

= The Wire =

The Wire is an American crime drama television series set and produced in and around Baltimore , Maryland . Created and primarily written by author and former police reporter David Simon , the series was broadcast by the cable network HBO in the United States . The Wire premiered on June 2 , 2002 , and ended on March 9 , 2008 , comprising 60 episodes over five seasons .

Each season of The Wire introduces a different institution in the city of Baltimore and its relationship to law enforcement , while retaining characters and advancing storylines from previous seasons . In chronological order these institutions are : the illegal drug trade , the seaport system , the city government and bureaucracy , the school system , and the print news media . The large cast consists mainly of actors who are little known for their other roles , as well as numerous real @-@ life Baltimore and Maryland figures in guest and recurring roles . Simon has said that despite its framing as a crime drama , the show is " really about the American city , and about how we live together . It 's about how institutions have an effect on individuals . Whether one is a cop , a longshoreman , a drug dealer , a politician , a judge or a lawyer , all are ultimately compromised and must contend with whatever institution to which they are committed . "

The Wire is lauded for its literary thematics ; its uncommonly acute exploration of social and political themes ; and its realistic portrayal of urban life . Although the show received average ratings throughout its run , and never won any major television awards , it has since come to be regarded by many critics as one of the greatest television dramas of all time .

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

Simon has stated that he originally set out to create a police drama loosely based on the experiences of his writing partner Ed Burns , a former homicide detective . Burns , when working on protracted investigations of violent drug dealers using surveillance technology , had often been frustrated by the bureaucracy of the Baltimore police department ; Simon saw similarities with his own ordeals as a police reporter for The Baltimore Sun .

Simon chose to set the show in Baltimore because of his familiarity with the city . During his time as a writer and producer for the NBC program Homicide : Life on the Street , based on his book Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets (1991) , also set in Baltimore , Simon had come into conflict with NBC network executives who were displeased by the show 's pessimism . Simon wanted to avoid a repeat of these conflicts and chose to take The Wire to HBO , because of their working relationship from the miniseries The Corner (2000) . HBO was initially doubtful about including a police drama in its lineup but eventually agreed to produce the pilot episode . Simon approached the mayor of Baltimore , telling him that he wanted to give a bleak portrayal of certain aspects of the city ; Simon was welcomed to work there again . He hoped the show would change the opinions of some viewers but said that it was unlikely to affect the issues it portrays .

= = = Casting = = =

The casting of the show has been praised for avoiding big @-@ name stars and using character actors who appear natural in their roles . The looks of the cast as a whole have been described as defying TV expectations by presenting a true range of humanity on screen . Most of the cast is African @-@ American , consistent with the demographics of Baltimore .

The initial cast was assembled through a process of auditions and readings . Lance Reddick received the role of Cedric Daniels after auditioning for several other parts . Michael K. Williams got the part of Omar Little after only a single audition .

Several prominent real @-@ life Baltimore figures , including former Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr . ; Rev. Frank M. Reid III ; former police chief , convicted felon , and radio personality Ed

Norris ; Virginia Delegate Rob Bell ; Baltimore Sun reporter and editor David Ettlin ; Howard County Executive Ken Ulman ; and former mayor Kurt Schmoke have appeared in minor roles despite not being professional actors . " Little Melvin " Williams , a Baltimore drug lord arrested in the 1980s by an investigation that Ed Burns had been part of , had a recurring role as a deacon beginning in the third season . Jay Landsman , a longtime police officer who inspired the character of the same name , played Lieutenant Dennis Mello . Baltimore police commander Gary D 'Addario served as the series technical advisor for the first two seasons and has a recurring role as prosecutor Gary DiPasquale . Simon shadowed D 'Addario 's shift when researching his book *Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets* and both D 'Addario and Landsman are subjects of the book .

More than a dozen cast members previously appeared on HBO 's first hour @-@ long drama *Oz* . J. D. Williams , Seth Gilliam , Lance Reddick , and Reg E. Cathey were featured in very prominent roles in *Oz* , while a number of other notable stars of *The Wire* , including Wood Harris , Frankie Faison , John Doman , Clarke Peters , Domenick Lombardozzi , Michael Hyatt , Michael Potts , and Method Man appeared in at least one episode of *Oz* . Cast members Erik Dellums , Peter Gerety , Clark Johnson , Clayton LeBouef , Toni Lewis and Callie Thorne also appeared on *Homicide : Life on the Street* , the earlier and award @-@ winning network television series also based on Simon 's book ; Lewis appeared on *Oz* as well . A number of cast members , as well as crew members , also appeared in the preceding HBO miniseries *The Corner* including Clarke Peters , Reg E. Cathey , Lance Reddick , Corey Parker Robinson , Robert F. Chew , Delaney Williams and Benay Berger .

= = = Crew = = =

Alongside Simon , the show 's creator , head writer , showrunner and executive producer , much of the creative team behind *The Wire* were alumni of *Homicide* and Emmy @-@ winning miniseries *The Corner* . *The Corner* veteran , Robert F. Colesberry , was executive producer for the first two seasons and directed the season 2 finale before dying from complications from heart surgery in 2004 . He is credited by the rest of the creative team as having a large creative role for a producer , and Simon credits him for achieving the show 's realistic visual feel . He also had a small recurring role as Detective Ray Cole . Colesberry 's wife Karen L. Thorson joined him on the production staff . A third producer on *The Corner* , Nina Kostroff Noble also stayed with the production staff for *The Wire* rounding out the initial four @-@ person team . Following Colesberry 's death , she became the show 's second executive producer alongside Simon .

Stories for the show were often co @-@ written by Ed Burns , a former Baltimore homicide detective and public school teacher who had worked with Simon on other projects including *The Corner* . Burns also became a producer on *The Wire* in the show 's fourth season . Other writers for *The Wire* include three acclaimed crime fiction writers from outside of Baltimore : George Pelecanos from Washington , Richard Price from the Bronx and Dennis Lehane from Boston . Reviewers drew comparisons between Price 's works (particularly *Clockers*) and *The Wire* even before he joined . In addition to writing , Pelecanos served as a producer for the third season . Pelecanos has commented that he was attracted to the project because of the opportunity to work with Simon . Staff writer Rafael Alvarez penned several episodes ' scripts , as well as the series guidebook *The Wire : Truth Be Told* . Alvarez is a colleague of Simon 's from *The Sun* and a Baltimore native with working experience in the port area . Another city native and independent filmmaker , Joy Lusco , also wrote for the show in each of its first three seasons . Baltimore Sun writer and political journalist William F. Zorzi joined the writing staff in the third season and brought a wealth of experience to the show 's examination of Baltimore politics .

