

= Homicide : Life on the Street (season 1) =

The first season of Homicide : Life on the Street , an American police procedural drama television series , originally aired in the United States on NBC between January 31 and March 31 , 1993 . The show was created by Paul Attanasio , with film director Barry Levinson and television writer and producer Tom Fontana serving as executive producers . Adapted from David Simon 's 1991 non @-@ fiction book Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , the season followed the fictional detectives of Baltimore Police Department homicide unit and the murder cases they investigate . The show was broadcast on Wednesdays at 9 p.m. EST , with the exception of the series premiere , which aired immediately after Super Bowl XXVII .

The season introduced regular cast members Daniel Baldwin , Ned Beatty , Richard Belzer , Andre Braugher , Clark Johnson , Yaphet Kotto , Melissa Leo , Jon Polito and Kyle Secor . Most of the primary characters were based on real @-@ life Baltimore detectives from Simon 's book , including Gary D 'Addario , Terrence McLarney , Harry Edgerton , Donald Worden and Jay Landsman . Many of the first season story arcs were also adapted from the book , most notably the 1988 Baltimore slaying of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Latonya Kim Wallace , which was the basis for the murder case of Adena Watson in Homicide . Another multi @-@ episode arc included Lee Tergesen as an officer who is friends with the homicide squad and later gets shot . " Night of the Dead Living " , originally written as the third episode , was moved to become the season finale at the insistence of NBC executives , which led to several notable continuity errors .

The first season received consistently positive reviews , with several commentators declaring it one of the best shows on television at the time . The episode " Three Men and Adena " , which consists almost entirely of one police interrogation with three actors , received particularly positive reviews and was declared one of the 100 greatest television moments by Entertainment Weekly . The series premiere , " Gone for Goode " , opened to a season @-@ high viewership of 18 @-@ 2 million households due to a lead @-@ in from the Super Bowl . The Nielsen ratings declined throughout the season , which Homicide producers attributed to a poor time @-@ slot and heavy competition from the ABC comedies Home Improvement and Coach . The ratings led NBC executives to demand changes to the show before renewing Homicide for a second season .

Homicide : Life on the Street received four Emmy Award nominations during its first season and won two , and also received a Writers Guild of America award and a Directors Guild of America Award . The first and second seasons of Homicide were released together in a four @-@ DVD box @-@ set on May 27 , 2003 .

= = Episodes = =

= = Development = =

= = = Conception = = =

Film director Barry Levinson sought to create a police drama television series based on Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets , a 1991 non @-@ fiction book by David Simon based on one year he spent with Baltimore Police Department homicide detectives . In addition to the book 's being set in Levinson 's home city of Baltimore , the director was attracted to the realistic way Simon portrayed police work and the detectives . The book contradicted many popular myths that had been built into past police dramas : it portrayed the detectives as not always getting along with each other and told stories of criminals who were not always caught or punished . It also portrayed detectives as solving cases primarily through physical evidence , witnesses and confessions , not by investigating motives like on many other police shows . Simon also sought to dispel the popular television perception that all detectives take their cases very personally and identify with their victims : in Simon 's experience , homicide cases were primarily a job to the detectives , not personal . Levinson and Tom Fontana ,

who had past television experience as executive producer on the drama series *St. Elsewhere* , hired screenwriter Paul Attanasio to adapt elements of the book into the teleplay for the first episode . It was the first television script Attanasio ever wrote .

Attanasio based the characters in *Homicide* on the detectives featured in Simon 's book . Frank Pembleton was based on Detective Harry Edgerton , although the two were so different that both the producers and detectives agreed their only true similarity was that they were black . Meldrick Lewis was only loosely based on Detective Donald Waltemeyer , and Levinson admitted Lewis did not start to become strongly developed until season three because , " I thought it 'd be great to have a character who was totally unwilling to share with the people he worked with . " Tim Bayliss was based on the real @-@ life Baltimore detective Tom Pellegrini , the primary detective who investigated the 1988 Baltimore slaying of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Latonya Kim Wallace . The extremely personal approach Bayliss took in attempting to solve Adena Watson 's murder , and his strong disappointment over failing to solve it , was based on the emotions Pellegrini went through in the Wallace case . Pellegrini provided advice to actor Kyle Secor about how to play the Bayliss role .

