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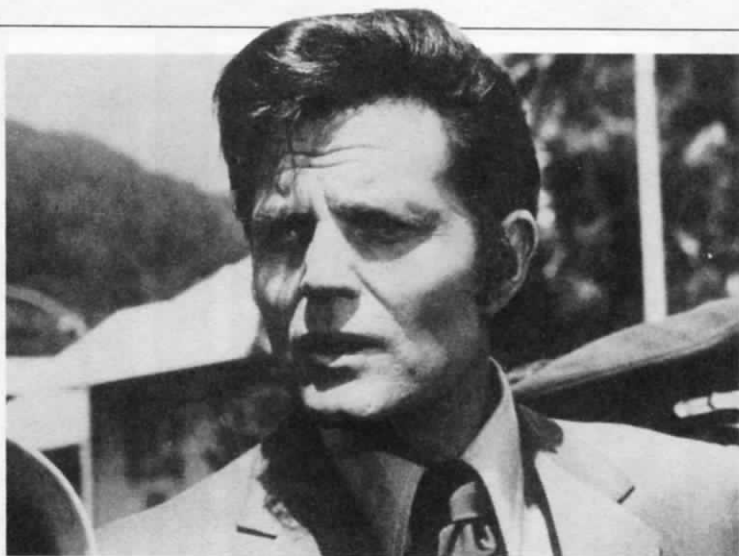
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PRIVATE EYES

1. The Rockford Files
2. Harry-O
3. Peter Gunn
4. City of Angels
5. Tenspeed and Brown Shoe
6. Perry Mason
7. Magnum, P.I.
8. Richie Brockelman, Private Eye
9. 77 Sunset Strip
10. Mannix

POLICE PROCEDURALS

1. Hill Street Blues
2. Dragnet
3. Naked City
4. Columbo
5. Police Story
6. The Untouchables
7. Crime Story
8. Kojak
9. Cagney & Lacey
10. Baretta



SCOREBOARD



AMATEUR SLEUTHS

1. Lord Peter Wimsey
2. Ellery Queen
3. Kolchak: The Night Stalker
4. Murder, She Wrote
5. The Saint

COMEDY CRIMEFIGHTERS

1. Rumpole of the Bailey
2. Barney Miller
3. Police Squad
4. Batman
5. Car 54, Where Are You?



T H E A U T H O R S

MAX ALLAN COLLINS is the author of the critically acclaimed "Nathan Heller" historical detective novels, which include *True Detective* (1983), winner of The Private Eye Writers of America "Shamus" for best novel, *True Crime* (1984), *The Million-Dollar Wound* (1986), and *Neon Mirage* (1988). He is also the author of three other popular suspense series, "Nolan," "Quarry," and "Mallory," as well as a new series of historical detective novels about real-life "Untouchable" Eliot Ness.

Collins is the TV and movie columnist for *Mystery Scene* magazine, and has co-authored (with James L. Traylor) the Edgar-nominated *One Lonely Knight: Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer*. Since 1977, he has scripted the internationally syndicated "Dick Tracy" comic strip, taking over for Tracy creator Chester Gould; and is co-creator (with artist Terry Beatty) of several comic-book features, including "Ms. Tree" and "Wild Dog." He was the regular writer of the "Batman" comic book in 1987.

A former newspaper reporter and college instructor, Collins has also performed with rock groups for over twenty years as a singer, keyboard player, and songwriter; currently, in what he claims is his "spare time," he appears with *Crusin'*, a rock band specializing in classic rock and roll. Collins lives in Muscatine, Iowa, with his wife, Barbara, and their son, Nathan.

JOHN JAVNA is the author of over a dozen books about American popular culture, including *60s!*, *Cult TV*, *The TV Theme Song Sing-Along Songbook* (Volumes I & II), *Behind*

the Hits, *The Doo-Wop Sing-Along Songbook*, and the first two volumes in this series: *The Best of Science Fiction TV*, and *The Best of TV Sitcoms*.

