



Pictured, from left: Paula Newsome as Maxine Roby on "CSI: Vegas." (Photo by Monty Brinton/CBS // ©CBS Broadcasting Inc.) • Martin Kove as Glenn in "A Taste of Love" on the Hallmark Channel. (Credit: ©2024 Hallmark Media/photographer: Courtesy Digital Caviar) • "Tournament of Champions" season four winner Mei Lin (Food Network photo)

Q&A: PAULA NEWSOME ON WHAT MAKES 'CSI: VEGAS' A HIT WITH FANS

Before Paula Newsome was famous, she famously had a chance encounter with an oh-so-well-known lookalike: Oprah Winfrey. "Years ago, when her show was in Chicago, she did this episode about what celebrities you look like," Newsome recalled in a phone interview last week. "I don't even know how I got on that show. I had one of those awful, asymmetrical haircuts. And I was in the audience. And she came up and she was like, 'And people tell you, "You look like. ..."' And she stuck her microphone in my face, and I got up and I did an Oprah impression, which she kind of loved."

Nowadays, Newsome is well-known, well-traveled, and well-respected for creating her own, one-of-a-kind characters. She has appeared in a slew of super-successful shows, including "Barry," "Chicago Med," "How to Get Away with Murder," "Castle," "NCIS," "Suits" and "Grey's Anatomy." Most notably, she leads the lab on "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" spinoff "CSI: Vegas," which is set to begin season three on CBS this weekend. Newsome's character, Maxine Roby, should have a "World's Best Boss" mug on her desk, because that's exactly what we find in this level-headed, team-oriented, extremely qualified crime scene supervisor. In season one, iconic "CSI" investigators Gil Grissom (William Petersen) and Sara Sidle (Jorja Fox) reinserted themselves into the crime lab after former colleague Jim Brass (Paul Guilfoyle) was attacked, and ex-medical examiner David Hodges (Wallace Langham) was accused of tampering with evidence from past closed cases. It would've been easy for Max, a former college basketball star, to boxout these semi-retired sleuths and let her own team do all the crime-fighting. Instead, she welcomed the help - and seamlessly unified the old "CSI" crew with new science fair stars Josh Folsom (Matt Lauria) and Allie Rajan (Mandeep Dhillon), and later Det. Serena Chavez (Ariana Guerra). Gil and Sara didn't return for season two - replaced by fellow "CSI" standout Catherine Willows (Marg Helgenberger) - but it didn't matter, because Max and her team had become more than capable by that time. Newsome, Lauria, Dhillon and Guerra have made this "CSI" their own, and their characters have been accepted into a long line of popular franchise characters. In fact, IMDb audiences have scored "Vegas" (7.4 out of 10) higher than "Miami" (6.5), "NY" (6.9) and the short-lived "CSI: Cyber" (5.5).

• Visit www.wnypapers.com to read the full interview.

Q&A: 'NICE GUY' MARTIN KOVE SHOWS SENSITIVE SIDE IN NEW HALLMARK CHANNEL FILM

Martin Kove is really good at being a really bad guy. The actor has made a career out of playing wicked, corrupt, immoral, depraved, debauched, unscrupulous, ruthless, merciless and cruel characters including, most famously, sensei John Kreese in "The Karate Kid" and "Cobra Kai." But Kove wants you to know those on-screen roles are not really representative of who he is - or of his softer side, which is not often seen in film or on streaming. To that end, he is costarring in the new film "A Taste of Romance," debuting Monday on the Hallmark Channel. The story centers on Taylor (Erin Cahill), a frustrated TV chef who returns home to find her family's restaurant up for sale; and her ex, Jacob (Kove's son, Jesse), whom she still has feelings for despite their breakup.

While it might be odd to see someone shooting at Chuck Norris in "Walker, Texas Ranger" one day, hassling Sylvester Stallone's iconic character in "Rambo" the next day, and then appearing on a network currently spotlighting Jane Austen, the man who coined the phrase "No mercy" said this was one of his favorite film projects. Not only that, Kove is working on a passion project meant to inspire children - even as he's on set reprising his role as youth-corrupting Kreese for the final season of "Cobra Kai" on Netflix.

