Considered by some to be a movement and others a genre, the classic period of film noir stretched from 1941 to 1958, bookended by the seminal films *The Maltese Falcon* and *Touch of Evil*. Film noir (or literally “black film”), a term coined by the French film critic Nino Frank, was often used to describe films that exhibited low-key black and white cinematography reminiscent of German Expressionism and plots centered around moral ambiguity and a rampant fear of sexuality. Often described and studied strictly in terms of its filmic manifestations, many of the stylistic aesthetics and narrative techniques of noir were prevalent on American television in such programs ranging from crime dramas (“Johnny Staccato,” “The Man With a Camera,” “77 Sunset Strip”), and police procedurals (“Dragnet,” “Naked City,” “The Untouchables”), to science fiction anthologies (“The Outer Limits,” “The Twilight Zone”).

Many of these programs not only exhibit noir style, but showcase the artistic efforts of many film noir luminaries. John Brahm (*The Lodger, Guest in the House*) directed episodes of both “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” and “The Twilight Zone.” John Cassavetes (*Shadows, A Woman Under the Influence*) starred and directed in “Johnny Staccato.” Joseph Cotten (*The Third Man, Shadow of a Doubt*) appeared in episodes of both “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” and “77 Sunset Strip.” Ida Lupino (*High Sierra, On Dangerous Ground*) directed episodes of both “The Fugitive” and “The Untouchables.” Lee Marvin (*The Big Heat, The Killers*) appeared on both “M Squad” and “The Untouchables” while Gerd Oswald (*Crime of Passion*) and Joseph Stefano (*Psycho*) worked together on “The Outer Limits.”

While the bulk of these programs ran during the 1950s and '60s, the noir style witnessed a resurgence during the late 1980s and early '90s, mainly exhibited in the works of Michael Mann and David Lynch whose seminal programs “Miami Vice” and “Twin Peaks” showcased a baroque utilization of noir aesthetics. However, these characteristics were also exhibited in over-looked programs, such as the Showtime anthology “Fallen Angels” (with episodes directed by Steven Soderbergh and Alfonso Cuarón), Wes Craven’s short-lived “Nightmare Cafe,” and the HBO series “The Hitchhiker.” During this time there were also several made-for-TV noirs, both remakes (“Dial M for Murder,” “Double Indemnity”) and original telefilms such as “Poodle Springs,” which was adapted from an unfinished novel by Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep, Double Indemnity and The Long Goodbye*).
Film Noir Television


Alfred Hitchcock Presents.  Lamb to the Slaughter (1958-04-13).  CBS.  Director, Alfred Hitchcock.  Writer, Roald Dahl.  Cast, Barbara Bel Geddes, Allan Lane, Harold J. Stone.  A frozen leg of lamb plays a key role in this story about a woman driven to murder following the discovery that her husband is filing for a divorce.  Study Copy: DVD3672 T


Climax.  To Walk the Night (1957-12-10).  CBS.  Director, Buzz Kulik.  Writers, Irwin Gielgud, Gwen Gielgud.  Cast, Richard Boone, Walter Matthau, Mary Anderson.  A police detective's Christmas Eve is sidelined by a murderer.  Study Copy: VA19423 T


The Fugitive. Fear in a Desert City – Pilot Episode (1963-09-17). ABC. Director, Walter Grauman. Writer, Stanford Whitmore. Cast, David Janssen, Barry Morse, Vera Miles. A doctor is wrongly accused of murder and must take to the road to avoid being put in jail. Study Copy: DVD6223 T


Film Noir Television


*Peter Gunn. The Kill* (1958-09-22). NBC. Director, Writer, Blake Edwards. Cast, Craig Stevens, Gavin MacLeod, Lola Albright. A club owner is the victim of ruthless retribution from a gang after refusing to pay for their protection services. Study Copy: VA5378 T

*Peter Gunn. The Blind Pianist* (1958-10-13). NBC. Director, Writer, Blake Edwards. Cast, Craig Stevens, Lola Albright, Herschel Bernardi. A blind pianist is the only witness to a murder. Study Copy: VA10476 T


Film Noir Television

77 Sunset Strip. Downbeat (1959-05-08). ABC. Director, Writer, Montgomery Pittman. Cast, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., James Garner, Roger Smith. Private detective Bailey's license is revoked and he goes on a drinking binge, becoming involved with Communists. Study Copy: VA60 T


77 Sunset Strip. The Fumble (1963-12-13). ABC. Director, Lawrence Dobkin. Writer, Tony Barrett. Cast, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., Richard Long, Stacy Harris. Bailey is hired to keep an eye on an alcoholic whose job is in jeopardy. Study Copy: VA61 T

The Twilight Zone. Mirror Image (1961-08-04). ABC. Director, John Brahm. Writer, Rod Serling. Cast, Vera Miles, Martin Milner, Joe Hamilton. A young woman thinks she is going mad when she is haunted by a strange look-alike in a bus depot. Study Copy: VA4470 T


NEO-NOIR TELEVISION

(sample holdings – consult the Archive Research and Study Center for further listings)


Nightmare Café. Pilot (1992-01-29). NBC. Director, Armand Mastroianni. Writer, Barry Pullman. Cast, Robert Englund, Lindsay Frost, Jack Coleman. Frank and Fay staff a surreal all-night diner where second chances are given. Study Copy: VA11570 T

Nightmare Café. Dying Well is the Best Revenge (1992-03-06). NBC. Director, Armand Mastroianni. Writer, Barry Pullman. Cast, Robert Englund, Lindsay Frost, Jack Coleman. Frank becomes involved with a woman plotting to kill her husband. Study Copy: VA11570 T


Twin Peaks. Pilot (1990-04-08). ABC. Director, David Lynch. Writers, Mark Frost, David Lynch. Cast, Kyle MacLachlan, Lara Flynn Boyle, Sherilyn Fenn. FBI agent Dale Cooper is called in to solve the murder of Laura Palmer, Twin Peaks’ homecoming queen. Study Copy: VA6819 T
Film Noir Television

Twin Peaks. Show No. 1 (1990-04-12). ABC. Director, David Lynch. Writers, Mark Frost, David Lynch. Cast, Kyle MacLachlan, Lara Flynn Boyle, Sherilyn Fenn. FBI agent Dale Cooper is called in to solve the murder of Laura Palmer, Twin Peaks’ homecoming queen. Study Copy: VA6818 T


MADE-FOR-TV NOIR
(sample holdings – consult the Archive Research and Study Center for further listings)


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES – UCLA
(for more information consult the UCLA Libraries collection)


Film Noir Television


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