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# Vera

JANUARY 2025



# SWEET SPOT

NAOMI ACKIE STEPS INTO THE LIGHT

► Smiles better

WELLNESS  
FINDS ITS  
FUNNY

► Different beasts

AN OFFBEAT  
SAFARI IN  
ST LUCIA



The best  
of what's  
onboard



# Off To A Flying Start

**CHARLES TYRWHITT**

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# CONTENTS

JANUARY

vera

## 7-24// Red Hot

Having a ball at LA's Balloon Museum, picking out Britain's best pastries, *Strange Darling's* Willa Fitzgerald unpacks her psych background and Japanese Brutalism lands on the US West Coast.

## 60-82// What's On

Revisit *Saturday Night Live's* most outrageous moments ahead of celebratory new film *Saturday Night*, David Mitchell dons the corduroy to solve crimes in *Luther* and get up to speed on 2025's music micro-trends.

## 87-90// Credits

Three top tip(ple)s to see in a healthy new year, plus our star crew member's top tips for Delhi.

26//



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

**FEATURES** East London's Naomi Ackie is poised to make it big (if she wants), on the trail of St Lucia's Small Six and why this year's health trend is having a laugh.

## CAMEOS



**Milly Kenny-Ryder** writes travel guides with her company

*Weekend Journals* and is the editor of thoroughly *modernmilly.com*, plus her Instagram - @millykr - is a real treat. Speaking of treats, she rounds up the best bakeries across the UK for us. *See p14*



**Aron Klein's** camera has taken him from documenting life in refugee camps

across Europe and Africa, to collaborating with tourist boards in Asia and the Middle East, as well as working with global brands. We sent him to St Lucia to spot the *Small Six* on safari. *See p46*



**Estella Shardlow** writes for *The Times*, *Condé Nast Traveller* and

*The Spectator*. When not reporting on wildlife and cuisine, she's exploring her new home in the Scottish Highlands. She tells us why wellness is getting a sense of humour for 2025. *See p37*

Ink

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# RED HOT

JANUARY



WORDS: JESSICA PRUPAS PHOTO: HYPERSTELLAR, HYPERSTUDIO, QUIET ENSEMBLE, ROMAN HILL, COURTESY OF BALLOON MUSEUM

Now showing //

## Blowing up in LA

► **WE'VE SEEN ALL MANNER OF IMMERSIVE** experiences popping up around the world lately, from the multi-city Museum of Ice Cream to London's Paradox Museum. Are they really museums? Who knows and, frankly, who cares? The latest is LA's Balloon Museum, which features 21 sound stage-sized installations precision-engineered for TikTok. From giant ball pits to huge floating bubbles and psychedelic LED tunnels, each exhibit is interactive and meant to evoke a childlike sense of play. Our verdict? It's a gas.

📍 FLY TO LOS ANGELES

First take //

# DAD-DAUGHTER DRAMAS ARE IN THE FRAME

AI Horner wonders whether we're finding an antidote to blockbuster superhero flicks in intimate family stories

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

► **IT'S THE DADDY OF ALL THE** current movie trends – films about fathers with daughter-related drama to work through, before it's too late. In *Goodrich*, available on Vera today, Michael Keaton plays an art dealer in crisis. His wife has left him. His gallery is under threat. And on top of it all, his relationship with his pregnant 36-year-old daughter from a previous marriage, Grace (Mila Kunis), is strained, to say the least.

As he prepares to become a grandfather, Keaton's character strives to reconnect with a daughter he wasn't around for growing up – too busy working, his attention always elsewhere. What follows is a moving tale from a filmmaker with her own, very public experience of a so-called broken home: Hallie Meyers-Shyer is the daughter of rom-com queen Nancy Meyers (*It's Complicated*, *What Women Want*) and fellow filmmaker Charles Shyer, who separated in 1999.

That film has company when it comes to recent captivating movies about dad-daughter relations. Netflix awards contender *His Three Daughters* broke hearts with its portrait of a trio of estranged sisters, with complicated feelings about their dying dad. *Poor Things* tells the tale of a mad scientist who has to learn to let his female Frankensteinian creation go – an odd father-daughter story but a father-daughter story nonetheless. And M Night Shyamalan's latest film,

*Trap*, is about a serial killer who risks it all to take his daughter to see her favourite pop star – pretty touching really, if you ignore all the kidnapping and murder.

All of this marks a shift. Sure, stories have always existed about complicated families, featuring dads and daughters who need to reconnect: *Interstellar*, *Contact*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the list goes on. But of late, these relationships have been foregrounded like never before. Charlotte Welles's *Aftersun*, 2023's most moving film, didn't need the fate of the world or society on the line to make audiences care. One question was enough to keep viewers gripped to the end: "Can this father and daughter patch things up?"

Maybe it's a reaction to the saturation of the superhero era. After endless films in which world destruction looms and all character emotion is lost in a blizzard of CG spectacle, the films that are truly connecting with audiences are the ones where the stakes are smaller, more intimate, more relatable. Because everyone has a family, and no family is free of conflict and chaos and the occasional bust-up. Unless you're one of the Waltons, of course.

© WATCH GOODRICH &amp; TRAP



“**THE FILMS THAT ARE CONNECTING ARE ONES WHERE THE STAKES ARE SMALLER, MORE INTIMATE, MORE RELATABLE**”





Mila Kunis has joined the cast of the next *Knives Out* movie, *Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery*.



## Celebs are spooked

1 //



**LADY GAGA** dropped \$50,000 on a state-of-the-art electromagnetic “ghost detector” because she believed a male poltergeist was stalking her on tour.

**VERDICT: BAD ROMANCE**

2 //



Indie king **LIAM GALLAGHER** was convinced he was being haunted by an evil apparition because furniture in his hotel rooms would mysteriously shift position whenever he wasn't in. Turns out it was just his brother Noel playing drunken pranks.

**VERDICT: WICKED SPIRITS**

3 //



**HELENA BONHAM CARTER** claims she hired a clairvoyant to ask Princess Margaret for advice on playing the late royal in hit show *The Crown*. HRH's top tip? “Get the smoking right. I smoked in a very particular way.”

**VERDICT: ASHES TO ASHES**

WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

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Psych student-turned-actor **WILLA FITZGERALD** brings an inquisitive approach to her roles, including in grisly thriller *Strange Darling*

PORTRAIT: VICTORIA STEVENS

► **WILLA FITZGERALD MIGHT** have been a therapist. Instead, the former psychology student now specialises in movies and TV shows that leave you needing therapy after watching. This year's *Strange Darling* saw the Nashville-born star as a woman on the run from an apparently deranged male aggressor, in a Tarantino-esque thriller full of adrenaline-rush action and unexpected turns. Elsewhere on the emerging star's recent list of hits is Netflix horror *The Fall of the House of Usher* – a Mike Flanagan adaptation of collected Edgar Allen Poe stories, that was basically *Succession* with murderous chimpanzees and supernatural cats. Both traumatising; both brilliantly humane.

"I've been very lucky in my career to get to play a lot of really complicated characters," the 33 year old grins from an LA hotel room. "I really love playing characters that people could, in theory, write off as evil or amoral. That's the most fertile ground to dig around in, because every quote-unquote 'bad person' had something happen to them that led them to the choices that they've made." But what about the choices that Fitzgerald has to make now, after the runaway success of *Strange*

*Darling* – a film lauded by everyone from Stephen King to JJ Abrams? The future's wide open, the TV supporting actress turned Hollywood leading lady tells *Vera*.

***Strange Darling* has one of the best movie twists in recent memory. On a scale of one to 10 – 10 being *Strange Darling* levels of violence – what's the correct punishment for someone who spoils twists for other people?** Oh man! I'm probably a bad person to talk to, because I ruined the end of *Anna Karenina* for my friend while she was reading that novel,

Rising star //

“I get led down some strange Google searches”



From above: Willa in *Strange Darling*; starring with Zach Gilford in *The Fall of the House of Usher*

so I would unfortunately be high on the execution list [laughs]. What I will say is, it's been amazing to see how protective people have already been of the film's surprises. Audiences have really been amazing in not spoiling it for other people and letting people discover it for themselves, which is a really sweet thing.

**Did the twist stun you in the way same that it's been surprising viewers, the first time you read the script?**

I had a very similar experience reading it as you did watching it! I really didn't know where it was going when I started the script. Then it just blew my mind [laughs]. I think I, like everyone, had a lot of preconceived notions and biases that were overturned as the story starts to unfold. And I loved that.

**You studied psychology for three years before turning to acting. How big a help is that background when it comes to understanding the psyches of the complicated characters you play?**

You know, it's a funny thing, it's not like I'm taking out the *DSM* [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*] while I'm preparing a part, but I certainly think that my interest in psychology

is connected to my interest in acting. They're both explorations of the human condition, right? Why does that person think the way they think and act? How can I understand that and what framework can I use to understand that? I think that as an actor, I probably do look at my work in a sort of academic way, researching whatever weird things feel appropriate to help with what I'm trying to tunnel into in these characters. It leads me down some strange Google searches [laughs].

**Your parents were both musicians. Was there ever a moment you considered that path instead of acting?**

I played piano a lot growing up and I still love playing piano, but music was never really something I considered as a possible career path. I think mainly because you have to have some way of rebelling against your parents – but

my parents are super cool, so instead I was like, I'm going to be a nerd! My way of rebelling against my parents was to study all day. I wanted to be an archaeologist, and then a forensic scientist, and then a psychologist. But the first time I ever [acted], I distinctly remember getting off the little stage in my elementary maths classroom and telling my mum I felt like I was flying. That was really the beginning of me ending up here today.

**What's next after the success of *Strange Darling*?**

I'm in a very lucky position right now to be a little picky and to take my time finding something that feels really special and really singular. And that is a real gift, knowing when the right thing comes along, I'll be ready for it. I know I want to keep playing characters who challenge viewers to feel empathy. Because, honestly, if more people allowed themselves to exercise empathy, I think the world would probably be a much better place.



**66**  
**I RUINED THE END OF ANNA KARENINA FOR MY FRIEND WHILE SHE WAS READING THAT, SO I WOULD BE HIGH ON THE EXECUTION LIST**

WATCH STRANGE DARLING

# SABO TAGE

I was trying to be good, but then I realised  
it's just a matter of time.



Take me with you.

*Ap*

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Table read

# SHOW US THE DOUGH

Ready for pastry paradise? Lucky the UK is in a baking purple patch. Milly Kenny Ryder, author of **BRITAIN'S BEST BAKERIES**, points out her faves

► **IT'S AN EXCITING TIME FOR BRITISH** baking, with a new wave of flour-dusted talents obsessing over lamination and levain, geeking out over ethically sourced heritage grains, and reimagining classic croissants and challahs using avant-garde ingredients. For my book, I had the enviable task of tasting my way around the country in search of all things baked, buttery and delicious. Here are five of my favourite finds.



● *Britain's Best Bakeries* is published by Hoxton Mini Press

## PUMP STREET BAKERY, SUFFOLK

The dusty pink facade of this specialty bakery has become almost as iconic as the creations sold inside.



Father-and-daughter team Chris and Joanna Brennan also run a celebrated chocolate company - both in the charming village of Orford - so you can expect their choc chip cookies and dipped flapjacks to be a cut above.

● [pumpstreetchocolate.com](http://pumpstreetchocolate.com)

## HAMBLIN, OXFORD

Hamblin proudly sources all its stone-ground flour from organic wheat and rye grown within 80km of



the bakery. These sustainable grains are the foundation for sweet and savoury options to satisfy any craving - whether that's hearty sausage rolls and pizzas, perfectly plaited cinnamon buns or melt-in-the-mouth cookies.

● [hamblinbread.co.uk](http://hamblinbread.co.uk)





**FARRO, BRISTOL**

On a corner of the St Paul's district, Farro opts for traditional loaves and viennoiserie, sometimes adding a modern twist. Expect a roll call of continental sweet treats in its daily displays: ultra-buttery Breton kouign-amanns, silky Portuguese pasteis de nata and dainty canelés with caramelised crusts.

● @farrobakery

**“ EXPECT A ROLL CALL OF CONTINENTAL SWEET TREATS AT FARRO, INCLUDING PORTUGUESE PASTEIS DE NATA**

**TOAD, LONDON**

A tiny, unassuming takeaway spot for addictive bakes on Camberwell's hipsterfied high street in south-east London. Will it be a savoury croissant stuffed with pork belly, red cabbage and cheddar, or a sweet yuzu, orange and almond Jaffa cake? The charismatic counter staff will help guide you.

● toadbakery.com



**The menu at Toad changes regularly as they aim to use fresh ingredients, but some staples are ever-present.**

**LANNAN, EDINBURGH**

When Lannan opened in the Scottish capital last summer, it was an instant success; fans queue down the road every morning in anticipation of glossy maple-pecan plaits and custard slices topped with berry icing. Owner and (self-taught) head baker Darcie Maher's attention to detail shines in everything from the beautiful, raspberries-and-cream coloured shopfront to the bespoke handmade coffee cups.

● @lannanbakery



**SET VISIT**



**North LOL in Toronto**

**R**achel Sennott plays Sam, a Toronto-based twenty-

something comedian dealing with the very not-funny effects of a sexual assault in *I Used to Be Funny*. The dramedy is loaded with gallows humour and manages to find levity in dark moments. Writer-director Ally Pankiw learned to laugh through the pain when she moved to Canada's largest city as a teenager and got involved in the local comedy scene. She spent a lot of time at the downtown Comedy Bar, where many of Sam's sets are filmed. It's the city's finest comedy establishment and the place to go if you want to yuck it up with some funny Canucks.

📺 **WATCH I USED TO BE FUNNY**  
✈️ **FLY TO TORONTO**

WORDS: JESSICA PRUPAS PHOTOS: MILLY KENNY-RYDER





➤ **WELL-DESIGNED HOTELS ARE OFTEN** described as “zen”, but at kodō hotel zen is a more literal pursuit. Slated as a first-of-its-type Japanese minimalist hotel in Los Angeles, it infuses every element of its design with the East Asian philosophy. It has only eight rooms and each one is meticulously designed – like the Izumi Superior King suite, which is inspired by the “essence of a serene rock garden”. Consider its thoughtful details, like the suspended LED mirror perched above a hand-carved stone washbasin. Concrete accents lend the space a calming feng shui-Brutalist vibe, while the waterfall shower – in the middle of the room – evokes the feeling of bathing al fresco. And the in-house dining options already have the venue tipped as a local hotspot. In the daytime head downstairs to kodō cafe, perfect for frothed matcha, yuzu pastries and a miso olive oil cake that’s to die for. Or visit their evening restaurant for an authentic nigiri and sashimi, wood-fired ribs and oyster mushrooms, or a melt-on-your-tongue Basque cheesecake. Set as it is within DTLA’s Arts District, it’s a stone’s throw from cultural institutions like Soho Warehouse, H Lorenzo Archive and Hauser & Wirth Gallery – all very LA, even if your hotel is more Tokyo.

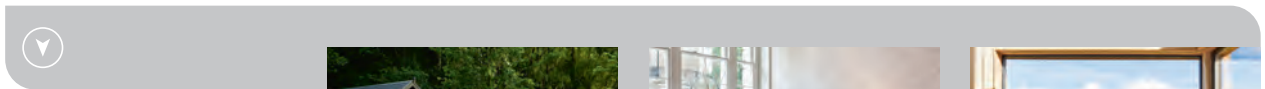


Sleeper hit //

# MAXIMAL MINIMALISM IN DOWNTOWN LA

New hotel **KODŌ** takes its cues from Japanese design for a delightfully monastic retreat on the West Coast

FLY TO LOS ANGELES



**INNESS, NEW YORK**  
This upstate getaway in Accord is perfect for switching off. Choose between a cabin or farmhouse room – both with a stripped-back, rustic design – or explore all 90 hectares of the resort’s hilly grounds, complete with 650m<sup>2</sup> spa.



