

# Edinburgh International Film Festival – Something Else For The Weekend

Here are two more films for you to choose from this weekend, courtesy of our friends at the EIFF.



## God Bless America

The land of the spree.

Frank is at the end of his rope. Middle-aged and divorced, his daughter hates him and he lives next to the neighbours from hell. After being suddenly fired from his job after a misunderstanding, he is watching television when he realises that the world is in the toilet. We celebrate the vacuous and the inane, prizing fame for its own sake above worth to humanity. Frank is just about to kill himself when he has an epiphany. He's not the one who deserves to die, they are. He is soon joined by Roxy, the teenaged classmate of his first victim who shares his views and intent, and they commence a cross country killing spree on their way to the epicentre of this modern-day pestilence: the live finale of American Superstarz.

I'm going to go out on a limb here and suggest that Bobcat Goldthwait is not a Republican. I know, it's just a wacky thought I had after watching this razor-sharp socio-political satire. If you only know Goldthwait from his appearances as Zed in the Police Academy flicks, then this is probably a good place to start. God Bless America is one of his most accessible movies to date as writer-director, bolstered by two excellent lead performances by Joel Murray as Frank and Tara Lynne Barr as Roxy.

Frank's main motivating factor is what he sees as the end of kindness and consideration for others. This is exemplified by the ongoing saga of Steven Clark, a contestant on the American Superstarz show who sings horribly off-key and appears to be slightly mentally challenged. Steven becomes a laughing stock all over the country, as much for his seeming obliviousness as for his lack of talent. Eventually he is offered a spot singing live on the finale of the series. It is this hypocrisy, this celebration of the inept, that prompts Frank to go. Here's the big question though: is Steven as gormless as he appears? Is he being used, or is he just as vile and manipulative as all the others that Frank and Roxy have been targetting?

The whole "avenging angel" plot does threaten to tip over into a left-wing tirade at times, but there are a couple of elements that save it. The first is Frank's own personal politics. He freely admits that he agrees with some things said by the movie's Bill O'Reilly-ish neo-con tv personality Michael Fuller (but to say any more about that would be to spoil one of the film's great punchlines) and although most of the pair's victims would probably line up to the right of centre, Frank never makes any political statement himself. The other saving grace is the fact that the script is outright hilarious. It has a perfectly pitched dry wit that both Murray and Barr handle just right, turning these remorseless mass murderers into people we can like and support.

The scary thing about God Bless America will turn out to be its prescience. The tv and radio clips that Frank is exposed to over the course of the film, the ones that drive him, are designed to be representative of what we have now but taken just slightly further towards absurdity. The problem is that in a few years (if it even takes that long) these clips will seem almost quaint, and then where will we be?

This is one that is worth seeing, and EIFF has the European premiere on Friday night, with Bobcat Goldthwait and Joel

Murray stopping by. The second screening is on Saturday afternoon. If you can't make it to either of those, the full UK release is next Thursday. Yes, that's right; the Fourth of July. Nice to know someone has a sense of humour.



## **Brake**

Just leave two minutes early.

A man wakes up in a box, with no memory of how he got there. The man's name is Jeremy Reins and he is an agent of the US Secret Service, and his box is in the boot of a car. Slowly he discovers that he has been taken by terrorists who are carrying out a massive attack on US soil and they want information that only Jeremy possesses. With his family threatened, and with potentially everything he knows about to come to an end, can he figure a way out?

Ah yes, it's "man in a box" time again. Instead of Ryan Reynolds buried in a coffin in Iraq, here we have Stephen Dorff in a perspex box being driven somewhere between New York and Washington with only a CB radio and a stolen mobile phone for company. Like Buried, the movie is told entirely from Jeremy's point of view, and Dorff does an excellent job as a man gradually losing it as he begins to doubt everything and everyone he knows. Although, since the actor is a professed claustrophobic (should that not mean "fear of Santa"?) maybe he wasn't doing that much acting...

Sorry to keep harping on about the comparisons, but where Brake has the edge over Buried is the fact that while Reynolds was a passive character – he was just stuck there and had to rely on being found and dug up – Dorff's Jeremy is an agent of his own freedom. He has the ability to get himself released from the box if he gives up the information the terrorists are after. This adds another element of excitement beyond the basic ticking clock; how long will he hold out? What will it

take to make him break?

Director Gabe Torres and his production designer John Mott have managed to make the confined location quite a dynamic presence through changing lights and colours, as well as a literal ticking clock in the shape of a massive digital countdown timer. Making the box perspex allows them to shoot from outside while still maintaining the locked-in sensation, and the immediate surroundings of the car trunk help to keep you oriented. Leaving the emergency release latch just beyond Jeremy's perspex prison was a nice touch of sadism as well.

Unfortunately, all this good work is undone in the final two minutes of the flick, with possibly the most bizarre ending I have seen in quite a while. I don't want to spoil it for anyone, but suffice it to say that if I had taken the bus home from the screening instead of walking, the driver could have taken that double decker through the gaping hole in the plot opened up by that ending and still had plenty of space on all sides. At first it just raised a "huh?" reaction, but the more I think about it, the more irritated it has made me. It's a shame because this movie was obviously a bit of a labour of love; in fact both Stephen Dorff and Chyler Leigh (who plays the voice of his estranged wife, Molly) are listed as producers.

Just for one final comparison, the voice of the unnamed 911 operator was played by the same actress in both Brake and Buried – one Kali Rocha. The really sad part is that I actually recognised her voice straight away.

For the first 89 of its 91 minutes, Brake is a very well-crafted film with a strong leading performance, and you can decide about that ending for yourself at the UK Premiere on Friday evening, or again on Saturday lunchtime. As always, you can get more info about the exact screening times and locations, as well as booking your tickets, from [the festival's website](#).

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# **Council agrees to give more information on city centre road closures**

At the first real meeting of the new coalition administration today there was much to be discussed, but you could have easily missed one of the more important points affecting the city centre. Conservative Councillor Joanna Mowat had tabled an emergency motion about the traffic diversions which are being put in place at the east end of Queen Street related to the ongoing tram works. The motion, which was unanimously agreed, read as follows:-

## **Conservative Group Emergency Motion**

Council is concerned that the decision to close York Place to all traffic from September to facilitate construction of the tram track has been taken and that notification of preparatory works and the subsequent closures was not notified to opposition spokespersons, councillors and residents until preparatory works had begun; Council thus asks for the following information:

1. When was the decision taken to close York Place to all traffic;
2. Which officers took this decision; and
3. What modelling took place prior to the taking of this decision?

Council also instructs the Chief Executive and her officers to ensure that, for any future works:

1. No works related to the tram (MUDFA or Infracore) commence before Councillors have been notified of planned works;
2. No works related to the tram commence before affected residents and businesses have been notified;
3. The press is only informed of planned works after Councillors, residents and businesses have been made aware of these planned works.

Councillor Mowat explained after the meeting the reason for the Conservative Group motion. The City Centre councillor said:-“I attended a tram team briefing meeting on Monday only to be told that York Place is going to be closed completely to facilitate construction of tram tracks. This may be logical but the community had always thought that York Place would not be closed off and that access would be maintained to the Bus Station at all times. They had thought that diversions would be put in place instead but that traffic would still flow there. There has been no discussion of this before the works beginning, and local residents are not being made aware of what is happening.

“Local councillors are also not aware of what is happening, and therefore cannot mitigate the effects of this closure. There will be new crossings going in on Abercromby Place and new priority changing made to traffic lights on Dublin Street. The priority will now be east-west and not north-south. Some of this is sensible but it needs to be communicated to the public and also signed properly, particularly for pedestrians.

“Some parking places will also be removed on Albany Street.

“York Place will be closed from mid-July 2012 to all traffic except buses, and the traffic will be diverted along Heriot Row, Abercromby Place and Albany Street. I will be asking for cameras to be put in place and for the police to monitor speeds in these areas, although the increase in traffic may well slow the traffic down in any case. I spoke about the problems encountered in Northumberland Street at last week’s Transport Committee meeting, but I will now have to go back to

the committee and ask them to reconsider the area in light of this new diversion. Dublin Street cannot be re-opened but we will have to look at other alternatives.”

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## Five things you need to know today



**Council meeting – Buses – Scottish Swimming – Juniper Green Community Council AGM – Bank robbery**

The council meet today when a deputation is expected from Boroughmuir High School Parent Council regarding the relocation of the school. The council is also being asked to rename the Business Centre in the City Chambers the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Business Centre “in recognition of Her Majesty’s 60 years as our Monarch.” Councillor Aldridge LibDem representative for Drum Brae/Gyle Ward is raising the question of a Scottish Government inquiry into the Edinburgh tram project which he says the previous Leader Jenny Dawe was committed to. Splashback is back on the agenda this morning. The closure of Leith Waterworld sparked the campaign by the Splashback group, and Councillor Lewis states that the council afforded the group six months from 7 February to produce a community bid for the premises. The new councillor asks for all the information needed from council officers to be made available to the group so that they can make their bid in

August.

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From 30 June 2012, Princes Street will be reopened (between South Charlotte Street and South St. David Street) to most City Centre buses. Other diversions are still in place in the City Centre including the closure of Broughton Street until 14 July.

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The Scottish Gas National Open Swimming Championships will take place from Thursday 28 June to Sunday 1 July at the recently refurbished Royal Commonwealth Pool in Edinburgh. As one of the major aquatics competitions in Britain, the event offers a good taste of the swimming action before this year's Olympic Games in London. The event is open to the public for a fee of £2 per session, with morning heats starting from 8.45 am, afternoon heats from 1.15pm and the evening finals from 5pm each day.

The Scottish Gas National Open Swimming Championships will welcome over 630 swimmers from all corners of the United Kingdom. The event is sponsored by Scottish Swimming's principal partner Scottish Gas. Kevin Roxburgh, Managing Director of Scottish Gas, is proud of the partnership both organisations have forged over recent years, supporting swimmers of all levels from beginners to elite athletes. "We are dedicated to keeping swimming and aquatic sports at the heart of our communities, supporting swimmers across all disciplines and in the process safeguarding the future of our sport. During this event, we will be privileged in getting a preview of that future as some of our brightest young Scottish stars in swimming compete."

Scottish Swimming's official swim partner, Speedo, is



supporting the event by offering personal fitting session of their new FastSkin3 range and will be selling supporting event merchandise during the event, promoting the latest Super Elite suit.

Ashley Howard, CEO of Scottish Swimming, is looking forward to the event being held in the recently refurbished Royal Commonwealth Pool. "The Scottish Gas National Open Swimming Championships are a critical marker in the Scottish Swimming calendar. On behalf of our staff, I thank Edinburgh Leisure for their help in hosting the event, and the Scottish Swimming TEAM, our supporters and volunteers for their hard work and commitment. And of course, I wish the athletes fantastic racing over the four days."

Live results from the event will be posted on Scottish Swimming's newly established Twitter live stream [@scotswimlive](https://twitter.com/scotswimlive), and further information can be found at [www.scottishswimming.com/championships](http://www.scottishswimming.com/championships)

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Tonight the Juniper Green Community Council is holding its AGM. Cliff Beevers writes:- "Two years ago at its AGM JGCC responded to the request to organise a monthly market. We need your input again.

The attendance at last Saturday's market was the lowest yet and it is critical that we re-assess the need for this monthly market. On the plus side the market does provide fresh veg, some meat, a variety of breads and excellent treats on the fourth Saturday morning of each month. It is also an opportunity to highlight local issues like the current planning application to build on the Green Belt on the edge of the village, a chance to talk to your local councillors, contribute to the community fund and generally enable a friendly meet and greet with your neighbours in neutral

surroundings. Further pressures on the Green Belt are inevitable and the forum of the market has given residents timely information in case they wish to object to the developers' plans.

