

NOTEBOOK

Our guide to what's on across Cheshire, the north west and beyond

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ADVERT

It's Showtime

It's panto time again. Oh, yes it is! A stellar line-up of famous names will be dressing up to bring us fun and laughter and theatrical mayhem. Here's our curtain call of the best shows around. Kicking things off from the 24 November, West-End superstar Ben Forster returns as the lead role, Buddy, in the musical adaptation of the much-loved Christmas hit, *Elf, The Musical*, which sees Buddy the elf journey to New York to find his long-lost father. It runs from the 24 November to 14 January at The Lowry. (thelowry.com)

Meanwhile, TV's Jennifer Ellison leads the cast as Captain Hook (while Jake Quickenden takes the title role) in JM Barrie's swashbuckling epic *Peter Pan*, at Blackpool's Winter Garden from 16 December to 7 January. (wintergardensblackpool.co.uk)

Mirror, mirror on the wall, is this the fairest panto of all? Cannon and Ball head to Crewe to perform *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs* at Crewe Lyceum, from 16 December to 7 January. (crewe.lyceum.co.uk)

And last but not least, turn to page 28 for more from John Barrowman, who leads a great cast – including comedy duo The Krankies – in the well-known tale of *Dick Wittington* at The Manchester Opera House, from 9 December to 7 January. (manchestertheatres.com/operahouse.htm)



DON'T SHOP, COOK

When it comes to the yearly Christmas gift giving, we all have those friends or family members who are very tricky to buy for.

This year, rather than trawling the shops, why not get creative?

The Cookery School at the Vegetarian Society in

Altrincham is running 'edible presents' workshops. Here you can learn how to make gorgeous

Christmas treats, including German Pfeffernusse biscuits,

full of festive spice. The course will also teach you a raft of

artistic techniques, so you can present your edible gifts

beautifully to friends and family. Also, recipes are carefully put

together by the society to cater for those who have special

dietary needs, such as gluten intolerance. The Vegetarian

Society is running two dates for this course: 26 November and 6

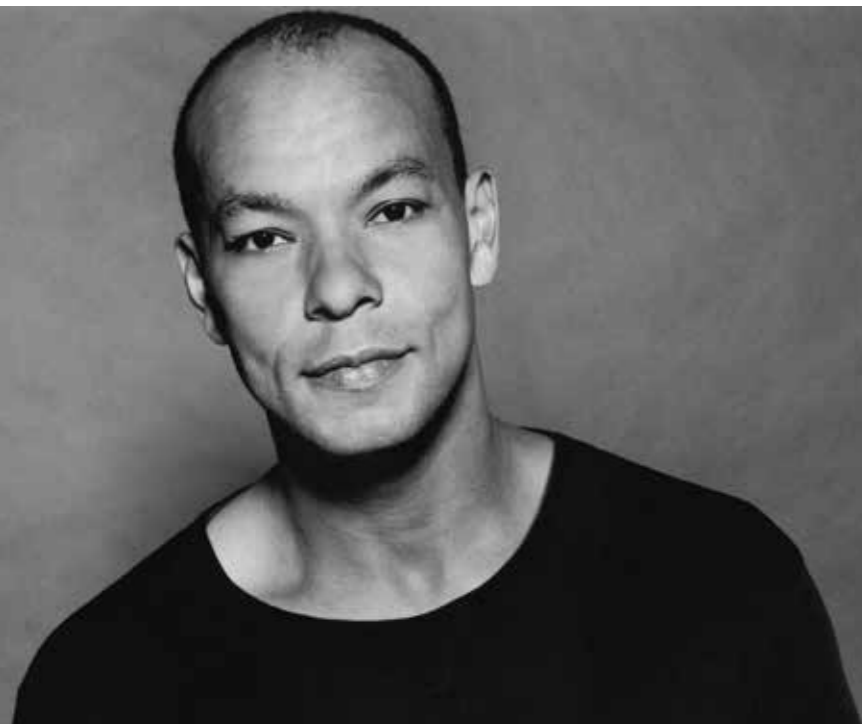
December, giving you plenty of time to get creative in the

kitchen before Christmas. (vegsoocookeryschool.org)



