

Arts and Entertainment Service Annual Review 2018/19



Welcome...

We are delighted to share with you the key achievements and figures for South Somerset District Council's (SSDC) Arts and Entertainment Service. It is a challenging time for all local authorities as the austerity measures handed down from national government mean local government are under ever increasing pressure to maintain the services our residents value so highly with less money. I am proud that SSDC continue to recognise the value that the arts play both in contributing to our local economy and in improving the quality of life for people living in South Somerset. SSDC supports the arts more than any other council in Somerset and guests to our district are often envious of our venues and the high quality arts events that take place throughout our district.

Studies from other theatres show the significant economic contribution of the arts, and locally many businesses benefit from The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue attracting thousands of visitors into the district every month. A report commissioned by the Local Government Association stated that every £1 spent on the arts by councils in England attracts a further £4 to the local economy. The arts and culture contribute £8.5bn to the UK economy every year according to an investigation by the Centre for Economics and Business Research. This is why we firmly believe our Arts and Entertainment Service is key to achieving our economic development aims and attracting businesses to South Somerset. The benefits don't stop there though as time and again the arts provide a source of joy for people of all ages. We are proud of the diverse range of artists who come to perform in South Somerset and the opportunities for people to get creative, make new friends, learn new skills and improve their quality of life. The arts events we support bring people together, promoting community cohesion and improving people's health and wellbeing, particularly mental health.

I hope you enjoy reading through the achievements of the last twelve months. I would like to thank all those who continue to contribute to making the Arts and Entertainment Service such a success and a source of joy, education and inspiration for our residents and visitors to South Somerset.

Clare Pestell

Commercial Services and Income Generation Director,
South Somerset District Council



The arts
and culture
contribute
£8.5bn to the
UK economy
every year



Exciting performances, dynamic events and inspirational activity

It has been another incredible 12 months of exciting performances, dynamic events and inspirational activity at The Octagon Theatre, Westlands Entertainment Venue and throughout South Somerset. I am incredibly proud of our achievements over the last year and am confident that we can look forward to continued success in delivering a strong and vibrant programme. The growth of events and users of Westlands in our second year of operation has exceeded our expectations and I am delighted that we are ahead of our business plan targets. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my team, our colleagues at SSDC and in the arts industry, the fantastic volunteers in the Foyer Club, the dedicated community groups and individuals and most importantly our audiences, patrons and guests who make our work so rewarding. I hope that you enjoy looking back at our achievements and that it brings you a greater understanding of what we do. I also hope it inspires you to come and join us, in whatever capacity, and be part of something very special.

Adam Burgan

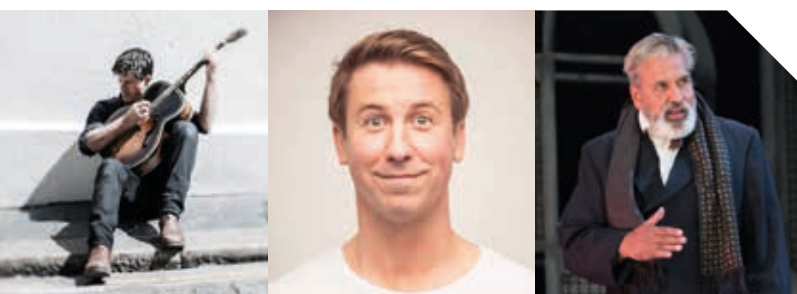
Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager,
South Somerset District Council

2018/19 - Key Achievements Facts and Figures

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	78,546	88,334	93,519	90,149	101,634	119,366	123,339
No. Of Performances	260	239	244	235	242	259	264
Gross Box Office Income	£1,098,093	£1,233,074	£1,362,419	£1,335,182	£1,549,590	£1,844,455	£1,843,064
Annual Income - Excluding Box Office	£359,367	£344,452	£364,735	£410,600	£477,181	£560,951	£610,876

