

ITV announces documentary in tribute to the late Paul O'Grady

Published Fri 08 Mar 2024



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The Life and Death of Lily Savage will air on ITV1 this Easter, along with Paul's final TV project; Paul O'Grady's Great Elephant Adventure, to mark the first anniversary of Paul's passing.

A Special feature length /90 minute documentary will feature Paul's daughter Sharyn and other close family and friends including Sir Ian McKellen, Julian Clary and Graham Norton, sharing deeply personal memories and first hand accounts, with much of it told in Paul's own words.

Paul O'Grady, who died a year ago this March, was a 'National Treasure' – an ardent animal-lover and professional chatterbox, who became a much-loved fixture of primetime television. But, for more than 20 years, he was also a razor-

tongued drag queen. In a brand new special 90-minute documentary to mark a year since his passing, Paul's story will be told through the prism of his famous creation, Lily Savage - an underground cabaret star who took mainstream telly by storm, against all the odds.

The Life and Death of Lily Savage is set against the backdrop of Thatcher's Britain, Clause 28 and the AIDS crisis. It's the unlikely tale of how a working class, gay man from Birkenhead created the unforgettable character of a Scouse sex worker and honed her persona on the stages of London's underground gay venues in the 1970s and 80s.

A leading voice in the battle for LGBTQ+ equality, O'Grady endured police raids, the death of a generation of friends, and heart-breaking visits to AIDS wards (in character) before moving into television. From her big break on Channel 4's The Big Breakfast to mainstream success hosting Blankety Blank on Saturday nights on BBC1, Lily came a long way in 20 years - and so too did Britain. But then, at the height of her fame something extraordinary happened: Lily Savage disappeared from TV, never to be seen again. Paul O'Grady hung up Lily's wig for the last time in 2004.

Featuring personal accounts from Paul's close friends and family, including, for the first time, his daughter, Sharyn Mousley, and, using Paul's own words from earlier recordings, The Life and Death of Lily Savage tells the story of decades of hard graft bringing Lily from the fringes of London's gay counterculture into the heart of the nation's living rooms and discusses why Paul suddenly decided to kill Lily off.

Featuring interviews with Paul's sister, Sheila Rudd, friends Sir Ian McKellen, Julian Clary, Jools Holland, Jo Brand, Alan Carr and Graham Norton, together they unpick this often overlooked chapter of Paul O'Grady's extraordinary story.

Paul's final TV project will also air for the first time on ITV1. Paul O'Grady's Great Elephant Adventure is a two-part series following Paul as he travels through Thailand and Laos to celebrate the wonderful work done by elephant conservation centres to rescue, rehabilitate and protect these most majestic, but vulnerable, of animals. Filmed in the months before his sudden and unexpected death, this was Paul's final TV project and one that he was incredibly passionate about.

Jo Clinton-Davis, Controller of Factual at ITV says: "This blue chip feature-length documentary reveals the little known biography of Paul's alter ego Lily - from her birth in the docks of Liverpool to her mysterious 'death' on mainstream TV. Set

against the background of social and political change and upheaval, it features Paul's own voice and those who were closest to him - including his daughter Sharyn. This is a layered and richly entertaining tribute to the wonderful Paul O Grady.”

Clare Barton, Executive Producer at Silver Star says: “It was an honour and a privilege to make Paul’s final TV project with him out in SE Asia, coupled with the opportunity to pay tribute to him with a deep dive into the life of his most famous creation - Lily Savage. It has been very emotional and moving to interview the people who knew him best and to delve into the golden archive of Paul in his absolute prime.”

Both programmes are co-produced by Olga TV and Silver Star Productions, for ITV1, ITVX and STV.

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