The part of John Munch was based on Jay Landsman , a practical joker who was known in his homicide unit for his morbid wit . Both Belzer and the character Munch he portrays are cynical , caustic former hippies who are so similar that Belzer declared the character " exactly as I would be if I were a cop " . Stanley Bolander was inspired by Detective Donald Worden who , like his on @-@ screen counterpart , was nicknamed " The Big Man " . Ned Beatty only met Worden once before taking on the role , and he said the detective had " an uncluttered mind and a near @-@ photographic memory " . Beau Felton was based on Detective Donald Kincaid , and Felton 's clashes with Pembleton were based on Kincaid 's real @-@ life strong dislike for Harry Edgerton . Kay Howard was based in part on the female Detective Bert Silver , and in part on the male Detective Rich Garvey , who experienced a real @-@ life string of good luck in solving consecutive cases , just as Howard did in the first season .

NBC ordered a full season of *Homicide : Life on the Street* before a pilot episode was even produced . Planned as a mid @-@ season replacement , the network ordered six episodes for their 1993 winter season , and then ordered another three after watching the completed pilot episode . The network had been consistently placing third behind their competitor networks ABC and CBS , and was suffering due to the loss of several successful shows in 1992 , including *The Cosby Show* , *The Golden Girls* and *Matlock* , as well as the upcoming end of *Cheers* in 1993 . NBC had tried appealing to audiences in their 20s through several comedies , but those efforts proved unsuccessful and the network decided to focus on high @-@ quality dramas like *Homicide* . NBC Entertainment president Warren Littlefield considered it the most promising new series of the season .

= = = Crew = = =

Paul Attanasio was billed as the creator of *Homicide : Life on the Street* , with Barry Levinson and Tom Fontana serving as executive producers . The show was produced by Levinson 's company Baltimore Pictures , which partnered with Reeves Entertainment . Wayne Ewing , who was cinematographer for Levinson 's film *Toys* (1992) , was director of photography during the first season and also directed the episode " Smoke Gets in Your Eyes " .

Stan Warnow started out working as editor on the season premiere " Gone for Goode " , but he departed before the process was done due to creative differences with Levinson . Tony Black finished the editing for that episode , but did not return for the rest of the season . Jay Rabinowitz worked as editor for the remaining episodes , along with editors Cindy Mollo and Richard Harkness . Van Smith designed the costumes for " Gone for Goode " , but he did not return to work on subsequent episodes , where the costumes were handled by Rolande Berman .

The real @-@ life detectives portrayed in *Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets* signed waivers allowing themselves to be portrayed in the show , and some became consultants for the series . Gary D 'Addario , the homicide lieutenant with the Baltimore Police Department and inspiration for

the Al " Gee " Giardello character , worked as a consultant and approved the teleplays for accuracy . Fontana said of the real @-@ life detectives ' contributions : " They have great stories , and the rhythms of their different personalities are so special that it 's great to have them around . "

= = = Cast = = =

Barry Levinson and Tom Fontana took the unusual step of basing the ethnicity and gender of the characters on the actors they cast , even though the roles were based on real @-@ life detectives . For example , the role of Frank Pembleton , although based on the African @-@ American Detective Harry Edgerton , was not race @-@ specific until Andre Braugher auditioned and was cast . This impressed Braugher , who believed fully developed roles were often written for white characters and black roles were generally two @-@ dimensional and stereotypical . This belief developed in part from Braugher 's poor experience playing Detective Winston Blake on the television series Kojak , where he objected to the show 's treatment of race . Ned Beatty , the best @-@ known member of cast when the series debuted , was personally approached by Levinson and Fontana to play Stanley Bolander . Although Beatty respected the two men and liked the show , he was reluctant to take the role because he believed NBC would corrupt the series and change it to a typical police show . Beatty claimed his agents and managers " pushed , dragged and hauled " him into meeting with Levinson , but Beatty ultimately accepted the role . Kyle Secor was cast as Tim Bayliss by Fontana , who remembered the actor from his role as gay AIDS patient Bret Johnson in Fontana 's previous show , St. Elsewhere .

