

SATURDAY 18 DECEMBER 2021

SAT 19:00 Natural World (m000qsjr)
Short Versions

Penguin Post Office

Nature documentary looking at a post office in Antarctica that is surrounded by 3,000 gentoo penguins.

SAT 19:05 All Aboard! The Great Reindeer Migration (m0001rz0)

A BBC Four Slow Christmas treat follows Norway's Sami reindeer herds as they migrate across the mountainous region of Finnmark, far north of the Arctic Circle. The journey, a little over 160 miles, takes the herd a week, travelling north from the inland winter feeding grounds to their coastal summer pastures. The film travels with the Sara family and their herd around the clock as they cross the Arctic wilderness to reach the coastal island of Kvaloya Fala in time for the calves to be born. It is a journey fraught with hazardous weather conditions.

SAT 21:05 The Lady in the Van (b06wcqyr)

1970s Camden Town. Writer Alan Bennett's neighbours include the outspoken and unconventional Miss Shepherd, proudly residing in a van parked on the street. Offering space on his front drive for her vehicle begins a bizarre arrangement that he feels guilty about later exploiting in print. Acclaimed comedy drama from BBC Films based on actual events.

SAT 22:45 The Galaxy Britain Built: The British Force Behind Star Wars (m000cdzt)

Superfan David Whiteley celebrates the unsung British heroes behind the first film in the Star Wars' franchise, 1977's eponymously titled Star Wars.

The Star Wars saga ends with the release of The Rise of Skywalker in December 2019. This documentary celebrates where it all began. It includes previously unheard stories from the people who made one of the most successful movies of all time, with additional interviews and previously unseen behind-the-scenes footage.

The presenter, Star Wars superfan David Whiteley, who has his own connection to the original film (he was born on May the 4th), tracks down the often modest British talent who brought the galaxy to life.

David explores the contribution of the London Symphony Orchestra and meets Ann Skinner, who was in charge of continuity. As well as seeing her original stills from the set, Ann reveals how she helped Sir Alec Guinness with one of the most famous speeches in Star Wars.

A must for Star Wars fans, this documentary also includes contributions from Star Wars producer, Gary Kurtz, and costume designer, John Mollo.

SAT 00:15 Toy Empire: The British Force Behind Star Wars Toys (m000c7nq)

Star Wars superfan David Whiteley celebrates the unlikely toy heroes of the 1970s.

Toy manufacturer Palitoy based in Coalville, Leicestershire, was chosen to make toys for the new Star Wars movie in the UK. The company was already successful with Action Man and Tiny Tears. But Star Wars toys were about to become the must have toys of a generation. It was an unexpected success. At that time toys from films didn't sell well. Rich archive brings the nostalgia of the 1970s back to our screens, as David Whiteley meets the men and women who made it happen against all the odds, and the enthusiasts whose pocket money toys now fetch eye watering sums.

'Toy Empire: The British Force Behind Star Wars Toys' tells the success story of the toys would change the way movies are marketed forever.

SAT 00:45 Tales of Winter: The Art of Snow and Ice (b01q6qj6)

Winter was not always beautiful. Until Pieter Bruegel painted Hunters in the Snow, the long bitter months had never been transformed into a thing of beauty. This documentary charts how mankind's ever changing struggle with winter has been reflected in western art throughout the ages, resulting in images that are now amongst the greatest paintings of all time. With contributions from Grayson Perry, Will Self, Don McCullin and many others, the film takes an eclectic group of people from all walks of life out into the cold to reflect on the paintings that have come to define the art of snow and ice.

SAT 02:15 Disco at the BBC (b01cqt74)

A foot-stomping return to the BBC vaults of Top of the Pops,

The Old Grey Whistle Test and Later with Jools as the programme spins itself to a time when disco ruled the floor, the airwaves and our minds. The visual floorfillers include classics from luminaries such as Chic, Labelle and Rose Royce to glitter ball surprises by The Village People.

SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER 2021

SUN 19:00 Natural World (b0078zw)
2005-2006

Penguins of the Antarctic

Antarctica's penguins are some of the most endearing animals on earth, but behind the comical behaviour is a continual struggle to survive the deadly cold. Each penguin has its own strategy - some rely on thick down coats and fat reserves, others migrate north for the winter or stay on volcano-heated islands. Life in the freezer is getting even tougher as Antarctica's climate starts to change. The ice-loving Emperor penguins may be the first to lose out, but their cousins, the King penguins, are waiting in the wings to take over. All penguins must draw on their ability to defy the odds if they are to survive their greatest challenge yet.

