December 17, 2017

INTERVIEW
ALEX HASSELL, STAR OF THE MINIATURIST

BEST FILMS ON TV
FROM SHAUN THE SHEEP TO BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

CHRISTMAS DAY
BAKE OFF, VICTORIA, DOCTOR WHO...

CULTURE

BUMPER TV GUIDE
OUR PICK OF THE BEST PROGRAMMES ON TELEVISION AND RADIO OVER THE TWO-WEEK HOLIDAY SEASON
ALL YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS
TV & RADIO

STEP INTO XMAS: A 4-DAY

FAMILY FARE

Parents prank their kids in the gentle hidden-camera fun of Born Silly (Today, C4, 4.50pm). The Lego Story — Brick By Brick (Monday 18, BBC2, 1.15pm) returns, including a route to midnight across TV and radio, with Carols From King's (BBC2, 5.45pm; BBC2 Scotland, 7.15pm) and The Story Of Carols (Classic FM, 8pm); to ease you into the day itself, both BBC1 and ITV have carols, readings and choirs galore from 11.45pm. The World's Best Christmas Lights (Saturday 23, C4, 8pm) follows Liverpool's Christmas Decorators on a trip to Manger Square. Just around the corner from the square is Banksy's Walled Off Hotel, and in The Alternativity (today, BBC2, 9pm), Danny Boyle travels there to help put on a performance of the Nativity in the car park. Oh, and he has to make it snow.

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

What better way to get into the true spirit of things than with 5,000 voices raising the roof at the Royal Albert Hall in Songs Of Praise The Big Sing (Christmas Eve, BBC1, 1.15pm). You could then plan a route to midnight across TV and radio, with Carols From King's (BBC2, 5.45pm; BBC2 Scotland, 7.15pm) and The Story Of Carols (Classic FM, 8pm); to ease you into the day itself, both BBC1 and ITV have carols, readings and choirs galore from 11.45pm. The World's Best Christmas Lights (Saturday 23, C4, 8pm) follows Liverpool's Christmas Decorators on a trip to Manger Square. Just around the corner from the square is Banksy's Walled Off Hotel, and in The Alternativity (today, BBC2, 9pm), Danny Boyle travels there to help put on a performance of the Nativity in the car park. Oh, and he has to make it snow.

HOW TO GET THROUGH CHRISTMAS DAY

Viewers used to full boxset immersion, reveling in the watercooker violence of Godless or shuddering at Stranger Things, might find Christmas Day TV and its insistence on jolly collective experience more disconcerting than The Upside Down. Traditional staging posts such as The Queen (BBC1, 3pm) or Morecambe & Wise (BBC2, 5.35pm) might be too much for the new TV soloist: better to ease in with all-ages animation The Highway Rat (BBC1, 4.45pm) or the modern sci-fi of Doctor Who (BBC1, 5.30pm), in which Peter Capaldi will finally regenerate into Jodie Whittaker. Rounding up beloved contestants, The Great British Bake Off (C4, 7.40pm) is a heartwarming example of a show redeemed, while First Dates At Christmas (C4, 9pm) proves no man is an island, no matter how poor their dinner small talk. Those still unconvinced by the communal experience might find solace in the smart misanthropy of Shakespearean sitcom Upstart Crow (BBC2, 8.25pm), Emma Thompson bringing Nicole Kidman-like film star glamour by appearing as Elizabeth. Otherwise, Netflix Scrooges can comfort themselves that normal TV autonomy can be resumed on Boxing Day, when everyone needs some time alone. Victoria Segal

COMEDY

Got the shopping done? Then sit back and get festive with Smashe's Xmasastic Playlist (Saturday 23, Gold, 4pm), and relax while the staff of Trolled (Christmas Eve, Sky 1, 9.30pm) take the strain. Anyone hoping for the sight of Charlie Brooker despairing in a dark room will be disappointed that there is no Screenwipe, but Have I Got 2017 News For You? (Friday 22, BBC1, 9pm) and Frankie Boyle's New World Order (Friday 29, BBC2, 10pm) will do their best to fill in. While Channel 5 remembers Les Dawson — In His Own Words (Friday 22, 10pm), there is a reminder of Rodney Bewes in the classic Whatever Happened To The Likely Lads? (Christmas Eve, BBC4, 8.15pm). And if you would rather be somewhere else, join John Hamm in Hong Kong on Travel Man (Boxing Day, C4, 8pm).

BRINGING SUNSHINE

It's not legally Christmas if there is no Eric and Ernie. If only the real thing will do, the 1977 Morecambe & Wise Christmas Show (Christmas Day, BBC2, 5.35pm) is the one with Angela Rippon and the newsreaders. Otherwise, Friday 29 is your night, when Leading Ladies (BBC2, 7pm) reflects on the indignities that befell Shirley Bassey, Vanessa Redgrave and Glenda Jackson; Eric & Ernie's Home Movies (BBC2, 8pm) covers the duo's career using their personal archive; and Eric, Ernie & Me (BBC4, 9pm) celebrates the writer Eddie Braben (played by Stephen Tomkinson) and shows the pressures he was under to keep them funny.

FILMS: TEN OF THE BEST

Beauty And The Beast (2017) Christmas Day, Sky Cinema Premiere, 3.10pm/8pm Disney's live-action remake of its 1991 cartoon is, of course, meant primarily for children with a love of romantic fairy tales, and it seems to have gone down well with those viewers, to judge by its huge box-office takings. This success is fairly well deserved. The film's star, Emma Watson, is merely competent, but she is surrounded by a swoony, picturesque show with exemplary technical effects (including those