

ITV AND RED PLANET PICTURES ANNOUNCE CAST AS FILMING COMMENCES ON JANE AUSTEN'S SANDITON

ROSE WILLIAMS, THEO JAMES, ANNE REID AND KRIS MARSHALL TO STAR IN THE LAVISH DRAMA FOR ITV AND MASTERPIECE ON PBS

As filming commences on brand new series, *Sanditon*, in and around Bristol (UK) including The Bottle Yard Studios, ITV and Red Planet Pictures are thrilled to announce casting for Jane Austen's final and incomplete novel, which is being brought to a wide television audience for the very first time. *Sanditon* will star Rose Williams (*Curfew, Changeland*), Theo James (*The Divergent Series, Downton Abbey*), Anne Reid (*Last Tango in Halifax, Hold the Sunset*), and Kris Marshall (*Death in Paradise, Love Actually*).

The sumptuous period drama, adapted by Emmy® and BAFTA-winning screenwriter Andrew Davies (*War & Peace, Les Misérables, Pride and Prejudice*), will see Austen's original 11-chapter fragment brought to life in an eight-part series for ITV and MASTERPIECE.

Written only months before Austen's death in 1817, *Sanditon* tells the story of the joyously impulsive, spirited and unconventional Charlotte Heywood (Rose Williams) and her spiky relationship with the humorous, charming (and slightly wild!) Sidney Parker (Theo James). When a chance accident transports her from her rural hometown of Willingden to the would-be coastal resort of the eponymous title, it exposes Charlotte to the intrigues and dalliances of a seaside town on the make, and the characters whose fortunes depend on its commercial success. The twists and turns of the plot, which takes viewers from the West Indies to the rotting alleys of London, exposes the hidden agendas of each character and sees Charlotte discover herself and ultimately find love.

Rose Williams will star as Charlotte. Excited by the promise of adventure that *Sanditon* offers, Charlotte is a young woman of enormous energy who builds a reputation as an integral part of the new town. Open and optimistic in spirit, she's excited by the changes the nineteenth century promises and she's ready for a new life; she's a truly modern Austen heroine. Confident in her opinions but unfamiliar with the rules of high society, Charlotte's self-assurance is knocked when she meets Sidney. Will *Sanditon* give her somewhere, and someone, to love?

Rose Williams said “I am absolutely thrilled to be playing Charlotte Heywood. This role is such a blessing. She's a brilliant character — modern, headstrong, with heart and a voice. Andrew's scripts are so beautifully written and wonderfully full of powerful female characters. I can't wait to start filming soon with the wonderful cast and creative team on *Sanditon*.”

Theo James plays Sidney, a man never the same from one moment to the next. Unpredictable, roguish and restless — seemingly never settling in one place for very long — self-made man Sidney finds his responsibilities to his family in Sanditon somewhat tiresome. And yet his cynicism masks a sensitive soul wounded by a broken heart that has never fully healed. In the company of Charlotte, Sidney must rediscover who he is and crucially, learn to trust again.

Anne Reid will play the deliciously direct Lady Denham. Two husbands dead and gone, Lady Denham received money from the first and a title from the second and expects to be treated with a great deal of deference. Notoriously tight-fisted, she seems to delight in the power that she wields over the town, particularly those waiting to cash in from her death.

Playing the head of the Parker family, Kris Marshall stars as Tom Parker, an enthusiastic and happily married man with a vision of putting Sanditon on the map. Full of energy and charm, Tom's a risk-taker although his unbending belief in his venture could see his obsession land him in trouble.

Andrew Davies, creator and screenwriter said: “I'm very excited that we are bringing the world of *Sanditon* to the TV audience with such a brilliant ensemble cast, headed by star of the future Rose Williams as our heroine, independent and forthright Charlotte Heywood, together with Theo James as Sidney Parker, our Regency entrepreneur with an aura of danger. It's been such fun to develop Jane Austen's fragment into a series - now I'm eager to see our exceptional cast bring *Sanditon* to life.”

Also set to star in this lavish drama are Kate Ashfield (*Secrets and Lies*, *Line of Duty*) as Mary Parker, Jack Fox (*Riviera*, *Johnny English Strikes Again*) as Sir Edward Denham, Charlotte Spencer (*The Living and the Dead*, *Watership Down*) as Esther Denham, Lily Sacofsky (*Bancroft*) as Clara Brereton, and Crystal Clarke (*Ordeal by Innocence*) as Miss Lambe. Elizabeth Berrington (*Vanity Fair*, *Patrick Melrose*) will play Mrs Griffiths, with Adrian Rawlins (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 & 2*, *Girlfriends*) as Mr Heywood, Turlough Convery (*Les Misérables*, *Poldark*) as Arthur Parker, Mark Stanley (*Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens*, *Game of Thrones*) as Lord Babbington and Matthew Needham (*The Hollow Crown*, *The Ritual*) as Mr Crowe. Alexandra Roach (*Black Mirror*, *A Guide to Second Date Sex*) will play Diana Parker, with Leo Suter (*Clique*, *Victoria*) as Young Stringer, Kevin Eldon (*Cavendish*, *Hot Fuzz*) as Mr Hankins and Adrian Scarborough (*The Madness of King George*, *A Very English Scandal*) as Dr Fuchs.

Sanditon is a Red Planet Pictures production commissioned for ITV by Polly Hill and MASTERPIECE by Rebecca Eaton. Created by Jane Austen, it is written and executive produced by Andrew Davies with Belinda Campbell as Executive Producer for Red Planet Pictures and Rebecca Eaton as Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE. Series producer is Georgina Lowe and directed by Olly Blackburn. BBC Studios is distributing the series internationally.

About Red Planet Pictures:

Red Planet Pictures has produced some of the UK's most popular drama content of recent years, including eight series of the BBC One ratings hit *Death in Paradise*, with episode one of the latest series pulling in a consolidated audience of 8.2 million, and a slot winning share of 32%.

The dynamic indie has also produced the ambitious and critically acclaimed 20-part drama *Dickensian*, a studio drama that brought together iconic characters from Charles Dickens' most famous works, for the BBC. Red Planet Pictures productions also include big budget adventure drama series *Hooten & The Lady* for Sky One, the critically acclaimed WWI drama *The Passing Bells* and the retelling of Noah's Ark, *The Ark*, both for BBC One. *Babs*, a 90min' drama written by Tony Jordan was produced by BBC Studios in association with Red Planet Pictures. The 8x60 drama adaptation of Jane Austen's unfinished final novel, *Sanditon*, developed by Emmy® and BAFTA-Award winning writer Andrew Davies goes into production in March 2019 and is slated for release on ITV in 2020.

Red Planet Pictures was founded by award-winning writer Tony Jordan in 2005, and in 2007 the company launched the Red Planet Prize, a writing competition designed to find and establish Britain's next generation of showrunners and writing talent. The creative initiative has uncovered and developed a number of aspiring writers including previous finalist Robert Thorogood, who created the BBC One smash-hit series *Death in Paradise*.

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 of the series. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking 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*.

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