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SEPTEMBER 2024

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**FOLK CULTURE
MAKES A COOL
COMEBACK**

► Nice chaps

**MEET LA'S
BLACK
COWBOYS**

+

The best
of what's
onboard

Shailene Woodley
PRIORITISES PLEASURE

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CONTENTS



24 //

FEATURES Shailene Woodley tells us how she's hooked on pleasure, while we get back in the saddle with Black cowboys, and investigate the resurgence of folk customs in the UK.

vera

5-22 // Red Hot

We reveal how actors aren't the only ones wearing beautiful clothes on film sets, take a cool break in the Bahamas and dig into tasty treats in St Lucia – plus *Dinosaur's* Ashley Storrie makes us laugh.

60-82 // What's On

Irish hip-hop trio Kneecap tackle themselves on the big screen, we have an introduction to British YouTubers the Sidemen, and discover why soca music slaps.

87-90 // Credits

Meet the crew member who has taken over her local sensory farm, plus tuck into the airline's new Virgin Bloody Mary crisps.

CAMEOS



Photographer **Emily Soto** is known for her expertise in both film and digital formats. For this *New Yorker*, it's all about capturing her subjects' true selves in every shot – as she's done with aplomb for our cover star, Shailene Woodley. See p24



London-based journalist and copywriter **Christine Ocheju** has had bylines in *The Guardian*, *GQ*, *Dazed* and *Condé Nast Traveller*. For us, she travelled to Southern California to meet the *Compton Cowboys* and dig into the heritage of Black rodeo. See p44



Estella Shardlow contributes to *The Times*, *Food & Travel* and *The Spectator*, and splits her time between London and Scotland. She was inspired to write about quirky British folk customs after stumbling upon a spring equinox ritual in Hackney. See p37

PHOTOGRAPHER: COVER & THIS PAGE: EMILY SOTO. STYLIST: THOMAS CARTER. PHILLIPS: MAKE-UP: GITTA BASS. HAIR: GARETH BROKELL. MANICURIST: CASEY HERMAN. CLOTHES: COVER: SUIT: DRIES VAN NOTEN. JEWELLERY: VHERNIER. THIS PAGE: CLOTHES: NAEEM KHAN.



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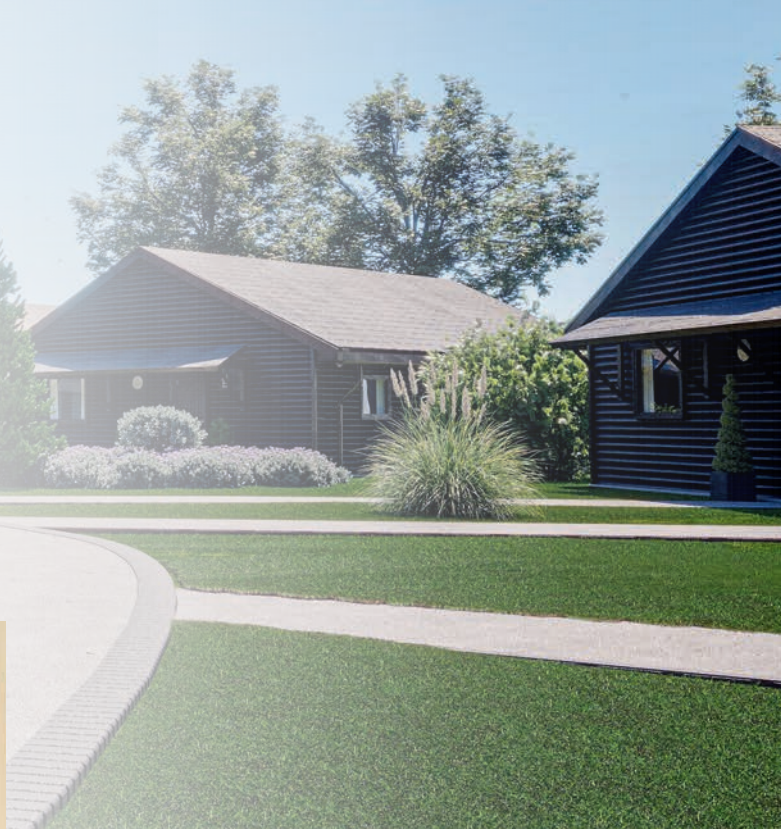
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Things to get obsessed with RIGHT NOW

RED HOT

WORDS: JESSICA PRUPAS. PHOTO: MUSEUM OF LATIN AMERICAN ART (MOLAA), ARTECONICA; ART, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY IN LATIN AMERICA TODAY MATRIX VEGETAL, 2021/22, PATRICIA DOMINGUEZ, COMMISSIONED BY SCREEN CITY BIENNIAL AND CECILIA BRUNSON PROJECTS, INSTALLATION AT MACALLINE ART CENTER, BEIJING. ©PATRICIA DOMINGUEZ



Now showing //

State of art in California

► **WHAT DO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, CLIMATE CHANGE** and cyber surveillance have in common? Well, apart from being the terrifying outcomes of humanity's inexorable march towards technological progress, they're all being explored at PST ART. This major happening takes place every five years and brings together more than 70 exhibitions at museums and galleries across California. This year's edition kicks off 15 September and is called *Art & Science Collide*, exploring the intersection between tech and art.

📍 FLY TO LOS ANGELES

First take //

HOLLYWOOD IS OBSESSED WITH FANFIC FILMS

The imaginary love lives of pop stars or movie characters serve as inspiration for new hit movies, finds Al Horner

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY FALLS

► TAYLOR HAS HER SWIFTIES.

Beyoncé has her Beyhive. Justin Bieber has his Beliebers. These days, every mega-selling pop icon has their own online community of devotees, known as a fandom, tracking their every appearance in the tabloid press. Once upon a time, these fandoms' influence was limited to the world of music: members would mobilise to promote new releases on behalf of their beloved artists. In 2024, however, fandoms are branching out, becoming surprise breeding grounds for hit films.

In *The Idea of You*, a suburban single mum played by Anne Hathaway shares a chance encounter with a member of a British boy band. The musician in question might be called Hayes Campbell (Nicholas Galitzine), but it doesn't take a Directioner (code name for One Direction fans) to work out that Hayes is based on Harry Styles. The result is a sophisticated rom com that indulges the fantasy of dating someone of Styles' celebrity. But it also depicts the nightmare of being the girlfriend of someone lusted after by millions.

That movie is just one example of a wave of recent "fanfiction" movies – unauthorised romantic tales written by fans of pop stars or movie characters, that become blockbusters of their own by disguising the properties they're based on. The author of the book on which *The Idea of You* is based, Robinne Lee, may have refused to confirm that

Styles was the inspiration for her story, but the same can't be said for 2019's Netflix drama *After*, which began life as a post on popular online fan fiction platform Wattpad, imagining a romance between a college girl and Styles (him again!). Nor Prime Video's *Red, White & Royal Blue* – Wattpad fanfiction widely understood to be inspired by *The Social Network* stars Jesse Eisenberg and Andrew Garfield.

From *The Mortal Instruments* – adapted from *Harry Potter* fanfiction – to *Fifty Shades of Grey*, which was whipped up as an unauthorised sequel to *Twilight* (the eventual books and movie adaptations removed all the vampires and kept all the steaminess), these stories strike a chord because they're rooted in authentic desire. The writers penning these tales, for the most part, aren't publishing titans, but real fans, putting their own fantasies onto the page.

Which chart-topper will inspire our next buzzy rom com? Your guess is as good as mine. But with movies like *The Love Hypothesis* (sci-fi romance that began life as *Star Wars* fanfiction) now in development, it's a trend that's moving in One Direction: up.

© WATCH THE IDEA OF YOU

“**THESE STORIES STRIKE A CHORD WITH AUDIENCES BECAUSE THEY'RE ROOTED IN AUTHENTIC DESIRE**”





Anne Hathaway made her breakthrough in 2001's *The Princess Diaries*, starring with Julie Andrews.

BLITHE SPIRITS

Celebs are taking shots

1 //



EMMA WATSON launched Renais, a sustainable gin brand that uses salvaged grape skins harvested from her own family's vineyards in rural France, apparently inspired by French winemaking traditions.

VERDICT: LOOKING VINE

2 //



Model and socialite **KENDALL JENNER** has released her own tequila brand. Called 818 and made from the Blue Weber agave endemic to Jalisco, Mexico, it can be enjoyed in a novel bottle shaped like a figure eight.

VERDICT: DOING NUMBERS

3 //



Actress **KATE HUDSON** has her very own vodka. Named King St after Hudson's buzzy former party pad in New York City, its smooth bright flavour is all about clean citrus and vanilla top notes.

VERDICT: CLEAR FAVOURITE

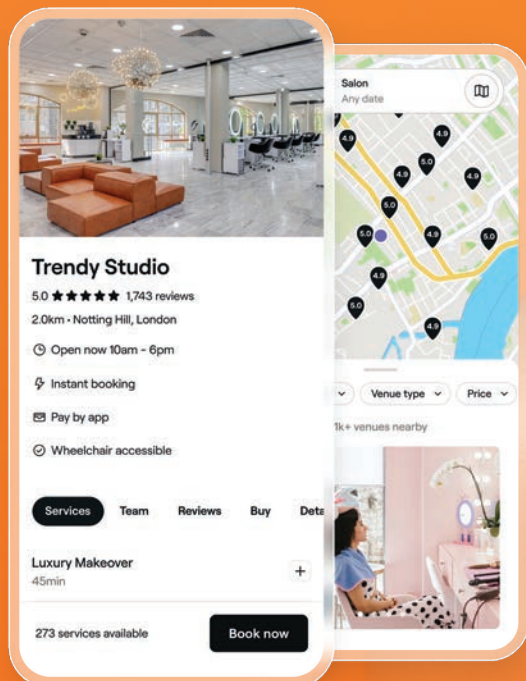
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Funnywoman and broadcaster **ASHLEY STORRIE** tells Andy Hill how neurodivergence is her comedy secret weapon

PORTRAIT: STEVE ULLATHORNE

► **ASHLEY STORRIE GREW** up in what you might justifiably call a colourful household. Dad's side of the family were notorious Glasgow gangsters. Mum is take-no-prisoners Scottish stand-up comic Janey Godley. "I spent my childhood lingering at the side of nightclub stages," Ashley tells *Vera*. "It was cheaper than childcare. I watched countless comedians, some who kept at it and are still working. But many, many more who went back to their real jobs because it wasn't for them. Hundreds of hours of comedy were absorbed into my autistic brain. And nowadays all that footage is right here, informing my world view, my jokes and my writing. I see the world very differently to most other people because of that. It's actually really helpful." A much-loved radio host on BBC Scotland, she now has a hit sitcom under her belt in the shape of *Dinosaur*. Ashley plays Nina, an autistic palaeontologist whose world is turned upside down when sibling Evie (Kat Ronney) meets a guy and gets engaged, threatening to upend Nina's lifestyle of carefully

cultivated order and routine. Here, Ashley tells *Vera* how autism shaped her experience both in front of and behind the camera – and the impact she hopes the show has going forwards.

Hey, Ashley! Congrats on *Dinosaur*, it's such a beautiful show. I cared about the characters from the very start.

Thank you! I love TV. It's such a domestic medium. You have so much time and space to develop characters – six episodes, rather than a tight two hours – so it's easier to make people

Risingstar //

“I want to make a show autistic people would watch”



Above: Kat Ronney with Ashley Storrie in *Dinosaur*

care. Plus it's beamed into people's homes, which makes it more family-friendly somehow. It was important to us that we made a family show, despite the odd naughty word.

How did you first get involved with the project?

The initial idea for the show came from Matilda Curtis. The pilot was filmed around Covid time and they were looking for neurodiverse actors. My agent got me a role. It was quite strict, not much room for improv. But when the show was eventually commissioned, the production company suggested I come in to consult. And after a few suggestions I made, they asked me to join the writing team.

What kind of changes did you make?

In the past, depictions of autism on screen were mostly made through what you might call the "neurotypical gaze". I wanted to make an autistic show that autistic people would want to watch. One that's authentic, especially regarding the experience of being a female with autism. That, and jokes. I'm obsessive about the rhythm of jokes. How certain lines just need an extra beat in there to work better. My autistic approach to comic writing.

Was the filming process stressful?

Post Covid I was anxious about re-entering the world. But the production team was amazing. Every film or TV shoot has what's called a "call sheet", basically a

daily printed schedule. Normally they're a nightmare to read. But our producer, Brian Coffey, attended some accessibility workshops, consulted others and introduced a new visual form of call sheet, with colour codes and trigger warnings for people with additional needs. It works so well, I gather they're using it on other productions now.

Do you feel like a trailblazer?

No! But I do feel like I'm part of a blazing trail.

Have you had any lovely feedback from audiences yet?

Loads of neurodiverse people have got in touch to say how happy they are to have "found" themselves on television for the first time. I'm also proud of *Dinosaur's* representation of Glasgow. Scotland is usually depicted as either *Trainspotting* or *Outlander*. We made sure we spoke in our authentic accents, not the phoney "Scottish" voice our actors are usually forced to put on for the cameras. And Scottish people are really funny! We're like the naughty street urchins of the world. We have a licence to be cheeky.

The episode where you attend a wedding-dress fitting and simultaneously go on a date is hilarious.

Thanks! I told the writers room how neurodiverse people like me can struggle to do more than one big thing in a day. It's a very classic sitcom set-up that hopefully makes people look again at old shows or characters and ask, hey, were they neurodiverse all along? Mr Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice* is autistic. I will die on that hill. The clues are right there!

What else are you up to these days?

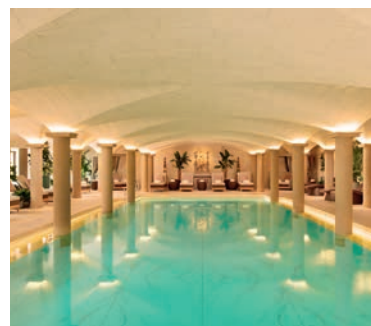
I love radio. There's my show on BBC Radio Scotland, which goes out every Friday night, lots of music and chat, and fun stuff like a segment uncovering Hollywood stars with dodgy music careers. It's a medium for sharing my obsessions. I have a show on BBC Radio 4 called *What's the Story, Ashley Storrie?*, the third series starts next year. It's an "autobiographical soundscape" – a comedy set inside my brain. Like with *Dinosaur*, I want to inform people, without being preachy.

© WATCH DINOSAUR

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Table read /

LIGHTS, CAMERA, FASHION!



Sofia Coppola directs Jason Schwartzman on the set of *Marie Antoinette* (2006), which was shot in Versailles.

