

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Press Release

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Images: Available to download [here](#)

Event listings: [here](#)

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Southbank Centre announces *Aladdin Sane*: 50 Years, celebrating anniversary of David Bowie's iconic album



IMAGE CREDITS IN NOTES TO EDITORS

- ***Aladdin Sane: 50 Years*** exhibition, curated by **Geoffrey Marsh** and **Chris Duffy**, son of photographer **Brian Duffy** who collaborated with **David Bowie** to create the iconic lightning flash portrait
- **Anna Calvi**, **Scissor Sisters'** **Jake Shears**, **Roxanne Tataei**, **Tawiah**, and **Lynks** join the **Nu Civilisation Orchestra** performing ***Aladdin Sane***; and two club nights - **Queer House Party** and **Queer Bruk** - celebrate Bowie's legacy with parties and music
- Talks exploring *Aladdin Sane*, Bowie and his cultural significance from **Paul Burston**, **Geoffrey Marsh**, **Victoria Broackes** and **Chris Duffy**
- National Poetry Library presents a new collection of work inspired by the album, ***Aladdin Sound***, from **Luke Kennard**, **Keith Jarrett**, **Golnoosh Nour** and **Mark Waldron**
- **Free archive display** on Bowie's history with the Southbank Centre and his enduring legacy

The **Southbank Centre** today announces a raft of events celebrating the 50th anniversary of David Bowie's iconic 1973 album, *Aladdin Sane*. ***Aladdin Sane: 50 Years*** will feature a two-month long exhibition (6 April - 28 May) exploring the creation of the album's iconic artwork, including the legendary lightning flash portrait by photographer Brian Duffy, as well as a stellar line-up of live music and talks inspired by the album.

On the *Aladdin Sane* celebrations, Southbank Centre Artistic Director Mark Ball, said: *"We're honoured to pay tribute to David Bowie, who made his Southbank Centre debut in 1969. The *Aladdin Sane* album cover portrait is considered to be one of the most influential pop culture images of the past half century, and the music remains fresh and contemporary, so we wanted to recognise this major anniversary and reflect on the album and its artwork's enduring legacy. It's a work that continues to inspire today's contemporary artists and the gender fluidity of the images still resonate deeply in queer culture in the UK and across the world."*

The ***Aladdin Sane: 50 Years*** exhibition in the Spirit Level, Royal Festival Hall (6 April - 28 May), will follow the journey of this pioneering portrait, mapping how Bowie's continuous reshaping of his image paved the way for audiences to rethink their own identities. Curated by **Chris Duffy**, the son of Duffy, and **Geoff Marsh**, the exhibition will begin by spotlighting the vibrant music scene of the early 1970s, contextualising the pivotal moment in which Bowie and Duffy met. It will go on to explore the unique relationship between the musician and photographer, and the January 1973 photoshoot from which the iconic *Aladdin Sane* image was born.

Of his father's work, Chris Duffy, said: *"My father's image of Bowie is often called the Mona Lisa of Pop. It's important to remember it was the result of a short studio shoot using film, which then had to be sent out for commercial processing. There were no instant digital images or photoshop then. It's extraordinary how it's lasted and been endlessly reworked. Wherever I go in the world, it's always somewhere on a t-shirt."*

The exhibition is complemented by a stunning new book by Chris Duffy, ***Aladdin Sane 50: The definitive celebration of Bowie's most iconic album and music's most famous photograph – with unseen images***, to be released on 30 March 2023 by **Welbeck** at £40 hardback.

The Southbank Centre Archive will also present a separate free display exploring David Bowie's history with the Centre, stretching over 50 years, and his ongoing legacy. From his performance in the recently opened Purcell Room in 1969, to later performances alongside Lou Reed and his curation of Southbank Centre's annual contemporary music festival, Meltdown, never before seen archival material will be available for public view.