In casting Al " Gee " Giardello , Levinson decided not to make the character Italian @-@ American like the real @-@ life counterpart Gary D 'Addario , but rather cast Yaphet Kotto and made the character a Sicilian @-@ African American . Kotto , who turned down two feature film offers to accept the Homicide role , was extremely impressed with Levinson 's choices for the character , saying , " They had the daring to make the artistic choice without prejudice of any kind . I don 't think there 's another network show on the air with this sort of cast composition . " Kotto struggled at first with the show 's production style and constantly moving camera style , which flustered him and made him forget his lines . Levinson had to personally reassure him that he could handle the part . Clark Johnson was cast as Meldrick Lewis , and Jon Polito as his partner , Steve Crosetti . When Polito first auditioned , he read the role of a Polish cop , then did a second reading for an Irish role based on Detective Sergeant Terrence McLarney . He was cast in the McLarney role , but it was rewritten to an Italian character for Polito . The actor found working on Homicide intense and demanding , claiming , " Everybody 's working so hard . This is much more of a theater atmosphere . "

The first Homicide season featured the first performances of Richard Belzer as Detective John Munch , a character the actor has been credited for in 459 television episodes (as of a May 2016 appearance) in nine different television series , including Homicide and Law & Order : Special Victims Unit . Levinson asked Belzer to audition for the part after hearing the comedian ranting on The Howard Stern Show , where Belzer was a frequent guest . Levinson said Belzer was a " lousy actor " during his first audition with the " Gone for Goode " script . Levinson asked Belzer to take some time to reread and practice the material , then come back and read it again . During his second reading , Levinson said Belzer was " still terrible " , but that the actor eventually found confidence in his performance . Daniel Baldwin was cast as Beau Felton , and dyed his naturally blond hair black for the role . Baldwin became one of the most vocal supporters of the show , giving many press interviews about it and defending it amid declining ratings . Baldwin declared , " Homicide is the best material I 've had the chance to do . " Melissa Leo was cast as Kay Howard , which was considered a particularly strong part compared to other female characters in police dramas at the time , which were usually limited to love interests or minor parts . While most cast members shadowed real @-@ life Baltimore detectives to prepare for the roles , Leo did not because , she said , " I don 't like to look at the horror that 's in the world . " Wendy Hughes was cast as medical examiner Carol Blythe .

The first season also introduced several minor characters that would make recurring appearances

throughout the rest of the series . Colonel Burt Granger and Captain George Barnfather , the Baltimore Police Department bosses , were introduced in the second episode , " Ghost of a Chance " . They were played , respectively , by Gerald F. Gough and Clayton LeBouef , the latter of whom later portrayed drug front worker @-@ turned @-@ informer Wendell " Orlando " Blocker in David Simon 's other police drama , The Wire . Also introduced in " Ghost of a Chance " was prosecutor Ed Danvers , who was played by ?eljko Ivanek , a long @-@ time friend of Tom Fontana . The executive producer felt Danvers was written in a dull and simple way , but felt confident Ivanek could " make it a real character " . Ami Brabson , the real @-@ life wife of actor Andre Braugher , played Mary Pembleton , the spouse of Braugher 's detective counterpart character . Brabson auditioned for the role shortly after Braugher was cast in the series , and Braugher said of their on @-@ screen pairing , " We have an instant rapport that we don 't have to create . " Michael Willis made his first of several appearances as defense attorney Darin Russom in the first season . Willis also later appeared in The Wire as the corrupt property developer Andy Krawczyk .

