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DAVID CRONENBERG'S "CRASH"

D. Voigt

X-FILES

The Fox TV show expands beyond cult status to earn mainstream acceptance.

This is the year that one could not venture past the newsstand without seeing an X-FILES cover story on at least one and usually several magazines: *People*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *TV Guide*, *Details*, and *Rolling Stone*, with its infamous cover photo depicting leads David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, devoid of their FBI suits—or any other clothing for that matter—cuddling under the sheets. Astronomer Carl Sagan took the show to task for promoting anti-scientific thinking in *Parade* magazine and in his book *The Demon-Haunted World*. If you bothered to turn on the infotainment shows, you'd often catch stars Anderson and Duchovny or series creator Chris Carter. Reviewers of movies and TV shows dealing with paranoia, conspiracies, aliens, and the paranormal couldn't get by without a comparison to THE X-FILES. Also, the show, which regularly references films, books and other TV shows, itself became the hip reference in other fictional media. Characters in *HOMICIDE*, *THE DREW CAREY SHOW*, and *ROSEANNE*, for example, mentioned X-FILES, and *CHICAGO HOPE* played a few bars of its theme music. Even the summer's monster hit, *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, had a dialogue reference.

Whether the publicity barrage or the show's continuing high quality brought about this year's ten percent audience increase is debatable. But Fox finally took advantage of its most popular drama by kicking its merchandising department into high gear: clothing, comic books, key chains, videotapes and laser discs of first season episodes, junior novelizations, best selling original novels, and an *Official Guide to the X-Files*. *SONGS IN THE KEY OF X*, an album by some of Chris Carter's favorite musicians, many of whom are X-FILES fans, hit the charts, and in Europe, where the show is also a big hit, remixed

versions of the show's theme were instant bestsellers.

X-FILES conventions are also drawing hordes, who hang on every word uttered by supporting actors from the show as well as a few writers, producers, and creator Chris Carter, whose previous con experience had been limited to a few gatherings of UFO buffs for research. "The situation is surreal to me—that I would be up on stage answering questions," said Carter. "Usually, on a TV show, you have very little personal communication with your audience. Now I'm up there on stage as some sort of performer. I always feel like I should be able to at least breakdance or something, and that I'm disappointing the fans in some way. I have no production value in myself; all I am is a spokesperson for the show. What surprised me the most is everyone always warned me that all the weirdos were going to come out of the woodwork. What's really

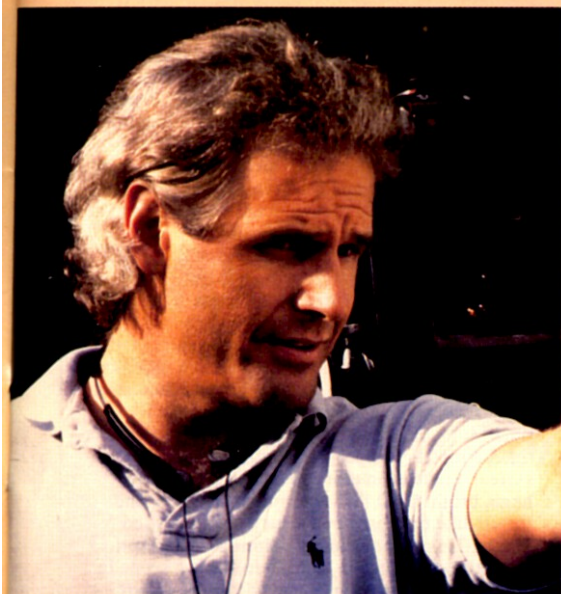
been wonderful is that the fans are just like regular folks, like me, I guess, who are coming out and enjoying the show. The grand majority are very nice, polite, respectful, and complimentary, and it's a good time. I really want these to be seen not so much as conventions but as parties. I would like it if everyone could just get together and have a great time."

THE X-FILES has also achieved acclaim from its peers, winning the 1995 Golden Globe for Best Television Drama (although surprisingly it wasn't even nominated in 1996) and receiving seven 1995 Emmy nominations. Gillian Anderson and David Duchovny were nominated for acting awards by this year's Golden Globes and the Screen Actors Guild, and a seemingly shocked Anderson won the SAG award for Best Actress in a Television Drama.

Although THE X-FILES did not take home an Emmy, it was the first Fox Net-

An alien abduction in "José Chung's 'From Outer Space,'" one of the third season highlights.






work show to be nominated for Best Drama. Carter said he realized early in the ceremony that "we didn't have a chance in hell of winning. I saw the things they were picking, and it seemed to me that they were more mainstream." Carter regretted that Duchovny and Anderson had not received acting nominations, nor did the show receive nominations for directing or production design. "That we didn't get one is, I think, highly unfair," he said. "I'm hoping that isn't political, because we deserve it in the biggest way. That [director of photography] John Bartley did get a nomination [for 'One Breath'] was really sweet."

THE X-FILES may not have taken home a gold statuette, but its influence on TV programming is undeniable, with a number of darker-hued genre shows popping up last year: CBS' AMERICAN GOTHIC, UPN's NOWHERE MAN and FOX's own STRANGE LUCK and PROFIT. Most of these were cancelled by the end of the season (not necessarily due to poor quality—PROFIT in particular was an unexpected gem), but that didn't keep the networks from trying again. This coming season, NBC will offer DARK SKIES, about a male-female duo chasing aliens, and Carter himself has a new show on Fox, MILLENNIUM, which he described as "more of a traditional show, but with aspects of the paranormal." MILLENNIUM stars Lance Henriksen (ALIENS) as an ex-FBI agent with the power to enter criminal minds, who is recruited into an underground crime-fighting organization at the turn of the century. Carter attributes the various clones to THE X-FILES' opening up the suspense/horror genres as

continued on page 21

**BY PAULA
VITARIS**



Series star David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson continue to gain in popularity. Inset: X-FILES creator Chris Carter will guide the show to a fourth season while also producing a new show, MILLENNIUM.

EPISODE GUIDE

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."
—Well-Manicured Man

THE BLESSING WAY

★★★

9/22/95. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin.

"The Blessing Way" begins where last season's finale, "Anasazi," left off. Fearing Mulder is dead after the Cigarette Smoking Man orders the destruction of the boxcar buried in the New Mexico desert. Scully returns to Washington, D.C., where she is put on suspension pending an investigation. Compounding her distress is the discovery of a computer chip inserted underneath the skin of her neck by her abductors last season.

Back in New Mexico, Mulder is found, near death, by Alfred Hosteen and other members of the Navajo community. The Navajos heal him with a traditional Blessing Way ceremony, during which he experiences a vision in which he sees and talks with his father and Deep Throat. Meanwhile, the Cigarette Smoking Man searches frantically for the missing DAT tape containing the Department of Defense UFO files while staving off the inquiries of his New York-based colleagues, especially the suspicious Well-Manicured Man (John Neville). This devious character has a separate agenda, and secretly contacts Scully at Bill Mulder's funeral to warn her that her own life is in danger. A healed Mulder travels to Greenwich, Connecticut, to quiz his mother about his father's work. The climax comes on furiously when a fearful Scully pulls a gun on Skinner, while back at her apartment, her sister Melissa falls victim to the bullet meant for Scully.



"The Blessing Way" featured the debut of the Well-Manicured Man (John Neville), leader of an information consortium behind the conspiracy.

to say the least. But her actions toward the end are confusing. If she suspects a killer is on the way to her apartment, why leave and go off with Skinner, when she knows Melissa is about to arrive? And why go to Mulder's apartment, which may be bugged or under observation? These questions fade in the excitement of watching Scully and Skinner pull their guns on each other, but they remain holes in the story.

"You'd be surprised what's not on the map in this country and what our government will do to keep it that way."
—Mulder

PAPER CLIP

★★★★

9/29/95. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Rob Bowman.

A reunited Mulder and Scully probe the mystery behind the New Mexico boxcar and the DAT tape with the help of the Lone Gunmen. Their investigation leads them to Victor Klemper (Walter Modell), a retired German scientist brought to the United States under "Operation Paperclip," the post-World War II project that bypassed required immigration procedures in order to import Nazi scientists and their valuable knowledge to the United States. Klemper sends them to a mine in West Virginia, where, in an extraordinary sequence, they discover a hidden archive: millions of medical records, including one for Scully, and one for Mulder's sister Samantha—but underneath the label on Samantha's folder is an older one for Mulder himself. Skinner, who still has the DAT tape, brokers a deal with the Cigarette Smoking Man; he'll give him the tape, if he promises not to harm Mulder and Scully. But when Krycek beats up Skinner, steals the tape and then goes on the lam after the Cigarette Smoking Man tries to have him assassinated, the Cigarette Smoking Man tells Skinner the deal's off. Skinner plays his trump card and informs him that the contents of the tape have been memorized by members of the Navajo nation. Mulder makes one more upsetting discovery: his mother confesses that his father "chose" Samantha to be abducted.

This barely covers the complicated storyline of "Paper Clip," an episode rich in both plot and theme. "Paper Clip," as stated in the teaser's legend of the White Buffalo Calf, is about choices, trade-offs, and sacrifices. It is also about the people who suffer when others make choices for them without their consent. But Mulder doesn't buy into that game; when Skinner offers them the opportunity to come in from the cold, to let Scully see her sister again, Mulder defers to Scully and willingly abides by her decision.

"Paper Clip," as well as "Anasazi" and "The Blessing Way," is also about the meeting of Western and non-Western cultures, and particularly how they record and remember their history. The Nazis who were brought to the U.S. in the real Operation Paperclip detailed their

horrors meticulously on paper and the medical files in the mine fulfill the same function, and also serve as a contrast to the Navajos' oral tradition of passing down their history. It is that tradition that saves the day for Mulder and Scully, but "Paper Clip" makes no statement against technology. If the answers, as Mulder suggests in the ineffably sad exchange with Scully in the hospital, are truly in the X-Files, perhaps it's because that is where the documented and the undocumented worlds come together.

"Paper Clip" is spectacular to look at, particularly the stunning scene in the deserted mine. An enormous, ruined building constructed as a series of terraces, it possesses the same mythological and psychological resonance as the submarine tower in "End Game." Inside, it looks like an Escher drawing come to life; its staircases seem suspended, as if by magic, in the air. By the time Mulder and Scully enter the endless corridors lined with file cabinets, we are in the realm of the surreal, made even more so by the impossibly huge, bright UFO that rises out of nowhere and the elf-like creatures that scurry past a startled Scully. This scene is overwhelming in concept, execution, and impact, yet the following scene in the diner is a perfect balance, with its intimacy and realism, as Skinner, Scully and Mulder talk around a table.

Mitch Pileggi's performance in this two-parter is outstanding, especially in his wrangles with William B. Davis' Cigarette Smoking Man.

"No man, not the cows again!"

—Zero

D.P.O.

★★1/2

10/6/95. Written by Howard Gordon. Directed by Kim Manners.

An unusually high number of deaths by lightning brings Mulder and Scully to Connerville, Oklahoma, a rural town located near a scientific institute that studies lightning phenomena. They locate a possible witness to the latest death, a strangely inobservant teenager named Darren Peter Oswald (Giovanni Ribisi), who claims he saw nothing unusual at the scene. When Mulder and Scully uncover the information that the emotionally and intellectually stunted Darren is the only surviving victim of the lightning strikes, Mulder begins to suspect a force other than Mother Nature is involved.

"D.P.O." is an underrated episode, coming after the rush of events in "Anasazi," "The Blessing Way," and "Paper Clip." The revelations of those three episodes are barely touched upon in "D.P.O.," and Mulder and Scully appear to be inhumanly unaffected. Some kind of transitional episode was called for, before the story moved on.

On its own, however, "D.P.O." is a slight but touching tale about a damaged, neglected teen who vents his frustration and rage by calling down

continued on page 23

Lightning strikes are guided by an unstable teenager in "D.P.O.," the first stand-alone episode of the season, a let-down after "Paperclip."



A nearly dead Mulder undergoes a traditional Navajo ceremony, "The Blessing Way," and sees a vision of the dead Deep Throat character.

As a story element, Mulder's vision during the Blessing Way chant makes sense: it's a chance for reconciliation with a dead father and the acceptance of his death. In execution, it's overloaded with too much detail: Mulder spinning through space in his bed of leaves, the ghostly observers, and not one but two father figures, Bill Mulder and Deep Throat. They speak in dialogue so turgid it loses meaning, especially compared to the deceased Bill Scully's spare but deeply moving monologue to his daughter in "One Breath." It's a scene to be accepted intellectually but not emotionally.

In all other aspects, "The Blessing Way" is a solid middle chapter of a three-parter. The introduction of an international consortium to which the Cigarette Smoking Man must answer diminishes his mystery somewhat but also creates new possibilities for his character.

Except for Mulder's vision, it's really Gillian Anderson's episode all the way: Scully's anger, her grief, her tentative stab at exploring her emotions and memories with a hypnotherapist. The scene where she discovers the chip in her neck is spooky,

X-FILES

THE BLESSING WAY & PAPER CLIP

The third season's opening two-parter continues the conspiracy story of last season's finale, "Anasazi."

By Paula Vitaris

From its first episode, when Fox Mulder told his new partner Dana Scully that his sister had been abducted by aliens, and that he had had no memory of the event until he underwent hypnotic regression therapy, to this season's finale, when Mrs. Mulder told the Cigarette Smoking Man she had "repressed" all memories of their former friendship, *THE X-FILES* has been a study on the theme of memory. Although the exploration of this began on an individual level, it has come to take on a larger resonance, encompassing memory as a societal and cultural phenomenon.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than in the third season's opening two-parter, "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip," which begins with Navajo elder Albert Hosteen relating how his people have come to trust memory over history. Chris Carter, who wrote both episodes, contrasts the oral tradition of the Navajos against the written files, both hard copy and computerized, of the government's collaboration with Nazi scientists brought to the U.S. after World War II as part of "Project Paperclip" (so named because the file folders of the scientists chosen for inclusion were marked by a paper clip).

"I read an article on the Holocaust," said Chris Carter, "that contained an argument about memory versus history. Its premise was that with history we reshape the truth, and with the death of memory we lose the truth. These were some of the points I made in the episodes. With the Navajo, we have a people with a very strong oral tradition who, in the show, have become the repository of truths of the most high-tech kind. I had seen *SCHINDLER'S LIST*, which came at the perfect time because the last survivors of the Holocaust were dying, and with them possibly the bulwark of memory that would prevent it from ever happening again. Those things were all in my mind when I came up with these story ideas. I don't want to be pretentious, but I was certainly taken with the idea that the death of memory could in



Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) has a talk with Mulder and Scully near the end of "Paperclip," the concluding chapter of a three-part conspiracy story begun with last season's "Anasazi."

fact be the birth of new evils."

Navajo culture first appeared on *X-FILES*' second season finale, "Anasazi," but in the concluding two-parter, Carter delved further into their way of life, concerned after he received a letter from members of the Navajo nation detailing some errors in the episode. With Mulder undergoing a traditional healing ceremony in "The Blessing Way," Carter wanted to ensure his script was as accurate as possible. "I went to a Navajo Native American church ritual. That means I took peyote, which is a legal substance for the Navajo, and I sat there for eight or nine hours on the ground with a group of Navajos going through a chant. I was just getting a feel for what they do. In 'The Blessing Way,' we were very careful not to use a real chant, because the Navajos feel the chants are sacred and should not be copied. So the chant I chose is something of an all-purpose chant. With Mulder in such a serious situation, he probably would have received a different kind of chant, but out of respect for the Navajo I took a bit of liberty there."

During the ceremony, Mulder, barely alive after the explosion in the boxcar at the end of "Anasazi," experiences an out-of-body encounter with two deceased men: Deep Throat and his father, Bill Mulder. The writing of this scene was a deeply personal one for Carter, whose parents had both passed away. "Even though I don't believe

in these things, I wanted to see them both again," he mused. "I had written 'Anasazi,' where Mulder's father dies, which aired May 19, and my father died on May 21. It was very emotional for me, even though he'd been sick for a long time. I still wanted to tell Mulder's story, but I thought, 'What would be the thing that I would most want to see?' I would want to speak to my father and have him tell me to carry on." Carter included Deep Throat in the vision because he was a "father figure of sorts and a person Mulder would have looked to for guidance."

Carter drew the vision's starry night setting and Bill Mulder's and Deep Throat's ghostly attendants from Navajo myth, in which the hero is assisted by the Star People, who represent man's spiritual nature. "That was quite accurate, although the Navajo take peyote and Mulder didn't," Carter explained. "The feedback I got from the Navajo was positive." The vision, Carter said, is a transforming event for Mulder. "He's been reborn, in a way. He's been refueled and revitalized, and now more than ever he has very personal and real reasons to continue. Although the whereabouts of his sister is still a big question mark, he knows a little bit more about her now."

Another theme Carter wanted to explore was that of sacrifice, which he did by incorporating the Lakota legend of the White Buffalo into the "Paper Clip" teaser: a white buffalo calf is born, but its mother dies. This mirrors the death of both Bill Mulder in "Anasazi" and Melissa, Scully's sister, who is killed by a bullet meant for Scully. Carter admitted that part of the motivation for killing Melissa was a practical one. The actress who played her, Melinda McGraw, had just won a role on an ultimately short-lived sitcom, *THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS*, which would limit her availability. But Melissa's death also served a storytelling purpose. "The truth is when you do big episodes, three-parters like this, dramatic things have to happen," Carter said. "I've always said I don't want the audience to think that anyone is safe on *THE X-FILES*."



In a visual highlight of "Paper Clip," Mulder is awestruck by the appearance of a UFO.

“I read an article about the Holocaust that said with history we reshape the truth, and with the death of memory we lose the truth.”

—Producer Chris Carter—

The White Buffalo story was a beautiful legend that somehow reflected on the show. I thought it would be wonderful, in the middle of this two-parter, to go to a barn where a white buffalo is being born. It grounded the show once again in Indian lore. It represented a rebirth: if something has to die, then something else can be reborn. That's a very beautiful idea, and I think that's what happened here, with Mulder's father dying to refuel Mulder's quest, and Scully's sister dying to refuel her quest. I think these things actually helped to make the characters more keen in their motivations."

In "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip," Carter felt the time had come to expand the conspiracy element of THE X-FILES to a higher level. He had taken the first step in "Anasazi," when United Nations representatives became involved after a hacker called the Thinker broke into the Department of Defense UFO computer files and downloaded the information onto a DAT tape. In "The Blessing Way," the audience met for the first time the New York consortium, an international group of conspirators, and its nominal leader, the "Well-Manicured Man," played to crafty perfection by John Neville.

Why extend the conspiracy? Carter said. "You have these groups that are believed to be out there, the Trilateral Commission, the Illuminati. I believe that, if this is going on, there would have to be a lot of high-level, smart and well-connected folks who are pulling the strings." Carter also wanted to thrust the Cigarette Smoking Man into a new situation, one that would threaten his status, and the best way to do that was to get him in trouble with the Consortium due to the loss of the DAT tape. "He'd always won," Carter said. "I think Skinner bounced him from his office once, but beyond that he was always the man in control. It was interesting to see him in a situation where he started to unravel, but as you saw in 'Nisei,' he's not quite a wimp."

