

Music icon IAN 'MOLLY' MELDRUM, 73, opens up to *Paul Ewart* about fame, his TV biopic, and the advice that has helped him stay grounded through five exciting decades in the spotlight

His long held "national treasure" status, but when Ian "Molly" Meldrum had a brush with death four years ago after falling from the roof of his house, the extent of Australia's love for the cowboy-hat-wearing music mogul was truly revealed.

A national outpouring of concern and wellwishing, both from the public and famous industry faces alike, spurred on the personality's recovery and instilled in him a new lease of life. Even a recent fall while getting out of a taxi in Thailand hasn't slowed him down.

Now he's gearing up for the release of a TV biopic about his life, set during his heady days as host of *Countdown*, the music show which – over 13 years – became one of the most-watched programs on Australian television, turning Molly into a bona fide star.

Ahead of the miniseries debut on Channel 7, the legend talks to *Yours* about his career highs, famous friends and why he doesn't have any regrets.

Yours: It's an amazing tribute to have your life turned into a miniseries. In the heyday of *Countdown*, did you think that you would ever become as famous as the celebrities you were interviewing?

Molly: I'm not really comfortable with the word "famous". I actually never had any desire to be the host of *Countdown* – it all happened quite accidentally. Originally, I was just one of the production staff and then one day my boss asked me to do a music report and the rest, as they say, is history.

Yours: Does it feel strange to watch your



A LIFE OF NO REGRETS
Molly says he looks forward to every day

life played out on the small screen?

Molly: Definitely! I actually don't think that I'm worthy of all the fuss, so it's very strange.

Yours: Were you nervous about the show?

Molly: I didn't have any reservations about the production at all. I stayed away for the entire filming, but I did attend the wrap party, which was great fun! Samuel Johnson does a brilliant job of playing me – in fact, it's kind of scary at times. Saying that, he's much more articulate than I am!

Yours: Last year, you released your autobiography, *The Never, Um, Ever Ending Story*, following your accident. How did the accident affect you?

Molly: The autobiography had been a long time in the making – many years, in fact. I started writing my memoirs in

1979, but at that early stage it was just stories I wrote down or tape recordings I had made. Of course, the accident made me look at my life and made me get some things finished – like the book.

Afterwards, I was overwhelmed by the public support. It was very touching for me and it definitely helped in my recovery. Even now when I go to the supermarket people stop for a chat and help me carry my shopping bags.

Yours: How are you feeling now?

Molly: I was very lucky that I had many wonderful people caring for me at the time of the accident and afterwards.

Yours: After spending more than 50 years in the spotlight, are you comfortable with life in the public eye?

Molly: Believe it or not, I'm really a shy person, so no – not really. I've been

'Family and friends keep me going'



DO YOURSELF A FAVOUR
Molly stars Aaron Glenane, TJ Power and Krew Boylan; (left) Samuel Johnson in the title role

fortunate to have a fabulous career, which I'm really grateful for and I feel very blessed. I have met some truly amazing people such as Rod Stewart, Elton John and Madonna, and all have become friends, yet I still get nervous!

Yours: If you were to pick one ultimate rock'n'roll moment what would it be?

Molly: A standout would definitely be meeting the Beatles in London while I was living and working there. I got to know them very well. In 1969, John Lennon asked me to do an interview with him, during which he broke the news to me that the Beatles were breaking up. I was so nervous I didn't actually realise what he was saying at the time! I sent the tape back to Melbourne to *Go-Set* magazine and the boss rang me and said, "You didn't tell us about the Beatles breaking up!" I told him that was all wrong and he said, "It's in your interview!" It became a world scoop.

PICTURES: DAVID COOK, BEN TIMONY, NEWSPIX



LOST FOR WORDS
Molly with Olivia Newton-John in 1980



SINGING SENSATION
Dolly Parton's 1984 visit to *Countdown*

Yours: How about your greatest regret?

Molly: I have no regrets all. My life has been, and is, brilliant. I look forward to and love each day.

Yours: Is there anything that's left to tick off on your "to-do" list?

Molly: I just want to be alive at the MCG to watch my beloved St Kilda win a grand final, so I can sing at the top of my lungs and have a big party! At the 1966 St Kilda grand final against Collingwood, I actually fainted after Barry Breen kicked a point that won us the flag that day.

Yours: What's a typical day in your life like?

Molly: There's always something going on at the house. I seem to have workmen here every other day fixing stuff, whether it's the pool or something in the garden. The phone's always ringing and people pop in all the time. I pretty much have an open-door policy. **Yours:** How about your simple pleasures?
Molly: Spending time with family and friends. I love hosting parties – my most recent one was Boxing Day night

'They've turned my life into a TV show – but I don't think I'm worthy of all the fuss'

with a great group of friends. It's always lovely to have the house filled with people and music.

Yours: What keeps you going?

Molly: Music, definitely, but most of all my wonderful family and friends.

Yours: Are you as passionate about the music industry as you were in the '70s?

Molly: Definitely. I'll never stop being passionate about the music industry.

It's still exciting and always has been.

Yours: Has anyone ever given you wise words that proved useful in your life?

Molly: Yes! I was brought up by my grandmother and she'd always say to me, "Remember, son, no one is above you and no one is below you.

Treat everyone you meet evenly." I've tried to live by that my entire life.

Yours: What do you want as your legacy?

Molly: This may sound boring, but just to be remembered as a nice guy – I think that's the most important thing. ●

Molly airs Sundays, February 7 and 14, on Channel 7