fun until you realise, "Oh yeah, I'm not actually very good at pool," and the fun stops. So athletes would rather keep talking instead of having to actually play pool. It's an approach that leads to some fascinating revelations. Here are some of the most intriguing.

**1 Athletes are just like us.**  
No really, they are. Except for, you know, being famous, incredibly fit and getting paid millions. They're just trying to be the best version of themselves through trial and error like the rest of us. Remember that.

**2 It's their way or the highway.**  
And if you choose the highway, they put out road spikes to keep you from leaving. A college coach tried

## THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Pro athletes chat to presenter Master Tesfatsion in this warm-hearted YouTube series. Cue some surprising insights...

to sabotage one NFL player because the player rejected an offer to play for the coach's university.

**3 Even ballers need their mummy sometimes.** When you skin your knee as a kid, who's there to kiss it better? When pro basketballer Nate Robinson was benched for 14 games, he called his mom. She came to his next game, he scored a season-high 41 points.

**4 Athletes really, really love Mickey Mouse.** We all have those days where we don't want to be at work. One NFL player had the chance of a US\$20 million contract, but didn't want to leave Disney World to go in for a physical.

**5 No one will ever forget that one mistake.** At my office, someone spilled an entire bowl of carrot and coriander soup in the printer. That story is brought up once a month. Imagine spilling your soup in front of millions. You're going to be a meme, face it.

Watch *Untold Stories*

## MUST-WATCH

**Friends: The Reunion** ❤

15

Feature

99 mins

**TRIPS DOWN MEMORY** lane now have a new yardstick: *Friends: The Reunion*. Though we'd long been promised some kind of get-together, it had been assumed the team might make an entirely new episode or two. Instead, we get something that's arguably better: the crew getting together for a good old chinwag; hosted by James Corden, they pay a visit to some of the iconic sets (Central Perk, the fountain and, of course, Monica's apartment) for an occasionally tear-jerking talk about old times. On hand to help reminisce are various supporting turns (Gunther! Janice! Tom Selleck!) as well as famous fans, including BTS, David Beckham, Justin Bieber and even Lady Gaga – with a special rendition of song *Smelly Cat*.

**Top Gear**

!

Box set

60 mins

Despite the pandemic it's a case of business (almost) as usual during the 30th season of the car-focused show, with hosts Freddie, Chris and Paddy attempting all the usual stunts, races and games – albeit in a Covid-safe environment.

**Kim's Convenience**

12

Box set

22 mins

Funny, heartfelt and even a little bit edgy: *Kim's Convenience*, a sitcom about a Korean-Canadian family running a store, is all of those things and a little bit more. Based on a hit play by Ins Choi, we have all 13 episodes from season one onboard.

**The Flight Attendant** ❤

⚠

Box set

45 mins

Cabin crew member Cassie (Kaley Cuoco) must piece together the events of a fateful night in this much talked-about mix of comedy and mystery – all the while plagued by the creeping feeling that she may be a murderer.

**Raised by Wolves** ❤

⚠

Box set

53 mins

Fresh from HBO comes this clever sci-fi series – partly directed by Ridley Scott – about androids whose job it is to parent human children on the planet Kepler 22b after Earth is destroyed. But raising kids is no easy task...

**The White Lotus**

!

Box set

Up to 105 mins

The lives of privileged guests rub up against those of hotel workers in all manner of comic and ultimately tragic ways in this satirical US series. See it as modern parable, see it as prestige drama or see it as murder-mystery. Just see it.

TOP 3

## Creature discomforts

**Formidable animal survivors star in National Geographic series *Hostile Planet***



1

### Barnacle geese goslings

Watch in speechless awe as adorably fluffy one-day-old geese leap from their cliff-face nest to search for grass to munch on – before they've learned to fly.



2

### Cordyceps

In the Amazon jungle, the Cordyceps fungus takes over an insect's body before using the corpse as a sort of growbag. Only discovered by scientists a decade ago and utterly terrifying.



3

### Meerkats

You might be used to them helping you to compare insurance, but IRL meerkats in the Kalahari Desert are warriors who battle deadly cobras and can withstand their venomous bite.