One of THE X-FILES' spectacular scenes ever took place in "Paper Clip," at a deserted West Virginia mine serving as a repository for what seems like miles of file cabinets holding medical records that go back for decades. In reality, the location was the British Columbia Museum of Mining at Britannia Beach, a former mine situ-

ated about 45 minutes outside Vancouver. "It's an amazing location," Carter said. "This building goes a quarter mile up the side of a mountain. It's like one giant cathedral room. If I see a location that interests me, I'll figure out a way to put it in the show. When I saw that mine climbing up the side of that hill, I asked myself what was the best way I could use this thing? It's not like I wrote this story and went looking for a mine. I found this mine and went looking for a way to fit it into the story."

The hundreds—thousands?—of cabinets, with their detailed medical records, seem to represent a new level of obsessively meticulous recordkeeping; it's the ultimate image of bureaucratic organization. "I'm interested in the idea of file-keeping on people," Carter said, adding that he had also been inspired by the knowledge that small pox vaccinations (which are part of the mine files) have been recorded since the 1950s. "We willingly give ourselves over to these things, like the taking of our tissue or the taking of a vaccine. And now the military is taking DNA from every soldier [to facilitate identification of remains]. There were two Marines who objected and would not give their DNA. I believe that's appropriate. What might the government be doing with their tissue?" The structure of bureaucracy also fascinates Carter. "What intrigues me is that a bureaucracy can become so labyrinthine that it starts not to work. It's meant to facilitate society, but it actually imprisons it. It also seeks to control in ways I find disturbing. Additionally, I'm interested in the abuse and the corruption that such power provides."

As if the scenes in the endless corridors were not enough, Carter followed those with a stunning sequence in which Mulder stands motionless on a catwalk, bathed in blinding light cast by a UFO rising on the other side of the building's dirty windows. Said Carter, "I thought, 'What would be the coolest way to use this location? To have a space ship take off from the bottom and see it go up through the series of rooms.'" Unable to be on location the day this scene was shot, Carter carefully went over the plans with director Rob Bowman. "It was a little less complicated than you might imagine. It was just a crane pulling up a lighting truss holding this big aluminum structure that had

a bunch of lights on it. Luckily, we have someone as capable as Rob Bowman taking advantage of that setting, and [director of photography] John Bartley did a fantastic job putting it on film."

A pivotal character in the two-parter is Assistant Director Skinner, who once again comes to the assistance of Mulder and Scully. In "The Blessing Way" he is forced to put Scully on suspension. "Skinner walks the line between being a good FBI man and being a believer and ally of Mulder and Scully, and in disobeying him [in 'Anasazi'], Scully had taken advantage of that," Carter said. When Skinner talks to Scully after her suspension, and she angrily confronts him, Skinner was attempting "to remove himself from her punishment, but she wouldn't let him. When he followed her, she made it a personal issue that he wasn't able to come to her aid. I felt that if I made this believable, Skinner would react to her as he did."

In "Paper Clip," Skinner takes his support for Mulder and Scully even farther when he wrangles a deal with the Cigarette Smoking Man to exchange the DAT tape, now in his possession, for their safety. He meets Mulder and Scully at a diner and presents a choice to them: come in from the cold, let him give the Cigarette Smoking Man the tape, and their safety (for now) will be assured. Mulder is reluctant, but then Scully says she must see her sister. "This quest for the truth was also a very personal thing for Scully," said Carter. "Her sister was in a hospital bed, and she might die. Scully realized that the further out they got, the less chance they actually had of finding the truth. They had become so willfully disenfranchised that they were going to lose any kind of hope they had to work as insiders." Mulder's deferring to Scully's was, for Carter, a scene that proved as much as any other, how close the two agents were.

Although Mulder and Scully uncovered a great number of secrets in "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip," the most shocking is not revealed until the penultimate scene, when Mulder travels to his mother's home in Greenwich, Connecticut. One of the files in the mine was labeled with the name of his missing sister, Samantha, but underneath Samantha's label was another label bearing

continued on page 62

"a viable one again for exploitation. All we showed people was that there was an audience for this kind of programming. It's as simple as: If you do a good show, people are going to watch it, no matter what genre it is. Even if you choose this genre, you better do a good job, or people are not going to watch."

Amidst all this attention, the show continues to offer some of the most compelling, imaginative, and beautifully shot hours on television. Mulder and Scully remain the heroes of a quest saga, wrapped in the skin of the quintessential 20th century icon: the detective. And though perspectives shift with each new revelation in the "mythology," the show remains rock solid in the relationship between Mulder and Scully, despite some rough patches in the writing this season. The homages to films and books (with "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'" a virtual festival of cross-referencing) continually pop up, and every now and then THE X-FILES tips a hat to its fans—as in "Ni-sei" when Mulder, pursuing a suspect, pulled a second pistol from an ankle holster and proclaimed, "I got tired of losing my gun"—according to Carter, a "wink to the Internet fans who have given me no end of grief" about Mulder always losing his gun.

Although Carter is a frequent lurker on the various X-FILES computer bulletin boards, he said he can't think of an instance where fan comment made a specific impact on the show, although it may influence him generally. "In fact, it does affect me. If I read objections, if there are a lot of voices, as in 'Don't give Mulder a girlfriend!' I hear that loud and clear. Everyone takes everything so literally. People thought I was going to give him a live-in lover. People have a tendency to overreact. My feeling about the Internet crowd in the third year is that there's a little bit of a backlash. Now that the show's been discovered by everyone, the popular thing is to take us to task for every little thing. I think

Scully investigates a serial killer who claims to be possessed by demonic forces in "Grotesque." (The gargoyle is a stature, not a creature or a vision.)



X-FILES

ACADEMIC X-PHILES

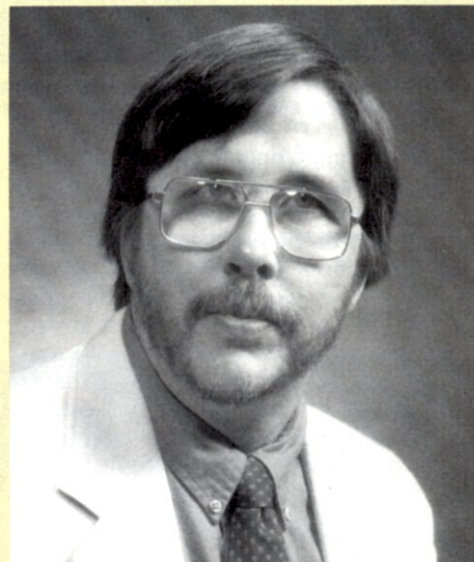
The show's dense texture leaves ample room for interpretation.

By Paula Vitaris

If former Yale English Literature Ph.D. candidate David Duchovny had remained in academia, instead of dropping out to take up acting, he might have fallen into the strange state that grips many a scholar these days: obsession with watching, analyzing, and interpreting THE X-FILES. Fans are popping up in universities and colleges all over the map, but if there is one Ivory Tower that could lay claim to being the center of X-FILES-ology, it is Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. There you will find chairman of the English Department Dr. David Lavery, Ph.D. candidate Marla Cartwright, and their colleague Jill Hague—all dedicated fans of the show. In 1992, Lavery edited *Full of Secrets: Critical Approaches to Twin Peaks*. Now, he and Hague and Cartwright are putting finishing touches on *The Truth Is Out There: Reading The X-Files*, to be published in September by Syracuse University Press. Lavery, whose interests lie in literary theory, film and television studies, modern poetry, and the relationship between science and fiction (he's particularly fascinated by the scientifically-minded Scully as a television character), conceived the idea of an X-FILES book in the summer of 1995 after *Full of Secrets* became the best selling book in the publishing history of Wayne State University Press.

Is it possible to conduct a valid analysis of a television series before it has ended? Lavery feels that *Reading The X-Files* may be regarded as a "preliminary report, just as Scully's reports are. The introduction will explain that the book is a work in progress, but so is television—it's the nature of serial drama."

Why so much attraction to a television show from people normally occupied by works of literature? "If your job is interpreting texts, it's refreshing to find a television show that's open to the techniques of critical inquiry and that contains enough material to yield results," said Joanne Rochester, a Ph.D candidate in English at the University of Toronto. She was captivated by show's ambiguous narrative and the visual style.



David Lavery, an English professor at Middle Tennessee State University, has put together a book of academic essays about THE X-FILES.

"We are never really sure exactly what we're looking at," she said, "There is always room for interpretation of the 'facts,' and that seems to be the foundation the show is built on. I don't mean to say that the show needs to be subjected to any specific form of critical interpretation, in order to be enjoyed. It does, however, support a certain amount of critical inquiry. The show is packed with information, all of which demands interpretation, both by the characters and the audience. Nothing is what it seems, on face value; this is what lends the show its ambiguity, which either delights or disgusts its fans, depending on their tolerance for lack of closure."

Lavery notes that when THE X-FILES first aired, critics branded it as cult television. "The appeal of cult television, film, and literature is that it honors the interpretive community experiencing it by fulfilling their sense of themselves as people able to interpret the work," he said. "This is part of THE X-FILES. It's nice for people to be able to get together—which also happens on the internet—and talk about the show. They explain it to each other and share theories, and, of course, that's what academics



Part of the show's appeal to academics is explained by its frequent literary references: for instance, in "Quagmire," a Loch Ness monster-type story, Mulder was compared to *Moby Dick's* Captain Ahab.

do. Jane Youngblood, the avant garde film theorist, used to say that entertainment gives you what you want and art gives you what you didn't know you wanted. When you think about this show, it's absolutely startling. If we take THE X-FILES seriously, then this is the deepest, most sinister conspiracy theory every offered. We don't know yet where it's going, but if they're telling us that Nazis, in collusion with the U.S. government, have sold over at least a substantial portion of the United States population for genetic experimentation with aliens—well, that makes Oliver Stone seem fairly normal!"

Rochester finds the themes of the quest romance, a Jacobean literary genre, central to THE X-FILES. "Romance, according to Patricia Parker's *Inescapable Romance*, is an open-ended narrative form driven by a quest for an ineffable, ungraspable end," she explained. "The quester, is in search of a specific goal which is never reached. The form is a narrative of infinite deferral, so that gratification, while glimpsed, is never actually achieved. Because of this, romance is an immensely flexible form—and although Mulder might not seem, at first glance, to have much in common with the Knights of Edmund Spenser, his quest for the 'Truth,' an ungraspable goal if ever there was one, is parallel to their search for the Faerie Queen. The quest romance armature of the show is what makes it work, over the long term, and provides the framework for the show's characteristic lack of closure. Even if Mulder finds out the truth about Samantha, he will still not discover the Truth with a capital 'T'; the series is by definition unendable."

Alice Palumbo, who studies Gothic literature from the 1760s to the present, said, "The show is a great example of prime-time Gothic. Mulder's viewpoint is pretty close to that found in the stories of H.P. Lovecraft, in that he believes there's an intelligence 'Out There' trying to get 'Down

Here.' Scully is, at times, a textbook case of Female Gothic—she tends to believe that whatever horrible things are being done by the Conspiracy are done by human beings. The narrative of the show provides a synthesis of both points of view. Chris Carter and the other writers, as well as the directors and production staff, synthesize contemporary fears and anxieties with archetypal plots and generic tropes."

Rochester takes delight in the show's ability to refer to its own premises and conventions, as well as its ability to stand outside itself and look at what it is doing. "I think it works with a lot of postmodern concepts—questions of perception, of narrative instability, of metatextual play," she said. "It plays with the concept of storytelling itself, the most obvious example being 'Jose Chung's From Outer Space,' which is a narrative about the way 'narrative' works. It is 'intertextual,' constantly making visual or verbal reference to other films or TV series, as well as to previous episodes of the series. The fact that the series is open to parody, particularly in Darin Morgan's episodes, is rooted not only in the myths on which it is founded—alien abduction, conspiracy theory—but on the self-referential nature of the show itself. Mulder and Scully are, in a 'normal' X-File, the only people who can see what's 'really' going on. Morgan's episodes turn this around, and place Mulder and Scully in situations which they can neither understand nor control, either placing them in situations where they become the X-factor, the inexplicable mystery, as in 'Jose Chung's From Outer Space,' or making them the normative characters, the outsiders, in a world with its own logic, as in 'Humbug.'"

The development of Mulder and Scully also piques the interest of these academics, who view them as characters with an intellectual curiosity and a life of the mind unusual for television. Palumbo sees Scully

continued on page 62

“My feeling about the Internet crowd is there's a feeling that it's not our show anymore, but that we're working for them. I find that interesting.”

—Producer Chris Carter—

there's a sense that it's not our show any more, but that we're working for them. I find that interesting, but I just proceed every day like I always proceed. I just try to come up with good ideas and make them into interesting stories, shoot them in an interesting way and give you the best possible show I can. So far this season I'm very proud of the work that's been done."

The third season started with a number of changes in personnel and an increase in the budget. Howard Gordon was promoted to co-executive producer, and Frank Spotnitz and Darin Morgan to story editors. Five writers came on board: producer Charles Grant Craig (who departed in the fall); story editors John Shiban and Jeff Vlaming, staff writer Kim Newton, and creative consultant Vince Gilligan. Carter had solicited a script last year from Gilligan, the author of the pyrokinesis film WILDER NAPALM. Gilligan's contribution became the episode "Soft Light." "I asked Vince if he wanted to come on staff after he wrote 'Soft Light,'" Carter recalled, "but he wanted to pursue his movie career. This year I got a call from his agent. She said Vince was interested in coming on staff now, so I scooped him right up."

The budget received a boost, due partly to salary raises but also to an increase in crew size. "Our budget right now is about \$1.5 million per episode," said Carter. "That's a couple of hundred thousand dollars more than last year, but right now we have a second unit working around the clock. We have 275 employees in Vancouver that go to work every day, probably double what we had the first season. That accounts for a lot of the extra money."

The second unit is invaluable to getting the episodes in on time and taking pressure off the first unit. Unfortunately, there is no second unit for writers or producers, who work long hours, even on weekends, to keep the show on schedule. "It's just the way it goes," said Carter. "It's just not enough time and too much work." This season began in a slightly more organized fashion than the last two, with the first eight episodes (of the 24 ordered) planned much more in advance. "I knew what I wanted, and I tried to divide the season into three sections of eight, and we had the first eight stories broken," Carter said, referring to the staff's custom of working out each plot point and emotional beat

again and again the lightning that has given him special powers. Darren and his friend Zero (Jack Black) may be the X-FILES version of Beavis and Butthead (the episode has more than a few moments of dark humor), but Gordon lets us see, in the figure of Darren's verbally abusive mother, the home life that breeds Darren's ignorance. Ribisi's performance is superb, revealing the emptiness in Darren, as well as his anger.

"Pinch me!"

—Mulder

CLYDE BRUCKMAN'S FINAL REPOSE

★★★★

10/13/95. Written by Darin Morgan. Directed by David Nutter.

A grumpy insurance salesman named Clyde Bruckman (Peter Boyle) is drawn, reluctantly, into Mulder and Scully's latest murder investigation when he finds a body stuffed into a dumpster. The murderer is targeting fortune tellers, and as Clyde has the unwanted ability to predict people's deaths, Mulder and Scully take him into protective custody. Soon, Mulder is asking Clyde, who feels it's useless to evade one's fate, to locate bodies and prevent more murders, while Scully uses more traditional methods, although a couple of intuitive leaps of her own actually save the day.

With this second script by resident humorist Darin Morgan, the X-FILES cast and crew have created one of those rare episodes where everything comes together—funny, bizarre, absurd, ironic, and sad. Peter Boyle, whose fatalistic Clyde seems overshadowed by a rain cloud, gives a performance that simply takes over the TV screen. Only actors as strong as Duchovny and Anderson, with their blissfully deadpan delivery, could withstand such a titanic presence, but withstand it they do. This episode is really told from Scully's point of view, and Anderson gives a beautifully nuanced and sensitive performance, especially in her scenes with Boyle. David Nutter, whose close-ups are the best on TV, gives her all the glamour of an old-time movie star.

But acting is just one part of this rewarding episode. The script is a gem, full of hilarious verbal and visual jokes. Each sequence is carefully constructed, with one gag leading naturally to the next, but as in the great comic films, the gags also reveal character. The scene wherein Mulder and Scully first make their appearance and meet celebrity psychic The Stupendous Yappi (an utterly hilarious performance by Duchovny's stand-in, Jaap Broeker) is a delightful illustration. The thematic underpinning, of free will versus fate, is a rich one. That the story ends in tragedy, not comedy, is fitting: the real Clyde Bruckman—a writer and director most notably associated with Buster Keaton (references to Keaton and the other comedy greats with whom Bruckman worked around here), committed suicide in 1955, and Keaton's own comedies often ended on a melancholy note.

Scully and Mulder search for the soul of an executed murderer, come back for revenge, in Carter-directed "The List," a prison-set drama.



Stuart Cherno, husband of former X-FILES scriptwriter Sara Charno, plays the "homicidal maniac" in "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose."

"A woman gets lonely, sometimes she can't wait around for a man to be reincarnated."

—Scully

THE LIST

★★

10/20/95. Written and directed by Chris Carter.

Chris Carter, in his second effort as a director, paints a gorgeous picture with his camera, but in service of one of his most depressing scripts. Neech Manley (Badja Djola), a death row inmate in a Florida penitentiary, vows before his execution to return from the dead to exact revenge on a list of five people who had caused him to suffer. When a prison guard is found dead without explanation—the second of nine deaths, if you count Neech's execution—Mulder and Scully arrive to investigate. Mulder quickly learns about Manley's list from a prisoner and hypothesizes that Manley has indeed begun to carry out his vow; Scully counters there may be a conspiracy among the guards. Pragmatic Warden Brodeur (J.T. Walsh) contends the prisoners have a hand in the murders.

With his jailhouse setting, Carter returns to the themes of control, power, and imprisonment he used so movingly in his first turn as a writer-director in last year's "Duane Barry." "The List" suffers in comparison, giving us little of that first episode's unsettling ambiguity. Mulder and Scully may not know who's doing the killings, but we know it's Neech, avenging himself from beyond the grave, so there's little suspense. Instead, we're reduced to waiting for the next inevitable murder. The maggots and flies infesting the victims are traditional symbols of demons and a nicely repellent way to signal which murders can be attributed to the fiendish Neech, but the shock effect is no substitute for genuine suspense. A scene where one falling maggot clues Mulder and Scully to the location of another victim induces a welcome frisson which an entire swarm cannot.

"The List" is spread out among too large a cast of characters, all of whom seem to come directly from prison films. Walsh's hypocritical, murderous warden is a case in point, although his character serves to remind us that abuse, as so often in this show, flows down from the top. Neech never comes alive as a character, because the viewer's time with him is extremely brief; we see only his fury (which Djola conveys superbly), never his pain. He hovers uncomfortably between this world and the next, failing to engage any real interest. The only human note is struck by Mulder and Scully, whose interaction in the prison is full of warmth. But even this cannot save the story. Rarely has there been an episode in which the two agents have not been able to come to some understanding of what has passed, even if they have no proof to present to the world. At the end

of "The List," although the audience has seen both Manley and Brodeur doing their worst, Mulder and Scully are completely befuddled, leaving them—and the audience—utterly frustrated.

Although Carter's script may not be top-notch, as a director he elicits fine performances, and visually this is an absolutely stunning episode. Carter and director of photography John Bartley film Graeme Murray's set of staircases, catwalks, cells and barred doors in a series of shots so carefully composed they could be paintings. Their choice of hazy, eerie green light turns this lock-up into an altogether unworldly prison. In a series that routinely delivers fabulous images to the screen, this episode is a stand-out.

