



Streets ahead

You've seen the exhibition, bought the book – now there's a chance to hang Peter Brown's work on the kitchen door, says DERI ROBINS



(From top, clockwise) November – *Early Evening, Milsom Street*; December – *Milk Float and Snowfall from Queen Square*; October – *Misty Start to a Sunny November Day*

The current frontrunner in the UK's annual contest for selling the greatest number of calendars, should you be interested, is X-Factor-spawned boy-band One Direction.

Last year's winner, Cheryl Cole, seems to have slipped out of the top 10 altogether – ah, the fickle vagaries of fame, Cheryl, pet – while cruising in at second place, with the full might of pensioner power behind him, is Sir Cliff Richard. And if this represents a vote of confidence for the elderly, there's equally good news for the dead: Elvis is back in the top 10 for the first time since 2002.

In Bath, however, there is really only one calendar you should be buying this year. Anyone who reads this magazine on a regular basis will know that we are massive, out-and-proud fans of local artist Peter 'Pete the Street' Brown, whose plein-air Impressionist canvases capture the city like none other. Oh, and if a painting shows an icy/rainy scene, you know full well that Pete has been out there, in his thermals, setting his face and easel against the bitter cold in order to capture the fleeting light and movement of the streets that provide him with endless inspiration.

As Pete explains, he's drawn on the paintings recently shown at the Victoria

“I really don’t know why people trek off to the Med or goddam Venice all the time” – Peter Brown

Art Gallery to create the main body of the calendar (great news for those who coveted them but couldn’t quite raise the several-thousand-pound price tag these paintings now command.

“I’d just exhibited over 90 paintings of Bath through the seasons, and it seemed to make sense to translate them to a calendar,” says Pete. “On the whole, your strongest work is, hopefully your most recent – so these are all from the last two years.”

However, there will also be paintings that fans may not have seen before.

“I was keen to put in unseen work, and there are three that never reached public view (January, April and August), and this was a good chance to get them to a wider audience.”

Presumably it must have been a tricky task, selecting just one image to represent each month?

“It was a nightmare. I had loads to chose from. I have always had all my paintings professionally photographed, and have a box full of transparencies and CDs to root through. They were not all painted in the right corresponding month, but I tried to make it relevant to the typical weather of that time of year. Lisa [Pete’s wife] pointed out that June was a rainy scene and I thought, ‘yeah, exactly!’”

Speaking of which, does Pete have a favourite type of weather?

“I just love getting up and being surprised. This morning was forecast miserable and grey, but we had a wonderful mist and morning sun which was inspiring. I do however always love snow as it transforms the city so much.”

However, it’s not quite so easy when it comes to choosing a favourite painting.

“Yeah that’s hard. I try not to dwell on them. I am happy enough with them as a group and now I just want to



April - 6.30 am from the Foot Parade



May - Winter Morning from Stochon Cliff

get on with some more. People often ask me at private views which is my favourite painting; I usually point them to the largest and most expensive, but they rarely fall for it. Invariably my favourites are the ones that nobody wants anyway.”

So – we’ve had the exhibitions, the book, the calendar – what’s next?

“More of each. I am just completing my next show which will be at Messums, London in February next year. You can’t escape it. It’s highlighted in the calendar.

“After doing the Bath show I

really wanted to paint anywhere and everywhere – whatever tickled me – and this seemed to turn into an exhibition of the South of England.

“I really enjoy motoring to different parts of the country and discovering new towns and people, and I have a yearning to put it all in a book when I have covered enough – *Brown’s England*, anyone? I love painting this country – there are so many wonderful seaside towns from Deal to the ends of Cornwall. I love our canals and rivers, the downs and the cities. I really don’t know why people trek off to the Med or



July - Midday,
George Street



February - The Morning
the Snow Fell

goddam Venice all the time.

"Apart from a new book, I am talking to a friend about the possibility of doing cards, and perhaps stationery, but those things are peripheral and may or may not happen. I just want to paint, really.

"But having said that all I ever want to do is paint England, next year I am painting in India for a week with a couple of friends, which I'm really looking forward to. I did a similar week away this year, when I went to Paris, which was fantastic.

"I had to then find a home for the Paris paintings and they (eight small oils on boards) are going to two group exhibitions: The Discerning Eye (10 - 20 November) and The New English Art Club Annual Open Exhibition (24 November - 4 December) both at The Mall Galleries, London."

Brown's England, India, whatever; bring it all on, say we. And we'll tell you what - these images will continue to delight as the decades go on, which is more, at a guess, than we can predict for the oeuvre of One Direction. **BL**

Peter Brown's *Paintings of Bath* calendar is available from many Bath shops and galleries, priced £10, and from peterbrownec.com



June - Rain, Milsom Street



January - Rush-hour snow
from Belmont

Peter Brown, 2012