

Show that raised gold standard

THE CAULDRON is lit so let the Greatest Games on Earth begin after the Greatest Show on Earth.

Britons are a proud people and the world will now have pride in Great Britain after billions watched Danny Boyle's thrilling spectacle, a passionate showstopping extravaganza which took the breath away.

From the smoking chimneys of the Industrial Revolution to the invention of the Internet, by way of the Lions led by Donkeys of the First World War.

Suffragettes breaking the law to win votes for women, and a Windrush generation of immigrants who made this country a diverse mini-world, the remarkable story of Britain was told with spell-binding verve and style.

The gasps in homes everywhere and cheers of the audience in the Olympic stadium will make future organisers sweat over matching the glory of London 2012, conjured up by a magician surely soon to be Sir Danny.

And all this in a Diamond Jubilee year in which the Queen entered into the spirit of the Olympics to declare the games open.

PARTY

During the next fortnight or so we'll witness the world's finest athletes going for gold, competing to stand atop the podium as the best in the world.

The road here wasn't easy, with some bumps on an arduous seven-year journey: costs spiralling to £9billion, transport problems and the recent G4S private security fiasco.

But a once derelict part of the capital is regenerated. We will witness incredible sporting endeavour. And Britain is showing the world that we may be a small place on the map but we are an international force to be reckoned with.

Things may, of course, go wrong and a few emotionally dead grumps will refuse to join in the fun, wallowing in their cynicism.

But last night you could feel the country getting in the party mood and sharing the excitement of the Greatest Games on Earth.

The world has come to London and last night London 2012 did Britain proud.

Here's to Team GB breaking records and winning a sackful of medals.



LEAP Lad goes head over heels



RESCUERS Mary Poppins



SPELLBINDING Giant Voldemort

800 medics, 30 Mary Poppins, 101 Dalmatians and Capt Hook give kids night of their lives..

BY MELISSA THOMPSON and LAURIE HANNA melissa.thompson@mirror.co.uk

THE living legacy of the London 2012 Olympics brought a tear to the eye of viewers all over the world - as local children took a lead role in the ceremony.

Many were born just yards from the new stadium in Stratford, one of the most deprived areas of the London.

But they had the whole world at their feet last night in a dramatic show watched by billions after being sworn to secrecy during months of late-night rehearsals.

Dressed in pyjamas, they performed a 12-minute "bed dance" in 100 hospital trolleys pushed by nurses, including some from Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

In a tribute to the health service, the trolleys spelled out NHS, as villains including Captain Hook, The Childcatcher and Voldemort terrorised the kids, before 30 Mary Poppins flew out of the sky to save them.

"It was absolutely brilliant!" said Gabriella Beldiko, nine-year-old pupil at Colegrave Primary, the closest to the stadium.

She was one of 31 pupils from the East London school picked at random to take part in the £27million ceremony, along with 800 NHS volunteers. The night-

mare scene paid homage to top British children's literature including Harry Potter, Peter Pan, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and 101 Dalmatians. Gabriella added: "It was brilliant because I've seen the film Mary Poppins, and then I got to actually meet her!"

"I was most nervous about building site into a state-of-the-art complex that will be theirs to use for years to come.

Six schools from the host boroughs were chosen to take part. Since January the children have put in long hours to prepare, keeping details under their hats after requests by Oscar-winning artistic director Danny Boyle's plea to "save the surprise".

Gabriella's schoolmate Bruno Pereira, eight, never spoiled the surprise, despite constant badgering by mates and family. Javelin-fan Bruno said: "I've been so excited about it but we had to keep it a secret. I couldn't even tell my family and that was hard as sometimes they would ask me.

"I'd just say, 'I'm not allowed to tell you'."

Danny Boyle made three visits to the school in the run-up to the Games and was a "huge inspiration" to them, according to assistant headteacher Katie Parks.

As well as the show's creator, Olympic legends visited the school to inspire the children, including four-time Olympic champion Michael Johnson and the US wrestling team. Teachers believe the children are proof the Olympic legacy will last beyond the games.

PE co-ordinator Abbie Barden, 27, said: "The change in them already has been huge. They've grown in confidence, and they feel they can do anything now. It's been absolutely amazing."

Over the last seven years, since London was picked to host the Games, the children have watched the area develop from a

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HEALTHY SCENE NHS nurses dance as kids bounce on beds

COMMENT STEVE OVETT

A FEW years ago, my old running rival Lord Sebastian Coe showed me around his office on the 23rd floor above Canary Wharf. He pointed out of the window towards a part of East London where there was nothing to see but huge mounds of earth. Last night, on that same area of reclaimed wasteland, a £27million party launched the biggest sporting show on Earth. London 2012 is here. The vision has become a reality. Seb must take his share of the credit for delivering the Games to our doorstep with the same energy he brought to the track. It's a fantastic achievement to host the Games and we should ALL take pride in London as a city and Great Britain as a nation. The opening ceremony was a fantastic spectacle - like the

opening titles to a blockbuster film you've waited ages to see. There is a sense of occasion. This is history in the making, it's not going to come around again in our lifetime, and maybe not even in our children's lifetime. Earlier this week I was shown some old copies of the Daily Mirror from 1908, when London first staged the Olympics, and the coverage was fascinating. I wonder what people will make of today's paper a hundred years from now. Some of the best

stories will come from athletes who have devoted their whole lives to reach this stage. For many, it's not about gold, silver or bronze - it's about being able to say they competed in London, to say "I was there". After last night, 60,000 people will keep their ticket stubs and say, in years to come, that they were there when the London 2012 party started. And I can say that I was there, in Seb's office, when it was all just beginning.



MAJESTIC ENTRANCE 'Queen' drops in

History class that Dan us all so proud

COMMENT ALISON PHILLIPS

WE lined up on the sofa: me, my husband, three kids, family pack of crisps and a sense of anticipation you could cut with a knife.

No one enjoys a 'big event' more than children and there is no 'big event' bigger than the Olympics. So we were expecting 'mega'.

But it was way better than that.

Better than any history book, we hurried along a national timeline - our victories, tragedies, achievements and faults - with a pulsating soundtrack that had us mesmerised. The sections featuring children's literature and the National Health Service showed the vast depth and breadth of what we were celebrating.

This Olympic opening ceremony was showing a great Britain with its head held high.

We recounted our history with pride and unshamed acceptance that it has made us the country we are today, a country still able to put on such an extraordinary event with style and to welcome visitors from around the world with open arms and, importantly, with open minds.

When James Bond walked in to meet the Queen, jaws dropped. From my eight-year-old because Bond was back months before expected. From me and my husband because to see the Queen take part in such a scene was utterly extraordinary.

Although when Her Majesty did turn up she seemed somewhat bemused as to why she was there.

The ceremony was big, brash, bubbling with confidence and national pride. We relaxed our stiff upper lip, let our natural reserve relax to show what we had to be proud of - and that we were indeed proud of it.

It felt like the most valuable history lesson my children could have.

We are repeatedly told one of the themes of the Olympics is legacy - to inspire kids to get involved with sport. But this achieved far more - by inspiring them about the brilliance and beauty of our nation in sport, music, arts, history and technology.

Well done Danny Boyle and all your volunteers for doing that. You made us all - parents and kids - very proud.

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THE VISION BECOMES A REALITY

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