

= The Long Bright Dark =

" The Long Bright Dark " is the series premiere of the anthology crime drama True Detective , which initially aired on HBO in the United States on January 12 , 2014 . It was directed by executive producer Cary Joji Fukunaga and written by series creator Nic Pizzolatto . The episode introduces a pair of Louisiana State Police homicide detectives , Rustin " Rust " Cohle (Matthew McConaughey) and Martin " Marty " Hart (Woody Harrelson) , as well as series regulars played by Michelle Monaghan , Michael Potts , and Tory Kittles . In " The Long Bright Dark " , Martin and Rustin are forced to recount the history of the Dora Lange murder investigation as new evidence suggests the perpetrator remains at large .

Pizzolatto began writing True Detective as a novel , but , as the project began taking definite form , felt it was more suitable for television . Principal photography was initially scheduled to take place in Arkansas ; however , Louisiana was ultimately preferred for its generous statewide tax incentives and unique landscape . " The Long Bright Dark " was shot entirely in 35 mm film and filming for the season lasted for 100 consecutive days .

Most press reviews for " The Long Bright Dark " were very positive , although some reviewers criticized the dialogue and other aspects of the program . Critics that held the episode in high regard applauded its complex narrative and sleek production , and there was a surfeit of praise for the performances of McConaughey and Harrelson . The initial broadcast of " The Long Bright Dark " drew 2 @. @ 3 million viewers , becoming HBO 's highest rated series premiere since the pilot episode of Boardwalk Empire .

= = Plot = =

= = = 2012 = = =

The episode opens with Martin " Marty " Hart (Woody Harrelson) , a homicide detective of the Louisiana State Police 's Criminal Investigations Division , beginning an interview with detectives Maynard Gilbough (Michael Potts) and Thomas Papania (Tory Kittles) . His former partner , Detective Rustin " Rust " Cohle (Matthew McConaughey) , is being questioned separately ; they have not seen nor spoken to each other since an altercation over a decade ago . The two men are asked to recount their relationship and the history of the Dora Lange murder investigation of 1995 , the files of which were destroyed in Hurricane Rita . Martin and Rustin claim to have apprehended the killer , but the crime scene of a recently slain woman is found to closely mirror the Dora Lange murder scene , leading investigators to believe that the perpetrator is still at large .

= = = 1995 = = =

Martin and Rustin are summoned to Vermillion Parish to examine the murder scene of a young prostitute , 28 @- @ year @- @ old Dora Lange . The woman 's corpse , crowned with deer antlers and bound to a tree in a kneeling position , is surrounded by numerous twig latticeworks loosely resembling Cajun bird traps . Rustin notices several stab wounds and ligature marks scattered about on the corpse , suspecting Dora to be the centerpiece of a ritual murder ? the " paraphiliac love map " to the perpetrator 's fantasy . Martin dismisses his suspicions , and suddenly invites Rustin to dinner at his wife Maggie 's (Michelle Monaghan) insistence , much to Rustin 's dismay as it is his deceased daughter 's birthday . However , he reluctantly agrees to come , but infuriates Martin when he shows up to the occasion intoxicated .

Meanwhile , Major Ken Quesada (Kevin Dunn) immediately sets up a press conference and assigns Martin responsibility over the briefing session for the following day . Rustin continues the investigation at a bar that evening and asks two prostitutes ? Anette (Charleigh Harmon) and Lucy (Alyshia Ochse) ? about Dora 's whereabouts , to no avail . By the next morning , there were several breakthroughs in the investigation : Dora 's body had been successfully identified , an

autopsy revealed she had been strangled , tortured , and possibly raped , and early toxicology reports found traces of lysergic acid and methamphetamine in her bloodstream . Martin , Rustin , and Quesada brief their colleagues with the new evidence .

The duo visit Dora 's ex @-@ husband Charlie Lange (Brad Carter) in prison for questioning . Charlie , incarcerated on charges of check fraud , claims to have not seen the woman since she filed for divorce a year into his prison sentence . He informs the detectives of Dora 's risky drug habits as well as the details of his final phone conversation with her .

