



Photo credit: BFI/Archbuild/Associated Rediffusion.

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**BFI ANNOUNCES DISCOVERY OF TWO EPISODES OF PRE-PYTHON  
CLASSIC BRITISH TELEVISION COMEDY SERIES**

**Missing Believed Wiped and unseen since original broadcast for  
over 40 years**

The BFI is delighted to announce the discovery of two episodes of the hugely influential and much-loved, British television comedy series *At Last the 1948 Show* (1967) starring John Cleese, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Marty Feldman, Graham Chapman and “the lovely” Aimi Macdonald.

These two episodes are the first and last ever broadcast: episode 1, series 1 and episode 7, series 2 seen on ITV in 1967. This is a major find for fans of the extraordinary early flowering of surreal, British television comedy which led to the creation of the Monty Python programmes two years later. John Cleese will present the two programmes at BFI Southbank, London SE1 on Sunday 7 December as part of the BFI’s annual celebration of newly recovered television programmes, Missing Believed Wiped.

The find was made by Missing Believed Wiped co-ordinator Dick Fiddy when he was invited by family members to explore the collections of the late David Frost who was Executive Producer on *At Last the 1948 Show*. The programmes were contained on two reels of

16mm film and had been filmed directly from a television screen. They have been specially loaned to the BFI by the Frost family. They have not been seen since their original broadcast in 1967. Twenty five years ago only two episodes of the series were known to survive but happily rediscoveries from various sources mean that today, of the thirteen episodes which were produced a total of more than nine episodes worth of material is now safely contained in the BFI National Collection of Film and Television.

Dick Fiddy, BFI Television Consultant said, “This latest recovery is a crucial find. It represents a key moment in the history of British television comedy featuring the combined talents of some of its greatest exponents. These gifted comedians, all in their 20s and 30s, were let off the leash and allowed to experiment with style and content, resulting in shows which have had an enduring influence on comedy worldwide. Even very recently the famous ‘Four Yorkshiremen’ sketch - which originated on *At Last the 1948 Show* - was used as the opener for the Python’s stage shows at the O2 and had been performed previously by the team in galas such as the *Secret Policeman’s Ball*. Cleese, Feldman, Brooke-Taylor and Chapman, created, scripted and starred in the *1948 Show* and the fact that the show remains very, very funny 47 years later is a tribute to their extraordinary abilities.”

*At Last the 1948 Show* is a comedy sketch show offering a range of spoofs of different broadcasting formats and occasional long-running gags, such as the recurring appearance of “the lovely” Aimi Macdonald as a presenter between sketches, under the impression that she is the star of the show. In one linking item she utters the words, “*And now for something completely different...*” the continuity announcement cliché which would resurface as a recurring motif in *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*.

Some of the sketches contained in these new discoveries were released on a commercially produced comedy record but this is the first time in nearly half a century that the visuals have been available to go with them.

Dick Fiddy, BFI television consultant and Steve Bryant, Senior Curator, Television, BFI National Collection are available for interviews.

A selection of images for use by media in connection with this story can be found on [www.image.net/BFI/BFINationalArchive/MissingBelievedWiped](http://www.image.net/BFI/BFINationalArchive/MissingBelievedWiped).

Notes to editors:

John Cleese Introduces  
**At Last the 1948 Show**

*ITV 1967. With John Cleese, Graham Chapman, Tim Brooke-Taylor, Aimi MacDonald. TRT 110min*

We’re delighted to welcome John Cleese to BFI Southbank for an on-stage discussion about the seminal ITV comedy sketch series *At Last the 1948 Show*. The BFI has been painstakingly restoring the series with material found from various sources. A significant new discovery earlier this year provided us with two episodes previously thought lost – fittingly, the very first and very last episodes, complete save for a few minutes in each case. We screen this newly retrieved material either side of our discussion.

**Sun 7 Dec 14:40 NFT1**

[www.bfi.org.uk](http://www.bfi.org.uk)

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## **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

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

A selection of images for journalistic use can be found at [www.image.net](http://www.image.net) under BFI / BFI National Archive / Missing Believed Wiped / At Last the 1948 Show