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A word in your ear...

There is close to 12,000km separating Bahrain National Stadium with the Arena de Sao Paulo in Brazil. But I'm pretty sure that when the whistle blows at 11pm island time on Thursday June 12, signalling the Fifa World Cup's opening clash between the hosts and Croatia, I won't be the only one glued to the screen. In fact, I'm expecting to be surrounded by hundreds of islanders breaking out in a collective grin at the thought of a month of football bliss ahead. Who will you be supporting? To help guide you through the 32 team, 64 match, 31 day tournament, we've called on *Time Out's* resident sports buffs to thrash the stats and make some (relatively) informed guesses about what to expect (turn to pages 14-17), as well as rounding up the best places to catch all the sweat, skills and tears right here in Bahrain (pages 18-20).

When I was growing up there were two subjects that dominated playground debate – football and music. So in case you're someone who fell more naturally into the latter camp, we've got something for you too, digging deep into the region's underground music scene to present our guide to the bands who matter most, from Bahrain and beyond (page 22-25).

And lastly, as we predict you might be spending a fair bit of time inside over the coming weeks, we've also put the kingdom's malls head-to-head (on pages 26-27).

Enjoy the issue,

Rob Garratt Acting Editor

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Time Out talk 'I have lived in a canoe for five or six days trying to remain hidden – that's what we had to do' **UK politician-turned-writer Paddy Ashdown on his special forces background** p70