**THE PRINCE AKATOKI, LONDON**  
This central spot blends luxe with Japanese design, all wood panelling, cherry blossoms and taupe walls. The in-room amenities also keep to theme, including a traditional tea set for your own tea ceremony.



**57 NORD, SCOTLAND**  
Two boutique cabins make up this serene getaway on Scotland’s East Coast – Hill House and Sky House. Inspired by both Scandinavian and Scottish design, both offer total immersion in nature via panoramic windows.

**3 more zen hotels**



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► FANS OF UK TV SHOW

*Great British Menu* will know Kirk Haworth well. The son of Northcote chef Nigel Haworth, Kirk first competed in 2021 and made a triumphant return this year with his A Taste of Unity dessert. Made in homage to the Olympics, ingredients in the raw cacao gateaux represent five continents. The twist? It's totally plant based, as is the rest of the menu at his new Shoreditch restaurant, Plates. Settling into a serene, stylish space after starting life as an itinerant pop-up, the concept – an all-vegan tasting menu – is a hit with diners, who have booked it out well into next year. Haworth turned to a vegetable-forward diet after being diagnosed with Lyme disease and threw himself into understanding plants. The flavours here – creative and almost postmodern in the way they deconstruct each ingredient – are a result of the chef's journey of enlightenment. Take the deceptively named lasagne: a delicate parcel of mung and urad beans with a creamy miso and chive sauce, flanked by a single Tokyo turnip and cucumber. Or the house-laminated sourdough, shaped into a flaky, kouign-amann-like muffin and served with mint-green spirulina butter. They all add up to the feeling that something great has taken root.

Snacks //

# VEGGING OUT IN LONDON

This isn't your nonna's lasagne – London restaurant **PLATES** turns plants into something sublime

✉ FLY TO LONDON

DRINKS

## Chai is riding high

**E**spresso martinis are all well and good. But leading mixologists agree they can't hold a candle to chai for sheer spicy complexity or saucy textural intrigue. Take the Chai Whisky Whisper at Bar Serene, Toronto, with JP Wiser's 10-year-old whisky, egg white and lemon. The Kulcha (right),

at Soma in London's Soho, blends 12-year-old Aberfeldy and Stauning rye whisky with clarified chai and Indian spices. The Chai Pani at Bungalow in NYC has full-fat milk, Old Monk Indian rum, ginger and cardamom. The name literally means "tea water". Perfect for getting in your cups.

✉ FLY TO LONDON, NEW YORK & TORONTO

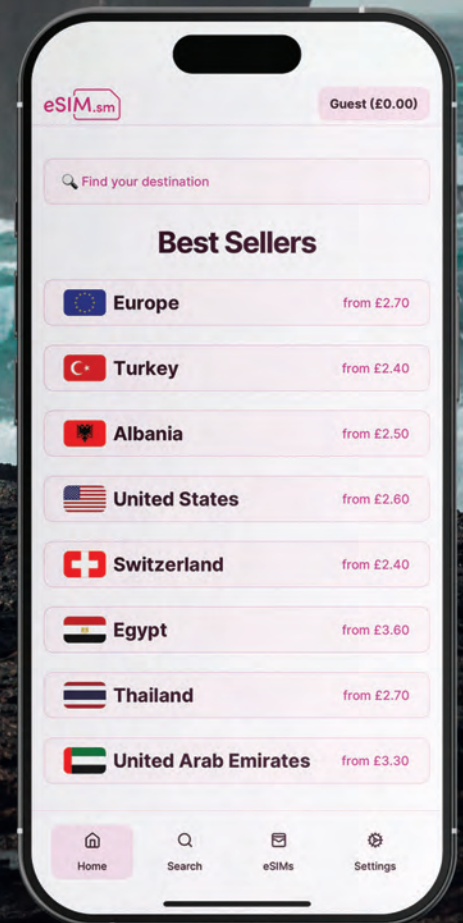


WORDS: JESSICA PRUDAS, ANDY HILL PHOTOS: JOSH CROLL, HARRY PEDERSON



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*Location scout //*

# NOVEL THRILLS IN ORLANDO

*The theme-park capital keeps levelling up its attractions, starting with Universal Orlando's latest resort, says local Terry Ward*



Left: The Tron Lightcycle Run at Magic Kingdom park in Florida

► **BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN INVESTMENTS**, five brand-new fully themed worlds, a new 500-room hotel with special park access and 50 new experiences for guests. When **UNIVERSAL EPIC UNIVERSE** opens at **UNIVERSAL ORLANDO** on 22 May, it will more than double the amusement park’s footprint and mark the company’s fourth theme park to open in Orlando since 1999.

Anyone who’s ever got lost in Universal Orlando’s existing theme parks – those include **UNIVERSAL STUDIOS FLORIDA**, **UNIVERSAL ISLANDS OF ADVENTURE** and **UNIVERSAL VOLCANO BAY** – will certainly want a navigation aid in this new 300-hectare park that’s the biggest of them all and expected to draw more than six million visitors in its first 12 months. Among Universal Epic Universe’s brand-new worlds are **THE WIZARDING WORLD OF HARRY POTTER: MINISTRY OF MAGIC**, **HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON - ISLE OF BERK**, complete with water ride and family roller coaster, and **SUPER NINTENDO WORLD**, where you can cosplay as Mario in an augmented reality dark ride, **MARIO KART: BOWSER’S CHALLENGE**.

All of these worlds and more are easily reachable via the **UNIVERSAL HELIOS GRAND HOTEL**, a Loews Hotel. The 500-room property anchors the park, offering direct access exclusively for guests, and will be preceded by two other Universal hotel openings early this year. All this comes on the heels of the autumn 2024 unveiling of the immersive **WICKED: THE EXPERIENCE** at Universal Studios Florida and 2023’s debut of **MINION LAND** at the same park.

And while Epic Universe is certainly expected to give Orlando’s other parks a run for their money and crowds, competitors have hardly been slouching when it comes to new attractions. In late 2024, Disney’s Imagineers debuted **TIANA’S BAYOU ADVENTURE**, a log flume-like ride that replaced Magic Kingdom’s Splash Mountain and has a 15m drop; it’s great for a scorching Florida day, as getting soaked is an inevitability. **TRON LIGHTCYCLE RUN**, which opened at Magic Kingdom in 2023, is still that park’s biggest rush and one of the fastest coasters of any Disney theme park. It propels riders, positioned as if on a motorcycle, at speeds up to 95km/h along 914m of twisting and turning indoor/outdoor track.

**SEAWORLD ORLANDO**’s latest debut, **PENGUIN TREK**, fills a gap in the family coaster niche (the height requirement is just one metre) within the park’s Antarctica realm. Opened last year, it has kids face a snowmobile-themed rollick that

“**EPIC UNIVERSE IS EXPECTED TO GIVE ORLANDO’S OTHER PARKS A RUN FOR THEIR MONEY, BUT COMPETITORS HAVE HARDLY BEEN SLOUCHING**”



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includes a dark stretch and two launches at speeds of up to 70km/h. **PIPELINE: THE SURF COASTER** opened at SeaWorld in 2023 and was designed to give riders the feel of catching a massive wave – if that wave propelled you at 96km/h and some 34m in the air. And **AQUATICA**, SeaWorld’s waterpark offering, upgraded its original kid’s area at the park in 2023 with **TURI’S KID COVE**, where little ones can run wild among tipping buckets and spraying jets.

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter spans three theme parks at the Universal Orlando Resort.



Look for big things from **LEGOLAND FLORIDA RESORT** in 2025, too, with the inauguration of the **SEA LIFE FLORIDA** aquarium, the park’s biggest opening since 2022’s **PEPPA PIG WORLD**.

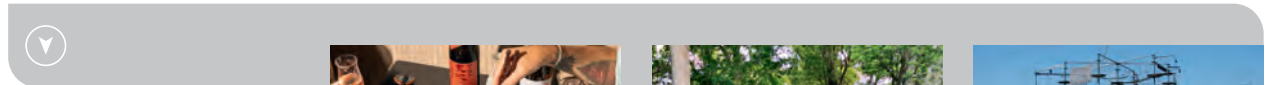
The immersive experience is being touted as a “theme park under the sea” and has a reef-inspired Ferris wheel, coral palace and invertebrate touch pool. Some 25 exhibits will replicate watery habitats that include Florida’s as well as Pacific, Indian and Southern Ocean environments. An underwater tunnel allows marine life to swim around visitors and ogle right back. But more low-key attractions are designed to captivate, too, like a seahorse gallery where you can watch the magical little creatures motor around with their miniscule fins. After all, the wow moments come big and small in Orlando.



From above: Noodle bowl at Minion Cafe and Turi’s Kid Cove at SeaWorld

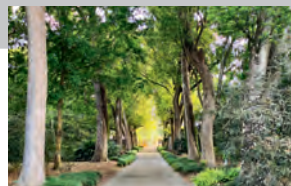
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PHOTOS: COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD RESORT; UNIVERSAL ORLANDO RESORT; SEAWORLD ORLANDO / AQUATICA, ORLANDO, FLORIDA; DELGADO, HARRY P LEU GARDENS, ORLANDO, FL.



**BAR KADA**

A curated sake collection and elevated small plates (caviar doughnuts and bluefin tuna aguachile) are on the à la carte menu at this 30-seat lounge in Winter Park. Walk-ins are welcome but it is recommended to book ahead.



**HARRY P LEU GARDENS**

Stroll lakeside trails shaded by 200-year-old oak trees, and wander through subtropical and tropical gardens at this 20-hectare oasis near downtown Orlando. Visits to the Leu House Museum are by guided tour.



**NONA ADVENTURE PARK**

Orlando is the world capital for wakeboarding. Give the watersport a whirl at this cable park on Lake Nona with inflatables, an obstacle course and 18m climbing tower, plus special events including movie nights and karaoke.

**3 more  
Orlando  
must-dos**



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Screen test //

# Are fight clubs real?

Do we just not know about the sort of brutal bashes featured in Dev Patel's *Monkey Man*, thanks to those famous first two rules, asks Ralph Jones?

ILLUSTRATIONS: RUBY FRESSON

## ► IN 1999, FIGHT CLUB INVENTED FIGHTING.

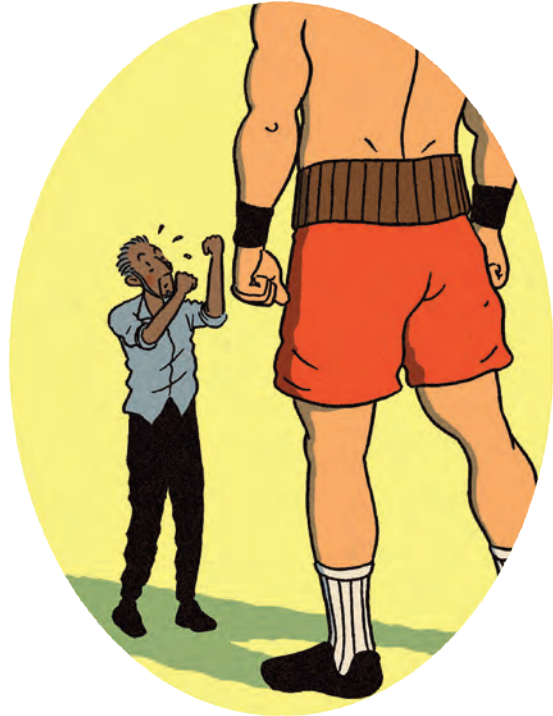
Before the film (Brad Pitt, Edward Norton, you're probably familiar), people existed in sweet harmony with one another and fighting was a foreign concept. When the film came out, people realised that their fists were capable of punching other people, and that's exactly what they started doing.

While this might not be strictly true, the film was seminal in introducing the concept of underground fight clubs to the world – and real fight clubs sprung up in its wake. Dev Patel's *Monkey Man* is the latest movie to take pleasure in the conceit, with Patel's character, Kid, who works in an underground fight club, desperate to get revenge on a man who killed his mother.

But what you're wondering is: are underground fight clubs real? Do these sweaty dens of bare-knuckle iniquity exist in real life?

The answer is a resounding yes. Whether inspired by *Fight Club* or not, people love the idea of trying to beat up strangers, preferably with an audience. It goes back hundreds of years. Until 1743, boxing matches were basically unregulated street fights. What happened in 1743? Bare-knuckle boxer Jack Broughton implemented rules because he'd killed a man two years earlier and didn't want the same thing happening again.

Generally, the illegal element of fight clubs is the money changing hands. Very broadly speaking, it is in fact technically legal to run a fight club if no one is paying to watch and fighters aren't being paid. Some fight clubs are branded "underground" in a bid to look edgy. While there are plenty of these examples – King of the Streets in Sweden; Rumble in the Bronx in New York – real underground fight clubs abide by the first and second rules of *Fight Club*, which, to



paraphrase, means not putting your fights up on YouTube (and binning your boxing gloves).

More legitimate – or less legitimate, if you see what I mean – was a secretive San Francisco operation run by someone called Bloody Knuckles. This was a bona fide fight club in the early 2000s; like *Fight Club*, there was no crowd, only fellow fighters. And, in the late 90s, while the still-fringe Mixed Martial Arts league in New York existed in a shady legal grey area, places like Underground Combat League thrived, with chaotic fights happening in a different location every time.

Since then, fighting has become a colossal industry, with UFC and MMA going mainstream and "fight clubs" picking up millions of views online. These comparatively safe operations mean the spotlight isn't shining on the real fight clubs run in basements and warehouses. They also tell us that the desire for people to gather and punch is probably an impossible one to suppress. Chances are there's an underground fight club in your hometown – you just haven't been invited yet.

**VERDICT: Yes, but they're not on Instagram.**

© WATCH MONKEY MAN





# 'Bel Can-do'



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(Bel Can-)Do your research



[christopherward.com](http://christopherward.com)



NAOMI ACKIE



HUNGRY

NAOMI ACKIE deserves to be a global megastar, but she's making her own way to the top.

She tells Jonny Ensall why she only takes on meaty roles

FOR

PHOTOGRAPHS: ROSALINE SHAHNAVAZ

MORE



NAOMI



ACKIE

is a phenomenally talented actor. This might seem an obvious statement to make about one of Hollywood's brightest rising stars, but it bears repeating – she's really that good.

As wannabe-murderer Bonnie in ultra-dark comedy *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World*, she plumbed the depths of pain and desperation. As Alicia, in the third season of Aziz Ansari's *Master of None*, she revealed the torments and triumphs of undergoing IVF treatment. And as Hazel in *Education* (part of director Steve McQueen's anthology film series, *Small Axe*) she radiated goodness in the bleak landscape of the 70s British school system.

These are stand-out performances that might have catapulted other actors to global fame. But Naomi Ackie is not (yet) a household name. "Fame – blah, blah, blah. Not interested," she says, over Zoom. "Sometimes I'm like, 'I need bigger things, I need to get paid more.' But that's a really normal human thing... My baseline is, can I afford to pay my bills? Can I go on a nice holiday? And I'm privileged enough to say I can do all of those things. Like, I've managed to make a living out of acting, which is insane to me."

This humility goes some way to explaining why Ackie isn't the face of some giant film franchise. She's almost been cast in a Marvel movie, twice, but it didn't work out – "Thank goodness, because I wouldn't have been able to do the work that I've done... I don't want to do those [sorts of

NAOMI ACKIE



NAOMI ACKIE



*“I never really come away from watching a performance being like, Nay, you are one talented actress”*

roles] until I'm satisfied with what I'm capable of, and I'm never satisfied with what I'm capable of." Instead she has chosen to appear in films and TV series that are deliberately wonky – playing with convention and expectation in exciting and often moving ways, even if they end up being cult classics rather than mainstream hits. "I'm such a big fan of films that aren't predictable," she says. "Of an audience being taken for a ride."

