Upstairs, Downstairs Encyclopedia Article

Upstairs, Downstairs

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Upstairs, Downstairs

Upstairs, Downstairs, a popular British-import television program about servants and their masters in an early twentieth-century London household, has been watched by an estimated one billion people in 40 countries since it was first broadcast on *Masterpiece Theatre* during the 1974 season. Produced by London Weekend Television, its 68 episodes follow the wealthy Bellamy family ("up-stairs") and their servants ("downstairs") from 1903 until the stock market crash of 1929. Rigorous period detail, distinguished acting, and the equal time given to lower-class characters are hallmarks of the series. In depicting the erosion of the British class system during and after the Edwardian era, *Upstairs, Downstairs* bolstered the reputation of British television around the globe. The show won eight Emmy Awards and garnered high ratings for the Public Broadcasting System in the United States, besides helping assure the success of *Masterpiece Theatre* as a PBS showcase synonymous with quality programming.

Further Reading:

Flaherty, Terrence. *Masterpiece Theatre: A Celebration of 25 Years of Outstanding Television.* San Francisco, KQED Books, 1996.

Floyd, Patty Lou. *Backstairs with Upstairs, Downstairs.* New York, St. Martin's, 1988.

Hardwick, Mollie. *The World of Upstairs, Downstairs.* New York, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1976.