

The Doug Anthony Allstars

TICK F[💀]CKING TOCK



ABC + iVIEW



TICK F***ING TOCK

Screening from Tuesday, 2 October at 9.30pm on ABC & ABC iview

The Doug Anthony Allstars were comedy superstars, until Tim Ferguson unexpectedly pulled the plug, breaking the hearts of Paul McDermott and Richard Fidler. Years later they discovered Tim had Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and put aside their differences to reunite and live the glory days again.

This two-part documentary series, *Tick F***ing Tock* chronicles the story of the bad boys of Australian comedy – and for the first time they confront how Tim’s MS impacted on their friendships at each step to international stardom. This is also an enduring love story between Tim and Paul, two of our greatest creative minds with the same confrontational attitude they’ve always had. All the while knowing that time is not on their side – Tick F***ing Tock...

“You can’t help seeing what’s going on between these two guys and how long they’ve been together and what they’ve been through and they’re still going through. It’s a really, really moving thing for the audience, you know I’ve got to admit it, it occasionally gets to me as well...” Paul Livingston.

Curated by comedy curmudgeon Ted Robinson, who gave the Allstars their first Australian break on the TV program *The Big Gig*, Tim, Paul and Richard discuss why the group broke up and the sadness of watching their friend deal with his debilitating illness – and in Allstars’ style, they can’t help being candid, moving, irreverent and funny.

From the ages of 19 to 32, Tim experienced random symptoms – crossed eyes, tingling, numbness – that were finally diagnosed as MS a year after the Allstars broke up. Throughout the film Tim talks about how it took him a long time to connect the dots about his illness.

The series features the Allstars’ outrageous acts from *The Big Gig* and *DAAS Kapital*, and their best songs, ranging from the controversial - *Funk You and World’s Greatest Kisser* - to their classic covers - *Throw Your Arms Around Me* and *I Heard It Through the Grapevine*.

Episode one, focuses on the group’s first 10 years. From buskers on the streets of Canberra in the mid-1980s, they quickly became huge stars in the UK. But in 1994 Tim called it quits and the Allstars broke up. Paul and Richard were devastated, with the group on the verge of true international success. It was another 12 years until Tim finally confessed to them that he had MS.

In episode two, the Allstars reform 30 years later as the “cripple” (Tim Ferguson, now in a wheelchair), the “superstar” (Paul McDermott) and the “pensioner” (Paul Livingston who replaces Richard Fidler). And once again, even after confronting the reality of Tim’s illness on and off stage, they quickly find success.

They make a triumphant return to the Edinburgh comedy festival, with their shows described as more brilliant than ever. Audiences are moved by Paul McDermott finding the lighter side of Tim’s MS and their audacious humour and angelic songs.

Paul Livingston observes how the show is about “falling apart, about being old, about not being able to cope any more. It works really well because we are not really acting. None of us.”

While Tim assures the audience, he will probably die before them ... Tick F***ing Tock...



Production Credits:

Tick F*ing Tock** is a Little Round Top production for GNW TV. Produced in association with the ABC by Ted Robinson and Anna Cater.

ABC Head of Factual: Steve Bibb.

ABC Commissioning Editor: Julie Hanna.

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EPISODE ONE

Tuesday, 2 October at 9.30pm on ABC and ABC iview

The Doug Anthony Allstars were comedy superstars, until Tim Ferguson unexpectedly pulled the plug, breaking the hearts of Paul McDermott and Richard Fidler. Years later they discovered Tim had Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and put aside their differences to re-unite and live the glory days again.

The two-part documentary series **Tick F**king Tock** chronicles the story of the bad boys of Australian comedy – and for the first time they confront how Tim’s MS has impacted on their friendships at each step to international stardom.

The Allstars began as buskers in the mid-1980s and were soon the toast of the Adelaide comedy festival. Finding it hard to break into the local Australian comedy scene, they quickly found success in the UK: sell-out shows at the Edinburgh comedy festivals, weekly appearances on all the major TV channels, and regular tours to packed theatres.

