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vera

OCTOBER 2024

► **Hex appeal**

**MEET SALEM'S
LOVE WITCHES**

► **Reef encounter**

**SPEARING
BARBADOS'
PROBLEM FISH**



**1 Bloomin'
lovely**

Why we like Michael Sheen a bunch

+

The best
of what's
onboard

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FEATURES Why Michael Sheen is just a super nice guy, we go to Salem to get love tips for "cuffing season" and investigate how Barbados tackled a spiky marine intruder.

CAMEOS



Londoner **Zoe McConnell** brings her natural eye for fashion to all her shoots, regularly working with global stars for luxury brands or creating film posters. This month, she snapped cover star Michael Sheen on location in west London. See p26



Our LA correspondent **Kevin EG Perry** has written for GQ, Empire and The Independent. He gorged his way through Hollywood's starriest restaurants for us this month, but concedes that that fourth Musso's martini was probably a mistake. See p20



Brooklyn-based **Arnard Montagard's** photography has appeared in Le Monde, Financial Times, National Geographic and The Guardian, and he has exhibited at the Saatchi Gallery in the UK, among others. He went to Salem, Mass, to meet the town's love witches. See p39

Ink

Editor Jessica Prupas **Art Director** Pete Allison **Sub Editor** Omer Ali **Photo Director** Tracey Griffin **Picture Editor** Katie Byrne
Advertising & Media Partnerships Patrick Dunne, Anya Mrkic, Daisy Heyes, Jennifer Brown, Marc Devis, Kane Hopps **HR and Careers** beinkredible@ink-global.com
Creative Director Tan Parmar **Acting Head of Ad Operations & Logistics** Jamie Rabey **Acting Ad Operations Manager** Erin Marshall
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TO ADVERTISE IN VERA MAGAZINE EMAIL PATRICK.DUNNE@INK-GLOBAL.COM OR PHONE +44 (20) 7625 0700

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Things to get obsessed with RIGHT NOW

RED HOT

OCTOBER



WORDS: ESTELLA SHARDLOW PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Now showing //

Underground culture in Delhi

► **THINK OF A MAUSOLEUM IN INDIA AND IT'S LIKELY** the Taj Mahal springs to mind. But now the spotlight's shining on the less well-known Humayun's Tomb as a new museum complex opens at – or, technically, below – this UNESCO-listed landmark in New Delhi. The warren of galleries displays 500 artefacts, including glittering astrolabes and manuscripts belonging to 16th-century emperor Humayun, who used star charts to inform everything, even his sartorial choices. Total Capricorn behaviour, if you ask us.

📍 FLY TO DELHI

First take //

PUTTING CINEMA ON THE COUCH

From “gaslighting” to “trigger”, therapy speak is all over Hollywood’s latest blockbusters – call it “safe space cinema,” says Al Horner

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

► **HERE’S SOMETHING TO MEDITATE ON:** have you noticed that the protagonists of your favourite films suddenly sound like they’re on the couch at Dr Melfi’s office? Call it “safe space cinema” – lately, multiplexes have been inundated with blockbusters that reflect how therapy has become a huge part of moviegoers’ lives since the turn of the millennium. It all arguably started with *Inside Out* in 2015 – a film ahead of the curve in terms of how it portrayed mental health on screen. Centred on a girl named Riley (Kaitlyn Dias), whose actions are controlled by five emotions at a control panel in her mind, the Pixar smash taught a generation of kids (and adults) that it’s okay to not be okay – a message that audiences embraced en masse.

Skip forward nine years, and films incorporating the language and ideas of therapy culture like *Inside Out* are very much in vogue right now. Obviously, there’s the inventive and at times heartbreaking *Inside Out 2* (available to watch on Vera), which quickly became the highest-grossing animated movie of all time on release this summer, winning over audiences and critics alike. The even grander success of this sequel – now featuring more complex emotions like Anxiety and Ennui as characters – makes sense when you stop to think about it. Mental health is a far bigger consideration in today’s society, with a reported 55.8 million Americans currently in therapy compared to 34m a decade ago.

As therapy waiting lists have ballooned, so too have examples of “therapy speak” in movies. Recent horror comedy *Renfield* saw the titular vampire assistant talking about being in a “codependent relationship” with Dracula. Teen comedies like *Booksmart* and *Bottoms* are now full of characters discussing what “triggers” them and the importance of “establishing boundaries”. And last year, Jamie Lee Curtis went viral for repeatedly

describing the latest *Halloween* movie as being about “trauma”, a bedrock phrase for psychoanalysts. When knife-wielding horror icon Michael Myers becomes a vessel for mental-health awareness, you know we’re in new territory.

Not everyone is on board: some critics have accused filmmakers of trivialising mental health in their films, deploying words like “gaslighting” in ways that rob the actual phrase of its potency in real life. For others, though, it’s a positive development, helping audiences – especially young ones – articulate their own inner emotional states.

Whatever your stance, after the enormous success of *Inside Out 2*, you can expect more movies that grapple with mental health issues and emotions – like therapy with a side of popcorn, self-care with a super-sized soda.

© WATCH INSIDE OUT 2

66
PIXAR SMASH
INSIDE OUT
TAUGHT A
GENERATION
OF KIDS THAT
IT’S OKAY TO
NOT BE OKAY





As well as *Inside Out 2*, catch *Freud's Last Session*, starring Anthony Hopkins as the father of psychoanalysis.

BARRED

Celebs are on point

1 //



Hunky **CHRIS PINE** has been taking ballet lessons, although he finds it hard because "they're speaking in French". Weirdly, he adds, "It's like geometry."

VERDICT: THROWING SHAPES

2 //



ANYA TAYLOR-JOY was cast as Imperator Furiosa in the new *Mad Max* film, says director George Miller, because her ballet chops made her a suitably tough adversary for bad guy Joe.

VERDICT: NUTCRACKER

3 //



Danish smoothie **MADS MIKKELSEN** trained as a gymnast and ballet dancer before becoming a screen idol. He even met his wife dancing.

VERDICT: MAD SKILLS



Q&A//

“Lee Miller is my most inspiring role”

KATE WINSLET tells Jessica Prupas why it took quite so long to bring the photographer’s story to screen

PORTRAIT: ZOE MCCONNELL/AUGUST

► **KATE WINSLET CAN DO ANYTHING**, right? She can hold her breath for seven minutes and 15 seconds (a skill she learned for underwater shoots on *Avatar: The Way of Water*), she can survive out-of-control house fires (like when she lived through a blaze that broke out on Sir Richard Branson’s private island estate and helped his 90-year-old mum to safety), and she can wow audiences in every role she plays – from *Titanic*’s Rose to the delightfully bonkers Chancellor Elena Vernham in this year’s outrageous political satire, *The Regime*.

So you’d think, if the Oscar-winning actor wanted to make a film about Lee Miller – the fashion model and Man Ray muse who became a World War II correspondent – it would be a cinch. But it took Winslet almost 10 years to get the film out into the world.

Why? Well, it’s partially that Winslet and her creative partner – Antony Penrose, Lee Miller’s son and author of *The Lives of Lee Miller*, on which the film is based – wanted to get it right. “We want to tell her story as a woman,” Winslet tells me. “Not through the labels that were slapped on her – the muse, the ex-model, the former cover girl.” They also began development before the eruption of #MeToo, which Winslet says “created a platform” for women’s stories to be told in new ways. *Vera* spoke with the megastar about finally putting her passion project out into the world, and what she learned from playing such a “phenomenal” woman.

Lee was very moving, I thought. The Holocaust is very close to my family...

Oh, I’m so sorry. For [costar] Andy Samberg, it was phenomenally hard as a Jewish man. When we filmed that particular section, we were really ruthless with ourselves creatively. We only followed the facts in terms of what Lee and Davey [photographer David Scherman] saw. The thing we had to really remember is that this is a film about a woman. It’s a film about her emotional war, with the backdrop being World War II. And the phenomenal courage that she had to be the voice for those voiceless victims. When we shot those Dachau sequences, we were quite sparse in terms of shot sequences, so not over-covering things, not digging too deeply into things that we don’t know whether Lee witnessed or not. We tried to be as respectful as we possibly could because Lee lived her life with incredible integrity but also passion, compassion and respect. As a filmmaking group of women, it was important to us that we took her lead.

It struck me that Lee lived the life of a true artist. Do you think one can still live the kind of artist life Lee did?

I actually know someone who does, but that someone is a man. I certainly think it’s a lot harder, because I think that now people’s means of business is displaying their work often digitally or through social media in a world that can be quite aggressive sometimes and can be quite critical in a way that I’m not sure is necessarily supportive to art. I stay away from the digital world and social media myself in order to actually protect my own creativity and integrity, and that thing of that negative white noise that can sometimes creep into one’s psyche and can make you

Above: Kate Winslet as photographer Lee Miller in *Lee*



Below: With Hugh Grant in *The Regime*

question your integrity and your creative truth and intentions. I will say that playing Lee Miller was the most inspiring role by far that I've ever been asked to inhabit. She has left a lasting impression on me in terms of... her acceptance of herself, her celebration of herself and her close personal relationships. And really throwing herself at life full throttle because life is so short.

Why do you think it took this long to tell Lee's story?

[Laughs] I can tell you exactly why. Well, first of all, many people have tried to make films about Lee Miller in the past. Antony Penrose told me very early on, in 2015, "I've read many screenplays. Many people have had a stab at this." And I asked, why weren't those films made? And he said, "Because no one really captured her." And often, from what I gather, people would always start from the period of her life that included Man Ray or Picasso. You know, these significant male figures who, if you put these characters on film and bring them back to life, they can be quite a dominating presence because they were hugely significant artistic people then and historically are. It took a long time to distil which decade of her life was the one that was the most important. The film is based on *The Lives of Lee Miller*, and that book is entirely about her life going through the war and the price that she paid to reveal the truth about the atrocities of the Nazi regime, when so much was being covered up.

“IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE TO HAVE THE WORLD MORE RECEPTIVE TO HEARING FEMALE-DRIVEN STORIES ABOUT PHENOMENAL WOMEN

It took you a long time to get this made. Was there ever a point where you were like, I'm giving up?

No, I never had a moment where I wanted to give up. As I became closer and closer to Antony Penrose, I realised just how important it was to him to tell this story. And as time went by, the world around us changed. The #MeToo movement happened while we were still in development stages and suddenly women's voices were being heard in a completely new way. That makes a difference, to have the world more receptive to hearing female-driven stories about phenomenal women who perhaps they didn't know enough about before.

Why do you think Lee never spoke to Antony about her experience in the war when she was alive?

There was a code of silence. Anyone who went through the traumas of World War II, they just wrapped it around everything. They didn't talk about it. She [Lee] had phenomenal PTSD. She had struggled with alcohol because of it. She struggled parenting her only child because of it. Antony, who has spoken at length about his difficulties being raised by Lee, never understood what was wrong with her, or what was wrong with him.

You said you worked with a neuroscientist for *The Regime*. What was the most surprising thing you learned about the way trauma manifests in the body?

Between the age two and four, if a child is exposed to significant trauma in that age, it can have a lasting impact on speech patterns and the learning of speech. I had no idea about that. I also had no idea that there are some neuroscientists who are able to reverse stammers or speech impediments in some form through a process of brain training. I found all that really fascinating.

You seemed to have a lot of fun playing Chancellor Elena Vernham in *The Regime*. Is having fun in a role important to you?

[Laughs] No! No! That doesn't usually come into play. But it was certainly refreshing for me to have an opportunity to play someone who is as outrageous and sometimes ridiculous as Elena Vernham.

● Lee is in theatres now and will be available to watch on Virgin Atlantic flights next year

WATCH THE REGIME



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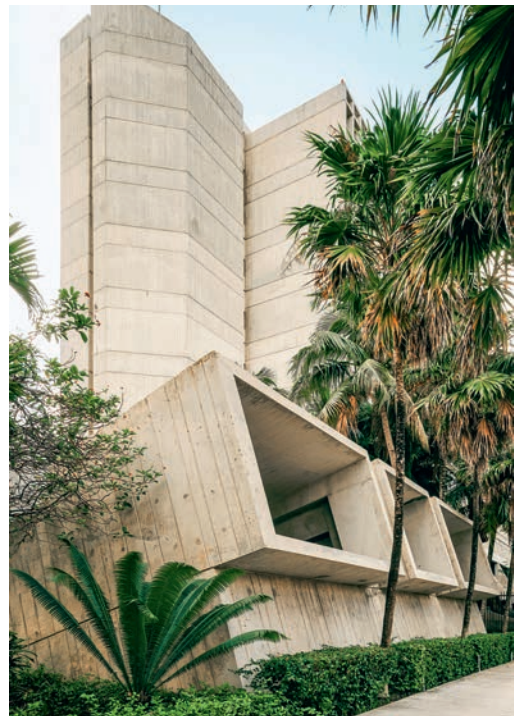
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Table read

CONCRETE JUNGLE

A new book reveals Brutalism's unexpected green corners



The Mill Owners' Association Building is one of five projects by Le Corbusier in Ahmedabad built in the 1950s.

► **BRUTALISM'S DETRACTORS SAY THE** architectural style is too harsh, too cold, too rigid. But look closer: there are signs of life growing in the cracks of its concrete buildings. These little corners – where the harsh edges of Brutalism are blunted by plant life – are the subject of a new book from Hoxton Mini Press, *Brutal Plants*.

The book is based on author Oliva Broome's Instagram account of the same name, which she's been running since 2018. Growing up in Switzerland, Broome became a fan of the much-derided, mid-century style pioneered by such British architects as Alison and Peter Smithson, and Ernő Goldfinger. She wanted to show the world Brutalism's softer side and so @brutalistplants was born.

Brutalist Plants compiles the best, most intriguing photography from the Instagram account's six years

Clockwise from top left: The Barbican Conservatory, London, and the Mailman Center for Child Development, University of Miami

of existence, including images of the zigzagged lines of the Geisel Library at UC San Diego, the Le Corbusier-designed Mill Owners' Association Building in western India and, of course, that sovereign of Brutalism, the Barbican in London. Juxtaposed against the hulking architecture, these plants remind us that most things are only temporary – Brutalism, once all the rage, went out of fashion after two decades. Nowadays, its buildings are “ever-oscillating between being listed and being demolished,” writes Broome in the book. Her advice, then, is to “make the most of all your palaces”.

● *Brutalist Plants* by Oliva Broome is published by Hoxton Mini Press

✈️ FLY TO LONDON, MIAMI & MUMBAI



WORDS: JESSICA PRUPAS PHOTOS: ©TARAN WILKIN, ©FELIX TORIKAR/FLXTRK, ©NATHAN WILLOCK/VIEW

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Snacks //

HOLY MACKEREL IN EDINBURGH

Raw line-caught wild fish at **AVERY**, Edinburgh, from a newly landed American chef is quite the catch

► **CHEF RODNEY**

Wages grew up in Kansas. After a long stint in the kitchen at California's celebrated French Laundry he opened his own gaff, named Avery, in San Francisco. Covid wasn't kind to that spot, so flash-forward a few years to a family holiday in Edinburgh, where Wages decided he'd start anew, bringing West Coast savoir-faire to the bountiful larder of seasonal Scottish produce. This all-new Avery does extraordinary things with those local goodies. Game bird "haggis", with pigeon breast, heart and liver on a bed of thistles with whisky sauce and cherry. Foraged gems like rock samphire, scurvy grass (aka "Scottish wasabi"), and Wages' signature tortellini with

mushroom broth, roasted garlic and burnt onion. The pièce de résistance on the handwritten menu? The modestly named "raw fish", line-caught mackerel from off the rugged Caledonian coast, cured in seaweed, seasoned in sauce brewed from its own bones. Truly off the scale.

