

Bye-Bye Mulder: THE X-FILES Episode Guide

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"Why do you keep watching the *THE X-FILES*?"

Age, these past few years, that's the question often lobbed by diehard X-FILES fans at the newly disaffected who complained about the show's surprisingly quick spiral

downwards into a black hole of incoherent plotting and characterization. The answer is simple: fans—or ex-fans—continue to watch because, for the first three seasons or so, *THE X-FILES* was so damn good. Stay-home-on-Friday-nights good. Emmy-nominated-even-though-it's-a-genre-show good. Capture-the-nation's-imagination good (you couldn't open a magazine or newspaper circa 1995 without finding an X-FILES reference). So good that, years past its prime, people still watch, if only to moan about how much better it used to be, and to see how the story of two FBI agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), would end.

*THE X-FILES*—created and produced by Chris Carter, whose credits previously had been in Disney TV-movies and sitcoms—started out as the Fox Network's second-favorite child, the net's executives assuming that *THE ADVENTURES OF BRISCO COUNTY, JR.*, an entertaining western/sf/fantasy/what-have-you hybrid starring cult fave Bruce Campbell—would be the break-out show for the fall of 1993. And at first, *THE X-FILES*'s ratings weren't anything to get excited about, although it kept winning the desirable young male audience demographic. But word-of-mouth began to bring in the viewers, and by the end of the season, *THE X-FILES* had turned into a hot property, even meriting a write-up in *The New Yorker*.

*THE X-FILES* had to be the most unlikely stew to appear on television in years. Its two heroes, Dana Scully, trained forensic pathologist and servant of justice, and Fox Mulder, expert profiler of serial killers,

hunter of all things paranormal and alien, and archetypal quester—specifically in search of a long-missing sister—spent their days in the FBI's X-Files division investigating unsolved cases. Mulder, who believed his sister had been abducted by aliens, found evidence of aliens, mutants, and government conspirators everywhere. Scully, the doctor, thought he was deluded and tried to keep him on the straight and narrow, while he tried to broaden her perceptions. They incarnated

the timeless debate between belief and skepticism, but they had a goal in common: the truth.

The show blended a broad range of familiar genres—horror, fantasy, science fiction, police procedural, medicine, conspiracy—and drew inspiration from, well, just about everything, including such acknowledged Carter inspirations as *THE NIGHT STALKER*, *THE AVENGERS*, *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*, not to

without, but within: our government; our parents; even ourselves. It was a vision that had been mined for several decades in films, television, and books, but had never been brought so forcefully before to the small screen.

Yet if *THE X-FILES* portrayed America at its worst, it also portrayed America at its best in its lead characters, Mulder and Scully, whose search for truth through a fog of deception and the barriers of their own preconceptions, gave the show a sense of hope. Mulder and Scully were anything but conventional television heroes. They seemed so real: deadpan; glum; stubborn; sometimes annoying (especially Mulder); occasionally

not easy to like. Mulder had a well-developed

sarcastic streak and used it often. They solved their investigations using their

brains, not their brawn. They weren't perfect. They made mistakes.

Mulder was the butt of jokes from other FBI agents who also thought Scully was nuts not to demand a transfer. He doubted himself and sometimes thought about giving up. They both got scared. They got angry. There was always the danger that Mulder would give up, or find himself trapped, like the show's primary villain, the (once-great) Cigarette Smoking Man, in a quest he didn't believe in—compelled to go on, because that quest was all that life allowed him.

By the end of the first season, Mulder and Scully had become a classic team, sparking off and inspiring each other, the chemistry (dubbed UST for "Unresolved Sexual Tension" by the fans) thick between them. The smallest gesture had significance. It was a partnership of equals, even if Mulder nominally headed up the two-person X-Files division and Scully never got her own desk or her name on the door.

Somehow, Carter and his first-season writers managed to stir all of this into something that seemed new and fresh and very real, as if these fantastical things could be happening in our very own lives. The dialogue was clever, the storylines engrossing, and the cinematography by Canadian John Bartley (the show was shot in Vancouver)

## The Age of Mulder and Scully Ends with the Ultimate Mystery: What Went Wrong?

mention Watergate, John Mack's book *Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens*, and the daily headlines, particularly those of the supermarket tabloids. Other precedents included classic quest myths and legends, Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories, film noir (you can draw a straight line from Humphrey Bogart and other noir detectives, who, like Mulder, cracked wise in uncertain and treacherous times), Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and a host of genre films and television like *BEYOND REALITY*, *PROBE*, the *QUATERMASS* movies, *WOLFEN*, *FIRE IN THE SKY*, *TWIN PEAKS*, and the Fox Network's own cheesy reality show, *SIGHTINGS*. And Mulder probably had a lifetime subscription to *THE FORTEAN TIMES*.

Carter and his first season writing staff (writing partners Glen Morgan and James Wong, and Howard Gordon and Alec Gansa) sampled liberally from all the preoccupations and fears of the end of the Millennium. The X-FILES happily dove into stories about aliens, mutants, genetic tinkering, recovered memories, and the general, free-floating paranoid anxiety that something was going on and there was a conspiracy afoot—probably by the government—to hide it from you. *THE X-FILES* gave us a vision of America betrayed, not by enemies



**NOT SPOOKY ENOUGH:** The introduction of special agent Doggett was supposed to launch **THE X-FILES** into its post-Mulder phase, but indifferent writing and lack of chemistry between Robert Patrick and Gillian Anderson scuttled those plans.

grew ever more beautiful as the seasons progressed. (Unfortunately, Bartley left at the end of the third season, but not before winning an Emmy for his work on "Grotesque.")

Although Season One occasionally experienced rough patches, it was nonetheless great television, the episodes almost like mini-movies. The second season was even better, turning out a high proportion of wonderful segments. In a classic make-lemonade-out-of-lemons scenario, the writers developed a superb opening arc that season, written around star Gillian Anderson's pregnancy that brought both Scully and Mulder to an emotional and physical brink. The second season also saw the arrival of Darin Morgan (Glen's younger brother), who introduced an entirely new tone to the show, one more overtly comic, although it was the driest and most deadpan comedy possible. The X-FILES newsgroup, which in those early years of the internet had become an important gathering spot for the show's fans, was flooded with approving messages after the broadcast of "Humbug," Morgan's first episode. They loved his work, and so did the professional community: Morgan's third-season episode, "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," won him the show's only Emmy for writing.

Yet, as the show headed into the third and fourth seasons, there were also problems. There seemed to be a disconnect between what had come to be called the "mythology" episodes that followed Mulder's investigation of a government conspiracy hiding the existence of aliens on earth (as well as the secret of his sister's disappearance), and the "stand-alone" episodes. After experiencing life-altering events in the mythology episodes, Mulder and Scully would be back to normal in the stand-alones, leaving fans to wonder why they seemed so unaffected. Scully kept seeing bizarre things, but always insisted everything could be explained scientifically. The mythology itself, with all the various aliens and conspiracies, was beginning to be more ridiculous than threatening.

Then something broke in the fourth season. Although the season didn't get off to a strong start with the mythology episode, "Herrenvolk," the few new episodes were good to great. Morgan and Wong, who had departed in the second season to create a new show for Fox (SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND), returned to write four episodes that, with one exception, focused on the idea that Mulder and Scully didn't know each other as well as they thought they did. The intent was to create a season exploring the theme of trust between Mulder and Scully, but Carter and new his right-hand man, Frank Spotnitz, took the show in another direction entirely. Forget trust; they fell back on the oldest and lamest trick for "character development:" they made Scully sick with cancer in the excruciatingly mopey episode, "Memento Mori." This crucial aspect of

Scully's life was then thoroughly ignored for the rest of the season, except in the episode "Elegy." The writers "explained" Scully was receiving treatment "off-screen," although she exhibited none of the side effects of chemotherapy or radiation.

Scully eventually recovered (and in highly melodramatic fashion, too, in "Redux II"), although THE X-FILES never did. There were still some good episodes to come, particularly Duchovny's writing/directing debut "The Unnatural," but they were fewer and further between. The mythology grew more and more ponderous, as the writers kept trying to top each twist with one supposedly mind-boggling revelation after another, none of which ever answered anything. The online fans went nuts trying to reconcile all the inconsistencies and plot holes. The various aliens (greys, shapeshifters, clones, oil aliens, monsters grown from viruses, human-alien hybrids, and more) multiplied faster than kudzu in the Deep South and were just as strangling to story logic.

The villains suffered too. The Cigarette Smoking Man (William B. Davis) grew toothless. Krycek (Nicholas Lea) virtually disappeared and reappeared, mostly just to jerk other characters around. The doomed members of the Syndicate never had any personality, except for the oily and reptilian Well-Mannered Man, played by the superb John Neville. Meanwhile, the standalone episodes became formulaic, needlessly graphic, and as enigmatic as a roadmap—Mulder and Scully often did little detective work to solve a case. Attempts to copy Darin Morgan's brand of humor fell flat, particularly in the sixth season's run of "humorous" episodes. The season cliffhangers left fans yawning, especially whenever they featured a "Is Mulder dead?" scenario. An X-FILES feature film released between the fifth and sixth seasons failed to find a genuine audience, and a long-promised move of the production from Vancouver to Los Angeles, beginning with the sixth season, failed to improve matters.

But worst of all was the damage done to the characters, particularly Mulder and Scully. Mulder's leaps of intuition, his "genius," became more and more improbable, examples of lazy writing that kept the two agents from genuine detecting. Mulder's declaration in the pilot that he needed evidence too, just like Scully, was forgotten, and his own innate skepticism and critical sense vanished. Instead, he'd put his faith in the wildest theories without a shred of evidence, and was consistently right only because the show's default was set to "P" for "paranormal." Mulder became an automaton, to be whipped back and forth as required. If the plot called for him to give up his deeply held beliefs

merely on the say-so of one government official, then he did so; a few episodes later, he was a believer once again. He had no reaction to the end of his lifelong quest in "Closure;" no reaction to nearly dying from an alien brain disease; no reaction to being tortured by aliens in the eighth season. One could argue that from the beginning he was emotionless, but that was part of Mulder's point. When the rage did bubble to the surface, it was jarring and uncontrolled, but never bullying—at least, when done right, as in "One Breath." Seeing Mulder threaten the taunting Cigarette Smoking Man in that episode was one thing; seeing him slap around and pistol-whip the doctor in "Emily" was quite another, and painful to watch for all the wrong reasons.

Scully went from strong and independent to depressed, whiny, and ultimately irrelevant, except for her role as mother-to-be. The subtext of the show, once Scully lost her ova to the conspiracy doctors, seemed to be that every woman wants to be a mother. The X-FILES writers seemed to think that the way to deepen her was to degrade her, either by making her sick (cancer), or by medically violating her, or by giving her some sort of maternal urge. The young woman who wanted to make a name for herself in the FBI—but not at the expense



of her ethics or compassion for victims—became a victim herself of the writers' idealization of her. In those first seasons, she had friends—she had *a life*. The writers snuffed out those signs of normalcy, put her on a pedestal, and robbed her of her sexuality, not only literally by robbing her of her ova, but by making her celibate and untouchable: the Virgin Scully. She turned into a woman with two modes of behavior: weepy or hostile. In the eighth season, a pregnant Scully is punished for attempts at

independent thought and action, pushed to the sidelines, made subordinate to her new partner, the man's man Agent Doggett, and protests not at all. (She's not thrilled to see Doggett at first, but before long she's telling him what a great guy he is.)

Mulder and Scully received the same kind of treatment as partners that they received as individuals. Their relationship, with the underlying UST, had arisen naturally out of Duchovny and Anderson's on-screen chemistry and their characters' continuing intellectual and philosophical debate about the nature of the world. Once the writers consciously attempted to write an attraction between them, it foundered, and then died when the X-



seemed like the writers wished Mulder had never come back, given the uncharitable way they treated him. The eighth season Scully didn't appear pregnant until well into the season (just like when she

years, if we can find a way out of the terrible conflict created by the events of last September 11, darker stories will once again come to the fore, in the same way film noir blossomed in the years following World War II.

