


# Tributes flow for Clive James

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By **JACQUELIN MAGNAY**, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

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8:49PM NOVEMBER 28, 2019 •  COMMENTS

Broadcasters, entertainers and statesmen have all joined together in paying tribute to Australian-born author and critic Clive James, [who has died at age 80](#).

The Sydney-born star of The Clive James Show was diagnosed with leukaemia, kidney failure and lung disease in 2010 and [died at home in Cambridge](#) on November 24.

A private funeral took place in the chapel at Pembroke College, Cambridge on Wednesday. His death was announced on the same day as the passing of Beyond the Fringe satirist and stage director Jonathan Miller, who died aged 85.

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Monty Python star Eric Idle referenced Oscar Wilde's hit play The Importance of Being Earnest while recalled two dear friends.

"Savage news this morning. To lose one friend is bad but to lose two reeks of carelessness," he said.

"The beloved hilarious genius Jonathan Miller who dramatically changed my life three times, and dear Clive James my pal at Cambridge. Its a f...ing rainy day in LA appropriate for tears."

Australia's High Commissioner to the UK George Brandis said he was saddened to hear of the death of James.

“Mr James was an intellectual giant, who spent a large portion of his life living in the UK, but he remained quintessentially Australian all his life,” he said

“He was unquestionably the greatest Australian poet of his time; as well as being a witty and incisive critic and a hugely gifted man of letters.

“He combined a true scholar’s erudition with a good natured scepticism that was very Australian. Mr James was a good friend of Australia House and he we will be missed by Australians and British people alike.”

His thoughts were echoed by those of Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who said James was a great novelist, poet, wit and personality who showcased the good humour and good nature of Australians.

Actor, comedian and writer Stephen Fry said: “Clive James and Jonathan Miller - two heroes of mine growing up. Each so wildly and profusely gifted in so many directions.

“Very sorry to think they’re not in this world any more. And I just heard that (celebrity chef) Gary Rhodes has been snatched from us too. How very sad.”

British Academy president Professor Sir David Cannadine said from literary criticism to journalism, essays, fiction, poetry and broadcasting, “there was simply no pursuit to which Clive James could not turn his hand and excel”.

“For over 50 years, he lit up this world with his wit, wisdom and incisive commentary,” he said.

Good Morning Britain presenter Piers Morgan tweeted: “RIP Clive James, 80. A brilliantly funny man.”

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Former ITV and BBC boss, Lord Grade, told BBC Radio 4: “(Clive James) had a wonderful conflict within him which he readily admitted. He wanted to be popular and recognised in the

street and when he was, he thought, ‘People are not taking me seriously, I’m quite a serious chap’.

“But he did it very lightly, he was not agonising about it, he was observational.

“But he was a very honest critic, a very honest critic and a very honest observer, and funny, funny, funny.”

James was awarded the President’s Medal by the British Academy in 2014.

BBC director-general Lord Tony Hall said James was “a clever, witty and thought- provoking broadcaster. He had a huge range of talents and everything he did was essential listening or viewing. He is irreplaceable”.

Actor and theatre director Samuel West also remembered James, writing in a tweet: “We were lucky to have him for so long after his diagnosis. We were lucky to have him at all. RIP Clive James.” In a second tweet, he added: “Thinking back with such joy to family Sundays around the breakfast table, my father reading Clive James’s Observer TV column aloud to us, weeping with laughter, often unable to finish. Beautiful, turned, silly, explosively funny prose. What a loss.” American satirist PJ O’Rourke said he will remember James for “the sheer breadth of his learning and his interest”.

He told BBC Radio 4: “The man had come as close as anybody since Dr Johnson to having read everything. Simply everything.”

*With PA*

#### **JACQUELIN MAGNAY, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT**

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