

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

## Don't Wait for Permission

*Maria Sten on Prime Video's Neagley, a Toronto winter of her own stunts, and the Mexico Hail Mary that made her a working actor.*

Interview by Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine



Maria Sten as Frances Neagley. Photo: Prime Video / Amazon MGM Studios.

On a Texas press stop that felt like a homecoming — “It’s good to be back in Texas,” she told AMFM — Maria Sten is finally talking about a show she has been sitting on for a long time. Prime Video drops all eight episodes of *Neagley* on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, the same night *Reacher* Season Four closes. The clock is public now. The work is not.

*“We have been sitting on it for a while now, and I’m just so excited that it’s finally coming out in the world,”* Sten said. *“I feel like we really made something that we could be proud of.”*

Frances Neagley, the former 110th Special Investigations Unit investigator who has been Jack Reacher’s most trusted partner since the first season of Prime Video’s *Reacher*, is no longer standing just off his shoulder. In the new series — created by executive producers and co-showrunners Nick Santora and Nicholas Wootton, and based on the character in Lee Child’s novels — she is a Chicago private investigator who learns a beloved friend has been killed in a suspicious accident and puts herself on a dangerous path to uncover a menacing evil. Alan Ritchson guest-stars as Reacher. The ensemble includes Greyston Holt as Detective Hudson Riley, Adeline Rudolph as Renee Birdwhistle, Jasper Jones as Keno, Matthew Del Negro as Pierce Woodrow, and Damon Herriman as Lawrence Cole.

Paul Salfen had already seen the first episodes on a big screen. Congratulations first. Then the honest question: she makes the running look easy. It was not.

## TORONTO IS NO JOKE



Official key art for Neagley, Premiering September 16 on Prime Video. Image: Prime Video / Amazon MGM Studios.

*"It was cold," she said. She did a lot of running. She did a lot of her own stunts. "Toronto is no joke, especially if you're there in the winter."*

The stunt work is not a dare. It is a camera problem she can solve from inside the frame.

*"I do love doing my own stunts," Sten said. "One, because I love anything where I get to use my body, but also because I feel like, from a directorial standpoint, you can just use so many more shots when it's the actor doing the thing instead of trying to hide the face of the body double. So I definitely make a point to try and do as much as I can."*

*You can just use so many more shots when it's the actor doing the thing instead of trying to hide the face of the body double.*

— MARIA STEN

When Salfen asked for a particular day or a senior moment — the one where she looked around and thought, I win, I could pay to do this — Sten went to the end of the schedule.

*"We ended up shooting the last, very last scene of the show on the very last scene of the last day," she said. "And I definitely had this moment of like, wow, we made it through, we did this. This happened — which was very surreal — and everybody clapping and everybody hugging each other after a long haul."*

## CATHARSIS, THEN CHAOS

AMFM had seen the first couple of episodes. They already get crazy. Sten confirmed, without giving the plot away, that the end gets “really, really crazy.” Then she drew the line most actors draw when a finale is sitting in a vault.

*“There’s a lot of action that happens at the end,” she said. “But there’s also an incredible catharsis, I think, in terms of this journey that you go on with her and learning about her. And really it’s quite heartbreaking, what you unveil along the way. And I feel that I like where we end up.”*

What should people bring into the room? Not a binge plan. A readiness.

*“Be prepared for the unexpected,” she said. “I think that’s what I would say.”*

The series, she added, is doing something new while paying homage to Reacher and giving viewers the things they love about that world. “I’m excited for people to watch.”



Maria Sten as Frances Neagley in the official trailer. Image: Prime Video.

## STUDY THE GREATS. THEN MAKE STUFF.

People look up to Sten now and think, that’s what I want to do. Salfen asked for the advice she would actually give someone trying to follow the work, not the stills.