There is no reason to suppose the remainder of the X-FILES' Season Nine will be any better. Even Fox execs couldn't avoid the obvious truth; finally throwing in the towel by denying the series a tenth season. Don't expect impassioned letter-writing campaigns to save this show.

Yet there is no diminishing what went before. We'll always have "Deep Throat" or "Conduit" or "E.B.E." or "One Breath" or "Duane Barry" or "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose" or "Pusher" or "Paper Hearts" or whatever episode made your heart pound and your

eyes tear up. Now that the first four seasons of THE X-FILES are available on DVD, fans old and new (and thanks to syndication and home video, there will always be new fans) can discover, in the best format available for home viewing, what made the show so great.

So as THE X-FILES shoots along into a creative flameout, let's sit back and enjoy the classic episodes, remembering that, just because Chris Carter has stopped believing, we shouldn't be prevented from celebrating the work of Carter, Glen Morgan, Darin Morgan, James Wong, Howard Gordon, Alex Gansa, Vince Gilligan, David Duchovny, and everyone else who contributed to the show at its best. Like Mulder, we shall look to the future, and move on with a smile. Because, when all is said and done, we can honestly say we had a wonderful time. CFQ

**ROLE REVERSAL:** What started out as partnership between two strong, competent equals (above, from the first season ep. "E.B.E"), had become a stereotypical love relationship by season eight (left, from "Dead Alive"). TOP RIGHT: Mulder and Doggett bury the hatchet, to little avail.

Team gave into a persistent fan demand for some kind of romantic relationship. This "romance" was treated the same way as Scully's cancer: mostly ignored; occasionally hinted at; usually permitted to occur almost entirely off-screen, even though it seemed to have culminated in a baby.

As for the eighth season, nearly everything the production team did went wrong. Mulder's replacement, Agent John Doggett (Robert Patrick), turned out to be hopelessly conventional, a typical TV male protagonist who would not have distinguished THE X-FILES if he had been the lead when it started. Into the mix was thrown another new character: Special Agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish), a New Ager and a specialist in Satanic rituals—an odd combination to say the least, given that there is no connection between the two. Duchovny's return to the show in the second half of the season was completely botched—it

had cancer).

She often made stupid decisions (her *modus operandi* for the past few seasons), acquiesced to whatever Doggett wanted, and then beamed as the newly enshrined mother, Mulder by her side. Even the most loyal of fans grew restless watching the eighth season, yet enough of us stayed on, a market considerable enough to guarantee a ninth season.

Even so, the times have bypassed THE X-FILES. The public mood had turned away from the well-worn, evil-government-conspiracy narrative towards something more simple and reassuring. World War II, the "just war," became a popular setting for films and TV, particularly if it involved American's favorite son, Tom Hanks. THE WEST WING, about an upstanding, moral president and his equally upstanding White House staff, won the Emmy for best dramatic series. Perhaps in a few

# THE X-FILES

## SEASON EIGHT EPISODE GUIDE

By Paula Vitaris

"I don't want you doing anything to upset your pregnancy."

—Skinner

WITHIN

★★

11/5/00. Editor: Louise Willingham. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

Picking up where "Requiem" left off—Scully's still pregnant. We know this because she has bad dreams about

backwards and feeding her rumors and innuendo about Mulder in an effort to drag information out of her. Scully's response is to fling a cup of water in his face. Oooh, Scully! You're such a professional! That's what all the *male* agents would do, isn't it?

Meanwhile, someone steals Mulder's and Scully's home computers and FBI files. This leads Scully to the realization that the aliens are trying to remove evidence of their presence, although no indisputable evidence of alien contact has ever been made pub-



I'LL TAKE MINE WITH A SPLASH: Doggett and Scully "meet cute," X-FILES style, in "Within."

a fetus that turns into Mulder, she stares into a mirror, and she throws up. Other than that, you'd never know. She shows absolutely no curiosity whatsoever about how she got pregnant when she's supposed to be sterile, and who the father may be. (It's not like the writers seem to have any idea, either.)

Mulder's still missing, although every now and then we get glimpses of him being tortured by aliens. Like Scully's pregnancy, Mulder's absence is little more than lip service, at least in this episode and the next. After that, even the "search" is missing in action.

A team has been formed to search for Mulder, headed up by Special Agent John Doggett (new series regular Robert Patrick). Doggett doesn't get off to a good start with Scully, sitting down next to her with his I.D. tag

lic, and so far, the vast majority of people are indifferent and disbelieving. Scully doesn't wonder about that, though.

Instead, she realizes that the best evidence of alien existence is Gibson Praise (Jeff Gulka), who disappeared two years ago in the sixth season opener, "The Beginning." It takes about three seconds to locate him at a school for the deaf in the middle of the Arizona desert. But Mulder—or someone who looks just like him—beats Scully, Skinner, Doggett, and Co. to the punch, and the episode ends with Doggett confronting the maybe-Mulder at the edge of a cliff, Gibson Praise his captive.

"Within" creates a nice aura of tension and suspense, with suspicion all around. But something risible always pops up to break the mood, whether it's that lady



singer warbling on the soundtrack, or the Mulder family tomb being uncrated in the *FBI office*, or best (or worst) of all: Scully examining Mulder's medical file to discover that he had been *dying all last season*. Funny, we'd been

told he had been cured in "A m o r Fati."

Robert Patrick is solid as Doggett. He actually makes you believe that he is a good guy, despite his opening

mind-game with Scully. They take the first baby step towards cooperation: she demands respect from him, and he rejoinders, "Give a little, get a little." David Duchovny, in a couple of scenes lasting a few seconds, gets the short end of the stick (or is that the long end of a probe?).

"Hey, you're where the action is."

—Doggett

"What does that tell you, that I'm crazy or I'm right?"

—Scully

WITHOUT

★★

11/12/00. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

What a shock—Mulder isn't really

Mulder! He's really the Bounty Hunter, disguised as Mulder, here to kidnap Gibson Praise. But Doggett intercepts him, the BH steps off a cliff, hits the ground and breaks his arm (the unnaturally crooked arm is a neat effect), and then disappears into the crowd at the school for the deaf, where Scully, Skinner, and a skeptical Doggett try to flush him out. Gibson Praise has fled to an underground hideaway in the desert. Meanwhile, Doggett is realizing that Kersh has set him up to fail in his investigation. The up-

shot of all this is that Kersh (one of the most one-note characters yet on THE X-FILES, and that's saying something) is furious over Doggett's inconclusive report and then, illogically, orders him to partner Scully on the X-Files.

If "Without" is about anything, it's about Scully and Doggett tangling and trying to find a turf on which to co-exist. Once again we hear the phrase, "give a little, get a little," but this time said by Scully to a doubting Doggett. While she and Doggett don't solve any major issues in "Without," at least they are beginning to get used to each other.

Now that Mulder is no longer around, it falls to Scully be the believer, although a reluctant one who believes, not so much because she wants to, but because she needs to, to keep alive her hope for Mulder's return. She doesn't sound all that convinced, whatever the words coming from her mouth.

The big light in the sky turning out to be a helicopter gimmick has gotten way too old.

"You ever carry one of these?"

—Doggett, holding up flashlight

"Never."

—Scully

PATIENCE

★1/2

11/19/00. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written and directed by Chris Carter.

If you're looking for a suspenseful, bite-your-nails, monster-of-the-week X-FILES episode...this isn't it. The teaser is a telegram from Western Union: With all that darkness, thunder,

lightning, and creepy music, you know someone is about to meet his or her end in a nasty way. The victims are an elderly mortician and his wife, and the wounds are so bizarre that Scully and her new partner Doggett are summoned to consult, despite the opposition of local detective Abbott (Bradford English). More people are killed, Doggett finds a newspaper article about some hunters who killed a giant Bat Creature in 1956 after it killed several people. Scully and Doggett discuss the case, and finally we learn that the murdering Bat Thing (Jay Caputo) was the companion or mate of the original Bat-Creature-Thing-Person killed back in 1956, now out for revenge.

The Bat Thing is a dull monster in fake-looking makeup—he just hangs around waiting to kill people, and nobody ventures a scientific explanation for his existence. The interaction between Scully, Doggett, and Detective Abbott keeps the episode from sinking into the mud altogether. Doggett's attitude towards Scully is patronizing (it gets worse in the next episode); observing the blatant sexism from Abbott, he steps in to "help," turning his back on Scully and excluding her from his conversation with Abbott. Scully rightly calls him on this, in one of the episodes few satisfying moments.

**"No! No! I'm pregnant! No! No! Don't do this! I'm going to have a baby! No, don't do this! No! I'm going to have a baby! No! No! No! No!"**  
—Scully

#### ROADRUNNERS 0

11/26/00. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Vince Gilligan. Directed by Rod Hardy.

Bad Scully. Bad, bad Scully. You traipsed off by yourself to Utah for "a consultation" with local cops about a murder, and didn't bother to tell your current partner, that redoubtable "man's man" John Doggett, that you were leaving town. You wore high-

At least you had a glimmer of good sense to call Doggett while on the road, so he would realize later that you were in trouble and hustle out to Utah to rescue you all by his big, strong self. So you learned your lesson, didn't you? Now that you've been violated, degraded, and humiliated, apologize to Doggett, because it was *all your fault*. Promise that you'll never do anything again without telling him, or making sure he's there by your side. Good Scully. Good, good Scully.

**"This is great. Now I've got a psychic in my living room that's going to tell me what's wrong with my son."**  
—Mr. Underwood

#### INVOCATION ★★

12/3/00. Editor: Michael Kewley. Written by David Amann. Directed by Richard Compton.

"Invocation" is a masterpiece, but only if you grade it on the "Roadrunners" bell-curve. Otherwise, it is merely a run-of-the-mill stand-alone, a combination of "Revelations" and "The Calusari." This time the mysterious boy is named Billy Underwood (Kyle and Ryan Pepi), who was abducted from a school playground ten years ago. One day he mysteriously reappears in the exact place from which he was kidnapped, still a little boy who hasn't aged a day, let alone ten years. For once Scully and Doggett have a case that really deserves their attention.

While the set-up is fairly intriguing, the episode collapses once we realize Billy is a ghost. All the suspicions about Billy, the weird happenings,



**THE SPIRIT RETURNS:** The mystery of a kidnapped child restores THE X-FILES to classic territory in "Invocation."

heeled boots and a too-tight shirt into the desert. You'll pay for those sins, by getting stranded in the middle of nowhere, and eventually being tied face-down on a bed by a bunch of wacko cultists who then insert into your back the phallic-shaped giant slug they worship as the latest incarnation of Christ.

they're just red herrings—without them, plus a couple of scenes about the stereotyped "white trash" people involved in Billy's disappearance, "Invocation" would last about fifteen minutes.

Well, twenty minutes, because "In-



**MAD MESSIAH:** Is Scully paying for her independence when she stumbles upon cultists in "Roadrunners?"

vocation" is also about Doggett's personal history: At one point during this investigation he pulls out a photo of a little boy and gazes sadly at it. Later a psychic brought in to consult about Billy senses "forces" flowing through Doggett, and says the agent has lost someone. The revelation that there is a tragedy involving Doggett and a child seems like so much *deja vu*. Robert Patrick is a solid actor, but even he cannot overcome such self-imitative writing.

