

*The Wolfe Pack  
The Nero Wolfe  
Literary Society*

# A NERO WOLFE MYSTERY

## Series has incomparable ensemble cast

## The Reviews

THE SUN HERALD [MISSISSIPPI] | JEAN PRESCOTT | APRIL 7, 2002

Kari Matchett has dimples that keep dimpling long after her smile is gone. They reinforce the blond-bombshell image but belie the intelligence of her latest American TV character. She plays Julie Jaquette, "an illicit young lady" in frosted pink lipstick, and for all of her short-skirted, white-booted flooziness, she impresses Nero Wolfe in the second-season opener of that A&E Network series (7 p.m. Sunday, April 14).

"Honest to God, I used to think, 'If only I could step back in time and do one of those old Katharine Hepburn or Rosalind Russell movies,'" Matchett said, "and here I am (in Nero Wolfe) doing that '40s movie kind of thing." She was calling from her home in Toronto where a late winter storm dropped a tree on her fence while dropping the temperature 50 degrees overnight.

The squashed-fence distraction was brief, though, and she turned quickly to Nero Wolfe and what she loves about her part in its carefully assembled ensemble cast.

"I don't think this could be more perfect," she said, "the opportunity to work like a theatrical company in a TV setting.

"All the actors have such creative juices," she said. The unmistakably '40s-'50s tone of the dialogue "gives the actors enough words to chew on ... which is a change from the modern sensibility that everything has to be real to be interesting."

Indeed the new two-hour movie, *Death of a Doxy*, deposits murder on Wolfe's (Maury Chaykin) doorstep. Orrie Cather (Trent McMullen), one of the brass-knuckled tough guys who run interference for Wolfe, asks Archie Goodwin (Tim Hutton), Wolfe's righthand man, to retrieve something from Orrie's ex-girlfriend's apartment, and when Archie lets himself in, he finds her stone cold dead.

What ensues is something like *The Thin Man* meets *His Girl Friday*. ... The misadventures ultimately begin to orbit Matchett's character.

Don't let the dimples and bare midriff fool you, though. She is a woman of many talents, and sci-fi fans surely will recognize her. She was Siobhan Beckett, the mother of a freedom fighting hybrid Liam Kincaid on *Earth Final Conflict*, a series made in Canada and syndicated in the States. Americans also may have seen her on *PSI Factor*, another series made there and syndicated here.

She's been nominated for a Gemini award, the Canadian equivalent of an Emmy, and done extensive work, most of it unavailable to Americans, in the theater, film and TV.

She's excited, too, about a new Canadian film in which she stars with Paul Gross.

"It's called *Men With Brooms*, " she said, "and it's a comedy about curling, something so quintessentially Canadian, even though a Scot invented it hundreds of years ago. I guess Americans would know it from the Winter Olympics."

The box-office success of *Men With Brooms* means it surely will be released in the States, she said.

Meanwhile, she's happy to be part of the Nero Wolfe company.

"I'm playing six different characters this season," Matchett said. "These shows really strike a chord with people, not that murder mysteries all end happily, but those old movies seldom had big messy endings, and these shows are like them -- with a certain clarity" at the conclusion.

Carrie Fisher, Penelope Ann Miller, Griffin Dunne and George Plimpton join cast regulars Hutton, Chaykin, Bill Smitrovich as Inspector Cramer, Colin Fox as Wolfe's long-suffering chef Fritz and Saul Rubinek (Daphne's Donny in the 1999-2000 season of *Frasier*) as newsman Lon Cohen. And returning with Matchett are fellow repertory players Debra Monk and James Tolkan.

For a series grown from a single movie that aired in 2000, Nero Wolfe has acquired a broad base of fans, many of them avid readers of Rex Stout's novels.

Said Matchett, "Where this series has ended up is simply out of this world."