While we are drawn to the costumes onscreen, fashion behind the lens also has its role, says Claire Marie Healy

► **ON SET, AN ITEM OF CLOTHING DEEMED** merely stylish to the outside observer becomes – in the act of working, risk-taking, directing – a potential tool for creativity. Andrei Tarkovsky’s lived-in sheepskin parka for below-freezing conditions. The oversized 1980s draping of Joanna Hogg hiding the nervous student director. Even an old blanket pilfered from the costume department can, in the act of filmmaking, become a forcefield of calm (Nicolas Winding Refn likes to wrap one around his tummy while making his ultraviolent movies). What such figures share in common – other than their appearance in a new book, *How Directors Dress* – is that their innate and often signature sense of style has a quality of



Clockwise from above: Paul Thomas Anderson and Heather Graham filming *Boogie Nights* (1997), Jean-Luc Godard filming a student demo in Paris, 1968, and Andrei Tarkovsky directing *Stalker* (1979)

usefulness as part of their director’s toolkit. Whether on set or in the edit suite, their uniform helps them make what they make. From Charlie Porter and Yohji Yamamoto to Sami Reiss and Lynn Yaeger, A24’s textural tome brings in a coterie of fashion-minded contributors to make its point, as well as plenty of entrancing photographs as per the Instagram account that inspired it, @directorfits. My own chapter focuses on that most uniform of uniforms: the button-up shirt, an item that has existed as a second skin to men and women for so long that examining how four directors have worn it – taut like David Lynch or chic like Sofia Coppola – reveals new truths about ourselves in the process.

● *How Directors Dress* is published by A24, a24films.com





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**AN INNATE AND
 SIGNATURE
 SENSE OF STYLE
 HAS A QUALITY
 OF USEFULNESS
 AS PART OF THE
 DIRECTOR'S
 TOOLKIT**

PHOTOS: ANDREW DUSHAM, MOVIESTORE COLLECTION LTD/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, © GUEORGUI PINKHASSOV/MAGNUM PHOTOS, KEYSSTONE PRESS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO, COURTESY OF RONNIE SCOTT'S

■ **BLUENOTES** ■



A jazzy joint in London

R onnie Scott's world-famous jazz club was founded by sax player and

raconteur Ronnie Scott in 1959. A silver-tongued cockney charmer, Scott cajoled some of jazz's biggest names – Nina Simone, Miles Davis, and pop giants Prince and Jimi Hendrix – into playing his Soho club. The venue, still open for bebop and supper today, is a location in the new Amy Winehouse biopic *Back to Black*. Director Sam Taylor-Johnson saw Amy perform there in happier times, recalling “she was a genius”. Amy loved the vibe and authenticity of Ronnie Scott's. Plus – get this – Amy's grandma Cynthia, herself a singer, briefly dated Scott. Told you he was a charmer.

📺 **WATCH BACK TO BLACK**
 ✈️ **FLY TO LONDON**





Sleeper hit //

COOL AND COMPOSED IN THE BAHAMAS

Beloved beachfront bolthole **THE POTLATCH CLUB** hits the high notes after an inspired renovation

➤ **DECADES**

ago, in its mid-century pomp, this storied spot on the hush-hush hideaway of Eleuthera in the eastern Bahamas served as a discreet bohemian retreat for resting artists. Elizabeth Taylor and Greta Garbo stopped by The Potlatch Club. Loved-up Paul McCartney came here on his 1969 honeymoon – indeed, he wrote two Beatles songs, *Oh! Darling* and *She Came In Through the Bathroom Window*, on Potlatch headed stationery. Abandoned to the elements in the 80s, it was recently rediscovered and gussied up for the 21st century. Dolphins frolic in the salty sapphire surf beyond the idyllic pink sand beach. Between the buildings – some original, others new but meticulously in-keeping – just 11 keys ensure it’s never hectic. Original design touches – chequerboard tiling, bone-white arches – harmonise beautifully with Nassau designer Amanda Lindroth’s rattan day beds and pink coral floors. A high-end spa with Grown Alchemist products underlines the top-tier pampering vibe, alongside the Fig Tree restaurant, with its robust ginger and jalapeño-infused cocktails. It really strikes a chord.



⊗ **FLY TO THE BAHAMAS**



THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL, CALIFORNIA

A 45-minute drive from LAX, this bouji escape has 5km of pristine beach, 36 holes of championship golf, a knockout swimming pool with private cabanas and a rarefied Italianate flavour to the decor.



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OZEN LIFE MAADHOO, MALDIVES

Set inside a pristine lagoon in the South Malé Atoll, this Edenic retreat on its own private island has six restaurants – one of which is underwater – a diving school, and a lush jungle interior.

3 more
beach retreats

WORDS: ANDY HILL PHOTOS: THE POTLATCH CLUB, THE RESORT AT PELICAN HILL, SAM LORD'S CASTLE, OZEN LIFE MAADHOO

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Snacks //

FLASH BULBS IN LONDON

ROE does everything big – including this Blooming Onion, which takes a steakhouse classic to new heights of flavour



► **WHEN JACK CROFT AND Will Murray met as chefs at the vaunted Dinner by Heston Blumenthal, they bonded over a shared interest in ultra-sustainable dining, taking the scraps most threw away and transforming them into star ingredients. A pop-up led to Fallow, their St James's, Mayfair, restaurant that sends critics into a tizzy for its technique-forward approach to nose-to-tail eating. Now for their second act: Roe is a massive, 500-cover offering in the heart of money-making Canary Wharf. Likely for the sake of their new audience – bankers looking for a decent after-work sirloin – they've blunted their geekier edges, offering instead a menu that brings together their Frankensteinian signatures: venison tartare with Thai laab dressing; snail vindaloo flatbread dolloped with mint yoghurt – all with familiar bar-and-grill staples. But banish any bias you may have against humdrum Outbacks – here, a baked potato, drenched in velvety cheese sauce, is crowned with shoestring fries and kombu-flavoured ketchup. And behold the Blooming Onion: a humble allium double-deep-fried, and topped with cheese and onion seasoning, garlic aioli, pickled red onion gel, chives and chive flowers. So beautifully bonkers, so richly indulgent, it may make you cry.**

⊗ FLY TO LONDON

DRINKS

Oyster martinis are a bit clam



ysters, we all know, are hella sophisticated. As are martinis. Small wonder bivalve-loving barkeeps all over the network love mixing the two. At seaside haunt The Suffolk – in Aldeburgh, England – London Dry Gin is infused with oyster shell for a delightfully saline take on the classic cocktail. At The

Tusk Bar in NYC you get a mini martini with a sidecar oyster dressed in horseradish, beetroot and ginger. The Hog Island Oyster Co – in San Fran and elsewhere – makes a mean Merroir Martini (*right*), garnished with smoked trout roe and oyster garnish. A cause for shellebration.

⊗ FLY TO LONDON, NEW YORK & SAN FRANCISCO



WORDS: JESSICA PRUPAS, ANDY HILL PHOTO: ROE, REMY ANTHIES

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ST LUCIA'S TASTY HERITAGE

A melting pot of cultures and myriad influences make this Caribbean island's cuisine unique, says local expert Kristin Braswell



Left: The restaurant at Hotel Chocolat, on the 57-hectare Rabot Estate

► **FLAVOUR ABOUNDS IN ST LUCIA, WHERE** fertile tropical rainforests produce sweet breadfruits and fleshy mangoes, and cacao trees sprout from rich volcanic soil. Like its produce, the cuisine is unique: African, British and Amerindian influences all intermingle in the island’s Creole dishes. This distinct culinary heritage has produced the national dish of green fig and saltfish, often trotted out at celebrations and festivals, and golden codfish fritters (accra), best served with a spicy tamarind dipping sauce.

Each bite tells a story of the St Lucian people’s ingenuity, utilising ingredients from the land to delicious effect. “Amerindians used the fruits of the earth and ocean in their cuisine and open-fired cooking styles,” says James Beard award-winning St Lucian chef Nina Compton. “Settlers from France and England, enslaved West Africans and indentured workers from India have made their stamp as well, bringing mangoes, breadfruit, preserved fish and meat on long journeys from their homeland, which is speckled throughout our cooking today.”

Chocolate is a major part of St Lucia’s culinary legacy: the island has produced cacao for centuries and became a major exporter to Europe in the 1700s. At the storied **HOTEL CHOCOLAT**, visitors can peep into the chocolate-making process with tours of the Rabot Estate and indulge in pampering spa treatments like chocolate facials and cocoa scrubs.

At the island’s northern tip, the stress-relieving Chocolate Caribbean Whoopie Ritual wrap at **THE LANDINGS RESORT AND SPA** follows a skin-buffing treatment of local cocoa nibs and exfoliating sea salts infused with all-natural chocolate mousse. Guests can pair this with a hydrating massage that incorporates coconut chocolate milk and a locally made coconut moisturiser. On the south-west coast, the towering **JADE MOUNTAIN RESORT** in Soufrière has 2,000 cacao trees dotting the lush estate gardens and offers a variety of intimate, choco-centric experiences, from visiting the “chocolate laboratory” to truffle-making.

For a firsthand look at the staggering variety of St Lucian produce, head to the open-air **CASTRIES MARKET**, first opened in 1894 in the island’s capital as a central hub for residents to buy and sell goods. Today, visitors can enjoy a renovated iteration of the original market, where items for sale include freshly caught fish, spices, as well as staple ground provisions like yams, sweet potatoes and dasheen – a purple-tinged root vegetable usually boiled or used in soups and stews. Saturdays are

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the most lively, with vendors setting up as early as 4am.

Edifying, food-forward excursions can be booked with PHVTours: experiences include lunch at **MARTHA'S TABLE** – well-loved for its breadfruit balls and wild yams – plus visits to **ST LUCIA DISTILLERS** and **MOURNE COUBARIL ESTATE**, which touch on the not-so-happy history of slavery in rum and sugar cane production, respectively.

And if you really want to get to grips with the myriad influences that find their way onto the St Lucian plate, the island's many excellent restaurants provide the best education. At **THE COAL POT RESTAURANT** in Castries, traditional Creole cuisine takes centre stage. Try the bouyon – a hearty salted-meat soup – or green fig (a type of green banana) and saltfish, preserved in a unique spice blend that nods to the island's various cultural influences. For a quintessential St Lucian meal, Chef Compton recommends the no-frills **HARDEST HARD RESTAURANT & BAR**, whose patio – heaving most lunchtimes – is shaded under an almond tree. Pumpkin soup, salted pigtail and fish Creole are just a few of the rotating dishes served here, always accompanied by a hefty portion of rice and plantains.

In the idyllic southern fishing village of Soufrière, chef Orlando Satchell – head of **ORLANDO'S RESTAURANT & BAR** – celebrates local flavours and produce, aided by his long-standing relationships with the island's fisherman and farmers. The menu here is a 101 class in St Lucia's heritage dishes,

Castries Market, built on a site previously occupied by coal heaps, boasts an abundance of island produce.



Below: Hardest Hard Restaurant & Bar, and a bottle of rum from St Lucia Distillers



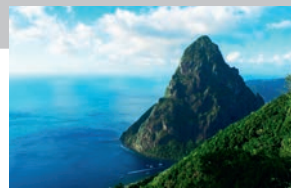
including smoked jerk chicken – first cooked by Maroons who introduced African cooking techniques to the Caribbean – on a ground provision cake with a callaloo thyme sauce, cocoa mousse samosas that riff on the classic South Asian pastry and cocoa grilled yellowfin tuna. The history of St Lucia, on a plate.

✉ FLY TO ST LUCIA



SULPHUR SPRINGS

A geological wonder located near the town of Soufrière, this dormant volcano's rejuvenating pools of mineral-rich water are nature's Jacuzzi. Book a mud bath, which promises to detoxify the body and help heal the skin.



TET PAUL NATURE TRAIL

Nicknamed Stairway to Heaven because of its sweeping views, visitors can take a guided 45-minute tour of this trail on the south-west part of the island, visiting sites like a working organic farm and a traditional St Lucian home.



FOND DOUX ECO RESORT

Located on one of the island's most active agricultural farms, 19 cottages are spread out around this laid-back eco-resort, which also boasts a cascading pool, a working cocoa estate as well as three nature trails.

3 more must-dos in St Lucia



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Screen test //

Is a second American Civil War likely?

Just how prescient is *Civil War*'s portrayal of the USA in open conflict? wonders Ralph Jones

ILLUSTRATIONS: RUBY FRESSON

► **ON THE SPECTRUM OF EVENTS WE WOULD** like to happen – with breakfast in bed being at one end and our eyes falling out for no reason on the other – a second Civil War in the United States is pretty close to the latter. In Alex Garland's latest film, *Civil War*, this scenario is borne out, with internal conflict turning the USA into a wasteland in which everyone is terrified for their lives.

The first American Civil War began 163 years ago, with the conflict between the north and the south lasting for four sanguinary years. The trigger was disagreement over slavery, on which the two halves of the country had incompatible stances. In Garland's film, which is more about war reporting than politics, we are left to fill in the blanks for ourselves, although we know that Washington, DC is being assaulted by the rebel alliance of right-wing Texas and left-wing California. So, how likely is Garland's general vision in 2024? Could we see another American Civil War in our lifetime?

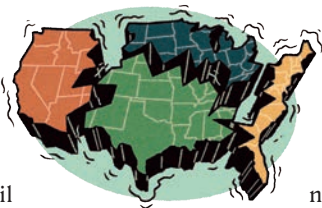
On 6 January 2021, the country came closer to erupting into Civil War 2.0 than perhaps it has ever before. Even when a mob stormed the Capitol, however, there was of course no formal conflict like that in 1861–65.

Jacob Kathman, a professor of political science who teaches and writes about civil wars, recognises that political polarisation in the US is high but doesn't take this as a sign to be concerned about civil war itself. He explains that civil war can be predicted by various factors, which include but are not limited to "extremely poor economic conditions, institutional decay and a proximate history of civil conflict". As the only civil war in US history happened nearly two centuries ago, there is good reason to think conflict won't erupt without those first two factors worsening significantly.



"The US has a robust economy that does not seem threatened by dire decline," he says. "Civilian control over the military is unchallenged. These sorts of factors tend to stabilise political relations in a way that helps to avoid cataclysms."