Lee Tergesen played Officer Chris Thormann , a patrolman who is shot in the head and blinded . His wife , Eva Thormann , was portrayed by Edie Falco , whom Fontana cast after watching her performance in Laws of Gravity (1992) . Fontana was so impressed with Falco 's work in Homicide that he later cast her in his HBO series Oz . Film and theater actor Moses Gunn 's final performance before his death was as Risley Tucker , a murder suspect questioned for 12 hours by Pembleton and Bayliss in " Three Men and Adena " . Several other notable actors made guest appearances throughout the first season of Homicide , including Gwen Verdon , Luis Guzmán , Paul Schulze , Walt MacPherson , Bai Ling , Lisa Gay Hamilton , Steve Harris , Alexander Chaplin , N 'Bushe Wright , and Baltimore filmmaker John Waters . Larry Gilliard , Jr . , who later starred as drug dealer D 'Angelo Barksdale in The Wire , made a brief appearance in the Homicide episode " A Dog and Pony Show " . Mel Proctor , then the home team sports announcer for the Washington Bullets , made his first of five guest performances in " Son of a Gun " as recurring reporter character Grant Besser . Detective Tom Pellegrini , the basis for the Tim Bayliss character , made an on @-@ screen cameo in " Ghost of a Chance " as the police officer who discovered Adena Watson 's body .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

Homicide : Life on the Street was unique among police dramas for weaving multiple intricate story @-@ lines into single episodes ; the season premiere " Gone for Goode " , for example , included four separate subplots . As the first season of Homicide progressed , NBC officials complained to the show 's producers about the large number of subplots , but the producers resisted the pressure to scale them back until the second season . Despite intense advance promotion of the Homicide premiere due to a planned Super Bowl lead @-@ in , Attanasio deliberately sought to introduce the show with little fanfare , avoiding sensational gimmicks in favor of character @-@ driven plot , quirky dialogue and morbid dark humor . Homicide was noted for its deliberate lack of gun @-@ play and car chases in favor of dialogue and story . The writers also wanted the dialogue to reflect the kinds of things detectives would talk about when not discussing murders or cases , which led to the inclusion of several scenes in which detectives talk casually among themselves during lunch or around the office . One of the " running gags " was Crosetti 's obsession of the Lincoln assassination and his quest to discover the " truth " and his arguments with Lewis or anyone else willing to listen . Fontana , who compared the scenes to Levinson 's 1982 film Diner , said , " That really made the show different from other shows , because we had the room to have conversations that seemingly didn 't [storywise] connect anything , but they did reveal a lot about the characters . "

" Gone for Goode " included several storylines , and even exact bits of dialogue , adapted straight from Homicide : A Year on the Killing Streets . One of the biggest story arcs from the first season was the murder of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Adena Watson , which is introduced in " Gone for Goode

" and lasts for five episodes until " Three Men and Adena " . The case was based on the murder of 11 @-@ year @-@ old Latonya Kim Wallace , which made up a major part of Simon 's book . The Watson case , like the Wallace case , ultimately goes unsolved . A subplot from " Gone for Goode " and " Son of a Gun " involved the investigation into Calpurnia Smith , an elderly woman suspected of murdering five husbands in order to collect their life insurance policies . This was based on the real @-@ life case of Geraldine Parrish , who was also accused of killing five husbands for insurance money , and was eventually convicted for three of their murders . Another multi @-@ episode arc involved the near @-@ fatal shooting of Patrolman Chris Thormann , which leaves the officer blind . This was also adapted from true @-@ life events in Simon 's book , although Homicide writers added the twist of Steve Crosetti taking the case personally based on his close friendship with the victim .