*“Go to acting class. Study, study the greats,” she said. “Stanislavsky, Hagen, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, among others that are just the greats that have written books about acting. And then I think, find yourself a teacher that you believe in and really study the craft. And then don’t wait for anybody to give you permission. I think go make stuff with your friends. It’s a big one.”*

*Don’t wait for anybody to give you permission. Go make stuff with your friends.*

— MARIA STEN

## THE HAIL MARY ON A BEACH IN MEXICO

Salfen's co-host history includes Drew Pearson, the Dallas Cowboy who caught the Hail Mary and went into the Hall of Fame. AMFM has spent years asking artists for the equivalent — the moment you have to go for it, and it works. Sten did not reach for a set story. She reached for the first job.

It was her first job as an actor. It was also the lead of a show.

*"I didn't think it was going to go my way," she said. "And so I went on vacation to Mexico with my mother. And then my manager called me and said, oh, it's still in play. And I was like, okay, but I'm sitting on a beach in Mexico."*

They told her they could use the tape she had already done. Then she got the call.

*"I'd been spending a long time sort of giving my all, working 24/7 to become a working actor," Sten said. "And I felt that it was so beautiful to have this moment where I decided to go on this vacation, because I'm not going to wait to see whether I have to go for this second audition or not. Because you can't. You have to keep living your life. And so I ended up going on this vacation and they're like, no, no, they don't need you. They can just use the tape you already did. And then I got the job. It was such a full-circle moment of one sharing it with my mother, but also this idea that you have to keep living your life and the things that are meant for you will still be for you."*

## JANTELOVEN AND THE WORK ETHIC

Salfen told her she has "that thing." When did she first realize it?

*"I think people tell you along the way, but I think we as artists, as creative people, always have a little voice that tells us that it's not true," she said. "Especially because I grew up in Denmark and we definitely have Janteloven, which is like, you're not special. Who do you think you are? No, you are not better than anybody else. Which, of course, is a healthy thing to have and keep in mind."*

The thing she will claim is not mystique. It is labor.

*"I do believe it's just about keeping your head down and continuing to do work, continuing to work hard," Sten said. "And I think that is the thing that you can be proud of. And when people tell me that I have something, it's like — it's a work ethic."*

*When people tell me that I have something, it's like — it's a work ethic.*

— MARIA STEN

Salfen compared that to an athlete's or a fighter's mindset: when it is go time, what do you tell yourself? Sten grew up a child athlete. The language is still in her body.

*"I definitely have that same sort of athlete's mentality of being in the moment," she said. "It's go time. It's all or nothing. You leave it all on the table or on the field or on the track. And I feel that you have to give the same approach to the work. It's different because as an actor, it's not necessarily the best person for the job that will get the job. As an athlete, if you are the fastest, you know that you*

*will win, which doesn't translate to being an actor. But at the same time, when you do get the opportunity to do it, that is when you can give your all."*

That all-or-nothing streak can get a person in trouble when the work is dangerous. Safety teams do their best. Sten is still the kid her mother had to survive.

*"I am definitely a wild child," she said. "I've always been. My mother — I don't know how she made it through my childhood. I've always been like, sort of on the wild side. And so I feel that it is appropriate that I get to do this particular job for a living."*

## COMING OFF REACHER

Getting the call that Neagley was actually happening — not one of the maybe-projects that circle this business — still lands. Coming off Reacher into a series with her name on the slate makes it land harder.

*"I'm so excited," Sten said. "I think the show is really doing something new, while also paying homage to Reacher and giving us the things that we love about Reacher. So I'm excited for people to watch."*

Besides this, she is writing. A few projects on that side. Next year is open on purpose.

*"We'll see what happens next year."*

Salfen hoped she would enjoy Texas even though it was hot as anything. She did not argue the weather. She took the welcome.

*"It's good to be back in Texas."*

Then the closer AMFM always uses when the work is about to hit the platform: tell everybody to check out the show. It is awesome. Sten did not hedge.

*"Of course," she said. "Thank you so much."*

## FIND MARIA STEN

Neagley — all eight episodes premiere Wednesday, September 16, 2026, exclusively on Prime Video in more than 240 countries and territories.

Created by Nick Santora and Nicholas Wootton. Based on the character in novels by Lee Child. Produced by Paramount Television Studios and Amazon MGM Studios. Alan Ritchson guest-stars as Jack Reacher.

Instagram @mariasten Prime Video Neagley

Interview conducted by Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine, September 2026.

*Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record.*