SUN 19:50 Swingin' Christmas (b00wyltw)

Michael Parkinson presents the sensational John Wilson Orchestra in a celebration of festive musical treats from the golden age of swing, with soloists Seth MacFarlane, Anna-Jane Casey and special guest Curtis Stigers. The Christmas classics include Winter Wonderland, Baby It's Cold Outside, Let It Snow and White Christmas.

SUN 21:00 Daniel Barenboim: In His Own Words (m0012tj)

A feature-length documentary in which legendary conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim speaks more candidly than he has ever done before about his life and music. Told entirely through interviews with the maestro, the film starts with his earliest musical experiences as a child piano prodigy in Buenos Aires, before following his meteoric rise to fame, including his encounters with other musical giants such as Nadia Boulanger and Arthur Rubinstein, who gave the 14-year-old Daniel his first vodka and cigar!

We also learn of Barenboim's move to Israel when he was a teenager, where he lived a double life as a musical genius and an ordinary schoolboy. He then talks with unusual intimacy about his relationship with cellist Jacqueline du Pré and her long battle with multiple sclerosis. The film also charts Barenboim's stellar career as an orchestral conductor, his move into opera and the founding of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra with Edward Said.

Simply told, through just his own words and a wealth of archive from over 70 years performing on the stage, this is the definitive account of an iconic musician.

SUN 22:15 BBC Proms (b04fy01d)
2014

Barenboim Conducts the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra at the Proms

A Proms visit from Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra is always an exciting event. The international ensemble's home is Seville and the programme has a strong Spanish flavour. Razia Iqbal and organist-conductor Wayne Marshall present Mozart's sparkling overture to the Marriage of Figaro - set just outside Seville - and a series of Ravel pieces including Rapsodie espagnol, Pavane for a Dead Princess and the ultra-popular Bolero.

SUN 23:45 Sound of Musicals with Neil Brand (b08bqfd2)
Seasons of Love

Series in which composer Neil Brand explores how musical theatre evolved over the last 100 years to become today's global phenomenon. Neil hears the inside story from leading composers and talent past and present, and recreates classic songs, looking in detail at how these work musically and lyrically to captivate the audience.

In the concluding episode, he explores why musical theatre is thriving in the 21st century. He charts the rise of the 'megamusical' phenomenon, with shows like Cats and Les Misérables, learns the behind-the-scenes story of how Disney transformed The Lion King from a cartoon into a record-breaking stage success, and sees how musicals have captured contemporary life in shows like Rent and Avenue Q. Neil recreates classic numbers to reveal the secrets of their songwriting, including The Rocky Horror Show's Sweet Transvestite, Don't Cry for Me Argentina from Evita, and Les

Misérables' Empty Chairs at Empty Tables. Neil meets a host of top musical theatre talent, including master lyricist Tim Rice, Lion King director Julie Taymor, and leading composers Alan Menken (Beauty and the Beast) and Robert Lopez (Avenue Q and Frozen).

SUN 00:45 Handmade in the Pacific (b0bj2r8)
Series 1

Yidaki

In Arnhem Land in the remote tropical north of Australia, the Gurruwiwi family of the Yolngu Aboriginal people, reveal the world of the 'yidaki', a sacred instrument better known to outsiders as the didgeridoo.

Believing the yidaki can heal people, control the weather, and summon ancestral spirits, the Yolngu place great importance on the making and playing of this instrument. The yidaki is a key feature of local ceremonial life and is used to play 'songlines', the stories of ancestors that the Yolngu communicate through music and dance.

Beginning with a 'hunt' for suitable stringybark trees, the tree is then hollowed out, shaped, and given sacred ceremonial paintings with ochres. The film culminates in a 'bunggul', a ceremonial dance where the yidaki is given its first outing.

Many of the beliefs expressed by the Gurruwiwi family have remained unchanged for tens of thousands of years. Yet, the modern world has definitely arrived.

SUN 01:15 Natural World (b0078zw)
[Repeat of broadcast at 19:00 today]

SUN 02:05 Daniel Barenboim: In His Own Words (m0012tj)
[Repeat of broadcast at 21:00 today]

MONDAY 20 DECEMBER 2021

MON 19:00 Top of the Pops (m000vbsr)

Mark Goodier and Anthea Turner present a Top of the Pops Christmas Day special, including a review of the hits that topped the charts in 1990 and featuring performances by The Beautiful South, Elton John and Kylie Minogue.