On the other hand everyone seems under the economic squeeze and that includes our stallholders who have to make their books balance too. So, we must decide if the market is to be continued and the AGM on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30pm in the Village Hall main hall is a good opportunity to air this and any other matters of village interest. Is the timing right? Is the balance of stalls correct? What would you do to improve matters?

There are no vacancies on the CC so no one need fear that attendance might lead to a committee post ... though if you have special talents (and everyone does) then you can be co-opted if you wish and use your skills to make Juniper Green CC a better organisation. Come and join in, air your views and enjoy the crack."

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A bank robber made off with a substantial sum of cash yesterday from the George Street branch of Natwest Bank. [STV Edinburgh](#) has more.

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## Review: The Stagger Rats – Mystery Masquerade EP

✖ Edinburgh five-piece **The Stagger Rats** prefer the road less travelled.

After being signed by a Hungarian record label the Scots decamped to the former Eastern bloc to set about recording a debut album of what they describe as 'psychobilly' music.

With producer Owen Morris (of Oasis and Verve fame) at the helm their 13 track album was dispatched, with this *Mystery Masquerade EP* serving as a taster for the full length main course.

'Fuzzy Fuzzy' kicks off this offering with some infectious hooks and vocals from Daniel Paylor that sit somewhere between magical and maudlin. Some attractive snare work by drummer Kai Wallace adds a shuffling beat to the track culminating in a sound that's distinctly more leftfield than the majority of The Stagger Rats indie contemporaries.

The following track 'I'm In Love' presents another side of the band's sonic patchwork, sounding distinctive but always uniquely themselves. Perhaps their most straight-up rock offering, the song is still given an off kilter feel by some dizzying vocals and combination of freewheeling guitars and wicked organ lines. Callum Easter's proclamation of "*I'm in love though/It ain't easy/I can't remember when I fell*" tells you all you need to know about the recesses from where this track emerged.

EP closer 'Sleeping Of Ecstasy' is no doubt intended to show their softer side but still contains more than enough melody to get your foot tapping. Back with guitarist Daniel Paylor on lead vocals, his tender offerings of "*All your candles of mercy/Why don't you blow them all out/My darkness and misery/Go on and give me a shout*" would strike a chord with even those with the blackest of hearts. Again the group's guitars sit perfectly, mirroring and mimicking the mood of the song.



All in all *Mystery Masquerade* leaves you craving the arrival of their full length album. The novel idea of bringing together three pre-album singles definitely works for **The Stagger Rats**. Their sound has been imbued with some of the idiosyncrasies and influences of their Eastern European apprenticeship. The combination of Scottish vocals and gypsy-sounding guitars gives them an edge over other UK debut acts and sets them apart in a sea of guitar blandness. Bring on the main event !

*Mystery Masquerade is out now.*

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## Former council employees arrested



A Lothian and Borders Police investigation into alleged corruption and fraud involving former employees of City of Edinburgh Council's Property Care Department has resulted in a number of individuals being charged.

The four former employees, who are all male and aged 42, 45, 59 and 62, have been charged with alleged corruption and fraud with regard to repairs carried out at Council buildings in Edinburgh.

In addition, and as part of the same enquiry, nine men and two women aged between the ages of 30 and 64 have been charged with alleged fraud, corruption and money laundering offences.

The police say that the Procurator Fiscal has been briefed and

a full report will be submitted in due course. They have also said that these charges are not connected to the Statutory Repair Notices scheme operated by the Property Conservation Department at City of Edinburgh Council. A report has been submitted to the Procurator Fiscal following an investigation into the operation of the scheme, however no charges have been brought.

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## **Indoor skate park to start the school holidays with a Hip Hop BBQ**



The husband and wife team behind Edinburgh's only indoor skate park believe they have come up with the perfect solution for parents of school children looking for a few hours off this summer: extreme sports in extreme safety.

Run by Ken Smith and Natasha Moroney (AKA skate park Mum and Dad) Transgression Park in Peffermill is a family-friendly environment for BMX, scooters, skateboards and inline skates, where complete beginners can learn alongside the best in Edinburgh.

Natasha explains: "The park is constantly supervised, with experienced skaters and riders on hand to keep a close eye on novices. One hour taster sessions and lessons with instructors are available for every level of experience, with each instructor working with a maximum of five kids at once. The mentors guide newbies around the park, teaching them how to use the apparatus safely – when to go, and when to wait.

“It’s not always about learning a new trick but also about learning how to move in an unfamiliar environment and building confidence. Our taster sessions and lessons have proved really popular allowing kids to come down and try out something new and exciting in a relaxed, supportive and safe environment. My own children ride here and, as a mother, it’s very important to me that Transgression provides a secure environment for young people to learn an extreme sport. There’s a real community spirit here, meaning parents know their kids will be looked after and will also have a great time exercising and spreading their wings.”

To mark the start of the school summer holidays, Transgression Park is hosting a hip hop BBQ party and open session on **Friday 29th June** from 3pm.

The BBQ, featuring music from rap duo Too Many Ts and skills from local skateboarders, BMX and scooter riders on the rails and ledges set up outside, kicks off a packed summer programme of events at Transgression Park, including the Vans Young Guns Series – the 2012 national unsponsored competition – on **Sunday 1 July**. Focusing on the under 16’s age group ‘Young Guns’ provides a rare opportunity to be talent spotted and picked out for potential sponsorship deals!



Transgression Park was formerly based at Ocean Terminal for three years before moving to its new home on Peffermill Road, the site of the old Jelly Club, in October 2011. The new park is far larger (18,000 square foot with capacity for 100 participants) than its predecessor and retains the best features of the old park alongside awesome new features including a pool bowl and numerous interchangeable rails and boxes. There is also a mezzanine level where spectators have a 360 degree view of all the action.

Transgression Park’s onsite cafe offers healthy food including

homemade burgers made with Scottish Beef, fresh pizzas with pureed veg hidden in the sauce, fresh fruit, yoghurt smoothies and salad boxes. Parents can enjoy a gourmet coffee while taking in the skate park action.

Also onsite, Transgression Park's shop is a leading stockist of all things skate, scoot and BMX carrying all the latest and best brands for scooters, skateboard, roller blades and BMX bikes as well as all the safety equipment and accessories. The shop also stocks spare parts and has a workshop for the repair and assembly of boards and bikes.

Sessions last two hours and cost £8, then only £2 for every additional hour. Annual membership costs £35 and provides a 25% discount on standard prices. A full range of skateboards, scooters and BMX bikes are available to hire costing £10 per session or £5 per hour. Helmets and pads are also available to hire for £1 per session.

At weekends, sessions run for the under 13s between 10am and 12 noon and for the under 16s between 12 noon and 2pm, with lessons available for beginners and improvers. Specialist sessions also run for inline skating on Mondays 8-10 pm, BMX only on Tuesdays 8-10pm and Skateboard only on Thursdays 8-10pm.

Transgression can be booked for school trips, corporate days and birthday parties. The park operates a zero tolerance on drugs and alcohol.

For more information check out [www.transgressionpark.com](http://www.transgressionpark.com)



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# Edinburgh International Film Festival – One to watch, one best avoided.

You may have noticed that I have quite enjoyed all the films I have reviewed at the festival, to one degree or another. Well, today marks my first negative experience at this year's EIFF, and it is a doozy.



## Tim & Eric's Billion Dollar Movie

Stay away from this garbage.

Tim and Eric are given a billion dollars by the Schlaaang Corporation to make a movie. When that movie turns out to be three minutes long and awful, Tommy Schlaaang demands his money back. Conveniently, Tim and Eric spot a commercial by a man offering a billion dollars to anyone who will come and take over his almost derelict mall. Seeing this as their only option to avoid being killed by Schlaaang, they make a run for it. Hilarity does not ensue.

Is it me? Am I the problem? Is there something missing in my sense of humour? These are the questions I was asking myself as I endured the seemingly endless (but in fact only 93 minute) running time of this abomination. Watching a film like this makes me weep for the future of the human race.

Tim Heidecker and Eric Wareheim got their start creating the tv series Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job! for Cartoon Network in the US. It was a sketch comedy show with each episode being about eleven minutes. I debated whether to watch any of it in advance of going to see this film, but I decided to go in fresh. Now I'm thinking that if I had watched one or



two episodes I might have been spared having to suffer through this. I could have sat in the bathroom pulling out my own toenails with pliers, for example, as that would at least have been more entertaining. Sketch comedy works because it's quick. You get in, you make the gag, you get the hell out again. It rarely works when expanded to feature length and this is the perfect example of why.

Tim and Eric have managed to garner quite a fanbase among the comedy elite in the States; people like Will Ferrell, Zach Galifianakis, John C. Reilly and Will Forte have dropped up as guest stars on their series and do the same here, amongst others like Jeff Goldblum, William Atherton, Ray Wise and the great Robert Loggia. These last names in particular lend the production an air of class that it really does not deserve.

I have seen Tim and Eric's style described as avant-garde – which I suppose it is, technically – and even anti-humour. Anti-humour (I had to look it up) is when the laugh comes from the irony associated with a deliberately unfunny punchline that is at odds with what you would expect. I like to think I have a fairly well-developed sense of irony, and to my mind, Tim and Eric have got stuck at the “deliberately unfunny” part of the equation. Or maybe it's all just a prank. Some kind of mass social experiment on mob mentality. The world's biggest bandwagon, perhaps. Or maybe it's just bad.

If you are a devoted member of the cult of Tim and Eric you have quite possibly already seen this, since it has been available in America since the beginning of the year. If not, you can judge for yourself – if you really feel you have to – at the UK Premiere on Thursday night, or the second show on Saturday.



**V/H/S**

Six creepy little horror movies.

A bunch of guys who record themselves carrying out random acts of vandalism and assault are hired to break into a house and retrieve a specific videotape. What they find in the house is one dead man and hundreds of tapes. Unsure which is the correct one, they start watching some of them. Big mistake.

Now this is an odd one. An anthology of short horror films all based on the found footage gimmick with the framing device of the gang trying to find this one tape out of hundreds, my initial response was one of vague distaste due to the fact that the films seemed to be populated almost entirely by unlikeable idiots. The more I think about it though, the more affecting it has turned out to be.

Each segment has a different director and a different tone, covering everything from monsters to psycho stalkers and haunted houses. There are five separate shorts included, each being one tape watched by the housebreakers. As well as telling a different type of horror story, each film manages to get a slightly different angle on the reason for the constant camera. For example the first film, Amateur Night, has three guys on a night out with less than savoury intentions. In order to capture all the action, the nerdiest of the three has been outfitted with spy glasses that come with a disguised lens in the middle. Another, Tuesday the 17th, starts off as a generic kids in the woods-type slasher affair, only the killer is invisible to the naked eye but can be seen as a glitch in the image through a video camera. I'm hesitating to describe the films in any more detail, as to do so would diminish the visceral reaction that is at the heart of all successful horror.

What these films lack in character development (or character differentiation – some aren't even named except in the credits) they make up for in short, sharp shocks. These are the campfire stories of the digital age. Of course there are still plot holes here and there, but that's part of the fun. At just shy of two hours long, it is a bit of a commitment.

The film might be more successful if one of the shorts was cut, but I wouldn't want to pick one to go, and I definitely wouldn't want to trim the films down. If you are prone to it though, you might want to take a travel-sickness pill before going in. Much like that other great videotape horror – Hideo Nakata's Ring – this is good on the big screen but would be even better on the small, late at night, alone...

V/H/S is also screening here on Thursday night and again on Saturday. If you can't get to either of those, it is definitely worth keeping an eye out for.

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## Edinburgh International Magic Festival starts on Friday



From vampire-style illusionists to a week-long kids' course revealing the secrets of magic; from uncanny mind-readers to comedy and theatre – the [Edinburgh International Magic Festival](#) is back this week. And it's bigger than ever, with more than 30 performers from eight countries taking part.