**"There's a reason all this is happening."**

—Martin Wells

#### REDRUM ★★★

12/10/00. Editor: Heather Macdougall and Michael Kewley. Teleplay by Steven Maeda. Story by Steven Maeda & Daniel Arkin. Directed by Peter Markle

"Redrum" has the feel of a TWILIGHT ZONE episode, especially since the protagonist is not Scully or Doggett, but Baltimore prosecutor Martin Wells (Joe Morton, in a superb performance), who, in the teaser, wakes up one morning to find himself in a jail cell, accused of murdering his wife Vicky. Guards arrive to hustle him out for transfer to another jail, and during the perp walk, he's shot and killed by his enraged father-in-law.

The first act then opens the day before, the second act the day before that, and so on. It doesn't take long for Martin to realize that each new day—for him—is the past one, not the next one, and that he is the only one who realizes it. Martin enlists the help of his perplexed but loyal friend John Doggett (Scully's appearances are fleeting) to solve the mystery of who killed his wife and why.

"Redrum" becomes a double mystery: on one hand Martin's investigation of his wife's murder; and on the other, an investigation into the workings of his own soul. As Martin clarifies and even changes the events of each preceding day, his own internal landscape becomes ever more

tangled and troubled. Martin does save his wife's life, and in the process saves his own soul. Unfortunately, as Martin sits consigned to another cell at the end, he delivers a superfluous

voiceover that ruins the mood of the final shot.

**"We all have a third eye. If we open it, we'd see a new reality, one closer to God. At least that's what Kesey told me on the bus back in '64."**

—Frohike

#### VIA NEGATIVA ★★1/2

12/17/00. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Tony Wharmby.

Scully is in the hospital with "abdominal pains," so it's boys night out for Doggett and Skinner. In Pittsburgh, twenty cult members and the two FBI agents staking out their house are murdered, their heads bashed in by an axe. The circumstances are bizarre: All the victims have been found in places locked from within, or too small to sustain the swing of an axe. The main suspect is cult leader Anthony Tipet (Keith Szarabajka, THE EQUALIZER), even though there's no forensic evidence implicating him. Tipet believes that he can achieve the "via negativa"—the dark path to God—through ingestion of a powerful hallucinogenic. As the episode proceeds, Skinner and Doggett begin to surmise that Tipet invades other people's dreams and murders them, psychically, in their sleep: Whatever death he paints for them inside their heads becomes reality.

Tipet is a disappointingly sketchy character (wasting the talents of Szarabajka)—once he splits his head in two, the fourth act is taken up almost entirely by Doggett, now dreaming himself, and thus prey for the comatose Tipet. "Via Negativa" is short on plot but makes up for it by being long on atmosphere and mood, conjuring up a number of disturbing, eerie images, the most ominous that of Tipet, in lotus position, floating above a jailhouse floor. He gazes at Doggett, and when his third eye opens, it's as if it's looking right into your soul, with evil intent.

**"You know, Elvis used to do this to his hotel rooms."**

—Doggett, looking around a room with bullet holes in the wall

#### SUREKILL ★1/2

1/7/01. Editor: Michael Kewley. Written by Greg Walker. Directed by Terrence O'Hara.

Twins...there's always a good one

and a bad one. In "Surekill," that formula is slightly modified to "bad twin and good twin who does bad things." The bad one, Dwight (Michael Bowen), is legally blind (although he can spot a telephone message light blinking from across the room), and the good one, Randall (Patrick Kilpatrick), can see through, well, everything. Their legit business is the Triple-A Surekill Extermination Agency, but the "rats" they exterminate are drug dealers. Randall, who is not too bright and is dominated by his brother, sees the dealers through walls, aims a gun, and kills them, then Dwight, the "brains" of the operation, makes off with the dealers' drugs and cash. Oh, yes, Scully and Doggett are in this one, too.

"Surekill" takes itself far too seriously. The Surekill office is so moodily lit in noir style you'd think Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray were about to arrive. Instead, we get the deadly dull trio of Dwight, Randall, and their assistant, Tammy, three of the most lifeless guest characters ever on the show. One shot catches the eye: when Doggett and Scully are looking around the real estate agent's apartment, they turn off the lights, and sunlight from outdoors floods in through bullet holes in the walls. It's a striking image.

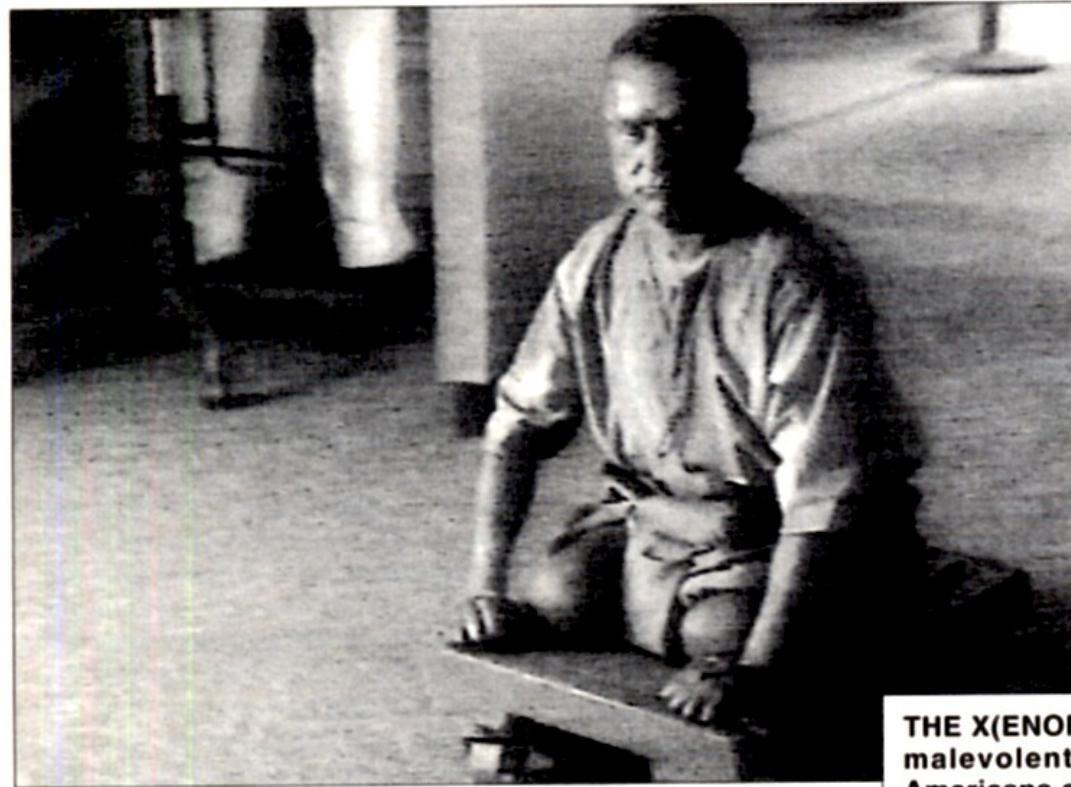
**"They've got to pay for this. They've all got to pay."**

—Ray Pearce

#### SALVAGE ★1/2

1/14/01. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Jeffrey Bell. Directed by Rod Hardy.

Another assembly-line monster-of-the-week episode. The monster in "Salvage" is Ray Pearce (Wade Andrew Williams), a junkyard worker whose exposure to an experimental regenerative substance is slowly turning his



**THE X(ENOPHOBIC)-FILES: A malevolent mystic attacks Americans at random in "Badlaa."**

body to metal. The best thing about "Salvage" is the terrific prosthetic makeup for Williams. That makeup is Williams's performance—at the end, when Pearce has transformed entirely into a man made out of bits and pieces of metal, looking like something from the scrap heap, he is an astonishing sight.

Pearce may be a victim of industrial carelessness, but no one meant to

hurt him, and the episode fails to create sympathy for him as he clumps around killing people, both those he considers responsible for his condition as well as innocents, including a woman who tries to help him. Williams's performance communicates sullen anger more than suffering or torment.

Scully has all of Mulder's lines in this episode, and Doggett has all of Scully's lines ("Are you suggesting that...?")

**"In my experience, dead men don't tip, Agent Scully."**

—Doggett

#### BADLAA ★

1/21/01. Editor: Michael Kewley. Written by John Shiban. Directed by Tony Whamby.

"So there's this guy who crawls up people's butts and hangs out in their bodies for a while, and their gut explodes, and there's lots of blood and ooh, their eyes turn all red..." Normally this would be where the TV producer interrupts the sweating novice writer's big pitch and kicks him (or her) out of the office, with a "don't call us, we'll call you" kiss-off. But this is THE X-FILES, a show desperate for a guest villain you haven't seen before, so the butt-crawler idea is instead written up into a script, filmed, and, alas, put on the air.

Although the butt-crawler is new, the plot is pure X-FILES generic Monster-of-the-Week. "Badlaa" is, like "Salvage," a revenge tale. This time the aggrieved party is an Indian beggar, a Siddhi mystic (Deep Roy) capable of manipulating reality, becoming invisible, and changing his size. Our mystic beggar is using his powers for revenge on innocent (if arrogant) Americans because a gas leak from an American chemical company in his village killed scores, including, possibly, his son.

(This fictional event is no doubt based on the devastating 1984 Union Carbide poison gas leak in Bhopal, India.)

The working out of the plot doesn't make much sense. The mystic is, in fact, only another incarnation of the Other, the exotic, dark people Western culture both fears and finds fascinating—Edward Said, author of *Oriental-*

*ism*, would have a field day with him. With his squeaky cart (the noise often preceeding his entry into frame), his gas-ravaged face, and the powers he uses to kill people, the character is indeed a frightening sight.

Throughout "Badlaa," Scully tries to investigate this case the way she believes Mulder would have, even bringing in his pal Chuck Burks for a couple of consultations. In the end, she becomes distraught that she can't be just like Mulder. But since when has she wanted to *be* Mulder? She has learned many things from Mulder, but why would she want to erase her own identity and her own instincts?

**"You've got it all backwards."**

—Rustic Woman

#### THE GIFT ★1/2

2/4/01. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners.

Doggett goes to Squamash, Pennsylvania, looking for clues to Mulder's whereabouts. Skinner reminds Doggett that he witnessed Mulder's abduction, and accuses him of wanting to concoct a story about Mulder that will get him off the X-Files. Doggett insists he just wants the truth, and he has to work this one solo, because Scully signed Mulder's falsified case files. (Gillian Anderson does not appear in this episode.)

Doggett quickly figures out that the townspeople of Squamash are hiding something involving Mulder, but since no one does any more real investigation on this show anymore, we are shown the secret: The townspeople are safeguarding a horribly disfigured man (Jordan Marder) who eats sick people, then, in agony, vomits them up. The vomit slowly congeals back into the eaten person, now restored back to his or her original form, free of the disease.

Doggett eventually experiences the process first-hand. You would think after this event he would become a raging believer, but no, he's not changed one bit. It took Scully seven years to turn into a believer despite seeing all sorts of fantastical things, and Doggett's only in his first year. Maybe in six years he'll make the leap—if anyone's still around to witness the transformation.

**"What am I looking for?"**

—Doggett

**"I don't know. Anything."**

—Scully

#### MEDUSA ★1/2

2/11/01. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Richard Compton.

After episodes about butt-crawling and vomiting, it's a relief to have one in which people die when their skin and muscle are fried away by microscopic sea creatures called medusas. The pesky little critters are lurking in puddles of water that have leaked into the Boston subway system from the bay. When an undercover Boston subway cop and a would-be mugger are

found dead in a train car, Scully and Doggett are called in to head up a search team, looking for who-knows-what in the tunnels. Scully decides to direct the investigation from the subway system's headquarters—she fears infecting her baby, but of course can't explain that to the puzzled Doggett—while Doggett will lead the search team as her "eyes and ears."

The tunnel sets are extremely effective, and allow a nice play of light and shadow, with flashlight beams cutting through the darkness.



