

## 7 things in 7 days

### tonight

**THEATRE: Stop Messing About**  
Theatre Royal, £19-£5, 01603 630000

From the team that brought us the hugely successful Round The Home...Revisited comes this second helping of Kenneth Williams' waspish wit. Stop Messing About is set during a live recording, packed with outrageously funny sketches, parodies and songs, which reunited Williams with his Carry On co-star Joan Sims and Hugh Paddick transporting you back to a time when comedy meant being funny, with scarcely a swear word in sight.



### saturday

**COMEDY: Jo Caulfield**  
Norwich Playhouse, £14 (£12 cons), 01603 598598

The star of countless panel shows appearances including Have I Got News For You is back in Norwich again. Having lived briefly in Norfolk, we're seemingly her favourite comedy destination. The show will be loosely based on her Radio 4 series Jo Caulfield Won't Shut Up, but there may well also be a gag or two about Norwich too. One of the best known faces on the stand-up circuit, she always guarantees laughs.



### sunday

**FAMILY: Big Birdwatch**  
Various locations

Last year half a million people took part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch, spotting over eight-and-a-half million birds of 73 species – so why not join them? All you have to do is spend an hour over the weekend of January 30-31 noting the birds in your garden. No garden? Go to a park or other open space. To entice more birds to your garden, put out some food. Found out more at: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)



### monday

**THEATRE: The Producers**  
Theatre Royal, £16.50-£5, 01603 630000

The Norfolk & Norwich Operatic Society takes on Mel Brooks' outrageously over-the-top smash-hit musical, the story of wily producers Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom who cook the books to produce the worst musical ever. The show won an unprecedented 12 Tony Awards on Broadway. The N&N Operatic Society is famous for its hugely popular productions and this is sure to live up to expectations. Interview, page 9.



### tuesday

**ART: Aude Gatto Collection: 20 Years of Collecting King of Hearts**, Fye Bridge Street, Norwich, admission free, 01603 766129

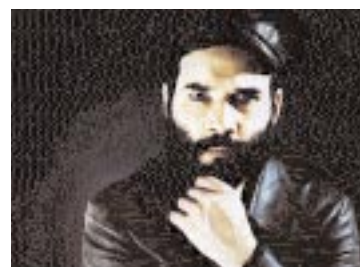
The Gatto Collection is unique in Norfolk. There are not many private collectors in the county who make their collection available to the general public. Built over 20 years, it reflects the high level of skill and creativity in the region. Many of the artists represented are well-established, but others are young and newly discovered. The show provides stimulating contrasts and a wide variety of paintings, prints, sculptures, textiles and photography.



### wednesday

**FILM/COMEDY: Bug#3**  
Norwich Playhouse, £12 (£9.50 cons), 01603 598598

The hugely popular Bug returns for another programme of extraordinary, extreme and downright brilliant music videos from around the world, presented, as always, by comedy genius and music video fanatic Adam Buxton. It again promises brilliant clips rarely seen on a big screen (or even a TV screen) and some incredible online discoveries – with insightful and hilarious contributions from Adam. Interview, page 11.



### thursday

**NIGHTLIFE: Adam F**  
Norwich Po Na Na, £4 before 11pm/£5 after 11pm, 01603 619961

Drum n bass and jungle legend Adam F pays a visit to Norwich to headline Po Na Na's Damage night. The Breakbeat Kaos record label boss, responsible for Pendulum's platinum selling Hold Your Colour album, is one of the most respected producers in the drum n bass arena, leading to collaborations with the likes of Redman, Jay-Z, Missy Elliott and De La Soul. His dad's Alvin Stardust, you know.



# The urban bard



© flickr.com/farndog



# who's just living for the moment

Summing up twenty-something London life in a lager-soaked blend of rap and punk, **ROB GARRATT** caught up with urban bard Jamie T ahead of his sold-out appearance in Norwich.

It would be hard to find an artist more at home in the 21st century than Jamie T.

A genre-merging, punk-poet that writes achingly observational stories of inner city life – and who rose to fame thanks to the internet.

There are two Jamie's – Jamie T the mythological star, hailed as a musical saviour, a poster-boy for the new generation of music who was singled out for a top award by readers of the trend-setting NME. The artist who has been praised for defying categorisation, yet described invariably as the heir to Joe Strummer and Billy Bragg, thanks to his edgy take on modern life as seen between swigs of a lager can.

Reading interviews with him ahead of my talk with the star, I was ready to be cut short and intimidated by what had been portrayed as a mono-syllabic, disinterested, arrogant and pretentious artist.

One interviewer even asked the rapper-come-punk if he owned a gun: only moments after asking if he felt guilty for being middle class – a fact hammered home by the revelation he went, for a time, to the same Surrey public school as Tim Henman.

But then there is the other Jamie – Jamie Treays the person; the chatty 24-year-old London kid who recorded an album – Panic Prevention – in his parents' bedroom and was overwhelmed when it got shortlisted for the Mercury Prize.

"I don't think anybody was expecting it to be received so well," he admits. "Especially me."

The Jamie who describes the 11 songs on his new album, Kings and Queens, as the "best of a s\*\*t batch." This is the Jamie who tells me his parents are proud of his foul-mouthed tales of drink and drugs and delinquency.

"Of course they were very proud of me," he says. "They didn't really know what was going on at first, it took them a few months to get the fact that it was a job."

Treays' rise to fame is largely thanks to social-networking phenomenon Myspace – the same tool that brought Lily Allen and the Arctic Monkeys into the public eye.