'It's amazing to see the festival growing,' said artistic director Kevin McMahon, himself a magician, who founded the festival three years ago. 'It's wonderful that we've been able to find an audience of more than 3,000 who want to get involved in magic. It's really satisfying to know that they're out there, and that they appreciate good magic – and I'm so glad that the festival has been one of the catalysts for that.'

 The festival's grand opening on Friday 29 June is with a

[Magic and Variety Gala Show](#) in the Lyceum Theatre, bringing together seven performers from around the world, and some from closer to home. 'One of the acts, Voronin, is someone I've always admired,' explains McMahon. 'He's Ukrainian, but he ran his own event in Seattle for about 15 years, where he was the Dracula-esque host. He far and away the most experienced magician we have, a real master of what he does.'

And alongside juggler Jeton from Germany and illusionists Les Chapeaux Blancs from France, McMahon is also showcasing Scottish talent in the gala show: theatre company Vox Motus, who perform illusions from their recent Lyceum show *The Infamous Brothers Davenport*, and mind-reader Drew McAdam.

Also in the Lyceum is [Voyageurs Egarés](#), a fully staged show combining theatre, clowning and magic by French performers Jérôme Helfenstein and Claude Brun. 'I saw the show in Spain last summer,' says McMahon, 'and I found it astonishing.' So what can the audience expect? 'It's such a joy to watch an hour-long produced magic show that's so visual, and done completely without words. They use some really startling effects, and there are some moments that are truly beautiful. It starts off with the guys meeting at a train station and end with them blasting off into space – the show takes you into all kinds of different worlds. Sometimes the performers are clowns, sometimes magicians, and sometimes they're interacting with shadow versions of themselves.'

It's also a show that will appeal to all ages, says McMahon. 'It's not specifically a children's show, but kids will certainly enjoy it, and there are a lot of comedy moments. There are games that they play with us noticing things, like they're trying to mess with us.'

Children also get the chance to see how magic is really done in a five-day [Magic School](#) for seven- to ten-year-olds hosted by magicians Gary James and Luke Eaton. 'The kids going along to that will be able to meet a lot of the magicians performing

in the festival,' says McMahon. 'They're not just locked in a room with a magic teacher – it's a really vibrant environment where other performers will be getting involved.'



John Archer

One of those is [John Archer](#), best known from CBBC's *Help! My Supply Teacher is Magic*, who also has his own show in the Traverse bar café. 'I really want the kids to feel part of what's going on, and to inspire them to practise and get really good – and, you never know, maybe perform at the festival themselves later on,' says McMahon.



Colin McLeod

Although he finds it difficult to single out shows as particular highlights – 'It's hard for me to choose because they're all good!' he says – McMahon points to Scottish mind-reader [Colin McLeod](#)'s one-off performance as one to watch. 'I'm excited about that show. He's doing a parody of Sherlock Holmes, taking some of the things that people will have seen on television and in the cinema and demonstrating them live. It's cool to watch.'

And continuing the movie theme, Newcastle-based magician [Matthew J Dowden](#) brings a show inspired by classical films. 'He's chosen a few movies that he loves and has been inspired by, and recreated moments from them live on stage using magic,' says McMahon. 'For *Singin' in the Rain*, for example, he dances with a floating umbrella, which makes its own way round the stage.'

There's also close-up magic from local magicians [Lewis Barlow](#) and [Michael Neto](#), card feats from 'Card Ninja' [Javier Jarquin](#), and [The Colour Ham](#), a show combining magic with sketch comedy and featuring McMahon himself as one of its performers. 'I'm

always thinking about where magic is going and how we can interact with other art forms to make something new, and The Colour Ham is essentially sketch comedy with magic and special effects,' he explains. 'Sometimes it's silly, and sometimes it's extremely silly! But we try to give an audience that likes sketch comedy and an audience that likes magic something a bit different.'

We're all used to seeing magic tricks on TV, or even on YouTube, but how important is it to see magic in the flesh? 'It's vitally important,' says McMahon. 'The experience is far more powerful. It's the same reason that people go to Wimbledon or to see a live football game. As an audience member you have a responsibility – you can influence the show, by giving energy back to the performer. And seeing it with your own eyes just can't be replicated by seeing it on television.'

The [Edinburgh International Magic Festival](#) runs from Friday 29 June until Friday 6 July in various venues throughout Edinburgh.



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## Five things you need to know today



Trams – Royal Highland Show – Planning – Chip pan fires – Robert Louis Stevenson

[We reported on Monday](#) that the many road works on Princes

Street are due to be removed by this Saturday. In addition there have also been reports about the money paid to the outgoing directors of **tie**, the company which the council set up to run the tram project and which was wound up last year. Now it appears that the money paid to these directors only attracted tax at 20% as the payments were made to limited companies and not to the individuals themselves, according to [The Edinburgh Evening News](#). Today's photo is of a sign which actually exists on Princes Street...

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Falkirk MP Michael Connarty criticised the organisers of The Royal Highland Show for not dealing with traffic problems which occurred after a weekend of unprecedented bad weather, causing him to miss a plane from Edinburgh airport.

In response, local MP Mike Crockart said:-“Whilst it is unfortunate that Mr Connarty missed his flight it is clear that this year saw a set of circumstances including unprecedented rainfall, which made access to the site extremely difficult. The exciting master plan for development of the site which is now underway, will deal with these access issues which have been problematic for many years.

What is important right now is that we review what went wrong this year and ensure that we have robust contingency plans in place for 12 months time. That way all of Scotland will continue to benefit from this wonderful event whilst ensuring the continued award winning service of our excellent international airport.”

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[The Council's Planning Local Review Body](#) meets today. One of the main items on the agenda is the proposal to develop 9 South St Andrew Street into flats. The property has been empty for some considerable time but the application was refused in March this year on the grounds of insufficient daylighting and

space. Revised plans are now before the council for review.

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Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service remind you that the kitchen is the most common place in the home for a house fire to start. Follow our simple advice to make sure you stay safe.

### **Swap your chip pan for an electric deep fat fryer**

Chip pans catch fire easily. An electric deep fat fryer is much safer. When deep frying, dry food before you put it in oil. Never fill a pan more than one-third full of oil. If the oil starts to smoke, it's too hot so turn off the heat and leave it to cool.

### **If you must use a deep frying pan:**

- Never deep fry with fat or oil when you've been drinking alcohol
- Never leave cooking unattended – even for a few seconds
- Turn the pan handle to the side so the fat or oil doesn't get spilled by accident

### **If a deep frying pan catches fire:**

- Don't try to move the pan
- Never throw water over the pan
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service, even if you think you've put the fire out
- If you can, turn off the heat – but don't take risks
- Put a damp towel over the pan to smother the flames
- Leave the room closing the door behind you to avoid smoke inhalation

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A prized collection of papers and books relating to Robert Louis Stevenson which is said to have few rivals in the world is being donated to the National Library of Scotland and



Edinburgh's Napier University.

The collection was built up over 50 years by the leading independent Stevenson scholar Dr Ernest Mehew who died last year.

It consists of more than 40 boxes of papers and some 2000 books and includes first editions, rarities, biographies, collections of letters, reference books, critical studies and bound copies of the magazines where Stevenson's work first appeared.

Robin Smith, Head of Collections and Interpretation at the National Library of Scotland (NLS), said: "This is a unique and wonderful collection which will enrich our existing Stevenson archive. We are extremely grateful for this donation and to be able to house these papers in the land of Stevenson's birth."

Ernest Mehew was a schoolboy when he first became interested in Stevenson's work and it was a passion that was to last throughout his life. By 1950, when he was in his late 20s, he had made himself such an authority on Stevenson's manuscripts and handwriting that he could help Janet Adam Smith with her edition of Stevenson's poems.

In the 1960s he was asked by Yale University Press to become assistant editor on the Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson and took over as sole editor in 1968. Working only with his wife Joyce as his assistant, and never using a computer, he

located, sorted, transcribed, dated, annotated and linked some 2,800 letters, many of which had never been published before.

When the eight volumes were published in 1994-1995, they were met with universal acclaim and they also elevated and enhanced Stevenson's literary and personal reputation.

As a result of his lifetime's dedication, Mehew was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Edinburgh University in 1998. The citation for that award said that, with no academic affiliation, Mehew "has achieved ... a contribution to literary studies which would be the envy of many a university-based academic, and has done so with a generosity to others and a self-effacing modesty which are the marks of a true scholar."

His papers are being donated to NLS with the books going to Napier University. The donation was proposed by Nicholas Rankin, administrator of Dr Mehew's estate and agreed by Maxine Barnes, the lawyer soon to be appointed by the Court of Protection as deputy of his widow, Joyce, who now lives in a care-home in England.

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# The Financial Lunch raises thousands for Prince's charity



*LUNCH HELD IN SUPPORT OF THE PRINCE'S TRUST SCOTLAND RAISES  
£16,000*

Guests from Scotland's leading financial services joined The Prince's Trust Scotland at a fundraising lunch in support of the youth charity, raising over £16,000. Over 150 guests attended the lunch and had the opportunity to hear from guest speakers Lucy Kellaway, the FT's Associate Editor and Moneyweek's Editor in Chief, Merryn Somerset Webb.

The event, sponsored by the Martin Currie Charitable Foundation and Liontrust, was held at Edinburgh's George Hotel and this is the third year the event has run.

The Prince's Trust Scotland works with young people aged 13-25 who have struggled at school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. Through a comprehensive range of personal development programmes, The Prince's Trust supports young people into jobs, self-employment, education training and volunteering. Over 80 per cent of the young people The Trust works with move into a positive destination and in 2012/13, The Prince's Trust Scotland with work with over 7,000 young people.

Heather Gray, Director at The Prince's Trust Scotland, said:- "The Financial Lunch is an important event within The Prince's Trust's fundraising calendar and we are absolutely delighted that people took the time out to attend. In addition to hearing from some fascinating speakers, including one of The Trust's own Young Ambassadors, guests helped raise vital funds

and learned more about the work of The Prince's Trust Scotland."

Prince's Trust's Young Ambassador, Ciaran McGearty, addressed guests and took the opportunity to share his experiences of being supported by The Trust.

Tim Hall from the Martin Currie Charitable Foundation said:-  
"The Martin Currie Charitable Foundation has been a long standing supporter of The Prince's Trust and has been a committed supporter of Fairbridge and The Prince's Scottish Youth Business Trust, prior to the recent mergers. We are delighted to be involved in events such as this which will help The Trust support even more young people. Planning for next year's lunch will start shortly, and I look forward to building on this year's success. "

*Photo from Prince's Trust Financial Lunch shows (L-R) Richard Martin (Founder of the Financial Lunch) Ciaran McGearty (Prince's Trust Young Ambassador), Heather Gray (Director of The Prince's Trust) and Tim Hall (Martin Currie Charitable Foundation).*

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## Postcode Challenge kick-starts summer holidays



*Worrying about how to start off the school holidays on the right foot?*

This week sees the end of the school term and the start of the summer holidays. Heaven for the children, a nightmare for the

parents, who suddenly find themselves with endless weeks to fill and keep the little ones occupied. But this summer, why not kick-start the holidays as you mean to go on and get outdoors to take part in this year's Postcode Challenge?

After the success of last year's event, the Bike Station and Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust have joined forces again to create the Postcode Challenge 2012. Organisers are calling all families, cyclist enthusiasts and Edinburgh residents to get outdoors this Sunday 1 July 2012 and discover more about the cycle routes on their doorstep.

Although billed as a 'challenge', the Postcode Challenge is an extremely relaxed affair, with challengers able to set their own pace. The event gets underway at 11am and those taking part are asked to check-in at ten pit-stops along the cycle path routes and collect their stamps to be in with a chance of winning a fantastic prize. What's more, there are plenty of treats along the way to pick up too, such as high-res cycle vests from People's Postcode Lottery, and flower and seed packets from the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust team.