"From a dried skin sample, you're concluding—what? That he's some kind of fat-sucking vampire?"

—Scully to Mulder

2SHY

★★1/2

11/3/95. Written by Jeff Vlaming. Directed by David Nutter.

Mulder and Scully are called in to work a strange case of murder in Cleveland. Someone or something has sucked all the fatty tissue from a dead woman, leaving her corpse enveloped in an acidic glop. Her roommate mentions her friend's use of computer chat rooms, and that lead sets Mulder, Scully and Detective Alan Cross (James Handy, in a weary but sweet performance) towards finding the man, a mild-mannered translator of Italian literature named Virgil Incanto (Timothy Carhart).



The corpse of a victim in "2Shy," an episode about a mutant killer who feeds on the fatty tissue of women found on computer chat lines.

Virgil is an upscale, articulate version of first season's unforgettable liver-eater Eugene Victor Tooms. He also must kill to survive; however, he takes a nasty pleasure in romancing his insecure, overweight prey, squeezing into their lives much like Tooms squeezed into people's houses. Vlaming's script smoothly combines a number of issues that concern women, such as body image and meeting men via computer. Scully's encounter with sexism in the workplace (Detective Cross suggests that she, as a woman, might not be able to handle the case) is an apt reflection of Incanto's inability to see his victims as people.

Carhart is chilling as Incanto, although he doesn't reach the heights Doug Hutchison achieved as Tooms. Catherine Paolone is excellent as Ellen, the woman who proves his undoing, and Aloka McLean gives a touching performance as Jesse, a blind girl whose would-be poet mother (Glynis Davies) is another victim. The fourth-act battle in Ellen's bathroom between Scully and Incanto raises your pulse, but alas, it's a giveaway, because the camera made darn sure the audience knew Scully left her gun in the bedroom.

Gillian Anderson's confident performance has just the right mix of toughness and sensitivity, thrusting Scully into a number of difficult situations.

"Sometimes the only sane response to an insane world is insanity."

—Mulder

THE WALK

★★1/2

11/10/95. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Rob Bowman.

The attempted suicide of an Army lieutenant (Don Thompson) catches Mulder's interest when the officer claims a phantom soldier prevented him from killing himself. General Callahan (Thomas Kopache), the base's commander, opposes Mulder and Scully's investigation but gives in when his adjutant and his young son die in mysterious accidents, after which he also sees the phantom soldier. Mulder links the phantom to one of the hospital's chronic patients, an embittered quadruple amputee named Leonard Trimble (Ian Tracey), who Mulder believes has mastered astral projection in order to bring misery to the officers he holds responsible for his condition.

A lot of the military detail in "The Walk" is wrong, and once again Scully, a pathologist, makes a psychological diagnosis when Mulder, a psychologist, should properly be the one to do so. Their characterization is off-balance too; they are either distant from each other and the case at hand or too blatantly angry, in what looks like an attempt to draw emotion from them. Anderson does have one astonishing moment, when Scully observes a murder through a window in a locked door: she conveys, in profile yet, every notch upwards of Scully's mounting horror.



Mulder rescues a young kidnap victim in "Oubliette," an episode which explores his feelings about his own missing sister.

Otherwise, this is a solid episode about responsibility and retribution, and the guest cast is quite fine, particularly Tracey, and Andrea Barclay, as the bereaved Mrs. Callahan. The scene wherein Captain Draper (Nancy Sorel) meets her death in the swimming pool is nicely done, the wavy light recalling the pool scene in Jacques Tourneur's *CAT PEOPLE*.

"I've probably experienced just about everything once or twice. It's all been pretty temporary."

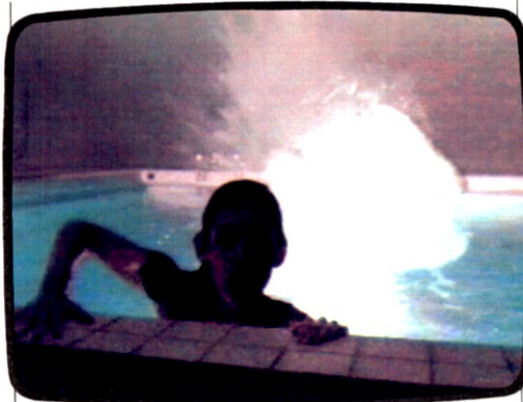
—Lucy Householder

OUBLIETTE

★★★1/2

11/17/95. Written by Charles Grant Craig. Directed by Kim Manners.

A bizarre case of empathy draws Mulder and Scully to Seattle. A woman named Lucy Householder (Tracey Ellis) bled and collapsed at the very moment when a man was kidnapping a teenage girl named Amy Jacobs (Jewel Staite) on the other side of the city; even more stranger, she incoherently babbled the very words the kidnapper was heard to speak. Lucy herself had been a kidnap victim, and when her kidnapper is identified as the same man who took Amy, Mulder becomes convinced that Lucy is experiencing whatever Amy sees and feels. He soon comes into conflict with the



In "The Walk," Captain Draper (Nancy Sorel) meets her demise in a pool, echoing a scene from Jacques Tourneur's *THE CAT PEOPLE*.

local FBI team and Scully, who feel all the evidence points to Lucy as an accomplice, not an empath.

"Oubliette" recalls "Conduit" from *THE X-FILES*' first season, although this time Mulder's identification is with two victims, not one. "Oubliette" stands on its own, however, without having to make comparisons. The relationship between Mulder and Lucy, tender and prickly at the same time, is completely believable and deeply moving as Lucy slowly grows to trust him. Tracey Ellis, with her hard-life face, her lank hair, and her soft voice, is perfect as the wounded Lucy; she is another in the *X-FILES* portrait gallery of terrific guest stars. Michael Chieffo's kidnapper, in love with photographing his victims, is totally creepy, and the scene where he takes Polaroids of his latest victim is a bone-chilling reversal of the scene in *REAR WINDOW* where Jimmy Stewart tries to fend off Raymond Burr with his flashlight. The foreshadowing of Amy's near-death in the river with Wade's giving her too much water to drink earlier on is a clever revelation of another layer to his character, and just one example of the strength of this script. The pacing seems off at times (too many scenes of people walking) and the writing for Scully is problematic at first; she seems too opposed to Mulder's interest in Lucy, and she is given no viable theory to counter Mulder's. Her decision to side with Mulder and accompany him to the river resolves that problem, but then comes a terrible mistake: the scene where Mulder and Scully administer CPR to Amy. Although Scully's giving up on Amy may make a dramatic point, it is so contrary to real medical procedure that it breaks the spell of the story and leaves the viewer gaping at her stupidity. The script makes up for it, with a melancholy but touching scene at the end between Mulder and Scully, when Scully points out that Mulder is the connection between Lucy and Amy that saved Amy. If director Kim Manners' blocking points to a lack of connection between Scully, sitting on the bed, and Mulder, gazing out the window, like Lucy in the hospital, that is in keeping with the touch-me-not spirit of this episode.

"Oh, look at this—a beacon in the night."

—Mulder, spotting the approaching Skinner

NISEI

★★★

11/24/95. Written by Chris Carter, Howard Gordon, Frank Spotnitz. Directed by David Nutter.

This very serious "mythology" episode starts off (after the opening credits) with a screamingly funny in-joke, when Scully informs Mulder that the \$29.95 alien autopsy tape he bought from some guy in Allentown, Pa., is "even hokier than the one aired on the Fox network!" And this line was delivered a mere minute or two after a commercial for a rerun of Fox's alien autopsy program! Maybe network executives do have a sense of humor after all.

Mulder's tape, however, ends not with Jonathan Frakes' ponderous narration, but the abrupt arrival of a military assassination squad into the autopsy room. A trip to Allentown to talk to the man who taped the footage off a satellite transmission propels Mulder and Scully into another chapter of the government conspiracy. The contents of a Japanese diplomat's briefcase cause them to split up, Mulder to investigate the *Talapus*, a ship tied up at Newport News, and Scully to interview the people on a list of Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) members. Separately they learn bits and pieces about a project run by Japanese doctors, former members of the notorious Unit 731, the Japanese Army unit that conducted horrific tests on human subjects during World War II. When Scully finds herself recognized by the MUFON members, she realizes she herself was one of the modern-day test subjects: all the MUFON women have had a chip implanted in their necks.

This scene with the MUFON women, at the end of Act II, is the highlight of "Nisei." The setting, a suburban home, is bland and normal, the women are indistinguishable from other women, and the lighting is clear and crisp; but the women talk about abduction, experimentation, implantation, and death. David Nutter's blocking and use of the camera creates a sense of paranoia and fear completely at odds with the everyday setting.

Some of the emotional beats in this episode seem off. Scully tells Mulder the MUFON women are sick and one is dying with the implication she could be in the same situation and he barely seems to hear her, another example of the disconnection between the two this season. The disconnection turns into physical reality when they split up once again to explore separately their own roles in the story. Scully brings the chip removed from her neck to be analyzed by FBI technician Agent Pendrell (Brendan Beiser), whose crush on the oblivious Scully is instantly endearing. Her pleas to Mulder, conveyed via cell phone, to stay away from the train carrying cross-country the Japanese doctors and their subjects fall on deaf ears.

"Nisei" is not an immediate sequel to the last two mythology episodes, "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip." The story starts up through sheer happenstance, with Mulder's purchase of the alien autopsy videotape, but it is clearly related through the similarity of the events surrounding the historical Operation Paperclip and Unit 731. *THE X-FILES*' mythology episodes have a sense of the past rare for television and an awareness that we are who we are, as individuals and a nation, because of the actions taken by our parents and grandparents and their parents before them. It's hard to judge the mythology episodes; they're like chapters in a book, and each ending opens up new possibilities. But they all have a gravity and a weight that compensates for the occasional niggling feeling that no conspiracy this big could ever exist because someone, somewhere, will always talk.

In "Nisei," Scully has FBI technician Pendrell (Brendan Beiser) examine a chip that was implanted in her neck during an abduction.





Roy Thinnes plays the good alien shape-shifter, put under constraints by the Cigarette Smoking Man in the season finale "Talitha Cumi."

on 3x5 cards.

For the new writers, "it's been a learning process," Carter said. "All of them are very gung-ho, determined and dedicated. We're all working together to bring their good ideas to the screen." Howard Gordon, as co-executive producer, found himself taking on more supervisory work, compared to his first two years at THE X-FILES. "I'm much more involved in the junior writers' scripts than I ever was in anything [former co-executive producers] Glen Morgan or Jim Wong did," he explained. "My job is more of a staff position now, and I've been involved in almost everything that's come up, whether supervising post-production, or editing, or rewriting a part of a script. It's much more of a group effort than it ever has been. I feel that some of my own work has suffered as a result. I haven't had a chance to cultivate that part of the job. I recognize that that's definitely part of the job description, and I know it's good training for the time when and if I have my own show. But it's frustrating—you just want to lock yourself in a room and do your thing. It makes me feel like I've earned my title at the beginning of every episode."

Essential to the smooth running of the show are in-house producers and directors that Carter has recruited over the years, who have consisted primarily of David Nutter, Rob Bowman, Kim Manners, and co-executive producer R.W. Goodwin, who oversees production in Vancouver and traditionally directs the first and last episodes each season. "It's been fantastic," Carter enthused. "It's not like when the director of the week comes in and you have to shake hands and say, 'This is how we do the job.' These guys already know. They've got a level of taste and understanding that makes my job so

X-FILES

2SHY

New writer Jeff Vlaming on providing thoughtful thrills.

By Paula Vitaris

A number of new writers joined the X-FILES staff third season, including story editor Jeff Vlaming, who contributed two scripts, "2Shy" and "Hell Money," before moving on to different pastures by season's end. As a writer on the USA channel's WEIRD SCIENCE, Vlaming had become a fan of THE X-FILES, so much so that he wrote an X-FILES spoof, "Fly Boy," for the show.

Vlaming also hoped to write the real thing: a freelance script for THE X-FILES. After submitting unread scripts, the former advertising executive decided he needed to advertise himself, and hit upon an unusual plan to get his foot inside the door. He cut a sponge into the shape of an alien, stuck it inside a pickle jar, covered it with a paper bag and attached a note which declared, "My God, Mulder, it's trying to communicate!" Remove the bag, and there sat the alien, holding up a little sign announcing, "Jeff Vlaming's ready to pitch." Two days later, his agent called and told him he had a meeting with Carter. "It worked better than expected!" Vlaming recalled. "Chris told me, 'This is a visual show, and you think visually. That's really important.'"

One of the ideas Vlaming pitched, which eventually became "2Shy," won him a place on the writing staff. "2Shy" is the story of mutant, Virgil Incanto (Timothy Carhart), who can only find sustenance in human fatty tissue. In Vlaming's original conception, Virgil sucked the oil, rather than the fat, leaving people "withered and husky," according to Vlaming.

Virgil, in his original oil-consuming incarnation, sprang from some medical reading Vlaming had done about the sebaceous, or oil-producing, glands. He combined that with an image in his mind of a man and a woman in a car, and the man killing the woman by sucking the oil from her—an image which eventually found its way into the teaser. After oil-sucking changed to fat-sucking at Carter's suggestion, Vlaming again hit the medical books, including volumes his wife, an occupational therapist, had bought for her classes. "When Scully



Jeff Vlaming's second of two X-FILES scripts, "Hell Money," in which Scully and Mulder aid Chinatown detective B.D. Wong, examines issues similar to those explored in the superior 2SHY.

goes, 'I don't know how to explain such accelerated autolysis,' my wife said, 'Like anyone would talk like that!' Vlaming laughed. "And Howard Gordon said, 'Scully sounded a little too textbook here.' But that's the point: I wanted to make Scully sound like she knows what she is talking about. But when it came to Virgil, we never really explained his condition, and intentionally so, because any explanation would have come off as sounding kind of silly."

Virgil is able to operate in privacy, working out of his apartment as a translator of Italian literature. His name is a reference to the great Roman poet and guide in Dante's INFERNO. "As for his last name, I took a few years of Italian and remember nothing of it, other than the fact that I had an Italian-English dictionary somewhere. I was looking for certain words, and Incanto



Scully and Mulder follow a trail of clues in "2Shy" (left) that eventually lead to Virgil Incanto (above).

means enchantment. It was an interesting name and had a certain subtext."

One of the creepiest aspects of "2Shy" is the way Virgil finds his victims: he scouts out overweight women, hunting them down by logging onto computer networks under names like "Timid" and "2Shy," dropping into chat rooms where he expects to find the desperately lonely and vulnerable. "I always thought it was intriguing how people met and often married through the personals in newspaper columns," Vlaming said. "It's pretty much a shot in the dark. You could be meeting anyone. What if you met the perfect guy, but he wasn't the perfect guy? It translated perfectly from the newspaper personals to topical internet chat rooms. I don't surf the net, but my cousin's a huge fanatic about it. I thought this would be the perfect avenue for Virgil. You can say just the right things without seeing who is saying them. And then he turns out to be a handsome guy. We waffled back and forth on that. Should he be this phantom who stays in the shadows? Someone said, 'No, he should be pretty good-looking, not James Bond or anything, but someone good-looking.' And for these women, it's like, 'Wow, this guy turns out nice, and he wants to date me!'"

"I can't deny there's the specter of Tooms looming over this whole thing," Vlaming admitted. "Tooms was an animal, whereas this guy was urbane and dressed nicely. That would be the flip side, even though Tooms certainly looked like the guy next door. But he wasn't conversational and while both of them seem fairly animalistic when they're on the attack, Virgil's methodology appealed to me. The victims walked right into it, and when they were cornered, then they were done for."

As a subplot, Vlaming has Virgil's attitude towards women mirrored in Scully's relationship with Cleveland detective Alan Cross (James Handy). Although Cross is well-meaning, he makes patronizing remarks to Scully concerning her ability, as a woman, to work on the case of a serial killer who targets women. Vlaming explained, "The one thing we thought was missing was development of Detective Cross. Rather than having him be a poor slob who is going

to get killed at the end of the second act, we set up this animosity between him and Scully. It gave Scully a good opportunity to hang tough. We knew she would, of course, and she does it without haranguing the guy and chopping him off at the knees. She handled it perfectly. It was a good, quiet way for her to assert her authority."

Another element in Vlaming's script was the introduction of Virgil's building manager, Monica (Glynis Davies), who irks him not only because she's quite slender—and thus not a potential meal—but also because she's nosy and, worst of all, wants him to evaluate her poetry. Although Monica at first provides some comic relief, Virgil catches her snooping about his apartment and kills her. One of the episode's most affecting scenes occurs when a sympathetic Scully interviews Jesse, Monica's blind daughter, who earlier had expressed her distaste for Incanto because he smelled "gross." Vlaming had wanted to eliminate Jesse's blindness, but Carter felt differently. "Everyone was offering suggestions, such as, 'Get rid of the blind girl,' but Chris said, 'No, I think the blind girl's good,' for no real reason other than Jesse being able to say, 'There's something about the guy upstairs.' I thought it was sort of gothic: 'the smitten landlady and her blind daughter.' But what did appeal to me was the idea about Jesse's sense of smell. Everyone else said, 'He's handsome; he's charming,' but she's immune to his looks and his charms. She catches something about him that none of us do, and then because of it she brings the whole case crashing down on top of him."

With "2Shy" behind him, Vlaming went to work on his second X-FILES script, "Hell Money," which examined issues similar to those in "2Shy." Once again, a sophisticated, educated man (a medical doctor) exploits a marginalized community, in this case newly arrived, poverty-stricken Chinese immigrants. Not as strong as "2Shy," "Hell Money" still has its virtues, and although Vlaming is no longer with X-FILES, his brief tenure will be remembered. □

“The end of last year became a template for the way we run things around here. It’s much more of a group effort than it’s ever been.”

—Co-producer Howard Gordon—

much easier. I'm just so thankful to have those guys."

One person who won't be directing an episode is David Lynch. An Internet rumor—that-wouldn't-die had fans speculating over a purported Lynch assignment and a possible crossover between X-FILES and Lynch's defunct TWIN PEAKS. "I thought it was an interesting rumor," Carter sighed. "I've never spoken to or met David Lynch, nor do I know what he thinks of the show." Carter is somewhat aghast at the power of online rumormongering. "I had to answer phone calls from the ASPCA the other day!" he grumbled, referring to a false story posted to the Internet newsgroup alt.tv.x-files claiming that kittens had been burned to death in an accidental pet store fire during the filming of an episode.

The third season opened with two of its biggest "mythology" episodes, "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip." A continuation of "Anasazi," the second season cliffhanger, they were packed with events so life-altering for Mulder and Scully that fans were left reeling. The episode following "Paper Clip," a stand-alone called "D.P.O.," gave Mulder and Scully no opportunity to mull over the changes in their lives. "I feel like the story itself is kind of thin," admitted Howard Gordon, who wrote the episode. "Coming off of 'The Blessing Way' and 'Paper Clip' was a tough act to follow. I was a big fan, particularly of 'The Blessing Way,' and I think I was a little intimidated by it, frankly. I think that's one of the reasons why the fans didn't embrace 'D.P.O.' Who cares about some guy throwing lightning in the midwest after what Mulder and Scully have been through? Some people looked at it as a good, old-fashioned X-FILES, but others said, 'How can they ignore the fact that Scully lost a sister and Mulder's lost a father and they've seen spaceships and aliens?'"