## David Attenborough's Conquest of the Skies

Box set

51 mins

**MINI-SERIES IN** which the estimable Sir David is aided by stunning wildlife footage in order to tell the story of flight in nature. Shot on location in China, Spain, Italy, Scotland, Ecuador and Borneo, Sir David starts off with a look at the very first flyers – insects – then discusses the rise of dinosaurs that are the ancestors of today's birds, before moving on to some of the magnificent birds of prey ruling the skies today. It is, as you would expect from someone of Attenborough's authority and pedigree, an awe-inspiring, breathtaking journey – filled with rightly praised photography – ensuring that you'll never look skyward in quite the same way again.



### Mindful Earth

Box set

30 mins

To tie in with our Headspace content, we present *Mindful Earth* – programmes that combine soothing narration with breathtaking visuals from around the world. Themes include "Breathe" and "Rest" alongside encouragement to take joy in our natural surroundings.



### Hostile Planet

Box set

48 mins

Narrated by Bear Grylls and using new technology to showcase never-before-filmed animal behaviour, National Geographic show *Hostile Planet* takes a look at the world's harshest landscapes and the animals that have adapted to live in them. See left

Watch Hostile Planet



## For Madmen Only: The Stories of Del Close

Documentary

87 mins

**TO COMEDY INSIDERS**, Del Close is the improv genius who revolutionised their art, changing the rules and ushering into the spotlight a generation of legendary names, among them Bill Murray, Harold Ramis and Tina Fey. The striking thing is, of course, that many of the people Close mentored over the years are far, far more famous than he is. So what went wrong? Director Heather Ross attempts to find out, firstly by exploring Close's long-in-gestation autobiography and secondly by assembling a who's who of talking heads. The likes of Jason Sudeikis (*pictured*) not only shed light on the genius of Kansas-born Close, but explore his darker side. The result is a funny and revealing piece that has a lot to say, not just about comedy but also about the nature of fame.



### Obama: In Pursuit of a More Perfect Union !

Box set

Up to 110 mins

If you didn't think that the life of former president Barack Obama was fascinating before, then you will after watching this comprehensive HBO documentary series. It's a compelling new look at a celebrated story.



### The Human Factor

15

Documentary

106 mins

Featuring incredible behind-the-scenes footage, this documentary tells the story of how the US spent a quarter of a century trying to broker peace between Israel and its neighbours. The resulting film is sobering and eye-opening.



### The Booksellers

15

Documentary

96 mins

With contributions from the likes of Parker Posey and Fran Lebowitz (*above*), this frank and funny documentary goes behind the scenes to take a look at New York's rare book world and some of the more eccentric characters therein.



### The Metropolitan Opera – Carmen

Culture

166 mins

Opera buff? Then don't miss Richard Eyre's stunning production of Bizet's classic from the Big Apple's legendary venue. Elina Garanča is the iconic gypsy of the title and Roberto Alagna plays the soldier who falls under her spell.



### The Lost Leonardo !

15

Documentary

96 mins

Feature-length documentary looking at the bewildering case of *Salvator Mundi*, which was the first work by Leonardo da Vinci to be discovered for more than a century. However, the painting subsequently went missing...

## STRONG WOMEN

**Mare of Easttown**

Box set | Up to 67 mins

Kate Winslet is at her all-time best in this riveting murder-mystery series, playing dogged detective Mare, who investigates the murder of a local girl while simultaneously juggling her own chequered private life.

**Parks and Recreation**

4 episodes | 22 mins

Among the best comedy shows ever, and the one that made stars of Amy Poehler, Chris Pratt and Aubrey Plaza, *Parks and Recreation* is not to be missed. We have episodes from season three onboard.

**Good Girls**

15

Box set

45 mins

**FINDING THEMSELVES IN** financial dire straits, three hard-up mums turn to crime in this hit US comedy-drama. Robbing a supermarket should be easy pickings for the trio – led by Christina *Mad Men* Hendricks, alongside Retta and Mae Whitman – but to say they pick the wrong store would be putting it very mildly indeed. This is no mere branch of Lidl. It's owned by a local gang of hardnuts and they don't take kindly to being ripped off. Pretty soon the women are forced to rob again in order to pay back the bad guys and, as you might imagine, things continue to spiral wildly out of control. Full of action, packed with great performances and rich characterisation, *Good Girls* is a proper, bingeworthy treat.

## BRITISH COMEDY

**Johnny Vegas: Carry on Glamping**

Box set | 45 mins

Can the comedian Johnny Vegas take a random collection of old vehicles and turn it into the coolest glamping site ever? He ropes in his long-suffering assistant, Bev, and has a good old go in this documentary series.