"Even though it's a challenge, the Postcode Challenge isn't about the competition," says Liz Stewart from Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust. "It's about discovering your local, natural habitat. We're looking for as many residents as possible to come down on the day and take part. What a better way to start the summer holidays!"

Don't have a bike? For those who don't have two-wheels, this year sees a five pit-stop version for walkers keen to learn more about the cycle routes and enjoy the conservation work and bio-diversity offered along the paths.

Once the ten – or five if you're walking – stamps have been

collected along the path, entrants are asked to drop their cards in at the Fiveways Junction before 4pm and be in with a chance of winning a prize. Organisers are also encouraging cyclists – and walkers – to leave messages on the Edinburgh Innertube blog, which can be found at: <http://innertubemap.com/>.

“We are delighted to support the Postcode Challenge Treasure Hunt again this year,” said Clara Govier, Head of Charities, People’s Postcode Trust. “It’s a great event and it gets everyone outside and learning a little more about the beautiful environment right here in the city.

“We wish all of the challengers good luck – and when you’re stopping by the People’s Postcode Lottery tent and get your stamp, there will also be the chance to enter a competition to win a brand new iPad 2!

People’s Postcode Trust has already worked with both the Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust and the Bike Station, who were one of the Dream Fund’s 2011 winners. Awarded over £98,000, the funding was used to create a London Underground-style map of the 70 miles of off-street cycle ways and paths that reach right into the city centre, which will create the basis of the Postcode Challenge route.

The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust also have another fantastic free family event at Hailes Quarry Park coming up on Saturday 7 July. Starting at 12pm, there’s plenty to get involved in, including a climbing wall, bike track, bouncy castle and children’s rides.

Zero Waste Aware Scotland, State Street, Drylaw Community Centre, Drylaw Community Garden, Spokes and MYDG (Muirhouse Youth Development Group) will also have stands along the

Postcode Challenge route.

More information about the Postcode Challenge can be found at [www.elgt.org.uk](http://www.elgt.org.uk).

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# Reflections instead of prayers at council meetings

✘ New ten-minute Pause for Reflection sessions will be held prior to meetings of The City of Edinburgh Council under plans unveiled today.

Group leaders from each of the political parties represented on the Council and the Lord Provost agreed unanimously to the move, which will open up the opportunity for reflection to all staff, councillors and visitors who would normally be attending the Full Council meeting.

The sessions, to be held in the Main Council Chamber itself, will be delivered by representatives from a wide variety of civic and community interests, including faith / belief groups, civic institutions and community and voluntary sector organisations.

The start of each Pause for Reflection session will be signalled by a bell at 9.50am on the day of a Full Council meeting, at which point the Lord Provost will accompany the individual delivering the session into the Chamber.

A further bell will be rung shortly before 10am, when those not taking part in the Pause for Reflection session will take their seats for the subsequent Council meeting. After this, the City Officers will bring in the ceremonial mace and sword

to mark the official commencement of the meeting.

The first Pause for Reflection session will be held prior to the Council's meeting on 28 June 2012, delivered by Charlotte Chapel Senior Pastor Paul Rees.

Lord Provost Donald Wilson said:-“Scotland's Capital is a place of tolerance, fairness and diversity and I am more than proud to stand as First Citizen in such a forward-looking city. As a Council, we have a duty to respect the beliefs, opinions and interests of all our residents, which is why this review of the current Prayers at Full Council meetings seems entirely appropriate.

“These Pause for Reflection sessions will be genuinely inclusive, providing a time for contemplation open to all staff, councillors and visitors who would normally be attending Full Council meetings. The first session on 28 June will be delivered by Rev Paul Rees and I will be inviting suggestions for future speakers from all my elected member colleagues to ensure the Pause for Reflection programme covers the broadest possible spectrum of faith, community and civic interests.”

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## **Schoolchildren asked to play it safe with trams**



Hundreds of children in Edinburgh's West End are being asked to play it safe this summer and stay away from tram construction sites. Project staff paid visits to two City primary schools in the last week to educate pupils on the



potential danger which they could face if they stray onto construction sites.

The summer safety road show visited Roseburn Primary School on Monday 18 June 2012 and Balgreen Primary School on Tuesday 26 June 2012, taking the message to more than 500 children. Construction equipment including a mini excavator, dumper truck and safety bus was taken to playgrounds where construction staff explained the hidden dangers of playing on or near construction sites.

Across the UK last year 17 children were injured on construction sites while there was one fatality, according to the latest figures from Health and Safety Executive. Potential danger areas include falls from scaffolding, excavations and machinery, storage of materials or being knocked down and seriously injured.

City of Edinburgh Council Transport Convenor, Lesley Hinds, said: "There has been a great response from the pupils across this series of events.

"Even if children see people playing around tram works, it is always best to tell an adult and not to try and get involved by trying to warn friends or other children, by themselves.

A spokesman on behalf of the Infrastructure Contractor said: "Educating children about the machinery and work processes we have highlighted why playing on or near construction sites can be dangerous.

"We are currently in the middle of a busy phase of construction and the construction equipment on site should not be seen as playthings."

As part of the road show children spent an hour being shown around the construction equipment and safety bus by construction staff involved in the project. Pupils were also given the opportunity to enter a poster competition which has

'safety first' as its central theme. The winners will be taken on a visit to the new Tram Depot at Gogar where they will get the chance to see the new Edinburgh Trams up close.

Avril Wilson, head teacher at Balgreen Primary School said: "The pupils enjoyed finding out more about the trams from the construction staff that are helping to build it.

"Our school is near to the new line and I hope all of the children have taken away the positive message that it is better to watch from a safe distance."

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## Beware of doorstep sales

### Free insulation offer: Council urges caution over doorstep callers

The council wants households to take extra care when speaking to insulation contractors who call at their door. They have received complaints from some householders who have had unsatisfactory work carried out by a company claiming to be part of the local authority's current free insulation offer.

The local authority today issued a letter to the company concerned, asking them to stop making these claims immediately. They also notified Trading Standards, who will take action if the situation is not resolved quickly.

The Council's free insulation offer is **only** being delivered by appointed installer Carillion Energy Services in partnership with local social enterprise Changeworks, which runs the Energy Saving Scotland advice centre for South East Scotland. As with all doorstep callers it is very important to check their ID and even verify it by calling the advice centre to

confirm that they're meant to be working in the area.



Vice-Convener  
of Health,  
Social Care &  
Housing – Cammy  
Day

Councillor Cammy Day said: “The number of complaints received remains small but we are not prepared to ignore the issue and want to do everything we can to prevent this from becoming more widespread.”

“If you’re not sure whether the person on your doorstep is working for the Council’s free insulation offer, call the Energy Saving Scotland advice centre on 0800 512 012 to verify their ID; look for their company logo and headed paper, business cards and uniform, and don’t commit to anything unless you’re confident that they’re genuine, and working for Carillion or Changeworks.”

You can call the Scottish Government-funded Energy Saving Scotland advice centre free on 0800 512 012 to check. For peace of mind, you can even book a free no-obligation insulation survey over the phone and receive a visit from the appointed contractor at a time and date that suits you.

Whether it’s home insulation on offer or something else entirely, any genuine doorstep caller will be more than happy to show you ID and arrange to call back later – giving you time to do a quick background check.

The Council’s free insulation offer is available throughout Edinburgh, and is set to target South Queensferry, Kirkliston and Drumbrae with a letter campaign over the next few weeks. Loft insulation saves a household around £175 a year, and

cavity wall insulation saves around £135 – wherever you live in Edinburgh you can now have these measures installed absolutely free.

With many insulation companies canvassing for work in the capital, it can be difficult to choose the best option for your home. The Energy Saving Scotland advice centre is a Scottish Government-funded service offering free and impartial advice – and working in partnership with The City of Edinburgh Council and Carillion Energy Services on the city's free insulation offer.

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## Five things you need to know today



**Legionella outbreak – Council committees today – TED Global – Armed Forces Day 30 June 2012 – Art exhibition**

The Holyrood Health and Sport Committee will meet at 10.30 this morning to take evidence on the Legionella outbreak in Edinburgh from:-

*Pam Waldron, HSE Director, Scotland, and Head of Field Operations Directorate, Scotland and Northern England Division, Health and Safety Executive;*

*Dr Alison McCallum, Director of Public Health and Health Policy, and Dr Duncan McCormick, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Lothian;*

*Dr Jim McMenamin, Consultant Epidemiologist, Respiratory*

*Team, Health Protection Scotland;*

*Colin Sibbald, Food Health and Safety Manager, City of Edinburgh Council.*

The latest reports on the Edinburgh Legionnaires' outbreak show an increase in cases of the disease – one confirmed and one suspected. This means the total number of confirmed cases is now 48 and the total number of suspected cases is 47.

The total number of overall cases is now 95.

At noon yesterday, of those cases being treated in hospital, three are in intensive care – an increase from two on Friday – and 12 are on general wards.

A total of 20 cases are being treated in the community, 51 have been discharged from hospital and two people have sadly died. Seven cases are being treated outwith the NHS Lothian area. The ages of the confirmed cases ranges between 33 and 85, with more males than females affected. The Health and Safety Executive and Edinburgh City Council are continuing their investigations into the possible source of the outbreak.

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon said:

“As well as the efforts being made by health service staff to treat those who are critically ill in hospital, a tremendous amount of work is being undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive and the City of Edinburgh Council to identify and deal with the source of the outbreak.”

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The Council has two committees meeting this morning, the [Economic Development](#) committee and the [Audit Committee](#). The Audit committee will consider a report on the council's ICT systems which are currently run under contract with BT which has been extended to 2016. The overall report suggests that the arrangements with BT work reasonably well but there is scope for improvement. One incident at the end of 2011 when

data in the Money Advice and Community Support section was lost, highlighted that no-one knew that this system was being operated by the council. This has resulted in the council examining the whole range of systems to ensure that everything is under some form of council control. At the Economic Development Committee the council will hear that over 1000 affordable houses are being built by the council at the moment.

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Sculptor, Antony Gormley responsible for the figures in the Water of Leith, and singer, Macy Gray, will be among those delivering TED talks today in Edinburgh at the TED Global 2012 conference. The theme for the conference is Radical Openness. Tomorrow the attendees will hear from Ruby Wax and First Minister, Alex Salmond. If you are still wondering what TED is then watch this video:-

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The official Armed Forces Day flag was raised in Edinburgh yesterday as the city prepares to honour service personnel past and present with a packed day of events on Saturday.



The flag was escorted down the Royal Mile to the City Chambers by the National Standards of the [Royal British Legion Scotland](#) and presented to the Capital's Lord Provost by the Chairman of [Veterans Scotland](#), Colonel Martin Gibson OBE DL.

The Rt Hon Donald Wilson, Lord Lieutenant and Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh, said: "We raised the [Armed Forces Day](#) flag at the City Chambers this morning to show our continued support and gratitude for the risks both serving personnel and veterans take to keep us safe.

"Edinburgh has a long and proud tradition of supporting the Armed Forces and raising this flag at the City Chambers will serve as a poignant reminder of all those who have fought on

our behalf.

“On Saturday, we are looking forward to welcoming thousands of serving personnel and veterans to Princes Street Gardens for a fun, family-friendly event to celebrate these men and women’s bravery and dedication to duty.”

Joining the Lord Provost at today’s ceremony were representatives of the Armed Forces: Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Mackenzie, Commanding Officer, [City of Edinburgh Universities Officer Training Corps](#); Commander Mark Buchan-Steele Royal Navy, Chief of Staff for Royal Naval Headquarters (Scotland & Northern Ireland); Wing Commander Nicholas Stringer, Officer Commanding Operations Wing, RAF Leuchars; and Colonel Philip Bates, Commander of Edinburgh Garrison.

