

By the time

Eileen Brennan, Truman Capote, James Coco,  
Peter Falk, Alec Guinness, Elsa Lanchester, David Niven,  
Peter Sellers, Maggie Smith, Nancy Walker and  
Estelle Winwood figure out *whodunnit*, you'll die laughing.



NEIL SIMON'S

# Murder by Death



COLUMBIA PICTURES presents A RAY STARK Production of NEIL SIMON'S "MURDER BY DEATH"

Starring (in alphabetical order)

EILEEN BRENNAN • TRUMAN CAPOTE • JAMES COCO • PETER FALK • ALEC GUINNESS • ELSA LANCHESTER

DAVID NIVEN • PETER SELLERS • MAGGIE SMITH • NANCY WALKER • ESTELLE WINWOOD

Music by DAVE GRUSIN      Production Designer STEPHEN GRIMES      Written by NEIL SIMON      Produced by RAY STARK      Directed by ROBERT MOORE      From RASTAR



PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
Some Material May Not Be Suitable for Children



# PUBLICITY

COLUMBIA PICTURES  
Presents  
A RAY STARK PRODUCTION  
of  
Neil Simon's

## "MURDER BY DEATH"

Filmed in Panavision®  
and Color at The Burbank Studios  
From Rastar

### THE CAST (In Diabolical Order)

Tess Skeffington ..... EILEEN BRENNAN  
Lionel Twain ..... TRUMAN CAPOTE  
Milo Perrier ..... JAMES COCO  
Sam Diamond ..... PETER FALK  
Bensonmum, the Butler ..... ALEC GUINNESS  
Jessica Marbles ..... ELSA LANCHESTER  
Dick Charleston ..... DAVID NIVEN  
Sidney Wang ..... PETER SELLERS  
Dora Charleston ..... MAGGIE SMITH  
Yetta, the Maid ..... NANCY WALKER  
Miss Withers, the Nurse ..... ESTELLE WINWOOD  
with  
Marcel, Perrier's Chauffeur ..... JAMES CROMWELL  
Willie Wang ..... RICHARD NARITA  
and  
"Myron"

### THE CREDITS

Produced by ..... RAY STARK  
Directed by ..... ROBERT MOORE  
Written by ..... NEIL SIMON  
Music by ..... DAVE GRUSIN  
Director of Photography ..... DAVID M. WALSH  
Associate Producer ..... ROGER M. ROTHSTEIN  
Production Designer ..... STEPHEN GRIMES

## SYNOPSIS

An invitation reading: "You are cordially invited to dinner and a murder..." has been sent to five world-famous detectives by Lionel Twain (TRUMAN CAPOTE), an eccentric millionaire living in an isolated, gloomy, fog-shrouded English manor house in northern California. When the guests arrive, they are greeted by Bensonmum, Twain's aged, blind butler (SIR ALEC GUINNESS), who has secured the week-end services of a deaf, mute cook and maid, Yetta (NANCY WALKER), from a local domestic agency.

Arriving from all points on the compass are the noted Belgian police detective, Milo Perrier (JAMES COCO), in the company of his solicitous chauffeur Marcel (JAMES CROMWELL); Sam Diamond (PETER FALK), San Francisco's best-known private eye, with his Girl Friday and social companion, Tess Skeffington (EILEEN BRENNAN); England's most famous distaff sleuth, Jessica Marbles (ELSA LANCHESTER), who cares for her indigent, wheelchair-ridden nurse, Miss Withers (ESTELLE WINWOOD); the inscrutable Oriental detective and ace investigator for the Catalina Island police force, Sidney Wang (PETER SELLERS), accompanied by his ingenious No. 3 adopted son, Willie (RICHARD NARITA), and from New York City, Palm Beach and Beverly Hills, the noted, sophisticated, urbane crime solver, Dick Charleston (DAVID NIVEN), with Dora, his chic and wealthy wife and partner in sleuthing (MAGGIE SMITH), and their precious pet pooch, "Myron."

At dinner, which is neither prepared nor served, the egocentric Twain reveals that someone in the dining room will be stabbed to death twelve times at the stroke of midnight.

Twain, the self-proclaimed foremost authority in detective fiction, defies his famous criminologist guests to solve the forthcoming crime. The person who does come up with the solution will be one million tax-free dollars richer and undisputed number-one detective in the world.

