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October 2021

EXTENDED RUN

One man's
quest to match
Forrest Gump

DEAD COOL

Dark tourist
destinations for
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Cameos

TAKE ME, I'M YOURS
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Jimi Famuwera

Jimi is a London-based food, arts and culture writer, as well as chief restaurant critic for the *Evening Standard* and a *MasterChef UK* judge. We sent him to get a taste of our cover star, Cuppy. See p30



Rogan Smith

Rogan is an award-winning Bahamian writer and blogger, so who better to turn to for the inside gen on the islands? She writes about her time there on her blog, *This Bahamian Gyal*. See p24



Al Horner

A film and music journalist who writes for *The Guardian*, *Empire* and *GQ*, Al's also a Marvel movie buff and offered us an intelligence briefing on new release *Black Widow*. See p59



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11-28

Red Hot

Everything you need to know about this month across our network – from saying Yes to circus clubbing in NYC, through to song and dance at the cinema, and trying out as a paranormal investigator.

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Features

Live life on the big screen as we meet the man who followed in *Forrest Gump*'s footsteps and ran five times across the USA, plus discover the ethos behind the rise of dark tourism just in time for Hallowe'en.

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What's On

Get the low-down on our onboard entertainment system. It's all here, whether you want to find out why Cruella turned against those numerous hounds, how bad rap got funny or even what your fave celebs are up to.

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Credits

The latest news and updates from the Virgin Atlantic network, including our duty free picks. Plus, toast English sparkling wine and discover how life is about to get more rewarding with the new Virgin Red partnership.

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THINGS TO GET OBSESSED
WITH RIGHT NOW

Red Hot



SECOND RUN

THE RETURN OF HOUSE OF YES

Often when things close, they're quickly forgotten. But when House of Yes shut last year in Bushwick, NYC, people were distraught. This nightclub-cum-circus opened in 2015 and became much loved for its wild parties, inclusive atmosphere and incredible performances. Thank goodness, then, that it's finally reopened – and it's back with a bang. This month's events include Dirty Thursday: 90s Night, where you can throw shapes to some throwbacks, and Dirty Circus, an acrobatic show where one lucky audience member gets to watch from a claw-foot bathtub. Roll up, roll up!

 Fly to New York



FIRST TAKE

HOLLYWOOD'S FOUND ITS VOICE AGAIN

Do you feel a sudden urge to burst into song? You're not alone, suggests **Al Horner**

Now here's a Hollywood trend worth making a song and dance about. Movie musicals are back and better than ever, as anyone who's seen *In the Heights* can confirm. The New York-set singalong, based on the musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda (the man behind *Hamilton*), tells the story of a community of dreamers of Dominican descent looking for love in the big city. And it marks the beginning of a new wave of musicals set to take over screens quicker than you can say "do-re-me-fa-so-la-ti-do".

Later this year, Steven Spielberg will unleash his adaptation of *West Side Story* on cinemagoers, with *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* and *Dear Evan Hansen* also due to make the leap from stage to screen before 2021 is out. *Tick, Tick... Boom!* – another musical by Miranda – also arrives soon, with a Netflix adaptation of comedian Tim Minchin's award-winning *Matilda* in production too.

It's a trend sparked by two tuneful big-hitters from recent years. Damien Chazelle's *La La Land* from 2016, and the following year's *The Greatest Showman* both roared to box-office success, sending Tinseltown producers rushing to Broadway front rows in search of the next smash. Move over, *The Sound of Music* – a new golden age of movie musicals is here.

 **Watch In the Heights**



Spielberg's *West Side Story* is out in December and stars Ansel Elgort.

ILLUSTRATION: DIEGO PATINO. PHOTOGRAPHS: MONET BY THE WATER BY MIRAL, IMMERSIVE VAN GOGH PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROSILOW, SISTINE CHAPEL EXHIBITION. SEE GLOBAL ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE.

PROJECTOR ROOM

Immersive art is all around



Digital exhibitions of great artists' best-loved masterpieces are all the rage right now. Impressionist lily-lover **Claude Monet's** deft brushwork can be pondered in a San Francisco venue (TBC) from December. **Rating:** Garden variety



Cultured types in Vegas can view **Vincent van Gogh's** star-lit canvases through pin-sharp projections at the Lighthouse. Classical pianist Luca Longobardi composed a special soundtrack – worth lending an ear to. **Rating:** Rising star



New Yorkers can ogle **Michelangelo's** Sistine Chapel interior, recreated in vast textured photos, until January – location to be revealed. Does the ceiling represent the apex of Western art? It's certainly up there. **Rating:** Godlike genius

DE MOI
BY DEMEE KOCH
CONSCIOUS
BEAUTY



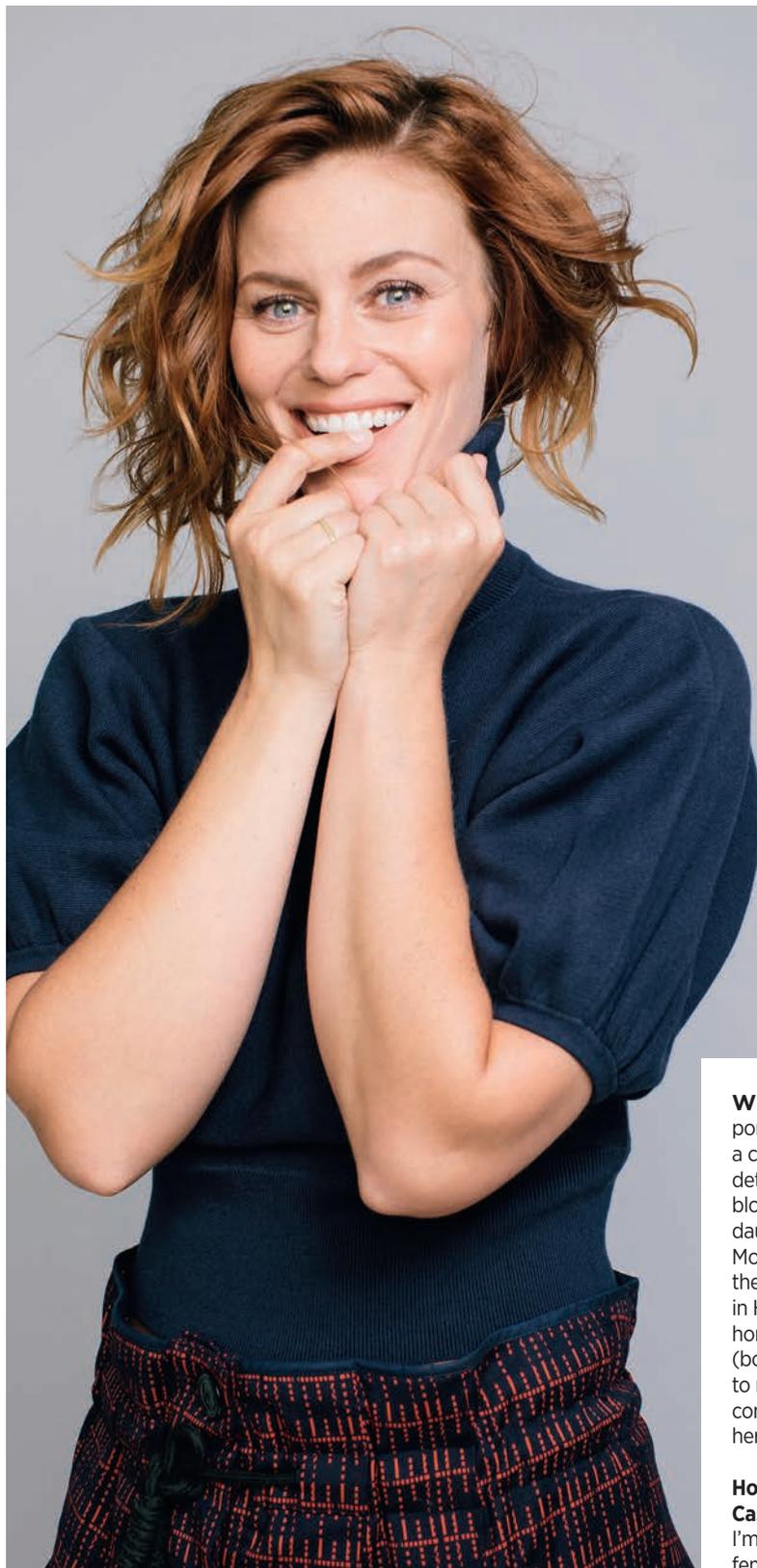
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RISING STAR

Full-time badass Cassidy Freeman

THE VERSATILE ACTOR FEATURES IN COMEDY SERIES *THE RIGHTEOUS GEMSTONES* AND NEW HORROR *THE FOREVER PURGE*. SHE TELLS **VICTORIA BEARDWOOD** WHY SHE'S A BORN SURVIVOR

WHILE SOME ACTORS give in to the comfort of portraying similar characters, Cassidy Freeman loves a challenge. She's gone from playing Lex Luthor's determined protégée in *Smallville*, to a hedonistic bloodsucker in *The Vampire Diaries*, and a sheriff's daughter and lawyer in modern western *Longmire*. More recently, she's turned her hand to comedy – as the pristine evangelical pastor's wife Amber Gemstone in HBO hit *The Righteous Gemstones* – and big-screen horror in *The Forever Purge*. Clearly her resilience (both on and off screen) is the reason she's managed to make a name for herself and, what's more, continued to get bigger and better. We caught up with her during the filming of the new series of *Gemstones*.

How did you find playing the heavily pregnant Cassie in *The Forever Purge*?

I'm quite tall and athletic, so I often get cast in strong female roles, ones where I need to fight or shoot ▶

guns. So this role was quite different. It's not that Cassie's not strong – it definitely takes strength to be nine months pregnant and running from people trying to kill you.

Do you like working on horror movies?

I've done quite a few horror films – maybe I've just got a good scream or something. They're great for an actor who likes to emote a lot of feelings. It's almost like going to the emotional gym every day. It's exhausting but also cathartic.

Yikes, that sounds intense. Does that mean everyone on set is always super drained?

Something I like about the horror films I've been a part of is that when they yell "Cut", there's a need to balance the energy, so everyone's almost more playful and joyful. At lunch on *The Forever Purge*, for example, we always had salsa music playing and we would dance between shots.

What can we expect from season two of *The Righteous Gemstones*?

There are a lot of new songs this year which, as a musical freak, I'm really excited about. We also have some incredible guest stars: Eric Andre, Eric Roberts, Jason Schwartzman...

"I know there have been times in my life where I've had to put on the face and do the do to get what I need, too"

If you had to give 10% of your money to something as a tithe, like they do in the show, what would it be?

I want to give to everything. To children and puppies, and women in Afghanistan. But I think it's so easy for us to see what's happening all over the world because of TV and social media, and we forget to look at what's right in front of us. It starts locally: what is your local food bank or animal shelter doing? Are there kids in your local community you could mentor? I wish everyone would take 10% of their income and put it back into their communities. Hey, maybe I'll run for office!

Vote Freeman! Was there a moment you read the script and knew you had to play Amber?

When it comes to choosing characters, I try to stretch myself to do something different than I've done before. It's really fun to challenge myself and ask myself not "How can I play this role?" but "Where is this character within me?" There was a part of Amber that really interested me, which was that she didn't



In *The Righteous Gemstones* (above) and as pregnant Cassie in *The Forever Purge*

come from money. She had to fight for it and was very calculated in how she got there. To me, that translates to badassery. I know there have been times in my life where I've had to put on the face and do the do to get what I need, too. She also reminds me of my mom, who didn't come from privilege but fought her way into school and became a corporate litigator.

Has your red hair become your signature?

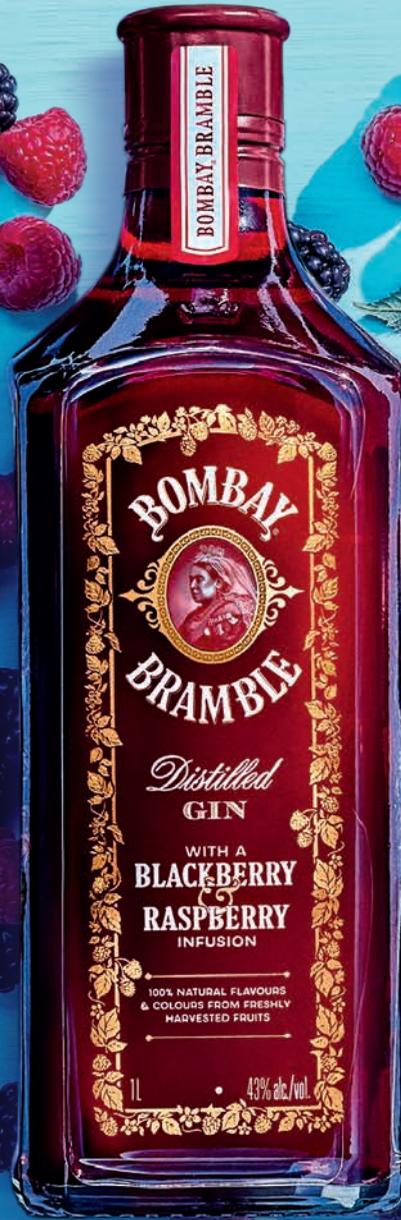
I'm actually naturally blonde but when I started on *Smallville*, which was my first long-running role, the woman who did my hair said she was going to add a touch of red into it so I'd be a strawberry blonde. It came out comic book-level red by mistake, but it worked for the show. Then on every job since they've wanted it red. Give the people what they want, I guess!