Next up for Ackie in that line is *Mickey 17* – a twisty sci-fi from *Parasite* director Bong Joon-ho in which she plays opposite Robert Pattinson and his many clones. "I can't give anything away," she says with a big laugh. The film is a refreshingly bonkers take on a classic sci-fi trope. It is unlike anything else you've seen in the cinema and Ackie is, of course, fantastic in it. Not that she would agree. "I never really come away from watching a performance being like, 'F\*\*\*ing hell, Nay, you are one talented actress.'" How would she feel if she met her clone, I wonder? "I'd be like, 'Oh, that's how people see me.' Because the way we see ourselves is not how people see us."

"As an actor, you're faced with your face a lot," she continues. "The truth is, sometimes I see my face on things and I'm like, 'Oh f\*\*\*, oh I look shit.' And then sometimes I see my face and I'm like, 'Oh my



God, Nay, you're a hottie!'" She thinks some more. "I've always wondered what it feels like to be celebrated as one of these 'it girls'. I'm not an 'it girl', I will never be an 'it girl'. I am just an actor. Sometimes I have aspirations. But also, you know, I wake up to myself every morning – I know the truth."

This is how Ackie speaks – she's self-reflexive, frequently plays down her looks or talent, howls with laughter at the end of most sentences and doesn't seem to take anything too seriously. "It's only acting – it's what my mum used to say. It's only acting, mate, you're not saving any lives!" Cue another fit of giggles.

She's speaking to me from Atlanta, where she's filming yet another project that she describes as a "mind bender", and arrives on the call fresh from a workout. The gym is one of her safe places – physical strength has become a way of dealing with the industry. "It's like my body is trained to hold this amount of stress and unpredictability," she says. "A lot of it is problematic."

Ackie's big break was supposed to have arrived in 2022, when she took on the perhaps insurmountable challenge of playing Whitney Houston in the biopic *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*. At the time, pop biopics were big business for Hollywood, not to mention

## CLONE WARS THE BEST FILMS ABOUT CLONES \*SPOILER WARNING



### Moon (2009)

This sparse sci-fi, starring Sam Rockwell as a deep-space miner who discovers he's part of a clone labour force, is a touchpoint for *Mickey 17*.

Rating: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



### Never Let Me Go (2010)

Why will we need clones in the future? To harvest their organs, of course! This is what lies ahead here for Keira Knightley and Andrew Garfield.

Rating: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



### Oblivion (2013)

What has happened to Earth? What's up with the weird spaceship giving Tom Cruise orders? This slick movie repays repeat viewings.

Rating: 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾



### They Cloned Tyrone (2023)

Mad scientists. Drug deals gone wrong. Fried chicken. From director Juel Taylor, this isn't your average clone story.

Rating: 🐾🐾🐾🐾



### Gemini Man (2019)

Will Smith is being hunted down by a younger version of Will Smith. Will Will Smith win over Will Smith or will Will Smith's will prevail?

Rating: 🐾

“Because of what I look like, the jobs I do will be politicised in one way or another”



obvious Oscar bait. But, unfortunately for Ackie, her moment arrived after the trend had crested. She was lauded for her performance, but the film fell flat.

“It was a bumpy ride,” she grimaces. “I just remember a lot of anxiety around that film.”

What made it so difficult? “The big part of it was the fact that I was hungry. I lost 30 pounds for the role. So, you know, when you don’t eat a lot of food you don’t feel very good. There was the real pressure of: this is the first lead role I’ve had in a film, the fan base is huge, if this goes wrong I could destroy my career... [I felt] full of fear and doubt and hunger. I laugh about it, but I was so hungry dude! Like, I’m not naturally skinny at all; my muscles wasted away. I can really say that I will never push my body to that degree ever again.”

Ackie was born in London and grew up in Walthamstow in the east of the







city. Her mother, who worked for the NHS, died suddenly aged just 49 – almost the same age as Whitney. That tragedy inspired Ackie to summon the spirit of the late singer. Yet, somehow, it was not the right role, or perhaps not the right time.

A better fit was her follow up, *Blink Twice* – the directorial debut of Zoë Kravitz. Ackie plays Frida, a young woman who finds herself trapped in paradise with an enigmatic

**“It’s kind of a miracle that I am where I am”**

billionaire. It’s a horror-comedy in the style of *Get Out* that subverts expectations around female victimhood, and also a rare film with a Black female lead that is not about race – not explicitly, at least.

“There are layers and shades of being a Black woman within that context that are different to being a white woman, without making it about race per se,” she says. Does she prefer roles that aren’t embroiled in racial politics? “I have no control most of the time. Because of what I look like, the jobs I do will be politicised in one way or another, and that is sometimes f\*\*\*ing difficult. I just want to tell a f\*\*\*ing story, can we not make this about race?”

“My new pet peeve is people using the word ‘woke’ instead of being like: oh, there’s a Black person or an Asian person in this film and I’m not happy about it,” she continues. “I get really irate about that because I’m not woke, I’m just Black. I see things differently to how you see them because our worlds are different – it doesn’t make yours untrue, it doesn’t make mine untrue. It’s just different and if you don’t have the space for it just don’t f\*\*\*ing watch it! This is why I’ll never be a big old movie star!” She breaks out into another roar of infectious laughter.

We chat some more about Zoë Kravitz – daughter of singer Lenny Kravitz and actor Lisa Bonet – who Ackie admires tremendously for her perseverance in getting the project made. I ask her what she makes of the “nepo baby” label. “People get a bit butt-hurt about it, but also I think maybe we’re looking at the wrong thing,” she considers. “If one day, when I have kids, one of them turns to me and goes, ‘Mum, I really want to be an actor,’ I’m going to pull out all the stops to make sure that happens. In the same way that if that same child said, ‘I want to be a gardener,’ I’d want to make that happen. I don’t think it’s that controversial, really.

“I think what we’re really talking about is privilege. The gatekeepers of the industry – whoever



“The self-doubt is a constant buzz in my head”

they are, faceless as they are – have put such a pin on allowing a variety of voices to tell their stories.”

Ackie can trace this to her own experience. “I grew up in Walthamstow, I’m the child of children of immigrants, it’s kind of a miracle that I’m where I am. How long does it take to do that? It takes a long time when you have no access. It’s ultimately about realising we are all under the thumb of someone else and someone else’s decisions and we spend a lot of time looking horizontally and we should really be looking up there.”

Ackie looks skyward. She’s been through a lot and knows she’ll probably have to go through a lot more. Her faith in what she’s doing is “tested constantly,” she says. “The self-doubt is a constant buzz in my head: am I doing this right? Did I say yes to the right thing? How are people going to receive this? I’ve almost gotten used to it.”

But she is strong, no doubt about it. Physically and mentally. I would love to see her clamber to the top of the pile in Hollywood, but it would also be great if she made a few more mind-bending movies before that.

© WATCH BLINK TWICE

## ACKIE SKILLS

NAOMI ACKIE’S CV



### BORN

2 November 1992 in London. Her dad worked for Transport for London and her mum for the NHS.

### EDUCATION

Walthamstow School for Girls, then the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

### FUN FACT

Starting out, Ackie had part-time jobs as a hot dog vendor, barmaid and host of corporate away days, and came close to quitting acting before landing her role in *Star Wars*.

### KEY WORK

#### Lady Macbeth (2016)

This period drama about a young bride launched Florence Pugh’s career, but Ackie’s role as Anna, her maid, turned heads.

#### Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (2019)

Ackie played stormtrooper-turned-rebel bad-ass Jannah, and brought some credibility to all the green-screen action.

#### Master of None (2021)

The third season of Aziz Ansari’s New York sitcom put Alicia (Ackie) and Denise (Lena Waithe) and their raw and beautiful relationship in the spotlight.

#### I Wanna Dance with Somebody (2022)

The big one: Ackie plays Whitney Houston in this pop biopic that skips all too quickly through the singer’s tragic life. A great performance in a misfiring film.

From top right: *Starring alongside Channing Tatum in Blink Twice, as Jannah in Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker and as Whitney Houston in I Wanna Dance with Somebody*



PHOTOGRAPHER: ROSALINE SHAHNAZ/AUGUST; STYLIST: LILY RIMMER; MAKE-UP: LUCY WEARING; HAIR: LAURIANE BAILEY; NAILS: JADA ELLIZE-LORENTZ; ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: © WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES; © LUCASFILM COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; PHOTO: JONATHAN COLLEY/ALAMY; CLONE WARS PHOTOS: BFA/SONY PICTURES CLASSICS; MOVIESTORE COLLECTION LTD, UNIVERSAL PICTURES, MACRO/MADE WITH LOVE/MEDIA/ALBUM, JERRY BRUCKHEIMER FILMS/ALBUM – ALL ALAMY



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# RAMBERT DANCE

IN

# PEAKY BLINDERS

## THE REDEMPTION OF THOMAS SHELBY

Written by the creator of Peaky Blinders, Steven Knight

Choreographer/Director, Benoit Swan Pouffer



**'TOMMY SHELBY TAKES THE STAGE BY STORM'**

The Telegraph



The Times



Sunday Express



Broadway World



NME



WhatsOnStage



The Metro



The Guardian



The Stage

**Sadler's 5 - 16 August 2025**

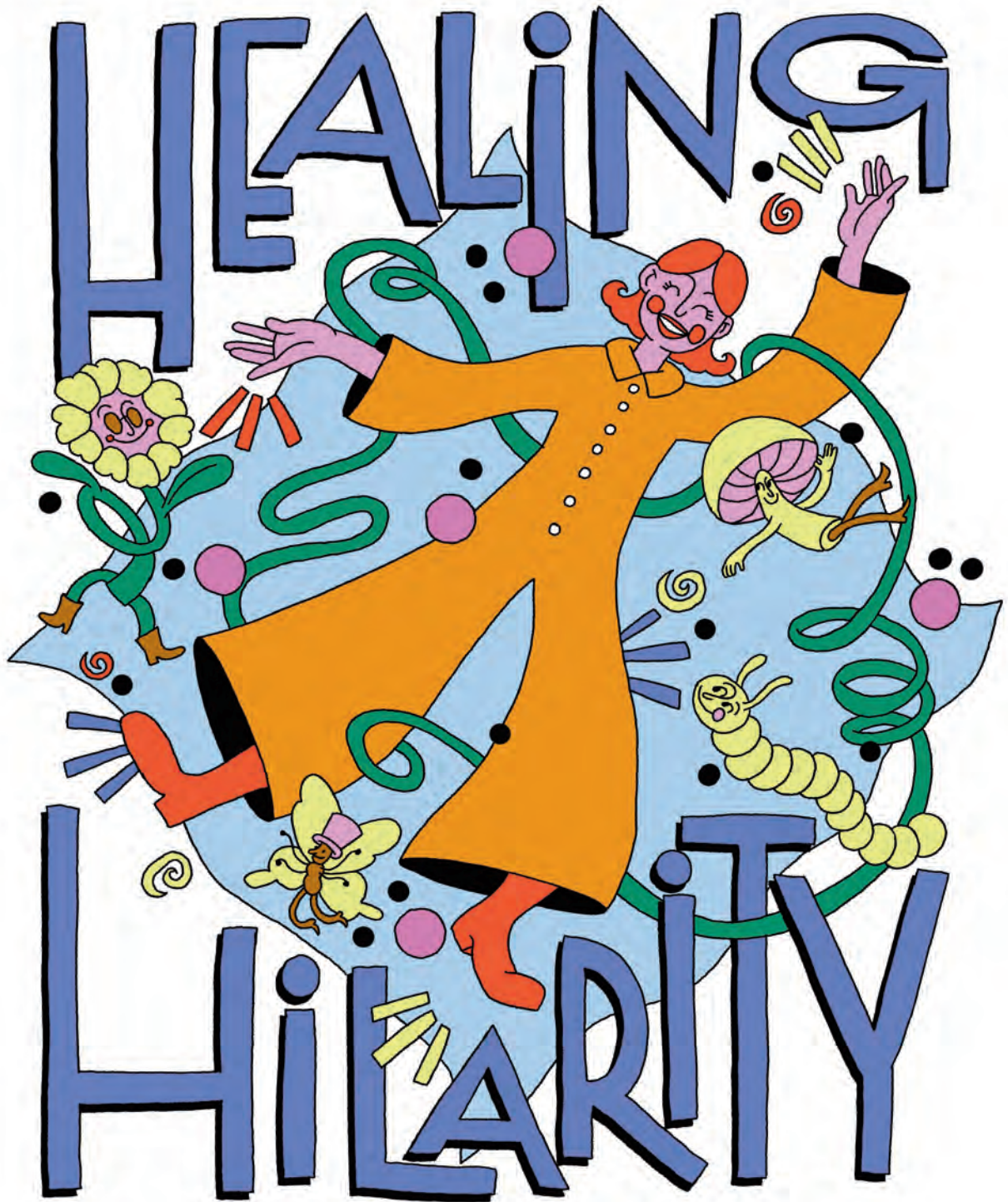
[peakyblindersdance.com](http://peakyblindersdance.com)

A RAMBERT PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME  
CO-PRODUCED WITH THE LOWRY



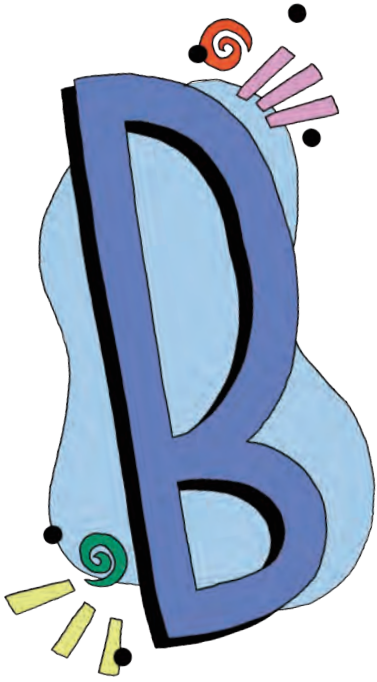
Executive Producers Rambert, Robin Saunders and Simon Sinek. Inspired by the television series Peaky Blinders created by Steven Knight. In association with Caryn Mandabach Productions. Peaky Blinders © TM Caryn Mandabach Productions 2022. Licensed by Caryn Mandabach Productions





Laughter is the best medicine, so the adage goes. But a bunch of performers, therapists and activists want us to take humour's healing power more literally, finds Estella Shardlow

**ILLUSTRATIONS: MADDIE FISCHER**



Belly laughs booming out of yoga studios, psychologists prescribing circus arts to burnt-out patients and therapy-themed stand-up sets – comedy and self-care are cosyng up in a host of unexpected new ways. It's all part of growing, global awareness around levity's ability to boost our wellbeing, whether it's the physical act of laughter or the catharsis of poking fun at even our most serious problems. Could comedy be the collective exhalation we all need this year? It's looking like yukking it up is set to be 2025's hottest pursuit – here's how to titter your way into optimal health.





Have a chuckle with clowning's next gen

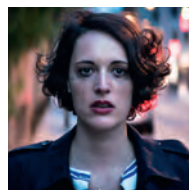
CLOWNS ARE NO LONGER confined to the Big Top but treading the boards of high-brow theatres. These next-gen performers aren't of the creepy, red-nosed Pennywise variety. Estonian-born, UK-based **JULIA MASLI** is a posterchild for clowning's new cool. Her surreal agony-aunt routine *Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha* won rave reviews in New York last year before transferring to London's Soho Theatre (until 11 January). "There's a healing element to the archetype of the trickster," says Masli. "By embracing failure, clowns allow us to accept that we're imperfect as humans." A skilled mime artist – at times wielding a mannequin's leg for an arm – she sidles up to audience members and coos "Problem?", then sets out to tackle their woes with a skilful blend of silliness and sensitivity.

Another next-gen jester is **VIGGO VENN** (left), whose hi-vis jacket and electric-shock hair may be familiar from *Britain's Got Talent* (he won the 2023 edition). Touring the UK in February, his madcap antics don't delve into matters of mental health per se, but he's also worked as a hospital clown in his native Norway, cheering up poorly kids. Going to even greater lengths to heal through humour, the charity Clowns Without Borders sends performers into conflict zones and crisis-hit communities.