✉ FLY TO EDINBURGH

DRINKS

Jam cocktails make us jelly



nce the preserve of grandmothers' pantries, jam is enjoying a moment as a bouji cocktail ingredient. Get stuck into an August at the new Henri in London's Covent Garden, with Buffalo Trace bourbon, Antica Formula, crème de fraise des bois and blueberry jam. Atlanta's Ticonderoga Club

is right now serving up a Slabtown Sling (*right*) with strawberry-flavoured gin, lemon-lime benedictine, hibiscus and a splash of soda. Or in the Where There's Smoke There's Fire, at the Blackbird Bar in San Fran, with mezcal, Aperol, grapefruit and house-made habanero jam. How's that for a nice spread?

✉ FLY TO LONDON & SAN FRANCISCO



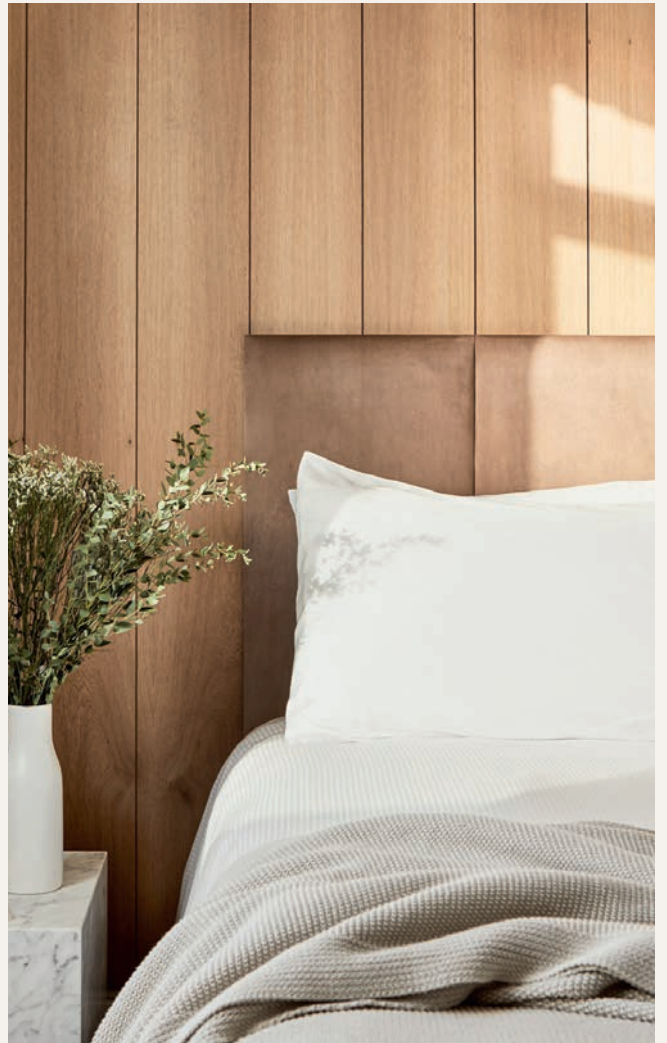
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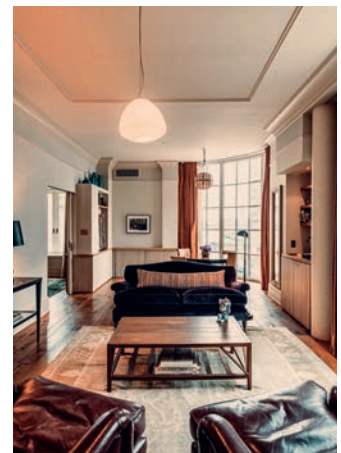


Sleeper hit //

A SLEEPING BEAUTY IN TRIBECA

Manhattan bolthole **THE GREENWICH HOTEL** doffs its cap to craftsmanship with ravishing vintage interiors

► **THE GREENWICH HOTEL** – ONE OF lower Manhattan’s most sought-after stays, in the celeb-dense Tribeca neighbourhood – is all about exquisite taste. Which makes sense, given that one of its owners is Robert De Niro, whose suave, timeless style clearly has an influence here. From top to bottom, it’s a love letter to craftsmanship. Behold the Pennsylvania red-brick facade, with doors hewn from reclaimed Civil War-era timber. Or the zen Shibui Spa, crowned with 250-year-old wood and bamboo farmhouse ceilings imported from Japan. Italianate ceramics, Tibetan silk rugs and lofty Parisian ceilings all cinch the globetrotting vibe. Guest rooms, many of which underwent a recent spruce-up, represent the apogee of quiet luxury: heavy walnut desks, Carrara-marble bathrooms. Downstairs, the Drawing Room feels decidedly Old World with its tan leather armchairs, French windows and wood-burning fireplace. Locanda Verde restaurant – a coveted NYC Italian in its own right, also recently updated – does soulful lamb pappardelle and raved-about “grandmother’s” ravioli. They don’t make them like this any more.



FLY TO NEW YORK



NOBU HOTEL, LONDON
The striking timber and glass exterior of this Shoreditch style icon beautifully expresses the lofty mission of this hotel built around the principles of its world-class restaurant, inspired by chef Nobu Matsuhisa’s years spent studying Japanese cuisine.



AVALON HOTEL, LOS ANGELES
California aesthete Kelly Wearstler supervised the renovation of this Beverly Hills veteran, all abstract art, psychedelic sculptures and European white-oak hardwood flooring.



HOTEL GREYSTONE, MIAMI
This adults-only Art Deco masterpiece just off South Beach rocks a rooftop pool, plush-as-you-like French restaurant with mezzanine jazz bar and mermaid chandelier in the lobby. Private terraces allow you to take in the shore.

3 more designer digs

WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: THE GREENWICH HOTEL, NEW YORK; NOBU HOTEL LONDON; SHOREDITCH, AVALON BEVERLY HILLS; DYLAN RIVES

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DINNER AT THE MOVIES IN LOS ANGELES

The Californian entertainment capital is full of real-life locations you know from the screen, including many where you can dine like a star, says local Kevin EG Perry





► **PART OF THE JOY OF WANDERING THE** streets of Los Angeles is the thrill of rounding a street corner and walking into a scene straight out of the movies. After a century of filmmaking it's hardly surprising that Hollywood has immortalised so much of its home town on screen – but it can be a pleasant revelation to discover that not only are your heroes' favourite haunts real, they're actually open and serving lunch.

There are few better examples of this phenomenon than the legendary **MUSSO & FRANK GRILL**, a storied Hollywood restaurant that dates from 1919 and boasts a rich history on and off screen. A favoured hangout dating back to silent era icons Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, it first appeared on screen in Buster Keaton's *Cops* in 1922. You might also recognise Musso from appearances in *Ocean's Eleven*, *Ed Wood* or Marilyn Monroe biopic *Blonde*, but these days it's probably best known as the venue for Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt's boozy lunch meeting with Al Pacino in *Once Upon A Time... in Hollywood*. In the film, DiCaprio knocks back a whisky sour while Pitt opts for a leafy Bloody Mary, but our hard-earned advice is not to leave without sampling their sublime martinis. While the food won't win awards, retro American classics like crab louie and a serviceable selection of sirloins keep diners well-fed. But it's the time-capsule atmosphere – all red booths and bow-tied waiters – that make it a worthy detour.

There's a similar air of old Hollywood glamour at **THE FORMOSA CAFE**, a favourite of Frank Sinatra, Humphrey Bogart and John Wayne. The restaurant pairs an Asian-inspired menu with sensational cocktails and makes a memorable appearance in neo-noir thriller *LA Confidential*, when Guy Pearce's detective Ed Exley gets into an argument over a woman he accuses of having had surgery to look like the pin-up and actress Lana Turner ("She is Lana Turner," comes the reply).

Head over to Koreatown to find **THE PRINCE**, a one-of-a-kind location that dates back to the 1920s, when it was known as the Windsor. With its wood panels and red leather booths it retains the air of an old-fashioned English gentleman's club but these days serves first-rate Korean food. Jack Nicholson stops here while on the case in *Chinatown*, and it gained a new generation of fans when it transformed into the sitcom *New Girl* gang's regular hangout, where Jake Johnson's Nick bartended.

Left: The iconic Randy's Donuts in Inglewood, as seen in *Iron Man 2* and *Mars Attacks!*

“
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Down in Hermosa Beach you'll find **THE LIGHTHOUSE CAFE**, a swinging club that's been playing host to Chet Baker, Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie and many other jazz greats since 1949. It's also where Ryan Gosling memorably explained his love of "pure jazz" to Emma Stone in *La La Land*. Stop by today for Sunday brunch with a side of thrilling live music.

If music's your thing, another can't-miss spot is **THE DRESDEN** in Los Feliz, a favoured hangout of Jon Favreau and Vince Vaughn in *Swingers*. Whether you're enjoying haute cuisine in the dining room or live entertainment in the lounge, this is a venue that, like the film's stars, is so money, baby. Whatever time you stumble out it's always time for **CANTER'S DELI**, which conveniently stays open 24 hours a day and serves the best Reuben sandwiches in town. Those round-the-clock opening hours made it a second home for up-all-night rockers Guns n' Roses, who featured it in several of their music videos. It's also popped up in shows like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Entourage*.

When you're ready for breakfast there are few better choices than **PAT AND LORRAINE'S COFFEE SHOP** in Eagle Rock. Don't just take our word for it – this is the diner where the colour-coded criminal gang first meets up in Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. Just remember: don't be like Steve Buscemi's Mr Pink, always tip your server.

Even after eating your way across Los Angeles, you should still find time to squeeze in one final stop at **RANDY'S DONUTS** in Inglewood. You'll


Canter's Deli opened in 1931 in Boyle Heights before moving to the Fairfax district of Los Angeles.



From above: Noodles at the Formosa Cafe and inside Koreatown restaurant The Prince

probably recognise the huge doughnut on top of the building from its appearance in *Iron Man 2*. While you sadly won't be allowed to lounge inside it like Tony Stark, you will be able to grab a box for the road.

✕ FLY TO LOS ANGELES



Scan to discover more of the magic of Los Angeles



THE BROAD

Admission is free at this expansive contemporary art museum that features works by Andy Warhol, Kara Walker, Roy Lichtenstein and hundreds more. Don't miss Yayoi Kusama's immersive, beguiling *Infinity Mirror Rooms*.



GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY

This cinematic landmark on the southern slope of Mt Hollywood – *Rebel without a Cause*, *The Terminator...* – offers breathtaking views. Inside the Art Deco observatory, exhibits bring to life the 14 billion-year history of our universe.



MALIBU PIER

This iconic pier dates from around 1905, when Malibu was known as the "Riviera of America". Today it's the ideal place to eat (try Neptune's Net, a local landmark), go fishing or catch a break on the adjacent Surfrider Beach.

3 more must-dos in Los Angeles

PHOTOS: RANDY'S DONUTS, GREG ZABILSKI, MAXIM SHAPOVALOV/COURTESY OF 1933 GROUP, THE PRINCE, MIKE KELLEY/COURTESY OF THE BROAD, DAVID PINSKY/GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY, GETTY IMAGES



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Screen test //

Could anyone swim the Channel?

How determined do you have to be to don the goggles like Daisy Ridley's character in *Young Woman and the Sea*? asks Ralph Jones

ILLUSTRATIONS: RUBY FRESSON

➤ **HAVE YOU EVER SAT BOLT UPRIGHT IN** bed and thought, "I must swim the English Channel"? Neither have I, but it's an incredible example of human achievement that has always fascinated me. I have absolutely no hope of swimming the Channel. But maybe you do.

Gertrude "Trudy" Ederle certainly did. The film *Young Woman and the Sea* features Daisy Ridley as Ederle, and tells the story of the first woman ever to swim the 21 miles (34km) from England to France in 1926. When Ederle completed the swim in 14 hours, she became the world's fastest Channel swimmer.

If you're thinking that sounds like a long way to swim, you couldn't be more right. But you might still be underestimating just how colossal an achievement it is. Nick Caine, who swam from England to France in 2009 aged 16, says that the effort ratio between running and swimming is approximately 1:3. A 21-mile swim, in other words, is probably about as tiring as a 63-mile run. Imagine having to run two and a half marathons in one go. "It is exhausting," says Caine, "and I think the hardest part is the mental boredom."

One of the most important things is that you don't just train in a pool; you must train in cold water in order for your body to acclimatise to the temperature of the Channel (which, in summer, is around 17°C). But when Caine says "the right training", he means swimming eight to nine hours every day, and swimming consistently for two years. The challenge has to become your life. On the upside, in order to add the recommended weight, Caine was consuming a pint of ice cream a day.



On top of that time commitment, you need to be able to swim non-stop for six hours, since that is the length of the qualifying swim every swimmer must do before they dip their bodies into the Channel. Clear this hurdle and you can organise the swim – which involves paying in the region of £7,000 (US\$9,170) for the various bits of paperwork. You must swim alongside a power boat, but during the swim you can't touch the boat or wear a wetsuit – either would mean your swim isn't official.

Caine is one of only about 2,000 people to have swum the Channel since the first attempt in 1875. Matthew Webb, who was the very first, was stung by a jellyfish – just one of many hazards. As Caine says, you can get hypothermia; you can swallow too much sea water; or you can have a heart attack and drown (this sadly happened to a fireman who took on the challenge for charity last year). When Caine swam, he was essentially swimming without moving for at least two hours – meaning he completed the swim in about 13 hours.

"I think the average person can definitely do it with the right training and the right time," Caine says, optimistically. At the end of the day, it's expensive, exhausting and dangerous – but then isn't everything that's fun?

VERDICT: I couldn't. But you might be in with a chance.

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MICHAEL SHEEN



Loads more Mr Nice Guy

PHOTOGRAPHS:
ZOE MCCONNELL

MICHAEL SHEEN is one of the UK's most talented and in-demand actors. So how does he manage to stay so down-to-earth? By following his own path, discovers Jonny Ensall



Michael

Sheen is not your average celebrity. On paper, it seems like he should be. He's had roles in big Hollywood franchises, such as *Twilight*. He has been in beloved Oscar-worthy films (*Frost/Nixon*, *Nocturnal Animals*) and hit series (*Good Omens*, *Masters of Sex*). He's even partnered a string of A-list women including Kate Beckinsale and Rachel McAdams. Now 55, and with a mop of silvery hair to match his raspy beard, he's definitely in national treasure territory. When our Zoom call finally connects he greets me with a disarmingly warm "How are ya doing?" in his lovely, deep Welsh accent.

It turns out that, in person, Michael Sheen is miraculously down-to-earth. "The list of things I'm good at is so small," he says of his stellar acting career. "If you can make a profession out of it, it seems like you're doing well, but it's more a reflection of how bad I am at doing everything else." He is, frankly, normal. In a remarkable kind of way. He still lives in Port Talbot, where he grew up, and has three children, including two small kids with his current partner, Anna Lundberg. He spends a lot of time role-playing as the character Evil Pea from his daughter's favourite

Previous page:
Shirt: Moss
Coat & trousers:
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cartoon, he tells me. Then whatever free time he has left is dedicated to good causes. He helps everyone from girls without access to period products to homeless people who want to play football, and recently set up a charitable foundation, Mab Gwalia, to try to do even more. Again, this is not typical celeb behaviour.

“I started to see my work as an actor, and everything in the entertainment industry, as an engine for being able to do the other stuff that I wanted to do,” he says of the 10 or so years since he left behind the glitz of LA and moved his life back to Wales. “I always used to think, when I was growing up, this isn’t my real life – that’s waiting for me down the road... [but] you have to choose the things in front of you. It’s less about big political ideologies and more about what can I do? You have to do what you can, about what you can, while you can.”