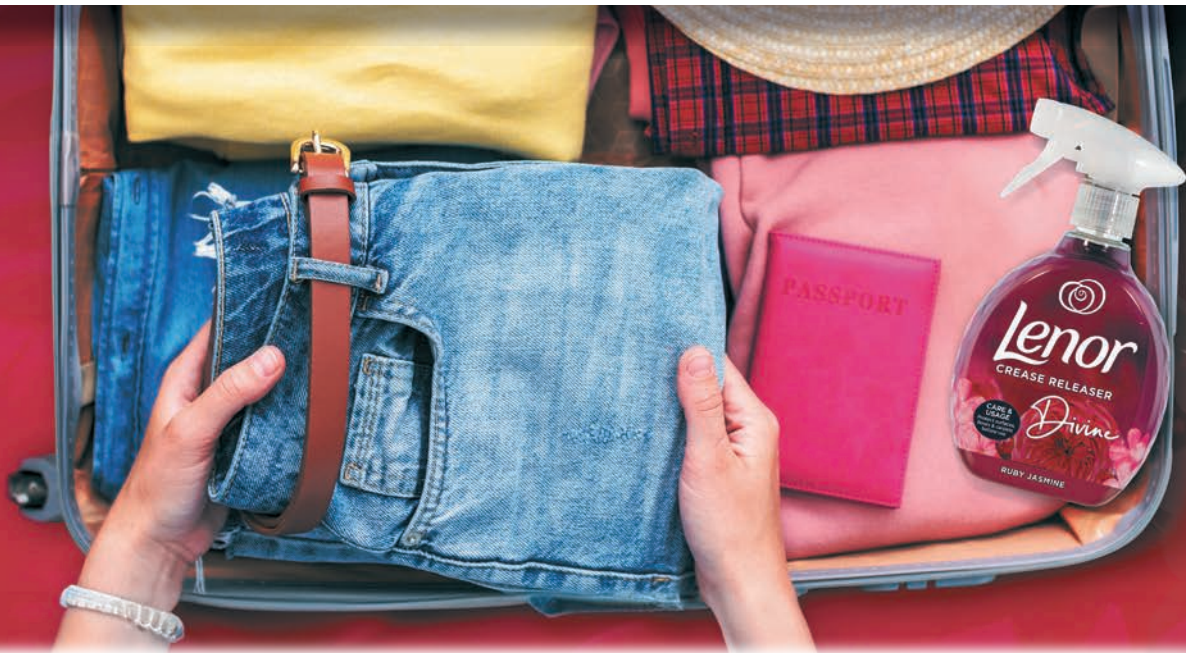
Some analysts acknowledge that there is major mistrust in the pillars of the establishment and that – due to political polarisation – Americans are engaged in a symbolic civil war online. But a secession, as we saw in the 19th century, doesn't seem on the cards in the near (or very far) future. Kathman thinks that open conflict in the US is "highly unlikely". This is not to pretend that everything is sunshine and rainbows but, in a political climate in which good news is hard to come by, we'll take it.



THE VERDICT: Not very likely.

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“MY LIFE

HAS BEEN

CONSUMED

BY DESIRE”

*Dress: Vintage
Yves Saint
Laurent from
Vintage Grace*



Once a teen icon, **SHAILENE WOODLEY** is wading into more grown-up territory in her third decade. Her latest project – a TV adaption of Lisa Taddeo’s *Three Women* – takes pleasure very seriously, finds Melissa Giannini

PHOTOGRAPHS:
EMILY SOTO

SHAILENE WOODLEY HOLDS

A GLASS OF SPARKLING WATER

AGAINST HER CHEEK AND LETS

OUT A LONG, GUTTURAL MOAN.

To be fair, it's quite humid, even inside this luxe hotel restaurant in northern New Jersey. But it's fitting, because we're talking about the importance of being open to pleasure – from the sensation of cool condensation against warm skin to what she calls, at full volume, “euphoric sexual experiences”.

I can't stop myself from stealing a glance at a nearby table for double-takes or slack jaws. Of course, the stares could also be due to the fact that the 32-year-old Colorado-based actress is one of the hotel's most famous temporary residents – and would stand out even if she wasn't, with her wild mane of blonde curls and long pearlescent fingernails, remnants of this afternoon's photoshoot.

Woodley is in town to film action-thriller *Motor City*, but she can't say for sure how long she's been here. “Like two, three weeks?” she guesses. “I tend to get in a little bit of a time wormhole when I'm working.” Either way, she's tried everything on the menu and hasn't had a single bad meal. I opt for the clam chowder. She's good with just water.

*Dress: Prabal Gurung
Ring: Vhernier*

SHAIENE WOODLEY



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The main inspiration behind Woodley's *When Harry Met Sally* diner-scene moment is her current role in *Three Women*, a limited series adapted from Lisa Taddeo's book of the same name, premiering on 13 September on Starz. The show, which also stars Betty Gilpin, DeWanda Wise and Gabrielle Creevy, explores the sex lives of a trio of women who come from different walks of life and regions of the United States, but who share "the audacity to believe they deserved more," Taddeo writes. Woodley plays Gia Lombardi, a character based on the author and she admits that her initial interest in the project revolved around "selfishly wanting to meet Lisa Taddeo". She admired the way the writer "mixed poetry with psychology in a digestible manner" and likens her to a modern-day Anaïs Nin, the French-born American diarist, and writer of fiction, essays and erotica.

"My whole life has been consumed by curiosity around sex, intimacy and desire. I found Nin when I was 15 or 16, and I grew up in a culture in America, as most of us do, where sex is explicitly in our face, but in a strange way, without a lot of honesty and realness when it comes to expressing how we feel and what we want." Backpacking through Europe in her late teens, she was excited to meet "women who were comfortable in their skin in a way that I had never seen with my mother or grandmother or cousins or aunts," she says. "It really opened my mind to the possibilities of what it could be like to



"I feel a responsibility to do what I can to leave this world a little lighter and safer"

live in a body without feeling guilt or shame for having certain desires. I am, by nature, a very watery creature, so there's very little that doesn't interest me when it comes to the experience of pleasure. And it was very frustrating to me at 18 to come back home and see so many people living lives seemingly devoid of pleasure. It's just not something that's ingrained in our culture."

Born in Upland, California, to psychologist parents, Woodley attended local theatre classes as a child. A quick study, she caught the attention of a talent agent and began acting profes-

sionally at five. "My parents had three rules when I was starting out," she says. "In order to be an actor, I had to stay the person they knew I was, do well in school and have fun. I love that they included having fun because I am a fun machine. I'm really good at playing," she says, tapping the tips of her fingernails together, clearly enjoying the novelty of a fresh manicure.

Following a run of small roles in TV movies and shows, Woodley landed the lead in *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, which led to starring roles in millennial touchstones like *The Spectacular Now*, the *Divergent* film series and *The Fault in Our Stars*. Around the same time, she was making a name for herself in progressive circles, using her platform to raise awareness for environmental causes and even getting arrested while protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Dress: Emilia Wickstead
Jewellery:
Briony Raymond

She doesn't consider herself an activist or even an environmentalist, but she recognises that such labels help us understand each other. "I care about trees because I see them and I'm in awe," she says. "I'm like, 'What are you, this thing that goes through four cycles in a year and gives us oxygen?'" She's also fascinated by psychology and the ways humans interrelate, and casually intersperses therapy-speak into bigger conversations about the human condition ("Is there a lion in the room about to tear my guts out?" she asks, on the topic of quieting ambient anxiety). Granted, this is not surprising coming from the daughter of psychologists. "Plus, I just feel in my bones that I want to be a mom," she adds. "And I feel a responsibility to do what I can to leave this world a little bit lighter and safer for future generations."

As such, she's drawn to causes involving nature and children, as well as the elderly. "I love kids because they haven't developed ego yet, and most elders have gotten rid of theirs and are just really beautiful pools of wisdom and light. There is still so much light in the world and I just think, man, if we could just set ourselves free to the beauty of the world, things could look and be so different."

One of the biggest lessons she's learned from her work in this arena is that progress takes time. "You can't turn a wheel quickly – that's how you spin off on a freeway," she says. "But if you turn the wheel deliberately and with intention and deep care, you can exit safely. And that's how I see the massive shifts that are happening in the world right now. There is a lot of demand for them to happen immediately, but things take time. I think *Three Women* is a great testament to that. It took Lisa eight years of travelling to write her book."

When Taddeo's book came out in 2019, women were still processing the aftermath of #MeToo and the Women's March. In the five years since, we've seen the fall of the #Girlboss era, a global pandemic, and the end of *Roe v Wade*. Meanwhile, the television adaptation of the book arrives as the United States' first female vice president is campaigning for the presidency. It's a lot and Woodley is not interested in predicting how audiences will respond. "I think, for me, it would feel like a safe haven to watch one of these episodes each week and feel a little less isolated in a world that can



feel very divisive and very isolating," she says.

While she acknowledges that we live in an incredibly confusing time, Woodley is doing her best to stay authentically the person her parents knew she was at age five, despite the fact that "we're constantly morphing creatures". She was saddened by the backlash she received for reposting a note from former First Lady Melania Trump following the recent shooting of Donald Trump, especially considering her history of service to progressive causes.

"[After the shooting] I was in lots of conversations with people I really admire who were saying things like 'He missed.'" To hear her friends speak

Dress & belt:
Michael Kors
Shoes: Malone Souliers
Rings: Ritique

SHAILENE WOODLEY



in this way about an event in which one person died and two were seriously injured felt disarming. Reading Melania's letter helped. "I heard a lot of heart in that letter, and an attempt to communicate her experiences behind closed doors with someone she loves, and the fear she had at possibly losing that person. I heard a call for compassion and human decency, beyond and above politics or masks, and I thought that was a really beautiful message. Had the tables been turned, and Joe Biden was up there, and Jill Biden had posted that letter, I would've reposted it," she says. "For me, it was a matter of having a conversation: we don't have to like each other. We can actually not like each other to the point of extreme rage, but I don't ever want to be in a position of celebrating murder because of an opinion. So that's why I posted it."

To Woodley, one of acting's biggest thrills is getting the chance to step inside differing perspectives. "I make art to heal my own wounds and understand myself better," she says. "But also so that I can figure out why my mom did that thing when I was young, or why my ex-boyfriend said that one thing. And that's the beauty of art. It unlocks doors and helps me release my own entrapments, and it inspires me to see the world differently, through different lenses."

She admits that she's just as confused as the rest of us, but she feels a



Dress:
Naeem Khan

“One of the main differences I’ve noticed overseas is that people **work to live**”

WRITE OFFS

THE BEST (AND WORST) BOOK-TO-TV ADAPTATIONS

The Queen's Gambit

The surprise 2020 hit was based on a 1983 novel by Walter Tevis centred on chess. Lockdown audiences were extremely taken by new star Anya Taylor-Joy (*right*).

3 Body Problem

The sci-fi novels by Chinese writer Liu Cixin count Barack Obama as a fan – Obama even turned down a cameo in this faithful, vast-in-scope adaptation.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

Douglas Adams' influential sci-fi comedy series never adequately achieved lift-off in the BBC's small-screen version back in 1981.

Animorphs

Remember those "animal morphers" books from school? Or the lame 1998 TV version (*left*)? A movie version is said to be in the works – hopefully it'll be a very different animal.



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hell of a lot better when she's grounded in her own body. "I find pleasure in looking at wind blowing through leaves or looking at the texture of that soup," she says, eyeing my chowder. Suddenly I see it in a new way – its herby croutons and drizzle of oil look sumptuous and inviting, a world of sustenance in a bowl. She tells me about how travelling throughout Europe, Asia and Oceania in her twenties opened her up to new ways of being and enjoyment. Most recently she was in Italy filming *Ferrari*, opposite Adam Driver.

"I've been very blessed to live a very international life, and one of the main differences I've noticed is that overseas, people work to live," she says. Life can be hard, but a glass of grappa and a good laugh with friends can cure many ills.

"There are ways to admire the beautiful intricacies of life not even associated with sexuality, that lend themselves to a very pleasurable life experience. Not to be cheesy, but I just f**kin' love life. I think it is a cosmic miracle that we're even here. It's very easy to live from a state of victimhood. I have done so, for sure, throughout different chapters of my life. But it's so much more rewarding to live from a place of awe and wonder. And that's what I try to do."

© WATCH FERRARI

From top right:
With Nicole Kidman
and Reese Witherspoon
in *Big Little Lies*;
and *Divergent* with
Theo James

ONE WOMAN

SHAILENE WOODLEY'S CV



BORN

Born on 15 November 1991 in Upland, California, to Lonnie and Lori Woodley, both psychologists.

EDUCATION

"I got the equivalent of my GED when I was 15 so that I could work legally as an adult during my junior year of high school," she says. "But I loved school so much and took pride in being an overachiever, so I ended up staying to get a real diploma and go to prom."

FUN FACT

Woodley was diagnosed with scoliosis at 15 and had to wear a chest-to-hips brace for 18 hours a day for two years.

KEY WORK

Divergent (2014-16)
Woodley stars as Tris in the dystopian science-fiction series based on Veronica Roth's bestselling trilogy.

The Fault in Our Stars (2014)

In this coming-of-age romance, Woodley portrays a 16-year-old cancer patient who meets and falls in love with another teen with cancer, played by Ansel Elgort.

Big Little Lies (2017-)

As a single mother, Woodley shines in this critically acclaimed, darkly comic ensemble drama about women whose seemingly perfect lives are upended.

Three Women (2024)

A down-on-her-luck writer (Woodley) meets three women with differing relationships and a shared longing for something more.