⊗ FLY TO LONDON

## Stream a sadcom

**Fleabag** superfan? Binged on **Baby Reindeer**? Well, guess what, you're already a convert to sadcoms – television's trauma-informed tragicomedy trend. The groundwork was laid by OGs like **Crazy Ex Girlfriend**,



in which the main character is diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Mental health topics that comedy series would



have once shied away from are now getting the sitcom treatment – from bipolar disorder (**Big Mood**) through anxiety and



PTSD (**Queenie**) to grief (**Shrinking**). Trigger warnings all round. If the idea of penning your own cathartic comedy drama

appeals, London's **The Comedy School** ([thecomedy-school.com](http://thecomedy-school.com)) runs sitcom script workshops as well as stand-up, and Indian humourist Amit Khuva's **Café Comedy** academy is launching a two-week online writing course ([cafecomedy.in](http://cafecomedy.in)).

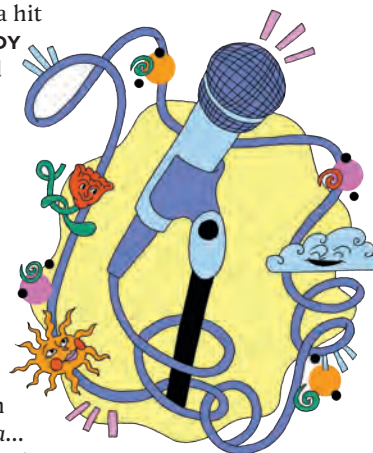


“Stand-up is taking on the serious matter of mental health”

Go from the couch to a stand-up set

FOUR COMEDIANS AND A PSYCHIATRIST WALK INTO A theatre. No, it’s not the set-up for a joke, but the premise of a hit show on last summer’s Edinburgh Festival Fringe. **COMEDY THERAPY**’s panel dished out life advice to problems submitted anonymously by audience members. With shows such as *Your Therapist Is Clueless* and *Trauma + Time - PTSD = Comedy!* also on the bill, the cultural bellwether that is Fringe sent a clear signal: stand-up is taking on the serious matter of mental health. These shows all featured mental-health experts moonlighting as comedians. Perhaps best known is **DR BENJI WATERHOUSE** (above), the NHS consultant behind bestselling 2024 memoir *You Don’t Have to Be Mad to Work Here*.

Life’s darker side has always provided material for jokes, but the boundary-blurring between psychotherapy and comedy is something new. “Contrary to opinion, comedy’s not the opposite of serious; it compliments it, flows from it,” says Scottish clinical psychologist Dr Edel McGlanaghy, creator of *Trauma...* “Trauma-informed practice and stand-up comedy both require vulnerability and bravery, and they both work best when authentic.”



© FLY TO EDINBURGH

## HA-HA HAPPENINGS

GET YOUR GIGGLE ON



**6–11 January 2025**

**Julia Masli: ha ha ha ha ha ha, Soho Theatre, London**

Expect bin fires, onstage showers and crowd-surfing. ● [sohotheatre.com](http://sohotheatre.com)

**16 February**

**Cheap Therapy by Hoes With Feelings, Arlo SoHo, NYC**

Karolena Theresa and Melissa Rich help audience members unpack their issues. ● [arlohotels.com](http://arlohotels.com)

**February**

**Viggo Venn: British Comedian, various venues, UK**

The Norwegian *Britain’s Got Talent* winner brings his hi-vis hijinks. ● [viggo venn.com](http://viggo venn.com)

**27–30 March**

**Laughter Release Playshop Big Ears Festival, Knoxville**

Laraaji and Arji OceAnanda lead two laughter meditation sessions. ● [bigearsfestival.org](http://bigearsfestival.org)

**10 May – 7 June**

**Benji Waterhouse: You Don’t Have to Be Mad..., various venues, UK**

Fly-on-the-padded-wall anecdotes. ● [@doctor\\_benjis](https://twitter.com/doctor_benjis)



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# Make asanas more amusing



SOMETIMES YOGA CLASSES CAN feel a little po-faced and perfectionist – a silent studio full of impossibly bendy, Lululemon-clad limbs. Not so with laughter yoga. Instead of your usual downward dogs or warrior poses, this playful practice blends pranayama breathwork (Lion’s Breath is a classic: open your mouth wide, stick out your tongue and release a loud “ha”) and physical exercises like chanting, clapping and mime that get groups in a light-hearted, childlike mood. The merriment might be forced at first, but watching equally goofy-looking classmates (eye contact is encouraged) soon makes you get the giggles for real. Spreading far beyond its Mumbai birthplace – where it was created by Dr Madan Kataria in 1995 – more than 5,000 laughter yoga clubs have sprung up worldwide, from Toronto to California. For a full list of places offering a funnier flow, see the Laughter Yoga International website.

● [laughteryoga.org](http://laughteryoga.org)

✦ FLY TO LOS ANGELES & TORONTO

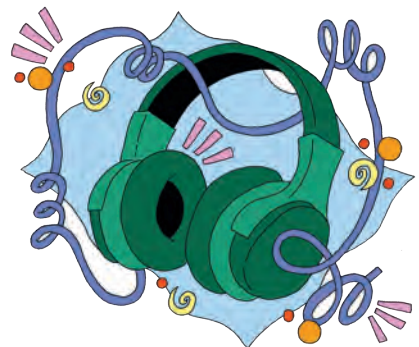
## Tune into an alt-therapy podcast

A “comedy podcast about mental health”? It shouldn’t really work, yet **Cheap Therapy**, hosted by self-proclaimed “bootleg therapists” Karolena Theresa and Melissa Rich, pulls it off (the duo’s monthly IRL spin-off events at New York hotel Arlo

SoHo frequently sell out, too). They’re among a growing crop of comedians creating mental wellbeing-themed podcasts that are wickedly witty, candid and caring in equal measure.

In **My Therapist Ghosted Me**, Irish stand-up Joanne McNally and presenter

Vogue Williams dish out “100% unqualified, unsubstantiated but upfront and honest advice” to 3.5 million monthly listeners. **Mental Illness Happy Hour** and **The Hilarious World of Depression** see American comedians Paul Gilmartin and John Moe



respectively inviting guests onto the therapist’s couch. Expect frank yet

funny accounts of navigating issues such as addiction and depression.

“Laughter brings you into the present moment, quickly and easily”



## Meditate on laughter’s medicinal powers

LAUGHTER MAKES AN EXCELLENT MEDITATION TECHNIQUE, as it “brings you into the present moment, quickly and easily,” says Arizona-based instructor **PRAGITO DOVE**. Laughing meditation is an accessible form of self-care that falls into two halves: first, laughter, followed by silent reflection. Let the laughter reverberate, “focusing on sending the sound inward, to the throat, abdomen, heart, lungs,” says American multi-instrumentalist **LARAAJI** (right), who has delivered his seriously playful laughter meditation workshops everywhere from Sydney to LA. Studies indicate that simulated laughter has the same health benefits as the real deal. Curious to give this a try? Drop into one of Dove’s free, 15-minute Zoom taster sessions. Meditation never looked so merry.



● [discovermeditation.com](http://discovermeditation.com)

⊗ FLY TO LOS ANGELES



None of the practices discussed in this piece is a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment. If you’re struggling with mental health, consult your doctor or a registered therapist. Visit [makeitok.org](http://makeitok.org) for further advice.

### COMIC RELIEF

THE BENEFITS OF LAUGHTER



#### Strengthens immunity

Laughter has been shown to increase infection-fighting antibodies and immune cells in the bloodstream, marshalling our natural defences.

#### Boosts mood

A cocktail of “happy hormones” – endorphins, dopamine and serotonin – are triggered when we chuckle, while blood pressure drops and stress hormones like cortisol are suppressed.

#### Relieves pain

Endorphins are the body’s natural painkillers, while Substance P (a pain neurotransmitter) levels are lower during laughter, promoting its use as a complementary therapy for conditions like fibromyalgia or arthritis.

#### Improves heart health

A good chortle sees heart and respiratory rates, good cholesterol and oxygen consumption all rise, leading to better circulation.



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# DID YOU KNOW



**Africa has the Big Five and now tiny eastern Caribbean nation St Lucia has the Small Six: half a dozen unique species you can spot on safari. Ian Packham meets the island's diminutive residents**



# IN THE



ST LUCIA SAFARI



PHOTOGRAPHS: ARON KLEIN

YOU CAN SAFARI



CARIBBEAN?

# CLAD IN KHAKI,

we focus our long lenses on

a single spot in the undergrowth, no more than a couple of metres from where we are standing, having left our 4x4 at the end of a narrow track some distance away. Butterflies delight in the sun's warmth despite the early hour, while heavy droplets of water crash through the tree canopy, falling irregularly onto wide leaves with the slap of a drumstick striking a tom-tom. Nearby, a scratching sound catches our attention and I put down my telephoto lens to admire the quartet of sharp, curved claws gripping at the bark of the nearest tree. Knowing eyes lock with our own, before an explosive burst of birdsong confirms our quarry's presence.

We're not on an African safari, but in the Caribbean, on St Lucia, an island known in conservation circles for its endemic species – creatures found nowhere else. The animal we're seeking isn't a member of the Big Five – Africa's most iconic large mammals – but the endemic St Lucia black finch, one of the island's newly established Small Six.

"The island is too young for big game," concedes life-long conservationist Adams Toussaint, the brainchild behind the Small Six list, as we cut along a sheer-sided mountain ridge created by the same volcanic eruptions that formed the island nation long after the North American continent had come into being.

However, that doesn't mean wildlife fans should head back to their beachside sun loungers disappointed. "As a biodiversity hot-spot people can come and appreciate how biodiverse it is, and what a high level of endemics there is. We're still discovering new endemism," Toussaint continues.

With a characteristically wide smile surrounded by a lightly greying goatee, and a monoscope attached to a tripod slung over his left shoulder, Toussaint is clearly in his element, even when we reach the uneven stones of the Des Cartiers Trail. Deep within Quillesse Forest Reserve – one of eight such protected areas on the 616km<sup>2</sup>

island – the trail forms part of a two centuries-old roadway constructed under French rule to connect its south and west by way of its crumpled and forested interior.

Remarkably, 70% of St Lucia remains forested and so the Small Six reflects this, including six species – three birds and three reptiles – that reside in areas like Quillesse. This list is not yet final, the array of possible species making Toussaint's ultimate decision all the harder, but when I visit it includes the black finch, Amazon (jacquot) parrot, oriole, whiptail lizard, threadsnake and pygmy gecko.

I nervously ask about the chance of seeing the rainbow-hued jacquot, a notoriously shy parrot, only for Toussaint to reply matter-of-factly, "In Des Cartiers you're guaranteed to see them." And he should know, having been born and brought up in the small rural community of Fond Assau nearby. Even so, it wasn't until the devastating effects of 1980's Hurricane Allen, 45 years ago this year, that Toussaint considered a career in conservation.

"I was just out of school and a lot of the island was in recovery. I was hired to manage the chainsaw clean-up crew. I did that for one year, then I got the opportunity to do some more study, in forestry." Thus began a career that took him from forest ranger to the government's chief forestry officer.



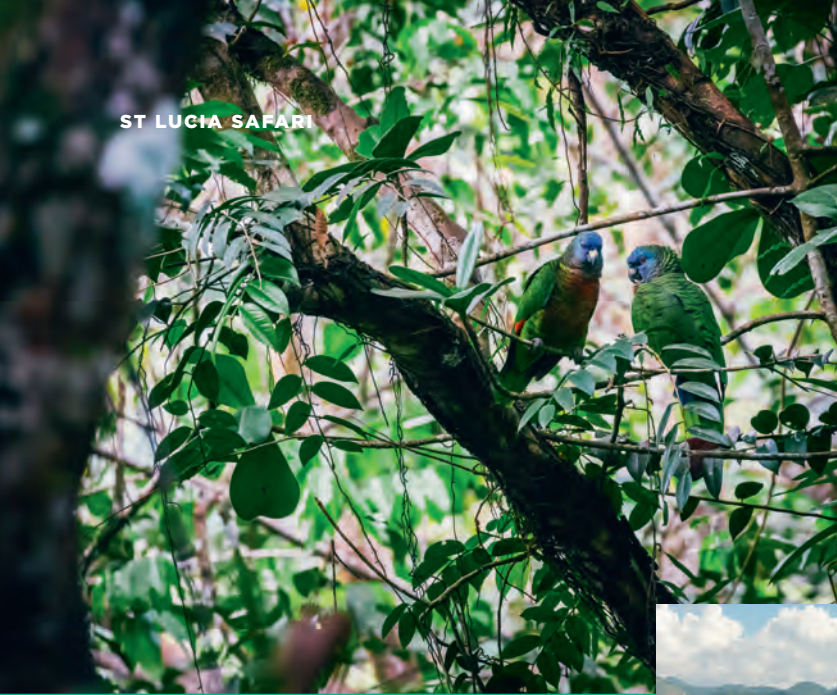
*Left & below: An oriole; Adams Toussaint*

*Right: Early morning on the Des Cartiers Trail*









On retiring from his government job in 2018 at 55, he decided to commit full time to his passion for wildlife and photography, setting up a tour company – St Lucia Birding and Wildlife Ambassadors – to lead visitors away from the beaches and into the island’s forest reserves. “It’s always a pleasure to guide, so I’m looking forward to this new safari challenge and the chance to show more visitors around our beautiful island,” he says.

Our conversation is cut short by a loud fluttering from a nearby tree hollow, the preferred nesting spot for jacquots. “There, there, I just saw one.” He points out a jacquot taking flight to a pip-pip backing track of tree frogs. Following the direction of its flight path, we move as silently as possible up the trail’s muddy track to a natural break in the tree cover, providing a window over the valley below. Setting down his tripod, he points to a gently swaying branch cluttered with leaves, where a jacquot busies itself preening a mate, before they take to the air in tandem, echoing each other’s moves without any apparent effort.

Hurricane Allen was also a life-changing – or perhaps lifesaving – moment for the jacquot. Already in significant

decline in the 1970s due to a combination of habitat loss, hunting and the international pet trade, the further decline caused by the hurricane’s sustained wind speeds of 305km/h – still the strongest ever recorded in the Atlantic – triggered a campaign to save the island’s national bird.

Today, there are upwards of 2,000 – sometimes difficult to find – adults. “I’m sure they’re sitting there, but unless they move, they blend in; their shape is the same as the leaf,” says Toussaint, as we pause beneath the strong tall form of a 40-year-old magnolia tree spotted in orchids.

Their Technicolor feathers – jungle green, with impressionistic daubs of blue and red – are striking, but their beauty wasn’t enough to get the jacquot onto Toussaint’s

Small Six shortlist, which was chosen for each species’ character, alongside its endemism and scarcity. The rarest of all, however, is the threadsnake.

“It’s something I bump into sometimes,” Toussaint says nonchalantly, scuffing at the damp leaf litter, the threadsnake’s usual habitat, with a boot. He grabs a fallen stick and sorts through soft yellow roots and thread-like fungal hyphae of pure white, but turns up only an earthworm. The wriggling

From top: St Lucia’s endemic jacquot parrots; the island’s rugged western coastline

**“People can come and appreciate how biodiverse St Lucia is, and what a high level of endemics there is”**

**WILD NUMBERS**

ST LUCIA IN FIGURES

**200**

Estimated number of species endemic to St Lucia

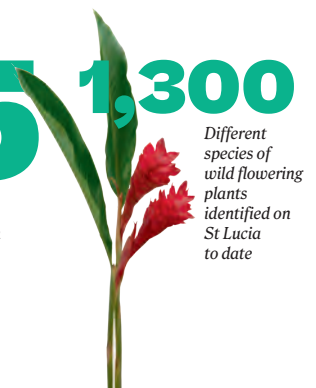


**1,900%**

Increase in the jacquot population since conservation efforts began

**45** **1,300**

Number of years Adams Toussaint has been working in conservation



Different species of wild flowering plants identified on St Lucia to date



# NATS

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Corporation

## ST LUCIA SAFARI

invertebrate looks like the small, slender reptile but, alas, we won't be seeing the elusive serpent today.

