

# [***'Monsieur Spade' casts Clive Owen in a series that's nearly the stuff dreams are made of***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B36-HP21-DY7V-G01T-00000-00&context=1516831)

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(CNN) &#8212; The latest installment of "[*True Detective*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/12/entertainment/true-detective-night-country-review)" gets overshadowed by another six-episode limited series premiering the same night, only this one featuring a detective out of the past, Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade. With a hat tip to "The Maltese Falcon," AMC's "Monsieur Spade" creates a nicely moody sequel built around the character, and if that's not quite the stuff dreams are made of, it comes wonderfully close.

Although he has dabbled in hard-boiled detective types in the past ("Sin City" comes to mind), and made an excellent Bill Clinton in [*"Impeachment: American Crime Story,"*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/31/entertainment/impeachment-american-crime-story-review/index.html) Clive Owen finds a role here that perfectly suits him as an older, world-weary version of the character most famously played by Humphrey Bogart. This new-old Spade comes to France in the mid-1950s carrying out an errand for Brigid O'Shaughnessy, the larcenous femme fatale whose name will mean something to "Falcon" aficionados.

Flash forward to 1963, and Spade is comfortably retired and still living in France, having picked up French (how well is a subject of amusing debate) and a good deal more baggage related to another alluring woman who came into his life.

Spade's reverie, however, gets abruptly shattered by an appalling act of violence, launching the hero into the grudging role of a sleuth again, while sweeping a number of characters - from the gruff local police chief (Denis Menochet, seen in "Inglourious Basterds") to Brigid's now-teenage daughter Teresa (Cara Bossom) - into Spade's orbit.

Like the Hammett stories, "Monsieur Spade" introduces multiple nefarious players with shadowy pasts and questionable motives, while having a good time puttying in details of Spade's life in the eight years from his arrival in France to the show's present. The side plots encompass everything from post-World War II baggage to Cold War ***politics***, punctuated by Spade, ever the cranky dinosaur, and his hostility to modernity, such as the absurd notion of launching men into space.

Shot in France, the series derives much of its beguiling kick from the cleverness of the writing and crispness of the dialogue, courtesy of veteran producers Scott Frank (who also directed the six episodes, and whose recent credits include the Emmy-winning [*"The Queen's Gambit"*](https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/22/entertainment/the-queens-gambit-review/index.html) and [*"Godless"*](https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/21/entertainment/godless-review/index.html)) and Tom Fontana (known for such series as "Oz" and "Homicide: Life on the Street").

In their hands, "Monsieur Spade" is so deftly constructed that at the very moment when the viewer begins to wonder why an expatriate yank would insist on swimming in the nude, there's a convenient flashback sequence that explains things.

Having enjoyed commercial success with "The Walking Dead" and prestige with "Better Call Saul," AMC has become more judicious about its series forays, and too reliant upon "Dead" spinoffs, despite achieving some credible highlights with macabre fare like [*"Interview With the Vampire."*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/30/entertainment/interview-with-the-vampire-review/index.html)

Here, the network has not only shown it can still play in the creative big leagues, but that the best efforts to capitalize on existing intellectual property often involve making a big bet - with "Monsieur Spade," both geographically and thematically - and coming away with a hand full of aces.

"Monsieur Spade" premieres January 14 on AMC, AMC+ and Acorn TV.

Review by Brian Lowry, CNN

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