Carter claimed that THE X-FILES "is not soap opera. You can play with time in series television, which means you don't know how much time went by between 'Paper Clip' and 'D.P.O.' Even though it was a week of our life, it could have been six months for Mulder and Scully, so a lot of things could have been resolved. I thought that we needed to get back and tell some stand-alone episodes. You can't keep this mythology thing up forever. As popular as

"But I'm not a very good shot, and when I miss, I tend to miss low."

—Mulder to the Red-Haired Man

731

★★★1/2

12/1/95. Written by Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Rob Bowman.

A scene more disturbing than anything else previously seen on THE X-FILES opens the second half of this conspiracy two-parter: soldiers round up, then massacre, helpless, pajama-clad prisoners, stirring our collective memory of photographs and movie footage chronicling the horrors of genocide: the Holocaust, Cambodia, Bosnia. The only teaser to even come close in horror was last season's "The Calusari," which showed us the ultimate TV no-no: killing a child. But there is something different about these prisoners; they look like alien Grays.

Once past the teaser, this is a swiftly-paced installment, cutting back and forth between Mulder, who has made his way into the train he jumped on top of in "Nisei," and Scully, who has traveled to the camp in West Virginia and discovered an open pit filled with the massacre victims. A gripping scenario ensues, with Mulder locking himself and the Red-Haired Man (Stephen McHattie), an assassin first seen in "Nisei," into the train car containing the creature brought on board in "Nisei," while Scully is escorted to a similar car by The Elder, a member of the Consortium, and told this is where she was brought during her abduction.

The dispute over the phone between Mulder and Scully concerning the identity of the creature in the train car (Mulder thinks it is a human/alien hybrid; Scully believes it to be a human deformed by experimentation) form the core of this episode, and exposes the conflict in their belief systems and approach to their experiences. It also re-establishes, for the purpose of the larger drama of THE X-FILES, the rationale for Scully's adherence to the completely human origins of her abduction.

There is a more immediate crisis at hand. Not only does the Red-Haired Man want to kill Mulder and the creature confined behind a locked door, but there is a bomb in the train car. The bomb may be a plot contrivance to screw up the tension levels, but it's a very effective one, and it's a neat twist that Mulder, unlike the usual action hero, is unable to disarm it. Not surprisingly, Mulder survives, thanks to a Deus X Machina, but we still get our ration of visceral thrills when that train car blows to kingdom come. Sadly, it takes the innocent little creature with it.

The final scene between Mulder and Scully, as they realize their evidence is gone and they are once more empty-handed, is beautifully written and acted. "Apology is policy" is a line well worth remembering, and a fitting substitute for the show's usual tagline of "The Truth Is Out There."

Michael Berryman (THE HILLS HAVE EYES) is a stand-out in "Revelations," as a handyman whose appearance hides a gentle soul.



Soldiers escort aliens as part of a government cover-up to hide their existence in "731," the conclusion of the previous episode, "Nisei."

"Mulder, would you do me a favor? Would you smell Mr. Jarvis?"

—Scully

REVELATIONS

★★★1/2

12/15/95. Written by Kim Newton. Directed by David Nutter.

Scully and Mulder protect a young Ohio boy named Kevin Kryder (Kevin Zegers) who they fear may be the next victim of a murderer (Kenneth Walsh) who has killed eleven false stigmatics. To Scully's astonishment, Kevin's stigmatic wounds appear to be genuine, and when she observes a series of seeming impossible phenomena, including an incorruptible body accompanied by a floral scent, she begins to consider the possibility that miracles really do happen.

Scully's search to reconcile her religious beliefs and her scientific training makes for powerful drama, and Gillian Anderson is up to the challenge. She gives a terrific performance, letting us see all of Scully's emotions as she is torn between her heart and her head. Her dialogues with Mulder, cast for once as the disbeliever, are particularly fascinating, as they struggle with positions strangely opposite from the ones they usually take. Mulder's skepticism is credible, having been shown in past episodes to disdain organized religion, but his attitude towards Scully is inconsistent, acting sympathetically in some scenes, but in others condescendingly.

Michael Berryman is simply wonderful as Owen Jarvis, the handyman whose frightening appearance conceals a pure and noble soul.

The episode bogs down when it comes to the plot. The killer, an Atlanta businessman named Simon Gates (Kenneth Walsh), has the power to conduct great heat, and when he strangles his victims, he burns his fingerprints right into their flesh. He can also bend the iron window bars. Mulder, who normally would be fascinated by this unexplainable phenomenon, barely seems interested. Kevin is an odd choice for a stigmatic; there's nothing particularly saintly about him. The only trait that distinguishes him from any other child is his ability to spin a tale. Unfortunately, Kevin Zegers gives an extremely self-conscious performance; he is unable to hint at anything beneath the surface of the dialogue. The death of his mother (well played by Hayley Tyson) barely affects this boy. The ending is a real mess: Scully conveniently figures out Gates has taken Kevin to a nearby recycling plant by linking a cryptic message, spoken by Kevin's mentally ill father, to a logo she spots on a conveniently placed recycling bin. She dashes off alone, without backup, and manages to save the day; then asks Mulder to make a statement for her, even though he wasn't even near the recycling plant. But this nonsense sets up a simply wonderful scene: Scully's visit to a church and her confession to a priest of all her fears and doubts. All complaints melt away before Anderson's deeply felt acting. If only the external narrative had matched the trajectory of Scully's

pilgrim's progress. Then we'd have an episode to equal "Beyond the Sea" and "Irresistible." Those episodes, and "Revelations," were directed David Nutter, who always inspires Anderson to her very best. After "Revelations" he moved on to Chris Carter's new show MILLENNIUM; with any luck he'll be back directing more X-FILES next season.

"...and suddenly you see reality, as it, you know, really exists."

—Dude

THE WAR OF THE COPROPHAGES

★★★1/2

1/5/96. Written by Darin Morgan. Directed by Kim Manners.

What do Mulder and Scully do on the weekend? Mulder escapes the fumigation of his apartment building by observing UFO hot spots in Miller's Grove, Massachusetts (an homage to the Grover's Mill, N.J., locale of Orson Welles' WAR OF THE WORLDS). Scully bathes her dog, cleans her gun, eats dinner and chats with Mulder on the phone. But Mulder's idyll is interrupted when his assistance is requested by the local sheriff in the investigation of an unusual death. A witness claims cockroaches are the culprits. Before long, Mulder is theorizing about cockroach robots from outer space, but Scully keeps heading him off at the pass—by phone—with completely logical explanations for each death. It isn't until Mulder meets Dr. Bambi Berenbaum (Bobbie Phillips), a beautiful entomologist working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, that Scully decides she really must pack a bag and head north.



"War of Coprophages": Mulder is seen from the insect-eye-view of killer cockroaches, which he believes to be alien robotic probes.

Writer Darin Morgan and director Kim Manners carefully crank up the comic tension, until the entire town is ready to burst, and burst it does in a convenience store riot that has to be the funniest thing on TV this year, with the sensible Scully utterly ineffectual at putting a stop to the nonsense. And that's only the prelude to an even bigger, and much messier, explosion.

Each gag is driven by a case of comic misperception, whether on the part of the viewer, or by the characters. Often the joke stems from a misperception about oneself, beginning with Dr. Bigger's pronouncement in the teaser that human beings, unlike roaches, are capable of self-illumination. By the end of the episode, that observation is definitely open to debate. The visuals underscore the differing points of view, especially shots like the roach's-eye view of a Mulder multiplied into dozens of Mulders.

This lightest and most farcical of Morgan's scripts does not plumb the emotional depths of his other episodes, and it has a more classically comic ending, with the incipient and incongruous liaison of luscious Dr. Berenbaum (who's barely glanced at Mulder, though he's struck dumb by her) and wheelchair-bound Dr. Newton. Mulder's parting comment to Scully that she smells bad falls flat, however; it's just too mean-spirited to work.

"I am not going to be humiliated by you, in front of you, or by having to bring in a teenage girl on her birthday, of all days, to identify the bones of her dead dog Mr. Tippy!"

—Scully to Mulder

SYZYGY

★1/2

1/26/96. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Rob Bowman.

Reports of cult killings bring Mulder and Scully to Comity, New Hampshire. Their suspicions fall on Margi and Terri, high school cheerleaders whose statements about satanic rituals are suspiciously similar. As the town's panic mounts, Mulder and Scully's partnership turns hostile, and they begin to act strangely, with Scully taking to cigarettes and Mulder to drink. A local astrologer suggests that a rare alignment of the planets may account for the uncharacteristic behavior of the town.



One of the horrific images in "Grotesque," a dark tale about a serial killer who claims to have been possessed by demonic forces.

"Syzygy," yet another comic episode, is a lost opportunity. The best moments, with the exception of the amusing scenes with cheerfully blasé astrologer Madame Zirinka (Denalda Williams), are the genuinely scary ones, especially the scene showing a boy crushed to death underneath the high school gym bleachers. If the rest of the episode had been played straight, then this could have been a horror classic. As it is, the jokes fall flat, because the humor exists in a vacuum. A prime example is the doctor in drag: a man is not funny just because he's in woman's clothing; there has to be some kind of reaction from the other characters. For proof, look no further than David Duchovny, in his pre-X-FILES days, as Denise/Dennis Bryson in TWIN PEAKS. It's the reaction of his colleagues that make Bryson's appearance such a side-splitter.

The relationship of Mulder and Scully is, in a word, ugly. For those who treasure the witty spats of Hepburn and Tracy, the dialogue in "Syzygy" induces cringes. If this had been a serious episode, the sniping might have worked, had Mulder and Scully gained some new knowledge of themselves through this confusing experience. But they're still snapping at each other in the final shot.

The episode's climax, a *melée* in the police station choreographed to Khatchaturian's *Sabre Dance*, could not be more heavy-handed or more obvious. Compare it with the hilarious riot in "The War of the Coprophages"—hilarious because Scully is there to react to it. In fact, much of "Syzygy" can be compared to "Coprophages," to the former's detriment: there are killings in a small town; people panic; Mulder meets a woman; and Scully is jealous—professionally jealous, of course.

Some of the humor works. The scene wherein Scully puffs away on a cigarette and Mulder mixes a truly disgusting screwdriver is amusing, primarily due to Anderson and Duchovny, who are masters of milking the comic deadpan. Duchovny is especially good, with his ever-languid Mulder now on what looks like a seven-second tape delay. A drink in Mulder's hands serves as a reminder of Bill Mulder's drinking in "Anasazi." What would this

scene have been like if played straight?.

Wendy Benson and Lisa Robin Kelley are dead on as Margi and Terri, and make their otherwise stereotypical characters work. Again, one can't help imagining how truly frightening their witness statement scene would have been, had this been a different type of episode.

The cinematography from John Bartley, is lovely, particularly in the first act funeral scene, aglow with a golden light unusual for this show.

"I wouldn't want to disappoint you by not disappointing you."

—Mulder to former boss Bill Patterson

GROTESQUE

★★★1/2

2/2/96. Written by Howard Gordon. Directed by Kim Manners.

A three-year hunt for a serial murderer ends with the arrest of John Mostow (Levani), but a disturbing twist threatens to undo the case's closure: a new body is found displaying the same facial mutilations as Mostow's victims. Mostow claims that he was possessed by a demon who has moved on to a new host and that his obsessive drawing and sculpturing of gargoyles was a desperate attempt to ward the demon off. Mulder finds himself on the case when his former boss at the Investigative Service Unit, Bill Patterson (an excellent Kurtwood Smith) requests his assistance from Skinner. Immediately it's like old times: hostility radiates from Patterson, who despises Mulder's methods as much as he needs them. In the middle of this personality clash stands a worried Scully, fearing for Mulder's sanity, as he submerges himself into the murderer's mind, sleeping at Mostow's studio, pouring over his drawings, trying some sculpting of his own. Between his obsessive behavior and some troubling physical evidence that points to Mulder's possible involvement in yet another murder, she begins to doubt his ability to differentiate between himself and his prey.

This episode, one of the darkest ever in tone and visual design, resembles last season's "Irresistible" in the ambiguity of its demon, glimpsed momentarily by Mulder: it's real, all right, but whether its place of origin lies within or without the human heart and imagination remains unanswered. It is also a fascinating look back at how troublesome life must have been for a maverick like Mulder when he joined the FBI, at how truly obsessive and conflicted he is, and at how the dark entices him. His assault on the helpless Mostow is extremely disturbing—a flashback to his loss of control with Duane Barry. Duchovny is superb at communicating each step of Mulder's deterioration; one wishes the episode could have lasted another half hour, to make his descent more gradual and to give Duchovny the opportunity to display even more shades to Mulder's fracturing personality. Anderson is equally good showing Scully at her supportive best.

"Grotesque" is a triumph for director Manners, cinematographer Bartley, and the X-FILES art

The eyes of an alien in "Piper Maru," an effect achieved by mechanical effects supervisor Dave Gauthier and visual effects supervisor Mat Beck.



Under the influence of an unusual alignment of stars and planets, Mulder resorts to some uncharacteristic behavior in "Syzygy."

department. The predominant blue tones, the manipulation of light and dark, the swirling camera, the hundreds of drawings and sculptures of gargoyles—all serve to reveal character, accelerate the tension, and breed an overwhelming sense of dread. Mark Snow's score is also one of his best. Alas, this truly fine episode ends on an intrusive note, a superfluous voice-over from Mulder philosophizing again on the nature of evil. He spells out what the camera is saying a hundred times more effectively with its final shot of a painting of a gargoyle.

"We bury our dead alive, don't we?"

—Commander Johansen

PIPER MARU

★★★

2/9/96. Written by Frank Spotnitz & Chris Carter. Directed by Rob Bowman.

THE X-FILES' conspiracy storyline advances in another two-parter, beginning with Skinner telling an outraged Scully the investigation into Melissa's murder has been suspended for lack of leads. Frustrated but unable to act, Scully plunges into what looks like another Mulder wild goose chase: determining the cause of the strange burns suffered by the crew of the *Piper Maru*. Mulder's attention is caught by the ship's original position, the very spot where the Talapus (from "Nisei") retrieved what he believes to be a UFO. By the end of the hour, Mulder and Scully have learned that something—or someone—indeed was at the bottom of the sea, something that caused the crew of the *Zeus Faber*, a World War II sub, to experience the same fatal burns as the *Piper Maru* crew. Mulder and Scully split up once more: Mulder to follow a woman named Jerri Kallenchuk (Jo Bates) who may know the secret behind the retrieved UFO; Scully to talk with an old family friend, Commander Johansen, who may be guarding the same secrets. Meanwhile, the conspirators focus their attention on Skinner in a most unpleasant way.

This swiftly-moving episode has a number of outstanding action sequences. First is Mulder's encounter with Jerri, a tough-talking, '90s film noir dame, happy to keep a finger on the trigger of the shotgun fastened to the underside of her desk. Their interaction in a Hong Kong restaurant crackles with anticipation, and it's great fun to see Jerri's sarcasm annoy Mulder to the point that he is driven to manhandle her. Jerri meets a bad end a minute later, during an enormously exciting sequence at her Hong Kong office (shot in lurid blues and reds by John Bartley). Mulder's furious confrontation at the airport with Krycek is also a keeper. It's regrettable that the next plot turn hinges on a major writing blunder, when Mulder stupidly allows Krycek to clean up in the bathroom by himself.

Satisfying though Mulder's adventures may be, it is Scully's scenes that lend "Piper Maru" an emotional depth. Her anger over the filing away of Melissa's murder investigation, her flashback to a

“We didn’t have a chance in hell of winning [an Emmy award]. I saw what they were picking, and it seemed they were more mainstream.”

—Producer Chris Carter—

those mythology episodes are, that’s not why a lot of people watch THE X-FILES. You have to give people a variety, and I thought that if we could change the from ‘Paper Clip’ to ‘D.P.O.’, it would allow people to say, ‘Okay, we’re back into the X-Files themselves, not just what the government is trying to prevent Mulder and Scully from finding out.’

Gordon agreed that varying the type of episode is best for the show. “One of ways that X-FILES has distinguished itself is in our very wide palette,” he said. “We can go from ‘The Blessing Way’ to ‘D.P.O.’ to ‘Clyde Bruckman’s Final Repose’ to ‘The Walk.’ This is reductive, but we basically have three types of episodes. There are the stand-alone episodes. There are the thriller-conspiracy-mythology episodes, like ‘Anasazi’ and ‘Nisei,’ which piece together the mythology of what the X-Files are and also Mulder and his quest. And we have the lighter shows, like ‘Clyde Bruckman’s Final Repose’ and ‘Humbug’ [both written by Darin Morgan], although that doesn’t mean they aren’t the ultimately the deepest. I think ‘Clyde Bruckman’s Final Repose’ is perhaps the deepest episode we’ve ever done. I loved it; it was one of those where everything worked. The casting and the writing was exquisite. Peter Boyle was terrific. It was one of the things that I was very proud to be associated with and frankly a little jealous of. The writer in me wished I had written it, which is always a good thing. But you watch NYPD BLUE or ER—for the most part, the tones of the episodes are consistent. I think our inconsistency is one of our strong suits. We have a tremendous range, and the audience doesn’t know what it’s going to get, whether you get a creepy monster show like ‘2Shy’ or ‘The Walk,’ or whether you’re going to get a reluctant psychic.”

Another consideration in separating stand-alone episodes from mythology episodes is syndication. THE X-FILES has already signed a deal with Fox’s cable channel, fx, to the tune of \$600,000 per episode. Beginning in fall 1997, the syndicated episodes will re-run out of sequence. “So you can’t keep referencing yourself,” Carter noted, “Even though the characters have to be true to a certain progression, you

continued on page 37

X-FILES

OUBLIETTE

The story behind Charles Grant Craig’s abduction-empath episode.

Oubliette” is the only X-FILES episode written by Charles Grant Craig, who joined the show third season, then left shortly before filming commenced on his script. “Oubliette” introduces Lucy Householder, an alienated woman still trying to put her life back together years after her escape from a five-year imprisonment in the basement of a remote house in Washington state. Her abductor, Carl Wade (Michael Chieffo) remains at large. When Wade kidnaps Amy Jacobs, Lucy unexpectedly experiences, both physically and emotionally, everything Amy experiences. It doesn’t take long for Mulder to track down a reluctant Lucy and attempt to persuade her to help find Wade. Scully and members of the local F.B.I. see her as a suspect, especially after a DNA test places Amy’s blood on Lucy’s clothes, even though, as Mulder points out, Lucy was not only miles from the scene of the kidnapping but had suffered a nosebleed.

In Tracey Ellis’ wrenching portrayal, Lucy becomes not just a bitter woman but a vulnerable human being. “When Charlie came up with the idea, Lucy was a little more hard-boiled,” said Chris Carter. “But then you find an actor like Tracey Ellis, and the hurt plays on her face. So the character had the same lines of dialogue, but the take on them, by virtue of Tracey’s casting, was very interesting. Tracey played a more wounded person. I had imagined a person who was all compensation, who had a tough, impenetrable shell.”

Lucy is not the only character for whom the case opens old wounds. Both Lucy and Amy serve as reminders to Mulder of his missing sister, Samantha. A heated discussion between Mulder and Scully brings Mulder’s personal stake in the case out into the open, when Scully suggests that Mulder is becoming too involved because of his sister. Mulder’s linking the two is “obvious from the very beginning,” said Carter, referring to the scene wherein Amy’s mother she asks him angrily, “How could you really know how I feel?” “The camera comes around Mulder and we all know how he could know,” Carter said. “That sets up the whole story, including the scene later on when Scully



Mulder rescues kidnap victim Amy (Jewel Staite) in “Oubliette.”

says, ‘This is about your sister,’ and Mulder gives her a speech about not everything coming down to a childhood incident. David and I talked about that. He actually ad-libbed that big speech. He didn’t want Mulder’s motivations to be so simple. We had been there before, in ‘Conduit’ [a first season episode about an abducted girl] and there was new terrain to be discovered. It was a good choice.”