He has been writing since 1983; prior to that, he traveled the U.S. as a street musician, was caretaker of an Oregon gold mine, sold helium balloons in Ann Arbor, Michigan, went to school every once in awhile, and owned a dollhouse factory

in Montpelier, Vermont.

He is currently the owner of *Javnarama*, a book-packaging company whose forthcoming volumes include: *Prime Time Proverbs*, the definitive book of TV quotations; *I Won't Grow Up*, an adult's guide to child's play; *Weird Weekends*; *How to Get Involved*, and several more, including the fourth volume in the Critics' Choice series, *The Best of TV Westerns*.



The authors at work on *The Best of Crime and Detective TV*.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

From the earliest days of television, when DuMont was a network and Uncle Miltie was a household name, the mystery story has had a home on the tube. No popular genre speaks to the basic concerns of all human beings like the mystery: violence and sex; death and romance; crime and punishment; puzzles and solutions; troublemakers and problem solvers.

We use the term *mystery*, incidentally, in its broadest sense—much the way booksellers do in their *Mystery* sections. Any tale with strong elements of crime and/or suspense and/or detection qualifies, loosely, as a “mystery”; a “whodunit” aspect need not be present—although it often is. Our focus here is mysteries that feature detectives, whether professional or amateur.

In most cases, the filmed mystery doesn't require the elaborate production values inherent in, for example, westerns, war stories, or science fiction. Perfect for early TV.

You won't find much early TV in this book, however. With apologies to enthusiasts of such vintage favorites as “Martin Kane,” “Rocky King,” and “Gangbusters,” we are focusing for the most part on shows from the late fifties onward. Many of the earlier shows, particularly those done live, are essentially lost. The authors (and probably most of our readers) have only the vaguest memories of them.

And frankly, a lot of the early shows were pretty poor. The mystery was a popular form on radio, and many of the first mystery TV shows were ungainly transplants from, or imitations of, popular private-eye and police radio shows. As popular art, the first few years of episodic



Are they gangsters or TV producers? Thugs strike it rich on “The Asphalt Jungle,” a 1961 crime show.

TV hold up about as well as the first several years of talkies. Which is to say, not at all well.

Few of these earliest mystery shows are still in syndication (some never were). Some vintage shows are available on videotape from dealers in such esoterica; but for the most part, we felt it best to stick with programs that are either in syndication or are of a vintage recent enough to remain distinct in our collective memory.

Of course there are exceptions. “Dragnet” is a relatively early show, and it gets in-depth treatment here, as well it should. “Dragnet” marks the point

where episodic TV—not just the mystery—began to grow up. Thanks to stylish (and much-maligned) director Jack Webb, “Dragnet” forced other TV programs to consider their melodramatic radio roots and confront more adult subject matter.

We do have a little information on early shows, and scores of mystery series will be given space here. But not *every* mystery show—we do not pretend to be the definitive volume on the subject. We are here to have a good time—to praise some shows, to bury others, and damn near ignore some that we don't care for.

INTRODUCTION

Some series are obviously among the best crime and detective shows that TV ever had to offer: "The Rockford Files," "Hill Street Blues," "Barney Miller," and "Dragnet" were in the no-contest area. And there were shows we weren't wild about, but which are so popular with critics and/or the public that they, too, could not be ignored—among these are "Cagney & Lacey," "Magnum, P.I.," and "Mannix."