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Attendance (Total number of tickets sold)	133,295	116,227 (O) 24,937 (W) 141,164 (T)	116,927 (O) 35,133 (W) 152,060 (T)
No. Of Performances	290	248 (O) 42 (W) 290 (T)	242 (O) 49 (W) 291 (T)
No. Of Screenings (Westlands)		74	204
Gross Box Office Income	£2,196,389	£1,888,223 (O) £354,501 (W) £2,242,724 (T)	£1,986,342 (O) £500,754 (W) £2,487,096 (T)
Annual Net Income - Excluding Box Office	£770,627	£710,629 (O) £510,623 (W) £1,221,252 (T)	£666,276 (O) £850,298 (W) £1,516,574 (T)

O = Octagon, W = Westlands, T = Total



Over
200,000
visitors in
2018/19
to The
Octagon

Westlands Entertainment Venue sold an additional 10,000 tickets in 2018/19 on the previous year taking the total number of tickets sold to over 35,000. This figure does not include the tens of thousands of guests at conferences, meetings, trade fairs, weekly ballroom sessions, banquets and parties. Westlands income in 2018/19 was up over £320k on the previous year, an increase of 42%. Income from room hire doubled on the previous financial year.

We estimate that the Octagon received over 200,000 visitors in 2018/19 who came to see a show, visit the gallery, dine in the café bar, use the venue for meetings and conferences or take part in a class or perform in a show. Our pantomime production of 'Aladdin' broke the Box Office record set by 'Cinderella' the previous year and was seen by over 28,600 people.



Westlands has received a 'Certificate of Excellence' from Trip Advisor for achieving consistently excellent reviews on the website. The Octagon Theatre has qualified for a 'Hall of Fame Certificate of Excellence' after achieving a 'Certificate of Excellence' for the past five years. The Octagon Theatre is listed as the No.1 Top Attraction in Yeovil on Trip Advisor with a 4.5★ rating out of 265 reviews. Westlands Entertainment Venue is catching up at No.6 on the list and a 4.5★ rating out of 36 reviews. 63% of all tickets sold were booked online.

On Facebook The Octagon is rated 4.7 out of 5 with 1,087 reviews.



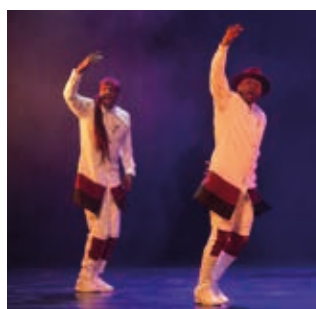
What's On? At The Octagon Theatre...

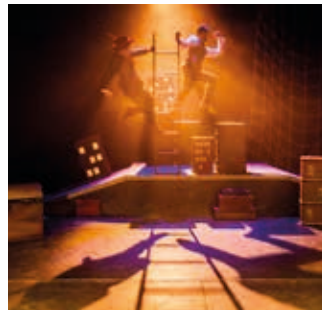


Over the twelve month period for the financial year 2018/19 The Octagon Theatre has enjoyed superb performances from a diverse range of artists and companies.

They include:

Jason Donovan, BalletBoyz, David Baddiel, Northern Ballet, Chris Ramsey, Alice Roberts, Dr Michael Mosley, Seth Lakeman, Richard Alston Dance Company, The Manfreds, Flawless, Russian State Opera, Esther Rantzen, Ross Noble, G4, Lee Mead, Austentatious, Pam Ayres, Timothy West, Sara Pascoe, Show of Hands, Dylan Moran and Fisherman's Friends.





What's On? At Westlands Entertainment Venue...



Westlands Entertainment Venue has welcomed Kim Wilde, Gilbert O'Sullivan, Brian Conley, Tim Vine, Jane McDonald, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, Nish Kumar, Rick Wakeman, Brian Blessed, Rip It Up starring Harry Judd, Aston Merrygold and Louis Smith, alongside a large number of conferences and large scale events including Yeovil Beer Fest, Somerset Gin Festival, Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders and many more.

Our programme of screening films and live events continues to grow in popularity showing the best of mainstream films, independent and foreign language films from the comfort of our leather sofas.





We have hosted numerous conferences, banquets, balls, trade fairs, and family celebrations and wakes. Income from room hire has doubled on the previous year.



yeovil literary festival

The Sixth Chapter



2018 saw our sixth Yeovil Literary Festival take place over five days in October (adding an additional day to the festival).

