

The Wolfe Pack
The Nero Wolfe
Literary Society

A NERO WOLFE MYSTERY

Nero Wolfe: *Silent Speaker*

The Reviews

MICHAEL R. FARKASH | HOLLYWOOD REPORTER | JULY 12, 2002

A delightfully arch two-part episode of Nero Wolfe surfaces, with the latest mystery thriller flinging out well-written wisecracks, a potential romance and decent plot twists.

The scripting by writer-director (and executive producer) Michael Jaffe is pretty darned entertaining, with plenty of tough talk and feuding between the great detective and the police. The delicate tonal balance between comedy and moments of drama is well maintained.

Period costumes, settings and even banter are believably delivered.

As fans of Nero Wolfe know, the private investigator (played by Maury Chaykin) is a brilliant, eccentric, often irritating fellow who never leaves his house (willingly) but counts on right-hand man Archie Goodwin (Oscar winner Timothy Hutton) to do all the legwork and field investigating.

Hutton, playing the loyal, capable and long-suffering Archie, is likable and pretty wise in his own right. He brings the perfect touch to the mostly easygoing tone of the series. Chaykin as Wolfe has a firm handle on the character's foibles and scruples.

Dynamics between the two make this an eminently watchable series.

In this two-parter, *Silent Speaker*, Wolfe is in dire financial straits, so he audaciously wriggles his way into a murder investigation and inveigles a corporate trade group -- the National Industrial Association -- to pay his fee, even though members of the NIA are prime suspects.

The case involves the murder of Cheney Boone, head of the Bureau of Price Regulations, an opponent of the association. There's a mystery woman, bitter employees and vintage audio "cylinders" in the mix.

Soon enough, Wolfe is pulling his usual stunts, irritating the police and gathering the suspects so he can interview the irate group all at once.

Interestingly, as part of the plot, the dynamics change between Archie and Wolfe, as Hutton's character disobeys his private detective employer, adding another level of drama.

One of the principals in the investigation of whom we don't get to see enough is the coolly self-assured Phoebe Gunther (Cynthia Watros). She knows something -- maybe a lot -- but she plays it cagey when Archie comes to interview her. There's instant chemistry between them, though Watros plays it very cool.

Watch the suspects closely. There are plenty of visual clues throughout