**Michael McIntyre's Big Show**

4 episodes | 56 mins

Live from London's prestigious Palladium, Michael McIntyre presents an evening's worth of entertainment, surprising celebrities and giving members of the public their moment in the spotlight.

**This Time with Alan Partridge**

Box set | 29 mins

After years of trying and failing, our favourite sports-casual wearer – played by Steve Coogan – finally has a show on prime-time TV. However, as this second season goes to show, things aren't exactly going according to plan.



## Crock of Gold: A Few Rounds with Shane MacGowan

18

Documentary | 124 mins

**THE POGUES' FRONTMAN** Shane MacGowan is probably as famous for his fondness for booze as his musical know-how, but among the many brilliant aspects of this documentary is director Julien Temple's determination to highlight not just his subject's debauched lifestyle, but also his incredible poetic lyrics, his genius as a focus for the band and his iconic, gravel-voiced delivery. Archive material is skilfully deployed, while on hand to offer further insights into the legend are Johnny Deep, Nick Cave and Bono. The result is one of the best musical documentaries of recent years and certainly the only one in which its subject recounts eating a Beach Boys record.



### Kate Nash: Underestimate the Girl

Documentary | 90 mins

Excellent documentary charting the rebirth of English singer-songwriter and actor Nash, who went from selling shedloads of records to being nearly homeless after she was dropped by her record label.



### Woodstock 99: Peace, Love, and Rage

Documentary | 110 mins

Woodstock 99 aimed to repeat the peace-and-love vibe of the original 1969 festival but instead, thanks to factors enumerated here, turned into something resembling *Lord of the Flies*.



#### Untold Stories - NBA

3 episodes | Up to 8 mins

Master Tesfatsion finds that the best way to get NBA players to relax is to challenge them to a game of pool. Only then do the likes of Jason Terry let slip the very best untold stories of the league. See opener



#### Untold Stories - NFL

3 episodes | Up to 10 mins

Gossip and locker-room tales as Master Tesfatsion grabs his cue and invites the stars of NFL to play a game of pool and have a good old chinwag. The competition includes Terrell Owens. See opener



#### You Cannot Kill David Arquette

Feature | 91 mins

Actor David Arquette isn't just an actor: he once set aside a promising movie career to forge a career as a wrestler. Now he's making a return to the sport with a camera crew in tow, and the result is this uplifting and inspiring film.

CUTTING-EDGE COLLECTIONS

# Audio

## BLOWING A STORM

Nubya Garcia is the saxophonist heading up jazz's new wave, says **Marcus Barnes**

TO SOME, JAZZ brings to mind smoky clubs, goateed middle-aged men and impenetrable solos. But if you think jazz isn't for you, you're stuck in the past. The next-gen British scene is surging and vital, and one of its leading talents is Nubya Garcia – a saxophonist, composer and bandleader with Guyanese and Trinidadian roots.

It all began in the late 2010s, when acts like Sons of Kemet, Moses Boyd and Ezra Collective emerged to reinvigorate the underground and bring it overground, inspiring young people to party to jazz. In London, high-energy clubs like Steam Down fostered a scintillating new movement in the city. Thirty-year-old north Londoner Garcia's debut album *Source* landed late 2020 and it's being hailed as a moment: a showcase of her intense, frenetic style, which is inspired as much by legacy artists like John Coltrane and Miles Davis as by dance music and sound-system culture. Don't be surprised if you find yourself having a little bop in your seat.

Listen to *Source*



## GREAT GROUPS

**Another Sky***I Slept on the Floor*

Alternative

**FORMED IN 2017**, British rock band Another Sky began by performing in darkness, partly to protect the identity of their blisteringly good lead singer. "People say I sound like a man," says Catrin Vincent, for it is she. "Maybe that means they'll listen." Her voice is an incredible tool, at once fragile and soulful, soft yet powerful, while on this soaring, shimmering debut album – one of the best of last year – she mixes the personal with the political, tackling subjects such as racism and #MeToo, as well as matters of the heart. The music, meanwhile, mixes the thundering post-rock theatrics of Mogwai with the uplifting, crowd-pleasing melodies of Arcade Fire, making for an immersive, transporting experience. There's no lack of ambition here. What's more, it's perfectly realised.

