

= The Mikado (Millennium) =

" ' The Mikado " is the thirteenth episode of the second season of the American crime @-@ thriller television series Millennium . It premiered on the Fox network on February 6 , 1998 . The episode was written by Michael R. Perry and directed Roderick J. Pridy . " The Mikado " featured a guest appearance by Allan Zinyk as Brian Roedecker .

After a group of boys witness a murder via a live webcam feed , Millennium Group profiler Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) realizes that the culprit is an old adversary who has learned to exploit the internet to continue his killing spree while avoiding capture .

Perry was inspired to write the episode after considering the " dark side " of the internet , drawing influence from Jennifer Ringley 's JenniCam website . Avatar , the episode 's antagonist , was based on real @-@ life murderer the Zodiac Killer . " The Mikado " was seen by over five million households in its initial broadcast , and has received positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

A group of friends browse the internet for pornography , finding a live stream of a woman bound to a chair . Behind her a number is painted on the wall ; when the feed 's web counter reaches the painted number , a masked man appears and cuts the girl 's throat . The boys quickly print an image of the feed as proof of what they have seen , just before the website disappears .

Millennium Group member Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) finds that police across the United States have received calls from witnesses to the killing . The police believe it to be a hoax but Black is convinced of its authenticity . He and fellow Group members Brian Roedecker (Allan Zinyk) and Peter Watts (Terry O 'Quinn) identify the victim as Rebecca Damsen . Damsen 's email correspondence leads them to a San Jose address ; Watts finds the bodies of both the owner and Damsen in a nearby graveyard . By the bodies is another number , which they determine to be an IP address .

The IP address leads to another live feed similar in nature to the first one . However , the chair is empty this time . There is another number painted on the wall , which Black recognizes as a case file number from his time in the FBI ? the case concerned Avatar , a serial killer who was able to evade all attempts at capture . Avatar sends Black a coded message twice , and places a woman in the chair on the feed , keeping her face hidden . Roedecker realizes that , through image differencing , the two messages contain additional information ? a sound clip from The Mikado , known to be Avatar 's favourite operetta .

Black determines that another set of numbers visible on the feed are latitude and longitude co @-@ ordinates for San Francisco . The San Francisco Police Department are uncooperative , however . After Black , Roedecker and Watts attempt to keep the feed counter from rising by recreating the live feed and substituting it , the second girl is murdered before the feed 's counter reaches the allotted number . Avatar leaves another clue after the killing , which leads to two further video feeds ? one shows a third set like the others , again with an empty chair , while the other shows the exterior of a mobile home . Police are able to locate the mobile home , but an officer is killed by a shotgun rigged to the front door , before the trailer is obliterated by a series of explosions . Black travels to San Francisco , finding an abandoned theater whose marquee is displaying The Mikado . He is shot at by a masked gunman and give chase ; however , he soon sees that the attacker is another kidnap victim , a gun tied to her arm in an attempt to trick Black into shooting her . Watts tells Black that they found a charred body in the remains of the trailer , but Black tells him it is just another victim , and Avatar will most likely fall silent again - for a while .

= = Production = =

" The Mikado " is the first episode of Millennium to have been written by Michael R. Perry , who would go on to pen a further four episodes in the third season . The episode is the final one helmed by director Roderick J. Pridy , who had also taken the reins on " Covenant " in the first season .

Perry was inspired to write the episode upon wondering whether the internet , about which he had only heard positive remarks , had a " dark side " . He was shown Jennifer Ringley 's JenniCam website , which provided a constant webcam view of her daily life , and wondered what sort of investigations would arise if a murder were witnessed on a similar broadcast . The other main inspiration for the episode was the real @-@ life Zodiac Killer , who formed the basis for the fictional Avatar . Perry 's script was later given a " polish " by executive producer James Wong , with Perry stating that roughly ninety percent of the material is his own work . Several women in the episode , including possible murder victims investigated by Black and Roedecker , are named after Perry 's sisters .

After principal photography had finished for the episode , additional inserts were shot to add more variety to scenes featuring a lot of dialogue ; Perry noted that this was something he had learned about from Wong and felt the technique was put to " great use " . Filming several of the episode 's scenes , including the webcam feeds and footage Black watches of police officers investigating suspects was filmed in a deliberately low @-@ resolution manner , on handheld cameras , as Perry felt footage that was too clean and high @-@ quality would lessen the episode 's tension , citing The Blair Witch Project as an example of how this approach has later been put to use . " The Mikado " featured Allan Zinyk 's last appearance as Group member Brian Roedecker . Wong and fellow executive producer Glen Morgan wanted to sign Zinyk on for further appearances , but actor declined in order to pursue a career in the theatre in Toronto .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

" The Mikado " was first broadcast on the Fox Network on February 6 , 1998 . The episode earned a Nielsen rating of 5 @.@ 4 during its original broadcast , meaning that 5 @.@ 4 percent of households in the United States viewed the episode . This represented approximately 5 @.@ 29 million households , and left the episode the seventy @-@ eighth most @-@ viewed broadcast that week .

The episode received positive reviews from critics . The A.V. Club 's Todd VanDerWerff rated the episode a A ? , calling it " one of the strongest episodes of the season " . VanDerWerff felt that the episode accurately depicted the general unease about the growing role of the internet in the late 1990s ; he also reflected that it follows the " serial killer of the week " formula of the series ' first season while retaining the second season 's " more mystical , supernatural bent " . Bill Gibron , writing for DVD Talk , rated the episode 4 out of 5 , calling it " very compelling " . Gibron compared the episode to the films Seven and 8mm ; he also felt that the unresolved plot helped to temper concerns about Black 's seeming infallibility . Robert Shearman and Lars Pearson , in their book Wanting to Believe : A Critical Guide to The X @-@ Files , Millennium & The Lone Gunmen , rated " The Mikado " three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . Shearman felt that although the episode 's details seem dated , its verisimilitude and enthusiasm helps to overcome this ; he noted that the episode " turns us all into spectators , and turns death into performance art " .