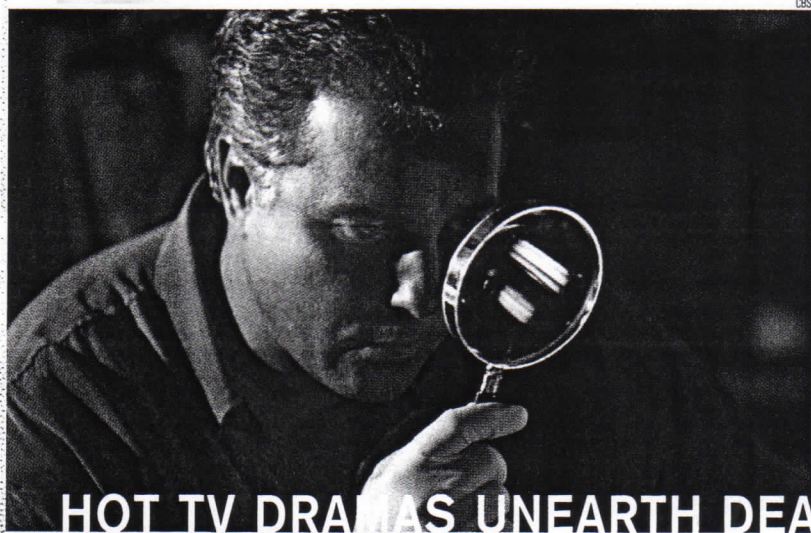


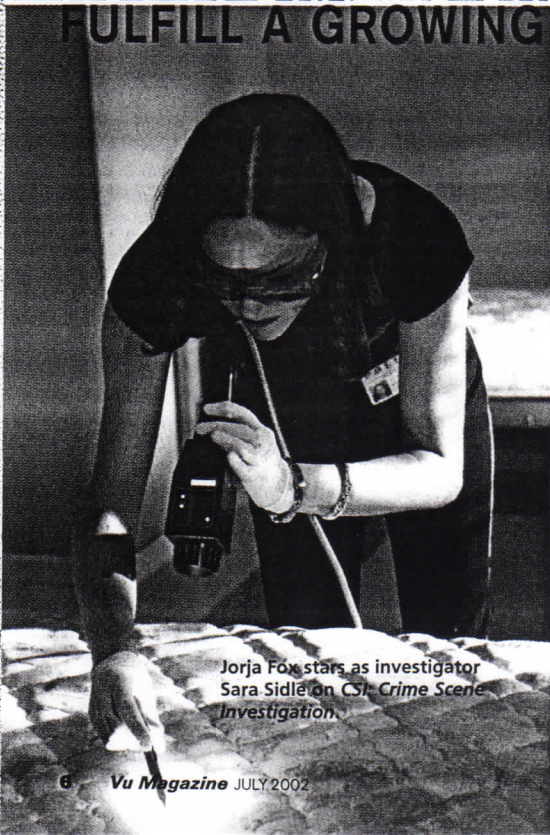
By Heather Camlot

FORENSIC FIX

>> The sun casts a golden hue upon the park-goers on a warm spring day. Father and son toss a Frisbee®, lovers glide hand in hand, picnicking couples gleefully await their burgers. Nearby, children giggle, chase one another in a friendly game of tag. Norman Rockwell couldn't have painted a more enviable scene. Suddenly, a young boy trips and falls hands first into a pile of dirt. As he screams for his mother, he watches his palms burn to a fire-engine red. Little does he know that underneath the toxic soil lies a desiccated body—epidermal tissue gone, clothing shredded, lye used to destroy the remains. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust—without the wait," says head forensic investigator Gil Grissom.



HOT TV DRAMAS UNEARTH DEADLY CLUES AND FULFILL A GROWING FASCINATION WITH MORBIDITY.



Jorja Fox stars as investigator Sara Sidle on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*.

So began a recent episode of *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, one of the hottest television programs on the air, and one of several dramas dealing with forensics. Add half a dozen documentary series delving into the profession and it becomes clear that TV programmers and viewers are fascinated by the science involved in investigating corpses.

"I think it goes back to a long-standing interest in the genre of murder mysteries," says Dr. Scott Fairgrieve, head of the forensic biology program at Laurentian University and director of the Forensic Osteology Laboratory in Sudbury, Ont. "Because we're in such a technological age it makes sense that we're interested in technological applications in solving crime and that's what forensic science is."

It's also an aspect of crime investigation that's not usually written about in newspapers and magazines, so to get a forensic fix there's primetime dramas *Crossing Jordan*, *CSI*, *Da Vinci's Inquest* and *Cold Squad*. Docu-dramas are cov-

ered as well, with *Medical Detectives*, *Secrets of Forensic Science* and *Scene of the Crime*.

