



Detective Drama **GEMS...**

Mid-1940s to the Late 1980s

Issue Zero April 2020

Your Editor & Curator is [Frank Gregorsky](#) and the purpose is to showcase...

Exhibits from Radio and TV (sorry, no books or movies)

It's 1951. President Harry Truman's undeclared war to preserve South Korea's independence is going badly. Gas is 20 cents a gallon; 90% of U.S. homes do not have a TV set; and an unusually calm detective appears on the radio.

This man is more ironic than iconic. He speaks a lot slower than do Philip Marlowe and Sergeant Joe Friday. He's also *sardonic*, which is probably the ideal term for his personality because it means "disdainfully or skeptical humorous" (*Merriam-Webster* 2004, page 642).

In only one way — syllabic adornment — is this radio figure open to enlargement. Instead of "private eye," he calls himself a **Confidential Investigator**. Nine syllables instead of just three. On the Mutual Network.

Issue Zero ([URL](#)) is the issue that comes before Issue #1. And, given how little the publisher is doing to draw readers, it's odd that you found this prototype. Quite a few clues are in these pages, though. You'll be able to make your own deductions (without making a deposit). The collecting of GEMS is beginning. And the audience for this publication will need to reveal itself...slowly.

The formal first issue is in the works. From 7/1/2020, use...

<http://www.exactingeditor.com/Detective-Gems-1.pdf>

Promoted to NBC Radio after its first few months, ***Confidential Investigator*** will be around 'til 1955. Theme music? Lilting, languid, and so laidback you couldn't even carry a fox trot on it. At times, the lead character *sounds* drowsy. He admits to taking naps. In his office. Just in case SOMEBODY might walk in and hire him.

The listener receives tutorials on investigative absurdities...

You rent an office on the third floor of the Old Mercantile Building. You've got a City license that says you're a confidential investigator. So, most of your life, you sit around and wait. Some of the guys in the business hire blondes and call them "secretaries." Others confide in cab drivers, bend bartenders' ears, and even buy dictating machines.

Many episodes have this low-key detective discovering a newly dead person. The Police have to be notified, so he calls them. But he usually leaves the scene ahead of their arrival. One time, because the person entered his office right before dying, our man had to stay put. This led to no mush and no musing; just a wisecrack about obtaining fingerprints...

"The Homicide Squad arrived and went to work. I don't like watching the boys. They're too smooth. I start thinking of all the stiffs they PRACTICED on [and] I shut my eyes." After a while, "Homicide wound up and went away. One nice thing about it: After they were through, the office no longer needed dusting."

The only time this fellow sounds intense or moralistic is during a fight or when flinging an accusation. And as for chatting up the bartender...

Maybe it helps them forget that they're the LONELIEST guys in the world — because nobody REALLY talks to you. The suspicious wives, the frightened parents, the desperate kids who walk into your office, never even SEE you. To them, you're a license, a pair of ears — and sometimes a gun. Nothing human.

Fatalistic barbs work as a cover for his sensitivity. Even while mapping the various dark alleys, this detective tries to remain "human." And this latter value will win out during this publication's very first Gem. The star will be trying to help a victim of partial amnesia reclaim his identity, and his life. An even odder twist: The detective's client is the amnesiac's *psychologist*.

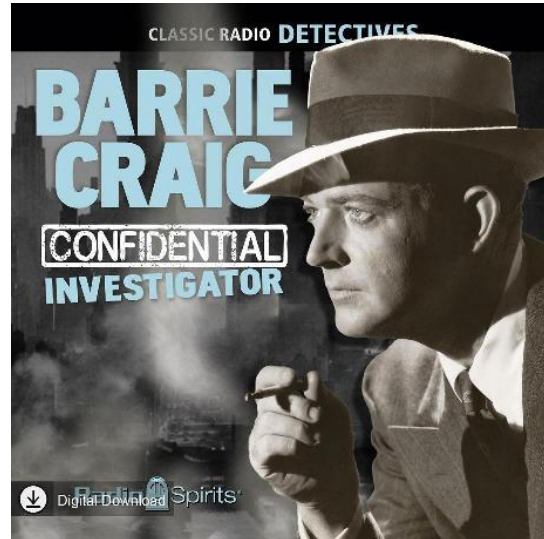
So who *are* we talking about? **Barrie Craig**. The quotes on this page come from one of the early episodes: "[The Case of the Philanthropist Bride](#)." But that isn't the Gem. Quotes from various Craig episodes are here to explain the series and its character.

In only one way is Barrie Craig an idealist. He accepts each client assuming that all of the rotten behavior will be found elsewhere. Try to see the reasoning...

Either you play it hard and believe nobody, which is fine — it's SAFE: You stay out of trouble and, maybe after 10 years, you're growing ulcers because nobody **LIKES** you. But an ulcer never killed anyone yet. Or else? You **BELIEVE** people. Then you've got trouble. You're **NOT** smart [by believing] — except maybe it's not a choice... Not a choice because it depends on the way you're built. The way I'm built, you stick your neck out.

"Believe nobody," year after year, and a hardening of the soul is your reward, **UNLESS** you are making efforts to lean the other way: Start each new assignment with trust. Craig will keep that up for four years.

"I **ALWAYS** believe my clients. Sometimes I'm suckered. Sometimes not. Because sometimes clients don't **EXPECT** to be believed." In that case, he'll try to *build* their trust.



Might take several episodes to see how Craig's approach to human pressure can work in real life. It's a vaguely Jungian mix of hard logic and light-perception.

"[T]he Only Actor of His Time Who Had...Been a Private Detective"

"Barrie Craig" was [WILLIAM GARGAN](#) (1905-79). For most of its life, the series was produced and set in New York City. [RALPH BELL](#) (1915-98) portrayed his sometime collaborator, Lieutenant **Travis Rogers**. Here's Rogers trying to get Craig to have suspicions about Wilma Lord, a scared lady who just hired him...

ROGERS: Craig, the story's no good... The punk there, with the knife in his back, was on the Harry Otis payroll.

CRAIG: Oh?

ROGERS: Wilma Lord is [also] on the Otis payroll.

CRAIG: Must be a large payroll.

ROGERS: Among his varied and largely illegal activities, Otis also runs a supper club over on the East side: The Gilded Lily. You can have Wilma Lord for supper there, six nights a week, and twice on Sunday.

CRAIG: It's too early for supper...

Rogers persists: "Wilma Lord could've come to you because she planned to concer-

tize with the Crime Commission and wanted protection" as it pursues Harry Otis.

CRAIG: Why me?

ROGERS: You're big. You're good-natured. And uhh, well —

CRAIG: I'm stupid?

