



## Our weekend arts and culture picks, from Cocaine Bear to Gorillaz

Our critics and editors pick the highlights of the weekend cultural calendar

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'Unforgotten' and 'Medea' are among this week's picks (ITV/BBC/Getty)

The third weekend of February brings some fascinating exhibitions, some left-field film releases... and a cocaine-fuelled bear. Yep, you read that right.

But that's not all that features in this week's Arts Agenda, *The Independent's* guide to the best cultural activities each and every weekend. Our team of critics and editors have selected a range of options from across the different spheres of culture: art, books, film, music, stage and TV.

Among the highlights are [David Hockney's new immersive experience at Lightroom](#) (we've also got [an exclusive interview with the man himself](#)). TV editor Ellie Harrison talks about the return of ITV's *Unforgotten* – sadly sans Nicola Walker – while film editor Adam White has found the perfect Netflix film to fill the Jennifer Coolidge-shaped hole in all our lives after *The White Lotus*. Arts editor Jessie Thompson, meanwhile, enthuses about Coco Mellors' bingeable novel *Cleopatra and Frankenstein*, and music editor Roisin O'Connor discusses an exciting new album from Gorillaz.

## **Art**

### **Mike Nelson: Extinction Beckons**

Biggest showing to date for the British sculptor's creepy, claustrophobic and utterly compelling immersive installations. Whether you find yourself under a sand dune, walking in on a black mass or behind the desk in some seedy van-hire office it's as though the original occupants have only just left the building. *Hayward Gallery, London, until 7 May*

### **David Hockney: Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away)**

This is one immersive experience that genuinely does work as art. Hockney was involved in its creation, and the graphic and theatrical nature of his art suits this large-scale animated interpretation, with an ever-changing barrage of colour and imagery bathing not just the vast walls, but the wide-eyed audience. *Lightroom, London, until 4 June*



An ever-changing barrage of colour: David Hockney's immersive art show in London  
(Justin Sutcliffe)

## **Lynette Yiadom-Boakye: Fly in League with the Night**

A second showing for a highly acclaimed exhibition terminated by the second lockdown. Using a limited palette of blacks and browns, the British painter's imaginary portraits of Black subjects play brilliantly not only with the conventions of Old Master paintings, but the cultural factors governing the way we perceive the world. *Tate Britain, until 9 May*

*Mark Hudson, chief art critic*

## **Books**

**I Have Some Questions For You by Rebecca Makkai**

Rebecca Makkai counts Jennifer Egan, Andrew Sean Greer and Rumaan Alam as cheerleaders for her new novel, a campus murder mystery set in the Nineties – and that’s a pretty cool gang to have on your side. Makkai’s blockbuster novel *The Great Believers*, charting the impact of the Aids crisis on a group of young men, was a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Her follow-up sounds just as compulsively readable.

### **Cleopatra and Frankenstein by Coco Mellors**

Coco Mellors’ debut novel, about the relationship between a beautiful young British artist and her older, ad agency boss husband, is a book made for binge reading. All the inevitable Sally Rooney comparisons have already been made, but her compulsive debut made me think more of a mix between Patricia Lockwood, Lorrie Moore and Hanya Yanagihara. It’s out now in paperback – expect to see it on many a sun lounger this summer.

*Jessie Thompson, arts editor*

## **Film**

### **Charm Circle**

Filmmaker Nira Burstein digs into her family history in this moving, funny and often wince-inducing documentary, which plays like *Grey Gardens* meets a lo-fi Lena Dunham production. Burstein’s parents, Uri and Raya, are Jewish, New York eccentrics, whose comic dysfunction conceals decades of trauma and psychological struggle – something brought to a head by the impending marriage of their daughter Adina to her two non-binary partners. There’s a lot that’s lovely here, folded in with disquieting intimacy. It’s a bit like rifling through a comedian’s medicine cabinet. *In select cinemas now*

### **Cocaine Bear**

Mean robot girl M3GAN may have dominated January pop-culture discourse, but February is all about a bear on class-As. Hollywood’s hottest new star is the anti-hero of *Cocaine Bear*, a stranger-than-fiction dark comedy inspired by a bear in Georgia in 1985 who consumed multiple bags of coke dropped out of a plane by a prolific drug baron. Director Elizabeth Banks fudges the facts a little from there, her film transforming into a wacky “killer-bear-run-amok” thriller.