Playwright and television writer / producer Eric Overmyer joined the crew of *The Wire* in the show 's fourth season as a consulting producer and writer . He had also previously worked on *Homicide* . Overmyer was brought into the full @-@ time production staff to replace Pelecanos who scaled back his involvement to concentrate on his next book and worked on the fourth season solely as a writer . Emmy @-@ award winner , *Homicide* and *The Corner* writer and college friend of Simon David Mills also joined the writing staff in the fourth season .

Directors include *Homicide* alumnus Clark Johnson , who directed several acclaimed episodes of

The Shield , and Tim Van Patten , an Emmy winner who has worked on every season of The Sopranos . The directing has been praised for its uncomplicated and subtle style . Following the death of Colesberry , director Joe Chappelle joined the production staff as a co @-@ executive producer and continued to regularly direct episodes .

= = = Episode structure = = =

When broadcast on HBO and on some international networks , the episodes are preceded by a recap of events that have a bearing upon the upcoming narrative , using clips from previous episodes . Each episode begins with a cold open that seldom contains a dramatic juncture . The screen then fades or cuts to black while the intro music fades in . The show 's opening title sequence then plays ; a series of shots , mainly close @-@ ups , concerning the show 's subject matter that changes from season to season , separated by fast cutting (a technique rarely used in the show itself) . The opening credits are superimposed on the sequence , and consist only of actors ' names without identifying which actors play which roles . In addition , actors ' faces are rarely seen in the title sequence . At the end of the sequence , a quotation is shown on @-@ screen that is spoken by a character during the episode . The three exceptions were the first season finale which uses the phrase " All in the game " , attributed to " Traditional West Baltimore " , a phrase used frequently throughout all five seasons including that episode ; the fourth season finale which uses words written on boarded up vacant homes attributed to " Baltimore , traditional " and the series finale , which started with a quote from H. L. Mencken that is shown on a wall at The Baltimore Sun in one scene , neither quote being spoken by a character . Progressive story arcs often unfold in different locations at the same time . Episodes rarely end with a cliffhanger , and close with a fade or cut to black with the closing music fading in .

= = = Music = = =

Rather than overlaying songs on the soundtrack , or employing a score , The Wire primarily uses pieces of music that emanate from a source within the scene , such as a jukebox or car radio . This kind of music is known as diegetic or source cue . This practice is rarely breached , notably for the end @-@ of @-@ season montages and occasionally with a brief overlap of the closing theme and the final shot .

The opening theme is " Way Down in the Hole , " a gospel @-@ and @-@ blues @-@ inspired song , written by Tom Waits for his 1987 album Franks Wild Years . Each season uses a different recording and a different opening sequence , with the theme being performed by The Blind Boys of Alabama , Waits , The Neville Brothers , DoMaJe and Steve Earle . The season four version of " Way Down in the Hole " was arranged and recorded for the show and is performed by five Baltimore teenagers : Ivan Ashford , Markel Steele , Cameron Brown , Tariq Al @-@ Sabir and Avery Bargasse . Earle , who performed the fifth season version , is also a member of the cast , playing the recovering drug addict Walon . The closing theme is " The Fall , " composed by Blake Leyh , who is also the music supervisor of the show .

During season finales , a song is played before the closing scene in a montage showing the lives of the protagonists in the aftermath of the narrative . The first season montage is played over " Step by Step " by Jesse Winchester , the second " I Feel Alright " by Steve Earle , the third " Fast Train " written by Van Morrison and performed by Solomon Burke , the fourth " I Walk on Gilded Splinters " written by Dr. John and performed by Paul Weller and the fifth uses an extended version of " Way Down In The Hole " by the Blind Boys of Alabama , the same version of the song used as the opening theme for the first season . While the songs reflect the mood of the sequence , their lyrics are usually only loosely tied to the visual shots . In the commentary track to episode 37 , " Mission Accomplished " , executive producer David Simon said : " I hate it when somebody purposely tries to have the lyrics match the visual . It brutalizes the visual in a way to have the lyrics dead on point Yet at the same time it can 't be totally off point . It has to glance at what you 're trying to say . "

Music by the Celtic punk band The Pogues is used throughout the series . The band 's song " The

Body of an American , " which is always played at detectives ' wakes at Kavanaugh 's Bar , occurs in three episodes . In the episode " Dead Soldiers , " the song " Sally MacLennane " can be heard when Bunk and McNulty are drinking on the street outside Kavanaugh 's Bar . The song " Transmetropolitan " is heard in the opening sequence of the episode " Duck and Cover " during season two , where McNulty crashes his car while drunk .

Two soundtrack albums , called The Wire : And All the Pieces Matter ? Five Years of Music from The Wire and Beyond Hamsterdam , were released on January 8 , 2008 on Nonesuch Records . The former features music from all five seasons of the series and the latter includes local Baltimore artists exclusively .

= = Style = =

= = = Realism = = =

The writers strove to create a realistic vision of an American city based on their own experiences . Simon , originally a journalist for the Baltimore Sun , spent a year researching a homicide police department for his book , Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , where he met Burns . Burns served in the Baltimore Police Department for 20 years , and later became a teacher in an inner @-@ city school . The two of them spent a year researching the drug culture and poverty in Baltimore for their book , The Corner : A Year in the Life of an Inner @-@ City Neighborhood . Their combined experiences were used in many of the storylines of The Wire .

Central to the show 's aim for realism was the creation of truthful characters . Simon has stated that most of them are composites of real @-@ life Baltimore figures . For instance , Donnie Andrews served as the main inspiration of Omar Little . Martin O 'Malley served as " one of the inspirations " for Tommy Carcetti . The show often cast non @-@ professional actors in minor roles , distinguishing itself from other television series by showing the " faces and voices of the real city " it depicts . The writing also uses contemporary slang to enhance the immersive viewing experience .

In distinguishing the police characters from other television detectives , Simon makes the point that even the best police of The Wire are motivated not by a desire to protect and serve , but by the intellectual vanity of believing they are smarter than the criminals they are chasing . However , while many of the police do exhibit altruistic qualities , many officers portrayed on the show are incompetent , brutal , self @-@ aggrandizing , or hamstrung by bureaucracy and politics . The criminals are not always motivated by profit or a desire to harm others ; many are trapped in their existence and all have human qualities . Even so , The Wire does not minimize or gloss over the horrific effects of their actions .

The show is realistic in depicting the processes of both police work and criminal activity . There have even been reports of real @-@ life criminals watching the show to learn how to counter police investigation techniques . The fifth season portrayed a working newsroom at the Baltimore Sun and has been hailed as the most realistic portrayal of the media in film and television .

In December 2006 , The Washington Post carried an article in which local African @-@ American students stated that the show had " hit a nerve " with the black community , and that they themselves knew real @-@ life counterparts of many of the characters . The article expressed great sadness at the toll drugs and violence are taking on the black community .