ROGERS: No no no. But you like to BELIEVE people when they give ya a CHANCE to...

CRAIG: I still believe Wilma Lord's story.

ROGERS: WHY? Because she's young? Beautiful? Because she looked you straight in the eye when she told you all?

CRAIG: [Chuckling] No, Trav. Because she was nasty.

In Craig's world, being nasty, especially when scared, signals the absence of BS.

"Craig" was William Gargan's second role as a radio sleuth. During 1947-48, he gave voice to [*Martin Kane, Private Eye*](#). But Gargan's ability to be authentic started even earlier. A [brief but lively biography](#) on "Old Radio World" dot-com reveals...

His father was a bookmaker, so Gargan learned a lot about the gambling world and met a lot of interesting characters from across the spectrum of society... [And the] main reason why Gargan was so convincing as a detective [is] that he was probably the only actor of his time who had actually been a private detective.

Tell ya more? "He first worked as a credit investigator and collection agent for a clothing firm. Once Gargan was shot at when he attempted to get a deadbeat customer to pay his overdue account. Next, he worked for about a year as a private detective with a New York agency for '\$10.00 a day and expenses.' Gargan did many of the usual detective jobs: Guarding payrolls, tailing possible suspects, conducting stakeouts, and protecting clients with valuables. He was fired when he lost track of a diamond salesman he was supposed to be protecting."

Maybe you're buying into the chief character and his ***Confidential Investigator*** radio persona? If so, a four-page owner's guide for the sparkling episode awaits.

Otherwise, for anyone ready to dive in without further preparation...

<https://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/crime/barrie-craig-confidential-investigator/fog-over-murder-1953-10-13>

DD Gem #1 — "Fog Over Murder" — October 13, 1953

From BARRIE CRAIG, CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATOR

NBC's Don Pardo pledges "another transcribed drama of mystery and adventure." Then comes that sedate theme music: Sleepy sax and gently plucked guitar, soon joined by somnolent horn section. A relaxed William Gargan sets the stage.

Standard fare — murder, forgery, rackets, two-timing, blackmail — is being set aside tonight. Instead, Barrie Craig's client is a stereotypical mid-1950s "shrink." Horn-rimmed glasses, high forehead (do we really get that from a radio script?). Stressing the adjective, Craig calls the psychiatrist a *MIND* doctor.

Even while laying out his humanitarian purpose, Dr. Banner sounds detached and clinical. Craig is insistent and at ease at the same time. Banner and Craig have already acknowledged that their collaboration...feels kind of odd.

- The psychologist wants the detective to help a patient of six months. "Clark Smith" is cursed with a major memory loss that goes back years. He "cannot function as a social being" and "resists his own true identity."
- Such resistance only happens "for a pretty grim reason," Craig replies: Something traumatic or horrendous in the not too distant past. What can the psychiatrist give the detective for starters?
- Banner good-naturedly uses the word "clues" and puts two on the table: [Midvale](#) and *Pomatawnie*. Each has bubbled up when Banner has gotten his troubled patient into something of a trance.
- The first word is either a town or a school, Banner figures. The second word reminds Craig of a river. If it is, "Smith" might be retreating to boyhood, when, to a young male, rivers signify isolation or escape.

Water has in fact been a draw: Smith (not his real name) is subsisting in a Long Island "beach shack" by selling raw fish. Craig walks up and says hi. Smith tells him to go into the shack, leave the money, and take a freshly caught fish.

A hulking fish-knife is hanging from Smith's belt. Some tools make deadly weapons, and it's wise to not cause jitters. No, Craig tells Smith, he isn't here to buy a fish.

With seagulls overhead and waves washing up, Craig is neither clinical nor pushy. He's here at the suggestion of Dr. Banner, "to help you, Smith — help you get back to the life you belong to." Smith sounds disoriented, rattled: *What are you after with me?* "Dr. Banner and me — we're on your side, we're your friends."

Smith calms a bit. He admits to being afraid. He came to the seashore for peace and quiet. Being alone on a small fishing boat is where he belongs.

When Craig brings out the two key words — MIDVALE and POMATAWNIE — Smith's blocking intensifies. He knows the words, but not what they mean. They rattle him. "Okay, forget them. I'll try to find out another way."

Craig says this as if he's at a Dairy Queen and, because they can't make his favorite sandwich, he'll go with a hot dog. No fuss. Adapt. Be reassuring. And, if he gets stuck, he tells Smith, "I'll come back to you. We'll go over it again. We'll go out on a boat and fish — and talk."

At times like this, I realize that only two other radio detective shows had a star more mild-mannered than William Gargan: Father Brown, a Catholic priest, and Mister Keen, "tracer of lost persons." Steady Eddies, in the extreme.

Then again, how many *fights* were Messrs. Keen or Brown able to handle?

Lloyd Beemer's Major Loss of Memory — WHY? From What?

Craig leaves Long Island, heads back into the city, and consults a World Almanac. The Pomatawnie River goes through Farrington, New Jersey. And under "industries" he finds the Midvale Bottling Works. Farrington is a "one-horse town," a delightful phrase still in use three decades after the automobile mobilized Middle America.

Craig somehow snuck a photo of Smith near the beach shack. He shows it to Farrington's Sheriff. Kind of blurry. The Sheriff has no comment on the photo. But he hands Craig the key fact: Only one man has vanished from Farrington during the Sheriff's tenure: **Lloyd Beemer** — seven or eight years ago! He owned and ran the Midvale Bottling Works. His wife Polly then took over as owner.

An enticing lead. Craig hits the Bottling Works. Overconfidence takes hold...

Without having introduced himself, he demands a "warming smile" from the pretty Polly for "the great thing I'm about to do for you." This is right after she muses about having him arrested. Why would she do that? After all, he's here to "reunite you with your husband." That's impossible, she declares nervously.

Really? The Sheriff said that Lloyd Beemer disappeared, not that he was killed.

You look rather "green around the gills," Craig tells Polly callously. "Your remarks," she stammers — "I was utterly unprepared." She sounds even more jittery than Smith did on the beach. This is the first signal that this radio script will do what detective scripts HAVE to do: Scramble expectations; avoid linearity.

Seventy-five seconds after walking into her office, Craig says who he is. They go back and forth. "I was DESERTED, Mr. Craig, by a man with VIOLENT currents in his nature." She has "come to think of my husband as DEAD," which is why she uses "this person" three times, about the man Craig was hired to help.

It's a powerful exchange. Polly Beemer's intensity is undoing Barrie Craig's uncharacteristic brashness. Detective Radio at its finest...

