

12/64

## Ghosts of Christmas Specials Past at BFI Southbank



Escape the cold and the hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping by visiting BFI Southbank this festive season; sit back, relax and enjoy a small but perfectly formed look back at Christmas TV Specials of yesteryear on the big screen. Featuring the likes of **Eric Sykes**, **Robbie the Reindeer**, **Dame Edna Everage** and **Eric Idle**, **Ghosts of Christmas Specials Past** will deliver seasonal cheer in abundance! BFI will also offer Christmas treats in the form of a new **BFI Mediatheque** collection **Santa's Grotto** which will include such classics as **The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show** (1980) and **The Snowman** (1982). In a royal year like no other, during which HRH Queen Elizabeth II even visited BFI Southbank, it is only fitting that this mediatheque collection will also include The Queen's very first televised Christmas Day speech from 1957. Royal content doesn't stop there, BFI Mediatheques around the country will also feature such gems as **Royal Family** (1969) which covers a typical year in the life of the Queen and her family, and showed for the first time the behind-scenes existence of the Royal Family in both their off-duty moments and official engagements.

**Camp Christmas** will feature two festive delights, the first is **Christmas Snowtime Special** (BBC, 1979) – ABBA, Boney M and Kate Bush appear in this outlandish affair hosted by Dame Edna Everage. Meanwhile The Goodies and Richard Wattis join the team for a pun laden show in **Crackerjack Christmas Pantomime: The Story of Aladdin** (BBC, 1974).

We'll also salute the comedic genius of **Eric Sykes** who died earlier this year with a programme dedicated to this comedy giant. This will include two seasonal episodes from Sykes' popular sitcom **Sykes: Christmas Party** (BBC 1975) and **Sykes: Christmas Special** (BBC 1977) as well as an extended Christmas Day edition of **This is Your Life** (ITV, 1979) in which Sykes is the recipient of the famous Big Red Book.

A collection of festive entertainment from the wilder side of life has been compiled for **Madcap Christmas**, including **The Telegoons: The International Christmas Pudding** (BBC, 1963) and **Eric Idle's** marvellous post-Python satire **Rutland Weekend Television Christmas** (BBC, 1975). Michael Bentine and his band of merry men, including the late Clive Dunn, will provide a mix of lunatic mayhem in **It's a Square World** and cult Claymation favourite **Rex the Runt** (BBC, 1998) will close the proceedings with its truly original and absurdist humour.

A collection of 1990s **Animated Christmas** classics will provide an evening of entertainment suitable for all the family. **Famous Fred** (C4, 1996) is the tale of a feline singing sensation, voiced by **Lenny Henry** and based on the charming book by Posy Simmonds (*Tamara Drewe*); while **The Mousehole Cat** (BBC, 1994) tells the tale of a cat who, along with his master, must braves fierce storms to save their village from starvation. Finally, Robbie the Reindeer must overcome various obstacles if he is to win a place on Santa's crack sled team in **Hooves of Fire** (BBC, 1999). This fast-paced comedy cartoon is enhanced no end by an all-star voice cast including **Steve Coogan, Paul Whitehouse** and **Jane Horrocks**.

As well as being haunted by *Ghosts of Christmas Specials Past*, audiences will be able to enjoy yuletide telly in BFI Mediatheques across the UK. The selection spans the period from **The Crazy Gang's Party** (1957) in the early days of ITV, to what many consider the pinnacle of the format, **The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show** (1980). Further chaotic capers can be seen in **Rod Hull and Emu Sing a Christmas Song** (1976), **Carry on Christmas** (1969) and **Tommy Cooper's Christmas** (1973). **The Snowman** will offer a more melancholy take on the season, the animation having been a festive fixture since its first broadcast on Channel 4 in 1982.

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#### **Events in the Ghosts of Christmas Specials season:**

##### **Camp Christmas: Christmas Snowtime Special**

BBC 1979. Dir Michael Hurl. 50min

ABBA, Boney M and Kate Bush appear in this snowbound spectacular hosted by Dame Edna Everage. It's the sort of show for which the phrase 'they-don't-make-'em-like-that-anymore' could have been invented, but the mixture of outlandish costumes and OTT performances is irresistible. It's directed with gusto by Michael Hurl, an entertainment maestro who died earlier this year.