The investigation takes a brief detour as Martin and Rustin direct their attention to a five @-@ year @-@ old missing @-@ persons case , a little girl named Marie Fontenot , after being mentioned by one of the locals . Authorities believe she is in the care of her father , and during a visit to see her uncle Danny Fontenot (Christopher Berry) , his caretaker echoed their beliefs . Rustin searches the property for potential evidence , and while in a shed , stumbles upon a twig sculpture eerily similar to those discovered at the Dora Lange murder scene .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

An accomplished writer , series creator Nic Pizzolatto delved into fiction writing and published a novel , titled Galveston (2010) , before being appointed as a screenwriter for AMC 's The Killing the following year . It was around this time that Pizzolatto was preparing to branch out into television , an endeavor that , due to a lack of capital , was never fully realized . He had already begun writing True Detective as his next novel , but later , once the project took definite form , felt it was more suitable on screen . " I 'd always had plans from the first time I 'd talked to an agent from Hollywood , I was going to ask how you break into this business , and particularly cable @-@ TV writing , because in television the writer stays in control , which is what the concept of show runner is " , he remembers . Pizzolatto pitched Galveston to several executives , and from May to July 2010 , he drafted six screenplays , including a spec script for " The Long Bright Dark " which consumed 90 pages . Shortly thereafter , he secured a development deal with HBO for a potential pilot series .

Pizzolatto 's stint with The Killing provided him a glimpse of the inner workings of the television industry , but grew increasingly dissatisfied with the show 's creative direction , eventually leaving the writing staff two weeks into the program 's second season . " I want to be the guiding vision . I don 't do well serving someone else 's vision . I 'm not at my best there , and I don 't think I 'm worth as much to the people who pay me . " He soon directed his attention to working on another script for the True Detective project , encouraged by Anonymous Content .

Alejandro González Iñárritu was initially expected to be appointed as director , but film commitments later forced him to pull out of the project . Pizzolatto instead approached Cary Joji Fukunaga , who he knew from Anonymous Content , to take up the task . Fukunaga spent time conducting research with a homicide detective of the Louisiana State Police 's Criminal Investigations Division in preparation for his services . Based on the officer 's own personal experiences , the director was able to develop " a nice sense of what it must be like to be a detective in Louisiana ? especially in that time period in the ' 90s , which was pre @-@ cell phone , and technology was about to change the way we all live our lives . That 's what I did . I 'm not a big serial killer studier ? I 've never analyzed books about that kind of stuff and I 've never really watched procedurals . Those parts of the story were the least attractive to me ; I was doing it mainly for the characters . "

= = = Casting = = =

McConaughey and Harrelson were among a small pool of actors considered suitable candidates for top billing . Producers contracted McConaughey , who had recently finished filming Killer Joe (2011) , well before True Detective was greenlit by HBO . Pizzolatto , impressed with the actor 's

performance in *The Lincoln Lawyer* (2011) , originally assigned him the role of Martin Hart , but McConaughey offered " a really compelling argument " for portraying Rustin " Rust " Cohle . When asked about his decision to switch parts in a *Variety* interview , McConaughey replied : " I wanted to get in that dude ' s head . The obsession , the island of a man ? I ' m always looking for a guy who monologues . It ' s something really important as I feel I ' m going into my better work . " To prepare , the actor studied his character through what he described the " Four Stages of Rustin Cohle " , a 450 @-@ page document he created detailing Rustin ' s evolution over the course of the story .

Meanwhile , Harrelson was attached to the role of Martin under McConaughey ' s recommendation . Having previously starred in the HBO film *Game Change* (2012) , Harrelson gravitated to the project due in part to his colleagues ; " I love Matthew . He ' s my brother . He ' s a phenomenal , amazing person . And I love Michelle [Monaghan] . I ' ve known her many , many years . Cary [Fukunaga] is a terrific director . And Nic [Pizzolatto] wrote this phenomenal script that you just couldn ' t put down . His writing is so amazing . " Monaghan was chosen to play the female lead , Martin Hart ' s wife Maggie ; the actress took an interest in *True Detective* as she realized her character arc and " really saw where these characters went . " Potts acted as Detective Maynard Gilbough , and Kittles played his partner Detective Thomas Papania .