But in 1994 Tim called it quits and the group broke up. Paul and Richard were devastated, with the Allstars on the verge of true international success.

Since his late teens Tim had experienced random symptoms – crossed eyes, tingling, numbness – that were finally diagnosed as MS a year after the Allstars ended. He was 32.

In 2003 the Allstars re-united to perform at a benefit concert – and still Richard and Paul had no idea about Tim’s MS. They eventually found out - 12 years after the group broke up.



EPISODE TWO

Tuesday, 9 October at 9.30pm on ABC and ABC iView

The Doug Anthony Allstars were international comedy superstars, until Tim Ferguson unexpectedly pulled the plug, breaking the hearts of Paul McDermott and Richard Fidler. Years later they discovered Tim had Multiple Sclerosis (MS), and put aside their differences to re-unite and live the glory days again.

In episode two of **Tick F***ing Tock**, the bad boys of Australian comedy reform as the cripple (Tim Ferguson now in a wheelchair), the superstar (Paul McDermott) and the pensioner (Paul Livingston who replaces Richard Fidler). And once again, just like 30 years ago, they quickly find success.

The Allstars make a triumphant return to the Edinburgh comedy festival, with their shows described as more brilliant than ever. Audiences are moved by Paul McDermott making fun of Tim's MS and their audacious humour and angelic songs.

But it's not easy. The ancient cobblestones of Edinburgh's streets and the stifling heat in the venues put a lot of stress on Tim, which flows through to the rest of the group. Paul Livingston observes how their show is about 'falling apart, about being old, about not being able to cope any more. It works really well because we are not really acting. None of us.'

Tim's MS limits his movements. It takes him a long time to get dressed and he needs assistance to shower, but he remains optimistic and keeps that trademark sense of humour – both on and off stage. He performs a poem at his own funeral and assures the audience he will probably die before them ... Tick F***ing Tock...



DAAS TIMELINE

1984: Tim Ferguson meets Richard Fidler busking on the streets of Canberra as uni students. They begin performing with Robert Piper, and form the Doug Anthony Allstars. They derived their name from Doug Anthony, a former Country Party leader and Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.

1985: Robert Piper leaves the group due to other commitments and is replaced by Paul McDermott.

1986: DAAS win their first major award, the Pick of the Fringe, at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, and move to Melbourne where they perform regular gigs at the Prince Patrick Hotel.

1987: DAAS make their first overseas performance at the Edinburgh Fringe, to sold out crowds.

1988: DAAS is nominated for the prestigious Perrier Comedy Award at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. They begin appearing on major UK TV channels, in front of millions of people and playing enormous shows – in Canada, Germany, America and Britain. They finish their time in Britain with an appearance on the final episode of Channel 4's *Friday Night Live* TV program.



1989: ABC comedy producer Ted Robinson invites DAAS to appear on his new live comedy show, *The Big Gig*.

1990: DAAS releases a book titled *Book*, a collection of dark short stories, and their first official album, *DAAS Icon*. The album becomes the highest selling independent album in Australia.

Tim Ferguson stands as an independent candidate in the federal seat of Kooyong against Opposition leader Andrew Peacock.

1991: DAAS creates the new TV series *DAAS Kapital* for the ABC.

1992: DAAS returns to the UK, appearing regularly on Channel 4's *Viva Cabaret* show.

1994: Tim Ferguson tells Paul McDermott and Richard Fidler that he can't be in DAAS anymore. The group does a farewell tour of Australia, releasing the show on CD, called *DAAS: The Last Concert*.

1995: Tim is diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

2003: DAAS re-unites for the 'Concert for Holly' benefit gig at the Sydney Opera House.



2006: Tim tells Paul and Richard that he has MS.

2008: Tim does an interview with Paul on *Good News Week*, going public about his MS. A DAAS DVD, titled *The Unlimited Uncollectible Sterling Deluxe Edition*, a 2-disc collection of their performances from the first two seasons of *The Big Gig*, is released.