MON 20:00 What We Were Watching (m0012tv1)
Christmas 1991

Writer and broadcaster Grace Dent takes a televisual trip back in time to Christmas 1991, as she immerses herself in the sights, sounds and TV schedules of the past.

Among Grace's festive findings are the discovery that this was a time when the BBC schedules were still ruled by TV's big beasts. Edmonds was the first Noel of broadcasting, Brucie was loved by all generations, and fresh-faced young whippersnappers Jeremy Clarkson, Phillip Schofield and Rob Brydon were starting to establish themselves as the stars of the future.

As well as checking out the year's music and fashion themes, the season's most popular sitcoms and Barry Norman's countdown of the year's movie turkeys, Grace explores some of 1991's greatest Christmas controversies, including Mark Fowler's HIV revelation on the EastEnders seasonal double bill, a retrospective of the comedy of Benny Hill, and most surprising of all, a Songs of Praise Christmas special that had the nation's Grinchs complaining in their droves to Anne Robinson's Points of View.

MON 21:00 Keeping Up Appearances (b007c65w)
The Father Christmas Suit

Hyacinth has decided that as it is Christmas, Richard should help distribute gifts to the old people at the Church Hall, dressed as Father Christmas. Richard, feeling an idiot, goes to show Elizabeth and Emmet, and he and Emmet proceed to get incredibly drunk. Meanwhile, Rose has a new boyfriend called Mr Sudbury, and Onslow and Daisy watch in amazement as Mr Sudbury and Rose dance down the road.

Later, Elizabeth discovers Richard and Emmet, and as Richard is too drunk she decides to dress up in his Father Christmas outfit and drive Hyacinth to the Church Hall. Richard and Emmet follow on the bus.

Hyacinth has invited Richard's Head of Department, Mr Thorngunby, and his wife over for some mulled wine and mince pies. While on her way to the Church Hall with Father Christmas, who she thinks is Richard, she spots Daisy, Onslow

and the Thorgunbys on their way to her house. She waylays the Thorgunbys, and takes them to the village hall where she meets the vicar, who tells her that Daddy has gotten very drunk, has shed his clothes and is creating a few problems.

Hyacinth eventually finds Daddy. She also sees Father Christmas being kissed by Onslow, but she discovers that it is Liz, and finds out what happened. Richard, Onslow and Emmet go off to find Daddy's clothes, and Hyacinth, dressed as Father Christmas, puts Daddy in the car. Onslow, thinking Father Christmas is Liz, goes and gives Hyacinth a kiss. Emmet appears, followed by Rose, who kisses him before also kissing the vicar.

Eventually Hyacinth, by this time rather mellowed, invites everyone around to her house for a glass of mulled wine and a hot mince pie, and they all go off happily together.

MON 21:30 Pet Shop Boys in Concert (m0012zms)

The 1991 Pet Shop Boys world tour combined theatre and drama in an inspired musical spectacle and featured some of the duo's greatest hits including It's a Sin and Suburbia.

MON 22:30 The Ice House (m0012tv3)

Classic chilling tale. In an attempt to come to terms with his recent divorce, a man seeks solace in a countryside retreat, but does not find the comfort he was looking for.

MON 23:05 James May: My Sisters' Top Toys (b00812vq)

James May celebrates the toys that made his childhood hell, as he opens the lid on his sisters' toy box. Sandwiched between elder sister Jane and younger one Sarah, many of their favourites he couldn't understand, or stand the sight of, or see the point of. This is both a tale of brotherly revenge, and the story from the other side of the toy room.

Each toy prompts a story - a history told via archive, anecdote and the occasional obsessive collector or inventor. Dolls, dolls' houses, dolls' prams, Tiny Tears, Girls' World, Look and Learn. Major Morgan the electronic organ get the May inspection... and sisters Jane and Sarah dish the dirt on their brother and their toy memories.

James blows up the Tree House Family, races in a converted Silver Cross pram, tries out his hair and make-up skills on Girls World, projects Spirograph on the side of the Royal Festival Hall, and appears in a Fuzzy Felt animated film... all jolly good clean fun.

MON 00:05 Ice Dream: Lapland's Snow Show (m0001v0s)

On the edge of the Arctic Circle some of the biggest names in art and architecture - including Zaha Hadid, Anish Kapoor, Yoko Ono, Tatsuo Mihijima and Future Systems - recently gathered to produce an extraordinary collection of artworks made of ice and snow. See ice harvested by chainsaw, flaming vodka coursing through Hadid's zigurat (and threatening to melt it) and Anish Kapoor get cross as his 'Red Solid' begins to look more like a pink slush puppy. Charlie Luxton investigates.

