

# “Lone Star” Fall Preview, September 2010



by Joe Rhodes

James Wolk, 25 years old and about to be an out-of-nowhere tv star, could sell you anything and make you think it was your idea. He knows all the tricks, how to look you straight in the eye and, every once in a while, pick up on a phrase you've uttered, repeating it, validating it, using it to form a bond. Then he turns on the Cary Grant charm, the effortless laugh, the George Clooney tilt-of-the-head. You will most likely buy what he's selling, whatever it is, whether you need it or not.

Which is why Wolk – whose biggest previous credit (as “Jimmy Wolk”) was a 2008 Hallmark Hall of Fame called “Front of the Class” -- has been cast as the con man centerpiece of Fox’s “Lone Star,” a steamy, intricate drama about a young scam artist with second thoughts about the double life

he’s leading, married to a girl-next-door in Midland (Eloise Mumford) and an oil heiress in Houston (Adrienne Palicki of “Friday Night Lights”) trying to extricate himself from a life of crime without going to jail and losing the women he loves. It’s part “Dallas,” part “Dirty, Sexy Money” and part Shakespearean tragedy, played out on a Texas-sized scale.

“Am I ready for this?,” he says, repeating a question, taking a break on the Dallas soundstage where most of the show is filmed, having just finished a scene with Jon Voight, who plays the oil baron father of his Houston wife and David Keith, who plays his con artist dad.



“I am r eady. It’s a weird confidence, I know, “ he says, leaning in. “Cause I’m not a cocky person. But I feel like if I’m not ready now, then I really will never be ready. I feel like the level of passion I have for this and how much I love learning more about it, those things are at full throttle. So why wait? There’s no better time than now.”

Kyle Killen, the Texas native who created “Lone Star,” chose Wolk over several better-known feature film actors because the character needed to be someone who doesn’t “feel slick. He

couldn't feel like an operator. He had to feel like a guy that when he sat in your living room you trusted and believe in him almost instantaneously.

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“For the show to work, Bob (Wolk’s character) has to be someone who, even though he sometimes does despicable things, the audience likes and forgives him And James had those parts that you can’t teach: the charisma, the warmth and the genuineness. That’s all just him.”

They are qualities Wolk honed growing up in West Bloomfield, Michigan, selling women’s shoes in his father’s store, Sundance Shoes, from the time he was 12 years old. “That was show business,” he says, “and I don’t mean that in a bad sense. You’re on. You have to relate, you have to communicate and you have to connect. Cause if you don’t, you’re not gonna sell anything. And in acting, it’s the same. If you don’t connect, no one’s buying it.”

“By the end of the pilot,” Palicki says, “James does a great job of being so charming and lovely and he has these puppy dog eyes and you’re just like, “I want him to have it all. I want him to have his cake and eat it, too.!”

In other words: Sold.