2013: DAAS re-unite for a performance at Melbourne Town Hall, to launch the ABC's *DAAS Kapital* DVD, as part of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Tim publishes his memoir, *Carry a Big Stick*.

2014: DAAS reform, with Paul Livingston replacing Richard Fidler as the guitarist, and perform at the 30th anniversary at the Canberra Comedy Festival.

2016: The new DAAS returns to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and win the coveted Spirit of the Fringe Award. They perform sell-out shows at London's Soho Theatre. Their show is selected by *Chortle* as the second most memorable comedy gig of 2016. Paul Livingston publishes his memoir, titled *DAAS: Their Part in My Downfall*.

2017: DAAS return to the cobbled streets of Edinburgh (hell for a wheelchair) where fans such as Dawn French and Eddie Izzard come to their shows. They perform a final sell-out UK show at iconic rock venue the Shepherd's Bush Empire before a star-studded audience, including musician Billy Bragg and *Blackadder's* Tony Robinson.



TIM FERGUSON

Tim Ferguson formed the Doug Anthony Allstars (DAAS) with Richard Fidler in 1984, with Paul McDermott joining soon after. For the next 10 years DAAS broke box office records on nine world tours and released books, comics, artworks, live recordings and Australia's biggest selling independent album, *ICON*. Tim also found time to stand as a candidate for the federal seat of Kooyong.

The group's screen credits include ABC shows *Daas Kapital* and *The Big Gig*, the feature film *The Edinburgh Years* and the BBC's *DAAS LOVE*. They appeared on Channel 4's *Viva Cabaret* and UK TV shows including *Friday Night Live*, *Dial Midnight*, *Night Network* and *Pure Raunch*.

After the group broke up, with a final swansong tour around Australia in 1995, Tim hosted the Logie-winning *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush*, the UK/Australian sitcom *Shock Jock*, *Big Brother Insider*, the *Unreal-TV* franchise, starred in the spoof 70's cop show *Funky Squad* and the live satirical commentary show *With Tim Ferguson* (WTF). He also appeared on *The Circle* and *Good News Week*.

Tim shocked and rocked as Frankfurter in the Sydney production of *The Rocky Horror Show*. He wrote his memoir *Carry A Big Stick*, a tale of love, laughter and MS, and the comedy manual *The Cheeky Monkey – Writing Narrative Comedy*.

DAAS reformed in 2014 with Paul McDermott and Paul Livingston.

In 2016 Tim co-wrote and directed the feature film *Spin Out*, which was released by Sony Pictures. He has written opinion pieces for newspapers including *The London Times*, *The Scotsman*, *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, and wrote the political satire *Left, Right and Centre*.

Tim is a narrative comedy teacher, and lectures in comedy, screenwriting and concept development at the Sydney Film School, the Australian Film TV & Radio School (AFTRS) and RMIT University and teaches his Cheeky Monkey Comedy Screenwriting courses.



PAUL McDERMOTT

Paul McDermott was asked to join the Doug Anthony Allstars soon after they formed in 1984. Initially busking and performing live in clubs, with Paul writing the majority of their material and songs, DAAS achieved success at the 1986 Adelaide Fringe Festival and travelled to Britain for the Edinburgh Fringe festival, where they were nominated for the Perrier Award. They toured both nationally and internationally, appearing on British television and playing at the opening of the Barcelona Olympics.

After initially struggling to gain success in Australia, in 1989 DAAS was picked up to perform on the ABC show *The Big Gig*. They appeared frequently on the show until 1991, when the group premiered their own series on the ABC, *DAAS Kapital*, which ran for two seasons.

The group split up in 1995 after a final farewell tour of Australia. Following the break-up, Paul wrote two film scripts and the stage show *MOSH!* In 1996 he was recruited as host of the satirical news-based quiz show *Good News Week*, which aired on the ABC and Network Ten for four years.