STYLIST: THOMAS CARTER PHILLIPS; MAKE-UP: GITA BASS; HAIR: GARETH BROMELL; MANICURIST: CASEY HERMAN; ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: ALAMY/NICKELODEON/NETFLIX/HBO/SUMMIT ENTERTAINMENT

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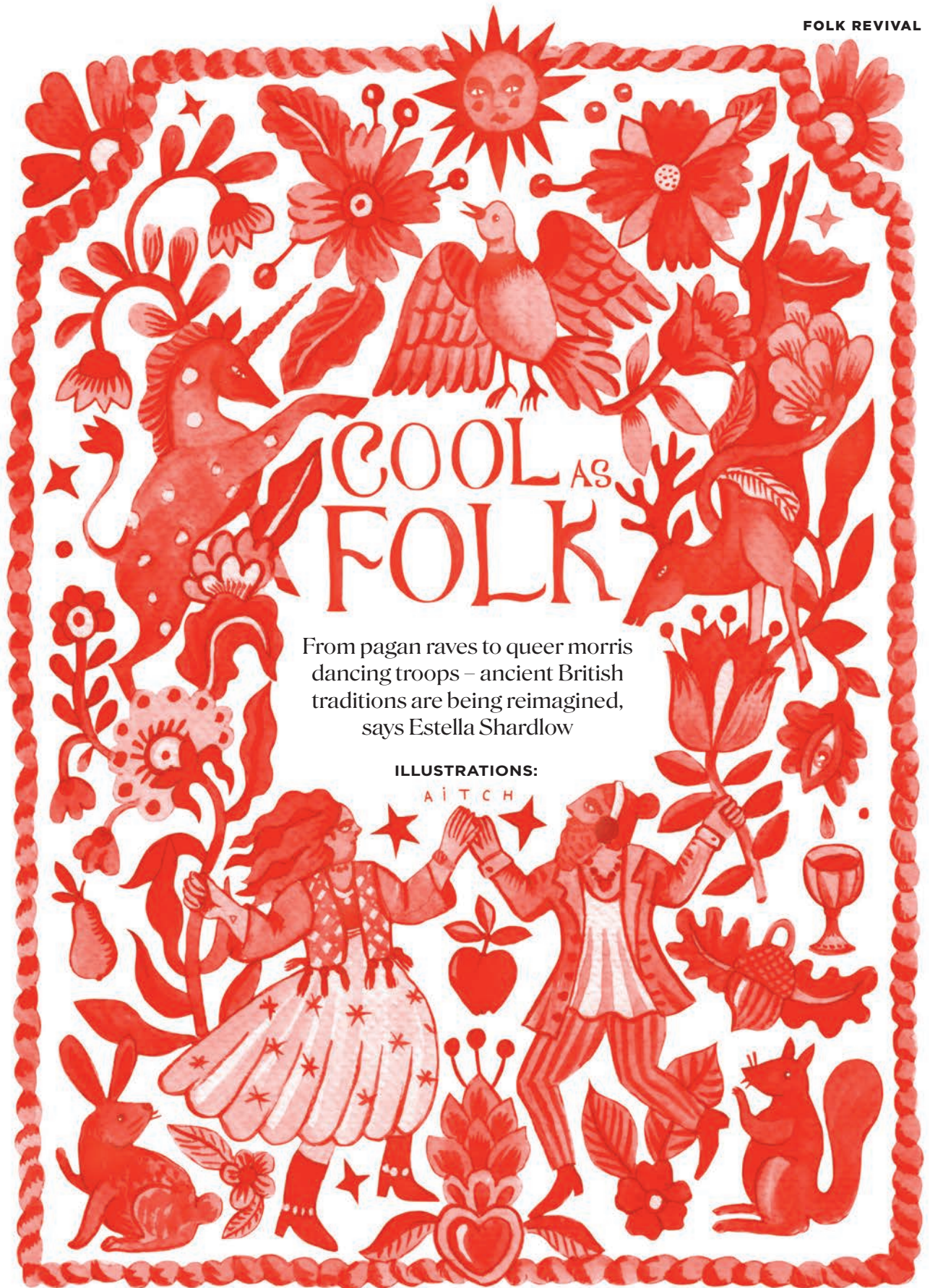
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From pagan raves to queer morris dancing troops – ancient British traditions are being reimagined, says Estella Shardlow

ILLUSTRATIONS:
AITCH



Main: Sunrise on the summer solstice at Stonehenge
Top right: The Burning of the Clavie in Lossiemouth

Whether it's record-breaking crowds seeing in summer solstice at Stonehenge or morris dancers stealing the show at the Brit Awards, the UK's folk culture is now officially – somewhat surprisingly – cool. Only, these quirky customs and rituals from Britain's pre-colonial, pre-Christian past aren't quite the same as before; they're getting a more progressive, inclusive spin courtesy of Gen Z "folkfluencers". "Something is most definitely happening," says

artist Ben Edge, "and to me it feels far more than just another folk revival, it's a rising."

Some say the climate crisis is driving this newfound respect for natural rhythms and rural life. For others, it's a post-Brexit grappling with national identity, tapping into a reassuring, distant past amid the permacrisis, or simply a way of escaping screentime for a spot of real-world merrymaking and community spirit. Either way, with this new wave of nationwide happenings, you're in for a folkling good time.



Celebrate the SEASONS

Dawn's breaking over a huddle of hipsters on east London's Hackney Marshes – no, they're not ravers stumbling home from a nearby warehouse party, but instead early risers attending a solstice ceremony. Local collective **We Don't Know What This Is** organises these events quarterly, marking the spring and autumn equinoxes (when the Sun crosses the Earth's equator) as well as summer and winter solstices (the longest and shortest day of the year, respectively).

Even larger are **Stonehenge's** solstice

gatherings: more than 15,000 people rocked up to the iconic neolithic landmark on 20 June.

These solar events slot into the Wheel of the Year, as the pagan calendar is called, alongside Gaelic festivals such as **Samhain** (a sort of proto-Halloween) and **Beltane** (May Day). Some corners of the UK also have quirky seasonal rituals all their own. Take the Scottish seaside town of Lossiemouth, which banishes midwinter gloom with **The Burning of the Clavie** (11 January) by parading blazing whisky barrels through the streets.

So why are these esoteric rituals hitting the mainstream now? "In an increasingly nebulous and unsettling world, getting in touch with the seasonal year can feel extremely comforting," explains Lally MacBeth, founder of online platform The Folk Archive. "It's a way of venerating and celebrating the land, in a world where ecological unrest is a factor in our everyday live."





Left: The all-female New Esperance perform prog morris in London

Clue up on ancient CUSTOMS

Folk's long been overlooked by mainstream media and publishing. But now a wave of chroniclers is changing that. Due for release next month, coffee-table tome **Folklore Rising** (Watkins Publishing) compiles 200 of contemporary artist Ben Edge's paintings, photographs and first-hand observations of esoteric traditions across the UK. Another illuminating title to add to your future reading list is broadcaster and DJ Zakia Sewell's **Finding Albion** (Hodder Press, 2026). As a mixed-race Brit, her journey through folk songs, stories and symbols is, she says, for anyone "yearning for a connection to this ancient land, and for a sense of identity beyond the toxic myths and symbols of empire". Tune into her enthralling 2020 BBC Sounds podcast **My Albion** to continue your folk-culture education.



Boogie with a MORRIS DANCING SIDE

England's archetypal folk dance, morris conjures images of bearded white men clashing wooden sticks and waving hankies. Well, the sticks and hankies still stand, but a more diverse bunch is now following those rhythmic steps.

Names to know in the prog morris movement are **Huginn and Muninn**, a two-person morris side based in south London, and female-inclusive **New Esperance**, who follow their free taster sessions with pints in a central London pub and jigged in the city's Pride procession this year. **Boss Morris**, another all-women team, have strutted their stuff on stage at Glastonbury with Hot Chip. Seems this centuries-old dance form has well and truly broken free of the village green.



"It seems this centuries-old dance form has well and truly broken free of the village green"



WHEELY GOOD YEAR

DATES FOR YOUR FOLK-CULTURE CALENDAR

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

We Don't Know What This Is, Hackney Marshes, London

The next solar event on the horizon is autumn equinox. This free, informal sunrise ritual invites city-dwellers to tune into the seasons.

● @wedontknow whatthisis24



14 OCTOBER 2024

The Stone Club at The Social, London

Want to get stoned? No, not like that: The Stone Club's bimonthly talks and performances bring "a new perspective on prehistory" – from ancient rock art to megaliths in film and literature.

● @stoneclub.rocks

29 OCTOBER 2024

Weird Walk's Samhain Ritual, Earth Theatre, London

"Prog morris dancing, DJs and a summoning of LARGE VIBES INDEED" at this modern Celtic end-of-harvest festival has us feeling OK about winter.

● earthhackney.co.uk

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SCAN ME



Wear some folksy FASHION

While a horned mask and full-length leaf-covered cloak may look spot-on when partying at Pagan Rave (yes, that's a thing – it takes place in Dingle, Ireland, each May), up-and-coming British fashion brands are offering subtler, more wearable nods to folk costume. Mystical symbols swirl across denim, fleeces and tracksuits in **Heresy's** ethically made streetwear. **John Alexander Skelton's** deconstructed men's tailoring weaves in references to medieval druidic rituals and 19th-century mummers' plays.

Then there's **Story mfg's** natty use of botanical embroidery, patchwork and crochet. Accessorise with a Stonehenge necklace from **Tatty Devine's** SS 2024 Folk Pop collection. Other style cues come from artist and morris dancer **Alex Merry** (@alexmerryart), whose fantastical illustrations have featured in Gucci campaigns, while archivist-curator **Lally MacBeth** (@lallymacbeth) rocks an embroidered smock or pom-pom adorned headgear. Turns out this subculture is a sartorial dream.



Above: Folk-inspired design by Story mfg

30 APRIL 2025

Beltane Fire Festival, Edinburgh

Billed as an "immersive celebratory ritual", this yearly event sees a clan of acrobats, drummers, dancers, musicians, witches and spectators descend on Calton Hill to usher in the start of summer. ● beltane.org

21 JUNE 2025

Crawick Multiverse Summer Solstice Wellbeing Day, Scotland

Tai chi and yoga classes, contemporary dance and choral singing performances, all surrounded by monumental land art. ● crawickmultiverse.co.uk



1-8 AUGUST 2025

Sidmouth Folk Festival, Devon

From cider-fuelled ceilidhs to crafting workshops, some 700 grassroots events take over this seaside town each summer. Listen out for impromptu music jams cropping up in ye olde pubs. ● sidmouthfolkfestival.co.uk



Above: Matt Smith and Morfydd Clark star in *Starve Acre*



Frighten yourself silly with **FOLK HORROR**

If you assumed this movement was all about revisiting some happy-clappy, bucolic idyll, think again – lots of fans are flexing an altogether darker side. “Folk horror is many things. It’s protest. Vengeful spirits. It’s a bit of *Wicker Man*, *Midsommar* or *Jerusalem*” – so says the blurb of upcoming folk-horror anthology **Bog People** (Chatto & Windus, autumn 2025), which promises short stories “as sharp as a guillotine blade”. Then there’s the British Library’s ongoing **Tales of the Weird** series: monthly volumes of creepy archive fiction rooted in the English landscape.

Setting spines tingling in cinema, BFI Southbank is running dedicated folk horror film season **Roots, Rituals and Phantasmagoria** through September. Top of the billing is new movie **Starve Acre**. Set in rural Yorkshire, it stars Matt “*Doctor Who*” Smith as an archaeologist who becomes consumed by the legend of an ancient oak. Could the tree’s long-dormant supernatural powers be awakening? You bet.

“The unofficial bible for folk-curious hikers is *Weird Walk* – a zine on ‘standing stones, folklore, rambling and good fellowship’ that has a cult following”

Go on a weird WANDER

Dotted with Neolithic burial chambers, sacred hills and Iron Age earthworks, the UK’s mythology-steeped landscapes are calling. The unofficial bible for folk-curious hikers is **Weird Walk** – a zine on “standing stones, folklore, rambling and good fellowship” that has a cult following.

Stonehenge is just the tip of the iceberg. You can tread in medieval pilgrims’ footsteps along **St Edmund Way** in Suffolk, uncover an enigmatic pagan shrine among Scottish lochs and snow-capped mountains at **Tigh nam Bodach**, or circumnavigate the

country’s oldest stone circle, **Castlerigg** (above) in the Lake District. Not all our isles’ enchanting landmarks date from the days of yore; at **Crawick Multiverse**, a land art

installation in south-east Scotland, artist Charles Jencks has designed “a cosmic landscape worthy of the ancients”.

FLY TO LONDON, MANCHESTER & EDINBURGH



PHOTOS: ENGLISH HERITAGE, © ANDREW HOWARD, ERIN HOPKINS, FOLKLORE RISING COVER ARTWORK, BEN EDGE / COVER DESIGN, BEBECCA WRIGHT, CHARCOALS STUDIO, CO.UK, @WEDONTKNOWWHATTHISIS24 / TOM PRICE, STORY MFG, KYLEAKERPHOTOGRAPHY.COM, CHRIS HARRIS, GETTY IMAGES

Black in



A troupe of cowboys is bringing equestrian culture to inner-city kids – at the same time busting misconceptions about LA's Compton neighbourhood. It's all part of a nationwide resurgence of Black rodeo, finds Christine Ochefu

SA

the



PHOTOGRAPHS: RHYS FRAMPTON

DIDDLE



Opening pages: Stona Maine and Keenan “Kee” Abercrombia ride out with the Compton Cowboys – and with Randy Savvy (far right)

At first glance, it's your typical pastoral scene. There are chickens, dogs, a bull complete with gold ring through its nose and about a dozen horses roaming around the compound. I soon make friends with the smallest and most adorable horse on the ranch, a Shetland pony called Cheyanne, who nibbles on her handler's fingers.

You'd be forgiven for thinking it's Nashville or Texas. Instead, I'm in South Central's Compton, just streets away from the buzz of LA's endless traffic and smog. Nineties movies like *Boyz n the Hood* and *South Central*, along with the city's West Coast rap genre, left Compton with a notorious legacy – a hard, gritty place where you need to look over your shoulder. In reality, it's a mixed bag of scenes, more residential and family friendly than you might expect. Chatting to locals, I'm quickly tapped into under-the-radar gastropubs, mom-and-pop cookout spots and swap meets for accessories.

And perhaps no part of the city is as stereotype-busting as Richland Farms, home to the Compton Cowboys. An all-Black group of seven cowboys and one cowgirl, their motto is: “Streets raised us, horses saved us.” At their stables, working-class kids get a chance to explore the natural world, stay out of trouble and learn about an often-forgotten part of Black history.

Introducing youngsters to horses is “a spiritual experience,” says de facto leader Randall Hook, better known as Randy Savvy. A sociology major, he speaks at a mile a minute, waxing on the links between the ranch's serenity and mental well-being, and the overlooked potential of his beloved hometown. “People always think when you come into a horse programme it's about riding horses, but it's not just that,” he says. “The introductory part of it is, ‘What's this energy? What's this feeling?’”

The group has become a globally recognised name as far as Black cowboy culture goes, even starring in a Guinness ad campaign. Homegrown talent Kendrick Lamar sported custom cowboy boots emblazoned with their moniker on stage at Coachella 2022. But their story starts back in the 80s, with Randy's aunt Mayisha Akbar. Her family has southern roots, so she



COMPTON COWBOYS



grew up watching westerns and interacting with horses. After moving to Compton with her family, she stumbled upon an address close to the current ranch and found the perfect place to live out her cowgirl dreams. It became difficult to shield from Compton's social problems, though.

"Her son got shot up at the gas station, he almost died," Randy recalls. "It was very traumatic for our family." Encouraged by their grandmother, the wider family opted to address these local problems rather than relocating. The answer came from horses. "When [my aunt] used to ride a horse around, all the kids used to follow her. So she was like, 'Damn, what if we used the horses to attract the kids?'" Mayisha started the Compton Junior Posse, a youth horse-riding organisation. Despite strict attendance conditions – trying hard at school and no bad behaviour – it created a snowball effect and encouraged local kids into equestrianism.

