



SIR Jimmy Savile's trademark Tarzan cry would make him a perfect contender for the I'm A Celebrity rainforest. But the iconic DJ-cum-TV host is firmly fixed within his Leeds penthouse apartment.

"Last year, they offered me £100,000 to go on I'm A Celebrity," he says.

"This year they offered me £150,000. I said to them, 'I tell you what, I'll give you £150,000 if you let me stay at home!'"

But some might say that certain aspects of Sir Jimmy's home are every bit as unsettling as the Australian jungle.

There are no pythons, just an eerie feeling that the rickety elevator which transports visitors to the top of the Leeds tower block overlooking leafy Roundhay Park – opening directly into Sir Jimmy's hall – is also taking them back to 1972.

Sir Jimmy – "just call me Jimmy" – holds court in a lounge which looks like a cross between the set from Woody Allen's movie, *Sleeper*, and Mrs Merton's parlour.

"The furniture was already here when I bought the place," he says. And he isn't joking.

Items most people might get out of the cupboard when friends come round to tea are liberally sprinkled about the place – a Jimmy Savile tea coaster here, a faded fanzine with a "Jimmy-meets-Elvis" cover shot over there.

Testament to his longevity is provided by the fact that there are two big red books from *This Is Your Life* – one handed over by Eamonn Andrews in 1971 and the other by Michael Aspel in 1990.

And while Sir Jimmy will be 80 next year, his skills are clearly still in demand, with the jungle drums also suggesting a revival for *Jim'll Fix It*.

"Cobblers," Jimmy insists, lighting the first in a chain of Romeo Y Julieta Petit Corona cigars. "I own the programme so I can bring it back any time I want and I'm doing nothing with it."

"Today, Fix It is almost more

Sir Jimmy Savile has torn up his invitation to I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out Of Here! Nor will there be a hotly-tipped comeback for old favourite Jim'll Fix It. Approaching 80, he's still "drip-feeding" his personality to the British public. **SIMON DONOHUE** paid him a visit

legendary than it was. For 20 years it attracted between 19 and 21m viewers a week. They'd kill for figures like that today. And I don't want to bring it back because it's warm in people's memories.

"I could write my own cheque but there's no point in it because we've got 20 years of it which we can repeat and I'm not a greedy fella."

Not a greedy fella, maybe, but certainly one of the most successful and endearing personalities this country has ever produced.

Having been "blown up" down the pit, he retired due to ill health and got his small screen break in 1958 when Granada TV wanted to speak to him about being the boss of a Manchester dance hall and his dealings with the Great British public.

He served as a Radio One DJ and "invented" *Top Of The Pops*, which started life in an old church in

Dickenson Road, Manchester.

Today he is wearing a Nike track suit unzipped to the navel and revealing gold chains, chest hair and the beginnings of a pot belly. But he's remarkably lucid and fit for his age.

Five weeks ago he did his 217th marathon and says that he knows he is still in good health each morning if he reaches out and doesn't feel the sides of a coffin.

He still has friends from his days down the pit – the Friday morning club – and busies himself with small TV projects and public appearances.

He lives alone and prefers it that way. His elder sister, aged 91, is the only other sibling of seven surviving and Sir Jimmy says she wants him to go first "because she'll be rich".

He could never see the point in getting married – "I actually don't like kids" – but there were lots of women.

"It wasn't that you were a dirty

bugger, or anything like that – it was part of life," he adds. "I've known some of the most famous women in the world – literally. There's a cheque for a million pounds waiting for me if I want to do a kiss and tell, but I won't."

"Even now I'm older, I'm glad I never married. When I get up in the morning, stagger in here, and I get a cigar on, looking at all this. Or I'm in my place in Scarborough and look at all the sea and cliffs and the 700-year-old castle. Or when I go to my place in Scotland – the most photographed place in Britain – there's only yourself, I think it's brilliant."

He doesn't look rich, but he talks a wealthy game. He says he has eight properties, two Rolls Royces and never eats at home – yet claims never to spend money because "it turns your head soft. I do a deal for everything," he says. "Public

appearance? How about a box of cigars. My place in Bournemouth I got as payment for rescuing a club. I needed somewhere for the Duchess to stay at the time."

The Duchess is his late mother, Agnes, who he is clearly affectionate about, but not morbidly so.

Clutching an ageing photograph of his entire family, he says: "If they could install a hotline to heaven, that's what I'd have."

BUT, more than anything, Sir Jimmy Savile is still great fun – and more recognisable than most so-called celebrities on the TV circuit. Even so, does he really not miss being a star?

"I never was a star," he counters. "I'm a service industry. That's where a lot of people went wrong, because they think they're special. My advice is to quit when you're ahead and drip-feed your talent."

"Now you get people, greedy people, who've got four or five programmes."

"You see them on current affairs things, they're doing their own talk shows, they do news, but they never give any other folk a chance."

He keeps up with what's on the box because people "expect him to".

"I laughed one day this week because, peak time, on one of the channels, there was a half-hour programme and the description said, 'Arnold boxes in a wastepipe'. But if they've not got Arnold boxing in his wastepipe what have they got which hasn't already been done to death."

Becoming serious for a moment he adds: "I'll tell you another thing which people haven't realised ... there is a terrible world shortage of stars."

"Now imagine that you were the producer of something like *Sunday Night At The London Palladium* and it runs for 26 weeks. You would find it impossible to find 26 top of the bills which haven't already been done. My generation is coming back on to the telly because there's nothing else – but not me."



■ PRINCE OF POP: Left, DJ and TV presenter Jimmy Savile on the set of the first Top Of The Pops in 1964, which was filmed in Manchester. Right, Sir Jimmy as he is today, with his trademark cigar and gold jewellery