The festival offers an exciting programme of literature and arts events from well-known literary figures, comedians, celebrities and exciting local and emerging writers. The festival is a not-for-profit partnership between The Octagon Theatre, Waterstones, Yeovil Community Arts Association and Somerset Library Service; the headline sponsor was Battens Solicitors.

The festival sold 7,400 tickets for events including Sir Michael Parkinson, Craig Revel Horwood, Helen Pankhurst, Jo Brand, Tom Fletcher, Jonathan Agnew, Benedict Allen, Gregg Wallace, Alan Johnson, Lucy Worsley, Floella Benjamin, Simon Reeves, James & Bob the Cat, Ruby Wax and many more.



An exciting programme of literature and arts events

IMAGINATIVE
AUTHOR
NON-FICTION
ARTS
COMEDY
THEATRE
ENLIGHTENING
ROMANCE
HUMOUR
FUTURE
INSPIRATION
LITERATURE
PASSION
CELEBRITY
VIBRANT
HISTORY
FACTU
ENGROSSING
EXCITING
FASCINATING
DRAMA

yeovil
literary
festival



The Festival will return from
Thursday 31st October to
Monday 4th November 2019.

Gallery

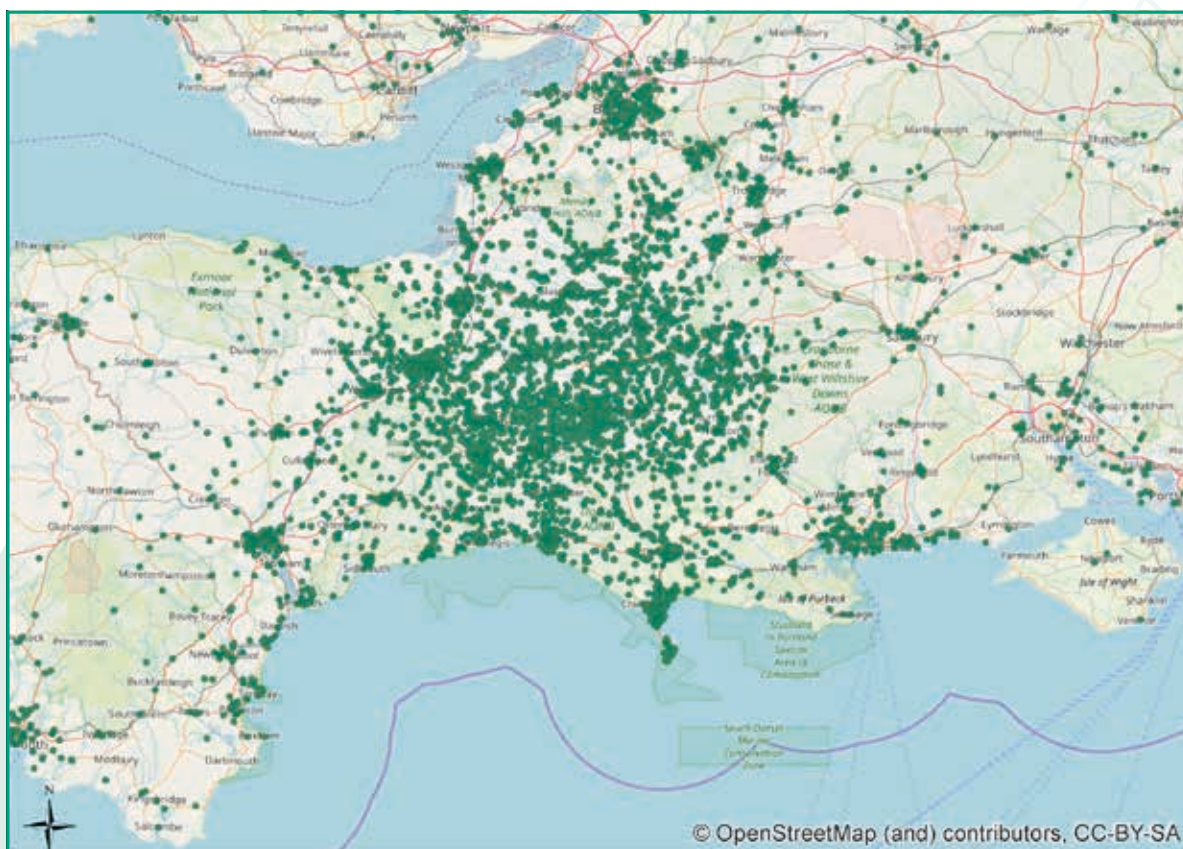
The Gallery at the Octagon continues to focus on local talent from the surrounding areas, promoting groups & artists whose main motive is to share the pleasure of art.

