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Best crime dramas on Netflix: great detective series to watch

It'd be criminal to miss the best crime dramas and crime shows on Netflix.

By MARC CHACKSFIELD
11 September 2024

Whether you're into true crime, the fictional detectives of Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie or gangster tales, there's an enduring appeal to crime drama.

It's often about a mystery unfolding in front of your eyes. There's danger at every turn, but you can take it all in from the comfort of your sofa.

Netflix has had a big hand in making crime as popular as it is in recent years, especially in the field of true crime TV. However, today we're more interested in either purely fictional stories or the dramatised versions of real cases.

UPDATE: *The latest Netflix crime drama is the biggest classic mystery hit since Fool Me Once. The Perfect Couple focuses on a rich family in Nantucket, one preparing for the wedding of their son. But when a body shows up on the nearby beach on the day of the wedding, the big question becomes not "will they or won't they" but "who did it?" This show is primed for a binge. And as it's based on a book, you know you're getting a complete story in those six episodes. But, if you haven't guessed already, this one is on the trashier end of the scale.*

We've included plenty of high-class crime dramas, as well as the moreish binge watches that trade in twists rather than gritty realism.

The best bit: you don't have to wait for episodes to arrive. While we add new shows to the list below as they arrive, Netflix typically releases most seasons as a block, rather than drip-feeding those eps.

Few genres lend themselves so readily to binge-watching as crime, by virtue of the fact that there's a mystery to be solved and therefore a reason that you have to get to the end right now.

Here are some crime shows that should be eating up all your weekends for the foreseeable future.

Note:the following best crime dramas on Netflix are available in the UK - please check your region for availability.

Best Netflix crime dramas

1. Mindhunter

Stream now (Netflix)

This show has a novel premise, with two FBI agents from the bureau's Behavioral Science Unit interviewing a laundry list of real-life and well-known serial killers in order to try to find out what's going through their heads. We've already seen portrayals of the likes of Ed Kemper and Montie Rissell, while the upcoming second season is expected to introduce audiences to Charles Manson and, according to some rumours, David Berkowitz.

Image Credit: Netflix

1075 261

2. Breaking Bad

Stream now (Netflix)

Obviously. We're not going to berate you if you haven't seen it yet, but you know you've got a treat in store when you do get round to it, and that you're probably going to have to cancel all your plans until you've finished it.

More ways to watch: The Complete Series on DVD | Blu-ray | Digital Download

Image Credit: AMC

763 189

3. Ozark

Stream now (Netflix)

When the premise of Ozark was revealed - Jason Bateman and Laura Linney star as as a married couple who have to relocate their family to the Ozarks after a money laundering scheme goes awry - everyone thought the show was just going to be Breaking Bad lite, but after four seasons it is much more than that. Fantastic acting and bags of tension make this one of the best things on Netflix right now.

Ozark has now ended and the entire show is now streaming on Netflix.

Image Credit: Netflix

536 84

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Like Lillie's of Charleston
amazon

4. Peaky Blinders

Stream now (Netflix)

If Gangs of New York had a sequel and that sequel was set in Birmingham, this is what it would be. An absolute British triumph of television starring Cillian Murphy as crime boss Tommy Shelby as he runs the runs rackets post World War I with his flat-capped gang, The Peaky Blinders. Notable appearances from Sam Neill other big names couple together to make it one of the best things the BBC has made in years.

The sixth season of Peaky Blinders is now on Netflix and what an ending it is.

More ways to watch: Buy now on Amazon: DVD | Blu-ray | Digital download

Image Credit: Channel 4

556 144

5. Unbelievable

Stream now (Netflix)

Based on true events, the series follows a young woman (Kaitlyn Dever) accused of lying to the police about a rape, and two detectives (Toni Collette and Merritt Wever) who begin to find the truth as they investigate a spate of similar attacks. It's not the easiest watch and it will almost certainly make you cry and shout with frustration, but it's compelling storytelling of the treatment of sexual assault victims, with all twists and turns you expect from a true crime drama. There are eight episodes in total, each lasting approx. 50 minutes.

Image Credit: Netflix

479 90

6. The Sinner

Buy HD version on Amazon

The Sinner upends the classic crime show format by showing the bloody murder – and who did it – from the get-go. Instead, we spend a fascinating season investigating why the crime was committed in the first place. Jessica Biel and Bill Pullman put in totally pitch-perfect performances and we now have a second season to enjoy.