Plus **Crackerjack Christmas Pantomime: The Story of Aladdin**

BBC 1974. Dir Robin Nash. 60min

The Goodies and Richard Wattis join the *Crackerjack* regulars in this pun-laden show.

**Total c110min**

**Thu 6 Dec 18:10 NFT2**

### **Christmas with Eric Sykes**

Comedy giant Eric Sykes died earlier this year and we salute his genius with three Christmas specials.

#### **This Is Your Life: Eric Sykes**

ITV 1979. Dir Terry Yarwood. 45min

This specially extended Christmas Day edition of *This Is Your Life* featured Sykes as the recipient of the famous Big Red Book. A studio of famous guests add reminiscences to the story of Sykes' life in, and out, of the world of comedy. Plus two seasonal episodes from Sykes' famous sitcom:

#### **Sykes: Christmas Party**

BBC 1975. Dir Roger Race. With Hattie Jacques. 30min

#### **Sykes: Christmas Special**

BBC 1977. Dir Roger Race. With Hattie Jacques. 30min

**Total c105min**

**Mon 10 Dec 18:20 NFT2**

### **Madcap Christmas**

A collection of festive entertainment from the wilder side of the street.

#### **The Telegoons: The International Christmas Pudding**

BBC 1963. Dir Tony Young. Voice artists: Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe, Peter Sellers. 15min

Seasonal offering from the TV puppet adventures of radio's famous Goons (tbc).

#### **It's a Square World**

BBC 1963. Dir Joe McGrath. With Michael Bentine, Clive Dunn. 30min

Michael Bentine and his band of merry men in the usual mix of lunatic mayhem.

#### **Rutland Weekend Television Christmas**

BBC 1975. Dir Ian Keill. With Eric Idle, Neil Innes, Gwen Taylor. 30min

Eric Idle's marvellous post-Python local television satire.

#### **Rex the Runt: Adventures on Telly: Parts 1-3**

BBC 1998. Dir Richard Goleszowski. Voice artists: Andrew Franks, Kevin Wrench. 3 x 10min

Absurdist animation with the cult favourite Rex the Runt and his unlikely crew. A true original, quite mad but always entertaining.

**Total c105min**

**Wed 19 Dec 18:20 NFT2**

### **Animated Christmas**

A collection of 1990s animated Christmas classics.

#### **Hooves of Fire**

BBC 1999. Dir Richard Goleszowski. Voice artists: Steve Coogan, Paul Whitehouse, Jane Horrocks. 30min

Robbie the Reindeer must overcome various obstacles if he is to win a place on Santa's crack sled team. Fast-paced comedy cartoon enhanced no end by an ace voice-cast including Steve Coogan as Robbie.

#### **The Mousehole Cat**

BBC 1994. Dir Catherine Collis. Voice artist: Siân Phillips. 25min

Utterly enchanting animation based on Antonia Barber's famous children's book in which a cat and his master brave fierce storms to save their village from starvation.

#### **Famous Fred**

C4 1996. Dir Joanna Quinn. Voice artists: Lenny Henry, Tom Courtney. 25min

Based on the book by Posy Simmonds, *Famous Fred* tells the story of a feline singing sensation.

**Total c80min**

**Thu 20 Dec 18:20 NFT2**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £10.00, concs £6.75 Members pay £1.50 less on any ticket. Website [www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)

**Tickets for FREE screenings and events must be booked in advance by calling the Box Office to avoid disappointment**

### **BFI Shop**

The BFI Shop is stocked and staffed by BFI experts with over 1,200 book titles and 1,000 DVDs to choose from, including hundreds of acclaimed books and DVDs produced by the BFI.

### **The benugo bar & kitchen**

Eat, drink and be merry in panoramic daylight. benugo's décor is contemporary, brightly lit and playful with a lounge space, bar and dining area. The place to network, hang out, unpack a film, savour the best of Modern British or sip on a cocktail.

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

### **\*\*\* PICTURE DESK \*\*\***

**A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI Southbank / December 2012 / Ghosts of Christmas Specials Past**