# [**It's Past Time for Benson and Stabler to Get Together on 'Law & Order'**](https://collider.com/olivia-bensons-most-intense-law-order-svu-episodes/)

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The franchise needs to move past the famous will they/won't they story.

**Image via NBC**

The [***Law & Order***](https://collider.com/tag/law-and-order/) franchise is known for depicting grisly crimes and the moral complexities of the American criminal justice system. But it also has plenty of good old-fashioned relationship drama. Its most complicated interpersonal dynamic is the one between Olivia Benson (**Mariska Hargitay**) and Elliot Stabler (**Christopher Meloni**), from [***Law and Order: Special Victims Unit***](https://collider.com/tag/law-and-order-svu/) and its spin-off ***Law and Order: Organized Crime***. The latter show just dropped a major hint that the pair could be headed towards finally becoming a romantic couple after one of the longest will they/won’t they periods in TV history. But as exciting as the tease was, it also emphasizes that the franchise’s slow-burning approach to the relationship is becoming more frustrating than interesting.

Close



*Organized Crime* just completed a two-episode story arc in which Elliot was reunited with Tia Leonetti (**Ayelet Zurer**), an Interpol agent he knows from his time working as a New York Police Department liaison in Italy. After they finished investigating a case together Tia came over to Elliot’s apartment late at night, obviously hoping to seduce him and maybe even start a romantic relationship. The two did wake up hung over the next morning, but they did not sleep together, instead spending the night talking, with a drunken Elliot revealing that he is in love with another woman. However, Tia had so much to drink she can’t remember the woman’s name, and Elliot claims not to either. But fans of the franchise know this could only be referring to Olivia.

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## **The History of Benson and Stabler**

**Image via NBC**

[**Olivia and Elliot**](https://collider.com/best-tv-detectives-21st-century-ranked/) were introduced as main characters in the first season of *SVU* back in 1999. They were partner detectives in the Manhattan Special Victims Unit, which investigates sexual violence and similar crimes. It is implied that they have been working together for some time before the earliest events of the series, as they already have a strong, effective professional partnership and close personal friendship. Elliot has a wife named Kathy (**Isabel Gillies**) and four children, but his dedication to his job and the effects of the brutal crimes he deals with put a strain on his family relationships. Olivia struggles to develop a fulfilling personal life for similar reasons and in the early days of the series, her partnership with Elliot seemed to be the easiest, most comfortable dynamic in both of their lives.

However, as the years went on, their bond also caused problems at their jobs and in their personal lives, with Kathy and some of the Stabler kids fearing that Elliot was having or would eventually have an affair with Olivia. The various stresses in their marriage led Kathy and Elliot to officially separate for a time. Olivia also at one point asked for a new partner, fearing that continuing to work together would damage her personal relationship with Elliot. Elliot managed to reconcile with both of them, and although the sexual and romantic tension between him and Olivia remained, their dynamic and Olivia’s with the rest of the Stablers healed, with her even saving Kathy’s life and helping deliver her and Elliot’s fifth child, Eli, after the two of them were in a horrific car crash.

Meloni departed *SVU* after the twelfth season following failed contract negotiations. Fortunately, the season finale provided a suitably dramatic reason for the character to exit. When Jenna Ortega (**Hayley McFarland**), the daughter of a murder victim, encountered her mother’s killer in the SVU headquarters she drew a gun and killed him. After doing so, she seemed to panic and continued firing wildly, forcing Elliot to shoot and kill her to protect himself and the rest of the precinct. In the Season 13 premiere, Captain Cragen (**Dann Florek**) told Olivia that despite being cleared of wrongdoing in the internal investigation of the shooting, Elliot decided to retire from the NYPD.

His departure profoundly upset Olivia, and the series continued to reference their partnership and his departure frequently, even as Olivia formed connections with new colleagues like Nick Amaro (**Danny Pino**) and [**Amanda Rollins (Kelli Giddish)**](https://collider.com/law-and-order-svu-season-24-kelli-giddish-exits/). One of the most significant mentions of Elliot after he left came in the episode “Acceptable Loss” when Olivia worked with Alexandra Eames, with **Kathryn Erbe** reprising her role from ***Law and Order: Criminal Intent***. Eames reflected on her own partnership with Bobby Goren (**Vincent D’Onofrio**), which was somewhat similar to Elliot and Olivia’s, saying, “All that time together, it’s like we were married,” to which Olivia sadly replies “But you weren’t."

