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Versailles heads to BBC Two



By Ed Gove,
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Versailles is made by Canal + and broadcasts on BBC Two

A bold 10-part French drama about the court of King Louis XIV to be broadcast on BBC Two later this year.

Versailles is a new 10-part Franco-Canadian historical drama set in 17th century France.

Despite being filmed in France by French broadcaster Canal Plus, the show is written in English and by English writers, including co-creators David Wolstencroft (*Spooks*) and Simon Mirren (*Waking the Dead*), with a British actor playing King Louis XIV.

According to the [Daily Mail](#), French critics were not pleased that the drama was being produced in English.

Gaston Pellet of the United Republican Group for Linguistic Renaissance, Initiative and Emancipation told *The Times* "It is very worrying and totally implausible that a series about Louis XIV should be made in English"

This is not the first time that the broadcaster has produced a show in English having produced *Borgia* in 2011, however it is the first dramatisation of French history that it not written in French by the broadcaster.

French viewers will be able to watch the programme either dubbed into French, or with French subtitles.

The broadcaster has justified the decision as a "pragmatic choice" to help market the show outside of France, which is necessary to justify its generous £21 million budget - costing around twice as much per episode as ITV's *Downton Abbey*.

However, the programme is now proving popular with audiences, and a second series will begin filming this month.

The show is about the construction of Louis the Sun King's magnificent Palace.

Surrounded by rebelling nobles, King Louis XIV moves the official court of France away from Paris and to Versailles – his father's hunting lodge.

While initially entranced by the magnificence and splendour of the Palace, the courtiers quickly come to see it for what it is – a gilded prison. Secrets, lies and intrigue abound as the nobles try to fight back.

A broadcast date has not yet been announced.