This year's programme supports a range of works from independent artists to local groups such as South Somerset Monochrome Art Group. The Octagon continues to support annual exhibitions from Yeovil Art Group and Somerset Art Works, and is also working towards an exhibition which will promote the artwork of students from a wide range of schools across South Somerset.



Where do our customers come from?

A postcode analysis for customers who purchased a ticket for a performance at The Octagon and Westlands Entertainment Venue in the last financial year shows that our venues are used by people from all across the district and all four areas.



Each dot represents a person who bought a ticket for the Octagon in the last year. It does not represent the number of tickets they bought or the number of times they visited. There were 610 customers who could not be included as their postcodes could not be recognised.

Venues at the Heart of the Community...

We are proud that our venues are at the 'heart' of the community in South Somerset.

Many local groups and societies stage performances and events including Motiv8 Productions, Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society, University College Yeovil (Graduation), Helen Laxton School of Dance, Beatnik Productions, The Dance Factory, Castaway Theatre Group, Yeovil Amateur Pantomime Society, Yeovil Youth Theatre, Yeovilton Military Wives, Project Play and many more.



Join In



The Octagon Academy was launched in 2010 following a grant from SSDC Area South Forum. We now have over 18 weekly classes for all ages and abilities. Over 400 people aged from 15 months to 73 are taking part in classes at the Octagon and Westlands in singing, dancing and drama every week.

Our venues are home to Somerset Youth Theatre and Castaway Theatre Group and classes from The Helen Laxton School of Dance, The Allen School of Dance and many more.

The Johnson Studio is also the home of Yeovil Community Arts Association, Yeovil Art Group and University of the Third Age Local History Group.



Somerset Cancer Café moved to the Octagon in 2009 offering a drop-in support for advice, a friendly chat and a good cup of coffee. Since moving to the Octagon attendance has quadrupled and the café now brings around 60 people together each week who are affected by cancer.

Supporting Roles...

The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue serve thousands of meals each week and are proud to use local suppliers where possible to support the local economy and to source the best quality products that showcase Somerset producers. Whether it is ice cream from near Bath, meat from the butchers in Crewkerne, Glastonbury water, bread from Mortimers in Yeovil or local ales and cider we are proud to share the 'taste of Somerset'.

- Mortimers Bakery
- Marshfield Ice Cream
- A & J Winters, Butchers, South Petherton
- Barrett Bros, Butcher, Crewkerne
- Glastonbury Spring Water Co

We also support local companies who we partner with to provide goods and services. In addition to the advertising in local magazines, newspapers and printers here are just some of the other local suppliers benefitting from our venues.

- Ever So Clean Supplies
- Inno Fire & Security
- Atlas Security
- The Cloth Shop, Crewkerne (re-upholstery)
- Dataweigh Systems Ltd, Yeovil
- Perrys Recycling



THE CLOTH SHOP - SEATON

Dataweigh Systems



OCTAGON THEATRE



A Helping Hand

Our venues are supported by a team of 100 volunteers. The Foyer Club undertake Front of House duties including welcoming patrons to the auditorium and showing them to their seats, selling ice creams, confectionary and merchandise and helping with mailings. They donate approximately 15,800 hours per year!

Without these volunteers it would cost us an additional £153,000 to operate.

Fundraising

The Foyer Club gained charitable status in 2014 and work with our staff to raise money to purchase new equipment and support the theatre. The Foyer Club are currently fundraising to support our 'Name A Seat' campaign that will replace the auditorium seating in The Octagon Theatre in the summer of 2020.