So what do you do when your killer is a microscopic creature without purpose or malice and the search team doesn't grab your attention? The answer here is to create "dramatic conflict" between Scully and the obnoxious Karras (Ken Jenkins), the subway system's deputy chief. He insists that the trains must begin running again at 4:00 p.m. for evening rush hour, whether the search team finds anything or not. This episode is like all those 1970's disaster movies with the cliched, obstreperous official insisting the plane must fly or the skyscraper is fire-proof, even when the potential for catastrophe is staring him in the face.

**"Parenti is my doctor. Is that so strange? Is there something about him I don't know?"**

—Scully

#### PER MANUM 0

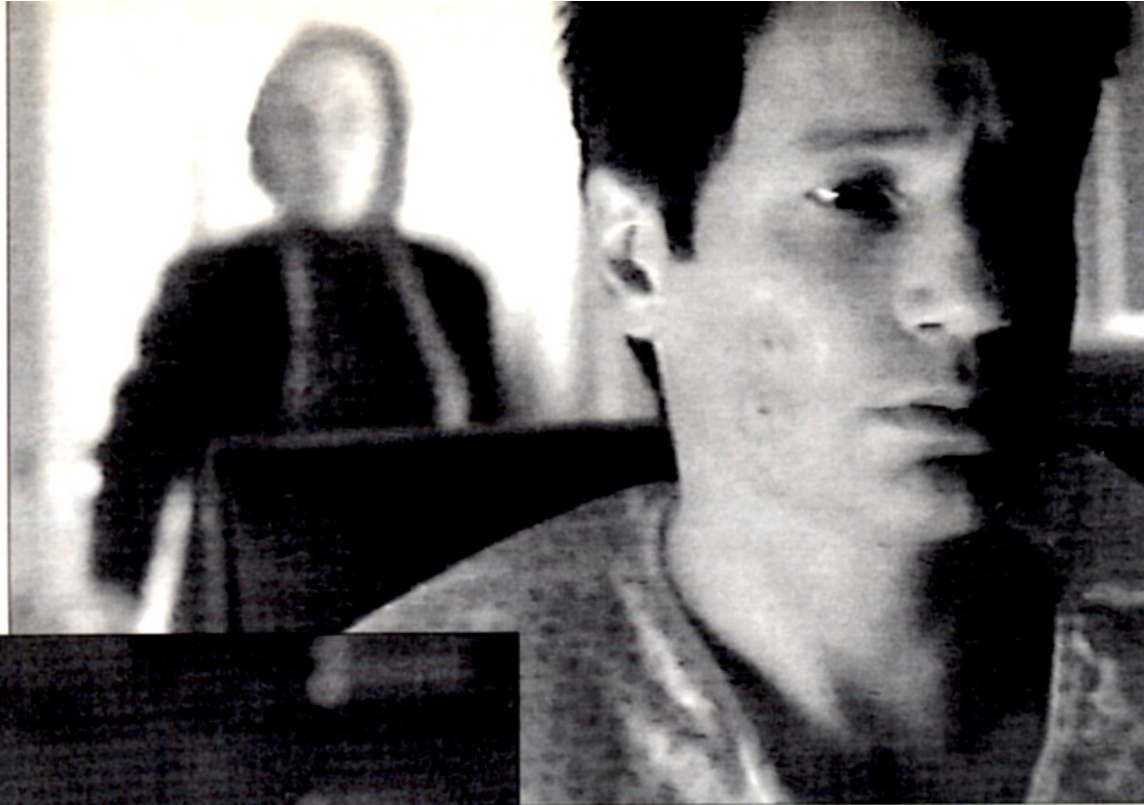
2/18/01. Editor: Louise Innes. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners.

Scully stares into a mirror—again—in "Per Manum" (as more of that annoying soprano wails on the soundtrack). She mopes and snuffles



her way through an "investigation" inspired by the techniques of Inspector Clouseau, treats Doggett like an afterthought, and ends up clueless as ever. Oh, and she really, really wants to have a baby!

It all starts with the Conspiracy's Evil Doctors. They are up to no good, impregnating women with alien fetuses, and since they want Scully to know *all about it*, they send undercover operative Duffy Haskell (Joe Acovone, who also appeared in "Demons") to her office. Haskell, in his guise as a long-



Mulder really dead? What do you think?

"This Is Not Happening" introduces a new recurring character, FBI Special Agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish), an expert in comparative religion and satanic cults. Doggett brings Reyes in on the case, explaining that her background gives her a certain "expertise" that will help them find Mulder. What Doggett does not explain is why he thinks a background in comparative religion is useful towards solving an alien abduction.

Gillian Anderson has a marathon of weeping to get through in "This is Not Happening." She tears up or cries a total of four times, including some Olympic-level emoting at the end, when she delivers the episode's signature phrase in reaction to Mulder's "death." It's an artificial moment.

**"Get out while you can, Agent Doggett, or you may never get out at all."**

—Scully

**DEADALIVE** ★1/2

4/1/01. Editor: Regis B. Kimble. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Tony Wharmby.

They bury Mulder at the beginning of "Deadalive" (in North Carolina—for some reason the Mulders of Martha's Vineyard and Rhode Island are all buried down there). Three months later, they dig him up and, guess what, he's alive! "Dead Alive," asks us to believe that a) an alien virus was able to reduce Mulder's vitals to so low a level that he could survive three months without food or water; b) nobody at the FBI—including Scully and Skinner—demanded an autopsy; and c) Mulder was not embalmed or cremated.

The pertinent info—that Mulder is suffering from a virus, not just the aftereffects of alien torture—arrives with Krycek (remember him?), who grabs Skinner's attention by dialing up his nanobite-controller. He presents Skinner with a choice: Krycek will give him a vaccine, developed by Mulder's father(!) that will cure Mulder (will someone please tell Krycek that vaccines *prevent* disease, not cure it?). In return, Skinner must see that Scully's baby doesn't come to term. Skinner never asks the \$64,000 question: why is Krycek concerned about Scully's baby? And how does Krycek expect Skinner to prevent Scully giving birth—kick her in the stomach?

**"Mulder, you make it sound like this is a conspiracy."**

—Scully

**"Ooooh, there's that word again."**

—Mulder

**THREE WORDS** ★ 1/2

4/8/01. Editor: Regis B. Kimble. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Tony Wharmby.

Those three words are "Fight the Future," scribbled on a mini-disc by a man named Howard Salt wants to pass

continued on page 48



and Doggett don't do anything to find the abducted agent. Instead, he comes to them, more or less.

Scully and Doggett and Skinner are on the scene—which happens to be Helena, Montana—because that's where the aliens have conveniently dumped Teresa Hoese (Sara Koskoff), a Bellflower, Oregon abductee taken at the same time as Mulder. When Scully, Doggett and Skinner get the news about Hoese, they rush off to the Big Sky State to question her, but find she has been tortured (a doctor blithely announces she is "circling the drain," a line for which *he* should be tortured) and is unable to speak. The trio wait around hoping Mulder will be offloaded next.

While waiting, they interview Richie Szalay (Judd Trichter), another Bellflower citizen they met last year in Oregon. Richie found Teresa while searching for his friend Gary, who had also been abducted. This kid has the brains to do what Scully and Doggett haven't done once all season long.

Richie thought he saw an alien in the field where he found Teresa, but Doggett tells him it can't be and shows him a plaster cast of the footprint from a Nike sneaker. So just who did Richie see?

It turns out to be alien healer Jeremiah Smith (Roy Thinnes—remember him?), who has also been waiting around for abductee returns. He wants to heal these dying, tortured people before they turn into... well, that's another episode. Smith has taken up with a Heaven's Gate-like cult which helps him in his endeavors. Using his shape-shifting powers, Smith disguises himself as Hoese's doctor and orders her to be transferred, somehow getting her moved to the cult's farm. Eventually Doggett, Scully, Skinner and a new character, FBI agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish), raid the farm with a SWAT team. Suddenly there's a blast of light, the cultists vanish into thin air, and Mulder, returned by the aliens, is found dead nearby. Scully abandons Smith to run to Mulder, and Smith—along with his healing powers—disappears in the confusion. It's yet another manifestation of plot-induced Scully stupidity so Mulder can't be cured instantly and we can have a suspense-free cliffhanger: Is

**RECKONINGS: Scully has to confront ominous implications about her baby in "Per Manum" (left), while Mulder faces down the repercussions of his abduction in "Three Words" (above)."**

time member of MUFON and bereaved husband of a woman who had been abducted multiple times and then died giving birth to what, Haskell claims, was an alien baby, begs for Scully and Doggett's help. Scully seems strangely affected by his story. The plot thickens when she learns her obstetrician, Dr. Parenti (Steven Anderson), was one of the doctors consulted by the Haskells during Mrs. Haskell's pregnancy. After some investigation, Scully realizes that something very, very fishy is going on. So fishy, in fact, that anyone watching this episode can smell every plot "twist" from ten thousand miles away. Sadly, Scully's own sense of smell is non-existent, and she comes off as a moron.

Scully's not the only dummy here; the Evil Doctors are right there with her. Scully visits one of their clinics, Zeus Genetics (ooh, continuity! Remember Zeus Storage back in "The Erlenmeyer Flask?") and easily wanders around the facility, overhearing a woman crying that her baby will be "like all the others!" She soon finds her way into a large room filled with dozens of jars containing malformed fetuses. You would think that Evil Conspiracy Doctors could find a better

place—perhaps behind a locked door?—to store malformed fetus specimens.

Flashbacks seem to be the only way THE X-FILES writers could figure out to use David Duchovny before Mulder's official return from alien torture. In "Per Manum," the flashbacks, which apparently go back to fifth season, not only reinvent established X-FILES history, but also reveal major new information about Mulder and Scully's relationship—they tried to make a test-tube baby!

And Scully still doesn't question *how* she got pregnant.

**"Bad as you want to find Mulder, you're afraid to find him, too."**

—Doggett to Scully

**THIS IS NOT HAPPENING** ★1/2

2/25/01. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Chris Carter & Frank Spotnitz. Directed by Kim Manners.

The non-search for Mulder reaches its highly anti-climatic conclusion in this unexciting episode, where Scully

# THE X-FILES

## Special Makeup Effects

### Disfigured Corpses and Moldy FBI Agents Lead Team to Emmy Award

By Roxie Ray

Cheri Montesanto-Medcalf and Matthew W. Mungle are responsible for the makeup and special makeup effects on THE X-FILES. Although one could easily consider them modern-day alchemists due to their ability to turn materials such as silicone, gelatin, and latex into magic on the small screen, no wizardry is actually responsible for their career successes. Instead, they have worked hard since childhood to develop their talent and skills.

It falls to Montesanto-Medcalf and Mungle to make believable the preternatural exploits of Scully and Doggett. They must be doing something right—their efforts won them an Emmy award for Outstanding Makeup for a Series (Prosthetics) for the eighth season episode, “Deadalive,” putting them into a rarefied, award-winning fellowship with X-FILES makeup artists Clinton Wayne, Laverne Munroe, and Robin Luce.

Montesanto-Medcalf, THE X-FILES’s Department Head of Makeup and Special Makeup, admitted that she was surprised and pleased at the Emmy nomination. But as Mungle, who is in charge of Special Makeup Effects, went into detail regarding the work done on this episode, one could understand why it won.

The makeup crew had six days to do a body cast of

Zachary Ansley, the actor who portrayed Billy Miles, a character from a previous X-FILES episode whose corpse is found floating in the ocean. Mungle explained how the body cast process was done: “We used plaster bandage to cast the front and back of his body while he was in a body suit. We then made a fiberglass cast from that, which gave us a fiberglass positive of his body. Once that was done, my lab guys, Clinton Wayne, Ryan McDowell, Russell Seifert, Tim Considine, and Eddie Vargas, sculpted on top of the cast with water clay to create the proper look of a bloated body. Fiberglass molds were then made of this sculpture. After the body suit was created using a latex skin backed with soft

poly-foam, it was painted with non-tack PAX paints.”

