

# **L. A. Law Encyclopedia Article**

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## L. A. Law

A ground-breaking prime-time television series, *L. A. Law* emerged in 1986 from the stable that had brought a new veracity to ensemble series drama with *Hill Street Blues*. Setting his new show in a high-powered law office, trend-setting producer Steven Bochco (and co-writer Terry Louise Fisher), while expanding on the concept of multiple storylines, rooted these firmly in character-driven scripts of intelligence, authenticity, and wit. Gone were the idealized television attorneys of yesteryear such as Perry Mason. This team, played by a large A-grade cast, presented a realistic cross-section of the likable, the insecure, the authoritative, and the downright smarmy. Many of the situations straddled several episodes, and involved a seamless blend of office politics, love affairs, or sexual misadventure, played out parallel with the firm's legal concerns, ethical dilemmas, and courtroom appearances. The fundamentally serious approach was leavened with doses of witty dialogue and occasionally outrageous absurdities.

Because the law firm dealt in multiple areas of the law, the cases were able to legitimately range from divorce to murder, and to engage a variety of complex contemporary issues from date rape and child abuse to capital punishment, outing of homosexuals, and voluntary euthanasia. *L. A. Law* ran between 1986 and 1994. It collected 20 Emmy Award nominations in its first season, and won four Best Drama Emmys, as well as Golden Globes, Television Critics Association Awards, and a Peabody Award. Most significantly, its approach and narrative style paved the way for the even more compelling relationships and finely honed characterizations of *E.R.* in the 1990s.

### Further Reading:

Marc, David, and Robert J. Thompson. *Prime Time, Prime Movers: From I Love Lucy to L. A. Law—America's Greatest TV Shows and the People who Created Them*. Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1992.

Thompson, Robert J. *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*. New York, Continuum, 1996.