

TELEVISION



DAVID DOLSEN Lifetime Movie

GAL PALS: Maggie Lawson's Lacey Smithsonian, from left, is on the case of the dead stylist, with friends Brooke (Sarah Edmondson) and Stella (Sadie LeBlanc) as backup.

REVIEW

'Killer' concept? No, but it's decent

Maggie Lawson is a pleasure to watch as a fashion reporter turned sleuth in a light Lifetime mystery.

ROBERT LLOYD
TELEVISION CRITIC

Should you desire to write detective fiction, you will want to give your detective some distinguishing decorative characteristic. Since all the plots have been written three times over already, it's how you dress them up that counts.

Will your hero/heroine be a clown detective, a gardener detective, a detective made of cheese? They say it's best to write what you know, which is why my detective would be a TV critic detective (possible titles: "Saturday Night Dead," "Mary Tyler Murder," "Beverly Hills 90210hmygod"), just as forensic anthropologist Kathy Reichs made hers a forensic anthropologist — her novels inspired the television series

Two novels from Byerrum's Crimes of Fashion series have been adapted by Lifetime for the small screen, which is the right-sized screen for them. The first, "Killer Hair," premieres Sunday, and although it is less than perfect — the mystery not especially gripping, the resolution almost arbitrary, the characters low on substance and sometimes sense — it is nevertheless pretty consistently enjoyable. And it has the advantage over many Lifetime movies in that no one is terminally ill, unless you want to consider murder a kind of fatal condition.

It is held aloft primarily by its star Maggie Lawson ("Psych"), who plays Lacey Smithsonian, a fashion writer for a D.C. tabloid — Byerrum's own beat was OSHA — who turns sleuth when a stylist she knows, an apparent suicide, is caught dead in a haircut the stylist wouldn't be caught dead in. Lawson, who appears in every scene, brings to her lines a music not all her co-stars are able to find and conveys an ease and intelligence that complements rather than clashes with the cute Ali-

tage couture," meant to mark her as an oddball even as it ties her to an earlier era of independent screen heroine.

Mary McDonnell, the big-name in a cast of familiar faces (Mario Cantone, Finola Hughes, James McDaniel), is a fleeting presence as Lacey's mother; her scene is at the far side of a phone call. Designated love interest Victor Webster, square-jawed and a bit stiff, plays a detective with whom Lacey has ancient history, but she is more warmly supported by Sadie LeBlanc and Sarah Edmondson as respectively sassy and serious gal pals; Lawson does her best work with them. One scene, in which she and Edmondson, an attorney, interrogate the FBI agent who means to interrogate them, is especially deft, as if it had dropped in from a slightly better movie. But this one is not bad.

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'Killer Hair'

Where: Lifetime Movie