Throughout his career, Kove has proven his ability to work across genres - everything from "Kojak," "The Rockford Files" and "Diagnosis Murder" to "The Incredible Hulk," "Starsky and Hutch" and "Tales from the Crypt." He starred alongside Tyne Daly and Sharon Gless in seven seasons of "Cagney & Lacey," and with Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio and Margot Robbie in "Once Upon a Time ... In Hollywood."

At 76, Kove isn't ready to retire. Especially with new acting ground to cover. "I really enjoy playing the nice guy," Kove said. "I mean, I cry at supermarket openings. You know, everybody always thinks (I'm a bad guy) because of 'The Karate Kid' character and 'Rambo' and all the tough guys I played. I enjoy playing characters like this one in 'Taste of Love.' I like playing romantic and soft things, where I can emote. And even the moments in 'Cobra Kai' are my favorite. Like last night, I did a scene with Peyton List, and it's my favorite to be soft and gentle and vulnerable. I don't get a chance to do it very often. But I did in this movie." Plus, "I learned how to do certain things like cutting, and what cheeses you'll cut one way, vegetables you'll cut another way. The special way to hold the knife to dice things. That was cool. ... I do things with guns and horses."

• "A Taste of Love" premieres on the Hallmark Channel at 8 p.m. Monday. Visit www.wnypapers.com to read the full interview.

Q&A: MEI LIN LOOKS TO DEFEND 'TOURNAMENT OF CHAMPIONS' BELT

Let there be no doubt: "Tournament of Champions" is the wildest, toughest and most prestigious culinary competition on television.

In four seasons, the Food Network showcase of kitchen immortals has brought together chefs who own restaurants, chefs with their own cooking lines, award-winning chefs, and even "Top Chef" winners. What about those chefs you read about in magazines? Yup. The chefs at the fancy festivals starting trends on social? They're here, too. And the chefs who taught these chefs? They're serving as judges.

It's for those reasons - not to mention bragging rights and a cash prize - the entrant pool continues to grow - so much so, there's a play-in sub-series this time around.

And it's not just the chefs who love "TOC." In season four, which aired in 2023, the viewing audience was nearly 11 million.

The bracket-style (single-elimination) tournament pits 16 East Coast chefs against their 16 West Coast counterparts over eight episodes starting at 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 18. Competitors will be ranked, from No. 1 to No. 16, based on past performance - or, if they're new, on their cooking and/or TV competition experience.

In season five, each of the past champions - Brooke Williamson, Maneet Chauhan, Tiffani Faison and Mei Lin - returns with a goal of capturing a second championship belt and \$150,000.

Guy Fieri is back to host "TOC," alongside field reporters Simon Majumdar, Justin Warner and Hunter Fieri. Also returning: Guy's devilish "Randomizer," a series of spinning wheels that determine the dish(es) to be passed.

Last year, Lin beat a culinary dream team (Crista Luedtke, Tiffany Derry, Shota Nakajima, four-time semifinalist Jet Tila and season two champion Chauhan) to win the "TOC" title and the \$100,000 cash prize.

In the finale, she had to impress a judging panel comprised of world-renowned chefs (Nancy Silverton, Ming Tsai, Cat Cora, Lorena Garcia, Daniel Boulud) - and create her dishes based on maybe the worst "Randomizer" in "TOC" history.

Lin's creations - lamb tartare, pomegranate-glazed lamb chops, Persian stew and shiso ice cream - netted a score of 91 out of 100, besting Chauhan by 2 points.

Lin explained, "I actually grew up in the restaurant industry. I started at a really young age. My parents, my aunts and uncles, all owned restaurants. And so, I started going to work with my dad at age 8. And I have just been completely enamored since. ...

"In regards to the competition, I think that each and every chef that I've ever met is super competitive. Depending on if they want to do competitive cooking or not; just in general, we're all really competitive, and we all want to be the best in every way possible. And this is just an outlet for some of the chefs of kind of be in and to do, honestly."

• Visit www.wnypapers.com to read the full interview.

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