Today we’re due to discuss his latest TV project, *A Very Royal Scandal*, about the infamous interview between Prince Andrew, the late Queen’s third child, and the journalist Emily Maitlis, which aired on the BBC in 2019. Sheen plays Prince Andrew. Though “plays” is perhaps the wrong word – he inhabits the role in a way that makes you forget you’re not watching the real person. This is another fascinating thing about Sheen: he’s not so good at acting like a famous person in his own life, but is uniquely good at acting like other famous people, having previously



“I am trying to find a way to show that the things the person does are inevitable”

become the politician Tony Blair (in no fewer than three different films), the football manager Brian Clough and the quiz-show host Chris Tarrant.

A Very Royal Scandal is a three-part series revealing the behind-the-scenes drama around the scoop of the decade. If you haven’t seen the original interview, it is a toe-curling watch. Sat in Buckingham Palace, the Prince is grilled by Maitlis on his role in the Jeffrey Epstein scandal. Sheen watched it on TV at the time. “I’m no different to anyone else – I thought it was an extraordinary car crash. Like most

people I just couldn’t understand how it happened, which obviously our drama looks into.”

Put Sheen’s performance side-by-side with the original and it’s the dramatised version that feels more humanising. How does he do it? “I’ve probably watched the interview more than anyone else in the world now,” he considers. “My job isn’t to make excuses, or try to persuade the audience of anything. I’m certainly not trying to make the person’s behaviour forgivable. But what I am trying to do is find a way to show that the things the person does are inevitable. As a result of circumstance, the life you’ve led, the situations you’re in.”

Does he have sympathy for divisive characters like these? “I think there’s a difference between sympathy and empathy,” he says, carefully. “It had never really struck me how high Prince Andrew’s high was, and how far he had to fall

Above:
Coat & bold knit:
Anderson & Sheppard

from there over time... for a man who was seen as being the ultimate eligible bachelor, and the fairy-tale prince, to get old and overweight and no longer attractive in the same way, and to feel like you don't get treated the way you should, and to get into money troubles, and to have – allegedly – your major relationships ended because you've been told to do that by your family. All of those things were all revelations to me."

Sheen is keen to point out that he's talking about the character, not the person. He's never met the real Prince. But, of course, the whole thing is interesting because it is based on real, albeit murky, events. "We don't know what happened... there was no court case," says Sheen. Though he has opinions about the Prince's guilt. "I had to make a choice..." Which is? "I'm not going to tell you for a number of reasons. The main one being that it would spoil the experience for people watching."

He's skirting around it, but there's a tension for the actor with this kind of performance. Sheen knows that he can never reveal the truth, but he's still trying to get at some version of it. "I have to try and find connections with characters that I play," he explains. "It doesn't matter who they are or what they do, real or not – the whole point of acting is that you find the points of connection. And some of those points of connection can be hard to accept. Obviously the life of an actor who has some celebrity comes with all kinds of privilege itself. Different kinds of privilege to members of the royal family, but there is some crossover, and there is enough there to be able to take the imaginative leap."

In 2020 Sheen gave back his OBE, or Order of the British Empire (a merit given to him by the Queen), as he felt to keep it would be hypocritical given his criticism of the royal family's continued use of another archaic royal title: Prince of Wales. I sense he is no great fan of the royals, or indeed any family that controls tremendous amounts of wealth and property.

As for his own wealth and property, there's not that much of it, he says. When, in 2019, he got involved in bringing the Homeless World Cup to Cardiff, he ended up having to sell his houses in the US and UK in order to make it happen. It was "a situation that was really tricky and difficult and challenging and potentially devastating," he says. "I had to



“In my life and career I get to move through different areas of society, and oftentimes I can be in very, very different places in the space of a day”



find a lot of money very quickly. Which I'm still paying for, which is why it's quite funny when people call me a champagne socialist. I wish!"

And yet, Sheen acknowledges that he does not face the same kind of challenges as the Port Talbot steelworkers he mixes with at home. He is constantly checking his privilege. Does that not get a bit exhausting? "As much as you might feel like you're a victim of other people's privilege, to try and accept what your own is..." he pauses to think. "It's not an acceptance that you're the bad guy, you just have to do it in order to understand how things work," he says. "It's that balance between having the confidence and the self-righteousness, I suppose, to fight against the obstacles in your way, while at the same time realising that you are part of the obstacle for someone else maybe."

Port Talbot, like many Welsh towns, has been badly affected by the decline of British heavy industry. It is a place where many people struggle. Sheen admits that this wasn't always obvious to him, but over one weekend in 2011 he had an epiphany of sorts when he returned to the town to star in and co-direct a performance of *The Passion of Christ*. Staged in the streets and involving the whole community, the work took place over three days and culminated in the actor screaming in pain as he was nailed to a cross. He came down from it a changed man.

"There were huge amounts of what was going on in my town that I just wasn't aware of," he reflects. "I wanted the story to come out of the town itself, so I needed to hear what people felt about things and what their hopes and fears were. So I'd speak to the mayor, but I'd also speak to someone who was receiving treatment at the alcohol and drug centre. Doing that was revelatory for me. The town of Port Talbot is unique in several ways, but it's also similar to many places across the whole of the UK.



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"There is a side to life that is so hard and difficult to deal with that we don't want to know about it until it happens to us," he continues. "And what that means is that people who are going through that experience don't get the kind of support that they should have... In my life and career I get to move through different areas of society, and oftentimes I can be in very, very different places in the space of a day. I can be doing something in Port Talbot in the morning and I can be at some very posh do in London that night. So the discrepancies and the gap of opportunity in different places become very clear. It lit a fire in me to ask why, why is that the case?"

MICHAEL SHEEN

Has he answered his question? And is there any room for optimism that things are improving? "It's very hard to know even what being optimistic or pessimistic means," he says. "We're at a point of big change. And I don't mean from the Tory to the Labour party. I mean the shifting of tectonic plates culturally in all kinds of ways that politics is trying to keep up with... The chances of something really fundamentally massively changing in the way we live our lives – it could happen in the next couple of years. The rise of neo-fascist, far-right agendas, all getting linked up and connected across the West is a real danger."

We've spent most of our time talking in this way, about politics and privilege. He is clearly a good student of tricky conversations, and not just because of his hours spent rewatching Prince Andrew – he recently took part in a BBC special called *The Assembly*, in which his interviewers were a group of neurodivergent young people, tasked with asking him the most incisive questions they could dream up. For example: "How does it feel to be dating someone who is only five years older than your daughter?" (Sheen's first child is 25 while partner Anna Lundberg is 30.) His answer was typically straightforward: "If you find someone who brings you happiness and they make you happy, you've got to go for that."

"People have said, why don't you get into politics?"



SO-SO-SO-SCANDALOUS RANKING THE ROYALS ON TV

The Windsors

This irreverent and enjoyably low-rent sitcom has lasted through three seasons so far, and casts the modern-day royals as variously: bigoted, power-hungry, sex-obsessed and a bit dim. Is that all that controversial?



Harry & Meghan

This behind-the-scenes doc, for which Netflix paid a pretty penny, was less *Real Housewives* and more real boring.

Monarchy: The Royal Family at Work

This 2007 BBC documentary promised controversy when the trailer appeared to show the Queen storming out of a photoshoot with Annie Leibovitz – but it was just some trickery in the edit room.



The Crown

Charting the entire reign of Queen Elizabeth II, *The Crown* won every award going, though its final season drew criticism for its historical accuracy.

MOST CONTROVERSIAL

Royal Family

Another BBC doc, this time from 1969, *Royal Family* included plenty of candid moments from a year in the Queen's life, leading none other than Sir David Attenborough (then controller of BBC2) to complain it gave away Her Majesty's mystique.



An Interview with HRH the Princess of Wales

Martin Bashir's sit-down with Diana was watched by over 20 million Brits at the time. The repercussions continue today.

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From top right:
Frost/Nixon, The
Damned United and
A Very Royal Scandal

Left: Black-and-white
shirt: All Saints
White shirt: Luca Faloni
Trousers: Mr P
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Boots: Grenson
Sunglasses:
Lunetterie Generale

“Coming into that situation the understanding was that you’re OK with being asked anything,” he says. “I knew there was no agenda or malice. It was just genuine curiosity. The one thing I could prepare was my mindset, which allowed me to answer that particular question. And I just thought: I have to be honest and everything has to come from the heart.”

As a younger actor, his naturally wide-eyed Britishness leant itself to a few roles as baddies (British baddies “class the joint up a bit,” he says). But now he looks and acts like a kind of modern sage, offering up simple wisdom for troubled times, without really taking anything too seriously. He makes being normal feel quite radical and I can see why the path he’s taken is one that many others wish to follow. Will we ever see Michael Sheen the politician, I wonder?

“People have said to me, why don’t you get into politics?” he concedes. “I feel like I can achieve more doing what I do, rather than going for the big ideological stuff. Maybe just get on with helping that person who needs a bit of help over there.”

© WATCH THE WAY, BEST INTERESTS & THE DAMNED UNITED

VALLEY BOY

MICHAEL SHEEN’S CV



BORN

5 February 1969 in Newport, Wales. His dad worked for British Steel and his mum was a secretary.

EDUCATION

Glan Afan Comprehensive School in Port Talbot and, later, RADA – the elite drama school in London.

SPECIAL SKILLS

He was scouted to play for Arsenal Football Club when he was 12, but his family didn’t want to move to London. He was named star baker on the celebrity version of *Bake Off* for his light and fluffy pavlova.

KEY WORK

The Deal (2003)
Sheen’s first outing as UK PM Tony Blair in a trio of movies by Stephen Frears.

Frost/Nixon (2008)

Another uncanny portrait, this time of interviewer David Frost attempting to pin down Richard Nixon over the Watergate scandal.

The Damned United (2009)

Beloved by sports fans for Sheen’s portrayal of a renegade football manager, inspired by Brian Clough’s time at Leeds Utd.

The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn (2011-12)

Sheen hammed it up as creepy vampire royalty fawning over Kristen Stewart in the hit film series.

Best Interests (2023)

Sheen is a father whose daughter faces a life-threatening condition in this heartfelt TV drama.



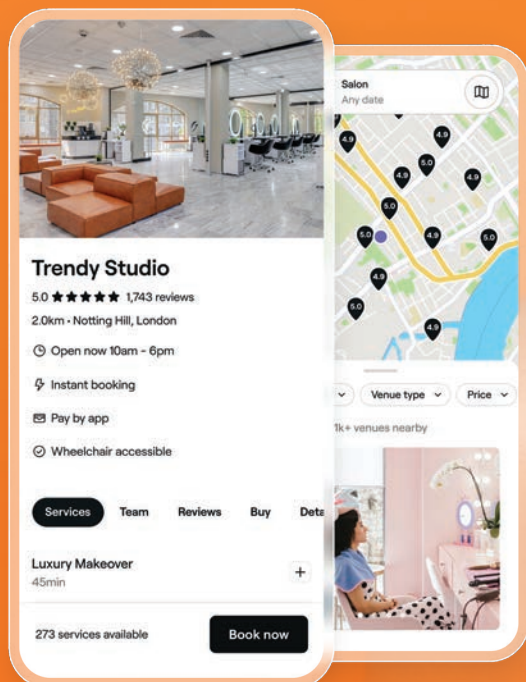
STYLIST: GARETH SCOURFIELD MAKE-UP: NATHALIE ELEN HAIR: BEN COOKE STYLING ASSISTANT: ANDREW BURLING SHOT ON LOCATION AT BOSTON MANOR HOUSE ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: ALAMY, COURTESY OF PRIME VIDEO

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Six of Swords

Salem may be known for its witchy history,

A SPELL

but its current residents put a progressive spin on love magic

ON YOU

WORDS: ZOIEY GOTO

Page of Swords

AS THE NIGHTS GET LONGER

and temperatures plummet, it can only mean one thing: the cuffing season is officially upon us. It's that most magical time of year, when singletons couple up for the duration of the winter months. Which begs the question – how to attract a lover before winter solstice?

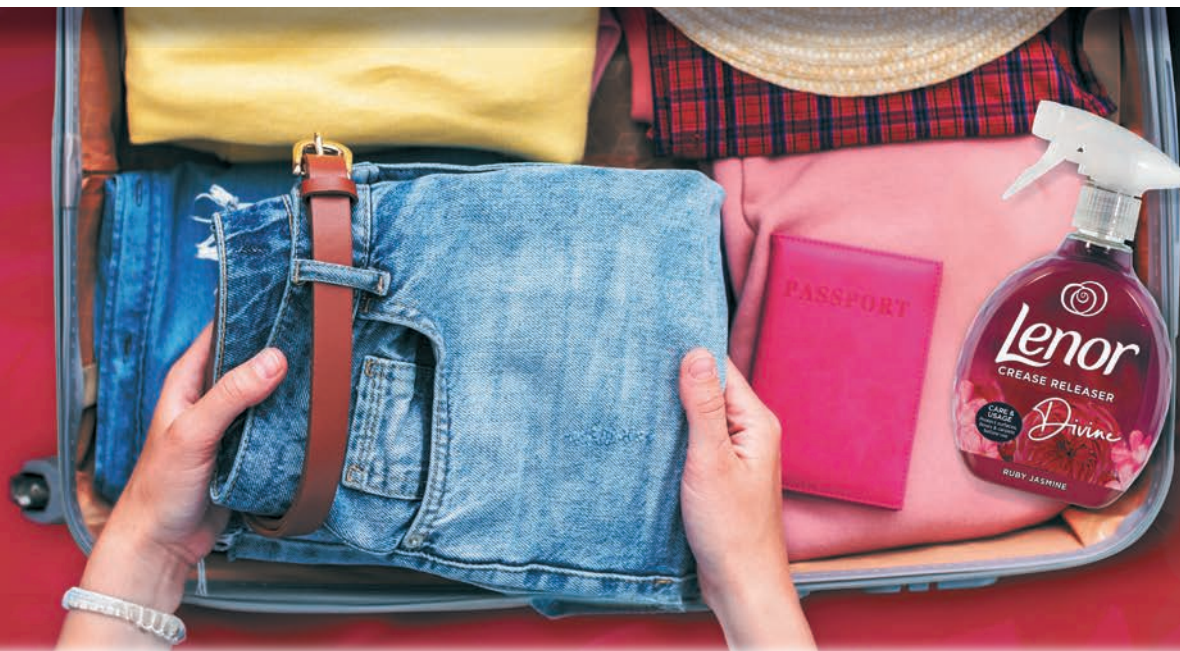
Come along, my pretty, as we travel to Salem, Massachusetts, to ask its famous love witches for their amorous advice. Just a short broom ride from Boston, Salem found notoriety with the Witch Trials of 1692, when 19 people were accused of witchcraft and sentenced to death. These days, it's not without a certain irony that the historic New England city swarms with a new generation of proudly practising witches, many of whom specialise in the ancient art of romance. From a Wiccan priestess who blesses unions across the gender and sexuality spectrum to a relationship clairvoyant favoured by celebrities, Witch City's love coven puts a modern twist on witchcraft. Here they share their best advice for creating cosmic connections.

The Witch House, Salem, was owned by judge Jonathan Corwin, who presided at the Witch Trials, and is now a museum





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① **Cauldron**
 "Every witch needs a nice cast-iron cauldron or vessel in which to burn things. If you've had an argument with your partner, a very simple spell to try is write it on a piece of paper and burn it. It's about releasing and clearing the energy."

② **Pair of white cats**
 "It's important to bring pairs of things into your home if you're already living with someone or just want to be in a relationship. It's a nice way to bring the energy of partnership into your space. I like pairs of animals."

③ **Rose quartz**
 "My wife and I like to clear our wedding rings at the end of each day by putting them with a piece of rose quartz. It's the go-to stone for witches when it comes to relationships."

④ **Lioness tarot deck**
 "As a couple, we like to use this tarot deck as it's very romantic and there's a lot of sensual imagery such as flowers. It feels like taking yourself on a date when you use them."

In the spirit of the cuffing season, how can love magic be used to attract or keep a mate?