After apologizing, he brings up the two key words. "Some clues relate him to the town of Farrington, to these bottling works. Clues, but they may be incidental; you never know." Their exchange then hits a crescendo — by stopping.

It stops when Polly Beemer FAINTS — "the deadest faint I'd ever seen." The script has taken us from brashness, to sympathy, to fear: *Mrs. Beemer has no pulse*. "A heart attack from the shock of it all?" Listener engagement is total.

But Mrs. Beemer revives. Craig is relieved. She apologizes for unnerving him. "We were never so much of a couple," she resumes. Besides, I've built a whole new LIFE for myself." Craig can't get her to be specific about a current relationship.

He expresses sympathy for the troubled beach-dweller: "No welcome home. Rough on a guy, kind of: A return to identity, at long last, only to find himself on the scrap heap" — he calmly sketches it for the still struggling Polly Beemer.

Her jitters can be felt by the radio audience. But Craig has a mission. Questions still need asking. From Joe Mannix to [Steve McGarrett](#) to Frank Ballinger, the coin of the investigative realm is QUESTIONS. Any aspiring journalist already works that way. So do Science students and moral philosophers.

But almost anyone who wants more out of daily life should skip some of the Google time and ask real people. I content that, on a typical day, many of us are trying to get answers to questions we haven't even taking the time to diagram — *as questions*. Absorbing detective episodes will help you hone that skill.

Lloyd Beemer's major loss of memory? WHY? From what? He "blanked out to escape BEING Lloyd Beemer," Craig was told by the doc — "IF my party IS the missing Lloyd Beemer... So what was he running from?"

Craig persists. He offers Polly examples of situations that could trigger major long-term amnesia. Nothing like those, she replies. The problem was different. "Lloyd was an eccentric — secretive — he never could quite fit into the group... He found marriage [pause] too commonplace."

"Oh, by the way — pictures. Got any around of your missing husband?" This re-

quest firms up Polly Beemer in a startling way, and it's another clue. No way and no how will she give Craig a photo of her vanished husband. "I'll do NOTHING to [brief pause] to facilitate the return of this person you say MAY be Lloyd Beemer."

At this point in a 27-minute radio show that (like many of 'em) had much to convey, and without making the audience feel stupid, the listener is in the right place: Processing a tragic tapestry showing nagging holes. Our lead character seems nowhere near the crystalline moment where the tapestry rips itself up.

But that's normal. At the two-thirds point of any radio "case," much of what we think is "it" will be invalidated by a different **IT** eight minutes later. In an hour-long TV episode (same genre), your "it" can be snatched away two or three times.

An additional character is about to be heard from. And then, none other than Polly Beemer turns up on the train Barrie Craig is riding back to New York!

Even though its ending is a shocker, "Fog Over Murder" consists of twists and turns that are **PLAUSIBLE**. The write-ups in this publication will diagram that sort of compelling story line, and they'll do it without spoiling the ending.

These two closing judgments shouldn't spoil anything...

- (1) Barrie Craig's client, as distinct from the person he tries to help, is a decent human being and not part of any deception. And...
- (2) Every exchange in "**Fog Over Murder**" is so well crafted you should be able to overlook the bits of strained delivery.

So now you have met Barrie Craig. On Page 9, we'll move ahead 20 years and add color TV. As for what makes a Detective Drama GEM? A methodical definition isn't here. But that's not because anything is being hidden. Putting together this prototype, simply lacked a set of standards or any detailed way to evaluate episodes.

Only one attribute was firm during Issue Zero's slow assembly: **PLAUSIBILITY**. It's a rather dry word, but with a delightful double meaning...

PLAUSIBLE means "**worthy of applause**." It *also* means "**seemingly worthy of belief**." Note the "seemingly," because good mystery depends on certain things being other than how they seem. After 2,000+ episodes from 2013 to now, I discovered that fewer than one in 25 pass the test offered by Definition #2.

So, here at the start, that's my sole absolute for treating an episode as a Gem.

DD Gem #2 — "Percentage" — February 20, 1973

From the Original [HAWAII FIVE-O](#) (CBS, 1968-80)

Counting both versions, HAWAII 5-O holds the record: Prime time, on CBS, with new episodes, for 22 of the past 52 years. This publication sticks to the original.

For a dozen seasons beginning in September 1968, [JACK LORD](#) was Stephen J. McGarrett. He worked out of the Iolani Palace in Honolulu. His boss was "the Governor," whose full name was heard only once during those 12 TV seasons.

[LEONARD FREEMAN](#) (1920-74) conceived the series. Until his death during open-heart surgery, Freeman also served as Executive Producer. His exacting standards show in "Percentage," from near the end of that red-hot fifth season.

Unlike Barrie Craig, Steve McGarrett needs no introduction. Nor does his #2, [Dan Williams](#) (JAMES MacARTHUR). But several actors who gave this and other FIVE-O episodes a lasting luster will be saluted. So will scriptwriter [NORMAN LESSING](#) and director [ROBERT BUTLER](#) for how they blended coherence and complexity.

"Percentage" is magic produced by method. If you read about it in 500 as opposed to 3,000 words, you might go watch it. But...would you know what to LOOK for?

Forty-seven years after it aired, this episode sparkles for at least three reasons:

- The **central character** — a relentless operator named Sam Green. He'll help you redefine "charisma." If you have an associate or relative who functions like Sam, watch him or her with awe, and do so from a healthy distance.
- The **murder weapon**, where it was used, and how both are scoped out by "Doc" Bergman and Crime-Lab chief Che Fong.
- Those **final 10 minutes** in McGarrett's office: The way the murder weapon was wielded is the "tell." None of the suspects comes out ahead. And every pivot — from lost love, to bank info, to blood money — gets the floodlight.

In this publication, count on three design staples: (1) The analyses won't spoil any endings; (2) they're not written for "fans," but for writers and editors — whether video, audio or just plain text — who seek to convey complexity in an absorbing way; and (3) the **episode** will always be front and center. Other elements — the actors, the series itself — are mentioned mostly to help illuminate that particular Gem.

From Crime-Lab Laughs to Gambling Junkets with Milton Selzer

In classic detective radio, the protagonist — Johnny Dollar, Philip Marlowe, Danny Clover, pick your favorite — HAD to be the star of each episode. Hour-long TV treatments, by contrast, are expansive enough to let a guest actor become the driving character. In "Percentage," [MILTON SELZER](#) (1918-2006) has the wheel.

During the era covered by this publication, Mr. Selzer was all over stage, crime and comedy productions. He was never the hero, and often the fumbler or fall guy.

