

= True Detective (season 1) =

The first season of True Detective , an American anthology crime drama television series created by Nic Pizzolatto , premiered on January 12 , 2014 on the premium cable network HBO . Its principal cast consisted of Matthew McConaughey , Woody Harrelson , Michelle Monaghan , Michael Potts , and Tory Kittles . The season had eight episodes ; its initial airing concluded on March 9 , 2014 .

Engineered as a flashback narrative , the season focuses on the lives of Louisiana State Police homicide detectives Rustin " Rust " Cohle (McConaughey) and Martin " Marty " Hart (Harrelson) . Over a seventeen @-@ year period , they must recount the investigation into the murder of prostitute Dora Lange and the histories of several other unsolved crimes , the perpetrator of which remains at large . During this time , Hart 's personal problems threaten his marriage to Maggie (Monaghan) , and Cohle struggles to cope with his troubled past . The season explores masculinity and Christianity , and the show 's portrayal of women and the influences of horror and comic literature on its main narrative have been the subject of analysis .

Pizzolatto initially conceived True Detective as a novel , but felt it was more suitable for television . The episodes , directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga , were filmed in Louisiana over a three @-@ month period . The series received overwhelmingly positive reviews from critics and was cited as one of the strongest dramas of the 2014 television season . It was a candidate for numerous television awards , including a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Drama Series and a Golden Globe Award for Best Miniseries or Television Film , and won several other honors recognizing its writing , cinematography , direction , and acting .

= = Episodes = =

= = Cast = =

= = = Main cast = = =

Matthew McConaughey as Detective Rustin " Rust " Cohle
Woody Harrelson as Detective Martin Hart
Michelle Monaghan as Maggie Hart
Michael Potts as Detective Maynard Gilbough
Tory Kittles as Detective Thomas Papania

= = = Recurring cast = = =

= = Production = =

= = = Conception = = =

Before creating True Detective , Nic Pizzolatto had worked as a literature professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill , DePauw University , and the University of Chicago . He developed a fascination for fiction writing while attending graduate school at the University of Arkansas ; inspired by HBO 's series The Wire , The Sopranos , and Deadwood , he began working on a short story collection that he later published as Between Here and the Yellow Sea in 2006 . Several years later , he wrote a full @-@ length novel titled Galveston (2010) , and around the same time he began preparing to write for television ; his earlier attempts were unsuccessful because of a lack of money .

Pizzolatto was appointed as a screenwriter for AMC 's series The Killing in 2011 . He credits the

show with giving him a glimpse of the inner workings of the television industry . Pizzolatto grew increasingly dissatisfied with the series ' creative direction , and left the writing staff two weeks into its second season .

True Detective was originally intended to be the follow @-@ up to *Galveston* , but once the project took definite form , Pizzolatto thought it was more suitable on screen . The writer pitched *Galveston* to two executives , and from May to July 2010 he developed six screenplays , including an early , 90 @-@ page draft of the pilot episode script . He wrote another script for the series shortly after his departure from *The Killing* , thanks in part to the support of the production company Anonymous Content . Pizzolatto did not hire a writing staff at this point because he believed such an approach would not yield the desired result . The final copy of the project script was 500 pages long . Pizzolatto secured a development deal with HBO for a potential pilot series early on , and by April 2012 , the network had commissioned eight episodes of *True Detective* .

= = = Casting and crew = = =

Pizzolatto began contemplating the lead roles while he was pitching the series to networks in early 2012 . *True Detective* 's anthology format allowed him the freedom to employ film stars " because they 'd only be committed to one season " . Woody Harrelson and Matthew McConaughey were among the actors Pizzolatto considered for star billing . McConaughey , who had recently finished filming *Killer Joe* (2011) , was contracted well before HBO commissioned the season . Impressed with his performance in *The Lincoln Lawyer* (2011) , Pizzolatto at first assigned him to play Hart but McConaughey convinced him to give him the part of Cohle . When asked in a *Variety* interview about his decision to switch parts , the actor 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 for the role , McConaughey created a 450 @-@ page analysis ? the " Four Stages of Rustin Cohle " ? to study his character 's evolution during the season .

