

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday 21 September 2024

Legendary singer Eddie Low passes away

Christchurch, New Zealand

E kore e mutu ngā mihi, e kore e mutu ngā roimata.

Moe mai rā e te Rangatira

The voice in a million is silent, but his music will live on forever.

Renowned New Zealand singer Eddie Low (MNZM), known as "the voice in a million", passed away peacefully at 7.45am today, 21 Saturday September 2024, with loved ones at his side. He had been battling cancer for some time.

Born into poverty on 14 May 1943, Eddie's life was marked by extraordinary resilience, determination, and talent. His mother, Rangi Ratana McRoy, contracted German measles and tuberculosis during her pregnancy, resulting in Eddie's being born totally blind at birth. Tragically, Rangi passed away shortly after giving birth to Eddie and his twin, who did not survive.

Eddie had a two-year-old brother David (Mackie), and as their father felt unable to raise two boys on his own, Eddie and David were taken in by Maria Low, a widow already raising five children. Maria legally adopted Eddie, fearing he would be removed from her home and institutionalised due to his blindness, a common practice at the time.

Educated at the Foundation for the Blind School in Parnell from the age of five, Eddie developed a deep love for music, learning to play numerous instruments by ear and feel. At the age of 12, he underwent three surgeries on his eyes, gaining slight vision in his left eye but remaining blind in his right eye.

His incredible vocal abilities, combined with his humility and musicianship, propelled him to international fame. Eddie's career spanned more than 60 years, during which he captivated audiences worldwide with his incomparable voice and dynamic stage performances. He performed alongside legendary national and international artists, toured extensively, and left an enduring legacy in New Zealand's music industry.

Eddie's talents were not limited to music, as he was also an outstanding track and field athlete, training in with the late, great Peter Snell, gaining his black belt in karate under the great sensei Len Monk, and becoming an international blind golfing champion.

Eddie's eldest daughter, Maria, describes her father's strength, resilience, and indomitable spirit.

"He never thought of his blindness as a disability – it was just something he happened to have. His only fear was that people would think he couldn't do something because of his sight, but if anything, it made him even more stubborn, more determined, to prove he could do anything others could do, and more.

"The odds were stacked against Dad from the beginning, but he beat them one by one. He never knew how talented he was and how much he inspired all of us as well as other singers and musicians," she said."

The family will hold a service in Christchurch, which will be livestreamed (details to come). A special tribute concert is being planned in 2025 to honour Eddie's life, music and legacy. Details will be announced closer to the time.

Eddie Low will be remembered as a beloved musician, a trailblazer, a man who never let his blindness define or limit him, and a source of inspiration for all who knew him. He leaves behind three children, five grandchildren, one great grandchild, and his partner of almost five years, Kerry.

Ends

For further information, call Eddie's eldest daughter Maria Low, on 0210569234. If the phone is not answered, please send a text.

Additional notes:

[EDDIE LOW MNZM \(nzwalkoffame.co.nz\)](http://nzwalkoffame.co.nz)

Eddie was born in Rotorua and educated at the New Zealand Foundation for the Blind in Parnell, Auckland from the age of 5, returning home to Ngāpuna in Rotorua for school holidays.

After leaving school and building a reputation as a great vocalist and multi-instrumentalist, Eddie got a job playing in the band at Auckland's Picasso Nightclub.

In 1964 Eddie and fellow entertainer and friend, John Rowles, went to Australia on a Melbourne contract and guaranteed work on the club circuit. When the contract ended, Eddie and John moved to Sydney and joined the band, Australian Sundowners.

In 1966, Eddie joined the Māori Quin Tikis. This was the era of New Zealand's popular Māori showbands. The Māori Quin Tikis toured New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, and Kuala Lumpur. They also travelled to Thailand to entertain United States Air Force personnel at their bases during the Vietnam War.

Eddie also appeared in the film Don't Let It Get You (1966) with the Quin Tikis, the late Sir Howard Morrison, and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

In 1969, Eddie went solo under Joe Brown's Management touring Australasia, Fiji, Tahiti, Papua New Guinea and carrying the New Zealand flag high and proud in tours of Canada and Nashville, twice representing New Zealand on the International Show at the Grand Ole Opry.

In 1980 while touring Canada again, Eddie – feeling homesick – wrote 'Songs of Home', a now iconic song that sings of the beauty of Aotearoa New Zealand and a chorus of famous Māori songs. Songs of Home has been performed by many other Kiwi entertainers including The Topp Twins, and sung around the world, touching the hearts of thousands of ex pat New Zealanders who live overseas.

Eddie won New Zealand Entertainer and Songwriter of the Year in 1980.

Eddie was inducted into the Country Hands of Fame in Tamworth, Australia in 1983, and later into the Country Hands of Fame in Gore, New Zealand.

Eddie was bestowed with the NZ Order of Merit (MNZM) appointed by Her Majesty the Queen in 2006 for his services to music.

Eddie was awarded the New Zealand Country Legend Award in Hamilton in August 2009.

Eddie was honoured by his peers as the recipient of the prestigious Variety Artists of New Zealand's Benny Award (2009) for his lifetime of achievements in the entertainment industry.

Eddie's career of almost 60 years has taken him around the world and onto stages with some of music's greats including Johnny Cash, Charlie Pride, Buck Owens, Tom T Hall, Freddie Fender, Kenny Rogers and many more. He has toured as Roy Orbison and is likened to Tom Jones and Engelbert Humperdinck.

Eddie is one of the foremost vocalists of Elvis Presley songs.

During his career Eddie has recorded more than 60 records (albums, EPs, and singles) in recording studios in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Australia.

Eddie's second wife Kathleen (Bunny) died suddenly of a heart attack on Waitangi Day 2019 in Australia, while with Eddie for a tour of Sydney and Melbourne. In December 2019 he was diagnosed with colorectal cancer and had major surgery. In July 2023 Eddie was diagnosed with diffuse stomach cancer and two months later underwent a seven-hour operation to remove his stomach.