📺 Watch *The Righteous Gemstones* and *The Forever Purge*



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TABLE READ

FORGOTTEN CINEMAS OF THE UNITED STATES

A new photography book paints a colourful history of a fading era

In the early 20th century, as Hollywood boomed, the movie theatre became a place for people to come together and dream.

Cinema offered escape, fostered aspiration and introduced millions to the concept of glamour. These theatres reflected the grand traditions of European opera houses, with their plush velvet seats and ornamental mouldings. As Marcus Loew, the founder of Loew's Theatres, put it: "I don't sell tickets to movies... I sell tickets to theatres."

Photographers Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre quote Loew in the introduction to their book *Movie Theaters*, recently published by Prestel. The pair, based in Paris, spent 15 years travelling around the continental United States unearthing cinemas that had become forgotten or else repurposed as

something else entirely – a shopping centre or school bus depot – often sweet-talking their way into venues that had been boarded up for years. The result is a document of change, showing how the movie experience has shifted from the big screen to the small; from the collective to the individual.

Streaming cinema might be the new normal, meaning you can easily watch a blockbuster from your bathroom, but the images Marchand and Meffre have collected create waves of nostalgia for that recent past, presenting these venues almost like classic ruins, and evoking the memories of buttered popcorn, flickering reels and tear-stained tissues we all still seem to share.

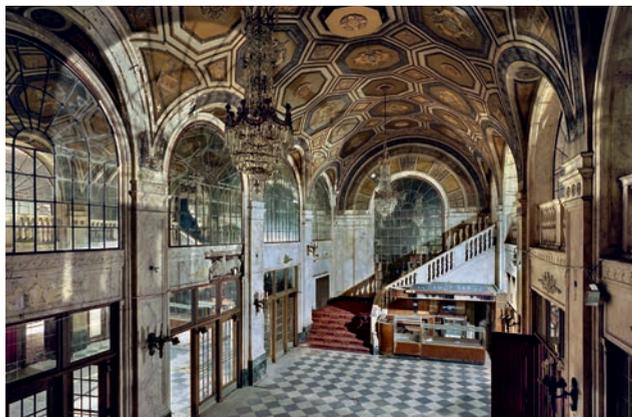
■ *Movie Theaters* is out now, published by Prestel



Clockwise: Fox Theater, Inglewood, CA; Loew's Palace Theater, Bridgeport, CT; Meserole Theater, Brooklyn, NY; State Theater, West Orange, NJ; and Paramount Theater, Brooklyn, NY



Brooklyn's Paramount Theater (1928) became Long Island University's sports arena.



SET VISIT

Celeb spotting in London's Liberty

Producers working on *Cruella* – the raucous reboot of Disney's *101 Dalmatians* franchise – needed a location to serve as visual shorthand for “classic London chic”. There was only one choice: Liberty, the upscale department store in Soho. It has a mock-Tudor frontage that serendipitously echoes the movie's monochrome-haired antihero. In the film, aspiring designer Cruella (Emma Stone) gets her big break in fashion after drunkenly decking out Liberty's famous display windows. *Dalmatians* aside, the real-life Liberty also happens to be a reliable place for celeb spotting.

Watch Cruella

WORDS: JOHNNY ENSALL, ANDY HILL PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY, IVES MARCHAND & ROMAIN WEFRE

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DRINKS



We're fired up for CBD cocktails

Sometimes all you need after a stressful day is a stiff drink.

At The Grow Room - hidden inside Glasgow bar Tabac - you can calm your nerves with something stronger. One of its CBD-infused mojitos, daiquiris or old fashioned will take the edge off, thanks to CBD's effect on the brain's serotonin receptors.

The natural compound made from the cannabis plant is legal, and there are plenty of CBD soft drinks out there too, such as the all-natural Medahuman canned drinks. Their concoctions combine CBD with helpful ingredients like magnesium, ashwagandha and vitamin D3. Try one in London's Chiltern Firehouse or Claridge's hotel.



SNACKS

NEW-WAVE HOT DOGS IN BOSTON

Seafood restaurant **Ivory Pearl** is serving up tentacles in a bun - you'd be a sucker to miss it

HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?

Sausage is out and squid's in.

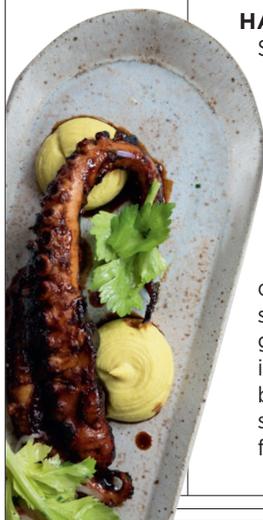
The recently opened Ivory Pearl, in Brookline (just outside Boston), has taken the classic hot dog and given it a seafood twist.

The so-called Tentacle Hot Dog - or Octo Dog - is made up of a succulent octopus tentacle that's been steamed for hours, before getting a final 30-second crisp in a fryer. It's then laid inside bread, along with caviar, sauerkraut, mustard seeds and fresh apple - certainly a touch

more exciting than your average frank in a bun.

And it's not the only place serving squid: tentacles are a trend in Boston. Earnest Drinks at Gracie's Ice Cream has removed lobster from the classic lobster roll and added octopus doused in fish sauce, mirin and sesame oil. At Greek restaurant Krasi, you can try octopus in a sweet carob marinade (left) and, at Pulpo at Atlántico, with a salsa negra. We're going to go out on a limb: this trend is here to stay.

✦ Fly to Boston



Red Hot



SLEEPER HIT

NoMad's new London home

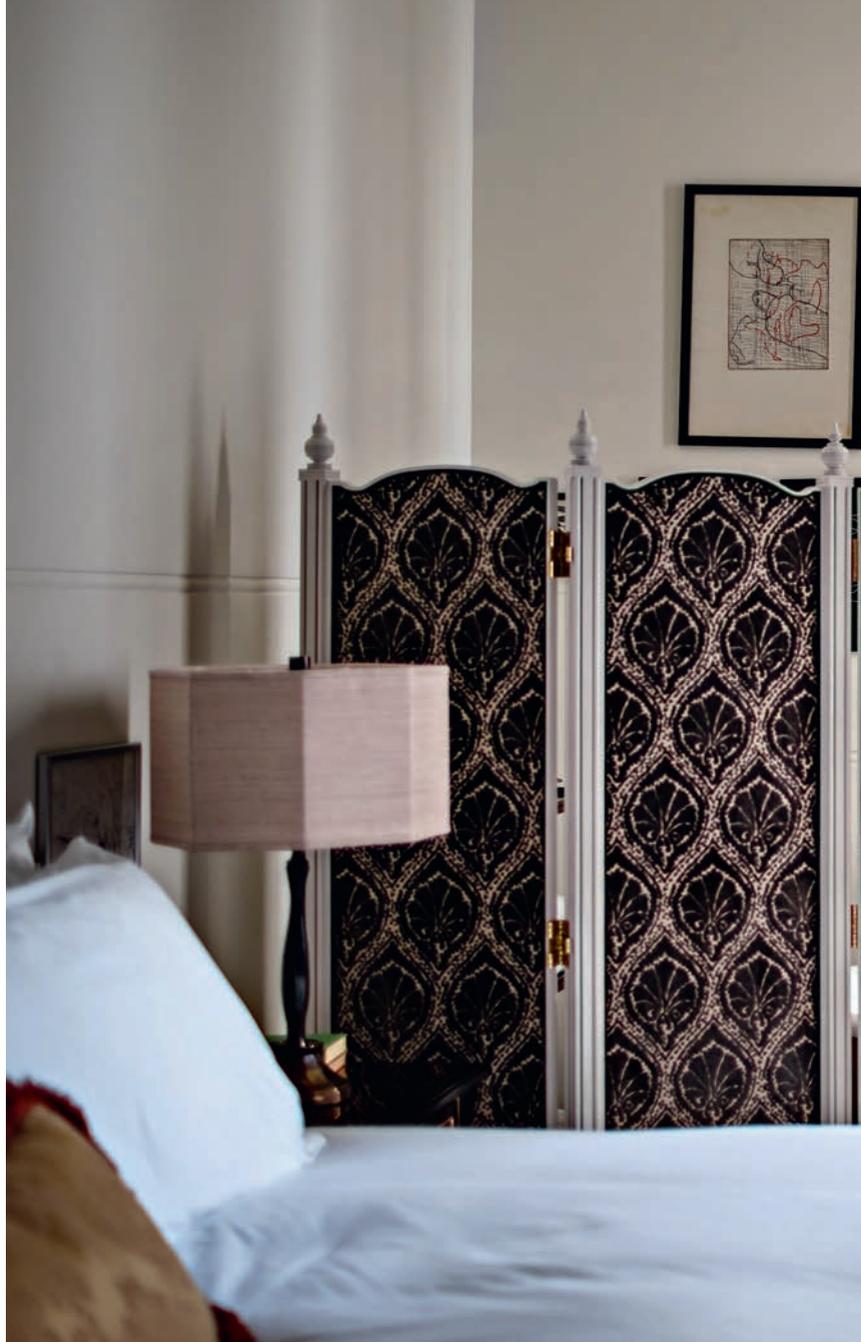
THE ICONIC NYC HOTEL NOW HAS A CULTURED BRITISH OUTPOST

NOMAD IS THE name given to the area north of Madison Square in New York City, though not many people used that shorthand until the NoMad hotel opened there in 2012. Effortlessly chic, the hotel changed the way we all thought about a good night's kip in the city. Now here's another one, also called NoMad, but in the centre of London's Covent Garden, and it's just as elegantly laid-back as its transatlantic cousin.

London's NoMad is directly opposite the neighbourhood's world-famous Royal Opera House, and the glow of that gilded institution reflects into the hotel's timeless rooms, full of hardwood, marble and velvety furnishings. Oh, and art. Over 1,600 pieces in fact, stuck to every available wall space, apart from that of the atrium restaurant - NoMad's heart and lungs - which drips with plant life.

New York-based interior design studio Roman and Williams has pulled out the stops for this European venture, and the result feels dashing intercontinental, though also seems to fit right into this Grade-II listed home - a former courthouse. Our verdict: design heaven.

✈ Fly to London



Clockwise from top left: The NoMad Restaurant in the hotel's atrium; an art-filled suite; the plush interiors of the Magistrates' Ballroom

WORDS: JOHNNY ENALL; ANDY HILL. PHOTOGRAPHS: © SIMON UPTON, COURTESY OF STYLL GROUP; WILLIAM JAMES PHOTOGRAPHY; LEELE ST JOHN; CRAIG PHOTOGRAPHY



3 MORE OPERATIC IDYLLS



OPERA HOUSE HOTEL, NYC

Set in the decidedly lavish shell of the former Bronx Opera House, this swish boutique spot skilfully harmonises its OTT neoclassical frontage with chic contemporary detailing on the inside.



SANDY LANE, BARBADOS

This luxurious Caribbean bolthole was a favoured haunt of larger-than-life tenor Luciano Pavarotti. Stories abound of him warming up his legendary larynx in the gardens, or over cocktails by the water.



MAXWELL HOTEL, SEATTLE

A block from McCaw Hall, the home of Seattle Opera, these musical digs hit the high notes with a rococo piano by the bar and rhapsodic room names like Aria and the Prima-Donna Suite.

