

# John Cleese: Completely Different Emcee

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Prince Charles celebrates his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, and among various engagements Thursday November 13<sup>th</sup> was the date that **The Princes' Trust** - an organisation setup by Charles to help young people - held an evening of A-list comedy entertainment in his honour at the New Wimbledon Theatre in London.

The performers were Rowan Atkinson, Robin Williams, Bill Bailey and relative newcomers Michael McIntyre, Stephen K Amos and Omid Djalili, with a brief appearance from Joan Rivers.

Wisely, the organisers chose John Cleese to hold it all together - which he did in fine style, playing up his own advanced years by appearing on stage in a wheelchair and attended to by two busty blonde nurses.

Cleese impressed further by constantly apologising for the length of the show and dismissing the quality of the obviously superb acts and the Prince's likelihood of being entertained with wonderful quips - a well-received one being "I bet when the Duchess of Cornwall told you Sir she had a couple of tickets for Wimbledon you thought you were in for a treat."

Now, it could be said that over the years John Cleese has lost his way somewhat as a legendary comedian. Some might even say that he has lived off past successes for the last 20 years.

In Cleese's defence, I would say this - none are better, and few will reach the level of recognition and success as a comedian and comic actor during far longer careers.

So what if he's restricted his career to cameo appearances alongside Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Radcliffe? He wrote **Fawlty Towers**!

Cleese went on to dismiss the quality of the acts and the supposed remote likelihood of the Prince being entertained with wonderful quips - a well-received one being "I bet when the Duchess of Cornwall told you Sir she had a couple of tickets for Wimbledon you thought you were in for a treat."

With this level of emceeing holding together a diverse range of comics, the evening could only go well. Highlights included Iranian-born Omid Djalili as well as Bill Bailey and Robin Williams, both individually and together performing a hilarious song that they improvised for 20 minutes backstage.

Rowan Atkinson meanwhile was on hand to perform one of his classic one-man show sketches "And Now From Nazareth, The Amazing...", appearing as a vicar reading from the Book of John and telling the story of Jesus and the Feeding of the Five Thousand with the result that everyone wants to book the Christ for party entertainment.

Throughout it all, however, the evening's best performance was truly owned by John Cleese. Remaining wheelchair-bound and sporting increasingly serious injuries as the evening progressed; he eventually rose to his feet for the finale, provided by Eric Idle in a tutu leading a

rousing chorus of “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life” from Monty Python’s 1979 movie **The Life of Brian**.

The Prince of Wales and his accompanying consort Camilla and son Harry typically haven’t revealed their opinions of the show, but naturally seemed to be enjoying it considerably. With Cleese in his best form in a very long time, they will have no complaints.

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