There are four seasons of The Sinner available to watch.

More ways to watch: Buy now on Amazon DVD | Digital download

Image Credit: Netflix

532 149

7. Better Call Saul

Buy HD version on Amazon

OK, so it might not have the same edge-of-your-seat discomfort as Breaking Bad but the televisual return of Saul Goodman surpasses its bedfellow in many ways. Charting the rise (ok, flatline) of Walter White's future lawyer from morally challenged good guy to hustlin' legal trickster, it's a modern classic in its own right. The show has ended now, so it's a perfect crime drama to get into right now.

Better Call Saul's final season is now streaming, with part one available now.

More ways to watch: Buy now on Amazon DVD | Digital download

Image Credit: AMC

482 111

8. Narcos

Buy HD version on Amazon

In its third thrilling season - with a separate Narcos: Mexico drama to boot - now is the perfect time to watch José Padilha's series about the rise of notorious drug kingpin Pablo Escobar. Filmed in Colombia and following Escobar's life from 1970 to 1992, there's plenty of action in this true-to-life account. The show even includes real archival footage of the era for an extra (frighteningly) realistic feel.

More ways to watch: Seasons 1 - 3 on DVD | Blu-ray

Image Credit: Netflix

404 101

9. Dark

Stream now (Netflix)

Dark quickly transcends the crime genre and morphs into a freaky, truly scary, brain-expanding exploration of time and space. But it keeps at its core a gripping mystery of kids that keep disappearing from a small town. Watch in German but with English subtitles – the English dubbing is a bit naff.

Image Credit: Netflix

389 125

10. Criminal: UK

Stream now (Netflix)

It may not have been out long but this Netflix Original is an instant hit. Set in within the four walls of an interrogation room, London investigators go after three suspects, each accused of some pretty horrific crimes. It's packed full of Britain's best including David Tennant, Hayley Atwell, Lee Ingleby (Luther, Line of Duty), Rochenda Sandall (Line of Duty, Bandersnatch) and playing the big boss Katherine Kelly. If three episodes isn't enough for you, there are nine more episodes set across France, Germany and Spain - each with different casts and storylines.

Image Credit: Idiotlamp Productions

328 114

11. The Stranger

Stream now (Netflix)

British crime drama is usually seen on the Beeb and ITV, so it's great to see Netflix try its had at Brit crime and this one is a corker. When a stranger enters the life of Adam Price, something is revealed about his wife that turns his life upside down. This is a twisty, turny thriller that gets a little confusing but is a lot of fun.

Image Credit: Netflix

305 121

12. Money Heist

Stream now (Netflix)

Originally set to be just a two-part series, this fevered Spanish crime thriller has ballooned into five parts on Netflix and 48 episodes. The plot is simple but very effective: the Professor has plans to pull off some of the most audacious heists in history, recruiting eight people to help him do this. It's fantastic fun and while the final season has now aired, a South Korean remake is happening soon.

Image Credit: Netflix

280 101

13. Don't F*Ck With Cats

Stream now (Netflix)

You don't want to miss this. It is one of the strangest tales to ever hit Netflix and is the true story of a cat killer and how trying to figure out who this person is, another huge revelation is revealed. We don't want to spoil this one, but if you want a compelling watch then this is for you.

Image Credit: Netflix

249 78

14. Safe

Stream now (Netflix)

Safe is a cracking British thriller with a stellar cast. Dexter's Michael C Hall is Tom a widowed surgeon who lives a peaceful life until his eldest daughter goes missing. Over the episodes we find out that the rich neighbourhood he lives in is not quite what is seems.

Image Credit: Netflix

277 107

15. Lupin

Stream now (Netflix)

Much like the BBC's Sherlock, Lupin is a masterful modern retelling of a classic literary great. The plot is fairly simple: Assane Diop is a thief that is out to avenge his father, after a wealthy family wrongs him. Diop uses racial prejudices help with his plans, as well as taking inspiration from French novelist Maurice Leblanc who created Arsène Lupin. If you after twists in your crime tales then this one is for you - it's utterly entertaining to watch.

10 episodes (set over two parts) are now available to watch on Netflix.