Paul hosted the AFI awards in 2002, 2004 and 2005, and the ABC show *Strictly Dancing* in 2004 and 2005. He has released three books - *The Forgetting of Wisdom*, *The Scree* and *The Girl Who Swallowed Bees*. *The Scree* was developed into a short film and went on to win Best Film at the 2005 Flickerfest International Film Festival and was invited to be screened at the 54th Berlin Film Festival.

In 2010 Paul was nominated for a Gold Logie Award for Most Popular Personality on Australian Television. He returned to regular TV hosting in July 2015 as the host of *Room 101*, airing on SBS. In 2018 he became the host of the ABC quiz show *Think Tank*.



RICHARD FIDLER

Richard Fidler formed the Doug Anthony Allstars with Tim Ferguson in 1984. For the next decade the group played to audiences all over the world: from the West End of London, to the streets of Paris and New York, to isolated mining towns in outback Australia.

In 1987, at their first show at the Edinburgh Fringe, DAAS took audiences outside the venue to a giant bonfire, where they successfully goaded them to burn their worldly possessions. The intensity of their performances generated strong word-of-mouth and their season sold out. Soon DAAS found themselves on *Friday Night Live* for Channel 4, and on a New Year's Eve special *DAAS Love* for the BBC.

Returning to Australia, the group featured on the ABC series *The Big Gig* and their own sci-fi comedy series, *DAAS Kapital*. This is where Richard met Khym Lam, a performer in the show, and they were married in 1993. They now have two children.

After DAAS broke up in 1994, Richard presented the ABC programs *Race Around the World*, *Aftershock*, *Mouthing Off* and *Vulture*. In 2005 he began *Conversations* on ABC radio that has since become a national institution, generating 1.9 million downloads every month.

In 2011 Richard co-wrote a satirical book on Australian politics titled, *Jack the Insider: The Insider's Guide to Power in Australia*. His first non-fiction book *Ghost Empire*, released in 2016, records his journey to Istanbul with his son Joe, to uncover the history of Constantinople. Last year he released his second book, *Saga Land*, with his friend Kári Gíslason, about the classic medieval tales of the first Viking families.



PAUL LIVINGSTON

Paul Livingston, popularly known as Flacco, has regularly appeared on TV shows including *Good News Week*, *The Sandman and Flacco Special*, *The Big Gig*, *DAAS Kapital*, *The Money or the Gun*, *The Fat* and *The Sideshow*. He was on triple j Breakfast from 1994 to 1997 and has also acted on stage and in film.

He was joint winner of the Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award in 1996 for outstanding achievement in the performing arts in Australia. He is the author of *Absent Without Leave: The Private War of Private Stanley Livingston* and *DAAS: Their Part in My Downfall*. He also wrote the play *Emma's Nose* about the relationship of Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Fliess and their patient Emma Eckstein.

Livingston has toured Australia and internationally and appeared at festivals in Edinburgh and Montreal. In 2014 he replaced Richard Fidler as the guitarist in the reformed Doug Anthony Allstars.



TED ROBINSON, writer/director

Personal Statement

I first came across the Doug Anthony Allstars in 1985 – a year after they formed. I was in Adelaide for the comedy festival and heard about a new cabaret group from Canberra who were tearing up the tents of the Fringe with their soul-searing version of the Marvin Gaye classic, *I Heard It Through the Grapevine*.

I arrived too late to catch the Grapevine song but not too late to witness an audience saturated in alcohol and sweat. One punter was still on stage, a semi-naked sacrifice to the Dougs' shenanigans. I made a mental note to go back and check out the 'Grapevine Guys'.

Four years later as head of ABC Comedy, I was casting acts for a new live show for the ABC, *The Big Gig*. The ABC was terrified of the risk they were taking with a live show that they could not control. Looking for new performers, I was taken to the Prince Patrick Hotel in Melbourne to see the Doug Anthony Allstars, and was surprised to realise they were the 'Grapevine Guys', and even more taken aback to see what talented, clever, vulgar, blasphemous, amusing, audacious, charming young punks they were.

