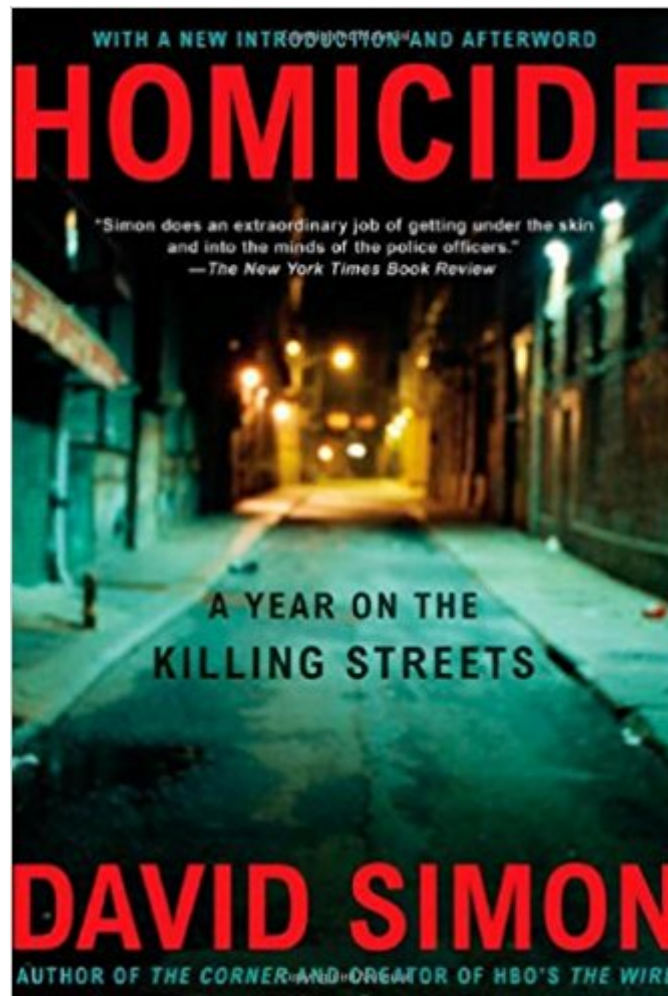




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# Homicide: A Year On The Killing Streets



## Synopsis

From the creator of HBO's *The Wire*, the classic book about homicide investigation that became the basis for the hit television show. The scene is Baltimore. Twice every three days another citizen is shot, stabbed, or bludgeoned to death. At the center of this hurricane of crime is the city's homicide unit, a small brotherhood of hard men who fight for whatever justice is possible in a deadly world. David Simon was the first reporter ever to gain unlimited access to a homicide unit, and this electrifying book tells the true story of a year on the violent streets of an American city. The narrative follows Donald Worden, a veteran investigator; Harry Edgerton, a black detective in a mostly white unit; and Tom Pellegrini, an earnest rookie who takes on the year's most difficult case, the brutal rape and murder of an eleven-year-old girl. Originally published fifteen years ago, *Homicide* became the basis for the acclaimed television show of the same name. This new edition—which includes a new introduction, an afterword, and photographs—revives this classic, riveting tale about the men who work on the dark side of the American experience.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This 1992 Edgar Award winner for best fact crime is nothing short of a classic. David Simon, a police reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, spent the year 1988 with three homicide squads, accompanying them through all the grim and grisly moments of their work--from first telephone call to final piece of paperwork. The picture that emerges through a masterful accumulation of details is that homicide detectives are a rare breed who seem to thrive on coffee, cigarettes, and persistence,

through an endlessly exhausting parade of murder scenes. As the Washington Post writes, "We seem to have an insatiable appetite for police stories.... David Simon's entry is far and away the best, the most readable, the most reliable and relentless of them all.... An eye for the scenes of slaughter and pursuit and an ear for the cadences of cop talk, both business and banter, lend Simon's account the fascination that truth often has." --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

Baltimore Sun reporter Simon spent a year tracking the homicide unit of his city's police, following the officers from crime scenes to interrogations to hospital emergency rooms. With empathy, psychological nuance, racy verbatim dialogue and razor-sharp prose, he offers a rare insider's look at the detective's tension-wracked world. Presiding over a score of sleuths is commander Gary D'Addario, "connoisseur of survival" who grapples with political intrigue, massive red tape and "red balls" (major, difficult cases). His detectives include Tom Pelligrini, obsessed with solving the rape-murder of an 11-year-old girl; Rich Garvey, whose "perfect year" is upset by a murder case that collapses in court; and black, cosmopolitan Harry Edgerton, a lone wolf, son of a jazz pianist. This hectic daily log reveals the detective's beat on Baltimore's mean streets (234 murders in 1988) to be brutal, bureaucratic and, occasionally, mundane. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Audio Cassette edition.