[Saturday’s events](#) start at 1pm with a combined Veteran, cadet and military parade from King Stables Road to the Ross Theatre in Princes Street Gardens.

A packed afternoon of family entertainment then kicks off with various performers taking to the stage. These include the SCOTS Mil Afghan Rock Band, 1940s dance troupe Kennedy Cupcakes, highland dancers and a jazz band.

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And the Libraries blog [Tales of One City](#) reminds us that there is an exhibition in the Central Library of art inspired by the College of Art. It runs till 30 July.

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# Edinburgh International Film

# Festival – Picks For Next Weekend (part 1)



## Shadow Dancer

Some very good Belfast accents.

Belfast, 1973. Young Collette McVeigh sees her younger brother shot to death during a skirmish between the British Army and the IRA. Twenty years later, Collette is a member of the IRA herself. Picked up by MI5 while on an unsuccessful mission to place a bomb in the Underground, she is convinced to spy on her republican brethren in order to protect her own son's wellbeing. As Collette finds herself deeper in trouble, can she trust her handler to help?

Academy Award-winning director James Marsh (Man On Wire) turns his attention to my old home town during a time of considerable upheaval – December 1993. This was the official beginning of the end of the Troubles, as the Downing Street Declaration of December 15th led directly to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and the eventual setting-up of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Also in 1998, ITV's Ireland Correspondent Tom Bradby released his first novel, Shadow Dancer. Fourteen years later, he has adapted it into a screenplay.

Although set in Belfast, Shadow Dancer is not a "Troubles movie". The political situation is merely a backdrop for this intelligent and tense thriller based on the themes of family, betrayal and the lengths we will go to to protect the ones we love. Geordie actress Andrea Riseborough plays Collette and this deserves to be a breakout film for her. Even in scenes without dialogue, such as the extended opening sequence as she tries to evade her MI5 tail through the Underground, she is a captivating presence at the head of an exceptional cast. Clive



Owen as Mac, her MI5 handler, brings his usual calm gravitas and a certain ambiguity to a role that could have been fairly one-note. Collette's brothers and fellow IRA members are played by Domhnall Gleeson and Aiden Gillen. The two roles are relatively small and unshowy, but Gleeson (son of Brendan) manages to show that the talent has not skipped a generation, and we get reserved and pensive Aiden Gillen as opposed to wacky, out there Aiden Gillen. More *The Wire* than *Blitz*, shall we say.

Marsh and his art department done a fantastic job in recreating Belfast of the early nineties, with the wardrobe, the cars, even the set dressing. My parents had the same bedroom furniture as Collette, that's how accurate it is. All of this would just be empty window dressing without a good script though, and this is a very good script. Where it excels most is in its restraint. Bradby isn't afraid of silences, trusting that his director and actors will be able to get across the point of a scene without words. I mentioned it before, but that opening sequence is a bravura piece of filmmaking; I didn't have my stopwatch, but it must have been maybe six or seven minutes with no dialogue, only background noise, and not for one second are we in any doubt about what is happening. The film starts off tense and never eases off; it just keeps ratcheting it up until the shocking ending.

*Shadow Dancer* will be screening this Friday and Saturday, with a full nationwide release scheduled for 24 August 2012. As always, tickets for this and any other film showing here can be picked up at the festival box office at The Filmhouse, Lothian Road, or via the festival's website, [here](#).

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# Edinburgh Leads Shortlist for Scottish Children's Book Awards



Picture by Gareth Easton  
Photography

It seems only yesterday we were at [star studded awards ceremony](#) in Edinburgh's Lyceum Theatre hearing the results of the Scottish Children's Book Awards 2011, but actually it was all the way back in February and enough time has now elapsed for a new crop of nominees to be announced.

Edinburgh-based children's authors have dominated the shortlist for 2012, with five out of nine shortlisted authors hailing from the city. [Catherine Rayner](#), [John Fardell](#), James Kilgore, [Jonathan Meres](#) and [Elizabeth Laird](#) will all be competing for the prize.

Run by [Scottish Book Trust](#) and [Creative Scotland](#), a unique thing about these awards is that winners are decided by Scottish children, who read all the shortlisted books and vote for their favourites. 23,000 children voted last time round and the organisers are hoping this year will see even more participation from young readers, who have seven months to cast their votes.

Award winning illustrator Catherine Rayner (shortlisted in the Bookbug (3-7 years) category) said:

*"I'm thrilled to be shortlisted for this year's Scottish Children's Book Awards. This is such a special award as the children themselves are so involved with the whole process. It really encourages them to think about and enjoy books in a*

*different way. I always find it fascinating to hear their refreshingly honest feedback and it's an honour to have these young people judging my work."*

Meanwhile James Kilgore (shortlisted in the Younger Readers (8-11 years) category) admitted,

*"The thought of "Soldier's Game" in the hands of so many discerning young reviewers is incredibly exciting – if a little scary. But what more could a writer ask for?"*

The full Shortlist is as follows:

### **Bookbug Readers (0-7 years)**

- Jack and the Flum Flum Tree by Julia Donaldson, Illustrated by David Roberts (Macmillan)
- The Day Louis Got Eaten by John Fardell (Andersen Press)
- Solomon Crocodile by Catherine Rayner (Macmillan)

### **Younger Readers (8-11 years)**

- Out of the Depths by Cathy MacPhail (Bloomsbury)
- Soldier's Game by James Killgore (Floris Books)
- The World of Norm: May Contain Nuts by Jonathan Meres (Orchard)

### **Older Readers (12-16 years)**

- The 13th Horseman by Barry Hutchison (Harper Collins)
- Code Name Verity by Elizabeth Wein (Electric Monkey)
- The Prince Who Walked With Lions by Elizabeth Laird (Macmillan)

Winners will be announced at a ceremony on World Book Day (7th March 2013) at the Caird Hall in Dundee.

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# Princes Street due to reopen this week



Princes Street, west of Waverley Bridge, is set to re-open to buses, cycles and taxis by 30 June according to the council. Subject to complete handover by the infrastructure contractor and sign-off , the move should provide a welcome boost to the city centre at the start of summer. The Mound will also reopen to general traffic, helping to free up north and southbound traffic flow in the city centre.

As work continues in the project's busiest period of construction, the next major programme of city centre tram works has also been announced for York Place.

From 14 July, following the re-opening of Broughton Street, works will commence on York Place, allowing for bus only access between North Street, Andrew Street and Broughton Street. Access to the bus station from Elder Street will be maintained during this phase. Detailed information regarding these diversions will be made public in advance of work getting underway.



Convener                of  
Transport              &  
Environment          –  
Lesley Hinds

Transport Convener, Councillor Lesley Hinds, said: “The new Administration is determined to make sure that the project will continue to move forward, in a spirit of cooperation,

with all the parties working together.

“Edinburgh tram works are being managed to a clearly defined programme with this work scheduled to start now in order to deliver the project by the summer of 2014.

“Meanwhile the re-opening of Princes Street, west of Waverley Bridge, will come as a welcome boost to business at what remains a challenging period for traders.”

Sue Bruce, Chief Executive, City of Edinburgh Council, said: “Throughout the tram works, people have adapted quickly to the new traffic systems and bus diversions once they have had the chance to bed-in. This is a significant work package in the programme and its implementation is in itself a clear indication of continuing meaningful progress.

“The bus station will be required to be temporarily re-located later in the year. This will happen following the conclusion of detailed discussions with bus operators and bus station management. We have managed a similar relocation before and are confident this process will be a relatively smooth transition.

“We appreciate the continued support of the public as work gets underway on this latest phase of the project.”

As construction progresses, and a single signalised bus lane can be accommodated on Princes Street at the junction of Waverley Bridge and South St Andrew Street, York Place will be closed to all traffic between North St Andrew Street and Broughton Street. Details when this will take place will be made public closer to the time. However, it is currently anticipated that this will take place at the end of September.

The York Place closure will require the temporary relocation of the bus station and discussions with bus operators and bus station management are ongoing. These plans will be made public after they have been finalised. During this time access

to the St James Centre and Multrees Walk will be maintained via Little King Street.

Officers have been speaking to businesses about the plans in advance of implementation and offering logistical support for planning for and receiving deliveries. In addition, traders affected by the works continue to be supported by the 'Open for Business' fund set up by the Council to help them through the construction phase of the project.

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## Five things you need to know today



**Better Together? – Trams – Queensferry bid for a BID – Plastic bags – Mercat Bar**

[Here is the music](#) which accompanies the Better Together campaign video which will be launched today in Edinburgh. Alistair Darling MP will be at the forefront of the movement against independence which is said to have the support of all three opposition parties in Scotland.

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[The Edinburgh Evening News](#) reports that the erstwhile directors of the tram company tie were not paid as employees and thus saved income tax on the payments made to them on cessation of their contracts. Rather than paying higher rate tax, they are said to have paid corporation tax as the

payments were made to limited companies.

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Businesses in Queensferry today (22 June) voted yes to creating change, attracting further investment and having a real say in decisions that impact their business.



Ballot papers were distributed from May 10 asking local businesses to vote on whether they want to move ahead with a Business Improvement District (BID) initiative which will enable businesses to take vital steps to improve the prosperity of the town. Areas of focus will be creating a robust events and marketing campaign, business grant support and initiatives, improved signage and parking.

A company will now be set up with representatives of all sectors and areas of the BID, to ensure the overall £500,000 budget delivers maximum return.

Before voting was carried out over 100 one-to-one consultations with businesses were carried out with 250 questionnaires issued to businesses for their views of the town which also asked if in principal they would support a BID.

Cllr Tom Buchanan, Convener of the Economic Development Committee, said: "This is fantastic news for Queensferry and sends out a strong message to businesses in other areas of Edinburgh that BIDs help businesses to collectively enhance trading conditions. The yes vote will now help to deliver over £500,000 of additional investment over the next five years to Queensferry to be spent on projects led and managed by the business community."

[Business Plan](#)

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The Greens have welcomed news that the Scottish Government will publish a consultation on reducing plastic bag waste, despite being almost a year later than promised.

Alison Johnstone MSP tabled questions in the Scottish Parliament last week asking why the consultation had not been published in autumn 2011 as set out by the Environment Secretary last summer. (1) A promised marine litter strategy has also failed to materialise, two years after it was promised during the passage of the Marine Act.

The introduction of a 5p charge in Wales last year has led to a reduction in the use of plastic bags of up to 90%, and a similar charge will come into force in Northern Ireland in April 2013. (2). A Green motion was submitted to Parliament congratulating Wales on their success. (3)

Green MSP Alison Johnstone said:

“Scotland is now trailing far behind Wales and Northern Ireland in tackling this very visible form of waste, and the SNP need to explain why they delayed this consultation by almost a year. The evidence from Wales is that a small charge is easy to implement and has a huge impact on shopper’s behaviour, which can only be a good thing for litter in our towns and for our wildlife, seas and beaches. Countries as diverse as Rwanda, Italy and Bangladesh have gone even further and have an outright ban on certain plastic bags because they recognise the negative impact that they are having.

“I ask those who oppose this policy to question whether there is such a thing as a free plastic bag and who picks up the bill for littered cities and polluted seas. The SNP must now stop dragging its feet and deliver the marine litter strategy that was promised two years ago and is nowhere to be seen. Greens will always fight for the strongest possible measures on waste because a zero-waste economy means more jobs and a better environment for all.”



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The award-winning Mercat Bar & Restaurant in Edinburgh's West End, recently had its function area refurbished and to celebrate, they are offering free hire between now and 31 August 2012.

The stylish, private function area can accommodate up to 100 guests (45 for table dining and 100 for receptions) and is ideal for family gatherings, wedding receptions, birthday parties, team meetings, corporate dining through to early morning business breakfasts. The normal hire price ranges from £150 to £500 for exclusive use of the function area.

