

INSIDE...

Page 7 - Roger Evans looks back on the time he played rugby, with 'legendary socials'



Pages 8&9 - Gloucester super chef Tom Kerridge is celebrating Bristish produce

Page 12 - How a Cornish resort is proving to be the ideal spa and get-away-from-it-all option

Page 17- Top tips to make sure your hanging baskets look their best this summer

Page 20 - Jamie Oliver chats about his childhood and his new children's book

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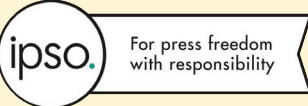
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ON THE COVER
Stepping out
Tom Byrne as Richard Hannay in The 39 Steps - see pages 10&11
Photography: Mark Senior

WINNER
Marjorie Stratton, of Zeals, in Wiltshire, has won a pair of tickets to see Hamilton at the Bristol Hippodrome

CORRECTIONS & COMPLAINTS

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Peter Brown captures the colour and lights as Radiohead take the Pyramid stage at Glastonbury Festival in 2017

All pictures, copyright: Peter Brown

'It's a beautiful spectacle'

The flags, the fireworks, the mud and the sunshine, celebrated Bath artist Peter Brown loves Glastonbury. He tells **BEE BAILEY** about the puddle fisherman, the litter pickers and being in the best place on Earth

IT'S early in the morning. Glastonbury Festival is still. The tents are largely still zipped shut, festival-goers sleeping off the day before inside. Peter Brown is already out. As he looks down over the site, he sees what – to a painter's eyes – is pure gold. A solid line of 100-or-so people walk over the fields collecting rubbish. In front of them, a sea of debris from a day of partying and music. Behind them, clear grass. "If you are up high at the Glastonbury sign and you can look down, you see this line of litter pickers coming towards you, about 100

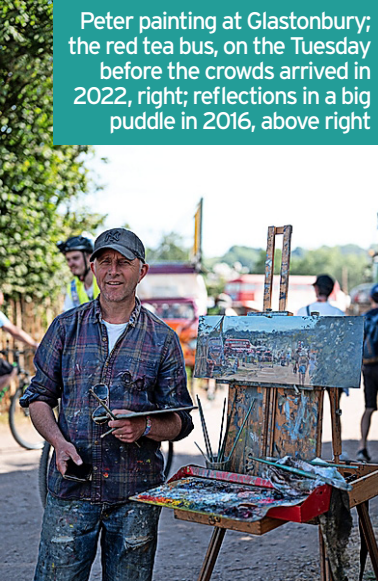
people, and behind them there is nothing and in front of them is masses of litter. They are like locusts," he says. "I go out quite early morning to see that. It's remarkable. "You get people wandering around out of their tree. I remember some young lad shouted to me, 'tell Dad I'll be at the cricket later', I thought that says a lot about Glastonbury. I don't know if that's a Somerset thing or a middle class thing but it made me laugh." The festival was started by Michael Eavis in 1970, offering 1,500 people

he left, he was certain he would come back every year that he possibly could. "That first year I remember thinking, 'God, I'll never not go to Glastonbury again' because it was just so wonderful. It's like a festival on steroids. I've never been to anything quite like it," he says. "It's a beautiful spectacle. All the tents and the circus tents are really lovely. And the stalls are really interesting, and there's people wearing bizarre clothes. It's not about money, and flash cars, it's just about loads of people being nice and having a lovely time." Deciding what to paint when he is surrounded by so much great material isn't always easy. The first year he trekked right across the site, lugging his field box easel that can hold four wet paintings, his brushes and a box of oil paints, because he felt he needed to see everything before he picked a subject. Now he's realised there's good stuff wherever he looks so he just grabs his kit and finds his spot.

"I always say to any painters that go, don't walk miles cross the site looking for a painting. Just step out of your tent, turn left, and start painting," he says. "It's not so much about covering every area of Glastonbury, it's capturing the atmosphere at the time. "To me it's always been that stuff on the ground that's the more interesting. People say about Norfolk and East Anglia, 'it's got amazing skies' – to me that means there's nothing on the ground. I've never been into skies." What he loves is focusing on snippets of the festival story, all the different characters he sees, the food stalls, the trade stands and stages, the

performers, the human traffic. "It's the variety of it that really tickles me," he says. His eye might be drawn by the billowing flags or the bright red tea bus and then someone steps in front of him and in minutes they're on the canvas. One year he painted a mum crouching down, doing up a small child's coat. Another year, a girl walking across the scene with a halo of flowers in her hair, like "a hippy straight out of the Sixties". Like many of the city scenes he's known for, people often have a deep affection for the festival and love the detail he sees that the majority of us would never notice. "People have a huge emotional connection to Glastonbury," he says. "You can't be anything but happy there and if you are lucky enough to go as a kid, especially if you're born in Somerset, it's a rite of passage so there's a huge pull for people to have something of the memory of that time." Pete, 56, has his own fond memories; painting Wolf Alice as they