As this project progressed, Mungle took photos and e-mailed them to Chris Carter to get his input into look of the body. “The thing about this bloated body,” Mungle said, “was we didn’t want it to look fat. We wanted it to look like his skin had just taken on water and bloated. That was the tricky part of this.”

There were additional tricky aspects to bringing Miles’s body back to life. Said Mungle, “We had to do a bloated body, and then we had to sculpt it so that it would look dry. Yet, for the scenes in the morgue room, they wanted it to look a little wet. What we did

was put a coating of KY and a little slime on it to give it that slick look.”

Later in the episode, the skin had to look different because Miles would be dried out and shedding his skin. Said Mungle, “The dry, flaky skin was created by using thin pieces of urethane skin glued to the dried body suit. It created the look of skin flaking off.”

Looks were not only concerns for Montesanto-Medcalf—she had to consider how the actors’ skin would react to the “Deadalive” makeup, in particular David Duchovny’s, which would be undergoing makeup effects for most of his scenes. Mulder’s appearance in

this episode is less than attractive: When found, Mulder is thought to have been long dead; in fact, his skin has become moldy. To keep

Duchovny’s own skin safe, Montesanto-Medcalf decided to use egg whites and a placenta from a Swiss facial mask under the makeup. Not only was this good for the skin, but when it dried, it gave “this really cool, old, dried-up, cracked skin effect.”

“Deadalive” was not Montesanto-Medcalf’s first foray into Emmy territory. She joined THE X-FILES’s production team in Season Six, when filming moved from Vancouver to Los Angeles. She won the award that season for “Two Fathers, One

**ANOTHER LUCKY ELIMIDATE CONTESTANT:** A variety of ingredients, including figs and fruit roll-ups, go into the special makeup effects for THE X-FILES.



Son." Her philosophy is to pay attention to the minutia that might not register on a conscious level, but that makes the characters truly live on the screen. When developing the makeup for characters, she thinks about their personal backgrounds and how they present themselves to the world. For example: "Say you have a girl in a small town that's poor. She's kind of like a white-trash-type of girl. We're going to give her chipped-up nail polish. Or maybe she bites her fingers a lot, so let's give her cracked-up, peeling cuticles.... We do put extra effort into it to make the show look well. It would be easier not to do this stuff but it makes the whole show look good."

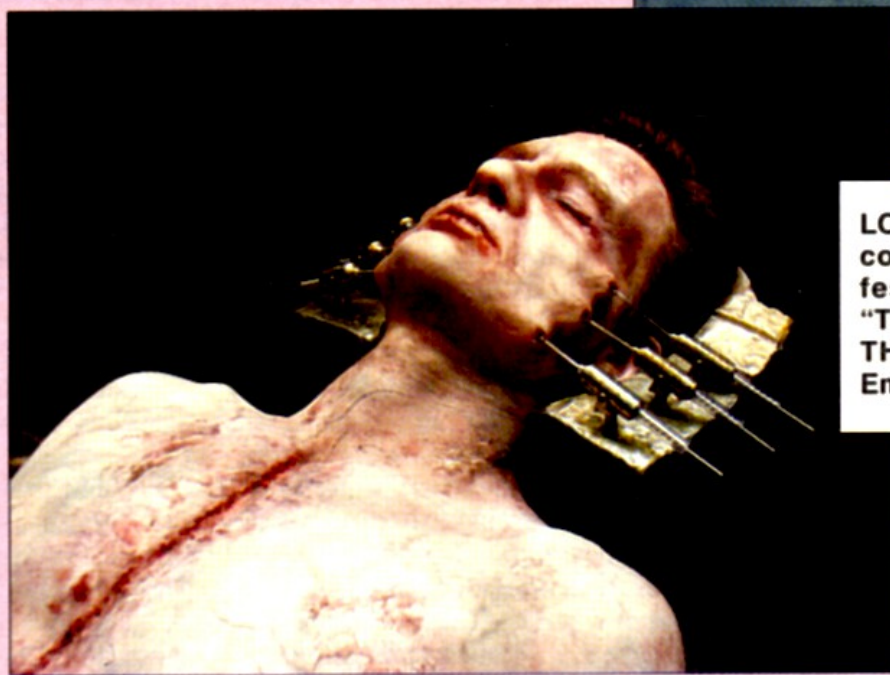
Perhaps this was why Montesanto-Medcalf won the Emmy again in Season Seven for "Theef," one of the artist's favorite episodes. She enthused, "I remember Billy Drago was awesome—he looked so creepy after makeup. I just wanted this guy to look super-creepy and disturbing to look at, but real enough that you might be scared if you looked out your window at night and saw him standing there. I wanted him to look real enough that he would really scare somebody and *not* be a monster."

The eighth season was Mungle's freshman year with the show, joining the crew mid-season. He is no stranger to the Emmy award himself, having won for CITIZEN COHN. He also has earned an Academy award for his work on BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA.

THE X-FILES has three full-time trailers that Montesanto-Medcalf and Mungle have to keep track of: first unit; makeup effects; and second unit. This can be difficult, because different episodes are being filmed at the same time. Said Mungle, "With a show like this, time is of the essence, because every eight days is a new episode. We have only eight days prior to

prep the show and then eight days to shoot the first unit. Most of the second unit stuff is where the inserts go. Then we go onto the next week, when the next show is starting. It's a complete turnaround on this show."

Montesanto-Medcalf has much preparation to do for every



**LOOKIN' GOOD:** A water-bloated corpse (above) and a mold-infested Fox Mulder (left, from "This is Not Happening") netted THE X-FILES makeup team an Emmy for "Deadalive."

that, we start shooting."

Not only does the position of makeup department head require a person to be focused,

but diplomatic as well. The head deals with actors, directors, producers, and the studio. It is a delicate balance to keep all happy. Montesanto-Medcalf confessed that in order to keep a congenial atmosphere at work, she tries to "stay as calm as possible." A Herculean task, especially at times when, "at the last minute they change a concept on a big character or creature and you literally have to come up with it overnight."

But not every makeup design is done on the quick. Said Montesanto-Medcalf, "We do a lot of makeup tests. It's good because sometimes the translation between one person to another might not be exactly right. I always like to have everyone who has to decide see [a makeup] before the day we are filming. Then if we have to make an adjustment, we can fiddle with it. We know exactly what we are doing, [and] the actor knows what they're going sit through."

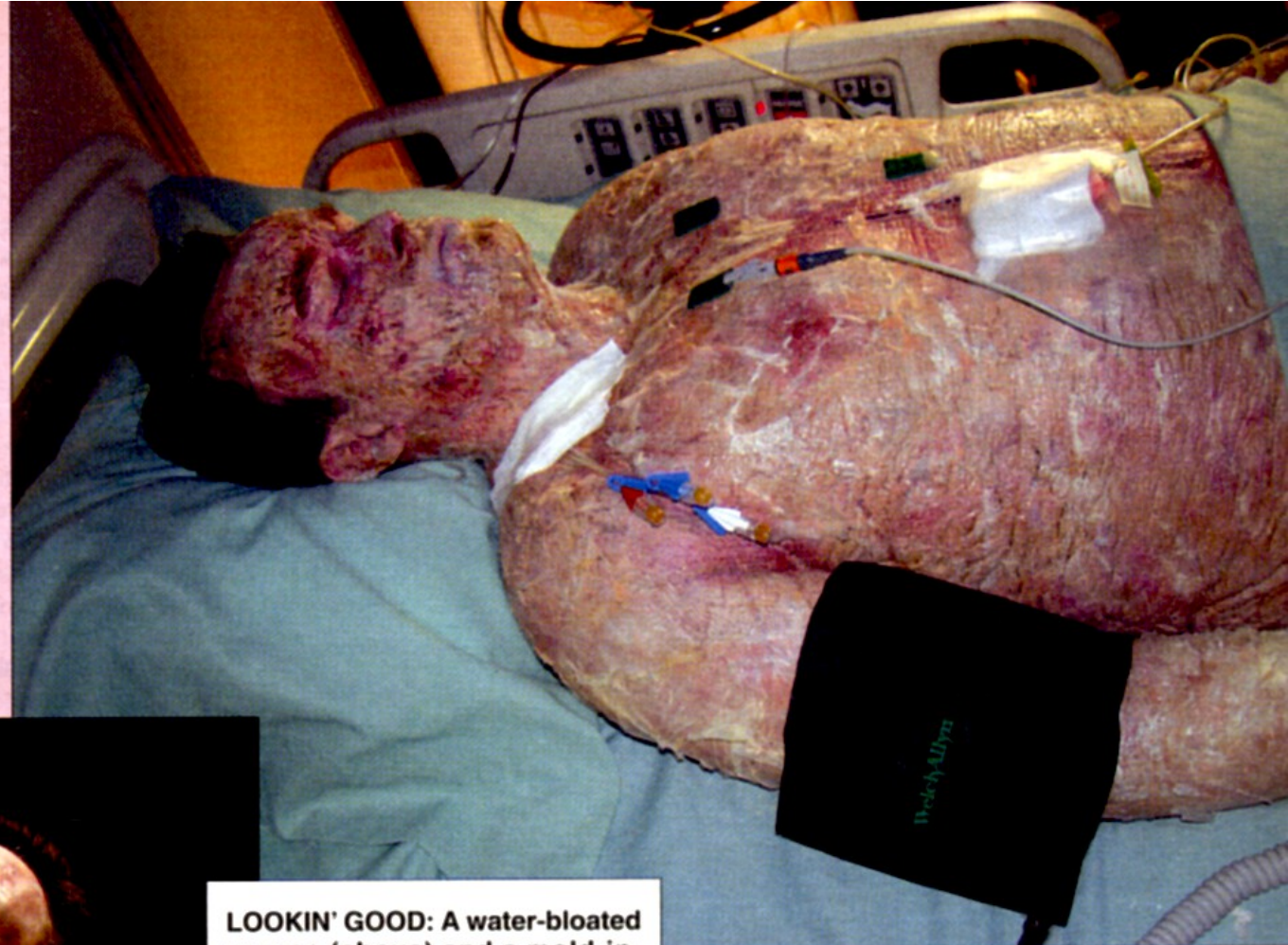
However, not all tests are done on actors who will be involved in the filming of an episode. There are instances when an extra is hired and then made-up to demonstrate a particular design to producers and directors, who then may make

episode. "I get the scripts," she explained, "I go into concept meetings where all the department heads toss around ideas. Then we start prepping, decide what kind of makeup I need to get in.

"Then I talk to the actors. Sometimes we have to have contact lenses, so I need to set up appointments with a contact lens doctor."

Mungle states that a concept meeting occurs seven days prior to the shooting of an episode. The full script is usually not available at this conference—if the group gets a teaser and two acts, they consider themselves lucky. Instead, the writer of the episode—usually Chris Carter—and the rest of the group discuss the direction of the story.

A day or two after the concept meeting, according to Mungle, "We have a makeup meeting in regards to what we need to do: What our concept is and what the director's concept is for the show. Then after that, we go back and get to work and do our budget. Money comes into play—how much all of this is going to cost. Within that time, some things may be added and some things may be taken away. Usually five days after



suggestions. Montesanto-Medcalf likes this process: "It's good—more time-soothing than consuming. You want to have it right for the first day."

Montesanto-Medcalf would not trade her job for the world. She also appreciates the support she is given by THE X-FILES team. "I have to say these people—Chris Carter, Frank Spotnitz, all the directors, and Kim Manners—they're all such wonderful people. They're so trusting and they just let you go.

"There's a scene in 'Deadalive' where the guy's fat skin gets showered off to reveal a thin body. They went to Matthew and said, 'Can you do that?' He said, 'Well, yeah. If we can figure something out, could we show it on TV?' They said, 'If you guys can do it, we'll show it on TV.' We do stuff you don't see on TV."