In recent years, popular culture has piqued interest in the Black western. Think: TV series *Yellowstone* and 2021's hit film *The Harder They Fall*, artists such as Shaboozey and, of course, Beyoncé's latest album, *Cowboy Carter*. Randy's own childhood was filled with amateur rodeos called "play days" that featured Black and Latino competitors. "Rodeo is probably the most American thing you can do, period. But



it was actually a culture shock for me when I saw a white cowboy because I grew up around all-Black ones," he says. "I'm like, 'What is that white fool doing on a horse?'" Joining the official rodeo circuit, he noticed fewer and fewer Black competitors and fans. "The more established rodeos that had a high offering to the public were mostly white. And horses in the modern context are associated with the elite and wealthy."

Organisers and Black equestrian groups across America have been working to change this. The Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo (named after the

"This environment auto-corrects a human. Whatever the issue is, it will find its way naturally to and through you, and you end up better"



Clockwise from far left: Stona Maine washes his shirt; Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo this July – and back in 2021

African American cowboy) celebrates its 40th anniversary this year and is "100% Black," Randy points out. Such events are reviving the original Black rodeos of the 1940s and 50s, which were in turn a reaction to segregationist restrictions that prevented Black competitors from taking part in major tournaments.

The Los Angeles leg of this multi-city extravaganza sees the Compton Cowboys performing alongside groups like the Wiltown Riders, Sacramento's Loyalty Riderz and Urban Saddles of South Gate, California. A testament to Black rodeo's popularity, the event sells out far before I step foot in LA. Instead, I visit the ranch for their Bill Pickett premiere – effectively, a sneak-peek into

COMPTON COWBOYS

the main event. One of the Compton Cowboys, Keenan Abercrombia, otherwise known as Kee, mans the barbecue, putting together delicious smoked chicken sandwiches straight off the grill. There's rodeo practice going on in the background, competing in original cowboy skills, like catching cattle and riding horses. Then there's the influx of modern southern culture and dirt biking; motorcyclists do wheelies and zoom in and out of the compound. Rather than country music, the soundtrack is true to our location. LA classics of old-school funk, West Coast rap and throwback soul are blasted through speakers, while everyone grooves along in cowboy hats and spurs.

These modern events doubly serve to shed light on the fact America's original cowboys were Black and Latino, a depiction rarely shown in modern retellings. In the late 1800s, following the abolition of slavery, many formerly enslaved people took to farm work for employment, looking to skills developed in pre-colonial Africa. "The term 'cowboy' was degrading," Randy explains, "If you were white, you were a ranch hand or cow hand.

'Boy' was relegating you to a more inferior position. The white man didn't want to be called a boy."

This led to forms of erasure that filtered into rodeo culture at large. "Even in the worst conditions, our ancestors still found a way to have sauce, have swag, so it became cool," Randy says. "The powers that be co-opted those skill sets and turned it into a dreamy Hollywood thing, and the [image of the] American cowboy was John Wayne. It's actually tragic."

"It's an exciting direction for what we're trying to do for Compton, for Black people, our narrative of the inner city"



*Above: Richland Farms, home to the Compton Cowboys
Right: Singer Howard Johnson waves his cowboy hat before the Bill Pickett Rodeo in July*





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COMPTON COWBOYS

As for the sport's future prospects, Randy is clear: "It's definitely on the rise. You got groups like us... with the intention of making the Black cowboy cool as f**k again. It's an exciting direction for what we're trying to do for Compton, for Black people, our narrative of the inner city. We finna [going to] flip all that shit over."

Despite reaching the wider world, their focus is granting recreation not often afforded to Black children in their branch of LA – knowing firsthand the positive impact that nature, equestrianism and community can bring to young lives. "Imagine you've grown up in a little apartment or a housing complex. No yard, no front, no back. Everything is cooped up. It's like cabin fever," Randy says. "When kids come to us, some of them might be sad, some aggressive, some aren't doing well in school or are missing a parent. But this environment auto-corrects a human. Whatever the issue is, it'll find its way naturally to and through you, and you end up better."

He points over to Kee's daughters, who have been running around in the



Top: Kee and Stona
Maine ride into the
setting sun

sunshine with friends during our conversation. "Kids from round here don't get to do this," he says. "When you got animals and a good village and community around you, you can blossom into anything."

In the serenity of the ranch, the cars and smog of the city feels a universe away. In fact, there is often only one sound cutting through the chatting and laughter: birdsong. "It's the spirit of this place," Randy muses. "The trees, the smell, the farm. You hear the wind and breathe. It's all those intangibles."

● comptoncowboys.com

📍 FLY TO LOS ANGELES

SADDLE UP

THE BEST PLACES TO
CATCH BLACK RODEO
ACROSS AMERICA



THE WILD WEST IN COLOR RODEO & AGRICULTURAL EXPO

This rodeo makes an appearance in Atlanta every Juneteeth – the major African American holiday commemorating emancipation. Expect fantastic dining options, true to Atlanta's thriving Black culinary scene.

● *Jim R Miller Park & Event Center, Marietta, Georgia, wildwestincolor.com*

LAS VEGAS INVITATIONAL BLACK RODEO

Rolling into Sin City 11–12 October, this event features educational presentations for fans who want to dig deeper into African American cowboy and cowgirl history alongside all the traditional action-packed contests, of course. There's also a Kidz show for little ones.

● *Horseman's Park Equestrian Center, Las Vegas, Nevada, blackrodeousa.com*



BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO

Perhaps the most notable multi-city Black rodeo, Bill Pickett pioneered the bulldogging practice of wrangling cattle, which morphed into the steer-wrangling that today features at rodeos worldwide. Bareback riding, calf-roping and barrel-racing skills are also tested.

● *Check for 2025 dates and locations, billpickettrodeo.com*

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The winter sun

HOTEL GUIDE



Feel the heat

Whatever delight you quite rightly

derive from the cold season's many charms - mellow fruitfulness, chunky knits - there's no denying an invigorating boost of sunshine is often just what the doctor ordered. So don't be shy: top up your wilting tan and fill your boots with vitamin D as envious followers scroll through your Insta back home in the drizzle. These spots are specially selected for savvy off-season sun seekers...

Lovers of luxury rejoice.

In the gorgeous form of the O2 Beach Club & Spa, Barbados, the Caribbean all-inclusive experience has been honed to perfection. Dine on jumbo scallops and lobster tail with impeccable wine pairings and live piano at ninth-floor Oro, one of five on-site eateries and arguably the island's best restaurant. Get pampered at the Acqua spa with floor-to-ceiling ocean vistas. Splash around in a trio of pools, gossip over cocktails at a



swim-up bar, or chill on colourful sun loungers studded along 300m of bone-white sand. Island vibes permeate every encounter, from local artwork, steel pan lessons, or the chance to hone your domino skills like a local. All this plus designer rooms with clear balcony views of turtles at play in the cerulean surf.



O2 Beach Club & Spa, Barbados
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IFURU ISLAND, MALDIVES

The one for **hitting new heights**



For a fresh perspective on the Maldives, how about making an entrance from 13,500ft? The Ifuru private island retreat, set on a secluded spot on the dazzlingly pretty Raa Atoll, joined forces with high-flying professional skydivers to launch the region's first permanent skydiving drop zone. Sky-blue Indian Ocean adrenaline rushes aside, Ifuru is also quite the looker at sea level - get a load of the Barbicore lifeguard station, or swish modern styling at 147 beach suites and villas, many with private beachfront pools and direct access to the beaches. Eat astonishingly well - it's all inclusive, 24/7 - at six restaurants. Palm Grill for fresh fish cooked over charcoal. Dreamy sunset spot The Waterfront for divine Asian fusion, or poolside pizzas followed by cocktails and tunes at Hubba Hubba bar. Talk about upmarket.





**Cap Maison,
Saint Lucia**
THE ONE FOR
GETTING WED
AND WILD

Popping the question

to your beloved in the 21st century is a fraught business. It needs to be a ravishing setting, come (pretty much) as a surprise, and look fabulous on the 'gram. Step forward Cap Maison, a lavish clifftop boutique on the northern tip of heavenly St Lucia.

Apart from being quite the love nest – you'll swoon over its whitewashed Spanish facade, terracotta vases and handpainted tiling – Cap Maison offers a "proposal concierge" service, which will hook you and your betrothed up with a suite upgrade, discreet photographer, helicopter transfer and – on the big night – sunset dinner at Rock Maison, a unique private dining table on a rocky outcrop in the balmy Caribbean. Champagne – and a ring – is winched over to you on a rather nifty zipwire contraption. And in that situation, as we all know, you just can't beat a nice big rock.



DON CESAR HOTEL, FLORIDA

The one for a rosy outlook



This much-loved landmark, joyously nicknamed the Pink Palace, has been the life and soul of this stretch of Gulf Coast since 1928. Jazz Age legend F Scott Fitzgerald was notoriously fond of the place. Presidents from FDR onward have swung by. Robert De Niro made a movie and Pitbull not long ago shot a music video here. Dominating the award-winning alabaster sands of St Pete Beach, it has two giant swimming pools, 277 unashamedly glamorous old-school guest bedrooms and one of the most celebrated seafood spots in the whole US - Maritana - where the movers and shakers of the Sunshine State gather and devour seared foie plum, with brioche and port, octopus, and butter-poached lobster with Swiss chard and truffle emulsion. Book now - you'll be sure to be tickled pink.



Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah

THE ONE FOR PUSHING THE BOAT OUT

If you're so inclined, you can arrive at this absolute jewel by helicopter. From the helipad, it's a short hop to the Royal Suite, arguably Dubai's most opulent, with nearly 1,600m² of polished wood, Italian marble tiles and servant quarters. If you're not quite so flush right now, the regular rooms are amazing anyway, tastefully appointed with a soft ivory and spearmint palette, Salvatore Ferragamo toiletries in bathrooms with in-mirror TVs, and pillow menus offering goose down, or anti-ageing

vitamin E spritzes for serenely taking in the skyline. Dine at Social by Neapolitan-born Carmine Faravolo, sup afternoon tea with Venetian-inspired small plates in the agreeably old-money vibe of Peacock Alley, or dip into a cool lagoon pool. There's even parking for your yacht - just another way to make a splash on arrival.



SANDALS SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

The one for all-inclusive escapism



The lesser-known but nevertheless lovely Caribbean isle of Saint Vincent is situated at the edge of the Lesser Antilles, and its arresting mix of lush rainforests, white sand beaches and remnants of ancient cultures feels like something from the pages of a fantasy novel. The newly opened Sandals Saint Vincent and the Grenadines resort, on its own secluded cove with a gently flowing river, boasts an eye-catching array of two-storey overwater villas, beachfront butler villas and more. Eleven restaurants offer everything from upscale dock-to-dish seafood to healthy grab-and-go treats, like sushi hand rolls and green bowls. Swim in four captivating swimming pools, including a mesmerising 90m linear pool, or dive into nearby reefs where you'll encounter the unique local black coral. A breathtaking outpost of paradise.





Will Smith once stated that in his whole career, he most regrets turning down the part of Neo in *The Matrix*.

Where there's Will

Bad Boys launched Fresh Prince Will Smith's blockbuster career in 1995. Nearly 30 years on, where better to turn to reboot his career after that Academy Awards incident in 2022? Martin Lawrence returns as Smith's fellow wisecracking detective for this fourth outing in the franchise, which sits somewhere between TV series *Miami Vice* and the *Beverly Hills Cop* films – with the cumulative violence of both.

© WATCH BAD BOYS: RIDE OR DIE

65-71// Movies

Kneecap discuss the buzz around their eponymous debut film, plus plunge into *Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga* and take a tumble for *The Fall Guy*.

73-77// Television

Meet charitable UK YouTubers the Sidemen, catch up on the biggest acts of Glastonbury 2024 and drop into high-stakes US drama *Billions*.



79-82 // Audio

Soca is our flavour of the month – plus tune into Camila Cabello's *C.XOXO*, Meghan Trainor's *Timeless* and Gracie Abrams' *The Secret of Us*.



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 September.

A WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

WHAT'S ON

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THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Tune into **VERA**, our genre-busting world of entertainment

Welcome onboard

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

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

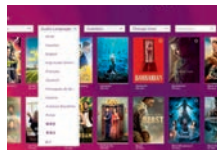
- Select an album from Music, a TV show from TV or a movie from Movies.
- For Music, click on the star symbol next to your chosen track or album.
- For Movies and TV click Save Show/Movie for Later.
- Depending on which aircraft you are on, you'll see a tab or star at the top of your screen.
- Click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



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See below for more on your aircraft



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If you are on one of our **789** or **A333** aircraft, select subtitles or audio description from the dropdown menu to see what's available. Once you have made your selection, just touch the screen while the media is playing and select the desired audio language or subtitles from the Language Settings dropdown menu. Now you're good to go – enjoy!

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If you want to limit which content is available by BBFC rating at a particular seat, please talk to a member of the cabin crew.

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Viewing guide

- ⚠ Not suitable for nervous flyers
- ⚠ Unsuitable for children
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WHAT'S ON

MOVIES

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BER

FRESH FILMS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

“WE WERE BORN TO PLAY OURSELVES”

Hip-hop trio **KNEECAP** bring the Irish language to the big screen

► “THE RISK WAS ALL ON our side,” Belfast rappers Kneecap (Mo Chara, Móglaí Bap and DJ Próvaí) say of their punchy, eponymous new movie. The film is a lightly fictionalised biopic on their rise to fame and – like the band’s music – is partially Irish-language, frantically paced, and sparks with both depth and edgy hedonism.

It took you a long time to agree to make your movie. Why?

Mo Chara: Once the people who make the film have made the film, they’ll move onto the next thing and we’ll still be Kneecap, so if it was shit, it could be quite detrimental to our music careers. But, in the end, it was a risk worth taking.

Kneecap is kind of a true story and kind of not...

Móglaí Bap: Yes. When you’re in front of the camera you have to add a bit of spice. Hollywood spice. We did acting classes for six months. That made a big difference. But it’s a role we were born to play: ourselves.

From top: DJ Próvaí, Mo Chara and Móglaí Bap



Former Republican leader Gerry Adams appears in the film. How did that happen?

Mo Chara: We all know Gerry, so I messaged him on Twitter [X]. It was a scene where I gave the boys ketamine by accident. He said he had one problem with the script. I was assuming it would be the drugs, but he didn’t want to swear. So he said “flipping”.

Historically it’s been difficult to succeed performing in Irish.

