

= A Dog and Pony Show (Homicide : Life on the Street) =

" A Dog and Pony Show " is the sixth 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 10 , 1993 . In the episode , Pembleton and Bayliss investigate the murder of a police dog , Crosetti helps his friend adjust after a serious injury , and Felton and Howard suspect a drug dealer for a brutal murder .

The episode was written James Yoshimura based on a story by executive producer Tom Fontana , and was directed by Alan Taylor , who Homicide executive director Barry Levinson chose after being impressed by Taylor 's short film That Burning Question (1988) . Elements of the episode , including the shooting of patrolman Chris Thormann , were adapted from David Simon 's non @-@ fiction crime book , Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets . " A Dog and Pony Show " included guest appearances by actors Michael Constantine , Larry Gilliard , Jr . , Lisa Gay Hamilton and Edie Falco .

Since ratings for Homicide had gradually declined throughout the season , NBC announced a decision about whether the series would be renewed would depend on the Nielsen ratings of the final four episodes , starting with " A Dog and Pony Show " . Before it aired , Barry Levinson appeared in a commercial making a direct appeal to viewers to watch . Nevertheless , it was seen by 8 @. @ 47 million household viewers , which was considered relatively low , although it was an improvement over the previous episode " Three Men and Adena " .

= = Plot summary = =

Bayliss (Kyle Secor) continues to despair over the murder case of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Adena Watson , which he failed to solve . When Gee (Yaphet Kotto) orders Bayliss and Pembleton to move on and take new cases , they are assigned to solve the murder of Jake , a police dog . Bayliss thinks it is a waste of time , but according to municipal law , the death of a city @-@ owned animal is treated as an official investigation , and Pembleton decides to take the case seriously . The dog 's gums are extremely red , and Pembleton believes he may have been poisoned or gassed . They question local dog pound employee Penny (Joy Ehrlich) , who admits she accidentally killed Jake with carbon monoxide after mixing him up with another dog , then dumped the body in a panic . John Kuehn (Nick Olcott) , Jake 's human " partner " , scatters Jake 's ashes in a lake and Bayliss , reminded of Adena Watson , reacts emotionally .

Felton (Daniel Baldwin) and Howard (Melissa Leo) respond to the murder of a young woman named Idamae Keene , who is found cut and tortured to death in a bedroom . They determine the victim likely knew her killer , and the next day they question " Pony " Johnson (Geoffrey Ewing) , a drug dealer who was having an affair with Keene . Johnson denies killing Keene , but Johnson 's other girlfriend (Lisa Gay Hamilton) tells the detectives Johnson abruptly left a party with a fellow drug pusher named William Lyness (Larry Gilliard , Jr .) the night of the murder . Later , Lewis (Clark Johnson) reports William 's mother , Alexandra Lyness , was killed the same way as Keene . Felton , Howard and Lewis interrogate William Lyness , who confesses he sat in the car while Johnson killed his mother for taking drugs away from William .

Medical examiner Blythe (Wendy Hughes) leaves her visiting son Danny (Stivi Paskoski) with her boyfriend Bolander (Ned Beatty) for the day , with the hopes they will get to know each other better . Danny rides along with Bolander and Munch (Richard Belzer) on their murder investigations , but acts very wild and constantly asks inappropriate questions . At dinner later , Danny asks Bolander about his sex life with Danny 's mother , making Bolander extremely uncomfortable . Bolander later tells Blythe he believes her son is crazy . Meanwhile , Crosetti (Jon Polito) spends a lot of time with his friend Officer Chris Thormann (Lee Tergesen) , who is recovering from a recent shooting that has left him blind . At one point , Thormann defecates on himself and is humiliated , but Crosetti helps him clean up . Thormann 's wife , Eva (Edie Falco) , tells Crosetti she is pregnant , but that her husband reacted angrily to the news . Thormann tells Crosetti he should have died at the hospital and can never be a good father , but Crosetti encourages him .

Gee attends a retirement party for his best friend and fellow shift commander , Lt. John Scinta (Michael Constantine) . Police brass keep Scinta 's possible replacement a secret from Gee . After returning drunk from the party , the two reminisce about old times , but Scinta also warns Gee that police brass could end up forcing him into retirement , just as they did to Scinta .

