

**T**HE GENERAL VIEW inside the police service is that this level of insight helps their image with the public, politicians and the press. But what do viewers get from the deal? Good telly, unquestionably, but does it tell the whole story? Obviously there are legal reasons why certain things can't be shown, but in my experience we do not censor ourselves merely to stay in with the force. But I do feel a responsibility to the officers who trusted us not to distort their performance simply to make good TV. Were we to witness criminal behaviour, we'd show it.

Some cop docs just focus on action, creating a false impression of excitement with no character or complexity. But the best of these series portray the dilemmas that make policing harder – and more boring – than fictional versions suggest.

That is not to ignore the general reluctance on the part of

## ‘Police are ordinary people often asked to do extraordinary things’

police when asked to let a camera follow them. There is anxiety they will be caught on camera making mistakes, or worse, and mistrust of their superiors' reactions. Those who might agree worry they will be ridiculed by reluctant colleagues. We have often addressed hostile teams of officers, unconvinced it is in their interest to let us see what they do. But some remain unwilling, so we work around them. Ironically, many then complain they have been left out of finished films!

The great merit of such observational film-making as *Catching a Killer* is that it shows police are ordinary people often asked to do extraordinary things. If it builds understanding about what police can – and cannot – do, this is surely a good thing. Our police can only function with public consent.

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Roger Graef, OBE, is a film-maker and criminologist who has made more than 50 films inside the criminal justice system



**MODERN  
POLICING**  
DCs Natalie  
Golding and  
Nikki Smith