In the opening scene of the classic HBO series "The Wire" a Baltimore homicide detective interviews the witness to a seemingly senseless murder of a teenager in the street and wants to know why the victim's street name was "Snot Boogie" and why he was shot. Reading "The Wire" producer David Simon's journal of a year spent with the Baltimore homicide department when he was a crime reporter for the Baltimore Sun, I was certain that scene was so real it had to be in the book somewhere. And it was, toward the end. Simon was attuned to life on the gritty, city streets of Baltimore with an ear for the argot unlike any other producer of a TV crime show or crime writer. It showed in the TV series "Homicide: Life on the Streets," "The Corner," and lastly his masterpiece, "The Wire," and it shows in this pull-no-punches book. The senseless killings, the frustration of the detectives when confronted with a stone-cold "who-dun-it" they knew would never get solved, the anger when obviously guilty people they had arrested went free after trial ... it's all here, and more. As I read this book, I could see the models for the characters who appeared in the TV shows (I didn't even need to see the photos of the actors playing these models to figure out who they were) being developed. It isn't easy to make non-fiction a gripping read, but David Simon makes it look easy.

As a huge fan of *The Wire* (I've watched the series through at least 5 times), I can't believe I only read this just now. This book is probably my favorite narrative nonfiction book of all time now, along with *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. It is written much like a novel, with engaging stories and characters throughout. The best part is that, like real life, not all of the storylines get neatly tied off in a bow. Just like life, politics dictates that resources are shifted from one case that has gone cold to the next hot case. The bits about interrogation are also amazing, tackling interview techniques used by cops, discussion around Miranda warnings and the 5th Amendment, and how cops have to work around these limitations. Really awesome stuff. If you have ever been interested in *Law & Order*, *The Wire*, *Radley Balko*, or issues of police brutality or effectiveness, or if you have ever lived in an American city, or in America, I consider this a must-read. Do it!

Second time reading this book. Very well written and captures the futility of what modern police departments fight against on a daily basis. The "politics" of law enforcement is explained in terms of public perception and internal police perception especially when the public (media) grabs something and turns it into a circus. The detectives come across as real people with personalities and imperfections just like the rest of us. The book recounts a year during the 1980s and there is some follow-up material which helps close out some of the individual stories. I would highly recommend this book for those highly critical folks that assume the everything a cop does is done out of malice or hate. It brings a sense of everyday realism to the job that few other books can claim.

This book honestly should be required reading. Too often citizens do not know what the police have to deal with on a daily basis, or have unreasonable expectations on what constitutes evidence. We watch *CSI*, *Law and Order*, *NCIS*, and other procedurals and the guilt of a suspect is without a doubt. There is the proverbial smoking gun. And yet homicide detectives have to piece together cases and find suspects based on intuition, luck, and good old fashioned detective work. Those who earn their living solving homicides routinely see the dark side of humanity, and there often is no happy ending. No reckoning. No justice for the guilty. This is a hard life for those who protect the citizens and try to bring murderers to justice. If you like police procedurals, then this is the holy bible of police procedurals, out of the mouths of Baltimore's finest.

This is an excellent book! The characters in it are engaging. The dialogue is wonderful. And the situations are both scary and amazing: amazing in how so stupid some people are and how little it

takes for someone to kill someone else, scary because it is all true. In case you weren't aware of that, this book is actually the story of one of Baltimore's homicide units in 1988. Simon went around with the detectives for the entire year and have put their stories down in this book. At times it is quite sad to read about the brutal atrocities that people are committing against each other. At times it is satisfying to read about the detectives tracking down or lucking in to catching those responsible for the many deaths. But it is always engrossing and fascinating to follow the process and the people involved in one of the uglier jobs possible. This book is a must for any fan of police stories, criminal investigations or anything related to law and order. And in case you further didn't realize it, this book was the basis for the tv show of the same name. It makes the show even scarier to know that not only is it based on real life, but many of the stories from the show are taken straight out of the book. If you were a fan of the show, you will easily recognize many of the exact same cases here in the book. (Or rather vice versa since the book was first.) Easily one of the best books that I've read in a while!

The Wire and Homicide are about people, good, bad and in between. It is their humanity that makes Simon's writing so interesting. Homicide is a fairly long book, but I could not put it down. Highly recommended! Watch the HBO series The Wire to see many of the real people in the book portrayed.

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