

Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale [B2]

Le intriganti avventure del conte di Grantham e della sua famiglia ci hanno tenuti incollati agli schermi. Ora, la serie che ha riportato di moda i drammi in costume si avvicina alla sua fine con il terzo e ultimo film.

Downton Abbey is a cultural phenomenon. With over 120 million viewers worldwide, the **period drama** is one of the most popular series in the history of British television. The two feature films — Downton Abbey (2019) and Downton Abbey: A New Era (2022) — together **grossed** around €250 million at the **box office**. Now, fans are **eagerly** awaiting the third and final **instalment**, Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale. Scheduled for **release** on 12 September, little is known about the **plot**, although it will likely offer a heartfelt and emotional conclusion.

THE CRAWLEYS

Created by Julian Fellowes, Downton Abbey premiered on UK TV channel ITV in 2010. It quickly became a global sensation. Over the course of six seasons and two films, audiences were **engrossed** by the lives and loves of the aristocratic Crawley family and their servants. The series centres on the fictional **estate** of Downton Abbey in Yorkshire, home of the **Earl** of Grantham, his American wife and their three daughters. Violet, the proud Dowager Countess of Grantham, is the matriarch of the family. Equally important are the servants, key among them the **butler**, Mr. Carson, and the head **housekeeper**, Mrs. Hughes. Quintessentially British, the series' rich storytelling and strong character development captivated viewers, leading to critical acclaim and a **host** of awards, including a Golden Globe and an Emmy.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Downton Abbey series is set in post-Edwardian England, from 1912 to 1925, while the movies take place in 1927 and 1928. These were turbulent

times. Over the course of the series, the characters are touched by key historical events, from the sinking of the Titanic, World War One and the Spanish flu pandemic, to the Irish War of Independence and the Beer Hall Putsch, Adolf Hitler's failed coup d'état. It was also a period of intense social change, with the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the working class. The series gives the audience a close-up view from different perspectives. This is part of why it is so popular. Its portrayal of class dynamics, societal changes and historical events allows viewers to engage with the past.

CULTURAL IMPACT

Downton Abbey has had a profound impact on popular culture. Period dramas have always been popular, but the series revived the genre and sparked a renewed interest in British aristocracy, leading to other successful shows such as The Crown and Poldark. Beyond television, its influence extended to tourism and even fashion. Highclere Castle in Hampshire, the real-life location of Downton Abbey, is now a popular tourist destination, attracting over ninety thousand visitors a year. The increased visitor numbers helped the owners of the crumbling estate to pay for urgent repairs. Moreover, the show's glamourous aesthetics have inspired trends in interior design and personal style, from opulent furnishings to cloche hats and flapper dresses.

THE GRAND FINALE

The Grand Finale takes us to the 1930s. The film will feature the return of familiar faces, including Hugh Bonneville, Michelle Dockery and Elizabeth McGovern. New additions to the cast, such as Alessandro Nivola, Joely Richardson and Simon Russell Beale, are expected to bring fresh dynamics to the story. The trailer shows Lord Grantham announcing that his daughter Mary will be in charge of Downton Abbey. "It's hard to accept that it's time to go," he says. Mary is divorced from Henry Talbot and the whole household has to deal with the public disgrace. As the Crawleys struggle to adapt to changing times, Mary poignantly states, "Long live Downton Abbey."