On the comedy side: During the opening season of *Get Smart* (1965-66), Selzer ran the Crime Lab. His character was Professor Parker. On this unbelievably innovative spy spoof, almost anything — fire hydrants, cigarette lighters, wall clocks, a bottle of cologne — could serve as a phone. Parker's best shot? The **Pistol Phone**. If you don't want anyone to hear the call, he tells Maxwell Smart, *just use your silencer*.

Milton Selzer also portrayed foreign-born wizards. In 1961, [THE ASPHALT JUNGLE](#) was an ABC-TV cop show that gave us just 13 episodes. The 9th episode is called "The Professor." Selzer is that wily villain. He plays "Doc" Stehlmeyer, mild-mannered mastermind of German lineage and accent (or maybe it's Austrian, ja?).

In "Percentage," Selzer is just as dazzling. Thriving on organized gambling before the U.S. made the mistake of legalizing it, his character facilitates fellow risk-takers. Again, he is THE driver; and again the cleverness becomes deadly. Each time the game plan is short-circuited, Selzer — as Sam Green — finagles and finesses. Two synonyms for the second word are *cunning* and *subtlety*...



Sam Green intuitively calculates risk versus reward. When the balance is too close, he finds a way to take out insurance against massive loss.

Can't arrange insurance? Then he'll let the hand pass.

His enterprise: Gambling junkets, as noted. And "percentage" is the watchword for this character to keep ahead of a wicked game. Barely ahead.

"Percentage" percolates as Green

hatches and plays out two very high-risk strategies. One works, the other doesn't. Since this publication does not spoil endings, we'll focus on the one that works.

"Would I Waste Your Time and Mine If I Didn't Have an Angle?"

One of several memorable scenes in "Percentage" has Herman Stein signaling his old friend Sam, who waits on a fishing pier. Herman has spent 20 years apportioning gambling districts for Yoshigo, a local hood whose first name we never know or see. Yoshigo is played by FIVE-O dark-sider KWAN HI LIM (later Lieutenant Yoshi Tanaka on *Magnum*). And [LEONARD STONE](#) (1923-2011) is the jittery Stein.

Sam Green might've been a great venture capitalist, a role that entails functioning as a con artist and dream-spinner. At this stage, his imperative is to (a) enlist old friend Herman in the (b) arrest and jailing of Yoshigo.

Yoshigo keeps two hoods on the books, under phony names. They recently killed Sam Green's business partner. Why? To induce Green to quit setting up gambling junkets in South Korea. Yoshigo had kept local gamblers happy in Hawaii, never mind the anti-gambling laws. In Korea, by contrast, wealthy Hawaiians can dress to the nines and lose thousands without fearing arrest — thanks to Sam Green.

"How much are we down this month?," Yoshigo asks his bookkeeper. "Seventy thousand — same as last month." And Yoshigo outfit's books are kept by Herman Stein. During this same chat, Herman is told that his long-time expectation of a 25% share of the business is dead. "From now on, you're just the bookkeeper." We see him about to crumble.

As a compromised lieutenant with knowledge of beatings and killings, Herman is ripe. Sam wants Herman to help him open the Yoshigo's office wall safe. If Sam can get those books, and give them to the District Attorney, a busted Yoshigo will be no threat to him OR to Stein. Sam can then resume the overseas gambling junkets. Like the glitzy gathering this episode opened with.

Desperate Herman, pressed by Persuader Sam — each character is so believable that a keen viewer might infer each one's highs and lows going back decades. (Not a bad way to measure a script.) Their seaside back & forth is marvelous.

HERMAN: Sam, it's just too wild. He's BOUND to finger me...

SAM: Herman, this is SAM GREEN talking. Would I be wasting your time and mine if I didn't have an angle?? ... The idea is to play the percentages.

You're never gonna find cash in Yoshigo's safe, protests Herman.

SAM: I don't want cash, I only want his books...of *course* for the D.A.... I can't make a move with Yoshigo on my back.

HERMAN: Sam, I'M listed in those books, too!

SAM: But under an assumed name, right?

HERMAN: Well, yeah but — suppose the cops put two and two together. Where does that leave me?

SAM: In the clear! All you have to do is turn state's evidence... The most that can happen is that you'll pay a fine.

Herman's face has been racked with anxiety. Now it shifts to mild shock: "Turn state's evidence?," he repeats in disorientation. It takes another minute and 20 seconds for Sam to close the sale: "The main thing [that] is Yoshigo will never be able to finger you for the safe-crack." Each block has been chipped away.

Milton Selzer as Sam Green persuades each person as the episode weaves. That includes McGarrett, with whom he's on a first-name basis. He even gets McGarrett to tell Dan Williams to offer police protection to someone who has not requested it.

Masterful cop-show sequences keep us from making our own fatally wrong turns, under the influence of creative "pals." Do you have an associate or (worse) a relative who operates like Sam? Watch him or her with awe; do so from a safe distance.

Sam and Herman pull off the robbery. Sam jauntily tells McGarrett that the stacks of evidence just "magically appeared on his doorstep" one morning. And Yoshigo assumes Herman Stein too spineless to betray him by being part of that robbery.

Right after Yoshigo goes into hiding, we see Herman Stein smile. Just this one time. He's the *only* surviving character that WON'T end up in McGarrett's office.

Because of a \$120,000 I-O-U Stuck in Sam Green's Shirt Pocket

"Percentage" starts as a murder probe; gambling is in this story for those glitzy scenes in South Korea, and to clarify Sam Green's "percentage" principle.

In Korea, a lout that Sam vouched for walked out of the hotel. His \$120,000 debt had just been jammed in Sam's shirt pocket by proprietor Kuang. Kuang turns out to be the **ONLY** person immune to Sam Green's persuasiveness. If the big loser doesn't pay off, Green tells McGarrett in a sweat, "I'm hit." On Kuang's orders.

A Korean national, and one of the two master villains in this episode, Kuang is played by [SETH SAKAI](#) (1932-2007). He's another FIVE-O standout.

From 1971 to '80, he appeared in 23 episodes — as a professor, a general, four different physicians, various racketeers, a police captain, a beat cop, a print-shop lowlife, and a distraught father. Leonard Freeman and Jack Lord favored solid Hawaiian actors and actresses. Most episodes boasted: "Filmed entirely on location in Hawaii" (which is something HAWAIIAN EYE couldn't claim).

Two more characters complete the cast. Walter Sinclair and his wife Valerie are the very estranged couple who end up bitterly sorry Sam Green flew them to Korea. Mrs. Sinclair is played by [CAROLE KAI](#). Walter is 20 years her senior. We see her recovering from an affair with the cocky but bankrupt murder victim who (more or less) caused his own death by sticking Sam Green with that \$120,000 I-O-U at the South Korea casino.