LOCATION SCOUT

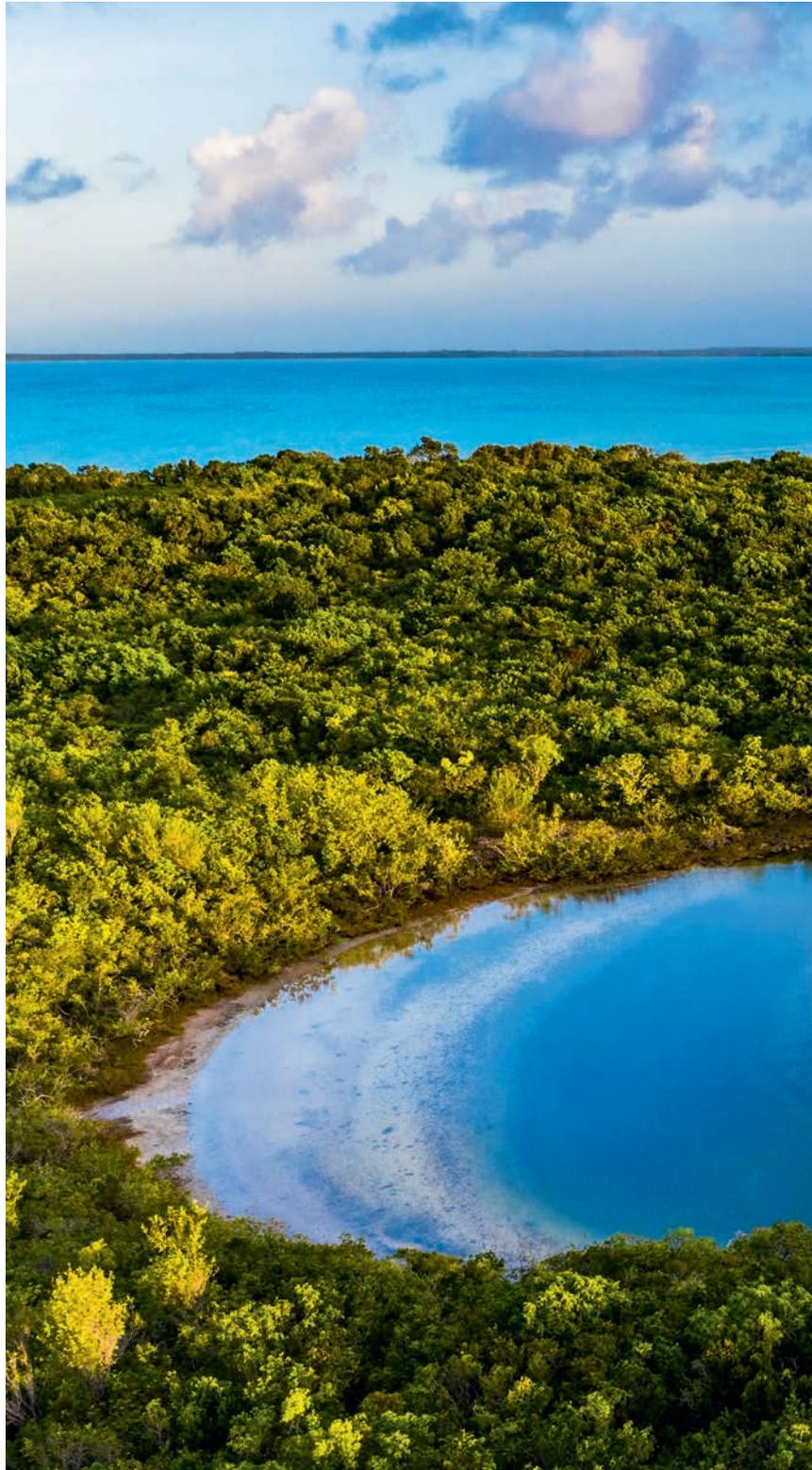
THE BLUE HEAVEN OF THE BAHAMAS

The 700 islands of this Caribbean country are famous for their eye-popping beauty, says Bahamian expert **Rogan Smith**

Talk about friends in high places – astronaut Scott Kelly called the Bahamas “the most beautiful place from space”. When Christopher Columbus landed here in 1492, he described “very green trees and many ponds and fruits of various kinds”. And the country, which forms part of the Lucayan Archipelago in the North Atlantic Ocean, remains just as stunning today, with its hundreds of islands and cays, powdery-pink sand beaches and malachite waters.

Stunning and inspirational – it was here that Martin Luther King Jr penned parts of his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. There’s also evidence Ernest Hemingway was inspired to write his Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Old Man and the Sea* in the Bahamas. Though the novel is set in Cuba, in the 1930s Hemingway visited the island of Bimini, where he battled to pull in a giant marlin that was being mauled by sharks, much like in the book

These islands offer so much more than just sun, sand and sea. They provide the perfect holiday spot for adventure seekers, nature lovers, island hoppers and foodies. Here are the venues and ▶





It was here that Martin Luther King Jr penned parts of his famous “I Have a Dream” speech

Collapsed caves filled with water are known as “blue holes”; this one is on Eleuthera Island

activities to add to your own itinerary.

1. Not all visitors know the full history of the Bahamas' slave trade past, but one trip to the **Clifton Heritage National Park** will change that. Located on the western tip of New Providence, this historic landmark allows you to step back in time, retracing the steps of some of the Bahamas' slaves. The park features slave relics and a replica of their old quarters. There are breathtaking ocean views; while there, go snorkelling at the nearby Jaws Beach and visit its mesmerising underwater sculpture park.

2. If thrill seekers had a headquarters, it would be **Dean's Blue Hole** in Long Island. As the world's second deepest blue hole (202m deep), this natural wonder attracts expert free divers eager to test their skills. It's beautiful and can be challenging. But that's part of the attraction.

3. For an authentic food experience, you have to eat where the locals eat, and that's **Bamboo Shack** in Nassau, New Providence (the most populous island in the Bahamas). It's not uncommon to see huge lunch crowds eagerly ordering a juicy conch snack smothered with ketchup and hot sauce. Some locals even get theirs with raw onions piled high. If you do, prepare for ya' brett to be hot. Best keep a mint handy.

4. James Bond fans will be thrilled by the helpfully-named **Thunderball Grotto Cave**



The 5m-tall *Ocean Atlas* off Jaws Beach is said to be the world's largest underwater sculpture, above; fried plantain and rice, below



Bon Vivant's Great Inagua Punch is made with tropical green tea-infused Absolut Elyx.



in Exuma. The underwater cave with its otherworldly beauty was of course featured in the 1965 Sean Connery-starring Bond film *Thunderball*, and is the perfect location to snorkel, or at the very least pretend to be a

dashing international spy without worrying about villains with dodgy accents.

5. Wouldn't it be cool to stand on a bridge that separates the raging dark blue Atlantic Ocean from the tranquil turquoise waters of the Bight of Eleuthera? Well, you can. The **Glass Window Bridge** is one of the most jaw-dropping sites in Eleuthera and well worth the visit. The man-made structure replaces a rock arch, but do take care during storms. Bahamian weather is known for its temperamental side.

6. No trip to the Bahamas is complete without a cocktail or two. Or more. For the best spot in New Providence, head to **Bon Vivants**, which bills itself as the Bahamas' first craft cocktail bar and specialty coffee shop. The LGBTQIA-friendly bar is an Instagrammer's dream with its tropical decor. When you're ready to wind down, try the Great Inagua Punch, served in Instagram-worthy bird-themed cups. But, be careful, too much liquor may leave you all *kerpunkle up* (pretty sloshed).

7. How about a watery glimpse into the Bahamas' more nefarious recent past? Head to **Staniel Cay**, Exuma, to dive near a sunken wreck that was used by the Medellín Cartel for drug-running in the 1980s. According to local legend, their drug-laden aircraft fell just short of its landing strip in Bahamian waters. Today, it's a popular dive spot, home to many species of fish and coral.

✕ Fly to Bahamas

3 MORE INSPIRATIONAL DESTINATIONS



STOCKBRIDGE, MA, USA

This historic town a couple of hours from Boston was the basis for Norman Rockwell's most famous painting, *Home for Christmas* (Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas). Time to book a seasonal visit?



EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

From character names to buildings, the streets of Edinburgh inspired the magical world of Harry Potter. It's said that Diagon Alley is based on pretty Victoria Street in the Old Town, so start your tour there.



KINGSTON, JAMAICA

It's no secret that Jamaica was Bob Marley's home, but did you know you can visit the housing project he namechecks in *No Woman, No Cry*? Now a museum, Trench Town is seen as reggae's birthplace.

SCREEN TEST

Can anyone become a ghost hunter?

THE CASES OF REAL-LIFE PARANORMAL INVESTIGATORS ED AND LORRAINE WARREN PROVIDE THE SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THE *CONJURING* FRANCHISE. CAN **OLIVER KEENS** GET INTO THE BUSINESS?

Supernatural horror franchise *The Conjuring* has reached its third movie – *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It* – and as with every instalment of this bum-rumbling strand of pleasantly retro frighteners, the ghost-hunting couple at the centre of it put themselves into situations of absolute terror.

The human obsession with all things ghostly goes back centuries, but what does it take to be an actual, professional paranormal investigator? To find out if I – an incredibly risk-averse, borderline scaredy-cat non-believing man – could ever be cut out for the role, I let Hazel Williams, from London's Spectrum Paranormal Investigations (SPI), put me through my paces.

She didn't sugar-coat things for me as a rookie: yes, it would be scary. A recent foray into a pitch-black cellar, complete with a screeching bat and the stench of its ammonia-heavy droppings, left even a steely pro like Williams feeling terrified. But fear is both natural and conquerable too: "You learn to take a deep breath and know that even though it's totally dark and you're worried that someone is going to touch you, everything will be fine. Until something happens, that is..."

Williams – who has experienced everything from levitating objects to doors flying open in haunted pubs – surprisingly has lots of time for scepticism in her ranks. "You don't need to believe in ghosts," she says. "If you did, then you might just trust every bit of evidence that comes along. I'd rather have a sceptic on my team than a believer." Instead, being a good investigator requires you to be grounded and "not fooled by small things" like faint taps and creaks.

Reassured that my background as a journalist would see me fit in with the community ("It's a great skill set, documentation is key"), I'm then asked: "Do you have a hectic life?". It's a good



question. "If you do, I'd imagine you might find it hard to become tuned in to any changes in energy. Your body is your best ghost-hunting tool. I can stand in a particular spot and know that an energy doesn't feel quite right."

Williams' simple approach to investigating the paranormal is a revelation, and while she's quick to bemoan Hollywood for making people too scared of simple things like – gulp – a moonlit graveyard or a pitch-black basement, I had to know that one trope of ghost-hunting movies was real: gadgetry. SPI pack a hefty supply on every hunt, including an odour meter to measure strange smells, a TriField meter to gauge electromagnetic energy, a FLIR (forward-looking infrared) camera and a solar radiometer to measure electromagnetic radiation.

Williams reckons that, as long as I can keep my mind open, stay grounded and am prepared to make a sizeable investment in kit, I most certainly have a future as a paranormal investigator. I'm honestly flattered. Now, how do I make my life less hectic?

 Watch *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It*



THE VERDICT

Who you gonna call? Me, just so long as I stay focused when things go bump in the night.

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“I’M DESTINED



FOR GREATNESS

Social media queen, international DJ, Afrobeats star and the Nigerian Kim Kardashian, Cuppy has already taken Lagos and London by storm – now it's on to the rest of the world. She tells **Jimi Famurewa** about riches, recordings and the trials of reality TV

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID YEO



Iolence 'Cuppy' Otedola is telling me about the recording process for her debut album, *Original Copy*. "Hand on heart, it was the hardest thing that I've done," says the 28-year-old, with a light laugh. Typically, popstars bursting onto the global stage only say good things about their time in the studio – where the atmosphere was inevitably electric, and songs doubtless came together with magical ease.

Cuppy is more honest, however. "I went on social media and said that I was really down because I couldn't find the featured artists I wanted," she explains. Over 10 million followers – or 'Cupcakes' as she affectionately refers to them – share in almost every aspect of Cuppy's life across Instagram, Twitter and her other accounts. "And then I got a phone call from Wyclef [Jean, of The Fugees], who joined the project."

This tale – featuring internet-age candour, a rebellious streak and the sudden arrival of a very famous person – is, in many ways, the quintessential Cuppy story. Born in Nigeria, into one of Africa's most illustrious families (her father, oil tycoon Femi Otedola, has a fortune valued as high as \$1.8 billion), she has used this early privilege as a springboard for charity work, reality TV stardom

and an illustrious music career. As a DJ she has spun records for the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Emmanuel Macron and Elton John ("He kissed my hand so that must mean I'm destined for greatness"). As a popstar, with millions of streams to her name, she's a leading light of the increasingly global Afrobeats scene.

Cuppy also embodies a very modern type of digital fame. Viewed through the prism of those frantically updated social media accounts her life appears to be a whiplash-inducing blur of club nights, first-class cabins and philanthropic engagements. Or, as she memorably puts it: "I can be hanging out in the studio one moment and the next day I'll be, I don't know, giving a talk at a pneumonia benefit with the queen of Spain."

So, yes, Cuppy has clout and connections. But, perhaps unsurprisingly, this daughter of a driven businessman wants even more in life. Much more. And, as is abundantly clear after a frenetic, entertaining and, at times, painfully honest hour in her company, she is not about to let anyone else's opinions get in her way.

"Not to sound too dramatic but I kind of compare my journey to Rihanna's," she tells me, ▶



Previous pages:
Dress *Roté Birger
Christensen*.
Headpiece *Lock & Co*.
Trainers *Sophia
Webster*

This page:
Dress *Torlowei*



Shirt *Versace*.
Trousers *Vintage*.
Shoes *Sophia*
Webster. Sunglasses
The Goods Agency

with tongue firmly in cheek. Cuppy possesses supernaturally self-assured charisma and a sense of fun that goes perfectly with her signature shock of candy-floss pink hair. Her accent is African-tinged but with traces of London and Californian Valley Girl. Though she was born in Lagos in 1992 (“My personality was made in Lagos. The good side, the bad side, the hustle, the not taking no for an answer. That’s all Lagos”), Cuppy moved to Britain in the mid-noughties to study, first at the prestigious King’s School, Canterbury, and then business management at King’s College London.

“So having never visited the UK, at 13, I found myself in boarding school there,” she says, with a disbelieving chuckle. “The food was different, the weather was different, everything was different. Music became my escape; partying became my escape. I’d love to tell you that my introduction to DJing was this magical moment, but I was just the biggest party animal ever.”

