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X-FILES

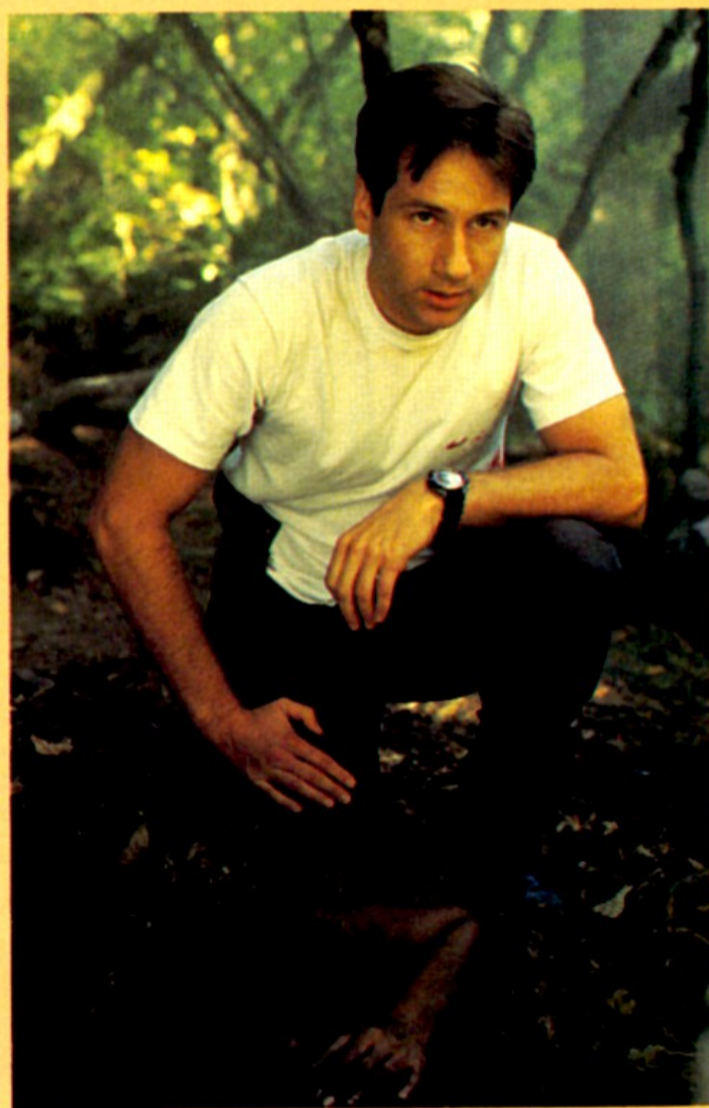
Taut scripts make this show the best drama on television.

By Paula Vitaris

Not even an alien spacecraft landing in the Beverly Hills Hilton during the Golden Globes award ceremony last January could have been a bigger surprise to the cast and staff of *THE X-FILES* than taking away that evening the prize for Best Drama on television. Chris Carter, the show's creator and executive producer, was so convinced *THE X-FILES* was the least likely choice that he wasn't even listening when Captain Kirk himself, actor William Shatner, opened the envelope and announced the winner.

"I didn't hear Shatner say *THE X-FILES*," Carter admitted. "I just sensed it. Everybody at the table sat up at once, and I thought, 'We won!' I was determined to thank everyone I possibly could, because there have been so many people responsible for the success of the show." Carter found particularly gratifying that *THE X-FILES* had won in the category of Best Drama: "It was a unifying award. It said we're the best show on TV, and everybody got to share in it equally."

X-FILES was up against a quartet of dramatic heavyweights (*CHICAGO HOPE*, *NYPD BLUE*, *ER* and *PICKET FENCES*), and was handi-



David Duchovny as Mulder from first season's "Jersey Devil," kneeling at the body of the "wild woman" mistakenly killed as a "monster."

capped by its nominal membership in the science fiction/horror genre, usually ignored by award-givers. Executive producer Bob Goodwin, certain that *ER* would come out on top, said that winning the Golden Globe seemed to have brought the rest of Hollywood out of the genre closet. "Everybody thought we were great but no one said it out loud," noted Goodwin, who explained the win by citing a friend, the wife of a three-time Emmy-winning director, who

told him, "All those other shows are really excellent, but none of them really break any new ground." "And we do," noted Goodwin. "*THE X-FILES* is something truly unique. It's one of those absolutely impossible circumstances in which there was a great idea, well-written scripts and perfect casting. You combine that with good execution, and it had all the earmarks of something that could be very successful and rewarding. That's what it's proven to be."

Certainly the television audience has agreed, with ratings steadily improving all through the show's run. After the Golden Globe ceremony, *THE X-FILES* posted some of its best numbers including winning its time slot for the first time with the broadcast on February 17 of "End Game," the exciting second half of a sweeps month two-parter. And no one could have been more ecstatic by the breakthrough than Frank Spotnitz, the episode's writer.

A former journalist and graduate of the American Film Institute, Spotnitz is one of three new writers to come on board the *X-FILES* writing staff for its second season. Spotnitz had come in to pitch story ideas during *THE X-FILES*' first year. Carter did not buy any, but invit-



Series creator Chris Carter picks up the show's Golden Globe.

ed him to come back and pitch again, which he did in Fall 1994. Then, Spotnitz recalled, Carter "called me back and said, 'I don't want to buy your ideas. I want you to come on staff.' It was totally out of the blue. It just floored me." Not long thereafter, Spotnitz suggested to Carter a way to bring back Samantha, Mulder's abducted-by-aliens sister, which resulted in his participation in putting together the story for the February two-parter, to include writing the second episode's script (the first episode, "Colony," was written by Carter based on a story conceived with series star David Duchovny).