Secret Attraction

Chester-based social enterprise company Big Heritage has secured the keys to Liverpool's hidden treasure, Western Approaches: a building which was used to mastermind the Battle of the Atlantic. Big Heritage founder, Dean Paton, and his team of archaeologists, project managers and builders are accurately working to renovate the forgotten underground HQ. This new and exciting project will create a visitor centre which will include a 1940s street scene, complete with sweet shop, pub and community classroom facility. This bomb- and gas-proof building covers 30,000 sq ft and its location was such a closely guarded secret that it did not officially exist until the 1960s, many years after the war had ended. Big Heritage is now working hard to showcase this attraction and the important part it, and the people who worked there, played during WWII. The company is looking forward to bringing the building back to life for schools and businesses based in the city, and for visitors worldwide. (bigheritage.co.uk)



DON'T MISS

9 DEC

Roland Gift at Manchester Academy
 Roland Gift of The Fine Young Cannibals plays at Manchester Academy on 9 December. Gift is one of modern music's true torchbearers and the charismatic front man of The Fine Young Cannibals. After taking time out to add to his illustrious film resume, Gift is back with a new solo album, the self-titled *Roland Gift*, and a solo tour, providing a great opportunity to enjoy Roland's trademark vocal prowess. (manchesteracademy.net)

What's On?

Dates for the Diary

1 DEC

The Secret Seven

Storyhouse, Chester presents this major new adaptation of Enid Blyton's beloved 1945 book. (1 December-14 January, storyhouse.com)



4 DEC

Floral Extravaganza

Take some time out to visit Arley Hall, where each room is beautifully decorated using hundreds of fresh flowers and foliage. (arleyhallandgardens.com)

8 DEC

Ed Byrne Live

Enjoy brand new stand-up from the unrivalled master of observational comedy, as he takes to the stage at Warrington's Parr Hall. (pyramidparrhall.com)

16 DEC

Party at Quarry Bank

It's party night at Quarry Bank in Styal. Dress to impress and enjoy a festive dinner, then hit the dance floor as the disco gets under way. (nationaltrust.org.uk/quarry-bank)

17 DEC

World Squash Championship

Manchester Central plays host to the men and women's final, with the winners set to take home over £34,000 in prize money. (manchestercentral.co.uk)

21 DEC

Cheshire Reindeer Lodge

Come along to feed reindeer, watch the fun *Elf* stage show and meet Father Christmas in his grotto. (cheshirereindeer.co.uk)

26 DEC

Fourth Test of The Ashes

If you're lucky enough to be spending Christmas in the sun, watch Australia and England go head-to-head in Melbourne. (26-30 December; ecb.co.uk)

30 DEC

Harry Potter

The Harry Potter Studio Tour gets a festive makeover, with all the sets, props and costumes getting a blanket of film-makers' snow. (18 November-28 January; wbstudiotour.co.uk)



3 of the Best

Shopping Experiences

'Tis the season to shop. Whether you're stocking up on traditional fare, searching for the perfect gift or on the hunt for a designer dress, we have the experiences in the bag

A New York Shopping Tour

New York is a shopper's paradise, but it can be a little daunting knowing where to start. Luckily, Karen Parker O'Brien of The Style Room has created a series of shopping tours to help solve the problem, offering a VIP private shopping experience with the lady herself, who has over 20 years' experience working as a NYC fashion professional. Her VIP experiences allow exclusive access to designers' showrooms and studios, and you can even buy directly from the designers themselves, thus benefiting from discounts. Karen's tours are perfect if you are looking for something special, and are a great way to celebrate a birthday or a day with the girls.