However, for the Mercat's special promotion, this area will be complimentary for bookings between now and 31 August 2012 based on a minimum of 30 for a two-course meal (priced from £11.20pp) or 80 for a buffet and drinks (priced from £8.50pp).

The refurbished function area boasts a private bar, new flooring, upholstered leather chairs, lovely lighting (all energy efficient) and new ladies and gents washrooms – all set within attractive stone feature walls. There's also a 50" plasma screen and sound system if required.

The Mercat's talented head chef Claire Allan can tailor an excellent selection of catering options, from a four-course meal, canapés or buffet for private events. The team prides itself on providing customers with wholesome and tasty dishes with fresh produce sourced from Scotland's impressive larder. There's also a wide selection of quality wines, beers from around the world, spirits and soft drinks. And guests will be

exceedingly well looked after by the Mercat's friendly, attentive and well trained team.

Private events can be held anytime from 9am until 1am, seven days a week at The Mercat Bar & Restaurant and subject to availability, the venue can also open earlier.

For more information please contact The Mercat Bar & Restaurant on 0131 225 8716 or email [info@mercatbar.com](mailto:info@mercatbar.com).

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## **Pride Scotia on 30 June sponsored by GHQ**

GHQ are the proud sponsors of Pride Scotia 2012 and say they are honoured to have Kieron Richardson, star of Hollyoaks and Dancing on Ice, appearing on 30 June 2012.

The celebrations however starts from Friday 29th with the Energy Bears who will be in GHQ from 22.30 till 3a.m. DJ Robb White and DJ JT will be playing all the latest tunes to kick off the weekend celebrations.

The 30 June will be a day to remember. The Day starts off at the City Chambers on the High street for speeches, followed by the march from the city centre at 1300. The March will then arrive at about 1400 at the Omni Centre where there is a Health & community fair, tea dance and the Main Stage.

Kieron Richardson along with numerous acts will be gracing the stage to entertain the crowds. GHQ will have entertainers and staff throughout the crowds who will have passes for the club. GHQ opens from 2pm with Barbra La Bush who will be entertaining with a Pride show until 5pm. Followed by Kieron Richardson who will be in GHQ for the duration of the night. Not forgetting the resident DJs Reuben Lowenthal and Dowser will be bringing you the tunes till the early hours on Sunday!

Later in the evening GHQ will also be welcoming the regular Naughty Angel Butlers who will be interacting and photo opportunities will be available.

The weekend celebrations won't stop at the end of Saturday. GHQ is open from 11pm with Motown Hodown with DJ Lynne to bring an end to a fabulous weekend! Let's just hope the weather stays nice for everybody.

GHQ 's PR staff will be out & about from Thursday giving out Wristbands so keep an eye out for them these will give you discounts from Friday till Sunday night.

Contacts for further information – E: [ghq@glgroup.com](mailto:ghq@glgroup.com) Twitter @ghqedinburgh T: 0131 550 1780

Follow the chat @ghqedinburgh #prideatghq

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## **Move over Royal Highland Show – we are ready for the Festival now**

We seem to have had so many things to see and do over the last couple of weeks. Most recently the Royal Highland Show

finished today at Ingliston, and now we are looking forward to August when the Festival will field vast shows at Royal Highland Centre

Three shows impossible to stage in conventional theatres are waiting in the wings as the 2012 Royal Highland Show draws to a close at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston.

An expert 80 strong team will transform the 4,500 square metres of Lowland Hall into a theatre space for Edinburgh International Festival 2012. Over 50 tonnes of set will also be put in place for three productions by a roll call of world-leading directors.

In an epic undertaking, all three sets will be built alongside each other, beginning on July 26 ready in just 16 days for the first performance on August 11 – **2008: Macbeth**.

An enormous three-storey construction with multimedia screens is the set for a stunning multi-media take on the Scottish play. *2008: Macbeth* relocates Shakespeare's work to a contemporary and brutal Middle East in a production from Warsaw-based director Grzegorz Jarzyna and TR Warszawa.

In the year *The Artist* has taken cinemas by storm, a spectacular fantasy about the early days of silent movies and an amateur's attempts to shoot a film is just the beginning of ***Les Naufragés du Fol Espoir (Aurores)***. This complex, beautifully designed show is brought to the Scottish capital by Théâtre du Soleil and Ariane Mnouchkine, the legendary French director whose work has not been seen in the UK for more than 20 years.

Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison it's not. With a soundtrack that includes Bryan Adams, George Michael and Wagner, a hilarious and surreal version of My Fair Lady, ***Meine faire Dame – ein Sprachlabor*** opens at Lowland Hall on 14 August and

is the UK debut for director Christoph Marthaler. Fife-born actor Graham Valentine – a star of musical theatre in mainland Europe – plays both Eliza Doolittle and Professor Higgins in a rare UK appearance.

Over 3000 artists from 47 nations will gather in the Scottish capital this year for Edinburgh International Festival 2012 (Thursday 9 August to Sunday 2 September) to share the live experience of theatre, dance, opera and music with audiences from approximately a third of the world's nations.

This very special project for 2012 has been supported by The City of Edinburgh Council, Creative Scotland and EventScotland.

The three plays are also part of the London 2012 Festival, a UK wide festival from 21 June – 9 September 2012 featuring leading artists from around the world.

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## **Edinburgh Marathon run raised funds for Katie Piper Foundation**



***Richard Borthwick of Corstophine completed the Edinburgh Half Marathon on Sunday 27 May 2012 and raised over £500 for The Katie Piper Foundation***

Local man, Richard Borthwick of Corstophine completed the Edinburgh Half Marathon on Sunday 27 May 2012 in 2 hours and 10 minutes and raised a total of £255 for burns charity, The Katie Piper Foundation [www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk](http://www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk) His employer, HSBC, have matched the sum to bring it to a total of £510.

“This is the hardest run I have done to date and I am happy to have finished it in a decent time. Well done to everyone who took part, I think I will be back next year for the full marathon! I am so pleased to have been able to raise this sum for The Katie Piper Foundation and thanks to my employers, HSBC, who matched the sum I raised and took the total to over £500.” said Richard.

Head of Fundraising at The Katie Piper Foundation, Carol Borwick comments, “We’re so grateful to Richard for completing the Edinburgh Half Marathon on our behalf and thanks to all his friends, family, colleagues and HSBC for supporting him. The money raised will help us make a positive difference to burns survivors through life-changing treatments and workshops”.

Launched in July 2010, The Katie Piper Foundation [www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk](http://www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk) is a registered charity which aims to make it easier for people to live with burns and scars by progressing extended rehabilitation and scar management for burns survivors, providing information on and access to non-surgical treatments for burns and scars, campaigning for consistent clinical care and developing a support network for people living with burns and scars. The Foundation helps disfigured people to reconnect with their lives and their communities.

- If you would like to add to the money Richard has raised, please visit his fundraising page at: [www.justgiving.com/Richard-Borthwick](http://www.justgiving.com/Richard-Borthwick)
- Donations can also be made at The Katie Piper Foundation

website: <http://www.katiepiperfoundation.org.uk/donate-now/>

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# Five best things to see at the Edinburgh Mela Festival



The Mela is a festival that brings communities together offers a spectacular range of talent from all cultures. Here's what to look out for this year.

## DANCE

The 2012 festival is centred around dance, and is determined to showcase the most diverse and artistic performances.

One highlight this year is **Rama & Sita**, by Scotland's Indian dance company – Dance Ihayami – and outdoor theatre company – Walk The Plank. Traditional dance and puppetry is used to reenact this classic story – and it's free! The show will also be enhanced by special effects, pyrotechnics and a firework display. Click [here](#) to see other highlights of the dance category.

## MUSIC

The spectacular **Babylon Arabic Band** is a fusion of traditional Arabic music with Scottish, Irish and German influences. This is sure to be a wonderful combination. A variety of other renowned artists will also be making an appearance. Ones to look out for are Bhangra legend Jassi Sidhu and Desi starlet

Ramee. Read about the rest of the lineup for music [here](#).

## FASHION

The **Mela Fashion Show** featuring both international and local designers will include a mix of contemporary and traditional clothing. Keep an eye out for some beautiful Asian bridal wear and evening wear as well as a wide range of contemporary Western designs. The show will be choreographed by Nadim Saleem, who returns after experience running the London-Pakistan Fashion Week and the Newcastle Mela. To read more about the fashion show click [here](#).

## FOOD

Do not leave the Mela Festival without visiting at least one of the more than 20 stalls offering not only fresh Bombay street food; mouth-watering curries, sweetmeats and snacks, but also food from South and East Asia, South America, Eastern Europe and, of course, Scotland. All this can be found at the **Global Food Village**. Make sure you try the haggis pakora!

## KIDS ACTIVITIES



This year the **Mela Kidzone** promises to take its young audience members ***Around the World in Eighty Minutes***. With a series of workshops, kids can explore 'stories and traditions of the four points of the compass'. The Mela Storytelling Boat will guide their way with a crew of Vikings and Norsewomen. This is a fantastic opportunity for young people to become immersed in other cultures and to learn, and under 12s get free entry.

**Other performances listed [here](#).**

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Steve Cardownie, Chair of the Mela board, said that "A big part of the Edinburgh Mela's appeal is that it originates from, and represents, the city's own diverse communities...



Edinburgh boasts an unrivalled and hugely varied year-round calendar of events and the Edinburgh Mela truly is one of the highlights of the summer months.”

The Mela will run from 31 August-2 September in Leith Links. Go to the official [Edinburgh Mela website](#) for more details.

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# Edinburgh International Film Festival – Top Pick For Sunday

Just one film today, I’m afraid. It’s a cracker though.



## Leave It On The Track

Sex, violence and roller skates.

Benjamin Pascoe’s debut feature documentary tells the story of modern roller derby by focussing on the two teams battling for the TXRD League’s 2009 Calvello Cup: the Hellcats and the Cherry Bombs. Despite being one of the fastest growing sports in the USA, it still retains an air of ramshackle improvisation that makes everybody seem like the endearing underdog. But as the clock runs down, which team will come out on top?

Most of the documentaries I have been watching recently tend to be more politically minded or issue-based. This one, on the other hand, is more where my tastes lie; a real DIY effort full of charm and humour and casual – but friendly – violence. I loved it.

The film plays out as a series of intercut interviews with the players on both sides as they discuss the game and each other, with the championship match as a backdrop throughout. All the women that Pascoe speaks to share one thing in common: they all love each other, and not just their own teammates, but all the other players as well. You can really feel the camaraderie that holds the TXRD League together. It certainly isn't money they play for anyway. It is implied that the players are all unpaid – most of them have day jobs as well – and the league is so poor that when one of the players gets seriously injured in the big match, players from both teams start passing helmets through the crowd for donations to her medical bills. Watching that kind of consideration between supposedly sworn enemies is quite a touching moment.

Shot on digital camcorders (frequently by one of the film's participants in fact), the movie has a bit of a punk rock look to it that neatly echoes the DIY aspect of the league itself. This was obviously a labour of love for Pascoe, and he has managed to get some wonderful personalities involved. With names like Cherry Chainsaw, Miso Vicious, Alison Chains and Kate Or Dye (because her name's actually Kate and she's a hairdresser!) these girls defy all expectations. Far from the random brawl on wheels that you might expect it to be, Roller Derby is actually a very structured game and the players are very devoted and well trained. Also, I don't know about you, but I am required by law to love any sport where the champion can be decided by a pillow fight.

