

What's on > Scotland



PERTH

COSMIC SKY

Perth Concert Hall
(Horsecross)

Until December 30
Tel: 01738 621031

VARIOUS people (sci-fi fans, mostly) have told us that when the space shuttle finally starts ferrying (or should that be 'shuttling'?) Joe Public into outer space, they will instantly book a window seat for an unforgettable, full-on lunar experience. They WANT to blast off into the unknown. Are they mad? Haven't they SEEN Apollo 13? No. You'd have to drug us or carry us kicking and screaming on to the space shuttle. So if we want space exploration, we'll watch an episode of Star Trek, thanks very much; or, now that Perth has a swanky new concert hall and theatre centre, we'll tootle along to its fantastic Cosmic Sky exhibition and get a simulated trip instead. This is a touring show - situated in the Threshold art area, in the foyer - which envelopes you in surround-sound and close-up imagery and whizzes you off into the furthest reaches of the Universe. Cosmic Sky - a recently formed collaboration between astronomer Dr Francisco Diego, planetarium educator and artist, Dr Gill Russell and poet/storyteller, Brian Hill - is billed as "a whole new cosmic experience". There's a show every half an hour, of 20 minutes' duration approximately. And it's free. So we'll see you on the dark side of the moon...



THE ROYAL BANK STREET PARTY PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALISTAIR LINDFORD

ABERDEEN

STONEHAVEN FIREBALL FESTIVAL

December 31 - January 1
High Street
www.stonehavenfireballs.co.uk

"EXCUSE me, sir. Your handbag seems to be on fire." This is just one of the things you DON'T want to say to a fireball-slinger in the middle of the Stonehaven Hogmanay festivities; for one thing, he will be waving a 15-pound ball of flame around his head on a five-foot chain. And for another... oh, look, you just DON'T want to, OK?

This ancient ceremony looks extremely dangerous; but you know what health and safety regulations are like these days (apparently, things weren't so stringent in Pagan times, when fireball-swinging was thought to have originated). So barriers are now erected to separate the swingers and pipe bands and control the thousands who come to spectate, while the fireballs themselves are enclosed in wire mesh cages. Feel better now? So what happens during the festival? Well, approximately 60



fireball swingers (who - very important - all have to live in the Burgh) march down the high street with their (as Jerry Lee Lewis might have put it) great balls of fire to the accompaniment of pipes and drums. They end up at the harbour, where they fling the fireballs into the sea. Why? Yes, good question. Some believe the festival is to do with the winter solstice, the sun, or to replicate a shooting star which brought good fortune to Stonehaven; others say its aim is simply to ward off the devil or evil spirits. Whatever: the Stonehaven Fireball Festival looks spectacular, and the atmosphere (it's freezing cold but warm and friendly, all at the same time) is unforgettable. Be prepared for crowds all around you and a distinct chill in the air. Unless you're a fireball swinger, that is.

GLASGOW

FANTASY DESIGN

The Lighthouse
Until January 15
Tel: 0141 221 6362

KIDS, eh? If they're not playing eardrum-shattering music or slouching monosyllabically in front of the TV, they're designing amazingly innovative creations for an international touring exhibition.

Erm... aren't they? The latest exhibition at The Lighthouse - called Fantasy Design - is the result of a three-year international education project in which pupils from across Europe worked with designers to develop a range of innovative (if imaginary) household products. In all, 4,000 youngsters from Scotland, Denmark, Belgium, Norway and Finland were able to give their creativity free rein and unleash a blinding flare for design and artistic expression. The results are quite staggering, and 65 inventions (across all the schools) have been chosen by a panel of designers and design professionals for an international exhibition (which has already been shown in Helsinki and Gent). The selected works have been made into prototypes by design companies.

We looked on the Fantasy Design website (www.fantasydesign.org) to see the kind of things we could expect: swimming goggles

RESEARCHED BY TONY GREENWAY

EDINBURGH

HOGMANAY 2005/2006

December 29 – January 1

www.edinburghshogmanay.org

IF you want to celebrate New Year – and we mean REALLY celebrate New Year – then there is, of course, only one place in the world to be (we'll give you a clue: it starts with 'Scot' and ends in 'land'. Call us biased if you like).

Hogmanay celebrations will be happening across the country, naturally; but the world's biggest and best New Year celebrations will unfold in Edinburgh – and for four whole days, too. At the time of writing, the details were still sketchy; but you can expect the Torchlight Procession through the city streets (on the 29th), culminating in a firework

finale; the Night Afore International carnival (December 30); the world famous Royal Bank Street Party (December 31) with 100,000 people from across the globe and four stages of free live music against the not unimpressive backdrop of Edinburgh Castle; plus the Concert in the Gardens ticketed event (December 31, in Princes Street Gardens), featuring the best bands around.

