

Documentaries & Factual - Human/Social Interest



Riot Island

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A near-deserted island is transformed into a prison without bars, holding some of society's most hardened gangsters.

During the early 1960s, Singapore undertakes a revolutionary social experiment – to rehabilitate its most feared mobsters through sheer hard work. These young detainees, who have been held without trial, build a remarkable prison complex with their bare hands and it becomes the envy of world. Pulau Senang is hailed as a beacon for prison reform but just three years later, the detainees riot.

The attack sends shock waves around the world and sets in motion one of the largest criminal trials of the age. Secrets from Pulau Senang are soon revealed, where all is not what it seems.

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Episode 1: Prison Without Walls

Singapore in the late 1950s is plagued by the menace of secret society gangs, where criminality rules the streets. To combat this rising threat, a new initiative is born – sending gangsters to a new open-air prison on Pulau Senang, where hard labour becomes a form of rehabilitation.

After landing on a near-deserted island in 1960, the detainees are put to work, constructing a remarkable prison complex that soon becomes the envy of the world. Superintendent Daniel Dutton oversees this prison and devoutly believes that redemption for these gangsters is possible. Just three years later, this island turns into a fiery hell – as the detainees burn the settlement to the ground and brutally murder prison servicemen. The riot appears to be a shocking act of mindless violence but is all as it seems?

Episode 2: Prison In Flames

In Singapore's trial of the century, 59 men stand accused of rioting and murder at the open-air prison of Pulau Senang. After opening in 1960, this idyllic prison is lauded as a progressive beacon of hope for the rehabilitation of society's most feared gangsters. Three years later, these detained secret society mobsters burn the prison to the ground and slaughter four servicemen. The death sentence now hangs over these accused men. But is all what it seems?

The slain Superintendent Daniel Dutton oversaw Pulau Senang and was hailed as a visionary, but questions grow around his tough rehabilitation methods. With rumours that Dutton was a sadistic taskmaster, does this penal paradise hold shocking secrets?

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