



MISSING BELIEVED WIPED

Introducing ‘The Precious Things’: Holiday Startime

Hugh and I

A fondly remembered and long-running sitcom that reunited Terry Scott and Hugh Lloyd, who had worked together on stage many years earlier. The episodes were built around a simple but durable premise: at his mother’s house at 33 Lobelia Avenue, Tooting, in south London (*Citizen Smith*, a decade later, was also set in Tooting), Scott is a rather hopeless youngish bachelor who aspires to wealth, a situation he would prefer to achieve without hard work, continually dreaming up grandiose schemes that he then seeks to explore. The more downbeat and slight Lloyd, meanwhile, is the family’s lodger, who, while a trifle dozy, at least brings some money into the house courtesy of his job at a local factory. Although in no way a direct parody of Laurel and Hardy, the relationship – and physical characteristics – of the two lead players was reminiscent of the great film comics, and their friendship was often tested to its limits when the gullible Lloyd was led into one misadventure after another by Scott’s boisterous and usually blind enthusiasms.

By the end of the fifth series the principals decided to bring it to an end, but when the BBC asked for more they decided to continue but with new settings, ending the suburban domestic sagas and introducing different backdrops. (At this point, Scott’s screen mum, and her Lobelia Avenue neighbours – the Crispins and the Wormolds – left the cast.) With Hugh having won £5,000, a small fortune in 1966, on the Premium Bonds, a sixth series showed the pair undertaking a world cruise. The seventh – its revised title punning the US adventure series *I Spy*, then airing in the UK on ITV – found the mismatched twosome returned from their globetrotting but embroiled in a variety of comedy adventures, each episode ending in a cliff-hanger.

Mark Lewisohn, *RadioTimes Guide to TV Comedy*, 1998

Elton John Lost & Found – His Finest Concert

After the lightweight hit ‘Don’t Go Breaking My Heart’, Elton’s management proposed that he undertook a ‘solo’ gig, which would be televised as a live-to-air ‘event’ to be transmitted via satellite to America with local Independent Scottish Radio picking up the show too. This may seem very much par for the course for any Rock Star. But in 1976 this was a huge undertaking and an unheralded benchmark in the history of music on TV.

This planned John Reid Enterprises event known as ‘The First Edinburgh Rock Festival’ featured Queen, Stephen Stills & Neil Young and Elton. Elton’s opening night concert was taking place in a time that was pre mobile phones, pre domestic computers, before the internet, and before stereo TV. Back in the summer of ’76 there were only three UK networked TV stations, namely BBC1, BBC2, and regional ITV. Local radio was still in its infancy. Satellite TV transmissions were an expensive rarity, apart from high profile sports events such as the World Cup and the Olympic Games. So a live Elton ‘Solo’ Stereo STV concert with only Elton at his grand piano was still technically challenging back in 1976, especially for clunky old Scottish TV.

This concert was advertised in the local Scottish Press as ‘*The first solo “Colour TV Concert” to be transmitted live on ITV via satellite to the USA*’. So New Yorkers could see this show too. However, the UK ITV Network, oddly opted not to take this show. Only Scottish TV were given the right to screen the gig for the first half hour of a two hour show. Furthermore, the inferior mono TV audio was usurped here by a new challenge of what was then called a ‘Radio Simulcast’. This was where Edinburgh’s Radio Forth and Glasgow’s Radio Clyde would provide their stereo sound engineers so you could turn down your mono TV set’s sound and turn-up your stereo tuner amplifier’s radio signal to sync with local Scottish ITV. All via your domestic Hi Fi. That was the plan! What followed was different.

Elton began the set with a seldom played ballad, ‘Skyline Pigeon’, singing his heart out. A full house saw his audience going absolutely nuts. Elton was on tip top form. The sound improved, but 25 minutes in just as the show was getting better and better, the TV Transmission ended abruptly mid-way through a song. The remaining 90 minutes were lost. Local radio carried on transmitting till the two hour concert ended.

Years later, painstakingly, Henry Scott-Irvine masterminded a reconstruction of the full concert using the superior radio sound and video masters of the full show. This reconstruction was released briefly online for 48 hours to commemorate Elton’s 70th birthday but then disappeared. Henry Scott-Irvine joins us to talk about the epic reconstruction and to introduce a couple of stunning Elton performances from the show.

Introducing ‘The Precious Things’

Certain sections of the TV archives are healthily exploited, repeated on linear television, available on streaming channels, released on DVD and Blu-ray. For the most parts these are well remembered comedy and drama series and prestige one-offs and mini-series. The BFI TV seasons often feature more rarefied material but there remains an enormous amount that hasn’t slotted in to themed seasons. Ironically, the Missing Believed Wiped initiative screenings, which show rediscovered examples of television, often do include more obscure material (advertising magazines, regional documentaries, long forgotten lifestyle shows) programmed simply because of the fact that they have been ‘found’. However many similar items have survived in the archives but rarely see the light of the day; brilliant, baffling, idiosyncratic footage often unseen since its original transmission.

Next month sees ‘The Precious Things’, a season designed to offer us the opportunity to plunder the TV archives for weird and wonderful examples. As a taster for the season we present one such item: *Holiday Startime*.

Holiday Startime

The centrepiece of LWT’s 1970 Boxing Day schedule, this 70 min cornucopia of music and comedy, hosted by Maggie Fitzgibbon, included talents as diverse as Ted Ray and Peter Cook, and Acker Bilk and The Bee Gees. ITV variety show, recorded in black-and-white, because of the colour strike.

With thanks to:

Chris Perry

The Kaleidoscope Team

Henry Scott-Irvine

Pete Thomas

HUGH AND I: BEAU JESTERS

Written by: John Chapman.
Music: Wally Stott
Producer: David Croft

Starring

Terry Scott
Hugh Lloyd

Cast

Carl Duering
Aidan Turner
John G. Heller
Eva Whishaw
Maurice Podbrey
Harold Beren
Robert Gillespie
Jay Denyer
Howell Evans
Jan Leeming
Bernard Martin
Butch Hudson

BBC1 tx 13.12.1966
UK 1966

TRT 120 mins

THE PRECIOUS THINGS

1970s Odd Pop and Rare Rock

Sat 11 Dec 15:00

An Evening with Vincent Price: Vincent Price Is in the Country + Aspel and Company

Sat 11 Dec 17:50

Neil Innes and Terry Jones: East of the Moon (+ intro by producer Joy Whitby) + The Innes Book of Records

Fri 17 Dec 18:10

Christmas Specials of Yesteryear: Magpie + Max Headroom’s Giant Christmas Turkey

Sat 18 Dec 18:20

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