Real storylines from real cases

The wealthy southern doctor lay in a pool of his own blood and a baseball bat is found nearby, an episode of Court TV's *Forensic Files* reveals.

Even before the digital channel launched last September, 78 per cent of Canadian households subscribed to Court TV U.S. Now, the Canadian version is one of the most successful digital channels in the country, which excites and amazes Court TV Canada programming director Jill Bonenfant.

"I already had quite an interest [in crime]—I was watching all the A&E shows," she admits. "It's a treat now that I can leave the TV on in my office and not feel guilty."

Forensic series like *Da Vinci's Inquest* and *CSI* are not only entertaining—*Da Vinci* won all the top awards at the 2001 Gemini and two-year-old *CSI* holds the number two spot in the Nielsen

Nicholas Campbell
(centre), portrays coroner
Dominic Da Vinci on the
award-winning Canadian
series *Da Vinci's Inquest*.



Ratings—but are awkwardly comforting as well.

"Most of the storylines come from real cases," says Nicholas Campbell, who portrays coroner Dominic Da Vinci. "We get a lot of credit in Vancouver [where we shoot] from the families and the police about keeping the stories alive."

In particular, Campbell mentions this past season's storyline about missing prostitutes, mirroring the real investigation into the disappearance of 50 women and the search for their bodies on a pig farm in Port Coquitlam, B.C.

But forensics shows can be both a blessing and a curse, according to Fairgrieve.

"It's a blessing in that it does draw people to forensic science and what science can do. The curse part is that the show goes about it, well, in a way it's not always done," he explains. "My own students will watch *CSI* and will ask if I saw it. And I'll say 'Yes, did you catch all the mistakes?'"

Two errors come to mind quickly for Fairgrieve—when a forensic anthropologist held up a bone and then named it incorrectly,

and when Grissom, a specialist in entomology, tried keeping insects alive, in a jar without any food or airway.

Not for the squeamish

Seven bodies were discovered buried in a landlord's backyard, each one wrapped in layers of blankets, tarps and sheets, held together with thread and duct tape, explains coroner Laura Santos on The New Detectives. But four of the bodies remain unidentifiable, so decomposed that fingerprints cannot be taken and teeth, missing, cannot be impressed...

For the queasy, working with dead bodies may not be the best career move. Even actors have a hard time with the material—and they're working with props.

"The blood is fake and the bodies are rubber, but the stories are real. That's the biggest hurdle," says Gary Dourdan, who portrays Warrick Brown on *CSI*.

Julie Stewart of *Cold Squad* agrees. "Sometimes we freak out about the episode we have to do, but at least [the bodies] are not real," she says. "It's pretty heavy stuff. Anybody who's been involved in [investigat-

ing these crimes] has to be marked in some way."

If forensic science is still appealing, prepare for scenarios beyond a scriptwriter's imagination.

"What I have to commend Hollywood for doing is piquing curiosity," says Fairgrieve. "But I think you'll often find that truth is stranger than fiction." *continued*

FORENSIC FIX

SHOW TIMES

>> Dramas

CSI Thursdays at 9 p.m. on CTV and CBS

Cold Squad Saturdays at 9 p.m. on CTV

Da Vinci's Inquest Sundays at 9 p.m. on CBC

Homicide: Life on the Street
Monday-Friday at 8 p.m. on BookTelevision

Prime Suspect Weeknights at 6 p.m. on Showcase

Graham Green hosts the documentary series *Exhibit A: Secrets of Forensic Science*.

>> Documentary series

Exhibit A: Secrets of Forensic Science
Saturdays at 9 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. on Discovery. Saturdays at 11:30 p.m. on APTN

Forensic Files
Wednesdays at 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. on Court TV Canada

Cold Case Files
Tuesdays at 4 p.m. and 1 a.m. on A&E

Medical Detectives
Sundays at 9 p.m. and Thursdays at 8 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on TLC

The New Detectives
Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 p.m. on Court TV Canada

Scene of the Crime
Sundays at 10 p.m. on TLC

Secrets of Forensic Science
Thursdays at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. on TLC

All times ET. Broadcasts subject to change.

Gil Grissom (William Petersen) and Dr. Robbins (Robert David Hall) find evidence that implicates a man's wife for the murder of his mistress on *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*.




Bell
ExpressVu

VU

MAGAZINE

JULY 2002 \$5.50

Mind over Matter

Tom Cruise's
latest brain-teaser,
Vanilla Sky, hits
Pay-per-View
this month



Publication Registration #09594
1109 TD Tower, Edmonton, AB T5J 2Z1

ENGLISH EDITION

www.expressvu.com


Bell
ExpressVu