Raising Money For Local Charities

Each year we receive hundreds of requests to support local school fetes, raffles and many other fundraising events that we support where possible. We also support many local charities with Bucket Collections and other fundraising events throughout the year.

Here are just a few from the last twelve months...

- £1,560 for the new Yeovil Hospital Breast Care Centre appeal – Helen Laxton School of Dance – Everybody Dance
- Bucket collections during 'Aladdin' and our 'Christmas Celebration' Concert at Westlands entertainment Venus raised £8,898 that was split between The Foyer Club and Somerset and Dorset Air Ambulance.
- £531 was raised for Chernobyl Children's Lifeline at Rumours of Fleetwood Mac and The Manfreds
- Castaway Theatre Group raised £2,950 for various charities including St Margaret's Hospice and St James Church
- £249 raised at 'The Carpenters Story' for Somerset & Wessex Eating Disorders Association
- £198 for the Royal British Legion at our Remembrance Day Concert.
- The Funtasia Charity Ball at Westlands raised £17,000 for St Margaret's Hospice and the Yeovil Hospital Breast Care Centre.
- Party! By Order of the Peaky Blinders at Westlands raised £6,000 shared between St Margaret's Hospice and Prostate Cancer UK.

Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset



Arts Development in South Somerset

Developing opportunities for arts and creative activity across the district is also a key part of the Arts and Entertainment Service. To achieve this we work with individual artists and arts groups from both the professional and voluntary sectors. We continue to fund four key arts organisations, Take Art, Somerset Art Works, Somerset Film and Actiontrack, who help us to deliver a cross section of art projects to our communities.



Take Art

www.takeart.org

Take Art's rural performance scheme continues to bring professional, high quality music, theatre, dance and performance to village halls, churches and pubs across Somerset. Productions have been brought to venues in Langport, North Cadbury, Lamyatt and Huish Episcopi. Engaging over 1750 audience members across South Somerset last year.



The project *Word/Play* continues to be a success. *Word/Play* is a social prescribing project for people experiencing mental ill health. Take Art work with Ryalls Park Medical Practice and Health Visitors in Yeovil to deliver the project. It uses performance poetry to empower individuals, giving them the freedom and encouragement to tell their stories.

Evolving from this Take Art has set up an open mic poetry night at The Hub in Yeovil, the *Rainbow Fish Speak Easy*. The *Rainbow Fish Speak Easy* alone has given a much needed spoken word platform in Somerset, giving a stage to a further 50 local poets. Since its launch 12 months ago it has now been seen by over 400 audience members.

Somerset Art Works

www.somersetartworks.org.uk

Since its inception in 1994 Somerset Art Weeks have become an important date in Somerset's calendar, delighting art lovers near and far. Featuring over 300 artists in 192 venues, visitors were able to see how artists make their work; their process, practice and inspiration.



SAW have successfully completed a three-year project based at Yeovil Country Park *Wafer – Meadow – Wood*. This project has provided greater engagement with people and new opportunities to interpret the natural, cultural and historical heritage of Yeovil Country Park.

Somerset Film

www.somersetfilm.com

Somerset Film's vision is to give everyone in Somerset and surrounding area the opportunity to be inspired by, engage with and produce creative moving image and digital media. The Engine Room community media arts centre in Bridgwater, offers uniquely accessible and often free access to the tools, facilities and expertise necessary for creative media production.



Successful projects include the Ignite programme, dedicated to passing on skills to artists across all art forms and helping communities benefit from creative digital technology. The programme will focus on working with mental health service users and rural communities in South Somerset to explore storytelling with digital technology. Somerset Film have also been busy leading the innovative InspirED arts education network, working with a subscriber base of 80 plus schools across Somerset.



Continued: Arts Engagement and Outreach in South Somerset

ActionTrack

www.actiontrackperformance.co.uk

Actiontrack have delivered an exciting range of projects throughout the year including, delivery of a World Music Residency with 'The Turbans' in Chard. The Turbans, one of Europe's leading world fusion bands delivered workshops to students at Holyrood Academy in Chard ending off with a gig in the Academy Hall.