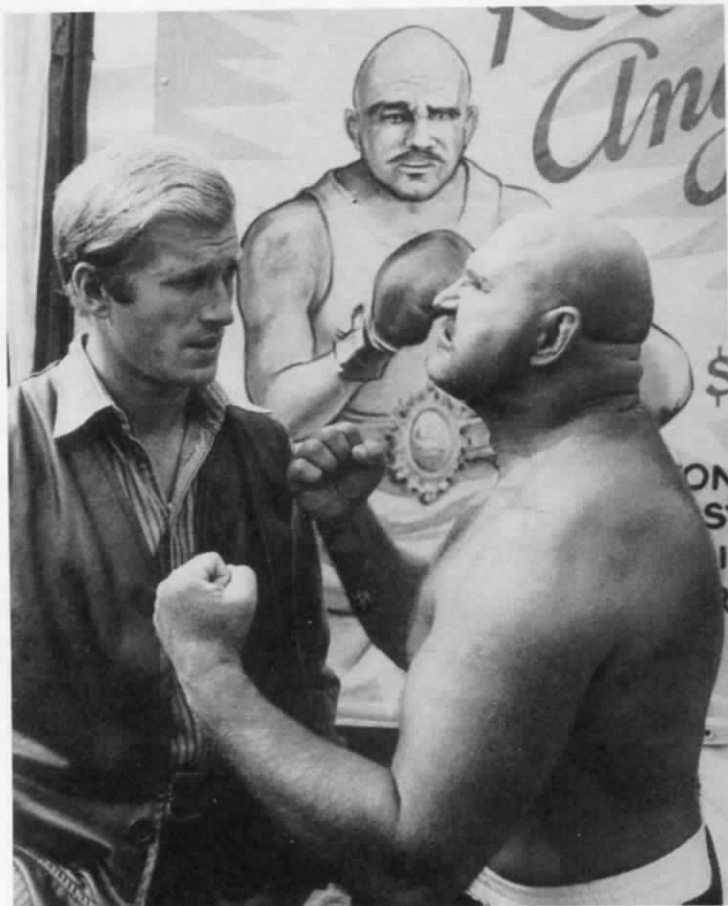
Also there were a few relatively obscure shows that the au-

thors loved and felt were worthy of being showcased. Among these are "Richie Brockelman, Private Eye," "Crime Story," "City of Angels," and "Tenspeed and Brown Shoe." Among extremely popular shows we found too repellent to discuss in depth were "Hawaii Five-0" and "The F.B.I."

Finally, the categories had to be considered. Here is some of what we left out, perhaps to be covered in a sequel: spies (hence neither "The Avengers" nor "Get Smart" are in this



Lloyd Bridges starred briefly in "Joe Forrester," a 1975 series about a cop on the beat.



Ken Howard (left) faces H. G. Haggerty in an episode of "Manhunter."

book—damnit); lawyers (though Perry Mason sneaks in on Paul Drake's coattails, Rumpole crashes the party, and a few legal lights get some passing glances); reporters (so "Lou Grant" isn't here, although Carl Kolchak is); anthologies (hence no "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," although "Police Story" is included because it focused on one police department with occasional recurring characters).

And a lot of other crime-oriented shows aren't represented, because what we finally decided to focus on were Private Eyes, Police Procedurals, Amateur Sleuths, and Comedy Crimefighters.

As specific as these categories are, there is much within them that may seem arbitrary to you. And if you wonder how exactly we arrived at such dubious distinctions as deeming "Tenspeed and Brown Shoe" a serious show, and "Rumpole of the Bailey" a comedy, well, that's a conundrum we'll leave for you to ponder.

After all—what would life be without a little mystery?

JUST THE OPINIONS, MA'AM

The ranking of the shows within the categories in this book is based upon the results of a poll taken among mystery fans, mystery writers, and TV critics. A ballot was published in *Mystery Scene*, the news magazine of the mystery and horror field, and both fans and professionals were invited to participate; later, a slightly revised ballot was mailed to a select group of prominent mystery writers and critics. Those participating were encouraged to make write-in selections and express dissenting opinions.

Not every show was voted upon by every participant in the poll; many chose to ignore those shows they were unfamiliar with and/or disliked. (Donald E. Westlake, for example, crossed out all the private eye shows save "Rockford," which he marked "1 through 10," while Elmore Leonard voted for no P.I. shows at all.) "The Rockford Files" came the closest to garnering a vote on every ballot. The most popular shows overall were "Rockford," "Rumpole of the Bailey," and "Barney Miller." The shows liked least were "Mannix," "Baretta," and "Cagney & Lacey" (against which there was a considerable backlash).

