SOFTWARE & TECH

Columbo Murder By The Book Full Cast

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Unraveling the Mystery of Columbo Murder By The Book Cast

When television history is discussed, few detective series hold the revered status of **Columbo**. The disheveled, trenchcoat-wearing Lieutenant Columbo, played by the incomparable Peter Falk, captivated audiences with his unique method of investigation: the "howdunnit" format where the audience knows the killer from the start. Among the series' most celebrated episodes is the season 3 premiere, **"Murder By The Book,"** which aired on September 15, 1973. This episode is not only a fan favorite but also a masterclass in television mystery. A significant part of its enduring appeal lies in the exceptional **Columbo Murder By The Book cast**, featuring a compelling antagonist and a host of memorable supporting characters. This article offers a comprehensive deep dive into the cast, their roles, the production, and the lasting legacy of this classic installment.

The Core Duel: Columbo vs. Ken Franklin

At the heart of any great **Columbo**episode is the intellectual battle between the lieutenant and the murderer. In "Murder By The Book," this duel is particularly sharp, witty, and intense. The episode begins not with a crime of passion, but with a calculated act of professional jealousy and greed.

Peter Falk as Lieutenant Columbo

It is impossible to discuss the **Columbo Murder By The Book cast**without first acknowledging the series' anchor. Peter Falk's portrayal of Lieutenant Columbo is iconic for a reason. His character is a master of disguise, hiding a razor-sharp intellect behind a facade of bumbling forgetfulness and seemingly irrelevant questions. In this episode, Falk is at his absolute best. He appears as a fan of the mystery-writing duo, Ken Franklin and Jim Ferris, which adds an intriguing layer to the investigation. His genuine admiration for their work contrasts sharply with the cold calculation of the killer. Falk's performance is filled with subtle nuances—the famous "just one more thing" lines are delivered with perfect timing, and his innocent curiosity is a weapon he wields with surgical precision. He embodies the Everyman detective who always gets his man, and in "Murder By The Book," he is matched against a foe who initially believes he can outsmart the system.

Jack Cassidy as Ken Franklin

If Peter Falk is the heart of the episode, then Jack Cassidy is its dark, stylish soul. Cassidy's performance as Ken Franklin is one of the most memorable in the entire **Columbo** series. Ken Franklin is half of a successful mystery-writing duo. He is charming, sophisticated, and effortlessly charismatic. However, beneath this polished exterior lies a jealous, ruthless, and arrogant man. When his partner, Jim Ferris, decides to go solo, Franklin sees his lucrative partnership and comfortable lifestyle slipping away. He cannot bear the thought of Ferris getting all the credit for their shared success. Cassidy plays Ken Franklin with a magnificent, almost theatrical arrogance. He is a villain you love to hate. His scenes with Falk are electric; their verbal sparring is a chess match of wits. Cassidy brings a unique flair to the role, making Franklin a cold-blooded killer who believes his own intelligence makes him untouchable. This performance earned him a well-deserved Primetime Emmy

Columbo history. Columbo history and solidified his place in

The Supporting Cast of Columbo Murder By The Book

While the central conflict is between Columbo and Franklin, a strong supporting cast provides the necessary context, clues, and red herrings. Each character, no matter how small, adds texture and depth to the narrative.

Herb Edelman as Sergeant Kramer

Herb Edelman portrays Sergeant Kramer, a recurring character in the **Columbo**universe. Kramer is a standard-issue uniformed officer who often assists Columbo at crime scenes. While not a deep character, Kramer serves an important function. He represents the "regular" police force, amazed and often confused by Columbo's unorthodox methods. Edelman's performance provides a grounding presence, a contrast to the eccentricities of the lieutenant and the flamboyant killer. His reactions often mirror the audience's, creating a sense of shared bemusement.

Martin Milner as Jim Ferris

Martin Milner, famous for his roles in *Route 66* and *Adam-12*, plays Jim Ferris, the murder victim. Even though his screen time is limited to the episode's opening act, Milner makes a strong impression. Jim Ferris is the more talented and ambitious half of the writing duo. He is excited about his new solo project and is completely unaware of the murderous jealousy brewing in his partner. Milner portrays Ferris as a likable, hardworking man who simply wants to follow his creative instincts. His character's untimely death sets the entire plot in motion, and Milner's performance ensures that the audience feels a genuine loss, making Franklin's crime all the more heinous.

Rosemary Forsyth as Joanna Ferris

Rosemary Forsyth plays Joanna Ferris, the victim's widow. She is a woman caught in a whirlwind of grief and confusion. When Columbo questions her, she provides crucial insights into her husband's professional life and his relationship with Ken Franklin. She is not a suspect but a vital source of information. Forsyth brings a quiet dignity and raw vulnerability to the role. Her scenes help to humanize the investigation, reminding Columbo (and the audience) that a real person has been lost. Her testimony about her husband's decision to break the partnership is a key piece of the puzzle for the lieutenant.

Deep Dive into the Guest Cast of Murder By The Book

Beyond the main players, the episode features a collection of talented actors who populate the world of the story. These **Columbo Murder By The Book cast** members create a rich, believable environment.