I'd recommend using rose quartz essence, which has the energetic imprint of rose quartz crystal preserved in water. It's considered a love crystal that connects to self-love and empathy, and can be added to body lotion, a bath or tea.

You are married to a fellow witch. Have you used witchcraft in your own relationship?

My wife and I will do a yearly tarot reading together. We'll pull one card for the overall theme of the year, then a card for each month. We also have a love altar in our bedroom, which is laid out with special mementos from our relationship, and magical things like tarot cards and crystals. But witchcraft can't replace therapy, which is also important for a healthy relationship.

Who is the greatest witch in history?

Singer-songwriter Stevie Nicks gives a great name to witches everywhere.

How do your relationship aura photos work?

We have a booth in the store and visitors can get an individual photo of their aura, followed by a joint photo that shows their combined energy as a couple. We'll sometimes have people who are clearly very sceptical, particularly men who have been roped into it by their partner and literally look like they want nothing to do with it. But when they see the colours of their auras they often cry like babies.

Do you feel that society has recently reconsidered the role of witches?

Absolutely! The witch was historically persecuted because she was wasn't of use - she was poor or too old to procreate. By reclaiming witchcraft, many contemporary women and queer people are saying that power exists outside of the patriarchy. The witch is the ultimate archetype of defiance and there's something really empowering in that.

Which haunts should a first timer to Salem visit?

The Witch House, which is the last building in Salem still standing with a direct connection to the Witch Trials.

What should people know about modern-day witches?

Anyone can be a witch. Jump in, we're a pretty accepting community.



ERICA FELDMANN

Founder and head witch at the HausWitch store, which helps customers bring witchcraft into the domestic sphere

What is love magic?

I have a bit of a different take on love magic as I feel that it all starts with self-love. It's not about imposing your will onto someone else - that's a real no-go in my books. What makes someone attractive is that they feel complete as a person. But there are certainly magical tools to help get to that place.

"The witch is the ultimate archetype of defiance and there's something really empowering in that"

LORELEI STATHOPOULOS

Salem's most famous clairvoyant, specialising in love readings

In the spirit of the cuffing season, how can love magic be used to attract or keep a mate?

Start with some stone magic. Amethyst is good for healing, or malachite for transformations. Once you have your chosen stones, focus on your intention as you shake the stones in your hand to charge them up. A poppet, which is a fabric doll figure filled with herbs such as chamomile, can also help attract the right kind of love. Slip it under the left-hand side of your pillow before you sleep.

You performed a love spell for Katy Perry shortly before she met her partner, Orlando Bloom. Did your spell help her to find love?

Katy arrived in my kitchen, which is where I cast my spells, with these big security men who were getting kind of shifty. I said, "Look, guys, you're in my yard now. Katy is the boss onstage but I'm the boss here." They soon backed off and I did a love spell for Katy. I also predicted that she was going to star in a major TV show, which came true when she became a judge on *American Idol*. I believe that Katy met her great love, Orlando, because she was ready for it. I just helped her put a direct message out into the universe, asking for precisely what she wanted.

Are there ethical considerations or certain rules that you follow when casting a love spell?



① *Sphere*
"I have this sphere to honour my chihuahua, who sadly passed on, and I use it to connect to it. People once hung glass spheres in their windows in the 17th century to keep away the evil spirits."

② *Wand*
"If we're casting a circle [a ritual where a circle is formed] then we might use a wand to draw in magical energy. They can be healing too, especially with headaches."

③ *Stones*
"Each stone has a different energy. I use amethyst for stress relief."

④ *Mojo bag*
"We put different mixtures together depending on what you need. For love, I mix strawberry leaves, rosebuds, chamomile, peppermint and lavender. Add rose petals for passion, or onions for protection."



Yes, just last week I had to turn someone away as their energy was paranoid. I felt a therapist would be better suited to help with their love life.

What's the most memorable love spell that you've cast?

Believe it or not, it was a love spell that I cast on my husband. He asked me for a spell and I was keen on him, so I also added a little secret blend of love herbs and we ended up married. His family always thought I'd put a spell on him and, in a way, they were right!

LORELEI'S APPLE LOVE SPELL

PLANT THE SEEDS OF LOVE WITH SOME VOODOO

Cut the top and bottom off a ripe apple, so you have a disk that's around two inches high.



Place the apple on a dish and pour honey over it to help attract someone who is sweet. Sprinkle with rose petals, strawberry buds and lavender.

Scratch the name of your love interest into a candle. Place the candle on top of the apple and honey, and light it.

Say aloud: "By this apple, honey sweet, my true love I soon will meet. I call on the power of Venus, goddess of love, and ask that she sends me a love from above."

Wiccan high priestess, ordained minister and founder of Witchy Woman Weddings, which crafts bespoke wedding ceremonies and vow renewals for couples

In the spirit of the cuffing season, how can love magic be used to attract or keep a mate?

Candle magic can be used to manifest love. Start by writing a note, something along the lines of “I am worthy of love”. Slide the piece of paper under a candle and light it.

Who is the greatest witch in history?

Morticia from the Addams family has one of the healthiest marriages ever – it doesn’t get much better than Gomez and Morticia.

TARA
MCMULLEN-
KING

What are the key ingredients for a happy union?

I’ve worked with around 100 couples in the past and I’d say that the most successful



① **Crystal ball**
“My crystal ball is made from Labradorite, sometimes referred to as the ‘stone of magic’. It’s a favourite of many Wiccans and witches as it’s associated with intuition.”

② **Quaich**
“This is a traditional Scottish drinking cup that couples sometimes use in my ceremonies. We’ll pour a little scotch in and the couple drink and pass it back and forth. It reminds us of the need to be both apart and together in a relationship. It also looks a bit Game of Thrones!”

③ **Wooden offering bowl with flowers**
“In a wedding ceremony, a couple may leave offerings such as chrysanthemums and red rose petals to gods and goddesses such as Venus or Aphrodite, in the hope of favourable feelings in return.”

④ **Metal pentacle altar tile**
“This star is often referred to as a pentagram. The five points represent each of the elements – earth, air, fire, water and spirit. Most Wiccans consider it a symbol of protection.”



“Consult a lunar calendar before picking a wedding date. Ceremonies held on a new moon bring the energy of fresh starts”

romantic relationships are built on friendship. Understanding each other’s love language is also important.

Any tips for using witchcraft and magic in wedding ceremonies?

Definitely consult a lunar calendar before picking a date. Ceremonies held on a new moon bring the energy of fresh starts. You could also conclude the ceremony by “jumping the broom”. Couples hold hands and jump over an actual broom to symbolise taking a leap of faith and sweeping away past hardships.



Which haunts should a first timer to Salem visit?

The House of the Seven Gables, a waterfront mansion that inspired the author Nathaniel Hawthorne, is always top of my list.

What should people know about modern-day witches?

Witches aren’t just women. There are plenty of male and non-binary witches.

Ⓜ WATCH PRACTICAL MAGIC
✕ FLY TO BOSTON

An aerial photograph of a diver in clear turquoise water. The diver is wearing a mask, snorkel, and fins, and is holding a spear. The water is crystal clear, showing the sandy bottom and some rocks. A dark, rocky shoreline is visible in the upper left corner. The text 'SPEAR SOUND' is overlaid in large white letters, and 'PHOTOGRAPHS: ARON KLEIN' is overlaid in smaller white letters.

SPEAR SOUND

PHOTOGRAPHS: ARON KLEIN



Invasive lionfish have been wreaking havoc on Barbados' coral reefs, but shrewd islanders have taken up spearfishing to curb the influx. Jonnie Bayfield hooks up with some locals to learn the art of the catch



**I'M 20 METRES
UNDER THE
ATLANTIC,
JUST OFF
THE COAST
OF BARBADOS.**

Below me, the seabed is daubed with acid-green sponges and rust-red rock formations. But I'm too nervous to appreciate its beauty, as I am hot on the tail of an eerie, venomous creature that has spread across these waters like a plague.

Barbados is an island of relaxed beaches, easy-going locals and slow sunsets. You'd hardly expect it to also be the epicentre of one of the planet's most unlikely ecological epidemics. The troublesome marine creature at the centre of it all is the lionfish, a beautiful but invasive species that made its way to the island's waters several decades ago and has been slowly chewing through the coral reefs that protect Bajans from waves and storms. For the people of this small country – an island whose vulnerability is only truly revealed when out at sea, looking in at the gnawed cliff edge – the lionfish invasion is not just an inconvenience, but a threat of existential proportions.

The lionfish is off limits to commercial fisheries due to its rocky habitat, so spearing them by hand is the only effective way of culling numbers. In recent years, aided by government initiatives encouraging the practice, spearfishing has been taken up with enthusiasm by locals and tourists alike – despite the creature's intimidating battery of venomous spines.

Each year the island hosts its now legendary lionfish “hunt” as part of its annual Dive Festival, with a week-long programme including sea turtle surveys, shipwreck check-ups, night dives and, of course, rum-soaked beach parties.

I'm visiting the island at the punishingly hot time of the festival to take part in the hunt, which concludes with a giant bonfire cookout. The prickly fish has become something of an island delicacy, grilled up at local “cutter” (sandwich) shops, or crumbed and pan-fried in the dining rooms of five-star hotels. Heard about dealing with your problems? Here, they spear and eat them.

A day before the big hunt, I'm out on the glassy, cerulean water for a practice run with local dive master Phil Mahy (whose dive operation Reefers & Wreckers is one of the island's best) and his gang of Bajan employees who,



the moment you crack a smile, beam back at you with a warmth that matches the weather.

It's unclear how the lionfish, native to the Indo-Pacific, made their way to these warm Caribbean waters, but Phil, with his magnetic Bajan drawl and milky blue eyes, offers up a bit of local legend. "So," he says, anchoring the boat and leaning in with a stillness that belies the choppy waters. "It was the early 00s. An aquarium of lionfish was being transported to the summer home of a wealthy businessman when a storm hit." He pauses for effect, cracking a wry smile. "Some say it was Storm Andrew. It was a big storm and it tipped the

boat. The tanks went in, spilling the lionfish where they did not belong, in the vast Atlantic. And here we are."

The origins of their presence here may be under dispute, but no one can deny that the global spread of lionfish has been prolific. Thanks to rising sea temperatures, the lionfish aren't just a problem in the Caribbean, but in the Mediterranean as well, where temperatures were once too cold for their survival. Though they are still struggling to contain the invasion in parts of the Med, I'm told by marine biologist Nia – who is also with us on

*Opening page & top:
Padi diver Nesaba
Browne*

Above: Heywoods Beach

A diver's legs and fins are visible in the lower-left quadrant of the image. The diver is wearing black wetsuits and white fins with the brand name 'CRESSI' printed on them. The diver is surrounded by a dense, swirling cloud of numerous jellyfish, which appear as translucent, bell-shaped organisms with visible internal structures. The water is a deep, clear blue, and the overall scene is illuminated from above, creating a dramatic, almost ethereal atmosphere. The jellyfish are concentrated in a large, circular area to the right of the diver, suggesting a localized but intense encounter.

“For the people of this small country, the lionfish invasion is not just an inconvenience, but a threat of existential proportions.”

the boat – that lionfish numbers in Barbados are currently “under control” because of grassroots movements such as the annual hunt. “When we first found the lionfish, we reacted like that,” she says, snapping her fingers for effect. It’s something I’ve noticed in my short time here: islanders see themselves as stewards of the water that feeds and protects them. For Bajans, matters of the ocean hit close to home.

“There’s no backdoor in the ocean,” is an old island adage that’s repeated to me almost constantly by the islanders I meet. Only that morning, while waiting for Phil’s boat, a Bajan fisherman said it to me after having emerged, Bond-like, from the water, holding a ring of freshly caught barracuda. It’s a gentle warning – a reminder to treat the sea with care and the appropriate reverence.

Alas, there is no backdoor for me either. The next day, I’m up and ready for the hunt at 8am, the temperature already cresting 29°C. Up on the dive boat, we’re a battalion of 15, both tourists and locals. We’re kitted up – tank, mask, buoyancy jacket – and briefed as if we are destined for the surface of some uncharted planet.

“A shot between the eyes is perfect,” I’m told by a disarmingly maternal dive instructor, who patiently talks me through spear technique like a primary school teacher telling a child not to run with scissors. “Push your thumb through the elastic strap to the top of the spear, go in close, then release.”



Left: Instructor from Barbados Blue diving

Above: Speared lionfish

Sounds easy enough, I think to myself, as the captain anchors the ship over our site. One trigger happy American cries, “Let’s hunt!” We are prepped by the diving instructors like a military operation – breathing regulators are put on like pacifiers; buoyancy jackets drained – and then launched into the bath-warm sea water one by one.

We descend into the deep, dim ocean and hover above the reef, a complex city of dense, interconnected marine life. Diving can be a very monastic activity: all about controlling breath and meditating on the beauty of the ocean – but I’m on high alert for any vibrantly tiger-striped fish. For a while, there’s nothing but swaying,

OFF THE SCALE

FEAST ON LIONFISH AT THESE SPOTS



OISTINS FISH FRY

This casual, locally beloved spot serves that day’s catch fried in takeaway boxes with a side of slaw.

ROGERS SCUBA SHACK

A man of many talents, when Roger isn’t diving, he can be found frying up lionfish every Thursday night in Carlisle Bay.



MARCO-POLO BAR & GRILL

Nestled by Foul Bay, Saint Philip, this chic restaurant offers elevated takes on the local specialty: pan seared or in fluffy fish cakes.

SHAKERS BAR & GRILL

This long-standing hotspot often boasts lionfish as its catch of the day, served beer-battered or blackened.

SPEARFISHING IN BARBADOS

outstretched sponges, and large barrel corals spilling over with small fish that nibble on multicoloured foliage like kids in a sweet shop. Eventually, cresting a rock, I drift past a leather-back turtle – huge, ancient and not interested in entertaining tourists. Caught in a reverie, I scarcely clock that – as the turtle lifts off in search of some peace – there’s a lionfish lurking right behind it, with all the hubris of an apex predator.

Target acquired: this is it. I ready the spear and shift to line up the shot, moving in as close as I can get without grazing those venomous spines. My weapon yanked back as far as the water pressure will allow, I aim. I take the shot – and miss. The lionfish snaps back under a rock, gone. This hunting thing is harder than it looks.

First dive done, we clamber back aboard the boat. The first thing I see is an instructor splayed out on the deck, hand nursed in a heat pack, having been stung by those perilous spines. This is the sacrifice some pay for a healthy reef and fresh fish. Suffice to say, as the second dive looms, I’m a little more anxious than before.

Another brief, another descent. This time, blessed by the spirits of the sea, I spot and spear one within minutes. Then



Above & top: Barbados Blue's Andrew Miller, and barbecued lionfish with breadfruit

Below: Pebbles Bay



two, three, four. I’m on a roll. By my fifth, it’s like I’ve been doing this my whole life.

Nearing sunset, we’re back on the beach, where all Bajan roads seem to lead. As dive boats drift in the water beside us, each dive shop presents their haul, over 80 lionfish in total. Our catches are despined, scaled, filleted, grilled up and dished out with a side of charred breadfruit, smothered in garlic butter. All is washed down with ice-cold beer and a tipsy drift in the shallows. It’s clear that, in the Caribbean, people know how to make the best of a bad situation.

As the sun turns honey gold and slumps into the horizon, I ask Phil what he makes of the whole lionfish saga. In true Bajan style, he shrugs and says, “It is what it is, Jonnie. It is what it is.” This practical approach to a challenging ecosystem – the damage of recent Hurricane Beryl can still be easily spotted across the island – is typical of the islanders I meet. In place of cynicism, Bajans seem to tackle their problems with an infectious optimism, warmth and good humour. To this end, they’re as calm and unfazed as the lionfish they hunt.