Mungle echoed Montesanto-Medcalf's sentiments. He highly regards Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz, noting that both men are "very imaginative" and will "push you to go get more out of you, within the time allotted, of course.

"I have really, really thoroughly enjoyed working on X-FILES because it keeps my mind working: How do we do this and how can we achieve this? It's pulling from all of the years of my experience of working with all the products that we have and utilizing that to work for different effects. It's just really wonderful. I am thoroughly enjoying it." CFQ

on to the president. Salt's method of delivery is to hop the White House gate, get shot, and pass the disc on to a security officer with his dying breath. Is this an advertisement for the latest special edition DVD of the X-FILES movie?

Salt turns out to be a member of Jeremiah Smith and Absalom's cult group. Doggett's informant, Knowle Rohrer (Adam Baldwin) slips the password to him, and eventually it gets to Mulder. With the help of the Lone Gunmen, Mulder learns that that U.S. census office holds genetic data identifying people who are to be replaced by alien replicants in preparation for the alien invasion—the one they've been talking about for years but never happens? It must be the alien invasion led by Godot.

The first act opens with tremendously affecting acting from Duchovny. Mulder sits alone, touching his scars, flashing back to the torture on the alien ship. His face is a study in anguish and bewilderment, and we feel, deep down, all the pain and confusion he must be experiencing. Then Scully comes in and tells him he's completely healthy and Mulder tries to act cheerful (if with a bit of sarcasm), but we can see how fragile he is underneath his nonchalance.

After this it's back to business, with a vengeance. This episode is little more than a lost opportunity to explore the psyche of a person who has suffered torture, followed by months of burial. Even so, it's a relief to have Mulder back; his smartass sense of humor and anti-authoritarianism are the only signs of humanity left in this show.

**"I feel like I'm stuck in an episode of MAD ABOUT YOU."** —Scully

#### EMPEDOCLES ★1/2

4/22/01. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Greg Walker. Directed by Barry K. Thomas.

We are asked to believe that a big-city New Orleans detective (the excellent Ron Canada, and what is he doing in such a tiny part?) can manage to mistake the booklet from a Marilyn Manson CD for an indication that satanic cult activity is involved with a workplace shooting. We are also asked to believe that the detective has not shown the booklet to the other officers on the case, or if he has, that they don't recognize it either.

Luckily for this out-of-touch-with-popular-culture investigative force, satanic cult expert Special Agent Monica Reyes works in New Orleans, so she hops on down to the crime scene. She dismisses the cult connection (she knows her Marilyn Manson), but when looking at one of the bodies, she experiences a vision of the body burned to the bone. The vision reminds her of when, as a member of the team searching for the murderer of John Doggett's son, Luke, she experienced the same vision upon beholding the boy's body. She tells Mulder that Doggett had the vision, too. Now we know the identity of the boy in the photo that Doggett looked at in "Invocation," and what happened to him.

At least Reyes's dialogue isn't as quite as convoluted here as it was in "This is Not Happening," but she feels

shoehorned into the show. And now she's psychic? And Doggett, too? Scully, meanwhile, is sidelined yet again in the hospital, but ironically, the scenes between her and Doggett are among the best in the show. She understands fear of believing, and she asks him all the right questions, even though she's drugged from pain medication. Mulder already seems like a third wheel to the Reyes and Doggett show, but Duchovny is so good, and Mulder's impertinence so refreshing, that Mulder enlivens every scene he's in. Even Reyes seems to come alive when talking to him.

**"I'm sorry, but Agent Doggett is out fishing. May I take a message, please?"**

—Mulder

#### VIENEN ★1/2

4/29/01. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written by Steve Maeda. Directed by Rod Hardy.

Three more episodes to go after "Vienen," but this is the one where Mulder gets kicked out of the FBI, for real. Looks like the X-FILES writers didn't want to keep Mulder's departure for the end of the season, when it would have taken airtime away from something far more important: Scully's blessed event.

Much of "Vienen" takes place on an oil rig, and a lot of the visuals have a cinematic flair to them. The exteriors especially have a nice sense of space, with the pale blue sea blending into the even paler blue-white horizon of sky. Contrast these shots to the show's current visual style, which has become very claustrophobic, often consisting of close-up after close-up.

Freed from the bottom of the ocean floor, the oil aliens (remember them?) infect the rig personnel and continue drilling so they can infect the Earth. Two immune workers, Huecha Indians, are trying to prevent this. An infected worker kills one of the Indians, and the news of his death reaches Mulder, who, on his own, opens an FBI investigation. Before long, an executive from the oil company complains about the investigation, and an infuriated Kersh sends Doggett off to the oilrig, since this matter is now officially open. When Doggett arrives, he finds Mulder has beaten him there.

As action-adventure, "Vienen" is so-so. Except for the big "money shot" explosion at the end, it doesn't exploit the possibilities of the physical location. Scully actually comes off best (and Gillian Anderson, when allowed to play Scully's old decisive self again, is very good). The real point of the episode, though, is to male-bond Mulder and Doggett (nothing like a leap off a burning oil rig to accomplish that!), so Mulder can "hand off" the X-Files to...Doggett. Doggett? Hey, yoo-hoo! Anybody remember *Scully*?

**"God, this really is an X-File, isn't it?"**

—Special Agent Leyla Harrison

#### ALONE ★

5/6/01. Editor: Lynne Willingham. Written and directed by Frank Spotnitz.

Let's get this straight: At the end of the last episode, Mulder got kicked out of the X-FILES and the FBI. No chance of reinstatement. It's for real this time. Are the X-FILES writers even remotely interested in showing us how Mulder is coping with the loss of the job that has meant everything to him? Nope.

This episode is a monster of the week about an annoying scientist named Herman Stites (Zach Grenier), who turns himself into a man-eating reptile. Why? Who knows; who cares? "Alone" is also the X-FILES writers' idea of a tribute to fandom in the form of a temporary partner for Doggett, Special Agent Leyla Harrison (Jolie Jenkins), named after a dedicated X-FILES fan who passed away several years ago. Scully is finally on maternity leave, so Harrison, formerly in accounting, is assigned to the X-Files. The tribute is dubious, because Agent Harrison comes off as a hapless, over-anxious puppy nipping at the Doggett's heels, giddily hoping to encounter a mutant or alien.

At the end, she realizes she doesn't have the right stuff to be an X-Files investigator, even if she out-Muldered Mulder by being the only one to figure out that Stites is the man-eating reptile. No, all she wants to know, when Mulder and Scully present themselves to her in the hospital, is how they got out of Antarctica after their snowmobile had run out of gas. Could this episode be making fun of such fannish questions? Further note to the writers: If those plot loopholes didn't exist, the



**THE HUMAN TOUCH:** An accomplished performance by Gillian Anderson trumps the stock shocks (left) of "Empedocles."

fans wouldn't ask them.

**"I can see why you gave up a career in medicine for the FBI, Scully. You've got *manos de piedra*."**

—Mulder

#### ESSENCE 0

5/13/01. Editor: Chris Willingham. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

"Roadrunners" and "Per Manum" set the misogyny bar as high as it had ever been on THE X-FILES, and "Existence" raises it to a whole new level, beginning with the teaser, which is a voiceover by, not Scully, but Mulder. It consists of a metaphysical public health lecture in which Mulder de-

scribes the process of conception (shown on screen with ova, sperm, and a needle to help them along—no real sex on THIS show!) and wonders if DNA contains the soul. (David Duchovny couldn't sound more bored, and who can blame him?)

Mulder then asks rhetorically, what does he tell the child; what does he tell Scully? Well, who cares what *he* has to say? It's Scully we should be hearing from.

But we don't. Scully is the passive, mostly silent Virgin Mother who is about to give birth to...Jesus Christ. Yes, her baby is supposed to be a miracle baby, "more human than human." They did this story a lot better in the New Testament (or, if you prefer a more recent text, Frank Herbert's *Dune*).

Scully isn't a Lady Jessica, though—she lets everyone else do the thinking for her, including her mother, who inflicts the most depressing baby shower in history on her. The male characters also take her over: Skinner, Mulder, Krycek—they all seem to have an unsalubrious interest in her baby, how it came to be and who the father is. It's about time someone asked, but again, that should be Scully.

When they learn that Billy Miles, the human-alien replicant, is doing the Terminator thing and killing all the "Per Manum" doctors, they propel Scully from pillar to post, and quite literally, too: Notice how all the men grip Scully's arm, as if she were a child and unable to make decisions where to go. She's finally delivered into the waiting rental car of Monica Reyes, and the two gals zoom off for

safe parts unknown, leaving the boys to do the action stuff and dispose of marauding Billy.

The episode is riddled with all sorts of nonsense. None of the offices have any security. Dr. Parenti's office has an unlocked, deformed fetus showroom, just like the one at Zeus Genetics. When Krycek explains that he wanted Skinner to prevent Scully's baby from coming to term because he wanted to destroy the "truth" before the aliens found it, Mulder interprets this to mean that there is a God. And if we didn't already know that Doggett was a manly man, we first see him cleaning his gun while watching a NASCAR race (on Fox, of course). Now there's a fine, subtle bit of characterization.

But clunky plot contrivances pale in comparison to the muffling of Scully. She is now merely a womb on legs, without a word to say for herself. The "essence" of this episode is destruction of a once-vital female character.

**"What do you know about fair or right, Krycek? You're a coward."**

—Mulder

**EXISTENCE** 0  
5/20/01. Editor: Regis B. Kimble. Written by Chris Carter. Directed by Kim Manners.

Thus endeth the Mulder-and-Scully era of THE X-FILES, and what a load of sanctimonious crap it turned out to be! This dreadful episode is the culmination of three-and-a-half years' effort (presumably unwittingly) by the X-FILES writers to destroy the show's characters, who have all been flattened and crushed like Billy Miles in a trash compactor, but without hope of resurrection. Everything that once made

this show great has evaporated. No longer do actions have consequences, no longer do characters experience inner conflict or react to the world around them. Like every other storytelling arc the writers have attempted since the middle of the fourth season—Scully's cancer and Mulder's loss of faith, for example—this season's baby story is a miserable failure. It goes absolutely nowhere except to turn Mulder and Scully into the Stepford couple they mocked and feared in "Arcadia."

There are ways the pregnancy might have been handled successfully—for instance, if it had forced Scully to question everything about herself, her life, her government, the people who abducted her and violated her body—but THE X-FILES has shown itself incapable of any self-examination. It can't even remember events from episode to episode.

"Existence" slathers a cathedral's worth of religious imagery onto the birth of Scully's baby. A stained glass Christ adorns the window of the deserted, dilapidated house in which Scully and Reyes take refuge (the town they're in is called Democrat Hot Springs, Georgia—political symbolism with echoes of FDR). The house is dilapidated, but Reyes has time to fix it up into a comfy birthing creche. There's a bright star in the night sky and it guides Mulder to Scully. The alien replicants who had

**THE (NE)X(T)-FILES: With Duchovny gone and Anderson maneuvering for the exit, the ninth season would fall to agents Doggett and Reyes to carry on.**



wanted to destroy Scully's baby instead gape in awe, like the shepherds. Even though they're all unstoppable assassins, they all meekly go away after witnessing the miracle of birth. The three Lone Gunmen arrive later on at Scully's house bearing gifts, while Scully wears white pajamas and a blue robe—the colors of the Virgin Mary—and Mulder, who used to be Christ, is now Joseph! And if we didn't "get" all the "symbolism," hammily reverential music "inspired" by John Williams's score for the grail scenes in INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE, tells us it's time to kneel down and worship.

Does Carter really think he's fooling anyone with this plaster-saint religiosity? Grafting all this onto

the birth of Scully's baby doesn't elevate it into a holy event; it turns the birth into the corner church's elementary school Christmas pageant.