Curiously, although Scully is herself an abduction victim, the script and Gillian Anderson’s performance do not emphasize any identification Scully might have had with Lucy. “We could have played that angle, but it didn’t come out in the 44 minutes we had,” Carter said. “All the evidence pointed overwhelmingly in favor of Lucy’s involvement in the crime. The blood was the most damning piece. Scully wanted to believe Mulder until that point and then felt that he had stepped over a line. But she was gentle about it. She didn’t put her foot down.”

In the end, not even Mulder’s own empathy for Lucy can save her from the memories rekindled by her empathic connection. When Amy is drowned by Wade (who is then shot by Mulder), she is revived by Lucy, a mile away, who absorbs the water into her own lungs. “In order to outrun this guy, she had to die,” Carter concluded. “She had to save this other girl. That’s the tragedy in the story.”

Paula Vitaris

X-FILES

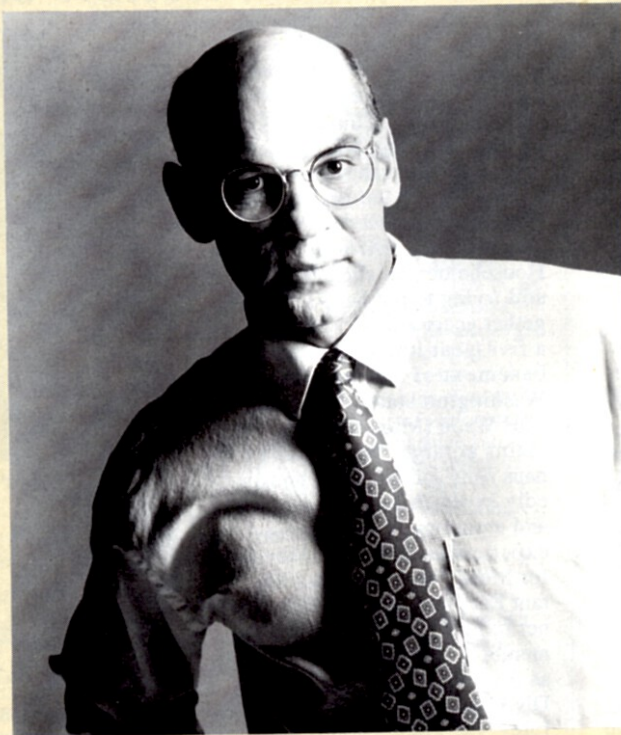
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR SKINNER

Mitch Pileggi on his character's growing popularity.

Thanks to Mitch Pileggi's robust portrayal, FBI Assistant Director Walter Sergei Skinner has emerged as one of THE X-FILES' most popular supporting characters. His fan following has grown with each appearance, particularly skyrocketing after last season's "End Game," when Skinner stepped out from behind his desk to engage in a memorable fistfight with X (Steven Williams), and this season's "Paper Clip," when he proclaimed to the Smoking Man (William B. Davis), "This is where you pucker up and kiss my ass!" Speculation about Skinner soared to a new high after the April 26 broadcast of "Avatar," an episode that brought to light many details about his personal life.

Pileggi attributes Skinner's popularity to the tension his conflicts with Mulder, Scully, the Smoking Man and X bring to the show. "It has plenty of dramatic tension as it is, but it's just another avenue for them to look down," he explained. The audience's appreciation of Skinner's allegiance to Mulder and Scully received a big boost in "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip," when Skinner hides from the Smoking Man a crucial DAT tape. Although the tape is taken forcibly from him, Skinner is still able to beat the Smoking Man by telling him members of the Navajo Nation have memorized the contents and are prepared to reveal them if harm should come to Mulder and Scully. Despite Skinner's actions, Scully has doubts in "The Blessing Way," because not only has she no idea he is safeguarding the tape, but he has placed her on suspension. According to Pileggi, "There are a lot of things Skinner can't control," he said. "He's got a lot of people that he has to answer to. This is something that was pushed on him, and he wanted Scully to understand that. Then she came back at him with, 'You overestimate your position in the chain of command,' and that just crushed him, because I think that he cares very much for both Mulder and Scully. For her to club him over the head with something like that was painful."

By the end of "The Blessing Way," Scully's trust in Skinner has eroded so drastically that she pulls a gun on him. When he responds by aiming his weapon at her, the episode ends in a cliffhanger stand-off that left the fans gasping for air. The scene resumes in "Paper Clip" with Mulder, gun drawn, bursting into the room. "Scully pointing her gun at Skinner was, once again, crushing for him," Pileggi said. "That's



Mitch Pileggi plays FBI director Walter Sergei Skinner.

why, when they leave, he gives her this look that says, 'I can't believe you didn't trust me, and you got to the point where you had to pull a gun on me.' He's making every effort he can to help them and they keep rebuking him."

The "pucker up and kiss my ass!" scene is a Pileggi favorite. "When I read that, I said, 'All right! Finally, I got to tell the Smoking Man what I feel! The dialogue was perfect.'" Another favorite "Paper Clip" scene communicated a completely contrasting tone. Skinner arrives at a remote diner to meet Mulder and Scully, who have been on the run. He tells them he has brokered a deal that will permit them to return to work. "It felt really good. It was three people sitting down, just talking about the stuff that's going on. Skinner pretty much laid it on the line. I think that if ever he was able to reveal to Mulder and Scully how sincere he was in helping them, it was there. I don't know if they ever believe him, just like I think some of the fans still don't believe him. No matter what he does, they still think that he's got something up his sleeve or that he's got ulterior motives."

Later, Skinner unexpectedly encounters Krycek, the Hispanic Man (Lenny Britos), and a third accomplice, who assault him and steal the tape. "Like the elevator fight with X from 'End

Game,' it was in a small area. The guy who was garroting me was shorter than I was, so he was sticking his knee in my back and pulling me back, and then Nic Lea was hitting me. Fortunately, I was able to take out the other guy or I probably would have had been hit myself. I finally had to tell the guy garroting me, 'I have a bad back and it's killing me.' We finally worked it out where I drove him back into the wall, which took some of the pressure off."

Skinner's next episode was "Nisei," the first of another conspiracy theory two-parter. In Allentown, Pennsylvania, Mulder and Scully have apprehended a man they believe to be an assassin. Skinner arrives unexpectedly to inform them the man is a Japanese diplomat, and he has been forced to travel up to Allentown to smooth over what has become an embarrassing international incident. Pileggi said, "I don't think Skinner had any idea what they were doing up there, and then when Mulder gives him the 'We're checking out some video pirating thing,' Skinner's reaction is, 'Right. Here we go again.'"

After "Nisei," Skinner popped up fairly regularly during the rest of the season. In "Grotesque" he shared a short but

touching scene with Scully, and in "Pusher" he found himself at the mercy of the size-seven heels of Holly (Julie Arkos), an FBI computer technician under the hypnotic influence of villain Robert Modell (Robert Wisden). And the conspiracy heated up once more with significant consequences for Skinner, first in "Piper Maru," when he was shot by the Hispanic Man and then in "Avatar," a story that cast Skinner in the role of murder suspect. The murder, of course, is engineered by the Smoking Man in order to frame Skinner and discredit the X-Files, but Mulder and Scully's investigations open up for the audience a number of revelations about Skinner's personal life: his impending divorce, his sleep disorder, and his persistent fear of a vision of an old woman that has haunted him for years.

Pileggi acknowledged that, as much as he loves being on THE X-FILES, the show is not about his character and he doesn't expect to be in every episode. "The show is set up in such a way, I think, and intelligently so, that you don't dwell upon the conspiracy for a whole season. There's a diversity here that I think is very important, so people don't get bored with any one aspect of it. Because as soon as you get done with one thing, then you go on to something else, so it just keeps it fresh." **Paula Vitaris**



In "Apocrypha" Scully visits Skinner in the hospital, where he is recovering from a gunshot wound in the previous episode "Piper Maru."

young Melissa, and her reminisces with Johansen finally give us, after many months, an idea of what she is thinking and feeling about her sister's death.

The conception of the alien is devilishly clever. Those ink-cloud eyes, an effect achieved by mechanical effects supervisor Dave Gauthier and visual effects supervisor Mat Beck, are wonderfully creepy. This alien is different from the morphing aliens of "Colony" and "End Game"—it takes over your body physically, instead of impersonating you—but the effect is the same: the person you think you know may not be who he seems.

"We show talent for these G-man activities."
—Langly

APOCRYPHA ★★★
2/2/96. Written by Frank Spotnitz & Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

1953: Three young men are questioning a horribly burned, terrified crewman about the events onboard the *Zeus Faber* seven years ago. By the end of this teaser, we find, to our shock, that two of the men are Bill Mulder and the Cigarette Smoking Man. The identity of the third man—Deep Throat?—is unknown. Through facial expressions and a few words, we see that even this early, Bill Mulder and the Smoking Man are treading different paths, and we begin to understand how they arrived at their final meeting in "Anasazi."

There is much to enjoy in "Apocrypha" when it returns to the present, but nothing quite as startling as that teaser. The plots twists its way through so many alleyways that on first viewing it's a bit confusing. Mulder and Scully are reunited after Mulder returns to the U.S., with the alien-possessed Krycek in tow. The alien-Krycek escapes to find the Cigarette Smoking Man and hands over the still-missing DAT tape in exchange for transport to his ship, now housed at an abandoned missile silo in North Dakota. Skinner is recovering from the gunshot wound inflicted in "Piper Maru" by the Hispanic Man, but when he is abducted out of the hospital by that shady character, Scully not only comes to rescue but finally captures the man who shot her sister. Anderson is terrific in this scene, pounding down the street after the ambulance, shooting the Hispanic Man, and resisting the overwhelming temptation to shoot him dead.

When the story finally lands at that silo in North Dakota, we are treated to spectacular shots of the vault-like interior, dotted by rows of starry lights stretching up into infinity. Of course, Mulder and Scully are hustled away by the Cigarette Smoking Man's soldiers before they get a good look at anything, but that leaves room for a truly alarming ending for Krycek, punctuated by Mark Snow's eerie music. "Apocrypha" is a bit of a let-down from "Piper Maru," neither as exciting (except for Scully's apprehension of the Hispanic Man) nor as moving, but it wraps up neatly the

DAT tape plot thread that began back in "Anasazi," offers Scully some closure for Melissa, and leaves us wondering just what that alien was and what its mission was when it crashed into the sea all those years ago.

"Made you look."
—Mulder to Modell

PUSHER ★★★
2/23/96. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Rob Bowman.

When one Robert Patrick Modell, a.k.a. "Pusher" (Robert Wisden), calls the FBI and claims to be behind the apparent suicides of 14 people, he is promptly arrested—and within minutes there is a terrible traffic accident, leaving one agent dead, another injured, and Modell on the lam. The injured agent, Frank Burst (Vic Polizos), brings in Mulder and Scully to assist in recapturing Modell. Mulder surmises that Modell, an otherwise average man, has acquired a suggestive ability to "push" his victims into belief situations that cause their deaths. Scully is dubious as to Modell's supernatural powers, but when they discover Modell is dying from a brain tumor, they agree that he has decided he has nothing to lose and will take his cat and mouse game to the farthest ends. The game takes a vicious turn when Modell focuses in on Mulder as a "worthy adversary" and lures him and Scully into an ultimate test of wills.

An intense nailbiter, "Pusher" ranks with the best of THE X-FILES. Vince Gilligan's script crackles with witty dialogue and smart characterization that advance the story. For instance, Mulder's taunting of Modell, making him look to see if his shoelaces are untied, unleashes Modell's interest in Mulder and leads directly, two acts later, to the climactic showdown in the hospital between Mulder, Scully, and Modell. That remarkable sequence is foreshadowed beautifully throughout with such scenes as Mulder's extreme concentration at the FBI shooting range and Modell's obsession with the idea of "payback." The hospital scene, wherein Modell impels Mulder, through mental suggestion, into a game of Russian roulette that forces Mulder not only to put a gun to his head (and click on an empty chamber) but train the weapon on an unarmed Scully, is one of the memorable scenes of this show. It consists for the most part of a series of close-ups, and each actor makes the most of it. Mulder's struggle, Scully's courage and fear, and Modell's desire for revenge and death are written in the eyes and on the faces of the characters, so much so that the scene could have been done without even its sparse dialogue.

Vic Polizos's determined Burst is notable for creating a memorable FBI agent not in conflict with Mulder and Scully, and the scene in which he suffers an induced heart attack is a true shocker. Julia Arkos as the computer records technician Holly gives a piquant performance, and the scene

Mulder is forced by psychic suggestion into a game of Russian roulette in "Pusher," a nail-biting episode that ranks among the series' best.



when Modell "pushes" her to beat up Skinner is, quite literally, a kick. Pusher is an egotistical, deluded monster, but Wisden makes you feel a bit sorry for him: if only he had had the social and emotional tools to match his psychic ones, his fate might have been very different.

"More rats, Scully. Don't you think that's significant?"
—Mulder

TESO DOS BICHOS ★
3/8/96. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Kim Manners.

Cliches fasten their claws into this tired yarn about the vengeful jaguar spirit of an Ecuadorian shamaness whose remains have been exported to a Boston museum by a U.S. archaeology team. When team members start disappearing, Mulder theorizes the shamaness is responsible; Scully suspects the influence of a native drug on archaeologist Antonio Bilac (Vic Trevino). Before long, the grade-Z horror flick conventions pop up, with everyone acting like they left their brain at home. This nonsense isn't even fun, because it's all so derivative, and Duchovny and Anderson look bored. The purported climax comes when Mulder and Scully traverse through the maze-like



Having our heroes prowl around in the dark while a monster is on the loose is but one of the cliches on view in "Teso Los Bichos," a lesser episode.

museum basement, where they finally meet the enemy: a flock of kittycats presumably possessed by the jaguar spirit. At this point, one starts wondering when the crew from MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 are going to get into the act. Most excruciating to witness is Scully's tussle with an obviously fake kitty, in reality a dummy covered in rabbit fur. Perhaps writer John Shiban was influenced by CAT PEOPLE producer Val Lewton (namesake of the doomed Dr. Lewton?) but, as Lewton proved, true horror often lies in fear of the unseen. Alas, no such subtleties exist here.

Duchovny and Anderson survive this with straight faces but not much more. The scene in which blood drips from a human intestine deposited in a tree is nicely done; Duchovny, by hurriedly wiping away the drop on his face, creates some real feeling. The distorted images from the shamaness' point of view are evocative. Trevino as the drugged Dr. Bilac delivers a terribly mannered performance, but Janne Mortil as Mona, the unfortunate grad student, is believable. Unfortunately, the serious issues of academic politics and misappropriation of cultural artifacts are only afterthoughts in this script.

Director Kim Manners does his best. The episode's lighting is nearly non-existent; for the first time, it really is too dark, maybe to disguise that fake pussycat. Editor Jim Gross deserves combat pay for cutting such impenetrable footage.

continued on page 39

X-FILES

DARIN MORGAN

THE X-FILES' court jester on turning the show inside-out.

By Paula Vitaris

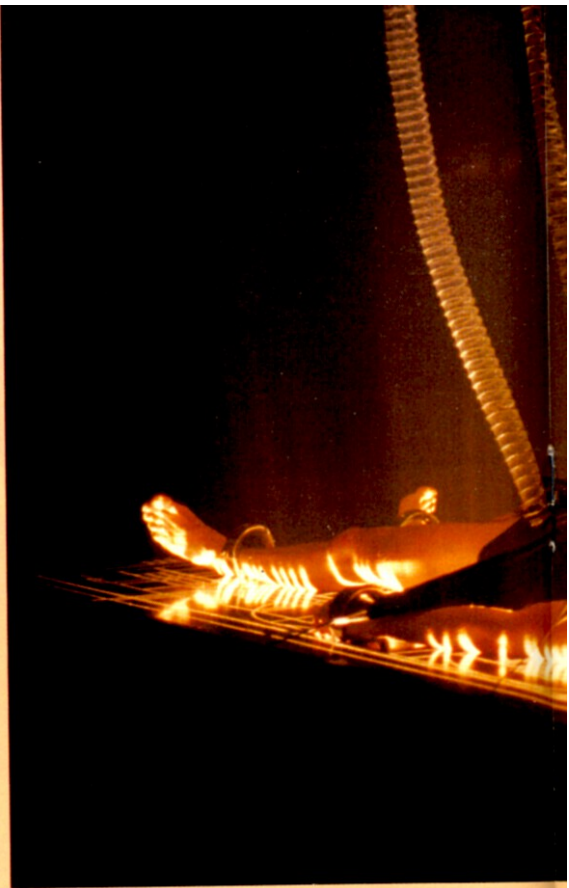
There's a scene in the X-FILES episode "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'" where in a teenage girl wakes up after a possible alien abduction to find she is wearing her clothes inside out or backwards. "Inside out or backwards" also serves as a fitting description for the comic X-FILES episodes written by Darin Morgan, author of "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'" and three others: "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," "The War of the Coprophages," and last season's "Humbug." Morgan's episodes are all bonafide X-files, with cases to be solved and creepy monsters and aliens on the prowl, but like any good court jester, he has no hesitation in sticking a pin into the inflated balloon of X-files convention, be it Mulder's reputation as a well-dressed genius, Scully's ultra-professionalism, or the show's thoroughly serious tone.

The person behind all the hoopla is a self-effacing 30-year-old man with a love for the work of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, Howard Hawks, Preston Sturges, and Billy Wilder. The younger brother of X-FILES producer-writer Glen Morgan, he was offered two

jobs during the X-FILES' second season: to play the mutant Flukeman in "The Host" and to help work out the story for the "Blood" with Glen and James Wong. Morgan's work on "Blood" earned him a spot on the writing staff, which he accepted even though he was unsure of his ability to turn out a script due to his slowness as a writer and his natural bent towards comedy. When he finally turned in "Humbug," the staff and the network were understandably apprehensive, since the episode was so unlike anything done before. Even though "Humbug," his first produced script, turned out to be massive hit with the fans, to this day he is unsatisfied with the final result, lamenting the loss of a number of good gags.

Morgan got the feeling he was on the wrong show. No matter how much he tried to be serious, he kept turning out funny stuff. "At least on THE X-FILES, there always was a point to why I was being funny. I tie it into the show in various ways," he said. "The thing I was always careful of was to make sure I had a real investigation, with theories from both Mulder and Scully. I was aware I was doing things differently, but I also wanted to make sure I was doing all the things the show would normally do. In

Mulder (Duchovny) eyes a roach motel in "War of Coprophages," Morgan's killer cockroach comedy.



'Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose,' each time Mulder says Clyde is psychic, Scully had a legitimate reason to say he's not. I did even more in 'Coprophages,' where, in the end, Scully was wrong, but she was right in the beginning, and that's what the whole show is about: different theories, how to explain certain phenomenon. My scripts had that, and I always had stereotypical 'boo' scenes or act-outs [ending an act] with a dead body. I was proudest of 'Jose Chung,' in which only two people died, and I didn't have a death on an act-out. You get in the habit of saying, 'Okay, here's a dead body,' cut to commercial. But you usually have to have those. THE X-FILES is a kind of horror show, so you have to have those moments of genuine terror or grossness."

