

NEWS And NOTES



The Good Wife's Julianna Margulies

TV's Hottest Guest Gig

How does the sizzling legal drama *The Good Wife* score A-list talent for recurring roles? Hint: It's *not* the big bucks.

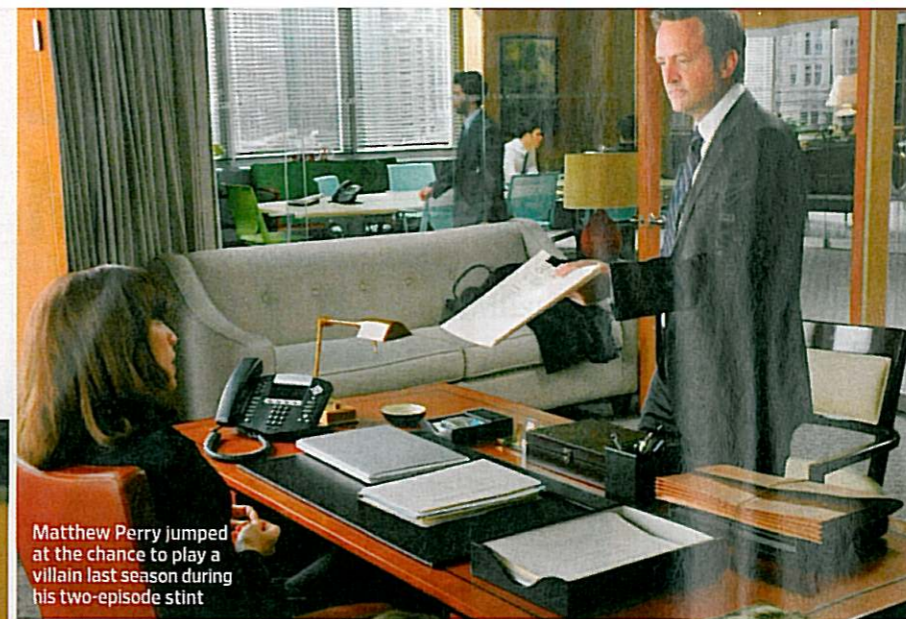
BY LYNETTE RICE

WHENEVER THE creators of *The Good Wife* want a guest star to play an irascible judge, a sassy lawyer, or a cunning client, they need only check their voicemail. "I get calls every day, all the time [from well-known actors]," says casting director **Mark Saks**, who credits creators **Robert** and **Michelle King** for making the show a talent magnet. "Their words are so good." In the three years since the CBS legal drama debuted, veteran actors like **Michael J. Fox**, **Matthew Perry**, **Martha Plimpton**, **Parker Posey**, **Denis O'Hare**, **Carrie Preston**, **Titus Welliver**, and **Kristin Chenoweth** (who was injured in July while filming her appearance) have flocked to the series, where they're all but guaranteed memorable roles that result in glowing reviews...and a crack at Emmy gold. (Last month, Plimpton—who played the role of smart-alecky

attorney Patti Nyholm in four episodes—became the first *Wife* guest star to take home the award, for guest actress in a drama.) But even more fascinating than the list of actors who have done time in and around the halls of Lockhart/Gardner is the money they earn while doing it: Although star **Julianna Margulies** pulls in well north of \$125K an episode to play the estranged wife of Cook County state's attorney Peter Florrick (**Chris Noth**), the guest stars earn just \$7,674 for a week's work on *Wife*. While that may seem paltry in a business where studios regularly shell out \$20,000 to snag a big-name guest star, the *Good Wife* team says it's relatively easy to persuade actors to accept "top of show"—the technical term for such a (low) fixed fee. "Actors



Martha Plimpton and Michael J. Fox both guest-starred in the April 29 episode



Matthew Perry jumped at the chance to play a villain last season during his two-episode stint



Nathan Lane plays a penny-pinching law-firm trustee in his recurring role this season



Amanda Peet's multi-episode arc as a military lawyer kicks off Nov. 4

respond to it because there is no negotiating," says Saks. "Everyone makes the same, and about 90 percent fall in line [right away]. And sometimes, if I just continue to harass an actor, they'll fall in line." Other times, though, it's the actors doing the nagging. For example: The Kings created the role of the crafty attorney Louis Canning in 2010 after Fox, a huge fan, asked for a gig. He'll reprise his role later this season, after a new slew of actors like **Amanda Peet**, **Brian Dennehy**, **Christina Ricci**, **T.R. Knight**, and **Stockard Channing** join an already

impressive roster of regular guests like **Nathan Lane** (trustee Clarke Hayden) and **Maura Tierney** (billionaire Maddie Hayward), who'll continue to pop up. "It's a small community," explains Michelle King, "so it makes sense that they would bump into the same people in the legal world." That's good news for Plimpton, who says she would gladly work around her busy schedule on Fox's *Raising Hope* for the chance to return to court this year. (The Kings definitely want her back.) "People love this show," Plimpton tells EW. "And Patti is so much fun to play!" ■

"THERE IS NO NEGOTIATING. EVERYONE MAKES THE SAME."

—GOOD WIFE CASTING DIRECTOR MARK SAKS

THE MOST COVETED COMEDIES

Will work for buzz: Like *The Good Wife*, the hottest sitcoms can lure big stars without paying big bucks. These all pay roughly \$4,796 per episode, and still have top-shelf talent lining up.

Modern Family

It's the No. 1 comedy. No wonder stars like **Matthew Broderick** and **Wendi McLendon-Covey** are visiting the Pritchett-Dunphy-Tucker clan this season.

New Girl

Thanks to its breakout success last season, such actors as **Jamie Lee Curtis**, **Parker Posey**, **Carla Gugino**, and **Rob Reiner** all signed on for stints this fall.

The Mindy Project

Mindy Kaling's cool factor helped persuade pals like **Ed Helms** and **Seth Meyers** to appear on her freshman laffer.



(From left) Seth Meyers on *The Mindy Project*; Ellen Barkin on *Modern Family*; Parker Posey on *New Girl*

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