

REVIEWS

Bonkers for 'our' Dizzee

Dizzee Rascal, Academy
IF the music world remembers 2009 for anything, it will be Dizzee Rascal's transformation into a national treasure.
With four critically-acclaimed albums, three number-one singles and a Mercury Music Prize-winning debut under his belt, it's amazing to think the young rapper is still only 24 years old.
Dizzee takes in a huge array of influences, from rap to ragga, from garage to grime, to create a sound that could only have come from this country.
Although always highly praised, this year saw Dizzee — real name Dylan Mills — become a household name.
And his storming set at Glastonbury was one of the highlights of the festival.
So it was a frenzied gathering at Bristol Academy which greeted the boy from Bow, East London, who wasted no time living up a dreary Sunday evening.
And for an hour and 20 minutes people parted like it was Friday night.
It's easy to forget how many great songs he has under his belt, but out they came, one after the other: Fix Up, Look Sharp and Sirens were particular highlights.
But unsurprisingly it was his trilogy of number ones that set the audience on fire.
Dance Wiv Me and Holiday saw more hands in the air than you could count, and a climactic Bonkers threatened to shake the Academy to its very foundations.
As the man himself says on Stand Up Tall "Don't give it half-hearted / Give it your all".
Dizzee certainly did that for Bristol and long may he continue to do so.
9/10

SAM RKAINA

Gig of quality, not quantity

Brendon Benson: Thekla
IF there was any justice, Brendon Benson would be selling millions of records and have a downstairs too fit to bursting with Grammy Awards.
He's played on the big stage with his other band The Raconteurs but that's more to do with The White Stripes' Jack White than Benson's own superlative songwriting. Frustratingly, his 13-year solo career is critically acclaimed but this has yet to translate into huge album sales.
His solo career has been hewn from melodic guitar pop that often tips its hat to Squeeze and prime-era Paul McCartney.
And this jam-packed, sweaty show at the intimate Thekla was a great showcase of his consistently fine songwriting skills. Opener A Whole Lot Better proved what an under-rated white soul singer he is.
In less than an hour, it was all over. While the strike rate was superb, we could have done with a little more bang for our buck. Instead, we'll just have to be happy with quality over quantity.
8/10