MON 00:35 Bought with Love: The Secret History of British Art Collections (b037c5gt)

The Golden Age

With Britain's country houses being home to world-class art collections full of priceless old masters and more, this three-part series sees art historian Helen Rosslyn tell the story of how great art has been brought to Britain by passionate collectors and how these same collectors have also turned patron and commissioned work from the cream of their contemporary crop of painters.

In this episode she focuses on the 18th century, the Grand Tour era when aristocrats filled their Palladian villas with masterpieces by 17th-century classical painters. Throwing open the doors of some of our most magnificent stately homes, Rosslyn visits Holkham Hall in Norfolk to view the Grand Tour collection there, before going on to explore the legacy of the Dukes of Richmond at Goodwood House. She also visits Petworth House in Sussex, where the one-time Lord Egremont patronised JMW Turner.

MON 01:35 Top of the Pops (m000vbsr)

[Repeat of broadcast at 19:00 today]

MON 02:35 What We Were Watching (m0012tv1)

[Repeat of broadcast at 20:00 today]

TUESDAY 21 DECEMBER 2021

TUE 19:00 Top of the Pops (m0001r5k)

Peter Powell presents the pop chart programme, first broadcast on Christmas Day 1986. Featuring Billy Ocean, The Communards, a-ha, Europe, Doctor and the Medics, Cliff Richard & The Young Ones, Spitting Image, Boris Gardiner, Diana Ross, Berlin, Simply Red, Nick Berry, Falco, George Michael and Pet Shop Boys

TUE 20:00 A Merry Tudor Christmas with Lucy Worsley (m000cfd5)

Lucy Worsley recreates how Christmas was celebrated during the age of Henry VIII – eating, drinking, singing, dancing and partying like people did 500 years ago. She is getting into Tudor clothes and inside Tudor minds - discovering the forerunners of some of the Christmas customs we still enjoy today and exploring why other festive traditions fell out of favour.

With the help of food historian Annie Gray, she prepares two royal feasts in the kitchens of Hampton Court Palace. For the king's Christmas dinner, Lucy - in full royal costume as Henry - tucks into stuffed boar's head, served to her by a choir singing its praises. She also tastes Tudor versions of the mince pies and Christmas cakes we still enjoy today - and munches on a marzipan chess set and some 16th-century sweets.

Lucy joins Tudor carol-singers to perform a festive hit penned by Henry VIII himself, and watches a forerunner of the Royal Variety Show, complete with dancing stags and swordplay. She immerses herself in the rabble-rousing fun created by the Lord of Misrule, an anarchic ancestor of our Father Christmas.

Lucy also explores how ordinary Tudors liked to enjoy themselves - and why the holidays were such a welcome break. She discovers how many people relied on charity to see them through the winter - and why Christmas was the only time it was legal to play most games and sports! Lucy decks her Tudor hall with traditional decorations, tastes the ale and mead which were popular Christmas drinks for humble folk, and brings back to life a strange and spooky Christmas custom which is a prototype of Halloween trick or treating.

Lucy is also thrilled to encounter priceless records in the National Archives, which show exactly how much Henry VIII's lavish Christmas celebrations cost. She discovers that the Tudor version of Christmas gift-giving was an occasion for very big spending. She even receives some of the presents that were offered to Henry VIII in 1532 - which ranged from money and bling to a brace of greyhounds and a six foot boar spear from Anne Boleyn.

Alongside all the partying, Tudor Christmas was more focused on religion than it is for many people today. Lucy reminds us how the celebrations followed a month's fasting during Advent and visits one of the ornate royal chapels where Henry himself worshipped, exploring how the religious Reformation he unleashed would change Christmas forever.

Across the programme, she traces Henry's evolution from handsome prince to ill-tempered old man - but reveals that two of his queens nonetheless found a way of enjoying Christmas together.

This Yuletide treat was filmed at some of the UK's most historic and beautiful locations, including Hever Castle, Ingatstone Hall, Penshurst Place and the centuries-old farm buildings of the Weald and Downland Museum. Contributors include historic performance specialist Charlotte Ewart, early music specialists Passamezzo, Professors Maria Hayward and Meg Twycross, and the chaplain to Her Majesty's Chapel Royal at Hampton Court, Father Anthony Howe.

On each of the traditional twelve days of Christmas, Lucy explores a different aspect of the season, uncovering fresh insights into the Tudor mind and casting a captivating new light on Christmas itself.