Just as astonished to be on the *X-FILES* writing staff is Sara Charno, whose past credits include co-authorship of three *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* episodes ("The Wounded," "New Ground" and "Ethics.") Urged on by a friend, she had sent the script of a short film she had written to Glen Morgan and James Wong (the writing team who departed *THE X-FILES* mid-season to concentrate on the creation of their own show, *SPACE*, for Fox Network). She hoped they would be interested enough in her writing to meet with her and let her pitch story ideas.

"I didn't realize they were looking for staff positions," Charno said. "I was really re-



Flanked by his team (l to r): Howard Gordon, Rob Bowman, Duchovny, Paul Rabwin, Glen Morgan, Gillian Anderson, Robert Goodwin and J.P. Finn.

“It was a unifying award,” said series creator Chris Carter. “It said we’re the best show on TV, and many people are responsible for that success.”

laxed and we shot the breeze. They called me up about two weeks later and asked if I wanted to be on staff. It was definitely the fairy godmother story, the dream come true.” Her first script, “Aubrey,” was assigned after Carter told her he was intrigued with an idea she had about “genetic memory;” her second script this year was “The Calusari.”

The third new writer is Darin Morgan, younger brother of Glen Morgan, whose first credit on X-FILES came not as a writer, but as an actor, or, more accurately, a monster, when he donned an exceedingly uncomfortable costume to play the Flukeman in “The Host.” Before he did his “Host” stint, however, he had been working with brother Glen and James Wong on the second season’s third episode, “Blood,” for which he received a story credit. Morgan is self-deprecating about his job as an X-FILES scribe.

“I did the worm man and they had to fill a spot on the staff,” he noted with quiet humor. “I wasn’t very sure about wanting it. I’ve never done television or staff writing, but they offered it to me, so I’ve been here ever since.” He admitted he considers himself primarily a comedy writer, and fittingly his first solo script for X-FILES, “Humbug,” was about circus freaks, an episode which Chris Carter

called “a very funny X-File.” The episode’s director, Kim Manners, thought “Humbug” “might be the most bizarre X-FILES ever.”

Manners not only directed “Humbug” and Glen Morgan and James Wong’s final script for THE X-FILES, “Die Hand Die Verletzt,” but as of February is on staff as a producer, joining director Rob Bowman, who came on staff with a producer credit earlier in the season, after he had finished directing the episode “Aubrey.” Both Bowman and Manners are now exclusive to THE X-FILES, and when not directing in Vancouver or shepherding their episodes through post-production in Los Angeles, they assist other directors in preparing their episodes and overseeing the editing process.

Manners is a 16-year veteran of television, having begun his career with CHARLIE’S ANGELS. Since then, he said, “You name it, I’ve directed it.” His work includes “When the Bough Breaks,” a first-season episode of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION which co-starred Jerry Hardin, well-known to THE X-FILES audience as the character Deep Throat. Manners directed the pilot episode of 21 JUMP STREET, and when Morgan and Wong joined that show’s writing staff, directed several of their

episodes. They were especially impressed with his work on an episode involving a death row inmate.

“Kim did such a better job than what that script was,” Morgan recalled, and he and Wong insisted that Manners be brought in for THE X-FILES. They were delighted with the results on “Die Hand Die Verletzt,” Carter and Goodwin were too, and two months later Goodwin called to offer Manners a producer slot.

“So now I’m ‘X-filed,’” Manners enthused. “Visually the show is very challenging. To step up to the plate and direct an X-FILES, it’s just not like anything else. David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson are wonderful to work with. John Bartley, the director of photography, is sensational. I couldn’t be happier. It’s like I died and went to heaven.”

Rob Bowman is familiar to genre fans for having directed several episodes in the first two seasons of STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, including “Where No One Has Gone Before,” “Heart of Glory,” and “Q Who,” as well as an episode of Fox’s ALIEN NATION. Goodwin, who had worked with Bowman on MANCUSO F.B.I., brought him in to direct “Gender Bender” during THE X-FILES’ first season, and since then

Bowman has taken the helm on many of THE X-FILES’ second season episodes, including “Sleepless,” “Aubrey,” “Fresh Bones,” “End Game” and “Dod Kalm.”

Directing THE X-FILES, Bowman said, “stretches me on every level because Chris expects me to do beyond what I can do, and all my energies are focused into making better shows every time out. THE X-FILES really tries to be a movie every week, so it’s always fresh, though the work is exhaustive. It’s a new experience every time.”

Despite the changes in creative staff and attention from the mainstream media, so far THE X-FILES has not lost the moody edginess that is its trademark approach. But will a distinct style, originality, and a Golden Globe lead the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, notorious for avoiding nominating genre shows, to nominate it at Emmy time? Bob Goodwin is superstitious enough not to even want to utter the word “Emmy.”

“It doesn’t matter if you win awards or even get nominated,” he concluded. “All that does is cement the feelings you have. I just think THE X-FILES is one of the best shows on television. I say that with all immodesty, but it is.” □

Scully (Gillian Anderson) finds herself handcuffed to geologist Shawnee Smith in “Firewalker,” ravaged by a silicon-based parasite caught from spores.