At 15, with the help of a fake Nigerian driving licence, she was hitting upmarket London nightclubs, and soon playing at them too, forging her Cuppy persona in the hedonistic whirl of the West End’s ritziest circles. She even featured in *Lagos to London: Britain’s New Super-Rich* – a controversial 2016 documentary on Channel 4 about the flamboyant lifestyles of West African trust fund kids in the capital. While she stresses she was still “very academic”, her parents were none the wiser to the goings-on the documentary exposed. “They were oblivious and, being honest, [they were] just like a bank,” she admits. “They were sending me ridiculous amounts of money that they never should have.

“I think *Lagos to London* touched on the fact I was in this weird glass box but didn’t fit in,” she adds. “Maybe because I sounded different or acted different, or maybe because of the colour of my skin, I never quite felt like I belonged. As much as I wore Uggs, had an Anya Hindmarch bag and hung out around Sloane Square, it just wasn’t sticking. And at that time I didn’t have a lot of Nigerian

“I NEEDED TO BRING MORE CREDIBILITY SO I DECIDED TO MAKE MY OWN MONEY AND MUSIC”

friends because I was so far away from home.”

What’s more, as she began to work at London’s clubs, Cuppy found there wasn’t yet the appetite for African-inflected pop that there is now. “One London bar I wanted to DJ at told me that the set list on my SoundCloud was ‘too urban’,” she says, with an eyebrow-raise.

Ultimately, the fallout from her sudden infamy prompted her to get more serious about her music

In full Flo

THE CUPPY CV

Born

Florence Ifeoluwa Otedola was born on 11 November 1992 in Lagos, Nigeria – the daughter of esteemed Nigerian businessman Femi Otedola.

Education

King’s College, London – bachelor’s degree in business and economics. MA in music business from New York University. Currently enrolled at the University of Oxford to study politics and African studies.

Interests

Music, DJing, business and charity work. In Lagos you can find her eating dinner at Nok or shopping for Ankara fabrics at Lekki market.

Key works

The House of Cuppy I & II

Two EPs on which Cuppy remixed tracks by leading Afrobeats artists, leading to her embarking on a tour of the continent.

Original Copy

Her 12-track debut Afro-fusion album arrived in 2020 and featured guest spots from Wyclef Jean, Julian Marley and Ms Banks.

Red Velvet Music Management

Cuppy’s record label bridges the gap between rising Lagos artists and the UK.

The Cuppy Foundation

Formed in 2018, The Cuppy Foundation is Cuppy’s charitable arm. Its 2019 Gold Gala raised over £10 million for Save the Children.

Highlife

A new Channel 4 documentary (streaming now on All 4) following the lives of a set of glamorous young British West Africans – including Cuppy, of course.



career. “I will put my hand up and say that [the TV show] was probably the wrong perception for me to have been giving,” she says. “And I think I’m now constantly facing the consequences of people thinking I’m just a rich kid.” She pauses. “I was looking at it like, I’m actually an entrepreneur; I know how to do this and I know how to work my market. I needed to bring more credibility so I decided to make my own money and my own music.”

The result of this was her first single proper: ‘Green Light’ – a bubbling, sun-drenched smash that has clocked a staggering 15 million views on YouTube since it was released in 2017 and features Cuppy – ably backed by fellow Nigerian artist Tekno – singing in a mellow, lightly synthesised voice. Then came *Original Copy* in 2020, and that ▶

album's hit single 'Jollof on the Jet' (jollof being a Nigerian rice dish). It also features a major Nigerian rap star, Rema, as well as Tanzania's next big thing, Rayvanny. As with all subjects, Cuppy is bracingly frank about both her abilities as a performer and her savvy decision to hop aboard the unstoppable Afrobeats train with her choice of collaborators.

"Just because I play music doesn't mean I'm good at making it," she admits. "But even though I may not have a great voice, I have a good ear." Cuppy has a masters degree in music business from NYU. Given the family's business background, do all the Otedolas believe music represents a sound investment? "My parents were excited but they were also concerned," she says, with fresh hesitance in her voice. "They wanted me to find my calling but they also wanted to make sure that I had some sort of steady income. And it's all about excelling in whatever you do. I even remember my mum famously saying, 'If you want to be a pole dancer then just make sure you're the best pole dancer.'"

Talk of the Otedola clan and, by implication, the African media's fixation with them brings us to the elephant lurking in the gilded penthouse suite of Cuppy's career. Because of her father's fortune, and her own inescapable internet profile, Cuppy's

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT MY PEOPLE ARE REPRESENTED. SOMEONE'S GOT TO DO IT"

music is sometimes seen as secondary to her sheer, luminous internet star power.

"They call us the Kardashians of Nigeria," she tells me, with barely concealed pride, of younger sister Temi, elder sister Tolani and younger brother Fewa. Anyone this famous is sure to have detractors, and Cuppy has a simple message for hers: "I have a right to express myself." Plus, she is determined to use her influence for good, most significantly through her own Cuppy Foundation. The organisation was set up to protect and provide education for vulnerable children in her home country. It also supported Nigerian regions with hand-washing and other resources during the pandemic. "Because of the opportunities I was given I just feel it's important to create opportunities for others," she says.

Then there's her decision to return to fly-on-the-wall TV in a new documentary, *Highlife*, aired on Channel 4 as part of 'Black to Front' – a series of shows pushing Black creators to the fore. "This show is much deeper [than *Lagos to London*] and I have a voice," she explains, of putting her trust in a television programme again. "It's always a risk, but it's one I'm willing to take because it's important to make sure that my people are represented. And, you know, I hate to say it, but someone's got to do it. I'm doing this for more opportunities to come for Black women, especially in the UK."

If that wasn't enough, she's also just launched a jewellery brand, Cuppy Cuts, and there's the small aside of her enrolling at the University of Oxford to study politics and African studies. "My music is going to change direction because of this move. It's not just African music – it's African music for the world."

As our time comes to an end and another engagement beckons, Cuppy's desire to change global perceptions of young African women is palpable. To underestimate her intellect, entrepreneurial spirit or unblinking drive would, you feel, be a mistake. "I'm working so hard so that young girls in Nigeria can look at me and know that they can have it all. You don't have to be uneducated to be an artist, and you can be a scholar and still make your own music. You don't have to follow the crowd."

"The world is now recognising our scene, our race, our music," she adds. "I wouldn't switch who I am. I feel like I can save the world and still party at the same time."

🎧 Listen to Cuppy's Original Copy and The List with Cuppy – exclusive to Vera

Cuppy recommends... THREE NIGERIAN MUSICIANS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Nissi

Burna Boy's little sister, Nissi blends Afrobeats with dance music, drawing on her experiences of life between Nigeria and London.

Ayra Starr

After working with Don Jazzy – the force behind Nigeria's influential Mavin record label – Ayra's debut LP *19 & Dangerous* put her on the map.

DJ Frizzie

A DJ Frizzie set sees her blend dancehall and pop, house and Afrobeats. She also has an MSc in environmental science.





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Dark tourism

Don't
even



A photograph of a grey brick wall. The wall is covered with ivy leaves and stems, which are dark green and some are yellowing. On the right side of the wall, there are several large, white lilies with yellow stamens. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, creating a moody atmosphere.

Dark tourism is the travel trend everyone wants to try this Hallowe'en, but just how macabre are we talking?
Jessica Prupas visits the dark side

PHOTOGRAPHS: STEPHEN LENTHALL

go there

The fog creeps around the crooked gravestones,

lined up like dead-eyed soldiers and weathered by orange moss. The trees, spindly and naked, have shed all their leaves, cutting the shape of twigs into the lurking moon. The wind is cold and if you screamed, your voice wouldn't carry past the necropolis gates.

Yes, you're on holiday.

Howling, historic cemeteries; abandoned nuclear test sites; eerie medical museums – once upon a time these were the settings for B movies. Now they are the preferred destinations of so-called “dark tourists”, a growing community of travellers who eschew the beach in favour of the macabre, the affecting and the strange. It's a scene that Dr Peter Hohenhaus – a German-born academic, researcher and author of the new *Atlas of Dark Destinations* – has been uniquely influential in helping to grow.

“I have always been attracted to darkness,” says Hohenhaus. “I spent my holidays in Germany exploring derelict buildings and abandoned harbour sites. So, when I first heard of dark tourism I thought, ‘That's me.’”

That was in 2007, when the doctor was reading an interview in *The Guardian* newspaper with the academics who coined the term. Becoming obsessed with the concept, he began chronicling every viable dark tourist site on the planet on his website dark-tourism.com. Since then, the site has ballooned into an encyclopaedia of interesting and overlooked places around the globe, used monthly by 30,000 intrepid souls.

“I started out writing about all the places I'd visited, thinking I would stop at around 100 destinations,” he recalls. “Then people began submitting more to me, and the list grew very suddenly to 2,500 destinations, and then I lost count. That was years ago.”

Now dark tourism is entering the mainstream thanks to a spate of new publications, including ▶

Dark places
**Alnwick Garden,
Northumberland, UK**

Some people plant fancy gardens for aesthetics, some do it for conservation and some – as in the case of Jane Percy, Duchess of Northumberland – do it to take you down. The Duchess began remodelling the estate at Alnwick Castle in north-east England in 1997 and chose to add a dinky Poison Garden of 100 stupefyingly toxic shrubs. After eyeballing the pretty lawns and cascading fountains, guests enter the pernicious plantation through heavy,

black iron gates, marked with a skull-and-crossbones and the legend “These plants can kill”.

Inside, you’ll find everything from common-or-garden laurel (a source of cyanide in WWI) and giant hogweed (the photosensitive sap of which causes awful blisters) to brugmansia, or angel’s trumpet (which acts as a heady aphrodisiac before it polishes you off). Some plants are so vicious they’re locked away in cages – though morbidly curious visitors are banned from sniffing or touching the rest anyway, lest they start pushing up daisies.

✈ Fly to Edinburgh



Hohenhaus's *Atlas*, TV shows such as Netflix's 2018 docu-series *Dark Tourist* and even specialist travel agencies springing up to offer so-called "Dark Tourist Trips" to anyone who dares venture into the abyss.

It's enough to give you goosebumps, but should we be embracing the darkness in this way? Hohenhaus is keen to point out that dark tourism in the academic sense is never gratuitous or exploitative – it exists to highlight those aspects of history and society that we tend to gloss over while travelling yet offer us rare insight into the human condition. Museums, political monuments, landscapes shaped by tragedy and sites of forgotten injustices – these are all on the dark tourist's itinerary.

"Lots of people hear the term 'dark tourism' and think it's something deviant or ethically unsound," says Hohenhaus. "But it's actually about trying to understand those things that are nearly impossible to understand."

This curiosity isn't new. Some scholars consider sites such as Pompeii to be precursors to modern dark tourism. The Italian lost city began welcoming tourists back in the 18th century, when European nobility would stop by as part of their coming-of-age Grand Tour of the continent.

But the real tipping point for the trend, according to Hohenhaus, was the advent of mass media, followed by the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 – the first globally reported disaster. The breathless newspaper articles triggered an enduring, cultish interest from a group of people keen to learn all they could about the sunken ship. Long, expensive expeditions to see the *Titanic* wreck were offered,

"PEOPLE WANT EXPERIENCES BEYOND WHAT IS PRESCRIBED BY THE TRAVEL GUIDES"

and tourist attractions were erected at various points on land that could claim some connection with the doomed vessel. Belfast's harbourside district around the shipyard where the *Titanic* was built in the early 1900s became home to film studios, exhibitions, even a fun fair.

In many ways, modern dark tourism is all about finding a more respectful way of exercising that same interest. For Hohenhaus, commodification needs to be balanced with education. "The bad sites revel too much in the darkness," he says. "Running a ▶

ADDITIONAL IMAGES: ALAMY, THE ALNWICK GARDEN, CONSTANCE MERSH ON BEHALF OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA
ADDITIONAL WORDS: TOM HOWELLS SET DESIGN: KERRY HUGHES





Dark places **Mütter Museum, Philadelphia, US**

Fans of gruesome stuff in glass cabinets will feel like they've hit the jackpot at Philadelphia's Mütter Museum. This impressively-mezzanined building contains thousands of centuries-old human specimens, all of which have serious ick appeal. Behold! Such treasures as: slices of Albert Einstein's actual brain; a pair of gout-engorged hands; 2,000 objects pulled from people's throats by 'famed' laryngologist Chevalier Jackson; pickled genital



warts laced onto string like jewellery; and so on.

Lurid, sure, but the Mütter is actually part of The College of Physicians of Philadelphia, so there's a serious academic bent to all the nauseating stuff on display. As well as the permanent collections, the museum also holds occasional special exhibitions, too: one past show included "real-world examples of gruesome and grotesque fairy-tale bodies" - Grimm in every sense.

✂ Fly to New York



Dark places Centralia, Pennsylvania, US

Back in 1962, firefighters in the bustling coal-mining town of Centralia – around 80km north-east of Harrisburg in Pennsylvania – set about clearing some landfill just as they'd done in years past: by setting it on fire. Unfortunately, this particular dump sat on top of a fissure into a gargantuan network of subterranean coal seams, which promptly went up in flames and haven't stopped burning since.