"We used to think it was the black finch that was rarest, but now we've learned more about their habits." Toussaint says of the goth-like, jet-black bird. He tells me that the black finch is monospecific – in other words, the only species in its genus. It's a biologist's way of saying that not only is the black finch very rare, but unusual too, being unrelated to any other bird on the island. "It's an evolutionary mystery."

"Very rare" is a phrase Toussaint uses throughout our two-day safari experience. Over the course of our trek, I get to know why the wildlife of St Lucia is so inimitable, whether that's glimpsing the pygmy gecko's striped back before it disappears into a tiny burrow, finally catching sight of the wasp-like colouration of the St Lucia oriole after hours of searching, or jumping from a small speedboat into the shallows around Praslin Island – as warm as bathwater and as clear as glass. This tiny speck of land on St Lucia's east coast – struck by a succession of low Atlantic breakers peeling away from



Clockwise from top:  
A pygmy gecko; whiptail  
lizard; and sunset over  
the jungle

an offshore reef – is the only place it's currently possible to encounter the whiptail, locally known as the *zandoli tè*, a lizard growing to a length of 35cm.

Saved from the brink of extinction after decades of predation by non-endemic species such as mongoose brought to St Lucia from southeast Asia during British rule, the whiptail was limited to an area of just nine hectares before 10 pairs were transferred to the predator-free island in 2000.

Twenty-five years on, their future is as bright as the cerulean hue that covers the slender tails of mature males. Around 200 individuals are now thought to bask on Praslin's warm rocks, and it's only a few seconds after stepping onto

the island that we encounter these strange-looking reptiles, the largest the length of my forearm, with mismatched markings of spotted flanks and soft yellow bellies.

A nation that would fit into the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania 24 times over might not seem like the obvious place for a safari. But, as Toussaint says as another brightly coloured male pauses for our admiration, "We have so many unique species – the Small Six is supposed to be like a flagship." And so, once the reptile scurries away, we press on – deeper into the dense forest that covers this tiny island like a cloud, to spot more whiptails or just admire the scenery.

⊗ FLY TO ST LUCIA

**"We have so many unique species – the Small Six is supposed to be like a flagship"**



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PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

## THE INDULGENT WELLNESS

# HOTEL

An aerial photograph of a large, circular swimming pool at a resort. The pool is surrounded by a paved deck with many lounge chairs. Palm trees are visible around the pool, and their shadows are cast onto the water. The pool is the central focus of the image, with the text overlaid on it.

### IT'S YOUR ROUND

"NEW YEAR, NEW YOU" is something of a cliché. Nevertheless, after the bilious excess of the festive season, some manner of reset is wholly appropriate. Still, there's no reason to go hardcore on the self-flagellation. The following hotels offer all the gentle respite you crave, so you won't feel you're just going around in circles.

# GUIDE

## THE SURREY, NEW YORK CITY

**THE ONE FOR** *Upper East Side glam*

IF YOU'RE GOING to stay in NYC, you may as well do it properly. This lavish Upper East Side gem – built in the Roaring 20s and still dripping in Art Deco decadence – is a model of glamour and sophistication. Take the suites, with architectural mouldings subtly referencing the bridges of nearby Central Park, those blue granite bathroom countertops, or handcrafted Murano chandeliers gracing the public spaces. Dine with the movers and shakers

over a dirty martini at Casa Tua, or in the bookish lounge. Wellness-wise, The Surrey Spa featuring Sisley Paris puts an emphasis on rejuvenation on the treatment menu – try the exclusive Black Rose Replumping Facial, or a yoga session on the outdoor terrace – a rare gem in this part of town.

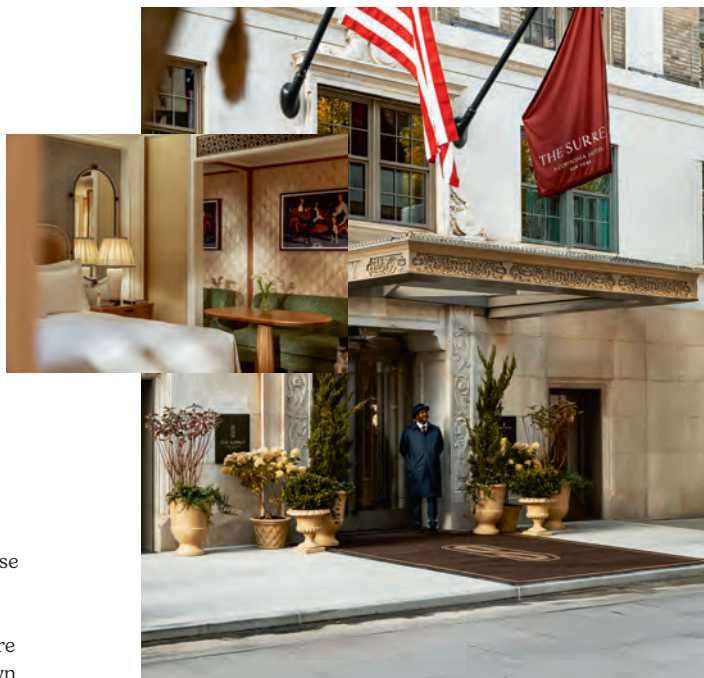


PHOTO: JONATHAN MOLONEY OF WHAT THE FOX STUDIO



## SANDALS SAINT VINCENT

**THE ONE FOR** *outdoor wellness*



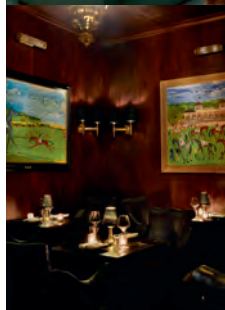
KEEPING FIT AND healthy isn't typically associated with all-inclusive holidays. But at the brand-new Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines resort, it's totally a thing. Set among 20 hectares of lush landscapes in the midst of a breathtaking mountainous backdrop, the resort proves a sanctuary where guests can really connect with nature, practise wellness and indulge in a raft of authentic local experiences. This adults-only spot also boasts Sandals' first ever fitness suites – the Lady Palm Club Suite with Fitness Room and Balcony

Tranquility Soaking Tub, with Technogym equipment, plus a fitness bike with personalised programmes. Complimentary land and water sports are included in every stay at Sandals Resorts, while the Red Lane Spa offers al fresco wellness and indulgent treatments in beautiful cabanas by a gracefully flowing river.





“GLORIOUSLY REFINED AND THE VERY ANTITHESIS OF ANODYNE MODERN HOTEL DESIGN”



## THE MILESTONE HOTEL & RESIDENCES, LONDON

**THE ONE FOR** *royal treatment*

FRESH AIR AND wide-open spaces are seldom seen in such splendidly situated hotels as this stately 19th-century pile, a few moment's stroll from Kensington High Street station. But The Milestone, bang opposite Hyde Park at the bouji Kensington Palace and Gardens end, has it all. Gloriously refined and the very antithesis of anodyne modern hotel design, it's all plush original furnishings, oil paintings and lavish

bathrooms. Service is ultra-attentive, with thoughtful touches like sweet treats refreshed throughout the day, while afternoon tea – served with Champagne Lanson in the dreamy Park Lounge – is among the best in town. The spa downstairs has a resistance pool, pampering treatments – available in-room on request – and a proper gym for working off all those scrumptious sweet treats.



“EVERY INCH  
THE PALATIAL  
RURAL  
RETREAT,  
COMPLETE  
WITH ELEGANT  
PUBLIC SPACES  
AND RUGGED  
DARTMOOR  
VIEWS”

## BOVEY CASTLE, DARTMOOR

### THE ONE FOR *an Art Deco dip*

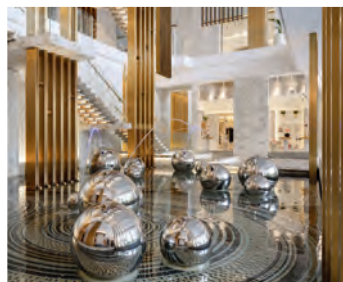
THIS SPIFFING NEO-Elizabethan castle is as romantic as they come. Originally built by WH Smith – yes, that WH Smith – it was later taken over by the Great Western Railway, which added a golf course. Every inch the palatial rural retreat, complete with elegant public spaces, mahogany staircases, giant fireplaces and rugged Dartmoor views, you'll never be short of something to do – archery, clay pigeon shooting and sloe gin-

making are just a few of the bracing activities the team would love to hook you up with. Stay in the castle proper, or in a range of highly desirable self-contained lodges. The real draw, though? Its sumptuous blue-tiled swimming pool, a proper Art Deco gem dripping in jazz-age glamour and sophistication. The Elena Spa is well worth blocking out an afternoon for, with full-body massages, facials and a plethora of positively regal pampering options.





“ROOMS ARE MASSIVE, WITH GENEROUS BALCONIES LOOKING OUT TO THE GULF OR BACK OVER THE PALM”




## ATLANTIS THE ROYAL, DUBAI

### THE ONE FOR *hot property*

THE SHEER MIND-BLOWING SCALE of Atlantis The Royal has to be seen to be believed. Enviably situated on the outer crescent of the

Palm Jumeirah, Atlantis the Royal is architecturally dazzling – part ultra-high-end mall, part avant-garde art gallery and part ludicrously luxurious hotel. Vast sculptures and no-expense-

spared finishes abound. There are seven restaurants (including Michelin-starred Dinner by Heston Blumenthal), a Nobu beach club and an infinity pool on the 22nd floor, partly designed by Dolce & Gabbana. Rooms are, as you'd expect, massive, with generous balconies looking out to the Gulf or back over the Palm. Savour the Arabic-accented AWAKEN spa or, if you're with kids, hit up the sprawling Aquaventure Waterpark. As if the hotel itself wasn't splashy enough.



*Transformers One* is the first animated feature starring the Robots in Disguise since 1986's outing.

## Autobots, roll out!

*Transformers* launched on TV in 1984 on the back of Japanese toy line Microman. The series depicts the continuation of the millennia-long battle between two warring factions of Transformers - the heroic Autobots and evil Decepticons - after they crash-land on Earth. Movie fame soon followed, evolving into a series of live-action films from 2007 before this welcome return to animation.

© WATCH TRANSFORMERS ONE

### 65-71// Movies

*Saturday Night* is alright for comedy, Kate Winslet tackles dream project *Lee* and Adam Pearson goes all meta for *A Different Man*.

### 73-77// Television

Why *Luther* is the best sleuth series on television right now. Plus join *A Gentleman in Moscow*, get a *Garden Rescue* and *Sort Your Life Out*.



**79-82 // Audio**

Discover some of the stars and trends to look forward to this year, and check out some of the best of 2024, including music from The Cure and Tyler, The Creator.



**Vera Loves**

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

A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

# WHAT'S ON

JANUARY

# THE CHOICE IS YOURS

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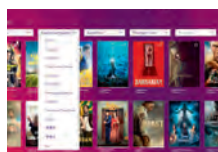
- Select an album from Music, a TV show from TV or a movie from Movies.
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- Depending on which aircraft you are on, you'll see a tab or star at the top of your screen.
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- ⚠ Unsuitable for children
- ♥ Vera Loves

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# WHAT'S ON MOVIES

JANUARY

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS

## FIVE FROM NEW YORK

As **SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE** is feted on film, Andy Hill ranks the show's most outrageous skits



**Dick in a Box**  
Spooky pop group The Lonely Island won a primetime Emmy – and the ire of the FCC – for this tongue-in-cheek *Saturday Night Live* skit, an R&B song featuring Andy Samberg and Justin actual Timberlake offering their respected loved ones a unique gift.  
**Verdict: Firm favourite**

MILD!



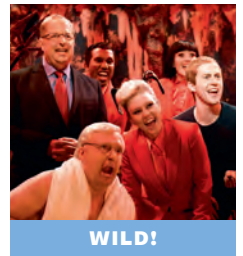
**Samuel L. Jackson's F-word**  
Samuel L. Jackson violated the most important rule of live TV by yelling a full-blooded F-word at the climax of a sketch opposite cast mainstay Kenan Thompson. Jackson thought he was banned for life, but Thompson recently swore that's not true.  
**Verdict: Flipping outrageous**



**Dan Crenshaw's eyepatch**  
*SNL* regular Pete Davidson got in trouble for mocking combat veteran and Republican congressman Dan Crenshaw's eyepatch. The following week Davidson had to apologise to Crenshaw live on air – one in the eye for the woke mob.  
**Verdict: Patched things up**



**Stormy Daniels**  
During the last Trump administration, the adult movie star popped up in the middle of a sketch starring Alec Baldwin as the president and Ben Stiller as his fixer Michael Cohen. "I know you don't believe in climate change," she said, "but a Storm's a-comin'."  
**Verdict: Heating up**



**Alan Dershowitz in hell**  
The attorney was depicted on a day trip to hell in a 2020 skit. There, he encounters a host of colourful characters, including *SNL* stalwart Kate McKinnon as Satan, Adam Driver as Jeffrey Epstein and Mark Zuckerberg (Alex Moffat) as the underworld's IT guy.  
**Verdict: Down in flames**

PHOTOS: DANA EDELSON/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES; WILL HEATH/NBCU PHOTO BANK/NBCUNIVERSAL VIA GETTY IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

**Lorne  
unto  
himself**  
*SNL* creator  
Michaels' lines



"I don't tweet for a very simple reason – I drink"

"I can't concern myself with how viewers feel"

"If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room"

"There's no creativity without boundaries"

WATCH SATURDAY NIGHT

HOT RIGHT NOW



Lee ♥

15

Kate Winslet, Alexander Skarsgård	117 mins
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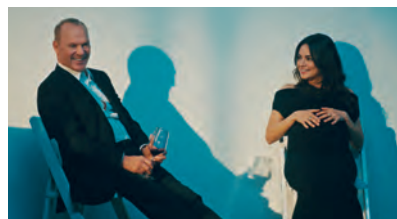
▶ **KATE WINSLET IS ON FIRE IN THIS FIERCE AND INTIMATE BIOPIC** of Lee Miller, the model-turned-photographer who swapped the catwalk for combat zones to chronicle World War II for *Vogue*. Framed by a 1977 interview, the film unpacks Miller's leap from glossy covers to gritty trenches – and the bruising toll it took on her. For Winslet, this was a passion project that nearly fell apart – the film took eight years to make, and the level of commitment is reflected onscreen. Mirroring Miller's unstoppable spirit, the movie is more than just a biopic. It's a story of a woman who smashed conventions and didn't look back even when the world tried to box her in.



KENSUKE'S KINGDOM ⚠

Cillian Murphy, Ken Watanabe	85 mins
---------------------------------	---------

Michael Morpurgo's beloved novel comes alive in this hand-drawn animated adventure. Swept overboard, young Michael washes up on a Pacific island and meets Kensuke. With themes of survival and friendship, it's a visual and emotional triumph.



GOODRICH ♥

Michael Keaton, Mila Kunis	111 mins
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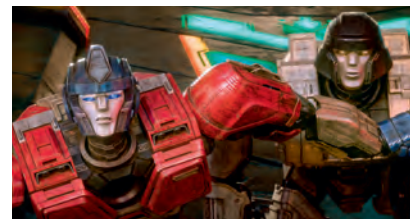
Keaton is superb in this heartwarming drama as art dealer Andy, whose life is upended when his wife enters rehab. Left alone with their young kids, he leans on his daughter from his first marriage (Kunis) and finds himself on a steep learning curve.



DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE 15

Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman	127 mins
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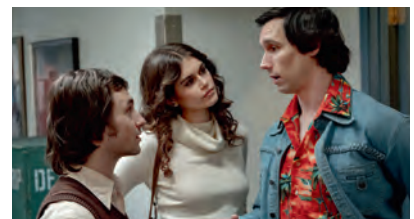
The record-breaking hit of the year is here, and it finds our two wisecracking anti-heroes (Reynolds and Jackman) teaming up to save the planet from extinction. Or something, because, let's face it, the plot doesn't matter.



TRANSFORMERS ONE ⚠

Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson	104 mins
--	----------

Unusually for a *Transformers* movie, the critics have been kind to this prequel harking back to a time when the legendary Optimus Prime and Megatron were allies. What follows is a slick origin tale exploring the line between friend and foe.



SATURDAY NIGHT 15

Gabriel LaBelle, Finn Wolfhard	109 mins
-----------------------------------	----------

Featuring a sparkling ensemble cast, this true-life drama takes us back some 90 minutes before the broadcast of the very first *Saturday Night Live* in 1975 – and then shows us the confused and chaotic build-up in real time. The result? A total blast. See *opener*

# Top five

## Fun facts about Cillian Murphy



### 1 He talks the talk

Murphy's fake American accent when auditioning for *Batman Begins* in 2005 was so convincing casting directors had no idea about his natural Irish lilt.



### 2 He beat Jason Statham...

... to the lead in *Peaky Blinders*. The series' creator had Statham in mind until Murphy texted, "I'm an actor."



### 3 He's a law unto himself

He started law at University College Cork, but was more interested in the drama society. Why? To get invited to parties.



### 4 He avoids all beef

A committed vegan, Murphy nonetheless learned how to butcher meat for his role in *Girl with the Pearl Earring*.



### 5 He calls the tune

Cillian and his brother Páidi were in a band called The Sons of Mr Green Genes, heavily influenced by Frank Zappa and The Beatles.



WATCH KENSUKE'S KINGDOM

VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES WORDS: ANDY HILL

## ALL THE FEELS



### The Outrun

15

Saoirse Ronan, Lauren Lyle

118 mins

► **SAOIRSE RONAN TAKES US TO THE WINDSWEPT BEAUTY OF** Orkney in this raw and lyrical drama in which she plays Rona, an ex-party animal back on the islands to untangle her messy past and maybe find some peace. So the stage is set for addiction, loss and healing to collide with epic landscapes and a performance so honest it stings. Indeed, Orkney itself feels like a character here – its rugged cliffs and wild seas reflecting Rona's turbulent inner world, while Ronan delivers every moment with a quiet power that keeps you hooked. Bold, emotional and breathtaking in every sense, *The Outrun* offers a story of redemption that's as much about embracing life's chaos as it is about finding calm.



### UNICORNS

15

Jason Patel, Ben Hardy

119 mins

Hardy stars as Luke, a mechanic and single dad, who forms an unexpected connection with Aysha, a South Asian drag queen (Patel). Their bond ends up sparking a road trip that forces both to confront cultural expectations, personal truths and the complexities of romance.



### IT ENDS WITH US

15

Blake Lively, Justin Baldoni

131 mins

This adaptation of the Colleen Hoover novel finds Lily (Lively, who wears a lot of brown throughout) in a relationship with a charming neurosurgeon, Ryle, when a past love re-enters her life. After that, things take a rather sinister and insidious turn.

CRIME DRAMA



Strange Darling

18

Willa Fitzgerald,  
Kyle Gallner

97 mins

► **WHERE DO WE START WITH THIS ONE? FIRST OFF, IT'S A SERIAL** killer thriller, but not as you know it. It begins with a date between The Lady, played by the brilliant Fitzgerald, and The Demon, played by Gallner (from *Smile*). Things get steamy very quickly (oh, and they get very steamy, so consider yourself warned), after which they start to get very blood-drenched (ditto). To say any more is to give too much away; part of this movie's pleasure is going in blind. Suffice to say, you can't ever get comfy with this one because nothing is what it seems – with its fiendish combination of razor-sharp tension and relentless pace, the film keeps you guessing at every turn.



THE SILENT HOUR

15

Joel Kinnaman,  
Mekhi Phifer

99 mins

The suspense is of the strong, silent type in this refreshingly original thriller. The set-up is simple – a deaf cop (Kinnaman) must protect a deaf murder witness from a team of corrupt cops.



1992

!

Tyrese Gibson,  
Cle Bennett

97 mins

Gibson impresses as Mercer, an ex-con protecting his son from the chaos all around them in this thriller set during the LA riots of 1992. Said chaos includes a heist at Mercer's workplace.

LOVE STORIES



FLY ME TO THE MOON

! 12

Scarlett Johansson,  
Channing Tatum

132 mins

Fab romantic comedy starring Johansson as marketing expert Kelly and Tatum as NASA launch director Cole. Tasked with staging a fake Moon landing, sparks (romantic and otherwise) soon fly.



WHITE BIRD: A WONDER STORY

♥ !

Bryce Gheisar,  
Gillian Anderson

120 mins

Profoundly moving, this follows Julian, who hears his grandmother's story of survival in Nazi-occupied France. Filled with love, sacrifice and loss, it's a powerful reflection on courage and humanity.



DANDELION

!

Kiki Layne,  
Thomas Doherty

124 mins

A simple, soulful story with a stunning soundtrack, *Dandelion* focuses on a struggling musician (Layne) who leaves her hometown to compete in a South Dakota music festival.

## THINKY THRILLERS



### BLINK TWICE

15

Naomi Ackie,  
Channing Tatum

102 mins

*Blink Twice* is a stylish thriller featuring waitress Frida, who gets an invite to billionaire Slater King's private island. But the paradise becomes a nightmare and Frida is soon fighting for her life.



### THE WASP

15

Naomie Harris,  
Natalie Dormer

95 mins

This one's a nail-biter as estranged pals Heather and Carla reconnect, only for Heather to make an offer that changes everything. The tension builds, revealing revenge, regret and shocking twists.



### A Different Man

15

Sebastian Stan,  
Adam Pearson

112 mins

► **META DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO COVER A DIFFERENT MAN.** Sebastian Stan stars as a facially disfigured, not very successful actor who undergoes transformative surgery only to land a role in a play where he ends up portraying himself. Confused? Don't worry, you're supposed to be. Without getting too highfalutin about it, *A Different Man* works on several levels, so while it's a compelling story, it's also a deeply layered exploration of identity, self-perception and the masks we wear (both literal and metaphorical). If you're into the existential twists of Charlie Kaufman (*Being John Malkovich*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*), this one will be right up your alley.

Oh  
snap!  
How  
realistic  
is Lee?

**Alright, I'll bite, who was Lee Miller?** Elizabeth "Lee" Miller (played by Kate Winslet, right) was a fashion model and photographer in 1920s New York. She moved to Paris and became a muse for surrealist artist Man Ray, later becoming a war correspondent.

**That's one hell of a trajectory.** She was one hell of a lady. Bored of the NYC modelling scene, where she graced both the cover of *Vogue* and ads for Kotex sanitary products, Miller was thirsty for adventure.



**How true is the movie?** Mostly, except it's presented as flashbacks relayed to her son Antony in old age. In reality, Antony only learned of his mother's acts of derring-do after her death, when he discovered papers she'd stashed away.

**How daring was she?** She reported on the London Blitz and the liberation of Dachau for *Vogue*. One legendary image shows her washing in the bathtub of Hitler's private apartment on the day he committed suicide, her nearby boots all muddied.

© WATCH LEE

DARK HUMOUR



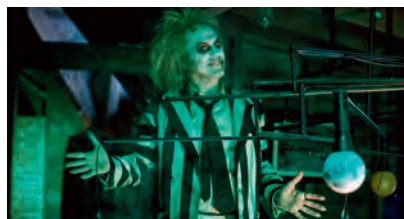
# MaXXXine

18

Mia Goth,  
Lily Collins

103 mins

► **THE FINAL CHAPTER IN TI WEST AND MIA GOTH'S WILD AND** blood-soaked horror trilogy, *MaXXXine* cranks up the chaos. In the wake of *X*'s retro-slasher vibes and *Pearl*'s twisted Technicolor dream, this third outing dives headfirst into gritty 1980s Hollywood as aspiring actress Maxine Minx (Goth) finds herself on the brink of her big break. But would you credit it? Just as she's about to go supernova, a killer shows up attempting steal her spotlight. Goth is magnetic as ever, bringing fierce, take-no-prisoners energy to a character who refuses to be anyone's victim. At the same time, West's direction is razor-sharp, balancing pitch-black humour with all the gory thrills fans of the series have come to expect. Each film in the trilogy stands on its own, but together they form a smart, genre-hopping commentary on fame, ambition and survival.



## BEETLEJUICE BEETLEJUICE

12

Michael Keaton,  
Winona Ryder

102 mins

Betelgeuse is back in *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, as Lydia Deetz's rebellious daughter accidentally unleashes the mischievous spook. With Keaton returning to his iconic role and Burton at the helm, this is just as good as you hoped it would be.



## LAROE, TEXAS

15

Steve Zahn,  
John Magaro

110 mins

There's a hint of *Better Call Saul* or even the Coen Brothers in this thriller-cum-comedy-drama. Zahn stars as Ray, who discovers that his wife is cheating on him and decides to kill himself. However, his plans suddenly change when a stranger mistakes him for a low-rent hitman.

# Movie quiz

## Take on our featured films

1 //

Animated adventure *Kensuke's Kingdom*, featuring Cillian Murphy and Sally Hawkins, was adapted from Michael Morpurgo's novel by which fellow children's author, who created the London 2012 Opening Ceremony?

2 //

Erotic thriller *Strange Darling* marks the debut behind the lens for which actor, known among *Friends* fans for his portrayal of Phoebe's half-brother Frank?

3 //

LA heist movie 1992 showcases the final screen performance of which actor, noted for his portrayal of gangster Henry Hill in *GoodFellas*?

4 //

Hit-woman feature *The Wasp* is directed by Guillem Morales, who is garlanded for his work on which British comedy-horror TV series?

5 //

Mekhi Phifer features as a corrupt cop in crime thriller *The Silent Hour*, but which hugely popular US series did he star in from 2002-08?

● *Answers on the right*



# OUR COMPLETE MOVIE LISTINGS\*

Make your choice from the A–Z of our pick of the BEST OF THE BEST

## NEW RELEASES

### A–C

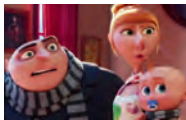
- Abigail
- Am I OK?
- Anyone But You
- Arcadian
- Asphalt City
- Babes
- Back to Black
- Bad Boys: Ride or Die
- Beetlejuice Beetlejuice



- **The Bikeriders**
- Blink Twice
- Boy Kills World
- Candy Candy Lane
- Challengers
- Civil War
- The Critic

### D–H

- Daddio
- Dandelion
- The Dead Don't Hurt
- Deadpool & Wolverine
- Dead Talents Society



- **Despicable Me 4**
- A Different Man
- Dream Scenario
- Drift
- The Exorcist: Believer
- Ezra



- **The Fall Guy**
- Firebrand
- Fly Me to the Moon
- Fresh Kills
- Furiosa: Mad Max...
- The Garfield Movie
- Gasoline Rainbow
- Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire
- Girl You Know It's True
- Goodrich
- Grey Matter
- Harold and the Purple Crayon
- Hit Man

### I–L

- The Idea of You
- If
- I Heard the Bells
- I'll Be Right There
- Insecure
- Inside Out 2
- Irena's Vow
- I Saw the TV Glow
- ISS
- It Ends with Us
- I Used to Be Funny
- Janet Planet
- Journey to Bethlehem
- Kensuke's Kingdom
- Kinds of Kindness
- Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes
- Kneecap
- Laroy, Texas
- Late Bloomers
- Lee
- Lisa Frankenstein

- Little Bone Lodge
- Longlegs
- Love Lies Bleeding

### M–Q

- Madame Web
- MaXXXine
- Midas Man
- The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare
- Monkey Man
- Música
- My Spy: Eternal City
- Napoleon
- One Fast Move
- Ordinary Angels
- The Outrun
- Ozi: Voice of the Forest
- Pinkfong and Baby Shark's Space Adventure
- The Present



- **A Quiet Place: Day One**

### R–V

- Red Right Hand
- Reverse the Curse
- Riddle of Fire
- Rob Peace
- Role Play
- Saturday Night
- The Silent Hour
- Sing Sing
- Someone Like You
- Space Cadet
- Starve Acre
- Storm Chasers
- Sting
- Stange Darling

- Summer Camp
- Sweet Dreams
- Tarot
- Thelma
- Transformers One
- Trap
- Tuesday
- Turtles All the Way Down



- **Twisters**
- Unicorns
- Unsung Hero

### W–Z

- The Wasp
- The Watched
- We Grown Now
- White Bird: A Wonder Story
- Wonderstar Concert
- Young Woman and the Sea
- 1992

### VERA CLASSICS

- Arthur Christmas
- Bad Santa
- Chef
- The Damned United
- Dunkirk
- Edge of Tomorrow
- Elf
- Forrest Gump
- Horrible Bosses
- Moneyball (2011)
- Moonlight
- The Polar Express
- Practical Magic
- Saving Private Ryan
- Selma

- The Social Network
- A Star is Born (1976)
- Star Trek
- Warrior

### INTERNATIONAL

- Beomjoedosi 4
- Born to Fly
- Creation of the Gods I
- Crossing
- The Delinquents
- Drishyam 2
- The Ex-Files 4: Marriage Plan
- Golmaal – Fun Unlimited
- If You Are the One III
- KINGDOM: Return of the Great General
- Perfect Days
- The Roundup: Punishment
- Shayda
- The Three Musketeers: Milady
- YOLO
- 12.12: The Day

### INDIAN

- Bachelor Party
- Bholaa
- Coat
- Dhak Dhak
- Doctor G
- Garudan
- Ghoomer
- Gulmohar
- Jawan
- Joram
- Kaagaz 2
- Kill
- Main Atal Hoon
- Naguvina Hoogala Mele
- Ondu Sarala Prema Katha

- Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani
- Sam Bahadur
- Satyaprem Ki Katha
- Sif Ek Banda Kaafi Hai
- Tarla
- Tiger 3
- Yaariyan 2
- Zara Hatke Zara Bachke

### NIGERIAN

- Aburo
- Ajosepo
- Farmer's Bride
- Insecure
- Last Call
- Meeting Funmi's Parents
- The Silent Intruder
- What About Us?
- When the Poor Smile
- Wrong Number

### SHORT FILMS

- Favourites
- Favours
- Meat Puppet
- The Therapist

### DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY SHORTS

- Entitled
- Eulogy for the Dandelion
- Haud Close Tae Me
- The Honeys and Bears
- Lay Me Low
- Old Mother Blackbird
- Swim
- Walks With Me

\* Not all content available on our A339/A350 aircraft

# SET SAIL ON A CULINARY VOYAGE



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WHAT'S ON

# TELEVISION

JANUARY

## MIND-BENDING PLOTS

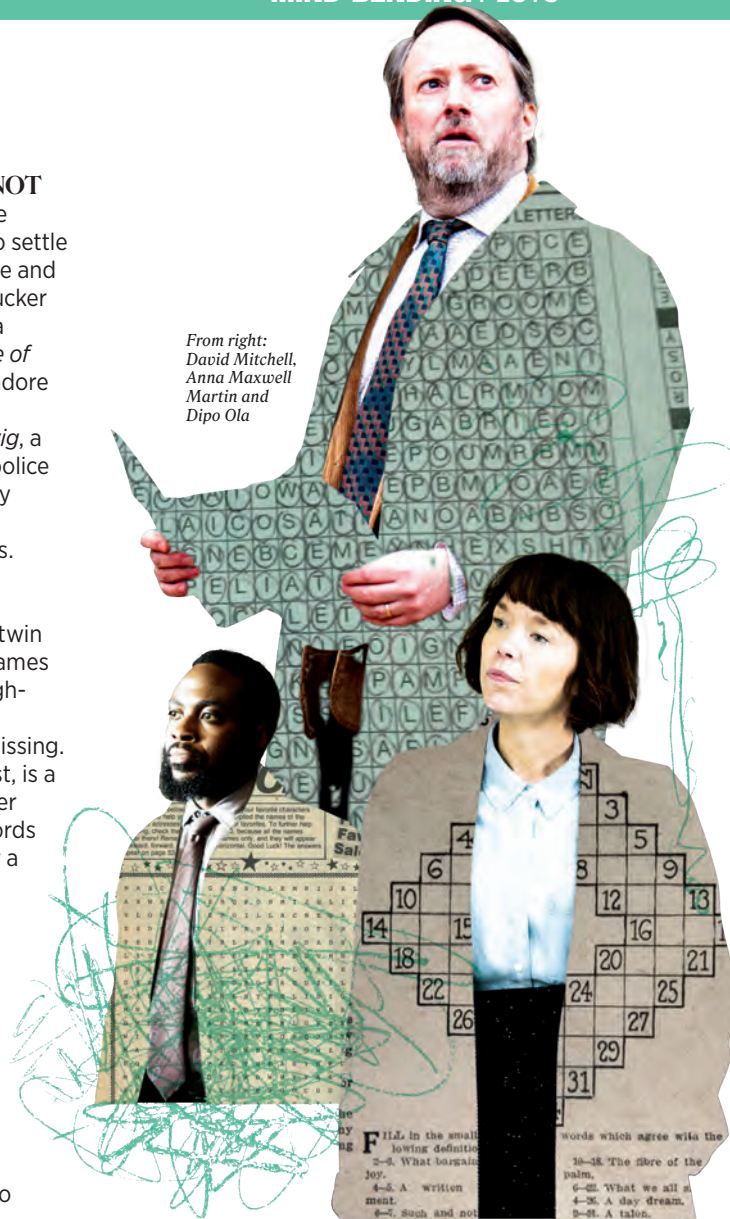
► **LIKE MANY, IF NOT** most marriages, mine routinely struggles to settle on a TV show my wife and I both like. She is a sucker for a grim crime saga – *Prime Suspect*, *Line of Duty*. For my part, I adore more pretty, funny, whimsical fare. *Ludwig*, a gloriously odd new police procedural, cheerfully scratches both our respective telly itches.

