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MASTERPIECE to Air "Mr Bates vs The Post Office"

Based on the real-life British Post Office Scandal, Limited Series Has Set Off Firestorm of Public Outrage forcing the Prime Minister to Act; MASTERPIECE Premiere Set for April 7, 2024 on PBS

"A starry cast takes on one of the worst miscarriages of justice in British history. They're the ideal way into skulduggery so terrifying it could be a *Black Mirror* episode."

– *The Guardian*

"This is a staunch David and Goliath homage to quiet fortitude triumphing over corporate chicanery, and well worth anyone's time." – *The Observer*

"All credit to the writer Gwyneth Hughes for the efficiency of her script, which conveyed a mind-boggling scandal clearly and crisply." – *The Times*

Following one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in British legal history, *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* was created with direct input from the innocent – and indomitable – people caught up in it. Following the UK broadcast on ITV, the series has set off a firestorm of public interest and, within eight days of premiering, the Prime Minister announced a new law to pardon the victims who had been wrongly convicted. The stellar ensemble cast is led by BAFTA award-winning Toby Jones (*Empire of Light*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and *Sherlock*) as Alan Bates and will premiere on Sunday, April 7, 2024 on MASTERPIECE on PBS.

When money started to seemingly disappear from its local branches, the government-owned Post Office wrongly blamed their own managers for its apparent loss. For more than a decade, hundreds were accused of theft and fraud, and many were even sent to prison – leaving lives, marriages, and reputations in ruins. But the issue was actually caused by errors in the Post Office's own computer system – something it denied for years. Revealing a shocking David vs. Goliath fight for justice, this is the story of the decent ordinary people who were relentlessly pursued, coerced and controlled by a powerful corporation, and their ongoing battle, against seemingly insurmountable odds, to right so many horrific wrongs.

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Mr Bates vs The Post Office is the UK's most-watched drama of 2024 so far and ITV's biggest new drama launch in over a decade averaging 13.1 million viewers, with hundreds of thousands still catching up on ITVX every day, beating the launch of *Downton Abbey* in 2010.

Patrick Spence, Executive Producer, said "Our ambition in telling this story was simply that the Subpostmasters felt heard. We were so angry on their behalf, we wanted others to feel it too. And they did: the whole country is angry now! They rose up to stand beside the Subpostmasters with such determination and such rage that the Prime Minister had no choice but to act within days. They certainly feel heard now.'

Natasha Bondy, Executive Producer, Little Gem added "It was impossible not to empathise with the Subpostmasters at the heart of this scandal. People who'd been forced to question their own sanity and the behaviour of loved ones and employees, at the hands of a trusted institution. Getting their stories to a wider public so that everyone could understand what they've been through, was our biggest hope."

Susanne Simpson, MASTERPIECE Executive Producer says, "*Mr Bates vs The Post Office* is a testament to the people who persisted in their search for truth and justice. The producers of this powerful drama have reignited the public interest in the Subpostmasters' 20-year quest for justice. I'm incredibly proud that MASTERPIECE will bring this story to the American audience." MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by GBH Boston.

Writer Gwyneth Hughes commented, "I've spent a lot of time with the Subpostmasters at the heart of this fightback, whose lives were turned upside down by this appalling business. They are a very British bunch of lively, interesting and indomitable people who never gave up, and I'm honoured to bring their stories to an international audience. I still find it just astonishing, and deeply troubling, that this could have happened in my country; I confess it's shaken my confidence in British justice. So it's been extraordinary and humbling to witness how a huge television audience can force change."

Monica Dolan (*The Thief, His Wife and The Canoe*), Julie Hesmondhalgh (*The Pact, The Trouble With Maggie Cole*), Alex Jennings (*This Is Going to Hurt, The Crown*), Ian Hart (*The Responder*), Lia Williams (*The Crown, The Capture*), Will Mellor (*Coronation Street, No Offence*), Clare Calbraith (*Grace, Anne*), Shaun Dooley (*Gentleman Jack, It's A Sin*), Amit Shah (*Happy Valley*) Lesley Nicol (*Downton Abbey*) Adam James (*The Suspect, Vigil*) and Katherine Kelly (*Bloods, Gentleman Jack*) round out the cast.

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Mr Bates vs The Post Office will premiere on MASTERPIECE on PBS on April 7, 2024 at 9/8c on broadcast and will be available to stream on PBS.org, the PBS App and the PBS MASTERPIECE Prime Video Channel.

Mr Bates vs The Post Office is an ITV Studios and Little Gem production for ITV and ITVX commissioned for UK audiences by ITV's Head of Drama Polly Hill. It is distributed internationally by ITV Studios. The writer is Gwyneth Hughes. The director is James Strong. The executive producers are Patrick Spence, Gwyneth Hughes, James Strong, Joe Williams, Natasha Bondy and Ben Gale. The producer is Chris Clough.

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About MASTERPIECE:

Winner of 83 Primetime Emmys® and 18 Peabody Awards, MASTERPIECE has been essential Sunday night viewing for millions of fans for over 50 years. Susanne Simpson is the executive producer. Series funding for MASTERPIECE is provided by Viking Cruises, Raymond James, The MASTERPIECE Trust, and public television viewers. Produced for PBS by GBH Boston, MASTERPIECE is known for hits such as *All Creatures Great and Small*, *Sherlock*, *Downton Abbey* and *Wolf Hall*, and beloved classics such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Prime Suspect*, *The Forsyte Saga* and *Poldark*. For more information, please visit pbs.org/masterpiece and follow us on social media @masterpiecepbs.

About PBS

[PBS](https://pbs.org), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 42 million adults on linear primetime television, more than 15 million users on PBS-owned streaming platforms, and 56 million people view PBS content on social media, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature, and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front-row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS's broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to [PBS LearningMedia](https://pbs.org/learningmedia) for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. As the number one educational media brand, [PBS KIDS](https://pbs.org/kids) helps children 2-8 build critical skills, enabling them to find success in



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school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality content on TV – including a PBS KIDS channel – and streaming free on pbskids.org and the [PBS KIDS Video app](#), games on the [PBS KIDS Games app](#), and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at PBS.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Communications on Twitter](#).

About ITV Studios

ITV Studios is a creator, producer and distributor of world-leading programmes that people can't get enough of. We connect millions of people every day and shape and reflect the world they live in, we are More Than TV.

ITV Studios is home to some of the best creative minds, crafting over 6,700 hours of original programming across more than 60 production labels. Our global footprint spans 13 countries including the UK, US, Australia, France, Germany, The Nordics, Italy and the Netherlands and our global distribution business sells our catalogue of 90,000+ hours to broadcasters and platforms around the world.

ITV Studios is part of ITV PLC, which includes the UK's largest commercial broadcaster.

About Little Gem

Little Gem was set up by Natasha Bondy and Ben Gale in 2014 to produce entertaining factual programmes with first class storytelling at their heart.

The company has produced over 90 hours of television in the UK for the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5, Sky and UKTV. In 2023, authored documentary *Emily Atack: Asking for It?* (BBC2) showed that not enough is being done to stop online sexual harassment. At the lighter end of the spectrum, *Eurovision Calling: Jason and Chelcee's Ultimate Guide* (BBC1) explored Eurovision from the perspective of newcomer Jason Manford.

Over its ten-year lifespan, the company has expanded its output into different genres, co-producing reality show *Five Star Hotel* for Channel 4 in 2018 and more recently moving into drama, co-producing the smash hit *Mr Bates vs The Post Office* with ITV Studios.

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Little Gem's programmes have been nominated for both Royal Television Society and Grierson Awards.

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