By the 1980s, the foibles of living on top of a literal inferno – plumes of toxic gasses, burning-hot earth below petrol stations, 30m-deep sinkholes opening



up – were getting a bit much, and Centralia was forcibly evacuated (though five stoic residents remain). These days, curious visitors can amble around this near-ghost town, past abandoned buildings and along a heat-cracked (and heavily graffitied) highway, smoke drifting up from its fractured tarmac. There's no need to all rush at once: scientists reckon the fire could keep smouldering for another 100 years.

✈ Fly to New York

“REAL DARK TOURISTS ARE SENSITIVE TO HISTORY AND ALWAYS WELL BEHAVED”

dark tourism attraction is a tricky job. It has to be done sensitively.” Then there's the question of when to visit the site of a disaster. There is no golden rule, says the doctor, but the more years that have elapsed between the event and the visit the better. And he has no time for people who enter active war zones to snap some selfies. That is “danger tourism” – insensitive, and life-threatening. “I'm not prepared to risk my life for travel, and I don't think anyone else should,” he warns.

Ultimately, dark tourism is just one slightly murky part of a bigger picture. As socially responsible travellers, many of us don't want the brochure version of the place we're visiting – all the gloss, none of the reality. “People are seeking out travel experiences beyond what is prescribed by

the travel guides,” says Hohenhaus. “They don't just want to check a bunch of boxes, and dark tourism offers so much more depth.”

And, sometimes, there's beauty to be found in places others don't usually look. Hohenhaus was fascinated by the hulking Soviet monuments of his youth in Germany – for him, they were portals to another era, not the concrete eyesores of a failed state. It's the gateway quality of these sites that keeps dark tourists hooked.

What comes next? Dark theme parks? Dark cruises? Dark gap years? Not quite, but Hohenhaus is seeing more and more websites being hastily put together to keep up with demand, full of sensationalised subject matter and inaccurate historical assertions. However, he remains confident the purer aspects of the movement will endure. “The real dark tourists are the most respectful types of tourists, because they're sensitive to history and always well behaved,” he says. And besides, as soon as the spotlight falls on something, how can it be truly dark? The truth, as they say, is out there.

■ Atlas of Dark Destinations is published by Laurence King this month

Discover the Possibilities Within



Stir Creativity

Run, Rob, run!





Forrest

BRITISH ULTRARUNNER ROB POPE DECIDED TO FOLLOW IN THE STEPS OF FORREST GUMP AND RUN COAST TO COAST ACROSS AMERICA AN INCREDIBLE FIVE TIMES, BECOMING A BEARDY TOM HANKS DOUBLE IN THE PROCESS. WHY, ASKS **ED CUMMING**

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVID VENNI

In one of the most famous sequences from Robert Zemeckis' 1994 film *Forrest Gump*,

Tom Hanks' simple-minded but golden-hearted hero stands up on his porch in Mobile, Alabama, wearing chinos, red Nike Cortez and a red "Bubba Gump Shrimp Co" hat and jogs off down the road. "That day, for no particular reason," Gump says in voiceover, "I decided to go for a little run." More than three years later, after crossing back and forth across the continent, Gump comes to a stop just as abruptly, on a stretch of arrow-straight road in Monument Valley. "I'm pretty tired," he says. "I think I'll go home now."

On 15 September 2016, Rob Pope, a 38-year-old veterinarian from Liverpool, laced up a pair of red Nike Cortez and set out from Mobile, Alabama, in Forrest's footsteps. After 422 days of running he arrived in Monument Valley at the height of spring, having completed Forrest's run. In total Pope ran 15,621 miles (25,140km) at an average of 37.5 miles (60km) a day. He crossed 43 states, reached the ocean five times and pounded his way through 33 pairs of trainers. He saw a bear, a moose, dolphins, countless dogs. He drank much Dr Pepper and ate many doughnuts. "Run, Forrest, run!" was shouted at him, by his estimate, more than 500 times.

Over the years, Pope has found that when you run nearly 16,000 miles back and forth across the USA, one question crops up more than any other: "Why?" At the end of all his wandering, he still doesn't really know. "If you'd asked me at the start, I'd have said I just wanted to run across America," he says, over coffee and fruit in north London. "Beyond that, you can dress it up in so many ways. I could say I didn't want to fail. Or ▶

On Highway 93, Nevada, reaching the 400-day point



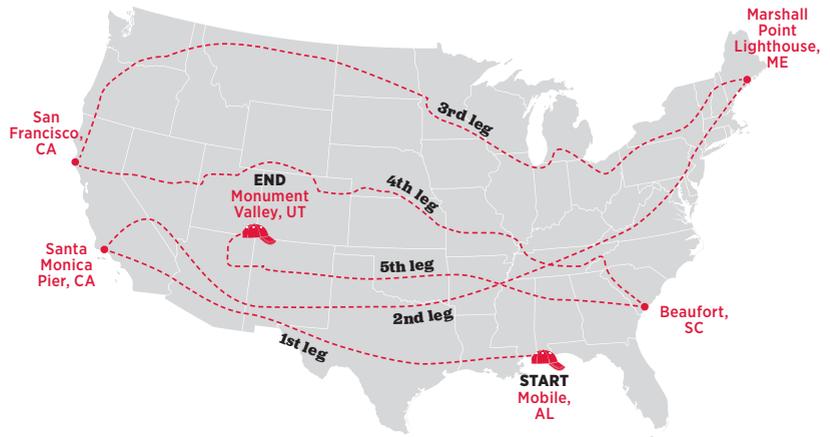
Run, Rob, run!





that I didn't want to let people down. But I don't really have an answer."

He smiles as he says this. Or at least I think he does. You can only tell by his eyes, which shine through a Hagrid-thicket of dark-brown beard, a tribute to Gump's late-run transitory look. "I put a bit of oil in it, but other than that it's pretty low maintenance," Pope says, running both hands through it. He can't shave yet. Three years after he finished his run, Pope has written a book, *Becoming Forrest*, detailing his achievement. It's a staggering, at times bewildering, tale of determination in the face of injuries, apathy, weather, fauna, motor vehicles, the landscape and the American public at a time when Trumpmania was dividing the nation. While he promotes it he is still trying to look the part. As well as the Forrest face-forest, Pope is wearing Nike Cortez, a check shirt and chinos. From a bag he produces two red Bubba Gump hats, one bleached pink by the American sun.



ROB'S ROUTE

1st leg

AL, MS, LA, TX, NM, AZ, CA
2,259.45 miles

2nd leg

CA, NV, AZ, NM, TX, OK, AR, TN, VA, Washington DC, MD, DE, PA, NJ, Boston Marathon, NY, CT, MA, NH, ME
3,759.3 miles

3rd leg

ME, NY, PA, OH, MI, IN, IL, WI, MN, ND, MT, ID, WA, OR, CA
4,163.05 miles

4th leg

CA, NV, UT, WY, CO, NE, KS, MO, IL, KY, TN, NC, SC
3,140.77 miles

5th leg

SC, GA, AL, MS, AR, OK, TX, NM, AZ, UT
2,266.9 miles



"I hope the book is a monument to trying hard," Pope says. "Some ultrarunners are extraordinary athletes. But others are just normal people who overcome adversity. I wanted to show what you can achieve with mental dedication. I also wanted to show an antithesis to 'Make America Great Again'. America is not perfect, and it is a bit broken, but it's still great. I probably met 4,000 people, with all kinds of politics, and there were

Clockwise from above: Tom Hanks in the movie in Monument Valley; a beardless Rob at Bayou La Batre harbour, Louisiana; Rob in Joshua Tree National Park, California

only three or four bad eggs. That's got to give you hope, doesn't it?"

Pope is too modest to put himself in the "extraordinary athlete" category, but he was already an accomplished runner, nearly good enough to turn professional, when he took on his most extreme challenge. He has been running marathons since he was 19. When he signed up for his first New York City Marathon his mum, Cathy, tricked her way through to Richard Branson on the phone to ask him if he would sponsor her son. The Virgin boss explained that they didn't sponsor individuals but arranged for Virgin Atlantic Upper Class tickets to New York so Cathy could watch Rob race. Pope still holds the Guinness World Record for the fastest marathon dressed as a movie character, having run 2:36:28 as Gump in 2018 to take the title from a man who'd run 2:39:09 dressed as Elsa from *Frozen*.

Forrest Gump is a popular film with long-distance runners, who relate to Gump's one-foot-in-front- ➤

of-the-other obstinacy and gnostic justifications. Pope says he initially planned to do a cross-Australia run, but was attracted to the Gump mission because although several runners had done single transcontinental legs, nobody had done the whole thing. It's hard not to draw other parallels between Pope and Hanks' character. Gump's run begins after his mother dies of cancer and the love of his life, Jenny, leaves. Cathy Pope died of cancer in 2002 at just 48, after a life marked by difficulty.

"I've had my fair share of hardship," Pope says. "I come from a single-parent family. My mum had a major battle with alcoholism that she overcame, but we lost everything as a result: the house, her health." Gump had a childhood problem with his legs; when Pope was three he was diagnosed with a rare hip disorder. Gump is mocked for his low IQ; Pope's junior school told him that if he went to his chosen secondary school he would be the stupidest kid in the class. Before she died, Cathy urged her son to do one thing with his life that made a difference.

"I didn't have a clue what that meant," he says. In the years since her death he completed a PhD and qualified as a vet, but he still felt something was

“Before she died, my mum told me to do one thing with my life that made a difference. At the time, I didn't have a clue what that meant”

missing. "I was working five 13-hour days a week," he says, "I just thought something had to change."

Logistics and money were a constant battle on the Gump run. Pope estimates the whole thing cost around £60,000 (US\$80,000), including all his and his partner Nadine's savings. By the final leg, they were relying on the kindness of strangers. For much of the early stage, Nadine was his only support network, driving ahead of her single-minded boyfriend. It sounds like an act of devotion on a par with the run itself.

"She was having to drive the RV, cook, clean, empty the 'black tank'," Pope says. "It was stressful for her. I'd come back with tales of seeing rattlesnakes or sunsets, and she'd have been parked up on the side of the road, waiting for me while trucks whistled past. She was basically an unpaid skivvy. My estimation for her went through the roof. If we'd got to the point where we were out of money, I think she'd have been well in her rights to give me a belt."

Pope's nadir came in a petrol station in Houston, crippled by tendinitis in his shin. "I broke down," ▶

Bonneville Salt Flats,
Utah, famous for its
speed races

Run, Rob, run!



Getting the Gump look

Baseball cap

The Bubba Gump Shrimp Co is an international chain of restaurants inspired by the film. In the movie, Forrest decides to honour a promise to his fallen Vietnam comrade Bubba by setting up a successful shrimping business in the Gulf of Mexico.

Trainers

The Nike Cortez were created by Nike founder Phil Knight and his partner, Olympic coach Bill Bowerman, for the 1972 Munich Olympics and were key to the brand's early success. They're still a bestseller today.

Shirt

Later on Forrest wears a yellow tee, but at the run's start he is in his signature blue button-up number, the same one he wears on the bench in the scenes that bookend the film.

Tracksuit top

Although Nike make endless varieties of tracksuit top, the one Forrest wears on his journey was unique to the film. Rob's version was customised by his wife Nadine to add the stripe. He says: "It's one of a kind and the item I get asked most about!"

Shorts

Forrest may begin his journey in plain chinos, but he graduates to these dashing red shorts for later phases of the epic feat.



“I was too self-centred at the start, but as I went on I realised it was about more than me”



he says. “I sat on a bench eating my snacks and blubbed for about 10 minutes.” The start of the fifth and final leg was another low point. “I didn’t really want to go back,” he says. “I was going to go heavily into debt. I was broken. I wanted to live my normal life again. My original motivation had gone. I just wanted to not let people down.” Pope had amassed a large following on social media and received thousands of messages of support. Two people wrote to him saying they’d been suicidal before hearing about his example of doggedly waking up and putting the miles in. Since he started the run, Pope himself had gained another reason to carry on: Nadine was pregnant with their daughter, Bee.

Ultrarunners are given to philosophising. As the endless tarmac passed beneath Pope’s feet, and the landscape changed from desert to forest to glacial lakes and back again, he had no shortage of time to think. “I was too self-centred at the start,” he says. “I don’t know if it was because I was an only child. But as I went on I realised it was about

more than me. You can’t worry about pleasing everyone, but if you make everyone in your inner circle happy, they’ll make you happy.”

It’s a Gumpian lesson: for all the challenges the world throws at Forrest, he responds with determination and goodwill. “The world would be a better place if people were more like Forrest,” Pope says. But you get the sense that what he really learnt on his grand peregrination was how to be more Rob Pope. At the finish line, with well-wishers gathered, he dropped to one knee and proposed to Nadine. She said yes. These days the family is back in Liverpool, where Pope is working at a non-profit vet’s and presumably hoping his haircut doesn’t get him mistaken for one of the patients. He still fancies a crack at the Australia crossing.

As to the Gump run, only one obvious challenge remains. There has still been no word from Hanks. “Tom’s obviously so lovely, I can only assume he hasn’t heard about it,” Pope laughs. “Nads and I sometimes talk about the run and say it would be the ultimate romcom. Maybe if we make a film out of it, he can have a cameo in that.”

