

Meet Nero Wolfe (1936)

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'Meet Nero Wolfe' Brings a New and Engaging Gumshoe to the Rivoli -- 'Early to Bed' at Paramount.

J.T.M.

A most comforting sort of detective for these humid days is Nero Wolfe, a sedentary sleuth given to drinking great quantities of home-made beer in his cool, shade-drawn brownstone and solving murder mysteries therefrom by means of remote control and the extremely helpful hand of the screen's Archie Goodwin, whose voice is the voice of Lionel Stander. Mr. Wolfe is, of course, the rotund Edward Arnold, whose characterization of Rex Stout's fairly recent fictional figure presages brisk competition for such current screen master minds as Philo Vance and Perry Mason, both in matters of deduction as well as esthetically. Where Mr. Vance, for example, collects old chrysoprase and what not, Nero Wolfe grows orchids. Mr. Wolfe sets a precedent, too, in achieving something that seems not to have occurred to the other ratiocinators of the cinema. He collects huge fees.

Mr. Wolfe's deduction in the first of his cases to receive cinema attention is nothing short of Sherlockian. A glimpse, for instance, at a clipping describing the death of one Professor Barstow of a heart attack on the golf links tells him immediately that the unemployed gunsmith whose disappearance he has been placidly investigating will be found murdered. It also tells him that the professor, too, was murdered, with a poisoned needle released from the shaft of a golf club by an air rifle mechanism concealed therein. In due time the police accept the deductions Mr. Wolfe arrives at without ever leaving his quiet home.

It is when a reward of \$50,000 is posted by the professor's widow for apprehension of the murderer that Mr. Wolfe really goes to work. That is, he starts to think hard. His earnest, single-tracked aide, Archie, handles the details, faithfully seeing to it that everybody—suspects, potential victims and police—gather under the Wolfe roof in order that the immobile Nero need under no circumstances venture outside.

How Mr. Wolfe retraces a maze of past intrigues and murders in the Argentine without ever bestirring himself beyond his front door, and how he converts a cunningly contrived bomb into a trap to ensnare the desperate quarry who sent it to him are matters that only a trip to the Rivoli can properly make clear. What can

be told here is that the ultimate villain is one that clear-thinking moviegoers may figure out in advance by applying the best known rule of thumb for mystery story followers.

It might also be mentioned that Miss Dennie Moore, the film's Mazie Gray, with her plaintive, idiomatic campaign to woo Archie away from his chosen career as a gumshoer's helper into marriage and the furniture business, is worth the price of admission all by herself. It might be suggested to Columbia in passing, that Nero Wolfe be permitted in the near future to leave his orchidaceous and beer-stocked flat, if only for a brief visit to the morgue or something. Then they could cash in on one of the most popular of the current title trends and release an episode called "Nero Wolfe Steps Out."

MEET NERO WOLFE, based on the Rex Stout story; screen play by Howard J. Green, Bruce Manning and Joseph Anthony; directed by Herbert Biberman; a Columbia production. At the Rivoli.

Nero Wolfe Edward Arnold

Archie Goodwin Lionel Stander

Ellen Barstow Joan Perry

Claude Roberts Victor Jory

Sarah Barstow Nana Bryant

Mazie Gray Dennie Moore

Manuel Kimball Russell Hardie

E. J. Kimball Walter Kingsford

Professor Barstow Boyd Irwin Sr.

Olaf John Qualen

O'Grady Gene Morgan

Maria Rita Cansino

Dr. Bradford Frank Conroy