Alden Ehrenreich, Margo Martindale and the late Ray Liotta star. *In cinemas now*



The Cocaine Bear in 'Cocaine Bear'  
(Universal Pictures)

## We Have a Ghost

If, like me, you were tricked into watching the terrible Jennifer Lopez action romcom *Shotgun Wedding* earlier this month because oddball comedy queen Jennifer Coolidge was briefly in it... well, here we (maybe) go again! Coolidge turns up as an eccentric, bewigged psychic in this goofy Netflix movie, in which a family (led by Anthony Mackie) move into a suburban home haunted by a ghost (David Harbour). Don't lose all hope, though: *We Have a Ghost* is at least written and directed by the brilliant horror-comedy filmmaker Christopher Landon (of *Happy Death Day* and *Freaky* fame), who has long cornered the market in camp creepiness. *Streaming on Netflix now*

*Adam White, film editor*

## **Music**

### **Album: Gorillaz – Cracker Island**

It's a delight to hear Gorillaz embracing their party side on new album *Cracker Island*, which *The Independent's* critic Helen Brown describes as their best since 2005! Joining Damon Albarn and his band of apes are Stevie Nicks, Latin pop star Bad Bunny and LA jazz-funk bass prodigy Thundercat. Tracks such as the hazy, synth-laden "Silent Running" are bound to get you longing for hot summer days. *Out now*

### **Live Music: BBC Radio 2 – Piano Room Month with Stormzy**

Rapper Stormzy is the latest artist to take part in BBC Radio 2's Piano Month. Hosted by Ken Bruce, this wonderful series invites an eclectic group of artists into the BBC's piano room for a pre-recorded performance alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra. Other artists to take part include Ellie Goulding, Pink, the Sugababes and Sophie Ellis-Bextor. Suede's cover of Patti Smith's "Because the Night" was particularly spectacular. *On BBC Sounds*



Stormzy's piano live session is on BBC Sounds  
(Gareth Cattermole/Getty)

## Live Music: Inhaler at O2 Academy Birmingham

Catch one of Ireland's biggest new rock bands a week after the release of their new record, *Cuts & Bruises*. Fronted by Eli Hewson (son of U2's Bono), Inhaler are an engaging live act with danceable tracks such as "These Are the Days" among more sombre songs like "My Honest Face", with Hewson's reverb-laden vocals and dramatic instrumentation.

*Roisin O'Connor, music editor*

## Stage

### Romeo and Julie

The National Theatre periodically gets flak from various people dissatisfied with the way it's being run – but right now it's delivering some of the best work in London, across all three of its stages. In the Lyttelton, there's Simon Stone's

excoriating take on *Phaedra*, and in the Olivier, Sheffield musical *Standing at the Sky's Edge* was awarded five stars from my colleague Isobel Lewis last week. And now, Welsh playwright Gary Owen offers a contemporary take on *Romeo and Juliet* in the Dorfman. I didn't love it as much as some of Owen's previous plays, but *Romeo and Julie* is well worth seeing for some darkly witty writing and exceptional performances from Callum Scott Howells and Rosie Sheehy. *National Theatre, London, until 1 April*



Callum Scott Howells and Rosie Sheehy in 'Romeo and Julie'  
(Marc Brenner)

## Medea

Since it opened at the end of last year, @sohoplac has been steadily gathering steam as a go-to venue for smart, starry productions. After Josie Rourke's *As You Like It* at the end of last year, Dominic Cooke's staging of *Medea* has garnered glowing reviews, with powerhouse performances from Sophie Okonedo and Ben Daniels. Our critic Alice Saville described it as a "subtle, brilliant staging", that makes one of the most deplorable anti-heroines of Greek drama feel "entirely human". @sohoplac, London, until 22 April



*Jessie Thompson, arts editor*

## TV

### Liaison

One of the juiciest showbiz stories of the past 12 months has to be the publishing of the scathing texts Eva Green sent about an exec producer of one of her movies. She called the man “pure vomit” and a “devious sociopath”. If that doesn’t get you in the mood to watch her new Apple thriller, co-starring fellow French heartthrob Vincent Cassell, I don’t know what will. *On Apple TV*

### Parole

BBC Two’s inside look at the high-stakes world of parole hearings was given five stars by our critic this week. In the first episode we meet 54-year-old Colin, who committed murder following a pub fight 25 years ago, and serial fraudster David, who spent 40 years swindling money out of the women he dated. Are they no longer a threat to the public? The answer is complicated. *On BBC iPlayer*



Matthew from 'Parole'  
(BBC/Raw TV)

Cold-case drama *Unforgotten* is back for a fifth series – but it’s got a painful Nicola Walker-shaped hole in it. In this season, Sanjeev Bhaskar’s detective is joined by a new sidekick, Sinead Keenan, who was brilliant in *Little Boy Blue*. If anyone’s able to fill Walker’s shoes, it’s her. Although the actor did recently admit that when she’d seen that Walker had been killed off, her first thought was, “God, woe betide anyone who takes that on.” *Mondays at 9pm on ITV*

*Ellie Harrison, TV editor*

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/features/cocaine-bear-gorillaz-unforgotten-b2287931.html>