Harrelson was the season 's next significant casting , brought on to play Hart at McConaughey 's request . Harrelson , who joined *True Detective* in part because of the people involved in the project , had previously worked with HBO in the 2012 film *Game Change* . Michelle Monaghan agreed to play the season 's female lead , Maggie , once she realized her character arc and " really saw where these characters went " . Michael Potts and Tory Kittles completed the principal cast , playing detectives Maynard Gilbough and Thomas Papania , respectively . Major supporting roles in *True Detective* 's first season include Kevin Dunn as Major Ken Quesada , Alexandra Daddario as Lisa Tragnetti , and Brad Carter as Charlie Lange .

Pizzolatto narrowed his search for a suitable director down to Alejandro González Iñárritu and Cary Joji Fukunaga , the latter of whom he knew from Anonymous Content . Fukunaga was formally appointed as director after Iñárritu pulled out of the project because of film commitments . In preparation for his services , he carried out research with a homicide detective of the Louisiana State Police 's Criminal Investigations Division to develop an accurate depiction of a 1990s homicide detective 's work . Fukunaga recruited Adam Arkapaw , director of photography of *Top of the Lake* , as project cinematographer . Arkapaw came to the director 's attention for his work in *Animal Kingdom* (2010) and *Snowtown* (2011) , and was hired after the two men negotiated a deal at a meeting in San Francisco . Alex DiGerlando , who Fukunaga had worked with on *Ben-Hur* 's *Glory at Sea* in 2008 , was appointed as the production designer . Fukunaga said 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 " .

= = = Filming = = =

Initially , *True Detective* 's first season was due to shoot in Arkansas , but Pizzolatto later chose to film in Louisiana to take advantage of state tax incentives and the area 's distinctive landscape : "

There 's a contradictory nature to the place and a sort of sinister quality underneath it all ... [e] 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 . " Principal photography consumed three months (between 100 and 110 days) , from January to June 2013 . Approximately five minutes of film was shot per day . The crew constructed various set pieces , among them being a scorched chapel , Joel Theriot 's tent revival , and the Louisiana State Criminal Investigations Division offices , the last of which they built inside an abandoned lightbulb warehouse near Elmwood . For the Dora Lange crime scene , production filmed exterior shots at a remote sugarcane field outside Erath which , because it was partially burned , inspired a " moody and atmospheric " backdrop for corresponding scenes . Other filming locations include the old Kenner High School campus and Fort Macomb , a nineteenth @-@ century fort outside New Orleans .

Fukunaga took cues from David Lynch 's Twin Peaks to adapt his filming style for TV . The entire season was shot on 35 mm film , which the crew chose to achieve " a slightly nostalgic " quality . Scenes were filmed using a Panavision Millennium XL2 camera , but the choice of lensing depended on the period from which said scenes took place . Those that were set in 1995 and 2002 were captured with Panavision PVintage lenses . They produced a soft quality in its imaging because they were made of recycled low contrast glass . As these scenes were written as a reflection of Cohle and Hart 's memory , production sought to make them as cinematic as possible , to reflect " the fragmentation of their lucid imaginations back through their past " . To achieve this , they relied on 40 mm lenses to exaggerate composition . The 2012 scenes were shot with Panavision Primo lenses : the visual palette in comparison was sharper and had much more contrast , creating a modern aesthetic and helping " pull characters out from their environments to hopefully help audiences get inside their heads " .

= = = Art design = = =

Joshua Walsh was responsible for creating True Detective 's artwork . His work for the show consists of over 100 individual " devil 's nests " ? twig sculptures ? in addition to wall paintings and miniature , Munch @-@ like men made of beer cans , among others . According to DiGerlando , Walsh 's interests in hunting and taxidermy made him " the perfect dude for the job " . A blueprint for the twig sculptures was not well established in the script , so the duo went with a tripod structure , which when put on its side , would naturally spiral at the base . Many had cross @-@ members linking each side , sometimes resembling a ladder , though each design had subtle differences from one another . Henry Darger and James Charles Castle were cited as strong stylistic influences on Walsh 's early work . DiGerlando wanted the sculptures to look primitive , to reveal the workings of a man with " some deep inner urge to express himself , and he does it through these murders and these constructions . " As such , Walsh built devil 's nests using mud , disposable children 's clothing , reeds , roots , and other materials he felt the antagonist would use himself .