Highway 163, Arizona, where Forrest stops and decides to head home in the movie; after the birth of daughter Bee at Liverpool Women’s Hospital

■ **Becoming Forrest** is published by HarperNorth this month

A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT
AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

What's On

DOG EAT DOG

Every iconic villain needs a good origin story, and now your favourite Dalmatian tormentor gets one in Disney's *Cruella*. The punchy prequel – set in punk-era 1970s London – stars Emma Stone as Estella Miller (aka Cruella de Vil), a ruthless fashion-world upstart plotting revenge on the industry bigwig who wronged her. So, is Cruella really that evil? It's not so black and white...

 Watch Cruella



THE BEST OF WHAT'S ONBOARD

59-65

Movies

From spooky Halloween chillers to new family favourites, there's a feast of films onboard.

67-71

TV

Kick back with *Summer of Soul* or delve into the paranormal with *Resident Alien* – it's all here.

73-75

Audio

From celeb podcasts to new pop, we have the words and music 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 boxsets and ace docs. Read on for our top picks for October.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

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

SCREEN TIME

Onboard this month we have

114

Movies

410+

Albums & playlists

240+

Hours of TV shows

26

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:

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- 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.

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Viewing guide

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-  Unsuitable for children
-  Vera Loves

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

automatically take you to our WiFi page.

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

OUR CINEMATIC HEROES

Movies

BLACK WIDOW 101

Scarlett Johansson returns as the tough Avenger in the latest Marvel movie, but what's going on? **AI Horner** fills us in—

Name: Black Widow, aka Natasha Romanoff.

Status: Deceased.

Oh, a superhero who's a ghost, haunting supervillains from the grave? Not quite. After sacrificing herself in *Avengers: Endgame*, the ass-kicking Marvel super-spy played by Scarlett Johansson is finally having her history filled in with a long-overdue prequel, set after the signing of the Sokovia Accords.

The Sokovia Accords? I filled in on synths for them once... I don't think so. The Sokovia Accords are a piece of US government legislation that tore the Avengers apart in 2016's *Captain America: Civil War*.

So, what's going on in this movie? With the Avengers scattered around the world on a friendship timeout, Natasha heads to Europe where her plans to lay low are interrupted by a mysterious villain named Taskmaster – and a surprise reunion with her estranged Russian spy family.

The fun cop from *Stranger Things* is on the poster, is it a crossover event? That's just good old David Harbour, who played chief of police Hopper in the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. He and Florence Pugh (*Midsommer*, *Little Women*) steal the show as Natasha's long-lost dad and sister respectively.

Are there big explosions? You bet. Explosions, thrilling fight scenes, mind-controlled pigs – everything you could want.

 Watch Black Widow



HOT RIGHT NOW



Cruella ❤️

12

Emma Stone, Emma Thompson	134 mins
------------------------------	-------------

WHO BETTER THAN Stone to play the title role in this live-action spin on the Disney classic? Things are a bit different this time around, however, as we journey back in time for a prequel that explains how Estella, a creative kid with a knack for fashion, turns into Cruella, the arch-baddie we know (and, let's face it, love) today – including why she so detests dalmatians. Thompson is on fine, scenery-chewing form as Estella's arch-rival, Baroness Von Hellman, but really the film belongs to Stone. She nails Cruella, making this a supremely enjoyable, tremendously colourful, very funny and endlessly entertaining treat for the entire family. Unless, of course, your family includes a dalmatian.



F9: The Fast Saga

12

Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez	143 mins
-----------------------------------	-------------

This latest in the long-running *Fast & 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.



Snake Eyes: G.I. Joe Origins

12

Henry Golding, Samara Weaving	122 mins
----------------------------------	-------------

If Marvel and DC can feature their characters in spin-off films, then why not Hasbro, owners of the G.I. Joe franchise? Here, the toymakers take the property in a more serious direction, telling how a vengeful orphan becomes... Snake Eyes (*Crazy Rich Asians'* Golding).



Black Widow ❤️

12

Scarlett Johansson, Florence Pugh	133 mins
--------------------------------------	-------------

Has the wait for this latest MCU instalment 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. See p59



In the Heights ❤️

PG

Anthony Ramos, Corey Hawkins	143 mins
---------------------------------	-------------

Did you groove on *Hamilton*? Did you dig *Crazy Rich Asians*? If you answered yes to the above, you're going to love this version of a Broadway smash set in a Manhattan neighbourhood and packed with exuberant dance numbers.



The Forever Purge

15

Ana de la Reguera, Tenoch Huerta	103 mins
-------------------------------------	-------------

You know about *The Purge*, right? It's the horror franchise that centres around one night of the year when gory mayhem is legal. Except in this latest instalment (the fifth), a group of marauders have decided that the Purge should carry on, like, forever. See p14

SIDE-SPLITTERS

FIVE THINGS...

You didn't know about In the Heights



1

Lin-Manuel Miranda – the genius behind *Hamilton* – started writing *In the Heights* as a 19-year-old college sophomore.

2

Director Jon M Chu became a father again during filming. What did he name his new son? “Heights”, naturally.

3

Miranda cast himself in the minor role of “piragua guy” – a street-food hawker – to prevent studio editors cutting this beloved low-key character.

4

The crew had to expensively restart a tricky musical number shot in the subway so a train piled with NYC trash could be diverted through their set.

5

At the same time as *In the Heights* was being filmed on location in New York, Steven Spielberg was shooting his *West Side Story* remake mere blocks away.

Watch In The Heights



The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard

15

Ryan Reynolds,
Samuel L Jackson

118
mins

THIS SEQUEL TO the very funny *The Hitman's Bodyguard* features a starry cast, all of whom attack their roles with the kind of gusto that dogs reserve for juicy bones. Last time around, bodyguard Michael Bryce (Reynolds) was in charge of protecting assassin Kincaid (Jackson), making them the oddest of odd couples. This time the problem is Kincaid's potty-mouthed wife (Salma Hayek), who needs saving from a vengeful madman – much to the chagrin of poor old overworked and put-upon Bryce. With the swearsy violence even more turbocharged than before (if that's possible) and guest appearances from, oh, you know, Morgan Freeman, Antonio Banderas, Gary Oldman... the result is a profane and uproarious gem.



Our Ladies

15

Abigail Lawrie,
Marli Stiu

106
mins

Lots of bawdy fun here, as a group of Catholic schoolgirls on a choir trip to Edinburgh turn their noses up at singing and instead get stuck into wild nights of partying. The result – based on a novel by *Morvern Callar* author Alan Warner – is a riot.



Dwindle

!

Jidekene Achufusi,
Funke Akindele-Bello

125
mins

Nigerian comedy about Sogo and Buta, two friends who find themselves in possession of (for which read: steal) a car and launch a taxi service. Things go well for the duo until they cross paths with assassins who have just kidnapped the state governor.

HEARTWARMING



Swan Song ♥

Udo Kier,
Jennifer Coolidge

105
mins

THE LEGENDARY KIER – star of some 220 films – turns in a wonderful late-career performance in this indie gem. He plays bereaved, down-on-his-luck and very camp hairdresser Pat, who as the movie begins is living in a nursing home. Told that the town’s premier society woman and former friend Rita (played by *Dynasty*’s Linda Evans) has died, Pat takes his flashy jewellery, escapes the home and sets off on a long walk across town in order to give her – or at least her corpse – one last cut and blow-dry. Needless to say, it’s an incident-packed and often hilarious journey, which, as it reaches its conclusion, becomes something quite different indeed, evolving into a piece that is (end-of) life-changing for its participants, and deeply touching and heartfelt for us.



12 **Mighty Orphans**

Martin Sheen,
Robert Duvall

118
mins

This true-life sports film is set in the Great Depression as high school football coach Rusty Russell (Luke Wilson) takes an unpromising side of orphans to the State Championship, inspiring a nation.



I Carry You With Me

Armando Espitia,
Christian Vazquez

112
mins

Based on a true story, this acclaimed Spanish-language film spans the decades to tell of a chef (Espitia) and teacher (Vazquez), whose romance begins in Mexico before they embark on a treacherous journey to New York.



MOVIE QUIZ

TAKE OUR TRIVIA TEST

1

Vin Diesel is the star of high-octane blockbuster *F9: The Fast Saga*. In 2019 he also featured in the most successful movie of all time, *Avengers: Endgame*, but only spoke a single line. What’s the line?

2

Actor Alec Baldwin voices the title character in *The Boss Baby: Family Business*. But which satirical movie features a

musical number entitled “You Are Worthless, Alec Baldwin”?

3

New York musical *In the Heights* is based on a play by *Hamilton* writer Lin-Manuel Miranda. Which 2016 Disney cartoon also featured tunes by this prolific songwriter?

4

The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It is the third

instalment in the supernatural saga. Which disturbing devil-doll who featured in the very first film ended up getting her own spin-off series?

5

In *The Fly*, Jeff Goldblum plays a scientist whose DNA becomes mingled with that of an insect. But which horror legend made his name in the original 1958 version of the story, reprising his role in *Return of the Fly* one year on? *Answers on the next page*

FRIGHT FESTS



The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It 18

Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson	111 mins
---------------------------------	-------------

Wilson and Farmiga return as real-life ghosthunters Ed and Lorraine Warren in this eighth instalment of the scary horror franchise. As usual, the jumps come thick and fast as they investigate a murder that may also be a demonic possession.



The Fly 18

Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis	96 mins
-------------------------------	------------

You have to admire the seduction technique of Seth (Goldblum) in this classic. He decides to woo journo Veronica (Davis) not with dinner but by inviting her to witness the icky process of him turning into a housefly.



The Seventh Day 15

Guy Pearce, Vadhir Derbez	87 mins
------------------------------	------------

If Guy Pearce isn't enough to sell this, then how about that it's about an exorcist who teams up with a priest on his first day of training – only for hell to quite literally break loose. Writer-director Justin P Lange is something of a horror pro, as this only goes to show.



Those Who Wish Me Dead 15

Angelina Jolie, Nicholas Hoult	100 mins
-----------------------------------	-------------

AS IT KICKS OFF with its firefighter heroes staging drunken, death-defying stunts, *Those Who Wish Me Dead* might have you thinking you're watching a 1980s action movie. But you're not. Pretty soon we're introduced to a pair of truly sinister and insanely ruthless assassin dudes who need to kill a little kid, and the only person standing between them and the child is Jolie, one of the aforementioned firefighters. Oh, and did we mention the fact that Angelina and the lad are stranded in the wilds of Montana with a forest fire raging around them? Well, they are, and if that sounds tense to you then good, because once you get past the *Top Gun* antics this is a total nail-biter.



The Unholy 15

Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Katie Aselton	100 mins
---------------------------------------	-------------

Critics have complained that this Gothic horror based on a novel by James Herbert doesn't do anything new. Maybe not, but it does the old stuff very well, making writer Evan Spiliotopoulos's directorial debut an at-times genuinely terrifying experience.



The Wolf of Snow Hollow 15

Jim Cummings, Robert Forster	85 mins
---------------------------------	------------

Imagine *Fargo* except with werewolves and you've pretty much nailed the quirky appeal of this funny and gory story in which a mountain town is gripped with panic when bodies start turning up after a full moon. Cummings writes, directs and stars, the show-off.

ANSWERS: 1: 'I AM GROOT'; 2: TEAM AMERICA; WORLD POLICE 3: MOANA 4: ANNABELLE 5: VINCENT PRICE WORDS: TOM HIDDLESTON VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES, © 2021 WARNER BROS. ENT. INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.



Love and Monsters

12

Dylan O'Brien,
Jessica Henwick

109
mins

SET SEVEN YEARS after the monster apocalypse, this family friendly action-adventure finds Joel (O'Brien) deciding to reunite with the love of his life, Aimee (Henwick) and, despite all manner of beasts at large, leaving his bunker in search of her. As you might imagine, it's an action-packed odyssey. Although Joel's pretty clueless when it comes to self-defence, he does hook up with a pair of charismatic survivalists and begins to sharpen his own survival skills. Even so, the trip is only half the story, for when he reaches his destination planning to renew his relationship with Aimee, he finds his problems are only just beginning. Funny, full of action and unexpectedly touching, *Love and Monsters* is a little cracker.



Spirit Untamed

U

Isabela Merced,
Marsai Martin

88
mins

Gorgeous animation and a lovely message enhance this tale of a girl, Lucky Prescott, who moves from the big smoke to a small frontier town. There she meets and befriends a wild mustang named Spirit – and her life is changed forever.



Mrs Doubtfire

12

Robin Williams,
Sally Field

102
mins

As with all great comedies, the humour in *Mrs Doubtfire* comes from a place of truth as, in the wake of a divorce, actor Daniel (Williams) resorts to desperate measures in order to see his kids: dressing up as their housekeeper. Heartwarming and very funny.



Luca

U

Jacob Tremblay,
Jack Dylan Grazer

120
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. *See right*



The Boss Baby: Family Business

PG

Alec Baldwin,
James Marsden

105
mins

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.



Peter Rabbit 2

U

Rose Byrne,
James Corden

94
mins

The adrenalised first outing for our floppy-eared friend may have divided critics, unhappy with this fast-paced update for a childhood fave, but it delighted kids (and many parents). The formula is left unchanged here, as Peter decides to explore the big city.

NEED
TO KNOW



What's so special about the Portorosso Cup?