Later that night, stumbling home, I get chatting to an elderly lady, a local, on her way to evening church service. She’s lived on the island her entire life and so I ask, casually, “What keeps you here?” The woman cackles and throws up her arms. “Who wouldn’t want to live in paradise?” she says. For the people of Barbados, one prickly little fish invasion is not going to get in the way of a good time.

● Barbados Tourism & Marketing Inc’s (visitbarbados.org) annual Dive Fest takes place in August. Jonnie was a guest of The Rockley (therockleybarbados.com) part of The Ocean Group, where junior suites start at £174 per night per room based on double occupancy on B&B basis (taxes and fees included)

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The spa

HOTEL GUIDE



A moment of zen...

Those wise enough to prioritise self-care appreciate the magic of a good spa. They're sacred - a space to embrace relaxation and rejuvenation so you can be your best self. The following hotels have exceptional spas in which to savour some serenity and get in some prime "me time". Sound steamy? You bet...

There's a delightfully rustic holiday camp vibe to the accommodation at Marian Resort & Spa, with its endearing cabins splayed up the hillside betwixt the north Wales mountains and a graceful amble down to the coast. Lovers of fresh air rejoice. Still, there's no shortage of luxury on hand at the aptly named Serenity Spa, where they're all about nurturing your inner glow and natural vitality - think soothing music, soft lights and subtle scents. Detoxify



and rejuvenate in the modern sauna and steam room, before a bracing soak under the hydrotherapy bucket shower. Treat yourself to a rubdown with pink salt grains, a "hot rocking relax massage" or sustainable honey-based goodness from TRIBE517 before a nightcap at the Lounge Bar - real inner peace.



**Marian
Resort & Spa,
Wales**
THE ONE FOR
RURAL RELAXATION

BODYHOLIDAY, ST LUCIA

The one for 360° wellness



This venerated retreat on the fancy northern coast of St Lucia takes wellness to whole new levels. Behold, an Ayurvedic pavilion - the only one of its kind around these parts, an eye-catching sanctuary with a rolling menu of classes and treatments, most complimentary on a one-per-day basis. Try some thalassotherapy, which caresseses your weary muscles with soothing jets of seawater. Expecting? Take in a nurturing mother-to-be massage. There are bespoke facials, classes on digestive health and stress management, a downright paradisiacal 180m beach facing the irresistibly warm Caribbean. Sunrise yoga, the signature Serenity Massage with essential oils, the prospect of a tipsy evening mingling with fellow travellers in the piano bar... BodyHoliday really strikes a chord.





Hotel Café Royal, London

THE ONE FOR
EXQUISITE
PAMPERING



A glamorous hub for

London's champagne set since way back in the 1860s, Café Royal on London's Regent Street has hosted an eclectic mix of royalty, politicians, creatives and celebrities over its long and storied history. Recently reimagined as a top-tier hotel by architect Sir David Chipperfield,

nowadays it's all about opulence and refinement with snazzy contemporary touches.

That means two-Michelin-star dining by Alex Dilling, a taste of the sweet life courtesy of renowned pastry chef Albert Adrià's effervescent fantasia Cakes & Bubbles, and absinthe escapism at the Green Bar, not to mention fully 159 lavish rooms and suites. And nowhere is it more luxurious than the Akasha Spa, with its roomy pool – big enough to swim laps in – generous sauna, private hammam, Vichy shower and exclusive treatments. Astonishingly zen, considering you're literally right under Regent Street.

The Ozen Collection Maldives

THE ONE FOR INFINITE INDULGENCE

The first Ozen resort

around these parts, Maadhoo, has already made a name for itself as an Edenic, elements-themed haven, with roomy and luxurious “earth” villas under foliage and on the beach, thatched overwater “wind” cottages, and “water” in the form of M6m, the ambitious underwater restaurant. The group’s newer spot – Ozen Reserve Bolifushi – is downright ravishing, too. But the ELENA spa, at both properties, is surely the cherry on the (organic) cake. Bespoke wellness

journeys under Ozen’s “Wellness Your Way” programme offer spa itineraries crafted to lucky guests’ needs, including such modalities as watsu, water dance, Ayurveda, shiatsu, craniosacral and trigger point therapy, with reflexology and reiki classes as part of the all-inclusive service.



MALIBU BEACH INN

The one for a healthy glow



As you’d expect from a first-class hotel just off California’s Pacific Coast Highway, wellness is kind of a big deal at Malibu Beach Inn. Check out its divine white CURE spa providing a plethora of cutting-edge treatments. Think vitamin-infusing IV therapies for nutrient absorption and enhanced mental acuity. Invigorating hydra facials with high-tech serum boosters to further elevate your skincare game. A Sunlighten infrared sauna, ideal for either before or after your life-changing deep tissue massage. All this goodness mere steps from a beach, in a hotel with exceptional in-room amenities – Sleep Number smart beds, which individually tailor softness, temperature and mattress orientation to your needs, and futuristic heart rate-lowering Therabody smart goggles. Feeling great never looked so cool.



A prettier Palladian

pile you never did see. Grantley Hall, magnificently set against the backdrop of the Yorkshire Dales, is part 17th-century palace, part Georgian country pile. Its centrepiece is surely the Three Graces Spa, with its enviable subterranean vaulted indoor pool, hydrotherapy pool and snow room. Be sure you take time to linger in the swish, contemporary designer Nordic Spa Garden with its twin, custom installed ice baths from



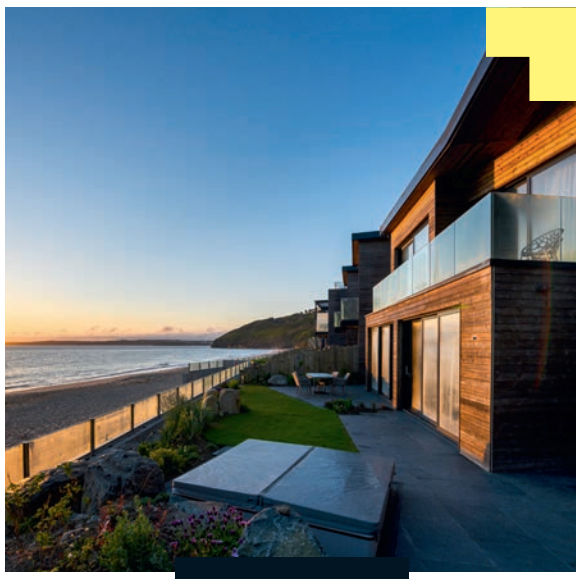
Brass Monkey, then the bespoke steam sauna with idyllic views of the grounds. When you're quite finished indulging, there's a Michelin-starred restaurant with a 10-course tasting menu by local chef Shaun Rankin. Plus a 3D body scanner and cryotherapy chamber. Doesn't get cooler than that.



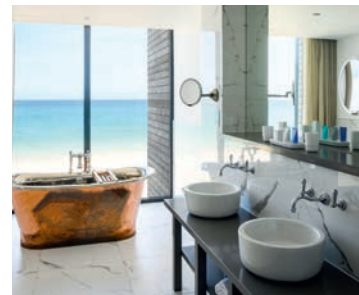
**Grantley Hall,
Ripon**
THE ONE FOR
ROYAL TREATMENT

CARBIS BAY HOTEL & ESTATE

The one for **chill waves**



Perhaps it's the show-stopping outdoor heated pool, with its to-die-for infinity ocean views. Or the opportunity to take in a soothing soak with a glass



of champers in the hydropool or hot tub. The C Bay Spa at Carbis Bay – that luxury hotel in Cornwall which, you may recall, hosted the likes of Joe Biden and Angela Merkel at the G7 summit in 2021 – is appropriately world class. Indulge in a rejuvenating organic facial from leading British brand Bamford, with groundbreaking soy stem cells and hyaluronic acid. Or a Voya organic seaweed marine eye treatment with decongesting lymphatic massage. Or yoga in a swish studio with floor-to-ceiling sea views. All at an impressibly contemporary hotel with a restaurant led by Michelin-starred Adam Handling. Oh, you will like to be beside the seaside.



Liverpool-born Jodie Comer was feted for her portrayal of assassin Villanelle in TV series *Killing Eve*.

Ticket to ride

Cinema takes its inspiration from all over: theatre, novels... but a photobook? Danny Lyon's 1968 *The Bikeriders* is the unusual source for the film of the same name, starring Jodie Comer and Austin Butler (*pictured*). The US photographer spent the mid-60s following the Outlaws bike club in Chicago. That's been tweaked to the "Vandals" by writer-director Jeff Nichols – and he's added Tom Hardy.

© WATCH THE BIKERIDERS

65-71// Movies

Get your laughs this horror season with *Lisa Frankenstein*, *Abigail*, *Late Night with the Devil* and *Thanksgiving*, plus get all emosh for *Inside Out 2*.

73-77// Television

Mo'Nique sprints out of the blocks for Black History Month, *Blur* get back together and Jenna Coleman goes deeper for *The Jetty*.



79-82 // Audio

Stone take their inspiration from all over for new album *Fear Life for a Lifetime*, plus we get on an EDM tip with John Summit and Gorgon City.



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 October.

A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

WHAT'S ON

OCTOBER

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

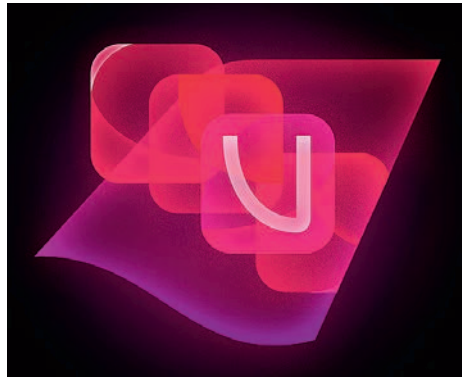
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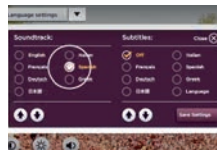
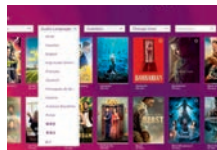
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Viewing guide

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BENNETT WINCH

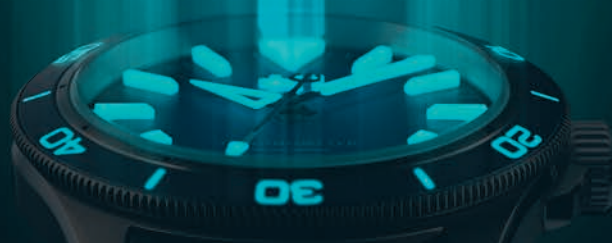
HANDMADE IN ENGLAND



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Gone are the days of taming unruly suit bags in high winds held only by an exposed hanger, while your wheelie case goes for a wander down the airport ramp. The Bennett Winch Suit Carrier Holdall combines a garment bag and a duffel into a single piece of luggage for those who seek a smarter way to travel.

'Brightling'



Despite its 10.95mm height, the Trident C60 Pro 300 'Lumière' leaps from your wrist. (Just like it jumped off this page.) Its brightness results from proudly protruding indices and the logo they encircle. Featuring facets finely machined to tolerances of 0.03mm, these mini-monoliths are super-legible in daylight. But it's the Globolight®, the unique luminous ceramic from which they're hewn, that produces their astounding, super-brilliance at night. And inspired this timepiece's name. The light show doesn't end there. Carved from titanium, the 41mm case incorporates a second sapphire crystal displaying its super-accurate movement. But it's not the back of this beautiful tool watch you're buying into. Is it?

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WHAT'S ON MOVIES

OCTOBER

SCARES, LAUGHS AND DRAMA – IT'S ALL HERE

DEAD FUNNY

How horror comedies tweak classic scary movie tropes

► HALLOWEEN IS A TIME FOR scares, sure. But also mischief. And it was ever so. Within just five years of Mary Shelley's landmark horror novel *Frankenstein* hitting the shelves in 1818, humorous adaptations of the Gothic yarn began appearing on the London stage. Pulling off the perfect "horror comedy" requires impeccable judgment on the part of filmmakers. Too funny? It's no longer scary. Too scary? It's just not funny. Let's look at a few classic scary-movie tropes and the new horror-comedies that subvert them with such deadly wit.

Girl meets ghoul Found footage

Horror films have imagined doomed love affairs with ghoulish figures since the 1819 short story *The Vampyre*, considered the progenitor of vampire romance fiction. Zombies aren't usually the subject of lust, but new film *Lisa Frankenstein* (2024) breaks the mould in fine style, making the undead star a romantic lead. A zom com, if you will.

Most famously executed on 1999's *The Blair Witch Project*, the conceit of found footage is that you're watching what really happened through the shaky amateur lens of IRL witnesses. New horror *Late Night with the Devil* wittily deals with a demonic possession (another trope) at a TV station. Shockumentary, anyone?

Clockwise from top: Lisa Frankenstein, Late Night with the Devil, Thanksgiving and Abigail

“TOO FUNNY? IT'S NO LONGER SCARY. TOO SCARY? IT'S JUST NOT FUNNY

A masked killer Creepy kids

From *Ghostface* in the *Scream* franchise to Michael Myers in *Halloween*, the masked murderer is an evergreen slasher staple. Eli Roth's new hit *Thanksgiving* uses a creepy, seasonally appropriate pilgrim mask to hide the bad guy's identity. Turns out – spoiler – he was a pillar of the community all along. Yes, just like in *Scooby Doo*.

Can cute urchins also be fiendish killers? It's a venerable trick. Just think of that girl in *The Omen*, or Brit classic *The Midwich Cuckoos*. The dainty tween star of new flick *Abigail* turns the tables on her kidnappers, making bloody revenge look like child's play.

© WATCH LISA FRANKENSTEIN, ABIGAIL, LATE NIGHT WITH THE DEVIL AND THANKSGIVING

HOT RIGHT NOW



Fresh Kills ❤️



Emily Bader, Jennifer Esposito	120 mins
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▶ **A MAFIA MOVIE TOLD FROM A FEMALE PERSPECTIVE IS A RARE** proposition. So rare, in fact, that director-star Jennifer Esposito struggled to get financing for the project. Set against the backdrop of a vividly recreated 1980s Staten Island, it revolves around a crime family who have moved to the suburbs but can't escape the ever-present danger of their past. Among all this is young Rose, slowly becoming aware that her family is just that bit different to everybody else – and that her beloved father is actually a powerful mafia kingpin. What emerges is shot through with Esposito's passion for the story and her experiences growing up on Staten Island.



THE BIKERIDERS ❤️

15

Austin Butler, Jodie Comer	116 mins
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With a cast this good, the plot hardly matters, but here it is anyway: headstrong Kathy is drawn to Benny, a member of motorcycle club the Vandals. However, dangerous changes are afoot at the Vandals, and Benny must choose between love and loyalty.



BOY KILLS WORLD

18

Bill Skarsgård, Jessica Rothe	111 mins
----------------------------------	----------

As played by Skarsgård, Boy is a deaf lad with a big imagination. When his parents are murdered, he trains for revenge and things soon get bloody. If you have a taste for high-octane brutal action, then you need this on your list, maybe even at the very top.



INSIDE OUT 2 ❤️



Amy Poehler, Maya Hawke	120 mins
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Pixar's animated delight continues with Riley's journey to high school, where her emotions are joined by new, chaotic ones like Anxiety and Envy. A deep dive into the emotional turbulence of adolescence, this is visually stunning and heartfelt.

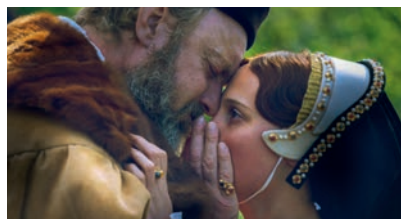


KNEECAP ❤️

18

Michael Fassbender, Kneecap	105 mins
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Following the rise of the real-life rap group, this boisterous biopic takes us on a joyride through the streets of Belfast, showcasing beats, rebellion and the never-say-die spirit of the underdog. It's bold, unapologetic and very swearsy.