DJ Próvaí: People listen to music in every language now: BTS sold out Wembley twice singing in Korean. People don’t care as much anymore. It’s about energy, enjoying the music and craic.

Have you had time to work on your music, too?

Mo Chara: We’re back and forth from London working with Toddla T on a new album. When it’ll be ready is a secret.

How has your music – and the film – travelled?

Móglaí Bap: Some jokes go down well in certain places. We brought an RUC Land Rover [a symbol of the Troubles] to Galway Film Fleadh; it creates a bit of drama. I think some Americans need subtitles too because of our accents.

“PEOPLE LISTEN TO MUSIC IN EVERY LANGUAGE... IT’S ABOUT ENERGY, ENJOYING THE MUSIC AND CRAIC

WATCH KNEECAP

HOT RIGHT NOW



Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga ♥

15

Anya Taylor-Joy, Chris Hemsworth	148 mins
-------------------------------------	----------

► **MAD MAX IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN (OR IS HE?) IN THIS NEWEST instalment of the iconic franchise, which centres instead on the journey of a young Furiosa, brilliantly portrayed by Anya Taylor-Joy. Acting as both spin-off and prequel to *Mad Max: Fury Road* as well as an origin story, it's set 15 to 20 years before the events of *Fury Road* and follows Furiosa's life over a decade, from her kidnapping by warlord Dementus (Hemsworth) to her rise to Imperator. As with any *Mad Max* movie, action is the star and the carnage here is gobsmacking, easily the equal of *Fury Road*. Viewers should stay alert for potential Easter eggs and cameo appearances.**



BAD BOYS: RIDE OR DIE

15

Will Smith, Martin Lawrence	115 mins
--------------------------------	----------

Will Smith is back in this fourth *Bad Boys* team-up with longtime sparring partner Martin Lawrence. Be warned, though: among the explosions and car chases are scenes that may not be suitable for nervous passengers.

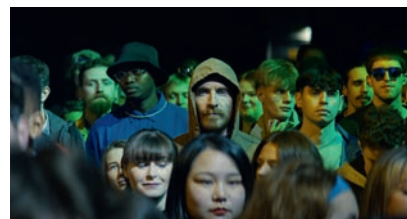


BACK TO BLACK ♥

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 modern celebrity.



KNEECAP ♥

18

Michael Fassbender, Kneecap	105 mins
--------------------------------	----------

Following the rise of the eponymous 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, very swearsy – and it's utterly ace. *See opener*



CIVIL WAR

15

Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura	109 mins
--------------------------------	----------

Writer-director Alex Garland's brilliantly realised dystopian mind-bender reimagines the US in a state of modern conflict. Awesomely staged action makes this one a thriller – while a distinctly uneasy sense of timeliness gives it a topical, almost newsy edge.



GASOLINE RAINBOW

15

Tony Aburto, Micah Bunch	108 mins
-----------------------------	----------

Some critics have responded to this tale of kids who leave high school and embark on a coming-of-age road trip by labelling it “just a load of drunk teenagers talking”. Others have praised it for its insight, feeling and heart. Maybe it's both?

Top five

Fun facts about Chris Pratt



1 // **He worked as a stripper.** In his late teens Chris Pratt stripped at bachelorette parties and, memorably, a \$40 gig at his mate's grandma's house.

2 // **He lived in a van.** Pratt lived in a van during a spell in Maui ("A pretty awesome place to be homeless") taking odd jobs, the occasional audition and hotboxing to Dr Dre's album *2001*.

3 // **Parks and Recreation was his big break.** He was only meant to be in the hit Amy Poehler sitcom for a few episodes. However, the writers kept him on.



4 // **He's married to Arnie's daughter.** In 2019 Pratt married Katherine Schwarzenegger, daughter of action legend Arnold, after meeting (rather wholesomely) in church.

5 // **He's a lifelong Garfield fan.** Since he was a nipper, Pratt always flipped to the Garfield comic strip in newspapers. Now he provides Garfield's voice.

WATCH THE GARFIELD MOVIE



VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES. WORDS: ANDY HILL

DYSTOPIAN LARKS



A Quiet Place: Day One

15

Lupita Nyong'o, Joseph Quinn

100 mins

► **SILENCE IS GOLDEN AND SCREAMS ARE A DEATH WISH IN THIS** intense prequel which stars Nyong'o as Sam, a terminally ill woman who finds herself caught up in an invasion by blind, extraterrestrial creatures with an acute sense of hearing. The cast (with the exception of Djimon Hounsou, who returns from *A Quiet Place II*) are mostly fresh faces, but with series writer John Krasinski onboard, you can expect all the nail-biting scares you've come to love. Signing onto the film, Nyong'o had to fess up to a fear of felines and even asked director Michael Sarnoski if Sam could own another animal. One course of cat therapy later, she overcame her fear and had even adopted a cat by the end of production.



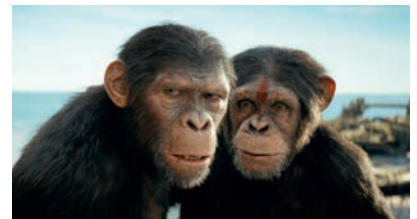
ARCADIAN

15

Nicolas Cage, Jaeden Martell

91 mins

Wear gloves while watching *Arcadian* or your fingernails won't survive the journey. With a plot that revolves around brothers trying to keep their wounded dad (Cage) safe while being hunted by nasty creatures, this is brilliantly nerve-jangling stuff.



KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES

12

Owen Teague, Freya Allan

120 mins

The iconic saga continues in this fourth instalment in the reboot series as we delve into the aftermath of humanity's fall and the rise of super-intelligent apes. As ever with this franchise, it's popcorn entertainment done with brains as well as gobsmacking simian-based action.

TRULY HISTORIC



12.12: The Day ♥

15

Hwang Jung-min, Jung Woo-sung	141 mins
----------------------------------	----------

► **HAILING FROM SOUTH KOREA, HISTORICAL ACTION-DRAMA 12.12:** *The Day* is set against the backdrop of the 12 December 1979 military coup. The plot unfolds after President Park's assassination as martial law is declared. Security commander Chun Doo-gwang (Hwang Jung-min) and his loyal officers stage a coup, while Lee Tae-shin (Jung Woo-sung), a resolute commander of the Capital Garrison Command, believes soldiers should not take political action and fights against Chun Doo-gwang. *12.12* has proved especially popular with young South Koreans, who signed up to a "heart-rate challenge" where thrilled viewers posted smartwatch heart-rate pictures on social media.



THE MINISTRY OF UNGENTLEMANLY WARFARE ♥

!

Henry Cavill, Eiza Gonzalez	120 mins
--------------------------------	----------

Director Guy Ritchie has furnished us with a mere five major projects in two years – and now comes this cracking tale of highly skilled and unorthodox soldiers who go behind enemy lines during WWII.



IRENA'S VOW

!

Sophie Nélisse, Dougray Scott	121 mins
----------------------------------	----------

This superb true story tells of Irena Gut, a Polish nurse who risked her life to save 12 Jewish people from the Holocaust and was recognised as Righteous Among the Nations for her actions.

ACTION STATIONS



ASPHALT CITY

!

Tye Sheridan, Sean Penn	124 mins
----------------------------	----------

Young paramedic Ollie (Sheridan) is assigned to the NYC night shift with a seasoned partner (Penn). Not only does darkness reveal a city in crisis, but Ollie soon has an ethical dilemma.



ISS

15

Ariana DeBose, Chris Messina	95 mins
---------------------------------	---------

When war between the superpowers breaks out on Earth, the US and the Russian crews are ordered to take control of the International Space Station by their respective governments.



MONKEY MAN ♥

18

Dev Patel, Sharlto Copley	121 mins
------------------------------	----------

Starring, and written and directed by Patel, this is the bloody and bullet-strewn story of Kid, who's on a mission of revenge for the brutal murder of his mother. Action meets social commentary.

LOVE STORIES



THE IDEA OF YOU ❤️

15

Anne Hathaway,
Nicholas Galitzine

115 mins

Rom com massive, get ready: Hathaway is Solène, a 40-year-old single mum who begins an unexpected romance with the 24-year-old lead singer of the hottest boy band on the planet (Galitzine).



SOMEONE LIKE YOU

Sarah Fisher,
Jake Allyn

126 mins

Grab your hankies for this tale of a grieving architect, Dawson (like the creek) who, after the death of his best friend (London, like the city), goes in search of London's secret twin sister.



The Dead Don't Hurt ❤️

15

Viggo Mortensen,
Vicky Krieps

129 mins

➤ **BEST KNOWN FOR HIS WORK IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA, VIGGO** Mortensen takes the directorial reins for this western set during the US Civil War. Themes of love, loss and survival crop up in a tale centred on Vivienne (Krieps), who must navigate the harsh realities of frontier life. When the man she loves, Holger Olsen (Mortensen), goes off to fight in the Civil War, Vivienne is left to fend for herself in a place controlled by a corrupt mayor and his unscrupulous business partner. The plot thickens as Vivienne battles these external forces while Olsen fights on the battlefield. Upon his return from the war, Olsen and Vivienne must confront and make peace with the people they have each become.

Movie bluff

How true is *Back to Black*?

So does the Amy Winehouse biopic do her justice? Lead actress Marisa Abela is on song channelling

Winehouse's romantic, creative spirit in a film that otherwise glosses over some key aspects of her life.

Like what? Her American band and close confidants The Dap-Kings scarcely get a look in, ditto influential producer Mark Ronson. Husband Blake Fielder-Civil is a central figure - their meeting in Camden boozier The Good Mixer is mostly true.

So it's a love story? That's definitely fair to say, although the movie ignores Amy's other boyfriends around this time, including actor Josh Bowman, former fiancé, director Reg Traviss, and fellow tabloid target, The Libertines' Pete Doherty.

Are the performances faithful? Abela studied every last eye roll and finger snap to recreate Winehouse's 2008 Glastonbury set. Although the film, maybe wisely, skips the bit where she yells, "Imagine if I was a c*** like Kanye West!"

© WATCH BACK TO BLACK



BIG LAUGHS



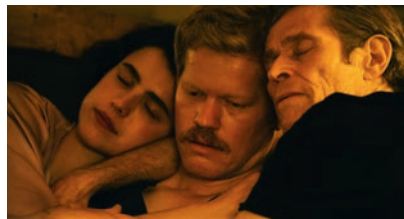
The Fall Guy ♥

12

Ryan Gosling,
Emily Blunt

126 mins

► **RYAN GOSLING PLAYS LOVETRUCK STUNTMAN COLT SEEVERS** in this entertaining spin-off from the TV show. After leaving the business, the battle-scarred, careworn and heartbroken Seavers springs back into action when the star of a big studio movie suddenly disappears. As the mystery deepens, he soon finds himself caught up in a dastardly plot – while also trying to woo back his lost love, Jody (Blunt). Fans of Gosling’s work in the sadly overlooked *The Nice Guys* might find some echoes of that movie here – which, by the way, is high praise indeed. Overall the result is a movie which is a whole heap of fun and even includes Gosling singing along to a Taylor Swift song.



KINDS OF KINDNESS ♥

18

Emma Stone,
Jesse Plemons

165 mins

Directed by the brilliant (and brilliantly idiosyncratic) Yorgos Lanthimos, *Kinds of Kindness* follows three intertwined stories: a man seeking control of his life, a policeman facing changes in his wife, and a woman searching for someone with a special ability.



LAROY, TEXAS

15

Steve Zahn,
John Magaro

110 mins

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

Movie quiz
Take on our featured films

1 //

In a dream sequence in western *The Dead Don't Hurt*, writer-director-star Viggo Mortensen uses his character Aragorn's sword from *The Lord of the Rings*, but do you know the sword's name?

2 //

Ryan Gosling and Emily Blunt lead action comedy *The Fall Guy*, but who played stuntman Colt Seavers and his girlfriend Jody in the original 80s TV series?

3 //

Star of noir farce *LaRoy*, Texas Steve Zahn made his big-screen breakthrough in which 1996 musical biopic written and directed by Tom Hanks?

4 //

Co-stars Anna Hathaway and Nicholas Galitzine bonded on the set of rom com *The Idea of You* over their shared enthusiasm for which English Premiership team and striker Leandro Trossard?

5 //

Portmanteau comedy *Kinds of Kindness* is Emma Stone's fourth collab with director Yorgos Lanthimos. Can you name the previous three?

● *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
- American Fiction
- Anyone But You
- Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom
- Arcadian
- Arthur's Whisky
- Asphalt City
- Babes
- Back to Black
- Bad Boys: Ride or Die
- The Beekeeper
- The Blind
- Bob Marley: One Love
- The Book of Clarence
- The Boys in the Boat
- The Canterville Ghost
- 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
- Ezra
- The Fall Guy
- Ferrari

- The First Omen
- Freelance
- Fremont
- French Girl
- 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
- Hit Man
- The Holdovers
- How to Have Sex
- The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes

I–L

- The Idea of You
- Immaculate
- If
- Insecure
- In the Land of Saints and Sinners
- In Too Deep
- Irena's Vow
- The Iron Claw
- ISS
- 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
- Last Suspect
- Late Bloomers
- Late Night with the Devil
- Lego DC Comics Super Heroes: Justice League vs Bizarro League
- The Lesson
- Lights Out
- The Long Game
- Love Lies Bleeding

M–Q

- Madame Web
- May December



- **Mean Girls**
- Migration
- Miller's Girl
- The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare
- Monkey Man
- Mothers' Instinct
- Música
- Napoleon
- One Life
- Ordinary Angels
- Origin
- Out of Darkness
- The Painter
- The Pod Generation
- Poor Things
- A Quiet Place: Day One

R–V

- Race for Glory: Audi vs Lancia
- Red Right Hand
- Ricky Stanicky

- Riddle of Fire
- Road House
- Role Play
- The Royal Hotel
- Saltburn
- Scrambled
- Self Reliance
- Silent Night
- Someone Like You
- Sting
- Swan Princess: Far Longer Than Forever
- Sweet Dreams
- Tarot
- Teen Titans Go! & DC Super Hero Girls: Mayhem in the Multiverse
- Thanksgiving
- Turtles All the Way Down
- Unsung Hero
- Upgraded

W–Z

- We Grown Now
- Wicked Little Letters
- Wish
- Your Lucky Day

VERA CLASSICS

- About Time
- Call Me By Your Name
- Carol
- Gangs of New York
- Ghostbusters
- Goodfellas
- Gremlins
- Harry Potter...
- Interstellar
- The Karate Kid
- La La Land
- The Lego Movie
- Memento
- Moonlight
- My Own Private Idaho
- Police Academy
- The Prestige
- Slumdog Millionaire
- Starman
- The Terminator
- 12.12: The Day
- Aburo
- Ajosepo
- Angrezi Medium
- The Animal Kingdom
- Baahubali 2: The Conclusion
- Bala
- Beomjoedosi 4
- Bheed
- Bholaa
- Born to Fly
- La Chimera
- Creation of the Gods I
- Daredevil Musthafa
- 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
- Kantara
- Kill
- The Kingdom: Flame of Destiny
- Malaika
- Meeting Funmi's Parents