TUE 21:00 dinnerladies (p09yj3rt)

Series 2

Christmas

It's nearly Christmas and all is not well in the canteen. Bren thinks she has blown it with Tony, and Petula's hopes of a family Christmas are thwarted.

TUE 21:35 Victoria Wood: Seen on TV (b00pl74d)

A look back at Victoria Wood's hugely successful television career. Featuring sketches, stand-up, characters and songs from her incredible repertoire as well as exclusive interviews with Victoria and friends and fans, including Dawn French, Julie Walters and Sir Roger Moore.

TUE 23:05 Some People with Jokes (b04w80p3)

Some Santas with Jokes

Father Christmases from across Britain take time out of their

busy schedules to share their favourite jokes and get the whole nation going 'ho-ho-ho!'.

TUE 23:35 The Truth about Christmas Carols (b00gbgt3)

There could be nothing more sweet and sentimental than the sound of traditional carols performed by a velvet-voiced choir at Christmas. Or so you would think. Composer Howard Goodall uncovers the surprising and often secret history of the Christmas carol.

Far from being accepted as part of the celebrations of Jesus's birth, over the centuries carols have been banned by both church and state. The carols we sing seem set in stone and yet they can have up to 400 regional variations. Individual carols have caused controversy - While Shepherds Watched had to be cleaned up by the Victorians for being too crude and there's a suspicion that O Come All Ye Faithful was a call to 18th-century Jacobites to rebel.

The documentary celebrates the enduring power of the carol with a variety of performances from folk singer Bella Hardy to the choir of Truro Cathedral.

TUE 00:35 Bought with Love: The Secret History of British Art Collections (b037nhb9)

The Age of the Individual

Helen Rosslyn explores how collecting reached its maturity in the 19th century when unprecedented wealth from Britain's booming economy encouraged enlightened, philanthropic industrialists to spend their fortunes on art, and in many cases then donate their collections to the nation.

With different taste from the British aristocracy who had dominated collecting to this point, a new breed of art buyer enriched Britain's cultural story by acquiring adventurous and often avant-garde work. Helen looks at the influence of pharmaceutical magnate Thomas Holloway, the Rothschild banking dynasty and the Welsh Davies sisters.

TUE 01:35 Top of the Pops (m0001r5k)

[Repeat of broadcast at 19:00 today]

TUE 02:35 A Merry Tudor Christmas with Lucy Worsley (m000cfd5)

[Repeat of broadcast at 20:00 today]

WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER 2021

WED 19:00 Top of the Pops (b008ptfg)

Christmas 1978

Noel Edmonds presents a special Top of the Pops from 1978, with Darts, Abba, Boney M, Brotherhood of Man, Father Abraham, Bee Gees, Brian and Michael, Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band, Wings, Showaddywaddy, Rose Royce, Olivia Newton-John and John Travolta and Legs and Co.

WED 20:00 Yes, Minister (b0074qsm)

Series 3

Party Games

Sitcom about a British government minister and the advisers who surround him. The seasonal festivities at the Department of Administrative Affairs are overshadowed by rumours of a cabinet reshuffle. But a leadership election and the Eurosaurus affair could lead to great things for Jim Hacker.

WED 21:00 One Foot in the Grave (p00d70c7)

Who's Listening?

Victor bemoans the commercialism of Christmas and ponders whether it ever had a deeper, spiritual meaning. He decides to help the vicar feed the homeless on Christmas Day, but it's not quite the uplifting experience he'd hoped for because they end up being held hostage by a gun-toting man.

WED 22:00 Eric, Ernie and Me (b09ksz61)

For over a decade, the Liverpoolian ex-market stall trader Eddie Braben penned Morecambe and Wise's material, reshaping the double act into the Eric and Ernie that the nation took to its heart. But it wasn't all sunshine.

This comedy-drama follows the story of how The Golden Triangle was formed and celebrates the man behind Morecambe and Wise's greatest successes.

In 1969 Eddie Braben was persuaded by the BBC's then Head of Light Entertainment Bill Cotton to make the journey to

London to meet Eric and Ernie and their producer John Ammonds. It wasn't a meeting of the minds. But there was a spark, something different and special that Braben saw in the music hall double act who had yet to crack their on-screen presence. He set out to uncover the essence of what would transform them into television's most beloved entertainers.

