

= Three Men and Adena =

" Three Men and Adena " is the fifth episode of the first season of the American police drama television series *Homicide : Life on the Street* . It originally aired on NBC in the United States on March 3 , 1993 . The episode was written by executive producer Tom Fontana and directed by Martin Campbell . In the episode , Pembleton and Bayliss have a 12 @-@ hour limit to elicit a confession from Risley Tucker for the murder of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Adena Watson . The episode takes place almost entirely within the confines of the police interrogation room with the three actors .

Tucker was played by actor Moses Gunn , which was his final acting role before his death in December 1993 . " Three Men and Adena " was seen by 7 @. @ 08 million households in its original broadcast , which was among the lowest @-@ rated network shows from that evening . However , the episode received positive reviews ; it is considered one of the classic *Homicide* episodes , and ranked number 74 in an *Entertainment Weekly* list of the 100 greatest television moments . Tom Fontana won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series for the episode 's script .

= = Plot summary = =

Bayliss (Kyle Secor) and Pembleton (Andre Braugher) prepare to interview Risley Tucker (Moses Gunn) , an elderly arabber . Bayliss is convinced Tucker murdered 11 @-@ year @-@ old Adena Watson , but Pembleton is less confident . Since they have already interviewed Tucker multiple times , the court will not allow him to be bothered anymore if he does not confess after this interview , and the detectives have only 12 hours to elicit a confession before Tucker walks free . Pembleton starts off acting friendly while Bayliss , who has taken the Watson case very personally , is more aggressive . Adena used to work for Tucker , taking care of his horse . Pembleton brings up Tucker 's alcoholism , but Tucker said he gave up drinking because he used to black out , insisting he hasn 't had a drink in 16 months . Tucker also insists he hadn 't seen Adena for three days before she died , but Bayliss shows him she had soot on her skirt that matched soot from Tucker 's barn , indicating she was there the day she was killed .

During a moment of anger , Bayliss nearly presses Tucker 's face against a hot pipe on the wall , but Pembleton stops him . Tucker still angrily insists he did not kill her , and he agrees to submit to a polygraph test . When Bayliss leaves , Pembleton speaks to Tucker in a soft and comforting tone , trying to get Tucker to trust him . Pembleton suggests Tucker had a drink and blacked out the night he killed Adena , and he seems close to getting a confession before Tucker once again insists he is innocent . With four hours left before the deadline , Bayliss returns and says Tucker failed the polygraph test . Bayliss and Pembleton then aggressively team up on Tucker , talking quickly and intimidating him with repeated questions . They bring up a previously dropped statutory rape charge against Tucker involving a 14 @-@ year @-@ old girl , then suggest he attempted to have sex with Adena and killed her because she resisted . They confront Tucker with gruesome crime scene photos of Adena and ask him if he is sure he didn 't kill her , to which a frightened and confused Tucker replies , " Not right now , I 'm not . "

With less than an hour left and still without a confession , the detectives are exhausted , and Tucker turns the table on them . He claims Pembleton has the attitude of a man trying to distance himself from his African American heritage because he is ashamed to be black . Tucker also accuses Bayliss of hiding a " dark side " inside him that he is afraid to embrace . Eventually , Tucker admits he harbored pedophilic feelings for Adena , and feels shame that the " one great love of my life was an 11 @-@ year @-@ old girl " . He breaks down and cries , but still insists he did not kill her . The 12 @-@ hour time limit elapses and the detectives fail to get a confession . Tucker is released and Bayliss is miserable he was unable to close the case . Pembleton , who has a new respect for Bayliss , tries to comfort him by saying he is now convinced Tucker is the killer , but Bayliss is no longer so sure .

