

MASTERPIECE

A Jewish Spy Fights for Her Life

Ridley Road

A stellar cast brings the turmoil of Sixties London to life
in a spellbinding miniseries on MASTERPIECE
Sundays, May 1-May 22, 2022 on PBS

Summer 1962: London is swinging with new music, hip fashions, and an irresistible hedonistic spirit. It's also seething with antisemitic violence incited by homegrown neo-Nazis. MASTERPIECE presents a riveting drama set in this colorful but tumultuous time on *Ridley Road*, based on Jo Bloom's acclaimed novel and airing in four parts, Sundays, May 1-May 22, on PBS.

Inspired by true events, *Ridley Road* stars newcomer Agnes O'Casey as Vivien Epstein, a young Jewish hairdresser who fits right into London's mod scene, while secretly infiltrating the British neo-Nazi hierarchy on behalf of Jewish antifascists.

"Britain's relationship with fascism is closer and more alive than we like to think. Luckily, so is our history of fighting it. Honoured to bring this urgent, relevant story to the screen for MASTERPIECE PBS," says the drama's Creator, Executive Producer and Screenwriter Sarah Solemani.

"*Ridley Road* has a strong message to convey," says MASTERPIECE Executive Producer Susanne Simpson. "Writer Sarah Solemani and executive producer Nicola Shindler have created a compelling story to remind us that fascism continues to exist in our society and we need to ask the question, what are we going to do about it?"

British TV critics were transfixed by the miniseries. *The Guardian* called it "a drama with resonance. It has the right story to tell—alas—in our current dark age." *The Independent* raved, "*Ridley Road* is an action thriller as well as a period piece, with chases, fights and romance to go with its political context." And the *London Times* enthused, "What makes *Ridley Road* a joy to watch is not only the stellar cast, but the storytelling," adding, "It is beautifully crafted, weaving in archive footage, making it look as if Vivien is actually in Sixties London."

"As soon as I read about this history...I felt compelled to tell the story on screen.... The more I researched, the more horrifying were the details," adds Executive Producer Nicola Shindler.

O'Casey is joined by Rory Kinnear (*No Time to Die*) as Colin Jordan, the real-life leader of Britain's post-World War II Nazi movement; Tom Varey (*Game of Thrones*) as Jack, Vivien's true love, who mysteriously disappears at the outset of the series; Eddie Marsan (*Little Dorrit*) as Vivien's cagey uncle Soly, a secret operative for the 62 Group, which is combatting the resurgence of fascism; and Tracy-Ann Oberman (*After Life*) as Soly's shrewd wife, Nancy.

Also appearing are Rita Tushingham (*Doctor Zhivago*) as Nettie, Vivien's right-wing landlady; Tamzin Outhwaite (*EastEnders*) as Barbara, the gutsy manager at the Soho hairdressing salon where Vivien lands a job; and Gabriel Akuwudike (*War of the Worlds*) as Barbara's son, Stevie, a leftist law student who gets the wrong idea about Vivien's politics.

Politics is the last thing on Vivien's mind when she flees a proposed arranged marriage in Manchester to find Jack, whom her parents deplore. Little does she know that Jack has been recruited by the 62 Group in London as a mole to infiltrate the National Socialist Movement, a fascist party promoting violent antisemitism and racism.

Before she knows it, Vivien is also recruited—with the mission of finding out what has happened to Jack. The assignment requires her to change her look, her name, and her personality, becoming an apparent Nazi and ardent admirer of the movement's charismatic leader, Jordan. She is far more successful than anyone dreamed possible, which pulls her deeper and deeper into a vicious lion's den of intrigue.

London is famous for its swinging era in the early sixties that launched a worldwide, youth-centered cultural revolution. Largely forgotten is the concurrent rise of extreme nationalist politics that seemed poised to take over the county—the movement portrayed in *Ridley Road*.

Program Description

Summer 1962: London is swinging with new music, hip fashions, and an irresistible hedonistic spirit. It's also seething with antisemitic violence incited by homegrown neo-Nazis. MASTERPIECE presents a riveting four-part drama set in this colorful but tumultuous time on *Ridley Road*, based on Jo Bloom's acclaimed novel. Inspired by true events, *Ridley Road* stars newcomer Agnes O'Casey as Vivien Epstein, a young Jewish hairdresser who fits right into London's mod scene, while secretly infiltrating the British neo-Nazi hierarchy on behalf of Jewish antifascists, Rory Kinnear as Colin Jordan, the real-life leader of Britain's post-World War II Nazi movement, and Tom Varey as Jack, Vivien's true love.

Episode Descriptions

Episode One

Sunday, May 1, 2022; 9-10pm ET on PBS (check local listings)

London in the swinging sixties is a hive of violent antisemitism, as Jewish hairdresser Vivien learns when she arrives in search of her beau, Jack.

Episode Two

Sunday, May 8, 2022; 9-10pm ET on PBS (check local listings)

Now undercover, Vivien strives to convince neo-Nazi leader Colin Jordan that she is on his side. Her spying turns up an alarming development.

Episode Three

Sunday, May 15, 2022; 9-10pm ET on PBS (check local listings)

Vivien's link to Jordan is complicated by the arrival of his wife. The police rebuff warnings from the 62 Group, who must act on their own.

Episode Four

Sunday, May 22, 2022; 9-10pm ET on PBS (check local listings)

As Vivien's deception starts to crumble, she races to secure incriminating evidence against Jordan. Meanwhile, Jack faces mortal danger.

Ridley Road is a production of RED Production Company, a Studiocanal Company for BBC co-produced with MASTERPIECE in association with Endeavour Content. The series is created and written by Sarah Solemani and based on the book "Ridley Road" written by Jo Bloom. The executive producers are Nicola Shindler, Sarah Solemani, Rebecca Eaton and Jo Bloom. The executive producers for the BBC are Lucy Richer and Ayela Butt. The producer is Betsan Morris Evans. The director is Lisa Mulcahy.

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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