FIREBRAND

15

Alicia Vikander, Jude Law	120 mins
------------------------------	----------

A historical drama revolving around Henry VIII you say? Sold. This one concentrates on the period during which Catherine Parr (Vikander) was named regent while Henry was fighting abroad. When he returns – ill and paranoid – Cath finds herself fighting for survival. See box

All the feels

Who's who in *Inside Out 2*?

1 //

Anxiety

Our hero Riley is now a teen, and her old feelings – Joy, Anger, Fear, Sadness, Disgust – have company in the shape of Anxiety (Maya Hawke).



2 //

Ennui

Puberty usually comes with waves of huffy, downcast boredom, aka Ennui, played by Adèle Exarchopoulos.



3 //

Embarrassment

What could be more teen than awkwardness in the face of choppy emotional weather? Meet Embarrassment (Paul Walter Hauser).



4 //

Envy

The green-eyed monster, played by Ayo Edebiri, is a nuisance. But could she help Riley suss out what she really wants in an unfamiliar social sitch?



WATCH INSIDE OUT 2

VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES WORDS: ANDY HILL

THE CREEPS



Lisa Frankenstein

15

Kathryn Newton,
Cole Sprouse

101 mins

► DESCRIBED AS A “COMING OF RAGE” LOVE STORY WITH DISTINCT shades of Tim Burton, writer Diablo Cody’s latest centres on misunderstood teen goth Lisa (Newton) who lives near a haunted graveyard and spends a fair bit of her time hanging out there. After a chance encounter with a bolt of lightning, she finds herself entangled with a reanimated Victorian-era corpse (Sprouse) and embarks on a romance with him. But now it gets really interesting, and possibly even darker, as the lovestruck couple embark on a macabre quest to find fresh body parts in order to restore the creature’s human form. This is a horror comedy that combines Cody’s sharp wit with a retro 1980s vibe. *See opener*



ABIGAIL

18

Melissa Barrera,
Dan Stevens

109 mins

It should be a simple plan for these crims when they kidnap young ballet prodigy Abigail. Taking her to a secluded manor they wait for her rich dad to pony up. However, it soon becomes clear that Abigail is no ordinary little girl – and this is no ordinary kidnap. *See opener*



THE WATCHED

15

Dakota Fanning,
Georgina Campbell

101 mins

From Ishana Shyamalan (daughter of M Night) comes this horror-shrouded tale of a young artist (Fanning) who becomes stranded in a forest in western Ireland. Taking shelter with three strangers, the group find themselves stalked by mysterious nocturnal creatures.

SHORT SHORTS



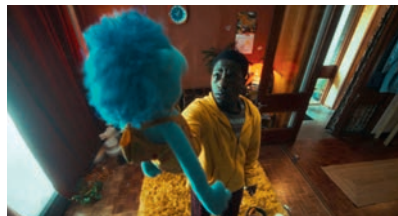
The Therapist ❤️

Ash Barba,
Brett Curtis

12 mins



► **HILARIOUS, HEARTFELT SHORT IN WHICH DIRECTOR AKWASI POKU** proposes the local barbershop as an underrated haven for emotional therapy. The story is set after months of lockdown-induced isolation, when Jaydon (Brett Curtis) walks into the barbershop for a fresh cut, but instead gets a session with the Therapist (played by *Top Boy*'s Ash Barba) that dives into the heart of his low spirits. Through a combination of surreal flashbacks and warm barbershop banter comes a slice of Black British life that has nods to David Fincher's aesthetic flair, and a touch of surrealism. *The Therapist* is more than just a film, it's a conversation starter, a visual feast and an unexpected love letter to barbershops.



MEAT PUPPET



David Jonsson,
Mairéad Tyers

12 mins

Comedy short in which things happen in quick succession: firstly, Oz misses his girlfriend's graduation. Secondly, puppet imprisons his soul. To save his relationship – and survive – Oz must grow up.



FAVOURITES



Stephen Curry,
Sibylla Budd

5 mins

A huge film-festival hit, this comedy focuses on two parents who face an impossible choice when their family camping trip turns deadly. None of their options are good at this stage.

FROM THE HEART



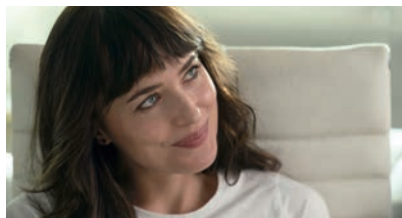
I USED TO BE FUNNY

15

Rachel Sennott,
Olga Petsa

105 mins

Rachel Sennott stars as a struggling comic dealing with PTSD, who must decide whether to join the search for a missing girl she used to nanny. A blend of uneasy comedy and drama.



AM I OK?

15

Dakota Johnson,
Sonoya Mizuno

86 mins

When Lucy (Johnson) discovers that bestie Jane (Mizuno) has been offered a job in London, it causes Lucy to re-examine her life, her friendships and – mostly – her sexuality.



THE PRESENT

PG

Isla Fisher,
Greg Kinnear

86 mins

Family comedy about Taylor, a quirky kid who fixes a clock that lets him rewind time. When his parents announce a separation, he tries – and hilariously fails – to keep them together.

TOTES EMOSH

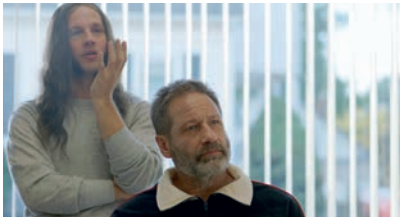


GREY MATTER ♥

12

Eloise Smyth, Stephanie Beacham | 95 mins

Funny and touching, this follows young, free-spirited Chloe when she has to become a stay-at-home carer for her Nan, who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Together, they decide to have some fun.



REVERSE THE CURSE

1

David Duchovny, Stephanie Beatriz | 105 mins

When Ted moves in with his terminally ill dad, Marty, he's determined to make Marty's final months meaningful. Marty's wish? For the Red Sox to end their losing streak. Ted's solution is joyfully creative.



Tuesday ♥

15

Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Lola Petticrew | 111 mins

► WE'RE ACCUSTOMED TO SEEING JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS BEING sweet and funny in *Seinfeld*, *Veep* and her superb collabs with director Nicole Holofcener. Here she tackles a full-on dramatic role in a film that folds fairy-tale elements into a genuinely tear-jerking scenario (so consider yourself warned). Louis-Dreyfus plays a mother, Zora, whose daughter, Tuesday, is visited by a talking bird of Death (or is it a parrot?), intent on taking her away. Determined, the mother refuses to let the bird take her daughter without a fight. Louis-Dreyfus is incredible here. Lola Petticrew as Tuesday is just as good. The result is a heartrending yet profound brew of drama and fantasy.

Yass Queen
How accurate is *Firebrand*?

Another Tudor drama eh? Kinda. *Firebrand* is inspired by historical novel *The Queen's Gambit*. Not to be confused with

Netflix's soft pawn Cold War show, this loosely tells the tale of Henry VIII's sixth missus, Catherine Parr (Alicia Vikander).

Ah, the one who survived. Well, "divorced" Anne of Cleves technically outlived them all, not to split hairs. *Firebrand* does a grand job bigging up Parr as a savvy, independent woman who massively influenced England's religious affairs.

Who plays Henry? Jude Law puts in one of the all-time great portrayals of the horny sovereign, who we meet as a grouchy fatso with ulcerated legs, by turns sexually squishing his beloved Parr then forcing her to wash his gross leg ulcers.

Ick. Indeed. The costumes and hairdos are gorgeous, though, and true to life by all accounts. But beware – Parr wasn't at Henry's bedside when he died, as the movie suggests. In the name of a good yarn, the writers clearly lost their heads.



WATCH FIREBRAND

BASED ON A TRUE STORY



Young Woman and the Sea ♥



Daisy Ridley,
Tilda Cobham-Hervey

90 mins

► **IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE STORY OF GERTRUDE "TRUDY" EDERLE, NOW** is the time to find out. Gertrude, who died in 2003 at the grand old age of 98, was an American competition swimmer, Olympic champion and world record-holder who, in 1926, became the first woman to swim across the English Channel. Playing the "Queen of the Waves" in this handsome biopic is Daisy Ridley, taking us on a journey from Gertrude as a young girl, barred from swimming, to a world record-breaking athlete and then into the treacherous waters of the Channel, with sexist coaches and jellyfish stings just two of the hurdles along the way. A superb cast also includes Stephen Graham and Christopher Eccleston.



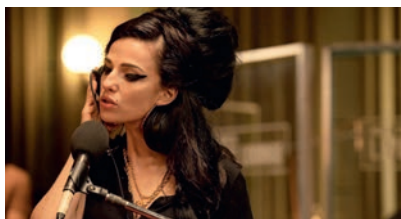
SELMA

12

David Oyelowo,
Cuba Gooding Jr

127 mins

An acclaimed look at Martin Luther King Jr's 1965 Civil Rights march, this sees Oyelowo outstanding as King, resolute in the face of violent opposition as he fights to secure equal rights for African-Americans. Though the film is hard-hitting, it never feels like a history lesson.



BACK TO BLACK ♥

15

Marisa Abela,
Jack O'Connell

123 mins

Abela is uncanny as Amy Winehouse in this biopic from director Sam Taylor-Johnson. Telling the tale of Amy's rise to global fame – a journey that saw her demons come to the surface – this is an unflinching look at the modern celebrity machine.

Movie quiz

Take on our featured films

1 //

The tagline for Catherine Parr biopic *Firebrand* is "Henry VIII had six wives. One survived" – but that's not exactly true. What is the mnemonic to remember what happened to the English king's spouses?

2 //

For drama *Reverse the Curse*, actor-writer-director David Duchovny has reunited with Evan Handler, Pamela Adlon and Jason Beghe from which 2007 comedy-drama series?

3 //

Alzheimer's drama *Grey Matter* features shoulder-padded 80s icon Stephanie Beacham, who was known for what role in American soap opera *Dynasty*?

4 //

Jennifer Esposito's *Fresh Kills* is not the first time star Annabella Sciorra has strayed into organised crime onscreen. In which TV series – touted as one of the best of all time – did she feature from 2001-04?

5 //

Tom Hardy is said to keep a prop from every movie he works on, so what do you reckon he took home from motorcycle club drama *The Bikeriders*?

● *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
- All of Us Strangers
- Am I OK?
- Anyone But You
- Arcadian
- Asphalt City
- Babes
- Back to Black
- Bad Boys: Ride or Die
- The Beekeeper
- The Bikeriders
- The Blind



Bob Marley: One Love

- The Book of Clarence
- Boy Kills World
- The Boys in the Boat
- Challengers
- Civil War
- Coat

D-H

- DC League of Super-Pets
- The Dead Don't Hurt
- The Delinquents
- Dream Scenario
- Drift
- Drive-Away Dolls
- Dune: Part 2
- Eileen
- The Equalizer 3
- The Exorcist: Believer
- Ezra
- The Fall Guy
- Firebrand

- The First Omen
- French Girl
- Fresh Kills
- Freud's Last Session



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga

- The Garfield Movie
- Gasoline Rainbow
- Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire
- Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire
- The Great Escaper
- Grey Matter
- Hit Man
- How to Have Sex
- The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes

I-L

- The Idea of You
- Immaculate
- Inside Out 2
- If
- Insecure
- In the Land of Saints and Sinners
- In Too Deep
- Irena's Vow
- The Iron Claw
- ISS
- I Used to Be Funny
- Joika
- Justice League: Crisis on Infinite Earths Part 1
- Kinds of Kindness
- Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes
- Kneecap
- Kung Fu Panda 4

- Land of Bad
- Laroy, Texas
- Last Call
- Late Bloomers
- Late Night with the Devil
- The Lesson
- Lights Out
- Lisa Frankenstein
- The Long Game
- Love Lies Bleeding

M-Q

- Madame Web
- May December
- Miller's Girl
- The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare
- Monkey Man
- Mothers' Instinct
- Música
- Napoleon
- One Life
- Ordinary Angels
- Origin
- Out of Darkness
- The Pod Generation



Poor Things

- The Present
- A Quiet Place: Day One

R-V

- Race for Glory: Audi vs Lancia
- Red Right Hand
- Reverse the Curse
- Ricky Stanicky
- Riddle of Fire
- Road House

- Role Play
- Scrambled
- Self Reliance
- Someone Like You
- Sting
- Summer Camp
- Sweet Dreams
- Tarot
- Thanksgiving
- Tuesday
- Turtles All the Way Down
- Unsung Hero
- Upgraded

W-Z

- The Watched
- We Grown Now
- Wicked Little Letters
- Young Woman and the Sea
- Your Lucky Day

VERA CLASSICS

- About Time
- Call Me By Your Name
- Carol
- Chef
- The Damned United
- Edge of Tomorrow
- Ghostbusters
- Gremlins
- Harry Potter...
- Horrible Bosses
- The Karate Kid
- The Lego Movie
- Memento
- Moneyball (2011)
- Moonlight
- My Own Private Idaho
- Police Academy
- Practical Magic
- Selma
- Starman
- The Terminator

INTERNATIONAL

- 12.12: The Day
- Aburo
- Ajosepo
- The Animal Kingdom
- Baahubali 2: The Conclusion
- Bachelor Party
- Bala
- Beomjoedosi 4
- Bheed
- Bholaa
- Born to Fly
- La Chimera
- Creation of the Gods I
- The Delinquents
- Doctor G
- Dream Girl 2
- Drishyam 2
- The Ex-Files 4: Marriage Plan
- Fallen Leaves
- Fly Me to the Moon
- The Great Indian Family
- Golmaal - Fun Unlimited
- If You Are the One III
- Io Capitano
- Insecure
- Jawan
- Kill
- The Kingdom: Flame of Destiny
- Main Atal Hoon
- Malaika
- Meeting Funmi's Parents
- Merry Men 3
- Monster
- The Movie Teller
- Naguvina Hoogala Mele
- Ondu Sarala Prema Katha
- Perfect Days
- Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani
- Satyaprem Ki Katha
- Shiv Shastri Balboa
- The Silent Intruder
- Sirf Ek Banda Kaafi Hai
- Suzume
- The Teachers' Lounge
- Three of Us
- The Three Musketeers: Milady
- Tiger 3
- Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar
- What About Us?
- YOLO
- The Zone of Interest

SHORT FILMS

- Favourites
- Favours
- For People In Trouble
- In Too Deep
- Meat Puppet
- The Snip
- The Therapist
- They Grow Up So Fast

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

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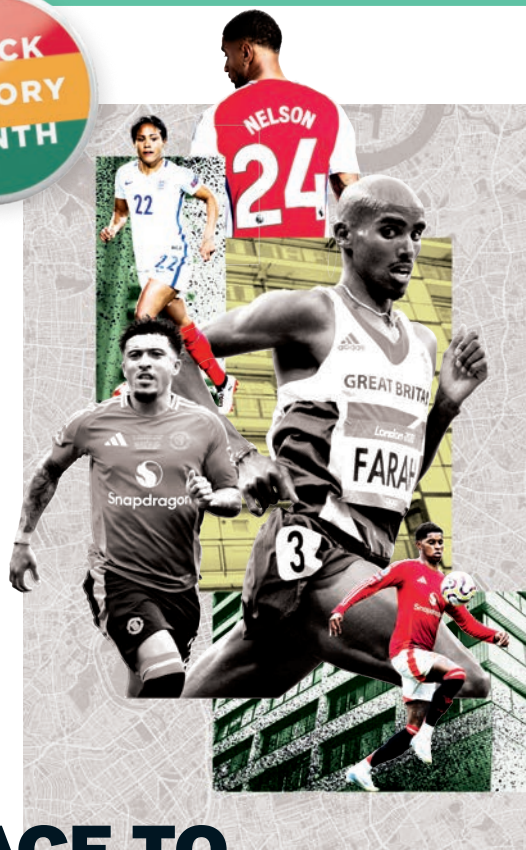
In partnership with 

WHAT'S ON

TELEVISION

OCTOBER

GROUNDBREAKING PERSONALITIES



RACE TO THE TOP



Uju Asika celebrates the inspiring Black sportspeople who have fought their way into history

➤ **AS A PARENTING AUTHOR AND MUM, I'M** always on the lookout for role models. Representation matters, not just for Black kids but for people from all backgrounds. My sons grew up wanting to emulate Ian Wright and, later, Bukayo Saka. To a child, these athletes can seem like gods, but what makes them impressive are their human stories.