**BTS***BTS, The Best* | Pop

The popularity of South Korean boy band BTS shows no signs of abating. Here, for those who want all the hits in one convenient package, is their bestselling greatest hits compilation. *See below*

**The Joy Formidable***Into the Blue* | Alternative

Hang out the bunting, inflate your party balloons: Wales's best-kept indie secret, The Joy Formidable, are back with a fifth album of Pixies-meets-My Bloody Valentine rock sure to tweak your heartstrings.

**Chvrches***Screen Violence* | Pop/Alternative

The Scottish synth-poppers continue to add edge to pure unashamed pop on this shimmering fourth album. Inspiration comes from sources as varied as Cyndi Lauper and Throbbing Gristle.

**Pearl Jam***Icons* | Alternative/Rock

Thirty years after forming and still going strong, the Seattle grunge rockers never fail to deliver. Their debut album *Ten*, all the way back from 1991, also plays onboard, featuring hits *Alive*, *Even Flow* and *Jeremy*.



**South Korean septet BTS debuted in 2013 and have...**

**22 billion** Spotify streams to their names. **\$3.6 billion** is said to be the lads' contribution to the South Korean economy.

That's every year, mind. **800,000** tourists reputedly travel to South Korea in a normal year because of BTS. **52.9 million** ultra-dedicated fans follow them on

Instagram. They're known as the ARMY, which stands for Adorable Representative MC for Youth. **108.2 million** – that's the first-day views for hit song *Butter* in May 2021, an all-time YouTube record.

Listen to BTS, The Best

## SOLO FEMALES

**Orla Gartland** ❤

Woman on the Internet | Pop

Straight outta Dublin comes Orla Gartland who, as the title of this, her debut album, suggests, made her name on YouTube. Think idiosyncratic indie-folk and you're halfway to appreciating the magic of Orla. See p12

**Olivia Rodrigo** !

SOUR | Pop

If the kind of experimental, edgy but heartfelt pop made by the likes of Billie Eilish and Phoebe Bridgers is your bag, then here's your new favourite artist. One listen to opening track *Brutal* and you'll be convinced.

**Kacey Musgraves** ❤

Star-Crossed | Pop/Country

**HAVING RECENTLY APPEARED** completely naked on *Saturday Night Live*, Musgraves is now baring her soul (see what we did there?) on this new album that details her heartache following her split from the US singer-songwriter Ruston Kelly. Stand-outs include the title track, and fellow singles *Justified* and *Simple Times*.

**Clairo** !

Sling | Pop

**VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS** pop, acoustic folk and folk rock, US singer-songwriter Clairo continues to keep it lo-fi and deeply heartfelt on this acclaimed second album.

Having guested on Lorde's *Solar Power*, the New Zealand artist returns the favour here on *Blouse*.

**Caroline Polachek** !

Pang | Pop

Once upon a time Polachek was the lead singer of synth-pop duo Chairlift. Now she's gone solo with this debut, where synth, and indeed pop, reign supreme, and her idiosyncratic vocal style is even more prominent.

**Nubya Garcia**

Source | Jazz

Tenor saxophonist Garcia, a key member of the resurgent London jazz scene, essays a deeply heartfelt and emotive take on modern jazz on this swoonsome debut. Don't sleep, jazz fans, this is not an album to miss. See opener

## VERA EXCLUSIVES

**Retro: 00s Vol Two**

Arguments about which was the best musical decade will always rage hard. Here, the noughties states its case with a sharp selection of tracks, including *Mr Brightside* by The Killers.

**The List with George Ezra** !

Since the fantastically nice and very cool Ezra's musical output encompasses pop, soul and folk, it's no surprise this fantastically nice and very cool assortment of tunes does the same.

**Celebrity Catch Up – Life After That Thing I Did** !

Entertainment journo Genevieve Hassan hooks up with the stars of much-loved films, TV shows and music of the 1980s to the 2000s. What emerges is funny and occasionally eye-opening chat.





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Poolside posing,  
**Virgin Atlantic style**

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# CREDITS



Virgin Atlantic news and views

## REST AND AVIATION

We want to help you use your flight time to relax



**H**ad a hectic festive period? January should be a time to relax and recover – even when you're flying. We've made sure our aircraft and clubhouses are stocked with healthy snacks, calming teas and rest-inducing products, so you can arrive at your destination feeling and looking revived.

