



Culture Vulture

Tony Greenway selects some of the best music, film, theatre and art in Yorkshire this month. He also takes flight as our very own 'Culture Vulture', taking a wry look at a top entertainment event

BACK in 1978, an American new wave band called Blondie appeared on Top of the Pops performing their UK breakthrough hit, Denis. Next day at school, it was all we talked about. Or rather, lead singer Debbie Harry was all we talked about.

It's hard to describe the effect that Harry had on a bunch of hormonally charged 12-year-old boys, but I think I speak for all my former schoolmates when I say: 'Phwoarrrrr.'

By then, Harry was already 33, but this didn't matter to us because she was, we all agreed, the most sizzling female this side of our beleaguered French teacher and the blonde one out of Abba (12-year-old boys think about



Classic pop band Blondie play Harrogate's International Centre this month with iconic Debbie Harry on lead vocals. Tony Greenway is touched by her presence

little else - well, that and football.)

Our attraction to Harry was partly fuelled by the way she looked: blonde, just-got-out-of-bed hair, vermilion pout, blinding teeth and cheekbones so sharp you could cut yourself on them. Her image was alarmingly, rapaciously sexual and her clothes were on the brief side.

But we also liked her coolly detached attitude. She had a surly, challenging stare which invited everyone to drop dead.

Even at that young age, we recognised trouble when we saw it, and trouble looked like fun. I knew if I ever brought Harry home to meet my parents (I could dream, couldn't I?) she would be exactly the sort of woman my mother would violently disapprove of, but my dad, strangely, would be okay with.

She even had a powerful effect on females. At the girls' school down the road, pupils started sporting shaggy peroxide 'dos, even if some of the results were more Dirty Harry than Debbie Harry.

Meanwhile, my friends and I got on with the tough chore of collecting every bit of Harry memorabilia we could lay our hands on - posters, records, magazines and even a video called Debbie Does Dallas, which we presumed was a recording of a Blondie concert in Texas but which turned out to be something else entirely.

Nearly three decades have passed, which makes Harry - eek! - 62 years of age and me old enough to know better. Amazingly Blondie are still touring and this month play Harrogate which is not, admittedly, the first place you'd expect to find a band associated with the wild excesses of the seventies New York punk scene.

Debbie is old enough to be a granny now, so the only ones buzzing about her will be the balding sexagenarians in the stalls. And when she sings 'Oh, your hair is beautiful' - a line from Blondie's 1979 hit Atomic - expect to see most of them burst into tears.

She's still a rebel at heart, refusing to grow old gracefully (if she was, she probably wouldn't be touring the world with a raucous New Wave pop group). Some commentators have tut-tutted about this, saying she's too old to be a rock chick and should retire with dignity. Funny that. No one ever says the same about Mick Jagger or Keith Richards.

And anyway, she's still got 'it' - that same indefinable thing she had back in 1978. She still looks like trouble. Plus, her voice has stayed exactly the same. Just listen to the way she purrs 'she looks like she don't care', the intro line from Blondie's 1999 comeback hit, Maria. It's as strong and true as it was 30 years ago.

So what if Debbie Harry isn't a poster girl anymore? She's now something far more potent. She's become an icon.

• **Blondie play Harrogate International Centre on July 19th. For details, phone 0845 130 8840.**

JAZZ

Ian Shaw and Guy Barker's Tribute To The Movies Hull Truck Theatre, July 31st, 01482 323638

As part of this year's Hull Jazz Festival, Ian Shaw welcomes award-winning trumpeter Guy Barker to play a bunch of movie themes - everything from Chaplin and Bogart to Balloo the Bear and Bond. Barker is one of the brightest names on the British jazz scene, as are young Soweto Kinch (who's won virtually every major music award in the book with his electrifying blend of jazz and hip hop) and elder statesman Stan Tracey (80 this year), who are also appearing at this year's festival. That's quite a line-up in anyone's book.

FILM

Die Hard 4.0

Across Yorkshire from July 4th

He's ditched his trademark dirty vest - and most of his hair, by the looks of things - but Bruce Willis is back as smirking, smart-mouthed cop John McClane in the fourth instalment of the Die Hard series.

In this outing, a gang of cyber-terrorists have hacked their way into the US computer network and are amusing themselves by turning off the traffic lights and crashing the stock market. Only one man stands in their way. Guess who! (Here's a clue: 'Bruce' and 'Willis').

Granted, none of this sounds as dangerously exciting as the first Die Hard movie (Bruce Willis gets stuck in tall building with German master criminals) or even the second (Bruce Willis takes on some baddies at an airport), but the trailer proves that this is easily as action-packed as its predecessors. Put it this way: we had to sit down after watching it and have a drink of water.

Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix

Across Yorkshire from July 13th

For Potter fans, this is the best news for ages. For the rest of us, it's slightly underwhelming. This time, Harry is in his fifth year at Hogwarts. But watch out! He's hormonal.

EXHIBITIONS

Ronald Searle

Nunnington Hall, near York,

July 3rd to September 2nd, 01439 748 283

Nunnington Hall does it again. After the big Bryan Adams photographic coup it pulled off in May, here's another top-flight exhibition featuring the work of Ronald Searle, one of the world's most popular illustrators, best known for his drawings for Punch. Nunnington is the only venue to be hosting this show in the North.