= = = Visual novel = = =

Many important events occur off @-@ camera and there is no artificial exposition in the form of voice @-@ over or flashbacks , with the exceptions of two flashbacks ? one at the end of the pilot episode that replays a moment from earlier in the same episode and one at the end of the fourth season finale that shows a short clip of a character tutoring his younger brother earlier in the season . Thus , the viewer needs to follow every conversation closely to understand the ongoing story arc and the relevance of each character to it . Salon.com has described the show as novelistic in

structure , with a greater depth of writing and plotting than other crime shows . Each season of The Wire consists of 10 ? 13 full @-@ hour episodes , which form several multi @-@ layered narratives . Simon chose this structure with an eye towards long story arcs that draw a viewer in , which then results in a more satisfying payoff . He uses the metaphor of a visual novel in several interviews , describing each episode as a chapter , and has also commented that this allows a fuller exploration of the show 's themes in time not spent on plot development .

= = = Social commentary = = =

Simon described the second season as " a meditation on the death of work and the betrayal of the American working class ... it is a deliberate argument that unencumbered capitalism is not a substitute for social policy ; that on its own , without a social compact , raw capitalism is destined to serve the few at the expense of the many . " He added that season 3 " reflects on the nature of reform and reformers , and whether there is any possibility that political processes , long calcified , can mitigate against the forces currently arrayed against individuals . " The third season is also an allegory that draws explicit parallels between the Iraq War and drug prohibition , which in Simon 's view has failed in its aims and has become a war against America 's underclass . This is portrayed by Major Colvin , imparting to Carver his view that policing has been allowed to become a war and thus will never succeed in its aims .

Writer Ed Burns , who worked as a public school teacher after retiring from the Baltimore police force shortly before going to work with Simon , has called education the theme of the fourth season . Rather than focusing solely on the school system , the fourth season looks at schools as a porous part of the community that are affected by problems outside of their boundaries . Burns states that education comes from many sources other than schools and that children can be educated by other means , including contact with the drug dealers they work for . Burns and Simon see the theme as an opportunity to explore how individuals end up like the show 's criminal characters , and to dramatize the notion that hard work is not always justly rewarded .

= = Themes = =

= = = Institutional dysfunction = = =

Simon has identified the organizations featured in the show ? the Baltimore Police Department , City Hall , the Baltimore public school system , the Barksdale drug trafficking operation , The Baltimore Sun , and the stevedores ' union ? as comparable institutions . All are dysfunctional in some way , and the characters are typically betrayed by the institutions that they accept in their lives . There is also a sentiment echoed by a detective in Narcotics ? " Shit rolls downhill " ? which describes how superiors , especially in the higher tiers of the police department in the series , will attempt to use subordinates as scapegoats for any major scandals . Simon described the show as " cynical about institutions " while taking a humanistic approach toward its characters . A central theme developed throughout the show is the struggle between individual desires and subordination to the group 's goals . Whether it is Officer Jimmy McNulty using all his cards to pursue a high @-@ profile case despite resistance from his own department , or gang member D 'Angelo Barksdale accepting a 20 @-@ year prison sentence contrary to his strong desire to turn in his uncle Avon and walk , this type of conflict is pervasive in all aspects of the show .

= = = Surveillance = = =

Central to the structure and plot of the show is the use of electronic surveillance and wiretap technologies by the police ? hence the title The Wire . Salon.com described the title as a metaphor for the viewer 's experience : the wiretaps provide the police with access to a secret world , just as the show does for the viewer . Simon has discussed the use of camera shots of surveillance

equipment , or shots that appear to be taken from the equipment itself , to emphasize the volume of surveillance in modern life and the characters ' need to sift through this information .

= = Cast and characters = =

The Wire employs a broad ensemble cast , supplemented by many recurring guest stars who populate the institutions featured in the show . The majority of the cast is black , which accurately reflects the demographics of Baltimore .

The show 's creators are also willing to kill off major characters , so that viewers cannot assume that a given character will survive simply because of a starring role or popularity among fans . In response to a question on why a certain character had to die , David Simon said ,

We are not selling hope , or audience gratification , or cheap victories with this show . The Wire is making an argument about what institutions ? bureaucracies , criminal enterprises , the cultures of addiction , raw capitalism even ? do to individuals . It is not designed purely as an entertainment . It is , I 'm afraid , a somewhat angry show .

= = = Main cast = = =

The major characters of the first season were divided between those on the side of the law and those involved in drug @-@ related crime . The investigating detail was launched by the actions of Detective Jimmy McNulty (Dominic West) , whose insubordinate tendencies and personal problems played counterpoint to his ability as a criminal investigator . The detail was led by Lieutenant Cedric Daniels (Lance Reddick) who faced challenges balancing his career aspirations with his desire to produce a good case . Kima Greggs (Sonja Sohn) was a capable lead detective who faced jealousy from colleagues and worry about the dangers of her job from her domestic partner . Her investigative work was greatly helped by her confidential informant , a drug addict known as Bubbles (Andre Royo) . Like Greggs , partners Thomas " Herc " Hauk (Domenick Lombardozzi) and Ellis Carver (Seth Gilliam) were reassigned to the detail from the narcotics unit . The duo 's initially violent nature was eventually subdued as they proved useful in grunt work , and sometimes served as comic relief for the audience . Rounding out the temporary unit were detectives Lester Freamon (Clarke Peters) and Roland " Prez " Pryzbylowski (Jim True @-@ Frost) . Though not initially important players in the operation , Freamon proved a quietly capable and methodical investigator with a knack for noticing tiny but important details , and Prez turned out to be a natural at following paper trails and his persistence when dealing with seemingly unbreakable codes paid off eventually .

These investigators were overseen by two commanding officers more concerned with politics and their own careers than the case , Deputy Commissioner Ervin Burrell (Frankie Faison) and Major William Rawls (John Doman) . Assistant state 's attorney Rhonda Pearlman (Deirdre Lovejoy) acted as the legal liaison between the detail and the courthouse and also had a sexual relationship with McNulty . In the homicide division , Bunk Moreland (Wendell Pierce) was a gifted , dry @-@ witted , hard @-@ drinking detective partnered with McNulty under Sergeant Jay Landsman (Delaney Williams) , the sarcastic , sharp @-@ tongued squad supervisor . Peter Gerety had a recurring role as Judge Phelan , the official who started the case moving .

On the other side of the investigation was Avon Barksdale 's drug empire . The driven , ruthless Barksdale (Wood Harris) was aided by business @-@ minded Stringer Bell (Idris Elba) . Avon 's nephew D 'Angelo Barksdale (Larry Gilliard , Jr .) ran some of his uncle 's territory , but also possessed a guilty conscience , while loyal Wee @-@ Bey Brice (Hassan Johnson) was responsible for multiple homicides carried out on Avon 's orders . Working under D 'Angelo were Poot (Tray Chaney) , Bodie (J.D. Williams) , and Wallace (Michael B. Jordan) , all street @-@ level drug dealers . Wallace was an intelligent but naive youth trapped in the drug trade , and Poot a randy young man happy to follow rather than lead . Omar Little (Michael K. Williams) , a renowned Baltimore stick @-@ up man robbing drug dealers for a living , was a frequent thorn in the side of the Barksdale clan .

