

LABORS OF LOVE

noble intentions

It's not often that an acting renaissance begins in one's fifties, but John Noble has enjoyed the process as much as the results.

The Australian actor, who played the imperious Denethor in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, has been seen this past season as Dr. Walter Bishop on Fox's *Fringe*, a scientist as memorable as he is quirky. "Walter has been on a journey to redemption as he, essentially, awakens," Noble assesses. "We're watching someone go from being seen as crazy to a man of great intellect."

Noble credits Joshua Jackson, who plays his son, with helping him elevate his work. "I see him as someone who's never satisfied with his performance, despite all he's been able to accomplish," he says of his younger costar. "I think we'll see him thought of as one of the great actors before it's all said and done."

He saw a similar dedication in Kiefer Sutherland when he guest-starred on *24*. "I've never seen someone more intense," he says. "I tend to be that way, too. Kiefer has a way of getting into a certain mental space, and that's the way to get a strong performance."

And Noble should know — back in Australia he directed more than eighty productions at The Stage Company. Today he stays connected with fellow performers by hosting salons at his home. "I enjoy having actors get together and get into the craft," he says. "Forget about being cast in something. Just let your mind go free to express yourself and surprise yourself. Find that freedom."

Noble has similar hopes for his *Fringe* character, who he believes will ultimately heal himself and those around him. "We'll see Walter moving toward coming to peace with his past. We'll also see more of his unconscious humor that comes from his eccentricity and this unawareness that comes with just speaking your mind."

Noble pauses, then laughs. "I wish I could be that way sometimes!" —Eric Butterman