

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 THURSDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2007

Britain is a Nation of Culture Vultures

- Reality TV Backlash Pushes Britain Towards the Arts –

Far from dumbed down Britain, an over indulgence in reality TV has generated a resurgence of interest in more culturally enriching activities. Whether it's visits to museums and galleries, rising documentary viewing figures, orchestral performances, art car boot fairs, or debating and dinner clubs, cultural activities are booming, with activities previously seen as traditional and irrelevant, inspiring the nation, with a new and modern twist.

Culture is coming to town, right across the UK. New and regenerated theatres, concert halls and art centres are emerging across the country. Art fairs, ballet and even opera are opening their doors and attracting the masses, moving Britons from party people to cultural connoisseurs.

What's driving these changes?

1. Reduced ticket prices and increasingly modern performances / interpretations
2. Growth in funding from Government, The National Lottery and other "cultural bodies" increasing number of Britons who can train in, participate and consume arts and culture
3. Ageing UK population with high levels of disposable income
4. Marrying later in life, meaning there are more singletons and dating couples than ever before – keen to be perceived as culturally savvy and therefore adding culturally rich events to their dating roster
5. Second or third generations immigrants feel increasingly British and are driving a re-invention of traditional British activities with a "nu" twist eg. cuisine - S&M Café in London, fashion - dandies and fops, hobbies - bowls

Supporting Facts:

- Increased public funding – including the Millennium Commission offering £35m in 2006 to fund a trust to support a diverse range of cultural and sporting initiatives; the unveiling of the £100m Wales Millennium Centre for the Welsh National Opera in

2004; and the £27.9m restoration of Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow, which opened in July this year.

- Since entry charges were scrapped in 2001, visits to England's national museums and galleries have gone up 83%.
- Emergence of digital sites like Flickr (nearly 4000 photos uploaded every minute) and YouTube have created online forums where creative output can be almost instantly showcased.
- Thriving debate culture - Philosophy in Pubs website, Intelligence Squared debate and dinner club.
- Increased audiences for documentaries on both TV & big screen, and for foreign language films.
- Use of cultural activity to tackle antisocial behaviour – classical music initiative at Brixton Tube Station, Music in Prisons organisation.
- Craft Revival – Hunga Munga club/craft night, new craft events like Craft and Origin (with craft items selling for as much as £20,000!)

Comment:

- Art centres and cinemas are changing their programmes and services to truly reflect the diversity of their communities. According to artistic director Laraine Porter of The Broadway cinema in Nottingham, one of the cinema's key aims is inclusiveness. "Everyone from the local community feels it's a space that they can use," she says, adding that the programmes are as "inter-generational" and "inter-cultural" as possible. The current range of events on offer at The Broadway, include a daily pensioner's matinee, low-cost film and tv courses and a constant rotation of cultural seasons such as Polish, Latin-American and Bollywood.
- In addition, "thanks to digital and online developments, the opportunity for young people from all backgrounds to be part of the creative community has soared" Matthew Taylor, director of Royal Society for Encouragement of Arts.
- "The general public no longer feel they need telling what work is of artistic merit but want to make the decision for themselves" Katherine Stout, curator of Art Now exhibition, Tate Modern.

Case Study:

Intelligence Squared, founded by media entrepreneurs John Gordon and Jeremy O'Grady, is an events concept that, takes "information and analysis as its raw material, and translates this into discussion, conversation, and sexy debate".

The company provides a platform where the most crucial issues of today can be discussed and debated. It's 800 capacity debates are hugely popular, many selling out – regardless of topic – 10 days after tickets go on sale.

Source:

These findings were taken from the Living Britain Report, created by The Future Laboratory in association with Zurich Financial Services. This report is a snapshot of Britain today, looking at evolving trends and influences. It determines and celebrates how Britain is flourishing in certain sectors, including business, culture, media, community and travel.

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Notes to Editors

Available for interview:

- Martin Raymond, Director of The Future Laboratory and Editor of the report is available for interviews.
- Ekow Eshon, Artistic Director, Institute Contemporary Art
- Dylan Jones, Editor of GQ
- Lowri Turner, presenter and author

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