Lynnette Mettey as Gloria

Lynnette Mettey appears as Gloria, a young, attractive woman who is connected to Ken Franklin. She is present at the scene of the crime and in several key sequences. Her character adds a layer of complexity, suggesting Franklin's double life and his ability to manipulate those around him. Mettey's performance is understated but effective, showing a person who is initially dazzled by Franklin's charm but later becomes part of his alibi and scheme.

Joshua Shelley as Buddy

Joshua Shelley plays Buddy, who is part of the film production team. His character provides some of the technical and professional context surrounding the murder. While his role is minor, he adds to the authenticity of the Hollywood setting.

Bernie Kuby as Detective

Bernie Kuby appears as a uniformed detective, adding to the police presence. These small roles are essential for building the world of the episode.

Production and Behind-the-Scenes Details

"Murder By The Book" was a landmark episode for the series in many ways. It was the directorial debut of Steven Spielberg. Yes, that Steven Spielberg. Before he would go on to direct *Jaws*, *E.T.*, and *Schindler's List*, he cut his teeth on television. His work on "Murder By The Book" is a masterclass in suspense and visual storytelling.

Steven Spielberg's Direction

Spielberg's direction elevates the entire production. He uses the **Columbo Murder By The Book cast** with incredible skill. The opening sequence, where Ken Franklin drives to a remote cabin to meet Jim Ferris, is a brilliant exercise in building tension. Without any dialogue, Spielberg creates a palpable sense of dread. The use of lighting, camera angles, and natural sound design is remarkable. The murder scene itself is shot from a unique perspective, emphasizing the shock and violence of the act. Spielberg brought a cinematic quality to a television movie, and this episode is often cited as proof of his immense talent. His choice to focus on Franklin's planning and execution of the crime sets the stage for a cat-and-mouse game where the audience is always a step ahead, but Columbo is always closing in.

The Script and Writing

The episode was written by Jackson Gillis, based on a story by William Link and Richard Levinson. The script is tight, intelligent, and full of sharp dialogue. The cat-and-mouse interactions between Columbo and Franklin are brilliantly written. Franklin's arrogance is perfectly captured in his lines, and Columbo's deceptively simple questions are perfectly placed to dismantle the murderer's confidence. The script also cleverly uses the mystery-writing profession as a backdrop. The irony that a writer of murder mysteries would commit the perfect crime—and that he would then be investigated by a detective who is a fan of his work—is a delicious narrative conceit that the script exploits fully.

Legacy and Cultural Impact of Murder By The Book

Over five decades after its initial broadcast, "Murder By The Book" remains a high point of the **Columbo** series. Its legacy is multifaceted, and it continues to be discovered and appreciated by new generations of fans.

Critical Acclaim and Fan Favorite

The episode is consistently ranked among the top five episodes of the entire series by critics and fans alike. Jack Cassidy's performance is frequently cited as one of the best "villain" performances in the **Columbo** canon. The episode's inclusion in DVD box sets and its heavy rotation in syndication have ensured its longevity. The chemistry between Falk and Cassidy is often compared to the best pairings in television history, such as Alan Alda and James Garner, or even Holmes and Moriarty. It is a perfect example of the **Columbo** formula executed at the highest level.

Influence on Later Television and Film

The episode's influence can be seen in numerous detective and mystery shows that followed. The "howdunnit" format, while pioneered by **Columbo**, was perfected in this episode. The concept of a clever, sophisticated villain who is slowly unraveled by a seemingly simple detective has been imitated many times. Shows like *Monk*, *Psych*, and even modern series like *Only Murders in the Building* owe a debt to the dynamic established in "Murder By The Book." The episode also serves as a showcase for how a guest star can elevate an entire show. Jack Cassidy's performance set a standard for future villains on the series, from Ruth Gordon to Robert Culp.

The Columbo Murder By The Book Cast as a Perfect Ensemble

Ultimately, what makes this episode so special is the collective work of the **Columbo Murder By The Book cast**. Peter Falk is the anchor, providing warmth, persistence, and genius. Jack Cassidy provides the elegant, dangerous antagonist. The supporting actors, from Martin Milner to Rosemary Forsyth, build a world that feels real and compelling. Steven Spielberg's groundbreaking direction ties it all together with a visual flair that is rare for television of the era. It is a perfect storm of talent, script, and direction. Watching the episode today, one is struck by how timeless it feels. The battle of egos, the pursuit of justice, and the fall of arrogance are themes that never grow old.

The Enduring Appeal of This Classic Episode

So, why has "Murder By The Book" captured the hearts of so many viewers? The answer lies in the quality of its storytelling and the excellence of its performers. The **Columbo Murder By The Book cast** represents a golden age of television acting. They understood the assignment: to create a compelling, entertaining mystery that respects the audience's intelligence. Jack Cassidy's Ken Franklin is a villain who is both despicable and fascinating. You cannot take your eyes off him, just as Columbo cannot take his off of him. The episode rewards repeat viewings because the subtle details of the performances and the direction become more apparent each time. You notice the way Falk's Columbo seems to be looking right through Cassidy's Franklin, or the way Spielberg frames a shot to foreshadow a crucial clue.

A Masterclass in Villainy: Ken Franklin

Ken Franklin is more than just a murderer; he is a portrait of narcissism and entitlement. He feels he deserves the success that Jim Ferris is achieving. He cannot stand the thought of being second best. Jack Cassidy plays this with a flamboyant, almost theatrical air. He is a performer within the

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