His lingering disappointment with "Humbug" took him in another direction, to a story that would become his second episode, "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," about a weary middle-aged insurance salesman with the ability to see people's deaths. When Mulder and Scully ask his help to help solve a series of murders of fortune tellers, Clyde, played by Peter Boyle, is reluctant. To his mind, there is no altering the future. "I felt I had done 'Humbug' wrong, so I watched 'Beyond the Sea,' [Morgan's favorite X-FILES episode] again to see what the show is really about. I decided to try to write one that was much more serious and much more depressing. I really was trying to write a show with no jokes in it at all—but I failed."

The character of Clyde Bruckman was named for a comedy writer and director who had committed suicide in 1955. "I was so



Left: Flashback account of an alien abduction from "José Chung's 'From Outer Space.'" Above: Charles Nelson Reilly as author José Chung, who puts together the unreconcilably conflicting stories of various eyewitnesses.

depressed after 'Humbug' that I felt suicidal," he recalled. "So I said, 'I'm going to write about a character who will commit suicide at the end.' You hear these things about people's careers going downhill, and Clyde Bruckman always struck me as being the ultimate Hollywood horror story. He worked with Keaton, Lloyd, Laurel and Hardy, and W.C. Fields. There was a ten-year span that must have been the greatest. I can't think of a greater series of jobs. Yet the guy obviously had some problems. He was an alcoholic, and ending up killing himself."

Another source of inspiration came from Morgan's insurance salesman father who is, said Morgan, "kind of a depressive guy," like the fictional Clyde. Morgan was also intrigued by the notion of an insurance salesman who can foresee the future. "Insurance is about what will happen to you. You don't know, so you have to take out insurance, and to have a character who actually does know trying to sell people that was kind of amusing."

The episode's exploration of free will versus determinism, and coincidence versus fate, grew out of Morgan's difficulties with plotting. "I've always been really bad with plot and trying to figure out twists," he said. "So Clyde Bruckman and the killer character act in ways that were really easy to plot, but which make the story seem complicated. Stu Charno, who played the killer, asked me, 'Why does the guy kill?' I told him, 'Because I needed him to.' He really doesn't kill for any specific reason. I had come up with this idea of the killer as a puppet, someone who doesn't feel in control of his own life. That's why I like the

assume it was contrived or plotted that way by someone."

Morgan researched fortune tellers and psychics, learning about their tricks to delude the public. Out of that grew a memorably over-the-top character, "a cross between Uri Geller and the Amazing Kreskin," according to Morgan—the Stupendous Yappi, played by Jaap Broeker, David Duchovny's stand-in. "Jaap is such an bizarre character," Morgan said. "He has a very interesting facial structure, and he's mesmerizing. I based Yappi's speech patterns on him. Japp really talks like that, very fast, and sometimes he doesn't stop."

The first act opening scene, when Mulder, Scully and Yappi all show up at the scene of the latest murder, is Morgan's favorite of all his episodes. "Even though it was just a series of one-liners, a lot of information was conveyed. It was all done so fast that it seemed to work. Also, the other cops bought into Yappi's explanation, which separated Mulder and Scully from the other investigators. I like the fact that it was Mulder who was making those points. Even though he believes in psychic phenomenon, he's smart enough to know the difference between a charlatan and a real psychic."

Besides Clyde Bruckman, the episode also demonstrates Morgan's care in delineating Mulder and Scully. "Everyone looks at Mulder as having all

the answers," he said. "Most of the other episodes present him as usually right. I've always found that the things he talks about, if a normal person talked about them, you'd go, 'This guy's crazy.' He's supposed to be a smart guy, but I've never looked at him as such. He's just more lucky in some of his explanations. And Scully, although skeptical, has the right approach, when she says, 'I don't believe this.' Before I wrote for the show, Mulder always seemed like the more interesting character, but once I started writing for it, I found that I liked Scully more."

The result is that Morgan often shakes up Mulder's image, as at the end of "Humbug," with Mulder unwittingly striking a GQ pose. "I don't mind making fun of Mulder," Morgan said. "He's presented as the seeker of the truth, and to me such people are always somewhat ridiculous."

Mulder's and Scully's attitudes toward Clyde also demonstrate Mulder's views of their characters. "My pitch to Chris was that Mulder is so involved in psychic phenomenon, that he's interested in Clyde only for his abilities. But Scully, doesn't believe in these abilities, so she can consider this man as a person and see how, even though he believes he's psychic, it's ruined his life. That was one of the main points of the episode. Everyone considers Mulder to be the one who has all the answers, but I think sometimes he's so narrow-minded that he doesn't do some things properly. He never really considered Clyde Bruckman as a person, only as a phenomenon. The note Clyde leaves for Scully is written to her, because Bruckman knows that she's treating him as a person."

"Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose" contained several lines of dialogue that sent fans into a frenzy pondering their meaning. The first came when Bruckman told Scully she wouldn't die. "Some people took it to mean that Scully was immortal, but the meaning was that Clyde knows how Scully's going to die, but he likes her so much he's not going to tell her, because telling

Peter Boyle guest-starred in "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose."





Mulder encounters the mysterious Men in Black in "José Chung's 'From Outer Space.'"

her would ruin her life, whether she believed it or not. Telling someone they're not going to die is one of the nicest things you can say. That's why he says it to her. It had nothing to do with whether she was immortal or was going to be hurt in the show."

The other line of dialogue that transfixed fans came when Bruckman says offhandedly, "I'm sure there are worse ways to go, but I can't think of a more undignified one than auto-erotic asphyxiation," and Mulder quickly demands, "Why are you telling me this?" Is it just another joke, or is there some deeper meaning? "Well, yes and no," Morgan hedged. "I think that's what Mulder will die of. A homicide investigation book I read had several pictures of people who died in that manner. There's something in those pictures that is so disturbing, in the sense of going back to the ancient Greeks, and their idea of 'don't dishonor my body after I die.' It's bad enough to be found dead, and a suicide is tragic, but then you see these people who have these really complicated, almost Rube Goldberg type set-ups. It would be humorous if it wasn't so disturbing. This ties in with Clyde's dream about what your body looks like when it dies. How will it be found? In what condition and what manner? That was the gist of that character. The autoerotic asphyxiation is obviously a joke line, but it came about from studying those photos."

Third season post-production for Morgan was a much more pleasant experience than it had been with "Humbug." "On this show, you're really regarded as being a producer of your own episode," Morgan said. "No one trusted me on 'Humbug,' because it was my first. But on 'Clyde Bruckman' and the cockroach episode, it worked out that both David Nutter and Kim Manners had to start prepping another show immediately. They each had one day of cutting and then I was allowed to be in there with the editor."

"Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose" won Morgan praise from an unexpected quarter,

when the science fiction author Harlan Ellison called to express his admiration. Morgan, not a science fiction fan, had no idea who Ellison was. "He was the childhood idol of some of the writers on our staff and they were all pissed off that I didn't even know who he was, and he called me," he laughed. "I've since learned about him, although I've yet to really read his stuff. He really liked the episode and thought Peter Boyle was great."

"The War of the Coprophages," in contrast to the more measured, meditative "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," was Morgan's lightest, fastest, most farcical episode. "There were some serious, actual ideas in this one, so I felt free to be a little bit lighter," Morgan explained. The episode opens on a weekend with Mulder up in Massachusetts, hanging about UFO hot spots, and Scully at home doing those mundane things everyone does during the weekend. The X-File arrives when Mulder is pulled in by local law enforcement to help solve the mystery behind some strange deaths caused, according to witnesses, by swarms of roaches. Mulder traces the roaches—which he believes, naturally, to be robotic alien probes—to a factory that produces methane from dung.

The episode worked, Morgan feels, but it's another script with which he is unhappy, although he can't put his finger on what bothers him. "I don't know!" he laughed. "I had less time to do that script than any other one. I wrote it in a week. I was a couple of days late with the last act, the only time I was ever late with a script. Fortunately [director] Kim Manners really liked it a lot, even with just the first three acts, so no one was mad at me."

Morgan conceived the idea of alien robot insects from his research into robotics and artificial intelligence. "Everyone assumes that if there are extraterrestrials visiting us, that they would look like gray aliens," he said. "There is this idea that our own future in space exploration is going to be robotic. It would make sense that other alien forms, if they do visit us, would also be robotic. There is a roboticist at M.I.T., Rodney Brooks, who has devised robots in the forms of giant bugs a foot long. They operated much better than other robots, because he had decided that instead of trying to duplicate the way the human brain works, he would make his robots' brains work the way an insect brain works, purely on reflex. The other idea in the episode was how we think our brains are so complicated, the highest level of evolution, and yet so many of our actions and beliefs and thoughts are dictated solely by reflex responses, much like a cockroach's. That was the idea behind the mass hysteria: that people don't think about what's happening. They just hear something and react, and scurry around like insects"

The big "scurry around" scene in "The War of the Coprophages" was a hilariously slapstick mini-riot staged in a convenience store where the indefatigable Scully has stopped to buy a road map. Morgan's source for this scene was the famous 1938 radio adaptation by Orson Welles of H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds* (the X-FILES episode is set in Millers' Grove, Massachusetts, a tribute to the radio show's Grover's Mills, N.J.), which Morgan considers a fascinating case of mass hysteria. "Nothing like that has ever happened in my lifetime. *War of the Worlds* is an example of people reacting by reflexes rather by complex thoughts. I always wonder what I would have done—you always like to think of yourself as being clearheaded. There are so many inconsistencies in the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast that if you actu-

Scully (Anderson) is unimpressed by the Stupendous Yappi (Jaap Broeker, Duchovny's stand-in) in "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose."



ally listen to it, it doesn't make any sense. But I'm sure at the time and the moment, I would have been as terrified as anyone."

Mulder and Scully prove to be immune from the panic gripping the town, but they have their own unique ways of reacting. "Although Mulder never reacts to the hysteria, he has his own mindset, so whenever he hears killer cockroaches, he goes, 'Oh my God!' without thinking," Morgan said. "Scully keeps telling him, 'Oh no, it's probably this other thing.' She's always right. But because Mulder has his own way of perceiving things, he keeps trying to convince himself that he's on to something bigger."

Another memorable character makes her appearance halfway through the episode, Bambi Berenbaum (Bobbie Phillips), possibly the most luscious entomologist on the face of the earth. "I thought it would be it amusing if Mulder found another woman partner," Morgan explained. "All of sudden Scully starts going, 'No, this isn't just cockroaches! This is something big! I'm coming up there!' I thought it was amusing, that she would abandon some of her beliefs in order not to lose Mulder to another woman. We received some letters from people who were displeased that Mulder could find Bambi attractive. On the other hand, she is a very intelligent woman, so I don't see why people got mad at that, but just the idea of Mulder having an interest in someone other than Scully put people into shock. You kind of forget Mulder is a man, because he's so interested in the paranormal. But he's a man, nevertheless, and I thought it would be interesting to have him be attracted to a woman."

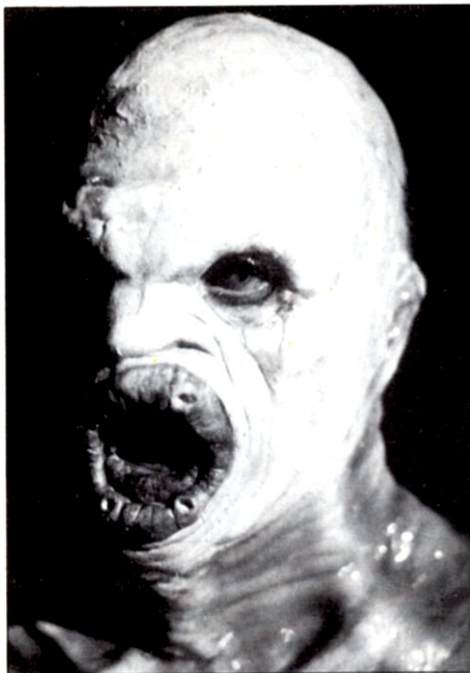
Morgan's final verdict on "The War of Coprophages" is resigned: "It's never boring. It moves really fast. And there's a certain achievement in centering an episode around cockroaches and dung."

Morgan's last effort for THE X-FILES was "José Chung's 'From Outer Space,'" an episode rooted in the show's most basic premises, going all the way back to the pilot and "Deep Throat": the government and the military are covering up proof of alien existence and while they're at it, they're deleting and altering your memories of whatever you think you witnessed. It's also the show's most baroque, flamboyant hour, as Scully relates to a cheerfully cynical writer named José Chung the events of a most unusual alien abduction case involving—possibly—the government abduction and hypnotizing of innocent citizens.

When Morgan joined the X-FILES, he knew very little about alien abduction or UFO lore, so he bought some books on the subject. "There was actually a lot more information about typical alien abduction in 'José Chung' than there has been in most X-FILES," Morgan commented. "Usually the episodes that deal with abductions are about the Cigarette Smoking Man and the conspiracy. That has nothing to do with

“I was aware I was doing things differently, but I also wanted to make sure I was doing all the things the show would normally do.”

—Writer Darin Morgan—



Darin Morgan made his X-FILES debut last season as an actor, playing the Flukeman in "The Host."

standard abduction stories. I thought there's so much more out there about extraterrestrials, and these things should be mentioned. Even Roky, the character who goes to inner earth, is another aspect of that, because UFO people think there are inner earth people. And the published accounts of Men in Black are actually more ridiculous than what I had in the episode."

Director Rob Bowman had to read the script 15 times before he understood it, Morgan said, grateful that the director gave it the extra attention. Although Morgan was interested in exploring the nature of reality in "José Chung," the convoluted narrative design is also his strategy to maneuver around the problems he has with plotting. "There's always a practical reason behind the deeper thoughts," he observed. "It's often a search to find a way to ease out of having to explain your plot. The coincidences in 'Clyde Bruckman' and the weird things about aliens and government involvement in 'José Chung' had to do with my needing an out. That out was the hypnosis angle. I felt like I could do anything. Unlike saying it's all a dream, I could always go, 'It's all just memory implanta-

tion.' Even though the episode is all about aliens and the government conspiracy, it actually has more to do with hypnosis and how much we can actually know and remember. I always thought it was more interesting to have some of your memories changed than to have them completely wiped out, so this show was more along those lines. 'They' have the ability to change what you remember. To me, that's more terrifying than being abducted by aliens. It's kind of confusing to talk about, I know, but all this stuff was invented to avoid a specific plot. In terms of the multiple storytelling, I wanted to do something like RASHOMON, where everyone had a different memory. I originally wanted to do it with José Chung interviewing a different person for each act. That still happens in the third act, when Chung talks to Blaine. But it was too complicated, so I stuck with Scully. But I find it appealing to use 'tales within tales,' where someone is telling a story and then a person in that story starts telling another story. The whole episode is really that, because even when Scully is telling her story, she's actually telling everyone else's account."

Lord Kinbote, the hulking red creature who abducts Chrissy, Harold, and the two Air Force pilots, is a double tribute to stop-animation genius Ray Harryhausen and to Morgan's favorite writer, Vladimir Nabokov. "We didn't have the time or money to do a proper stop-action model," lamented Morgan. "Toby Lindala [special effects makeup supervisor] built a suit. The scene was shot, speeded up and then slowed down by computer to give it a jerkiness. Mat Beck [visual effects supervisor] had to do a lot of work on it. I hope it looked like stop-animation." The name Kinbote is taken from Charles Kinbote, the possibly mad scholar of Nabokov's novel *Pale Fire*. "In one of his interviews, Nabokov made the point that reality is a word that should always have quotes around it, because everyone's reality in a sense is different," Morgan said. "People will look differently at the same object, depending on their backgrounds and past history. That was a direct influence on this episode."

Morgan could not resist adding his own satire of Fox's alien autopsy show, the X-FILES' second re-creation of the program this season. "We were all watching the alien autopsy tape one day, and it was so ridiculous," Morgan recalled. "The Big-foot footage at the end of 'José Chung' is just so damn phony, but you have no idea how much it costs to get the rights to that thing. You think about how much money has been made on that footage, and it's a crime! And I feel the same way about the alien autopsy: it's a swindle, and it's almost disturbing to see how many people take it seriously." Morgan expressed his sentiments by having his alien autopsy

continued on page 62

X-FILES

THE CIGARETTE SMOKING MAN

It's been an interesting year, says actor William Davis.

It's been quite an interesting year for the Cigarette Smoking Man, admits his real-life counterpart, actor William B. Davis. First glimpsed in the series pilot as a shadowy cigarette-puffing figure who, in the final scene, hid away the only remaining evidence of alien visitation gathered by Mulder and Scully, he has developed into a complex character with ties to the Mulder family that reach back four decades. With the present-day unfolding of the conspiracy to an international level, the Smoking Man is no longer the remote figure he used to be. Now he reports to a New York-based syndicate comprised of men from all over the world, possibly attached to the United Nations.

Davis confessed that he was surprised to find out the Smoking Man had to answer to others. "In the early days when I had much less information, I was conjecturing all sorts of close relationships with the President or whatever," he said with a laugh. But when he read the script, "I wasn't too impressed with the authority they seem to have over me. I think the first episode I had with them, I gave into them a bit, so I stood up to them a little more [in 'Apocrypha']. I don't know what's in Chris Carter's mind, whether [working for the syndicate] is my main function or whether I'm a double agent in that I do whatever it is for the U.S. government as well. But I'm having fun playing with it."

Davis has no trouble playing a character whose intentions he can't always fathom, adjusting with each new piece of the puzzle. "Every once in a while I get a script, and I go, 'Oh!' and then I have to shift my story. For instance, prior to the first episode with the syndicate, I was quite confident that I was saving the world from impetuous young people like Mulder, who were out to discover some things that are going to scare the pants off everybody and cause chaos. So I had a very definite role to play." When the Smoking Man found himself in trouble with the Syndicate at the beginning of the third season because of a missing DAT tape, Davis, who had always felt that his character considered himself something of a hero, had to figure out a way to justify his self-serving moves. "It wasn't quite so morally upstanding as 'saving the world.' What seems to me to have happened is that Bill Mulder and I, at an early age, took different forks in the road. We



Mulder confronts the Cigarette Smoking Man (William Davis) in "Talitha Cumi."

either go with this, as I did, or go as Bill Mulder did. He kept resisting it, wanting to find some human value—and he ended up drinking himself practically to death until we had to finish it off. But I keep adapting to new information and building it up. When I go to the X-FILES conventions I sometimes make the case that I'm the real hero of the show and Mulder is the villain. It's going to be hard to sell that case to the fans now!"

Davis had never met John Neville (THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN), the eminent theater actor and director, cast as the Syndicate's figure of authority, the "Well-Manicured Man." He had been aware of Neville's work since the early 1960s, when Davis was in England and Neville was running the Nottingham Repertory Theater. It was fascinating to meet Neville, who, in turn, had known of Davis' work. "I've really enjoyed making a personal contact and talking about lots of things that we're both interested in, in terms of Shakespearean production and British theater," Davis explained. "John is great to work with. He's a very powerful actor; he makes me work. Because he's as strong as he is, the Smoking Man's vulnerability has to be covered up."