South of the River charts the origin stories of players like Jadon Sancho and Reiss Nelson,

who rose from deprived south London neighbourhoods to score big in the Premier League. Executive-produced by Rio Ferdinand (who grew up on a Peckham estate), this three-part series also highlights community sports as one way of keeping local kids from falling through the cracks.

For many, sport can be a refuge and an escape route. Take Sir Mo Farah (real name Hussein Abdi Kahin), whose extraordinary life story is unveiled in *The Real Mo Farah*. Born in war-torn Somaliland, Farah lost his father to gunfire when he was just four. At nine, he was trafficked to the UK and forced into child labour. It was his early athletic prowess that set him on a different path. He went on to win four Olympic gold medals.

Farah's story is a powerful reminder that every human deserves safety, empathy and a fair start. The fact that he had to hide his illegal status for so long should give us all cause to reflect.

Today, Farah is known for his incredible charity work. He's one of many exemplary Black sports heroes using their profiles to affect change — like Marcus Rashford and his free school meals campaign, or former Lioness Alex Scott and her domestic violence advocacy. Beyond sports, the African Caribbean contribution to Britain is incalculable.

Yet, while 43% of Premier League and 34% of English Football League players were Black in 2020-21, only 4.4% of professional football managers in England were Black. I dream of a day when we're no longer struggling to level the playing field.

● Uju Asika is the author of *Bringing Up Race, A World for Me and You* and *Raising Boys Who Do Better*. @babesabouttown

📺 WATCH SOUTH OF THE RIVER & THE REAL MO FARAH

HISTORY MAKERS



Black boxing great **Bill Richmond** was feted at King George IV's court in 1821 and sparred with Lord Byron.



Arthur Wharton was England's first Black pro footballer and, on 3 July 1886, became the first man to run 100 yards in 10 seconds.



Six-time Olympian and javelin superstar **Tessa Sanderson** became the first Black British woman to win gold — at LA in 1984.



At the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000, **Denise Lewis** became the first European to win gold in the heptathlon.

MUST WATCH



Blur: To The End ❤️

15

Music	104 mins
-------	----------

► **FEW BRITISH BANDS CAN BOAST A HISTORY WITH AS MUCH DRAMATIC oomph as Blur.** Emerging first as baggy also-rans back in 1991, they then reinvented themselves, discovering their inner Kinks with the albums *Modern Life is Rubbish* and *Parklife*. They went on to release a series of acclaimed LPs, expanding their sound and then... went quiet. This film documents their reunion after almost a decade apart, as band members reconvene to record the album that became *The Ballad of Darren*. Despite plenty of water under the bridge, the summit was emotionally difficult. This documentary manages to be both a portrait of a band and a deeply felt study of friendship.

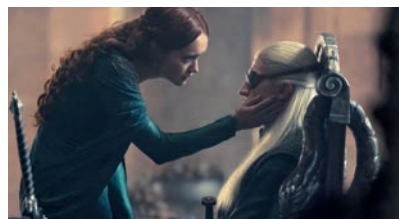


HIGH & LOW: JOHN GALLIANO

15

Culture	112 mins
---------	----------

Documentary charting controversial designer John Galliano's career, from his tenure at Dior to his dramatic fall from grace and eventual comeback. What emerges is a gripping tale of creative brilliance and personal demons – all set in the volatile world of high fashion.



HOUSE OF THE DRAGON ❤️

18

Box set	Up to 69 mins
---------	---------------

Here's the prequel to *Game of Thrones* and this is equally packed with action, political intrigue and Machiavellian action, as an internal succession war kicks off within the legendary House Targaryen. We have the whole of the incredible second season onboard.



HOT ONES ❤️

!

Factual	25 mins
---------	---------

For anyone who's ever yearned for a TV show all about hot chicken wings, and the appreciation of said wings by various entertainers and sportspeople (like F1 champ Lewis Hamilton, *above*), we present *Hot Ones*! See box right

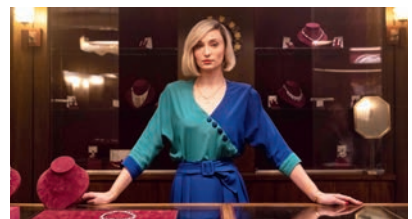


UNTOLD: THE RISE AND RISE OF TAYLOR SWIFT

PG

Music	27 mins
-------	---------

How did a country girl turn heartbreak into hit records and global fame? Find out in this documentary detailing her journey from teen hopeful to the planet's brightest star. Swiftly scandals, ex-boyfriends and a killer soundtrack – it's all here.



JOAN ❤️

15

Box set	47 mins
---------	---------

If you thought Sophie Turner was sensational as Sansa Stark in *Game of Thrones*, wait until you get a load of her in this 1980s-set biopic-cum-drama. Joan steals diamonds from her boss and becomes one of history's most notorious jewel thieves. All of series one is onboard.

Hot topic

Spicy nuggets from *Hot Ones*



1 //



Sweating pure chilli, tennis idol **SERENA WILLIAMS** reveals many years ago she tried, unsuccessfully, to cash her first million-dollar check at a drive-through ATM.

2 //



CHILDISH GAMBINO - aka Donald Glover - explores the contradiction between Glover the self-deprecating comedian and Gambino the braggadocious hip-hop star.

3 //



Seldom starstruck, *Hot Ones* host Sean Evans is so overwhelmed he lets his guard down to confess his love for Foo Fighters frontman **DAVE GROHL**.

4 //



Pop star **SABRINA CARPENTER** talks songwriting, cats and her obsessive knowledge of Beatles trivia, all the while battling painful spicy tears.

WATCH HOT ONES

HIGH DRAMA



The Jetty ♥



Box set

58 mins

► **WE DO LIKE CRIME DRAMA IN THE UK AND IF IT STARS JENNA COLEMAN** even better. Here she plays Detective Ember Manning, who finds herself embroiled in a dark and twisted case as she investigates a mysterious fire at a holiday home in a picturesque Lancashire town. As she digs deeper, Manning unearths a complex web involving a true-crime podcaster obsessed with a long-forgotten missing person's cold case, as well as an illicit love triangle between a man in his twenties and two underage girls. The result is intense, powerful drama - a dark, compelling portrayal of how women navigate a male-dominated world, complete with smart twists and relevant social commentary. All of series one is here.



COBRA: REBELLION 15

Box set

Up to 50 mins

Elite counter-terrorism operatives fighting global threats? Check. High-stakes missions and intricate conspiracies? Double-check. Now in its third season (which shows in its entirety onboard), *COBRA: Rebellion* definitely brings the action.



THE WAY ♥



Box set

45 mins

Created by Michael Sheen and documentarian Adam Curtis, a union steward is haunted by a tragic past in this bold three-parter (all of which is on Vera). When he tries to broker peace he is double-crossed by management and his family soon find themselves on the run.

PUNCHLINES



Curb Your Enthusiasm ❤️ ⚠️

Box set	Up to 40 mins
---------	---------------

► **FOR OVER TWO DECADES NOW, THE CO-CREATOR OF SEINFELD,** Larry David, has played himself in this insanely brilliant comedy – all the more impressive when you consider that it's largely improvised. The formula has remained largely the same: a sprinkling of celebrity guest stars tend to feature, but mainly we're with Larry who, whether at work, home or around town, never fails to take a buttock-clenchingly embarrassing situation and turn it into an even more buttock-clenchingly embarrassing situation. As we join this 12th season (all of which is onboard), Larry is arrested for violating the Election Integrity Act of 2021 in Atlanta. Cringe-making? Yes. Funny? Oh, yes.



BIG BOYS ❤️ 15

Box set	27 mins
---------	---------

The Times called this sitcom about two lads dealing with grief and sexuality “one of the most funny, tender, profound, sad-happy comedies [of the] year”. We have the whole of the second season onboard.



FANTASMAS ⚠️

Drama	30 mins
-------	---------

Set in NYC, the mainly sketch-based show from Julio Torres, known for his “magic realism” comedy, blends laughs and fantasy to tell the over-arching tale of Julio’s search for a lost golden oyster.

FANTASY



SWEET TOOTH ❤️ ⚠️ 12

Box set	Up to 56 mins
---------	---------------

This blend of fantasy and adventure is set in a world where human-animal hybrids roam. The second season, which shows onboard, goes further into Gus’s quest for identity and survival.



THE RISING ❤️ ⚠️

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

Supernatural mystery *The Rising* focuses on the murder of Neve. Who did it? It’s a two-pipe problem for sure, but the first hurdle is this: how will she investigate when no one can see her? It’s all onboard.



THE WALKING DEAD: DARYL DIXON ❤️ 15

Box set	60 mins
---------	---------

As all *Walking Dead* fans know: the dead may walk but Daryl runs the show. Expect more guts, glory and growling walkers in this spin-off, as all of the first series screens on Vera.

PROPER TUNES



WALDBÜHNE 2024: A SUMMER NIGHT, FIRE & PASSION ♥

Culture	83 mins
---------	---------

Berliner Philharmoniker’s Waldbühne concert is conducted by Kirill Petrenko and features piano whizz Yuja Wang. Mussorgsky and Ravel’s greatest hits fill out the programme.



THEY ALL CAME OUT TO MONTREUX

Culture	60 mins
---------	---------

The story of the Montreux Jazz Festival and its irrepressible founder, Claude Nobs, is told in this series, which kicks off here with Nobs’ groundbreaking brainwave.



Maestra ♥

Culture	88 mins
---------	---------

➤ **SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT HERE, WITH AN INTIMATE LOOK AT** the personal and professional challenges faced by women in the male-dominated world of orchestral conducting. We begin as the conductors gather in Paris to compete in “La Maestra”, the world’s only competition exclusively for women in this field. Competitors include Zoe, a mother of young twins striving to prove to her children that anything is possible, and Ustina, a Ukrainian conductor grappling with the turmoil in her homeland. *Maestra* beautifully captures their struggles, triumphs and the camaraderie that binds them, offering a compelling narrative of perseverance and the pursuit of artistic excellence.

On tap
Mindfulness
at your
fingertips

Poppy Delbridge is a coach-practitioner and leading advocate of “tapping”, a mindfulness technique that relies on fast tapping of select energy centres to unlock mental-health benefits.



Motivation

By targeting electrical pathways, or “meridians”, in your body, tapping has been shown in studies to disrupt negative thought patterns and help you complete long-term creative projects, or abandon bad habits.

Mood

Poppy got into tapping during a stressful time in her life. With daily tapping, she – and fans including Oprah Winfrey and Fearne Cotton – have achieved mood-lifting results and stress alleviation on a par with more mainstream therapies.

Skincare

By tapping the main energy centres on the face daily for just five minutes you can achieve lymphatic drainage, boost collagen creation and create radiance in a safe, convenient fashion. Touch!

© WATCH RAPID TAPPING

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WHAT'S ON AUDIO

OCTOBER

RUNNING THE MUSICAL GAMUT – FROM CLUB TO INDIE

“WE TAKE INSPIRATION FROM EVERYWHERE”

Scousers **STONE** are all about genre-hopping, Insta banter and their home city, they tell Robin Murray

➤ “LIVERPOOL NEEDS MORE VENUES,” says charismatic Stone frontman Fin Power. The awesome foursome's new LP, *Fear Life for a Lifetime*, offers glorious indie with a pop sensibility and club production. Here's Fin and drummer Alex Smith on what makes them tick.

Hey Stone, I love your sense of humour.

Fin: We're just ourselves on socials – people like that. As a group, we can be chaotic... and when that's captured it can be pretty funny!

“MAYBE IT'S A SUBCONSCIOUS THING, BUT OUR SONGS ALWAYS SOUND GREAT LIVE

Musically there's a real 00s indie vibe about you

Alex: People love putting us in boxes, but we're every genre you could possibly name. We take inspiration from everywhere. People don't know where to

put us, but I think being individual is what people like about us.

You've got anthems to spare, lads.

Fin: Thanks! We never really intend to do anything – our songs are just how we feel in

the moment. Maybe it's a subconscious thing, but our songs always sound great live.

Do you write together?

Fin: Everybody contributes. We're a very close-knit band when it comes to songwriting.

Being from Liverpool, do fans in America automatically associate you with the Beatles?

Alex: You're always going to get it if you're from Liverpool, aren't you? As much as that's stifling, it's also handy. At least people know where it is! We love our community – without them, there would be no Stone. On our last tour, all the support acts were from Liverpool. We like to give back wherever we can.

You're one of the hardest working bands out there right now.

Fin: We're obsessed. That's the easiest way of putting it. I never stop thinking about it. It's a craze. Once I've started, I don't like stopping.

🎧 LISTEN TO FEAR LIFE FOR A LIFETIME

Left to right: Sarah (bass), Fin (vocals/guitar), Alex (drums) and Elliot (guitar)



Berwyn ♥

Who Am I
R&B & SOUL

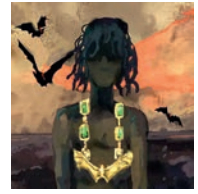
➤ **RIGHT NOW, TRINIDAD-BORN BERWYN DU BOIS LIVES IN LONDON.** But for a while – just after moving from his birthplace – a mix-up with papers meant that he did not officially exist. Luckily, he did actually exist and, inspired by his experiences, began recording a musical document of his time as an immigrant of no status. One of the songs was *Dear Immigration*, which acts as a tentpole for the album *Who Am I* and, like the rest of the album, is a place where street-sharp beats meet existential dread. He calls his music “folk R&B”, but even that golf-umbrella-sized term doesn’t quite do justice to the lyrical poetry on display.



REMI WOLF ♥ ⚠

Big Ideas
POP

Hailing from sunny California, Remi Francis Wolf first gained attention on *American Idol*. This second album blends brash, explosive pop with raw, funky honesty.



REMA ⚠

HEIS
POP

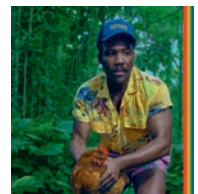
Rema’s brilliant second album finds him blending experimental sounds with diverse influences. Listen out for collabs with Shallopipi and Odumodublvck.



LAVA LA RU ♥ ⚠

STARFACE
ALTERNATIVE

A sci-fi-inspired journey that delves into what makes us human, featuring a mix of funk, dance and alt-rock, plus collaborations with artists like Cuco and Audrey Nuna.



CHILDISH GAMBINO ⚠

Bando Stone and the New World
HIP HOP

The fifth and “final” album from Childish finds him taking the role of Bando Stone for an acclaimed, multi-genre set. This is how to go out in a blaze of musical glory.

Fire Marshall
Eminem's
new LP slaps



If you love lewd humour, whip-smart wordplay and a clever concept that addresses all species of Eminem critic, you’re in for a treat. Lose yourself in the rap god’s 12th album, a postmodern conceptual masterpiece, pitting 51-year-old Marshall Mathers III against his bleach-blonde alter ego in a fight to the literal death. We stan.