I went backstage that night to sign them for *The Big Gig*, on the basis of this one performance. It was the start of life-long friendships and working relationships with Tim Ferguson, Richard Fidler and Paul McDermott.

Paul hated me from the start and tried to pick an argument. The centrepiece of their show that evening had been a parody of Jesus Christ's crucifixion. By the standards of the 1980s, Paul rightly guessed that it was an unlikely choice for TV. I could see that he was about to fling it down like some deal-breaking gauntlet.



I said: "And that Jesus Christ piece ..."

Paul snorted derisively: "Oh here it comes. 'Let's not do that. That's far too controversial for TV'."

And I said: "We should save that for Easter."

Paul was in.

Incidentally, we did do it for TV. And at Easter. And it was 'live'.

The Allstars went on to appear in all 65 episodes of *The Big Gig*. Then it came time for their own show, *DAAS Kapital*, which I produced and directed. Eventually I clocked up 30 years of work with them, including theatre, TV debates, falling outs, arguments, successes and failures.

I was devastated when I finally heard that Tim had been diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. I had to go and read up on what MS actually was and what it meant for that bright, beautiful man.

It had saddened me that a lot of the Allstars' early work was from a pre-digital era and that their magic and talent hadn't been captured in a medium more impervious to the wear and tear of the ages.

These sentiments grew into a project that became energised by the surprise appearance of the new Allstars ... and morphed into this documentary series, **Tick F***ing Tock**.

BIOGRAPHIES OF KEY CREATIVES

TED ROBINSON

Writer/Director/Producer/Executive Producer

Ted began his TV career at the ABC, working on *The Aunty Jack Show*. His TV directorial debut was in 1973, with the ABC sitcom *Our Man in the Company*, and in the following year he directed two *Aunty Jack* spin-off series, *Wollongong the Brave* and *Flash Nick from Jindavik*. During the late 1970s he also co-hosted a regular radio show on 2JJ in Sydney with actor Lex Marinos.

Ted went on to produce and direct a few landmark comedy series over the next three decades including; *The Gillies Report*, *The Big Gig*, *DAAS Kapital*, *The Dingo Principle*, *The Party Machine*, *The Glass House*, *The Sideshow* and *Good News Week*. As ABC Commissioning Editor for Comedy he was also answerable for shows like *Live and Sweaty*, *This Sporting Life*, *The Great Debates*, *The Late Show* and many more.

Ted has worked as a writer for international acts including Peter Allen, Danny La Rue and Bette Midler and others. He has a long involvement with the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. A long time ago in a Galaxy far, far away he won an AFI Raymond Longford Award.

MARTIN COOMBES

Co-Director

Martin Coombes has directed comedy TV shows for the ABC, Ten Network, Seven Network, SBS, Foxtel and the BBC. His highlights include the Melbourne Comedy Festival galas, *Just For Laughs* at the Sydney Opera House, *Montreal Comedy Festival* specials, *Good News Week*, *NSW Schools' Spectacular*, *Long Way to the Top*, *The Glasshouse*, *Denton*, *Live & Sweaty*, *Clive James's Postcard from Sydney* and *The Money or the Gun*.

JORDAN ROBINSON

Co-Director and Co-Producer

Jordan Robinson has produced, shot and edited many comedy shows over the past 10 years, including *Aaron Chen Tonight* for ABC2, various *Melbourne International Comedy Festival* productions, the *Adelaide Fringe Tonight*, *Just for Laughs* (Montreal and Australia), *JFL* at the Sydney Opera House), *No Laughing Matter*, *Die on Your Feet*, *Good News Week*, *The Glass House*, *The Way We Were*, *The Sandman In Siberia* and *In Siberia Tonight*.

DEBORAH JOHNSON

Co-Producer

Deborah Johnson has been Executive in charge of production and Producer on most of GNW TV product for more than a decade. Her brief has included long-form studio Comedy Series to drama-styled production and "one-off" large, "specials". Deborah has done everything from OB series in a pub to theatre and stadium TV productions.