= = = Filming = = =

The initial location for principal photography for *True Detective* was Arkansas ; however , Pizzolatto later opted to film in southern Louisiana to capitalize on generous statewide tax incentives and the area ' s distinctive landscape , which he felt illustrated a striking paradox . " There ' s a contradictory nature to the place and a sort of sinister quality underneath it all , " the native Louisianan noted . " Everything lives under layers of concealment . The woods are thick and dark and impenetrable . On the other hand you have the beauty of it all from a distance . " " *The Long Bright Dark* " and subsequent episodes were shot in 35 mm film , and principal photography for the season consumed 100 consecutive days . The crew filmed exterior shots at a remote sugarcane field outside of Erath , Louisiana which , because it was partially burned , inspired a " moody and atmospheric " backdrop for corresponding scenes . Fukunaga recruited Adam Arkapaw , previously director of photography for *Top of the Lake* , as project cinematographer and employed minimalistic lighting for layering composition . Also involved in production was Alex DiGerlando , who Fukunaga had previously worked with on Benh Zeitlin ' s *Glory at Sea* (2008) . The director remarked in an interview , " I knew what Alex accomplished in the swamps of Louisiana and given some money , how much more amazing he could be in building sets that would just be used for one or two days and be abandoned again . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its initial American broadcast , " *The Long Bright Dark* " was seen by an estimated 2 @.@ 3 million viewers . It was the highest rated series premiere out of any HBO program in the last four years , falling behind only the series premiere of *Boardwalk Empire* , which drew 4 @.@ 8 million viewers . The episode performed exceptionally well with adults between the ages of 18 and 49 , recording a 1 @.@ 0 rating in that demographic . " *The Long Bright Dark* " was the fifth highest rated cable telecast of the night by total viewership . The United Kingdom terrestrial premiere was broadcast on February 22 , 2014 by Sky Atlantic , garnering 707 @,@ 000 viewers .

= = = Critical response = = =

" *The Long Bright Dark* " was critically acclaimed by most critics . Tim Goodman from *The*

Hollywood Reporter said Fukunaga develops " a beautiful , sprawling sense of place " in the premiere , and identified the ensemble and the writing , which he believed " undulates from effectively brash soliloquies to penetratingly nuanced moments carried by sparse prose " , as two of its other most satisfying attributes . Marshall Crook of The Wall Street Journal agreed , writing the show hits the mark with " good acting , smart writing , and lush cinematography " . Willa Paskin of Slate described the episode as " creepy , gorgeous , unsettling , and searching " and noticed " a literary quality , an accretion of meaningful detail " within the show 's narrative . The Daily Beast 's Andrew Romano said the premiere , together with the former half of the season , compose " one of the most riveting and provocative series I 've ever seen " , while Entertainment Weekly critic Jeff Jensen called it " an enthralling murder mystery about history , culture , and heroic character " .

Brian Lowry , reviewing for Variety , called " The Long Bright Dark " a " rich and absorbing " episode where True Detective immediately assumes a unique identity from other police procedurals , and wrote the cast ensemble consisted of " fine players on the periphery " . Writing in USA Today , Robert Bianco felt McConaughey and Harrelson not only met , but occasionally even exceeded " enormously high " performance expectations of the " golden age of TV acting " . David Wiegand of the San Francisco Chronicle singled out the duo as being " in a class of their own " , and Los Angeles Times journalist Robert Lloyd thought the character work from the two men was of " a very high order " . Sarah Rodman of The Boston Globe , though found the program 's grim tone to be occasionally excessive , opined that the two men successfully engaged audiences enough to invest in the series with their performances . Monaghan also received kudos from Rodman for her work in the episode . Additional praise for ensemble performances , chiefly for McConaughey and Harrelson , came from Time 's James Poniewozik , The New York Times critic Mike Hale , Curt Wagner in RedEye , The Independent 's Sarah Hughes , and Gwilym Mumford of The Guardian .

Bianco said the show avoided character stereotypes , and Alan Sepinwall in HitFix felt Cohle and Hart developed into such riveting characters " that they paper over some of the series ' weaknesses " . The Daily Telegraph critic Chris Harvey awarded " The Long Bright Dark " five out of five stars , hailing True Detective as " the most ambitious TV drama for a long time " .

Not all critics were as enthusiastic in their reviews of " The Long Bright Dark " . Hale , despite commending the flashback narrative , believed the dialogue devolved into " a languid character study and a vehicle for long @-@ winded exchanges about religion and responsibility that are writerly in the worst way . " Chris Cabin from Slant Magazine agreed that the writing too readily " defers to an earnest , rote view of bad religion " , but wrote that Pizzolatto and Fukunaga " smartly embrace the pulpiness of their material " . Hank Stuever , writing for The Washington Post , observed " mumbly , bloodshot fatigue " in the story , and felt the series fell short of its ambitions . " In its better moments , True Detective feels like a fever dream , but mostly it ? s just groggy , " Stuever concluded . Emily Nussbaum of The New Yorker was especially critical of the show and claimed it relished in " macho nonsense " .