

Critique of “*Sensing Murder*” – Kay Stewart (screened Sept 08)

This is the episode deemed to “Silence the Skeptics” but I believe it has some of the biggest inconsistencies of all the episodes!

The Police

This is the case that must have totally embarrassed the police force of New Zealand. The interviewing Senior Sergeant, though at times had the traditional poker face, at other times was so expressive about the psychic’s statement that it beggared belief. Psychics are experts at reading *non-verbal* cues to glean pieces of information from their clients – Deb Webber hit the suggestive-jackpot with Senior Sergeant Ross Levy!

The Police have since said that the name Deb came up with is of a person who has already been discounted. Good entertaining stuff – but nothing useful. Indeed, Levy wasn’t convinced of the psychic’s abilities himself, choosing to “sit on the fence”

In fact Levy phoned me in response to a letter I sent him asking a few questions on this episode and his dealings with *Sensing Murder*. Some interesting points were raised:

- He confirmed that the interviews he had with the two psychics were held WEEKS APART! When I expressed surprise at the length of time between readings and that the psychics had so much time to communicate with each other, he mumbled something about integrity! I asked why we should expect that they actually *have* integrity.
- Each of his ‘readings’ with the psychics took about four hours. It makes you wonder, what on earth they were talking about for all that time?!
- He did state that he had minimal verbal contact with the psychics during that time. I presume his face did the rest.
- He could NOT confirm whether the psychics stayed overnight and what supposed security checks were imposed as it was nothing to do with the police. (I am willing to bet their baggage was not searched and so had the use of a computer)
- He emphasized that he and the police felt it was a good way to get more information from the public, which I agreed that it could possibly do so.
- I asked him how he felt about the way the program represented him; was it in a good light or a bad light, did he agree some of the parts and disagree with others? He was a little reticent in answering but finally stated that some parts they showed were fine but other parts were not as he would have liked.

So, let’s leave Senior Sergeant Levy in the “unconvinced” bracket and return to the case at hand...

The Psychics

Unbelievably and breaking their own rules of prior case involvement, the psychics Deb and Kelvin have already looked into this case (and failed), they had more contact with police than ever before, and it was the only time that a policeman (one of the investigating officers on the case) was the one that was allowed to do all the interviewing in the episode. Is it no wonder that the psychics were able to wheedle out so much information?

John, from www.sillybeliefs.com says it all, "In other words, they will talk about a case they are familiar with and yet will still pretend they are getting their information from the spirits of dead people. *Sensing Murder* and psychics in general have long been accused of often having prior knowledge of the events they talk about. This is one of several ways that they can appear to "channel" real information. It's called "hot reading", or more simply – cheating. Until now *Sensing Murder* insisted that they always chose and monitored their psychics to make this accusation of prior knowledge unfounded. This is the first time they have *admitted* that they have broken their own rules. Yet rather than get other psychics that didn't already know the answers, they went ahead with their two flawed subjects. Obviously they thought it wouldn't matter to their viewers, who would still believe that what the psychics said was coming from dead people and not from their memories. And from the comments we've heard since, they were right. Followers of *Sensing Murder* ignored the admission of prior knowledge and sided with the spirits.

The rules are broken again (as always) when although the program states that only positive statements may be affirmed, I heard at least two negative statements being responded to. How many others (over the 4 hour interviews) were edited out? Surely, by only affirming *positive* statements, the *negative* ones are also being responded to by the resultant silence!

Very early on, Kelvin got the whole name Kay Margaret Stewart very quickly, but he still did not connect with the case he had investigated just two years before.

Why did the spirits give such a definite full name to Kelvin but Debbie could only get the one name Margaret? Is it because Kelvin spent much longer on the case previously than Debbie and had better recall? Why Margaret rather than Kay?

How is it when Deb "sees" a car driving up a gravel path this is explained as being the road surface at the time of the incident (now it's tarseal) whereas the next 'vision' she has is of a boardwalk that is then reported to be only a *recent addition* to the track. Does Deb go from historical to updated 'visions' to suit or is this just sloppy editing?

What's wrong with this scenario?

10.30am: Kay drops daughter, Jane off at the school. She promises to be back by 12.30 to pick her up.

11.00 am: Deciding to fill this time with a walk she stops at the Rimutaka National Park depot on the way for information.

11.15 am: probably arrived at start of the track after driving to the end of the road then returning back to the track start. She had a choice of two very well formed tracks, 15 minutes and 30 minutes in duration.

1pm: She was then reported back down at a DOC depot two km's away already late. Why? Why did she not ask to use a telephone when asking for directions? With Jane suffering from a nervous disorder don't you think it's odd and out of character that she didn't think to contact her school?

It was a two km walk back to her car, but somehow she seemed to have missed it and from what the psychics inferred by their standard sick feelings – she ended up another km further on at the picnic area -somewhere near where she was allegedly murdered.

Forgetting any thoughts of murder, does this not sound as if something was wrong with Kay? Regardless of medication, could she have had something happen to her health that made her confused before she started taking 'short' cuts through the bush?

Kay's daughter, Jane, stated on the program that they had searched for weeks but couldn't search the whole area – it is huge.

The Results

The program continued its unbroken record of never getting a criminal arrested.....if the police were as bad in solving their cases they'd be fired. Yes, it appears a locked gate is enough to thwart further investigation just as the rule of "solve in one day" has been enough to stop readings in their tracks right when it seems an imminent breakthrough is so close.

The program IS very slick. I would love to get a copy of Sensing Murder's first episode to analyse – I'm sure there would be a lot more mistakes and inconsistencies than the latest program with 3 seasons of practice! If a fourth season of *Sensing Murder* is screened you can bet I, along with other 'realists' will be analysing the content to see if Ninox Television have learnt from their mistakes and, as a result, produce episodes that are flawless in their support for exploitative scammers.

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