

# MASTERPIECE

**An epic of India on the cusp of change**

## ***Beecham House***

**co-created, directed, and produced by Gurinder Chadha  
Premieres on PBS Passport on March 1, 2020**

Acclaimed British-Indian director Gurinder Chadha (*Bend It Like Beckham*, *Bride and Prejudice*) takes viewers back to a time before British rule in India, when the Mogul Empire was on its last legs and unrivalled wealth was up for grabs, on *Beecham House*, a six-part epic starring Tom Bateman (*Vanity Fair*), Lesley Nicol (*Downton Abbey*), and Dakota Blue Richards (*Endeavour*). *Beecham House* will have a special premiere on PBS Passport, an added member benefit which provides extended access to a digital, on-demand library of PBS programs, on March 1, 2020 at 9am ET. The series will have a television broadcast in early Summer, 2020.

Hailed during its British broadcast as “splendid” (*The Telegraph*) and “a feast for the eyes” (*The Times*), *Beecham House* showcases the culture, grandeur, and unbridled ambition of one of the greatest civilizations on Earth at the end of the 18th century.

The international cast also features Gregory Fitoussi (*Mr. Selfridge*), Adil Ray (*Citizen Khan*), Bessie Carter (*Howard’s End*), Pallavi Sharda (*Lion*), Marc Warren (*Safe*), Viveik Kalra (*Blinded By The Light*), Leo Suter (*Victoria*), Shriya Pilgaonkar (*Smile Please*), and Roshan Seth (*Indian Summers*).

Shot largely on location in Rajasthan and Delhi in India, *Beecham House* recaptures the majesty of the old imperial capital with its signature Red Fort and dazzling Peacock Throne, where the emperor received suppliants from all over the world. The plot revolves around a house on the outskirts of Delhi, recently purchased by an enigmatic Englishman.

Set in 1795, as the Mogul Empire is slowly losing its grip over a subcontinent it has dominated for the past two centuries, the story focuses on the struggle to control the lucrative trade with India. One contender is France. The other is Great Britain’s East India Company, a private venture supported by mercenary troops.

Three years before, John Beecham (Bateman) was an officer for the East India Company. Troubled by its rapine tactics, he quit. Since then, he has been trading as an honest private citizen, falling more and more in love with India and establishing strong local ties. Not incidentally, he has earned a small fortune and made influential friends.

When Beecham appears at his newly acquired estate in Delhi, his entourage includes a mixed-race baby and its nurse, Chanchal (Pilgaonkar). “No one mentioned a baby is coming, sahib,” protests Baadal (Kalra), the house steward. “You will learn that I am a private man,” replies the new master.

The baby is not the only mystery. Beecham's undisclosed reason for moving to Delhi sparks intense interest from resident French General Castillon (Fitoussi), not to mention Emperor Shah Alam (Seth) and one of the emperor's kinsmen, Murad Beg (Ray), who happens to be Beecham's next-door neighbor. The neighbor's daughter has an English governess, Margaret Osborne (Richards), who is attractive, intelligent, unmarried, and also intrigued by the newcomer.

The plot thickens with the arrival from England of Beecham's overbearing mother, Henrietta (Nicol); her young traveling companion, Violet Woodhouse (Carter), who is Beecham's childhood friend with intentions to deepen the relationship; and Beecham's old army buddy Samuel Parker (Warren), now trying to restore his good name after being slandered in a trial involving the East India Company.

Finally, rumor has it that somewhere on the subcontinent, Beecham's dissolute younger brother, Daniel (Suter), is serving as an East India mercenary.

Mix in greed, treachery, and amorous entanglements—plus the appearance of a mysterious woman whom Beecham believes is a risk to the baby's life—and the stage is set for a gripping saga of far-flung adventure, suspense, and passion.

*Beecham House* is co-created and written by Gurinder Chadha (*Bend It Like Beckham*, *Viceroy's House*, *Bride & Prejudice*), Paul Mayeda Berges (*Viceroy's House*), and Shahrukh Husain (*In Custody*). Victor Levin (*Mad Men*) also serves as writer on the series. *Beecham House* was originally commissioned by ITV (UK). ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill, commissioned *Beecham House* for ITV in the UK and oversaw production of the drama on behalf of the broadcaster. Rebecca Eaton serves as Executive Producer-at-Large for MASTERPIECE. Susanne Simpson is the Executive Producer of MASTERPIECE.

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#### **About MASTERPIECE**

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 16 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Rebecca Eaton is the Executive Producer-at-Large of the series. Susanne Simpson is the Executive Producer. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking and Raymond James with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. Presented on PBS by WGBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for recent hits such as *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.