

## 7 Must-See Australian Crime Shows

Written by News Release

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Sydney 16 October 2014. For almost 60 years, [Australian television](#) has been entertaining audiences at home and abroad, and one of the most beloved genres has undoubtedly been crime drama with its depictions of criminals, punishment, law, order, and the daily lives of individuals on the police force and those working to elude the police force. If you love television, and you love crime dramas, here are seven Australian television shows you can't afford to miss.

### Phoenix

Shot in two 13-part series for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 1992 and 1993, [Phoenix](#) follows the investigation of the bombing of the state police headquarters in Victoria — a plot that was more than loosely based on an actual incident and case that occurred in the 1980s, known as the Russell Street Bombing. Heralded as one of the most realistic forays into police surveillance, forensics, and investigatory tactics, Phoenix was also notable for its dark tone, violence, and colourful language and was an obvious forerunner to subsequent shows like Janus and Underbelly.

### Janus

A spin-off that followed closely on the heels of Phoenix, [Janus](#) also aired for two seasons for a total of 26 episodes. Known in some countries as Criminal Justice, the series was loosely based on the high-profile Pettingill family and the Walsh Street police shootings. The series follows the prosecution of a family of organized crime mobsters known as the Hennesseys. The storyline is told through the family members, the police, barristers, prosecutors and judges to give a nuanced picture of the plot and characters.

### Underbelly

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Another drama inspired by real-life events, *Underbelly* takes its cue from the 1995–2004 Gangland War in Melbourne. Based on the book, “Leadbelly: Inside Australia’s Underworld,” the series follows the important members of Melbourne’s underground world of organized crime. [The Underbelly TV series](#)

is one of the most critically acclaimed and watched crime dramas ever produced in Australia, although it has received a fair amount of criticism for what some see as a glorification of crime and violence.

### **Blue Murder**

A two-part miniseries produced and aired in 1995, [Blue Murder](#) is also based on true events. Set in the 1970s and 1980s, the often graphic and violent miniseries follows the complicated relationship of former Detective Roger “The Dodger” Rogerson and criminal mastermind Arthur “Neddy” Smith. Rogerson and some of his co-workers stood accused of allowing Smith to commit crimes without police interference, which led to a corruption investigation that lasted for years. Both Rogerson and Smith attained a somewhat celebrity status as the corruption case unfolded, which led to the making of the miniseries.

### **Prisoner**

An Australian soap opera also known as *Prisoner: Cell Block H*, [Prisoner](#) ran from 1979 through 1986 for almost 700 episodes after only being commissioned for 16. Inspired by a British TV drama, *Prisoner* follows the lives of the women in the Wentworth Detention Centre, most notably Karen Travers and Lynn Warner — one convicted of murdering her husband and the other convicted of the kidnapping and attempted murder of a child. Both women find themselves in the prison’s maximum security wing, and the storyline follows their difficult adjustment to the culture of violence there.

### **Rake**

Having just finished up its third — and most likely — final season, [Rake](#) follows the daily life of a clever and self-destructive barrister who spends the vast majority of his time defending guilty clients. The show focuses on the ethical obligations of those who work for law and justice, while also shining a light on the complicated relationship between barristers and those for whom they work. A critical and popular success, the Fox Network in the U.S. commissioned an American version, which aired this past January.

### **Blue Heelers**

Situated in a small, fictional town called Mount Thomas, [Blue Heelers](#) follows the lives and

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work of a group of police officers. The show was on the air from 1994–2006, and every episode presented the day's work from the perspective of the officers themselves, as opposed to the criminals, barristers, and others with whom they regularly interacted. From small problems like land disputes to homicides and kidnappings, the police work in the small town of Mount Thomas was almost mandatory viewing by the television-watching public in Australia.

Australian crime television tells many stories from many differing points of view. Whether it's from the perspective of organized crime, female prisoners, or the daily life of a small town police officer, watch any one of these seven excellent TV series for a closer and more intimate look into the world of Australian crime.