Image Credit: Netflix

222 52

16. The Valhalla Murders

Stream now (Netflix)

This one is super scary. The show focuses on police investigator Arnar who, living in Norway, heads back to his hometown of Iceland to help catch the country's first-ever serial killer. The cold backdrop is as much a character in the show as everyone else, with echoes of True Detective throughout. Superb stuff.

Image Credit: BBC4

143 26

17. How To Get Away With Murder

Stream now (Netflix)

There's 5 seasons of How To Get Away With Murder on Netflix. The sixth and final season has just concluded so we're hoping it'll head to Netflix soon. This is a great crime series focused on a law professor who, with five of her students, becomes involved in a murder plot. Yes, it's melodramatic and soapy at times but Viola Davis is just stunning as Annalise Keating, the ruthless lawyer.

Image Credit: Netflix

205 90

18. When They See US

Stream now (Netflix)

Co-written and directed by Ava DuVernay, When They See Us is a powerful dramatised account of the true story of five teens from Harlem who are falsely accused of a brutal attack in Central Park, New York. Over four episodes we see in detail how an accusation like this can change the lives of people, thanks to a flawed justice system.

Image Credit: Netflix

177 64

19. The Fall

Stream now (Netflix)

This is a fantastic character study of a serial killer who just happens to be one of the most handsome people on the planet! That's right, Jamie Dornan plays Paul Spector who uses Belfast as his killing ground. On his tail is Stella Gibson (Gillian Anderson), a detective who is brought in to solve the case.

Image Credit: BBC

117 15

20. Border Town

Stream now (Netflix)

Stephen King is a big fan of this one and we can see why. This superb Finnish drama features Detective inspector Kari Sorjonen who is autistic, taking on a Sherlock Holmes type role as he investigates goings on in the 'border town' of Lappeenranta in Finland. There are three series to binge-watch here and each season is a must for crime buffs.

Image Credit: Netflix

110 19

21. You

Stream now (Netflix)

Wow, this one is dark. This crime series centres on infatuation and how someone can seemingly be Mr Nice Guy to some people but completely different to others. While we can't give too much away (as it will spoil the fun), the focus here is on obsession and how, through social media and toxic relationships, things can get way out of control. This one of the most successful shows on Netflix right now and three seasons are streaming now.

Image Credit: Netflix

100 29

22. The Serpent

Stream now (Netflix)

The Serpent is a chilling true story about about a serial killer who preyed on backpackers in Thailand and the long process it took to get him recognised by the authorities. This one takes a little time to get going but definitely stick with it.

62 16

23. Giri / Haji

Stream now (Netflix)

This stunning crime thriller takes place both in London and Tokyo with Tokyo detective Kenzo Mori (Takehiro Hira) in London looking for those who apparently killed his brother, someone who got messed up with the Yakuza. The murder could cause an all-out war on the streets of Tokyo, so there is a lot at stake.

Image Credit: BBC

54 10

24. The Night Agent

Stream now (Netflix)

This show is arguably more of a political thriller than a classic crime drama. But crimes definitely happen and we wager a lot of you would enjoy The Night Agent, one of Netflix's biggest hits of 2023. A junior FBI agent gets embroiled in a conspiracy that reaches deep into the White House. Gabriel Basso stars, and by avoiding the classic convoluted plot of a conspiracy thriller, this show ends up being a pure shot of entertainment. A balm for tired mind.

47 3

25. Inventing Anna

Stream now (Netflix)

The newest crime drama on our list is one of the most jaw dropping. Inventing Anna is about a supposed heiress who took Instagram and the like by storm - the only thing is, she was conning New York elites out of their precious cash. This series sees the whole thing recalled, by Anna, to a journalist reporting on the story.

Image Credit: Netflix

55 14

26. Top Boy

Stream now (Netflix)

Set on the fictional Summerhouse Estate, this London-based drama is a gripping look at the political machinations of a council estate that's packed with dealers and crime. Top Boy is a fantastic show that was saved by both Netflix and, er, Drake who is a big fan of the show.

Image Credit: Netflix

45 12

27. The Alienist

Stream now (Netflix)

A fantastic cast and plot makes The Alienest a great watch. Set near the turns of the 20th Century in New York City's gilded age, it focuses on a psychologist on the track of a serial killer. Daniel Brühl is great as the psychologist while Dakota Fanning and Luke Evans team up with him to track down the murderer.