## **Stabler's Return to the 'Law & Order' Franchise**

**Image via NBC**

Meloni’s return to the franchise and *Organized Crime* were announced in 2020. Elliot first reappeared in the *SVU* Season 22 episode, “Return of the Prodigal Son," which set up the premise of *OC*. He and Kathy had returned to New York to surprise Olivia at an awards dinner, where she was being honored, when they are caught in a bombing attack, with Kathy sustaining life-threatening injuries. After being shocked to see them at the crime scene, Olivia works with Elliot to find the perpetrators, but the attack proves to be part of an elaborate conspiracy. Although Olivia is not eager to discuss it, Elliot begins explaining why he left without saying anything. Olivia replies by telling him how hurt she was, as at that point he was the “single most important person in my life.” Their professional relationship is also strained, with Elliot’s tendency to break police rules threatening Olivia’s reputation in her new position as Captain.

Kathy dies and Elliot continues to seek justice for her murder on *OC*, joining the Organized Crime Control Bureau. Eventually, it is revealed that the attack was orchestrated by Richard (**Dylan McDermott**) and Angela Wheatley (**Tamara Taylor**), mobsters whose organization Elliot was investigating in Italy after he came out of retirement. *OC* and *SVU* have staged frequent crossovers since the former started, with Olivia and Elliot working cases together, and Olivia helping Elliot process the trauma of Kathy’s death while they also mend their relationship.

## **There's No Reason for Benson and Stabler Not to Take Their Relationship to the Next Level**

**Image via NBC**

The duo is in a much better place in the series’ current seasons (*OC*’s third and *SVU*’s 24th). The Wheatleys have been presumed dead and the season-opening crossover, “Gimme Shelter” (which also included the original ***Law and Order*** series), showed Elliot and Olivia functioning as an effective crime-fighting team again. They’ve also gotten their personal dynamic back to a healthy place, and Elliot has had sufficient time to mourn Kathy, so there really isn’t any in-universe reason why the pair can’t get together romantically anymore.

The constant delaying of the seemingly inevitable coupling is getting frustrating for fans, especially as both series frequently tease it in scenes like the one with Tia. Mounting a full-blown love story between characters who now star on different shows sounds difficult, but wouldn’t actually require Meloni or Hargitay to appear on one another’s series much more often than they already do. The big problem is that each show seems to have different interpretations of the characters’ dynamic.

Since Elliot’s return, *SVU* has often implied that despite the strength of their bond he might actually be a bad influence on Olivia, threatening the personal and professional progress she made in his absence. *OC*, on the other hand, believes their relationship and a potential romance can have nothing but positive effects. The snail’s pace of the relationship’s development begins to look even sillier when *SVU*’s other big love story, between Rollins and Sonny Carisi (**Peter Scanavino**), has developed from inception to what appears to be an upcoming marriage in a comparatively short eight years.

The creators of the shows need to get on the same page and commit to actually exploring a romance. It’s not like putting Elliot and Olivia together will remove all conflict from their dynamic. They would have plenty of challenges to navigate while balancing actually being in a relationship with their jobs. That could be just as interesting as the question of whether they’ll ever actually get together has been. And they don’t ultimately have to stay together if the story calls for them to eventually separate, but there needs to be some kind of payoff to what is now nearly a quarter-century's worth of teasing and development.

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# **Olivia Benson’s 6 Most Intense ‘Law & Order- SVU’ Episodes, According to NBC**

**BY**[**OMAR AZIMI**](https://collider.com/author/omar-azimi/)

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"Some things, you can put them behind you, but they do change you."

Since [***Law & Order: SVU***](https://collider.com/tag/law-and-order-svu/)’s debut in 1999, [**Mariska Hargitay**](https://collider.com/tag/mariska-hargitay/) has portrayed the beloved character of Olivia Benson. Hargitay has portrayed Benson initially as a detective of NYPD’s SVU division, then becoming the captain of the same division in season 21.

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A compassionate advocate for victims, Benson ensures that survivors are treated with care and empathy. Hargitay also portrays Benson with a fierceness who ensures criminals are brought to swift justice. Through her years in the SVU squad room, Benson has seen it all and has had to deal with intense, shocking, and exceptional cases. Hargitay’s performance as Benson has rightfully earned her the title as television’s longest-running detective.