🎧 LISTEN TO THE DEATH OF SLIM SHADY



EMINEM
The Death of Slim Shady (Coup de Grâce)
HIP HOP

Em's 12th album is a concept piece about a battle between himself and his Slim Shady alter ego. It includes guest appearances from Big Sean, Jelly Roll and more, and features production contributions from the legendary DJ Premier. *See below*



DRAKE
Icons
HIP HOP

Fresh from his jolly exciting beef with Kendrick Lamar, here's a playlist featuring Drake at his very best. Featured tracks include *Hold On*, *We're Going Home*, *Hotline Bling*, *Family Matters* and *Nice for What*.



Killer Mike

Michael & the Mighty Midnight Revival, Songs for Sinners and Saints
HIP HOP

> IF HIP HOP HAS A SEAL OF QUALITY, it's Killer Mike. He made his debut on OutKast's stone-cold classic *Stankonia*, released some acclaimed solo joints and then formed Run the Jewels with the superstar producer El-P. Mike returned to his solo work with the superb *Michael* album last year and now comes this follow-up, which involves reworking tracks from *Michael* with one key difference: a choir. Yes, Mike has assembled his own gospel choir.



GUITAR HEROES

Jack White

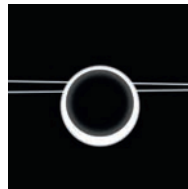
No Name
ROCK

> WHATEVER YOUR OPINION OF Record Store Day, you have to admit that Jack White releasing a limited-edition, vinyl-only album – with no advance publicity – was a baller move. *No Name* is notable for blending garage rock, blues and punk blues into a powerful, cohesive experience. It is also notable for being very good. How good? Put it this way, the raw, heavy sound was described not only as a return to form (did he ever lose form? For the sake of argument, let's say he did) but also reminiscent of his early work with his groundbreaking band, The White Stripes – not to mention being his best solo work to date and one of the most exciting rock albums in recent years. Yup, all of those things.



STONE
Fear Life for a Lifetime
ALTERNATIVE

Liverpudlian breakout stars Stone unleash a debut that navigates young adulthood with a blend of post-punk, indie and hip hop. There's a reason this lot get spoken of in the same breath as Oasis and the Stone Roses, and here it is. *See opener*



THE SMASHING PUMPKINS
Aghori Mhori Mei
ICONS

The 13th album by the Pumpkins blends progressive rock, alternative, heavy metal, and pop and is best described as a “rock and roll guitar record” reminiscent of the band's classic Siamese Dream era. And yes, you did read that correctly.

EDMazing
 It's all going electronic around here

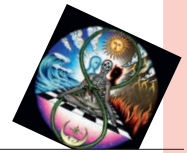
1 //



GORGON CITY
Reverie

The fourth album from north London production duo Gorgon City (aka Kye “Foamo” Gibbon and Matt “RackNRuin” Robson-Scott) keeps the formula simple: house and EDM, but done really, really well.

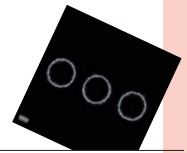
2 //



JOHN SUMMIT
Comfort in Chaos

Report to the dancefloor, because following a slew of absolute bangers from DJ/producer Summit comes this debut LP, and it looks like being a glitterball classic in the making. Guest spots include Julia Church and Paige Cavell.

3 //



SWEDISH HOUSE MAFIA
Paradise Again

You thought Swedish House Mafia had broken up, right? Well 10 years after calling it a day, they're back. Expect pop bangers alongside longer progressive house workouts – all done in the infectious, inimitable Swedish House Mafia style.

SMOOTHLY DOES IT



KHALID



Sincere
R&B & SOUL

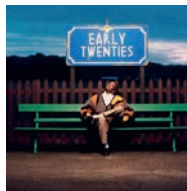
Khalid's third album marks a return to his roots with a minimalist approach, featuring soulful harmonies and introspective lyrics that explore the complexities of intimacy and self-discovery. Listen out for a feature from Arlo Parks.



SLOWLY ROLLING CAMERA

Silver Shadow
WELLNESS

Slowly Rolling Camera mark their 10th anniversary with a cinematic jazz experience. Infused with soul-stirring rhythms and magnetic melodies, the album is inspired by film montages, delivering concise, emotionally resonant jams.



CAT BURNS



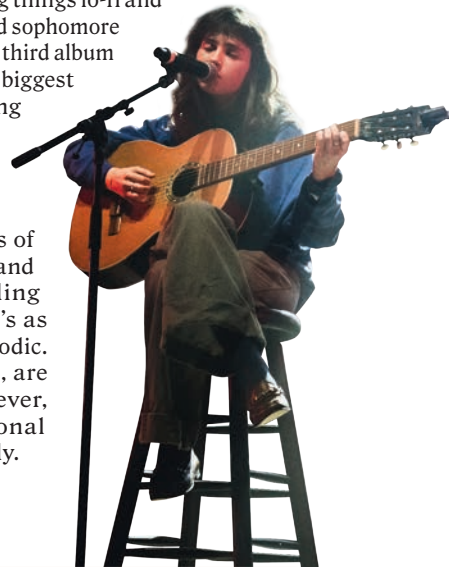
Early Twenties
BREAKING ARTISTS

Although singer-songwriter Catrina Burns has been nominated for three Brit Awards – first in 2017 – it's taken her a while to craft a debut album. Happily, *Early Twenties* is well worth the wait with a sound embracing gospel, pop and indie.

Clairo

Charm
POP

▶ **SINCE GETTING HER START AT 13 BY POSTING** tunes online, Massachusetts-born Clairo (aka Claire Cottrill) has been doing a fair bit of artistic growing, serving notice of even greater things to come with her much-admired 2019 debut, *Immunity*, keeping things lo-fi and heartfelt on an acclaimed sophomore set, *Sling*, and now this, a third album that sees her taking her biggest steps yet. Collaborating with producer Leon Michels, Clairo has expended her sound by blending 1970s-inspired grooves with elements of jazz, psychedelic folk and soul, the overall feeling being something that's as downtempo as it is melodic. Her lyrics, meanwhile, are as heart-forward as ever, scanning the emotional horizon self-reflectively.



Eye on the prize
The best of the Mercurys

Nia Archives
FORBIDDEN FEELINGZ

Yorkshire's queen of jungle has an uncanny knack for marrying filthy 90s-inspired breaks with honey-sweet vocals. This cut – originally from Nia Archives'

2021 EP of the same name, but worthy of inclusion on Mercury-nominated 2024 album *Silence Is Loud* – is uber-danceable. And listen out for a cheeky sample lifted from vintage TV cop show *Columbo*, a lifelong favourite of Nia's nan.

English Teacher
THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PAVING SLAB

All hail 2024 Mercury Prize winners and lovable alt-rock nerds English Teacher, best known for this delightfully obtuse track. The title is a reference to an actual paving stone, fun-fact fans, outside Colne Town Hall in Lancashire – although whether it's actually the world's largest paving stone is disputed. All off-kilter riffs and bookish, reference-heavy lyrics, this is one slab of UK pop-punk that's anything but pedestrian.

Corinne Bailey Rae
PEACH VELVET SKY

A stalwart in the biz for going on a decade now, Corinne Bailey Rae's latest album *Black Rainbows* has been widely hailed as a triumph. Previously associated with mild coffee-shop acoustica, these days Bailey Rae freewheels between R&B, punk, neo-soul and EDM. *Peach Velvet Sky*, from her new LP, is a delectable morsel of grown-up jazz, all sublime piano backing and supple vocals.



LISTEN TO VARIOUS ARTISTS: THE MERCURY PRIZE AWARDS



Introducing Sherwood, a fresh and innovative brand born from the passion of a true watch enthusiast. After years of collecting watches, I embarked on a quest to create my perfect timepiece. The result? The Commander.

This, my first design; I wanted a timepiece that is a highly versatile dress/diver. Inspired by the world-famous British secret agent, The Commander needed to be tough enough for a swim in the ocean and stylish enough to compliment a tuxedo while playing a game of baccarat at Casino de Monte-Carlo. This watch can't be shaken by water but will cause a stir - a cocktail of elegance.

SHERWOOD →

www.sherwoodwatches.com

MOULIN ROUGE! THE MUSICAL

Be dazzled by a ravishing, maximalist musical mashup

inspired by Baz Luhrmann's unforgettable 2001 hit film. *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* – winner of 10 Tony Awards, including Best Musical – is a full-on extravaganza, with pyrotechnics, decadent scenery, petticoat-flashing choreography and hedonistic needle drops. Now playing at the Piccadilly Theatre, London's most spectacular show follows the story of Parisian nightclub star Satine and her lover, aspiring composer Christian, with a supporting cast of aristocrats and wild-eyed Bohemians in old Montmartre. It's about truth, beauty, freedom and – above all – love.

● moulinrougemusical.co.uk



WHAT'S HOT NOW



STAY & LABS

Designed with modern work and travel in mind, Hot-Nesting by STAY & LABS lets you live like a local in the heart of London's Camden Town. By combining the comforts of home – fully serviced apartments by STAY – with an inspiring co-working space by LABS, it's all seamlessly integrated for your productivity.

● stay.com/hot-nesting



GOUQI

Michelin-garlanded chef Tong Chee Hwee (Hakkasan, the Ritz-Carlton) presents Gouqi, a high-end Chinese restaurant off Trafalgar Square, London. With deft takes on classics like Legendary Peking Duck and bold new formats – Dim Sum afternoon tea is divine – Gouqi means great food in a buzzy, opulent space or chic private dining rooms.

● gouqi-restaurants.co.uk



WUKA

WUKA – it stands for Wake Up, Kick Ass – is the world's first multi-size period underwear. Guaranteed to fit any body shape and size, WUKA is for all types of flow, eliminating the need for pads and tampons. Taboo-breaking and ideal for women of all ages. WUKA was founded by Ruby Raut, who was banished from Nepal as a teen for bleeding. Save 20% with code VERA20.

● wuka.co.uk



CONCERTS BY CANDLELIGHT

How does uplifting music from world-class performers in gorgeous venues all over the UK and Ireland sound? Concerts by Candlelight presents hit shows based on the music of Fleetwood Mac, Queen, Coldplay and more, performed by West End talent. No wonder thousands of spellbound concertgoers are already waxing lyrical.

● concertsbycandlelight.com

BUYS GUIDE

THE VERY BEST IN FASHION, SMART LIVING AND GREAT NIGHTS OUT



NTH DEGREE CLERKENWELL

Impress guests at your next garden soirée with luxury outdoor furniture from Nth Degree. Inspired by art, architecture and nature, Nth Degree blurs the line between indoor and outdoor with natural materials, fostering an environment where memories are made, stories shared and moments cherished.

● nthdegree.co.uk



CHARLES TYRWHITT

Keep the chill at bay in glorious style with Charles Tyrwhitt's timeless Harrington jacket. Crafted from 100% extra fine Merino Australian wool, the Harrington cuts a dash with its streamlined silhouette and aristocratic oatmeal finish. It's solidly practical, too – water repellent, with lots of pockets and six snap buttons to warm your cockles.

● charlestyrwhitt.com



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VIRGIN ATLANTIC NEWS AND VIEWS

THE PLANE FACTS

Head of Inflight Services Paul Mills explains how we fill up on food and drink

► “WE’RE RESPONSIBLE for everything that’s loaded on the plane,” explains Head of Inflight Services Paul Mills. “That’s customer and crew food and drinks, duty free, headphones, amenity kits – you name it, we load it. But loading food presents special challenges, like weight, *below*.” Here’s Paul’s juicy food facts...



In numbers

But weight! “We load three tonnes of catering on each flight,” says Paul. “Where that weight is placed matters, because the plane needs to balance front and back, and left and right.”



Nice! “Moving to NICE canned wine brought a great new wine to our customers, while also helping with our wider mission of reducing single-use plastic across the business. It was a pretty bold move at the time – and other airlines soon copied us.”



1k

CUSTOMERS
served per day



400

CANS OF COKE
onboard every flight



16

SPECIAL MEAL
options available including vegetarian, gluten-free, kosher, Hindu and vegan

45

MINUTES
allowed for caterers to load everything on – and off



300

CANS OF WINE
onboard every flight

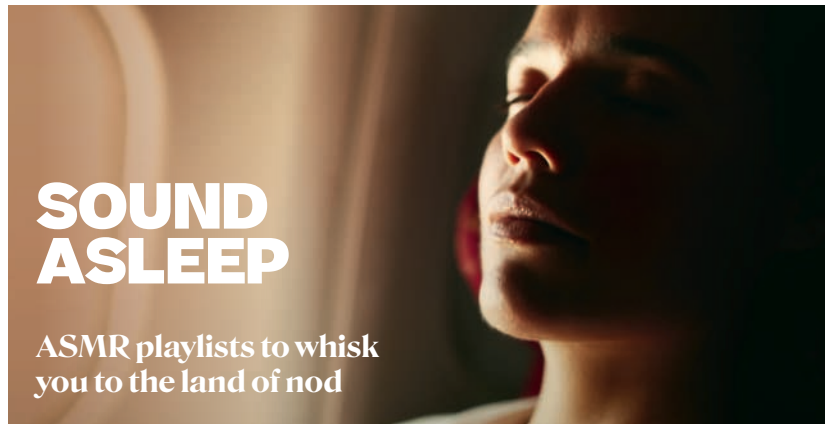
500k

MEALS
served every month



128

CANS OF BEER
onboard every flight



SOUND ASLEEP

ASMR playlists to whisk you to the land of nod

► AS PART OF OUR TIRELESS commitment to get you where you're going well rested and looking fab, we've loaded a bunch of ASMR eargasm playlists onto the in-flight entertainment system.

EAR MESSAGE

ASMR – autonomous sensory meridian response – is all about

crunchy sounds that stimulate and make you feel all tingly.

BACKGROUND CITY NOISE

Lull your frazzled senses with the gentle buzz of traffic and gentle hum of anonymised human voices.

OCEAN WAVES

Sail away to snoozeville thanks to the soothing susurrantion of the sea – just you, the wind and the waves.

🎧 LISTEN TO ASMR PLAYLISTS ON VERA



Edgy: Henry at the Edge Observation Deck, Hudson Yards



Join the crew in... New York City

CABIN CREW LEGEND **HENRY VO** SHARES HIS ULTIMATE TOP TIPS FOR GOING LARGE IN THE BIG APPLE

1 //

Get to grips with the USA's fastest growing sport – **pickleball** – at a clinic or a fun open play session at the beautiful Wollman Rink in Central Park.

2 //

Reach giddy new heights at the **Edge Observation Deck** at 30 Hudson Yards. The glass-floored sky deck creates the uncanny sensation you're floating.

3 //

Drink in sunset views of the Empire State Building with a frozen margarita at **230 Fifth Rooftop Bar**, then dance the night away with disco balls.

TOP TIP
For an authentic flavour of NYC head to the **Yankee Stadium in the Bronx**. It's a real diamond.



Meet Virgin Atlantic's hotshot technical platform lead **STEVEN RADFORD**



The role

My job is to make sure our website – including the shiny new

version rolling out as we speak – works brilliantly. So every customer can enjoy a quick, slick and accessible experience, whatever device they're using.

The lowdown

The website is essentially our shop window. My team makes sure all the information – pricing, seat selection, baggage, – is presented in a useful, intuitive format.

Accessibility is key. Can a disabled person use the website on a keyboard alone? Are the colours legible for people with eyesight issues?

The buzz

I grew up watching Sir Richard Branson flying around the world in hot-air balloons. I decided I wanted to either be him, or work for him. So I'm halfway there! Genuinely, I work with so many exceptional people, who are always happy, and always helpful. There's never a day when I don't relish the prospect of coming to work.

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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.

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

IF YOU'RE ONBOARD...

- An A330neo, A350-1000 or 787-9, open your browser and navigate to virgin-atlantic-wifi.com
- An A330-300, open your browser and navigate to airborne.gogoinflight.com



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