

Spring Supplement

Spring is on the way! Of course it may never get here but at least we can have fun planning. Here's a brief guide to some anticipated highlights of the Brave New Season.

Must-See TV

Celebrity Hate Island

A bunch of publicity-hungry MPs are fooled into thinking they are auditioning for the TV version of Desert Island Discs. But they are marooned on a real desert island and left to fend for themselves. Hidden cameras record their all-too rapid descent into savagery. See if you can spot your own MP!

Narcissus Island

A Team of Glamdroids descend upon the recently discovered Greek island of Parnassus, believed lost for 2000 years following an Earthquake. See the unforgettable moment when half the Cast stare at their own reflection in a stream for so long that they turn into flowers and trees. Don't miss the hilarious footage of the survivors being pursued by amorous Hounds, Wild Bulls and Swans. How delighted they are to see the Showers of Gold... Then realising their mistake. (Available on special subscription.)

This Could be Your Life

Or if that's too many islands for you, why not try this new format?

Have you ever wished you had more money? Well there may yet be hope...

Watch as BBC Chair Richard Sharp travels the world to match the mega-rich with the barely surviving.

With only a handful of clues he searches for those Multi-millionaire long-lost cousins you somehow forget you ever had. Or that you do remember, but are somehow too shy to approach yourself. See hope flame in the eyes of the Seekers. Then die as *They* see the horror in the face of their 'Cousins'. So, Plebs, accept your lot in life! Educational TV at its best.

And over on Radio 4...

Hear Sir Kier Starmer on the real Desert Island Discs as he skilfully dodges admitting liking any Disc - "It's still far too early to say... And I would not wish to alienate any writer or writers, living or dead, by in any way appearing to prefer the work of one, or the combined effort of more than one, above all others. Without Benefit of Focus Group."

But under intense pressure from Lauren Laverne he finally admits his favourite music is John Cage's Piano piece "4' 33". "Pure vacuity," he sighs.

Opera - "Bogeyman"

The hot ticket here is undoubtedly Thomas Ades' "Fungus The Bogeyman", based on Raymond Briggs' beloved monster, with Boris Johnson singing and dancing the name role for 10 nights at Covent Garden in May. (Mr Johnson's voice is rumoured to be insured for a record breaking £37.85p.)

Cinema - "Shanghaied"

Ken Loach breaks with his usual style with this fantasy tale of the 'Chinese Opium Wars'. In 1840 Jack Truman is cruelly pressed into the Navy on the eve of his wedding. But when he saves the life and honour of a Cantonese Sorceress she shows her gratitude by teaching him her secret skills. Jack flies back to the Home Counties on a dragon and animates all the chalk figures of Britain to raise an army of revenge. In an unforgettable sequence they march on Westminster led by Jack and the Cerne Abbas Giant, with Stone Henge stamping on the columns that try to resist them. More please, Ken!

Travel

Talking of ships, are you thinking of taking a cruise through Scandinavian waters this Spring?

Why not go off the beaten track and visit the charming island nation of Heimstryggvalaberg? With its charming mountain, lake, not to mention the 2000 pubs for the friendly population of 4000, this year Heimstryggvalaberg is reviving its Famous Skjeareeggen (Beard) Festival on March 31st. You don't have to be a Heimstryggvalaberger yourself to enter the Best Beard Competition. First Prize a rubber dinghy filled with traditional home-made lager. Entrants from all over the World are welcome. (But humans only please.)*
Good luck to all you Beardies and those who place bets on you. A good time is guaranteed for all.

*(This is to avoid a repetition of last year's unpleasantness when an angora rabbit and cashmere goat won first and second prize respectively. Accusations of cheating led to rioting when the 5000 year old Althing Parliament building was burnt to the ground and the entire adult population of Heimstryggvalaberg was hospitalised and needed to be cared for by their children.)

Poetry Corner - TOWN AND COUNTRY IN THE SPRING OF THE YEAR

Ode to Amnesia

Oh for a draft of vintage that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep delved earth.
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance and Provençal song and sunburnt mirth!

Dance, song, and sunburnt mirth are very fine,
But you can go badly wrong with vintage wine:
Mine's lost – Where was it that I delved it?
In retrospect, I wish I'd simply shelved it...

Sally's on edge...

On Wenlock Edge the Wood's in trouble.
And so is Sally in the town below -
Her soldier boyfriend hasn't told her
His regiment to the War must go.

Hills high and low

The murmuring in the higher woods is bees.
Drawn thither by the flowers, shrubs and trees.
But no bees murmur here
Or other creatures dear...
Only beasts strangely mutated,
Fearsome, wretched, hideous, hated.
These lower woods one now avoids:
Poisoned with neonicotinoids.

(Thanks for that, Minister.)

**And finally, whatever you do or see, why not buy a special gift for the Shy Person in your life.
(And if that's you, why not treat yourself?)**

Whether travelling abroad or at home, shy people are often too timid to press the Attention Bell at an unattended Reception Desk, fearful of the angry reaction of poorly-trained staff.

We have the perfect answer to that: Let a Cute Glove Puppet do the talking for you!

Simply Ding the bell, pose the puppet on the edge of the desk, and wait. When the bad-tempered Receptionist appears you simply wave its cute little arms until the Ogre smiles.

Guaranteed to work in most cases. (Depending on the country you're in.)

Comes in 5 models: Puppy, Kitten, Frog, Easter Chick, Extinct Bee.