The creation of the season 's title sequence was a collaboration between director Patrick Clair and his Santa Monica @-@ based studio Elastic , Clair 's Sydney @-@ based studio Antibody , and Brisbane @-@ based company Breeder . Pizzolatto and Fukunaga wanted the team to emphasize southern Louisiana 's remote landscape , which juxtaposes many of the characters ' traits and personal , inner struggles . Clair stated that from the start he had an " unusually clear " vision of True Detective 's finished opening sequence . Using Richard Misrach 's Petrochemical America (2012) as a template , the production team initially photographed the local scenery , which were woven together to form the core of the title sequence . By the time production began animating , they had faced several problems : photographic stills were too grainy and footage was too jagged . As a result , many shots were digitally altered and slowed to about a tenth of their original speed , which , according to Clair , " evoked a surreal and floaty mood that perfectly captured what we were after " .

Creation of a 3D effect required the design team to use an assortment of low poly meshes . Using a variety of animation and special effects techniques , these images were later superimposed " with painstaking care " to avoid a sterile , digitized look . Clair said , " The most crucial thing to me was

that this didn't feel digital , so we went to great lengths to incorporate as much organic imagery as possible " . For some stills , the design team created digital doubles to develop more texture . The sequence 's final cut was polished using optical glitching and motion distortion techniques . Season one 's opening theme is " Far From Any Road " , an alternative country song originally composed by The Handsome Family for their 2003 album *Singing Bones* . The Sydney Morning Herald included the opening sequence in its list of the " Ten of the Best " title sequences on television .

= = = Music = = =

The True Detective soundtrack features a compilation of gospel and blues music , which were selected by Pizzolatto and T Bone Burnett . The pair opposed the use of Cajun music and swamp blues for the season 's musical score because " it 's already been done so much " . Burnett said the score was intended to be character @-@ driven , rather than inspired by other crime fiction drama . Songs by Bo Diddley , The Staple Singers , Grinderman , Vashti Bunyan , Townes Van Zandt , and Captain Beefheart appear in season one . Burnett also composed original pieces with Cassandra Wilson and Rhiannon Giddens , the latter of whom used a Swarmatron synthesizer . HBO released an abridged soundtrack album , featuring 14 tracks from True Detective 's first two seasons , on August 14 , 2015 through physical media and iTunes .

= = Themes and influences = =

Commentators noted the appearance of masculinity within True Detective , especially as it pertains to its portrayal of women . Christopher Lirette of Southern Spaces said the show was about " men living in a brutally masculine world " and as such , women are depicted as " things @-@ to @-@ be @-@ saved and erotic obstacles " for said men , similar to *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Chinatown* (1974) . Slate 's Willa Paskin said True Detective 's depiction of its female characters as sex workers , the deceased , and " a nagging wife " , emphasized the " blinkered worldview and the very masculine , Southern cop culture they inhabited " . Some commentators saw Hart 's characterization as a manifestation of this idea , evident through his conventional views of women as virgins and whores , as well as his treatment of Maggie and Audrey . For example , when Hart confronts the two men who had sex with Audrey , he is in essence " charging other men a price for infringing on the daughter he sees , in a muddled way , as both deserving of protection and badly in need of being controlled . " In her analysis of season one , Salon 's Janet Turley said women " become reflections of the men " , given the True Detective universe is observed through the lenses of the show 's male leads . Sam Adams of Indiewire contended that the season 's central story focused on " the horrible things men do to women " , many of which are never reported or investigated by authorities . Adams wrote , " No one missed Dora Lange . Marie Fontenot disappeared , and the police let a rumor stop them from following up " . Furthermore , he observed that the role of women is only more profound because Cohle is made to suffer by virtue of his ex @-@ wife and deceased daughter , and Hart is unable to " deal appropriately with the women who are there " . John Semley from Esquire argued that a significant part of the show 's thematic center was alcohol , which functions as a " measure of manliness " that reinvigorates its male characters .

