

The purr-fect combination

THEATRE

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The feline factor arrives at Milton Keynes Theatre from Tuesday, when Andrew Lloyd-Webber's record-breaking show *Cats* makes a long-overdue return to the locality.

The show was last here back in 2003 and last roamed the UK, moggy style, in 2008. TS Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* was adapted by Lloyd-Webber, and quickly connected with the theatre-going public. It debuted on the London stage in 1981, just before the Royal Wedding, and lasted significantly longer than those nuptials too – playing close to 9000 performances before the curtain fell in 2002, with an Olivier Award for Best Musical under its collar. On the other side of the pond, Broadway embraced the work, where it scooped seven Tony Awards and ran for 18 years – only Lloyd-Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* has shown longer.

Fiddles – 'like single rare malts'

THE STABLES

American pop singer-songwriter Steve Forbert had his first major hit with 'Romeo's Tune' in 1979 and played a cameo role in Cyndi Lauper's 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' video, writes Georgina Butler. More than 30 years and 14 studio albums later, he brings his brash-yet-sensitive take on song-writing to The Stables tonight.

From a crooner who blends folk, rock and country, to a saxophonist comfortable with classical, jazz, soul and the blues – tomorrow sees Julian Smith play at the Wavendon venue.

A graduate of Birmingham Conservatoire, music teacher Julian appeared as a contestant on ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* in 2009, coming third.

But hey, he's still working... Stage 2 welcome the aptly named Good Lovelies tomor-

'Cats has been seen by more than 50 million people across 300 cities in 26 countries...'

The set-up?

On one night annually, all the Jellicle cats meet at the Jellicle Ball where their wise and benevolent leader Old Deuteronomy makes the Jellicle choice and announces which of them will go up to the heaviest layer and be reborn into a whole new Jellicle life.

As you get your claws into the production, it will shine brightly with a spectacular set design, fabulous costumes and terrific choreography, which is down to Chrissie Cartwright.

Worldwide, *Cats* has been seen by more than 50 million people across 300 cities in 26 countries.

The purrfect fusing of Lloyd-Webber's ace with TS Eliot's class has struck a lasting chord with audiences, and so its return here has meant for swift ticket sales.

Tickets are priced from £10 to £37.50.

A signed performance will play on Thursday, July 4 and a touch tour follows on Friday, July 5 at 6pm, and then the audio-described performance at 7.30pm.

If you don't have yours yet, call the box office on 0844 871 7652 for tickets.

> GO! and the Citizen has teamed up with the production to swell funds for our Citi-tikat appeal.

Post-show, you are invited to pop any loose change into the bucket collection.

Monies raised will support the Milton Keynes and North Bucks RSPCA cattery which is struggling to cope with the increasing numbers of dumped, abused cats and kittens.

Kittens like those found callously dumped in a carrier bag next to a public bin in Bletchley.

If it wasn't for the swift action of the centre, and intense, constant support, their lives would have been over before they had barely began.

Please give what you can. We appreciate it, and every penny makes a difference.

row – Caroline Brooks, Kerri Ough, below, and Sue Passmore are best friends, thrown together after solo careers. The Toronto-based trio have folk roots and a western swing and their clever songs and three-part harmonies are matched by a convulsively funny repartee.

'The Supersonic 70s Show' is taking the UK by storm – you



won't want to miss this incredible live pop experience on Saturday.

Full of classic hits, the gig features a six-piece band and takes you from the towering mastery of Queen to the pin-up pop of David (Essex and Cassidy) and the sounds of The Carpenters, 'Saturday Night Fever' and 'Grease'.

Also on Saturday, over on Stage 2, exciting young guitarist Ben Poole will showcase his talent as a guitarist, singer and songwriter.

The award-winning Blazin' Fiddles are a group of contemporary fiddle players from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Like rare single malts, each band member draws the distinct flavour of music from their homeland, blending solo and ensemble sets in a way guaranteed to excite your senses on Wednesday evening – mid-week musical magic. Call MK 280800 to book.



THE CATS, BUT DO THEY HAVE THE CREAM?: Bombalurina and Demeter are among the whiskered ones taking over MK Theatre from Tuesday, the start of a two-week stay

Turkish Delight...It's Ronda Alla Turca, only different...

GARDEN SEASON

Another stunning weekend of entertainment in the beautiful setting of the Old Rectory Gardens in Wavendon is only needing a touch of sunlight to truly glisten.

Certainly the line-up is a glittering affair.

On Saturday, The Garden Season presents live music from the Tony Kinsey Quartet.

Drummer Kinsey is a true godfather of the modern jazz scene, and a man whose passion for the genre is unshakable – his career extends over six decades.

His skills have seen him work with many of the world's jazz greats, Oscar Peterson, Billie Holiday and our own late Sir John Dankworth, who founded these Garden Sea-

son events still housed in his garden.

Kinsey will be joined by bassist Andy Cleynert, Sam Mayne on alto saxophone and John Horley at the piano.

Dame Cleo Laine & Friends step up on Saturday afternoon, with John Horler back on stage for the second set of the day – joining an exemplary line-up including Malcolm Creese, Jim Hart, Mark Nightingale and Andy Payini to back the unshakeable Dame Cleo. Unsurprisingly, the afternoon session is sold out.

Cleo is a world class force, and truly in a league of her own, and those lucky enough to have tickets to see the vocal sensation will also catch Clarinetist Emma Johnson.

Emma is stepping up to join Cleo on Turkish Delight – Sir

John's version of Mozart's Ronda Alla Turca.

But enough of the show you can't see, and on to Sunday's shows, which are still available.

The Nigel Price Organ Trio perform at midday.

Widely regarded as one of the most exciting UK jazz bands around today, Nigel's blend of 'flowing, fiery bebop lines, deep blues feeling and the will to swing hard' has made him a huge smash with jazzers.

Nigel Price is back at 2.30pm, this time with Georgia Mancio for a joyous and intimate programme of jazz and Latin songs.

Tickets for each session are £12, or enjoy a full day ticket for £20. Quick, call MK 280800 with bookings and have yourselves a merry little weekend.



GARDEN BLOOMS: Dame Cleo Laine will perform to a sell-out audience on Saturday afternoon, with Nigel Price-making two appearances at the Wavendon event, on Sunday