ANNA CATER

Producer

Anna Cater began her career as a print journalist and has written for newspapers and magazines around the world, as well as working for the ABC's *Background Briefing* radio and *Four Corners* TV programs. After graduating from the Australian Film Television & Radio School with an MA in Documentary, she has produced documentaries for Australian and international broadcasters including *Dick Smith's Population Puzzle* (ABC); *Frank Hurley – the Man Who Made History* (ABC, BBC, NDR, AVRO, History Television Canada); *Outsourced!* (PBS, SBS); and *Honeybee Blues* (SBS, Nat Geo). She has worked for Oxfam in the UK and Australia and produced the feature film *Rites of Passage*.

ILTER CIMILLI

Editor

The many TV shows edited and technically supervised by Ilter span decades. Starting with the ABC's *TVTV* they went on to include *John Conway/Aaron Chen Tonight*, years of the *Melbourne International Comedy Festival*, *Galas*, *Opening Nights* and *Debates* and other 'Specials'. Four years of *Good News Week*, six years of *The Glass House*, *Adelaide Fringe Tonight*, *Just For Laughs* (Montreal and Australia), *JFL* at the Sydney Opera House), *No Laughing Matter*, *Die on Your Feet*, *The Sideshow* and more.

CREDITS

Writer and Director
Co-Director
Producers

Executive Producer
Editor
Camera
Titles and Graphics
Associate Producer
The Guitarist
Location Sound

Additional Lighting
Sound Editor
Specialist photography
Additional Camera

Additional Editing

Creative Consultant
Stills Photography

Ted Robinson
Martin Coombes
Ted Robinson, Jordan Robinson,
Anna Cater, Deborah Johnson
Ted Robinson
Ilter Cimilli
Martin Coombes
Tony Melov
Joel Robinson
Paul Livingston
Dougie Fairgrieve
Joel Robinson
Leo Sullivan
Gavin Wright
Mark Avis
Tony Melov
Justin Brickle
Steven Cassidy
Joshua Flavell
Julia Kennedy
Sue Lumsdon
Glenn Traynor
Martin Coombes
Jordan Robinson
Tony Melov
Mark Rogers

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Produced in association with the ABC by Ted Robinson and Anna Cater.
ABC Head of Factual: Steve Bibb.
ABC Commissioning Editor: Julie Hanna.

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SONGS

DOUG ANTHONY ALLSTARS ORIGINAL SONGS:

Commies for Christ, Catholic Girls on LSD, Skinhead Skippy, Cadillac for Jesus, World's Greatest Kisser, Krisna, Dead Elvis, Kylie and Jason, Broad Lic Nic, Vote Tim, Funk You, I Hate the French, Bless Me Father and Bottle.

All songs performed by Doug Anthony Allstars. Written by P McDermott/T Ferguson/R Fidler.

RAMBO - Lyrics by Tim Ferguson, Music by Tim Ferguson and Richard Fidler

US - Written by Paul McDermott, Performed by Doug Anthony Allstars

Guitar Enigmas - Performed and composed by Paul Livingston

The Night Chicago Died - Performed by Doug Anthony Allstars

Written by Murray/Callander. Universal/Dick James Music Ltd, Administered by Universal Music Pty Ltd

The Big Gig theme, *Hadacol Bounce* - Performed by The Swinging Sidewalks, Written by Henry Roeland Byrd.
(Professor Longhair Music/Mushroom Music)

She - Performed by Doug Anthony Allstars

Written by Kretzmer/Aznavour, Standard Music Ltd. Administered by Essex Music Australia Pty Ltd

I Heard It Through the Grapevine - Performed by Doug Anthony Allstars. Written by Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong

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Throw Your Arms Around Me - Performed by Doug Anthony Allstars. Written by J. Archer/G. Crosby/D. Falconer/J. Howard/R. Miles/M. Seymour/M. Waters. Mushroom Music.