## **Season 6, Episode 4, "Scavenger"**

In the season 6 episode, “Scavenger,” the SVU is tasked with hunting down a serial killer throughout the city who leaves clues on his victims, similar to the Zodiac Killer. Benson and Stabler ([**Christopher Melon**](https://collider.com/tag/christopher-meloni/)i) are forced to solve riddles and puzzles and eventually discover that the murders are being committed by a copycat of the original ‘RDK’ murders. Benson and Stabler must race against the clock when they discover that the copycat killer has kidnaped one of RDK’s original victims and buried her alive.

In their attempts to catch the serial killer, Benson and Stabler are engaged in an intense, nail-biting game of cat-and-mouse. The clues and riddles left by the killer continually raise the stakes, and the intensity only goes higher when the detectives must find his latest victim before the oxygen tank runs out.

## **Season 7, Episode 3, "911"**

In the season 7 episode, “911,” Benson receives a routed 911 call from a child who the squad is unable to track, leading them to believe that the call is a hoax. Against Captain Cragen’s (**Dann Florek**) advice and orders, Benson stays on the phone with the little girl, who becomes increasingly lethargic and frightened.

The episode’s increasing tension and pressure to find the missing girl keeps the viewer on the edge of their seat. The episode earned Hargitay an Emmy for her performance and is undoubtedly one of SVU’s best episodes.

## **Season 9, Episode 9, "Paternity"**

In the season 9 episode, “Paternity,” Stabler goes out of town, leaving Benson with his pregnant wife Kathy (**Isabel Gillies**). Kathy and Benson get into a life-threatening car crash, trapping Kathy in their car, and causing Kathy to go into premature labor. Shaken but undeterred, Benson manages to take back control of the dangerous situation by safely delivering Kathy and Stabler’s baby.

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Although the episode ends with Kathy safely in the hospital, the tension is rampant in the scene where Kathy gives birth and subsequently loses consciousness. The episode is full of action, both physically and mentally, and is one of the most memorable SVU episodes.

## **Season 13, Episode 1, "Scorched Earth"**

In the season 13 episode, “Scorched Earth,” Benson finds herself with two new detectives in the squad room, Rollins (**Kelli Giddish**) and Amaro (**Danny Pino**), after Stabler’s (and Meloni’s) departure from the SVU following the devastating shootout that occurred in the precinct in the season 12 finale. At the end of the episode, Cragen informs Benson that Stabler has filed his papers and effectively resigned from the SVU.

This episode marked the first episode without Stabler’s presence and sees a surprisingly emotional moment from Benson. Normally a tough, yet compassionate detective, it was difficult to watch Benson quietly sob at the news of her partner’s resignation. It wouldn’t be until the series premiere of [***Law & Order: Organized Crime***](https://collider.com/law-order-special-vicitms-unit-organized-crime-crossover-nbc/) that Benson and Stabler would reunite.

## **Season 15, Episode 1, "Surrender Benson"**

In the season 15 episode, “Surrender Benson,” Benson finds the tables turned on her when she is kidnapped by William Lewis ([**Pablo Schreiber**](https://collider.com/tag/pablo-schreiber/)). Arguably one of the worst villains of the show, Lewis forcibly drugs and intoxicates Benson and emotionally, physically, and mentally tortures her. Lewis takes them to a remote cabin in the woods where he continues to taunt her until Benson regains the upper hand where she nearly beats him to death.

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In a stunning turn where Benson normally finds herself as the one consoling victims, she finds herself on the other end fighting for her survival. The episode sees Benson nearly snap and murder Lewis and the trauma the experience inflicts on her.

## **Season 15, Episode 20, "Beast’s Obsession"**

In the season 15 episode, “Beast’s Obsession,” Benson once again finds herself face-to-face with William Lewis. In this episode, Lewis escapes from prison and kidnaps a 12-year-old girl, and contacts Benson to taunt her with the girl’s capture. Benson is nearly sexually assaulted by Lewis when he instead forces her into a game of Russian Roulette. After a couple of intense rounds, Lewis shoots himself in the face, taunting Benson one last time.

This episode raises the stakes double-fold in the saga between Lewis and Benson. Benson’s internal desire to help save the kidnaped girl intertwines her with Lewis once again and nearly costs her life. Lewis's death during the nail-biting game of Russian Roulette only inflicts more trauma on Benson’s psyche, rather than bringing her peace and closure.