This is also Krycek's last bow, and his death is one of the worst scenes in an episode constructed of bad scenes. Krycek has been reduced from a once-fascinating villain to an inconsistent cypher mumbling about "the truth" and wanting "the same thing" as Mulder. The scene where Skinner kills Krycek is excruciating—but not in a good way. It's an insulting end to a formerly great character who never got the Krycek-centered episode he (and Nic Lea, who plays Krycek) deserved.

What a dismal end to the partnership of Mulder and Scully on THE X-FILES, and to two characters who once embodied the best of television writing. THE X-FILES' mania for hiding the "truth" about aliens, mutants, and conspirators has reached the point where all is confusion and inconsistency, and the "mythology" is so top-heavy that it has fallen down and can't get up.

But that is not the real tragedy here. The real tragedy is that THE X-FILES no longer does what it once did so beautifully: shed light on the true mystery, that of the human heart.

# THE X-FILES

## The Ten Scariest Moments

### Want Some Sleepless Nights? These'll Do It.

By Katie Anderson

10

#### "The Calusari"

Season 2 Episode 21 (1995)

##### The Story So Far:

Mulder and Scully discover that eight-year-old Charlie Holvey is involved in the macabre deaths of his brother, father, and grandmother. It appears that young Charlie is possessed by an evil spirit—a spirit that just so happens to belong to his stillborn twin brother, Michael.

##### The Scary Bit:

Mulder turns to the Calusari to help prevent Charlie (or should that be Michael?) from killing again. The group of elderly Romanian holy men battle the forces of evil to exorcise the demon possessing Charlie. As they perform the necessary ritual, the bed begins to rise off the floor, a mysterious yellow substance oozes out of the walls, and Charlie, his face distorted with evil, begins to shout in an unknown tongue.

##### Shock Value:

If it was good enough for THE EXORCIST, then trust THE X-FILES to go one better. The only thing missing is the head-spinning and the pea-soup vomit.

9

#### "Terms of Endearment"

Season 6 Episode 6 (1999)

##### The Story So Far:

Wayne and Laura Weinsider, an expectant couple in their late thirties, receive some devastating news from their doctor. He shows them a recent ultrasound picture of their baby, and points out some prenatal birth defects—their child appears to be growing horns.



**FLOATING A CONCEPT:** Freaky visions intensified the graphic scenario of "Via Negativa."

##### The Scary Bit:

Later that night, Laura wakes up with a jolt; at the foot of the bed stands the horrific figure of a horned demon. Laura screams as the creature grabs her legs and drags her towards him. It reaches down and then rises with a wriggling newborn in its arms; a newborn with horns. The next minute, Laura wakes up covered in blood, screaming, and, it seems, no longer pregnant.

##### Shock Value:

Having your child taken away from you—regardless of the circumstances—must surely be every parent's worst nightmare. Once again, THE X-

FILES demonstrates just how apt it is when it comes to psychological horror, tapping into our deepest, innermost fears, and turning them into must-see TV.

8

#### "Chinga"

Season 5 Episode 10 (1998)

take on a life of its own, the blade curling back towards him.

##### Shock Value:

While the evil, enchanted doll concept isn't exactly original (who could forget Chucky?), Polly and Chinga make for one hell of a spooky double act. And the wounded shoppers, their eyes dripping with blood, is an image you won't find easy to erase. Babysitting this child would be anything but child's play.

7

#### "Memento Mori"

Season 4 Episode 15 (1997)

##### The Story So Far:

Scully's worst fears are confirmed when tests reveal that she has cancer: an inoperable tumor in her brain.

##### The Scary Bit:

Mulder meets Scully at the hospital, where she shows him an MRI film of her skull. A small dark mass—the tumor—is clearly visible on the scan. Scully explains that the positioning and type of cancer makes treatment problematic in the extreme: "I am as certain about this as you have ever been. I have cancer... If it pushes into my brain, statistically, there is about zero chance of survival..."

##### Shock Value:

Certainly not an easy subplot, the sensitive issue of terminal illness is, thankfully, exquisitely executed. Although it could easily have come across on-screen as a sensational ploy by the writers to pep up the rat-

##### The Story So Far:

A terrified young woman, Melissa Turner and her daughter, Polly, flee their local supermarket. All around them, shoppers have inexplicably begun mutilating themselves—clawing at the flesh around their eyes and slapping their faces—as bloodcurdling screams fill the store.

##### The Scary Bit:

The butcher's attention is suddenly diverted when he sees something disturbing in the door opposite him: a distorted image of a rather large doll—Polly's doll. Instinctively, the butcher pulls out a knife from his belt. But the knife begins to

ings, this moment is as terrifying as any X-FILE has ever been, or could ever be.

6

### "Orison"

Season 7 Episode 7 (2000)

#### The Story So Far:

Donnie Pfaster—a death fetishist whom Scully and Mulder apprehended five years ago—escapes from a maximum-security prison and goes in search of his next victim: Agent Scully. It seems Donnie Pfaster intends to finish the job he started before his apprehension.

#### The Scary Bit:

Mulder arrives at Scully's apartment, just in time to prevent Pfaster from carrying out his handiwork and places him under arrest. A bruised and bloodied Agent Scully approaches her abductor. All of a sudden, the room lights up as sparks fly from the ceiling fixture. Pfaster falls to the ground.

#### Shock Value:

On first impressions, this isn't exactly an obvious choice in the scare department. But who would have ever imagined that Dana Scully, of all people, would be able to shoot someone in such a cold-blooded fashion? The action played out in slow motion only serves to increase the impact.

5

### "Die Hand Die Verletzt"

Season 2 Episode 14 (1995)

#### The Story So Far:

Four teenagers are messing about in the woods when one of the boys is grabbed by the throat. His body is discovered later with his eyes and heart cut out, as rumors spread through the town about devil worship and dark rites.

#### The Scary Bit:

Fifteen-year-old Shannon Ausbury and the rest of her science class are dissecting a fetal pig as substitute teacher, the supremely scary Mrs. Paddock, supervises the experiment. Shannon freaks out as she cuts

into the animal, the poor girl hallucinating that the pig has come to life. She starts screaming hysterically.

#### Shock Value:

It may only last a few seconds, nevertheless, the pig embryo sequence represents but one disturbing moment from an episode littered with them. Dark and creepy, this installment is as close to true horror as TV Standards and Practices will allow.

4

### "Home"

Season 4 Episode 3 (1996)

#### The Story So Far:

The discovery of a grossly malformed new-born baby, buried alive in the sleepy rural community of Home, Pennsylvania, leads Scully and Mulder to the freakish Peacock brothers. They soon uncover the family's gruesome secret.

#### The Scary Bit:

Mulder and Scully's search of the booby-trapped Peacock property leads to a shocking discovery: a grotesque, disfigured woman hidden underneath the bed. It seems the Peacock's have been breeding their own stock, and we're not talking farmyard animals.

#### Shock Value:

Even by X-FILES standards, this episode is particularly shocking and, with incest the underlying theme, controversial in the extreme. Repulsive and almost impossible to watch, this is, unquestionably, one of television's most distressing hours.

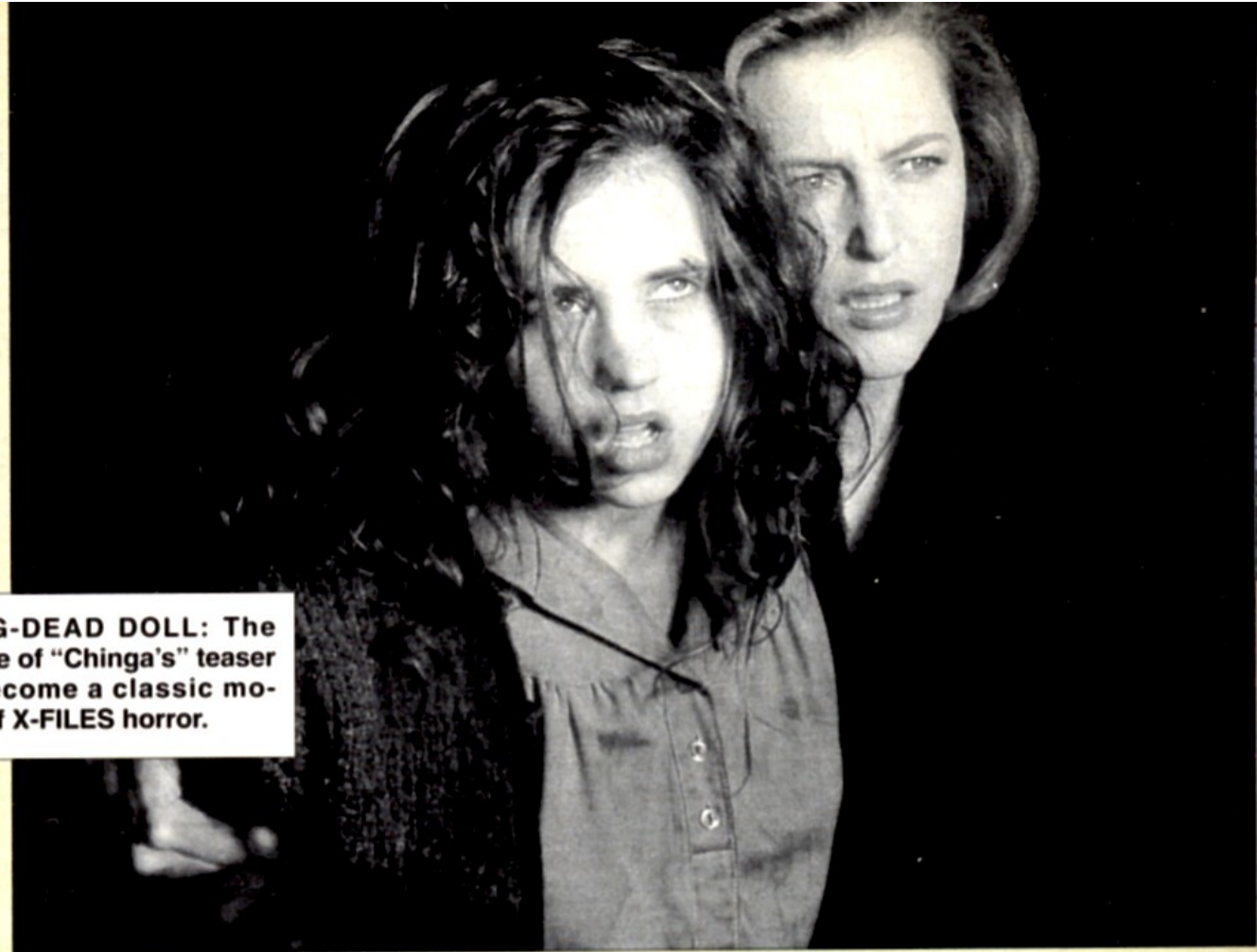
3

### "Roadrunners"

Season 8 Episode 4 (2000)

#### The Story So Far:

On a deserted road in the middle of nowhere, a young man, Hank Gulatarski, manages to flag down and board a passing bus. Seconds later, the bus stops suddenly and everyone



**LIVING-DEAD DOLL:** The carnage of "Chinga's" teaser has become a classic moment of X-FILES horror.

but Hank exits the vehicle.

#### The Scary Bit:

Hank watches helplessly as the bus driver and the other passengers proceed to viciously bash a disabled man's skull in with rocks. Once they have finished, they turn on Hank. He yells, but it's to no avail as they swarm around him like animals devouring their prey.

#### Shock Value:

If this opening sequence doesn't make you want to change the channel, then be prepared. Although the pace slows down a little, there's plenty more shocks in store.

2

### "Fresh Bones"

Season 2 Episode 15 (1995)

#### The Story So Far:

A series of unusual deaths involving U.S. soldiers assigned to oversee the incarceration of Haitian refugees throws Scully and Mulder into a secret war between the base commander, Colonel Wharton, and a voodoo priest.