INTERNATIONAL

- Merry Men 3
- Monster
- The Movie Teller
- Perfect Days
- Rocketry: The Nambi Effect
- Satyaprem Ki Katha
- Shiv Shastri Balboa
- The Silent Intruder
- Something Like Gold
- Suzume
- Tatsama Tadbhava
- The Teachers' Lounge
- Three of Us
- The Three Musketeers: Milady
- Tiger 3
- Tu Jhoothi Main Makkaar
- YOLO
- The Zone of Interest

SHORT FILMS

- For People In Trouble
- In Too Deep
- An Irish Goodbye
- The Snip
- Strange Way of Life
- The Stupid Boy
- 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

* Content may vary according to aircraft

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WHAT'S ON

TELEVISION

SEP
TEMBER

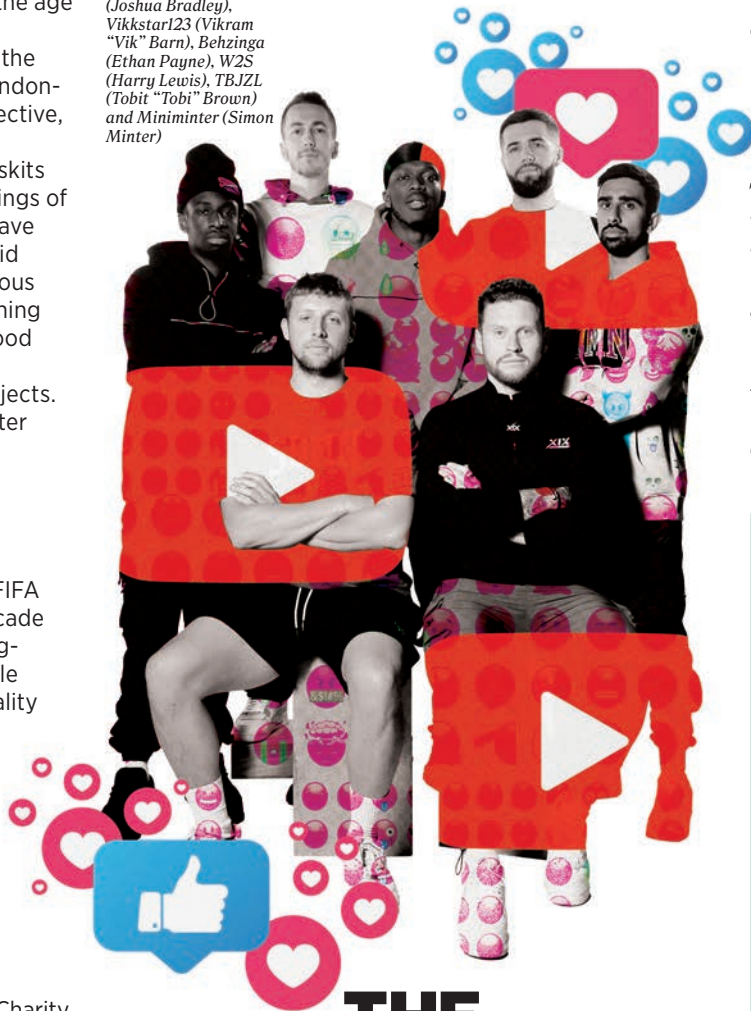
DOING THE NUMBERS

► **IF YOU'RE A YOUNG** person – say, under the age of 25 – you'll almost definitely know who the Sidemen are. The London-based YouTuber collective, famous for pranks, challenges, comedy skits and hilarious reworkings of reality TV formats, have tens of millions of avid followers across various channels. Plus a clothing line, their own fast food chain and several successful music projects. Here's why they matter – even if you're not Gen Z yourself.

They're self-made
From a humble start streaming GTA and FIFA matches online a decade ago to their latest big-budget *Top Gear*-style shenanigans, and reality show remakes featuring celeb guests like Nicole Scherzinger or Steve Aoki, the boys are creative grafters doing it all their own way.

They're doing good
Last year's Sidemen Charity Football match, at West Ham's London Stadium, raised £2.4m for charity – up on the £1m they raised at a similar event the year before. That money went to good causes, like sending low-income school kids on educational foreign trips.

Clockwise: KSI (Olajide "IJ" Olatunji), Zerkaa (Joshua Bradley), Vikkstar123 (Vikram "Vik" Barn), Behzinga (Ethan Payne), W2S (Harry Lewis), TBJZL (Tobit "Tobi" Brown) and Miniminter (Simon Minter)



THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Why you should care about British YouTuber crew **THE SIDEMEN**

They're relatable
The Sidemen are very obviously close mates in real life, and the banter and in-jokes they share make for a massive part of their appeal.

They're inspiring
When Ethan was struggling with his mental health after internet trolls teased him about his weight, the boys rallied around and helped him on his way back to fitness. He recently became the first of the gang to become a dad.

SIDEMEN IN NUMBERS

6.37
BILLION
Views of their YouTube content so far



6
Outlets of Sides, their growing chicken shop chain



2.7
MILLION
people watched their last charity football match live

7
Number of countries visited by the winning team in 24 hours for a recent challenge

\$35
THOUSAND
Price of the Nikes Simon bought on a whim in Vegas

2
Final chart position of Christmas Drillings, their 2022 number

MUST WATCH

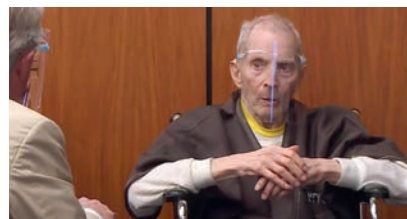


Agatha Christie: Ordeal by Innocence ♥



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

▶ **BASED ON THE NOVEL BY THE QUEEN OF CRIME, AGATHA CHRISTIE,** the BBC's handsomely mounted *Ordeal by Innocence* features an all-star cast including Bill Nighy. A gripping four-part murder mystery, it unfolds during Christmas 1954 at wealthy philanthropist Rachel Argyll's family estate, Sunny Point. When Rachel is murdered, her adopted son, Jack, is promptly arrested. The plot thickens with the arrival of a mysterious stranger who offers an alibi for Jack, throwing the case into disarray. Who really dunnit? Well, as hidden motives and deep-seated grudges bubble to the surface, it could be literally anyone. We have the entire saga onboard.



THE JINX, PART TWO ♥



Crime & thrillers	Up to 58 mins
-------------------	---------------

The Jinx, Part Two continues the true-crime saga, covering the years since 2015, when suspected serial killer and real-estate heir Robert Durst was imprisoned for murder. (He died in 2022.) The series delves into his trial and features new interviews as well as prison calls.



FARGO ♥



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

As reliably brilliant and eminently watchable as TV drama gets, the fifth season – which is showing here in its entirety – finds an all-new and very star-studded cast (Juno Temple, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Jon Hamm) telling a story of murder, betrayal and deception.



ELSBETH ♥

Box set	43 mins
---------	---------

Unorthodox lawyer Elsbeth Tascioni (*The Good Wife*) gets her own spin-off show. She's still using unconventional methods to snare the crims and, most importantly, is still played by the wonderful Carrie Preston. Series one is onboard.



LOST BOYS & FAIRIES ♥



Box set	59 mins
---------	---------

Superb mini-series about Gabriel and his partner, Andy, who plan to adopt a kid. However, Gabriel must first embark on a journey of self-discovery and attempt to repair his relationship with his own father. All three episodes are here.



ETERNAL YOU ♥



Culture	87 mins
---------	---------

Prepare to have your heartstrings tugged by this documentary about companies that use AI so people can talk to their loved ones after death. The film asks whether this is exploitation of grief, or is it a way to ease the suffering of those who are left behind?

Beast mode

Who's who in *All Creatures Great and Small*

1 //



James Herriot

Nicholas Ralph plays the dashing rural vet coping with everything from sickly cattle and flea-ridden tortoises to a flatulent boxer named Cedric.

2 //



Helen Anderson

Oscar-winner Rachel Shenton plays James's lovely missus Helen. No spoilers, but in season four she's broodily scoffing pickled eggs.

3 //



Mrs Hall

The doughty housekeeper (Anna Madeley) is going through the excruciating – in the 1940s – process of getting a divorce.

4 //



Siegfried Farnon

As the proprietor of Skeldale House, Siegfried (Samuel West) is a big cheese. He's cranky, though, as he's trying to give up tobacco for Lent.

WATCH ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL

VERA LISTINGS: ANDREW HOLMES WORDS: ANDY HILL

EPIC DRAMA



Billions ♥

15

Box set

Up to 60 mins

► **HIGH STAKES, HUGE EGOS AND STRANGE PECCADILLOS TAKE CENTRE** stage in this US drama, which reaches its final, seventh season here. Over the years, the faces have changed, but the central dynamic remains the same as mega-rich hedge fund manager Prince (Corey Stoll) locks horns with Charles “Chuck” Rhoades (Paul Giamatti), an attorney with a particular dislike of white-collar crims who think they're above the law (ie men like Prince). Putting these two on a collision-course makes for lip-smacking drama – after all, they're natural enemies. Keep your eyes peeled for an old school character (cough, Damian Lewis) making a bit of a comeback. We're showing the entire season onboard.



TOKYO VICE ♥

18

Crime & thrillers

Up to 60 mins

Set in the neon-lit underbelly of the titular city, *Tokyo Vice* follows journo Jake Adelstein as he navigates the dangerous world of the yakuza, uncovering secrets and risking his life to bring the truth to light. Intricate plots? Intense character development? Check.



THE SYMPATHIZER !

Box set

Up to 60 mins

Robert Downey Jr plays a number of roles in this acclaimed drama from *Oldboy* director Park Chan-wook. Set after the Vietnam war, the narrative revolves around a spy who feeds info back to the Viet Cong – and we've got the whole lot onboard.

EDGY HUMOUR



Hacks

15

Box set	Up to 37 mins
---------	---------------

► **NOW IN ITS THIRD SEASON - AND DESPITE WINNING A HATFUL OF awards** - *Hacks* continues to be a bit of a closely guarded secret. It revolves around an almost-over-the-hill comedian, played by the brilliant Jean Smart, who decides she needs to freshen up her act and hires a young writer, Ava (Hannah Einbinder). And that's it, more or less, with the love-hate, on-off relationship between them providing the backbone of each successive season, attracting critical acclaim and numerous accolades, including Primetime Emmy Awards and a Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series - Musical or Comedy. We've got the whole of the brilliant third season onboard, so binge away.



FANTASMAS



Drama	Up to 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.



DREAMING WHILST BLACK



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

Writer-star Adjani Salmon plays Kwabena, who works in recruitment but dreams of being a filmmaker with his pal from film school. *Dreaming...* tackles issues around work, relationships and discrimination.

OUR DESTINATIONS



DRONETV, POWERED BY AIRVUZ

Travel	Up to 12 mins
--------	---------------

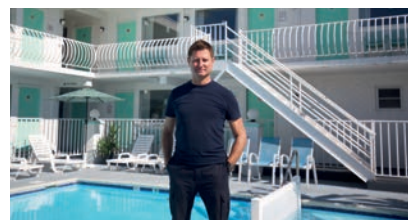
Experience stunning drone footage of VA destinations, including the breathtaking landscapes of south England, awe-inspiring skylines of North American cities and beautiful Caribbean islands.



JIMMY'S TASTE OF FLORIDA

Factual entertainment	60 mins
-----------------------	---------

Chef Jimmy Doherty (him off *Jimmy's Farm*) visits Pensacola and Panama City Beach, surfs at New Smyrna Beach, sees the Kennedy Space Center, and explores local delicacies in St Pete and Tampa Bay.



GEORGE CLARKE'S AMERICANA

Factual entertainment	48 mins
-----------------------	---------

Architect George Clarke travels across the United States, exploring quirky homes and groundbreaking design, highlighting along the way the creativity and diversity of American architecture.

THAT'S SHOWBIZ



THE SIDEMEN STORY ♥

15

Culture 100 mins

Airline exclusive. The Sidemen is a British YouTube group made up of household names such as Miniminter, Zerkaa and W2S. This documentary takes a look at their first decade together. See *opener*



THE REST IS ENTERTAINMENT

Vodcast 23 mins

Join smarty-pants hosts Richard Osman and Marina Hyde as they pull back the velvet curtain to answer burning questions about TV, movies, journalism and other entertainment stuff.



Glastonbury 2024 ♥

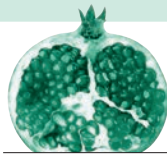


Music 55 mins

➤ **GLASTONBURY HAS INCREASINGLY EMBRACED TELEVISION CAMERAS** over recent years, so what better way to experience Britain's foremost music festival than with this near-hour-long highlights show? Thankfully, the downpours that have benighted the five-day event in many previous instalments stayed away this year and Somerset was drenched instead in summer sun. Dua Lipa returned with a showstopping act seven years after her debut, Camilla Cabello (pictured above) wowed the crowds on the Other Stage, and Sugababes pulled together a sizzling set that proved to be one of the weekend's highlights. K-pop band Seventeen and Avril Lavigne also feature.

Blast from the past Why we dig Pompeii

A recent flurry of activity at the archaeological site of Pompeii – buried under volcanic rock and ash two millennia ago – has revealed some fascinating new insights into what life was like for the luckless people who dwelt there.



Food
A newly revealed fresco shows an icky ancestor of pizza, with pomegranate seed as topping. Pineapple wouldn't make it to Europe until the 1490s.



Decor
A recently discovered banqueting hall floor has over a million shiny mosaic tiles. The walls? Painted black, to hide mucky soot stains from oil lamps.



People
Wealthy Romans had time to skip town on their fancy horse-drawn carts, leaving slaves – like two recently uncovered women and a child – to bite the dust.



Graffiti
Graffiti ran the gamut from lewd jokes to official election notices. Alas, for the citizens of Pompeii, the writing was on the wall.