= = Production = =

" Three Men and Adena " was directed by Martin Campbell and written by Tom Fontana , executive producer of Homicide : Life on the Street . The interrogation room at the homicide division , colloquially referred to by detectives as " The Box " , is a setting that appears in almost every episode of Homicide : Life on the Street . While filming an interrogation scene there in " Gone for Goode " , the first episode of the first season , director Barry Levinson commented to Fontana that the acting from Andre Braugher and Kyle Secor was so effective , an entire episode could be filmed revolving strictly around an interrogation . The comments partially inspired Fontana to write " Three Men and Adena " . Fontana said , " I only had the courage to write that episode based on the fact that I had seen what (Braugher and Secor) could do in the pilot episode " . Almost the entire episode of " Three Men and Adena " takes place within the confines of the police interrogation room with Braugher , Secor and Moses Gunn , the actor who guest starred as Risley Tucker . It was Gunn 's final acting role before his death in December 1993 . Fontana acknowledged a certain amount of risk in producing such an unusual episode in only the fifth week of the show , but he said , " It was important for Barry Levinson and I to establish that we weren 't going to do the same old show every week . "

" Three Men and Adena " marked the conclusion of the Adena Watson murder case , a story arc which began at the start of the first season . The Watson case was based on the real @-@ life 1988 Baltimore slaying of Latonya Kim Wallace , which is chronicled in Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , the 1991 David Simon non @-@ fiction book that served as the basis of the Homicide series . Elements of the interview in " Three Men and Adena " were incorporated from real @-@ life police interrogations in that case . The Wallace case was never solved , and Fontana insisted that the Watson case in Homicide remain unsolved as well , despite pressure from NBC for a more satisfying conclusion . Fontana said , " We never solved it because we felt that it would be a disservice to the real girl , to have this fake TV solution . Because it 's not O.K. that she died , that no one took responsibility . " The scene when Tucker admits for a moment he is not sure in his own mind that he didn 't commit the murder was inspired by a similar real @-@ life interaction Fontana found in a police interrogation transcript during his research . Fontana said , " It was so chilling (and) I was like , ' Oh man , how do you get there ? ' " .

Martin Campbell spent three days of preparation on the " Box " set , analyzing it from every angle to learn the feel of the room . Fontana comes from a playwriting background , and " Three Men and Adena " involves long lengths of dialogue in a single setting , much like a play . The actors shot about 14 pages of dialogue each day , and had a very small amount of rehearsal time before shooting . According to Fontana , Campbell never shot a scene from the same angle twice , " So the entire hour keeps changing the point of view of the camera , so that you never get tired of being in that room . " While filming the episode , Campbell would shoot single scenes with multiple pages of long dialogue , then film the scene again from another angle . Braugher said the experience felt more like staging a play than shooting a television episode , and allowed for a feeling of spontaneous human emotion in the performances . Although the dialogue in the final episode did not stray from the original script , Fontana said Campbell and the actors came up with the rhythm and pacing of the performances largely on their own , particularly during the fast @-@ paced questions when Pembleton and Bayliss team up on Tucker .

The fact that Tucker goes free upholds a common theme in Homicide : Life on the Street ? that life is not always fair , and that criminals sometimes get away with their crimes , a conviction that often put the show 's producers at odds with NBC executives . Fontana deliberately wrote the script so that it would remain ambiguous whether Tucker committed the murder or not . He wanted the character to have a genuine feeling of love for Adena Watson , but the strong feelings do not specifically mean he killed the girl . Braugher praised Fontana for creating such a three @-@ dimensional character in Tucker , and said , " Fontana 's genius is that we are never quite certain as to what it is that we have on our hands . " Fontana also wanted Pembleton and Bayliss to have different interpretations of the same interrogation ; Bayliss begins the interview convinced of the man 's guilt and becomes uncertain by the end , and Pembleton has the opposite experience . Multiple police departments have requested copies of " Three Men and Adena " for use in training

sessions due to its accurate portrayal of the intricacies of the police interrogation process . The interrogation included several police tactics not typically featured in television dramas , including the presentation of false evidence in an attempt to get a confession .

During the opening scene of the episode , Bayliss watches the music video for " Surround " , by the British band Bleach .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast on March 3 , 1993 , " Three Men and Adena " was watched by 7 @. @ 08 million households , according to Nielsen ratings . The episode received a 7 @. @ 6 rating / 12 share . It was among the lowest @- @ rated major network shows from that evening , in part due to heavy competition from ABC 's broadcast of the Sixth Annual American Comedy Awards , which was seen by 14 @. @ 7 million households . " Three Men and Adena " was also outperformed by CBS 's two @- @ hour broadcast of In the Heat of the Night , which was seen by 11 @. @ 82 million households and Fox 's Beverly Hills , 90210 , which was seen by 10 @. @ 33 million households . Also on NBC that day , the series premiere of the new Crime and Punishment fared better than Homicide , capturing 8 @. @ 47 million viewers . In the Washington , D.C.-based affiliate WRC @- @ TV 's market alone , the episode was watched by 122 @, @ 166 viewers , which locally was also the lowest rating of the evening .