What followed was years of dedication, determination and hard graft - comedy comes at a price. With the help and support of his wife Deidree, Eddie dug deep, taking on a huge scripting workload that saw Eric and Ernie take over the living rooms and hearts of the UK population.

Year on year a new series, a new Christmas special, incredible celebrity guests and the never-ending commute from home in Liverpool to work in London saw Eddie work himself to the point of exhaustion. He was a man desperate for a break but driven by perfection and the need to make people laugh.

The film culminates in a journey to the iconic 1977 Christmas Show, celebrates a decade of enormous success for both Braben and Morecambe and Wise, whilst not shying away from the pressure and pain Eddie went through to help create the screen work of Britain's beloved double act.

WED 23:00 Timeshift (b00813cn)
Series 7

Stuffed: The Great British Christmas Dinner

It's the season of peace and goodwill to all, when we think of those less fortunate than ourselves. It's also the time of year when we stuff our faces and gorge and drink ourselves silly. Christmas dinner is served. Being the last great feast in the British culinary tradition, what role does it play today?

With contributions from actor Simon Callow, cultural critic Jonathan Meades, food writers Paul Levy, Prue Leith and Diana Henry, and historians Kate Colquhoun and Kathryn Hughes, this fun documentary asks why the British remain so wedded to this meal? What does it say about us as a nation? Can it survive in a rapidly changing and culturally diverse Britain of different faiths, food fads and health concerns?

For many, Christmas dinner means the anxiety and pressure to get it right, the endless advice from every celebrity chef reinventing the wheel and the bizarre traditions that must be maintained at all costs. For others it's a time to savour good food, dine with family and friends and connect with ancient customs and rituals. Either way, we end up completely stuffed.

WED 00:00 How Quizzing Got Cool: TV's Brains of Britain (b084fs6s)

We all love a good quiz. So here's a question - when did ordinary contestants turn into the pro-quizzers of today? Giving the answers are Victoria Coren Mitchell, Judith Keppel, Chris Tarrant, Mark Labbett, Nicholas Parsons and many more. Narrated by Ben Miller.

WED 01:00 Handmade in the Pacific (b0bkyt27)
Series 1

Taupoo

Mama is one of the last traditional weavers from the South Seas island of Rurutu, French Polynesia and one of the last to make the 'taupoo', the traditional ceremonial hats woven from dried pandanus tree leaves.

Taking five weeks to make, these hats were originally introduced to the island by British missionaries in the early 1800s. Now, they're worn to church and given as wedding gifts. But the knowledge of how to make them is dying out. For each hat, 30 or more long pandanus leaves have to be cut down, spliced together, hung, dried, rolled, sorted, dyed and bleached. And that's all before the weaving actually begins. Without a template or stitches or any thread, Mama almost magically weaves the dried leaves into a hat.

Touching upon the island's Christian history, local myths and legends, and offering a unique sense of this island idyll in a moment of flux, this film is a rare visual treat and a chance to enjoy the last vestiges of an ancient tradition.

WED 01:30 Top of the Pops (b008ptfg)
[Repeat of broadcast at 19:00 today]

WED 02:30 James May: My Sisters' Top Toys (b008l2vq)
[Repeat of broadcast at 23:05 on Monday]

THURSDAY 23 DECEMBER 2021

THU 19:00 Top of the Pops (m0012tx7)
Christmas 1998

Jayne Middlemiss, Kate Thornton and Jamie Theakston present the pop chart programme's Christmas special, first broadcast on 25 December 1998. Featuring Spice Girls, Robbie Williams, B*Witched, Fat Les, LeAnn Rimes and Boyzone.

THU 20:00 Joanna Lumley in the Land of the Northern Lights (b00dhv1n)

An amazing journey in Norway's far North as Joanna Lumley pursues a lifelong dream to track down the elusive, stunningly beautiful Northern Lights - 'the true wonder of the world,' as she puts it.

Joanna grew up in tropical Malaysia, and as a little girl never saw snow or felt cold. Inspired by fairytales and picture books, she always longed to make the journey north. At last she travels north across the Arctic Circle, up through Norway to Svalbard, the most northerly permanently inhabited place on Earth, where she has to cope with temperatures approaching minus 30 degrees centigrade.

With a box of crayons in hand, her journey takes her from train to boat, to husky-sled, to snowmobile, as she is pulled ever northwards by what she calls 'the strongest point of the compass'. She explores the romantic fjords of Lofoten and learns to ride a snowmobile, speeding across endless expanses of Lapland tundra with a Sami herdsman in search of his reindeer. As she reaches the Arctic Ocean, she prepares for bed in a hotel made entirely of ice. Everywhere she goes, she asks about the mysterious Northern Lights.