Image Credit: Netflix

46 13

28. The End Of The F***Ing World

Stream now (Netflix)

This is one of our favourite series on this list. The End Of The F***ing World is based on a series of comics and is a bleakly dark but brilliantly funny story about James (Alex Lawther), a teenager who thinks he might be a psychopath, and Alyssa (Jessica Barden), his classmate who is angry with the world. They go on something of a road trip and the results are marvellously macabre.

Image Credit: Channel 4

35 5

29. Orange Is The New Black

Buy HD version on Amazon

The US doesn't need John Oliver to discover the failings of its penal system for comedic fodder. In this 2017 documentary, Oliver takes a look at the American prison system through the experiences of Piper Kerman and her memoir about living for a year in a women's prison. The episodes just get better and better and now the show has concluded with season 7, there's no better time to catch up with it.

More ways to watch: Buy now from Amazon DVD | Blu-ray | HD Digital download

Image Credit: Netflix

29 107
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30. Pieces Of Her

Stream now (Netflix)

One of the twisiest crime dramas on this list, Pieces of Her stars the ever-excellent Toni Collette as a mum with a secret, which unravels when she is involved in a shooting at a diner. Each episode's antics will make your jaw drop, in a good way.

Image Credit: Netflix

28 8
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31. Good Girls

Stream now (Netflix)

Good Girls is a tale of crime in suburbia, where three mums decide to rob a grocery story to become financially independent. Although it was cancelled after four seasons this is still a great watch, with Christina Hendricks putting on another star turn and one that is some way from her Mad Men days.

Image Credit: Netflix

37 19
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32. Lucifer

Stream now (Netflix)

A classic high concept premise, here. Lucifer himself gets bored of Hell, and decides to come to Earth to help solve crimes instead. This is no hard-hitting true crime show, but its combo of campy fantastical elements and a charming performance by Tom Ellis makes Lucifer monish, and has attracted a large and very dedicated following.

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33. Dirty John

Stream now (Netflix)

Dirty John has a great concept. Based on the successful podcast of the same name, it's an anthology series focusing on a different 'John' in each season. So far there are two seasons and a stunning cast list, which includes: Eric Bana, Connie Britton and Juno Temp in the first season; Amanda Peet, Christian Slater and Rachel Keller in the second.

Image Credit: Universal

23 6
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34. DAHMER - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story

Stream now (Netflix)

This isn't for everyone and the showcasing of a true-life serial killer for entertainment is always questionable, but DAHMER - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story has such a stunning central performance by Evan Peters that you can't help be but captivated by this episodic look at the vile crimes of America's infamous cannibal.

Image Credit: Netflix

24 9
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35. Fool Me Once

Stream now (Netflix)

This is a great example of a show it's hard not to binge. The eight episodes flow like wine, with twists coming in thick and fast, making it hard not to just jump onto the next ep. Fool Me Once is a Harlan Coben novel adaptation. Maya Stern is grieving the death her husband, but her life unravels when she sees him in her living room. This is no TV show is not a masterpiece, it sure is riveting if you find yourself pulled along by its threads.

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36. The Gentlemen

Stream now (Netflix)

Guy Ritchie is back to his old tricks. The Gentlemen is a TV show spin-off of the 2019 movie of the same name. It's packed with violence, swearing, drugs and, of course, comedy. Eddie Hatchard inherits a massive estate only to find out there's a drug operation running on the grounds. If you like Ritchie's classic films like Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels, get this one on your watch list. It also features long-time Ritchie collaborator Vinnie Jones.

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37. Clark

Stream now (Netflix)

This one has gone under the radar a little but you really should seek it out. Clark is a 'you won't believe it's true' tale, the always excellent Bill Skarsgård who is a career criminal with a penchant for bank robberies. If you have ever heard of Stockholm Syndrome, then it's a term that comes from one of his big robberies. This six-part series is directed by music director supremo Jonas Akerlund and it's pretty shocking in places but it is a riveting watch.

Image Credit: Netflix

9 4
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38. Aquarius

Stream now (Netflix)

While it was cancelled after two seasons, we have a lot of love for Aquarius. It's a detective show starring David Duchovny and focuses on the weirdness surrounding Charles Manson as he turns from petty crook to cult leader.