Actiontrack have also been delivering workshops in Somerset using the county's Javanese Gamelan. Actiontrack tour local schools teaching the students how to play and also introducing them to a new musical culture. After a week of workshops and a full day of rehearsal the entire year 9 from Maiden Beech Academy in Crewkerne, performed their adaptation of the traditional Indonesian performance filled with storytelling, dance, music and shadow puppets. MyTunes has been an exciting music-making project working in and alongside Pupil Referral Units and other agencies of Alternative Provision with vulnerable young people at risk.



Arts Engagement & Development Team

New roles have recently been created at the Octagon Theatre to allow us to increase the Octagon's involvement in development projects across South Somerset and outreach to disadvantaged communities. The Arts Development team now consists of Gemma Gubb appointed as Arts Engagement & Outreach Officer and Katherine Hoskins as Arts Engagement Assistant.

Together they are responsible for the strategic development and delivery of the learning and participation programme delivered within the South Somerset area; coming up with creative ideas about how we can benefit the local community through engagement with the Arts.

The goal is to work closely with local Schools, Colleges, Arts Organisations, Arts Groups and Community Groups to create more opportunities for people to participate and engage with the creative arts. Collaborating with the community to create projects which celebrate the vibrant cultural life of South Somerset. The Arts Development team will be involved in:

- Providing opportunities for the community to experience and take part in world class Performing Arts.
- Providing opportunities for the community to develop practical skills within the Arts.
- Providing opportunities for the community to develop life skills & raise aspirations.
- Supporting healthy physical and mental wellbeing within the community.
- Encourage community engagement with the Arts through clubs and groups.
- Providing opportunities for the community to work with professional practitioners.
- Supporting artists, arts organisations and arts events across South Somerset by providing advice and support.

Project Development

To further our provision and engagement with communities in South Somerset we are currently developing the Octagon's second dance engagement project. The dance project will build on the success of the first dance project in 2014, focusing on community engagement, participation and professional development.

The aim of the project is to further engage disadvantaged groups and promote the dance scene within Somerset by raising the reputation of the Octagon as a supporter of dance. The Octagon's mission is to meet the growing demand for quality performing arts experiences by establishing the Octagon as a dance hub which would be accessible to a wide range of people from young to old who can embrace dance as a way to improve their lives.

We look to achieve this by generating more opportunities for young people, graduates, and adults to take part. Our newly founded Boys Dance Company and a Youth Dance Company, acting under the Octagon Academy umbrella, looks to do just that; as we offer participants performance opportunities across Somerset and the option to work with well-known dance practitioners. To encourage uptake and a mix of participants from across South Somerset, we have been offering primary and secondary schools in the region a free dance workshop, which has helped build interest and strengthen our relationship with these schools.

Our intention is to also establish a Graduate Dance Company, an Over 50's Dance Company, and an Inclusive Dance Company open to those with and without learning disabilities. To achieve our goals we will be applying for Arts Council funding within the coming months.



Compliments

While the facts and figures might be impressive the feedback from our customers is perhaps some of the most rewarding and really explains why The Octagon Theatre, Westlands Entertainment Venue and the Arts Engagement and Outreach Service is such a success and so special to the residents of South Somerset.

A massive thank you to all of your staff who have been absolutely wonderful over the Everybody Dance rehearsals and run. Danny, Dave, Adrian and Greg did an outstanding job as always, they were so helpful and enabled the show to run smoothly, nothing was too much trouble for them all and they were so lovely with all of the helpers and children. Danny's lighting was absolutely incredible and completely transformed the show, I am so grateful. The front of house staff and the Footlights gang were also so helpful. A special thanks to Paul who was amazing dealing with the medical emergency on Saturday night. I am so grateful to all of your staff, they are an incredible team. Thank you again, you are an amazing team, you do a fantastic job leading them all Adam, Yeovil is very lucky to have you!

Helen Laxton

We were lucky enough to get tickets to see Gilbert O'Sullivan; Westlands Entertainment Venue is a fabulous place to relax before and after the show. We arrived early to get settled and made ourselves extremely comfortable on one of the very comfy black sofas that surround the lounge area. They have a good reasonably priced food menu and their gateaux were truly amazing and very delicious. We tried the carrot cake... never tasted one that good. Staff everywhere very helpful, spotlessly clean facilities. Can't wait to return!