The second season introduced a new group of characters working in the Baltimore port area , including Spiros " Vondas " Vondopoulos (Paul Ben @-@ Victor) , Beadie Russell (Amy Ryan) , and Frank Sobotka (Chris Bauer) . Vondas was the underboss of a global smuggling operation , Russell an inexperienced port authority officer and single mother thrown in at the deep end of a multiple homicide investigation , and Frank Sobotka a union leader who turned to crime to raise funds to save his union . Also joining the show in season 2 were Nick Sobotka (Pablo Schreiber) , Frank 's nephew ; Ziggy Sobotka (James Ransone) , Frank 's troubled son ; and " The Greek " (Bill Raymond) , Vondas 's mysterious boss . As the second season ended , the focus shifted away from the ports , leaving the new characters behind .

The third season saw several previously recurring characters assuming larger starring roles , including Detective Leander Sydnor (Corey Parker Robinson) , Bodie (J.D. Williams) , Omar (Michael K. Williams) , Proposition Joe (Robert F. Chew) , and Major Howard " Bunny " Colvin (Robert Wisdom) . Colvin commanded the Western district where the Barksdale organization operated , and nearing retirement , he came up with a radical new method of dealing with the drug problem . Proposition Joe , the East Side 's cautious drug kingpin , became more cooperative with the Barksdale Organization . Sydnor , a rising young star in the police department in season 1 , returned to the cast as part of the major crimes unit . Bodie had been seen gradually rising in the Barksdale organization since the first episode ; he was born to their trade and showed a fierce aptitude for it . Omar had a vendetta against the Barksdale organization and gave them all of his lethal attention .

New additions in the third season included Tommy Carcetti (Aidan Gillen) , an ambitious city councilman ; Mayor Clarence Royce (Glynn Turman) , the incumbent whom Carcetti planned to unseat ; Marlo Stanfield (Jamie Hector) , leader of an upstart gang seeking to challenge Avon 's dominance ; and Dennis " Cutty " Wise (Chad Coleman) , a newly released convict uncertain of his future .

In the fourth season , four young actors joined the cast : Jermaine Crawford as Duquan " Dukie " Weems ; Maestro Harrell as Randy Wagstaff ; Julito McCullum as Namond Brice ; and Tristan Wilds as Michael Lee . The characters are friends from a West Baltimore middle school . Another newcomer was Norman Wilson (Reg E. Cathey) , Carcetti 's deputy campaign manager .

The fifth season saw several actors join the starring cast . Gbenga Akinnagbe returns as the previously recurring Chris Partlow , chief enforcer of the now dominant Stanfield Organization . Neal Huff reprises his role as Mayoral chief of staff Michael Steintorf having previously appeared as a guest star at the end of the fourth season . Two other actors also join the starring cast having previously portrayed their corrupt characters as guest stars ? Michael Kostroff as defense attorney Maurice Levy and Isiah Whitlock , Jr. as senator Clay Davis . Crew member Clark Johnson appeared in front of the camera for the first time in the series to play Augustus Haynes , the principled editor of the city desk of The Baltimore Sun . He is joined in the newsroom by two other new stars ; Michelle Parness and Tom McCarthy play young reporters Alma Gutierrez and Scott Templeton .

= = Plot = =

= = = Season 1 = = =

The first season introduces two major groups of characters : the Baltimore police department and a drug dealing organization run by the Barksdale family . The season follows the police investigation of the latter over its 13 episodes .

The investigation is triggered when detective Jimmy McNulty meets privately with judge Daniel Phelan following the acquittal of D 'Angelo Barksdale for murder after a key witness changes her story . McNulty tells Phelan that the witness has probably been intimidated by members of a drug trafficking empire run by D 'Angelo 's uncle , Avon Barksdale , having recognized several faces at the trial , most notably Avon 's second @-@ in @-@ command , Stringer Bell . He also tells Phelan

that no one is investigating Barksdale 's criminal activity , which includes a significant portion of the city 's drug trade and several unsolved homicides .

Phelan takes issue with McNulty 's report and complains to senior Police Department figures , embarrassing them into creating a detail dedicated to investigating Barksdale . However , owing to the department 's dysfunction , the investigation is intended as a façade to appease the judge . An intradepartmental struggle between the more motivated officers on the detail and their superiors spans the whole season , with interference by the higher @-@ ups often threatening to ruin the investigation . The detail 's commander , Cedric Daniels , acts as mediator between the two opposing groups of police .

Meanwhile , the organized and cautious Barksdale gang is explored through characters at various levels within it . The organization is continually antagonized by a stick @-@ up crew led by Omar Little , and the feud leads to several deaths . Throughout , D 'Angelo struggles with his conscience over his life of crime and the people it affects .

The police have little success with street @-@ level arrests or with securing informants beyond Bubbles , a well known West Side drug addict . Eventually the investigation takes the direction of electronic surveillance , with wiretaps and pager clones to infiltrate the security measures taken by the Barksdale organization . This leads the investigation to areas the commanding officers had hoped to avoid , including political contributions . When an associate of Avon Barksdale is arrested by State Police and offers to cooperate , the commanding officers order the detail to undertake a sting operation to wrap up the case . Detective Kima Greggs is seriously hurt in the operation , triggering an overzealous response from the rest of the department . This causes the detail 's targets to suspect that they are under investigation .

Wallace is murdered by his childhood friends Bodie and Poot , on orders from Stringer Bell , after leaving his " secure " placement with relatives and returning to Baltimore . D 'Angelo Barksdale is eventually arrested transporting a kilo of uncut heroin , and learning of Wallace 's murder , is ready to turn in his uncle and Stringer . However , D 'Angelo 's mother convinces him to rescind the deal and take the charges for his family . The detail manages to arrest Avon on a minor charge and gets one of his soldiers , Wee @-@ Bey , to confess to most of the murders , some of which he did not commit . Stringer escapes prosecution and is left running the Barksdale empire . For the officers , the consequences of antagonizing their superiors are severe , with Daniels passed over for promotion and McNulty assigned out of homicide and into the marine unit .

= = = Season 2 = = =

The second season , along with its ongoing examination of the drug problem and its effect on the urban poor , examines the plight of the blue @-@ collar urban working class as exemplified by stevedores in the city port , as some of them get caught up in smuggling drugs and other contraband inside the shipping containers that pass through their port . In a season @-@ long subplot , the Barksdale organization continues its drug trafficking despite Avon 's imprisonment , with Stringer Bell assuming greater power .