Attanasio , Levinson and Fontana strove to make Homicide more realistic than other police dramas , even in minor details . For example , Levinson specifically asked that a dead body found by detectives in " Gone for Goode " be badly decomposing and attracting flies because he felt other shows did not portray corpses in a realistic way . Some episodes , like " Ghost of a Chance " , focus on murders that take place in wealthy rural settings , rather than an urban or predominantly poorer location as most police dramas did . Homicide was noted for demonstrating better than most American television police shows that murders can take place in various socioeconomic circumstances . In striving for realism , some cases in Homicide remain unsolved and murderers go free , most notably in the Adena Watson case . This theme often put the show 's producers at odds with NBC executives , who wanted happier endings with more closure . Fontana said of the Watson investigation , " 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 writers also used details from real @-@ life criminal investigations in their script . During one scene in " Ghost of a Chance " , a busload of rookie police officers straight out of the academy are brought in to investigate a crime scene . The New York Police Department employed exactly the same tactic while searching for the remains of a missing girl in upstate New York in 1987 . One episode written by Tom Fontana , " Three Men and Adena " , took place entirely within the confines of the police interrogation room known colloquially by the detectives as " The Box " . Fontana was partially inspired to write it by comments made by Barry Levinson during filming of an interrogation scene in " Gone for Goode " , when Levinson said the acting by Braugher and Secor was so good , an entire episode could be filmed around it . 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 [exec producer] Barry Levinson and I to establish that we weren 't going to do the same old show every week . " 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 .

" Smoke Gets in Your Eyes " was originally supposed to be the first season finale , while " Night of the Dead Living " was meant to be the third episode . However , NBC programmers felt it was too slow @-@ paced to run so early in the season : the episode takes place entirely within the squad room and lacked traditional police drama action , which NBC executives felt was not appropriate for an early stage when the series was still trying to woo viewers . As a result , " Night of the Dead Living " was shown out of sequence and made the season finale . This created several notable continuity errors . For example , Officer Chris Thormann has not yet been shot and blinded in " Night of the Dead Living " , and Tim Bayliss is still working on the Adena Watson case , which was already ended earlier in the season . These errors were addressed by Homicide producers by adding the words " One hot night , last September ... " to the beginning of the episode , thus establishing the events of the episode took place within the correct timeline of the series , even though the episodes are shown out of order .

= = = Filming = = =

The inaugural season of Homicide established a realistic visual style that would remain largely

intact throughout the duration of the series . Among the stylistic elements were the near @-@ constant movement with hand @-@ held Super 16 cameras to give the show a naturalistic documentary look and an editing style involving jump cuts that was unusual for television at the time . Wayne Ewing had used Super 16 cameras while filming promotional material for Toys , and that format allowed Homicide producers to film cheaply and with a smaller crew , giving them more time to focus on the actor 's performances . While filming , Levinson said he would simply allow the actors to perform while he switched back and forth between them with the hand @-@ held camera instead of filming carefully planned shots and individual scenes from multiple angles . Levinson said the camera and editing style was partially inspired by the Jean @-@ Luc Godard film *Breathless* (1960) , which he would often ask his directors to watch before filming Homicide episodes .

Some individual scenes involved several jump cuts repeated several times in fast succession . Another unusual stylistic element used throughout the season involved sudden changes in jump @-@ screen direction ; a shot with an actor looking from left to right might immediately jump to another shot of the same actor looking from right to left . This process came from Levinson 's insistence that the footage be edited together to include the actor 's best performances . While editing " *Gone for Goode* " , Tony Black cut together two shots that did not match and began looking for a cutaway shot he could use to disguise the edit . Levinson liked the technique that came from cutting the two conflicting shots together and insisted it stay in . This technique became commonly used throughout the series , although it was toned down in future seasons at the insistence of NBC executives who found it too unconventional .