### Eat well

Getting involved in Veganuary might have you walking off the plane with some pep in your step. Studies show that those who eat a plant-based diet often feel more energised, since animal-based foods can take a lot of energy to digest. This month you can order the likes of vegan penne ➤



bolognese in Premium and spiced cauliflower, spinach and lentil pastry pie in Upper Class on selected flights from the UK.



#### Drink well

If you're in Upper Class, you may well want to try our brand-new Three Spirit "Nightcap" – The Dream Maker, a non-alcoholic herbal cocktail that's best enjoyed neat over ice or topped with ginger ale. Then, come morning, wake yourself up with a Three Spirit "Livener" – The Party Starter, which is high in invigorating natural caffeine.

Those in Upper Class and visitors to the Clubhouse can also enjoy a range of calming teas from our new tea partner, teapigs. The Snooze

Virgin Atlantic can help you get into Veganuary with tasty dishes on flights from the UK

#### Plug in, pop on a jasmine-scented sleep mask and drift off to the sounds of a desert campfire or the pouring rain

blend, made up of chamomile, sweet apple and lavender, is particularly comforting. And kids and grown-ups alike travelling in Upper Class will love our hot chocolate melting spoons, served with vegetarian marshmallows by Cocoba.

#### Sleep well

Our inflight entertainment system has plenty of content to help you get a good flight's sleep, including Virgin Atlantic ASMR and Headspace: Sleep, which you can find in our TV section. Plug in, pop on a jasmine-scented Spacemask sleep mask (available to buy from our duty free retail selection) and drift off to the sounds of a desert campfire or the pouring rain.



## 5 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED FROM....



DUTY DIRECTOR  
**JON HILTON** OVERSEES THE OPERATIONS CONTROL CENTRE AND GIVES US THE INSIDE GEN

**1 There's a team of around 30 people** in an office in Crawley 24/7, 365 days a year, supporting Virgin Atlantic's customers and making sure they reach destinations safely. It's called the Operations Control Centre.

**2 If a flight is delayed, every minute has to be accounted for** with a delay code – and there are nearly 100 different codes.

**3 Take-off slots are governed by an airline's performance.** If we miss our slots too many times, we might lose them, which can cost millions of pounds. Luckily, that

hasn't happened to Virgin Atlantic!

**4 Several factors affect flying time** but the main one is airspeed. If a plane has a tailwind it might arrive at the destination sooner, while a headwind can cause delays. Flying in a slightly different direction or at a lower altitude can help.

**5 The OCC is in constant contact with each aircraft, even when it's flying!** We can call the aircraft on a SATCOM phone, speak on HF radio if in range, or message through ACARS, which appears as a printout in the flight deck.



## JOIN THE CREW IN... LAS VEGAS

Cabin crew member **James Radford** gives us his top tips for what to do in Sin City



My favourite place for breakfast is **Mon Ami Gabi**. It's a French bistro with an outside patio opposite the Bellagio Fountains so you really get a meal with a view.



One of my most memorable experiences was going on a **helicopter ride** over the Grand Canyon. It's pricey but definitely worth it.



Head to one of the many ticket offices on the Strip to see what bargain tickets they have on offer. Any of the **Cirque du Soleil** shows are worth seeing – they're incredible.



End your evening at **The Chandelier** bar inside The Cosmopolitan hotel. They do the best Porn Star Martinis in Vegas.



# WHEN TWO BECOME ONE

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**Emily Stephen loves learning from her colleagues and making a tangible difference to peoples' lives**

"I'm a Be Yourself and Community Senior Specialist. My role is about making sure that there's a place for everyone at Virgin Atlantic. One of my

focuses is on Diversity and Inclusion. I ensure we're attracting the most diverse range of people to come and work with us, and, once they are, supporting them so they can be their best selves and deliver their best work. I collaborate with internal

groups, our LGBT+, ethnicity, gender and disability engagement networks, to discover what's needed and then use that to drive action and influence change.

"My other focus involves working with our local communities to influence positive

change through programmes such as Passport to Change, which inspires young people around the world to reach for a brighter future.

"There's so much I love about my job. I love being able to listen to what colleagues are saying and turn that into tangible

outcomes that enable them to thrive in the workplace. I also really enjoy the fact that I'm always learning, whether that's through the conversations I have with colleagues on a daily basis or finding out best practice from other organisations."

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- An A330-300, open your browser and navigate to [airborne.gogonflight.com](http://airborne.gogonflight.com)

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