Coinciding with the release of the album fifty years ago, music artists will pay tribute to *Aladdin Sane* in the Royal Festival Hall on Friday 21 April. Hosted by the **Nu Civilisation Orchestra**, Mercury Prize nominee **Anna Calvi**, Scissor Sisters' **Jake Shears** along with acclaimed R&B singer **Tawiah**, **Roxanne Tataei**, who has collaborated with the likes of Nitin Sawhney and Shabaka Hutchings, and masked pop maestro **Lyinks** will perform Bowie's album in full, which includes hits such as 'The Jean Genie', 'Drive in Saturday' and 'Lady Grinning Soul'. Meanwhile, in the Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer, two nights of joyous club music will celebrate Bowie's inimitable persona and influence. On Friday 21 April, DJ collective and community platform **Queer House Party** will host a jam-packed programme of radical fun, while, on Saturday 22 April, Afro-Caribbean inspired **Queer Bruk** will blend dancehall, afrobeats, soca and more for an accessible all-out party.

Across the weekend, there will also be talks and poetry events. In the Purcell Room on Friday 21 April, the National Poetry Library will present ***Aladdin Sound*** with ten of the UK's most exciting poets.

Taking their cue from the poetic language and potent imagination of Bowie's masterpiece, each poet has been commissioned to write a new poem in response to each track, creating a spoken word version of the album that will be presented live on stage. Poets include Forward Prize-winner **Luke Kennard**, **Keith Jarrett**, **Golnoosh Nour** and **Mark Waldron**.

On Saturday 22 April, author and co-curator of the V&A's hit exhibition *David Bowie Is*, **Geoffrey Marsh**, and **Victoria Broackes**, co-curator of *David Bowie Is* and director of the London Design Biennale, will explore the rise of immersive music exhibitions, from the Rolling Stones' *Exhibitionism* (2016) to *Amy: Beyond the Stage* (2021). Meanwhile, Broakes will chair a conversation with **Chris Duffy** discussing the ***Aladdin Sane: 50 Years*** exhibition and the enduring relevance of the album. The day's talks will close with writers **Paul Burston** and **Golnoosh Nour** on the cultural impact of Bowie's androgyny and his playful subversion of gender identity.

Tickets for the exhibition, live music and talks will be available on Wednesday 1 March, 10:00am via

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/festivals-series/aladdin-sane-50-years>

Stretching over fifty years, David Bowie and the Southbank Centre have had a storied past. Bowie made his Southbank Centre debut in 1969 in the recently opened Purcell Room when it cost as little as five shillings to see him perform 'Space Oddity'. Three years later, Bowie headlined the Royal Festival Hall for a special Save the Whale benefit gig, including a guest appearance from Lou Reed. In 2002, David Bowie curated the Southbank Centre's annual contemporary music festival, Meltdown, which featured performances from The Legendary Stardust Cowboy, The Divine Comedy, Phillip Glass, Suede and a fledgling Yeah Yeah Yeahs. After a warm-up DJ set by TV host Jonathan Ross, Bowie closed out the festival by playing his 1977 album *Low* in its entirety for the very first time before giving the same treatment to his then recently released *Heathen*.

#ENDS#

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Image credits, from left to right:

Aladdin Sane, 1973. Photo Duffy © Duffy Archive & The David Bowie Archive™.

Brian Duffy. © Duffy Archive.

About the Southbank Centre

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre occupying a prominent riverside location that sits in the midst of London's most vibrant cultural quarter on the South Bank of the Thames. We exist to present great cultural experiences that bring people together and we achieve this by providing the space for artists to create and present their best work and by creating a place where as many people as possible can come together to experience bold, unusual and eye-opening work. We want to take people out of the everyday, every day. The site

has an extraordinary creative and architectural history stretching back to the 1951 Festival of Britain. The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room and Hayward Gallery as well as being home to the National Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. It is also home to six Resident Orchestras (Aurora Orchestra, Chineke! Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Philharmonia Orchestra). www.southbankcentre.co.uk/



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