= = Production = =

" A Dog and Pony Show " was written by James Yoshimura based on a story by executive producer Tom Fontana , and was directed by Alan Taylor . Barry Levinson , executive producer of Homicide : Life on the Street , hand @-@ picked Taylor to direct the episode after watching Taylor 's 1988 half @-@ hour film , That Burning Question , which Taylor made as a thesis for a seminar taught by film director Martin Scorsese . The episode establishes the vacancy of the homicide unit 's second shift commander position , which is offered to Pembleton in the first season episode , " And the Rockets Dead Glare " , before it is ultimately given to Megan Russert in the beginning of the third season . Taylor said of directing Homicide , " I hadn 't even learned the rules of filmmaking , or TV for that matter , and I was being put in a position where I was supposed to break them all . "

The shooting of Officer Thormann was adapted from true @-@ life events in chronicled in Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , the 1991 David Simon non @-@ fiction book about a Baltimore Police Department , which was adapted into the Homicide series . Homicide writers added the twist of Crosetti taking the case personally based on his close friendship with the victim . As the first season of Homicide progressed , NBC officials complained to the show 's producers about the large number of protracted , interwoven subplots going on during each given episode . " A Dog and Pony Show " in particular refers to the Adena Watson murder , which was featured in five previous episodes and resolved in " Three Men and Adena " , as well as the romance between Bolander and Blythe , which had been progressing throughout the first season . Additionally , the " Pony " Johnson subplot started in " A Dog and Pony Show " would not become resolved until the next episode , " And the Rockets Dead Glare . " By the beginning of the second season , the Homicide producers bowed to network pressure and were forced to reduce the number of subplots in each episode .

" A Dog and Pony Show " included guest appearances by actors Michael Constantine , Larry Gilliard , Jr . , Lisa Gay Hamilton and Edie Falco . Tom Fontana cast Falco as Officer Thormann 's wife Eva after watching her performance in Laws of Gravity . Fontana said of her , " She 's an actress who 's unadorned by any embroidery . She does everything with such simplicity and honesty , it 's breathtaking . " Falco was a struggling actor at the time , and said her salary from one Homicide episode paid for one month 's worth of rent . Fontana cast Falco as a regular in his HBO series Oz based on her work in the Homicide episodes . Larry Gilliard , Jr. later starred in a leading role as drug dealer D 'Angelo Barksdale in The Wire , another Baltimore police drama created by Homicide producer and writer David Simon . Lisa Gay Hamilton later starred in the legal drama The Practice , making her the second future Practice star to appear on Homicide , after Steve Harris in " Gone for Goode " . Hamilton also later starred in the 2009 comedy @-@ drama series Men of a Certain Age as the on @-@ screen wife of a character played by Homicide co @-@ star , Andre Braugher .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

Ratings for Homicide : Life on the Street gradually declined since the series first premiered . In response , NBC announced to fans that a decision about whether Homicide would be renewed or canceled would depend on how the last four episodes of the season fared in the ratings , starting with " A Dog and Pony Show " . The week before the episode aired , the network started airing a television commercial with Barry Levinson making a direct appeal to viewers to watch the show , in which he said :

If you 're wondering when we 're on , remember the Michael Jackson special ? We were opposite that . And when the president spoke ? Pre @-@ emptied for it . And the Grammys ? You got it - we were opposite that . So where are we , exactly ? Well there 's a show called Home Improvement - and as soon as you get there , then quickly switch to NBC .

In its original American broadcast on March 10 , 1993 , " A Dog and Pony Show " was watched by 8 @.@ 47 million households , according to Nielsen Media Research , earning the episode a 9 @.@ 1 rating . This constituted an increase in viewership compared to the previous week 's episode , " Three Men and Adena " , which was seen by 7 @.@ 08 million household viewers and received a 7 @.@ 6 rating . Nevertheless , Homicide ranked relatively low in the Nielsen ratings compared to other shows , ranking 67th for the week of March 8 to 14 , with the ABC comedy series Home Improvement ranking number one with 22 @.@ 6 million household viewers .

= = = Reviews = = =

The Scripps Howard News Service praised the episode , calling it one of their strongest television recommendations for the week and declaring Homicide " the best new drama of the season " . " A Dog and Pony Show " 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 .