Events

Good Morning, Britain: TV-am Revisited

To celebrate the launch of The BFI Collections Fund, join contributors and presenters to transport us back to the 1980s and the heady days of TV-am. Relive the (then) brave new world of shoulder pads, breaking news stories, children's programming and, of course, aerobics. BFI Ambassador Sanjeev Bhaskar hosts a one-off sofa of special guests Lorraine Kelly, Nick Owen, Lizzie Webb, Gyles Brandreth, Lisa Aziz, Anne Diamond, Anneka Rice and Timmy Mallett, to revisit a historic, much-loved era of breakfast television.

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February 1983. Britain is waking up to a bright new era of television. For the first time, viewers can switch on the commercial channel in the morning and find a brand-new service dedicated to news, current affairs and entertainment. The station is TV-am, the programme *Good Morning Britain* and its arrival promises to change the way the nation starts its day.

Broadcasting live every morning from the brand-new Breakfast Television Centre studios on Camden Lock, a former car garage and showroom transformed into television studios in a striking post-modern design by Sir Terry Farrell, TV-am brought a bold, colourful burst of sunshine to Britain's mornings.

Initially launched and fronted by five of the biggest names in British broadcasting: David Frost, Michael Parkinson, Angela Rippon, Anna Ford and Robert Kee, TV-am would go on to make household names of presenters including Anne Diamond, Nick Owen, Lizzie Webb, Wincey Willis, Gyles Brandreth, Loyd Grossman, Mike Morris, Timmy Mallett, Lisa Aziz, Lorraine Kelly – and of course Roland Rat!

Across its lifetime, TV-am produced more than three hours of live television each day leaving a vast legacy of archive material comprising around 10,000 hours of programming, making it one of the largest surviving collections of live broadcast television anywhere in the world. The BFI National Archive has now acquired this collection and is undertaking the enormous task of documenting, accessioning and digitising this material. Tonight we celebrate TV-am as we announce a landmark preservation project to safeguard the collection for future generations.

Through a decade of broadcasting, TV-am welcomed an estimated 30,000 guests, including royalty, prime ministers, politicians, journalists, entertainers and sporting personalities. There are interviews with political figures including Harold Wilson, Margaret Thatcher, Edward Heath, Arthur Scargill, Tony Blair and many others. TV-am also secured Britain's first television phone interview with Nelson Mandela eight days after his release from prison. From industrial unrest and the miners' strike at the beginning of the decade to terrorism, the poll tax and the fall of Communism at its close, TV-am was there, often setting the news agenda and examining the issues that shaped the lives of ordinary people.

The breadth of guests drawn from the world of film, music and entertainment is remarkable with notable guests including John Cleese, Bette Davis, Sir David Attenborough, Elton John and Madonna among many others. From *After Nine* and its pioneering commitment to women's health issues and regular topical awareness campaigns, to Lizzie Webb's much-loved morning fitness sessions and children's favourites such as *Wacaday* and Roland Rat, the collection captures the diverse mix that defined TV-am's output. Many of these segments would become breakfast TV staples: Dr Hilary Jones and the Doc Spot; Russell Grant's horoscopes; agony aunts Anna Raeburn and Claire Rayner; Jeni Barnett and Gyles Brandreth with the



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Selection Box: Seasonal TV Treats from the Archive

The Goons at Rediffusion + intro by journalist and broadcaster Samira Ahmed
Sat 5 Dec 15:15
Disco!
Tue 8 Dec 18:20
Funny Women at Christmas
Thu 17 Dec 18:10
The A to Z of TV
Sun 27 Dec 14:45

Postbag; Rustie Lee and John Eley, the self-styled 'Cooking Canon' in the kitchen and many others.

TV-am should be remembered not only for its pioneering role in UK broadcasting history, but also for its cultural value. For many, it remains a cherished part of Britain's shared television memory, recalled with both affection and nostalgia. Viewed today, the collection stands as a remarkable time capsule of the 1980s and early 1990s, documenting the rapid transformation of British society in the Thatcher era and beyond. Through its coverage of major political events, breaking news and headline tragedies, TV-am chronicled economic upheaval, shifting cultural trends and changing public attitudes.

When an emotional Mike Morris and Lorraine Kelly presented *Good Morning Britain* for the final time on 31 December 1992 there were many across the nation who also shed a tear. It was truly the end of an era.

Chris Hall, Television Project Curator

The BFI Collections Fund

Every year, our experts at the BFI National Archive spend thousands of hours caring for an entire history of film and television. One of the largest and most important archives of film and television globally, its collections contain a singular record of the art of filmmaking and TV production from the late 19th century through to today. Caring for a collection of this scale and diversity is complex and time-consuming but without it, we can't bring the stories of our past to future audiences across the UK.

The TV-am collection is one of many in our care, with our specialists dedicating time and expertise to preserving it. Our colleagues have spent the last two years working on acquiring the TV-am collection to the Archive, and this includes assessing thousands of historical videotapes which contain the programmes we love and remember. Wear and tear and imperfect storage conditions can lead to irreparable videotape degradation over time, rendering the material unwatchable or irretrievable. As replacement parts are no longer commercially available, and the technical skills needed to maintain playback equipment are rare and dwindling, caring for obsolete videotapes is more challenging than ever. Without digitising these tapes we can't unlock this collection's potential for audiences.

Support is needed for every stage of caring for collections such as TV-am; without it the BFI cannot continue to bring the stories of our shared past to future audiences. This is why we are launching the BFI Collections Fund, to raise funds in support of the BFI National Archive team's work to protect this collection and unlock its potential.

Together, we can do more to bring these programmes from the vaults to the screen and beyond. Every newly digitised episode goes straight into the Mediatheque here at BFI Southbank, and with your support we will be able to take them even further.

We're proud to be caring for this vital piece of television history, thanks to donations like yours.

To support the BFI Collections Fund:

https://stories.bfi.org.uk/collections-fund/

All I want for Christmas is… a film can!
The BFI National Archive needs 1,500 new film cans each year to keep 16mm and 35mm films safe for future generations. Give £5 this Christmas to buy a can and help us give film history a future.

BFI Southbank

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop. We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.