Like the rest of the series , the scenes for the first season episodes were shot on @-@ location in Baltimore . The use of hand @-@ held cameras allowed the film to be shot more easily in the city , rather than on a sound @-@ stage in Los Angeles or New York City , where most shows are typically shot . Levinson said being on location at all times allowed Baltimore " to be a character in the show " . The Recreation Pier Building , a Fells Point structure built in 1914 which once housed Baltimore 's marine police , was used as the set of the police department station , which was the principal set for the show . The building looked so realistic that Baltimore residents would occasionally wander into it to report actual crimes . Production director Vincent Peranino created the squad room set inside the Recreation Pier Building . While most sets include a few fake walls opposite an open space for the cameras and crew , Peranino designed the entire room as if it were a real setting , including separate areas for the detectives ' coffee room and the interrogation room known as " The Box " . The actors began storing their actual belongings at their desks on the set , left real personal messages to each other on the bulletin boards , and got business cards with their characters ' actual names for their desks .

Many other scenes in Homicide were filmed primarily in the Fells Point neighborhood , including actual streets , bars and houses to create authenticity . Scenes at the Homicide morgue were filmed inside Baltimore 's actual Office of the Medical Examiner , which the actors hated performing in due to the unsettling atmosphere ; Ned Beatty said of filming there , " The one thing you can 't get on camera is , oh boy , it smells . " Homicide footage was transferred from film to videotape for editing at the Maryland studio Colorlab Motion Picture Services . There , Levinson and Ewing worked with colorist Drexel Williams to drain the footage of color value , leaving a gritty visual style almost reminiscent of black @-@ and @-@ white . This technique was downplayed starting in the second season , giving the show a more colorful look .

The opening credits for season one were developed by Mark Pellington , a director and Baltimore native . Pellington filmed the images used in the credits with an 8 mm camera to give it a gritty look . Levinson and Fontana wanted images of all the regular cast members in the credits , but wanted a different approach than the typical image of an actor looking at the camera , which they felt was a television cliché . Instead , Pellington included each of their images , but in quick close @-@ up shots using a variety of lighting methods and camera angles ; the names were only shown after the last close @-@ up , and not in the same order . This approach was used until the beginning of the show 's fifth season .

= = = Music = = =

The theme song for Homicide : Life on the Street was composed by Lynn F. Kowal , who submitted one of several tapes sent to the producers for consideration . Homicide producers initially had trouble finding the right song , and Levinson ultimately chose Kowal 's themes because , while most of the candidates too closely resembled typical television theme songs , Levinson felt Kowal 's song " had that odd quality to it , drums or whatever , and it was very unusual " . Music is presented in various ways throughout the first season of Homicide . Some songs are played on radios that play in the homicide squad room , like " Lay Down My Life " by Carole King , " Texas Slide " by Jean @-@ Jacques Milteau , " N.Y.C (Can You Believe This City ?) " by Charles and Eddie , " Little Boy Blues " and " Break Up " by Gary Fitzgerald , and " Tropic Call " by Mitchell Coodley and Andrew Snitzer , all of which are featured in " Night of the Dead Living " . Other songs are more integrated into the show itself , like " Hazy Shade of Blue " , a Tor Hyams song that plays while the police raid several neighborhood homes in search of clues during " Ghost of a Chance " , and the hymn " The Sweet By and By " , which is sung at a church during Adena Watson 's funeral in that same episode . Several other songs are featured in episodes throughout the first season , including " Elephant Walk " by The Kings , " The Beat Goes On " by Sonny Bono , " Going ' Around in Circles " by Jules Taub , " Telephone Blues " by Sam Ling and George Smith , and " It 's So Hard to Say Goodbye to Yesterday " by Freddie Perren and Christine Yarian .

= = Reception = =

= = = Reviews = = =

Reviews were consistently positive from the beginning of the series . The Washington Post television critic Tom Shales called Homicide " the least compromised and the most intense " drama show on television , adding , " In every department , the level of excellence has been awesome . " Shales complimented it for portraying the tension of a homicide squad without resorting to gratuitous violence . Harold Schindler of The Salt Lake Tribune said the series " ranks among the best programs of their kind to appear on television anywhere " . He praised the acting and called the filming style " camera vérité at its best without actually becoming a documentary " . Lon Grahne of the Chicago Sun @-@ Times called it " the season 's best new series of any genre " , praising it for not depending on action sequences and claiming it " has the spice , dry wit and ethnic diversity of the Hill Street Blues crew , with even more eccentricities and a heightened sense of realism " . Paul Lomartire of The Palm Beach Post called it " the best new drama to come along on any network since NBC canceled Shannon 's Deal " . Newsday critic Marvin Kitman called Homicide " an old @-@ fashioned NBC signature show " reminiscent of the network during the time of Grant Tinker and Brandon Tartikoff .