= = = Reviews = = =

" Three Men and Adena " received positive reviews and has been described as one of the " classic episodes " of Homicide : Life on the Street . " Three Men and Adena " ranked number 74 in an Entertainment Weekly list of the 100 greatest television moments , and number 15 among the top television moments from the 1990s . It was also identified by The Baltimore Sun as one of the ten best episodes of the series . Sun writer David Zurawik said Fontana 's playwriting background was deeply infused in the episode , which he called a " landmark hour " that it " put (three men) and a few sticks of battle @- @ scarred , municipal @- @ green furniture and somehow managed to show us the human soul and the heart of darkness " . Additionally , " Three Men and Adena " was among a 1999 Court TV marathon of the top 15 Homicide episodes , as voted on by 20 @, @ 000 visitors to the channels website . David Bianculli of the New York Daily News said the episode " remains one of TV 's best drama hours ever " , and he ranked it the second @- @ best television episode ever made , behind the Taxi episode where Reverend Jim gets his driver 's license . Entertainment Weekly writer Bruce Fretts said the episode was " one of the most powerful prime @- @ time hours ever " and called Andre Braugher 's performance a " tour de police force " . Alex Strachan of The Vancouver Sun described " Three Men and Adena " as " one of Homicide 's finest moments " . He called the episode " claustrophobic , cynical and ultimately painful " and particularly praised the performances of Braugher and Secor , and the fact that it was not a happy ending . David P. Kalat , writer of Homicide : Life on the Street : The Unofficial Companion , described the episode as " an astonishing tour de force of writing and acting that demonstrates all of Homicide 's best qualities " . He also praised the chemistry between Braugher and Secor , particularly when they found a common voice during the interrogation .

Rocky Mountain News critic Dusty Saunders said the episode was " as good as dramatic television gets " , and showed how the quality of Homicide is anchored in strong writing and acting rather than action . John Leonard , a literary and television critic , called it " the most extraordinary thing I 've ever seen in a television hour " . Leonard praised the tension , the setting and the writing , particularly when Tucker turned the tables on the detectives . He said the episode was better than such works as Ariel Dorfman 's Death and the Maiden and author Don DeLillo 's books about men in small rooms . Lon Grahne of the Chicago Sun @- @ Times called it a " relentless masterpiece " .

Manuel Mendoza of The Dallas Morning News considered " Three Men and Adena " one of the best Homicide episodes and particularly praised the performance of Moses Gunn . Mendoza also said , " The claustrophobia of The Box contributes to the palpable tension . The Baltimore Sun television critic David Zurawik said the episode established The Box as " the main stage for Pembleton and the moral center of the Homicide universe " . Zurawik also said , " Stark and minimalist , the episode was musical theater as much as television , a celebration and explosion of language ; an angry , urban opera with the voices of Bayliss and Pembleton coming together and then falling back as Tucker sings a final aria of rage and contempt . " Calgary Herald writer Bruce Weir said the episode " is Homicide at its finest : brilliantly written , intensely acted and continuously surprising . " Emily Nussbaum of The New York Times called " Three Men and Adena " the standout episode of the series , and described it as " a potent showcase for the series ' smartly mordant dialogue , and its willingness to explore the cliches of TV detectives instead of merely repeating them " . Los Angeles Times writer Howard Rosenberg described it as a " mesmerizing (and) complex character study " , and said Gunn delivered the best guest performance of the television season . Grant Tinker , former CEO of NBC , said of the episode , " I thought it was stunning . "

= = = Awards and DVD release = = =

Tom Fontana won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series for his " Three Men and Adena " script . It was one of two Emmys Homicide : Life on the Street received during the 45th Primetime Emmy Awards season , with Barry Levinson also winning an Emmy for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series for the episode " Gone for Goode " . " Three Men and Adena " and the rest of the first and second season episodes were included in the four @-@ DVD box @-@ set " Homicide : Life on the Street : The Complete Seasons 1 & 2 " , which was released by A & E Home Video on May 27 , 2003 for \$ 69 @. @ 95 .