True Detective also explores Christianity and the dichotomy between religion and rationality . Born into a devout Catholic household , Pizzolatto said that as a child he saw religion as storytelling that acts " as an escape from the truth " . According to The Daily Beast , the season alludes to Pizzolatto 's childhood and creates a parallel between Christianity and supernatural theology . " Both ... are stories . Stories people tell themselves to escape reality . Stories that ' violate every law of the universe . ' " It said this message is not critical of religion per se but religious zeal " can wind [you] up in some pretty sick places " . Jeff Jensen from Entertainment Weekly said the show becomes more self @-@ aware through Cohle 's harsh critiques of religion , which he viewed as a vehicle for commentary " about pop culture escapism " . The philosopher and author Finn Janning argued that Cohle 's evolution illustrates an affinity between Buddhism and pessimism . A self @-@ proclaimed pessimist , Cohle is eventually changed by a near @-@ death experience in the season finale , in

which he has an epiphany seeing death as " pure love " ; this echoes the Buddhist concept of rigpa .

Critics have offered many readings of the influence of weird and horror fiction on True Detective 's narrative , specifically Robert W. Chambers ' short story collection *The King in Yellow* (1895) and Thomas Ligotti , as well as nihilism and pessimism . Allusions to *The King in Yellow* can be observed through the show 's dark underbelly , its recurring use of " Carcosa " and " The Yellow King " as motifs throughout the series , and its symbolic use of yellow as a thematic signature that signifies insanity , decadence , and mental illness . The similarities between Ligotti 's work and True Detective became the center of a plagiarism scandal , in which Pizzolatto was accused of plagiarizing texts from *The Conspiracy Against the Human Race* (2010) . Other philosophers and writers identified as influences include Arthur Schopenhauer , Ray Brassier , Emil Cioran , and Eugene Thacker . The Atlantic said True Detective was " Fincherian in the best sense " , a fusion of *Se7en* (1995) and *Zodiac* (2007) , because of its subject matter , sleek cinematography , and " vivid , unsettling " aura .

Some commentators noted further influences from comic book literature . Adams likened Cohle to the protagonist of Alan Moore 's *The Courtyard* and drew parallels with Grant Morrison 's *The Invisibles* for the show 's brief exploration of M @-@ theory with one of Cohle 's monologues . ComicsAlliance and New York columnist Abraham Riesman cited Top 10 as the inspiration for the season finale based on dialogue from the episode 's closing scene .

= = Reception = =

= = = Viewership = = =

True Detective debuted to 2 @.@ 3 million U.S. viewers , becoming HBO 's highest rated series premiere since the pilot episode of *Boardwalk Empire* . Ratings remained steady and peaked at the finale , which drew 3 @.@ 5 million viewers . Overall , season one averaged 2 @.@ 33 million viewers , and its average gross audience (which includes DVR recordings , reruns , and HBO Go streaming) totaled 11 @.@ 9 million viewers per episode , thus becoming HBO 's highest rated freshman show in 13 years .

= = = Reviews = = =

The American press considered True Detective to be among the best television shows of 2014 . On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes , the first season garnered a rating of 85 percent based on 65 reviews , with an average rating of 8 @.@ 5 out of 10 . The site 's critical consensus says , " In True Detective , performances by Woody Harrelson and Matthew McConaughey reel the viewer in , while the style , vision and direction make it hard to turn away . " On Metacritic , season one has a score of 87 out of 100 , based on 41 critics , indicating " universal acclaim " .

The Daily Telegraph critic Chris Harvey declared True Detective " the most ambitious TV drama for a long time " . Tim Goodman , writing for The Hollywood Reporter , identified the acting , dialogue , and sleek production as its most satisfying attributes . HitFix 's Alan Sepinwall agreed and said these qualities " speak to the value of the hybrid anthology format Pizzolatto is using here ... points to a potentially fascinating shift in dramatic series television " . In his review for Vanity Fair , Richard Lawson said the season successfully marries Fukunaga 's " portentous , heavy " sensibilities with Pizzolatto 's script , producing " a captivating and offbeat tweak of a well @-@ worn genre " . Andrew Romano in his review for The Daily Beast felt the first half of the season forms " one of the most riveting and provocative series I 've ever seen " , and by the fourth episode , Christopher Orr of The Atlantic called True Detective " the best show on TV " .