Associated Press writer Scott Williams praised the series as unique : " It had superb writing , a gifted cast that created complex , fully realized characters , a unique visual style , and stories of compelling power and intensity . " Knight Ridder Newspapers television writer Mike Duffy praised what he called the show 's witty writing , stylish visuals and superb acting , and declared it the best police drama since Hill Street Blues . The Scripps Howard News Service called Homicide " the best new drama of the season " , and The Buffalo News writer Alan Pergament ranked it among the ten best television shows of 1993 . Eric Kohanik of The Hamilton Spectator called it " the best new series of the midseason " , and praised it for not resorting to " silly car chases [and] blazing guns " . Not all reviews were positive . James Endrst , television columnist for The Hartford Courant , felt the series was over @-@ hyped and said " seen it , done it , been there before " of the filming techniques otherwise being praised as cutting edge . In writing about " Gone for Goode " , Time reviewer Richard Zoglin praised the " strong cast " and said he appreciated the lack of violence , but said , " the characters are too pat , their conflicts too predictable " , particularly the rookie character Bayliss .

The New York Times writer John O 'Connor praised the acting and originality of the series , which

he called " simultaneously funny and harrowing " . He also said Homicide occasionally gratuitously emphasized style over substance in an attempt to be original , " [as if] trying to signal , ' See how much better we are than ordinary television . ' " Many commentators were impressed with the high number of strong , complex , well @-@ developed and non @-@ stereotypical African American characters like Pembleton , Lewis and Giardello . When the show risked facing cancellation due to poor Nielsen ratings , Benjamin Hooks , executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People , took what was considered an unusual move and wrote a letter to NBC Entertainment president Warren Littlefield urging the network not to cancel Homicide . Hooks said the show presented many positive portrayals of African Americans , as well as " a compelling and realistic rendering of today 's multiracial and multicultural urban society " .

" Three Men and Adena " received especially positive reviews and has been described as one of the " classic episodes " of Homicide : Life on the Street . It 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 . David Bianculli of the New York Daily News said the episode " remains one of TV 's best drama hours ever " , Entertainment Weekly writer Bruce Fretts said the episode was " one of the most powerful prime @-@ time hours ever " and literary critic John Leonard called it " the most extraordinary thing I 've ever seen in a television hour " . 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 " .

= = = Ratings = = =

The series premiered on January 31 , 1993 , in the time slot immediately following Super Bowl XXVII . Having consistently placed third in the Nielsen ratings during prime time since September 1992 , NBC hoped a large football audience coupled with an extensive advertising campaign would allow Homicide : Life on the Street to give the network a large ratings boost . NBC ran numerous television commercials advertising the premiere episode , some of which focused on the involvement of Barry Levinson with the hope of capitalizing on the feature film director 's household name . " Gone for Goode " was seen by 18 @.@ 24 million household viewers , which was largest viewership of the first season , and marked the best ratings performance of a preview or premiere following a Super Bowl since The Wonder Years in 1988 . Nevertheless , NBC considered it a disappointing performance based on the amount of advertising and press coverage the episode received . " Gone for Goode " received less than half the audience that the Super Bowl itself did .