#### The Scary Bit:

The agents discover Wharton performing a voodoo rite at a local cemetery. While Mulder attempts to bring him in, Scully—who has suddenly become strangely ill—sits alone in the car. She starts to scratch at her hand, looking down in horror as another hand bursts through the skin and tries to choke her.

#### Shock Value:

Scully's hallucination easily gets my vote for the yuckiest, goriest moment...ever. Hard to stomach, no matter how many times you watch it.

1

### "Via Negativa"

Season 8 Episode 7 (2000)

#### The Story So Far:

Doggett and Skinner team up to investigate a murder spree where the killer leaves no trace of his crimes.

#### The Scary Bit:

Doggett is walking down a hall, following a trail of bloody footprints which lead to a man hovering about three feet off the ground, in a lotus meditation position. He opens his eyes—all three of them—and stares at Doggett. Doggett looks down at his hands; he's holding a bloody, severed head: Agent Scully's. Freaked out, Doggett drops the head; the next minute, he wakes up. It was just a dream.

#### Shock Value:

Sometimes it's good to push the limits a little bit; to shake things up. And seeing Scully's severed head in Doggett's hands is a close contender for the most jaw-dropping moment ever. I very much doubt anything could lessen the visceral impact of this scene—the viewer discretion warning at the start of the episode is totally justified.

CFQ

# THE X-FILES

## David Duchovny's Grace Notes

### Creating Episodes That Re-Think THE X-FILES

By Paula Vitaris

With the broadcast of "The Unnatural" and "Hollywood A.D.," THE X-FILES's David Duchovny revealed himself to be a writer and director of great promise. "The Unnatural," a warm, gently humorous, and ultimately moving story about baseball and aliens, clearly was the outstanding episode of the sixth season. In "Hollywood A.D.," Duchovny turned a Hollywood producer loose on a tantalizing mystery investigated by Mulder and Scully, and the resulting "movie" is one of the funniest spoofs yet of the show.

In the second season, Duchovny shared story credit with the show's creator and executive producer Chris Carter on two episodes, "Colony" and "Anasazi" (on the latter he also participated in the plot breakdown). Other episodes for which he received story credit include third season's "Avatar" and fourth season's "Talitha Cumi."

Several seasons went by before he began thinking about actually writing a script of his own. "I didn't have the surety, the confidence in my mind that I could write a teleplay," Duchovny said.

"I was thirty-four, thirty-five, and I thought, *I'm never going to get it. I have decent ideas and I'll just pitch them to the writers.* It took me to the sixth year of the show to actually sit down and write one of my ideas."

Duchovny's first "written by" credit was shared with Carter for the seventh-season episode, "Amor Fati." By the sixth season, Duchovny was ready to write his first solo script, and decided he should direct it, too. His episode, "The Unnatural," is about an alien who falls in love with baseball so much that he will do anything to play the game. Said Duchovny, "The satisfying thing about it is that I had no help at all. The mentoring was done through having five years of well-structured teleplays to guide me through. I wouldn't have known the teaser, four-act structure—that's not an intuitive thing to figure out. Above anything else, THE X-FILES is a really well-structured, storytelling mechanism. So I had that as my mentor. It's the most satisfying thing I've ever done."

Duchovny and X-FILES executive producer Chris Carter, both devoted baseball fans, had wanted to write an episode about baseball for several years, but had never been able to find the right story. One morning, Duchovny was reading the newspaper—much like Mulder at the beginning of the episode—and spotted an article about a minor-league player named Joe Bauman. In 1954, Bauman, a gas station owner who had played for the now-defunct Roswell Rockets in the long-forgotten Longhorn League, hit seventy-two home runs and drove in 224 runs, for an overall slugging average of .916. "He played in Roswell,

New Mexico, which I found hysterically funny," the actor said. "So I thought, *What if this guy's an alien? He's hitting seventy home runs and he's an alien. There's my story—we've got an alien baseball player.* I told my wife [actress Tea Leoni] the idea and the next day I woke up and said to her, 'What if the guy's black and he's an alien and the reason he's black is because he doesn't want to go to the pros because he doesn't want to be discovered?' After that, it just all fell into place."

The alien's race also dictated the flashback structure of the episode. "Once [alien ball player Josh] Exley [Jesse Martin] became black, the story wouldn't make any sense if it took place after the integration of baseball, because after integration he would be discovered, whether he wanted to or not," Duchovny said. "I liked the sense of loss that is part of the legacy of black ball players in this country. There were players whose names we don't know who were every bit as good as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig and all the names we do know." A flashback story also lessened Mulder's presence in the episode, giving Duchovny time for pre-production and directing.

The nighttime scene where Mulder instructs Scully on the finer points of batting is one of the most charming finales in an X-FILES episode. On one level, watching Mulder teasing Scully and Scully laughing at their fun

together is utterly endearing. But there is another level to the scene, an unspoken subtext: Mulder's desire to communicate to Scully what he learned from his investigation. The scene also complements beautifully their scene together at the beginning of the episode's first act, when Mulder is spending his Saturday researching in the office and an unhappy Scully, brandishing a fat-free tofutti cone, longs for weekend freedom.

Duchovny saw these Mulder and Scully scenes as his opportunity to write something warm and funny for the two characters: "I was tired of hearing the conversation between Mulder and Scully where Scully would say, 'Well, I'm a scientist. I believe in science and science tells me this,' and then Mulder would say, 'Well, I go with my gut. My gut tells me this.' I wanted them to have a conversation in which they are actually 'in' their dialogue rather than saying who they are, to let the way they speak say who they are, and to let them inhabit themselves rather than perching outside themselves."

As director, Duchovny had first cut of the episode, so for the first time he found himself working in the editing room. His editor for "The Unnatural" was Lynne Willingham. "We often start to shoot scripts that are still in progress, that's just the nature of the schedule," said Duchovny, "but I had my script far in advance because I was only doing one, so I was pre-



pared months before and I knew what I needed. Lynne [who began editing while shooting was still in progress] would call me if I missed anything, so I had the chance to go back and get something. When you're out there shooting, you really do have an infinite amount of possibility for where you're going to put the camera. The great thing about the editing room is that for better or for worse, once you're in it, you only have the shots you took, and you have to make it work from that.... It's kind of like growing up. You're like, *Okay, well, fuck, I'm not going to be an astronaut, let's just learn how to fly a plane.*"

Duchovny's decision to direct "The Unnatural" grew out of his occasional frustration with the show's storyline and his lack of control over his character, something he acknowledged an actor "has to give up" in a television series. He saw directing as a way of protecting his script. "Directing is a part of the writing process. It's the completion of the writing and making sure that your vision gets carried through all the way. I guess I've been disappointed in the show's execution. It's a little like music. You can tell somebody this is how this should be and this is how it goes, and they nod, and you figure, *We're on the same page, we're speaking the same language*, but it never works out that way. It doesn't. So you just go, *For better or for worse, I'm going to be the guy that executes it all the way. I'm not going to leave it up to somebody else.*"

Duchovny admitted that, as a director, he has his weaknesses, especially in his ability to conceive a shot visually. "I'm spacially backwards. I have no competence at all. I can't draw. I can't even conceive on a flat piece of paper in three dimensions. I wish I could. So I was really nervous going in thinking how am I going to move these people through three dimensional space. I also always feel nervous that I'm not always getting enough pieces to cut it together. What I do have is a kind of non-linear sense of how images reveal a story. I guess in 'The Unnatural' it would be the moment when Exley bleeds red blood, and in 'Hollywood A.D.'

it's the final moment when a piece of plastic makes zombies dance on a sound stage. When someone would say, 'This doesn't make any sense. Why is this here?' I would say, 'Because.' It makes poetic sense, and I think that when you tell a story visually you're telling it poetically. You're not telling it like a literal narrative."

Although "The Unnatural" was his first directing assignment, Duchovny felt he did not receive any help beyond what is usually given any new director on the series. "Traditionally, as a sop, TV producers will let a long-time actor on a series direct, but it's letting a monkey paint," Duchovny laughed. "The idea is, *Oh, we've got this mechanism of THE X-FILES in place and we won't let you fail*, which is encouraging, if also condescending. When you actually go through it, you realize both that you can do it, and secondly, that you do need a lot of help. Everybody who comes in to direct gets a lot of help, not just dumb actors who think they can direct."

"The Unnatural" was an instant hit with X-FILES fans, some of whom compared the episode's visual puns and occasionally mocking tone with episodes by former X-FILES writer Darin Morgan. Duchovny claimed that Morgan, whose work includes "Humbug," "The Final Repose of Clyde Bruckman," and "War of the Coprophages," wasn't as big an influence as one might think, although he greatly admires Morgan's work for the show. "Darin comes much more out of the history of film," said Duchovny. "He's seen everything. I come more out of literature. In that way we're very different, but I do think we are both kind of hellbent on subverting the seriousness of the show."

The tone in Duchovny's second episode as writer and director, "Hollywood A.D.," moved away from the pathos and low-key humor of "The Unnatural" towards something more outrageous and satirical, creating a story with a dual focus: a super-



**DEPARTING SHOTS:** Duchovny tried to move beyond stock characterizations when scripting the interplay between Mulder and Scully.

serious case investigated by Mulder and Scully; and a satiric look at Hollywood.

Duchovny's original idea for his second directorial turn was to write a story centering around Assistant Director Skinner. "I'm always wanting to write Mitch stuff, because I think Mitch is totally under-used," Duchovny said. Initially, the actor considered writing a MIDNIGHT RUN-type episode for Mulder, Skinner, and two retired FBI agents. "That's where I was heading, and then it turned into 'Hollywood A.D.'" Skinner still has several stand-out moments in "Hollywood A.D.," particularly when he, Mulder and Scully all end up in bubble baths in their respective Hollywood hotel rooms and engage in a three-way split-screen phone conversation a la PILLOW TALK.

"Hollywood A.D.'s" fictional producer, Wayne Federman (played by real-life comedian Wayne Federman!), appears at first blush to be the stereotypical film-biz player: slick, fast-talking, unable to view the world as anything but one big movie. Naturally, the super-serious Mulder and Scully wish Federman would go back to where he came from (Mulder asks Skinner if he's pissed him off "in a way that's more than normal" to merit Federman's presence), but they eventually realize that words of wisdom may emerge even from the mouths of Hollywood habitues, especially when Federman paradoxically states that Mulder is crazy for believing what he believes and Scully is crazy for not believing what Mulder believes. "The idea was Holly-

wood satire, but that's too easy," Duchovny said. "There are a lot of philistines out here, but there are a lot of smart philistines here.... That's what makes Hollywood a crazy town."

Duchovny added that he took pride in "throwing the case away, because I knew people would want to see the whole story. I like it that it's so good I'm going to throw it away."

Like "The Unnatural," "Hollywood A.D." ends with Mulder and Scully together, sharing information about what they've witnessed and what it means. Duchovny felt that despite similar structures, each episode's conclusion showed Mulder and Scully in a different light: "They're slightly different in that 'Hollywood A.D.' ends on its own [with the zombie dance] and 'The Unnatural' ends with Mulder and Scully. 'The Unnatural' is more integrated into the frame of the characters in the show. 'Hollywood A.D.' is more of a release and happens behind their backs; they sum up the story in the way they think it was, and then the story sums up itself with the way *it* is. Mulder and Scully get what they need to get, but they still underestimate the power of Hollywood."

Duchovny had no further plans to write or direct for THE X-FILES. "The great thing about THE X-FILES is that I could cut my teeth on what's about as close to moviemaking as you can get on television.... I don't see myself going into television to try to create characters that could sustain seven years' worth of shows. I'd love to write and direct two hours at a time. I feel that's what I should do with my life." CFQ