The characters in Pixar flick *Luca* will do anything to win this triathlon with a twist

Stage 1: swim

The small town of Portorosso on the Italian Riviera is known for its idiosyncratic version of the triathlon. In the first stage, contestants swim out to a boat bobbing in the harbour, then back to shore.

Stage 2: eat

Participants must then wolf down a plate piled high with pasta. The type changes each year, so it's best to practise with everything from penne to spaghetti. Top tips: go in hungry and master the old twist-and-shovel fork technique. Basically, use your noodle.

Stage 3: cycle

For the final stretch, competitors need to cycle their pasta-bloated bodies up a punishingly steep and treacherous cobbled hillside and back down to the town centre. Indigestion is inevitable but worth it for the win.

Watch Luca



My Village People

Bovi, Venita Akpofure,
Charles Inojie

134
mins

AFRICANS - ESPECIALLY NIGERIANS – are a superstitious lot. Or at least they are according to this movie which, as the title suggests, focuses on the people of a village and how they can be influenced by – and also, wait for it, influence – supernatural events. What transpires is a brilliantly dark comedy in which we join central character, Prince, as he navigates what turns out to be an increasingly bizarre series of events. On hand to help are a host of new faces familiar from Nigerian TV and film, as well as several Nollywood veterans. The result? A star-studded, funny and magical delight. Nollywood, for those not in the know, is a loose term for the Nigerian film industry, apparently coined by *The New York Times*.



Devil in Agbada

Erica Nlewedim,
Uzor Arukwe

118
mins

How come the three women in *Devil in Agbada* – featuring also star Uche Jombo – are so desperate for revenge? To find out, you'll just have to watch. Will they succeed in their vengeful endeavours and find the justice that society has failed to grant them? Ditto.



On My Honour

Fred Amata,
Norbert Young

110
mins

Nigerian drama about a cop who just wants to be one of the good guys. Easy, you'd think, except for the fact that he finds himself in a decrepit system undermined by chronic underfunding, corruption and political interference. Can he uphold his ideals?

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SHOWS TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT

Television



IT'S NOT EASY to make it as a rapper. Just ask American actor David Burd, who has fictionalised his own limited success as a comedy rapper into even more amusing US sitcom *Dave*. Here's the lessons we learned from the first series (the second came out this summer) on how to make it big in the rap game.

Keep it real. When choosing your hip-hop alias, take something obvious about yourself as inspiration. You could try your real name: Marshall Mathers first went by M&M, then Eminem. Maybe you look like someone: Calvin Cordozar Broadus was nicknamed Snoop (Snoop Dogg) by his mum. Or, like our Dave, you could go for something literal (or possibly sarcastic) and name yourself Lil Dicky.

Get yourself an entourage. Look no further than your friends and family to sort out your "crew". Say hello to Dave's manager (and flatmate) Mike, producer (and childhood friend) Elz, on-stage hype man (and friend) GaTa, and loving girlfriend Ally. Heck, even your parents – hello Mr and Mrs Burd – will put on their dancing shoes if you invite them to your first gig.

Hang with the in-crowd. Whatever the collective pronoun is for a group of rappers – a school, a flock, a parliament – they all like making guest appearances on each other's songs. *Dave* features a gaggle of celebrity guest cameos from such pop and hip-hop luminaries as YG, Macklemore and

BEATS, RHYMES AND STRIFE

How to reach the top – or at least give it a good go – like struggling rap star Lil Dicky

Justin Bieber. Just maybe don't pay them \$10,000 a verse in advance of hearing the finished product. Silly Dave.

Strike a record deal. First, you'll want to build up an internet following. Then, after a couple of million YouTube hits, the record companies will be clambering over each other to sign you for the big bucks – even if, like Dave, you only actually have two songs with inappropriately rude titles that we can't possibly print in a family-friendly magazine. Let's just say that Lil Dicky isn't shy about revealing the size of his, er, talent. Though, to us, he's still kind of a big deal.

From left:
Dave's best pal
Elz; his
flatmate Mike;
girlfriend Ally;
the hapless
hip-hopper
himself

 Watch Dave

MUST WATCH



The White Lotus ❤️

Box set	60 mins
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SHARP, TOPICAL, SHOCKING, thought-provoking... There just aren't enough adjectives to fully do justice to writer-director Mike White's hit comedy-drama series. The plot involves a group of tourists who turn up at the titular luxury hotel, each of them expecting a lovely, relaxing holiday. Spoiler alert: they don't get one. Instead, the lives of these rich, privileged guests rub up against those of the hotel workers in all manner of comic and ultimately tragic ways, leading to a thoroughly shocking conclusion. We have every episode of this superb series onboard. See it as a modern parable. See it as a prestige drama or a might-be-murder mystery. Just see it.



Catch and Kill: The Podcast Tapes !

Box set	30 mins
---------	---------

Ronan Farrow is the Pulitzer-winning journalist most famous for helping to expose Harvey Weinstein. This documentary series brings to life his interviews with whistleblowers, journalists and others, conducted for his podcast and bestselling book.



All Creatures Great and Small !

Box set (season 1)	50 mins
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Revived for a new generation, James Herriot's vintage tales of a country veterinarian practice in 1930s and 40s Yorkshire have lost none of their humour or rustic charm. If you fancy a trip back to a supposedly less complicated time, you need look no further.



Rick and Morty ⚠️ 15

5 episodes	22 mins
------------	---------

Inspired by the relationship between Doc Brown and Marty McFly in *Back to the Future*, cult animation *Rick and Morty* finds boozy scientist Rick and his grandson Morty embarking on interdimensional adventures.



Dave !

4 episodes	30 mins
------------	---------

Meet Dave. He's a mildly neurotic bloke convinced he's one of the greatest rappers of all time. Truth is, he probably isn't, but no way is that small fact going to stop him trying to prove it to everyone in this hit US sitcom. See p67



Parks and Recreation 15

4 episodes	22 mins
------------	---------

Among the best television 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're screening the first four episodes from season three onboard.

3 THINGS...

We learned from Spaceship Earth



1

It was breathtakingly ambitious

In 1991 a band of optimistic, jumpsuit-clad dreamers willingly self-isolated in a multi-habitat glass biosphere to test out the feasibility of extraterrestrial colonies. Great idea – until carbon levels spiked and emergency oxygen had to be pumped in.

2

Food was a faff

When the team fancied pizza, it took four months to grow the wheat, which then had to be threshed and ground to make flour. Tomatoes, peppers and onions all needed time to ripen too. It really makes us appreciate Domino's.

3

But there was plenty of beef

Over time, the eight “biospherians” divided into two bitter factions in a move psychologists call “irrational antagonism”. Ugly power struggles over the direction of the project ensued, with one crew member recalling she was spat at.

📺 Watch Spaceship Earth



Resident Alien ❤️



Box set

50 mins

HARRY IS AN alien in this new and rather brilliant US comedy. Although he's taken human form, he intends to steer clear of Earth-dwellers in order to complete his very important mission. “What's his mission?” you ask, to which we say, “Whoa, Nelly, you'll need to watch and find out.” (But the answer is a good one, promise you). Anyway, his plans to remain incognito are thrown into disarray. Until, that is, he becomes involved in the local community. Even – oh yes – falling in love. Funny, edgy, sometimes even quite scary, *Resident Alien* is undoubtedly an oddball gem and one surely destined for cult status.



Spaceship Earth

12

Documentary

116 mins

Beginning in 1991, the Biosphere 2 experiment replicated Earth's atmosphere inside a closed vivarium populated by eight scientists. But what really went on during their two years inside? The truth, as this superb film goes to show, is stranger than fiction. *See left*



Wellington Paranormal ❤️

!

Box set (season 1)

22 mins

Robbery at the blood bank? The members of the Wellington Police are on hand to tackle that and any other paranormal events that crop up in this hilarious spin-off from *What We Do in the Shadows*. The first episodes of series two of *WWDS* also screen onboard.

FAMILY DRAMA



Smother !

Box set	52 mins
---------	---------

DERVLA KIRWAN HEADS the cast of this miniseries set on the rugged coast of County Clare, where life is disrupted by the discovery of a body at the bottom of a cliff. This particular cadaver belongs to the husband of Kirwan's character Val Ahern and has been found the morning after what can only be described as an eventful family gathering. The cops don't seem interested, putting it down as an accidental death, but our Val's not so sure and sets out to investigate. Pretty soon she's up to her neck in potential suspects and possible motives. At the same time, terrible, dark family secrets continue to emerge. You'll no doubt remember Kirwan for her roles in *Ballykissangel* and *Goodnight Sweetheart*, and she really lets rip here. We have all six *Smother* episodes onboard.



Lie With Me !

Box set	45 mins
---------	---------

Infidelity! Paranoia! A "perfect" new nanny! Just three things that Anna (Charlie Brooks) must deal with once she, her errant husband Jake, and their two kids move to Australia. All four gripping episodes screen onboard.



Reyka !

Box set	55 mins
---------	---------

Detective Reyka Gama uses her own traumatic experience of kidnapping to solve abduction mysteries. This thriller series set in South Africa sees her facing her toughest case yet - while also wrestling with her inner demons.

SPORTS SHOWS



The Weight of Gold !

Documentary	60 mins
-------------	---------

We know all about the physical challenges facing Olympic-level athletes, but what about the psychological ones? Record-breaking swimmer Michael Phelps is just one athlete who speaks from sometimes painful experience.



Modern Day Gladiators !

Box set	44 mins
---------	---------

It's all about skill rather than strength for the gladiators of the eSports world. This docuseries examines the growing global phenomenon that is competitive gaming, delving into its communities and events, and the lives of gamers.



Student Athlete !

Documentary	88 mins
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Told through the eyes of four men all at different stages of their athletic careers, this feature-length documentary explores how college athletes can be exploited by a system that generates billions of dollars for their institutions.

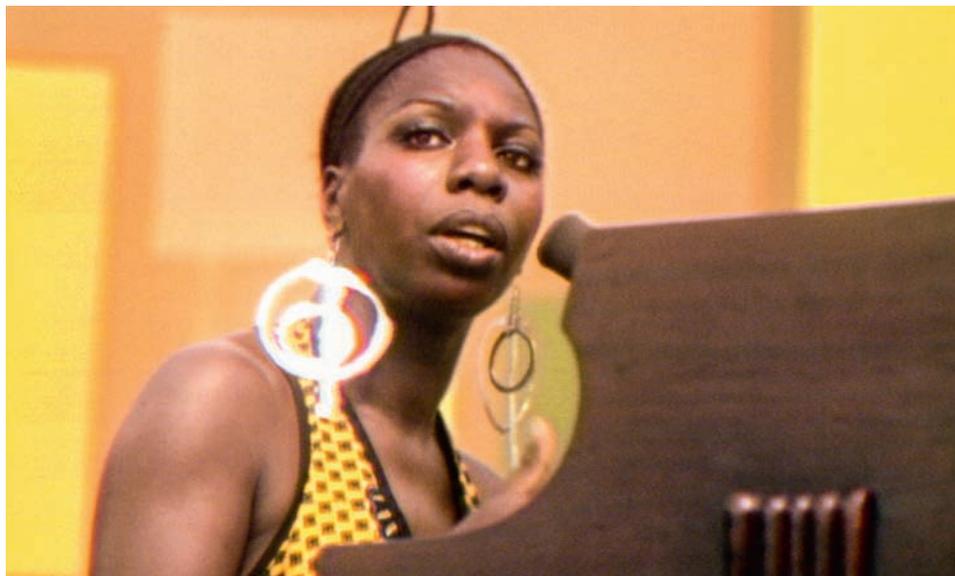
BEHIND THE MUSIC



Kate Nash: Underestimate the Girl !

Documentary	90 mins
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Excellent documentary charting the rebirth of English singer-songwriter and actress Nash, who went from selling shedloads of records to being nearly homeless after she was dropped by her record label.



Summer of Soul

12

Documentary	118 mins
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YOU KNOW QUESTLOVE, right? He's the sticksman for hip-hop's legendary band The Roots and, judging by his work on this superb documentary, he's also a pretty decent director to boot. The movie in question is a scintillating documentary focusing on the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, a six-week long showcase for the cream of African-American talent at the time. Who? Oh, only the likes of Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, Gladys Knight, Sly and the Family Stone... You name them, they were there. And yet despite the wealth of talent on offer – not to mention the fact that those in the know call it “the black Woodstock” – the festival remains something of a footnote in musical history. That's an omission Questlove seeks to address and, ultimately, correct.



Hip Hop: The Songs That Shook America ▲!

Box set	43 mins
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Documentary series in which classic hip-hop jams are assessed for their contribution not just to the genre but to wider American culture. Plenty of insight then – including from artists involved – as well as some seriously good tunes.

FAMOUS FIGURES



Ruth – Justice Ginsburg In Her Own Words !

Documentary	90 mins
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Ruth Bader Ginsburg was only the second female Supreme Court justice in the history of the United States. This stylish and eye-opening documentary charts her incredible rise, and her lasting influence and societal impact.



Mo Salah: A Football Fairytale !

Documentary	43 mins
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Egyptian footballer Mo Salah electrified the Premier League in his first season at Liverpool. Featuring input from the likes of Gary Lineker and manager Jürgen Klopp, this documentary examines Salah's unique genius.



