



Tony Greenway, our Culture Vulture, takes flight again to select some of the best music, film, theatre and art in Yorkshire this month.

Culture Vulture

THE school I used to go to closed its doors for good in July, so I went back for the last-ever old boys' reunion.

As an academic seat of learning it was in a sorry state all round, sinking so low in the educational league that it was in danger of falling off the bottom of the Ofsted table. Aesthetically, the building was somewhere between 'tatty' and 'squatter camp'. In fact, it was so squalid and useless that next month the bulldozers come in to knock the place down before it can fall on top of anyone.

I mooched around with three of my oldest pals and stood defiantly on the school lawn in full view of the headmaster (a brazen act which used to be strictly forbidden and punishable by instant death), reminiscing

about the old days and watching the rats chasing each other around the bike sheds.

We also bumped into our former science teacher, a man who made Stalin look like a reasonable human being. This was a person who delighted in using my head for blackboard rubber target practice on a day-to-day basis and, by rights, should now be on trial in the Hague. But instead there he was, as free as a bird, shaking me by the hand and calling me by my Christian name.

The whole day was surreal. No one shouted at me. No one criticised my grammar. No one put my head down the toilet and flushed it. Plus, we were allowed beer.

They say school days are the happiest of your life, but, honestly, mine were about as much fun as gum disease.



I've been giving this a lot of thought recently and I've decided that it would have been a lot better if my parents had sent me to Rydell High School instead, the location of the hit movie musical Grease.

Just think of the fabulous benefits: singing; dancing; general frivolity; big



quiffs; cool cars; warm weather. a lack of institutionalised brutality; access to the 'Shake Shack'; Olivia Newton-John; and access to Olivia Newton-John in the 'Shake Shack'.

At my school, there were none of these things - apart from the quiffs. So give me Rydell High any day of the week.

Harewood House is showing Grease this month as a drive-in movie: a great idea if the weather behaves itself.

I like the film, but find it strange that it regularly tops the charts of the Best Movie Musicals Ever Made (look, it's good, but it's no Paint Your Wagon).

For starters, there's John Travolta who, we are asked to believe, has just turned 18, despite clearly being at least 36. His legs appear to be made out of pipe-cleaners, and is that eyeliner he's wearing?

Also - and I don't care what anyone says - John should on no account be encouraged to sing in the upper register (Exhibit A: 'Sandy'.) He sounds like Kermit the Frog on helium.

Then there is the 'plot', which goes something like this: prim college girl Olivia Newton-John is the one that swivel-hipped teen John Travolta wants. Which is lucky, because she's hopelessly devoted to him. But their young romance doesn't go like greased lightning, because of those summer nights. Then she becomes a slut and they drive off in a flying car. The end.

And yet, Grease works beautifully. Perhaps it's the music. Perhaps it's the attention to period detail. Perhaps it's Olivia Newton-John in slutty satin leggings. Whatever the reason, you always feel better when it's over.

A bit like a school reunion.

EVENTS

Grease - Drive-In Movie Harewood House, Leeds

September 8th (gates open 5pm, movie starts at 8pm)

The soundtrack will be broadcast via FM radio on a frequency to be announced on the night.

Germaine Greer The Crucible, Sheffield

**September 20th, 0114 2496000,
www.sheffieldtheatres.co.uk**

Germaine Greer is a bit like Janet Street-Porter with an Aussie accent and extra O Levels. You either love her and find her frank and outspoken views fascinating, or you want to push something through the TV screen whenever she appears on it. But then Professor Greer is an acclaimed academic and has always been a controversial commentator on the role of women in society. It's what she does and, if you have tickets to this show, what you expect to see and hear.

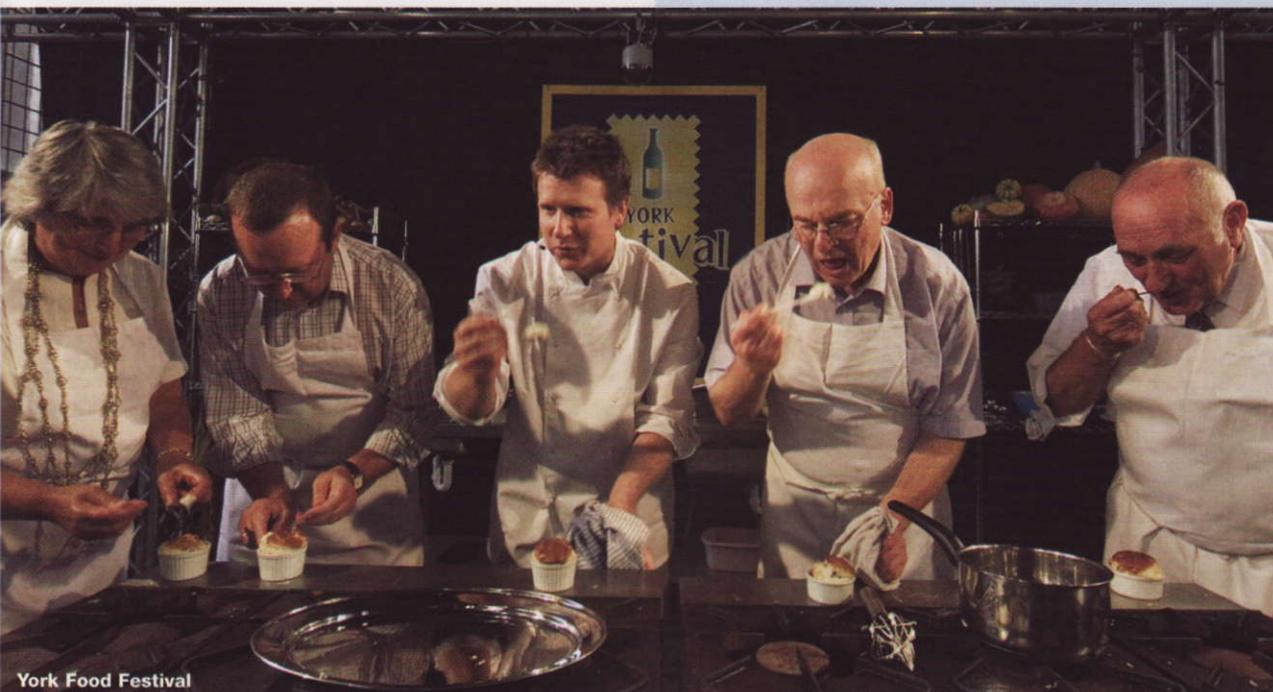


FESTIVALS

York Festival of Food and Drink September 21st-30th

**Various venues, 01904 466687,
www.yorkfestivaloffoodanddrink.com**

It's now one of the biggest food festivals in the country - so bring it on, we say. Expect demos from top chefs (including Andrew Pern from The Star Inn at Harome and - sacre bleu! - Raymond Blanc), taste workshops, ale trails, wine guides, cooking for kids and the usual markets, marquees and stands. There's also a world food market, an organic market and a multicultural market too. The theme this year is about learning: learning to cook, learning to taste and learning something new..



York Food Festival