© THE POMPEII: THE NEW DIG

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WHAT'S ON AUDIO

SEP
TEM
BER

SOUNDS TO UPLIFT THE SPIRITS

ISLAND RECORDS

Why **SOCA** music slaps

➤ TRINIDAD AND

Tobago's Lord Shorty - he stood 6'4" tall - created soca music in the early 70s. The lively, danceable sound, still wildly popular throughout the Caribbean, emerged from the characteristic ethnic make-up of his dual-island homeland. Thanks to its African heritage, from the days of the slave trade, the calypso rhythm of soca owes much to West African



kaiso music. When the trade was banned, Indian indentured labourers brought over to make up the workforce introduced a wave of East Indian instrumentation and harmonic flavours, which

Lord Shorty ultimately blended into his newfound sound. Soca at first dealt in spiritual and political themes, but later became saucier and more energetic to amp up carnival crowds. Lord Shorty quit the game, mad that soca, in his view, now existed only to "celebrate the female bottom, rather than uplift the spirits of the people".

🎧 LISTEN TO VARIOUS: SOCA OVERLOAD



“**AT FIRST SOCA DEALT IN SPIRITUAL AND POLITICAL THEMES, BUT IT BECAME SAUCIER**”

Beat this
Soca's past, present and future

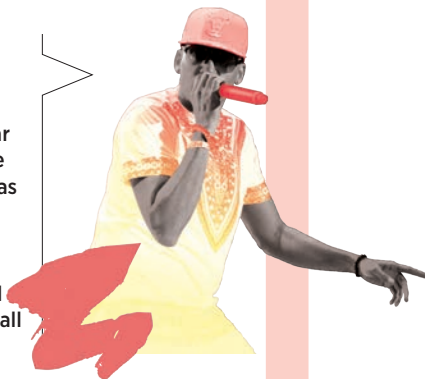


THE PAST Alison Hinds

ROLL IT GAL
"Soca Queen"
Alison Hinds was one of the first women to make a mark on the soca scene in the late 80s. This track is all about female strength and empowerment.

THE PRESENT Rupee

JUMP
Barbados soca star Rupee - real name Rupert Clarke - was born to a German mother and a Bajan father, and has scored several evergreen dancehall and soca hits.



THE FUTURE King Bubba FM

CALLING IN SICK
This naughty tune straight-up incites the listener to phone in sick and go to carnival. This is the way the genre is headed - Lord Shorty would be mortified.



FRESH SOUNDS



Camila Cabello

C.XOXO
POP

► **CAMILA CABELLO ROSE TO PROMINENCE AS A MEMBER OF FIFTH Harmony**, one of the bestselling girl groups of all time. Since leaving the group in 2016, things have got colourful for Camila real fast. Over four albums, beginning with 2018's sultry *Camila*, the critical plaudits have got louder, the guests a little starrier, and the bangers more, er, bangery. No doubt this is why she feels secure enough to fiddle with the formula. Indeed, this fourth album finds her embracing her leftfield side. "I do feel like a weirdo," she says, "and that's the music I love." Bangers for weirdos, then? Count us in.



NORMANI ♥ ⚠

Dopamine
POP

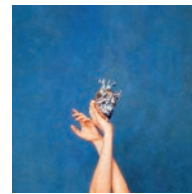
The kind of vocal that leaves you needing to take a cold shower paired with seriously addictive, creamy smooth R&B club-ready tunes. This is the world of Normani – dive in.



ALFIE TEMPLEMAN ♥

Rudiosoul
POP

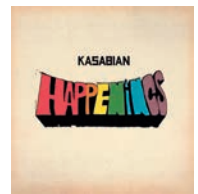
Templeman described his debut as "indie R&B". This joyful follow-up finds him expanding his sonic palette to include funk, psych rock and everything in between.



AURORA

What Happened to the Heart?
POP

According to the singer-songwriter, the title of this second album of clubby indie-pop is "the most important, beautiful and sad question I've ever wondered in my life".

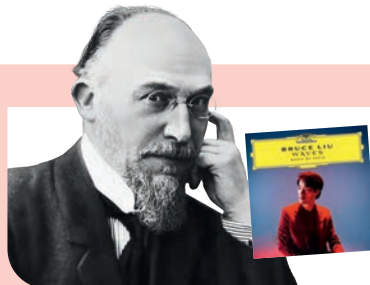


KASABIAN

Happening
ROCK

Talismanic lead singer Tom Meighan may be gone, but the band continue to make albums replete with the kind of stadium dance-rock bangers for which they're known.

Pianist envy
In praise of
Erik Satie



French composer Erik Satie was an odd duck. Credited with dragging classical piano from the stuffed-shirt 1800s into a modernist, avant garde future, he produced a surrealist ballet with Picasso and wrote extensively about his diet, which apparently consisted only of white food, including bones and fruit mould. Check out his *Gnossiennes* and feel transported.

🎧 LISTEN TO BRUCE LIU: WAVES (MUSIC BY SATIE)

INDIE



THE MYSTERINES ⚠️

Afraid of Tomorrow's Rock
ROCK

Wirral two-piece The Mysterines play a potent blend of grunge and indie rock, delivering raw, visceral energy like the world might end tomorrow. Some say it's bleak, some say it's dark and brooding. But everyone who's heard it agrees it rocks.



IMAGINE DRAGONS ❤️

Loom
ALTERNATIVE

Hailing from Las Vegas, Imagine Dragons specialise in energetic anthems boasting introspective lyrics. With *Loom*, they prove once again that they're masters of crafting hits that make you sing, dance and ponder life's mysteries. What? All at once?

Been Stellar ❤️

Scream from New York, NY
ALTERNATIVE

➤ **IMAGINE IF THE EARLY SHOEGAZE** bands Lush, Ride and My Bloody Valentine were stuck in an elevator with New York legends The Strokes and Interpol, and then when no help arrived, they got cheesed off with each other, started arguing, and a huge fight broke out. Well, that's what this lot sound like. Hailing from the Big Apple, Been Stellar craft tunes in which lush, reverb-soaked guitars clash with sharp, staccato rhythms, embodying the chaotic spirit of a city always on the brink. "Some people do noisy well and some do pop well," they say. "It's a delicate balance trying to merge the two."

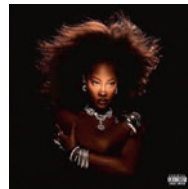


IN THE CLUB

Kaytranada ❤️ ⚠️

Timeless
DANCE & ELECTRONIC

➤ **KAYTRANADA'S TIMELESS IS** an aptly named romp through the record box of the best DJs, solidifying his place as the master of funky, beat-driven glitterball bangers. A smorgasbord of infectious grooves and irresistible rhythms, the Haitian-born producer's third album boasts an impressive guest list of white-hot talent, pairing Childish Gambino's slick vocals with Kay's signature funky beats and Anderson .Paak's joyous contribution. And yet, here's the thing: heavyweight collabs be damned, because this is a Kay album through and through.



TEMS ❤️ ⚠️

Born in the Wild
R&B & SOUL

Known for her collaborations with Drake and Wizkid, Grammy-winning Tems has produced an imaginatively out-there debut blending African rhythms with modern beats. The result is a fresh, genre-defying sound that's as wild as its name suggests.



LUCKY DAYE ⚠️

Algorithm
R&B & SOUL

Grammy-winning New Orleans artist Lucky Daye infuses his third album, *Algorithm*, with a smooth blend of soulful R&B and futuristic beats, exploring love, technology, and human connection. Listen out for contributions from UK wunderkind Raye.

NuCountry
Heartfelt ballads and foot-stomping anthems



CARLY PEARCE
Hummingbird

Country sensation Carly Pearce proves her acclaimed debut, 2021's *29: Written in Stone*, was no flash in the pan with this assured follow-up. "I'm still a work in progress," she says. Aren't we all, Carly, aren't we all.



VARIOUS
Country Vibes ⚠️

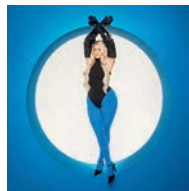
The fact that this country music playlist has a track called *Cold Beer Calling My Name*, says it all. Expect stories of hard-drinking dudes and lovelorn gals.



LUKE COMBS
Fathers & Sons

If you want heartfelt ballads and foot-stomping anthems that celebrate family bonds, then Mr Combs would like a word. His latest album finds tearjerkers rubbing shoulders with toe-tappers, blending sincerity with just the right amount of twangy charm.

TOP OF THE POPS



MEGHAN TRAINOR ⚠️

Timeless
POP

Famed for her body-positive anthem – and total earworm – *All About That Bass*, Trainor continues to champion self-love and confidence with this vibrant collection that fuses doo-wop, bubblegum pop, and a whole lot more besides.



GRACIE ABRAMS ❤️ ⚠️

The Secret of Us
POP

Gracie Abrams' sound has been compared to Lorde and Taylor Swift – which is (a) surely better than being compared to The Wurzels; and (b) pretty apt given that this critically acclaimed second album includes a duet with said Taylor Swift.



VARIOUS ⚠️

Essentials: Canto Pop
CHINESE

This collection of Cantonese pop features such classics of the genre as *Bohemian (Without) Rhapsody*, *Stay Tuned* and *Before Dawn*. If that means nothing to you, now's your chance to change that.



Lola Young ❤️



This Wasn't Meant for You Anyway
POP

➤ **MUCH-PIERCED SOUTH LONDONER LOLA WAS** nominated for the Brit Award for Rising Star 2021 and subsequently charmed us all with her haunting cover of *Together in Electric Dreams* for the John Lewis Christmas advert. Inspired by Joni Mitchell, Prince, Frank Ocean, and Anderson .Paak, Lola's second album oozes raw, emotive soul and indie pop – complete with lyrics that set her apart from the pack. “I’m pretty hopeless with love, I hate flowers (unless they’re dead), I can’t sit still for more than 10 minutes,” she admits. In *This Wasn't Meant for You Anyway*, Lola figures out her heart and mind through poetry and melody, and invites us along for the ride. Just try to keep up.



Noughties but nice
The best of the 00s



Kings of Leon
MOLLY'S CHAMBERS

There's a charming lick of the Southern Gothic about Kings of Leon's snarling breakthrough smash. Leaner and scrappier than the Followhill boys' late-career stadium-fillers – the band comprises three brothers and a cousin – *Molly's Chambers'* relentless two-note riff underscores a rocky paean to a beautiful, powerful and – crucially – unobtainable woman. Two minutes 17 seconds of delirious lust.

PJ Harvey feat Thom Yorke
THIS MESS WE'RE IN

This haunting duet represents the final time Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke would lend his unmistakable voice to a straightforward, mid-tempo indie track of the kind he'd spent the 90s building his reputation on. The opening lines – “Can you hear them / The helicopters / I'm in New York / No need for words now” – sound extra chilling when you learn PJ Harvey was awarded the Mercury Prize for this record on 11 September 2001.

Beyoncé
SINGLE LADIES (PUT A RING ON IT)

Queen B released this dynamite floor-filler around the time she wed Jay-Z. It's about women knowing their value and not sticking around when they're not respected. Deceptively sophisticated for a pop tune, the beat by producers Tricky and The-Dream is a wild maelstrom of dissonant synths and robot chirps.



LISTEN TO
VARIOUS ARTISTS:
RETRO - 00s VOL TWO

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● nthdegree.co.uk

WHAT'S HOT NOW



CHRISTOPHER WARD

The world's first online-only premium watch brand, Christopher Ward presents beautiful, British-designed, Swiss-made timepieces at surprisingly low prices. Its latest drop, the C60 Trident Lumière, *pictured*, is an all-titanium, Chronometer-certified dive watch with helium escape valve and peerless after-dark legibility.

● christopherward.com



SUSAN CAPLAN

As worn by Adele, Beyoncé and Rihanna, Susan Caplan stands for the apex of glamour, luxury and sustainability with her world-renowned vintage collection. Each hand-picked piece reflects Susan's instincts as a curator, as seen in London's V&A, the Met NYC, luxury stores globally, and on Netflix's *The Crown*. Get 15% off this month using web code VA15.

● susancaplan.co.uk

WORDS: ANDY HILL



LA MAISON COUTURE

Championing timeless, exceptional jewellery, sourced with artisans and the environment in mind, La Maison Couture is a leader in ethical couture. Its new Busia Collection by designer Tomasz Donocik is inspired by small gold-mining communities in Uganda, with proceeds supporting artisans, social projects and nature regeneration.

● lamaisoncouture.com



CHARLES TYRWHITT

Energised and fresh from a good summer, smart gents are handsomely attired in Charles Tyrwhitt's versatile range of shirts, gilets, chinos and sumptuous knits. It's all about a seamless transition between the office, the bar and weekend shenanigans. Confident, classic cuts and the flexibility to layer. Bring on autumn.

● charlestyrwhitt.com

BUYS GUIDE

THE VERY BEST IN FASHION, TRAVEL ESSENTIALS AND HEALTHY LIVING



RUARK

Legendary family-owned British audio brand Ruark is dedicated to crafting systems that sound gorgeous, and enhance the vibe and feel of every room. The R410, *pictured*, rocks nostalgic 70s-inspired styling, but packs a punch with modern features like Airplay, Google Cast, Tidal Connect and Spotify Connect functionality.

● ruarkaudio.com



STRONG ROOTS

Nothing beats simple, tasty meals that are good for you and kind to the planet. Strong Roots is a force-for-good B Corp making vegetable-first frozen food for discerning modern palates. It thinks everyday food should be quicker, easier and better. Try guilt-free Oven Baked Sweet Potato Fries, a four-times Great Taste Award champion that's table ready in 15 minutes.

● strongroots.com



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WARM AND FUZZY

Meet the cabin crew member working her animal magic for a beautiful cause

► “I STARTED VOLUNTEERING AT MY local sensory farm during Covid,” says cabin crew member Paris Howard-Hall. “After the pandemic, the guy who ran it wanted to close it down. So I took out a bank loan and bought it!”

Smiles Sensory and Family Farm in southern England aims to help young people with additional

needs experience nature. “The difference it makes is amazing,” says Paris. “One little boy we help, Huey, has autism and ADHD. In 11 years he never once hugged his mummy. Then, after a session with our animals, he ran over and gave her a lovely squeeze.”

The animals are selected for calmness and patience. There’s Dave the goat, Brenda the chicken and Pip the pig. “Pip is like a dog,” beams Paris. “He just runs towards you whenever you open the gate.”

The farm also hosts homeschooled children on a one-to-one basis, but it needs help fundraising. “Winters are hard, people don’t visit. We’d love to get a yurt so we can keep going in the cold!” If you want to help, just scan the QR code.

“We’d also love to secure some celebrity backing,” says Paris. “A local rescue has Johnny Depp as a patron. So Tom Cruise, if you’re reading, slide into my DMs!”

● sfmsensoryfarm.co.uk

“AFTER A SESSION WITH OUR ANIMALS, ONE LITTLE BOY RAN OVER AND GAVE HIS MUM A LOVELY SQUEEZE”



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