

walkergeorgefilms

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GEORGE MELLY'S LAST STAND (Tx: BBC4, Nov 7)

George Melly lived his long life to the full: he sang like Bessie Smith; he was passionate about surrealism; and he was a writer of journalism and memoirs that documented his life of habitual debauchery. Diana, his wife of 44 years, has also written with incredible candour about their complex, open marriage.

In the months before he died in July this year, George and Diana gave filmmaker Katie Buchanan unprecedented access to film with them. The result is **George Melly's Last Stand** (BBC4 - Wednesday, November 7th), a deeply personal, moving, completely frank – and often unexpectedly funny - portrait of this unique man's final months.

Diagnosed with vascular dementia and lung cancer, George refuses treatment and is looked after at home by Diana. Facing both illnesses, and impending death, with courage and honesty and characteristic humour, George is determined to keep on performing to the end. Just weeks before his death he travels by ambulance to his final performance at the 100 Club (in aid of charity For Dementia) - the venue where he launched his career 60 years earlier.

Despite his ill-health George is as flirtatious as ever, and determined to be the centre of attention. As his strength wanes, Diana invites his old girlfriends to visit him at home to say goodbye. One of the first to come is Molly Parkin. Diana and Molly have had a long-running feud since the 1980's and tension runs high as the two women meet for the first time in 25 years.

It was Diana who first recognised George's dementia when he didn't know who she was when she found him trying to hail a cab in the street. And despite their complicated marriage, it is Diana who is with him at the end. In the last weeks of his life as she nurses him, they finally find peace and companionship together.

Diana Melly says: "George and I wanted to make the film to bring the experience of dementia – both for sufferers and their families - into the public eye. But we also wanted people to see that dementia isn't all horrible – though it can be, of course.

"As a surrealist, George actually rather enjoyed some of the strange hallucinations he had thanks to the condition – such as the three pre-Raphaelite ladies who used to visit his bathroom!

"Watching the film some months after George's death was very moving, and I hope that it can bring support and inspiration to others – whether they are facing a similar situation, or cared about George.

"The film portrays a life lived to the full, right to the end, and I think it also shows that George was able to have a 'good' death."

**For more information, interviews, DVDS and pictures contact:
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Notes for editors:

- Diana Melly is patron of the dementia charity For Dementia and George asked for his contributors' fee to be donated to the charity. For Dementia, working with Admiral Nurses, aims to improve the quality of life for people affected by dementia. For more information, or to make a donation, visit www.fordementia.org.uk or call 0845 257 3310
- An exhibition from the collection of George Melly, curated by Michael Woods, will be held the **EAST WEST GALLERY**, 8 Blenheim Crescent, London W11 1NN from the 2nd to the 10th of November. 2007. For further information about the exhibition and to obtain images from the show, contact **David Solomon** at **East West Gallery**, 020 7229 7981, david@eastwestgallery.co.uk Website: www.eastwestgallery.co.uk
- Walker George Films' first film, *Young@Heart*, a feature-length musical documentary for Channel 4 about an American chorus of pensioners who sing rock 'n' roll, has recently won the Rose D'Or for best arts documentary at the Montreux Film Festival as well the special prize for best overall documentary. It is currently nominated for two Grierson awards.