STEVE HARNELL

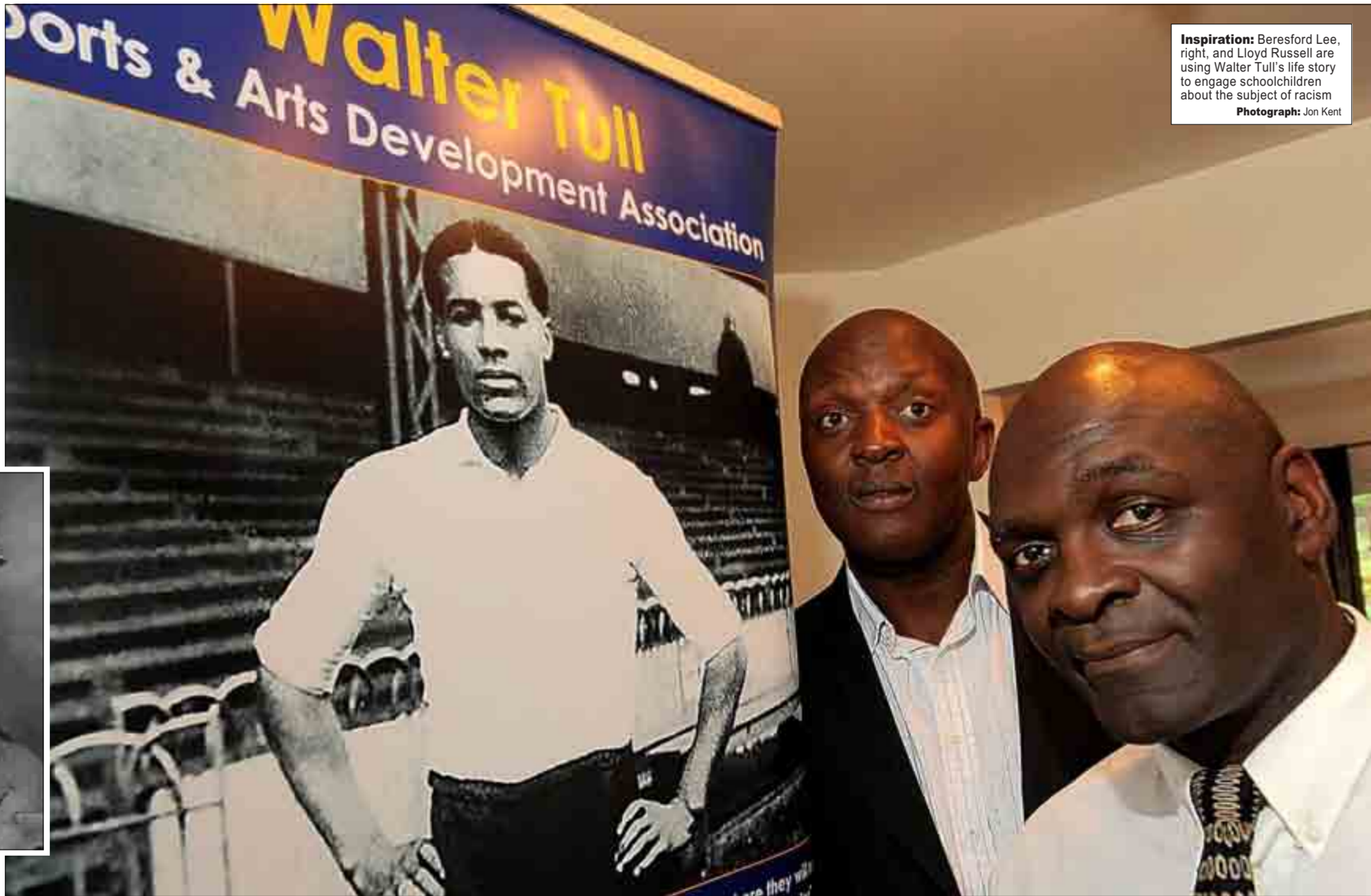
A Whale of a time for fans

Noah and the Whale: Bath Komedia
WHAT a difference a year (and a broken heart) makes. Noah and the Whale have transformed from a melodic, poppy indie band into impressive soundsmiths.
Charlie Fink told the lively audience that it was a real pleasure to be playing in Bath. And boy was it a pleasure to have the band in the city's newest and nicest gig venue.
Noah and the Whale have a remarkable ability to create the most complete and perfectly formed set list.
A lot of the band's recent songs are soaring two-handers, beginning as softer mesmerising ballads escalating into epic anthems complete with refined guitar solos. So the small contingent who seemed bored during an apparent slow song were taken by surprise and ended the song dancing along. There's not many gigs where camp waving hands sit happily alongside headbanging and foot stamping but for this it made perfect sense.
9/10

LAURA WILLIAMS

SPORTING PIONEER AND A WAR HERO

Feature writer DAVID CLENSY looks back at the extraordinary life of Walter Tull, a trailblazer for black British people, whose legacy is helping children across the city to live a better life



Inspiration: Beresford Lee, right, and Lloyd Russell are using Walter Tull's life story to engage schoolchildren about the subject of racism
Photograph: Jon Kent



War hero: Walter Tull was the first black officer in the British Army



For Queen and country: Walter served in the trenches during the infamous Battle of the Somme, after which he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant

It was one of the lowest points in Bristol City's history; a normal match day, back in October 1909, with the home team pitted against Tottenham Hotspur.
As the visiting team made its way onto the pitch, the fans saw something they had never witnessed before — a black man was kitted up and preparing to play for Spurs.
Walter Tull was the first black outfield player in the English top division.
Almost before the referee had blown the whistle to start the match, the barrage of racial abuse had started.
The taunts came throughout the match, casually hurled by the Bristol fans. When the crowds left Ashton Gate that day they left a stain on the pitch; the dubious honour of playing host to one of the first recorded examples of racial abuse in the beautiful game.
One century on and the echoes of that ugly moment in the city's history are finally being put to some good use.
The Bristol-based Walter Tull Association has been awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund Grant for £45,000, to develop its work in the city's schools.
The project was devised by Bristol youth worker Beresford Lee, who set up the scheme four years ago.
"I wanted to find a way to engage with school children about the subject of racism and I also wanted to find a role model for young people to look up to," he said.
"All too often they look up to modern-day stars who might not always be the best role models. But I realised from what I'd read about Walter Tull, he would make an excellent role model.
"He was a man who pulled himself up out of poverty; he was brought up in a London orphanage. He was spotted by a football scout while playing in the street with his friends.
"Then he went on to become

