

Coroner Stars Serinda Swan and Roger Cross Discuss Their New Series

Tags: [CBC](#), [Coroner](#), [Roger Cross](#), [Serinda Swan](#)



[Coroner](#), a new CBC crime thriller, kicks off its eight-episode debut season tonight. We had a chance to sit down with series stars Serinda Swan (Dr. Jenny Cooper) and Roger Cross (Det. Donovan “Mac” McAvoy) in Toronto to discuss their roles and what really set this show apart from other projects they’ve worked on.

Before you dig into the interview below, read Heather’s preview of *Coroner*’s first episode [here](#). And be sure to watch tonight at 9pm (9:30 NT) on [CBC](#), or online on [CBC Gem](#).

Serinda, what was it about Jenny Cooper that initially drew you in?

Serinda: I’m a huge fan of the Morwyn/Adrienne team — Morwyn Brebner and Adrienne Mitchell. They’re both incredibly talented women, and they do really interesting and world-class work. I keep talking about the new face of Canadian television and not apologizing like, “That’s great for Canada.” It’s

great for anybody. I read the script and looked at the [series] bible. Obviously, it's called *Coroner* and it's about a coroner, but it's a human story about a human life and the human struggle [of someone] who happens to be a coroner. That's a shade of who she is.

It's based off the M.R. Hall book series in the U.K. so there's some lovely tiebacks to that. [Jenny Cooper] is this brave, flawed, falling apart, off-balance, kick ass woman who I loved. I fell in love with her. I fell for her idiosyncrasies and weirdness and this "Stepford Wife" beginning. At the very beginning, there's a tragedy with her husband who had been her controller. In that control, it has allowed her to suppress things from her own past. After he dies, she immediately gets thrown into a new world and a new job. She switches from an ER doctor into a coroner. She moves her son from a very ritzy, beautiful neighbourhood into this old, dilapidated house in the country that's falling apart, and start this new life.

What can you share about Jenny's past that begins to resurface?

Serinda: With her husband dying, it has triggered some of her trauma. She starts hallucinating and having panic attacks. Jenny has this constant anxiety and starts taking Ativan and talking to a therapist. She begins to remember things from her past as she dives deeper into these cases every day. In trying to find the truth for them, she realizes that she doesn't know her own truth: one is who she is as a woman; two is her past and the mystery around her sister's death. Why doesn't she remember the death, and why was she mute for two months afterwards?

She picked a husband and a job that kept her in line and now that he's gone, all the edges are being blurred. What you'll see in Episode 2 is the expansion of Jenny Cooper that never was allowed to be, but in that expansion, she's grasping as hard as she can to try and hold it together for her son.

We have these incredible relationships on and off screen. They did such a

good job casting it, and it's these real humans in this hyper-visual world. They did a great job with the cinematography, and you see this stylized version of what it would be like to be a coroner.

Roger, you have played so many fantastic roles over the years. What set this one apart from the others?

Roger: They sent me Episode 6. It's about Donovan dealing with his past and going back to his old neighbourhood. In his mind, he's outgrown it and moved on. He's got this job, he's in charge, he's the lead homicide investigator. He's got his world and this is how it is. He goes home, plays his music, cooks his food. He has everything under control, and then this coroner comes in and shakes up his world.

Jenny starts questioning and bringing up old cases. They have to deal with things on a professional level, and then she starts an inquest that makes him deal with things on a personal level. Someone from his old neighbourhood was killed, and he didn't touch [that case] because it was too close to home. He left it alone and [later] realized that [his colleagues] did a terrible job, and he let it happen so he's culpable. What's great about Jenny is that she reminds Donovan of how he started out, trusting his instincts and wanting the truth. It's almost a reverse journey. He's coming full circle back to who he was. It's great when you have a rich character, and it's that journey's that really drew me in.

Many female actors that I've spoken with over the years have brought up an issue that keeps coming up — an insistence that their characters should be "likeable." Jenny, thankfully, is so much more layered.

Serinda: Oh yeah. All the time. Jenny makes a lot of interesting choices that on the surface aren't necessarily likeable, but you like her because she's messy, imbalanced and human. A lot of the time, women have been accessories for a very complete male character as opposed to a very complete female character. On all sides, it's better to have complex, human

[characters]. Each time you talk to someone on screen, especially on our show, you have these very diverse, authentic characters that I get to interact with, which makes Jenny even more interesting.

I heard that they really threw you into the fire very quickly on this show with shooting four episodes at once.

Serinda: We block shot four episodes at once.

Roger: And I didn't know that until I got here.

Serinda: I did. I had binders with color coding. In one day, we would shoot a scene from Episode 1, and then 3, and then 4, and then 2.

Roger: Sometimes, you don't know where you are and what place you're in, and changing clothes but it's the wrong outfit.

Serinda: I'm so impressed with our team, our crew, and everybody involved. They cared so much and it shows when you watch it. You'll really see the love and support.

Roger: It's a great team.

Photos Courtesy of CBC



[Melissa - The Televixen](#)

Melissa Girimonte, aka The Televixen, is a writer, podcaster and digital media producer who has covered television for more than a decade. She

founded [The Televixen](#) in 2008, and continues to serve as its Editor-in-Chief. She is also the host and producer of [Fem TV](#), a podcast dedicated to celebrating women working in the television industry. In the age of Peak TV, she believes that sleep is basically a wasted viewing opportunity.