### Conflict

David Mitchell plays twin brothers John and James Taylor. James is a high-flying detective who mysteriously goes missing. John, our protagonist, is a reclusive puzzle setter who creates crosswords and sudoku grids for a living. He's also, perhaps, a little on the spectrum. When John tries to sneak into his brother's workplace, a Cambridgeshire police station, to gather clues about James's disappearance, he's reluctantly roped into solving some actual murders. Spoiler – he's very good at it.

### Resolution

Mitchell is every inch the thinking person's crime-fighting idol. A riddle,



From right: David Mitchell, Anna Maxwell Martin and Dipo Ola

wrapped in an enigma, wrapped in a corduroy jacket, skilfully focusing his finely honed nerd instincts on seemingly intractable mysteries. The crimes, to be fair, fall squarely into the tried-and-tested category – for instance, a locked-door murder in a posh school – but the resolutions are always satisfying. And, while the show is undeniably about murder – every episode has one – it's very gentle in tone. Cosy crime – think Agatha Christie, if not Richard Osman.

### Denouement

What's most impressive is the level of design and production ingenuity. The cinematography by Annika Summerson is sublime, and the sets – especially the police station – by designer Melanie Allen incorporate sudoku and other geometric riddles into the frame. Even the soundtrack uses unusual, you might say cryptic, arrangements of old Beethoven tunes (cos *Ludwig*, geddit!?). Fair to say that, with a second season already commissioned, the mystery of what to watch on the box has – in my house anyway – been satisfactorily solved.

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

Andy Hill on why **LUDWIG** might be the smartest show on TV

© WATCH LUDWIG

MUST WATCH



**A Gentleman in Moscow** ❤️



Box set	Up to 55 mins
---------	---------------

► **EWAN MCGREGOR STEPS INTO THE SHOES (AND LUSTROUS moustache) of Count Rostov, an aristocrat whose life takes a dramatic turn in this sumptuous historical drama. Stripped of his wealth and confined to the grand yet claustrophobic Metropol Hotel in post-revolutionary Moscow, Rostov must navigate a world transformed by upheaval. What begins as a tale of reduced circumstances unfolds into something much richer: a story of resilience, reinvention and the quiet power of human connection, capturing the complexities of finding freedom in the most confined spaces as the Count learns to thrive within the gilded prison of the Metropol. We have the whole first season for you.**



**HOW TO LIVE TO 100** ❤️

Travel	52 mins
--------	---------

Are your days stress-free? Do you eat oily fish and have a purpose-driven routine? If so, you might be on your way to reaching the grand old age of 100, according to this globetrotting series exploring the secrets of longevity.



**HISTORY'S GREATEST ESCAPES WITH MORGAN FREEMAN** ❤️



Factual	Up to 43 mins
---------	---------------

Everybody's favourite voiceover guy, Morgan Freeman, narrates history's boldest prison breaks. Re-enactments and expert insights reveal the daring plans, crafty minds and relentless manhunts that make each breakout legendary.



**LUDWIG** ❤️



Box set	Up to 58 mins
---------	---------------

David Mitchell is superb as Ludwig, a pro puzzle expert who takes on his missing twin brother's detective role. As he tries to solve the mystery of his brother's disappearance, he also gets involved in solving cases – and we have the whole first series onboard. *See opener*



**THE CONTINENTAL FROM THE WORLD OF JOHN WICK** ❤️



Box set	Up to 97 mins
---------	---------------

This spin-off from the John Wick franchise explores the origins of the movie's iconic Continental Hotel in 1970s NYC. Featuring Mel Gibson chewing the scenery in full-on baddie mode, it's as stylish as it is gritty. Oh, and yes, there's plenty of gunplay in it. Series one is here.



**ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL** ❤️



Box set	46 mins
---------	---------

Revived for a new generation, James Herriot's 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 less complicated time, the rose-tinted journey starts here. Series four plays onboard.

# Goteam

## Who's who in Here We Go

1 //



**Sue**

Alison Steadman, who you will recall from such totemic sitcoms as *Gavin and Stacey* and *Abigail's Party*, plays shrill, sharp-tongued matriarch Sue Jessop.

2 //



**Paul**

Ex-Olympic archer Paul, aka Dad, is played to neurotic perfection by Jim Howick, who was alcoholic Mr Hendricks in the Netflix comedy *Sex Education*.

3 //



**Amy**

Freya Parks plays eldest daughter Amy. Most famous for being in *Jane Eyre* (2011), she can always be relied on for a bone-dry ironic aside.

4 //



**Rachel**

Mum Rachel keeps the show on the road as Covid-19 ransacks the Jessop family finances. Actress Katherine Parkinson was Jen in *The IT Crowd* and played a small role in *Sherlock*.

WATCH HERE WE GO

VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES WORDS: ANDY HILL

## SPORTING LIFE



### Hard Knocks: Chicago Bears



Sports	Up to 50 mins
--------	---------------

► **HARD KNOCKS TURNS ITS ATTENTION TO THE CHICAGO BEARS**, where great hopes and grand ambitions collide with the gritty reality of NFL life. From intense drills to off-field bonding, the show captures every high-stakes moment as the team gears up for the season. At the heart of the action is Caleb Williams, the number-one pick whose every move, from his first preseason prep to his breakout leadership on the field, is under scrutiny; alongside Caleb, rookie standout Rome Odunze navigates the relentless grind, proving he's more than just potential. As the Bears' training camp unfolds, each episode takes viewers deeper into the team dynamics.



#### THE ICONIC



Sports	24 mins
--------	---------

Telling the stories behind the most celebrated events, institutions, clubs, players, rivalries and moments in sport, we have episodes focusing on epochal moments and legendary characters in golf and boxing, such as Muhammad Ali – plus a special episode on Cristiano Ronaldo.



#### FOR REALS



Sports	26 mins
--------	---------

Gobsmacking scenes here, as the spotlight falls on "global athletes" (aka adrenaline junkies), spotlighting daring stunts – from wingsuit jumps and BMX loops to record-breaking moments, like Felix Baumgartner's epic "space jump", F1 desert racing and a skatepark in the sky.

SITCOMS



Here We Go

15

Box set	29 mins
---------	---------

► **WELCOME TO SUNNY BEDFORD FOR THIS SHARP, OBSERVATIONAL** sitcom. Welcome also to not-so-sunny total chaos, as the Jessop family stumbles through life with youngest son Sam filming every misadventure. The Jessops mean well, but life has other ideas. Whether it's botched plans, accidental disasters or family feuds spiralling out of control, this crew has a knack for turning the everyday into an unforgettable comedy of errors. Featuring some of the cream of Brit TV comedy, *Here We Go* is a love letter to imperfect families everywhere. It's about finding joy in the chaos, laughing through the mishaps and sticking together. Series two shows in its entirety on Vera. *See box, previous page*



BOOKIE

!

Box set	Up to 27 mins
---------	---------------

Sharp humour and tension collide in this fast-paced comedy following veteran bookie Danny, whose world is turned upside down when sports gambling goes legit. The whole of series one is onboard.



DERRY GIRLS

15

Box set	Up to 49 mins
---------	---------------

This smash-hit comedy featuring the exploits of a teen and her mates during the Northern Irish Troubles of the early 1990s is very funny and relatable – and we have season three here right now.

SHOW TUNES



MY FAVORITE THINGS: THE RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN 80TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

Music	120 mins
-------	----------

A dazzling tribute to the true masters of the musical here, as the likes of Audra McDonald, Michael Ball and Daniel Dae Kim revive iconic songs from *The Sound of Music*, *Oklahoma!* and loads more.



ANNIE LIVE!

Music	130 mins
-------	----------

Live performance of the beloved tale about an orphan (Celina Smith) who melts the heart of billionaire Daddy Warbucks (Harry Connick Jr). Factor in Taraji P Henson, the result is both glitzy and heartwarming.



KINKY BOOTS

12

Music	132 mins
-------	----------

The film of the stage show of the film brings the story of a struggling shoe factory owner and his drag queen saviour to the stage. Featuring tunes by Cyndi Lauper, it's a truly uplifting spectacle.

LIFE HACKS



**Sort Your Life Out**

Factual entertainment | 60 mins

Stacey Solomon and the team aim to declutter Britain's homes. As the homeowners decide what to keep and what to chuck, their personal stories are revealed along the way.



**RAPID TAPPING** ♥

Wellness & sleep | Up to 5 mins

Leading tapping expert Poppy Delbridge reveals the daily face tapping routine which, practised for just a few minutes a day, helps improve mental focus, brighten your mood and enhance skin vitality.



**Garden Rescue** ♥

Factual entertainment | 44 mins

➤ **GOT GARDEN ENVY? BRACE YOURSELF. GARDEN RESCUE BRINGS** together the powerhouse team of Charlie Dimmock and the Rich Brothers, with occasional help from guest designers, to transform ordinary outdoor spaces into lush personal havens. From eco-friendly oases teeming with wildlife to serene, wedding-ready sanctuaries, each episode dives into the art of turning dreams into reality – one flower bed, water feature and butterfly habitat at a time. Whether it's crafting a space for celebration or designing a family-friendly retreat, every garden tells its own story, brought to life by the team's expertise and creative flair. The result is packed with inspiration, warmth and a touch of healthy competition.

**Blue check**  
How to live to 100



Legendary Channel 4 newshound **Jon Snow** came out of retirement to visit so-called "blue zones" around the world and learn why people there reportedly live longer, healthier lives.



**Okinawa, Japan**  
Folks here enjoy a low-calorie diet full of pulses and whole grains, and tend to stop stuffing their faces when they feel 80% full. They're big on *ikigai*, which basically means having a sense of purpose.



**Sardinia, Italy**  
A healthy Mediterranean diet – veggies, legumes – is part of the reason islanders here age so gracefully. Plus robust social networks, and the fact it's warm and sunny much of the time.



**Loma Linda, California**  
Residents of the US's only blue zone live 10 years longer than expected. Why? Again, veggie diets. Plus the Seventh Day Adventist church promotes sociability here.



**Ikaria, Greece**  
Obvs, veggie diets. And refusing to live by clock time. "We have three times," one local tells Snow. "Sunrise to noon. Noon to sunset. Sunset to next sunrise." Cool!

WATCH HOW TO LIVE TO 100



# BENNETT WINCH

HANDMADE IN ENGLAND

*Waterproof Nylon outer*

*Solid brass hardware*

*12oz cotton lining*

*Capacity for up to three suits*

*Rear suitcase slip  
and accessories pocket*

*Tuscan leather trim*

*Magnetic connectors*

*Military grade cotton webbing*



## Bring your tailoring into the fold

Handmade in England, the Bennett Winch Trifold is a full length garment bag that transforms into a lean carry with capacity for up to three suits. Whether held in hand, worn cross-body or mounted onto rolling luggage, there's no smarter way to bring your tailoring into the fold.

# WHAT'S ON AUDIO

JANUARY

THE FRESHEST SOUNDS AROUND

## Floetry

They used to call it “conscious hip hop” – rap that’s about something deeper than blunts and bling. The current rap landscape is nothing if not thoughtful. Whether it’s Kendrick Lamar winning the Pulitzer, or Lowkey tackling Middle Eastern politics, the modern MC is literate, socially aware and uncannily poetic. Check out UK talent **Clavish** with his aptly named *Food For Thought*, a 10-minute tour de force ruminating on rap, romance and racial politics.

## Glo-fi indie

The 21st century has seen recording studios shrink to the size of a laptop, enabling state-of-art production to emerge from the humble bedroom. It’s time for those artists to reach outwards, to puff their chests a little – yep, bedroom pop is going maxi. **Claire**’s emphatic success leads the way, while in the UK our very own beabadoobee has moved from viral uploads to selling out huge headliners. **Billie Marten** will surely follow – check out her song *She Dances* for proof – with the likes of BRIT winners **The Last Dinner Party** sealing their rise without severing their underground roots.



Clockwise from top: Billie Marten, Olivia Dean, Clavish & Caity Baser

## TRENDING NOW

Writer Robin Murray picks out the music micro-trends to keep on your radar this year and the artists that embody them

“**CAITY BASER WILL SURELY FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHARLI XCX**”

## Chaotic pop

Think of pop and you think pristine, immaculate. The new gen, though, didn’t get the memo – with Chappell Roan’s *Good Luck, Babe!* ruling the charts, it’s clear that a changing of the guard is underway. UK voice **Caity Baser** will surely follow in the paths of Charli xcX, Sabrina Carpenter and even Ella Henderson back in the day, who will come to look like the harbingers of pop’s bedlam era.

## Britty realism

UK OK? Well, not quite. No matter your political persuasion, the country has been through tough times and some of the best artists reflect on that in their music. Northern songsmith **Jamie Webster** promises *24 Hours in A&E*, **Olivia Dean** offers affecting treatises on 21st-century life while **Sekou** pours his heart out in song. Happy musical new year!

🎧 LISTEN TO VARIOUS: ONES TO WATCH 2025



FRESH SOUNDS



**Tyler, The Creator** ♥

CHROMAKOPIA  
HIP HOP

► **TYLER, THE CREATOR REALLY PULLS OUT ALL THE STOPS WITH HIS** eighth album. A heady swirl of hip hop, jazz, R&B and neo-soul, it's narrated by his mother Bonita Smith and framed as a diary, piecing together his reflections on time and memory over lush, synth-driven arrangements and soulful melodies. A cheeky shoutout to tennis star Coco Gauff is woven seamlessly into the album's playful yet introspective narrative – much to her very public delight – while military cadences and unexpected flourishes of sound keep the rest of us happy. As bold and eclectic as its creator, *Chromakopia* is Tyler in full flow.



