Make your choice for city's 08 hot seat!

By CATHERINE JONES Culture Reporter

THEY are bright, colourful and inventive.

And their designs are too.

Today we unveil the shortlisted entries from schoolchildren who took part in the ECHO's Benchmark competition.

Hundreds of young designers put their best creative caps on to come up with a bench for the contest which is part of the Open Culture initiative created by Phil Redmond and backed by Merseyside's media.

Now it is up to ECHO readers to decide which entry should join two adult finalists in the competition.

The final winning design will be developed into a full-size bench and a number of them will be placed around Liverpool to mark 2008 and as a legacy beyond Capital of Culture year.

Voting runs until Friday on the ECHO website, and the finalists from both votes will be revealed early next week.

Phil Redmond, Capital of Culture's cultural director, said: "We put the competition out to schools because we wanted to see what the next generation of Liverpudlians would come up with for their city.

"The number of entries and their real inventiveness proved it was the right decision. There are some very creative, and some technically demanding, designs in here."

ECHO editor Alastair Machray said: "We've had a lot of people voting so far for their favourite benches and it's going to be interesting to see which three finalists are chosen. Benchmark will be a lasting tribute to Liverpool people's creativity."

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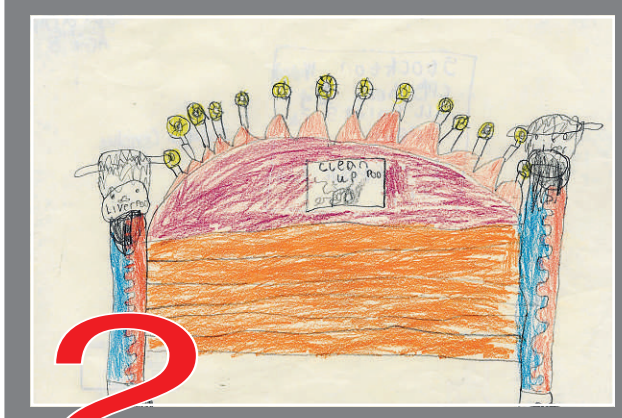
CULTURE FUN: Phil Redmond

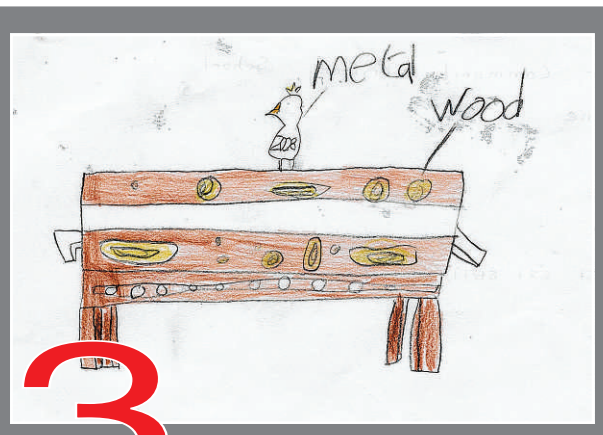
ECHO Essentials

TO vote for your favourite bench from the shortlisted designs, visit www.liverpoolecho.co.uk and follow the link. The closing date for votes is midnight on Friday.

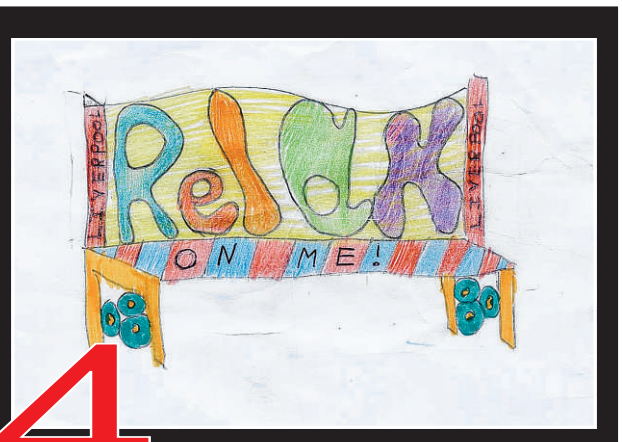
1 Tom Robinson, Woolton Junior school



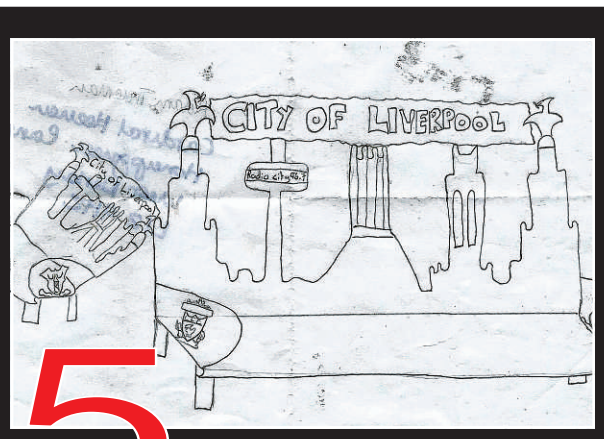
2 Jordan Conchie, Stockton Wood Primary school