THU 21:00 Winterwatch (b01q9d86)
1963: The Big Freeze

Chris Packham introduces a classic documentary from the BBC's archive, which takes a look at the worst winter of the 20th century in 1963. He also explores what we now know about how this big freeze affected Britain's wildlife, and how it would cope if we experienced another equally bad winter.

THU 22:00 The Last Igloo (m000cr9s)

Documentary that follows a lone Inuit as he hunts, fishes and constructs an igloo. It tells the story of skills that are disappearing and of how climate change is affecting the lives of Greenland's indigenous people.

With its focus on the ingenious craft of igloo building before it becomes too late to record it, this is a meditative and poetic sensory immersion in a landscape of ice and snow, an elegy to a world that is melting away.

THU 23:30 Lucy Worsley's Christmas Carol Odyssey (m000c5y4)

In this festive treat featuring the Kingdom Choir and Hampton Court Choir, Lucy Worsley reveals that there's much more to our best-loved carols than meets the eye. She reveals how their stories add up to a special kind of history of Christmas itself. In the ancient past, the wassail, a pagan fertility ritual, gave us door-to-door carol singing. Wassailing was also an integral part of an older midwinter festival that was adopted by Christianity when it came to Britain, and was rebranded as 'Christmas'.

Religion, however, soon turned its back on carols. They were far too frivolous for the Puritans, who wanted to ban Christmas altogether. French Catholics on the other hand didn't mind fun and frolics, and Lucy crosses the channel to learn a French renaissance jig, written by a dancing priest in the 16th century. The tune she dances to went on to become the carol Ding Dong Merrily on High in the 19th century.

In strict Protestant Britain, the carol survived outside the Church and new ones turned up in some surprising places. Lucy visits the British Library, where she discovers an 18th-century children's book that contains a little memory game called The Twelve Days of Christmas. Christmas carols could also be politically dangerous and subversive. British Catholics were oppressed for generations after the Reformation, but one Catholic scribe, John Francis Wade, hid a coded message of support for a Jacobite rebellion in the carol O Come All Ye Faithful.

Eventually, the Church of England couldn't resist the power of the carol, and finally opened its doors to all of them, thanks to a chance pairing of words and music in Hark the Herald Angels Sing, performed in the programme by the renowned gospel ensemble, The Kingdom Choir. In the 20th century, Ralph Vaughan Williams's passion for English folk music took him to the villages of Surrey. Here, Lucy meets a folk singer who tells the tale of an elderly farm labourer, Henry Garman, who sang a tune for Vaughan Williams, which became O Little Town of Bethlehem.

Finally, in the snowy Austrian Alps, Lucy discovers the simple

story of a young parish priest with a poem in search of a tune. When he found one, the result was Silent Night. During the First World War, this simple carol would become a hymn for peace during the famous Christmas truce of 1914. Silent Night also reminds us that carols are, and have always been, 'popular music', music for the people, fulfilling an enduring need to celebrate and sing together at Christmas.

THU 00:30 Carols from King's (b04w0vg5)
Sixty Years of Carols from King's

On the sixtieth anniversary of this Christmas institution, Juliet Stevenson narrates the story of Carols from King's, how it was first televised in 1954 and how each year the soloist is selected for the traditional opening of Once In Royal David's City.

THU 01:30 Winterwatch (b01q9d86)
[Repeat of broadcast at 21:00 today]

THU 02:30 Joanna Lumley in the Land of the Northern Lights (b00dhv1n)
[Repeat of broadcast at 20:00 today]

FRIDAY 24 DECEMBER 2021

FRI 19:00 Top of the Pops (m0012ty3)
Christmas 2002

Richard Blackwood and Lisa Snowdon present the pop chart programme's Christmas special from 2002, with the year's top-selling singles and the Christmas Number One. Including performances by Gareth Gates, Atomic Kitten and Girls Aloud.

FRI 20:00 Top of the Pops (b086trr9)
Christmas Hits

The Top of the Pops Christmas Hits compilation is made up of hits down the years, mostly performed on those classic episodes of Christmas Top of the Pops in a seasonal studio. We include songs that reached the charts in December, from Ian Dury & the Blockheads to Madness, East 17 and Coldplay.

