

A Family Holiday Across Europe - What Could Go Wrong?

Us

**Tom Hollander and Saskia Reeves star
in an adaptation of David Nicholls' bestselling novel
on MASTERPIECE**

Sundays, June 20 and 27 on PBS

Paris, Venice and Barcelona are on the itinerary when a married couple on the verge of breakup take a European vacation with their rebellious teenage son. Tom Hollander (*Baptiste*) and Saskia Reeves (*Roadkill*) star as Douglas and Connie, a hopelessly mismatched husband and wife, with Tom Taylor (*The Dark Tower*) as Albie, their moody offspring. Adapted from David Nicholls' Booker Prize-nominated novel, *Us* airs in two two-hour episodes on MASTERPIECE, Sundays, June 20 and 27, 2021 at 9/8c on PBS. MASTERPIECE is presented by GBH Boston.

A Drama Republic and Bandstand Production, the recent UK broadcast of *Us* delighted critics who called it "hard to resist" (*The Guardian*); "funny and touching and acutely observed" (*The Independent*); and "Melancholy without being bleak, funny without being silly...perfect Sunday night entertainment." (*The Daily Telegraph*)

The Independent further noted that *Us* is "a vision of paradise, filmed before lockdown, a continent of trains and restaurants and museums where no character ever says 'epidemiologist' [or] 'quarantine.'"

Us also features Iain De Caestecker (*Roadkill*) and Gina Bramhill (*Sherlock*) playing Douglas and Connie as young lovers and newlyweds, when their unsuitability as partners seemed stimulating rather than stifling.

The story opens in suburban Britain, with Douglas and Connie twenty years into their marriage. He is a left-brain type – a scientist – organized, numerical, and obsessively rational. Meanwhile, she is an artist with her right brain firing on all cylinders—visual, creative, unconventional. Out of the blue one night, she wakes up Douglas to announce, "I've been thinking about leaving. I think our marriage might be over."

It's news to Douglas, who has been blindly contented with matrimony. He immediately decides to change his ways in order to change her mind. She agrees that they should at least go ahead with their planned European holiday, designed to introduce art-school-bound Albie to the glories of continental culture. At seventeen, he is not exactly thrilled to be doing the tourist beat with his parents.

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Yet all three embark on a grand tour—three weeks, six countries, twelve cities—that is less about museums, monuments, and cafes than how family members can't help driving each other over the edge. The contentious incidents abroad are interspersed with flashbacks to happier days, showing how Douglas and Connie met and fell in love, despite their differences. These scenes also reveal a long-ago tragedy that bonds the couple, and that has deeply affected Albie.

It wouldn't be a proper trip without new friends made along the way. One is Kat (Thaddea Graham, *The Irregulars*), a musician and aspiring busker like Albie. She is as spontaneous as Douglas is deliberate, yet the uptight scientist comes to appreciate her free-form anarchy. Another is middle-aged Freja (Sofie Grabol, *Gentleman Jack*), who encounters Douglas at a particularly difficult phase of the trip and is just as spiritually lost as he is.

Through it all, one thing that keeps Douglas going is his sense of perspective. Visiting the Louvre with Connie and Albie, he contemplates Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa*, where a shipwrecked crew is at the height of their suffering, which has included cannibalism. "At least someone is having a worse holiday than us," he observes.

Descriptions

Series Description

Douglas, his wife and his teenage son take a European summer vacation together. What could go wrong? Tom Hollander, Saskia Reeves, and Tom Taylor star in an adaptation of David Nicholls' bittersweet, bestselling novel about a family giving their relationship one last shot. "Funny and touching and acutely observed," applauded *The Independent* (London).

Episode One

Sunday, June 20; 9 - 11pm ET

Connie tells Douglas she wants to end their 20-year marriage, but not before they take a European vacation with Albie, their rebellious teenage son.

Episode Two

Sunday, June 27; 9 - 11pm ET

Searching for Albie in Venice, Douglas makes a new friend, Freja. Later, he lands in jail. Back in England, Connie wonders what's going on.

Us is a Drama Republic and Bandstand Productions for BBC and MASTERPIECE. David Nicholls is the writer and executive producer. Greg Brenman and Roanna Benn are the executive producers for Drama Republic and Hannah Pescod and Tom Hollander are the executive producers for Bandstand Productions. The director is Geoffrey Sax. The producer is Hannah Pescod. Jo McClellan is the executive producer for BBC One.

About MASTERPIECE

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 18 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans since 1971. Susanne Simpson is the executive producer and Rebecca Eaton is the executive producer-at-large for the series. Funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking and Raymond James with additional support from public television viewers and contributors to The MASTERPIECE Trust. Produced for PBS by GBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for hits such as *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Victoria*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*.

pbs.org/masterpiece

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