When Davis read the script that introduced the Well-Manicured Man, his first reaction was, "I thought I was well-manicured! So how is he differentiated from me? But once I saw John Neville doing it, then you could see the differentiation very clearly, because he's quite a different presence than I am." Davis is sure the Smoking Man would like to see the Well-Manicured Man disappear permanently, noting that the Well-Manicured Man has arranged his own

meetings with Mulder and Scully. "Within this sphere the Well-Manicured Man has a level of authority," he said. "I'm not quite sure why he has it, but he has it. But at the same time he seems to be rebelling against us, bit by bit, drop by drop. I think he's probably dangerous. We may have to finish him off!" he said with a laugh. "I'm having a lot of trouble getting good help, as you may have noticed. I mean, I hired this Hispanic Man, Luis Cardenal [played by Lenny Britos], because he's known for his marksmanship, right? But he has Skinner at point-blank range and he can't knock him off either!"

The Smoking Man's attempt to have Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) assassinated in "Piper Maru" was one of several efforts this year to derail the FBI assistant director. "Skinner's getting dangerously liberal. He used to be a little more on my side of the fence, I thought; now he's slipping across. The Smoking Man doesn't react well. It's dangerous to all the people of this country." Davis's favorite "Paper Clip" scene occurs when the Smoking Man furiously demands the DAT tape and Skinner says he "may" have located it. "It was a very well-written scene," Davis said, noting that he has added it to his demo reel. "I had a lot of shifts. It wasn't just bang-bang-bang, but involved some tactics."

The teaser to "Apocrypha," a fascinating flashback to 1953 and the events that triggered Mulder's and Scully's current-day investigations, showed the youthful Smoking Man, Bill Mulder and an unknown third man questioning the last living victim of a submarine disaster. By the end, the Smoking Man had set to rights everything in his part of the world; he had recovered the missing tape and imprisoned the treacherous Krycek alive in an abandoned missile silo. The Smoking Man promptly disappeared once more for several months, until he resurfaced in "Avatar" and "Talitha Cumi."

It's hard even for the actors not to get caught up in the show, and Davis confessed that he tries not to miss an episode. "I watch it because I like it, but I also watch it because my character's a lot more active than one might think. There's a lot of things that happen on those episodes that I did! I may not be in the episode, and I don't get any credit or money, but somebody destroyed that evidence, or did something or moved something, or had something done, or sent some people in, and it's usually me! I like to keep track of these things." **Paula Vitaris**

“One way the show has distinguished itself is with our wide palette. We have a big range, so the audience doesn’t know what it’s going to get.”

—Co-producer Howard Gordon—

can’t have them dealing with these complex emotional issues as a thread each week. In fact, I think people would hate the show if it were like that.”

This has been an important season for the development of Scully. No longer just the junior agent assigned to babysit/spy on “Spooky” Mulder, she has become an essential character in her own right. With her abduction and the death of her sister, she now has a personal stake in uncovering the various conspiracies engineered by the Cigarette Smoking Man and his cohorts. But Scully has also had a major role to play in non-mythology episodes, especially “Revelations,” which brought Scully to an emotional turning point and provided a showcase for actress Gillian Anderson. Late in the season came “Wetwired,” which thrust Scully onto the brink of a breakdown, thanks to some insidious tampering with television signals. “I’ve always seen Scully as Mulder’s co-equal,” Carter said. “What happens is that, because in the real world the FBI is 91% male, Scully has to constantly be showing this boy’s club that she is, in fact, up to the task. I think it’s interesting that she doesn’t take a back seat, and people would take issue with it if she were to let Mulder do all of that kind of posturing. It’s interesting to me to play her that way, and Gillian plays it very well.”

One element about which Carter is adamant is that there will be no romance between Mulder and Scully. But what he viewed as the third season continuation of their working relationship and friendship, some fans viewed as coldness, even the beginning of a professional split. Carter said he had no idea why the audience would perceive such a development. In “Paper Clip,” Mulder and Scully “were very close,” said Carter. “That episode reunited them in a way, in a common bond. The two-part episode, ‘Nisei’ and ‘731,’ brought them together towards a common goal. I think what some people want is an escalation of their relationship. I’m not prepared to do that right now, but I don’t think I’m giving them any less. Their case may be that there hasn’t been a scene, like in ‘Tooms’ where they sit in the car together and have a moment where they smile and are light, but that’s just because of the kind of stories we’ve told.”

X-FILES

THE LIST

Creator Chris Carter on his second session time in the director’s chair.

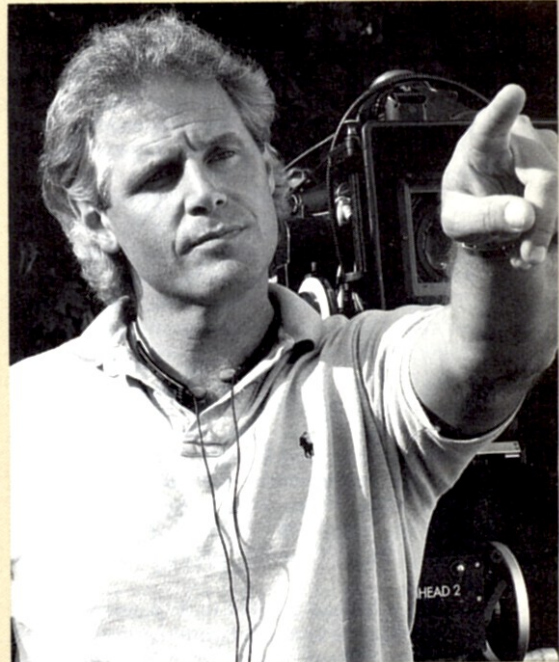
Duane Barry,” one of the best episodes of THE X-FILES’ second season, was the directing debut of creator and executive producer, Chris Carter, who felt the time had come to try to translate the images in his head directly to the screen without having to sift them through a second person’s vision. Happy with the result, Carter decided to direct again in the third season with “The List.”

Set in and around a Florida penitentiary, “The List” is, according to Carter, a “nice little tale of revenge with a nice twisty end,” about the spirit of an executed prisoner, Neech Manley (Badja Djola) who returns from beyond the grave to wreak havoc on the people who had harmed him in life. The script’s origin lay in a book Carter had been reading on the subject of death row; he was intrigued to find that a belief in reincarnation is popular with the inmates. “We put people to death, but we keep them imprisoned for a long time,” Carter said. “They are subjected to other punishments, maybe some worse than death—indignities and cruelties and torture—and I think that if a person’s punishment is ultimately death, if he were to get some revenge for the other things that had happened to him, it would be an interesting story. That was my original idea, and I thought death row was an interesting place to set it.”

Carter admitted that another reason to set “The List” in a prison was due to his status as a second-time director. “I’ve never shot a giant location, and I’ve never shot a big dinner table scene. There are things that are frightening to me as a director. In episodic television you have very little time to get a whole lot of work done, and I didn’t want to put myself out on a limb with something like ‘Paper Clip.’ I’m so glad Rob Bowman did that episode and not me. ‘The List’ seemed more like a contained episode.”

Although many of the death row inmates (as well as a number of guards), were cast with African-American actors, Carter was not attempting to make a statement about unequal sentencing in the U.S. justice system. “I didn’t want to deal with the issue of black justice versus white justice. It was uninteresting to me, ultimately, because it’s kind of obvious in this country.”

“The List” is one of the season’s most graphic episodes. Neech’s spirit presence is signaled by swarms of maggots; a prison guard is decapitated, and there is a brief, out of focus shot of his bloody, headless neck. “Maggots are a part of life; everybody’s seen them,” Carter commented. “Everybody has this big reaction to the grossness



After his impressive directorial debut with “Duane Barry,” Chris Carter returned to the director’s chair with less impressive results in “The List.”

of the maggots, as if we had maggots going into people’s eyeballs or something.” He went “back and forth” with the network on all the episode’s visual aspects before shooting. “I told them what I wanted, and they told me what they didn’t want. I wanted to put the head in the paint can; I wanted to do the headless man; I wanted to do the guy rotting in the attic. To be honest, I like to show very little. The things I do show, I like to show for just an instant, or I want to show them in an obscure angle or in a blurry shot, or pass right by them. What you think you saw, or what you glimpsed, or what you didn’t see is scarier than what you put right in front of people.

“I wanted the episode to feel claustrophobic,” added Carter, who used sound to accentuate the atmosphere of confinement and suffocation. “I had them put in almost an underwater rumble. I wanted almost a submarine quality.”

That submarine quality is also reflected in the strange green cast of the lighting. “I wanted to do a green episode,” he noted. “We don’t use green normally. A lot of directors always shoot prisons blue. Blue is not a queasy color. It makes prisons beautiful, in a way. And I didn’t want to make this beautiful at all. I wanted to make it a little nauseating.” **Paula Vitaris**

X-FILES

D.P.O.

Co-executive producer Gordon on scripting his underrated effort.

What's harder than writing THE X-FILES' intricately plotted mythology episodes? Writing the episode that comes afterward. It's nearly impossible to top the electrifying events from the week before

That was the situation faced by co-executive producer Howard Gordon when he was asked to write the episode following the powerhouse trilogy of "Anasazi," "The Blessing Way," and "Paper Clip." Gordon's story, "D.P.O.," focused on an Oklahoma teenager with the power to control lightning. To fans still not decompressed from the three-parter, "D.P.O." was something of an anti-climax. But if you consider "D.P.O." strictly as a stand-alone story, it turns out to be an affecting X-FILES episode with fine performances and a dark comic energy all its own stemming from the unrequited loves and hopeless longings of clueless teen Darren Peter Oswald, played by Giovanni Ribisi.

The staff had wanted to do a story about a kid who could conduct lightning or electricity, but uncertainty about how to handle the premise delayed turning it into a script. Gordon explained the writers wanted to avoid the image the term "Lightning Boy" kindled "of a guy with lightning bolts coming out of his fingertips. I finally figured it out. My take had lightning as a metaphor for adolescent hormones. The lightning represented that unbridled part of all of us. Darren could control it—but not really. He could harness it and tap into it, and occasionally redirect it. But even it overwhelmed him in the end." To this basic premise, Gordon added the background of a town where lightning struck frequently, thanks to the research conducted by the nearby Astadourian Lightning Observatory (named after THE X-FILES' chief researcher Mary Astadourian). Gordon said he liked the idea that in a town where lightning struck so often, there "existed a boy who is basically Beavis or Butthead, but with this ability. And that was the genesis of the idea."

If you have Beavis, you must have Butthead—or, in this case, Darren's slightly more self-aware friend Zero, played by Jack Black (DEAD MAN WALKING). Darren and Zero, said Gordon, were "two complete losers who just didn't know any better, with one of them suddenly bestowed with this ability. What would happen?" This question inspired Gordon to give Darren an obsessive, secret infatuation with his remedial reading teacher, Mrs. Kiveat.



Howard Gordon's duties as co-exec producer left little time for writing this season, but he did deliver "D.P.O.," an underrated stand-alone episode.

"I thought, well, maybe he's got a crush on his teacher at school," said Gordon. "One thing led to the next. It's a very thin story when you look at it. It's just this pining adolescent."

Teenagers, not surprisingly, took Gordon's message to heart. The mail he received in response to "D.P.O." let him know that "most of the people who loved this episode or really dug it were kids. It's one of the favorites of that segment of our audience. There were other people who felt let-down by it and disinterested by it, but I got a lot of letters from teachers who said, 'I have students like that.' I was pretty proud of the fact that there was some kind of accuracy in the character."

Despite the focus on the guest characters, Mulder and Scully are not exactly invisible in "D.P.O." One notable scene involved Scully's questioning of an openly hostile sheriff, while Mulder silently stands by. His refusal to get involved was deliberate, according to Gordon. "The idea was a way to describe Scully's progress as a skeptic, to put her in that position. It was one way of re-examining where she's been and to actually have, for a change, someone in the form of the sheriff verbalize and vocalize some of the arguments she probably would have put forth a year and a half, two years ago. How would she answer herself in this context?"

Paula Vitaris

"I just try to come up with good stories and make the best show I possibly can. So far, I'm very proud of the work that's been done."

—Producer Chris Carter—

As the fourth season approaches, THE X-FILES stands at a crossroads. Jeff Vlaming, Kim Newton, and Darin Morgan have left. Director of photography John Bartley, whose contribution to the show's visual style has been invaluable, has departed. Replacing him is Ron Stannet, whose credits include LONESOME DOVE, for which he won a Canadian Society of Cinematographer's award. And Chris Carter will now be dividing his time between THE X-FILES and MILLENNIUM. The pilot episode was shot this past spring, resulting in Carter's protracted absence from THE X-FILES. How Carter the perfectionist will maintain quality control on two shows, given the schedule of THE X-FILES alone, remains to be seen, but perhaps changes will not be obvious, especially with the return of Glen Morgan and James Wong to the staff after the cancellation of their SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND. Morgan and Wong are slated to work on five to eight episodes and contribute episodes to MILLENNIUM.

The other critical change is a new time slot. Fox will be moving THE X-FILES from Friday at 9:00 p.m. to Sunday at 9:00 p.m. after its first three episodes next season which debuts October. (After that MILLENNIUM will slip into the Friday timeslot.) THE X-FILES has become "appointment TV," but it has probably acquired as big an audience as it ever will draw on Friday, the least-watched night of the week. Sunday is the night with the most viewers and Fox is gambling that X-FILES will not only bring an established audience but also attract new people who might never have watched, otherwise.

But will that established X-FILES audience change its regular Friday night date after three years? There are a number of factors that may disrupt Fox's plan, including the network's own lackluster Sunday lead-in schedule. And there is the show's own convoluted internal mythology. A new viewer tuning in on Sunday won't know what is happening without at least a helpful rerun of "More Secrets of the X-Files," the series recap that Fox aired last May. The perfect solution, of course, would be for Fox to gain access to the 10:00 p.m. time slot from the FCC and schedule MILLENNIUM right after THE X-FILES. Now that would be a perfect Freaky Friday double bill. □

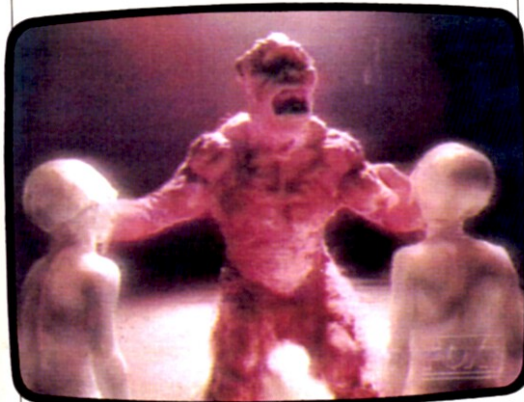
"What good is an interpreter when everyone speaks the language of silence?"
—Detective Glen Chao

HELL MONEY

3/29/96. Written by Jeff Vlaming. Directed by Tucker Gates. ★★

Newly arrived immigrants in San Francisco's Chinese community play a deadly game: they gamble body parts, corneas and kidneys and even hearts, against a chance to win an enormous lottery prize. Mulder and Scully come into the case when a young man is found cremated, a murder that fit the profile of a serial murder case Mulder has been tracking. They team up with Detective Glen Chao (B.D. Wong), a young American detective of Chinese ancestry. Autopsy results, clues, and witness statements lead them, eventually, to Dr. Chin (James Hong), the recipient of the black market organs. An arrogant chain-smoker, he's a Chinese version of the Cigarette Smoking Man.

The story, about the exploitation of the weak by the strong, is a recurring X-FILES theme, but as treated here it would fit nicely into any other police drama. Mulder's initial speculation that Chinese ghosts are to blame is feeble, and even he abandons this theory by mid-episode. The ghost theme then mutates into a symbolic mode, with the notion that the immigrants are haunted by the ghosts of their ancestors, but it's a desperate grab to retain a paranormal aspect. The three actors in the black suits and ghost masks are not very convincing.



The alien Lord Kinbote in "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space,'" writer Darin Morgan's tribute to Ray Harryhausen and Vladimir Nabokov.

The pacing, with much repetition of nearly identical scenes, is glacial. There are nice performances from Michael Yama as a father desperate for money to cure his daughter's leukemia, and from Lucy Alexis Liu as the gentle daughter. And it's wonderful to see a performer of the caliber of Tony-winner B.D. Wong on THE X-FILES. Although not deeply developed in the script, his youthful but jaded detective, caught between two cultures, is altogether appealing.

Despite the failings of the script, the visuals, with their vibrant red tones, are a pleasure, and the lottery scenes are well staged. Best of all, Scully makes such a horribly, wonderfully corny joke about the victim who left his heart in San Francisco that even the dour Mulder cracks a grin.

"Ever see a UFO in these parts? Ever experienced a period of missing time? You ever have the suspicion that you've been abducted by aliens? Have you ever found a metal implant in your body? You checked everywhere?"
—Mulder to Ovaltine Diner cook

JOSE CHUNG'S "FROM OUTER SPACE"

4/12/96. Written by Darin Morgan. Directed by Rob Bowman. ★★★★★

José Chung (Charles Nelson Reilly) is a writer whose publisher thinks there are big bucks to be



The plot of "Hell Money" is about a lottery in which Chinese immigrants gamble their organs in exchange for a chance of a huge cash prize.

made off the UFO abduction phenomenon. The puzzling abduction case of Chrissy Georgio and Harold Lamb, teenagers from Klass County, Washington, proves a suitable subject, and included on Chung's interview list are the two FBI agents who investigated the case. Mulder, fearing ridicule, refuses, but Scully accepts, and as she tells the tale, we are treated to a dazzling display of unreliable narrative piled upon unreliable narrative—flashbacks of flashbacks. To make matters worse, each person not only has an agenda to promote, which may color his or her testimony, but they all—including Scully and Mulder—may have been hypnotized into believing something else happened to them than what really happened. Which means, of course, that it is completely impossible to arrive at any consensus as to the truth.

Even so, the script is so deftly written that each scene, contradictory though it may be to what came before, advances the plot. The baseline story seems to be that the Air Force costumes its pilots to look like alien Grays, sends them out in experimental aircraft to render citizens unconscious and bring them to a secret facility, where they are hypnotized into believing they've been abducted by aliens. The tables are turned on two of the pilots, in the process of kidnapping Chrissy and Harold, when a creature right out of a Ray Harryhausen movie kidnaps them, along with Chrissy and Harold, and brings them all back to his ship for experimentation. Also on Chung's interview list are science fiction fan Blaine, who lives in the hope of being abducted, and Roky, the lineman (CLOSE ENCOUNTERS reference) who witnessed the abduction and has written up his account in screenplay format. And then there are two mysterious Men in Black...

This is a very funny episode—self-referential and in-jokey, loaded with verbal and visual allusions to UFO and popular culture, especially sci-fi and horror films, although there are other more obscure references: Harold Lamb is the name of the character played by Harold Lloyd in the silent comedy THE FRESHMAN. But this is also the ultimate expression of Morgan's—and THE X-FILES'—continuing fascination with the nature of truth, and the truth of one's memories. In a way, this episode is a sequel to first season's "Deep Throat," which saw Mulder captured by the Air Force and drugged into losing the memory of the experimental aircraft he witnessed. For all its humor, "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'" is a deeply pessimistic episode. If you can't trust yourself, and you can't trust others, how can you form any kind of relationship? No wonder Chung's final thoughts concern human loneliness, rather than a pronouncement on truth and reality.

Director Rob Bowman shows off a deft hand at directing comedy. Duchovny and Anderson are simply priceless at sending themselves up, but even in the midst of insanity they bring poignancy to their characters. And Charles Nelson Reilly is divine; what delightful and unexpected casting.

