



FILM: **DOWNTON ABBEY**

FDG RATING: 3.0 ☺☺☺○○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Michael Engler: *director*

Dame Maggie Smith: *actress, Violet Crawley*
TV series cast

DATE: October 20, 2019

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **DOWNTON ABBEY**

Even loyal Abbeyists admitted the story was a bit meager but enthusiastically gave the costumes and regal vistas our highest score. On the plus side, you did not need to know the back story which aired continuously from 2010 until 2015, nor have a familiarity with the quirky characters to enjoy the big screen episode. The series surrounded the fictional Yorkshire country estate of Downton Abbey between 1912 and 1926, depicting the lives of the aristocratic Crawley family and their domestic servants in the post-Edwardian era. The film is basically another episode set in 1927, that brings together almost every character from the series to tie up loose ends while standing on its own as well.

We see the excitement and slight trepidation as the Crawley family learns that King George V and Queen Mary are coming to visit their estate during their tour the countryside. We pushed aside any doubts that the King and Queen would actually want to visit the Yorkshire estate* and shared the entire staff's thrilling exhilaration at the opportunity to serve the King and Queen even luring former butler Carson (a series favorite) out of retirement to take charge of the estate in preparation of the royal visit.

For 2 hours we are entertained by four dozen major and minor characters, nobility and servants, bustling about meticulously to execute every detail including fixing a damaged boiler; completely altering a dress in a few hours, and in the middle of the night in pouring rain, arranging metal chairs for townspeople who are supposed to gather the following morning to watch the arrival of King George V and Queen Mary.

What happens next threw a wrench into their expectations as they learn their services are not needed since the king and queen travel with their own chefs and attendants. Many of us felt it completely unrealistic and out of character for the staff to rebel, toppling the majestic protocol, but they did so in caperesque, high jinx fashion adding an amusing interlude to the pomp and circumstance.

Was the film merely an opportunistic endeavor, riding the royal coattails of a highly successful TV series? Probably, but many agree that seeing the lavish costumes, jewelry, scenes, sets, and expansive vistas in a grand scale, was worth it. And of course, it's always a joy to see Dame Maggie Smith as the endearing, witty, sharp tongued matriarch, Violet Crawley.

Of our 17 discussion participants, 12 regularly watched the series but only 2 of those rated the film a noble 4 on our scale of 1 to 5 (5 is the best). Definitely better as a TV series where you are invested in the lives of the characters, the film used a weak, mildly entertaining plot embellished with shiny baubles. A few 2s, with the rest of the scores maintaining a middleclass status quo resulted in a less than majestic collective 3.0.

*(fact check: King George V and Queen Mary were regular visitors to Yorkshire during the 1920s especially after the marriage of their only daughter Princess Mary to Viscount Lascelles in 1922 and the birth of their first grandchild in 1923. The Royals visited every year to stay with them at their family homes of Goldsborough Hall 1922-1930 and later Harewood House. The Royals would often visit and stay with other Yorkshire estates whilst in the area or on route to their Scottish Estate of Balmoral.)



See you at the movies!

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