

DOWNTON ABBEY**2019****122 min.**Directed by **Michael Engler**

Starring: Michelle Dockery, Maggie Smith, Hugh Bonneville, Jim Carter, Elizabeth McGovern

In 1927 Buckingham Palace informs Robert and Cora Crawley, the Earl and Countess of Grantham, that King George V and Queen Mary will visit Downton Abbey during a royal tour through Yorkshire. Violet Crawley, Dowager Countess of Grantham, is perturbed that Maud, Lady Bagshaw, Queen Mary's lady-in-waiting, is included in the tour. Robert is Maud's cousin and closest relative, and the two families have long disputed who should inherit Maud's estate. The royal household staff arrive. All but Ellis are dismissive and arrogant to the Downton servants. Upstairs, eldest Crawley's daughter Lady Mary Talbot, the estate manager, constantly worries about keeping Downton afloat in a fast-changing world. Believing Mr Barrow unable to manage a royal visit, Mary asks Mr Carson, Downton's retired butler, to temporarily resume his duties. Barrow, strongly protesting, steps aside. A man, Major Chetwode, arrives in Downton Village seeking out the Granthams' Irish son-in-law, Tom Branson. Tom assumes Chetwode is a detective assessing security for the royal visit. The royal entourage completely displaces the Downton household. Meanwhile, Tom and Lucy Smith, Lady Maud's maid, form a mutual attraction. Bertie and Edith Pelham, the Marquess and Marchioness of Hexham, also arrive at Downton. The King asks Bertie to accompany the Prince of Wales on a three-month African tour. The news distresses Edith, the younger Crawley daughter, who tells Bertie she is pregnant and is due just as Bertie would depart. Prior to the royal parade starting through Downton Village, Chetwode stations himself near where the King is awaiting the Royal Artillery, unaware that Tom has grown suspicious. As Chetwode aims a pistol at King George, Tom tackles Chetwode, pinning him to the ground. The real royal detectives apprehend Chetwode, an Irish Republican sympathiser who erroneously believed Tom was an ally. After the parade, Tom encounters a sobbing woman on Downton's lawn, unaware she is Princess Mary. He initiates a conversation which inspires the Princess to remain with her husband. That same evening, Barrow and Ellis go to York. While Ellis visits his parents, Barrow waits at a local pub. A man there invites Barrow to a hidden gay nightclub. Shortly after Barrow arrives, police raid the club. Ellis, who is secretly gay, discovers what happened and uses his royal connection to secure Barrow's release. Afterwards, the two men develop a bond, indicating they will meet again. Back at Downton, as the inheritance conflict escalates, Isobel, Lady Merton, surmises correctly that Lucy is Maud's secret illegitimate daughter, which is the reason she is Maud's heir. She tells Maud she must inform Violet. The next morning, assistant cook Daisy, who doubted if footman Andy was the right man for her, realises she does love him and begins planning their wedding. Henry Talbot, Mary's husband, returns from abroad in time to accompany the family to Harewood House with the royal party. During the ball at Harewood, Princess Mary informs her parents that Tom inspired her to save her marriage, prompting the King to personally thank him. Also, the Queen has persuaded the King to release Bertie from the imminent tour. Maud tells Violet about Lucy. Violet does not approve but understands, and immediately schemes to unite the two households through Lucy and Tom when told they plan to write to one another. Mary privately queries her grandmother regarding her recent trip to London. Violet confides that medical tests reveal she may die soon, but she assures a distraught Mary that Downton's legacy is safe in her hands.

Critics' comments:

With a two-hour running time, Downton Abbey can indulge itself in some of the more delicious aspects of its six-season run.

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