The ensemble performances , chiefly those of McConaughey and Harrelson , were frequently mentioned in the critiques . Robert Bianco in USA Today wrote that the pair met , and occasionally exceeded , the " enormously high " performance expectations of the " golden age of TV acting " .

David Wiegand of San Francisco Chronicle thought the two men were " in a class of their own " , and Los Angeles Times journalist Robert Lloyd felt their work was of " a very high order " . The Boston Globe singled out Monaghan for her work on the show , as did Todd VanDerWerff from The A.V. Club , who wrote , " while her role is more thankless , she invests it with spirit " . Variety 's Brian Lowry said the True Detective cast consisted of " fine players on the periphery " . RedEye , The Independent , and The Guardian also praised the ensemble performances .

Some reviews were not as enthusiastic as the consensus about the season . The New York Times journalist Mike Hale and Slant Magazine believed the script too readily deferred to religion as its narrative backbone . Gerald Peary of The Arts Fuse cited the writing as the show 's main flaw , so too did Michael Starr from the New York Post , whose opinion was that its pacing was " at times downright glacial " . Hank Steuver of The Washington Post said True Detective failed to realize its own ambition , while Grantland 's Andy Greenwald said despite its " radical and forward thinking " form , its narrative was " anything but " . Emily Nussbaum from The New Yorker commended the show 's fluid style but condemned its portrayal of women , which she claimed revels in " macho nonsense " . James Poniewozik of Time wrote that , despite having strong characters in Cohle and Hart , " everyone around them is much more flat " .

= = = Accolades = = =

As the nominations for the 66th Primetime Emmy Awards approached , early media reports named True Detective among several potential miniseries candidates , due to a revision made by the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences that recognized film and miniseries content as distinct categories . By March 2014 , HBO had submitted True Detective as a drama series contender , an unconventional move given the show 's anthology format and fierce competition from the likes of Breaking Bad and House of Cards . HBO 's decision was censured by FX president John Landgraf , who remarked to reporters at a press event : " My own personal point of view is that a miniseries is a story that ends , a series is a story that continues . To tell you the truth , I think it 's actually unfair for HBO to put True Detective in the drama series category because essentially you can get certain actors to do a closed @-@ ended series ? a la Billy Bob Thornton in Fargo or Matthew McConaughey and Woody Harrelson in True Detective ? who you can ? t get to sign on for a seven @-@ year [regular drama series] deal . " Nevertheless , True Detective emerged as a frontrunner heading into the Primetime Emmy season , and in July 2014 , was nominated for twelve awards ; its closest rival , Breaking Bad , received sixteen nominations . The series ultimately won five Emmy awards : Outstanding Directing (Fukunaga) , Outstanding Casting , Outstanding Main Title Design , Outstanding Make @-@ Up , and Outstanding Cinematography .

In total , True Detective was a candidate for thirty @-@ seven awards recognizing outstanding achievement in direction , cinematography , writing , and acting ? including a Golden Globe for Best Miniseries or Television Film and a TCA Award for Program of the Year . Of the thirty @-@ seven nominations , the show scooped up twenty @-@ four wins , among them being a British Academy Television Award (BAFTA) for Best International Programme , a Writers Guild of America Award in the Dramatic Series category , and a Critics ' Choice Television Award for Best Actor in a Drama Series (McConaughey) .

= = Home media release = =

On June 10 , 2014 , HBO Home Entertainment released the first season of True Detective on DVD and Blu @-@ ray Disc formats . In addition to the eight episodes , both formats contain bonus content including interviews with McConaughey and Harrelson , Pizzolatto , and composer Burnett on the show 's development ; " Inside the Episode " featurettes ; two audio commentaries ; and deleted scenes from the season .