

The Wolfe Pack
The Nero Wolfe
Literary Society

A NERO WOLFE MYSTERY

Stamp of approval for the Nero Wolfe mystery, *The Golden Spiders*

The Reviews

CBS SUNDAY MORNING | JOHN LEONARD | MARCH 12, 2000

Announcer: It's SUNDAY MORNING on CBS, and here again is Charles Osgood.

CHARLES OSGOOD, host:

Later this morning, we'll have a close-up look at the legendary mystery writer Robert Parker. First, here's John Leonard, who's been doing some sleuthing of his own.

Good morning, John.

JOHN LEONARD reporting:

Good morning, Charles.

It's a Sunday that swarms with cable cops. On Showtime, gun-toting criminal investigators for the post office; on USA, an entire family undercover for the FBI -- but only one extremely private eye.

Rex Stout wrote 73 Nero Wolfe mysteries, each of them a music box or clockwork orange, a closed time-table tick-tock world, like the great detective's famous brownstone on West 35th Street in Manhattan, seven steps up to fine food, imported beer, rare orchids, and the occasional temper tantrum. Weighing in at a seventh of a ton, addicted to crossword puzzles, bottlecap-counting, and Lawrence of Arabia, Nero Wolfe rarely left this music box. That's what he had Archie Goodwin for, his wise-guy assistant, and Saul Panzer, his best operative, and Inspector Cramer, who'd round up the usual suspects for the ultimate unmasking.

I don't know why Wolfe has never before worked on television. But all this has now changed, as you'll see this evening on A&E cable.

(Footage of *The Golden Spiders* book cover)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) *The Golden Spiders*, lovingly adapted by Paul Monash and lovingly directed by Bill Duke, is perfect pitch, from the casting to the period detail of New York in the late '30s.

(Excerpt from *The Golden Spiders*)

LEONARD: Maury Chaykin may not be as huge as we imagine Wolfe -- Orson Welles or Robert Morley would be more like it -- but he grows on us.

(Excerpt from *The Golden Spiders*)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) Timothy Hutton is so good as Archie, a combination of Huck Finn, Sancho Panza, John Garfield and Dennis Day, that he must have been genetically engineered to play the part.

(Excerpt from *The Golden Spiders*)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) Saul Rubinek as Panzer, and Bill Smitrovich as Cramer, are equally satisfying, and so are the color-coded chairs, and the roof-top garden, and the haute cuisine.

(Excerpt from *The Golden Spiders*)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) The mystery involves what a street urchin saw while wiping the windshield of a car in traffic, and whether or not the woman in that car was Mimi Kuzyk.

(Excerpt from The Golden Spiders)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) And what, if anything, she has to do with two dead bodies and the blackmailing of European refugees from Hitler.

(Excerpt from The Golden Spiders)

LEONARD: (Voiceover) By the time everybody's been gathered in the study to be told the truth about themselves, Nero Wolfe has come to embody an authority so prophetic and so oracular that he amounts to a Delphic Freud.

(Excerpt from The Golden Spiders)

LEONARD: A&E wants to make American mysteries as stylish as the British imports. The Golden Spiders is a fine start, with only 72 more Rex Stouts to go. I want more private detectives, period, somebody on television who actually believes the client's innocent and the system's rigged. We used to be able to count on Boston Blackie, Richard Diamond and Barnaby Jones, a Hardy Boy, a Thin Man or a Rockford, to take on the neighborhood bullies, aristocratic privilege, corporate goons and government frame-ups. Now, routinely, we assume guilt and the position.

But if Nero Wolfe can make a comeback, maybe there's hope, too, for that smart-mouth, mean-street gumshoe, that mixed grill of St. George and St. Francis, that submarine sandwich of shining knight and psychotherapist, for Robin Hood and Don Quixote.

OSGOOD: (Voiceover) Ahead on SUNDAY MORNING, meet the piano man, avant-garde artist Nam June Paik.