Ratings for Homicide : Life on the Street gradually declined throughout the first season , and it ultimately finished 99th in the Nielsen ratings among network shows for the season . It aired Wednesdays at 9 p.m. EST and was consistently defeated in the ratings by a high @-@ rating comedy block featuring Home Improvement and Coach on ABC . Barry Levinson said the scheduling was a serious detriment to Homicide which , like many other drama series at the time , was designed for a 10 p.m. time @-@ slot . Tom Fontana also believed Homicide suffered in the ratings because it aired between Unsolved Mysteries and Law & Order , which he believed was too many police dramas for one night : " I never understood the concept of three hours of people in handcuffs as a way to entice an audience . "

Viewership also suffered in part due to heavy competition in its time @-@ slot from several major television events , such as a live Oprah Winfrey 90 @-@ minute interview with pop singer Michael Jackson on February 10 , the 35th Grammy Awards ceremony on February 24 , and the Sixth Annual American Comedy Awards on March 3 . As the ratings declined , 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 . During the first week of March , 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 .

Homicide was considered at high risk of cancellation by the end of the first season . When questioned , NBC spokesman Curt Block only said the network was " on the fence " about the series . By the time the season ended , four additional scripts had already been written , but NBC executives asked for several refinements ? including fewer episode subplots and less camera movements and jump cuts ? before approving a second season . Fontana said he was willing " to do anything to keep NBC from forgetting us " , although Levinson said the show would maintain its realistic visual style , claiming , " We want a camera that 's almost a participant in the show . " Homicide was ultimately renewed , but the producers slightly toned down the show 's bleak visual style and hand @-@ held photography motif , and focused more strongly on single stories rather than multiple subplots . Tom Fontana said of the changes to the series , " We were experimenting with our first nine episodes . Whenever you try something new , you tend to err on the side of breaking ground . But we 'd rather have more people watching , so the colors and lighting are slightly brighter , and the camera movements are not as jarring . "

= = = Awards = = =

Homicide : Life on the Street won two Emmy Awards during its first season and received two additional nominations . Barry Levinson won an Emmy for Outstanding Directing for a Drama Series for his work on " Gone for Goode " and Tom Fontana won for Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series for the " Three Men and Adena " script . After winning his Emmy , Fontana made an emotional acceptance speech about the need to save the hour @-@ long television drama , in which he said : " It 's not the fault of the American public that the drama is in trouble . It 's us : the writers , producers , the network executives , the studio money @-@ crunchers . We have to figure out a way to reignite the imagination of the American people . " Fontana said of the response to his speech :

" I didn 't think I was going to win , but I decided if they were going to give it to me , I was going to yell ... Writers told me , ' Boy , you really gave it to the producers . ' Producers told me , ' Boy , you really stuck it to the networks . ' The networks told me , ' Boy , you really hammered the studios . ' Nobody got to the point . I was indicting all of us . What is frustrating about this is nothing has changed . Everybody wants to do everything the way it has been done 100 times before . "

Mark Pellington received a Creative Arts Emmy nomination for the main title sequence of the show , and Gwen Verdon was nominated for the Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series her guest performance in " Ghost of a Chance " as Jessie Doohan , an unhappily married woman accused of killing her husband of 60 years . That same year , Verdon was also nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series for her performance in the series Dream On .

The first season also received other awards and nominations . Frank Pugliese and Tom Fontana won a Writers Guild of America award for Outstanding Achievement in Television Writing for Episodic Drama for the " Night of the Dead Living " teleplay . Paul Attanasio was nominated for the same award his " Gone for Goode " script . Levinson was nominated for a Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Direction in a Drama Series for " Gone for Goode " , but lost to Gregory Hoblit for his direction of the pilot episode of the police drama NYPD Blue . Homicide was nominated for best drama series at the American Television Awards , a new awards show established in 1993 by the producers of the American Music Awards . The American Television Awards differed from the Emmys in that nominees were determined by reporters and critics rather than members of the television industry . Homicide was defeated by I 'll Fly Away , an NBC drama series that was canceled in 1993 .

= = DVD release = =

The first and second seasons of Homicide were released together in a 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 . The set included an audio commentary by Barry Levinson and Tom Fontana for the " Gone for Goode " episode , as well as a collection of the commercials that advertised the episode during the Super Bowl .