TOP TIP

Treat yourself to the Ultimate Experience tour, which includes a chauffeured limousine to take your party (up to four) to a selection of designers' studios with champagne and nibbles along the way. Tours for larger groups can be made, by arrangement. (styleroom.com)



Magical Christmas Markets, Germany

The Christmas shopping experience is not complete without a trip to a Christmas market, and the very best Christmas markets are to be found in Germany. These historic markets are the perfect place to enjoy traditional shopping, purchase artisan products and browse true craftsmanship. If shopping leaves you peckish, follow the aromas from the delicious Gluhwein, baked apples, hot chestnuts and grilled sausage. Take your pick from the markets in Cologne, Nuremberg, Berlin and Dresden, or opt for a smaller town, such as Rothenburg ob der Tauber.

TOP TIP

Check out free local concerts held in churches and palaces while the markets are on. Always ask about seasonal, regional specialities and, for a small fee, purchase your own Gluhwein mug to keep and refill as you shop. (www.germany.travel)

Department Store Grand Dames, Paris

If 'one stop' shopping is your thing and you are also in love with the finer things in life, then you need to take a trip down Boulevard Haussmann in Paris and head to the Galeries Lafayette and Printemps. These two department stores will transport you back to the time of 19th-century Parisian chic. The buildings are full of architectural opulence, from the Belle Epoque Galeries Lafayette to the Art Nouveau design of Printemps. Lafayette has been featured in many books and films, while Printemps was registered as a historic monument by the French Government in 1975. Both stores are full of the latest designer collections, jewellery, home furnishings and must-have cosmetics. These stunning 'Grand Magasins' are of course a mecca of luxury consumer delights but, during the festive season, they are also adorned with lights and elaborate decorations, making for a spectacular shopping experience. (departmentstoreparis.printemps.com)



TOP TIP

Make time to visit the Lafayette Gourmet located within the Galeries. This most exquisite of food markets houses the very best French specialities to tempt you. When you need to take a break from shopping, Printemps' panoramic terrace and café is the perfect spot to rest weary legs. (galerieslafayette.com)

IMAGINATIVE influences

We are feeling berry, merry and bright and are ensuring all our guests are seated comfortably



WHAT we're LISTENING TO



One You Bake The Mince Pies To

Nat 'King' Cole and Me by Gregory Porter. Synonymous with Christmas, Nat King Cole's voice tells us the festivities have started. Mr Porter is 2017's biggest jazz/soul artist, I think. Relax as Gregory settles down with Vince Mendoza, a classical conductor, and delivers us a good sprinkling of Nat's magic, giving us that warm, fuzzy feeling that only Christmas can conjure.



One You Turn Up The Volume And Dance In The Kitchen

Once the Christmas shopping is done, presents are wrapped and the festive fizz is open, it's time to party. Who says we must conform to Slade and Wizzard (although they are great) to have a good boogie at Christmas? My second album is Norman Jay MBE – *Mister Good Times*. For a cool party, taking in Funk, Soul and Disco, Mr Jay's new helping will get any family shimmying toward the kitchen and the left-over turkey. It's true what they say: all the best people can be found in the kitchen at parties.... Enjoy!

Collated by our resident music maestro, Wayne Millar of atm-allthingsmusic.com

TREND alert

PLUM PASSION

#1 Adidas Stella McCartney Yoga Mat, £45 (selfridges.co.uk); #2 Regis Convinium Silk Scarf by Santorus, £195 (limelace.co.uk); #3 Urbanara AW17 Cashmere cushions, £99 and Cashmere blankets, £199 (urbanara.co.uk); #4 J by Jasper Conran Blazer at Debenhams, £135 (debenhams.com); #5 Normann Copenhagen Geo Thermos Flask, £50 (black-by-design.co.uk); #6 Winter Berries large candle, £18 (annabeljames.co.uk); #7 Ragtales Evie Rag Doll, £19 (burbblebaby.co.uk)

TOP PICKS

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Coffee Table CRUSH

Please Be Seated: More Historic Chairs and the Tales They Tell

This is the second in the series and presents 17 unique chairs and their interesting stories. Written with wit, knowledge and great affection by art historian and curator, Gun Bjerkander Handbeg, the book explores fascinating revelations about the opulent Rococo society chair, the timeless Windsor to the polycarbonate contemporary icon.

Published by Vind and Vag, £15 (pubeasy.com)