For the most part, however, the majority of voters liked most of these shows. The amateur sleuth category was so close it could be termed a virtual five-way tie for first place—and nearly the same was true for the comedies. In the other catego-

ries, two shows lead the pack ("Rockford" and "Harry-O" in private eye, "Hill Street Blues" and "Dragnet" among the cops) with a show or two 'way at the bottom ("Mannix" was a mostly unloved P.I., while "Cagney & Lacey" were little-liked cops) and all the other shows were bunched in the middle in a virtual dead heat.

But we should note that every show in each category received some first- or second- or third-place votes; in fact, only a handful of shows did not receive any first-place votes.

And while this poll may not be scientific, it is probably more accurate than your average Nielson ratings book or Hite Report on human sexuality.

Here is a partial list of individuals who either voted in the poll or contributed their comments; our sincere thanks to all of the participants:

MYSTERY WRITERS

- **Michael Avallone**, prolific creator of private eye Ed Noon (who had a black secretary long before Mannix), author of *The Tall Dolores* and others.
- **Linda Barnes**, award-winning mystery novelist, creator of the Michael Sprague mysteries, author of *A Trouble of Fools*
- **Paul Bishop**, novelist, critic, and L.A. cop
- **Lawrence Block**, award-winning novelist and short-story writer; author of *Eight Million Ways to Die*
- **Jon L. Breen**, Edgar-winning critic and scholar, mystery novelist, author of *Listen to the Click*
- **Mary Higgins Clark**, best-



Burt Reynolds starred as a cop in "Dan August" from 1970 to 1975.

selling novelist, author of *Where Are the Children?* and *A Stranger Is Watching*

- **Max Allan Collins**, author of *True Crime*, *True Detective*, and many others
- **Bill Crider**, award-winning mystery novelist, critic, author of *Shotgun Saturday Night*
- **William L. DeAndrea**, two-time Edgar-winning novelist, author of *Killed in the Ratings* and many others
- **Gene DeWeese**, author of *The Dandelion Caper*, *Adventures of a Two-Minute Werewolf*, and others
- **Wayne Dundee**, author of *The Burning Season*, the Joe Hannibal stories, editor of *Hardboiled* magazine
- **Jack Early**, acclaimed, award-winning novelist, author of *Donato and Son*
- **Loren Estelman**, award-winning author of twenty-eight books, including *Bloody Season* and *Sugartown*.
- **Joe Gores**, award-winning novelist and short-story writer; author of *Hammett*, screenwriter
- **Ed Gorman**, editor of *Mystery Scene* magazine; novelist, author of *The Autumn Dead*
- **Andrew Greeley**, best-selling novelist, theologian, critic, author of the Father Blackie Ryan

THE POLL



mysteries

- **Jeremiah Healy**, award-winning mystery novelist, attorney, author of *So Like Sleep*, creator of the John Francis Cuddy mysteries
- **Joe L. Hensley**, acclaimed novelist, short story writer and judge; author of *Robak's Law*
- **Edward D. Hoch**, award-winning novelist, prolific and respected short story writer, critic
- **Stuart M. Kaminsky**, novelist, screenwriter, critic, and professor of film and television; creator of the Toby Peters mysteries and screenwriter of *Once Upon a Time in America*
- **Stephen King**, best-selling horror novelist, author of *Carrie* and *The Stand*; author of the critical work *Danse Macabre*
- **Elmore Leonard**, best-selling and award-winning novelist and screenwriter; dean of American crime fiction practitioners
- **Richard J. Lupoff**, author of *Circumpolar!*, *Countersolar*, *The Forever City*, and others
- **John Lutz**, award-winning novelist and short-story writer; author of *Scorcher*, creator of the Alo Nudger mysteries
- **Malcolm K. McClintick**, novelist and short-story writer, author of *Mary's Grave* and *Key*
- **Richard Meyers**, novelist and critic, author of the Edgar-