Up to this point, Walter Sinclair has been a gambler in an overseas setting. Now he undertakes a turn for the truly dark side: Withdrawing murder money, down to the dollar. The viewer never sees Sam Green enlist Sinclair; later we know it was one more catastrophically persuasive pitch.

Walter Sinclair is played by the unflappable [DOUGLAS KENNEDY](#) (1915-73). His mini-biographer at the IMDB site says Kennedy "appeared in many westerns and detective thrillers, often as a villain. World War Two interrupted his career, and he spent the war years as a Signal Corps officer and an operative in the OSS and U.S. Army Intelligence. After the war he returned to Hollywood, where he began playing supporting roles in larger films and an occasional lead in a lower-budget film."

Plausible Scripts with Connected Actors Don't Need Special Effects

A factor in this publication's test for Plausibility is Characters that are not Caricatures, stick figures, or shells. True, a master criminal is by definition Unusual. But they don't HAVE to be Impossible. All of the main characters — of course the regulars, but also the villains and guest cops — should be so well defined you could infer each one's highs and lows going back in time or ahead a decade or more.

That's why this write-up stressed the scene featuring Sam Green and Herman Stein, near the pier, both fearful of death, and estimating the odds. They've functioned that way many times in the past (individually) and want to keep alive for more.

During the original HAWAII FIVE-O, two semi-regulars offered reliable back-up...

- ▶ In "Percentage" and dozens of other episodes, "Doc" Bergman is one more fellow with no first name: The gravel-voiced, jut-jawed Medical Examiner. In real life he was [AL EBEN](#).
- ▶ [HARRY ENDO](#) is Che Fong. For seven seasons, he gave us tutorials on Crime Lab breakthroughs. Highly informative (although devoid of the comic relief one found watching Maxwell Smart and Professor Parker).
- ▶ Walter Kennedy also did a lot for FIVE-O. He made three appearances during the fifth season alone...

Besides "Percentage," he starred in "Here Today, Gone Tomorrow," as a Big Business control-freak. In "Jury of One," he played a jury foreman of stability and integrity; the same man who, 20 years prior, had withstood torture by North Korea's Reds rather than spill sensitive info. Different characters, and both of them are strong.

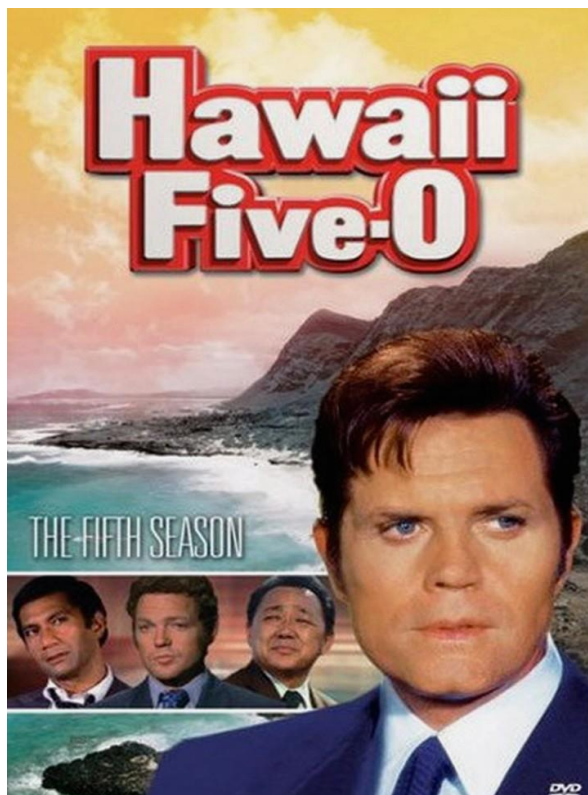
IMDB's picture of Kennedy as "a tall, powerfully built man" was even more apt when it changed: In "Percentage" he becomes known to us as a semi-stoic. It means "not affected by passion or feeling" and "showing indifference to pain."

Yet, because of his wife's affair with the lout ([MITCH MITCHELL](#)), we see the anger accumulating. Facing pressure points and the closing proofs in Steve McGarrett's office, Walter Sinclair's self-control disappears. Was his wife really worth it?

Every character in "Percentage" is played superbly. I don't mean just that we're seeing "good acting." The point is that quality actors **along with a great script** — coherently connected scenes — absorb the viewer: We almost get to be a participant. We experience the false leads as well as the ka-chings and ka-blooeys.

Those final 10 minutes: *Very* hard to forget. Scriptwriters Lessing and Butler didn't need some out-of-nowhere X-Factor to make sense of it all. Loose ends tie tidily.

----- VIEWING OPTIONS -----



The people and businesses behind the 12 years of the original HAWAII FIVE-O will look more kindly upon this no-charge Web publication ... if you [purchase Season Five](#) on DVD (the image is also from Amazon).

As for YouTube? Forget it. All it shows of "Percentage" is a four-minute clip.

In October 2024 — checking all the 2020 links for this reload of the Zero GEMS — I came across a fresh option: <https://app-windows.pluto.tv/us/on-demand/series/612d4b0486e1e0001672e570/season/5/episode/612d4b0b86e1e0001672e762>. Didn't sign up to explore, which means I can't say anything pro or con about Pluto TV.

DD Gem #3 — "[Dead Or Alive](#)" — October 21, 1976

From THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO (ABC, 1972-77)

Defining STREETS as a series would push this next account to 4,500 words. So let's settle for a striking episode from the show's last season. The writers are [BURTON ARMUS](#) and [EDWARD HUME](#). A viewer will have 15 minutes to conclude that their masterpiece is one more urban murder case. Then? It changes totally.

Not Who, More Like All: Greed...Flukes...City-Wide Hysteria

TIME: Around 10:30 p.m. on a weeknight. As they play tennis on a well-lit city court, two young women are being watched from behind the fence. One sees the leerer, briefly; the TV viewer also sees him, though not clearly.

After 11, the two friends say farewell. One heads for home. But then the other's car won't start. She opens the trunk, apparently to store her gear. After closing it, she is grabbed in a way that prevents her from screaming.

We see a struggle on the driver's side. Rapist and victim disappear behind the car. And this is ALL we see. (1970s cop shows held back from close-ups of savage behavior. Less gore helped the stories and dialogue be more mentally engaging.)

So begins another "police procedural." Clumsy term, going back to Jack Webb's radio launch of *Dragnet* in 1949. But it grew in applicability, edging out the slangy "whodunit." As crime dramas left radio behind, "who" became less and less the question. TV often let us SEE the bad people, long before capture. Early in the episode, we'd therefore know more than the cops. From very little, they'll have to figure out what we process as an atrocity, robbery, or other explicit crime.

