

## TV Review: Great Performance From Kenneth Branagh Anchors ‘Wallander’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 8, 2012 - 3:35pm

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CHICAGO – The great Kenneth Branagh delivers yet again with a new series of “Wallander” films on PBS under the banner of “Masterpiece: Mystery!,” starting tomorrow night, September 9, 2012. These are accomplished, adult tales of loss, guilt, and mystery that should satisfy viewers hooked by the first two “Wallander” runs previously aired on PBS.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

There are moments in the premiere that are a bit too lethargic and slowly-paced for their own good but every time that “Wallander” starts to lose its way, the strong dialogue writing and fantastic work by Branagh bring it back from the brink of tedium. This is high quality mystery entertainment unconcerned with flashy visuals or quick editing. It’s about the human cost of crime.



Wallander  
*Photo credit: PBS*

The three films that will air three Sundays at 8pm CST are “An Event in Autumn,” “The Dogs of Riga,” and “Before the Frost.” In all three, Branagh plays Kurt Wallander, the crime-solving hero of a series of novels by the internationally beloved Henning Mankell. Wallander has already been the subject of a series of Swedish telefilms, one of which was even released in arthouse theaters earlier this year under the name “[Wallander: The Revenge](#) [9].” He’s a strong character, one who viewers root for in terms of not only solving the crime but dealing with his personal demons as well.





Wallander  
Photo credit: PBS

"An Event in Autumn" opens with a woman leaping from the side of a ferry and having part of her wash up on a shore to be found by Wallander. Did she fall? Did she jump? Was she pushed? While Wallander tries to find happiness with Vanja (Saskia Reeves), he's about to get embroiled in one of the darkest and most disturbing cases of his career. As his investigation gets closer to his actual home and starts to impact people close to him, "An Event in Autumn" asks a common question of great detective fiction — how can we look into the abyss of evil and not bring it home with us?

Branagh is simply perfect here. He balances the world weary tone of Wallander with a solid core of moral gravity in just the right way to make him work. The writing is strong even if the pace does sometimes feel a bit too leaden for its own good. I wanted "Autumn" to turn up the heat a little bit instead of being such a dark, cold tale but it's an interesting way to start the new season and Branagh is up for the emotional challenge.

PBS is in an undeniable renaissance right now, delivering more and more high-profile content than in years. As "Downton Abbey" and "Sherlock" are about to rock the Emmys, they just seem to become more interesting with every new show and returning favorite. At the forefront of this PBS drama revolution is a detective who brings new meaning to the word private. It's easy for a show like "Wallander" (which will also be available on PBS's official website the day after each premiere) to get lost in the shuffle. Don't let that happen.

*"Masterpiece: Mystery! Wallander III" stars Kenneth Branagh and Saskia Reeves. It premieres on PBS on Sunday, September 9, 2012 at 8pm CST.*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [11]  
Content Director  
HollywoodChicago.com  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [10]

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