

'IMMACULATE AND SATISFYING'

24 Hours in Police Custody shows the way the law works, says **Alison Graham**



Years spent working as a crime reporter make me the world's worst viewer of television crime dramas, which is why, by and large, I must watch them on my own.

"No, senior officers don't interview suspects, they leave that to the lower ranks while they steer the questions and the tone remotely," I'll say of just about every cop show. Then there's, "Forensic pathologists have absolutely nothing to do with the interrogation of suspects. Really, nothing at all" – which applies to *Silent Witness*, ad infinitum.

That's why I'm so smug about my love for *24 Hours in Police Custody*. There it is for all to see, the absolute, unadorned, straight-down-the-line police work. There are no maverick detectives bouncing off walls, no gimlet-eyed, witty serial killers playing mind games. Just hard slog and "no comment" interviews.

24 Hours in Police Custody is the most immaculate, satisfying documentary series. It shows how the law works, and quite often the law works in ways that you don't expect.

It's an adult and unsparing series that doesn't pull punches. The raw simplicity of the format – police investigations and then suspect-interviews under caution – makes for episodes that are unembellished and detached without being chilly. Officers don't get overcome and take everything personally, like in, say, *Unforgotten*. They ask and they listen. They might or might not judge, we don't know, that's not their job.

Child abuse, gang violence, drug dealing and murder – all the details are gone through minutely. And so many times, things aren't what they first seem. The most affecting story

from the last series involved a woman who was found dead in a field, her throat cut with a broken bottle. The outcome was as extraordinary as it was sad.

And the most gob-smacking? The arrest, on-camera, of a corrupt police officer involved in a blackmail plot. The shock of his colleagues was tangible.