**JELLY ROLL** ♥ ⚠

*Beautifully Broken*  
COUNTRY

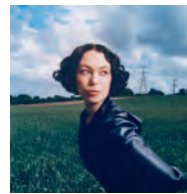
To say that Jelly Roll has a colourful past is putting it mildly. We'll leave you to Google the details; suffice to say his 10th album is rich with stories, merging country and hip hop.



**HALSEY** ♥ ⚠

*The Great Impersonator*  
POP

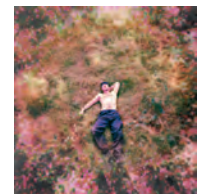
Halsey has, over the course of five albums, carved quite a niche for her confessional electro-pop. This album blends pop, rock and folk into an exploration of life's struggles,



**KELLY LEE OWENS**

*Dreamstate*  
BREAKING ARTISTS

Hot on the heels of collabs with Daniel Avery and St Vincent, Welsh electronica wizard Owens's latest features team-ups with Bicep and Tom Rowlands of The Chemical Brothers.



**MAVERICK SABRE** ♥ ⚠

*Burn the Right Things Down*  
R&B & SOUL

Neo-soul meets introspection on the fifth album from Irish singer and rapper Sabre. With emotional lyrics and lush instrumentation, covers love, loss and hope.

**Beat that**  
The epic rise of Afrobeats

**12**  
MINUTES

Time it took Wizkid to completely sell out the O2 Arena, London

The Grammys now have a Best African Music Performance category

**13.5**  
BILLION

streams of Afrobeats songs on Spotify in 2022

**\$1.5**  
MILLION

Burna Boy's fee for playing the Coachella festival



"I'm so glad I'm part of the generation that is showing the world what Africa is"  
Arya Starr



🎧 LISTEN TO VARIOUS: AFRICAN HITS



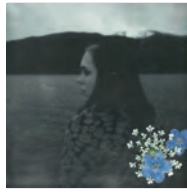
DREAM POP



PEACH PIT

Magpie  
ALTERNATIVE

Hailing from Vancouver, Canada, fourpiece Peach Pit specialise in music they themselves describe as “chewed bubblegum pop”. This fourth LP is an indie-guitar-pop delight that goes as big on surrealism as it does on feelings.



SOCCER MOMMY

Evergreen  
ALTERNATIVE

The fourth album from Soccer Mommy (aka Sophia Allison) weaves indie rock with pastoral folk, tackling themes of grief, loss and longing. Delicate melodies and shimmering production create an intimate yet expansive soundscape.

Bastille

& (ampersand)  
ALTERNATIVE

➤ **BASTILLE'S FIFTH ALBUM IS** what happens when indie-pop meets history class – except, like, the fun version. In other words, it's a concept album that serves up story songs about everyone from Emily Dickinson to Edvard Munch, Narcissus to Leonard Cohen, proving that Dan Smith and co can make anything sound catchy and dramatic. Each track is tied together with the almighty ampersand – because, apparently, nothing says connection quite like punctuation.



VINTAGE VIBES

Rag'n'Bone Man

What Do You Believe In?  
POP

➤ **THE SINGER-SONGWRITER BORN** Rory Graham took his stage moniker when he was part of a drum 'n' bass crew and went by the name Rag 'N' Bonez, inspired by watching repeats of sitcom *Steptoe and Son*. Since then he's maintained

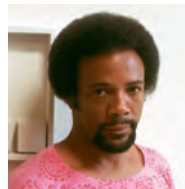
the underground sensibility while also carving a three-album reputation as one of the UK's very best blues and soul singers. Here he brings his signature mix of vintage soul and hip hop vibes to an album, the title of which was inspired by a poignant conversation with his son.



SAMARA JOY

Portrait  
JAZZ

Samara Joy blends jazz standards with original songs, highlighting her sensational vocals. From smoky ballads to upbeat swings, the album captures the depth of her artistry and emotional range, marking the 25 year old as one of jazz's brightest new stars.



QUINCY JONES

Icons  
PLAYLISTS

Icons celebrates the late Quincy Jones's extraordinary career with a curated selection of hits and hidden gems. From iconic classics to deep cuts, it's a fitting tribute to one of music's greatest legends.



Classical moods  
Piano men hit all the right notes



BRUCE LIU  
Tchaikovsky: The Seasons

Pianist Bruce Liu breathes new life into *The Seasons*, presenting each month's composition with sensitivity and skill. From the lightness of spring to winter's chill, Liu's virtuosity transforms these classics.



VÍKINGUR ÓLAFSSON  
Continuum

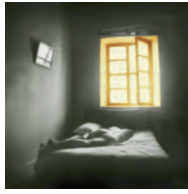
The man described as a “breathtakingly brilliant pianist” by *Gramophone* magazine reimagines sacred works by Bach. His piano interpretations are sublime, creating an emotional and transcendent listening experience.



TOM ASHBROOK  
Nocturnes

British composer Tom Ashbrook forges a unique neo-classical, piano-led path, creating cinematic soundscapes of jaw-dropping beauty. He describes this, his third album, as “a soundtrack to our time”.

**BOYS IN THE BAND**



**SUEDE**



*Dog Man Star*  
(30th Anniversary)  
**ALTERNATIVE**

Suede's Britpop classic still resonates, its sweeping drama and poetic lyrics perfectly capturing the band's golden era and encapsulating the heady days of its creation. This lush reissue features remastered tracks, rare demos and live recordings.



**COURTEENERS**



*Pink Cactus Cafe*  
**ALTERNATIVE**

On their seventh album, Manchester's Courteeners expand on their indie-rock roots, adding new collabs and sonic layers into the mix. *Pink Cactus Cafe* travels from swaggering anthems to experimental touches.



**UNDERWORLD**



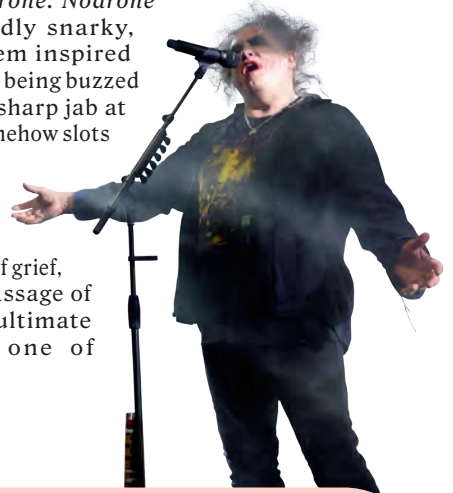
*Strawberry Hotel*  
**DANCE & ELECTRONIC**

The grand old men of British electronica unleash their 11th album, and it's a sweeping, immersive statement that's both intricate and expansive. Perfect headphone food, it's a set that showcases their ability to craft cinematic technoscapes.

**The Cure** ♥

*Songs of a Lost World*  
**ALTERNATIVE**

➤ **SIXTEEN YEARS AFTER 4:13 DREAM, THE CURE** return with *Songs of a Lost World*, a widescreen and windswept goth-rock opus steeped in loss, isolation and mortality. Here you'll find frontman Robert Smith's signature melodic melancholia on full display, unfolding in sweeping, drawn-out movements that feel like soundscapes for impermanence itself. But what's this? Amid the darkness, there's levity. *Drone: Nodrone* – an unexpectedly snarky, pacey pop anthem inspired by Smith's garden being buzzed by a drone – is a sharp jab at self-doubt that somehow slots perfectly into the record's mournful *g r a n d e u r*. Mainly, though, you'll find themes of grief, regret and the passage of time – with the ultimate feeling being one of catharsis.



**Jonesing**  
The wit and wisdom of Quincy Jones

**ON MUSICIANS**  
"All guys get into music because they love music and they also want to get the girls."

**ON WORK**  
"Be the labour great or small, do it well or not at all."

**ON MODESTY**  
"I was the most subtle person in the world."

**ON AGEING**  
"When you're over the hill, that's when you pick up speed."

**ON TRAVEL**  
"Every country can be defined through their food, their music, their language. That's the soul of a country."

**ON ROCK 'N' ROLL**  
"The Beatles were the worst musicians in the world."

**ON LISTENING**  
"God gave us two ears and one mouth, because you're supposed to listen twice as much as you talk."

🎧 **LISTEN TO QUINCY JONES: ICONS**



WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

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**HAPPILY PUZZLES  
JIGSAWS**

Formulated to exercise your mind and promote relaxing brainwaves, Happily Puzzles create cool 1,000-piece adult jigsaws and pocket-sized minis that are stimulating and fun. The colourful British brand uses vegetable-based ink, sustainably sourced high-quality FSC paper and 100% recycled board and zero plastic. It's all falling into place.

● [happypuzzles.com](http://happypuzzles.com)



**JETWELL**

Jetwell's sleek Duffel Bags are designed for seamless city hopping. The firm's viral, versatile Duffel Bag, available in smart black or natty pink, and sized with airline size restrictions in mind, has a spacious main compartment to fit around all your essentials, whether it's for weekend jet-setting or a cheeky gym sesh.

● [jetwellworld.com](http://jetwellworld.com)

# WHAT'S HOT NOW



**BIO&ME**

Founded and created by leading gut-health expert Dr Megan Rossi, health and wellness brand Bio&Me has just launched a kefir drinks range. With 18 culture strains in each bottle, stacks of protein and essential nutrients like vitamin B12, it's a great way to bolster your immune system this winter, in lush natural or creamy vanilla flavours.

● [bioandme.co.uk](http://bioandme.co.uk)



**UNTUCKIT**

A clothing brand that started life with a simple question: why does nobody make quality shirts that look good untucked? UNTUCKit has since spawned an empire with more than 80 stores in the UK, US and Canada. Available in all sizes and an array of no-fuss, wrinkle-free cuts, plus polos, tees, jackets and womenswear, feel at ease without sacrificing on style.

● [untuckit.co.uk](http://untuckit.co.uk)

WORDS: ANDY HILL



### **LOOP CASHMERE**

Supremely soft and elegantly crafted by a brilliantly talented British team obsessed with colour and distinctive detailing, Loop Cashmere creates ethical, sustainable pieces that are made to last you a lifetime, using only the most conscientiously sourced 100% Mongolian cashmere. *Use code VA15 for 15% off your next order.*

● [loopcashmere.co.uk](http://loopcashmere.co.uk)



### **CTRNE**

Embrace mindfulness and manifestation in style with sneakers by CTRNE. Why the name? Each sneaker contains an embedded citrine crystal, said to harbour and invoke positive energy, abundance, clarity and confidence. Sleek, comfy and easy on the eye, they're sure to raise your vibration. Have you got the minerals?

● [ctrne.com](http://ctrne.com)

# BUYS GUIDE

THE VERY BEST IN FASHION, SMART LIVING AND TRAVEL MUST-HAVES



### **SIMPLEXITY TRAVEL**

Simplexity Travel is London's leading bespoke travel management company, providing luxury services to corporate and private clients who expect the very best. Whether handling complex business itineraries or locating a private island for that once-in-a-lifetime celebration, it's all about making dream trips a reality.

● [simplexitytravel.com](http://simplexitytravel.com)



### **WOODFORD RESERVE**

They've been making bourbon on the site of the Woodford Reserve Distillery – a National Historic Landmark – since 1812. Exquisitely balanced, with a flavour profile encompassing bold grain, sweet aromatics and rich floral notes, plus fruit and cocoa on the nose with a whiff of vanilla, it's a pure slug of Kentucky glory.

● [woodfordreserve.com](http://woodfordreserve.com)



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# CREDITS

VIRGIN ATLANTIC NEWS AND VIEWS



WELL,  
WELL,  
WELL

Three ways we can help you smash dry January

## ► THEY SAY GOOD THINGS

come in threes. So with dry January upon us, we've put together a stonking line-up of knockout booze and coffee-free alternatives to keep you refreshed and well-rested while you're on your journey with us.

### 1 // TRIP

Sure, alcohol is one way to relax. But TRIP's effervescent magnesium and lion's mane-infused functional soft drinks are extraordinarily chill, too – plus there's zero risk of waking up with an icky hangover. Lean, at just 19 calories a can, and lightly sparkling with elderflower, mint and no added sugar TRIP is pure glamorous canned calm.

### 2 // THREE SPIRIT

Rooted in botanical alchemy, Three Spirit drinks ingeniously harness the magic of adaptogens, nootropics, herbs, distillates and ferments to create a floaty sensation without resorting to alcohol.

Resolutely cruelty free, from a B-Corp to boot, the Nightcap is luxuriously decadent – an alcohol-free drink that devotes more energy to what goes in, than what comes out.



### 3 // PERFECT TED

PerfectTed co-founder Marisa Poster used to rely on high-sugar energy drinks and coffee, which left her jittery, exacerbating her ADHD and anxiety. Then she discovered matcha, the ancient Japanese green tea known to aid focus. Made with the finest ceremonial-grade matcha, PerfectTed Juicy Peach provides an energising, hydrating lift up in the air.





# CLASS ACTS

How to help us inspire more kids into STEM

► **AS PART OF OUR ONGOING** commitment to give back to the community, we're delighted to unveil the first of two new charity partners Virgin Atlantic is supporting as part of our Passport To Change initiative. STEM Learning is a non-profit dedicated to increasing the number of young people taking up

STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and maths – in particular pupils from diverse backgrounds. How? Through school visits, often involving Virgin Atlantic team members (*above*), aiming to inspire the next generation of engineers and scientists. Your generosity makes this possible – thank you for donating any loose change to our cabin crew as you disembark today.



**NEXT MONTH: SAVE THE CHILDREN**



The Agrasen Ki Baoli stepwell



## Join the crew in... Delhi

INSPIRATIONAL CABIN CREW LEGEND **BRIAN ROSE** SHARES HIS ULTIMATE TOP TIPS FOR INDIA'S CAPITAL

**1** //

Ride a rickshaw through **Chandni Chowk**, one of the oldest and busiest markets in Old Delhi – a sensory feast of stalls, spices, sights and sublime scents.

**2** //

For a great photo op, don't miss the chance to descend one of Delhi's iconic stepwells. **Agrasen Ki Baoli** is gorgeous and has four levels.

**3** //

Tuck into a top-drawer thali and freshly squeezed juice plus great views of the bustling Main Bazar at the lovely **Krishna** rooftop cafe.

**TOP TIP**  
It's easy and fulfilling to volunteer serving food to the needy at **Gurudwara Bangla Sahib**, a beautiful Sikh temple.



**Meet Virgin Atlantic's hotshot turnaround officer JUDE OTA**



**The role**

I make sure when our aircraft are on the ground everything

– catering to baggage and anything our Cabin Crew or Flight Deck might need – is turned around, or made ready, as safely and efficiently as possible for the next flight.

**The lowdown**

I'm the guy buzzing around the aircraft with a clipboard, sometimes helping customers catch a quick connection, or tracking down lost bags. It means ensuring the aircraft has been fuelled, cleaned and catered, and carrying out the checks that help get our customers on their way as safely and seamlessly as can be.

**The buzz**

Every day there's a new set of challenges. I talk to everyone and can be anywhere – on a ramp in the rain, monitoring hundreds of bags as they move through Heathrow, or overseeing some of our cargo. I love seeing a plane taxi to the runway safely and on time, knowing I've been a key player in that.



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## HOW TO CONNECT

**1** // Turn on your WiFi-enabled device and connect to the "Virgin-Atlantic" WiFi network.

**2** // If you don't automatically connect to the WiFi portal, don't worry. Just take a look at the safety card in your seat pocket to see what type of aircraft you're on.

### IF YOU'RE ONBOARD...

- An A330neo, A350-1000 or 787-9, open your browser and navigate to [virgin-atlantic-wifi.com](http://virgin-atlantic-wifi.com)
- An A330-300, open your browser and navigate to [airborne.gogoinflight.com](http://airborne.gogoinflight.com)

**3** // Then just follow the onscreen instructions to buy a session and get browsing!

*Davidoff*

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ON THE MOVE



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