His debut album's success, bolstered by anthems Sheila, If You Got The Money and Calm Down Dearest, was followed hot on the heels by the personal accolade of being voted the NME's Best Solo Artist in 2007, beating off competition from iconic performers Jarvis Cocker and Thom Yorke.

"I think awards are always a bit rubbish, music is not about competing, at least in my book," he said "[But] that was an award voted on by people and I felt honoured."

Integral to Jamie T's work are his lyrics, fiery, witty and gritty rhymes spun out in a very-London vernacular, conjuring images of mashed-up nights out; of friends, lovers and thieves living out tragic stories under neon nights.

The mood created by his familiar, loutish tone is that of a mate down the pub, enthusiastically sharing tales of reckless endeavours, doggy friends of friends, all interspersed with cinema vérité references to London landmarks.

His romantically-downtrodden take on city life does for south of the river London what Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits did for the Jersey shore in their Seventies work.

"I'm always writing lyrics and bits and pieces in four or five notepads," explains Jamie, "and when I pick up the guitar and find a melody I look through my books."

"I listen everywhere, I listen to a lot of other people's music when I'm writing. It'll be something I heard from a friend or watched on TV, anything inspiring you've got to grab."

"I could nail down every lyric to a personal experience, whether it's about me or a friend of mine or how I thought of a situation."

Musically, it's a mismatch; his rap-phrasing



juxtaposed with a punk energy, driven by a brave mix of beats, loops and samples played against clanging indie-punk guitars and cutting bass lines – but never failing to be anthemic.

Much has been written about his conceptually contrasting rap and punk approaches – but asked to list the records on his turntable and it's more raucous guitar than rhyme.

"To be honest I've not been listening to hip hop much in the last few years, it's the more punk side of things I listen to. There was a lot of Wu Tang and stuff playing around when I was 16, 17. Chester P, half of the duo Task Force, is supporting me on half the tour and he's a huge influence on me."

"[But] recently I've been listening to a lot of

The Replacements, there's a band I really like called Devil's Brigade, and Murder City Devils, and Rancid."

His entry into music was typically punk – picking up a bass because four-strings were easier than six, and gigging "at least once a week" since he was 16.

"I couldn't play the guitar, I still find it a bit of a struggle," says Jamie. "[Bass] was the first instrument I could pick up and put a melody over, it was something I could use without spending a year studying a chord book just to play a G chord. It was out of necessity."

Jamie T will be playing a sold out show at the UEA on Sunday to promote his not-so-new album, Kings and Queens, released last May. The original tour, booked for October, was

postponed after he came down with laryngitis on the eve of the first date. In a message thanking his fans for the wait, he called it a "frustrating time for all involved."

Kings and Queens saw the whole scope of Jamie's sound expand. Where he was once restricted to programming bedroom electronics and grizzly bass and guitar, the new album brings in a rounded scope of everything from glossy strings to a professional US-style range of beats.

For the second time it saw Jamie collaborating with loyal mate Ben Bones, swapping his parents' bedroom for a shed at the end of the garden of his new Wimbledon home, working haphazardly and throwing ideas around endlessly until something stuck.

"People say [Kings and Queens] sounds really different, which surprises me," admits Jamie. "But then I never listen to the first album. Maybe we learnt a few more tricks, different recording techniques."

"We never wanted to make the first album again – why would I want to sit in my bedroom in my parents house and not move forward? We spent a lot of time listening to more music and new ideas came on. I write every song as it comes and produce it as it needs to be produced – whether it's epic synthesizers or just me an acoustic guitar."

The original plan, though, was to record with his co-billed band the Pacemakers, who lend Jamie's live shows a contrasting, chaotic punk feel.

"My first idea was to do it with them," says Jamie. "But I work in a very strange way and with a band you would have to have everything done and rehearsed and then record it – we would have had a completely different record."

Kings and Queens is a more mature work than its predecessor. Gone are Panic Prevention's adolescent between-track room recordings of Jamie joking with his friends – instead he the vinyl junkie samples a raft of eclectic delights, including everyone from The Bonzo Dog Band Doo Dah Band to Joan Baez.

"I write from whatever's going on in my mind," explains Jamie. "From the first moment you find something you just grab hold of it, whether it's a drum beat or a melody, every song it's a different manner. Earth, Wind & Fire was written after I found a sample of Joan Baez and put a drum beat to it. With British Intelligence I had the chorus for four years that I was playing around with, I could never decide on it."

As well as all the inner-city beats and electronics – there is still space for a good old-fashioned solo acoustic ballad, Emily's Heart. However Jamie was quick to throw out reports in a national newspaper that he shelved an entire acoustic album.

"It was never going to be an acoustic album," he says, righting the record. "I wrote about 50 to 70 songs, I ditched a lot. A rarities album? I'm only 24 – that sounds like something you do when you're 60."

Treays says he is yet to even think about the next album ("Who knows, maybe I'll start getting into techno").

And where does he see himself in five years? "I really don't know man, I kind of leave as much up to chance as I can, I try not to plan too much; plans always turn out different. I'm just enjoying trying and playing and living in the moment."

Doesn't he feel a pressure to live up to his legions of fans' expectations? "One thing about being stubborn is your mind is set on what you wanna do, and not much sets it off really. We live and die by what we do and I think people who understand that are more likely to let you make mistakes."

Does Jamie think there is anyone blending rap and rock the way he does? "No," he says bluntly, adding after a pause: "I am sure people are doing it in their own way, but there's no one doing it the way I do. People will always blend styles, but always in different ways."

■ **Jamie T plays the UEA on January 31.**

■ **Kings and Queens is out now.**

■ **Further listening:** [www.myspace.com/jamietwimbledon](http://www.myspace.com/jamietwimbledon)