Image Credit: NBC

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39. Dear Child

A missing person case that is 13 years old is reopened when a mother and child who have spent years in captivity are found following a hit and-run incident. This is a twisty, and at times harrowing thriller, a digestible 6-part series. Dear Child is a German show, so you do have to be game for subtitles. But this is worth the effort.

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40. Money Heist: Korea - Joint Economic Area

Stream now (Netflix)

Money Heist: Korea - Joint Economic Area is a fantastic spin-off to the Money Heist franchise, focusing on a heist in Korea which is inspired by what happened in Spain. While it doesn't quite retain the same stickiness of the main show, it's a great setting for a heist.

Image Credit: Netflix

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41. Bodies

Stream now (Netflix)

Bodies takes elements of the police procedural and wraps them up in a sci-fi premise. There's a murder, but it occurs in four time periods. The same murder, in 1890, 1941, 2023 and 2053, all in London. We follow each investigation, but there's obviously a deeper mystery here to be uncovered. Its grand ideas have even caused comparisons to Christopher Nolan movies. And, sure, Bodies isn't all that level but is still a compelling watch.

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42. Monster

Stream now (Netflix)

The plot for Monster is superb: "A brilliant Japanese neurosurgeon is drawn into darkness when he tries to solve a series of murders involving a patient whose life he once saved." But it also doesn't do justice to just how great a character study this show is, as well as how cinematic the show is. This is based on one of the greatest Anime of all time and we doesn't match the heights of the comic, the episodes are still superb.

Image Credit: Madhouse

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43. Eric

Stream now (Netflix)

Benedict Cumberbatch stars as Vincent in Eric, an unusual crime drama in which a fictional 70's-ish monster is the key to Vincent finding his lost son. He is a puppeteer for a Sesame Street-like show, a troubled person who goes off the rails when his son disappears. The show is set in a grimy 1980s New York, a city full of crime and poverty.

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44. Griselda

Stream now (Netflix)

Griselda Blanco was a real-life drug lord, bringing Colombian cocaine to the streets of Miami in the 1970s. This show isn't based on the real story, charts her heyday as a ruthless, cocaine-fuelled, gun-toting, Miami-based mobster. The show follows the abused housewife to the "Cocaine Godmother" of Miami. Sofia Vergara stars as Blanco. There's an argument the show makes a monster appear too likeable, but it is a fun watch.

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45. The Perfect Couple

Stream now (Netflix)

This six-part series is based on a novel by beach read author Elon Hilderbrand. Like twists, turns and intrigue? It's one for you. The Perfect Couple stars Nicole Kidman and Liev Schreiber as the parents of a rich and opulent family living in the US island paradise of Nantucket. They are preparing for a wedding, of their son, but it's thrown into chaos when the body of one of the wedding party is discovered on the beach. But who killed her.

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46. Copenhagen Cowboy

Stream now (Netflix)

Nicolas Winding Refn is one of the most divisive directors around but we love everything about his style, and reckon he's made another mini masterpiece with Copenhagen Cowboy. Here he dabbles into the supernatural with his tale of a young woman who is seen as a lucky charm by various dodgy folk of the underworld. While the plot is sometimes difficult to follow, give your eyes to the treat they deserve and let them bathe in the, free-flowing imagery.

Image Credit: Netflix

4 4
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47. Kin

Stream now (Netflix)

A crime family goes to war with a Dublin gang in Kin, a show that mines all the classic tropes and themes of crime drama. It's tense and powerful, and sees two crime bosses go head to head. They are played by Aidan Gillen and Ciaran Hinds, while Charlie Cox plays the nephew of one of the crime bosses, just released from prison and struggling to get back into civilian life.

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48. White Lines

Stream now (Netflix)

White Lines escalates to a point where you'll probably start laughing at its audacity, but it's a fun watch about criminal goings on in Ibiza. It's made by the same creator of Money Heist, so if you like that show style then you are going to be right at home here.

Image Credit: Netflix

128 119
↑ ↓

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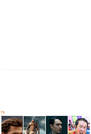

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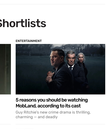

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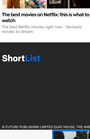

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