one of the big footballing stars of his day, despite the sort of prejudice against black players that manifested itself so terribly here in Bristol.
"It's good to know that we have come such a long way as a society. We may still get occasional racist outbursts from football crowds but these days, when it does happen, it's coming from a tiny minority who are only interested in

extolling their extremist views. The terrible thing about Walter's case was that the abuse he experienced was very common back then.
"Casual racism was the norm at the time. Even the match reports referred to Walter as 'Darkie Tull'.
"The incident at Ashton Gate embarrassed Spurs officials so much that soon after Walter was dropped to the reserve

side; he made only three more appearances in the first team. After a more successful stint with Northampton Town, he cut short his career because of the outbreak of World War I.
Beresford said: "He joined the 17th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. During his military training Walter was promoted three times.
"That's the kind of man he was."

Walter went on to experience the true horrors of trench warfare — serving in the infamous Battle of the Somme, after which he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant — making him the first black officer in the British Army.
Beresford said: "It's hard to describe just how ground-breaking this was at the time. It's an indication of how impressive a man he must have been for him to clear a path for generations of non-white men to make a proper career out of life in the army as well as on the football pitch."
Walter went on to serve for a spell on the Italian Front, where he twice led his company across the River Piave on a raid.
His commanding officer recommended him for the Military Cross for this action but the award was never received.
"We believe he was overlooked because of his race and we would like to see this medal awarded posthumously," Beresford said.

Towards the end of the war, Walter returned to the Somme Valley, where he was killed by machine gun fire during a battle at Favreuil.
"Walter was such a popular man that several of his men risked their own lives to try to recover his body from No Man's Land, but it proved impossible," said Beresford.
"His remains were never found so, like thousands of victims of World War I, he doesn't even have a proper grave."
The Walter Tull Association has a pool of a dozen "mentors", who visit schools to tell Walter's tale.
One of the most experienced is Lloyd Russell, who has been with the project since its inception.
He said: "It's very rewarding to be able to tell the children about the life of this man. And schools across Bristol are always keen for us to come in, because our work covers a range of the National Curriculum — from the history of World War I to the subject of

modern-day race relations. It doesn't matter whether you're talking about Walter to schools that have predominantly black and Asian pupils or predominantly white pupils; we can all learn from the way this great man lived his life."
Beresford said: "The cash from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will allow us to deliver further workshops to 10 Bristol schools, where 200 young people will research and record the facts of Walter's life.
"This will create a study pack, which we can then get out to every school in the city, and perhaps one day it can be rolled out right across the country."
For more information about the Walter Tull Association, visit the website by logging on at www.waltertull.com.

HISTORY ONLINE
Go to our Bristol Times page at website www.thisisbristol.co.uk/bristoltimes



First team: Walter Tull in his Tottenham Hotspur strip and, below, with the Spurs team for the season 1911-1912



Rescuers: The RNLI crew in action

Pair renew vows and aid lifeboat

A COUPLE who holiday in Weston-super-Mare have helped raise funds for RNLI crews in the resort.
The RNLI's annual running costs are around £110million, or around £300,000 per day.
As a registered charity, the organisation continues to rely on voluntary contributions and legacies for income.
Angela and Tony Couper have spent many holidays in Weston with their family, usually at Sand Bay.
After 18 years of marriage they decided to renew their vows at Kewstoke church.
Instead of presents, they asked their family and friends for contributions to the Weston RNLI station and raised £205.
Angela said: "We will often be having our holidays in Weston so never know when we will need you."
The RNLI charity saves lives at sea by providing a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts.
It operates more than 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 100 lifeboat units on beaches around the UK.
Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved more than 137,000 lives.
To find out more information about Weston lifeboat, call Glyn Hayes on 07774 181418 or visit www.westonrnli.org.uk.

Answers ready

A QUIZ night is held every third Saturday of the month at Hanham Community Centre, from 8.30pm.
Teams of up to six people are invited to play. The cost is £1 per person.

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