nominated *TV Detectives* and the forthcoming *Murder On The Air*

- **David Morrell**, best-selling novelist, critic, and teacher; author of *Brotherhood of the Rose*, creator of Rambo (in his novel, *First Blood*)
- **Warren Murphy**, author of one hundred books, including the Destroyer series, the award-winning *Grandmaster* (with his wife, Molly Cochran) and Trace series, and *Ceiling of Hell*
- **Sara Paretsky**, acclaimed novelist, creator of the V. I. Warshawski mysteries
- **Otto Penzler**, Edgar-winning critic and anthologist; editor/publisher of the Mysterious Press and owner of the Mysterious Book Shop in Manhattan
- **Robert J. Randisi**, founder and executive director of the Private Eye Writers of America, author of *The Disappearance of Penny*, *The Steinway Collection*, *No Exit from Brooklyn*, and others
- **Ben Schutz**, award-winning novelist, author of *All the Old Bargains*, creator of the Leo Haggarty mysteries
- **Bob Shayne**, screenwriter whose credits include scripts for "Magnum, P.I." and "Simon and Simon"; producer and writer of 1987 TV movie *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*
- **Mickey Spillane**, best-selling novelist, creator of Mike Hammer; author of *I, the Jury* and *Kiss Me, Deadly*
- **David Schow**, TV historian and novelist, author of *The Killing Riff* and *The Official Outer Limits Companion*
- **Andrew Vachss**, attorney, acclaimed author of *Flood and Strega*
- **Donald E. Westlake**, award-winning mystery novelist, screenwriter, and critic; author of *The Hot Rock* and (as Richard

Stark) *Point Blank (The Hunter)*

TV CRITICS

- **Yardena Arar**, TV critic, *Los Angeles Daily News*
- **Greg Bailey**, TV critic, *Nashville Banner*
- **Ed Bark**, TV critic, *Dallas Morning News*
- **Bob Blakey**, TV critic, *Calgary Herald*
- **Andee Beck**, TV critic, *Tacoma News Tribune*
- **Walt Belcher**, TV critic, *Tampa Tribune*
- **Robert Bianco**, TV critic, *Pittsburgh Press*
- **David Bianculli**, TV critic, *New York Post*
- **Jeff Borden**, TV critic, *Charlotte Observer*
- **John Carman**, TV critic, *San Francisco Chronicle*
- **David Cuthbert**, TV editor, *New Orleans Times-Picayune*
- **Michael Dougan**, TV critic, *San Francisco Examiner*
- **Rick Du Brow**, TV editor, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*
- **Duane Dudek**, TV/film editor, *Milwaukee Sentinel*
- **Michael Duffy**, TV critic, *Detroit Free Press*
- **Douglas Durden**, TV critic, *Richmond Times Dispatch*
- **Jeff Edwards**, TV critic,



George Kennedy played "The Blue Knight" from 1975 to 1976.