In "Dead Or Alive," the rapist enters as a blur. We don't even know if HE knows he also committed murder. We *did* see his face — sort of — right before the assault. During that leering phase, we glimpsed the "who" that committed the evil.

The next morning, Mike Stone and Dan Robbins scour the scene. They're joined by Stone's soon-to-retire colleague Eddie Clark. [KARL MALDEN](#) is Stone and [RICHARD HATCH](#) is Robbins. Though much younger, Hatch is a solid #2, and the research for this publication made me a Karl Malden admirer.

Seeing "Detective Lieutenant Mike Stone" roll through his questions is a delight. This is a television detective who, face to face, is rarely threatening. If the source is not hostile, this man's intensity can even come across as enthusiastic, as opposed to desperate, accusatory, or some kind of power-trip.

Where might Mike and Dan find a witness? If not to the assault, then to whom-ever lurked awaiting his chance. No guard was at the tennis court. All-night gas stations? What about coffee shops? Robbins is tasked to check, and...

Nothing but dry holes. But Stone's phone inquiries indicate that three different bus drivers work Route 83 and stop near the courts. Two have nothing to report. The third is "Tom Feranga" ([ROBERT DoQUI](#)). Robbins and Stone approach him.

Seeing the latter's badge, Feranga asks, lightheartedly: "What'd I do?!?" "It's not what you did, it's what you might have *seen* that interests us."

If Stone is good-natured, Feranga is on the route to giddy: "Ain't nobody gonna read me my rights or nothing? *Come on now...*" With a crisp intensity even as he maintains the smile, Stone replies: "You have no rights... You're a witness, not a suspect." (Think about THAT principle for a moment.)

Let's go sit in the bus and chat, the driver says. Not necessary, the cops reply.

Yes, he sees a lot while driving Route 83, because he doubles up on his shifts — the point there is OVERTIME! "Hey, do you know what it costs to put braces on a kid's teeth these days?" Stone: "Listen, do you know by any chance what TIME you went by those tennis courts along that route? Was it between 9 and 11?"

The detectives need info, not banter. Feranga: "Yeah — twice. It's only an hour-and-50-minute route." Robbins: "Did you notice anyone hanging around the place? Someone that might not belong?" Feranga: "You mean girl-watchers? Well, they always hang around a tennis court. You know, when I'm drivin' by, sometimes I slow down and take a little peek myself." He chuckles contentedly.

We're seeing the value of easing, into a grim topic, someone who might have key information. Both Stone and Robbins are still smiling. This exchange has to work. Why? Feranga is the last of three drivers to be questioned. If something can't be coaxed out of him, there might be zero leads. They'll have to humor his humor.

Robbins: "Yeh, but LAST NIGHT." Feranga: "Yeah, well — there WAS a guy. But — look, what is this all about anyway?" Stone: "A girl was raped and killed. What about this man [you saw]?" Not a wasted word, but also no hostility. Instead, Stone radiates concern. Right now, he seems more like a *doctor* than a cop.

Upon hearing "raped and killed," the bus driver comes to a full stop, draws a deep breath. Yeah, he says; a bread-truck driver was watching the girls. He was parked in the zone reserved for busses, an infraction any Route 83 driver would notice.

"Parisian Bread" is the brand or company, he thinks. Now THAT's serious help.



Karl Malden was made for this role. As Mike Stone, he shows us how to probe, during a spontaneous interview, while moderating and sometimes inverting a cop's intensity. In STEETS for all five of its seasons, this and other traits shine.

"Give us a full description," he urges the driver. The gawker was wearing glasses, white, over 6 feet tall, and uniformed. What kind of eyewear? "Very thick horn-rimmed glasses."

Before Stone and Robbins have his name and photo, the viewer learns a lot more about the suspect. Doing what? Joking that his girlfriend, a waitress, doesn't look as good as the bikini-clad girls he's ogling, right there at her restaurant.

There's a small possibility he isn't the rapist/killer: Detective-series scriptwriters often show us someone who ISN'T the culprit. This isn't one of those scripts.

In fact, not a single aspect of this magnificent episode fits the "whodunit" term. Nor is there any doubt about the guy's motivation or core nature. Worth noting, although the absence of doubt isn't what makes this episode a bone-rattler.

"Do You Think You Could Pull a Blood Type On Him?"

By Minute 13:37, back at the station, using "rape" as the key search term, Robbins and Stone have the most probable suspect. It's Donald Wilton — "four previous [arrests], two for rape — he beat both cases. Never did any time."

Gail Dobbs, the dead girl, wound up with blood under her fingernails. She clawed the assailant's neck, to such an extent that three of her nails were torn off. This means there's a chance to get the attacker's blood type.

Thanks to fragments from a lens at the murder scene, Stone and Robbins also know about his eyesight. They aren't quite as sure as we are that Wilton is the man. Then Eddie Clark clarifies another key fact, about the glasses: "The guy is near-sighted; the best estimate is 40 over 60." Those numbers mean VERY near-sighted.

While at the crime scene, Clark had warned Stone: Gail's dad is Larry Dobbs. "He's a heavyweight. Lots of money." Edmund "Eddie" Clark is played by [TOM BOSLEY](#) (1927-2010) — Richie's father on the '50s nostalgia sit-com *Happy Days*.

By Minute 15, we've also met Dobbs and his lawyer, George Driscoll, played by [PAUL STEVENS](#) (1921-86). Throughout the '70s, Stevens appeared as a low-key legalistic if not criminal character in various detective stories. He's one of those sedate yet precise types who convey dignity in a cadaverous sort of way.

Good casting, for Stevens is the LEAST excitable personality in this episode. As an advocate, though, he fails to penetrate: George Driscoll's client will be deaf to every single piece of advice the grounded lawyer provides.

The client, Larry Dobbs, is played by an aging powerhouse: [HOWARD DUFF](#) (1913-90). Sadly, Duff is the only less than convincing actor in this episode. Apart from his grief at the morgue, Dobbs is all bombast and clichés. He delivers and emotes as if he'd been told to act like someone who has no acting skill.

Maybe that's the weirdest part of TV drama: We expect the best actors to impersonate real people, 99.9% of whom have never had an acting lesson. But a greater proportion of us have had to ACT, in the sense of taking bold action. Dobbs will.

The viewer has seen Dobbs visit Stone, as well as make the bitter trip to the morgue. *Yes, that's my daughter*. Now he's a man alone. His wife isn't part of this saga. And Duff as Dobbs isn't the sort of man you'd invite to a barbecue or even play chess with. These impressions are taking hold well before the DVD's 15th minute, when this episode of *STREETS* still looks to be a Police Procedural. That's when the entire structure and significance blow up.

