

cover story

True crime podcasts to obsess over

BY MAKENZIE WHITTLE • The Bulletin

Don't worry, your obsession with true crime stories is completely normal. Well, to an extent. Many people love catching up with all the dark and gritty details laid out in a real-life mystery, murder or scandal. According to a 2009 interview with NPR, psychologist Dr. Michael Mantell explained that “we have been fascinated with the conflict between good and evil since the beginning of time,” adding that reading, watching or listening to stories involving true crime can give us a sense of catharsis stemming from a kind of rehearsal scenario — how we would fare in a similar situation as the victim.

If you haven't gotten into the land of true crime podcasts, it may seem overwhelming. With hundreds to choose from, here are just a few to dip your toe into the genre, each taking different approaches to how they tell the stories, with various degrees of gruesomeness and topics.

You can catch any of these podcasts via your preferred podcast platform.

American Scandal — Hosted by Lindsay Graham (not the politician) the podcast takes a look at the less murder-y side of the true crime genre and instead focuses on more of the political, business, religious or celebrity scandals that have occurred through modern American history. With series on Enron, BALCO and sports doping scandals, Lenny Bruce, the Branch Davidians, the Tuskegee experiments and even the Volkswagen diesel scandal, each lasting between five and eight episodes and includes dramatic reenactments by Graham sprinkled in with the compelling research. wonderly.com

Conspiracy Theories — The incredibly information-heavy podcast hosted by Molly Brandenburg and Carter Roy adds a hefty dollop of speculation, along with the real stories of the world's most controversial events. Some are true crimes, others tragedies or otherwise unexplained phenomena, but each topic is heavily researched and recounted to the last detail as we know it before the hosts jump into some



of the wilder theories surrounding it. Both Brandenburg and Roy are pretty skeptical about the theories they present but instead of making outright parodies of them, they treat each one with the same amount of detail as they do with the known accounts. It's more true crime adjacent, ideal for those wanting to ease into the pool of crime podcasts. parcast.com

Morning Cup of Murder — Another option for easing yourself into true crime podcasts, this one in a daily, bite-sized form. Host Korina Biemesderfer takes no more than 10 minutes in each episode to quickly recount an actual murder that happened each day of the year. Like a daily desk calendar, only instead of Far Side cartoons to flip through, you get to hear about murderers. audioboom.com

My Favorite Murder — If you don't mind some irreverent and macabre humor thrown into talking about grisly murders, then check out the bi-weekly podcast hosted by comedians Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark. In every episode, they each pick one murder, story or historical event to discuss through what they know and they make it clear, this is just based on their casual research. They do draw clear attention to common threads within these cases often involving mental illness, sexual abuse and victim's rights. While the nature of it may seem flip-pant given the seriousness of the crimes they comment on, the episodes don't feel that way when you listen to them. Both Kilgariff and Hardstark clearly have respect for

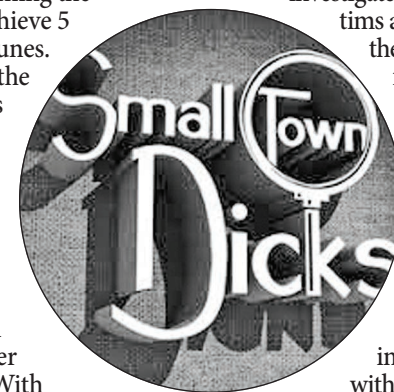
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the victims at the heart of the stories they recount they just tell it in a way that feels more approachable than a cut-and-dry documentary style. myfavoritemurder.com

Serial — This serialized documentary show broke records becoming the fastest podcast ever to achieve 5 million downloads on iTunes. It also leapt to the top of the streaming service's charts on its debut and stayed there well after the first season ended. Host and executive producer Sarah Koenig does a deep, investigative dive into one case per season with the third season being a dive into the larger criminal justice system. With each case, Koenig talks with the accused, witnesses, friends, acquaintances and more to get the heart of the story. The podcast flows so well and is intriguingly told, making it one of the best to follow. serialpodcast.com

Small Town Dicks — Actress Yeardley Smith co-hosts the podcast with twin brother detectives Dan and Dave (no last names) as they speak with actual small-town detectives about the crimes they've investigated as well as families of victims and people involved with the cases. Names and identifying details as well as relationships and locations are changed or omitted to protect the victims and their families, while the podcast uses actual jailhouse interview audio to plot the events of what occurred. It's laid out very much in that documentary style, with Dan and Dave adding their own insight into how cases evolve and are solved. They are sincere in their recountings and respectful of the cases they cover that rocked small towns. smalltowndicks.com



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