You could say this is modern feminism in a microcosm – women who careen around a track battering seven bells out of each other while still embracing their femininity with their skimpy team uniforms (mostly consisting of fishnets and underwear-flashing skirts) – but I'm not sure the players or the film would agree with you. That seems like a bit of a lofty ideal for a movie clearly made with the simple goal of showing off the TXRD League and the personalities that are drawn to take

part in it. Accompanied by a fantastic soundtrack of rockabilly tunes, this is not only a fun documentary packed with endearing characters, it is also one of the best sports movies I have seen in quite a while.

Leave It On The Track is another World Premiere for the EIFF, screening on Sunday evening and again next Saturday if you can't make it tonight.

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## Edinburgh International Film Festival – What's Worth Catching On Monday



### Day Of The Flowers

Viva la revolución, big yin.

When their father suddenly dies, two Glasgow sisters – one a socialist activist, the other a party girl – take his ashes to Cuba to scatter them at the place where their parents met. Along the way, there'll be trouble with the law, trouble with the locals and trouble with each other, not to mention a revelation or two.

In 1998 John Roberts directed Paulie, a movie about a parrot telling his life story to a Russian janitor (it was for kids). Besides a TV movie in 2001, this is his only credit since then. I don't know what else he has been up to these last 14 years, but he has hit the ground running with this enjoyably realistic, almost Loachian comedy-drama. Eva Birthistle plays Rosa, the super-socialist whose politics are the sole driving

force in her life. Her gradual awakening to the truth about her family and her relationship with her sister is the main focus of the story. Birthistle does a very good job as the intelligent and driven but shockingly naive Rosa. There are times in the movie where her ignorance is almost annoying, and Birthistle is never afraid to be unlikeable, but at the same time she really pulls you in to the story and you want everything to work out alright for her. Charity Wakefield is her sister Ailie; a whirlwind of heels and hairspray. Ailie is the type who brings an electric sandwich maker on holiday with her, but her apparent superficiality masks a much deeper understanding of things than her emotionally stunted big sis. The cast are all very good in fact, especially when you consider that out of the four main actors, only Carlos Acosta as Tomas is playing a native of his own land. The two Scottish sisters are actually Irish and English and the suspiciously handsome Cuban Ernesto is in fact half Irish, half Greek/Rwandan!

What we see of Cuba is beautifully shot by DoP Vernon Layton – whether it's the countryside Rosa ends up travelling through or the sweat-fuelled clubs where Ailie dances the night away – though he and Roberts seem to leave every scene with a faint air of danger hanging over it. This is writer Eirene Houston's first feature after doing her bit for British TV with *Monarch of the Glen* and *Eastenders*, and it is an assured debut. She captures the sibling tensions very well, and while both sisters might feel a bit like one-note caricatures at first, they both show much more depth and similarity as the story progresses. It may suffer slightly in comparison to Paul Laverty's similarly-themed work, but what wouldn't? The bait-and-switch ending is a bit predictable but refreshingly underplayed.

The script doesn't really do anything new with the themes of familial discord and reconciliation, but it is still an entertaining watch bolstered no end by the two strong female

leads. Day Of The Flowers is screening in competition for the Michael Powell Award for best British feature and is having its World Premiere (yes, another one!) on Monday 25th, with the writer, director and some of the cast in attendance. There is a second showing on Wednesday 27th as well.



## **The Ambassador**

Danes don't just do thrillers.

Danish journalist, satirist and television presenter Mads Brügger decides to expose the corruption that is rife within the diplomatic community in Africa by becoming a part of it. With cameras in tow (some hidden, some not) he buys the post of Consul for Liberia to the Central African Republic and starts trying to smuggle some blood diamonds. Wacky hijinks (and murder) ensue.

Mads Brügger is either one very brave man or one very foolish one. Either way, he has brought to EIFF a documentary that is as frightening as it is entertaining, and filled with characters and situations that are so absurd they have to be real. This film is a shocking indictment of the depth of corruption in some of these fledgling governments. It seems there is almost nothing that cannot be bought or sold if you know the right people and have deep enough pockets.

Things I Learned From Watching The Ambassador:

- A diplomatic passport costs between \$100,000 and \$150,000, depending on who you ask.
- If you follow Brügger's lead and try this for real, there is a very good chance you will end up cheated out of millions of dollars and/or dead.
- Pygmies always travel in pairs.

After a few minutes research, it seems that a lot of people

are of the impression that *The Ambassador* is a Borat-style mockumentary, but Brügger assures us that is not the case. The film follows his travails as he tries to set up a relationship with a mine owner in the CAR, while simultaneously establishing his cover business of a match factory employing exclusively pygmies. The third strand played out sees Brügger go through the nerve-wracking process of having his bona fides confirmed by the government of Liberia. It is this last that is the most nerve-wracking, since without the proper accreditation from his “home” government, a diplomatic passport provides about as much protection as a chocolate fireguard if you are trying to leave the country with a case full of blood diamonds.

Brügger is a hugely entertaining host to this world, playing the role of the rich and dodgy businessman with considerable style. Even though what he’s trying to do is shockingly illegal and immoral, you can’t help but want him to succeed. I’m sure some will say that his irreverence will be making light of a terrible situation, but I disagree. This is an important story that deserves to be told, and if tying that message up in a funny wrapper makes it more palatable, then so be it. I do have one ongoing question though: where exactly did Brügger get his hands on so much cash?

*The Ambassador* is showing as part of the festival’s Focus On Denmark strand. Its first screening is this afternoon, with the second show on Monday evening. Tickets for all festival screenings can be bought in person at Edinburgh’s venerable Filmhouse Cinema or through the EIFF site [here](#).

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# In Photos – Dalai Lama visits Edinburgh



His Holiness The Dalai Lama visited Edinburgh yesterday. He delivered a speech and answered questions from the audience made up of local dignitaries and schoolchildren along with those who had been lucky enough to get tickets for the event.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama greets well-wishers as he leaves Edinburgh's Usher Hall after his formal visit.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama greets well-wishers and VIPS as he arrives at Edinburgh's Usher Hall for his formal visit.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama is given a scarf of peace by Edinburgh's Lord Provost David Wilson, after the Dalai Lama delivered his speech, part of the Edinburgh Lectures series, at Edinburgh's Usher Hall after his formal visit.

Photos by Colin Hattersley Photography

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[www.colinhattersley.com](http://www.colinhattersley.com)

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# Royal Highland Show – Spotlight on food and drink



## ***Stirling Tastes Good* at the Royal Highland Show!**

This year's Royal Highland Show running till Sunday features *Stirling Tastes Good*, a new group of local food and drink businesses showcasing the best of the Stirling region's produce at the Food Hall.

This will be the first year *Stirling Tastes Good* visits the Royal Highland Show and will feature the following food and drink businesses:

- Get Juiced – Delivering a range of 100% freshly squeezed juices, made in Scotland!
- Allanwater Brewhouse – Launching Scotland's very first gluten free beers, including Blonde Honey and Dark Treacle gluten free beers.
- Deanston Distillery – Producing an outstanding Highland single malt Whisky. They are also launching their new visitor centre opened with a £500,000 investment.
- Monachyle Mhor Hotel – MHOR is a family business based in the heart of the Trossachs National Park, priding itself on using seasonal, local produce.
- T&R Skinner home of the Extraordinary Sausage Co – A butcher and deli that strives to provide a wide range of highest quality locally produced food
- Knockraich Creamery – A family run dairy farm, including a restaurant and tearoom, in Fintry, owned and managed by Robert and Katy Rodgers and family.
- Edenmill Farm Shop – A [real farm shop](#) and [smokery](#) outlet



producing tasty [beef](#), lamb, pork, venison and game.

- Mushrooms (Scotland) Ltd – Producing the very highest quality Scottish mushrooms.



Katy Rodgers Product of the Year at the Royal Highland Show

Rural Affairs Secretary Richard Lochhead said:-

“Scotland has a fantastic array of high quality and delicious local produce, from all corners of the country. *Stirling Tastes Good* -supported by the Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER Programme – is an excellent example of local businesses coming together to work cooperatively and promote their products.

“I am sure that their stand at the Royal Highland Show will attract a lot of interest and increase exposure for the bountiful food and drink offering from the Stirling area.”

For directions and more information please visit [www.royalhighlandshow.org](http://www.royalhighlandshow.org)

Working with local food and drink producers, STEP is the economic development agency for Stirling. STEP's *Stirling Tastes Good* Food Stand was secured following funding from both Stirling Council and the Forth Valley and Lomond LEADER programme.

For more information on STEP and *Stirling Tastes Good* please visit [www.stepstirling.co.uk](http://www.stepstirling.co.uk)



Mark Gibson from Edenmill Farm with Gregg Wallace

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# Five things you need to know today



**Dalai Lama – Edinburgh International Book Festival – Festival of Politics – Wifi on the trains! – Planning application at Fort Kinnaird**

Tickets to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Usher Hall have already long since sold out, but the Tibetan spiritual leader is going elsewhere in Edinburgh today and so you might be able to catch a glimpse of him either at the Signet Library just after 8.30a.m., or the Usher Hall about 10.15a.m. before making his speech at 10.30 this morning. Some roads are closed and diversions in place in these areas.

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The Edinburgh International Book Festival was launched yesterday although you can only start buying tickets next Friday 29 June 2012. In a fast-paced world filled with ever-changing soundbites and 140 character opinions, the Edinburgh International Book Festival provides the perfect environment to carefully consider the society in which we live. In 2012 the Book Festival will rethink some of the issues facing the world today, offering audiences the opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussion with leading writers from across the globe. Charlotte Square Gardens will welcome Nobel Laureates, Booker and Pulitzer Prize winners and Poets Laureate as well as a stellar line up of the world's leading writers, poets, thinkers and commentators. With Guest Selectors, the Anobii

First Book Award, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, the gamut of outstanding authors from Ali Smith to Zadie Smith, and a third year of the late night Unbound events, the Book Festival promises a summer of contemplation, inspiration and entertainment.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival said "In 2012, the Year of Creative Scotland, we are delighted to showcase some of the best Scottish writing, from well-established authors to debut novelists, as well as welcoming some extraordinary literary talent from around the world to help us rethink aspects of society that affect our everyday lives. This is a year for taking stock about what matters to us in a time of uncertainty, doubt and data overload. It is also, of course, a time when Scotland is preparing to make a big decision about its own future. All this and more will be discussed, deliberated, considered, broadcast live online via the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference, and disseminated around the world – we look forward to a lively, informed and informative debate."

In Edinburgh to launch their brand new books will be Ian McEwan, James Kelman, Will Self, Pankaj Mishra, Pat Barker, Gavin Esler and Louise Welsh while Zadie Smith, Howard Jacobson, Val McDermid and A N Wilson will offer exclusive previews of their forthcoming novels. Joining them in a packed programme will be over 800 authors appearing in 750 events and representing 44 different countries from Australia to Russia, Argentina to Nigeria. The prestigious James Tait Black Memorial Prize will be announced at the Book Festival, together with the Edwin Morgan Poetry Prize and the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust Book of the Year award. Former Prime Minister Gordon Brown will deliver the National Library of Scotland's Donald Dewar Lecture and John McCarthy will speak at the inaugural Frederick Hood Memorial Lecture.

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You can start buying tickets today for the Festival of Politics which starts on 17 August at Holyrood. Some big names will appear at the Festival but we thought this might appeal to some of you who are interested in music.

### **The Future of the Music Industry**

Saturday 25 August, 17:00-18:00, Debating Chamber, £4.00/£2.50

In an age when music is commonly available via the internet and CD sales are declining, this event will explore what this means for the future of the industry and asks what it means for future generations of musicians. What can we learn from countries such as Norway and Canada? Join panellists including Scott Cohen, founder The Orchard; Scott Hutchinson, Frightened Rabbit; Caroline Gorman, Rage Music and the Scottish Music Industry Association; Olaf Furniss, Wide Days; and Inger Dirdal, Music Export Norway in a lively discussion on the future of the music industry in Scotland. Chaired by the Deputy Presiding Officer Elaine Smith MSP.

