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Classic

Downton Abbey, Season 4

With guest stars Shirley MacLaine and Paul Giamatti
Harriet Walter, Gary Carr, Joanna David, Julian Ovenden, and Tom Cullen
On MASTERPIECE on PBS
Sundays, January 5 – February 23, 2014

The most-watched drama in PBS history enters its fourth gripping season with the whole world waiting to learn how the beloved characters deal with a shocking tragedy. The acclaimed ensemble is back, together with returning guest star Academy Award®-winner Shirley MacLaine and new guest star Paul Giamatti. Also joining the cast are Harriet Walter, Gary Carr, Joanna David, and Tom Cullen, as the legend continues on *Downton Abbey*, Season 4, airing over eight Sundays beginning with a two-hour premiere on January 5, 2014 on PBS.

Written and created by Julian Fellowes, *Downton Abbey*, Season 4 is a Carnival/MASTERPIECE Co-Production. Carnival is a division of NBCUniversal International Television Production. The series' many accolades include nine Emmys®, two Golden Globes®, and a coveted Screen Actors Guild Award® for the ensemble cast.

Viewership and social media buzz have been soaring since the series launched in January 2011. Season 3 reached a record 24.1 million viewers, more than any other drama in the history of PBS, and the season had the highest Twitter buzz ever for public television.

Replete with weddings, births, abandonment, financial reversal, sudden riches, and equally sudden deaths, Season 3 left critics spellbound. *USA Today* ranked it as a perfect four stars out of four. *The Hollywood Reporter* called it “an absolute pleasure to watch.” And *The New York Times* praised it as “delightful escapism.” Ahead of the celebrated final episode—the #1 show of the night, beating all broadcast and cable competition in prime time—*Newsday* had this summation: “The finale of a superb season does not disappoint. Grade A(+).”

“We’d follow the Crawleys off a cliff,” echoed *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. “Please have Carson pack us a lunch.”

The returning cast includes Hugh Bonneville, Laura Carmichael, Jim Carter, Brendan Coyle, Michelle Dockery, Joanne Froggatt, Rob James-Collier, Lily James, Allen Leech, Phyllis Logan, Elizabeth McGovern, Sophie McShera, Lesley Nicol, Dame Maggie Smith, Penelope Wilton, and a host of others, joined by Shirley MacLaine (Oscar® for Best Actress, *Terms of Endearment*), who reprises her role as Martha Levinson, the forthright American mother of Cora, Countess of Grantham (McGovern). Martha again battles wits with Cora’s wickedly acerbic mother-in-law, Violet (Smith).

Among the new faces are Paul Giamatti (*Sideways*) as Cora’s playboy brother, Harold, who appears in the season finale; Dame Harriet Walter (*Little Dorrit*) as Violet’s old friend Lady Shackleton; Gary Carr (*Death in Paradise*) as jazz singer Jack Ross; Joanna David (*Bleak House*) as the Duchess of Yeovil; Tom Cullen (*World Without End*) as the dashing Lord Gillingham, and Julian Ovenden (*Smash, Any Human Heart*) as an unexpected houseguest.

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All who tuned in last season know that Matthew Crawley—heir to Downton Abbey, husband to Lady Mary (Dockery), and brand new father to a baby boy and successor—lies dead on a country road next to his overturned roadster. On top of this, the family is still grieving over the death in childbirth of Sybil, Mary's youngest sister, who also left a baby behind.

Season 4 opens six months later. Although it is the 1920s, Britain still observes mourning rituals that are almost Victorian in their solemnity. Nonetheless, the Crawleys are beginning to snap out of it: Robert, Lord Grantham (Bonneville), must manage the estate without his canny son-in-law; Cora suddenly faces a staffing crisis; Violet, who has seen enough tragedy, knows how to recoup quickly; Isobel (Wilton), Matthew's mother, may never recover; Edith (Carmichael), who was jilted at the altar, tempts scandal with a new beau; and Mary now finds herself the most desirable widow in Yorkshire.

The servants also pick up, buck up, and get on with it—with new arrivals, departures, rivalries, and betrayals among the downstairs staff. Life goes on at Downton Abbey.

Written and created by Julian Fellowes, *Downton Abbey* is a Carnival Films/MASTERPIECE Co-Production. The series is executive produced by Gareth Neame, Julian Fellowes and Liz Trubridge. Nigel Merchant is co-executive producer. Rupert Ryle-Hodges is the producer. The first episode is directed by David Evans. Other episodes are directed by Catherine Morshead, Philip John, Edward Hall, and Jon East.

Rebecca Eaton is Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Funding for the series is provided by Viking Cruises and Ralph Lauren Corporation with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust, created to help ensure the series' future.

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