McNulty harbors a grudge against his former commanders for reassigning him to the marine unit . When thirteen unidentified young women are found dead in a container at the docks , McNulty successfully makes a spiteful effort to place the murders within the jurisdiction of his former commander . Meanwhile , police Major Stan Valchek gets into a feud with Polish @-@ American Frank Sobotka , a leader of the International Brotherhood of Stevedores , a fictional dockers ' union , over competing donations to their old neighborhood church . Valchek demands a detail to investigate Sobotka . Cedric Daniels is interviewed , having been praised by Prez , Major Valchek 's son @-@ in @-@ law , and also because of his work on the Barksdale case . He is eventually selected to lead the detail assigned just to investigate Sobotka ; when the investigation is concluded Daniels is assured he will move up to head a special case unit with personnel of his choosing .

Life for the blue @-@ collar men of the port is increasingly hard and work is scarce . As union leader , Sobotka has taken it on himself to reinvigorate the port by lobbying politicians to support much @-@ needed infrastructure improvement initiatives . Lacking the funds needed for this kind of

influence , Sobotka has become involved with a smuggling ring . Around him , his son and nephew also turn to crime , as they have few other opportunities to earn money . It becomes clear to the Sobotka detail that the dead girls are related to their investigation , as they were in a container that was supposed to be smuggled through the port . They again use wiretaps to infiltrate the crime ring and slowly work their way up the chain towards The Greek , the mysterious man in charge . But Valchek , upset that their focus has moved beyond Sobotka , gets the FBI involved . The Greek has a mole inside the FBI and starts severing his ties to Baltimore when he learns about the investigation .

After a dispute over stolen goods turns violent , Sobotka 's son Ziggy is charged with the murder of one of the Greek 's underlings . Sobotka himself is arrested for smuggling ; he agrees to work with the detail to help his son , finally seeing his actions as a mistake . However , the Greek learns about this through his mole inside the FBI and has Sobotka killed . The investigation ends with the fourteen homicides solved but the perpetrator already dead . Several drug dealers and mid @-@ level smuggling figures tied to the Greek are arrested , but he and his second @-@ in @-@ command escape uncharged and unidentified . The Major is pleased that Sobotka was arrested ; the case is seen as a success by the commanding officers , but is viewed as a failure by the detail .

Across town , the Barksdale organization continues its business under Stringer while Avon and D 'Angelo Barksdale serve prison time . D 'Angelo decides to cut ties to his family after his uncle organizes the deaths of several inmates and blames it on a corrupt guard to shave time from his sentence . Eventually Stringer covertly orders D 'Angelo killed , with the murder staged to look like a suicide . Avon is unaware of Stringer 's duplicity and mourns the loss of his nephew .

Stringer also struggles , having been cut off by Avon 's drug suppliers and left with increasingly poor @-@ quality product . He again goes behind Avon 's back , giving up half of Avon 's most prized territory to a rival named Proposition Joe in exchange for a share of his supply . Avon , unaware of the arrangement , assumes that Joe and other dealers are moving into his territory simply because the Barksdale organization has too few enforcers . He contracts a feared assassin named Brother Mouzone . Stringer deals with this by tricking his old adversary Omar into believing that Mouzone was responsible for the vicious killing of his partner in their feud in season one . Seeking revenge , Omar shoots Mouzone but , realizing Stringer has lied to him , calls 9 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 . Mouzone recovers and leaves Baltimore , and Stringer (now with Avon 's consent) is able to continue his arrangement with Proposition Joe .

= = = Season 3 = = =

In the third season , the focus returns to the street and the Barksdale organization . The scope , however , is expanded to include the city 's political scene . A new subplot is introduced to explore the potential positive effects of de facto " legalizing " the illegal drug trade , and incidentally prostitution , within the limited boundaries of a few uninhabited city blocks ? referred to as Hamsterdam . The posited benefits , as in Amsterdam and other European cities , are reduced street crime city @-@ wide and increased outreach of health and social services to at @-@ risk populations . These are continuations of storylines hinted at earlier .

The demolition of the residential towers that had served as the Barksdale organization 's prime territory pushes their dealers back out onto the streets of Baltimore . Stringer Bell continues his reform of the organization by cooperating with other drug lords , sharing with one another territory , product , and profits . Stringer 's proposal is met with a curt refusal from Marlo Stanfield , leader of a new , growing crew . Against Stringer 's advice , Avon decides to take Marlo 's territory by force , and the two gangs become embroiled in a bitter turf war with multiple deaths . Omar Little continues to rob the Barksdale organization wherever possible . Working with his new boyfriend , Dante , and two women , he is once more a serious problem . The violence related to the drug trade makes it an obvious choice of investigation for Cedric Daniels ' now @-@ permanent Major Crimes Unit .

Councilman Tommy Carcetti begins to prepare himself for a mayoral race . He manipulates a colleague into running against the mayor to split the black vote , secures a capable campaign manager and starts making headlines for himself .

As he approaches the end of his career , Major Howard " Bunny " Colvin of Baltimore 's Western District wants to effect some real change in the troubled neighborhoods for which he has long been responsible . Without the knowledge of central command , Colvin sets up areas where police would monitor , but not punish , the drug trade . The police crack down severely on violence in these areas , and also on drug trafficking elsewhere in the city . For many weeks , Colvin 's experiment works , and crime is reduced in his district . However , Colvin 's superiors , the media , and city politicians eventually find out about the arrangement , and the " Hamsterdam " experiment ends . With top brass outraged , Colvin is forced to cease his actions , accept a demotion , and retire from the police department on a lower @-@ grade pension . Tommy Carcetti uses the scandal to make a grandstanding speech at a weekly Baltimore city council meeting .

Dennis " Cutty " Wise , once a drug dealer 's enforcer , is released from prison alongside Avon . His struggles to adapt to life as a free man show an attempt at personal reform . Cutty tries to work as a manual laborer and then flirts with his former life , going to work for Avon . Finding he no longer has the heart for murder , he eventually uses funding from Avon to purchase new equipment for his nascent boxing gym .

The Major Crimes Unit learns that Stringer has been buying real estate and developing it to fulfill his dream of being a successful legitimate businessman . Believing that the bloody turf war with Marlo is poised to destroy everything the Barksdale crew had worked for , Stringer gives Major Colvin information on Avon 's weapons stash . But Stringer is himself being betrayed by Avon : Brother Mouzone had returned to Baltimore and tracked down Omar to join forces . Mouzone tells Avon that his shooting must be avenged . Avon , remembering how Stringer disregarded his order which resulted in Stringer attempting to have Brother Mouzone killed , possibly still furious over D 'Angelo 's murder (Stringer having finally confessed the truth) , and fearing Mouzone 's ability to harm his reputation outside of Baltimore , informs Mouzone of Stringer 's upcoming visit to his construction site . There , Mouzone and Omar corner him and shoot him to death .

