

PRESS RELEASE

Upholding the law...in his own way

Zen

Starring Rufus Sewell

On MASTERPIECE MYSTERY!

Sundays, July 17-31, 2011 on PBS

What does an honest cop do when his bosses are on the side of the lawbreakers? Outwitting prosecutors, politicians, mobsters, and run-of-the-mill kidnappers and killers, Detective Aurelio Zen brings justice to modern-day Italy, whether the authorities want it or not, on *Zen*, a trio of spellbinding cases based on the bestselling novels by Michael Dibdin, airing on MASTERPIECE MYSTERY! Sundays, July 17-31, 2011 on PBS.

Called “as bracing as grappa” by *USA Today* and “superb at evoking...Italian turmoil and uncertainty” by *The Times* (London), Dibdin’s *Zen* thrillers are like an Italian vacation gone horribly, crazily wrong. Now they are brought to television in productions that were shot on location around Rome, giving vivid life to the colorful settings, gorgeous women, twisted criminals, and brooding, brilliant hero.

Rufus Sewell (*Middlemarch*, *The Pillars of the Earth*) stars as *Zen*, a Roman police detective hailing from Venice, where “Zen” is a local shortening of the name Zeno. Separated from his wife and living with his mother (Catherine Spaak), he is too frazzled by his job to think about romance.

That is, until he meets Tania Moretti, his chief’s new secretary played by Italian actress Caterina Murino (*Casino Royale*, *XIII*). Tania herself has been having spouse trouble and sees *Zen* as a remarkable exception to the predatory Romeos around the police station. Indeed, *Zen* has more than a bit of Bond about him, being both a gentleman and an exceptional lover.

They are joined by an international cast including Ed Stoppard (*Upstairs Downstairs*), Ben Miles (*The Forsyte Saga*), Stanley Townsend (*Sherlock*), and Francesco Quinn (*Platoon*), with guest stars Greg Wise (*Return to Cranford*) and Allan Corduner (*Lennon Naked*).

Opening with a brutal double murder to the strains of Mozart’s haunting duet *Che soave zeffiretto*, the series unfolds as follows:

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Vendetta

A killer is on a vendetta-fuelled rampage against those who wrongly imprisoned him, including a cop who had almost nothing to do with it: Zen. But Zen is too busy dealing

with another crime—a politically-charged murder—to notice that he’s on the psychopath’s hit list. Ordered by his boss to nail the chief suspect in the murder case whether he is guilty or not and by a justice official to get the guy off, Zen is in a no-win situation—although he has won the heart of his officemate Tania Moretti. With so many distractions, can Zen solve the murder while keeping his job, staying alive, and getting to know Tania better?

Cabal

A disgraced aristocrat jumps off a bridge. Or was he pushed? As usual, Zen gets mixed signals from his scheming bosses: the Ministry of Justice wants a ruling of suicide, while a powerful and beautiful female prosecutor hints that Zen had better start looking for the murderer. The plot thickens when it appears that the victim was trying to inform on a previously unknown group called the Cabal, with conspirators at the highest levels of Italian society. Meanwhile, Zen and Tania are having trouble closing the book on their failed marriages, plus Zen is being pressured into an affair by the prosecutor.

Ratking

When a wealthy industrialist and political party funder is kidnapped, the Ministry of Justice wants Zen to get the hostage back alive at any cost. But these kidnappers don’t seem to be playing by the rules, since they kill the lawyer who shows up with a ransom payment from the family. In kidnapping-plagued Italy, it’s illegal to pay a ransom, and Zen must skirt this issue while dealing with the bickering relatives, who seem ready to forget about their captive kinsman. Even worse, Zen has a tyrannical new boss who is a stickler for regulations, including the one against workplace romances, jeopardizing the detective’s burgeoning affair with Tania.

Zen is a Left Bank Pictures, co-produced with MASTERPIECE, RTI, Ingenious, Mediaset, and ZDF in association with Lipsync Productions and BBC Worldwide. The series is based on the Aurelio Zen mysteries by Michael Dibdin. The executive producers are Andy Harries for Left Bank, Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE, Raffaella Bonivento for RTI, Katharina Gortz for ZDF, and Matthew Read for BBC. The producer is Michael Casey.

MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by WGBH Boston. Rebecca Eaton is executive producer. Funding for the series is provided by public television viewers, with additional support from contributions to The MASTERPIECE Trust, created to help ensure the series’ future.

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