THE FINAL ACT

Downton Abbey has brought to life some of the most memorable fictional characters: the aristocratic Crawleys and the many and varied staff who serve the family. As the world eagerly anticipates the final film in the franchise, here is a reminder of where we left the most popular characters at the end of Downton Abbey: A New Era. A warning for those who didn't see the 2022 film: major spoilers ahead! Violet Crawley, the matriarch of the family, dies at the end of Downton Abbey: A New Era. In the penultimate film, she inherits a villa in the South of France. She reveals that she had a summer romance with the Marquis de Montmirail on the French Riviera, prior to her marriage to Lord Grantham. She passes away at home, surrounded by her family, leaving the villa to her great-granddaughter Sybil 'Sybie' Branson. Immortalised by the late, great Dame Maggie Smith, her acerbic wit and strong-willed personality made her one of the most beloved characters. Robert and Cora Crawley, played by Hugh Bonneville and Elizabeth McGovern, have returned from their trip to France. Following speculation about his parentage due to Violet's Riviera romance, Robert is relieved to confirm that he is the legitimate son of the previous Lord Grantham. With his daughters settled, he is taking a step back from the day-to-day running of the estate. Cora is helping at the local hospital. She has a health scare, initially fearing she has cancer, but it turns out to be pernicious anaemia, a treatable condition. Lady Mary, played with aplomb by Michelle Dockery, has been hosting a film crew while her father and others travel to France. She allowed Downton Abbey to be used as a filming location, intending to use the money for essential repairs. She even becomes involved in the production, dubbing the actress' voice. Her husband, Henry Talbot, is absent, pursuing his passion for car racing; it is clear there are tensions in the marriage. Mary resists temptation, despite her attraction to the film director. By the end, she takes charge of managing the estate and her family's legacy. Tom Branson (Allen Leech) is now married to Lucy Smith (Tuppence Middleton), the maid — and secret, illegitimate daughter — of Baroness Bagshaw. Tom was formerly the chauffeur and a radical socialist. He has a daughter, Sybie, from his first marriage to Sybil Crawley, who died in childbirth. Despite initial controversy, both Tom and Lucy have now been accepted into the Downton Abbey circle. They have a baby and are happily

settled at the Brampton **estate**, which Lucy inherited from her mother. Former **footman** Thomas Barrow has become the **butler** of Downton Abbey. He is gay, at a time when homosexuality was **forbidden**. During the series, Thomas flourishes into his true self, accepting his sexuality. A complicated man, he is kind and loyal, even though he starts out rude and manipulative. His personality change **rings true**, thanks to a stellar performance by actor Rob James-Collier. In the last Downton film, he meets film star Guy Dexter, who offers him a job in Hollywood. He accepts, encouraged by Lady Mary and Mrs. Carson, leaving Downton Abbey **without a butler**. Mr. Carson, a well-loved character played by Jim Carter, was Downton Abbey's **butler** for many years. He has retired and is now married to head **housekeeper** Elsie Hughes (Phyllis Logan). Carson struggles to **keep up with** the times, but his temperament is **kept in check** by his wife. Below stairs, she is the moral **compass** of the **household**. When Violet dies and Thomas decides to leave, Lady Mary asks Mr. Carson to **step in** as **interim butler** and to **train footman** Andy Parker as his replacement.

Glossary

- **interim** = provvisorio
- **housekeeper** = governante
- **Moreover** = inoltre
- **running** = gestione
- **hosting** = accogliere
- **forbidden** = proibire
- **kept in check** = tenere sotto controllo
- **dubbing** = doppiare
- **step in** = subentrare
- **grossed** = incassare
- **instalment** = capitolo, episodio
- **estate** = tenuta
- **furnishings** = mobili
- **anticipates** = aspettare
- **inherits** = ereditare
- **engrossed** = catturare
- **sparked** = accendere, innescare
- **Long live** = viva
- **great-granddaughter** = pronipote
- **parentage** = parentela
- **relieved** = sollevato
- **eagerly** = con impazienza
- **Earl** = conte
- **host** = serie, miriade
- **wit** = ingegno, acume
- **strong-willed** = tenace
- **due to** = dovuta a
- **compass** = bussola
- **household** = casa, famiglia
- **period drama** = dramma in costume
- **coup d'état** = colpo di Stato
- **cloche hats** = cloche, cappelli a campana
- **settled** = stabilirsi

- **maid** = domestica
- **keep up** = stare al passo
- **footman** = domestico
- **rings true** = sembrare vero
- **release** = uscita
- **plot** = trama
- **poignantly** = dolorosamente
- **late** = defunta
- **Dame** = Dama dell'Impero Britannico
- **film crew** = troupe cinematografica
- **health scare** = spavento per la salute
- **box office** = botteghino
- **flu** = influenza
- **Beer Hall Putsch** = Putsch (colpo di Stato) della birreria
- **to engage with** = interagire con
- **crumbling** = fatiscente
- **acerbic** = pungente
- **butler** = maggiordomo
- **train** = formare, istruire