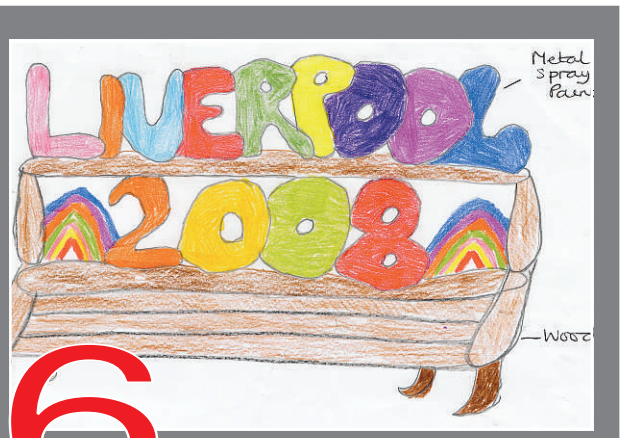
3 Sarah George, Longmoor Community Primary, Aintree



4 Isabelle Bailey, 9, St Paschal Baylon, Childwall

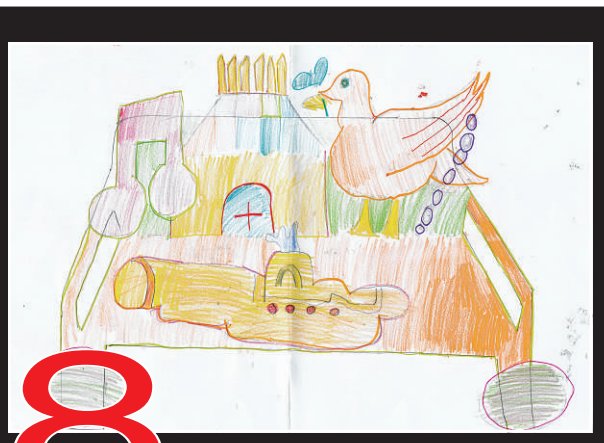


5 Adam Trueman, Cardinal Heenan, West Derby

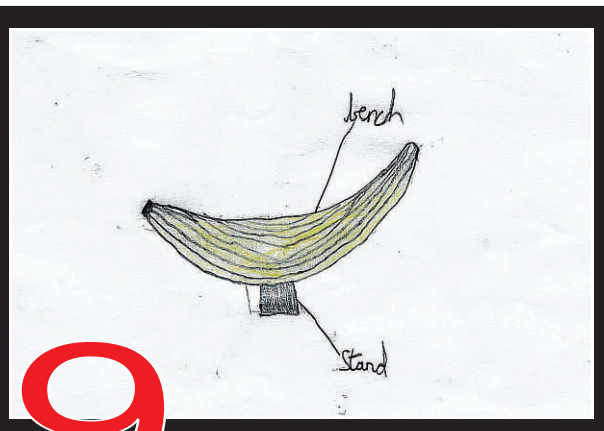


6 Kate Smith, Northway Primary, Maghull

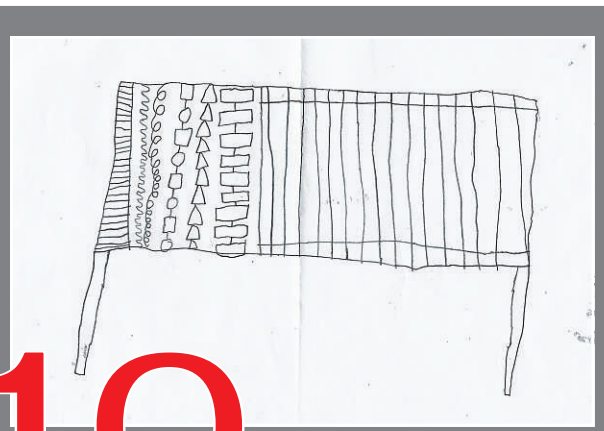
7 Jennifer Kelly, Rice Lane Infant school, Fazakerley



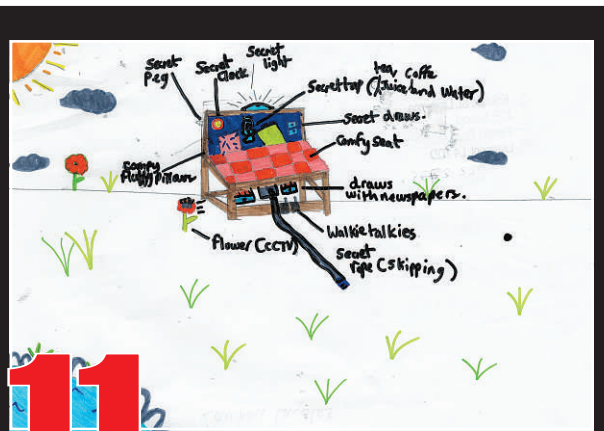
8 Megan Nolan, St Sebastian's School, Fairfield



9 Thomas Rigby, Gwladys Street Community Primary, Walton



10 Lonjezo Kalanda, 6, University of Liverpool Children's Centre



11 Lauren Lawler, St Lawrence CE school, Kirkdale