

Press Release

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BBC FIRST SIGNS SMEG AS CHANNEL SPONSOR AND ANNOUNCES TWO MAJOR PROGRAMME ACQUISITIONS



Photo credit: Sophie Mutevelian/BBC/Blueprint Television Ltd/Courtesy of Sony Pictures Television

Premium drama channel BBC First has announced Smeg as its new channel sponsor; alongside the acquisition of two major dramas *A Very English Scandal* starring **Hugh Grant**, and *Vanity Fair* with **Olivia Cooke** (*Ready Player One*).

Smeg will become the channel sponsor for BBC First from July 1. The deal comes as BBC First continues to grow its audiences across the key ad sales demo of People 25-54, with live audiences up 25% over the last twelve months across the day*. The sponsorship will see a string of highly-anticipated dramas featuring big names hitting the screen in the coming months.

The critically acclaimed *A Very English Scandal* is the shocking true story of the first British politician to stand trial for conspiracy to murder. In the late 1960s, homosexuality has only just been decriminalized, and Jeremy Thorpe, the leader of the Liberal party and the youngest leader of any British political party in a hundred years, has a secret he's desperate to hide. As long as Norman Scott, his vociferous ex-lover is around, Thorpe's brilliant career is at risk, and eventually Thorpe can see only one way to silence Scott for good. The trial of Jeremy Thorpe changed politics forever as the British public discover the darkest secrets of the Establishment and the lengths they'd go to conceal them.

For period drama lovers, **Gwyneth Hughes's** (*Victoria*) adaptation of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* brings the novel to life in way that will really connect with a modern audience. Set against the backdrop of the Napoleonic Wars, the series follows Becky Sharp (Olivia Cooke) as she attempts to claw her way out of poverty and scale the heights of English Society. Her story of "villainy, crime, merriment, lovemaking, jilting, laughing, cheating, fighting and dancing", takes her all the way to the court of King George IV, via the Battle of Waterloo, breaking hearts and losing fortunes as she goes. The series also features **Michael Palin** and **Suranne Jones** (*Doctor Foster*).



These two new acquisitions join *Patrick Melrose*, premiering on BBC First from July 23. Starring Oscar nominee and Emmy winner **Benedict Cumberbatch** and featuring **Hugo Weaving** and **Jennifer Jason Leigh**, the series is based on the novels of Edward St Aubyn and adapted by acclaimed author and screenwriter **David Nicholls** (*One Day*) and won praise from audiences and critics alike with its recent screenings in the UK and US.

Smeg's six-month package, developed by Multi Channel Network, will see BBC Studios creative team produce a series of bespoke channel assets across on-air, digital and social platforms. These include integrated billboards, channel idents and behind the scenes footage giving viewers extra insight into these high-end shows.

Katrina Norton-Knight, Head of Brand Partnerships & Channels Advertising, BBC Studios, Australia and New Zealand said: "We are delighted to have Smeg as BBC First's new channel sponsor. The premium brand is an excellent fit with BBC First which has seen impressive audience growth this year driven by a combination of some of the most exciting and talked about new shows coming out of the UK together with a slate of hugely popular returning dramas that audiences tune in to again and again.

Olivia Anderson, National Marketing Manager, Smeg Australia said, "For 70 years, Smeg has created appliances with superior technology and style as a result of our partnerships with world famous architects. Our partnership with BBC First befits Smeg, which has been celebrating world firsts since the launch of *Elisabeth*, the world's first programmable cooker in 1956. This Spring Smeg is proudly launching *Dolce Stil Novo*, our finest collection ever, which will be showcased across BBC First as part of the Channel sponsorship. For us it was a natural synergy of innovation and a celebration of dramatic results – this time in the kitchen."

*OzTam National Subscription Panel, Jul17-Jun18 v Jul16-Jun17, Live Projections, 0600-2400, P25-54

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For more information, please contact:

Jessica Meades

Email: jessica.meades@bbc.com

Phone: 0423938166

NOTES TO EDITORS

About BBC Studios

BBC Studios, a global content company with British creativity at its heart, is a commercial subsidiary of the BBC Group. Formed in April 2018 by the merger of BBC Worldwide and BBC Studios, it spans content financing, development, production, sales, branded services and ancillaries. BBC Studios' award-winning British programmes are internationally recognised across a broad range of genres and specialisms. It has offices in 22 markets globally, including six production bases in the UK and production bases and partnerships in a further nine countries around the world. The company, which makes 2500 hours of content a year, is a champion for British creativity around the world and a committed partner for the UK's independent sector. BBC Studios has revenue of £1.4bn, and returns around £200m to the BBC Group annually, complementing the BBC's licence fee and enhancing programmes for UK audiences.

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