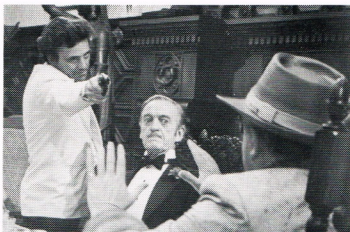
The doors are locked. The windows are bolted. No one can leave before dawn on Sunday.

Rooms appear and disappear. There is a disappearing and reappearing corpse — or what appears to be a corpse — alternately clothed and unclothed.

The champion sleuths are pitting wits against each other and against their host, Twain. Who will live and who will die?

Who is the murderer and who will be the victim or victims? Each must use his personal deductive powers of reasoning to outwit the fiendishly clever mind behind the test-ridden week-end.

The clock strikes twelve, and...



MD-37

Peter Falk as Sam Diamond makes a pointed observation to Truman Capote as Lionel Twain, while David Niven appears unimpressed by the accusation... Capote plays an eccentric millionaire, who hosts a gathering of the world's greatest detectives, in the Columbia Pictures comedy opening... at the Theater. The film was produced by Ray Stark from an original Neil Simon screenplay.

## AN EVENING OF "DINNER AND MURDER" WITH COMEDY MASTER NEIL SIMON

Guess who's coming to murder?

That's the question raised by acclaimed comedy writer Neil Simon in his screenplay for "Murder By Death," a Ray Stark production for Columbia Pictures release, opening... at the... Theater.

The answer, in "diabolical order," is as follows: Eileen Brennan, Truman Capote, James Coco, Peter Falk, Alec Guinness, Elsa Lanchester, David Niven, Peter Sellers, Maggie Smith, Nancy Walker and Estelle Winwood. They all star in Simon's tongue-in-cheek tribute to the great detectives, criminal fiends and hapless victims who've left their blood-stained fingerprints on the silver screen.

Simon's sinister spoof gathers the world's most famous sleuths at a fog-shrouded, mysterious mansion, where eccentric millionaire Lionel Twain (CAPOTE) and his blind butler (GUINNESS) have summoned them for an evening of "dinner and murder."

The mansion, with its vanishing rooms and multitude of bizarre bric-a-brac, was built by production designer Stephen Grimes with the counsel of producer Stark and director Robert Moore. According to Grimes, it is "modeled after the kind of American estates which millionaires, like the Hearsts and Morgans, used to bring over from Europe, stone by stone."

Furnishings for the mansion, from authentic suits of 15th century armor to precious porcelains to razor-sharp swords, were valued at over a quarter of a million dollars. Included are several portraits, their eyes removed to serve as peep-holes, and an oversized moose head, wired for sound, for a scene in which the egocentric Twain mysteriously converses with his assembled guests.

From the Automotive Classics firm in Santa Monica, California, producer Stark and company leased five cars for the various sleuths to drive. Sam

Diamond (PETER FALK) and his Girl Friday, Tess Skeffington (EILEEN BRENNAN), drive a 1948 Chevrolet. Dick (DAVID NIVEN) and Dora Charleston (MAGGIE SMITH) and their pet terrier, Myron, are in a classic 1937 silver Packard convertible. Sidney Wang (PETER SELLERS) and his No. 3 adopted son, Willie (RICHARD NARITA), rumble up in a 1941 Ford "woody" station wagon, while Milo Perrier (JAMES COCO) and his chauffeur, Marcel (JAMES CROMWELL), are in a 1945 Citroen. Jessica Marbles (ELSA LANCHESTER) and her nurse, Miss Withers (ESTELLE WINWOOD), arrive in a vintage English taxicab.

When Niven was placed behind the wheel of the Packard, he did an authentic double-take. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "It's my old car!" He recalled having purchased the classic convertible from Laurence Olivier for \$800 and selling it a few years later for even less.

"Not the wisest move I ever made," admitted Niven on learning that the Packard is now valued at \$36,000.

"Murder By Death" is also a treasure trove of special effects. There is fog, rain, thunder and lightning, a bridge that sags, a ceiling that moves downward like a vise, falling swords, gargoyles and statues, a clock with a hand that continually falls off, assorted cobwebs, poisonous gas, fire and a bed in flames and, for good measure, a scorpion.

Unlike the present practice of using real exterior locations, every setting for "Murder By Death," including the tree-lined country road leading to the Twain mansion, was constructed from "scratch" at The Burbank Studios. According to producer Stark, they aimed to re-create the look of the detective films of the 1930s and 1940s, which have their own distinctive style.

And that, "Murder By Death" most certainly does.