"I was no choir boy. I inhaled." —Skinner

AVATAR

4/26/96. Teleplay by Howard Gordon. Story by David Duchovny & Howard Gordon. Directed by James Charleston. ★★

Nearly two years after his first appearance in "Tooms," Mitch Pileggi's Assistant Director Walter Skinner takes center stage. Unfortunately, it's a creaky vehicle—the stern, by-the-book boss accused of a terrible crime. Skinner, on the verge of an unwanted divorce, finds solace in the arms of a woman he meets in a bar. He wakes the next morning to find her murdered. Of course, the D.C. police consider him the prime suspect, and the FBI internal affairs people start poking around for a reason to get rid of him. But Mulder is convinced that Skinner has been framed, and works tirelessly to clear him. A more dubious Scully, wondering why the normally forceful Skinner doesn't defend himself, also searches for proof of his innocence. Add in Skinner's estranged wife Sharon (Jennifer Hetrick), Skinner's sleep disorders, the old woman who haunts him since his near-death experience in Vietnam, and the return of the conspiracy, in the form of the Cigarette Smoking Man and the Gray-Faced Man from "Piper Maru"—and you get a top-heavy story. All the elements come together, more or less, but you can see the stitching.

The scenes between Skinner and Sharon are contrived. His bedside confession, where many words say nothing we haven't already gathered, is simply poor writing. Skinner's decision to embrace all his fears, personified in the merged figure of the Old Woman and his critically-injured wife, should be affecting since it finally releases him from his mental paralysis. But his decision is also used as a plot device to get him to the hotel, and the action moves so quickly that it rips all the emotion from the scene. The timing of his movements is off, too. How does he get from the hospital to the hotel room and shoot the bad guy before Mulder, who's in the lobby, reaches the same spot?

Jennifer Hetrick gives a thoughtful performance as Sharon, and Pileggi does his best, but there's little chemistry between them. The shot revealing the Cigarette Smoking Man is too obvious, but a similar one when the camera shifts focus to reveal the Gray-Faced Man spying on Mulder, Scully and Judy Fairly (Stacy Grant) is a true bone-chiller. Bringing back the Gray-Faced Man is a wonderfully unexpected twist.

"Avatar" seems to be the battle for Skinner's soul between good, as personified by female characters, and bad, personified by male characters (except for Mulder, who embodies many qualities traditionally regarded as feminine). Skinner, in the end, chooses to remain somewhere in the middle. Perhaps it's no coincidence, then, that the person whose woe strikes deepest is Mulder, who begs for Skinner to confide in him, but is rebuffed with a cool thank-you. Duchovny is truly moving in this scene.

"Avatar" expanded the character of assistant director Skinner (Mitch Pileggi), but the poorly written episode proved to be unsatisfactory.





The lake monster makes its jokey last-shot appearance in "Quagmire," after Mulder and Scully have given up and left the scene.

"We eat fish and fish eat us."

—Scully

QUAGMIRE

★★★

5/10/96. Written by Kim Newton. Directed by Kim Manners.

Part JAWS, part THE LOST WORLD, and part Buster Keaton, "Quagmire" finally brings a Loch Ness monster story to THE X-FILES. Mulder drags Scully and her little dog Queequeg to investigate sightings in north Georgia of the lake leviathan "Big Blue." Dr. Farraday, a die-hard skeptic, scoffs at the story, but when bodies (or in one case, half a body) start floating to the surface, it becomes apparent that something is turning the local population into lunch meat.

"Quagmire" is a fairly simple story. What makes it memorable is the sheer swampiness of the location (aided by John Bartley's misty blue cinematography); Anderson's perfectly played bereavement over the serio-comic loss of poor little Queequeg to the jaws of whatever is out there; and a colorful cast of characters, including two brain-dead teens from "The War of the Coprophages" still in search of a great high. But it's in the third act that "Quagmire" becomes truly special, when Mulder and Scully are forced to abandon ship and take refuge on a big rock in the middle of a pitch-black night. The stranded Mulder and Scully, unable to get away from each other, finally have that heart-to-heart they've so carefully eluded for three years. Touching, insightful, imaginative, funny, and beautifully acted, it's a major piece of character writing, with Scully analyzing Mulder's Ahab-like tendencies and Mulder resisting her interpretation. This is a unique scene, one of the best of the entire series. Then, in a variation on a gag from Keaton's wonderful 1921 short "The Boat," they realize, when Dr. Farraday comes wading by, that all this time they've been just a few feet from shore.

There is one major misstep: the final shot of Big Blue slipping through the lake waters, after Mulder and Scully have walked away. This shot destroys the story's ambiguity. A large ripple in the water would have been much more clever.

MORE SECRETS OF THE X-FILES

5/10/96. Produced by Bart Montgomery. Narrated by Mitch Pileggi.

No secrets here (but then, the fact that the title misleads us is rather X-FILES-ish). MORE SECRETS OF THE X-FILES is a follow-up to last year's SECRETS OF THE X-FILES. Despite brief appearances by Chris Carter, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, and narration by Mitch Pileggi, this is basically a Fox edit job recapping the series' complex conspiracy storyline through the use of episode clips. The charitable interpretation is that the network wants to help new fans catch up. Of course, it doesn't hurt to have a program with the name X-FILES airing during May sweeps.

"Bet all you guys were officers in the audio-visual club in high school, huh?"
—Mulder to the Lone Gunmen

WETWIRED

★★★

5/10/96. Written by Mat Beck. Directed by Rob Bowman.

Reminiscent of second season's "Blood," "Wetwired" is another chapter in the conspiracy story, laced with heavy doses of angst and paranoia for Mulder and Scully. When several people with heavy television viewing habits kill friends and loved ones for no explainable reason, Mulder and Scully suspect the influence of a signal coming through the cable wire, especially after Mulder finds a strange device in the switch box near the home of one of the accused. They review the dozens of tapes made by the murderers, and soon Scully falls victim to an imperceptible signal that causes people's most secret fears to flare up into paranoia and delusions. Scully's fear is betrayal by Mulder into the hands of the conspiracy, and before long, she shoots at him and takes off into the night.

Though the evil television concept may not be too original, it gives Mulder and Scully a chance to debate the merits of the medium broadcasting them to millions of homes. The concept also serve as a catalyst for characterization. It's certainly interesting to learn that Scully's biggest fear is betrayal by Mulder, and sickly fascinating to watch her fall apart. Anderson is superb, especially in the scene when Mulder finds her at her mother's house and she nearly kills him before collapsing in tears.

The script loses steam when Scully's collapse, which logically should be the climax of the episode, takes place at the end of the third act. Act Four turns into Mulder's story, as he hunts down the men responsible for the sinister project. Gripping though it may be, it's anti-climatic, despite a tense confrontation between Mulder and X (Steven Williams). An astonishing twist right at the end injects just the needed dash of excitement. Duchovny is excellent, especially in the scene where Mulder has to identify a body he fears may be Scully's.

"You can smoke that? Or you want to smoke on this?"

—Mulder, pressing his gun in the Cigarette Smoking Man's face

TALITHA CUMI

★★★1/2

5/17/96. Teleplay by Chris Carter. Story by David Duchovny & Chris Carter. Directed by R.W. Goodwin.

"Talitha Cumi" is a sequel to last season's two-parter, "Colony" and "End Game." This time, two shapeshifters are on the scene. One is last season's Pilot (Brian Thompson), who is trying to find Jeremiah Smith (THE INVADERS' Roy Thinnes), a shapeshifter who has turned, we learn, against the colonization project. We first meet

Scully helps to uncover a secret about Mulder's past in "Talitha Cumi," putting herself back in danger with the government conspiracy.



Smith when he miraculously heals victims of an Arlington, Virginia, fast-food restaurant shooting. Mulder and Scully arrive and are puzzled by a detective's report that Smith somehow vanished without anyone seeing him leave. Mulder becomes desperate to find him when his mother, after a meeting with the Cigarette Smoking Man at the Mulder family's unused Rhode Island summer house, suffers a massive stroke.

Deliberately paced, "Talitha Cumi" is not as viscerally exciting as last season's finale, "Anasazi." The so-called cliffhanger, with Mulder, Scully, and Jeremiah Smith watching the approaching Pilot, is weak. The big action scene, a fight between Mulder and X, goes on too long. Yet "Talitha Cumi" is a most unusual and fascinating hour of television. Cerebral, cool, and dense, the real struggles are those of opposing wills, not opposing bodies. In the center ring are the Cigarette Smoking Man and his prisoner, Jeremiah Smith. Their debates on good and evil, adapted, as literary Internet fans have noted, from the "Grand Inquisitor" chapter of Dostoevsky's THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV, place further into the light the Cigarette Smoking Man's basic motivations, revealing how truly cynical and power-hungry he is. When Jeremiah shapeshifts into the figures of men the Cigarette Smoking Man has destroyed—Deep Throat and Bill Mulder—we grin in satisfaction as we see the first glimmers of fear on the Cigarette Smoking Man's smug face.



"Wetwired" featured a conspiracy involving television sets wired to send subliminal signals that cause viewers to commit murder.

These are not the only memorable scenes. The sequence in which Mulder weeps at his mother's bedside, then loses control and blindly attacks the unwaveringly arrogant Cigarette Smoking Man, is sublimely acted by both Duchovny and William B. Davis. Earlier, Mulder follows a clue from his mother, rooting through the summer house and all the things that represent a happier, vanished life. This emotional scene takes three minutes, and is all the stronger for containing no word of dialogue.

The scariest moment, however, comes in the meeting between Mrs. Mulder and the Cigarette Smoking Man, when his reminder that he was better at other things than her husband Bill suggests a past relationship between the two. Waiting to find out what really occurred between them long ago is a better cliffhanger than the upcoming stiletto fight.

Although this episode is not focused on Scully, her presence is vital, both as a supporter for Mulder and pursuer of clues. Rebecca Toolan, as Mrs. Mulder, finally gets a chance to shine, if briefly. And Roy Thinnes is simply wonderful as the saintly Jeremiah. But is he what he seems to be? Now that THE X-FILES has established the existence of aliens, the uncertainty derives from knowing they can assume any identity, any personality, to accomplish their mysterious goals. Trust no one.

X-FILES

NISEI & 731

Advancing the story of the alien-human experience.

By Paula Vitaris

"Nisei" and "731" form another "mythology" two-parter advancing the story of the government alien-human hybrid experiments begun in "The Erlenmeyer Flask." Like "Paper Clip," which made direct reference to Operation Paperclip, the post-World War II government scheme to bring Nazi scientists to the United States, "Nisei" and "731" draw from a sickening piece of recently uncovered history: the human experiments conducted by the notorious Japanese Army Unit 731 on prisoners during World War II.

These horrors are translated into X-FILES terms when a bootleg videotape of a strange autopsy leads Mulder and Scully to evidence of current experiments on humans under the supervision of the elusive Dr. Takeo Ishimaru (Robert Ito), a former member of Unit 731. This is the same man, Scully remembers, who supervised the experiments performed on her during her second season abduction. "Unit 731 first came to my attention at the same time as it did for a lot of other people, when I read in the New York Times about what the Japanese did to prisoners of war during the Second World War," Chris Carter said. "I've known

for a long time about the tests that the Nazis performed on Jews, and I've been to the Holocaust Museum and Yad Vashem [the Holocaust memorial] in Israel. I studied the Holocaust as a kid, and I had read some time back about the Nazi scientists coming here and getting clemency so we could use their science and technology for our own purposes. That's one of those dirty secrets that America has never come to grips with, and I thought Unit 731 was an interesting way to use it in the show."

"Nisei" and "731" first took shape as a single episode, number seven, assigned to story editor Frank Spotnitz. But Spotnitz' plan to set the story on a moving train soon put the episode into jeopardy. "We found that we were going to have some trouble shooting with trains," Carter said. "So I took said, 'Let's bump it to episode nine, and make it a two-parter.' That way we were able to cut the cost of the trains in half. This is my life and my job, and it may sound easy to people, but it's like juggling chainsaws, trying to keep all these things going forward. We found that shooting on trains is very difficult to do on a television schedule, as well as on a television budget."

"The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip" opened up what Carter called "questions



An alien is hustled out of a van by federal agents in "Nisei," first of a two-part conspiracy story, one of THE X-FILES' so-called "mythology" episodes.

and an area of interest" which could be further developed in "Nisei" and "731." "I thought that Mulder had made great strides, and Scully had seen things that she had not really talked about in those episodes," Carter said. "This two-parter was a chance to show that Scully had indeed talked about these things off-screen, to answer some of those questions, and to continue with the hybrid story. I felt that this was an interesting story, continuing with Cigarette Smoking Man, who had been censured by his cohorts. Here, he showed up again in a position of reclaimed power—still working away like a termite. We also reintroduced the character of X, for the first time this season. I'm particularly happy with the ending, where the last thing you expect is for the Red-Haired Man [an assassin played by Stephen McHattie] to bash Mulder over the head, get shot, and then have X pop in and save Mulder's life. It was a very ambiguous ending. You don't know what X has come for; he just walks out from that train, and he's got Mulder on his shoulder. I thought that was good movie-making."

Dr. Ishimaru remains a shadowy character. He is seen and heard only briefly, and when Mulder finally catches up with him, he is already dead at the hands of the Red-Haired Man. Ishimaru was "a less prominent character originally," Carter noted. "You have to learn by investigation what his depredations were. He himself was of less interest to us than what he had done."

One of the best scenes in "Nisei" is Scully's eerie encounter with a group of women who, like her, had been abducted and implanted with computer chips. Real-life support groups formed by people claiming to be abductees inspired the writers. "I thought it was interesting that Dana

continued on page 62

Continuing the government conspiracy to hide the truth, the military rounds up aliens in "731."



THE BLESSING WAY

continued from page 20

his name. When Mulder demands to know if his father had had chosen between the two of them, Mrs. Mulder blurts out that Bill had chosen Samantha to be abducted. The idea of the trade, Carter said, "was originally suggested by David Duchovny. It's character-altering. It's like finding out that your parents are not your parents. It's frightening to find that people you thought had always loved you and acted one way, ultimately act in another way. Everything upon which you built your foundation of belief has to be reassessed."

"Paper Clip" ends upon a scene of profound sadness, with Mulder, newly aware of secrets in his past, attempting to comfort a bereaved Scully, sitting before the empty hospital bed once occupied by her sister. Mulder's statement that their work is not about justice but fate, was a philosophy that Carter felt "was very Mulder-like. Some people took issue with that. They believe that we are all captains of our ship and we have free will. But Mulder believes in the idea that there is fate, and if character is fate, that there are some things out of our control." □

NISEI

continued from page 41

Scully would come upon these women who had experiences which mirrored what had happened to Scully," Carter said. Scully was "creeped out," he noted. "Imagine if people—perfect strangers—knew more about you than you knew and were telling you what you had experienced, something you were possibly trying to deny but couldn't, especially with all these women taking these little implants out of their purses. I thought [director] David Nutter did a great job with this scene."

At the end of "731," Scully observes bitterly that what the conspiracy "can't cover, they apologize for." Her conviction that "Apology is Policy" replaces the episode's usual "The Truth is Out There" in opening title sequence. This is only the fourth time Carter has made such a substitution, inspired by his indignation when he heard that the president had apologized for radiation experiments conducted by government doctors in the 1950s. "I don't want these to become bumper stickers," he said. "I don't do it just to turn a clever phrase. I do it only when I think it has some greater resonance. It's reprehensible the way that governments and nations will commit the most heinous acts and then years later just apologize for it, as if that makes up for it. We took what is in



"Published accounts of Men In Black are actually more ridiculous than what I had in the episode," said Darin Morgan of "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space.'" □

fact a very topical piece of news, this apology by the president, which is a real thing, and we had Scully extrapolating that this is what's going on, and they were using Mulder to float this story."

But even in a two-parter as deadly serious as "Nisei" and "731," there is room for humor. Mulder launches a few wisecracks, including David Duchovny's adlib, "Scully, let me tell you, you haven't seen America till you've seen it from a train." Best of all is Scully's sarcasm at the beginning of "Nisei," when Mulder shows her what he believes to be an alien autopsy video. The suspicious Scully snaps that it's even hokier than the Fox Network's alien autopsy video. "They let us do it," Carter said. "I expected a fight and I didn't get one. Turns out they have a better sense of humor than that." □

ACADEMIC X-FILES

continued from page 22

as an example of a person trying to "sort out her beliefs and professional life in an increasingly confusing world. She's trying to juggle personal belief in a religion and personal belief in the scientific world view while analyzing the occult, the supernatural, and the paranormal. She's like most of us, trying to sort information in a world surfeited with it. Mulder's also trying to find himself. He's intriguing because he's so open and yet so closed. Explanations don't seem to interest him, and it didn't seem all that surprising that he came off as the skeptic in 'Revelations.' The comparison of Mulder to Ahab in 'Quagmire' was a good one; one wonders if Scully is due to get upgraded to Ishmael from Starbuck."

THE X-FILES breaks through the limitations imposed by labels such as "horror" or "science fiction." Rochester states that THE X-FILES is "the best thing on television in its genre, and I'd say that

the genre is 'drama,' as opposed to science fiction. The only thing I can find to compare it to is THE PRISONER, which matches it for subtlety of scriptwriting. The fact is that attempts to duplicate THE X-FILES have bombed or been only marginally successful. People don't like it because they're obsessed with alien invasion or government conspiracy or paranormal phenomenon; they like it because it's good TV."

Take away all the jargon, however, and what it comes down to is that these scholars appreciate finding something on television that not only entertains them, but speaks to them as people who are as passionate about their literary investigations and analysis as Mulder and Scully are about their own work. "It's a show you have to watch carefully and faithfully, much like tackling Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* or Shakespeare's tragedies," Cartwright concluded. "They both take thought, dedication, and time, things that typical TV viewers—especially those of 'fluff' like sitcoms and news magazines—don't engage in. Most other television shows don't demand that of its viewers. THE X-FILES does, and for its efforts has tapped into the largest unused resource in the TV audience—the intelligent, questioning viewer."

Added Ph.D. folklorist Leslie Jones, "Claude Levi-Strauss said that myths are 'good to think with.' THE X-FILES is good to think with." □

DARIN MORGAN

continued from page 35

video hosted by the Stupendous Yappi, his fake psychic from "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose."

The episode ends on a poignant note, with José Chung wistfully reading from his book that "in our own separate ways, on this planet, we are all... alone." "It was quite touching," Morgan remarked. "It

felt right. I didn't want to end on a wacky note. The scene is humorous, but you also have certain points or feelings you like to express, and I guess the loneliness of human existence was one of the them. When Chung goes on about how some people don't care about extraterrestrials, that is, I guess, my own summation about working on the show. I want to write about people rather than about aliens."

"Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space'" is so confusing that one's initial reaction, besides laughter, is to rewind the VCR and watch it again—precisely the effect Morgan wanted. "I think it worked, for the most part, and even if people are confused—because it is confusing, and purposely so—I hope that they would recognize that for being part of it and enjoy it even more. I just want to get a reaction. I don't care if they learned anything or got anything out of it. I hope they thought it was funny and moving, and were entertained on whatever level they needed."

After the X-FILES's third season, Darin Morgan left the show, burned out by the relentless pace of writing for television. "I did only four episodes, but they took a lot out of me," he said. "There's still a chance I might come back and write another one, but right now I have certain things I would rather write, rather than a couple more Mulder and Scully stories. I want to do something that's more romantic-comedy, rather than those scary things." □

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