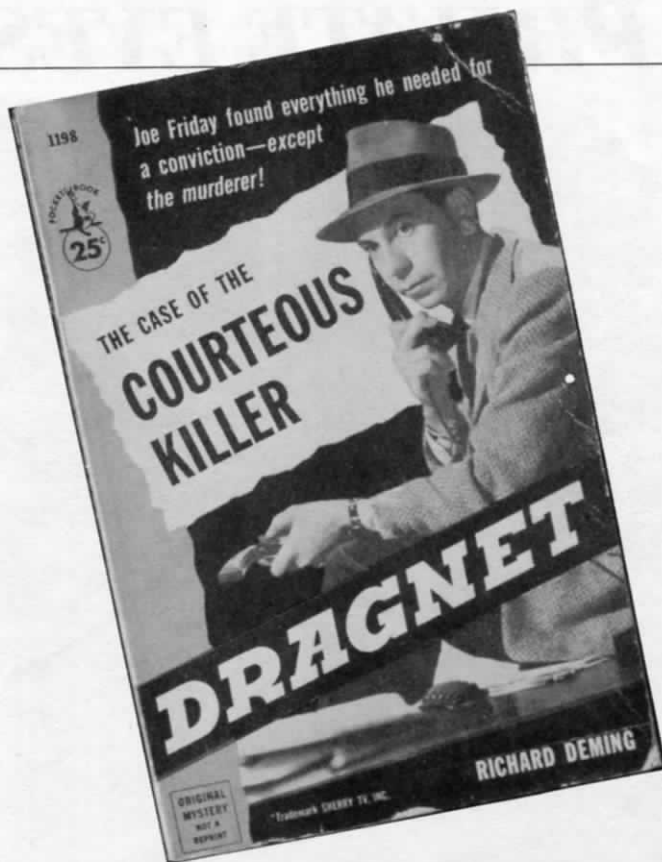
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Jackson Daily News

- **Peter Farrell**, TV columnist, *Oregonian*
- **Barry Garron**, TV/radio critic, *Kansas City Star*
- **Jim Gordon**, TV critic, *Gary Post-Tribune*
- **Marc Gunther**, TV critic, *Detroit News*
- **R. D. Heldenfels**, TV columnist, *Schenectady Gazette*
- **Michael Hill**, TV critic, *Baltimore Evening Sun*
- **Ken Hoffman**, TV critic, *Houston Post*
- **Barbara Holsopple**, TV critic, *Phoenix Gazette*
- **Tom Jicha**, TV editor, *Miami News*
- **John Keisewetter**, TV critic, *Cincinnati Enquirer*
- **Phil Kloer**, TV critic, *Atlanta Constitution*
- **Robert P. Laurence**, TV writer, *San Diego Union*
- **John Martin**, TV critic, *Providence Journal-Bulletin*
- **Wally Patrick**, TV critic, *Asbury Park Press*
- **Joel Pisetznier**, TV critic, *Bergen Record*
- **Dusty Saunders**, TV critic, *Rocky Mountain News*
- **Mark Schwed**, TV critic, *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*
- **Gene Seymour**, TV critic, *Philadelphia Daily News*
- **R. K. Shull**, TV critic, *Indianapolis News*
- **Steve Sonsky**, TV critic, *Miami Herald*
- **Joseph Walker**, TV critic, *Salt Lake City Deseret News*
- **Dennis Washburn**, TV critic, *Birmingham News*

GENERAL TV

- **Diane L. Albert**, editor, *The TV Collector* magazine



- **Peter Bieler**, president, Video Ticket Productions
- **Jim Davidson**, president, National Association for the Advancement of Perry Mason
- **Joel Eisner**, author of *The Batman Bat-Book*
- **Gordon Javna**, author of *Tough TV: The Television Guide to Your Mind, Calling All Monomaniacs*, co-author of *60s!*
- **John Javna**, author of *Cult TV, The TV Theme Song Sing-Along Songbooks (Volumes I and II)*, co-author of *60s!*, and more
- **Donna McCrohan**, TV historian, author of *The Honeymooners' Companion*, coauthor of *The Honeymooners' Last Episodes*, author of *The Second City: A Backstage History of Comedy's Hottest Troupe*
- **Jack Mingo**, author of *The Of-*

ficial Couch Potato Handbook and *The Couch Potato Guide to Life*

- **Lee Osborne**, The Rumpole Society
- **John Peel**, British author of more than eighty volumes of TV criticism; contributing editor to *TV Gold*
- **Walter J. Podrazik**, coauthor of seven books, including *Watching TV: Four Decades of American Television*, and *The TV Schedule Book* (a season-by-season schedule guide to the entire broadcast day)
- **Gene Sculatti**, author of *The Catalog of Cool*
- **Gregory Small**, editor, *TV Crime News*
- **Richard K. Tharp**, publisher, *RERUNS, The Magazine of Television History*