



Ho Ho Ho its Christmas

Roger Wheeler

Yes it's that time again, the season to be merry and gay and it's also the season that causes most stress and anxiety, well don't let it. Whether we have any religious belief or not you simply can't ignore Christmas, I have tried and failed so if you can't beat them you might as well join them. Get the Brussels sprouts on. Haven't you done that yet? – they need at least three weeks good steady boiling; you will then enjoy the smell until Easter. Buy the presents that no one really wants; thank heavens for T K Maxx, put the fairy on the tree, throw last year's lights away as they will never work and pour yourself something long, strong and interesting.

What to do during this season of festive fun? We live in one of the most 'vibrant' cities in the country so there should be loads of exciting stuff happening all over the place. Well I have looked and looked again and sad to report, in my humble opinion, there's a drought of originality and anything remotely festive. It appears that panto is making a huge comeback all over the country, well not in Brighton. The Theatre Royal has managed to scrape together a production of Peter Pan, sponsored by Robinsons Barley Water; you'll need something to help the medicine go down. At the time of writing, four days before it opens, they hadn't announced the cast, saying merely that the cast will be listed in the programme, well that's a novelty. I got hold of the official press release and I quote "Captain Hook is played by RADA-trained actor Granville Saxton. Peter Pan will be played by Harry Francis, whose

stage roles include The King & I, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and a touring production of West Side Story" Well now we know, although I am none the wiser.

I am sure that they will do a wonderful job and the show will be officially a huge hit with children. It's a great shame that the Theatre Royal Brighton is regarded as the ugly sister of the powerful Ambassador Theatre Group; if we were in Bromley or even Richmond upon Thames, we would have the likes of Jane Asher and Claire Sweeney in their pantos. I felt really sorry for the poor press officer at the Royal who was at great pains to tell me that they didn't have a 'soap' star, with just the hint of a superior attitude; she would be shouting it from the roof tops if they had a 'name'.

The jewel in Brighton's crown is, of course, the Dome and what do they offer us, more treats, sorry no. They have Chicago until the 20th December, a really festive feast of murder and mayhem set in a gaol in 1930's America. Great songs and dancing, of course and Gary Wilmot is a great Billy Flynn, but not actually a treat for the little ones. The big Christmas attraction is, wait for it, four evenings of Brendan Cole, who? You may well ask. He is one of the 'big' names from the – admittedly – smash BBC1 hit show known simply as 'Strictly'. (this sounds like an evening with a dominatrix). The nine million people who watch the show can't be wrong, well maybe they can, but to pay up to £29.50 to watch this chap dance on the Dome stage seems just a tad too much.

The only show really worth going to see this Christmas would mean a trip to The Hawth in Crawley to see Julian Clary as Dandini in Cinderella. That will be a very jolly



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affair along the lines of how pantomime should be. Full of real entertainment, on two levels, for children and adults who can laugh at the same jokes for different reasons. I did promise the recipe for a really good hangover on Boxing Day, well here's a couple we swear by. My American friends serve a traditional potent mixture called egg nog, this involves mixing six egg yolks in a pint or so of cream with some brandy, bourbon and dark rum (the quantities are up to you, but about 100ml of each should do to start with). Add some vanilla flavouring, grated nutmeg and whipped cream at the end. Taste as you go along, it should end up tasting like a creamy alcoholic milk shake; hopefully you will have enough left over for guests. Lastly if all else fails serve up some Long Island Iced Tea, which has nothing to do with either Long Island or tea. You simply mix together equal quantities of vodka, tequila, rum, gin, triple sec (or Cointreau) lemon juice and a splash of coke, it's the coke that fools people.

Take it really easy and have a good one.



Money-saving David

David Campbell

Greetings once again my penny pinching pals!

Hooray!! 'Tis January once again and in this month more than any other you can pick up some real deals. I LOVE IT! I just hope you still have some cash left after the Christmas blowout. First port of call, the High Street Sales. Elbows out, head down and get in there and rummage through those racks. I always leave clothes purchases to January and luckily I have a partner who is more than happy (well, I hope she is!!) to wait for her major Xmas prezzie from me until the January sales. After plundering all the major high street stores I go down and visit all the major charity shops. Some people may not be seen dead in there but I tell you what, post-Xmas people donate unwanted gifts and sometimes quite expensive items that they no longer have room for. I picked up a lovely nearly new Pierre Cardin suit for 15 quid last year from Shelter which probably would have cost me 200 pounds brand new on the High Street. Would you know if it was second hand when I was wearing it? Categorically not!

I also refuse to spend up to ten pounds for a new tie or belt when most charity shops are selling them for around one or two pounds at most. I find the big charity shop chains like Oxfam are usually better in terms of quality in regards to clothes but for books, CD's and DVD's I tend to frequent smaller independent charity shops as they are much cheaper

here. My 2 favourites charity shops are The Sussex Beacon on St James Street and St Vincent's on Lewes Road. I regularly go there to buy books and also toys and puzzles for my daughter for a quick treat if she is being good. (Better than giving her chocolate I say!) I recently picked up a Peppa Pig jigsaw puzzle for 50p which had I saw sold on the High Street for seven quid previously. Don't forget to browse the classified ads in January. They are crammed full of bargains. I spend many a happy hour trawling local newspapers, the Friday Ads, Brighton Gum Tree and Craigs List at this time of year. My favourite site though is Freecycle.org where people give stuff away for free, you just have to go over and collect. Can't really get cheaper than free. Also check out internet auction sites like Ebay and Ebid. I have to say though recently that although there is loads of stuff on Ebay, I have gone off it a bit as the fees are getting too much and I instead veer towards using Ebid.com which doesn't charge any fees.

If you want to make a bit of cash on the side you could investigate in becoming a re-seller. I have a friend of mine who scours the charity shops on a regular basis and then flogs what he buys on-line for a tidy profit. He says he makes hundreds of pounds doing it. This charity shop chum also introduced me to the concept of post-Xmas unwanted prezzie swapping parties where you and your mates get together with all the gifts you could officially do without, have a few drinks and then swap them with one another. One man's trash is another man's treasure at the end of the day! Just have to make sure you don't offend anyone.

Also worth checking out are trade-in stores like Game, Cex and GameStation. You can get some cash for trading in PlayStation or NINTENDO DS games. I swapped in a Nintendo Dogs game which my daughter never played with and bought a used a Dr Kawashima Brain Training game for a four pounds difference. Brand new you are looking at between 15-20 pounds. There be gold in them there games lying around! Also, got a new mobile phone? Trade in the old one on internet sites FoneBank.com or EnviroFone.com and you can make a fair few quid. Just on a cautionary note before I end this month's column. Remember just because it is cheap may not mean it is a real bargain. It is always worth asking yourself two questions before you needlessly part with your hard earned cash. Firstly, do I really need it? And secondly, will I make good use of it? If the answer is no my advice is keep your purse firmly in your pocket! Happy Hunting!

David is co-founder on
www.moneysavingdavid.com

50+ tai chi group

Friendly group with qualified, experienced teacher meets at The Craven Vale Community Centre starting Tuesday 12/01/10 from 10.00-11.30, only £1 Both Tai Chi and Chi Kung are practiced and they are beneficial in reducing tension; improving balance and flexibility; aiding digestion; improving sleep patterns and attaining greater concentration.

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