And if you REALLY can't get enough of Hogmanay, then the New Year Revels in the historic Assembly Rooms features three rooms of live music to keep you on your dancing feet until the wee small hours. And if, at any time in the proceedings, you see a tall, dark man bearing a gift – give him a hug for us, why don't you?

EDINBURGH

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN:

THE GREATEST FAIRYTALE

City Art Centre

Until January 29 (Monday to

Saturday 10am-5pm)

Tel: 0131 529 3993

THERE are two common misconceptions about fairytale author Hans Christian Andersen. One: He looked like Danny Kaye (who famously played him in the 1952 film). Wrong. From the picture we have, the real Andersen looked more like Martin Clunes with a bit of John Sergeant thrown in for good measure.

Two: Hans spent a lot of time mooning around forlornly over a star ballerina from his local dance troupe. Erm, no. That's another Hollywood invention from the Kaye film. In fact, the real Andersen was gay or bisexual and, at one stage in his life, fell deeply in unrequited love with a close friend, Edvard Collin. Even the notion that Andersen wrote twee children's stories such as The Ugly Duckling, The Little Mermaid, The Princess And The Pea and



Thumbelina is wrong – largely because those stories aren't twee. In fact, the overall tone of Andersen's tall tales is rather dark and foreboding.

What we CAN say about Andersen without a shadow of a doubt is that the world is celebrating the 200th anniversary of his birth, the centrepiece of which is an exhibition called The Greatest Fairy Tale: The Amazing Life and Story of Hans Christian Andersen, now in Edinburgh. This is an interactive journey through Andersen's world, "targeted at children of all ages". Expect original artefacts and a sequence of six sets which feature favourite fairytales reflecting significant episodes in Hans's life.



"that turn into sunglasses at the press of a button", for instance; and a Hoover disguised as a schoolbag which sucks up "unwanted, horrible dinners".

Katty Barac, head of the acclaimed Scottish design firm One Foot Taller, was

on the judging panel, and amazed at what she saw.

"The children were open to all ideas and developed a range of imaginative solutions to a variety of problems," she says.

"When faced with the combined inventiveness of the youngsters, it struck us how little creativity adults can often show by comparison. Perhaps industry needs children as an asset in product development programmes. Certainly they were able to grasp how to develop products for a more enjoyable way of living and enjoyment - which is something that so often gets lost in a competitive world."

EDINBURGH

BOND... JAMES BOND

January 20

Usher Hall

Tel: 0131 228 1155

SO who was your favourite Bond? Macho Sean Connery ("Ah, yesh - Pooshy Galore...") or walking clothes horse Roger Moore in his unfortunate safari suits and flares? Or what about suave Pierce Brosnan, saturnine Timothy Dalton or Aussie male model, George Lazenby? Well, give us Sean, every time. The man looks good in a DJ and has testosterone to spare. Actually, the star of this evening is called Barry... John Barry. This Yorkshire-born composer has won more Oscars than any living Englishman, and is responsible for giving 007 his distinctive, menacing sound. Barry is the man who arranged Monty Norman's dynamic James Bond Theme (for Dr No) and scored the most vibrant 007 soundtracks of them all, including From Russia With Love, Goldfinger, Thunderball, You Only Live Twice, On Her Majesty's Secret Service and Diamonds Are Forever. Indeed, he left such a musical imprint on the superspy's adventures that, frankly, he's been an impossible act to follow (Barry's swan-song was 1987's The Living Daylights, with A-ha, which he hated). Barry is now a cult figure in the music industry, but not everyone



was a fan in the early days. Harry Saltzman, the Bond co-producer, disliked the brassy theme to Goldfinger, performed with typical gusto by Shirley Bassey. "He said to me: 'If I didn't have a deadline to hit with this picture, I'd take that goddamn song out!'" remembers Barry. Er, just how wrong can a film producer be? This lavish evening is not all about Barry. The instantly familiar film themes include Paul McCartney's Live And Let Die and Marvin Hamlisch's Nobody Does It Better (from The Spy Who Loved Me). But let's hope conductor Carl Davis and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra DON'T attempt to play Madonna's hideous Die Another Day club anthem. Otherwise we might have to swallow the cyanide pill we have carefully secreted behind our lapel; but not before throwing our steel-rimmed bowler at the violin section.