There are hits that made the enviable Christmas Number 1 spot from the likes of The Human League & Pet Shop Boys, songs that were pipped to the post and perennial Christmas classics from Slade, Mud and Frankie Goes to Hollywood to name but three. We also have a special rediscovered rare performance opening the programme from the psychedelic era Rolling Stones from 1967 and not broadcast for over 40 years. Christmas Top of the Pops adorns the studio in tinsel to give a perfect playlist for any festive party.

FRI 21:00 Tom Jones and Beverley Knight's Gospel Christmas (b09jld6x)

Gospel Christmas returns from the heart of Cardiff to celebrate a special evening of music and spiritual cheer with Sir Tom Jones and Beverley Knight. The blend of traditional gospel, carols and songs of spiritual intent from modern greats like Prince and Bob Dylan are performed by choirs and a house band from the British gospel scene, and will add up to the freshest of winter warmers.

FRI 22:00 Country Christmas (m0012twg)
2021

Country Christmas brings the joy and festivities of the holidays to you in this Christmas special. Join first-time hosts Gabby Barrett and Carly Pearce as they get the holiday festivities started on CMA Country Christmas. Sing along to Christmas classics performed by Jimmie Allen with Louis York and The Shindellas, Gabby Barrett, Breland, Brett Eldredge, Lady A, Carly Pearce, Pistol Anniés, Carrie Underwood and Lainey Wilson.

FRI 22:40 Country at the BBC (b08gqkzv)

Grab your partner by the hand - the BBC have raided their archive and brought to light glittering performances by country artists over the last four decades.

Star appearances include Tammy Wynette, Kris Kristofferson, Johnny Cash and, of course, Dolly Parton. All the greats have performed for the BBC at some point - on entertainment shows, in concert and at the BBC studios. Some of the rhinestones revealed are Charley Pride's Crystal Chandeliers from The Lulu Show, Emmylou Harris singing Together Again on The Old Grey Whistle Test and Glen Campbell's Rhinestone Cowboy from The Val Doonican Music Show.

We're brought up to date with modern country hits from Top of the Pops and Later...with Jools Holland.

FRI 23:00 The Turn of the Screw (b00pk76h)

Drama studying the interactions between the living and the dead.

A young governess, Ann, is sent to a country house to take care of two orphans, Miles and Flora. Soon after her arrival, Miles is expelled from boarding school. Although charmed by her young charge, she secretly fears there are ominous reasons behind his expulsion.

With Miles back at home, the governess starts noticing ethereal figures roaming the estate's grounds. Desperate to learn more about these sinister sightings she discovers that the suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of her predecessor hold grim implications for herself.

As she becomes increasingly fearful that malevolent forces are stalking the children the governess is determined to save them, risking herself and her sanity in the process.

FRI 00:30 Omnibus (m0012ty5)

Whistle and I'll Come to You

An ancient whistle dating back to the times of the Knights Templar spells danger for the man who finds it. Classic MR James chiller adapted by Jonathan Miller.

FRI 01:15 The Sky at Night (b06t3wst)

The Real Star of Bethlehem: A Christmas Special

Astronomers have been fascinated by the idea of the Star of Bethlehem for centuries. Did it exist? And if so, what was it?

The list of candidates includes some of the most exciting objects in the night sky - supernovae, comets, meteors and unusual alignments of the giant planets.

In this surprising and entertaining Christmas special the Sky at Night team go in search of the potential causes of the Star of Bethlehem.

The team explore the possibilities, investigating the nature of the phenomena and digging through the historical records including Babylonian clay tablets and ancient Chinese manuscripts, to reconstruct events in the night sky 2,000 years ago.

Maggie Aderin-Pocock goes hunting for supernovae using the most powerful laser in Britain, and discovers that these mighty explosions caused by the death of stars can shine brighter than the moon in our sky.

Chris Lintott reconstructs the night sky over Jerusalem at the time of Jesus's birth, discovering a once-in-a-millennium conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter that was first suggested as a cause of the star by the great astronomer Johannes Kepler in 1604.

Armed with his telescope, Pete Lawrence searches out the features of the night sky we can observe today that may provide clues to the origin of the Star of Bethlehem.

Professor Alan Fitzsimmons explains why the sudden appearance of a comet in the night sky has always been seen as an omen of great events on Earth.

Dallas Campbell goes in search of the historical and archaeological records that can shed light on the identity of the star. Finding Babylonian tablets in the vaults of the British Museum and ancient Chinese texts that record all the unusual events in the night sky 2,000 years ago, including a bright new star that appeared for 70 days in the year 5BC.

FRI 02:15 Top of the Pops (m0012ty3)

[Repeat of broadcast at 19:00 today]