

# The Gazette

## Doyle kidnaps our hearts

Alex Strachan  
April 6

Kidnappings often make lousy plots for crime thrillers. They've been done to death, for one. They can end in only one of two ways, for another: the victim lives, or the victim dies.

The pleasure lies in the details - and the characters. Character counts for everything, whether it's the sleuth doing the sleuthing, the victim who's been victimized, or the baddie who did the dirty deed.

Republic of Doyle (CBC, 9 p.m.) ends its season with an opening you've seen countless times in TV crime thrillers: The good guy's loved ones are grabbed by a drooling, scowling fool, and it's down to that good guy - hardbitten gumshoe Jake Doyle (Allan Hawco) - to find them before it's too late.

The good news is that, as crafted by Hawco - the multi-talented Newfoundland native cowrites, co-produces and plays the lead character - Republic of Doyle assumes real intelligence on the part of the viewer.

The baddie in the season finale is played by the ever-versatile Paul Gross, as a cad who's both hard to take seriously and downright dangerous.

Gross is a name actor, prolific playwright and big-shot producer in his own right, but he's not afraid to look ridiculous. He plays the baddie with scenery-chomping relish. Comical one minute, menacing the next, Gross is the perfect TV villain: a deceptively simple buffoon who's capable of sudden, irrational violence.

Gross has been typecast throughout his career as the lantern-jawed ladies' man - the hero. Here, he uses his natural charm and leading-man looks to play someone you wouldn't want to bring home to meet your mother.

Republic of Doyle is one of a handful of promising homegrown dramas at the moment, and it deserves credit for cheating death as long as it has without losing its creative spark. (Doilies, relax: The show will be back for a third season next year.)

--Fresh from butchering the Elton John song-book last week, the remaining nine contestants on American Idol (CTV, Fox, 8 p.m.) take on Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees in Wednesday's performance program. Two-time Hall of Fame inductee Jeff Beck will accompany each of the singers on guitar - which could be reason enough to watch, if only for the shock value.

--It's merge time on Survivor: Redemption Island (Global, CBS, 8 p.m.), and not a moment too soon. With the great Russell Hantz a distant and fading memory, the Winners vs. Losers tribe thing was getting a bit old.



--If the food challenges on Survivor leave your stomach a little unsettled (anyone for raw sea cucumber?), sample **The Cupcake Girls** (W, 9 p.m.) instead. The docu-reality series about Vancouver cupcake store owners and best friends Heather White and Lori Joyce returns for a new season, with their "no boyfriends, no babies" policy about to be put to a severe test.