The change starts with ***clunk, clunk, clunk***. Larry Dobbs is telling the print-shop manager: "I want five thousand, exactly like the proof copy — THAT picture, nice and clear... I want the whole town papered with these posters when the sun comes up... Just get it done." Is he sure this is legal? "If anybody asks ya, just tell 'em you thought it was a practical JOKE."

What's about to "paper" San Francisco? A poster. Somehow Dobbs has obtained the same mug shot — of **Donald Wilton** — Stone found at Headquarters. And the poster is going beyond asking for "information leading to the capture" etc. etc.

Dobbs shows his lawyer the key document. *How did you get this?* "I bought a file clerk. Are the facts correct?" "Well, it's an official record." Driscoll twice urges Dobbs to let Stone and the city cops handle the case. Hell, no. "They had this guy twice for rape, George, and he's never spent a day in jail. Not one!"

That's why Dobbs chose the poster's three magic words: **DEAD OR ALIVE**. Along with a big number. A cash bounty (in 1976 dollars!) guaranteed to galvanize.

Minute 15:38, end of the second segment: The stage is set for crank calls, group non-think, trigger-happy greed, mistaken identification, and career-incineration.

"If I Put Him in Your Hands, Will Ya Split the Money With Me?"

Stone and Robbins have something Dobbs lacks: Don Wilton's address, and it's only a week old. Approaching the building, they find the superintendent in a chair, waiting for the tenant's return. In his lap is a shotgun. What have you got THAT for, they ask him. "A guy has to defend himself," replies the manager.

Here's another moment when the audience knows more about the situation than the good guys do. Such scenes are among the "rewards" used by clever producers to maintain audience focus without exhausting us.

The manager has seen the poster. Stone and Robbins haven't. Right before he shows it to them, he says: "Why should I tell you guys anything when somebody's willing to pay a million bucks for it?"

BAM. Stone and Robbins realize their routine has been ruptured. The suspect-search protocol is out the window. Don Wilton must be trying to flee the city, or disappear into a hole. What else COULD a guy in his position do?

But Wilton still is not aware. Posters?? From a distance, *he can't read even LARGE print*. One lens had been shattered overpowering Gail Dobbs; the other will end up broken during a fall. Wilton remains oblivious to the gathering hysteria...

It comes at him while trying to dodge an old friend. The friend drives a cab. After

some false friendliness, he pulls a gun and tells Wilton to get in. Wilton easily overpowers the guy, and manages to run two blocks. And this is where he finds himself staring, close-up, at one of the posters. The handiwork of Dobbs and his printer: A million bucks to find HIM, Donald Wilton, "dead or alive."

HIDE? There's no choice but to try. Exhausted in an old building, Wilton then has to shake loose from a watchman ([DABBS GREER](#)) who ends up wounded by his own gun. The next place is where the glass frames break. This murderer is doomed to be "hard of seeing." Yet anyone — *any* person in San Francisco — might see *him*.

What we get to absorb, thanks to this Gem of an episode, is the disorientation and panic of a figure we'll have zero sympathy for. But hold on a second: Is the man we are watching absolutely the assailant?

In case anyone missed it in Act One — and most of us would have — we later glimpse, at Minute 12:14, the right side of Wilton's neck; that's where Gail Dobbs frantically scratched him with four fingers. We see the streak marks more clearly at 18 1/2, and VERY clearly at 21:46.

Okay then — zero doubt: This guy IS the murderer. A big, clumsy, muscular, leering menace to society. A man-boy so shallow that — as cited halfway down Page 18 — that he ribbed his girlfriend Rhoda for being past her prime. Even at that point, she was still willing to make a date with the jerk. And it's time to round out the Cast...



[MAX GAIL](#) is Donald Wilton: "No redeeming social value." But Nick-At-Nite alums are far more likely to recall his role as Detective Sergeant Stanley Wojohowicz on the long-running comedy *Barney Miller*. He appeared in 100+ episodes.

Reliable Rhoda is played by [ARLENE GOLONKA](#). About her profession: "It's 97% work and it's 3% glamour," she'll say at the age of 61. "I call it the most unglamorous glamorous business in the world." Her movies include *Hang 'Em High*, *Airport '77* and *Love at First Bite*. And her enduring persona is **Millie Swanson** in *Mayberry RFD*. A decade later, Golonka is still girlish, but acting ghoulish — thanks to the \$1 million poster that would tempt even a neighbor of Andy Griffith.

When Wilton approaches her behind the restaurant, Rhoda is rattled: "Is it true — what they say?" "No way, babe." He begs her for cash so he can get out of town.

She agrees to get 30 bucks from her purse. We're up to Minute 21.

Forget the 30 bucks. Rhoda tells her boss: "If I put him in your hands, will ya split the money with me?" Is she serious? *That killer is really out there?*

"Just answer me: Will ya split?" Sure, no problem. "He's in the back, in the alley." She'd be reaping a lush reward for putting up with a boorish boyfriend. But does her boss have a firearm? No. So he grabs a butcher's knife, and sets out to collect half the bounty. She reminds him: "Hey, look — remember, we split, huh?"

Wilton easily outruns the restaurant-manager. This episode isn't even half over.

Which brings up a design factor about some of those great [QUINN MARTIN](#) productions. By suspending the practice that all parts of an episode should be equal in length — and then adding an Epilogue — Mr. Martin and his associates could elongate the duration sensation felt by viewers. At the end, the feeling is having experienced more than the standard 48 to 49 minutes. I've had this sensation during many STREETS viewings.

In any case, Wikipedia reports that Martin (1922-87) "had at least one television series running in prime time every year for 21 straight years.

"Half the City is Chasing the Other Half Around With GUNS"

Stone and Robbins have pieced together Wilton's family situation. Father is dead; mother used to be a nurse, still lives in town. Wilton may go to her for relief. All along, the events pile up: Betrayals, mob scenes, crazed pursuers, lethal actions.

For crazed articulation, the episode's best moment is right after another taxi driver triggers an assault on a man dressed like Wilton (a physical description has been overheard on police radio). Out of nowhere, in the space of 30 seconds, a merchant seaman, "just off the boat two hours ago," ends up needing an ambulance.

This is the first time we see Stone and Robbins in the midst of violent hysteria. They pull the cabbie and other assailants off the seriously wounded sailor.

For a few seconds, the cabbie is deliriously happy. "I got him!" The sailor's identification card ends the jubilation. And Stone tells the cabbie what he's got: "You got yourself criminal charges and maybe even manslaughter, if the man dies."