Colvin tells McNulty about Avon 's hideout , and armed with the information gleaned from selling the Barksdale crew pre @-@ wiretapped disposable cell phones , the detail stages a raid , arresting Avon and most of his underlings . Barksdale 's criminal empire lies in ruins , and Marlo 's young crew simply moves into their territory . The drug trade in West Baltimore continues with little change .

= = = Season 4 = = =

The fourth season expanded its scope again to include an examination of the school system . Other major plots include the mayoral race that continues the political storyline begun in season three , and a closer look at Marlo Stanfield 's drug gang , which has grown to control most of western Baltimore 's trafficking .

The show introduces Dukie , Randy , Michael , and Namond , four boys from West Baltimore , as they enter the eighth grade . At the same school , Prez has begun a new career as a math teacher . Despite mentorship from the more seasoned faculty , Namond , and later Michael , work as drug runners for Bodie , who has had middling success selling Proposition Joe 's product independently .

The cold @-@ blooded Marlo has come to dominate the streets of the west side , using murder and intimidation to make up for his weak @-@ quality drugs and lack of business acumen . His enforcers Chris Partlow and Snoop conceal their numerous victims in abandoned and boarded @-@ up row houses where the bodies will not be readily discovered . The disappearances of so many known criminals come to mystify both the major crimes unit investigating Marlo and the homicide unit assigned to solve the presumed murders . Marlo coerces Bodie into working under him .

McNulty has found peace working as a patrolman and living with Beadie Russell , and refuses promotions from Daniels , now a major commanding the Western District . Detectives Kima Greggs and Lester Freamon , as part of the major crimes unit , investigate Avon Barksdale 's political donations and serve several key figures with subpoenas . Their work is shut down by Commissioner Ervin Burrell at Mayor Clarence Royce 's request , and after being placed under stricter supervision within their unit , both Greggs and Freamon request and receive transfer to the homicide division .

Meanwhile , the city 's mayoral primary race enters its closing weeks . Royce initially has a seemingly insurmountable lead over challengers Tommy Carcetti and Tony Gray , with a big war chest and major endorsements . Royce 's lead begins to fray , however , as his own political machinations turn against him and Carcetti starts to highlight the city 's crime problem . Carcetti is propelled to victory in the primary election .

Howard " Bunny " Colvin joins a research group attempting to study potential future criminals in the middle school population . Dennis " Cutty " Wise continues to work with boys in his boxing gym , and accepts a job at the school rounding up truants . Bubbles takes a homeless teenager named Sherrod under his wing . He encourages the boy to attend class , which he fails to do .

Prez has a few successes with his students , but some of them start to slip away . Disruptive Namond is removed from class and placed in the research group , where he gradually develops affection and respect for Colvin . Randy , in a moment of desperation , reveals knowledge of a murder to the assistant principal , leading to his being interrogated by police .

Proposition Joe engineers a conflict between Omar Little and Marlo to convince Marlo to join the New Day Co @-@ Op. After Omar robs Marlo , Marlo frames Omar for a murder and attempts to have him murdered in jail , but Omar manages to beat the charge with the help of Bunk . Omar learns Marlo set him up , and gets revenge on him and Proposition Joe by robbing the entire shipment of the Co @-@ Op. Meanwhile , the co @-@ op members , including Marlo , are furious at Joe for allowing the shipment to be stolen . Marlo demands satisfaction , and as a result , Joe sets up a meeting between him and Spiros Vondas , who assuages Marlo 's concerns . Having gotten a lead on Joe 's connection to the Greeks , Marlo begins investigating them to learn more about their role in bringing narcotics into Baltimore .

Freamon discovers the bodies Chris and Snoop had hidden . Bodie offers McNulty testimony against Marlo and his crew , but is shot dead on his corner by O @-@ Dog , a member of Marlo 's crew . Sherrod dies after snorting a poisoned vial of heroin that , unbeknownst to him , Bubbles had prepared for their tormentor . Bubbles turns himself in to the police and tries to hang himself , but he survives and is taken to a detox facility . Michael has now joined the ranks of Marlo 's killers and runs one of his corners , with Dukie leaving high school to work there . Randy 's house is firebombed by school bullies for his cooperation with the police , leaving his caring foster mother hospitalized and sending him back to a group home . Namond is taken in by Colvin , who recognized the good in him . The major crimes unit from earlier seasons is largely reunited , and they resume their investigation of Marlo Stanfield .

= = = Season 5 = = =

The fifth season focuses on the media and media consumption . The show features a fictional depiction of the newspaper The Baltimore Sun , and in fact elements of the plot are ripped @-@ from @-@ the @-@ headlines events (such as the Jayson Blair New York Times scandal) and people at the Sun . The season , according to David Simon , deals with " what stories get told and what don 't and why it is that things stay the same . " Issues such as the quest for profit , the decrease in the number of reporters , and the end of aspiration for news quality would all be addressed , alongside the theme of homelessness . John Carroll of The Baltimore Sun was the model for the " craven , prize hungry " editor of the fictional newspaper .

Fifteen months after the fourth season concludes , Mayor Carcetti 's cuts in the police budget to redress the education deficit force the Marlo Stanfield investigation to shut down . Cedric Daniels secures a detail to focus on the prosecution of Senator Davis for corruption . Detective McNulty returns to the Homicide unit and decides to divert resources back to the police department by faking evidence to make it appear that a serial killer is murdering homeless men .

The Baltimore Sun also faces budget cuts and the newsroom struggles to adequately cover the city , omitting many important stories . Commissioner Burrell continues to falsify crime statistics and is fired by Carcetti , who positions Daniels to replace him .

Marlo Stanfield lures his enemy Omar Little out of retirement by having Omar 's mentor Butchie murdered . Proposition Joe teaches Stanfield how to launder money and evade investigation . Once

Joe is no longer useful to him , Stanfield has Joe killed with the help of Joe 's nephew Cheese Wagstaff and usurps his position with the Greeks and the New Day Co @-@ Op. Michael Lee continues working as a Stanfield enforcer , providing a home for his friend Dukie and younger brother Bug .

Omar returns to Baltimore seeking revenge , targeting Stanfield 's organization , stealing and destroying money and drugs and killing Stanfield enforcers in an attempt to force Stanfield into the open . However , he is eventually shot and killed by Kenard , a young Stanfield dealer .

Baltimore Sun reporter Scott Templeton claims to have been contacted by McNulty 's fake serial killer . City Editor Gus Haynes becomes suspicious , but his superiors are enamored of Templeton . The story gains momentum and Carcetti spins the resulting attention on homelessness into a key issue in his imminent campaign for Governor and restores funding to the police department .

Bubbles is recovering from his drug addiction while living in his sister 's basement . He is befriended by Sun reporter Mike Fletcher , who eventually writes a profile of Bubbles .

Bunk is disgusted with McNulty 's serial killer scheme and tries to have Lester Freamon reason with McNulty . Instead , Freamon helps McNulty perpetuate the lie and uses resources earmarked for the case to fund an illegal wiretap on Stanfield . Bunk resumes working the vacant house murders , leading to a murder warrant against Partlow for killing Michael 's stepfather .

