

MEDIA RELEASE



Celebrating 'The King': Graham Kennedy, the online exhibition!

NFSA pays tribute to TV superstar with more than 75 rare items available online – from a 1958 half-smoked cigarette to his first filmed appearance.

The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA) is celebrating the life and work of 'The King' of Australian television, Graham Kennedy, with a new [online exhibition](#) featuring memorable, rare and personal clips, as well as tributes and artefacts that span his more than four-decade long career across radio, television and film.

Graham Kennedy, the boy from Balaclava, was one of Australia's most beloved television stars. He shot to fame in Australian living rooms with *In Melbourne Tonight* 60 years ago, on 6 May 1957. He would depart the show 12 years later in 1969 as 'The King' of Australian TV. His loveable antics as a presenter, comedian and actor were displayed across a 40-year career: from his early days on live variety television with riotous comedy sketches and an enduring partnership with Bert Newton on *In Melbourne Tonight* and *The Graham Kennedy Show*; through to top-rating game show *Blankety Blanks* and later, current affairs program *Coast to Coast*.

NFSA Television Curator Helen Tully said about the online exhibition: 'It is wonderful to bring the prodigious talent and life of Graham Cyril Kennedy, our first Australian TV star, to both a new generation and to those who already knew and loved him. This exhibition enables us to take a glimpse into Graham's world and allows his voice to guide us across his journey in radio, film and television - the communication media of the 20th century. We hope through this exhibition that we have helped to fulfil his wish to "live on in people's hearts."'

As an icon of the Australian entertainment industry, Kennedy's colleagues have praised his extraordinary talent.

Patti Newton said: '*IMT* was a wonderful start to my adult working life. Graham was such a perfectionist, but everyone saw the genius in him. Bert always said he was the best editor of a script he'd ever known.'

In Melbourne Tonight scriptwriter Mike McColl Jones said: 'It didn't take me long to realise that Graham had an aura that commanded respect from friends, workmates and strangers alike. He had those great ingredients that all superstars have - unpredictability and mystery!'

Nine's voice-over legend Pete Smith said: 'In performance Graham had a magic spark and those of us privileged to work with him benefitted from the warmth of his amazing talent.'

The NFSA has published more than 75 items across an interactive [online exhibition](#), and four complementary [curated collections](#) with expanded content. Highlights include:

- Kennedy's first ever filmed appearance - the newly restored 1956 Sennitt's Ice Cream advertisement!
- The crown and throne that symbolised his title of 'The King' of Australian television

- Fascinating artefacts from his personal life including handwritten and typed thank you letters to Mike & Val McColl Jones; Wedgwood china courtesy of Qantas; and even the butt of Graham's half-smoked cigarette rescued by an avid fan and kept safely in a small cardboard box since June 1958.
- Key moments from *In Melbourne Tonight (IMT)* including: a young Graham Kennedy singing a self-penned ditty '500 Times, 5 Nights a Week' commemorating the 500th edition the show; a complete Wilsons sketch; and Graham flipping pancakes in a sponsored advertorial.
- Excerpts from rarely seen 1977 episode of *Blankety Blanks* and a recording to the producers of the show giving tips to aid its improvement.
- Intimate footage from a 1961 overseas working holiday to Europe and India together with a post trip interview with John Godson, Graham's first TV interview.
- Bert Newton joins Graham Kennedy for a live advertisement for the latest Raoul Merton designer shoes, on nationally viewed *The Graham Kennedy Show*, circa 1961. Other advertisements include: ScotTowels, Norman Ross and even one to encourage us to complete the 1981 Census form.
- An excerpt from an unreleased 1969 interview with Graham Kennedy explaining why he wanted to leave *IMT*.
- A glimpse into Graham's radio days': 3UZ morning program *Nicky and Graham* from June 1955; and Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton on 3AK's November 1961 morning show, *Graham's Hideout*. The latter was broadcast from Graham's purpose-built studio in his home in Frankston, Victoria.
- And, long forgotten interviews with a roll call of Australian TV greats: Mike Walsh (1969), Bert Newton (1976), Ivan Hutchinson (1979), Mike Willesee (1981) and Don Lane (1983).

The online exhibition is available here: <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/online-exhibitions>. Curated collections with extended content are also available: <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated>

NFSA Television Curator Helen Tully is available for interviews. For more information, please contact Miguel Gonzalez, Manager National Media on (02) 8202 0114 / 0404 281 632, or email: Miguel.gonzalez@nfsa.gov.au