That doesn't end their exchange. Here's what he tells Stone back: "How many chances have you had to come up with a million bucks? How many!?! How many times in your LIFE — I'll tell ya how many, NONE! The same as with me..."

This vigilante is attempting to *identify* with Stone — "the same as with me." He

seems desperate to get back in the same ballpark with civil society.

Then the cab driver reverts to the dark side. Ownership of his greed wipes out every shred of shame. **"So you give me the SMELL of THAT MUCH money — *just the SMELL of it!!* — and I'm gonna do whatever it takes."**

Stone keeps staring. He's shaking his head slowly. Rather than showing anger or even disgust, Karl Malden as Lieutenant Stone radiates controlled astonishment.

At times like this — and most episodes of *STREETS* offer such scenes — one sees the genius of Karl Malden. The look, the head-shaking, is a moment that not even Jack Lord during *FIVE-O* or Mike Connors being Joe Mannix could've made quite this memorable or evocative. It's also a "moment" this script is stretching out...

And it's not just me, either. Every cabbie in this TOWN is looking for that guy — and every BUS driver, and every PEDESTRIAN! Every time a guy's looking out the window, he's looking for THAT KILLER! It's NOT just me. It's EVERYBODY.

Stone replies quietly: "Maybe [pause] — but it's *you* I'm gonna put in jail."

While Stone and Robbins are out trying to keep up with the greed-fueled manhunt (and find Don Wilton before he is killed), their colleagues back at the station are fielding useless calls. Some are from Wilton impersonators; others relay phony or phantasmal sightings; still other callers inquire about the legality of rewards.

Officer Eddie Clark ends up taking the call from the *real* Don Wilton. By now he is stumbling around on the city outskirts, terrified enough to request being picked up by a police officer. Out of hundreds of calls, **only THIS one** gives the cops a chance to end the chaos.

Eddie Clark applies the now standard test: *What happened to your glasses and what's their prescription?* Wilton aces both questions.

Mike Stone is the colleague to whom old friend Clark would logically shout: "Mike! It's really him!" Problem is, Stone has just dashed out of the office.

And Wilton doesn't want Clark to "send a car." He takes Clark's name. "You come — just you." After a bit of hesitation, Clark agrees to go get Wilton personally.

But this 11th-hour rescue also blows up. Once again, the half-blind Wilton can't get to safety. He does reach his mom's house. Go to the police, she urges. *I did that*, he screams back, *and they tried to kill me!* (That's not exactly what happened.)

[CLAUDIA BRYAR](#) portrays Wilton's mother — shattered, shaky — spectacularly.

Wilton browbeats her into giving him all her spare cash and the car, too. "But I need the car for work." To hell with that, Wilson replies. Some triumph: As if his miserable eyesight and the poster will let him get past two or three intersections.

Right to the end, Don Wilton is an overgrown weasel. As he did when confronted by Rhoda point-blank, he denies being the killer. And here he is, lying to his mother, the only person left who might have some pity on him. But you'll feel sad for her. He YELLS at her: "Don't look at me like I'm some kind of BUG!"

He could also be talking to — shouting at — most of us viewers. Commendably, not a single element in this dazzling script fastens Wilton's evil essence on anyone but him. More generally, *STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO* was never a show for 1970s viewers who believed evildoers could be rehabbed or "understood."

First-Rate Episodes Benefit More than Editors and Writers

The Epilogue features Dobbs, his lawyer, Stone and Robbins. It's just right. Different morals can be drawn. You'll be thinking about 'em for more than 49 minutes.

This publication won't offer one-dimensional judgments. I'm not much for lofty absolutes either. What great detective episodes do enhance is our appreciation for human nature — the light, dark, grayish, and murky/muddy sides of it.

Well-crafted episodes also expand one's toolkit for handling risky or foggy passages. In normal life, too, not just physically dangerous moments. People who carry out interviews or are otherwise tasked with determining likely motivations and actual intentions will become better at teasing out facts and perceptions.

"Gem" story lines and characters are best absorbed slowly, using more than one viewing. Just like a physical gem, they'll sparkle on different sides; they reflect on various parts of our environment, as well as on the person examining them.

Still need a bottom line? Okay, a final plus for Gem Episode #3: Most viewers are unlikely to find anything impossible, sloppy, or gimmicky in "Dead Or Alive."

In October 2024, when this "Zero Issue" had its defunct links replaced, no YouTube version of "Dead Or Alive" existed, and "Pluto Free-TV" looked too hard to navigate. But Barnes & Noble was still offering [Season Five](#) (1976-77) of *STREETS* at the same price as in 2020.

The strange thing is, for approximately *the same outlay*, you can have [ALL FIVE SEASONS](#) — as a nice studio-issue package — from...yes, Target. For anyone who admires [Karl Malden](#), that's quite a value proposition.

The URL for this experimental issue of *Detective Drama Gems* is
www.ExactingEditor.com/GEMS-Issue-Zero.pdf

And these are some GEM finalists *for the next few years...*

"[The Lorcoe Diamonds Matter](#)" — from
YOURS TRULY, JOHNNY DOLLAR (CBS Radio, November 1955)

"[The Case of the Calculated Risk](#)" — from
THE NEW ADVENTURES OF NERO WOLFE (January 19, 1951)

"[Snake Eyes](#)" — February 4, 1977
From QUINCY, MEDICAL EXAMINER (NBC-TV, 1976 to '83)

"[Molly Keller](#)" — July 17, 1950
From [NIGHT BEAT](#) (NBC Radio, 1950 to '52)

"[Bought and Paid For](#)" — November 29, 1985
From MIAMI VICE (NBC-TV, 1984 to '90)

"[Escapade with Paula](#)" — January 9, 1949
From [ROCKY JORDAN](#) (CBS Radio, 1948 to '51)

"[Shield of Honor](#)" — November 15, 1973
From THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO (ABC, 1972 to '77)

"[The Serpent's Tooth](#)" — March 19, 1991
From LAW & ORDER (NBC-TV, 1990 to 2010 and Since '22)

"[The Cost of Doing Business](#)" — November 5, 1987
From NIGHT HEAT (CTV & CBS, 1985 to '89)

For a list of, and links to, all of the **Gems** issues from April 2020 through November 2024, send an informative inquiry to Exacting22124@aol.com

Every GEMS analysis will spotlight **characters**, **dialogue** and **scenes** from the episode's first half. The founding premise is that writers and editors can use each analysis to clarify what to look for during the episode's second half.

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— Frank Gregorsky, Editor and Curator