Freamon and Leander Sydnor gather enough evidence to arrest Stanfield and most of his top lieutenants , seizing a large quantity of drugs . Stanfield suspects that Michael is an informant , and orders him killed . Michael realizes he is being set up and kills Snoop instead . A wanted man , he leaves Bug with an aunt and begins a career as a stick @-@ up man . With his support system gone , Dukie lives with drug addicts .

McNulty tells Kima Greggs about his fabrications to prevent her wasting time on the case . Greggs tells Daniels , who , along with Rhonda Pearlman , takes this news to Carcetti , who orders a cover @-@ up because of the issue 's importance to his campaign .

Davis is acquitted , but Freamon uses the threat of federal prosecution to blackmail him for information . Davis reveals Maurice Levy has a mole in the courthouse from whom he illegally purchases copies of sealed indictments . Herc tells Levy that the Stanfield case was probably based on an illegal wiretap , something which would jeopardize the entire case . After Levy reveals this to Pearlman , she uses Levy 's espionage to blackmail him into agreeing to a plea bargain for his defendants . Levy ensures Stanfield 's release on the condition that he permanently retires , while his subordinates will have to accept long sentences . Stanfield sells the connection to The Greeks back to the Co @-@ Op and plans to become a businessman , although he appears unable or unwilling to stay off the corner .

As the cover @-@ up begins , a copy @-@ cat killing occurs , but McNulty quickly identifies and arrests the culprit . Pearlman tells McNulty and Freamon that they can no longer be allowed to do investigative work and warns of criminal charges if the scandal becomes public . They opt to retire . Haynes attempts to expose Templeton but the managing editors ignore the fabrications and demote anyone critical of their star reporter . Carcetti pressures Daniels to falsify crime statistics to aid his campaign . Daniels refuses and then quietly resigns rather than have his FBI file leaked .

In a final montage , McNulty gazes over the city ; Freamon enjoys retirement ; Templeton wins a Pulitzer ; Carcetti becomes Governor ; Haynes is sidelined to the copy desk and replaced by Fletcher ; Campbell appoints Valchek as commissioner ; Carcetti appoints Rawls as Superintendent of the Maryland State Police ; Dukie continues to use heroin ; Michael becomes a stickup boy ; Pearlman becomes a judge and Daniels a defense attorney ; Bubbles is allowed upstairs where he enjoys a family dinner ; Chris serves his life sentence alongside Wee @-@ Bey ; the drug trade continues ; and the people of Baltimore go on with their lives .

= = = Prequel shorts = = =

During the fifth season , HBO produced three short prequels depicting moments in the history of characters in The Wire . The three prequels depict the first meeting between McNulty and Bunk ; Proposition Joe as a slick business kid ; and young Omar . The shorts are available on the complete

series DVD set .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

All seasons of *The Wire* have received positive reviews from many major television critics , several naming it the best contemporary show and one of the best drama series of all time . The first season received mainly positive reviews from critics , some even calling it superior to HBO 's better @-@ known " flagship " drama series such as *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* . On the review aggregation website Metacritic , the first season scored 78 out of 100 based on 22 reviews . One reviewer pointed to the retread of some themes from HBO and David Simon 's earlier works , but still found it valuable viewing and particularly resonant because it parallels the war on terror through the chronicling of the war on drugs . Another review postulated that the series might suffer because of its reliance on profanity and slowly drawn @-@ out plot , but was largely positive about the show 's characters and intrigue .

Despite the critical acclaim , *The Wire* received poor Nielsen ratings , which Simon attributed to the complexity of the plot ; a poor time slot ; heavy use of esoteric slang , particularly among the gangster characters ; and a predominantly black cast . Critics felt the show was testing the attention span of its audience and that it was mistimed in the wake of the launch of the successful crime drama *The Shield* on FX . However , anticipation for a release of the first season on DVD was high at *Entertainment Weekly* .

After the first two shows of season two , Jim Shelley (a British TV critic writing for *The Guardian*) called *The Wire* the best show on TV , praising the second season for its ability to detach from its former foundations in the first season . Jon Garelick with the *Boston Phoenix* was of the opinion that the subculture of the docks (second season) was not as absorbing as that of the housing projects (first season) , but he went on to praise the writers for creating a realistic world and populating it with an array of interesting characters .

The critical response to the third season remained positive . *Entertainment Weekly* named *The Wire* the best show of 2004 , describing it as " the smartest , deepest and most resonant drama on TV . " They credited the complexity of the show for its poor ratings . The *Baltimore City Paper* was so concerned that the show might be cancelled that it published a list of ten reasons to keep it on the air , including strong characterization , Omar Little , and an unabashedly honest representation of real world problems . It also worried that the loss of the show would have a negative impact on Baltimore 's economy .

At the close of the third season , *The Wire* was still struggling to maintain its ratings and the show faced possible cancellation . Creator David Simon blamed the show 's low ratings in part on its competition against *Desperate Housewives* and worried that expectations for HBO dramas had changed following the success of *The Sopranos* .

As the fourth season was about to begin , almost two years after the previous season 's end , Tim Goodman of the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that *The Wire* " has tackled the drug war in this country as it simultaneously explores race , poverty and ' the death of the American working class , ' the failure of political systems to help the people they serve , and the tyranny of lost hope . Few series in the history of television have explored the plight of inner @-@ city African Americans and none ? not one ? has done it as well . " Brian Lowry of *Variety* wrote at the time , " When television history is written , little else will rival ' *The Wire* . ' " The *New York Times* called the fourth season of *The Wire* " its best season yet . " Doug Elfman of the *Chicago Sun @-@ Times* was more reserved in his praise , calling it the " most ambitious " show on television , but faulting it for its complexity and the slow development of the plotline . The *Los Angeles Times* took the rare step of devoting an editorial to the show , stating that " even in what is generally acknowledged to be something of a golden era for thoughtful and entertaining dramas ? both on cable channels and on network TV ? *The Wire* stands out . " *TIME* magazine especially praised the fourth season , stating that " no other

TV show has ever loved a city so well , damned it so passionately , or sung it so searingly . " The website Metacritic , which gathers reviews from news sources and translates them into a percentage score , assigned The Wire 's fourth season a weighted average score of 98 % , the second highest score for any television season in Metacritic history (with the fifth season of Breaking Bad being the first) .