performed on the Pyramid Stage on a Friday teatime; going to see The Killers with his kids after he'd painted enough in the previous days to feel satiated, then getting home and putting the gig on canvas because the powerful experience was so cemented in his brain; a guy who was, shall we say, high-on-life who studied a painting showing one of the music stages then asked if it was a boat; and the time Pete left all his equipment and paintings near the bins while he went to get a coffee and came back to find a litter picker had cleared them away. Ever his affable, laid-back self, he took it all in his stride and got everything back undamaged. It's just another good Glasto story. Having only just returned from New York where he's painting a collection for a Messums' exhibition next year, he's looking forward to getting back to the festival where he hopes to paint the Silver Hayes dance village, spend time with his wife, Lisa, and five kids – aged 15 to 26 – and fall asleep to the sound of music drifting across the fields. No glamping for Pete, just pitching in with the crowds in an ordinary tent and sleeping bag, and joining the long queues for the loos. One thing he always looks forward to is ditching the volume of clothes he has to wear for his day-to-day work as a plein-air artist often working in the cold and wet in London, Bristol or Bath where he's known affectionately as 'Pete the Street'. His usual uniform is a thermal vest, a T-shirt, a normal shirt, a jumper tucked into long-johns, jeans, paint-splattered salopettes, and a padded coat on top. At Glastonbury, on a good year, he keeps his trademark baseball cap but ditched the layers for lighter togs. "Glasto's so nice, it's just chill; sandals and shorts and slop around and just make sure you have sun



Peter painting at Glastonbury; the red tea bus, on the Tuesday before the crowds arrived in 2022, right; reflections in a big puddle in 2016, above right



cream on if it's sunny," he says. Having said that, the festival is famed for the kind of weather that Brits can't stop talking about, often either blistering sunshine or torrential rain that turns parts of the site into a swamp. Thankfully Pete is perfectly happy in the wet and is known for work that makes a rainy day in the city look decidedly



enticing. "The weather sets the whole tone for the festival," he says. "It's just like, 'OK, it's raining, that's all right, better have my umbrella' or 'it's mud' and it's hell to get from one side of the site to another but you get wellies on and get on with it. "Then you get years when it's really, really hot, and everyone's trying to get into the shade. You just

■ To buy Peter Brown's Glastonbury Festival paintings, or his plein-air paintings of Bath, Bristol, Devon, Cornwall, London, Rome, and New York, visit www.peterbrownneac.com
■ To see more from Pete follow @pethestreet1 on Instagram
■ Peter's exhibition of New York paintings will be shown at Messums in Manhattan in Spring 2025. This year's Glastonbury paintings will join others from previous years on his website presently.
■ Glastonbury Festival runs from Wednesday to June 30

Big Feature

take the weather as it comes, and that's what you're painting. It's all part of the fun. "The year we had a really rainy Glastonbury was mad. There's one big puddle I spent a lot of time around not far from the Pyramid Stage, turns out it was actually a burst pipe or something, but the mud! It's all that traffic, all those feet. You just end up with it pasted into thick custard or chocolate sauce, slopping around. "It's brilliant for me if the sun comes out because it glints off it and the mud becomes a subject in itself." Even the puddles, which in normal life would be studiously avoided, become an attraction with people wading through them in their wellies and having their pictures taken as they stand in the middle, grinning from ear-to-ear. "In a way, everyone is performing," Pete says. "There was this guy in this huge multi-coloured coat, he got a fishing rod and a line, he just stood there for ages pretending to fish in a puddle. "Little performances like that are really lovely."

As an artist and a punter, Pete just couldn't love the whole thing more. "The year before last I was put in the anarchist area, a traders' area. It's right by Greenpeace, near South East Corner, so all night it's 'duff, duff, duff', right in your ear. I love it. I love that at night you can hear the music coming across the site," he says. "But then I could sleep on a clothes line beside a motorway. "As soon as you get on site it's like walking into Heaven. For those four or five days you're there, everything else is on hold. "Leaving at the end is just awful, lump in your throat time. You're not ready at all. You're thinking, 'I want to do this for ever and ever' but that's life, isn't it? "It doesn't matter how cool London or New York is, for those five days, Glastonbury is the coolest place on earth."