Cuppy Takes Africa ♥ !

Box set	45 mins
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Let redoubtable DJ Cuppy take you by the hand in order to experience the sights, sounds, drama and fun of eight of Africa's party capitals during this whirlwind tour – from Nigeria to South Africa. See our cover feature p30



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NEW MUSIC AND A HOST OF CLASSICS

Audio

CAST FROM THE PAST

Podcast *Celebrity Catch Up: Life After That Thing I Did* shows some of our favourite cult celebs in a new light, says **Victoria Beardwood**

ARE YOU EVER going about your day and suddenly start wondering what Antony Costa from that noughties band Blue is doing now? Or why the woman from *Bend It Like Beckham* disappeared off our radars? Oh, thank goodness – us too.

It's for people like us that former BBC journalist Genevieve Hassan started her podcast *Celebrity Catch Up: Life After That Thing I Did*. The unashamedly nostalgic show sees her interview personalities from the best-loved films, TV shows and music of the 1980s to the 2000s about how their lives unfolded after rising to fame.

The podcast shot to the top of the Apple podcast charts earlier this year and is listened to in more than 110 countries, so there are more of us nostalgia-seekers than people admit. Those who say they're not curious to know how the mean redhead from *Clueless* is doing are lying.

🎧 Listen to *Celebrity Catch Up: Life After That Thing I Did*

Alan Ruck

This *Ferris Bueller* star probably did need a day or two off after he got a blood infection from a dirty Jacuzzi. "It was serious – they told my ex-wife for the first two days, 'We don't think he's going to make it,'" he informs Genevieve.



Nick Frost

You'll know this actor from films like *Fighting with My Family* and *Shaun of the Dead*, but he could have appeared in the recent *Star Wars* trilogy had he taken the part. "The pay's rubbish," he says on the podcast, so he passed.

Luke Goss

The Bros star may have sung *When Will I Be Famous?*, but it led to a death threat in Mexico that required four police cars to escort him home – as he mentions on the show. Fame's not all it's cracked up to be.



FEMALE LEADS



Taylor Swift !

Evermore	Pop
----------	-----

TO SAY THAT TAYLOR Swift's 2020 album, *Folklore*, surprised a few people is something of an understatement. One gentleman in Leamington Spa even went so far as to fall off his chair. The fact that she then followed it up in quick-smart time with *Evermore*, which was just as good, if not better? Put it this way, he won't be sitting down any time soon. Her ninth album, *Evermore* finds Swiftie continuing to plough the creative furrow first heard on *Folklore*, which is to say a more folky introspective direction, which although bearing signs of its collaborative nature (she co-wrote with Aaron Dessner of The National) is still, thanks to its trademark soul-baring lyrics and instantly hummable melodies, unmistakably Taylor. It is, in short, a blooming marvel.



Cuppy !

Original Copy	Pop
---------------	-----

Cuppy has a bulging contacts book. Here she makes good use of it by inviting a host of pan-African voices and sounds for what emerges as a delicious melange of house and Afrobeat. See p30



Brittany Howard !

Jaime Reimagined	Alternative/Pop
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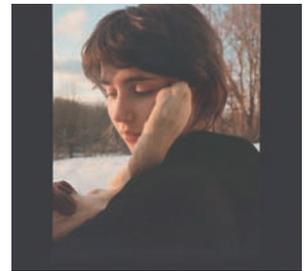
Ex-Alabama Shakes Howard's 2019 album tinkered with a variety of styles. For this makeover she's asked remixers including Childish Gambino and Little Dragon for their take, and the results are frankly unbelievable.



Billie Eilish !

Happier Than Ever	Pop
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For her second album, the insanely talented and zeitgeist-surfing Ms Eilish takes us in a different direction, with the trap stylings of her classic debut downplayed in place of low-key jazz and electropop.



Claire !

Sling	Pop
-------	-----

Variously described as pop, acoustic folk and folk rock, US singer-songwriter Claire continues to keep it lo-fi and deeply heartfelt on this acclaimed second album. Oh, and listen out for a guest turn from Lorde on *Blouse*.



Billie Eilish



According to her new album, Billie Eilish is happier than ever. We track what's brought her joy over her relatively short years

Age 8 Li'l Billie loves singing so much her parents enrol her in the LA Children's Chorus. **13** Billie posts *Ocean Eyes* to SoundCloud so her dance teacher can hear it. The tune goes viral. **14** Signs record deal. **17** *When We Fall Asleep Where Do We Go?* is the year's fastest-selling debut album. **18** Wins Grammys for best record, song, album and new artist. Then does a Bond theme. **19** Publishes *Billie Eilish by Billie Eilish*, a family photo album featuring childhood snaps of her brother, co-writer and "best friend" Finneas. Aww.

🔊 Listen to Happier Than Ever

PLAYLISTS



Various ♥

UK Grime

Brits do very well at taking existing sounds and genres, and twisting them into something that creates a life of its own. Born out of UK garage with nods to jungle, dancehall and hip-hop, grime captures the mood of the country.



Various ♥

Destinations: Nigeria

With Wizkid achieving worldwide acclaim, take a look at some other up-and-coming artists from Nigeria. Listen to the new stars shaping the country and those that helped drive the sound of a nation.



Various

New Music October 21

Step right this way for a grab-bag of the month's best new music, including material from Lorde, whose *Solar Power* is a bliss-soaked summer classic in the making, as well as Calvin Harris, Noel Gallagher and loads more.



Various

This Is Reggae

Never has one island sent out such a strong musical message as Jamaica. Unity and togetherness is its theme, the rhythms are its method. Explore old and new reggae in this celebration of positive sound.

Amy Winehouse ♥

Icons

AMY WINEHOUSE'S 2003 debut album, *Frank*, is undeniably a collection of great songs, but perhaps more than that it's notable for introducing the world to a fully formed persona – one that bristled with defiant, jazz-soaked attitude – and an enormous musical talent. That the north Londoner topped it with *Back to Black* three years later, which went on to become one of the biggest-selling British albums ever, remains an incredible achievement – her subsequent death in July 2011 an enduring tragedy. Ten years on from her early passing, Winehouse leaves a legacy that spans jazz, soul and more girl-group orientated styles, all done in her own inimitable fashion. They make up the bulk of this playlist, which features the best of the best, and represents a great place to start while featuring a handful of deeper cuts for more seasoned fans.



EXCLUSIVES

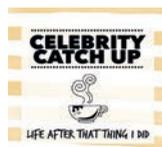
The List with Cuppy ♥

DJ, musician, charity ambassador and more, Cuppy joins host Yasmin Evans exclusively on *The List*. Cuppy's playlist showcases the queens of African music and their influence on her.



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. Funny and occasionally eye-opening. See p73



The List with Dave Grohl

Is Dave Grohl the nicest man in rock? Of course not. He's the nicest man in the entire world. Here he proves he has the musical taste to go with that legendary affability as he chooses a typically rocking (but very nice) selection.



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Virgin Atlantic news and views



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Skin Magic Wonder Balm

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£25. **Beauty**



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BETTER BUBBLES?

It might well be International Champagne Day on 22 October, but why not try an English sparkling wine instead

Back in June 2019, we offered our Upper Class customers the choice of an English sparkling wine alongside our usual French Champagne. It was intended only as a two-week promotion, but the Hambledon Classic Cuvée proved so popular it remains a permanent feature on our Upper Class menu.

We shouldn't have been surprised, really. The critics agree: English sparkling wine now provides stiff competition to the famous Champagne region. As wine writer Oz Clarke put it, "The English wine world is a thrilling place to be – so full of potential that I sometimes call England the newest new world wine nation." It's little wonder, then, that production of English wine has increased from around one million bottles in 2008 to over 15 million in 2018.

Hambledon Classic Cuvée was the clear choice for our in-flight menu. The vineyard that makes it, nestled in the stunning Hampshire countryside in the village of – you guessed it – Hambledon, is the oldest commercial vineyard in the UK. It was first established by Major General Sir Guy Salisbury-Jones in 1952. Fast forward to 2021 and it's now set over 80 hectares, with some 100,000 established vines – of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier (the three grape varieties most commonly used in the production of Champagne) – which are

Hambledon is the oldest commercial vineyard in the UK and is now home to 100,000 established vines over 80 hectares

painstakingly picked by hand each autumn before being pressed, blended and bottled onsite.

It even has the royal seal of approval. Hambledon wine was served by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1972 to the then French president, Georges Pompidou, at a reception in the British embassy in Paris. This was the first time English sparkling wine was served to a president of France.

So, are English bubbles really better than Champagne? You'll have to try and see. Cheers!

Raise a glass to Hambledon – in the UK's beautiful South Downs



LIFE IS ABOUT TO GET MORE REWARDING

We've partnered with rewards club Virgin Red to give customers more

BUILDING UP VIRGIN Points feels very exciting, but deciding how to spend them can be tricky. Virgin Atlantic has just teamed up with brand-new rewards club Virgin Red, which has been created to revolve around you – yes, you – so using your points is as easy as earning them.

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WHY I LOVE MY JOB

First officer Sheraaz Rasool values the opportunity he has to inspire young people to get into aviation

"I've always loved aircraft, ever since I was little. Never in my wildest dreams, though, did I ever think that I – an inner-city boy from Birmingham – would end up flying 787s for a company like Virgin. That's why I'm so passionate about Fantasy Wings, an initiative I work with that aims to encourage more kids from

ethnic minorities to consider a career in aviation. Currently, 97% of the flight deck is made up of white males, so it's really important to show young people that no matter your background, you can get to the flight deck of a 787 or be a senior manager in an airline.

"Recently, I was flying from London to Montego Bay. As I was walking into the terminal, I noticed this family just outside the doors – there was a mum, a dad and two children, one of whom was

bawling her eyes out. When I went over to ask if everything was all right, the mum said that her nine-year-old daughter, Faith, was upset because her grandma was about to leave the UK to go and live back in Jamaica. As it turns out, she was on my flight, so I told Faith that we'd look after her grandma and she didn't need to worry. Faith's mum later told me that because of our meeting, her daughter wants to be a pilot. That meant so much to me."

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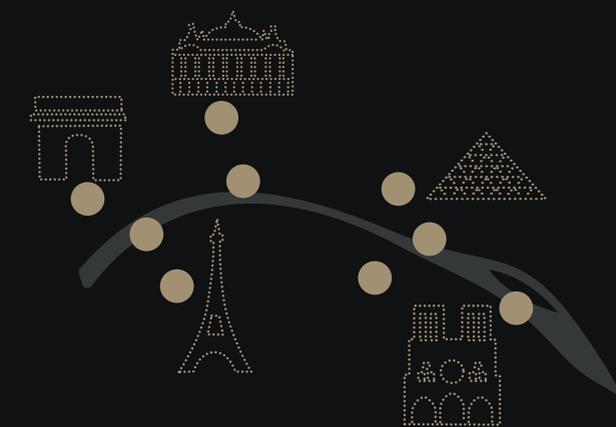
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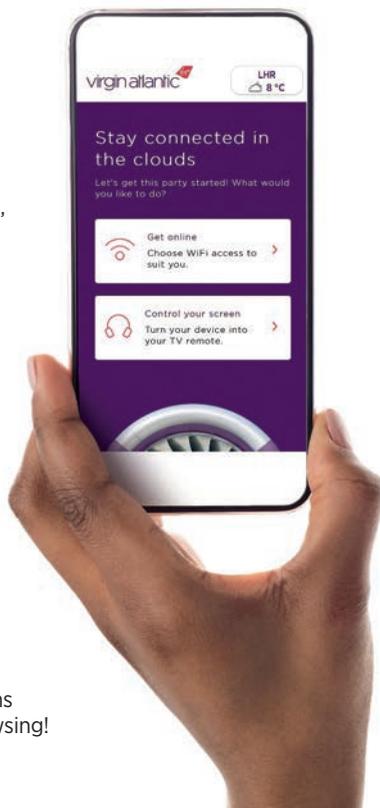
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BE YOURSELF

Not just a piece of great advice, but also the name of the manifesto that underpins everything we do at Virgin Atlantic

At Virgin Atlantic, our purpose is to empower everyone to take on the world. Our vision is to be the world's most-loved travel company. To achieve both, we need to create an inclusive environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging; one which values people's unique identities and in which minority groups are represented.

We have a rich history and strong culture of embracing the human spirit without prejudice or boundaries. We want people to proudly be themselves, regardless of gender, background, beliefs, race, physical ability or who they choose to love. At the heart of it all, we uphold an inclusive environment in which everyone can thrive.

But we know we must go further. We start by defining what we mean by diversity, equity and inclusion. Diversity is about recognising difference. Better decision-making can be achieved when you realise the benefit of having a range of perspectives. Equity bridges the gap between minority and majority groups. If we identify the

specific needs of different demographic groups, then everyone starts on a more even playing field. Inclusion creates an environment where people feel they belong without needing to conform; that their contribution matters.

Our "Be Yourself" manifesto is at the heart of everything we do. It's vital that we continue to live and breathe it every day. Because love, for us, means embracing, celebrating and supporting uniqueness. It's treating each other with respect, kindness, trust and integrity. It's about being amazing and, equally, about being amazed. It's the purpose you gain when you know you belong.



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