Several reviewers have called it the best show on television , including TIME , Entertainment Weekly , the Chicago Tribune , Slate , the San Francisco Chronicle , the Philadelphia Daily News and the British newspaper The Guardian , which ran a week @-@ by @-@ week blog following every episode , also collected in a book , The Wire Re @-@ up . Charlie Brooker , a columnist for The Guardian , has been particularly enthusiastic in his praise of the show , both in his " Screen Burn " column and in his BBC Four television series Screenwipe , calling it possibly the greatest show of the last 20 years . In 2007 , TIME listed it among the one hundred best television series of all @-@ time . In 2013 , the Writers Guild of America ranked The Wire as the ninth best written TV series . In 2013 , TV Guide ranked The Wire as the sixth greatest show of all time . In 2013 , Entertainment Weekly listed the show at # 6 in their list of the " 26 Best Cult TV Shows Ever , " describing it as " one of the most highly praised series in HBO history " and praising Michael K. Williams 's acting as Omar Little . Entertainment Weekly also named it the number one TV show of all @-@ time in a special issue in 2013 .

Critics have often described the show in literary terms : the New York Times calls it " literary television ; " TV Guide calls it " TV as great modern literature ; " the San Francisco Chronicle says the series " must be considered alongside the best literature and filmmaking in the modern era ; " and the Chicago Tribune says the show delivers " rewards not unlike those won by readers who conquer Joyce , Faulkner or Henry James . " ' The Wire Files ' , an online collection of articles published in darkmatter Journal , critically analyzes The Wire 's racialized politics and aesthetics of representation . Entertainment Weekly put it on its end @-@ of @-@ the @-@ decade , " best @-@ of " list , saying , " The deft writing ? which used the cop @-@ genre format to give shape to creator David Simon 's scathing social critiques ? was matched by one of the deepest benches of acting talent in TV history . "

President of the United States Barack Obama has said that The Wire is his favorite television series . The 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature Laureate , Mario Vargas Llosa , wrote a very positive critical review of the series in the Spanish journal El País . The comedian turned mayor of Reykjavík , Iceland , Jón Gnarr , has gone so far as to say that he would not enter a coalition government with anyone who has not watched the series .

Robert Kirkman , creator of The Walking Dead , is a strong follower of The Wire ; he has tried to cast as many actors from it into the television series of the same name as possible , so far having cast Chad Coleman , Lawrence Gilliard , Jr . , and Seth Gilliam .

= = = Awards = = =

The Wire was nominated for , and won a wide variety of awards , including nominations for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing in a Drama Series for " Middle Ground " and " ? 30 ? " , nominations for the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Drama Series in each of its five seasons ; and nominations for the Television Critics Association Awards (TCA) , and Writers Guild of America Awards (WGA) .

Most of the awards the series won were in seasons 4 and 5 . These included TCA 's Heritage Award for season 5 and WGA 's Award for Best Dramatic Series for season 4 , plus Crime Thriller , Eddie , Edgar , Directors Guild of America , and Irish Film and Television awards . The series also won ASCAP , Peabody and Artios awards for season 2 .

The series won the Broadcasting & Cable critics poll for Best Drama (season 4) and won Time 's critics choice for top television show for seasons 1 and 3 .

Despite the above mentioned awards and unanimous critical approval , The Wire never won a Primetime Emmy Award nor received any major nominations . Several critics recognized its lack of recognition by the Emmys . According to a report by Variety , anonymous Emmy voters cited

reasons such as the series ' dense and multilayered plot , the grim subject matter , and the series ' lack of connection with California , as it is set and filmed in Baltimore .

= = = Academia = = =

In the years following the end of the series ' run , several colleges and universities such as Johns Hopkins , Brown University , and Harvard College have offered classes on The Wire in disciplines ranging from law to sociology to film studies . Phillips Academy , a boarding high school in Massachusetts , offers a similar course as well . University of Texas at San Antonio offers a course where the series is taught as a work of literary fiction . In an article published in The Washington Post , Anmol Chaddha and William Julius Wilson explain why Harvard chose The Wire as curriculum material for their course on urban inequality : " Though scholars know that deindustrialization , crime and prison , and the education system are deeply intertwined , they must often give focused attention to just one subject in relative isolation , at the expense of others . With the freedom of artistic expression , The Wire can be more creative . It can weave together the range of forces that shape the lives of the urban poor . " University of York 's Head of Sociology , Roger Burrows , said in The Independent that the show " makes a fantastic contribution to their understanding of contemporary urbanism " , and is " a contrast to dry , dull , hugely expensive studies that people carry out on the same issues " . The series is also studied as part of a Master seminar series at the Paris West University Nanterre La Défense . In February 2012 , Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek gave a lecture at Birkbeck , University of London titled The Wire or the clash of civilisations in one country . In April 2012 , Norwegian academic Erlend Lavik posted online a 36 @-@ minute video essay called " Style in The Wire " which analyzes the various visual techniques used by the show 's directors over the course of its five seasons .

The Wire has also been the subject of growing numbers of academic articles by , amongst others , Fredric Jameson (who praised the series ' ability to weave utopian thinking into its realist representation of society) ; and Leigh Claire La Berge , who argues that although the less realistic character of season five was received negatively by critics , it gives the series a platform not only for representing reality , but for representing how realism is itself a construct of social forces like the media ; both commentators see in The Wire an impulse for progressive political change rare in mass media productions . While most academics have used " The Wire " as a cultural object or case study , Benjamin Leclair @-@ Paquet has instead argued that the " creative methods behind HBO 's The Wire evoke original ways to experiment with speculative work that reveal the merit of the imaginary as a pragmatic research device . " This author posits that the methods behind The Wire is particularly relevant for contentious urban and architectural projects .

= = Broadcasters = =

HBO aired the five seasons of the show in 2002 , 2003 , 2004 , 2006 , and 2008 , respectively . New episodes were shown once a week , occasionally skipping one or two weeks in favor of other programming . Starting with the fourth season , subscribers to the HBO On Demand service were able to see each episode of the season six days earlier . American basic cable network BET also aired the show . BET adds commercial breaks , blurs some nudity , and mutes some profanity . Much of the waterfront storyline from the second season is edited out from the BET broadcasts .

The series was remastered in 16 : 9 HD in late 2014 , and the HD remasters debuted on HBO Signature , airing the entire series consecutively , and on HBO GO on December 26 , 2014 . The HD versions became available for purchase on various digital platforms on January 5 , 2015 , and was released on Blu @-@ ray on June 2 , 2015 .

In the United Kingdom , the show has been broadcast on FX , and aired on terrestrial television on BBC Two . Although controversially it was broadcast at 11 : 20 pm and had no BBC iPlayer catchup available . In a world first , British newspaper The Guardian made the first episode of the first season available to stream on its website for a brief period . In Ireland , all episodes were aired on public service channel TG4 approximately 6 months after the original air dates on HBO . The series

became available in Canada in a remastered 16 : 9 HD format on streaming service CraveTV in late 2014 .

= = Home media releases = =

The DVD sets have been favorably received , though some critics have faulted them for a lack of special features .

The series was remastered in 16 : 9 HD in late 2014 , became available on iTunes , and was released as a complete series Blu @-@ ray box set on June 2 , 2015 .