I wanted to thank you and all your staff for providing a first-class service on Friday. The day went smoothly and colleagues were very impressed with the venue, they thought the food was lovely and all the staff they encountered were polite and courteous. We've heard "best one yet" "very professional" "food was delicious" to pick out a few comments.

Sarah Symcox, Yarlinton Housing Group

Great venue, very clean and well organised. Bar not as pricey as most venues of this type. When the tallest man in the theatre sat in front of my wife, staff allowed us to move for a better view! 5/5

We had tickets to see Tim Vine in May at Westlands and thought the venue was impressive. Big, light, airy common areas - it felt more chilled than most other places. During the show I noticed the bathrooms were extremely well looked after too - probably the nicest I've ever experienced at event venues. 5/5

I got two tickets to see the Etta James Story and had a wonderful night, starting with supper in the Bistro and then watching the amazing Vika Bull perform. It wouldn't have been something that I would have gone to see, not knowing much about her but I am so glad I did! It was an electrifying show and I shall be back.

Fran Cousins

Had a great time last night at the Jane McDonald concert at Westlands. Great venue for concerts. Seats are very comfy and there are plenty of toilet cubicles in the ladies so the queue goes down quicker. Superb venue for concerts - hope to return.

Went recently to Westlands to watch Kim Wilde and was highly impressed with the venue. Certainly a little gem.

Lawrence McClure

Props to Westlands - the only venue I've ever been to where there are wheelchair accessible places in the FRONT ROW. Maybe more places could implement this. #AccessibilityMatters
Colin Bytheway

I just wanted to drop you a quick email to say how wonderful the staff are at the Octagon. My husband & I have been many times to shows there and enjoyed several meals in the restaurant. Every time without fail the staff are charming and helpful. The restaurant staff are very polite and always smiling which is such a change these days! The staff in the booking office are so very helpful and always take the time to make sure we get the best seats available. Every member of staff we have dealt with has been superb, they must really enjoy their job and that is all down to good management, well done and keep up the good work!
Sheila Spooner

Always a good experience at the octagon theatre. Varied excellent shows for all tastes. The staff are excellent, efficient and friendly. The food in the restaurant is perfect for pre-show dining.

I was absolutely blown away by how good the pantomime was last night at the Octagon. The whole production was wonderful from start to end. Fabulous singing, the costumes were really amazing, especially the Ugly Sisters and the white horse and carriage actually bought a tear to my eye, really beautiful. I will remember this for a long time and look forwards to going again next year. Well done everyone involved backstage, cast and front of house. We were all made to feel very welcome from the moment we walked in. Thank you all very, very much.
Jaine Thorne

My husband and I love the Octagon; its proximity to a large car park, the spacious lobby, amazing restaurant, friendly staff and comfortable seating. In fact it's our favourite theatre.
Pam Howard

The Octagon staff have been so helpful this week, YAPS Jack And The Beanstalk, nothing is too much trouble. Thank you everyone xxx
Daisy Reid

We had a fabulous time at the panto 'Aladdin' on Boxing Day. Wonderful characters, great singing and very funny. We do love a Panto Dame and Widow Twankey did not disappoint. Well done everyone! It's the first time we have been to the Octagon and we will definitely be booking for Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs next year.
Kate Cameron

Recommend that you book a table for a pre-show meal. The lasagne was lovely, little bit pricey but so worth it. Also recommend booking straight away to the Panto they have each year. We've been going as a family for 6 years now, DONT hesitate, deep laughs, makes you cry with laughter and above all, it lifts your spirits 100%. Love the diversity of shows they put on as well. Great staff, great team behind the productions, comfortable seating, good all round view also. Recommend not going anywhere else to see entertainment on this scale, we are lucky to have a complex as good as this on our door step. Thank you so very much to all involved setting my year up in a positive way.
Michael Brown

Sally and the two ladies behind reception were all so very friendly, supportive and extremely helpful.
Sam Best, Operations Manager, Somerset & Wessex Eating Disorders Association



Box Office: 01935 422884 octagon-theatre.co.uk westlandseyevil.co.uk

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Westlands Entertainment Venue | Westbourne Close | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 2DD

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