Programme availability and tickets

- \* Tickets will go on sale at 10am on 22 Friday June.
- \* Online via [www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk](http://www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk)
- \* A limited number of tickets are available via the Scottish Parliament in person and via telephone on 0131 348 5405.
- \* Full details of the festival programme are available from [www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk](http://www.festivalofpolitics.org.uk)

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Cutting edge technology will be used on Scotland's rail network to significantly enhance the experience for passengers on the network. As part of the significant £5 billion package of investment announced today for the new rail franchise from 2014, significant new technological improvements will be required.

Smart ticketing technology will be rolled out across the network by the end of the franchise period. Bidders will be

encouraged to develop plans to link with other forms of transport, including bikes, and efforts will be made to better integrate rail journeys with connecting ferry and bus services.

In addition to this, the new franchise agreement will also include a requirement to install Wi-Fi technology across the network by 2019. The results of the trial which began this week on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line will help to establish which technological solution will be used.

Commenting on these developments, SNP MSP Kevin Stewart said:

“It is right that Scotland should learn from innovations around the world and bring the best of technological solutions to our rail network. Improving the experience for passengers should always be at the heart of improvements to Scotland’s railways.

“Smart ticketing has clearly worked well in London and other areas, so I am delighted that we will be bringing the technology to Scotland’s railways. It is clearly a far more convenient and efficient solution and I am confident it will be warmly welcomed by passengers across the country.

“It is also important that we do more to integrate the various types of transport available in Scotland as far as is possible and I am sure that requiring the next ScotRail franchisee to develop plans for this will bear fruit.

“The warm welcome that the rollout of Wi-Fi on the Edinburgh-Glasgow line received this week shows the strength of demand for internet access on the move.

“Rolling the technology out across the network by 2019 is an ambitious step forward and I am sure that the lessons from the current trial will be well learnt.”

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The owner of Fort Kinnaird Shopping Park says it has taken a vital step forward in the continued regeneration and improvement of the park with the submission of four planning applications to The City of Edinburgh Council.

The applications represent a £24 million investment in Fort Kinnaird with 285 new positions created on opening, in addition to a significant number of jobs during the construction period. Fort Kinnaird employs 1,600 people, rising to 2,500 during the Christmas peak.

The applications seek detailed consent for the design of a number of new shops and restaurants which already have planning permission, a new seven screen multiplex cinema, new toilets and a security office to replace the existing offices.

The applications also propose upgrading and revitalising the public areas throughout the park with a fully equipped children's play area and cafe to provide a new heart for the centre and major improvements to the pedestrian crossing on Newcraighall Road.

If approved, it is anticipated that work will start on site in early 2013 with completion scheduled for summer 2014. The location of the cinema and restaurants on the same site as the retail creates opportunities for linked trips between the various elements on the park, creating new jobs but also safeguarding existing ones.

Liam Smith, Centre Manager at Fort Kinnaird, said: "These plans demonstrate our commitment to continued investment in Fort Kinnaird and will release its full potential, making spending time here an even better experience for our customers.

"As well as creating vital new jobs and local investment and improving public areas, the new shops and restaurants will enable us to attract and accommodate new and exciting retailers which are not currently represented in the area.

“There was previously a cinema at Fort Kinnaird and this replacement will provide a modern, digital cinema with stadium style seating; something not possible with the previous building.”

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# Edinburgh International Film Festival – What To See This Saturday

As the name suggests, there is a very international flavour to this festival, with the majority of films being at least partially in another language. Both of my picks for Saturday are subtitled movies: one Swedish and one Chinese.



## Flicker

Happy endings, but no meatballs.

In small-town Sweden, a local telecoms company is going through a rough patch, as are many of its employees. Whether it's a technician with dry roasted nuts, a cleaner with arachnophobia or an executive with terminal loneliness, everyone could be doing a little better.

Like a cross between *The Office* and Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, *Flicker* tells several stories that weave in and out of each other and are bookended by a pair of power cuts that leave the town of Backberga in complete darkness. Writer/director Patrik Eklund has crafted an astonishingly tight screenplay for his first feature-length film; absolutely everything is connected in some way. This is a movie that will

reward repeat viewings, and will probably be just as funny every time. The comedy in Flicker is the comedy of real life, of frustration and irritation – something everyone can relate to.

Flicker's best asset though is its cast. Everyone in the large ensemble is uniformly excellent, so much so that it would be unfair to single anyone out. Each creates a real person that we can relate with, sympathise with and laugh with (or at, as the case may be) while Eklund keeps things moving from one story to the next at just the right time. Despite the various disasters that each character faces – everything from a Blue Screen Of Death at just the wrong moment to sterility, via an allergic reaction to electricity itself – the movie ends on an uplifting sense of optimism. Let's call this the feel-good hit of the year, shall we? Maybe that will get me a poster quote.

Saturday evening's screening will be the first time Flicker is shown outside its homeland. Trust me, you don't want to miss it.



## **Dragon (or Wu Xia)**

If Holmes had been Chinese...

It is 1917. Liu Jingxi is a simple man, working in his village's paper mill. One day a pair of bandits come through the village and try to rob the general store. Liu is there at the time and hides, but when the bandits are about to kill the elderly storekeeper, he suddenly attacks them, killing them both. While the rest of the village hails him a hero, the detective Xu Baijiu arrives to investigate the deaths. What he discovers will change everything.

Dragon is the latest film from director Peter Chen (The Warlords). Playing out as a mix of A History Of Violence and One-Armed Swordsman, with a dash of Sherlock thrown in for



good measure, it is the latest movie to show off what a movie star Donnie Yen is. Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li are the most well-known in the West, but Donnie Yen should be more famous than all of them. Arguably a better martial artist, he is definitely a better actor than any of those three. Here he plays Liu, a man trying to forget his past by living a brand new future, and coming to realise that the past has a way of catching up with you. He is matched by Takeshi Kaneshiro (House of Flying Daggers) as Xu, the eccentric detective with exceptional deductive skills. Watching Xu recreate in his mind the fight between Liu and the bandits should be enough to keep the Cumberbatch Brigade sated until Steven Moffat makes some more episodes.

This film is one of the most successful genre-blending pictures I have seen from China in a long time. Instead of just wall-to-wall action, this has only three fighting sequences in its 110 minutes. The fights aren't just fights though; they are critical parts of the development of Liu as a character, just as much as the scenes of him at home with his family. Then we get the noirish detective story as Xu tries to piece everything together to get to the truth of who and what Liu really is, accompanied by the dramatically-rendered visual aids seen through his mind's eye. Both halves come together to make a thrilling whole.

While the fights may be short in running time, they are not short in quality. Yen himself served as action choreographer and, like the story, the action is a blend of styles from the more traditional sword- and fist-fights to parkour. He even involves the cattle at one point! Yen's ability to fuse all these influences together means that none of it ever feels anachronistic, even though parkour wasn't invented until about 80 years later.

By the way, that One-Armed Swordsman reference wasn't made lightly: Jimmy Wang – the eponymous amputee himself – stars in Dragon as the gangster leader Liu escaped from all those years

ago.

Dragon was a huge hit at Cannes in 2011, and finally has its UK premiere on Saturday evening at the same time as Flicker. Luckily, they are both on again on Sunday afternoon.

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## New Cinema Release – Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter



**Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter.**

Hat? Check. Beard? Check. Axe?

What if everything we knew about one of America's greatest presidents was only part of the story? After his mother is killed by a vampire in his youth, Abraham Lincoln devotes his life to training in the art of hunting and killing the undead abomination, at the hands of his new friend Henry Sturgess. From his days as a shopkeeper in Springfield, Illinois, through his law practice and on to the White House, Lincoln constantly faced this immortal menace. You think the Civil War was just about slavery? Think again.

This film has been one of the biggest victims of negative hype in years. Deservedly? Not so much. Yes, it has problems. Of course it does. But are these deal-breakers? No. The script was written by Seth Grahame-Smith, adapting his own novel. This is the man who invented the recent trend of mash-up alt. history with *Pride and Prejudice* and *Zombies* (a book I really enjoyed, by the way). The film tracks Lincoln's whole life, inserting the vampires as the unseen motivation behind almost

everything he did. The fact that it is all presented with such a straight face makes it that bit more successful. The movie wants to be an actual biopic of Abe, not a parody. For my money, that was certainly a wise choice by Grahame-Smith and director Timur Bekmambetov – the Russian filmmaker who turned James McAvoy into an action hero in *Wanted*.

Lincoln is played here by relative newcomer Benjamin Walker. Better known around New York as a stage actor and occasional stand-up comedian, Walker is very good. He handles both the oration and the fighting with equal aplomb, throwing that axe (and himself) around like a boss, and he is backed up by a host of rising talent including Mary Elizabeth Winstead as his wife Mary Todd, Anthony Mackie as old friend Will Johnson, and Howard Stark himself, Dominic Cooper as Sturgess. Rufus Sewell is suitably snarly and devious as Lincoln's nemesis Adam, the oldest and possibly even the first vampire. His Louisiana accent slips at times, but since Adam is obviously not a native of the area in the first place, I suppose it can be understood. Considering he had \$70 million to spend though, you'd think Bekmambetov could have spent a bit more money on makeup. Walker gets subtle but effective prosthetics to age Abe through life, but all Winstead and Mackie get are some mild grey streaks in their hair. The vamps look good however, that I have to admit. They are brought to unlife with a combination of makeup and contacts with some CG enhancement. They sort of bridge the gap between the animalistic viciousness of *30 Days Of Night*, and the cultured aspect of *Underworld*. Grahame-Smith plays a bit fast and loose with the "rules" as well. These vampires walk around freely in the daytime with just the mildest application of sunblock (at least they don't sparkle) and there is no mention of stakes or crosses; silver is the only weapon shown to be effective. Oh, but how effective it is.

The biggest problems with the film can be traced back to its ambition. By cramming an entire life into barely 100 minutes –

and such a widely-known and eventful one at that – certain things must be sacrificed. In this case, that means anything not directly related to the ongoing forward momentum. For example, Lincoln spends a big chunk of the second act making it known that he is studying law while working in a shop. Then there is one short scene where he sits at a desk behind an “Abraham Lincoln – Attorney at Law” nameplate, and then it’s off to Washington we go. Also, using vampires as an excuse for slavery (so the vamps living in the Confederacy can freely buy and sell food) comes off a bit pat, bordering on insensitive, without the time to explore the idea further. I don’t often say this, but I think this story would have been better served had it been split into two or even three movies.

But that’s enough about the story, you want to know how it looks. Well, I’m a bit mixed on that score too. There are times when the camera soars out over Washington or the Gettysburg battlefield, and these scenes do not come off as well as they should. The digital extras have a cartoony aspect to them that I thought we had said goodbye to years ago. The smaller, character-driven sequences are much better though. The natively-shot 3D comes off quite effectively when the scene is well-lit but unfortunately the big climactic fight scene is on a train barrelling through the countryside, at night. That the background is little more than a dark grey haze is just unforgivable. The fights themselves are presented very stylistically, with lots of slo-mo and speed ramping, 300-style.

Overall, the film is enjoyable as a period action-horror. Building it around a known person does away with most of the need for character set-up, but it also spoils a certain level of suspense. Of course Lincoln is not going to be bitten, for example, but anyone with more than a rudimentary knowledge of history will know full well which characters are likely to end up in jeopardy. I think the biggest stumbling block for Abraham Lincoln, Vampire Hunter will be the expectations

caused by Grahame-Smith's reputation as a humourist. I'll say it again: this is a period action-horror. Nowhere in that sentence – or in the film – does comedy appear. If you go in determined to see otherwise you are likely to be disappointed. Go in with an open mind though and you could well enjoy yourself quite a bit.

The film is [showing at Cineworld at various times.](#)